

# BLOOMINGTON BRIEFING



MARCH 2019

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## KEEPING CUTTING-EDGE COMMUNITY AMENITIES

The Bloomington Ice Garden Skate School offers year-round skating lessons for people of all ages and abilities. The Bloomington Ice Garden (BIG) is one of the City's many community amenities.

BIG, Creekside Community Center, Dwan Golf Club and Hyland Greens Golf and Learning Center are among the City facilities built in the '50s, '60s and '70s. Today, these aging

structures are in need of upgrades. Watch for public meetings about a possible new community center and other community amenity developments.

Community amenities are included in the City Council's One Bloomington strategic priorities.

For more information on BIG and the upcoming ice show event "Skating under the BIG Top," *see page 8.*

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## MINNESOTA VALLEY STATE TRAIL COMING

In December, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) awarded a contract to begin construction on the Bloomington segment of the Minnesota Valley State Trail. When completed, the Bloomington segment will stretch 13 miles from the Bloomington Ferry Bridge to the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge visitor's center.

Construction will occur in phases as the DNR obtains State funding. Work is slated to begin in late summer 2019. The first phase will start at Lyndale and progress east to the Xcel powerline corridor.

The 10-foot-wide paved state trail will comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, making the Minnesota River

Valley more accessible. Existing natural surface trails will remain, allowing for two unique user experiences. However, there are segments where the trails must converge to cross streams or to minimize environmental impacts. In those locations, users will share the paved trail.

The City Council authorized an agreement to allow the DNR to construct the trail on City-owned land. The DNR must obtain similar permission from other landowners, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and a handful of private owners to construct the trail on their lands.

For information, visit [blm.mn/rivertrail](http://blm.mn/rivertrail) or call 952-563-8920.





# MAYOR’S MEMO

## CITY’S SOLAR PRACTICES SHINE WITH NEW SOLSMART GOLD DESIGNATION

By Mayor Gene Winstead

The future of solar energy is bright in Bloomington. The City recently received SolSmart Gold designation from The Solar Foundation and the International City/County Management Association. This designation is reserved for cities and counties that make it fast, easy and more affordable for homes and businesses to go solar. And it goes a long way in highlighting Bloomington as a community of choice in the Twin Cities region.

City staff has worked to be leaders in solar energy for years. The designation from the national SolSmart program recognizes practices that were already in place here at the City. From establishing the goal of completing accurate inspection requests in three business days to code requirements that line up with best practices that ensure ease of solar installation, Bloomington has taken bold steps to encourage solar energy growth and remove obstacles to solar development.

As a SolSmart Gold designee, the City of Bloomington is helping solar companies greatly reduce the cost of installations and pass those savings on to consumers. This allows even more local homes and businesses to access affordable, clean and reliable electricity through solar.

The Sustainability Commission spearheaded the effort to seek the SolSmart Gold designation for the City’s ongoing efforts to make solar power easy to access in Bloomington. This project is part of the commission’s larger goal to reduce citywide energy use by 75 percent by 2035 relative to 2016. This is one of the strategies in play to reduce energy use and become a more sustainable Bloomington.

The City Council made sustainability a priority because we want Bloomington to be as great a place to live for future generations as it is for us now. We want to be able to enjoy our parks and natural resources in the future, as we do today. And we’re doing everything we can to make that happen.

To read more about a local organization that recently went through the process of installing solar panels as a part of their larger energy-efficiency efforts *see page 4*.

With the feedback the City received from SolSmart during the application process, staff made information on solar installation and permits easier to find on the website. To learn more about how to get started, visit [blm.mn/solarenergy](http://blm.mn/solarenergy).

## NEW WATER PARK PLANS DISCUSSED

Tentative plans for a new water park near Mall of America are taking shape. In late January, a joint City Council and Port Authority Commission meeting reviewed the deal structure in more detail. The meeting confirmed that the Council and the Port Authority are interested in additional exploratory measures and continuing the project. Funding the cost of a design contract for building plans and specifications is the next step.

Slated to be one of the country’s largest, the new 250,000-square-foot water park would bring an estimated \$1 million in admissions taxes to the City’s general fund, as well as an incremental increase in lodging tax revenue to Bloomington.

“The City and Triple 5 have structured a project that protects Bloomington property taxpayers and provides a new amenity for our region,” Mayor Gene Winstead said.

The water park would function as a separate nonprofit entity and be open to the general public. A nonprofit entity would issue bonds for the \$250 million project. No Bloomington property taxes would be used for the project debt. The City would take over operations after the debt is paid off in 30 years. Construction could begin in 2020 and take two years to complete.

For information, visit [blm.mn/waterpark](http://blm.mn/waterpark) or call 952-563-4861.



## IN MEMORIAM: BILL BELANGER

Former Bloomington Councilmember and State Senator William “Bill” Belanger had a long career of public service in Bloomington. He passed away in December. Belanger represented Bloomington as a State Senator for 26 years. He also served on the Bloomington City Council from 1966 – 1977.

While he was on the Council, he was a part of many projects that shaped what Bloomington is today. During those years, Normandale Community College was established; Dwan Golf Course opened; the Water Treatment Plant was completed and the Council approved women as firefighters. Before dedicating himself to serving in Bloomington, Belanger also served in the U.S. Army.

## BRIEFING

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The *Briefing*, published monthly by the City of Bloomington, is mailed to our residents and businesses. Direct comments and requests for Braille, larger print or computer file to Communications Administrator Janine Hill, 1800 West Old Shakopee Road, Bloomington MN 55431-3071; PH 952-563-8819; MN Relay 711; FAX 952-563-8715; E-mail: [jhill@BloomingtonMN.gov](mailto:jhill@BloomingtonMN.gov)  
**Website: [BloomingtonMN.gov](http://BloomingtonMN.gov)**

### BLOOMINGTON CITY COUNCIL



**Mayor**  
Gene Winstead  
952-888-1258 (h)  
952-563-8782 (w)  
[gwinstead@BloomingtonMN.gov](mailto:gwinstead@BloomingtonMN.gov)



**Councilmember At Large**  
Nathan Coulter  
952-239-0531  
[ncoulter@BloomingtonMN.gov](mailto:ncoulter@BloomingtonMN.gov)



**Councilmember At Large**  
Tim Busse  
952-457-7506  
[tbusse@BloomingtonMN.gov](mailto:tbusse@BloomingtonMN.gov)



**Councilmember District I**  
Dwayne Lowman  
952-479-0226  
[dlowman@BloomingtonMN.gov](mailto:dlowman@BloomingtonMN.gov)



**Councilmember District II**  
Shawn Nelson  
952-479-0471  
[snelson@BloomingtonMN.gov](mailto:snelson@BloomingtonMN.gov)



**Councilmember District III**  
Jack Baloga  
952-944-5194  
[jbaloga@BloomingtonMN.gov](mailto:jbaloga@BloomingtonMN.gov)



**Councilmember District IV**  
Patrick Martin  
952-454-6657  
[pmartin@BloomingtonMN.gov](mailto:pmartin@BloomingtonMN.gov)

*Elected officials presented for informational purposes.*

### COUNCILMEMBERS

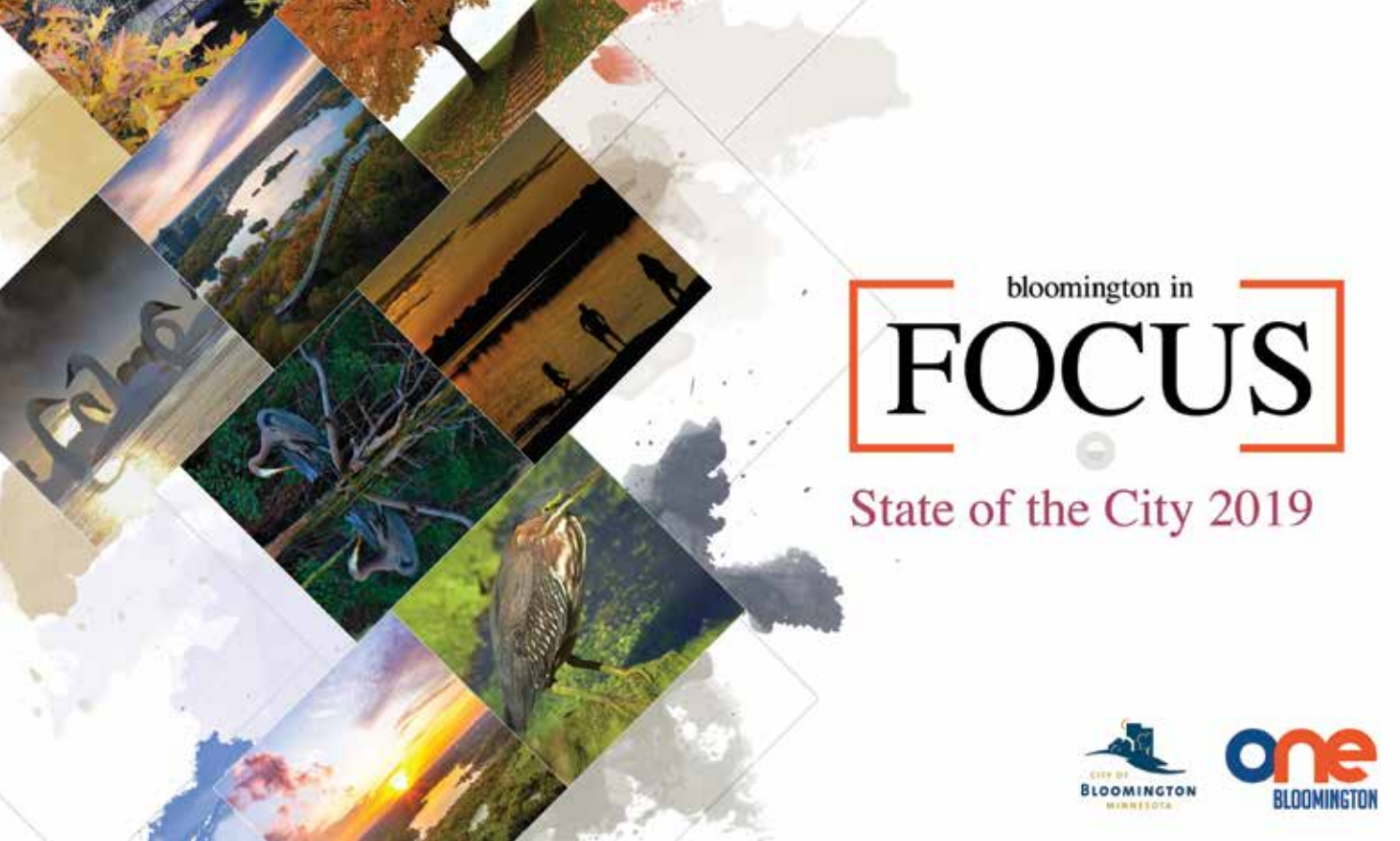
[council@BloomingtonMN.gov](mailto:council@BloomingtonMN.gov)

### EXECUTIVE STAFF

Jamie Verbrugge, <i>City Manager</i>	952-563-8780
<a href="mailto:citymanager@BloomingtonMN.gov">citymanager@BloomingtonMN.gov</a>	
Kris Wilson, <i>Assistant City Manager</i>	952-563-8780
<a href="mailto:citymanager@BloomingtonMN.gov">citymanager@BloomingtonMN.gov</a>	
Eric Johnson, <i>Community Development</i>	952-563-8947
<a href="mailto:communitydevelopment@BloomingtonMN.gov">communitydevelopment@BloomingtonMN.gov</a>	
Diann Kirby, <i>Community Services</i>	952-563-8717
<a href="mailto:communityservices@BloomingtonMN.gov">communityservices@BloomingtonMN.gov</a>	
Lori Economy-Scholler, <i>Finance</i>	952-563-8791
<a href="mailto:finance@BloomingtonMN.gov">finance@BloomingtonMN.gov</a>	
Ulie Seal, <i>Fire</i>	952-563-4801
<a href="mailto:fire@BloomingtonMN.gov">fire@BloomingtonMN.gov</a>	
Amy Cheney, <i>Information Technology</i>	952-563-4885
<a href="mailto:it@BloomingtonMN.gov">it@BloomingtonMN.gov</a>	
Melissa Manderschied, <i>Legal</i>	952-563-8753
<a href="mailto:legal@BloomingtonMN.gov">legal@BloomingtonMN.gov</a>	
Ann Kattreh, <i>Parks and Recreation</i>	952-563-8877
<a href="mailto:legal@BloomingtonMN.gov">legal@BloomingtonMN.gov</a>	
Jeffrey Potts, <i>Police</i>	952-563-8601
<a href="mailto:police@BloomingtonMN.gov">police@BloomingtonMN.gov</a>	
Karl Keel, <i>Public Works</i>	952-563-8731
<a href="mailto:publicworks@BloomingtonMN.gov">publicworks@BloomingtonMN.gov</a>	

**General phone number** 952-563-8700  
*The City of Bloomington complies with all applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and does not discriminate on the basis of disability in the admission or access to, or treatment or employment in, its services, programs, or activities. Upon request, accommodation will be provided to allow individuals with disabilities to participate in all City of Bloomington services, programs, and activities. The City has designated coordinators to facilitate compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and to coordinate compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as mandated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development regulations. For more information, contact the Human Services Division, City of Bloomington, 1800 West Old Shakopee Road, Bloomington, MN 55431-3027; 952-563-8733. Upon request, this information can be available in Braille, large print, audio tape and/or electronic format.*





## STATE OF THE CITY FOCUSED ON COMMUNITY

With a focus on Bloomington’s people, places and progress, the 2019 State of the City address will provide a look at the city through many lenses. Mayor Gene Winstead and City Manager Jamie Verbrugge will talk about the past year’s accomplishments and take a look at what’s to come at the event on Thursday, March 21, at the Radisson Blu. If you’d like to register to attend the event, visit [www.mplschamber.com/sotc](http://www.mplschamber.com/sotc). If you’d like to see the presentation without going further than your computer screen, check out the City’s Facebook livestream of the event, beginning at 12 p.m., on Thursday March 21 at [blm.mn/facebook](https://www.facebook.com/blm.mn/). There will be a few other presentations of the 2019 State of the City this spring. One will be held at a town hall forum on Tuesday, April 23, at Civic Plaza, 1800 West Old Shakopee Road. The other will be held at Creekside Community Center and led by the Mayor with a date to be announced. Visit [blm.mn/soc19](http://blm.mn/soc19) for more information.

## COURTS MOVED TO DOWNTOWN MINNEAPOLIS

If you have any court business, take note of court location changes. Due to the Southdale courthouse closure, prosecutors from the City of Bloomington are handling cases in downtown Minneapolis. City prosecutors appear at the Hennepin County Public Safety Facility, 401 South Fourth Avenue, for cases scheduled in the morning, and at the Hennepin County Government Center, 300 South Sixth Street, for cases scheduled in the afternoon.

Residents and businesses can expect the same high-quality service and treatment of cases. As a benefit to the community, the City Attorney’s Office has increased prosecutor court time calendars to help reduce the amount of time case processing takes.

While both courthouses are located in downtown Minneapolis, they are different buildings. Allow extra time for transportation, parking and security. Each building has its own security checkpoint.

If a case has more than one hearing, those hearings may be held in different courthouses. Check court reminder slips for locations. Contact Hennepin County District Court at 612-348-2040 with questions.

### HOW TO GET THERE

Have court business but don’t want to drive downtown and pay for parking? Multiple bus routes serve the Hennepin County Government Center and the Public Safety Facility, as well as the Blue Line and Green Line light rail trains. Call 612-373-3333 or visit [blm.mn/mtransit](http://blm.mn/mtransit) for bus information.

## HOW TO GET YOUR MINNESOTA REAL ID, ENHANCED ID OR STANDARD ID

Maybe you’ve heard about Real ID. It’s one of three driver’s license options, not just in Minnesota but across the country.

Regular Minnesota licenses will be accepted for official purposes, including air travel and federal facility entry, through October 1, 2020. Consider waiting until you have a change of address, change in your name or are close to your license expiration date to obtain a new one.

When it’s time for a new license, you have a choice of Real ID, Enhanced ID or Standard ID. All are valid for driving and most identification purposes. Only Real ID and Enhanced ID are acceptable for domestic air travel after October 1, 2020.



Sample license photos courtesy MN DPS.

### SAVE TIME ONLINE

An online pre-application lists each requirement in a step-by-step format. Completing it before visiting Bloomington’s Motor Vehicle Office will save you time and prepare you for exactly what documents are necessary.

Take note of what you need to complete your driver’s license renewal or application. The pre-application is available at [blm.mn/preapp](http://blm.mn/preapp).

### THE ABCs OF NEW IDs

Ready for a new driver’s license? Here are the ABCs.

#### A - ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

More documents are needed to apply for Real ID and Enhanced ID. The Real ID Act requires Minnesota and other states to verify each document. All documents must be originals or certified copies. For information, visit [blm.mn/realid](http://blm.mn/realid).

#### B – BLOOMINGTON LICENSE OFFICE

Not all cities have driver’s license offices, but Bloomington does. The Motor Vehicle/Deputy Registrar Office, 9930 Logan Avenue South, provides full services, including processing ID applications. Visit [blm.mn/license](http://blm.mn/license), call 952-563-8719 or email [motorvehicle@BloomingtonMN.gov](mailto:motorvehicle@BloomingtonMN.gov).

#### C - CHANGED YOUR NAME?

Ever had a name change? If your current name is different from the name appearing on one or more documents, you will be required to submit proof for each name change.



## SAVE THE DATE: TOWN HALL FORUMS

Want to know more about what’s going on in your community? Attend a town hall forum. Councilmembers began hosting forums in 2018 as a new way to connect with residents. At these events, councilmembers lead discussions about the City’s strategic priorities and projects. The first town hall forum of 2019 is scheduled for Tuesday, April 23, at 7 p.m., in the Schnieder Theater at Civic Plaza, 1800 West Old Shakopee Road. City Manager Jamie Verbrugge and Mayor Gene Winstead will give an overview of the 2019 State of the City. They will talk about the progress the City made in 2018 and what is planned for 2019. For more information or to RSVP, call 952-563-8782.

## BE AN ELECTION JUDGE

Are you looking for ways to give back to your community while having fun and learning more about the democratic process? Sign up to be an election judge. Poll workers are temporary, paid employees trained to make a difference by overseeing voting and assisting voters at polling places. Regular judges earn \$11.25 per hour; assistant head judges earn \$12.50 per hour; and head judges earn \$13 hourly. The City Clerk’s Office is recruiting eligible voters to serve on August 13 and November 5.

**To become an election judge you must be:**

- At least 18 years old.
- A Minnesota resident for at least 20 days.
- A citizen of the United States.
- Able to read, write and speak English clearly.
- Eligible to vote and reside in the state.
- Able to attend two training sessions.

**You cannot be:**

- Working with a judge you are related to at the same time in the same precinct.
- Related to or living with a candidate on the ballot.
- A candidate for election in the precinct where you are serving.

To learn more about the responsibilities and qualifications, or to apply, visit [blm.mn/electionjudge](http://blm.mn/electionjudge). Questions? Contact Deputy City Clerk Kim Engberg at 952-563-8729.



# CURBSIDE CLEANUP

Curbside Cleanup continues to be a convenient program at a bargain with an annual cost of \$48.24 for residents. That costs less than dropping off items at a transfer station yourself. Moreover, disposing of one mattress with the bulk pickup program costs \$51.

Eligible residents will see “Citywide Curbside Cleanup” on their utility bills. Prepare for your Cleanup day by setting your materials at the curb **before 7 a.m.** Items must be boxed or bundled with twine. **No plastic bags will be accepted.** Trucks only pass through once.

Limited assistance is available for **seniors or residents with disabilities** who need help moving things to the curb. First come first served. Contact Community Outreach and Engagement at least two weeks prior to your pickup at 952-563-8733.

## ACCEPTED AT THE CURB

- General junk, household building materials, lumber, windows and doors:** Pile limited to what fits in ONE level standard-size pickup truck bed. Lumber stacked and no longer than five feet. **NO railroad ties. NO business materials used for contractor work.** General junk must be boxed or bundled with twine and weigh under 100 pounds per item.

- Carpets/pads:** Rolled and securely tied with twine. Under five feet long and one foot in diameter.
- Appliances:** Water heaters and softeners, microwaves, washers, dryers, stoves, air conditioners, dehumidifiers, freezers, dishwashers, trash compactors, garbage disposals, water coolers, refrigerators (remove door or tie securely shut). **Limit of two** appliances per house. **DO NOT set out appliances until the morning of your pickup date.**
- Unusable furniture:** Disassemble or tie down hide-a-way sofa beds so they cannot open when handled. Limited to two items.
- BUNDLED brush:** Branches must be smaller than three inches in diameter and five feet in length, tied with twine and put in bundles that can be carried by one person. Brush piles must be no more than what can fit in a standard pickup truck bed.
- Mattresses or box springs.** Limited to two items.
- Large metal ONLY:** Large scrap metal items that do not fit in the trunk of a car (swing sets, grills, bikes, treadmills, lawn mowers, snow blowers, etc.) Drain all fluids and remove tires. Smaller items should be taken to the South Hennepin Recycling and Problem Waste Drop-Off Center, 1400 West 96th Street.

## NOT ACCEPTED AT THE CURB

- Small metal.**
- Tires, batteries.**
- Tubs, sinks, toilets.**
- Exceptionally heavy and bulky items:**

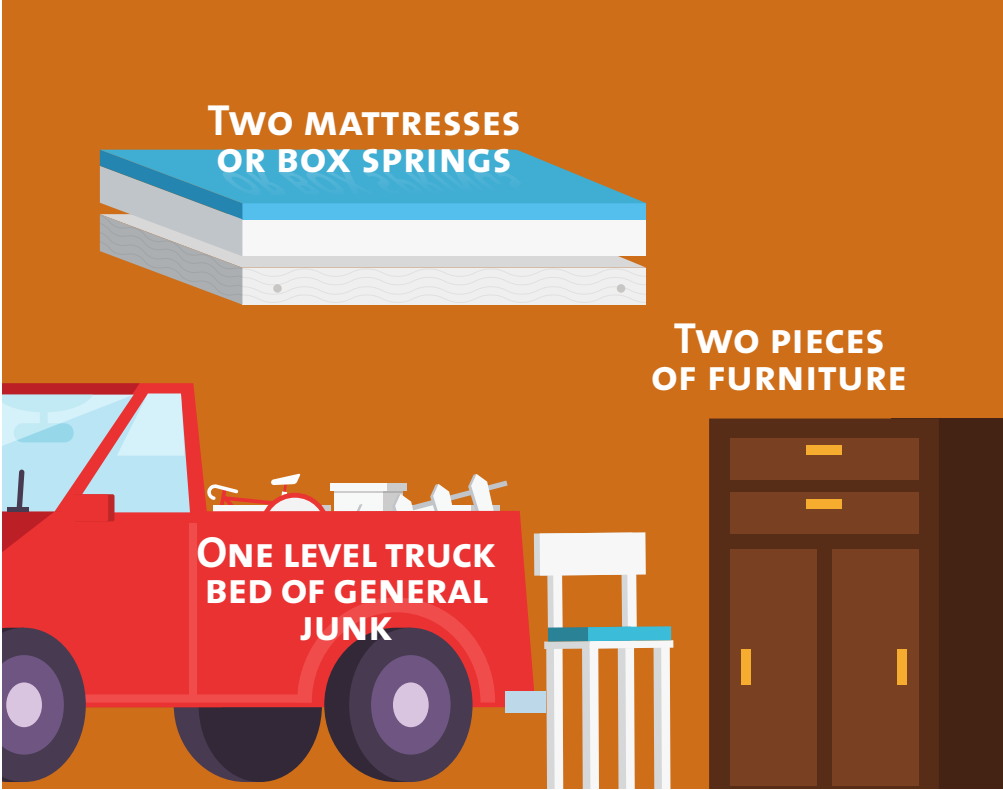
Pianos or organs, for example.

- Electronic items:** TVs, computers, stereos and cell phones, printers.
- Miscellaneous building items:** Contractor materials, railroad ties, treated wood, concrete, bricks or shingles (asbestos).
- Hazardous waste:** Paint, motor oil, solvents, fluorescent tubes, propane and other household chemicals.
- Organic materials:** Leaves, grass clippings, sod, stumps, logs and food waste.
- Recyclable materials:** Newspapers, cans, glass, corrugated cardboard, boxboard and plastic bottles.

## QUESTIONS? CALL 952-563-8760 OR VISIT BLM.MN/CURBSIDE.

For tips on how to properly dispose of items not accepted at the curb, call 612-348-3777 or visit the Green Disposal Guide on Hennepin County’s website at [www.hennepin.us/green-disposal-guide](http://www.hennepin.us/green-disposal-guide).

# CURBSIDE PILE ITEM LIMITS



## DO SOME SPRING CLEANING IN YOUR YARD

Gather up those leaves, twigs and garden prunings, it’s almost yard waste season. The annual full season yard waste subscription service will be available April 15 to November 30. Subscribers will be billed \$81.09 on their utility bills. If you are currently subscribed with full-season service and would like to discontinue the service, contact our office before April 15 to cancel and avoid charges.

Residents may also pay \$4.08 per bag for on-call services. For on-call yard waste service, visit the Utility Billing office, 1800 West Old Shakopee Road, to purchase stickers. Residents must adhere one sticker to each on-call bag. To schedule an on-call collection, contact our billing office at least 48 hours prior to your collection day. The hauler will collect yard waste materials on your garbage day.

Haulers pick up yard waste weekly. Yard waste includes all garden waste, grass clippings, leaves, weeds, soft garden materials, shrub and tree waste, prunings and wood chips. Remember: twigs and branches must be approximately three feet in length and no more than three inches in diameter. Place in compostable bags, containers, or on the ground tied in bundles. Bags and bundles should not be heavier than 40 – 50 lbs. Questions? Contact Utility Billing at [utilitybilling@BloomingtonMN.gov](mailto:utilitybilling@BloomingtonMN.gov) or call 952-563-8726.



## REFRESH YOUR ROUTINE WITH ORGANICS RECYCLING

In the average household, organic materials such as food scraps, non-recyclable paper items like paper towels and other compostable items like tea bags make up one-third of the trash pile, but there’s a better place they can go. The City has two organics recycling drop-off locations: Valley View Park, 201 East 90th Street in the parking lot between the pool and the ballfields, and West Bush Lake Park, 95th Street and West Bush Lake Road in the parking lot near Shelter 1. Collection hours are 30 minutes before sunrise until 10 p.m. at each location. Hennepin County also hosts an organics drop-off site at the South Hennepin Recycling and Problem Waste Drop-of Center at 1400 West 96th Street. Hours are posted on the Hennepin County website at [blm.mn/countyorganics](http://blm.mn/countyorganics).

Organics collected at the drop-off locations is turned into compost, which adds valuable nutrients back into the soil. The compost is used primarily by commercial landscapers, in road construction projects and in gardens.

Nine hundred and seventy-five residents have signed up for the program. New participants are mailed a welcome kit, which includes 10 compostable plastic bags, a reference guide magnet, an adhesive label for your organics storage container and program brochure. Sign up at [blm.mn/organics](http://blm.mn/organics). This helps the City track the success of the program, and ensures you are aware of any program changes.





Bloomington resident Jason Harris visits the City’s 25-acre off-leash recreation area at Nesbitt Avenue and West 110th Street with his dog Herky. The area is partially fenced and has a three-quarter mile walking trail, water fountains and an open pond.

## SPRING THAW REVEALS UNCOLLECTED DOG WASTE

With the spring thaw, piles of dog waste emerge. It’s annoying and messy but preventable. Dog owners and handlers can make a difference. The remedy is to clean up dog waste in your yard and in parks or along trails as it accumulates. Make it a habit to pick up and properly dispose of poo from the pooch.

Place dog waste into a trash can, which will be emptied and its contents incinerated. Besides being the right thing to do for the environment and your neighborhood, a city ordinance calls for dog owners and handlers to clean up after their dogs from any sidewalk, street, park, school, public place or private property.

## CITY ATTORNEY’S OFFICE GOES PAPERLESS

After a legal service enhancement, all cases from the City Attorney’s Office with an offense date of November 1, 2018, or later are now electronic. All documents are available electronically through a case management system and accessible remotely to prosecutors. The move to paperless is in keeping with the City Council’s One Bloomington strategic priorities for environmental sustainability and high-quality services. Less paper amounts to volumes of benefits, including enhancing efficiency. “We’re not wasting time looking for a physical file,” Assistant Attorney Jennifer Cross said. “We’ve gotten rid of two filing cabinets already.” Residents and businesses will receive the same high-quality service with no apparent change. But as part of the paperless move, police reports are now available by email at no charge.

The transition to paperless was planned to precede the move of City attorneys to downtown Minneapolis courts. *See page 3.*

BY THE NUMBERS	
Under the former paper method, Bloomington’s weekly prosecution caseload would generate, on average:	31.5 INCHES OF PAPER.
	4,725 PAGES OF PAPER.
	47+ POUNDS OF PAPER FOR PROSECUTORS TO CARRY.
	10+ HOURS SPENT PULLING FILES FROM CABINETS.

## SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION WORK PLAN

The City is committed to promoting sustainability and a newly updated work plan contains initiatives designed to serve the community long term. Now in its third year, the Sustainability Commission Work Plan includes updated goals for energy and carbon, as well as other focus areas for environmental sustainability as outlined in the City Council’s One Bloomington strategic plan. “We have a Sustainability Commission and an ambitious work plan to make Bloomington become more sustainable,” Public Works Director Karl Keel said. “Everyone needs to participate in order for this to be a success.” Anyone can have a more sustainable footprint. To reduce home waste, residents can use organics recycling drop-off locations. For information on accepted organics, visit blm.mn/organics and register for program updates via email, or call 952-563-8760. Another option is to improve home energy use. Start with a home energy visit. Contact the Center for Energy and Environment at 651-328-6220 or visit blm.mn/energycenter. Want to learn more about sustainability? For information or to sign up for E-Subscribe, visit blm.mn/scworkplan. Businesses can get involved through education tours, which showcase successful energy projects. Local business members meet while CenterPoint, Xcel and City representatives can provide information about potential energy improvements. Email dwithers@BloomingtonMN.gov to participate.



## DON’T MOVE WOOD

Whether it’s firewood, tree trimmings or fallen branches, the movement of wood is restricted in Hennepin County and 14 surrounding counties stretching down to the Iowa border. The quarantine is designed to prevent the spread of Emerald Ash Borer and other invasive species. Emerald Ash Borer can remain in stored wood for two years and emerge. “You can’t always see them,” Assistant Maintenance Superintendent Dave Hanson said. “Movement significantly increases the spread of invasive pests that wouldn’t move so far on their own.” Learn more about the quarantine at blm.mn/woodq.

## BUYING FIREWOOD

Need to buy firewood for your home, business or cabin? Look for a local vendor certified by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture at blm.mn/citywood. Planning a trip and need wood? If you plan to visit a state or national park, don’t bring your own wood. Parks have wood available for purchase. It’s important to use approved firewood only. The Department of Natural Resources online tool offers another way to find certified vendors throughout the state. For information, visit blm.mn/certwood.

## GIVE BACK BEFORE THROWING IT OUT

As you’re getting ready to do some spring cleaning and take advantage of Curbside Cleanup, don’t forget about all the places in Bloomington where you can give back first. Here are some places you can donate gently used furniture and household items in Bloomington: Arc’s Value Village: visit blm.mn/arcs or call 952-818-8708. Bridging: visit blm.mn/bridging or call 952-888-1105. Choose to Reuse: visit blm.mn/hcreuse. Twin Cities Free Market: visit blm.mn/tcfm. For a full list of organizations where you can donate or recycle your items, visit blm.mn/donate.





### MAKE A DIFFERENCE: GIVE BLOOD

Giving blood is quick, easy and can make a big difference to those who are in life or death situations.

“The importance of giving blood—whether you anticipate it or not—is that it can save a person’s life at any given moment. It could even be your own,” Bloomington Community Development Director and blood donor Eric Anthony Johnson said.

Sign up to donate at the Bloomington Community Blood Drive Wednesday, March 13, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m., at Civic Plaza, 1800 West Old Shakopee Road. Online registration is preferred, but walk-ins are welcome. For more information, contact the American Red Cross at 1-800-REDCROSS or visit [blm.mn/ blooddrive](http://blm.mn/blooddrive).



### GROW YOUR GARDEN WITH THE CITY

Planning to plant some fruits and vegetables this summer? Use one of the City’s 178 community garden plots to show off your green thumb. Pick a plot at Smith Park, Harrison Park or Brookside Park. A plot measuring 10 by 15 feet costs \$40 for the season (May – October) with a maximum of three plots per renter.

Fee assistance is available to qualifying Bloomington families. For more information, visit [blm.mn/gardens](http://blm.mn/gardens) or call 952-563-8877. Applicants must complete the fee assistance application process before a rental application can be submitted. It may take up to one week to process fee assistance applications. Return renter and new renter registration is open now.

## MEET A BLOOMINGTON FIREFIGHTER

D’Andre’ Williamson has been a Bloomington firefighter for nine months. He serves out of Station 1.

**Q:** What’s your day job?

**A:** I work in logistics and analytics. My dad owns the company so I’ve been doing that work for about 10 years officially.

**Q:** What do you do for fun when you aren’t working or volunteering?

**A:** I like to stay athletic so I play basketball, flag football and softball. I do outdoor stuff, too. I like fishing, hiking and camping.

**Q:** What made you want to become a firefighter?

**A:** The responsibility that comes with the job. I want to help people and better the community I live in.

**Q:** What brought you to Bloomington? What do you like about living here?

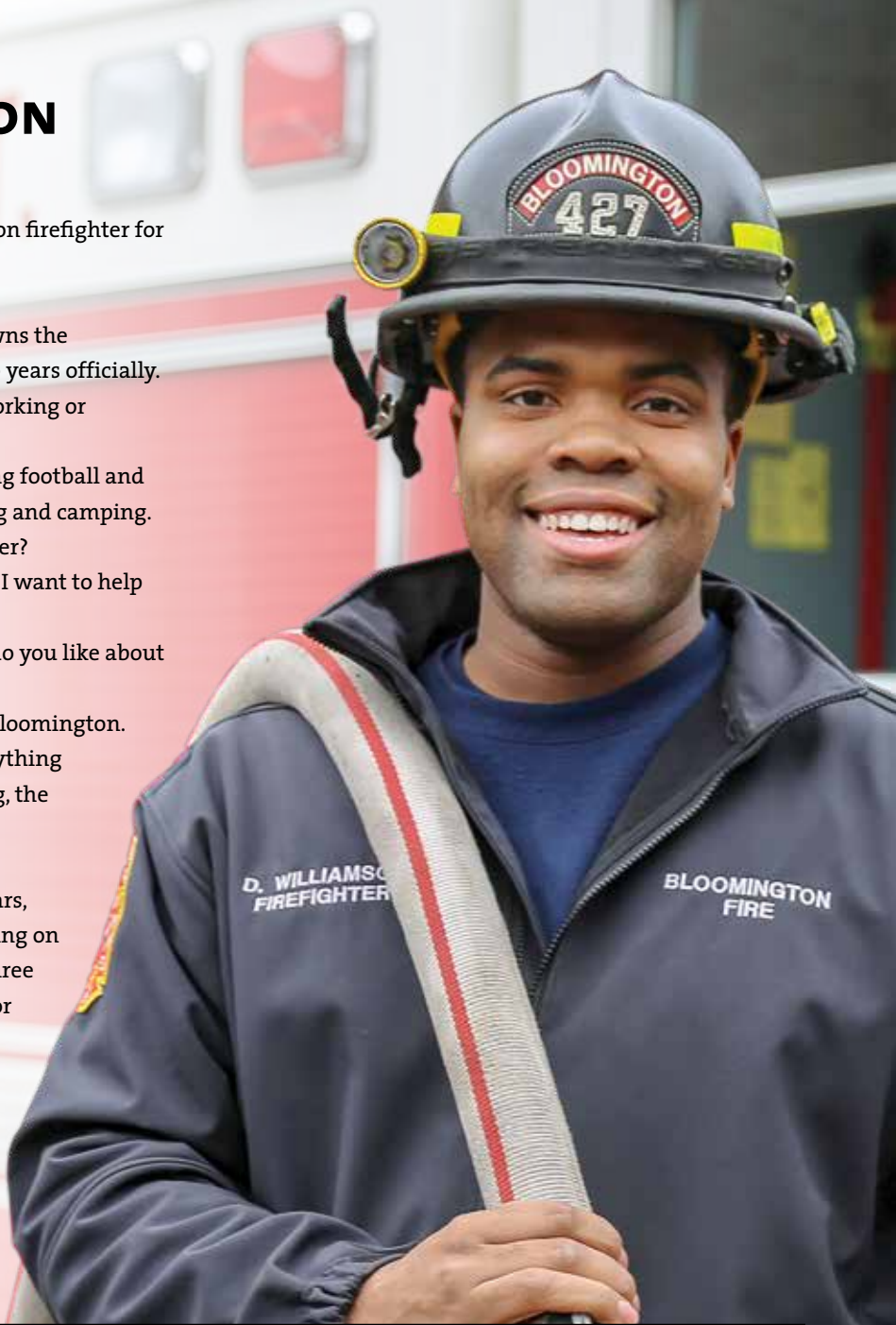
**A:** I was househunting and I stumbled upon Bloomington. I’ve been here for about four years now. I like everything about it really. I love the accessibility to everything, the parks are great and the river bottom is beautiful.

**Q:** What are some of your hobbies?

**A:** I like tinkering with things—working on cars, building wood projects and stuff like that or working on my house. I like to travel, too. I’ve been to all but three states in the U.S., Jamaica, Mexico and to Europe for the 2012 Olympics.

**Q:** What would you say to someone who is thinking about becoming a firefighter?

**A:** I would say to do it. It can bring many more opportunities, not only full-time firefighting. It opens up chances to do more public service. It’s hard work, but it’s such an accomplishment when it’s all done.



### BUS ROUTE 537 GETS MORE STOPS, IMPROVED SAFETY

Bus route 537 is changing after community concerns about boarding the bus on the north side of Old Shakopee Road near Beard Avenue South. When residents have questions about accessibility for people with disabilities and older adults, Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator Tracy Smith provides information and other assistance. She guided the process of change for route 537.

“Working with residents and agencies like Metro Transit takes time but ensures community input is considered,” Smith said. “As a result, three new stops are planned for the south end of route 537, a real win-win solution.”

Beginning Monday, March 11, the bus route will extend with new endpoints on side streets south of Old Shakopee Road. The lengthened route enhances public safety. Riders can board the bus from a less busy street.

One new stop is by Penelope 35 Apartments. Longtime Bloomington resident Veronica “Roni” Lock said, “I’ll take the bus more often if it’s coming our direction.”

Visit [blm.mn/mtransit](http://blm.mn/mtransit), or call 612-373-3333 for bus information.



### BLOOMINGTON POLICE GIVE BACK

The holiday season brings many things—family, friends, presents and festive meals. For Bloomington Police Department staff, it also offers a chance to make positive connections with the people they serve.

For the sixth year in a row, BPD and the Joint Community Police Partnership hosted Holiday Helpers in Blue. The program pairs 20 children with officers and a volunteer from the community to shop for holiday gifts to give to their family members.

“I’ve been involved all six years. It’s the best,” Detective Kerri Nolden said. “Some kids can be shy at first, but by the end a connection is made. I still keep in touch with kids I’ve met through Holiday Helpers.”

BPD also held its third annual Coffee with a Cop and Toys for Tots event and broke its own record for toys collected. People donated more than 1,200 toys, five bikes and \$900.





## COUNTRY KICKERS AT CREEKSIDE

Every Tuesday morning, the Country Kickers dance to Grand Ole Opry songs and other toe-tapping tunes at Creekside Community Center. They come for the exercise, music and social interaction but this is no ordinary workout group. Ranging from 60 – 90 years old, the Country Kickers enjoy each other’s company whether or not they keep in uniform step.

“We take our time. We break the dance down and do it step-by-step and try to make it as easy as we can,” Senior Program Leader Jennie Doyle said. “I always kid them, ‘We are seniors so we keep one foot on the floor at all times.’”

Last year, the group learned eight dance routines and gave performances at the Presbyterian Homes of Bloomington and Wealshire of Bloomington.

Sometimes the dancers even dress the part with western bandanas, folk shirts, cowboy hats or boots. Bloomington resident and Country Kicker Rita Quinn has a collection of white, red and black cowgirl boots. Just the thing to kick up her heels with. At age 87, Quinn loves to dance.

Country Kickers’ sessions are free and walk-ins are welcome to join in the fun on Tuesdays, 8 – 8:45 a.m., Creekside, 9801 Penn Avenue South. Call 952-563-4944 for information.



## GET CREATIVE AT CREEKSIDE

Unleash your imagination and celebrate the coming of spring with new botanical art classes. In partnership with Artistry, Creekside Community Center offers a three-part series for older adults.

**LEARN TO PAINT FLOWERS**

Friday, March 29, 1 – 3 p.m.

Explore how to use basic wash to create realistic depth and detail. Create a flower with a 3D look.

**LEARN TO PAINT PLANTS AND LEAVES**

Friday, April 12, 1 – 3 p.m.

Want to paint plants and leaves in a realistic style? Study material basics and techniques to create a botanical watercolor full of depth and detail.

**WATERCOLOR PENCILS: CREATE YOUR OWN BOTANICAL GARDEN**

Friday, April 26, 1 – 3 p.m.

Discover the versatility of watercolor pencils. An understanding of relationships between objects, positive and negative spaces, and other drawing skills will enable you to create a botanical garden landscape.

No previous art experience is required and all materials are provided. Classes cost \$15 each and will be held at Creekside, 9801 Penn Avenue South. For information and registration, call 952-563-4944 or email [communitycenter@BloomingtonMN.gov](mailto:communitycenter@BloomingtonMN.gov).

## SIGN UP FOR TEEN VIDEO BOOT CAMP

Are you ready for your directorial debut? Teen Video Boot Camp is for youth ages 12 – 17 who are interested in learning how to make videos. The program is free and gives participants a chance to learn about production from professional videographers from Bloomington Community Access Television and Southwest Community Television in Edina. In one week, students will learn how to use professional video production equipment and produce a short film as a team. The camp earned high marks from teens who participated last year.

“I liked learning about how to film and learning about sequencing and shots,” Anjali said. “It was fun to get a taste of behind-the-scenes work on a movie.”

Three camps are scheduled for this summer: June 10 – 14, July 15 – 19, and August 12 – 16 and will be held at Civic Plaza, 1800 West Old Shakopee Road. Each session runs from 1 – 4 p.m.



all week and will end with a screening of films for students and parents on the last day. For more information or to sign up, contact Communications Specialist Ben Vinar at 952-563-4980 or [bvinar@bloomingtonmn.gov](mailto:bvinar@bloomingtonmn.gov). There are a limited number of spots available, so sign up today!

## BEHOLD THE BEST OF BLOOMINGTON BIRDING

Abundant parklands and Minnesota River frontage make Bloomington a birder’s paradise. With patience, a good eye or ear, and a bit of luck, birders can discover hundreds of species of birds here.

The spring migration is a particularly busy time, but birding is a year-round activity. Bloomington resident Bob Williams identified 92 species in his backyard during one year. As an avid birder and lister, he is always watching and listening.

The birding community keeps active sharing real-time updates through texting, Facebook and more. Perhaps you heard about the roseate spoonbill spotted by the Old Cedar Avenue area last year? The place was flocked with birders.

“When the spoonbill showed up, it was like a high school class 50th reunion. Everyone came together,” Williams said.

Some other favorite observation points include the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge (MVNWR), 3815 American Boulevard East and Hyland Park Reserve, 10145 East Bush Lake Road. The MVNWR’s has bird feeders behind the visitor’s center and Hyland has feeders by the Richardson Nature Center.

Spotting birds while they’re eating is a fun way to be introduced to birding. Learn more about birds at a meeting or field trip with the Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter. Sign up at the MVNWR visitor’s center or visit [blm.mn/mrvac](http://blm.mn/mrvac) for information.



Photo courtesy of Greg Burnes, Bloomington resident and former president of MRVAC board. Pictured from left to right are Richardson Nature Center Interpretive Naturalist Monica Rauchwarter and Bloomington residents Walt Stull and Rob Daves. All three serve as MRVAC board members.

## DWAN GOLF CLUB UP TO PAR

Dwan Golf Club is up to par and then some. The 18-hole, par-68 golf course is getting an update with the addition of a new set of forward tees. Each hole will increase from three to four tee location options, with the front two being par 72. Golfers of all skill levels will find something new and exciting in the game here.

“We’re not taking away anything,” Golf Course Manager Peter Kurvers said. “We’re just enhancing what we already have.”

On several holes, a new tee location will be placed forward of the existing tee box. On other holes, the existing tee box can accommodate the fourth tee location. The work began last fall and will be playable by spring. The changes will improve the pace of play and player enjoyment.

“We are reimagining how to set up a golf course so that we offer all players a tee option that gives them the best chance to have a great experience every time they play at Dwan,” Kurvers said.

For information, visit [blm.mn/dwan](http://blm.mn/dwan) or call 952-563-8702.





FOOD AWARDS HONOR SERVICE AND SAFETY

Hospitality and food service are big business in Bloomington, employing 20,000 people. The 23rd Annual Diamond Service Awards celebrate their work and the spirit of hospitality. The Bloomington Convention and Visitor’s Bureau presents the March gala at the DoubleTree by Hilton Bloomington.

City Councilmembers, Environmental Health representatives and other City officials attend, along with hospitality workers. Among them, 15 customer service stars will be honored in “best of” award categories.

Bloomington Food Safety Awards honor establishments in five categories plus one overall food safety award. Mayor Gene Winstead will present the food safety awards based on results of the City’s 2018 health inspections.

Nominees in each category are interviewed and rated on food safety practices by the City’s Food Collaborative volunteers. The City’s Advisory Board of Health reviewed the scored results and selected the winners for the 18th annual awards presentation. To see award nominees, go to blm.mn/foodsafety or for other information, visit blm.mn/diamondservice.

“There’s nothing like it in the country,” Environmental Health Manager Lynn Moore said. “We like to call the Diamond Service Awards and the food safety awards our own academy awards.”

ASK A PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE

Public Health Nurses work with community members of all ages on topics relating to pregnancy and parenting, early childhood development, senior health, disease control and prevention and much more. In this column, they’ll answer your health-related questions.

Q: How can I help my child build healthy snack habits?

A: Try to choose fresh snacks whenever you can. Options like fresh fruit and vegetables, hummus with whole-wheat pitas, yogurt and fruit, string cheese or hard-boiled eggs can make snack time easy and healthy.

You can also use grocery shopping with your children as an opportunity to teach them about healthy eating and the types of foods that make their bodies strong. Last but not least, try to model good snacking behavior for your kids by choosing nutrient-dense snacks for yourself.

BLOOMINGTON YESTERDAY

A HELPING OF HISTORY FROM AAA AUTO CLUB COUNTRY CLUB

Fill your plate with local history. The Bloomington Historical Society serves a good helping in its display of place settings circa 1911—a multi-course meal of nostalgia plated on the finest china.

The dogwood pattern has all the trimmings for an elegant table, right down to the demitasse bowl. The set hails from the former American Automobile Association (AAA) Auto Club Country Club, located on Old Auto Club Road. It was touted as the largest and finest automobile club in the nation until the building was razed in 1958.

The Auto Club Country Club was the place for memorable meals with travel log meetings, bridge clubs, style shows, orchestra-led dances, proms, weddings and other joyful events. Patrons were well-nourished with full menus featuring French onion soup, crudités, prime rib, spiced apple rings, rolls, baked Alaska and more—all for \$2.75. There was even a smorgasbord on Thursdays.

Bloomington resident Henry Seifert donated the dinner service. When the AAA Auto Club Country Club closed in 1958, the former employee made a home for the otherwise unwanted dishes in his basement. Today, part of the set is on display for all to see at Old Town Hall, 10200 Penn Avenue South.



BIG SPRING ICE SHOW: ‘SKATING UNDER THE BIG TOP’

The Bloomington Ice Garden Spring Ice Show is coming to town and promises to be the greatest youth ice show on Earth. “Skating under the BIG Top” features 66 skaters from the skate school and the figure skating club, ages 3 – 18, all eager to share their talents. The Bloomington Butterflies and the Northernettes synchronized skaters add to the performance, now in its 49th year.

See a circus on ice complete with ringmasters, lions, snake charmers, candy sellers, fire eater, trapeze artist, contortionist and other sideshow acts. BIG performers enjoy the chance to show family and friends their improved skating skills in a different environment than competitions.

“The kids always want to do another week’s worth of shows afterwards,” Skate School Coordinator Rene Gelecinskyj said. Join in the fun on Friday, March 15, at 7 p.m. and Saturday, March 16, at 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. Tickets are available at BIG, 3600 West 98th Street, starting March 9. The cost is \$7 for adults, and \$5 for children and seniors. After March 13, tickets cost \$8 for adults, and \$7 for children and seniors. Tickets will also be available at the door.



AT YOUR SERVICE: JESSICA JUTZ

During food inspections, Environmental Health Supervisor Jessica Jutz dresses the part in a white lab coat. Yet it’s her full-faced smile that really catches the eye.

A born extrovert, Jutz enjoys the people aspect of her work, especially the chance to help chefs and other food providers. “Everyone thinks as a health inspector I get to sample food, but I am not eating the food—I’m checking to see it is safe,” she said. “We are there to educate people and to ensure safe food.”

The goal is to make sure restaurants, grocery stores, day cares, schools and other food-related establishments have what they need in place for food safety. Jutz and her team work with hundreds of Bloomington and Richfield businesses.

Over 13 years, after working her way up from Environmental Health Aide to supervisor, she not only conducts inspections but oversees a staff of five food inspectors. Her group has a close working relationship.

“My coworkers are wonderful,” Jutz said. “It’s a great team. Everyone supports one another—kind of like a little family, so that’s fun.”