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MINNEAPOLIS BEGINS TO HEAL

By Courtney Cushing Kiernat



A mother and child sheltering at home peek out a window as they enjoy the music of over a 100 street strolling Singing Resistance protesters sharing hope and support. (Image: Courtney Cushing Kiernat)

After months of intimidation and disruption, Minneapolis residents are rebuilding with the help of limited assistance, but lasting recovery will demand ongoing support from the entire community.

I breathed a sigh of relief when the Trump administration’s border czar announced on Feb. 12 the end

of Operation Metro Surge and the drawdown of ICE agents in Minneapolis.

But like many others, I understand that the visible and invisible damage to our community, and the tens of thousands directly impacted, will require many years and much effort to repair and heal.

Thousands of people, based on the color of their skin or immigration status, were and continue to be impacted by Operation Metro Surge. It may be over on paper, but it continues to haunt and affect Minneapolis families, workers, restaurants, businesses, hospitals and schools.

One woman who has lived in Minneapolis with her husband, both employed and tax-paying residents for more than 20 years, has been in hiding with her school-age children for months.

She shared, “I need to be stronger, but how do you just move on?” Still fearful, she has cautiously returned to work.

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MINNEAPOLIS CITY COUNCIL MOVES TO REMOVE “ICE” FROM LOCAL LEXICON

By Molly Mogren Katt



The Minneapolis City Council has had enough with the word “ice” and aims to ban it. (Image: Courtney Cushing Kiernat)

In the wake of Operation Metro Surge, the Minneapolis City Council is leading a push to remove the word “ice” from business names, public spaces and everyday language as residents continue to navigate the policy’s lasting impacts.

Minneapolisians are being asked to fight ice in a new way. In the aftermath of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s “Operation Metro Surge,” the City Council insists businesses drop “ice” from their names — and even, quite literally, from their premises.

“I couldn’t believe my eyes,” East Isles resident John Higgins told the Hill & Lake Press, sitting at his kitchen table in the historic Bull Higgins house.

As Bobby McFerrin’s “Don’t Worry Be Happy” piped through a Sonos system on repeat, Hig-

gins handed our team an official-looking document on City of Minneapolis letterhead, marked up extensively in what appeared to be graphite from a No. 2 pencil.

“In the aftermath of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s ‘Operation Metro Surge,’ the City Council insists businesses drop ‘ice’ from their names — and even, quite literally, from their premises.”

“The City Council states here that ‘Icehouse’ is too triggering for residents, and that we’ll incur a daily fine of \$100 until we change the name starting May 1.”

Higgins claims the city even sent a list of potential new

names, including Cold Playhouse, Nicollet Ave and the Music Venue Formerly Known as a Place that Stored Frozen Water from the Lakes Before Freezers Were Invented.

Higgins is just one of many Minneapolis residents receiving such threats from council members.

The Loppet Foundation has been instructed to strip any mention of ice from next year’s Luminary Loppet marketing materials.

In its stead, the city suggested verbiage such as “illuminated frozen sculptures” and “enchanted fire-lit cryogenic water garden.”

A representative from the Minneapolis City Council who asked to go by their Signal pseudonym WhistleFerret, says healing our city in the wake of the federal government’s paramilitary invasion is Priority Number One.

“Who can even think about fixing potholes in a time like this?”, they told the Hill & Lake Press. “We need to change these names, and change them immediately. And this is just the tip of the glacial floe.”

WhistleFerret said to expect changes within the parks system. Parade Ice Garden, which will

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letters TO THE editor

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.



A familiar Lake of the Isles landmark, the 20-foot, chainsaw-carved No. 2 pencil stands tall on a neighborhood lawn, transformed from a fallen tree into a symbol of renewal and community ritual. The sculpture is featured in "A Short Documentary About A Giant Pencil," part of Shorts 9: Eclectic Interests at the Minneapolis St. Paul International Film Festival. (Image: MSPfilm.org)

A Giant Pencil Finds a Bigger Stage

"A Short Documentary About A Giant Pencil," a Minnesota-made film about the Lake of the Isles pencil, will be featured at this year's Minneapolis St. Paul International Film Festival (MSPIFF), running April 8 to 19.

The 22-minute film tells the story of a 20-foot No. 2 pencil carved from a storm-damaged tree and the annual community ritual of sharpening it each June. What began as a simple act of reuse has grown into a gathering many now see as a symbol of renewal and shared creativity in Minneapolis.

The film has already received national recognition, including Best Short Film at the Santa Barbara International Film Festival, and it is an honor to have it included in MSPIFF, one of our region's most important cultural events.

I hope neighbors, artists and anyone who appreciates the unexpected ways community can come together will consider attending and supporting the festival. For more information, please visit mspfilm.org.

The next public sharpening of the Lake of the Isles pencil will take place Saturday, June 6. All are welcome.

John Higgins
 East Isles

The Missing Faces of Minneapolis

In the weeks since Operation Metro Surge came to Minneapolis, its impact has reached far beyond headlines and political debate. While the tragic deaths of two residents have drawn national attention, another loss often goes uncounted: the quiet disappearance of neighbors, coworkers, classmates and friends from daily life.

Across workplaces, restaurants, schools and job sites, familiar faces are not showing up. Not because they have all been detained, but because many are living in fear and choosing to stay out of sight.

These are people who have lived in our neighborhoods for years, paid taxes, raised families and contributed to our shared community. Some have legal status. Others are working toward it. Most are law-abiding in every meaningful sense. Yet fear has pushed many into isolation rather than risk detention.

The economic consequences are significant. City leaders estimate hundreds of millions of dollars in lost wages and revenue as workers stay home and customers stay away. Businesses struggle to operate. Schools face increased absenteeism. Families are forced to choose between earning a living and protecting one another.

At the same time, Minneapolis has responded with care. Volunteers and community groups have stepped forward with food, legal support and mutual aid. These efforts reflect the best of our city, but they also underscore what has been lost.

Neighbors who once shared daily routines now move cautiously, or not at all. The absence is visible in ways both subtle and profound.

As we move forward, we should remember the human impact behind the policy. Recovery will take time. Rebuilding will require more than economic stability. It will require restoring trust and reconnecting the people who make this city whole.

Mike Erlandson
 East Isles

Support Rent Relief

I am grateful for your coverage of this extraordinary time in our city. I am writing specifically about the timely column from Molly Mogren Katt, who wrote, "Those of us with means, with privilege, must stay engaged." Indeed.

We are now facing a problem: the urgent need for rent relief to prevent the eviction of thousands of families in Minneapolis. Financial support can help address this need. And many of us who read this mighty paper have way more money than we need to support our lives.

In recent weeks, I have been inviting support from people with significant discretionary wealth whom I have worked with over many years. They live across the United States and have seen and been inspired by the generosity and courage of everyday Minnesotans.

From one invitation to a group of individual funders, we raised \$700,000 from outside Minnesota. These funds are being matched by the Wilson Foundation and distributed by local nonprofits and on-the-ground teams to people who have fallen behind on rent because of Operation Metro Surge.

We are in a moment when, through direct experience, we in Minneapolis have revealed to ourselves a new way to be in community. We have come to understand how interconnected we all are.

This is a perfect time to reaffirm that revelation through giving to rent relief at "Adopt-a-Rent" at "StandWithMinnesota.com." Donations of \$500 to \$3,000 are matched directly with someone in need, with payment made through Zelle or Venmo. Another organization is Neighbors Helping Neighbors.

Please feel free to contact me at marmore56@gmail.com for more information or if you would like help determining where or how much to give. Thank you.

Marian Moore
 Kenwood

Thank You, Hill & Lake Press

I just finished reading the March issue of the Hill & Lake Press and wanted to say how thankful I am that we have such a wonderful community resource. It's clear how much dedication goes into keeping a strong local newspaper alive.

The issue was terrific from start to finish. I especially appreciated the commentary about the new city flag. The line describing the current version as something that "might hang in the lobby of a community and technical college circa 1956" made me laugh out loud.

Thank you to everyone involved in producing another thoughtful and engaging issue. Local journalism like this makes our community stronger.

Melissa Rappaport Schiffman
 Cedar-Isles-Dean

Uptown Needs a Council Member Who Shows Up

At a moment when Uptown urgently needed attention, Minneapolis Council Member Aisha Chughtai chose to be in Cuba (Star Tribune, March 27, 2026).

While residents, small business owners and community leaders gathered to confront the ongoing decline of Uptown, rising safety concerns, shuttered storefronts and a neighborhood struggling to regain its footing, their elected representative was absent. Not just unavailable, but out of the country.

That absence would be concerning on its own. But the destination matters.

Cuba is not simply a travel location. It is a living example of a political and economic system that has failed its people for decades. Chronic shortages, suppressed enterprise and a lack of basic freedoms are not abstractions. They are the predictable outcomes of a system that dismisses markets, undermines public safety and centralizes control.

Here in Minneapolis, we are seeing echoes of those same priorities. The policy direction championed by Council Member Chughtai, often aligned with activist groups such as the Democratic Socialists of America, has too often deprioritized public safety, discounted the struggles of small businesses and elevated ideology over results. These approaches have not revitalized Uptown. They have contributed to its stagnation.

It is not unreasonable for constituents to ask: Is this the model? Is this the vision? Because, sans the palm trees, the trajectory is difficult to ignore.

Uptown does not need political experiments rooted in theories that have repeatedly failed elsewhere. It needs leadership grounded in accountability, economic reality and a clear commitment to restoring safe-

ty and vibrancy.

Most of all, it needs a council member who shows up.

*Dawn Erlandson
East Isles*

A New Flame on Franklin

How thrilling to attend the absolutely mobbed March 7 opening of Lowry Hill Gallery in the once-vacant storefront next to Sebastian Joe's on West Franklin.

The excitement for art reminded Susan and me of the teeming Art Crawl days down First Avenue 40 years ago, before that energy moved to Northeast.

This is Lowry Hill's million-dollar corner, the entrance to the neighborhood, and gallery owner Andrea Bubula and manager Muriel Lang have created a vibrant jewel box filled with light and astonishing art, a true neighborhood attraction.

Now the vacant Burch Steak across the street looks much more appetizing. Lowry Hill Gallery has provided not just a spark, but a flame. Let's see if something gets cooking there as well.

*Jim Lenfestey
Lowry Hill*

A Failure of Decency

I'm appalled by the myopic viewpoint taken by a recent contributor in last month's Letters to the Editor titled "Shame on Walz," about our neighbors who are being terrorized by ICE.

To believe the lies of the current administration — that ICE is only going after violent felons who are in the country illegally — requires turning away from the suffering of one's neighbors.

Refusing to see the parallels between this moment in history and the occupation of Nazi Germany is exactly how history repeats itself. Historical distance allows us to feel righteous about the persecution of a targeted, marginalized group without having to risk standing up for what's right in the present day.

Sir, where is your decency? Your soul?

I urge more critical thought and, perhaps most importantly, deeper compassion for our neighbors — including children and babies — whose lives are being torn apart simply because of where they were born, the color of their skin or the language they speak.

We all like to think we would be

the person who did what's right. But are you?

*Hal Sansone
Lowry Hill*

**Good Intentions,
Bad Eviction Policy**

This past week, the Minneapolis City Council passed an ordinance extending the notice period for evictions within the city. The council's efforts are well-intended but flawed. By way of background, I previously managed affordable housing properties for a nonprofit organization and now manage market-rate properties for myself and others.

The proposed 60-day notice period was not supported by any of the major nonprofit affordable housing providers operating in the Twin Cities. Longer notice periods primarily allow residents to go deeper into debt by the time they reach court. Many will ultimately be evicted for failing to pay a settlement agreement tied to a debt they cannot afford. Others may move out before the eviction hearing but leave behind a large unpaid balance that bars them from securing future housing.

It can already take months to obtain a hearing for an eviction case, on top of the city's required 30-day notice of intent to evict. As a result, many major landlords now issue 30-day notices immediately for any late payment. I have personally been directed to issue them for as little as \$1. You would be surprised how many residents in otherwise good standing I have had to reassure after receiving what appears to be an eviction notice over a single late payment.

A better use of the city and county's energy would be to provide proactive rent assistance for residents who are struggling. As written, this measure risks creating a trap for well-intentioned residents who fall behind, while also opening loopholes for those who may seek to exploit the system. At the same time, it increases the time and cost burdens placed on housing providers, costs that will ultimately be reflected in higher housing prices across our city.

*Thomas Regnier
Lowry Hill*

**YOUR SUPPORT KEEPS
LOCAL JOURNALISM STRONG**



(Image: Courtney Cushing Kiernat)

Dear Friends and Supporters,

On behalf of the entire board and everyone who works and volunteers at the Hill & Lake Press, I want to extend our deepest thanks to each of you who donated to our nonprofit newspaper this past year.

Your generosity uplifts us more than you may realize. Time and again, members of our community step forward to support this paper, often without any solicitation at all.

That quiet, steadfast belief in the importance of strong local journalism sustains us, inspires us and reminds us why this work matters so deeply.

We are incredibly proud of what the Hill & Lake Press has accomplished this past year.

Our mission has always been to serve as a strong local voice, one that goes deeper into the neighborhoods and communities we cover in ways major media simply cannot.

We are honored to share the stories, perspectives and lived experiences of our neighbors.

Our most recent issues, which took a hard look at the impacts Operation Metro Surge have had on our community, are one example of our commitment to thoughtful,

community-centered reporting.

As a largely volunteer-driven publication, we operate with dedication and care.

Your donations allow us to expand our coverage, invest in meaningful reporting and bridge the gap between what advertising revenue provides and what it truly costs to produce independent, high-quality local journalism. Quite simply, your support makes this work possible.

Looking ahead, we are excited about what comes next for the paper. We will continue to grow and strengthen our website, broadening our ability to deliver timely, in-depth news to an even larger audience.

At every step, our focus remains the same: to amplify local voices and serve our community with integrity and depth.

From all of us at the Hill & Lake Press, thank you. Your belief in this paper ensures that strong, independent local journalism continues to thrive.

With gratitude,

Mike Erlandson, Board Chair
Hill & Lake Press



Hill & Lake Press

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• East Bde Maka Ska Neighborhood Association (EBMSNA)



• Cedar-Isles-Dean Neighborhood Association (CIDNA)



• Lowry Hill Neighborhood Association (LHNA)



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MINNEAPOLIS BEGINS TO HEAL Front page



(Images: Courtney Cushing Kiernat)

Before the surge, she worked six days a week and never needed to ask for assistance to pay her rent and care for her children. Now her employer can only give her three days of work because the business is struggling to stay open, in large part due to the ICE surge. Her limited hours mean that she will not be able to afford her \$1,800 April rent, utilities and food for her family.

She does not want to ask for help, but she has little choice. Asking for

medical appointments.

These strangers have raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to help with rent.

They shop for and deliver groceries to families they have never met. They drive children to school and help fill out legal custody forms in case parents are detained and their children are left behind. They wait outside restaurants that many of us frequent regularly to ensure vulnerable workers get home safely. They may never be publicly recognized because they fear retribution for their generosity and for the safety of the people they are supporting.

One engaged Kenwood neighbor shared, "I have seen heroism in unlikely places and from ordinary folks using every possible skill set at their disposal. My friends have comforted the terrified, adopted

"I have seen heroism in unlikely places and from ordinary folks using every possible skill set at their disposal."

and receiving help from strangers has been lifesaving but shattering for her sense of confidence, independence and pride. It is an invisible but damaging impact of the surge that will have long-term repercussions.

An amazing network of community members across the Twin Cities has filled the void for vulnerable neighbors too afraid to go to work, get their kids to school, shop for groceries or attend critical

"Restaurants, markets and businesses need customers to return so they can employ those who have come out of hiding, only to find their jobs cut or significantly reduced."

the needs of households, stepped up for missing parents, sourced rent for complete strangers and put their lives on hold. They have given generously."

While the generous actions of so many of our neighbors have kept impacted people safe, fed and housed, it is not sustainable. Many neighbors who hid in their homes, used their savings and accepted the generosity of others will need time to work and earn enough to cover future rents and expenses.

Restaurants, markets and businesses need customers to return so they can employ those who have come out of hiding, only to find their jobs cut or significantly reduced.

ICE actions and threats have taken a toll on the individual and collective mental health of our city.

"My friends have comforted the terrified, adopted the needs of households, stepped up for missing parents, sourced rent for complete strangers and put their lives on hold."



Our work as a community in support of those most vulnerable is not over.

Please support our community by frequenting restaurants and local businesses, and continue to contribute your time, talents and resources to help those most impacted by the ICE surge get back on their feet and heal.

It will take time, but we have proven that Minneapolis is strong and that we protect our most vulnerable neighbors.

Courtney Cushing Kiernat is the photo editor of the Hill & Lake Press. She lives in Kenwood.

REP. KATIE JONES' BIKE RIDE TO MOTHERHOOD

By Paula Chesley



Left: Katie Jones, loaded up and ready to bike home with her newborn son, Hans. Right: Katie Jones and Peter Schmitt beam embracing their newborn son, Hans. (Images provided by Katie Jones).

A Minneapolis lawmaker puts her climate values into action, biking to and from the hospital with her newborn son.

No one can accuse Katie Jones, Minnesota state representative for District 61A, which covers much of the Hill & Lake

“My grandfather normalized biking for me as a mode of transportation at any age.”

Press coverage area, of not living her climate values. In this case, she biked them.

On a day in late February, Jones, a first-term representative running for re-election, was

chauffeured to the Mother Baby Center in a cargo e-bike by her husband, Peter Schmitt.

A few days later, they made the return trip home on the same bike with a special passenger, their newborn son, Hans.

Jones and Schmitt live in the Wedge, not far from the Mother Baby Center in Phillips, and benefited from protected bike lanes to and from the hospital.

Still, this was a ride like no other. During Jones' pregnancy, the couple tested multiple route options, including 24th Street, 26th and 28th streets and the Midtown Greenway.

They ultimately chose 26th and 28th streets for their protected bike lanes, minimal hills and relatively clear conditions.

Once settled into an infant carrier, Hans slept most of the way home, as Jones documented on Instagram. Their pediatrician, Jones said, supported the

decision after learning about the safety measures they had in place.

Jones has spoken publicly about her environmentally friendly lifestyle before, including writing about her straw-built home. The bike ride to motherhood was not a one-off decision.

In 2018, the couple sold their car through a buyback program after realizing they rarely used it and had access to alternatives such as car share services.

Her inspiration goes back even further. Jones recalls her grandfather, a doctor, biking to work in their small town into his 90s.

“My grandfather normalized biking for me as a mode of transportation at any age,” Jones said.

Whether Hans will continue the family's climate-friendly commuting tradition remains to be seen.

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



MINNEAPOLIS CITY COUNCIL MOVES TO REMOVE 'ICE' FROM LOCAL LEXICON Front page

henceforth go by the name Parade Zamboni Garden.

The outdoor rink at Lake of the Isles will now go by the Slippery Outdoor Oval. If you're looking to catch a January muskie on Bde Maka Ska, you'll soon be doing a sport called “freezy fishing” while within city limits.

“A local television meteorologist said a council member reached out to her, asking to remove any mention of ice or icy from upcoming forecasts.”

WhistleFerret shared they hoped to remove ice from all bars and restaurants, stating they may hold up liquor licenses for places that refuse to comply.

“Cold drinks are overrated,” says WhistleFerret. “We don't need margaritas on the rocks. We will allow chilled glasses, and businesses may continue to use refrigerated drinks. Just not you-know-what.” WhistleFerret did say slushies may be permitted, provided the texture is more smooth than chunky.

The City Council is also discussing words with “-ice” in them, such as “service, office, rice and mice.”

One helpful neighbor on a hyper-local Signal chat who goes by the name Pannenkoeken, suggested the city try a Castilian approach to ice-laden words.

“I studied abroad in Barcelona in 2001,” they told our team via secure burner phone. “The

dialect thounded a little thrange at firht, but you get uthed to it.” They cut our conversation short to pick a “slithe” of cheese at Piz-za Luce.

A local television meteorologist said a council member reached out to her, asking to remove any mention of ice or icy from upcoming forecasts.

“They suggested I say things like ‘banana peel in Mario Kart-like conditions’ or ‘walk like a penguin on your way to the bus stop,’” she said. “Sleet, hail, snow, blizzard will be allowed, but I've been told ice should be treated like the name Voldemort.” When asked if this development played a role in her upcoming retirement, she shrugged.

A spokesperson for the city said they preemptively sent any musician with “ice” in their name notice that they will not be allowed to perform in Minneapolis unless they remove the I-word

from their moniker.

Ice Spice and Ice-T did not respond to the Hill & Lake for comment; Ice Cube said this shouldn't affect any future engagements at Minnesota's casinos.

Vanilla Ice replied to our email immediately from an aol.com address. “I hoped to play the Greenroom this summer,” he wrote. “But ain't nobody wanna see someone named Robert Matthew Van Winkle in concert” (April Fools). 🤪

Molly Mogren Katt is a writer and mother of two. This story originally ran on her post *Hey Eleanor!* on Substack. She lives in the Wedge.

AREA PARK BOARD COMMISSIONER EXPLAINS DECISION TO REMOVE PARKWAY

By Ellen van Iwaarden

East Isles residents question newly elected Park Board Commissioner Jason Garcia's vote to explore closing part of The Mall parkway, raising concerns about safety, access and neighborhood input.

On Feb. 4 the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board voted 7-2 to authorize park staff to explore whether the Metropolitan Council could permanently close two blocks of The Mall's northern parkway. The closure would occur after the Met Council completes the sewer reconstruction planned along The Mall.

The vote reversed a decision by last year's Park Board directing the Met Council to return The Mall Park to its current configuration after the sewer work, keeping the parkway open.

Newly elected District 4 Commissioner Jason Garcia, who represents neighborhoods around The Mall, was joined by at-large Commissioners Meg Forney, Amber A. Frederick and Board President Tom Olsen in voting with the majority to explore closing the two-block stretch, despite strong opposition from nearby residents.

District 6 Commissioner Cathy Abene, a professional engineer, and District 2 Commissioner Charles Rucker voted against the proposal and have raised concerns about public safety.

Many neighbors living near The Mall have opposed the proposed closure since it was first introduced by the Community Advisory Committee in 2018 and adopted by the Park Board in 2020. More than 800 neighbors have signed a petition asking the Park Board to keep the parkway open.

Neighborhood concerns about the proposed permanent closure include potential public safety risks if fire department equipment loses access, a concern raised by retired Fire Chief Bryan Tyner and Commissioner s Rucker, a longtime Minneapolis firefighter.

Residents also worry that the closure would disrupt traffic patterns by forcing vehicles and bicycles onto Lagoon Avenue at dangerous intersections. Currently, many drivers use The Mall Parkway to reach East Bde Maka Ska Drive and enter at a stoplight.

Additional concerns include reduced parking access for elderly and disabled park visitors and renters along The Mall, as well as the loss of the park's historic symmetry for what critics describe as only a minimal gain in sloped green space.

The East Isles Neighborhood Association invited Garcia to attend its March board



Area Park Board Commissioner Jason Garcia and the majority of thier colleagues, several of whom were recently elected, support closing this section of parkway in favor of green space. Many area residents are concerned this could create circulation problems and parking challenges along The Mall, especially for renters who rely on access. They also note there is already ample green space along the adjacent Chain of Lakes. In addition to the East Isles Neighborhood Association, commissioners with technical backgrounds in engineering and firefighting oppose the change. (Image: Ellen van Iwaarden)

meeting to explain their vote.

"For me, it was about utilizing the space as park space versus parking and traffic," Garcia said.

Garcia also noted that removing the two-block stretch of parkway would support Park Board goals of reducing miles traveled by cars on parkways and lowering emissions.

Garcia added that park staff had reached out to the Metropolitan Council about closing the parkway but had not yet received a response. The Met Council sewer project, originally expected to begin last summer, has also experienced additional delays.

Board and community members asked Garcia about their decision-making process, including who they consulted beyond neighborhood residents and how they weighed neighborhood concerns about safety and ac-

cess against what many see as a small increase in green space.

Some community members also pointed out that The Mall borders the 1,555-acre Chain of Lakes Regional Park, leading them to question whether closing the parkway to add more green space would have meaningful impact.

Neighborhood leaders expressed hope Garcia may still reconsider supporting a permanent closure of the two-block stretch and instead address the public safety and access concerns raised by residents.

Stay tuned.

Ellen van Iwaarden is the president of the East Isles Neighborhood Association.



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UPTOWN UNITED LAUNCHES COMMUNITY AMBASSADOR WALKS

By Ellen van Iwaarden



(Image: Kevin Norman)

Uptown United is a new resident-driven volunteer effort that aims to bring people back to the streets, support businesses and strengthen community presence.

On March 19, more than 175 residents, business owners, police officers and elected officials gathered in the future home of the Arizona Taco Company in Uptown.

The crowd was there to learn more about the Uptown Community Ambassadors Program, slated to start in Uptown at the end of March.

The Uptown Community Ambassadors will be groups of people who care about Uptown walking the area's streets together on Friday and Saturday nights.

There will be two shifts each evening, and the goal is to strengthen the neighborhood with a visible community presence.

The program is a collaboration between Uptown United, a new cross-neighborhood advocacy group, and the Uptown Association.

The Uptown Association is a long-standing nonprofit that partners with businesses and community groups to improve Uptown's economic vitality and sustainability.

The evening's emcee and program founder, Andy Vaaler, described what he wanted neighbors

“Wouldn't it be great to say 'I was actually a part of the rebirth of Uptown.'”

to do: “Show up to be present in Uptown, show up to support Uptown businesses, show up to eat at Uptown restaurants and show up to meet your neighbors.”

Speakers included Arizona Taco owner Marcos Ayala, Shop

My Closet owner Marsha Magdalene, MPD Crime Prevention Specialist Faith Randall and MPD Uptown patrol officers, program founder and Uptown resident Lee Todd, Uptown United founder Kevin Norman, Uptown Association President Andrea Corbin and newly hired Uptown Association Executive Director Stefani Pennaz.

Kevin Norman described his dream for the program this way: “We want to have community walks on Friday and Saturday nights, not policing, just walking. We want to get people on the streets walking around, eating at restaurants and saying hello to business owners.” He added, “Wouldn't it be great to say ‘I was actually a part of the rebirth of Uptown.’”

Lee Todd gave his perspective on the decline of Uptown. He said the decline was the result of increasing pressure on its businesses from the growth of online retail, the COVID-19 pandemic and the unrest following George Floyd's murder.

He credits the Uptown Farmers Market, a multi-neighborhood community event that launched on Thursday nights last summer, with stopping the decline and starting the renewal.

The Uptown Farmers Market will be back on Thursdays starting in June. In more good news, Pennaz also announced that the Uptown Art Fair is coming back to Uptown this summer.

All the speakers thanked the crowd for coming out to support Uptown. They also praised the increased efforts and patrols of the Minneapolis Police Department, which are already making a difference in the number of people loitering and breaking the law in Uptown.

Speakers stressed that more police presence is only part of the solution. Residents need to do their part, too.

They encouraged everyone to call 911 whenever they witness trouble in Uptown, whether it is drug dealing, drug use, trespassing or vandalism, or see someone who is not well and needs help.

While the initial plan is to have the walks on weekend evenings, organizers are open to walks happening at other times of the week and day as well.

As Uptown business owner Judy Longbottom said, “The trouble is out there 24/7.”

Uptown supporters can sign up to be an Uptown Community Ambassador on the Uptown United website at UptownUnitedMpls.org.

The founders are seeking volunteers to walk and to help organize walking shifts. All volunteers can pick their own walk schedule and frequency.

Ellen van Iwaarden is the president of the East Isles Neighborhood Association.

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EVEN MY DOGS DON'T THINK UPTOWN IS "VIBRANT"

By Quinton Courts



(Images: Paula Chesley)

Two dogs, one neighborhood and a daily walk that shows how far Uptown has to go to feel vibrant again.

My dogs don't like walking through Uptown — and honestly, neither do I.

Within the past year, my partner and I foster-failed two rambunctious, 1-year-old litter mates through a Minnesota dog rescue.

Like many dog-owning neighbors, we take advantage of Minneapolis' walkable neighborhoods with beautiful turn-of-the-century architecture. Most days we head out for a 3-mile loop, choosing a different route to sniff out and explore.

From our home in East Isles, we can walk to the Minneapolis Institute of Art, Lakewood Cemetery, Loring Park or the entire path around Lake of the Isles.

I'm sure we look like a traveling circus when the four of us move through the neighborhood together, but I'm proud to say the dogs' reactivity and lack of confidence has improved greatly since we adopted them, created routines and showered them with love.

I can't say for certain which route is their favorite, but I know their least favorite: Uptown.

And I have to agree.

There's a lot going on — and not going on — in Uptown right now.

My partner and I moved to Minneapolis in 2021, and I never experienced Uptown in its heyday.

My partner, who grew up here, along with neighbors, often tell me about how lively it once was: safe, walkable and the place to be. I only caught the tail end of that era, visiting the small-format Target, Stella's and joining the YWCA just before they closed.

Since then, I have repeatedly heard local elected officials describe Uptown as "vibrant." I beg to differ.

With so many vacant storefronts, our "urban puppy walks," as we call them, often feel like a trip into the Upside Down from "Stranger Things," passing eerie shells of businesses that once thrived.

During winter walks, we frequently passed people using or selling drugs in alleyways, covered entryways of closed businesses and even at the Uptown Transit Center, in full view of the cameras.

I've watched my dogs' demeanor change as we walked east along The Mall, hesitantly passing someone clearly under the influence of drugs but somehow still balancing on two feet and swaying in place.

More than once, I have called 911 to request a welfare check because I feared for

someone's safety.

Now that the snow has melted, Uptown walks still aren't a favorite — sometimes for ordinary dog reasons.

The loud bursts of compressed air from city buses startle them. The automated crossing signals meant to help visually impaired pedestrians make them jump. I reassure them that it's OK, while appreciating the infrastructure for humans.

Cities across the country spend millions trying to create exactly the kind of compact mixed-use residential-commercial district Uptown already has. Yet much of it now feels neglected, if not abandoned.

On many walks, we dodge broken glass from smashed car windows and piles of salt left carelessly in the middle of sidewalks. I

"When someone's car window is smashed, their bicycle stolen, their storefront tagged with graffiti or their business entryway littered with drug paraphernalia and human waste, the burden falls on the same working people who keep these businesses alive."

pass doors with printed signs announcing a business's final day years ago, some still with tables and chairs inside as if everyone suddenly disappeared. Some doors are now chained shut.

We also navigate human waste, vomit, used needles and food trash. Graffiti covers windows and brick facades. From Hennepin Avenue, it's clear that Walker Library has effectively become a daytime warming center for people without stable housing.

I am hopeful about our newly elected Ward 7 Council Member Elizabeth Shaffer, who has shown a clear concern for Uptown's future. That kind of attention and willingness to engage is a positive step and something

our community needs.

At the same time, it is hard to ignore the broader failure of leadership. Uptown did not arrive at this moment overnight, and it will not recover without honesty about the depth of the challenges we face. Too often, elected officials have been slow to acknowledge the seriousness of the decline or to advance solutions that match the urgency on the ground.

Council Member Aisha Chughtai, in particular, has been largely absent from the day-to-day concerns of constituents in Uptown. Residents and business owners deserve consistent engagement and responsiveness, especially at a time when the neighborhood is struggling.

Chughtai appears more focused on ideological and international causes than on local concerns. She recently traveled to Cuba with a delegation aligned with socialist interests, missing a local Uptown United meeting. As a Cuban American, I find that deeply troubling, particularly given the history and real-

"Many elected officials talk about representing working people. Yet ignoring the daily impacts of disorder and petty crime does not help the working class."

ities of Cuba's communist government.

Responsibility also extends to the mayor. These conditions have developed on his watch, and stronger, more visible leadership is needed. Where is the coordinated effort to stabilize and restore one of Minneapolis' most important commercial and cultural districts?

In the absence of that leadership, residents, business owners and community organizations are stepping forward.

I appreciate the efforts of Uptown United and others who are refusing to accept a diminished quality of life. If meaningful change is going to happen, it will require both accountability and a renewed partnership between the city and the people who care deeply about Uptown's future.

Many elected officials talk about representing working people. Yet ignoring the daily impacts of disorder and petty crime does not help the working class.

When someone's car window is smashed, their bicycle stolen, their storefront tagged with graffiti or their business entryway littered with drug paraphernalia and human waste, the burden falls on the same working people who keep these businesses alive.

Spring and summer are coming, and at least the weather will make our walks through Uptown more pleasant.

It is my hope that our government and public agencies will step up in a way that matches the resilience of the businesses fighting to remain here and the grassroots efforts of everyday Uptown residents who continue to call this neighborhood home.

Quinton Courts is a community volunteer and lives in East Isles with his partner and two dogs.

WHY I VOTED NO ON THE PRE-EVICTION NOTICE EXTENSION

By Council Member Elizabeth Shaffer



From left: Liudmila Trandafilava, Hennepin County director of security; Amy McNally, deputy director of the Hennepin County Library; Ward 7 Council Member Elizabeth Shaffer; and Ward 10 Council Member Aisha Chughtai. Photo taken at a Minneapolis Police Department Fifth Precinct meeting on Uptown safety. (Image: Dave Berge)

Minneapolis City Council Member Elizabeth Shaffer argues that longer gaps without rental assistance can deepen debt, increase evictions and shrink already limited housing options.

This vote was a genuinely difficult one. This is exactly the kind of issue where reasonable people, debating in good faith, can disagree because those of us on both sides agree on so much.

We agree the federal government created a genuine crisis through the economic disruption caused by Operation Metro Surge, especially in our immigrant community.

We agree we want our immigrant neighbors to remain part of the vibrant cultural fabric that makes Minneapolis so great.

We agree eviction is associated with serious social and public health consequences.

And we agree this problem can be solved with money, in the form of emergency rental assistance.

Where we disagree is whether more time will make the problem

of evictions better or worse.

The strongest argument for extending the notice period is that what we are dealing with here is a special case.

The people experiencing severe income disruption because of Operation Metro Surge do not necessarily fit the profile of clients regularly served by large housing nonprofits.

The argument goes that the expertise of those organizations may not fully apply in these specific circumstances.

Millions of dollars in mutual aid have been activated and thousands of people have received rental assistance through community-driven efforts.

That generosity matters, and the argument is that more time would allow those resources to reach families before eviction proceedings begin.

I understand that argument. But I do not believe it holds up.

If someone is already two months behind on rent, adding another 30 days only increases the size of the financial hole they are

in.

It increases the amount of money needed to make them whole. Even in these circumstances, time is only going to make the road to recovery steeper.

I will concede what I think is true. There are certainly individual circumstances where 30 more days would help someone stay in their current housing.

But that is outweighed by evidence pointing to more people being harmed in the long run through larger debt balances that push them past the reach of rental assistance programs, higher rates of eviction and a gradual erosion of the affordable housing supply as smaller landlords face financial

“If someone is already two months behind on rent, adding another 30 days only increases the size of the financial hole they are in.”

pressure that forces them to sell.

Consider one concrete example. Align Minneapolis’ Emergency Rental Assistance program, one of the community-based tools our neighbors rely on, caps eligibility at back-due rent not exceeding three months and \$2,000. Both conditions must be met.

A tenant who crosses either threshold does not get less help. They get no help at all. Extending the notice period makes it more likely that tenants in crisis cross that line before anyone intervenes.

The same logic applies to mutual aid. We have heard from people on the ground that many of these funds are already tapped out or will not be able to continue past

March. More time, more debt and fewer donations is not a path forward. It is a deeper hole.

The organizations we heard from, including Aeon, Agate, CommonBond, Catholic Charities, Project for Pride in Living and Simpson Housing, are trusted partners we fund through the Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

Their whole mission is preventing evictions, not enabling them. They spoke with a united voice at great political risk that this proposal is counterproductive.

When they tell us a longer notice period leads to larger balances and higher rates of eviction, we have a responsibility to listen. They have been engaged in this work for decades.

None of this diminishes my respect for those who hold the opposite position or the awe I feel for the thousands of Minneapolitans who have sacrificed money, time and personal safety to protect our neighbors. The compassion behind this advocacy has inspired the world and me.

But our responsibility as policymakers is not just to pass something that feels like help. It is to pass policies that actually help.

The most effective tool for preventing eviction is rental assistance, not longer timelines.

That is why I supported the mayor’s additional \$1 million in emergency rental assistance and continued lobbying at the Capitol for resources at the scale this crisis requires.

My door is always open to those with perspectives different from my own. Those are exactly the conversations I value most.

On difficult questions like this one, good faith disagreement is not a weakness of our politics. It is part of how we do our best work.

Elizabeth Shaffer represents Ward 7 on the Minneapolis City Council. She lives in Lowry Hill.

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48TH IN THE NATION: A WAKE-UP CALL FOR SCHOOL COUNSELING IN MINNESOTA

By Susan Trondson



Members of the Minnesota School Counselors Association gather at the Capitol for the 2026 Day on the Hill to advocate with state legislators. (Image: Minnesota School Counselor Association)

Minnesota ranks 48th in the nation for student-to-counselor ratios as student mental health needs rise. A new state bill aims to expand school counseling and strengthen support for students.

Two years ago, after 29 rewarding years at Aveda Corp., I retired. As meaningful as that work was, I wanted to contribute more directly to the public sector, particularly in supporting young people and the systems that serve them.

That decision led me to enroll in the school counseling master's program at the University of Minnesota. I am learning a great deal, not only in the classroom and through internships, but also about the current realities of the profession and the importance of advocating for meaningful change. If we want all students to thrive, we must support the teams that guide them.

On any given school day in Minnesota, a

“Every child in the United States deserves a free public education that offers not only academic opportunity but also a safe and supportive space to learn, grow and move forward with hope.”

student may walk into a school counselor's office carrying far more than questions about schedules or college plans. Anxiety, peer conflict, family instability, grief and rising social pressures are showing up in classrooms every day.

Recently, immigration enforcement actions, including Operation Metro Surge, have added more stress for some students and families, creating new pressures for teachers, administrators and support staff.

Every child in the United States deserves a free public education that offers not only academic opportunity but also a safe and supportive space to learn, grow and move forward with hope.

School counselors are crucial to this process, yet current counselor-to-student ratios in Minnesota are unworkable. Only 50% of the

state's 2,201 schools have a full-time counselor. In many districts, a single counselor is responsible for nearly 550 students, more than double the recommended ratio.

Minnesota ranks 48th in the nation in student-to-counselor ratios, leaving many schools, especially elementary schools, without consistent access to a licensed counselor.

Understanding the evolving role of school counselors makes these numbers even more alarming. Once known primarily as guidance counselors who handled schedules and college advice, today's counselors support academic success, social-emotional well-being and preparation for college, careers and life. They help students develop learning strategies, self-management skills and social skills.

Minnesota Sens. Susan Pha and Liz Boldon have co-authored Senate File 3892, which would strengthen school counseling statewide by ensuring a minimum of one counselor in every school, defining the role consistently across the state and empowering counselors to spend 80% of their time providing direct, multi-tiered services to students.

Minneapolis Public Schools counselor Kim Cook emphasized the urgency.

“I have been a school counselor for more than 30 years, and I have absolutely seen an increase in students' mental health challenges,” Cook said. “As social-emotional needs grow and counselor-to-student ratios rise, we are hurting already marginalized students. It is truly unacceptable.”

Anna Miller, a sixth-grade counselor in Minneapolis, said students frequently ask to meet with her. With more than 400 students, it can be difficult to meet the demand. She sees sixth grade as a crucial transition point for young people.

“Organizational skills, time management, academic coaching, mediation, conflict resolution and coping skills are all vital to student success and part of our individual and group work,” Miller said.

Both counselors stressed that school counseling is a behavioral science profession requiring a master's degree and professional licensure. Counselors advocate for equity, access and success for all students. Miller said counselors use attendance, testing and behavioral data, along with surveys, to develop targeted interventions that improve student outcomes. Counselors also collaborate closely with families, educators, student service teams and community partners.

What can communities do to help?

I spoke with Dr. Carolyn Berger, Ph.D., LSC, co-chair of the Minnesota School Coun-

selor Advocacy Committee. She encouraged families and community members to engage.

“Parents and families should speak with school leadership, school boards and state legislators to share their experiences,” Berger said. “If a school lacks adequate mental health or postsecondary support, families should make their voices heard. Communities can also reach out to local counselors to learn how to advocate for stronger support. All students deserve the resources they need to succeed.”

Strengthening school counseling is a practical, evidence-based step lawmakers can take to support student mental health and academic

“When we invest in school counselors, we invest in the future of our children and communities.”

success. When students are overwhelmed and lack the skills or support to steady themselves, learning becomes much harder.

When we invest in school counselors, we invest in the future of our children and communities. Please support Senate File 3892 by contacting your state representative. Let's make this a priority and make Minnesota a top-ranked state in school counseling.

Susan Trondson is a graduate student in school counseling and a mental health advocate. She lives in Lowry Hill.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

on Bill SF 3892 or school counseling, visit:

<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/bills/94/2026/0/SF/3892/?body=Senate>

<https://msca.memberclicks.net/about>

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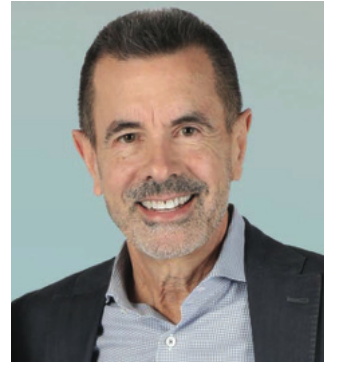
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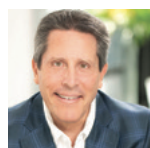


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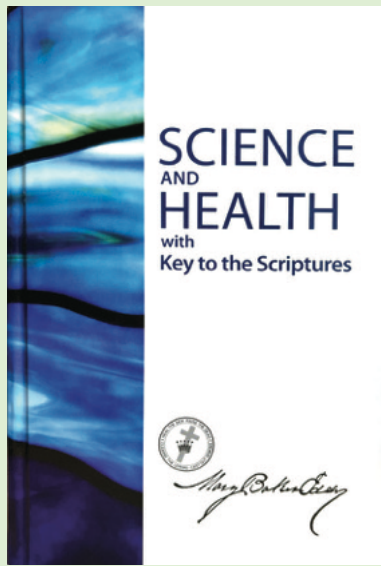


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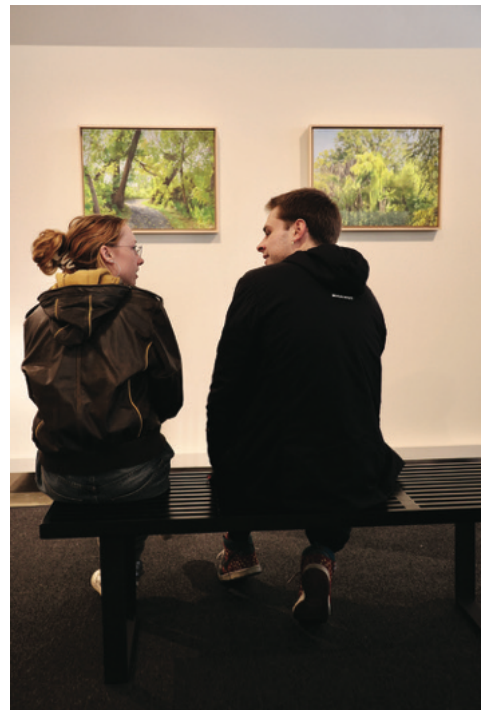
Mary Baker Eddy, The First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany pg. 210

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NEW GALLERY BRINGS REGIONAL ART AND NEW ENERGY TO LOWRY HILL

By Brian Lucas



(Images: Courtney Cushing Kiernat)

The new Lowry Hill Gallery showcases regional artists while inviting neighbors to stop in, explore and bring art into their lives.

In the summer of 2025, as Andrea Bubula drove past a “For Lease” sign near the corner of Hennepin and Franklin avenues, an idea began to take shape. She realized that the spacious location, with its stark white walls and soaring ceilings, was more than an empty storefront. It was a blank canvas for her dream of starting a gallery.

In December, she toured the space with her colleague Muriel Lang, now the gallery manager. Three months later, they officially opened the doors to Lowry Hill Gallery, 1009 W. Franklin Ave.

“So many things were right about this location: the visibility, the high traffic and the fact that it sits on the edge of a residential neighborhood,” Bubula said. “Starting a gallery isn’t an easy decision, but I believe in this location and the work.”

Bubula and Lang officially opened the gallery March 7 with a reception that drew hundreds of visitors eager to see the art and welcome the new addition to Uptown.

“I didn’t know if we would have 100 people or 300,” Bubula said. “So when people started coming, many that I knew from my life in the art community, it felt affirming. I felt that they were here to celebrate this bright future.”

The gallery debuted with exhibitions by two Twin Cities artists: Kirsten Tradowsky, whose paintings reanimate vintage snapshots found at estate sales and flea markets, and Charles Lyon, whose vibrant oils capture shifting light and “optimistic color” in the Midwestern landscape.

Exhibitions will rotate every six weeks, focusing on Minnesota and regional artists who specialize in representational work depicting recognizable people, places or things. Lowry Hill Gallery works with more than 40 artists representing a wide range of styles and techniques.

Bubula hopes people will make a habit of visiting and that the gallery feels welcoming to everyone.

“You don’t need to be an art buyer to enjoy visiting a gallery,” Bubula said. “I want people to stop by on their way to Sebastian Joe’s for ice cream, or maybe they’re just walking by out of curiosity. I invite them to come in and experience it. We want this to

be an easy, engaging environment where the neighborhood feels comfortable.”

Bubula hopes that as visitors explore, they will respond to the work and decide to bring art into their lives, whether they are seasoned collectors or first-time buyers.

“Living with art changes the way you live in your space. Once you have it in your home, if you take it away, there’s a void.”

— Andrea Bubula

“If there’s something that resonates with you after you visit, maybe you can’t stop thinking about the little painting in the corner, then listen to that,” she said. “Living with art changes the way you live in your space. Once you have it in your home, if you take it away, there’s a void.”

Bubula also hopes the gallery will contribute to a broader renaissance in Uptown as restaurants and businesses begin opening again to serve nearby neighborhoods. She hopes the gallery will add creativity and beauty to the community.

“To be so well received by the neighbors means a lot to me. I really have felt it,” she said. “Whenever someone stops in, even just out of curiosity, I pinch myself. I can’t believe I get to do this here, and I don’t take this warm reception for granted.”

Lowry Hill Gallery is open Tuesday through Saturday from noon to 5 p.m. During warmer months, the gallery will also host evening events that are free and open to the public.

Brian Lucas is a regular contributor. He lives in Kenwood.

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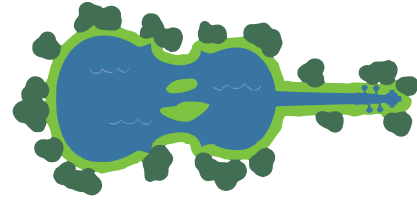
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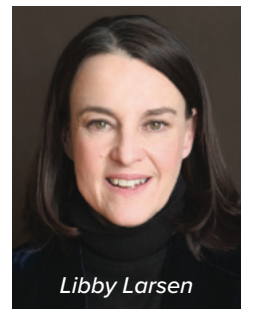


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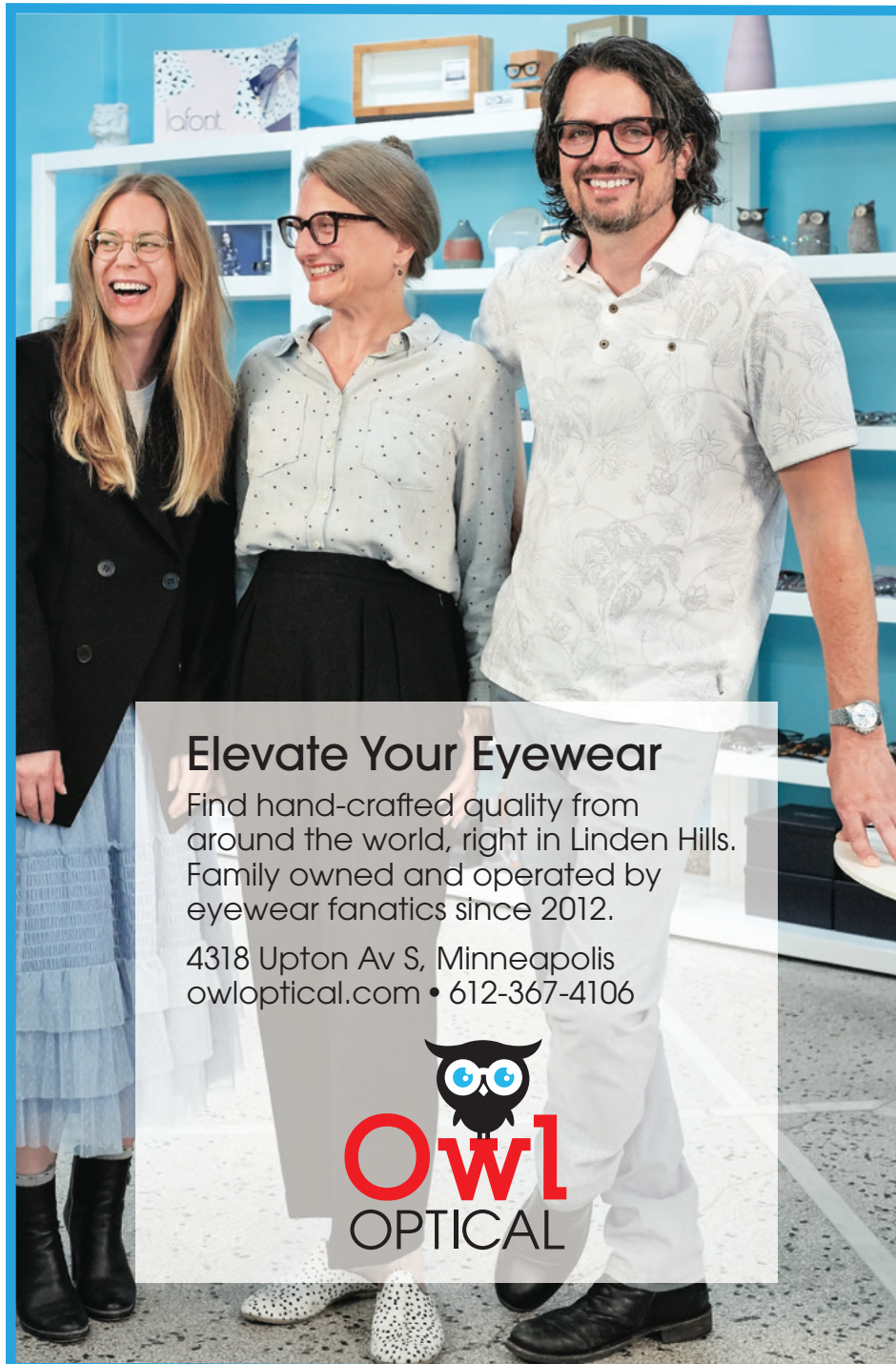
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CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF THE KENWOOD

THE POLITICS OF HOLY WEEK: THEN AND NOW

By Pastor Kyle Hanson



(Image: Courtney Cushing Kiernat)

Palm Sunday was a clash between Roman military power and a public act of resistance — a tension that echoes today in protests against state authority and immigration enforcement.

As a child, I loved Palm Sunday because we got to march around the church, singing “All Glory, Laud and Honor” while waving palm branches. I thought this was a simple hymn of praise.

The theologian Marcus Borg reminds us that Holy Week is not simply a spiritual drama. It is a political confrontation. The story of the first Palm Sunday begins not with one procession into Jerusalem, but two.

From the west gate, Pontius Pilate enters the city on a war horse, surrounded by imperial cavalry and armed soldiers. This is the parade of empire. Rome’s annual show of force during Passover is a reminder of who holds power. It is intimidation dressed up as order.

But from the east gate comes a different procession. Jesus rides not a war horse but a borrowed donkey. No armor, no weapons, just peasants, cloaks and branches. This is not a random detail. It is street theater, a deliberate counter-parade. Jesus is mocking

empire, exposing it and offering an alternative vision of power rooted in humility and justice.

This is why Jesus was killed.

He was not executed for vague religious reasons. He was executed because he was dangerous. His actions in Jerusalem, his entry, his disruption of the Temple, calling out oppression and speaking truth to power, threatened the status quo.

His teachings about God’s kingdom were subversive. They challenged both imperial authority and the local systems that cooperated with it. Rome crucified people who threatened order. Jesus was one of them.

“Holy Week is not simply a spiritual drama — it is a political confrontation.”

Even the cry of the crowd, “Hosanna,” is often misunderstood. It does not mean simple praise. It means “save us.” It is a plea, a protest, a cry from people living under occupation and longing for liberation.

Holy Week, then, is not passive. It is charged with political urgency. It asks: Who is your king? What kind of power do you follow?

That question echoes loudly in Minneapolis this year.

On March 28, the “No Kings” protests, part of a nationwide movement opposing expanding executive power and immigration enforcement, took place across the country, with a flagship action in the Twin Cities.

On Palm Sunday, March 29, 2026, many Christians across the country stood up to the rise of authoritarianism and white Christian nationalism. We will stand against the politics of greed, cruelty and oppression by continuing to show the country that our central commandments, to love God and love our neighbors, are our way forward.

These protests have grown in response to aggressive ICE activity and recent deadly encounters involving federal agents, which have sparked widespread outrage and sustained resistance in Minnesota.

Minneapolis has already seen thousands take to the streets, including clergy, workers and neighbors calling for justice and the removal of ICE from their communities. What is emerging is not just protest, but a deeply rooted moral movement, one grounded in community, faith and solidarity.

Seen through the lens of Holy Week, these actions are not separate from the gospel story. They are a continuation of it. On the last night that Jesus was alive, he met with his disciples and took on a servant role, washing their feet. Before he left them, he gave one final command: to love others.

If Pilate’s procession represents the machinery of state power, militarized enforcement, surveillance and fear, then the gatherings of ordinary people, marching, praying and demanding justice look a lot like Jesus’ procession. Not powerful in the conventional sense, but powerful in truth.

To say that these peaceful Palm Sunday actions are “holy” is not to romanticize them. It is to recognize their alignment with the original story: people crying out for salvation, confronting systems that harm and embodying a different kind of kingdom.

Holy Week has always been about choosing sides:

*Between empire and mercy.
Between domination and dignity.
Between the war horse and the donkey.*

And the question remains as urgent now as it was then:

When the two processions enter the city, which one will we join?

Kyle Hanson is a Lutheran pastor and the executive director of Agate Housing and Services. He lives in Lowry Hill.



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THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT, MINNEAPOLIS STYLE

By Susan Lenfestey



(Images by Big Animal Productions)

A thousand or so of us showed up on a bitter February day to become part of a monarch butterfly, a fleeting act of art, protest and community.

In chaos theory, the “butterfly effect” describes how a small change in one state of a deterministic nonlinear system can result in large differences in a later state.

On the frigid last day of February, more than 1,000 people converged on Powderhorn Park to become part of a large monarch butterfly, or what Christopher Lutter-Gardella had told us would be a butterfly.

Christopher’s vision morphed into reality in less than a month. He and his crew figured out how to arrange people into segments of orange and black wings that, when viewed from above, would form a shimmering monarch, with a pulsating heart revealed at the center.

Along with 999 other ICE-weary people, I bundled up and trudged into the park at noon sharp. I was directed across the ice-pocked ball field to be part of Team 15.

Team leader Terry handed us each a cardboard poster with a glossy black or orange splotch printed on one side. She showed us a chart indicating where we were in the butterfly, upper right wing, and where we should stand, defined by faint lines barely visible on the freeze-dried grass.

Those with orange signs stood in the center, facing one direction. Those with black signs lined up elbow to elbow along the perimeter, facing another. I held a black sign.

And there we stood and waited. And made jokes. And waited. And commiserated with the mother of a weeping 13-year-old who had forgone layers of down for fashionable yoga pants. And waited.

We watched the black-clad letter group practice curling up or stretching out head to toe to spell “love” in eight languages. At least they get to keep moving, we said, until someone pointed out that they were lying on rock-hard goose droppings while we stood together generating communal warmth. So we waited.

Poets recited moving words. Singers led buoyant songs. Then we were given directions we could barely hear. Team leader Terry repeated them, and we passed them along based on what we thought we had heard, a teeth-chattering game of telephone.

We were to disperse, but remember ex-

“Out of well-managed chaos, we had created a butterfly.”

actly where we had been standing and next to whom, so that when we returned we would be in the same spot. On cue from the stage, which we could not see, we would raise our signs and shimmer them. On another cue, those in the center, the body of the butterfly, would flip their signs to red and become the pulsating heart. Got it? Well, sort of.

With drones circling overhead, we dispersed, then returned to our places. Those of us in the wings shimmered on cue. After a few minutes, those in the center double-thumped on cue. After a few more minutes of shimmering and pulsing, a cheer rose and we heard Christopher shout that we had done it. Out of well-managed chaos, we had created a butterfly.

We went to Powderhorn Park to be a part of what Christopher Lutter-Gardella called “a collective act of beauty and creativity.” I don’t think any of us imagined how beautiful that image would be, or how much we would rely on trust to make it happen — trust of the vision, the process and each other. Maybe holding up a sign and shimmering, whether on the tip of a butterfly’s wing or a suburban street corner can build trust and strengthen a democracy that feels increasingly fragile. Maybe it can give us hope.

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



NORTH POLARS' JOHAN ALCANTARA LUND OF EAST ISLES WINS STATE SILVER

By Steve Kotvis



Johan celebrates a semifinal win that secured his spot in the championship match. (Images by Steve Kotvis)

North Polars' Johan Alcantara Lund of East Isles Wins State Silver.

Wrestler Johan Alcantara Lund, an East Isles resident and a senior at Minneapolis North, earned silver at 152 pounds in Class AA at the 2026 Minnesota State High School League state tournament.

He finished the season with a 44-2 record, marking his third trip to state and his

“I’m proud of how far I’ve come.”

second consecutive year on the podium for the Polars. The No. 2-ranked Johan won a dramatic 5-3 overtime semifinal to reach the finals.

“I’m proud of how far I’ve come,” said Johan, or “Yogi,” as he’s known by teammates and fans, noting he has only been wrestling since eighth grade.

Most wrestlers at this level have been competing for many more years. Since first stepping onto the mat, after discovering the sport through judo during the 2020 Olympics, he has also become a three-time AAU Minnesota state judo champion.

He credits his mom and his coaches, and says he was inspired by a North High graduate who qualified for state as a senior when Johan was in eighth grade. “I thought, well, if he can do it, so can I.” And he did.

Often up by 5 a.m. for an early workout, followed by classes, practice and weightlifting, Johan understands the effort required for success. He also emphasizes the importance of his teammates, even on a smaller team, saying he would have had zero chance of success without them.

“Johan will not be outworked,” said Minneapolis North Principal Mauri Friestleben. “He will be the first to arrive in the gym and the last to leave. He will find every mind, body and soul guru he can to learn from them. He will watch, listen and study and not stop until he masters whatever skill he’s got his eyes on. He is truly an entity all his own, and I am so proud to see him as the current face of North High School.”

Johan attended Kenwood Elementary School and Anthony Middle School. Asked what it was like to be among the first students to attend North when attendance lines changed, he said he was nervous.

Most of his friends were going to other schools, and he described himself as a somewhat shy kid. But he quickly made new friends and says he likely would never have become a wrestler if he hadn’t gone to North.

For that, he says, he has the school to thank.

Johan has found success both on and off the mat. Academically, he has completed every AP class available at North and is now considering college options in Minnesota and beyond, with an interest in political science.

Wherever he chooses to go, continuing his wrestling career will be a major factor in his decision.

Steve Kotvis is a professional sports photographer and community advocate with a passion for nature. He lives in Bryn Mawr.



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RAYMOND LUCZAK

By David Piper



(Image by unknown)

A deaf Minneapolis writer reflects on a life shaped by language, identity and art — and how visual storytelling continues to inspire his work.

Raymond Luczak is a deaf, gay local author and poet. Raised in Ironwood, Michigan, he comes from a hearing family of nine children.

After graduating from Houghton High School, he earned a B.A. in English from Gallaudet University, the world's only university specifically designed for deaf students, where he learned American Sign Language.

After Gallaudet, he relocated to New York City, where he lived for the next 17 years. He moved to Minneapolis in 2005, where he has lived ever since.

Since 1993, Luczak has had more than 40 books published, offering a mix of fiction, poetry and non-fiction.

His most recent book is “Named,” a chapbook of 14 stories inspired by his favorite paintings at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts.

Were you mainstreamed as a deaf child, and how did that impact your childhood?

I became deaf at the age of nine months due to a bout of double pneumonia and fever, but my hearing loss wasn't detected until I was 2½ years old. Because there wasn't a program for deaf children in Ironwood, I lived with three different foster families over a total of nine years in Houghton, a two-hour ride away, where there was a program for deaf kids. While there, I was taught to speak; I wasn't allowed to learn sign language. I spent many lonely years completely mainstreamed; my hearing classmates never included me in their activities.

How was coming out for you, and how has it impacted your work?

I knew I was gay all my life, but I didn't know it had a name. All I knew — somehow — was that it wasn't acceptable for two men to kiss each other.

My coming out happened gradually. I first came out to my youngest sister when I was 17.

She took it well, considering how much misinformation had surrounded the LGBTQ community at the time. Then, four weeks after I arrived for college in Washington, D.C., I came out to everyone on cam-

pus one momentous night.

I had just visited Lambda Rising, my first gay bookstore, and bought seven books. The importance of those books cannot be overstated; they made me feel a lot less alone and gave me the confidence I badly needed to be true to myself.

Then I came out to my parents after my first semester away. They weren't happy. But I felt I had no choice. I knew that I was going to be a writer — although I had no idea how that would happen — and that I wasn't going to hide.

All my siblings eventually learned one way or another about me. Because I had never felt included in my own family gatherings, I wasn't too upset by their reactions. I've never regretted coming out.

What piqued your interest in visual art?

Even though the Upper Peninsula didn't have an art museum, I was very much enamored with visual arts.

I sought it whenever I could, which meant checking out the covers of the latest record album releases every week.

Later, at Gallaudet, I took a one-year course in art history. I couldn't understand why we were supposed to learn this or that term related to art evolving through the centuries.

It wasn't until I moved to New York that it gradually dawned on me that I had to look at art, not just the visual stimuli splattered across CD covers, books and graffiti spray-painted everywhere.

One could say that I was a late bloomer with my art history appreciation. When I moved to Minneapolis, I learned about the Minneapolis Institute of Arts.

As luck would have it, I showed up on the day they opened the new Target Wing to the public for the first time. I instantly fell in love with the place; the fact that it offers free admission sweetened the deal.

I visit Mia at least three times a year. When I'm there, I often turn off my hearing aids. My favorite paintings always demand my full attention.

What drew you to ekphrasis, the process of responding to visual art with your own art?

When I create something out of thin air, I try not to worry about its outcome. I may have some ideas at the outset, but I've learned not to lock myself into such expectations.

In terms of ekphrasis, I find it important not to overthink; I simply react.

Often, a painting inspires a strong opening sentence that forces me to explain it.

Take the opener for “Harry,” inspired by Modigliani's “Little Servant Girl”: “She strides a streak of black into the reading room where I'm trying to compose a letter to my nineteenth fiancée.”

Whoa — this guy has had 19 fiancées? Just who is he? And who's she in black? And why are they together in the reading room?

All those questions are front-loaded in that one sentence alone. Answering them made it easy to write its first draft. I rewrote, tightening it to fit on a single page.

I enjoy the challenge of condens-

ing a story. Much like when I compose poems, the process forces me to evaluate the weight and force of each word.

The stories in “Named” are not autobiographical, which made them fun to write. It meant imagining more fully the lives of my characters not always revealed in the paintings.

I love discovering things I didn't know about my characters, and I hope my readers do, too.

You can learn more about Raymond at raymondluczak.com.

David Piper is a retired judge and regular contributor. He lives in Kenwood.



(Image: Minneapolis Institute of Arts)

→ AN INTERPRETATION OF AMEDEO MODIGLIANI'S “LITTLE SERVANT GIRL”

by Raymond Luczak

She strides a streak of black into the reading room where I'm trying to compose a letter to my nineteenth fiancée. She plops down with a loud sigh on a chair opposite me. Her brown hair is thick and scraggly. Her eyes have the color of water. Sweating with a perpetual blush, she clasps her hands softly as if she is waiting for someone to arrive and take her away from all this. Or is she simply expecting? She has the wide hips for the task.

I've never seen her before, so I pay her no mind. Besides, I need to send my fiancée in Chicago an urgent letter. While here on “a business trip” in Minneapolis, I've run very low on funds, but I've just enough—three pennies—for a stamp. At least that's the story I tell everyone.

In the library on Hennepin Avenue, I was fortunate to nab a small writing desk within spitting distance of the fireplace cackling quietly. It's been more than two days since I tasted a drop of alcohol. I feel parched, but the library is new enough to offer a small water fountain, still a novel treat, downstairs.

I take stock of my list. I must frame each of my arguments succinctly enough that my fiancée would feel compelled to send cash my way. Thirty dollars should cover everything for the next two weeks. She wouldn't want her father to know, which sweetens the deal. Fathers hate me.

My stomach rumbles like each train lurching to take off for points far beyond the station a few blocks away. I try not to think about the last time I ate: a small plate of soggy scrambled eggs and a half-eaten slice of toast. I had swiped it from behind the diner where the cook felt sorry for me when a customer of hers returned the plate and demanded better scrambled eggs. Competing with the hoboes and drifters on Washington Avenue is tough, but I still have my wiles.

I grew up as an orphan, bouncing from one lousy home to another, until I was old enough to leave. By then I had learned a great deal about fleecing naïve women. I've never married, but I've been a future husband many times over. I just sniff out their banking accounts first before I propose marriage and quietly buy my next train ticket for elsewhere. I change names as often as I change socks. Today I'm Harry Smith; tomorrow I'll be Ed Jones.

But that woman sitting opposite me is no fool. She pretends to be a sad-eyed doll, but I've seen her kind before. She expects me to fall for her sad tale of abandonment and filch my few dollars out of my pocket while I'm not looking. I'm saving them for my next train ticket.

I snort at her obvious ploy and start writing. She storms off. Finding her next victim won't take her long.

SAKE, RAMEN AND FANTASY SUMO AT MOTO-I

By Jason Suss



(Images: Jason Suss)

House-brewed sake, rich ramen and the chance to win money watching sumo. What more could a Minneapolis night need?

Last month we talked about the 2026 Iron Bartender champions from Nico's Tacos. This month it is the runner-up. It was a very tight competition, and Moto-i came in a close second, which is still quite an accomplishment. It should

"It's Moto-EEE, not Moto-EYE."

not be much of a surprise that, along with their food, the beverage program is solid. More on why in a bit.

First things first. It is Moto-EEE, not Moto-EYE. The letter "i" in Japanese has the sound of the English letter "e." Now on to the details.

Moto-i sits on the northwest corner of the Lyn-Lake intersection and has been a neighborhood staple since opening in 2008. Eighteen years is a long run for a restaurant, which means that they are doing something right. Actually, several things.

Probably the most notable is that they brew their own sake. In fact, Moto-i is considered the first sake brewery in North America. The sake is brewed on site, and there is even a special clean room visible from the second level where they grow koji mold. That mold is used in the fermentation process that produces sake.

Sake is rice wine, and the alcohol content typically hovers around 15% to 20%. It can be light and fruity or rich and savory. It can be served cold, at room temperature, or warm. The

world of sake can be just as intricate as that of wine or beer.

Since they brew their own sake, the team clearly knows a thing or two about drinks. The cocktail menu is unique because it takes classic drinks and merges them with house-made sake. The sake appears alongside Japanese whisky, clove and chrysanthemum in their version of an Old Fashioned, with green tea and ginger in a mule-style cocktail, and with aquavit, miso, togarashi and nori in their house Bloody.

As you would expect with Japanese-style drinks, presentation matters. Fancy glassware, thoughtful garnishes and flavored ice cubes are all part of the experience. Whether it is a sake

"It's like fantasy football, but for sumo wrestling."

flight, cocktails or just a beer, you will not be disappointed.

The space itself is cool. The first floor has the typical bar-and-table setup. The second floor offers a smaller bar with lounge-style seating that works well for private events. The rooftop patio is excellent during the two weeks of nice weather we get each year.

The food is Japanese with a focus on ramen. Classic pork and chicken varieties are available along with a rich mushroom broth option. Despite being Japanese cuisine, there are plenty of vegan and gluten-free options for that one friend we all have.

There are also several excellent small plates including Japanese fried chicken, lettuce wraps,

rangoons and more. Be sure to try at least one of the buns.

Like any good Uptown-adjacent spot, Moto-i also has a solid happy hour and serves brunch on weekends.

Finally, one of the most unique things they offer is a Fantasy Sumo league. It works like fantasy football but for sumo wrestling. You buy in, fill out a bracket and watch the matches televised at Moto-i. More than 800 people participate, which makes the prize money fairly substantial.

So pull up a seat, sip some sake, slurp some ramen and watch a couple of 300-pound diapered wrestlers try to win you some money.

Sounds like a perfect night to me.

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 @AProper-Pour.

→ MOTO-I at a glance

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Fun Fact:
Opened in 2008, Moto-i is widely considered the first sake brewery in North America.



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THE NEIGHBOR TAX

A monthly column by Dorothy Richmond



(Image: Courtney Cushing Kiernat)

For my April column, I set out to complain about taxes and instead discovered a better one: the “neighbor tax.”

Dear Neighbor,

It’s April, and I was planning to write a fun, breezy column on the dreaded, annual task of filing taxes, but after one paragraph the whole thing felt flat and off: We’re not living in a fun and breezy time.

Yes, we all have to pay taxes and it’s a drag (especially the preparation), but we also like smooth roads and safe bridges and good public schools. I have no problem with that. I hate that a portion of my income was (thank God, no longer) for funding Kristi Noem’s luxury jets or picking up the tab for Kash Patel’s date nights in Nashville, but I have no say in those matters beyond voting against such conspicuous and unnecessary consumption on my dime.

After I began that now-abandoned column I went to Mass. At last, I have found a church that

feels right for me. I’d heard great things from friends about Ascension Church in North Minneapolis, but it was my daughter Daisy who got me there. She also goes to church more often than I. Here, the Mass is half in English, half in Spanish. Daisy, who also speaks Spanish, works in a law firm that specializes in immigration law; she keeps a box of Kleenex on her desk to help clients get through the sad and shocking stories they tell her each day.

The theologian Brian D. McLaren writes, “When we argue about religion and theology, we’re actually arguing about the kind of world we want to live in.” Ascension embodies the kind of world I want to live in. It’s humble, simple, and filled with people who actually want to be there — not for show, under duress, or getting an obligation over with. Being there is to feel that peace and love. Ascension is the first time in my life I’ve actually liked and looked forward to going to church.

Father Dale Korogi, who used to serve at the Basilica, now is pastor of Ascension, a gentle, modest parishioner-centered (many of them immigrants) world of loving kindness. He also learned to speak Spanish well into middle age. And, he has a terrific sense of humor! In English or Spanish, it’s impossible to not feel his goodness.

In front of Daisy and me sat a young family — Mom, Dad, and two little kids — clearly of modest means. As the collection basket came around, the mother handed her contribution to the little girl (as my mother would hand me a dollar to toss into the basket). Hers was a twenty-dollar bill! I reached for my wallet and cleaned it out — take it all, I thought, and wondered if anyone had ever thrown in a credit card. Thinking of my discarded column on taxes, it hit me that I’d just paid what I suddenly dubbed a “neighbor tax,” and paying it gave me a sense of joy.

Ascension is all about paying the neighbor tax. Somehow it raises and delivers \$15,000 worth of goods and services each week to its parishioners, many of whom have been pounded by ICE. After Mass, curated bags of groceries are there for the taking; for those afraid to leave home, the food is brought to them. Ascension offers legal consultation and rent assistance.

My friend and fellow Ascension parishioner Lisa and I are hosting a fundraiser for Ascension on April 30 from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. at my house. We’ll have food from an immigrant-owned restaurant and assorted treats. Let me know if you’d like to join us (drichmo2@comcast.net).

While ICE may have diminished its staff in Minneapolis, they leave lasting wounds and many more are sure to follow.

We’re hoping to raise \$15,000, equating to a week’s worth of Ascension’s munificence. An anonymous donor has offered to match all donations.

Taxes were conceived so that we can all live together. That “we” — that collectivity — so precious to democracy, is under attack today. I believe that a neighbor tax (love thy neighbor as thyself) can bring us back to the original purpose of taxes.

Everyone gets to choose this tax, the amount, the form it takes. It might be financial, it might be generous acts of kindness, e.g., standing up for neighbors who’ve been treated unfairly. It might be prayer. Whatever it is, it’s our choice and our responsibility.

And, really, we’re all neighbors.

— Dorothy

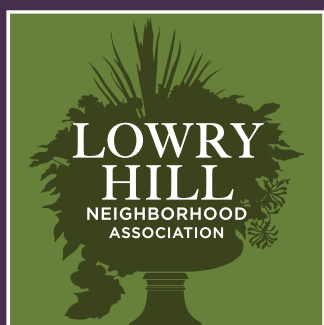
Dorothy Richmond is founder of the Dear Neighbor column and a longtime resident of Cedar-Isles-Dean.

Lowry Hill Update

It's been heartening seeing the community respond to this moment. Rent relief remains a priority—many residents still can't leave their homes. Whether you need resources or are looking for ways to help, visit lowryhillneighborhood.org/ice.

Uptown Farmers Market is seeking vendors for its 2026 season! Those interested in vending or volunteering this summer can apply for both at uptownmarket.org.

Did you know storm drain street trash pollutes lakes and rivers? Debris breaks down in the elements, then drains into our waters. But adopting a drain is free, and takes only a few occasional minutes to maintain: mn.adopt-a-drain.org



Resources: ICE in Our City

www.lowryhillneighborhood.org/ice

Check out a list of actions, trainings, fundraisers and relief options. Every single bit helps, and ongoing support is still needed as neighbors shelter in place.

Lowry Hill Board Meetings

Apr. 7 • May 5 1st Tues. 6:30 – 8 PM

Kenwood Community Center: 2101 W Franklin Ave

Join us for neighborhood updates! To join the agenda, please email lhna@lowryhillneighborhood.org.

Lowry Hill Service Saturdays

Apr. 18 • May 16 3rd Sat. 10 – 11:30 AM

Start + end at Sebastian Joe's: 1007 W Franklin Ave

Get outside, meet neighbors, pick up litter, and build community. In April we'll walk down to the Lake to join neighboring groups for the Earth Day Cleanup!

Garden Tool Swap

May 2 Sat. 1 – 4 PM

Kenwood Community Center: 2101 W Franklin Ave

Gather unused yard tools, planters, garden decor, books, seeds, and more, and share them with neighbors.

Lowry Hill Annual Meeting

May 19 Tues. 5 PM social, 6 PM meeting

First Unitarian Society: 900 Mount Curve Ave

Hear from your elected officials, get neighborhood updates from the past year, and run for our Board!

lowryhillneighborhood.org

for full details, newsletter sign-up and more

MARCH 2026: BLIZZARD BLISS

Images by Courtney Cushing Kiernat



(Image: Ellen van Iwaarden)

