

A NEW ERA BEGINS



EMMA JOHNSON • The Reporter

Above, President Roshit Niraula swears in new vice president Rebekka Jay. Bottom left, the academic senators, including former president turned Graduate Studies Senator Sierra Roiger (far left) are sworn in. Bottom right, off-campus senators and senators on several advisory boards were sworn in.

DEI awards student leadership

By LAUREN VISKA
Staff Writer

Liz Flatum said they were shocked when they got the email saying they'd won an award at the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Awards in the CSU Ballroom Tuesday.

"I was really excited. I didn't know what categories were for the awards. It was interesting," said Flatum. "It was like, 'What am I gonna get? What's gonna happen?'"

They won the Women in Action award for their work at the Women's Center. This award is given to a student who strongly commits to intersectional leadership and service on campus.

This student's efforts are consistently aimed at uplifting and empowering all MSU students, regardless of gender or identity.

The award ceremony recognizes student leadership within the DEI programs. Megan Heutmaker, the director of American Indian Affairs, said it has been going on since she was a student in 2007.

"I won the Dean's Award, which is on my wall here. That was a big honor to win that award," said Heutmaker.

Heutmaker said the awards help recognize and appreciate students' work over the academic year or their time in the program.

"To help them feel special, empowered and emboldened to keep doing more work as they continue here at MSU if they're a first, second-year or third-year student," she said. "If they are about to graduate, it's to remember to keep doing amazing work as they go out into the world and make a change at different institutions that they may be a part of as they go out in the real world."

Heutmaker also said it is important to recognize these students because they are making MSU more supportive of DEI's mission: to have a diverse campus where students, faculty and staff can be engaged and productive members of a global society.

"It's always important to recognize students who are doing amazing things on our campus and making things better, making things more helpful for students

DEI on page 2▶

Niraula and Jay become 92nd Student Government leaders

By EMMA JOHNSON
Editor In Chief

The torch was passed Wednesday as Roshit Niraula and Rebekka Jay were sworn in as Minnesota State's new Student Government president and vice president.

Before the inauguration began, awards were given out to faculty members by extending a helping hand and going the extra mile to help students succeed. One of the awards given was the Vic Swenson Student Friendly Award. The recipient was professor Kari Sween who was nominated for her advice and being "an idol and friend" to her students.

"I come here every day because it impacts all the people in this community, I'm spreading awareness throughout Deaf history, culture and ASL," Sween said. "I want to say thank you to all of the students who inspire me. I love my job here and I love getting to know you."

Facilities Services Director David Cowan won Administrator of the Year Award while Professor Jason Kaufman won the Dr. Duane Orr Teacher of the Year Award. Fourteen students were awarded the Maverick Shop Leadership Award for their leadership both on campus and in the community.

Before swearing in Niraula, outgoing President Sierra Roiger reflected on her presidency, calling this year "one for the history books" along with finding her passion for advocacy.

"I've had the opportunity to testify at the State Capitol in front of the higher education committees and that experience reignited a passion within me that I had nearly lost after last semester," Roiger said. "Standing before those committees advocating for the needs and concerns of students reminded me of the immense power that comes from finding one's voice and speaking up for what truly matters."

Roiger then swore in Niraula,

who served beside her as vice president this year. They thanked their family, Roiger and several student leaders for their impact on them. He also mentioned the kindness he's been met with.

"I've learned to laugh a little bit at myself, be more mindful of my actions and more importantly, appreciate the supportive community we have here," Niraula said.

He talked about how his and Jay's theme for their leadership is leading with vulnerabilities.

"It's not about the mistakes that we've made, but it's about the lessons that we've learned and the kindness that we've shared along the way," Niraula said. "When we lead with vulnerabilities, we create a culture of openness and trust and we invite others to share the struggles, the fears without the fear of judgment."

Niraula then listed his and Jay's plan of action once they get into office.

"Our first priority is transparen-

cy. We plan on preparing platforms for us to be more transparent and accountable to students. Our second priority is ensuring all of our students feel represented. Our priorities also include getting tough conversations started. We want to address and engage with each and every one of you as we find workable solutions to difficult questions," Niraula said.

Niraula briefly stepped back into his vice president role to swear in Jay. She kept her speech "short and sweet," saying how honored she was to serve the student body and work alongside Niraula.

"I cannot wait to get to work serving our students and get to work with our senators and overall student body and faculty," Jay said. "We are students supporting students and that is our main goal."

The pair will host their first meeting next Wednesday where the speaker will be chosen for the next academic year.



DAVIS JENSEN • The Reporter

Pictured above is Winona Williams, Ayasha Williams and Megan Heutmaker. The trio took home the Outstanding Recognized Student Organization Award for their efforts in the Native American Student Association.

◀DEI from page 1

across the entire university,” said Heutmaker. “What we do here in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for students are things that all students have access to.”

One of the many programs under DEI is Accessibility Resources.

They help coordinate accommodations for students with disabilities and serve as a resource for faculty, staff and the university community to ensure everyone has equal access to education.

Katelyn Walz is the vice president of the Neurodiversity Club, which helps people with neurodivergent disorders like ADHD, dyslexia or autism.

She won the Student Leadership Award for Accessibility Resources.

“Winning this award feels very rewarding. It is a nice physical symbol of what I’ve been able to do over the past couple of years,” said Walz. “And just really shows I have made at least a little bit of a difference.”

There were 16 award categories in total, and two had multiple winners from different programs. Students can participate in DEI by walking in the door of any one of the programs.

“We’re always excited for people to come be involved in any of the work we’re doing and to be a part of any of our student organizations. Any of the events that we have were always excited for any student who wants to come and be a part of our work. All it takes is you stepping forward,” said Heutmaker.

MUDAC hosts first event since COVID

By BIRUK MENGESHA
Staff Writer

The Midwest Undergraduate Data Analytics Competition, which featured 37 teams competing, was held on April 6 at Minnesota State.

The competition was hosted by Data Resources for Eager and Analytical Minds, also known as DREAM.

Carleton College and University of Minnesota won first place for undergraduate and graduate respectively.

Dr. Rajeev Bukralia, a faculty member in the computer science department and founder of DREAM, organized the event. On Saturday, students were gathered for the 24-hour, non-stop data analytics competition.

“The student teams were asked to solve a data challenge related to agriculture in Minnesota, specifically about synthetic fertilizers,” Bukralia said.

The data sponsor for MUDAC 2024 was Agricultural Utilization Research Institute (AURI), Bukralia said.

MUDAC, first held in 2012 at Winona State University, was soon brought to MSU with the help of Bukralia. The event was held back in COVID from 2021-2023. Making this year’s event even more special.

“This year over 100 industry professionals from companies including United Health Group, Wells Fargo, Thomson Reuters, Target, Medtronic, Christensen Farms, Taylor Corp, and many other large and small companies served as judges,” Bukralia commented.

The mission of MUDAC is to



NATE TILAHUN • The Reporter

The Midwest Undergraduate Data Analytics Competition, which featured 37 teams competing, was held on April 6 at Minnesota State.

provide students with an opportunity to learn data science and data analytics.

“MUDAC is considered one of the most rigorous hackathons because students are unaware of the challenge questions or data until they arrive on campus,” Bukralia added.

As for those interested in participating, Bukralia notes that any student can participate.

“Faculty advisors form student teams that include students from a variety of academic backgrounds. Most common majors are computer science, mathematics, statistics, data science, and business analytics,” Bukralia continued.

Saumya Gautam, president of DREAM, helped organize the competition.

There were two rounds for the students to be judged.

“In the first round we present-

ed our findings in the form of a presentation to four to five different judging tables.

Four to five teams were selected to present in front of the entire audience for the second round,” Gautam said.

According to Gautam, MUDAC gives students exposure to real-world problems.

“Working in a team in limited time also gave us a feel of what it’s like working in a real work environment,” Gautam said.

DREAM is a student organization recognized by MNSU.

With over 300 student members, it is the largest student club on campus.

“DREAM is a great place to meet students with similar interests, make connections, network, and most importantly learn and grow in the field of technology,” Gautam said.

Mankato Riverblenders Barbershop Chorus

The Mankato Riverblenders Barbershop Chorus will celebrate the **50th Anniversary** of the chorus by presenting their annual show titled “50 Years of Harmony.”



April 27th, 1:00 p.m.

Tickets can be purchased from any Riverblenders Chorus member, online at singmankato.com, Cub Foods stores, Hilltop HyVee or Nutter Clothing in St. Peter.



Ticket prices are: \$15 adult and \$5 student

50 Years of Harmony
Hosanna Lutheran Church, Mankato

This semester, Library Services and IT Solutions selected four faculty members that have contributed to textbook affordability and equitable classroom practice by reevaluating their course materials. These instructors have found library resources or Open Educational Resources (OER) that are free for students to use but still maintain the academic rigor of their courses. This month, we thank these faculty members for helping students have a more equitable and affordable experience in their courses!



Thank you to our textbook heroes!

- Dr. Jeff Pribyl (OER) - Chemistry
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Are you our next Textbook Hero?

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First 7 jurors chosen for Trump's trial

By MICHAEL R. SISAK
The Associated Press

The first seven jurors for Donald Trump's hush money trial were seated Tuesday after lawyers grilled the jury pool about their social media posts, political views and personal lives to decide who can sit in fair judgment of the former president.

The panelists who were selected are an information technology worker, an English teacher, an oncology nurse, a sales professional, a software engineer and two lawyers.

Eleven more people still must be sworn in before opening statements begin as early as next week in the first criminal trial of a former commander in chief. It's a moment of reckoning for Trump, who has tried to put off his prosecutions until after the November election and casts himself as the victim of a politically motivated justice system.

The trial puts Trump's legal problems at the center of his closely contested race against President Joe Biden. It's the first of Trump's four criminal cases to reach trial, and it may be the only one to return a verdict before voters decide whether to elect the presumptive GOP presidential nominee.

The methodical process unfolding in the Manhattan courtroom highlights the challenge of finding people who can fairly judge the polarizing defendant in the city where he built his real estate



Former President Donald Trump awaits the start of proceedings on the second day of jury selection at Manhattan criminal court, Tuesday, April 16, 2024, in New York.

MICHAEL R. SISAK • The Associated Press

empire before being elected president in 2016. Even so, jury selection moved quicker than expected Tuesday afternoon. It was set to resume Thursday.

On his way out of the courthouse, Trump stopped in the hallway to rail against the case to reporters, accusing Judge Juan

Merchan of "rushing" the trial. He has denied any wrongdoing.

"We are going to continue our fight against this judge," said Trump, who pushed unsuccessfully to have Merchan removed from the case.

During an appearance later Tuesday at a bodega in Harlem,

Trump was asked what he thought of the jurors he had seen. He said it was "a little bit early to see," adding, "We'll see what happens."

Over two days, dozens of potential jurors have been excused after saying they could not be impartial or because they had other commitments. Trump's lawyers challenged

a handful of people over social media posts, and one person was dismissed over a 2017 post about Trump that said "Lock him up!"

Several would-be jurors told the judge they believed they could decide the case fairly, no matter their feelings about Trump or his policies as president.

Trump looked on in the courtroom as potential jurors — whose names are known only to prosecutors, Trump and their legal teams — shared details of their lives and impressions of him. The judge admonished Trump at one point after he spoke loudly and gestured while the judge questioned one woman about a social media post.

"I don't know what he was uttering, but it was audible and he was gesturing. And he was speaking in the direction of the juror," Merchan said. "I won't tolerate that. I will not tolerate any jurors being intimidated in this courtroom."

Prosecutor Joshua Steinglass took Trump's notoriety head-on, telling the jury pool that attorneys were not looking for people who had been "living under a rock for the past eight years." They just needed to keep an open mind.

"This case has nothing to do with your personal politics ... it's not a referendum on the Trump presidency or a popularity contest or who you're going to vote for in November. We don't care. This case is about whether this man broke the law," he said.



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Things to know about transgender kids' rights

By GEOFF MULVIHILL
The Associated Press

Three court rulings across the U.S. this week delved into laws restricting the rights of transgender kids, including the first time the U.S. Supreme Court has gotten involved in a ban on gender-affirming care.

Most Republican-controlled states have now banned gender-affirming health care such as puberty blockers and hormones for transgender minors, and blocked transgender girls from participating in girls sports competitions.

Most of the measures face legal challenges, and this week's rulings went both ways. The Supreme Court said Idaho can enforce its ban against gender-affirming health for minors while lawsuits proceed. An Ohio state judge put on hold a law against health care and sports participation that was about to kick in there. And a federal appeals court ruled that West Virginia cannot keep a transgender girl from participating on her school's track team.

Here are things to know about the court rulings and the latest legislative action.

OHIO JUDGE PUTS STATE LAW ON HOLD

On Tuesday, an Ohio judge blocked enforcement of a law that was to take effect on April 24, banning gender-affirming care for minors and keeping transgender girls off girls sports teams at schools.

Franklin County Judge Michael Holbrook said in his written opinion that it's likely the law, adopted in January with a legislative override of Republican Gov. Mike DeWine's veto, violates a requirement that the state's laws address just one issue. He noted that lawmakers



DARIN OSWALD • The Associated Press

People gather in front of the Idaho Statehouse in opposition to anti-transgender legislation moving through an Idaho Republican congress, Friday, Feb. 24, 2023, in Boise, Idaho.

added the ban on gender-affirming care to the sports-related legislation because they were unable to adopt it separately.

The ban on enforcement is in effect for two weeks or until a judge holds a hearing for a request to halt enforcement while the case works its way through the courts.

THE SUPREME COURT HAS ITS FIRST SAY ON A BAN

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled on Monday that Idaho can enforce its ban on providing puberty blockers or hormones to minors. The law also bans gender-affirming surgery, which is extremely rare for those under 18 anyway.

At least two dozen states have put similar bans into law in the last few years, nearly all of them challenged in court. Twenty other states are currently enforcing them.

The Idaho ruling was the first time the issue reached the Supreme Court.

But the justices did not dive into the constitutionality of the ban. Instead, they ruled 6-3 that enforcement can proceed, except against the two transgender teens who sued. And most of the justice's written opinions dealt with judicial procedure, exploring whether it's proper for courts to impose universal injunctions blocking laws

while questions about them move through the courts.

OTHER CASES ON GENDER-AFFIRMING CARE ARE IN PLAY

The first ban on gender-affirming care for minors was adopted by Arkansas in 2021.

It was also the first to be blocked entirely — not just temporarily — by a federal court.

Last week, 10 judges on the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in St. Louis heard arguments on Arkansas' appeal of the ruling that blocked the law.

Circuit court appeals often take months to decide, and any ruling

is likely to be appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, which has already been asked to block similar laws that are in effect in Kentucky and Tennessee.

COURT SAYS WEST VIRGINIA ATHLETE CANNOT BE BARRED

A three-judge panel from another federal appeals court, the Richmond, Virginia-based 4th U.S. Circuit, ruled 2-1 Tuesday that the West Virginia's ban against girls sports competition by transgender girls violates the rights of one teen athlete who challenged it.

The result: 13-year-old Becky Pepper Jackson, who has identified as a girl since she was in third grade, can stay on her middle school's girls cross country and track and field teams.

Attorney General Patrick Morrisey said in a statement that the ban remains in place for others, though an ACLU-West Virginia spokesperson said it's not clear that there are any other kids in the state are impacted by the law.

Other judges have temporarily blocked enforcement in Arizona, Idaho and Utah. But the New York City-based 2nd Circuit revived a challenge to Connecticut's policy of letting transgender girls compete in girls sports, sending it back to a lower court last year without ruling on its merits.

At least 24 states have laws or policies on the books barring transgender girls and women from certain sports competitions, and most are enforcing them.

And some local bans are being litigated: A federal judge ruled refused to block the New York state government from taking legal action against Nassau County's ban, which is also being challenged by a local roller derby league.

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Immigrant rally in NYC on inequities

By CEDAR ATTANASIO
The Associated Press

Black immigrants turned out in the hundreds on Tuesday across from New York City Hall during a hearing about racial inequities in the city's shelter and immigrant support systems.

Over 1,500 immigrants, mostly from Guinea, assembled in City Hall Park, after it became clear that only around a hundred people would be accommodated inside for the hearing.

The City Council considered relatively minor proposals. One set of bills would require administrators to collect better data on migrants in city services. Another effort, a resolution, called on the federal government to eliminate or to reimburse immigration application fees.

City Council members are asking for better data because they believe, with some evidence acknowledged by city officials, that Black migrants are more often turned away from shelters, denied access to help in their native languages, and less able to find accommodations for religious practices than others.

City officials say African migrants are more likely to arrive to the city without children, meaning they're often less of a priority for limited shelter space. Under a recent legal settlement, the city can evict adult migrants after 30 days



CEDAR ATTANASIO • The Associated Press

Immigrants line up to attend a city council hearing on disparities in immigration services for Black immigrants at City Hall in New York on Tuesday, April 16, 2024.

in a shelter and 60 days for those under age 23, before forcing them to reapply for another spot. It's unclear how often those migrants end up sleeping on the street or in a subway car.

"The 30-60 day notices disproportionately affect Black immigrants," said Council Member

Alexa Avilés, Chair of the Committee on Immigration, in a gilded hearing room Tuesday. Dozens of immigrants listened to proceedings on headsets with access to simultaneous translations in Wolof, Haitian Creole, Arabic, French, Fula and Bambara.

Rallies in support of City Council

proposals are common, but usually draw only a few dozen people, often just the most tuned-in activists. But Guineans cheering and clapping outside Tuesday said that by word of mouth, often on WhatsApp groups with fellow immigrants, they learned about the event and came to support City

Council members, or see if they could get information about jobs and housing. Some learned for the first time that they're eligible for city-run health insurance.

"I'm very impressed that, you know, today there was a call to action and you showed up," Council Member Mercedes Narcisse said to those inside the hearing room and outside in the park.

"We want support, because we have no shelter, we have nowhere to live. What is more, we also want help in legalizing our situation in this country," said Ibrahima Barry, from Guinea, of gaining work permission and residency.

While asylum-seekers must wait six months for a possible work permit, some migrant groups are offered a shortcut.

In September, President Joe Biden authorized Venezuelans already in the country to receive indefinite immigration protection, making them eligible for work permits. In December, in response to a surge of violence in Haiti, the administration announced an expansion of the program for Haitians.

Some countries in Africa, such as Sudan and Ethiopia, are also on that relief list, but not Guinea or other common origin countries of New York immigrants such as Senegal and Mauritania. And like the relief for Venezuelans, the protections don't apply to migrants who have arrived since the initial announcement.

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Cross something off your bucket list this summer

Summer is right around the corner. For some, this is a time to get away from the stressors of life and to enjoy pure relaxation. For others, it may be a time to further a career at an internship or to grind a summer job to rack up as much cash as possible.

Whatever your summer plans are, we should all use it as a time to cross at least one thing off our bucket lists.

Regardless of how you plan to spend these sun-filled months, it's the perfect opportunity to cross at least one item off your bucket list. Whether it's skydiving, learning a new skill or finally taking that road trip with friends. Summer provides the extra daylight hours and, often, a more relaxed schedule to make these dreams a reality.

It also helps that we are young. It is the prime time to experience life and the things that we cannot do during the grueling school months. It is a time to be active, to learn and to experience all the things we day dream about during long lectures and assignments.

Incorporating these experiences isn't just about fun; it's about growth and fulfillment.

Engaging in new activities can challenge you, help you gain new perspectives and even reveal hidden passions. Crossing something off your bucket lists is a chance to create memories that last far beyond the summer months, providing stories to share and accomplishments to reflect on.

Bucket list activities can also be great life lessons. For example, planning a hiking trip can teach you the importance of preparation and perseverance. Starting a running routine might show you the value of persistence and pushing beyond your comfort zone.

Meanwhile, dyeing your hair or getting a tattoo can encourage self-expression and reassure you that it's okay to try something unusual.

If you're graduating this can be the perfect time to hit the road one last time as a sendoff before officially joining the workforce. Bring a college friend with you before you go your separate ways. Cement your relationship and celebrate new beginnings. It is important to get together with the friends that pushed you during your years of education.

If you aren't graduating, consider crossing off that item with an old hometown friend or with a new friend gained in college. This is a perfect opportunity to bond with old and new friends.

Lastly, during these months, create a bucket list for school. It can include new goals and things you want to achieve during the fall and spring semester.

Perspectives

Let's drag out the history of drag



SETH WENIG • The Associated Press

On April 26, the Jim Chalgren LGBT center will hold its annual and popular drag show. It has been a continuous tradition on this campus for well over 20 years and goes back even farther than that.

Most people at this point are familiar at least with the concept of drag. Drag (for the few uninitiated out there) is when people perform publicly in clothing or costumes outside their typical gender. Usually this involves a heightened performance of gender stereotypes or an excess of campy transgressiveness.

So where did drag start exactly? Some have speculated drag originated with the practice of having male actors perform the roles of women on stage during the middle ages when women were banned from performing in theaters. Supposedly according to this idea, the

WHY NOT TODAY? By JEREMY REDLTEN

term drag came from the way male performers' dresses and gowns would literally drag on the stage. (This theory has been called into question though.)

One of the earliest well-documented drag performers was William Dorsley Swann. Swann described himself as "the queen of drag" and was arrested several times over the lavish drag balls he threw at his home. As a formerly enslaved person, Swann was no stranger to persecution. He fought back against the charges, going so far as to ask President Grover Cleveland to issue a pardon.

However, cross-dressing

was not always a persecuted or illegal activity. In fact, around the turn of the century, female impersonation was seen as a high art form. It fell in favor for a variety of reasons but one was the broader rise in persecution against the queer community that occurred in the early half of the 20th century.

By the 50's and 60's, drag became relegated to underground gay bars. But following the Stonewall Riots in the 1960's, it began to come back into vogue.

The 1990 documentary "Paris is Burning" was released, which chronicled the underground ball culture in New York City. "Paris is Burning" helped bring an understanding of drag and ball culture to a larger culture and highlighted the various discrimination and difficulties faced by its drag subjects. The show "Pose" deals with

COLUMN on page 7▶

Pulse

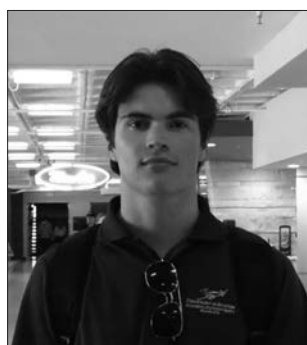
"What is on your bucket list?"

Compiled by Alexis Darkow



ANITA ALE, FRESHMAN

"Getting back home to my country."



COOPER JOHNSON, FRESHMAN

"Becoming a certified flight instructor."



DEOGRASIA SHIRIMA, SOPHOMORE

"Visit my brother in China."



JACOB GREEN, FRESHMAN

"Start my own business."



JACQUE WALLS, SOPHOMORE

"To leave the country and study abroad."



OLIVIA SEYMOUR, SOPHOMORE

"Camp in Banff, Canada."

Storm dumps record rain across Dubai's airport



JOHN GRAMBELL • The Associated Press

An SUV passes through standing water in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Tuesday, April 16, 2024. Heavy rains lashed the United Arab Emirates on Tuesday.

By JOHN GRAMBELL
The Associated Press

The desert nation of the United Arab Emirates attempted to dry out Wednesday from the heaviest rain ever recorded there after a deluge flooded out Dubai International Airport, disrupting flights through the world's busiest airfield for international travel.

The state-run WAM news agency called the rain Tuesday "a historic weather event" that surpassed "anything documented since the start of data collection in 1949." That's before the discovery of crude oil in this energy-rich nation then part of a British protectorate known as the Trucial States.

Rain also fell in Bahrain, Oman, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. However, the rains were acute across the UAE.

The flooding sparked speculation that cloud seeding -- flying small planes through clouds dispersing chemicals aimed at getting rain to fall -- may have caused the deluge.

But experts said the storm systems that produced the rain were forecast well in advance and that cloud seeding would not have caused such flooding.

Several reports quoted meteorologists at the National Center for Meteorology as saying they flew six or seven cloud-seeding flights before the rains. Flight-tracking data analyzed by The Associated Press showed one aircraft affiliated with the UAE's cloud-seeding efforts flew around the country

Monday. The National, an English-language, state-linked newspaper in Abu Dhabi, quoted an anonymous official at the center on Wednesday as saying no cloud seeding took place on Tuesday, without acknowledging any earlier flights. The center did not respond to questions Wednesday from the AP.

The UAE, which heavily relies on energy-hungry desalination plants to provide water, conducts cloud seeding in part to increase its dwindling, limited groundwater.

Jeff Masters, a meteorologist for Yale Climate Connections, said the flooding in Dubai was caused by an unusually strong low pressure system that drove many rounds of heavy thunderstorms.

"You don't need cloud seeding's influence to account for the record deluge in Dubai," Masters said.

Scientists also say climate change in general is responsible for more intense and more frequent extreme storms, droughts, floods and wildfires around the world. Dubai hosted the United Nations' COP28 climate talks just last year. Rising temperatures and other effects of global warming long have been viewed as a threat to life in the already-baking region.

The rains began late Monday, soaking the sands and roadways of Dubai with some 20 millimeters (0.79 inches) of rain, according to meteorological data collected at Dubai International Airport. The storms intensified around 9

a.m. local Tuesday and continued throughout the day, dumping more rain and hail onto the overwhelmed city.

By the end of Tuesday, more than 142 millimeters (5.59 inches) of rainfall had soaked Dubai over 24 hours. An average year sees 94.7 millimeters (3.73 inches) of rain at Dubai International Airport, a hub for the long-haul carrier Emirates.

At the airport, standing water lapped on taxiways as aircraft landed. Arrivals were halted Tuesday night, and passengers struggled to reach terminals through the floodwater covering surrounding roads.

One couple, who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity to speak freely in a country with strict laws that criminalize critical speech, called the situation at the airport "absolute carnage."

"You cannot get a taxi. There's people sleeping in the Metro station. There's people sleeping in the airport," the man said Wednesday.

They ended up getting a taxi to near their home some 30 kilometers (18 miles) away, but floodwater on the road stopped them. A bystander helped them over a highway barrier with their carry-on luggage, the bottles of gin they picked up from duty-free clinking away.

Dubai International Airport acknowledged Wednesday morning that the flooding had left "limited transportation options" and affected flights as aircraft crews couldn't reach the airfield.

◀COLUMN from page 6

this era of queer history as well. Today drag is celebrated across the globe. Drag queen story hours have become popular activities at public libraries and "Rupaul's Drag Race" is now on its 15th season. However, drag still faces numerous challenges. Charges of grooming and worse are frequently

leveled against drag queens these days. Several states have attempted to institute various types of drag bans.

Here in Mankato, the first drag show was held on May 16, 1975 with Jim Chalgren working as one of the producers of the show. "Social norms will be transgressed and attitudes

will be challenged at the 'Ms. Mankato Drag Race,'" wrote The Reporter when describing the event.

In any case, in spite of current opposition, one finds it difficult to imagine that drag won't be able to continue giving sassy, fabulous transgressiveness far into the future.

Homes are demolished in Ivory Coast's main city



DIOMANDE BLE BLONDE • The Associated Press

People whose houses were demolished on public health grounds collect water in the Gesco neighborhood of Abidjan, Ivory Coast, Wednesday, Feb. 28, 2024.

By TOUSSAINT N'GOTTA
The Associated Press

Dame Touré rushed to quickly gather what she could as bulldozers rolled into her neighborhood in Ivory Coast's fast-growing economic hub of Abidjan.

Her three children joined her, stuffing plastic bags with clothes and whatever other items they could grab, before their home was reduced to rubble as armed security forces looked on.

The Touré home was among hundreds crushed in a February wave of demolitions targeting Abidjan's underdeveloped areas.

The government says it's because of public health concerns as the poor areas — built along a lagoon in this port city of 6.3 million on West Africa's southern coast — suffer deadly floods during the rainy season. More than 300 people have been killed since 2005 and officials

say the deluges become breeding grounds for water-borne and other diseases.

"My children and I now sleep under the sun," said Touré, 50. "We don't know where to go."

Demolitions in low-income neighborhoods are nothing new in Abidjan, where rapid urbanization has led to a population boom and housing shortages, with nearly one in five Ivorians residing in the city.

It's a challenge in many parts of Africa where economic woes pushed more people into cities in search of better opportunities, straining an already overstretched infrastructure.

However, the latest Abidjan demolition — mainly in impoverished suburbs in the Gesco and Sebroko districts — is one of the largest in years, with an estimated hundreds of thousands of residents affected since it began in late January.

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SPORTS

Mavericks to take on Minnesota Crookston

By AHMED HASSAN
Staff Writer

The Minnesota State men's baseball team returns home to take on the University of Minnesota Crookston Golden Eagles in a three-game series.

The Mavs currently have a 24-12 overall record and a 20-6 conference record which keeps them in second in the conference standings after their two-game series against the University of Sioux Falls.

The Mavericks faced the University of Sioux Falls Wednesday where they split their two-game series. The Mavs lost game one 5-3, but redeemed themselves in game two winning 10-4.

After the split, MSU Head Coach Matt Magers said he was impressed with his team's play.

"Fischer, Magers, Wickman and Baker showed off their pop at the plate while Matthaideess stepped up in relief giving us five quality innings," he said.

Louis Magers, Ryan Wickman and Matthew Fleischhacker led the Mavericks in game two with all three players accumulating two runs.

The Golden Eagles currently hold a 23-12 overall record and a 17-8 conference record which places them fifth in the conference standings after a two-game series



Courtesy Maverick Athletics

The Minnesota State baseball team are nationally ranked 12th in on base percentage and 26th in hit-by pitches.

against Bemidji State.

The Maverick offense has been on a tear recently catching heat in their past eight games (prior to game vs USF) outsourcing their opponents 110-31 with 16 of those

runs coming from homeruns. The Mavs' batting has also been on fire averaging a .429 batting average with 112 hits to go along with it.

The Mavericks have dominated the small ball categories leading the

conference in runs, walks, sacrifice flies, hit by pitches and on base percentage. The Mavs are nationally ranked 12th in on base percentage and 26th in hit-by pitches.

Aidan Byrne, Zach Stroch and

Magers have led the Mavs offensively recently, combining for 43 of the Mavs 112 hits over the last eight games. Byrne raised his batting average from .636 to .424 during the Mavs winning streak which made it the sixth best in the conference.

Magers and Fleischhacker continue to perform for the Mavs on the mound as the pair had combined for 70 of the Mavs 97 walks this season which leads the conference.

Ryan Wickman has been solid on the base path season recently climbing up the rankings in the history books fifth all time in MSU all time steals with 50. Wickman has 19 stolen bases so far on the season.

The Golden Eagles faced Bemidji State Wednesday and swept them winning 8-3 in game one and keeping the momentum in game two winning 15-1.

Teddy Giefer leads the Golden Eagle offense as he leads the team in batting average (.382), RBI (40), on-base percentage (.466) and slugging percentage (.618).

The Golden Eagles staff is ranked eighth best in the conference in batting average against (.292) and ERA (6.04) while also ranking fourth in strikeouts (261).

The Mavericks are back in action Saturday to host Minnesota Crookston at 1:30 p.m.

Women's golf take fourth at Wildcat Classic

By MOHAMED WARSAME
Sports Editor

The Minnesota State women's golf team returned to the green for the Wayne State College Wildcat Classic Monday.

The Mavericks finished fourth of 14 teams with a total team score of 636.

"We got to learn to play the conditions and capitalize when we get our scoring opportunities," said head coach Alex Schmitz in a press release on the Maverick Athletics website. "Lots to improve on before conference next week"

The event held at Wayne Country Club in Wayne, Nebraska, was initially supposed to take place over two days, but the weather forecast for Tuesday threw a spanner in the works.

"So we were supposed to play 18 holes yesterday and 18 holes today, but because of the forecast we played 36 holes yesterday. That's a long day," said assistant coach Todd Pflugsten.

Augustana took home first place with a total team score of 607. AU's Molly Stevens won the individual medal by shooting a 149.

The Mavs' goal coming into the tournament was getting victory, or at the very least staying close to the eventual winners. Neither of those



Courtesy Maverick Athletics

The Minnesota State women's golf team's next time out on the green will be when they compete in the NSIC Championship April 26-28.

things happened Monday.

"Augustana's the other really good team in our conference. We beat them last fall once, and they beat us up pretty good yesterday.

Sometimes that's golf you know. We hit some shots and we were in good position to score and at times we just missed greens or we three putted or I think we let the wind get

to us at times, Pflugsten said.

Anna Cihak led the way for the Mavs with a score of 155 which was good enough for a tie in sixth place on the day, is a person that the team

looks to when things get tough.

"She's a long hitter. You know she's always going to give you a pretty decent score, but she's the one that always leads by example. Always stay pretty calm, patient and upbeat," Pflugsten said.

Whenever the MSU women's golf team plays in these kinds of weather conditions, shaking off bad shots and moving onto the next one is what the coaching staff preaches. Strategically, hitting the ball low is something that they are told to do when the winds are rough.

Some of the other individual performances for the Mavs include Claire Schweim who finished tied for 12th with a score of 158, Kelly Winter finished tied for 20th with a 161 and Sammy Youngquist shot a 162 which gave her a tied 24th-place finish.

The Mavs will now shift their focus to working on certain aspects of their game to make sure that they are prepared for the Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference Championship.

"So number one, how to play better in the wind. Number two, keep working on our short games because there's a lot of strokes inside 100 yards. Team drills, individual drills, just to work on chipping and putting because that's really critical," Pflugsten said.

Is this the end of the Golden State Warriors dynasty?



GODOFREDO A. VASQUEZ • The Associated Press

Golden State Warriors guard Stephen Curry sits on the court during the second half of the team's NBA basketball play-in tournament game against the Sacramento Kings, Tuesday, April 16, 2024, in Sacramento, Calif.

By LUKE JACKSON
News Editor

I have always been a lifelong basketball fan but as I get older and life gets busier I have struggled to stay up to date on the ever-so changing NBA. Every year new stars are on different teams and new players are coming in and shaking up the players power rankings.

One thing that has been a constant whether you're a die hard fan or just a "casual" like I have now become is you can always rely on knowing the big three in the Bay Area. Steph Curry, Klay Thompson and Draymond Green have changed the way basketball is played and they have been dominant for a decade now.

If you are a fan or not (I have not been a fan), you can rely on them to give you "Must See TV" with their reigning threes and fast pace play. They have been a spectacle to watch for all of my teen years and as I reach adulthood, they are not the same.

I got home from a busy day Tuesday night and turned on the Warriors play-in game expecting to see the experienced team blowing out the young Kings roster. I

was quite surprised by the exact opposite.

Curry did his usual thing, scored 22 and kept the team in the game (sort of). Despite his age, he is still an MVP caliber player and can light up any team on any given night.

But, he has to deal with the other two that make up the big three.

His second half of the Splash Bros just simply looks miserable. Thompson went an abysmal 0-10 in the field and didn't put up a single point.

With every shot he took his demeanor seemed to fade away from his body and at the end of the game, it looked like he was done. He looked defeated.

This is the man who put up 60 points on 11 dribbles. This is the guy who put up 37 points in one quarter and who was the anchor for the team through their four championship wins. And with his zero point performance, he may just be gone.

The Splash Bros may be over and his time with the Warriors may come to an end.

Lastly, there is Green. Was punching Jordan Poole worth it? Are all the techs and dirty plays

paying off?

You got your championships but man, your teammates just seem over you. Green is a constant problem and seems to just be wearing down the team.

The Kings ended the Warriors season on a 118-94 win.

Their biggest win against the Dubs since 2006. This could be their most meaningful win. The young Kings took down the old Warriors. The Kings may have ended the Warriors dynasty and ended Thompsons time with the team.

It'll be very interesting to see what happens in the Warriors future.

Maybe Thompson will put his ego aside and take a minimum contract to stay on the team. Maybe they'll go ahead and shock the league once again and sign a big name free agent. Only time will tell.

The NBA continues to be ever-so changing and with this loss it just feels weird.

I am aging right with these teams and it is becoming harder to keep up with.

Am I becoming the old-head who just remembers the players of the past?

Nuggets realize defending their NBA championship will be a tough task



BRANDON DILL • The Associated Press

Denver Nuggets center Nikola Jokic (15) handles the ball against Memphis Grizzlies forward GG Jackson, front left, in the first half of an NBA basketball game Sunday, April 14, 2024, in Memphis, Tenn.

By ARNIE STAPLETON
The Associated Press

The Denver Nuggets met coach Michael Malone's challenge not to let up after winning the franchise's first NBA title.

Nikola Jokic somehow got even better with another historic season that made him the odds-on favorite to win the MVP award for the third time in four years, according to BetMGM Sportsbook.

Aaron Gordon, Michael Porter Jr. and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope all stepped up their games this season and Jamal Murray had another terrific year despite missing 23 games with various ailments.

Reggie Jackson took over as leader of the Nuggets' second unit following Bruce Brown's departure in free agency and he teamed with Chris Braun and Peyton Watson to provide steady — and sometimes spectacular — play during the non-Jokic minutes.

"I'm most proud of the fact that as reigning world champion we haven't been satisfied the whole year," Malone said. "You gotta stay hungry because we have 29 teams right behind us trying to take what we have. And you need the requisite mindset, energy, focus, discipline, urgency, whatever you want to call it, and we had it."

The Nuggets bumped their win total by four, finishing 57-25, tied with Oklahoma City for best in the West, but the Thunder won the tiebreaker, so Denver dropped from the top seed a year ago to No. 2.

Malone found a silver lining in the slip: this time around, the Nuggets already know who their first-round opponent will be when they begin their title de-

fense Saturday night, something they didn't know until 48 hours before the playoffs began last year.

The team gathered at Jokic's home Tuesday night to drink a little rakija and watch the play-in game in New Orleans that the Los Angeles Lakers won 110-106, earning a first-round matchup against the reigning champs.

"There's a bullseye on our backs even more so now," Malone said Wednesday. "... That was our message today: Don't let anybody in these playoffs take what we worked so hard to get."

Starting with LeBron James & Co.

Malone acknowledges how daunting a task it is to become the league's first back-to-back champion since Golden State in 2018.

"The Western Conference playoffs are going to be insane," Malone said. "Forget seeding, the numbers in front of each team, throw them out the window. There's going to be eight really talented teams and there's a number of teams that I wouldn't be surprised to see coming out of the West because that's how deep and talented it is."

The Nuggets swept the Lakers in the Western Conference finals last year, leaving James muttering about retirement. Denver won all three matchups this season and hasn't lost to LA since Dec. 16, 2022.

"Can we not mention that anymore?" Jokic asked with a laugh. Amen, said his coach.

"Everyone keeps talking about how we've beaten them eight games in a row, and as I told our players today, that doesn't mean anything," Malone said. "This is a different team, a different series and we know what we have in front of us."



GODOFREDO A. VASQUEZ • The Associated Press

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Real Madrid beats Man City 4-3 on penalties

By JAMES ROBSON
The Associated Press

Real Madrid advanced to the semifinals of the Champions League after beating Manchester City 4-3 on penalties at Etihad Stadium on Wednesday.

Antonio Rudiger struck the decisive spot kick after the game had finished 1-1 through extra time and 4-4 on aggregate.

Bernardo Silva and Mateo Kovacic both saw their penalties saved in the shootout as defending champion City was eliminated by record 14-time champion Madrid.

Rodrygo fired Madrid ahead in the 12th minute with a twice-taken effort from close range to beat City goalkeeper Ederson on the rebound.

City dominated from then on with Kevin De Bruyne leveling in the 76th by lifting a shot high into the net from close range.

The match was tied 4-4 on aggregate after the first leg ended 3-3 in Madrid last week.

City immediately took advantage in the shootout after Julian Alvarez converted his opening penalty and Luka Modric's effort was saved.

But Madrid goalkeeper Andriy Lunin then saved successive spot kicks from Silva and Kovacic to swing the balance in the visitors' favor. Silva's attempt was right down the middle and easily caught chest-



DAVE SHOPLAND • The Associated Press

Real Madrid's Antonio Rudiger celebrates at the end of the Champions League quarterfinal second leg soccer match between Manchester City and Real Madrid at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester, England, Wednesday, April 17, 2024.

high by Lunin.

Defeat ended City's bid to become the first English team to win back-to-back Champions League titles and its pursuit of successive trebles. City is still challenging for the Premier League title and FA Cup.

Victory for Madrid keeps the Spanish giant in the hunt for a record-extending 15th European Cup. It also saw it advance to the semifinals for the fourth year in row — denying City the chance to emulate that feat.

But Madrid had to dig in to get

past Pep Guardiola's team, which dominated the majority of the match without managing to add to De Bruyne's second-half goal.

This was the third straight season Madrid and City have clashed in European club soccer's most demanding competition.

It has become a classic rivalry with the winner of their meetings going on to win the competition in each of the past two years.

It is a measure of the fine margins between the teams that they entered this match with nothing separating them after drawing the first leg.

Madrid was out for revenge after being routed 4-0 in the semifinals last year. Despite coming up against the defending champion and tournament favorite, Jude Bellingham was quick to point out the pedigree of his own team on the eve of the match, noting "we're a pretty good team ourselves."

Bellingham was pivotal to Madrid's opener with a moment of brilliance to open City up.

Collecting a high ball just past the halfway line, the England midfielder shook off the attention of Rodri with a deft touch to wrong-foot his opponent.

The ball was worked to Vinicius Junior on the right who crossed to Rodrygo.

The Brazilian's first shot was pushed away by Ederson, but there was nothing City's goalkeeper could do when he fired home on the rebound.

In response, Erling Haaland and City mounted one attack after another to leave Madrid retreating for the majority of regulation time.

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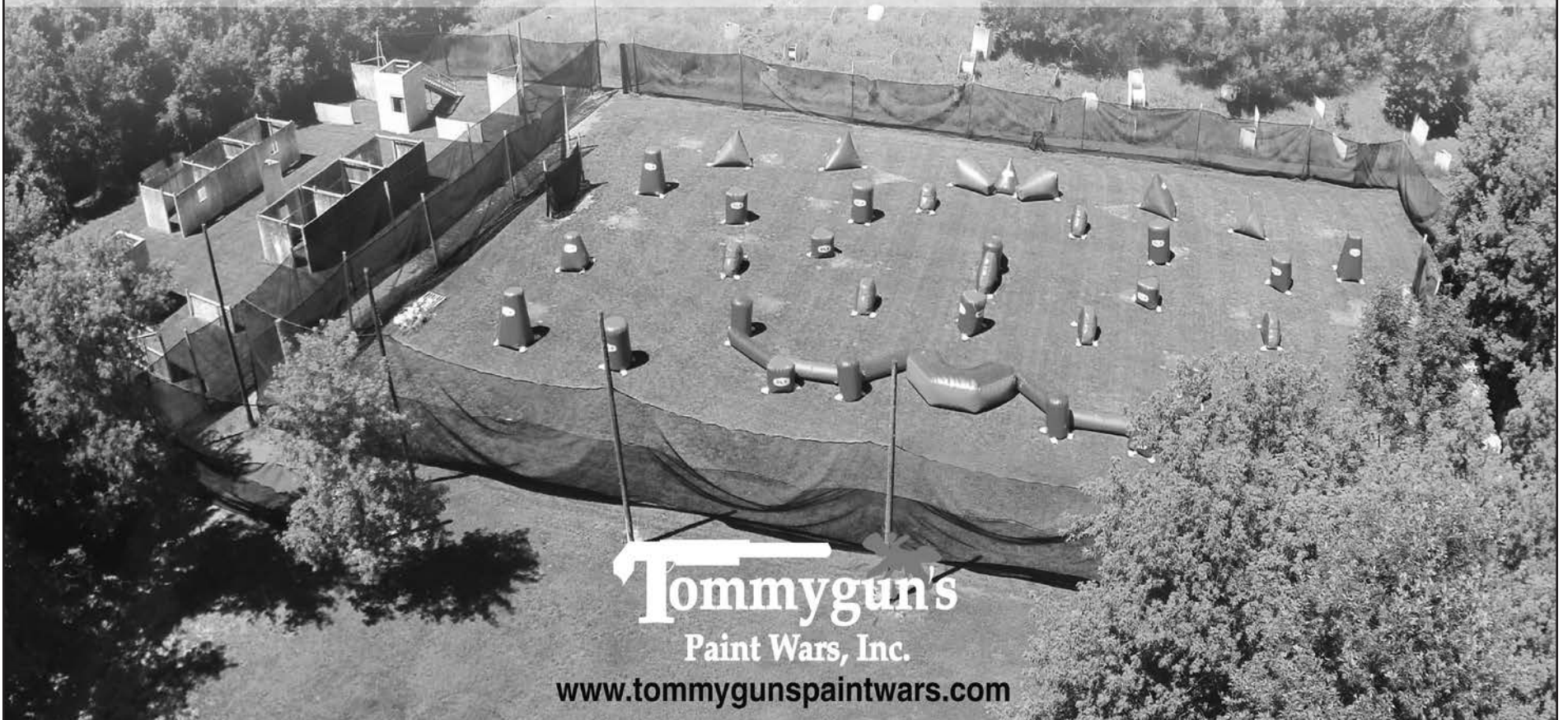
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VARIETY

‘Luminescents’ ignites hope for cancer survivors

By MERCEDES KAUPHUSMAN
Variety Editor

When Amber Melby was battling breast cancer in 2015, she wondered if she would ever be herself again.

She put on a mask of bravery for her loved ones, but underneath it she felt, “isolated, depressed and alone,” her mission reads.

During her grueling treatments, the small acts of kindness from her family and friends was the motivation to push her toward the finish line. She considered these acts, “the light in my darkness.”

“Inspired by that light, I vowed to find a way to pay it forward and ‘B the Light’ was created,” Melby’s mission reads.

Igniting this charity to Minnesota State’s torch, students in the Integrated Business Experience (IBE) program created, “Luminescents,” a company of candles.

After reading Melby’s story, MSU junior Construction Management student and Luminescents CEO Jada Jerry felt inspired by, “the cause and connecting with her; we really liked her a lot,” Jerry said.

Once the plans were in motion, the crew shared their scheme with Melby of New Ulm.

“She (Melby) was super excited. She had no idea what the IBE program was, so we introduced that to her,” Jerry said. “She was super excited to work with the school.”

Luminescents hosts tabling events with an entourage of candles for students and the general public to purchase.

Their first day on the market, Luminescents collected about \$1,500 in profit, all to fill the pockets of cancer survivors. To Jerry, “that just felt amazing.”



Courtesy luminescents_msu Instagram
Pictured is MSU junior Jada Jerry (right) with her Luminescents crew, tabling their candles inside the CSU. Luminescents is a company created from the Integrated Business Experience program and donates all their profits to the “B the Light” charity.

Each candle is held by reusable jars and appeals to both masculine and feminine parties. Glass jars hold sweeter scents, black jars are more manly — all of them are tied with Breast Cancer’s symbol.

“We made sure for selling, we tie a pink bow around them and that’s what connects us with the ‘B the Light’ charity and breast cancer,” Jerry said. “The pink ribbon is how we tied in the charity with us.”

Through IBE, the program replicates an authentic business model. From coordinating the company to selecting an organization to gift its profits, the team then turns to the bank for a loan and works to manage the funds efficiently.

“In the beginning, there’s a lot of decision making to be done on what we want to do, where you want to order from, where we want things to look like, scents,” Jerry said.

The team sends out surveys for the public’s opinion, and utilizes the answers for company growth. At the end of the semester, the collection of coins are sent off to the chosen charity.

“It’s such a good learning experience; it is hands-on because it’s all real money, all real products, customers — it’s a great experience,” Jerry said.

Despite a chance for bumps in the road, Luminescents keeps a solid bond, and it’s been smooth sailing for sales.

“Our company actually gets along very, very well,” Jerry said. “There hasn’t been any real arguments, we all are very good at putting out ideas and understanding other people’s ideas.”

Luminescents tables around MSU’s campus, as well as various boutiques and stores in the Mankato-
HOPE on page 14

Sing and dance with MSU’s various ensembles

By ANAHI ZUNIGA
Staff Writer

Minnesota State’s singing groups, the Chamber Singers and the University Gospel Choir, performed Tuesday in Halling Recital Hall in the Earley Center for Performing Arts. MSU students and the Mankato community were invited to watch the powerful performances of both choirs.

The Chamber Singers were directed by Elisabeth Cherland, Director of Choral Activities, who performed a set of traditional vocal chamber composition while the University Gospel Group was under the direction of Courtland Pickens, a premier vocalist from Minneapolis.

Junior Bailey Kowarsch, a music education major with a theater minor, forms part of the gospel choir. Being an alto saxophone player herself, Kowarsch decided to join University Chorale to learn more about singing and its elements.

That led to her joining the gospel choir that started last semester.

“One of our professors actually got someone who lives in the Cities and that’s our teacher. And it’s very interesting because I’m not a choir person, but I’ve been told that in choir you have music that you can read off of, and he teaches us completely with just lyrics like no actual music without just telling us it,” Kowarsch said. “It’s really interesting. It’s cool. It’s very unique and as a non-choir person, it kind of helps me be able to understand a little.”

Preparations for the performance have been ongoing for Kowarsch and the group, taking place once a week.

“We have this packet of songs and every week, he taught us a new song by just the lyrics and then singing it for us and we repeat it to him,” she said. “Then splitting it up into parts like the tenor, tenor bass, alto, soprano parts and making it all come together. And then, once we kind of got all the songs we

wanted, we just prepare them and keep practicing, rehearsing.”

Kowarsch said the process of selecting and practicing the songs with the group.

“We have this packet, and we did a chunk of them last semester. And then he just kind of picked them. He was like, ‘I’m gonna teach you this one today.’ And we’re like, ‘Okay, cool.’ And some of them we even have a song that’s not even in the lyric sheet,” Kowarsch said. “He just taught us it because it’s only four lines long so it’s pretty easy to remember. Otherwise, he would be like, ‘We’re gonna learn this one today.’ And then we would just learn it and then there were a few songs where if it didn’t go very well, he’d say, ‘Okay, maybe we’ll put that one on a back burner.’”

The concert was introduced by a pre concert performed by the Chamber String Ensemble. The Chamber Singers then introduced their pieces, one of which originated from the late Renaissance, titled



Courtesy mrcourtlandp Instagram
The Chamber Singers and the University Gospel Choir groups at Minnesota state performed Tuesday evening in the Early Center for Performing Arts.

“All Ye Who Music Love.”

The gospel choir performed last, singing a cover of “Easy on Me” by Adele and two songs from Sounds of Blackness, a vocal and instrumental ensemble from Min-

neapolis, with few other soulful pieces that incorporated dances, solos from the members and participation from the crowd.

For the performance, Kowarsch
SING on page 14

Q&A: Phish's Trey Anastasio on playing the Sphere



DAVID BECKER • The Associated Press
Trey Anastasio, guitarist and singer-songwriter of the band Phish, poses for a photograph during an interview on Tuesday, April 16, 2024, in Las Vegas.

By JOSH CORNFIELD
The Associated Press

Phish has been performing for decades, but never has the band played the same show twice.

Over the 40 years since the band was formed at a Vermont college, Phish has amassed a reputation for its dedicated legion of fans and the dazzling light shows that accompany the improvisational jams. It follows, then, that the next stop for Phish is the new

temple of immersive performances: the Sphere in Las Vegas.

Inaugurated with U2's 40-show residency, the \$2.3 billion arena will offer Phish fans something they've definitely never seen — or felt — before.

Mind-blowing visuals run up, down and across the floor-to-ceiling screen, designed to be manipulated in real-time during the band's long jams. A sound system features more than 1,600 speakers.

◀HOPE from page 13
to area.

While interacting with people out in the community, the team encountered a slice of their impact in real time.

"We were out at the boutiques downtown and asking if we can table there, and someone who's got a donation from Amber before was working, and so we got to talk to her," Jerry said. "That was really cool that I got to meet someone that's actually had a donation from her."

For Jerry, the cause behind the candles hits closer to her home as well.

"My great grandma had can-

cer and our family was all there. I just couldn't imagine someone not having that," Jerry said. "When I think about that I'm like, 'Yeah, this is a great cause, and I would love to help.'"

Candles from Luminescents are available for purchase via tabling events and Shopify. Links and announcements are posted on their Instagram @luminescents_msu. Prices range from \$10-\$45.

"A lot of people have been affected by cancer, so that's a good thing to know you're helping people that maybe don't have the family to support them like maybe your family has," Jerry said.

◀SING from page 13

said she has found ways to calm down nerves such as finding comfort in the music and saying how "it's really helpful when you're a part of a group and you're all just there to have fun."

"The cool thing about gospel music is that it's very just uplifting. So it's kind of more fun to perform; you're performing more than just standing up there and singing. I think that helps with the nerves," she said.

'Civil War' might be the year's most explosive movie

By JAKE COYLE
The Associated Press

Alex Garland's films have vividly conjured a virus-caused pandemic (2002's "28 Days Later"), an uncontrollable artificial intelligence (2014's "Ex Machina") and, in his latest, "Civil War," a near-future America in the throes of all-out warfare.

Most filmmakers with such a record might claim some knack for tapping into the zeitgeist. But Garland doesn't see it that way. He's dealing, he says, with omnipresent realities that demand no great leaps of vision. He wrote "Civil War" in 2020, when societies around the world were unraveling over COVID-19 and the prospect of societal breakdown was on everyone's minds.

"That was pretty deafening back then," Garland says. "So in a way, it's slightly past zeitgeist. It's actually oppressive."

"Civil War" is an ominous attempt to turn widely held American anxieties into a violent, unsettling big-screen reality. Garland's film opens Friday — the anniversary, to the day, of when the Civil War began in 1861. And it's landing in movie theaters just months ahead of a momentous presidential election, making it potentially Hollywood's most explosive movie of the year.

For months, the arrival of "Civil War" has been closely tracked as numerous trailers have drummed up intrigue. Texas and California aligned? "Science fiction," wrote one commentator. Another said: "This single movie had the best 8 year marketing campaign of all time."



A24 • The Associated Press

This image released by A24 shows Cailee Spaeny, left, and Kirsten Dunst in a scene from "Civil War."

Yet "Civil War" is something far more oblique than its matter-of-fact title. The film, which Garland wrote and directed, isn't mapped directly against today's polarization. In a war that's already ravaged the country, California and Texas have joined forces against a fascist president (Nick Offerman) who's seized a third term and disbanded the FBI.

A band of journalists (Kirsten Dunst, Cailee Spaeny, Wagner Moura) makes its way toward Washington, D.C. Much of the film's disquiet comes from seeing visceral encounters of war — bombings, fire fights and executions — on contemporary American soil. ("Civil War," to take advantage of tax breaks, was mostly shot in Georgia.) For everyone who has in recent years wondered "How bad can it get?" — here is a sobering answer.

"When things collapse, the speed at which they collapse tends to surprise people — including people like intelligence officers whose job is to watch and predict

when these things will happen," Garland said in a recent interview. "Things are always in a slightly more dangerous state than they might appear."

The rapidity with which society can disintegrate has long fascinated Garland, the 53-year-old British born filmmaker who emerged with the screenplay to the zombie apocalypse thriller "28 Days Later." Western democracies, he says, can lean too much on their sense of exceptionalism. To him, "Civil War" isn't an act of cynicism. It's a warning shot.

"The consequences of it are so serious that to not take the threat seriously would, itself, be another kind of insanity," says Garland. "It would just be complacent."

In past election seasons, Hollywood has sometimes looked to channel, reflect or capitalize on political discord. Ahead of the 2020 election, Universal Pictures released "The Hunt," a "Most Dangerous Game" riff in which liberals kidnap "rednecks" to hunt on a private preserve.

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Hillary Clinton and Malala Yousafzai producing



JENNY ANDERSON • The Associated Press

This photo provided by Rubenstein shows Director Leigh Silverman talking with former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton during a rehearsal for the off-Broadway musical "Suffs" in New York.

By JOCELYN NOVECK
The Associated Press

Shaina Taub was in the audience at "Suffs," her buzzy and timely new musical about women's suffrage, when she spied something that delighted her.

It was intermission, and Taub, both creator and star, had been watching her understudy perform at a matinee preview last week. Suddenly, she saw audience members searching the Wikipedia pages of key figures portrayed in the show: women like Ida B. Wells, Inez Milholland and Alice Paul, who not only spearheaded the suffrage fight but also wrote the Equal Rights Amendment (still not law, but that's a whole other story).

"I was like, that's my goal, exactly that!" Taub, who plays Paul, said from her dressing room later. "Do everything I can to make you fall in love with these women, root for them, care about them. So that was a really satisfying moment to witness."

Satisfying but sobering, too. Fact is, few audience members know much about the American suffrage movement. So the all-female creative team behind "Suffs," which had a high-profile off-Broadway run and opens Thursday on Broadway with extensive revisions, knows they're starting from zero.

It's an opportunity, says Taub, who studied social movements — but not suffrage — at New York University. But it's also a huge challenge: How do you educate but also entertain?

One member of the "Suffs" team has an especially poignant connection to the material. That would be producer Hillary Clinton.

She was, of course, the first woman to win the U.S. presidential nomination of a major party, and the first to win the popular vote. But Clinton says she never

studied the suffrage movement in school, even at Wellesley. Only later in life did she fill in the gap, including a visit as first lady to Seneca Falls, home to the first American women's rights convention some 70 years before the 19th Amendment gave women the vote.

"I became very interested in women's history through my own work, and writing and reading," Clinton told The Associated Press. And so, seeing "Suffs" off-Broadway, "I was thrilled because it just helps to fill a big gap in our awareness of the long, many-decades struggle for suffrage."

It was Taub who wrote Clinton, asking her to come on board. "I thought about it for a nanosecond," Clinton says, "and decided absolutely, I wanted to help lift up this production." A known theater lover, Clinton describes traveling often to New York as a college student and angling for discounts, often seeing only the second act, when she could get in for free. "For years, I'd only seen the second act of 'Hair,'" she quips.

Clinton then reached out to Malala Yousafzai, whom Taub also hoped to engage as a producer.

As secretary of state, Clinton had gotten to know the Pakistani education activist who was shot by a Taliban gunman at age 15.

Clinton wanted Yousafzai to know she was involved and hoped the Nobel Peace Prize winner would be, too.

"I'm thrilled," Clinton says of Yousafzai's involvement, "because yes, this is an American story, but the pushback against women's rights going on at this moment in history is global."

Yousafzai had also seen the show, directed by Leigh Silverman, and loved it. She, too, has been a longtime fan of musicals, though she notes her own acting career began and ended with a school skit in Pakistan, playing a not-very-nice male boss. Her own education about suffrage was

limited to "one or two pages in a history book that talked about the suffrage movement in the U.K.," where she'd moved for medical treatment.

"I still had no idea about the U.S. side of the story," Yousafzai told the AP. It was a struggle among conflicting personalities, and a clash over priorities between older and younger activists but also between white suffragists and those of color — something the show addresses with the searing "Wait My Turn," sung by Nikki M. James as Wells, the Black activist and journalist.

"This musical has really helped me see activism from a different lens," says Yousafzai.

"I was able to take a deep breath and realize that yes, we're all humans and it requires resilience and determination, conversation, open-mindedness ... and along the way you need to show you're listening to the right perspectives and including everyone in your activism."

When asked for feedback by the "Suffs" team, Yousafzai says she replied that she loved the show just as it was.

(She recently paid a visit to the cast, and toured backstage.) Clinton, who has attended rehearsals, quips: "I sent notes, because I was told that's what producers do."

Clinton adds: "I love the changes. It takes a lot of work to get the storytelling right — to decide what should be sung versus spoken, how to make sure it's not just telling a piece of history, but is entertaining."

Indeed, the off-Broadway version was criticized by some as feeling too much like a history lesson. The new version feels faster and lighter, with a greater emphasis on humor — even in a show that details hunger strikes and forced feedings.

One moment where the humor shines through: a new song titled "Great American Bitch."

Hugh Grant to settle suit alleging illegal snooping



RICHARD SHOTWELL • The Associated Press

Hugh Grant arrives at the premiere of "Wonka" on Dec. 10, 2023, at Regency Village Theatre in Westwood, Calif.

The Associated Press

Hugh Grant accepted "an enormous sum of money" to settle a lawsuit accusing The Sun tabloid of unlawfully tapping his phone, bugging his car and breaking into his home to snoop on him, the actor said Wednesday after the agreement was announced in court.

Grant said he reluctantly settled because of a court policy that could have stuck him with a huge legal bill even if he prevailed at tri-

al — a reality that could also force fellow claimant Prince Harry to settle, their lawyer said. A civil court rule intended to avoid jamming up the courts would have required Grant to pay legal fees to both sides if he won at trial but was awarded anything lower than the settlement offer.

"As is common with entirely innocent people, they are offering me an enormous sum of money to keep this matter out of court," Grant said on the social media platform X.

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