



The Newsletter of the  
**Twin Cities T'ai-Chi Ch'uan Studio**  
2242 University Ave  
St Paul, MN 55114  
(651) 767-0267

# Wu-Dang

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www.tctaichi.com  
email: tctaichi@minn.net

Complimentary for studio members.  
\$6.00 subscription for others.  
Please send requests to address at left.

## NEW SCHEDULE

January 15 is the first day of our new schedule with the following changes. **Monday 8:30-9:30 p.m. Pa-Kua** is now closed to new enrollees.

**Wednesday 8:30-9:30 Pa-Kua** is newly open to new enrollees. This class will cover the 8-Linking Palms, Ch'in-Na techniques, a 2-Person Ch'in-Na form, and Basic Sticking Hands.

Reminder: if you have finished the Solo Form you are eligible for the **7:00 p.m. Pushing-Hands Class on Tuesday night** and the **11:30 a.m. T'ai-Chi Review & Practice on Saturday**.

If you have any questions, please feel free to ask them of Sifu Ray or Sifu Paul.

## FIELD TRIP TO ARMS & ARMOR

January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2008, 7:00-9:00 p.m. (note: date change)

We will embark on a field trip to the Arms and Armor forge in Minneapolis as a sequel to our in-studio seminar last year. Our tour guide, Craig Johnson will show us around the shop and forge where they make their world famous medieval reproductions. Free will donation for Craig is appreciated, but not compulsory.

## CHINESE NEW YEAR

**Year of the Rat**

We will celebrate the Chinese New Year with our annual demonstration and Altar Ceremony followed by a banquet at U Garden. The date is Saturday, February 23<sup>rd</sup> beginning at 5:00 p.m. (note the earlier time). Please sign-up for the banquet at the Studio.

## 10<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL RETREAT

The dates for the annual retreat are August 15-17. The theme this year will be "Something Old, Something New". We will be offering two of our most popular classes from previous retreats, as well as offering two brand-new classes. We will have breakout sessions, a Scotch tasting, Celtic music for entertainment, and the release of a book commemorating 10 years of TCTCCS Retreats.

## 2008 STUDIO BOARD NEWS

At the end of 2007, the Board of Directors for Twin Cities T'ai Chi Ch'uan Studio had some personnel changes. First of all, we'd like to welcome two new directors: Ralph Jerndal and Dennis Kelly. They are replacing Morgan Grayce Willow and Patrick Jarvis, who have completed their terms on the board. Thanks to both of you for everything you've done for the Studio!

Loc Truong has been serving as a director for three years. This past year, he also took on the duty of Webmaster for the Studio. He is retiring from his director position in order for him to devote his time to our website re-design and upgrade as Webmaster. Thank you, Loc! Expect exciting changes and additions to the website coming soon.

Lastly, the board held officer elections for 2008. The new officers are: Val DiEuliis as Chairman, Rondi Atkin as Vice Chairman, Julie Cisler as Treasurer, and Sharon Nyberg as Secretary. We are looking forward to serving the Studio membership this year.

Feel free to say hello to the board's directors and officers. We'd like to hear from you!

## TO LEARN AGAIN

By Karen Taylor

Nothing has brought more validation to the famous quote “To teach is to learn again” as being asked to tutor another student. While this is an honor, it also carries with it a responsibility to provide a quality lesson and represent the studio as a place where students can learn the form comfortably at their own pace. Last November, Sifu Hayward gave a seminar on tutoring in a way that is both effective and individualized to the student. Below are some of the main points from that evening.

It might be obvious that communication is key in teaching, but it is easy for us to jump into the form without finding out anything about the student. Before you begin showing postures and movements, it is important to briefly discuss with the student their physical abilities and any specific health concerns they may have. This will allow you to teach to the tune of their ability rather than your own. When you begin to teach postures, start with alignment, relaxation, and breath. Students will have already experienced the standing meditation, so the language will not be entirely foreign. Emphasize being straight, not stiff, and the plumb-line of the spine; allow gravity to be felt evenly through the skeleton, as the bones are there to hold the body up. Remember the meaning of relaxation: *re* is “to do again” and *lax* means “not fully.” In other words, we do not want to collapse, but allow the core of the body to have energy while the surroundings are relaxed. It might be helpful to introduce students to the tension/relaxation scale of zero to ten, zero being totally collapsed and ten completely tense, to help them gain this type of body awareness. While practicing alignment and relaxation, breath becomes a key player. It should always be kept in the abdomen, never in the chest, and above all, never held or stopped.

As a student progresses through these body basics, tutors need to help students keep their minds focused

on the task of learning the form. Encourage them to read books and begin studying the Classics to aid their process. While teaching the sequence, set an example and goal of unity or smoothness. The top and bottom of the body need to move together as one unit to form a consistent speed, with absence of clumsiness and jerkiness. Remember the movement comes from the legs to give way to correct propulsion. When dealing with the sequence itself, it is sometimes appropriate to refer to other parts of the form but such a discussion needs to be relevant to what the student is working on.

In addition to the above points, as tutors we have to remember to stay in the student's line of vision. Move



yourself as the postures progress, remaining in front of the student.. When describing postures, verbally say the actions as you do them with the student and break them down as needed. It is often helpful to describe and practice the lower body separate from the upper body and then put the two together. After drilling postures many times, students need to try it on their own. You may need to briefly walk away from them to encourage “on your own” practice before you can give any corrections, and of course be sure

to emphasize practicing away from class. Some students may need creative encouragement, or be interested in martial applications. In using applications, make sure it is to make their form better, and as with any innovation, it is only truly innovative if it teaches.

Lastly, be cognizant of when your teaching time is over. When either Sifu approaches your teaching space, be prepared to turn it over to them. Be respectful and pay attention to any corrections or comments they makes to your student, since they likely apply to you as well. In my personal tutoring experience, I have found many gaps in own knowledge, and those few minutes are valuable to both the student and tutor.

# T'AI CHI, TOOLS, and TIME

By Sifu Paul Abdella

During my time studying T'ai Chi with Master Liang I often heard him make the pronouncement "My art is with the music and the tassell!" to describe what he felt was his unique contribution to the art of T'ai Chi Ch'uan. "I want to make T'ai Chi more scientific and more aesthetic" was a frequently added qualifier to the first statement. His reference to music is of course the introduction of counting, rhythm and the use of music as a backdrop and learning tool for the practice of T'ai Chi forms. In this short article I would like to examine the merits of Master Liang's use of music and other 'tools of time' in the study and practice of the Solo Form. I would also like to share some methods I have used in my practice to go beyond their inherent limitations. The use of the tassell as an aesthetic element in the practice of the sword and broadsword will have to be the topic of another article.

## Benefit of the beat

I have found that the use of counting to learn and practice T'ai Chi has four primary benefits. First, as a way to learn the postures of the solo form, the natural rhythms of each movement can easily be counted out making them much easier for a student to learn and assimilate. Occasionally I encounter a student whose particular learning style does not adapt well to counting and requires another approach but for the most part counting is a highly effective tool for learning new movement.

Second, counting helps unify body movements. If a student knows exactly what actions take place on a given count the important concept of moving in a unified and connected way becomes clear and accessible.

Third, moving to a counting rhythm regulates breathing. A frequently asked question by a new student is "What should I be doing with my breathing?" To this question I reply, "Let the body breathe naturally." Moving to the count will provide natural stimulation for rhythmic deep breathing. Fourth and finally, counting provides a natural focus tool that allows the mind to calm and enter a meditative state.

Master Liang's use of music for form practice was a way to integrate these four attributes of rhythm into a

seamless enjoyable practice. His concept was to learn the postures to a count, then apply the count and focus the mind to the beat of the music. The calming rhythm and melody of the music would help one relax, and the use of deep rhythmic breathing would help bring one to a meditative or alpha state. It was an innovative strategy that yielded the desired results for someone willing to work through the various stages.

## Meditation: Beyond the beat

The use of music was originally intended to be a means to an end, and for Master Liang that end was T'ai Chi as moving meditation--"meditation in action, action in meditation." He often said if you master the form to music then "you will forget the music" and the five attributes of form, perception, consciousness, action and knowledge will become empty. Part of the path to accessing this state of emptiness is to slow down and let the body's own rhythms and those rhythms inherent in the movements naturally emerge. At a certain stage in one's development adhering to the brisk pace and rigid meter of the music may hinder rather than help this process. Other means of practice must then be sought out and employed for progress to continue.

Whether standing, seated, moving or still, all forms of meditation share the common attributes of relaxation, innervation, respiration, concentration, and circulation. To allow the muscles to relax and release excess tension is key to a proper meditation posture. To hold the spine straight in an upright position generates the flow of electricity from the nervous system. Slow deep breathing increases oxygen intake and calms the body/mind. A concentrated attention stimulates brain activity in the frontal cortex where perception is expanded. Circulation is increased from the interaction of all of these areas.

For me personally, the greatest joy and benefit of meditation is the experience of timelessness. Time, the great human invention, has allowed us to control our environment, our productivity, and our selves in order to insure our survival. It has also made us servants of the clock and magnified our sense of separateness from nature and each other.

Even a daily practice of thirty minutes will provide a refreshing reprieve from our notions of time and our timekeepers, eventually bringing us back to an understanding of the energy nature of all experience.



*"T'ai Chi, Tools, and Time" continued on page 4*

### **Our History of Holding**

Currently my favorite training routine is a posture holding practice I will describe in detail. First, let me say that holding postures is nothing new to our lineage or our studio. Master Liang advocated holding postures from the form and Ray and I have made frequent use of the metronome as a counting device in our holding practices at the studio. We were also introduced to the sophisticated standing practices of Yi-Ch'uan created by the famed Wang Hsiang-Chai and introduced to our studio by Master Choi. Yi-Ch'uan has added much to our knowledge of how to gain the most from posture holding. It is however, a practice of simplified movement with little footwork that is limited as a direct translation to the solo form. Similarly, holding postures with the metronome allowed us to change the pace of the form but still required an equal cadence during the moving phase of a posture and reduced training options during the holding phase to merely counting the clicks of the metronome.

### **Tuesdays with Gymboss**

Tuesday is Gymboss day in my house. The Gymboss is a small interval timer available online ([www.gymboss.com](http://www.gymboss.com)) for about twenty dollars. It's about the size of a wristwatch and clips on to a belt or lapel. It has single or dual interval timers that can be set to a nearly infinite array of timing combinations for up to an hour. I have been using and experimenting with it for several months and it has changed and deepened my form practice significantly.

The practice I do is simple, challenging, and deep. I set the timer to a thirty second repeating interval. Once I press the start button the timer beeps once every thirty seconds until I press the stop button. Simple.

I begin with a simple warm up. I hold ten stances for thirty seconds each. The stances are: Horse, Bow, Taming Tiger, Cross Leg, Cat, Seven Star, Unicorn, Chicken, 60/40, and L-stance. This usually takes about ten minutes and has put my body in many positions that warm the joints, stretch the muscles, and raise my body temperature slightly.

I shake out my limbs and position myself to begin the form.

### **The Form: Entering Tranquility**

At the sound of the beep I begin the first movement of the form at a medium-slow tempo and hold the finished position for the remainder of the thirty-second period. I always move slowly enough to feel connected and

harmonious in my movement with a sense of swimming through the air. At the end of the movement I reserve time for holding--at least ten seconds or more, even after the longest postures.

What to do or not do during the holding phase is up to the individual practitioner. In my practice I engage three things. First I adjust the finished position. There are always subtle adjustments to be made that can make the finished posture more aligned with gravity. This can usually be done fairly quickly. Second I bring my attention to my breath. The mind is prone to wander while holding and bringing attention to the breath keeps the mind centered and the body relaxed and able to transition through any physical discomfort. My intent however, is always to move toward a state of emptiness. If I feel particularly distracted on a given day I will need to stay focused on the two areas just mentioned until



my mind quiets down. I usually spend the first section of the form getting to that place of quiet relaxation. By the end of the section my body is warm, my legs have settled into their stance height, the breath is slow and deep and mental distractions have dissipated. The first taste of emptiness has been served.

"The Chi should be stimulated and the spirit of vitality should be retained internally" is a line from the Classics that generally

describes my experience of the second section of the form up to the kicks. A feeling of warm liquid will emerge in the chest, abdomen, palms, and along the spine particularly after repetitive turn and twist postures like Repulse Monkey and Cloud Hands.

As I enter the kick section the physical demands of holding kick postures draws me back to adjusting my alignment and using the breath to relax through any physical discomfort. I allow myself the option of relaxing the kicking leg if I feel I'm straining to maintain the position or if my balance feels compromised. Over time both my leg strength and balance have improved from holding this section of the form. As I exit the kick section the sensation of warm liquid I felt earlier is now in fact, perspiration.

Section three of the form is made up primarily of pieces of sections one and two interspersed with posture sequences unique to section three. My experience of this part of the form is similar to section two before the kicks--with a notable difference. The kick section has tired my legs sufficiently that in order to 'rest and recover' while continuing the form, all excess tension in the postures must be released. This creates a sink and root quality in my legs and a light, empty sensation in the upper body. Once I get to the Cross Kick and active step Roll Back, Press and Push I become aware the end is near and resist becoming anxious to finish by refocusing on the breath. Soon I am performing Cross Hands and Conclusion. I press the stop button on the timer--run time: seventy-five minutes. I stand in Wu-Chi for a minute or two as I savor the feeling of what I inadequately describe as 'euphoric exhaustion.' Unlike exhaustion from rigorous external activity that leaves me drained and in need of a long recovery, my physical recovery is rapid and I experience a feeling of well being that increases throughout the day. I have participated in many endurance sports and many styles of martial arts

### **The Studio Needs Your Help**

If you are ready, willing, and able to share some of your knowledge, skills, energy, and time to help the Studio's operations, we would like to hear from you. During the coming year, we will be building a database of members' who are willing to volunteer to help us with a variety of tasks and projects, ranging from putting some new paint on the wall to legal or accounting advice to organizing fundraisers. We'll provide more details later this year--when we figure them out ourselves--but for the time being, you can email us at [volunteers@tctaichi.com](mailto:volunteers@tctaichi.com).

Contemplate the workings of this world, listen to the words of the wise, take all that is good as your own. With this as your base, open your one door to truth. Do not overlook the truth that is right before you. Study how water flows in a valley stream, smoothly and freely between the rocks. Also learn from holy books and wise people. Everything--even mountains, rivers, plants, and trees--should be your teacher.

**Morihei Ueshiba, founder of Aikido**

as well as meditation practices. I believe the combination of movement and meditation and the sensations and benefits they produce, are unique to T'ai Chi Ch'uan.

### **In Conclusion**

I would encourage experienced T'ai Chi practitioners to give this practice a try and to create variations of their own. I would caution that there is a physical, even athletic, component to the practice that needs to be incrementally worked up to in order to avoid undue strain or injury. Start with the first section and with less holding time and build the practice from there.

I'm aware of the irony in using a timekeeping tool to experience the sensation of no time. Historically though, in monasteries and temples throughout Asia bells, gongs and other devices were used to signal the beginning and end of extended periods of meditation. Like Master Liang, I view this practice as a means to an end--an enjoyable journey of self-cultivation and discovery that will continue to unfold in ways unique to each and every practitioner. Enjoy.

In Memory of

**Nancy Chalmers Hardenbergh**

1920-2007

One of the 4 Founding Mothers  
Of Twin Cities T'ai-Chi Ch'uan Studio

**Tao Te Ching 40**

*Returning is the motion of the Tao  
Yielding is the way of the Tao  
The 10,000 things are born of being  
Being is born of not being.*

The Re-release of  
Paul Gallagher's Book  
***Drawing Silk***

Is available at the Studio for \$17.99  
\$1 off cover price for Studio members

# T'AI-CHI SECRETS

By Rondi Atkin

I wrote my T'ai-Chi secrets because I was studying the secrets of others, such as Master Liang, Cheng Man Ch'ing, and the Yang family, and discussing them with Sifu Ray who suggested I write my own. Although I didn't believe I had any secrets or hidden knowledge, I started writing, and the first three spilled from my pen (now, #s 2-4). After reading what I had written, I realized that they revealed how to cultivate one's practice and bring T'ai-Chi into life.

I then decided to try and come up with eight secrets, which refer to the eight postures, the eight directions, and the eight trigrams. The next day, three more secrets emerged. After the seventh, I showed them to my friend and mentor, Joanne VonBlon, who supplied me with my eighth secret (which became my first). Now, having written them, I am trying to live up to them. I imagine that we all have secrets within us.

## T'AI-CHI SECRETS

### 1. **Observe and absorb T'ai-Chi.**

Watching Sifu Ray and Sifu Paul practice the form helps us imitate their movements and absorb their energy. Also, as did the old masters, observe and absorb nature.

### 2. **Visualize.**

T'ai-Chi Ch'uan, like any endeavor, should be visualized. In imagining the ideal form we follow the precept that the mind or *I* comes first.

### 3. **Cultivate inner purpose.**

Rather than work for external measures of success, such as the number of forms learned, belts earned, or awards won, cultivate inner purpose. Progress should be like the form—fluid and internal. Even during levels of seeming stagnation, sustained and focused practice leads to the attainment of higher skill.

### 4. **Develop a personal practice.**

Class is where we receive information; learning occurs during practice, on our own or with partners. Information applied during practice becomes knowledge.

### 5. **Practice daily.**

Coleman Barks, the American translator of Rumi (12<sup>th</sup>-century Sufi mystic), remarked: "People from all religions came to Rumi's funeral. When asked why,

they said, 'He deepens us.'" T'ai-Chi deepens us too. And, like prayer, daily practice renews, strengthens, and deepens our connection to the infinite.

### 6. **Read about T'ai-Chi and related philosophies.**

Although past masters were often illiterate and still attained phenomenal skill, we have the advantage of conceptual learning. Reading good texts of T'ai-Chi will enable us to better understand the art; reading great philosophical works, such as the *I Ching*, *Tao Te Ching*, and *The Art of War* will broaden our understanding of the Eastern mind.

### 7. **Relax.**

Relaxation is the key to good form and enables the chi to circulate freely through the body. Tension inhibits chi's flow and renders the form ineffective.

Relaxation is also the key to dealing with life. When students asked Master Liang for personal advice, he told them to "relax." Think willow. When pushed, shrug it off.

### 8. **Keep T'ai-Chi within at all times.**

Follow Master Liang's advice to hold our bodies like a "string of pearls." This will benefit our form and our posture and will continually renew our connection to heaven and earth.

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## My Day with My Mentor a.k.a. Ten Years Is a Short Time

By Adam Frank

I work for the Minnesota Conservation Corps which is a subsidiary of Americorps. Through this program, I am granted ten hours of "mentorship opportunity" which allows me to shadow a chosen mentor for a day. I have had other mentors in the past, but there was very little question that I would ask Sifu Ray Hayward if I could spend the day with him.

After some explanation and minor paperwork, Sifu Hayward whole-heartedly agreed, on the condition that I write an article of reflection for the January Wu-Dang. He said that I should contact his wife for scheduling purposes. We decided on Thursday,

*"My Day with My Mentor" continued on page 7*

*"My Day with My Mentor" continued from page 6*

October 25<sup>th</sup> 2007. At class on the Wednesday before, I asked for further details. Sifu said that I could observe his morning private lessons, and the day and night classes. I asked if I should bring a lunch, or if he usually goes out. He said he usually goes home where Kim, his wife makes a brunch for the family, and that I was invited. I was both honored and flattered, and asked if I needed to bring anything else. Sifu said that if I brought Starbucks in the morning, he'd be grateful. I heartily agreed.

**7:30 a.m.** I observed a private lesson- two students begin with a saber form. I found out that there are three ways to do private lessons:

1. The student tells the teacher what they want to work on
2. The teacher tells the student what they should work on
3. There is mutual input from both ends-the two students then practiced pushing hands

**8:30 a.m.** Four students have a private lesson- they practiced Willow #4. This consisted of making an opponent tense by an attack, or relaxing an opponent so much that they "fall asleep". I also learned (or rather, was reminded) that, with the internal arts, skill and knowledge replace external force in technique which allows one to be soft and relaxed...i.e. gives one the advantage.

**10:00 a.m.** Breakfast at Sifu's House- The fare was a delightful and wholesome spread of smoked salmon, tea, eggs, and muffins, all prepared by Kim. I had the pleasure of meeting Kim and their sons, Jim and Yaseen. Our conversations were intelligent and open, and ranged from swords (including Lord of the Rings), education, Chinese Philosophy, travel, the outdoors, the percussive arts, books, family, Liang, Choi, Cheng, Tai Chi history, San Shou, Four Directions, Willows, and Tai Chi application. This entire time, and all day really, I felt comfortable enough to be myself in the presence of my master, and his wonderful family.

**12:30 p.m.** I observed the day Tai Chi class- they performed the standard warm-ups, standing meditation and Section 1 of the long form. After they regroup, they performed the full Sword Form, Saber Form, Cane Form, Fan Form, and Double Saber Form, along with Two Person forms including San Shou, Saber Fencing, and Sword Fencing.

**2:30 p.m.** Break until 6- At this point Sifu said that he normally goes home for a break, and that I should do the same, but to come back and participate in the 6:00

class, take notes if necessary, and then participate as I normally would in 7:30 Hsing-I class. At this point I was overwhelmed. I'd been trying all day to soak up as much as possible of Sifu Hayward's actions and words, and not to forget even one thing that has happened, or one word he has said. This was for my own purposes, and the purposes of this article. At home, I tried to relax and eat, and settle in to read a passage in a book that Sifu lent to me thinking it would be of interest. It came up when we were talking about my job, that of environmental and forestry restoration. The book was entitled "Soul Food by Jack Kornfield and Christina Feldman. It is a compilation of spiritual gems from many traditions. The passage in particular that I was to read was from the Taoist tradition, and is apparently Sifu Hayward's favorite story. It is about generations of monks restoring the mountains near a desolate village and as the forest grows, the village prospers. This is a crude summation of the story, and there is much more to it than that, but suffice it to say, it discussed and combined two of my favorite things, mediation and forest restoration and their benefits. "How, after one day, could he know me so well?" I thought. "How did he know this precious story would move me the way it did?" I suppose I might wear these interests of meditation and forest restoration on my sleeve (the latter quite literally), but either way, I am glad that Sifu thought to show me this story.

**6:00 p.m.** Tai Chi Class participation- pretty standard class, except that I attempted to apply some of the advice and actions I observed that day.

Tai Chi really is a long process of cultivating refinement, which requires patience. It really is the Grand Ultimate in its possibilities, but it does not happen fast. Sifu Hayward has said "when practicing Tai Chi, even 10 years is a short time". I hope to be around for at least that long. In fact, my first night at class, Sifu Hayward bet that I wouldn't last those 10 years, and that I should "prove him wrong". After my day with my mentor, I renew my vow to do just that.

Earlier that day Sifu and I talked about the future of his teaching, and the possibilities of him retiring and just teaching private lessons at home. He spoke of an addition on his garage which would function as the facility for these private lessons, complete with a wood burning stove for the winter months. I imagined that this place is where some of Sifu Hayward's greatest lessons would be taught, and I suppose as part of my vow to stick around Twin Cities Tai Chi Chuan Studio, I couldn't help but imagine myself receiving some of those great lessons...lessons from my Sifu, my friend, my Mentor.

## Class Schedule for January 15, - June 15, 2008

Monday		Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Saturday
12:30-2:30 Solo Form (all levels-join anytime)				12:30-2:30 Solo Form (all levels-join anytime)	10:00-11:30 Eclectsis (join anytime)
6:00-7:30 Solo Form (beginners only)		6:00-7:00 Solo Form Refinement (instructor authorization required)	6:00-7:30 Solo Form (all levels-join anytime)	6:00-7:30 Solo Form (all levels-join anytime)	11:30-12:30 T'ai-Chi Review & Practice (prerequisite: Solo Form completion)
7:30-8:30 Weapons Cycle 2: Sabre (enrollment closed)		7:00-8:00 Pushing-Hands & San-Shou (prerequisite: Solo Form completion)	7:30-8:30 Hsing-Yi Ch'uan: Level II (enrollment closed)	7:30-8:30 Hsing-Yi: 5 Elements (join anytime)	12:30-2:00 Solo Form (all levels-join anytime)
8:30-9:30		8:00-9:00 Praying Mantis Level I (join anytime)	8:30-9:30 Pa-Kua Linked Palms (join anytime)		
Liu Ho Pa Fa Mother & Sons (join anytime)	Pa-Kua Linked Palms (enrollment closed)				

**NOTE: The Studio will be closed Monday, May 26 for Memorial Day.**

**Twin Cities T'ai-Chi Ch'uan Studio**  
**2242 University Ave W Suite 207**  
**Saint Paul, MN 55114**

**FIRST CLASS MAIL**