The TIMES of.... SKINKER DEBALIVIERE

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Neighborhood Parking Lot on Skinker Gets Bonafide Improvements

By Mary Lou Green









When the City of St. Louis, its elected officials and employees, and neighborhood volunteers come together, great things happen. Case in point: the transformation of the parking lot at the corner of Skinker and Westminster Place.

The lot is now sporting a newly-repaired and painted wrought iron fence; 18 freshly-planted native chokeberry bushes; hundreds of marigold, celosia and gomphrena seedlings; new mulch, and a weeded perennial bed at the back of the lot. In addition, an industrious neighbor removed aggressive ivy growing on the Westminster side of the city-owned lot.

Neighborhood residents who participated in the cleanup included: Matt Boxdorfer; Josh, Lisa and Pierson Buell; Calah and Lawrence Cramer; Andy Cross; Gale Fitzpatrick; Mary Lou Green; Christina McGroarty; Jason Meyer; Wendy Panagos; David, Fei, Feronia and JJ Powell; Mary Anne Rudloff; Jeff and Karen Stokes; and Margaret Welch.

Now the backstory.

Earlier this year, the City of St. Louis' Forestry Division removed the diseased and dying pfitzer juniper hedge that ran along the west side of the lot down northbound Skinker. The hedge had become so overgrown that the walk was no longer ADA compliant.

In addition, the wrought iron fence adjacent to the walk and hedge was bent so severely that it pulled the decorative concrete pillar off its moorings. Residents called the City's Citizens' Service Bureau (314-622-4800 or #311) to report the problems.

Tenth Ward Alderwoman Shameem Clark-Hubbard quickly committed ward funds for the repair while Neighborhood Improvement Specialist (NIS) Max Magee coordinated bids for the repair. At the April Skinker-DeBaliviere Community Council meeting, both Alderwoman Clark-Hubbard and NIS Magee advised patience given the complexity of the repairs.

Residents didn't have to wait long. In early April, shortly after the meeting, residents spotted a city crew on site.

The fence was straightened, the pillar placed back on its moorings and two city employees repainted all of the wrought iron fencing surrounding the lot — all just in time for the neighborhood planting project.

"We couldn't believe it, the city definitely delivered," said one nearby resident. "I emailed Alderwoman Clark-Hubbard and Max right away to thank them both."

In the meantime, Kingsbury resident Mary Lou Green consulted neighbors and native plant experts to develop a plan to replace the hedge.

What was needed was a hardy shrub that could withstand the heat and drought of St. Louis summers, while also adding an attractive visual sightline for walkers, drivers, and residents.

Residents Plant

With repairs completed and a planting plan in hand, approximately 40 neighbors of all ages got to work on Saturday, April 18. They planted the new chokeberry bushes, which were donated by Forest ReLeaf of Missouri, and made quick work of weeding and mulching the beds that surround the lot. Flower seedlings, donated by Brightside St. Louis, were also planted.

The effort was the culmination of many neighbors' work over the past several years. Neighbors from Westminster and Kingsbury would get together periodically to weed and mulch beds in the lot as well as the young trees along Skinker.

Longtime residents still refer to the location as the Bonafide Lot, as it was a small Bonafide Gas Station (with cigarettes) for decades before it was torn down in 1995. The plot of land is now owned by the city.

It's come a long way (baby).

Linda Edwards, Creator of Iconic Blueberry Hill Windows, Mourned

By Margaret Welch



Remembered for her irreverent humor, wit and her must-see Blueberry Hill windows adorning the Delmar Loop for 40 years, Linda Edwards died February 15.

According to the family's obituary, she grew up in the Skinker DeBaliviere neighborhood and attended St. Roch's School. She met her husband Joe in 1972. Together they founded Blueberry Hill, which helped propel the revitalization of the Delmar Loop and transform it into one of St. Louis' premiere attractions.

Her windows at Blueberry Hill debuted in 1986 and continue to be a fixture at the establishment today.

"Some were whimsical. Some were serious. Some were weird and wonderful," Joe Edwards told St. Louis Public Radio. "Her attention to detail on those display windows rivaled anything that the department stores ever did back in the '40s and '50s."

Concepts called out by the family include "Trimming Santa's Tree" and the "Rosemary's Baby Shower."

"It made her feel good when she would see people's jaws drop. Like: What is going on in there? 'Rosemary's Baby Shower' dropped a lot of jaws," Joe Edwards said in the SLPR interview. "That was where she could put all her creative talents to work. It meant the world to her," he added.

Her daughter, Hope, documented the displays in the book "The Window Display Art of Linda Edwards at Blueberry Hill Restaurant and Music Club.

She is survived by her husband, her daughters Christine and Hope, sons-in-law Lee Todorovich and Josh Sommovilla, and her sister Pat Kennedy.

Editor's Notes

By Linda Cross

Change is inevitable, the only thing you can count on are death and taxes, change with the times. As I age, these sayings become more poignant. I have never sought change. I like being comfortable and I admire those who constantly challenge the status quo and are energetic about making our world better.

Luckily for me, the changes that have impacted me lately are for the most part great. We are approaching the best time of year in my opinion – Shakespeare in the Park, the Muny season, Movies at the Art Museum, Delmar Festivals, just being out of doors. In addition, you may have noticed that the paper is getting more efficient and timelier. A new group of enthusiasts who have experience in the neighborhood and with journalism have volunteered their time to work on the Times of Skinker DeBaliviere.

Together we (meaning them) are revamping the website, creating a Google Drive for stories and meeting to plan stories in advance. I am so grateful to this new team of David Powell, Margaret Welch, Mary Lou Green and Karen Stokes, who are generously giving their time.

If you have any suggestions of articles that you would like to see, information about events that your neighbors would enjoy, or would just like to see a picture of your beaming graduate, hit us up! In the meanwhile, enjoy living in the best neighborhood in the city.

Guidelines for Submitting Copy

The Times welcomes unsolicited articles and letters. Because of the small size and volunteer nature of the writing staff, the quality and range of articles in *The Times* depend on submissions from area residents who are not on the paper's staff.

The writer is solely responsible for the accuracy of data, including times, dates, locations and the spelling of names. *The Times* retains the right to omit or alter any material. All opinions expressed are solely that of the author.

The deadline to submit copy for our summer issue is August 15, 2026. Please send submissions by e-mail to Linda Cross at lcross@sdtimes.org.

The TIMES of.... SKINKER DEBALIVIERE

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GRACE FOOD PANTRY: Dedicated Hearts and Helpful Hands

By Karen Stokes

On Tuesday mornings, starting well before 9:30 a.m., a collection of 80 to 100 people gather in the Waterman Grace UMC parking lot. They receive a randomly assigned number just before the doors of Grace's food pantry open at 9:45 a.m. and the volunteers welcome them in. Anyone arriving later receives a sequential number for admittance.

Grace UMC has operated its food pantry for decades. I spoke with Vanessa Bogaty, one of the co-directors of the pantry, (Madonna Durham is also co-director), who has been overseeing the operations since 2010. Here is what I learned.

The pantry has seen an increase in clients since Covid but the demographic hasn't changed all that much. Approximately 70% of folks are more than 65 years old. Thirty percent are aged 19-56 and have families with kids. Seventy five percent are African American, 20% are Asian and the remaining 5% are a mix of Latino and various nationalities. What they all have in common is the need for food assistance and community, no questions asked. And that is exactly what they receive.

The pantry receives donations in cooperation with Operation Food Search, (https://www.operationfoodsearch.org/) a local hunger relief organization that has operated in St. Louis for over 40 years. They supply fresh produce, meat, prepared foods and occasionally, toiletries. The pantry also accepts and screens donations from our neighborhood, Schnucks on Olive, Panera Bread and Dierbergs on Eagar Road. To ensure a variety of items are available to their clients, Paul Durham supplements the pantry shelves and freezers by purchasing chicken legs and thighs from Restaurant Depot, toilet paper from Kampe Supply, soap products from The Dollar Tree and canned fruit, veggies, tuna, dry goods, cereal, hamburger, hotdogs, soap, toilet paper, diapers, Depends, laundry and dish detergent from Aldi's. It takes dedication, time and careful attention for the pantry to operate.

With the worsening of our economy and increasing inflation, all donations, both financial and food, are vital to the pantry's function. When I forced Vanessa to come up with a dream list of donation items, she said: "Maybe adult diapers, but for both men and women. Sometimes the men hesitate to use a female product. Or smaller containers of laundry detergent. Even though the larger ones will last longer, a majority of folks walk here and physically can't carry a heavy box of laundry detergent home with them." And lastly, "Please check those expiration dates on the items that are donated. Some are fine...canned beans a few months out. But maybe ask yourself, 'Would I eat that?' before placing it in a donation bag."

Volunteers working at the pantry are not all church members. These incredibly dedicated individuals come to Grace via a variety of associations and reasons. If you would like to volunteer, call the church office to see if there is a need. Vanessa would love to have the extra hands but only if she can put you to work!

The pantry offers more than food. It offers community. Many clients have been visiting the pantry for years. They share stories about family and friends, hardships and joys with one another and the volunteers. Irma Ruebling, a member of Grace's Social Justice Team, is present almost every Tuesday, informing folks about what our legislators are up to and helping the clients to have a voice in their state. Often, they aren't aware of laws being passed or measures that are on an upcoming ballot. Irma educates and encourages them to call our senators and representatives and to vote. Sometimes, she directs them to resources in our city to help them solve a problem.

Vanessa loves what she does. She says she's just continuing the ministry she learned from her mother, a woman who was always in a kitchen, at home or at church. Her mom believed everyone deserved to eat. So does Vanessa. Mostly, Vanessa wanted me to say thank you. A deep, sincere thank you for all you give and for caring.

A Letter to the Neighborhood from Grace United Methodist Church

By Pastor Katie Nix

Dear Skinker DeBaliviere Neighbors,

Grace United Methodist Church (the big stone building on the corner of Skinker and Waterman) is a busy place - and not just on Sundays! Along with worship services, Sunday School classes, children's activities and small group studies, we offer a variety of opportunities for service, activism and education that are open to community members of all religious identities.

In addition to the Grace UMC Food Pantry, which serves around 100 neighbors per week on Tuesday mornings from 9:45 a.m. to 11:45 a.m., our building and volunteers provide support for the work of our partner organizations. On Tuesday nights when the temperature drops below 25 degrees, we partner with Winter Outreach to offer a warming shelter with beds, showers and meals. On the third Saturday of each month, Health Protection and Education Services (HPES) provides free health screening services and health education to underserved and uninsured St. Louisans of various races, ethnicities and backgrounds.

We host regular dinners with the Fork in the Road Foundation, which provides employment to immigrant and refugee women as well as meaningful cross-cultural exchange for attendees. After the May 2025 tornado, Grace UMC opened our doors to the Red Cross and served as an emergency shelter for nearly 80 people - an experience that helped us to develop policies and tools that will allow us to activate again if and when future emergencies arise.

Our Missions Team also organizes annual one-off work days with organizations like Sustainable Housing and Equitable Development (SHED), the St. Louis Area Foodbank, LifeWise STL, Sleep in Heavenly Peace and Midwest Mission, all of which are open to community members.

As a multi-ethnic, LGBTQIA+ affirming ministry that embraces all beloved identities, Grace UMC is dedicated to social justice and interfaith collaboration. We have an annual presence at Tower Grove Pride and we frequently bring in speakers from other faith traditions. In April 2026, we partnered with Shaare Emeth to host Professor Rachel Mikva, the Herman E. Schaalman Professor of Jewish Studies from the Chicago Theological Seminary, for a discussion of the intersection between Jewish and Christian relations.

Each week, our Social Justice Team shares information on pressing political and legislative issues and ways to take action through their Lift Every Voice newsletter. This email list is separate from the church's main list, so if you sign up, you'll only receive these updates and not our regular Good News newsletter. A registration form and archive of these emails is available at www.graceumc-stl.org/lift-every-voice.

If you're a music fan, Community Concerts at Grace hosts a range of free concerts in our acoustically excellent sanctuary, including performances from the Ariel Concert Series, the Arianna Chamber Music Festival and the American Guild of Organists. If you prefer something more casual, we also participate in Skinker DeBaliviere's PorchFest, so stop by this September!

In short, regardless of whether you ever attend a service at Grace, we welcome you as part of our community and invite you to serve, learn and celebrate with us. Thank you for being our neighbor.

With love,
Pastor Katie Nix

ARTS CALENDAR

The Tempest
Shakespeare Glen in Forest Park
8:15 p.m., May 27 - June 21
stlshakes.org/production/the-tempest-2/

Juneteenth in the Loop Festival
Delmar Loop
June 13
visittheloop.com/events/juneteenth-celebration/

Levitt Vibe Concert Series
Phillip Lucier Park
3 to 7 p.m.
June 14 and 28, July 12 and 26
delmarmainstreetstl.com/levitt-vibe/

Muny 2026 season
Muny (Forest Park)
June 15 – August 23
muny.org

St. Louis Filmmakers Showcase
The Hi-Pointe Theatre
July 17 – 26
filmfreeway.com/StLouisFilmmakersShowcase

Joyful Juneteenth
Missouri History Museum
5 - 8 p.m.; June 18
mohistory.org/events/joyful-juneteenth

SDCC Breakfast Garden Tour
8:00 a.m. too 12:00 p.m., June 8
SDCC office (314) 862-5122,
projects@skinker-debaliviere.com

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FAQs

Hours	8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
AM/PM schedule	Free play, circle time, outside, food
Outside time	Two 45-minute periods per day
Kid/teacher ratio	5:1
Food	Breakfast, lunch, 3 snacks per day
Experience	30+ years combined for David and Fei
Positive parenting	Yes!
Potty training	Of course!
Part-time hours	No
Montessori	Mixed ages, home setting, student-led
Vaccinations	All shots required (including covid and flu)



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THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND: More playgrounds, fewer parking lots!

By Mark Banaszak

A small core of people can get a lot done.

The neighborhood playground at Four Corners has been falling into disrepair — its equipment worn by a generation of kids who are now parents themselves. Neighbors noticed and decided to do something.

In our next issue, The Times covers the 2026 Four Corners playground renovation driven by our neighbors, the SDCC and Alderwoman Shameem Clark Hubbard.

Greg Freeman Park at Four Corners has long been the neighborhood hub. Even before the playground existed, something was always happening there. One of our neighborhood artists placed a Big Boy statue on the corner, holding a giant foam corn dog — a nod to the famous St. Louis statue holding his sword in front of the Art Museum. One day, a kid, apparently inspired by the university students who used to steal that sword, made off with the foam corn dog to use on his friends' heads. Retrieving it from that kid and returning it was my introduction to Bill Christman, who has left his own mark on this corner.

In 1997, the site was a parking lot. A chance conversation between Laure Porterfield, then Executive Director of the Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council, and a new mom named Katrina Stierholz sparked a three-year effort to change that. A small committee of neighbors — Andy and Linda Cross, Beth and Joan Bender, Nancy Kramer, Betul Ozmat, and Katrina Stierholz — worked with Porterfield and the community council to raise money and clear the hurdles standing in the way.

The hurdles were real. The site needed work, and the question of long-term maintenance had to be solved before anything could move forward. Two voices made the difference: Dan Skillman, the St. Louis Parks Commissioner, backed the project, and Pastor Miki Merritt of New Cote Brilliante Church of God made the case plainly — whatever the complications, this was for kids, and kids should not be denied a clear good.

Seed money came from aldermanic funds through Lyda Krewson, then the neighborhood's alderperson. That initial commitment unlocked grants from the Dana Brown Foundation, the Whitaker Foundation, and the Enterprise Foundation — roughly $35,000 in total from public and private sources. But the grants weren't the heart of it. Direct donations from neighbors ultimately made up more than half of all the money raised, driven by flyers, mailings, and a series of neighborhood events.

One of those events is hard to forget. Bill Christman designed a bonfire in the parking lot that would become the playground — a towering teepee shape built from wood salvaged from old projects. Neighbors turned out, local emergency services stood by, and a flaming arrow lit the teepee. The fire was so large and loud that everyone went quiet, feeling small and grateful.

The neighborhood completed what it started. Time passed, and that playground has been in near-constant use. With time and the impact of all those small hands, the playground needs some tender care. Some of that initial committee have moved away, and one, Joan Bender - who was a rock of the neighborhood's stabilization efforts - passed away years ago. Like trees planted, that group left a mark that benefits future generations. Now, a new group of neighbors is doing it again. It proves what has long been understood here: you don't need a movement. You just need six to eight people who care and show up.

COMMUNITY COUNCIL MAY MEETING RECAP

May 11, 2026

Editor's Note: Meetings are held the second Monday every month at 7 p.m. at the Community Council office at 6008 Kingsbury Avenue. May meeting highlights appear below. Visit https://www.skinkerd.com/meeting-minutes for complete meeting minutes and announcements.

HIGHLIGHTS

Council President (Mike Stephens, Parkview)

Council Offices Lease — The Skinker-DeBaliviere Community Council appears to have reached an agreement in principle to renew the lease for the Council's offices at 6008 Kingsbury Ave. The current lease ends at the end of May 2026.

The proposed new lease is a two-year term with a $20/month rent increase.

The Council and Housing Corporation and the Council will split the cost of replacing the building's HVAC system.

Community Gardens — Consideration must be given to the management of the neighborhood's two community gardens. One is located on McPherson and the other on Westminster across from Big Hamilton School. Of concern are the lack of full-time staff to manage them and whether the Council should oversee them.

At issue: the management of bed fees, liability insurance, and taxes and fees.

A robust discussion about the issue will take place at next month's meeting after the distribution of the Memos of Understanding.

Alder's Report (Ald. Shameem Clark-Hubbard)

Rams Settlement — Would like to hear

CC May Recap *continued on page 7*



CHILDREN PLAYING OUTDOORS

By Cristina Kerr





As our neighborhood is getting new playground equipment, it made me think about the importance of play but especially about the time children spend outdoors - playing.

Have you wondered about how much time your children spend outside? Do they get this opportunity at their school? When they get home do you encourage them to play outside for a bit? Do you engage them in gardening? Do you take a daily walk around the neighborhood? Do you visit the playground and have them meet other children who might be their neighbors?

Now that the daytime is longer, we have been taking walks after dinner, admiring the nature coming to life, noticing the changes in the yards of our neighbors and eventually ending up at the playground. Our son is always happy to meet other children playing there.

Our playground is lovely, having trees that keep shade, flowers and a wide variety of plants (thanks Andy for maintaining it so beautifully!)) - for such a small space it checks a lot of boxes. There is even a grassy area where you can have a picnic!

Being outdoors helps our children to feel restored, more attuned to what happens around them, it accentuates their senses and improves their capacity to focus.

Something very important that Kim John Payne mentions in his book "Simplicity Parenting" is that: "We don't have to aim for spectacular natural settings. How satisfying it is for a child to know a place - however modest - and to know it deeply. To explore it repeatedly, to know it in all its seasonal faces, to identify one's own favorite little spots and crevices in it. ... Children feel more grounded to where they live when they can learn to identify some of the common plants, birds, and animals they see in their yards and neighborhoods."

Richard Louv, author of "Last Child in the Woods," suggest 100 nature activities we can initiate for our families, from which I will list five: 1. 1. Tell your children about your special childhood places in nature

2. Help your child discover a hidden universe. Find a scrap board and place it on bare dirt. Come back in a day or two, lift the board and watch how many species have found their shelter there.
3. Be a cloudspotter - a young person only needs a view of the sky.
4. Make the "green hour" a new family tradition - give your children time for unstructured play and interaction with the natural world.
5. Encourage your children to build forts and huts with sticks, rocks, boxes and ropes.

No matter the weather, let's try to spend as much time as possible outdoors!


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KIDS CORNER

By Fei Powell

July 4 Chalk Fireworks!

The only thing better than fireworks is making them with your kids! All you need are cardboard, red, white and blue chalk, scissors and pencils or any fun writing instrument.



Steps 1 and 2

Cut out circle or star shapes for the shape of each firework. Older kids can cut their own shapes to form the center of their fireworks explosion.



Step 3

Draw an alternating series of red, white and blue chalk lines around each shape, then smudge the chalk outwards.



Step 4



Step 5

Kids can draw their own message around their fireworks or simply decorate their page.



Celebrate the Fourth of July!



Thanks, Lion's Pride Academy kiddos!


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MEET CHAD WALLACE: Our Neighborhood's Postman, Guardian and Friend

By Margaret Welch

Who walks or drives almost daily the 6000 and 6100 blocks of Waterman, McPherson, Kingsbury and Westminster wearing a blue uniform, carrying a large satchel and sporting a wide grin and a bushy beard?

Usually it is Chad Wallace, the neighborhood mail carrier who has carefully delivered mail to residents and businesses on this route five to six days a week for more than 13 years.

His day begins around 8:30 a.m. at the local post office, where he spends a couple of hours sorting his mail and loading his truck before he heads out.

Deliveries start at 6199 Waterman – Grace Methodist for those not postal aware – and wrap up at 6189 Westminster Place. From there he drives back to the post office to process outgoing mail, return the truck and clock out by 5 p.m., if the post office has its way. However, residents know Chad has been known to slip mail through the slot as late as 8:30 p.m.

"Bottom line: this job is a marathon, not a sprint, and setting a healthy pace is essential," said Chad. "I've seen too many twenty-somethings need new knees or shoulders because they blazed through their routes at the get go."



Chad's Route: By the Numbers

500+
possible deliveries

Light day:
800 mail pieces

Heavy day:
2500 pieces

Steps: 20,000

Water consumed:
4 to 8 bottles

Favorite snacks:
Baked Lays & Trail Mix

The typical postal bag weighs 35 pounds. Carriers must be able to lift a 70-pound parcel and take it to and from their truck.

Key to the day's success: efficiency. That means keeping the truck optimally placed for bag refills, parcels and even the essential water break. Adding to the complexity: daily changes to the "routine" based on mail volume.

"There's a lot of moving parts behind safely delivering the mail," said Chad.

Safety is something Chad must keep top of mind. On severe weather days he must balance the needs of his route and the need for shelter. When he must get inside, he usually goes to one of the churches, Snarf's or a local apartment building.

But just like in the movies, it is dogs that keep Chad on his toes. He tells a story of a dog that would rush the glass front door every day he made his rounds. One day, as Chad marched up the steps with the day's mail in hand, the dog charged the door as usual. This time, the glass shattered and the (big) dog just kept coming.

"Just like Scooby and Shaggy, the dog ran this way, and I took off running that way," Chad says laughing.

Chad said his first line of defense against charging dogs is his mail satchel. Then there's dog spray, which he does not like to use and will do so only as a last resort.

He also cautions against distracted dog walking. "If they have teeth that touch, they can bite," Chad said. "Just because they don't bite you doesn't mean they won't bite us."

Other safety issues: sweet gumballs in the sidewalk, gopher holes in the yard, toys and tools left on steps, and land mines – you know the ones left by our furry friends.

Just as Chad gets to know the neighborhood pets, he is also familiar with the typical comings, goings and patterns of the neighborhood and its residents. He sees when mail piles up and can gently inquire.

"A consistent carrier is a second set of eyes for a neighborhood, and having one could be a fleeting tradition," he said. "I do hope it is one that can continue."

His heaviest delivery days? Christmas? Nope. It is Washington University move-in days when he can deliver up to 120 parcels. "The Christmas rush isn't what it used to be now that we have this thing called the internet," Chad said.

Outside of work, Chad currently enjoys karaoke with Kelly Clarkson's "Since You Been Gone" being his go-to number. He also tried his hand at stand-up comedy several years ago and developed a solid following on social media. "Sadly, comedy moved away from me," he said. "It's not what it used to be."

Chad has two children — a 25-year-old son, and a 19-year-old daughter, who is currently attending Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin.

When asked how residents can make his deliveries easier, he laughed and said, "Snacks are always appreciated." He then quickly added, "Seriously, know your mail slot. If it is hard for you to use, then imagine what it is like for us! The less moving parts the better."

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CC May Recap *continued from page 4*

from residents about the proposed uses of Rams settlement funds. Encouraged residents to call or email their comments. The Board will have four meetings on the issue. Meetings are held at 11 a.m. on Tuesdays and they are exploring adding an evening session.

Water Infrastructure — Under current proposals, the Water Department is slated to receive $60M of Rams settlement money. She indicated that a water rate hike is also likely, given the system's infrastructure needs. The Council could invite representatives from the Water Department to a meeting for discussion.

A board member commented that it is a decision of having a municipal system where residents have direct input, or s corporation. Alderwoman Clair-Hubbard said if things get worse, the state could take over the system.

City Neighborhood Improvement Specialist Max Magee

The city mows lots and streets on a rotating basis.

There is $1 million set aside for summer camps, pools and programs for young people aged 19 to 24.

Refuse trucks now have tablets in their cabs helping crews avoid missed route segments.

Planning and Zoning has the first draft of maps online for review.

Delmar Mainstreet (Tamika Stigers) The first of the organization's 10 Levitt VIBE STL Concert Series had 500 in attendance. The free concerts take place through the fall on the second and fourth Sundays of each month from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., and feature nationally-known and locally-based performers. For more information and sponsorship opportunities, visit https://delmarmainstreetstl.com/levitt-vibe/.

Victoria Headrick, Council Project Manager

Continues to update the Council's webpage.

Working on a "Friends" campaign to boost neighborhood engagement.

Working on 60th Anniversary t-shirt concept to help raise funds for the Council and neighborhood activities.

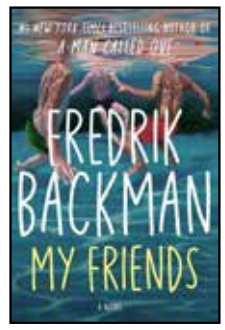
Samantha Smugala — Delmar Loop

Joe Edward's Mini Golf has closed, but a new concept for the space will be coming soon.

Jekyll-Hyde is the new concept that will be opening in the Prime 55 space, and will include a restaurant upstairs and a speakeasy downstairs.

BOOK REVIEW: My Friends, By Fredrik Backman

By Karen Stokes



Occasionally, books have a way of tapping into emotional wells that surprise us. My Friends by Fredrik Backman did just that for me. This book did an amazing job of gently pulling me back and forth between the author's story and my own. If you've read other novels by this author, you are familiar with his writing style. It is straightforward and heartwarmingly philosophical, with just a hint of Roald Dahl's fantastical expressiveness and humor.

The story begins with Louisa, the abused foster kid and budding artist, who loses her best friend and has run away from her recent foster home. She collides with "the artist" outside a church where an art auction is taking place. Louisa is there to see in "real-life" the painting pictured on a stolen postcard she has kept throughout her childhood. "The Artist," brought to the church by his beloved friend, Ted, is there to buy back his own painting. From this accidental meeting, the story of four childhood friends from the past begins to unfold.

The characters, whether past or present, are very well developed and recapture with laser precision, what it was to be a kid, painfully maturing into adulthood. It then reminds us that adulthood isn't the triumphant success we once imagined as children, but rather a complex and nuanced continuation of who we've always been. There is incredible loss in this book, as well as pure-hearted joy, and I relived these themes emotionally both as a child and an adult.

The novel moves between timelines seamlessly. The plot is very well constructed. The back and forth is revealed through the characters' reflective storytelling in present day, so it never feels like you are having to make challenging mental jumps in historic timelines. The author easily flip-flops between the characters' lives in a way that keeps the narrative action in a fluent continuum. It's a very easy read. Was I hooked the ENTIRE time? Well... perhaps at times, these young characters' insights may feel almost too perfect, too self-aware — but that is part of the novel's charm.

Some reviewers felt this book was about art and artists, but in my humble opinion, art was used as a vehicle to impart a simple theme, that shared pain, laughter, and small acts of loyalty can create lifelong bonds that endure even after childhood.

Every taste, sight, sound and emotion is vividly captured through a child's perspective. The story carried me back to places, experiences and people I hadn't revisited in decades. Backman has a remarkable ability to create deep connections — not only between readers and his characters, but also within the reader's own memories. This is a book I would highly recommend.



LIPSTICK
by Eileen G'Sell

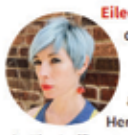
Forget your mother's tube of Revlon.

Lipstick today is as messy—and fascinating—as changing attitudes towards femininity. Mining the experience of women across culture, class, and generation, this book tosses out expired ideas about beauty and power like so many tubes of melted wax.

Who wears lipstick today? For those who do, is it out of loyalty to a strict feminine standard? Or some other reason entirely? From MAC to Glossier, from Marilyn to Chappell Roan, lipstick is as shape-shifting and elusive as femininity itself. Unpacking the history of feminism's anti-lipstick sentiments, debunking long-standing fallacies, and digging into how Gen Z is using lipstick to explode gender norms, *Lipstick* explores how self-adornment can be a source of play, pleasure, and transformation.

Order now!

$14.95
160 pages
ISBN: 9798765135587
Release date: 5 February 2026
Contact: paige.domantey@bloomsbury.com



Eileen G'Sell is a poet and culture critic whose work focuses on gender, sexuality, and economic class. Her writing has appeared in *The Baffler*, *Jacobin*, *Current Affairs*, and *Hyperallergic*, among other publications. In 2023, she received the Rabkin prize in arts journalism. She is also the film critic for *The Hopkins Review*, an award-winning literary and culture magazine out of Johns Hopkins University. She is currently a Teaching Professor of College Writing at Washington University, St. Louis, USA.

PRAISE FOR LIPSTICK:

"Brilliant, biting, and irresistibly stylish, *Lipstick* treats beauty as the serious subject that it is. With deep insight, lyrical precision, and humor, Eileen G'Sell examines how painted lips expose the tensions between conformity and self-expression, beauty standards and personal agency. Less a book about makeup, and more about what we make of ourselves, this is cultural criticism at its most relatable and relevant."
— Zahra Hankir, author of *Eyeliner: A Cultural History* (2023)

"What if pigmented wax was one of humanity's oldest technologies of honesty? In this homage to the form, Eileen G'Sell gives us a lipstick for all. Her elegant book not only lays out the cultural evolution of the object, but points to the expansively feminist ethics and latently utopian politics of colorful mouths. Pucker up, dive in, and dispel your femmephobia today."
— Sophie Lewis, author of *Enemy Feminisms* (2025)

Object Lessons is a series of short, beautifully designed books about the hidden lives of ordinary things.

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IN YOUR EAR

By Hawkeye Z. Hoerr, Commentary in the TIMES since 1980

I was leaving the renovated Uncle Bill's Pancake House on south Kingshighway – their pancakes are still the best! – and was in the midst of a vibrant discussion with my friend. Actually, maybe it was vibrant-plus because we were talking about how to change the world. Again. As we parted to go to our cars, I was jarred by the comment of the man who had held the door open for us. "You're welcome," he said. It was jarring because we were so caught up in our conversation, we hadn't bothered to thank him.

There was no excuse for my rude oversight, none. Even if my friend and I were truly about to change the world, there is always room for gratitude. You see, the older I've become - not that I am old yet - the more I understand that the little things in life really are the big things, and that gratitude is one of them. We feel seen when others express their appreciation to us. Years ago I wrote: "What offers great benefits at little cost? Gratitude, taking the time to express appreciation," so that makes my recent oversight all the more egregious. So much for practicing what I preach.

There is a difference between gratitude and appreciation even though the terms are often used interchangeably. Gratitude is how we feel, and when we express this to others, it becomes appreciation. Acting on our gratitude is a win-win because when we express our appreciation to others it causes them to feel good. No matter how busy or jaundiced we are, receiving a thanks from someone releases dopamine throughout our brain. That's not shabby! According to Dr. Google, "Dopamine is a key neurotransmitter and 'feel-good' hormone that acts as a chemical messenger in the brain, essential for pleasure, motivation, memory, learning, and motor control. It reinforces behaviors by creating feelings of satisfaction, playing a major role in the brain's reward system." And you can generate that just by a little thanks. KA-POW!

But this isn't easy. Visibly showing appreciation - not just feeling gratitude - is typically not part of our routine. Despite our gratitude, we often we don't show our appreciation to others because we are too busy. Or perhaps we are used to their good efforts and showing appreciation is not the norm. Hawkeye knows that it's not possible to stop and express gratitude each time someone is helpful or shows kindness, but we need to develop the habit of regularly making and taking the time to let others know that we appreciate their efforts.

Perfunctory simple thanks count, but often they do not convey the depth of gratitude that we feel and the appreciation that others need. Simply taking another 30 seconds to provide specifics can be powerful. Imagine others' feelings when you extend your thanks with some elaboration, such as "I really appreciate how you..." or "Thanks for taking the time to ..." Or "You were really helpful when you..."

Expressing our gratitude can become a habit if we work to develop it. Hawkeye consciously seeks those times when he should thank others, and has worked to expand this practice with his friends. For the past six or so months, whenever a group convenes – whether it is for a holiday dinner, a social get-together, or the meeting of his guys' Book Club, he asks that everyone begin by taking turns sharing something for which they feel gratitude. It's always a wonderful experience, says Hawkeye, because he can feel his dopamines firing! It pays forward too because friends have said that knowing this question is coming causes them to be more aware of the kindness and generosity of others; that's a win!

In the classes that I teach, I assign students to write three handwritten notes each week for the first three weeks of class. They simply have to report the date that they did this; I don't need to know to whom the notes were sent or why. I explain the importance of gratitude as we begin to do this, and as I see their tiny facial expressions through my Zoom screen, it seems that some of them are dubious about its value.

In the following weeks, I began class by asking "How did it go? How were you feeling when you wrote your notes of thanks? Did you get any reaction?" Students met in small groups to share their feelings about the experience and it was obvious that any dubious feelings evaporated. Almost all of the students talked about how good it felt to express their gratitude and show appreciation, and a few shared the positive reactions they received from the recipients of their notes. Near the end of the semester I have the class do this again in the hope that writing hand-written notes of appreciation will become a habit.

How about you, dear reader? I am sure you wouldn't have overlooked the kind gentlemen who opened the door at Uncle Bill's, but how often do you routinely thank people with more than just a drive-by thanks? Might beginning a meal with everyone sharing gratitude moments work for you? When is the last time you sent, gasp, a hand-written note of appreciation? Hey, Hawkeye thanks you for reading this column!



