

[MUSIC PLAYING]

(SINGING) 1, 2, 3, 4

CATHY WURZER:

It's *Minnesota Now*. I'm Cathy Wurzer. Today is day two of the largest nurses strike in US history. We'll get some context on how this strike is different from others in the past. Minnesota author Anika Fajardo talks about her new book, out today, and the Minnesota children's book festival.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

A new film about women skateboarders premieres at the Duluth Superior Film Festival this weekend. It profiles a woman from Stillwater. We'll talk with the filmmaker about her work.

And Jack Jablonski is here to talk about how he handles the spotlight over his hockey injury and his recent announcement that he's gay.

Famous foodie, Andrew Zimmern has a new show about how to cook wild game. It's part of his personal mission to eat sustainably. We'll talk to him too. We'll have the Minnesota Music Minute and the song of the day. All of that comes up right after the news.

AMY HELD:

Live from *NPR News* in Washington, I'm Amy Held. Stocks are selling off sharply on disappointing inflation news from the Labor Department. The Dow is down more than 900 points. NPR's David Gura reports Wall Street had hoped for signs prices had moderated more.

DAVID GURA:

The consumer price index for August came in higher than expected, up 8.3% from a year earlier. That's less of an increase than the month before thanks, in part, to falling gasoline prices. But food prices rose, and new cars were more expensive. So was rent.

Today's sell off reflects Wall Street's expectation based on these data. The Federal Reserve will once again raise interest rates by 3/4 of a percentage point when it meets next week. Fed policymakers have doubled down on their commitment to fight high inflation. We need to act right now, Fed Chair Jerome Powell said in a speech last week, forthrightly and strongly. David Gura, *NPR News*, New York.

AMY HELD:

Democrats are trying to sound sanguine about inflation, though the Congressional Budget Office says the so-called Inflation Reduction Act will have a negligible effect on prices any time soon. NPR's Windsor Johnston reports, President Biden is celebrating last month's passage of the bill at the White House today.

WINDSOR JOHNSTON:

President Biden and congressional democrats are expected to highlight parts of the law they say will benefit working families. Senate Majority Leader, Chuck Schumer, says the law signals a turning point in the fight to lower everyday prices and meet the nation's climate change goals.

CHUCK SCHUMER:

The good news is already pouring in. Companies like Toyota have announced billions in new investments to start manufacturing batteries for electric and hybrid vehicles right here in America. Had we not done this, many of these plants would have been built but probably overseas.

WINDSOR JOHNSTON:

In addition to providing incentives for the clean energy industry, the law allows Medicare to negotiate prescription drug prices. Windsor Johnston, *NPR News*, Washington.

AMY HELD:

Senator Lindsey Graham is introducing a bill that would ban abortions nationwide at 15 weeks. But in order for it to pass, he concedes republicans would first have to win back the House and the Senate in November.

Ukraine has changed the front lines of its war with Russia, taking back in days what it had lost in weeks of fighting. Kyiv says it has liberated more than 24 square miles of territory this month alone. NPR's Greg Myre reports, with Russia still occupying large swaths of Ukrainian land, Kyiv is strategizing about what's ahead.

GREG MYRE:

Now, Ukraine faces a tough decision. If it keeps pressing ahead, it could risk overextending its own forces. But if it doesn't keep pressing, this may allow the Russians a chance to regroup.

AMY HELD:

A senior US military official says, when it invaded in February, Russia overestimated its own strength and underestimated Ukraine's. The US has sent more than \$13 billion in security aid to Ukraine. This is *NPR News*.

NARRATOR 1:

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[MUSIC PLAYING]

CATHY WURZER:

Around Minnesota right now, skies are sunny with a little haze because of wildfire smoke. Temperatures today will be in the 70s. Right now, in Wudinna, it's sunny and 72. It's 64 in Wynonna. And outside the Castle Danger Brewery in downtown Two Harbors, it's sunny and 70. I'm Cathy Wurzer with Minnesota News Headlines.

Today's the second day of a three-day nurses strike at hospitals in the Twin Cities and Twin Ports. The affected hospitals are asking the public for patience if there are delays in care.

The Nurses Association, representing the 15,000 registered nurses on strike, are pushing for better staffing levels and pay increases to retain nurses. More on that strike in just a minute.

A 33-year-old central Minnesota man has been found guilty of assault and stalking, motivated by bias for a months-long campaign of threats and property damage that terrorized a nearby family. Tim Nelson has more.

TIM NELSON:

A criminal complaint includes nearly a dozen charges against Benton Beyer of Richmond accusing him of spying on a family near a group home where his girlfriend worked, later damaging their cars, and eventually crashing a stolen SUV into their home early one morning.

Beyer told his girlfriend that he believes she was unfaithful to him with a series of Black men, and charges say his suspicion fell for no discernible reason on a biracial family near the group home as well as other unrelated people. Beyer was arrested shortly after the SUV struck the family's Cold Spring home in July of 2021.

A jury trial that ended Monday in Stearns County found him guilty of stalking, theft, criminal property damage, and assault motivated by racial bias. Beyer is jailed and scheduled for sentencing November 18. I'm Tim Nelson.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

CATHY WURZER:

I mentioned the Minnesota Nurses strike. Nurses are picketing this week at 16 hospitals in the Twin Cities and the Twin Ports. It's the largest nurses strike in Minnesota history. Union organizers say it's the largest strike of nurses in US history.

It made us think about where this strike fits in history and what it means right now, two years into a worldwide pandemic. Peter Radcliffe is on the line right now. He's co-executive director of the Eastside Freedom Library in Saint Paul and a retired history professor at Macalester College specializing in labor history.

Professor, it's always a pleasure. Welcome back to the show.

PETER RADCLIFFE:

Thank you, Cathy. Glad to be here.

CATHY WURZER:

I know you've been following strikes for years and years, the Minnesota Nurses Strike of 2010 comes to mind, about 12,000 nurses at that point. That was called the largest nurses strike in history then. At the time, it was prolonged. You remember there was talk of getting the National Guard out. Why do you think we're back here again?

PETER RADCLIFFE:

Well, I think that the pandemic has really demonstrated the fault lines in the American health care system. It's not just a question of the sixteen hospitals here in Minnesota that are being struck. There's a strike going on right now in Wisconsin. There's a strike going on right now in the state of California, again, nurses and mental health workers.

The pandemic has both put stress on the system and demonstrated the fragility of the system that we have. And it's going to take a really large solution to prevent these kinds of conflicts in the future.

CATHY WURZER:

When you look back at history, and I know you do so often, are there any corollaries between this strike and others in the past?

PETER RADCLIFFE:

Sure, I think that here in Minnesota, in our history, there have been several strikes that have been bellwethers for how the National Labor system and the National political economy is going.

In the spring of 1894, railroad workers on the Great Northern Railroad struck against James J Hill in a strike that involved about 10,000 workers, and by June of that year, had grown to 125,000 workers on railroad systems all over the United States.

That led, among other things, to the establishment of Labor Day as a national holiday. In 1934, truck drivers and warehouse workers in Minneapolis went on strike, actually went on three strikes in February, in the early summer, and in the late summer. And the real outcome of those strikes was the passage of the National Labor Relations Act in 1935. The whole National Labor Relations system shifted as a result of those strikes in Minneapolis.

And in 1985, '86, Hormel workers in Austin, Minnesota struck in a strike that became the symbol of the shift in the American political economy from the demand-driven Keynesianism of the 1940s through the late 1970s to the more supply side profit-focused, top down system that's been called neoliberalism that has continued to dominate the American political economy since the Reagan administration of the '80s.

So these have all been moments where labor conflict in Minnesota has had a national echo, has had a national impact, has left its imprint for decades after each of these struggles as to how the American system of labor relations would be understood and practiced.

CATHY WURZER:

So I wonder what may materialize, potentially, when it comes to any lasting changes from this labor strike, right? Earlier this morning on *Morning Edition* I talked with a Rutgers University professor who said something interesting. She said doctors bring in money. Nurses cost money.

To give nurses what they want, do you think there needs to be some sort of fundamental redistribution of spending in order to pay nurses more. Doctors and administrators maybe get paid less or differently?

PETER RADCLIFFE:

Well, I think that the nurses union is pointing to the inequities in the system that has led to considerable wealth ending up in the hands of hospital administrators. So I'm not sure about the balance between doctors and nurses, but it does seem like the balance between administrators and care providers, whether they are nurses or LPNs or nurses assistants or other workers who provide that hands on care for patients.

But I think we really need to have a conversation about what would be a humane and socially appropriate health care system. This would be a good time, Cathy, I think, to talk to John Marty who has been an advocate for decades for restructuring the health care system both in Minnesota and nationally. And I think John's voice could be a very valuable voice in these conversations.

CATHY WURZER:

And of course, we're talking about State Senator John Marty.

PETER RADCLIFFE:

Yes.

CATHY WURZER:

Professor, I've got a couple of minutes left. As you know, there is vocal opposition in some quarters to unions. A group of nurses in a Mayo clinic facility in Mankato, as you know, recently voted the Union out, the M&A. What do you make of that move versus this strike?

PETER RADCLIFFE:

Well, I think that administrators in the hospitals have been quite dug in in their resistance to nurses having a collective voice in how health care is delivered and how workers are compensated. In the case of the Mayo Clinic, the role played by the National Right-to-Work Committee in providing attorneys and advising the Mayo Clinic is a very important part of the story.

This is an ideological resistance to collective bargaining and worker representation, and it needs to be evaluated through that lens.

CATHY WURZER:

And before you go, what will you be watching for here in the next days and weeks to come when it comes to the nurses strike?

PETER RADCLIFFE:

I think public opinion is the critical factor here. The nurses picket lines, their signs, their opportunities to express themselves through the media. The most important audience is not the hospital administrators. The most important audience is the general public.

How do we understand what's happening in our health care system? What lessons can we learn from the pandemic? How can we create a more humane system? We need to hear more from John Q Public, or whatever the feminine-gendered version of John Q Public is. We need to hear from ordinary people who are themselves patients who depend on the health care system.

I want to just quickly add, Cathy, and I was saying to your producer Gretchen, that there was recently a study published that there are 100 million Americans who owe medical debt, 100 million of us, far more than those who own student loans.

So what's cockeyed about a system that leaves 100 million people in debt after they've been sick or injured and have sought care? We need to have a big conversation about our health care system.

CATHY WURZER:

And maybe the strike opens that door. I appreciate your time, as always.

PETER RADCLIFFE:

It's an opportunity.

CATHY WURZER: It is. Thank you, professor. Take good care.

PETER RADCLIFFE: You too, Cathy.

CATHY WURZER: We've been talking to-- Peter Ratcliffe is co-executive director of the Eastside Freedom Library, retired professor of history, labor history at Macalester College. Of course, we'll continue coverage of the nurses strike on the air and on our website, NPRnews.org.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

(SINGING) It's 5 o'clock in the morning, still laying here all alone. I stayed up all night long waiting for my man to come home. He's been running around with every single girl in this town. I've been playing a fool. The time has come. Forbid I get up and sing those pack your suitcase blues.

CATHY WURZER: Oh, friends, is the Minnesota Music Minute. This is *Pack Your Suitcase Blues* by Minnesota's first lady of song, Miss Debbie Duncan. Known for her vibrant personality, her energy and impressive vocal range, Debbie was an unstoppable performer who brought so much joy to the community. I just can't believe she's gone. She passed away in 2020 and is remembered by members of the Twin Cities jazz scene and everybody who loved her, Debbie Duncan. That was your Minnesota Music Minute. 12:16 here on *Minnesota Now* from NPR News.

Let me introduce you to another amazing woman, Anika Fajardo is an award-winning author who was born in Colombia, grew up in Minnesota, based here now. She writes books for adults and young adults, and her most recent book comes out today, today. It's called *Meet Me Halfway*, and Anika is here to talk about it. Hey, welcome to *Minnesota Now*, and congratulations. Happy book launch day.

ANIKA FAJARDO: Thank you so much, Cathy. I'm excited to be here.

CATHY WURZER: Well, this is a big day for any author when your book comes out. Do you ever get sweaty palmed even after all this time?

ANIKA FAJARDO: Oh, yes, definitely. In fact, I have sweaty palms at this moment. But we call it a book birthday, and so that makes it feel a little bit more like we should have cake and ice cream kind of day. So that helps to take away the nerves of it.

CATHY WURZER: Some balloons, happy book birthday. This is your fifth book. Tell us about *Meet Me Halfway*.

ANIKA FAJARDO: Well, meet me halfway is for readers ages 8 to 12, so that middle grade, middle school. It is about two half sisters who discover one another and then go in search for the Colombian father who was an anthropologist that they share and that they've never met before.

It is inspired by the sister antics of *The Parent Trap* movies and the sibling adventure in E L Konigsburg 1967 novel from *The Mixed Up Files Of Mrs. Basil E Frankweiler* where the siblings go and hide out in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. This book, the girls end up at a liberal arts college in California and have some adventures there.

CATHY WURZER:

This feels like it might be also based a little bit on your own life.

ANIKA FAJARDO:

It is. So both of the sisters then are half white and half Colombian. They grow up not knowing their father, their Colombian father, which is what I had happened to me. I was born in Colombia, but when my parents got divorced when I was little, I grew up here in Minnesota and did not know my father as I was growing up.

And then, I also found out that I had a half sibling, a brother actually, when I was an adult. And so I got started on this book with the question of what if I had met him by surprise somewhere, just ran into him. And also what if I'd met him when I was young? What would that be like?

CATHY WURZER:

I love that. Yeah, those are questions that are interesting to ask. Do you have any memory from the first time to meet your dad that sticks out?

ANIKA FAJARDO:

Well, I first met him when I was 21 years old. I was a junior in college, and I had just spent the semester in Spain. And so I spoke Spanish and was feeling pretty adventurous, as you feel when you're 21. And so he called me up one day and asked me if I would like to come and visit him for a month. And I think part of just young adult naiveté, I just said, sure, why not?

And so, he sent me a ticket, and I jumped on the plane. And I just remember getting off the plane. The whole experience was so just completely different from anything I had ever had happen to me. But I got off the plane, and there he was. And even though I hadn't seen him since I was two years old, I immediately recognized him. And we ended up figuring out was I an adult? Was I a child, going back and forth with just getting to know him and his wife and the rest of my family that lives in Colombia.

CATHY WURZER:

Any moment of surprise in that meeting, or a revelation of any kind?

ANIKA FAJARDO:

Well, the most amazing thing was, one time, we were out walking in the evening, just my dad and I in one of the cities in Colombia. And we stopped at a plaza, and there was a fountain in this plaza. And I just randomly told him this story about how I had fallen into a fountain when I was little. And he stopped and he said, I was there.

And it turns out that it happened at the Black Forest Inn in Minneapolis, which has a little fountain. And I was walking along it, fell into it, and the waiter wrapped me in a tablecloth and handed me back to my parents. And he had been there.

And so it was this amazing moment where I remember the moment, and he remembered it. He was there. And even though I didn't have memories of him, it was like we had this shared moment suddenly. And that it really struck me that, yes, this is my father. This is meant to be.

CATHY WURZER:

So let's talk about your writing. As an adult, you were at Saint Keats, right? You were an academic librarian.

ANIKA FAJARDO:

Yes.

CATHY WURZER:

Which, of course, helps you pay the bills. But you were also thinking I want to be an author. I should be writing, right? So how did you decide to leap into that pool?

ANIKA FAJARDO:

Well, I'd always wanted to be a writer, but I didn't really think that was a job you could have, which is how I ended up first as a teacher and then as a librarian. And I was working part time, which was nice because I started taking classes at the Loft Literary Center in Minneapolis, just very, very beginning classes, kind of creative. How do you tell a creative story?

And then, as I kept working, I started telling my own stories, stories about my dad and about my family, and discovered that writing my own story was really resonating with readers. And my teachers, various teachers and mentors that I had were really encouraging. And that's when I started working on writing my memoir.

CATHY WURZER:

And then you also, of course, have written children's literature. We should say, for folks who don't remember, your book *What If A Fish* Won the 2021 Minnesota Book Award in middle grade literature. Congratulations. I don't think I had a chance to tell you that. Congratulations.

ANIKA FAJARDO:

Thank you.

CATHY WURZER:

What do you like writing about? Why do you like writing for children?

ANIKA FAJARDO:

Well, I think, part of the thing is that I really remember very, very clearly what it was like to be a child. And I don't know if everyone has those memories. I also kept journals from the time I was in fourth grade. And so I have this archival evidence of how your brain works when you're young.

And so it's partly just that the child characters really come to me. I know many writers talk about this. They just appear to me, and that they're the ones that want to tell these stories. And I always write about family and identity and place. And so it depends on what characters pop up in terms of how I want to explore those issues.

CATHY WURZER:

So let me ask you a little bit about the children's book festival this Saturday. You're going to be there.

ANIKA FAJARDO:

Yes, it will be my first time there. I have been told that it is a really, really fun event. Other authors have been there before, have told me that there's just kids running around everywhere. It's a great event for families. Lots of adults and educators who are really interested in children's literature come to see the presentations from the authors. There's also going to be time for signing and Red Balloon Bookshop is selling books there.

CATHY WURZER:

And by the way you, have a book release event tonight. We should talk about that too.

ANIKA FAJARDO:

Yes, Red Balloon Books in Saint Paul at 6:30. And I'm going to be speaking with Jacqueline West the author of *Long Lost*, which won the Minnesota Book Award in middle grade literature last year. I mean this year.

CATHY WURZER:

This year, right, exactly. Now, *Meet Me Halfway* comes out today. In case you're just tuning in, we're having a little bit of a book birthday celebration here on the air. Have your parents read the book yet? I'm curious, if they did, what'd they think?

ANIKA FAJARDO:

They have.

CATHY WURZER:

They have, oy.

ANIKA FAJARDO:

Yes, my dad actually happened to be here in Minnesota in the fall for the first time in 40 years. And I just happened to have an early release copy of the book. And so I was able to give it to him, and he was able to read it. And his wife contributed a lot to this story because she's an anthropologist, which the dad in this story is a Colombian anthropologist. And she helped me track down the stories, that mythology that I use in the book.

She does not speak English, so she has not had a chance to read it. But my dad really liked it. My mom also read it. The book is dedicated to my mom, and she was the one who first told me how much she loved the Haley Mills *Parent Trap* movie. So that was part of the inspiration for the book.

CATHY WURZER:

Well, I wish you all the best, and I'm so happy that we could talk about your book today on the air. Thanks so much.

ANIKA FAJARDO:

Thank you. Thank you so much.

CATHY WURZER:

Anika Fajardo is the Minneapolis author of the new middle grade title released today *Meet Me Halfway*. She's going to be reading from her book tonight at The Red Balloon in Saint Paul, and this Saturday, 1:00 PM, at the Minnesota Children's Book Festival in Red Wing.

For more on the festival, you can go to AndersonCenter.org.

NARRATOR 2:

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CATHY WURZER:

By the way, just love that Andersen Center. If you've never gone to the Anderson Center in Red Wing, do check it out. It has a wonderful history and great programming.

Well, coming up on 12:26, let's get a news update right now from John Wanamaker. John.

JOHN WANAMAKER:

Cathy, Ukrainian troops are pressing a counter-offensive that has produced major gains. As the advance continued Tuesday, Ukraine's border guard services said the army took control of Vovchansk. That's a town just two miles from Russia that was seized on the first day of the war. Russia acknowledging that it has withdrawn troops from the areas in the Northeastern region of Kharkiv in recent days.

Lower gas costs slowed down US inflation for a second straight month in August, but most other prices across the economy kept rising. And that is evidence that inflation remains a burden on American households. Consumer prices were up 8.3% in August compared with a year earlier, down from an 8.5 jump in July, and a four-decade high of 9.1% in June.

So-called core prices jumped 6/10 of a percent from July to August. That's up sharply from the 0.3% the previous month. And the markets have reacted negatively to the latest inflation numbers. The NASDAQ off over 3 and 1/2% at one point, nearly 4%. The Dow is off 2.5%. The S&P 500 down just under 3%. I should say the-- yeah, the NASDAQ was off nearly 4%.

A congressional oversight committee has requested an assessment from the National Archives on whether presidential records removed by former President Donald Trump remain unaccounted for and potentially in his possession. The House Committee on Oversight and Reform sent a letter to the acting archivist Tuesday, today.

And in the letter it requested a full evaluation of Trump White House records after National Archives staff informed lawmakers last month that the agency is still not certain whether all presidential records are in its custody. The request comes weeks after the FBI uncovered top secret and even more sensitive documents from Trump's Mar a Lago estate in Florida.

A former security chief at Twitter told Congress that the social media platform is plagued by weak cyber defenses that make it vulnerable to exploitation by anyone from teenagers and spies to other international agents. The privacy of users at risk. Peter Zatkorn a respected cybersecurity expert appeared before the Senate Judiciary Committee to lay out his allegations today. Zatkan was the head of security for the platform until he was fired early this year. This is MPR News.

CATHY WURZER:

Thank you, John. 12:28. So we were talking about the children's book festival a few minutes ago. Now, let's talk about the Duluth Superior Film Festival. It's September 22 through the 25th. And the festival will feature 90 films from the Midwest and around the globe.

Jessica Edwards will be there, and her documentary *Skate Dreams* will have its Minnesota premiere. It's the first feature-length documentary to capture the story behind the rise of women's skateboarding. She'll be joined by one of the film's five featured skateboarders, Nicole House of Stillwater. Here's a clip from that film.

[AUDIO PLAYBACK]

- You used to have a couple guys at a magazine deciding what would get shown.

- Back then, you didn't have phones with cameras. Now, it's so easy to film anything, and this it's why we're seeing so many more women, girls needed more support. It's always, it's so dangerous. Like, what the heck? Something had to be done.

[END PLAYBACK]

CATHY WURZER:

Filmmaker Jessica Edwards is on the line right now. Welcome to the program, Jessica. Congratulations.

JESSICA EDWARDS:

Thank you so much, and thanks for having me.

CATHY WURZER:

Interesting subject matter, women's skateboarding. Of all the narrative and documentary films made about skateboarding, how many would you think are about women's skateboarding?

JESSICA EDWARDS:

When we started making the film in 2018, I knew of one other project that was created to showcase how limited the media coverage was. And that film started out as a thesis project by a wonderful skater and organizer named Amelia Brodka. And it was very limited in its availability.

And I couldn't find anything else amidst the dozens of other films, both narrative and documentary, that showcased really women at all.

CATHY WURZER:

There's always, as you know, a personal story behind most films that spurs a filmmaker to get out there and create. What's your story? Why did you decide to tell this story?

JESSICA EDWARDS:

Well, it's probably about as personal as you can get. My six-year-old daughter, when we started making the film, decided that she wanted to start skateboarding. And she was really the impetus to really look for some positive narratives and some really incredible female role models that she could look up to as this young girl.

And what I couldn't find in the mainstream media landscape, I was finding all over social media. And social media really became this catalyst for this community of women and non-binary people and people of color and all different kinds of humans who were very-- didn't look like a pretty standard skateboarding stereotype to find each other.

And so that really became very interesting to me, and my daughter never really felt like she wasn't included. And that was really interesting. She just got her little pink skateboard and went out with the crew and started skating. And that disconnect between what it was like for me growing up and what it was like for her was something I wanted to explore a little bit deeper.

CATHY WURZER:

I love the little pink skateboard. So you followed five women, skateboarders, for the film. One of them, as I mentioned, is from Minnesota, Nicole House. She's from Stillwater. She's been skateboarding, oh gosh, I talked to her years ago. She's been skateboarding since she was 10. I think her dad built her a skate ramp behind the barn, if I recall correctly. So she's been out there, and is really interesting woman.

I want to play a clip from the film because I wonder if it captures something about the culture of the women's skateboard community. I want you to comment on that. Let's play that clip.

[AUDIO PLAYBACK]

- I flew from Cambodia alone. Not so many female skaters at Cambodia.

- Oh, definitely not.

- No, and I'm so excited to be here, especially I see so many female skaters.

- Me too.

- And I just want to be a part of that crew, especially. But I'm not in the team yet.

- Do you want to be on our team?

- Who is Cody?

- Really?

- Yeah.

- Really? Yeah?

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

- We're going to have the best time.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

[END PLAYBACK]

CATHY WURZER:

I love that because the women seem very open and welcoming. Did you see a lot of that, and did you get to have a front row seat to the community courtesy of Nicole House?

JESSICA EDWARDS:

Absolutely, Nicole was so open and welcoming. And like many of the skaters, I think that they were so used to being sidelined by sponsors, by media, that they just went out and did it on their own.

And so anybody who showed interest or drive to skate or learn to skate or be part of a group of girls who was interested in skating, that was all that mattered. It was like, you can sit with us if you're interested in skating. There is very little in the way of posturing and that was extremely new five years ago when we started. And this was really before the Olympics had happened and accepted skateboarding as an official sport.

And then, it's changed slightly over the past five years, for the good, in my mind. More women have gone pro in the last five years than, I think, in the years 20 years previous to that, including Nicole House who just went pro for Real Skateboards last weekend, which is really, really exciting. So we're really, really proud of the hometown hero.

And but, yeah, there is an absolute change now, a sea change from even when we started making the movie.

CATHY WURZER:

But is it still hard to break through? I'm thinking of when you think skateboarding, who do you think of? Tony Hawk, I suppose, right, who's made millions off of endorsement deals. I would think it would still be pretty hard for female skaters to get sponsors. Or am I wrong?

JESSICA EDWARDS:

I think that the change that I've noticed in the last even two years, is it is easier now than it's ever been. But the caveat of that being, of course, that it was never easy. But you do have very big sponsors and very big apparel companies and board companies and beverage companies paying attention to women in a way that they never have before.

And we can only applaud that, right? Everybody just wants there to be more access, and that's, frankly, what the kids are excited about. One of the silver linings of COVID for American kids was that they could use skateboarding or be introduced to skateboarding, and the industry really exploded during those couple of years.

And you saw more kids get on a skateboard than you have in the recent past.

So the industry itself is paying attention to what the kids are excited about, and what they're seeing is really from social media. So there's kind of a direct way that skateboarders can connect with their audiences and connect with their crews that then the big brands pay attention to.

CATHY WURZER:

I see. I have just seconds left. Because your six-year-old daughter, her interest in skateboarding got you to make the doc. She's still skateboarding.

JESSICA EDWARDS: She's still skateboarding. She's got lots of other interests now too, but Nicole House is her hero. When she found out that she went pro last week, she just was super excited. And folks should come out and meet Nicole. She would sign all your boards and hang out.

We have a screening in Duluth, and we also have one in Stillwater on September 25. So come and hang out with us, see the movie, and then go skate.

CATHY WURZER: I love that. Jessica, thank you so much.

JESSICA EDWARDS: Thank you. Thank you for having us.

CATHY WURZER: Best of luck. Jessica Edwards is a filmmaker. Her documentary *Skate Dreams* will have its Minnesota premiere at this weekend's Duluth Superior Film Festival. And of course, she also mentioned the Stillwater screening September the 25th.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

NARRATOR 3: Programming is supported by Cub, partnering with the Minnesota Gophers in the University of Minnesota Masonic Children's Hospital, learn more at Cub, how you can help make a difference with local children living happier, healthier lives.

CATHY WURZER: A lot of Minnesotans have followed the story of Jack Jablonski. He was the high school hockey player from Saint Louis Park who's become an advocate for folks with spinal cord injuries after suffering one himself during a high school hockey game back in 2011.

He became paralyzed from the chest down from that injury. Today, he leads the Jack Jablonski Foundation, a charitable organization he created a year after his accident to advance paralysis recovery treatments through research.

He's also busy with his career as the digital media content specialist for the Los Angeles Kings NHL team. And last week, he announced on social media that he is gay. We wanted to talk to Jack about his announcement, so he is on the line. Jack Jablonski, welcome to *Minnesota Now*. How have you been?

JACK JABLONSKI: I'm doing well. Good to talk to you again.

CATHY WURZER: Thank you. Likewise. What kind of response have you received since you came out last week?

JACK JABLONSKI: It's been overwhelming in the best way possible. I've been so thankful for all the positive responses on social media and personal messages. And again, it's been bottled up for quite a while, but at the same time, it's all been worth it since I've had the opportunity to come out and be who I am publicly.

CATHY WURZER: I'm glad to hear that. As you know, the sports world isn't terribly welcoming to gay male athletes, especially in high school. As you started to question your sexuality when you were younger, how did that culture and what you know of it bump up against your inner struggle?

JACK JABLONSKI:

Well, for me, I didn't realize who I was until a little bit later in life. But during my high school experience, it was just conflicting because you look back and you have hindsight 2020. And for me, you can put the pieces together of when things started, and that did include being in high school.

And it was one of those things where it just-- they were two separate worlds for me. And I didn't understand how they could go together, mostly because of the way that I was just around in terms of life. But at the same time, it definitely was conflicting. And I'm thankful that, to this point now, it's getting to become a little bit more acceptable. But at the same time, it's two things that still need to work their way together.

CATHY WURZER:

I'm wondering, I read the really excellent article about you in *The Athletic*. How was the pandemic lockdown a turning point for you?

JACK JABLONSKI:

Yeah, well, I think for many people, when you're by yourself or you don't have much going on, your mind can kind of do its own thing. Or the truth or the realization of a lot of things can happen. And for me, with my injury I've always been focused on staying busy to avoid being alone or have my mind race because it can often go in a dark hole with paralysis and the realization of what life holds at times.

For me, I didn't fully realize my sexuality until COVID hit because that was when I was alone by myself. I had moved to a new city after graduating from college in LA. And that's when it all just clicked. And for me, in many ways, I'm glad it clicked because I was finally able to get to the point where I am now, and that's being out and proud.

But at the same time, that was also the start of the dark days because of the realization of who I really was and what it was going to take for me to become happy with who I was. And COVID definitely was the beginning of that, and it went down a dark road for a little while. But I'm here to tell the story, and I'm happy with who I am and where I am.

CATHY WURZER:

And do you feel lighter, in a sense?

JACK JABLONSKI:

Yes, so much lighter. It was such a relief being able to have the opportunity to tell my story and not hide in the shadows because, for me, it was something that ate me up inside. And at the end of the day, now being able to have everyone know, but just be able to go out and be myself is what's so important and so healthy for me mentally. And anyone else who's been through this process can relate.

CATHY WURZER:

So I want to ask you about something else. A freshman, as you know, at Bloomington Jefferson injured his spinal cord during a football game earlier this month, actually last week. What insights can you offer that young man and others going through that very difficult experience?

JACK JABLONSKI:

Yeah, absolutely, I know my family's been in touch with his family, Ethan. And obviously, I will be as well as that process continues. Most importantly, you want to give space when it's needed. And everyone handles it differently in terms of the process of grievance and reality and in understanding the future.

But most importantly, life isn't over after you have a spinal cord injury. There's so much to live for. There's so much that you can accomplish in terms of a career, but most importantly, happiness. And right now is such a vital time to focus on yourself and focus on recovery because, with spinal cord injuries, that immediate rehab and understanding some of the goals that you need to start setting, and hopefully can focus on, is extremely important at this stage.

And first off, I wish Ethan and his family nothing but the best. And I hope to be able to be a part of his life in terms of just helping be an asset and a resource towards, hopefully, living a great life.

CATHY WURZER:

With my best 30 seconds left here, I know you're coming back for your Jablonski Foundation Gala October 15 at the River Center, right?

JACK JABLONSKI:

Correct, yes. We have the annual gala for the Jack Jablonski Foundation. We raise money for spinal cord injury research. We've made significant progress, raising well over \$3 million in the nine years of existence. And we look forward to continuing that. And for anyone interested in the gala or the information of what we do, you can go to JablonskiFoundation.org.

CATHY WURZER:

Excellent. Jack, it's so good to hear your voice again. Thank you so much. Best of luck.

JACK JABLONSKI:

Thank you so much, and I appreciate you letting me tell my story.

CATHY WURZER:

Take care of yourself. Jack Jablonski, he works for the LA Kings hockey team. He leads the Jack Jablonski Foundation.

NARRATOR 4:

Support comes from Summit Orthopedics. When you're in pain, you need care from providers you can trust. Summit's Lakeville location offers a range of treatment options, with no referrals and walk in urgent care. Start at Summit.

CATHY WURZER:

Hey, it's *Minnesota Now* on MPR News. I'm Cathy Wurzer. Thanks for being with us. Minnesota's hunting seasons are just around the corner. Maybe you're planning on having some venison on the table. Maybe that's not your thing. A new show from Andrew Zimmern makes the case for some pretty appetizing-looking wild game.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

[OIL BUBBLING]

ANDREW ZIMMERN:

Crispy, medium rare, bison. Mmm, it pairs up so beautifully with tamarind chutney and peanut sauce. Can't stop, won't stop. Mmm.

[WOLF HOWLS]

[MUSIC PLAYING]

CATHY WURZER:

Andrew, of course, is an Emmy award-winning four-time James Beard award-winning TV personality chef and writer based in Minnesota. Welcome to the program. It's good to hear your voice.

ANDREW ZIMMERN:

Oh, likewise. Nice to talk to you, Cathy.

CATHY WURZER:

You've done *Bizarre Foods*, so you're no stranger to the offbeat. What's behind the focus on wild game for you?

ANDREW ZIMMERN:

You know, I was sitting in an icehouse about three years ago on a lake about a mile-- you know where all good conversations start. It occurred to me while I was talking about the fish that were coming out of the hole in the ice, we were really under serving our natural resources all around us.

And I just thought there's this gaping hole in our food canon for natural and wild foods. That's from foraged plants and mushrooms to a fish that someone pulls out of the water, right on down to five pounds of ground venison that your neighbor knocks on your door and thinks he's doing a favor by handing it to you. And most home cooks are like, now, what do I do with that?

CATHY WURZER:

True.

ANDREW ZIMMERN:

It's extremely discouraging for folks.

CATHY WURZER:

I wonder, going back to something you said about there's not really been an emphasis-- there's kind of a-- let's face it, for some people, an ick factor when it comes to natural or wild foods. Where do you think some of this comes from, this aversion?

ANDREW ZIMMERN:

Traumatic childhoods. We've all been the little kid that had the whole trout put down in front of you at a restaurant, and someone in the family is like, oh, my gosh, there's a head on it. Or grandpa used to put the 20 walleye in the fridge, and they'd eat 16. And then after three days, four of them would get frozen.

Well, those four got a little bit sketchy, and then in the middle of winter when they came out, got defrosted, and got, let's say, over or undercooked, or not necessarily paired with some delicious foods, some of us developed problems with eating them.

We also are a state where, while we still do have people who hunt in the morning for their dinner and hunt in the evening for their meals the next day, it's not done on a regular everyday basis because of licensing and laws and the way our state has grown.

So we've gotten about a generation away from having regular access.

CATHY WURZER:

Exactly. Now, I'm a fly angler, so I fly fish for trout. I've done some hunting. You, obviously, are also an outdoors person.

ANDREW ZIMMERN:

Yes.

CATHY WURZER:

So can I ask you then, with this new show that you're talking about here, where do you come up with your recipes because I have a really hard time when I catch something figuring out what the heck to do with it.

[LAUGHTER]

Got to be honest with you.

ANDREW ZIMMERN:

Well, this is the thing. It's not that hard to start to translate recipes over. And I'll give you a great example with trout, and it's in season one. And I think it's going to change your life. People have always taken fish and wrapped it with bacon. The be all and end all has always been the crock pot for traditional game cooking. The other one has been bacon. Wrap anything in bacon and roast it in the oven.

Now, part of that was smart because it based it in fat, and most wild meats are leaner than their supermarket cousins. But with trout, I wanted to put more salt, more saline on it. And I also didn't want to dry it out. Some trout are very, very thin, and I like cooking them on the bone. And I wanted to cook it over open fire and not in a skillet.

And so I wrapped it in paper thin slices of prosciutto that I got at the local Italian market. And then I just made a green sauce, just a lot of herbs, olive oil, lemon, a shallot, pureed in the food processor, the blender, and just put it over the fish that had been wrapped in the prosciutto, which had gotten crispy and delectable.

It had basted the trout in that cured antique porcine excellence that prosciutto represents. And I was like, oh, my gosh. I'm really onto something here. And then I made it another time and worked out some of the wrinkles.

So a lot of it is inspiration. A lot of it is, what I call, recipe transfer. Wow, I made that with salmon. Maybe it would be delicious with a wild halibut.

CATHY WURZER:

I hear your executive producing *Feral*, which is another outdoor channel series featuring Yia Vang, who I adore.

ANDREW ZIMMERN:

Yep.

CATHY WURZER:

What's that all about?

ANDREW ZIMMERN:

Well, the idea with Hmong food, the Hmong are a ethnic group of folks who have never really had their own country. And the largest group of Hmong in the nation came to Minnesota in the '70s, right, from an area where three or four countries all come together in Southeast Asia.

They believe, very much so, in a cook what you have in front of you mentality and always have. And a lot of this is historically because of their persecution and their lack of their own geographical footprint in the world where they could grow things. So they are the ultimate forager, MacGyver food culture, and incredibly delicious.

So Yia likes to take food in the wild, which is at the essence of Hmong cooking. So we produced another show for Outdoor Channel where he goes after invasive species and then cooks them.

CATHY WURZER:

No.

ANDREW ZIMMERN:

Yes, so if he's down in Florida getting wild snakes, he's down there with the local guys who were trying to do their job to eradicate this horrific invasive. We can eat our way to a safer and healthier planet. So we have Yia on the move, out in the world, with other people, experiencing what it's like to take your own food, whether it's iguanas, lionfish, snakes, turtles, wild javelinas, whatever you have. And it's really a lot of fun.

CATHY WURZER:

Wow, so I want to go back to the show that we've been talking about, *The Wild Game Kitchen*. And thank you, by the way, for giving me something new to think about when I get my trout.

Bison, venison, obviously, rabbit, elk, pheasant, you are an outdoorsman. What wild game have you not had a chance to savor yet? What's out there that you want to try to bag and cook.

ANDREW ZIMMERN:

Oh, my gosh. First of all, I'm the luckiest person in the whole world because I'm not one of those people that lives out on the edge of the grid, who hunts and fishes every day. I'm lucky if I get 20 days a year out in the field or the water. But it's a love of mine.

But for 14 years I made a show where I got to call the shots about what we wanted to do. So I still think my favorite meat is kudu in Southern Africa. The meat is pale pink, and it's a small venison species in Southern Africa. It runs in about four or five countries. To me, I said this is the veal of wild game. It's just breathtaking.

And so maybe I'd like to go for kudu again.

CATHY WURZER:

OK.

ANDREW ZIMMERN:

If that's a fair enough answer.

CATHY WURZER:

I think it is.

ANDREW ZIMMERN:

I'm sure I'm going to hang up with you, and I'm going to say, oh, my god, I forgot about-- but the fact of the matter is that, as an outdoors person, sustainability and preserving our natural world is of paramount importance to me.

And so I'm fine with the 14, 15 animals that I regularly go after that are in sufficient enough numbers that we're not going to harm their populations if we observe the right rules and regulations.

CATHY WURZER:

Andrew Zimmern, I wish I had more time with you. I love your stories. I've always loved your stories. You've done so much, and you're such an interesting guy. I wish you all the best with this new series. And I'll be watching for the other series too, *Feral* with Yia Vang. Take care of yourself.

ANDREW ZIMMERN:

Thank you, my friend.

CATHY WURZER:

I adore Andrew. I never tire of talking to him. Andrew Zimmern is an Emmy winning, four-time James Beard award-winning TV personality. Chef and a writer based in Minnesota. His new show *Wild Game Kitchen* premieres at 8:00 PM, September 19 on the Outdoor Channel.

Boy, there was a lot we talked about today. In case you tuned in late, we celebrated the book birthday for Anika Fajardo's new book, *Meet Me Halfway*. She's having a book event tonight at The Red Balloon in Saint Paul.

Then we talked with the filmmaker behind *Skate Dreams*. You can learn more about the entire lineup of films at this weekend's Duluth Superior Film Festival online at DS.ff.com. They'll be screening films Thursday through Sunday.

Oh, OK, I'm going to relax a little bit here for the next few hours. By the way, if you happen to be in northern Minnesota, FYI, Western wildfire smoke is going to drift across the region here next couple of days. Should be aloft. Should not impact air quality too much, but the skies will become milky, and sunrises and sunsets will become really quite beautiful. Just FYI.

This is *Minnesota Now* here on MPR News, 91.1 KNOW Minneapolis Saint Paul. Support from *Minnesota Now* comes from True Stone Financial, a full service credit union working to improve the financial well-being of its neighbors since 1939, serving individuals and businesses at 23 locations and online at TrueStone.org, equal housing opportunity, insured by NCUA.

Yeah, we're going to see some of that haze here in the Twin Cities. As a matter of fact, that's what you're seeing right now. 75 degrees is our current temperature at the airport. The high, oh, a few more, 78 or so. Not much of a wind to push the smoke out of here, West at five miles an hour.

Tomorrow, partly sunny skies, a little bit warmer with a high of 82. We're going to scrub some of the smoke out of the air on Thursday. We have a chance of thunderstorms Thursday afternoon, warmer too with a high of 85, and windy, wind gusts around 30, 35 miles an hour.

Thursday night, there's a 50/50 shot of rain, Friday a 50% chance for showers with a high near 80. It's 1 o'clock.