Many frustrated as special session appears elusive

It's been a long summer already for Minnesota disability advocates and their advocacy groups, as no progress has been made toward a legislative special session. Many groups have taken up the call for a special session, with the organization ARRM bluntly issuing an action alert that stated, “Legislators, do your damn job.”

As Access Press went to press, Minnesota legislative leaders had failed to reach an agreement on special session terms. Gov. Tim Walz and House Speaker Melissa Hortman (DFL-Brooklyn Park) told reporters June 16 that negotiations with the Republican-controlled Senate had reached an impasse.

Hortman called the situation “deeply disappointing.” She said the House put forward four different offers, but didn’t get a response. Republican leadership countered that it had plans for the surplus, including more funding for disability services and nursing homes.

This was in contradiction to talks in the final week of the regular session, in which leaders said they had reached a deal on the surplus. One historic part of that deal would have been an end to taxes on Social Security. But the deal fell apart after little key legislation was passed. Some bills barely missed getting onto the House and Senate floors.

Walz has said he remains open to offers that would reopen the debate. As the House and Senate seats on the November ballot, those decisions could be in the hands of a whole new group of people.

By June’s end, Walz had urged state lawmakers to return half of the state surplus in the form direct checks of $9.235 billion, was an historic surplus, which grew to a projection of $11.335 billion, an issue where consensus could not be reached.

“Legislators, do your damn job.”

Many frustrated as special session appears elusive

Many stories of accomplishment have come out of Minnesota’s groundbreaking Partners in Policymaking Program, which is helping people with disabilities and their family members become self-advocates. An anniversary celebration was held recently in Bloomington.

Past Partners graduates, faculty, staff and supporters gathered to celebrate the impact of the program, reminisce and get reacquainted. The 35th Anniversary event featured “Inclusion,” a new exhibit that follows the history of people with developmental disabilities from the 1990s through today.

The program’s roots are with the Minnesota Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities (MNCDD) and efforts in 1986 toward passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The program began in 1987, three years before the ADA was signed into law in 1990.

The program is now used by people around the world who seek to become effective advocates for themselves and their family members. As Council member and longtime program supporter Dan Reed recalls, “It’s simply unconscionable to be sitting on $7 billion when your damn job.”

As the ADA celebration is an annual event, it is being held virtually this year. The event is free and open to the public, but participants must preregister, and see accommodations by Tuesday, July 26 for a virtual event.

The event is free and open to the public, but participants must preregister, and see accommodations by Tuesday, July 12. Visit https://celebrateadamn.com/ to register.

Recognizing the challenges the past two years and the COVID-19 pandemic have brought, the ADA anniversary planning committee planned a celebration to help Minnesotans with disabilities reconnect with one another and face challenges in new and exciting ways.

Accessible Adventures Await! will highlight a host of accessible programs across the state and opportunities to explore the great outdoors — even from indoors. The ADA celebration is an informative and fun event to learn more about the variety of organizations, state agencies and others offering a range of accessible adventures across the state.

Program supporter Dan Reed recalls, “It’s simply unconscionable to be sitting on $7 billion when your damn job.”

Accessible Adventures Await! is annual ADA event theme

Accessible Adventures Await! is the theme of Minnesota’s 32nd annual American with Disabilities Act (ADA) celebration. Join the anniversary committee, disability community leaders and a host of great guest presenters noon-1:30 p.m. Tuesday, July 26 for a virtual event.

The event is free and open to the public, but participants must preregister, and seek accommodations by Tuesday, July 12. Visit https://celebrateadamn.com/ to register.

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Popular radio host Larry “Moon” Thompson from the Moon & Staci Show on KS95 will act as the event emcee. Thompson stepped away from the microphone in 2021 after 17 years with the show. He was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2005. He had worked in radio since age 16.

“As a person with MS who is in a chair full time, I know how easy it is to have your world shrink. Minnesota has done a good job of ensuring there are ways to experience the outdoors even if you have a disability,” he said. “I’m excited to be a part of this celebration. Without the ADA a lot of us would be stuck inside.”

Gov. Tim Walz will present a proclamation honoring the ADA. Noted national ADA expert Peter Berg will deliver the keynote presentation. Berg will focus on the application of the ADA to publicly and privately owned ADA EVENT to page 5

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David Quilleash was one of the council members at the anniversary event.

Thirty-five years of advocacy celebrated by Partners’ program

Thirty-five years of advocacy celebrated by Partners’ program
Hey, Minnesota lawmakers, here’s a reminder from us: You had one job ...

This is not just posturing and pontificating on our part. These are the supports and services that keeps us in our home communities, with our friends and families, and in our workplaces.

We look at some much undone and all we can say is, really? What happened? Where was the common sense and the change on? Too much arguing? Too much waiting until the last minute?

This is not just posturing and pontificating on our part. These are the services that are affected when nothing gets done. There are the supports and services that keep us in our home communities, with our friends and families, and in our workplaces. The ADA could have helped beagled families whose loved ones had to move home or into assisted living facilities. The changes that could make school easier for learning-disabled and young people.

Changes large and small can transform lives. But we need policymakers’ support to happen. Must we go another year without doing what could make a real difference for all of our lives?

First Americans with Disabilities Act passage celebrations remembered

When the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) became federal law in 1990, Minnesotaans with disabilities and their allies joined in the national jubilee. Passage of the ADA also launched a new era in the disability community.

Disability advocacy and service organizations throughout the state worked to educate the greater community. Disability rights commission. Chambers of commerce and state legislators about the ADA and what it would mean. As noted in the Congressional votes, opponents cited business costs and impacts in opposing the ADA. Having information to present about needed changes was meant to sway votes.

Other groups including faith-based institutions, student groups and community service organizations wanted more general information on what the ADA meant. The ADA would make it harder for those who lived with cerebral palsy and maladaptive degeneration, especially in demand.

Thirty-two years later, many of the people involved in that first ADA gala are no longer with us. But the ADA and its impacts continue.

The History Note is a monthly column produced in cooperation with the Minnesota Governor’s Commission on Developmental Disabilities. Past History Notes and other disability-related articles may be found at www.mnddc.org.

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Many options are available for all to enjoy Minnesota’s great outdoors

Go out and play! Disabled Minnesotans can find an array of ways to get outdoors and have fun. See the creatures at the Minnesota Zoo in Apple Valley, enjoy the trails at Covered Bridge Park in Zumbrota, and visit many places in between. This year’s Minnesota Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) celebration puts a spotlight on outdoor fun. Many destinations in recent years have expanded the range of disabilities served. For example, few if any accommodations were offered years ago for people with sensory disabilities. That has changed. Planning ahead is essential for many destinations, as accessible spots and accommodations can fill up quickly. Ask about accommodations available for a visitor’s disability or disabilities as not all options may be online. Nor may all options on a website be available at a particular time. Check on admissions prices and where accessible parking is available. It’s also very important to plan for personal needs before heading out. Make sure to dress appropriately, with clothing and shoes that are comfortable for clothing, hats and anything else that can shelter you from sun or rain. Make sure to have water or needed care devices at home. Bring plenty of water and snacks. And always remember sunscreen and insect repellents.

Here’s some ideas for outdoor fun:

**Minnesota Department of Natural Resources** [DNR](https://www.mn.gov) offers a wide range of opportunities. While every state park is different, and not all have a full range of accessible options, all offer something to enjoy. Do some homework before visiting parks and learn about accessible options. Check the website at https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/index.html and click on the tab for Accessible Outdoors to find information about trails, hunting, fishing, camping and much more.

Many state parks have picnic facilities. Most have camping facilities and trails. Many state parks also offer boating and fishing opportunities. Check the website for a list of sites, visitor centers, or interpretive programs.

Three Minnesota state parks offer tours with accessible options, including beautiful Blue Mound State Park and its bison buggy tours.

A new state parks feature is free all-terrain wheelchairs. The chairs were first made available at Camden State Park in southwestern Minnesota. Crow Wing State Park in north-central Minnesota, and Myre-Big Island State Park in south-central Minnesota. McCarthy Beach State Park in the Iron Range will have an adaptive beach chair so users can enjoy Sturgeon Lake. Lake Benzie State Park and Maplewood State Park are to add the all-terrain chairs later in the season if they haven’t done so already. The track chairs run on electricity and work on gravel, dirt trails and open fields, as well as on snow.

Use of the chairs is free but there are some caveats. Users need a state park permit. Every location has a transfer board available but park staff cannot offer assistance for a chair transfer, so bring a caregiver, friend or personal transfer equipment. Planning in advance when accommodations are needed is very important. Many Minnesota state parks have accessible campgrounds, lodging, and trails. But they can fill up quickly, especially on holiday weekends.

Don’t hesitate to ask for specific information about accessibility at a particular state park. Call that park before visiting. In some cases special arrangements can be made. Although park staff cannot reserve specific sites, they will make every effort to assign a site with appropriate picnic tables and easy access to the restrooms and shower buildings. Also, look for information on special rates and licenses for people with disabilities.

**City, county and regional parks.** Parks and natural areas abound in Minnesota. In the Twin Cities region, there are more than 60 regional parks, nature preserves, and special features including Como Zoo. Most regional parks offer accessible features for guests enjoying the great outdoors. Visit https://metroparks.org/Parks/About.aspx Many Minnesota cities and counties provide parks and recreation information on their websites, with larger communities offering adaptive recreation programs and activities. Many communities have upgraded to universal playground equipment. Check websites for information.

A few regional parks are offering all-terrain wheelchairs including parks in Olmsted County and Jay C. Hormel Nature Center in Austin. Minnesota Historical Society operates a wide range of historic sites around the state. Visit and learn about grain milling, early soldiers, farming, and how wealthy people lived. With planning, visits can be made with accommodations. Click the main page at https://www.mnh.org and click on each park site for more details including access information. The types of accommodations vary greatly by site.

Many sites have offer outdoor opportunities to explore. For example, many of the original Fort Snelling historic site buildings have narrow doorways and old-fashioned skills that a wheelchair cannot get over. But there’s plenty to see outdoors and at the modern visitors’ center at the fort, which is accessible. The adjacent state park and river valleys are especially lovely in the fall when the leaves turn. Other historic sites include the Iron Range will have an adaptive beach chair so users can enjoy Sturgeon Lake. Lake Benzie State Park and Maplewood State Park are to add the all-terrain chairs later in the season if they haven’t done so already. The track chairs run on electricity and work on gravel, dirt trails and open fields, as well as on snow.

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ADA EVENT

From page 1

operated outdoor areas including trails, beaches, campgrounds, and picnic areas.

The video demonstrates how the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources’ [DNR](https://www.mn.gov) new accessible all-terrain track chair and its accessible bison buggy at Blue Mound State Park. The Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute [CKRI](https://www.mnhs.org/) and its Adaptive Sports and Recreation program will also be among programs featured. The videos are a great way to learn about accessible outdoor options.

Singer-songwriter Joseph Baird is among the entertainers for the virtual event.

Deadline for accommodations is Tuesday, July 12. Accommodations available are American Sign Language (ASL), audio description, Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART). Language descriptors: Russian, Somali and Hmong language description will also be provided. If additional accommodations or technical assistance is needed, contact Cindy at 651-603-2015 or cindy@mcil mn.org. Follow the event on its Facebook page, and its website at https://celebrateadamn.

SESSION

From page 1

Bills that were passed during the regular session have been signed into law, including the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) Minnesota’s competency restoration bill. Among those present at the bill signing was Joseph Pfeiffer St. James, and family were also present at the bill signing. Joseph’s husband Paul Pfeiffer was killed in June 2021 after being struck by a car driven by Christopher Rice. Rice had been found incompetent in October of 2020, and had a history of difficulty accessing care in the mental health system. He had recently been provisionally discharged while civilly committed when the incident occurred. Elected officials and advocates said the legislation will save lives. The law’s implementation requires the judicial branch to act by January 2023, with the law fully taking effect in July 2023. Be part of our Directory of Organizations NEXT EDITION: OCT 2022 For more details, call 651-644-2133 HANDI MEDICAL SUPPLY Your professional clinical team ready to assist in product selection & set-up. Contact us for all your respiratory needs! 651-287-3523 TWIN CITIES • MANKATO
Limiting work options for people with disabilities raises equity issues

by Linda Moore

...and along trust us because we know better. This is the attitude behind a steady push to take away work options from people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. People with a limited ability to advocate for themselves, make their voices heard and share their needs and desires are being set aside, first in the nation’s capital and now in Minnesota. The 2021 state task force on the elimination of subminimum wages is one example.

One would think that adults with disabilities who use this commensurate wage or special minimum wage work option, and their family members would be fighting to change the legislation just to get a seat at the table.

Why was this obvious oversight allowed in the first place? I have a theory. Those who know best don’t want to debate their position. They would prefer to leave out the people who use the special minimum wage option. People will not give the answers they want.

Even some disability service providers who work closely with those who use the special minimum wage testify that they must be in favor of eliminating the subminimum wage in order to participate. It is “not a good deal for those with disabilities” and “it is not fair.” Why would they hold this view?

Some start out earning commensurate wage and then go on to other jobs earning minimum wage or often more after they get a handle on work expectations. For others, that is not a realistic option and that’s OK. They should not be left behind.

And, still others with disabilities go the other way, stepping back from higher paying jobs as their health needs change.

The anti-choice crowd knows, like I know, that in studies and state programs where people with disabilities and their families are asked, 90-plus percent are in favor of keeping the commensurate wage option. But this doesn’t matter to those opposing choice. They only double-down in their position and work to find ways around the opposition.

Actions inspire reactions, and that’s part of why we have the new A-Team Minnesota group to help educate leaders about why choices need to be preserved. Watch for more from them soon.

In past years, when people attended hearing on this issue, there was an obvious observation that could be made. High-functioning individuals with disabilities who can make this choice improve the anti-special minimum wage testimony and people with greater needs and their family members or staff would speak in favor of keeping the option.

Most of those who use it preserved and a vocal group that does not use it wants to take it away. If a regular job works for me, it should work for you, too, right? Unfortunately, the market-based economy and minimum wage requirements exclude some people with disabilities from the workforce.

So, an accommodation is made to allow people to work based on their ability and be paid based on what they can produce. They make this choice to work, to do something they value.

Some call this the first accommodation for people with disabilities. It’s fair to the worker and the employer, and it allows people to participate in the workforce who otherwise could not. The vast majority of the people who need this option are receiving long term supports that include food, clothing and housing.

Anyone looking at this honestly with an open mind would realize the intention is not to “lift people out of poverty” or for people to support themselves or a family with these wages. At our day service and employment facilities, we use this kind of work as therapy.

Someone might not be able to experience this form of working competently, so we have the next best thing. People who want something different are free to pursue other work opportunities and be supported on the job.

The real beauty of our system in Minnesota is that it allows a range of options and ways of work to be chosen. From support for independent job placements to work crews, in-center work, enrichment programming, education and work exploration, there’s something for everyone. People will also jump back and forth between services as their preferences and life circumstances change.

As a seasoned advocate with a 37-year history of serving people with disabilities with a variety of needs, I know from experience that people want choices, not lip service. They want us to listen to them, and to know they have been heard.

We may not have the answers to their every need or want, but we should have access to positive, life-changing services.

That is what community is all about—helping one another and understanding the other person’s perspective, though it may be different from our own.

Change for change’s sake that caters to opinion rather than facts and real-life impacts is not positive or helpful. Let’s not give up in our work to support people with disabilities to live the lives they can.

Linda Moore is executive director and a licensed psychologist at Chrestomy. Inc., Chrestomy. Inc. is a Twin Cities based provider of day and employment services, including behavioral support necessary to ensure success for clients with complex needs.

Homebound? Hang out with the bears and birds

by Holly Anderson

Isn’t it the best season of the year? There are so many flowers, birds and green plants. That natural Vitamin D almost makes me giddy. In a few weeks, I’ll be getting my knee replaced and will have limited mobility for some time. This is why I was so interested in exploring how you can take advantage of the outdoors from the comfort of your home.

Wonder what’s going on up north?

There are numerous web cams offered by the MN Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR). In the mood to watch a nesting eagle or wood duck? Or are you more likely to watch the wolves or bears? Whatever you choose is just a click away.

At the Minnesota DNR event you will see a compilation of the various cams. Believe me, they will make you smile. Sometimes it’s just a sleeping bear and other times it seems they are performing for the camera. If you are not as enamored by animals, you can view what might be wrong with your fish, check out the DNR website has an amazing amount of information. Fun fact: There are 444 native Minnesota bird types. I’m going to check out the Loon’s Facebook page to see if I can find them through my app.

The apps are available on Android and Apple devices by downloading the DNR’s Fish, Wildlife and Nature Cams at https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/features/webcams/index.html.

Wolf cams are brought to us by the International Wolf Center in Ely. They have wolf cub cams here: https://wolf.org/wolf-cubs/wolf-cam3/wolf-pup-cams/

Holly Anderson is executive director of Access Press and a member of the committee planning this year’s ADA celebration.

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FROM OUR COMMUNITY

We welcome your letters and commentary

Access Press welcomes letters to the editor and commentary pieces from readers on topics of interest to Minnesota’s disability community. Letters should be no more than 500 words, with 750 words for commentary. Ask the editors if more space is needed.

Letters and guest commentaries must be signed by the authors. With letters, a writer’s hometown is published but not a street address. Please send contact information, in the form of a phone number or email, in case the editor has questions about a letter or commentary. Contact information isn’t published unless the writer specifically requests that the newspaper do so.

Pictures of the author or content subject matter can be published with a guest commentary but aren’t required. Access Press asks that letters and guest commentaries be specifically written for the newspaper. Letters must have a focus on disability issues and ideally, a focus on those issues as they affect Minnesotans. Form letters will not be published.

Here’s an important reminder during an election year. Because Access Press is a non-profit publication and must follow regulations on political partisanship, political endorsement letters are not published. That is true for candidates’ endorsements as well as for ballot questions.

Before writing a submission, writers are always encouraged to contact the newspaper to discuss ideas or to ask questions about how the submission will be handled. Letters are not published, or accepted. If you are interested in submitting a letter or commentary, please contact the editor at 800-649-5215 or access@accesspress.org.

Letters may discuss events in the writer’s life, or issues of importance to the writer and their household. The newspaper does not guarantee that all letters will be published. Letters and commentary reflect the views of the authors and not the views of the staff, the board or the directors of Access Press.

Deadline for the print edition of the newspaper is the 15th of each month, with publication the following month.
New disabilities bring new challenges, as well as learning experiences

by Tim Benjamin

Where have you been, Tim? I’ve been out and about, you could say, for the past year. I had a minor surgical procedure last July that turned into a major catastrophe. I lost most of my eyesight, and most of my ability to think. I also lost a lot of my memory. The doctors thought it would just be short-term, but it evolved into more like the last five to 25 years of my life. It all depends, on any day of the week, on how terrible or great I think I’m in 1995. My vocabulary isn’t what it used to be, either. I’m living in St. Paul. This kind of memory loss is a catastrophe. I lost most of my eyesight, and most of my ability to communicate more clearly so I can get out in the world or just on the phone for a chat. That means I work trying to communicate with those around me. Some days are better than others.

One of the biggest hurdles I face is the inability to communicate my needs to my PCAs and nurses. It’s also been really hard to get staffing, so I’m really grateful for the help that I do get.

I used to sleep pretty well, but I had a lot of chronic pain that I dealt with. Now I have no pain issues but I have had serious problems with sleeping. Some nights I don’t sleep at all, and that makes it difficult to maintain friendships and other relationships, because I am in a fog or irritable or just not always there. I’m writing this on a day when I have a clear head after a good night’s sleep.

Anybody who’s gone through rehab and therapy after getting hurt knows what I’m talking about. It’s difficult and scary all at the same time.

In St. Paul, this kind of memory loss is a catastrophe. I lost most of my eyesight, and most of my ability to communicate more clearly so I can get out in the world or just on the phone for a chat. That means I work trying to communicate with those around me. Some days are better than others.

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Anybody who’s gone through rehab and therapy after getting hurt knows what I’m talking about. It’s difficult and scary all at the same time.
Minnesota prep athletes win state titles in adapted softball, track and field

The Minnesota State High School League’s adapted prep sports program has closed the book on the 2021-2022 academic year. Adapted softball and track and field events wrapped up the academic year’s competitions in June.

The state track meet was held at St. Michael-Nov Acres High School. In Class A girls’ competition, defending champion Emily Sullivan of Le Sueur-Henderson was the runaway sprinter in the girls 200 meter and 200 meter dash wheelchair events. She was also the only competitor in the girls’ wheelchair shot put division.

Adalya Borgmeier of Mankato East won the 100 meter wheelchair dash, with Tayla Borgmeier of Big Lake second in Class AA competition. The two also finished one-two in the 200 meter wheelchair dash. She was also the lone competitor in the 800 meter wheelchair run. Gassman was the only competitor in wheelchair shot put and won.

No one competed in girls’ Class AAA wheelchair events.

In boys’ Class A competition, Aidan Gravelle of Mankato Loyola/Cleveland set two state records in the two shortest distance events. He won the boys’ 100 meter wheelchair dash, followed by Tyler Gunnarson of St. Cloud Tech and Toby Hagen of the University North Central, and Toby Hagen and James Hagen of River Valley.

He also won the boys’ wheelchair dash in a record run, followed by Gunnarson, Toby Hagen and James Hagen. Gravelle’s third-place finish in the 1600 meter wheelchair run, with Shepensky placing second.

He won a total of seven wheelchair runs, with Gunnarson second. Class A field events saw Gunnarson winning the shot put, with Toby Hagen and James Hagen placing second and third. Gravelle won the wheelchair discus throw, with Toby Hagen second.

Class AA boys’ competition saw a mix of three titles for athletes winning titles. Nelson Remington of Faribault won the 100 meter wheelchair dash in Class AA, followed by Dylan Clark of Daybrook/Carbon and Devin Flenz of Winona. Remington also won the 800 meter wheelchair run.

It was Eaton, Filzen and Remington in the 200 meter wheelchair dash, and Eaton and Filzen finishing one-two in the 800 meter wheelchair run. Filzen won the class AA wheelchair shot put title.

In Class AA, Michael Allen of Wayzata took home titles in the 100 meter and 200 meter wheelchair dashes, and the 1600 meter wheelchair run. He also won the shot put title.

The adapted softball tournament was held at Chaska High School.

The high-scoring Dakota United Hawks, a co-op of seven high schools in Dakota County, won the Class A state title with a 19-6 victory over Anoka-Hennepin in the title game.

Seniors (9-0) raced to a 12-1 lead into the fourth inning and didn’t look back. It is the fifth state championship for Dakota United and third since 2016. The Hawks captured the PI crown in 2019, the last time the state tournament was held in person. The 2020 and 2021 tournaments were postponed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Senior pitcher Indigo Jaworski was 4 for 4 with four runs scored to power Dakota United to its eighth victory of the season in the CI Division, topping three opponents by a combined score of 41-6 en route to winning the team’s second championship since 2019. It was the Cats’ third title overall.

Sophomore outfielder Clarke Ruhland capped the offensive surge with a home run in the bottom of the fifth inning which secured by rule the 10-run victory. It was Burnsville/Farmington/Lakeville’s third victory over New Prague in three meetings this season.

Dakota United took third place with a 10-9 win over Chaska/Chanhassen/Prior Lake/Shakopee. Junior pitcher Thomas Christoperson was 3 for 2 with two runs scored to help propel Dakota United.

Senior catcher Alex Moberg of South Washington County 15-2 in the consolation final. Oseo and St. Cloud Area were the other squads in the tournament.

The CI Division all-tournament team members are Elliott Miller, South Garden County; Abby Pas, North Suburban; Colin Price and Mark Manwurman, Dakota United; Jake Goetsch and Drew Hennen, Chaska/ Chanhassen/Prior Lake/Shakopee; Aaron Adamson, Tryston Severson, and Evan Minar, New Prairie; and Caden Rosesh, Shaw Baker and Miller Hertaus, Burnsville/ Farmington/Lakeville.

The CI Division is for athletes with cognitive disabilities.

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Outstanding direct support providers are recognized by MOHR

Direct support professionals or DSPs who make a positive difference have been honored by the Minnesota Organization for Habilitation and Rehabilitation (MOHR). Awards were recently presented to four DSPs, who serve people with disabilities around Minnesota. The presentations were made at a recent conference in Duluth.

Award organizer and MOHR Board Member Lynne Megan said DSPs are the lifeline to services and supports for people with disabilities. “There are amazing creative supports that are happening each and every day by DSPs across our state.”

Megan herself was honored with MOHR’s Tip of the Spear Award. “See related story.”

Here’s a look at the honored DSPs:

Samantha “Sam” Davis is honored in the Enrichment Focus category for Greater Minnesota. Davis is a DREAM case manager at Functional Industries, a Buffalo-based nonprofit. DREAM is an acronym for Developing Relationships, Empowerment and Motivation.

Davis always puts the individuals she serves first. said Functional Industries Lead Case Manager Jenna O’Donnell. “She understands ‘person-centeredness,’ thinks outside the box and involves others in decision-making. She has worked for the Buffalo-based organization for five years.

Davis meets weekly with program participants and assists as they plan their week. This often involves laying out and staffing multiple community outings including a library book club, bingo at the community center, museum tours, visits to parks, orchards and the local police station.

Tom Fix is honored in the Enrichment Focus category in the Twin Cities metro area. ProAct’s Fix entered the disability services field after checking out a home for his sister with disabilities 36 years ago joining the staff. This led to a long’s a day services DSP in Scott County.

Fix is known for being friendly, fair and empathetic to every caregiver, supervisor and coworker, said ProAct Day Support Services Manager Ali Rabin. In his three decades of service, he has worked with many people, ranging from those who need complete help to some with more independent living.

Alyssa Sampson is honored in the Employment Focus category for Greater Minnesota. Sampson is an arts instructor at Epic Enterprise, Northfield.

With an intense drive to learn and expand the knowledge of Epic Enterprise participants, arts instructor Alyssa Sampson breaks down barriers and creates a sense of pride and accomplishment, said Program Director Leah Williams. “She uses her skills, abilities, and passion to help Epic participants develop holistically by expanding their artistic/cognitive functioning, physical functioning, and social/emotional well-being.”

As Epic uses a hybrid model for art classes today, Sampson ensures that each participant is greeted, engaged and feels a part of the class, whether they’re in-person or joining remotely.

Mari Sorgatz is honored in the Employment Service category for Greater Minnesota. For nearly 30 years, Epic Enterprise job coach Sorgatz has served as a mentor and supporter of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. She has helped many reach their career goals.

“Mari encourages and empowers her clients to pursue their career goals. “She asks questions, listens and encourages and empowers her clients to pursue their career goals.”

Sorgatz coaches three crew members who work for the City of Northfield, cleaning the city’s pavements, the city’s parks, ice arena and water treatment plant. Some crew member have transitioned to competitive employment. Sorgatz helped to make that process go smoothly.

During the pandemic some workers stepped into volunteer roles to build and maintain skills, including holiday bell ringing for the Salvation Army and helping at an animal shelter.

Anna Thompson is honored in the Employment Service category for the Twin Cities metro area. TSE employment specialist Thompson in St. Paul is a star employee in the nonprofit’s Work Ahead Resource Center, where she matches people with disabilities with jobs in the area.

Thompson, who rose to the challenge during COVID, said it was strange thing in the field. “I’m thankful for the support I got from my family and coworkers, my boss and the resources and time to do extra things,” she said. “I like being busy and doing a variety of different things. That’s what has kept me in this field for so long.”

This summer will mark 25 years for Thompson at TSE, Inc. and 18 years with the resource center there.

Megan wins MOHR’s “tip of spear” award

Someone who like to give awards was given one of her own at the recent Minnesota Organization for Habilitation and Rehabilitation (MOHR) conference in Duluth.

Megan is a 44-year veteran of the disability services field and lead the advocacy on MOHR’s annual “Tip of the Spear Award.”

The award winner is for individuals who have demonstrated characteristics, traits and skills that have improved the lives of people with disabilities. An independent panel selects the award winner.

“Megan’s passion in the field,” said MOHR President Julie Johnson. “The tip of the Spear Award recognizes someone who jumps to act and inspires others in the same vein,” said Johnson. “Lyne always thinks about people with disabilities, communicates with everybody all the time and the importance of the work we do and the importance of including people with disabilities in the community.”

Megan was humbled and inspired by the honor and being recognized among her peers. “Know that our work is not done. We still have amazing changes that we can and want to do to be able to move the future forward,” she said.

Megan is president and CEO of TSE, Inc. a St. Paul-based disability day service and employment provider serving 260 people, almost half of them in community-based jobs.

Working with The Arc of Minnesota, she supported the “Unlock the Waiting List” bill in the 1990s which allowed more than 7,000 people with disabilities to access services through an expanded waiver program, said Bob Brick, a disability services veteran who is currently the COO of ExcelCare.

On the national level, Megan helped advance the objectives of the American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR), who is currently the COO of ExcelCare.

As Epic uses a hybrid model for art education, said ANCOR CEO Barbara Merrill. “There really isn’t a substantive ANCOR initiative that hasn’t benefited from Lyne’s passion, dedication and steady leadership.”

21st Century Bank VP John Bennett also praised Megan, saying, made similar comments in a nomination “Her commitment to meet and address the needs of the less fortunate knows no boundaries as her reach spans city, state and national levels. Her influence carries tremendous weight and merit both personally and professionally, which she shares eagerly on every worthy cause.”

Megan is involved in many civic activities, including the Optimist Club. She’s a big fan of the St. Paul Winter Carnival.

She’s active in MOHR on the board and with ARRM and has served as a member of the Minnesota Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities (MCIDD). With MOHR, Megan has been a leader in ensuring that direct support professionals are recognized.

MOHR is comprised of about 100 adult day, day training and habilitation, extended employment, and supported employment service provider members serving in excess of 26,000 Minnesotans with disabilities.
**Make the news!**

Receiving an award? Joining a board? Moving to new space? Winning a race? Filling a top post? Send us your “boast”! Marking a key date? Please don’t be late!

Access Press welcomes submissions for the People and Places pages. Submissions are due by the 15th of each month.

Questions? Call 651-644-2133 or email access@accesspress.org

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In print four times annually and online 24/7, the Access Press Directory offers quick information for people seeking an array of resources.

From housing to health care, recreation to recovery, clubs to consumer-directed community supports, we offer the information you need for your best life! Just $60 per year gets your listing in front of readers eager for services and supports. Add additional listings for a small fee.

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Whether facing an immediate concern or planning for the future, the experts at the Hub have years of experience helping people with disabilities, and the people who support them. A free resource for all Minnesotans. We serve all languages. Follow us on Facebook!
Latest program graduates celebrate, reflect on what they have learned

The 2021-2022 Partners in Policymaking graduated 22 individuals in May, with a large group of friends and family members attending. Graduates and their family members have a wide range of developmental disabilities, as well as physical disabilities.

The keynote speaker was self-advocate and activist Jillian Nelson, who welcomed the graduates into the family of trained disability advocates. Nelson was part of Class 24 and is now a board member on the Minnesota Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities (MNCCD). Nelson works for the Autism Society of Minnesota. MNCCD has conducted the training program for the past 35 years.

The graduates reflected on their experiences. All agreed that Partners in Policymaking helped them become better advocates for themselves and their family members, and to speak out when help is needed. They appreciated learning about disability history, their rights and how legislative processes work. All said they will use the knowledge gained in the future.

The graduates gathered for a photo. Read about 2022-2023 applications on page 12.

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Metro Mobility has announced service area changes that start on November 28. The changes are due to new hours of operation in some areas. Some trips that currently don’t run on standby will be removed. With riders in these areas will now have access to Metro Mobility service, service will run on a schedule.

For customers who have booked a trip to or from an affected area, after November 28 some of those trips could go on standby. With standby trips, riders book as usual, but a reservationist will contact the day before a ride to confirm the trip and give the pickup time. Ensuring riders can continue to travel. The service area change will not be subject to the change.

This service adjustment will affect areas within the following zip codes: 55055, 55122, 55305, 55347, 55437, 55071, 55315, 55369, 55438, 55075, 55117, 55318, 55379, 55441, 55076, 55118, 55327, 55391, 55442, 55077, 55551, 55445, 55106, 55510, 55437, 55445, 55017, 55344, 55429, 55447, 55109, 55326, 55345, 55431, 55448, 55110, 55303, 55436, 55433, 55177, 55444, 55443, 55351, 55390, 55314.

(Metro Mobility)

Regional News

Metro Mobility eyes service area reductions

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(Metro Mobility)

State takes control of Pine Island facility

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) in June assumed control of Pine Haven Care Center in Pine Island, due to concerns that a growing level of unpaid bills threatened critical services for residents. The facility has 52 residents and is licensed for 78 beds.

A Ramsey County District Court judge granted a temporary order that required regulators to protect residents’ safety and ensure continued care at the facility while operations and funding were addressed. State officials have arranged for Pathway Health, a professional management company, to serve as the facility’s managing agent during the receivership.

The temporary manager later found evidence that the facility had not paid bills and inability to meet payroll. The temporary manager said staff were not providing necessary services and medications for residents. MDH and the temporary management team will stabilize the facilities’ operations to support staff and to ensure patients receive quality care.

“The temporary manager can one day we don’t take lightly, but the evidence indicated a need for immediate action to ensure that residents are safe and continue to receive essential services,” said Minnesota Commissioner of Health Jan Malcolm.

The temporary manager has focused on assuring the safety of residents and determining the next steps that will meet the needs of residents, staff, and families.

Receiverships, authorized by state law, allow regulators to assume control of facilities when there are serious health and safety concerns for residents. By law, the receivership cannot exceed 18 months. In a receivership, MDH becomes responsible for operating the finances of the nursing home and typically appoints a managing agent to conduct the daily work of managing the facility and is licensed for 70 beds.

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(Minnesota Department of Health)

State to make hospital ruling

The fate of a new 144-bed psychiatric hospital that was planned for the former Delta Air Lines cabin in St. Paul rests with the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH). The agency’s decision in the proposal has been the subject of much debate.

In a typical process, MDH advises state lawmakers as to whether to waive a construction moratorium and allow hospitals to be built. This time legislators reversed the process — making a deadline vote at the end of the 2022 session to allow the hospital. But that is only if MDH Commissioner Jan Malcolm approves.

The switch adds weight to the department’s public interest review, which included a hearing a mid-June in which dozens of people argued whether the $62 million project by Acadia Healthcare and Fairview Health Services should be allowed. It also gives final say to a state agency that bypassed the usual standalone psychiatric hospital proposed for the Twin Cities.

Nobody disputes that psychiatric hospitals are full and that people in mental crises are left waiting in emergency rooms. Minnesota was among five states in the National Mental Health State Needs Assessment that the state’s psychiatric bed usage rates above 130 percent. Only 28 of 1,355 adult beds were available in mid-June at the Minnesota Hospital Association. None was in the Twin Cities. Six were in Fargo.

“We’ve had numerous families tell us they’ve just stopped trying to get to ER because they’ve had such long waits,” said Liz Franklin, associate director of behavioral health services for CLUES, a Latinx credit agency in St. Paul.

Adding beds is one solution, but that expands the most expensive level of mental health care. MDH officials noted that Minnesota was among states focused on ensuring the facility’s safety and ensuring continued care for residents. The concern of excess hospital capacity is why the state’s mental health commissioner said it will continue.

The alternative is more outpatient and community services, which are cheaper and reduce the need for inpatient care. That rationale convinced the health department in 2018 to oppose a plan by a company now called PrairieCare to build a psychiatric hospital for adults and children in Woodbury.

State officials have arranged for Pathway Health, a professional management company, to serve as the facility’s managing agent during the receivership.

The temporary manager later found evidence that the facility had not paid bills and inability to meet payroll.

(Minnesota Department of Health)

Cabin simulator helps ease flying fears

A newly arrived airline at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport doesn’t have wings, or wheels, or engines. It’ll never leave the gate. But it will help more people gain the skills and confidence needed to make their travel goals a reality.

The former Delta Air Lines cabin simulator lined with rows of Boeing 737 seats, is now located in Concourse C at MSP, in what may be a first-of-its-kind airport installation.

The simulator allows for “getting people with disabilities out to the airport, and giving them the experience without all the stress,” said Eric Lipp, executive director at the Open Doors Project.

The simulator provided a practice time for children or adults with mobility disabilities, autism or intellectual or developmental disabilities who can be comfortable with flying. People with service dogs can also take part. It is part of the Navigating MSP program, which allows travelers to essentially do a test flight in the airport.

(Minnesota Department of Health)
New Bush Fellows announced; projects have disability focus

People & Places

One of 35 New Bush Foundation Fellows is a leader in Minnesota’s deaf community. Others have ties to disability-related programs. Fellows are a group of individuals whose remarkable vision and drive are transforming communities in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and the 23 Native nations in those states.

Comfort Dondo, a former Governor’s Council on an Age-Friendly State member, is a South African-born professional clinical counselor. The Minnesota-inspired program is offered in most states and several countries around the world.

Friday, July 15 is the deadline to apply for the 2022-2023 comprehensive advocacy training course, Partners in Policymaking. Applications are sought from Minnesotans with disabilities and parents of young children with developmental delays.

The program is free and starts in September. It is presented in eight sessions over nine months and covers topics such as understanding of disability law and policies, designation of Powers of Attorney, and career and personal development.

“The program is based on the belief that systems change is best brought about through the efforts of those most affected by them, and we seek to arm individuals with the tools needed to be successful in the public policy arena,” said Colleen Wieck, executive director of the Minnesota Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities (MNCDD). “As they gain experience in the systems that impact us, our Fellows will be more effective in advocating for their needs.”


Skills Partnership grant programs which bring employers with specific training needs together with educational or other non-profit institutions which design programs to meet those needs.

Contact Mary Graba, 651-644-2133 ext. 2
mary@accesspress.org

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Pioneering direct care program is encouraging news in care crisis

A pioneering PCA Curriculum Program could address critical workforce needs in direct care workforce crisis while offering meaningful career path and educational opportunities. The Metropolitan Center for Independent Living (MCIL), through partnerships with Minnesota's voluntary third tier to Minnesota's PCA programs, is working to solve the prolonged crisis in hiring and retaining direct care workers. The Personal Assistance Curriculum (PCA) shortage has dire consequences.

A $280,000 Community Innovation Bond was awarded to the Metropolitan Center for Independent Living's PCA Community Innovation Project committee. The committee worked for months to create a curriculum that deepens career opportunities, attracts more people to new career paths, and expands the PCA workforce. The result is a landmark approach to solve the crisis by planning to develop a first-ever state-of-the-art curriculum and online correspondence course to meet the needs of the people served by WACOSA.

The PCA Certification Program, based partly on the independent living philosophy, is being developed as a voluntary third tier to Minnesota's PCA Career Lattice for the 100,000-plus PCAs in Minnesota and potentially for the nearly four million PCAs nationwide. Plans include offering a curriculum through online schools, post-secondary educational institutions and workforce training centers. The committee is also pursuing a formal PCA apprenticeship program with the state and the U.S. Department of Labor, which requires formalized education to be met by the PCA curriculum. The committee is also eyeing a PCA service corps education model.

For our elders and citizens living with disabilities there is no quality of life without a well-trained, fairly compensated workforce of PCAs and direct support professionals (DSPs) is maintained," said Beth Fondell, MCIL board chairman.

I do not know of a more severe crisis than what we are experiencing today in the Home and Community Base Services system with so many closings of group homes, nursing homes, severe worker shortages, and inconsistent support rates and services system including Minnesota’s PCA programs,” said Jesse Messelt, MCIL board chairman. “We need to bring forth solutions such as the curriculum leading to the credential of the Certified PCA. With the development of this new Certified PCA curriculum along with the PCA Rate Framework passed into law in 2021, staff is about solving the PCA crisis. It is also about economic justice for PCAs."

Of course, our coverage didn’t slip a beat in 2021 and the first half of 2022. Some highlights include the short-term and long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, ranging from the challenges of losing an array of supports and services to getting vaccines for our community. We covered local and state government's issues affecting people with disabilities and adapted to online meeting coverage at all levels of government. We continued our extensive coverage of the care crisis and impacts. We published a series of articles about voting with a disability, whether in-person or by mail-in ballot. We also celebrated the accomplishments of community members through our popular People and Places feature. We continued to provide a voice for community members on our From Our Community section. We also added a board-written editorial. Money should never stand in the way of access to information, which is why Access Press is free. But to provide this service and so much more, we need your help. Please join us in our effort to strengthen our reporting capabilities and realize that we have more informed Access Press readers. Don’t let Access Press become a number along with the other 100 papers that folded, support us with your subscriptions and gift cards.

Highlights of Messelt’s tenure include passing landmark legislation requiring all children entering foster care to be screened for FASD and legislation requiring all foster parents in the state of Minnesota to have yearly training on FASD. She and Proof Alliance have partnered with national organizations and institutions to provide training and education on screening for FASD and providing the support their patients need. She was very involved in efforts to launch Children's Sacred Center to bring Proof Alliance programming to tribal communities throughout Minnesota and Hawaii. She also provided leadership in securing the Butler Special Projects grant that allowed the organization to renovate the building at 1876 Minnehaha Ave. W. St. Paul, Minnesota. The space is now the central hub for Proof Alliance staff and the many families and professionals who use its services. Messelt also led work to open the Proof Alliance FASD Clinic in St. Paul. Rebranding of MOFAS to Proof Alliance was another of her projects.
Service dogs take flight

Can Do Canines assistance-dogs-in-training and handlers recently boarded a mock Delta airplane at the Minneapolis−Saint Paul International Airport to destination: nowhere. The non-existent flight was part of the nonprofit organization’s training program to acclimate future assistance dogs to the airport, TSA security, and the inside of an airplane.

Can Do Canines works with the Minneapolis−Saint Paul International Airport and Delta to make these “Flights to Nowhere” possible. “These trainings are so important to many of our clients who travel with their assistance dog. Being certain our dogs can perform their often life-saving skills in a busy place like an airport is vital,” said Kathy McGinn, Can Do Canines staff member.

Can Do Canines offers Flights to Nowhere five times each year. Since 2014, staff members have been coordinating the two-hour sessions and offering them to foster owners (and occasionally, certified clients). The registered group meets for these “fake flights” at Terminal 1, One of the Minneapolis−Saint Paul International Airport. They are escorted together through the airport, going through all of the normal security procedures, visiting the pet relief station, and riding the tram to a special, private room.

They board a previously used plane fuselage that Delta Airlines donated for this purpose. Although Flight to Nowhere is not part of certification programs, the session allows the dogs an opportunity to get used to the process while being surrounded by familiar people.

Lisa, who has hearing assist dog Cleo, said that the Flight to Nowhere “definitely helped to get a feel for how the process works going through TSA, talking with gate agents, and how the dog fits under the seats in the planes.” Lisa says they have taken about 45–50 flights together for various reasons. Cleo is a big help, whether by alerting Lisa to someone calling her name in a noisy airport or by picking up a dropped item so Lisa doesn’t have to risk experiencing vertigo. “I feel much safer and more confident traveling alone when Cleo is with me,” said Lisa.
Cowichalla is coming

The second annual Cowichalla, a disability literacy and music festival, is 6-8 p.m. Thu, Aug. 4 at Springboard for the Arts, 262 University Ave. W, St. Paul. The Cowtipper Press feature event features four new Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowich alla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowichalla Cowic...
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