

## Downtown Minneapolis – an underachiever

What will bring shoppers back?

By **STEVE BERG**

When Nordstrom recently confirmed the selection of Ridgedale for its second Twin Cities store and no one in downtown Minneapolis bothered to blink, well, that was just another reminder of how far down the shopping chain Nicollet Mall has fallen, and how badly downtown's shopping scene needs a shot of adrenaline.

In the not-so-distant past, Nordstrom's snub would have caused a furor. But, given the tectonic shifts in retail (on-line shopping, suburban lifestyle centers, etc.), downtown Minneapolis has grown accustomed – perhaps too accustomed – to playing a diminished role in the metro shopping mix.

Fifteen years ago, downtown was the Upper Midwest's prime shopping destination. It remains a bit healthier than the retail cores of most major cities. But it long ago lost its dominant role to the Mall of America and other suburban venues, and it shows signs of slouching further toward the kind of eerie retail-free zone that's increasingly common in American downtowns. (St. Paul lost the bulk of its downtown retail decades ago.) Polo, Crate & Barrel and now Borders Books and Williams-Sonoma are the latest national retailers to depart Minneapolis, explaining that downtown sales don't keep up with suburban



**MinnPost photo by JOHN NOLTNER**

Borders Bookstore is the latest among national retailers to leave downtown Minneapolis.

counterparts, a differential magnified by a tough economy.

Indeed, national figures, released on Thursday showed disappointing sales in December, with apparel shops and department stores taking the biggest hit. Given recent trends, downtown stores, both here and across the country, may have suffered disproportionately, further diminishing expectations.

When Apple Computer, perhaps the hot-

test retail commodity of the moment, recently opened 178 stores nationwide, it located only six of them in big-city downtowns – three in New York and one each in Chicago, San Francisco and Portland, Ore. (MOA, Southdale, Ridgedale and Rosedale landed the four Twin Cities spots).

**continues on page 4**

### INSIDE



**John Camp in Iraq**  
Minnesotans learn to live with the routine of war. **page 5**

#### **MINNPOST.WORLD**

With economic issues superseding war concerns, voters start to focus on Democrats. **page 2**

#### **COMMUNITY VOICES**

Readers comment on MinnPost coverage of politics, more. **page 8**

#### **KAY HARVEY**

People-pleasing habits limit women, author says. **page 3**

#### **JOHN CAMP**

Minnesotans in Iraq learn to live with the routine of war. **page 5**

#### **LORENA DUARTE**

Politicians, media need to reassess the way they depict immigrant communities. **page 6**

#### **PAMLEA ESPELAND**

Jazz: Trombones help beat the winter blahs. **page 7**

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## MINNPOST.WORLD

## With economic issues superseding war concerns, voters start to focus on Democrats

By STEVE BERG

OK, Iowa and New Hampshire have had their say. What more do we know about who's likely to be the next president as the next wave of primaries approaches?

- We know that voters seem more excited about the Democrats than the Republicans, who have drawn smaller crowds and turn-outs, at least so far.

- We know more clearly the differences that separate the voters who prefer Hillary Clinton (traditional Democrats) from those attracted to Barack Obama (younger, more affluent Democrats and independents).

- We suspect that public opinion polls may overestimate Obama's support, perhaps because of race.

- We know that Republicans have a fascinating flock of candidates, none of whom fits perfectly into the mold that GOP primary voters seem to like.

- And we know that the worsening economy has replaced Iraq as the issue that voters care about most.

Let's take the last point first. Asked about what they would do to soften a recession, Republican candidates at Thursday night's debate in Myrtle Beach, S.C., answered almost in unison: tax cuts. Making permanent President Bush's tax cuts of 2001 and 2003 – which Democrats oppose – was first on their list, although some also listed additional tax incentives for business. The tax-cutting legacy of Ronald Reagan was evoked repeatedly, with Fred Thompson, the former Tennessee senator, taking specific aim at Mike Huckabee, the former Arkansas governor whose religious and populist credentials make him a favorite to win in South Carolina on Jan. 26.

"This is a battle for the heart and soul of the Republican Party and its future," Thompson asserted. "On the one hand, you have the Reagan revolution, the Reagan coalition of limited government and stronger national security. On the other hand, you have the direction that Gov. Huckabee would take us



REUTERS

Republican presidential candidates, from left, Fred Thompson, Mitt Romney, John McCain, Mike Huckabee, Rudy Giuliani and Ron Paul.

in. He would be a Christian leader, but he would also bring about liberal economic policies, liberal foreign policies [in] the tradition of 'blame America first.'"

In response, Huckabee said he "stayed faithful to the things Ronald Reagan stayed faithful to," while noting that Reagan also raised taxes as California's governor.

Indeed, David Brooks, in today's New York Times, foretells an end to the simplicity of the tax cut answer to every economic question. "Smart Republicans are groping for a new economic model (to replace the supply-side emphasis) and, as they do, Republican economic policies are shifting," he wrote. "The entrepreneur is no longer king. The wage-earner is king. As the presidential campaign rolls into Michigan, it's clear that Republicans are adjusting their priorities to win back the anxious middle class."

Democrats, meanwhile, have had wage-earners in their sites all along, as noted in today's Washington Post roundup.

As the likelihood of a recession grows, most economists inter-

viewed in today's Wall Street Journal expect a Democrat to be elected next fall. Of those economists, "some 56 percent disapprove of President Bush's handling of the economy," the story said, "about the same as the 59 percent of the public who disapproved in a recent Wall Street Journal/NBC poll."

It should surprise no one, then, that the public seemed noticeably more interested in the Democratic field during the season's first two political events. In Iowa, the Democratic caucuses drew nearly twice as many people as the Republican meetings. In New Hampshire, Democratic candidates outpolled Republicans by 3-2.

Sen. Hillary Clinton's famously teary moment was widely credited for her surprise New Hampshire comeback, although the Washington Post's E.J. Dionne offered more to the delineation between Clinton and Obama voters.

"It was women and voters of modest means who pulled Clinton back from the abyss," he wrote. "And the people Edwards courts

were the ones Clinton connected with [in New Hampshire]. She defeated Obama soundly among voters in families earning less than \$50,000 a year and among those who never attended college."

"She stole the mantle of empathy from [John] Edwards," Dionne continued. "Voters who told exit pollsters that they made their choice of the basis of which candidate 'cares about people like me' went strongly for Edwards in Iowa [but in New Hampshire] Clinton narrowly defeated Edwards in this group – and overwhelmed Obama, 2-1."

Veteran polltaker Andy Kohut supplied an additional explanation for the surprise of Clinton's win. Lower-income voters are less apt to answer poll questions, he wrote in the Times. And when they do, they tend to say that they favor a black candidate when, in fact, they do not. The glitch was first noted in 1990 when Charlotte's African-American mayor, Harvey Gantt, seemed on the verge of defeating then-Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), only to lose by a substantial margin.

## No more Ms. Nice? Author says people-pleasing habit limits women



**KAY HARVEY**

If you're a woman determined to pad your paycheck with a promotion, here's good news to start your year. Wages of women in their 20s are running neck and neck with men of the same age in some U.S. cities, including Minneapolis and St. Paul, according to pooled data from the American Community Surveys in 2005 and 2006, said Trent Alexander, a research associate at the University of Minnesota's Minnesota Population Center.

While pay for women in their 30s and older in the same census surveys still lags behind pay for male contemporaries, the data are a good sign for women. So is the success rate of women who finish a Washington, D.C.-based leadership program, said Rebecca Shambaugh, president and CEO of Shambaugh Leadership, a company she created. Four in five graduates of the program, she claims, are promoted within less than a year.

Aspiring women's biggest problem isn't an inability to climb the ladder once they're on the way, Shambaugh said. It's getting their feet off the ground.

In her new book, "It's Not a Glass Ceiling, It's a Sticky Floor" (McGraw-Hill Professional), she blames predominantly female habits we may have learned in kindergarten for keeping women stuck.

For starters: people-pleasing, perfectionism and keeping our heads down.

### Pleasers vs. the big picture

"We're pleasers," she said of women. "We're trying to be the best at everything." But being a worker bee and pursuing straight A's doesn't always translate to a work environment, she said. Instead, "It limits perspective. We're so involved in pleasing people that we may not see the big picture."

She suggests women ask instead what's good-enough. "Quite frankly, doing a good job isn't everything," she said. "It's also about building relationships, knowing where you bring the greatest value and making sure people know about you."

Hmm. Is the self-promotion process starting to sound not so nice? Likely so for many people, according to a study spearheaded by Linda Babcock, an economics professor at Carnegie Mellon University. The 2005 study showed that both men and women were more likely to subtly penalize women who asked for more money and to perceive them as "less nice" than their peers.

Along with old inhibitions, that mindset has to go, said Shambaugh, whose book lays out seven tactics for getting unstuck. The seventh is asking for what you want. "A promotion - there's nothing wrong with that," she said. "People sometimes won't know if you're interested if you don't tell them. Sometimes women feel if they over-promote them-

**A 2005 study showed that both men and women were more likely to subtly penalize women who asked for more money and to perceive them as "less nice" than their peers.**

selves, they're too overpowering or come off as that b----, or whatever."

### Balance, boundaries are better 'b-words'

She offers more positive b-words that help women attain success. One is balance. Rather than operating in total overdrive and self-marketing, she said, a flip side is important: marketing other people, too.

She suggests creating a personal board of directors, a group of women for support and help with goal-setting. "Women always collaborate, usually in friendships," she

said, but rarely do they foster career success. "It can open up an opportunity for frankness, so they will straight-talk issues with you."

Another key word is boundaries. "We really have to set some boundaries for ourselves," she said. "Not only to nurture others but to step back and say you are your own career and the only one who can create your destiny. You can't expect other people to take charge of that."

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# Downtown Minneapolis – an underachiever

## ‘Some positive movement’

The long term isn't entirely bleak, however, for downtowns that maintain a healthy office and residential core. Creative retailers continue to seek opportunities in those kinds of downtowns, and Minneapolis, with 160,000 employees and 30,000 residents, has the demographic profile to overcome its current status as a shopping underachiever, according to retail experts.

“There's some positive movement,” said Jim McComb, president of Minneapolis-based McComb Group retail consultants. The recent return of Brooks Brothers and the addition of Len Druskin are good signs, he said. So is the Downtown Council's new emphasis on retail strategy and recruitment. “Downtown needs to think harder about how it fits into the broader retail landscape,” he said.

Downtown, he said, has many of the ingredients of a budding “lifestyle center,” the magic retail formula of the moment. It has, for example, a nearby affluent population and a sprinkling of the usual “lifestyle” cast members (Talbot's, Ann Taylor, Banana Republic, Nieman-Marcus, Macy etc.) It also has the kinds of cultural attractions and restaurants to mix with potential shopping success. What it lacks is good design, he said.

What McComb and others mean by lack of design is that city government and the private sector appear to have low standards on public spaces, like sidewalks, and on the architectural details of storefronts. In winter, for example, no one bothers to haul away the piles of dirty snow that bury the parking meters on most downtown streets. No one demands higher quality on the building facades of City Center and other prominent spaces. No one, either public or private, has stepped forward to demand that downtown shopping streets and other public spaces be “drop-dead beautiful,” as in Chicago, Boston or in other successful urban shopping experiences. And no one has yet convinced retailers

to turn their stores “inside-out” to embrace Nicollet Mall rather than turning their backs to it. These and other “configuration” problems (including the much-discussed skyway dilemma) are part of what makes downtown a retail underachiever.

“We aren't getting the kind of design that make people want to linger,” said McComb, who added that parking prices are also far above those in comparable urban shopping districts.

Midge McCauley, a retail consultant at Los Angeles-based Economics Research Associates, said that downtown “could support more retail than it now has” if only it could overcome design constraints. McCauley's recent report on Minneapolis forms the heart of the Downtown Council's new retail strategy and provides the basis for council president Sam Grabarski's prediction that “five years from now you won't recognize downtown.”

Whether or not auto traffic turns Nicollet Mall back into Nicollet Avenue (one of her suggestions), there will be an active attempt to recruit more stores. The council has hired Ann Wimmer, formerly of Gabberts and Nordstrom, as its recruiter. In a recent interview, Wimmer outlined her thinking.

“We should be more energetic, more varying and more than we are,” she said, adding that downtown must set itself apart not only from the suburban malls but from the successful neighborhood nodes, like Grand Avenue and 50th and France.

## Soho flavor to Hennepin Avenue

Shopping, she said, has become “experience driven.” People shop where they think they'll have the least chance of failing to find what they want – and they shop to make a statement about themselves. Her goal is a blend of price points and an eclectic mix of stores, many of which you wouldn't find in a mall.

Her first aim is to give Hennepin Avenue a bit of a Soho flavor – before the downtown Manhattan district went upscale and mainstream. That means edgy

art galleries (perhaps with studio space), unique clothing and home furnishings, interspaced with the theaters, bars and restaurants already there. The hope is to create a critical mass of positive on-street activity that would give theater-goers the courage to actually stroll down the street to look for interesting shops rather than making a nervous bee-line to their cars or tour buses.

Wimmer's second aim is to fill in Nicollet's blank spots with more lifestyle-type shopping attractions. She declined to mention names but presumably she's talking about Patagonia, Pottery Barn, Z gallery, White House/Black Market and other such favorites, as well as out-of-market finds like Escada, Eileen Fisher, and Bailey Banks & Biddle. But what's really new in shopping, she said, is that people will buy a \$400 jacket to wear with a \$10 t-shirt. Nicollet should have both kinds of stores, she said, making it not quite the quintessential “lifestyle” shopping experience but something more “authentic” and tuned to “Minnesota sensibilities.”

A third aim is to remake Seventh, Eighth and other connecting streets into attractive walkways to encourage people to shop both on Nicollet and Hennepin. Meanwhile, street-level businesses catering to transit customers might be attractive for Marquette and Second Avenues, which will become transit spines. As presented in a new report from the urban market consultants, ZHA Inc, of Annapolis, Md., there's also retail potential surrounding proposed supermarkets at each end of Hennepin Avenue.

## Unique stores, prestigious niches

The study portrays downtown as under-retailed, and expects growth to match the eight to 12 new major office buildings projected for downtown over the next 12 years. But it cautions that downtown is unlikely to draw the ultra high-end stores that dot Chicago's North Michigan Avenue, San Francisco's Union Square or Boston's Newbury Street. Even with its condo growth, downtown Minneapolis simply lacks

the neighborhood buying power to support prestigious stores. “High-income suburban neighborhoods ... are more likely to contain the area's most prestigious retail locations,” it says.

A better strategy – and the one Wimmer embraces – is to search for creative retailers unlikely to locate in suburbia, retailers that can create an edgy buzz. “The nation's most successful downtown retail districts have been able to provide this with unique stores, typically serving limited but prestigious niches – not found in suburban malls,” the report says.

The city's current hotel boom offers further encouragement, Wimmer says. When a hotel comes in, others decide they want to be in the market, too. The same goes for retail, she says. If one or two cutting-edge stores make the leap, others will follow. She's not mentioning names – Nordstrom “would be nice,” she said with a chuckle – but she is discussing new formats like the “manutailoring” (manufacturer to showroom, no middle man) offered by H.D. Buttercup, the upscale Los Angeles furniture mart, among others.

The bottom line is that downtown Minneapolis will not reclaim its former regional retail status. But it can regain its full potential as an eclectic and innovative shopping destination for downtown visitors, workers and residents. A central challenge will be to convince two generations that have never thought of downtown as a retail option. A bigger challenge is to transform its inward, 1970s-era design into a more attractive, welcoming experience. Downtown retains its status as the region's premier office district. It has undergone a stunning renewal of its cultural infrastructure. And, despite the current lull, it has added impressively to its residential population. Now, its task is to go shopping for more shopping.

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# Minnesotans in Iraq live with the routine of war

As part of a helicopter assault battalion in Iraq, Minnesota National Guard members plug through the daily routine of war – and keep a bunch of Blackhawk helicopters in the air.

By JOHN CAMP

LSA ANACONDA/BALAD, IRAQ – A cloudy, cool, almost windless day at the major American base north of Baghdad, flight operations going in the background: Blackhawk and Chinook helicopters coming and going, transport planes, jets of various kinds, and in the middle of the sand and the pounding noise and exhaust fumes and occasional indirect fire – mortar attacks – from local insurgents, Delta Company of the 2-147 Helicopter Assault Battalion keeps plugging through the daily routine, which means, basically, keeping a bunch of Blackhawk helicopters in the air.

Much of the 2-147 comprises Minnesota National Guard units, with additional units from Washington and Hawaii. The 2-147 has been here since August, and will probably stay for another half-year before returning home. Some of the deployed soldiers look forward to returning to their regular jobs – one, for example, says simply, “I’m a milkman” – while others are professional soldiers, working full time with the Guard.

Delta Company 1st Sgt. Juan Esquivel, 47, of Oakdale Minn., who works full time with the Army Aviation Support Facility at Holman Field in St. Paul, said that the Iraqi deployment is tough. “But it’s especially tough for some of the younger people. We had some ‘Dear John’ letters after we got here that really had some guys feeling sad. It’s hard to keep dating when somebody suddenly goes away for a year.”

Esquivel said that he and his wife, Julie, are more or less veterans at deployments. He has been deployed twice in the states, and now this time in Iraq, so “we have it more under control.” Nevertheless, he misses his kids, Joshua, Maria and Samuel, and sits at a desk with their photo pinned to the plywood wall behind his desk.

## ‘It’s really a job’

As the top enlisted man in Delta, Esquivel supervises 98 soldiers

whose job it is to keep the battalion’s Blackhawk helicopters in the air: everything from drive-train repair to avionics maintenance. Which sounds complicated, and is – though it’s also somewhat analogous to what the local Lexus dealer does. They do lots of brake jobs because the Blackhawks often do “roll-on” landings, where they taxi after landing, instead of coming straight down, and the big, brutal gun-metal black machines can really chew on the brake pads. Tires get torn up by rough-country landings, and in Iraq’s summer heat, which can get well into the triple digits, the electronics have a hard time.

Esquivel says that though deployments can be hard on the soldiers, it can be even harder on the families left behind. “People think it’s awful here, because maybe you get shot at, or there’s mortars, but for us, it’s really a job: We dress really good and we eat really good and a lot of the younger guys, it’s like going deer hunting with your friends. But the people at home, you know – they’re sort of left alone.”

A sentiment not exactly shared by all the unit’s soldiers.

Specialist Michael Nelson of Taylors Falls works for Carlson Dairy and delivers milk for cafeterias in the Anoka-Hennepin school district. “I really miss my job,” said the skinny 24-year-old redhead. Nelson is single, and grew up in North Branch, going to North Branch High School. “I miss my cafeteria ladies. I really liked seeing them, and working with them, and some of them still send me care packages over here.”

Nelson has been in the Guard for seven years including, now, seven months in Iraq. His original Guard contract ran out on March 29 of last year, but he was voluntarily extended in the military’s “stop-loss” program, which was instituted to stop the loss of critical personnel. Nelson is a power-train mechanic, doing the heavy lifting on the big choppers. “Helicopters are basically an expensive pile of nuts and bolts, and you’ve got to keep pieces from falling off,” he said.

As he talked, Nelson was sitting in a tiny plywood office behind a plywood desk, which featured the remnants of a Wisconsin summer sausage, which he called “the breakfast of champions.”

“The work isn’t bad here, the people are fine, but I miss home – I love winter, I like to fish – ice fish – I like to hunt up around Sandstone, deer and grouse. I love fall and winter, and you know, you think about what you’re missing.”

In the end, he said, “I just can’t wait to get back to my lunch ladies.”

## Missing winter

Winter was a recurring theme with the troops, Minnesota or not. Specialist Comfort Stelzer, 22, of Ellsworth, Wis., Pfc. Scott Swart, 19, of Henderson, and Danielle Petree, 21, of Winlock, Wash., got entangled in a discussion of snowboarding vs. skiing when they were asked about whether they missed winter: They did. A lot.

But Swart, an engine mechanic, said the deployment was not a huge sacrifice for him: “I knew when I signed up that we were going to be deployed. I signed up anyway.”

Petree ruefully confessed that she hadn’t believed it: When she signed up, “People told me that I could be deployed, but I didn’t believe it – I just didn’t.”

The hardest part for young soldiers, Petree said, was keeping relationships going. “It’s hard to communicate. We’ve got the phone and the Internet, but it’s not the same. So, you see a lot of breakups.”

There are others, she said, who secretly like it in Iraq. “They say they don’t, but you know that they do.”

Back to winter: “I’d like to be snowboarding at Trollhaugen,” Stelzer said. “I’m missing it.”

Petree boards at Mt. Hood: “I’d love to be there, but I’m not.”

Sgt. 1st Class Diana Fleischman of Cottage Grove has been more-or-less military for 26 years, working at Holman Field, sometimes as a government civilian, but sometimes pushed onto active duty. She believes in what’s she’s doing – but desperately misses her two children, Audry Rose, 8, and A.J., 13.

“If you’re a single mother, like I am, it gets really complicated with the family. My sister takes care of my house and kids, and we had to set up everything so she had access to all my accounts, to keep things going. One thing is, you’ve really got to trust the people back at home. They’re taking care of your life, while you’re over here.” She tries as best she can to stay in touch with telephone calls and email, “but I haven’t been able to get the web-cam thing going yet. I’m trying to do that.”

As one of the top-ranking enlisted people in Delta, she runs Delta’s production control, along with Specialist Dan Malenke of Elk River, who has been in the guard for four years. “I joined after 9/11, so I figured I’d be deployed at some point,” Malenke said. His life, though, is as complicated as Fleischman’s: Malenke’s wife, Samantha, is an airman 1st class with the Air Force, and this spring will be deployed to Qatar. She won’t be back from that deployment until after Malenke gets home from this one.

Fleischman: “I really do miss winter. I miss the holidays with my kids. I got a film of my Christmas; I’m going to put it on a CD so they could see what I was doing. ...”

Malenke: “I just got back from leave, so at least I had a snowball fight this year.”

Petree, the Washington snowboarder, said that whatever you thought about the Guard, about the deployment, about Iraq, most members of the unit seemed to agree that the time here would be something that people would look back on later in life and say, “I did that. You meet people and hang out with people you never thought you’d meet or hang out with, and, you know: You can say, ‘I went to Iraq.’”

*John Camp is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and best-selling novelist who writes under the pen name John Sandford. He can be reached at [jcamp@minnpost.com](mailto:jcamp@minnpost.com).*

## Politicians, media need to reassess the way they depict immigrant communities



**LORENA DUARTE**

With another electoral season upon us, what I most dread is the inevitable scapegoating and name-calling.

Who will be this season's electoral whipping boy for politicians eager to garner votes? History tells us that it's likely to be people of color, members of the GLBT community and, of course, immigrants.

This week in Minnesota, we saw the first evidence of this with Gov. Tim Pawlenty's "new" immigration plan. The governor dusted off some of his favorite anti-immigrant one-liners and resurrected his 2-year-old "study" that attempts to legitimize his immigrant attacks.

As an immigrant myself, I find these attacks utterly disturbing because recent immigrants are less likely than the other groups to be able to vote against those who use and conveniently abuse us.

### Labeling makes recent immigrants more vulnerable

Although there is much to say about the issue of American immigration, I'll limit myself to the issue of labeling and the way that many politicians (and, often, the media who cover them) so conveniently use and attack these vulnerable populations.

Last month, the Minnesota Media Empowerment Project released a report that analyzed

Minnesota newspapers' portrayal of Latinos in 2006. (Full disclosure: I used to coordinate this project and helped get the study off the ground. But I wasn't involved with the analysis of the data.)

The report found that among articles gathered from 21 newspapers, about 43 percent of them focused on either immigration or criminal activity. A very limited, skewed portrayal indeed.

As Dr. Dina Gavrilos of the University of St. Thomas, who analyzed the findings, says, "Stories about immigration (and crime ... are important, but we have to ask ourselves: How are they framed? Why are they associated with particular groups? How are they told? Why are they told in a particular way?"

"These things influence each other. If Latinos are portrayed in a very narrow way; it influences individuals, education, work and politics. How we think about others can't help but influence how people are treated by different institutions and reinforce existing power structures in our society."

Gavrilos argues, for example, that when immigration is talked about, the larger political, economic, and social analysis often is not given. "The number of undocumented people coming from Mexico correlates to the number of people who've lost jobs due to NAFTA, she says. "Why don't we talk about that?"

**"How we think about others can't help but influence how people are treated by different institutions and reinforce existing power structures in our society."**

— Dina Gavrilos, University of St. Thomas

### Terminology often derogatory

Terminology also is dealt with in the study, as is the use of terms that many of us consider derogatory, such as "illegal immigrant," "illegals," and "aliens." (Barb Kucera explained many of our concerns about those terms very well earlier this week in a "Community Voices" commentary.)

For Steven Renderos, the project coordinator who worked with Gavrilos on the analysis, the results were somewhat surprising.

"In a state that's proud of its progressive values, it was disappointing to find that the results were consistent with similar studies conducted nationwide in which the coverage focused heavily on crime and immigration," he says. "Certainly having criminals as the top Latino source cited in the stories we tracked is cause for alarm and an opportunity to question how stories are being generated and its overall impact on the public perception of Latinos in Minnesota."

Of course not all immigrants

are Latinos, but when politicians roll out the issue of "illegal immigration" to scare the public into voting for national security, there is a presupposition that they are — mostly — speaking about the Latino community (contrast security concerns on our Canadian border as evidence).

What the report shows is just one example of how immigrant communities often are inaccurately and unfairly portrayed in the media. That unflattering portrait makes it easier for them to become fodder for vitriolic political campaign slogans.

Wouldn't it be nice if politicians this year said, "We won't resort to name-calling, to stereotypical representations, or to the easy scare tactics"? Wouldn't it be nice if Minnesota's media outlets reassessed their use of language and their portrayal of Latino and other immigrant populations?

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# Trombones help beat the winter blahs



**PAMELA ESPEILAND**

The unhappiest day of the year is almost here. Thanks to Welsh professor Dr. Cliff Arnall, who developed an equation that factors in bleak weather, Christmas debt, failed New Year's resolutions, and other glum variables, the first Monday of the last full week of January is designated Blue Monday. This year, it falls on January 21st.

Don't despair, prepare. Plan to spend part of Sunday the 20th at the Artists' Quarter and stock up on bonhomie for Monday and beyond.

The AQ is hosting its first Sunday Afternoon Jazz Party starting at 3 p.m., complete with free hors d'oeuvres. On stage: Valves Meet Slide, a quintet with two trombones and a killer rhythm section.

I first heard this group in November of last year and I liked them a lot. The music is upbeat and warm—jazz standards you've probably heard before, but on different instruments.

The trombone is not the first horn people associate with jazz; that would be the saxophone or trumpet. But it's an instrument with a great range and mellow sound. Usually you're lucky to hear one in a jazz ensemble. Slide Hampton, Robin Eubanks, J.J. Johnson, Steve Turre, and Delfeayo Marsalis have all

helped to popularize the horn with the big reach. Hearing two at the same time is a rare treat.

In Valves Meet Slide, Dave Graf plays the trombone most people are used to seeing, the one with the slide. Brad Bellows plays valve trombone, which uses valves (like a trumpet) instead of a slide to lengthen or shorten the pipe and create the notes. (Trombone trivia: The late Maynard Ferguson played a trombone with both valves and a slide. He called it Superbone.)

Bellows is the founder of Locally Damaging Winds, the Midwest's preeminent jazz trombone quartet; earlier this month, they played to a near capacity crowd at the Bloomington Arts Center. Graf can be heard with the Latin ensemble Salsa Del Soul every Thursday night at the Times Bar and Café in northeast Minneapolis. His musically varied background includes big bands, Brazilian music, A Prairie Home Companion, and a long association with the late trumpeter Red Wolfe in his Port of Dixie Jazz Band and the Ellington Echoes. Graf has also performed with Dizzy Gillespie, Slide Hampton, Jack McDuff, and the Woody Herman Orchestra.

It was Bellows who suggested to Graf that the two get together and jam. "We started doing that for the heck of it," Graf says. "I like to practice with someone else, give and take, bounce ideas around. After we'd done that a

## Valves Meet Slide

- The Artists' Quarter, 408 St. Peter Street, St. Paul
- 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 20
- \$7
- 651-292-1359
- [www.artistsquarter.com](http://www.artistsquarter.com)

couple of times, Brad said, 'Let's try and get a gig.' Next thing I knew, we had a booking at the AQ." That was last summer. The Sunday Afternoon Jazz Party will be the fourth time Valves Meet Slide has performed in public.

Both men have fond memories of the Emporium of Jazz in Mendota, where the Hall Brothers New Orleans Jazz Band played for 25 years. "They had a Sunday afternoon show," Bellows says, "and it was fun." Bellows and Graf have day jobs, as do most of their family members and friends. "People with day gigs don't want to go out at night during the week," says Bellows. "A Sunday matinee will give more people a chance to see the band."

They will have a set list but don't yet know what will be on it. "We play what we like, a variety of stuff, and we try to sneak in a couple of new songs every time we play," Graf says. "We keep it pretty loose."

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COMMUNITY VOICES

# Readers comment on politics, tattoos, ethanol

Politics, tattoos and ethanol were some of the topics that prompted readers to comment on MinnPost stories and posts in recent days. Here's a sampling of what they were saying:

**Barbara Miller had this reaction to Doug Grow's Wednesday story, "New Hampshire victories for Clinton and McCain dramatically change the moods of Minnesota activists":**

So here's a question. Have we always been this shallow? "We" being "we, the people." Or is this a product of our all-media, all-the-time society? Sometimes I truly despair for us because just when substance should trump all else, so many are so easily distracted by bright, shiny objects.

If the answer is yes, where, really, is the now overused concept of hope? Just askin'.

••••

**Brian D. Maginnis commented on Steve Berg's Wednesday Cityscape post, "Seeing juvenile violence as a threat to public health":**

Of course the culture of violence in the black community is deplorable, and public health is at risk (just ask the families of the innocents slain in the past several years by run-amok shooters).

But no amount of school and park "programs" will ever take the place of effective parenting, the lack of which is the unspoken crux of this matter.

The obvious reason for the epidemic of youth violence is the diseased culture that has taken hold in the wake of the welfare policies of the past three decades, during which the black family was torn asunder. The main result of the disastrous liberal social experiment that is/was welfare has been the eradication, figuratively, if not literally, of the black father.

Three generations of single parent households have been fostered by welfare, with 69 percent of black children now born out of wedlock. As Lenin said, "Destroy the family and you destroy the society."

Liberal political policy has always been to keep the black community separated and disadvantaged, and therefore dependent on the promises of the liberal political machine to "solve" their problems, ensuring that power remains the primary focus of the Democrat. Of course, those "solutions" now emerge in the foolhardy need to produce 34 "recommendations" (read: more tax money to fund) for "programs", that will be nothing more than a feel-good salve on a flaming cauldron of a culture at once destroyed and then pathologically mutated by welfare.

You wonder why the jig is up on the Democratic Party? Why conservative talk radio rules the airwaves? Why good and decent families move out of Minneapolis? Why the black "community leaders" like Randy Staten and Spike Moss are anti-police instead of pro-family?

Your old paper was complicit in all of it, is paying the price now, and as you write from the new world of the blogosphere, you still won't tell the truth.

Shame.

••••

**Tom Poe weighed in on Eric Black's Wednesday post, "Spin patrol: Pundits were wrong, but didn't say it":**

I suspect the pundits are more interested in keeping their press cards than informing the public. The RNC and DNC have invested a lot in their present position of power, and don't intend to give it up to the people easily.

Put that together with the fact that our country utilizes proprietary electronic voting machines that guarantee some the ability to manipulate the vote count without detection (yes, secret vote count), and pundits now have to either raise the issue of vote manipulation (election fraud) or come up with an utter nonsensical rationale for the mismatch.

We have, among other things, been sold a bill of goods on the Help America Vote Act. We, the public, have to prove that the vote count was wrong due to undetectable vote count manipulation. That's right. If we can prove undetectable vote manipulation took place, we can demand a recount.

In Australia, they realized that proprietary electronic voting systems literally take away the voters' right to vote. They use nonproprietary electronic voting systems that enable public scrutiny of their elections, and can detect most, if not all, "undetectable" vote count manipulation. They even make their election software available free to the rest of the world to modify and use.

Now, I wonder why the U.S. won't permit such systems to be used in our election? The cost would be a fraction of what we're spending, and the systems would let us make sure we don't have some jerk manipulating the vote count, and reporting someone won, when they didn't. But, hey, pundits need to keep their jobs, right?

••••

Blaine Fridley had this lament on Christina Capecci's Jan. 2 post, "Expert longs for the time when tattoos really meant something":

Oy, tattoo snobbery (and I guess snobbery in general), I

can't take it. If a soccer mom sees her Tinkerbell tattoo as a little act of impulse in a dull, structured life – so be it.

••••

Here a comment on the four-part ethanol series:

**Bernice Vetsch on Ron Way's Monday installment, "Minnesota's corn ethanol industry blends subsidies, politics and lobbying":**

When Mexico signed on to NAFTA and opened its borders to our goods, American agribusiness flooded its market with low-priced corn and beans until 1.5 million Mexican farmers were driven out of business. Many of these farmers are among the desperately poor "illegals" who are blamed by fear-mongering politicians and right-wing talk radio hosts for everything from terrorism to taking jobs that Americans need (but probably do not want).

Since we now obviously have a home market for all the corn our farmers can grow, we could perhaps (as Mexico's president asked that we do last year) help Mexico re-start its agricultural industry. We could thereby do much more to help both our countries than building that wall along the border.

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