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# ThreeSixty

Minnesota Teens Report Stories & Issues That Matter



**Adapting in crisis:  
Journalists pivot,  
inspiring future  
storytellers**

**Inside the Minnesota  
Lynx game day**

**Mental health  
matters! Profiling  
powerful advocates  
and providers**

**Meet the new  
ThreeSixty Scholar**



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ThreeSixty Magazine will be published twice during the 2023 calendar year.

ThreeSixty Magazine is designed by Cindy Samargia Laun.

Email [ThreeSixty@StThomas.edu](mailto:ThreeSixty@StThomas.edu) with comments, letters and questions about participating in ThreeSixty Journalism.

ThreeSixty Journalism is a nonprofit program of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of St. Thomas.

Donations from individuals like you provide a significant amount of ThreeSixty's operating budget. To learn more, visit [threesixty.stthomas.edu](http://threesixty.stthomas.edu).

**ON THE COVER**

ThreeSixty TV Broadcast Camp Reporters Fatima Abdurahman and Amira Mohamud work with the FOX-9 reporting team at the University of St. Thomas College of Arts and Sciences.



News Reporter Academy reporters interviewed people who are working to improve mental health in historically marginalized communities (see pages 9 - 15). Charlie Quick and Joseph Plotts interview Thad Shunkwiler.

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**Summer Camp scrapbook** showcases photos of participants in ThreeSixty's eight summer camps across six weeks. *Pages 7 - 8*

**Health equity** is in the spotlight again, as ThreeSixty's News Reporter Academy reporters profile organizations bringing mental health resources to BIPOC and historically marginalized groups in Minnesota. The stories were produced under MinnPost's lead and in partnership with the Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota. *Pages 9 - 15*

**Courtside reporting** took five Sports Writing Workshop reporters up close with the Minnesota Lynx. They produced the stories with the Star Tribune's sports desk. *Pages 16 - 17*

**Minnesota journalists** and newsmakers have been through a lot in the last three years. Winter Workshop reporters shine a spotlight on their work to tell important stories at a critical moment in time. *Pages 18 - 23*

**ThreeSixty Voices** showcases college essays written at College Essay Boot Camp in summer 2023 and op-ed stories from the 2022 Fall News Team. *Pages 25 - 30*



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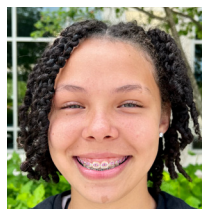
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# ThreeSixty Wins 5 MNA Awards

THREESIXTY JOURNALISM collected five awards in the Minnesota Newspaper Association College Better Newspaper Contest for the 2021-22 school year, including a general excellence award for the third year in a row. These victories and recognition continue to prove ThreeSixty Journalism's commitment to producing high quality journalistic content by diverse youth across the state. Even more impressive is the fact that those representing ThreeSixty were high schoolers competing against college kids.

"We are thrilled our high school students are honored again at the collegiate level. All four winners are passionate about storytelling, and their hard work paid off in a big way. They are completely deserving of the awards," said Program Manager Theresa Malloy Lemickson.

ThreeSixty Journalism won second place in the General Excellence category for its ThreeSixty Magazine, which it publishes online and in print. The award marks the third consecutive occasion ThreeSixty received second place in said category.

The judge wrote, "Strong digital integration and layout with wonderful features, graphics, opinions and stories. A very modern

layout approach captures the reader's attention either in print or online."

In the Business Story category, ThreeSixty students were bestowed second and third place, going to Faaya Adem and Isaac-Santino Garcia, respectively.

Adem, a freshman at the University of Minnesota and graduate of Fair School of Arts in Minneapolis, took second place for her story "Power of Documenting," a well-rounded profile piece centering on Georgia Fort, a Black journalist in the Twin Cities. Fort has been pivotal in providing honest journalism that reflects underserved communities and has pushed for diverse, local journalism told by diverse, local journalists in Minnesota's homogenized media landscape.

Garcia, a junior at Cretin-Derham Hall High School in St. Paul, took home third place for his story "Respect and Equity," which reports on St. Paul's Family Tree Clinic, an organization making huge strides in providing inclusive health care to the LGBTQ+ community. The story is an incisive one that takes a deeper look at the complexities of the health care system in the United States, a process that is even more complicated — and at times

even unjust — for members of the LGBTQ+ community.

In the Columnist category, ThreeSixty students won first and third place, handed out to Evan Odegard and Caroline Siebels-Lindquist, respectively.

Odegard, a freshman at Harvard University and graduate of Nova Classical Academy in St. Paul, secured the top prize for his honest columns, which give the reader an insight into the experience and struggle of hailing from two countries and cultures.

The judge commented, "Evan Odegard superbly chronicles his struggle for belonging while rising floor-by-floor in the elevator of a Chicago skyscraper to the Costa Rican consulate, where he will finally achieve his dual citizenship."

Siebels-Lindquist, a freshman at Drake University and graduate of the Great River High School in St. Paul, won third place for her pieces. The judge remarked, "Siebels-Lindquist hits a timely home run with her clear, concise argument for comprehensive sex education programs for young people and widespread availability of contraceptives as the best way to prevent unwanted pregnancies."

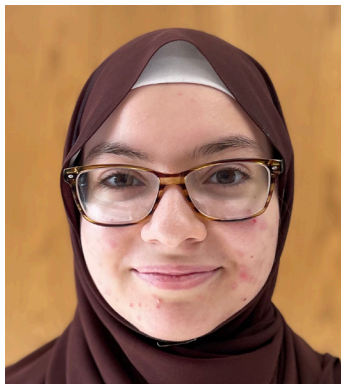
ThreeSixty congratulates all its alum who won awards.



ThreeSixty was recognized with second place in the General Excellence category for its magazine, published in Fall 2022.

*"We are thrilled our high school students are honored again at the collegiate level," said Program Manager Theresa Malloy Lemickson.*

# ThreeSixty Alum Earns Prestigious Scholarship



Mariam Jabri will be attending the University of Minnesota in the fall.

THREESIXTY SENIOR Mariam Jabri, a 2023 graduate of Eden Prairie High School, was recently awarded the Dow Jones News Fund Scholarship.

Jabri and three other students from across the country won the scholarship, which grants each student \$1,500 to finance their college education. Jabri plans to attend the University of Minnesota in the fall.

In summer of 2022, Jabri attended ThreeSixty's News Reporter Academy at the University of St. Thomas in St.

Paul, where she wrote an essay that would eventually earn her the scholarship. The essay, "Opening Doors to Truth, Justice, Healing," is an eye-opening account of the federal Indian boarding schools that were in operation up until 1969; 21 of these schools were in Minnesota. The nationally funded boarding schools were responsible for separating Indigenous families and eradicating their culture. Jabri also wrote about The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition and its mission,

in partnership with the Department of Interior, to reveal the truth regarding those dark decades and their goal to find a way forward and to heal collectively.

The Dow Jones News Fund also provides money to ThreeSixty for one of its summer camps, News Reporter Academy, which is held in partnership with MinnPost and the Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota.

Jabri was nominated by Program Manager Theresa Malloy Lemickson.

"She is a compassionate leader who wants to make the world better one story at a time," said Malloy Lemickson.

This is the third time a ThreeSixty student has won this award, with Faaya Adem winning in 2022 and Ayo Olagbaju in 2020.

Adem is studying journalism at the University of Minnesota Hubbard School of Journalism and Mass Communication, while Olagbaju is majoring in journalism at Howard University.



# Meet the 2023 ThreeSixty Scholar

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

JAYDIN FAIRBANKS, a member of Osseo Senior High School's Class of 2023, is the ThreeSixty Journalism 2023 Scholar. This award grants him a full-tuition, four-year scholarship to study emerging media at the University of St. Thomas College of Arts and Sciences.

Jaydin Fairbanks plans to use the scholarship to expand his horizons in education.

"I plan to try to get the full college experience. I want [to] join clubs and meet new people. There's a bunch of aspiring students, and I want to meet them and learn for the future," he said.

The scholarship ensures Jaydin Fairbanks will be the first in his family to get an opportunity of this scope.

"Unlike my parents, who had to take care of their kids while going to college, I plan on getting the full college experience," he said.

Jaydin Fairbanks was born in a Navajo Nation in Arizona and moved to Minnesota after a stint in Oklahoma. He was not expecting to be selected as the winner of the ThreeSixty Scholarship. In fact, he took the call with the good news while he was at his grandmother's funeral.

"I had very mixed feelings. I mean, I felt happy, but literally my grandma's casket was right

behind me. There were so many mixed emotions I had," Jaydin Fairbanks said.

The timing of the call led him to momentarily wonder if his grandmother played a part in his stroke of luck.

"The next day, after all my feelings, I was really happy. I was glad I got it, I felt like maybe my grandma gave it to me," he said.

Jaydin Fairbanks said the origin of his experience with ThreeSixty can be traced back to his mom, Arlene Fairbanks, insisting that he get out of the house and do something productive with his time as summer 2021 rolled around.

"It was during COVID, and I was just sitting around doing nothing. That's why my mom signed me up for it," said Jaydin Fairbanks.

ThreeSixty chose Fairbanks out of a pool of high school seniors who graduated from a ThreeSixty Journalism camp. The scholarship is worth more than \$160,000 over four years.

"Jaydin is an eager student and quick learner who is talented and tech savvy," ThreeSixty Program Manager Theresa Malloy Lemickson said. "He takes what he learns in the classroom and uses those skills to tell stories in his community. He has a bright future."

Arlene Fairbanks said, "This

scholarship brings me immense pride and joy. It definitely reflects the efforts and commitment I have given Jaydin over his childhood to nurture his natural abilities to strive and succeed in reaching his goals."

Jaydin Fairbanks' earliest encounters with storytelling and media came through making and editing YouTube videos of another one of his passions: video gaming.

"I started making some things on an editing program I got when I was younger. I actually started a YouTube channel of mostly gameplay videos but putting little editing tricks on it to make it funny," he said. "I like making and telling funny stories and making people laugh. Then when I got into ThreeSixty, I was like, 'Oh snap! You can actually do this as a job!'" Jaydin Fairbanks said.

He hopes to learn about producing films and stories while in college.

"My dream job ... probably getting on a TV set and helping people, doing stuff, telling them what to do, but not exactly a director. I want to see the process happening, like, maybe a production manager or producer," he said.

Arlene Fairbanks would like to see her son become a positive influence on the community that shaped him and create a domino effect of success wherever he goes.



Jaydin Fairbanks, 2023 ThreeSixty Scholar

"As a person growing up on the Navajo Nation Reservation, this scholarship will have a huge impact on Jaydin's life and career. So many individuals living on the reservation are in constant survival mode," she said. "I hope for him to become a role model within our community, and one day bring his knowledge,

skills and experiences to help address the challenges many face living on the reservation and in other Native communities. I hope he will create a ripple effect throughout and will inspire and motivate others to pursue their own educational aspirations."

## ThreeSixty Scholar Updates



Jos Morss, 2020 ThreeSixty Scholar

JOS MORSS is a senior at the University of St. Thomas. They are double majoring in journalism and elementary education with a minor in theology. They currently juggle five jobs: a peer research assistant at the O'Shaughnessy-Frey Library; a babysitter and nanny; a nursery attendant at a local church; and a kinder club leader at the Twin Cities German Immersion School.



France Aravena, 2021 ThreeSixty Scholar

FRANCE ARAVENA is majoring in strategic communication with a double minor in English and political science at St. Thomas. For this upcoming semester, she will be interning at the Division of Student Affairs as a social media content creator. Aravena said, "Being an alumni to ThreeSixty has connected me with some of the most inspiring people I have ever met and has given me many great opportunities."



Gwynnevere Vang, 2022 ThreeSixty Scholar

GWYNNEVERE VANG is majoring in journalism as the 2022 ThreeSixty Scholar. She is an inaugural member of the New York Times Corps, a mentorship program for college students from underrepresented groups. She is also currently the University-Affairs content manager-editor for TommieMedia, St. Thomas' student-led news organization.





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documentary series at:  
[youtube.com/cfpmn](https://youtube.com/cfpmn)



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# ThreeSixty Trains Emerging Storytellers Across 8 Camps

THREESIXTY WELCOMED STUDENTS at eight camps this summer, which explored emerging media fields of digital media arts, journalism and strategic communication.

Students participated in camps at the University of St. Thomas, St. Paul campus, with two programs hosted off-site: Radio Broadcast Camp at Minnesota Public Radio and Sports Writing Workshop at the Star Tribune.

Students worked side-by-side with professional mentors, emerging media professors and other partners to complete weeklong projects. And, four camps included equity stipends, meaning students earned \$590 for each camp they completed.

ThreeSixty opens its summer camp application in early February. Learn more at [threesixty.stthomas.edu](https://threesixty.stthomas.edu).



## News Reporter Academy

In News Reporter Academy, reporters were immersed in a four-day camp where they wrote stories for publication (see pages 9-15). Taught by MinnPost and its managing editor, Harry Colbert Jr., students learned why journalism matters. They worked with professional mentors and had guest speakers from the Twin Cities Black Journalists chapter visit. All students completed stories about mental health resources in underserved communities, sourced by the Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota.



## Radio Broadcast Camp

Radio Broadcast Camp convened at Minnesota Public Radio for the first time since 2019. A dozen young reporters worked with journalists to create stories about Indigenous narratives. The camp partners included KRSM and MIGIZI.



## PR & Advertising Workshop

ThreeSixty's PR & Advertising Workshop tasked seven advanced students with creating a campaign to raise awareness about social media addiction. Under the leadership of University of St. Thomas professor Paul Omodt and Marketing, Insights and Communications professional Pete Winecke, students built engaging campaigns and presented them at Weber Shandwick in downtown Minneapolis, seen here with staff who provided feedback on student campaign presentations.





## College Essay Boot Camp

Fifteen students, including a cohort from Girls Inc. Eureka!, completed their essays at College Essay Boot Camp with help from writing and communications professionals. Campers also learned more about the college admissions process.



## Sports Writing Workshop

ThreeSixty Sports Writing Workshop writers spent the day courtside at the Minnesota Lynx game. The Star Tribune Junior Reporter program brought students into the newsroom to work with the Sports Desk to complete the articles, which the WNBA published.



## Digital Audio Storytelling Camp

ThreeSixty students learned about the art of Foley from emerging media professor Peter Gregg in the Digital Audio Storytelling Camp.



## Game Jam Workshop

Game Jam Workshop students built video games in teams from start to finish in a week's time. The camp, led by emerging media professor Sky Anderson, was held in partnership with Best Buy Teen Tech Centers.



## TV Broadcast Camp

ThreeSixty TV Broadcast Camp reporters witnessed a live broadcast from the newsroom to the studio during a field trip at KSTP. Students paired with a reporting team of professionals from local TV stations to put together broadcast-ready packages on stories in partnership with the Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota.



# ThreeSixty Shares Stories on Mental Health Resources

THREESIXTY JOURNALISM STUDENTS are passionate about mental health and how it impacts their community, which is why the stories produced at News Reporter Academy this summer are so important. In partnership with the Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota and led by MinnPost, students are profiling mental health resources in underrepresented communities. This resource guide highlights important people and organizations doing mental health work throughout the Twin Cities. You can find more information on those resources at [threesixty.stthomas.edu](https://threesixty.stthomas.edu).



## Minnesota Nonprofits Fight Tobacco to Help People with Mental Illness

COMMERCIAL TOBACCO USE is literally killing people who are living with mental illness, but they're not getting the help they need to kick the habit.

People with serious mental illness live on average 25 years less than the general population, according to the Lung Mind Alliance — and the number one cause of death among people with a mental illness is commercial tobacco use.

In response to the issue, a pair of Minnesota nonprofits are working to make a difference.

In 2022, Touchstone Mental Health, a nonprofit organization that supports people with mental illness or substance use disorders, partnered with Lung Mind Alliance to eliminate the use of commercial tobacco in Touchstone's residential treatment programs. Lung Mind Alliance is a statewide coalition and part of the American Lung Association that works on tobacco disparities among mental health and substance use disorder populations.

Touchstone didn't just ban the use of commercial tobacco in four of its Minnesota facilities, but it also incorporated new tobacco treatment programs. In these efforts, it stands out from other treatment facilities across the United States.

Less than a third of substance use disorder treatment programs offer



treatment for commercial tobacco addiction, according to Lung Mind Alliance. Many commercial tobacco users want to quit, but they are rarely given the proper support to do so. Sometimes even trained mental health professionals are reluctant to help.

"There's this persistent and pervasive concept that people with mental health disorders are unable to quit or don't want to quit," said Victoria Larson, a health coach and tobacco treatment specialist at Touchstone.

For example, a primary care doctor may ignore smoking to treat what they view as the greater health issue.

"A regular primary care doctor ... will not historically talk to [someone with a mental illness] about tobacco use, nor encourage them to quit," Larson said.

While some people view commercial tobacco as a safe substitute for other addictive substances, it is far more harmful than many realize. Many people who quit abusing another substance resort to smoking, which can be just as harmful and addictive as whatever they were using before, according to Larson.

"[Tobacco] interacts with our brain in the exact same way that all other drugs do," they said. "It runs along the dopamine reward system, just like any other substance."

Larson believes that commercial tobacco is perceived as less harmful than it truly is because it was once so commonly used in everyday life.

"Back in the day, mental hospitals actually gave out cigarettes to people," said Larson.

In addition, the commercial tobacco industry "has intentionally targeted certain communities, and one of those is people with mental illness," Larson said.

Research shows that quitting commercial tobacco significantly reduces anxiety, depression and stress, which improves people's overall mental health.

This May the Minnesota Legislature took a step forward for all Minnesotans battling commercial tobacco addiction by passing bill SF 2995, which allows people with MinnesotaCare or Medicaid to have access to tobacco treatment through their insurance.

"[The bill] took off all of the limits that had been around nicotine replacement therapies," said Larson.

While tobacco use remains prevalent in Minnesota, Lung Mind Alliance is on a mission to



Victoria Larson

improve overall Minnesota health by partnering with numerous treatment facilities to reduce the use of tobacco products, especially by vulnerable populations, such as people with mental illness.

"We're a statewide coalition. So we bring together multiple organizations from across the state of Minnesota," said Chelsey Bad Moccasin, specialist of advocacy



Chelsey Bad Moccasin

in tobacco control at Lung Mind Alliance.

The Lung Mind Alliance strives to build on each collaboration, including its work with Touchstone.

"It's nice for a facility like Touchstone to see ... that others have done this, too," said Bad Moccasin. "They know that they are not alone in this, and that's kind of the whole point of Lung Mind Alliance."



## Hope Is Key

*Esperanza United is engaging the youth of the metro through domestic violence education.*

MANY NONPROFIT organizations are facing a critical question — in an era of desensitized teens in a complex world, how do you make kids care about the issues that matter, like domestic violence?

St. Paul's Esperanza United, a Latinx-led organization that focuses on ending gender-based violence, fostering community and empowering Latinx leadership, has found a way to get teens to care about gender-based violence.

"We talked about identity and self-esteem, and then we kind of started getting deeper into relationships," said Beverly Martinez, a youth coordinator for Esperanza United.

Gender-based violence is an epidemic that continues to impact Minnesotans. On average, nearly 35% of law enforcement calls are related to domestic disputes, with



**Alexis  
Aryeequaye**  
Rosemount  
High School

1 in 3 Minnesota women and 1 in 4 men facing some form of abuse from their partner, according to the Safe Haven Shelter and Resource Center.

For Nallely Castro Montoya, a prevention and social change manager at the organization, Esperanza United's impact is widespread.

"We work with the community to have conversations and discussions around how to prevent or how to support somebody that might be in a situation that involves violence," she said.

The organization's youth outreach has been so effective that many former members of the youth

program, like Montoya, have gone on to work at Esperanza United.

One of the ways the organization connects with youth is through educational programs, like camps, retreats and school visits. Martinez leads the youth programs for students in grades six through 12. In those conversations, they often unpack the relationships in a young person's life.

"We talked about all these different dynamics of relationships, and how sometimes they can bleed into our friendships and our relationships with our parents," Martinez said.

Abuse in relationships can present itself in different ways: 48.4% of women and 48.8% of men have experienced at least one form of psychological abuse by a partner in their lifetime, according to the Ananias Foundation. "Maybe you're



**Beverly Martinez, Nallely Castro Montoya and Felix Martinez-Paz**

not hitting your spouse, but you're screaming at her, you're verbally abusing that person. You've taken advantage of the money. There's a lot of ways you can cause harm without hitting someone," Felix Martinez-Paz, a youth advocate at

Esperanza United, said.

As well as teaching young girls the signs of abuse, Esperanza United staff are doing the work to deconstruct gender roles and toxic masculinity. Martinez-Paz helps **HOPE** continued on page 24

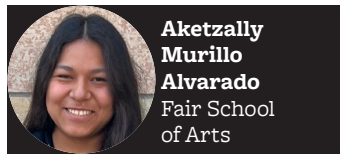
## Education Breaks Cycle of Gender-Based Violence

IT WAS ONLY after becoming a father that Felix Martinez-Paz realized he had a lot to learn.

Before his daughters were born, Martinez-Paz didn't understand some of the hardships women face. That's when he knew he had to do something about it and help others do the same.

"Everything started clicking in my head," Martinez-Paz said. "I don't want my daughters going through all these expectations of this society, that they can not go outside at night just because of the way they're dressed, or if something happened to them just because of the way that she was dressed."

It was after this realization that Martinez-Paz joined Esperanza United, a national organization based in St. Paul, Minnesota. The nonprofit's male audience asked for a male coordinator to lead conversations on breaking down traditional gender roles. Now Martinez-Paz works to rethink traditional gender



**Aketzally  
Murillo  
Alvarado**  
Fair School  
of Arts

roles as a men and boys coordinator for Esperanza United.

Martinez-Paz's role is one part of Esperanza United's efforts to organize and teach Latinx communities to help end gender-based violence. The organization's various programs and methods consist of not only starting important conversations, but also running community-strengthening activities and offering other resources, such as a women's shelter.

The organization hosts a virtual youth-led conference that allows youth of diverse backgrounds to talk about their community independently. The conference consists of three different sessions: gender-based violence, mental health and general community. Ultimately,

though, the topics are decided by the youth participants.

Esperanza United's goal is to help communities by specifically accommodating that community's needs. For instance, the nonprofit formerly had an annual mother-daughter retreat, but after hearing from the community, decided to change it to a child-parent/guardian retreat.

Since Esperanza United's founding in 1982, it has continued to grow, both locally and nationally. According to youth amig@ coordinator Nallely Castro Montoya, "the youth bring their parents or their parents bring their kids. So it builds that trust, with the community, and being present in the community has also really helped."

That trust, along with personal connection, is what has allowed Esperanza United to communicate with the community so well. About 95% of the staff is Latinx, which allows them to bond over similar



**Felix Martinez-Paz, Nallely Castro Montoya and Beverly Martinez**

experiences and concerns, but also helps overcome toxic, traditional gender roles that can be embedded in culture. When it comes to family especially, traditional roles can be more prevalent, as well as harmful. To combat this, Martinez-Paz and his team use what they call the

"family approach."

"We work with the whole family and have these discussions," explained Martinez-Paz. "They're very difficult to have. They're not easy, and sometimes considered taboo topics."

**EDUCATION** continued on page 24

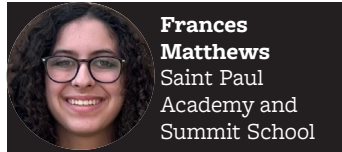
## Hennepin County Helps Teens

IN THE WAKE of the pandemic, many adolescents have shown heightened signs of anxiety and depression.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, teenagers' brains exhibited older "brain ages" compared to teens' brains that were scanned before the pandemic. This means that their brains exhibited features that are usually found in older people and those who have experienced chronic stress or adversity.

"I think most people are walking around with a lot of unhealed stuff," said Kayla Richards, program manager of the Juvenile Justice Behavioral Health Initiative. "Trauma, grief and loss; grief related to what the pandemic did to folks in terms of the ways that we connect with others."

Because so many youths missed out on formative experiences—such as in-person graduations, first days



**Frances Matthews**  
Saint Paul Academy and Summit School

of college, after-school programs—there is a feeling of loss in the adolescent population. Coupled with communitywide civil unrest after the murder of George Floyd, young people in the Twin Cities may be experiencing the loss at a heightened level.

"I'm noticing a lot of folks attempting to cope with a lack of healing and that shows up really differently for different people," Richards said. "Depression, anxiety, sometimes really high-risk behavior sensation seeking."

That is where Hennepin County comes in. The county has the Behavioral Health Center, located at 1800 Chicago Ave. in Minneapolis,

in place for residents over 18. It is a centralized clinic that provides social services, including mental health care, to people who walk in: no appointment needed.

Services for residents under 18 tend to be less centralized, Richards said. But there are many services in place to support youth, such as mental health assessments; therapy, both for the individual child and for families; and in-home counseling. Hennepin County has officials across the area to help respond to the health care needs of families and adolescents. A main goal for the program is to be able to offer support wherever it is needed.

The county's Juvenile Justice Behavioral Health Initiative is still being built up, as it is relatively new. Currently, part of the county's program functions as a coalition of people who meet every month to discuss what the program should look

like. These people include family members who have lived through the process of seeking help for a young person, experts on the subject matter being discussed at the meeting and the adolescents themselves to offer up opinions on what they need. Having the people who seek the services in the discussion means that the initiative can provide the help needed to whoever needs it.

Even without a centralized clinic,

youth in Hennepin County have a system to support them, which is especially important to have after the events of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the county, they are especially focused on meeting the recipients where they are to best serve everyone.

"The youth and family services [are] really being provided where the youth and families are," Richards said. "We're working at building out supports."

**Where to go for support?**

**HENNEPIN COUNTY FRONT DOOR**

612-348-4111

Available Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Email: [socialservices@hennepin.us](mailto:socialservices@hennepin.us)

**HENNEPIN COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH CENTER**

612-596-9438

Monday, Thursday, Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Tuesday, 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Wednesday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

## Don't Settle on the System

*In Hennepin County, programs alone can't solve homelessness. Families need connections to people.*

KAYLA RICHARDS KNOWS what homelessness looks like and feels like. When she thinks about growing up in South Dakota, she says programs assisted her family, but not as much as people.

"There were interventions that helped my family, right, like supportive housing, consistent therapeutic services, mentorship," she said. "(But) it was the people. It was the practitioners. It was having a connection to a caring adult who showed up for me really consistently and showed up for my family."

In Hennepin County in 2022, 2,191 people lived in shelters and almost 500 people lived without shelter, according to the county's latest annual count. According to the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration, people experiencing homelessness have a higher mortality rate, are more vulnerable to sickness



**Everett Parker**  
Eagan High School

and often struggle with several challenges, from substance usage to alcohol abuse. Twenty years after living through homelessness, Richards now works as a juvenile behavioral health program manager for the county with a mission of connecting people to resources and lived experience. She especially wants to be that connection for "Black and brown and indigenous youth (who) are overrepresented in the juvenile justice system."

Hennepin County offers many programs to help this vulnerable population — from housing programs to mental health care. Though these programs are in place, Richards said it's easy to overlook

the difficulties someone experiencing homelessness faces in fulfilling everyday tasks, such as finding public transportation, storing and carrying water, or even using the restroom.

"I just remember the amount of effort it took to keep up on just day-to-day tasks," she said.

In order to do tasks that many people take for granted, this population requires services that exist in many places — programs for mental health, for addiction help, for housing stability and for finding shelters. But what helped Richards the most were people.

"So, relationship is such a critical intervention," she said.

In the Twin Cities, families dealt with loss from COVID-19 and also from the George Floyd murder. Richards says to move forward we must "create space for healing" and slow down, and that's true for

service providers, too.

"I'm noticing a lot of folks attempting to cope with a lack of healing," Richards said. "And that shows up really differently for different people: depression, anxiety, sometimes really high-risk behavior, sensation seeking, lots of stuff. And so I think as systems providers, we need to do a better job of slowing down and thinking about capacity a little differently. ... I think that often, our service delivery models really situate and center the service provider and not the client."

She fears the problem may lead to intimidation getting in the way of people getting what they need.

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration, permanent housing and housing with services help people stay connected to social services and destigmatize mental

disorders while offering a space where they can be heard and understood.

"We often sit in the assumption that folks from marginalized communities do not have voices. They do," Richards said. "We have to work on shifting systems to create space to listen."



**Kayla Richards, Hennepin County**



## Offering LGBTQ+ Youth Gender-Affirming Care

GENDER-AFFIRMING CARE is an important service to many LGBTQ+ youth. Many states across the United States have been trying to restrict access to gender-affirming care, including Florida and Arkansas. Meanwhile, lawmakers in Minnesota have passed legislation protecting access to this care.

But as safe as Minnesota is, the process to get gender-affirming care is lengthy and the misconceptions about it don't help.

Gender-affirming care is a resource that helps people, in this case adolescents, find ways to become comfortable with their identity, said Dr. Angela Kade Goepferd, the chief education officer and medical director of the Gender Health Program at Children's Minnesota. People often think that the general idea of this care is surgeries and medications that make drastic changes, but



**Kiya Darden**  
North  
Community  
High School

that's not at all what they do.

"Most of what we do is have conversations with kids and families, answering questions, offering support and helping them learn how to express who they are in a way that feels good to them," Goepferd said.

This care includes using someone's chosen name and pronouns, haircuts and new clothing or shapewear that makes them feel more comfortable, voice therapy and help with changing legal documents. When the care does include medications, most are completely reversible.

Research from the National Institutes of Health shows that people who receive gender-affirming

care have a 60% lower risk of depression, and a 73% lower risk of self-harm and suicidality.

Minnesota has mental health care resources available to the LGBTQ+ community, and Goepferd said there are a few steps to take to access it.

The first step for an adolescent getting gender-affirming care is to find a guardian to bring them to the appointments and consent. And while this can be challenging, parental consent is mandatory for the work that they do. "So many young people don't even get through the door of the clinic because they can't identify a safe person they can disclose that to," said Goepferd.

Step two is to make an appointment with Children's Minnesota, though waiting lists can be more than a year long. Because of the **YOUTH** continued on page 24



Dr. Angela Kade Goepferd

## Following a Need

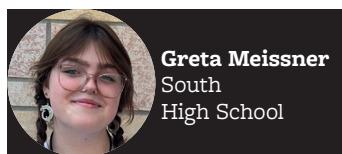
*Extending gender care services is a mission for two Minnesota advocates.*

"THERE WAS a need, and I followed the need," said Dr. Angela Kade Goepferd, the chief education officer and medical director of the Gender Health Program at Children's Minnesota.

Goepferd identifies as nonbinary and dedicates their career to providing health care for transgender youth. The lack of resources for the community was obvious to Goepferd while growing up and going through college. And so, they became what they had needed in their youth.

"The need was very tied to my identity and community," they said.

In college, Goepferd realized there were no LGBTQ+ teachings in the curriculum. They wanted change. Going into pediatrics, they knew there were other youth that needed resources, the same as they did growing up, and Goepferd wanted to be the person to provide that care.



**Greta Meissner**  
South  
High School

"It feels really important to represent my community," they said.

Like Goepferd, Ani Koch is a nonbinary health care professional, but is working more behind the scenes. Their focus is insurance and reducing disparities in health care for marginalized communities, especially the transgender community.

Koch grew up in Dubuque, Iowa, in the '90s. "It was not the safest place to be anything different," they said. They created a gay-straight alliance in high school, and later, a youth resource center for young people who identify as LGBTQ+.

Neither Koch nor Goepferd began their careers intending to focus on transgender care and

services, but the lack of resources in their field kept bringing them back.

"It was a matter of need. Not necessarily wanting to do it," Koch said. "But somebody had to."

Koch is the principal equity specialist working in the Racial and Health Equity Department at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota. They work at an internal systems level, changing how the business operates. Due to the country's current political climate, Koch's work is mainly centered around LGBTQ+ health and the challenges surrounding the transgender population.

Goepferd and Koch's work is now as important as ever. States all over the country are banning health care resources for the transgender community. But Minnesota has gone the other direction: lawmakers passed a law making the state a refuge for minors seeking gender-affirming care.

**NEED** continued on page 24



Ani Koch

## DHS Prioritizes Teen Mental Health

*Teen mental health care is more important than ever, especially after the pandemic, and the state is looking to extend help.*

DEPRESSION, ANXIETY, FEAR: these emotional issues have become commonplace among today's high school students.

Mental health problems among students have steadily climbed over the past few years. According to a 2022 statewide survey conducted by the Minnesota Department of Education, almost one third of Minnesota high schoolers are battling mental health issues, an increase of nearly 10 percentage points since 2016.

Although many factors play into this mental health crisis — such as lack of family support and the stigma surrounding mental illness — one of the most significant is the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic caused intense social isolation because of widespread school shutdowns



**Maria Odegard**  
Nova Classical  
Academy

and the many challenges of remote learning. Depression, anxiety, fear of getting sick, loss of family members and disconnection from the community weighed heavily on young people.

Because they had never experienced a situation like that before, many students did not recognize the signs of mental health strain, and if they did, they did not know where to turn for help.

“[COVID-19] really led to this. All of a sudden there is another epidemic of our youth who are really experiencing intense mental health [problems],” said Neerja

Singh, a 2023 Bush Fellow and the clinical director at the Minnesota Department of Human Services, specializing in mental health.

Singh said it is important that this mental health crisis be addressed quickly so that students do not stumble down harmful paths that only aggravate their emotional problems.

“This epidemic of untreated mental health [problems] can lead these students to rely on unhealthy coping strategies like self-harm, drug use, violence and involvement with the justice system,” said Singh.

The problem is even more difficult for students of color, Singh said. “They don’t get to see providers who speak their language, who look like them, who can really understand their struggles,” she said. Gender identity questions can

also be a complicating factor.

The Minnesota Department of Education survey also revealed an apparent difference between boys and girls in the frequency of mental health issues. The survey indicated that nearly 50% of girls in 11th grade suffered from mental health issues and behavioral problems. But only 20% of boys reported those issues in the same survey.

However, such surveys might not be an accurate indicator of how many boys are dealing with mental health issues. Boys often struggle with opening up about these difficulties because they see it as a sign of vulnerability. Speaking up takes courage, Singh said.

“The culture of the stereotypes needs to really be addressed, and we want more and more men to be role **TEEN** continued on page 24



Neerja Singh

## Passion Drives Neerja Singh

*“I would really encourage (students) to take the lead in raising awareness regarding mental health.”*

GETTING ACCESS to resources for mental health and seeking help can be exhausting, especially for youth of color, whose issues are not seen as genuine or worth prioritizing. However, for mental health professional and 2023 Bush Fellow Neerja Singh, it is a passion to prioritize this population.

Singh faces frustrations, challenges, and compelling experiences dealing with the intersectionality of race and mental health while working in the field. She has witnessed the cultural stigma in ethnic communities and observed that a lot of children of color do not have the same amount of access to quality care that a lot of white kids do.

“Especially for students of color, they do not get to see providers who speak their language, who look like them, who can really understand their struggles,” Singh said.

She goes on to elaborate that



**Devyne Duroshola**  
Maranatha  
Christian  
Academy

microaggressions that would be caught by someone of the same race are not as easy to notice for another racial group.

It does not click naturally for schools to notice these passive-aggressive behaviors, especially when the staff are mostly white and there is a lack of push for creating spaces for racial minorities, she explained. It is not classified as bullying; it is pushed off to the side, which only worsens the mental health of children of color. Not only that, but a lack of support from families can only add to that, she said.

“I belong to an Indian family. Still, everything is about grades,” she recalled.

She explains how the culture she grew up in prioritized GPA and did not care much for health. Because of the stigma around mental health, a lot of people around her found the concepts of trauma, anxiety and depression perplexing.

She feels that the stigma plays a part in why people do not ask for help. However, it is not the individual who she feels is challenging, but the system and lack of support it gives families who might need it. Singh feels the cultural concept of disease plays a big part in how communities of color perceive mental illness. In her experience, it is common for Asian and African communities to see these things like mental health as just a Western problem. That includes her own relationship with her daughter, which at first she could not understand herself, despite being a mental health professional.



Neerja Singh

If there is one thing Singh wants people to take from this, it’s this: “I would really encourage you guys (the students) to take the lead in raising awareness regarding mental health.”

But, as a word of advice and warning: “You will get frustrated.” A lot of people want to change the

world in a short amount of time, but it simply does not work out that way. So, to combat the disappointment, appreciate the small accomplishments, have people who will be there for you and prioritize self-care. And she says to remember, “The message of seeking help is a sign of courage.”



## Doctor's Rewarding, Difficult Journey in Native Care

SINCE HE WAS YOUNG, Dr. Micah Prairie Chicken has always wanted to help people. But as a clinician from an underrepresented community, he's more of the exception than the rule.

"My dad was a licensed alcohol and drug counselor when I was growing up, so having a role model of that stature was a big influence on me," said Prairie Chicken, a member of the Oglala Lakota and Mdewakanton tribes and postdoctoral fellow in clinical psychology at the Indian Health Board, a community health clinic near the Phillips neighborhood in Minneapolis.

Medical service to the Native community runs in his blood. But that doesn't mean being one of a growing number of Indigenous people in health care in Minnesota has been easy.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2017 suicide was the second-leading



**Ayanna Melander**  
North  
Community  
High School

cause of death for American Indian/Alaska Natives between the ages of 10 and 34, and Indigenous people report experiencing serious psychological distress 2 1/2 times more than the general population.

What's more, the CDC reports that only about a third of Americans trust medical researchers to care about the public's best interest. That distrust of the medical community is especially heightened among Black, Indigenous and communities of color.

According to the Association of American Medical Colleges, there are just over 2,580 doctors who identify as American Indian or Alaska Native, roughly one-tenth of 1% of the 1.07 million doctors in the country. There are more than

537,000 doctors who identify as white.

"When we are talking about [the] wellness of Native folks, we are talking about all aspects: physical, spiritual, mental, emotional," Prairie Chicken said. "And I think that's one thing that separates us from other health centers. We are not just a Western-based medical model."

"Part of Native life is using all kinds of medicines that come from the land itself, so we use things like cedar grass, and we have our own garden where we grow all these traditional native plants," he added.

As much as medicinal health is prioritized at the Indian Health Board, so is spiritual health. One way the clinic incorporates Native culture is by relying upon knowledge keepers, or elders who maintain the ancient history of their tribe.

Knowledge keepers have been able to learn or retain their tribal



**Dr. Micah Prairie Chicken**

customs, traditions, teachings and practices, Prairie Chicken said. These elders hold a special place in Native American communities. "They provide spiritual guidance

and are looked to for guidance in general," he said.

More than one-fourth of Indigenous adults lack health **JOURNEY** continued on page 24

## Indian Health Board Offers Valuable Support

FAMILIES TORN APART. People losing their will to live. These are crushing feelings many people are conscious of, but one thing people may not know are the obstacles that stand in the way of Native American communities getting access to health care.

There are several root causes that lead to instability in mental health for members of the Native American community, including assault, domestic violence and generational trauma.

Many health care services that try to support Native American communities are often underfunded. According to the American Public Health Association, "between 1993 and 1998, IHS (Indian Health Services) appropriations increased by 8%, while medical inflation increased by 20.6%." The current funding situation seems to be better, based on the Indian Health Services



**Priya Yang**  
Irondale  
High School

receiving north of \$5 billion in advance appropriations.

When thinking of reservations, the health care services tend to be scarce, forcing people to drive for hours to reach a nearby hospital or clinic. Dr. Micah Prairie Chicken, who is a postdoctoral fellow in clinical psychology and works in counseling and support for the Indian Health Board, confirms the conditions on reservations aren't always conducive to good care.

"In modernity, conditions on reservations widely vary. Some are desolate and poor; others close to large metropolitan areas have found ways to become economically advantaged," said Prairie Chicken.

Countless Native families have

experienced trauma, both historical and generational. That trauma has led to lower life expectancies for Native Americans. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Native American community has the highest suicide rates in the country, yet with that information, the Native American community continues to lack the resources and treatment to prevent such events.

Being unable to heal from past experiences will continue to impact individuals who are not mentally stable enough to carry on, he explained. This is especially true for many children who had been forced into boarding schools. Events that occurred in the schools were incredibly traumatizing for the Native American community.

"There is [a] period in this country where Native people weren't allowed to be families," said Prairie Chicken, speaking of children being



**Caption: Dr. Micah Prairie Chicken talks to reporters Ayanna Melander (left) and Priya Yang (right) at News Reporter Academy about his work.**

forced into boarding schools and being ripped from their families.

Considering all the agonizing events the Native community endured, the historical trauma continues to impact members of the Native American community today.

As a result, on the reservations

many Native youth have given up hope for their future, which results in taking their life. According to the CDC, Native youth suicide rates are 2½ times higher than the national average.

Connecting back to historical **BOARD** continued on page 24

## Mental Health Resources Needed in Greater Minnesota

HARDSHIP IS NOT UNKNOWN in greater Minnesota. In isolated communities, there are challenges to accessing health care, with hospitals long distances away. Accessing mental health resources can be especially difficult, which is far too common in the vast expanse of Minnesota.

But there are people working to help, with one — Thad Shunkwiler — looking to grow the industry. Shunkwiler, a father, veteran and renowned professor, is seeking to change the game. In August 2001, Shunkwiler entered the military, right before 9/11. He participated in the war on terror and served overseas in the U.S. Army.

“And so after spending some time overseas and coming home



**Charlie Quick**  
Southwest  
High School

and having some difficulty in transitioning back from a deployment, I participated in my own behavioral health services and started seeing the kind of impact I could have if I chose this as a profession,” commented Shunkwiler, founder of The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Center for Rural Behavioral Health at Minnesota State University, Mankato. “So I would say I found my way to mental health, through my own lived experiences.”

But even with those working to

improve the field, great issues still linger. A big one of those is merely having access to the resources. In a time of crisis when immediate action is needed, usually hospitals are too far to provide care.

“So, when you think about a rural community, you might have 60, 80 miles geographically that encapsulates kind of an area. And so even if someone lives just 10 miles away from town, that’s a barrier for them,” he said. “It’s an access issue to providers; there’s simply just not enough providers in rural communities.”

In Minnesota alone half the population lives outside the Twin Cities metro, with only 20% of total mental health providers in the state serving those areas. But Shunkwiler

is seeking to steward the next generation of the workforce.

The new Center for Rural Behavioral Health in Mankato is a hub for training these new students. Multiple programs are in place to help, such as a fellowship to entice enrolled students into the field. One of the other major problems that we face in this battle is the stigma around mental health and how to eliminate it.

You can’t defeat long-term depression with just sheer will-power. You need medical help, and a healthy web of friends and family to provide shoulders to lean on.

Teron Buford, director of diversity, inclusion and belonging at Blue Cross and Blue Shield, experienced **RESOURCES** continued on page 24



**Thad Shunkwiler**

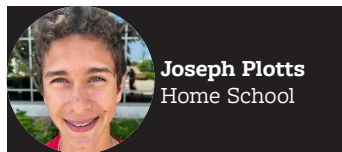
## Reducing Mental Health Stigma in Rural Minnesota

MINNESOTA’S RURAL COMMUNITIES face increased rates of suicide compared to their urban counterparts. Mental health professionals don’t know why, but say the startling statistic shows the need for mental health care services in the state’s rural reaches.

“There is very little empirical evidence to suggest why there is a disparity,” said Thad Shunkwiler, the founding director of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Center for Rural Behavioral Health.

A primary problem is the shortage of mental health care resources for rural Minnesotans. Even though the state’s rural and urban residents experience similar life stressors, Shunkwiler said, there are more resources in urban areas.

The state’s urban centers contain 54% of the state’s population but have 80% of all the practicing mental health providers, Shunkwiler said. That means nearly half of Minnesotans share about one-fifth of the state’s mental health providers.



**Joseph Plotts**  
Home School

There also aren’t many clinics near rural communities. A mental health center in rural Minnesota may have to serve a 60- to 80-mile radius, Shunkwiler said.

The need for services had been growing over the past decade, but was exacerbated during the pandemic because people started paying more attention to their mental health, Shunkwiler said.

Part of the solution in addressing the resourcing disparity between urban and rural areas is expanding the ranks of behavioral health providers in Greater Minnesota. That’s why the center, based in Mankato, created a fellowship program to train more of them. If they commit to working in underserved communities, the fellows will have their graduate education paid for.

Two students are currently enrolled in the program, which is funded by a \$600,000 grant from Blue Cross and Blue Shield.

“When I think of an impactful story, it’s literally that, if nothing else, there are two more providers that are going to serve areas that desperately need them after this program,” Shunkwiler said.

The Mankato center also received \$1.5 million from the Minnesota Legislature this year to establish a mental health training clinic to allow students going into this field to get real-world experiences. All these efforts are aimed at providing more means of preventative mental health care to rural Minnesotans.

“People don’t go from feeling well to suicidal overnight. And so there are many opportunities to intervene along the way,” Shunkwiler said. “So how do we prevent people from getting to that place where that appears to be the only outcome? Really that is about getting mental health resources in people’s hands.”

He’s also doing his part by teaching the next generation of rural behavioral health providers. In addition to his duties as director of the center, Shunkwiler is an associate professor in the Department of Health Science at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

“As a teacher, I essentially get to impact hundreds, if not thousands, of patients by training the next generation of providers who will go out and provide services to dozens of people who I will never meet,” Shunkwiler said.

He will consider the fellowship program a success if the number of mental health care providers increases in rural areas and if survey results show that mental health challenges are declining in the region.

“I’m not going to suggest that if those two things happen, it’s only because of the work that we’re doing,” Shunkwiler said. “There’s a lot of people doing this work. But I think those are two very tangible data points that we can point to and say things are getting better.”

**If you or someone you know is struggling and needs mental health resources, the number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is 988. Call \*\*CRISIS to access the Minnesota crisis line or 833-600-2670 for the Minnesota Farm & Rural Helpline.**

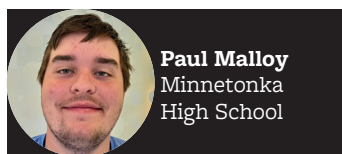


## Lynx Build for the Future

SYLVIA FOWLES was the last remaining piece of the greatest WNBA dynasty, the Minnesota Lynx. The team made the playoffs for 11 consecutive years, from 2011 to 2021, making the finals six times and earning four titles. Fowles' tenure with the team included seven of those dynasty years, and she played a major role in the team's success, winning league MVP in 2017.

At the end of the 2022 season, Fowles hung up her basketball shoes on one of the best careers in WNBA history. With her retirement marking the official end of the dynasty, the team has a ways to go before they can get back to their dominant ways of the past.

The Lynx are a young team this season, with players averaging just over three years of WNBA experience. After starting the year winless in its first five games, the team is slowly starting to put things together. Going into July's all-star break, the Lynx have a 9-11 record and are barely clinging to a playoff spot. Rookies



**Paul Malloy**  
Minnetonka  
High School

have played a key role this year, with 2023 second overall pick Diamond Miller starting all 12 games she has played and their 2023 second-round pick, Dorka Juhász, being thrust into the starting center role due to injury.

Fowles' departure left a gaping hole in leadership in the locker room. Head coach Cheryl Reeve has called upon All-Star Napheesa Collier and veteran Kayla McBride to fill Fowles' leadership role on and off the court. Carley Knox, team president of business operations, had high praise for Collier.

"We're kind of creating a new generation of the Lynx, and Napheesa Collier, she is our superstar, our captain, our WNBA All-Star," Knox said. "The best part is, she is the kindest person. She got to be mentored by Sylvia [Fowles]

and see what it meant to be a great leader and good teammate."

Knox also firmly believes that the team post-Fowles is starting to head in the right direction. "We have an unbelievable coaching staff ... a young, scrappy team that plays with all their hearts," she said. "I'm excited about our future between Napheesa, Diamond and Dorka." We have some really great building pieces that are going to continue to progress and grow, and we'll add to that in the future."

On Wednesday, July 12, the Lynx suffered their worst loss in franchise history, losing by 40 at home to the Dallas Wings and struggling defensively. In her post-game press conference, Reeve spoke on what she believes the current team needs to do to get back to their title days.

"Those teams believed strongly in a few things. We really believed strongly in winning home games. This team is below .500 at Target Center," Reeve said. "People talked about our offense a lot because we

had really good players, and that's what everybody was interested in. You win at a high level with defense. They didn't want the other team to score and they were gonna be there for each other and help, which is what this team lacks."

Reeve isn't the only person who recognizes the team's defensive struggles. A longtime teammate of Fowles, Rachel Banham thinks the team is struggling to replace Fowles' presence in the paint on both ends of the floor. "Sylvia had that huge presence inside. You had a rim protector and an automatic scorer in the paint," said Banham after the game. "We don't have that anymore."

The Lynx dynasty may be over, but they have the young talent and star power they need to become title contenders once again. Once their rookies become more developed and the team grows defensively, the Lynx should have the talent to be a perennial title contender once again.



**Kayla McBride**

(COURTESY MINNESOTA TIMBERWOLVES)

## Lynx Mark 25 Years with Eye Toward the Next 25

In 1998, the Minnesota Lynx franchise was born as one of two new WNBA expansion teams. Twenty-five years later, it is recognized as the most successful professional sports team in the state. But it didn't all come at once for the Lynx. In the team's first 12 seasons, it only made the playoffs twice and had an all-time record of 165 wins, 235 losses.

In 2011, the team turned things around dramatically when it made its first of seven straight finals appearances and won the first of its four championships. And for the next 11 years, the Lynx didn't miss another postseason.

"I would say we had exceptional talent," said Cheryl Reeve, who has been the head coach of the Lynx for the past 13 years. "We had Hall of Famers in each position. That group, they just cared so much about the team's success. So we



**Maximus Jennings**  
University of  
Minnesota

became the model franchise in terms of how we did it — not that we did it, but how we did it."

During that time, the Lynx featured a plethora of talent, including legends like Maya Moore, Sylvia Fowles, Lindsay Whalen, Rebekkah Brunson and Seimone Augustus.

When asked about the success they have had as a franchise, Carley Knox, team president of business operations, said, "I'm super of these rings I've won in my career."

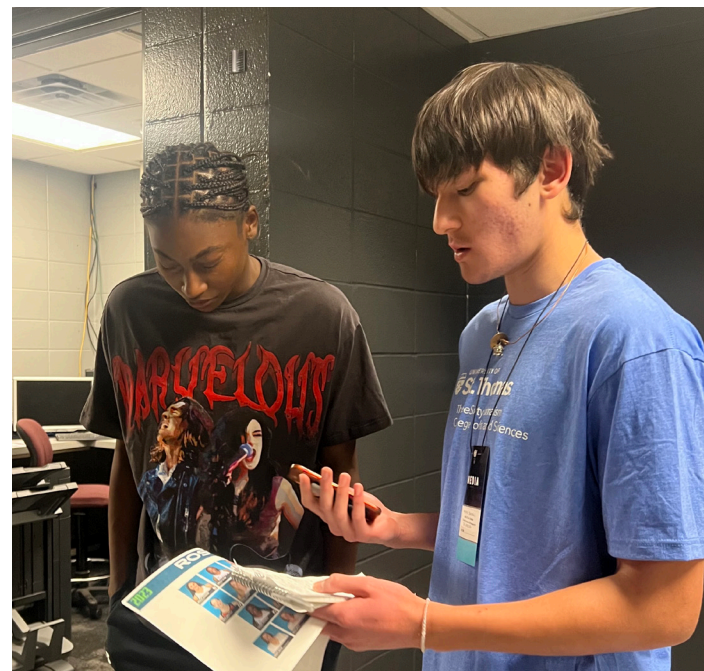
"But I'm more proud of the work that we do off the court in terms of our social justice work and our activism."

Activism has been a big part of

the Lynx history as a franchise. An example of this came in 2016, after Philando Castile was shot and killed by a police officer. The Lynx came together to use their platform to call for justice. They decided on wearing black warmup T-shirts that read "Change Starts with Us" to call for accountability. And this season, they've unveiled the new Rebel jerseys, which honor that moment in time seven years ago when the Lynx came together to call for change.

"We will have a statement if we're passionate about it," Knox said. "[If] we see injustice or marginalization, we're going to speak up, and that's at the core of our values and that's what the [Rebel] jerseys really represent."

Now a couple years removed from the dynasty that brought the Lynx championships and



**ThreeSixty reporter Max Jennings interviews Lynx star Diamond Miller for his feature story.**

**LYNX** continued on page 24

## Napheesa Collier's Stock Is on the Rise

LYNX FORWARD Napheesa Collier recently received her third All-Star nod in just her fifth season, as she looks to lead the Lynx to a late-season playoff push.

After missing all but the last four games of the 2022 WNBA season for the birth of her baby, Mila, she has returned for the 2023 season better than ever.

The 6-foot, 1-inch forward out of UConn is averaging a career high in scoring on 48.4% shooting from the field. Collier has a knack for creating shots for herself around the



**Dylan Lennick**  
Minnehaha  
Academy

basket and possesses an arsenal of moves in the post. She continues to improve as her career progresses.

"I don't want to peak out now in my career. I want to get better, work on the things I need to do; I want to get better at changing direction, I want to get my three-point shooting up," Collier told reporters this week.

Despite Collier's inspired play, the Lynx began the season with a six-game losing streak. Over the six-game stretch, the Lynx had a defensive rating of 108.0, which is lower than any defensive rating in the league. When it seemed as though all hope was lost, the Lynx went on a shocking run, winning eight of 10 games from June 11 to July 7.

In the midst of the struggles, Collier presented herself as the leader who was needed.

"Napheesa Collier is the one we look to [as a leader]," said

four-time WNBA champion head coach Cheryl Reeve.

Collier is an elite-level basketball player, but she also receives praise throughout the Lynx organization for being a likable person and teammate off the court.

"She's so humble. She is truly so down to earth," said Carley Knox, president of Lynx business operations.

Not only is Collier leading a competitive Lynx team, but she is also launching a new league for WNBA players after the current season

concludes. The league is designed for top tier WNBA players who seek an alternative to playing overseas in the offseason.

Due to the average WNBA salary being around \$113,000, many players compete in Europe in the offseason in order to earn more money. Often the players receive more money for playing overseas than they do for playing in the WNBA, although it's challenging to maintain a brand when playing overseas.

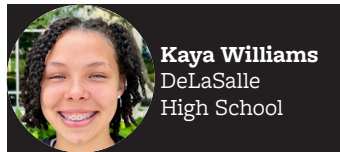
**COLLIER** continued on page 28

## Growing My Game

SINCE I WAS YOUNG, I had this dream to play basketball in the big league. I would always be excited to go to camps, learn more about basketball and continue to expand my love for the sport. Thankfully, I had a family that was also very open to helping me enjoy what I loved to do, so I would go to Lynx games from the age of 3.

Since then, I've wanted to be like them.

On July 12, I went to a Lynx home game. I closely watched their star rookie, Diamond Miller, a player I can relate to. I relate to her youth and leadership. I went to



**Kaya Williams**  
DeLaSalle  
High School

basketball camps, talking to people who also loved the sport.

One of my favorite players was Maya Moore. She was so good, I dreamed of playing on the Lynx ever since watching her play. I began to find myself in basketball camps, trainings and more to grow my game. I loved it and still do. I joined a team with Park Center playing traveling basketball. I met

some great people while being there, which helped me continue to love the sport even more. Going to practice was the only thing I looked forward to after school. My mom put me in training early, still learning but getting better at the same time. She instilled in me that even when I was too tired or maybe didn't feel like going, that now and forever you will need to put in the effort to get where you want to go. She would remind me that at a younger age it may feel like you don't need to put in a lot of work, because at that stage the game was

**GAME** continued on page 31

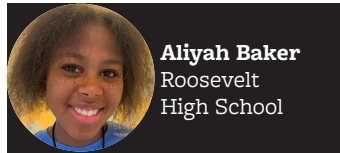


**ThreeSixty Reporter Kaya Williams** interviews Carley Knox, team president of business operations, in the media room.

## Rebel Jerseys: "Change Starts with Us"

THE LYNX WORE black shirts sporting the slogan "Change Starts with Us" in 2016 after former St. Anthony police officer Jeronimo Yanez shot and killed Philando Castile during a traffic stop.

"As the Minnesota Lynx celebrate their historic 25th season, the Rebel uniform represents a founding pillar of this franchise — using sport as a vehicle of change," said Lynx President of Business Operations Carley Knox. "Change Starts with Us" is a call to action to create a more just and equitable society, where we all feel safe,



**Aliyah Baker**  
Roosevelt  
High School

respected and heard. [It] represents the values that we've always had of activism [in] our franchise."

The new Rebel uniforms are all black, different from the team's original jerseys. The black is reminiscent of the "Change Starts with Us" warmup shirts the team wore in July 2016 in response to the shootings

of Castile in Minnesota and Alton Sterling in Louisiana.

Waking up and hearing the devastating news, the team wanted to do something about it.

"OK, what are we going to do?" and "How do we want to use our platform?" the team asked, according to Knox. "And that's what the team came up with," she said.

At that time, this type of activism was new to pro sports, so the team decided to make a change and make sure a meaningful message was getting put out there.

"Nobody was using their platform," Knox said. "I believe that we did was such an incredibly inspiring moment that made me proud to be part of our franchise."

The Rebel uniforms honor a time when the Lynx showed the public exactly what they stand for. It's in their history of activism and social justice work, and it's been at the core of their values since. The name "Rebel" means unapologetic.

Since 2016, the Lynx have gotten even more involved, joining committees, activist groups and

protests. When injustice happens, team members make a commitment to be involved.

"You'll see us involved in many different things," Knox said.

Recently, Knox and Lynx head coach Cheryl Reeve were at the state Capitol for an assignment to make Minnesota a safe space for trans youth and trans families.

If it's something they are passionate about, their core value is to speak out.

"And that's what the jerseys really represent," Knox said.



# Winter Workshop Spotlights Local Journalists

REPORTERS at ThreeSixty's 2023 Winter Workshop put a spotlight on local journalists, and the emerging Twin Cities print and online newsroom scene.

With the pandemic and racial reckoning in the wake of George Floyd's murder, journalists have been on the front lines through it all documenting history. Behind the scenes, newsrooms are working to diversify, reach new audiences and amplify unheard voices.

This collection of stories highlights that work and was created by 16 high school reporters who attended the weekly workshop at the University of St. Thomas College of Arts and Sciences.

Led by Bethel journalism professor Scott Winter, students conducted interviews, and wrote stories and bios to hone their journalism skills.



ThreeSixty reporters attend the 2023 Winter Workshop at the University of St. Thomas.

## Diversifying Twin Cities Newsrooms

*After George Floyd's killing, newsrooms work to better reflect their communities.*

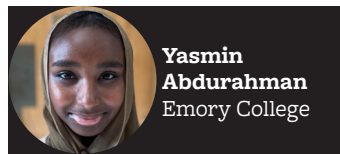
AS THE TWIN CITIES becomes more culturally diverse — not only in numbers but in influence — several news organizations understand that it's crucial for newsrooms to accurately reflect the communities reporters are telling stories about.

Four journalists say they take the challenge of diversifying newsrooms and news coverage seriously through their presence as people of color, but most importantly through the life experiences they can share with their colleagues.

"In order to have an equitable newsroom, you need to create systems in place where they include talking to people and communicating," said Kyndell Harkness, the Minneapolis Star Tribune's assistant managing editor for diversity and community. "We need to see what the guidelines are and what the bar is, so that people can meet it and not go below it."



Ava Kian



Yasmin  
Abdurahman  
Emory College



Hafsa Farah  
Edina  
High School

Since March 2021, Ava Kian has reported on pieces that emphasize people of color and minorities' experiences with health care providers.

Kian says she applied for her race and health equity reporting position because of her passion for social justice. Her older sister is a nurse among few women of color in her doctorate and nursing programs. She recalls discussing how many of her sister's co-workers and peers have various views about race.

The normalization of racism in her sister's workspace — with hospital employees judging immigrants who choose not to take vaccinations — pushed Kian to learn more about health equity, such as health care challenges immigrants face because many struggle to express themselves. Their experience of language or financial barriers inspired Kian to want to tell those stories.

"It made me not want to blame the individuals experiencing it, but

explain the system of what's behind it," Kian said.

Through accurate reporting, she hopes to build trust in communities of color. Many people in minority communities often feel journalists aren't empathetic to their life experiences, she said.

"I think a lot of minorities and people of color have a hard time reaching out to (news) institutions when there's a lack of trust," Kian said. "There's a disconnect between them wanting to share their stories and them feeling comfortable someone's going to tell it in the right way."

Sahan Journal editor and CEO Mukhtar Ibrahim remembers one of his mentors covering a story on immigrants and communities of color that portrayed her sources respectfully and accurately. Ibrahim said she was able to accurately represent communities of color because of the connections she had with her sources and how respectful she was. This sparked his interest in creating a space where newsrooms reflected their communities.

The mission to have diverse, accurate stories starts with diverse newsrooms, Ibrahim said.

"If you speak the language, understand the language or look like (your sources), that gives you a different window into what

these communities are going through," he said. "A journalist of color can well document the issues mentioned rather than someone who's not from that specific community."

For Ibrahim, journalists from diverse backgrounds can establish connections and trust by being out and about in coffee shops, places of worship and elsewhere. That way, journalists understand readers' experiences.

MinnPost's Harry Colbert started his journalism career at news outlets that focused on Black audiences: Insight News and North News. He now works at MinnPost as the managing editor, where he says he can reach a larger audience that likely has not thought of certain issues before or hasn't seen its issues represented.

"I'm unapologetically Black and want to make sure that we're telling stories of people of color," he said.

Colbert is happy with the impact he had on North News, but felt there were limits.

"The impact with North is we were able to do really great work," said Colbert, who still lives in North Minneapolis. "Same with Insight News. (We) were able to do phenomenal work in telling some much-needed stories. But sometimes we were telling the story inside of a silo, meaning the people

that were getting the information ... were saying, 'Yeah, of course we know this.'

"Whereas with MinnPost, when we're given some of this information — whether it's talking about disparities in health or education or police contact and things of that nature — some people were unaware, or unaware to the extent in which this type of gap exists."

Throughout her career, Harkness has seen how stories have changed as newsrooms changed over time. She worked as a photojournalist for 20 years before being promoted to her current role at the Star Tribune.

"I just loved the job," she said of photojournalism. "I love taking pictures. I love going into strangers' houses, being invited and having them be OK with taking pictures of them, which is pretty cool."

Despite her contentment with photojournalism, Harkness and other journalists sought solutions for diversifying their newsrooms after police officer Derek Chauvin murdered George Floyd, an international news event the Star Tribune covered for months.

After Floyd's murder, Harkness and other journalists of color knew they needed to be treated better and that their coverage of communities needed to improve, even after winning a Pulitzer Prize in Breaking News Coverage.

## Floyd Murder, COVID-19 Took Toll on Local Reporters

*The physical and mental cost of covering the dual crises tested Twin Cities journalists' commitment to their mission.*

LIBOR JANY said he felt conflicted when he accepted the award for Journalist of the Year from the National Association of Black Journalists. Jany won the award in 2021 for his work at the Minneapolis Star Tribune covering the civil unrest following the death of George Floyd. But the accolade didn't sit right with him.

"(The death of Floyd) was the source of so much pain and trauma for so many people," Jany, now a crime reporter at the Los Angeles Times, said. "So, it doesn't seem right for me to be on a stage somewhere smiling and accepting some award based off that. It just doesn't feel right."

When Floyd's murder collided with the COVID-19 pandemic in



**Marcos Odegard**  
Nova Classical Academy



**Thuy-Sa Truong**  
Eagan High School

Minneapolis and St. Paul during the summer of 2020, tenacious local journalists dove into coverage. From citywide protests to Chauvin's conviction and continuing efforts to overhaul the culture of policing in America, these stories earned journalists professional esteem, but also saddled them with lasting

emotional trauma.

Jany, who grew up in St. Paul, was the lead crime reporter at the Star Tribune at the time. He was no stranger to late-night crime scenes and public unrest, but nothing compared to the news he got on Memorial Day 2020. He was working the holiday shift when he caught wind of a man who had died in police custody. The Minneapolis Police Department's initial statement claimed Floyd had died following a "medical incident," but Jany had gotten a tip that the information in the statement wasn't true. He spent all night at the crime scene — now George Floyd Square at 38th Street and Chicago Avenue — trying to capture the full story, **TOLL** continued on page 31



(COURTESY MIKE SHUM)

**Libor Jany interviews a witness at a crime scene in the middle of the night. His late nights in the field helped him win the 2021 Journalist of the Year award from the National Association of Black Journalists.**

## Reporter's Approach Opening Doors

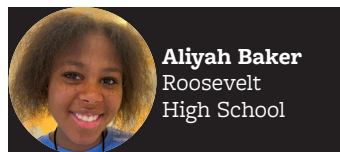
*National award-winning journalist Libor Jany uses empathy, compassion, casual style to get the stories communities need.*

LIBOR JANY's reporting style has always left a lasting impression on Liz Sawyer, a police reporter with the Minneapolis Star Tribune. She remembers a time when Jany had to write a story about a mother whose three young children died in a house fire while she was at work.

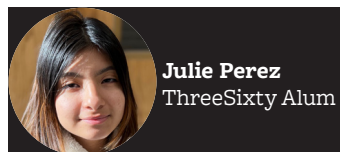
She had left them alone at home because she had no one to care for them; the furnace caught fire while she was gone. At that moment, Jany needed to get the details, but also needed to be sensitive about the tragedy.

"He understood in that moment to not approach the grieving mother," Sawyer said. "He gave her space and he found other people on the periphery to get the story. So it's about having the social intelligence to know when you should be talking to immediate relatives."

Jany always finds a way to open the door. Jany now covers the Los Angeles Police Department for The



**Aliyah Baker**  
Roosevelt High School



**Julie Perez**  
ThreeSixty Alum

Los Angeles Times, following an award-winning career as a public safety reporter with Sawyer at the Star Tribune that included the Journalist of the Year award from the National Association of Black Journalists and a team Pulitzer Prize in 2021.

Many of his colleagues would say he wins those awards because he's in journalism for the right reasons.

"One of the biggest cliches about journalism is (we're) trying to give a voice to the voiceless, right?"

Jany said in a Zoom interview with ThreeSixty Journalism. "Trying to give people that normally, their stories and their plights wouldn't necessarily be heard or see the light of day, giving them a platform and getting their perspective out there. ... That's still something that sort of motivates me is that even in this day and age, even with social media and everybody ... technically having a platform, there's still some points of view and some perspectives that are privileged over others. And so I think it's important for reporters to tell the stories of folks that couldn't tell the stories themselves."

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Jany grew up in St. Paul and graduated from Highland Park High School. He studied mass communication at Mississippi State University and got his first internship as a sports intern at The Trentonian in New Jersey. He then worked for the Star Tribune for

nearly 10 years before going to the L.A. Times.

Sawyer says people mistake him as a reporter who's just trying to get a story out of someone. But that's not him.

"Libor checks in on people even when he doesn't need a story," Sawyer said.

Jany covered public safety before, during and after the officer-involved deaths of George Floyd, Daunte Wright and others, which put the Twin Cities on the national and international stages. But with stories big and small, he takes pride in getting stories from people who aren't necessarily in power.

"It's important for reporters to tell the story of folks who couldn't get the chance to tell the stories themselves or wouldn't have the ability to get their voices heard," he said.

What motivates him is that even though social media gives many



**Libor Jany**

people a platform, there are still points of view and perspectives that are more privileged than others.

"Words are powerful, right? Words can be harmful or non-harmful depending on how you're using them or how they are wielded," Jany said. "Using language that conveys compassion, and doesn't have an unnecessary judgment on people and doesn't diminish their humanity — that's what I strive for."

**DOORS** continued on page 31



## Tech Bridges Journalists, Communities

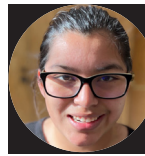
*A challenging road ahead: Twin Cities reporters see technology tools as key to reaching marginalized voices.*

GEORGIA FORT has seen the pain of Black and Indigenous communities firsthand. As a biracial woman who is half Black, her hair is naturally curly. However, as an anchorwoman in Georgia, she was required to keep her hair straight. No matter what.

The thing about straightening her hair: it took one to two hours. One day, she got a flat tire. She didn't have time to straighten her hair and showed up for work with her natural curly hair.

She was scolded for a supposed violation of contract.

From then on, she made it her goal to do her part to change environments that forced Black and brown people to conform to others.



**Kendall Shostak**  
University of  
St. Thomas

Fort is an independent multimedia journalist who is joining other journalists throughout the Twin Cities who want to see newsrooms look like the communities they cover and to use technology as a tool to better tell important stories in the community.

Fort said her goal throughout her career has been to spread joy in stigmatized communities — no matter how tough it may be, no matter the generation, no matter the stigma

surrounding the issue. Most importantly, she wants to amplify the voices of those who have not always been heard.

“I hope my legacy reforms media to be more equitable for communities of color,” Fort said.

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According to Fort, and other journalists, technology is a bridge to help bring diversity to newsrooms and stories. She wants journalism to communicate with non-native English speakers, make the news accessible to everyone and use graphics to connect to the broader public.

Now, imagine you are a recent immigrant or refugee and have sent  
**TECH** continued on page 27



Georgia Fort

(COURTESY GEORGIA FORT)

## Scenes of a Visual Journalist

*Mark Vancleave works to get the best photos and video possible to tell the stories people should see, even at the risk of his own safety.*

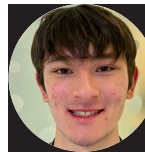
MARK VANCLEAVE thought his work was over for the night until he saw a five-story apartment building engulfed in flames against the midnight sky.

The fire became more intense as it spread to the surrounding buildings and houses. Neighbors rushed to get hoses and whatever else they could to fight the blaze.

Despite his shock, Vancleave took a photo of the building; he had to quickly retreat as the heat became more intense.

Moments before the apartment fire, he was capturing photos of someone's car that had been set on fire. He documented these events, and many more, during the week following George Floyd's death in late May 2020.

Vancleave helped the Minneapolis Star Tribune win the Pulitzer Prize in Breaking News Reporting in 2021 for their coverage of Floyd's death and the aftermath. A video of the murder was taken by a bystander, and what soon



**Maximus Jennings**  
University of  
Minnesota

followed were protests and social unrest as the National Guard was eventually mobilized in St. Paul and Minneapolis. The local outrage spread to an international level, and reporters like Vancleave had to move quickly to cover the events as they happened.

Being in an environment like that was a risk, but it's a risk that the reporters and photojournalist were willing to take.

“Even when we asked them to turn around and go home, they didn't,” Star Tribune editor Suki Dardarian said.

Dardarian, the senior managing editor and vice president of the Star Tribune, had the responsibility of checking up on and working with reporters and visual journalists as they worked in the field. Reporters

got assaulted, injured and caught in scary situations with protesters and police.

“Reporters and photographers were ordered to the ground and told to spread their arms and legs, and some were photographed and tracked,” Dardarian said. “It was scary.”

Vancleave, despite the threats, stayed on the street late into the night with colleagues.

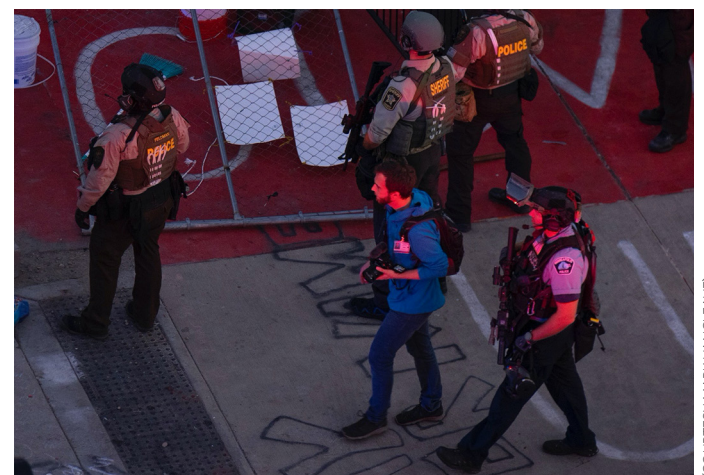
“In any situation we feel might be unsafe or dangerous, we oftentimes pair up,” Vancleave said.

Vancleave also tries to look out for others when out there in the field. “He's always looking out for his teammates,” Star Tribune photojournalist Aaron Lavinsky said. Texting. Calling. He's just a great guy.”

To stay safe, Vancleave decides where he must position himself. He watches the crowd, identifies potential dangers, and moves to safer and calmer areas with colleagues. And  
**SCENES** continued on page 27



(COURTESY MARK VANCLEAVE)



(COURTESY MARK VANCLEAVE)

Photojournalist Mark Vancleave was front and center during coverage of the protests following George Floyd's murder.



## Still Believing in Storytelling

After more than 40 years in the news business, Rubén Rosario believes journalism is more important than ever.

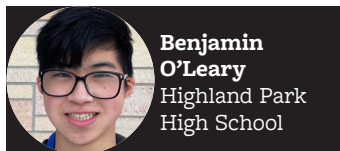
In 1981, Rubén Rosario had a conversation with editors at the New York Daily News, wondering if they were reluctant to have a reporter with a Latin name.

“Do I need to change my name to get a reporter’s job?” Rosario asked. “Because apparently Rosario doesn’t cut it.”

He got the job.

Rosario’s career has taken him from crime, cops and courts in Brooklyn to the crack dens of Harlem to a long run as a featured columnist for the St. Paul Pioneer Press.

Fresh from Fordham University in 1976, he snagged a job as a copyboy at the New York Daily News, the newspaper he’d grown up reading. Copyboys not only carried stories from reporters to copy editors, they fetched coffee, sandwiches and



**Benjamin O’Leary**  
Highland Park High School

beer for those people. And placed bets for them on the day’s horse races. It wasn’t exactly journalism.

In short order, Rosario worked his way up to a job as a sport tabulator — somebody who worked late at night compiling sport results from across the country.

But he wanted more. He wanted to be a reporter. On his own time, without pay, he wrote 50 stories about Latin music and street gang culture. Then he confronted his editors with his work and wound up working tough crime stories as a cops and courts reporter in Brooklyn

and Manhattan for 11 years.

“It’s one of the best jobs in the news business,” he said. “There’s a story everywhere. It’s like a stage. It’s a morality play every day.”

One of Rosario’s most talked-about stories involved a trip to a crack den in 1986.

“Crack cocaine was devastating communities in New York, especially disenfranchised communities,” he said. “I wanted to do more to cover this crack cocaine epidemic and the impact it was having on the city.”

That led Rosario on an undercover venture in Harlem.

“There were six or seven people standing in a circle passing a crack pipe around. They included two young women in their 20s, maybe both of them pregnant,” Rosario

**BELIEVING** continued on page 28



Rubén Rosario talks to ThreeSixty Journalism reporters about the importance of media on the campus of University of St. Thomas in St. Paul. After 43 years in the business, Rosario still believes in the power of telling the truth.

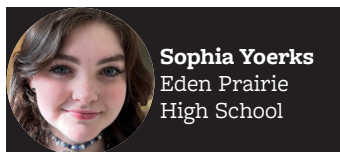
## Through Challenges, She Persisted and Pioneered

EARLY IN HER CAREER 40 years ago, Rachel Blount was given an assignment: profile star Alabama running back Cornelius Bennett. As a female sportswriter, Blount was often written off and ignored, including by Bennett’s coach, who sneered that the “litle lady” didn’t belong there when she arrived for an interview. But even after Bennett went to the locker room without speaking to her, she was determined to get her story.

“I waited, and I waited, and I waited for a good 3 1/2 hours. It was dark,” she recalled. Eventually Bennett emerged and told her she had five minutes to interview him.

“So I sucked it up. I talked to him for five minutes and extended it probably to 10,” Blount said. “Then I drove back to Atlanta and wrote my story, because you know what? This is my job. I like my job. I want to do my job. And you’re not going to stop me from doing my job.”

Blount, a sports reporter with Minnesota’s Star Tribune since 1990, has stories of personal



**Sophia Yoerks**  
Eden Prairie High School

triumphs and defeats through decades working in a male-dominated industry.

Blount grew up in an athletic household in Iowa with a father and brother who played college sports. In this world, she was also exposed to sports journalism.

“We were playing a game or watching a game or talking about a game all the time,” she said, noting that when she attended college in the early 1980s women were starting to emerge in sports journalism.

“I thought to myself, how cool would that be? To be on the leading edge of this thing?” Blount said. “It felt fun and exciting to me to not only have this opportunity to write about games and athletes, which I found so fascinating, but also possibly pioneering something for women.”

And pioneer she did. After starting her first job as an intern at the Atlanta Journal Constitution, Blount eventually made her way to the Star Tribune, where she has covered six Olympic Games. Among her personal favorite moments: St. Paul gymnast Suni Lee winning the all-around gold medal at the 2020 Summer Games in Tokyo.

“I’ve seen a ton of cool stuff at the Olympics, but seeing Suni Lee was one of those moments where I’m watching it unfold in front of me and I’m thinking, *How am I gonna write this? What words am I going to choose? How am I going to tell the story? How am I going to do this justice?*” I couldn’t help but think there weren’t any words.”

But then Blount did what she does best: she wrote.

“I found myself so energized and so inspired, that particular day at the Olympics was like 27 hours from start to finish and I wrote 120 inches of copy,” Blount said. “It was unbelievable. It’s so funny to me because as I was watching it,



Rachel Blount

I thought, ‘This is beyond words.’ And then when I sat down to start writing it, I couldn’t stop writing. It just absolutely poured out of me.”

Even through the triumphs in her career, Blount said she has faced sexual harassment, humiliation and, above all, discrimination. Whether it was sports teams barricading locker rooms or newspapers being

taped on windows to block any view, Blount has seen and been through it all.

During one of her first assignments with the Star Tribune, she said Minnesota North Stars owner Norm Green approached her in the press box, pushed her hair aside and kissed her on the back of the neck **PIONEERED** continued on page 28



## Zoe Jackson Digs into Race

*A young Black reporter discovers a new and profound goal: to find untold stories in minority communities.*

ZOE JACKSON dreamed of being a political reporter until she got hired by Minneapolis Star Tribune in 2021 and saw something new. And when Star Tribune editors saw her work during her 2019 Report for America internship, they knew they had something new, too.

“Zoe was doing great work. We knew she had a unique voice,” said Kyndell Harkness, the Star Tribune’s assistant managing editor for diversity and community. “So, the fact that she could seamlessly go from reporting what would be called a traditional journalism story to different story forums and online platforms is very valuable.”

The Star Tribune couldn’t just let a unique voice go.



**Kyselia Vang**  
Buffalo  
High School

Jackson, who is from Detroit, graduated from Western Michigan University in 2019 and followed that with her Report for America internship covering politics. When she got hired full time by the Star Tribune, she found herself on the race and immigration beat, partially because of who Jackson is inside and outside the newsroom.

“All of your experiences, all of who you are and all the different identities that you are,” Harkness said, “you bring that to work.”

As a Black woman, Jackson said she understands the struggles people of color face, including racism, discrimination and lack of safety. Jackson had so much that she could report on in the wake of multiple police-involved deaths in the Twin Cities, including that of George Floyd and Daunte Wright.

“I want to write about this because literally everything intersects with race or immigration,” said Jackson, who wrote a story about how teachers talk to students about such deaths.

Harkness describes Jackson as an amazing reporter who is able to generate great stories about people despite her youth because she pays attention to her community.

“The fact that she’s quiet makes her a really good listener,” Harkness said. “And so, when she’s in spaces where people are talking, she’s ... really able to capture the mood of a place, and she’s always watching, which is fantastic.”

In May 2020, when Jackson was working the politics beat, Floyd was murdered by former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, who was convicted of the crime. In June 2020, Jackson was asked to be part of a team that covered Floyd’s funeral and reactions to the trauma from the community. Jackson found people felt unsafe, even in their own homes.

“It was just very emotional being **JACKSON** continued on page 28



Zoe Jackson

COURTESY ZOE JACKSON

## Uplifting Diverse, Unheard Voices

*Hmong American journalist Chao Xiong is the managing editor of a staff that writes stories about people of color and immigrant communities.*

CHAO XIONG saw the pain in their faces.

Protesters were united as they marched through the streets of downtown Minneapolis in May 2020 following the murder of George Floyd. The crowds sought justice from what they believed was an unjust criminal system.

“As a Minneapolis resident, I really felt it was my duty to be part of that reporting — someone who lived in the area, knew the area,” Xiong said in a Zoom interview with ThreeSixty Journalism. “I covered three nights of protests. It was hard to describe what that was like. The amount of people that were out, the outrage, anger, sadness, fear and grief people were expressing.”

After 18 years as a Star Tribune reporter, Xiong saw an unmet need in the community. That led him to join the Sahan Journal as its managing editor, to focus on stories about Minnesota’s people of color and immigrant communities — people who were not often represented in



**Nalani Vang**  
University of  
Minnesota

mainstream media. In his leadership role, Xiong manages and creates plans with reporters to share stories that go deeper, provide more context, and cover issues and perspectives mainstream media outlets may not.

“Even though the world was protesting George Floyd’s killing, mainstream media was really slow to change how it operates things internally, how it covers communities of color and how it treats staff [members] of color, and I felt it was time to make that change,” Xiong said.

Looking back, Xiong admittedly had a difficult time leaving the Star Tribune and stepping into an editorial role. But he knew he could create more of an impact as a leader. Mukhtar Ibrahim,

his former colleague at the Star Tribune, founded Sahan Journal in August 2019 and recognized Xiong’s need for a change. Ibrahim knew of and appreciated the influence Xiong already had in Minnesota as a Hmong American journalist and brought Xiong into his growing newsroom.

“When he joined, we felt the impact of his work,” said Ibrahim, the CEO of Sahan Journal. “He can guide the reporters on any story that they’re working on, and it’s really hard to find someone who has those kinds of diverse, wide-ranging skills. I see him taking a more leadership role in the organization as we grow and add more staff, and reporters and editors.”

Long before he led a newsroom, Xiong was a child watching the news with his father in Des Moines, Iowa. And thanks to his middle school English teacher who fostered his passion for reading and writing, he was encouraged to explore journalism.

“I’m a naturally curious person,

too,” said Xiong, who graduated from the University of Iowa with a double major in journalism and the arts. “It just seemed to be a great way of marrying all of those interests of learning new things.”

Decades after journalism school, Xiong reflected on his position as a leading Hmong American journalist and the unique role he serves in the Twin Cities.

“It’s a double-edged sword because obviously when you are one of few in your community in a field, there’s a lot of pressure on you to do your best, or to reflect well on your community,” Xiong said. “It’s great to be able to represent the community in a small way — people want to see that and appreciate that. But sometimes the expectations are really high, too.”

With high hopes from his community and his interest to broaden the media coverage for people of color and immigrant communities, Xiong aims to make a lasting impact in journalism.



Chao Xiong

“I think mainstream media is changing and growing, which is really great to see,” Xiong said. “I know that people have done a lot in the last few years after George Floyd, so I don’t want to discredit that work that people are doing. I just felt like I’m not going to be around much longer, so why not make a change, do something new and work at Sahan.”



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**HOPE** *from page 10*

organize various programs for community members, like fishing, a traditionally masculine activity, to break down gender stereotypes and expectations.

“Sometimes back in their home country, it’s OK to date someone who’s over the age of 18. So, talking to them about the laws that if they’re a minor, they shouldn’t be dating anyone over the age of 18 and how sometimes that can lead into grooming,” Montoya explained.

There are many important pieces in the conversation — parents and kids both need to be engaged to make a lasting impact.

“We did the activities where we provide fishing rods for the whole family, so everybody can have the activity, go fishing, have a conversation on healthy masculinity and spend time together,” Martinez-Paz said.

“That goes back to the gender roles, why can’t women fish? ... How we can break those stereotypes, his gender roles and say, ‘Men also wash dishes and take care of the kids.’ That’s what we’re trying to do.”

Over the decades, the organization has only gotten stronger.

Esperanza United is doing its part in teaching the youth of the Twin Cities about domestic violence prevention, and that it’s OK to get help and seek support.

“When you’re ready, we’re here for you,” Montoya said.

**NEED** *from page 10*

According to Goepferd, calls from out of state looking for care at the clinic have increased 30% to 40%. Goepferd and Koch say there are challenges to handling a large influx of patients traveling here from out of state, both in limited resources and an issue of health insurance tied down to state lines.

This does not mean they won’t try to do what they can.

“When young people are seen and believed and understood for who they are, they do better,” said Goepferd.

**EDUCATION** *from page 10*

According to the team, in many Latinx families and other communities of color, there are instances of “machismo,” which is the sense of being manly and self-reliant. The concept usually affects male figures in families that enforce toxic masculinity and encourage the harmful cycle of traditional roles placed onto boys and males in households. Having men and boys acknowledge this can be difficult, especially if they’ve been used to this mindset for a long time.

According to Martinez-Paz, traditional gender roles are “one of those topics that you need to start from scratch so everybody has an understanding, especially for me working with men, to be sure that they understand that the women in our lives suffer and are victims of gender-based violence.”

**JOURNEY** *from page 10*

insurance and more than half of Indigenous people rely on Indian health services, but due to underfunding, facilities tend to be crisis-driven and leave a wide gap in adequate and preventative health care for many Native Americans, according to Native American Aid, a South Dakota-based advocacy organization.

A sense of crisis also creates a sense of urgency, and the opportunity to step up. Like Prairie Chicken and his father before him, “a lot of Native mental health providers got into this line of work because of the call to help more people,” he said.

**YOUTH** *from page 12*

wait, people at the clinic keep in touch with families to direct them to local therapy and mental health providers.

“Those visits are about, ‘What can we help you with? How do you identify? What’s hard for you right now?’” Goepferd said.

During this time, families, therapy providers and the clinic formulate a plan, which can look different for each person.

Due to the 2023 “trans refuge” bill, which legally protects people both accessing and providing transgender care, Minnesota has become a safe space for transgender patients. But some neighboring states have taken a different approach. For example, North Dakota recently passed a law that makes it illegal for minors to receive gender-affirming care. “We’ve got North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, other states, and all of those kids and families who want to either move here or come here for care, but we don’t have the capacity to provide that care for them,” Goepferd said.

Gender-affirming health care involves recurring appointments that make traveling back and forth problematic and expensive. Another obstacle for patients coming into Minnesota is how much insurance networks can cover out-of-state care.

With the new influx of people from out of state, the calls to the already busy clinic from interested patients have increased 30% to 40%.

“The hard thing is that our health care system is not designed that way,” Goepferd said.

**BOARD** *from page 14*

trauma caused by the United States government, many families in the Native community had lost their trust in the health care system. Therefore, it is important for these health care facilities to provide trust and quality treatment.

“Systematic racism does play a role in health and wellness of people of color,” said Prairie Chicken. “As a provider who provides services to people of color, it’s a real complex issue.”

**LYNX** *from page 16*

consecutive finals appearances, the team is experiencing the growing pains of this new era. Despite this, the Lynx continue to grow in popularity.

“We’re really excited about our growth,” Knox said. “Our TV ratings have doubled. Our crowds have been awesome this year, which we’re really excited about. We’re continuing to grow our fanbase, our season ticket members.”

Lynx rookie Diamond Miller talked about what being a part of this franchise means to her as an up-and-coming player.

“Oh, it’s huge,” Miller expressed. “First of all, my coach is a legend, and I could learn a lot from her. My teammates are really good. So, I can learn from people around me and

**TEEN** *from page 13*

models for boys to come forward and say, ‘Yes, I need help,’” said Singh.

The effects of not seeking help can be serious, both emotionally and academically. Singh explained that mental health problems often result in a decrease in academic performance, which in turn may lead to fewer career opportunities and lower lifetime incomes.

The Department of Human Services is trying to get more mental health professionals into schools and connect them with students who need help, but there’s an acute shortage of providers.

Singh is passionate about addressing the stigma surrounding mental health in Minnesota, and strongly urges families and the community to step up their support for these young people.

“[These children] are my future. They are your future. They are this community’s future,” Singh said.

this environment.

This season, the Lynx are celebrating their 25-year milestone by honoring its 25 best players ever with an All-25 Team; new merchandise and apparel; and retiring Sylvia Fowles’ jersey. On “Whay Day” this season, the franchise will honor Lindsay Whalen’s induction into the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame and Women’s Basketball Hall of Fame.

As the franchise looks toward the next 25 years, it hopes to build on an already impressive legacy.

“Excited for the direction that we’re heading,” Knox said. “I know we will get back to that mecca, that land, once again and hopefully get more of these [championship rings].”

**RESOURCES** *from page 15*

the type of stigma against mental health firsthand.

“You know, people often suffer in silence, especially when the resources are nearby. ... These consequences oftentimes lead to avoiding very treatable conditions and diagnoses that folks can work with. But oftentimes it goes underdiagnosed or undiagnosed, which leads to a whole host of other issues,” he said.

The best way to fight the stigma is to shed light on it. But with the new generation of mental health providers, there’s hope.

“What we’re doing now is simply just planting seeds that we hope that we can harvest a decade from now,” Shunkwiler said.

# COLLEGE ESSAY BOOT CAMP

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## College Essay: *Brushstrokes of My Life*

IF I CLOSE my eyes, I can still remember it. The dining room table in the duplex in Northeast Minneapolis I lived in close to 14 years ago. The memories are blurred, mostly made of pictures and stories shared with me later on by my mother. When I was small, no more than 2 or 3 years old, I gathered paper and a marker on that table and drew my very first attempt at a girl. She was incredibly simple, consisting of two shapes: a circle head on a triangle dress. I was enormously proud. I had started something I would take with me for the rest of my life — art. Every day after that, I'd sit at the same table



**Maitreya Reeder**  
Saint Anthony Village High School

with my Crayola markers and redraw the girl, adding different details each time. She gradually gained arms and legs, then a face. I painted over her in different colors. Eventually I stopped, only picking up drawing later in life after each copy of the girl was gone. I was so caught up in my own experiences, and only now do I realize how similar we are. With each feature added she became closer to being finished, as did I.

Just like my childhood drawing, I started out simple. But then, like most art, it got messy. When I was 2 years old, my mother divorced my father. I never saw him again. The change added to the drawing of me, painting me in deep reds and blues that blurred over time like an old tattoo. Still there, yet drowned in my memory.

But the dark colors made me grow. At 11 years old, I developed an anxiety disorder that I've struggled to manage for years. I couldn't sleep, couldn't think straight. It was a black and gray ocean, washing over me until I couldn't draw a breath. But with each dark brushstroke, there's balance with a gentler color, as in all good and contrasting art. A lot of my memories were good, like meeting close friends for

the first time, jumping into the lake by my cabin fully clothed, or thunderstorms where I'd gotten caught in the rain. Each new lesson was a layer on my canvas, but my drawing was far from finished. I learned over time how to empathize with people and love them better, and beams of light were painted over my drawing in orange-yellow streaks.

In November 2022, that light dimmed. The cancer of a longtime friend of mine, someone I'd known since I was less than a year old, had come back. This was the second time her disease had returned, and the doctors couldn't save her. The color blue flooded the drawing of myself when the girl I'd played with before we could walk — the girl I'd fought, loved, told my secrets to — was gone. Her empty place in

our friend group caused it to fall apart, and I lost touch with nearly all of my middle school friends. The color her death painted me is still there.

Though now I'm spending less time creating visual art, I'm still painting myself with new experiences. It's both a blessing and a curse to relate to artwork. It's never quite finished, like me, always being added to with brushstrokes of memories and new people. I'm a canvas, with a palette of future colors I'd like to use, and I'll utilize my further education to decide which ones to paint with. I'm just like my first drawing, still two shapes under layers of memories and colors. And after every painting and every sketchbook filled, my greatest creation is still me.

## College Essay: *Sportsmanship Trumps Loss*

WHEN I'D WATCH pro tennis players in elementary school, from Serena Williams to Andy Murray, I'd see their giant reactions when they lost. They would argue with the umpire and smash their racquet on the court. Seeing this at such an age when my mind could mold into anything, I thought acting out like this would make my playing top tier. Growing up I was a super competitive person, and that created a horrible mindset — I did whatever it took to secure the trophy. I didn't care what other people wanted, I just needed to be the best. Some of this most likely came from me playing tennis from such a young age and discovering the glory of winning.



**Chloe Soundara**  
Prior Lake High School

My father taught me tennis when I was young, and I never won against him. But playing against my peers gave me a taste of winning, and my hunger for more grew. I had a head start from training with my dad, so the successes piled up and I felt on top of the world. Then I started playing in tournaments.

I handled my first loss extremely poorly. I cried behind my clunky glasses, ripped my ponytail out and wanted to throw

my racquet. I just couldn't handle being a runner-up. Eventually this evolved into me arguing loudly with my opponent over line calls. I only lost occasionally, but when I did, I would take my anger out on the people around me.

I'd always hated rude opponents, ones who would roll their eyes and curse under their breath, but that was me. If I hated playing against those people, what did people think of me? This realization compelled me to think about why losing was so difficult for me.

I began to understand that I was like this because I wanted my parents' praise, to meet their expectations. They were always at my matches, so I wanted them to watch me succeed. My parents had escaped a civil war and started fresh for our family's safety. I didn't want them to have emigrated from Laos

just to have a failure of a daughter. A competitive side is something you need in life, but too much of it can poison you and everyone around you. I had started to poison myself and all the people who supported me. I would continue to mope after losses and snap at anything people would say to me. I stayed like this up until my eighth-grade tennis season, when I made the varsity team. That's when I began to change.

Before I made varsity, I won the majority of my matches. But on the varsity team, I started playing with the higher-level players in my district and losing more often. I recognized that I loved tennis much more than I loved winning. I was going to keep on playing, whether I lost or won. I fixed my attitude and became a more polite player with the largest amount of sportsmanship I could muster. After a match, I would

shake hands and genuinely wish my opponent well. Sometimes they would be frustrated, but I could — and can — understand why. I've been there, too.

I still cared about winning, but empathy and good sportsmanship mattered more. I wouldn't cry and I wouldn't smash my racquet — at least not as much. I realized that I wasn't losing, I just wasn't winning. I asked my dad for some simple things I could do to be a better player, and he would tell me, "Take it one point at a time, then one game, then one match."

As I continue to grow, as a player and a person, I'll use my newfound knowledge to successfully handle hard losses, and sympathize with opponents and friends. Sometimes I'll lose matches, get a bad grade or maybe lose job opportunities, but I know I can handle it with grace.



# COLLEGE ESSAY BOOT CAMP

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## College Essay: The Game of Chess

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CHESS HAS HELPED ME become a better person by improving my knowledge and skills. The game is beneficial for me because it teaches me brainstorming, critical thinking skills, how to engage with people and how to share ideas.

When I was 10 years old, my grades were poor. It was upsetting to see how badly I was doing in school. It made me feel discouraged when my report card arrived. My family was not proud. That changed before my first day of middle school. I was introduced to the game of chess. It was a challenge for me at the beginning, but I loved it



**Alex Yupa  
Chimborazo**  
Great River  
School

because I like developing strategies on my own. Later, I realized how entertaining and educational this game is. I learned how to become a skillful player in chess with the help of the computer.

During middle school, my grades were getting better because chess had educated me about critical thinking and planning, which helped me with my homework.

It made me a successful student. I started feeling better about my future because I gained more self-confidence and intelligence.

When I was 13, I started struggling with problem-solving and harder classes in eighth grade. Then I discovered an online game called chess puzzle. The game is about figuring out the right chess move to keep a winning position alive. One wrong move and you are off track. I enjoyed the puzzles because they helped me practice problem-solving and become an even better chess player. I can identify the solution to a problem and support my critical thinking. I have learned to be persistent, even if it is difficult to complete a task. For example, in chess, sacrifices help me take advantage of something better.

Challenges stimulate me.

When I was 15 years old, a sophomore in high school, I moved to a new school: Great River School in St. Paul. I was nervous when the school year started because I had not gone to school for one year because of the pandemic. During lunch time, I decided to play chess on my own since no one recognized me yet. One day, I met a person who wanted to go against me in chess. I was hyped on the inside, but calm on the outside. My first opponent's skills were fine, but I practiced more on the attacking strategies than him. I checkmated him with a surprise move. I was so good at chess that I gained my opponent's respect, and we became friends.

I was delighted to see that I was making friends along the way

throughout the school year and communicating with staff members more often. Then, I gained popularity for being the best chess player in my grade, and I was proud of it. I feel thankful for my favorite game because without it, I would be an average student.

Now I am 16, advancing to grade 12. I feel relaxed and happy. At the same time, there is a challenge I need to face. That challenge is college. I only have another year to prepare. When I first started playing chess, it had no relevance for my future. Now, I participate in chess tournaments to earn awards and recognition and will apply for chess scholarship programs to help me get into college.

My success as a chess player has given me the skills to succeed in school. Chess made me who I am.

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## College Essay: A New Perspective

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IT ALL STARTED in eighth grade when my mom told me she was pregnant with my second little sister. I was ecstatic! I could barely hold it in. I wanted another sister and finally I would get one! Shortly after, my dad told me he was having two babies. I was bothered because I was my dad's only child for so long, and I was worried our relationship would change. In ninth grade, my mom announced her pregnancy with my third little sister; although



**Niyomi Adams  
Benilde**  
St. Margaret's

I was excited about it, I couldn't help but feel a pit in my stomach. Then my dad told me my little brother had been born, and I was overjoyed because I had all my sisters and now I had a brother! It made me happy, but again that

pit was there. I was uncomfortable with the sudden change. It had only been one year.

I refused to let myself feel sad because that made it seem like I didn't want my siblings, but that couldn't be further from the truth. But what was wrong with me? I didn't talk about it because I didn't want anyone to take it the wrong way. All I felt was guilt and sadness. I wanted it to go away, but my feelings seemed bottomless. It was the same as when I was 7 and my first sister was born, only my thoughts were more intrusive. I was overwhelmed. When I saw my mom and dad's stress, I didn't want

to burden them with my problem. It didn't take long for me to feel like a burden. I felt like my feelings were not valid. I knew I loved my siblings, so how could I be so sad?

I prayed for God to give me some peace of mind. I had to take time for me, and remember that I love myself and everyone loves me. And while going from one sister to five siblings was difficult, I am happy to say that I am at peace. I love having a big immediate family! When I feel bad, their excitement and their smiles make me feel better every time.

I can make a difference in my community because of my

dedication and resilience. When I put my mind to something, I always make my best effort to make it happen. When it comes to difficult tasks or walls in my way, I persevere and work hard to get through. I am not afraid to ask for help when I need it, and I'm not afraid to offer my help to anyone in need. I know I would be a great partner to my peers. In my future I look forward to pursuing a career in pediatrics. Not once did I give up. I figured out the problem and fought it head-on. The lesson I took away from my hard time was to always be positive and to look on the bright side.

## SCENES from page 20

of course, he said it's best to avoid getting in between protesters and police when they are exchanging projectiles. Vanleave saw protesters and journalists get injuries from rubber bullets and other "less lethal" projectiles.

The next spring, in April 2021, he covered protests following the death of Daunte Wright, and he got caught in a standoff between police and protesters.

Vanleave was shot by police with nonlethal projectiles, landing him in the hospital.

One of his fingers was broken. He would have to take months away from his work.

Coming home after a chaotic night working in the field, and trying to relax and sleep isn't easy. It also weighs on your mental health, he said.

"Having a support network of friends and colleagues who we can gather with was really helpful," Vanleave said.

After nights of covering the social unrest happening in Minneapolis in 2020, Vanleave and a network of journalists from different outlets would grab a drink or gather in people's backyards to roast marshmallows. He also exercised, sometimes with trips to the Boundary Waters, for his physical and mental health.

"I really got into mountain biking that summer," Vanleave said. "Having an outdoor aerobic activity was really helpful for managing stress."

Vanleave learned early on that breaking news can happen anywhere — even on a college football field.

When Vanleave was a student journalist at the University of Minnesota, he covered a Gophers football game in January 2011 against the New Mexico State Aggies. With seconds remaining in the game, Minnesota's head coach, Jerry Kill, collapsed on the turf.

The coaching staff surrounded Kill. The stadium was silent.

Kill was having a seizure.

Soon the medical crew arrived to get him onto a stretcher and take him to the hospital. What started as a football story transformed into a life-and-death story about the coach. Vanleave had a small window of opportunity to get a photograph and capture a delicate moment.

"Ultimately, sometimes what we do in photojournalism comes down to luck," he said. "And the skill involved is just, like, trying to make sure that we're putting ourselves in the best position possible."

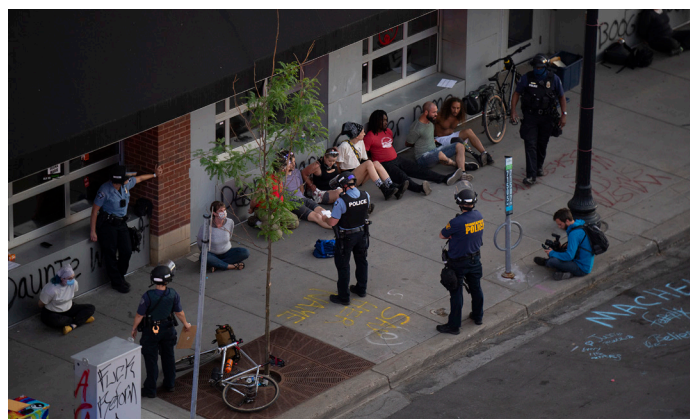
Much like reacting to a burning apartment building, Vanleave saw the medical crew taking Kill through the tunnel and quickly made a decision that would allow him to either get the photo he wanted or leave him empty-handed.

He went to the left side of the tunnel as the stretcher carrying Kill approached, with the medical crew surrounding him from all angles.

He had an opening to get the shot he wanted.

He got it.

*Editor's Note: Mark Vanleave started working at The Associated Press in summer 2023 after the story was written.*



(COURTESY MARK VANLEAVE)

Photojournalist Mark Vanleave was front and center during coverage of the protests following George Floyd's murder.

## TECH from page 20

your child off to school. Your kids love the community, and you love bringing your kids to a place they already know. Except that school is closing. You are blindsided because the only outlets broadcasting the information did so in English.

For the community around the Cedar Riverside Charter School, this scenario happened.

In response, Sahan Journal innovation editor Aala Abdullahi connected with a local Somali TV station to broadcast the announcement in the language of the community. The Sahan newsroom is also continuing to find outlets that broadcast to the Somali-, Hmong- and Spanish-speaking populations so everyone can access community news.

"Good journalism often gives people a better understanding of the world they live in, which in turn helps people become more informed and engaged community members," Abdullahi said. "I'd say that's how my values intertwine with Sahan Journal's vision and mission. Our newsroom has made the commitment to do coverage that truly represents the changing face of Minnesota and recognizes that democratic engagement and power that belong to everyone."

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Howard Sinker, digital sports editor at the Star Tribune, recently worked with reporters on a story about a basketball coach who was suspended for saying a slur. The story was continuously updated for two to three weeks. Eventually, Sinker got information about how an opposing team voted to not play that coach's team after he was reinstated. The article became the most popular on the website.

The ability for Sinker, and the Star Tribune, to continuously

update stories on [StarTribune.com](https://www.startribune.com) is a tool that has only been introduced in the last decade.

Sinker's current project is to create web infrastructure. He wants readers to come to the Star Tribune before other sites, but to do that, information has to be accessible to everyone.

"I really like stories that give people added value to what they see in the newspaper," Sinker said.

C.J. Sinner, director of graphics and data visuals at the Star Tribune, has spent her career cycling through newsrooms helping to engineer digital storytelling.

Her first job was at the Bismarck Tribune in North Dakota as an online producer. During her time in the position, the Missouri River flooded the town, displacing people from their homes and crippling infrastructure. However, Sinner and the newsroom were able to quickly leverage social media to rally the community.

Sinner uses social media and data analysis to create maps and graphics for storytelling at the Star Tribune. She aims to help people see they do

not have to excel in English proficiency to work in journalism.

"I hope that future journalists can see that there are other media, like photography, graphics, data, or skill sets like math that can be used to help readers understand a story," Sinner said.

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Fort uses alternative media to share unheard stories of minorities. Fort created a news page called BLK Press and hopes it will transform media by empowering reporters to share what is happening in their own communities.

"I feel like the media industry is moving forward," Fort said. "I think that there are a lot of Black and brown reporters that are working in mainstream media."

She is also working on a TV show that airs on The CW, which aims to dismantle stereotypes about Black people perpetuated by the media and instead celebrate their stories.

"I just hope that they're encouraged to continue doing that work from the inside because that also is going to be the thing that helps move us forward," Fort said.



(COURTESY GEORGIA FORT)

Georgia Fort



## **BELIEVING** from page 21

said. *What should I do as a reporter, should I smoke?* he asked himself. *Because technically I'd be breaking the law.* Now retired, he can admit that he took a puff or two. And it didn't lead to further use.

In 1991, the National Association of Hispanic Journalists arranged interviews for Rosario at the Seattle Times, USA Today and St. Paul Pioneer Press, which flew Rosario to Minnesota.

"I thought St. Paul was in Florida," Rosario said. "When you live in New York City, you think you're in the center of the universe."

He planned on staying two or three years and then returning to New York, but Rosario found that he liked the paper and the people in Minnesota.

"The major con (in Minnesota) is definitely the weather, but there's a lot of pros: good quality of life, good schools, good place to raise a family," he said.

Three decades later, Rosario is still in St. Paul. After five years as city editor and head of the public safety team at the Pioneer Press, he became a featured columnist in 1997.

"Rosario was a *real* journalist," Pioneer Press editor Mike Burbach said. "He knew that you had to be constructively skeptical of everything. That's what a journalist does. A journalist checks things out and tries to find out where the facts are.

"Rosario worked hard to have contacts in the community. He went and talked to people, he listened to people, he called people he knew and didn't know. Rubén was passionate."

Rosario wrote columns about immigration, social justice, and

interactions between citizens and police.

"I got quite a bit of negativity," Rosario said. "I learned that I had to grow a thicker skin. But in the end, if you write the truth, write with integrity, then all the criticism doesn't matter."

Late in his career, Rosario wrote what he called his hardest column — but also the easiest. It was about his diagnosis with multiple myeloma, a type of blood cancer.

"I got a lot of positive feedback on that," he said. "I got hundreds of emails and phone calls from people offering prayers and support."

Rosario and Burbach talked about how when someone has a life-threatening illness, they learn to appreciate that every day is a gift.

"Rubén got it," Burbach said.

When Rosario got into journalism, "newspapers were at the top of the media food chain," he said.

"That's no longer the case. With the advent of the internet and social media, people have become their own journalists. One result has been the explosion of misinformation and disinformation. Quality journalism is more important than ever to help people sort through all of that."

Rosario left full-time employment with the Pioneer Press in April 2020.

"There's no rocking chair for me yet. I'm wrapping up a book of my columns and pursuing other opportunities. I'm also grateful that I can still write an occasional column for the paper," Rosario said.

Does he have any regrets?  
"None," Rosario says. "Every story was a learning experience."

## **PIONEERED** from page 21

neck; sometimes he'd massage her shoulders.

"Sometimes he would sit down and tell me stories about how he had a yacht in the South of France, and all the women were always naked because that's how he liked it," she said. [He] told me I should go over sometime; I should fly to the South of France and go on his yacht because it'd be really great."

Not wanting to get reassigned, Blount didn't mention Green's behavior to anyone ... until he was being sued for harassment by one of his employees.

"I was very reluctant to talk to my editor about this because I knew what would happen, which we do see happen frequently to women in journalism; it becomes our problem," she said. "I think it's a little better now, but back then in particular, I knew that if I told my

editor I was being sexually harassed, the answer would be, 'Well, we'll just put you on another beat. We'll just move you.' But I didn't want that. I loved covering the team. Why would I have to be punished? So I was just really careful about what I said."

Now, her resilience continues to shine through a new obstacle: cancer. Blount has been fighting gallbladder cancer since August 2022. She has undergone surgeries and chemotherapy, leading up to her current clean CT scans. She documents her journey on CaringBridge.

Through her treatment, she has continued working and covering sports, ranging from curling and horseback riding to gymnastics, hockey and soccer. It's because of journalists like Blount — hardworking, determined and strong — that

women in sports journalism have become more widely accepted and appreciated.

Blount encourages young people interested in the profession to network; introduce themselves to a reporter, meet for coffee to talk about the job. But she offers caution that it's not a 9-to-5 job, particularly in the world of sports journalism.

"The hours are unpredictable. You cover a lot of games at night and on the weekends. You'll get called in on your day off because your team made a trade or the news breaks," she said.

At the end of the day, for Blount and many other journalists, the satisfaction and passion makes everything worth it.

"I wouldn't change any of what's happened to me for the world. I hope others can find the solace I found within words and writing."

## **COLLIER** from page 17

"When we go overseas, our marketing goes so down," Collier said on "The Real Deal Podcast." "It's like you don't hear from us for half of the year."

Collier and her business partner and former UConn teammate Breanna Stewart are looking to evolve women's basketball by allowing players the opportunity to make money while staying in the United States in the offseason.

"I don't think there's any player that wouldn't be excited about playing at home, while making money, growing your game and your marketing," Collier said.

## **JACKSON** from page 22

there and with other reporters from all around the world," Jackson said. "And I don't know, they just don't teach you in school about how real things get in the community after such a great trauma that happened."

But Jackson wasn't the only one struggling with the story, which happened during the first few months of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It was tough being on the street," Harkness said. "It was tough for editors to make the right decisions about what to do. Making sure that we had the right tone of stories that all people were going to be represented in terms of visuals, words, who we were talking to."

As a race and immigration

reporter, Jackson "brings a fuller picture with a richer story language," Harkness said, adding that she is a reporter who makes you feel welcomed, as well as someone you can open up to easily without feeling judged.

Jackson enjoys the interactions with people she interviews. In January, she was working on a story about D.A. Bullock, a filmmaker and activist Jackson described as so compelling that he left her speechless.

"I've been thinking about it, it was, like, so interesting," she said. "Just his take on the digital civil rights movement of the last few years and on being Black in Minnesota."



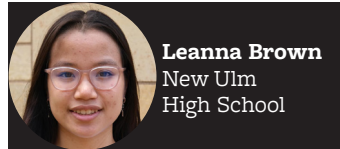
Rubén Rosario was honored with the ThreeSixty Widening the Circle award at the spring banquet.

## ThreeSixty Fall News Team students wrote op-ed stories, with prompts from the #360YouthVoiceChallenge, which is inspired by youth.

### Prioritize Students' Mental Health

AT THE END of eighth grade, my grades were in the dumps and so was my mental health. A's and B's in my classes turned into a C average, and I struggled to accept support from my parents and my school. That was three months into the COVID-19 pandemic, and I was far from alone. The isolation during the pandemic significantly worsened high school students' mental health in the United States, and there were not enough resources to deal with it.

"It's as though we were trying to build a bridge across a canyon but didn't have all the materials to finish the project. Then, the pandemic hit, making the canyon wider and the materials even more in demand," said Ray Merenstein, the executive director of the National Alliance on Mental Illness Colorado, in a Healthline interview.



**Leanna Brown**  
New Ulm  
High School

With institutions all over the country — and now the president — declaring the emergency phase of the pandemic over, it is especially important for parents, school administrators and elected officials to be aware of the struggles students faced in order to help them transition back to normal life.

In a survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of almost 8,000 high school students, nearly 45% of American high school students reported persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness between 2020 and 2021. Almost 20% reported seriously considering suicide and

9% had attempted suicide.

Normally, students might rely on support systems at school to help them with their mental health. In an interview with Healthline, Dr. Asha Patton-Smith, a child and adolescent psychiatrist at Kaiser Permanente in Virginia, said students lost support systems that "often provided an outlet to cope with issues they may be facing and helped to identify students in need of additional support."

Without school, parents — who were already stretched thin from financial burdens and their own mental health — often became their children's entire support system. This dynamic was often unmanageable for families, and it hasn't gotten much easier since then.

That is to say nothing of the effect on low-income families, who

were disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. The pandemic exacerbated long-standing issues with support and access for these families, and watching that stress affect their communities took a toll on students. "Our children are like sponges. If we are experiencing distress related to the collective traumas of COVID-19, they are likely to be impacted as well," said Dr. Anjali Ferguson, a clinical psychologist at Virginia Commonwealth University, in an interview with Healthline.

So, has the bridge been built?

No. But here's how we can build a better one:

- Parents can support their children by taking care of their own mental health and having honest conversations with their children about their struggles.

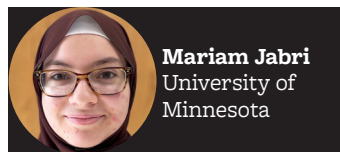
- School administrators can advocate for more funding and mental health professionals to combat the lack of mental health resources in schools. Teachers can also help their students by checking in with them and being available to talk.

- Elected officials can provide aid to low-income Minnesotans to fight long-standing socioeconomic challenges exacerbated by the pandemic. They can promote ways to provide aid to these families, such as supplying stimulus to families in need and making health care more accessible.

### Diversifying Your Bookshelf: How Readers Can Change Publishing

HARRY POTTER? WHITE. Percy Jackson? White. Katniss Everdeen? Also white. I could go on. Seriously, it doesn't stop there. Most of the books I read between the ages of 9 and 15 had a white main character. That wasn't by choice. At the time, young adult books with a person of color as a leading character were rare to nonexistent.

I didn't realize how important diverse representation is until I read *Love from A to Z* by S.K. Ali. I finally found a book where I identified with the main character.



**Mariam Jabri**  
University of  
Minnesota

The book industry is making it hard to share that experience. According to *The New York Times*, 95% of books released by the five major publishers between 1950 and 2018 were written by white people. Since authors tend to write characters that resemble them, this can lead to fewer characters of color in books.

To top that off, Barnes & Noble is reportedly cutting back on the number of hardcover books stocked on its shelves. This limits chances for voices of color to have their stories read. Black authors Keah Brown and Britney S. Lewis have already seen the effects of the new policy. Both of their latest books will not end up on shelves, which impacts their sales.

The new policy further highlights the odds stacked against authors of color.

This is where readers come in. We, as readers, don't realize

the power we have in the book industry. According to *Publishers Weekly*, BookTok — a community of readers on TikTok who recommend, promote and review books — is partly responsible for the 4.6% rise in adult fiction sales in 2022. *The New York Times* even labeled BookTok as a "Best-Seller Machine" in its recent article about TikTok's influence in the publishing industry.

As an avid reader on BookTok, I've seen how one five-second video of a book can change the trajectory of its popularity. Following

Black, Indigenous and people of color content creators on social media and interacting with posts promoting BIPOC authors will have that same impact.

Another thing readers can do is go out there and buy books by writers of color. Visit your nearest Barnes & Noble and search out diverse reads. Can't find the book you're looking for? Ask for it. Growing up without proper representation made me realize how important it is now. We have the power to see the books we want stocked on their shelves.



## Somalis Deserve Collective Healing

*It's time we talk about mental health in the Somali community.*

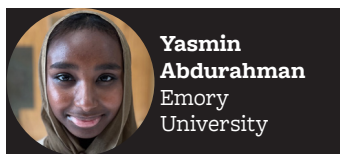
THE WALLS OF my room suddenly began closing in on me. Nausea hit my churning stomach faster than a bullet train. My heart was about to beat out of my chest, and my leg shook uncontrollably. I couldn't breathe, the air around me had somehow vanished.

I grabbed at my throat, but just as I thought I was on the brink of death, my breath suddenly returned.

Mentally and physically shaken, I hurriedly ran to my phone. Was I having a heart attack? Dr. Google gave me an answer I didn't expect.

Anxiety.

More specifically, what I experienced was a panic attack. Seeing the words on my screen felt like a slap



**Yasmin  
Abdurahman**  
Emory  
University

in the face. While I don't remember what triggered that physical response, I knew what close family and friends would say if I even uttered the word anxiety, much less discussed my experience.

In the Somali community, mental health is almost never discussed in our homes. Despite many Somalis in Minnesota and abroad experiencing trauma from witnessing the war, we fail to acknowledge its impact.

The Somali Civil War that broke

out in 1991 is nothing short of ongoing tragedy. According to a 2020 article from the London School of Economics, survivors recount rape, murder, interclan fighting, physical injuries and displacement.

"Many African countries have huge and unmanageable health problems (physical, mental, social, and ecological) as a consequence of prolonged militarized conflicts," according to a 2020 psychiatry study conducted by the International Journal for Equity in Health.

Somali culture is family-oriented and tight-knit. While this can be a positive, it can also present a challenge. Due to the stigma of

mental health, open discussions lead to judgment and pity from relatives, which makes it difficult to get help.

With the majority of Somalis being Muslim, we view the recitation of Quran as the only solution to mental health issues. For some, these holy words have eased their pain, but it shouldn't be the only option toward tranquility and healing.

The stigma fuels the reluctance to seek out mental health resources.

Doctors and providers need to understand the backgrounds and views of their Somali patients so they can effectively treat them.

Despite the ongoing issue of

mental health in the community, it doesn't represent Somalis as a whole.

Somalia is the home of poets and storytellers. The air in our neighborhoods is filled with the sweetness of malawah, aunts singing folk music, uncles reciting the Quran in marketplaces and laughter of children echoing through the streets.

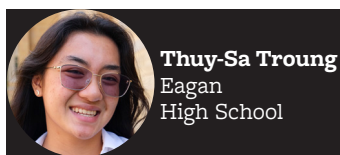
I love these parts of my community, but I wish there was support for our mental health.

I hope we reach a point where discussing mental health isn't frowned upon, where families can sit together and share experiences like my panic attack and be open to collective healing.

## Bites of Life

"C'MON, TY, you got to try this!!"

I was on my knees for my friend Tyler to try some boba, a Taiwanese tea with little black tapioca balls. We were at the mall and wanted something sweet, so I recommended boba. Tyler is a picky eater and has a nut allergy, so he's very cautious about what he eats. After interrogating me about what's in boba, I reassured him it has nothing he's allergic to. He finally decided to order his first-ever Oreo boba milk tea.



**Thuy-Sa Truong**  
Eagan  
High School

His reaction was exactly what I was expecting. When I saw his eyes light up, I knew that my job was complete and he was hooked. I knew this wouldn't be his last boba.

Food is something everybody needs, so why not spice it up and

try something new? After all, research shows there are many benefits that come with trying new foods; one is that it connects cultures.

Each bite of something different can create a new sensation. As food helps bridge cultures, people experience diversity. For example, in my neighborhood there's an annual party, which is a great way to introduce new foods to new people. I can remember my mouth

watering at things as simple as hotdogs, burgers, cream cheese wontons and curry. As you might imagine, my neighborhood is fairly diverse. New dishes are always being made for these parties, and it's a way for people to learn from each other. As folks learn how to cook new dishes to spice up their palate, these new dishes add to the diversity of neighborhoods.

Food links cultures, helps people forge communities and

teaches us about another culture's food palate. Whether you try creamy pastas from Italy, the spicy rice cakes in Vietnam, or even the plantains of Panama, you certainly will gain a new, tasty experience. As for Tyler, he's way more accepting of trying new foods. Just the other day, we ate at Bonchon, a Korean fried chicken place, and he loved it. So, in the end, try to be like Tyler and sample tasty new experiences.

### **GAME** from page 17

just for fun and giggles. I wanted to go to the highest point you could get to, though, so she started me early so I wouldn't have to worry about struggling later on.

Before I knew it, I was getting older and started to play Amateur Athletic Union and high school basketball. I was in the seventh grade starting AAU and in eighth grade starting high school. I transferred to a better school with a better community and for a better education. I now go to DeLaSalle High School, playing JV/varsity basketball.

With my time playing I have been looking for certain answers to my questions on things such as, "Why didn't I do this right?" or "What could I have done better?" I went to a camp with ThreeSixty Journalism and got the chance to not only meet but interview Miller. We went to a press conference and were lucky enough to hear them talk and even got to ask them questions.

Pregame, we were allowed to ask questions, and put out statements to the coach and some other players. During the game while we watched them play, I took notes so I could find ways to improve my game; I paid attention to the way the players did things on the court and how they communicated, passed and moved. Miller, in particular, was great at playmaking. She was great at setting up the play so her teammates could score. She hustled to every place she was supposed to be and had some wonderful spacing.

Even after their tough loss that day, Miller still gave high-fives to everyone. She may not have been smiling or been super happy about the outcome, but she still acknowledged all of her teammates and others around her. During my interview with Miller, she was open to everything I had to say and ask. I asked her questions about the game and about her personally, trying to find ways to better my game.

I look up to Miller (literally and figuratively), so I was nervous at the start. Miller, though, eased my anxiety. She exuded a sense of humility and calm — qualities I hope to have in my life on and off the court.

### **TOLL** from page 19

which he published shortly after 9 a.m. the following day.

Star Tribune crime reporter Liz Sawyer praised Jany's commitment to uncovering the truth in the Floyd case despite conflicting information from authorities. While the rest of the public safety team worked already lengthy shifts from 9 a.m. to midnight or later, Jany would strive for more, Sawyer said.

Traversing a city full of pain, anger and violence was not an easy job, Sawyer said. Having painful conversations with Floyd's family took a toll on the whole team, Jany noted. Members of the public could choose not to watch the graphic footage of Floyd's death, but journalists didn't have that luxury.

"When you watch those videos and you spend all this time in the field, sometimes witnessing violence and unrest, you bring it home with you," Sawyer said. "It's hard to forget scenes like that."

As national and local news outlets descended on Minneapolis to cover the city's response to Floyd's death, an army of freelance journalists joined the fray.

Minneapolis-based Deena Winter, a longtime reporter caught in between staff jobs at the height of COVID-19, took a freelance assignment from the Wall Street Journal to cover the protests.

In order to do so, she first had to take a Wall Street Journal hazard training course for reporters working in conflict zones. Then she

received a box in the mail with protective gear, including a gas mask, a helmet and a chemical solution to nullify pepper spray, worth \$1,000.

It dawned on her how risky of an assignment it was, Winter said. "Obviously (the Journal) knew it was a liability," Winter said. "They had these people who were in war zones all over the world training us."

Walking alongside protesters through burned-out streets, she saw ordinary people with enormous guns propped on their shoulders.

While most of the demonstrators were peaceful, she kept an eye out for provocateurs who wanted things to turn violent.

Looking back, Winter said she relied on her thick skin to insulate her from the emotional intensity of that time. Afterward, she continued to work in Minneapolis, while many other journalists left the field. She landed a job at the Minnesota Reformer, where she continued to follow up on stories about the Minneapolis Police Department, which contributed to her Minnesota Society of Professional Journalists' 2022 Journalist of the Year Award.

More than two years after the civil unrest that roiled Minneapolis, local journalists are still covering stories stemming from that time while dealing with residual emotional scars. Andy Mannix, one of the Star Tribune's two police reporters, said the newspaper continues to cover the criminal cases of people who

were charged with rioting, excessive force lawsuits against police and the status of policing reforms.

The stress of the job is often compounded by the thanklessness of it, Mannix said. The social media crucible following Floyd's death included attacks on local journalists. News outlets including the Star Tribune were criticized on Twitter and elsewhere for publishing uncensored photos of violent unrest. Mannix said his home address and private phone number were posted online, and his family received death threats.

He threw himself into his work to cope, Mannix said. His staff of reporters, photographers, videographers and editors won the 2021 Pulitzer Prize in Breaking News Reporting. Mannix, Jany and Sawyer were on the front lines of that coverage and are still trying to make sense of it, but at the time, they knew what they had to do.

"When Minneapolis was suddenly at the center for national news, and there was a lot of stuff going on — protests, riots ... all these questions about 'How could this happen?' and 'Is there something wrong with the police department, with our criminal justice system? ... [It] felt really important for us as the local paper to cover the story really well," Mannix said. "That's where my head was at for most of that. I felt like my mission was clearer and more important than ever."

### **DOORS** from page 19

Expressing this humanity and empathy, Jany said, are important when it comes to getting people to talk to you. He explained that working with police and activists is especially challenging because they tend to have a natural wariness or distrust of reporters. Both sides feel like they haven't been covered well or fairly by the media.

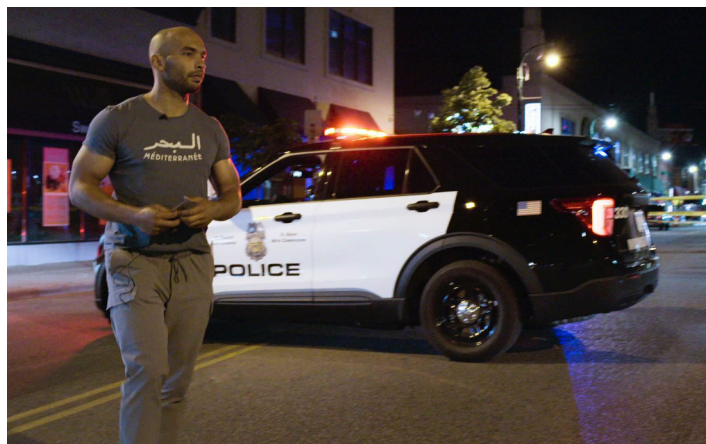
"You try to explain to them, 'Hey, that might have happened in the past, but you know, I'm new, I want to hear your story and write it in good of faith,'" he said.

So how does Jany connect with people and what makes him different from the rest? Sawyer says Jany is a humble person. For instance, when the Star Tribune staff won a Pulitzer Prize for Breaking News for coverage of Floyd's death, he didn't want the credit.

"During the award ceremony, instead of allowing people to congratulate him and [get] him in the spotlight, he spent most of the evening talking to interns and learning more about them," Sawyer said.

She said Jany wears T-shirts and jeans to work and in the field, which is one of many ways he's influenced her in reporting, including taking the time to stay in touch with everyone he meets along the way.

"(He reaches) out to people even when you don't need them," she said. "Just knowing you care for other people will make it easier when you have to do a story."



**Libor Jany interviews a witness at a crime scene in the middle of the night. His late nights in the field helped him win the 2021 Journalist of the Year award from the National Association of Black Journalists.**



(COURTESY MIKE SHUM)





# 2023 FALL OP-ED WORKSHOP

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