

\$1

ThreeSixty

Minnesota Teens Report Stories & Issues That Matter



**CHANGEMAKERS
AND ACTIVISTS
YOU NEED TO KNOW**



Food scene's secret ingredient? Culture.

Students star as Wolves scribes.

Voices: Let's revisit voting-age laws.



Special-use photos: Zekriah Chaudhry • Dymanh Chhoun • Aaliyah Demry • Ariana Feygin • John Gleason • Casey Gordon • Danae Lawson • Minnesota Timberwolves • Christine Nguyen • Yia Vang • University of St. Thomas • Anna Wienke

ThreeSixty Journalism

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Email ThreeSixty@StThomas.edu with comments, letters and questions about participating in ThreeSixty Journalism.

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Donations from individuals like you provide a significant amount of ThreeSixty's operating budget. To learn more, visit threesixty.stthomas.edu.

ON THE COVER

Illustrations by ThreeSixty student Jacqueline Martinez



THREESIXTY JOURNALISM

ThreeSixty students at fall News Team point at you, reader! ThreeSixty's stories are by teens, for teens. We offer school-year and summer programs. Learn more at threesixty.stthomas.edu.

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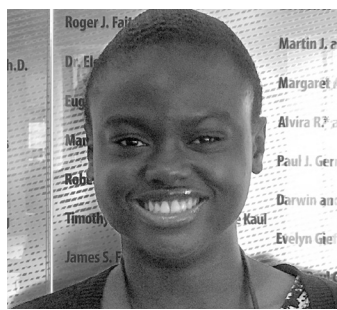
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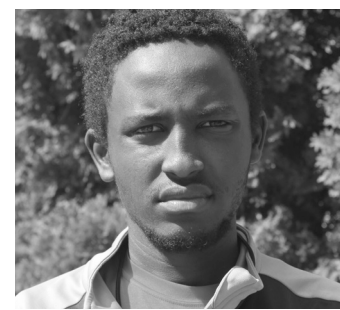
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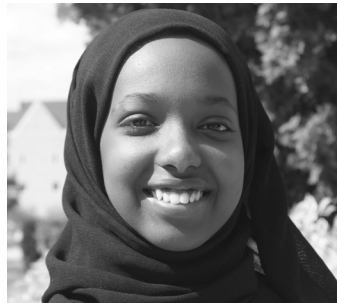
Kalid Ali
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Aaliyah Demry
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Josie Morss
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Evan Odegard
Nova Classical Academy



Ayo Olagbaju
Patrick Henry High School



Sophia Schach
Minnehaha Academy



Sam Stensgaard
Roseville Area High School



Ahlani Thomas-Ceron
Cristo Rey Jesuit High School



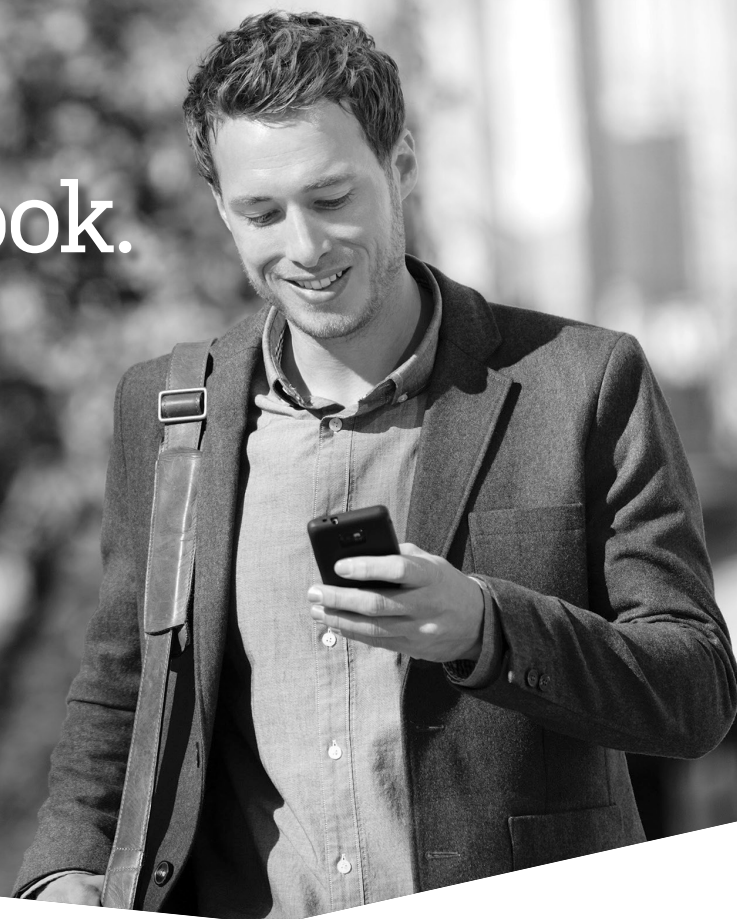
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Great River School



David Xu
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ThreeSixty Journalism
College of Arts and Sciences





THREESIXTY JOURNALISM/CHRISTINE NGUYEN

ThreeSixty reporters Austin Kuo and Jacqueline Martinez explore the university's medicinal garden where research and education happen.



THREESIXTY JOURNALISM/DYMANH CHHOUN

ThreeSixty reporter Ayo Olagbaju is supported by volunteer writing coach alumna Aaron Young. They interview program alumna and local trailblazer Anika Bowie.

Editor's Note



Theresa Malloy
Program Manager

THE SCHOOL YEAR has flown by at ThreeSixty Journalism, and I have had the privilege of watching our students grow into more confident storytellers through News Team sessions, Learning Labs and special reporting opportunities. ThreeSixty students continue to refine and improve their skills. Whether it's backstage at the Ordway Performing Arts Center in St. Paul or interviewing players in the Timberwolves locker room, ThreeSixty students and alumni continue to impress with their professionalism. And, students continue to thrive thanks to our many partners and

volunteers who support them.

In this issue, you will find food and culture stories from Fall News Team, which gave students the opportunity to write more creatively with rich descriptions. Their stories do not disappoint. From a day in the life of a chef (page 23), to Josiah Lemm's hilarious personal reflection on why teen boys are always hungry (page 16), you will learn something new.

You will also see stories from Winter News Team. With the theme of "trailblazers," reporters interviewed influential voices in the Twin Cities who are advocating for social justice reform and change. As we search for role models or heroes, the group we've assembled are ones you want to follow. Writing a profile piece requires good research and trust. Our students were moved by the people they interviewed, and the stories reflect this.

Finally, peppered throughout the magazine are great student voices. Fran Aravena (page 15) challenges why people under 18

are not allowed to vote with the 2020 election looming. Sam Stensgaard takes us into the locker room at the Timberwolves game the day after Kobe Bryant died (page 10), where he expertly and respectfully talked to players who were grieving. David Xu finds out why KFC is so different China - in fact, it's a place many people take a date for Valentine's Day or to celebrate Christmas (page 28). We enter the cockpit with pilot-in-training Danae Lawson (page 17), and Aaliyah Demry reflects on what it means for black women to wear natural hair (page 16).

As we look ahead to summer, I can't wait to meet the next batch of young reporters and help them find their voices. We have an exciting set of camps ahead. Keep up with what we're doing by following ThreeSixty on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn, where we showcase our work.

Enjoy the magazine and be sure to share with others!



THREESIXTY JOURNALISM

ThreeSixty student Safiya Mohamed takes a selfie with volunteer editor Jo Herrera at fall News Team.



THREESIXTY JOURNALISM/DYMANH CHHOUN

ThreeSixty reporter Tristan Xiong interviews Cow Tipping Press founder Bryan Boyce for the winter News Team session about trailblazers.



THREESIXTY JOURNALISM

Emily Rodriguez, Kennedy Rance and Ayo Olagbaju collaborate at a ThreeSixty Learning Lab taught by stop-motion animator John Akre. Their group of five students created a short film called, "All Good Things Come to an End."



THREESIXTY JOURNALISM

ThreeSixty Alumnae Kelly Ordoñez-Saybe and Erianna Jiles visit local author Kao Kalia Yang at the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts in St. Paul.



Left to right: Samantha HoangLong, Kai Sanchez, Danielle Wong, Zekriah Chaudhry

ThreeSixty Scholar Updates

EACH YEAR, HIGH school students who are graduates of ThreeSixty programming compete for the ThreeSixty Scholarship — a full-tuition, four-year scholarship to study emerging media at the University of St. Thomas. Currently, there are four ThreeSixty Scholars attending St. Thomas.

Danielle Wong

2016 ThreeSixty Scholar

Wong is wrapping up her studies as a senior studying journalism with a minor in justice and peace studies. This year, Wong was nominated by St. Thomas students, faculty and staff as a finalist for the prestigious Tommie Award, an honor granted to a senior who best represents the ideals of St. Thomas Aquinas through scholarship, leadership and campus involvement. This summer, Wong will be interning as a photographer at the Star Tribune.

Samantha HoangLong

2017 ThreeSixty Scholar

This fall semester, HoangLong kicked off her junior year as news director of the student news organization TommieMedia; in the spring, she makes the move to studio director of TommieMedia's broadcast program. HoangLong has also been interning for PBS NewsHour's Under-Told Stories Project and traveled to India in November to report on various water issues. In January, she studied multicultural communications in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Zekriah Chaudhry

2018 ThreeSixty Scholar

Chaudhry kicked off his sophomore year studying abroad in Rome. Over the course of four months, he traveled across Italy and jetted off to additional adventures in Athens, Paris and Copenhagen. Meanwhile, Chaudhry also studied classes in philosophy, English, art history and Italian. Chaudhry returned to St. Thomas in the spring and is interning at the Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal.

Kai Sanchez

2019 Scholar

In her first year at St. Thomas, Sanchez has applied herself to both her academics and the many extracurricular opportunities campus has to offer. Currently, she hosts a radio show through KUST called "Kai-POP," which explores the music of K-pop and the culture around it. Sanchez is hoping to add another show in the spring to share the music of Chicax/Latinx culture.



ThreeSixty Scholar Zekriah Chaudhry spent fall 2019 studying abroad in Rome.

Pioneer Press Awards Alumna Scholarship

THREESIXTY JOURNALISM ALUMNA Erianna Jiles has been selected as the 2019 recipient of the \$2,000 Pioneer Press/MN Newspaper & Communications Guild Diversity Scholarship.

Jiles is a junior at Metro State University studying creative writing. She started with ThreeSixty during summer 2015, participating in print and visual media opportunities with the program.

Beyond ThreeSixty, Jiles' experiences include being a college contributor at The Current, interning for American Public Media Group's "Terrible, Thanks for Asking" podcast, freelancing for KFAI, and hosting shows on KMOJ and KRSM

radio stations. In June 2018, she earned first place at the Society of Professional Journalists Page One Awards for her radio feature on "The Queen of Dark."

"I have discovered that I want to be a multimedia journalist," Jiles said. "I've found that the story stays the same, but it's all about how you tell it. Finding the love to play with different mediums to tell a story is extremely blissful for me."

Jiles began her college career at St. Paul College, spent a year at North Dakota State University, then started at Metro State for the fall 2019 semester

"I didn't start at a prestigious four-year college, and now being at

Metropolitan State it can sometimes feel like I have fallen below the radar," Jiles said. "Being recognized for this scholarship continues to keep the spark lit within me. (People) see the potential in me, the growth and the ideas."

Jiles is the second ThreeSixty alumni to win the Pioneer Press/MN Newspaper & Communications Guild Diversity Scholarship. Kelly Saybe, a junior at St. Thomas, received the award in 2018. The joint Pioneer Press/MN Newspaper & Communications Guild Scholarship was initially proposed by Pioneer Press management with the goal of creating a pathway for a more diverse workforce at the newspaper.



From left: Pioneer Press Editor and Vice President Mike Burbach, ThreeSixty Executive Director Chad Caruthers, scholarship winner Erianna Jiles and Pioneer Press reporter Fred Melo in the Pioneer Press newsroom November 2019.

Edwidge Danticat: 'We Have Rights'

ThreeSixty Journalism reporter Ayomide Adesanya sat down for an exclusive interview with award-winning author and 2009 MacArthur Fellow Edwidge Danticat.

EDWIDGE DANTICAT WAS BORN in Haiti and moved to the United States to live with her parents when she was 12 years old. She's authored essays, novels and nonfiction memoirs about Haiti. Danticat started her writing career as a high-schooler writing for a publication similar to ThreeSixty Magazine called "New Youth Connections" in New York. She says she writes her stories for her 15-year-old self.

Danticat visited the University of St. Thomas on Nov. 25, 2019, for the College of Arts and Sciences English Department's Common Context series. In an exclusive interview, ThreeSixty Journalism reporter Ayomide Adesanya spoke with Danticat in the Luann Dummer Center for Women at St. Thomas. The following is a transcript of their conversation, which has been edited for brevity.

Ayomide Adesanya: You came here when you were 12 years old. I came here when I was 14 in 2016. It's been so hard (to) move from Nigeria, a totally different culture, to the United States. How did you navigate between your Haitian culture and the American culture?

Edwidge Danticat: My parents folded them both because I have two brothers who were born in the U.S., and then two of us were born in Haiti. My mom always said to my younger brothers, (who were) U.S.-born, to speak to us in English so we can improve our English. We (were) supposed to speak to them so they can improve their Creole. It turned out well. All of us speak English and Creole.

Also, like all immigrant families, there were certain things that were intimidating or frightening to my parents about American culture. Certainly, all the freedom kids have and what they saw sometimes as power.... That power imbalance we had, for example, I would go to the



Ayomide Adesanya
Harding High School

doctor with my parents, and then I would translate for them in sensitive moments. You were still a child, but you had the power of language

because you had to be kind of (an) interpreter for them.

So those types of adjustments, certainly language and getting used to the United States, in the sense of going to school and in a new place, all that, and also putting our families back together because I was separated from my parents for eight years. They were here, and I was in Haiti. I was 12, so that was probably the biggest adjustment, getting reintroduced to my family unit.

AA: I can also relate to that because my mom is also (limited) in English. I am asked to be the person who interprets. ... What do you think it's been like being an immigrant in America right now, especially with President Donald Trump?

ED: I think it's very difficult. Where I live in Miami, which is a majority immigrant city, there are a lot of people who are newer immigrants and people who are undocumented, who are DACA, which is Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, and are TPS, temporary protected status. There are a lot of people

in the city where I live who are in limbo.

Sometimes I visit with doctors who come from (elsewhere)... They realize that a lot of people won't bring their kids unless they're really sick because they're afraid immigration will be at free clinics. ... A lot of families are mixed status families: the U.S.-born children, the parents might be undocumented. There are all these tensions of the families that are separated at the border, but there's these families that feel like they can potentially be separated.

It's a very tense time if you're an immigrant. ... And even people with green cards, even people who are naturalized citizens feel some nervousness because you feel like the ground has really shifted under your feet.

AA: What advice would you give as an immigrant in America right now, trying to juggle between those types

of tensions? What would you say to inspire students to keep going?

ED: One of the things I know is the ACLU, the American Civil Liberties Union, did a ("We Have Rights") series of videos in nine languages. They're online, and they have all kinds of advice in terms of if you're stopped on the street by immigration, if they knock on your doors. There's all kinds of scenarios. It has really some good, real concrete advice with things about what people can physically do, like in terms of the steps that you should take.

The other thing is to stay informed. We have people who live in churches right now in some cities because they're afraid that immigration will come for them. My mom, actually even before I came to the U.S., was taken in the immigration raid when she was pregnant with one of my brothers, so it's **DANTICAT continued on page 8**

"It's a very tense time if you're an immigrant."

—Edwidge Danticat



ThreeSixty student Ayomide Adesanya shares a laugh with author Edwidge Danticat during their interview.

DANTICAT from page 7
something that's not new. Certainly, it's perhaps more widespread these days. People now can be taken off buses. ...

Inform yourselves. Like those videos say, we have rights. Even if you're an immigrant, even if you're undocumented, you have certain rights, and it's important to know what they are and to inform yourself to know what to do.

AA: Now to go into your story; I have read a lot about your books, and I just got one. I'm really excited to read it because I love reading. What inspires you to write a new story? Where do you find them?

ED: I just love stories. From the time there was a little girl, I was told stories. Is there ... a strong oral tradition in Nigeria?

AA: I grew up with my mom reading stories to me, but when I came to the United States, it just became

something I personally enjoyed. I don't know how I found that love for reading. It started when I saw Wattpad. I had someone recommend it to me, and then I started reading. I just got hooked. Since then I (discovered) journalism, and I just started sharing my stories out loud. I don't know exactly where it came from – I didn't like reading in Nigeria. It was just something that clicked here.

ED: I love that it was Wattpad. My niece does a lot of work (for Wattpad) ... she won't tell me her code so I can read them, but she writes on Wattpad. I think part of that is the appeal.

I started doing journalism, too, when I was in high school for (a) publication called "New Youth Connections." But I just love hearing stories, and then I transitioned to just loving reading. I think reading was also a way for me to escape the world and go into words. So, I started reading a lot, and then

"I think reading was also a way for me to escape the world and go into words."

—Edwidge Danticat

from reading developed that feeling when I read something that I loved, I thought, "I want to do that." And that's how I started writing.

AA: Personally, my mom really wants me to study science or medicine, and I really want to go for something journalism-related. There's a clash. As an African immigrant, she expects better opportunities for me. It's like I have to decide between what I want for my life and what they want for me. How did your parents react to your choice to write stories?

ED: My parents wanted me to be a doctor, too. The high school that I went to was called Clara

Barton High School for the Health Professions. I was in a program where you were on a fast track to get a quick medical degree. ... We were on that track, but I just ... didn't feel like it was for me.

But now seeing inside as a parent, I understand the impulse to want your child to do well. You want them to succeed, and you think you know what it is like. You want for them to have less risky paths.

One thing I would say is to also think about as you go into journalism the hybridity of it. My friend is the Caribbean correspondent at the Miami Herald. She makes videos, she writes the stories, she sometimes has to produce a video for the website. She has to do the Twitter.

It's also cool with the layers that the profession is also growing to expose yourself to all the other sides of it.

AA: How did you stick up for yourself when you started out as a writer to your parents?

ED: I don't think I ever stood up for myself. I just kind of did it. Eventually ... they realized, "Oh, if she's pushing on that particular point then it's really important to her." Eventually they relented, but we never had a clash about it. ... They (are) going to be just proud of you, no matter what.

AA: What advice do you want to leave students with?

ED: I think people don't often talk about discipline in writing. ... But for writing, people expect (it) to just come from the gods and pour out of you. ... Do your legwork, do your research. And then give it the best you've got.

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Students Honored for Camp Stories

TWO THREESIXTY JOURNALISM students were honored for their stories produced at ThreeSixty's News Reporter Academy camp, which is a two-week program in the summer.

MNA BETTER NEWSPAPER CONTEST

Isabel Saavedra-Weis earned second place in the Minnesota Newspaper Association Better Newspaper Contest in the business story category.

Saavedra-Weis wrote her story

about the Sioux Chef, titled "Reclaiming Culture Feeds into a Healthy Life" at News Reporter Academy in summer 2018 while she was a senior at St. Paul Academy and Summit School. ThreeSixty high school students compete at the college level in the Better Newspaper Contest.

The judge commented, "Excellent profile of a business person who is making a difference in the community."

Saavedra-Weis is studying at

Macalester College and is a staff writer for The Mac Weekly. She will intern at the Pioneer Press this summer.

DOW JONES NEWS FUND SCHOLARSHIP

Ayo Olagbaju (Patrick Henry High School) earned the Dow Jones News Fund Award of Excellence for her 2019 News Reporter Academy story, "Swimmers Synchronize Social Justice," about local synchronized swim team, The Subversive



Isabel Saavedra-Weis



Ayo Olagbaju

Sirens.

Along with the national award, Olagbaju will receive a \$1,000 scholarship to study journalism at the college level, which she plans to do in the fall.

Olagbaju wrote in her application essay, "Once I was introduced to

the world of journalism, I realized that it was something I wanted to be part of. It incorporated a lot of the things I loved, including writing and speaking."

Olagbaju was one of six students nationally who earned DJNF scholarship. The Dow Jones News Fund granted ThreeSixty funding for News Reporter Academy.

Both stories were produced in partnership with the Center for Prevention at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota. Stories written in News Reporter Academy are also published in the Pioneer Press and Star Tribune.

Backstage with Kao Kalia Yang

Hmong American writer using her voice to share untold stories

HONG AMERICAN WRITER Kao Kalia Yang never doubts the power of a blank page. The professional writer, born in Ban Vinai Refugee Camp in Thailand, has dedicated her experiences as a teacher, mother, wife, big sister and daughter to her writing.

Yang spoke at the ThreeSixty 2019 Great Media Get-Together at the University of St. Thomas College of Arts and Sciences in October. She joined me and two other alumni, Erianna Jiles and Erick Castellanos, on a panel. She talked about the power of using your voice.

Prior to the fundraiser, I was sitting backstage at the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts in St. Paul on Sunday, Sept. 22. I was nervous and anxious because people mentioned that Yang has such an eloquent way of speaking that among their descriptors, words like "synesthetic" and "wonderment" sketch her presence. Excitement filled my mind as I got to peek into the mind of a writer who I can identify with as a woman of color, a writer whose book "The Latecomer: A Hmong Family Memoir" was the



Kelly Ordoñez-Saybe
ThreeSixty Alumna

spark of meaningful dialogue in my high school English classes.

Being a writer requires an extension of yourself and your vulnerability to be put forth on a page. This is especially hard when you present this writing as your story. This was tough but important for Yang: "I went into writing as a selective mute; my father told me that from hardness you can give birth to gentleness. If you speak, then maybe our lives aren't lost."

From that she gave birth to a collection of unfiltered stories about familial struggle, the Hmong experience and the ability to tell others' stories.

The stakes are high for Yang during her writing process.

"Every time I go onto the page it means it has to matter, matter to me because I am my first reader, but it has to matter to the people who care about me," she said.

One of those people is her father, Bee Yang. During our interview backstage I could hear her father sing with joy and conviction. Kao Kalia Yang writes from the songs her father sings. Her father sings in his native tongue about the sacrifice it took to give his children a better future. The songs he sings are included in his memoir, "The Song Poet," written by his daughter.

Bee Yang's articulation is on the nose and so guttural that it incites an ethereal reaction from listeners. I experienced chilling goosebumps to on-the-brink of tears when I attended Yang's performance.

Kao Kalia Yang read excerpts from "The Song Poet," which extended from her father's lyrics of joy to loss in his performance. Expounding from her family's story and the traditional folktales, Yang opened up the floor for her father to sing about the life of his people.

The audience in the Ordway was presented with the power of storytelling through multiple mediums. Yang's performance has led to another medium for writing — a youth opera. The Minnesota Opera will bring Yang's "The Song Poet" to a greater audience, paying tribute to Bee Yang's story and his songs.

Yang doesn't limit the ways her art can be expressed. She mirrors the nature that surrounds her and reflects it in her writing.



ThreeSixty Alumnae Kelly Ordoñez-Saybe and Erianna Jiles visit local author Kao Kalia Yang at the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts in St. Paul.

"For me that first draft is my first stab at it; if there's seeds planted, I'll go back in and harvest from that crop and something beautiful will grow," she said.

By dwelling in possibility, Yang has expressed the truths that we hold dearly. Most of Yang's writing waxes unfiltered truths, serving as candid and beautiful anecdotes from her experiences.

Yang tells ThreeSixty students that, as artists, "You are the most qualified person in (the) world to tell the story of your life, and sometimes you are the most qualified person to tell the stories before you. Author comes from the word authority; authority is earned, and you are earning it right now."

This limitless growth as a

storyteller feeds into the mission of ThreeSixty in allowing students to tell their story in order to tell the stories of others.

The creative power felt poignantly universal and was encapsulated in Yang's performance with her father.

Yang describes not only the power of storytelling, but the power of a blank page, like a blank canvas where you're free to roam through the wildest of your words.

"On the page, I am free," she said. "On the page I am big, and I am strong, or I'm tiny and weak. On the page I am whoever I need to be in the moment."

Reporting at the Timberwolves Game

Being a Sidelines Mentor

FIRST YOU THINK about how small you are, standing next to NBA players who are nearly 7 feet tall. Then, you feel a lot bigger standing on the court as the shootaround begins, talking to media professionals and players, and watching the game with a box view.

Two years ago, I had those experiences as a high school student at ThreeSixty Journalism. It was a sudden realization that I was living my childhood dream of covering major sports events. Even though I had been to Timberwolves games at Target Center when I was younger, it couldn't compare to the behind-the-scenes experience. On Jan. 27 this year, I was able to live it again. But this time I was there mentoring another young student who, like me two years ago, was given the



Zekriah Chaudhry
2018 ThreeSixty Scholar

distinction of StarTribune Junior Reporter.

The kid's name was Sam Stensgaard. We talked a little bit before the game started, enough for me to know that he had NBA knowledge. But that was a small part of the task he had in front of him. There is real intimidation when asked to not only go up to interview strangers but to interview people you see on TV. On top of that, Sam had an extra challenge.

The locker room was distinctively somber. Only the day before, news had broken about the death of NBA



THREESIXTY JOURNALISM

ThreeSixty reporters visit the Star Tribune newsroom on Junior Reporter night. (Left to right) ThreeSixtyScholar Danielle Wong, reporter Aaliyah Demry, reporter Sam Stensgaard and Scholar Zekriah Chaudhry.

legend Kobe Bryant and his daughter, Gianna Bryant. Bryant's impact on basketball was as significant as any player from his generation. He was idolized by the very players Sam was being asked to interview.

I gave Sam the best advice/pat on the back I could: "It's a learning experience so do your best."

I didn't realize that his best was, in the face of a daunting task, shockingly good.

He approached players in the locker room respectfully, but with the right amount of reckless abandon needed to be a journalist. He wasn't afraid, or at least he didn't show it. Sam chatted up players on everything from shoes to life as an NBA player, and he still managed to get around to asking the deep questions about Kobe.

I would have liked to take credit for Sam's boldness, but as I trailed behind him talking to Gorgui Dieng, Andrew Wiggins and Jordan Bell, all I could really do was smile. He was a natural.

By game time, Sam had enough information to put his story together, and I had more incredible memories to remember for the rest of my life.

Remembering Kobe, Healing Through the Game

AS I STAND in the Timberwolves locker room on Monday, Jan. 27, glancing from player to player, I almost forget that one of the NBA's greatest stars died the day before... almost. Then I turn around and notice the massive TV displaying nonstop coverage of Kobe Bryant, his daughter Gianna Bryant and what they meant to basketball.

ESPN's bottom ticker displays their achievements, along with quote after quote from virtually anyone who ever played basketball. It feels like a never-ending parade of grief. It's inescapable in a way sports tragedies seldom are; there's probably no one left on Earth who doesn't know what happened that Sunday afternoon.

How do we heal from something this traumatic? It's not just losing Kobe we have to deal with, it's the collective pain from millions of other lovers of the sport. On Instagram, LeBron James said: "It's my responsibility to put this sh*t on my back and keep going."

He might have been referring to his team's season, but he might have also been speaking about what emotions Lakers fans were dealing with. It's probably tempting for a leader like



Sam Stensgaard
Roseville Area High School

James to feel the need to shoulder the pain of an entire fanbase, but he shouldn't.

Nor should his former teammates. Former Kobe teammate Luke Walton was visibly upset when media members spoke to him. Shaquille O'Neal broke down in tears on "Inside the NBA."

I never considered myself a big Kobe fan, but a few hours after hearing the news, I found myself crying alone on my lunch break at work. Everyone is in pain right now, and we're feeding off the pain of one another. That's what we need to maintain, the sense of togetherness.

On Monday night, the Timberwolves and Kings suited up for a game that some of them may not have been ready to play, though it's always subjective how much time is enough to become emotionally well again.

Jordan Bell is matter-of-fact as he talks

to me about Kobe Bryant. He seems fine as he talks, but there's a defeated tone. He describes to me what it was like growing up in LA during the height of Bryant's reign, watching the championship parades. He was 15 when he witnessed Kobe win his fourth title, but even then, still knew greatness when he saw it.

"I was having breakfast, and a guy who was ordering was on the phone, and he said, 'Kobe just died,' and I was like, 'Kobe who?'" Bell said, describing his bizarre story of learning the news.

Like so many of us, he cried when the news sank in.

Despite that, Bell still went out, practiced and answered questions like everyone else. Then he played a basketball game. Like the rest of the NBA.

That's a good thing.

In our times of personal loss, people are often drawn to what we enjoy most or where we work the hardest. In the case of pro athletes, those two things are often the same: what they play.

So, we were given a pretty amazing game

despite the half-full arena and terrible combined record of the teams playing.

The Timberwolves set a team record for three-pointers made in a half; Andrew Wiggins earned another productive night scoring, but that's where the fun ended.

The Kings had a 41-point fourth quarter; Buddy Hield had a career high in points; and the Wolves blew a 17-point lead with two minutes remaining, a feat that was achieved for the first time ever.

OK, maybe that wasn't a good thing.

But it was an objectively thrilling game, one that I wish more fans got to witness in person. It felt as if Kobe Bryant, who famously surpassed Michael Jordan in scoring at Target Center, came back to give Minnesota basketball fans one more gift.

Now we try to move on from the Mamba; games will keep being played, Kobe tributes aplenty will be had, but we'll learn to move on. Move on using the game of basketball.

Kobe wouldn't have wanted it any other way.

Mentor Observations

HERE AT THREESIXTY, we have no shortage of students who blow us away with their professionalism and thoughtfulness, and when seniors Aaliyah Demry and Sam Stensgaard were given backstage access to the Timberwolves, they proved themselves to be no exception.

In their preparatory meeting with Star Tribune Timberwolves reporter Chris Hine, Aaliyah and Sam were asking questions that some college students might not even think of on the spot. They were curious about how they should navigate the nuances of Kobe Bryant's death, which happened the day before, especially because there were players who had personal connections with the basketball legend. They wondered how they could build rapport with players after just meeting them, compared to the seasoned journalists who they would be working alongside.

Aaliyah and Sam attentively watched as the players drifted in and out of the locker room, piping up as they took note of anything and everything that piqued their interest, from the bottles of lotion sitting on players' shelves to the brands of the sneakers laying around on the floor. Even before we



Danielle Wong
2016 ThreeSixty
Scholar

entered the locker room, Sam knew he wanted to talk to Jordan Bell — a native of Los Angeles — on how he took the Bryant news, and he did exactly that.

"I think I blacked out," Sam told me afterward. "I'm probably not going to remember any of this conversation later."

I laughed and told Sam he definitely wasn't alone. I recounted the story of when I interviewed A-list comedian Kevin Hart at a red-carpet event before the 2018 Super Bowl in Minneapolis. If it wasn't for a video, I probably wouldn't have remembered much of the interview either! I reassured Sam the more practice he has with interviews, the easier it will get to remain present — especially when the stakes are higher.

Meanwhile, Aaliyah had no problem starting up some playful banter with some of the players. She was comfortable, personable and absolutely hilarious. It took me back to my first man-on-the-street interviews as a new journalist with



ThreeSixty's Junior Reporter team included (left to right) scholar Danielle Wong, Aaliyah Demry, Sam Stensgaard, scholar Zekriah Chaudhry and program manager Theresa Malloy.

ThreeSixty; I remember how fast my heart was beating and how questions seemed to fly in and out of my mind without giving me a second to grab on. Aaliyah didn't show an ounce of nerves under the pressure,

but instead displayed some of the most necessary qualities of a journalist: fearlessness and an insatiable curiosity.

As we wrapped up the night courtside, I watched as the

students' eyes widened at each unexpected turn of events. But regardless of how the game ended, Aaliyah and Sam walked away winners — confident in their skills and their passion for journalism.

Joining the 'Big Dogs' at the Wolves Game

LITTLE OL' ME walking into Wolves territory ... of course, I was nervous and didn't know what exactly to expect. I just had to take this big moment and make the best of this experience.

Initially walking down to the media room and receiving our press passes, I felt legit. I'm thinking to myself, "I'm finally with the big dogs."

One of those "big dogs" was Chris Hine, who is a Star Tribune Timberwolves reporter. Earlier in the day, before heading to the big game, we spoke with Hine, and he gave us some tips about what to expect and what being an NBA reporter looks like. This took lots of the uneasy feelings off of my shoulders.



Aaliyah Demry
Irondale High
School

Seeing Hine in the press room made me feel a little more comfortable seeing how calm, cool and collected he was. There were other news reporters in the room, of course, and many photographers and videographers.

Joanna Stang, who is the partnership activation manager for the Timberwolves, introduced to us to many of the various employees on the Timberwolves public relations team. It was really nice to see all the jobs you can land revolving

around communication, which goes to show how important communication is.

Stang also introduced us to some really special people: the Timberwolves players! Because of our press credentials, we were led to the players' locker room to do some interviewing.

Surprisingly, when I first walked into the room it didn't smell like sweaty socks and shorts. It smelled more like a nice spa found somewhere on an island. The players were blasting their playlist, featuring songs like Young Thug ft. Gunna "Hot," to get ready for the game.

Walking toward each player's locker, you could see how different **'BIG DOGS'** *continued on page 12*



Aaliyah Demry was all smiles as she waited to get her media credentials with locker room access at the Timberwolves game.

Alumni Spotlight: ‘Social Justice Renegade’

Anika Bowie draws on personal experience to create change in her community and criminal justice system.

“If you are silent about your pain, they’ll kill you and say you enjoyed it,” said author Zora Neale Hurston. This quote resonates with Anika Bowie, a St. Paul native and local organizer whose passion is to inspire social and political change in her community.

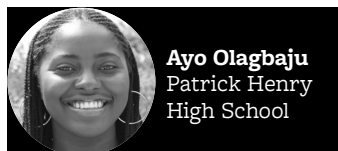
At the age of 27, Bowie serves as vice president of the NAACP Minneapolis. She also ran to represent Ward 1 on the St. Paul City Council in 2019. Bowie describes herself as not only a trailblazer, but also an artist, changemaker and “social justice renegade.”

Ultimately, Bowie wants to help establish an equitable and just world for everyone.

“My involvement in politics came from a very personal place,” Bowie said.

When Bowie was a freshman at Central High School in St. Paul, her father was incarcerated. The experience was difficult for her family but also pushed her to think critically about the criminal justice system and unwarranted policing in communities of color.

“People are not always passionate about what they love; sometimes their passion comes from what they hate,” Bowie said.



Ayo Olagbaju
Patrick Henry
High School

Bowie grew up participating in a social justice improv troupe and was a ThreeSixty Journalism participant in high school. Both activities nurtured her curiosity and love of storytelling. They also helped Bowie develop her voice to be able to speak her truth.

“From there, I immersed my life into trying to answer the question of why my dad is in prison,” Bowie said. “That really was the epicenter of me searching how to change the lives of the folks who find themselves behind bars.”

Witnessing her father in prison was not only critical to her understanding of justice, but also to her healing process.

“I was going down the rabbit hole of this enormous industrial complex of the business of prisons in America, and it was very dark and very spooky. But I had to undergo it to really understand it,” Bowie said.

After graduating from Hamline University with a double major in criminal justice and social



Anika Bowie, 27, is vice president of the NAACP Minneapolis and was a candidate for St. Paul City Council in 2019.

justice, Bowie continued to use her voice in the forms of social organizing activities and politics. She takes on issues such as racial equity, youth empowerment and criminal justice reform.

These experiences and others motivated Bowie to take action and run for a seat on the St. Paul City Council in 2019. Bowie was a candidate to represent Ward 1, which includes Rondo, the neighborhood she grew up in. Although Bowie gained the support of many, she lost the election. But this only added fuel to her fire.

In the future, Bowie hopes to

run for other political positions at the state and national levels. Until then, Bowie continues to advocate for marginalized groups by working with organizations like the NAACP.

As a young black woman who actively uses her voice, Bowie has often been advised to be quiet and be grateful for all of her accomplishments and opportunities.

“I have experienced spaces that are not accustomed to people that look like me being in those spaces with authority and actually offering something,” she said.

Bowie said in her experience,

Minnesota culture tends to approach difficult conversations in a very calm and unagitated manner. People who have held positions similar to hers have often succeeded by not ruffling too many feathers. Yet, to do that would be completely out of Bowie’s character.

“I’m a natural feather ruffler,” she laughed.

Although it isn’t always easy, Bowie loves and finds great fulfillment in her work.

“I find much joy and love and passion in what I do, because I think it empowers other people to share their voice as well,” Bowie said.

‘BIG DOGS’ from page 11

each player was from another. Some lockers were filled with clothes all over the place, while others were neat and clean.

One of the biggest things I noticed was how stylish and huge the players’ shoes were. Star Karl-Anthony Towns, a center for the Wolves, has the biggest feet on the team: size 20.

Many of the players wore Kobe Bryant shoes in honor of his tragic death the day before, while Josh Okogie, a guard for Wolves, told me he wears Kobe’s shoes for every game.

For me it was very awkward talking to the players. I didn’t want to seem starstruck, but I have to admit these players are human and just like any other stranger it is hard starting a conversation with them. Especially when I’m 5 feet, 1 inch tall looking at each player who is more than 6 feet tall; it can be very intimidating. Overall, I enjoyed the company of the players I got to speak to, and they were a joy to meet.

Later in the night during halftime, we had the opportunity to sit down and have

a conversation with Erik Nelson, who is executive producer of digital content for the Wolves. He told us what it’s like having his job producing digital content and social media. He also told us about all the new things the Timberwolves have coming up in the future.

In my future, I wouldn’t mind doing what Nelson does for a living. From the way he talks, you can tell he really enjoys what he does.

To end the night off right, I enjoyed the game with my brother, father and my fellow

ThreeSixty Journalism family, sitting in a suite above the court. Watching the last three minutes of the game was intense. As the Sacramento Kings got closer and closer to the Wolves’ lead, people in the crowd began to get tighter and tighter to their seats.

Unfortunately, the Wolves lost to the Kings in overtime with a final score of 133–129.

Even though this was a big loss for the Wolves, it was a major win for me to have this experience.

Marathonning Diversity, Equity + Inclusion

Inspired by personal experiences, Kha Yang promotes diversity, equity and inclusion at the University of St. Thomas.

KHA YANG IS NO stranger to obstacles. When she's 20 miles into a painful, energy-demanding marathon, she knows she must break through mental and physical walls.

As an advocate for diversity, equity and inclusion, Yang faces similar barriers. The race for social justice is even more challenging, with no defined finish line.

Over the course of her 20-year career, Yang has worked as a community organizer in the Twin Cities and as inclusion programs and workforce reporting manager at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis.

Now, as the associate vice president of inclusive excellence at the University of St. Thomas, Yang is fighting for equity on campus. But despite being the very first person to hold this position, she does not consider herself to be a trailblazer.

"People have said that, 'You're a great leader. You're a trailblazer.' But for me, I just do the work that needed to be done to get to where we are," Yang said.

Since joining the St. Thomas community in July 2019, Yang has been working to cultivate an environment that fosters diversity, equity and inclusion. This goes beyond race and includes individuals with disabilities, of various sexual identities and from various backgrounds, according to Yang.

Currently, her focus has been on hearing student experiences and understanding the climate on campus. Incorporating the St. Thomas Action Plan to Combat



Emil Liden
Minnetonka
High School

Racism, Yang wants to encourage more campuswide discussions on prevalent issues and provide diversity training for students and staff.

The ideas Yang hopes to implement are also in accordance with the university's Commitment to Diversity, which states that each student at St. Thomas "is called to protect and enhance human dignity, in community with each other, and to work for a more just and equitable society."

Despite these initiatives already in place, the work Yang does on a daily basis is not easy. In addition, the results she hopes to achieve are not always tangible.

"If I were to get \$1 for every time someone said, 'I don't envy the work that you do,' I probably wouldn't have to work," Yang said.

Despite the difficulties of her job, Yang finds sources of motivation, such as remembering where she came from and reflecting on her own experiences.

"What motivates me to continue to do this work is that it's personal," she said. "I am a refugee to this country, and my family has personally experienced acts of intolerance."

Coming to the U.S. as a refugee from Laos, Yang always wanted to feel like she belonged. Growing up in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, she didn't



Kha Yang was appointed associate vice president of inclusive excellence at the University of St. Thomas in July 2019.

know that this longing would turn into a lifelong career in fighting for social justice.

"As a young child, I knew that I wanted to belong, for myself. Then I knew that I also cared about community, and I also cared about people and helping people," she said. "So that ... harnessed the passion in me in terms of, 'What do I want to be when I grow up?'"

Years later and with a family of her own, Yang is also motivated by her two young daughters, who are 6 and 8 years old.

"I've always been passionate about cultivating an equitable society for all. But once I became a

parent, it even hones in more," Yang said. "You get to see these innocent and pure minds that you just want to protect and not see them in an environment where — because of the color of their skin or because of their hair or because of whatever social identity that they were born with — they would be treated in a different way."

Yang envisions a more inclusive world for her daughters, but she knows intolerance will unfortunately never become a closed chapter in our society. However, there are small ways that people can combat this issue, including on the St. Thomas campus.

One of the most important things Yang stresses is engaging other people in promoting diversity, equity and inclusion. Training opportunities, events and directed discussions educate students, faculty and staff on these issues. There are also more than 140 clubs that students can join. Yang believes in the power these initiatives have in contributing to a greater cause.

"What keeps me going is that every little thing that we do in this will amount to a bigger impact," Yang said.

Much like the wall at the 20-mile mark, there will always be obstacles in the fight for social justice. So while this race for diversity, equity and inclusion seems like a painful, energy-demanding marathon, Yang knows that we must continue running in order to create a more welcoming world.

"What motivates me to continue to do this work is that it's personal."

—Kha Yang

Students Take on Climate Change

Seniors in high school and college share how they push for climate change action, calling it one of the biggest issues of our time.

MORE THAN 1 million students joined activist Greta Thunberg in climate strikes around the world on March 15, 2019. Priya Dalal-Whelan, a senior at Perpich Center for Arts Education in Golden

Valley and partnerships director of Minnesota Youth Climate Strike, joined the efforts that day and continues to organize for climate change action.

“You think of climate change as environmental issues that affect animals and wildlife,” Dalal-Whelan said. “But I think what really motivated a lot of us to get started is the realization that this is a people problem.”

Dalal-Whelan says the 2018 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change study, which reported we have only 12 years to limit climate change’s impact to moderate levels, drove her and others to action.

“We are physically at risk in the next couple of decades,” Dalal-Whelan said. “And people who don’t have as much privilege are at way more risk ... (They) have fewer resources to protect themselves.”

Minnesota Youth Climate Strike has two ongoing campaigns: one for pushing those in power to divest from fossil fuels and another to rid North Minneapolis of a trash incinerator that produces more carbon dioxide than a coal plant and releases toxins into the neighborhood.

Recently, Dalal-Whelan joined other students at the Minnesota Capitol for a Minnesota State Board of Investment meeting. She learned that the board is legally responsible



Jacqueline Martinez
Harding High School

for doing what’s in the best interest of the fund.

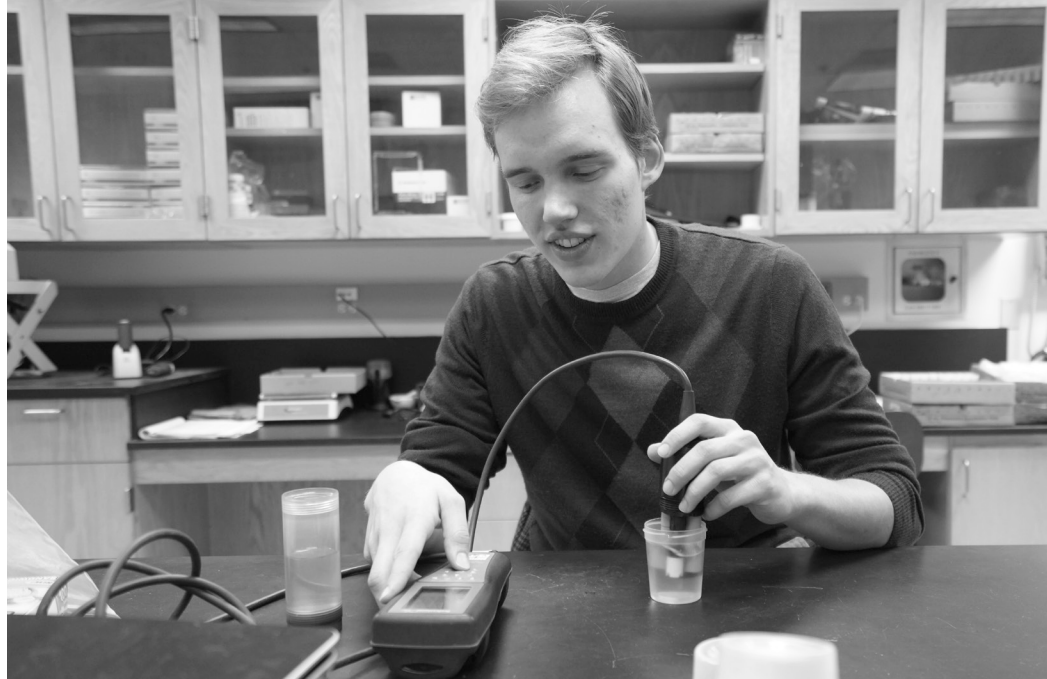
“They are trying to argue that it means they can’t divest,” Dalal-Whelan said. “But if you look at the numbers, it means they should.”

Dalal-Whelan and her peers bring a realistic conversation to the table, and she plans to continue advocating after graduation. She wants to study social science and social policy in college.

“I think a lot of times people think of youth activism as an extracurricular in high school and it ends, but it doesn’t. It can be a career.”

Another person involved in climate and environmental activism is University of St. Thomas senior Michael Salzl, an environmental science major. Salzl conducts research with associate professor Dr. Gaston Small at St. Thomas’ Stewardship Garden about the effects of different fertilizers and compost on urban agricultural soils and water sources.

Growing up on a dairy farm motivated Salzl to research food production and sustainability, and it shapes how he views agriculture. He recognizes animal farming is unsustainable, but also knows what it means for a family to rely on milk checks. He hopes his research will help farmers and the community find common ground. By focusing on urban agriculture, he wants to



Michael Salzl demonstrates testing water runoff samples with a lysimeter in the Ecosystem Ecology Research Lab at St. Thomas’ south campus.



Priya Dalal-Whelan serves as partnerships director for Minnesota Youth Climate Strike. She attends Perpich Center for Arts Education in Golden Valley.

bring fresh produce to communities that might lack access.

Salzl said getting people as close as possible to the food they eat reduces the emissions produced by food transportation.

“We are maximizing the ways that we can farm efficiently and then bring food to people that need it the most,” Salzl said. “That’s a very important thing when we’re talking about climate change, action and activism in general.”

Salzl also pushes for climate action in his current community at St. Thomas. He collaborates with the Sustainability Club to persuade the university to invest more in climate change issues, arguing that its slogan “all for the common good” should include working toward renewable energy and sustainability. He is currently working to create an individual action group that will urge the university to divest from fossil fuels and weapons investment.

“I’m pushing for the university to vote with their dollar and walk the walk,” he said.

Salzl acknowledges the important efforts youth like Dalal-Whelan have made when it comes to climate activism, and he would like to see adults take more responsibility and action.

“That’s what Greta is saying,” Salzl said. “She’s pretty much saying that adults need to step up and do their job and that their inaction is the reason that you have to strike. So (youth activism is) a good call, and it’s a good push; but I wish it didn’t have to happen in the first place.”

Both Salzl and Dalal-Whelan believe there are many opportunities to contribute in the fight against climate change. The Minnesota Youth Climate Strike hosts many sit-ins and protests anyone can get involved with.

“Wanting to save the environment by using reusable cups or no plastic straws — I think that’s great,” Dalal-Whelan said. “But what we’ve seen with the climate strike is people realizing that our individual action isn’t going to be enough (and) that coming together against climate change makes a lot more sense.”

For more information about the Minnesota Youth Climate Strike, check out its Instagram page: @MNClimatStrike.

Fighting for Gun Reform

For Hailey Dickinson, the time for change is now.

WHILE HER CLASSMATES are prepping for the ACTs or finding a prom date, a North Saint Paul High School student is fighting for gun reform.

Hailey Dickinson, a junior, has been working for Students Demand Action for two years. The group is a local subsidiary of Everytown For Gun Safety, which is a nonprofit group dedicated to creating stricter gun laws.

“I got involved after the Parkland shooting like a lot of people,” she said, referring to the 2018 Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in Parkland, Florida, which killed 17 people and sparked national outrage.

Students Demand Action is divided into chapters all over the state that work to create measurable change across Minnesota. Two of the group’s top priorities are increasing background checks and creating red flag laws, which are temporary bans on buying a gun at the request of a person’s family or



Sam Stensgaard
Roseville Area High School

law enforcement departments.

Dickinson said young people are frightened by gun violence, which makes the message of gun control more powerful coming from them.

“I think a lot of advocacy issues are centered around people who are not impacted by the issue,” she said.

Dickinson speaks respectfully, but the passion in her eyes is unmistakable.

She brings a unique perspective to Students Demand Action, as well — one many of her fellow activists lack.

“My dad’s a hunter, my brother’s a hunter,” she said, emphasizing that she’s not a stranger to gun culture. “However, I think that it’s important to recognize ... your right to possess a firearm doesn’t exceed



Hailey Dickinson is an event coordinator for Students Demand Action. She says, “I think that everyone recognizes that violence is a problem. I just think that people have different views on how to solve it.”

that of another’s (right) to live.”

Despite the differences between Dickinson and members of her family, she claims that having family members who hunt has helped her better understand other gun owners. Knowing gun owners as actual people has also assisted her in realizing they have similar goals — reducing gun deaths and violence overall.

“I think that everyone recognizes that violence is a problem. I just think that people have different views on how to solve it,” Dickinson said.

Dickinson’s solution is creating an environment where civil discourse can go on — not just shouting counterpoints.

“I think that it’s just really important that we need to reach across the aisle and not just have conversations, (but) find a common ground with other people who we don’t initially agree with,” she said.

According to Dickinson, recent debates on gun control have been unproductive and not led to any significant change.

“A big frustration for us is inaction in the (state) Senate,” she said.

“Regardless of whether that means background checks (or) red flag laws, it’s just inaction around any conversation about gun violence.”

So how can people prevent inaction as private citizens? Dickinson has some ideas about what can help.

“I always say you can start up a Students Demand Action chapter. If that’s not up your alley, call your senators and call your representatives,” she said. “They need to hear that this matters to you.”

For more information on Students Demand Action, visit everytown.org/studentsdemand/.



ILLUSTRATION BY JACQUELINE MARTINEZ

A Renewed Fight

Why people under the age of 18 should be granted the right to vote

It’s 10:30 AM, March 14, 2018. Snow covers the ground, and of course no one brought a jacket. Hundreds of students have walked out of class carrying signs and loudly protesting. We’re demanding gun control; we’re pleading with our elders to let us live and be safe in our schools.

A weird mix of pride and fear was raging through me during the entire



Fran Aravena
Wayzata High School

protest. I don’t only want gun control for myself, but for my brothers and sisters throughout the United States who are being personally

affected by school shootings.

Issues like gun control, equal rights, immigration policies and climate change directly affect the future of my generation. The next presidential election could determine how these situations are addressed legally, and I should be allowed to vote and influence the outcome.

There’s currently a debate about voting age, a reflection of the early 1970s protests for the passage of the 27th Amendment, which lowered the voting age to 18. Their protest started with the Vietnam War, an issue that affected many teens during that time. Nowadays many student-led movements are fighting to bring the voter age down to 16.

VOTING continued on page 17

Love Crunch and Leafy Greens

How one teen braves constant hunger

THE DAY STARTS with my ancient iPad muttering a creepy sci-fi sound. I hit snooze once, hit the button twice, hit it a third time for five more minutes of sleep. Finally, my feet hit the floor. I have Love Crunch on my mind.

My first bowl of Love Crunch granola, with its chocolate and strawberry chunks, is the start of something big each day. Six meals a day, seven days a week, 365 days of the year. That's my current food schedule as a teenage boy.

My parents like to tell me to eat something healthier for breakfast, like eggs, to which I usually counter that my cereal has dried strawberries. They roll their eyes, but I leave



Josiah Lemm
Blaine High School

for school before they can make me eat something more colorful.

Once I'm at school, I usually make a pit stop at the cafeteria before going to class in order to satisfy the demands of my growling stomach. Whatever is being served at the cafeteria is usually good, but I always go out of my way to make sure I get grape juice. I'm not sure why, but ever since I was young the mystical purple elixir has been my favorite thing to drink.



ILLUSTRATION BY JACQUELINE MARTINEZ

Recently, my mom has been really pressuring me to eat healthier. She likes to ask me when I get home, "What green stuff have you eaten today?" In response to this, I've been doing my best to eat a salad for lunch every day in order to be healthier.

My friends like to laugh at me when I tell them I'm eating a salad to be healthier because after my salad I hit up the school store, where I get my daily dose of chocolate bars and Mentos. But hey, Mom, I did what you wanted, I ate some green food. Besides, my

high metabolism isn't going to last forever so I figure I might as well enjoy it while I can.

After a long day of school, I can't wait to get home. But don't get confused here — I'm not excited to go home to a busy house with three younger siblings and to complete my ever-looming homework. No, I'm excited for my next meal, which I like to call my early dinner.

I've nicknamed this meal the "junk meal." Not because I eat only junk food, but because it reminds me of going to a junkyard as a kid looking for treasures. You're never

quite sure what you're going to find, but you always leave with some very weird items. For me, the junkyard is my fridge and the discovered treasures are whatever I manage to find in my fridge that day. From olives to pizza to soup to off-brand Cheetos, I'm never quite sure what I'll end up finding on a given day.

The purpose of my junk meal is to simply hold me off until dinner. My father often works irregular hours because he works for the United States Postal Service. Combine that with the crazy schedule that comes with three younger siblings who all have activities, I'm never really sure when dinner will be. In my family, we can eat dinner as early as 4:30 p.m. and as late as 8 p.m.

My family's inconsistent dinner time is part of the reason why I eat my sixth and final meal of the day late in the night, usually after midnight. The other reason for this meal is simply because, like most teens, I stay up too late and because of that I need more energy. What I eat for this meal really just comes **HUNGER** continued on page 19

My Hair, My History

I WANT to shave my head and go bald. I don't want to deal with any of this. I just want to start over.

From the time I was in kindergarten, my mom and I would stay up at night with my neck held in one position for hours while we watched her favorite show, "The Real Housewives of Atlanta." An overnight nurse with hair straight and sleek like Kandi Burruss, a singer-songwriter on the reality TV show, my mom worked on my hair from behind me on our red couch.

Braids gripped my scalp as tight as skinny jeans. Brushes and combs scratched my head for hours. Just for me grease dripped down my forehead to make it shiny as the sun. Barrettes snapped in my ear. Then my mom would tell me, "Aaliyah, you are so beautiful," and I'd feel so special.

Sleeping on my hands to keep the barrettes from falling out was



Aaliyah Demry
Iroindale Senior High School

uncomfortable. But after almost three hours of my mom's hard work, I would definitely be in trouble if the barrettes came out.

Walking into Shakopee Elementary the next day, I didn't feel beautiful or special anymore. My suburban classmates touched my hair as if I were an animal in a petting zoo. They asked me weird questions:

"What's wrong with you?"

"Why is your hair not like ours?"

Natural black hair is becoming more mainstream, with more representation of African Americans in media — Cartoon Network's "Craig of the Creek," the Netflix series "Nappily Ever After" and the

Academy Award-winning "Black Panther." That is a good thing. But each person's lived experience shows a tough journey, including how I feel about my confidence, my cultural identity and my hair.

Being the only black girl in my class, I felt alone, embarrassed and insecure. Many of my classmates had long, straight, silky, bouncy hair. Going home and seeing everyone on my favorite cartoons and TV shows didn't make it any better. None of the characters' hair was like mine either — not Carly's on "iCarly," not my Barbie dolls, not even Beyoncé — and if I couldn't have my hair like theirs, I just wanted to shave my head and be done with it.

I complained to my mom every day, asking her if she could please just straighten my hair. I couldn't change her mind. She would tell me, "This who you are, Aaliyah, and

you're not changing for anyone." I would show up to class with puff balls and afros, barrettes and beads. I became the weirdo on the bus, on the playground and in the lunchroom; the cycle continued throughout the year.

Eventually I convinced my mom to straighten my hair so it would be like Holly's thick brown bob or Eden's long blond hair with bangs. It was such a long process, and I regretted it every time the hot comb sizzled on my scalp. All I cared about was the end result, which was priceless—the reaction on my face in the bathroom mirror. My long and bouncy hair looked amazing. I felt beautiful again. I was so excited to go into school the next morning without my hair being the main topic — without being the weirdo.

But I was wrong.

"Wow, Aaliyah, now your hair is finally like ours."

Ugh, I thought, here we go again. All I cared about at the time was looking like everyone else.

As I got older, I began going to

beauty shops. I straightened my hair more often throughout elementary school and into middle school. My mom would battle with me, saying I needed to embrace my natural hair and stop trying to fit in.

"I'm only telling you this because I never had no one to tell me."

But I didn't listen. My hair started to burn every time I used heat with the flat iron. I started to lose my natural curl pattern.

As a seventh-grader, I knew this wasn't me. I was tired of breaking myself down to be a part of a group that did not respect the real me and where I come from.

My dad gave me a book about the history of African kings and queens. It was something I had never seen before. Their hair was just like mine. They had beads and braids with gold, silver and green. I had seen that type of hair many times, but I had never seen it in a positive way — like it was a good thing to have this hair, worthy of being treated as royalty.

MY HAIR continued on page 19

VOTING from page 15

Being an active member of society is more than just having a job and paying taxes. Through volunteering, actively attending school and participating in global events, I exercise more of my First Amendment rights daily than some of my predecessors did. The day-to-day work done by college students to pass the 27th Amendment didn't make the news in detail. Modern day protesting has drastically changed with the Internet. Online communities allow organizers to share the message with a wider audience quicker than ever before.

All this online support directly fuels protest crowd sizes; an estimated 800,000 people showed up to Washington, D.C., for the 2018 March for Our Lives Protest, making it one of the largest protests in American history, according to USA Today.

Extinction Rebellion became one of the most well-known climate strikes around the world after the London chapter shut down the city's busiest routes for 11 days and over 1,100 protesters were arrested, according to BBC News.

These two protests provide a small look at how youth actively participate in social issues that are ultimately decided by politicians in office.

By not allowing those of us under the age of 18 to vote for our representatives, we aren't able to elect people who will make changes in Congress to better help our future.

I'm going to be one month shy of the legal age to vote in the next presidential election, but my

Being allowed to vote would grant me the ability to participate in the democracy we hold so dear.

future will still be greatly affected by the outcome. Being allowed to vote would grant me the ability to participate in the democracy we hold so dear. Not being allowed to will probably leave me swimming in student loans.



Danae Lawson was invited to tour a new high-tech plane with her mentor.

COURTESY: DANAEE LAWSON

Dreams Taking Flight

Who says teenagers can't fly planes?



Danae Lawson
Patrick Henry
High School

MY HEART IS pounding 100 beats per minute.

It feels like the ground is moving a mile a minute, and so is my mind. Did I make the right decision? As we pick up enough speed, we start to lift off and the weight of the plane fights against us. The plane tries to pull us down, but I pull up harder.

Lift off.

In mid-March, I was sitting in a classroom thinking it would be a normal day for me. Even when my teacher said she had a surprise for the class, I didn't think too much of it. A man walked through the door — yellow stripes on his black jacket, wings on his hat. Boom. It clicked. He was a pilot. And little did I know, this man would become my aviation mentor.

At this point, I had no idea I wanted to be a pilot, but I did know I loved being in the sky. When the pilot started to talk, my eyes didn't move one inch. I was so intrigued about his life, I felt like a kid standing with wonder in a candy

shop. Then he shared an opportunity to go to a flight school over the summer — I was sold, and my life wouldn't be the same without him.

Flying a plane is not something you can just give up midway; when you're driving down the runway, it doesn't make any sense to stop before you've even taken off, and it definitely doesn't make sense to stop running the plane in the middle of a flight.

Out of all of my hobbies — I also play the violin and wrestle — only flying has taught me this lesson. Why give up now when you are so close? When I fly, I feel like a free spirit, and even though I know it will be a process to get my pilot's license, it's going to be worth it. I have seen too many people I know give up in the beginning, but I'm halfway there so I can't stop now and that's what keeps me going.

I think most kids have something they want to accomplish, or a dream they want to achieve, but not every one of them has the chance to fully get there. Maybe they lose passion, maybe they don't have enough money to proceed, or maybe they're struggling with personal problems. All of these are totally normal, and sometimes you can get a little lost.

But I'm choosing to persevere. I will get my private pilot license at a young age because I want to inspire my peers and prove that no matter where you are in life or who you want to be, you can get through it.

I'll be honest, I didn't always follow through with things. I was scared to finish, and self-doubt would often keep me from continuing on. When I have to finish a big project my mind goes blank; but when I landed the plane, it wasn't like that at all. Something pushed me and it was like running a marathon and coming in first place — I felt so relieved. Ever since, I haven't doubted myself because being pushed to a new level helped me understand that life is truly what you make of it.

As I grab the wheel, my palms are sweaty as if I dropped a whole bottle of water on them. But as I look down and watch the ground zoom past me, I can't help but admire the beauty of being able to see the world from all the way up here. The trees and the cars look like tiny ants, and the faster we go, the bigger my smile gets.

Now that I know what it feels like to fly, I can't stop looking up.

Flying a plane is not something you can just give up midway; when you're driving down the runway, it doesn't make any sense to stop before you've even taken off, and it definitely doesn't make sense to stop running the plane in the middle of a flight.

Disability Does Not Define You

Disabilities are thought of as a struggle to overcome, but Bryan Boyce disagrees. They are “a cool thing, and a good thing and an exciting thing, a natural form of human difference.”

FOR BRYAN BOYCE, Cow Tipping Press started with his younger brother, Jay.

Jay has a developmental disability. Formally, his diagnosis is a mix of developmental and intellectual disabilities, dyspraxia, schizophrenia, seasonal affective disorder and bipolar disorder.

What does this all mean? To Boyce, it means very little — Jay is just Jay, and there's more to Jay than his disability.

One winter when Boyce was a student at Grinnell College, he came home for break and saw Jay creating stories and reciting tongue twisters.

“The stuff he was coming up with (was) more inventive and imaginative and creative (than) I could do,” Boyce said. “A lot of my peers ... are paying tons of money to try to train themselves to think creatively.”

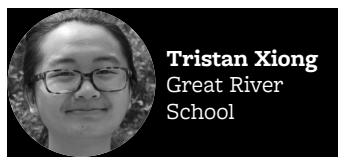
With this train of thought, Boyce wanted to celebrate voices like Jay's.

When Boyce returned to Minnesota after about a decade of living in other places, he started teaching creative writing classes for people with disabilities.

“I knew I was interested in doing something innovative or different ... in the disability field,” Boyce said. “This is what stuck.”

His writing classes gained more attention and support. He started publishing his students' work as a collection of poems, stories and essays.

That was the beginning of Cow



Tristan Xiong
Great River
School

Tipping Press. The name Cow Tipping comes from a poem from one of Boyce's students. It is fun and mischievous, just like the authors, he said.

“The reason it's called Cow Tipping is because ... we want to put our authors' voices front and center as much as possible,” Boyce said.

Now the organization has multiple books, news features and events for its authors. The published collection is now used as a teaching tool beyond Grinnell's campus, including Carleton College, St. Olaf College and Hennepin Theatre Trust.

Today, Boyce spends his time training teachers. Inside Boyce's classrooms, students are given the freedom to write and learn in whatever strategy works with them. Whether it is reading out loud, following along word for word or transcribing their writing, these strategies are targeted to fit their students' needs.

“We don't tell people, ‘Oh wait, actually (you) should fix this grammar or no, that's not appropriate, don't do that,’” Boyce said. “When they're writing, it's like, ‘You do you, take it where you want.’”

One of Boyce's favorite poems is “Ghazal” by Mike Ruland.



Bryan Boyce founded Cow Tipping Press, which publishes stories to change the narrative on disabilities.

“(It's) hard to pick a favorite,” Boyce said. “But that's one that's standing out to me this morning. ... This one just kind of drifts off into daydreaming about cake.”

GHAZAL

by Mike Ruland

*Oh my atlanta Someone ate
the plate of cake no one is
Looking cake*

*my brother and me like to eat
cake*

*I went to the store and
bought cake
some food for the holiday to
Celebrate John F. Kennedy
cake*

cake

cake

cake

Ruland uses an Arabic form of poetry called a ghazal, Boyce explained. According to Poetry Foundation, the format of the couplets in a ghazal ends with the same word and starts the next couplet with a rhyming word. Bringing in their own ideas about what they

want to write, Boyce's students have a voice and Cow Tipping Press gives them a chance to express it.

Boyce said there are two ways of looking at a disability, the medical model and the social model. The medical model views disability as a diagnosed problem to fix. Boyce favors the social model, because it values disabilities as a piece of what makes that person an individual.

“We see disability as a form of identity,” Boyce said. “This is who you are ... this is something that, sure, has some challenges with it but also has a lot of really cool things.”

Boyce said high school students' only exposure to disabilities might be through books like “Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime” by Mark Haddon and John Steinback's “Of Mice and Men.” These books have characters with developmental disabilities, but Boyce feels these characters are one-dimensional because “they are a picture painted by nondisabled authors.”

“You're learning that people with disabilities can't speak for themselves,” said Boyce. “A lot of people would presume that someone with an intellectual or developmental

disability like my brother either couldn't write or create something or wouldn't want to, ... and neither of those are true at all.”

Boyce is as critical of these stories that portray characters with disabilities as he is of how people with disabilities are treated in real life. While Boyce was in college, Jay was learning what the McDonald's sign meant in his special education classes in high school. Boyce knew his brother was capable of so much more than that, as are the characters in Haddon's and Steinback's stories.

“You read a book, and you (think), ... ‘Oh, it's so hard to be Chris,’” Boyce said, referring to the character in “Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime.”

“(But) your special ed. peers are down the hallway learning what the McDonald's logo says. They're capable of representing themselves, but you're down the hallway reading this book, and you're like, ‘Oh, that sucks,’” he said. “It's really stupid.”

“This is why we exist,” Boyce said. “To be a counter voice or counterpoint to those narratives.”

No Decision Without Us

Minneapolis Youth Congress gives teens platform to advocate for issues that matter to young people in Minneapolis.

WHEN RAMIRO VAZQUEZ Jr. began working with Minneapolis Youth Congress six years ago, he did so with a fervent passion to empower youth to advocate on their own behalf.

MYC is a community of 50 young adults from Minneapolis working to influence policies and decisions that affect youth. The members range from grades eight through 12 and serve on seven different committees: education, housing, safety, employment, transportation, green initiatives and health.

“Our motto is, ‘No decision about us without us,’” Vazquez said. “They work together to kind of change the landscape of Minneapolis and around issues that affect them.”

At the end of 2019, MYC compiled polls and interviews with Minneapolis youth into a 70-page Youth Master Plan. Through their research, the youth council members identified six priority areas they want policymakers in



Danielle Wong
2016 ThreeSixty
Journalism
Scholar

Minneapolis to focus their efforts on improving; two of those are gender and sexuality inclusivity, as well as culturally responsive approaches to issues. Next, MYC will release a second part of the master plan, which will include a complete status report of youth data and policy recommendations for their local representatives.

When Chelsea Chingwe moved to Minnesota from Zimbabwe in eighth grade, MYC was one of the first programs she joined. Even now, as a sophomore at Edison High School, Chingwe is still blown away by the opportunities she’s had to find her voice.

“At that time I didn’t really see myself as taking this big leadership role,” she said. “But with me

change mainstream predictions of beauty.” Janice Williams and Jessica Durham wrote, “Well, time’s up, straight hair: Women are pushing back, embracing their curls and coils.”

Big poofy puff balls were my favorite style. My baby hairs always stayed on fleek. My friends would see me at lunch and yell out, “Aaliyah, you poppin’, girl.”

I started to get more compliments at school about my hair, and people even started to wear their hair like mine. I felt pretty again. I saw more black girls in music videos, on TV shows and in news media who looked like me. Even people around me started to look like me.

I felt my natural self again.



Chelsea Chingwe and Ramiro Vazquez Jr. are challenging the city of Minneapolis to listen to youth voices in policymaking.

coming from Zimbabwe, I was really underrepresented and the Minneapolis Youth Congress was a platform for me to represent myself and take charge.”

Within their program, MYC serves every demographic in the city of Minneapolis, which Vazquez said brings an incredibly diverse set of experiences and identities to the table.

“You may go to Edison, another student goes to Southwest, but you’re still dealing with the same impact of prejudice or racism from classmates or sometimes educators, and they can kind of find that common ground and that solidarity

to work together and succeed together,” he said. “Our youth come together, and they don’t see the differences, they see the similarities.”

Chingwe said MYC has been instrumental in bringing about some major changes in Minneapolis, including helping to raise the tobacco age to 21 and ensuring high school students are able to receive free bus cards.

“We are directly doing the things that we say we’re doing — making youth have a voice, meeting with people in power,” she said. “We are the people of tomorrow. And, if they keep messing up things right now, what’s the future for us?”

Seeing the important work youth and coordinators are able to accomplish together brings Vazquez the “truest sense of community.”

The future? There’s nothing to stress about.

“This generation, they’re taking the bull by the horns, and they’re speaking their truths. They’re holding those who haven’t done anything — adults like myself — accountable,” Vazquez said. “I feel in good hands with the youth that I work with and the future of the world.”

MY HAIR from page 16

From that point on, I embraced my natural hair. On YouTube, I watched tutorials on how to manage your natural hair and styles that will help protect it. There became this big movement for natural hair online and in society. It made me feel less alone to know people struggled and worked hard to maintain their natural self like me.

In high school I still had times when I wanted to give up the struggle to fit my hair into a rubber band the size of a Life Saver and would wake up crying with rage because my hair would shrink up like noodles.

But times have changed. In 2018 Newsweek published an article called “How women of color are using natural hair to

HUNGER from page 16

down to whatever I feel like. Whether I feel like consuming multiple cans of chicken noodle soup or simply eating massive bowls of ice cream, this final meal of the day is my whatever-I-want meal.

Of my six meals, my midnight meal is the one my parents despise the most. My father says I use this meal to get around having to eat my mom’s creamy broccoli soup at dinner, while my mom says I’ll get cancer from eating so late.

Looking back on my daily eating routines, I sometimes think I should start eating healthier or perhaps eat fewer meals in a day. I consume around double the recommended calories a teenage boy should be consuming,

and I should try to start forming better habits for when I’m older. I often fall asleep thinking about ways to change my food schedule to be healthier; perhaps I could shrink from six to four meals a day?

However, when I wake up in the morning, I have only one thing on my mind: Love Crunch. The thought of the dried strawberries mixed with the chocolate chunks that slowly dissolve, giving the whole white milk beautiful chocolate swirls, entices me once again and I think to myself, “Being healthy can wait.”

Learn more about MYC’s work at ycb.org/myc.

Changing Culinary Culture

Diane Moua is highly recognized for pastry masterpieces she creates at three restaurants in Minnesota and is committed to changing the culture in kitchens for future chefs.

DIANE MOUA WAS raised to be in the kitchen, but she didn't turn out to be a traditional Hmong woman. Her roots in cooking grew into a passion for plating delicate desserts as a nationally recognized pastry chef.

Today the 2018 James Beard Foundation Award for Outstanding Pastry Chef finalist and three-time nominee can be found making some of the most innovative and stunning plates in the pastry world.

And while customers admire Moua's plates for their beauty and unique combinations of colors and textures, most don't get to see that every plate has one important element — balance.

"You have to have an eye for it," Moua said. "Like putting something too close to the room (on the plate) is going to look different than putting it just (a) little offset of it."

Moua's unique plates are featured on her Instagram page. The photos feature a variety of colors and kinds of desserts, all with geometric cubes, lines and splashes of color accented by complementary sweets and fruits.

Moua's lemon crepe cake is a neat stack of crepes, filled with whipped cream and garnished with fresh lemon slices and raspberries lightly sprinkled with powdered sugar.

"It visually has to come together too because you eat with your eyes first," Moua said.

The plated desserts represent



Aaliyah Demry
Irondale Senior
High School

Moua and the life she balances as a Hmong-American woman, mother of two and nationally recognized executive pastry chef overseeing three of Minnesota's premier restaurants: Bellecour in Wayzata, and Spoon and Stable and Demi in Minneapolis

MOUA'S PATH TO PASTRIES

But Moua's career did not begin with the perfect plate. It took time for her to find that balance.

After graduating high school, Moua was married with a new baby to care for and no idea what she wanted to do for a living. She was intrigued by a commercial for culinary school and enrolled in Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts Minneapolis/St. Paul, where she landed an internship at La Belle Vie in Stillwater and was mentored by three-time Beard House cook and experienced New York pastry chef Adrienne Odom.

"Somehow out of, like, five, six

"It visually has to come together too because you eat with your eyes first."

—Diane Moua



Moua is an executive pastry chef at three of Minnesota's premier restaurants: Demi, Bellecour, and Spoon and Stable.

dodges ... I got the job, this Asian chick who's never worked in a kitchen before," Moua said. "Oh, and on my first day I was 45 minutes late."

However, first-day tardiness didn't end Moua's career as a pastry chef. She and Odom continued to work together for the next six years at two different restaurants.

Helping her parents understand her job was also a challenge.

"It was hard to explain to my parents," Moua said. "(They'd say,) 'What are you doing (being) a pastry chef?'"

It wasn't until 2018, when she was nominated for a James Beard Award, that Moua's parents recognized all the amazing work she was creating. The James Beard Foundation Awards are presented to top culinary professionals in the United States every year to recognize their work in the food industry.

From the list of the top 20, Moua made it to the top five finalists.

"I think that for once they finally understood what I did," Moua said. "That was all I wanted them to see, so that was probably my biggest accomplishment of just letting them know what I do. I didn't need a win."

MOUA GAINS INSPIRATION FROM FAMILY

Moua said her family's support inspires her to continue striving for success in her career. However, her traditional Hmong cultural views and her career ambitions have not always aligned.

"Being in this field is really hard ... when you're married," Moua said. "I was the first one in my family to actually go through a divorce. That was ... looked down upon in our culture."

Yet, her newfound freedom allowed her to refocus in the kitchen.

"For the first time (in) my whole life ... being free is like the biggest thing to me," Moua said. "I'm happy. Being free helps me a lot with my team, my kids, everything

in life. I totally, for once, understand the (need to) surround yourself with good people."

MOUA CHANGES PASTRY CHEF, INDUSTRY CULTURE

Now, Moua intends to change the pastry industry by treating people the way they want to be treated. Moua said when budgets are cut in the restaurant industry, pastry chefs and their staff are usually the first to go.

"Let's fix this. Let's work together. How we can maintain it, make money and still be a part of the restaurant," Moua said. "Because we are the ending part of it, and it's very important to me."

Moua plans to travel with her family and make the most of this upcoming year before deciding whether she wants to pursue her own shop.

"I surround myself with amazing people, and I think that's how I got to where I am," Moua. "My mom and dad are my biggest mentors. They always steer me in the right direction."

Breaking Bread: All Are Welcome

HAVE YOU EVER wished there was a restaurant where it feels like your own dining room, with big tables like Thanksgiving night? A place where you can share a meal with people you don't know but who could live right across the street from you? A restaurant that doesn't have a menu, where you don't even have to split the bill with anyone because there is no bill? Where you give as you can?

The good news is this place exists. It's called Provision Community Restaurant. The new restaurant has just opened on Lake Street and Harriet Avenue in Minneapolis. Its main goal is to serve the community. But there is a catch: You only pay what you can for the meal you are served, which means no one is ever turned away. "My goal is for people in need to be able to come there and feel as normal as they possibly can," said Anna Wienke, the founder and executive director of Provision.

Wienke came up with this idea



Kalid Ali
Central High School

based on personal experiences. She has been involved with nonprofit organizations throughout her career, including volunteering at St. Stephen's Shelter and the Shakopee women's prison.

"I think anyone can feel isolated, alone and not connected to their community," she said.

That changed when she opened Provision.

The support for the project came directly from her community.

She raised money through fundraising and individual contributions — even the food is donated.

Right now, 70% of the food is donated, and the goal is to get 90% of the food donated by local organizations.

Three professional chefs — Kenny Beck, Heather Mady and



COURTESY ANNA WIENKE

Provision founder and executive director Anna Wienke.

Manny Winston — work for Provision part time. Dave Smith is Provision's program director. The rest of the work is done by volunteers.

Wienke said the result is to "create a dinner experience," especially in a time when families are

not always eating together.

The idea to give as you can might seem unusual, but here's how it works.

Thirty people are served at each meal. There are eight meals a week. Dinner is served at both 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. On Saturday breakfast is served at 10 a.m. and noon.

So let's say on average a table of six people pays \$30 for the visit, which could cover their meal and other people's meals. That would result in \$1,000 of revenue each week, which could help cover the cost of the chefs' salaries and any additional operating costs.

They are also helped by company sponsorships.

There is no set menu. Each meal is prepared that day and available for all. The chefs base their menu on what they can find in the fridge and pantry from donations.

Wienke said the restaurant is trying to keep costs down, so they will avoid meat-related food when possible. They haven't yet secured a donor for meat.

Finding a place to open Provision wasn't easy. Wienke hoped to open in 2018, but it was difficult to find a property that fit her vision. Then she had to work on getting a

nonprofit status and the appropriate licenses.

When Wienke sat down with ThreeSixty in September, Provision had not yet had its grand opening. But, the restaurant had hosted meals for donors, had held a mini fundraiser and had seen a lot of support from the community.

Provision officially opened Oct. 9. According to Wienke, so far at Provision it has been quality over quantity. The restaurant is continuing to increase business each week. The interactions and diversity they were seeking has been happening, she said.

While Provision has had regular volunteers, it is working to get even more people in the door. There's nothing really like it yet, Wienke said, so people don't know what to expect.

Wienke's dream is to expand to four restaurants in 10 years, including locations in Powderhorn, Seward and St. Paul.

In the meantime, though, the Lake Street location will bring together people who might not have met each other but maybe live across the street, or even across Minnesota, as they share a hot meal.

Learn more at provisioncommunity.org.

Feeding All St. Thomas Students

St. Thomas' mobile food pantry addresses food insecurities

BRIGHT YELLOW BINS filled with cereal, crackers, canned fruits and bottled water can be found around the University of St. Thomas campus.

The donated food is collected by Keystone Community Services, whose mobile food shelf visits St. Thomas once a month. Tommie Shelf was started last May to address food insecurity among students. Around 45 percent of



Safiya Mohamed
Central High School

college students experience hunger, according to a study conducted by the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice.

"It was kind of a decision to act swiftly, knowing that this was likely

an issue on campus," said Casey Gordon, the program manager for the Center for the Common Good at St. Thomas, which oversees Tommie Shelf.

The need was made clear during Tommie Shelf's first event; they ran out of groceries after 40 people showed up.

In a school of unequal distribution of resources, some students may feel uneasy seeking assistance.

"Right now, we are in the process of understanding what some of our hurdles may be to make sure that the students who are really, truly experiencing food insecurity don't feel a stigma coming to the food shelf," Gordon said.

Despite the stigma, Tommie Shelf has been able to reach up to 35 people in need each month.

When the truck rolls on to South Campus on the first Tuesday of every month, people can jump



Casey Gordon sorts through donated groceries in front of a yellow Tommie Shelf bin at the University of St. Thomas.

aboard and shop. Each person steps off the bus with up to 25 pounds of groceries.

"You walk in, and it's like a little grocery store," Gordon said. "It's not like here's one random bag

of pasta and a weird can of green beans."

Tommie Shelf is stocked by donations through a partnership with Center for the Common Good and **FOOD PANTRY** continued on page 29

Trailblazer in Food and More

Minnetonka High School freshman using platform to motivate others

ARIANA FEYGIN is a chef, a successful philanthropist and a motivational speaker who has spoken in front of 11,000 kids.

She's only 15 years old.

Feygin, a freshman at

Minnetonka High School, runs a company called Feygin Group, which she launched after competing on the youth cooking show "MasterChef Junior." Feygin hopes to use her experience on the show to inspire others.

She uses her passion for cooking to fuel her passion for giving back.

"I really wanted to do something to leverage my passion for cooking as a platform to help other people," Feygin said. "I really wanted to use what I had gotten from the show and the exposure that I had to do something really good."

Through the Feygin Group, she puts on private dinners and gives the proceeds to cancer charities like the Make-A-Wish Foundation. The



Paula Akakpo
Math and
Science
Academy

dinners are successful at raising funds because she's using skills she learned at restaurants like The French Laundry in Napa Valley.

At home, she uses a cooking style called molecular gastronomy, which is the inclusion of science and experimenting with cooking. It focuses on chemically transforming ingredients into a dish. She also incorporates French cuisine into her cooking, making it an exciting dining experience.

It's all rooted in family

Where does her love for giving back come from? Why does she do it?

"I think both my parents coming from Eastern Europe and (emigrating) here and building a life for themselves, ... they taught me a lot

about how important it is to give back to the community and help others, and if I have this unique power to help other people and inspire them, how important that is."

Her parents' total belief in her has allowed her to pursue another one of her hobbies professionally: public speaking. Feygin's main goal when she gives speeches is to inspire people to follow their dreams.

At the Hy-Vee Exercising Your Character Event, she spoke to 11,000 fourth- and fifth-graders about not letting age be a barrier to their dreams. She estimates she has probably engaged with 30,000 kids across different forums.

"One of the most fulfilling things for me is to be able to show other young people that age is just a number and it shouldn't define your abilities in that."

Some advice she has for others trying to pursue their passions is that though there are many opportunities to give up and accept your failure, you cannot give in.

"I can imagine a whole list of things that I would have never been able to accomplish if I hadn't



COURTESY ARIANA FEYGIN

Feygin dazzles judges on "MasterChef Junior."

persevered and not let those failures take me down," Feygin said. "Because there definitely were a lot of them."

Feygin continues to persevere. In November, she launched feygin-group.com, her business website, and she is selling a brand-new apron line.

With so much accomplished at such a young age, it's easy to forget that like any teenager she's planning her future. What does she have planned?

"In the future, being kind of

like the female version of Gordon Ramsay has always been something that gets really exciting for me," she said. "But then also, I'm really passionate about helping other people. And I really want to continue doing that."

She added, "I know that whatever I end up doing in the future, 10 years down the line, 20 years down the line, I'm still going to have philanthropy and helping other people and inspiring others at the core of everything that I do."

'MasterChef Junior' Contestant Hopes to Inspire

AS THE CLOCK ticked by, 12-year-old Ariana Feygin rushed to finish roasting the lamb. With more than 70 wedding guests waiting to be served, she scrambled to meet their demands.

Feygin, now a freshman at Minnetonka High School, was a participant on the hit series "MasterChef Junior" three years ago. At 15 years old, she has achieved more than most kids her age and wants to inspire others to pursue their lifelong passion.

Her love for cooking began when she was 4 years old.

"What really drew me to it was



Ilhaan Dhegadub
Park Center
Senior High
School

kind of the ability to be so free and creative and expressive through my cooking," Feygin said.

She'd climb countertops in hopes of reaching the stove. She would watch countless cooking shows, such as "MasterChef Junior," and was in awe of the kids on the show.

After seeing an ad pop up for auditions for "MasterChef Junior," Feygin decided she had to be there.

"I kind of had this lightbulb moment because I realized that the things I was seeing the kids do on the show, I was able to do that as well," she said.

The show lets young chefs ages 8 to 13 compete in front of famous chefs, including Gordon Ramsay, Christina Tosi and Aarón Sánchez. It airs in more than 55 countries and is so popular that more than 20,000 kids audition every year. Feygin said she tried out three times before finally making it.

Feygin made it on to season six, wowing judges with her amazing culinary skills.

A LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCE

After winning one of the challenges in the show, she was able to be team captain and lead 10 other contestants. They competed against the other team while catering a real wedding. The guests selected the winner from the two entrees they received from both teams.

"It was incredibly stressful because there was so much pressure on me as a team captain, but it was super, super rewarding at the end when the guests at the wedding were super happy. And then we won that challenge," she said.

The other kids on the show weren't just her competitors. They also became her best friends.

"I met some really incredible kids that I'm still friends with now. We still stay in touch after the show. I think we had so much in common

because of our passion for cooking and our really big personalities."

Feygin also met her culinary idol, Gordon Ramsay, who was one of the judges on the show. To the audience, he's very intense, but to Feygin, it's just another way he shows he's passionate about cooking and that he wants everyone to do well.

Not only has the reality show given her a platform and the opportunity to meet other amazing young chefs, it also changed her as a person. "MasterChef Junior" opened her eyes to what's possible, and through the show she learned so much.

Three years after the show, Feygin continues to pursue her passion of cooking. She also inspires other young people and continues **MASTER CHEF JR**
continued on page 29

Bap and Chicken Restaurant Dishes Up Owner's Passion

"It's ME ON a plate," said John Gleason, owner and head chef at Bap and Chicken.

Located at 1328 Grand Ave. in St. Paul's Macalester-Groveland neighborhood, Bap and Chicken infuses the hottest Korean food trends — a rice bowl called bibimbap and Korean fried chicken — with some American, and particularly Midwestern, flairs.

In addition to the Asian style foods, customers can order an appetizer called Uff-da, which is Spam wrapped in Korean fried bacon with fried pickles, cheese curds and rice tots with ranch dressing.

Gleason was born in South Korea and adopted by a South Minneapolis couple. He remembers watching a lot of Julia Child food shows on TV while growing up and feeling inspired.

"I was cooking ever since I was a young kid, when I had to stand on a chair to reach the burners," he said.



Josie Morss
Lakeville North
High School

So began a dream to open up his own restaurant.

To accomplish that, he studied marketing and management at the University of St. Thomas, where he graduated in 2002. During college his curiosity about different kinds of foods grew, and he tried Korean cuisine for the first time in his life.

To learn the ins and outs of a restaurant business, he performed a variety of jobs at various Twin Cities restaurants, including Izzy's Ice Cream Shop, Macaroni Grill and Giordano's Pizza.

He also began to travel and try new and unique restaurants. He said he ate a lot of great Korean food, which was an inspiration for his new business.

"I'm not sure if it was an 'aha' moment," Gleason said. "Or just, hey, what is the Twin Cities missing as far as the style of food, the type of restaurants? And what can I create that will fill that need?"

Bap and Chicken opened in late July 2019. It's casual dining with counter service. Gleason said it's located in the perfect spot.

"The food doesn't take a long time to make, so people that are walking by can pop in for a quick bite," he said. "There's a lot of businesses around (and employees) can swing by for lunch, early dinner. Then the neighborhood really helps fill out the rest of the business."

Patrons can't miss a display of the "finger heart" on the east wall. The love gesture was made famous by a Korean pop star who used her index finger and thumb to display the shape of a heart to her fans in her audience.

"When I saw it, I knew that



John Gleason, owner of Bap and Chicken, shows some love using the popular "finger heart."

it was fitting for the restaurant, just because of the passion that I put into the food, and the level of service that I want and hospitality (that I want) for the guests," Gleason said. "And I want all the guests that come in to feel loved and to feel warm and to enjoy themselves, just like they would if we were their friends and having them over for dinner."

Gleason also created an adoptee wall at the restaurant, featuring photos of customers who were adopted.

Chad Caruthers, ThreeSixty Executive Director, a Bap and Chicken customer and adoptee, said he felt so welcomed by Gleason that he agreed to have his photo displayed on the wall.

"I think it's good if it makes somebody else decide that they want to be on that wall," Caruthers said. "And almost come out a little bit, if you will, just shout it out a little bit more than they ever have, or maybe feel more comfortable doing that."

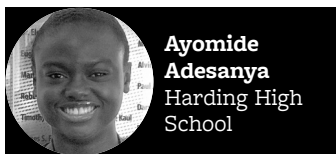
This St. Paul Chef's Got Seoul

FROM SUNRISE TO sunset, John Gleason has business on his mind. Gleason is responsible for everything from cooking to paying the bills to creating new menu items; Gleason is responsible for everything and everyone at Bap and Chicken, his first and newly opened restaurant on Grand Avenue in St. Paul.

Gleason was born in Seoul, South Korea, and raised by his adoptive parents in South Minneapolis. His restaurant's cuisine combines his South Korean heritage with his upbringing:

Think rice bowls and cheese curds.

While he's dreamed of being the boss in the kitchen since he was



Ayomide Adesanya
Harding High
School

a child, it's a lot of work and he's never been busier.

ThreeSixty Journalism sat down with Gleason to learn about a typical day for the restaurateur.

6:30 a.m. Rising from his bed in the morning, Gleason, 39, spends some time going over the sales from the day before. He also checks his emails and text messages to make sure "the ball is rolling in the right direction." From there, he takes his dog, Percy, a chocolate Lab mix, for a walk.



Chef John Gleason poses in a kitchen at the University of St. Thomas, where he graduated in 2002 with a degree in marketing and management.

9 a.m. Arriving at Bap and Chicken, Gleason and his team of four to seven staff members start by eating breakfast together and discussing a plan for how the shift is going to go. At the same time, Gleason is checking the restaurant's food supply orders, making sure

they arrive early and are ready to go for the day. He also checks in with the workers at the front and back of the restaurant, verifying they are in communication about the specials and seasonal vegetables that will be on the menu.

10 a.m. One hour before opening,

Checklists are important ... because sometimes when you're in a routine, it is easy to miss something...

Gleason runs through the checklist. "We have a lot of checklists," Gleason said. "And it really might seem like, hey, you do the same things every day. But checklists are important to make sure that you know you don't miss something. Because sometimes when you're in a routine, it is easy to miss something because you're so used to it you just miss it, or you take it for granted."

11 a.m. Bap and Chicken opens. Gleason splits his time between greeting customers and cooking **BAP AND CHICKEN** *continued on page 29*

Gourmet Hot Dogs With a Twist

Chef Yia Vang forges Hmong recipes, Minnesota traditions

AS A YOUNG boy, Yia Vang thought hot dogs were “the greatest idea ever.”

To Vang, a Hmong refugee born in Thailand and living in Minnesota, an American hot dog represented more than meat wrapped with bread and covered in condiments.

From an early age, Vang recognized that the hot dogs he heard his friends talk about eating at baseball games and his home-cooked traditional Hmong meals were very different.

These days, Vang uses Hmong “food philosophy” to cook his hot dogs.

“Hmong food isn’t a type of food; it’s a philosophy, a way of thinking about food,” Vang said. “We’re going to use all the same elements ... but let’s just try different techniques.”

Thus Banh Mi hot dogs were



Sophia Schach
Minnehaha
Academy

created.

They are made every day at Union Hmong Kitchen, a pop-up restaurant Vang co-founded with his cousin Chris Her.

Don’t get it twisted – this isn’t your random Minnesota State Fair fusion. Vang’s recipes have purpose.

The restaurant’s cuisine centers on the tastes of the current generation of Minnesotan Hmong people. Hmong cooking in Minnesota is going to be different than Hmong cooking in California, Vang said. The way the ingredients are used is always changing.

Growing up, Vang loved food but didn’t like to cook. It was just

a way to pay the bills. But as Vang’s interest in cooking grew, he realized it wasn’t just the delicious food he was passionate about, but the history and cultural aspects, as well.

“I really see how food can really bring a lot of people together,” he said. “That’s how it started for me.”

In cooking Hmong food, he had to reflect on his family’s history.

“Understanding deeper sacrifices my parents made and the things they had to do to get us to this country,” he said.

The Hmong are an ethnic refugee group who do not have a country of their own, which causes constant transition. With varying resources and climates, Hmong food is also constantly developing, Vang said.

Union Hmong Kitchen’s cuisine is also constantly adapting to serve the tastes of the current generation of Minnesotan Hmong people.

“A common struggle for immigrants is keeping their family’s culture and traditions,” Vang said. “I’m merely the vessel that gets to tell the story.”

The restaurant, which will be at Sociable Cider Werks for the next year, serves fried chicken with sweet and sour cucumbers, pickled red onions and Mama Vang’s hot sauce, which is named after his mother.



Chef Yia Vang garnishes dishes at Union Kitchen. Vang believes food brings people together, so he offers personal in-home chef services to customers.

Union Hmong Kitchen also plans to expand to a brick-and-mortar restaurant.

“Food is the ultimate equalizer,” Vang said. “It makes us all the same. It doesn’t matter how poor you are,

what political party you belong to, it doesn’t matter. At the end of the day, we as humans, as a people, we need to eat. And when it comes to food, that makes us all equal.”



Yia Vang immigrated to the United States from Thailand as a young boy. Minnesota is believed to have the largest Hmong population in the United States with about 60,000 Hmong living in the state.

COURTESY YIA VANG

The Cook Who Didn’t Like Cooking is Glad He Had Change of Heart

YIA VANG NEVER enjoyed cooking growing up. He didn’t even enjoy it during college, when it was just a way to pay the bills while he pursued a communications degree. Then, Vang had an epiphany.

Vang, 35, is the co-founder of Union Hmong Kitchen, a pop-up restaurant that has gained national attention despite not having a permanent home.

Vang, whose team cooks at Sociable Cider Werks in Minneapolis, is looking to open his own brick-and-mortar restaurant. So how does a reluctant chef become a celebrated entrepreneur?

“I never wanted to get into it, not even in college,” Vang said. “A lot of my cooking



Ahlani Thomas-Ceron
Cristo Rey Jesuit
High School

experience came through college and it was an easy way to make money.”

Then he realized what Hmong cuisine meant to him.

He recalled how his parents taught him to prepare dishes using a campfire-style cooking method while he was growing up.

“The way that my dad taught me will go from me to hopefully one day my kids,” he said. “I think that’s what being

Hmong really means, passing down our heritage and traditions ... so that the older generations’ legacy, their sacrifices, will be remembered.”

For Hmong elders, those sacrifices included fleeing from Laos with their families during that country’s civil war. Vang’s father, a military leader, helped his troops come to the U.S. from refugee camps in Thailand and start new lives. Vang and his family came with them.

“One thing to know about Hmong people is that they’re always moving,” he said. “We’re always going in different

UNION HMONG KITCHEN

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North Minneapolis Youth Nonprofit Creates Food — and Music — for Change

IN 2016, YOUTH involved with a North Minneapolis-based nonprofit called Appetite for Change created a music video called “Grow Food.” The five-minute video, which was uploaded to YouTube, addressed problems the neighborhood was facing with nutrition and community health.

Three years and more than half a million views later, the organization is releasing an album.

Aaliyah Demry is one of the teens in North Minneapolis working with Appetite for Change to create new music for the album. Demry’s work is an example of the variety of ways AFC raises awareness and creates change in its community.

“It’s like a family,” Demry said of the organization.

Appetite for Change was created in 2012 as a response to a lack of healthy food options in North Minneapolis. At the time, there



Evan Odegard
Nova Classical
Academy

were 38 fast-food restaurants in the neighborhood and only one grocery store.

“The people that own these restaurants, they’re not even from our community,” Demry said. “They don’t even eat the food they serve us.”

Appetite for Change is working to solve these problems. From community gardens to a cafe, AFC is serving people fresh kale, turnips, tomatoes and other vegetables the community didn’t have access to in the past.

AFC also works to uplift its community with a strong focus on youth. Demry sees the change AFC is making in North Minneapolis, but

also how it is helping her friends succeed.

“They want to open their own business,” she said. “Appetite for Change has taught them that.”

The “Grow Food” video is evidence of the impact that AFC’s youth have already had. What started as a fun youth project ended up having what Demry said was a genuine impact on the community and others like it around the country.

“While we were making it, I didn’t think it was going to go viral,” Demry said. “I thought people were going to laugh at us.”

It took two weeks to plan, record and edit the video. As the video became more and more popular on the internet, Demry saw the affect it was having.

“Little kids were singing all the words to our songs,” she said. “I knew they were actually listening to



Aaliyah Demry and friends Nacory Holiday (left), Arieana Moore and Omariasha Houston celebrate the fruits of their work: a crate of newly picked okra grown in an AFC garden.

what we were saying.”

The video’s quick production and great success show the potential for Appetite for Change’s new album, which Demry and others at AFC are hoping will be a hit.

Music is just one of the ways that Appetite for Change creates change in North Minneapolis. Since its beginning, AFC has grown and is now able to help more people in the community. There is no better way to do this, said Demry, than through food.

“We’re all connected, because everybody’s got to eat,” she said.

“Food affects you in so many different ways.”

Appetite for Change’s impact shows the different ways food can affect a community. From improved nutrition to youth empowerment, AFC is reaching more youth across North Minneapolis.

One of these young people is Demry, who is thankful for all the ways Appetite for Change has helped her.

“They believed in my dream,” Demry said. “They helped me get where I want to be.”

A ‘Seed’ Grows and Then Some

DIG A HOLE, place the seeds, fill with soil.

Next comes the waiting.

You can give a seed everything it needs — sun, water, nutrients — but still have a question lingering in the back of your head: Will it ever grow?

Four years ago Aaliyah Demry was a newly planted seed going into her first day at Appetite for Change, a community-based organization in North Minneapolis that uses food as a tool for building health, wealth and social change.

It was the summer before her freshman year of high school, and Demry was looking for a job to fill



Dedeepya Guthikonda
Edina High
School

the hot, empty days. She applied to work at a cafe owned by Appetite for Change called Breaking Bread Cafe. Or so she thought.

“I went in for the interview, and they handed me a spoon to go make lemonade,” Demry said. “Their interview questions weren’t normal stuff.”

Demry was asked big-picture questions, like what changes she wanted to see in the community.

Soon after, she was hired — not for the cafe, but for one of AFC’s seven gardens in North Minneapolis.

At the garden, student workers are taught basic gardening skills and how different plants affect their bodies, building on one of the main pillars of the nonprofit — educating youth on healthy, green eating.

A new revelation for Demry? She found she likes kale. Onions? Not so much.

“Kids my age don’t eat (unhealthy) because they want to; they do because it’s all they have,” Demry said.

In her eyes, unhealthy eating habits and lifestyles get passed down over generations. But at Appetite for Change, Demry is working to change this by using food to build relationships.

“We have so many problems in the world,” Demry said. “But we’re all connected because everybody

gotta eat.”

And this connection is apparent in the tight community she finds at AFC, which she describes as “like family” and “more of a home.”

In this home the team is always busy, taking part in and hosting various events each day, like community-cook events and tending to their gardens. Community-cook events, which occur every other week, are cookouts that are open to anyone and everyone. During the cookouts, attendees discuss changes for the community. When they’re not hosting community-cook events, they’re working in the garden and tending to plants.

Through all these events, Appetite for Change has served as more than a means of healthy eating and community in Demry’s life. It has been a vehicle for change and growth, leading to many opportunities for her along the way.

For example, Demry has always had an interest in rap music.

Stemming from that interest, Demry was among a group of teens at AFC who created a rap song titled “Grow Food” that went viral. They have performed at venues all across the state and country, winning a grant for the organization, as well.

The video allowed Demry to express her sillier side. But in the bigger picture, AFC helped connect Demry to her future aspirations.

“When I had expressed to them my passion and what I wanted to do, they believed in my dream and helped me get to where I want to be,” Demry said.

One of the opportunities made possible through AFC came after Demry talked to Princess Titus, one of the co-founders of Appetite for Change, about her interest in **APPETITE FOR CHANGE**
continued on page 29

Medicinal Plants, Magical Properties

THE OUTDOOR MEDICINAL garden at St. Thomas has plants to treat just about every disease you can name: Madagascar periwinkle and evening primrose for diabetes; coneflower for the cold and flu; and lovage to improve digestion. Many of them have strong herbal scents, like harvested chamomile.

On a September day, Dr. Amy Verhoeven and Catherine Grant ran through the list of plants in the garden. Sitting at a picnic table, Verhoeven and Grant stopped to pick some leaves from the four flower beds of about 70 varieties of plants, as a warm rain fell.

Here plants aren't only for decoration. The garden is an educational space on campus that serves to inspire students' interests in plants' medicinal properties. Recently, a group of 75 students came through for a visit.

"They came out here, and they wanted to smell everything," said



Jacqueline Martinez
Harding High School

Grant, the greenhouse manager. "But a lot of them were just genuinely interested in how can (they) work with plants. It warms my heart."

Grant is in charge of upkeep in every season. She orders plants and knows every single one of them individually. The garden is organized by categories: Native American medicinal plants, modern pharmaceutical plants, modern herbal supplements and traditional medicinal plants. Grant said a majority of the plants in the garden have proven medicinal properties.

Verhoeven studied biochemistry as an undergrad at the University of Iowa because she liked chemistry and biology. She got interested



St. Thomas greenhouse manager Catherine Grant sniffs an herb growing in a garden plot.

in medicinal plants because they combine both of those disciplines. She wanted to build the garden in 2016 for her Plants, Food and Medicine class. Students, she said, frequently want to be in the medical field, but are quick to dismiss the

healing powers of plants. She said the class and Medicinal Garden are good ways to make students realize plants are important for your dietary health and not only as medicine.

And, for some, it's a calming

hobby to have.

"I have a professor who (teaches) computer science. He'll text me or email me and say, 'Do you need anybody to help?'" Verhoeven said. "He just says, 'This **MEDICINAL** continued on page 30

Medicinal Garden Sees Through 'Plant Blindness'

THE SWEET AROMA of a medicinal garden easily overpowers that known feeling of stepping into a bakery.

The Medicinal Garden is nestled outside a greenhouse on the University of St. Thomas campus in St. Paul. Run by biochemistry professor Dr. Amy Verhoeven and greenhouse manager Catherine Grant, the garden features more than 70 plant species. ThreeSixty tagged along on a tour of their classroom-sized outdoor herbal garden.

The purpose of the garden is to raise awareness about improved botanical gardening in the community and the benefits of the many herbs grown there.

"We're really divorced from



Austin Kuo
Wayzata High School

where everything comes from, where our clothing comes from, where our food comes from and where our medicines come from," Grant said. "So the garden (addresses) the sort of plant blindness that we have."

The Medicinal Garden exists not just for actual research, but also for the immersion experience. It offers college students the chance to be more open to the usage of plant life in their day-to-day life.

"I've noticed among my students

that many of them use herbal supplements when they didn't used to," Grant said. She noted, however, that these days people can be labeled a "wacko" if they talk about using herbs and essential oils. Grant believes having more medicinal gardens will help younger generations understand the link between plants and medicines.

The garden is split into four plots:

- Native American, including herbs such as tobacco, coneflower and bloodroot
- Modern Pharmaceutical, such as the opium poppy and the highly toxic foxglove flower
- Traditional Herbal, such as jasmine and lemon balm

- Modern Herbal Supplements, including St. John's wort and marshmallow.

According to Verhoeven, a diet rich in plant material prevents a lot of health disorders that modern medicine tries to solve.

As the cost of modern medicines, including insulin, consistently increases, Grant said it can be more beneficial for Americans to start changing their habits. For example, according to the Health Care Cost Institute, the average daily price of insulin increased from \$7.80 in 2012 to \$15 in 2016. By planting or helping communities with gardens, people can experience a healthier lifestyle and possibly limit the use of expensive medications.

"There's a lot of links between diet and disease," Grant said. "You know, the increasing amount of diabetes, cardiovascular disease — even things like cancer and inflammatory diseases — are tied to poor diets."

But the garden isn't just about

promoting a healthy lifestyle. Verhoeven is a strong supporter of biophilia, the belief that humans have a special connection to nature. She said people have been separated from plants, but not in a literal sense. People spend their daily lives surrounded by flowers, trees and grasses, yet seldom acknowledge the vegetation that keeps them alive.

Verhoeven said medicinal gardens offer an opportunity to bring back the appreciation of nature before it's lost in the future.

"There's a long tradition in nature writing to think that you have to go to Yosemite or Yellowstone or really seek wilderness," Verhoeven said. "But you can actually find that connection to nature in very simple ways. In this little tiny garden, you do find a connection with nature."

Verhoeven said that in the end, botanical gardening should be about kicking back and having fun.

COLLEGE ESSAY BOOT CAMP

Kicking students' college essays into shape!

In College Essay Boot Camp, students use the fundamentals of writing to craft essays ready to submit to a college of their choice. This collection of essays is a product of ThreeSixty's partnerships with Cristo Rey Jesuit High School and Girls Inc. Eureka!

I Became a Leader in a Police Uniform

I SLUMPED IN my swivel chair in the police department's stuffy conference room, contemplating what to do if there was a difficult situation. I imagined a person charging at one of my partners, with a razor-sharp knife in hand. Would I shoot?

Would I not shoot? I placed my hand on my chin and observed the buzzing ceiling lights.

"Team 3, it's your turn," one of my advisers yelled. My imagination paused for a moment. I glanced over at my team and bobbed my head toward the door to signal our scenario was ready. I perked up



Maria Mendel
Cristo Rey
Jesuit High
School

from my chair. "You ready?" I asked my team. One of my teammates reluctantly raised his head from the table. "Sure." I could tell it was going to be a long night.

Every Monday, I had my Police Explorer meeting at the Maple Grove Police Department in Maple Grove, Minnesota. It was normally a good meeting. After school, I

traveled home to change into my neatly folded police uniform. I had a warm feeling in my heart like I was going to a place where I belonged.

We always began every meeting with uniform checks in every meeting. Didn't bring your notepad? Twenty pushups for everybody. Didn't have black socks? Twenty more pushups. Didn't wear the right uniform? We were lucky if we only had to do 20 more pushups. They made me feel immobile next morning. After our grueling checks, it was time to work with our teams in police scenarios.

Working with the scenarios was often tedious. It was designed like a real police situation. We even had to fill out paperwork or write a police report. Teamwork was in need of improvement, and people seemed secluded, including me. I made my teammates do the hardest tasks for me, while I slacked on even the easiest tasks, such as fingerprinting. Along with that, our communication

was lacking. Like, wow, this team literally stood in silence until a role-player or judge pointed them in the right direction. It felt as if we needed our hands held during the scenario.

I remember one experience in particular: a search-and-arrest scenario at our state competition. The state competition was our biggest event. Our advisers and leadership made it sound intimidating – more than 1,000 Explorers from cities and counties all over the state were attending, and some performed better than us. We had to be flawless in our procedures and, most importantly, we had to win. This unfortunately did not happen with my team. We were awkwardly scattered around the place, had poor crime scene control and sloppy search methods. I felt a fluttering feeling in my chest after the scenario ended. Tears formed in my eyes, and I leaned my head backward against the wall. It felt as if I had tainted the reputation of my police department.

We had to change. We had to communicate more efficiently, properly perform procedures and prioritize officer safety.

As days became months, my team began to improve. I felt I had improved, too. I used constructive criticism in my performance, and I was open to different roles in scenarios. No longer was I the person who stood in the corner, waiting for my commands. I was now the person who took charge in a situation, and I made sure I was in control. For the first time in my life, I finally felt like a leader.

For me, Police Explorers was an opportunity to grow and learn from the worst of mistakes. I developed my ideas about teamwork and how valuable it is in life. I also realized self-improvement is always an option and mistakes happen, even when you're the one in control. Police Explorers has shown me the value of teamwork and resilience, both in Explorers and in life.

Grandma's Room

I CAN REMEMBER feeling the loud silence as I walked into the hospital room. The sight of my grandma hooked up to machines scared me. I didn't think it would be serious. I had hoped I would still be able to make it to my school dance. I squeezed my way to the back where counters became seats and walls were solid support to lean on.

"What happened?" I asked. "She had a stroke," my brother answered me. "She's in a coma now," my aunt chimed in. With those words, the reality of the possibility of her death hit me hard.

Once I left the hospital, I hated myself. I thought of all the times I didn't spend with my grandma. My friends and I heard a knock at



Jadelyn Yang
Girls Inc.
Eureka!

Yang turned this essay into a digital audio story. You can listen to it at threesixty.stthomas.edu/student-video-radio/digital-audio-storytelling-camp

the front door of my house, but nobody was there. I was sure it was my grandma checking up on me and making sure I'd be OK without her.

A few days later, my family decided they would take my grandmother off life support. We would do it the next day after spending the

night in the hospital waiting room.

"Wake up early tomorrow. We all have to be in the room," my aunt said to us.

That night, all the adults were preparing us grandkids for the next day. I remember crying and the hopelessness that shot through me. I laid on the floor until I fell asleep. I slept in the small corner by the heater.

The next day, the walk to grandma's hospital room felt like it took forever. My heart raced, and I wanted to cry. When I entered the room, it was packed with almost 30 people squeezed in, with the grandkids in the back while the adults swarmed the front, hugging my grandma. The tears dripped down our faces. I watched as my aunts shrieked in pain. They wanted the grandkids to say one last word to my grandma, but I couldn't. I was scared and hurt and everything felt

broken, yet I couldn't even gather the courage to say goodbye to her. Throughout the days leading to my grandmother's death, I had cried only once or twice, but in that small hospital room that day my eyes flooded with tears and snot dripped down my face. My guard had finally broken down.

As I watched my grandma take her last breath, a wave of relief went over me; she wouldn't have to suffer anymore. I saw how my family came together to support each other. I saw the love that radiated from each one of us. I saw how raw and human my family could be.

It's hard to talk about my feelings because in typical Hmong families we don't express the way we feel. There's a collective agreement to put family first before individuals. But when my grandma passed away, I finally broke the unspoken rule about feelings: I spoke to my

grandmother's spirit and told her I was sorry for not speaking to her more. I allowed myself to break down and cry, something I don't usually do.

My grandmother's passing taught me to express myself, appreciate my family and to take advantage of the time I have. I've started to say what's on my mind and advocate for my needs. I've also learned to tell friends and family that I love them and to be more open about my struggles with school and mental health. I've started to focus more on creating memories with family and friends by taking pictures and videos or going out on fun dates with them. I also concentrate more on school and prioritize my education more. Life is short, and there are always obstacles to overcome. My grandmother's death showed me the patience and perseverance to take on anything.

A Culture of Disrespect

WHEN MY CO-WORKER tried to dodge a Happy Meal box that was thrown at her, I realized what kind of people I was dealing with.

The customer was about to throw a slushie when another McDonald's employee pulled out her phone and threatened to call the police. This was enough to scare off the box-thrower.

This particular ordeal began because the customer didn't like how many times we repeated her order back to her.

Welcome to the wonderful world of fast food.

Customers are frequently disrespectful and sometimes verbally abusive to fast-food workers. This poor treatment has manifested itself into workers in concerning ways. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Association has found the food service industry has the highest rate of drug use, with an estimated 16.9% of workers abusing substances.

My younger sister works at Subway, and she once told me about how a customer made her cry. I haven't cried yet, but plenty of customers have brought me close to it. A customer explaining to me that everyone I worked with was an idiot is one painful example.

Some customers see this as totally acceptable behavior. Our society has been conditioned to view fast-food workers as modern



Sam Stensgaard
Roseville Area High School

day peasants — people who are paid very little and therefore are entitled to very little respect. It's not just teenagers who are treated this way. According to the National Employment Law Project, 40% of fast-food workers are over 25 years old.

I see maybe 200 customers in a single day, and with that sample size, you can start to figure out certain characteristics of what makes a rude customer. It's cheap food, so plenty of customers don't have a lot of money. Maybe they work dead-end jobs that don't pay much more than mine. In their worlds, they are the downtrodden and disrespected, too. They know what it's like to work a job where customers treat them like dirt.

However, when they pull up to the drive-thru window, they're the ones with the power. For the first time in their day, they get to interact with people they don't have to be nice to. They wield this power to yell at strangers when I give them the wrong size of fry, or the wrong order. Never mind that I was also running around with a broom at the time, hustling to take an order. Because if I told them to wait, they



JACQUELINE MARTINEZ

BUSINESS PROFESSOR WEIGHS IN

Stephen Vuolo, a University of St. Thomas professor in the Opus College of Business, weighed in with his expertise about customer service and the fast-food industry.

"I think that good customer service starts with the leader on-site. People follow behaviors that are modeled, not what is cited by management if the actions are not evident.

"Everyone who is customer-facing needs to portray the desired brand image and be customer centric with their approach. Companies need to spend time and energy not only training their people but measuring their job satisfaction."

Vuolo said the fast-food industry does suffer from high employee turnover, which "has several effects; the employees are constantly being trained, which adds stress to the environment. It may lead to the impression that they don't have to care about the employee long term because they are going to leave anyway, which then becomes self-fulfilling."

would have another reason to yell at me.

These customers seem to believe that customer service really means customer servant. Because they know they can get away with it. What can employees do? Some are younger than 16, a couple are older than 60, but all are forced to pretend that the customer is always right. So we stand still and apologize as we're told we are

incompetent and should be ashamed of ourselves.

For that, I make \$10 an hour.

Most of us were told at least once or twice in school we needed to get our act together, or we would be "flipping burgers" when we were adults. So, we shouldn't be surprised when society treats the actual burger flippers as failures, dropouts and people too stupid or lazy to be doing anything else. Even

though our job can be just as stressful and difficult as other higher paying ones.

Naturally this leads to the employees showing up to work every day with all the enthusiasm of a death row inmate. How can workers be expected to take pride in working in such harsh circumstances? That lack of pride causes a high turnover rate; new, young employees stream in seemingly every week, which leads to new people making mistakes and being berated for it.

People who have stormed into a McDonald's to "give the manager a piece of my mind" because there was cheese on their hamburger might see their behavior as totally reasonable. Fast-food employees are paid to do their job — if they make a mistake, they should know about it, right? Well maybe, if you're being respectful. Too many customers think that order mishaps give them the right to be a jerk.

Everyone is entitled to a certain level of respect — to not be yelled at unnecessarily, not to be scolded or called names. The job they do does not change that. What someone is paid, or what uniform they wear, is not a license to treat them worse than someone else. It's not like anyone ever throws stuff at their bankers.

Here's a very simple way of looking at it. Would you treat your co-workers like this? Friends? People on the street? If you say no, then reassess how you act toward people who work in fast food because they aren't any different.

If you say yes, here's your burger, have a nice day!

Fast Food, Different Nation

I'D EATEN AT KFC only once in the United States. I was greeted with dirty floors, inexperienced staff and subpar food.

But during a family visit to China late last year, on a ride from the train station with my cousin and uncle, I noticed three KFCs within a couple of blocks of each other in the town of Xuanhua, in the



David Xu
Wayzata High School

northwestern Hebei province. With a population of about 274,000, this city is a little over three times the size of Duluth. I pointed this out to

my cousin, and he told me two new KFCs were built there in the past few years.

That night, my cousin, my brother and I decided to test our luck at a local Xuanhua KFC.

We walked into the restaurant, and I was greeted by a warm smile from the hostess. The restaurant was nearly double the size of most

KFC restaurants in America, was well staffed with a large crew. I could see my reflection on the spotless floor, and the room was packed full of people. The overall welcoming environment contrasted greatly to my KFC experience in America.

I ordered a fried chicken leg and chicken wing with a side of mashed potatoes. My cousin ordered a Peking duck burrito, using an app on his phone to place our order. I saw many traditional Chinese foods, like rice dishes, soymilk drinks, egg

tarts and fried dough sticks. The menu had all of the foods present in American KFC restaurants, but added new items akin to the local tastes and culture.

Our food arrived within a few minutes and I was excited to dig in. A fragrant steam came from the fried chicken box, and the potatoes were covered with a dark, rich gravy. The chicken was crispy, moist and well-seasoned. I reflected on my experience with KFC in the U.S. and

FAST FOOD continued on page 30



COURTESY ARIANA FEYGIN

Ariana Feygin announces her teammates' individual jobs for the wedding competition.

MASTER CHEF JR from page 22

her philanthropy work.

She's traveled across the country, sharing her story with thousands of kids. She has also raised thousands of dollars and has helped countless organizations, such as the Make-A-Wish Foundation, Children's Hospital and Children's Heart Link.

Altogether, Feygin estimates she has raised more than \$500,000 with the help of her

siblings and others since she appeared on "MasterChef."

"For other teenagers that are getting started, I think after you find what you're really passionate about, just having the courage to persevere through the failures is something that's really important, too," she said.

Feygin continues to spread that message and hopes that 20 years down the line, she'll continue to inspire people.

FOOD PANTRY from page 21

Keystone Community Services. Keystone supplies the Center with food and resources to distribute to the community. The Center then holds a food drive every month to collect food for Keystone.

The need for this initiative may be surprising given the school's affluence. The cost of attending the university for a year as an undergraduate is more than a St. Paul resident's average income. The campus itself is well-kept, spacious and modern, with a student center that cost \$66 million.

"We are a university of privilege," Gordon said. "We want to get the neighborhood involved in donating, whether that's monetary or donating food to the food shelf."

Hunger is not something that is unique to St. Thomas. Around 11.9% of Ramsey County residents and 10.5% of Hennepin County residents identify as food insecure, according to

statistics from Feeding America. It is also affecting other college students around the Twin Cities. The University of Minnesota, Normandale Community College and Augsburg University have their own food pantries.

Because of these statistics, St. Thomas plans on expanding the shelf to its Minneapolis campus, as well. The Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society plans to set up bins on the Minneapolis campus where people can donate nonperishables.

Gordon said she wants to see Tommie Shelf thrive.

"(My) biggest hope is to raise awareness for people who will need the service and for people who can support the service," she said.

For now, the bright yellow bins and colorful food mobile will be around to serve a hungry campus.

If you're interested in donating, you can drop off food in a yellow bin on the St. Thomas campus or you can donate at keystoneservices.org.

APPETITE FOR CHANGE

from page 25 journalism. Titus connected Demry to a mentor in the communications department of AFC.

From there, "I got to go down to the Twins stadium and meet with people who worked in the communications box and that are commentators ... see how they work and spend the day with them," Demry said.

Additionally, AFC was able to connect Demry to ThreeSixty Journalism, which she has been involved with for two years now. Demry has participated in many of the organization's summer camps, as well as the school-year News Team program.

It isn't just her life that she's been changed by AFC. Demry has witnessed firsthand the ways AFC has changed the people around her, her friends and her community. Demry said the garden, as a safe space, has helped youth distance themselves from dangerous circumstances, such as gang affiliation.



THREESIXTY JOURNALISM

Aaliyah Demry tends to okra plants in the garden, while friend Arieana Moore watches.

She notes that many of her friends at AFC now aspire to be farmers and open businesses or restaurants.

"You never hear of a black kid that wants to be a farmer instead of being on the streets," she said.

Now in her senior year at Irondale High School, Demry is grateful for everything she's received from Appetite for Change

— the opportunities, relationships and platform to create change.

And although she started as a "seed," Demry has bloomed.

"When I first started, I didn't expect to be there that long," Demry said. "Food has connected me with so many things — to my career path and (to) the life I want to live."

BAP AND CHICKEN from page 23

during the lunch hour, which goes until 2 p.m.

3 p.m.: Gleason and his team prepare for the dinner rush. "We make sure that we clean up and restock," said Gleason, adding that he makes sure to do all the orders for the next day if there are any.

4 p.m. First-shift workers head home. Second-shift workers begin their day and take over. Gleason recharges. "I kind of start to do the same thing," he said. "Check in with all the employees. If there's any prep that has to be done still, talk to them about, 'OK, this still needs to get done.'"

Gleason also makes sure to communicate with staff about specials, features and any late deliveries that are coming to the restaurant.

5 p.m. After a final pre-dinner cleaning and going through the dinner checklist, the staff gathers for a meeting and begins to welcome the evening rush of customers.

7 p.m. or 8 p.m. After the dinner rush, Gleason gets his staff into prep mode again. "We'll clean up. We'll restock. Do whatever cleaning needs to get done. And make sure that the next day is ready," Gleason said. "At night, we go through and

see what we have on hand and see what needs to get prepped for the next day. And then we clean up and get out of there."

If that doesn't sound stressful and exhausting, Gleason still has to make time for staff scheduling, paying bills, forecasting for the week and month, and answering up to 50 emails and 20 phone calls a day.

"I think staying busy is fun," Gleason said. "I like the challenge."

When he arrives home, Gleason gets most creative. He is always developing new menu items.

A few months after the restaurant's opening, the reviews are pretty good.

One Minneapolis resident wrote on Yelp that her pork belly bulgogi "had lots of depth to the flavor and fresh tasting. We will definitely be back to try more of the items on the menu."

Another patron from St. Paul gave it five stars for its updated and lively decor and great customer service.

"The goal of Bap and Chicken is to really be a strong part of the neighborhood, to serve great food, to have every guest that comes in leave happy. And if it becomes bigger than that, that's OK. But if it doesn't, that's OK as well," Gleason said.

UNION HMONG KITCHEN

from page 24

areas, because that's how, culturally, we were and that's also how our food is — our food is always transitioning.”

And yet, it wasn't until eight years ago, while he was a student at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, that he discovered his passion for cooking. He realized how much it meant to him and his family; he compares it to being in a relationship.

“Cooking is like that ex-girlfriend that you keep breaking up with, but you somehow end up back together,” he said.

Vang said the food he created was often inspired by other cultures' ingredients or dishes. He called this “forging, not fusion.”

For example, Vang serves a Bahn Mi hot dog that combines an American favorite with Southeast Asian ingredients and presentation. He uses a local meat provider, Andy Peterson, of Peterson Craftsman Meats.

“We just take their hot dogs, and



COURTESY VIA VANG

Hmong American Yia Vang began working as a chef after graduating from the University of Wisconsin La Crosse in 2010. Vang drew inspiration for his cuisine at Union Hmong Kitchen from his childhood as a Hmong refugee and his experience growing up in Minnesota.

then we just did the elements that we love ... like all the pickled veggies, the jalapeños,” he said. “Again, we always want to tell the story, so

it's just like the story of (Hmong people) being influenced by this American culture.”

Another dish, Hmong BBQ Pork,

features tender pieces of pork, pickled red onions, spicy Tiger Bite sauce and General Vang Pao sauce, a play on the popular Chinese

FAST FOOD from page 28

realized that I was having a better experience at KFC in China.

At this point, I was wondering why KFC was so different in China and what strategies businesses use to change their restaurants.

Muer Yang, an associate professor at the University of St. Thomas Department of Operations and Supply Chain Management, says KFC employs a business strategy called localization, in which restaurants change their food and menu to cater to local Chinese tastes.

KFC, the first Western fast-food company to move into China, tries to appear as a Chinese brand rather than a Western brand.

“I would say KFC was an important restaurant and a famous one in China,” Yang said.

Many traditional Chinese comfort foods were incorporated into the menu and the taste of the food was adjusted to suit the palates of Xuanhua residents, Yang said.

“I think KFC nowadays in China is very different from KFC in (the) 2000s when I was still in China,” Yang said. “Now if I look at the menu only and cover the name of KFC in China, I would think

it is a menu from a local Chinese restaurant rather than an American restaurant.”

Food is a central part of society and adapting to regional cultures is essential to winning over customers. The most important part of any Chinese holiday is the food. During holidays like Valentine's Day and Christmas, KFC is a popular option.

“I was actually a little bit surprised that the KFC in the U.S. was a very low-end restaurant, which was quite different from my impression in China,” Yang said.

During Chinese New Year, my grandparents would video call me and show me the food they prepared. Every time I spoke with my grandpa over the phone, he told me about all the food he would have ready for me when I returned to China.

I clung to the term localization, which helped me understand why KFC was changing and growing in China while KFC in the United States was, well, still KFC. A KFC spread in China actually might be something my grandpa would have ready to serve me on my next visit to Xuanhua.

MEDICINAL from page 26

is just so peaceful for me and it makes me feel good. I'll go back to my computer now.”

“And I think it's like that for a lot of the students.”

Students get interested in plants in different ways. Students who were inspired by research papers about how opium synthesizes morphine came down to the Medicinal Garden to learn more about the poppies. That's what the Medicinal Garden is intended to be — a resource for those seeking to learn more about plants.

They also have mandrakes, which were referenced in the Harry Potter books and movies.

No, they don't actually scream when you pull them out of the pot, as seen in the movies, but their roots are big. Some grow to be as big as a baby. Europeans used to believe these roots were special because of their shape. They were traditionally used for anxiety and sleep problems.

All these plants have a history of being used as medicine. Grant said in the traditional medicinal plant bed, they have many flowers with European origins. Verhoeven



THREESIXTY JOURNALISM/CHRISTINE NGUYEN

Dr. Amy Verhoeven and Catherine Grant pose in the greenhouse next to coneflowers (left) and other herbs.

pointed out how many of the plants originally had officinalis in their scientific Latin names because in medieval Europe monastery-run pharmacies, called officinae, used these particular plants for their strong medicinal properties. Examples of officinalis plants include sage, lavender and oregano.

There are many things to learn in

American dish General Tso's chicken. The sauce was named after the infamous military leader who rallied Hmong soldiers during the Laotian Civil War. Vang also serves kimchi fried rice — fried rice with a Korean twist.

Vang started his business with just \$350 in the bank. While his family was also supportive, Vang recalled how his friend Josef Harris was the one who gave him the “kick in the butt” not to compromise his food or “dumb down his flavors.”

“He kind of helped me maneuver through (the process),” he said.

In the future, Vang plans to build a brick-and-mortar restaurant and to keep working hard.

“It started from the idea of saying that food is the ultimate equalizer. It makes us all the same,” he said. “It doesn't matter how rich or how poor you are, what political party you are a part of, at the end of the day, we as humans, as people, need to eat. And when it comes to food, we are equal.”

the Medicinal Garden, but it's still an outdoor garden. The public can hang out in the garden on weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

They also face the same problems as normal gardens “Rabbits,” Grant said with a smile. “That's why there's this elaborate block on the rabbit entry.”

She paused: “Seems like it hasn't worked.”



ThreeSixty Journalism

2019 PROGRAM YEAR REPORT

June 1, 2018-May 31, 2019

Student Demographics

African.....	10%	Hispanic.....	32%
African-American.....	29%	Caucasian.....	5%
Asian American.....	17%	Multiracial.....	7%

Young Alumni Job and Internship Highlights

- Pioneer Press
- MPR News
- WCCO TV
- Star Tribune
- Center for Prevention at Blue Cross Blue Shield MN
- MinnPost
- KRSM Radio
- Minnesota Timberwolves
- American Public Media Group
- Clarity Coverdale Fury
- Fox 9 News
- ESPN XGames
- The Current
- Andersen Corporation
- Greenspring Media

Quotes from ThreeSixty Alumni

"I'm very thankful that ThreeSixty has heavily supported me throughout many exciting opportunities, which include directing TommieMedia and interning at Under-Told Stories Project at PBS NewsHour in the fall 2019!"

- Samantha HoangLong, 2017 ThreeSixty Scholar

"ThreeSixty was the start of a journey for me. Thinking about how far I have come as a writer and journalist with the program is amazing, but the connections and relationships I have built within it are somehow even more valuable."

- Zekiah Chaudhry, 2018 ThreeSixty Scholar

"ThreeSixty has made dreams of college a reality. I am so excited to be at St. Thomas in the fall and just know that at the end of the long (but fun) four years I will be doing something I truly am passionate about in a field that needs more people of color and females."

- Heidi Sanchez Avila, 2019 ThreeSixty Scholar



THANK YOU!

The Great MN Media Get-Together

Hosted by Matt Belanger, KSTP TV 5 Eyewitness News Anchor



Thank you for a great 2019 Great MN Media Get-Together. The event featured award-winning writer Kao Kalia Yang and raised more than \$65,000 for ThreeSixty Journalism. We appreciate your loyalty, passion and generosity!



PHOTOS COURTESY UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS



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