

Minnesota

Colorful Spring Fashion

The Spirit of Minnesota

Monthly

TOP

RESTAURANTS



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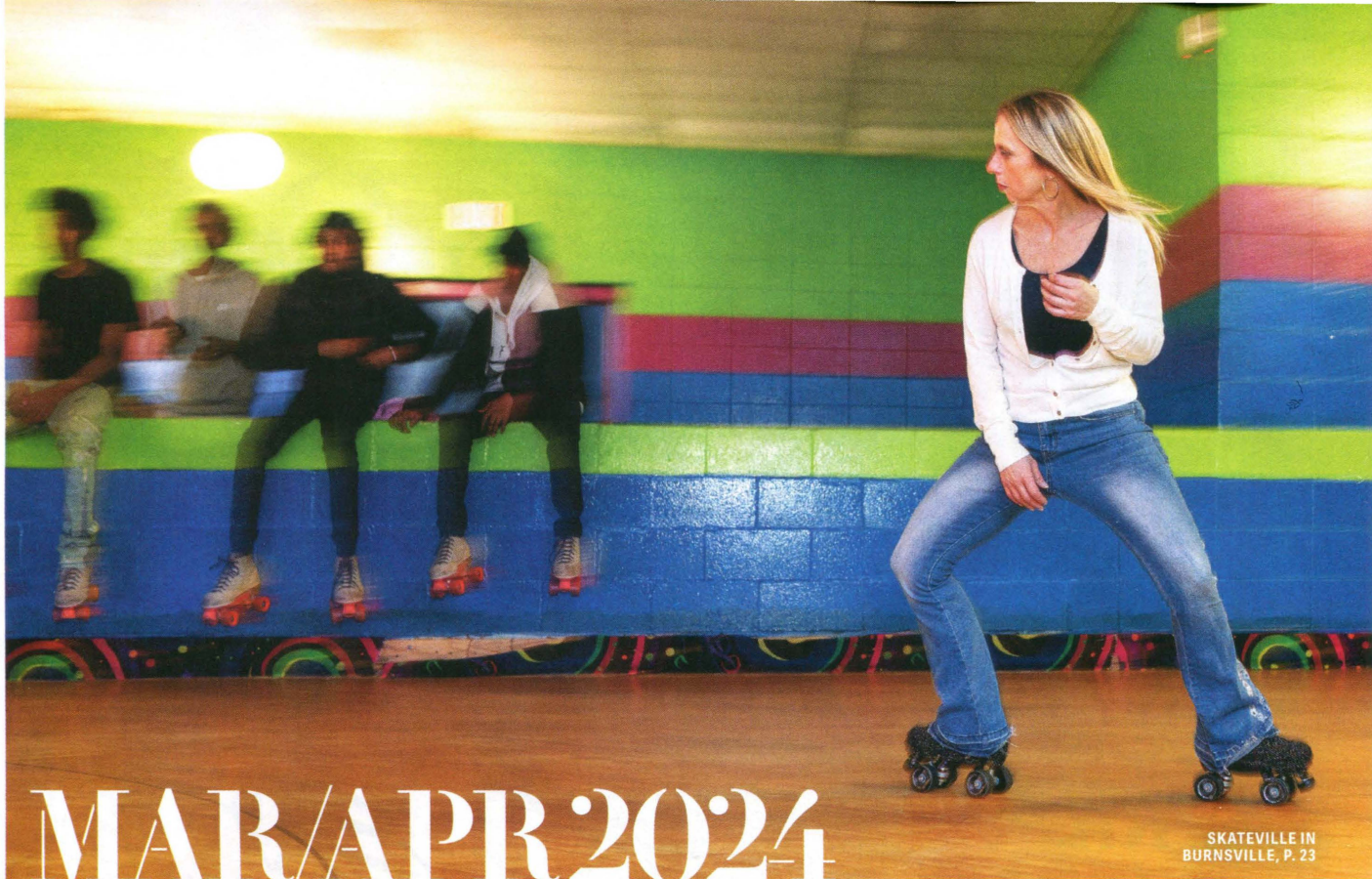
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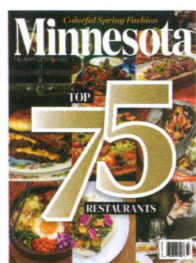
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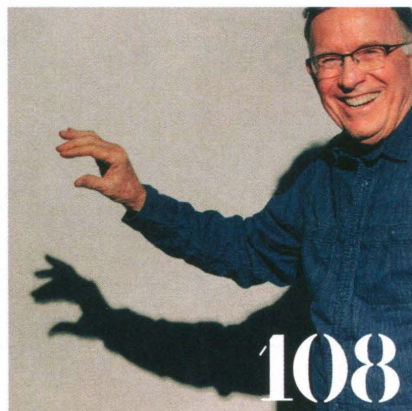


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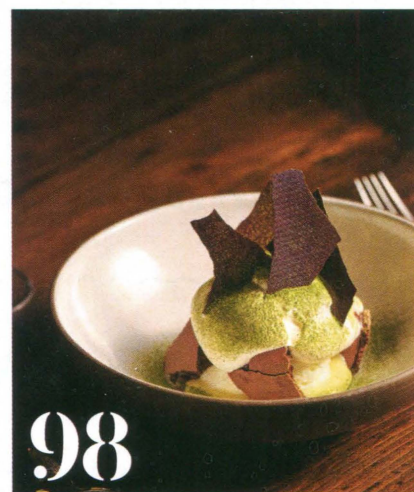
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What Goes Around Comes Around

WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT A SET OF WHEELS and the promise of an adventure? You may be thinking I'm referring to a long bicycle ride on one of Minnesota's many bike trails, but I'm actually thinking about my snazzy roller skates and a weekly gathering of music lovers. As we finalized the *Bike Minnesota* guide that accompanies this issue, I turned to writing about my blast-from-the-past Monday night roller-skating outings and realized there are some similarities between the two pastimes. While biking has long been big in Minnesota and a passion of many of my friends, family members, and co-workers, roller-skating is getting national buzz for its comeback in popularity. Like biking, there are different versions and adaptations—in-line skating, roller derby, and roller disco—but it's the retro indoor version that I have committed to trying again.

Roller-skating has a special place in my heart. I spent several awkward but formative middle-school years at the roller-skating rink, my friends and me circling the carpet-lined pony walls in controlled chaos and rushing into the middle of the rink when the songs we requested started playing. When I told my parents about my weekly escapades to the rink, I learned their first date was roller-skating when they were teenagers. They've been married for more than 55 years now.

I may have a new set of friends and a few more decades of experience at the roller-skating rink this time around, but the fun I find in the activity remains. I've learned what goes around truly comes around. ■

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PHOTOS (FROM ABOVE) LESLIE PLESSER, JAIDA GREY EAGLE, ABI ARGANBRIGHT



A new law prohibits employers from asking
about current or prior pay in hopes
of making wages equal
BY ERIK TORMOEN

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"In a number of cases, women sued under either the Equal Pay Act or Title Seven, or both," Hasday says, adding that some women could show evidence they were paid less than men who worked the same job or a subordinate one. "At least some courts accepted the argument that it was not pay discrimination, violating these federal statutes, if the employer could point to the woman's history of being underpaid elsewhere as the reason for the discrimination."

Here, a domino effect may occur: Discrimination at one job sets up a pattern of lower pay, since employers keep setting wages according to past salaries. Another question tends to arise: Do you sit tight, though paid unfairly? Or do you speak up, potentially risking employment?

Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan, the highest-ranking Native woman in state politics, shared a story publicly, during the passage of the law, about her own run-in with this question. Working for a nonprofit before she became lieutenant governor, she realized her role's predecessor, a white man, had made \$40,000 more. "During the interview process, I was actually asked what it was that I made at my current employer," she says. "Even factoring in experience and years of service, that gap was significant enough that it was pretty clear to me that sharing my salary really put me in a tough spot."

In the same hot seat are "so many women—and so many women of color, Indigenous women—who just start that much farther behind," she says.

If the law sounds simple, that's part of its appeal. "There's no paperwork," Hasday says. "Just don't ask the question." Job applicants may bring up past or current pay if they choose, for negotiating.

And what of this policy's efficacy? Hasday points to a study released by Boston University School of Law in 2020 comparing counties in the same labor market. "But some of the counties were subjected to a pay-history ban." Those counties showed a salary bump for job seekers of 5-6%. Women, specifically, saw a roughly 8% increase, and African American women's wages rose about 13%.

Hasday says the law's intersectionality also hugely boosts its appeal, covering both race and sex. "It will help women and anyone else with a history of being underpaid"—meaning men of color, too.

She adds that, for companies, the greatest "compliance cost"—which, in the example of tax law, might mean tedious paperwork—should merely involve deleting that question from online applications.

Enforcing the new law is the Minnesota Department of Human Rights. Those who spot violations can fill out a form on the department website. Both parties may then engage in mediation, says department commissioner Rebecca Lucero. "There's a neutral investigation to determine if there is a

edia outlets dubbed last year the "Year of the Girl."

Onscreen and onstage were Barbie, Beyonce, and Taylor Swift.

On trend were bows, sequins, and pink. It was like '90s girl power but for today's culturally savvy. There was knowing scorn, after all, in actor America Ferrera's viral "Barbie" monologue, about the state of women.

Holding court in a rainbow-streaked set piece, Ferrera's character marvels at the contradictions: Be a boss, but don't be mean; be pretty but never tempting or threatening; "...always stand out and always be grateful, but never forget that the system is rigged," she fumes. "So, find a way to acknowledge that, but also always be grateful."

At the end of last year, Minnesota got in on this sentiment with the passage of a pay-gap law. The Preventing Pay Discrimination Act makes it illegal for employers to ask prospective employees about past or current pay. Instead, the law pushes employers to set pay based on applicants' "skills, education, certifications, licenses, and other qualifications, as well as the job market." When the law went into effect Jan. 1, Minnesota joined 22 other states in banning the pay-history query. It's intended to make the "system" a little less rigged.

As a don't-ask policy, it works by plugging up a leak in anti-discrimination legislation. White women in Minnesota are paid, on average, 81 cents for every dollar earned by white men, according to the 2022 Status of Women & Girls in MN report, from the Women's Foundation of Minnesota and the Center on Women, Gender, and Public Policy at the University of Minnesota. For Asian American women, that figure is 71 cents. For Black and Native women, it's 61 cents. And for Latina women, it's 55 cents. Men of color are also paid substantially less, earning 8 to 16 cents more than women of the same race or ethnic group.

"The wage gap between men and women persists, and actually there has been remarkably little change, if you look at, say, the last 10 or 20 years," says University of Minnesota law professor Jill Hasday, who testified on behalf of the new law. This disparity conflicts with 1963's Equal Pay Act, which outlawed pay discrimination based on sex.

Now, where does that pay-history question come into play?

GOING WITH THE CASH FLOW

Comparison is the thief of joy. So, rather than present this list of Minnesotan occupations by median wage as an arbitrary sort of yardstick, we're intending a different function: to help you see whether your income is above or below the earnings of your middle-ground peers.

To achieve this, we turned to the Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics data tool. This handy chart shows typical wages by occupation in Minnesota. (By wages, we mean straight-time gross pay, calculated hourly.) This information, collected by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics in collaboration with state agencies, typically comes into use for employers benchmarking wages and job seekers venturing into the profit-making world. The semiannual survey has been a prime resource for over 30 years. For our purposes, it satisfies curiosity, too.

These estimated figures use three years' worth of data—from 2020, 2021, and 2022—to reduce sampling errors. The following list certainly doesn't include all occupations tabulated, but it does span incomes and societal purposes.

OCCUPATION	HOURLY WAGE	# OF JOBS
Bartender	\$13.07	18,770
Cook, Fast Food	\$13.61	6,740
Dishwasher	\$14.38	6,450
Child Care Worker	\$14.63	9,400
Maid/Housekeeping Cleaner	\$16.80	12,200
Shuttle Driver/Chauffer	\$17.59	5,750
Preschool Teacher (Except Special Education)	\$18.11	11,490
Hairdresser/Hairstylist/Cosmetologist	\$18.59	5,980
Customer Service Representative	\$22.26	58,340
Exercise Trainer/Group Fitness Instructor	\$22.94	5,300
Construction Laborer	\$23.97	24,000
Mental Health Counselor	\$24.73	6,770
Paralegal/Legal Assistant	\$30.15	6,140
Graphic Designer	\$30.18	5,400
Child/Family/School Social Worker	\$31.74	7,400
Public Relations Specialist	\$32.32	6,310
Human Resources Specialist	\$34.48	16,120
Electrician	\$35.79	11,850
Accountant/Auditor	\$37.36	28,730
Plumber/Pipefitter/Steamfitter	\$37.72	9,430
Loan Officer	\$38.66	8,020
Mechanical Engineer	\$40.98	5,760
Dental Hygienist	\$41.51	4,800
Registered Nurse	\$41.96	63,800
General and Operations Manager	\$43.50	73,910
Physical Therapist	\$45.73	4,430
Industrial Engineer	\$48.01	15,530
Computer Systems Analyst	\$52.72	13,380
Software Developer	\$55.21	36,360
Nurse Practitioner	\$63.92	5,300
Sales Manager	\$64.79	9,240
Financial Manager	\$65.23	14,990
Pharmacist	\$68.50	6,630
Lawyer	\$68.58	10,750
Marketing Manager	\$76.65	7,750
Chief Executive	\$82.15	7,270

violation of the law.” The Minnesota Human Rights Act offers “multiple remedies,” including civil penalties and compensatory or punitive damages.

“We have many cases—around 600 cases—open at any given time, sometimes more,” Lucero says. “So, I’m always asking people to recognize that it could take a little bit of time for their case to go before an investigator or for the investigation process to move forward.”

But the aim, Hasday says, is not to whip up lawsuits. It is “to make people aware, so the situation improves without litigation.”

Next, Hasday wants more legislation on pay secrecy, whereby companies discourage openness about wages. Flanagan says to expect that cultural issue to crop up soon. Already, it’s illegal for

Minnesota employers to prohibit employees from disclosing wages.

Returning to her own \$40,000 wage gap—and the “Barbie” comparison—Flanagan recalls she went “back and forth” about what to do. “I also, honestly, loved my job,” she says, “and I was good at it.” She describes a “dance” she and many women know: Stand up for equal pay but don’t cause a stir. “There is also, I think, this expectation that women will do the job because they care about the community,” she says—without requiring compensation equal to what white men would receive.

“There were some people who said, ‘Well, employers are going to end up paying workers more,’” Hasday says, recounting some pushback, “to which I would say, ‘Exactly.’” ■

