

The Annual Picnic happens in the summer, usually June.

Brief history of it:

Najwa Bukhari, originally from Saudi Arabia, but living in Northfield with her husband and children, started interacting with the HRC when the climate against Muslims in the US was getting really difficult during the election campaign that resulted in Trump as president. Her and other mothers of Muslim children were very concerned about the political climate and what they perceived as an environment at the schools with teachers not prepared to face incidents of racism against Muslims in town.

She then collaborated with commissioners to create short presentations about how to be prepared to face situations of racism in the schools. The HRC created a presentation that was delivered to churches, the Northfield middle school, schools administrators and teachers on the preparing for the upcoming school year days. After that Najwa joined the commission. Her cancer didn't allow her to participate fully but before she died she expressed the need to create opportunities for community members who don't interact despite living in close proximity. She wanted have community meals to bring people together. Her observations of the divide came from the North Avenue in Northfield, an avenue that divides fancy homes, from where she lived, from apartments. This divide happens in other areas in town such as Jefferson Parkway in the area around FiftyNorth, NCRC buildings.

This is how the Najwa Annual Picnic was born, a year after she died. Her widower, Tom Loretto, continued to be involved with the effort and the picnic was done in person two times, at the Greenvale School and the Park on Jefferson Parkway by FiftyNorth. The third time it was virtual. Tom expressed he preferred the name to not have Najwa's name attached to it and it became the Annual Community Picnic. Unfortunately, Tom Loretto died last summer also because of cancer.

In conversations with commissioners several of us expressed the need to create an International Day and we thought the Annual Community Picnic is the perfect event for such a festival. This year, the proposed changes will include showcasing our Asian community members and their businesses. We can also determine the theme for 2023.