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HCC celebrates 50 years as fall tour returns

Les Jones

Heights Community Congress (HCC) is proud to announce that its Heights Heritage Home & Garden Tour will return for its 43rd year on Sunday, Sept. 18, from noon to 6 p.m. This year's theme: The Tour is Back in Town!

This year marks the 50th anniversary of HCC, which formed in response to the results of the historic St. Ann Audit of Real Estate Practices in Eastern Cuyahoga County in 1972. That year, five brave women from St. Ann Church published their findings on racial discrimination in real estate selling practices throughout Cleveland Heights, triggering a series of legal and community actions which forever changed the community.

The five committee members who researched and produced the St. Ann Audit are honorary chairs of this year's tour.

All proceeds from HCC's tour support its fair housing and diversity programs, and tickets are 100% tax-deductible.



Stroll the exterior grounds of Harcourt Manor as part of this year's HCC tour.

The 2019 tour was abruptly cancelled due to the microburst storm that hit parts of Cleveland Heights just prior to the start of the tour weekend. The storm knocked out power, toppled trees, and damaged

numerous properties, including three homes and two churches that were to be featured on the tour. Following that disappointment came the COVID pandemic years that led to tour

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UH Fall Fest to be 'bigger and better' in its third year

Mike Cook

Were you wondering why Carlos Jones and the PLUS Band weren't on the University Heights Summer Concert Series schedule this year? The legendary reggae band will be performing at Fall Fest, instead.

University Heights Fall Fest returns to Walter Stinson Community Park for a third year on Sunday, Oct. 2, from noon to 5 p.m.

Having grown up around fall festivals, Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan said it has always been his goal to bring such an event to University Heights. "Our first Fall Fest was in 2019, and that was a great success for an inaugural event," said the mayor. "2021 was big, and we anticipate this year's edition will be bigger and better than ever."

"Fall Fest is just another way for



Carlos Jones and the PLUS Band will return to University Heights for Fall Fest on Sunday, Oct. 2.

us to come together as a community."

Carlos Jones and the PLUS Band will headline with a free concert at

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Bremer Fisher joins team at University Heights City Hall



Deanna Bremer Fisher

Mike Cook

Deanna Bremer Fisher, the former publisher of the *Heights Observer*, has joined the team at University Heights City Hall, and she's bringing more than 20 years of public service experience with her.

Bremer Fisher began work in mid-August as the new Executive Assistant to the Mayor for Special Projects.

"I aimed high when I recruited Deanna for this position," said University Heights Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan. "She has a ton of experience. Deanna works hard and gets things done, and I am thrilled she is on board."

Bremer Fisher is currently the interim administrator for the Heights Schools Foundation. She will continue in that role part time while also working at UH City Hall part time. Later this year, Bremer Fisher will transition to working full time for the city of University Heights.

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Library spotlights censorship with banned book programs

Sheryl Banks,

In August, the public library in Jamestown, Mich., lost funding due to residents' objection to the library's inclusion of LGBTQ materials in its collection. In July, 200 residents attended the board meeting of the Ashland (Ohio) Public Library to demand that children's books related to health be removed for being "pornographic." In January, a school board in Tennessee voted to remove Art Spiegelman's graphic novel *Maus* from the school's eighth-grade curriculum, in part due



Heights Libraries Banned Book Family Bingo Challenge offers prizes such as banned books, tote bags, socks, and mugs to raise awareness of the dangers of censorship.

to "curse words" and a depiction of a naked Holocaust victim. Public libraries in Iowa and Alaska have had to shut down temporarily due to the resignation of directors who could no longer tolerate the pressure to censor materials found objectionable by residents.

While book challenges are nothing new, they have been increasing at an alarming rate. The American Library Association (ALA) reported in April that "ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom tracked 729 chal-

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Letters Policy

The *Heights Observer* welcomes letters to the editor. They must be submitted electronically, along with the writer’s name, phone number and e-mail address, to: www.heightsobserver.org/members.

HEIGHTS OBSERVER

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About the Observer

The *Heights Observer* is not a conventional newspaper; it is a nonprofit publication for residents of Cleveland Heights and University Heights.

The *Heights Observer* has no writing staff; it is written by you—the readers.

Individuals throughout the community decide what stories they want to write, then submit them for publication. Anyone in University Heights or Cleveland Heights is welcome to contribute regularly, occasionally or even just once.

Is there something you think should be covered in the *Heights Observer*? If so, please write it on your own, or with friends, neighbors or colleagues. Our volunteer editors will make sure it’s ready to publish, and contact you with any questions.

If you’re writing a news article, it should be clear and factual. If you want to express an opinion, submit it as a letter to the editor or an opinion piece. Either way, make sure it’s about something specific to our two cities.

- To make a submission of any kind, go to www.heightsobserver.org and click on “Member Center” at the left.
- For information about writing style, article length, etc., click on “Become an Observer” at the left. For questions that aren’t answered there, call the FutureHeights office at 216-320-1423 or e-mail info@futureheights.org.

Articles to be considered for the October issue must be submitted by Sept. 12. We publish some articles online only. We also publish an e-newsletter each Tuesday.

Council members call for CH City Charter review

Tony Cuda

On Aug. 15, Cleveland Heights City Council voted 4-3 in favor of amending our city charter to clarify council’s right to inquiry. However, we needed 5 votes for a charter amendment to appear on the ballot. Council members Davida Russell, Gail Larson, Josie Moore and myself voted yes; Council members Melody Joy Hart, Craig Cobb and Anthony Mattox Jr. voted no.

All council members agree that timely access to information is essential for council to make informed legislative decisions. No one wants this council to be a rubber stamp. But we don’t all agree on how to fix the problem.

Background: Cleveland Heights switched from a city manager form of government to an elected mayor form of government when residents overwhelmingly voted for Issue 26 in 2019. To do that, the voters had to approve a change to the city charter. Because the change was driven by a citizen initiative, state law (the single-subject rule) only allows one part of the charter to be changed. Subsequently, separation of powers, checks and balances, and a host of other charter

issues were left to the new government. (East Providence, R.I., also switched from city manager to elected mayor. Its city council, however, was able to pass 27 amendments before the mayor took office.)

The council majority: The majority of council believes that, even though it is preferable to do a complete review of the charter (which will eventually happen), the issue of council getting timely information cannot wait. This is for several reasons:

- Timely information is essential for council to do its job (review, vote on, and create legislation).
- Six of the seven council members have expressed numerous concerns about the flow of information from this administration to council.
- Council needs to set the boundaries for future city councils to make sure there is a clear separation of powers that allows for the checks and balances necessary to assure our co-equal branches of government are fully empowered.
- The city law director has told us that the current language regarding council’s right to inquiry is unclear,

and that our amendment helps to clarify the current ambiguities.

- Most cities in Cuyahoga County, including Lakewood, Beachwood, and University Heights, as well as our county council, have the same right to inquiry found in the charter amendment we are proposing.
- Council’s powers must come from the charter, not the other branch of government.

Next steps: Since all seven council members do agree about the need to empanel a Charter Review Commission (CRC) to update our charter to conform to our new form of government, let’s get started. Let’s get to work on empaneling a CRC with all deliberate speed. And in that process, let’s make sure we create a strong, independent city council that serves as both a collaborative partner to the mayor, as well as a strong, independent oversight body that is a check and balance on the administration.

Tony Cuda is a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights and a member of its city council. Three other council members, Davida Russell, Gail Larson, and Josie Moore, are in agreement with the opinion Cuda has stated here.

Correction to an August column

An editing error in the August issue of Susie Kaeser’s The Common Good column, “Kids give us what we need,” misstated the performance time of the end-of-camp concert. It took place in the morning.

Correction to an August article

In Shari Nacson’s August article, “CH-UH and Tri-C partnership supports adult learners,” the last name of one of the English Conversation Partners, Albertine Laleye, was misspelled.

BANNED continued from page 1

lenges to library, school and university materials and services in 2021, resulting in more than 1,597 individual book challenges or removals. Most targeted books were by or about Black or LG-BTQIA+ persons.” That number, 729, is the highest recorded by the ALA since it began tracking challenges in 2000.

“Although we are fortunate not to have had many challenges about materials in our community, it is critically important that we stay aware of what’s happening in public and school libraries across the country,” said Kim DeNero-Ackroyd, Heights Libraries’ deputy director. “It’s disheartening to read about library staff in other cities being harassed for doing their jobs, in addition to hearing about small and rural libraries actually closing because of a loss of funding, which in some communities has been tied

to politics.”

“Last year, Rocky River Public Library fought off many challenges from a small but vocal group of residents called Citizens for Transparency, who accused the library of ‘grooming’ and spreading critical race theory,” added Heights Libraries Director Nancy Levin. “We are fortunate that our residents understand the need for a well-balanced collection that represents all kinds of people.”

To inform the community about the growth of censorship in the United States, Heights Libraries will be celebrating national Banned Book Week, Sept. 18–24, with programs for all ages that will run throughout the month. This year’s theme, determined by the international organization Banned Book Week Coalition, is “Books Unite Us. Censorship Divides Us.” For additional information on Heights Libraries events, and to register, visit heightslibrary.org.

Banned Book Family Bingo Challenge - every day in September, at all branches: Join the “Books Unite Us” Family Bingo Challenge and celebrate the right to read. Pick up a Banned Book Bingo card in the Youth Services Department of any library branch to track how many frequently banned and challenged books you can read this month. There will be Banned Book swag for all who complete the challenge, and each entry earns a chance at a Banned Book

prize pack.

Banned Book Trivia Night - Tuesday, Sept. 20, 7 p.m., at the Noble branch, 2800 Noble Road: Compete and learn why books have been censored, banned, burned, and otherwise detested. Registration begins Sept. 6.

Books Unite Us: Censorship and You Panel - Thursday, Sept. 22, 5:30 p.m., at the Lee Road branch, 2345 Lee Road: Book challenges often target youth literature reflecting diverse identities and experiences. What can parents, educators, community members and families do to support inclusion and access to diverse materials? Build your advocacy tool kit with Heights Libraries as it welcomes panelists from the ACLU of Ohio, the LGBT Community Center, and Colors + Youth. This program is recommended for adults and teens. Registration is encouraged, and begins Sept. 8.

Freedom to Read Giveaway - Sunday, Sept. 18, through Saturday, Sept. 24, at the Noble branch: Celebrate Banned Book Week by submitting entries to win one of two banned books-themed gift baskets. Each basket will include a \$25 Mac’s Backs gift card, along with other themed items. (One entry slip per person per day; winners will be contacted the week of Sept. 25.)

Sheryl Banks is the communications manager for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library System.

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Yes, charter review matters, but *not now*



HEIGHTS OF
DEMOCRACY

Deborah Van Kleef and Carla Rautenberg

In our March 2022 *Heights Observer* column, we wrote:

“[A] charter review process initiated so early in our new government’s tenure would be a grievous misuse of time and effort. As a member of the most recent CRC [Charter Review Commission], convened from 2017 to 2019, one of us had the dubious honor of serving on a commission formed for the wrong reasons in the wrong way. We implore council: Let us not do that again.”

Our conclusion, in that same column:

“Cleveland Heights may want to consider ward representation and other important charter changes sometime in the future—but *not now*. Our government urgently needs to fill key positions at city hall, implement automated trash and recycling pickup, revamp housing and building programs, revive the Noble corridor, reinvent Severance Town Center, and focus on equity, safety and environmental sustainability. First things first.”

Automated trash and recycling collection has begun. Attainment of other goals will take longer,

but substantial progress must be a priority for the city; nor is the above list exhaustive.

We are alarmed by recent calls for a CRC to resolve procedural strain between a neophyte council and an inexperienced mayor, as they struggle to bring into existence a form of government new to all of us.

To believe a charter review can help now is almost delusional. We believe current efforts by Council President Melody Hart, Council Vice President Craig Cobb and Mayor Kahlil Seren to craft a memorandum of understanding constitute the best approach.

The last CRC was created to delay, if not derail, nascent citizen interest in changing Cleveland Heights’ form of government. The process of selecting CRC members was complex, lengthy and secretive. In the end, [because] a majority of council members favored keeping the city manager and opposed ward representation, a majority of [CRC members] did, too. These machinations rendered illegitimate the process our [city] charter minimally describes thus:

“Council shall, at least once during each ten-year period, by ordinance or resolution, determine whether to appoint a Charter Review Commission to review the entire Charter.”

To appoint a new CRC without researching how other cities do this, and [without] considering multiple

options, would be irresponsible.

For example, in at least 11 Ohio municipalities (and in many in other states), voters elect CRC members. This happens to be the case in South Euclid, whose charter requires a review every 10 years by an elected commission of nine. That city’s charter also specifies, “The fact that a candidate holds an elective or appointive position in the City of South Euclid shall not disqualify him [sic] from seeking election to the Commission.” It further states, “Any proposed amendment of this Charter, agreed upon by a majority of any Charter Review Commission in pursuance of this article, shall be submitted to the electors, for their approval or rejection . . .”

There is way too much in South Euclid’s charter alone for us to unpack here. But for our new council to call for a CRC without the vaguest notion of how its members could or should be chosen, or what will be done with their recommendations, is uninformed, unhelpful and even arrogant.

The current Cleveland Heights charter is silent on these matters, so just addressing them to make the process legitimate will itself require a charter amendment. Has council even realized this?

Deborah Van Kleef and Carla Rautenberg are writers, editors and longtime residents of Cleveland Heights. Contact them at heightsdemocracy@gmail.com.

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Sewer district seeks input on Horseshoe Lake project

Jennifer Elting

The Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District, in partnership with LAND studio, is seeking resident input for its Doan Brook Restoration Near Horseshoe Lake project.

This project will remove Horseshoe Lake Dam, a failing earthen dam constructed more than 170 years ago, restore Doan Brook to its natural state, and the free-flowing stream corridors will be planted with trees and native vegetation. This will help manage stormwater throughout the watershed, reducing flooding along area roads and downstream.

Along with the sewer district's work, the design team has an opportunity to work with the cities of Shaker Heights and Cleveland Heights to develop a park plan with other key stakeholders. LAND studio leads and initiates public space projects in Northeast Ohio, and has an active role in facilitating conversation with

key stakeholders for this project.

We want to create an improved, safe and natural asset for the community that eliminates the risk of a failing earthen dam.

Everyone is welcome to respond to LAND studio's survey at www.surveymonkey.com/r/Doan_Brook_Restoration. Those without Internet access can contact the sewer district's customer service team at 216-881-6600 to participate.

Additional opportunities for resident input will continue with guided hikes of Doan Brook watershed this fall and additional community meetings in December. The design team will continue to work on this project throughout 2023 and construction will begin in 2024.

Additional information about this project is available at www.neorsd.org/DoanBrook.

Jennifer Elting joined the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District (NEORSd) in 2008.

Hey, where's my lake?

Bert Stratton

Last month the circus came to town. The Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District had a "public-engagement" open house at Shaker Lakes, complete with seven tents.

"Join the design team as we envision how we can bring the natural environment back to the Brook," read the sewer district's publicity.

So now we're supposed to call Horseshoe Lake a Brook (capital B, at that) to get back to the primordial "natural environment." Should we all live in goatskin lean-tos and get rid of our paved roads, too? Cain Park should be a brook, too.

I like man-made things, like Horseshoe Lake, which the Shaker religious sect made by damming Doan Brook 170 years ago. One more example of a pleasant nearby man-made amenity: Cumberland Pool. Johnny Weissmuller once swam there. The pool is a treasure. Why? Because it looks like it did when Johnny Weissmuller swam there. Some things of beauty should stay that way. Want to knock down the Cleveland Museum of Art's 1916 main building and give it a re-make?

Nobody ever lost his life in a flood at Shaker Lakes. Why are we going all nanny-state to make sure the dam is 110% safe? Again, nobody ever—in the Heights or University Circle—lost her life in a flood in the history of Shaker Lakes.

There is a Talmudic precept

"whoever saves one life, saves the entire world." But come on, this coddling is ridiculous.

The sewer district, plus the Ohio Department of Nature Resources, fears flooding under the Rapid Transit bridge in University Circle, where there is one apartment building—one that might get flooded. Somebody should buy that old University Circle brick apartment building and vacate the ground floor, pour concrete in it, and call it a day. (I'm doing that tomorrow! Joke.) Make the old building look like the science fortresses around that part of University Circle. We'll be fine.

The sewer board hired a landscape architect from Cambridge, Mass. One of the firm's owners is Lauren Stimson, who, according to her firm's website, "has a deep love for New England, where she was raised, and an interest in the overlap between the built environment and the rural landscape." Gotta love New England. And here in Ohio, we have locals with a deep love of Cleveland—locals with the common sense to realize we have a beautiful lake, and it should stay that way.

Friends of Horseshoe Lake (see <https://savehorseshoelake.com>) has hired an engineering firm, public-relations firm, and a law firm to fight for the preservation of Horseshoe Lake. That's a battle worth fighting.

Bert Stratton is a writer who lives in Cleveland Heights.

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Safe	✓	✓
Preserves history	✗	✓

Friends of Horseshoe Lake is dedicated to saving Horseshoe Lake

- FOHSL worked with a team of engineers and experts to find a solution that replaces the dam and preserves Horseshoe Lake
- Our plan is safe, costs less than or equal to the Sewer District's plan, and most importantly, saves Horseshoe Lake
- We shared our plan with the Sewer District and elected officials, but they have not been open to alternative solutions that save the lake



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Ordinance No. 75 means 'all are welcome'

Cole Ware

In last month's *Heights Observer*, I read Alan Rapoport's opinion ["There's a culture war in Cleveland Heights"] criticizing recently passed Ordinance No. 75-2022. In it, he takes issue with the ordinance for banning conversion therapy, a practice that seeks to change an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity. He argues that the law is "one sided," noting that it bans efforts to change same-gender attraction but does not prohibit school counselors from "advising minors to adopt a homosexual lifestyle."

It's worth noting that the ordinance is largely agnostic on a child's sexual orientation or gender identity—it protects LGBTQ kids just as it protects straight and cisgender kids. Even if Mr. Rapoport were correct, though, and the ordinance only protected LGBTQ children, he invents a fake problem to distract from a real one.

There is no evidence that educators or health care providers are trying to turn children gay or transgender. There is evidence, however, that conversion therapy is administered to gay and trans children, and that it is both ineffective and dangerous, according to the American Psychological Association.

Arguing that the ordinance is one sided implies the existence of two sides equally worthy of consideration. Mr. Rapoport's bogeyman of school

counselors turning straight kids gay doesn't stand up to that test.

Continuing his argument against the ordinance, Mr. Rapoport claims "sexuality is a private matter" that government should leave to families and their health care providers. My feelings on that statement aside, the point is irrelevant—the law doesn't regulate sexuality; it regulates conversion therapy. [Rapoport's] argument is akin to saying marriage is a private matter, so government shouldn't prevent domestic abuse. The ordinance isn't an unjustified intrusion of government into individuals' lives; it's our city having the backs of our LGBTQ youth.

Mr. Rapoport concludes his opinion by claiming that the ordinance is unneeded, because "harms caused by conversion therapy can be addressed in other ways." I'm not a lawyer, so I won't opine on whether existing laws can prevent conversion therapy. What I will point out is that they're not preventing it. In states like Ohio, where conversion therapy is allowed, 16,000 LGBTQ youth, 13-17, will receive conversion therapy before they turn 18. This ordinance is needed because it will chip away at that number.

Mr. Rapoport claims that this ordinance means that, "all apparently are not welcome in Cleveland Heights." Respectfully, I believe it signifies exactly the opposite.

Cole Ware works as a policy analyst. He has lived in Cleveland Heights since 2019.

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Activists weigh in with court



THE COMMON GOOD

Susie Kaeser

Matt Huffman, majority leader of the Ohio Senate, is the architect and champion of privatizing education in Ohio. In an Aug. 15 *New Yorker* article about gerrymandering, he is quoted as saying that gerrymandering means “We can kind of do what we want.” And they have. Under his leadership, investment in public education has lagged, while spending on private-school vouchers has exploded.

Stymied by the legislature’s lack

of concern for public education—the system that serves 90 percent of Ohio children—a coalition of school districts turned to the state courts to protect public education, a state obligation set out in the state constitution.

On Jan. 4, more than 100 school districts filed suit against the state of Ohio, challenging the constitutionality of using public funds for private education. The Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District is a lead plaintiff.

On May 18, the state filed a motion to dismiss. In response, 20 organizations, including the Heights Coalition for Public Education, submitted six different amicus briefs to the Franklin County Common Pleas Court in sup-

continued on page 12

CH mayor attempts power grab

Alan Rapoport

Mayor Seren recently tried to sneak past Cleveland Heights City Council an “emergency request” to remove police and fire chiefs from the list of classified employees. That removal would deny them protections of civil service status. It would be a naked power grab that city council properly balked at approving too quickly. Hopefully, reasons for the present system will be considered carefully by city council before any changes to it are made.

Civil service resulted from a reform movement in the 1880s, which sought to reduce or eliminate the system of spoils, patronage, and corruption that characterized many governments. It instituted hiring based on merit. This improved the performance of government services. It provided criteria for advancement and regulation of covered employees. Most importantly, it removed politics from the operation of basic municipal services. It was, and is, a successful reform.

In Cleveland Heights, civil service regulates the hiring, promotion, discipline, and dismissal of covered employees. The city’s Civil Service Commission has three members, [who serve] six-year terms. It meets as needed. The mayor appoints its members. As a check and balance, the

appointees must be confirmed by city council. The commission prepares and administers employment tests and handles disciplinary matters.

Mayor Seren now proposes removing key department leaders from its coverage. He wants police and fire chiefs to serve without civil service protection. He wants [more control over] how they are hired and fired.

Chiefs in direct charge of police, fire, and ambulance employees are not normally considered to be political hires. When covered by civil service protection, they can only be fired for good cause.

Employees without such protection serve at the pleasure of the mayor. That makes them more potentially vulnerable to coercion and intimidation. This is the reason why civil service has been very important in preventing corruption in government. It remains important today.

Government functions best when staffing is based on merit, not on political patronage. Maybe Mayor Seren disagrees. He seems instead to believe that his direct political control of the police and fire departments is essential to his role as an elected official. It is not.

Alan Rapoport, a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights, served on CH City Council (1980–87) and as mayor (1982–87).

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Mike Cook

The official "University Heights Residential Rubbish and Recycling Collection Survey" hit mailboxes last month. All households are encouraged to participate and let their voices be heard.

The deadline to complete the survey is Sept. 9. The survey is also available online via a link at www.universityheights.com.

The Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District, in partnership with

Resource Recycling Systems, is surveying residents regarding collection services to assist the city of University Heights in future decisions pertaining to collection methods, costs, efficiency and safety.

This survey was written by industry professionals at no cost to the city.

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

FALLFEST continued from page 1

3:30 p.m. Fall Fest will also feature performances by singer-songwriter Diana Chittester, and the Wizbang Circus.

There will be activities for the kids, including pumpkin painting, and bouncy houses.

And come hungry. Two food trucks will be on site—Wild Spork and Dawg Bowl Food Truck—as will other food vendors. Pop Culture CLE, with artisan popsicles, will return this year, as will University Heights local favorites Odd Dog Coffee, The Yummy Cart, and Milk & Cookies.

As always, artists and vendors will be the stars of the festival. Vendors from all over Northeast Ohio and beyond will descend on The Walt, including returnees Little Hummingbird Designs, Upward Dog Collars, Noble Fawn Jewelry, and Dude About Town.

New vendors for 2022 include Feeling Fused, Funky Designs, Mark Zannoni Photography, and Bittnerbees.

Be sure to visit with University Heights resident-vendors, including Tommy Chesnes from PaperThin Co, Annie Rawlinson of Annie's Kitchen, and Dontty Lakina from Cross Culture.

Carlos Jones and the PLUS Band will perform classic songs, as well as numbers from their most recent album, *A New Day*. "Let's get this out of the way," said music critic Charlie Weiner, "their new album is a masterpiece."

Diana Chittester will be making her second appearance in University Heights, having performed at a Sum-



Shannon Hogarth of Crescent Rose Craft will sell jewelry and plants at this year's Fall Fest.

mer Concert Series show in 2021. "I am so excited to return to The Walt for a solo performance in the park," Chittester said. "And, hopefully, a hug from Cooper."

Last seen in University Heights performing with her band Rubix Groove, Shannon Hogarth is a veteran of Fall Fest. She set up shop in both 2019 and 2021 with her jewelry and flower business, Crescent Rose Craft.

"University Heights Fall Fest has been an event I always look forward to vending," Hogarth said. "It has allowed me to connect with so many wonderful people in [the] city, including the mayor. He bought a cactus from my booth for his office a couple years ago. I hear he had trouble keeping it alive, so I'll be happy to sell him a new one on Oct. 2."

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



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Cleveland Heights City Council Meeting highlights

JULY 7, 2022 - special and executive meetings

Present were Mayor Kahlil Seren, Council Vice President Craig Cobb and council members Tony Cuda, Gail Larson, Anthony Mattox Jr., and Josie Moore, Council President Melody Joy Hart and Council Member Davida Russell were not present. Also present was Law Director William Hanna.

Public comments

Several city employees spoke regarding legislation that would change the civil service classification of the police and fire chiefs and assistant chiefs. A battalion chief and a firefighter, who are in the leadership of Local 402, explained that, as classified employees, the chiefs and assistant chiefs can speak freely with the mayor or council about public safety issues and still be protected. This keeps politics out of public safety.

Mayor’s comments

Mayor Seren made his case for changing the employment classification of police and fire chiefs and assistant chiefs, saying it would increase flexibility in recruiting and hiring qualified candidates. Because Fire Chief Freeman will retire in September, recruitment must begin quickly, and Seren believes that this change would enable recruitment from outside, as well as inside, the Cleveland Heights Fire Department.

Legislation passed on first readings

Council approved a public services and improvements plan for the Cedar Fairmount Special Improvement District; authorized the mayor’s application for grant funding, under the State of Ohio Department of Development 2022 Brownfield Remediation Program, to demolish the former Hillside Dairy/former police annex; and authorized a lease agreement with WVZ CPV LLC for the Taylor-Tudor buildings.

Council appointed Whitney Crook as clerk of council. [Crook subsequently declined to take the position.]

Classification change of safety chiefs

Council members discussed the ordinance to remove the positions of chief and assistant chief from classified service. Josie Moore said [council] members need to educate themselves about civil service and the appropriateness of this request, and that Melody Joy Hart and Davida Russell should be present for the discussion. [This ordinance has since been pulled from consideration.]

AUGUST 1, 2022 - regular meeting

Present were the mayor and all council members, as well as the law director.

Public comments

Three residents addressed a proposal for putting a charter amendment on the November ballot. They noted the importance of transparency and inclusion, the ability of council members to request and receive information, and the need to codify this function. One speaker cited the Model City Charter published by the National Civic League, [in which] council members are prohibited from giving employees orders, but



not from making inquiries. Another speaker urged consideration of the pros and cons for the [proposed] amendment, and opined that the language needed further revision.

Council actions

Council established the OneOhio Opioid Settlement Fund to segregate funds received from the settlement from the rest of the budget, and to account for their disbursement for mitigation and prevention services.

Council amended the description of the standing council committees to add environmental sustainability to the Municipal Services Committee and to expand the committee’s scope.

First readings without a vote

An ordinance to create a charter amendment issue for the Nov. 8 ballot specifies the terms and parameters of permissible inquiry between council members and city department heads.

Council Committee of the Whole

Upon convening the Committee of the Whole meeting after the regular public meeting, council members discussed Anthony Cuda’s proposed city charter amendment regarding council [inquiries to] administrative staff. Cuda explained that timely access to information is necessary to make good decisions, and that the current charter does not enumerate the power of inquiry. He [said he] agrees with others that a complete charter review is needed, but [said] that this problem cannot wait for a review.

Mayor Seren stated that this measure would fundamentally and dramatically change the relationship between the mayor and the mayor’s employees. He pointed out that voters approved the strong mayor/council form [of government] in 2019.

There were substantial disagreements among [council] members. An alternative to this legislation was proposed, involving a written mutual agreement with the mayor and staff. Cuda responded to all the comments, saying that his proposed legislation is consistent with that [of] many other city governments. He concluded that this is about what kind of government council wants to set up, and that having nothing in place leaves the interactions open to abuse.

August 8, 2022 - special meeting

The mayor and Laure Wagner, assistant law director, were present, as were six council members. Davida Russell was not present.

Council actions

Council approved implementation of the Cedar Fairmount Special Improvement District (SID) public services plan, including the collection of \$120,000 annually from property owners in the SID for certain expenses. It also authorized \$216,397 for re-mounting an existing ambulance body on a new truck.

LWV Observer: Blanche Valancy.

Expanded reports are available online at www.heightsobserver.org.



Members of the 2019 Heights High marching band performed in that year’s Homecoming Parade.

Heights High Homecoming Parade returns to Lee Road

Krissy Dietrich Gallagher

The Homecoming Parade, a communitywide celebration of the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District, will return this September after a three-year hiatus.

The parade will kick off the 2022 Homecoming Weekend celebrations on Friday, Sept. 16, at 5 p.m., marching north on Lee Road from Fairfax Elementary School to Tullamore Road.

All school groups, clubs and teams are invited to participate, as are area nonprofits that want to show their support for Tiger Nation.

The parade will be followed by a football game at 7 p.m., against Lorain.

Community residents are invited to line Lee Road to watch the festivities. (The space in front of the Lee Road Library is an especially good viewing area for young families.)

The Wine Spot will serve as another viewing venue, hosting a special Meet and Greet for the 2022 Heights High Distinguished Alumni Hall of Fame inductees. That ceremony will take place on Saturday morning at the high school.

Also on Saturday, Heights High will hold an open house, from 10 a.m. until noon, for those who would like to tour the building.

Cleveland Heights Mayor

Khalil Seren is among the community leaders who will serve as judges for the parade, as student groups seek to break the district’s Transportation Department’s long winning streak as best parade performer.

Local artist and district parent Shannon Morris is designing a unique trophy, to be handed down each year, from one winning group to another.

Lee Road, from Tullamore Road to Clarendon Road, will be closed to traffic on Sept. 16, from 4:30 p.m. until 5:45 p.m. Scarborough Road, from Stratford Road to Lee Road, also will be closed that evening, beginning at 4:30 p.m., so that marching groups can gather on the street. (Please share this information with neighbors, and check the city’s and police department’s social media for updates and reminders.)

The 2019 parade boasted more than 900 participants representing 36 school groups, complete with costumes, floats, dance routines and tons of school spirit. The 2022 parade is sure to be just as exciting. For additional information, or to register to participate, send an a-mail to hocoparade@gmail.com.

Krissy Dietrich Gallagher is a graduate of the Heights schools and a former Coventry School teacher. She is a freelance journalist under contract with the CH-UH City School District.

BREMER FISHER continued from page 1

Prior to joining the Heights Schools Foundation, Bremer Fisher worked for 14 years as the executive director of FutureHeights. In that position, she launched the *Heights Observer* community newspaper, produced the Heights Music Hop, and created the nonprofit’s Community Capacity-Building and Future Homes programs.

She previously worked as director of marketing and development for the Cleveland Restoration Society.

“I am very excited to join the team at University Heights

and work with Mayor Brennan,” Bremer Fisher said. “I’m looking forward to bringing my knowledge of community development to the city to lead in a variety of special projects, including working with Power a Clean Ohio to reduce our carbon footprint.”

At UH City Hall, Bremer Fisher succeeds Ben Schaefer, who accepted a position with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District.

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

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Five ways to celebrate World Clean Up Day

Catalina Wagers

On Sept. 17, the Cleveland Heights Green Team (CHGT) encourages Heights residents to participate in World Clean Up Day, when volunteers and partners worldwide work together to clean up litter and mismanaged waste from neighborhoods, parks, beaches, rivers, forests, and streets.

The World Clean Up Day Organization reports that in 2021 more than 8.5 million people in 191 countries participated in the effort.

“We know our community is ready to embrace this opportunity,” said CHGT co-founder Alex Sitarik. “We have seen a tremendous improvement in litter reduction since the transition



Heights residents at a Cain Park cleanup in 2021.

to bins in Cleveland Heights, but we know that there is still much work to do. Case in point, the CHGT recently attended a Noble Neighbors meeting in which residents shared their frustration with storm drains being clogged with debris. What was really encouraging was to hear them talk about how they are addressing the issue one block at a time.”

In March 2022, CHGT, in partnership with FutureHeights, conducted a community survey to learn what Heights residents see as priorities in terms of sustainability issues.

According to Sarah Wolf, community-building programs manager at FutureHeights, survey respondents ranked climate change as the most important issue, closely followed by trash, litter, waste re-

duction, recycling and composting. Asked what issue they would be most willing to take action on, litter control was at the top.

“What we heard loud and clear,” Wolf said, “is that litter control requires a multi-prong strategy that includes community action, litter prevention education, and enforcement of Ohio’s littering code. While education and enforcement require coordinated work and resources, the good news is that the Heights community is willing and ready to act in their own streets and in communal green spaces.”

According to CHGT, World Clean Up Day is not about one single action once a year. It is about believing that changes happen in people and through people. “It is a catalyst for creating positive change and on

continued on page 12

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Officer Jason D. West scholarship fund restructures



Travis Thompson was a two-time recipient of the Jason D. West Scholarship, in 2013 and in 2018, when he attended the Cleveland Heights Police Academy. He is currently a member of the Euclid Police Department.

Joy Henderson

The Officer Jason D. West Scholarship Fund was established by residents, business owners and Cleveland Heights police officers to honor the service and memory of Officer Jason D. West. He was a member of the Cleveland Heights Police Department who was killed in the line of duty in 2007.

The goal of the scholarship fund has been to encourage young men and women to consider a career in law enforcement, and to strengthen the relationship between young people and the police.

At its inception, the organization's committee awarded scholarships to Heights High seniors who had completed the two-year Crimi-

nal Justice Career Tech Program and were interested in pursuing additional education in criminal justice. In 2021, however, the school district discontinued the program. As a result, the scholarship committee is reevaluating its work.

One of the first things that the committee did in the restructuring process was to acquire tax-exempt designation from the state of Ohio and 501(c)3 status from the IRS. The organization is now The Officer Jason D. West Memorial Fund with its own board of directors. This step made the organization entirely separate from the school district.

Lita Gonzalez, president of the Officer Jason D. West Memorial Fund Board and a founding member of the organization, spoke about the restructuring. "I'm excited about the direction we are taking," she said. "The new board is working on ways to partner with the community, city and the police department to encourage young people to enter the criminal justice field, strengthen the relationship between young people and the police and, of course, to honor the life of Officer Jason West."

The board expects to continue to encourage young people to enter the field of criminal justice and is working on several options to accomplish that goal.

"The scholarship students are now serving in so many ways," said Gonzalez. "We are proud to have

helped so many and look forward to finding new ways to encourage young people to serve."

Since 2008, the Officer Jason D. West Scholarship Fund has awarded 23 college scholarships totaling \$23,000 to Heights High seniors. Two of those students, after completing college, applied and were accepted to the Cleveland Heights Police Academy. The organization paid their tuition, amounting to more than \$8,000. They both became police officers.

Three of the scholarship recipients are serving or attending school:

- Travis Thompson, class of 2013 and Cleveland Heights Police Academy class of 2018, is a member of the Euclid Police Department.
- Kamille Harris, class of 2011, is a

member of the West memorial fund board. She graduated from Wright State in 2015, earned an M.A. from St. Mary's University, and is in law school at Case Western Reserve University.

- Logan Bryant, class of 2020, is a junior at Fayetteville State University majoring in criminal justice, pre-law.

For more information about The Officer Jason D. West Memorial Fund contact Lita Gonzalez at lita.gonzalez@att.net, or visit the www.facebook.com/OfficerJasonWestFund.

Joy Henderson is a member of the Officer Jason D. West Memorial Fund Committee, and a retired contract worker for the CH-UH City School District's Communications Department.



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Request a tree for fall planting

Laura Marks

Heights Tree People, a volunteer organization working to rebuild the tree canopy in Cleveland Heights and University Heights, encourages residents to make requests for fall trees now. With its cool, moist weather, fall is a perfect time of year to plant trees. Fall tree-planting runs from the end of September through Thanksgiving, and Heights Tree People will plant trees for free in the front yards of homes in both cities.

Trees that were planted when Heights neighborhoods were built 100 years ago are dying and being removed. From 2013 to 2019, Cleveland Heights lost 14 percent of its tree canopy, and University Heights lost 26 percent. Heights Tree People makes it easy to plant new trees, to remain cities of trees.

People are happier and healthier when they live with trees. With trees, stress levels go down, as do stress-related diseases, including heart attacks, strokes, anxiety and depression. Studies have shown that crime, including domestic violence, is lower in neighborhoods with good tree canopies. Neighborhoods are more stable, and property values increase where there are plenty of trees. Trees cool houses and clean the air, so they

reduce respiratory diseases. When trees are lost, so are their benefits, which are essential to the well-being of a community.

City planners and arborists look at tree canopies citywide. But, really, increasing the tree canopy requires many individuals acting in concert to plant trees in their yards or tree lawns. Because the majority of land in any municipality is private property, individual property owners acting together can significantly increase the tree canopy.

If we all do our part—whether planting a front-yard tree, requesting a tree-lawn tree from the city, or encouraging friends and neighbors to take advantage of these free resources—the result will be a stronger, healthier and more attractive community that is more resilient for all.

If you would like to host a new tree, request a free front-yard tree from Heights Tree People by visiting www.heightstreepeople.com, or sending an e-mail to heightstreepeople@gmail.com. To request a tree-lawn tree, call 216-601-3717 in Cleveland Heights, or 216-932-8531 in University Heights.

Laura Marks is a member of Heights Tree People.

Volunteer through Reaching Heights to support public schools



Barb Wherley practices letter names and sounds with a kindergartner at Boulevard Elementary.

Mazie Adams

Reaching Heights has three volunteer programs that encourage community members to volunteer in the Heights public schools. Each program is unique and offers different ways to support district students.

One and Done is a single-event volunteer program in which community volunteers help with book fairs, literacy nights, food distribution events, gardening, and more. These are “one and done” commitments, with no pressure to take on future volunteer work.

Role Models speakers share their personal stories of professional success with the district’s fifth-grade students. This inspires CH-UH students, and helps them envision

their full potential. Role Models programs engage and energize CH-UH students by providing positive examples of the successful community members who share their pathways to success.

Many Villages Tutoring Program supports the academic progress of students through a structured and targeted tutoring program. Many Villages volunteers provide one-on-one support in CH-UH elementary schools, and receive the training, orientation, ongoing feedback, and heartfelt appreciation necessary [to make it] a great experience for all involved. Many Villages tutors must pass a background check and commit to weekly sessions throughout the school year.

Reaching Heights is a citizen voice for public education and a resource for the students and educators of the Cleveland Heights-University Heights public schools. Reaching Heights exists because CH-UH students deserve the best education possible, the success of Heights public schools is everybody’s business, and successful schools are a critical part of successful communities.

Reaching Heights invites everyone in the community to show up and share their expertise, experience and energy.

To volunteer, call 216-932-5110, or visit www.reachingheights.org/volunteer.

Mazie Adams is a Reaching Heights board member.

COMMON GOOD continued from page 7

port of the plaintiffs.

The hope is that the outpouring of interest will demonstrate that the case is of such significance that it should go forward.

The coalition’s brief was written by a volunteer lawyer and former public-school teacher, Ken Kowalski.

Two other grassroots organizations, Public Education Partners and Northeast Ohio Friends of Public Education, added their names to the submission.

The coalition got started in 2014 after more than 160 people joined in a community reading project that explored the war on public education. Participants were moved by their new understanding of what was at stake and decided to raise public awareness of the issues and mobilize the public to advocate for public education.

Coalition members have been visible and vociferous at legislative hearings on voucher policy and state funding.

More than 1,370 people have signed the coalition’s position statement, which, among other things, rejects vouchers.

Ari Klein and I serve as the convenors of the coalition, and a small steering committee designs its programs and activities.

The coalition’s brief urges the court to bring the case to trial: “[The] case should not be short-circuited.” It asserts that Ohio’s voucher program unconstitutionally provides preferential treatment to private schools, because it spends more per pupil on vouchers than on public-school students in most districts, including ours.

The “Vouchers Hurt Ohio” litigation claims that Ohio now

operates two systems of education—one private and one public—at state expense and without adequately funding the public system.

This has exacerbated segregation and promoted discrimination. The goal is to end Ohio’s damaging investment of public funds in EdChoice vouchers for private education.

The fact that we were able to participate in this important legal challenge is something of a miracle. The Heights Coalition for Public Education is an all-volunteer effort with no budget, staff, or office. Our strength comes from our commitment to public education and the common good, our tenacity, and our willingness to show up and speak up.

The grassroots nature of our organization makes us a citizens’ voice for fairness—a voice that is often unable to participate because of resource constraints, or which is drowned out by special interests like Ohio’s Center for Christian Virtue and the Koch brothers-funded Institute for Justice. Both of those organizations actively lobby for privatized education in Ohio and against the litigation.

We have not given up, and we won’t go away. For citizen activism to be effective, that is a requirement. If it survives this first hurdle, the lawsuit is expected to take a couple of years.

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.

CLEAN UP continued from page 10

finding solutions to ‘trash blindness’ in our own backyard,” said Sitarik.

CHGT suggests five ways in which Heights residents, organizations, and businesses can participate in World Clean Up Day:

- Schools execute “Operation WCUD,” to inspire and reward students for participating in a cleanup of their school’s grounds as well as neighboring blocks.
- Neighbors host a “Sunrise & Coffee” or “Sunset & Wine” clean-up block party.
- Parents organize a kids’ “Litter Treasure Hunt” at a park or empty lot.
- Businesses join in a “Sweep & Spruce” of their storefronts and loading zones.
- Grassroots environmental groups conduct a “Stream Sweep” in one of the Heights’ many waterways, ravines and lakes.

“Imagine what the Heights could look like if everyone just picked up one piece of litter,” noted Sitarik. “World Clean Up Day gives us the opportunity to do so while connecting with our surroundings and with each other. It is all about community-building and enjoying a sense of civic pride. Who would have guessed that one piece of trash can do so much good?”

CHGT invites participants to share details of their events by emailing greenteam@chgreenteam.org. Events will be posted and promoted through social media at [#worldcleanupdayintheheights](https://www.facebook.com/worldcleanupdayintheheights). For more information, visit www.chgreenteam.org.

Catalina Wagers lives in Cleveland Heights’ Fairfax neighborhood, and is a co-founder of the Cleveland Heights Green Team.



This historic Tudor-style home is one of six properties featured on this year's HCC tour.

HCC continued from page 1

cancellations in 2020 and 2021.

This year, the tour will showcase six elegant and unique Cleveland Heights properties. They include a colonial with a recently renovated kitchen and bath, a stately Tudor mansion, a remarkable backyard garden oasis, an English brick cottage and garden, a contemporary solar-powered home with tropical foliage, and the magnificently restored exterior grounds of Harcourt Manor.

Ticket holders can also take a guided tour of the landmark Fairmount Presbyterian Church, partake of light snacks, and view a special display about the history of HCC over the course of its 50 years of service to the community.

Advance tickets are \$20; after Labor Day, all tickets will be \$25. Tickets are available online at www.heightscongress.org, and in person at the following businesses: Appletree Books, Bremec on the Heights, Heinen's (on South Green Road), The Stone Oven Bakery & Café, Tommy's, and Zagara's Marketplace.

Heights Community Congress is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

Les Jones, a 45-year resident of Cleveland Heights, is president of HCC's Board of Trustees, and has served on

the Heights Heritage Home & Garden Tour planning committee every year since 1990. He is a past president of the boards of Reaching Heights and the Forest Hill Home Owners Association.

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An award-winning journalist who has lived in Paris, Santa Fe, and New York City, he arrived in July 2020 via the suggestion of a fellow resident. He's been delighted ever since.

“As a writer, I enjoy spending time alone, and these surroundings are perfect: my apartment is quiet, and the views overlooking the Cleveland Museum of Art are lovely. But by far the best part of Judson is the people. Everyone is so knowledgeable about art and culture. I wanted to have stimulating company to spend my time with, and I've found that here. These are wonderful, interesting people,” says Joe.

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Joe Coyle

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Cleveland Heights – University Heights Public Library Board

Meeting highlights

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF GREATER CLEVELAND

JULY 18, 2022

Board members present were President Gabe Crenshaw, Patti Carlyle, Dana Fluellen, Annette Iwamoto, Tyler McTigue, and Vikas Turakhia. Vice President Max Gerboc was not present.

Public comments

Kevin Nichols, library security manager, reported that in the first six months of this year there were 57 security incidents, 50 percent lower than pre-pandemic numbers.

Bostwick Design gave a presentation to the board about plans for the Noble branch renovation and addition.

Krista Hawthorne, Coventry PEACE board president, shared questions and concerns about the leasing process at the Washington Boulevard building.

Board resolutions

The board approved advertising for a construction manager at risk for the renovations of and additions to the Noble branch.

The board created a new position: assistant facilities manager.

The service and administrative policy was amended for 2022.

A new 2023-25 strategic plan was approved, with the following focus areas:

- Foster diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Ensure an environment of safety, security, and well-being for community members.
- Champion community workforce and tech skill development.
- Promote unbiased sources of information and combat censorship and disinformation.

Director’s report

Director Nancy Levin responded to the questions and concerns raised by Krista Hawthorne, noting that Cresco Property Management and Leasing was delayed in issuing new leases, and mediation with tenants over disputed bills is being planned.

Oct. 16 open houses—homecoming at the library—are being planned.

The library will be closed Sept. 23 for staff development.

Joining Joint Boards committees [formed as a collaboration of the CH and UH city councils, the board of education, and the library board] are: Annette

Iwamoto, Max Gerboc and Nancy Levin—Workforce Development; Patti Carlisle and Vikas Turakhia—Food Insecurity; Dana Fluellen and Gabe Crenshaw—Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; and Tyler McTigue—Shared Resources. The next joint meeting is Oct. 26.

Personnel report

Heights Libraries has several opportunities to introduce students to public library work through summer internships: Teen Tech Ambassador Summer Internship (supported by Friends of Heights Libraries), Library Experience Program, and Youth Opportunities Unlimited. This summer the library hosted seven interns, five of whom were high school students. The internships provide an opportunity for teens and young adults to experience library service work as a possible career option.

Public service report highlights

Adult summer reading has 626 entries. More than 700 children and teens registered for the summer reading program.

Coventry Village branch Youth Librarian Louise Lybrook and Youth Associate Angela Higgins provided family engagement activities for the Juneteenth celebration. Community members created a collaborative quilt project on the theme, “What does Juneteenth mean to you?” The quilt is on display in The Shire children’s room.

LWV Observer: Elizabeth M. Tracy.

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

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Cleveland Heights – University Heights Board of Education Meeting highlights



AUGUST 2, 2022

Board members present were Malia Lewis (president), Jodi Sourini, and Beverly Wright. Board members Dan Heintz and James Posch were not present. Also present was Superintendent Elizabeth Kirby.

Public comments

University Heights Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan requested school district property from the Wiley building site to house the city of University Heights’ new planned service department and its vehicles.

Amy Rosenbluth and Cherish Bailey addressed the board [to give their assessment of] the successful impact Lake Erie Ink has had on students in the past year.

Superintendent’s report - Title IX

The superintendent met with leaders from Chicago public schools to learn about procedures they have enacted to protect students and be Title IX compliant. A dress code draft is in the works. It has been sent to legal counsel for review and will be shared with the board at the next meeting. Staff will participate in service training issues related to Title IX. The board is interviewing people for the one-year position of compliance officer.

Bus depot

The bus depot will be completed by the end of August. Bus routes will be ready for the beginning of the school year.

LWV Observer: Robin Koslen.

Documents for all board meetings can be accessed at www.chuh.org/Board-ofEducation.aspx. Board meetings are livestreamed at www.youtube.com/CHUHSchools and recorded for later viewing.



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You can also view a special display that tells the history of Heights Community Congress as they celebrate 50 years of serving the Heights community as an advocate of social justice, a monitor of fair housing practices and a facilitator for building strong diverse communities.



Sunday,
September 18, 2022
12:00 pm to 6:00 pm

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Services available in advance of new hospital's Oct. 8 opening

Angela Townsend

Kythryn Carr Harris was in the Cleveland area visiting her daughter in October 2020 when she heard the news that The MetroHealth System planned to build a behavioral health hospital. Carr Harris, at the time, was in a leadership role with the Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health Board of Franklin County, Ohio, and was very familiar with the treatment and support services landscape across the state.

MetroHealth's new venture caused Harris to do a double take.

"I wasn't aware of any health care system in the state investing that kind of money into behavioral health," she said.

MetroHealth believes its construction of the new behavioral health hospital is the largest investment in care for mental health and substance abuse disorders in the



Kythryn Carr Harris

region in decades.

Nearly a year later, MetroHealth hired Carr Harris to fill a new position: Executive Director for Community Behavioral Health, in charge of all outpatient behavioral health services within the health system.

Since joining MetroHealth in September 2021, Carr Harris has been focused on the rollout of the partial hospitalization program (PHP) and the intensive outpatient program (IOP) that will operate at MetroHealth's Cleveland Heights facility.

The new hospital will open on Oct. 8, but MetroHealth began accepting PHP referrals for adult patients with mood and thought disorders in mid-July. Since the end of July, in-person group and individual sessions have been held throughout the day. Group sessions have a maximum of 12 patients.

IOP referrals will begin in September, starting with patients who have been diagnosed with conditions such as depression and bipolar disorder.

"The programs are part of a larger continuum of care," Carr Harris said. "Instead of keeping people hospitalized, there is now a new level of care on an outpatient basis, no matter where a person enters the health system. PHP functions as a sort of step-down unit and can be used to stabilize someone enough that they don't need to be admitted as an inpatient. That's our highest level of outpatient care—five days a week including group counseling."

IOP is one level down from PHP, with patients attending two or three individual sessions each week, in addition to group sessions and classroom instruction.

MetroHealth's other outpatient behavioral health services include psych-consult services at its Main Campus Emergency Department and the emergency departments at its Cleveland Heights and Parma medical centers, and at its Brecksville Health and Surgery Center; and services for adolescents.

continued on page 19

Homecoming

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COURTESY DAVID BUDIN

The original Coventry School, in 1922, as seen from the roof of the Heights Art Theater (later the Centrum). Back then, Washington Boulevard went through to Euclid Heights Boulevard at Coventry Road. The empty space at the point at Washington and Coventry is where the Coventry Library was built, a few years later.

School days—for 12 more years



SONGS AND STORIES

David Budin

Ninety-six years ago, Joe Budin walked into Coventry School as a new kindergartner. It was 1926. He was 5 years old, and Coventry School was only one year older. In fact, though the first part opened in 1919, the whole school wasn't actually completed until 1922.

Joe Budin, my father, went all the way through Coventry, then Roosevelt Junior High, and then Heights High. My brothers and I went all the way through all those schools, too. Then my son attended kindergarten in the new Coventry School building. He then went to Roxboro Elementary School, switched to Ruffing Montessori for a few years, and went to Heights High for all of high school.

Now my grandson is a little Heights Tiger, too, attending kindergarten at Fairfax, along with his sister, Westin, who's a second-grader.

That's four generations of a family, all in the Cleveland Heights-University Heights school system, which is rare.

And not only that, but my son is the Heights High swim team coach, and my daughter-in-law teaches engineering and math at Heights, a position she has held since graduating from college, four years after she, herself, was a student there.

A few weeks ago, a high school friend of mine, Phil, made one of his very infrequent visits back to Cleveland Heights from his longtime home in Los Angeles. We drove all over the area, especially where he grew up, in the University Heights neighborhood that borders South Euclid. Then I wanted him to see the renovated Heights High. My daughter-in-law, teaching summer

school, let us into the building after her classes, and showed us around. Phil was pleasantly surprised with the changes. Neither of us had enjoyed being students there, except for the music.

As Heights students, Phil and I were there mainly for the choir. On our visit, we went up to the fourth-floor choir room, which was basically the same as it had been, except that it was completely new. But, I mean, the basic structure was the same.

We also walked around the auditorium, where we had both spent a lot of time performing. It has been beautifully restored, and now even has dressing rooms, so kids no longer need to make quick costume changes on stage, behind the risers, as we used to do.

Phil and I had also taken music theory classes at Heights, taught by the orchestra director at that time. On our brief tour this summer, we also ran into the school's current orchestra director, Daniel Heim, now in his 13th year, and talked to him for about a half hour. Phil and I, both longtime professional musicians, talked with Heim about the solid musical education we received at Heights, and about the large number of graduates of Heights High's music programs who have become professional musicians, in every genre of music.

Phil left town around 1980. I stayed, got married and had kids. When I was a kid, I thought I would grow up and never have to see the insides of those schools again. But as soon as my kids started going to school, I got involved—because, by then, I had become a person who just gets involved (after hearing Pete Seeger speak at a Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and Museum event). I started volunteering—for everything—at their schools. I even served as a “room mother” a few times. And

continued on page 19



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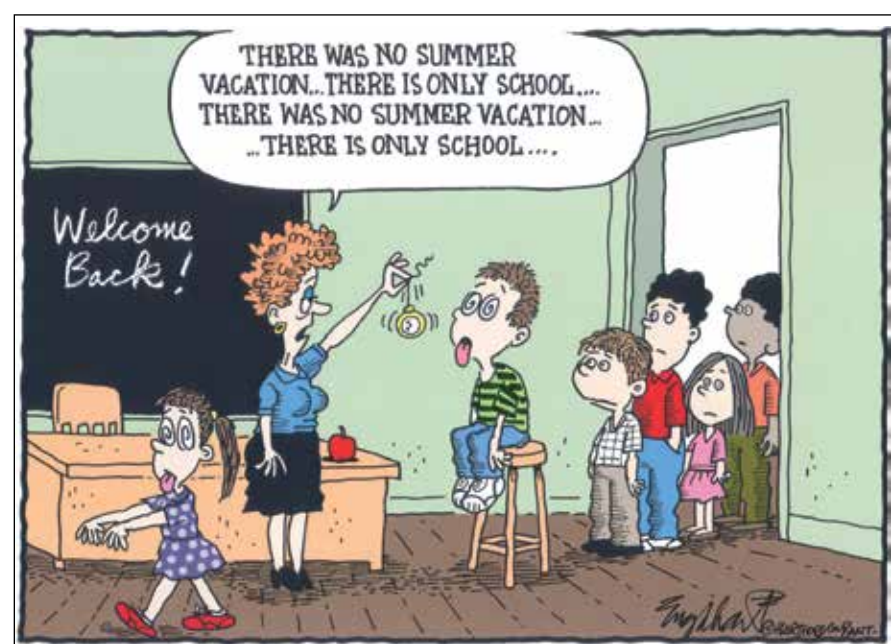
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Ray McNiece hosting an Ekphrastic poetry event at Heights Arts.

Academy of American Poets awards fellowship to McNiece

Tom Masaveg

Cleveland Heights Poet Laureate Raymond McNiece has been awarded a fellowship from the Academy of American Poets. McNiece is among 22 poets nationwide who will receive \$50,000 each in recognition of their achievements, and who will complete proposed projects.

Cleveland Heights holds the distinction of supporting the oldest poet laureateship in Ohio, through a partnership between Heights Arts and the city of Cleveland Heights. Every two years, Heights Arts' volunteer community team, Heights

Writes, reviews submissions and chooses a new poet laureate for a two-year position.

McNiece, who will end his term in April 2023, will continue to work with Heights Arts and other partnering organizations such as the Center for the Book and Lake Erie Ink to complete his "The Poem for Cleveland" project, which will create a mosaic of Cleveland voices past, present and future through intergenerational, multicultural workshops.

Among his civic duties, McNiece coordinates Heights Arts' Ekphrastic, Artists Talk and Poets Respond series.

The Ekphrastic literary program is a series of artist talks and poetry readings held regularly in the Heights Arts gallery, in conjunction with its exhibitions. Cleveland-area writers are invited by the poet laureate and Heights Writes Community Team members to view the installed artworks and respond with a new poem. Five weeks after an exhibition opens, the artists talk about their work and the poets read their poems, often resulting in a surprising dialogue. Participating poets receive an honorarium for their participation.

The next Ekphrastic event will take place on Thursday, Sept. 22. McNiece will join poets Diane Vogel Ferri, Ariel Alexander, and-

continued on page 19

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SERVICES continued from page 16

For now, MetroHealth's pediatric psychiatrists, psychologists and therapists, and other providers who are integrated into primary care, are staying at the Main Campus.

Plans for the PHP and IOP services for adolescents will begin taking shape over the next few months.

"We will help patients get to the

right place for outpatient care," Carr Harris said. "Many of our providers are integrated within our primary care and specialty clinics throughout the system. We really want to be accessible to all individuals."

Angela Townsend is a senior writer in the Department of Marketing and Communications at The MetroHealth System.

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SCHOOL DAYS continued from page 17

especially when they got to Heights High.

The first year my son went to Heights, I was in the building more than 100 times, for a wide variety of reasons. I lectured to social studies and journalism classes. I became the president of the Band and Orchestra Parents Organization. I was on the committee that hired the new vocal music director. I helped start the Vocal Arts Parents Organization. I ran the concession stand for swim meets. I attended music concerts and sports events. And other things. In fact, at the end of that first year, I was walking through the front hall with my mother (who also graduated from Heights High), on our way to my son's orchestra concert, when she said, "You've probably been in this building more times this past year than you were in your own last year

here." And she wasn't kidding.

My father never wanted to be in school. I never did, either, though my brothers were okay with it. I lasted as long as I did there because of the Heights choir. My daughter never wanted to be in school, though my son was okay with it. My granddaughter loves school (so far). My grandson is just starting. He's only got 12 more years there. His personality is different from his sister's. But I hope he loves it. If he doesn't, he seems like he's very musical, so there's always that.

David Budin is a freelance writer for national and local publications, the former editor of Cleveland Magazine and Northern Ohio Live, an author, and a professional musician and comedian. His writing focuses on the arts and, especially, pop-music history.

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ACADEMY continued from page 20

Diana Lueptow as they respond to the *Imagination* and Jackie Miller exhibitions.

Cleveland Winter
by Ray McNiece

*Cleveland winter gray
from November till May
lake effect pall every day,
one stacked upon the next
like slabs in a steelyard.
Maybe a clump of weeds
smashed beneath stays green.*

*Grizzled, ashen faced
old bachelor uncle waits
his cataract eyes watching
through fish-scale window,
for me to take him to soak
his Slovenian immigrant bones
in cinderblock bath-house.*

*Dawn's first dull light fills
the aluminum pot he hammers
into shape to hold his daily
ration of meals on wheels.
But when he stops, heat
leaves its skin, leaving
his hands raw and dingy.*

*He holds them over blue
flame of stove like the last
blast furnace in the Flats
as the sun's molten smile
slides out from under clouds
before nails of thin sleet tap
down the sky's tin roof.*

[published in "Heartlands Today"]

Tom Masaveg is a local 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.

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