

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THURSDAY, MARCH 26

MINNETONKA PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

When: 6 p.m.

Where: Minnetonka Community Center — Council Chambers, 14600 Minnetonka Blvd.

Info: minnetonkamn.gov

SATURDAY, MARCH 28

SPRING EGGSTRAVAGANZA

When: 10-11:30 a.m.

Where: Minnetonka Community Center, 14600 Minnetonka Blvd.

Info: minnetonkamn.gov

MISS AMAZING MINNESOTA

When: 10:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Where: Hopkins High School, 2400 Royals Drive, Minnetonka

Info: Miss Amazing is back in Minnesota for their first event since 2019. AMPLIFY is their biggest event of the year, where girls and women with disabilities (ages 5+) step into the spotlight to build confidence and self-advocacy skills. During the final show, all participants perform a passion presentation, give a personal introduction and receive awards. Queens will be announced for the upcoming year.

SUNDAY, MARCH 29

MINNETONKA CONCERT BAND SPRING CONCERT

When: 3 p.m.

Where: Arts Center on 7, 18285 Highway 7, Minnetonka

Info: musicassociation.org

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1

EDEN PRAIRIE SPRING RECYCLING CURBSIDE PICKUP

When: all day

Info: edenprairiemn.gov; call 952-894-1448 to schedule pickup

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Aphasia, second verse

To the Editor:

I wrote a letter to the SunSailor April 9, 2019, “Aphasia, a word people don’t know.” I wanted people to learn more about stroke and aphasia. This is a follow-up letter, describing some of the activities I am currently doing. Aphasia can be a nasty disorder, but with effort one can thrive and flourish.

Starting in 2017, I created my first seed art piece for the Minnesota State Fair Crop Art exhibition. Using seeds from Minnesota, Elmer’s glue and a frame, I described what it was like to have aphasia. I have submitted a new piece for the Crop Art display each year since, including the word “aphasia” somewhere in the art. I have shown scrabble, a book club, and the brain, among other things.

Then in 2022, I made my first Mixed Media project for the Art of Possibilities show at the Courage Center. Each year since, my project has been about aphasia. This exhibition is free and open to the public, in May each year. Only artists with disabilities can submit artwork.

Another more

recent activity is participating in a Monday Night Book Club. I am the only one with aphasia in the book club, and I use Assistive Reader in Kindle to read the books. It includes some who grew up in St. Louis Park. We sometimes talk about Central and Westwood, that Westwood had modular scheduling, and walking to McDonalds for lunch in high school.

I started writing poetry in 2020, and find it is a way to express myself and expand my vocabulary to help overcome aphasia. In 2026, I published my first poetry book. It is titled, Stormy Road: Reawakening From Stroke and Aphasia. There are poems about aphasia, photos of some of my Crop Art, plus essays by some friends and professors discussing aphasia and my continued recovery. One of the poems in the book contrasts my St. Louis Park elementary school experience to being an adult attending a class for stroke survivors in the Robbinsdale School District.

I am still getting better!

Rochelle M. Anderson
Minnetonka

COMMUNITY BRIEFS



(SUBMITTED PHOTO)

The Eden Prairie 2026 Words in Action Contest winners include, from left: Aanya Mehta, Itisha Budamagunta, Ryan Altawil and Asa Shannon. Also pictured: Human Rights and Diversity Commission student members Ikra Ibrahim and Anjolaoluwa Raimi, Mayor Ron Case and HRDC members Susan Weaver, Babar Khan and Greg Leeper.

Eden Prairie recognizes 2026 Words in Action Contest winners

In honor of Black History Month, the Eden Prairie City Council recognized winners of the 2026 Words in Action Contest at the Feb. 10 meeting. Now in its sixth year, the annual contest invites students who live or attend school in Eden Prairie to select an inspiring quote from a Black American civil rights leader and reflect on its meaning through writing, art or digital media. Students also are asked to explain how they can carry forward the leaders’ legacies in the community.

The Human Rights and Diversity Commission contest committee selected the winning entries and honorable mentions. Recipients received cash prizes funded by the Eden Prairie Community Foundation.

The winning entries were:

- Writing: Ryan Altawil, 11th grade, Eden Prairie High School
- Visual Art: Itisha Budamagunta, 6th grade, Eagle Ridge Academy
- Visual Art: Aanya Mehta
- Visual Art: Asa Shannon

To see the winning entries, visit edenprairiemn.gov/WordsInActionContest-Winners.



(SUBMITTED PHOTO)

Minnetonka High School student Ritvik Gopinath, center, was recognized for placing in the top 20 in BestPrep’s 2026 Student Spotlight Competition.

Minnetonka High student receives BestPrep award

Minnetonka High School student Ritvik Gopinath was recognized for placing in the top 20 in BestPrep’s 2026 Student Spotlight Competition. The top 20 winners were recognized at BestPrep’s educational forum Feb. 11 at the Minneapolis Convention Center. The forum is an annual event that provides an opportunity for nearly 1,000 guests, students, sponsors and supporters to enjoy a motivational and educational discussion surrounding national and global issues affecting our local community. In correlation with the forum, BestPrep hosted a state-wide

competition open to all Minnesota high school students grades 9-12. Participants of the competition created projects inspired by a prompt from entrepreneur John Hope Bryant’s keynote address at the forum, Financial Freedom for All. Over 200 projects were submitted and judges from Minnesota-based companies volunteered to determine the top 20 winners. Students who qualified for the top 20, along with their teachers and families, were invited to attend the Educational Forum. Each top 20 student was awarded a gift card, while students in the top five were awarded larger prizes. Gopinath placed in the top five with a visual video art piece.

Trimble/From page 4 — but it ended up being a severe sprain. So, what do bouldering gyms and hospitals have in common? Me. The answer is me.

Believe it or not, I’m not the only person sustaining injuries from bouldering. As I was leaving the gym to go to the hospital, I was stopped by a couple of strangers who shared stories of their

own bouldering-related ankle and elbow injuries. “Welcome to the sport,” one of the strangers said as I hopped out the door. While I plan on returning to bouldering eventually, for now, I’ll be taking

a much-needed (and mandatory) hiatus. For the next 6-8 weeks, I’ll be rocking a chic walking boot and crutches and attending physical therapy sessions to assist with my healing process.

Although inconvenient and humbling, this experience has made me more appreciative of my body’s physical capabilities and has shown me the importance of challenging myself while respecting

my body’s limitations. Plus, now I have a story to look back on and laugh at in a few years. At least that’s what my doctor told me. Movement is a gift, pain is temporary.

Bennett/From page 4 50s when his company went out of business as a result of new technology. He wanted to keep working both for financial reasons and to stay busy and engaged. He interviewed

and was hired for a part time job at one of the local zoos, in a position that has satisfied him for 17 years. What started out as a job that provided a paycheck and also caught his interest has become more than that. He is using skills he

enjoys in his work, including attention to detail and interacting with people both on a one-to-one basis, and with the general public, as he meets and greets zoo-goers, answering questions and informing them about the animals

and the extensive zoo property. He has already bypassed the typical retirement age, happy in his part-time work with time available to prepare and work in his seasonal job (as a real bearded Santa!). The point here is that

having purpose is essential throughout life. The key is to find ways to stay active and curious, to socialize and to use skills that keep you engaged and interested. It is easy to resort to your comfort zone, but when seeking fulfillment

in retirement, rather than restricting yourself, stay open; you are likely to benefit not only your own life, but that of others as well. Recovering purpose takes getting up, getting out and being active in mind, body and spirit!