ACCESS PRESS
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Defending services is capitol focus

12:22

Defense of disability services continues as the 2025 Minnesota legislative session chugs forward. Community members are pushing back against Gov. Tim Walz's proposed budget and its potential cuts to waiver services. A key argument is that expenditures on disability services and special education are rising faster than other budget areas, raising the likelihood of a structural deficit. But that is countered with arguments that savings can be found in other places.

Many bills were still in play as March began. And of course, much hinges on the state budget forecast that is due to be released March 6. That's when state lawmakers are expected to roll up their sleeves and delve into budget work, especially now that a standoff over power sharing has been settled in the House.

Here's a look at a few key issues:

Cuts to disability services. Walz wants to slow spending growth on disability and elder services, which are among the fastest growing areas of state spending. His proposed health and human services budget cuts spending by about $1.3 billion over four years. Part of this cut would be made by capping an automatic rate increase for Medicaid providers. The rate currently increases every two years based on inflation. The governor wants to cap the automatic rate increase at 2 percent per year.

Rural Minnesota county officials, flanked by Senate Republicans, objected at a news conference. County officials contend the Walz recommendation would push costs onto their property taxpayers.

The governor has also proposed a 5 percent county share for residential services paid through disability waivers, which would bring an estimated $400 million in savings over four years. That is seen by county leaders as creating greater property tax burdens.

Fraud is another focus, with recent cases involving the Feeding Our Future program and programs centered on autism services. Walz in January signed an executive order to create a centralized state fraud investigation unit, to be at the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. The governor also proposed a fraud reform effort that steps up investigations and oversight, and increases criminal penalties.

The House has had a strong focus on fraud. House Republicans in February discussed HF1, which is meant to combat fraud, abuse and waste in state government. The bill if signed into law would set up an Office of the Inspector General in the legislative branch. The office would be overseen by the nonpartisan Legislative Audit Commission.

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ISTOCK

Numerous sweeping federal actions spark fears for disability community

Freezes to federal funding, rollbacks of key initiatives, mass layoffs, canceled research and threatened cuts to critical services and supports are sparking widespread fears in the nation's disability community. The first month of President Donald Trump's second term has thrown countless lives into uncertainty about

12:21

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The Americans with Disabilities Act is 35 years old this year and so is *Access Press*!

Check Page 11 to be part of our anniversary issue.

Minnesota's Long COVID survey provides many insights

People who become ill with the COVID virus could be susceptible to Long COVID, a condition that can linger for weeks if not months after an infection. Some people have been permanently disabled by Long COVID.

For people already living with disabilities, Long COVID can compound conditions and affect long-term health.

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) has released results from a first-of-its-kind survey on Long COVID impacts. MDH, which has one of the earliest state-level Long COVID programs in the United States, conducted the survey to learn more about people living with Long COVID.

"The reality is, COVID is still with us, and for a lot of people, it's not just like a cold," said Kate Murray, supervisor of the state's Long COVID response program. MDH conducted the survey as officials saw a need to gather more Long COVID data. That data can help to inform additional studies as well as future public policy.

For health experts, the survey provides a look at COVID's endurance. The first cases were found in Minnesota in February 2020. Vaccines were not widely available until more than a year later.



12:20

ISTOCK

Long COVID is considered to be a diagnosable disease. It refers to infection-associated chronic conditions that can happen after someone is ill with COVID. The federal government defines Long COVID as having symptoms lasting three or more months beyond an initial sickness.

Long COVID is also considered to be a disability in and of itself by the federal Department of Health and Human Services. People who live with Long COVID deal with health conditions including ongoing fatigue, extreme tiredness after activities, muscle pain, coughing, headaches, shortness of breath and brain fog or memory issues. Some people lose their senses of smell and/or taste, or have those senses change.

Murray noted that for people with disabilities, Long COVID can be a twofold overlap as people with disabilities may be much more susceptible. Also, people who weren't disabled before developing Long COVID may develop disabilities as a result of the illness. She also noted the effects Long COVID can have on activities of daily living, raising challenges for people who need workplace accommodations as well as disability-related benefits.

People with disabilities already must navigate inequities with the health care system, Murray said, and Long COVID can

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EDITORIAL

Too much at stake as DEI and DEIA initiatives are attacked

If you live with a disability, DEI and DEIA are much more than a set of initials. The principles of DEI and DEIA - diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility - are at the heart of our lives. Now those principles are under attack. Elimination of initiatives at the federal level and in the corporate world are cause for concern.

Diversity means embracing differences, including differences rooted in physical or cognitive disabilities.

Equity means providing equal opportunities and treating everyone fairly.

Inclusion means respecting the voices of everyone. It also means creating safe spaces where people can share beliefs, ideas and perspectives.

Accessibility means that all can enjoy the same opportunities. It speaks to access on a wide range of issues.

The focus is on groups that have been underrepresented historically, or subjected to discrimination based on racial or gender identity or disability.

This is certainly nothing new. Measures are rooted in the civil rights movements that came to prominence starting in the 1960s. The first key step was the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which banned employment discrimination based on race, religion, sex, color and national origin. It also banned segregation in public places. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act established the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, to eliminate employment discrimination.

We can tick off the other anti-discrimination legislation, including the Equal Pay Act of 1963, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967. Laws were brought forward to address labor issues, and the need to accommodate protected classes.

We needed (and still need) equitable workplaces and schools. Reforms for those of us with disabilities have had to come later.

We have more choices as to where to live and how to participate in our home communities.

12:18

And now we're watching a pendulum swing again. Now we're watching decades of gains wiped out with the swipe of a pen. For those who have been able to make critical gains, it's frustrating.

Those of us who live with a disability or disabilities know all too well what it means to be part of a marginalized, underrepresented community. We also know that it has taken much, much longer for us to be treated with fairness in all aspects of our lives under these mandates.

We know that DEI and DEIA wasn't there to help us when such initiatives began to help others.

Those of us who began or tried to begin careers in the pre-Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) days dealt with rampant and blatant discrimination.

We may have been turned down for volunteer opportunities, which could have enriched our lives.

We may have dealt with discrimination in our personal lives. We may have been blocked from marrying. We may not have had to make choices in places to live based on factors including accessibility and available of paratransit or even accessible regular route transit services.

The initiatives have helped many of us with disabilities to have living-wage, family-supporting jobs with opportunity for advancement. We were no longer forced into workplaces where we boxed up the widgets.

We have more choices as to where to live and how to participate in our home communities. We have many more options for so many things.

And now we're watching a pendulum swing again. Now we're watching decades of gains wiped out with the swipe of a pen. For those who have been able to make critical gains, it's frustrating.

For the elders who missed out on so many gains we could have made had DEI and DEIA been enforced for us years ago, it's beyond sad.

One more thing to watch

At the Minnesota capitol, state lawmakers have a May 19 adjournment date. There are bill deadlines and processes in the House and Senate to go through before then.

Despite the drama over House control that dominated the first few weeks of the session, the major focus must be on getting a budget passed. If work isn't completed on the state budget by May 19, the choices are to either have a special session to get work done or to have a state government shutdown on July 1.

We remember the last shutdown all too well. It was in 2011 and lasted for 20 days. It created real pain for some people who needed state help the most.

About 80 percent of government functions were considered essential during the 20-day shutdown and ordered funded by a Ramsey County District Court judge. Major health and human services programs, educational institutions, and local aid recipients all received continued state support.

That won't be the case with any future shutdowns. A 2017 Minnesota Supreme Court decision, in the case of Ninetieth Minnesota State Senate vs. Gov. Mark B. Dayton over line-item budget vetoes, will make district court-ordered funding during a shutdown less likely.

A key part of the court's ruling made it clear that the courts wouldn't take on the legislative role of ordering emergency funding, in the absence of state appropriations. What happened in 2011 cannot happen again.

That in turns makes the stakes of any future shutdown much, much higher.

HISTORY NOTE

12:19

Legislative fights over disability issues aren't anything new

As we have seen unfold nationally and in Minnesota, the work of government can be complicated and messy. That was the case 60 years ago when a fight over state academy admissions and school choice sparked a battle over what is now the Minnesota State Academy for the Blind in Faribault.

Sen. A. O. (Arnin) Sundet, Faribault, was worried about enrollment at what was then called the Minnesota Braille and Sight Saving School. Sundet was critical of school oversight and management, wanting that taken away from the commissioner of public welfare and given to a five-member board of trustees.

His most high-profile fight centered on school choice. Sundet and fellow Conservative caucus member Rep. Robert Kucera, Northfield, were bill authors. (The Liberal and Conservative caucuses were in place until 1973.)

The bill, dubbed the "parent choice" bill, became statewide news. The bill responded to a recent controversy over whether students with visual disabilities should be admitted to the state school or should stay in their hometown schools. Sundet contended that state welfare and education departments' employees were actively keeping blind students in their home districts and not allowing them to attend the state school.

At the time, a panel of welfare and education department leaders and local school board members screened children for placement at state schools. The three-person panel only met to make decisions after receiving a local school administrator's recommendation that a student attend a state school.

Sundet also claimed that the goal of reducing enrollment at Faribault was to turn that facility into a school for students with a wide range of disabilities, a claim state officials denied.

"The departments of education and welfare have gone out of their way to put a bushel over this school," he told the *Austin Daily Herald.* "They have deliberately tried to close this school." He noted that enrollment was 90 pupils, and could be as high as 120.

Gov. Karl Rolvaag vetoed the bill on May 27, 1965, saying that its provisions extended complete parent choice to the education of disabled children anywhere in Minnesota.

In his veto message, Rolvaag said the bill would have taken responsibilities away from local school boards. While parents' wishes should certainly be considered in school choice, the governor said that local schools boards' rights and responsibilities must also be preserved.

Sundet called the veto "most regrettable" and said it deprived children of going to the school that was best for them. He accused state welfare and education commissioners of building up their domain.

Republican Sundet worked on many high-profile bills during his years in the House and the Senate. Another unsuccessful effort in 1965 was to require that University of Minnesota faculty take loyalty oaths, in response to a student raising concerns about Communists on-campus.

He was defeated in the 1970 election and died 10 years later.

The History Note is a monthly column produced in cooperation with the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities. Past History Notes and other disability history may be found at www.mnddc.org

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Many with compromised immune systems must remain on guard against COVID

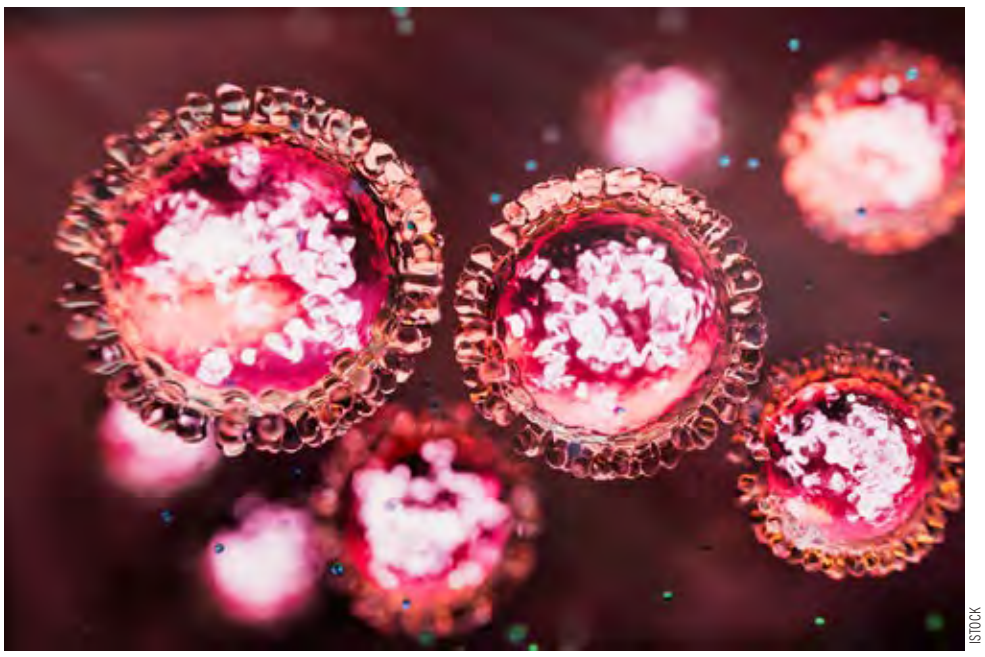
Many people with disabilities live with compromised or weakened immune systems. This news presented by the University of Minnesota is a reminder to be safe.

People with weakened immune systems—most of whom were vaccinated—made up 4 percent of a random sample of more than 12 million people in England in 2023 yet represented 22 percent of both COVID-19 hospital admissions and deaths, according to new findings from the INvestigation oF cOvid-19 Risk among iMmunocompromised populations (INFORM) study.

European researchers and representatives from the pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca conducted a retrospective study using the electronic health records of participants aged 12 years and older from a random 25 percent sample of the English population from January to December 2023.

The results were published in the *Journal of Infection*.

Over the study period, 11,200 COVID-19 hospitalizations and 2,330 deaths occurred in the study sample. Immunocompromised participants accounted for 4.0 percent of 12.1 million people included in the sample but made up 21.7 percent and 21.9 percent of COVID-19 hospitalizations and deaths, respectively.



ISTOCK

Beyond three years since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, immunocompromised individuals remain disproportionately impacted from COVID-19 despite increased vaccination.

The risk of severe COVID-19 was higher among immunocompromised than otherwise healthy people (adjusted incidence rate ratio [aIRR] for hospitalization, 2.04; aIRR for death, 1.69).

Immunocompromised participants were more likely to have received at least four doses of COVID-19 vaccine than their non-immunocompromised peers (72.6 percent vs. 29.8 percent). The aIRRs for COVID-related consultations with a general practitioner and accident and emergency visits were 2.26 and 3.02 for immunocompromised and non-immunocompromised people, respectively.

Of the immunocompromised subgroups, the risk of COVID-19 hospital admission was highest for recipients of a stem cell transplant in the 2 years before infection (aIRR, 19.18), followed by those who had a solid organ transplant in the 5 years before infection (aIRR, 6.53). Other groups with a threefold or higher risk than those without the immune-weakening condition included those with primary immunodeficiency, end-stage kidney disease or dialysis, or blood cancers.

"Beyond three years since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, immunocompromised individuals remain disproportionately impacted from COVID-19 despite increased vaccination," the authors wrote. "These findings highlight a persistent need for additional COVID-19 interventions for immunocompromised populations."

Minnesota has had more than 16,000 COVID deaths.

Access Press provides coverage of COVID issues with support from the Metropolitan Center for Independent Living (MCIL). Learn more about MCIL at https://mcil-mn.org/

This activity is made possible through the COVID-19 Community Coordinator Program of the Minnesota Department of Health.

COVID

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make those matters worse.

It's not known how many people in Minnesota have or have had Long COVID. In 2023 about 20,000 people who had had COVID were called for the MDH survey. There were 1,270 people who completed interviews.

Survey findings are that 8.4 percent of adults reported having experienced Long COVID. This suggests that an estimated 365,000 adults in Minnesota could have had symptoms of Long COVID.

One interesting finding in the survey is that people who were vaccinated and boosted had a better chance of avoiding Long COVID. Only 37 percent of those surveyed reported lingering symptoms if they had received the initial vaccine and a booster shot before they became ill.

Fifty-three percent of unvaccinated Minnesotans who had COVID have had lingering symptoms.

Ongoing health effects, for more than three months after infection, were reported by more than 40 percent of respondents, something Murray called out as an important point.

The state has some caveats with the study. "Due to low participation and other survey limitations, the survey cannot tell us the prevalence of Long COVID, nor does this group represent all Minnesotans experiencing lasting symptoms after a COVID infection," the MDH report stated. "Nonetheless, their input can help the public, health care providers, and public health professionals understand Long COVID symptoms and how they can impact a person's daily activities and health care experiences."

There are challenges to studying Long COVID. One is that there isn't a simple test for the conditions, like there is for COVID, said Murray. The survey indicated that only about 9 percent of people were actually diagnosed with Long COVID.

The state has convened a medical advisory council to help doctors as the work toward improved diagnosis of Long COVID. The council has just released its first report on COVID treatment with Paxlovid, looking at whether that kind of treatment reduces long COVID risks.

Minnesota is also continuing Long COVID studies, first with a trial with McLeod County COVID patients, said Murray. That work has expanded statewide to track changes for those living with the condition.

Learn more about the Minnesota study at *https://www.health.mn.gov/diseases/longcovid/data.html*

Access Press provides coverage of COVID issues with support from the Metropolitan Center for Independent Living (MCIL). Learn more about MCIL at https://mcil-mn.org/

This activity is made possible by a grant from the Long COVID Program of the Minnesota Department of Health

Think Dementia offers help to rural Minnesota

12:16

Think Dementia announces help for rural Minnesotans living with dementia and their families with the free Medicare GUIDE program: *Guiding an Improved Dementia Experience*.

Amy House, a certified dementia practitioner, is owner and host of the podcast Think Dementia. She is also an educator on dementia in the Twin Cities. Dementia is a broad term that describes the symptoms of those with Alzheimer's Disease and other progressive neurocognitive disorders.

Think Dementia has partnered with Tembo Health, a tele-health company that provides dementia care, support and resources through the Medicare GUIDE program via phone and video visits. House meets with families of those living with dementia regularly to provide support, ideas and resources in this free program. She is from Royalton, grew up on a dairy farm and knows the needs dementia-focused services in rural Minnesota are high.



In 2020 the Alzheimer's Association estimated there are 99,000 Minnesotans living with dementia. The number is expected to increase to 120,000 by this year. The free Medicare GUIDE program started in July 2024. Feedback from those already enrolled indicates how valuable this has been for them on their dementia journey.

Janet, whose husband has dementia, attends House's monthly webinars to learn caregiving skills and understand the disease progression. She recently told Tembo: "As difficult as it is to hear about what is coming down the road with late-stage dementia, Amy House presents the webinar with such compassion, care and understanding of this illness. We are blessed to have such an experienced dementia practitioner guiding us on this difficult journey in our life."

The GUIDE program with Tembo Health provides help in the areas of medical concerns, medications, behavioral symptoms, caregiver wellness, advanced planning and home safety with monthly phone or video visits, allowing the caregiver to participate from their home which is key for those in rural Minnesota.

Together they develop small goals to prevent injury, hospitalizations and caregiver burnout. Caregivers may be eligible to be awarded $2,500 annually to help pay for respite care like in-home services or an adult day program to give the caregiver a break and time to take care of themself, which is just as important as caring for the individual with dementia. Families also have a 24/7 helpline with Tembo to contact when the need arises and weekday support from a team of clinical staff at Tembo led by Dr. Nancy Berley, a general practitioner with Tembo Health.

To learn more and see if someone qualifies for the free GUIDE program contact Tembo Health at *www.tembo.health* or contact Amy House at a*my@think-dementia.com*



FROM OUR COMMUNITY

Protecting disabled tenants from eviction: A call to action

Eviction is devastating for anyone, but for disabled individuals, it can mean losing independence, accessibility, and even their right to live in the community. A Minnesota couple facing eviction exemplifies this crisis. Their home has been extensively modified to allow them to live safely with minimal outside assistance, in line with the Olmstead v. L.C. decision, which affirmed the right of disabled individuals to live in the least restrictive setting possible.

Why does this matter? This couple's home is not just a residence—it is a carefully designed environment that allows them to live independently. Their modifications include:

• An accessible kitchen: One section sits just 16 inches from the floor, allowing one partner to cook and use appliances with her feet while seated. The kitchen transitions to a roll-under counter, sink, and a smart five-burner cooktop for full wheelchair accessibility.

• Smart home technology: Voice and app-controlled lights, doorbell and security features allow them to function without relying on outside help.

• Other critical modifications: Roll-in showers, widened doorways, and other custom adaptations that make this home one of the few places where they can live safely.

If evicted, they face institutionalization or severe loss of independence, violating the principles of the Olmstead decision.

What are the legal protections and violations involved?

• The Fair Housing Act (FHA) and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) require landlords to provide reasonable accommodations to disabled tenants. Eviction that disregards necessary accommodations can be a form of discrimination.

• Olmstead v. L.C. (1999) states that people with disabilities have the right to live in the least restrictive setting, not institutions or inaccessible housing.

• Yet, the legal system often fails disabled tenants, moving quickly through eviction cases without considering these protections.

Here's a to-do list, with actions for change.

Courts must require disability impact reviews before eviction, ensuring alternatives are considered.

Stronger enforcement of fair housing laws is needed to prevent discriminatory evictions.

Increase accessible housing options so displaced tenants aren't forced into unsafe or institutional settings.

Expand legal aid funding to help disabled tenants fight wrongful evictions.

This couple's fight is not just about one case—it's about the broader failure to protect disabled individuals from displacement. Evicting tenants whose homes have been adapted for their needs is not just an inconvenience—it's a potential civil rights violation. Lawmakers, courts, and the public must act now to ensure that disability does not mean instability.

Darrell Paulsen
Paulsen and Company, Inc.
Voices for the Disabled
Maplewood

Blaming people with disabilities is unacceptable, as is scapegoating

by Dick Van Wagner

We now know with certainty that President Trump regards us – those of us with disabilities, our folk and our friends – with contempt. The President's January 30 scripted brief remarks of solace and concern for the victims of the tragic mid-air collision of the commercial airliner and the military helicopter was appropriate. But true to his inability to check the forces of his subterranean mind he launched into blaming the crash on former Presidents Obama and Biden and the FAA during their terms – blaming the hiring of people with disabilities as the cause of this air tragedy.

We with disabilities and our advocates, should not be surprised at President Trump's behavior, his disregard, his scorn, his contempt for us. His use of people with disabilities as a scapegoat for his blaming of both Presidents Obama and Biden is no shock. His behavior was foreshadowed nine years ago when then candidate Trump publicly mocked a reporter who has upper extremity paralysis. (This same reporter now works for the New York Times and you can still find this event on You Tube.)

We should be appalled at Trump's penchant for his scapegoating of people with disabilities. Why? One, his use of a tragic accident to blame others. Two, using his widespread denunciation of DEI to single out us – including specific disabilities as his scapegoat of choice for his invective. It was deliberate that Trump used us, people with disabilities, to berate President Obama and President Biden. Clearly, to him we are the easy fodder to try – without evidence - to prove a point, a venomous point, not one of "common sense," as he claimed.

I hope you are as angry as I am about Trump's malevolent behavior toward us with disabilities. What are we going to do? You can't unelect Trump. Use our hands, our voices, our dollars to end this deliberate denunciation of capable people with disabilities.

Editor's note: *Dick VanWagner is a former board member at Access Press. He is an elected delegate to the White House Conference on the Handicapped and a founding officer of the United Handicapped Federation. He's a vocational counselor and testifying vocational expert, and has provided numerous advisements to organizations for Section 504 and the ADA.*

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Focus on disability rights and access

In the wake of recent contentious battles and political maneuvering, Minnesota state lawmakers have limited time to craft and pass meaningful legislation. The remaining days of this legislative session will determine if members prioritize bipartisan solutions that address the pressing needs of Minnesotans with disabilities or remain divided.

While the primary focus for legislators will be negotiating and passing a comprehensive two-year budget that reflects our state's values, members of both parties must prioritize improving accessibility and support services for people with disabilities. This includes expanding healthcare coverage, strengthening educational accommodations, ensuring housing accessibility, and increasing funding for disability services and support programs that enable all Minnesotans to thrive.

Despite the challenging political climate at both state and federal levels, Minnesota lawmakers can achieve meaningful progress by focusing on disability rights and access. Rather than getting sidetracked by legally questionable social media regulations or overreaching tech bills that could inadvertently restrict online accessibility, they should concentrate on developing bipartisan support for substantive policy reforms that enhance digital inclusion and expand opportunities for people with disabilities.

Kelli Carlson
Minneapolis

Your letters and commentary are welcomed but follow guidelines

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 per commentary. Ask the editors if more space is needed.

Letters and guest commentaries must be signed by the authors or authors. Unsigned letters won't be published.

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 editors have 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 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.

With the legislative session underway, we very much welcome letters and commentaries about legislative agendas or individual bills. This can be a great way for an individual or advocacy group to draw attention to a bill or an issue.

We ask that those types of commentaries be written in a manner that isn't politically partisan and focuses on issues at hand.

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. We also don't publish articles critical of political parties or candidates.

Before making a submission, writers are always encouraged to contact the editor to discuss ideas or to ask questions about From Our Community submissions, at 651-644-2133 ext. 1 or *jane@accesspress.org*.

Let the newspaper staff know if accommodations are needed to submit a letter or commentary, and we will help you. More and more people are using AI to write letters. Let us know if that is the case

Letters and commentaries reflect the view of the authors and not the views of the staff and board of directors of *Access Press*.

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Got news to share?
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FEDERAL CUTS

From page 1

health care, disability services, education, transportation and so much more.

"These are scary times," said Kelly Buckland. He was a disability policy advisor at the U.S, Department of Transportation, working for Pete Buttigieg. He stepped down at the end of President Joe Biden's term.

Before that Buckland had a long career in independent living, including service as the executive director for the National Council on Independent Living and at the Living Independent Network Corporation.

"You look at what has happened in just one month. The infrastructure of this country is being torn apart," said Buckland.

The mass firings, grant freezes and elimination of key federal policies are a wakeup call, especially for people with disabilities who spent decades working for their rights. "They're going after civil rights," Buckland said.

The cited firings of federal works as one huge cause for alarm. "These people provide essential functions," Buckland said. One example he gave is the Veterans Administration (VA), with care for disabled veterans. "Cuts there will cause injury and death."

Another big question is disability, equity and inclusion or DEI programs. That umbrella also covers DEIA, which adds an accessibility focus.

A federal judge January 21 blocked a sweeping executive order from Trump that sought to end government support for programs promoting DEI. According to *Associated Press*, Baltimore Judge Adam Abelson in Baltimore found it likely violates free speech rights and granted an injunction blocking the funding withdrawal as a lawsuit plays out.

Trump signed an order his first day in office directing federal agencies to terminate all "equity-related" grants or contracts. He signed a follow-up order requiring federal contractors to certify that they don't promote DEI. Plaintiffs – including the city of Baltimore and higher education groups – sued the Trump administration earlier this month, arguing the executive orders are unconstitutional and a blatant overreach of presidential authority. They also allege the directives have a chilling effect on free speech.

The Trump administration has argued that the president was targeting only DEI programs that violate federal civil rights laws.

Abelson, who was nominated by Democratic President Joe Biden, agreed with the plaintiffs that the executive orders discourage businesses, organizations and public entities from openly supporting diversity, equity and inclusion.

"The harm arises from the issuance of it as a public, vague, threatening executive order," he said during a hearing this week.

Abelson's order does allow for the attorney general to investigate and prepare a report on DEI practices.

PBS has reported that three civil rights organizations filed a federal lawsuit February 19 charging that three of Trump's executive orders attacking diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility in the federal government violate their free speech rights and hinder their ability to help marginalized communities.

Through Trump's orders barring references to transgender people or support of DEIA programs within the federal government, public funding for several nongovernment organizations, including the three plaintiffs, are at risk of being cut.

As a result, the civil rights organizations – the National Urban League, the National Fair Housing Alliance, and AIDS Foundation Chicago – said in their lawsuit that they will be less able to help "people of color, women, LGBTQ people, and/or people with disabilities overcome systemic barriers to access housing, education, employment, and healthcare stemming from discrimination, biases, and inequalities."

A federal judge in Boston on February 21 delayed proposed cuts at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), in response to a lawsuit filed by several states' attorneys general. Those officials include Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison.

The cuts would hamper if not shut down research at Minnesota colleges and universities, and at private institutions including the Mayo Clinic.

NIH is the county's main funder of biomedical research. Minnesota projects in 2024 were awarded more than $715 million, out of about $35 billion nationwide.

In public statements, University of Minnesota President Rebecca Cunningham has cited the important research NIH supports.

Mayo Clinic officials have also spoken out against the cuts. In a letter to the Rochester Post-Bulletin newspaper, Dr. Randall Walker said, "I am alarmed by the recent actions by President Trump and DOGE Director Elon Musk to abruptly and indiscriminately cut funding for medical research at our world famous medical center in Rochester."



ISTOCK

Walker goes on to say that he spent 50 years at Mayo in training and practice as an infectious disease specialist. "I focused on the most vulnerable patients with cancer, leukemia, end-stage organ disease requiring transplantation, diabetes and trauma. . . The abrupt disruption of our center's medical research by this capricious edict will result in irreparable harm to medical progress in finding cures for the most challenging diseases . . "

More health questions

The online publication Disability Scoop is reporting that Trump is tapping newly confirmed U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to lead a commission charged with addressing autism and other "health burdens."

The Make America Healthy Again Commission will be "tasked with investigating and addressing the root causes of America's escalating health crisis."

The group's initial focus will be childhood chronic diseases, the order said. It cited conditions including autism, allergies, asthma, autoimmune disease, fatty liver disease, obesity and attention deficit disorder/attention deficit hyperactivity disorder."

Kennedy's appointment already sparked controversy, especially with his stance against vaccines and his claims that there is a link between vaccines and autism. The commission announcement has met a very mixed reaction from national autism service organizations.

A commission report ia due in 180 days.

Danielle Hall, director of health equity at the Autism Society of America, told *Disability Scoop* that the "ambiguity" of the Make America Healthy Again Commission's scope as it relates to autism is concerning.

"Autism is not a chronic disease, it is a complex developmental condition, and any federal initiative addressing autism must be grounded in scientific evidence, and the lived experiences of autistic individuals and their families," Hall said. "We urge the administration to provide clarity on the commission's objectives and to ensure that debunked theories are not revisited."

Alison Singer, president of the Autism Science Foundation, expressed cautious optimism that the Trump administration's attention to autism will be a positive, particularly for those with profound autism.

"I give RFK credit for wanting to study the causes of autism. We need more studies looking at the underlying biological causes of autism so that we can develop treatments that are based on biology and relieve the suffering that our children are experiencing," Singer said. "But the key is we can't let the discredited vaccine hypothesis become a distraction. That question has been answered."

Special education threats

Advocates are warning that there could be severe consequences if the Trump pledge to disband the U.S. Department of Education materializes. Trump has said that the department is a target of his efforts to end wasteful spending.

Closing the department would require an act of Congress. But any efforts could hurt a department that is involved in providing services to more than 7.5 million students with disabilities.

"We have deep concern as we see or hear nothing that assures us the administration understands and intends to carry out its obligation to protect our kids or understands that (the Education Department) has an obligation to assure our kids get the services and supports they are entitled to under the law," Denise S. Marshall, CEO of the Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates (COPAA) told *Disability Scoop.* COPAA is a nonprofit that advocates for the rights of students with disabilities and their families.

Federal laws including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act guarantee students with disabilities certain rights in schools. But it is up to federal education officials to make sure those laws are enforced.

"The interplay of the federal laws that serve and protect our children is complex, there must be expert personnel who work to carry out the statute's requirements," Marshall said. "IDEA delegates distinct duties to the secretary of education and the law obligates the department to provide oversight, technical assistance and more so that states can fulfill their obligation to provide a free, appropriate public education to every student with a disability."

Dan Stewart, managing attorney for education and employment at the National Disability Rights Network, told Disability Scoop that IDEA, Section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act were created by Congress and will remain in effect regardless of any executive order. But the president does have some ability to prioritize the use of certain funds.

Stewart said he's concerned that the Trump administration could be eyeing changes that would impact federal funding to hire, train or retain school staff, for example.

"Without adequate staffing, students with disabilities will not be able to access federally mandated supports and services," he said.

But Section 504, which requires institutions receiving federal funds to make accommodations for disabled people, itself is threatened by a lawsuit opposing transgender rights. The attorneys general of 17 states, led by Texas, have contended that they are narrowly opposed to a rule imposed in 2024 by President Joe Biden. That rule includes gender dysphoria as a disability. That is when a person's gender identity doesn't match the gender assigned at birth. The states behind the lawsuit claim they aren't against disability rights as a whole. But disability rights advocates disagree, citing sections in the lawsuit, and are pushing back.

Nonprofits are scrambling

Minnesota disability service nonprofits are scrambling to keep up with a myriad of confusing changes. Programs have been suspended. Layoffs have started.

One example is Upstream Arts, which had to put a project on hold. The Art of Prevention, which includes work with several adult day program partners, had to wait because of funding issues. The Minnesota Department of Health's Sexual Violence Prevention Program awaited funding from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Rape and Prevention Education fund.

"The Art of Prevention is one of our broadest and most ambitious initiatives, working to combat the sexual violence epidemic in the disability community in which people with disabilities are seven times more likely to experience sexual violence than their peers . When we are forced to cancel programming, individuals with disabilities lose access to vital information for their own health and well-being, and support staff lose access to important tools for prevention that they have been demanding. There is no substitute for this work."

The Minnesota Council on Nonprofits staff is quickly working to offer information. What raised countless red flags is a February 6 Trump administration memo that stated "It is the policy of my administration to stop funding (non-government organizations or NGOs) that undermine the national interest. I therefore direct the heads of executive departments and agencies to review all funding that agencies provide to NGOs. The heads of agencies shall align future funding decisions with the interests of the United States and with the goals and priorities of my Administration, as expressed in executive actions. . . "

According to the council, federal agencies are being directed to "review all funding that agencies provide to NGOs" and are given authority to "align future funding decisions with the interests of the U.S." The funding review is to ensure alignment with the administration's executive orders.

"This memo is extremely troublesome and puts nonprofit services and operations into jeopardy. MCN is connecting with federal partners to better understand the memo's scope, timeline, and specific implications for nonprofits that receive federal funding," the council stated.

Two days after the Trump administration announced the intent to freeze trillions of dollars in federal funding, the memo doing so was rescinded. But confusion continued as there was another announcement that federal officials would continue to scrutinize programs. Many found funding portals to be temporarily blocked. Some funding still hasn't been released.

Transportation policies rolled back?

One effect of the sweeping changes at the federal level is that they provide incentives for the pirvate sector to erode hard-fought disability rights, said Buckland. An example he gave is how the nation's largest airlines are trying to rescind recently enacted consumer protection rules for travelers with disabilities.

A lawsuit was filed in February with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit, contending that the U.S. Department of Transportation overstepped its authority.

The federal government acted after numerous horror stories from travelers who use wheelchairs or mobility devices. Many media reports described damaged and mishandled wheelchairs,

The trade group Airlines for America and American, Delta, JetBlue, Southwest and United challenged the rule that makes mishandling wheelchairs a violation of the federal Air Carrier Access Act.

The rule was just finalized in in December 2024. It requires that airlines offer annual training for workers who work with disabled passengers. Passengers with disabilities are to get prompt assistance during their travels.

Buckland has used a chair since a teenage diving accident in Idaho's Snake River. He's well aware of the challenge wheelchair users face when flying.

He said the legal challenge to the air transportation rule could be the first of many similar challenges to come for disability rights measures, and not just in transportation policy. "There was a real need for this rule," he said. "This and so much more could be taken away."

State and federal legislative coverage is compiled by Editor Jane McClure.

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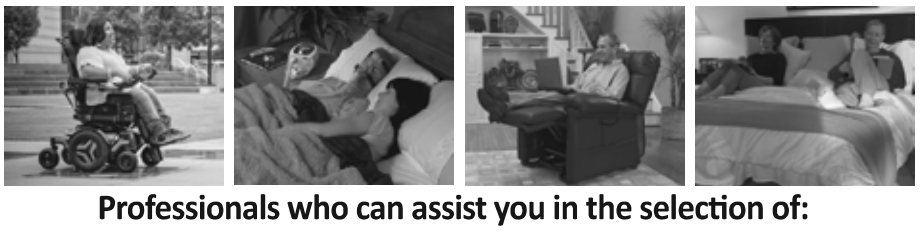

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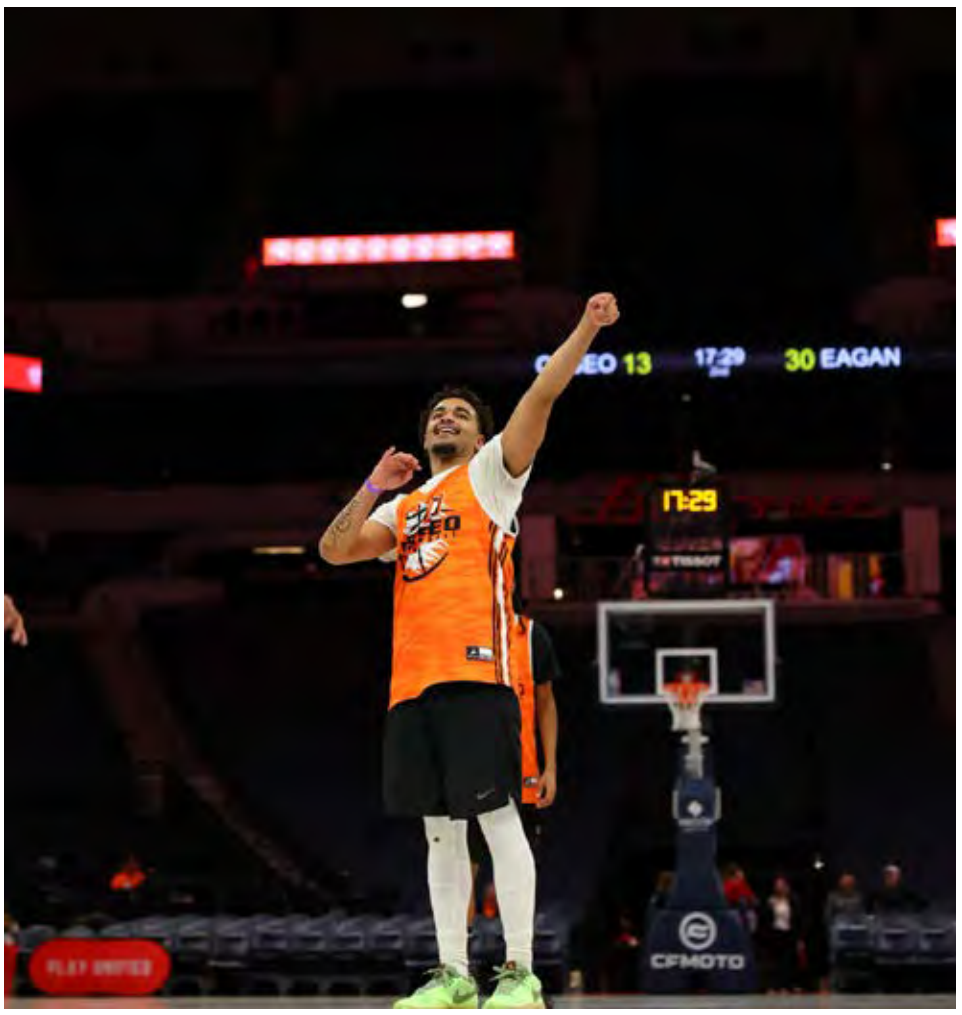
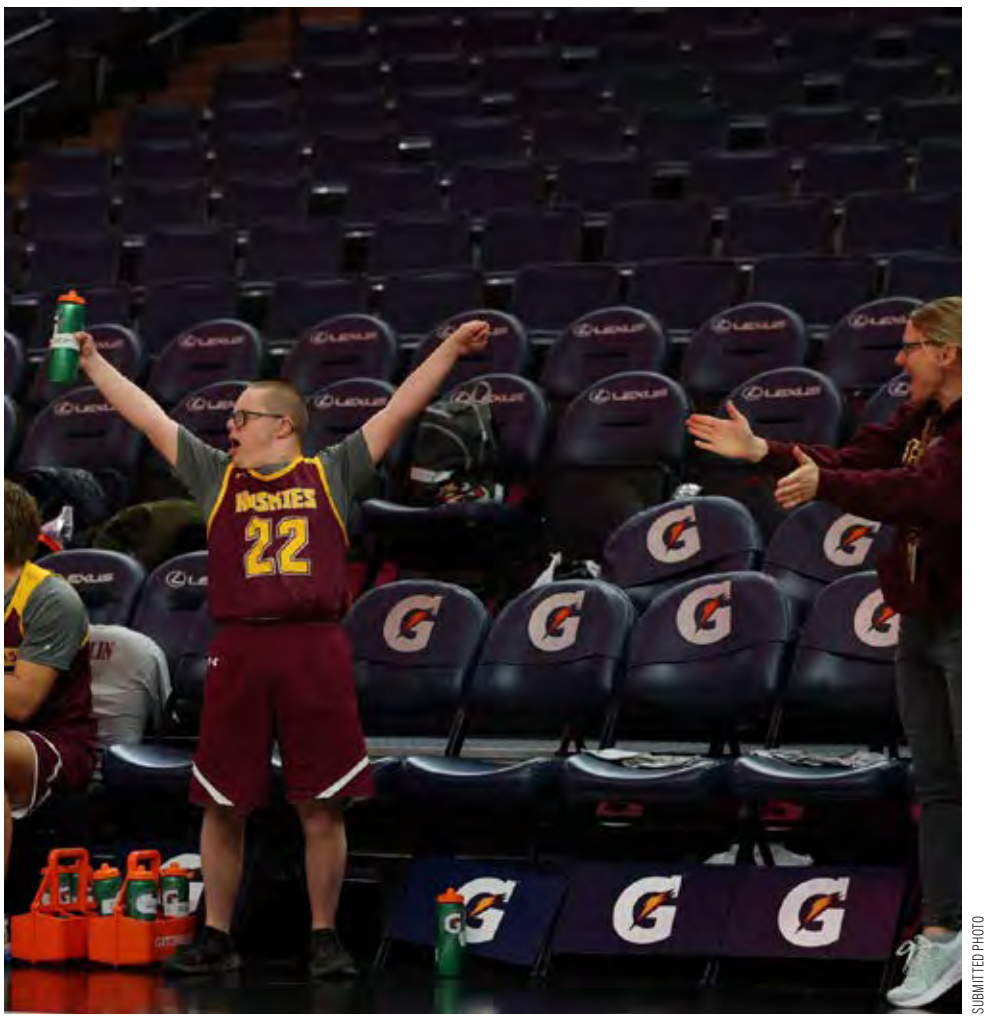
PEOPLE AND PLACES

Unified Champion Schools State Basketball Tournament provided competition and fun





SUBMITTED PHOTO

Target Center was hopping February 11 as Special Olympics Minnesota hosted the 2025 Unified Champion Schools State Basketball Tournament. Students from seven high schools across Minnesota demonstrated skill, sportsmanship and inclusion as they competed for state titles in one of two divisions.

The annual tournament showcases competitive play and inclusion in action, as students from eight high schools across Minnesota come together to compete for titles. It's an opportunity to witness firsthand the power of sports and teamwork as athletes both with and without disabilities demonstrate their skills on the basketball court. The Unified Champion Schools movement brings students together to foster inclusion and friendship at more than 360 schools in Minnesota. Unified Sports are a huge part of this movement, and the State Basketball Tournament showcased the #InclusionRevolution at the highest level.

Eagan High School won the Division A title. Watertown-Mayer High School won the Division B title.

Other Division A competitors were from Bemidji High School, Menahga High School and Osseo Senior High School.

Other Division B competitors were from Farmington High School, Pillager High School and Proctor High School.

Division B games focused on player development. Division A games were more competitive.

Twin Cities Orthopedics is the United Sports sponsor and supplied an athletic trainer for the young competitors.



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PEOPLE & PLACES

PACER's Paula F. Goldberg Award is announced

Nominations are now open for the Paula F. Goldberg Champion for Children with Disabilities Award. The award winner will receive $5,000 to support their work and will be publicly recognized at the PACER Gala on May 10.

Goldberg died in May 2022. She was an extraordinary leader who made the world a better place for countless numbers of children with disabilities through her work as co-founder and executive director of PACER Center. This award was created in her honor to encourage and recognize an individual or group who has demonstrated exceptional advocacy and leadership in support of the rights of children with disabilities.

Deadline for nominations is March 10. Contact *pacer@pacer.org*.

PACER Center's call for nominations suggests that community members consider nominating someone who is a visionary leader, a dreamer, and a doer; a tenacious advocate who is unwaveringly persistent in advocating for children with disabilities; and a true role model whose achievements, integrity, positive attitude, and commitment inspire others.

Goldberg is remembered for her strong advocacy and passion for helping children with disabilities. She was not only a PACER Center co-founder, she was also a driving force behind its anti-bullying efforts.

Goldberg grew up in Rochester and Minneapolis, where she learned from her parents the importance of supporting her community. Her mother, Helen Friedman, was a Yiddish interpreter who would often take her daughter along when she provided interpretation at the Rochester State Hospital.

She taught elementary school in Chicago and Minneapolis, and had had a number of special needs students in her classrooms. She authored two League of Women Voters studies on special education in the Minneapolis Public Schools. That started decades of advocacy at the local, state and national levels.

PACER grew into a large organization under Goldberg's leadership. But she is widely remembered for always reaching out personally to others around the nation.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Paula Goldberg

Career-ending epilepsy diagnosis is the focus of new book

After a seizure brought an end to the broadcast journalism career she loved, Stacia Kalinoski was forced to confront the reality of the epilepsy that was ravaging her life. Offering valuable insight into the experience of grappling with a relentless neurological disease, *Racing Uphill* from University of Minnesota Press also details what Kalinoski learned from prominent epileptologists about seizures.

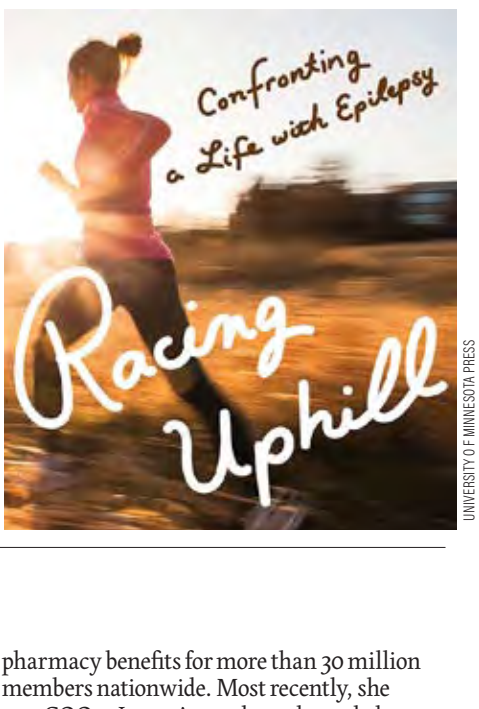
In sharing the remarkable opportunity that epilepsy presented for her courage and growth, Kalinoski speaks to anyone facing a battle of their own and offers inspiration for taking control of one's own health.

Kalinoski is an Emmy Award–winning TV news journalist whose documentary *Brainstorm* premiered on Twin Cities PBS and was nominated for a regional Emmy Award. Before a seizure ended her broadcast journalism career, she reported for television stations in Nebraska, Oregon and Michigan. She now shares her story as a motivational speaker.

The book has earned praise. "Stacia Kalinoski's courage in sharing her personal journey with epilepsy is truly inspiring. Epilepsy is one of the most common neurological disorders, yet as a society, we still have much to learn about understanding and supporting those who live with it. Through her powerful storytelling, Kalinoski not only raises vital public awareness but also offers hope and encouragement to others navigating life with seizures," said Jenna Carter, executive director, Epilepsy Foundation of Minnesota

"Stacia Kalinoski has been an inspiration in my life and my son's life, giving hope to those with epilepsy through her resolve and willingness to stand up for herself and others with seizure disorders. Her memoir further highlights her amazing fighting spirit. Within these pages, she offers encouragement to millions of Americans who are struggling–emphasizing that they, too, can overcome," said Wayne Drash, Emmy Award–winning journalist and author.

For more information, visit the book's webpage at *https://www.upress.umn.edu/9781517917463/racing-uphill*



UNIVERSITY O F MINNESOTA PRESS

Minnetonka-based MAC Midwest names Bent as new chief

MAC Midwest, a provider of autism services in the Midwest, is proud to announce the appointment of Christine (Chris) Bent as its new chief executive officer, effective February 6, 2025. Bent succeeds Jeff Nichols, who has served as CEO since 2018. Nichols has been instrumental in advancing MAC's mission of supporting individuals with autism and their families.

Bent was selected after an extensive nationwide search that attracted highly qualified candidates from across the country. Her proven leadership, people-focused approach, and alignment with MAC Midwest's mission made her the unanimous choice of the Board of Directors.

"Chris is an extraordinary leader whose vision and expertise are exactly what MAC Midwest needs to propel the organization into its next chapter," said Chad Peel, MAC Midwest board chair. "Her ability to lead with compassion, drive impactful change, and foster collaboration will strengthen our mission and expand our reach. As a MAC parent and board member, I am thrilled to welcome a leader of Chris' caliber to the MAC family."



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Christine Bent

"I am deeply honored to join MAC Midwest, an organization that has made such a meaningful impact on individuals with autism and their families," said Bent. "The team's dedication to compassionate care and unwavering support resonates deeply with me. I look forward to building on this strong foundation to continue improving lives and empowering the communities we serve."

With more than 30 years of leadership experience in healthcare, Bent brings a wealth of expertise and a record of distinguished achievements to MAC Midwest. She worked at Atrius Health and Mass General Brigham, where she cultivated her expertise in clinical operations and patient-centered care.

During her tenure at Allina Health, she held key leadership roles, including president of the Allina Health Group. There she led transformative initiatives during significant service expansion. Bent later served as chief operating officer at Prime Therapeutics, overseeing 3,300 employees managing pharmacy benefits for more than 30 million members nationwide. Most recently, she was COO at InnovAge, where she scaled infrastructure to help seniors live with dignity and independence at home.

Bent serves as a faculty advisor and mentor for the University of Minnesota's Master's in Healthcare Administration program. Recognized as a Twin Cities Business Notable Hero in Health Care (2020), she also served as president of the Women's Health Leadership TRUST in 2021. Her dedication to service reflects her passion for making a meaningful difference in and out of the workplace.

Founded in 1996, MAC Midwest is a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting individuals on the autism spectrum and their families. MAC Midwest provides trauma-informed, evidence-based therapy and holistic family support services, focusing on empowering individuals to reach their fullest potential. It is based in Minnetonka.

Center for disability inclusion opens in New Hope

Lifeworks Services has opened what officials describe as a first-of-its-kind facility in Minnesota for people with disabilities. Officials and dignitaries celebrated the grand opening February 13 of the new Center for Disability Inclusion in New Hope, located at 7508 42nd Ave. N.

Gertrude Matemba-Mutasa, CEO of Lifeworks Services, has touted the facility for its unique blend of services for people with disabilities. It will provide services including job training, employment and support services.

Families can also visit the center to seek help navigating the complex disability services system.

The center is not just available for families in the New Hope area, but for clients statewide.

It is the first of three locations that Lifeworks Services will open this year.

On its website, Lifeworks Services stated, "At Lifeworks, we believe that disability inclusion should be the standard, not the exception. However, people with disabilities continue to face significant barriers to fully participating in their communities, careers, and daily lives. From navigating complex systems to accessing employment opportunities and community spaces that are not fully accessible, the challenges people with disabilities face are persistent."

In explaining the new centers, Lifeworks Services also said, "We know our society is largely unfamiliar with the experiences of people with disabilities. Many workplaces and public spaces remain inaccessible, employers often struggle to recruit and retain employees with disabilities, and access to critical services is difficult. Lifeworks is committed to changing this reality through our Centers for Disability Inclusion, which will be welcoming, fully accessible spaces designed to foster greater inclusion, connection, and opportunity."

Goals include increasing access to disability services in historically underserved communities; supporting local businesses in tapping into underutilized talent in their communities; and building stronger, more inclusive communities where people with disabilities feel valued, respected, and connected.

MDI is featured in book

Disability services and employment provider MDI is featured in a new book. Hidden Talent, written by workforce expert David DeLong, highlights organizations that have cracked the code on hiring marginalized workers, including people with disabilities, immigrants and those with past incarcerations.

For more than 60 years, MDI has been a leader in inclusive employment, with about half of its employees being people with disabilities. This is no accident—it's the foundation of it mission to create opportunities that empower individuals and build stronger communities.

In Hidden Talent, MDI leaders share insights into why we employ people with disabilities—because it's a powerful value generator. MDI's experience and success are proof that diversity in the workforce drives innovation, productivity, and meaningful results.

The book, which also addresses the challenges of employing people with disabilities, offers practical advice for business leaders looking to tap into this underutilized segment of the workforce. As an organization that has been championing this cause for

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REGIONAL NEWS

NUWAY Alliance takes action against Department of Human Services

NUWAY Alliance, a network of substance use disorder treatment centers, has filed a motion for a temporary restraining order and preliminary injunction against the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS).

The federal lawsuit is meant to block Shireen Gandhi, the temporary DHS commissioner, from withholding Minnesota Health Care Programs (MHCP) payments, also known as Medicaid payments, for substance use disorder treatment services provided by NUWAY.

DHS informed NUWAY on February 3 that it was going to temporarily suspend Medicaid payments for outpatient treatment effective February 21.

In court filings, NUWAY argues that DHS's payment suspension is unconstitutional, "effectively a death penalty" and an "existential" cliff threatening to shut down the state's largest outpatient substance use disorder treatment provider without so much as a hearing.

KARE 11 has extensively investigated NUWAY and its practices. The television station's "Recovery Inc." investigation, published on January 30, exposed tens of millions of dollars in questionable Medicaid billing by NUWAY while executives of the nonprofit were paid exorbitant salaries.

Publicly filed 2023 tax records reveal NUWAY CEO David Vennes was paid $909,930.

In response, state lawmakers called for legislative reforms and for NUWAY to refund taxpayers.

KARE's investigation also uncovered previously unreported kickback allegations levied by state and federal investigators regarding NUWAY's long-standing practice of providing subsidized sober housing for clients enrolled in its addiction recovery programs.

The new court filings confirm KARE 11's finding that DHS has known about the housing payments for years without raising concern and add a stunning twist.

Filed as part of their argument that the housing payments are not fraud, NUWAY posted several contracts with insurance providers such as Hennepin Health that require the housing payments.

The Hennepin Health contract with NUWAY states: "Provider shall provide monthly recovery residence support of $550 to each eligible member for the duration of the member's receipt of covered outpatient treatment from the services provider."

NUWAY contends DHS's action to suspend Medicaid payments is a drastic overreaction to recent public criticism of the department regarding its oversight of public funds. It claims DHS is unfairly targeting NUWAY based on unproven fraud allegations, jeopardizing



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the organization's ability to provide critical treatment services to approximately 1,000 Minnesotans daily.

The memorandum in support of their motion for a restraining order against DHS argues that NUWAY will suffer imminent and irreparable harm if the payment withhold is not lifted. NUWAY cites potential severe economic hardship, likely leading to a cessation of operations and that patients will suffer irreparable harm if their access to treatment and supportive housing is disrupted.

(Source: KARE 11 News)

Supreme Court takes up case

The U.S. Supreme Court is poised to decide whether a teenager with severe epilepsy can sue her Minnesota school after a lengthy fight over accommodations.

The student, identified only by her first name - Ava - sued the Osseo School District for discrimination. She cannot attend school before noon. Her school is now under court order to extend her school day until 6 p.m.

For her entire life, Ava has had a rare form of epilepsy called Lennox-Gastaut Syndrome. She has intellectual disabilities as well as seizures. The seizures are most severe in the morning.

The Supreme Court will consider whether Ava and her family has to show the school acted in "bad faith or gross misjudgment" in the debate over her accommodations.

The teen's family said the school applied a more stringent test than is required and the courts that are mistakenly applying it have unfairly ignored discrimination claims from hundreds of disabled students fighting for an education. Requests for evening instruction at home were denied.

"This question presented comes up frequently in litigation brought by children with disabilities," attorneys for the family told the justices. "It should now be resolved by this court."

The school district said courts all agree that a student has to prove an intent to discriminate.

And that didn't happen in this case, the district said, because the school made "persistent efforts" to accommodate the student's epilepsy.

"Although petitioner's parents disagree with some decisions the district made, those disagreements do not evince discriminatory intent under any standard used in any circuit," the school's lawyers told the court.

The family has taken action under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which requires a free appropriate education to children with disabilities, and also sued the district under the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act, which protect students from disability discrimination.

The St. Louis-based 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals agreed with the district court that the suit should be dismissed because "a school district's simple failure to provide a reasonable accommodation is not enough to trigger liability."

(Source: USA Today)

Civic plaza to be improved

A $175,000 plan to address pedestrian concerns and accessibility at Rochester's Peace Plaza is moving forward. City Council members said more still needs to be done.

"I think we need to move on and find a solution, find a new solution," Rochester City Council member Norman Wahl said at a February 19 council meeting, asking for a more aggressive approach.

Others agreed that a different approach would be preferred but cited limited funding for options that included pouring cement walkways along the north and south sides of the plaza.

Deputy City Administrator Cindy Steinhauser said other approaches could cost significantly more than the $175,000 already approved by the state Destination Medical Center Corp. board and require up to 15 months of disruption along the plaza and First Avenue.

"We have heard concerns from businesses about not impacting their front door, and we want to be sympathetic to that," she said, adding that Peace Plaza is expected to be one place downtown without extensive construction in the next year or two.

She said taking smaller steps allows a chance to determine whether future plans need to be made for a more aggressive approach.

The council voted 5-2 to support the staff plan, with Wahl and council member Shaun Palmer asking for a different approach.

Council member Andy Friederichs said it's not ideal, but it's action headed in the right direction.

"At this point, not having a great solution and a big bucket of money to throw at something, I do feel it's the best option at the moment," he said.

The approved Peace Plaza effort project aims to expand the use of smooth pavers by replacing portions of Ann Hamilton's "A Song for Water" art installation , which features words with raised lettering that can be read when moving through the plaza.

Steinhauser said the work is expected to be completed with limited disruption and continued assessment throughout the summer. At the same time, more analysis is expected to determine why pavers are shifting, since underground heating is expected to eliminate the effects of winter frost and other concerns. The issues have added to hazards and disability access issues at the plaza.

(Source: Rochester Post-Bulletin)

Council president steps down

Citing mental and physical health reasons, Ward Four Council Member and St. Paul Council President Mitra Jalali is stepping down. She announced her resignation January 25, saying she will stay on for the first council meeting in February and then take a leave of absence.

"As council president, I have done everything in my power to help our new council succeed and to represent what principled, progressive, and effective elected leadership looks like. Real leadership is about the team, not the individual, and our community sent this team to do historic work," Jalali wrote.

In her announcement, Jalali said that serving as an elected official has been "negatively impacting" her health. She first discussed the health issues with her health care professionals in 2023, but went to become council president in 2024, taking on more responsibilities.

In her statement, Jalali said that as much as she loves St. Paul, her well-being is not the price she can pay by staying on the council.

As of deadline, the process of naming an interim council member hadn't been announced. Jalali was still listed on council agendas as of late February.

Typically the council has an open application process and makes an appointment. An appointee serves until a special election. Council members in the past have given preference to appointees who commit to not seeking the seat on a permanent basis.

Jalali was last elected in 2023, to a term ending in 2028.

She first won a 2018 special election.

Pressures on elected officials and how those pressures can affect mental health have increasingly been in the news nationwide.

Jalali is the first Asian American woman and the second woman of color elected to the council. She was also the first to openly identify as a member of the LGBTQ community to be elected. She has served on a host on city and regional committees and boards.

(Source: Midway-Como Monitor)

Data sought on facilities

A woman who had suffered a stroke, was blind in one eye and mostly blind in the other transferred from a nursing home to Golden Nest Assisted Living in northeast Minneapolis. Her second-floor room was 20 feet from the front stairs.

Two days later, in September, 2024, she was found at the bottom of those stairs, unresponsive. She died at the hospital three hours later. State officials said in a recently released report that Golden Nest was at fault; the woman should not have been walking alone.

It is the third time Golden Nest has been cited in a resident's death. In 2018, a woman with dementia wandered outside in the cold and died. In 2017, a resident fell and was left bleeding on the floor for four hours.

Yet, for Minnesotans searching for information about facilities for a loved one, reports about those incidents are no longer on the state Department of Health's website. In an email, agency spokesman Garry Bowman said reports are removed after "7 years for substantiated findings, 4 years for inconclusive findings, and 3 years for not substantiated findings per state statute."

While state law allows the records to come down, advocates say the difficulty of tracking incidents is another example of a blind spot in Minnesota's lack of accountability. State officials acknowledged they don't keep a tally of assisted living and nursing home deaths due to negligence.

"It's just such an atrocity and they keep happening," said Kristine Sundberg, executive director of Elder Voice Advocates, a Minnesota coalition of elders, adults with disabilities and their families. "And for-profit, small providers are trying to reduce the oversight that assisted living licensure requires. How do you do that and still keep people safe?"

Golden Nest administrator Hongjoo Lee didn't responded to multiple phone messages seeking comment from the *Minnesota Star Tribune*.

In response to the 2018 death, Lee told the *Minnesota Star Tribune* then that she didn't agree with the state's finding of neglect. But she said she missed the deadline for appealing the findings.

The for-profit company has two facilities: assisted living in the 1900 block of 19th Avenue NE., and a residence in the 6700 block of Emerson Avenue in Richfield.

Eilon Caspi, an elder mistreatment researcher and Elder Voice board member, has been downloading reports from the state Department of Health and loading the data into a free tool, Elder Care IQ.

There, people can track neglect cases in care facilities. So far, Elder Voice Advocates has found more than 50 substantiated reports of neglect in Minnesota long-term care facilities in 2023 and 2024 – including more than 26 deaths.

Caspi cited a number of examples where department investigators found neglect of supervision by assisted living facilities.

While these reports are public and searchable, Caspi said the state's system is "difficult to navigate." And even if people find incidents of neglect, they cannot find more than one at a time.

Gaps in the system, including cases that do not show up during appeal, are some of the reasons why even newer findings might not show up, Caspi said.

"Half the states don't even post completed investigations online," Caspi said. "Sometimes, you can find a single paragraph summary.

State lawmakers have called for better ways to track data.

(Source: Minnesota Star Tribune)

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Advocates for Medicaid/Medical Assistance draw attention to possible cuts

Proposed federal cuts to Medicaid are causing alarm for those who rely on the program and for more than 150 Minnesota health care and advocate organizations. Advocates gathered February 20 at the state capitol to call attention to the threat ahead. Roughly 1.4 million Minnesotans could be affected if the cuts are made.

About half of those affected would be children. Another 125,000 are people with disabilities.

Another issue eyed in Congress is that of considering requiring enrollees to prove that they are working in order to use Medicaid. This is seen as creating more barriers to health care.

Advocates have also alerted Minnesota's Congressional delegation, Minnesota legislators and Gov. Tim Walz. They cite the severe impacts on the health and well-being of more than one million Minnesotans who get care through Minnesota's Medicaid program, which in the state is called Medical Assistance/MA.

Federal lawmakers in early February passed a budget resolution directing the House Energy and Commerce Committee to reduce the federal deficit by $880 billion over 10 years. It's a target Republicans have indicated they will hit primarily by cutting Medicaid.

The This Is Medicaid coalition is making the case for saving Medicaid. The coalition was formed eight years ago when Minnesota health care advocates came together to fight cuts to Medicaid through repeal of the Affordable Care Act.

Coalition members find themselves defending against harmful federal funding cuts or policy changes to Medicaid. They also want to raise awareness among Minnesota's policy makers and members of the general public about the threats ahead.

The Arc Minnesota Public Policy Director Tina Rucci said the cuts would have a dramatic impact. "The size of the cuts being proposed in Congress make it impossible for people to not lose coverage and for covered services to not be eliminated," she said.

"For almost 60 years, Medicaid has been a lifeline for millions of people, now over 1.3 million Minnesotans from every corner of our state," said Sue Abderholden, executive director of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) Minnesota. "When looking to cut billions of dollars from the federal government budget, Congress has turned their eyes toward Medicaid. It's easy to look at the dollar amounts and forget the faces, and the lives of those who would be impacted."

Mental health advocates, people who receive Medical Assistance, and providers have expressed fears about what would happen if Medicaid cuts or harmful policy changes are made at the federal level.

Medical Assistance covers Minnesotans from birth to old age. Abderholden cited many services Medical Assistance provides. Children can have regular check-ups, developmental screenings and early intervention with health conditions so they can grow up healthy.

People with disabilities can leave institutions and can be in their home communities. People with mental illnesses and substance use disorders can access the medications, therapy and in-home supports that help them recover and become re-engaged with their community. Older adults are able to stay in their homes as they age and be cared for in a nursing home when needed.

"Medicaid not only supports lives – but communities," Abderholden said. "Without Medicaid, our community institutions – our hospitals, clinics, mental health and (substance abuse disorder) providers, nursing homes – would be overwhelmed with uncompensated care, and our emergency departments would face even greater pressures as they become the only places where uninsured people can access care."

Other speakers focused on the clients they serve. Lindsay Leemann is a licensed professional clinical counselor with North Homes Children and Family Services, a nonprofit dedicated to providing comprehensive mental health services to children and families in the northern part of the state. She oversees school-based mental health services, working directly with families to help them navigate the often-overwhelming process of accessing care.

"It's no secret that mental health care is expensive, and for too many families, the fear and shame of being unable to pay stops them from seeking help altogether," Leemann said. "I have seen firsthand how this prevents parents from taking that first, most critical step toward getting their child the care they need. Medicaid removes that barrier, allowing families to focus on what truly matters: getting help, not worrying about how to afford it."

Justin Schafer, a second-year psychiatry resident at Hennepin Healthcare with a clinical rotation at Sanford in Bemidji, is concerned that federal cuts to Medicaid will make accessing health care more difficult for Minnesotans living in Greater Minnesota. Much of Schafer's work is with people struggling with opioid addiction.

"Big cuts to Medicaid will only exacerbate the challenges we face with access to care in rural areas," Schafer said. "Cuts to Medicaid will force patients to forego services, pursue them in the emergency room, or place responsibility on family members to care for their loved ones with complex health care needs."

Clients also worry. AJ Grant lives in Minneapolis and is one of the one in five Minnesotans who relies on Medical Assistance for their health insurance. Grant, a second-year pharmacy student, explained how an expensive insurance plan would mean making difficult choices as to which crucial bills to pay or even being able to stay in school.

"Being able to rely on Medical Assistance for my health care coverage allows me to completely focus on school as I work to become a trusted medical professional that helps people get the medication and other services they need to live their lives," Grant said.

The big worry in Minnesota is that if the federal programs are cut, the state would either have to acquiesce to the cuts or fill the gap. That would means cuts to an array of other state services.

Minnesota is already facing a multi-billion dollar budget deficit, and additional state Medicaid spending would require tax increases or cuts to other priorities like public education, parks or transportation.

"We simply want to help people understand that Medicaid is something that makes our state stronger, safer and healthier," Rucci said.

FOCUS

From page 1

Bill sponsors Patti Anderson (R-Dellwood) presented the bill in mid-February to the House State Government Finance and Policy Committee. It was sent to the House Human Services Finance and Policy Committee on s split voice vote.

Anderson has presented the proposed offices as being nonpartisan so that staff can work without threats. The contends that the state's inspector generals, appointed by the governor to serve six different agencies, aren't being effective.

The bill has met criticism from DFLers who contend that it isn't fully fleshed out. Erin Campbell, commissioner of Minnesota Management and Budget, sent a letter to the committee outlining several concerns as well. Campbell noted that no other state has an inspector general with executive branch oversight responsibilities appointed by a legislative entity.

The House also has a new committee, which has the goal of preventing state grant dollars from being misspent. The House Fraud Prevention and State Agency Oversight Policy Committee is chaired by Rep. Kristin Robbins (R-Maple Grove). At its first meeting, she cited the roughly $610 million in fraud over the last six years in Minnesota, calling it an "appalling waste of taxpayers' hard-earned money."

She also said that the committee mission is to ensure that money is going to the need and not the greedy, by getting to the root of problems that lead to fraud.

The Office of the Legislative Auditor has indicated in presentations that problems have included a lack of training for grants management staff as well as a the lack of a standard statewide grant registry system.

Mental Health Day on the Hill was the first of the large-scale disability rallies of the 2025 session, held February 20.

More than 600 people from around the state attended the Mental Health Legislative Network rally and information session. The network represents more than 40 organizations. They heard from speakers at the National Guard Armory before trekking to the capitol for a rally. The rally was followed by visits with state lawmakers.

This year's theme was From Crisis to Recovery: A Path Forward for Mental Health. A repeated message is the need to build the state's mental system, so that it can better serve people of all ages.

"We need to increase the capacity of our mental health system at all levels so that we are not in a perpetual state of crisis," said National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) Minnesota Executive Director Sue Abderholden. "We have increased needs, we need to increase funding to meet them."

Todd Archbold, LSW, MBA, Chief Executive Officer of PrairieCare spoke about needs for youth mental health services "Our youth deserve a system that is not only compassionate but also adequately funded and equipped to meet their needs. Stagnant Medicaid rates continue to hinder growth and jeopardize the viability of many mental health providers. Together, we can ensure that no child falls through the cracks and that families have access to the care they need to thrive."

A wide array of issues are being brough forward this session, including increasing rates for inpatient and outpatient mental health and substance abuse disorder care; ensuring access to mental health care for students; requiring health plans to cover effective mental health treatment and the workforce shortage.

One effort is to sustain FastTrackerMN.org, a web-based directory for all Minnesotans to search and find real-time access to treatment openings, services and facilities.

More rallies and information sessions are coming up. Minnesota Council on Disability hosts its 2025 Legislative Forum between 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Friday, March 14. It is a hybrid event that can be joined either in person at the Minnesota Department of Revenue or virtually.

The Zoom link will be available on the MCD website and sent out during the week of March 10. Visit the MCD event page for more details, at *https://www.disability.state.mn.us/events-and-outreach/mcd-events/mcd-2025-legislative-forum/*

Participate in discussions and engage with policymakers.

Disability Services Day at the Capitol is 10 a.m. Tuesday, March 18, 2025. Hundreds of advocates will be on hand for a rally and visits to state lawmakers. Find details at *https://www.arrm.org/events2/day-at-capitol*

Disability Day at the Capitol is 9 a.mn.-noon Tuesday, March 25. The theme is Disability Justice: Defining our Future, Remembering the Past. The rally in the capitol rotunda is 11-11:45 a.m. Arrive earlier to take part in poster making and opportunities to talk to representatives. Register at *https://www.mnccd.org/2025-disability-advocacy-day.html*

In terms of advocacy, one big change is the resignation of Trevor Turner, MCD's director of public policy. Turner has worked at the state council since October 2020. His final meeting with MNCCD was February 19. He has been a fixture at the capitol on disability issues and a committee leader for MNCCD.

Turner is returning to the Starkey Hearing Foundation, where he worked between January 2016 and October 2020. He left Starkey as manager of international programs and returns as vice president for international programs and development. Turner will be based in Minnesota.



NAMI Minnesota

The annual mental health rally and advocacy day drew a huge crowd.

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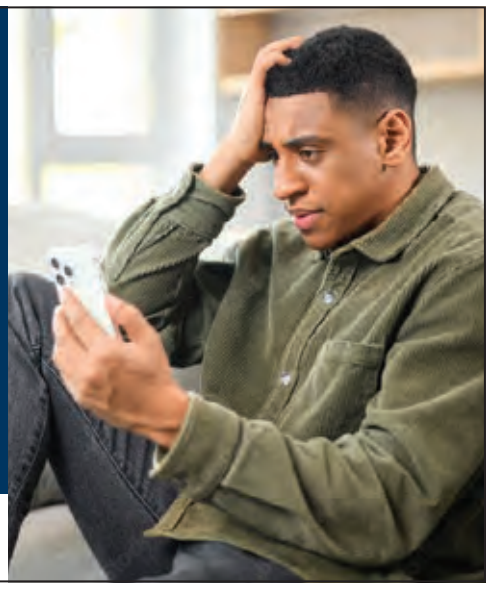

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For March, 23 new books will premiere. Radio Talking Book is not just for listeners with visual disabilities. Anyone with difficulty reading or turning pages can enjoy the service.

The sampling published monthly in *Access Press* doesn't represent the full array of programming. Listen to RTB's live or archived programs online at *www.mnssb.org/rtb,* and learn more about programs.

Hear programming on a hand-held mobile device, for either iOS or Android. Visit the Apple App Store for iOS, or Google Play for Android, and download the Minnesota Radio Talking Book app.

Missed a book broadcast? Access it for one week following its original broadcast in the online weekly program archive.

For help accessing the archive, contact Ronnie Washington at 651-539-1424 or *SSB.Equipment@state.mn.us.*

If the book's broadcast is no longer available in the archive, contact staff librarian Molly McGilp at 651.539.1422 or *Molly.McGilp@state.mn.us*

Books broadcast on the Minnesota Radio Talking Book Network are available for loan through the Minnesota Braille and Talking Book Library in Faribault. The catalog is at *www.mnbtbl.org*. Call 800-722-0550, Mon-Fri, 9 am - 4 pm CST.

Updates are on the Facebook site Minnesota Radio Talking Book.

Audio information about the daily book listings is on the National Federation for the Blind (NFB) Newsline. Register for NFB Newsline by calling 651-539-1424. The NFB-NEWSLINE service provides access to more than 500 magazines and newspapers. To learn more, visit *www.nfb.org/programs-services/nfb-newsline;* 612-562-7803

Staff welcomes any feedback or suggestions. Contact Joseph Papke at 651-539-2316 or *joseph.papke@state.mn.us.* Contact Tom Conry at 651-642-0880 or *thomas.conry@state.mn.us* with comments about periodicals and programming.

Chautauqua*
Monday – Friday 6 a.m.
How the World Ran Out of Everything, nonfiction by Peter S. Goodman, 2024. A deeply informative look at how the supply chain operates, and why its reform is crucial—not only to avoid dysfunction in daily lives, but to protect the fate of global fortunes. Read by Yelva Lynfield. 19 broadcasts; begins Tue, March 4.

Same as Ever, nonfiction by Morgan Housel, 2023. A look at how human nature is the great constant in the history of change. Read by Pat Ocken. Six broadcasts; begins Mon, March 31.

Past is Prologue*
Monday – Friday 11 a.m.
*A Murder on the Hill, n*onfiction by Roger Barr, 2024. The story of a mysterious murder of a woman in Depression-era St. Paul that was shrouded in scandal, innuendo, police neglect and media sensationalism. Read by Dan Sadoff. 13 broadcasts; begins Thu, March 13. - L, S, V, G, R.

Bookworm*
Monday – Friday 12 p.m.
Whale Fall, fiction by Elizabeth O'Connor, 2024. A stunning debut about loss, isolation, folklore and the joy and dissonance of finding oneself by exploring life outside one's community. Read by Silvester Vicic. Four broadcasts; begins Tue, March 11.

The End of Drum-Time (rebroadcast), fiction by Hanna Pylväinen, 2023. An epic love story about a young reindeer herder and a minister's daughter in the nineteenth century Arctic Circle. Read by Jeffrey Weihe. 15 broadcasts; begins Mon, March 17.

The Writer's Voice*
Monday – Friday 1 p.m.
*Charlie Chaplin vs. America, n*onfiction by Scott Eyman, 2023. The shocking, must-read story of Charlie Chaplin's years of exile from the United States during the postwar Red Scare, and how it ruined his film career. Read by John McClure. 15 broadcasts; begins Wed, March 12. -L.

Choice Reading*
Monday – Friday 2 p.m.
The Sunset Crowd, fiction by Karin Tanabe, 2023. A tale of survival and reinvention, of faking it until you make it, and the glittering appeal of success and stardom. Read by Mary Knatterud. 10 broadcasts; begins Thu, March 6. - L

Fire Exit, Fiction by Morgan Talty, 2024. A masterful and unforgettable story of family, legacy, bloodlines, culture and inheritance, and what, if anything, people owe one another. Read by Tom Speich. Eight broadcasts; begins Thu, March 20. – L

Afternoon Report*
Monday – Friday 4 p.m.
The Age of Grievance, nonfiction by Frank Bruni, 2024. A lucid, powerful examination of the ways in which grievance has come to define the current culture and politics, on both the right and left. Read by Robb Empson. 10 broadcasts; begins Mon, March 17.

Power and Progress, nonfiction by Daron Acemoglu & Simon Johnson, 2023. A bold reinterpretation of economics and history that will fundamentally change how one sees the world. Read by Parichay Rudina. 21 broadcasts; begins Mon, March 31.

Night Journey*
Monday –Friday 7 p.m.
Northwoods, fiction by Amy Pease, 2024. A murder with ties to America's opioid epidemic reveals the dark underbelly of an idyllic Midwestern resort town. Read by Therese Murray. 11 broadcasts; begins Thu, March 13. – L

Ash Dark as Night, fiction by Gary Phillips, 2024. In the follow-up to One-Shot Harry, fearless crime photographer and occasional private eye Harry Ingram finds himself in the LAPD's crosshairs after capturing damning evidence of police brutality. Read by John Gunter. 10 broadcasts; begins Mon, March 31. – L

Off the Shelf*
Monday – Friday 8 p.m.
*Mania, f*iction by Lionel Shriver, 2024. A brilliant subversive novel about a lifelong friendship threatened by culture wars. Read by Robb Empson. 11 broadcasts; begins Tue, March 4. – L

You Are Here, fiction by David Nicholls, 2024. An uplifting, relatable, and satisfyingly realistic love story about second chances to cure any lingering lockdown blues. Read by Dan Sadoff. 11 broadcasts; begins Wed, March 19. – L, S

Potpurri
Monday – Friday 9 p.m.
Cue the Sun, nonfiction by Emily Nussbaum, 2024. A sweeping cultural history of America's most influential, and most divisive, artistic phenomenon: reality television. Read by Pat Ocken. 17 broadcasts; begins Mon, March 10. – L

Good Night Owl
Monday – Friday 10 p.m.
Mania, fiction by Lionel Shriver, 2024. A brilliant subversive novel about a lifelong friendship threatened by culture wars. Read by Robb Empson. 11 broadcasts; begins Tue, March 4. – L

You Are Here, fiction by David Nicholls, 2024. An uplifting, relatable, and satisfyingly realistic love story about second chances to cure any lingering lockdown blues. Read by Dan Sadoff. 11 broadcasts; begins Wed, March 19. – L, S

RTB After Hours*
Monday – Friday 11 p.m.
The Winner, fiction by Teddy Wayne, 2024. A dark, explosive literary thriller that brilliantly skewers the elite and puts a fresh twist on getting what one deserves. Read by Pat Ocken. 10 broadcasts; begins Mon, March 17. – L, S

Funny Story, fiction by Emily Henry, 2024. A shimmering, joyful new novel about a pair of opposites with the wrong thing in common. Read by Eileen Barratt. 12 broadcasts; begins Mon, March 31

Weekend Program Books

Your Personal World, 1 p.m. Sat, presents *Reasons Not to Worry* by Brigid Delaney, read by Bev Burchett, - L ; followed by *Living For Pleasure* by Emily A. Austin, read by Lannois Neely.

For the Younger Set, 11 a.m. Sun, presents *Gather* by Kenneth M. Cadow, read by Peter Danbury, – L; followed by *The Roof Over Our Heads* by Nicole Kronzer, read by Stuart Holland.

Poetic Reflections, noon Sun, presents *Bad Hobby* by Kathy Fagan, read by Jan Pettit, – L; followed by *Rose Quartz* by Sasha LaPointe, read by Mary Knatterud; followed by *Daywork* by Jessica Fisher, read by Mary Knatterud.

The Great North, 4 p.m. Sun, presents *Gunflint Falling* by Cary J. Griffith, read by Jodi Lindskog; followed by *Turnout* by Joan Anderson Growe, read by Michelle Juntunen.

All times listed are Central Standard Time.

Abbreviations
V – violent content
R – racial epithets
L – strong language
S – sexual situation
G – gory descriptions

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TAKE NOTE!

Survey, documentary offered

The Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities is on a mission to create a brighter future for Minnesotans with developmental disabilities—and the council needs help from the community.

Take part in the council's Quality of Life Assessment Survey. The survey will include questions about different parts of life, like being independent, productive, making personal choices, and feeling included in the community.

By sharing thoughts in this important survey, participants can help guide the efforts to improve the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities across Minnesota.

While at the council's website, watch a new documentary. Based on the book by Susan Bartlett Foote, The Crusade for Forgotten Souls explores Minnesota's institutional reform efforts from 1948 to 1952. Watch the full documentary to see the story of how a small group of reformers and an enlightened governor made Minnesota come out of the darkness and begin better treatment practices.

Find the survey and watch the documentary at *https://mn.gov/mnddc/*

Take Note! of the change

The longtime Opportunities and Enjoy! calendars are now Take Note! *Access Press* is listing fewer calendar items in print and encouraging more to be posted online. The change allows more immediate information about upcoming events.

Online options include our free events calendar. Ways to post an event can be found at *www.accesspress.org*, under the listings tab. The event must be disability-focused, offer accommodations or led by a disability service organization. Anyone with questions can contact Editor Jane McClure at *jane@accesspress.org* or 651-644-2133 ext. 1

Another option is to consider an online ad to get the word out. A third, ongoing option for an interested business or disability service organization is to sponsor our online calendar, being a sponsor is a great way to support Minnesota's disability community and its events. Information can be obtained by emailing *ads@accesspress.org*

In Memoriam

Lou "The Photo Guy" Michaels captured decades of community events

Lou "The Photo Guy" Michaels enjoyed his lifelong vocation as a photographer, including work for *Access Press*. Michaels died in February after a bout with cancer. He was 81 and lived in St. Paul.

The Detroit native was known for his quick wit and relentless dedication to his craft. He was a master of turning ordinary moments into extraordinary memories with the click of his camera shutter. He took pictures for numerous newspapers and other clients around the region.



Lou "The Photo Guy" Michaels

The *Park Bugle* was one of the many other places Michaels' photos appeared. The following is excerpted from *Bugle* Editor Scott Carlson's tribute to Michaels.

In his more than 60-year career in photojournalism, Lou Michaels let his pictures do his talking. . .

"I cover all the angles and I make people smile with the lens cap on," Lou used to say.

Lou was a dedicated photographer, taking on his assignments with enthusiasm and diligence. His strong work ethic made him a reliable mainstay, always turning around his work in a timely fashion.

For Lou, shooting photos was a labor of love. During his career, he said he accumulated a file of more than 9 million photos in his digital archive, which was a part of his LouThePhotoGuy business.

"What could I see through the lens? I just enjoyed photography," said Lou, who grew up in the Detroit area and had photo mentors from the *Detroit Free Press* and other professionals that guided him along the way.

Lou's first photo gig came at age 19 when he shot pictures at a small birthday party for a friend and was paid $150.

"That's where it all started," he said. "I did small jobs so I could buy a newer camera. I was the high school photographer and in college for the college paper." He graduated from Henry Ford High School in Detroit and attended community college at McComb and Wayne State in Michigan.

Perhaps Lou's proudest photojournalism honor came in 2019 when he was inducted into the National Press Club. in Washington, D.C.

The full personal tribute to Michaels can be read on the Park Bugle website, at *https://www.parkbugle.org/*

Beyond his career, Michaels was a dedicated member of many organizations, including the American Legion, VFW, Jewish War Veterans, National Photography League, Legion Riders, Oddfellows and Kiwanis. He was historian for his American Legion District and also served as Winter Carnival Senior Royalty.

He enjoyed many hobbies including coin collecting, movies, history and ham radio.

He is survived by his wife Tamara Michaels; his daughter, Holly Foster; two grandchildren and one great-grandchild. Services have been held.

Anderson led special education

John Philp Anderson was a pioneering special education director in Minnesota, as part of his long career in the mental health field. Anderson died in January. He was 85 and lived in Greenbank, Washington

Born in Minneapolis, Anderson grew up in Isle and Onamia. He met his future wife, Adele Carlson, on a high school choir trip.

Anderson was a graduate of Bethel College and then went on to two years of seminary. He worked as a social worker for the state, and completed a master's degree in social work at the University of Minnesota in 1968. He later earned a PhD in educational psychology.

He served as director of special education for St. Public Schools. Later oin his career he was director of mental health and a therapist for Aspen Medical Group.

Anderson served on the boards of Arlington House and People Incorporated. He enjoyed woodworking, boating and writing.

He is survived by his wife, a daughter and her family, and two brothers and their families. Services have been held.

PEOPLE AND PLACES

From page 7

decades, we're honored to be included in a book that provides such valuable lessons for others to follow.

Hidden Talent has just been published. Watch for author DeLong and MDI President/CEO Eric Black in upcoming interviews.

Many appointees announced

Gov. Tim Walz and Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan have announced numerous appointments to state boards, commissions and committees that affect the lives of Minnesotans with disabilities.

Appointments and reappointments were made to the Minnesota Board on Aging. Jane Pederson and Leonard Levine, both from Woodbury, were reappointed along with Khadija Zeig, Cottage Grove.

Sally Macut, Minnetonka, replaces Anjuli Cameron. The board develops, coordinates, evaluates, and administers federal and state funds for programs for the aging; makes grants to seven area agencies on aging and nonprofit agencies; and serves as advocate for older persons.

The State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind has one new member and one returnee. Paulo Matheus Carvalho Chaves de Castro, Minneapolis, is a client assistance program representative, replacing Ryan Haenze. Robert Hobson, Maplewood, was reappointed as a vocational rehabilitation counselor. The council advises the commissioner of the Department of Employment and Economic Development about programs of State Services for the Blind and performs other functions as provided in state and federal statute.

The State Rehabilitation Council has several new and returning members.

Ty Barth, Jordan, is a new business, industry and labor representative. Barth replaces Scott Berscheid, Jill Belland, Buffalo, is a new appointee to represent current or former recipients of Vocational Rehabilitation Services. Belland replaces Michael Etten. Sue Fager, Minneapolis, will represent PACER, replacing Deanne Curran.

Ben Coady, Rochester, returns as a business, industry and labor representative, as does James Houston, Burnsville. Shelly Weaver, Naytahwaush, was reappointed as American Indian vocational rehabilitation project representative. Mike Windsperger, Lake Crystal, was reappointed as a vocational rehabilitation counselor member.

The council works jointly with the Minnesota Vocational Rehabilitation Program to develop goals and priorities, assess customer satisfaction, conduct needs assessments, and seek citizen input through public forums.

Six people were reappointed to the Governor's Council on Age-Friendly Minnesota. They are Faron Jackson Sr., Cass Lake; Dian Lopez, Alexandria; Rajean Moone, Woodbury; Russell Pointer Sr., Lakeville; Mimi Stender, Duluth and Sandra Vargas, Golden Valley. The Governor's Council on an Age-Friendly Minnesota was established to work across sectors to ensure that Minnesota is an age-friendly state.

The Minnesota Commission of the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing has new and returning members. Alexander Lucier, Mankato, is a new at-large member, replacing Sally Prouty. Also appointed as a new at-large member is Autumn Moder, White Bear Lake, replacing Mohamed Mourssi-Alfash. Rebecca Thomas, Ramsey, was reappointed as an at-large board member.

The Minnesota Commission of the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing represents and advocates for deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing Minnesotans via public policy.

35 YEARS
Anniversary CELEBRATION
The Americans with Disabilities Act is 35 years old this year and so is *Access Press!*
Be part of our July anniversary issue. We'll honor our Minnesota heroes of the ADA, present a timeline of Minnesota disability history and much more
Get involved! Visit *www.accesspress.org* for details or call 651-644-2133.
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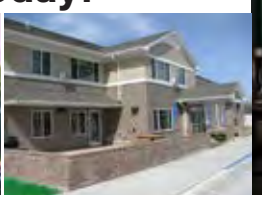


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