



The Blue Line averaged over 32,000 riders a day last year. (Photo by Terry Faust)

Ridership was setting records... then there was a pandemic

Metro Transit says it is a good thing fewer people have been using light rail since March

By CHLOE PETER

Normally, a summer day in July or August would mean big business for the Metro Transit Light Rails. Twins' games would bring in riders to Target Field or concert goers might take the light rail to US Bank Stadium or the Target Center. Even just summer activities in local neighborhoods, would bring in business to the Green or Blue Lines. Local families often use the light rail for groceries, doctor's visits, or entertainment like going out to dinner. But, the light rail lines have been seeing fewer riders since COVID-19, and Metro Transit says that's a good thing.

"We want people to exercise social distancing. A packed car does no one any good," said Metro Transit public relations manager Howie Padilla.



According to Howie Padilla, there are only about 5-6 riders a car right now.

In the last few years, Metro Transit has seen record ridership. The number of riders continued to go up until the pandemic. Last year, there were more than 14 million riders on the Green Line which averaged at 44,000 riders each day. And, on the Blue Line, there were more than 11 million riders with an average of over 32,000 on a given weekday.

METRO TRANSIT >> 6-7

Pregnant and parenting during COVID-19: THERE ARE NO MANUALS FOR THIS

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

Ingrid Rasmussen had everything well-organized for her second pregnancy, and the first two trimesters went according to plan. When the Stay-at-Home Order was issued, Rasmussen was six months along. With her husband and their three-year-old daughter, she settled in to being at home.

As the senior pastor of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, one of Rasmussen's new responsibilities was to help the church transition into lockdown mode. Sunday services and all other face-to-face gatherings were quickly put on-line. Some two months later George Floyd was murdered. She said, "The church went from being completely closed to completely open in about 10 minutes."

Located one block from the 3rd Precinct, the most immediate need of the church was to provide space for a medic station. Holy Trinity staff welcomed teams of medics and helped them set up in the church community room. Suddenly Rasmussen was back at work, and in a COVID-19 exposure situation that could only be described as very high risk.

The medics brought resources to help with emergency needs around the clock. People coming in were treated for tear gas exposure to eyes and skin; injuries resulting from being shot with rubber bullets, scrapes and bruises; and emotional trauma sustained from being around the Third Precinct both before and after it burned.

None of this was part of Rasmussen's pregnancy plan.

She explained, "During the unrest, it was all-hands-on deck for pastors from our church, and clergy from other faith communities, too. We assisted the medics and offered pastoral care to anyone who needed it. Frequently people came into the church just for a moment of silence."

"Not insignificantly, after fires overtook so many of the nearby buildings, we had one of the few working toilets in the neighborhood."

A movement worth leaving quarantine for

Rasmussen and her husband agreed that supporting the



Ingrid Rasmussen and her six-week-old son Lars, carried through and delivered in the time of COVID. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

Black Lives Matter movement was worth leaving quarantine for, even though they both knew that exposure to tear gas, and many other things Rasmussen would encounter, weren't good for a pregnant woman. She remembered the restrictions of her first pregnancy: the doctor had cautioned her not to eat sushi and to limit her caffeine intake.

This was clearly a very different pregnancy.

Rasmussen said, "I did what I could in those early days of the unrest. The church community and the volunteers were so supportive of me in my obviously pregnant state. People were very kind and protected my physical health as I tended to the needs of others. It was an extraordinary experience of liv-

ing through mutual aid.

"One of the refrains ringing through our church in this season is that there is enough for everyone: enough food, enough medical care, enough kindness, enough compassion, enough love."

More tough choices

Seven days before her expected delivery date, Rasmussen was given a COVID-19 test, which is standard procedure at M Health Fairview University of Minnesota Medical Center where she would deliver. The test results were negative, and she returned home to wait for the arrival of her baby.

Rasmussen's husband suffered a cardiac arrest five years

PREGNANT >> 3

New life for used plywood

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

In the wake of the Uprising, Minneapolis was flooded with a reusable commodity that residents weren't used to seeing everywhere: plywood. Within four days of George Floyd's murder, plywood covered hundreds of businesses and organizations along Lake Street from end to end, and just about everywhere else. If one business owner chose to cover windows and doors, it seemed like everybody on the block followed suit.

ReUSE Minnesota Board President Jenny Kedward is a recycling educator by trade, a professional trash talker who has been taking the message of recycling to schools, businesses, and neighborhood groups for 14 years. She said, "ReUSE Minnesota stands with our communities advocating for systems change and pursuing justice for George Floyd."

NEW LIFE >> 10

Neighbors at George Floyd Square issue demands for justice

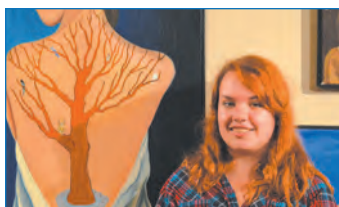
By JILL BOOGREN

It doesn't get any more local than this: chocolate chip cookies baked in the commercial kitchen across the street and brought out fresh - still warm - for sale. These "Cookie Crumbs" cookies from Hosea Gourmet are offered, along with t-shirts, jewelry, candles, oils, face masks and other wares by entrepreneurs, at the Reimagine 38th Street market taking place on Saturdays at George Floyd Square (38th St. & Chicago Ave.).

Asked about baking and serving up cookies at the Square, Ashley Hosea said, "It just feels so good. It's just genuine, organic, real, true."

George Floyd Square is the focus of talks after the city of Minneapolis said it would be reopened to traffic in mid-August (the city placed barricades at each entrance to provide safe access for visitors).

DEMANDS FOR JUSTICE >> 5



BACK TO SCHOOL:
A conversation with
homeschoolers

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Violent labor protests
rock South Minneapolis
in the 1930s, 2 die

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THROUGH THEIR EYES:
Business owners deal
with crime on E. Lake St.

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'Nightwatchers:' New mystery novel by local author Vincent Wyckoff coming in September

By JILL BOOGREN

Get ready to see Minnesota's North Shore in a new light – or rather, in the dark – in Vincent Wyckoff's new novel, "Nightwatchers," to be released on Sept. 8.

The sequel to his first novel "Black Otter Bay," "Nightwatchers" returns to the same fictional small town on the big lake with the same cast of characters – Sheriff Marlon Fastwater, Postmistress Mrs. Virginia Bean, Café Proprietor Marcy Soderstrom, and more. Lake Superior, in all its mist and majesty, forms the backdrop.

The story opens with the shadowy intrigue of something, someone, slinking through the forest in the early light of dawn. The mystery unfolds as residents seek to find what, or who, is out there and intensifies as a legend is revealed.

In keeping with its prequel, "Nightwatchers" is crafted as a non-violent mystery. Asked why, Wyckoff explained:

"It seems every mystery thriller now pushes the boundaries on violence; especially against women. My thought is, Why not [tell] a thrilling story with engaging characters without all the violent, vulgar blood and gore." The heroine in "Black Otter Bay," for example, is a 13-year-old girl, who returns in "Nightwatchers" and again in the third installment of the series, which Wyckoff is currently writing.

Readers can expect more of a "thriller" in this installment. The term "Nightwatchers" comes from Wyckoff's mother.

"When I was a child and playing outside with my friends,



Catch former Nokomis mail carrier Vincent Wyckoff talking about his new book during a virtual interview on Saturday, Sept. 19, noon to 1 p.m. It is hosted by Once Upon a Crime. Signed copies of "Nightwatchers" are available at Nokomis Shoe Shop and Nokomis Beach Gallery and Frame Shop.

she'd call for me to come in after dark, and of course I didn't want to," explains Wyckoff. "Finally, she'd say the Nightwatchers will be out soon. I didn't actual-

ly believe her, but when you're a little kid your imagination takes over. I'd conjure up all sorts of monsters lurking around and eventually head inside." A poem written by his mother is included on the dedication page.

Wyckoff is familiar to many Nokomis area residents as their former mail carrier and author of "Beware of Cat," which chronicles his experiences delivering the mail. Black Otter Bay, his first work of fiction, was published shortly after Wyckoff retired from the postal service. The novel was nominated for a Minnesota Book Award and won runner up for the Midwest Independent

Booksellers Award. His short story, "Lemonade on a Parkside Bench," which takes place at Lake Hiawatha, is included in an anthology entitled, "Home."

Signed copies of "Nightwatchers" will be available at Nokomis Shoe Shop and Nokomis Beach Gallery and Frame Shop on Sept. 8. Once Upon A Crime is hosting a virtual interview with Wyckoff on Saturday, Sept. 19, noon-1 p.m., and will have signed copies at the store. Books are also available for preorder on the Moon Palace Books, Magers & Quinn Booksellers, Barnes & Noble and Amazon websites.

Follow the release schedule on Wyckoff's Facebook page. He also welcomes you to contact him at vincentwyckoff@gmail.com for socially-distanced book clubs, virtual book clubs, and personalized signings for gifts.



Pregnant and parenting during COVID-19

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ago, and the couple decided that COVID-19 exposure risk in the hospital was too great for him. They made the difficult decision that he would not attend the labor and delivery. He needed to care for their three-year-old anyhow. Because of COVID-19, neither set of grandparents could help.

When it was time for Rasmussen to deliver, her husband and daughter dropped her at the cul de sac of the hospital and waved goodbye.

Of that decision, Rasmussen said, "There was disappointment for both of us, but we knew we needed to take a long view. The most important thing was that my husband be part of our kids' lives for many years to come."

Lars Rasmussen was born at 12:36 p.m. on July 26. All during Rasmussen's labor, the anesthesiologist held a cell phone up so her husband could be in the delivery room via Facetime. Rasmussen said, "The delivery went well, and Lars came out screaming just the way you hope a baby will."

A moment of peace

Rasmussen's planned three-month parental leave from work turned into a two-week leave instead. She is working part-time from home due to the extraordinary demands currently placed on the church. Her husband works from home as well, and they pass the child care baton back and forth.

The community of Holy Trinity Church participated in a drive-by baby shower at Rasmussen's home a few weeks ago. Cars streamed by on a Saturday afternoon: one mask-wearing person at a time got out of their car, dropped a gift for Lars or the family on the lawn, and shouted "Congratulations!" as the next person pulled in.

Both sets of grandparents have come up to Minneapolis for backyard visits. Other family members have met Lars during Zoom calls. It isn't what Rasmussen had in her original plan, but it's the time the community is living in.

With so much on her plate, does Rasmussen have any quiet moments with her new baby? She said, "I feel most present with Lars right after he's done eating, when he is satiated. His body is heavy and full, like he

A necessary agility

"The church as an institution has never been known for being particularly nimble. In these last weeks and months though, we have found a necessary agility in meeting the needs of our neighbors. We became a medic station. We became a food distribution site serving 700+ people each day. We became a place where anyone could seek and receive pastoral care. We have felt the walls of our church dissolve, to become a place where everyone is truly welcome," said Holy Trinity Lutheran Church Senior Pastor Ingrid Rasmussen.

doesn't have a care in the world. With him resting against my chest and shoulder, I'm given a moment of peace – and it's enough."

Faith Matters

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Spirit Garage - The church with the really big door
www.spiritgarage.org • 612-827-1074
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www.epworthmpls.org
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10:30 am - Sunday Worship: livestreamed on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/EpworthUMCMPLS/>
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www.stpeders.org
Julie A. Ebbesen, Pastor
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www.stpeders.org or on FB @ [stpedersmpls](https://www.facebook.com/stpedersmpls)

Minnehaha Communion Lutheran
4101 37th Ave. S. • 612-722-9527
www.minnehahacommunion.org
Interim Pastor Lee Hallstrom
All services and programs temporarily on-line. Check church website for any changes.
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Trinity Lutheran Church of Minnehaha Falls
5212 41st Ave. S. • 612-724-3691
www.trinityfalls.org
Pastor Matt Oxendale
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» 9

TSA agent, Longfellow man dies of COVID-19

Grief-stricken wife urges people to wear masks to protect themselves and others

By TESHAM. CHRISTENSEN

Terra Girard wasn't planning to be a widow in her 60s. But things changed quickly in September when her husband Teddy got a sore throat and a cough, was hospitalized for COVID-19, and died nine days later on Tuesday, Oct. 13.



Gerald 'Teddy' Girard, age 67

"When I try to look ahead, all I see is a deep, black hole where my future used to be bright," said Terra.

"We were going to retire in a couple of years and travel. We were supposed to be one of those cute old couples, holding hands while we walked. We were planning what we wanted to do on our 65th wedding anniversary. I wasn't supposed to have to be alone for the rest of my life."

41 years of marriage

Gerald, known as 'Teddy,' and Terra met at a bar and knew they wanted to get married after a few months of dating. They enjoyed dancing and spending time together. They raised two children and have four grandchildren.

The couple celebrated their 41st wedding anniversary together earlier this year on June 23, 2020, in the same Longfellow home they've lived in since 1980.

"My husband was a kind, nurturing man, with rough hands that, when he touched my neck could calm me down in an instant. He had an amazing sense of humor. He had the kind of laugh that made people laugh with him," recalled Terra.

"He was my knight in shining armor. He rescued me from

ON STREETS FOR DEMOCRACY AND JUSTICE



Demonstrators who marched onto I-94 during the November 4 National Day of Protest are blocked from exiting by law enforcement officers who kept them on the interstate for more than five hours as 646 arrests were made. (Photo by Jill Boogren)

By JILL BOOGREN

On Nov. 7, 2020, the day the Associated Press called the election for President Elect Joe Biden, nearly a thousand people gathered in front of the former Third Precinct police headquarters at Minnehaha Ave. and E. Lake St. for "Together We Rise: March to Decide Our Future," a rally and march along E. Lake St. to Mercado Central.

CTUL (Centro de Tabajadores Unidos en la Lucha), one of the 34 organizations co-hosting the march, described the event like this:

"Together we rise from the ashes from the presidential election, the police killing of George Floyd, the COVID pandemic and the unfair systems that led us to this moment. It is clear that we cannot go back to normal but instead we must create a future where all of us – people of color, workers, tenants, immigrant communities – have a voice and our families can thrive."

ON STREETS » 10-11



'Together We Rise' demonstrators march along East Lake St. from Minnehaha Ave. to Mercado Central on Saturday, Nov. 7, 2020. (Photo by Jill Boogren)

Taking care of the George Floyd Global Memorial



Jeanelle Austin, lead caretaker at the George Floyd Global Memorial, stands near Peyton Scott Russell's striking portrait of George Floyd. (Photo by Jill Boogren)

By JILL BOOGREN

At the center of the intersection at 38th St. and Chicago Ave. S., a large sculpture of a fist holding a red, black and green striped Pan-African flag is surrounded by a circular garden. On Chicago Ave. facing north, candles, flowers and tributes are laid around a figure painted on the street, face down, with angel's wings – the place where George Floyd took his last breath. Next to this a giant portrait of George Floyd stands tall against the bus shelter.

In the months since Minneapolis police took George Floyd's life on May 25, people from all over the world have visited the memorial to

pay their respects, often placing tributes large and small on the surrounding sidewalks and streets. Tiny figurines, stuffed animals, votives, cut flowers and plantings rest alongside children's drawings, handwritten letters, protest placards, street art, murals and sculptures.

"It's a living memorial," said Jeanelle Austin, who as lead caretaker sees every single thing that is left there. Asked what it's like to witness new arrivals in this ever-changing space, she said "It's beautiful. Because it says that people are finding a way to express themselves."

TAKING CARE » 6-7



SHOP SMALL BUY LOCAL
Donations help Lake St. businesses recover

PAGES 2-3



COMMUNITY DRIVEN:
Delivering free food to those who need it most

PAGE 8



AGING WELL
Letting go to live blissfully

PAGE 20

TSA agent, Longfellow man dies of COVID-19

>> From 1

abusive relationships into the kind of relationship every woman deserves. He was honest, reliable, stable and steady. I never had to worry about a roof over our heads, food on the table, clothes, etc. He deeply loved our children, Amanda and Tony. And even more deeply our grandchildren.

"He was a teddybear of a man - he loved to hug, and he could hug the tired, the angry, the depressed, right out of you."

One of 9 TSA agents to die

When they first heard about COVID-19, they agreed that Terra would stop working as a PCA for her disabled sister because Terra has asthma and other co-morbidities. "Teddy was always so very healthy (rarely even caught a cold!), so he decided to continue working," recalled Terra.

Teddy, age 67, had been working for the TSA at the Minneapolis/St. Paul airport since December 2007. He was part-time. Teddy was certified to conduct security screenings in the checkpoint areas at the airport, as well as TSA's checked baggage operation.

"At the beginning, they were not allowed to wear any PPE (personal protection equipment), but that changed pretty quickly," said Terra. "Also, at the beginning, he only worked one day every two weeks while the TSA was getting things figured out. Gradually they increased everyone's hours until they were



A Girard Christmas with parents Gerald "Teddy" and Terra, children Amanda and Tony (with his wife Lisa), and grandchildren Lorelei, 14, Greg, 16, Liam, 11, and Sonja, 8 (Photo submitted)



Gerald "Teddy" and Terra Girard on their wedding day and their 41st wedding anniversary on June 23, 2020.

working their regular hours again.

"I believe Teddy got sick from his job at the airport. You can't social distance and still do your job. I am positive that people traveled even when infected. Some of them probably were asymptomatic and didn't know they were contagious," said Terra.

Teddy is one of nine TSA agents who have died. As of Nov. 20, 3,020 TSA employees have tested positive for COVID-19.

It started like a cold, got worse

At home, they wore masks, practiced socially distancing, washed their hands constantly, and sanitized surfaces with special attention to door knobs and counters.

But in September, during the week of Sept. 24, Teddy developed a cough and sore throat. Terra wasn't feeling well either,

but both assumed it was bronchitis, which she often gets, and thought he had a cold.

On Oct. 1, her symptoms worsened. She had a fever, headache and diarrhea (which lasted for eight days).

On Saturday, Oct. 3, his symptoms got worse. His fever rose to 101 degrees, he was achy all over, he had a headache and he suffered from diarrhea.

"That was when we started thinking it was probably COVID-19," said Terra. They scheduled a drive-through COVID-19 test for him on Tuesday, figuring if he tested positive she had it, too. "I again attempted to get him to go to the hospital, but he again refused. That night/early morning, he was severely sick. I insisted he go to the hospital. He wouldn't let me call 911, so I drove him to Abbott-Northwestern. They took him right back, and wouldn't let me stay, so I went home.

They did the quick COVID-19 test on him, and it was positive. So the next day, I went in for a COVID19 test, which was also positive."

She got calls from the hospital every 2-3 hours starting on Oct. 6. "They couldn't stabilize him," Terra remembered. They tried multiple ways of getting him more oxygen, including nose cannulas, C-pap, Bi-pap, and full face mask with forced 15 pounds pressure of oxygen.

"At that time, we were still able to communicate with him, but he had to leave the oxygen mask on," noted Terra. "He was in good spirits, making jokes. I realize now, that he was trying to not worry me. He must have been in pain, and lots of discomfort from coughing and being unable to catch a good breath. He worried about me the whole time. Every time the doctor or nurse called me, they asked me how I was doing, so they could tell him."

Then his organs started shutting down.

"I started getting pretty worried, but we both still believed he would recover," said Terra.

"He couldn't swallow, so they had to put in a feeding tube. His only kidney shut down, so

they had him on continuous dialysis. His lungs were half full of fluid, which it couldn't clear. Then they put him on a ventilator, and had to put him into an induced coma (so that his body would tolerate the ventilator). From that time on, he was unable to communicate. This is when I started to get panicky. Then I got a call that during the switch onto the ventilator he had a heart attack. After a time on the ventilator, that was not working either, so they decided to put him on a machine called an ECMO. This machine would do the work of his heart, and of his lungs, so his body could fully rest.

"This is when the doctor first told me that he might not be able to recover."

Saying goodbye

As they put him on the ECMO, he had two heart attacks. They brought him back, but two days later Terra got the call she had been dreading. During the heart attacks, he had a series of brain strokes, which had destroyed most of his brain function. If Teddy did recover from COVID-19, he would remain in a vegetative state.

MAN DIES OF COVID-19 >> 15

OBITUARY

GERALD 'TEDDY' GIRARD

Gerald "Teddy" Girard, 67 died 9 days after being diagnosed with Covid-19 on Oct. 13, 2020 at Abbott-Northwestern Hospital in Minneapolis, MN.

He was born August 31, 1953, the son of Isadore and Lena Girard.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded by a sister, Sharon.



He is survived by his wife, Terra; his daughter, Amanda and her daughter, Lorelei; son Tony (Moore) Girard and his wife, Lisa Moore-Girard, and their three children, Greg, Liam and Sonja; his sisters Mary, Deb and Vicki, and his brother Don; several sisters-in-law and brothers-in-law, and many nieces, nephews, grand-nieces and grand-nephews. Teddy was beloved by all, and will be greatly missed.

A memorial will be held after the COVID-19 crisis has passed.

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- 5) Offer to help with yard chores, or feed and exercise the pets.
- 6) Write notes of encouragement and support, and help with "thank you" notes.
- 7) Offer to drive or accompany him/her to the cemetery regularly.
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- 10) Always mention the deceased by name and encourage reminiscing.

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Man dies of COVID-19 >> 14

She was finally allowed to see him to say goodbye.

"I held his hand, stroked his arm and his head, and told him how much I loved him. I told him not to worry about me, that I would be okay," said Terra, who remains grateful they allowed her this rare "compassionate" visit. In a while, the doctor came in to talk to me. She said they couldn't do CPR on him again, due to his brain damage, and that it was time for me to make a decision about what to do. She was very compassionate - they all were - and gave me as much time as I needed. So they let me go into a conference room, where I was able to contact Teddy's siblings, our children and my sister. I told them each of what was happening, and they all agreed I should let him go.

"So I went back to the room and told them to let him go. Then the procedure was to have another doctor come and make sure his brain was not functioning before they took the ECMO off of him. I got to hold his hand and talk to him as this was all happening.

"That was probably the hardest thing I've ever had to do."

Depressed, lonely - and angry

"Life without the love of my life is kind of like existing in a tunnel," said Terra. "I know I have to get through the tunnel to get back home, but I'm extremely resistant because I know it will be incredibly painful and heart-breaking.

"Sometimes a random thought of Teddy will feel like a cannon ball just shot through my heart, and I can't breathe.

"I'm learning every day of all the ways he took such great care of me. Like putting gas in my car, taking out the garbage, paying the bills, etc. We had a very reciprocal relationship and took care of each other.

"I miss him every day."

She's depressed and lonely - and angry.

'Wear the mask'

"I feel strongly that our 'leadership' let us down, when it comes to COVID-19. I believe with all my heart that my husband did not have to catch it and die," said Terra.

She's been sharing her story to remind people why it is important to wear masks and stay home.

"I'm shocked and disgusted by how many people I still out and about not wearing masks. Why? Do they not read papers, watch TV or Google anything? COVID-19 is infecting and killing people all over the world, and especially in the U.S.

"Do you notice the old man standing within your sphere? How about the 25-year-old woman? Or the parents with their child? Any of those people could catch COVID-19 from you. And many others could get infected exponentially through you to others around you. Many will die. Many more will suffer permanent damage to their organs. Many will be asymptomatic and spread it to their family and/or friends.

"Maybe you think it's not worth the hassle to wear a mask, because it's not 100% effective. But think of it this way: Like condoms, masks are not 100% effective. But you use them anyway, for protection.

"Wear the mask."



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People & Pets Together keeps families from giving up animals

Local nonprofit helps families and their pets during economic crisis

By CHLOE PETER

An older woman walked through the door of People & Pets Together, a program that provides pet food and supplies for those in need. When getting her pet food, she started up a conversation with volunteers and pulled out her phone to show pictures of her two cats, her face lighting up. She's a regular at the food shelf.

Her husband is no longer living, and her children live out of state. Often, she'll come in and give updates on the cats' health or something funny they did that week. Nick Atwood, the program director at People & Pets Together, has come to know her very well over the years.

"For seniors like her on a fixed income, surviving largely on Social Security, our services are very important," Atwood said, "She has told us more than once that without us providing her with food and cat litter, she would not be able to afford to keep her pets."

People & Pets Together is a nonprofit organization based at 3745 Bloomington Ave. The program started in 2009. It was the midst of a financial crisis. People were out of jobs, and families were struggling to keep their homes. Not only did People & Pets Together provide food, but also, cat litter, food and water dishes, leashes and collars, and even flea and tick prevention, so the families could keep their

beloved pets and have one less thing to worry about in difficult times.

"We heard stories of people who were considering surrendering their family pet because they could not afford to care for the dog and cat anymore. The stories were heartbreaking," Atwood said.

The official pet food shelf opened in 2016. They first focused on getting food and care out for people who had pets in the Phillips and Powderhorn neighborhoods of Minneapolis. But, they have since expanded to serving the entire city. People qualify to receive free pet food if they participate in a government assistance program, such as food support, Medicaid or housing assistance, or if they are unemployed or their annual income falls below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines. On average, People & Pets together help 25 families get the food they need for their pet each day. In 2019 alone, they served nearly 900 households.

The program's mission is "to support the relationships that people have with their pets, and to prevent the surrender of pets during times of economic crisis."

Donation drop box

During COVID-19, People & Pets Together has seen an increase of demands for pet food and other supplies. There

"When we give people food to feed pets, we take one worry off their list and allow them to focus on their own needs."

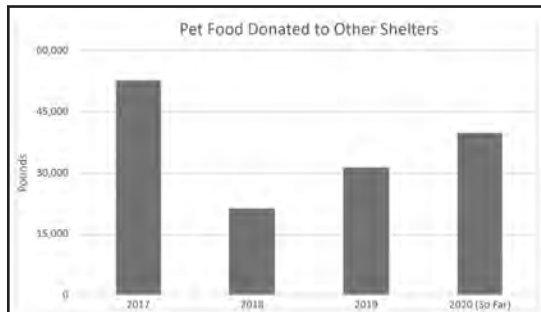
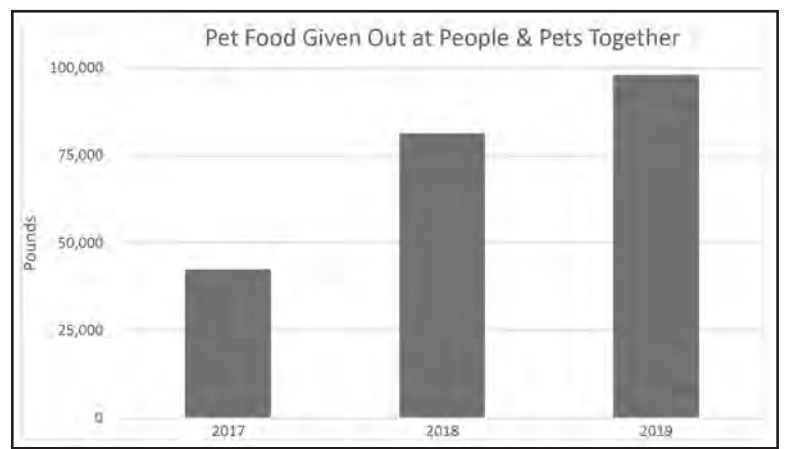
~ Nick Atwood

are more first-time clients than in years past, and they're serving many people who worked in restaurants and other businesses closed by the pandemic.

People & Pets Together is also providing pet food to other food shelves in the Twin Cities and have had to increase their deliveries because the other shelters are seeing increased demand, as well. This year, the program has delivered more than 40,000 pounds of pet food to other food shelves.

"We welcome donations of pet food and gently used pet supplies. We have a drop box in the parking lot behind our pet food shelf where donations can be placed at any time. Financial donations are especially appreciated," Atwood said. Financial donations can also be made online at peopleandpetstogether.org.

People & Pets Together has also been impacted by the recent protests and uprising. Many grocery stores, small markets, and dollar stores in the program's area were damaged or closed.



would spend their last dollar to purchase food for their pet rather than to buy food for themselves."

The People & Pets Facebook page is overflowing with comments of gratitude from other shel-

ters, individuals, and families that the program has impacted. Several people made comments about fundraising in their neighborhoods, donating money for birthdays instead of receiving gifts, and even starting a lemonade stand where all proceeds go to charity and set up laundry baskets labeled "PETS" to be filled with supplies.

"When we give people food to feed pets, we take one worry off their list and allow them to focus on their own needs," Atwood said.

This, too, has increased the number of people coming to look for pet food and supplies at the food shelf because essentials are difficult to find. However, this has not stopped the community from giving back. People & Pets Together has seen increased donations both from neighborhood drives and pet food manufacturers.

"It has been encouraging to see the community respond by donating food and money to help residents and community groups," Atwood said, "We often hear from our clients that they

Neighbors at George Floyd Square issue demands for justice

>> from 1

In response, community leaders drafted Resolution 001, which includes a set of 24 actions they are demanding be taken by city, county, state and federal governing bodies in order to reopen either 38th St. E. or Chicago Ave. S.

"The George Floyd Memorial is first and foremost a place of protest, not commissioned by the city but by the people against the city," states the resolution. The National Lawyers Guild of Minnesota and AFSCME LOCAL 2822 have endorsed the demands, available at bit.ly/George-floydsquare-a, which include police accountability measures as well financial investments in the neighborhood and youth.

At an Aug. 15 press conference held by community leaders at the Square, Central Area Neighborhood Development Organization (CANDO) Executive Director Carmen Means said they didn't want to diminish calls for safer streets. "But we live in a land where they're trying to make us choose between safety and justice," said Means. "That should not have to be a choice."

As of Aug. 23, the city has delayed reopening the street as talks continue (a statement by the city was posted on the *Messenger* Facebook page Aug. 17) Meantime, residents hold meetings twice daily in the Square, at 8 a.m. and 7 p.m., and events there continue apace. A "sit-in"



Top photo: View of George Floyd Square from Chicago Ave., facing north. Above, left to right: Amitri Hosea, Ashley Hosea and Semhara McBrayer pose with their freshly-baked chocolate chip cookies at the Reimagine 38th St. market on Aug. 22. (Photos by Jill Boogren)

by silent protesters was held on Aug. 17, and the following weekend visual artists were invited to "Occupy With Art!" by contributing a piece to the zone. Resident and Certified Balloon Artist Scott Nichols answered the call by creating a giant Prince symbol made

of shimmering purple balloons (Prince spent some of his formative years in this neighborhood), and there's now a piano on site.

The Reimagine 38th Street market, presented by CANDO, will continue on Saturdays through Sept. 5.

What if I need to...

They look at the combination, never verbally questioning. But they don't have to - their stares speak the question as loudly as their mouths could. I don't think too much of it anymore, unless I'm in a new situation or back home in India. The funny looks they give roll off my shoulders like water off a leaf. Gradually, but still forgotten nevertheless.

When they finally get the answer their eyes are craving, they try to play it cool.

"That's cool that your adoptive parents are white. So what?" Well, so...what.

What if I need to talk about how scared I am around police? To share my experiences and to hear others' experiences. To connect with someone who has personally felt that type of fear build up in their bones.

What if school asked me to talk about all of the characteristics I "got from my mom" and why my hair is so thick and why I am so short?

What if I want to learn about my culture, immersing myself in the smells and sights and thoughts of my homeland?

What if the doctor asks me about medical history or genetic history as they're performing tests?

Capturing moments

By ABHA KARNICK



What if a stranger asks me if I "know that man" as my guardian comes to pick me up from practice?

What if a pandemic and riots and racism overtake me heart, soul, and mind, and I need a safe place to process, a safe place to be fully Indian?

What if...what if I don't have the answers?

Abha Karnick is a south Minneapolis resident with East Indian roots who graduated from Hamline University in 2019. She grew up in the Twin Cities and found her passions in music, photography, and writing. She has pieces published with CAAL, MNAsianStories, and HER Online Journal, and her passion lies in storytelling and finding the moments to capture.

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UP CLOSE WITH THREE COFFEE SHOPS

By TESHA M. CHRISTENSEN

Longtime Nokomis Beach supported by regulars

Nokomis Beach Coffee (4956 S. 28th Ave.) closed its doors for the first time in 22 years on March 13, 2020 – “8270 days in a row, not a bad run,” observed Dennis Kloek, who owns the coffee shop with his wife, Mary.

They remained closed until May 4. “Upon reopening I was surprised how generous our customers were, both in terms of purchasing of gift cards you knew were probably never going to be used as well as going out of their way just to consume, to show support,” Kloek said.

“We reopened with very strict COVID-19 precautions, some would say the most strict of anywhere they’ve been. I was ok with that. I saw early on the value many of our customers saw in our protocols. I’ve probably said some things to customers in the last year I would’ve never imagined myself saying to a customer, but when it came to our COVID-19 plan I wasn’t going to waiver or compromise.”

They surrounded the barista kitchen with plexiglass, and established a one-way ordering process with a strict 9-foot distancing. Everything was contactless. Food and drink orders were filled and placed on a table outside the back door. They paid with a new contactless system. “The idea was to get them in and get them out as quick as possible,” said Kloek. “This procedure is still in place today.”

The Kloeks worked during the week and their employees covered weekend hours, which created two pods in case one came in contact with COVID-19.

They provided patio seating and asked that no more than four people sit together. When folks pushed tabled together to accommodate eight or more, Kloek bolted the tabled down with 10-foot spacing. “In the end, I believe our protocols paid dividends. People eventually came to respect our position and desire to keep every safe,” observed Kloek. “By September we came within 4% of the same months sales the year before.”

A year later, Kloek can’t say for certain that they’ve survived the pandemic.

But they are still moving forward.

“Although the business



Nokomis residents Dennis and Mary Kloek have owned Nokomis Beach Coffee for 23 years. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

may look different than it did a year ago, it’s working,” Kloek said. “We have reached close to pre-pandemic numbers while being open far fewer hours. We now close at 2 p.m. Monday to Friday and 5 p.m. Saturday to Sunday, as opposed to 8:30 p.m. all days pre-COVID-19.” While Kloek is considering expanding hours again, he has seen a sharp decline in applications.

Receiving both rounds of PPP was crucial for Nokomis Beach Coffee. The funds allowed the Kloeks to bring back every employee that was working for them when they closed in March 2020, and keep them at the same amount of hours.

“Between new minimum wage laws, mandatory sick leave, and increasing rent because of property tax increases, we knew we had to find a way to trim expenses somewhere. For us it was cutting any hours that truly were not going to be profitable,” said Kloek.

“For years I took pride in the fact I was able to provide 13/15 jobs for individuals but now that’s down to 7/8. Not many people realize that in this industry a \$15 an hour wage cost the employer closer to \$19 after all taxes are paid.

“When you add in the sick leave/ taxes on wages and tips, workman’s comp, and unemployment insurance, we just can’t justify any extra hours that can’t carry themselves.”

The Kloeks have seen a lot of changes in the Nokomis community during their 23 years as business owners. More businesses have moved into the area, and their clientele has gotten younger.

They opened Nokomis Beach Coffee on Sept. 1, 1998, and are known for their expansive patio that welcomes dogs.

“While in college I had lived in Vienna for just over a year and really enjoyed going to all the coffee shops that had been part of their culture for many years. Upon returning I knew a shop would be somewhere in my future,” recalled Kloek.

“It was early on in our business life that we knew we want to live in the same community as we worked so we bought a house on the south end of the lake from where the shop is.”

Living and working in Nokomis East has been rewarding for them.

“The community has been amazingly supportive of the shop over the years,” pointed out Kloek. “Even as franchises have moved in our customers have remained incredibly loyal providing us with steady growth throughout the first 22 years.”

He added, “COVID-19 has, I believe changed every business model out there. Ours needed changing anyways.

“In the end, like so many, I’m glad to have this year behind us. It’s definitely had its challenges, but I’m pleased with how we’ve come out of it on the other side. In some ways our business is better because of it. It has forced us to get creative and find a way to make things work for the long term.”

Learn more at <http://lighthouseinternet.com/nokomis/mobile/index.html>.



Carley Kammerer of Wildflyer Coffee (3262 Minnehaha Ave.).

Wildflyer opened during a pandemic

Wildflyer Coffee opened its doors in the middle of a global pandemic.

Peace Coffee opted not to reopen its longtime coffee shop at 3262 Minnehaha Ave. and to focus instead on coffee sales. They reached out to Wildflyer who decided the time was right to expand from a coffee cart to a cafe.

“We didn’t view it as opening a coffee shop, we viewed it as opening an employment training program for youth experiencing homelessness, and that was needed more than ever before during the pandemic when unemployment was high and entry-level jobs were vanishing overnight,” explained Wildflyer CEO Carley Kammerer. “The need was too great to ignore it, and the opportunity to take over this wonderful shop and learn from Peace Coffee was too good to pass up. We were smart about it, but we knew this was ‘it’ for Wildflyer, so we went for it.

“Would I open a coffee shop during a pandemic? No. Would I open an employment training program for youth? Yes.”

Former Southside resident Kammerer is a licensed social worker who has worked with youth experiencing homelessness for over eight years. “In that time, I started noticing a common trend where my clients could get a job but would quickly lose it, putting them in a cycle of homelessness and instability with no pathway out,” she observed. “There are so many barriers to employment while experiencing homelessness, things like transportation, hygiene/professional clothing, not even having vital documents to begin with, as well as a lack of soft skills.

“It seemed like something needed to exist that just helped cultivate these skills and eliminate these barriers so youth could achieve self-sufficiency. Out of that resource gap came the vision for Wildflyer Coffee.”

They started with a mobile cart at farmer’s markets and private events in 2017, and received more youth applications than the cart could employ. They began raising money in 2019 to expand into a coffee shop. They were all set to sign a lease in March 2020. Then COVID-19 hit.

They put their plans on hold. “Peace had created a really special, local neighborhood coffee shop, and we knew we would benefit from that. We have already benefited from Peace’s customers wanting to see us succeed,” remarked Kammerer. “The shop itself was already a coffee

shop, which meant we could spend much less on a build-out and divert funds to our youth program, which was a wise decision based on our mission. We also love this area of South, and knew that the residents of Longfellow would be very on board with our mission.”

After neutralizing the color scheme, putting up their logo and color patterns on the back wall, and bringing in new furniture, Wildflyer Coffee opened on Dec. 15, 2020.

Located just three blocks from the Third Precinct, Wildflyer staff and board are talking a lot about racial justice.

“Many of the youth we employ are BIPOC, and statistically, youth of color experience homelessness at higher rates than their peers,” Kammerer pointed out. “Internally, we’re working to make sure our staff/leadership/board of directors adequately reflects the youth we employ, and part of that is diversity and bringing program graduates themselves onto the board.

“Externally, with COVID restrictions easing up, we are hoping to use our shop, especially the extra side room, as a hub for community meetings and activism. We’re not sure what that looks like yet, but working on opening it up as a place to be used for real social change.”

The nonprofit coffee shop, creates employment opportunities for youth aged 16-24 who are experiencing homelessness and housing instability. “Every dollar spent not only goes back into our work and life skills training program, but each customer is actually partnering with the mission closely by providing those critical interactions that are the training platform for skill development,” said Kammerer. “It’s really a community response to ending youth homelessness in our city.”

The name came from the idea that the youth who work there are “wildflyers.”

“We feel like our youth have so much potential within them, they just need support to really soar,” said Kammerer. “We provide that support, and partner with them in moving forward into a whole new future.”

She recommends folks check out their toast menu, with the popular avocado or hummus and kimchi toast. “Right now, with our spring drink menu, our ‘paint me like one of your French girls’ latte is really popular. It’s Rose Cardamom!”

“Come see our space, meet our youth, be part of the mission and vision!”

More at <https://wildflyercoffee.com/>.

MORE >> 13

Thank you

for your wonderful support over the years and helping us get through the past year in particular.





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We are so proud to be a part of the Nokomis community!

UP CLOSE WITH THREE COFFEE SHOPS

>> From 12

Milkweed adjusts hours and staff

Milkweed (3822 E. Lake St.) had been open less than a year under owners Brenda Ingersoll and Alex Needham when the pandemic hit. They shut down in March with 10 staff members, and when they reopened in April it was with the two of them and one other person.

Needham built a take-out window in the front door and installed plexiglass around the barista kitchen, and they started selling their signature drinks again with limited hours. He built a few more take-out doors for other local businesses, as well.

A year later, they began ramping up their staff again, starting from scratch as former employees had drifted away. Their menu is complicated and takes 4-5 days of training to master. "Generally, if they're excited about what we do, they can get along with the workload," remarked Ingersoll.

The menu includes delicious and nutritious drinks that are tailored to specific ailments, such as a hot toddy with elderberry, lime, rosemary and trace minerals to build the immune system in the winter. The Dirty Sailor is a warming, detoxifying dirty chai made with dandelion, burdock, chicory, ghee and seasonal ayurvedic spices. Their signature drink is a nettle and matcha latte with lavender syrup, oat pistachio milk and cbd, served cold or hot. With a focus on vegan and dairy-free offerings, they make their own plant-based milks (coconut, almond, oat pistachio, pumpkin seed and hazelnut).

"I see coffee as medicine. I



Brenda Ingersoll has staffed many of the hours at Milkweed herself since the pandemic began, but has recently brought on new staff members. (Archives)

see tea as medicine," said Ingersoll, who views the cafe as a mothering space. "We're just trying to heal and caffeinate."

Many of the herbs and some tea blends come from Sacred Blossom Farm in Mondovi, Wisconsin or Frontier Coop in Iowa.

Regular patrons include folks from the local neighborhood as well as people from the greater Twin Cities' metro area drawn by Milkweed's unique plant-based, vegan drinks and gluten-free options. One woman drives 30 minutes daily each way from St. Louis Park.

"We've become a secret destination," said Ingersoll. "Tons of people don't do dairy, it turns out."

The health and safety directives along with peoples' new habits changed how their space is used. Previously, there was a morning rush of folks getting coffee on their way to work in the morning. Now, they serve a steady stream of people all day.

Some get their coffee and tea to go, while others pick one of 12 chairs at six tables on the sidewalk patio.

Being located on East Lake Street through the civil unrest has been stressful, admitted Ingersoll. She drives past the Third Precinct and destroyed buildings every day on her way to work. "It's hard to see an area that was finally coming back to life get destroyed," said Ingersoll. "I'm sure it will start to grow and flourish again. It's just going to take time."

For a time last summer following the protests, Milkweed and Peppers and Fries next door were the only places open on that stretch of East Lake Street.

"People really needed coffee. They were up all night patrolling the neighborhood," recalled Ingersoll.

It has been rewarding to offer people a space to talk and feel safe.

Southside Garage Sale Day set for June 5

NENA offers many ways to get involved in your community.

• Southside Neighborhoods Garage Sale Day - Matching buyers and sellers throughout the Nokomis East and Standish-Ericsson neighborhoods, plus Corcoran and the Longfellow Community Council neighborhoods on Saturday, June 5, 2021. Visit standish-ericsson.org/garagesale2021/ for a map of the sales.

• Nokomis East Free Food Distributions - On the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month, NENA hosts a free food distribution at 5735 Sander Drive from 2:00 - 4:00 pm. All are welcome, and volunteers are needed. Items include dairy, meat, fresh produce, pantry staples, toiletries, cleaning supplies, and culturally appropriate food options. For more information, visit nokomiseast.org/nokomis-east-free-food-distribution/

• Minnehaha Food Shelf - Every Tuesday, the Minnehaha Food Shelf is open from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm at 3701 E. 50th Street. For more information, visit minnehaha.org/foodshelf.html

Staying in Place Grants

NENA is pleased to offer our Staying in Place grant program through its nonprofit partner, Rebuilding Together Twin Cities.

Staying in Place Grants help vulnerable adults (lower-income households, seniors, residents living with a disability, and/or veterans) address outstanding housing maintenance issues. Rebuilding Together Twin Cities will provide access to needed funds to help these property owners living on fixed incomes make repairs to live safely in place with economic stability.

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Safe at Home: Provide home safety and fall prevention modifications and ramps for older adults and individuals living with

Nokomis East Neighborhood Association



By BECKY TIMM, Executive Director
becky.timm@nokomiseast.org

a disability.

Home Repair: Provide volunteer-delivered repairs, including weatherizing, cleaning, installing flooring, patching and painting, siding, and landscaping, and timely contractor-delivered repair or replacement of essential systems, such as HVAC, electrical, plumbing, outer envelope, and roofs. For more information, visit nokomiseast.org/staying-in-place/ or call NENA at (612) 724-5652.

Join NEBA

The Nokomis East Business Association is a volunteer-driven, fully independent organization. Our membership is open to local businesses - both storefront and home-based - as well as service organizations located in the Nokomis East neighborhood of Minneapolis.

NEBA works to promote our members and area businesses through our website, Facebook and Instagram accounts, newsletter, and through networking meetings and gatherings. By working together, we can build a stronger, richer, and more vibrant community. Find out more about NEBA, its great programming, and become a member at www.nokomiseastba.com.

Meetings and events:

6/1/2021: NENA Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Committee at 6:30 pm, Via Zoom

6/9/2021: Nokomis East Free Food Distribution at 2-4 p.m.

6/17/2021: NENA Green Initiatives Committee at 6:30 p.m.

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Nokomis East Neighborhood Association

Staying in Place Grants

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NENA's Staying in Place Grants help vulnerable adults - lower-income households, seniors, residents with a disability, and veterans - address housing maintenance issues

For the Keewaydin, Minnehaha, Morris Park, and Wenonah neighborhoods

Visit nokomiseast.org/staying-in-place or call NENA at (612) 724-5652 to learn more

Glimpse into their lives as they juggle work and online schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic

UP CLOSE WITH LOCAL FAMILIES

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The Michael "Taz" and Sakiko Nilan family has a global perspective on things as they've lived in both Japan (where Sakiko is front) and Minnesota (where Taz grew up) during their marriage. Taz works full-time from home as a consultant in the medical/technology industry. Sakiko is a stay-at-home mom. Together

they juggle three Northrop Elementary students. Ten-year-old Kenzo is in fourth grade; 7-year-old Yumika is in second grade, and 5-year-old Yuzo is in kindergarten.

What's the biggest change for you this school year?

Taz: With our 5-year-old starting kindergarten this autumn, our biggest change is to have all three children learning online at home and the parents



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need to supervise what they are doing and teach as needed on a daily basis.

What's the hardest part as a student?

Taz: There are not many people who would disagree with the statement that elementary children should not be learning on an electronic tablet all day. I wish that my wife and I could throw away the tablets and become full-time home-school teachers for our children, but we don't have the time and abilities to take on those roles right now.

The fact that we have three elementary school age children all online at the same time offers its own challenges as we are completely out-manned. Friends with just one or two children, or older children seem to be faring better.

Sakiko: I think the hardest thing for them is not being able to feel connected to the class and the teacher as they can't build the real relationship through the screen.

What's the best part?

Taz: When I asked our children what they liked about learning online they all responded in unison "nothing."

Sakiko: If I try to find any positivity out of this difficult situation, for us parents, it's been nice to be able to see what and how the kids are actually doing at school and get more involved in their daily learning.

What's going right for you this year?

Taz: It would be difficult to find something that has gone right this year.

Sakiko: I have to say that the bond between siblings has been strengthened. I am so glad they have each other to entertain each other and get through this lonely time together.

What are you and your family doing for your mental health?

Taz: This has been a very trying year for my wife and I. My wife has been thrown into the

very difficult job of trying to manage the online education of three relatively young children while I manage my consulting job and our income. Along with millions of others, we have had to face a level of stress this year that we have not had to face in the past.

It's been extremely difficult to find time for ourselves, but we try to get outside and enjoy family time.

What tips do you have for families?

Taz: In terms of online education, raising a family, or holding down a job, do what you can this year and do not beat yourself up for not meeting your expectations of what you think "normal" is or should be. It is important to reach out for help when needed.

How do you think this will change you for the long-term?

Taz: Most children seem to have a face and set of behaviors for the home with the family, and a different face and set of behaviors for the outside world. It is the loss of the outside world socialization with teachers and classmates that worries me for the general development of young children moving ahead.

Hopefully we will get the children back into school soon enough to recover from 2020.

Germany, France, the U.K, Korea, Japan, Canada and many other developed countries have found safe ways to keep their children in school while fighting COVID-19. We need to get our children back into school ASAP where they belong. I am aware of a number of private schools in Minneapolis that have maintained in-classroom learning while effectively managing any COVID-19 cases for students and remain confused on why the same city has multiple forms of school going on at the same time.



HIGH SCHOOL & MIDDLE SCHOOL

Meet the Jennifer Clough and Mike McMahon family. Twelve-year-old Liam attends sixth grade at Sanford Middle School while 16-year-old Gwendolyn is a junior at South High. The kids are doing online school while their parents are working from home.

Mom Jennifer said, "It's been so cute to see them have fun together as siblings again. They played well together when they were younger, but Gwen hit that point where little brother was just kind of annoying. Now that he is in middle school and 12.5, he is 'catching up' and this 'forced time' together has been great to bring them closer! And yes, the family game time has been great! I have also enjoyed when we do family walks - we did that more in the first few months of the pandemic."

"In general, I think having a middle schooler and high schooler sounds like it's much easier - since they are pretty independent - than elementary age kiddos. Poor elementary parents seem to have a tough time from the ones I've heard from. I'm feeling grateful as I know many are struggling through these

tough times on many levels."

What's the biggest change for you this school year?

Gwen: For me, the biggest change is probably the lack of interaction with other students. When we were in person, I was able to see my friends and just people in general every day and now I see them over Zoom or not at all!

Liam: School being online and not seeing people.

What's the hardest part as a student?

Gwen: Personally, the hardest part has been balancing school with other activities. I always have schoolwork to do, and if I let it take up all my time, it will. I have to remember to take breaks and focus on other things (exercise, drawing, etc.).

Liam: Being at meets for hours a day at screen is tiring.

What's the best part?

Liam: Having your own pace to do things and having the whole day instead of just a class period.

Gwen: The best part about online school is having more time to work independently as opposed to listening to the teacher talk for extended periods of time. I prefer to work on my own, so having more time to ourselves is ideal.

UP CLOSE WITH LOCAL FAMILIES

Juggling work and online schooling during pandemic

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What's going right for you this year?

Gwen: This might sound a little strange but I think my sleep schedule is a lot better this year. I prefer to stay up later and then wake up later, and when I don't have to catch a bus at 7:15 a.m. I get a lot more sleep.

Liam: The school work is not too much.

What are you and your family doing for your mental health?

Liam: We are playing games together.

Gwen: My parents encourage me to prioritize my mental health by consistently getting outside, even for a short walk. As the days get shorter, it's hard to get out before it gets dark, but I never regret it when I do.

What tips do you have for families?

Liam: Do things together and do what makes you happy.

Gwen: I don't have a ton of tips for other families because I don't really have things figured out myself. But one thing I would say is make a schedule or to-do list for yourself. It's easy to forget things when you aren't seeing people in person, so any reminders you can give yourself will help.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

At Hiawatha-Howe PTO President Michelle Trumpy's house, there are two adults working from home, one third-grader in full-time distance learning, and two cats who love having their humans around.

What's the biggest change for you this school year?

There are so many, it's hard to choose! One of the biggest things is that we have not needed after school child care. When school and work are over, we can start our family time.

What's the hardest part as a student?

My daughter says it's really hard to make friends during distance learning. There are few opportunities to talk with classmates like you might if you were in person.

What's the best part?

Having lunch together :) And not having the hustle/bustle of getting out the door, catching the bus and driving to work.

What's going right for you this year?

Our daughter is self-sufficient in her work and is able to manage her own schedule. These are skills will serve her well

throughout her life.

What are you and your family doing for your mental health?

We try to do a variety of things, such as going outside on a regular basis and FaceTiming with friends. We also stick to the basics of good self care - getting enough sleep, exercise and eating a balanced diet.

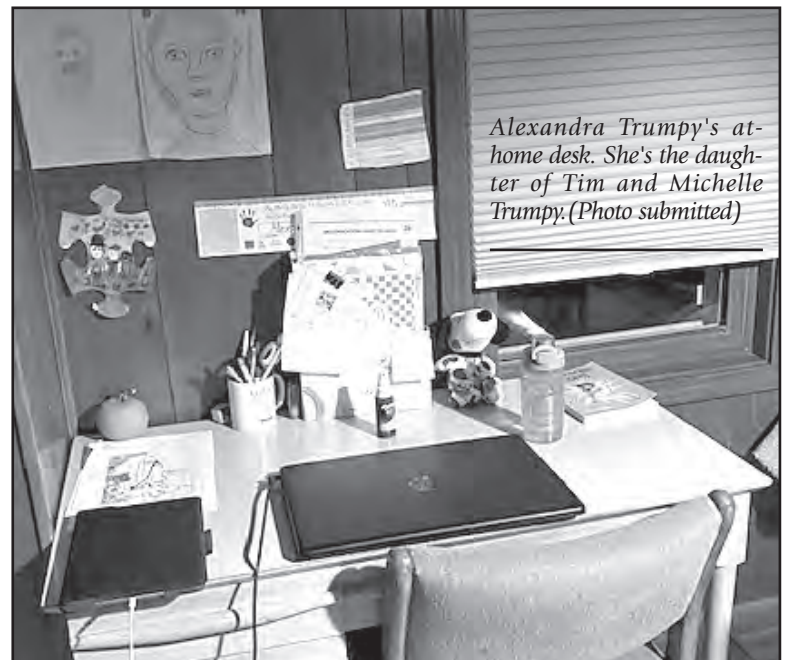
What tips do you have for families?

Find a routine that works for your family. Sometimes kids need a break from school/screen and it's okay! Make the students work area their own - have all their items accessible, hang the schedule on the wall, make sure the space is straightened up at the end of the day - it's nice to start fresh in the morning.

How do you think this will change you for the long-term?

I don't think we will go back to the office full time. I think we will find a balance with a hybrid situation.

There are so many silver linings to appreciate during this really hard time. I never would have been able to have this time all together in our usual world and I greatly appreciate it. I'm excited to see what we keep as we move into our "new normal."



Alexandra Trumpy's at-home desk. She's the daughter of Tim and Michelle Trumpy. (Photo submitted)

Talking social-emotional learning for children with U of M

To help mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in communities across Minnesota, many children have spent an important period of their development at home with limited interaction with others. This can affect a child's social-emotional learning, which develops the skills needed to manage their emotions, build and maintain healthy relationships with others, and make responsible decisions as a part of a larger community.

University of Minnesota Professor Clay Cook explains why social-emotional learning is a vital part of a child's development and how caregivers can support their children.

Q: What is social-emotional learning?

Prof. Cook: Social-emotional learning (SEL) aims to ensure each child is socially and emotionally well by helping them develop a sense of belonging and positive feelings about themselves and their situation. It also helps them develop key competencies to respond to life situations and enhance the likelihood of achieving the types of meaningful outcomes we want for children now and as they transition into adulthood.

Q: How can parents and other caring adults help develop social-emotional learning with their children?

Prof. Cook: Just as it is for any other skill like reading, shooting a basketball or learning to ride a bike, SEL develops with repetition, practice and modeling. We, as adults, all developed the skills we have through regular practice and use of that skill. Knowing that practice is key puts caring adults in a better position to create opportunities for their child to practice specific social-emotional competencies - such as social skills - to build healthy relationships with others or resolve conflicts productively.

Children are always watching. Modeling - which is when someone sees a behavior of another and then imitates it - is also a powerful tool that facilitates social-emotional learning. Through this, parents and caring adults can help a child learn the use of emotion regulation skills. These skills can be used to calm down after an upsetting situation or identifying and reframing unhelpful thoughts that are getting in the way of doing important things through intentionally modeling these through their

own actions.

Q: During COVID-19, most children are spending time at home. How can the home environment help a child develop their social-emotional skill set?

Prof. Cook: The home environment is one of the most influential environments on children's development and functioning. Caregiving adults have the capability of helping children better regulate themselves in response to life situations and increase their motivation to follow through with important tasks through creating predictable home environments.

Predictability comes by establishing consistent routines that allow children to get in a rhythm with their behavior, so they can anticipate what's going to happen. For example, creating a visual schedule that outlines the sequence of activities the child will follow each day helps create predictability so the child can anticipate what is going to happen. Also, establishing what is referred to as "first-then" routines. This involves outlining what children need to do "first" before they "then" engage in something that is more preferred. Predictability also happens for children when

the adults in their lives establish clear expectations for behavior so the adult and child are on the same page. Lack of clear expectations for behavior expects children to read an adult's mind, which leads to inconsistencies and sometimes conflict.

In addition to predictability, caregiving adults can create a reinforcing environment by paying careful attention to what a child says, does or achieves that is worthy of acknowledgment and recognition. This demonstrates appreciation for the energy and effort the child is putting into schoolwork or some other aspect of family functioning.

Q: Healthy relationships are an important part of a child's development. How can caregiving adults help establish that?

Prof. Cook: Caregiving adults can use a very straightforward strategy called child time. It involves identifying a window of time to spend with the child (e.g., 20 minutes) where the child gets to select the activity and the caregiving adult's job is to ask open-ended questions, express interest, remain present and go along with what the child wants to do. This helps build healthy relationships, as well as provide

a time where the caregiving adult is not giving an instruction to the child, correcting something the child isn't doing properly, or making a request of the child to transition from doing something they like to do to something less preferred (e.g., go to bed).

Q: What research are you doing in this space?

Prof. Cook: Recently, I've been working with other researchers at the University of Minnesota on a project to develop and test a family-focused intervention in which caregiving adults work to support their child's social-emotional and behavioral well-being at home. The intervention - Brief Remoted Intervention for Engaging Families (BRIEF) - is designed to empower caregiving adults to select topics they would like to learn more about and plan ways to support their child's well-being. This can include promoting healthy sleep as the foundation for health and well-being and practicing skills to promote emotional coping and resilience in response to life stressors.

Clay Cook is a professor of educational psychology in the University of Minnesota's College of Education and Human Development. His research and interests lie in school-based mental health supports, emotional and behavioral disorders, and positive psychological approaches to intervention.