FutureHeights celebrates 20 years on Aug. 20

Robert Brown

FutureHeights will celebrate 20 years of service to the Heights community at its 2022 benefit party, “Swinging at the Rockefeller,” on Aug. 20, 6–9:30 p.m. The event will take place at the Heights Rockefeller Building, 3309 Mayfield Road, and its Proximity Golf Lounge. Guests will have the opportunity to enjoy music and dancing in the building’s outdoor garden and courtyard, and partake of appetizers, desserts and drinks from some of the Heights’ finest culinary establishments. Proximity Golf’s simulators will also be available to guests, enabling them to tee off, albeit virtually, at championship golf courses.

To purchase tickets to the Aug. 20 benefit, and for additional information, visit www.futureheights.org.

“We are proud of all that FutureHeights has done to strengthen the Cleveland Heights and University Heights communities,” said FutureHeights Board President Julie Sabroff, “and we look forward to even greater accomplishments in the coming years.” This year’s honoree will be Brendan Ring, whom FutureHeights is recognizing for his decades of contributions to the community through his ownership of the iconic Nighttown music club, in Cleveland Heights’ Cedar Fairmount district. The annual benefit will also highlight FutureHeights’ 20 years of working to strengthen the Cleveland Heights and University Heights communities. Among its endeavors are the following:

Supporting racial equity: FutureHeights has made the advancement of racial equity an ever-riding goal and underlying principle of its work. That includes the hiring of Black contractors, connecting Black residents with employment, and increasing participation by Black residents on its board and committees.

Housing rehab: FutureHeights partners with local contractors to renovate—so far 20—houses that have been abandoned due to foreclosures. To date, FutureHeights’ FutureHomes Rehab Program has sought to maximize the impact of its housing work by targeting rehabilitation in the Noble neighborhood.

FutureHeights presents 2022 Heights Music Hop Sept. 9 and 10

Micah Kirman and Eric Simna

Music fans will want to mark their calendars for the 2022 Heights Music Hop, Sept. 9 and 10, showcasing musical talent from around the region. The free music festival, now in its ninth year, will feature performances in three Cleveland Heights neighborhoods. This year, performances will also take place in the Noble neighborhood, at the Noble Gardens’ Market at the mini-park at Noble and Rockside roads, on Saturday morning, 10 a.m. to noon.

FutureHeights, Cleveland Heights’ nonprofit community development corporation, founded and presents the Heights Music Hop to encourage visitors to experience new, local music in the vibrant, walkable business districts of Cleveland Heights. This year’s performances will take place both inside neighborhood businesses and on outdoor stages throughout the participating business districts.
A correction to the July ‘The Victorian’ condo article—and the hint of a possible future story

Kim Sergio Inglis

In the July Heights Observer article about The Victorian, “ Owners seek landmark status for CIH’s first condo,” this editor got a few things wrong. (And, in looking into things, I learned much more!)

The article stated, “The Victorian was the first building in Cleveland Heights to be constructed as condominiums.” It should have clarified that it was the first to be constructed as a single building housing condominiums.

Further, in condensing the information into a short, single-line headline, even more words were dropped that might have clarified that “The Victorian was Cleveland Heights’ first condo in a particular category of condo development.”

Sara Stashower, a resident of one of the multi-unit condos on Mornington Lane—who grew up in a different condo there—wrote to let the Heights Observer know that that development predated The Victorian by about six years.

The Mornington Lane condominiums were built in 1969, while The Victorian was built in 1972. So—they’re both firsts, but Mornington Lane was more first, one could say: The Victorian was the first single-building condo, but Mornington Lane’s were the first built condo units (and, arguably, one of those units, of four condos each, would also have been the first condo building)

Wanting to get it right this time, the Heights Observer ran the whole puzzle by Mazie Adams, chair of Cleveland Heights’ Landmark Commission, who had this to say: “The Victorian was the first condominium building constructed as a single structure in which all the units are contiguous and under the same roof.

Mornington Lane Condos do pre-date the Victorian, but are in groups of four condos per structure/under one roof for a total of 16 units in four buildings.

“We will make the distinction very clear in the official designation of The Victorian.”

Stashower is working on a book about the Mornington Lane condos—I hope she’ll share some of their history (and maybe some photos!) with the Heights Observer, whenever she is ready to do so.

Sometimes it takes a village—or more editors—to notice an error, and clarify a very interesting part of Cleveland Heights’ housing history.

Kim Sergio Inglis is editor-in-chief of the Heights Observer, and is a Cuyahoga County master gardener volunteer.

A correction to the July MetroHealth article

Due to an editing error, the July article “Behavioral Health Hospital plans October opening” misstated the first name of Bev Loza, MetroHealth’s executive director of behavioral hospital operations.

Music Hop is proud to work with sponsor-partners, including Cuyahoga Arts & Culture, the Ohio Arts Council, Arts Midwest, Flaherty & Collins Properties, the city of Cleveland Heights, Cedar Fairmount Special Improvement District, Cedar Lee Special Improvement District, and the Heights Observer.

Visit the Heights Music Hop’s website, www.heightsmusichop.com, for updates and a full list of participating artists and venues. (Full festival information is still to come.)

Micah Kimran is the interim executive director of FutureHeights and a lifelong Cleveland Heights resident. Eric Stimm, principal of Ayo Sound, is manager of the 2022 Heights Music Hop.
Did Mayor Seren excuse rioting?

Robert Shwab

Mayor Khalil Seren’s opinion in the June issue of the Heights Observer (“Pride is insistence in the face of intense resistance”) issues an overwrought clarion call for fight, protest and action against an enemy coalition of bigots, theocrats and others who might kill you if you are gay or lesbian. He describes the United States as if it were Iran, or some other dozen Islamic territories, where speaking about LGBT rights does bring a death sentence.

Because the U.S. Supreme Court has tossed the abortion issue back to the people and their representatives, he then includes the Supreme Court in the enemy category and seems to excuse or expect “rage and riot” against our most vulnerable democratic institution, which would put him somewhere on par rhetorically with the Jan. 6 rioters. He also mentions the earlier “brave humans who put themselves on the line in riots, parades . . . and legal battles.”

An arbitrator for FINRA, Robert Shwab has lived in Cleveland Heights since 2000.

There’s a culture war in Cleveland Heights

Alan Rapoport

A culture war has been declared in Cleveland Heights by the mayor and city council, as evidenced in an [ordinance] passed as an “emergency” measure.

Ordinance No. 75-2022 prohibits any treatment by a mental health professional the purpose of which is “an attempt to change an individual’s sexual orientation.” It is called a protection of minors. Its main target is so-called “conversion therapy.” [The ordinance states] engaging in such therapy with a minor [is] “an Unlawful Discriminatory Practice.”

It could result in a substantial penalty.

Mr. Mayor, we want more civil debate and reasoning, and far less “rage and riot.” But this ordinance clearly is aimed at those considered as political enemies. It pertains to “efforts to change behaviors or gender expressions or to eliminate or reduce sexual or romantic attractions or feelings toward individuals of the same gender.” It would not [for example] sanction school counselors who might advise minors to adopt a homosexual lifestyle. Nor does it address such treatments as puberty blockers or transgender surgery that also may harm minors. It is one sided in its approach, and real goals are selective. Enforcement also will be selective.

Sexuality is a private matter. Highly personal decisions about it should be left to families after consultation with their trusted professional care providers.

The great middle swath of moderates wants to see political compromises in all these “rights” issues. Prominent liberal legal scholars criticized the Roe decision but support the pro-choice policy. Moderates are seeking ethical, moral and social arguments toward a political solution, somewhere in that great range between a ban at conception and allowing abortion of viable babies.

Possible harms caused by conversion therapy can be addressed in other ways. Laws already on the books create criminal sanctions and civil remedies that protect minors. And any regulation of professional practices is a proper matter of state law, not local law.

The mayor and city council have invented a problem. This is their obvious effort to show solidarity with a political constituency. But that constituency does not include many sincere members of our community. They particularly exclude those with certain strong convictions, whether religious or otherwise. Although their ordinance does not mention these members, its radical approach shows they have them in mind.

All apparently are not welcome in Cleveland Heights.

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Local government obviously should protect public health, safety, and welfare. But merely declaring a health “emergency” does not mean there is one. Perhaps city council next will outlaw sugar because it may cause diabetes. We should worry about what limits city council will place on the exercise of political power.

Tyranny begins with small steps toward altruistic goals. Ordinance No. 75-2022 shows how this could occur even in Cleveland Heights.

Alan Rapoport, a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights, served on CH City Council (1980-87) and as mayor (1982-87).
Kids give us what we need

Susie Kaeser

June 18 was magic. When the Heights Summer Music Camp Orchestra performed its final piece on the stage at Heights High that evening, the audience—family and friends, district leaders, music advocates and longtime supporters of the Heights music program—erupted with a standing ovation. People were blown away by the music and by the young people taking their bows.

After a two-year hiatus due to COVID-19, this was a restart for the camp. We were starting from scratch. Only eight people who attended the camp as fifth-graders a few years ago were eligible to attend when we reopened. Everyone else was new to the experience. We were thrilled to enrol 71 campers.

This is the 16th year that I have been the camp director, and it was my 16th finale concert. This one felt different. It felt more important.

Each year, our music director, Dan Heim, sets the tone for the week when he shares the camp philosophy with our staff: “Everyone is a learner, and everyone is a teacher.”

An exceptional teacher, Heim articulated the expectations that shape our efforts. Every camper can learn something new, will make progress, should feel support, can teach us something about learning, and should have fun. It’s a perfect climate for everyone to work hard, excel, and open themselves to new perceptions of themselves.

In a short week, the daily camp routine, led by amazing music professionals and enthusiastic high school mentors, transformed our gaggle of slightly wary fifth- and sixth-graders a few years ago into a tight-knit community of musicians. Part of each day was spent preparing for the concert. Musicians are lucky. They can hear feedback by giving us what we need. They know it is worth it to provide them with what they need. They can learn something new, will make progress, have the music camp helped everyone overcome the stress, fatigue and loss inflicted by COVID, I believe it touched. We know our young people can develop new skills and knowledge, self-confidence, satisfying relationships, and the motivation needed to reach beyond what they imagine they can achieve.

As our community and schools continue to reclaim normalcy and overcome the stress, fatigue and loss inflicted by COVID, I believe the music camp helped everyone touched. We know our young people can develop new skills and knowledge, self-confidence, satisfying relationships, and the motivation needed to reach beyond what we imagine they can achieve.

For many of us who have been living in isolation, the concert was an awakening. This shared experience among audience members, among the performers, and between the audience and the orchestra was comforting and electric. It’s something everyone carried with them as they returned to life after camp.

I’m certain the performance raised awareness among parents that music teaches important lessons, and that their children are capable of tremendous growth. With sufficient support, they can and will stretch themselves.

The campers had the new experience of playing for a large audience. The immediate feedback rewarded their effort. It lifted them. I am hopeful it solidified their support, they can and will stretch themselves.

Music is social. While individuals practice alone, we need to be around each other to experience the full benefits of music-making. Camp could not work via Zoom. But for the better part of three years, our school district tried its best to serve our children during a pandemic. For the music program, concerts were not an option, and instruction was from afar. A lot got lost.

When the concert was the students myself, and I am hopeful it solidified their commitment to music.

As our community and schools continue to reclaim normalcy and overcome the stress, fatigue and loss inflicted by COVID, I believe the music camp helped everyone touched. We know our young people can develop new skills and knowledge, self-confidence, satisfying relationships, and the motivation needed to reach beyond what we imagine they can achieve.

If you attended the concert, you know it is worth it to provide children with what they need. They respond by giving us what we need.

Susie Kaeser moved to Cleveland Heights in 1979. She is the former director of Reaching Heights, and is active with the Heights Coalition for Public Education and the League of Women Voters. A community booster, she is the author of a book about local activism, Resisting Segregation.

"The Common Good"

Susie Kaeser

Local activism, Resisting Segregation.
On the road to a new government

Unfortunately, a choice for the first full-time clerk of council was announced before the employment contract was signed. When council’s chosen candidate told her current employer she was leaving, that city persuaded her to stay. Something similar happened in 2011, when Cleveland Heights council announced the hiring of a new city manager from the Toledo area. After her acceptance was announced to the media, she withdrew before signing a contract. Council’s lack of institutional memory can sting!

Seven months is nowhere near enough time to reverse a decade-and-a-half or more of decline; for example, we never expected the Severance Center debacle to be resolved in two months. But we are waiting for the mayor to show that he is beginning to follow through on some important campaign pledges.

First, we had hoped to see early signs of reform in the city’s housing department. Diana Woodbridge, a leader of the recently disbanded Greater Cleveland Congregations Cleveland Heights Housing Team, points out that Seren has not, as he promised, engaged Thriving Communities for a citywide vacant property inventory, nor is it in the recently approved budget. If anything is being done about chronic problem properties, it is a well-kept secret.

Additional concerns: Foreclosure bonds require banks to put up money for the upkeep of vacant and neglected properties, but, according to state law, must be issued within two years. The city is not meeting these deadlines. Point-of-sale inspections continue to be outsourced to SafeBuilt. The housing department remains understaffed, with ineffective leadership still in place.

Another area where action is desperately needed is the handling of phone calls from residents. While certain staff (some now retired) have consistently returned calls, this has not been the norm. During the first two years of the pandemic, the situation became even worse.

The mayor stated frequently during his campaign that he would institute a call-management system to ensure timely responses and accountability. From the number of complaints we hear, it would appear this has not yet occurred. Because of space limitations, we can highlight only a few issues this month. If you know of others, please share them with us at heightsdemocracy@gmail.com.

Deborah Van Kleef and Carla Rautenberg
University Heights undertakes city charter review

Recognizing there’s always room for improvement, a new University Heights Charter Commission will spend the rest of 2022 and the first three months of 2023 studying, reviewing, and eventually proposing changes to the city charter. University Heights voters will be given the opportunity to vote on any proposed changes in the 2023 General Election.

The 11-member commission comprises the following University Heights residents: Tyler Bobes, Rick Brown, H. Lee Crumrine, David Farkas, Margaret Friedman, Jacquelyn Gould, James Hux, Wesley Kretch, Chris Myrick, Alicia Sloan, and Stephen Wertheim.

They were sworn-in at the commission’s first meeting on July 27. The commission will meet twice per month, until it submits a final report and recommendations to University Heights City Council, for submission to the electorate. The deadline for the commission to submit recommendations to city council is March 31, 2023.

All meetings of the UH Charter Review Commission will be held at Wiley Middle School, and will be open to the public. The Charter of the City of University Heights originally was adopted at a special election on June 3, 1941. A review of the original charter took place in 1979, and a second review was conducted in 2008 and 2009.

Mike Cook is the communications and civic engagement coordinator for University Heights.
Cleveland Heights City Council
Meeting highlights

JUNE 21, 2022 - regular meeting

Present were Mayor Kahlil Seren, Council President Melody Joy Hart, Council Vice President Craig Cibals, and council members Tony Cuda, Gad Larson, Anthony Mattox Jr., Josie Moore, and Danielle Russell. Also present was Law Director William Hanna.

Public comments - agenda items

A resident spoke in support of the legislation establishing a ban on conversion therapy, pointing out that people in the LGBTQ community do not have an illness or disability, and noting the powerful message of support this action sends to young residents.

Public comments - general

A representative of Friends of Horseshoe Lake stated that the majority of residents seem to support the alternate plan to preserve the lake, and said the plan is safe, controls stormwater, and costs less than the sewer district’s plan.

A resident expressed concern that council and the mayor were not communicating well under the new legislative council and strong mayor governing structure, and that citizens are confused about who is doing what. Another resident claimed that residents do not know whom to contact with concerns under the new form of government.

Mayor’s report

Mayor Seren praised the weekend events for Pride and Juneteenth. He thanked council for the passage this evening of legislation for Pride and Juneteenth. He thanked council for working with Heights Libraries, the owner of the Coventry PEACE Campus building.

LWV Observer: Blanche Valancy.

JUNE 27, 2022 - special meeting

Council President Melody Joy Hart and Council Member Tony Cuda joined the meeting remotely. The mayor, the other council members, and the law director attended in person.

Mayor’s report

Mayor Seren spoke about the U.S. Supreme Court Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization decision that reversed Roe v. Wade. Seren asserted his belief that abortion is a health care, and the right to an abortion is a matter of bodily autonomy and a fundamental human right. He called on city council to provide substantive assistance via funding to assist those who must travel to have an abortion. He also asked that reproductive health decisions be added to the city’s anti-discrimination ordinance.

Staff presentations

Directors Anna Smith, Ryan Prussor, Amy Hinemen, William Hanna, Mike Thomas, and Eric Zarrli presented “Department 101,” Expanded reports are available online at www.heightsobserver.org.

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Aug. 31 Crowdsourced Conversation tackles community safety

Crowdsourced Conversations continues on Wednesday, Aug. 31, 6-7:30 p.m., with the third in a series of four discussion-based forums. The focus for the Aug. 31 session will be community safety.

Cleveland Heights and University Heights residents are invited to attend the in-person event at Denison Park’s picnic pavilion (1015 Quarry Drive).

The conversation series utilizes responses from Heights-wide surveys on the discussion topics to inform the small group conversations. Crowdsourcing in this way enables a wide spectrum of perspectives to be considered during each forum.

While traditionally forums feature a panel discussion that allows for audience questions, the organizers of this series wanted to give Heights residents a chance to learn from one another and community-build while focusing on what is actionable by everyday citizens.

The first conversation took place on April 27, at Coventry PEACE Campus, where participants discussed sustainability and earth-friendly practices; the second, on the topic of housing and neighborhood preservation, took place on June 28 at Forest Hill Church.

The final 2022 Crowdsourced Conversation, on the topic of civic engagement, will be scheduled for the end of October.

The forum series is planned as a partnership of FutureHeights’ Community & Civic Engagement Committee, the Cleveland Heights Green Team, Home Repair Resource Center, the City of Cleveland Heights Racial Justice Task Force, the Racial Inequity Repair Committee of Forest Hill Church, representatives of Cleveland Heights City Council, and others.

This event series is free to attend; pre-registration is recommended. To learn more about Crowdsourced Conversations #3: Community Safety, and to register, visit futureheights.org/community-safety-forum/.

Sarah Wolf is the community-building programs manager at FutureHeights.

Millichin playground offers fun August programs for all

Free summer-fun activities at Millikin playground continue throughout the month of August.

They include an environmental afternoon with a woods walk and art activities on Aug. 7 at 2 p.m.; theater games on Aug. 8 at 7 p.m.; activities with Lake Erie Ink on Aug. 14 at 1:30 p.m., a concert with Cory Michael on Aug. 15 at 7 p.m., Wiz Bang Circus on Aug. 21 at 1:30 p.m., and 10K Movement demonstrating and teaching hip-hop dance on Aug. 29 at 7 p.m. (All activities have rain dates.)

For additional information on these August activities, and a look ahead to September’s, send an e-mail to cpankhurst@ameritech.net or rohinkoslen@gmail.com.

Millikin playground is located at 1700 Crest Road, and all are welcome.

Robin Koslen is a mom, grandma, Heights resident, retired teacher, part-time activist, and full-time rebel.
Community News

The Noble Gardeners’ Market Opens Aug. 6

Brenda H. May

Noble Gardeners’ Market 2022 (NGM) will open on Aug. 6 for the first of eight consecutive Saturday mornings at the mini-park at Noble and Roanoke roads. Open from 10 a.m. to noon on each market day, NGM provides a hyper-local opportunity to sell fresh flowers, fruits and vegetables to neighbors and other market-goers. The date of this year’s final market will be Sept. 24.

Anyone who grows fruits or vegetables in their backyard or in a community garden is welcome to sell, for a couple of weeks or for the entire eight-week season. Cut flowers and potted plants can be sold at the market, but processed foods cannot be sold.

Sellers, who are not required to live in Cleveland Heights, provide their own tables or ground cloths, and must be able to make change for their customers. Buyers should bring small bills and coins to help support their neighbor-sellers.

Most sellers harvest that morning for the market, so buyers will find the freshest produce outside of their own backyards.

Parking is free at the meters on the street and in the city parking lot across Noble Road. There are no facilities or restroom facilities on site.

NGM is staffed by volunteers, and vendors are not charged for table space.

The primary goal of the market is to foster community by bringing together people with common interests. Folks sharing food, cooking tips, stories about grandparents who grew their own food, and dreams of future gardens. The community is made richer through cooking tips, stories about grand-community members, or other needs for infection protection and mask accordingly.

As of July 1, Cuyahoga County was experiencing medium transmission levels (yellow in the state’s rating system). Participants should gauge their own needs for infection protection and mask accordingly.

For additional information, visit www.nobleneighbors.com, or send an e-mail to nobleneighbors@gmail.com.

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FutureHeights continued from page 1

Natalie Elwell

The Cleveland Heights Green Team (CHGT) believes that individuals and local governments have a responsibility to address climate change by developing and implementing a plan tailored to the specific needs of their communities.

At a May 28 brainstorming event on climate action, hosted by the Cleveland Heights Green Team, Heights residents concluded that the path to a climate-resilient community starts with the identification of a common set of data points and a strategy for the foundation for any potential course of action.

According to Cleveland Heights resident Andrew Linehanger, “The most important outcome of the brainstorming session was highlighting the need for a more inclusive approach to determining what matters most to our community in the face of climate impact.”

“We felt that the process should be transparent and inclusive, which starts with equal and ample access to information in a manner that is easy to understand and relate for everyone,” said Linehanger, who also participated in the May 28 event. “Understanding how climate change is affecting Northeast Ohio, learning from the successes and failures of cities who have already embarked on the development and implementation of their own Climate Action Plan, and identifying readily available resources that can inform and shape a targeted course of action are the first steps in developing a framework for climate action.”

According to Catalina Wagers, co-founder of CHGT, “As a first step, the group proposed to organize a series of forums intended to inform and educate Heights residents on climate action and climate advocacy topics. The idea is that through relatable content, Heights residents can develop a more informed and cohesive understanding of the specific challenges of climate change on our community leading to collective prioritization and support.”

The next forum in the series will take place on Aug. 17, at Heights High auditorium. It will explore the partnership of Cleveland Heights, Shaker Heights, and University Heights with Power a Clean Future Ohio, including Cleveland Heights’ commitment to reducing 50% of its carbon emissions by 2030.

Future forums will explore the link between environmental justice and social justice, how to become a more effective local climate advocate, and how to transition one’s home to renewable energy.

Natalie Elwell is director of gender equity practice at World Resources Institute in Washington, D.C. She is co-founder of the Cleveland Heights Green Team. She works remotely, and dedicates her time to advocate for environmental protection and activism.

For more information, visit www.chgreensteam.org.

Robert Brown is a city planner with 45 years of experience; for nine years, he was Cleveland’s planning director. A resident of Cleveland Heights, Brown is a FutureHeights board member.

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GardenWalk CH 2022 featured a riot of blooms

Kim Sergio Inglis

GardenWalk CH 2022 (July 16 and 17) provided Heights residents and visitors with the opportunity to tour, for free, more than 40 gardens and yards in Cleveland Heights.

Some of the stops along the tour showcased flowers at their peak bloom time.

Among them were the fleeting but spectacular daylilies, echinacea (coneflowers), and even a water lily, at a garden on Englewood Road, which also featured a raised-bed vegetable garden, espalied apple trees, and a giant bird aviary. Sharp-eyed visitors might also have spied the baby praying mantis, perched on a daylily bloom.

At a double-yard garden on Cambridge Road, perennials and annuals were everywhere, in pots and in the ground, leading the eye—and feet—along numerous pathways full of color, attracting garden visitors and pollinators, including a hummingbird that the homeowner said returns every year.

Kim Sergio Inglis is editor-in-chief of the Heights Observer, and is a Cuyahoga County master gardener volunteer.
CH-UH and Tri-C partnership supports adult learners

Shari Nacson

In addition to educating Heights students from pre-K through grade 12, the CH-UH school district also supports adult learners through a partnership with Cuyahoga Community College’s (Tri-C) Aspire/Options program, which houses its hub in the district’s Delisle building.

Salome Harris is the coordinator of Tri-C’s eastside Aspire sites. The program provides non-collegiate community-based adult learning, free of charge.

Courses include literacy and math skills, field training, high school equivalency diplomas, and English language for new learners. From that hub at Delisle, Harris coordinates services from East Cleveland to Willowick, and in between.

Cleveland Heights program locations have included Heights High, Delisle itself, and the Noble Neighborhood Library. The Lee Road Library is in the process of becoming an English class site, as well.

“We have over 30 years of partnership with the CH-UH school district and the Heights Libraries,” said Harris.

That partnership is essential to students such as Albertine Layele, who immigrated to the United States from Benin in 2017.

While living with her daughter in University Heights, Layele started classes with instructor Alisa Warshay, who has been teaching in the program since 2018. Layele attended classes, which meet for 2.5 hours twice a week, for about one year. As her English improved, she was able to secure a better job—which ironically made it hard to get to class. Warshay helped her match to an online class, which was a big help.

Realizing that her students needed English practice outside of the classroom, Warshay created an English Conversation Partners program, wherein she matches students with community volunteers for twice monthly conversational practice.

Layele was matched with Louise Abrams. The pair would sometimes undertake intentional lessons; other times they would go into the community and talk about what’s around them.

“We focus on problem-solving,” said Abrams, “going to concerts, the library, and the botanical garden together. We have pleasant conversations while doing something enjoyable.”

The “work” quickly became friendship and moral support, and included going to the bank together to sort out an issue. Abrams’s husband was recruited to help Layele learn to drive. The relationship is mutually gratifying, because it is anchored in friendship.

Layele encourages people from other countries to take a class through this program. “It helps a lot with work,” Layele explained. “And work has helped a lot with learning English.”

Entering her third year of studies, Layele now will be taking courses directly at Tri-C, and is excited about moving from a high school to a college campus.

Harris explains that community-embedded programming helps people get connected.

For example, when an immigrant family enrolls its children in CH-UH schools, Tri-C’s offerings are accessible for the parents, too.

Building community relationships is helpful to someone who is settling into American life. There is a sense of safety and familiarity being in schools and libraries.

In a typical year, said Harris, the Heights-based hub serves more than 1,000 students on Cleveland’s east side.

“It was easy to find the classes,” said Layele. “I looked on my phone, and I made an appointment to attend an orientation.”

Those interested in high school equivalency or English language classes can book an August orientation date to register for fall classes, which begin Aug. 29.

Visit www.tri-c.edu/ohiooptions and click on the orange button that says “Register Here.”

Anyone interested in becoming an English Conversation Partner volunteer should contact Alisa Warshay at warshay@gmail.com.

Mostly a mom, Shari Nacson, is a mother, freelance editor, social worker, and nonprofit consultant who has lived in Cleveland Heights for 22 years. More than anything, Nacson is inspired by kids and adults who build connection through kindness.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

The Class of 2022 will be attending the following colleges, universities, and more:

- Allegheny College
- Bowling Green State University
- Capital University
- Carnegie Mellon University
- Case Western Reserve University
- Central State University
- Clark Atlanta University
- Cleveland State University
- College of Wooster
- Columbus College of Art & Design
- Columbus State Community College
- Defiance College
- DePaul University
- Drexel University
- Eastern Michigan University
- Erie Community College
- Fashion Institute of Technology
- Florida Memorial University
- Garden City Community College
- Hampton University
- Honduras College of Nursing
- Howard University
- Independence Community College
- Indiana State University
- Indiana University Bloomington
- John Carroll University
- Kent State University
- Kentucky State University
- Lake Forest College
- Lakeland Community College
- Lorenzo de Medici Institute
- Loyola University Chicago
- Mercyhurst University
- Michigan State University
- Morehouse College
- Morgan State University
- Niagara University
- Norfolk State University
- Notre Dame College
- Occidental College
- Ohio Dominican University
- Ohio Media School - Valpar
- Otterbein University
- Ohio Wesleyan University
- Purdue University
- School of the Art Institute of Chicago
- South Carolina State University
- Southern University
- Shreveport College
- Tennessee State University
- The College of William & Mary
- The Ohio State University
- Tiffin University
- Tuskegee University
- United States Army
- United States Navy
- University of Akron
- University of Cincinnati
- University of Colorado
- University of Detroit Mercy
- University of Mount Union
- University of Rochester
- University of Southern California
- University of Toledo
- Ursuline College
- Valparaiso College
- Washington & Lee University
- Wayne State University
- Westfield State University
- Wittenberg University
- Wright State University
- Youngstown State University

The Class of 2022 combined to receive more than $17.3 MILLION in college scholarship offers.
COS principal concludes first year, looks ahead to year two

Eileen Ryan Ewen

Loretta Pilla knows something about being the new kid in school. The Communion of Saints School (COS) principal, who recently wrapped up her first year at the school, fell in love with education when she was in third grade.

Pilla and her family had emigrated from Italy to Boston when she was 8. Despite the culture shock of moving to a new country and learning English, she thrived. She earned a degree in education at Boston College, where she met her husband. They moved to Cleveland, which Pilla said is “the perfect place to raise a family.” The couple has three children.

Fluent in both Italian and Spanish, Pilla taught Spanish at Notre Dame Elementary School. She served as assistant principal at St. Mary’s in Chardon, and, in 2010, became principal at Mater Dei Academy. Pilla came to Communion of Saints School in 2021. While taking her leadership role in stride, she said she’s “always happy to be a student.”

As she led the school this past year, she learned much about the students, their families, the parish, and the Cleveland Heights neighborhood she calls home five days a week.

The 100-year-old campus reminds Pilla of Rome. “Walking the grounds, the history of the school comes alive.” Beyond architecture and history, Pilla found a strong community of welcoming families. “COS has some of the most supportive parents I’ve ever experienced, and great students,” she said.

Starting a new school year is never without its bumps. Becoming principal during the coronavi - rus pandemic brought that challenge to another level. Pilla’s focus was meeting students where they were academically, then bridging the gaps that occurred during the first year of the pandemic. Schedules were tweaked, and educational aids and volunteers were added, providing targeted learning at every level. In addition, lessons in social-emotional learning were implemented.

In-school enrichment was expanded, and the new student newspaper, The Sabre Scoop, was launched. Entrepreneurial opportunities were created, from student participation in the COS Holiday Pop-Up Shop to the Alpha Jump program. Band and drama programs returned.

To balance the intensity of academics, Pilla brought events to the school, including Alpaca Day, Turkey Game Day before Thanksgiving, guest speakers, field trips, and a talent show.

With her first year under her belt, Pilla is excited about the future of COS, and preparing its students for success.

Eileen Ryan Ewen is a children’s book illustrator and volunteer librarian at Communion of Saints School. Her children attend COS.
Heights Libraries expands its summer internships

Sheryl Banks

As part of its commitment to workforce development, Heights Libraries expanded its internship opportunities for young people this summer. Starting in June, the library has hosted six interns across its four branches—five high school students and one college student.

Since 2016, Heights Libraries has offered the Teen Tech Ambassador program, a paid internship that gives two students a chance to learn about customer service, technology, and tech teaching by working in the library’s Continuing Education Department. This summer’s Teen Tech Ambassadors were Henry Turner, a rising senior at Cleveland Heights High School, and Reid Auttero, a rising sophomore at Villa Angela-St. Joseph High School.

“Tech literacy is becoming increasingly important as more and more aspects of our lives move online, so the field of tech training is growing as well,” said Heather Howiler, continuing education manager. “This internship offers a taste of the field for young people who are interested in pursuing it in college or after.”

The library also has offered young people public service practical experiences through its unpaid Library Experience program, which sets up a customized experience for students that fulfills more formal high school or college requirements, such as senior projects, or college and graduate school apprenticeships.

The program, which started in 2017, hosted two Library Experience students this summer, both of whom worked in the Lee Road Youth Services department: Trinity Kimbro, a rising senior at Heights High, and Maddie Hellwig, a junior at Ohio University majoring in English literature and writing and pursuing a certificate in deaf resources. Both students hope to pursue Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS) degrees when they finish.

In Cleveland Heights—University Heights Public Library Board

Meeting highlights

JUNE 21, 2022

Board members present were President Grabie, Crenshaw, Patt Carlyle, and Dana Flissler. Not present were Annette Ivanovets, Tyler Mitigues, Vicki Taratika and Vice President Max Gerdoski. Because there was no quorum, no board action could be taken.

Public comments

Continuing Education Manager Heather Howiler gave a presentation on how the computer labs at the Heights Knowledge and Innovation Center are becoming innovation labs. Howiler showed examples of patrons’ products created with 3-D printers.

Covington PEACE Campus (CPC) Board President Kris Hawkinson made several requests at the board: copies of bills for 2020-21, a public records request for a copy of the Allegra report, and the total incomes and expenses for the Covington PEACE building since the library acquired it. A CPC tenant asked the board how common space in the PEACE building will be handled.

Director’s report

Because there was no quorum, the board could not vote, as planned, on the letter of intent (LOI) form which lists the terms and conditions for individual lease negotiations with the tenants at the building at 2843 Washington Blvd. (Covington PEACE Campus). Heights Libraries Director Nancy Levin stated that some wording in the LOI had been changed based on feedback from tenants. The option-to-renew portion is now clearly stated, including a 3 percent annual increase. Levin stated tenants would have first choice on use of common space, and there would be a fee schedule for using common spaces for events. Levin stated that in May and June many hours were spent on continuing correspondence between CPC and the library. Attorneys are working on terms for both parties to enter into LOI negotiations. Levin stated that $84,603.68 has been spent on repairs, including the HVAC repairs, and that an additional amount of $47,338.79 was pending action. Levin took notes on questions posed at this meeting, and stated answers would be provided.

Levin updated the board on repairs and computer upgrades made at several of the branch libraries.

A new partnership is developing with the Farrell Foundation which would provide for enrichment classes along with the Dementia Friendly Community Initiative.

Levin reported that HB 327, the “divisive concepts” bill, did not move forward in the legislative process. Levin stated that it is still important to keep in touch with representatives, because when the lame-duck session returns in the fall, anything could still be on the table, including HB 327.

Personnel report

The library is recommending an across-the-board 2 percent increase in staff salaries. A special meeting will be held in early July to vote on this.

Public service report highlights

Heights Libraries Deputy Director Kim DelaTa-Ashford reported on the summer reading-themed activities that have been held. The number of visitors to the libraries has not returned to pre-pandemic levels; however, circulation remains high.

LWV Observer: Elizabeth A. Tracy

Information about the board, meeting minutes, and audio recordings of board meetings can be found at https://heightslibrary.org/locations/heights-libraries/board.

COURTESY HEIGHTS LIBRARIES

Dasha Spencer showed kids how to make origami at Heights Libraries’ Noble Neighborhood branch.

Free books mailed to your young child!

If your child is 4 years old or younger and lives in Cuyahoga County please register online at:

ImaginationLibrary.com

In a suburban subdivision with identical houses, parents find their teenagers addicted to an online horror video game. The game setting? A subdivision with identical houses. The goal? Smash through an army of zombies to escape the neighborhood for good. But as the line blurs between virtual and reality, both parents and players realize that fear has a life of its own.

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Library welcomes strategic projects manager

Sheryl Banks

Kaela Sweeney has joined Heights Libraries’ management team as the new strategic projects manager. She replaces Maggie Kinney, who moved to the Coventry Village branch manager position in 2021.

Sweeney, who grew up in Georgia and attended college in Ohio, has a background in public education and curriculum development. She taught English, journalism, creative writing, and public speaking at both the middle- and high-school level, and said that experience is a big part of what continued on page 19

What’s going on at your library?

Coventry Village Branch
1905 Coventry Road, 216-321-3400
Saturday, Aug. 20, noon to 10 p.m.
Annual Pekar Park Comic Book Fest.
The Pekar Park Comic Book Fest is back, with fun for all ages. It will feature crafts, vendors, panel discussions, art, refreshments, and so many comics—plus, a family-friendly movie in Coventry PEACE Park at 8 p.m.

Lee Road Branch
2345 Lee Road, 216-932-3600
Thursday, Aug. 4, 6 p.m.
Intro to Seed Saving.
Learn the skills needed to start saving your own seeds at this family-friendly workshop. Learn about open-pollinated and heirloom varieties, and what kinds of seeds can help preserve biological diversity. Our speaker, from the Cleveland Seed Bank, will discuss how to harvest and store seeds so they are ready to plant next year. Resources will be provided for the seed-starting techniques that will be discussed. Registration is required.

Noble Neighborhood Branch
2800 Noble Road, 216-591-9665
Tuesday, Aug. 23, 7 p.m.
Live Trivia at the Library.
Tired of virtual trivia? How about doing this in-person again? Come to the library, team up with friends, and prove your smarts. Questions will cover a wide range of topics, and be family-friendly. Registration is required.

University Heights Branch
13866 Cedar Road, 216-321-4700
Wednesday, Aug. 24, 6 p.m.
Readers Roller Rink.
Lace up your skates and snap on your helmet! We’re turning the University Heights Library’s parking lot into an after-hours roller disco party! Join us for music, snacks, and fun! Note: Patrons are responsible for bringing their own skates and safety equipment.

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Hammond to oversee clinical services at MetroHealth’s new CH hospital

Angela Townsend

Robert Hammond, PsyD, will oversee the social workers, psychologists and behavioral health specialists on staff when the MetroHealth Cleveland Heights Behavioral Health Hospital opens on Oct. 8.

Hammond, the new director of clinical services, is leading a team that is developing programming and building a curriculum for the various patient treatment units.

The inpatient curriculum for the 112-bed hospital is based on non-drug interventions that include therapy, support groups and classes—activities that promote interaction, engagement and learning skills.

“Instead of an individual having to undergo years and years of therapy,” said Hammond, “we look for how we can have measurable change in the shortest time possible. We want to give clinicians the tools they need to be able to manage their cases more effectively and move their patients to improved health.”

Hammond joined The MetroHealth System in December 2019 as a staff psychologist at the Cuyahoga County Jail, two months after MetroHealth assumed responsibility for all medical care at the jail.

“Part of my role is to connect the dots across all treatments, whether it’s at the jail, the Behavioral Health Hospital, or the partial hospitalization program and intensive outpatient program being developed,” Hammond said. Those two programs are for people who no longer need inpatient services.

It was the opportunity to help build the program at the county jail, to increase mental and medical services there, that initially drew Hammond to MetroHealth.

Delivering those services became even more challenging in the spring of 2020.

“The jail was in the process of shifting counseling services from individual to group sessions,” Hammond recalled. “We were seeing some great results, and we were able to help a lot more people.”

Then came the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The staff quickly reverted group sessions to individual sessions, and did so with no change in staffing levels.

“Providing those services to the inmates turned out to be a major factor in helping to quell some of the initial fears there surrounding COVID-19,” said Hammond.

Before joining MetroHealth, Hammond was a clinical psychologist at the Louis Stokes Cleveland Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center. He also worked at the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections, where he was eventually appointed chief of mental health.

“I’ve worked in environments with intense conditions,” said Hammond, who also has served as a military psychologist for more than 20 years, including his current tenure with the Army National Guard, which included a year-long deployment to Iraq in 2007.

According to Hammond, the key to effective patient care is putting in place strong quality-improvement processes and following evidence-based practices. “I want to take what I’ve learned and apply it to the most underserved members of our community,” said Hammond.

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Angela Townsend is a senior writer in the department of marketing and communications at The MetroHealth System.
Books are art in upcoming group show

Tom Masaveg

Visual artists have long been fascinated by books, often because books provide a way to distribute reproductions of original works.

Impagination, a group exhibition at Heights Arts that will open Friday, Aug. 19, and run through Sunday, Oct. 16, is not about reproductions; in this show, books themselves are one-of-a-kind works of art, designed to be held in the hands and leafed through in a narrative sequence.

The 13 featured artists, selected by the Heights Arts Exhibition Community Team after an open call for applicants this past spring, are Melissa Bloom, Phyllis Brody, Yiyun Chen, Julienne Edberg, Gene Epstein, Michael Gill, Jeanetta Ho, Amy Jacobs, Karen Koykka O’Neal, Rachel Morris, Wendy Partridge, Zoe Taylor, and Emanuel Wallace.

Ho described her process for blending the pages of a book with imagination: “Capitalizing on the ethereal qualities of handmade milkweed paper, these books weave the seemingly ephemeral, mystical sheets into objects that can be opened to catch the light and release its spirit.” The patterns of the milkweed fibers pressed into Ho’s pages tell stories that otherwise drift away in dreams of growth, flowering, dying back and then flying again.

In a simultaneous Spotlight Gallery exhibition at Heights Arts, ceramic artist Jackie Miller identifies patterns that form along the threshold between nonsense and poignant clarity. In presenting her porcelain body of work, Miller asks, “What happens when predator, prey, consumer of carrion (with keen eyesight), and an inanimate object animated only in the mind of a human encounter one another? What if we only observe a split second of their story? I am exploring here those times when we arrive in the middle (or the muddle) of a story without knowledge of what preceded or eventually ensued. Can we suspend our proclivity to imagine a context without the facts, or is the pressure to make sense of the momentarily nonsensical ultimately overpowering?”

These two exhibitions reverberate with meaning as pages pluck strings of symbols linked along chains of stories. The shared experience of the human condition is a burgeoning book, and Heights Arts presents new volumes for visitors to explore.

For more information on Heights Arts’ community programs and events, including house concerts, gallery performances and outreach, visit www.heightsarts.org.

Tom Masaveg is a public artist specializing in augmented reality installation and graphite works on paper. He’s also the programs manager at Heights Arts. Contact him at programs@heightsarts.org.
Here’s a story I didn’t tell Antoine Dunn when I talked to him on the phone recently.

When I was about 8, there was a kid, Mike, who was a year older, living a few houses from mine, in Cleveland Heights. I already knew I wanted to be a musician and performer. He already knew that he wanted to be a disc jockey and announcer. His house had a screened-in first-floor back porch. He would be up there on the porch, playing Elvis Presley and Ricky Nelson records on his little portable turntable, and I’d be on the lawn just below, lip-synching the records and mimicking each singer’s movements. After every song, Mike would pick up a toy microphone and back-announce the record, and give other relevant information, like the typical AM DJs of the day. We did that all one summer.

Then, when I was about 21, I went to Columbus, Ohio, from New York City, to work on an act with my childhood friend Mike. We talked for a few minutes, and then he asked me what I’d been doing. I said, “I just recorded my first album for Sire Records in New York. I’m waiting for it to come out. What have you been doing?” Mike said, “I’m in school here, and I’m a DJ on the OSU radio station and I’m an announcer on one of the TV stations in town.”

So, there you go.

I didn’t mention that to Antoine Dunn, but I flashed on it when he told me something about his youth, from when he was still living in Cleveland Heights: “I used to be down in the basement, and I’d finish writing a song,” he said. “I’d play it over a loudspeaker, and at the end I would turn the volume down, fade it out. And I’d talk over it, and say, ‘Ninety-three-point-one. That was Antoine Dunn with . . .’”

And now he hears his records on the radio for real—all around the country, when he’s touring, performing on bills with artists including some of his idols, like D’Angelo, and others. Antoine, who now lives in Los Angeles, owns his own record company, Harvey Marie Records, which he named after his grandparents. His debut single, “Can’t Forget,” and the follow-up single/video, “Miss My Love,” both landed in the Top 20 on the Billboard chart. He produced his latest album, Everything, with Grammy Award-winning producer/engineer Scott Jacoby (who has also worked with John Legend, Jason Mraz, Coldplay). He was named the 2020 Artist of The Year and Vocalist of the Year in the R&B/Soul category of the Josie Music Awards, a national independent all-genre music awards program.

Antoine and I were about 50 years apart, as Heights High student musicians, and were working in vastly different musical styles, but we had similar dreams and drive. I’m old enough to be Antoine’s father. How do I know? Because he was in the Heights Choir with my daughter. I was in the Heights Choir. My brother Noah was in the Heights Choir. He was its student conductor. His third album of all-original songs should be out by the time you read this. I produced and arranged it.

Antoine’s brother, Adrian, was also in the Heights Choir. In fact, shortly before Adrian graduated, in 2003, I presented him with a Friends of Cain Park Excellence in the Arts Scholarship. We gave $5,000 awards to students who thought showed the most promise in their artistic fields. Adrian Dunn is now a nationally known singer of classical and gospel music, and a composer and producer. Antoine, besides being a singer and composer of R&B songs, is also a producer, arranger and multi-instrumentalist.

Antoine’s music brings to mind—my mind, at least—the sounds of classic 1970s’ soul, like that of the Chi-Lites, Stylistics, and others. “Oh—I listened to a lot of that growing up,” he told me. “My parents had this very extensive collection of vinyl records. I didn’t realize till I was older that I had been learning how to write and arrange music before I was aware of that. I’ve always had a young spirit, but an old soul.”

Besides being professional musicians, with brothers who are professional musicians, who were all in the Heights Choir, Antoine and I—and almost every songwriter—have something in common. “I started thinking of a new kitchen, bathroom vanity or media cabinet?

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A science-fiction concert and movie doubleheader, a renowned world music band, and a mashup of Klezmer and Motown will wrap up the 2022 University Heights Summer Concert Series this August.

Aug. 4 – Oregon Space Trail of Doom / “It Came from Outer Space”: With a sound that can only properly be described as absolute psychedelic madness, Oregon Space Trail of Doom’s rock and jazz jams recall some of the most experimental of the genre.

After the band’s 7 p.m. show at Walter Stinson Community Park, concertgoers are invited to stick around for a showing of the science-fiction classic movie, “It Came from Outer Space.”

The evening will be hosted by Leopold and Lenora from WUAB’s “Big Bad B-Movie Show.”

Aug. 11 – One World Tribe: Considered by many critics to be North America’s premier world music group, One World Tribe offers a musical feast to delight all audiences.

Mike Cook is the communications and civic engagement coordinator for University Heights.

Mike Cook

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Leopold and Lenora from WUAB’s “Big Bad B-Movie Show” will host a concert and movie doubleheader at The Walt on Aug. 4.

Mike Cook

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The band’s musicianship often draws comparisons to artists such as Santana, and Earth, Wind & Fire. This Afro-beat, funk, Latin, soul and world music extravaganza is a true multicultural ensemble—not just in the music. The group’s conscious lyrics and message are backed by the racial and cultural diversity of the individual members, as well. One World Tribe has performed for more than 30 years. This Aug. 11 show at The Walt will mark the group’s first-ever performance in University Heights.

Aug. 18 – Yiddishe Cup: Summer in University Heights doesn’t end until Yiddishe Cup says it does. The band wraps up the city’s summer concert season with its annual show at The Walt.

Yiddishe Cup has been playing throughout the United States—at festivals, colleges and Jewish gatherings—since it formed in 1988. The Klezmer music it performs is a hybrid of Eastern European Jewish folk music, American swing, Yiddish theater tunes and Israeli horas. Yiddishe Cup also mixes in Motown music, including a mashup of “Ball of Confusion” by The Temptations and “Tradition” from Fiddler on the Roof.

Planning for the 2023 Summer Concert Series will begin this November.

Mike Cook is the communications and civic engagement coordinator for University Heights.
Heights Observer August 1, 2022
www.heightsobserver.org

Heights Libraries

INTERNSHIPS continued from page 13

their undergraduate degrees.

"As an educator, I saw if I ran a library, what libraries mean to communities," said Sweeney. "Many of my students relied on libraries as a center for resources, and I am excited to be in a position where I can be more involved in this aspect of communities."

Sweeney will explore and research potential, projects and programs that will help Heights Libraries continue to meet the needs of its community, and will support those new initiatives with grants that support and sustain the growth of the library. She will also work closely with other public service managers and staff to support their work on a departmental level.

"When I was a teacher, I had the opportunity to work with so many students, and they impressed and inspired me daily," said Sweeney. "I also worked as a writing consultant and curriculum writer, and had the opportunity to present my work alongside students at conferences and in academic publications. Most recently, I wrote a chapter for a textbook for new teachers about using young adult climate fiction to teach students about climate change and community action."

Sweeney's other areas of responsibility include ensuring public programming is aligned with the library's strategic plan, and representing the library at meetings with outside partners.

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"I am looking forward to supporting Heights Libraries through research, grant-writing and strong partnerships that will get me involved in the community," said Sweeney.

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"When I was a teacher, I had the opportunity to work with so many students, and they impressed and inspired me daily," said Sweeney. "I also worked as a writing consultant and curriculum writer, and had the opportunity to present my work alongside students at conferences and in academic publications. Most recently, I wrote a chapter for a textbook for new teachers about using young adult climate fiction to teach students about climate change and community action."

Sweeney's other areas of responsibility include ensuring public programming is aligned with the library's strategic plan, and representing the library at meetings with outside partners.

"I am looking forward to supporting Heights Libraries through research, grant-writing and strong partnerships that will get me involved in the community," said Sweeney.

"I am excited to be in a position where I can be more involved in this aspect of communities," said Sweeney.
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