

From casino heist suspect to tribal chairman: **The astonishing rise of Archie LaRose**

By **MIKE MOSEDALE**

CASS LAKE, MINN. — On a recent Monday afternoon, near the end of business hours, Arthur “Archie” LaRose made the tactical error of walking into the reception area outside his Cass Lake office. Everyone, it seemed, wanted something from LaRose, the 37 year-old chairman-elect of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe.

One young mother, with two kids in tow and troubles with her food stamps, beseeched him for a gas voucher. A grandmother meekly asked for emergency assistance with an overdue light bill. A band member visiting from the Twin Cities said she needed some cash for transportation home.

Like a seasoned ward healer, LaRose fielded the requests diplomatically, urging each of his supplicants “fill out an app.” At the same time, he slowly maneuvered his way to the exit on his way to a meeting in Bemidji with two political allies.

Once out of earshot, LaRose offered a frank assessment of the persistent economic and social problems at Leech Lake. “I want to restore the work ethic in our people. A lot of them try, but with our hiring practices, it’s hard for them to get jobs,” he said. “And some of these younger people come in and try to take advantage. You help them out once or twice and then they keep coming back in. We do have some people who are just sitting back and collecting.”

Still, in his six years as secretary-treasurer — the band’s second most powerful elected office — LaRose said he has “helped a lot of people in



MinnPost photo by **MIKE MOSEDALE**

Arthur “Archie” LaRose, chairman-elect of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe: “I want to restore the work ethic in our people.”

a lot of ways.” As he explains it, he doesn’t wish to be “stingy with the people’s dime.”

LaRose has made a populist economic agenda the cornerstone of his political platform. Among other things, he has proposed a revenue sharing plan — commonly called “per capita” payments — that would award yearly cash grants to each adult member of the 9,000-strong band. Drawing on \$3 million that band receives annually from the state of Minnesota from a 1972 hunting and fishing rights settlement, LaRose figures that recipients would get between \$700 to \$1,000.

Those figures are paltry in contrast to the payments made by such casino-rich tribes as the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, where annual per capita grants are estimated at around a million dollars a year. Nonetheless, LaRose’s plan constitutes a significant break with tradition at Leech Lake, where resources have long been pooled for use in social programs. And, apparently, it’s a break with tradition that Leech Lakers are ready for.

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On the 40th anniversary of the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy, a reporter looks back at his presidential campaign in 1968 and at the Minnesotans whose lives became intertwined with his: the late Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey who became the Democratic nominee that year; the late Sen. Eugene McCarthy who also sought the nomination, and the late Sen. Paul Wellstone, who retraced Kennedy’s 1967 poverty tour 30 years later. **page 2**

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MINNPOST.WORLD

RFK's complex legend lives on

By SHARON SCHMICKLE

When Sirhan Sirhan shot Robert F. Kennedy 40 years ago, he killed a complex political fighter and a star figure in the Kennedy family saga. But he couldn't kill a legend that many will honor today on the anniversary of that assassination.

Kennedy expressed the essence of the legend on April 4, 1968, when he told a crowd in Indianapolis the tragic news that the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. had been assassinated:

"What we need in the United States is not division; what we need in the United States is not hatred; what we need in the United States is not violence or lawlessness; but love and wisdom, and compassion toward one another, and a feeling of justice toward those who still suffer within our country, whether they be white or they be black," Kennedy said.

Keeping the legend alive

The late U.S. senator from Minnesota, Paul Wellstone, did more than his share to keep the legend alive.

Declaring Kennedy to be his hero, Wellstone set off in 1997 to retrace a "poverty tour" Kennedy had taken 30 years earlier. The point of both tours was to show the nation the shocking hunger and want in the midst of wealth and privilege.

Wellstone had worked on Kennedy's 1968 presidential campaign. But the two men never met. And Wellstone declared often on the tour, "I'm not Bobby Kennedy." Still, he called forth the Kennedy spirit.

Covering a good share of the tour as a Star Tribune Washington Correspondent, I met the despair that had stirred passion in Kennedy. I could see how the mansion-dwelling graduate of elite prep schools and Harvard University could be moved to champion the cause of the poor and powerless and do it with convincing sincerity.

In Appalachia, we trailed up and down the steps of rickety shacks

where weary parents would struggle to pay bills and Wellstone would rail about pitiful wages for the working poor. In Chicago's ghettos, we sat beneath the gritty, barred windows of community centers and heard about streets so dangerous that the murder of kids was almost routine. In a Los Angeles barrio, we met poor mothers who were desperate to keep their kids from selling drugs and stealing cars.

The details had changed over three decades. Real gains had been made. Wellstone's bid was to further Kennedy's work by building on them.

Another Minnesota senator

One thing that hadn't changed was fiery debate over tackling poverty and racial disparities.

The debate surfaced back in 1968, when Kennedy's history intersected with another Minnesota senator in ways that were not nearly so dreamy.

U.S. Sen. Eugene McCarthy had challenged incumbent president Lyndon Johnson for the Democratic presidential nomination and stunned the nation by nearly winning the New Hampshire primary. Johnson's vulnerability was exposed. Kennedy jumped into the race.

The Vietnam War was the power issue against Johnson. Although they differed on important particulars, Kennedy, like McCarthy, had called for an end to the American bombing. And he stole some of the Minnesota senator's anti-war base.

McCarthy lashed back, attacking Kennedy on his signature issue, anti-poverty.

Kennedy had favored expansion of public and private spending to build up black areas in the cities. McCarthy charged that the "gilding the ghetto" approach would reinforce racial separation, historian James T. Patterson said in his book "Grand Expectations."

"McCarthy, emphasizing the goal of integration, denounced Kennedy's stance and called instead for the construction of 'new towns' on

the edge of cities, so blacks could move out and live where the jobs were," Patterson wrote.

Powerful emotions

Still, Kennedy solidified his appeal as a champion of poor and working-class Americans, and his campaign caught fire.

"He attracted huge and sometimes frighteningly responsive crowds almost everywhere," Patterson wrote. "More than once he emerged from crowds with torn clothes and with hands bleeding from the hundreds of squeezes and slaps that besieged him. Veteran political observers were astonished and shaken by the powerful emotions that Kennedy aroused."

The adoration propelled Kennedy to victory in the California primary and he went to a ballroom in Los Angeles' Ambassador Hotel to address his supporters. While he was leaving through a kitchen passageway in the early hours of June 5, 1968, Sirhan Sirhan, a 24-year-old Palestinian, shot him with a .22-caliber revolver. Kennedy died the next day.

A different outcome

What if he had lived and become president? Evan Thomas, author of "Robert Kennedy: His Life," explored the intriguing question in Newsweek.

First, a reality check: It is no sure bet that the Democrats would have nominated Kennedy, even after Johnson decided to retire. Yet another former Minnesota senator, then Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey, was the presumed successor.

"Under the old rules the bosses still controlled the Democratic Party," Thomas said. "Kennedy was regarded as too 'hot' and too radical by the big city and Big Labor chieftains."

And Kennedy would have faced a formidable foe in November: Richard Nixon, then building his own working class following among Americans who were disgusted by hippies and scared by urban riots.

Let's assume, though, that

Kennedy rode his wave of change to the White House. Delivering on his pledge to fight poverty would not have been easy. Kennedy preferred creating jobs rather than handing out cash, so he would have moved to set up jobs programs. But organized labor would have fought him in Congress.

"Big labor did not like to create low-paying jobs for unskilled workers, thereby diminishing the power of union workers," Thomas said.

Kennedy was impatient — some said, ruthless. How would he have handled power? History suggests he would have been tempted to abuse it, Thomas said.

"RFK was willing to at least condone, if not order, CIA dirty tricks as his brother's surrogate chief of the spy agency's botched Get Castro operation in the early '60s," he said.

The real test is how Kennedy would have handled a crisis. Thomas looked to the Cuban Missile Crisis.

When CIA spy planes discovered Soviet missiles in Cuba in October 1962, then President John F. Kennedy put together an expert panel and placed his brother in charge of deliberations.

"RFK himself started off as a hawk, wanting to bomb and invade Cuba, but his moral sense rebelled: he realized that the world would see an American attack as a Pearl Harbor," Thomas said. "Then RFK's shrewd mind came alive, and he helped negotiate a behind-the-scenes way for the Soviets to remove their missiles while saving face — allowing both sides to back down from the precipice of war."

Kennedy was able to listen to contrary advice — indeed, to seek it out, "a quality notably missing from some leaders, including George W. Bush," Thomas said.

"He was at once passionate and detached, a rare combination but essential in a leader," he said.

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Classical music plays on this summer: a calendar



DAVID HAWLEY

The St. Paul Chamber Orchestra concludes its season this weekend and goes on hiatus until next fall. But this isn't the start of the summer dog days for classical music — far from it.

I've put together a few highlights of summer '08, and it's certainly not a definitive list. If you think I've only skimmed the surface — and you'll be right — feel free to offer an event in our comment area below.

June 9-13: Let's start with the annual Schubert Club Summer Song Festival. Launched three years ago, the festival offers a concert every weeknight at various venues in St. Paul, plus free noontime concerts (Ralph Vaughan Williams is the focus of each program this year) every day at Landmark Center. In observance of Minnesota's ongoing sesquicentennial celebration, Monday's evening concert focuses on songs that were either composed by people with Minnesota connections or deal with a state subject matter. Wednesday's evening program pays homage to Pulitzer Prize-winner Dominick Argento, who has spent the last 50 years living and composing in Minnesota; the premiere of a new song by Argento is promised.

June 13-22: The long-established North Star Opera Company recently changed its name to Skylark Opera, and now it is changing its production format as well. Instead of performing a few productions each season, the company is doing it all in 10 days by performing two operas in repertory. One is the often-parodied Victor Herbert masterpiece,

"Naughty Marietta" (who can forget "Ah, Sweet Mystery of Life at Last I've Found You" from Mel Brooks' "Young Frankenstein"?). The other is the local premiere of Ned Rorem's 2006 opera version of "Our Town." All performances are in the E.M. Pearson Theatre at St. Paul's Concordia University.

June 14: How about a day of Bach — not listening to it, but performing it? The Bach Society of Minnesota is sponsoring an all-day "Cantata Workshop" at Hennepin Methodist Church (511 Groveland Ave., Minneapolis), which culminates in a 3 p.m. performance of the Cantata No. 9 ("Es ist das Heil"). The experience includes lunch and a post-performance reception. Hurry! The deadline for registration is June 10. Or just show up on the afternoon and enjoy the performance.

Layton "Skip" James

Courtesy of the White Pine Festival The White Pine Festival, taking place in St. Croix Valley communities, includes an organ recital by SPCO keyboardist Layton "Skip" James.

June 19-22: If you're wondering what the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra musicians are doing on their summer vacations, look no further than the White Pine Festival, a kind of artist-colony gathering in communities along the St. Croix River Valley, including Hudson and Stillwater. The extended weekend includes concerts, symposiums, readings and other activities. The musical events, however, feature an organ recital of Bach by SPCO keyboardist Layton James and a concert by the Miro Quartet, both at Stillwater's Trinity Lutheran Church.

June 20-26: If you're heading

toward the St. Croix River for the White Pine Festival, stick around for the start of the Stillwater Music Festival. This year's festival will be anchored by two main concerts at the Washington County Historic Courthouse on June 20 and June 26. The latter is an all-Nordic program featuring the New York-based string quartet, Brooklyn Rider and mezzo-soprano Heather Johnson. In addition, there will be a pre-concert performance at the Daily Grind coffee shop in Stillwater on June 26 and a first-ever family concert on the rooftop of the Stillwater Public Library on June 25. In the June 20 opening concert, Brooklyn Rider will go classical with Schubert's "Death and the Maiden" quartet, then collaborate with folk singer Christina Courtin in what should be an interesting fusion.

June 24 and 29: St. Paul's Cathedral Choir — the one from London — performs at the Cathedral of St. Paul on June 24 in an appearance sponsored by Minnesota Public Radio. The all-male choir has been in existence since the 12th century and specializes in a broad repertoire that ranges from Latin and Anglican liturgy to modern commissions. If that isn't Anglican enough for you, there's the opportunity on June 29 to attend a free afternoon organ recital at Central Lutheran Church in Minneapolis (333 S. 12th St.) by Stephen Cleobury, choir organist at Queen's College, Cambridge.

July 1-20: Winona is the place to find Beethoven this summer. The Minnesota Beethoven Festival is taking place in the small river town, but it's no small potatoes. The lineup is star-studded, including the King's Singers on July 9, violin superstar

Joshua Bell on July 11, pianist Marc-Andre Hamelin on July 15, and the Pacifica String Quartet on July 17. The Minnesota Orchestra opens and closes the festival with concerts on July 1 and July 20.

July 11-Aug. 2: Yes, it's Sommerfest again — now officially called "Fidelity Investments Sommerfest." The three-week festival at Orchestra Hall is the usual collection of elements that range from waltz gluts to jazz. But some of the highlights include orchestra ensemble groups performing music by ex-Minnesotan Paul Schoenfield on July 18, an all-Finnish program (Rautavaara, Aho, Sibelius) conducted by Osmo Vanska on July 24, and a semi-staged production of "La Traviata" on Aug. 2. Families will want to see the return of Theatre de la Jeune Lune in their much-loved performance of "Peter and the Wolf" on July 27.

July 20-27: The Summer Singers is a largely unknown group that has been producing CDs for years, thanks to the talents of vocalists from better-known groups like the Minnesota Chorale and Exultate who don't want to rest their pipes during the summer break. They will be giving concerts July 20 in Edina, July 24 in Minneapolis and July 27 in St. Paul — all free. If you happen to be in downtown Minneapolis and want to check them out in advance, attend their appearance on July 11 as part of the regular noontime Summer on the Plaza performances at the Hennepin County Government Center.

Did I miss anything? Please comment at www.minnpost.com. We'll update this calendar. Please include details and links to websites.

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Joel Kramer, CEO and editor

From casino heist suspect to tribal chairman: The astonishing rise of Archie LaRose

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In an April 1 primary election, competing with five other candidates, LaRose garnered an unprecedented 55.9 percent of the vote. Under the band's election rules, a candidate with a minimum of 51 percent in a primary wins outright. While that provision had been in place for a decade, no candidate for chairman ever reached the threshold.

More remarkably, LaRose's status as the reservation's top vote getter has endured despite a blizzard of bad publicity and brutal political infighting. In recent years, LaRose was arrested and jailed twice after fellow council members worked to ban him from entering the band's casinos, allegedly for intimidating a casino employee into giving him access to a security tape.

"The county judge dismissed the charges both time. He knew it was political," LaRose said with a shrug. "I spent three hours in jail the first time, 15 hours the second time. But I wasn't going to back down. It was wrong in everybody's eyes."

Over the years, LaRose's rivals have accused him of everything from personal corruption to nepotism to involvement in a notorious casino heist and an unseemly affiliation with a reservation gang called the Native Mob. LaRose offers the usual blunt denials but, for the most part, he laughs off the accusations.

"Back in 2003, they had some gang task force meetings at Mille Lacs and I guess my name kept coming up. People were saying that I was linked to the Native Mob and that I controlled the prison vote," said LaRose, adding that the accusations seemed to have been based on the criminal record of an older brother. "It was just the ultimate lie. I wish I had been there to defend myself because I would have loved to see the documentation."

Mike Bongo, the executive director of the Bemidji-based non-profit Northwest Indian OIC and a LaRose ally, said he finds such accusations ludicrous. "The head of the Native Mob? Every time I hear this stuff I chuckle because poor Archie has been so unfairly tainted,"

said Bongo, who was the leading vote getter in the primary race to replace LaRose as secretary-treasurer. "The things his detractors say about him couldn't be further from the truth. He's a good young man, honest as the days as long and very faithful. You know, he and his wife have been together for 18 years."

Bill Lawrence, the publisher of the mucking raking newspaper The Native American Press/Ojibwe News, attributes some of LaRose's political success to the unpopular practices of the ruling faction at Leech Lake, led by outgoing chairman George Goggeleye. "Those guys abused their power and I think the people were sick of it," said Lawrence, whose paper has been highly critical of Goggeleye.

But Lawrence also credits LaRose's famously tireless approach to campaigning, a strategy that included — by LaRose's count — 700 door knocking visits to residences across the sprawling reservation in the lead up to the primary. Ironically, Lawrence notes, the luxury to campaign so hard was made possible by LaRose's fellow council members, who earlier stripped him of much of his authority as secretary-treasurer.

"After those guys took away his responsibilities, Archie had a lot of time on his hands," Lawrence observed. "Most candidates can't take time off for door knocking and I think that was a big factor. They [the ruling faction] would have been better off if they just tried to overwhelm him with his duties."

Frank Bibeau, the former director of legal services for the band, said LaRose works hard and "understands the idea of being respectful." "Archie grew up with his grandmother and I think he got her values," Bibeau said, adding, with a laugh: "The dude is also very punctual and that's not a common trait in Indian country."

The Bingo Bandits case

Born at Cass Lake Indian Hospital and raised at Tract 33, an impoverished tribal housing complex on the outskirts of town, LaRose first gained notoriety on the reservation as an amateur boxer. In his

first foray into tribal politics, he lost by a narrow margin. Lawrence attributes that defeat to the lingering suspicions about LaRose's involvement in the only casino heist in modern Minnesota history — the 1994 armed robbery of the Palace Casino in Cass Lake by five masked men in coveralls.

Soon after, LaRose and four other young Leech Lakers were arrested and jailed in connection with the crime, which netted some \$27,000 in cash and jewelry. After the trials of two suspects resulted in acquittals, charges against LaRose were dismissed. To this day, the case of the Bingo Bandits, as they came to be known, remains unsolved. LaRose insists he had nothing to do with the robbery.

Despite the disappointment of his first failed bid for a seat on the tribal council, LaRose stayed involved in tribal politics. He worked on the removal of then-chairman Eli Hunt, a one-time ally. In 2002, he was elected to the office of secretary-treasurer and quickly wound up at odds with the majority faction on the five-member tribal council. In 2004, the council members voted to remove him from office, alleging that he had improperly authorized the expenditure of some \$40,000 on his mother's home.

LaRose, who denied wrong doing, fought to get his name on the ballot for the special election, campaigned hard, and was re-elected to his old position. In 2006, he won the office again in a regularly scheduled election, again by a large margin.

These days, LaRose is biding his time until his official swearing-in ceremony in July. He is also working on the campaigns of two political allies running for seats on the council, Mike Bongo and Eugene "Ribs" Whitebird. Because Bongo and Whitebird both finished in first place in their respective primaries, LaRose is optimistic that he will wind up with a controlling voting block on the council — critical if LaRose is to enact his agenda.

In addition to the revenue sharing plan, LaRose ticks off other "reform" plans, an admixture of small and big changes, with a few populist gestures thrown in

for good measure. For instance, LaRose wants to eliminate the requirement that band members who rent rooms at the casino have a credit card. "It's a direct insult to our people and it affects our revenues," LaRose said. "The majority of our people can't afford credit cards, or even get cards. Why would you have a policy that insults your people and hurts your main source of revenue, which is the casino business? We own these three casinos and hotels together."

On a more substantial front, LaRose said he wants to change the band's approach to dealing with two of the more intransigent problems in Indian country: substance abuse and employment. Under the band's drug testing protocols, LaRose said, employees are typically fired when traces of marijuana are detected in their urine.

"Marijuana stays in your system to 30 or 40 days, compared to man-made drugs that only stay in the system for two or three days," LaRose said. "I believe a lot of our people have been driven to use these man-made drugs just to get and hold a job. Now there is a big pill problem at Leech Lake and these man-made drugs are killing people."

LaRose said he also hopes to make life — and employment — easier for band members with criminal records and histories of drug use. Two years ago, the tribal council floated a proposal to banish a convicted killer and reputed gang member who'd been released from prison. Among the council members, LaRose alone opposed the idea, which later died in the face of popular opposition.

"We have no authority to banish anyone and it would have violated the U.S. Constitution and the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe Constitution," LaRose said, adding: "I believe everyone deserves a second chance in life. When people who get out of treatment or jail or prison, they've paid their debt to society."

Mike Mosedale, who has written for City Pages and newspapers in Connecticut, Wisconsin and California, reports on the environment, Indian affairs and other topics.

For Franken, Gore giveth, Planned Parenthood taketh away

THE DAILY GLEAN

By DAVID BRAUER

Al Franken is bleeding local support going into this weekend's DFL convention. Now, Planned Parenthood says it would be "very difficult" for its political arm to endorse Al Franken if "even half the allegations" about his writings are true. The blog Checks and Balances reproduced the group's email, reprinted here. The group's legislative affairs director calls the pieces "misogynist." Minor question: The group says they sent a (somewhat oblique) letter to the Strib; why hasn't it been printed? It's certainly newsworthy.

In better news for Franken, Al Gore "warmly" endorsed him, the Strib's Patricia Lopez notes. Text is here. Gore touted Franken as among the Democrats' "hardest working activists" — to be sure, Al's fundraising and campaigning for others remains his biggest asset headed into this weekend. The story also notes that Franken's opponent, Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer, picked up support from Amy Klobuchar's 2006 campaign manager, Ben Goldfarb. Could be a plus headed into the convention.

To national conventions for a moment: The Strib's Randy Furst and PiPress's Rachel Stassen-Berger have great rundowns how locals trade access for corporations cash. A George Washington University-affiliated nonprofit says host committees' charitable status allows them to mask donors until after the events. Stassen-Berger offers great details on Gov. Pawlenty's begging: who turned him down, and how he and U.S. Sen. Norm Coleman basically elbowed out Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak.

The PiPress' Megan Boldt says 85 percent of whites but just 39 percent of blacks graduated on time in the high school class of '05. Local administrators say the Education Week stats don't count transfers or students who take longer to graduate. For the class of '07, the state says another 33

percent of blacks still are working toward a degree, but the four-year grad rate is 16 points below national averages. The Strib's headline: "Minnesota's graduation rate is among highest in the nation."

Nice frame from the PiPress's Dave Orrick: "Faced with the choice of killing parking or killing traffic on University Avenue, St. Paul City Council Member Russ Stark on Wednesday evening said kill the traffic." Stark is proposing a two-lane road to preserve parking. But could a two-lane road really function, especially anytime someone has to parallel park? Haters aren't quoted.

MPR's Brandt Williams checks in with a Day Two piece on the Winona bridge closure. Five hundred Winona State summer students who commute from Wisconsin are seriously screwed by the one-hour detour; the Strib's Jim Foti and Mary Lynn Smith say a river ferry is in the works.

Yuck — Minnesota Monitor's Chris Steller says Lake Calhoun received junk from an illegal Minnehaha Club sewer line. The pipe may have been the source of a "mysterious milky-white substance that showed up in the lake April 29. The pipe has since been disconnected.

Alert Lou Dobbs! The PiPress's Dave Hanners offers up an interesting discrimination suit: Plaintiffs allege a downtown St. Paul McDonald's owner hires "Mexicans from Mexico," not "Mexicans from America" because the latter quit. The state's Chicano Latino Affairs Council has never heard of such a suit, and the defendant denies the allegations. One plaintiff said an interviewer asked him where he was born, then gave him the discriminatory news.

A progressive Minnesota think tank says the state's economy has slipped as its tax rankings have fallen, the Strib's Pat Doyle reports. Minnesota 2020 tracked government spending per \$1,000 of income from 1995 to 2006;

Minnesota fell from 10th to 29th in national rankings, but growth was sluggish. What's striking is the Pawlenty administration's response: The group "has no credibility." None? It's very Scott McClellan-like — old Scott McClellan.

The PiPress's Tad Vezner writes that the St. Paul City Council unanimously introduced standards for 4 a.m. bar-time during the convention: Bars must be in the downtown or commercial districts, or have "at least 291 seats." Some slightly smaller venues, like Billy's On Grand, aren't happy. Over in Minneapolis, the Strib's Anthony notes that outside of downtown, the City Council might limit longer hours to hotel bars.

A day late, the PiPress has a story on JoAnn Syverson, the Eden Prairie teacher and Iraq War mom who introduced Barack Obama Tuesday. The neat factor: The ex-Republican is a U speech instructor who teaches folks to overcome stage fright. "I wasn't nervous before, and I wasn't nervous during," she says, but broke out in a sweat after. What'd she say? Paul Tosto's story is skinny on details, but you can read the speech here. Her son was stop-lossed and is now on his second Army tour.

The Strib's Bob von Sternberg surveys local blacks on Obama's nomination. A lachrymose mom lets her 8-year-old son stay up to watch a "brown" man claim the presidential nomination; a St. Paul teacher calls it "the best thing that has happened to this country for a long time — maybe all time." However, a 35-year-old student observes that changing the political system requires more than one man.

For what it's worth, the PiPress's Mara Gottfried reports that 19,583 people were in Xcel for Obama's speech. The number banded yesterday was 17,000. Cops arrested just two people inside the hall — drunk guys trying to rip restricted-area wristbands off people. Bloomington sent 17 cops to get the lay of the land for the

GOP convention in three months.

The PiPress's Tom Webb says given Obamamania, Minnesota would rather have the Democratic National Convention than the GOP event. But Republicans asked first. He notes that "more than 2 million Web sites mention the words 'Democrat 2008 convention Denver' — nearly 10 times more than GOP convention references.

Why Norm Coleman is an astute politician: He's going to Detroit to lobby for continued manufacture of light trucks at St. Paul's Ford plant, writes AP's Frederic Frommer. Ford says closure plans haven't changed, according to the Strib's Kevin Diaz and Emily Kaiser. But it's a timely contrast to Franken's porn troubles.

Today's hot button: Three Bloomington high schoolers are banned from graduation for waving the Confederate flag in a parking lot. They didn't know the racial connotations, one mom tells the PiPress's John Brewer, providing further evidence that graduation might not be appropriate. However, administrators say one boy had been previously suspended for the same violation. They'll still get their diplomas. The Strib's Patrice Relford says the courts have upheld such suspensions. The ACLU tells parents to abandon hope.

The Strib's Sarah Lemagie offers up a fascinating piece on a Minneapolis "do-gooder" who feds say is a drug dealer. Chiffon Williams is a single mom of 10, helps the homeless and (perhaps ironically) supports neighborhood anti-crime efforts. Police say her tidy home is a stash house for crack cocaine, Ecstasy and pot "pumped" into the neighborhood. She's had legal run-ins, and so have her sons, but some neighborhood activists support her. She denies the charges.

Nort Spews: Joe Mauer and Carlos Gomez connected for an ultra-rare two-run sac fly; Joe hit it, GoGo legged it from second after a fielder slipped as the Twins beat Baltimore 7-5. Mauer also hit his second dinger. Sore Loser here.

COMMUNITY VOICES

Bottom line: Women are overlooked advantage for business success

Editor's note: This article is reprinted by permission of "B. — The Magazine of the University of St. Thomas Opus College of Business."

By **NANCY M. CARTER, Ph.D.**

It doesn't take a fortune teller's crystal ball to divine critical pressures confronting today's business leaders. Take your pick:

- Keeping pace with the exponential curve of new technologies and products

- 24/7 customer demands
- Increasingly critical link between business and ecosystems — water scarcity, climate change, habitat change

- Juxtaposition of unrelenting globalization against the difficulties of managing cross-cultural differences and coordinating across boundaries and time zones

None of these is easy to solve. But equally challenging is the looming global talent shortage. Fortune 500 leaders at a recent Catalyst CEO-Summit[1, see footnotes below] concurred — the scarcity of talent ranks near the top of the "pressure list," and solving it is critical to their companies' future competitiveness.

The need for workers who can act innovatively and have appropriate skills, language abilities, and leadership experience has never been at a higher premium. Yet, in many regions of the world aging populations

and low fertility rates portend an unprecedented dearth of skilled workers prodding governments and businesses to reevaluate immigration policies and work with aging employees to postpone retirement.

Ironically, the ominous talent shortage is compounded by businesses that have yet to create fully inclusive work environments in which all employees are developed and utilized. Savvy leaders at forward-thinking companies recognize that solving the talent shortage will require more than just focusing on recruitment. They recognize that attributing the talent shortage to the employee shortage in the marketplace is naive. The challenge also involves an under developed pipeline of talent within the company and an overly narrow definition of what "talent" looks like in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion and age.

At precisely the time companies confront a severe talent shortage, inhospitable work environments risk unprecedented turnover and difficulty recruiting employees reluctant to join companies that haven't demonstrated commitment to talent engagement.

In today's ever-flattening, ever-widening marketplace smart companies know that:

- Winning new markets means winning new talent
- Ensuring long-term sustain-

ability means fully developing the talents of all employees

- Diversity, in senior leadership and the pipeline means:
- A broader scope of ingenuity and innovation
- A wealth of perspectives and expertise
- An increased potential to attract new customers and tap into diverse markets
- And, enhanced company financial performance

The workforce of the future will be decidedly different. In the United States alone, estimates are that between 2006 and 2014 more than 68 percent of new entrants to the workforce will be women and people of color[2] — a bonanza of talent if stereotypes of what constitutes "talent" are eradicated.

Already women in the United States represent more than 50 percent of managers and professionals. Yet in senior leadership, where the talent shortage threat is most severe, they are dramatically underrepresented. Catalyst's 2007 censuses of Fortune 500 leaders[3] indicates that women represented just 15.4 percent of corporate officers and a paltry 2.6 percent of CEOs — numbers signifying that giving women opportunities can result in immediate gains in closing the talent gap.

When confronted with these numbers leaders often ask, "Should I build the business case for women in leadership in my

company?" My response — "That's the wrong question. The right question is why not?"

Having women in senior leadership correlates with company financial performance — and not just by a little. Both return on equity and total return to shareholders was nearly 35 percent higher, on average, among companies with the highest representation of women on their top management teams[4].

And when women are well represented in the boardroom, the financial advantage is even more pronounced. Companies with the highest number of women on their boards outperformed those with the fewest, having, on average, a return on equity 53 percent higher, return on sales 42 percent higher, and return on invested capital 66 percent higher[5].

Whether or not to have a diverse workforce in the future is not an option for companies. Work will be more global, diverse and immediate. The opportunity to narrow the talent gap by creating workplaces where all employees can contribute to business success is both immediate and obvious. Promoting women and other underrepresented groups is not only the right thing to do, it's the smart thing to do.

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Footnotes:

[1] 2007 Catalyst CEO Summit: Preparing Leadership for the Future. San Francisco, CA., December 9th.

[2] Toossi, Mitra. 2007. Labor force projections to 2016 — Civilian labor force, entrants and leavers, 1996, 2006, and projected 2016. Monthly Labor Review. November.

[3] Catalyst. Census of Women Corporate Officers and Top Earners of the Fortune 500, 2007.

[4] Catalyst. The Bottom Line: Connecting Corporate Performance and Gender Diversity, 2004.

[5] Catalyst. The Bottom Line: Corporate Performance and Women's Representation on Boards, 2007.

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