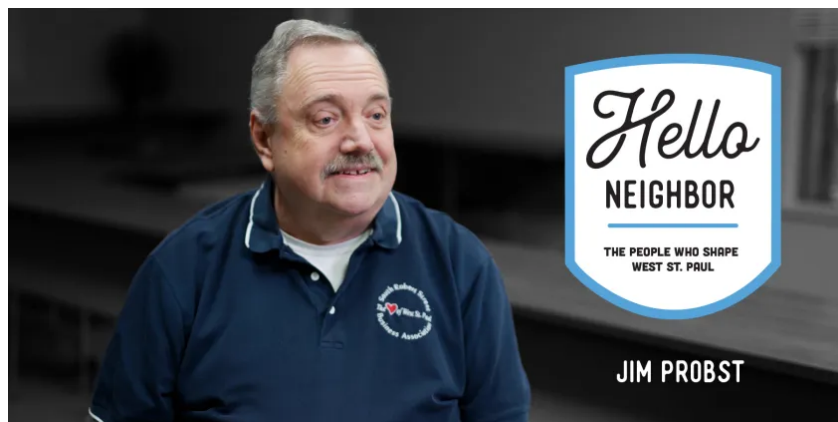




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Hello, Neighbor: Jim Probst

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Hello, Neighbor: The People Who Shape West St. Paul is a collaboration between [member-supported](#) West St. Paul Reader and [Community Blueprint](#), a local content creation studio focused on telling stories that make change.

Jim Probst loves West St. Paul. As president of the South Robert Street Business Association and a member of the Kiwanis Club, Probst dedicates his time to giving back to the West St. Paul community.

Watch the [video interview](#) with Jim Probst:

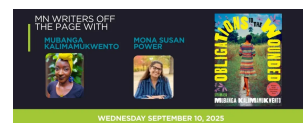


The Business Community

The [South Robert Street Business Association](#), which is [over 100 years old](#), is built of small businesses in the community. The organization started on Robert Street but has since expanded to the rest of West St. Paul and sites in Inver Grove Heights, South St. Paul, and others.

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“We try to be as proud of West St. Paul as we can and be as active in our community as possible,” Probst said of the association.

“When you’re a little guy like Southview Garden Center and you have to compete against Lowe’s, Menards, and that sort of thing, you work really hard to go ahead and do it. And if we can help a group like that succeed with good ideas and good sharing of information, that’s what we want to do,” said Probst.

The mission of the organization is to support the “local community, schools and businesses via fundraising, advocacy and community events.” The South Robert Street Business Association raises money from charitable gambling at their [sites](#) in West St. Paul and St. Paul.

According to Probst, the association donated \$300,000 back to the community last year from funds earned through charitable gambling.

Giving back to the community includes “everything from Boy Scout troops to the Dollars for Scholars program at Two Rivers High School. Last year we gave away \$40,000 in scholarships to local high schools,” said Probst.

“We like to take our money and really spread it around and make our community a better community.”

Student Scholarships

Probst is especially involved on behalf of the South Robert Street Business Association in the [Dollars for Scholars](#) program at Two Rivers High School, which awarded over \$175,000 to 155 Two Rivers graduates in 2024.

“Nothing makes me happier than being up there and seeing 35 kids receive a scholarship from South Robert Street Business Association,” said Probst. “They may get \$500, they may get a \$5,000 scholarship, but it’s [an] impact on their lives.”

To the students who receive these scholarships, Probst says, “we believe in you. We want you to be a better person. We want you to go ahead and make the most of what you can possibly do.”

Probst spoke about the value of investing in students, saying “we can go ahead and hopefully help our own businesses by hiring some of those well-educated people that we helped educate.”

Oh Kids These Days

Probst’s involvement with Two Rivers High School goes beyond the Dollars for Scholars program. He also works with the [Two Rivers Key Club](#), a student organization focused on community service, and the high school branch of the Kiwanis International family.

“My absolute favorite thing I could possibly do is working with the young kids with the Key Club,” Probst said. “The more I work with them, the more incredible I find them to be. They’re hardworking, they want to do better for the community. They want to do all sorts of things to make this world a better place.”

Key Club focuses on community service that helps everyone from senior citizens to young children to veterans.

His favorite days of the week are Mondays and Fridays, when he gets to meet with the “Key Clubbers” at Two Rivers. “I’m lucky enough on Mondays and Fridays to have a little crystal ball. I get to see what the future is, because I get to see the future leaders.”

Probst spoke in defense of young people, comparing his own perspective to the grumblings he hears from others. “I always hear people say, ‘oh kids these days.’ What I get to say is, ‘oh kids these days, what a wonderful thing!’” Probst said.

When Probst was in high school, there was little diversity in the student body, and he appreciates the change in the community that is “becoming far more diverse and so much better and

stronger because of it.”

“I walk through the halls and see the diversity within Two Rivers now and it warms my heart,” said Probst. “I hear other languages being spoken. I see people that are different. If you want to understand the world, that’s the way to do it.”

Staying Close to Home

For Probst, giving back to the community comes naturally, because West St. Paul has always been home. “It is in my blood,” he said.

Probst’s father and grandfather both lived here. His first job was at Rax Roast Beef, which used to be on Robert Street. Probst later met his wife at Wilder Nursing Home in 1978, where they worked together, she as a cook and him as a dishwasher.

“Our life is so intertwined with West St. Paul,” said Probst. After Probst and his wife were married they lived together across from the West St. Paul YMCA.

Probst says West St. Paul is unique because the people who live here don’t leave. When he needed to downsize, it took him years to find the right new house, moving from his home on Thompson Avenue to a townhome on Bellows Street, because he couldn’t imagine leaving West St. Paul behind.

“My next move is from Bellows to West Funeral Home, because that’s the way it’s going to go,” said Probst. “I’m not leaving this town.”

A Lot to Love

According to Probst, there’s a few reasons that people in West St. Paul stay here, including education. “The education that you can get from the local school district is second to none in an inner ring suburb.”

There’s plenty to do in the city. “We have great shopping. We have great restaurants,” said Probst. “One of the true jewels of this area is we have the Dodge Nature Center. Our kids can go over there and take a beautiful walk around and see wildlife that you can’t get four miles from a capital city.”

While Probst had great things to say about the students of Two Rivers, he also expressed his love for the community at large. “I love the people,” he said. “They’re good hardworking people. They’re people who see this community as part of what they do.”

“It’s so important that we all work together to make [West St. Paul] a better community for everybody,” said Probst. “West St. Paul is part of who I am, and I want to make it the best we possibly can.”

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