

THE **U** N I T E R

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A PEEK AT WHAT IT TAKES TO RUN A VENUE

ON THE COVER

In this week's cover feature, staff photographer Keeley Braunstein-Black looks at the work and passion that goes into keeping Winnipeg's remaining music venues alive. Read more on page 7.

BOGUS BUDGET

THOMAS PASHKO
MANAGING EDITOR



On Feb. 7, Winnipeg Mayor Scott Gillingham released the city's preliminary budget for 2024 to 2027. Frustratingly, it's the work of a city hall still dedicated to protecting the interests of wealthy property owners at the expense of the poor and working-class people who actually need help.

Gillingham is committed to raising property taxes no more than 3.5 per cent. In order to hold the line on that figure, fees are increasing on vital services that impact all Winnipeggers, particularly those of us who don't make enough money to even consider property ownership. Transit fares will increase 10 cents (double previous years' increases). Phone bills will increase \$1 a month to fund 911 calls. Water and waste-collection fees are increasing.

But raising property taxes is, for some reason, taboo. CBC reports that the average increase on property-tax bills will be \$69. But the impact of these increases are relative to the income of the individual. Why shouldn't the nearly 100,000 Winnipeg households that earn more than \$100,000 a year see their rates increase more than the same number of people who make less than \$500,000 a year?

And then, of course, is the matter of where that money's going. The already-bloated police budget is set to increase by \$7 million, giving them an annual \$333 million. Until Winnipeg has a mayor who will commit to building a city that serves people instead of police, roads and the wealthy, things won't improve.



ILLUSTRATION BY GABRIELLE FUNK

In this week's One Green City, columnist Allyn Lyons looks at food waste's impact on the climate crisis. Read more on page 12.

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SUBMISSIONS

Submissions of articles, letters, graphics and photos are encouraged, however, all new contributors (with the exception of letters to the editor) must attend a 45-minute volunteer orientation workshop to ensure that the volunteer understands all of the publication's basic guidelines.

A volunteer orientation will be held over Zoom on Friday, Feb. 9 at 1 p.m. To register, email Dara at volunteer@uniter.ca.

Deadline for advertisements is noon Friday, six days prior to publication. *The Uniter* reserves the right to refuse to print material submitted by volunteers. *The Uniter* will not print submissions that are homophobic, misogynistic, transphobic, ableist, racist or libellous. We also reserve the right to edit for length/style.



BLACK PRIDE, NO PREJUDICE

TCM's Black and Proud festival shares culture with all

MATTHEW TEKLEMARIAM | ARTS AND CULTURE REPORTER | @MATTEKLEMARIAM

When Joseph Ahissou first moved to Canada from his home in the Republic of Benin, he became distinctly aware of a part of his identity for the first time.

"I was not that aware of the colour of my skin. I was not even aware of the fact that I am a Black person," Ahissou says. "As soon as I reached here, that became something right in front of me. It's obvious. The first question when you meet someone and greet each other is 'where are you from?'"

This instance of self-discovery prompted the idea for the inaugural Black and Proud Festival at Théâtre Cercle Molière (TCM). This February – concurrent with Black History Month – the celebration returns for its third edition, with four weeks of programming.

Along with co-founder Wilgis Agossa, Ahissou hosted the first edition in a limited capacity as a photo exhibition.

"Wilgis and I, we share a common passion for photography. We asked every person we photographed, 'what is your story?'" Ahissou says.

"Some people came here because they are refugees, and there is war in the country. Others come because they started here. Others because they are professionals seeking international experience."

This year's festival includes a photo

exhibition, gala dinner, poetry slam competition, a market for Black-owned local businesses, workshops, film screenings and more.

With six pieces on display, local painter Xavier Mutshipayi is one of several participating artists. He cites the work of Congolese artist Lema Kusa as a particular source of inspiration, among others.

"I get inspiration from everywhere in the world: pictures, different artists. People around me inspire me, as I usually work with portraits," Mutshipayi says. "As an artist, it's about more than staying in the studio and simply painting. It's important to participate in the community."

As this year's theme is togetherness, the festival prioritized accessibility.

"We want everyone to be able to know what is happening and where it is happening. Everything we're doing, we made sure to have the French and English version," Ahissou says.

Beyond mere language accessibility, Ahissou encourages all, regardless of race, to be educated and celebrate the complexity of Black history.

"It's not only about Black people. Being here, I've been supported not only by Black people and people from my country, but people who are not Black from Canada but who have helped me to discover



OLIVIA MUGOSA (SUPPLIED)

The Black and Proud Festival runs until Feb. 29 at TCM.

this country, to have a better life here, to live a dream," he says.

"You may be a minority, but at the same time, people need that minority to feel complete. It's complementary. I feel I'm completing something in someone's life."

Ahissou hopes the success of the festival can, ultimately, give back to the community that has welcomed him with open arms.

"Long-term, the target is to be able to raise an amount each year as scholarships, as tuition for people. Not necessarily Black people ... this is our way of making life here better for everyone," he says.

Visit exponoiretfier.com for a full itinerary on this month's Black and Proud Festival events at TCM.

ALL THINGS 'HORROR' THIS WAY COME

Horror bookshop Raven's End opens on Portage Avenue

SUZANNE PRINGLE | ARTS AND CULTURE REPORTER | @BLAQUE_SQUIRREL

Perhaps starting with childhood nightmares, a fear of the basement or tales told by flashlight, horror is a topic that Chelsea McKee-Trenchard, owner of Raven's End Books: The Horror Bookshop, believes touches everyone.

"I've seen such a wide demographic in customers, from young teenagers to people well into their 60s and 70s who are excited to find a new array of horrors to get into," McKee-Trenchard says.

Located at 1859 Portage Ave., Raven's End opened on Jan. 4 as a one-stop shop for books on all things creepy. From vampires and zombies to body horror and splatterpunk, Raven's End carries a vast selection of macabre books for people who, she says, "enjoy the darker side."

But it's not all jump-scares and gore.

"Horror is anything where you're (in a) situation you'd rather not be," McKee-Trenchard says.

She points to an episode from Netflix's *Wednesday*, where a gothy, wide-eyed Wednesday Addams watches *Legally Blonde*.

"That's a horror for some people," she says. "Like, we're not judging."

Local specialty bookseller Michael Bumsted of Whodunit Books says he is "really excited" about what McKee-Trenchard is doing.

Whodunit, which ran exclusively as a mystery-novel store before branching out in 2018, has been in business for nearly 30 years, proving specialty bookstores have a place in Winnipeg.

"She has a very exciting opportunity to provide service to a largely underserved population," Bumsted says, referring to Winnipeg and the west of Canada.

Mainstream bookstores and libraries rarely carry the titles that interest McKee-Trenchard and her customers, which is a big reason Raven's End exists.

"Trying to find a feminist werewolf novel can be really hard," she says.

There's even a market for horror cookbooks – something McKee-Trenchard was unaware of until she opened her shop. Raven's End boasts a wide selection, including the H.P. Lovecraft-themed *Necronomnomnom Cookbook*, witchy recipe tomes and horror-movie-inspired titles, as well.

Raven's End currently carries works from three local authors, including Chadwick Ginther (*Graveyard Mind*), (editor) Serena Keshavjee (*The Art of Ectoplasm*), and J.H. Moncrieff (*The Restoration*). In the coming months, McKee-Trenchard intends to add more.

Indigenous horror, along with queer horror, is "a huge hit," McKee-Trenchard says, with works by Stephen Graham Jones (*The Angel of Indian Lake*) and Jessica Johns (*Bad Cree*) flying off shelves.

"Part of our thing here is to give voice to marginalized voices," she says. "That's the whole history of what horror is all about."

In addition to spooky books, Raven's End carries horror-themed games, puzzles and other retail items, and plans to host classes and special events.

A Silent Book Club, which takes place

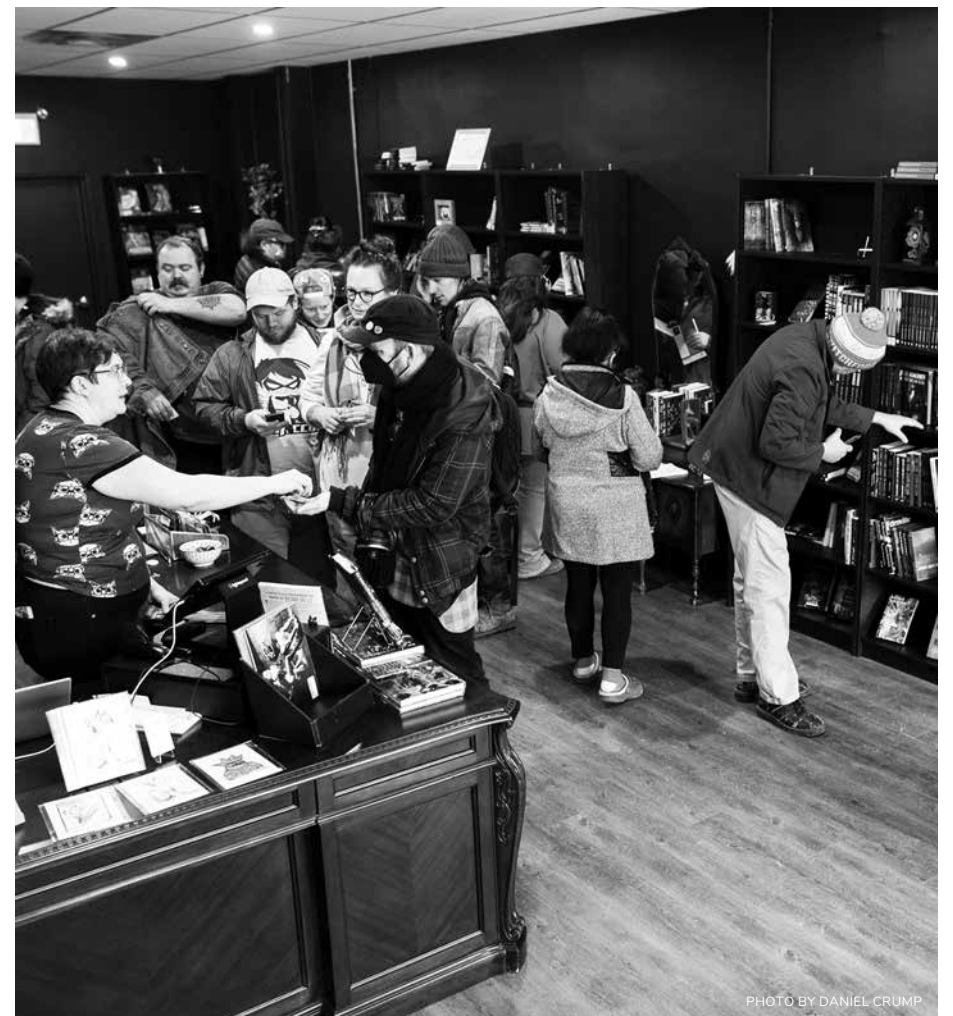


PHOTO BY DANIEL CRUMP

Raven's End Books is a new shop catering specifically to horror fans.

every third Thursday, will appeal to introverts like McKee-Trenchard, who find "constant social interaction" taxing but enjoy connection.

After nearly three decades in the book biz, Bumsted says the key to getting the best books and service is to go to "places where people have real passion and knowledge about what it is that you like."

And that place is a local independent bookstore.

"She's going to do great because she cares a lot about her material," Bumsted says.

Raven's End Books is open Tuesday to Saturday at 1859 Portage Ave. Follow @ravensendbooks on Instagram for details and store hours.



SUPPLIED PHOTO

Aisha Alfa (left) and Jonathan Giles

AISHA ALFA AND COHORTS RETURN FOR PARK THEATRE PARTY

The truth will set you free, and your bottom will follow

MATTHEW TEKLEMARIAM | ARTS AND CULTURE REPORTER | @MATTEKLEMARIAM

On Feb. 9, an eclectic group of comedians will take the stage to serve up belly laughs – with a Chubby Checker-style twist.

The Truth or Dance party, hosted at the Park Theatre by former Winnipegger Aisha Alfa and podcast co-host Jonathan Giles, will have comedians in the hot seat. In a daring

format, comics will be forced to either speak a revealing truth or bare their souls in the form of a dance.

“We’re doing standup, we’ll have some dancing, a lot of vulnerability,” Alfa says. “Everyone is going to have a great set, and everyone is going to be hilarious.”

Alfa, formerly crowned Winnipeg’s Funniest

Person with a Day Job, makes her grand return after moving to Los Angeles to perform comedy and star in television.

“Do I put (Winnipeg’s Funniest Person) on my resume? Absolutely, baby,” Alfa says.

“I love the Park Theatre. I’ve done a ton of stuff there. When I lived in Winnipeg, that was one of my favourite places to perform. I haven’t been home a ton since that show, so this is like my comeback.”

Alfa first met Giles, her *A Work in Progress* podcast co-host at a comedy festival in Chicago, coincidentally when both were about to make the big move to Hollywood.

“We went for Pequod’s Pizza together, and there’s nothing that bonds two people like a greasy-ass deep-dish pizza and a Coke,” Alfa says.

“We’ve had several projects that we’ve done together. I wrote a web series, and she featured in that,” Giles says. “We had the opportunity to start a podcast, and we said why not? We were hanging out and having a lot of fun together anyways. She’s like my big sister.”

Both Alfa and Giles believe their chemistry has an ineffable quality that stems from their deep bond as friends.

“We’re really friends. We enjoy making

each other laugh, but we’re also there for each other as we’re going through real things in life,” Giles says. “It just elevates the shows and performances we do. People come out to see two friends that they feel connected to, as well.”

“We’re so different in so many ways, and we’re still the same in many ways. Our Venn diagram is very fascinating, I think,” Alfa says.

The lineup for Truth or Dance includes local comedians Mike Green, Jordan Wellwood and Emmanuel Lomuro, along with DJ K Chedda of Tempo Collective providing music.

“These are my homies, my guys. Mike Green, Jordan and I all started together. These are the guys who, whenever I come home, we put on shows together,” Alfa says.

“It’s amazing to see what everyone has done since. I’m so happy that I started in Winnipeg, because it gave me the baseline skills to know how to be in that scene but also how to work very hard and be in community with people.”

Purchase tickets for Truth or Dance at myparktheatre.com. Check out Winnipeg’s Aisha Alfa in Based on a True Story on Global TV.

BOOKS, BEER AND A BOOST FOR RAY

Author Michael McMullen sets a high bar for helping others

SUZANNE PRINGLE | ARTS AND CULTURE REPORTER | @BLAQUE_SQUIRREL

Anyone can be “Garbage Boy” – at least that’s what Winnipeg author Michael McMullen wants readers of his sophomore novel, *Garbage Boy: The High Bar of Low Expectations*, to consider.

This follow-up to *Scarred*, McMullen’s 2019 novel, is somewhat personal to him.

“Am I the ‘garbage boy?’” he says. “Yes, it is me, but it really isn’t.”

Garbage Boy follows the story of a teen dealt a bad hand: an abusive homelife, poverty, bullying and a face full of scars. He finds community and strength through an unlikely group of sanitation workers – but are they helping him “ascend” or taking him down the primrose path?

On Jan. 28, *Garbage Boy* was officially released at a launch event at One Great City Brewing Co. in partnership RaY (Resource Assistance for Youth). RaY helps youth under 30 – much like the book’s young protagonist, William, a.k.a Garbage Boy.

\$5 from each book sold until Feb. 29 and \$1 from every Garbage Boy Golden Ale (a One Great City beer created specifically for the book) will go to RaY.

“The beer is pivotal to both the prequel *Scarred* and *Garbage Boy*,” McMullen, who uses beer to bond his characters at critical moments, says.

McMullen recalls the challenges of growing up in a single-parent home on the “lower rungs of the social ladder” – something he felt most acutely during his sum-

mer job as a garbage picker.

“Even if nothing was said,” McMullen says of cleaning up after his peers in the park, “that denigration of your status, your position in life was real. As a 15-year-old, you’re particularly vulnerable to that.”

The impact of this memory stayed with McMullen and informed the characters in his book.

“That ‘real-life’ experience and feeling, the emotions, the senses of life I put into the characters,” he says of the fictional story.

Michelle Kowalchuk, director of mental health and addictions at RaY, sees parallels between William and the young people who come to RaY.

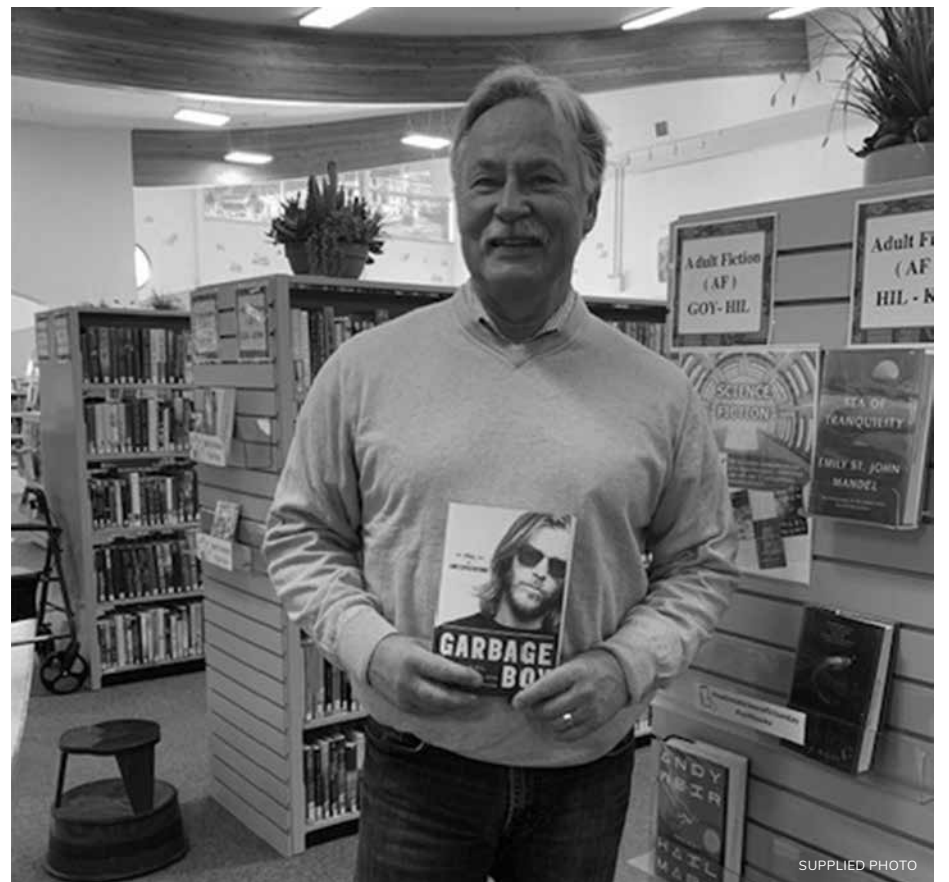
“Many of our youth have a lot of trauma in their lives, a lot of barriers that they face, a lot of difficulties,” Kowalchuk says.

She adds that RaY’s programming and resources help them “move past those barriers and onto a better path.”

She says if William had access to services like the ones RaY offers, “maybe his path would have looked a little different.”

McMullen learned about RaY through his late friend Syd Vosters, whose daughter Breda works as their director of grants and information.

“Syd and I would talk about the taxation system and income inequality,” he says. “She gave me a perspective of caring and how things are seen from different



SUPPLIED PHOTO

Michael McMullen, author of *Garbage Boy*

perspectives.”

The connection to RaY aligned with “*Garbage Boy*” and McMullen’s personal story. He hopes that William’s journey and what drives him will also resonate with readers of all walks of life.

“If there’s something that an audience can see in a character that motivates them,” he says, “it connects you with your audience.”

Kowalchuk says RaY is always looking for opportunities to build partnerships

with individuals like McMullen, as well as other outreach-minded organizations. The organization plans to use the funds from the book and beer proceeds to provide clothing, hygiene items, mental-health support, housing, food, groceries and other resources for youth in need.

***Garbage Boy: The High Bar of Low Expectations* is available for purchase at McNally Robinson. Find Garbage Boy Golden Ale at One Great City Brewing Co.**



SUPPLIED PHOTO

HOW TO HAVE SEX

Plays Feb. 16 to 29 at Cinematheque

★★★★☆

THOMAS PASHKO | MANAGING EDITOR | THOMASPASHKO

The term “teen movie” can seem like a pejorative. It sometimes gets thrown around like a genre, typically to describe movies made for teenage audiences (the implication being that, for adults, mileage may drastically vary).

But there are also those works made for adults that, with hindsight, explore the challenges of teenage life. Some, like Amy Heckerling’s *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, are insightful classics. Others, like HBO’s *Euphoria*, are garish, stylized works

of alarmism meant to scare us grownups about what “kids these days” are going through.

How to Have Sex, the debut feature by British writer-director Molly Manning Walker, falls somewhere between the two camps. Visually, its neon-drenched depiction of bacchanalia could be mistaken for *Euphoria*’s. But it’s a picture equally drenched in feeling, catharsis and wisdom about the pitfalls of youth.

The film follows a trio of 16-year-old En-

glish girls who have snuck their way into a spring-break party weekend in a resort on Crete where booze flows as freely as the revellers’ libidos. They’re determined to have the holiday of their lives and to get Tara (Mia McKenna Bruce), the lone virgin of the group, laid.

When they check into their hotel room, they find their next-door neighbours are also a trio of partygoers. Tara instantly has eyes for Badger (Shaun Thomas), a northern lad with bad taste in tattoos and worse taste in friends.

For its first act, *How to Have Sex* could almost be mistaken for a sex comedy. The dialogue is funny and authentic. But the naturalistic acting (all the performers are so good that it’s hard to pick a standout) and fly-on-the-wall camerawork give the whole affair an undercurrent of danger.

It’s appropriate — coming-of-age hedonism is often dangerous, and viewers will spend the early goings hoping that it doesn’t deliver on that nagging promise of danger. Inevitably, though, it does.

Without delving into spoilers, it’s safe to

say that the party resort isn’t an environment that nurtures safety. This is fertile ground for sexual predation, and the film depicts this in a way that’s made all the more devastating by how matter-of-fact it all is. It’s not graphic, but it is explicit, disturbing and familiar. We all either have a story like this or know someone who does.

But it’s not just the sexual danger that Manning Walker gets right about teenage life. It’s all the little hostilities: the pressure to have sex, to have fun partying, to drink more than is humanly possible, to perform well in school and account for a future that’s impossible for you to imagine yet.

Tara’s friend Skye (Lara Peake) is horrible and passive aggressive toward her at every turn, but Tara’s still too naive to know that she doesn’t have to put up with it just because they’ve known each other since they were six.

How to Have Sex is full of little insights like this, and it gets them all across without seeming like it’s trying too hard.

ARTS BRIEFS

CIERRA BETTENS | ARTS AND CULTURE EDITOR | FICTIONALCIERRA CIERRABETTENS

Dead films come to life

Ring in Valentine’s Day at the Park Theatre and experience *Love You to Death*, a film screening and musical performance presented by Local Jukebox and GMB Chomichuk. Witness the “reel resurrection” of “dead films” with live music performed by a quartet of local musicians. The fun begins on Feb. 14 at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$25 plus fees and can be purchased via bit.ly/49qllDu.

Last call for WUFF submissions

The deadline to submit to the annual Winnipeg Underground Film Festival (WUFF) is this Sunday, Feb. 11. The festival, which runs from May 31 to June 2, seeks new and engaging moving-image works that deviate from traditional cinematic forms. Interested filmmakers may access the submission form via winnipeguff.com/submissions.

Art through contemplation

On the walls of creBery Gallery (125 Adelaide St.), artist Shelley Remple conveys feeling on the canvas. She begins her practice by asking, “what colours or textures would best express what I am thinking or feeling?” Her nature-inspired solo exhibition, *Musings: A Product of Contemplation*, is on now until Feb. 13. For gallery hours, visit creBery.com.

Beading for your sweetheart

Whether your sweetheart is a lover, friend or yourself, an upcoming MAWA workshop will show you how to make the perfect beaded gift just in time for Valentine’s Day. Beadwork artist Aj’a will teach participants to make a gorgeous pair of earrings using flat beading techniques. The event takes place on Feb. 12 from 6 to 9 p.m. at Creative Manitoba (300-245 McDermot Ave.). To register, visit bit.ly/3uq9Y64.

Stone-cold connections

Through the practice of lithography, artist Jonathan Green forges connections between humans and stone. His solo exhibition *Needful Stones* launches at the Galerie Buhler Gallery in St. Boniface Hospital later this week. An opening reception takes place on Thursday, Feb. 8 from 7 to 9 p.m.

The Mountaintop @ Royal MTC

The Royal MTC’s forthcoming production *The Mountaintop* chronicles a “gripping reimagination” of the night before Martin Luther King Jr.’s assassination. The play takes audiences back to April 3, 1968 at the Lorraine Motel, where King’s story unfolds. The production opens on Feb. 14. For ticketing information and more, visit royalmtc.ca.

GET ME OUT OF HERE!

'It's just people helping people around Manitoba'

JURA MCILRAITH | CITY REPORTER | @ JURA_IS_MY_NAME

Most Manitobans know the frustration of being stuck after a snowstorm or being stranded with a dead battery. One local group hopes to ease that stress and give people a boost.

Chris Mills started the Facebook group GET ME OUT OF HERE in November 2021. He got the idea after he saw more than a dozen cars lodged in deep snow in Winnipeg's Elmwood neighbourhood following a bad storm.

"There were people stuck everywhere," Mills says. "Everybody said the same thing: 'CAA is going to be a long wait. We can't get out. We've got to get somewhere.' So I just pulled everybody out."

The private Facebook group has grown to nearly 4,000 members, and Mills thinks they'll surpass that number within the next month. He says he never expected so many people to join the group and offer to tow or boost those in need.

"It's just people helping people around Manitoba," Mills says.

This year's above-average temperatures have led to fewer people calling for roadside assistance, despite January's two-week cold snap where he says things got a little busier.

During previous years, he would sometimes spend four or five hours after his full-time job responding to posts that popped up in the Facebook group.

It can get tiring, but members of GET ME OUT OF HERE offer their support as a kind gesture for other Winnipeggers and Manitobans.

"If somebody needs help and nobody's taking care of it ... I can go scoot and get a couple done," Mills says. "My intentions for the group is just to watch it grow, watch it expand and see how many more people we can help. This is unreal."

But Mills doesn't oversee the group's activity by himself.

Truck driver Tony Cardamone met Mills through a truck club and has been lending a hand since joining the group at the end of 2021.

Cardamone says he's amazed to see how many group members regularly go out and assist others.

Once the spring and summer weather hits, there's often less to do, but he still sees the odd post about someone getting stuck.

"In summertime, you get the occasional guy getting pulled out of the mud because he's decided to be funny and realize he's not that funny," Cardamone says.

Mills and Cardamone say their most memorable tow involved someone getting their truck stuck "somewhere he shouldn't have gone."

The person's vehicle had sunk down to its axles until Mills and Cardamone



SUPPLIED PHOTO

GET ME OUT OF HERE is a Facebook group that connects drivers stuck in snow with good samaritans in big trucks.

pulled it out. They said they had to drive the long way around some trees to access the vehicle so they wouldn't get stuck, too.

"I enjoy it," Cardamone says. "It goes to show that there's still people out there that have a good heart and are willing to help, and that's what we're all about."

CITY BRIEFS

TESSA ADAMSKI | CITY EDITOR | X TESSA_ADAMSKI @ TESSA.ADAMSKI

Celebrating Black history

Every February, Canada celebrates Black History Month, and this year's theme is "Black Excellence: A Heritage to Celebrate; a Future to Build." Starting Feb. 26, the University of Winnipeg Students' Association's BIPoC Lounge is showcasing Black fashion, food and art through a weeklong event series. They are hosting a gaming tournament, workout training session, movie night, seminar and a Black Excellence Gala on March 1.

Wesmen basketball team rankings

The Wesmen men's basketball team needs to win both games in Regina this weekend to secure a top-four spot in the Canada West standings. This would give them a bye in the opening round of the playoff tournament. After losing twice to the University of Manitoba Bisons last weekend, the women's basketball team will need to win both games in Regina for a chance to make the playoffs.

Illegal border crossing leads to arrest

A Calgary man, Saleh Youssouf, appeared in a Winnipeg court on Jan. 29 after he was charged under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act for allegedly smuggling seven men across the Canada-United States border. The RCMP said the seven men are from Chad in north-central Africa. Less than two months ago, another group of people from Chad were also found illegally crossing into Manitoba. The Canada Border Services Agency is investigating.

Métis crafting session

In collaboration with the Manitoba Métis Federation, the U of W's Indigenous Students' Association is hosting a Métis crafting session to celebrate Louis Riel Day. The university is closed on Feb. 19 to honour Riel, so the crafting session will take place on Feb. 12 in the Helen Betty Osborne Building (Room 1E11) from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m.

Gillingham to give state of the city address


Mayor Scott Gillingham will give his second annual state of the city address on Feb. 9 at the RBC Convention Centre. He will provide an update on the city's progress regarding his electoral promises to improve municipal services, invest in infrastructure projects and tackle social challenges like homelessness and crime. Gillingham will also address his plans for Winnipeg's future.

Debates about library space

Coun. Evan Duncan (Charleswood-Tuxedo-Westwood) suggested the community connections space, which often provides social supports for vulnerable downtown populations, be moved out of the Millennium Library. He told CBC News the space should be for library services and that the province should fund a new resource space. Advocates for the community hub say his comment excludes part of Winnipeg's population that has the right to access the public library.

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ELIZABETH LAMONT WITH FORMER RWB DANCER YUE SHI (2015-2023); PHOTO BY DAVID COOPER, C.M.

BEHIND THE BAR



A peek at what it takes to run a venue

Bartenders at the Park Theatre pour drinks during Women in Jazz on Friday, Feb. 2.

The bands, Roman Clarke and Courtney Fox begin loading in at 4 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 1 at the West End Cultural Centre (WECC). They are greeted by the people working the lights and sound, who started an hour earlier.

While they set up, Meagan Stewart, the WECC house manager and volunteer coordinator, and assistant house manager Mark Cohoe restock the bar.

Cohoe started at 3 p.m., but Stewart's day began at 10 a.m. when they stopped at the LC on the way in to pick up some needed drinks. Some ordering minimums have just gone up, so they have to make time in their workday to pick up drinks they used to have delivered.

"The amount I would have to order to have it delivered, so much of it would go bad," Stewart says.

When people think of venues, she says, they often focus on things they can see: people serving drinks, taking tickets, selling merchandise and running the sound system. But they don't think of what they can't see, the things that happen in the background.

Each show production starts with ideas, communication, coordination and scheduling with departments and agents before the show is confirmed. It has all the work of a regular office job with phone calls, marketing, accounting and meetings. There is building maintenance, inventory, stock, drink trends and keeping up with sound technology and equipment.

"The things that keep us running," Stewart says. "I always sum up my job as a house manager like this: if I've done my job right, you don't realize I exist."

That's not the hard part. When they came in that morning, the mezzanine had a broken chair that had rusted through. The mezzanine was sold out for the show, and they had to find parts from the same make, since the chairs were salvaged from the Rex Theatre in 2008.

"Anything could go wrong at any time, and there are a lot of moving parts," Stewart says.

One of the highlights of her job was when she got to plan the WECC's first-ever Drag Story Hour.

"As a queer non-binary person, it was really important for me to put together something that represents what my community is about: freedom to express oneself," Stewart says.



Bartenders at the Park Theatre pour drinks during Women in Jazz on Friday, Feb. 2.



Carter Happy, Darling Bar's event booker, hauls equipment in preparation for First Fridays on Thursday, Feb. 1.

'Sweat equity and hard work'

Carter Happy fell into the event manager job at Darling Bar after helping run Mango Fest Manitoba. They find their job has many moving parts and requires them to wear "many hats."

"I think switching hats all the time and putting out fires and trying to get things to run smoothly, especially in the current economic ecosystem we're in, where teams are a lot leaner than they used to be, that does put more weight on every individual and makes us all more valuable but also more strained," Happy says.

They hope the team will expand in the future if things pick up now that they've learned how to coordinate the events with the bar and the café.

"Everyone's here to have fun because they love art, and being a small part of making that happen is kind of what makes it worth it," they say.

Dylan Pereira, owner of Darling Bar, sits underneath the stairs where people hang out during concerts in one of their three areas that can be booked. He is currently reviewing the quotes and building permits required for the climbing wall, which was the original idea behind Darling Bar and the VA Café.

"I might have to rethink it, but there is definitely going to be climbing somewhere downtown," Pereira says. "In developing or putting the space together to make it more of an event space, I had to build sound panels on the ceiling, which my dad and I built by hand."

Jessee Kowalski, who works at The Handsome Daughter, started working at venues because he played in bands and wanted to be more involved.

That entails "a lot of thankless hours, a lot of sweat equity and hard work. It's not easy, but it is rewarding," he says, "The most rewarding part is to see people have a place to apply their trade and be creative."

John Scoles, owner and manager of the Times Change(d) High and Lonesome Club, found his calling working venues at 12 years old. He lost the student-council election and became a social convenor instead.

"I realized pretty quickly that there's nothing like music to bring people together in the best way. Plus, I'm just a total duct tape, staples and Christmas lights kind of guy," Scoles, who calls himself the Times Change(d)'s janitor/president, says.

For him, the hardest part of running a venue is holding onto a space while delivering an endless stream of incredible shows. He likens it to festivals that do this once a year, except venues do it every week.

"You have to keep finding fuel somehow," Scoles says.

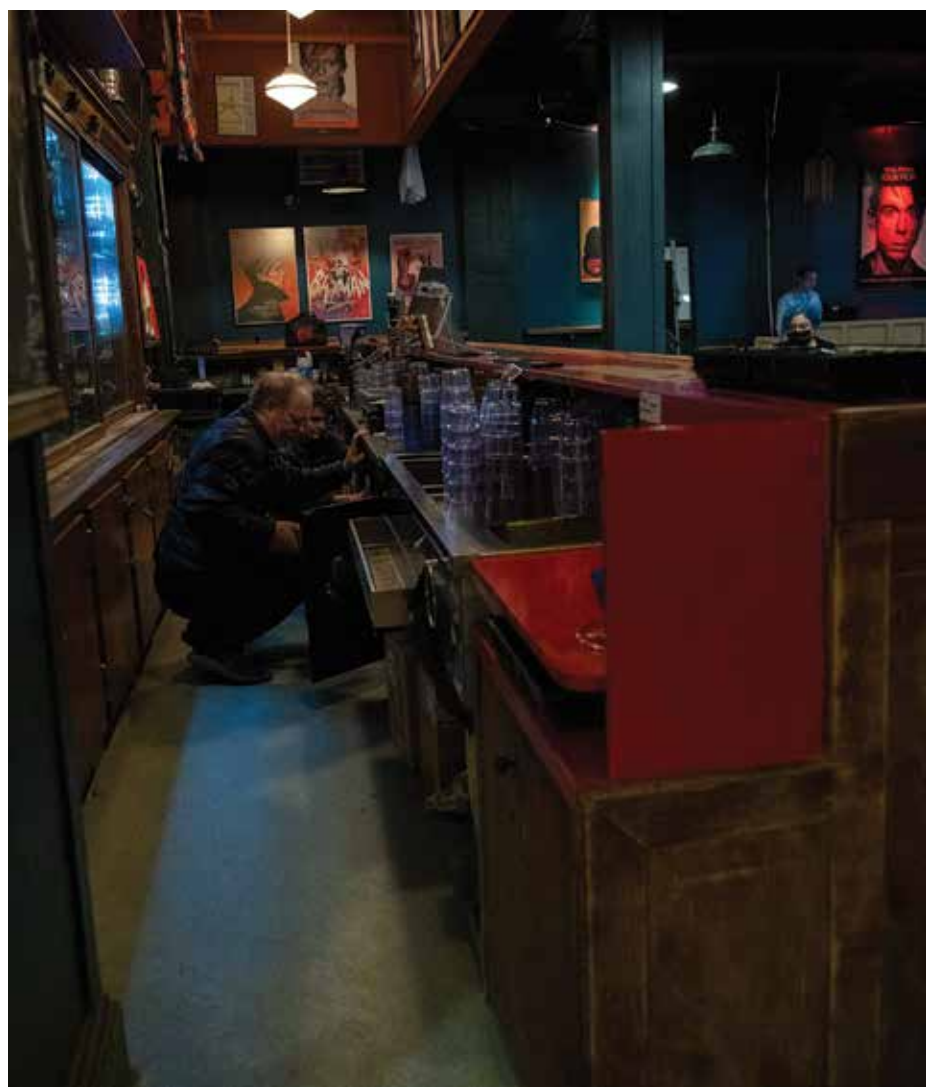
According to Scoles, "It's not about business, and you have to let go of that aspect."

Instead, "you've gotta treat it like your heart. Trust it, listen to it, give it regular workouts, let it shine. These places are like campfires. Go scrounge for sticks and invite a few friends over to share the glow."

Some of Scoles' favourite moments have been watching his staff turn into "seriously legit honky-tonk heroes," including Liam Duncan (Boy Golden), Grant Siemens and Sean Burns (Corb Lund), Andrew Neville, Amber Nielsen (Sweet Alibi), Josey Krahn, Jesse Millar (The Honeysliders), Matt Foster, Jaxon Haldane, Joanna Miller (Everybody) ... the list goes on forever, and the party never ends.

The people who make venues work do it because they love it, but that doesn't change the challenges of operating them. Some people, like the folks behind the Park Theatre, love it so much that they're opening a new venue called Sidestage. The project was just announced, and they're looking for a location in the South Osborne area.

In light of this month's closures, like

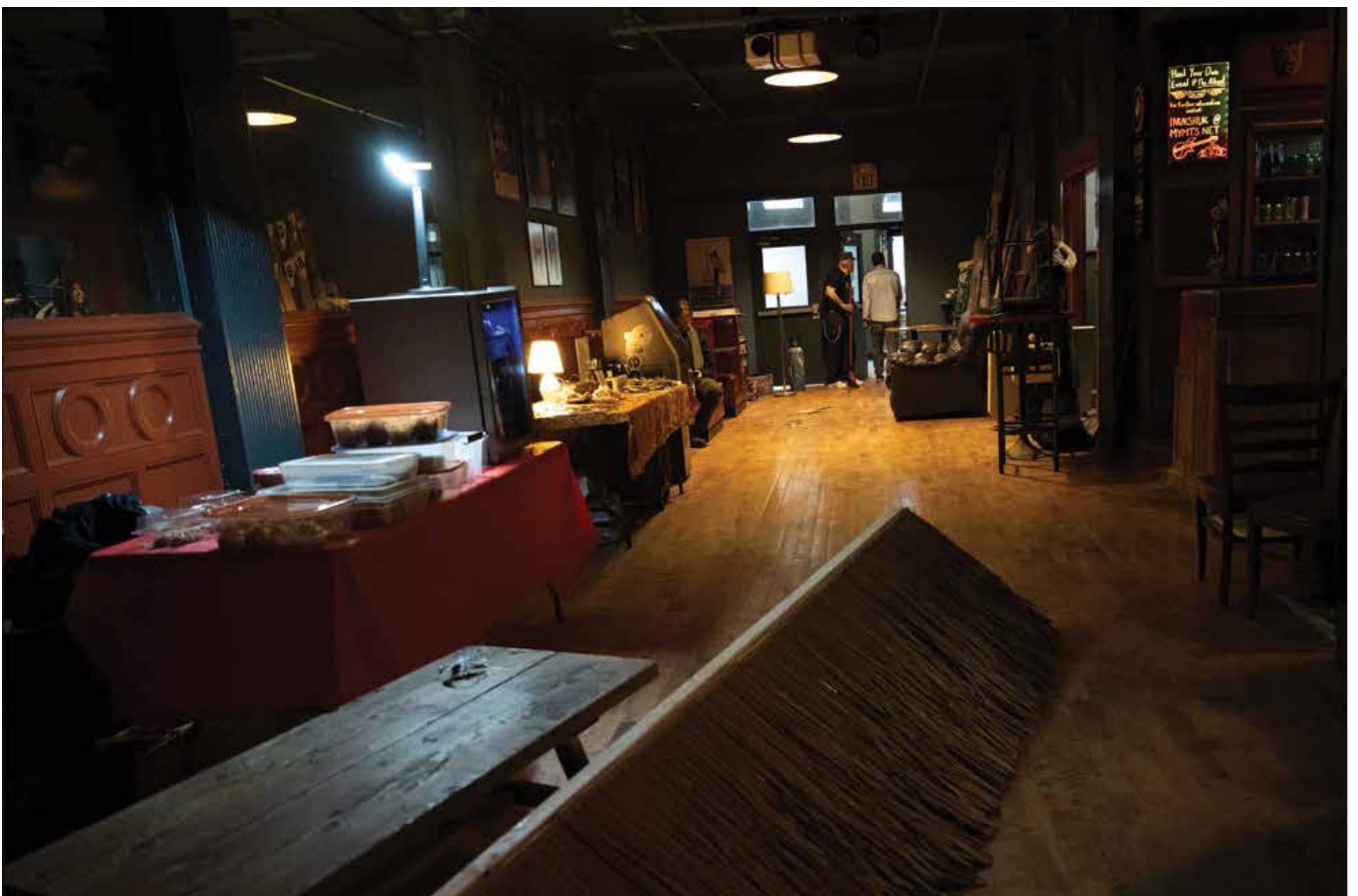


Dave McKeigan, who owns and operates both the Royal Albert Arms and the Pyramid Cabaret, restocks the bar at the Royal Albert Arms on Friday, Feb. 2.

the Good Will Social Club, and FACTOR Canada budget cuts that may affect touring grants, Stewart would like to encourage people to support the places they love, which starts with showing up.



The Albert has gone (and is going) through renovations. The venue undergoes three changeovers during First Fridays. Staff and vendors tear down the café to transform it into a dancefloor, while the main area by the stage is transformed into a craft market. In the evening, it will change back into a dancefloor and lounge. Friday, Feb. 2.



"(The Albert features) theatre, arts, music, fashion." - Dave McKeigan



Mark Cohoe, assistant house manager and sometimes volunteer at the West End Cultural Centre, teaches new volunteers how to sort empties on Thursday, Feb. 1.



Venue work isn't always glamorous and often involves cleaning and sorting. At the WECC, they try to sort everything, including compost. Thursday, Feb. 1.



Meagan Stewart, volunteer and community outreach coordinator at the WECC. Thursday, Feb. 1.



Even at static venues, production folks start setting up earlier than most people would think. Thursday, Feb. 1.



Holy Void, Mahogany Frog and Tie Guan Yin soundcheck at Times Change(d). Saturday, Feb. 3.



On the bar of The Handsome Daughter



NINE INDIGENOUS FACULTY MEMBERS TO JOIN THE U OF W THIS SUMMER

Academic cluster hire aims toward reconciliation

JURA MCILRAITH | CITY REPORTER | JURA_IS_MY_NAME

The University of Winnipeg (U of W) is in search of nine Indigenous academics to add to their faculty as of July 1.

The cluster hire aims to make the U of W a more inclusive space and break down colonial barriers for Indigenous scholars, according to a Jan. 25 press release.

"It's really important to find new ways of understanding the process of challenging bias – conscious or unconscious – and really learning about multiple worldviews and views that are not necessarily Western," Dr. Pavlina Radia, provost and vice-president, academic at the U of W, says.

"It was a group effort to really embody the transformative approaches to hiring but also to really decolonize some of our processes."

Radia says some of these obstacles include practices within institutions and structures that hold colonial values and biases introduced from different cultural approaches.

She adds that organizations can't participate in changing those colonial structures and beliefs without challenging them. Reconciliation includes working with Indigenous ways of knowing in a respectful way, Radia

says.

"It comes from the heart but also from the community and listening to our community members, listening to faculty," she says.

The hiring process, which usually entails posting a job description and waiting for applications, won't be typical.

Radia says the U of W has a committee in place to seek out potential candidates. From there, the interview process will give applicants the chance to talk about themselves as Indigenous Peoples, the communities they're from and their lived experiences.

Radia and Chantal Fiola, U of W's interim vice-president of Indigenous engagement, hope this practice will help prevent people applying under false Indigenous identities.

"The cluster hire is a wonderful way of ensuring that we're walking our talk, that we're committed to developing and nurturing stronger relationships between the university and our ... Indigenous neighbours," Fiola says.

"A hire like this gives the institution an opportunity to change the landscape of the population at the U of W to ensure that we are a more inclusive environment for everyone."



Chantal Fiola, interim vice-president of Indigenous engagement at the University of Winnipeg

Although the university is focusing on hiring Indigenous Peoples, Fiola says they may have the chance to shift the focus to other BI-POC academics, too.

Positions are open in the arts, science, kinesiology, education and business and economics faculties, as well as the Global College.

Radia says she understands that many Indigenous scholars work through an interdisciplinary lens, and that's why it's important to have positions available in various areas of study.

The cluster hire expands the U of W's commitment to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's calls to action. The university added three new Indigenous-language certificate programs in 2022 and an Indigenous course requirement in 2016.

"Essentially, our strategy is all hands on deck," Fiola says. "Happily, thankfully, lots of folks are interested in putting their hands to the work of reconciliation across all of our faculties."



PROFile

FROM MILITARY MOVES TO ORGANIC MOLECULES

Dr. Tabitha Wood, associate dean of science and associate professor of chemistry

THANDI VERA | FEATURES REPORTER

Dr. Tabitha Wood, the associate dean of science and an associate professor of chemistry at the University of Winnipeg, didn't discover her interest in the subject right away.

Born into a military family, Wood moved frequently during her childhood and lived in places like Nova Scotia and Germany.

"We moved about every two years, which meant constantly making new friends and adapting to new environments," she says. "As a kid, I didn't mind the moves."

One of those moves brought her to Winnipeg when she was around 12 years old. "I think it was the summer, in July. I remember that first day. It was so hot," she says.

While her initial stay in Winnipeg was brief, it left a lasting impression. "Based on my previous experience with Winnipeg, I was quite happy to be offered a job here in 2010," Wood says. "I had lived in a lot of places, but I was very happy to come back."

She initially majored in forest ecology as an undergrad, but her trajectory shifted when she was offered a research-assistant position in a chemistry lab. "I found myself quite happy there," she says. "That experience led me to switch my major to chemistry."

Wood's research focuses on synthetic or-

ganic chemistry, exploring the synthesis of novel molecules with potential applications in drug discovery and materials science. Her work aims to unravel the intricate mechanisms behind chemical reactions, contributing to advancements in various fields.

Beyond her academic pursuits, Wood is passionate about scientific outreach. "Engaging the public in science is important," she says. "I've been involved in outreach since my undergraduate days."

Wood is also focused on making science accessible. She engages with students to organize events like the Science Rendezvous. "It's something I feel strongly about," she says.

Outside of work, Wood says she enjoys spending time with her family and also likes doing crossword puzzles in her spare time.

What was your worst grade in university?

"Human Environmental Interactions. I think I got a B."

If you had to eat one meal for the rest of your life, what would it be?



SUPPLIED PHOTO

"I have a comfort food that I like. It's fried zucchini with pasta and some kind of mild cheese and a lot of garlic. I'd be quite content to eat that if I had to choose one."

What was your favorite toy growing up?

"My Little Pony. I got my first little ponies when I was about two or three and continued to play with them until I probably felt some peer pressure to stop at the age of 12."

What is something you like about Winnipeg?

"I find that there are a lot of really creative and hardworking people in Winnipeg who create and share things they enjoy, like with the festivals that we see throughout the year. I find it very heartwarming that there are a lot of people in Winnipeg who care deeply about something, and they want to share that caring with other people."



ONE GREEN CITY

Farm, table, landfill

ALLYN LYONS | COLUMNIST | @ALLYNLYONS

As the total at the grocery register seemingly climbs every week, many Canadians are looking to save money however they can. Buying discounted food close to its expiration date could help shoppers avoid sticker shock while even unintentionally reducing carbon emissions.

Of the 35 million tonnes of food wasted a year in Canada, grocery retailers are responsible for about 12 per cent.

When inevitably taken to the dump, unsold food breaks down and becomes methane, a gas 28 times more powerful at trapping heat than carbon dioxide. In Canada alone, food waste is responsible for 56.6 million tons of greenhouse gases. Globally, food waste is responsible for 6 per cent of greenhouse emissions.

One way retail stores divert food from landfills, while still making a profit, is discounting food approaching its best-before date and marketing it as something that shoppers should “enjoy tonight.”

Just a few weeks ago, Loblaw incited controversy when they rolled back their 50 per cent discount on food approaching its expiry date to 30 per cent. As inflation rises, many people, fairly, are not willing to pay full price for items that aren't perfect. After pressure from a number of groups, the grocery chain has reinstated the original 50 per cent discount.

Tech companies are now also trying their hand at salvaging edible food from being thrown out by grocery stores. New apps like Flashfood alert users of discounted items approaching their best-before dates at their local grocery store, allowing shoppers to save money while diverting food from the landfill.

But why should the burden fall mainly on the consumer?

The City of Winnipeg has a website with tips for how individuals can decrease their carbon footprints by reducing the waste in their own fridges and pantries, yet will likely not have a curbside composting program until 2030.

Large companies have long chided individuals for their carbon footprints, a term coined by British Petroleum, while neglecting their own responsibility. If our government wants individuals to take more responsibility for their actions, they should encourage powerful corporations to do their fair share first.

In 2016, France made it illegal for grocery stores to send edible food to landfills. By law, all retailers had to donate food approaching its expiry date to charities or food banks. This policy ensures fewer families will go hungry, while also reducing the country's carbon emissions.

According to the French Federation of



ILLUSTRATION BY GABRIELLE FUNK

Food Banks, this program prevents 46,000 tons of food from ending up in a landfill each year.

In Canada, there are no laws requiring grocery stores to divert food waste from landfills. During the cost-of-living and climate crises, what is stopping Canada from developing a similar policy? Especially when two issues can be addressed with one solution.

It's clear from the Loblaw controversy

and the increasing popularity of food-waste apps that consumers are indignant at the idea of sending edible food to the dumpster. A government that took the cost-of-living and the climate crises seriously would be doing more to address these issues, not offloading responsibility on consumers.

Allyn Lyons is based in Treaty 1. It's pronounced uh-lyn lions.



THE CHANGING NATURE OF EDUCATION

Coming to terms with the market

GABRIEL LOUËR | VOLUNTEER CONTRIBUTOR

Every year, the University of Winnipeg (U of W) welcomes more than a thousand new students. For students, starting university can signify a new chapter filled with glee. For institutions, these are fresh minds to educate.

However, there has been a noticeable shift for the worse in the campus zeitgeist regarding this once mutually beneficial exchange.

According to publicly available data published by the U of W, the student body has shrunk over the last few years, down to around 8,945 in 2022 and reaching a peak of 9,670 in 2019. To most, this might seem like a non-issue. For the university, however, it presents a great concern: revenue.

Although nominally an institution of higher learning, the university is perhaps much better understood as a vessel of economic activity. Hundreds of staff members are employed. Businesses can thrive in a locale with thousands of prime-aged consumers within their reach. Students earn credentials that can help them access better job opportunities.

It seems like a perfect deal for everyone involved. Yet this social contract necessarily depends upon two things: the demand for the university's services and the supply of students.

Despite the fact that total enrollment numbers have steadily declined, the share of

international students has rapidly increased within just a few years.

In 2018, international students made up roughly nine per cent of the student body. In 2022, that number almost doubled to nearly 17 per cent. This is no coincidence and is a part of a much broader trend seen across Canada.

Accommodating foreign students is part of a strategy universities employ to combat declining revenues. Depending on the course of study, international students can be expected to pay up to three and a half times what domestic students pay.

Total enrollment may decline, but so long as international-student populations increase, institutions like the U of W might not only break even but actually record a surplus. In exchange, international students are presented with opportunities for permanent residency, higher real incomes and living standards that are among the highest worldwide.

But everything has its downsides. Permanent residency is not a guarantee, and international students have some of the highest rates of underemployment once they graduate.

A sudden influx of international students may also strain deeply needed resources, like campus housing and nearby rentals. Consequently, this raises housing costs for everyone involved. The deal might not seem like

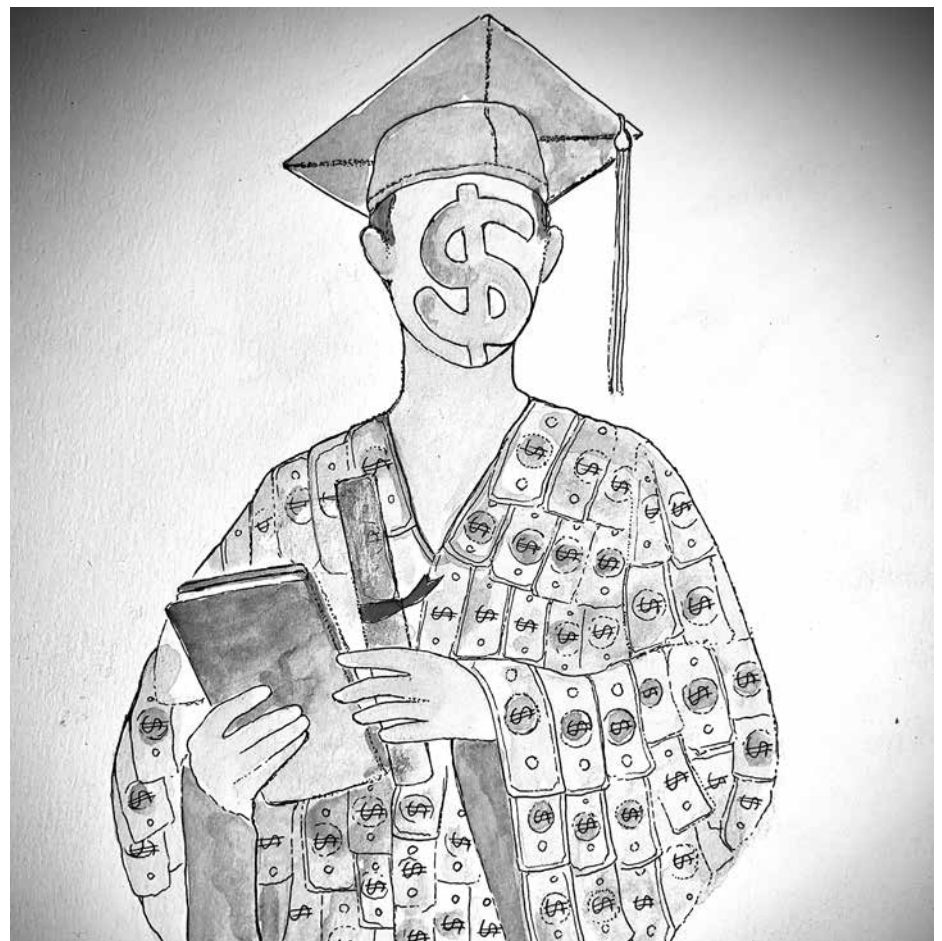


ILLUSTRATION BY GABRIELLE FUNK

the bargain it was hailed to be.

Attracting students for fiscal reasons only further subordinates education to the all-consuming invisible hand. Yet it is foolish to pretend as though one should not pay attention to the demands of the market. Goods and services are not made out of thin air, and the university cannot operate without paying attention to its bottom line.

Fortunately, universities can learn from existing alternate models. In many Europe-

an countries, there are no tuition fees. There, education is treated as a public good and not like a pre-packaged commodity, all while maintaining academic standards that rival, and in some cases surpass, that of Canadians.

Gabriel Louër is a volunteer contributor for The Uniter. He serves as emerging leaders director for the UWSA.



A TALE OF TWO SPORTS CITIES

CFL and NHL players have differing views of Winnipeg

PAUL HODGERT | BUSINESS MANAGER | PAULHODGERT

On Jan. 31, Winnipeg Blue Bombers fans were greeted by a cryptic Instagram post showing a fur coat and cowboy hat hanging on an armoire. The only word in the post was “soon.” Bomber fans knew this could only mean one thing.

Later that same day, the team announced they had signed American quarterback Chris Streveler to a one-year contract. This will be his first time back in the CFL, and with the Bombers, since he left for the NFL after winning the 2019 Grey Cup in spectacular fashion.

In an interview with Ed Tait, Streveler stressed how much he loves Winnipeg and playing for the fans here. Streveler’s view of Winnipeg stands in glaring contrast to the opinions NHL players shared in a recent survey.

On the very same day the Bombers announced Streveler’s signing, *The Athletic* published their anonymous survey of NHL players. While Streveler is excited to return to Winnipeg, the NHL players surveyed felt differently.

When asked which road city was their least favourite to play in, 41.24 per cent of respondents picked Winnipeg. The second least-favourite city, Ottawa, was voted the least favourite by only 11.86 per cent of respondents, a nearly 30-point margin.

When asked why, players listed the cold and lack of things to do in the city. This was also a common complaint for the second and third responses, Ottawa and Buffalo, respectively. As hockey is a winter sport, the cold issue is no surprise. Having listed Las Vegas as the favourite place to play, it is clear what these athletes want for entertainment, and Winnipeg simply cannot match up.

But there must be something about Winnipeg, the people, the culture that makes people like Streveler want to return. He’s not even the only Bomber who chose Winnipeg

over other, potentially more lucrative offers. American wide receiver Kenny Lawler has chosen to restructure his contract for less money in order to stay in Winnipeg.

But this difference in opinion on Winnipeg between NHL and CFL players may be due to two things.

First, football is a summer/fall sport. Until late in the playoffs, CFL players get to enjoy beautiful Manitoba summers and autumns, while NHL players are here for the dreags of winter and the sloppy, cold spring.

Second is where the teams play. When an NHL team comes to town, they are greeted by Winnipeg’s downtown, which continues to be a sorry sight. In the winter, there is little to do and few places to go for dinner in the downtown area.

While the Bombers may play in the south end of the city on the University of Manitoba campus, they are still in a better position to enjoy the city, including downtown areas like the Exchange District, as the elements are far more welcoming to them, and those areas are more vibrant.

Winnipeg can be a wonderful place to live with a great arts and cultural scene, lovely people and beautiful skies, but our downtown is still in shambles. Downtown revitalization has been a hot topic for more than 40 years, going back to the initial development of Portage Place, but the city keeps falling short. Surveys such as this only serve as more bad press for the city.

As for the hockey players, if they are only in town for a couple of days in the winter and feel geographically locked into the downtown area around the Canada Life Centre, I can’t really blame them for not wanting to be here.

Paul Hodgert is the business manager for The Uniter and was at the 1991 Grey Cup at old Winnipeg Stadium.



The Winnipeg Blue Bombers shared this cryptic image on Instagram on Jan. 31, teasing the return of star quarterback Chris Streveler.



THE UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG

Student Services

MONEY TALKS

Student Aid is in the spotlight this month in the Money Talks series:

- **Feb. 13** – Myths about Government Student Aid
- **Feb. 27** – Applying for Manitoba Student Aid (Spring Term)

All sessions are 11:00-11:30 a.m. via Zoom. Registration in advance is required. More info here:

uwinnipeg.ca/awards

WEBINAR WEDNESDAYS

Looking for tips to polish your resume or improve your interview skills? The Webinar Wednesdays series starts again with a pair of job-hunting relat-

ed webinars:

- **Feb. 14** – Interviews
- **Feb. 28** – Burnout
- **March 6** – Planning for Spring Term Registration

Webinar Wednesdays are held at 12:30-1:00 p.m. via Zoom. Pre-registration required. Please visit: uwinnipeg.ca/webinar-wednesdays

CAREER CHATS ON INSTAGRAM

It’s time to start thinking about summer jobs!

Career Chats welcomes representatives from the STEP Services Program to talk about student employment with the provincial government, agencies, and Crown corporations.

Join us live on **Feb. 15** at 11:00 a.m. on UWinnipeg Instagram for a session on STEP Services with Brett Howden and Melissa Phaneuf-Ahi.

Hosted by Career Services, these live sessions feature career and employment-related guests every other Thursday.

FINAL WITHDRAWAL DATE (FALL/WINTER TERM)

The final date to withdraw without academic penalty from a Fall/Winter Term course (September to April) is **Feb. 16, 2024**.

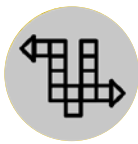
WINTER TERM READING WEEK

There are no classes during Winter Term Reading Week, **Feb. 18 – 24**. On **Feb. 19**, the University is closed for Louis Riel Day.

SPRING TERM REGISTRATION

Spring Term 2024 course offerings are now available. Students will be sent their assigned registration start date/time to their University webmail account in March.

In the meantime, check out the Spring Timetable here: uwinnipeg.ca/timetable



DIVERSIONS

HOROSCOPES

The new moon in Aquarius presents unique circumstances.

The new moon in Aquarius on February 9 at 5:59 PM represents a new social or political perspective.

SOURCE: CAFEASTROLOGY.COM

ARIES

Today's Sun-Uranus square can put the pressure on, dear Aries, but it's better not to rush anything right now. If you have yet to acknowledge a need to make changes in your practical affairs or with a friendship, you may experience some tension. But through this process, you can awaken to new ideas and possibilities for improving your life. Consider that people may be emotionally excitable, or there can be many distractions, but look for the opportunities to grow, learn, and understand yourself, your relationships, and your projects more completely. Try not to get stuck on old habits and methods, and instead, look to push your boundaries just enough to get to a new level of understanding. As the day advances, you're more likely to see ways to improve, particularly with income, finances, work, health, and daily routines. There can be new ways of doing old things or new projects altogether that excite and inspire you. You could be feeling especially happy with what you're doing, your work, or the expert way you deal with your daily affairs.

TAURUS

There can be scattered energy, but there is something to learn at the end of the day, dear Taurus. With the Sun's transit, your ambitions are strong, and your need for accomplishment is particularly compelling at this time of year. Still, some of these drives feel a little much, or they are running counter to your drive to be yourself, express your independence, and live authentically. The results of this clash may amount to just a bit of tension or a lot of it, depending on how things go! For best results now, avoiding abrupt moves or dramatic stands is best until you process your feelings and understand possible consequences. Aim to tone down rough edges and consider ways to make changes without making so many waves. Watch for a defensive, impatient, or provocative manner that instigates rather than takes charge. As the day advances, powerful energy is with you for breaking through negative attitudes and inhibitions. You're happy to take action if you know it will improve your life.

GEMINI

There can be times when your attention is divided today, dear Gemini, as the Sun forms a square with Uranus. As much as you want to focus, you could find it rather difficult to concentrate. There can be surprising new information that throws off your schedule or plans, or the routine seems exceptionally boring or restricting to you today. Instead of working on autopilot, try to satisfy your desire for something different by trying a new style, route, or topic. The desire to shirk a responsibility can be strong but is unlikely to satisfy in the long run. While you likely need to make a change, it's better not to be abrupt about it, as this approach can backfire--it's likely to cause more trouble than you need. Aim to tone down rough edges and avoid speaking too soon on a matter for the best results today since impatience can lead to short or curt words. As the day advances, look for ways to break free from past addictions and hauntings, such as attachments to people or things that can no longer be a part of your life, as you're receiving wonderful support from the cosmos to do so.

CANCER

Today's transits favor new approaches and flexibility, dear Cancer. If you can avoid the tendency to move too fast and live on your nerves (or only in your brain), you can come to fascinating and possibly prophetic insights. Keep your feet on the ground, though, so you can benefit from the open, growth-oriented energy of the day. Surprises or changes in plans can lead to adjusting expectations and attitudes. If you're feeling especially tense or restless, try to channel excess energy into a productive pursuit that you know serves you well. Investigating new approaches and experimenting with new methods can satisfy an itch for doing something different and unusual. What's most important now is that you learn more about yourself and your desires and feelings to make better decisions as you advance. As the day progresses, making changes comes more organically. It can be a wonderful time for connections, friendships, involvement with groups or teams, and possibly even breaking free from a limiting, disruptive situation.

LEO

Today's Sun-Uranus square brings uncooperative energies surrounding a partnership, parent, or boss to your day and week, dear Leo. A sense of moving forward is with you, but it's best to avoid quick reactions since the tendency to react or to be abrupt and loud about making changes can lead to unnecessary trouble or misunderstandings. It can annoy you if others are too impersonal with you now, but it's best not to play into it. Instead, find ways to enjoy yourself without counting on someone else. However, a matter may need your attention, and this transit can bring it to the surface. As the day advances, energies especially inspire increased confidence in your practical affairs, self-worth, and long-term professional or financial goals. You may enjoy a release from restrictive circumstances, such as the end of a payment plan, a bonus or income increase, or a new venture that gives you more freedom or independence.

VIRGO

Today's Sun-Uranus square can test your patience in spots, dear Virgo, particularly regarding opinions, directions, and instructions. The desire to perform, work, and excel in your work or with your health and routines is strong, but it is clashing with an equally compelling need to explore, learn, and enjoy the benefits of spontaneity and freemove learning and living. Something you hear might stimulate a new way of thinking, so don't disregard communications altogether, but do take some time before reacting. Fortunately, creative energy is abundant, even if it can sometimes be challenging to tap. Try to make something useful of this excess energy. You may stumble upon a new way to approach a health or work problem from upset or interrupted plans today, so try to stay positive and centered if your schedule changes at a moment's notice. As the day advances, there is a fresh quality to your work and your personality. You're exploring new ideas and approaches, learning exciting new things, and letting go of the more rigid elements of your personality.

LIBRA

With a Sun-Uranus square early today, you could be feeling a little on edge, dear Libra, especially with creative projects and intimate relationships or if you don't know where you stand with a situation or someone. Try to remain flexible and avoid stubbornly sticking to old methods while avoiding the other extreme if it involves an impulsive break. Aim to consciously pull your energy away from tense situations and let go of stress when possible. Of course, it's usually wise to examine your reactions if they come on suddenly. As the day advances, you can enjoy breakthroughs when it comes to insight into your own psychology, an intimate relationship, or a support system. A release from a private burden or a debilitating secret might also figure strongly. It can be an excellent time for family relationships, domestic matters, and mental health or support.

SCORPIO

With the Sun and Uranus square early today, dear Scorpio, concentrating can be difficult, as you may feel pulled in several directions. Temporarily, where you're heading or your next step may be unclear. You might discover that focusing on the moment is best just for now, and worrying too much about your next step can be a waste of energy when you're uncertain of the final destination. Someone in your life could surprise you, or there could be disconcerting competitive energy with (or between) family or a partner, making it difficult to relax or unwind as a result. Consider that you may be torn between wanting time to yourself and a craving for companionship, which can send people confusing signals. Keep yourself open and flexible because, sometimes, unexpected changes can help you move forward and away from bad habits. Channeling extra energy into making plans or organizing the home and possibly family activities can be successful. Especially as the day advances, a liberating influence affects your social life, and connecting with others can be especially beneficial now.

SAGITTARIUS

A Sun-Uranus square early today can generate some tension, dear Sagittarius. You'll feel this more intensely if you've been consumed by your studies, contacts, or projects, and a chaotic feeling emerges in other areas of your life. Aim to know your limits and respect them, or else you're likely to feel too scattered to be very productive. If you've been suppressing frustration, this can be a time when it surfaces unexpectedly. Stress can aggravate problems, so do what you can to relax. Your mind may be latching onto a dilemma or issue, and it can be complicated to pull yourself out. This can also interfere with achieving your goals or handling your priorities. Today's energies are lovely, however, for helping you pinpoint what parts of your life could do with an update or serious improvements. Especially as the day advances, you might open your eyes to new ways of taking care of the practical side of life that are empowering and freeing. Super energy is with you for your career, work, health, income, and major life goals.

CAPRICORN

A Sun-Uranus transit in the first half of today can overstimulate you, dear Capricorn, making it best to watch for too-quick moves, particularly with money and love. Your desire for comfort and safety might compete with your need for emotional excitement. With the Sun's current transit, you want to take control of the more practical affairs in your life, and today's inconsistencies remind you that control is never entirely ours! There can be a breaking-free moment emerging from tensions related to dysfunctional areas of your life that can be significant. Changes in plans can encourage new approaches and ideas. Aim to keep an open mind and avoid pushing things too far. Still, consider that scattered energies now can more easily lead to losing or misplacing something. Be sure to take some time away from an issue if it's draining you or distracting you from your priorities--something that comes far more naturally as the day advances. In fact, you can feel especially free and spontaneous. People may be introducing you to new ideas and beliefs that inspire you. Personal enjoyment is in strong focus.

AQUARIUS

A Sun-Uranus square can feel slightly jarring or disruptive early today, dear Aquarius. It has a way of pointing out restrictive conditions that you may have tolerated but now find too much. Consider that you may not be content with routines or tired, old ways of relating, and now is the time to see what these are and perhaps break free from them. Look for new ways to enjoy yourself if things feel too stuffy or oppressive, but seriously consider what you may need to stay stimulated and engaged. A little self-knowledge can go a long way today. Challenges today also seem to light a fire under you to make improvements. Especially as the day advances, it's a good time for feeling freer, more connected, and emotionally ready to change things for the better. Opportunities for putting limiting living conditions or attitudes behind you can arise. Getting rid of emotional baggage can instead be in focus.

PISCES

With a Sun-Uranus square early today, dear Pisces, mental tension is likely, making it best to avoid impulsive moves. Fortunately, this aspect gives you a nice window into areas of your life or specific ways of thinking that have become dysfunctional. Still, the desire to go your own way, particularly mentally and with your projects, can rock the boat. Watch that you don't become your own worst enemy by speaking too quickly about a matter. It may be that you want to break free from a stifling situation, but being mindful about whether to exit a situation will serve you better. An inherent need for change from the inside out is with you today, and circumstances are such that you need to shed yourself of attitudes that no longer work for you. As the day advances, you find it easier to unwind and see the positive side of any schedule changes you've had to endure. Look for opportunities with partnerships, friendships, communications, income from business or work, and networking as the day advances. It's a time for focusing on self-improvement and taking steps towards a much-improved lifestyle.



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The Uniter is seeking a dedicated, politically minded and well-connected person to fill the role of city editor. This person should have experience and a passion for writing about such topics as local news, student issues, community events, sports and more.

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