

Force defended

As a mutual aid commander, the SLP police chief defended force used at protests in Brooklyn Center. **Page 7**



A field day

The Eden Prairie Eagles swooped in on the Hopkins Royals' track-and-field team's ambitions. **Page 28**

Thursday, April 29, 2021

March highlights anti-bias focus of SLP early learning program

Children held signs and marched around Central Community Center

By **SETH ROWE**
seth.rowe@apgecm.com

Participation in the Black Lives Matter at School Early Childhood Symposium last year helped prompt St. Louis Park educators to organize a march for children last week.

Originally scheduled April 13 to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the Week of the Young Child, the set of marches April 20 prompted pre-

kindergarten children to march around Central Community Center while holding signs about caring and singing songs about love and the classic tune "The More We Get Together."

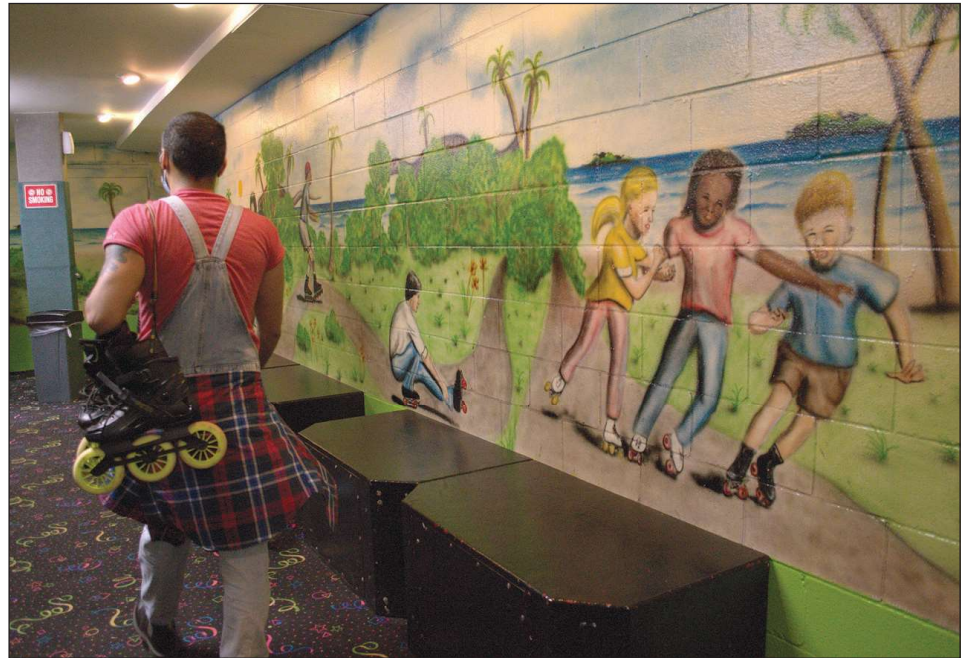
Some St. Louis Park early childhood educators and other staff attended the symposium in New York in February 2020. While there, they

See **March**, Page 13



(SUN PHOTO BY SETH ROWE)

A student in St. Louis Park's early learning program grins while marching around Central Community Center April 20.



(SUBMITTED PHOTO BY AUDREY KAY PROSSER)

An in-line skater walks past a mural in the entryway of the St. Louis Park Roller Garden April 25.

After 52 years, St. Louis Park Roller Garden reaches its last laps

Longtime business will close May 8

By **SETH ROWE**
seth.rowe@apgecm.com

Good times have rolled on at the Roller Garden in St. Louis Park for 52 years, but they'll brake to a stop Saturday, May 8.

The owners of the longtime entertainment establishment announced on their website, roller-garden.com, that they would close the doors for the final time on that date.

"It has been a privilege to see all the smiles and happiness of our skaters, watching them grow up, bring their children, grandchildren and even great grandchildren," the

notice says. "This was an incredibly difficult decision which was not taken lightly."

Bill Sahly, who owns the business with his wife, Pat Sahly, and her sister, Colleen Johnson, said they had considered ending the roller rink's run for its 50th anniversary.

"We kept on running it, but we kept on getting older and more tired," Bill Sahly said in an interview.

He noted the second employee he hired in 1969, who worked as facilities maintenance director, retired last November, leaving a void. A second shutdown ordered by Gov. Tim Walz that month amid a surge in COVID-19 cases caused the business to be closed during the holiday season, and Bill

Sahly noted the rink could open at only 25% capacity when allowed to reopen in mid-January.

"A roller rink is not like a high-end designer store of some kind," he said. "You're dealing with the masses, and that's who we serve. We love our customers. It's family, children, church groups, school groups, Girl Scout groups, YMCAs and YWCAs. That's the heart of the business."

Generations of families have visited, he added.

"It's their thing, their activity," Bill Sahly said. "Their friends are there. They loved it. They're like family to us. So, it's bittersweet, and we reached the point where we can't

See **Roller**, Page 15

Volume 51, No. 19

Index

Arts-Page 3
Opinion-Pages 4-5
Public Safety-Page 5
Classifieds-Pages 17-24
Sports-Pages 28-31

Sun Newspapers | 10917 Valley View Road
Eden Prairie, MN 55344
sailor.mnsun.com

facebook.com/MNSunSailor

@MNSunSailor

PUBLIC NOTICES: See pages 26-27

Roller

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

run with the crowds.”

He also noted operational challenges, with a small parking lot and complaints by residential neighbors about the noise from the business’s sound system and customers who are leaving.

Of the sound system, Bill Sahly said, “We’d love to see somebody pick up the reins and open a rink in a central location in a nonresidential area where they can really run it, run the people in and let it rip.”

The buyer of the building, Kenwood Gymnastics Center, has expressed interest in the facility repeatedly since 2019, Sahly noted.

After another offer and while bills continued to mount amid the pandemic, Bill Sahly said, “We were worn down and we thought, you know what, it’s time. I’m not old, but I did turn 80 on St. Patrick’s Day.”

He said he and his wife want to enjoy more time with their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

The family’s other skating rink, the Woodbury Fun Zone, remained closed after the first shutdown in 2020. Maintenance and tax costs that have continued as the family seek a buyer for that site have also contributed to financial constraints.

The owners of Kenwood Gymnastic Center, which currently operates at 3440 Beltline Blvd. in St. Louis Park, plan to keep the Roller Garden building and create a historical display on the wall.

“They love our beautiful hardwood maple floor and the history of the building,” Bill Sahly said.

The building originally opened in 1930 as an indoor riding academy with horses, according to the St. Louis Park Historical Society. Pat Sahly’s father bought the facility after it had become an early indoor tennis site.

Bill Sahly recalled, “I was a salesman at the time, and he said, ‘How’d you like to run a roller rink?’ I said, ‘Well, that would be interesting.’ Little did I know 52 years later I’d still be there.”

The facility hosted both indoor tennis and roller skating for a period, with

Bill Sahly describing a system he rigged up with posts, cables, nets and a cart with wheels that he said could transform the floor from one activity to the other in 2 minutes. Although tennis went away in the mid-1970s, he recalled days in which a bird or two that had made it through holes in the windows flew around during games.

“It was challenging tennis, but it was indoors,” he said.

The St. Louis Park Fire Department used fire hoses on the interior – with the power switched off – to clean the building before annual smelt fries.

The Historical Society documents the building’s colorful history, including a jam-packed Halloween dance in 1963 with The Trashmen, known for the hit “Surfin’ Bird,” with such a large crowd that the building’s glass front wall shattered. The article is at slphistory.org/pastime.

Since the closing announcement, Bill Sahly said comments on social media have been flooding in with memories of meeting significant others there

See **Roller**, Page 16



(SUBMITTED PHOTO BY AUDREY KAY PROSSER)

Patrons line up to visit the St. Louis Park Roller Garden April 25. The venerable venue will close Saturday, May 8.



(SUN PHOTO BY SETH ROWE)

Right: A dinosaur statue that once had been displayed outside the Roller Garden, including on the roof, hangs out in front of the skating floor April 25.



Crayola Experience A FULL DAY OF FAMILY FUN!

WITH 23 CREATIVE ATTRACTIONS!

Present this coupon & save **\$4 OFF** ADMISSION
Code: CESAVINGS64
Exp: 5/31/2021
Not valid with any other discounts or offers. Not valid online.

Mall of America | CrayolaExperience.com | 952.851.5800

Your Community Your News

Print • Digital • Social

SUN SAILOR

Minnetonka, Hopkins, Plymouth, Wayzata, Eden Prairie, St. Louis Park, Deephaven, Excelsior, Medicine Lake, Tonka Bay, Shorewood, Greenwood

APG EAST CENTRAL MINNESOTA

To subscribe: 763.712.3544 • servicecenter@apgecm.com

Tired of throwing your weight around?

American Heart Association Fighting Heart Disease and Stroke

Exercise.



(SUBMITTED PHOTO BY AUDREY KAY PROSSER)

Josh and Haley Kukovec skate April 25 at the St. Louis Park Roller Garden.



(SUBMITTED PHOTO)

A young Roller Garden customer has no shortage of tickets for the business's arcade.

Roller

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

and thousands of children's birthday parties.

The roller rink attracted visitors from Minneapolis and many other suburbs, including many children of immigrants who enjoyed the activity, he said.

Over the decades, the music format has changed, from an organ to rock 'n' roll on 45s and LPs to cassettes, CDs and then computers. Bill Sahly recalled the days that the Woodstock generation used to come into the rink. When raggedly bell-bottom pants ended up becoming

caught in the rollerskate wheels, he said his mother would trim the fringe to prevent mishaps.

"That was like asking them to trim their bangs," Bill Sahly said with a laugh.

In later years, the owners hosted parties themed with Michael Jackson and Prince. For a "Purple Rain" party, they inflated a waterbed hung from the ceiling with purple sheets to give away as a grand prize. Other parties featured bicycles and a large yellow rubber raft hung from the high ceiling as prizes.

Pat Sahly sold millions of tickets to the rink over time.

"We've managed to work together for 52 years which not every married couple can say," Bill Sahly said. "We've met a lot of great people – a lot of great people – and had a lot of laughs."

The business is planning a "Week of Goodbyes" May 2-8. More information will be available on the website, rollergarden.com.

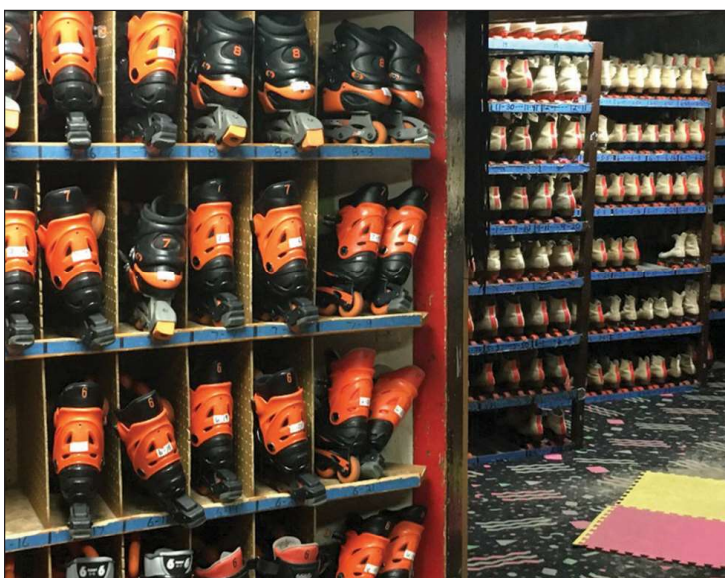
The online statement says, "It will be extremely difficult to say goodbye. We hope that we have been able to provide memories that will last a lifetime, as you have done for us."

Follow the Sun Sailor on Facebook at facebook.com/mnsunsailor.



(SUN PHOTO BY SETH ROWE)

Patrons skate at the Roller Garden for one of the last weekends before it closes.



(SUBMITTED PHOTO)

Inline skates and roller skates are available for rent at the Roller Garden.



AMAZING HEARING AIDS, AMAZING PRICE!

BUY DIRECT FOR WHOLESALE PRICES

BUY 1, GET 1 FREE!

- A fraction of the price of other leading brands
- High-quality, rechargeable, and nearly invisible
- Noise filtering & reduction technology
- Extremely easy to use
- No doctor appointments needed. No audiologist visits required. No fittings necessary.
- Ships direct to your door in 7 days



844-734-0344

For mild hearing loss. These are Class 1 hearing aid devices under FDA regulations per 21 C.F.R. sec 874 3300.



(SUBMITTED PHOTO)

The Roller Garden building hosted indoor tennis in the past.