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Major health policy challenges for the next decade

by David Durenberger and Daniel McLaughlin

Ten years ago a heated debate began regarding the structure and control of the American health care system. With the failure of the Clinton Health Security Act and the moderate cost growth of health services many policy leaders turned their attention to other issues. However most of the problems that were debated in the early 1990s continue today and other new issues have emerged as well. The next decade will require strong leadership from the public and private sectors in order to meet these health policy challenges.

Growing workforce shortages will make health care quality improvement even more difficult.

One promising new initiative is the National Quality Forum. The Forum is beginning to coordinate all the quality reporting and improvement efforts of the public and private sectors. However, quality improvement cannot become a major focus of the health system until there is an effective market for high quality services and a concomitant financial reward for their provision.

Financing and access

As we begin this decade, health care costs have once again begun to rise faster than general inflation. Significant reasons for this include the cost of pharmaceuticals and an increased demand for ambulatory services. This cost pressure will surely increase the number of Americans without health insurance. The ability of providers to render services for free or at high discounts for these uninsured individuals is diminishing as cross subsidization is eliminated. It is likely that access to health care services for the uninsured will become ever more difficult.

A fundamental policy challenge is finding a method to constrain cost growth that is acceptable to consumers. Managed care organizations have withdrawn many of the techniques that they have historically used to control costs; such as restricted networks, pre-procedure certification, and tightly managed formularies. This change is due to many employers' reluctance to buy health plans that use these techniques. Financing and payment systems must be developed which can provide appropriate incentives to encourage both cost control and quality improvement. Without a new theory of cost management, health care costs will continue to outpace general inflation.

Public and population health

Globalization increases threats to the public's health. Americans will be confronted with the risk of new and exotic diseases, many of which could become epidemics if not aggressively managed.

On the other hand, opportunities for raising the health status of Americans are at hand due to an increased understanding of the influence of personal behavior on health. As we all eat better, exercise more and avoid destructive substances our health will increase. And those of us with chronic diseases will have an increasing opportunity to manage our health more effectively.

Quality

The quality of health services continues to be an issue of importance, however it is not highly visible in the public debate. Although the Institute of Medicine released two highly critical reports during the last year, few policy makers have been able to construct new policy initiatives to meet the concerns expressed in the report. The under use, overuse and misuse of health services by some practitioners continues.

www.citizensleague.net

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The Prevent Child Abuse America group out of Chicago estimates the daily cost of child abuse in America at \$258 million. Of this, \$152 million is due to adult criminality, almost \$40 million to child welfare expenses and \$17 million for hospitalization. All told costs to the country exceed \$94 billion annually.

-U.S. News and World Report, April 9, 2001

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Citizens League releases two new reports on mental health

by Kristine Lyndon Wilson

In conjunction with the Minnesota Department of Health and the Minnesota Department of Human Services, the Citizens League has released two new policy reports focusing on mental health issues.

The first report, *Meeting Every Child's Mental Health Needs: A Public Priority*, takes a broad look at the children's mental health system in Minnesota. The charge to the committee was to identify and recommend policies and strategies that Minnesota should pursue to ensure that every child's mental health needs are appropriately identified and met, as well as ways that major systems can be brought together.

The state's current mental health system is based on the 1989 Children's Mental Health Act, which outlines a state supervised/county administered system for delivering mental health services to Minnesota's 1.2 million children. (Approximately 72,000 of these 1.2 million children are believed to have a serious mental illness or emotional disturbance.) The goal of the Act was to ensure access to a continuum of services that would address the unique needs of individual children, in a manner sensitive to their cultural differences and special needs. Early screening and prompt intervention were to be available to all children. The services provided by social service, health, education and juvenile justice systems were to be coordinated and complementary.

The Citizen's League Committee on Children's Mental Health concluded that more than ten years after its passage, the mission of the Children's Mental Health Act remains utterly unfulfilled. The committee found that "the mental health services a child receives, and the degree to which those services are coordinated and easily obtainable depends largely on what county the child lives in and the persistence of parents and family members. Education, prevention and early intervention efforts range from limited to virtually nonexistent. No one is held accountable when a child's mental health needs go unmet."

In response to these findings and conclusions, the report recommends that

Minnesota take a public health approach to childhood mental illness. This means a focus on the population as a whole and an emphasis on education, prevention and early intervention. The report also calls for this public health approach to be lead by the Minnesota Department of Health, rather than the Department of Human Services, which currently oversees children's mental health services. The report also urges the state to play a stronger role in overseeing the public mental health system, in order to provide increased accountability, and to lead by example.

The report's final major recommendation is that the state re-evaluate the policy of depending on voluntary Children's Mental Health Collaboratives to coordinate all of the different systems involved, including counties, school districts, the juvenile justice system and treatment providers. In many cases, the committee found, local Collaboratives appear to be adding another layer of bureaucracy rather than coordinating those that already exist. Therefore, the report calls for the legislature to authorize and fund an independent evaluation of the Collaborative system, with an emphasis on comparing outcomes for children in counties with Collaboratives and outcomes in counties without Collaboratives.

Finally, the report highlights the cost of failing to prevent or intervene early in a child's mental health problems. These costs include higher K-12 education costs, dramatically lower graduation rates, use of expensive "deep-end" mental health services, increased health care costs, an increased number of children in the juvenile justice system and other out-of-home placements, and tragic suicide rates.

The second report, *Mental Health in the Workplace: An Issue for One in Five Employees*, outlines the significant impact that mental health issues have on the workplace. In any given year, more than 40 million Americans, or one in five, have a diagnosable mental illness. In Minnesota alone, approximately 800,000 people have a diagnosable mental disorder, and 92,000 live with a serious and persistent mental illness.

"Clearly the prevalence of these conditions makes mental illness an important issue for the business community. After all, the vast majority of these 40 million people are coming to work everyday," notes the report.

The Citizens League Committee on Mental Health and Employment considered two parallel issues: how employers address the mental health challenges of those working and how they make room for those with serious mental health problems to work.

The committee found that "by far the largest workplace impacts of untreated mental health problems are reduced productivity as the result of increased absenteeism and disability, and greater utilization of health care services." For example, according to the American Psychological Association, 50 to 70 percent of visits to primary care physicians are for medical complaints that originate from psychological factors."

However, research suggests that while mental health problems will always exist in the workplace, their incidence can be reduced and their impact minimized through the use of employee assistance programs, strategically designed health care benefits, and a little common sense and understanding. Benefit packages that make it easy and inexpensive for individuals to seek mental health treatment early, and in an outpatient setting, have been found to save employers money by dramatically reducing inpatient mental health treatment costs and the overuse of general medical services.

The League's study committee concluded that "while researchers and mental health advocates know that mental health problems and illnesses affect hundreds of thousands of Minnesotans, and they know that these conditions can have a negative impact on the workplace, the issue isn't even on the radar screen for most Minnesota employers." The committee found that, as a group, employers don't see mental health and mental illness as relevant to their environment as they don't recognize the extreme likelihood that they already employ people

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Viewpoint

From the Executive Director

Mental health: Overdue for a revamping

by Lyle Wray

There is a rising sense of optimism in the field of mental health, with many effective treatments being unveiled for major challenges such as depression and anxiety. Yet, at the same time, there is almost a sense of despair about getting our state's overall public and private systems of mental health to work well for all of our citizens. The two studies just issued by the Citizens League – one on children's mental health and another on adult mental health and employment – point to important challenges in the mental health arena and in health and human services more generally.

Challenges

Let's consider three of the challenges that emerged from our look at mental health services for children and adults. First, in an effort to limit intrusions into individual and family privacy, and to restrict the number of people eligible for services and to thereby limit expenditures, Minnesota has constructed a myriad of finely sliced programs that are not well coordinated. The consequence of this approach is that we often wait until problems are well advanced before intervening and then do so in ways that are not well

coordinated.

Linking research on what works with actual service delivery in the field is another significant challenge. While we are getting better information on which programs and treatments actually work, people on the ground are struggling over basic issues of reimbursement and access to service. For example, even though we know that a good deal of illegal drug use is "self-medication" for mental health problems, that knowledge is not translated into accessible on-the-ground treatment programs.

The question of accountability for children and adult mental health services is another significant challenge. Despite the little-known provision of the 1978 Community Social Services Act, which provides a framework for county interventions and requires that regular reports on outcomes be provided to the Legislature, little has been done in the past 23 years to take this requirement seriously. Further, there is a great deal of fragmentation in the field, with a variety of actors involved in the public delivery arena and more than two thirds of treatment funding outside the public system. Developing systems of accountability and executive and legislative branch oversight in such complex areas – including services to seniors and children – is a key challenge on the table now.

An Agenda

If the system is indeed highly fragmented, with little emphasis on overall accountability, the legislature and the public are understandably skeptical about adding significant new resources. What is needed, it seems, are a series of "trust building" steps to address at least these three challenges.

First, a key recommendation of the children's report is that the state move towards a "population level" approach more in line with traditional public health thinking, rather than with a set of very narrowly defined client groups. Since mental health challenges affect as many as one in five people in any given year, it is

clearly suited to a much broader approach. Putting this approach into effect would require rethinking the way in which we plan for, deliver and pay for mental health services in this state.

Second, developing better linkages between research and on-the-ground services requires that we take a leaf from Lisbeth Schorr's book, *Common Purpose*, by laying out what she refers to as a "human services intervention map" of what works, what the costs of programs are, and which models of service should be offered. This would likely lead to a greater emphasis on prevention and early intervention into mental health challenges. Further, a companion piece would need to be generated on possible avoided costs in areas such as special education, incomplete schooling, incarceration, and additional health care expenditures.

Third, accountability would need to be improved with better reporting of outcomes in the area of mental health to the executive and legislative branches and the public at large. Innovative ways of strengthening accountability could be done with "cost savings sharing" from avoided costs shifted to prevention programs.

It is clear that we know how to do a better job of working with individuals, families, communities and professionals to enhance the mental health of children and adults. To get there it is likely that the legislature and executive branch will need to push for a series of "trust building" steps to pave the way for a major system overhaul. A crisper reckoning needs to be done comparing the broader approach to assuring quality and timely mental health service with the avoided costs and savings to public and private systems. We need to match the optimism of what is becoming possible in treatment and intervention with a modernized restructuring of how we provide for mental health in Minnesota. **MJ**

Lyle Wray is executive director of the Citizens League.

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The role of government

All levels of government have an active involvement in the current system and must change to accommodate the new realities of the health care system in this upcoming decade. The federal government must grapple with marked increases in the number of Medicare enrollees and the growing costs of Medicaid due to expansions in long term care. The private self-insured market will require a reevaluation of the role that the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) plays in its regulation.

In addition, state governments will need to reexamine their systems of regulating practice and their insurance industries. The health care workforce shortage will also need to be addressed at the state level as states have the primary responsibility for education and training.

Long term care

Nowhere is the dysfunction built into our health system and the over medicalization of support services more obvious and more costly than in long-term care. The long-term institutionalization of the mentally and developmentally disabled and the elderly combined with the public welfare approach to financing service design and delivery is at fault.

It must begin to change, and change must come nationally to support innovations at the state and community level. The Citizens League's 1999 contribution via the Minnesota Department of Human Services report – *A New Wrinkle on Aging* – provides a precedent setting dimension

to this challenge. This issue needs a national dialogue and subsequent reform of income security politics. "Ending welfare as we know it" must not lead to a new definition of public welfare, but to a reform of private and social insurance; tax and employment benefit policies. Delivery system redesign and capacity building will follow.

Technology and the consumer

One of the wonders of the next decade will be the new health care science available to us all. We will see exciting developments in pharmaceuticals, new implantable technology and the use of the human genome. However to fully use these advances we will need to re-design the systems of delivering care.

The health care consumer will need to develop a closer partnership with their health care provider. Health care information needs to be automated in order to be used effectively by providers and patients while protecting their privacy and confidentiality. However, it is likely that consumers will have new financing systems available to them that will reward wise health care consumer behavior. The challenge for this emerging system is to find a way to move the consumer of today who has first dollar insurance coverage and no particular interest or knowledge of their own health to the new "empowered" health care consumer of tomorrow.

Leadership

Who is going to develop the new health policies needed to meet these challenges? The failure of the Clinton health plan and

the incrementalism in its wake argues against significant or innovative federal policymaking. Although some states have been innovative in health policies, the marked variability among the states makes for an ineffective national policy. Many private sector health care organizations have been on the defensive for the past decade as managed care has shown itself to have many more problems than was first identified by its proponents.

Therefore we believe the new health policies of the future must come from the health professions and citizen action. Leaders must engage with their communities to define and address each emerging health policy issue. Citizen leaders with the help of doctors, health care executives, employers, patient advocates, and the media can contribute to developing new and creative policy solutions.

Elected officials that sponsor legislation that is effective and long lasting will look to practice to drive policy. Policy solutions that arise from citizen action and health professions leadership have a good chance of becoming permanent government and private sector policy.

The upper Midwest has always been a crucible of health policy innovation. Many of the ideas developed here have been adopted nationally by practitioners and policymakers alike. It is now time to demonstrate our leadership again. **MJ**

David Durenberger is the chair and Daniel McLaughlin is the executive director of the National Institute of Health Policy. NIHP is a partnership of the University of Minnesota and the University of St. Thomas.

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with mental health problems and illnesses.

On the upside, several current economic trends create a unique opportunity to motivate employers to address mental health in the workplace. Today's employers are under extreme pressure to attract and retain qualified employees in a very tight labor market, increase the productivity of existing employees, and manage rapidly rising health care costs.

"Employers who are sensitive to the mental health challenges of those working

and make room for those with serious mental health problems to work will see significant results in all three areas," argues the report.

The primary recommendations of the report are that Minnesota take a public health approach to mental health, and that the Department of Health be given the responsibility and the resources to lead this public health approach. The report also recommends that a very specific public education campaign be directed at

employers and suggests ways for mental health and rehabilitation service providers to connect with the business community, via things like the Internet. **MJ**

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OnBalance

Views From Around the State

Bits of policy decisions found under the melting snow

The concealed weapon law is once again on the table at the Legislature:

According to the **Star Tribune** (March 8) "the so-called concealed-carry bill has been around since today's teens were tykes. Its aim is to take away the discretion police chiefs now exercise in issuing permits to carry concealed weapons." "If Minnesota were populated by robots, perhaps the concealed carry bill wouldn't pose such dangers. But its inhabitants are mostly human – and thus prone to haplessness, fear, pride, anger and other human foibles. How can putting guns in their pockets possibly help them?"

"The idea of some kind of consistent statewide standard is appealing," according to the **Brainerd Daily Dispatch** (March 18). However, "the provision in the bill that would deny county sheriffs the discretion they now have regarding who gets a permit and who doesn't is more troubling." "...the sheriffs are certainly more accountable than a faceless state bureaucrat. This is an area where local control makes a lot of sense."

"The current law works just fine. Leave it alone," says the **Duluth News Tribune** (March 9). "Do we really want people carrying hidden pistols into churches, schools, bars, child-care centers, sports stadiums and other public places?" "The people of Minnesota have said year after year that they do not want loosened concealed carry laws – and that, in the end, should prevail at the Legislature."

And the governor's proposal to ban teacher strikes also generated some discussion:

"If there is a more backwards way to resolving Minnesota public schools' budget and labor issues than what Gov. Jesse Ventura proposed this week, it would be hard to imagine what it is," writes the **Fergus Falls Journal** (March 23).

"We find the governor's suggestion that teachers should be classified as 'essential employees' one of simplicity," says the **Mesabi Daily News** (March 22).

"Sometimes simplicity is good. Sometimes not. In this case, most definitely not."

The **Rochester Post-Bulletin** (March 24) believes the chance of passing a strike prohibition is slim, and instead supports the Scheevel-Kuile bill which would "bar school districts from agreeing to teacher contract settlements that exceed the districts' anticipated revenues."

The **Pioneer Press** (March 23) agrees, saying that while the idea of a ban on teacher strikes "is worth discussing, it seems unlikely to be adopted in either house of the Legislature. After all, the state teachers union is a potent political force and one of the largest contributors to legislative campaigns."

But virtually every daily paper in the state felt compelled to weigh in on proposals for a publicly financed baseball stadium:

"State lawmakers' latest plan to help build a new ballpark for the Minnesota Twins contains sensible elements," according to the **Pioneer Press** (March 21). "But it suffers from a bit of the excessive complexity and insufficient candor that have tripped up other efforts over the years to help the Twins succeed in Minnesota." "As lawmakers refine and adjust their ballpark plan, they should keep it simple and call it what it is."

The **Worthington Daily Globe** (March 22) believes "any plans for a new stadium must include two items: No money can be spent on a stadium until baseball levels the financial playing field between the small markets and the big markets; and any stadium must be built so a retractable roof can be added later. The Twins draw fans from a large area of Minnesota, Iowa and the Dakotas. People

need to know that if they make the investment to get to the ballpark, a game will be held rain or shine."

The **St. Cloud Times** (March 22) thinks "having the public help pay for new stadiums may be an evil necessity of hosting pro sports teams, but the least lawmakers should do is make sure taxpayers are getting a stadium pitch they can swing at with confidence. This latest plan is close, but it's still outside the public's strike zone."

"Taxpayer-funded stadiums do not solve the problem. They only get communities involved in bidding wars for teams – and increase the asset value of teams to the owners," according to the **Duluth News Tribune** (March 22). "Until team owners address the two big issues of private contribution and small market competitiveness, this proposal, like others in the past, is doomed to failure."

"If Major League Baseball eventually adopts a workable revenue sharing plan, as the NFL and NBA have done, the Twins should be able to afford their own stadium," according to the **Rochester Post Bulletin** (March 26). "In the meantime Minnesota's tax dollars should go for tax cuts or needed public services, not for subsidizing a baseball stadium."

The **Brainerd Daily Dispatch** (March 29) thinks the "state must meet other needs before granting the Twins a subsidy." "How we protect and use our natural resources, how we educate our children and how we fund our transportation systems should be vital concerns to senators and representatives. How the Minnesota Twins, a private, for-profit sports franchise, fares is just not on that list of vital interests." "While there is a sentimental attachment and pride in the Twins, that can't be translated into unlimited generosity when more pressing state needs are being unmet." **MJ**

Minneapolis corridors: The city's veins and arteries

by Chuck Ballentine

Minneapolis is a city of neighborhoods bound together by streets that function as corridors. These connecting streets and the land uses that border them continue to play a special role in the evolution of our communities. The Minneapolis Comprehensive Plan uses the terms "community corridors" and "commercial corridors" to describe streets characterized by mixed-use, linear development. Access to goods and services, community facilities and natural amenities are an important feature of those places. The neighborhoods find many of their goods and services along these corridors. As destinations and demands for traffic, these places function like the city's veins and arteries. This article reviews the historical rise and decline of these corridors and gives several examples of current city efforts to enhance and enliven corridors, to keep our veins and arteries healthy.

Urban settlement and corridor development

Urban settlement and growth in Minneapolis changed radically in the late 1880's with the electrification of horsecar lines. The electric streetcar and trolley system had a tremendous impact on the development of the relatively young city.

This new mode of transportation allowed new development to occur at farther distances from the central core of the city, thereby reducing residential crowding

"The opportunity is clear: There is only one Mississippi, and the Upper River is the best potential large-scale amenity awaiting development in the City of Minneapolis."

in the core area and enabling working people to live farther away from the congested downtown yet still move around easily and quickly to work and shopping. Initially, streetcar lines served the southside of Minneapolis. Northeast neighborhoods were also connected to downtown and the Lake District. Another well-traveled line connected the Near North with the Southside and Downtown.

From the 1910s to the Second World War, outlying residential areas developed around streetcar lines that traveled along Hennepin, Nicollet, Broadway, Central, and Lake. Commercial districts sprung up gradually as a critical mass of resident settled in newly built areas. Small clusters of stores prospered at streetcar stops by supplying groceries, meat, pharmaceuticals and other everyday goods and services. As time passed and streetcars were gradually replaced by private automobiles, the shape and form of retail commercial area changed as well. Department stores were replaced by shopping malls, built to accommodate cars and their drivers. Corner grocery stores closed their doors as supermarkets became more common and people's grocery shopping habits changed. Economically stable and prosperous households either left the city altogether or got into their cars to do their shopping at suburban centers located in outlying areas. Even with these changes, Hennepin, Nicollet, Broadway, Central and Lake still represent most of the city's commercial corridors. In addition to traditional commercial corridors, the city has undertaken major reinvestment projects along some of the less traditional, but just as important locations, to strengthen the vitality of economic, social, physical and natural flow through these veins and arteries.

Avenue of the Arts – highlighting and adding

The Avenue of the Arts project, initiated by Mayor Sharon Sayles-Belton, creates a new vision for Third Avenue between the Mississippi River and 26th Street South. The goal of this urban design project is to highlight the arts, celebrate diversity, connect civic buildings and spaces, create a signature street, complement neighborhoods and facilitate part-

nerships.

Avenue of the Arts has its roots in the 1917 *Plan of Minneapolis* put forth by city planner Edward Bennet. The plan depicted 6th Avenue as a grand boulevard that ran from the Mississippi River to Lake Harriet, with connections to the City's administrative center at City Hall and a transportation center at Gateway Park. The Avenue would run past the newly built Minneapolis Institute of Arts, thus incorporating the museum into the daily life of the city. This 1917 dream now takes shape as the Avenue of the Arts, creating an avenue that ties the Minneapolis Institute of Arts in with downtown and the river.

Avenue of the Arts includes: the new Third Avenue freeway bridge inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright; a sculpture garden on the Third Avenue side of the new American Express service center; and a redesigned layout of intersection patterns and street furniture.

Upper River Master Plan – changing land uses

Land use in the Upper River corridor has been in a state of flux for the past 125 years, with a succession of bulk-material-processing and transport industries responding to market forces and rapid changes in available resources and technologies. This change can be understood by tracking the history of specific parcels of land. For example, the area along the west bank of the Mississippi north of Plymouth Avenue was used for saw mills, lumberyards, and foundries during the first era of the city's settlement. When the supply of trees declined the vacant land became a railroad yard stretching up past Broadway. After the rail yard became unnecessary with conversion from steam to diesel engines, the MCDA developed the current West River Road, with riverfront open space on one side, and the other lined with light industries such as printing plants and laboratories.

Current city policies encourage light industrial and park development on the Upper River, while also supporting old-line, bulk-material-handling industries with subsidies to the City-owned Upper Harbor Terminal. The Upper River Master

"The major benefits of this plan. . .include 90 acres of new park land, 15 miles of bike lanes and recreational trails, 5.25 miles of parkway and boulevards, 2,500 housing units in new riverfront neighborhoods, 2,000 new additional jobs and over \$10 million in additional annual tax revenue."

Plan explores the potential benefits to completing a continuous riverfront park system on both banks of the Upper River, leading a transition away from barging and heavy industry to a new, more stable era of land use.

This plan presents a bold vision for developing the Mississippi riverfront into a regional park amenity in north and northeast Minneapolis. The opportunity is clear: There is only one Mississippi, and the Upper River is the best potential large-scale amenity awaiting development in the City of Minneapolis.

The plan seeks the highest and best use of land adjacent to riverfront parks, including the development of new residential communities. Riverfront living is gaining in popularity in Minneapolis, and the Upper River affords some of the most enticing sites with excellent river views and quick access to downtown. Two major redevelopment areas are proposed on the West Bank including a mixed-use urban promenade district south of Lowry Avenue and new residential neighborhood north of Lowry. The development of residential neighborhoods will produce many benefits including a higher value tax base, support for locally-based commercial goods and services, move-up housing for area residents, increased park security, and an enlarged constituency seeking continued improvements to the ecology of the river corridor and communities of north and northeast Minneapolis.

The major benefits of this plan's implementation include 90 acres of new park land, 15 miles of bike lanes and recreational trails, 5.25 miles of parkway and boulevards, 2,500 housing units in new riverfront neighborhoods, 2,000 new addi-

tional jobs and over \$10 million in additional annual tax revenue.

Humboldt Greenway – building off existing success

The Humboldt Greenway seeks to build long-term value and enhance existing tax base through strategic investment in parks and improved infrastructure. The Greenway will add parkway amenities along and adjacent to Humboldt Avenue North in the Shingle Creek and Lind-Bohanon neighborhoods, from Victory Memorial Drive to 53rd Avenue North in Minneapolis. Project construction began in July of 2000.

With the input, support, and cooperation of the community, this project has been designed to add much needed senior housing, larger single family homes, and attractive townhomes to neighborhoods that currently lack a range of housing choices. The Greenway project will also enhance Single Creek as it flows toward the Mississippi and improve pedestrian connections to existing parks and schools. The Humboldt project represents long overdue public investment on a grand scale to maintain our neighborhoods on the north side.

Since the project's inception, Hennepin County has served as the lead agency and its largest financial supporter. The Greenway has also received significant financial support from the federal government, the State of Minnesota, the Metropolitan Council and the City of Minneapolis.

Near Northside Redevelopment – new neighborhood connector

A new parkway-style boulevard is a

major feature of the Near Northside Redevelopment Project, a comprehensive project that includes construction of mixed-income housing, commercial development, cleanup activities, creation of natural amenities, multi-modal transit access and improved connections to existing and planned employment centers, education, services, parks and parkways. The Near Northside Redevelopment Project is the designated anchor project for the north subzone of the Minneapolis Empowerment Zone (EZ) initiative. An important objective is improved access to jobs, recreation and services for residents of northside Minneapolis neighborhoods, long under-served by the city's network of streets and trails due to railway and freeway barriers. The new north-south boulevard will in part replace existing residential streets. In addition, the boulevard will add new road service to connect north and south Minneapolis, bridging rail tracks and crossing below Interstate 394. Important connections include job-generating efforts in the Basset Creek Valley area, Downtown Minneapolis, educational and cultural campuses, and the high quality park and parkway amenities in South Minneapolis. Enhanced landscaping and on-site surface storm water management to improve the aesthetic characteristic of the boulevard is included within the scope of the project.

The City of Minneapolis is moving to keep its veins and arteries healthy by highlighting and enhancing a corridor like the Avenue of the Arts; changing land uses entirely like the "Above the Falls" Upper River Master Plan; building on the existing success of the parkway system in the Humboldt Greenway project, and created new corridors like the new north-south connectors as part of the Near North Redevelopment. **MJ**

Chuck Ballentine is the director of planning for the City of Minneapolis. Material for this article was taken from "The Minneapolis Plan" Volume I-Policy Document, "Above the Falls," the Upper River Master Plan, "Avenue of the Arts" Master Plan, and the Hennepin county web page.

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TakeNote

Policy Tidbits

Rummaging around in Minnesota's public policy attic

About 18 months ago the *Minnesota Journal* reported that Education Minnesota (EM) lost its bid for loan forgiveness for \$2.3 million as a result of the merger of The Minnesota Education Association (MEA) and the Minnesota Federation of Teachers (MFT). At the time Education Minnesota pledged that the merger would not result in a dues increase or a special assessment to pay for the additional \$240,000 per year. Apparently Education Minnesota is living up to its promise. Sort of. According to Mike Antonucci of the Education Intelligence Agency, part of EM members' dues payment goes to a "crisis fund" which is designed to provide support in case of a strike. In March delegates to EM's Representative Convention approved a plan to use interest from the fund to pay the NEA debt. Apparently EM believes there is a distinction between actual dues income and the interest earned from dues.—*Phil Jenni*

The Minnesota Business Partnership's April newsletter quotes data from the Minnesota Department of Children Families and Learning that shows school district revenue per student increased by 18 percent — after adjusting for inflation—during the 1990s. Revenue per student jumped from \$5,395 in 1990 to \$8,382 in 2000.—*P. J.*

It has been a few months since we've seen an upward revision in the expected cost of Minnesota's Mall of America-to-Downtown light rail line. Just in case anyone is keeping track, Seattle still wins the prize for the most expensive rail project in the country: \$4.1 billion (so far) for a 21-mile line. The financial situation is getting so bad that the U.S. Inspector General actually told Congress at the start of this month to suspend future funding until local transit planners get their act together and come up with a clear bottom line cost for the project. Meanwhile, King County's elected officials are debating increasing fares on the region's buses in order to generate a few million dollars in additional operating funds. Is this the vital, competitive future we can look forward to as our own rail line progresses?—*Dave Chadwick*

Help Wanted: Teachers. Over the next decade America needs to hire 2.2 million K-

12 teachers. For September of 2001 New York City Schools have 12,000 vacancies and Los Angeles has 4,000. Might be a good time to dispense with cash incentives for early retirement in Minnesota. (*U.S. News and World Report*, April 9).—*L.W.*

Minnesotans are accustomed to thinking of Target—and especially the now defunct Dayton's name—as our own. With more than 35,000 employees, it's the largest private sector employer in the state and second only to the State of Minnesota in total Minnesota employees. But the Target Corporation is now the largest private employer in California, too, with 64,000 employees spread out in more than 270 stores.—*P. J.*

Hands were wringing over the latest results of the TIMSS (Third International Math and Science Survey), which is administered to a sample of students around the world to measure math and science education. The rankings for American eighth graders improved over 1995, the last time the test was given, but differences in which countries participated in the two rounds of tests made it difficult to know how real the improvements were. More troubling: some inner-city districts—like Miami, Jersey City, and Chicago—scored near the bottom of the international rankings, down near Chile, Morocco and South Africa.

Meanwhile, in Japan, usually admired for its math and science schooling, the Ministry of Education has ordered a 30 percent cut in the amount of math and science instruction in elementary and middle schools (*Japan Digest*, April 4). The education bureaucrats decided schools should stop trying to cram

kids' heads full of facts and give them more leeway for independent thinking. But universities are saying freshman competence in math and science has taken a nose-dive, and employers complain that younger workers don't have the skills needed to do their jobs.

These developments show why comparing relative achievement has its limits. American achievement may suddenly look better next round, not because our kids know more but because other kids know less. Let's hear it for objective standards of excellence.

—*Janet Dudrow*

I'm a big fan of writers who find ways to make abstract numbers vivid and meaningful. Gregg Easterbrook of *The New Republic* recently pointed out (March 16) that in 1999, the year of the Columbine shooting, 28 students were killed nationwide in schools — while 840 kids under age 20 were killed when struck by cars while walking, often to school. Funny how we don't see splashy front-page stories on newspapers, magazines and TV about the tragedy of juvenile pedestrian deaths.

Another good number-smith, Steven Holmes, did a story in *The New York Times* (March 21) about the lobbying clout of AARP (formerly the American Association of Retired Persons). He points out that the organization's nationwide membership, at 33.4 million, is bigger than the population of Canada.—*J.D.*

"Take Note" contributors include Minnesota Journal and Citizens League staff members and Janet Dudrow, policy analyst at Dorsey & Whitney.

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The Citizens League is an open membership organization. Suggested dues are \$50 for individuals and \$75 for families. For more information, please call 612-338-0791.

Special Thanks...

to the League's Program Committee. They met several times and considered a wide range of topics before submitting their list of three to the Board. In addition to the co-chairs, Bill Diaz and Barb Sporlein, members included Gary Cunningham, Kathleen Vellenga, Steve Keefe, John Adams, John Brandl, Linda Ewen, Dee Long, Jean Harris, Ken Keller and Tom Triplett.

Board puts energy into next study committee

The Citizens League Board of Directors has selected a review of Minnesota's energy policy as the topic of the next study committee.

The Board chose the energy project from a list of topics recommended by an ad hoc Program Committee led by Board members Bill Diaz and Barb Sporlein.

Other top considerations included a look at what Minnesota's public institutions need to do to serve new residents of Minnesota and developing a citizen vision for the metropolitan bus system using the latest in bus system design and technology.

While the Board was intrigued by all the choices, they felt the energy topic was the best fit for the League's research agenda.

It has been 25 years since the state of Minnesota last took a major look at energy supply. The Board felt that the state

needed a new, independent, non-partisan review of Minnesota's energy future and that the League was well-suited for the task.

Minnesota Unplugged: Time for a New Energy Policy

Earlier this winter, most Minnesotans were shocked by the rapid increase in home heating bills. But the rolling blackouts in California shifted concern from high prices to reliability.

A recent poll conducted by the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* and Minnesota Public Radio indicated that 72 percent of Minnesotans are either "somewhat" or "very concerned" about Minnesota's electric supply. And well they might be.

Some analysts predict Minnesota faces California-like shortages within the next half dozen years. They project the state will need an additional 3,000 megawatts of electric supply by the end of the dec-

ade — that's the equivalent of supplying energy to 300,000 homes, or put another way, requires the capacity of three big power plants like we have now.

The charge to the League committee will concentrate on three questions:

- With the marketplace for energy increasingly crossing state and national borders, what is the state's role in terms of supply, conservation, and market restructuring?
- What policies should Minnesota adopt in those areas where there is a significant state role?
- In preparing for Minnesota's future energy needs, how should we balance affordability, reliability and environmental soundness?

The committee will begin work soon after Memorial Day. Watch your mail for the details.

Help Wanted — Citizens League Program Associate

The Citizens League is about to experience our own labor shortage. We're looking for a program associate to provide the primary staff work for the upcoming energy committee and help out with other League programs, like the Mind-Openers, and the *Minnesota Journal*.

A complete job description can be found on the front page of the League's web site at www.citizensleague.net. Candidates should possess excellent writing, administrative, organizational, analytical and strong interpersonal skills. Candidates should

work well in a small office setting and should be flexible enough to become involved in a wide variety of policy topics.

Contact with community leaders; a collegial, stimulating and flexible work environment; and a competitive salary and em-

ployee benefit package make this a very attractive position. If you, or someone you know, are interested please send a resume and cover letter to Phil Jenni at 708 South 3rd Street, Suite 500, Minneapolis, MN 55415 or email pjenni@citizensleague.net.

MIND-OPENER POLICY FORUM

K-12 Education Reform in Minnesota

Are good intentions and more money enough?

The current Citizens League Mind-Opener series is focusing on K-12 education issues, with special attention to accountability, system reform, and the future of charter schools.

Senator Sandra Pappas (DFL-St. Paul), chair of the Senate Education Committee, began the series on April 10. Upcoming speakers include:

Tuesday, April 17

Representative Alice Seagren (R-Bloomington)
Chair, House K-12 Education Finance Committee

Wednesday, April 25

Joe Graba
Senior Policy Fellow, Hamline University

Wednesday, May 2

Louise Sundin
President, Minneapolis Federation of Teachers

All meetings are from noon to 1:30 p.m. at the University Club, 420 Summit Avenue, St. Paul. The cost is \$15 for League members and \$20 for nonmembers and includes a buffet lunch.

For more information go to
www.citizensleague.net
or call 612-338-0791.

Board endorses mental health reports

In addition to selecting the next study topic at its March meeting, the Board of Directors also endorsed the recommendations of the League's two new reports on mental health (see article in this month's *Journal*). Adult mental health committee co-chair Jan Smaby presented the work of her committee, which was co-chaired by Mike Christenson. Marcia Avner and Keith Halleland, co-chairs of the children's mental health committee, were also on hand to brief the Board on the work of their committee.

The children's mental health report is already gathering media attention, serving as the jumping off point for an editorial in the April 1 edition of the Star Tribune. The editorial touches on several of the flaws in Minnesota's children's mental health system and compliments the League for having "many remedies in mind."

Both reports are now available online at the League's website (www.citizensleague.net). Hard copies can be obtained by contacting the Minnesota Department of Human Services at (651) 582-1829.

During the Board's discussion of the reports, League Executive Director Lyle Wray reminded the Board that since the studies were done under contract with the Department of Human Services, their endorsement was necessary to make the reports official League policy. He also noted that contract studies are a unique confluence of mission-related policy work that fits the League's current portfolio, fills a community need and diversifies the League's revenue sources.

Guidelines for contract studies include: 1) the study fits within the League's current issue portfolio, or the League's historic interest (e.g., property tax); 2) the League has complete control of the process; 3) the study has the potential to make a contribution to good policy and put the League in the forefront of policy debates; and 4) the project is financially successful.

50 years of good ideas for a better place — CL 1952-2002

The Citizens League will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2002. We intend to mark the occasion over the course of the next year and a half with a glimpse back at the League's influence and impact on making this a better place.

This month we'll take a look back at what the League was doing 20 and 40 years ago.

Twenty years ago, in April 1981, the League released a statement urging the Metropolitan Council to tackle new initiatives to keep its role as policy coordinator for the re-

gion. Specifically, the League listed four areas where the Council should take more policy initiative: cable communications; regional employment policy; financing regional services; and local government boundaries, structures and functions. The statement also repeated the League's long-standing position that the Council should be elected.

The League also renewed its call for a high occupancy vehicle lane for the planned construction of I-394. The League said a conventional freeway would be obsolete

before completion and said that "the greatest potential for progress lies in creating more incentives for ride-sharing."

The League's sights weren't as regional back in the spring of 1961. Forty years ago the League suggested modifying a proposed Minneapolis charter amendment for increasing the strength of the Police Department.

In addition, the League expressed its disappointment that the city's Chief Administrative Officer would report

to the City Council and not the Mayor's office.

The League also weighed in on the "hottest metropolitan issue in the Legislature" strongly urging the passage of a bill establishing a metropolitan sanitary district. The League said the bill was necessary for the "benefit of the health and orderly growth of the entire metropolitan area." League Executive Director at the time Verne Johnson had recently chaired a special committee on the topic that had been appointed by Governor Elmer L. Anderson.