

December 2019 Issue 388
Latino
American
Today
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M E R R Y
Christmas!

FELIZ
NAVIDAD
y Prospero
año nuevo



“WE COME BEARING PEACE”

A Procession, a Prayer, a Cry through the Streets of Minneapolis



We Come Bearing Peace Posada on December 15

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15, 4:00 PM

A walk through the streets of our city, with Mary and Joseph for all who seek shelter.

“We will keep walking! We will keep opening the door!”

The community is invited to join the We Come Bearing Peace Posada—the journey of Mary and Joseph seeking shelter—in a bilingual, multi-sensory procession of prayer and solidarity organized by a consortium of churches and neighborhood groups.

The procession takes place on Sunday, December 15. Beginning at 3:00 pm, participants will gather at Powderhorn Park in Minneapolis (3400 15 Ave. So.) and will leave the Park Center at 4:00 pm, traveling one mile to St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, located at 2742 15th Ave. S. At the church, the journey ends with a bonfire, food, music, and a living Nativity.

Reminiscent of La Natividad enacted by In the Heart of the Beast Theatre together with St Paul’s Lutheran Church in the past, the fundraising event is aimed to be a walk for those who journey with hope towards the US border and for those separated from their families by borders. Organizers urge interested participants to join together, participate by walking together and holding each other, and gather to welcome all the holy children being born in our midst.

All proceeds from a free-will offering will go to Interfaith Coalition on Immigration and Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota, two groups which accompany immigrants through legal proceedings.

This event is initiated by St. Paul’s Lutheran Church and the Semilla Center for Healing and the Arts, with cooperation from Edina Community Lutheran Church, St. Stephen’s Lutheran Church, Immanuel Lutheran Church and In the Heart of the Beast Puppet and Mask Theatre.

For more information, contact the Semilla Center for Healing and the Arts

semillacenter@gmail.com or **612-724-3862**, **Facebook: @SemillaCenter #WeComeBearingPeace**



On The Cover

Merry Christmas
¡Feliz navidad y prospero año nuevo!

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Today**

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EL Regalo de la Navidad



Por Saúl H. Carranza

A todos nos gusta recibir regalos y a muchos nos gusta dar regalos. En el libro *Los cinco lenguajes del amor* el autor Gary Chapman dice que el valor del regalo no es el precio del mismo, sino el amor con el que se da. Como padres, esposos o amigos hemos aprendido que un regalo es una inversión. Una inversión en la felicidad de la otra persona, o una inversión en nuestra relación con esa o esas personas. Y finalmente una inversión en nosotros mismos, porque vale la pena ver la sonrisa y felicidad en el rostro de aquella persona al momento de recibir el regalo. O el alivio que significará a una necesidad.

Saúl Carranza

Muchas veces los regalos no son para alguien conocido, ni tampoco veremos cuando la persona lo reciba, pero que bueno es proveer para aquellos que no tienen alguien cercano que les ayude. Cada año por esta época nos preocupamos por coleccionar juguetes para enviar a niños de familias de escasos recursos o que alguno de sus padres está en prisión. En la mayoría de los casos no conocemos a los niños, y no estaremos allí cuando reciban su regalo. Pero, el simple hecho de saber que recibirán una muestra de cariño en esta época nos motiva. Bajo el lema “que ningún niño se quede sin un regalo esta navidad”. Movilizamos a muchas personas y muchos voluntarios para proveer esos regalos.

Alguien dijo que cada niño, y realmente cada persona, tiene un tanque emocional que debe ser llenado con amor. Muchos de los males y maldad en nuestro mundo se deben a la carencia de amor. La persona que no ha recibido amor es como el niño que se porta mal para llamar la atención. Cuando el tanque del amor está vacío, la vida es infeliz y la infelicidad da frutos de amargura y maldad.

El amor viene de Dios. Y los regalos de la navidad nos recuerdan el gran amor de Dios por cada uno de nosotros. Dios nos envió a este mundo a su hijo Jesús para recordarnos el infinito amor que tiene para cada uno de nosotros. Un amor que se hizo carne para darnos esperanza, fe y felicidad. Un amor que no hace diferencia de personas, lenguas, raza o nacionalidad. El amor de Dios es para todos y el Regalo de Jesús es su más hermosa expresión. Cuando de, o reciba un regalo esta navidad, recuerde que es una expresión de amor y un recordatorio del infinito amor de Dios. Feliz navidad y Prospero año nuevo.

THE Christmas gift

By Saúl Carranza

We all like to receive gifts and many of us like to give gifts. In the book *The Five Languages of Love* author Gary Chapman says that the value of the gift is not the price of the gift, but the love with which it is given. As parents, spouses or friends we have learned that a gift is an investment. An investment in the happiness of the other person, or an investment in our relationship with that or those people. And finally an investment in ourselves, because it is worth seeing the smile and happiness on that person's face when receiving the gift. Or the relief that will mean in a need.

Many times the gifts are not for someone known, nor will we see when the person receives it, but it is good to provide for those who do not have someone close to help them. Every year around this time we worry about collecting toys to send to children from low-income families or that one of their parents is in prison. In most cases we do not know the children, and we will not be there when they receive their gift. But, the simple fact of knowing that they will receive a sample of affection at this time motivates us. Under the motto “that no child is left without a gift this Christmas,” we mobilize many people and many volunteers to provide those gifts.

Someone said that every child, and really every person, has an emotional tank that must be filled with love. Much of the evil in our world is due to lack of love. The person who has not received love is like the child who misbehaves to get attention. When the tank of love is empty, life is unhappy and unhappiness bears fruits of bitterness and evil.

Love comes from God. And Christmas gifts remind us of God's great love for each of us. God sent his son Jesus to this world to remind us of the infinite love he has for each of us. A love that became flesh to give

us hope, faith and happiness. A love that makes no difference to people, languages, race or nationality. The love of God is for everyone and the Gift of Jesus is his most beautiful expression. When giving or receiving a gift this Christmas, remember that it is an expression of love and a reminder of God's infinite love.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Saúl Carranza is from Guatemala. He is the Pastor of the Cristo Para Todas Las Naciones Church in Crystal, MN. Tel 7632452378. Email: pastorcarranza@gmail.com



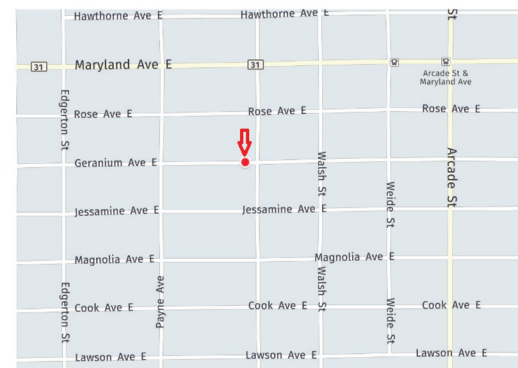
Horario de servicios.
Viernes 7:00 pm
Domingos 4:00 pm
Trayendo el mensaje de amor y fe en Jesús en tu idioma.

Para mas información llamar a
Pastor Saul Carranza al 763 245 2378 o
escribir a pastorcarranza@gmail.com

Nueva Iglesia Cristiana sirviendo a la comunidad hispana de Saint Paul y sus alrededores.

Iglesia del Nazareno

1115 Greenbrier Street, Saint Paul, Minnesota 55106
(Arlington hills Lutheran Church)



The Gift of Christmas – Give It Forward!



Marci Malzahn

By Marci Malzahn

As a family tradition, we love to give each other lots of presents during Christmas. We enjoy more the *quantity* versus how expensive presents are. And now that our children are grown, they want to bless us with lots of gifts too, so our Christmas tree looks beautiful full of presents!

But more importantly, there are other gifts that are not physical gifts that we each received since we were born. These are natural abilities and spiritual gifts that God gave to each of us. The Bible describes some of those gifts in Romans 12:6-8: “In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to **prophecy**, speak out with as much **faith** as God has given you. If your gift is **servicing** others, serve them well. If you are a **teacher**, teach well. If your gift is to **encourage**

others, be encouraging. If it is **giving**, give generously. If God has given you **leadership** ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing **kindness** to others, do it gladly.”

In addition, 1 Peter 4:10 says that, “God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of **spiritual gifts**. Use them well to serve one another.” And 1 Corinthians 12:7-11 tells us what they are, “A spiritual

gift is given to each of us so we can help each other. To one person the Spirit gives the ability to **give wise advice**; to another the same Spirit gives a message of **special knowledge**. The same Spirit gives great **faith** to another, and to someone else the one Spirit gives the gift of **healing**. He gives one person the power to **perform miracles**, and another the ability to **prophecy**. He gives someone else the ability to discern whether a message is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit. Still another person is given the ability to speak in **unknown languages**, while another is given the ability to **interpret** what is being said. It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.”

Isn't this wonderful? I encourage you to discover your natural and spiritual gifts and use them to help others. There are also many other gifts that you can give to your loved ones that don't cost any money. They are, the gift of:

- **Friendship:** Be there for your friends.
- **Laughter:** Laugh a lot with your loved ones. It is medicinal!
- **Forgiveness:** Give the gift of forgiveness to someone who hurt you even if they don't ask you for forgiveness.
- **Happiness:** Enjoy and celebrate every happy moment you have with your loved ones.
- **Joy:** Be joyful knowing that God's got you regardless of the circumstances.
- **Understanding:** Make the effort to truly understand someone.
- **Time:** Your time is your most precious possession. Give of your time to those who matter most.
- **Listening:** Listen without interrupting and be okay that sometimes you don't have to respond.
- **Grace:** Give people some grace and don't judge them for their mistakes.
- **Peace:** Provide a peaceful home to your family and a peaceful work environment to those you work with.
- **Generosity:** Give of your time, money, and talents to others consistently.

But most importantly, in the Christian faith, Christmas is a time to celebrate the true gift that God gave to all of us: Jesus—and the Gospel of Salvation that tells us that Jesus died on the cross for our sins so we can go to heaven and spend eternity with Him. Here is the simple message of Salvation:

Romans 10:8-13 Salvation Is for Everyone

In fact, it says, “The message is very close at hand; it is on your lips and in your heart.”

And that message is the very message about faith that we preach: If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.” Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. For “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

This month, if you have received the biggest gift there is—Salvation through Jesus Christ—I want to encourage you to *give it forward* to others! If you have not received this amazing gift yet, then I'm giving it to you right now. Today is your day to say yes!

Merry Christmas!

Marci Malzahn is president and founder of Malzahn Strategic a community financial institution consultancy focused on strategic planning, enterprise risk management, treasury management, and talent management. Marci is also a professional speaker and published author of four books. You can contact Marci for speaking engagements through her website at <https://marciamalzahn.com> or email her at marcia@marciamalzahn.com. You can purchase Marci's books at Malzahn Publishing (<https://malzahnpublishing.com>) or Amazon.



MEDA Names Former Caribou, Famous Dave's Exec as Its New CEO



*Alfredo Martel,
President and CEO of MEDA*

Previously published by Minne Inno, written by Maddy Kennedy

The Metropolitan Economic Development Association announced that it has selected Alfredo Martel as the organization's next president and CEO.

Martel will officially assume the position in November. Prior to joining MEDA, he held several high-level executive positions at companies like Caribou Coffee, KFC and Yum! Brands, Inc. Most recently, Martel worked as chief of marketing and strategic communication at Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. At Walker, he also led the museum's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion task force.

Martel is also the former chairman of the board for The Brand Lab, a nonprofit focusing on diversity in marketing.

"We are thrilled to have Alfredo Martel join MEDA as our next CEO," MEDA Board Chairperson Barbara Butts Williams said in a release. "His vision, passion and commitment to developing and supporting successful minority enterprises – combined with his keen business experience, legacy of innovation, highly engaging and purpose-centric approach – will drive continued growth and economic vitality for our clients and their communities."

For nearly a half-century, MEDA has helped minority entrepreneurs succeed through business development services, access to capital, and corporate and governmental market support for minority entrepreneurs.

Over the years, MEDA has helped launch more than 500 minority-owned businesses and assisted over 20,000 Minnesota entrepreneurs. Today, MEDA clients employ 6,000 Minnesotans and have a combined annual revenue of \$1 billion.

"As the son of Cuban entrepreneurs, I am honored to build on the proud legacy of this important institution," Martel said in a statement. "MEDA has a remarkable history of fostering economic empowerment and advancing the success of minority entrepreneurs, and we are solidly poised for purposeful innovations in serving our clients."

Allianz Life to Host Multicultural Marketing Conference



Rick Aguilar and Cecilia Stanton Adams

By Claud Santiago

The 24th annual Multicultural Marketing Conference, produced by Twin Cities based Aguilar Productions, will be held at the headquarters of Allianz Life Insurance Company of North America located in Minneapolis on March 26, 2020!

"We want to thank Cecilia Stanton Adams, Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer at Allianz Life, for the invitation to host our conference," stated Rick Aguilar, President of Aguilar Productions.

The conference will feature national Multicultural marketing experts who will present insights, case studies, and strategies to assist companies and organizations in their outreach and marketing efforts to the nation's fastest growing markets.

The U.S. Multicultural markets, Hispanic, Asian, African American and Emerging African markets have a buying power estimated at 3.2 trillion dollars. Sponsors for the conference include U.S. Bank, Comcast and the Minnesota Twins, and others to be announced.

Aguilar and Stanton Adams are long time associates and have worked together at various multicultural marketing and diversity conferences and seminars in the Twin Cities area.

Aguilar Productions began presenting Hispanic marketing conferences in the Twin Cities in 1997 and two years later added conferences to include the Asian and African American markets. Over the years the conferences have attracted attendees from the majority of the Fortune 500 companies based in the Twin Cities. His conferences today also attract, state agencies, non-profits and health organizations who have seen the tremendous growth of the multicultural populations in the Twin Cities metro area and outstate.



*At Allianz Life Headquarters in
Minneapolis*

SIX at the Ordway Music Theater



Award-winning theater producer Kevin McCollum recently picked the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts in St. Paul for a final pre-Broadway run of *SIX*.

The play is a *Hamilton*-esque retelling of Henry VIII's six wives. It's the first time a Minnesota theater has landed a pre-Broadway production since *The Lion King* ran at the Orpheum Theatre in 1997. The Ordway production will be the last stop for *SIX* before Broadway, and it will feature what is expected to be the final cast for Broadway—a rarity for pre-Broadway shows.

SIX will perform November 29–December 22 in the Ordway Music Theater. Tickets are available online or by phone at 651.224.4222.



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Election 2020—The Candidates!

Latino American Today will be presenting various candidates who are running for office in 2020.

By Claud Santiago



Mariah de la Paz

Mariah de la Paz is planning to run for the House of Representatives in 52A. District 52A represents West St. Paul, Mendota, Lilydale, and the northern part of South St. Paul. Mariah lives in West St. Paul and is a professional who currently works in the senior health care system. She is a conservative who has been active in politics and in 2018 served as campaign manager for a congressional race in St. Paul. Mariah is a single mother who still finds the time to be active in the community working with various organizations to encourage Latino youth to stay in school and graduate.

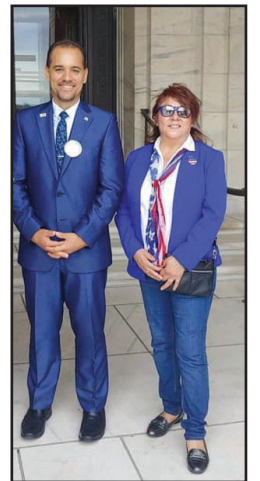
52A is home to a large Latino community: West St. Paul is currently made up of 22% Latinos, South St. Paul 14%, and 4% in Mendota.

Mariah is running for office because she believes that the current DFL 52A incumbent house representative, who has held office since 2004, has been part of the DFL administration who has given us the failed MNLAR and MNSURE systems, costing tax payers millions of dollars.

Mariah's twenty-year career in health care gives her insights into the current Department of Health and Human Services disaster that has seen overpayment of millions of tax payer dollars and a leadership who resigns and is unable to explain to the public why or who the overpayments went to.

"We need our current 52A house representative Rick Hansen to explain to us how and why he stood by while tax payers paid out millions and millions of dollars to these failed programs," Mariah stated in a recent interview with *Latino American Today*.

"I am running for office so that our residents, business owners and families in 52A have a house representative who is for a smaller and more responsible, organized government, reduced taxes, less regulations so that more businesses open, better schools, and a safer community. I look forward to meeting with our community in the upcoming campaign to ask for their vote to give me the opportunity to serve them at the State Capitol."



Mariah with MN Rep. Eric Lucero

Congratulations to Selena Rodriguez!

By Claud Santiago



Selena Rodriguez, St. Olaf College freshman

Selena Rodriguez had a very successful freshman year playing on the St. Olaf College Volleyball team as a defensive specialist. The St. Olaf College volleyball team earned an at-large bid in the 2019 NCAA Division III Women's Volleyball Championship.

Selena is from St. Paul and attended North High School (North St. Paul) where she played four years of volleyball and softball. Selena was selected to first team all-conference in volleyball as a junior and senior, honorable mention all-conference as a sophomore. The volleyball team won conference championships all four years and finished as section runner-up as a junior and senior. She captained the volleyball team her junior and senior years, was an "A" Honor Roll student, and Academic all-conference honoree.



Selena Rodriguez (center) with her St. Olaf College volleyball team

Her parents are Bob Rodriguez Jr. and Vida Rodriguez who live in St. Paul. Congratulations to Selena!



Right: Selena parents, Vida and Bob Rodriguez

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NAHREP Hosts Twin Cities Mixer

*By Isaac Contreras
Photos by Gustavo Rosso*



Within a year's time, NAHREP – Twin Cities (National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals) has hit the ground running and garnered some notable attention in the Minnesota Real Estate market.

A perfect example of this took place at the Cambria Gallery in the bustling heart of downtown Minneapolis on November 7th, where the Twin Cities chapter Executive Board hosted an appreciation mixer for its growing members and sponsors.

Appreciation was shown to a number of professionals for actively advancing NAHREP's mission of promoting sustainable Hispanic Homeownership. One particular recognition highlighted the event—The President's Award.

Guille Garza, NAHREP chapter president, introduced the Executive Director of the Latino Economic Development Center Henry Jiménez as the recipient of the Chapter President's Award for being an Avid MN Latinx Leader.

Our sponsors included Alterra Home Loans, Freddie Mac, Coldwell Banker, Pillar Title Services, Wells Fargo, equity bay, and U.S. Bank.

The tailor-made gathering was created to show appreciation for its members, sponsors, award recipient and the mission of NAHREP. We're excited to see what 2020 will bring.

*L to R: Ed Luna with Greg Larson,
President of Drake Bank*



Matt Baker, President Coldwell Banker Burnet with NAHREP members



Guille Garza with Trent Bowman, Old National Bank



Guille Garza with Henry Jiménez, President's Award recipient



NAHREP Twin Cities Board of Directors

Have a Long-term Health Condition? Get a Flu Vaccine!

Many people have a long-term health condition (also called a chronic disease) like diabetes, asthma, or heart disease. However, many people do not know that these health conditions can cause them to get very sick from flu. Most people hospitalized for flu have a long-term health condition.

Having a long-term health condition means your immune system is already working hard. When it has to fight off another disease like flu, it can be very difficult or make your other health condition get worse. This can happen even if you are taking all of the right medications and your long-term health condition is under control.

Getting a flu vaccine is the best way to prevent the flu. Everyone 6 months of age and older is recommended to get a flu vaccine every year, but it is especially important for people with long-term health conditions. Flu vaccination has been shown to reduce the risk of getting sick with flu as well as reduce the risk of having a serious flu outcome like going to the hospital or being admitted to the intensive care unit.

Flu is an illness caused by virus that attacks the nose, throat, and lungs. Flu can be spread in the air when people with the virus cough or sneeze, or by touching a surface with the virus on it and then touching their mouth or eyes.

Symptoms of flu include fever, cough, sore throat, headache, being very tired, and body aches. These symptoms usually begin suddenly and might be severe enough to stop your daily activities. Since people with long-term health conditions are more likely to get very sick from flu, this could mean having to miss many days of work, school or other activities.

Flu season can last through the month of April. It is not too late to get vaccinated and help protect yourself and the people around you from flu. Flu vaccine is available at many locations. This can include your health care provider's office, county health departments, pharmacies, and community vaccination clinics. There are clinics around the state of Minnesota that offer free or low-cost vaccine for people who do not have health insurance. Find a clinic near you on the Minnesota Department of Health's website at www.mdhflu.com.

¿Tiene un enfermedad crónica? Vacúnese contra la gripe!

Muchas personas tienen afecciones médicas a largo plazo (también llamadas enfermedades crónicas) como diabetes, asma, o enfermedades cardíacas. Sin embargo, muchas personas no saben que estas condiciones de salud pueden causar que su salud empeore por la gripe. La mayoría de las personas hospitalizadas por gripe tienen una afección médica a largo plazo.

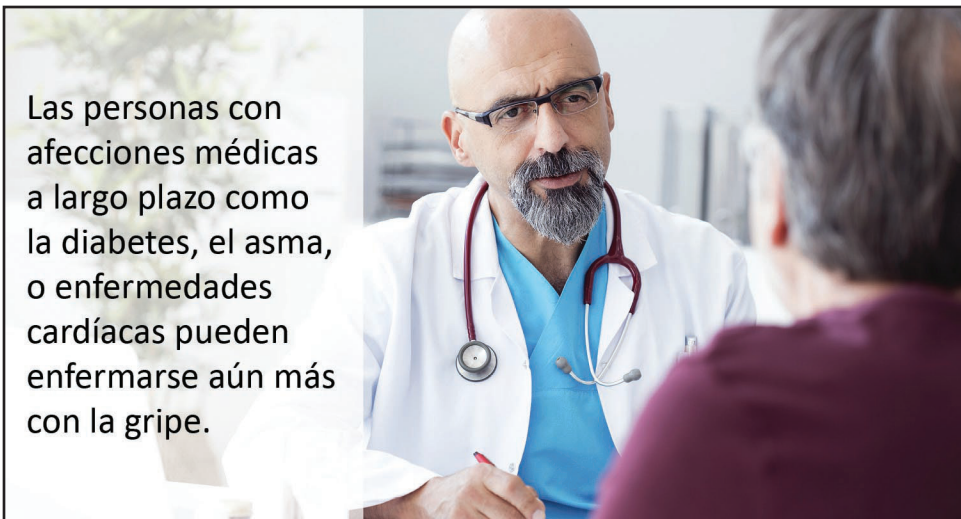
Tener una afección médica a largo plazo significa que su sistema inmunológico ya se encuentra trabajando duro. Cuando además tiene que combatir otra enfermedad como la gripe, puede ser muy difícil o hacer que su condición de salud empeore. Esto puede suceder incluso si usted está tomando todos los medicamentos y cuando su afección médica se encuentra bajo control.

Vacunarse contra la gripe es la mejor manera de prevenirla. Se recomienda que todas las personas de 6 meses de edad o mayores reciban una vacuna contra la gripe cada año, pero es especialmente importante para las personas con afecciones médicas a largo plazo. Se ha demostrado que la vacunación contra la gripe reduce el riesgo de tener serias consecuencias debido a la misma, como ser hospitalizado o ser ingresado en la unidad de cuidados intensivos.

La gripe es una enfermedad causada por un virus que ataca la nariz, la garganta y los pulmones. La misma puede propagarse en el aire cuando las personas con el virus tosen o estornudan, o cuando tocan una superficie con el virus en ella y luego se tocan la boca o los ojos.

Los síntomas de la gripe incluyen fiebre, tos, dolor de garganta, dolor de cabeza, cansancio y dolor corporal. Estos síntomas usualmente comienzan de repente y pueden ser lo suficientemente graves como para detener sus actividades diarias. Ya que las personas con afecciones médicas de largo plazo son más propensas a enfermarse de gripe, esto significaría perder muchos días de trabajo, estudio u otras actividades.

La temporada de gripe puede durar hasta el mes de abril. No es demasiado tarde para vacunarse y ayudar a protegerse de la gripe a usted mismo y a las personas que lo rodean. La vacuna de la gripe está disponible en muchos lugares. Por ejemplo, en el consultorio de su médico, los departamentos de salud del condado, farmacias, y clínicas de vacunación comunitarias. Hay clínicas en el estado de Minnesota que ofrecen la vacuna de forma gratuita o a bajo costo para aquellas personas que no poseen seguro médico. Encuentre una clínica cerca de usted en el sitio web del Departamento de Salud de Minnesota www.mdhflu.com.



Las personas con afecciones médicas a largo plazo como la diabetes, el asma, o enfermedades cardíacas pueden enfermarse aún más con la gripe.

Vacúnese contra la gripe para ayudar a mantenerse sano.

7th Annual Cine Latino - MSP Film Society



By Claud Santiago and Rick Aguilar

Cine Latino, the region's only showcase of Latin American and Ibero cinema, featured a rich tapestry of narrative and documentary films from across the globe from some of the world's most acclaimed and up-and-coming Spanish- and Portuguese-language filmmakers. Cine Latino was enriched by the presence of visiting filmmakers and community events, featuring Ibero and Latin food and music. MSP Film Society developed Cine Latino in collaboration with members of the diverse Spanish-speaking communities in Minnesota, and curates the annual series of films from countries with rich filmmaking histories and cutting-edge film industries in collaboration with Argentinian guest artistic director Hebe Tabachnik.

More relevant now than ever, and firm in the MSP Film Society's belief of the unique power of cinema to invigorate, inspire and help to change the world one film at a time, this year's Cine Latino's Focus was dedicated to "Cinema with a Conscience", a wide-ranging selection of films that highlight social, political, environmental justice and activism.

Rick Aguilar with Don Manuel Manrique Zapata, the grandson of Mexican revolutionary legend Emiliano Zapata who coined the phrase "Viva Zapata!"

Don Manuel was a guest from Mexico as part of the film, The Last Zapatistas, Forgotten Heroes. I was able to visit with Don Manuel...an amazing conversation!



With Cuernavaca-based filmmaker Francesco Taboada Tabone, who presented the film, The Last Zapatistas, Forgotten Heroes.

We spoke about Mexican filmmakers and directors who have won three "Best Directors Oscars" in the last four Academy Awards.



Enjoying the opening reception at the festival.



With David Howell and Iliana Rossell

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The Tree Protector

By Deborah Locke, DNR Information Officer

Yes, in answer to that age-old question, when a tree falls in the forest, it makes a sound.

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) forestry staff know that better than most people, especially those on the crew to deliver a 30-foot tree to the Minnesota Governor's Mansion for the Christmas season.

Jean Mouelle, born in what was then French Congo and educated in forest preservation, made the final selection of the state tree from General C.C. Andrews State Forest in Pine County. The balsam fir will be delivered to the St. Paul address on Dec. 3.



Jean Mouelle, DNR

Mouelle, 61, whose title is regional silviculturist and road specialist, is known nationally and internationally for forestry and logging protection, conservation and harvest. A pretty good problem solver, he's found solutions in use today that early on, seemed outlandish.

Consider these.

He figured out a better way to harvest mahogany trees in east central Africa.

He figured out a better way to harvest trees in Idaho that gave family-owned logging operations a fighting chance against the big logging industries.

He figured out a way to cut a big tree in a way that guarantees where it will fall without smashing branches once it lands. For that skill, Mouelle did research, practiced with a chainsaw, and today oversees the cutting and removal of the 500 to 900-pound pine from a Minnesota forest to St. Paul.

A 21-year DNR employee, Mouelle's career and life have been rich and eventful, pocked with a few tragedies and challenges.

In conversation with him, however, difficulties receive slight mention. He's a natural, optimistic storyteller with a life story that reaches from a remote African village where he spent a few years as a child, to his earning a Ph.D. in Idaho, followed by a move to Minnesota.

The early years demonstrate the greatest contrast between then and now. He was born in a city and for a few years as a boy, lived in a remote African village that lacked electricity and running water. Children played soccer with a ball handmade from leaves. Everyone shared what little they had. "It was there that I fell in love with nature and where I developed an interest in forestry," he said. Mouelle learned the benefits of cooperation and sharing, traits that benefit the whole group.

That early lesson becomes evident today through a simple question. Jean Mouelle, what tree should we plant in our yards?

"Fruit trees," he said immediately. "They're not too tall, they give shade, and they give fruit in the fall." Extra bounty can be shared with friends or a food shelf, he said. In addition, he encourages home gardening in the ground or through containers. He located land and helped fellow church members plant small plots.

Mouelle has planted and protected trees for a long time. As a young man, he attended the Rural Development Institute in Congo for engineering, rural development and forest management, and figured out way to harvest valuable mahogany trees that used the whole tree. He also espoused replanting trees. Not everyone embraced the new methods, especially large corporations.

"When you stand in the way of a corporation, it's a no-no," he said. Fortunately at that time he received a scholarship to study agri-forestry at the University of Idaho in Moscow, Idaho.

Mouelle said that his exposure to tropical and U.S. forestry and the differing methods of tree harvest gave him a broad understanding of the world and the management of natural resources. In Idaho he received a M.A. in agri-forestry



Mouelle in search for the perfect Christmas tree for the Governor's Mansion

and range resources and a PhD. in forest management.

That education and background give Mouelle a keen eye in the search for an ideal Christmas pine for the Governor's Mansion. Brian Strock, a 19-year veteran technician with the DNR, keeps an eye out year-round for well-shaped evergreen with short needles, like balsam fir or white spruce.

The tree must be near a road so it can be transported, and ample space is needed for the fall. Each

November, Strock finds three to five trees for Mouelle to choose from.

"Jean has the last say," Strock said. "He's the chief picker." A chainsaw fells the tree so it moves downward slowly in a predetermined direction. Witnesses hear a pop and squeak as the tree falls to a tarp. The tree is placed on a trailer and delivered to St. Paul the next day where staff from the Governor's Mansion wait with a crane.

DNR interns often help with the Christmas tree harvest, and provide youthful enthusiasm when the tree falls, Mouelle said. "You hear them scream and that makes me happy," he said.

On balance, the tree removal requires a small fraction of Mouelle's education and experience. Yet he is happy to act as crew coach because traditions are important to maintain, he said. After Christmas, the big tree is transported to a St. Paul yard and chipped for mulch, where it enters another phase of its life: to keep still-growing trees moist.

"Those chips will nourish another tree," he said. "They'll close the cycle of life."

Photos by DNR Staff Photos

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