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Rally against gun violence is all set to go

By Tim Engstrom tengstrom@swpub.com Sep 5, 2018



The Commons is a 13-acre municipal park in Excelsior on the shore of Lake Minnetonka that draws people from around the region.
Photo by Tim Engstrom

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EXCELSIOR — The official announcement has been made. Ducks are all in a row. Everything is a green light.

Now called “The Winds of Change: Westside Rally Against Gun Violence” — which first was set for mid-August before being canceled — it is taking place at The Commons in Excelsior on Saturday, Oct. 6.

The organizer, St. Paul-based statewide nonprofit Protect Minnesota, made the announcement on Tuesday, Sept. 4.

Toss out the summertime controversies over dates, permits, crowds and partisan politics, and the original intent of this event was to highlight students in the Twin Cities who made gun violence a local and national issue last school year. Some protested at the State Capitol, and others at their schools.

“Students are the engine driving this issue. We want to honor and thank student activists and commit to supporting their leadership during the new school year,” said the Rev. Nancy Nord Bence, executive director of Protect Minnesota, in a news release.

The rally is slated to go from 1 to 4 p.m. It is sponsored by Students Protect Minnesota, Protect Minnesota’s student caucus.

“As students, we know that going back to school means going back to the all-too-real possibility that tragedy will strike again and again, multiple times throughout the year, in more than one school,” said Gracey Scott, a college sophomore from Edina, in the news release. “And so we are going to do something about it.”

The release says the rally will feature voter registration, information and candidate booths and food trucks.

Meanwhile, a full afternoon of live music is planned. The performers are:

- The Carnegies
- The Daisy Dillman Band
- Wee Willie Walker
- Paul Metsa Acoustic Quartet
- Daisy Forester, a local high school performer
- Royals Smith, a young local rapper

Is the rally anti-gun? Not according to Nord Bence:

“Protect Minnesota is not ‘anti-gun,’ we’re anti-gun violence,” she said in the news release. “We look at gun violence as a public health crisis that can be addressed the way we’ve addressed deaths by motor vehicles. The U.S. managed to cut deaths by car accidents in half over 40 years by employing public health solutions — and we didn’t confiscate cars in the process. In fact, there are more than twice as many cars on the road today.”

She said America can reduce gun deaths “without taking away the rights of responsible, law abiding gun owners.”

Students who register before the event at www.protectmn.org will receive a free “Minnesotan Against Getting Shot” T-shirt.

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