

Dayton's Bluff District Forum

Volume 39, No. 9

October 2025

"The Voice of the Community"

New Pastor at Mounds Park United Methodist Church

Nancy Rassier from The Echo

As of July 1, our United Methodist Bishop, Lanette Plambeck, our Conference Superintendent, and the board of ministers, have reassigned Pastor Jay Jeong to Lindstrom, Minnesota, United Methodist Church. We had a reception for him and his family on June 22. We are sorry to have him leave us after his eight years at MPUMC, but we wish him nothing but the best and all of God's blessings.

Our Staff-Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) had decided on Rev. Jill Meents, LLP as the new Pastor here at Mounds Park United Methodist Church.

Pastor Jill has a Master of Divinity from Bethel Seminary, and a Bachelor of

Arts in Latin American Studies and Speech Communications from the University of Minnesota. Her appointment and Ministry experience has been with Grace UMC in Paynesville from 2022 to 2025. Paynesville is her home town. Pastor Jill also led Hillcrest UMC in Bloomington from 2017 to 2022.

She also provided "pulpit supply" to Hamover UMC in 2017, and she is a senior loan officer with Bell Mortgage, from 2005 to the present. She has completed the required online classes and has also led her church through the Healthy Church Initiative (HCI) process.

Jill is looking forward to leading us as our new pastor and is interested in multi-cultural and diversity issues, so she will be a good fit for our multi-cultural church.

Pastor Jill began her work here on August 1 and had her first "preaching" Sunday on August 3, which was followed by a reception after worship. A "Meet and Greet" with Pastor Jill was held after worship on Sunday, September 7.



Nancy Rassier from The Echo

Rev. Jill Meents, LLP, the new Pastor at Mounds Park United Methodist Church.

Coming Home — And Pushing Back

Mandy Okonek

After three decades away, psychotherapist and author Tonya Lester has returned to her Midwestern roots, now splitting her time between the buzz of Brooklyn and the cool charm of St. Paul. Her new book, *Push Back: Live, Love, and Work with Others Without Losing Yourself* (October 21, 2025), draws on 16 years of clinical experience, (and her own personal reckoning) to challenge the cultural pressure on women to be endlessly accommodating.

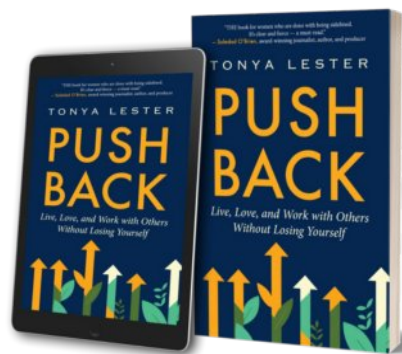
While Lester was busy pushing back on what wasn't working in her life and relationships, she felt another force tugging in the opposite direction, home. Building her career in New York had been exhilarating, she says, but coming back to Minnesota was about more than geography. It was about community. "I realized I needed the grounding I grew up with, the kind of connection I wanted my kids to know, too," she explains.

In her book, "Push Back: Live, Love, and Work with Others Without Losing

Yourself", Lester argues that constantly putting others first leaves women emotionally drained, and that setting clear boundaries isn't selfish — it's an act of emotional integrity that preserves both relationships and self-worth. In my own family, we call this essential ritual "me time." I love that Lester's version of pushing back led her not just to healthier boundaries — but all the way back to St. Paul.

She also brings her expertise on emotional well-being to her *Staying Sane Inside Sanity* blog for Psychology Today, where she writes about building healthy relationships, better habits, and all the thorny bits of emotional labor most of us try to sweep under the rug (or at least hide behind decorative throw pillows).

To my knowledge, no one has yet published a study proving that living in St. Paul improves mental health, but given the friendly neighbors, front porch conversations, and spontaneous block parties, it seems like a worthy topic. When I find myself explaining "why East St. Paul" to family and friends, it always comes back to the same thing: community. The kind that doesn't just hold you, it reminds you who you are.



A Celebration of Art, Community, and Unity

October 10-12

Solidarity Street Gallery

It is with much enthusiasm that we announce the return of Solidarity Street Gallery for 2025 (October 10-12). This year, our theme, 'We Belong Together' invites artists, creators, and communities to explore the profound connections that bind us all — across cultures, generations, and experiences.

BUILDING ON A LEGACY

Since its inception in 2020, the Solidarity Street Gallery has grown into a powerful platform for artistic expression and community involvement. Each year has brought forward themes that challenge perspectives and foster unity.

2025 THEME: 'WE BELONG TOGETHER'

This year's theme, 'We Belong Together' envisions gallery exhibits and performances that transcend differences and celebrate the unifying threads of humanity. It invites and challenges participants to create works that reflect the essence of belonging and togetherness, whether through community, family, shared values, or our country.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Prepare to walk Payne Avenue trans-

formed into a tapestry of art, creativity and connection:

Stunning fine art installations from local and national artists.

Live performances and theater that resonate with the theme of togetherness.

Interactive workshops to inspire collaboration and creativity.

A marketplace showcasing artisanal works and cultural crafts.

Panels and discussions exploring the role of art in fostering common values and unity.

JOIN US IN CELEBRATING BELONGING

Solidarity Street Gallery 2025 is more than an event — it's a movement. It's a call to embrace humanity and connections that define. It is an opportunity to contribute to a shared vision of unity. Whether you're an artist, a performer, a volunteer, a neighbor, or an arts admirer, your participation will make this celebration complete!

Mark your calendars now, and be part of an unforgettable experience on the second weekend in October that elevates us all, as We Belong Together!!!

SOLIDARITY STREET GALLERY 2025 is produced in partnership between ArT @ 967 Payne and the East Side Arts Council (ESAC), and held in conjunction with the Fall 2025 Saint Paul Art Crawl, coordinated by the Saint Paul Art Collective (SPAC). ESAC's mission and focus is to bring the arts to a unique urban community in the most diverse county in Minnesota.



DONATE TODAY

You got somethin' to say? Say it here!

The Dayton's Bluff District Forum welcomes all opinions and neighborhood anecdotes — send yours to:

daytonsbluffdistrictforum@gmail.com

Want to write about something that interests you? We want to hear it! Submit your stories and articles to the email above.

Opinions expressed in contributed articles may not represent the views of the *Forum*.

Deadline for the November issue of the *Forum*
October 10

Autumn Harvest Festival Being Held October 25 at Mounds Park Community Center

Nathan Barber

Get ready to celebrate the magical event that is fall in Minnesota. Join us for our Autumn Harvest Festival at Mounds Park Community Garden!
Join us from 3 to 9 p.m. for a day filled with fun activities, delicious food, and friendly competitions with prizes!
Bring your friends, family, and neighbors and a dish to share — this is an event you won't want to miss! RSVP today and let's make this a memorable evening together!
Bringing food or other items? Please add your information to this spreadsheet: doc-s.google.com/.../1Bikf98CPMZoW6vcEnCw.../edit...
Also, we will have a portable toilet available.
Should you have any questions, contact moundsparkgarden.com/contact.



Friends of Swede Hollow

If you have a passion for history and preserving nature, please join us for our monthly meeting on the third Tuesday of every month.
Our meetings are held at St. John's Lutheran Church at 765 Margaret St., back entrance. For the most accurate information on the next meeting, email Michel or follow us on Facebook.
The meeting is **October 21** and starts at **6:30 p.m.** and is an excellent resource for park updates and events. For more updates email taylor672@comcast.net or call Michel at 651-442-3366.

Dayton's Bluff District Forum Board Meeting

The *Forum* is seeking writers and help with online content, idea generation, and ad sales — join us at our next meeting on **Friday, October 3 at 11 a.m.**
If you'd like to attend, email daytonsbluffdistrictforum@gmail.com for more information.
We are currently meeting at the Dayton's Bluff Library.

Need Groceries?

If you are 60 or older, you may be eligible to receive a box of nutritious food every month from Second Harvest.
This box is part of a program called NAPS, and we can help you apply!
Give us a call at 651-683-2326, and someone will assist you with your application.
Help the Metropolitan Area Agency on Aging provide one-on-one counseling to Medicare beneficiaries at community

988 has been designated as the new three-digit dialing code that will route callers to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Text or Dial. 988 was recently launched as an alternative to calling 911.

Xcel Phone Numbers

Gas Leak: 800-895-2999. Power Outage: 800-895-1999.
Call 811 before you dig: Before starting


that roto-tiller or heaving that shovel into the ground for *anything*, call 811.
At no charge, Xcel will have a trained technician check the area on your property or on the boulevard to make sure there are no wires, pipes, or other hidden surprises in the designated digging area. Usually, someone checks within a day, marking the 'no-dig' area with painted lines, and everyone is safe!

Dayton's Bluff Community Council Board of Directors Meeting

The Dayton's Bluff Community Council is inviting everyone to attend the meeting on **Monday, October 20 from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.** at the East Side Enterprise Center at 804 Margaret Street.
Come meet your neighbors, share your ideas, hear from others, and elect board members. Your voice matters!
Welcome address from the Board President, remarks from other local officials, and open discussion with your neighbors and board members are on the schedule. Looking forward to seeing you and serving your neighborhood needs. All are welcome.

Free Legal Services for Low-Income People

Call Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services at 1-888-575-2954 or go to smrls.org to see if you qualify for free legal assistance with: family law, government benefits, housing, education, seniors, and more. You can also call if you're behind on your bills, having problems with credit or creditors, or have other civil legal issues, etc. If an interpreter is needed, SMRLS will provide one.
Hours: **Monday through Friday, 9 to 11:45 a.m.; 1 to 3 p.m.**

THE HISTORIC MOUNDS THEATRE

September 26 – October 4: She Kills Monsters presented by Six Elements Theater Co She Kills Monsters tells the story of Agnes Evans as she leaves her childhood home in Ohio following the death of her teenage sister, Tilly. When Agnes finds Tilly's Dungeons & Dragons notebook, however, she finds herself catapulted into a journey of discovery and action-packed adventure in the imaginary world that was her sister's refuge.
Dates/Times: September 26, 27, 29, October 1-4: 7:30 p.m. Sunday September 28: 2:00 p.m. Admission: \$20/Pay What You Can
October 11: Bands of the Beast.
October 17, 18, 24, 25 & 26: Real Haunted Tours. Times: Oct. 17, 18, 24 & 25: 7, 8:30, 10 & 11:59 p.m. Oct 26: 5 & 6:30 p.m. Tickets: Adult \$25 for standard 1-hour tours, \$50 for 11:59 p.m 3-tours and \$15 for kids on 5 and 6:30 p.m. sunset tours.
Visit moundstheatre.org for more information and to purchase tickets.
The Historic Mounds Theatre is located at 1029 Hudson Road, St. Paul, MN 55106; 651-772-2253; historicmoundstheatre@gmail.com.

Chess Club

Come join us at Karibu Grocery and Deli, located at 719 Payne Ave. in St. Paul for a weekly game of chess. All levels are welcome. We play every **Wednesday from 6-9 p.m.**

Dayton's Bluff Library is Happening in October!

Star Party with Mike Lynch is on October 2 starting at 6 p.m. in the Metro State Library Community Labyrinth. Make the stars your old friends as we watch the great celestial show in the skies over Saint Paul. We'll have giant telescopes aimed at the moon, Saturn, star clusters, galaxies, and more. An astronomical camera system will also capture breathtaking images!

Mike Lynch is a retired WCCO meteorologist and has been hosting Minnesota and Wisconsin Starwatch programs for over 50 years! This FREE, family-friendly event is cosponsored by Saint Paul Public Library and Metro State University. Dress for the weather please! Feel free to bring lawn chairs to make yourself comfy. Even if it's cloudy you'll learn a lot and have a great time!

If you need disability related accommodations, including parking, to make this event accessible, please contact the Center for Accessibility Resources, 651-793-1549 or Accessibility.Resources@metrostate.edu. This is an all ages event.

Dayton's Bluff Book Club (for adults) is starting on October 8th. Dayton's Bluff Book Club is a great fit for folks who love reading diverse books by local authors and discussing them with a group of dedicated readers. We meet once a month on a Wednesday in the months of October, November, December, February, March, and April at 6 p.m.

The Dayton's Bluff Book Club is a collaboration of the Metropolitan State University Library and the Dayton's Bluff Branch of Saint Paul Public Library whose members live, work or attend classes on the East Side. We prioritize our selection of titles to those written by Minnesota authors, that have a local setting,

or that are written by people of color and other diverse authors. Book discussions usually include issues related to social justice, equity, and anti-racism. We encourage book club members to use both the university and public libraries in pursuit of lifelong learning and the joy of reading. Discussions are frequently facilitated by authors, Metropolitan State faculty, or other guests from the community. For more information, call the library at 651-793-1699

Art Class (for adults) October 13 from 6-7:30 p.m. Try a new art project each month at our Art Class for adults at Dayton's Bluff Library! This month, learn how to create Imprinted Clay Trinket Dishes. All materials provided.

Community Seed Circle on October 15 from 6-7 p.m. Join Urban Roots, Metro State Library, and St. Paul Public Library Dayton's Bluff Branch to sort and process seeds and tidy up the East Side Seed Library.

Circus Manduhai will visit Dayton's Bluff Library on October 16 at 1 p.m. Circus Manduhai's performance is typically 30-45 minutes, with foot juggling, acro-balancing, contortion, juggling (diablo, balls, clubs, spinning plates) unicycle, hula hoops and includes audience participation. The target audience is kids 7-11 but all are welcome.

On October 28 from 6:30-8 p.m. during Teen Writers' Guild we are learning the skill of Book Binding. Get ready to fold, stitch, and bind your way to a one-of-a-kind book! This workshop introduces the basics of bookbinding with step-by-step guidance. From choosing your cover design to assembling the final product, you'll have the freedom to create a journal, sketchbook, or planner as unique as you are. Perfect for aspiring writers, artists, and crafters! This program is exclusively for teens 12-18.

For more information about events at Dayton's Bluff Library visit sppl.org/event or give us a call at 651-793-1699.



Dayton's Bluff District Forum

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While we are not currently printing, the paper is always available online at daytonsbluffdistrictforum.org. This publication of Hopewell Communications, Inc., is intended to provide a forum for the ideas and opinions of its readers and to be an instrument for developing community awareness and pride. Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of the *Forum*. Material from this paper may be republished if it is attributed to the *Dayton's Bluff District Forum* and to the author, if any. Articles and letters to the editor are welcome and may be emailed to daytonsbluffdistrictforum@gmail.com, or mailed to the address above. The *Dayton's Bluff District Forum* is delivered to businesses in the Dayton's Bluff neighborhood when the budget permits. To find out where you can pick up a printed issue, send an email to the address above.

Board of Directors: Greg Cosimini, Karin DuPaul, Sage Holben, Steve Trimble
Editor/layout: Allison Lund-Zalewski; Editorial Associate: Mark Gallagher
Staff: Mandy Okonek

Next issue: **November. Deadline for content October 10.**

Free Cybersecurity Check-Up Event for the Community Think Safe, Be Safe

Metro State

In response to a wave of recent cyberattacks that have disrupted city services and raised alarms across the Twin Cities, Metro State University is hosting a free cybersecurity awareness event **Think Safe Be Safe**. The event will take place on October 18, 2025, and is open to all community members, students, and local organizations.

The initiative is part of Metro State's broader commitment to strengthening digital literacy and resilience across the state. Hosted at the university's state-of-the-art Cyber Security Center, the event will feature interactive workshops, expert-led sessions, and practical demonstrations designed to help attendees understand how to protect their personal data and privacy.

This comes at a critical time for Saint Paul. Just recently, the city suffered a major cyberattack that prompted Mayor Melvin Carter to declare a state of emergency. The attack disrupted municipal systems, including payment platforms, library services, and internal networks. Governor Tim Walz activated the Minnesota National Guard's cyber protection unit to assist in recovery efforts. "The scale and complexity of this incident exceeded both internal and commercial response capabilities," Walz said during a press briefing.

In light of these events, Dr. Faisal Kaleem, Director of Cybersecurity and Cyber Operations Programs at Metro State University, emphasized the importance of community involvement in cybersecurity: "Cybersecurity isn't just a technical issue — it's a human one. Every person in our community plays a role in protecting our shared digital environment. **Think Safe Be Safe** is about empowering people with the knowledge and tools to make smart, safe choices online."

The event will also highlight Metro State's innovative Cybersecurity Clinic, which offers free vulnerability assessments to small businesses, nonprofits, and schools. These services are provided by trained students under expert supervision, giving participants real-world experience while helping local organizations improve their cyber defenses.

Whether you're a parent concerned about your child's online safety, a small business owner managing sensitive data, or simply someone who wants to better understand digital threats, **Think Safe Be Safe** will offer valuable insights and resources. All attendees are invited to bring their personal computing devices — laptops, tablets, phones — to get checked by cybersecurity professionals!

Registration for **Think Safe Be Safe** is free, and attendees are encouraged to RSVP using the QR Code. Light refreshments provided. To learn more, contact Will at will.lee@my.metrostate.edu or Devya at devya.esreepersaud@my.normandale.edu. If you need disability-related accommodations, including parking, to make this event accessible, please contact the Center for Accessibility Resources at 651-793-1549 or accessibility.resources@metrostate.edu.

CFSO Free Cybersecurity Awareness Event

Think Safe

Be Safe

Learn about cybersecurity, and how to protect your devices & personal info

Saturday, October 18

Stop by anytime 10 am - 3 pm

Location: Cyber Security Center

Metro State University, New Main Building, Room L206

700 E. 7th Street, Saint Paul, MN 55106

Parking Ramp: 402 Maria Avenue

Sponsored by Cyber Security and Forensics Student Organization (CFSO)

RSVP: Scan QR code!

SP PL Saint Paul Public Library

NDC Neighborhood Development Center

MN CYBER

Garage Sale and Bake Sale

Saturday, October 4

(10am to 4pm)

1049 Euclid Street

St Paul 55106

Sunday Worship

10:30am

Sunday services live-streamed on our YouTube channel (search: Mounds Park UMC)

651-774-8736

Mounds Park United Methodist Church

Sharing the love of Christ with our community • moundsparkumc.org

Dayton's Bluff at the State Fair

Amerigo Vespucci
Forum State Fair Reporter

The weather was perfect for both of my trips to the Minnesota State Fair this year. That meant it was easy to eat too many corn dogs and Peter's wieners while searching for signs of Dayton's Bluff.

Once again, long-time Dayton's Bluff resident Greg Cosimini had an entry in the Creative Activities postcard competition. It won a third place ribbon in the Topic category. His topic was "Romance in a Light Bulb" and featured postcards from 1909-1910. Someone back then must have decided that the Edison light bulb was the bee's knees and what better way to celebrate it than by putting couples in romantic poses inside of the

bulbs. Of course, the real bulbs contained almost no air and either the bulbs had to be very large or the people very small, but that is called artistic license.

Another artistic endeavor with connections to Dayton's Bluff was discovered in the Fine Arts Building. Our very own editor's sister, Emillee Lund, had a digital print of an original acrylic painting titled "Nocturnal Critters" accepted for display. It included an owl, a possum, and a flying squirrel. Just getting into this juried art exhibition is a major accomplishment but "Nocturnal Critters" also won the Hall and Walton Human/Nature Award and was purchased by a Fair-going art lover.

Also spotted both days at the State Fair was one of the *Dayton Bluff District Forum's* editors emeritus, Jennifer Gascoigne, hard at work at the Minnesota Historical Society's tent near the DNR building.

That's it until next year.
Photos below by Amerigo Vespucci



25 Years Ago in Dayton's Bluff

Is the Mounds Theatre Haunted?

Background: This article was first published in the October 2000 Dayton's Bluff Distinct Forum. The Mounds Theatre had been used as a warehouse for decades. Raeann Ruth, executive director of the Portage for Youth, was given the Mounds Theatre by its owner George Hardenbergh on the condition that it be restored. As the renovation began, some people thought that there was something strange about the building — it was haunted.

The following true accounts are from women who spent an evening in the old Mounds Theatre.

Four of us assembled in the theater lobby, on a cold, bleak evening in April. We were there to investigate what seemed to be a haunting in the projection booth in this long forgotten 1920's theater. There was something in this particular room that would make the bravest of people stop in their tracks and shiver. Was there something or someone in this projection booth that had forgotten to leave when the doors were closed in 1960?

Once we had gathered in the lobby, we bolted the door behind us and slowly ascended the old steps leading up to the balcony, no one speaking a word. There was a sliver of light coming through the door, which seemed to bathe the floor in a ghastly green hue. We each found our places in the balcony, kicking old popcorn boxes to the side as we settled in for the duration of our stay. As we sat there, we all became aware of the darkness around us and our senses kicked into high gear.

Our eyes strained to identify anything of significance that was familiar or unfamiliar in this huge expanse of darkness. Our lungs filled with the musty odor of 30 years of accumulated dust. It was then that we heard the first sounds. The sound was that of someone slowly trudging up the left hand side of the stairwell and bells could be heard. We could not breathe, nor could we move. It was as if we were all glued to our seats. The footsteps appeared to be getting closer to where we were all sitting and then a flash of light was seen to the left of us. The light shot past us and down to the lower side of the stage and through the exit door. There was a scream and. . .

The following is written by Barbara With, psychic, author, music writer and producer.

Psychics come in all different shapes, sizes, and levels of expertise. I focus my psychic abilities to reflect back to you, the condition of your spirit, mind, body, and emotions. I sometimes deal with past lives and loved ones who have died, but mostly I advise on ways to successfully maneuver through the challenges of your own life, using the most of your own abilities. So when Raeann Ruth asked me to come to the theater and spend some time there to see if I could pick up anything with my psychic abilities, I had no idea if I could help shed light on the Mounds Theatre Ghost.

As we entered the theater that night, there was definitely a presence. I put my voice-activated tape recorder in the front of the stage and we went into the balcony to wait in the dark. The degree to which we could hear noises and all sorts of odd sounds, was profound. At one point I heard what sounded like something



being dragged across the floor. Two of the other women heard bells and other strange things. We sat as long as we could stand it and then something

happened that made us all say, "Light the candle!!" As soon as the candle was lit, all of the noises stopped and it was dead quiet.

I could not pick up any information about the theater itself, or the possible ghost inside. However, I did get the impression that this particular place had been very important for the Native Americans during the 1800's. Very near to the theater some important event took place that was the end of an era as they knew it. I strongly sensed a great sorrowing and deep pain, but also a commitment to stay with the earth, even in death, with the intention to someday help inspire a new community, a community that would possess the same kind of harmony and community that the Native Americans did back then.

In the end, my tape recorder only recorded the sound of setting it down on the stage and then picking it up again as we left. But maybe there is a deeper reason why the Portage and Raeann seem to have extra special help (besides all the good people like George Hardenbergh, who donated the theater to the Portage) growing and evolving the Portage's influence in the community. Maybe there really are spirits of some of the early Native Americans who once loved this particular place on the St. Paul Bluffs. Have they come back in another form to help rebuild the Earth that meant so much to them in life? Who knows? But whether you believe it or not, it's fun to imagine it might be.

Photo provided by moundstheatre.org

Dayton's Bluff DistrictForum

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View From My Porch

Sage Holben

Mid-August: I was feeling fatigued enough to awake in the morning, rise from my bed, and fall asleep on the living room sofa for three hours, and then another two. My whole day was one long “nap”. One half-hour nap would have been normal; not an entire day that ended with me going to bed at seven that night — with no fever, no aches or pains than what had become normal with the diagnosed neuropathy in my legs (or sciatic or arthritis from as many doctors). It didn’t matter how the practitioners diagnosed it or what they prescribed — the horrendously searing ripping through my legs and the come and go of the hip aches on the right and left remained; sometimes with a 10-minute respite, but never far away.

Disorientation, a.k.a confusion, became an issue when I found myself having to thoroughly think about the familiar route to one of my common destinations. I had to figure which streets I needed to take as my route — one by one, block by block; what landmarks do I pass? No, I’ve never liked Alexis or Bixby or anyone else telling me to turn right or left, in xx miles. I like a map with street lines and names. I am largely a visual learner (it’s one of the strong resentments I have about Health Partners Dr. D.J. failed cataract surgery several years ago...I last read more than two paragraphs the morning he performed on my left eye. Since that May day in 2020 I have not been able to read a full page or a complete book. Now it seemed I was losing my memory as well as my sight.

Confusion came one day as I searched the many icons on my Android for — for what? I didn’t know what I was looking for; what icon would help me. I felt lost. I felt frustrated. NO! I felt ANGRY!

At that moment many recent conversations came to mind, fumbling my sentences and embarrassingly struggling to pull a word from my mind to offer to my waiting listener. I also had begun struggling putting entire sentences together. It became evident in my writing...seeing double from eye surgery didn’t help matters. Two recurring ‘events’ I found particularly interesting were, for want of a better description, sort of ‘out of body’ experiences. And no; during all this, I was NOT smoking cannabis nor was I snacking on gummies. I concluded all this as living with several kinds of constant pain and being fatigued emotionally and bodily. I was wearing down.

Part of this was seeing visions. Fully awake, I saw my son sitting next to my bed. He had his knees crossed and I reached out to touch his stockinged foot. It wasn’t there — my hand felt nothing. Maybe the cause was my early macular

degeneration, but it wasn’t a blur or blob I saw, it was a foot. My other ‘vision’ consisted of me, again, I believe I was fully awake, looking at a grey screen spread out fully in front of me. On the screen were people — they were not familiar to me. I was not trying to reach them either physically or verbally. I was just observing for what seemed a few seconds and then it was pffff — gone. They never seemed aware of my presence.

Within a day of my “icon confusion” I was conversing with a friend about my experiences and that I had recently been taking a newly prescribed drug — “Gabapentin 300 mg”. That drug, she told me, was one that she was advocating removal from her mother’s doctor-prescribed medications. She described some of the resulting effects of the medicine and I was reminded of the year (1992 or ‘93) in Oskaloosa, Iowa when I worked as an assistant activity director in a private “nursing” home.

I remember so clearly the first day I walked into the building. The main office was near the entrance and all around was a large room — part lobby, part TV room. A few lounge chairs for visitors, but the punch-to-the-gut was seeing six to eight very elderly residents, most eyes-closed, facing the TV, and their heads were tilted to one shoulder. I wondered if it was common for so many people to be asleep in front of a TV at the same time... nap time? My job was “activity”. I was part-time because I was attending college - a sociology major. This nursing home was becoming interesting. I didn’t know much about drugs, beyond aspirin and birth control pills, and their effects.

I first thought TV was the zombie-inducing ‘drug’ in this care facility. By my own intuition I found that music and bright pictures along with conversation, could bring a person back. I don’t know what medication these residents were prescribed. When the nursing staff kept telling me it was useless to give the residents any attention, that DID give me direction. I realized that whatever was being done or being dosed did not serve a healing purpose, but a maintenance purpose in keeping the residents quiet and calling for no attention including long, tedious trips to the toilets. I realize the facility might have been short-staffed, but to penalize a human being for staffing is inhumane.

Is it not then inhumane and blatantly careless to prescribe a life-changing medicine — Gabapentin 300mg — without informing the patient of a choice, or of warnings beyond ‘may cause drowsiness’?

To make a “real life” connection with these passive residents, I began singing bits of lilting songs my mother used to sing, thinking the tunes might kick start some memory, linking the present with time past: When the red, red robin comes bob, bob bobbin’ along, Bicycle built for two, How much is that doggie in the window? And If I were the only girl in the world...” Heads began lifting and glimpses of recognition brightened the morgue-like lobby. Though a few words were hoarsely being spoken, it was the beaming light from the eyes that assured me that inner feelings and thinking existed.

I then began showing the residents rural ‘home’ magazines with colorful, eye-stimulating photos of bright red barns, apple pie, people who might reflect their own rural Iowa homelife. I was watching elderly, dry-skinned men and women awoken from a deep sleep. Perhaps some had a desire to remain in an induced sleep. No staff mentioned it. So, I continued.

Return to the present: Though my head wasn’t falling into the shoulder tilt, I was aware enough to recognize my personality was slipping into the zombie mode I had recognized in the nursing home. Cautionary symptoms on pharmacy material (*the following warnings were not given by or from doctor’s office at visit when prescribed; no questions were asked about my mental or emotional background or history; nor was I asked if I was willing to exchange severe pain for any of the following or to become a zombie) include: ‘excessive drowsiness, dizziness, or lightheadedness, agitation, or confusion’.

And, on another sheet: “thoughts about suicide or dying, attempts to commit suicide, new or worse depression, new or worse anxiety, feeling agitated or restless, panic attacks. trouble sleeping (insomnia), new or worse irritability, acting aggressive, being angry or violent, acting on dangerous impulses, an extreme increase in activity and talking (mania), other unusual changes in behavior or mood.”

Within three days of initiating the Gabapentin 300mg, I was so fatigued and void of any desire to manage the simplest activity or even use my mind. I was frustrated because the neuropathy pain was not alleviated. My legs and mind were screaming internally, yet I had no tears to release. Three clinics, physical therapy regimen, many imaging, and almost no feedback from the medical “professionals” the pain was worsening, the three injections to my spine were not working, and I still wonder what Advan-

tage and my health insurance were really paying for. Was it really for ‘rent’ as a friend noted on his insurance statement?

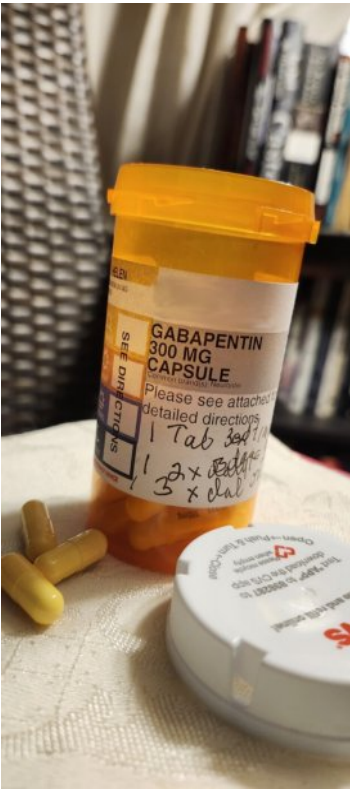
While taking the Gabapentin, I was having trouble latching onto words I wanted, friends patiently waiting as I searched the resources in my head. I found it difficult to construct a coherent paragraph. Botched cataract surgery had taken much of the eyesight I needed for reading; now I feared I would lose my thinking and speaking abilities. Would my eyes become empty orbs like so many other elderly people; their faces reflecting their fear of being forgotten, of not being able to be understood, of speaking for themselves and treated like the human individual they are - not as a zombie, a shell of a body that would perhaps rather die than shrivel inside and out as a result of a medicine that deadens a person’s senses and abilities? Why is a medicine sanctioned to be used as a tool to keep a human quiet and low maintenance (requiring less attention, freeing ‘care’ staff for other tasks)?

I became bold and started asking friends and acquaintances if they or someone they knew had ever been prescribed Gabapentin. “Yes” again and again; with unwelcomed side effects similar to experiences of my friend’s parent and my own experience.

When I called the clinic for an alternative to Gabapentin, the physician suggested Lyrica. It took my asking several specific questions to be told that basically Lyrica and Gabapentin have the same side effects. This info was not forthcoming. I had to probe.

I just turned 80 years old. Drugs such as Lyrica and Gabapentin can kill the soul if not the body. We MUST be our own advocates. READ all the info that you can get BEFORE you take the drug. NO ONE else is looking out for you. The most serious side effects are not necessarily the most evident. I need a magnifier to read the miniscule print. If you have an elder you care about, PLEASE advocate for them. Our medical system, medical staff, medical or pharmaceutical policies are NOT in place to protect us from Zombie-producing medicines.

This is a very opinionated piece of writing, I do admit. I have almost no trust in the medical business. I believe there remain many honest and good souls in the medical profession, though they are most often those who dare not speak up freely. They are restrained by severely limited time with patients; limited in questions they are permitted to answer. Dare I say patients of a certain age or ability become lucrative cash cows? And is ‘Big Pharma’ and its influence — a myth or reality? Read your chart (I’ve caught many errors entered by physicians/assistants and staff). Read your bill statements — the payments will astound you. Look up the meaning/translation of WHAT work is being billed. As someone from HP member service told me when I asked for a translation, “do what we do, and Google it”. ADVOCATE & SPEAK UP!



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Bestario: The Release from the Constraints of Reason

Metro State University

Join the Gordon Parks Gallery at Metro State University for a multimedia art exhibition: Bestario: The Release from the Constraints of Reason, featuring the works of Gustavo Boada, Cadex Herrera, Dougie Padilla, Maria Cristina Tavera, and Xavier Tavera.

Bestiarios are a product of fantasy. They are wonderful and magical creatures that may stem from mythical origins or the imagination of artists and lay-people alike. They exist in a symbolic universe where a collection of beliefs, language, and assumptions assist in creating and maintaining a shared sense of reality.

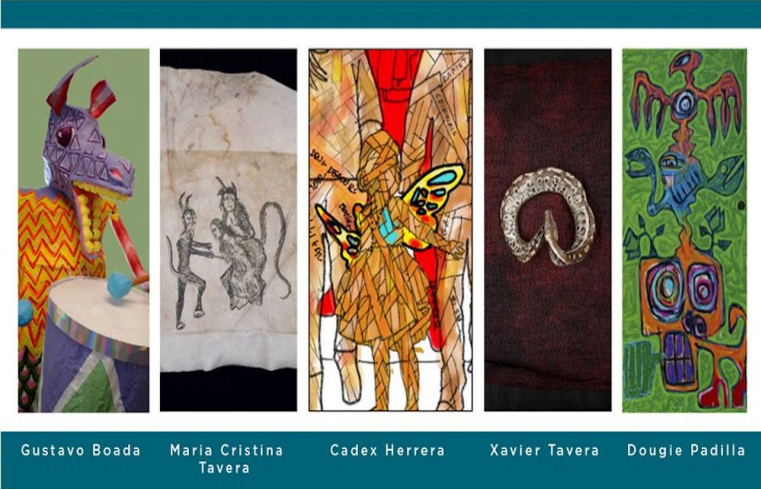
The five exhibiting artists are well-established and beloved members of the Twin Cities Latino community. Participants include puppeteer Gustavo Boada, Minneapolis; multi-disciplinary artist Cadex Herrera, White Bear Lake; painter and poet Dougie Padilla, Northfield, MN; multi-disciplinary artist Maria Cristina Tavera, Minneapolis; and photographer Xavier Tavera, Minneapolis.

Gallery Director Erica Rasmussen says, “The Latino psyche has long been fascinated by bestiarios. Take, for example, the Mexican alebrijes which grew out of Pedro Linare’s 1936 fever-induced dream in which he witnessed vividly colored, unfamiliar creatures in

further activated the collective Latino imagination.

“Similarly, there are countless folktales throughout Latin American countries that embody fantastic and magical creatures who weave cautionary tales, provide historical context and transmit cultural values. Some of the works in this exhibition are light-hearted and playful, while others are somberly provocative. In any case, these multi-media artists create visually stimulating artworks that deliver sincere sentiments informed by their Latino roots and their personal experiences.”

The exhibit opened with a reception from 5 to 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, September 11, and featured a poetry reading by contributing artist Dougie Padilla. The show will continue through October 23. Gallery hours are 1 to 7 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and Saturday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. The gallery is located on the first floor of the Library and Learning Center, 645 East Seventh Street, at the university’s Saint Paul Campus.



Gustavo Boada Maria Cristina Tavera Cadex Herrera Xavier Tavera Dougie Padilla

Friends of the Forum 2025

Make a donation today!

Greg Cosimini

Mark Gallagher

Ron Bardell

Working Together to Improve Access to Services

Ramsey County

At Ramsey County, resident feedback is a key part of how we improve our services. When we see areas where processes could be faster, clearer, or easier, we bring the right people together to make changes that matter.

Over the past few months, we’ve taken focused steps to address delays, improve communication, and make it easier for residents to get the support they need.

Here are some recent examples:

Faster application processing: Earlier this summer, we were able to assign SNAP and Cash applications within one to two days of receipt with processing times improving significantly since last summer. However, due to higher seasonal demand, the current assignment timeframe is about six days.

Timely returned calls: A new call-back pilot connected residents with trained staff who could answer questions quickly returning over 75% of calls within a day.

Better technology and communication tools: We’ve added automation to save staff time, made MNbenefits confirmation messages clearer and introduced voicemail transcription so urgent needs can be addressed faster.

Improved service center experience: The renovated Downtown and Maplewood Service Centers now offer a more welcoming space, streamlined check-in and new embedded Housing Stability services. Wait times have improved and residents can now see wait times on the Ramsey County website.

Stronger collaboration: A new partner group is working across agencies to share solutions and coordinate services more effectively.

We know there’s always more work to do. These improvements are part of our ongoing commitment to ensuring Ramsey County residents can easily access the services they need, quickly, equitably and in a way that honors their needs.

Friends of the Forum

Dear Reader,

The Dayton’s Bluff District Forum has been a volunteer-run newspaper since the 1980s and has always operated on a minimal budget. Each issue costs around \$1,000 to produce per month. We have found a new printer and have adjusted the cost to print each month.

For the past three years we have been soliciting donations through our Friends of the *Forum* program. Thanks to the donations from readers like you, we have been able to keep the paper up and running. If you value this community source of information, please consider filling out the form below. Any amount is appreciated; you may also make memorial donations, or include the *Forum* in your legacy planning. If you have been our Friend in the past, please consider making a tax-deductible donation in 2025. Our goal for 2025 is \$2,500; will you help us reach our goal?

Yes, I will become a Friend of the Forum. My tax-deductible check is enclosed, for:

\$100 \$50 \$25 Another amount _____

Or give online: givemn.org/organization/Hopewell-Communications-Incorporated

Name _____ Email _____

Phone _____

Address _____ City, State, ZIP _____

Make checks payable to: *Dayton’s Bluff District Forum* and mail to 1368 Minnehaha Ave. E., St. Paul, MN 55106. For more information, daytons-bluffdistrictforum@gmail.com.

Thank you for your support!