

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**CHRIS FARRELL:** Good afternoon. This is Minnesota Now, I'm Chris Farrell. I'm glad you're here. Cathy Wurzer is off today. A new law broadens THC legalization in the state. I'll talk with the representative behind it. And the news is just covered in tragedies right now. Cathy Wurzer talks with a local healer about radical self-care. What practices can keep you present and healthy? We'll find out.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Meteorologist Paul Huttner is here with the latest weather news. We look back at a groundbreaking comic strip set in Minneapolis, and it's still gaining followers 39 years after it began. And a 1977 murder mystery is set to music at the history theater in Saint Paul. We'll hear why the Glensheen mystery is still so alluring to some. All that, plus a song of the day and the Minnesota music minute. First, these headline news.

**LAKSHMI SINGH:** Live from NPR News, I'm Lakshmi Singh. The suspect in the July 4th parade mass shooting in the Chicago suburb of Highland Park is being held without bond. The 21-year-old man made his first court appearance today. He did not enter a plea, but Lake County state's attorney Eric Rinehart said at a news briefing a short time ago that Robert Crimo III confessed.

**ERIC RINEHART:** He was read his Miranda warnings, offered attorneys, et cetera. He went into details about what he had done. He admitted to what he had done.

**LAKSHMI SINGH:** Crimo is charged with seven counts of first degree murder. He faces more charges for the attack that also wounded dozens of people. Investigators say they believe Crimo was considering carrying out another attack in Madison, Wisconsin. In the Illinois attack, police say Crimo used a high-powered rifle and fired shots into the crowd from a rooftop. Police say the weapons Crimo owned were legally purchased, sparking questions about how that was possible following previous encounters with law enforcement.

Officials in Akron, Ohio have lifted a curfew that was put in place after unrest broke out over the weekend as a result of the police shooting of a Black man. Glenn Forbes of member station WKSU reports people were outraged by video that showed police shot the man approximately 60 times.

**GLENN FORBES:** Mayor Dan Horrigan says the community respected the 9:00 PM to 6:00 AM curfew put in place Monday night after 50 people were arrested Sunday on charges of rioting and failure to disperse. Protests turned destructive in downtown Akron after the release of body cam footage showing the death of 25-year-old Jayland Walker. Police say Walker fired a gun at them during a chase following an attempted traffic stop June 27th, but Walker did not have the gun outside his car when officers fired upwards of 90 shots.

Walker was wearing a ski mask, and officers deployed tasers which were ineffective, according to police. Officers say he appeared to be moving into a firing position. Eight officers were involved, seven white and one Black, the state of Ohio also investigating. For NPR News, I'm Glenn Forbes.

**LAKSHMI SINGH:** The Labor Department has released new figures on the economy. Job openings in the US fell slightly in May, but as NPR'S Andrea Hsu tells us, the labor market overall appears strong.

**ANDREA HSU:** There were 11.3 million job openings in the US at the end of May. That's down from April but still an indication that workers are in high demand. The decline was mainly in manufacturing and professional and business services, which includes the tech sector. Meanwhile, job openings climbed in hotels and restaurants, a sign that Americans are still traveling and eating out. Despite news of scattered layoffs, many of them in tech, layoffs overall remain near a 20-year low, and workers still appear confident about their job prospects.

The number of people quitting their jobs fell slightly in May but remains well above pre-pandemic levels. Andrea Hsu, NPR News.

**LAKSHMI SINGH:** The Dow is down 69 points. It's NPR.

**CREW:** Support for NPR comes from NPR stations. Other contributors include EBSCO, working to improve patient outcomes and increase patient engagement with its clinical decision suite. Learn more at [clinicaldecisions.com](https://clinicaldecisions.com). And the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

**JOHN WANAMAKER:** For MPR News in the Twin Cities, I'm John Wanamaker. Over a period of seven hours starting late on the 4th of July, Minneapolis police dispatchers received around 1,300 911 calls. It was a night of violence and recklessness in the city, which left at least eight people injured, including seven after a shooting at Boom Island Park. Officials described it as a night of whac-a-mole, as officers chased large groups who were shooting fireworks at people, cars, and police officers.

They also had to respond to shootings and other crimes across the city. Interim police chief Amelia Huffman says more than 80 officers on duty were stretched by the influx of calls.

**AMELIA HUFFMAN:** We are absolutely not satisfied with the current staffing levels. The long-term solution for Minneapolis Police Department, like many of our partner agencies in the metro area, to be able to provide the best possible public service is to hire high quality, community-minded officers to deliver that service to residents.

**JOHN WANAMAKER:** City officials say the police department has around 300 police officers on leave since early 2020. Several thousand homes and businesses were without power in the Sioux Falls area this morning in the wake of severe storms that swept across South Dakota and Southern Minnesota yesterday. The storms brought winds in excess of 80 miles per hour to the Sioux Falls area, downing trees and power lines. City officials issued a no travel advisory in the immediate wake of those storms, which also brought torrential rains, sparking flash flooding in parts of Southern Minnesota, including in Albert Lea.

The Albert Lea Police Department reported last night that crews responded to vehicles stalled in high water around the city. There were no immediate reports of injuries. Minneapolis's Guthrie Theater has canceled performances of the play Emma through tomorrow due to COVID cases among cast and crew. Theater officials say the cases also affect understudies for the play that's based on the Jane Austen novel. In total, the theater has cancelled four performances. Affected ticketholders have been contacted.

Performances of Emma are set to resume Friday evening. In sports, the Lynx host the Chicago Sky today in Minneapolis, the Twins wrap up a series in Chicago this afternoon. Some sun in the Western part of the state, clouds for the rest of Minnesota, highs upper 70s to mid 80s. This is MPR News.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**CHRIS FARRELL:** Minnesota hemp stores saw long lines and a buying frenzy over the holiday weekend. Now, why? Well, Minnesota lawmakers surprised some by quietly passing a new law regarding edible THC products last week. Under the law, Minnesotans can buy edibles of 5 milligrams per serving with a limit of 50 milligrams per package. This is the biggest step Minnesota has taken toward recreational marijuana legalization. Minnesota House of Representatives Majority Leader Ryan Winkler helped pass the law, and he joins me now.

Welcome to the show.

**RYAN WINKLER:** Well, thank you for having me.

**CHRIS FARRELL:** All right, so I think there's some confusion out here. So let's get the, I don't know, get the facts straight here. So what kinds of products are allowed under this new law?

**RYAN WINKLER:** The only products allowed are food and beverages in containers that are childproof, are not marketed to children, and are sold to people over the age of 21. We are not talking about marijuana vapes. We are not talking about marijuana flower for smoking. We are simply talking about edibles and beverages [AUDIO OUT] protected for children and have some basic regulatory rules around them.

**CHRIS FARRELL:** OK, I have to ask you-- it's a naive question. It's a ignorant question. We're using this term THC. So why not marijuana? What is THC?

**RYAN WINKLER:** So THC is basically a chemical compound. The delta 9 variation of THC is the active ingredient, if you want to say it that way, in marijuana that produces the high effect. THC delta 9 can also be derived from hemp, which is a different plant than the marijuana plant but come from the cannabinoid family. So essentially, you get the same chemical through a different process, not using marijuana, in a much lower concentrated form that can be processed and sold as THC.

**CHRIS FARRELL:** OK, so early in the week, you said that the push to legalize some THC edibles and beverages was purposely quiet. So what was the reasoning behind that?

**RYAN WINKLER:** I want to be clear that it was done in multiple public hearings, in bills that traveled the regular route through the legislature. So I don't think it was necessarily quiet. It was simply not something we put out a press release on every day because sometimes the legislature working quietly can get you farther than drawing a lot of public scrutiny. And I think maybe the Republicans working on this bill, because we needed Republicans in the Senate to vote for it, did not want to get scrutiny from their base for working on this issue with us.

**CHRIS FARRELL:** OK, so who's going to enforce this new law?

**RYAN** So it's a strange situation, but it's the Board of Pharmacy initially responsible for providing the regulatory oversight. When I passed House File 600 out of the Minnesota House of Representatives, it was a full legalization bill that included the creation of a Cannabis Management Board with full regulatory and enforcement powers to approve products, to enforce restrictions. And we don't have that robust structure in place so it's the Board of Pharmacy that's initially responsible.

But I expect the next legislature, next session, to come back and look at these issues again and figure out exactly what kind of regulatory structure we need. And I hope that will open the door for further legalization.

**CHRIS FARRELL:** So are you in-- sticking to this law enforcement theme, are you in partnership with law enforcement about how to address this new norm, how to deal with this new norm? We engaged for years with stakeholders of all kinds, including law enforcement, when we put together our Cannabis Management Board and the legalization effort we passed in the state house largely with DFL votes. Law enforcement was part of that.

**RYAN WINKLER:** What we're talking about here is not marijuana. It is not the traditional illicit marketplace for selling marijuana. It's not something that you smoke. These are products sold through regular retail operations, and there is a significantly lower public safety concern with these edible type products, especially in the limited doses that we have in this law.

**CHRIS FARRELL:** So I want to break down my next question into two parts. The first part, is this law creating a path, or is it part of a path that's being created, to decriminalize marijuana use?

**RYAN WINKLER:** I think it's a first step, and I think that there is a lot we need to do to really accomplish the end of prohibition and to right some of those past wrongs. First of all, we should not be wasting law enforcement resources on the cannabis prohibition laws we have. We have many more pressing public safety issues to be addressing with the limited resources we have. We also should recognize that past records related to cannabis should be expunged if they were just for cannabis possession and sale.

And we have a long ways to go in reinvesting in the communities hardest hit by the war on drugs, especially communities of color. So there's much, much more to be done to properly do legalization. This is just opening the door, and I think we need to continue pushing that door open and really putting together the robust legalization plan that we laid out in House File 600.

**CHRIS FARRELL:** Yes, that leads to the follow-up question, which is you mentioned legalization because there's a difference between decriminalizing and then fully legalizing. Do you feel that that's the path that we're now on?

**RYAN WINKLER:** I think we have to be, and I think that's where the public is. I think that decriminalizing just means you're not going to enforce marijuana laws that are still on the books. I think we need to take those laws off the books. I think we need to create a robust regulatory system around cannabis, whether it's hemp or marijuana, in order to make sure that consumers are safe, that we are taxing and putting that money back into address substance abuse and public safety issues.

To do this right, we have a whole robust set of proposals, and I think that is the path we are on. The key thing about this law this year, this new law, is I think it provides consumers access to a safe product that is now legal. And once people start having the ability to purchase this safely and legally, I think we're going to be moving [AUDIO OUT].

**CHRIS** And Representative Winkler, well--

**FARRELL:**

**RYAN** Yes.

**WINKLER:**

**CHRIS** Yeah, there. You're back now. OK, we just lost you there for a second. Why don't you finish your thought.

**FARRELL:**

**RYAN** Oh, I just-- I think once consumers have access to a safe, legal product, we are not going to go backwards.

**WINKLER:**

**CHRIS** Well, thank you very much for taking your time.

**FARRELL:**

**RYAN** Well, I'm happy to discuss it, and I hope that this is just part of a longer conversation in Minnesota about

**WINKLER:** cannabis legalization. We need to do it.

**CHRIS** I think that's for sure. That's a safe forecast, or a safe bet. That was Minnesota DFL Representative Ryan Winkler.

**FARRELL:**

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Classic rock fans, it's our Minnesota music minute. This is Rock Steady, a 1973 song by Minnesota classic rock band Crow, featuring Gwen Matthews. Crow will play the Lowertown Blues and Jazz Festival on July 16th.

[MUSIC PLAYING - CROW, "ROCK STEADY"]

**CROW:** Let's move it with a feeling from side to side. Set yourself down in your car now. Take a ride, and while you're moving, rock steady, rock steady, baby. Let's call this song exactly what it is. What it is, what it is, what it is. It's a funky and low down beat. What it is. A feeling from left to right. What it is. What it is even I can't do. What it is. [INAUDIBLE] Got a feeling [INAUDIBLE]

**CHRIS** All right, it's Wednesday, and for the past several Wednesdays, host Cathy Wurzer has been talking to Dr. Joi Lewis about daily practices that keep you mentally present and healthy. And look, you don't need me to tell you that there have been so many tragedies recently. So this is a good time to focus on ways to take care of yourself and your community. Dr. Joi is a community healer, speaker, and founder of Joi Unlimited and the Healing Justice Foundation.

She is also the author of the book Healing the Act of Radical Self-care. Today, Cathy and Dr. Joi are talking about what to do in life makes you want to stay in bed with the covers over your head.

**CATHY** Dr. Joy, welcome back to the program.

**WURZER:**

**JOI LEWIS:** Thanks so much, Cathy, glad to be here.

**CATHY** I got out of bed this morning, and obviously, you did, too.

**WURZER:**

**JOI LEWIS:** I did. Although, it was questionable, but I did get up.

**CATHY** Good, I'm glad to hear that. In the intro, I mentioned your book, and I would like to read a passage where you wrote about going numb. And you wrote, "It's easy to appear awake but still be dead inside. We may drink, veg out on social media or Netflix, smoke, work too much, have a lot of sex, shop, use street or prescription drugs, or use food.

**WURZER:** Which is my drug of choice, and I think you could probably add gaming or social media surfing to the list, too. Tell us about the urge to just check out.

**JOI LEWIS:** Yeah, I feel it, and I'm sure many other folks feel it. I guess what I want to just start with is that it's kind of tricky. It can appear to just be some kind of individual vice or something like that, but it likely is a trauma response. And so I think it's important that we make sure that we're connecting it to that. And there may be a term the folks have heard of, epigenetics, and it can cause changes in our chromosomes the way that we respond.

And it just can make it more difficult for us to deal with stress and prevent illness, and trauma, and stuff like that. So I don't want people to just think oh, I just have bad habits, but it actually is likely a trauma response.

**CATHY** How do when it's a trauma response versus something like self-care? How many of us like to just get a glass of wine, you go maybe binge a little Netflix, and you just take yourself out of the world for a little bit? Where is the breakdown line there?

**JOI LEWIS:** Yeah, that's such a good question. One of the ways to know is when we're doing something in excess. You know when it's like OK, I'm just doing this over, and over, and over again, and I'm not really being conscious or mindful. But it's like to make a decision, we want to have these practices of self-care to sort of in advance OK, life is going to be stressful. Life is going to happen. And here are some of the things that I use to help me show up for myself and show up for other folks.

It's an intentional way of living, instead of just being scattered and like OK, like I feel like so exhausted at the end of the day, and this is what I'm going to do. And you can kind of feel it in your body when you are really worked up and not necessarily being mindful. Hopefully, we have some time. There's a practice that I like for people to be conscious about how you can plan for these things.

**CATHY** OK, because I was going to ask-- you also wrote in the book, "I have been aware of my own struggles with going numb and checking out when faced with the cruelty of this world. I needed a process, a tool, a solution to help me show up and get present, stay connected, and reach for my humanity and yours."

**WURZER:** You want to just give us an idea of what you use?

**JOI LEWIS:** Yeah, so for me, the tool that I found really is around radical self-care, but oftentimes, when we hear self-care, it's sometimes framed in a way where it's about an opportunity to just escape or to find a way out right of toxic stress and trauma and all that. And sometimes self-care can also encourage isolation, but radical self-care is a bit different. It really is about finding stillness and returning to present moment again and again.

And it's sort of a way in instead of a way out. So the tool that I found, it was radical self-care, and I created a whole process around it, the orange method of radical self-care. So it really is to help us to really be present.

**CATHY** What is the orange, or orange? What does it stand for? What would that be?

**WURZER:**

**JOI LEWIS:** Yeah, so the orange method of radical self-care has four practices, the first one being a meditation to help us get grounded, the second one being mindfulness to help us get present, and emotional liberation to help us get free, and conscious movement to help us get unstuck. And the reason-- Yes, anybody who knows me, they know I love orange. But beyond that, orange is a chakra color for in our lower abdomen, and it's where transformation happens.

So yeah, and these practices, as I said, I didn't create them. They've been around for thousands of years. I can't say I created meditation, but what I do do in this method is to try to remind folks that these things are available to us. And I'm just on a mission to just say hey, life is hard. All of the hard things that have been happening, kind of nonstop but particularly over these last couple of weeks, stuff like the Supreme Court, all these shootings, all this stuff, it's like I want people to have practices and tools that are available to them that are really integrated into their lives.

**CATHY** I understand what you're saying. Thank you for that. Say, can we end with a meditation practice because we haven't done that, the two of us, for a little bit?

**WURZER:**

**JOI LEWIS:** Yes.

**CATHY** So can you just pick something that you like?

**WURZER:**

**JOI LEWIS:** Yes, as we've been talking, it's like OK, all of these tough things are happening and things are going on. So I like to set things up where I'm not just dependent on some kind of emergency response. So the practice that we're going to do today is called building your energy bank. Now, what I need you to do is either grab a sheet of paper or just simply, I love doing this, just take your phone and just open the notes section of your phone.

And at the top, put energy bank. And then you're going to write the word deposit and put one, two, three. And then under that, you're going to put withdrawals. So just think about this as you're building your own bank account, but it's an energy bank account. So on number one, here's what I'd like for you to do. Write down the names of-- the first names of three people that when you spend time with them, you feel amazing, awesome, and brilliant.

Now, don't worry, Cathy, I'm not going to have you-- you're not going to have to tell me what you wrote down. So this is just for you. Now listen, I don't want anybody on the list that you feel obligated to put down. This is your list. Be selfish. OK, you got that?

**CATHY** Mmhmm.

**WURZER:**

**JOI LEWIS:** Number two I want you to write down three activities that when you do them, they make you feel amazing, awesome, and brilliant. Same rule, you cannot put down things that you feel obligated. All right, now, don't worry about if you're not getting through all of this because you can go back, and you can do it in a longer way. But for now, this is fine. Number three, write down your favorite song, but here's the caveat.

I want you to write down a song that is your jam that makes you move, that makes you want to get up and dance, that song.

**CATHY** Mmhmm.

**WURZER:**

**JOI LEWIS:** OK. Oh, you guys-- you're like, it's easy. I might ask you about that one. OK, now, we're at the withdrawals. I want you to write down three people that when you spend time with them, you feel drained, agitated, and exhausted. I promise I'm not going to ask you to tell me those names, but just write down those three.

**CATHY** But wouldn't it be fun to call them out on the air? No, just kidding. kidding.

**WURZER:**

**JOI LEWIS:** No, I'm going to ask. OK, but here's the thing. This is the trick about this list. I don't want you to put anybody on your list that it's optional that you spend time with them. I also want you to know that a withdrawal is not a negative thing. If you go to the bank, and you need to get new tires or something, and they're going to cost you \$500, if you got \$3,000 in a bank, that's fine. You just withdraw the \$500. But the problem is if you need to withdraw \$500 and you've got \$100 in there.

Now, we're in trouble because then you're writing bad checks. And what I want you to know is that even with our energy, we often are out here writing bad checks because we don't have enough deposits. Make sense?

**CATHY** Mmhmm.

**WURZER:**

**JOI LEWIS:** So number two, I want you to write down three activities that when you spend time doing them, you feel drained, agitated, or exhausted. And again, I don't want this to be optional because let me free you real quick. If it's optional, don't do it. And you can say Dr. Joi said I don't have to do that anymore. Yeah, stop doing it because it's optional. And now, the last one is I want you to write down three sounds that when you hear them, they make you feel drained, agitated, or exhausted.

Maybe it's your alarm clock. Maybe it's when your phone rings. And these are not optional things, but there are some options you have. So I know we're moving quickly, but you should have your energy bank all worked out. Here's the thing. If you, on a consistent basis, spend some time putting those deposits in, when withdrawals happen, because withdrawals are going to happen probably every day, you have enough stored up in your energy bank that it's OK.

And it also is like if you're not sure why am I feeling so exhausted, I got a good night's sleep last night? I ate well, but gosh, I feel so exhausted. You can now pull out this list that you have and be like have I spent enough time in these deposits? We just don't want to be out here writing bad checks. Is that fair?



**CATHY** That is absolutely fair, yes. Exactly, that is so fantastic. Thank you.

**WURZER:**

**JOI LEWIS:** Yes, you're so welcome.

**CHRIS FARRELL:** I like that, an energy bank. That was host Cathy Wurzer talking with Dr. Joi Lewis. Dr. Joi is a community healer, speaker, and founder of Joi Unlimited and the Healing Justice Foundation, and author of the book *Healing the Act of Radical Self-care*. Now, this was an edited version of their conversation. You can find their extended discussion on our website at [mprnews.org](http://mprnews.org) in the Minnesota Now section.

**CREW:** Support comes from Summit Orthopedics. If foot or ankle pain is stopping you from staying on your feet, Summit can help. No referrals needed, orthopedic urgent care, and online appointment scheduling at [SummitOrtho.com](http://SummitOrtho.com). Start at Summit.

**CHRIS FARRELL:** By the way, did you catch the sky last night over the Twin Cities? There was that super orange and yellow. It was like out of a movie. Well, the National Weather Service Twin Cities has an answer. According to its Facebook page, and I quote, behind thunderstorms in the evening, especially larger complexes like what crossed Southern Minnesota, high clouds remain in their wake. The setting sun emits light that is bent with longer wavelengths.

While blue or shorter wavelengths are scattered out, the yellow, orange, red part of the spectrum, the longer wavelengths, remain. So the setting sun, which already emits those yellow, orange, red hues, bounces off the high clouds, thus producing the unusual environment we saw last night. And I think that's really cool. And we're going to have more on weather coming up later in the show with MPR News chief meteorologist Paul Huttner. But first, let's get the latest news from Mr. John Wanamaker. John.

**JOHN WANAMAKER:** I did get a very good look at that sky last night on my walk. And in the news in Illinois, the man charged with killing seven people at an Independence Day parade confessed to police that he opened fire from a rooftop in suburban Chicago and then fled to the Madison, Wisconsin area, where he contemplated shooting up an event there. That's according to authorities who spoke today. Robert Crimo III allegedly turned back to Illinois, where he was later arrested after deciding he was not prepared to pull off a shooting in Wisconsin.

An Illinois judge ordered Crimo to be held without bail. A prosecutor said police found the shells of 83 bullets and three ammunition magazines on the rooftop they say was the scene of the crime. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson battled to remain in office Wednesday, shrugging off calls for his resignation after two top ministers and a slew of junior officials said they could no longer serve under his scandal-tarred leadership. Members of the opposition Labor Party showered Johnson with shouts of go, go during the weekly ritual of prime minister's questions in the House of Commons.

Even members of Johnson's own Conservative Party are challenging their leader. When asked whether there was anything that might prompt him to resign, Johnson replied that he would keep going. Foreign ministers from the world's largest nations are looking to address Russia's war in Ukraine and its impact on global energy and food security when they meet in Indonesia this week. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, the foreign ministers of Russia and China are expected to attend the meeting in the Indonesian resort of Bali.

It will mark the first time Blinken and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov have been in the same room since January. Aviation authorities are preparing to cautiously relax some of the regulations that were meant to address the boom in the off-the-shelf movement of consumer drones. Drones can now fly out of their pilot's sight to inspect power lines or track endangered sea turtles off of Florida's coast, as well as monitoring seaports and railroads in the US and Europe.

Businesses want smoother rules that could open skies to new commercial use of drones, but privacy advocates and some private pilots have concerns. There have been several instances of drones affecting commercial flights while operating near airports. On Wall Street, stocks are mixed this hour, the Dow Jones off about 1/3 third of 1%, the S&P down slightly, and now that NASDAQ off-- actually, now is even. This is MPR News.

**CHRIS FARRELL:** A wind storm with gusts up to 85 miles an hour blew through South Dakota, Southern Minnesota, and Iowa yesterday. That's Tuesday. And the evening sky across the region was this unreal shade of yellow and orange. So what is going on? To get the answers, let's get all the details from MPR's chief meteorologist Paul Huttner, Paul, always good to talk to you.

**PAUL HUTTNER:** Oh yeah, good to hear your voice again, my friend. Thanks, and what a night, what a night, from severe weather to that just surreal sunset across Minnesota last night.

**CHRIS FARRELL:** OK, so let's start with that windstorm. Give us the details. That was enough strength to that wind to do some damage.

**PAUL HUTTNER:** Yeah, and it's what we call a derecho, even a super derecho with this one, because derecho, by definition, severe winds over a path 240 miles long, gusts of at least 58. This thing went 800 miles, Chris, from West Central South Dakota through Southwest Minnesota, Iowa, through parts of Wisconsin, and even to the Chicago area by late last night, where downed trees in Crystal Lake, which is the far Northwest suburbs.

Gusts as high as 91 in South Dakota, I saw a lot of 80-plus mile an hour wind gusts, even 70s in Southwest Minnesota. So that was the storm. But it's part of a bigger pattern that we call a ring of fire pattern, with all respect to Johnny Cash, that hot and humid heat dome. We hit 90 yesterday, day 11 in the Twin Cities. We were on the northern edge of that. It was close to 100 in much of Iowa, with heat index values way over 100. And around the northern edge of that heat dome which set up over the central US, that's where the jet stream rides.

You've got all that moisture dew points in the 70s, even 80s in Iowa yesterday. That is Amazon jungle type humidity, and the storms like to fire there. So they formed in South Dakota, raced across Southwestern Minnesota, and produced all that wind damage. We call that the ring of fire. It's a very favorable location as storms roll around the periphery of that intense heat dome, Chris.

**CHRIS FARRELL:** And that Johnny Cash singing Ring of Fire, boy, that-- I'm sorry, now, I had that in the back of my mind. I can just hear.

**PAUL HUTTNER:** It burns, burns, burns.

**CHRIS FARRELL:** Yes, so drought, is what you've been describing as drought coming back to at least parts of Minnesota?

**PAUL HUTTNER:** It's been creeping in, especially to the Southern parts of Minnesota, from the Twin Cities South. Abnormally dry conditions in the drought monitor, even a sliver of moderate drought in Southern Minnesota, but here's the great news from last night. Those storms dumped significant rainfall totals. We had 5 inches in Albert Lea, which of course, is flash flood material. And they had those warnings out last night. But a lot of places got heavy rains that didn't cause flash flooding, which is great news for crops.

You talk about \$1,000,000 rain, this might have been \$1,000,000,000 rain this time of year across parts of Southern Minnesota. Austin had 2 3/4 inches, Blue Earth, a little over two, Worthington, an inch and 3/4, Saint James, an inch, Rochester, an inch. So that belt along and either side of I-90 in Southern Minnesota, which is a sea of corn and soybeans, got a lot of good soaking rain last night. And boy, they needed it, Chris, because the crops were trending dry.

**CHRIS FARRELL:** Paul, I've been really waiting for this segment here because I just have to ask you what was your reaction to the Supreme Court ruling about the EPA?

**PAUL HUTTNER:** Yeah, well, like a lot of people, and I've been reading about a lot of experts reactions, too, basically, if the EPA can't regulate the fossil fuel industry and transition toward cleaner power, that's obviously terrible on the surface. But a lot of experts are saying that it doesn't impact state regulations. So states like California can make their own regulations, states like Minnesota. Market forces, of course as you're familiar with, still putting a lot of pressure on coal.

Coal, of course, has been in the decline. Renewables have been on the increase. And we reported on Climate Cast, Chris. Solar power is now the cheapest form of electric power in history. It's about half the cost of coal-generated power per kilowatt hour. So the economics are still pushing in the direction of that transition toward greener energy. Wind and solar power is now 25% of all power in Minnesota produced every year and in several other states.

And renewables and battery storage are moving forward quickly, but Chris, this is all in an environment where we still need to go much faster to reach those 1.5 or two degrees Celsius global goals for Earth's temperature rise. So the decision is certainly significant, Chris, but there are still opportunities for market forces and at the state level to move forward on cleaner energy and climate.

**CHRIS FARRELL:** OK, so in the-- oh, we got a little bit of time left here. So back to Minnesota and the weather, what can we expect for the rest of the week, the weekend?

**PAUL HUTTNER:** Yeah, classic summer weather, we've got some clouds around today mixed with sun. We're mainly in the 70s, low 80s. It's going to be mostly sunny to partly cloudy right into Saturday. Mid 80s for high, Southern Minnesota, '70s, North. Dew points in the 60s, so a little sticky, a pretty classic dog days summer forecast, Chris. Next real chance of storms come Saturday night into Sunday. So hey, get out there and enjoy it.

We wait all year for this the summer weather in Minnesota. It is finally here.

**CHRIS FARRELL:** I will be outside. I'm going to do what you tell me to do. Thanks a lot. All right, Paul Huttner is MPS's chief meteorologist.

**CREW:** Programming is supported by the McKnight Foundation, advancing a more just creative and abundant future where people and planet thrive, online and McKnight.org.

**CHRIS FARRELL:** You may have heard Alison Bechdel's name from the feminist film tool the Bechdel test or through her memoir turned Tony Award-winning Broadway musical called Fun Home. But even before those achievements, Bechdel wove herself into the fabric of lesbian cultural identity when she started publishing her comic strip Dykes to Watch Out For in Minneapolis back in 1983. And the strip gained a worldwide cult following for its game-changing portrayal of American queer life.

It went on hiatus in 2008, but it's still getting attention to this day. Alison Bechdel is a MacArthur Genius Award recipient, the author of a New York Times best-selling graphic memoir, and a Tony Award winner. OK, wow. She sat down with Minnesota Now producer Ellen Finn to look back on the roots of her work.

**ELLEN FINN:** Alison, I am so excited to talk to you.

**ALISON BECHDEL:** Oh, thank you.

**ELLEN FINN:** Let me just say I was a teenager growing up in Northern California when I first read the comic Dykes to Watch Out For. I was 17, I was barely out of the closet, and the strip portrayed Minneapolis as some sort of lesbian utopia. So when I moved here a few years ago, I was surprised to see the tight knit queer community that you depicted was very real.

**ALISON BECHDEL:** Oh, cool. So it still happening, I haven't been back in a while.

**ELLEN FINN:** Yeah, how did you come up with the name Dykes to Watch Out For?

**ALISON BECHDEL:** Oh gosh, that was something I didn't even think about it. It just came out of my head one day back in the very early 80s when I was drawing these silly pictures of lesbians to amuse my friends. I just started giving them numbers, as if I had a whole series of them, and then I, in fact, created a whole series. But that title just came out of nowhere, and it was funny to me because it had a double meaning. Keep your eye out because these people are exciting, but also, they might be dangerous, too.

**ELLEN FINN:** For folks who don't know, give a little synopsis of the strip's premise and characters.

**ALISON BECHDEL:** Dykes to Watch Out For was a soap opera kind of strip in gay and lesbian newspapers, and it centered around a women's bookstore where many of the characters worked. And we followed their lives and loves, but at the same time, we followed current events as they were unfolding and the characters were responding to things going on in the news and politics.

**ELLEN FINN:** Can you tell me more about how specifically the Twin Cities colored the strip?

**ALISON BECHDEL:** The big thing was the Amazon bookstore. It's hard to talk about Amazon bookstore anymore because of how completely the online Amazon wiped it off the map, along with countless other independent bookstores across the country. But long before the giant internet monopoly named for the biggest river in the world, there was Amazon bookstore, named for the mythological tribe of women warriors.

And it was on Loring Park in Minneapolis. It was the gravitational hub of this subculture of this gay and lesbian community that I was discovering. Authors would come through town and read. We were all very engaged with the writers and poets who were speaking there. There was the bulletin board, which did all the stuff we now do online, roommate and housing notices, announcements for political meetings and actions, all kinds of clubs and organizations.

There were the books themselves, of course, and the very knowledgeable and compassionate staff, who were often a literal lifeline for people. So I found much of my real life revolving around this great bookstore so I put that into my comic strip. I created a fictional bookstore called Mad Women Books, and that's where a lot of the stuff that happens in the comic strip world originates.

**ELLEN FINN:** Sounds like so much of the city informed the strip. I'm curious what role did you want the strip to play in the city? Were you thinking about that at the time?

**ALISON BECHDEL:** No, I was not thinking that at all. It was a really different world then, and it's hard to explain it to younger people now because there just-- we weren't part of the mainstream. We were really, really sidelined, and that was fine with us at that time. We were starting to think about wanting more access and wanting people to see us, wanting to have more visibility. But for the time being, we were building up our strength in this parallel subculture.

And to me, that was all that my comic strip was about. It was like I was showing the lives of people like me and my friends to people like me and my friends. It never occurred to me that it would go further than that. Maybe I had a dim little hope of that, but it was not part of my agenda. I just wanted to help people like me to see themselves as whole human beings, citizens, members of the community.

**ELLEN FINN:** I'm curious. *Dykes to Watch Out For* explores lesbian humanity at a time when mainstream images of queer women were one-dimensional, at best, and hateful, at worst. Your strip made life visible and especially highlighted lesbians at the forefront of political movements, but also trying to start a family, navigate a career and love. What role did you want your strip to play?

**ALISON BECHDEL:** Well, when I started doing this, people were openly hostile toward gay men and lesbians. Not just hostile, but even worse than that in some ways was the mockery and humiliation. It was just people making fun of us. Lesbians especially were just thought to be these ridiculous figures, these crazy old spinsters, or I don't even know what. But I felt really indignant about that. I was just as much a regular person as anyone, and I felt like I wanted to show that in my work.

Me and my friends were deeply humane people, actively engaged in changing the world, and I just wanted to create a record of that. Can I tell you a little side story?

**ELLEN FINN:** Please.

**ALISON BECHDEL:** When I moved to Minneapolis in 1986, I had been drawing *Dykes to Watch Out For* for a couple of years, but it didn't have those regular characters. It just had I would invent new characters for each episode because I wanted to have regular characters, but I didn't feel like I had the skill to do that, either to draw them recognizably from panel to panel and episode to episode or to create a really rich, believable, dense world for the characters.

But it was soon after I moved to Minneapolis that I felt ready to take that plunge, and I think it was directly a result of living in that incredibly rich, thriving subculture, where there was so much going on, so much support for my crazy alternative lifestyle. I started writing about a set of characters. I started with Mo, who was this young woman who kind of looked like me, her best friend, who was like the sort of Don Juan character of the strip, their friends, the couple, Clarice and Tony.

And then this whole little community of people started forming a constellation, and I just kept writing about them for many years.

**ELLEN FINN:** Wow, what do you make of people who say your characters are maybe not only the first lesbians that they met in their life, but they're role models?

**ALISON BECHDEL:** I always was a little disturbed by that, like wow, that's a lot of responsibility. So I just tried not to think about that, but definitely, I would hear from people who claimed that was true. And certainly, people in small towns, this was way before we had gay and lesbian characters on TV so it was just helpful, I think, for us to see a reflection of the kind of lives we were all leading.

**ELLEN FINN:** Yeah, it's pretty clear from your graphic memoir *Fun Home*, and even just the title of your strip, *Dykes to Watch Out For*, that you've been out for as a lesbian from a young age and didn't shy away from the complexity and intimacy of your gay identity in your work. I'm just curious do you have any advice for people who are struggling to be out these days?

**ALISON BECHDEL:** Honestly, Ellen, I don't know what to tell anyone. I feel like the world is really changing rapidly, and I don't know what's really happening. It seems like we're very much on the brink of possibly moving backwards in many bad ways. I've always felt like coming out is important, and that's what changes peoples' minds and makes the world safe for everyone. But I'm not making any pronouncements right now.

**ELLEN FINN:** Do you think you'll ever return to those characters, Mo in the crew?

**ALISON BECHDEL:** I am returning to them in a funny way right now. I'm working on another project where-- not a memoir but a sort of auto fictional story about my life where those characters are my actual friends. It's funny because when I first created those characters, in a way, I was making them just for myself. They were my imaginary friends, the community I wished that I had. And so I'm kind of resurrecting them now as my friends in late middle age.

They're all much older now, of course.

**ELLEN FINN:** That's fantastic. I can't wait to see that. Well, thanks so much for the work that you've done. It really has changed my and many people I know's lives. So thank you so much, Alison.

**ALISON BECHDEL:** Thank you, Ellen, lovely to talk with you.

**CHRIS FARRELL:** That was cartoonist Alison Bechdel speaking with our producer Ellen Finn.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

So a musical from St. Paul's History Theater is telling the story of one of Duluth's most notorious murders. On June 27, 1977 at Glensheen Mansion, Elizabeth Congdon, heiress to a vast mining fortune, was killed along with her night nurse. The mystery became a media sensation and one of the city's most infamous tales. So here to tell us more about the Glensheen the Musical is playwright Jeffrey Hatcher. And Jeffrey, welcome to Minnesota Now.

**JEFFREY** Hello, how are you?

**HATCHER:**

**CHRIS** Good. So what inspired you to write a musical about Glensheen?

**FARRELL:**

**JEFFREY** Well, I've always been interested in murders, and murder mysteries, and thrillers, and things like that. But  
**HATCHER:** actually, it was Ron Peluso's idea. Ron's the artistic director of the History Theater, and he's always finding terrific ideas about things that have happened in this state and the upper Midwest. And so he asked me about it a couple of-- well, many years ago now, probably 10 or 12. And we batted around different ways we might approach it.

And then I was working with the composer Chan Poling on another project, and it suddenly struck me I think this could really work and probably work best as a musical. So I asked Chan, and he said yes. And bing, bang, bong, there we are.

**CHRIS** OK, so why did you think a musical would be best?

**FARRELL:**

**JEFFREY** Well, a musical already takes you into an elevated, or theatrical, realm, and I knew the story of Glensheen,  
**HATCHER:** which, as you said in your intro, includes the two murders. But it also follows the murderers, the conspirators, and the family, and the police, and the prosecutors, and the defense attorneys for another 20 some years. So you've got to combine and condense a lot. You've got to exclude a lot, jump around in time.

And I thought that since it was a black comedy in many ways that changing styles would be useful. And again, that makes you think about music and how music can put you in suddenly a new place, a comic place, a mysterious place, romantic. So it seemed to me that that would be the perfect template.

**CHRIS** So can you describe for us one of your favorite moments in Glensheen?

**FARRELL:**

**JEFFREY** Oh, there are lots of them. At some point, Wendy Lehr, who plays many roles, but one of them is the defense  
**HATCHER:** attorney based on the late attorney Meshbesh, leads the defense team in a song called Conspiracy. It's the top of the second act. She addresses the audience as if they're the jury, and it's this wild manipulation of the jury state of mind to make them identify with the murderer. So that's one.

And then there are moments like Jen Maren and Dane Stauffer as the killers, when they decide to commit the murder, a song called What to Do. And one of my favorite moments is actually a song towards the end of the show, where we tell the audience what's true and what's false in the play because it's the history theater. So you're supposed to get the facts right.

**CHRIS** Right.

**FARRELL:**

**JEFFREY  
HATCHER:** We do take artistic license, but we wanted to be fair about it in a fun way. And so we have a song called Truth and Fiction that tells the audience this was true, this was false, this was close, this we're not sure, this was verbatim. And it's again something that you couldn't do in a straight play. It only really works if you do it in the context of something like a musical number.

**CHRIS** So the musical has been-- you've been touring all over the state this summer, and how is that going?

**FARRELL:**

**JEFFREY  
HATCHER:** Oh, it's been great. Naturally, the tour was scheduled for 2020, and it was put off by the pandemic. And we wondered how it would go to come back after two years. And also, what would other cities think about it? And it's been a huge hit, especially in Duluth. We played up there at the North Shore, and we wondered, of course, would this be hitting too close to home because that's where Glensheen is? Would people think that we were dancing on graves, et cetera.

But it went over great, and the audiences jumped to their feet, and cheered, and laughed at all the Duluth jokes, which, I guess, is the test. That's the litmus test. And yeah, no, really. And now, we bring it back to St. Paul, where I think we're almost sold out already. So I'm supposed to say get your tickets now because they're going fast.

**CHRIS  
FARRELL:** Oh, good. So that's wonderful to hear. But I have to ask you back performing in Duluth, did that make a difference for the actors and for you, this experience of doing it there?

**JEFFREY  
HATCHER:** Well, yes. Again, you're literally less than a mile from the mansion, and we imagine there might be family members or friends. It is a long time ago since the murder, and you can never tell. And I think on a preview night, Jen Maren, who plays Marjorie Congdon Caldwell, Jen was like I don't know if they like me. And at the end, they cheered voraciously. But that's a character that's difficult to like anyway.

And Jen's great, she's charming. She brings them in even though Marjorie is kind of a repellent character. But she's also a wounded character, and she's easily identifiable with. So I think there was a little bit of a clench like will they like us here.

**CHRIS** Right.

**FARRELL:**

**JEFFREY  
HATCHER:** And it turned out that they liked us as well, if not better, than any other place we've played.

**CHRIS** So tell us again. History Theater in downtown St. Paul, when does it start, and how long is the run?

**FARRELL:**

**JEFFREY  
HATCHER:** It runs for two weeks this time. It starts July 9th. I think that's Saturday night, right? And it runs through the 25th. So I know I'll be there, and we get a lot of repeat audience members. We even get audience members who dress up as Marjorie. That happened up in Duluth, too. So we've created a very strange fan base.



**CHRIS** Excellent. Well, thank you very much for taking your time.

**FARRELL:**

**JEFFREY** Oh, not at all, thank you.

**HATCHER:**

**CHRIS** Jeffrey Hatcher is writer of the musical Glensheen.

**FARRELL:**

[MUSIC PLAYING]

So still pretty muggy here in the Twin Cities, 75 degrees, overcast, creeping toward a high of 81. We may be in for some showers overnight tonight, just the slight chance. Sun will return tomorrow, finally, with a high of 83. Now, if you're up in Duluth, it's breezier up there, 64 degrees. Let's go down. Let's see, Albert Lea is 79, and it's 75 in Morris. So just yeah, it's going to be hot the next day.