Community Impact 2018
About Star Tribune Media Co.

Star Tribune Media Company LLC is a locally owned, award-winning media company serving Minnesota and the upper Midwest.

Star Tribune is read by 1.3 million people in the Minneapolis–St. Paul metropolitan area each week, and by many more outside the region. Today we have subscribers in all 50 states who rely on Star Tribune for news and information about Minnesota. The company also serves advertisers with a wide range of digital marketing services and home-delivered print advertising solutions.

With the largest newsgathering force in the region, Star Tribune is committed to covering more of what matters to Minnesota—all day, every day.
Dear Readers,

It might be said that there has never been a period in any of our lifetimes when it was more important to have an independent, professional and reliable free press.

During 2018—a dramatic and critical year for news reporting—Star Tribune was one of just a handful of independent major metropolitan news organizations in America. We’re proud to remain a fully staffed regional news source that reports on community, state and world events free of outside influences or corporate guidelines, interference or ties.

Every day, with your subscriptions and your advertising dollars, you support extraordinary, award-winning journalism and contribute to the continued health of the Star Tribune. We, in turn, produce original reporting that informs, protects, sustains and entertains.

With this 2018 Community Impact Report, we’re looking back at just some of the stories that made a real difference in 2018. The stories featured here highlight the diversity of coverage that Star Tribune strives to bring you week in and week out. I invite you to look back with us and to celebrate the unique value of independent journalism in Minnesota.

And thank you for helping to make this possible going forward in 2019.

Sincerely,

Mike Klingensmith
Publisher and CEO
‘Denied Justice’ launches reforms
Project: “Denied Justice” was a yearlong project that exposed widespread breakdowns in the way Minnesota investigates and prosecutes rape and documented the impact of those failings on women’s lives.

Community response:
• The state police oversight board issued investigative guidelines for how sex assaults should be investigated and is developing specialized training for officers.
• The state attorney general appointed a task force that found “systemic shortcomings” in rape investigations and developed sweeping recommendations for the 2019 Legislature, which is debating major changes to sexual assault laws.
• The Washington County Attorney is re-examining dozens of old cases that his prosecutors had not charged.
• The Minneapolis Police Department added two investigators and a victim’s advocate to its sex crimes unit; the department launched new policies and procedures for investigating sex assaults, including training for all investigators.
• The Hennepin County Attorney’s Office dedicated a prosecutor to work inside the Minneapolis Police Department’s sex crimes unit.

In the fall of 2016, Hennepin County courts reporter Brandon Stahl wrote about Abby Honold, a 19-year-old University of Minnesota undergraduate who was raped by a fellow student. Minneapolis police arrested her assailant, but they released him when they were told the sex was consensual, despite the extent of her injuries. Honold fought back though, and with the help of an attorney and an investigator from the University Police Department, and two corroborating statements from victims of the same rapist, the man was eventually convicted.

Stahl’s story included a startling fact: Before Honold, of the more than 1,000 sex assaults reported to the U’s rape prevention center, the total number of rapists who had been prosecuted was zero.

“Abby’s case—reporting that she was raped and being treated terribly—did not seem unusual,” Stahl says. “What was unusual was that she got a conviction.”

We wanted to dig deeper. We requested thousands of records from 20 law enforcement agencies across Minnesota that handle the most rape complaints. It took dozens of phone calls and e-mails and months of negotiations and demands to get most of the law enforcement agencies to cooperate.

Our largest request, to the Minneapolis Police Department, was originally filed in May 2017. It wasn’t completed until early November 2018.

Left: Dozens of Minnesota women came forward to tell their stories of how law enforcement handled their sexual assault cases.
As the more than 2,000 case files we analyzed trickled in, Stahl, reporter Jennifer Bjorhus and data editor MaryJo Webster painstakingly logged into a database such key details as whether police interviewed witnesses, gathered physical evidence or referred a case to prosecutors.

Patterns emerged: One-third of the victims who reported an assault were never interviewed by a detective. In half the cases, police failed to question witnesses or examine the crime scene. Only 1 in 4 cases were referred to prosecutors, and fewer than 1 in 10 rape complaints ended with a conviction.

Finding the people behind the data—victims’ names had been removed from case files—also proved difficult.

But our reporters eventually reached more than 100 victims willing to talk to reporters, to go back to the site of the assaults for haunting portraits or to sit down with photojournalist Renée Jones Schneider to tell their stories on camera.

We published a nine-part series and 30-part video testimonial that showed repeated and institutional failings in how Minnesota investigates sexual assaults—even in the cases of repeat offenders. Stories explored inadequate police training, the poor incentive to prosecute sexual assault cases and a unique Minnesota law that makes it more difficult for a woman who has been drinking or using drugs to prove she was raped.

The response was immediate and has continued. Police officers who handle sexual assault cases now have new training requirements and investigative guidelines. Individual counties have dedicated prosecutors to handling sexual assault cases, including reopening cases that were never charged. One police chief said she planned to make the series required reading for her officers. Others have said they will refer to our videos in training those who deal with assault victims.

With each installment, we continued to hear from more victims and their families. Their stories were heart-rending.

“You have given us more time and support than our police department ever did. I am forever grateful,” wrote a woman whose daughter had been raped after leaving a Minneapolis bar.

“Thank you so much for helping to tell the powerful, beautiful, and painful stories of these amazing women,” wrote an assault survivor. “They are opening doors for all of us who are victims of sexual violence, who have not been believed, and who have lived with the awful fallout of speaking the truth. Thank you for being part of giving them (us) voice.”

The series was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for local reporting and winner of the Sigma Delta Chi Award for public service journalism from the Society of Professional Journalists, among several other national honors.

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Read the series

• strib.mn/denied
• Stories by Brandon Stahl, Jennifer Bjorhus, MaryJo Webster
• Photos by Renée Jones Schneider

Left: For the final installment of the series, more than 35 of the 100 women who shared their stories with the Star Tribune gathered at the State Capitol for a photo. The 2019 Legislature is considering sweeping measures to fix “systemic failures” identified by a state task force in the way the state handles sex assault cases.

Below: The coverage included a 30-part video testimonial of women discussing how their cases were handled.
ELECTION COVERAGE

Expanding midterms coverage, in print and online
**Project:** Expanding our election coverage across all platforms to help Minnesotans be informed voters.

**Community response:**
- The digital version of our voter’s guide was the top story online every month after it published in July. It was the second most popular story online for all of 2018.
- Our local politics section of our website had more than twice the number of visits in the days surrounding the election than in each of the two prior elections.

Under financial pressure in 2018, some newspapers around the country reduced and even eliminated election results in their print editions, rationalizing that their subscribers would find results on their websites. Star Tribune, by contrast, expanded its offerings on both platforms.

Minnesota usually has the highest voter turnout in the country, and making sure that voters are informed and prepared when they cast their ballots is a core part of our mission.

Before Election Day, we published profiles on candidates, followed them on the campaign trail, put out a daily politics newsletter and produced a digital Be a Better Voter guide that included detailed tips on what voters could do that week. We conducted two Minnesota Polls with our partner, MPR News, and we produced an unprecedented 10-page voter’s guide, covering candidates and their positions in every major Minnesota race.

Our Editorial Board, which operates independently of the newsroom, addressed key issues, interviewed 80 candidates and made thoughtful and reasoned endorsements after its own reporting and research.

Throughout November 6 and into the early hours of the 7th, we staffed our newsroom around the clock, breaking results online as they unfolded and covering candidates’ victory and concession speeches. Our reporter's video tweet of just-elected U.S. Rep. Ilhan Omar’s victory dance with her family was viewed 822,000 times.

We were the news source of record for the nation on notable races, including returning Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith to the U.S. Senate, and all eight of our closely watched U.S. House races. And we covered the races important to our readers: city councils, county boards, school boards, sheriff offices, judgements, as well as the governor’s office and state Legislature.

We dropped our online subscription requirements on Election Day and into the next day so all voters could arm themselves with up-to-the-minute information and see the results of democracy at work.

**Read the coverage**
• strib.mn/election
Chronicling a changing spiritual path
Project: Test of Faith: The Unchurching of America explained the forces behind the unprecedented decline in church membership and the implications for the future of the faithful.

Community response:

• Faith leaders are using the stories to educate staff and shape church direction. Religion professors are using the series in class. And clergy are using our coverage at conferences to open discussion on how to retain congregants or find creative ways to finance a church.
• Each installment of this four-part series was widely read online nationwide and sparked conversations on our website and in chat groups, including on Reddit.com, where thousands of people debated the existence of a supreme being.
• Stories were widely shared on social media by both individuals and religious groups.

Our job is to tell you not only the news of the day, but also the news of tomorrow. What are the long-term trends that affect our readership? Part of our mandate is to bring you complex stories that start conversations, improve understanding and strengthen communities.

One of our most important projects to that end in 2018 was Test of Faith: The Unchurching of America. Since reporter Jean Hopfensperger took over the religion beat in 2013, she noticed the quiet trend of more and more churches closing. National data only confirmed what she was seeing across the state. Pulling together local data took time and creativity. For the Minnesota Catholic data alone, Hopfensperger holed up in the archives of a Catholic university to manually tally key indicators from six dioceses over 30 years.

The numbers she found were startling, with double-digit drops of both churches and members across mainline Protestant denominations over the past 16 to 17 years.

“This is an unprecedented shift in American religion,” said Hopfensperger. “Churches have always been a foundation of American life, offering a spiritual home and social life in communities. They’re the place where people gathered every Sunday, and where they married and buried loved ones. These community pillars are starting to crumble, and many people are worried what, if anything, will replace them.”

Besides revealing the scope of church declines, and the impact that has on communities, the series explored the changing role of clergy and the thriving congregations of the future, from non-denominational mega-churches to houses of worship that celebrate ethnicity or identity in addition to God.

The series also investigated the most significant religious trend sweeping the country, namely the explosion of people who belong to no church—now the fastest growing “religion.” The extraordinary response—from readers in Minnesota and across the country—demonstrated how much people cared about this issue.

“I think these stories were read by so many people because they hadn’t been done before,” says Hopfensperger. “And they were told through the lives of ordinary people, as well as hard statistics. This series was a public wakeup, that something we’ve taken for granted forever has a very uncertain future.”

Read the series

• strib.mn/church
• Stories by Jean Hopfensperger
• Photos by Leila Navidi

Left: Empty pews took a toll on La Salle Lutheran Church in La Salle, Minn. “Everything we’re doing, we’re doing for the last time,” said the Rev. Sarah Taylor, weeks before the church closed for good.
LEFT TO SUFFER

Staying on the story, sometimes for years.
**Project:** Our November 2017 series *Left to Suffer* documented the sharp rise in abuse of elderly residents in Minnesota’s senior care homes — and the state’s failure to investigate 97 percent of the 25,000 cases it receives a year.

**Community response:**

- Within a week, the Minnesota Department of Health fired the head of its health regulation division. Within a month, the state health commissioner resigned.
- In early 2018, the governor’s task force released a report calling for “immediate and dramatic reforms” to improve state oversight of senior care homes.
- In March 2018, the state’s legislative auditor released a scathing 122-page report concluding that the agency responsible for protecting residents in senior care facilities has not met its responsibilities.
- Since then, the Health Department has stepped up enforcements and investigations and cleared a backlog of more than 3,000 investigations. Now, every allegation of maltreatment is examined within two days, and the average time to complete investigations has dropped by nearly half, from 187 days in 2017 to 110 days last year, state data show.

“We’d been reporting on incidents of abuse and neglect in senior care facilities for years,” says social services reporter Chris Serres. “In 2016, it just felt like we were seeing more cases, and they were getting worse. So we decided we needed to do something in depth.”

Left to Suffer, our horrifying and heartbreaking five-part series by Serres and photojournalist David Joles, told of Minnesotans who were raped, robbed, beaten and neglected and the lack of oversight that allowed such abuse to happen. It also followed the aftermath: residents who were evicted from their senior living homes after making legitimate complaints, extreme delays in Health Department investigations, and families who were left in the dark about what happened to their loved ones.

The series looked for solutions, exploring a San Diego-based model in which a dedicated team of prosecutors, investigators and advocates has made enforcement of elder abuse crimes a priority.

While the impact of the series was immediate—then-Gov. Mark Dayton appointed a cabinet task force to draft reforms before the series even finished publishing—changes have continued through 2019. This spring, state lawmakers are expected to pass legislation that would, for the first time, establish minimum basic standards of care for Minnesota’s largely unregulated assisted-living industry.

The Health Department improved its oversight and stepped up enforcement of the laws around maltreatment of residents. New Health Commissioner Jan Malcolm overhauled the agency’s system for responding to and investigating allegations, eliminating a vast backlog of never investigated cases while investigating more new cases and doing it at a much faster pace than before.

“The progress is very real,” Malcolm said in early 2019. “We feel much more confident today that when serious issues are brought to our attention, that we spot them and are able to get to them more quickly.”

Left to Suffer won the grand prize in the Public Service category of Associated Press Media Editors (APME) awards for 2018. “It’s so well done in every aspect: The beauty of the prose and the photos, the shocking findings themselves, the tremendous governmental reaction and response,” the judges wrote. “This is an issue that can and will affect many, and the Star Tribune’s work did a tremendous public service in exposing these problems and pushing for change.” ★

**Read the series**

- strib.mn/senior
- Stories by Chris Serres
- Photos by David Joles

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*Left: Estelle and Mathias Schaust worried they’d be kicked out of their senior home because of their complaints to management.*
TENT CITY

Shining a light on homelessness
Project: For months we covered a Minneapolis homeless encampment that became a public health crisis.

Community response:
- Within two days of our first story, medical and outreach workers were dispatched to the camp.
- Readers responded to our coverage. Some showed up daily with food, blankets, medical supplies, clothing, warm coats, sleeping bags and toys for the children. Some even thanked us. “There are many challenges in solving the causes of homelessness,” wrote one reader, “but by treating these people with respect, empathy and dignity—combined with practical solutions—our city can be a shining example for how communities can solve similar problems.”
- By late fall, city officials and tribal leaders had established a safer, warmer temporary housing site and negotiated a transition for virtually all of the camp’s homeless residents.

When a handful of tents appeared along the side of Highway 55 at the intersection of Hiawatha and Cedar Avenues in August 2018, it wasn’t clear at first what was happening. So reporter Chris Serres and photojournalist David Joles went to find out.

They discovered a remarkably cohesive and self-regulating community of 100 homeless people, most of them Native Americans. People at “Tent City” shared resources and cared for one another. There was a sense of community that residents deeply craved.

But they were struggling with some of our toughest social issues: mental illness, homelessness, drug addiction, poverty among Native Americans, single parenthood and racial alienation.

And with the influx of people—the encampment quickly grew to hundreds of people—came even more problems. There was just one portable toilet. Infections such as Hepatitis C, scabies and MRSA (methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus) were running through the camp. Children were playing in areas strewn with infected needles and human waste, then going to school. Heroin overdoses had become a near-daily occurrence and the proliferation of reused needles had health officials concerned about disease outbreaks. Emergency responders struggled to discern illness from overdose.

Serres wrote some 50 stories on the encampment that came to be known as “The Wall of the Forgotten Natives.”

Serres and Joles wanted to understand—and show—the barriers, internal and external, that stood in the way of people securing shelter. Over five months they spent many nights and weekends there. They constantly weighed the public’s right to know with individuals’ rights to privacy. Over time, they forged strong relationships with dozens of people who lived and volunteered at the encampment.

Time and again, residents said it was the first time that anyone had ever asked about their frustrations or given voice to people who are largely invisible in their own community. They covered the deaths, fires and fights; the crusaders trying to help; and residents who dreamed of getting their lives back on track. And they covered city, county and tribal leaders trying to navigate a solution.

“After each story, I would be inundated with phone calls and e-mails from people asking where they could bring provisions and how they could help,” Serres says.

In December, Minneapolis opened the Navigation Center, a brand-new shelter run by Simpson Housing Services, and relocated the last 135 people from the homeless camp. Serres and Joles are continuing to follow the story.

Read the series
• strib.mn/homeless
• Stories by Chris Serres
• Photos by David Joles

Left: Angie Morrow warmed her hands by a fire at the homeless encampment in south Minneapolis in November.
NEGLECTED AMERICANS

Minnesotans having an impact
Project: Eight months after hurricanes Irma and Maria slammed Puerto Rico, we followed a local hip-hop artist and proud Sota-Rican, who had raised $270,000 for relief efforts, as she led a small group to see the damage first-hand.

Community response:
- Readers called and emailed after the stories appeared, commenting that they hadn’t realized Puerto Rico was still struggling from storm damage.
- Several asked where they could send money and how they could help.

Photojournalist Elizabeth Flores heard about Twin Cities hip-hop artist Maria Isa’s crusade to help the people of Puerto Rico, her family’s homeland, after the devastation from the one-two hurricane punches of Irma and Maria.

So when Isa, who raised $270,000 for relief efforts, went to Puerto Rico on a self-funded trip in April, nearly eight months after the hurricanes, Star Tribune went along, sending Flores and reporter Pam Louwagie. Their first article, “Minnesotans reach out to a struggling Puerto Rico,” was a dramatic and timely reminder that the violent effects of the storm were still haunting much of the island.

“One of the striking things I saw was how much needed to be done, how much damage lingered,” says Louwagie.

At the time they visited, nearly 23,000 customers still didn’t have electricity. Others were still relying on bottled water. Of the estimated 325,000 houses severely damaged or destroyed, approximately 275,000 still needed repair.

Isa’s team—which included her mother and husband, the rapper Muja Messiah—was able to pass out water filters, food and solar lamps. They also pledged $15,000 to help rebuild a community meeting space in the remote town of Comerio. But so much more was needed.

Louwagie and Flores also wrote about a group of doctors and medical students from the University of Minnesota who were focusing on the trauma felt by high school students who had seen their homes destroyed and their families uprooted. The doctors cited an increased interest in their project after the stories ran.

“The Star Tribune’s dedication to following important national stories through solid local connections makes an impact,” Louwagie said.

Read the series
- strib.mn/puertorico
- Stories by Pam Louwagie
- Photos by Elizabeth Flores

Opposite page: Betaña Gomez walked on what was once the second story of her home that was destroyed by Hurricane Maria in Toa Baja, Puerto Rico. She says she was given very little money to help rebuild her home because she is a Dominican citizen.

Left: Minnesotan Maria Isa Pérez-Hedges showed her loyalty to Puerto Rico as she joined relief efforts there months after Hurricane Maria.
Reporting on what officials don’t want citizens to know
**Project:** We reported that paramedics at Minnesota’s largest safety net hospital, at the urging of Minneapolis police, were sedating people with a drug called ketamine during emergency calls and enrolling them in studies without their consent.

**Community response:**
- The practice stopped immediately after our first story ran.
- After condemnations from city officials, Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey hired former acting U.S. Attorney General Sally Yates to conduct an independent investigation (later abandoned as being too expensive).
- Hennepin Healthcare suspended its ketamine research, commissioned three investigations and vowed to engage the community in how to improve its practices.
- Inspectors from the Food and Drug Administration visited eight times in August, finding the hospital fast-tracked its research without establishing proper guidelines to keep study subjects safe.
- Legislators have publicly discussed the need for new regulations around studies that do not require prior consent.

Reporter Andy Mannix had a major story: Minneapolis police officers were asking paramedics to sedate people with a drug called ketamine during emergency calls, and it was detailed in an internal report that City Hall hoped would never be released publicly.

Investigators for the city’s Department of Civil Rights found that instances of ketamine used during police calls had jumped from three to 62 in five years. Most incidents included no apparent criminal activity; instead they involved episodes of acute mental illness or public intoxication. Mannix would later learn people of color accounted for a disproportionately high number of those sedated.

Mannix quickly discovered that after the initial ketamine dose, many of these patients were enrolled in a drug trial without their consent at Hennepin Healthcare.

City officials pressured the Star Tribune not to run the story. But with citizens being harmed unknowingly, of course we published.

Our reporting sparked an immediate uproar of community protests, and the practice came under national scrutiny. Mannix heard from numerous people who had been affected.

Mannix has continued to follow the story, but reporting has been difficult. The city hired an independent firm to investigate how we obtained a leaked copy of the report; the source was not determined. Hennepin Healthcare has continually denied our requests for public records that would reveal more about its research.

Seven months and more than 20 stories later, we are still fighting for these records.

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**Read the series**
- [strib.mn/ketamine](strib.mn/ketamine)
- Stories by Andy Mannix
- Photos by Jeff Wheeler, Renée Jones Schneider, Glen Stubbe

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Clockwise from top left: Attorney Nekima Levy Armstrong condemned medical personnel administering the drug ketamine under pressure from Minneapolis police at a June news conference at Minneapolis City Hall; Angel Smith-El of the Twin Cities Coalition for Justice for Jamar criticized ketamine use at the same news conference; Thomas Hosley was given ketamine after having a bad reaction to a synthetic drug; Dr. William Heegaard of Hennepin Healthcare responded to the Star Tribune’s coverage at a press conference.
Who doesn’t love to see high school kids excel?
Project: Expand high school sports coverage and honor the best of the best at a season-ending celebration.

Few news organizations have the resources to cover high school sports broadly and thoroughly. For us, this is a priority.

In late 2017—with the help of four corporate sponsors—Becker Furniture World, Frandsen Bank & Trust, Pearson’s Candy and Luther Automotive—expanded our coverage of high school sports to make it more robust and equitable. Rather than recognizing the best in only major sports, we pledged to do the same for all high school athletics, including wrestling, volleyball, gymnastics, cross country, golf, swimming and skiing.

Why? It brings more gender equity to our coverage. But more important, our readers care strongly about it, so we care as well.

Who doesn’t love to see high school kids excel in something they love?

“High school sports are part of the fabric of our community,” says Paul Klauda, prep sports editor at Star Tribune. “It’s very personal. These are families, small towns, your neighbors, grandchildren. It touches just about everyone in our state. What we do, by virtue of focusing on this coverage, is reflect what our community is all about.”

In June 2018, at the end of our first school year of expanded coverage, Star Tribune created a now-annual event called the All-Metro Sports Awards, with 500 student athletes, coaches, family and fans attending the celebration at Target Field.

We honored all 140 Star Tribune All-Metro athletes—almost every one of whom attended—and for the first time recognized male and female Athletes of the Year, Teams of the Year and Coaches of the Year. In the best ESPYs tradition, attendees watched Play of the Year nominees and then cheered the winners from state champion Cretin-Derham Hall boys basketball onstage.

The presentation of the Student First award, Courage award and Difference Maker award—the last recognizing the most dedicated and passionate supporters of athletes and teams—left few dry eyes.

Vikings wide receiver Adam Thielen visited privately with the student-athletes and then delivered a keynote address.

“What we’re saying when we present awards to these people—kids, their parents, their coaches—is that they’re doing something important,” says Klauda. “That’s worth celebrating.”

Read the stories
• strib.mn/preps

Opening spread: Minnesota Vikings receiver Adam Thielen posed for a photo with student athletes being recognized at the Star Tribune’s inaugural All-Metro Sports Awards event at Target Field.

FEELING SUPERIOR

Taking readers on a 20-day adventure on the trail
Project: We sent a writer and photographer to hike the 310-mile Superior Hiking Trail, document its beauty and tell its story.

Community response:
- Readers ranging from hiking enthusiasts to children followed their journey online.
- The Superior Hiking Trail Association said it experienced a spike in interest after the series ran, with readers emailing and calling, asking for help planning their trips. Their volunteers on the trail also encountered hikers who said they were visiting for the first time after reading the series.

Our Outdoors Weekend coverage, which publishes every Friday, is designed to reflect—and to stoke—local passions for the outdoors. This year editor Bob Timmons and colleagues envisioned the six-year-old section's biggest project to date one they believed would appeal to readers of all ages and all ability levels: a serial adventure on the 310-mile Superior Hiking Trail along the state's beloved North Shore in early June.

“At its core, the project was intended to tell a Minnesota adventure story around a few things,” said Timmons of the project that ran over seven weeks in the summer. “We wanted to reflect Minnesota's remarkable natural resources in a remarkable area, told through an increasingly popular activity: thru-hiking.”

Long-distance hiker and freelance writer Melanie Radzicki McManus signed on, and we cleared the schedule of Brian Peterson, a Star Tribune photographer for 30 years who has a passion for outdoor photography.

It took McManus 20 days to hike, and the weather didn't always cooperate, from Day One. “A difficult day to start a 310-mile march north: 45-degree chill and rain ALL DAY LONG,” she said.

And on her last day at the trail's end at the U.S.-Canada border: “Wet, muddy, rocky, rooty—this trail was not going to make it easy until the very last step, and that's OK.”

In between she told readers of the people she met, the spirit of the trail, the natural beauty of that corner of our state and the heightened experience of being with nature. “When I walked along Lake Superior's impressive, stony beach, it felt like the lake was bidding me adieu, and telling me I'd done good,” she said near the end of her journey.

Peterson hiked about 170 miles of the trail, packing in and out with his equipment, and documenting McManus' journey in photos and videos. But he also documented the trail: the forest, the gorges, the rocky shores and wide-open sky.

While a three-week assignment in the outdoors had its benefits, the assignment was difficult logistically: trying to figure out the most scenic places to photograph along the trail and making sure he was in the best position when McManus was on the trail.

“My goal in photographing this project was to inspire others to explore the Superior Hiking Trail,” Peterson said. “We need to raise the awareness of what we have up there. It might not always be like this.”

Read the series
- strib.mn/superior
- Stories by Melanie Radzicki McManus
- Photos by Brian Peterson

Right: Writer Melanie Radzicki McManus in the old growth forest of Magney Snively Natural Area in Duluth on the second day of her 20-day hike along the Superior Hiking Trail.
The one-stop shop for Super Bowl LII coverage
**Project:** We provided extensive coverage around the biggest football game of the year—and the pageantry for weeks beforehand—for our core readers and out-of-town visitors alike.

When the entire nation is focused on events happening in Minnesota—whether the collapse of the 35W bridge, the death of Prince or the Super Bowl—Star Tribune is the main pipeline of information, covering the story from every angle.

Unlike many such stories, with SB LII we had years to prepare.

And we did. We sent reporter Rochelle Olson to Atlanta in 2014 when Minnesota made its pitch and won the bid to host the game. Then we sent her to two Super Bowls, in San Francisco and Houston, to report on how those cities handled their big games. And we pulled together teams in the newsroom: from sports, from features, from metro.

Our features and design teams created an Essential Twin Cities Guide for tourists (and locals), highlighting some of the top places to eat, drink and shop—in print and in an app. Sports editor Glen Crevier began assembling a team more than a year before the game to plan our sports coverage.

Olson, meanwhile, buried herself in Minnesota’s preparations. Who was organizing the nearly two weeks of festivities? Were Minnesota businesses able to cash in? Was the economic impact likely to be all that was promised?

And then the Vikings got good. Good enough to throw a beautiful wrench into our carefully laid plans. Teams from both our sports and metro departments had to come up with plans should the Vikings make the Super Bowl.

Perhaps we jinxed it. But after the NFC Championship game against the Philadelphia Eagles, we faced a new challenge: how to make our readers care about a Super Bowl that the Vikings were so close to playing in.

The answer was a dizzying mix of stories about the New England Patriots and Philadelphia Eagles matchup, the history of the game in Minnesota and the comings and goings of some of the top players of all time.

“People loved having an immense sports section every day,” says Chris Carr, who became sports editor following Crevier’s retirement in November. “A few diehard Vikings fans would say, ‘You’re breaking my heart every morning!’ But we helped them cope by throwing a great Vikings story into the mix.”

Meanwhile, Olson and a team from the rest of the newsroom covered every angle of Minnesota’s hosting efforts. What was going right? Not so right? Would protesters impact the game? Parking problems? The weather?

Music critics followed the nightly entertainment. Other reporters covered the parties and celebrity sightings around town.

In the end, Olson says she was surprised by the success of the Bold North-themed bowl. It was varied and rollicking and a little folksy and weird. Olson compared it to a “very, very cold Minnesota State Fair.”

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**Super Bowl LII coverage**

• strib.mn/sb

Justin Timberlake paid tribute to Prince as video of the music icon performing “Purple Rain” was projected on a large screen during the halftime show.
Hosting a discussion on complex issues

Housing in Minneapolis

At an Oct. 20 meeting of the Minneapolis Planning Commission, Navya Prasun, PhD, led the discussion on the Minneapolis 2040 Comprehensive Plan. The 2040 plan incorporates community needs, like safe and affordable housing, which are critical to the city's sustainability. The development of the 2040 plan will address issues such as housing affordability and the need for more sustainable housing options.

Like many areas of policy, overseeing the planning process is challenging, particularly in a city where the population is constantly growing. The Minneapolis Planning Commission must ensure that the 2040 plan aligns with the city's long-term goals and addresses the needs of all residents, including those who are underserved.

Helping our veterans

Kavanaugh made sure to highlight the importance of helping our veterans. The editorial board emphasizes the need for continued support and resources for veterans who have served our country. The board notes that the Department of Veterans Affairs is working to address the needs of veterans, including providing mental health services and supports.

Freedom of the press

The editorial board argues that freedom of the press is a critical component of our democracy. The board notes that the journalism community has a responsibility to hold the powerful accountable and to ensure that the public has access to accurate and timely information.
We have a diverse board with a range of viewpoints—culturally, politically, in terms of religion, age, gender and race. When contentious issues arise in the Twin Cities, the editorial team meets as a group to discuss and arrive at a joint opinion that everyone can stand behind.

The job of the 240-person news department at the Star Tribune is to investigate stories that are important to our community and provide objective, factual coverage that illuminates, informs and allows readers to reach their own conclusions.

The role of our 10-person editorial team is different. Operating separately from the newsroom, this group is responsible for hosting a civil and informed debate on the issues of the day by reflecting a range of viewpoints in editorials, letters to the editor, columns and commentary.

Members of the Editorial Board, similar to news reporters, do independent research and reporting. But unlike news reporters, editorial writers are responsible for taking a position on behalf of the board.

“It’s ‘opinion journalism,’” said Scott Gillespie, editorial page editor and vice president. “We start with an idea or issue and then do research to come up with an opinion. We’re collaborative and we have people from different points on the political spectrum. Because we don’t believe that either party has a monopoly on the right solutions.”

Over the course of a year, the Editorial Board offers more than 300 editorials on some of the most critical, and complicated, issues facing our nation, state and cities.

For example, in 2018 our editorial team focused on reasonable gun law reform and school safety in Minnesota. The board analyzed the Minneapolis 2040 plan that proposed to re-zone the city, incorporating more multi-family housing in areas traditionally limited to single-family homes.

The board also argued for increased mental health care for veterans, a federal Farm Bill that would reinstate food aid to low-income citizens, and—together with editorial boards throughout the country—freedom of the press as a vital component of our democracy.

During the 2018 election cycle, the Editorial Board interviewed more than 80 candidates seeking endorsement in national, statewide and local races. The board made its own picks and published letters and commentaries submitted on behalf of the candidates who were not selected.

Providing space for contrasting viewpoints is an essential function of the editorial pages. Editors are committed to publishing a mix of opinions in commentary and columns from national and Minnesota writers, as well as in letters from readers.

“Our job is to host a debate on the pages and website,” said Gillespie. “We’re always open to well-written counterpoint.”

The editorial pages exist to provide opinion content that gives readers a studied perspective on important issues. We invite our readers to agree or disagree, and to participate in the debate by joining the discussion.
Twin Cities-area high school students discussed school safety and gun laws after the Florida attack.

STUDENT PANEL:

Damon Brown
North H.S.

Walter Treat
Holy Family H.S.

Adrian Ali-Caccamo
St. Paul Central H.S.

Carianna Spencer
Orono H.S.

Eva Hadjiyanis
Edina H.S.
For weeks after the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, in February 2018, editorial page editor Scott Gillespie watched national coverage of young people speaking out in articulate, mature and persuasive ways.

“I felt that we were seeing and hearing the voices of students from Florida and they had a powerful message that added a lot to the national discussion of gun safety,” said Gillespie. “So it occurred to me that it might be beneficial to hear from students here in Minnesota. What did they think would make their schools safer? Do they feel safe now? How much are they paying attention to the debate over gun laws?”

A Star Tribune staff member contacted the MN High School Press Association, which provides resources for student journalists. The group put Gillespie in touch with students who had demonstrated an interest in the issues of school safety and gun control. Gillespie found a co-sponsor in WCCO-AM news radio. Together, they put together a panel of five young people from different backgrounds and positions on the issues, inviting them to take part in a roundtable discussion in March.

“Lives at stake, voices raised” featured a mix of male and female students from 16-18, white, black and Latino, from high schools across the metro area. One had lost a cousin to gun violence; another had written in support of Second Amendment rights and was a member of a competitive trap shooting team.

And their conversation—moderated by editorial writer Denise Johnson and WCCO-AM personality Adam Carter—was broadcast live and captured in the March 23 edition of the Star Tribune. After the roundtable, some of the students were asked to address the Minnesota Legislature.

“I was born post-Columbine shooting,” said Adrian, one of the students who took part in the roundtable. “All my life I’ve lived in a country where this has become the norm.”

No matter what their age, the Star Tribune is committed to representing Minnesotans with diverse viewpoints. Especially when their lives are at stake. ⭐
Before Star Tribune editorial writer Jill Burcum’s series, the dilapidated Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig school was being ignored by federal officials.

Burcum’s series led to increased federal and state funding, and a new “Bug” school was dedicated in 2018.
When the new Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig school on Minnesota’s Leech Lake Indian Reservation was dedicated in July 2018—editorial writer Jill Burcum was there. She was also there, at the old “Bug” school, in late 2014. That’s when she began writing her Pulitzer Prize finalist series “Separate and Unequal” about the dilapidated and dangerous conditions at Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools.

Part one focused on the deplorable conditions Burcum found at the Leech Lake school. Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig — originally built as a pole barn — had a roof that caved in after snowfalls, a failing heat system that required students to wear winter coats to class, rodent infestations and sewer back-ups that occurred regularly during extreme cold.

“As a parent, I went up there and thought there is no way anyone in the Twin Cities would send their kids to this building,” she said.

Burcum’s research showed that under the Obama administration, Department of Defense (DOD) schools had been funded robustly—getting about $39 million for new and upgraded facilities, putting them on par with most public schools. But BIE schools, the only other K-12 program funded exclusively by the federal government, received only $3.2 million, resulting in schools on Indian reservations in Minnesota, the Dakotas and other states that were decrepit, unsanitary and unsafe.

“As the state's newspaper of record, we have an obligation to hold government accountable,” Burcum said of her work on Indian schools. “And our government has treaty obligations to Native Americans to provide education to their children.”

After the series concluded, Burcum was invited to Washington to testify before a congressional subcommittee on education. Work by Minnesota’s congressional delegation and state legislators led to increases in both federal and state funding for Indian schools.

Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig students started the 2018–19 school year in a safe, well-equipped building that is modern, warm and filled with light. And Burcum continues to monitor BIE funding in Minnesota and other states.

“We’ll be writing about this issue again,” she said, “because there’s still more to do.”

As a result of editorial writer Jill Burcum’s work, state funding for this program was assessed and raised in 2015, '16 and '17, bringing critical repairs to BIE schools. She testified in front of Congress in April 2015, helping to boost federal funding for BIE schools, both in our region and in the western U.S.
Capturing meaning one image at a time

When Steve Sack joined the Minneapolis Tribune in 1981, he was one of about 200 editorial cartoonists in the United States. Today, there are only about 20 dedicated newspaper cartoonists in the country.

During these tumultuous times, Sack has continued drawing in response to puzzling, dramatic and quickly-changing world events. He often captures with one image the conflicts others struggle to explain in 1,000 words.

In his 37 years with the Star Tribune, Sack has captured the images and spirits of six presidents. He has found the humor in everyday Minnesota—and the pathos, with still, somber images to mark the toll of the opioid crisis, and the finally, heartbreakingly closed case of Jacob Wetterling.

Over the past year, Sack’s cartoons have crystallized the issues surrounding #metoo, Brexit, and our divided economy. The topic he visits most, he says sadly, is gun control; new mass shootings force him to return to the subject again and again.

**Taking part in the community we cover.**

*Star Tribune is part of the founding and the foundation of this community. Our involvement spans a wide variety of events and sponsorships. These partnerships and programs reflect the diversity of our coverage and the interests of our readers, while enriching and enhancing the lives of Minnesotans.*

**Among the events we produced and partners we supported in 2018:**

**Arts and Cultural:**
- American Swedish Institute
- Basilica Block Party
- Circus Juventus
- Edina Art Fair
- Guthrie Theater
- Hennepin Theatre Trust
- Medtronic Twin Cities Marathon
  (Twin Cities in Motion)
- Minneapolis Institute of Art
- Minneapolis-St. Paul International Film Festival
- Minnesota Book Awards
  (Friends of the St. Paul Public Library)
- Minnesota Children’s Museum
- Minnesota Historical Society
- Minnesota Museum of American Art
- Minnesota Orchestra
- Science Museum of Minnesota
- Talk of the Stacks
  (Friends of the Hennepin County Library)
- University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum
- Uptown Art Fair

**Educational:**
- Eastview Speech Tournament sponsorship
- MELSA: Support of Bookawooky/smARTpass Programs
- Minnesota Timberwolves “junior reporter” event
- NIE news in education program
- ThreeSixty Journalism

**Host/Producer:**
- All-Metro Sports Awards
- Behind the Lens: Photos of the Year
- Father’s Day Ugly Tie 5k at the Stone Arch Bridge Festival
- Music & Movies, a summer celebration at Lake Harriet
- One Day University
- Star Tribune Vacation & Travel Experience
- Talking Volumes (with Minnesota Public Radio)
- Top Workplaces

**Civic and business:**
- Better Business Bureau
- GreaterMSP
- Minneapolis Downtown Council
- Sports Minneapolis
- Youth Frontiers
We’re never finished.

Every year brings powerful stories and events that impact our community. With over 240 journalists in our newsroom—the largest in the state and one of the largest in the country—we’re working to give you broader, deeper coverage across Minnesota on topics from the environment and social issues to hockey and dining.

Journalism that matters. All day. Every day.