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FutureHeights
2843 Washington Blvd. #105
Cleveland Heights, OH 44118

Freeman is first poet laureate for all the Heights

Tom Masaveg

Heights Arts is proud to announce the appointment of Siaara Freeman as the eleventh poet laureate of Cleveland Heights—and now, also, University Heights.

The new laureate's two-year term and official duties will begin in April—National Poetry Month.

Freeman joins a long line of past Cleveland Heights poets laureate, the most recent of whom was 2022 Academy of American Poets Fellow Ray McNiece.

"I am incredibly honored to be chosen to continue in a legacy carved by such brilliant and generous poets," said Freeman. "It is a privilege to sit amongst personal heroes and close friends who embraced the opportunity to serve the community."

With Freeman's appointment comes a new partnership between Heights Arts and University Heights—an evolution that will



Siaara Freeman is the newly appointed Heights Poet Laureate.

change the title from Cleveland Heights Poet Laureate to Heights Poet Laureate.

Said Heights Arts Executive Director Rachel Bernstein, "The

Heights Poet Laureate program is the longest-running laureateship in the state and has been conferred through Heights Arts since its inception. Not
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Join forces with FutureHeights at its May 4 open house event



Jessica Schantz

FutureHeights, Cleveland Heights' nonprofit Community Development Corporation, will showcase its recent updates and upcoming programs at an open house event on Thursday, May 4, 5:30 to 8 p.m.,

Many will recognize the special significance attributed to May 4th—May the fourth be with you—by the iconic line from "Star Wars"—"May the force be with you."

Kristine Pagsuyoin, executive director of FutureHeights, explained that, for this event, the "force" relates to the mission and values of FutureHeights, in "repre-

senting the strength or energy exerted to cause motion or change."

"I think of the force as a positive light energy that some people possess; something special, that sets them apart from everyone else," said Pagsuyoin.

"FutureHeights has been fortunate to work with many residents, community leaders, and organizations that possess this ability, this 'force,' that supports FutureHeights. We would not exist as a driving force of social and economic development without the meaningful engagement of the people who support us and our mission: to ensure a vibrant and sustainable future for the communities of Cleveland Heights and University Heights.

"It is the force and support of people in the community that

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HCC ends its work



Jessica Schantz

In a March 1 letter, Rev. Eric Dillenbeck, executive director of Heights Community Congress (HCC), announced that the nonprofit organization had closed its doors, effective Feb. 28. The letter stated:

After 50 years of committed service to the Heights Community and [N]ortheast Ohio the Board of the Heights Community Congress (HCC) made the difficult decision to close its doors, effective February 28, 2023.

In 1972 HCC was formed to carry forward the work first started by the women who conducted the St. Ann Audit. For 50 years HCC worked to create a more just and diverse community that is committed to fair housing for all people. During our early years we helped pioneer efforts to uphold the values set forth in the Fair Housing Act of 1968. We trained and sent Fair Housing Monitors out into the community to test the practices of local real estate agents and landlords. When issues were discovered, HCC attempted to engage with the involved parties to provide education about the offending issues; when attempts at conciliation were not successful then HCC would file official complaints with HUD to help ensure that unfair
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Student art show returns to library

Sheryl Banks

The Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District's Creative Heights Art Show has returned to Heights Libraries Lee Road branch. The show will run through April 15.

The exhibition of student art features hundreds of pieces, created by students in kindergarten through grade 12, working in diverse media, including pencil and chalk drawings, photography, sculpture, pottery, painting, textiles, printmaking, and metals (jewelry).



A multi-media, collaborative piece created by Heights High 10th-graders.

"The skill and creativity these kids put into their work is incredible," said Youth Services Manager Sam Lapides. "You can tell that the art teachers in the district really inspire their students."

The library last hosted the show in 2019. The COVID epidemic prevented the show from taking place for the next three years, 2020-22.

"We are really happy the show is back," said Lapides. "The staff love it, the kids love it, and it encourages families to come in to the library

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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. And try to keep it under 500 words.

- 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 May issue must be submitted by April 10. We publish some articles online only. We also publish an e-newsletter each Tuesday.

It’s time for Ohio to fully fund public schools

Malia Lewis

In his budget proposal, Gov. DeWine has asked our legislators to fully fund the second phase of the Fair School Funding Plan (FSFP) for Ohio’s public schools. The General Assembly took a giant step forward for Ohio’s students and schools by enacting the Fair School Funding Plan in the last biennial budget. It is crucial that the next biennial budget include the second of the plan’s three phases.

The FSFP bases state school funding on what a student needs to succeed. The plan was developed collaboratively by a team of educational leaders. Its formula treats all Ohio school districts and taxpayers fairly, based upon their capacity to raise local funds. The implementation of this formula represents a move toward the equitable and adequate funding of Ohio’s schools, which our state constitution requires, and which our state supreme court has ordered four times.

Now is the time for the state to fully fund K–12 education. Ohio is in excellent financial shape with actual tax revenues for the 2022 fiscal year (FY) \$2.7 billion over original estimates. The Office of Budget and

Management projects tax revenue for FY 2023 will be \$1.65 billion (6.3%) above the estimates. Additionally, the legislature previously maxed out the rainy-day fund at \$2.7 billion, none of which was used during the pandemic. The state’s average \$400 million annual contribution to this fund should instead be invested to fully fund the FSFP for Ohio’s children—our future leaders.

According to the research and calculations that went into the FSFP, it costs approximately \$7,800 to educate each student in Ohio. But the CH-UH City School District currently receives only about \$1,900 per student. Guess where the difference comes from? Local property taxes.

Under the FSFP, the local and state shares of a school district’s budget are determined by a stable, fair capacity calculation based 60% on local property valuation per pupil and 40% on local income. Currently about 75% of CH-UH’s revenue comes from local property taxes and about 19% from the state. If FSFP is fully implemented, about 71% of our revenue would come from property taxes and about 23% from the state. A fully implemented FSFP would

provide the CH-UH school district an additional \$4.7 million.

Every dollar invested in our local schools impacts our local economy and our future workforce. Once fully implemented, the Fair School Funding Plan will bring predictability and stability to Ohio schools, allowing districts to prepare all students for success.

Fully funding the formula makes sense. Ohio has the money to implement the well-crafted, bipartisan plan. It is often said that what we value, we are willing to fund. Our legislators need to hear from all of us about the importance and urgency of investing in Ohio’s children and fully funding the formula.

Please contact Sen. Kent Smith (repo8@ohiohouse.gov) and Rep. Juanita Brent (repo8@ohiohouse.gov) to share your support for the full implementation of the Fair School Funding Plan and the importance of investing in Ohio’s future; and send copies to Rep. Jay Edwards (rep94@ohiohouse.gov) and Rep. Bride Rose Sweeney (rep16@ohiohouse.gov).

Malia Lewis is a member of the CH-UH City School District Board of Education.

POET continued from page 1

only are we thrilled to welcome Siaara Freeman to lead us into Heights Arts’ 25th anniversary in 2025, we are equally excited about our new partnership with University Heights to expand this position to the Greater Heights area—something I have been hoping to do since I became director.

“Cleveland Heights and University Heights share a school system and a library system, and we are grateful for [University Heights] Mayor Brennan’s enthusiasm in supporting another cultural asset in the poet laureate, which will expand civic engagement through the arts.”

Brennan said, “As we continue to grapple with the many challenges in today’s post-pandemic world, poetry can help us reconnect and heal. University Heights is excited to support the Heights Poet Laureate, and we look forward to working with her at our community events.”

Cleveland Heights Mayor Seren commented on what the laureateship represents in a city with arguably the highest population of artists and arts professionals in the region. “Poetry grounds us in our shared humanity in times of celebration and sorrow, and as ‘home to the arts’ Cleveland Heights recognizes poetry’s significance through this laureateship,” he said. “I look forward to working with Ms. Freeman to give her art a broader platform in our community.”

Freeman will be welcomed officially at CH City Hall on April 17, and at UH City Hall on May 1.

Her first public events as the new laureate will occur at Heights Arts’ Ekphrastacy – Artists Talk and Poets Respond event on April 20, 7 p.m., and at Heights Arts’ community celebration of laureates past and present on May 4, 7 p.m., at the Grog Shop.

Currently a teaching artist for the Center for Arts Inspired Learning, Freeman has spent recent years with Cleveland Public Theatre (Catapult Fellow 2021-22); as Watering Hole Manuscript Fellow (2020); tangerine chapbook fellow (2018); and Poetry Foundation Incubator Fellow (2018); and she is a two-time Pushcart Prize nominee.

Her first collection of poetry, *Urbanshee*, was released in August 2022. Her poems have appeared in many publications, and she has performed at poetry festivals, colleges, and universities, both locally and internationally.

In conjunction with the *Picturing Motherhood* exhibition at the Cleveland Museum of Art in 2022, she made a five-minute video that aired on the museum’s website.

It was clear to the Heights Writes Community Team, whose members select the new laureate, that Freeman would transcend the ordinary through her writing, performances, and work with young people. Said team member Annie Holden, “On paper, Freeman is deeply impressive. In person, she has a level of energy and dynamism that electrifies the space she inhabits.”

Tom Masaveg is the Heights Arts programs manager.

Advertise in the Observer

Invest ARPA funds in CH parks



Dugway Brook runs through Cleveland Heights parks.

Peggy Spaeth

Recently Cleveland Heights residents were asked where ARPA funds should be allocated. The third most chosen response was “Offer Cleveland Heights residents more healthy and safe opportunities for recreation and socializing by investing in outdoor public spaces and amenities.” I fervently agree.

People converged on parks during the pandemic for space away from virus transmission. Once there, many encountered the feelings of peace and steadfastness that nature engenders. Whether we walk alone or with a friend (human or canine), a trail away from urban landscapes reconnects us to the natural world.

Cleveland Heights is uniquely blessed with more than 140 acres of historic parks with unparalleled amenities, such as CH Community Center and Cain Park Theater! And almost all residents are within comfortable walking distance to a park.

Our park systems lie within two watersheds, the Dugway and Doan. The Dugway Brook watershed accounts for 47% of the city and comprises the largest park system, running diagonally across the geographical center of our 8-square-mile city. The Dugway chain of parks begins upstream at Cain Park, connects to Schoolhouse Park and Cumberland Park, and finally ends at Forest Hill Park (shared with East Cleveland).

The city’s parks have a comprehensive array of amenities, such as our nationally known outdoor theater and annual arts festival; a multipurpose community center; an outdoor pool; and up-to-date playgrounds, ball fields, and tennis, pickleball, and basketball courts for active recreation.

But when walking on the park trails, it’s easy to see that stewardship of natural resources is absent. This is not unusual for city parks. Few have a budget or management plan for active stewardship of natural resources.

We see the parks’ lawns are mowed and fallen leaves removed—

what else can be done? We can begin to improve the health of habitat and ourselves by mowing less and growing more; leaving leaves that harbor overwintering insects; removing invasive species and replacing them with native ones that support native insects and birds; improving and clearly marking trails; planting many more native trees; and creating iconic signage that identifies and connects all of the parks.

Unfortunately, Cleveland Heights doesn’t have a designated budget or staff to manage our natural resources. But residents do pay 2.3% of our property taxes to fund the treasured Cleveland Metroparks’ Emerald Necklace that rings the county. The Metroparks are only accessible by car from Cleveland Heights, but in Cleveland Heights there is a city park within walking distance of almost all residents.

Currently the Metroparks and East Cleveland are discussing management of two-thirds of Forest Hill Park. The idea is thrilling, but I don’t understand why our third of Forest Hill Park, excluding current amenities, is not under discussion. Let’s open a public conversation with the Metroparks to explore a partnership for environmental stewardship of the whole of Forest Hill Park, as intended at its 1936 inception.

Returning to residents’ desire for “investing in outdoor public spaces” with ARPA funds, this is a one-time transformational moment for our common ground. Let’s take this opportunity to realize the potential of our CH park system by jump-starting the effort with these funds. Then let’s find a way forward to fund continual park stewardship with public and private funds and grants.

We’ve inherited acres of public land that need our attention. We need to take better care of the land where we live, and we need to do it now.

Peggy Spaeth is co-chair of the Friends of Lower Lake; president of the Friends of Heights Parks; and a guide for the Heights Native Pollinator Path.

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Municipal court judge highlights past year's work

J.J. Costello

At the end of March of each year, Ohio's municipal courts must submit to their city and county governments a report of their operations, including a statement of receipts and expenditures. The full 2022 Annual Report for the Cleveland Heights Municipal Court, along with reports from years past, can be found on the court's website, www.clevelandheightscourt.com.

Here are highlights of some of the work performed by the court, and the improvements and community collaborations it has undertaken.

We remain one of the busiest

municipal courts in Ohio. There has been a 14% decrease in traffic citations, including OVIs, but an increase of approximately 3% in criminal cases filed. On the civil side, we saw a sharp rise in the number of evictions, from a low in 2020 of 429, to 652 in 2022. However, [in cases] where both tenant and landlord appear, approximately 90% of our eviction cases are settled. We also saw a significant rise in rent-deposit actions, from only six in 2017, the year before I took the bench, to 53 in 2022.

While the court is not a revenue center—our mission is to administer justice—we once again remitted

to the city of Cleveland Heights revenue above our expenses. Even with increased services provided, and raises for court employees, we reduced our general fund expenses this past year.

Our court continues to make technology improvements, funded through grants or paid from sources outside of the general fund. Collaborating with the Cleveland Heights Police, Law, and Information Technology departments, nearly all traffic tickets are now received electronically. Our website allows for electronic filing, we are almost entirely paperless, and we continue to notify individuals of upcoming court dates with e-mails and text reminders.

In 2022, the court was awarded a grant of over \$72,000. The grant includes a kiosk to allow probationers to check in for their appointments. Probationers can be asked to answer questions or give information that is automatically entered into our probation case management system. The kiosk will save not only the probation officer's time but also the time of a probationer who remains in full compliance with the court's conditions. The grant will also allow us to create a virtual courtroom that fully integrates remote hearings into our existing case-management

software. We will be able to conduct virtually every part of a case that would typically occur in the building. The added functionality will allow the court to conduct virtual hearings more often and for more dockets.

I continue to serve on the Supreme Court of Ohio's Commission on Technology and the Courts, and several other committees focused on improving the administration of justice and fostering public confidence in the judicial system. I was also elected a trustee of the Association of Municipal/County Judges of Ohio. I remain actively engaged in educational outreach programs, including visiting with our elementary school students and participating in various discussion panels.

None of this is possible without the hard work of the incredibly capable, diverse, and dedicated court staff. We look forward to continuing to serve our vital purpose of administering justice impartially, without denial or delay.

J.J. Costello has been the Cleveland Heights Municipal Court judge since 2018. There, he oversees all criminal, civil, eviction, housing, and small claims filings. He is a lifelong Cleveland Heights resident, and he and his wife, Alicia, are proudly raising their two sons in Cleveland Heights.

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New Coventry PEACE Park will benefit whole community

Steve Presser

I can't believe it has been 30 years! It seems like yesterday that a small group of Coventry Elementary School parents had a crazy idea to build a big playground around the famous Coventry school sledding hill.

Somewhere after the first wave of volunteers, my wife, Debbie, and I got involved. This was a herculean task to raise a lot of money before social media existed. It was a grassroots approach, with donations gladly accepted, from \$1 to \$10,000. The power of the people got this amazing playground built.

Over 10 days, many of them rainy, we worked with a handful of professional contractors from a specialized playground company. Coordinating this construction with almost 600 volunteers was a monumental task. However, as I always have said, "Let the PTA run the world and it will be a safer, better place!"

Anyone and everyone were welcome. We offered multiple shifts. We provided daycare for volunteers who had kids. We fed the masses. Many Coventry businesses donated food, but the King of Coventry, Tommy, went all out as usual.

There was a job for everyone. Even a guy like me, who can't even replace a lightbulb, became a schlepper and huge-slide builder. The construction was a true barn raising in the Amish sense of the word—okay, a playground raising—that took a village to achieve.

Over the years, I remained involved in the fun at Coventry Park. I initiated the "drive-in" movie series

without cars. I worked with Erick Kauffman, former Coventry PEACE president, to provide music from local bands and the Heights High jazz combo.

Now, 30 years later, we have a tired, old playground that needs to be replaced. What Heights Libraries proposed is pretty darn spectacular—a totally new Coventry PEACE Park, with attention [given] to the environment, natural materials, placement, and the community it serves! With these new plans, arts events and free-form play will continue to flourish.

What does this all mean? It brings life to Coventry, an area that is special to so many. The library will bring intergenerational programs outside. Coventry PEACE Campus, with its many nonprofits and artists, will benefit. The Coventry merchants, like many small businesses that can use a boost, will benefit as well. We'll be able to take our four grandkids to Coventry for a full day of fun. The whole community wins!

What can you do? You don't have to schlep tools or build anything except community. We need you to help raise the funds for this project.

The total project cost is \$1.2 million. We have raised \$613,000. We need to raise \$587,000 more. Help us spread the word! Maybe you know of a family foundation that would consider a donation. Donations can be made online at bit.ly/FFHLPeacePark or sent to the Fund for the Future of Heights Libraries at 2345 Lee Road.

Build it and they will come . . .

Steve Presser and his wife, Debbie Apple-Presser, are 40-year residents of Cleveland Heights' Coventry neighborhood.



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Lack of progress imperils trust in CH government



HEIGHTS OF DEMOCRACY

Deborah Van Kleef and Carla Rautenberg

The city of Cleveland Heights has been through a tough 15 months. With the Seren administration and CH City Council both struggling to demonstrate that they are meeting some—or any—of the serious challenges facing the city, our trust is shaken.

We speak only for ourselves but doubt we're alone.

It would be easy to say that we got what we asked for. After all, both of us actively supported, in this column and elsewhere, changing our city's form of government from council/manager to mayor/council. And we still believe it was the right decision.

In our advocacy, we were not entirely naive. We knew that Cleveland Heights, a populous and diverse suburb, would need an orderly transition to successfully navigate such a major change. Members of Citizens for an Elected Mayor (CEM), the group that spearheaded the Issue 26 campaign, knew it, too.

Along with CEM, the two of us trusted that city council, as constituted in January 2020, would be committed to an orderly transition. Melody Hart and Davida Russell were newly elected council members, while Kahlil Seren and Mary Dunbar had been re-elected. Jason Stein, Michael Ungar and Melissa Yasinow each had two years remaining in their terms. Since Stein, Seren, Hart and Russell had all publicly supported Issue 26, we expected to see a timely, thoughtful transition-planning process. We could not have been more wrong.

In early 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic turned every government in the world on its head, the city soon began livestreaming public meetings. We watched with growing concern as council ignored the vital need to prepare for the coming change.

In March, CH residents Len Friedson, Tony Cuda and Carla Rautenberg submitted a "Timeline for CH Transition to Mayor/Council Government," with seven target dates, culminating in the formation of a transition committee by June 2020. These goals could have been met via online meetings. Instead, nothing happened on schedule; nor was a transition committee ever created. In particular, then council president Jason Stein and vice president Kahlil Seren failed the city and the voters by not prioritizing the transition.

We issued pleas and proposals for transition planning in six increasingly frustrated columns between November 2019 and November 2021.

In the absence of formal preparations, Council Member Hart worked with CEM to present two online fo-

runs, one featuring mayors from South Euclid, University Heights and Maple Heights, and the other focusing on the East Providence, R.I., change (in 2018) from council/manager to mayor/council government.

More than a year after the advent of the new government, Council President Hart invited two former mayors, Mike Summers of Lakewood and Earl Leiken of Shaker Heights, to advise council on its role. On Feb. 3, 2023, they generously spent three hours doing so.

Better late than never? Perhaps. But such experienced people could and should have been brought in well before Cleveland Heights had both a mayor and a council learning on the job.

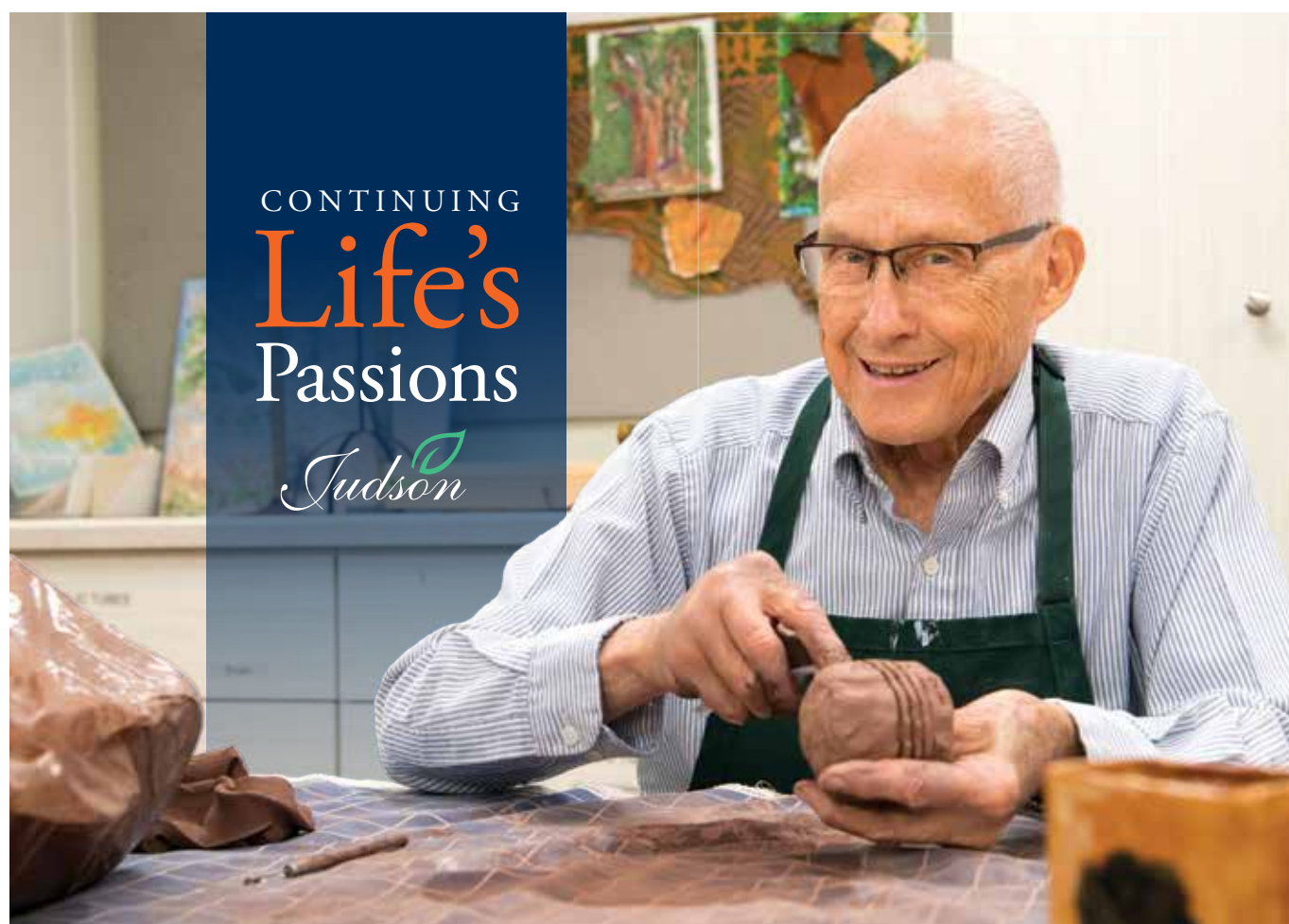
The debacle of the recent appointment to the council seat vacated by Josie Moore has further damaged our trust. Regardless of the outcome, the spectacle of President Hart, Vice President Craig Cobb, and Council Member Anthony Mattox Jr. sandbagging the rest of council at the Feb. 2 special meeting, handing the appointment to Mayor Seren, will not soon be forgotten.

Neither, however, shall we forget a major upside of viewing the videotaped applicant interviews, conducted by the League of Women Voters: Several very knowledgeable and well-qualified young candidates applied.

Some of them may be on the November ballot. We hope so, because we can only vote for people who ac-

tually run. And whatever happens, Cleveland Heights desperately needs a council that's not in the mayor's—any mayor's—pocket.

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



Peter has always been passionate about living, working, and volunteering in University Circle.

From his lifelong work as an astronomer to his recent work in pottery and everything in between, Peter is always searching for new things to explore.

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Heights Community Congress legacy can guide us



THE COMMON GOOD

Susie Kaeser

In February 1972, community activist Doris Allen called a community meeting after a fight at our newly integrating high school injured several students, including her son. At the meeting, Superintendent David Moberly asked the community for help. “Schools can’t fight racism alone,” he said. By naming the problem as racism and calling for a community remedy, Moberly prompted a dozen Catholic and Jewish activists to join with Heights High principal James O’Toole to organize. Their solution was to create the Heights Community Congress (HCC).

HCC was incorporated on

Jan. 1, 1973. After 50 years of groundbreaking activism, it closed its doors on March 1, leaving behind a substantial legacy.

The response to the fight at Heights High put the school district on a path that focuses on educational equity and racial equality, and it put the community in the middle of advancing fair housing and racial respect.

The new organization was a coalition of neighborhood groups, civic and religious organizations, city government and the school district. Its purpose was to mobilize the whole community to fight racism, advance equity and inclusion, and protect racial integration. HCC took aim at racism and kicked it hard. Refusing to be silent, it documented discrimination in lending practices and used that evidence to change federal laws.

HCC formed a housing service to promote homeownership to any-

one interested in living in Cleveland Heights. When realtors continued to undermine integration with racial steering, it confronted the real estate industry and tested the limits of fair-housing law, winning a landmark civil rights case.

It organized residents in every neighborhood and fostered street clubs—the bread and butter of community engagement, problem solving and relationship building. HCC also organized a variety of working groups, including a commission on aging and a landlord-tenant task force, and pushed hard for city policies to protect the housing stock. The organization’s annual house and garden tour raised money for the organization and improved the community’s reputation.

HCC urged all of us to examine our inherited attitudes and behavior related to race and relationships. In doing so, it helped create a standard for civic engage-

ment that, along with our enduring racial diversity, is a strength of our community and part of our identity. HCC provided a foundation upon which we can continue to find new ways to attack all the ways race is baked into the institutions and opportunity structures that define life chances.

Racialization, as we know, is stubborn and has a way of showing up in new forms. It is still alive and is now having an unsettling resurgence in state and national politics. The fight against racial disparities is also having a resurgence with Black Lives Matter and concern among some corporate, religious and independent organizations about the contributions they need to make toward diversity, equity and inclusion.

Cleveland Heights has a unique place in our nation as a rare example of a sustainable integrated community. I am grateful to the HCC and our community elders. Because of them, we did not resegregate within five years of racial change—the predicted outcome in 1970. As we face the 21st-century challenges of inequality in an aging first-ring suburb, in a state where political leaders are retreating from any form of commitment to the well-being of others and are gaining political advantage by promoting hate, we have to find the new form of the HCC.

We may not be able to uproot all aspects of racism for this generation, but we can reject them. We can speak up, organize, use the law, build individual awareness, mobilize and keep our community strong.

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.



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8. The Sewer District has not listened to residents or worked to compromise.
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SaveHorseshoeLake.com

'Get involved' as a UH volunteer

Mike Cook

Invoking the lyrics of soul singer James Brown, University Heights Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan is urging University Heights residents to "get up, get into it, get involved."

The city has revamped its volunteer page, www.universityheights.com/volunteer.

"If you are interested in serving your community," Brennan said, "this is a great place to start."

Brennan said residents can use the website to volunteer to get involved in city activities such as the Memorial Day Parade and Juneteenth. They can also get involved in the more nuts-and-bolts aspects of government.

"We need your experience, your expertise, and your ideas to advise and assist us in setting policy that meets the community's needs, as well as to ensure that our special

events really capture what makes University Heights such a great place to live," said Deanna Bremer Fisher, executive assistant to the mayor on special projects. "We are planning this year's programs now and looking for more people to get involved."

Residents may choose to volunteer for citizens committees that include Sustainability, Facilities and Infrastructure, and Tech Advisory.

"Tell us what you are interested in and what unique qualifications you bring, and get involved," urged Brennan.

Learn more about the opportunities that are available and find a link to the committee application online at www.universityheights.com/citizencommittees.

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

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University Heights City Council Meeting highlights

FEBRUARY 21, 2023



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®

Present were Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan and council members Michelle Weiss (vice mayor), Christopher Cooney, Justin Gould, Brian J. King, John P. Rach, and Sheri Sax. Council Member Barbara Blankfeld was excused early. Also present were Kelly Thomas, clerk of council; Luke McConville, law director; Dennis Kennedy, finance director; and Joseph Ciuni, city engineer.

Recycling ordinance

On first reading, council passed an ordinance for loose recycling services. Council members Cooney and King voted nay.

In her presentation, Council Member Sax said that the December 2022 data show little cost difference in moving to loose recycling when staffing is unchanged. Residents can opt in to recycle. The city will provide bins.

Service Director Jeffrey Pokorny spoke opposing the ordinance, claiming it will require two more trucks and two more people. The prior solid waste study addressed not only recycling; [it considered] all refuse pickup. The conclusion was that automated curbside pickup was the only way to be cost-efficient. As an unfunded mandate, the ordinance will cause other services to suffer. Pokorny noted that the lack of additional trucks and personnel would require the city to have a transfer station (temporary waste site), but University Heights has no place for one. The Service Department staff supports a curbside automated plan.

King maintained that backyard pickup was not fiscally responsible. Rach said council was honoring the will of the people.

Mayor Brennan said the ordinance should not be passed. He maintained that it is contrary to expert reports, administration policy and surveys, and does not address how it will be funded.

Other council actions

Council authorized the contract with Senior Transportation Services after a representative of the service explained the fuel escalator in the proposed contract.

Council approved, with Sax voting nay, the engagement of Stefanik Iosue & Associates as labor counsel for 2023. There are ongoing negotiations with the service, fire, and police unions, and the fees are favorable.

Council approved, with Rach abstaining, an ordinance to increase remuneration for the members of the Architectural Review Board, making it consistent with that of other committees.

LWV Observer: Marilyn Singer.

MARCH 8, 2023

Council members Blankfeld and Cooney were not present. The mayor and the other council members were present, as were

the clerk of council, law director, and city engineer.

SB 1 resolution removed from agenda

Vice Mayor Weiss moved to remove from the agenda the resolution opposing Ohio Senate Bill 1, maintaining this is not a local issue. Council Member King stated this was both local and nonpartisan. Council removed the item, with King voting nay.

Public comments

Judy Sourini, vice president of the CH-UH Board of Education, spoke to support the resolution opposing SB 1. She said it would strip power from the State Board of Education and create a new cabinet post to run the Ohio Department of Education. She claimed it would increase the cost of government, was not requested by the governor, and would concentrate power in a political appointee instead of elected board members. The companion legislation, Ohio House Bill 1, would increase taxes and decrease money for local governments.

Mayor's report

Last week, in Washington, D.C., Mayor Brennan met with representatives of Marcia Fudge, the secretary of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), to discuss the exclusion of UH from lead pipe abatement. Although the city does not share a border with Cleveland, he said it should still be considered a first-ring suburb. He also spoke with HUD officials about getting federal housing vouchers for UH residents.

Along with the lobbyists hired by UH, he met with people from Sen. Sherrod Brown's office and the EPA regarding funding for needed sewer projects.

Brennan did not sign the ordinance regarding contracting procedures for professional services excluding the position of the city engineer. The city will lose the current engineer at the end of 2023 without changes to the ordinance. However, under the charter, the engineer is a mayoral appointee, so the mayor will follow the charter, not the ordinance, and appoint an engineer. Without his signature, the ordinance went into effect Feb. 14.

He also did not sign the loose-recycling ordinance, saying the ordinance's mandate is unfunded and cannot be achieved. The ordinance went into effect March 1. On that date, Service Director Pokorny tendered his letter of resignation, effective April 1.

Council actions

Council passed an ordinance establishing pay rates for elected officials. The ordinance clears up ambiguities and does not increase pay for current elected officials.

LWV Observer: Marilyn Singer.

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UH connects eligible seniors with transportation service

Mike Cook

University Heights City Council recently renewed its contract with Senior Transportation Connection (STC), enabling the service to continue to be available to adult city residents who are 60 or older, or disabled.

All clients or personal care attendants must be registered to use the service. Call 216-265-1489 to request an STC registration be sent, or download it from the STC website, ridestc.org.

Once a resident's registration application is approved, STC is available to transport that individual to medical appointments, senior centers, grocery stores, and more.

STC's goal is to keep passengers connected to their community activities, medical care and hot meals with friends. STC can accommodate wheelchairs, walkers and other mobility devices. If using a wheelchair, the client must have a ramp at his or her residence. Personal care attendants can accompany clients who need their assistance.

STC's drivers escort passengers door-to-door to ensure safety and provide a personal touch. They will help with up to five bags on shopping trips, and their training in how to keep riders safe includes learning how to assist those who use a walker, cane or wheelchair.



UH City Council has renewed the city's contract with Senior Transportation Connection.

Drivers also are certified in CPR, and complete the National Safety Council Defensive Driving training module.

To reserve a ride, clients speak to a real person in STC's Cleveland-based call center.

Once approved, clients may make reservations for trips three days or more in advance. The service is available weekdays only, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Because local governments, including University Heights, subsidize most of the cost of the trip, STC is able to keep its fees low. Currently, there is a total fare of \$6 (\$3 each way) per trip.

STC also accepts charitable donations and grants to help cover

its services' costs.

STC was founded in 2005, after Cuyahoga County transportation providers began exploring coordination and shared services.

The nonprofit STC received initial funding through Mt. Sinai Health Care Foundation, Cleveland Foundation, United Way Senior Success Vision Council, Jewish Community Federation's Community Services for Older Adults, Saint Luke's Foundation, Deaconess Community Foundation, the Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland, and others.

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

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Coventry Living Room coming this summer to Pekar Park



A Coventry Living Room design session.

Sarah Wolf

The Coventry Living Room Project is a placemaking initiative that seeks to create an interactive, welcoming, outdoor gathering space for the community in a spot that is currently underutilized—Harvey Pekar Park, at the corner of Coventry Road and Euclid Heights Boulevard.

Led by neighborhood resident Cole Ware, in partnership with the Coventry Village Special Improvement District and the Coventry Neighborhood Group, planning began in fall 2022 and continued through winter 2023.

Ware hosted an online forum, two community design sessions, and had dozens of conversations with community stakeholders.

Based on the feedback generated by the planning process, Ware reports that the Coventry Living

Room will be designed as an inclusive space for the whole community, offering shade from the sun, greenery, public art, and a variety of seating options, all separated from the busy nearby intersection.

“Between now and this summer, we turn to the work of bringing that vision to reality by writing grants, finalizing approvals, staining wood, and potting plants,” said Ware. “It will be a team effort—an effort that will reward us with a space that builds the type of trust that turns a neighborhood into a community. It’s a vision well worth working toward.”

To learn more about this project, including how to get involved, visit coventryvillage.org/neighborhood-news/what-is-the-coventry-living-room-project or contact Ware at ware.cole@gmail.com.

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

Traffic-calming plan underway for Noble Elementary School neighborhood

Gail Larson

Traffic around Noble Elementary School is a major concern for the neighborhood, particularly when children are dropped off in the morning and picked up in the afternoon.

Principal Patrick Carpenter has worked with Mayor Kahlil Seren to define the issues and open up communication with residents of Parkdale and Montevista roads, and of the short section of Ardoon Street that connects them.

In January and February, the mayor held two meetings with neighbors of Noble Elementary School. Though small numbers of residents turned out, the mayor made certain all who attended had an opportunity to express their thoughts. Speeding on the streets was identified as a big factor contributing to the feeling that students could be harmed.

At the end of each meeting, the mayor established that a majority of attendees approved of one-way traffic around the school during designated times or during school hours. That would enable the left

lane to allow through traffic to pass the cars in the right lane, adjacent to the school, dropping off and picking up students.

To augment the one-way streets plan, participants suggested adding tools such as new signage with flashing warning lights, and stop signs for the corner of Montevista and Ardoon.

As of Feb. 25, there are stop signs at that intersection.

Because implementing any plan will require extra attention from school parents, staff, the police department and city administration, the mayor and Principal Carpenter are considering a pilot program that could begin when students return from spring break.

Cleveland Heights City Council’s Public Safety and Health Committee meets the third Monday of each month. Its next meeting is April 17, at 10 a.m.

Gail Larson has lived near Noble Elementary School since 2014. She is currently a member of Cleveland Heights City Council and chair of its Public Safety and Health Committee. To reach Larson, call 253-691-2714, or e-mail her at glarson@clevelandheights.gov.



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CH city administrator resigns

Kim Sergio Inglis

In a March 20 news release, the city of Cleveland Heights announced that its first city administrator, Joseph Sinnott, had resigned, effective March 31.

The city administrator position was mandated by the 2019 city charter amendment, in which the city's government changed to an elected mayor/council form.

Mayor Kahlil Seren's appointment of Sinnott was confirmed by city council one year ago, on March 21, 2022. Seren selected Sinnott, a former mayor of Erie, Pa., from an applicant field of more than 50.

The news release reads, in part: "Sinnott thanked Mayor Seren and City Council for his appointment and praised the city's progress during the last year. 'As a former Mayor, I believe Mayor Seren is leading Cleveland Heights in the right direction and making the most of its new government. Working in Cleveland Heights has been a great experience—my only regret is that I won't be here to see the results of the groundwork we've laid

over the last year.'

"Sinnott told City Council that he had not intended to leave this early in his tenure and had not been looking for another job. 'An opportunity in government back in Pennsylvania was too compelling to pass up,' Sinnott said.

"Mayor Seren praised Sinnott's work as City Manager. 'Joe was the right person at the right time, and it's a shame to lose such a great partner,' Seren said. 'Joe's understanding of government and attention to detail have been critical to restructuring the city's functions and retooling its systems. Joe Sinnott will be a hard act to follow, but his work this year has set the stage well for our next City Administrator's success.'"

The full news release can be viewed on the clevelandheights.gov home page, under News & Announcements.

Kim Sergio Inglis is editor-in-chief of the Heights Observer, and is a former, long-time Cuyahoga County master gardener volunteer who is all about native plants these days.

SAG re-forms as citizens' group

Kristine Pagsuyoin

FutureHeights is pleased to announce the formation of the Severance Action Group (SAG) as a newly independent citizens' group dedicated to advocating for the redevelopment of the Severance mall property.

In January 2020, SAG formed as a subcommittee of the FutureHeights Planning and Development Committee.

Since that time, SAG has sought to take a more active role in the community, to directly engage with citizens to put forward strategies to develop the property into an area that would better serve residents and be sustainable for decades to come.

FutureHeights and SAG members believe the group will have more flexibility to grow and to

engage citizens as an independent organization promoting the development of the Severance property into a viable destination to be enjoyed by all residents.

FutureHeights agrees the Severance mall property is a great opportunity for the community and believes that citizens ought to have a voice in protecting and redeveloping the area.

FutureHeights will assist SAG during its transition to become an independent group, and will continue to offer guidance and support as it does for other neighborhood and community groups serving Cleveland Heights.

To connect with SAG, contact Larry Nowak, SAG chairman, at severanceactiongroup@gmail.com.

Kristine Pagsuyoin is the executive director of FutureHeights.

FUTUREHEIGHTS continued from page 1

provides FutureHeights with the foundation that enables it to oversee the rehabilitation of vacant houses, publish the *Heights Observer*, develop neighborhood leaders, provide mini-grants to individuals and groups wanting to improve their community, and produce large, fun, citywide events, like the Music Hop each September."

Everyone in the Heights Community is invited to attend the May 4 gathering.

Meet and mingle with FutureHeights staff and board members, and other residents and stakeholders, in the organization's newly

spruced up office space.

It will be an evening filled with food, prizes and special announcements, and an opportunity to learn more about how you can add your "force" to supporting FutureHeights' mission, and the community.

FutureHeights is located in the Coventry PEACE Campus building (formally Coventry Elementary School), at 2843 Washington Blvd.

Jessica Schantz is the e-news and distribution manager at the Heights Observer, the office manager for FutureHeights, and a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights.

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Cleveland Heights City Council

Meeting highlights

FEBRUARY 13, 2023 - special meeting

Present were Mayor Kahlil Seren, and council members Melody Joy Hart (council president), Craig Cobb (council vice president), Janine Boyd, Tony Cuda, Gail Larson, Anthony Mattox Jr., and Davida Russell. Also present were Addie Balester, clerk of council; and William Hanna, law director.

Blighted property
Council declared the former Hillside Dairy/Police Annex at 1418 Warrensville Center Road a blighted property and approved an agreement with Partners Environmental Consulting Inc. to prepare environmental assessments. The cost is not to exceed \$67,405 and will be covered by Community Development Block Grant funds.

Cedar-Lee-Meadowbrook
Council amended the development agreement with F&C Development Inc. for the Cedar-Lee-Meadowbrook project. An added property provision of the development agreement required the developer to reimburse the city's costs for acquiring additional properties, up to \$725,000. This amendment increases the reimbursement amount to \$816,000 and revises the payment schedule.

LWV Observer: Jill Tatem.

FEBRUARY 21, 2023 - regular meeting

The mayor and all council members were present.

Public comments
Meryl Johnson, State Board of Education member for District 11, urged opposition to Ohio Senate Bill 1 (SB 1), which would change the duties of the State Board of Education.

Mayor's report
Mayor Seren reported that just-promoted Captain Williams is the city's first Black police captain.

Council actions
Council authorized cooperation with the Ohio Director of Transportation and appropriated \$151,515 for improvements on Monticello Boulevard, including traffic signal modifications and curb ramp upgrades. The city's costs are subject to adjustment when actual costs are determined.

Council approved a resolution opposing SB 1, which would transfer most powers and duties of the State Board of Education to the governor.

Council authorized the issuance and sale of economic development tax increment financing revenue bonds for the Cedar-Lee-Meadowbrook project, principal amount not to exceed \$14.2 million.

Committee of the Whole
Nancy Levin, Heights Libraries director, updated council on the library's 2023-25 strategic plan, highlighting diversity-equity-inclusion goals; community-workforce and technology-skills development programs; efforts to combat censorship and disinformation; and safety, security, and mental health programs. She also described the status of satellite locations and services during the Noble branch renovation, and plans for the Coventry PEACE Campus.

LWV Observer: Jill Tatem.



FEBRUARY 27, 2023 - special meeting

Council Member Davida Russell was not present. The mayor and the other council members were present.

Safe Routes to School
Council authorized the mayor to apply for and accept the Ohio Department of Transportation's Safe Routes to School project funding for the school travel plan for Noble, Fairfax, and Boulevard elementary schools and Heights High.

Cedar Fairmount SID
Council authorized the advancement of city funds to the Cedar Fairmount Special Improvement District (SID) Inc., to be reimbursed through tax assessments.

Committee of the Whole
Mayor Seren briefly described eight programs for which ARPA funds might be used. This was a preliminary draft indicating priorities and directions, to begin a conversation with council. Council discussed criteria for prioritizing allocations, assessment of community impact, funding proposals from community organizations, community feedback on proposed programs, and next steps.

LWV Observer: Jill Tatem.

MARCH 6, 2023 - regular meeting

Council Vice President Craig Cobb was not present. The mayor and the other council members were present.

Council actions
Council approved a resolution opposing Ohio House Bill 1, which cuts and flattens Ohio's income tax rates and eliminates \$1.2 billion annually in state payments to local governments.

Council acknowledged receipt from the Coventry Village SID of a five-year plan for public services and improvements.

Council authorized an agreement with the Home Repair Resource Center for the use of up to \$44,000 of U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development HOME Funds to administer the city's down-payment assistance loan program.

Council amended city code section 505.06, subsection (a), "Animals Prohibited in Public Parks," to permit dogs in city parks provided they are leashed, properly cared for, and cleaned up after. They may not enter playground areas, tennis and basketball courts, ballfields, picnic shelters, swimming pool premises, splash parks, sledding hills, or gardens. The mayor may prohibit dogs during public events, provided signs are erected during prohibited times.

Council member comments
Gail Larson announced that the MetroHealth minority men's health fair will be held April 27, 5-8:30 p.m. at three locations, including the MetroHealth Cleveland Heights Medical Center at Severance Circle.

Davida Russell announced that the June 10 "You Talk, I Listen" session on landlord-tenant law would include a program on pathways to home ownership.

LWV Observer: Jill Tatem.

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Community cleanup planned for April 23



Girl Scouts cleaned up Barbara Boyd Park in September 2022.

Natalie Elwell

An Earth Month Spring Cleanup & Social (SC&S) is planned for Sunday, April 23, 2 to 5 p.m.

Sponsored by FutureHeights, Coventry Neighborhood Group, and the Cleveland Heights Green Team (CHGT), SC&S is a communitywide event that invites residents, neighborhood groups, schools, business districts, and faith-based organizations to come together to act. Its goal is to pair community service with community-building, through outreach and inclusion, while promoting environmental awareness and stewardship.

According to Catalina Wagers, co-founder of CHGT, actions can range from helping an elderly neighbor spruce up their yard, to neighborhood litter cleanups, prepping community garden beds, and more.

According to Coventry resident Cole Ware, Coventry Neighborhood Group was inspired to be of service to its neighborhood as part of its community-building efforts. This spark of an idea—to pair socializing with environmental action—ignited a plan for organizing SC&S during Earth Month.

“When Cole shared this idea with us, we saw it as something that could be scaled across the entire Heights community,” said Wagers.

Cindie Carroll-Pankhurst, one of the founding members of the Millikin Neighborhood Group, said that group

is recruiting neighbors to undertake three efforts for the April 23 SC&S event: cleaning up Millikin Woods, cleaning up along Andrews Road, and reaching out to MetroHealth and Spectrum to address the amount of trash that blows from their Severance facilities into the adjacent woods.

“Our group was formed in response to safety concerns,” said Carroll-Pankhurst, “then realized that community-building was essential to improve safety and to protect our green spaces. The community was a forceful advocate for the preservation of the woods, threatened by efforts to sell the woods for development and later by MetroHealth’s expansion at Severance.”

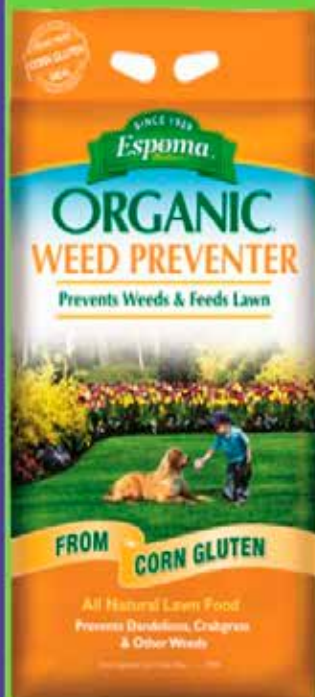
Last year during Earth Month, CHGT crowdsourced 55 environmentally focused events across the Heights. “The strong response from the community serves as evidence that building community through action and environmental advocacy are organically interconnected,” noted Wagers.

For additional information about the April 23 SC&S, and to add an event to the day’s lineup, visit www.chgreenteam.org.

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

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Community conversation to explore ‘Our Public Schools’ April 26

Sarah Wolf

Heights community members, including students, parents, and district alumni, teachers and staff, are invited and encouraged to participate in the first Crowdsourced Conversations forum of 2023, on the topic of “Our Public Schools.”

The event, organized by FutureHeights and Reaching Heights, and in partnership with other community groups and organizations, will take place on Wednesday, April 26, 7–8:30 p.m., at Heights High (13263 Cedar Road).

Attendees will participate in small group discussions geared toward discovering what actions (small, medium, or large) everyday residents can take to “be the change they wish to see” in the community, especially related to public education.

Every small group will have

a facilitator to help guide the conversation and a notetaker to record ideas as they emerge. After the event, participants will receive a copy of their group’s notes and have the opportunity to stay connected to others whom they met on event night.

The discussion questions will be generated from data collected in the communitywide survey on the topic of “Our Public Schools” that was widely shared in the Heights throughout the month of March.

Additionally, a resource page highlighting event takeaways and action steps will be created for the FutureHeights website by the discussion group participants and event organizers.

This free event is in-person only. Masks will be optional. Advance registration is encouraged. To reserve a spot, visit www.futureheights.org/



Housing was the topic of a June 2022 Crowdsourced Conversation.

cc23-our-public-schools. For additional information, send an e-mail to swolf@futureheights.org.

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

STUDENT ART continued from page 1

who may not have been here since the COVID shutdowns.”

The artwork is displayed throughout the building—in the main lobby, the teen and children’s rooms, and in the HKIC Art Gallery.

The Lee Road branch, at 2345 Lee Road, is open Monday through

Thursday, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.; and Sunday, 1–5 p.m.

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

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Resist is a collaborative piece by a group of Roxboro Middle School students.



This is me, J'Mear, by Monticello Middle School student J'Mear Collins.

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Art students at Heights High used a wide variety of materials for their creations.

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SCAN FOR FREE SIGN-UP

Monthlong bag drive aims to reduce plastic waste



Last year, CHGT and its partners collected 650 re-usable bags.

Catalina Wagers

More than one trillion plastic bags are used annually worldwide, with an estimated 100 billion used by U.S. consumers. That equates to about 1,500 bags per family each year. Cuyahoga County estimates that 99% of the bags end up as litter or hauled to a landfill.

The state of Ohio has passed legislation that prohibits cities and towns from passing their own bans or fees on plastic bags. Any existing local laws on this topic are preempted by the state law.

Undeterred by the state legislation, Cuyahoga County’s departments of Consumer Affairs and Sustainability are actively working with retailers and residents to curb the use of single-use plastic bags in the county.

“The power of a single individual action, such as giving up plastic bags and instead opting for reusable bags, could, if embraced by the masses, reduce the number of plastic bags used by the billions,” said Natalie Elwell, co-founder of the Cleveland Heights Green Team (CHGT).

Based on the incredible community response to last year’s Reusable Bag Collection Drive in the Heights, this April—Earth Month—CHGT and the Nature

Center at Shaker Lakes is partnering with the county for a second collection drive.

Clean and gently used reusable bags can be dropped off throughout the month at the two Cleveland Heights Phoenix Coffee locations, on Coventry Road and Lee Road; and at the Nature Center at Shaker Lakes. In University Heights, collection bins will be located at the University Heights Library and at John Carroll University. For more information visit www.chgreenteam.org.

The reusable bag drive gets excess/unused bags out of private homes and into the community, where they are distributed to people who need bags and may not have the ability or inclination to purchase their own.

According to Katharyne Starinsky, program officer for Cuyahoga County’s Bring Your Own Bags program, “The county is committed to helping retailers eliminate plastic bags from their checkouts and educating consumers about the benefits of bringing their own bags.”

Starinsky works with community groups and green teams throughout the county to help them conduct their own bag drives and distribute them to area nonprofits who serve people in need.

Also in April, the county will announce the recipients of its Sustainable Stores Grant, which provides funding to retailers to make changes to their business operations in order to eliminate plastic checkout bags.

Additionally, said Starinsky, “The county will be launching the Sustainable Stores Map to celebrate and promote businesses who are plastic bag free.” To learn more about the Sustainable Stores Program, visit cuyahogacounty.us/byobags.

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

Celebrate Trails on April 22

Elaine Price

Celebrate Trails Day, a national celebration established by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy in 2013, encourages people to get outside and enjoy the country’s trails and trail systems. Observed on the fourth Saturday in April, Celebrate Trails Day shares a date this year with Earth Day—April 22.

Here in Cleveland Heights, on April 22, 1 p.m., Boulevard Neighbors is hosting an all-ages hike of a two-mile section of Forest Hill Park. Built in 1938, as part of John D. Rockefeller’s estate, the historic urban park encompasses 235 acres—a mix of woods and fields, as well as a large lagoon.

The hike will proceed along the paved Forest Hill Pathway, which circles both the Cleveland Heights and East Cleveland sections of the park. Hikers should meet at the picnic shelter at the parking lot off of Lee Road, just north of Monticello Boulevard. For information, contact

Rachel DeGolia, at degolias@gmail.com.

Cleveland Heights also offers trails through Cain, Cumberland and Forest Hill parks, and is close to the Euclid Creek and Acacia reservations, the Shaker Lakes trails, and the Lake-to-Lakes trail that runs along Doan Brook all the way to Lake Erie.

Rails-to-Trails’s website, www.railstotrails.org, offers information on how to be part of Celebrate Trails day, and encourages participants to register their event on its website, where it will show up on a national map. It offers suggestions and tools for promoting local hikes and rides, including downloadable templates and a selfie frame.

Elaine Price is an environmental professional who is now doing greenspace work for county government. A longtime resident of Cleveland Heights, Price is active in the Boulevard Neighbors block association.

Quiet Clean Heights urges noise pollution awareness

Alice Jeresko

Quiet Clean Heights is an initiative that seeks to raise awareness of the health and environmental impacts of noise and air pollution in our residential neighborhoods. Two national campaigns share some “resonance” with our mission this month: Autism Acceptance Month, and International Noise Awareness Day (noiseawareness.org) on April 26.

As lawncare season begins, Quiet Clean Heights intends to advocate for quieter, healthier neighborhoods by promoting low-impact lawncare alternatives.

The CDC warns that sound intensity, the penetrating energy of sound, is a greater risk to hearing than loudness, especially at levels above 85 decibels. Gas leaf blowers produce noise of a particularly intense and penetrating quality, typically at 80-85 decibels. Operators are at highest risk of hearing damage and should wear appropriate hearing protection. However, unprotected residents and pedestrians have no control over the sound penetrating windows, walls and ears.

Law protects us from exposure to second-hand smoke in public places, but few options exist to control external noise and dust intrusions into homes. The Quiet Clean movement, under varying names, has led positive change in over 150 municipalities and counties. Quiet Communities Inc., founded by health and environmental scientist Jamie Banks, is dedicated to help-

ing communities reduce health and environmental harm from noise and pollution. For more information, visit <https://quietcommunities.org>

Autism Spectrum Disorder is a broad diagnosis for individuals with neurosensory differences. An estimated 90% of autistics experience sound sensitivities, or hyperacusis. Sounds acceptable or unnoticeable to a “typical” person may be distracting, overwhelmingly distressing, or even physically painful to an autistic.

A large portion of the general population is also affected by unwanted noise and hearing disorders. There is growing research into the effects of noise pollution on human health, especially stress levels and cardiovascular responses. It is an emerging public health issue with noise-induced hearing loss on the rise—especially among young people.

Cleveland Heights has a culture that promotes kindness, mindfulness and inclusion. Quiet Clean Heights urges residents to accept that some people are born with sound sensitivities, and assume, if one neighbor complains, there are others suffering in silence. Be aware of noise exposures and take action to protect hearing.

To share your thoughts or experiences, contact quietcleanhts@icloud.com.

Alice Jeresko is an environmental advocate who moved to Cleveland Heights in 1998.

Going shopping?

Here are 4 reasons to buy from local small businesses:

1. They're part of the community's character
2. They recirculate more of your money locally
3. They support local causes and institutions
4. If you don't support them now, they may not be around later

Published by Future Heights

Heights residents excel at Accelerate



SoundBender Institute's Keenan Williams, left, and Stephen Prewitt, right, with CLC Board Chair Bill Caster.



Myesha Watkins, right, with Accelerate category sponsor Hannah Belsito of Destination Cleveland.

Dani Gosky

Cleveland Heights residents Myesha Watkins and Keenan Williams were among the top winners at “Accelerate 2023: Citizens Make Change,” the annual civic-pitch competition presented by the Cleveland Leadership Center (CLC) in partnership with Citizens Bank and other organizations.

Watkins and Williams were among the six finalists selected from 32 pitches, each focused on making a meaningful impact in the Cleveland area. More than 550 people attended the Feb. 23 event at the Huntington Convention Center of Cleveland.

Judges selected Watkins and Williams as finalists in their categories. Each received \$2,000, membership in the Economic and Community Development Institute (*ecdi.org*)—a small-business support organization—and an opportunity to pitch at Northeast Ohio SEA Change (*seachange.org*).

Watkins’ pitch was for an initiative called “Another Homegirl,” which produces community-building events for local and visiting women in the Cleveland area. She envisions growing her programs to build a safe and enriching community experience for all women who participate.

“Women do not need anything more to worry about,” Watkins explained, stating that she plans to use her Accelerate winnings to provide

the events, which usually cost \$40 to \$45, free of charge. Watkins also praised the networking component of the events, saying, “The prize is not always monetary. The prize may be the connections you make.”

Williams with business partner Stephen Prewitt presented their SoundBender Institute project (*soundbenderinstitute.com*), a DJ school located on Mayfield Road in Cleveland Heights. They started SoundBender in March 2022 and since then have been teaching children and adults how to deejay in as little as four weeks. The goal, Williams said, is for students to gain socio-emotional skills that go far beyond scratching.

Initial funding for SoundBender Institute relied mostly on one-on-one meetings and phone calls, Williams said. He recognized how much easier it is to ask for the support needed for the institute using the skills acquired through the Accelerate pitch practice, run by CLC. “You win just by being in the room,” he said. “Since Accelerate, the influx of opportunities has been absolutely amazing.”

Williams and Prewitt plan to use their Accelerate winnings to purchase mobile-friendly DJ equipment. The smaller equipment will help them reach their goal to run DJ mini-camps at schools such as Heights High and Monticello Middle School.

Both Williams and Watkins

suggested that others who have ideas to make a difference should consider pitching at a future Accelerate. “Swallow your nerves and just go for it,” Watkins said. “You are going to walk away a winner, whether as a finalist or through making connections. Give it your all because you are going to win regardless.”

The 10th anniversary Accelerate competition will take place in February 2024. Pitch submissions will be accepted in November. Details are available online at *www.clevelandleads.org/accelerate*.

Dani Gosky is the board liaison and program associate at the Cleveland

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Cleveland Heights – University
Heights Board of Education

Meeting highlights

FEBRUARY 21, 2023 – work session

Board members present were Beverly Wright (president), Dan Heintz, James Posch, and Jodi Sourini. Malia Lewis was absent. Also present were Superintendent Elizabeth Kirby and Treasurer Scott Gainer.

Academic success update

The superintendent’s team presented an overview of attendance, literacy, mathematics, and graduation data for the first semester of the 2022–23 school year. The data were compared against the district’s goals.

- Attendance: The district is close to its attendance goal of at least 89.4 percent, and is investigating ways to decrease chronic absenteeism. Student attendance has increased compared to last year.
- Literacy: Third- and sixth-grade students were not on track to meet the district’s literacy goals. Tenth-grade students were approaching being on track for this goal.
- Mathematics: Third-, sixth-, and ninth-grade students were not on track to meet mathematics goals.
- Graduation: The district’s graduation rate goal is 91.4 percent. Administrators anticipate the goal [will] be reached by the summer graduation.

The board discussed the goals the district had set, with the intent to stretch for excellence. Dan Heintz [said he] wanted the public to understand that barely a majority of students achieves many of the standards set by the state. The board also discussed whether teachers using materials that were not board-approved was a problem or a mark of good teaching.

LWV Observer: Robin Koslen.

MARCH 7, 2023 - regular meeting

All board members were present, as were the superintendent and treasurer.

School Spotlight

Fairfax Elementary School Cabaret celebrated the cooperation between the school and community. Principal Florence Masella thanked her staff and the PTA. Vocal music teacher Tamar Gray praised the parents and PTA.

Monticello Middle School teacher Jon Diligente presented the robotics program, which offers Cuyahoga Community College credit to participating eighth-grade students. Students gain programming skills, hone math skills, and learn to work together in an innovative environment.

Teacher Leslie Garrett and students presented the International Baccalaureate (IB) service learning project. The IB students identified a need in the community and developed a plan of action. For the project, IB students tutor at Noble and Oxford elementary schools.

Diversity and equity

The Equity Task Force Team, staff, and students have watched part two of the documentary “Who We Are.” Cleveland State University’s Heather Hill facilitated the discussion

that followed. Malia Lewis commented that after the “Who We Are” showing, she was in conversation with students who want to form an afterschool organization to explore equity and racial disparity at the high school.

Concerning other diversity matters, the human resources department will partner with the Insight Education Group to continue work to recruit and retain staff of color. State grant funds will pay for implementation.

ELA curriculum

Christina Bauer, director of curriculum and instruction, presented the recommendation for the English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum and took questions. She discussed other districts that have used the curriculum, the percentage of teachers who recommended the curriculum, and the diversity represented in the materials. The board will vote in April on whether to accept the curriculum.

Treasurer’s report

In his latest “Three Things” presentation, Treasurer Gainer discussed:

- The district earning, for the second year, the Ohio Auditor of State Award with Distinction.
- Approval to use an independent public accounting firm for the audit process. The district pays \$50,000 to \$75,000 per year to be audited by the state. Dan Heintz [noted] that private schools are not audited and do not pay the state for the process.
- Elimination of the rollback for new levies approved after July 2013.

He also noted that Ohio House Bill 1 (HB 1), if passed, would jeopardize public services by eliminating rollbacks, affecting schools, libraries, parks, and more. The effects of HB 920 (inflation rollback, which is in the Ohio Constitution) would not be eliminated by HB 1.

The Fair School Funding Plan and the voucher program are in the governor’s proposed education budget.

Board comments and announcements

The Threat Assessment Management Guide has been completed. Teams were trained Feb. 28. Implementation begins in April.

Jodi Sourini asked whether Advanced Placement (AP) Calculus BC (an advanced Calculus AP course) will be offered every year. Currently, it is offered every other year. Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services Felicia Gould said she would review the rotation of AP classes and evaluate the request.

Sourini praised the “shadow” days at the various schools, designed to help students make school transitions, such as from middle school to high school or from elementary school to middle school.

LWV Observer: Rosemarie Fairman.

Documents for all board meetings can be accessed at www.chuh.org/BoardofEducation.aspx. Board meetings are livestreamed on the district’s at www.youtube.com/CHUH-Schools and recorded for later viewing.

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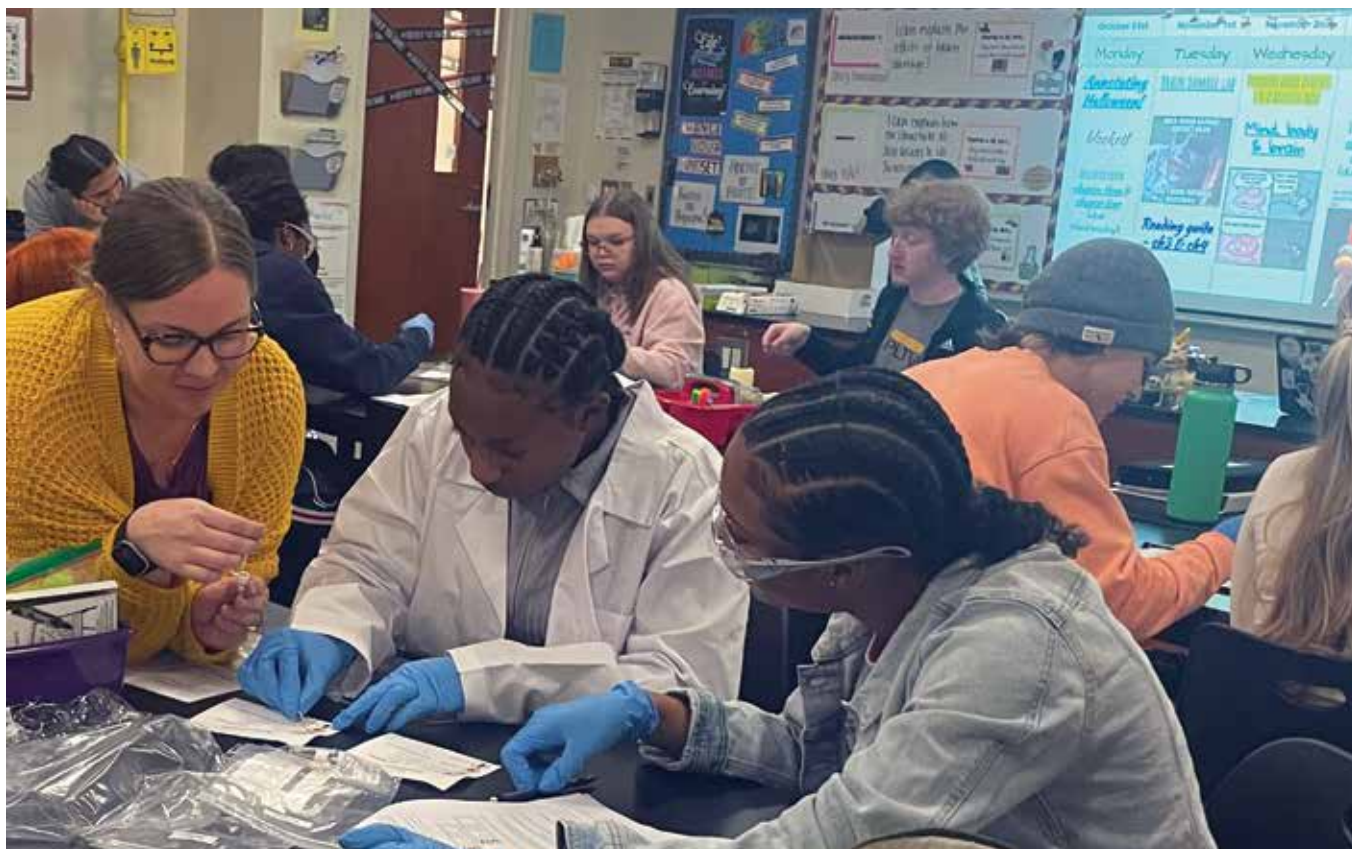
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Heights Observer April 1, 2023

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www.heightsobserver.org

CHHS offers college-level neuroscience course



Students engage in a lab under Nicole Zubik's guidance.

Krissy Dietrich Gallagher

According to Kenyon College, Cleveland Heights High School is the only school in the state, and one of a handful across the country, to offer its students a college-level neuroscience class. The one-semester course, new to Heights this year, is taught by Nicole Zubik. It provides students with four college credits from Kenyon, plus credit for one full year of high school science.

More than that, Introduction to Neuroscience: Perspective and Emotion gives students a glimpse into how their brains work. They ponder questions such as, Can we control our emotions or only how we react to them? and, What's happening in our brains when we feel sad, angry, or happy?

Zubik brings everything back to hard science, connecting content to human brain development. The students appreciate that what they're learning is relevant to their lives. "We actually learn how science relates to our emotional well-being," said Nico, an 11th-grader.

From a teaching perspective, Zubik appreciates the curricular free-

dom she has with College Credit Plus courses. She has more flexibility and an opportunity to work closely with a Kenyon professor. She described the class as "not about memorization. It's about application to the real world. I really wanted to teach a course that was meaningful, especially after what these kids all experienced during the pandemic. Their emotional health is so important."

Students enrolled in the course for a variety of reasons. Several said they intend to pursue science or medical careers, such as senior Ngoye, who is also taking anatomy and plans to follow a pre-med track in college next year. "I knew getting this foundation would be beneficial to me," she said.

Senior Jaiyah plans to major in biology [at college] and has taken this course along with anatomy, AP biology and AP psychology, which Jaiyah noted has "so many connections to neuroscience."

The biggest reason that students say they gravitated to this course has nothing to do with the material being taught and everything to do with the person who's teaching it.

"Ms. Zubik's name radiates

around this school," said senior Cameron.

"Everyone who's ever had Ms. Zubik just raves about her," said sophomore Sheriden.

"I like the vibe and energy of this class," said Mosijah, who plans to major in film and photography [in college]. "It's really about Ms. Zubik . . . she makes it all worthwhile."

That "vibe" is apparent as soon as one walks into the class: Students

are eagerly engaged in discussion, and the room has a welcoming feel, with battery-operated candles on each desk replacing the typical glare of overhead lights. Many students return during their lunch periods, choosing to sit and talk with one another, or ask questions of their teacher, during their 40-minute break.

Zubik said she is thrilled to be providing students with the opportunity to earn college credits without tuition payments or the need for transportation, stating, "This is what equitable access looks like."

"I want the kids who are going to struggle with college-level work to struggle here with me, where they have the support," said Zubik.

Next year, students will have the opportunity to take another equally relevant course, Neuroscience of College Life: Sleep and Stress. Noting that she frequently receives e-mails or completed assignments from students at 2 or 3 a.m., Zubik said, "They really need to understand why sleep is so important to their brain development and ability to function."

Students need a 3.0 GPA, or 2.7 with a teacher's recommendation, to register for the Introduction to Neuroscience course.

Krissy Dietrich Gallagher, a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights, is a freelance writer under contract with the CH-UH City School District.

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Register now for Reaching Heights' benefit 'Bee'

Jen Holland

Does seeing misspelled words make you cringe? Do you sometimes suppress the urge to spellcheck your coworkers' emails? Or, are you an average speller but a phenomenal supporter of the Heights community and its public schools?

The annual Reaching Heights Spelling Bee is a perfect way to support Heights public schools while also having fun. This spelling bee for adults is silly, campy, and nerdy in the best possible ways.

Registration is now open for this year's Bee, to be held on Wednesday, May 10, at the Heights High auditorium.

At the Bee, teams of three work together to correctly spell one word in each round, while also taking part in fun traditions that make the annual event a "honey-sweet" time for spellers and spectators alike.

Contestants wear creative costumes, sport "punny" team names,

and even sing their answers to earn spelling mulligans.

The longtime lineup features die-hard spellers representing law firms, city councils, mayors, business districts, arts organizations, neighborhood groups, churches, libraries, universities, and PTAs, each seeking to dethrone the prior year's reigning champions. What unites a team can be as simple as a love of spelling, community, and public education.

Reaching Heights (www.reachingheights.org) brings together community resources to create high-quality student programming and fund grants for CH-UH teachers and student groups. As its signature fundraiser, the Bee plays an essential part in helping Reaching Heights achieve its mission and goals, while celebrating the CH-UH school district's excellent education and commitment to student success.

Nearly 90% of the funds raised by the annual Reaching Heights Spelling Bee comes from the \$500



The Mayors' Team—CH Mayor Kahlil Seren, UH Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan, and South Euclid Council-Member-at-Large Susan Hardy (filling in for SE Mayor Georgine Welo)—at the 2022 Bee.

team registration fees. While many teams raise the registration fee themselves, Reaching Heights also connects teams who can't reach that amount with community resources to ensure that everyone who wants to participate can do so.

If you know two other spellers ready to join you as a team, you can register online now, at www.reach-

ingheights.org/spelling-bee-registration. Or, if you want to be part of the event but don't yet have two other people to make up a team, send an email to jen@reachingheights.org, and Reaching Heights will help connect you with other spellers to form a team.

Jen Holland is the program manager of Reaching Heights.

Wiffleball tourney will benefit Heights baseball

Krissy Dietrich Gallagher

The Heights community is invited to participate in the first annual wiffleball tournament, to benefit Heights High baseball. The tournament will be held on the turf field at Denison Park on Sunday, April 16, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Anyone is welcome to create a team and register. Teams can comprise four to six players of any age and ability.

There are two divisions for which teams can register, depending on how competitive a team may be: There is an open bracket for the young or for anyone who is feeling less competitive, and an over-14 bracket.

Food will be available for pur-

chase at the tournament, as will raffle tickets for chances to win gift baskets.

The \$60 registration will benefit the Heights Baseball Boosters. The booster club supports the high school's three baseball teams by funding everything from pizza lunch on field cleanup days to the charter bus that takes the teams on their every-other-year spring-break trips to Florida. This year, the boosters goal is to purchase new, permanent bleachers for the home field.

To register, go to tournifyapp.com/live/chub23/signup.

Krissy Dietrich Gallagher, a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights, is a freelance writer under contract with the CH-UH City School District.



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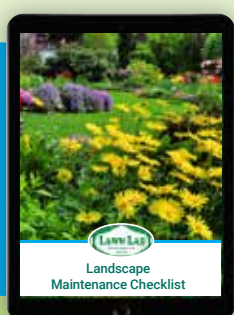
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Cleveland Heights – University Heights Public Library Board

Meeting highlights

FEBRUARY 20, 2023

Board members present were President Max Gerboc, Vice President Vikas Turakhia, Secretary Annette Iwamoto, Dana Fluellen, Tyler McTigue, and Melissa Soto-Schwartz. Patti Carlyle was not present.

Strategic projects update

Kaela Sweeney, strategic projects manager, presented a strategic project update to the board. Coventry PEACE Park fundraising has raised \$609,945 to date, toward the final goal of \$1.2 million. Work with the Hodge Group has been a good collaboration, yielding more than 70 prospects and 32 secured gifts. Currently, there is \$59,202 in funded grants and projects. Two grants have been submitted since 2023 began: one for an expanded partnership with Bike Cleveland, and another to support memory cafés.

Financial report

Deborah Herrmann, fiscal officer, pointed out that, if passed, Ohio HB1 would reduce the amount of state money for local communities. The library could lose \$793,000. Cash balance on hand at the end of January 2023 was \$21,006,289.70.

Board actions

The board:

- Authorized an agreement with Bostwick Design Partnership for redesign of the Lee Road Branch children's room.
- Approved the purchase of a programmable digital meeting room notification system for Lee Road Branch meeting rooms.
- Approved an after-the-fact purchase order for furniture as part of the Coventry Village Branch renovations.
- Approved a contract to install two new cleanout drains to prevent future flooding at the University Heights Branch.
- Declared an urgent necessity to repair the lower level of the University Heights Branch. The library's insurance has made a \$135,000 payment for repairs and replacements. A general contractor will be hired to make the repairs within that budget. Dana Fluellen asked if the requirement to consider minority firms still holds, even though a request for proposal will not be used. Library Director Nancy Levin replied that the requirement remained.
- Approved a new maintenance agreement for the Coventry Village Branch HVAC.
- Approved a memorandum of understanding between the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library System and Disciples Christian Church for the temporary use of space for children's programming while the Noble Neighborhood Branch is closed for renovations.

Year-end personnel report

There were 32 positions filled in 2022, compared to 46 in 2021. Turnover decreased from 24.43 percent in 2021 to 11.68 percent in 2022. Four employees were promoted. A new assistant facilities manager job was created, into which Leroy Hamby, maintenance technician,

was promoted. Staff received a 2-percent wage or lump sum increase. Medical, dental and eye care benefits continued, with slight changes in employee contributions. Eight human resources policies were reviewed and updated.

Sick leave used in 2022 was the highest since that data has been tracked, primarily due to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's mandated isolation after COVID exposure (a policy which has since changed).

The Annual Staff Development Day in 2022 was a success, with 121 employees attending. Staff also sought numerous education programs to further develop a job competency or meet a learning goal. The diversity, equity and inclusion report will be presented next month.

Director's report

Director Levin will present to Cleveland Heights City Council [an update on] Noble Neighborhood Branch renovations, Coventry PEACE Park funding, traffic calming at the Lee Road and Noble Neighborhood Branches, and the strategic plan for 2023–25.

All tenants have signed leases at the Coventry PEACE building.

Staff evaluations will be completed in mid-March.

A new hire for continuing education manager is anticipated.

Public service report

Heather Howiler, formally the library system's continuing education manager, started as adult services manager on Jan. 9.

Unpacking Our History and the 1619 Project discussions and programs continue to be popular with the community.

In January, 117 passport applications were executed. Total income from passport services for the month was \$7,283.05.

The African American Read In was attended by 50 people of all ages. "Celebrity" readers included Cleveland Heights Mayor Kahlil Seren, CH Council Member Gail Larson, civic leader Barbara Danforth, and Noble School Community Learning Center Organizer Kristiaun Copez Minor. Seven children, in grades two through eight, also read.

Librarians E Hogan and Angela Clock returned to Fairfax Elementary School for the second book club meeting—a "smashing" success with 76 participants.

Associate Felicia Muhammad organized a blanket-making craft [project] for a group of Roxboro middle-schoolers from the Roxboro Connect program.

Tech trainers conducted in-house and public orientation meetings featuring the SkillMill catalogue and virtual reality demonstrations.

The continuing education department began monthly Ask a Tech Expert branch visits.

LWV Observers: Elizabeth Tracy and Judith Beeler.

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

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'Burn it Down' exhibition celebrates and benefits women

Rachel Hunt

On Friday, April 7, the B Side Lounge will bring together 30 female artists—presenting visual, sound, and performance art—for the opening night of *Burn It Down*.

The exhibition explores and celebrates the resiliency of women, and will benefit Laura's Home Women's Crisis Center, an organization dedicated to empowering women and children dealing with trauma from domestic abuse, housing insecurity, and more.

Burn it Down is the brainchild of artist and curator Staci McNasty, who said the idea came from "watching the world, and some of my girls go through the ringer at the hands of beaters, gaslighters, and master manipulators."

"I want to reach the women who don't have strength to stand yet—help them rise and fight," said McNasty. "I'm a mom. I want to make sure that these younger women have a good support group and are able to use their voices without fear."

McNasty's life-sized, papier-mâché skaters will be part of the show, inspired by her 13-year-old son, Lux.

While the exhibition's visual art may have been created in the spirit of erasing tropes that have long been attached to women, the show also seeks to reclaim and redefine what it means to identify as femme. It considers that sometimes, in order to rebuild an identity for yourself, you have to burn it all down.

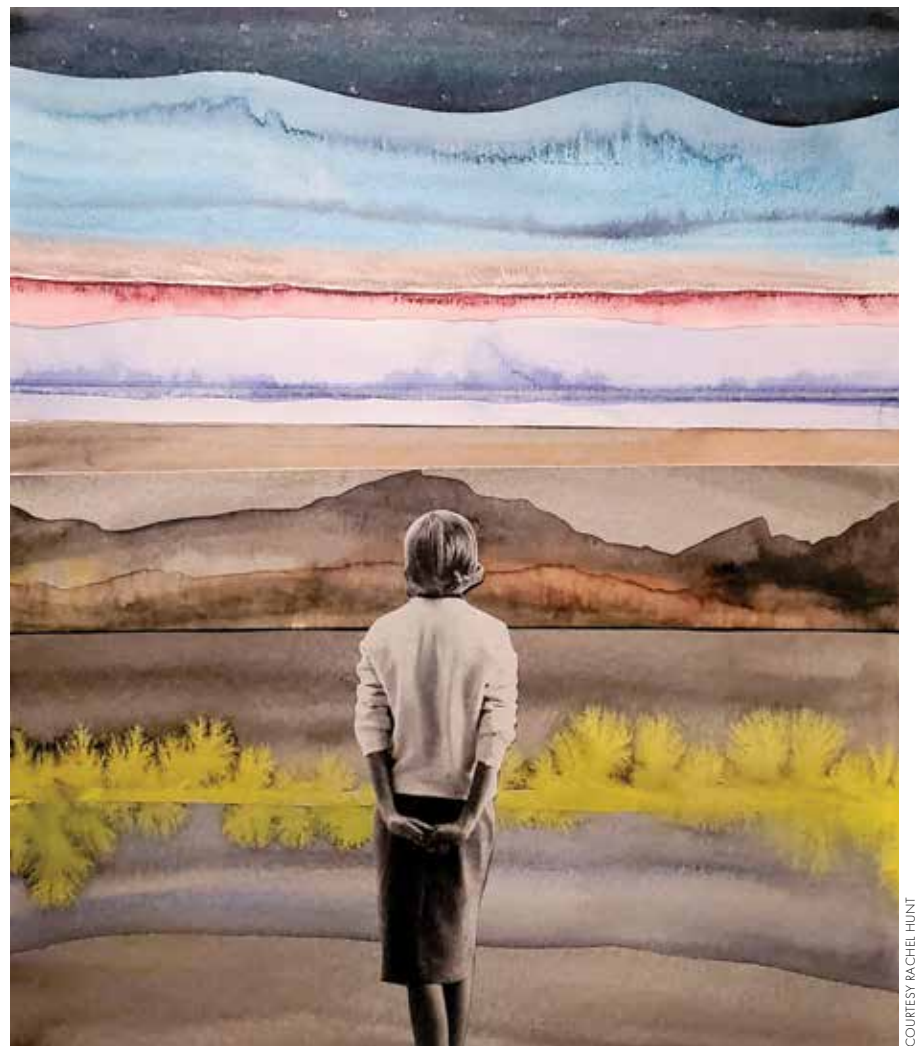
The exhibition's roster of visual artists joins regional powerhouses with emerging artists, including Dott Von Schneider, Marlee Pickles, Christine Sixteen, R. E. Yody, Bernadette Glorioso, Barb Merritt, Ashley Burns Todd, Beatrice Banaszak, Amy Hawks, Traci Gasho, Carla VFX, Bevin Ricker, Penney Vasquez, Lisa Miralia, Liz Adams, Gina Swor, Cassy DePuy, Dawn Teckler, Melvis the Pelvis, Kelly Kiessling Coleman, Kimberly Hendzel, Grace Victoria Gerengher, Tracy Parsons, Hadley K Connor, Kerstin Barnette, Pamela Voigt, and Jennifer Thomas-Heidt.

Opening night festivities kick off at 5 p.m. with light refreshments, and will feature local bands with female musicians displaying empowerment in all its forms throughout the evening, both upstairs at Grog Shop and downstairs at B Side Lounge (2785 Euclid Heights Blvd.).

The \$10 suggested donation will benefit Laura's Home Women's Crisis Center at the City Mission of Cleveland.

Performing will be Muzzle, Kill The Hippies, Night Medicine, Ringier, Seeing Scarlet, and Killer Kilroys. DJs She Rex, Mittenclips, and Tube-way Army will provide ambiance for the evening. Drag and burlesque dancers will also participate.

A portion of sales from artwork purchased over the duration of the exhibition will also be donated to



"the past is the past" by Barbara Merritt, layered watercolor and hand-cut collage.

Laura's Home. It offers housing, and programs that empower families and individuals to transition from crisis to self-sufficiency.

The art exhibition will be on view during the month of April at B Side Lounge, during business hours. For more information visit

www.bsideliqorlounge.com.

Rachel Hunt is the marketing director of Grog Shop, and spent years working on Coventry—first at Tommy's, then in retail at Vintage Apparel and Made Cleveland. She is continually amazed by the vibrancy and culture found within Cleveland Heights.

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Baldwin Wallace showcase returns to Beaumont May 5



The class of 2023 BW music theater majors.

Bruce Hennes

Right now, Baldwin Wallace University's music theater seniors are preparing a showcase for agents, bookers and promoters in New York City.

By the time they perform in Manhattan in mid-April, they will have spent six months creating and rehearsing an original, exciting, tightly choreographed, non-stop theatrical production. It's designed to showcase each student, in front of the casting directors who have the power to put them on stage in regional touring productions, on cruise ships, in TV shows and movies, and on the Broadway stage.

On Friday, May 5, at 7 p.m., the Baldwin Wallace seniors will reprise their showcase at Beaumont School in

Cleveland Heights. And at the end, this group of students—who've been together for four grueling years—will join hands and take a final bow as musical theater students, poised to start the next chapter of their lives as professional actors, singers and dancers.

Tickets are \$20 and can be ordered online at tinyurl.com/BW2023-Beaumont. For group sales, e-mail bhennes@gmail.com.

The Baldwin Wallace Music Theater Senior Showcase is presented by JWP Productions and Beaumont School.

Bruce Hennes, a 47-year resident of Cleveland Heights, receives a stipend from JWP Productions for his work on the showcase.

'The world is a stage; the stage is a world'



SONGS AND STORIES

David Budin

So, the first kid says, "Did you hear about the actor who fell through the floorboards?" And the other kid says, "Yeah. He was just going through a stage."

That's what they said, these two fifth-graders, on the stage of the Heights High auditorium a few weeks ago.

When I attended Cleveland Heights High School, I performed on that stage about a dozen times, mostly as a member of the Heights Choir, and as a soloist or part of small groups from within the choir. Then, decades later, my kids, Dan and Lauren, were in the orchestra and choir, respectively, and they performed many times on that stage. And, I should add, Dan's wife, Cassie, also played in the Symphonic Winds and other ensembles at Heights High, and served as the marching band's drum major (student leader). And, while I'm at it, both of my parents performed on that stage as well, as part of the choir (my mother) and band (my father); and my much-younger brother, Noah, performed in a lot of plays while there, as well concerts with the choir, of which he was the student conductor.

As an adult, I spoke from that stage about 15 times, presenting Friends of Cain Park arts scholarships on Senior Awards nights. Every time, my speech was a variation of the theme that the Heights Choir saved my life, and that every year, at least one of the arts taught at the school saves at least one kid, or, at least, provides the incentive for them to finish high school.

A few weeks ago, my son's daughter, Westin, made her first appearance on that stage, as part of the Fairfax Cabaret, a talent show her elementary school presents every two years. She was part of the Dobama Playwriters group of second-through-fifth-graders, who met after school once a week, for several weeks, to learn about playwriting from an actor associated with Dobama Theatre, a professional theater company located right down the street from Fairfax school. Westin's group demonstrated how they might express various emotions or objects with their own human "statues," as called out by another Dobama professional. Kids in Cleveland Heights are pretty lucky to have so many arts organizations and artists of every

kind all around.

Many kids participated—singing, dancing—including the comedy duo I mentioned above. I was amazed at a kindergartner who sang "Tomorrow" from "Annie," and did it unshyly, but, most impressively, completely in tune, including several key changes she had to navigate. Also impressive were a sister and brother (first-grade violinist and fourth-grade pianist), who played a movement from a violin concerto. Later the boy played a Bach piano prelude. A father and daughter played a trumpet duet.

The show started with a song ("Cabaret," of course) by Tamar Gray, a professional singer, who is the school's music teacher and who served as talent coordinator for this show. She does an amazing job with the students' concerts at the school. Gray responded to a Facebook post about the event, saying the show



The new sound, light and recording booth in the middle of the renovated Heights High auditorium, before the Fairfax Cabaret.

"brought me so much joy, and is a great reminder of who we are as a district and community." It's true: There were different generations working and performing together—students, parents, teachers and staff, comprising Blacks, Whites

and several nationalities, religions, and maybe even political groups (I say maybe, because it IS Cleveland Heights . . .)

Two Heights "Tigers" came out and did a dance and then joined a

continued on page 23

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Help birds save the Earth in theatrical family workshops

Robin VanLear

In April, Artful Cleveland and Art Acts studio will undertake the work of creating a play—"This Art is for the Birds"—a comical plea to save the earth, filled with hidden hopes and lessons. It will be the first original, outdoor theater production at Coventry PEACE Park.

According to the play's outline, the canary in the coal mine is dead. With so many amphibians on the brink of extinction, it is up to Birds to save the day. The Birds badly want to help, but the flocks can't

seem to agree on anything. The King and Queen of the Birds have a plan: a competition, in which each flock or collection of raptors will get to demonstrate their fail-proof plan. And . . . may the Earth win!

Beginning April 15, community members can join a series of family workshops and be part of the creative team that, through sharing words, movement, and visual art talent, will decide how the Birds save the planet.

Artists, including Eric Coble, Raja Freeman, Marlon Hatcher, Story Rhinehart and Diana Sette,

will take turns leading the various workshop sessions at Coventry PEACE Campus, 2843 Washington Blvd.

The workshops are open to families, and individuals age 15 and older, and will take place on Saturdays, 3-5 p.m., April 15, 22 and 29; and May 6, 13 and 20. The cost of a workshop pass for all six sessions is \$75 for a family or a friend group, and \$40 for an individual. The drop-in price is \$20 per family; \$10 per person.

In addition, on Saturday, April 22, noon to 2 p.m., Art Acts will host a free workshop to make kinetic birds, in celebration of Earth Day.

Visit www.artfulcleveland.org, or www.facebook.com/artfulcleveland for additional information on the workshops, and for information on a series of one-week summer camps and one-day workshops that will begin in June.

"This Art is for the Birds" is funded in part by a special project



Robin VanLear and Santanu Mallik try on "This Art is for the Birds" mask prototypes.

grant from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture.

Robin VanLear is the founder of Art Acts studio and a member of Artful Cleveland. She will be leading some of the workshops mentioned in the article.

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Surplus property from the Noble Branch of the Heights Libraries will be on sale at the branch, 2800 Noble Road, Sunday, April 23, from 1-4 p.m. Items to be sold include: a large assortment of tables and chairs, both adult and children sizes; shelves, lamps, cabinets; and other small items.

Only CASH will be accepted for purchases and all items purchased must be removed from the premises at the close of the sale.

Mobius fundraiser celebrates 50 years of hip-hop May 6

Andrea C. Turner

Mobius, formerly known as RoxArts and REAP, has planned a fun-filled event to celebrate the 50th anniversary of hip-hop, and to raise money for the organization. The event will take place on Saturday, May 6, at 6 p.m., at the B-Side Lounge in Coventry Village.

Proceeds benefit Mobius, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, whose mission is to create opportunities for K-8 students in the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District to engage in creative and critical thinking that extends and enriches the curriculum.

The name change—from RoxArts and REAP to Mobius—occurred in 2022. The organization's board of directors believed the change was needed to indicate the continuity of arts programming from elementary school through the middle-school grades.

The new name comes from the Möbius strip—a continuous strip of paper with a half twist. The organization works to eliminate boundaries and create opportunities for all students. The expanded scope is meant to inspire and serve more students, and means a greater ability to provide equitable educational opportunities throughout the CH-UH school district.

Doors open for the May 6 event at 6 p.m., and an auction will begin at 8 p.m. The event is for those 21 and older. General admission tickets are \$40; \$25 for CH-UH faculty and staff. The ticket includes heavy hors



Monticello Middle School students created paper lanterns through a Mobius-funded workshop by artist Debbie Apple-Presser.

d'oeuvres, beer, wine, music, and dancing to popular hip-hop tunes. To purchase tickets, go to mobiuschub.org/events.

Mobius most recently funded workshops with local artist Debbie Apple-Presser. She worked with Kelley Wachhaus, art teacher at Monticello Middle School, and students to create paper tea-light lanterns for Chinese New Year celebrations. Mobius has plans to provide a new pottery kiln for Monticello Middle School.

With continued generous support, Mobius hopes to provide valuable arts and science experiences for students throughout the district.

Andrea C. Turner is a board member of Mobius, and principal of ACT One Communications, LLC, a marketing communications consulting firm based in Cleveland Heights.

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HCC continued from page 1

housing practices were being held accountable. As an extension of our work for fair housing, HCC was committed to creating conversations about diversity, equity, and inclusion to help neighbors understand neighbors and come together to embrace the many differences that are part of Cleveland Heights' signature strength.

In addition to this work, it has been our special joy to host the Heights Heritage Home & Garden Tour. For over 40 years this tour brought thousands of people together to explore the unique nature of the homes and gardens that make up the tapestry of life here in the Heights.

While HCC is heartbroken to be closing our doors, we celebrate the impact we have had in the Heights [c]ommunity, and we applaud the commitment in the community to keep The Heights diverse. We know that when one door closes, another door opens so we look forward to the new opportunities the Heights community will create to come together to ensure that all people continue to find fair and equitable housing options in this community and the ways new

leaders will step forward to ensure that the city truly lives into its slogan, "All are Welcome."

Northeast Ohio continues to have a very strong organization committed to fair housing in the area. If you, or someone you know, is experiencing discrimination in the housing market, HCC strongly encourages you to reach out to the Fair Housing Center for Rights & Research (www.thehousingcenter.org). To report housing discrimination, call 216-361-9240 and their excellent staff will be there to offer support, education, and enforcement.

The Board of the Heights Community Congress wants to thank you for 50 years of support, for joining us in the work for a more just and equitable community, and for the sustained commitment to create change. May this community continue to come together to do the work required to help bend the arc of the moral universe towards justice.

Jessica Schantz is the e-news and distribution manager at the Heights Observer, the office manager for FutureHeights, and a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights.

SONGS & STORIES continued from page 21

group of Fairfax parents and teachers for another dance. One of those tigers was Westin's (and Baxter's) mother, Cassie, who teaches at Heights High. At the end, Gray also led a group of Fairfax parents, teachers and other staff members in a dance, and then all of the evening's performers in a closing number, the Fairfax school song, "Positive."

My grandson, kindergartner Baxter, was not a performer in the show, but he and Westin had artworks—which they created in an after-school art class they both take once a week—on display in the accompanying art exhibit in the lobby. Baxter also had another piece in the program book.

The entire Heights High building underwent a massive renovation a few years ago, so it's like a brand-new school inside. The auditorium was beautifully

restored, and enhanced with elements like a dedicated sound board and light rigging, plus many other improvements, including dressing rooms backstage (we used to have to make costume changes out in the hall behind the auditorium).

When I attended Heights High, I hated almost everything about the place except the auditorium and the Choir Room. Both of those places are much improved now. I'm looking forward to the time when Westin and Baxter attend Heights High.

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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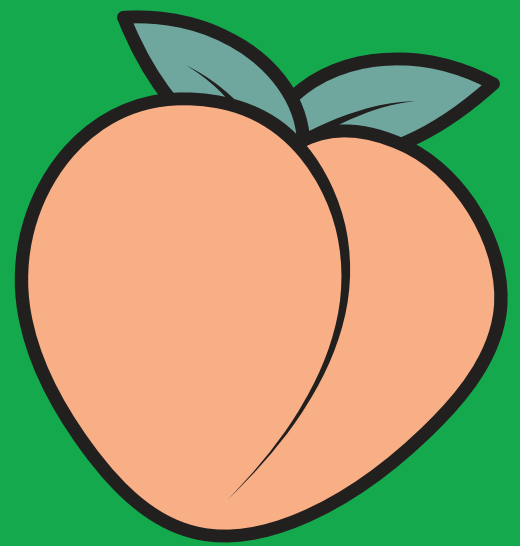
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