

Dialogue Minnesota Program Summaries 4th Quarter 2023

October 1, 2023

Tracking Communicable Diseases in Wastewater: Scientists learn much about COVID prevalence in communities by studying wastewater samples. The Metropolitan Council in the Twin Cities is partnering with the University of Minnesota's Genomics Center to gather data on COVID from waste being processed at treatment plants. University of Minnesota Genomics Center Director Dr. Kenneth Beckman and Metropolitan Council Principal Research Scientist Dr. Steve Balogh discuss the process of sampling wastewater for COVID and other communicable diseases.

October 8, 2023

Resiliency in Children: Many of Minnesota's K-12 students face academic challenges. There is a significant achievement gap for students of color and those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent school closures negatively impacted student learning. Yet, some students manage to overcome adversity and succeed in the classroom. University of Minnesota Regents Professor and Distinguished McKnight Professor of Child Development Ann Masten discusses why some children are more resilient than their peers from a similar background.

October 15, 2023

Invisible Systems of Design: We often think of what we can see when we think of design. We think in terms of aesthetics and beauty. But design affects much more than the visual world. Design systems from education to infrastructure to public health to politics dictate how society functions...or fails to function. In his book *Designing Our Way to A Better World*, former Dean of the University of Minnesota's College of Design and the current director of the Metropolitan Design Center, Thomas Fisher, discusses how we can build better and more resilient systems by understanding the inner workings of design.

October 22, 2023

The Assassination of St. Paul Police Patrolman James Sackett: Shortly after midnight on May 22, 1970, St. Paul Police Officer James Sackett and his partner responded to a call to transport a woman in labor to the hospital. When the officers arrived at the scene, Sackett was killed by a gunshot fired by a sniper. The incident capped a period of long-simmering tensions between the city's African-American community and the police. It took more than 30 years to bring the men responsible for the shooting to justice. Journalist William Swanson, author of the book *Black, White, Blue: The Assassination of Patrolman Sackett*, discusses the events leading up to the shooting and the eventual convictions of the perpetrators.

October 29, 2023

The University of Minnesota's Public Life Project: America is a deeply divided nation. These political and social divisions are evident on college campuses as they are elsewhere in the country. The University of Minnesota College of Liberal Arts launched the Public Life Project in the fall of 2021 to help address these divisions and encourage respectful conversations about controversial issues. The director of the Public Life Project, U of M Sociology Professor Douglas Hartmann, tells us how the initiative is working two years after its inception.

November 5, 2023

Deep Brain Stimulation: A miniature probe carefully inserted deep into the human brain is helping researchers treat several debilitating neurological conditions. Deep Brain Stimulation, or DBS, is a surgical procedure where a small device, precisely implanted, produces electrical impulses that alter the brain's electrical circuitry. DBS treats several neurological conditions, including epilepsy, chronic pain, and depression. At the University of Minnesota, the neurology department uses DBS to treat Parkinson's Disease. The procedure provides relief to patients suffering the symptoms of Parkinson's, such as tremors and dystonia. For many of these patients, DBS is more effective than medications. Dr. Gerald Vitek, the head of the U's neurology department and director of the neuromodulation research program, and Dr. Michael Park, an assistant professor in the Department of Neurosurgery at the U, discuss the DBS procedure.

November 12, 2023

The Civil Rights Movement in 1968: 1968 marked a pivotal year in America's Civil Rights Movement. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated. The Black Power Movement gained momentum. President Lyndon Baines Johnson, a champion of civil rights, announced that he would not seek a second term. University of Minnesota Professor of African American and African Studies Keith Mayes discusses the year's significance in the ongoing struggle for racial justice.

November 19, 2023

The JFK Assassination: November 22 marks the 60th anniversary of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in Dallas, Texas. More than half a century later, the fascination with the Kennedy assassination endures. Retired University of Minnesota Humanities Professor James Norwood shares his research on the Kennedy assassination and discusses its continuing legacy.

November 26, 2023

The Politics of Care: More than 13 years after it was signed into law, the Affordable Care Act continues to generate controversy. It has survived several legal challenges and attempts by

some members of Congress to repeal it. The Affordable Care Act debate raises a much broader question: how should a society care for its people and who is responsible for providing that care? University of Minnesota Political Science Professor Joan Tronto discusses her book *Caring Democracy*, which explores the politics of health care and suggests that Americans are facing a care deficit.

December 3, 2023

Understanding Climate Change: Communicating complex data about climate change to a non-scientific audience is challenging. A University of Minnesota initiative seeks to provide context to the science behind climate change and help local communities understand its impacts. Joel Larson, the U of M's extension leader at its Water Resources Center, discusses the U's efforts to engage Minnesotans in the global conversation about climate change.

December 10, 2023

Environmentally Friendly Farming: Agriculture plays a crucial role in protecting Minnesota's lakes, rivers, and streams. The University of Minnesota's Forever Green Initiative is tasked with developing new crops that are profitable for farmers and help maintain water quality. This week on Dialogue Minnesota, University of Minnesota Professor of Agronomy and Plant Genetics Nicolas Jordan discusses the Forever Green initiative and how it will benefit the agricultural industry while protecting the environment.

December 17, 2023

The Rational Animal: Many of us believe we occasionally act irrationally when spending money. But often, risk has its rewards. University of Minnesota Carlson School of Management Professor Vlas Griskavigis explores evolution's role in our economic decision-making and how seemingly irrational choices can be rooted in purposeful evolutionary traits. Professor Griskavigis discusses his book *The Rational Animal: How Evolution Made Us Smarter Than We Think*.

December 24, 2023

Minnesota's Rock Music Scene In the 1960s: Sixty years ago, a Minnesota garage rock band's novelty record with a pulsating beat was racing up both the local and national charts. The Trashmen's *Surfin' Bird* was released in the fall of 1963 and became an immediate regional hit by capitalizing on the California surfing scene popularized by groups like the Beach Boys and Jan and Dean. Rick Shefchik, author of *Everybody's Heard About the Bird: The True Story of 1960s Rock and Roll in Minnesota*, discusses the bands, recording studios, record labels, and radio DJs who defined the Minnesota music scene in the 1960s.

December 31, 2023

Aquatic Invasive Species: Among Minnesota's most valued resources are our lakes, rivers, and streams. But those waters are increasingly threatened by aquatic invasive species...living things that are not native to our state. Marine invasive species include fishes, plants, invertebrates, and microbes that can harm our health, environment, and economy. University of Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Center Extension Educator Megan Weber discusses a program offered through the Center that trains citizen scientists to monitor invasive species and provides researchers with valuable data to help prevent the spread of these harmful animals and plants.