

Twin Cities

Numbers improving for Hmong in U.S., census finds

Income, education rates show gains

By Frederick Melo
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The latest issue of the Hmong Studies Journal is all about numbers — the numbers of Hmong in the Twin Cities, the numbers of Hmong in America getting advanced degrees, the numbers of Hmong getting divorced.

The answer is the numbers are going up, sometimes dra-

matically, in all three respects. Meanwhile, poverty rates for the U.S. Hmong population are falling.

The St. Paul-based academic journal has dedicated its latest issue to the 2010 U.S. Census figures, which paint a revealing picture of one of the metro area's largest recent immigrant groups.

Professors from universities across the country contrib-

ed to the special issue, which took a year to assemble. Among their findings, they discovered Hmong living in all 50 states, and more than half of the Hmong population in the U.S. was born in America, as opposed to being foreign-born.

The journal has been chronicling issues of concern to Hmong in the U.S. since 1996. The special 2010 U.S. Census issue was co-edited by Zha Blong Xiong, an associate professor at the University of

Minnesota.

Fellow co-editor of the issue, Mark Pfeifer of the Hmong Cultural Center in St. Paul and an online lecturer in anthropology at the State University of New York's Institute of Technology, said that Minneapolis-St. Paul has long topped the list of U.S. metro areas with large Hmong populations and Hmong institutions, and the census shows "accelerated growth" in that regard.

The Twin Cities metro area

With 29,000 Hmong residents, St. Paul is home to more Hmong than any city in the country.

is home to 64,000 Hmong, compared with populations of 31,000 and 27,000 in metro Fresno, Calif. and metro Sacramento, Calif., respectively.

With 29,000 Hmong residents, St. Paul is home to more Hmong than any city in

the country, and Ramsey County has 13 of the top 25 neighborhood census tracts by population size. The U.S. Census tract with the largest number of Hmong (1,861) is in St. Paul's North End, bounded by Larpenteur Avenue, Rice Street, Interstate 35E and Magnolia Avenue.

The metro's Hmong community is, overall, disproportionately youthful. The median age for Hmong residents in

HMONG RESIDENTS, 4A >

Run, Laylah! Run!



PIONEER PRESS PHOTOS: BEN GARVIN

Ty Klietz and his dog, Laylah, race along Lake Street in Minneapolis. They're pictured below at Klietz's Minneapolis home.

Ty Klietz, 28, of Minneapolis broke his back in 2010.

"It was just another night of drinking that turned tragic," said Klietz, who has since given up the bottle. "I quit using alcohol, and now I'm more of a daredevil."

He's pulled in his wheelchair at high speeds by his best friend, Laylah, a 3-year-old pit bull.

"It started with her needing exercise and me not being able to walk her," Klietz said. "It didn't take long for her to learn that if we were going to go anywhere, she was going to have to pull me." The pair have reached speeds upward of 30 mph.

"Time and time again, there's always somebody with a high-five and thinks it's the coolest thing they've ever seen," Klietz said. "It's not a foolproof system — there are those times that we crash, believe me."

Klietz considers Laylah key to his recovery.

"She has made me step out of my pity party," he said. "She gives me a reason to get out of bed."

For a video, see photos.TwinCities.com.

— Ben Garvin



Carver County

Prince's French tax matter hasn't been resolved, IRS says

Hearing Friday over ignored summons

By David Hanners
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Although lawyers for Prince say the entertainer has given French tax collectors everything they wanted, the IRS says he still needs to obey the summons it issued for him.

The two tax returns that Prince's representatives turned over to French officials were undated and unsigned, and a lawyer for the IRS said the agency isn't sure the documents are all the French need.

"The IRS requires additional time to review the documents, make a determination whether the production of documents constitutes full compli-

ance with the summons, and, if necessary, consult with the French Competent Authority," Justice Department lawyer Daniel Applegate wrote in a response to Prince's December reply.

Until then, the IRS summons "is valid and enforceable" and a court hearing scheduled for Friday, Jan. 11, should go on as scheduled, Applegate told U.S. District Judge David Doty.

In September, the IRS went to federal court to enforce a summons issued for the musician, identified in court papers by his full name, Prince Rogers Nelson. Neither he nor his representatives showed up for an April meeting with the

IRS over the matter.

Doty had ordered a show-cause hearing to find out why the summons was ignored.

The French had asked the IRS for the summons, saying they wanted to make sure Prince, 54, and his company, Paisley Park Enterprises Inc., had paid all required taxes stemming from shows he played in that country in 2009 and 2010.

On Dec. 28, a lawyer for Prince filed a reply, saying that nobody had shown up for the April meeting with the IRS because the summons hadn't been properly served. The lawyer also wrote that Prince believed his previous business managers had filed everything they were supposed to, and that the documents had since been provid-

ed and the show-cause hearing wasn't needed.

In his reply, Applegate said that wasn't necessarily the case. The 2009 and 2010 tax returns that Prince gave the French lacked dates and signatures, the Justice Department lawyer wrote in his reply, filed Friday.

"As of this date, the Internal Revenue Service has not determined whether 1) the documents are responsive to the summons, and 2) the Respondent has fully complied with the summons," Applegate's reply says.

The French tax matter is not the rock star's only tax problem. Laurie Engelen, Carver County's taxpayer services manager, said records in that county showed delinquent taxes on 15 parcels associated with Prince, Paisley Park Enterprises, PRN Music Corp. or Love 4 One Another Charities. The total tax, penalty and interest due is more than \$360,500, Engelen said.

The singer lives in Chanhassen on property owned by PRN Music Corp.

St. Paul

Highland Park graduate dies after Bolivia crash

By Mara H. Gottfried
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A 20-year-old college student originally from St. Paul died Sunday, Jan. 6, after a Land Rover crash while traveling in South America, according to a CaringBridge website.

Tamar Kaplan was a junior at Claremont McKenna College in Claremont, Calif., and a top 2010 graduate from Highland Park Senior High School. She'd spent the fall semester studying in Quito, Ecuador, and she and friends traveled through Peru and then Bolivia at the end of the semester, the website with Kaplan's story said.

Kaplan and a friend were on a tour in a Land Rover on Wednesday and involved in a crash in which Kaplan was seriously injured, the web-

site said. She was taken to the nearest hospital and given basic care. Doctors reported Kaplan had a broken femur and clavicle and partial lung collapse, the post said.

Kaplan's father, Daniel Kaplan, arrived at the hospital Saturday and accompanied his daughter by ambulance to La Paz, Bolivia, a seven-hour drive. On the way, Tamar Kaplan's condition worsened and her lungs were filling with fluid, the CaringBridge site said.

The ambulance stopped at a hospital three hours from La Paz, where Kaplan's vital signs were weak and she was unconscious. "Evaluation revealed her injuries were more serious than initially reported: more

BOLIVIA CRASH, 4A >

St. Paul

Curtain will rise again at Penumbra

March show planned after African-American theater raises \$359K

By Ross Raihala
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St. Paul's Penumbra Theatre will return to action in March after raising \$359,000 to keep its doors open.

"I'm feeling really upbeat and very thankful for the people who sent support," said Lou Bellamy, Penumbra's founder and artistic director. "It's really cool."

Penumbra will debut "Spunk" on March 14 for a monthlong run. Adapted by George C. Wolfe from several short stories by Zora Neale Hurston, the show stars familiar Penumbra faces T. Mychael Rambo, Dennis W. Spears and Jevetta Steele.

In September, the nationally known African-American theater announced it was suspending programming for the rest of 2012 and cutting six full-time staff positions in order to balance its budget. The theater also embarked on a mission to raise \$340,000 by the end of the year. More than 1,400 individuals, corporations and foundations donated to the cause, exceeding the goal by \$19,000.

In order to keep the doors open, Bellamy said Penumbra is working with a team from 3M to develop a seven-year financial plan.

"We have to make sure a sound business plan carries us forward," Bellamy said. "We have to be very conservative in our revenue projections."

Audiences are likely to see fewer fully mounted stage offerings — possibly three in the upcoming season, as opposed to four or five. Bellamy said he wants to fill in the holes with more educational programming.

"The idea is to keep the budget as low as we can, which I think is completely doable," Bellamy said.

The largest African-American theater company in the United States, Penumbra is known for producing the plays of August Wilson, who lived in St. Paul from 1978 to 1990, as well as its own productions, like 2010's "I Wish You Love," which went on to enjoy a sold-out nine-day run at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C.

Minnesota > Education

Group gives state low mark on policies

School choice, teacher evaluations are at issue

By Megan Boldt
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A national advocacy group created by former D.C. schools chancellor Michelle Rhee gave Minnesota a “D” for its policies on school choice, evaluating teachers and using those evaluations to make personnel decisions.

Minnesota ranked 26th nationally based on report cards released by StudentsFirst on Monday, Jan. 7.

The highest-ranked states — Louisiana and Florida — each earned a B-minus for their overall grade.

StudentsFirst said Minnesota is behind when it comes to ensuring effective teachers are identified, retained and rewarded. The state is developing a new teacher-evaluation system, but the group said it's not enough, because there are no consequences for ineffective teachers.

The report, though, does not consider individual or schoolwide test scores or teacher effectiveness. And state education officials and teachers say that's a huge flaw.

“Minnesotans need to remember that

these ratings have absolutely no connection with how well schools educate students,” said Tom Doohar, president of the statewide teachers' union Education Minnesota. “If they did, Minnesota and Massachusetts would be at the top and Louisiana won't be held up as a model.”

In the StudentsFirst report, Minnesota also received low marks for not offering private-school vouchers for low-income children or allowing parents to close ineffective schools.

“It should be unacceptable to every Minnesotan that our state has one of the worst achievement gaps in the country. We must call on legislators to have courage in supporting common sense policies that put the interests of students first,” said Kathy Saltzman, Minnesota state director for StudentsFirst. “We must do better when it comes to working together to ensure all students are successful. It's an issue that affects our state's economic competitiveness and one of social justice when it comes to our children.”

Charlene Briner, chief of staff at the Minnesota Education Department, said

ON THE WEB

To read a copy of the report, go to [TwinCities.com](#).

she doesn't put a lot of stock in the report and gives it a “D” grade.

“It's an arbitrary judgment of whether or not states are following the narrow StudentsFirst agenda,” Briner said. “We're focusing on things that we know work based on research and data ... investing in our youngest learners ... closing the achievement gap.”

Rhee's three-plus years as head of Washington, D.C., public schools were contentious ones. She ranked the education establishment by pushing a teacher-evaluation system that led to the dismissal of nearly 300 instructors and placed hundreds more on one year's notice. Test scores did rise — dramatically, at some schools — but it also produced an investigation into cheating on the tests and climates of fear among city teachers.

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Burnsville-Eagan-Savage schools

Firm leads search for new superintendent

By Christopher Magan
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Four retired Minnesota administrators will help Burnsville-Eagan-Savage school board members pick the district's next leader.

Board members hired School Exec Connect on Thursday, Jan. 3, to lead the search to replace Superintendent Randy Clegg, who announced in September he will retire at the end of the school year. The district will pay a \$19,500 fee and up to \$2,750 in expenses for the contract that includes a two-year guarantee if the chosen candidate doesn't work out.

The Illinois-based education consulting and administrative search firm has been popular with Twin Cities districts looking for administrators. The West St. Paul-Men-

dota Heights-Eagan, South Washington County and Eden Prairie school districts all used the firm last year.

Four past area superintendents will lead the School Exec Connect search. They are: Kenneth Dragseth, former Edina superintendent; Antoinette Johns, past Brooklyn Center superintendent; Charles Kyte, past Northfield administrator and former leader of the Minnesota Association of School Administrators; and Robert Ostlund, a retired Wayzata schools leader.

Linda Hanson, president of the firm, said in a letter to the board that her group's process guarantees “well-vetted, quality candidates.”

The firm will develop a profile of desired attributes for the candidate through public meetings, focus groups and

surveys of staff and community members.

“We define our success by the longevity of the leaders we place, our continuing relationships with client districts and the positive and long-lasting relationships we establish with the board with whom we work,” Hanson wrote to the board in the firm's proposal packet.

The firm will begin taking input this month to develop the profile and the job will be posted nationally in February, with interviews taking place in the spring and the new superintendent taking over July 1.

More districts are using search firms to select their high-profile leaders. School Exec Connect was founded in 2004 and conducted 40 national searches last year.

The American Association

of School Administrators found the average tenure for a superintendent is five to six years. Leaders in large, urban districts typically have shorter tenures. Clegg has been with Burnsville since 2008.

Four Burnsville school board members who won reelection in November all said finding the right leader to replace Clegg was a top priority. The district faces several challenges, including projected budget deficits, stagnant enrollment and a growing number of students in poverty.

The new superintendent will be the district's ninth since its founding in 1955.

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Wisconsin

GOP Legislature to press mining, bipartisanship

Associated Press

The legislative session started Monday, Jan. 7, with Republican leaders promising swift passage of a bill to reform Wisconsin's mining law and calls for more bipartisanship and a healing of wounds after a bruising fight over collective bargaining led to a series of recall elections.

While Republicans can largely do as they wish with control of the Senate and Assembly, Republican Gov. Scott Walker has called for a less contentious agenda focusing on job creation and avoiding hot-button issues that could spur massive protests like those seen when he went after public unions in 2011.

At least one potential fight already appears to have been diverted. Republican Assembly Speaker Robin Vos said he would not allow a vote on making Wisconsin a right-to-work state, as was done last month in Michigan. Many Democrats and union supporters feared that would be the next step in Wisconsin following passage of the 2011 law that effectively ended collective bargaining for public workers.

“Hopefully we can leave the contentious issues of the past behind us,” Vos said in detailing his hope to focus on job creation, improving education, passing a balanced budget and cutting income taxes. “We don't need every single issue bringing 100,000 protesters to Madison.”

Yet Vos would not rule out tackling divisive issues, such as eliminating same-day voter registration, replacing the state's elections board with political appointees and changing how Wisconsin allocates Electoral College votes.

The top priority for the session will be passage of a new, two-year state budget. Walker is expected to deliver his State of the State speech next week, followed by the release of his budget in February. Debate of that two-year spending plan likely will dominate the Legislature through June.

Environmentalists fear the mine would devastate one of the state's most pristine regions near Lake Superior.

Passage of the bill is more likely this year after Republicans widened their majority in the Senate from 17-16 to 18-15 in the November election.

St. Paul

Disputed-arrest review sent to Minneapolis

Use of force, conflict of interest cited

By Mara H. Gottfried
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St. Paul police have asked city prosecutors to review the case of a man seen on a video being kicked by a city police officer last summer, after a county attorney's office declined to file felony assault charges.

The St. Paul city attorney's office referred the case to its Minneapolis counterpart to avoid a conflict of interest. It is awaiting review at the Minneapolis city attorney's office.

A police internal affairs investigation against officers Jesse Zilge and Matthew Gorans continues.

Eric Hightower's ex-girlfriend called 911 on Aug. 28 to report that the 30-year-old man had been stalking and threatening her for the previous few days, according to a criminal complaint. Hightower has pleaded

not guilty.

Hightower's arrest that day in the incident was captured on a widely viewed YouTube video. In the video, Zilge is seen delivering a kick to Hightower's chest and chin as the suspect lay on a North End sidewalk.

Gorans had sprayed Hightower with Mace while the suspect was in a squad car, according to the Olmsted County attorney's office, which reviewed the case to avoid a conflict of interest for the Ramsey County attorney's office.

The office said in November that it would not file felony assault charges because there was “insufficient proof beyond a reasonable doubt” that either officer “used unreasonable force.”

City attorney's offices have jurisdiction over misdemeanor and gross misdemeanor cases in Minnesota.

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> Hmong residents

Minnesota is 19.7 years old. The median age for a member of the state's general population is 37 years old.

The journal reports that an estimated 11.9 percent of Hmong in Minnesota had no health insurance coverage, compared to just under 9 percent of all Minnesotans. However, a much higher percentage of Hmong Minnesotans had public health coverage (just under 40 percent) compared with just over 25 percent of all Minnesotans.

Overall, “Hmong income and measures of socioeconomic status in both Minnesota and the U.S. have substantially improved over the past two decades,” Pfeifer said in an email.

The U.S. Hmong poverty rate in 1990 was 64 percent, but it had dropped to 38 percent in 2000 and 25 percent in 2010. In Minnesota, the estimated Hmong poverty rate in 2010 was 26 percent, compared with 7 percent among general state residents.

Pfeifer said the proportion of Hmong residents going on to higher education in Minnesota and other states “continues to show impressive increases.” Educational disparities between Hmong women and men appear to be falling by the wayside, especially within higher education.

Divorce rates in the Hmong community are relatively low but growing, according to an academic article by researchers from California State University, Chico and Utah State University.

The divorce rate in Minnesota's Hmong community is much higher than the rates in California and Wisconsin, the two other states with the largest Hmong populations.

A review of medical studies since 1990 was conducted by Professor Zha Blong Xiong with researchers from the University of Minnesota's Department of Family Social Science and the U of M Libraries.

ON THE WEB

To read the report, go to [hmongstudiesjournal.org](#).

They found a growing body of research documenting health disparities in the areas of certain types of cancer, including throat cancer, gastric cancer, liver cancer and cervical cancer, as well as diabetes, gout, Hepatitis B, hypertension, kidney stones and mental illness.

The journal's special census issue was funded in part by the College of Education and Human Development at the U of M and the Hmong Diaspora Studies Program at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

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Twin Cities

Metro Transit drivers approve new contract

3-year pact includes 2 percent raise

By Frederick Melo
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After five months without a fresh contract and two days of voting, Metro Transit drivers, electricians and mechanics approved a new labor agreement with the Metropolitan Council on Monday, Jan. 7.

“The members voted in favor of the offer, 92 percent to 8 percent,” said Michelle Sommers, president of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1005.

The three-year contract offered from the Met Council guarantees a 2 percent annual general wage increase, the union's first pay increase

since September 2009.

The 2,200 to 2,300 members of ATU Local 1005 had been without a contract since the end of July. Their previous two-year contract included a pay freeze.

Starting pay for a bus driver is currently \$16.93 an hour and can increase to a top wage of \$24.19 an hour, said Metro Transit spokesman John Sigveland.

Voting began Sunday after the union delivered a contract presentation to its members at the Ramada Mall of America in Bloomington. Voting continued from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday, according to the ATU 1005 website, [http://atu1005.com](#).

The union's bargaining team received the contract proposal — which they'd dubbed the “best and final offer,” quoting the Met Council — on Dec. 7. The plan was later tabled by the Met Council, which offered a new proposal more recently.

“This was the first offer the membership voted on,” Sommers said.

She said the new contract will include some changes to the seniority system for the bus, light rail and commuter rail mechanics, who will all be grouped into one list instead of three. That will affect vacation preferences, job picks and other seniority benefits.

Difficult contract negotiations eight years ago led to a 44-day Metro Transit strike

that froze bus service in March and April 2004. Contract discussions also were protracted in 2010.

Teamsters Local 120 approved a new labor agreement Saturday with First Transit, a private provider that contracts with the Met Council to provide drivers along Metro Mobility routes for the disabled, as well as some general bus routes in the suburbs. The drivers' contract expired at the end of August.

Negotiations with other bargaining units, such as First Transit mechanics, continue.

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> Bolivia crash

extensive thoracic trauma, with damage to both lungs, broken ribs and additional broken bones,” the site said.

Her family then posted, “Tamar never regained consciousness, and passed away peacefully just before midnight on January 6th. Her dad was with her. Thank you for all your support and love, Maya, Danny, Liat, and Netta.”

A man who answered the phone at the Kaplan home said no one was available to talk Monday afternoon.

News of Kaplan's death was devastating, said Joseph Miller, Highland Park High School's director of debate who graduated from the school in 2007 and knew Kaplan as a fellow student. She was regarded as a strong and accomplished debater.

“You don't think of people

younger than you dying,” Miller said. “So many people study abroad and they have stories — “That was kind of a close one’ — but by and large they come home safe. It's surprising and shocking that this happened to her.”

Kaplan was listed as a junior philosophy, politics and economics major in a November post on Claremont McKenna College's student newspaper's website. She managed a consulting organization of students for non-profit organizations and was a fundraiser for Claremont McKenna College's office of annual giving, according to her LinkedIn profile.

Kaplan was awarded a National Merit Scholarship in 2010. She graduated in the top 10 in her class, said Toya Stewart Downey, St. Paul Public Schools spokeswoman.

Kaplan went to Horace Mann School for elementary school. She was last on the Highland campus full time in her sophomore year because

“She lit up every room she was in. She just made the team so much fun.”

Michael Lando, Tamar Kaplan's debate coach in her senior year

she was a post-secondary enrollment option student, meaning she attended college while earning high school and college credits, Stewart Downey said. She also spent time with her family in Australia during her school career.

Kaplan and another Highland Park High student won the policy title in the state debate tournament in 2010 and later placed second in a national Urban Debate League competition in New York City.

Miller remembered the bus travel to debate tournaments being more fun with Kaplan.

“There was always a lot of laughter when she was around,” he said. “Tamar was

wonderful. She was energetic and funny and talented. She was just an incredible debater and really supportive of other team members.”

Michael Lando was Kaplan's debate coach in her senior year, but met Kaplan when she was a freshman and he was also a student. They were both on the debate team.

Lando said, “She definitely loved to argue and analyze things and look at various sides of an issue. She had a real hunger for knowledge.”

As a coach, Lando saw Kaplan doing eight to 10 times the work he would expect a high-school debater to be doing, anchoring the team and helping with coaching incoming debaters.

“She lit up every room she was in,” he said. “She just made the team so much fun.”

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