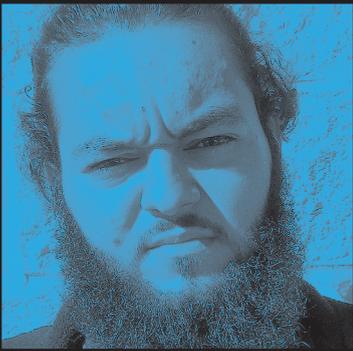


\$1

# ThreeSixty

Minnesota Teens Report Stories & Issues That Matter



## ILHAN OMAR

Before election, Omar talks candidacy, controversy and making history as a Somali-American legislator. **Page 16**



Making the Twin Cities a better place for young people. **Page 11**

### ALSO INSIDE

The first-generation college student reality. **Page 6**

Q-and-A with St. Cloud Police Chief. **Page 24**

Student-athletes take a knee. **Page 8**



# CHANGEMAKERS

REAL STUDENTS. REAL STORIES.

# ThreeSixty

VOLUME 7 • ISSUE 2

JOURNALISM

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PHOTO COURTESY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

Danielle Wong, left, a freshman at the University of St. Thomas, takes a photo with her mother, Retno, center, and younger sister, Isabelle, during the 2016 Great Minnesota Media Get-Together, a fundraiser for ThreeSixty Journalism, on Oct. 28 at St. Thomas. Wong was honored during the fundraiser as the recipient of the 2016 ThreeSixty Scholarship.

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**First-gen reality** New research highlights first-generation students and their families navigating college. **Page 6**

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**Hall pass unhappiness** Champlin Park's new pass system doesn't sit well with some students. **Page 7**

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**Ethiopian protest** Feyisa Lilesa's gesture during Olympics hits home in Minnesota. **Page 25**

**LGBT history** Students, others weigh in on California measure to teach classes in schools. **Page 25**

# About the ThreeSixty Scholar Award

EACH YEAR, high school seniors who are graduates of ThreeSixty programming compete for the ThreeSixty Scholar award—a full-tuition, four-year scholarship to study Communication and Journalism at the University of St. Thomas. Here is an update on our recent scholars.



Danielle Wong

**Danielle Wong, 2016 Scholar**

Wong, a freshman at the University of St. Thomas, is taking her first Communication and Journalism course while working as a reporter for TommieMedia.com, St. Thomas' student-run news organization. Wong also participates in several St. Thomas clubs and organizations, such as Asian Students in America, Black Empowerment Student Alliance, the Feminist Community, the COJO Living Learning Community, Residence Hall Association, Murray Hall Association and Cadenza.



Amira Warren-Yearby

**Amira Warren-Yearby, 2015 Scholar**

Warren-Yearby, a sophomore at the University of St. Thomas, is the marketing and public relations chair of the St. Thomas Black Empowerment Student Alliance. She also is a tutor at ANEW BAM and teaches dance with Twin Cities Mobile Jazz at Humboldt High School. Warren-Yearby also is taking a screen-writing class during fall semester.



Deborah Honore

**Deborah Honore, 2014 Scholar**

Honore, a junior at St. Thomas, is studying journalism and new media in Morocco with Round Earth Media during her fall semester. Later in the school year, she plans to travel to South Africa with the St. Thomas Theology Department to study the adverse effects of AIDS and apartheid on South Africans. Honore worked as a campus videographer last summer and edited her documentary, which she shot last January in Ethiopia.



Simeon Lancaster

**Simeon Lancaster, 2013 Scholar**

Lancaster, a senior at St. Thomas, is a student executive and production editor for TommieMedia at St. Thomas and is an intern for PBS NewsHour's The Under-Told Stories Project, whose correspondent, Fred de Sam Lazaro, is based at St. Thomas. Lancaster plans to attend an international reporting trip with the Under-Told Stories Project this school year and earn his journalism and political science degrees.



PHOTO COURTESY OF UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

ThreeSixty Journalism students discuss story ideas during News Team, ThreeSixty's school-year program, in October at St. Thomas.

## Changing for the better

THIS MAY LOOK like a normal edition of ThreeSixty Magazine.

But behind the scenes, we've made a couple of crucial enhancements to the way these stories are created and presented.

The first, and most apparent, of these changes is the new sections in this magazine: News, Active Life, Culture and Voices.

Creating these sections is one of the ways we've increased student collaboration, student interest and student investment in the reporting process at ThreeSixty. Each ThreeSixty student participating on News Team – our school-year program – this year is now part of a team of student journalists that writes for one of those sections in this magazine. We now have News reporters, Active Life reporters, Culture reporters and Voices writers.

Not only do students have the opportunity to write about topics, issues, events and people they're interested in, but also they have the opportunity to bounce ideas off of their peers and contribute to the quality of their section. It's an exciting change for the students, staff and volunteers.



**Miles Trump**  
Program  
Manager

But what type of stories can you expect to see in these sections?

On pages 6–7, you'll find the News section, which will contain a range of hard news, soft news and feature stories on issues and topics that matter to teenagers. Several of our News reporters wrote profiles for our "Changemakers" series, which you can find more about on page 11.

On pages 8–10, you'll find the Active Life section, offering stories about teenagers' active lifestyles inside and outside of school, with a specific focus on sports, other extracurriculars, fitness and health.

On pages 22–25, you'll find the Culture section, which will consist of stories about teenage life in modern-day society, and will have a specific focus on arts and entertainment, technology/new media and other cultural topics that matter to youth.

And on pages 26–29, you'll find the Voices section, comprising teens' first-person perspectives on a number of issues and topics.

Another subtler change we're excited about is to the structure of News Team, which used to meet once per month but now meets in three intensive sessions throughout the school year. ThreeSixty just wrapped up its October session of News Team, which spanned the first four Saturdays of the month. Students and volunteers worked incredibly hard on students' stories and showed great commitment during this time, and the result is the fantastic magazine you have in your hands.

We'll continue with News Team sessions in January (to plan and execute our Youth Digital Media Summit in February) and in March (to create the next edition of the ThreeSixty Magazine).

These changes represent the ways ThreeSixty continues to adapt to our students' needs and to give our students the best opportunities to succeed. And as you'll see through the compelling stories on the following pages, success comes easily for these students.

*“I just wanted to say thank you to the students and the ThreeSixty program. The article from the weekend was wonderful and it has generated some positive comments and interest in our organization.”*

– Darlene Fry, executive director of the Irreducible Grace Foundation, which was featured by ThreeSixty students in the September 2016 ThreeSixty Magazine.

# What people are saying about ThreeSixty Journalism

# Quotes

*“I recently had the pleasure of attending the ThreeSixty Journalism [College Essay] Boot Camp and I was extremely impressed by the students in the program. ThreeSixty Journalism has given talented students an amazing opportunity to further develop their college writing skills and all I can say is wow.”*

– Codi Soeun, admissions counselor at University of St. Thomas

*“I’ve really enjoyed working with the next generation of journalists. It helps me stay on my game as well.”*

– Marcheta Fornoff, associate producer at Minnesota Public Radio and ThreeSixty volunteer

*“If you didn’t go to the fundraiser, you missed out.”*

– Duni Awad, ThreeSixty student, on The Great Minnesota Media Get-Together, a Fundraiser for ThreeSixty

*“I found ThreeSixty just this year and I loved working with young reporters. It always brings me back to the basics. Reminds me of what is the foundation of reporting every time I come back.”*

– Susan Du, staff writer at City Pages and a ThreeSixty volunteer



PHOTO COURTESY OF IBRAHIM HIRSI

Ibrahim Hirsi, a 2006 ThreeSixty Journalism alum, covers immigration and workforce issues for MinnPost. Hirsi's persistence as a journalist paid off when he was hired full-time at MinnPost in February.

## ThreeSixty Alumni Spotlight: Ibrahim Hirsi

### Persistence pays off for MinnPost reporter

WHEN IBRAHIM HIRSI applied for ThreeSixty Journalism summer camp in 2006, one of the application questions asked, "Why do you want to be a part of this program?"

Hirsi boldly responded: "If you allow me to be part of this program, I will use the skills that you teach me to start a school newspaper for my high school."

Hirsi was accepted. A few months later, he began creating a journalism program at his school, Wellstone International High School in Minneapolis.

Now 10 years later, Hirsi is among only a small handful of full-time Somali news reporters in the Twin Cities. He covers workforce and immigration issues for



By Loveisajoy  
Pha  
Culture  
reporter

MinnPost.

Hirsi was born in Somalia and later lived in Kenya before moving to America with his family.

"I came here with a passion for writing. I loved writing and I loved telling stories," said Hirsi. "I never knew that I could actually make a living as a journalist."

That was until Hirsi learned about ThreeSixty Journalism, a program specifically targeting culturally diverse Minnesota teenagers. Lynda McDonnell, the former ThreeSixty

Journalism executive director, remembers Hirsi's camp application well, and she was impressed.

"That's a pretty ambitious promise to say, 'I'll go back to my school and start a student newspaper,'" McDonnell said. "And so I thought, 'Well, this is a guy who is really serious about journalism and willing to make a commitment to practice it in his school.'"

Hirsi found himself quickly learning the basic skills of journalism within the two weeks at ThreeSixty. From interviewing strangers and learning how to cover stories to writing articles, Hirsi developed his abilities and began working on his craft. He later started his high school newspaper, teaching others the skills he had learned at camp.

Hirsi went on to study journalism at the University of Minnesota with a focus on print reporting. He worked for the Minnesota Daily, the university's student newspaper, and interned at Newsday for a summer during college.

As a sophomore in college, Hirsi received a research internship with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to travel to Dadaab, the world's largest refugee camp, in Nairobi, Kenya. While there, he helped establish a refugee-written publication called "The Refugee," which has now evolved into a magazine.

But finding a full-time job was difficult after he graduated in 2011.

"We had a 'Great Recession,'" Hirsi said. "Jobs weren't available and journalism was even harder. Around the same time, people were getting laid off from the Star Tribune and Pioneer Press."

People close to him suggested he try another career path.

"My family, my brothers and some of my mentors were telling me, 'Hey, Ibrahim, are you sure you still want to do journalism? Because journalism isn't going well, people are getting laid off from their jobs. Are you sure you want to do this?'" he said.

Hirsi stayed patient, using other skills he learned at ThreeSixty and journalism school to land gigs in communications departments for

**HIRSI** continued on page 21

## ThreeSixty, MPR partner at State Fair



STAFF PHOTO

ThreeSixty student Bilan Mohamed (left, middle) talks with fairgoers in August outside of the Minnesota Public Radio booth at the Minnesota State Fair. ThreeSixty students worked as radio producers for MPR during the fair.

By Ka Vang  
Minnesota Public Radio

A SELECTION OF ThreeSixty Journalism students joined Minnesota Public Radio at its Minnesota State Fair booth as radio producers, learning skills that will help them in their journalism careers. Seven students got hands-on experience in radio producing, from coaching interviewees through scripts to working with radio equipment. The students helped with MPR's impact audio booth, where state fairgoers recorded their most meaningful MPR listeners' moments and election questions.

"The ThreeSixty students that were our recording booth producers came to MPR without any experience in radio," said MPR marketing specialist Bethany Barberg. "The students did not shy away from learning a new skill and were excited to get started. Thank you to ThreeSixty for sharing this bright and enthusiastic next generation of journalists with MPR."

Overall, 384 stories were

recorded over the course of the fair with the help of ThreeSixty students, MPR volunteers and staff. The stories will be used for member drives, on-air promos and research.

ThreeSixty student Katelyn Vue, a junior at North High School in North St. Paul, said meeting the listeners was the best part of the experience. "Listeners had stories that were heart-warming and mind-blowing, and all were a lot of fun hearing. I can't wait to see what MPR plans on doing next!"

MPR and ThreeSixty Journalism will partner again next year for the fair.

"MPR is committed to teaching and inspiring the next generation of journalists. Our partnership with ThreeSixty Journalism allows us to do this," said Ka Vang, director of impact and community engagement. "MPR also benefits from having ThreeSixty students at our state fair booth, because their abundance of energy and natural thirst for knowledge rubbed off on the staff, volunteers and state fairgoers visiting our booth."



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARK VANCLEAVE

Josh Crespo, a freshman at the University of St. Thomas, is a first-generation college student. He was a member of a research team that studied first-generation high school students, first-generation college students and their parents when it comes to college.

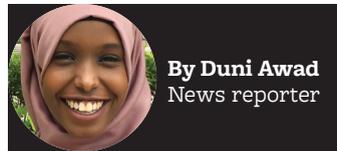
## A unique reality

### New research highlights how first-gen students and families navigate college

LONG BEFORE Josh Crespo became a first-generation college student, he wondered if students of color like himself belonged in college.

“... Growing up, that’s the image you have for yourself,” said Crespo, a freshman at the University of St. Thomas.

First-generation students, such as Crespo, and their families experience a unique “first-gen



By Duni Awad  
News reporter

reality” when it comes to college, according to newly published research conducted by students and staff at Cristo Rey Jesuit High School in Minneapolis and the

University of St. Thomas. The study outlined several major themes that point toward this first-generation reality, including a “hidden curriculum,” college affordability, support and understanding about college.

First-generation college students make up 30 percent of undergraduates in the country, but they are more likely to drop out, enroll part-time and take longer to earn a degree, according to the research.

“Being a first-generation college student, it’s hard because you have no background to it since both of your parents didn’t go to college,” said Gisell Castaneda Garcia, a senior at Cristo Rey who was a member of the research team. “... After doing the research project, it opened my eyes to the fact that I’m

not the only one, that there are a lot of people out there, too.”

The study, which was conducted last school year, was funded by a \$30,000 Youth Participatory Action Research grant that allowed students who are often researched to become the researchers. The research team included 10 high school students from Cristo Rey, three college students from St. Thomas and a recent alum from both schools, as well as St. Thomas professors and Cristo Rey faculty and staff.

The question they were searching to answer: What type of education and preparation do parents and families of first-generation college students need to best support their first-generation child? The team collected its findings through 388 online surveys and 25 in-depth interviews with first-generation high school students, first-generation college students and parents of first-generation students.

When the students first reviewed existing literature and research on first-generation college students as part of the project, they came back the next day feeling dismayed, according to Crespo.

“The reading and the statistics were really discouraging to us,” Crespo said, “but at the same time it gave us motivation to keep going.”

As they kept going, they found several major themes and created

recommendations for first-generation students and their parents.

#### RESEARCH FINDINGS

College affordability is one of the bigger issues that first-generation students face.

Families without college experience or degrees are often stuck in jobs with minimum wage and are living paycheck to paycheck. The research found that 90 percent of students said tuition and the cost of college are the most significant barriers when applying to college. More than 90 percent of students’ parents surveyed said that cost is a major factor in the decision process.

“The cost of college is grossly expensive now,” said Nick Contreras, a religion studies teacher at Cristo Rey and a faculty co-researcher, “and first-generation [students] can’t even get in the door, so how are they going to continue on later?”

The research also shows that many first-generation students need support in high school and once they get into college. The study found first-generation high school students need more information about financial aid and college affordability than their second-generation peers because their parents’ understanding of scholarships, financial support and stability can be lacking. The **FIRST-GEN** *continued on page 14*



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARK VANCLEAVE

Nick Contreras, a teacher at Cristo Rey Jesuit High School and a University of St. Thomas alum, was a faculty co-researcher in the study.

#### KEY FINDINGS

##### First-gen college students and high school students...

- know there is a hidden curriculum and learn quickly they have to make up for not having/knowing it.
- know they will work twice as hard to make similar gains as their first-gen, majority peers.

##### First-gen college students...

- possess wisdom emerging from their lived experiences as first-gen students and first-gen daughters/sons and want to share advice based on those experiences with other first-gen parents and students!
- say they wish their parents knew more/understood more about their

college experiences so they could better support them during the college transition and throughout their college journey.

##### First-gen high school students...

- are uniquely linked to their families in the college process based on their own culturally specific realities. They recognize their family connection is often different from their second-gen peers.
- need specific types of technical support in the college preparation process and repeatedly note how significantly they benefit from excellent college-prep courses, college-prep programs and college-prep nonprofit organizations.

- need much more information about financial aid and college affordability than most of their second-gen peers; they report their families/parents often lack knowledge specifically about scholarships, financial support and budgeting.
- report that, without question, affordability is the key factor for first-generation high school students when choosing which college to apply to or attend.

##### Parents of first-gen students...

- articulate two strong fears: the financial reality of college, and the wellbeing of their child and his/her feeling of

inclusiveness when at college.

- want significantly more knowledge and information; want it in multiple formats (online and in-person); and need/want it in their primary language.
- believe, unlike some of the literature suggests, their children going to college won’t negatively affect their family’s sense of connection or family’s daily functioning, and that parents must provide unconditional encouragement and support about college regardless of their own education level, knowledge, or experience.
- hold strong, positive beliefs about college creating a good future for their children.

SOURCE: YPAR STUDY

# Seeking to engage and unify

## Spring Lake Park creates Black Student Union to raise awareness

SCHOOL'S OUT AT Spring Lake Park High School, but a group of students is staying after class, their eyes glued on a PowerPoint presentation.

Topics on the slides cover social justice issues: police brutality, misogyny and black history. It looks like a typical academic discussion, but these 25 students are here for their personal enlightenment.

In April, for the first time in the school district's history, a Black Student Union formed at Spring Lake Park High School. The club's purpose is to bring consciousness about the lives of black people and unify the diverse school, a mission statement displayed on banners in the hallways of the school. About a third of the school's 1,500 students are students of color and about 14 percent are black, according to the school's website.



By Baher Hussein  
News reporter

Isaacina George, the president of the Black Student Union, said she helped form the group to build a support system for students of color. Anyone is welcome to come and discuss issues in the black community, she said.

"We don't have to react to negative racism," George said. "Violence solves nothing. Troubled kids who make bad decisions and have poor grades are vital. Making them a part of a community with discussions and fun activities will occupy them from making bad choices."

Many young black students have gotten involved because they are



Members of the Spring Lake Park Black Student Union sell chicken as a fundraiser during Homecoming Week.

inspired by recent events of police brutality, according to Jeoffrey Reed, the Black Student Union adviser, dean of students and one of the only African-American staff members at Spring Lake Park.

"This is for the kids, man," Reed said. He added that the club helps students by "making kids feel a part of something, teaching them their history and sparking awareness on what's going on now."

Black Student Union meets for about an hour every Friday. Many are active in the discussions, often led by George. Topics range from misogyny to police brutality. The discussions are respectful, and Black Student Union tries to look at both sides of every story and tries to avoid taking a biased viewpoint, George said.

At meetings, members also have discussed differences in a school where some students wear Black Lives Matter t-shirts and others have confederate flags on their cars. Group members say they are trying to educate students about how to deal with the divide.

Student Eunice Dennis said she joined Black Student Union to "find a group of kids I could relate to."

"There is a divide at our school where social cliques are made up of people with the same race and ethnicity," said Dennis, the group's secretary, "and very rarely is there diversity in a social circle."

But Black Student Union isn't all serious. The group also has fun.

This was clear on a gloomy day in the gym last May, when about 20 students came to Black Student

Union. This was the group's last gathering before the summer started, and members played volleyball and basketball, and were overcome with laughter.

These were low-income students, National Junior Honors Society students, student council members, athletes and band students, all coming together in one place.

Leah Dante, the Black Student Union parliamentarian, joined the group because she felt she had a duty to inform others about what goes on in the black community.

"There comes a time where, yes, there is oppression," Dante said, "but you [also] have to just kick back and have fun."

*Disclaimer: Baher Hussein is a member of the Black Student Union.*

# Use a hall pass or stay in class

## New Champlin Park pass system doesn't sit well with some students



By Amari Graham  
News reporter

THE FIRST DAY of school can be full of surprises.

But this year, when Champlin Park High School junior Lovesajoy Pha learned of a new, more restrictive hall pass system at her high

school, she was more surprised than usual. And not at all pleased.

"When I was first given the pink slip, I thought it was a joke," Pha said of the half-page sheet that contains the hall passes, which are required for trips to the restroom. "Especially for women ... they have feminine needs."

What some students, such as Pha, say is most upsetting about the new pass system is the 12 blank slots on each pass – which represents the limit for leaving the classroom during the three-month trimester. The school principal, however, says the new system is creating a safer environment and keeping students in class.

In order to leave, including using the bathroom, students must receive approval from a teacher and then write down the location where they're going, the time they leave and the time they return.

As the first week passed, students spoke passionately about their dismay, posting on social media and communicating their concerns to teachers. The girls' bathrooms became crowded during times in between classes.

"You can't take up your passing time from class to class," said Pha, who had already used 25 percent of her passes by the end of the first week of school. "Everyone is going to the bathroom, not just you."

Four days into the school year, senior August Bengtson created a post on social media in response to the student concern. Bengtson asked students to "like" or comment on a post on Facebook as a sign of support. He also urged students not to be upset with Principal Michael George, "because he is just doing what he thinks is best for the students," Bengtson wrote.

"It got shared so many times and got over 500 likes combined on Twitter and Facebook," Bengtson said of the post.

Bengtson then brought students' concerns to a meeting with the principal, and after the meeting, **HALL PASS** continued on page 15

# ACTIVE LIFE



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROSIE LETOFSKY

Players on the Minneapolis South High School girls volleyball team take a knee during the national anthem before their game against Minneapolis Washburn on Sept. 15 in Minneapolis.

## Kneeling for change

### Twin Cities high school athletes join national protest

FOR ROSIE LETOFSKY, taking a knee during the national anthem at her volleyball game on Sept. 15 was a no-brainer.

Letofsky, a Minneapolis South High School junior, knelt with the rest of her teammates before the match against Minneapolis Washburn, seeking to raise awareness of injustice in society. After a photo of the moment was tweeted by a national activist and figure in the Black Lives Matter movement, it made national headlines.

“There are so many injustices in America right now, it’s crazy,” Letofsky said. “From Black Lives Matter to the wage gap to LGBTQ rights, there are so many. People are not being treated as people, and that is a huge issue.”

Letofsky is one of several Twin Cities high school athletes—and high school athletes around the country—who have taken a knee to take a stand against racial injustice. Among them are football players



By **Talia Bradley**  
Active Life reporter and section leader

from Minneapolis North and Edina, according to reports, and athletes from Minneapolis Roosevelt.

As students across the Twin Cities participate in this protest, they say they are hoping to raise awareness and see social change.

The movement began with San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick, who sat in protest while the national anthem played during August NFL preseason games. He later knelt during the anthem in NFL games in September.

“I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color,” Kaepernick told NFL Media after he did not stand for the anthem during an August game. “To me, this is bigger than

football and it would be selfish on my part to look the other way.”

As reaction to Kaepernick’s actions spread, Twin Cities students began to get involved. At Minneapolis Public Schools, students received counsel from Michael Walker, director of the Office of Black Male Student Achievement.

“We just tell them that, ‘Hey, I support you and whatever decisions you are going to make as long as it’s not infringing on anyone else’s rights,’” Walker said. “We have no problem with that, but the other component to that is we tell the students that no matter what decision you make, there can be consequences to those decisions, so we want to make sure we outline the pros/cons of the decisions that they are making, so they are aware and informed.”

ThreeSixty talked to three other Minneapolis teen athletes who took part in similar protests with teammates.

#### **Davion Burris, junior, Minneapolis Roosevelt**

As Davion Burris took the field with his fellow Minneapolis Roosevelt football teammates in September, he decided to kneel on the field during the national anthem. A couple of other players did the same.

Their actions came after the team met to discuss participation; the

topic had been brought to coaches’ attention by a player, according to assistant coach Adam Flanders. Athletes were told they could participate as long as they were quiet and respectful to those who continued to stand.

Burris knelt during the anthem to request change, he said. He won’t stand until he feels the country is treating people the way the country is supposed to, he said.

“I hope to get attention to the slow speed of racial progress in the United States,” said Burris, who also cited statistics that highlight racial inequality in the U.S. “To participate, it makes me feel like I’m actually standing up to something with not only words but actions that may help make a change.”

#### **Korie Lyons, junior, Minneapolis Roosevelt**

In October, Korie Lyons and the rest of the Minneapolis Roosevelt

volleyball team lined up for the national anthem.

Instead of standing and singing, they knelt in silence.

Choosing to kneel was an easy decision, Lyons said, because police brutality toward African-Americans is unfair.

“I hope to get my point across in the unfairness toward citizens,” Lyons said. “When participating, it makes me feel as if I am part of a growing community.”

#### **Rachel Lawrence, senior, Minneapolis Roosevelt**

As Rachel Lawrence prepared to cheer on the football team at a game in September, she and the rest of the cheerleaders decided to kneel during the national anthem before the opening kickoff.

Lawrence said America was built on people of color, yet brutalizes and disrespects them while expecting respect in return. Hoping to raise awareness and express her anger and frustration, Lawrence continues to kneel during national anthems, waiting for change, she said.

Lawrence called her action “a form of protest against the brutalities and injustices against people of color in this country.”

“In my opinion, why stand up for a country that was built to stand on our people rather than for them?” she said.

Kaepernick has been quoted saying he will continue his protest. Some local teens are saying the same.

“I will protest as long as I participate in a sport,” Lawrence said.

*“I hope to get attention to the slow speed of racial progress in the United States. To participate, it makes me feel like I’m actually standing up to something with not only words but actions that may help make a change.”*

—Davion Burris, junior at Minneapolis Roosevelt

# A balancing act

## High school athletes do their best to juggle sports and academics, but sometimes struggle

It's 6 A.M. on a Monday when Joey Doyle arrives at the weight room of Minneapolis Southwest High School.

It's still dark outside and the building is empty. Two hours before the halls fill with bustling students, Doyle is here, putting in the work on the bench press and pull-up bar.

Doyle, a Southwest senior, says the early morning workouts are what he feels he needs to stay in top shape and to live up to his title as soccer captain and marquee member of Southwest's state champion Nordic skiing team, as well as his own expectations.

Like many high school athletes across the nation, Doyle struggles at times to juggle the added responsibilities of athletics within his academic schedule, but still feels sports are too important to give up.

"I have little to no social life when I'm in season, and can't waste any time on my phone," Doyle said. "I'm usually lucky enough to get to bed by 11."

Southwest junior Ari Bogen-Grose, 16, plays soccer in the fall, basketball in the winter and baseball in the spring. He preaches the academic responsibility of the student-athlete.

"Something I individually am very good at is juggling my work and setting out a plan [for] doing it, rather than procrastinating until the last minute," Bogen-Grose said. "But even with that skill, the workload I get, on top of the time I spend at practice and games, makes it very tough to handle."

Brennan Hawkins, Southwest's starting quarterback and basketball captain, agrees that it can be



By Aidan Berg  
Active Life  
reporter

difficult to handle the workload.

"It's about taking responsibility and being mature and knowing that you have to do something that you don't want to do," said Hawkins, a senior. "You don't want to go to class, you don't want to do homework, you have other stuff to do."

"But if you do it, your grades are going to be better, you're going to be a better student, you're going to learn these responsibilities and you'll be better as a person."

### BENEFITS OF A BUSY SCHEDULE

Student-athletes have a lot of responsibilities to handle. They often have to think about games and practices on top of class, homework, relationships, family, outside interests and other responsibilities.

Southwest Athletic Director Ryan Lamberty knows finding a balance can be a struggle, but also believes the intense schedule helps students live their best lives.

"We know from stats that athletes get better grades, have better attendance, [are] less likely to drink or do drugs, less likely to have sex earlier, all those things that lead kids to dangerous positions," Lamberty said. "Because they do care about themselves, they do have some external worth that they're worried about."

He added: "I see, on a daily basis, the kids who go to practice after school, in general, they don't



Joey Doyle bench-presses during an early morning workout at Minneapolis Southwest High School. Like many high school athletes, Doyle at times struggles to balance the responsibilities of academics and athletics.

have time to get in trouble because they're so tired. They go home, they do their homework and fall asleep."

Sports are shown to help students achieve higher levels in other areas of life. The U.S. Department of Education says that high school athletes are more likely than non-athletes to attend college and get degrees, and a University of Miami study found that high school athletes are less likely to express hostility toward their classmates.

### WHEN SPORTS COME FIRST

Sometimes, student-athletes put their busy schedules before sleep. Hawkins recalled one time during sophomore year when a Thursday night game and homework kept him up all night.

"I was at home, doing my homework, sitting at my desk from 11 at night to 7 in the morning," he said, "and then I just got ready and went to school. It was kind of crazy."

Some athletes have to develop certain tricks to get by. Bogen-Grose does his homework on the

long bus rides to away games, he said, and leans on his parents for moral support. Hawkins plans to do homework on days when he has no other obligations, he said. Doyle notes that he tries his best to get enough sleep and drink a lot of water so he can concentrate in class.

All three athletes agree that school is more important for them in the long-term. However, they also know there will be times when school may come second to sports.

Doyle recalled a time when he was tasked with studying for a math test that would account for the majority of his grade for the quarter. The week before the test, Doyle went on a week-long trip with the Nordic ski team to West Yellowstone, Montana.

"I had so much fun that I forgot my responsibilities as a student, and didn't study or do any homework," he said. "When I got back to school and took the test, I got a 'C' on it. To say the least, I wasn't very happy with myself."

Hawkins said some nights, the games are just too draining and he can't do the work. Bogen-Grose said he won't ever skip a game or practice because he has schoolwork.

### 'A BIG PART OF WHO I AM'

Some athletes say a sport brings lessons and structure to their lives that they just wouldn't have without it. That makes the balancing act worth it to them, even if they don't have a definite future in athletics.

"Being an athlete is a big part of who I am as a person, and who I see myself as in 20 years," Doyle said. "Will I go [Division I]? Most likely not. But I have learned many valuable lessons through sports, such as how to push yourself, how to trust others and how to manage time wisely."

Hawkins said the camaraderie of team sports are great for high school students who are developing as people.

"You come together, you make friends," he said. "I talk to some people I otherwise never would have talked to because of football and my sports."

For some, such as Doyle, sports will continue to be in the picture.

"Regardless of where I go in life," he said, "I will always take the time to participate in some sort of sport, no matter what it may be."

*"...The workload I get, on top of the time I spend at practice and games, makes it very tough to handle."*

—Ari Bogen-Grose, a three-sport athlete at Minneapolis Southwest.



PHOTO SUBMITTED

Mina Yuan, a senior at Wayzata High School, poses for a photo in Insadong, South Korea, during monsoon season. Yuan studied abroad in South Korea last summer, after her junior year of high school.

## Young globetrotters

### High school students experience new cultures while studying abroad

LAST SUMMER, Mina Yuan traveled on the subway in South Korea for two hours to get to Seoul, the capital city near the North Korean border. She shopped and hung out with friends before returning home to her host family.

A rising senior at Wayzata High School at the time, Yuan studied abroad in Songdo, South Korea, through National Security Language



By **Genesis Buckhalton**  
Active Life  
reporter

Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y), a program sponsored by the U.S. Department of State. NSLI-Y sponsors students to spend six weeks during the summer or a school year

in another country to learn new languages and experience other cultures.

Yuan is one of many high school students across the country who has studied abroad to travel and experience the world at a younger age than most. More than 5,000 students will have completed a NSLI-Y program alone by the end of the 2016-17 program year, according to the organization's website.

Yuan said she learned the importance of studying abroad while "living in Korea, not only seeing the American perspectives of things, but also seeing the Korean perspective and seeing how that different lens of a different culture really affects everything."

"Also [studying abroad] cultivates a kind of independence in you that you really don't experience anywhere else," Yuan said.

In South Korea, Yuan learned

about the country's economic and public health systems, which are two topics she plans to study in college.

"When you are in Korea, if you throw your trash in the wrong bin, a random old lady will come and yell at you because they are all very passionate about keeping their country clean," Yuan said. "They are a very collectivist culture, instead of the U.S., which is a lot more individualistic."

Yuan also saw into North Korea from the Korean Demilitarized Zone (but said she was disappointed at how much it has turned into a tourist attraction). She also got to see her favorite band from South Korea, named K'Pop, film its pre-recording music show at Inkigayo, a South Korean music program, before getting kicked out because of overcrowding.

Yuan went to South Korea

knowing only two sentences of Korean and having to meet new peers and new teachers. But the experience helped her grow, she said.

"In terms of personal growth, I became bolder and less afraid to try new things," Yuan said.

According to Lisa Merposha, a program associate for NSLI-Y, students travel abroad with 20 to 30 other students from the United States and also travel with a resident director to help assist with any issues. Merposha said NSLI-Y prepares the students for what to expect when they go to another country.

"We work in close coordination with the U.S. embassies and consulates in the countries' communities," Merposha said, "and also we provide in-depth orientations for the students to get an idea of how to go about living in that country and what ... some security and safety concerns could be and how to avoid them."

NSLI-Y reaches a wide variety of students by advocating its programs through educators and community organizations, according to Merposha.

Different programs require students to cover varying portions of program fees. Depending on the organization, students may be responsible for all, part or none of the expenses of a trip.

Faith Adeola, a senior at the University of St. Thomas majoring in biology and global health, received a scholarship to study abroad for two weeks in England and Italy during her junior year of college. She decided to study abroad when she discovered her department was offering a class called "The History of Medicine" overseas, she said.

Adeola doubts she would have been ready for the experience as a high school student.

"I wouldn't have been as mature," Adeola said. "I would have been focused on too many of the big-picture things instead of

**YUAN** *continued on page 14*

# WE CALL THEM CHANGEMAKERS.

EVERY DAY, PEOPLE ARE making the Twin Cities a better place for young people to live, learn and work. They are creating meaningful change—shaking up the status quo—in an effort to create a better community for future generations.

Some are adults who want to leave a lasting impact on the next generation. Some are youth who are inspiring their peers to rise to the occasion.

On the following pages, you will find profiles of people whose impact manifests itself in a number of ways: Inspiring students to stand for what they believe in (page 11). Teaching life lessons through a sport (page 12). Giving the gift of reading (page 13). Making political history as a Somali-American (page 16). Empowering students' voices (page 18). And advocating for those in need (page 19).



STAFF PHOTO

Coralie Maldonado, a senior at North High School in North St. Paul, is a youth activist who created a social justice group at her school called STAND, Solidarity Through the Annihilation of the Normality of Discrimination.

*“I want to provide resources for students who are interested in becoming active within their communities but [don’t know] how.”*

—Coralie Maldonado, senior at North High School in North St. Paul.

## Not playtime anymore

**Coralie Maldonado, a youth activist, calls for social justice in schools. And her peers call her ‘Social Justice Girl.’**

THE FIRST TIME Coralie Maldonado led a protest, she was only in kindergarten.

“I found myself one day laying in the middle of the floor during circle time,” Maldonado said. “[I was] protesting because I firmly believed we needed more playtime.”

Fast forward 12 years. Maldonado, a senior at North High School in North St. Paul, is now an avid youth activist. But these days, she is fighting for more than simply extended playtime.

“I’m most passionate about creating spaces in school where all students feel represented,” Maldonado said. “It’s really empowering to ... raise the voices of young people in marginalized communities.”

Maldonado has been a featured keynote speaker for EDTalks, a series of talks about public education issues, has started her own



**By Mina Yuan**  
News senior reporter and section leader

student advocacy group and has led a walk-in at her school. Her peers, she said, call her “Social Justice Girl.”

Now, Maldonado wants other youth to join her mission. Through her student advocacy group, her peers say, she is inspiring other teenagers to get involved.

### GROWING AS AN ACTIVIST

Maldonado has championed social justice in education since her freshman year, when her mother signed her up for her school’s Youth Leadership Council, which trains students to lead discussions about microaggressions in the classroom.

“(At first), I did not want to join stuff like the student council,” Maldonado said. “I was 14 and I didn’t trust the student council as far as I could throw them.”

The council immediately accepted her and invited her to a retreat. What happened next, she said, changed her life.

A game they played at the retreat, the Human Race, in which students step forward or backward based on their socioeconomic statuses, shocked 14-year-old Maldonado.

“It was like a slap in the face from privilege,” she said. “I had one of my best friends all the way out front while I was at the back.”

This revelation drove her to learn more about disadvantaged communities at school and in society. Along the way, Maldonado chose to drop out of certain clubs, classes and friend groups at her school after realizing that “their overall people and mindsets were pretty ignorant,” she said.

She began taking on more active roles in the community, mentoring elementary school students through Project SWAG (Students Working on the Achievement Gap) and participating in events that empower youth to make change, such as WE Day, the Facing Race Ambassador Awards, the Youth Activists Summit and the Global Youth Service Day.

She also joined Solutions Not **MALDONADO** *continued on page 23*



PHOTO SUBMITTED

Minneapolis North head boys basketball coach Larry McKenzie gestures to the crowd during the Class A state boys basketball tournament last season at the Target Center. McKenzie led the Polars to their first state title since 2003.

## Beyond X's and O's

### Prep basketball's Larry McKenzie spreads his creed, players become believers

ANYONE WHO HAS played for Larry McKenzie has heard “the creed.”

Former Minneapolis North two-sport star Tyler Johnson heard it before he was a Division I athlete at the University of Minnesota. Former Minneapolis Patrick Henry player Johnnie Gilbert heard it before he was playing basketball for the Oklahoma Sooners. Nick Anderson, a former student manager for McKenzie at Academy of Holy Angels whose abilities were doubted by many due to his cerebral palsy, has heard it and not forgotten it.

“It is something that I still live by today,” said Anderson, now a college student. “That is one thing that really



By **Zekriah Chaudhry**  
News senior reporter and section leader

sticks out about coach McKenzie is that when you are done with his program, the things he says before or after practice, during games, things that are life lessons, not just X's and O's, they stick with you.”

Since the 1990s, when McKenzie first began as a high school basketball head coach in Minnesota, hundreds of high school basketball players have heard “the creed” that he uses to contrast choices and results to his

players. It's his chief message, one that goes well beyond sports.

“I tell my players if you don't ever get anything out from me, I want you to take this with you,” McKenzie said. “I have been blessed with this day to use as I will. I've got a choice: I can waste it or I can use it for good. For what I do today is important, I am exchanging there my life for it. I must decide good or bad, gain or loss, success or failure, and in order to never regret the price that I pay for it.”

McKenzie, who coached Minneapolis Henry to four consecutive Class AAA state titles in the early 2000s, has built a reputation as one of Minnesota's top high school basketball coaches. He coached at Henry from 1997 to 2006, then moved to The Academy of Holy Angels in 2008 to coach basketball. McKenzie returned to the city in 2013 to take his current job as head basketball coach at Minneapolis North.

At North, which nearly closed several years ago when enrollment

fell, McKenzie immediately began to change the mentality of the struggling program.

“I watched from 1980 to 1997. I watched kids come through, win championships, and then I'd drive down Plymouth Avenue and see them on the block selling dope,” McKenzie said. “They were winning games, coaches were getting accolades, but the game was using them. They weren't using the game.”

McKenzie tries to help his players use the game positively, often keeping their hearts in the community. He requires his players to be active in the community, hosting basketball camps or reading to kids on the North Side.

“You have to change the culture,” McKenzie said of his transition to North. “We actually started fresh. I kept one kid, I only kept one kid from the previous program. My first year there, we started an eighth-grader, two ninth-graders and two sophomores.”

McKenzie likened it to coaching at the varsity level with a freshmen

or junior varsity team.

But once his program was implemented at North, the team's success took off. The Polars finished with a 29-5 record and defeated Goodhue last March to claim the Class A championship, the program's first state title since 2003.

“One of my favorite quotes is, ‘Fortune is a person that sees a need, recognizes the responsibility, and actively pursues becoming the answer,’” McKenzie said. “For me, I recognized the need, and it was beyond basketball. For a lot of those young men, it's not just about X's and O's, it's about really learning how to be a man.”

Since McKenzie took over, the Polars have a team average GPA of 3.0, with 21 out of 28 basketball players making the A or B honor roll last year.

Leo Lewis, North's athletic director, arrived at the school after McKenzie, and has noticed the interactions between McKenzie and his players.

**MCKENZIE** *continued on page 15*

# The gift of reading

## 16-year-old Maria Keller is distributing 2 million books to at-risk youth

BOOKS WERE PART of Maria Keller's life before she was even born.

While pregnant, Keller's mother, Maura, used to read to her not-yet-born daughter while Keller was still in her stomach. By the time she was a young child, Keller was surrounded with books.

Now 16, Keller is striving to surround other children around the world with books, too.

At age 8, Keller started Read Indeed, a nonprofit that distributes books to at-risk kids around the world in an effort to promote literacy. Her initial goal was to spread 1 million books across the world before she was 18, and she reached that goal before age 13. Now, Keller plans to donate 2 million books to at-risk kids in all 50 states and every country in the world.

"It's amazing how important reading is," Keller said, "and [how] effective it is as a way to grow academically and become a better student."

Reading helps children develop greater understanding in different subjects in school, and children who read regularly have better relationships with their parents, higher self-esteem and a more positive attitude toward school, according to Read Indeed's website.

One in four U.S. children grows up not knowing how to read, which has a host of negative effects, statistics show. For example, two-thirds of students who cannot read proficiently by the end of fourth grade will end up in jail or on welfare, according to Begin to Read.

The idea began after a book drive in Keller's church when she was 8. Keller realized that books were something not all kids around the world had access to, so soon after,



By Katelyn Vue  
News reporter

she started a book drive of her own.

After the books were collected and donated, Keller declared one night at the dinner table that she wanted another book drive. But this time, the goal was 1 million books.

Her mother, Maura, wanted to support Keller, but also was completely "stunned," she said.

"And so we tried to immediately say, 'Of course sweetie,'" Maura Keller said, "but in the back of my mind I thought, 'It's a cute little idea, it'll fizzle out in about a month, two months when she gets tired of it.'"

But then word spread, first to the principal at Maria's school and then to KARE 11, which featured Maria and her efforts to reach her goal.

"All of a sudden we had complete strangers coming to our door in Plymouth, knocking, saying, 'Is this where the book girl lives? I have two bags of books for you,'" Maura said. "... Within about three months, she had 60,000 books in her garage."

That garage is not where

### MARIA KELLER'S FAVORITE READS

As an avid reader, Maria Keller has a long list of favorite books:

- The Giver
- Divergent
- Harry Potter
- The Help
- Adventures of Tom Sawyer
- Hunger Games
- Treasure Island
- The Book Thief
- The Girl With the Pearl Earring
- The Lightning Thief Series
- Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane
- Hoot
- Hatchet
- The Boxcar Children (particularly the first)
- Because of Winn-Dixie
- The Black Stallion
- Frindle
- Ida B.
- The Chronicles of Narnia
- The Report Card
- American Girl books, particularly Kit

SOURCE: READ INDEED



Maria Keller, 16, is in the process of collecting and distributing 2 million books to at-risk youth throughout the world in an effort to promote literacy. She started her nonprofit, Read Indeed, when she was 8 years old.

they store books anymore. Read Indeed keeps the books sorted in a warehouse in Hopkins, a place big enough to contain 100,000 books at one point.

Read Indeed, which was started after Maria made her declaration at 8 years old, has donated more than \$4 million in books. Her work has been mentioned on "Good News" with Ellen DeGeneres and she was one of two students in the nation to receive a Jefferson Award in 2014.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on Read Indeed, including information about donations, go online to [www.readindeed.org/](http://www.readindeed.org/).

*"It's amazing how important reading is and [how] effective it is as a way to grow academically and become a better student."*

—Maria Keller, 16, founder and chair of Read Indeed.

On two days a month, Read Indeed opens up the warehouse for people who want to donate books, including some who held their own book drives. From there, volunteers count and sort books and get them ready to be shipped.

Read Indeed ships books to those in need throughout the Twin Cities and partners with organizations who travel to places outside the U.S. to take books with them on overseas trips. Organizations, schools and teachers also can come in on warehouse days to pick up books for children.

Maria's work with Read Indeed has impacted Twin Cities schools such as Hmong College Prep Academy in St. Paul.

Once a month, the school collects hundreds of books in boxes from the warehouse. The books are used for events such as family nights and literacy nights, in

which families can leave with free books to take home, according to Aemillianna Thao, operations manager at Hmong College Prep Academy.

"I have to say that Read Indeed has seriously, tremendously made an impact to our school," said Thao, who also said parents participate more in their children's reading because they get to take home free books.

During the first years of Read Indeed, Maura noticed the volunteers who came were mostly children. So Read Indeed created a Youth Advisory Council, which is made up of students ages 12 to 17, who build skills such as fundraising, researching and leadership, according to Read Indeed's website.

Several students at Maria's school, Orono High School, are involved in the Youth Advisory **KELLER** *continued on page 15*

## FIRST-GEN *from page 6*

findings show first-generation college students also wish their parents had a better understanding of their college experience to help support them through the college transition and beyond.

The research also says there is a “hidden curriculum” – which college-educated parents pass on to their children when they are in college – that first-generation students don’t receive and have to make up for not knowing.

“It’s a lot of smaller problems that students need help with money-wise, information-wise,” said Castaneda Garcia. “Some people don’t know how to even apply and some schools don’t provide college counselors. Parents too – some parents don’t even know how to help their child.”

But parents want to know more. According to the research, parents want “significantly more knowledge and information” about college, they want it in various forms, such as in-person or online, and they want it in their primary languages.

This research was important because it reached many students who need the help and support but who may not ask for it, according to Castaneda Garcia. She used to fall into the category, she said.

“Mostly the people who don’t go to college are the people who needed the help but didn’t go and seek that help,” Castaneda Garcia said. “And we need people like us going to college, sharing our culture and spreading diversity.”

## ‘WE ARE THE ONES ... MAKING NEW PATHS’

For Crespo, the college process was a bit easier because his high school, Cristo Rey, worked with his parents to help them understand more, he said.

“That’s why Cristo Rey was such a great school,” Crespo said, “because they always had the idea of underprivileged students having the upper hand and not being left out.”

Crespo first began to look into St. Thomas while on a college visit in eighth grade. He immediately fell in love, he said. Since eighth grade, St. Thomas was his goal.

A goal that he achieved, now that he’s the first in his family to attend college. It’s a big deal to his family, Crespo said.

“We are the ones who are turning the road and making new paths for the future generations,” he said. “You’re going to show that your parents’ sacrifice was worth it.”

As a college student, Crespo has continued to work with the research team to spread the word about the findings (The research has been made public in a report online and in a video). He also participates in a program that mentors at-risk youth, he said.

“I thought this was a great opportunity to build connections with these kids and motivate them to get through high school and on to college,” Crespo said. “Let them know about the research and how I got into college, and [that] they can, too.”



Emily Doss, a senior at St. Louis Park High School, holds up a sign with a friend during her study abroad stay last spring in Cape Town, South Africa.

PHOTO SUBMITTED

## YUAN *from page 10*

learning about the culture and being immersed in it. ... I wouldn’t have liked being away from home for that long. That would have been more scary.”

Emily Doss, a senior at St. Louis Park High School, decided to study abroad in Cape Town, South Africa, during her second semester of junior year. Unlike Yuan, Doss paid for her trip by working long hours as a lifeguard during the summer before her junior year.

Doss experienced South Africa’s mountains on the beach and its nine-month drought season. She said the trip was like a holiday, a nice break from school and work in Minnesota. South Africa also enlightened her more than she could have possibly imagined, she said.

“It was honestly the best ... learning experiences I have ever had,” Doss said. “I got to experience a completely new culture.”

Along with the long-lasting relationships with her host family and other friends, Doss says she gained more maturity and a better understanding of the world after living in South Africa for six months.

“I have matured a lot and I know how other places in the world are, because I lived there,” she said. “It helped me in my developing process



Yuan poses for a photo with her host family on their last day together.

PHOTO SUBMITTED



Students on the research team work on the research project.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CAROL BRIEISS

to becoming an adult.”

Taking all of the memories and experiences she has learned into account, Doss urges students to study abroad, whether it be in high school or college.

“Don’t let fear keep you from

[traveling abroad] because it is the best experience you could ever give yourself,” she said. “If you want to do something different with your high school experience, or even if you are looking to study abroad in college, I recommend it.”

**McKENZIE** from page 12

“I think it is imperative that not only you get a coach who knows how to manage student-athletes at this level,” Lewis said, “[but also] a coach who at this particular time in his career is overseeing primarily kids of color and to understand what makes them tick and to get them to play as a team.”

Isaac Johnson, a senior guard at North who has committed to play college basketball for Western Illinois University, said McKenzie often asks how he is doing, and has even invited him to have dinner and talk through any struggles he might be having.

“Most coaches, they don’t care about players out of class, off the court,” Johnson said. “Coach McKenzie does.”

But the improvement of the basketball program is not only felt by McKenzie’s team. Since McKenzie took over nearly four years ago, enrollment at North has grown exponentially. The school had about 400 students on the first day of school this year, a big increase from the 52 it had five years earlier, according to a Star Tribune report. It’s a change that school officials credit to both athletic and academic improvements.

The futures of North’s athletes have brightened – the football team



**McKenzie has given each of his players “the creed,” his chief message about choices and results that transcends basketball.**

also reached the state tournament last season – and the North Side community has rallied behind the success.

“After having won the championship, I’ve had 90-year-old ladies

come up to me and giving me a hug and say, “Thank you for doing something positive in the community,”” McKenzie said. “So I know the community respects the program, they respect what our kids are doing,

they look to our kids to represent the community.”

The Polars will open their basketball season on Dec. 6, McKenzie’s fourth season at the school.

PHOTO SUBMITTED

**KELLER** from page 13

Council.

“They are very supportive and that’s really cool that they get involved,” Maria said.

In many ways, Maria is still like every other teenager: she stresses out about ACTs, takes AP classes, tries to do her best in school and likes spending her time with friends and family. But the difference is she has to balance her time as the founder and chair of a nonprofit.

Her biggest supporter is her mom, she said.

“... Sometimes I’m overwhelmed with the abnormality of Read Indeed and the project itself,” Maria said, “but she’s always there to keep me grounded and directed, and she’s really supportive.”

Maria plans to continue her work at Read Indeed during high school and keep working toward her goal. As of Nov. 21, she was at 1,996,455 books.

“If somebody said ... almost eight years ago, that Maria would be running a nonprofit [and] she’s almost to 2 million books, I would just laugh, like, “What are you talking about?”” Maura said. “But here we are.”

**HALL PASS** from page 7

announced on Facebook that they had a productive conversation.

In an interview, George said the administration adopted the new hall pass system in an effort to improve safety and education at the high school by keeping more students in class and out of the hallways. When students used a pass under the old system, they had access to roam the hallways, according to George. “We believe we were responding to too many things that were happening in the bathroom,” he said.

The new hall pass system has been in the works for three years, George said. The staff council decided in August it was something to pursue this school year, he said.

This same type of system is used in other high schools in the Anoka-Hennepin School District as well

as in some of the feeder schools, such as Jackson Middle School in Champlin, according to George.

“We need structure in this place of 3,000 wonderful young adults, and we believe that this pass system, while it may not be completely flawless, it is having a positive result in terms of having a more safe and welcoming environment,” George said. “Ultimately, keeping kids in class.”

George said he understands students might be frustrated or concerned without knowing the reasoning behind the change, and hopes that if students are having challenges with the new system, they would speak to an adult in the school.

But for some students, the new system felt like too drastic of a change.

“I just think it was an extreme way to try to combat the

mischief going on in the bathroom,” Bengtson said.

Bengtson sees an opportunity to compromise, suggesting an alternate system that he experienced in middle school. That system had students receive approval from teachers and document when they left the classroom, he said, while still giving students the option of using the bathroom once per day without running out of passes. He said this is a good idea because staff in the halls would have the same information they have now under the current system.

The current system, however, puts students’ bathroom needs against their ability to stay in the classroom and get a good education, he said.

“That doesn’t seem like a choice students should have to make,” he said.



**August Bengtson, a senior at Champlin Park High School, holds up his hall pass, a new system at the high school that limits the number of times students can leave the classroom to 12 per three-month trimester. Bengtson created a social media post in response to student concern, asking students to “like” or comment on the post as a sign of support.**

AMARI GRAHAM/THREESIXTY JOURNALISM

ThreeSixty Focus on...

# Ilhan Omar

PHOTO COURTESY OF NIKITA GUPTA

In November, Ilhan Omar became the first Somali-American legislator in U.S. history. She was elected to the Minnesota House of Representatives to represent House District 60B in Minneapolis.

## A month before the election, the woman who has become the first Somali-American legislator in U.S. history talks her candidacy, controversy and future

WHEN ILHAN OMAR first came to the United States from an African refugee camp at age 12, she knew only a few words of English (“Hello” and “shut up”).

More than two decades later, Omar has made history as the first Somali-American legislator in the United States. Omar, 34, was elected on Nov. 8 as a State Representative for House District 60B in Minneapolis.

As a child, Omar and her family fled Somalia once the civil war broke out, and they lived in a refugee camp in Kenya for four years. After those four years, they immigrated to the U.S. when Omar was 12 and eventually moved to the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood in Minneapolis in 1997.

A Minneapolis Edison graduate, Omar discovered politics at an early age and went off to North Dakota State University to study political science and international studies. Since then, she has worked as a community health educator as well as a campaign manager and senior policy aide in the Twin Cities. Most recently, Omar was the director of policy and initiatives for the Women Organizing Women Network.

In August, Omar won the DFL primary in House District 60B, defeating Rep. Phyllis Kahn, who was tied for being the longest-serving legislator in Minnesota history. Her Republican challenger, Abdimalik Askar, suspended his campaign later in August due to family issues, which meant Omar had little Republican challenge in the November election.



By Duni Awad  
News reporter

Shortly after winning the primary in August, controversy followed Omar. An article published in Power Line, a conservative website, raised questions about Omar’s marital status and whether she had committed immigration fraud by marrying her brother. She later responded to the controversy with a statement on her website, explaining her marital history and saying that the accusations were “false” and “ridiculous.”

ThreeSixty sat down with Omar in October, about a month before the November election, to talk her candidacy, her marriage controversy and the election.

**Awad: What was your childhood in Somalia like? And what was it like to live in a Kenyan refugee camp for four years before coming to the U.S.?**

**Omar:** I was born in Somalia, in Mogadishu, the capital, and I was born in a neighborhood called Hodan, and we lived right next to the market. It was a very vibrant neighborhood to grow up in, and a very diverse neighborhood.

We ended up moving to a smaller place called Baydhabo. I started early in school. The traditional age you start school is 6 or 7. They had a weird requirement: if you lose your first tooth, then you’re old enough to go to school. Or for some kids it was, if you went to Islamic Studies ... then you started. Most of my family were teachers and I was the youngest, so I ended going to school super early, because I just was complaining all the time about wanting to go. I started school at 4, first grade, and then we moved after second grade.

We were in Baydhabo until the war started, and then we moved back to the capital and then fled from there. I was about 8.

Then we came to Kenya, started out in Nairobi, made our way to Mombasa where the refugee camp was. It’s very different from a lot of the refugee camps that exist right now. A lot of refugee camps now that are still in existence are in desert areas. This one was in

Mombasa, a coastal city, so it was very jungle-like, so we had different problems than the ones [such as] famine, the problems you have when living in a desert.

We had problems with malaria, so a lot of people were dying from malaria and there was a struggle for water that was sanitary. It was a little hard for people to be mobile ... The refugees stayed in the refugee camp. And so for my family, since I was the youngest and the one less likely to get in trouble for leaving the camp, I would fetch water and wood, the necessities for the family. I didn’t really get to go to school or participate in a lot of the educational opportunities that existed.

About four years later, then we got the opportunity to come here. We came here when I was 12.

**A: Your website says your interest in politics began when you were age 14, attending DFL caucuses with your grandfather and translating. Was there a specific moment when you realized politics could be in your future?**

**O:** I think I always found politics interesting. My grandfather was born during colonial times in Somalia. The country was colonized, and it was freshly colonized when he was born, so he grew up with the ideals of freedom and independence. They were very politicized, because when you’re a country fighting for freedom, everybody knows about it. There’s a revolution happening.

He always shared those stories with us about what the struggle looked like, what life was like when they didn’t really have complete freedom in their own country. I listened to the news with him a lot. He’d translate for me because he listened to a lot of Italian news, and sometimes I translated for him the ones that were in English.

When he came to America, he was really excited about the possibility of getting involved in a political party without being part of an elite system. You didn’t have to be a particular class to be involved in



PHOTO SUBMITTED

grassroots political party functions. That was exciting to him.

I took him to his first DFL meeting, and I remember being excited for him because he really wanted to be in this room and finally felt like there was something tangible politically that he could do. I think that experience of this process that is tangible for us to use for good was intriguing and inspiring for me.

Knowing that there were accessibility problems, because people like my grandfather who were really excited couldn't fully participate because there were language barriers, my thing was making sure that we made politics very accessible, especially party politics very accessible, to the people that the party is supposed to care about, is supposed to serve. And making sure that we lived up to our ideals of saying that, as the democratic party, it's the party of inclusion, that it actually was inclusive for everyone. Throughout I would continue to attend my caucuses, I voted as soon as I could, took my grandfather to vote every election cycle, watched debates with him. So politics was sort of part of my upbringing.

**A: Some Somali politicians like to appeal mainly to the Somali community, but you've also broadened your circles to people from different ethnic backgrounds. Why did you do this and how is that helping your campaign?**

**O:** I always think of myself as someone who likes to work collaboratively and likes to build coalitions. Our district is one of the most diverse districts in the state, and the persistent problems in tackling our issues was that we weren't unified as a district, as a community, to move an agenda that would be beneficial to all of us. When you're thinking about a representative democracy, when you're thinking about reflective democracy, you

want someone who has fluency in all of the issues and the cultures of the people that they're serving.

I wanted to make sure that if we're saying that this is the problem with our current representation, that I wasn't going to be a repeat offender of that. That I was going to make sure to include everyone in that process, that we were going to create a unified district, that we were going to create a coalition that would help us not only win, but would help us build a movement that can be used throughout the state, throughout the country, where people can see themselves as part of this process that is just for few, they can see themselves and they can see what it means to build

power together, what it means to build power for community, what it means to build power for yourself.

**A: There are so many communities in Minneapolis. I'll see the younger generation mix a little bit, but at the same time parents and older people don't always do it, so as a student you're like, "Maybe it's not acceptable. I don't know."**

**O:** When I first came to this country, I came as a teenager, I was 12. I didn't really speak English. I only knew three words of English. They were "hello" and "shut up." They weren't very helpful in having friends. I started out in Arlington, Virginia, so there weren't a lot of Somalis or Muslims or people who look like me who I can instantly build relationships with together because of our identities. Being stuck in this isolated world of not having friends, not being able to communicate with anyone.

My dad was very encouraging to say, "You focus on learning the language, because once you're able to speak English, you're able to communicate with people, they're

**OMAR** continued on page 20

**Omar and her supporters celebrate after she won the primary in August.**

**THE ILHAN OMAR FILE**  
**Profession:** State representative, Minnesota House of Representatives District 60B  
**Age:** 34  
**Hometown:** Mogadishu, Somalia  
**Biggest career highlight:** Becoming first Somali-American legislator in U.S. history in November 2016  
**Find her:** On Twitter at @IlhanMN

*"On primary night, it was sort of like a validation of all of our hard work, of the hopes and dreams we had of this belief in that sometimes the little man wins. That if you put in the work, that you will be rewarded."*



Lori Keekley, right, a journalism teacher and advisor at St. Louis Park High School, recently was named the Dow Jones News Fund National Journalism Teacher of the Year. Keekley says she lets the students run the show and allows them room to grow.

PHOTO SUBMITTED

*“If we just live in our own voice, then we’re in trouble, because nobody is getting a different view. Nobody’s growing.”*

—Lori Keekley, award-winning journalism teacher and advisor at St. Louis Park High School

Keekley’s teaching style includes setting an organic ambience and tossing lecture-like teaching aside. “I don’t sit down at a computer and write anything, I’m not doing a layout, I’m not taking photos,” she said. “I just help.”

It also includes being open-minded to the diverse voices of her students and protecting their First Amendment rights.

“If we just live in our own voice, then we’re in trouble,” Keekley said, “because nobody is getting a different view. Nobody’s growing.”

Many of Keekley’s students have thanked her for getting them into the journalism field, teaching them how to seek answers and considering what people have to say. Her students say Keekley has fostered an atmosphere where she has addressed their needs by giving them confidence in their stories.

“When I felt like giving up, she always pushed me to keep going,” said former student Amira Warren-Yearby, a sophomore at the University of St. Thomas, “and if there was ever a problem, she always made people feel heard.”

Warren-Yearby, who describes Keekley as a mentor, was the recipient of the 2015 ThreeSixty Scholarship, a four-year, full-tuition scholarship to study communication and journalism at St. Thomas. Warren-Yearby’s interest in videography came from her time with the Echo, when she and her crew would create videos on trends in her school.

**KEEKLEY** *continued on page 21*

## Teaching students to use the truth

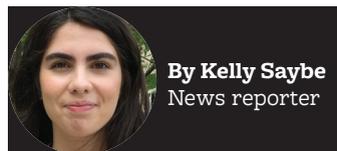
### Lori Keekley, award-winning St. Louis Park teacher, inspires student journalists

WORK ISN’T WORK for Lori Keekley.

For her, “work” is letting her journalism students run the show while teaching them how to write, showing them camera skills and giving them the confidence to grow.

But don’t be mistaken – Keekley works hard as a national award-winning journalism teacher at St. Louis Park High School.

“I’ve always called it school, I never call it work, because to me it’s not work,” said Keekley, the teacher and adviser for the Echo, the high school’s student newspaper and website. “I’ve been given this gift of being able to work with high school students on a daily basis. It’s the



By Kelly Saybe  
News reporter

best gig ever.”

Keekley didn’t initially intend to be a teacher, but she’s been in the classroom for 17 years, including 15 years as the teacher and adviser for the Echo. And recently, she was named the 2016 Dow Jones News Fund National High School Journalism Teacher of the Year, the second Minnesota teacher to ever win the award.

In high school, Keekley became



As a journalism teacher, Keekley is passionate about protecting students’ First Amendment rights.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MARK VANCLERVE

involved in her school newspaper and yearbook, and then worked on the paper as a college student at Indiana University. The Indiana Daily Student, where she was a copy chief, became Keekley’s outlet to write and “make a difference through those stories,” she said.

Entering Indiana University with a passion for journalism, Keekley

eventually found her way into education. After a teaching evaluation, an administrator inspired her with the reminder that she can teach students through her own interests.

“It’s working with students that really is my passion,” Keekley said, “and then I have a passion for journalism, so the two just naturally go together.”

# A seat at the table

## Collin Robinson is a 16-year-old social justice and education advocate

LAST SCHOOL YEAR, Collin Robinson helped select the next superintendent of Minneapolis Public Schools.

He took part in organizing a day-long workshop about social justice at Minneapolis Southwest High School.

He occupied the Fourth Precinct in north Minneapolis after the fatal police shooting of Jamar Clark last November.

And he was only a sophomore in high school.

It's normal for young people to spend their early years focusing on their own personal growth, but Robinson, 16, is focused on the growth of his entire community. Now a junior at Minneapolis Southwest, Robinson has proven himself as a young social justice and education advocate to peers, school administrators and community members.

"Advocating for people who are underserved when you have the privilege to is morally right," Robinson said. "I think that should be the norm. When I see students impacted by the work that I do, it's emotional."

Robinson hopes his work this school year will include a focus on education reform, specifically what he sees as systemic issues within the education system and "how to uproot those that specifically target students of color, special education and lower-income [students]," he



By **Julia Larson**  
Culture  
reporter

said.

Robinson has thought about racial inequality and social justice for most of his life. His mother, Jean, was a teacher at a program for students in juvenile detention or adult jail in Minneapolis when Robinson was a child. He saw through her how "systemic oppression could affect students," he said.

Tracine Asberry is director of the Board of Education for Minneapolis Public Schools and a longtime friend of Robinson's family. Asberry has known Robinson since he was in kindergarten at Clara Barton Open School in Minneapolis with Asberry's daughter, Farrington.

"I would go to pick Farrington up and Collin would always be there saying, 'Hi Tracine! Hi, Farrington's mom!'" Asberry said, chuckling. "I've seen him grow up and do the walkouts, the superintendent search. I am just so proud of him and to watch him grow."

### DARING TO BE REAL

Robinson first discovered his voice when he was 12 years old, he said. His new principal at the time, Patrick Duffy, introduced him to a program called "Dare 2 Be Real,"



Collin Robinson, a junior at Minneapolis Southwest, is a social justice and education advocate. Last school year, he helped choose the new Minneapolis Public Schools superintendent, helped organize a social justice day at his school and took part in the occupation of the Fourth Precinct in north Minneapolis.

a student program that promotes, addresses and discusses racial equity and leadership.

"If I didn't have Dare 2 Be Real, I don't know what I would be doing with myself," Robinson said. "I would still probably be a kid who doesn't know how to vocalize his emotions."

Robinson has continued with Dare 2 Be Real into high school. Then, last year, he felt called into action.

In November 2015, a Minneapolis police officer fatally shot

24-year-old Jamar Clark four blocks from Robinson's house in north Minneapolis. Witness statements conflicted with police accounts, and Black Lives Matter responded in the following days by blocking I-94 and occupying the Fourth Precinct in north Minneapolis.

"I didn't hear about it until Dare 2 Be Real the next day and I went home and there were all these police cars and people," Robinson said. "Soon I was there every day after school, and then all of a sudden I was missing class."

Robinson said the experiences he had protesting at the Fourth Precinct were unforgettable.

"The way that I grew at this area was incredible," he said. "I would learn so much more at the Fourth Precinct than I would ever learn sitting in a classroom with a textbook."

### RACE TO JUSTICE DAY

Robinson helped his classmates organize in a similar way. Following the occupation of the Fourth Precinct, Robinson *continued on page 21*

*"I would learn so much more*

*at the Fourth Precinct than I would ever learn*

*sitting in a classroom with a textbook."*

—Collin Robinson, junior at Minneapolis Southwest

**OMAR** from page 17

able to understand you, you're able to understand yourself, and all of the 'othering' that you find yourself in and that people see you as will disappear, because then you'll just be peers. Then you'll see yourselves as just teenagers [who] are trying to figure out how to survive middle school, high school, college, whatever."

That sort of has changed my mindset of what it means to be in community. It's once we are able to communicate together, once we are able to see each other as individuals beyond our cultures, our races, our genders, then we're able to connect.

**A: Take me back to the night you won the primary, beating Mohamed Noor and Phyllis Kahn, one of the longest-serving legislators in state history. When you found out you had won the competitive primary for House District 60B, what was going through your mind? What was your family's reaction?**

**O:** In order for me to answer that, I have to take you back. Today is actually the anniversary of the day I announced to run for office: Oct. 6 in 2015. ...

It was challenging because a lot of people didn't really think this was doable. A lot of people didn't think that there was a path to victory. You have a 44-year incumbent, that's already hard enough. And then you add another Somali candidate to the mix, which the media was very stuck on the fact that there are two Somali candidates, they're going to divide the vote. That was the narrative they were interested in. They kept perpetuating this narrative that as a Somali, we're only going to fight for the Somali votes. We can't get other people to vote for us.

The odds were starting to stack up against us. Then we got to the caucuses and sort of won the caucuses. I think about eight of the 12 precincts went our way. And then we got to the convention and then there were deals being broken, and we were there for 14 hours. You needed 60 percent to get the

endorsement. I got 55 at the last ballot, and then it was just stuck, it couldn't move. It was really hard for a lot of the young people who up to that point were really excited about the tides turning, about this possibility of us coming together and seeing the bigger picture. ...

I remember going through to the fifth ballot, making the announcement, "The convention is adjourned," and I told my supporters that day that this wasn't the end, that tomorrow we start door-knocking, tomorrow we start having conversations with people. If we believe in the possibility of our power and collectively what we are able to do, then we must continue, and we must continue stronger.

And so on primary night, it was sort of like a validation of all of our hard work, of the hopes and dreams we had of this belief in that sometimes the little man wins. That if you put in the work, that you will be rewarded.

The other thing that was pretty exciting on primary night, more than the victory, was that we did it without compromising. We did it without destroying our community, without playing dirty politics, without contributing to the chaos that people on the opposition were trying to create to divide our communities. That for me was more rewarding than the actual victory, was that we got to the finish line, but we got to the finish line together. And that was particularly exciting.

**A: About a week later, there was controversy. Starting with an article in Power Line, a conservative website, the media began to question your marital history and whether you committed immigration fraud by marrying your brother to bring him into the U.S. You issued a statement saying the accusations were "absolutely false," "baseless" and "ridiculous," and later explained your marital history in a statement on your website.**

**Looking back a couple of months, what is your reaction now that**



Omar and her family.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NICHOLAS FRENCH PORTRAITURE

**you're a couple months removed from this ordeal?**

**O:** My reaction is still the same. These are allegations that are very rooted in anti-immigrant fear-mongering, hateful allegations. And they are baseless. There is no immigration fraud, there is no wrongdoing in regards to how I handled it or why I didn't address certain things during my campaign.

When I think back on the effect that it's had on me, I think about the intended effect that people want it to have on me, which was to diminish our power, to sort of stunt the progress that our movement was making, to put a cloud over this tremendous, well-deserved victory that we had, and to sort of allow for that negative image that people want to portray about immigrants, to fall for it to exist.

They knew that I have no real opponent for my general election. As far as winning in November, they're wise enough to make the calculation that that really isn't going to make an impact. So this really wasn't for me, it was for our communities. It was to cast a shadow over Somalis, over immigrants, over Muslims.

That is why I spoke, and what I want to fight against, and what I want to make sure that the particular news media that are interested in furthering a narrative that isn't about the hard work that

immigrant communities do; the positive contributions that Somalis are making for our state and for our nation; the thriving successful young people who are making a mark on this world, who happen to be Somali, Muslim, black; those of us who are overcoming tremendous obstacles to achieve success that many don't think is possible—those are the [news media] people that I am not interested in having them be part of my narrative or entertaining their ideas of sensational news and headlines.

I refuse for my campaign, for my community and for my religion to be used to sell papers and for negative narratives to be furthered about us.

**A: If elected, you'd be the first Somali-American legislator in U.S. history. How does that make you feel?**

**O:** One, it makes me hopeful that we can finally have representation in the level that a lot of people didn't think would be possible because we are new immigrants.

Two, when you think about those who are representing us at a school level [who] are Somali, and those who are representing us at the municipal level [who] are Somali, they often struggle to make the case for their resources that they want to get for our communities. And now, that struggle will no longer exist,

because I will be there to make sure that resources are allocated to our communities.

When you think about funding for schools and when you think about funding for city government, municipal government, and you think about funding for the county, the state does allocations for them. When we're thinking about the resources that Somalis across the state need, when it comes to their needs as service providers or those of us [who] are public servants [who] are trying to make sure particular resources are allocated, these people, these Somalis [who] represent us at lower levels no longer have to beg and plead and make the case, because they will have someone like me advocating for them, who will be at that table, who understands what our needs are, where the barriers are and how do we go about making sure that there is equitable distribution of resources for all communities.

**A: If you're elected in November, what messages will you want to send to other young Somali men and women? And how do you think your candidacy will affect future generations?**

**O:** I hope the effect that my election has is one that is inspirational, one that is a validation of what hard work looks like, one that tells young people that once we believe in ourselves, we put our trust in God, and we put our best foot forward, that everything is possible.

I hope most that not just young people but everyone sees that it's a worthy investment to encourage young women in our communities to seek leadership positions, to seek public office, to not deter or create hurdles for them because they're supposed to be the lesser gender.

I hope that to the young men, to the young women, to the parents, to the grandparents, that I set as an example what is possible for both their daughters and their sons.

*This transcript has been edited for length and content.*



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARK VANCLEAVE

**Amira Warren-Yearby, a sophomore at the University of St. Thomas, describes Keekley as a mentor and a major influence on her journalism aspirations.**

**KEEKLEY** from page 18

“I was able to figure out what I like to do and do that, so it’s like [Keekley] helps you craft it and work it out,” Warren-Yearby said. “We would work together to make it happen.”

St. Louis Park senior Genesis Buckhalton, one of Keekley’s current students, is an aspiring journalist. She has known Keekley since her sophomore year and credits participation on the Echo for teaching her the foundations of journalism.

Buckhalton calls Keekley a role model and an inspiration. Others on the Echo agree, Buckhalton said, that Keekley is dedicated to her students and cares deeply about the work they put in.

“She loves teaching,” Buckhalton said. “She tells us all the time that she loves us all, and what we bring to the table.”

Keekley is not only a teacher and advisor, but also is involved with the Journalism Education Association’s Scholastic Press Rights Commission. The commission strongly values the First Amendment, a value Keekley shares. Keekley works with student journalists and helps them understand ethics, censorship and the right to express their diverse views through journalism.

She also has promoted a bill, authored by State Rep. Cheryl Youakim and State Sen. Susan Kent earlier this year, that would create a law giving student

journalists control over the content they publish, with laid-out guidelines for students, journalism teachers and administrators, according to a report and press release.

As a result of Keekley winning the Dow Jones News Fund award, a graduating senior at St. Louis Park will receive a \$1,000 scholarship in Keekley’s honor.

Keekley said she doesn’t know why she was chosen as the national journalism teacher of the year, but she believes the award is a tribute to her students and their work.

“They do a lot of collaboration and they work, too, and we talk about everybody being a teacher, it’s not just me,” Keekley said. “We’re learning from each other.”

**HIRSI** from page 5

Wallin Education Partners and in Minneapolis Public Schools.

“When you have a dream, you have to always be persistent in reaching and achieving your dream,” Hirsi said.

He kept working toward his dream. Hirsi found himself freelance reporting outside of work. As a freelance reporter, Hirsi wrote for the St. Cloud Times, the Twin Cities Daily Planet and MinnPost. He spent his nights and weekends

writing. He knew that he didn’t want to do communications anymore.

“That’s not what I went to school for,” Hirsi said. “It wasn’t where my passion was. I wanted to be on the streets reporting.”

In February 2016, several years after he had started freelancing, Hirsi landed a job at MinnPost as a full-time reporter. On his beat, Hirsi often covers issues and events surrounding Minnesota’s communities of color, including its Somali population.

According to McDonnell, Hirsi always strives to improve his writing and is determined to reach a story’s full potential. In doing so, Hirsi continues to grow in his craft.

“He has worked so hard to be a journalist,” McDonnell said. “He kept a notebook of all the pieces he had written. He would bring them to me, even when the story had still been published. He still wanted to know how it could’ve been better.”

*“Even though students can be at the table, it doesn’t necessarily mean that they will be heard. Students need to go above and beyond to be heard and recognized.”*

—Collin Robinson

**ROBINSON** from page 19

Precinct, students at Minneapolis Southwest performed walkouts in response to police violence.

As a compromise with administration, Dare 2 Be Real students organized an all-day event in February called “Race to Justice Day” to address systemic problems within the education system. Activists from Black Lives Matter, Neighborhoods Organizing for Change, the Minneapolis chapter of the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People and other organizations joined the event. Attendance was mandatory for all Southwest students.

Robinson taught a workshop specifically for staff in the building, he said.

“My workshop allowed a space where students could sit in front of teachers and administrators and speak their mind,” he said. “I had teachers leave the room crying, really moved about what’s going on and things they didn’t realize.”

Asberry also attended Race to Justice Day, representing the Minneapolis Board of Education. Her plan to stay only a couple of hours was derailed. She was so moved by what she saw and heard that she canceled her plans for the rest of the day, she said.

Other workshops included seminars taught by students on intersectionality, colorism, racism in sports, #BlackGirlMagic and more.

The overall response to Race to Justice Day was positive, Robinson said. The experience was unifying for those who attended, he said, but not everyone did.

“A lot of the kids who really needed to hear it didn’t show up that day,” Robinson said.

**SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH**

This past school year, Robinson also was one of two students on the Superintendent Selection Committee that analyzed

candidates for the new superintendent position at Minneapolis Public Schools. He helped select the finalists that the school board would vote on (The board voted to hire Ed Graff in May).

Robinson’s responses in his application for the committee were “stellar,” according to Asberry.

“When I talked about [his application] on the school board,” Asberry said, “I used his responses as the standard to measure the other adult responses that were a little more ambiguous.”

The superintendent search was a learning experience for Robinson, who was later elected as this year’s president of Citywide Student Government.

“What I did learn is that there is a lot of adult power in decisions,” he said. “Even though students can be at the table, it doesn’t necessarily mean that they will be heard. Students need to go above and beyond to be heard and recognized.”

Robinson’s work to get students’ voices at the table is already starting to have a lasting impact. A second Race to Justice Day has been scheduled for Feb. 9 at Southwest. Minneapolis South and Washburn high schools also will have the program this school year.

As for Robinson? He plans on attending college in a couple of years to study political science and medicine. Robinson, who also is a member of the Twin Cities Coalition for Justice for Jamar, Educate Ya Self and the Minneapolis NAACP Education Committee, also plans on remaining active in his community and fighting for social justice at every chance.

“I want to be like a cooler Ben Carson,” he said.

And when asked if there was anything else he wanted to say, he added: “Black lives matter.”

## Designing the 'Maxfield Times'

### Bethel journalism students to create newspaper for St. Paul elementary

FOURTH- AND FIFTH-GRADE students at St. Paul's Maxfield Elementary School will soon be featured in their own newspaper, thanks largely to the hard work of a graphic design and storytelling class at Bethel University.

They are two very different schools: the public elementary school sits in the historically African-American Rondo neighborhood, with many students receiving free- or reduced-price lunch. Bethel, a private Christian institution with a majority white population, is located in suburban Arden Hills.

So what brings these two schools together?

Scott Winter, a journalism instructor at Bethel who lives in the Rondo neighborhood with his wife, was looking to get more involved in the community. So, he pitched the idea of a Bethel-led newspaper in an urban elementary school to his graphic design students.

"They were really excited about it," Winter said of his college students.

It's the first journalism class for David Crane, a journalism minor at Bethel.

"I was super excited [about] getting to work with younger kids about a field I don't know a lot about," Crane said.

Winter also brought his idea to Ryan Vernosh, the principal at Maxfield Elementary. And that's when Winter realized this idea could work at Maxfield.

"The first thing the principal said to me was, 'These students don't need a savior, they need

published and to see their name in print, and to realize their ideas, their skills are worth something."

Winter also wanted to give his college students real-world experience with newspaper design, instead of giving them practice exercises in class. He decided to give them a goal like a coach, building his class to be like a team.

"If that goal is, 'We are going to make a school newspaper for Maxfield Elementary,' then I think they will work harder and the work will be more meaningful to them," Winter said.

CeCe Gaines, a sophomore in Winter's class, agrees.

"Instead of just sitting in a classroom and learning how to design a magazine, we're actually doing application work and actually making something that we can be proud of," she said.

The 17 Bethel students will work with about 100 students in fourth- and fifth-grade classes at Maxfield.

Most of the Bethel students already work for the campus student newspaper, the Clarion, which won a national college media award in 2015. The class will use the Clarion as a model to publish what it plans to call the "Maxfield Times." The newspaper, which is expected to be out before Christmas, is a final project for the Bethel students.

"It's going to look like the City Pages, like a news magazine," Winter said.

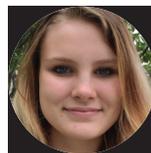
Maxfield elementary students will take photos of their classmates, do some writing and take surveys. These small actions will provide content that the college students will use to piece together a working newspaper.

For example, Maxfield students will answer surveys about simple things such as their favorite food, candy and movies. The college students then will take that information and compose it into graphics with quotes and images for the newspaper.

As of October, the program was expected to run for about six weeks on Fridays, with different college students participating on different days, and was expected to include a celebration at the end when the newspaper is published.

The ultimate goal is to provide the children with the opportunity to gain skills that are worth having.

"They're so impressionable," Gaines said, "and just to see how they are trying to be independent and navigate with cameras or reporting, it's great to see them doing that."



By Mychaela Bartel  
Culture reporter

opportunities," Winter said. "... That has kind of been our mission. Let's provide opportunity for these kids to take photos, to write, to get



Bethel journalism professor Scott Winter (center) and Bethel students CeCe Gaines (left) and David Crane are part of a class that is helping create a newspaper with fourth- and fifth-graders at St. Paul's Maxfield Elementary School. The newspaper is the final project for the Bethel class.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MARK VANCLEAVE

# A push for ethnic studies

## Students and educators see benefits of classes in schools

DURING HER MULTICULTURAL class at Champlin Park High School, Amari Graham has learned about African-American history and has presented on southern U.S. culture in front of the entire class.

This class, called “Multicultural Perspectives,” is offered as an elective at her high school, but Graham thinks the course is one all students should take.

“I think it’s good for everyone to hear someone else’s perspective,” said Graham, a senior. “It kind of eliminates the stereotypes of people.”

Amid a national discussion about teaching ethnic studies in schools, some Minnesota students and educators see the benefits of these courses, they say.



By **Melisa Robles Olivar**  
Culture reporter and section leader

“I feel like it’d be easier to learn it at school,” said Duni Awad, a senior at Ubah Medical Academy in Hopkins. “... [An ethnic studies course] exposes us to many things and gives us a better understanding of ourselves.”

A Stanford Graduate School of Education study published earlier this year found that high school ethnic studies classes improved attendance and academic performances of students who were at risk of dropping out. Students who took those classes also earned more

credits to graduate, according to the study, which looked at ethnic studies courses in San Francisco high schools.

In September, California passed a bill that will establish an ethnic studies curriculum that schools in the state can teach to students as an elective. The statewide curriculum is expected to be completed by 2019. Each district will be encouraged to offer an ethnic studies course based on the curriculum.

Some local schools in California also have made ethnic studies a graduation requirement.

California is not the only state to be taking action on ethnic studies. Albuquerque Public Schools in New Mexico will offer ethnic studies courses as an elective in all of its 13 high schools starting in August 2017. On the other hand, an Arizona statute in 2011 banned a Mexican-American studies course in the state, citing that classes should not promote the “overthrow of the United States government” and should not promote “resentment toward a race or class of people,” among other things. Opponents have argued these classes are anti-American, are teaching divisiveness and may cut into opportunities for students to

take other electives, according to a report on the Stanford study.

According to the Minnesota Common Course Catalogue, which includes courses for about half of the schools in the state, 23 ethnic studies courses were taught during the 2014-15 school year – the best available data from the Minnesota Department of Education.

St. Paul Public Schools has had American Indian History, Asian American History and African American History courses since at least 1995, according to the school district, but it remains up to each high school to decide which of these courses, if any, will be offered as electives. Currently, three SPPS schools offer African American History and one offers both Asian American History and American Indian History, according to the district.

Last year, Minneapolis Public Schools started offering a semester-long ethnic studies elective at all of its high schools.

Offering ethnic studies began as a way to give students the tools and skills to help them graduate and to improve the dropout rate, according to Kleber Ortiz-Sinchi, the social studies district program facilitator for Minneapolis Public Schools.

Ortiz-Sinchi believes ethnic studies courses are important for students.

“We need to have courses that allow our students to see themselves in the history, in the curriculum, in the books, in the knowledge that is being created every day at school,” said Ortiz-Sinchi.

Because state standards don’t include ethnic studies courses, they are not currently required courses, according to Ortiz-Sinchi.

“The standards are not written to include the perspectives and lived experience of people of color,” Ortiz-Sinchi said, “and because the ‘test’ is about the standards, the system doesn’t see the need to include those perspectives because they are ‘not tested.’”

When asked about the process of making ethnic studies courses a requirement in schools, Ortiz-Sinchi said the process is “multi-fold.” It includes student advocacy, revising the curriculum and changing the standards to reflect “the histories of all Americans,” he said. It also includes universities training future teachers to teach ethnic studies courses, he said.

“It’s about creating change within the system,” he said.

### MALDONADO from page 11

Suspensions, a campaign dedicated to ending disproportionate school discipline, which opened a new world of opportunities for her.

After Maldonado was invited to speak at EDTalks about what she calls “voluntary racial segregation” at her school and the creation of her student advocacy group, she attended the annual Solutions Not Suspensions meeting in Los Angeles, where she became the only high school student on the national coordinating committee. From there, Maldonado brought the concepts she learned back to her own school, North High School.

To encourage administrators to work on finding alternatives to suspensions, Maldonado organized a walk-in at her school to demand changes in discipline policy. To pull off the walk-in, she had to muster the fiery spirit and willingness to challenge authority from her kindergarten protest days, she said.

“I was shaking the first time I met with my principal [to organize the walk-in],” she said.

“I couldn’t finish my sentences because I was that nervous.”

According to Maldonado, the principal told her to come back when she had “done [her] homework.” Indignant, she returned at the next meeting with a thick file, telling the principal, “I did my homework.”

“My sister’s a very headstrong person,” said Maldonado’s older sister, Jonashka. “She is very confrontational; there’s no walking all over her. She can definitely hold her own in an argument.”

### SETTING EXAMPLES FOR OTHER YOUTH

While Maldonado uses protests to create change, she prefers reading and reviewing bills, a process she became familiar with through her work with Solutions Not Suspensions, she said.

“We can’t do just protesting all the time,” Maldonado said. “Working within the government is just as important, and we really need

more youth in that way.”

Maldonado hopes she can set an example for other Twin Cities youth to get involved with their local governments and state legislature. In her opinion, learning to make change through written laws is not only necessary, but also beneficial for those with hasty temperaments.

“I was very passionate and very bad at controlling my emotions [before],” she said. “I’ve come a long, long way.”

Many of Maldonado’s peers say that seeing her development has inspired them to take action as well. Classmate Triniti Thao said that before meeting Maldonado, she was interested in politics but lacked the resources and motivation to get involved.

“After meeting [Coralie] and seeing how much she knew, I was just so – wow,” Thao said. “Like, ‘Why haven’t I looked up all this stuff, too?’ She just really opened my eyes.”

To help other teenagers find the resources to participate in the legislation-making

process, Maldonado founded a student advocacy group at her school called “Solidarity Through the Annihilation of the Normality of Discrimination,” or STAND.

“I want to provide resources for students who are interested in becoming active within their communities but [don’t know] how,” she said. “I just wanted to ... give them the resources to reach out more on bigger levels rather than just the school.”

Through STAND, Maldonado is working on a photography project that shows the stories behind suspended students’ lives. She hopes to see larger STAND membership and more of her peers working to affect change.

Yet even if other teenagers do not join her right away, Maldonado said, she will not stop pushing for social justice.

“I refuse to do something generic just because what I’m doing is controversial and upsets people,” she said. “For the people who don’t like me, tough luck. I’m Social Justice Girl.”

# Q-and-A with St. Cloud Police Chief William Blair Anderson

## City's first black police chief talks aftermath of mall stabbing

ST. CLOUD POLICE Chief William Blair Anderson is no stranger to racial tension.

He has lived it.

Anderson's South St. Paul home was firebombed in 1994 while he and his two sons – ages 7 years old and 8 months old at the time – were at home. In the middle of the night, his 7-year-old heard the fire alarm and woke Anderson up, he said.

Anderson suspects a neo-Nazi group in the area was responsible, he said, although no one was ever arrested.

"It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that somebody is treating you a particular way because of what you look like," said Anderson, who is black. "But the firebombing of my home, with me and my children in it, has to be at the top of the list."

One year later, Anderson, a Detroit native, who had served eight years in the Army, got into a minority internship program with the Dakota County Sheriff's Office. When the internship was over, he became a full-time deputy.

After 15 years in Dakota County, Anderson became chief deputy in Carver County. And in 2012, he became the first black police chief in St. Cloud history.

Anderson became a national figure—and was thrown into another event of racial tension—after a mass stabbing at a St. Cloud mall in September that left 10 people wounded and a suspect dead. Authorities have said the suspect was inspired in part by radical Islamic groups.

ThreeSixty had the opportunity



By Tyler Lee  
Culture  
reporter

to talk to Anderson about the aftermath of the stabbing, St. Cloud's Somali community and being a black police officer.

**Lee: How has the mall stabbing in September affected St. Cloud's Somali community?**

**Anderson:** One of the things that we pride ourselves on in St. Cloud is that we build community every day, from the top down. It starts at the mayor's office and all city departments. We engage our community. We are the epitome of what community policing is supposed to look like, and we do that in a variety of ways.

When those attacks happened, some rumors begin to spread about what may have precipitated that, and that's exactly what they were—they were rumors. But I think at the end of the day, us having a strong foundation and good community to support and a very inclusive community, whether it's private business, public entities, you name it, was very helpful. And at the end of the day, I think it strengthened our community rather than weakened it.

**L: Do you believe that event influences discrimination against the Muslim community?**

**A:** In our community, we're fortunate again that that hasn't happened. Are there people out there

who want this to be something else? Of course there are. That doesn't make it so. We again have been fortunate because we're acceptable, and when I say we, I mean community leaders no matter where they fall—whether they're private business owners, whether they are public partners, other law enforcement partners, advocates in our community, the university, I could go on and on. So far we have not experienced that and again I think it's because we do a phenomenal job of community outreach and engagement across the board.

A lot of people, I don't think they realize how polarizing some things can be. ... The mayor and I make this point often: When people say, Somalis in the community, in this community or that community—in St. Cloud, we're just a community. We're a community that has an immigrant population, and it's not just Somali. There are immigrants from all around the world living in St. Cloud and obviously American-born people as well. But we consider ourselves one community.

**L: There have been racial comments going around such as, "Go back to where you came from." How will you suppress these racist comments and keep the peace?**

**A:** [With] the reasons I just explained. We didn't just start doing outreach and engagement when this incident happened. As a matter of fact, next week will be our 11th consecutive "CreateCommUNITY" event, which is subtitled, "A Conversation on Race." And that's something again that the mayor and other elected officials in conjunction with our private partners and other community leaders put together a long time ago to make sure that that dialogue is there, to make sure that we celebrate all of



St. Cloud Police Chief William Blair Anderson.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ST. CLOUD POLICE DEPARTMENT

the wonderful differences that make up our community.

In terms of comments like that, I'll say this: I don't know of any place where there are people where there isn't some conflict. At the end of the day, some people were just raised poorly, because that's the only place that something like that comes from. It's a learned behavior. If I had the answers to make that go away, believe me, I would share it. I'd give it away for free.

**L: Do you feel a sense of uneasiness when the "Muslim terrorist" topic is mentioned?**

**A:** No. I don't feel uneasy, and mostly because, unfortunately, that [terrorism] exists in places. History has taught us that.

But usually, again, it's borne out of ignorance ... People from all over the place want to render an opinion about what St. Cloud is, or what kind of place it is, and usually those people haven't been there. They have no idea the number of ways how we engage our community and they have no idea the level of support that we all give one another.

Uncomfortable subjects don't make me uneasy. It's a part of life, and you just have to deal with it when it comes up.

**L: Do you think black police officers are put in a difficult position when protesters are demanding more accountability from officers? Does that put extra pressure on black officers?**

**A:** No. Unfortunately it puts extra pressure and more of a spotlight on all police officers. It's an age-old problem. In my opinion, this is what the problem is: Are there issues in certain places? Are there things that people have a right to be angry about with respect to community and police relations? Absolutely. There absolutely are. However, the vast majority of police officers—and I mean, in the upper 90th percentile—do this job the right way and they do it for the right reasons.

And so for me, it's unfair that the whole group gets painted with such a broad brush. And I liken that to being a person of color, having grown up in America where we know what it's like to be judged by the worst element in your group. And no matter what group that is, that's never been fair, it's not equitable and it's divisive. And so I think the same applies here.

*This transcript has been edited for length and content.*

# Protest hits home

## Ethiopian runner's gesture at Olympics resonates with Minnesotans

ETHIOPIAN RUNNER Feyisa Lilesa caught the world's attention when he crossed the finish line in the 2016 Olympics marathon in Rio last summer with his arms over his head in the shape of an "X" to publicly protest against the Ethiopian government.

Lilesa, who is Oromo, also caught the attention of Awol Windissa of the Oromo Community of Minnesota, who said he had a mixed reaction to the gesture (which is a sign of solidarity).

"In front of the world, millions of people saw his gesture of protest. It inspired me," Windissa said. "So many people are understanding, so many people will



By **Elezebet Mitiku**  
Culture reporter

know and so many people will now know his cause.

"The sad thing is that it is a fight, there are killings and there is conflict. It's not something for which we can be proud. I would just like people to live in harmony."

Hundreds of people have been killed during protests against the government, mainly in Oromia, a region in central and southern Ethiopia, according to reports.

The Tigrayan ethnic group, which is 6 percent of the Ethiopian

population, has the majority of power in the country. Other ethnic groups in the country, such as the Oromo and the Amhara, are fighting for more representation in government and say the government is marginalizing them.

"It's a problem for everyone in the empire, everyone in the country," Windissa said. "There is a history of marginalizing Oromos in this regime and in previous regimes for the country. They are targeting Amharas. They are targeting other ethnic groups except the Tigrays."

It started in Oromia in November 2015 when people protested plans by the government to expand Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa. Since then, security forces have cracked down on protests that have been largely peaceful, according to Human Rights Watch. More than 400 people have been killed, thousands have been injured and tens of thousands have been arrested, according to Human Rights Watch. And at **PROTEST** *continued on page 29*



Awol Windissa of the Oromo Community of Minnesota makes an "X" with his arms, replicating the gesture by Ethiopian runner Feyisa Lilesa in the 2016 Olympics in Rio. Windissa said Lilesa's protest both inspired and saddened him.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MARK VANCLEAVE

# The LGBT history debate

## Local students, educators, others weigh in on Calif. school measure

STUDENTS IN CALIFORNIA public schools will soon be taught LGBT history statewide for the first time.

Some students, educators and parents in other states – including Minnesota – support the push for LGBT history in schools, while others say it is not right to be taught in school. In Minnesota, a state that has had vigorous public discussions about same-sex marriage and transgender bathrooms, a measure like this would likely stir controversy.

The California State Board of Education voted this summer to adopt a new History-Social Science Framework that includes the roles of minority groups, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Americans. It complied with a 2012 California law requiring better representation of the LGBT community and other minority groups in history classes.

Starting in second grade, California students will be taught about diverse family structures, including families with LGBT parents. The goal is to help students "locate themselves and their families in history and learn about lives and the historical struggles of their peers," according to a statement by the board.

In fourth grade, students will learn the history of California, including the founding of the first gay rights organization in the 1950s. Through high school, the teaching will expand to societal meanings, gender roles in history and relevant Supreme court cases.

In Minnesota, some say they would support LGBT history being taught in school.

"I personally think it's a good



By **Anjelynt Lor**  
Culture reporter

thing," said Katelyn Vang, a sophomore from St. Paul Harding High School. "If you start them young, as they get older they won't judge people."

Her opinion is shared by Tou Ger Vang, also a Harding student (no relation). He identifies as "queer" and said more opportunity to discuss LGBT issues in school would help him relate to his peers and his more traditional family members.

"I could be a person with more courage," he said, "and a person with more personality."

Anne Zielske, a science teacher and advisor of Gender Sexuality Alliance at St. Paul Harding, said offering LGBT history classes could help lift the burden of students not feeling accepted.

"Almost all the LGBTQ adults I am close to have expressed pain during their teen years due to the burdens of feeling like they weren't 'normal,' keeping part of themselves hidden, judging themselves harshly or being judged harshly by others, and fearing reactions of family and friends," Zielske said. "People cannot learn and develop fully when they are stressed or afraid."

Zielske feels the teaching of LGBT history in classes would bring a positive outcome to society.

"I think anything our schools can do, such as sharing stories and histories, to help people to walk in the

**LGBT** *continued on page 29*



TONY VUE/THREESIXTY JOURNALISM

## Self-identity

### Putting the puzzle pieces into place

I SEE MY identity as a jigsaw puzzle.

Each piece represents a part of who I am. Every day, I collect more pieces. Soon I'll have the full picture of myself, but I still have some missing pieces. Most of them have to do with gender identity.

I am 15 years old. Four years ago, I started having tiny thoughts about my gender. At that time, I didn't realize there were choices besides male or female. As the years went by, those thoughts took up the space in my head, crowding out thoughts about anything else.

When I was 14, I decided to



By Tony Vue  
Voices writer

figure it out.

Initially, I decided I am gender-fluid and want to be transgender when I get older. At that time, I thought I'd found the puzzle piece to fit an empty puzzle slot. I tried to make it fit, but it kept popping out. Now, I'm questioning my gender identity again.

Lately, I think of myself as

"cancegender," also known as "agenderfluid." Cancegender means my "base" gender is neither male nor female. Sometimes I might feel one gender or the other, but I'll always return to feeling agender. It's a new and an uncommon term. And for now, it's a puzzle piece of my self-identity.

It's been hard trying to tell my family about my gender identity. My aunts and uncles took a while to get used to the idea, but now they understand and support me. My dad is okay with it. My mom is a different story.

About a year ago, when I told my mom about my gender identity, her reaction was disgust and confusion. She couldn't believe that one of her children is not who she thinks they should be. She's traditional and still calls me a "girl." It used to distress me a lot, but I stopped caring about it since I understand it will take a long time for my mother to fully

accept who I am.

My friends are really supportive, and some of them are curious and want to know more. Some questions I get from them are about my preferred pronouns. They want to know if I would like to be called "he" or "she." It doesn't matter to me as much, but I prefer the pronouns "they/them" and sometimes "he/his."

I was born Maie (pronounced "my-EE"). For the past two years, I've asked people to call me "Tony" instead of Maie. Tony replaces the puzzle piece of my name, and with a bit of squeezing it in, it fits quite well in my identity puzzle.

Some people ask if it is spelled "Toni" as a female name or the usual "Tony" as a male name. Some even ask why I prefer to be called that. At first it was hard for me to explain why I like to be called Tony, but eventually I got used to being asked about it, and I got comfortable

answering those questions. A change of gender needs a change of name.

The people who support me make me feel glad. Even though I may be different from most, I am still a person. I have an upbeat personality, I have a creative imagination and I seek the greatness in myself. I want to be an artist and an animator. I have many goals and dreams I would like to achieve, as I can see a bright path ahead. I am hoping to be more open about myself and show my puzzle pieces to others, so they'll see the whole picture of me.

I know there are many teens who are still finding their self-identity puzzle pieces, whether it is family, race, sexuality, gender or something else. It takes a while to find out who you are, but it is worth it once you've placed the last puzzle piece into the slot. With each piece I collect, the more I see the full image of my self-identity.

# O, say can you kneel?

## Legitimate protest is not a form of disrespect

DURING THE HOMECOMING pep fest at St. Paul Harding this year, the student flag staff held the American flag in the gymnasium while the national anthem was played by the school band. Everyone was expected to stand, but a group of students took it upon themselves to use this time to raise awareness.

They left their seats to kneel directly on the gym floor, in front of the students holding the flag, and they held posters, one reading, “I will not stand for a flag that does not stand for me.” Some students criticized them – mostly on social media.



By Skyler Kuczaboski  
Voices writer  
and section leader

Those who were upset felt the protesters were disrespecting the United States while kneeling. I do not think the students’ intentions were to show disrespect, but rather to bring attention to issues that have been overlooked.

This form of protest drew national attention when San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick sat

through the national anthem during NFL preseason games in August. He said he was sitting to protest the oppression of people of color and police brutality. He told the media: “This stand wasn’t for me. This is because I’m seeing things happen to people that don’t have a voice, people that don’t have a platform to talk and have their voices heard, and effect change. So I’m in the position where I can do that and I’m going to do that for people that can’t.”

Throughout the fall, Kaepernick’s protest continued—he started kneeling in September – and spread to other sports, with athletes kneeling, locking arms or raising their fists. Eventually, it made its way to my high school gym.

One of the reasons students, athletes and others decide to take a knee during the playing of “The Star Spangled Banner” is because of racist suggestions in one of the three verses that are not sung out loud. The only verse that is sung at events is the first, and there are four verses in total.

In the third verse, the lyrics “No

refuge could save the hiring and slave/From the terror of flight or the gloom of the grave” have been interpreted by some as a celebration of the death of black slaves who were hired to fight for the British in the War of 1812.

What about the claim that not standing for the anthem is disrespectful to the veterans and soldiers who have lost their lives fighting for this country? Those veterans have been from a variety of racial backgrounds, and people fail to realize (or were never taught in a social studies class) that many minorities were exploited during wars.

I have heard stories from Hmong students whose fathers were offered citizenship if they fought with the Army in the Vietnam war. There were also African-American, Hispanic, Native American and poor soldiers who were sent out to fight in U.S. conflicts before the richer white men were sent.

Some soldiers of color who fought and died for their country were exploited by it. In my mind, the flag

does not represent their service, but their oppression.

Some say it was not the time and place to protest. Whether it’s a nationally televised sporting event or a high school pep fest, people feel like the protest ruins the mood and makes them uncomfortable. The discomfort shows that the message those who kneel are trying to send is working.

It frustrates me when people say, “If you don’t like America, then leave.” In America, people have the right to kneel, wave, dance, do cartwheels, salute or express themselves in other legal ways during the national anthem. People who kneel during the national anthem are exercising their right of free speech and freedom of expression.

Kneeling is a form of protest, not a form of disrespect. If people truly wanted to disrespect the flag, they would damage it. They wouldn’t peacefully kneel for a minute.

Protesting mistreatment of minorities and ignorance to history is not a form of disrespect.

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# First-generation and unashamed

## Planning to be the first in the family to attend college

I AM NOT ashamed to be a first-generation college student.

As a senior at Cristo Rey Jesuit High School in Minneapolis, I plan to be the first in my family to go to college and to become either a civil engineer or a journalist. I have always been so curious about building structures and bridges. Growing up, I asked my parents, “Como hicieron eso?” (“How did they make that?”) I never received the response I was hoping for, so I plan on figuring it out myself.

My parents don’t understand this. They came to the United States to help their families in Mexico. My Mexican grandparents are farmers with big families. My mom and dad didn’t want to be burdens. They came to Minnesota and planned to send money back to their families. Both my parents found cleaning jobs with relatives who were already here. They earned enough money to send some back to Mexico and accomplish their goal.

My parents tried to help me in school as much as they could, but sometimes there was nothing they could do. They couldn’t really help me in preschool. I remember being in Head Start and looking at all of the students who were

*Do not be ashamed of your culture, and do not hide yourself just because you are different.*



**By Gisell Castaneda Garcia**  
Voices writer

able to communicate fluently and easily build relationships. I wanted to have my own friends so badly, but because I knew no English and I was so used to my Mexican culture, it was difficult fitting in. I felt alone and scared.

I taught myself how to speak English and I tried my very best doing homework. In kindergarten, Mrs. Denise was assigned to help me understand what the teacher wanted. Starting in first grade, I was on my own. My main concern was fitting in and not calling attention to myself. I didn’t want people to know I was still struggling to understand the teacher’s tasks and English.

In middle school, I felt completely alone because I had no one to help me out. I had trouble finding my classrooms. When I got to class, I didn’t know enough English to explain why teachers shouldn’t give me a tardy. I also had trouble adjusting to the new homework load.

Then there was lunch. In elementary school we sat with our class during lunch break, but in middle school you sat with your friends. I had trouble making new friends, so I was often alone.

My mom and I found out about Cristo Rey when I was in eighth grade. We visited the school and I instantly fell in love with it. Finally, I was going to have friends

who were able to relate to my culture. Cristo Rey is not only majority Latino, but it also offers a corporate work study program, in which students work for Twin Cities businesses and corporations five full days each month, as well as preparation for college.

I work at Fredrikson & Byron, a law firm in downtown Minneapolis. I help in the immigration department. I do computer work and I also help translate Spanish emails to English. My fluency in two languages has made me realize that I have a skill that can help others. Being in a college prep high school has challenged me a lot, but I am finally able to think about my future and set a goal I want to achieve.

My cousin graduated high school in 2015. We were all so proud of him. He was the first one in our family to graduate. But then he made a decision I did not expect. He decided to work instead of going to college. I was confused; I didn’t understand why he would stop his education after receiving his diploma.

My cousin’s decision made me think harder about my own future. I want to graduate, I want to go to college and I want to explore the outside world and opportunities colleges offer. My parents are counting on me to find a major and graduate college. They want me to be a teacher or a doctor. They don’t really know much about civil engineering or journalism, so I will have to show them.

Earlier this year, I was part of a University of St. Thomas and Cristo Rey research program on first-generation college students. That helped me see I was not the only one who struggled. The knowledge I gained from this program makes it clear: All parents should be supportive, understanding and patient. As for students, do not be ashamed of your culture, and do not hide yourself just because you are different.

Stand out and show off your skills. Being different is beautiful.

# Safe in the sound

## Reflections on a journey with music

IT IS A hot, quiet day. The air is talking in tiny whispers, creeping up on the back of my shirt. Sitting on the bench, I await the next hour to play my opponent, a high school boy, quite like myself. Feeling a surge of anxiety, I look toward the right, seeing a tennis court filled with sweat and emotions. Toward my left, I see a grid of holes, a caged fence.

Five minutes remain before my match begins. I see my opponent waiting for me. I take out my phone and put in my headphones.

The music arrives. The sound escalates, making a slow yet steady climb. In the background, I can hear a pounding war drum. A trumpet arrives now, creating a mysterious feeling. The tempo shifts, and the song speeds up. I hear an orchestra playing along with the trumpet, deeply amplifying its sound.

“Hey!” says my opponent. “Let’s get this game started!”

My time is up, and I pause the song. I quickly put away my headphones, wanting to retain the energy and emotions I just gained. It’s time for the match to begin.

Music has always helped me in my time of need. Finding out the different types of music that appealed to me has been inspirational. I developed a sort of appreciation for every type of music, even if I didn’t prefer it. I learned that each song, each piece, has a purpose. It describes a feeling or an event. It creates peace, serenity and so much more.

It’s given me a greater view of human beings in the world; we can accomplish so much with so little.

The first time I learned about my musical affinity was in middle school, when I moved to a new



**By Austyn Lo**  
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town. I was someone with Asian ethnicity in a mostly Caucasian town, and having people stare judgmentally from a distance was hard.

Getting onto the bus and feeling their stares was frightening. I could only keep walking until I stumbled upon an empty seat, staring outside the window until I got off the bus and into school.

Of course, not everyone stared. Some people didn’t care. They gave me the gift of music.

They weren’t superheroes or anything—no, they were average. Maybe that’s why I listened. They were junior high students, and they blared music from their speakers like there was no tomorrow. When scolded for the volume of their music, they responded by switching it to something that everyone wouldn’t mind hearing—something similar to elevator music. I never met them, but I listened to them and learned from them through their music, and I’ll always be thankful for them.

Fast forward three years to 2013, and I’m back in my hometown of St. Paul. It’s my first year of high school, and I’m lucky enough to be able to walk to school, rather than ride the bus. My first walk there, I GPS my way toward the school. Over and over, I repeat the pattern until the walk becomes routine.

I grab my headphones and I step outside. The breath of the wind screams past me. Colorful leaves fall to the ground. The sun

# Not lack of caring

## Immigrant parents face challenges overseeing children's education

LOOKING AROUND MY ninth-grade science class at Eagan High School, I noticed I was one of only two students of color in class, along with a Somali boy who had a habit of not finishing his work.

One unusual day, I realized I had not gotten to my homework the previous evening. I felt a sudden twinge of guilt by association, because we were the only students of color and neither turned in our work.

At the end of the day, I overheard a teacher say, “Maybe if his parents were involved, he would be doing well.” However, I knew this student’s parents, and they work very hard to provide for his education and life.

In fact, I know many Somali parents who make their kids better students in different ways – including sacrificing their needs to support and provide for their kids.

I was born in the city of Nairobi, Kenya, and when I was 7 years old, we moved to a refugee camp called Kakuma. During my time at the refugee camp, I never felt as though I was missing something, because my parents always worked so hard to provide and keep me safe. Even after coming to the United States, both of my parents still work very hard to provide for my education.

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shoes of another or to improve the understanding of people for one another is good and important in our diverse society,” she said.

Others believe states, including Minnesota, should not follow California’s example.

Stephani Liesmaki, the director of communications for the



By Zahra  
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For example, even though my mom can’t speak English, she wakes up every morning ready to go to work, cook and drive all six of my siblings to our after-school activities. My dad works long hours, yet when he comes home and we ask him to help us with our homework or for money for field trips, he always tries his best to provide.

But even though many immigrant parents work hard to provide for their kids’ well-being, some of them face barriers helping their kids with schoolwork.

The biggest barrier, I believe, is education. In Kenya, when it came to school, all parents had to do was send their kids and the rest was up to the teacher. In the American school system, by contrast, it’s better if parents are involved in a child’s education.

Some of these immigrant parents don’t have a higher education. My parents can’t help me with my science or English homework. They have not read books by Charles Dickens and William

Minnesota Family Council, a Christian organization focusing on strengthening families, said the council is against the teaching of LGBT history in schools.

“Kids need a mom and a dad,” Liesmaki said. “That content [LGBT history] is not appropriate to second-graders. They aren’t ready to process those kinds of

remains unseen, hidden through the arms of the clouds.

I put in my headphones.

An old jazz song emerges, with a keyboard leading the charge, followed by a trombone. The sound slowly intensifies, reaching the song’s peak. A few seconds later, the sound dwindles, and a male voice appears, singing the words to “September” by Earth, Wind and Fire. I look up and find myself at the front steps of Harding Senior High School. I take out my headphones, and I walk to class.

Music takes me out of reality. It’s my go-to when I’m alone. It helps me think when I’m confused and stabilize myself when I’m feeling down. The growth of music itself is wonderful. But what I’ve come to realize is that I’ve grown with it.

Now, the process of grabbing my headphones and heading out is a routine. Listening to music in my free time is a given and has become a part of me now. I’ve learned that with music, trying out new things isn’t as hard as it seems. For example, with music, I realized that tennis is something I can try. It won’t hurt me, similar to how new music can’t hurt me.

The choices I make, the knowledge I’ve received and the friends I’ve made through music have helped, and will continue to help in the future. Learning how to overcome new things may make the ride a little shaky, but I’m not scared. The fundamentals I’ve learned through music will stay with me forever, never to be lost.

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least hundreds have been victims of “enforced disappearances.”

The government has disputed these figures, according to reports. Human Rights Watch says the government restricts independent media and NGOs from investigating the conflict in the country.

Lileasa’s protest on the international stage brought more awareness to the conflict in Ethiopia. Lileasa, who earned the silver medal, did not return to the country after the Olympics, fearing he would be imprisoned or killed, according to reports.

Many young adults in Ethiopia have been arrested for protesting against the government. But some young adults in the U.S., such as University of St. Thomas students Wako Wako and Bisrat Bayou, are taking advantage of their freedom of speech to spread awareness.

Bayou, a sophomore at St. Thomas whose parents moved to the U.S. from Ethiopia in 1996, heard about Lileasa’s protest after his mother texted him about it, he said. He later retweeted a video about

Lileasa’s gesture as a way to increase awareness.

“I’m all about people standing up against oppression,” Bayou said. “So when I saw it, I was proud, proud because I know it’s hard to be brave, especially when the government can be so cruel.”

Wako, who was born in Ethiopia and is Oromo, later took part in a demonstration near the State Capitol Building in St. Paul.

“Being all the way here in America, being super far away [from Ethiopia], I never thought about what I could do,” Wako said. “It kind of encouraged me to try to figure out how I could help, being all the way over here.”

Windissa said teenagers can “do a lot of positive things” on social media to spread awareness about the Ethiopian conflict, and he encourages all people to get involved in human rights issues.

“If it’s an issue in the Middle East, if it’s an issue here – it’s all human rights issues,” Windissa said. “It will impact me, it will affect you, it will affect her. It’s all human rights, and it’s a very small world.”

Shakespeare. Having well-educated parents can be very useful in so many ways. They know the value of education, the quality it should have and how the knowledge gained from education can be put to good use.

Another significant barrier is culture. Culture plays a critical role in the relationship between parents and their kids. Many immigrant parents bring their kids to the U.S. at a very young age and some of the kids start adapting to the culture here faster and easier. When communication breaks down, the ability of the parents to assist their child is lessened.

Lastly, another notable barrier is language. One of the reasons immigrant parents are sometimes not involved as much is that they can’t communicate in English—verbally or on paper—well enough. Some of these parents can’t read the materials that are sent home with students for review. They often also can’t respond to an email from their child’s teacher or principal due to their limitations on writing fluently in English.

In the end, these barriers should be kept in mind.

Immigrant parents are indeed involved in their children’s education, but not always in the way the American school system thinks they should be. Schools could help parents surmount these obstacles by being patient, being more accepting and hiring more translators. And if the school works with the parents, parents can also work with the school—and that will help students succeed.

ideas or to think clearly about that topic. It could produce a lot of confusion and it’s really important that materials are presented at an appropriate age.”

The goal is to have the California curriculum changes in place for next school year, according to a report. There is currently no similar measure in Minnesota.



# School-year snapshots



A look inside  
ThreeSixty's  
year (so far)







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