## FAITH MATTERS

## explaine PATHFINDER

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## You're Here... Now What?

by KAITLYN BIRD Marketing Coordinator

eing from the Pacific Northwest, I have a love for the outdoors, hiking, and adventuring. But some of the areas I've gone exploring here in St. Louis have, in all honesty, perplexed me! One place in particular, I remember walking up to the welcome sign to orient myself to the trails available and select which direction I wanted to go... I found that so many of them overlapped and connected that I lost track of which trail I was on when I was hiking. (Was it the white star or the red square trail that loops back around to the parking lot?)

The same can be said when exploring a new faith community! You're here... but now what? Which trailhead do you take?

Whether you've only attended a few services, experienced one of Pathfinder's community events, or been here a while but find yourself in a new season of life and looking for new ways to connect here—you aren't alone!

The following pages aim to orient you to the various ways you can "explore" here at Pathfinder. While you may find overlapping trails and ways to connect with this community, you'll also see that each path truly is intended for you to encounter the whole life God has for you to experience.

Let's change the question from "Now what?" to "What's next?"

The LORD will guide you continually, giving you water when you are dry and restoring your strength. You will be like a well-watered garden, like an ever-flowing spring. – Isaiah 58:11



## Explore Pathfinder

Formerly Called "Getting Started"

by ASHLEY CULPEPPER

Action Teams Co-Director

ver this past year, I have had the privilege of co-leading the "Getting Started" orientation with one of our Pastors, and I have been so blessed by all the people I have met through this experience. I have been inspired by each person-hearing their stories, getting to know them at the beginning of their whole life journey, and having a front-row seat to their next steps at Pathfinder. THIS is where I have truly seen God at work in this church! He has and continues to bring people to Pathfinder from all places and all faith backgrounds—ready to seek him and be a part of this vibrant faith community. This wide array of people and recognizing how our reach continues to grow is the driving force behind taking this orientation to the next level and introducing a new experience in: **Explore Pathfinder.** 

#### **Embrace the Journey:**

Life is a journey of exploration, and so is spiritual growth. Explore Pathfinder is more than just an orientation; it's an engaging journey that uncovers the heart and soul of our church. It will equip you with essential knowledge about Pathfinder, foster meaningful connections with fellow believers and church leaders, and help you discover your unique path to get involved. From those new to their faith to those who have been a part of the church for years, EVERYONE is invited to attend!

#### Who We Are:

Through Explore Pathfinder, you'll delve deeper into what it means to live a life of purpose and love within the church walls and the wider world. You will learn and understand the history that shaped us, the theology that guides us, and the mission and vision that inspires us and keeps us grounded in a whole life in Jesus. Understanding that faith is not confined to a single day of the week or a single aspect of our lives, we will discuss what it means to live a life of purpose and love, both within the church walls and in the wider world.

## **Embrace the Power of Community:**

A supportive community is the bedrock of any thriving church and has consistently been one of the reasons given when asked, "What brought you to Pathfinder?" One of the most meaningful aspects of Explore Pathfinder is the chance to share a bit of your story. This open-hearted sharing creates a safe space where you can be yourself and is an integral part of our culture—accepting our imperfections. As you get to know your fellow attendees, you'll discover that we are all on different paths, yet our shared journey brings us together. The Pathfinder community is a beautiful tapestry of stories that inspire and uplift, thanks to our diverse backgrounds and life experiences.

## Taking Next Steps to Get Involved:

Explore Pathfinder isn't just about discovery; it's also about taking action. While membership is valued at Pathfinder and is something you will have the opportunity to declare at the end of the orientation, we desire for EVERYONE to have a place to worship and to belong! Our heartfelt aspiration is for everyone to discover their unique calling and actively engage. Explore Pathfinder will equip you with the tools and provide information about our ministries, volunteer opportunities, Action Teams, Pop-Ups, and the many possibilities to take next steps to find connection. So, what are you waiting for? Come Explore Pathfinder and join us and let the experience guide you on your wholelLife journey at Pathfinder.



## Taking Action Towards a Whole Life

by RACHEL HINZ Action Teams Co-Director

ohn 10:10 says, "I came that YOU may have life, and have it to the FULL." Some translations use the word "abundance" and others even say "overflowing." Here at Pathfinder, we like to say that Jesus gives us a "WHOLE LIFE." What we mean by that, is that Jesus didn't come only to get us into heaven someday, but he came to bring us to a whole, full life, that begins **today** and continues into eternity.

We believe that Jesus calls us to live out our faith fully integrated—not only through church attendance on the weekends. He wants to breathe life into the vocational, relational, mental, spiritual, physical, and even financial areas of our lives on every day of the week. He also *empowers* us to take next steps in these areas, especially when we recognize areas of our lives that need support and actionable steps. For these reasons, we are proud to offer Action Teams—a unique way to connect with others and an impactful way for us to pursue the very wholeness that Jesus brings.

We don't have to journey alone on the path to a whole life. We are the Body of Christ: a united family, working together, and learning alongside one another as each of us grow individually.

So, whether you're in a season of grief, looking for support, prayer, and comfort...

Or you're looking to connect with other young families...

Or you're wanting to grow by learning a new skill or serving with purpose...

Or you want to spend more time in the Bible learning about God's promises...

Or you're looking to build up your physical strength and health...

Or you want to better steward your finances...

Action Teams are here for YOU to utilize, participate in, benefit from, and even lead! We want you to experience the wholeness that Jesus can bring into your life. New teams launch each January, June, and September. However, some current teams take on new members throughout the season, so check them out at pathfinderstl.org/actionteams and begin your whole life journey here at Pathfinder.





#### RACHEL HINZ

**ACTION TEAMS CO-DIRECTOR** 

#### What's your background?

Hi! I'm Rachel! My family moved here in 2018 when my husband, Seth joined the staff here as the Brand, Marketing, & Creative Director. We are proud Michiganders who love our new home! My family is Judah (11), Samson (9), and Evangeline ("Evie" 6). Seth has since moved on to a new role with Lutheran Bible Translators, but I like to joke that we just couldn't work together!

#### What's your role at Pathfinder?

I'm one of the Action Team Directors and oversee the teams in the spiritual, vocational, and financial areas of whole life. Within that vocational area, I'm also the Mission Liaison and connect our community to our local and international mission partners. And you may see me teaching art from time to time for the School of the Arts.

#### What's your favorite way to "explore" opportunities at Pathfinder?

Before coming on staff, I was an Action Team Junkie! I LOVE joining teams and meeting people around shared interests. Whether it's a Bible study, a family "creeking team," or pick-up soccer—nothing is better than doing life with more friends!

#### What excites you about the upcoming season?

We have some rock-solid teams restarting this fall that paused for summer that are coming back (like our Fit & Strong Women's Team), and also have some new teams that are growing demographics for those looking for family-oriented teams (Random Arts of Kindness, etc.) or Bible studies (our own Pastor Doug will be leading two!). Our Action Team leaders are pumped up and passionate, so I'm really proud of our Pathfinder community coming together and sharing their talents. And then STRONGHOLD! I can't wait to see their new school building in October! I'm so excited to get back to Cambodia after a 3-year hiatus. The ribbon-cutting ceremony will truly be a moment for taking in the amazing work that God has done through Pathfinder and Stronghold Cambodia.

## The Pathfinder Church App

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#### **EDUARDO RAMOS**

MEMBER-AT-LARGE, BOARD OF DIRECTORS

I'm excited to serve on the Board of Directors at Pathfinder Church with the support of my family-wife Rachel, and two kids Isaac and Olivia. We feel blessed to be a part of this incredible community. I firmly believe that serving others is an essential aspect of our faith journey, and being part of the Board of Directors allows me to contribute my expertise in Product/Digital Innovation, Strategy, and Operations to the church's endeavors.

When choosing to join Pathfinder, two key factors heavily influenced our decision. Firstly, the kids' ministry stood out as an incredible asset. Witnessing the genuine excitement our kids had when attending was incredible. And it reinforces our belief that we have found the right spiritual home for our family.

Secondly, Pathfinder's mission resonates deeply with us. The idea of pursuing a whole life with God across all areas of our life aligns perfectly with our values and aspirations. This holistic approach to faith allows us to explore and nurture our relationship with God in every aspect of our lives.

The future of Pathfinder is tremendous, and as a member of the Board, I'm particularly excited in helping the church grow in diversity.

## The Next Generation

by AJ MASTIC Pastor of Weekend Ministry

ere at Pathfinder, our heart is for all people to pursue whole life, including Kids, Students, and their families! Our Next Generation ministries are a place where young people are unconditionally accepted, that they might encounter Jesus through a true-to-life approach and make inspiring connections with one another and adult role models as they follow a God-directed journey.

On weekends, kids from infants through 4th grade gather at 9:00am and 11:00am for a unique Kids Ministry experience geared just for them! Check-in is available in the Commons. Kids are guided into a time of creative and engaging large-group worship and break into small groups for age-appropriate lessons and activities. Fifth graders get their own time and space at 11:00am, called "5th Element"—which meets at the gym. We also have a special needs ministry, where kids can register in advance to be assigned a buddy and visit our amazing sensory room!

Middle School students (6th-8th grade) meet on Sundays at 11:00am for *CORE*, which meets on the 2nd floor of our Cornerstone building. High School Students (9th-12th grade) meet on Wednesdays at 7:00pm for *Summit*, which meets on the 3rd floor of Cornerstone. At *CORE* & *Summit*, students begin with a large group time of high-energy worship led by the student band, play games, hear a relevant message, and break into small groups for discussions with our volunteer mentors. Students also gain confidence and leadership skills by embracing volunteer opportunities in our ministries.

For students looking for an opportunity to go deeper in the knowledge and ownership of their faith, our Confirmation program is offered yearly and recommended for students in 8th grade. Confirmation students watch video teachings, discuss with their parents, and meet on campus regularly for additional lessons and discussions in preparation to confirm their faith publicly. Registration opens in November.

On top of everything, at Pathfinder, we regularly involve kids and students in sanctuary worship, and our Next Generation Ministries periodically hold special events that are a blast for all! To learn more, check the schedule, or register, visit pathfinderstl.org

All year round, our Next Generation Ministries is led by an outstanding team, including Lisa Schmidt (Kids Min Director), Abby O'Dell (Kids Min Early Childhood), Tiffany Sloane (Kids Min Creative Arts), Jeremy Hetzel (Student Ministry Director), Catie Arndt (Student Ministry), Eva Robinson (Next Generation Worship), and over 217 volunteers!



### Core Pillars that Set Us Apart

**bγ** DOUG MAUSS

Executive Director, St. John School

or anyone who's not currently in school themselves or doesn't have kids in school—it can be hard to imagine how rapidly the educational environment in our country has changed from the days when we were in school! In my role as Executive Director of St. John School (one of our ministries at Pathfinder Church), I would say there has not been a more challenging educational environment for teachers, parents, and students in the last 100 years.

This challenging environment is why we feel so blessed to be able to offer a different school approach to the families of West County. St. John School reflects the values of our church ministry but is poured outward into the community in order to "cultivate the confident learners and leaders our world is hungry for."

To do that in a faith-prompted, innovative way, our school staff and leadership have committed to three core pillars that differentiate our school from others around us: an *Innovative Approach*, a *Tailored Design*, and a focus on *Whole-Person Growth*.

An **Innovative Approach** means that we are willing to examine the traditions and methods passed down to us critically. Our values are centuries old, but our practices can (and should!) be constantly reformed in the face of changing student needs. Much like our spiritual father Martin Luther, we're able to maintain our timeless traditions but adapt them to reach today's audience.

A **Tailored Design** reflects our outlook that each student is a unique child of God who deserves better than being taught in an educational system designed to crank out generic factory workers. (That's not a widely known fact, but our principals can tell you that it's absolutely true!)

Jordan B. Peterson, the famous psychologist, and professor, recently explored our educational system's systemic struggles and history in this video:

"Your Children Are Schooled to Be Factory Workers."



And, just like our church, our school is committed to developing the **Whole-Person Growth** of each child. Every school in our area is committed to the academic growth of its students. But we are uniquely positioned to coach our students to grow—not just academically—but relationally, socially, spiritually, and vocationally. Our staff cultivate in students the virtues they need to succeed in our rapidly-changing world: grit, integrity, empathy, self-control, and the embracing of the differences in others.

St. John School: it's one more way we can reach students and families who desire the whole life that Jesus offers!

Schedule a tour with St. John School at stjls.org/tours.

# Serving and Connection at Pathfinder Church

by TARA REIMANN Hospitality Director

hat is the best way to encourage and inspire YOU to serve—not only your circle of influence, but to go outside your comfort zone in order to grow in the vocational area of whole life? By giving real life examples of the connection and impact those taking that bold step have experienced! Stepping outside your comfort zone might look like serving in a different zip code, saying yes to something that you normally wouldn't, or doing something brand new. It requires boldness, conviction that God is calling you to this step, and a heart that yearns for a whole life.

At Pathfinder we create opportunities for YOU to answer the call to be bold and take a vocational step. All these opportunities also create connection in beautiful and sometimes surprising ways. Serving with others, you learn from them, are encouraged by them, and sometimes you make a lifelong friend.

That is what Pathfinder Missions Week accomplished this summer and what the upcoming Prosper the City teams will do. It's what the vocational Action Teams, serve Pop-Ups, mission trips, and the various ways you can serve on our Pathfinder campus all do. It builds connection in life-giving ways we could never manufacture on our own but is curated especially for you by God.

Listen to these real-life words of impact from those who have been prompted by their faith to be bold in their vocational life.

"Several of the children we served spoke at the end of the day about how important our group coming was for them and both leaders and kids pointed out Sarah, Miriam, and Rachel Jacklin as being especially impactful." - Missions Week Volunteer

"It was absolutely my honor to help with this group and I would be more than grateful to have the opportunity to go back to this location again."

- Missions Week Volunteer Leader

"We helped with getting some produce and dry good bags created, arranged the food pantry, and helped the people with their goods to their cars."

- Missions Week Volunteer Leader

"Being in my situation, the group has provided me better support while going through it."

- Action Team Feedback

"It's amazing the way God worked to put the right people in the group. None of us knew each other going in, but we all had something in common and were able to care for each other in ways outsiders couldn't have. We all grew." - Action Team Leader

"I truly feel like the Lord knew exactly who needed to be in the group, so the dynamic (openness and vulnerability) was amazing." - Staff Member

"People met others from Pathfinder they never had before, even though they had been worshiping together for years." - Action Team Leader

"I felt very seen." - Action Team Leader

"Women that otherwise would not have met ended up bonding and connecting—even outside of the serve time. We were all looking for community."

- Action Team Leader

"We had a plan for how the evening would go, but God just took over and we ended up somewhere we never would have imagined." - Pop-Up Leader

"God owned it, he brought the right people together."

- Action Team Leader

To learn more about Prosper the City, Action Teams, Pop-Ups, serving at Pathfinder, and how you can be bold and take that next step in any of these areas visit pathfinderstl.org



### The Generosity Journey and YOU by MATT HEWITT Chief Financial Officer

ake this moment of reflection on your generosity journey and begin asking God how you might take a step on your generosity journey. At Pathfinder, we consistently discuss generosity because we sincerely believe generosity should be a part of each person's whole life journey.

#### Why?

- 1. Generosity nurtures a sense of gratitude for the blessings we possess in our lives. Gratitude reduces the likelihood that money becomes our sense of identity, security, and/or the meaning of life.
- 2. Generosity ultimately means investing in the community around us, which builds and strengthens bonds with fellow believers. Therefore, generosity may serve as an antidote to loneliness and isolation.
- 3. Generosity is a journey that requires growth in both the financial and spiritual areas of whole life. Our faith grows as we learn to trust God to provide for our needs fully. In the Gospel of Luke, we encounter the widow who embodied all of these aspects of generosity.

#### Luke 21:1-4 | The Message

Just then, he looked up and saw the rich people dropping offerings in the collection plate. Then he saw a poor widow put in two pennies. He said. "The plain truth is that this widow has given by far the largest offering today. All these others made offerings that they'll never miss; she gave extravagantly what she couldn't afford—she gave her all!"

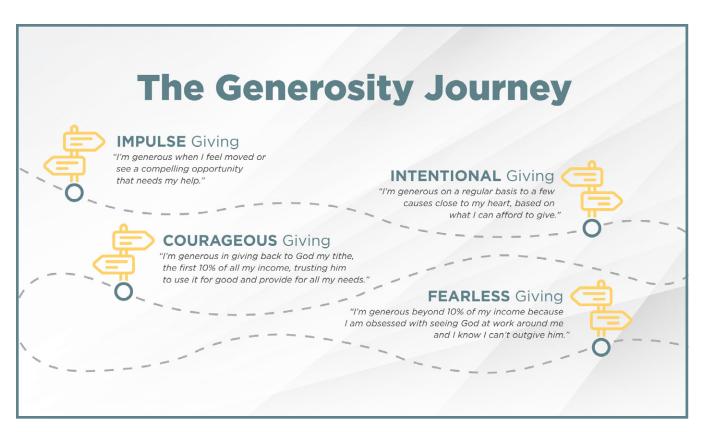
You might notice that, regardless of your Bible translation, Jesus does not end His teaching by saying, "Go and do likewise." This teaching is not about a calculation, sum, or percentage of income that you should be giving. Jesus is simply pointing out the widow's FEARLESS giving as a reflection of her deep faith and trust in how God would provide.

We recognize that each person is at a different point in their faith and generosity journey. When you look at the generosity journey, where do you see yourself? There is no right or wrong answer to this question, and there should be no shame, just an honest assessment.

Take this moment of reflection on your generosity journey to ask God how you might take a step on your generosity journey.

This fall, you will begin to hear about Pathfinder's next two-year ministry plan, which will start in January 2024. The upcoming ministry plan will include new ministry initiatives, capital projects, and more. Pray and ask God how he might use this opportunity to show you how to take the next step in your faith and generosity journey. Maybe it is simply getting started on the generosity journey. Perhaps it is moving from INTENTIONAL Giving to COURAGEOUS Giving. No matter how you feel God is leading you to take a step in this season, we earnestly pray that, as you take that step, God will show you how He can do more than you could ask or imagine with the gifts you give.













Scan to give or visit pathfinderstl.org/give



## Giving Up Control

by ERIN HINKLE Video Storyteller

If you know or have had the pleasure of meeting Jeff and Lisa Van Buren, then you know what it is to experience their genuine warmth, love, and acceptance. Sitting down with Jeff and Lisa back in November 2022, I was amazed at their unapologetically transparent approach to life through the lens of their faith-walk. Jeff shared, "We have always given to the churches that we have gone to. Not much at times, but we always gave something." When the Return, Rebuild, Reimagine campaign was introduced, the two sat down and intentionally discussed stretching their faith through giving. According to Lisa, "We just felt called to up our game, feel it, and give to better our church... There are so many wonderful things that go on here, we just wanted to be a part of that!" Considering the fear this can entail. Lisa recalled. "It was such an incredible relief to give that control over to God. You never really have control; you only think you do!" Agreeing that Pathfinder's strength comes from the efforts of supporting surrounding communities and maintaining a place where you feel God moving. Lisa perfectly stated, "If Pathfinder didn't exist, there would be a tremendous hole in the Ellisville and Wildwood community!"



Scan to watch the Van Buren's story



# YOU HAVEA GREAT STORY

At Pathfinder Church, we know that everyone has unique and inspiring God-Directed journeys—stories filled with highs, lows, and everything in between. As a church made up of people from all walks of life and very different pasts, we feel it is important to share varying stories of individuals and families experiencing God's direction for their lives.

Watch inspirational stories from our community and share your own at pathfinderstl.org/stories



## Hello From a Stranger

by DION GARRETT Senior Pastor

recently had a Zoom conversation with a guy named Adam. Adam grew up here, his parents still attend Pathfinder, and now Adam lives in the Pacific Northwest. Adam is a creative guy, a brilliant photojournalist, and a self-proclaimed **introvert**. So what makes Adam so interesting is that after moving away, across the country, to a town where he knew no one, he decided to launch a tradition that his mother started, *Monday night dinners*.

His mom, Colleen, held a family dinner every Monday night at her home. As her kids grew up and moved out of the house, Monday nights were a sacred time for them to come back and connect as a family. Many families may have a weekly family dinner; some may even open their tables to include friends and acquaintances. Far away from everyone he knew, Adam did something daring, especially for an introvert: he decided to host a Monday night dinner and invited total strangers from around his community to join him.

And they came.

Eleven people came to the first dinner, and with each week, more came. Now each Monday night, **hundreds of people** show up to have a "family dinner" in Adam's backyard. New people join every week.

As much as we talk about the *pursuit of a whole life* here at Pathfinder, the other part of our promise is equally important; we are *bringing together imperfect people*. That's what churches have always been about. Not simply teaching the Bible or helping people meet Jesus—as important as those things are. Jesus established the church to *bring together imperfect people*, taking complete strangers and making them into members of his forever family.

People are dying from a lack of connection, *literally*. There is an **epidemic of loneliness** plaguing our part of the world. Mental health is now a regular part of our conversation because so many of us are struggling; we can't keep it quiet anymore! But it's not just our *mental* health that's suffering. Recently the Surgeon General of the U.S. put out an advisory on the *physical* health impacts of loneliness on our country. Loneliness, the kind that is becoming the norm for us, has devastating impacts on our physical health—the equivalent of smoking a pack of cigarettes a day.<sup>1</sup>

I was sitting in a recent Pathfinder-hosted event where Dr. Gary Chapman, author of the bestselling

https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2023/05/03/new-surgeon-general-advisory-raises-alarm-about-devastating-impact-epidemic-loneliness-isolation-united-states.html



book, *The 5 Love Languages*, described how even in our families & marriages, the most intimate human institutions that exist, people feel disconnected from each other, unknown and unloved. The cost of this kind of disconnection is incalculable. The effects are far-reaching and long-lasting. As I sat there listening to him, deeply and personally aware of precisely what he was describing, a frustrated, defiant, powerful emotion grew in me. *It doesn't have to be like this!* 

Our part of the world does not suffer from a lack of churches. Our particular church doesn't suffer from a lack of people. But I'm afraid too many of us, even people who belong to a church & attend regularly, are suffering from a **lack of connection**.



This issue intentionally highlights for you how you can move from "attending" or "belonging" to Pathfinder to truly connecting here. Inspiring Connections is one of the four pillars guiding who we are and the way we approach ministry. We've got an incredible connection infrastructure in place. Through Action Teams, Pop-Ups, and meaningful service opportunities—both inside Pathfinder and out in our greater St. Louis region—we have created the path for you to go from wherever you are now to truly feeling connected!

But I cannot take your next step for you; only **you** can do that.

Maybe you sense that something is missing from your life. Or maybe you've grown to believe that "This is

just how life is." I want you to know that **God has** more for you.

My hope is that in reading this issue, you'll see that a life of meaningful connection isn't far off. It's only a couple of steps away! I realize it may feel vulnerable and scary. Maybe your life feels too busy to add another thing. Nevertheless, I hope you'll be inspired to do it anyway. I say this without any sense of exaggeration or hyperbole: *It will change your life*.

A woman named Kristen attended one of Adam's Monday Night Dinners some time ago. Here's what she said,

"Thank you so, so much for creating Monday Night Dinners. The first time I came here, I was all alone. I had so many losses in life, and I was the only person left... I thought, 'What could go wrong if I went to a Monday Night Dinner to try them out?' And it ended up being the best decision I have ever made. You have created such a profound sense of community and helped me to feel and recognize that none of us are alone. We are all part of a bigger world together. I am eternally grateful to be a part of this community and for your welcoming presence. Looking forward to many, many more years of this going forward!"

I love what Adam is doing in his backyard. I also love what we're doing together at Pathfinder. So I'll put Kristen's question to you, "What could go wrong if you pursued your next step?"

- **(1)**
- Sign up for the *Explore*Pathfinder orientation...
- Join an Action Team...
- **(1)**
- Register for one of our coming *Pop-Ups...*



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#### FALL AT PATHFINDER CHURCH

SEPTEMBER 15

Pop-Up: Party with a Purpose

SEPTEMBER 15

Pop-Up: STL City Soccer

**Viewing Party** 

SEPTEMBER 15 Friday Frenzie

SEPTEMBER 23 & 24
The Great Bible Giveaway

SEPTEMBER 24-OCTOBER 28
Prosper the City

OCTOBER 8
Explore Pathfinder

OCTOBER 21 & 22
Inspired Service Weekend

OCTOBER 27-29
Middle School Retreat

NOVEMBER 12
Explore Pathfinder

NOVEMBER 22 Thanksgiving Eve Service

FOR ALL EVENTS VISIT PATHFINDERSTL.ORG/EVENTS