Looking back at 2021, another year in the pandemic

Cliff Poeltt

2021 is in the books. It was a year of many challenges as well as key wins for Minnesota’s disability community. It was also a year when several key leaders were mourned.

Read about our annual look back and visit past stories at www.accesspress.org

January 2021
The Minnesota Legislature had an early January 5 start. Most session work was done virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Vaccines brought some measure of relief, but there were worries that it could take many months to have protection for all. How priorities were set was debated. Maynard “Bo” Bostrom was remembered as a key figure in the development of housing options for people with disabilities, and for his work with Accessible Spc Inc.

February 2021
Minnesota had lost eight disability service providers and was in danger of losing more due to the pandemic. Closures in rural area left people especially isolated, without income and in danger of losing...
Agendas in hand, disability advocacy organizations and individuals are preparing for January 31. That's when the 2022 Minnesota Legislature starts its regular session.

Weeks of legislative committee meetings, town halls and advocacy group gatherings are wrapping up. Those gatherings have shaped what we will be hearing more about in the weeks ahead. It is, as it may be to speak of visibility during a largely virtual legislative session, 2021 was the year when disability community issues gained much awareness among state lawmakers. Many gains were made.

We hope similar gains, and the growing recognition of disability community needs, continue into this year. A tight 7.7 million budget surplus will certainly bring opportunities as well as debate over what the dollars can be used for.

The state surplus will be a major factor in how the 2022 session proceeds. Debate over how funds can be used is well underway. We expect disability advocates to be front and center raising needs important to our community. Having all 201 legislative seats and state offices on the November ballot will also play into the session dynamic. As in other even-numbered years, 2022’s main focus will be the bonding bill. Bonding brings a long list of needs from around the state. In many cases the goal is to make existing buildings, parks, trails and other facilities more accessible or to improve facilities for people with disabilities.

Minnesotans with disabilities need to look at what requests are being made in their home communities and to see how those requests are cast. Have a critical eye on accessibility. Such requests can always be better informed and improved with public input.

Policy issues will also be a key focus this session. Dozens of disability-focused bills are already in the hopper, so advocates can pick and choose what to support and follow. Find ways to get involved with the issues of your choice and make your views known.

Be mindful that this will also be another largely virtual year at the capitol. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to transform how our lawmakers do business. Many of us will be watching hearings and floor sessions remotely, and may even be testifying remotely as well.

The capitol is open but don’t expect the large rallies of past years. Many disability community rally days and advocacy events will remain virtual in 2022.

The Minnesota House has already announced that it will continue remote and hybrid operations at least through the end of the 2022 regular session. Also, before venturing to the capitol complex, check ahead to see if various state buildings will be open to the public. Plan on masking up and following social distance measures.

We miss rallies and marches to the capitol. We miss meeting our lawmakers in person and seeing our friends from across the state. We miss being able to fill a room with advocates and make our presence known, no matter what the issue is. But maintaining health and safety are paramount.

We people with disabilities appreciate the ease of virtual government, and the ability to testify remotely. We do admit that not being to fill a hearing room with our advocates is missed, and we hope to be able to return to those times. Living with disability can be isolating as it is, and another year of virtual government adds to that isolation. But for people who cannot easily get out, virtual proceedings are an amazing thing.

Ironic as it may be to speak of visibility during a largely virtual legislative session, and looking through plexiglass for updates on bills. Thank goodness those days are gone.

But a virtual session can make it more challenging for people with disabilities to reach out to state lawmakers. If you are new to the ways of state government, many advocacy groups offer training sessions and online resources to help you share your story.

Resolve that 2022 is the year you get involved in the issues of your choice.

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**HISTORY NOTE**

Great Depression put a strain on families, the state’s institutions

The Great Depression, which lasted from 1929 to 1939, is considered to be the worst economic downturn in the history of the industrialized world. By 1933, when the Great Depression reached its lowest point, 15 million Americans were unemployed. Nearly half the country’s banks had failed. People lost everything.

One sad yet largely forgotten impact of the Great Depression is the significant strain it put on families, the state’s institutions, and the state’s economy. During the 1930s, institutional conditions of the state were dire. Many of the state’s institutions were overcrowded and underfunded, leading to chaotic conditions and poor health outcomes for those who lived there.

One example of this is the state’s institutions for people with disabilities. In January 1932, newspapers reported that there were 1,350 people with disabilities in Minnesota’s state institutions. The state had 18 institutions, known as state schools, that were responsible for providing care and education for people with disabilities. These institutions included schools for the deaf, schools for the blind, and sanitariums for people with mental illnesses.

The Great Depression put a strain on these institutions, and on the state as a whole. The state’s economy was in shambles, and the state’s institutions were underfunded and overcrowded. As a result, the state was unable to provide adequate care and support for people with disabilities.

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proposals, which is a longtime effort for that nonprofit. Lutheran Social Services is working on life sharing legislation focused on supporting people to live in their own homes and be part of their communities. Disability Law Center is working on a third theme, with another related package of bills, and a workforce solutions package will be a focus for the Minnesota Department of Human Services. Gillette will also work with Family Support Association of Minnesota and an appearance on the television show Nightline. She became a part of the Minnesota Council on Disability, which has an array of bills under its umbrella, with the focus of allowing people to stay in their homes and be part of their communities. Marcia Kay Taylor Lovejoy used her lived experience with mental illness to advocate for others, at the local and national levels. Lovejoy died in late 2021. She was 73 and lived in Minneapolis. Lovejoy grew up in the Twin Cities. While in her first year at the College of St. Benedict, she met a priest who encouraged her to travel to Mississippi to work with Head Start. She became involved in the civil rights movement and was part of the march known as Bloody Sunday in Selma, Alabama. In 1978, through People Incorporated, Lovejoy started an employment and retention of state employees with disabilities package. Lovejoy was later appointed by President Ronald Reagan to the US Department of Education to oversee its work with people with disabilities. Lovejoy received partial funding in 2020. She returned to school for her sophomore year but was diagnosed with schizophrenia and had to leave school. She spent six months in a mental health facility. After returning to school in 1979, she earned a master’s degree in psychology and became a counselor for people with mental illness. Lovejoy worked as a counselor for 27 years with the Multicultural Autism Action Network (MAAN) and the National Institute on Minority Health. That led to numerous public speaking engagements to educate others about mental health issues. Lovejoy was later appointed by President George W. Bush to an executive committee focused on employment opportunities for people with disabilities. That led to the chance to attend international conferences on disabilities, and an appearance on the television show Nightline. A third proposal, which advocates had hoped would be solved in 2021, centers on PCA driving privileges.Limiting on PCA driving privileges has been an obstacle for many Minnesotans. The delay of CSSY last year complicated implementation of needed changes. Another $13.45 million is requested to predesign, design, renovate, furnish and equip the north and south wings of the Miller Building at the Anoka Metro Regional Treatment Center for mental health and substance abuse treatment division. That is the third-ranked human services request. The following proposal to be a need. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) seeks $20 million to improve the accessibility of state-managed lands. This funding is a need. The DNR, which is ranked fifth by the DNR, would enable the agency to complete accessibility improvements to facilities at William O’Brien State Park. The tier is also a need. Improvements there received partial funding in 2020. State officials want to use lessons from Fort Snelling State Park and two high-visitation wildlife management areas, Carlos Avery and Whitewater. When complete, the project would include accessibility renovations of bathrooms, parking areas, showers, campsites, trails and a variety of other features. For other state facilities, the Department of Administration seeks $2 million to implement a centralized funding source for use by state agencies, boards, and commissions, the legislative and judicial branches of government, and constitutional offices to correct physical barriers in state-owned and state-leased buildings. One newer funding request that would directly affect people with disabilities is Fairview’s proposal to tear down their building in St. Paul and replace it with a 144-bed psychiatric and substance-abuse hospital. The facility would be operated in partnership with Atria Healthcare, a large national behavioral health care provider. The announcement was made in mid-December and would represent a plus-$50 million investment. While Bethesda is the preferred site, other sites in the St. Paul area have been looked at. The longtime hospital has had many uses in recent years, going from an acute-care facility to becoming a coronavirus hospital during the pandemic. It closed as a hospital in fall 2020 and has been used by Ramsey County as a homeless shelter. That use ends in the spring.Fairview is using the St. Joseph’s Hospital in St. Paul for inpatient mental health care through June 2022. The healthcare provider has asked the state health department for a public interest review of the project. It would need legislative approval because state law blocks new hospital construction. Read more of projects submitted for bonding at https://mn.gov/mubd/
Weigh in on this session on legislative topics of your choice

With the 2022 Minnesota Legislature gaveling into session soon, it’s worth reminding everyone that *Access Press* welcomes letters to the editor and longer commentary pieces on proposed state law, funding and policy changes.

However, our status as a nonprofit publication brings some additional guidelines to follow. Because *Access Press* is a non-profit publication and must follow regulations on political partisan letters, we cannot publish letters and commentaries that are politically partisan. We ask that writers explain issues in a manner that isn’t an attack on one political party or another.

When the 2022 election campaign season starts, remember that political endorsement letters or letters opposing a candidate are not published in *Access Press*. That is true for candidates’ endorsements as well as for ballot questions.

We welcome letters to the editor and commentary pieces on topics of interest to Minnesota’s disability community. Letters should be no more than 450 words, with 750 words per commentary. Ask the editor if more space is needed and that can be discussed on a case-by-case basis.

Letters and guest commentaries must be signed by the authors or authors. If a letter is written on behalf of a group, organization or business, we would like the author or authors’ affiliation(s) listed.

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. We need contact information to verify a writer’s identity, especially if the writer isn’t someone we have interacted with before.

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 this newspaper. Letters must have a focus on disability issues and ideally, a focus on those issues as they affect Minnesotans. We don’t want to publish form letters that have appeared in other publications. It is acceptable to send a letter published in *Access Press* to other publications after we have published it.

Let the newspaper staff know if accommodations are needed to submit a letter or commentary, and we will help you.

Letters and commentaries reflect the view of the authors and not the views of the staff and board of directors of *Access Press*. We reserve the right to reject submissions.

We are aware that due to space and news policy reasons, we do not publish regular columns at this time.

Deadline for the print edition of the newspaper is the 15th of each month, with publication the following month.

Before making a submission, writers are always encouraged to contact the newspaper to discuss ideas or to ask questions about From Our Community submissions, at 651-644-2133 or access@accesspress.org.

### YEAR IN REVIEW

**From page 1**

Nina Harrison was crowned Ms. Wheelchair Minnesota.

**April 2021**

Rick Cardenas was mourned as a fearless champion for people with disabilities after his death. Cardenas was a fixture at the state capitol and a mentor to many other activists.

It was the end of an era in Minnesota disability circles with the retirement of Bob Brick: co-founder of the Minnesota Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (MCCD), public policy expert, board member and leader of various disability service organizations including ALY People Solutions.

**May 2021**

Clifford “Cliff” Poetz’s many accomplishments were recalled after he passed away. He was the first person with a developmental disability to testify before Congress and was a well-known and eloquent self-advocate.

A May 17 bill deadline was looming at the capitol as advocates and state lawmakers raced toward the regular session finish line.

Lutheran Social Services and St. Paul-based Lifetrack Resources prepared for a summer merger. Lifetrack began in 1948 as the St. Paul Rehabilitation Center.

**June 2021**

The clock ran out on the Minnesota Legislature with no budget or major bills passed, so it was off to a summer special session. The best Gov. Tim Walz and state lawmakers could do was reach agreement on general budget targets.

Many were remembered a pioneer in recreation. James “Jim” Christy was remembered after he lost a long battle with cancer. Christy was considered to be one of the fathers of adapted prep sports in Minnesota.

**July 2021**

Health and human services and public safety measures went down to the wire at the state capitol during a special session. The best Gov. Tim Walz and state lawmakers could do was reach agreement on general budget targets.

The Minnesota State Fair was back but not everyone got to celebrate.

**August 2021**

After one year’s hiatus the Minnesota State Fair returned. But not everyone went to the Great Minnesota Get-Together. The Minnesota Council on Disability announced it wasn’t bringing back its large information booth, citing pandemic and health concerns.

New assisted living licensing changes took effect August 1. Residents of assisted living facilities and their families were urged to seek information on the changes, which affected residents with brain injuries and community access for disability inclusion waivers.

**September 2021**

As school bells rang, COVID-19 vaccine and testing options for students were announced. Health officials urged students, especially those in activities, to get vaccinated.

*Access Press* partnered with Ramsey County elections to provide information about the upcoming elections, early voting, voting with accommodations and becoming an election judge.

The late activist Ron Franke’s work on behalf of the MS Society and MNCCD was recalled, as was his long friendship with the “MS Gang.”

**October 2021**

Delays in implementation of the Community First Services and Supports (CPSS) program raised red flags for Minnesotans with disabilities. The earliest possible implementation date was pushed back to June 1, 2022.

Personal care assistant (PCA) workers in Minnesota saw higher wages and other new benefits, starting October 1. The statewide minimum wage for PCAs rose from $13.25 to $14.40 per hour effective Oct. 1, then increases again to $15.25 on July 1, 2022.

**November 2021**

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic continued to greatly affect Minnesotans with disabilities. The news that children ages 5-11 can get vaccinated was welcomed. But the National Guard was told that they would be helping at long-term care facilities as needed.

The Institute on Community Integration announced the move of the Masonic Institute for the Developing Brain, from the University of Minnesota’s Pattee Hall.

The move was to the former Shriners Hospital campus near the Mississippi River.

**December 2021**

Accessibility on many levels and in many forms was again seen as a theme at the state capitol for Minnesotans with disabilities. Organizations were hammering out final details of bills and legislative agendas, as the clock ticks toward the January 31 start of session.

Minnesotans were urged to prepare for winter weather, in areas ranging from travel and home safety to getting sidewalks shoveled for better access. Many apps can help with needed alerts.

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At mid-year, Partners in Policymaking class reflects on work

Ruby Parker
Minnesotas Partners in Policymaking program creates a supportive and educational environment to help individuals change habits, expectations and attitudes about themselves and their loved ones with developmental disabilities. The free program equips students with leadership skills to take back to their communities, through workshops, group interactions and meetings with legislators and therapists.

Individuals in the 2021-2022 class have unique stories of their learning experiences in advocacy in the education, social service and medical systems. Pictures of all class members and a longer story appear on the Access Press website.

Jane Anderson, Lakeville, has a teenage son with several disabilities. She values waiver programs that have allowed her son to be happy, healthy and connected to the community.

Roby Block, Good Thunder, has a brain injury that can bring on headaches, balance and memory issues. She uses a seizure response dog, conducts a brain injury support group and believes that staying positive is the best healing of all.

Innocent Chitulangoma, Lake Elmo, has a child with cerebral palsy. Chitulangoma worked to get out of state services for his son, but found many don’t meet his standards. He wants to join with other parents to improve how individuals with disabilities live, work and learn.

Blaine resident Theresa Edelman, her people with leadership skills to take back to their communities, through workshops, group interactions and meetings with legislators and therapists.

Tara Ellis, St. Paul, has anxiety, long-term depression and an anxiety disorder. Her child has fetal alcohol syndrome and other disabilities. Finding ways to learn more about services, public policies and understanding of waiver services, and improved advocacy skills for herself and her family.

Suniket Fulzele, Plymouth, has a young daughter with cerebral palsy. She requires hands-on attention for daily living activities. Caregivers are hard to find.

Often overwhelmed by confusing and incomplete information, he is hoping the class will guide him and help him be an advocate for others.

James Heinecke, Appleton, has a son with autism spectrum and other disabilities. The family has struggled to find information on available services. Heinecke wants information on inclusivity and normalizing education experience and acceptance at school and social settings, as well as more details on first responder training.

Arbella Hudson, St. Paul, has had brain injuries and concussions. She wants to learn more about her injuries, and education and help others.

Cassie Kallis, Plymouth, has three children with fragile X syndrome. She and her husband had to thoroughly research and strongly advocate for services. Kallis wants to learn more about services, public policy, and making schools more inclusive, with the goal of being a full-time advocate.

Sareen Dunlevy Keenan, Minneapolis, has attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and anxiety, and represents a sandwich generation of care. She is raising four children with disabilities. Keenan lives with and supports her mother and her sister, both of whom have physical disabilities. Educational arrangements for her children are complex as safety, transportation and inclusion need to be considered. Keenan hopes to learn more about inclusive employment and waiver services, and become more effective in caring for her family.

Nicole Laudont, Maple Grove, has a young son with autism. She is finding many barriers to school inclusion, and a lack of community resources. She is seeking Hennepin County waiver supports and finds that social services provide little help.

Yang Liang, Woodbury, has a son with autism who needs constant supervision for all activities. Liang is interested in school inclusion and future employment for her son, and is concerned about his future. She wants to learn effective advocacy skills.

Liestman describes her son as "incredibly kind and curious about the world. His natural empathy is admirable." Liestman is concerned about waiver issues, school and social inclusion, and planning for his child's future.

Nicole Lucas, Albertville, is guardian for her twin sister who is deaf and lives with multiple disabilities. Lucas advocates for respectful attitudes and interactions with those with disabilities. From her work experience in special education, Lucas seeks changes in state and national laws that would have a positive impact on how students are treated.

Christopher Nelson, Lakeville, has a daughter with epilepsy, autism and other disabilities. He describes the child as bright, energetic and loving to be happy, healthy and connected to the community.

Ruby Parker, Maplewood, lives with anxiety and depression. Her goal is that individuals with disabilities are treated with respect and communicated with on an adult level, not as children. She employs in two separate training facilities and is proud of overcoming her addiction to drugs. Parker is interested in understanding local politics and how she can have a bigger voice in the community.

Yesmean Ragheb, Plymouth, is raising a child with Down syndrome, who needs costly and complex therapies. Ragheb is a family connector for the Down Syndrome Association of Minnesota, helping families navigate resources.

Usha Ramakrishnan, Woodbury, has a son with multiple disabilities. She is concerned about accommodations for her son and is interested in educating herself to be able to give him the best possible care.

Dollie Richmond, St. Paul, is blind in one eye. She is interested in educational opportunities and transportation services for those with disabilities. She wants to become a public speaker, to help improve the quality of life for others.

Kayle Schmidt, Otsego, has a son with severe anxiety and autism who requires continual care, and a daughter with disabilities. Schmidt wants more information about waiver services and school inclusion, and wants to help other families facing similar challenges.

Jaxson Seguin, Proctor, has Asperger's syndrome. He has struggled with others judging him and not being friendly. A good case manager, the courage to put himself in social situations and getting involved at school have made a difference.

A recent high school graduate, he would like to be involved in politics.

Maple Grove resident Yesmean Ragheb has a 10-year-old son with William's syndrome and pother disabilities. Ragheb describes her son as "a kindhearted gentleman." She grew up with family members with autism, and wants to connect with other parents and learn from their experience.

Amanda Llamas Tyrell, Burnsville, lives with autism and an anxiety disorder, as does one of her five children. Her son is the reason she wanted to participate in this class. She hopes to find her voice to become a stronger advocate and set an example for her son to become a self-advocate as he moves into high school and adulthood.
Be part of a great resource! The best way to reach Minnesota’s disability community is through the Access Press Directory. 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!

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MN Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities V-651-274-2098 info@mcncd.org www.mcncd.org
PACER Center, Inc. V-952-838-9000 TF 800-537-2237 www.pacer.org
United Cerebral Palsy of Minnesota V-651-265-7361 info@ucpmn.org www.ucpmn.org

ARTS-PERFORMING ARTS
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MRCI-Client Directed Services V-657-386-3704 TF-800-829-7102 www.mrcicds.org
Partners in Community Supports V-952-967-5069 info@picsmn.org www.picsmn.org
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Work Incentives Connection V-651-632-5113 TTY-800-976-2728 www.mnworkincentives.com

GOVERNMENT
Minnesota Council on Disability V/TYY-651-361-7800 TTY-800-945-8913 www.disability.state.mn.us

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SUPPORTS - OTHER TYPES
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Provider organization achieves independence

As of January 1, St. Paul-based Altair Accountable Care Organization (ACO) is an independent 501(c)(3) organization.

Altair ACO began in 2013 with six home and community-based providers who joined together to share best practices, resources and information to provide better outcomes at less cost for individuals with disabilities. George Klauser was executive director and Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota served as fiscal agent.

The collaborative has grown to 14 providers who support more than 20,000 Minnesota individuals with disabilities who have Waiver services. "Our vision early on was to create integrated health and social service models that would deliver higher quality outcomes for people with disabilities at less cost. Altair has grown and thrived to make this vision a reality," said Klauser. He is chief executive officer of the new organization.

The ACO has developed a variety of services to improve outcomes, including a community care program that matches a care coordinator with staff in 700 supported community homes who provide direct care to people with disabilities. Together, they help identify and implement the best care strategies and interventions for the unique circumstances of each individual.

"A key tool for Altair is the LifePlan that provides a person-centered blueprint designed around the hopes and dreams of individuals. Each plan considers housing options, who caregivers will be, job and employment goals, care interventions that can improve personal health, and community involvement. In addition to Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota, providers include Hammer, Fraser, LifeWorks, Living Well, REM Minnesota, Dugarvan, Volunteers of America Minnesota, Mains' Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare, Gerirom Medical, HealthStar Home Health, Accord and Residential Services Inc. Altair funding was provided by member providers and public and private grants from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Minnesota Department of Human Services, Minnesota Department of Health, the Schulze Foundation, the George Family Foundation and Bigelow Foundation.

State champions are crowned

Lakeville/Burnsville/Farmington Blazing Cats and Robbinsdale/Hopkins/Mound-Westonka Robins won the 2021 Minnesota State High School League (MSHSL) adaptive soccer championships. The tournaments, held at the Kellogg Complex in Blaine, were held in two years. The 2020 tournament was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Blazing Cats defeated Dakota United 6-3 for the CI Division crown, which is for athletes with cognitive disabilities. Sophomore Caden Roseth got the Blazing Cats going first with a goal assisted by teammate Miller Hertaus. They would go on to lead the game from the start for the remainder of the game. In the third place game, the Park Center Pizzazz defeated Chaska/Chanhassen/Shakopee/Prior Lake in a 14-5 shootout. The host Stillwater Area Ponies topped South Suburban 14-6 for the consolation crown. Other teams in the CI tournament were St. Cloud and South Washington County.

In the PI Division for athletes with physical disabilities, perennial power Robbinsdale/Hopkins/Mound-Westonka won its first division adapted soccer state tournament championship in seven years. The Robins topped Dakota United 7-5.

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Sacred Grounds provides a gathering space

By Noelle Olson

Hidden in the Shoreview Village Mall is the Sacred Grounds Coffee House, a nonprofit creative community space meant to plant seeds of understanding so that equity and healing may flour ish for all.

Shoreview resident Sarah McGuiness, the founder and director of Sacred Grounds Coffee House, said it is part of a 10-year vision of building relationships and partnerships. The nonprofit opened its doors in July 2019 with hopes of helping people taste and see what is possible for their future.

“Our mission is to honor marginalized peoples’ lives for the arts and trauma-informed togetherness,” McGuiness said. Noelle Olson is a reporter for Press Publications. This article is reprinted with permission.

SACRED GROUNDS

Resilience. Nourished in the Age

Sacred Grounds Coffee House utilizes the hallway space with tables and chairs, a counter, one Keurig coffeemaker and guitars. “We have a great relationship with the other businesses here, and they don’t mind us using the hallway for our programs,” McGuiness said.

McGuiness said they have an art store led by persons with disabilities — especially developmental disabilities — to work as baristas. “The persons with disabilities population don’t have a whole lot of visibility after they age out of school, and they don’t have a lot of opportunities.”

Hours for the Sacred Grounds Coffee House store are noon to 6 p.m. Tuesday; noon to 4 p.m. Wednesday; and noon to 6 p.m. Thursday and Friday. People can check the website for changes in hours and special events.

For information on Sacred Grounds Coffee House, visit www.sacredgroundscoffee.org or Facebook at Sacred Grounds Coffee House Minnesota.
Residents sue over evictions
A group of tenants with disabilities has sued a Newport landlord, claiming they were evicted illegally.

The 45-page lawsuit was filed in Washington County District Court by the nonprofit Housing Justice Center, on behalf of six residents of the Wings at Newport. They allege fraud, retaliation, exploitation of vulnerable adults, and violations of the state’s Human Rights Act and Deceptive Trade Practices Act.

They’re asking for the court to block landlord Christopher Onken from evicting them, impose a fine against him and appoint an administrator to oversee the building. They also want the services promised when they moved into the apartment complex.

The suit claims that he is continuing to work with tenants and hasn’t filed eviction notices. He needs to have apartments vacated so repairs can be made, to the tune of at least $100,000. About 30 tenants were asked to move so repairs could be made.

Two-member teams can now respond to 911 calls about behavioral or mental health-related crises to provide crisis assistance and supported living to just 25 percent.

The four-story, 200-unit Wings building opened in December, prepared to deploy 14 responders.

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) has announced that it will approve medical edibles in the form of gummies and chews as a new cannabis delivery method in the state’s medical cannabis program.

The new delivery method will become effective August 1, 2022. A rulemaking process that will outline requirements for labeling, safety, messaging, packaging, and testing will launch this month. The two permitted delivery forms include pills, vapor oil, liquids, topicals, powdered products, and inhalants. The office of the state’s chief medical examiner determined the cause and manner of death.

The court’s ruling requires that the office of the state’s chief medical examiner determine the cause and manner of death. The state sets rates, so organizations like RSI don’t have as much money as they can pay staff.

A group of tenants with disabilities has filed a lawsuit against their landlord, claiming they were evicted illegally.

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Reading the Mind of the Other, nonfiction by Amity Z. Murray has many interests, ranging from mind processes the world around him differently than others. He uses voice acting to communicate and design. He's a volunteer and board member for a disability organization. He helps people with disabilities. Supports people with disabilities on a daily basis. He talks about making the voting process inclusive and as a solo artist. Read by John Potts. Nine broadcasts; begins Jan. 25.


Free Library of Philadelphia’s Disability Access Press

Did you know? About the history of people with disabilities.

Laura Young. 14 broadcasts; begins Mon, Jan. 17.

Off the Shelf* Monday — Friday 8 a.m. Jack of Spies, fiction by David Down, 2014. In 1913 Jack McColl performs missions for the German intelligence unit during the Boer War. But when he meets Cattlin Hanley, an American journalist, he must choose between his assignment and his feelings for her. Read by David Zierdt. 11 broadcasts; begins Mon, Jan. 3.

Potpourri* Monday — Friday 9 a.m. American Baby, nonfiction by Gabrielle Glasser, 2021. Journalist and author Gabrielle Glasser describes how the adoption industry removed children from their birth mothers and placed them with families, including her own. Read by John Potts. Ten broadcasts; begins Mon, Jan. 3.

KFAI is at 90.3 FM in Minneapolis and 106.7 in St. Paul. Listeners outside of the Twin Cities, or those looking for a past broadcast, can listen to our live stream online at www.kfai.org. Email disabilityandprogress@samjasmine.com for questions and send story suggestions to disabilitychannelmn@gmail.com

Conor’s Corner

Conor’s Corner with Conor O’Meara can be heard at 10 a.m. Mon, replayed 8 a.m. Sat, at 1 or 4 p.m. Fri and Thursday Community Radio. The show can also be found on Spotify and Mixcloud. Find the radio station online at www.wfrf.org.

The on-air studio line, offered 10-11 a.m. Mon, is 612-314-3144. Mail post can be sent to KFAI, 1808 Riverside Ave. S., Disability and Progress, Box 116, Minneapolis MN 55414.

Disability Channel Minnesota Disability Channel Minnesota is available on a YouTube channel. Mark Knutson, Charlie Brose and their team are regularly posting interviews, talks about what is going on in the world. Paul Butler is a self-advocate who works as a janitor and design. He’s a volunteer and board member for a disability organization. He helps people with disabilities. Supports people with disabilities on a daily basis. He talks about making the voting process inclusive and as a solo artist. Read by John Potts. Nine broadcasts; begins Jan. 25.

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Springboard hosts access discussion
Springboard for the Arts hosts a virtual workshop and social time for artists with disabilities, on the topic of how to successfully use public spaces. The free event, Accessing Mainstream Spaces, is 6-8:30 pm, Jan. 18. The workshop will center the experience of artists with disabilities when working with mainstream art institutions, including requesting accommodations, managing support needs, and utilizing Minnesota’s cultural landscape. FFI: https://springboardforthearts.org/events/artists-with-disabilities-virtual-social-and-discussion-accessing-mainstream-spaces/

Save the date for Fetching Ball
Tickets for the annual fundraiser for Canines Fetching Ball Gala, at the DoubleTree Hotel, Bloomington, are $180. Enjoy dinner, entertainment, a silent auction and more. All proceeds support Canines of the Canine Sound project, benefiting the organization. Master of ceremonies is Rena Sariannopoulos, KARE 11 reporter/anchor. FFI: Melissa Herman, 612-331-3005, ext. 115, mherman@canineandcandies.com

2022 Arc Gala
The Arc Minnesota has set its gala date for March 5, 2022, at the Depot in Saint Paul. The gala will feature a night of celebration, acknowledgement, and commitment. Proceeds support Arc and its many statewide advocacy efforts and activities. Attendees can purchase tickets by purchasing tickets, or attend virtually for no charge. Tickets start at $175. Sponsorships available. FFI: https://www.arcminnesota.org/

Call for performers
Open to all, a community program of Off-Leash Area to highlight and support performance work by artists with disabilities. Artists are sought to present work at Off-Kilter Cabaret June 9, 10, 11 and 12 at the Barbara B. Mann Center for Dance at the University of Minnesota, a fully accessible black box theater with a fully sprung stage. The event will include accessibility accommodations such as sign language interpreting, captioning and audio description, as well as current health protocols. Artist proposals are sought on the theme of “organ recital,” pieces should be five to 10 minutes in length and are due Feb. 8. Seven artists or artist groups will be selected. FFI: www.offkilterarea.org/Off-Kilter

Open Flow Forum
The Arts with Disabilities Alliance meets via Zoom 7-9 p.m. the first and third Wed. of each month, starting Jan. 6, Feb. 3 and March 3. Virtually join artists with disabilities and supporters to share visual art, writing, music, theater and dance-related efforts. Several featured speakers are Tanae Irmann, Kp Shae and Springboard for the Arts. The gatherings are fully accessible. Anyone needing special accommodations or wanting to learn more can contact an host organization Springboard for the Arts. Funding is available for access needs. FFI: 651-294-0670, resources@springboardforthearts.org

Less to Enjoy!
Restrictions have eased in the entertainment world, but with spikes in COVID-19 cases, arts organizations can change schedules. Check on events and activities before heading out. Some museums, arts and theater groups that typically have listings in the Access Pages in the Star Tribune have moved to online services or are offering in-person services with social distancing and safety measures. Please check with a venue or organization before attending. For more information, see what is available through the Minnesota Access Alliance and its calendar, at https://minaccess.org/

BIPOC Family Support Group: A peer-led support group in BIPOC (Black, indigenous, people of color) communities for families and friends of a person living with a mental illness. Meets 6-8 p.m. 1st and 3rd Sat.

Find a complete list of NAMI Minnesota support groups, meetings and workshops and other services by clicking on the organization's website. FFI: nami-minnesota-support-groups/

Center for independent living statewide
Minnesota has a long history of independent living statewide that have gone to more in-person operations. Typically centers offer an array of classes, workshops but past attendance isn’t required. Centers that proving PCA, homemaker and other staffing for clients to continue to do in person. Check with a local center or our website. FFI: www.macil.org/

Classes offered online
NAMI Minnesota (National Alliance on Mental Illness) has set up a wide variety of free online mental health classes. Classes include NAMI Family to Family, QPR – Question, Persuade and Refer, a special QPR class for Dance at the University of Minnesota, a fully accessible black box theater with a fully sprung stage. The artists are sought to present work at Off-Kilter Cabaret June 9, 10, 11 and 12 at the Barbara B. Mann Center for Dance at the University of Minnesota, a fully accessible black box theater with a fully sprung stage. The event will include accessibility accommodations such as sign language interpreting, captioning and audio description, as well as current health protocols. Artist proposals are sought on the theme of “organ recital,” pieces should be five to 10 minutes in length and are due Feb. 8. Seven artists or artist groups will be selected. FFI: www.offkilterarea.org/Off-Kilter

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