



9th Ward E-News

From Minneapolis Council Member Gary Schiff

August 17, 2007

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Special legislative session influences 2008 budget

This week Mayor R.T. Rybak [postponed](#) his annual budget address due to the financial uncertainties stemming from the I-35W bridge collapse on August 1. The likelihood of a special session of the Minnesota State Legislature opens the door to a new transportation bill, and restoration of local government [aid](#) cuts. The legislature adjourned in May without restoring \$2 million in local government [aid](#) to Minneapolis and without overturning the Governor's veto of a proposed gas tax increase for bridge and road maintenance. Local government [aid](#) in Minneapolis is used for police, fire and roads.

This week Minnesota was awarded [\\$133 million](#) from the federal government to reduce traffic congestion, using transit and congestion pricing. Money in Minneapolis will be used to build more bus lanes on 2nd Avenue and Marquette Avenue in downtown Minneapolis. A portion of these federal funds (\$13.2 million) will be available sooner than the rest of the funding. This money will allow Metro Transit to pay for new buses and a park and ride in the north metro to help relieve congestion related to the bridge collapse.

Today, the City Council approved a [Statement of Principles](#), calling for light rail transit and bus rapid transit to be incorporated into the rebuilding of 35W bridge. The principles will be used by the city as MnDOT seeks municipal consent for the final design and alignment of the replacement bridge.

Keep the party going after National Night Out

Nearly 60,000 residents took part in National Night Out on August 7, with over one thousand block clubs participating. "The connections made in one night can last throughout the year. Let's keep the party going and make our neighborhoods stronger," Council Member Gary Schiff said. "Connecting neighbors is the goal of National Night Out but the hope is that neighbors and neighborhood block clubs continue to meet year round."



Children enjoyed a petting zoo on NNO at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in the Phillips Neighborhood

Gerry Tyrrell's block club, the 3200 block of Longfellow and Cedar Avenues, meets every few months to discuss concerns, to share food, and to make sure neighbors look out for one another every day of the year. "We update our phone list at each meeting," says Gerry. "This way, we can reach each other quickly if an issue comes up. It's also a good excuse to knock on doors of new neighbors and make sure they feel welcomed and connected to the community." For more neighborhood involvement ideas or for assistance in organizing a new block or apartment club, contact the local [neighborhood organization](#) or [Community Crime Prevention Specialist](#). To invite Council Member Gary Schiff to neighborhood block meetings contact [Heidi Quezada](#) or call the Ward Nine office at 612-673-2209.

Resource Center of the Americas closes its doors



The Resource Center of the Americas suspended operations yesterday.

The Resource Center of the Americas closed its doors yesterday due to “continuing and insurmountable financial challenges.” Over the last five years, the Resource Center experienced funding instability which required program cutbacks and staff layoffs. The decision to suspend operations was made in order to responsibly fulfill payroll and creditor obligations, according to a statement from the Center. The bookstore and café have closed and all upcoming classes and programs have been cancelled. People who have registered for fall classes will

receive a refund.

Established by volunteers near the campus of the University of Minnesota in 1982, the Resource Center focused on human rights, globalization and development issues in the Americas while providing support for immigrant rights in Minnesota. Its award-winning programs and services have included the Centro de Derechos Laborales, Penny Lernoux library and the Bookstore of the Americas. [Read the full press release](#) for more information on the history and current situation of the Resource Center of the Americas.

August Breakfast with Gary: focus on human trafficking

New location!

On Friday August 31, join Council Member Gary Schiff and special guests Suzanne Koeplinger, Artika Roller and Hillary Freeman for a discussion on prostitution and human trafficking. Breakfast with Gary is a monthly event held 7:30 to 9:00 a.m. the final Friday of the month.

The guest speakers will address different aspects of the ongoing effort to reduce street prostitution in south Minneapolis. Suzanne Koeplinger is the executive director of the Minnesota Indian Women’s Resource Center, which has been working with law enforcement to address the trafficking of Native women from reservations. Artika Roller runs the Pride program at Family and Children’s Services, working primarily with first time offenders. Hillary Freeman works as a crime specialist for the Minneapolis Police Department and is developing a mentoring program for women trapped long term in prostitution.

Breakfast with Gary will now be held at Mercado Central, 3016 Bloomington Avenue South on the southwest corner of Lake Street and Bloomington Avenue. Please contact [Heidi Quezada](#) with questions.

Free arsenic screening for uninsured kids

Free arsenic screening for uninsured kids is now available at [Smiley’s Clinic](#), 2020 E 28th St, thanks to a grant from [UCare Minnesota](#). To make an appointment, parents should call 612-333-0770.

Potential exposure to arsenic remains a concern in the area of the south Minneapolis near the [CMC Heartland site](#). Soil contamination from arsenic was first discovered in 2001, and testing has confirmed over one hundred properties are affected. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, 61 properties have been cleaned so far. The EPA is undergoing a health risk assessment study to determine how many properties will receive additional cleanup. Results of the health risk assessment and determination of the final number of properties to be cleaned will be known until the fall of 2007.



Smiley Clinic opened in the Phillips Neighborhood in February 2006

While clean up continues, children who live and play in a contaminated area can have more exposure than adults. Preschool-age children are more likely to be exposed because of their frequent hand to mouth activity. In addition, dust from contaminated soil can be tracked into the house on shoes and can end up on indoor surfaces and toys. To learn more about arsenic and to keep your kids safe from accidental exposure, [click here](#).

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