Noble Gardeners’ Market welcomes musicians this season

Brenda H May

Noble Gardeners’ Market (NGM) 2023 will open for the season on Saturday, Aug. 5, and run for eight consecutive Saturday mornings, 10 a.m. to noon, through Sept. 23.

The market is located at the corner of Noble and Roanoke roads, at the site of the Noble-Roanoke Mini Park, one block north of the intersection of Monticello Boulevard and Noble Road. (The Cleveland Heights Centennial continues on page 11)

‘808 Day’ proclamation honors WJCU

Mike Cook

Aug. 8 isn’t just Special Election Day in Ohio. In University Heights, it’s 808 Day.

To honor the award-winning and Guinness World Record-holding WJCU 88.7 FM’s six-time national award-nominated student-run radio show out of John Carroll University (JCU), “808s & Mixtapes” has been broadcasting live, worldwide, for the last two years—at the frequency 88.7 FM in Greater Cleveland, and around the world via the WJCU app and at 808mixtape.com.

JCU students Zachary Simurko, Emily Davala, Collin Kennedy, Terron Lee, Daunte Horton, Hamoud Qotaynah, Danielle Turi and Jayden Beddingerfield run “808s & Mixtapes” every Tuesday night at 10 p.m.

“I am delighted to proclaim this Aug. 8 ‘808 Day’ in the city for so many reasons,” Brennan said, “most of all to celebrate the work that Zach, Collin, and the Progressive Insurance Campus, and the Malta Performing Arts Center—Cleveland Heights Fairmount Presbyterian Church (FPC) was recognized for its work in achieving a 50% electricity use reduction.

This milestone is one of FPC’s many environmentally responsible improvements, rooted in the congregation’s understanding of the connection between environmental... (continued on page 2)

LWV plans fall election forums for Heights voters

Elizabeth Tracy and Blanche Valancy

In the run-up to the Nov. 7 general election, the Cleveland Heights/University Heights Chapter of the League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland (LWV) will host a series of four candidate and issue forums for the local city council and school board races and ballot issues.

On Nov. 7, Cleveland Heights voters will elect three city council members and one municipal court judge. University Heights voters will elect four city council members and vote on city charter amendments. Two positions for the Cleveland Heights - University Heights school board will also be on the ballot.

To help voters become knowledgeable about the candidates and issues, LWV has planned the following voter education forums:

• On Wednesday, Sept. 13, 6-8 p.m., the CH-UH Board of Education Candidates Forum will be held at the Cleveland Heights Community Center, 1 Monticello Boulevard.
• On Wednesday, Sept. 20, 6-8 p.m., the Cleveland Heights City Council Candidates Forum will be held at the CH Community Center, 1 Monticello Boulevard.
• On Monday, Sept. 25, 6-8 p.m., the University Heights City Council Candidates Forum will be held at the University Heights Library, 1366 Cedar Road.
• On Thursday, Oct. 5, 6-8 p.m., the University Heights Ballot Issues Forum will be held at the UH Library, (continued on page 11)

Catalina Wagers

Each year, the Cleveland 2030 District and the NEO Local Leadership Team of USGBC (U.S. Green Building Council) Ohio host a friendly green building challenge to recognize exemplary new green construction and renovation projects in this region. In May, the winning entries were announced and—among recipients such as Oberlin College, Fairmount Presbyterian Church achieves another environmental milestone

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FUTUREHEIGHTS NEWS

FH intern Bryce Beard takes on new roles this summer

Bryce Beard

I am Bryce Beard, a new intern at FutureHeights, and soon to be a junior at Gilmour Academy.

The internship was made possible through Cleveland-based Youth Opportunities Unlimited (Y.O.U.). On my very first day at the FutureHeights office, Kristine Pagsuyoin, the executive director of FutureHeights and publisher of the Heights Observer, asked me to write about myself and outline in this article what I’ll be working on as a summer intern.

In my first week, beginning July 17, my first assignment was to write this piece.

I have already learned that writing for a newspaper is completely different from writing for a school project. I’ve learned a new style of writing, including the inverted triangle concept, a strategy journalists use to organize their writing. Using the inverted triangle, writers lead with the most important information.

After I finish this piece, I’ll be working on distribution of the paper. As a resident of University Heights, I hope to help expand distribution of the Heights Observer in that city.

I will also be working on the Heights Observer’s social media, and I am already researching ideas to create a dedicated Heights Observer Facebook page.

I first learned of this internship opportunity in April, through a school mentor who encouraged me to apply for the Y.O.U. internship program.

Y.O.U.’s mission is to empower young people by providing opportunities that will enable them to become valuable members of Ohio’s workforce.

After applying, each student interviews with a Y.O.U. placement specialist and describes their interests and past experience in the field of their choice. Upon a student’s acceptance to the internship program, Y.O.U. alumni begin looking for an appropriate placement. Throughout their 120-hour internships, all Y.O.U. interns receive professional skills training, networking opportunities, and stipends, as well as hands on work experience.

For myself and the other Y.O.U. interns, this will be our first real-world professional experience. To learn more about Y.O.U.’s internship program, visit www.youcdo.org/internships.

For now, I look forward to making connections, asking questions, and gaining experience at Future-Heights. I cannot wait to see where this experience leads.

This school year Bryce Beard will be a junior at Gilmour Academy, where he participates in speech and debate, cross country, and yearbook club. He is interested in journalism and law.

About the Observer

The Heights Observer is the 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. The focus of their work is in University Heights or Cleveland Heights is welcome to contribute regularly, occasionally or even just once.

In what other places 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 September publication must be submitted by Aug. 14. We publish several articles online only.

Heights Observer policy on election-related content

The Heights Observer will review election-related submissions with a goal of providing fair and equitable access for those seeking office, or taking sides on a ballot issue.

Candidates for office are expected to identify themselves as such when submitting anything for publication.

Candidates’ supporters and campaign representatives, and anyone writing about any candidate or election issue, are expected to disclose any personal or professional relationship they may have with any candidate, or with the subject about which they have written. These disclosures are intended to inform Heights Observer review, and will be disclosed to readers when relevant.

The Heights Observer will determine whether and when submissions will run in print, online, or both.

Contributions by and about candidates, and any election issue, are limited to a maximum of 400 words.

The Heights Observer does not endorse candidates, nor does FutureHeights, the nonprofit community-development corporation that publishes the Heights Observer.

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Horseshoe Lake supporters file lawsuit

William Hopkins

Friends of Horseshoe Lake (FOHSL) has taken the next step in a legal effort, filing a lawsuit against the cities of Cleveland Heights and Shaker Heights to prevent the destruction of Horseshoe Lake by the Northeast Ohio Sewer District (NEORSD).

This lawsuit follows demands letters issued by FOHSL to both cities, citing violations of their lease agreements with the city of Cleveland. According to attorney Anthony Coyne, a land use expert with the law firm Mansour Gavin that is representing FOHSL, the lease agreements require Cleveland Heights and Shaker Heights to preserve the existing conditions, which include the dam and lake; perform necessary maintenance, such as dredging and cleaning; and undertake any required improvements to ensure the park’s upkeep.

FOHSL has been actively involved in efforts to protect Horseshoe Lake since the sewer district announced plans to demolish the lake and dam two years ago. Collaborating with engineering experts TEC, FOHSL developed a comprehensive Horseshoe Lake Restoration Plan that not only preserves the lake but also addresses environmental, safety, and cost concerns.

The plan has been presented to NEORSD and the cities multiple times. However, despite FOHSL’s efforts, the sewer district has persistently pursued its plan to destroy the lake, refusing to consider any alternatives that involve repairing the dam. Its plan could stick taxpayers with millions in costs for improvements and maintenance.

The lawsuit marks a significant turning point in the ongoing battle to protect the lake. FOHSL supporters are determined to safeguard this natural treasure for future generations.

“We had hoped that the demand letters would foster collaboration between FOHSL, the cities, and the sewer district to find a mutually agreeable plan for Horseshoe Lake. Unfortunately, the joint response from the cities refuted the allegations of lease violations, leaving us with no choice but to escalate our legal strategy. We are now seeking injunctive relief from the courts to preserve this cherished asset,” said Coyne.

William Hopkins is a retired teacher and landscape architect, and is a member of Friends of Horseshoe Lake.

Vote for change on CH City Council

Cindy Evans

As a longtime Cleveland Heights resident, I have seen—and experienced—the good and the bad of our city’s government.

Lately, I’m afraid, I’m seeing and experiencing the very bad, right in our city’s council meetings.

The heart of our democracy is We the People. And We the People of Cleveland Heights are finding it harder to participate in our city government. Actually, we’re being actively and aggressively turned away.

It all began in January 2022, when newly elected Council President Hart decided to reduce the time allotted to each community member participating in the public comments part of council meetings from five minutes to just three.

Hart also made up a new rule that any member of the public who wanted to speak about something not on that night’s agenda had to wait until the end of the meeting.

Both public-comment portions of council meetings are explained as one-way communications, not discussions or Q&A sessions. Speakers are not to expect more than a polite “thank you” from the chair. This is not a policy change from prior council meetings I have watched, attended, and spoken at.

These new limits would be bad enough if they were applied evenly. But, in my experience over the past year and a half, residents who take the time to prepare their comments, concerns, and even criticisms, and have the courage to speak at council or committee meetings, can expect to be aggressively “corrected.” In contrast, speakers with whom the assembled elected officials agree are often granted extra time at the podium, and, certainly, are neither criticized nor corrected.

Maybe you saw the May 1 council meeting. if so, you saw evidence that Hart’s new rules are not being applied uniformly.

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CH needs a real city administrator

Alan Rapoport

There is a puzzle game called “Where’s Waldo?” In it, a lot of faces appear closely together in a picture. The player is challenged to find that one face belonging to a character called Waldo. That face is hidden and hard to find. This past year, Mayor Seren set up his own such puzzle at Cleveland Heights City Hall. What was hard to find there was the face of the city administrator. The mayor kept it hidden.

The CH City Charter requires Mayor Seren to hire a city administrator. As of this writing, this position remains vacant. It has been vacant much too long. Daily tasks of local government are to be supervised by a talented professional. The mayor then could be free to tackle big strategic issues. Hiring a “city manager,” as in former times, would not be necessary. By failing to fill the position, Seren has ignored the mandate of Issue 26.

Mayor Seren previously hired Joe Sinnott as city administrator. Sinnott had a great résumé. He was a former mayor of Erie, Pa. He had executive experience. But at the direction of Mayor Seren, Sinnott played no visible role in governing. Like Waldo, he was in the picture but hard to find. He did nothing obvious to improve terrible communications between the executive and legislative branches of government. His talents were wasted.

Mayor Seren kept Sinnott away from contact with CH City Council and the public. City services then became based less on need and merit than in the past. They became based more on political preferences. Consider “No Mow May” as a prime example.

Sinnott lasted only a year. He resigned in March. He accepted an opportunity in Pennsylvania that he said was “too compelling to pass up.” Sinnott claimed there were “no negative connotations or inferences” to be drawn from his abrupt departure. But maybe his reason for leaving was that the job was not what had been promised. Dissatisfaction must have contributed to his resignation. He found returning to Pennsylvania more to his liking than working in Cleveland Heights.

Mayor Seren proved unable to use, motivate, and retain a highly qualified person as city administrator. Hopefully, his next hire will be more visible and more effective. Cleveland Heights needs a real city administrator. It does not need another highly paid Waldo.

Alan Rapoport served on CH City Council (1982-87) and as council president/mayor (1986-87).

CH mayor weaponizes city’s law department

Robert Jefferis

The mayor of Cleveland Heights has weaponized the law department. I have been asked to pay for sewer repairs on public property or “appropriate enforcement action may be taken.” The sanitary is blocked and has backed up from city property onto my property.

I confronted the mayor at the grocery store; he informed me that “[they] decided that the city would only take responsibility at the curb.” I don’t believe the recent changes to our city charter allow the mayor to rule by fiat, nor is this the more responsive government we were promised. There is no local ordinance or state law that makes private citizens responsible for repairs on public property. It takes time for the legal process to work. The city is relying on isolating the homeowner and forcing them to undertake repairs. The decision by the mayor to remove responsibility from public property is a money-saving maneuver by the city. This could also affect you.

Lateral lines from everyone’s property typically cross the public right-of-way (which includes the tree lawn) and connect with the sewer at or before the curb, which effectively means the city has just handed individual homeowners a liability for repairs on public property.

This is particularly appalling because we pay two sewer bills, the city is under a consent decree with the EPA for sewers, and the city has been asking how to spend the flood of stimulus money it has received.

Robert Jefferis is a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights who cares about the city.
Cleveland Heights needs leadership

Robert Koonce

I recently visited Lakewood for a great meal and stroll along the lake. What struck me were the notable differences between our cities. While Lakewood certainly has challenges to work through, what I didn’t see was a vast wasted prosperity like Severance, nor did I see crumbling infrastructure in its parks.

Unlike Cain Park’s dilapidated gutters, broken retaining walls, frightened bathrooms, and accumulated trash, Lakewood’s parks looked great. I also didn’t see empty storefronts in its key business districts, compared with Coventry’s 19 vacancies.

Like Cleveland Heights, Lake-wood has a long history of claiming to be a progressive city, but it appears that we embrace the symbols of being one while ignoring the substance. A progressive community would focus on the things that matter—a thriving small-business environment, beautiful parks, and actionable plans for its biggest challenges.

Why Cleveland Heights doesn’t look like Lakewood boils down to our city hall. It’s failing. Current council leadership is incapable.

Council failed to appoint its own replacement for Josie Moore, has repeatedly failed to exercise its charter mandate to get information from the administration, has failed to produce any meaningful legislation itself, and failed to establish council rules or priorities after three taxpayer-supported retreats.

That leadership has the full backing of our mayor—someone who probably wants council to remain inept so that he can impose his own agenda on us. He has a growing reputation for lack of responsiveness and a keen ability to cover that up by leveraging gimmicks to get CNN interviews.

I have lived here most of my life and want nothing more than a city I can be proud of, but the combination of the current mayor and his enablers serving as council president and vice president don’t know how to get it done.

We have an election this fall for council seats. I strongly recommend we avoid voting for those who have the mayor’s support. We need an independent, wisely led city council—one that can work with the mayor while holding the administration accountable and passing strong legislation that improves our housing stock, revitalizes our business districts, tackles Severance by partnering with the Severance Action Group, maintains our parks, and, ultimately, grows the population and vitality of this city.

So, re-elect Gail Larson and look seriously at Jim Petras and any other candidate free from the mayor’s direct influence.

Robert Koonce was born and raised in Cleveland Heights and has lived most of his adult life here, raising four children along with his wife, Devina.

Larson thanks CH residents for input, ideas

Gail Larson

I recently released a survey asking for input from Cleveland Heights residents about your experiences living in our city, what you see as our strengths and challenges, and what you want for our shared future. I am grateful to have received so many responses—thank you to everyone who took the time to contribute your thoughts and ideas.

I am proud that people from all across Cleveland Heights put their trust in me to share their feedback in this survey. As many people agreed, one of our city’s greatest strengths is our diversity. I want to be sure I know what residents in every neighborhood want and need from our city government as we move forward.

As I’ve been thoughtfully reading through the survey responses, I’ve been thinking a lot about diversity. It’s more than race, religion, gender, or sexual identity. It’s also about how these parts of ourselves impact our experiences, influence the choices we make, and shape how we see our community. Each response on the survey is unique and valuable, and I appreciate the spectrum of perspectives that make up our great city. It is our diversity of viewpoints that truly makes us strong and resilient. Independent thinking and respectful disagree-

ment is not only OK; it is necessary for our democracy. I bring to the values of inclusion, responsiveness, and diversity to my role on council. I value residents’ input, whether it be through e-mail, comments at council meetings, citizen committees, or even while I’m out and about in Cleveland Heights. I believe that leadership requires listening, and it is the role of a democratic government to empower citizen voices, bring them forward, and facilitate what we learn into a coherent and actionable vision for our city.

This is also why I am committed to responding to every communication from residents. I want you to know that your voice is heard, and I will do whatever I can to address your concerns and answer your questions.

If you did not get a chance to fill out the survey, it will remain open on my campaign website, gallarsonforclevelandheights.com, on the “Your Feedback” page. Again, thank you to everyone who put your trust in me and shared your input and ideas for Cleveland Heights.

Gail Larson is currently a member of the Cleveland Heights City Council, and lives on Montevista Road in the Noble Elementary School neighborhood. She is a candidate for CH City Council in this November’s general election.

Kathy Carvin

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REWARDS FOR ALL BUDGETS
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OPINION

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ment is not only OK; it is necessary for our democracy. I bring to the values of inclusion, responsiveness, and diversity to my role on council. I value residents’ input, whether it be through e-mail, comments at council meetings, citizen committees, or even while I’m out and about in Cleveland Heights. I believe that leadership requires listening, and it is the role of a democratic government to empower citizen voices, bring them forward, and facilitate what we learn into a coherent and actionable vision for our city.

This is also why I am committed to responding to every communication from residents. I want you to know that your voice is heard, and I will do whatever I can to address your concerns and answer your questions.

If you did not get a chance to fill out the survey, it will remain open on my campaign website, gallarsonforclevelandheights.com, on the “Your Feedback” page. Again, thank you to everyone who put your trust in me and shared your input and ideas for Cleveland Heights.

Gail Larson is currently a member of the Cleveland Heights City Council, and lives on Montevista Road in the Noble Elementary School neighborhood. She is a candidate for CH City Council in this November’s general election.
Weak council leadership gives mayor too much power

Tonya Horn

In 2019, I, along with nine other Cleveland Heights residents, formed Citizens for an Elected Mayor (CEM). I was tired of stagnant leadership, and I often referenced Cleveland Heights as a tale of two cities: the vibrant, growing, and developed south side, and the red-lined, ignored, and voiceless north side.

I have no regret that [the elected mayor ballot issue] passed. I truly believed that we would finally have co-equal branches of government that would serve our city better than the city manager form of government.

Our council members are failing to get work done. Their disjointed efforts are often left at a standstill or stalemate of sorts, preventing priorities from getting completed in any timely manner. There seems to be an us-against-them mentality; and a clear divide between some members and the mayor. As a result, all are losing sight of residents’ needs.

Leadership starts at the top with the mayor and the council president. In my opinion, neither is faring well.

I have witnessed inappropriately disrespectful, and unprofessional interactions, and that is concerning. As a result, we lost a respected, hard-working council member, Josie Moore.

With an election on the horizon, watch, listen, and be informed. Is this the leadership you hoped for?

As I witness the actions of “leadership,” it is clear something needs to change if Cleveland Heights is to have a fully functioning council.

Council Member Gail Larson and challenger Jim Petras are two who will be seeking our votes.

Gail Larson has been a calm, thoughtful legislator who has brought her community values and dedication to the Noble neighborhood, producing legislation to help homeowners and, in particular, seniors. Each time I contact the council to share concerns, Gail has always responded with an acknowledgment.

Jim Petras is a young professional, the next generation, eager to learn, and passionate about this city. His measured and [engaging] approach brings people together every day to collaborate and solve problems. I have had the pleasure of working with him in the community, and I know him to be a hard-working leader who deserves a chance to serve his city.

There is a lot at stake in this election. Cleveland Heights needs a strong, independent, and productive city council that works well with the mayor, but also serves as a check and balance when necessary. This is far from how council is functioning now. Remember this in November when you cast your ballot.

Fire pits should be prohibited in warm months

Tom Bier

This past May, the Cleveland Heights administration featured Air Quality Awareness Week. The online “City News Update” stated that “Cleveland Heights is working hard to find ways to lower our contributions to poor air quality and make this a lung-friendly city.”

Recently, when smoke from Canadian wildfires was a health threat, “City News” advised us to “take steps to protect your health. Unhealthy air quality increases health risks for everyone, but is more worrisome for Sensitive Groups, those at risk for pulmonary episodes such as asthma.” And the Cleveland Heights Fire Department asked us to “[p]lease observe the current moratorium on open fires, such as fire pits, that generate smoke.”

If Cleveland Heights is to be a “lung-friendly city,” why are smoke-producing open fires, such as fire pits, permitted? They shouldn’t be.

Smoke is a serious health risk for some. It also is a nuisance. Most Cleveland Heights homes are not air-conditioned. The scent of lilacs coming through open windows should not be swamped by the smell of smoke. Blaring music is considered a nuisance and is not permitted; nor should unhealthy, disturbing smoke be during months when windows are open.

That’s my view. I suggest you submit yours to Council Member Janine Boyd (jboyd@cityofcleveland-heights.gov) who chairs council’s Public Safety and Health Committee.

Tom Bier has lived in Cleveland Heights for 50 years.

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What we see and hear

Deborah Van Kleef and Carla Rautenberg

In putting together these monthly columns, we work through our thoughts about and hopes for hyper-local democracy—specifically in Cleveland Heights. We try to express opinions only about what we can observe, avoiding speculation about the unseen and unheard—including people’s possible motivations. For that reason, since our first elected mayor took office in January 2022, we’ve written much more about CH City Council than about Mayor Kahil Seren’s administration. Except for frequent executive sessions, council meetings are open to the public, livestreamed and archived on YouTube. Agendas and legislation are posted on the city’s website.

We hoped for a mayor who would actively engage with the community, govern with transparency, and welcome the public to City Hall when it re-opened post-pandemic. Instead, most of the administration’s work takes place behind doors that, since 2022, are not only closed, but locked. The receptionist in the atrium has been replaced with a police officer. The mayor is invited to address the public regularly during city council meetings, but rarely has much to say. He is known to seldom return phone calls or reply to e-mail.

Seeking contact information for our city’s chief executive or his staff via the Cleveland Heights website is a challenge. While Mayor Seren’s phone number and e-mail appear under his photo on the Mayor’s Office landing page, most users will first see the staff directory on the left and click on that. It lists the mayor, Special Assistant Patrick Costigan, and Mayor’s Action Center Coordinator Brandon Upchurch, with no phone numbers and an e-mail address given only for the mayor. Many other sections of www.clevelandheights.gov similarly lack complete, current, well-organized information and user-friendly design.

This year, the city’s first monthly column reappeared in residents’ mailboxes after a hiatus in 2022. The first two issues contain a lot of valuable information but lack organization and professional polish. The second issue features a two-page announcement about the long-awaited Mayor’s Action Center. How to access this new service should be prominently boxed and in bold type. Instead, you have to read to the end of the article to find it, and the new coordinator’s name is never mentioned.

When things at City Hall don’t get done, or are not done well, we can’t always tell whether it’s due to insufficient staffing or incompetence. We have preferred to assume the former, but for frustrated residents it doesn’t matter. Running the city is Mayor Seren’s responsibility. Council passed his budget, fully funding his requests for new staff; yet key positions, some vacated on his watch, remain unfilled.

Although this column does not endorse candidates for office, individually we both strongly supported Kahil Seren in our city’s first mayoral race. We felt he was the best qualified of an underwhelming quartet of candidates, and we still do. But we’re concerned about what we’ve seen—and not seen—thus far.

The mayor appears to have spent countless hours with city council in executive session, wrangling over appointments to council and the Charter Review Commission. We know that he has severely restricted communication between council members and staff, and that staff has become less accessible to the public and the press as well. This is far from the direction in which Seren promised to take the city during his campaign.

Certainly, spin and political maneuvering are endemic to all governments, and conflict between mayors and city councils is hardly unique to Cleveland Heights. But if residents and neighboring communities see more of these things than steady progress toward solving chronic problems (think housing, Severance, and revitalizing the Noble and Coventry business districts), there will be trouble ahead.

Deborah Van Kleef and Carla Rautenberg are writers, editors and longtime residents of Cleveland Heights. Contact them at heightsdemocracy@gmail.com.
Summer has a way of flying by. The 2023-2024 school year will begin in Cleveland Heights–University Heights on Aug. 23, and, as we anticipate this annual back-to-school transition, I want to brag about our kids and reassure my fellow citizens that investing in our young people is worth it! We have great kids and we have a lot to learn from them and give to them.

Like most senior citizens and residents of our community, I don’t have a lot of everyday contact with young people. As director of the Reaching Heights-sponsored Heights Summer Music Camp, though, I have spent a week every summer since 2005 surrounded by adolescents. This summer I witnessed the interactions and musical development of 75 Heights students who had just completed fifth through eighth grade in our public schools, 27 Heights High teenaged musicians, two college student alums of the Heights music program, and 18 amazing music professionals.

In one week, this intergenerational hodgepodge of unique individuals became a special community, united in a common project, supportive of each other and willing to tackle significant musical challenges. They grew by leaps and bounds!

Our young people are vulnerable and can be awkward as they look for social acceptance, establish their identities, navigate individual challenges, and make sense of this often-harsh historic period. It’s a lot, but the camp setting was a perfect environment for developing competence and comfort, and observing their strengths.

Music-making is a collaborative project. Campers worked on their skills as members of a chamber group; orchestra; instrument section; or a percussion, ukulele or jazz ensemble. It was cooperative and cognitively demanding. As our campers adjusted to the daily routine and started to work in each musical setting, their warm hearts, sincerity, curiosity, uncertainty, desire to grow and acceptance of others were visible.

High school mentors helped diagnose issues to be solved, coached campers as they worked on skills, demonstrated what is achievable, brought creativity and fun to each day, and modeled what a love of music looks like. Their enthusiasm, skills and patience were always on view. They were a fabulous resource for campers, each other, and adult staff.

Every part of the camp day oozed with one-to-one connections that helped campers build skills and confidence, and develop friendships. These connections enabled campers to feel at home, cared about, capable and important. They soared!

More than one staff member said the camp’s inclusivity was what made it such a positive place. From enrollment and staffing to the attitudes and interactions among staff and campers, everyone was included and welcomed, regardless of skill, age, race or gender identity. Diversity is a strength, and it showed at camp.

Saxophone specialist Nathan Holaway bragged about the inclusive attitudes of the jazz players, who used every free moment to jam in the band room, while welcoming novice players and teachers to join them.

Low brass specialist Daniel Hershman-Rossi appreciated that the camp was playful and welcoming. Conductor Dan Heim’s ability to inject humor into the hard work of a rehearsal, and the playfulness of silly hats, stuffed animals and group costumes, added to an environment where everyone could be themselves.

Music camp puts me in touch with great kids and shines a light on the kind of support and environment that helps them thrive. Great kids are everywhere. They need us to support, encourage and trust them. Thanks and best wishes, teachers, for doing your best to bring out the best in our great kids!

Susie Kaeser is the former director of Reaching Heights, and is active with the Heights Coalition for Public Education and the League of Women Voters. She is the author of a book about local activism, Resisting Segregation.

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The City of Beautiful Welcome Signs

Mike Cook

Good signs come to those who wait. For years, University Heights was known as “The City of Beautiful Homes.” While a rebranding campaign in 2018 updated the door knocker logo and city motto, University Heights still has beautiful homes, and now it has beautiful welcome signs to match.

Last month, new welcome signs were installed across University Heights, with more to come later this summer and fall.

“The new signs were a long time coming, and now that they’re finally being installed, they exceed my expectations,” said University Heights Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan. “More importantly, the response from University Heights residents has been overwhelmingly positive.”

The signs feature the new University Heights city logo and colors. The four colors of the logo are made with transparent plastic, creating a stained-glass appearance that allows sunlight to pass through the signs.

Mayors from other cities have reached out to me, asking how their cities can have such beautiful signs,” Brennan said.

Seven signs were installed the first week of July, with eight more to go up soon. In addition to the welcome signs, a new sign was installed at Walter Stinson Community Park.

The city logo and the new signs were designed by Guide Studio. Design consultant Kevin Fromet said he is thrilled with the finished product. “The University Heights brand represents the community mosaic,” Fromet explained, “and it is great to see that come to life in the physical environment.”

“Translating the brand into signage provided an opportunity to create a more dynamic brand experience,” noted Fromet. “The transparent colors in the signage are meant to mimic stained glass, allowing light and scenery to show through in various ways depending on time of day, location, and the viewer’s vantage point.”

Future signs will include monument signs, plus signs at Purvis Park and UH City Hall.

Mike Cook is the communications and civic engagement director for University Heights.
University Heights City Council Meeting highlights
JUNE 20, 2023 – regular meeting

Council members present were Michelle Weiss (vice mayor), Christopher Conney, Thress Marshall, Brian J. King, and Shen So. Council members absent were Vice Mayor Weiss. Also present were Mayor Dylan Brennan, Kelly Thomas, clerk of council, Luke McClimon, law director, and Dennis Kennedy, finance director.

Public comments
Comments mostly addressed the Charter Review Commission’s (CRC) recommendations. Steve Wetherham, chair of the CRC, and Chris Myrick, vice chair, urged passage of all 10 proposed amendments. Mayor Brennan urged support by large majorities. Wendy Dearing, chair of the Heights Chapter of the League of Women Voters (LWV), said that the LWV supports ranked-choice voting (RCV), which assures a majority rule rather than a plurality. Several others spoke supporting the amendments, especially the RCV proposal, including Sean Logan of Lisbon, Ohio, a former member of the Ohio House of Representatives, Kyle Herman, executive director of Rank the Vote Ohio, and several residents.

Mayor’s report
Allen Brennan has been appointed the new service director and will start June 26.

Council vacancy
time proposal
Councilman Weiss was nominated to fill the council seat vacated by Barbara Herrmann. The motion failed, with Conney and King voting no. Weiss was nominated and appointed at the June 6 regular meeting, when the four council members present were Weiss, Sax, Rach, and Marshall, all voting yes.

CRC proposals
Flashing a charter amendment ballot requires support from over 2,000 members. That, according to Blanckfeld’s resignation and Rash’s absence, the five members present at this meeting must all vote to approve a charter amendment proposal.

Sax read a statement thanking the CRC, but maintaining that council should not rubber stamp all recommendations. King and Mayor Brennan expressed support for all proposed amendments, with the rationale that council should trust the commission and the voters.

Council approved the first CRC amendment proposal to review the charter to reflect gender neutrality and remove anachronistic references.

Council failed (to approve) the second amendment proposal, which called for the mayor to appoint the law director and removed council’s role in an appointment to an executive department. Conney, Sax, and Weiss voted no. Sax said this change would remove council’s role to provide checks and balances.

and Emily do both on the air and off the air that bring the city and the campus together through music.”

“808 & Mixtapes” broke the Guinness World Record for the World’s Longest Radio Interview in February 2022. Since then, the crew has won three national student production awards, helping WJCU become one of the nation’s top 25 collegiate audio programs.

Sinutko, Davala and Kennedy came in second place for the Best College On Air Personalities in the nation in the 2023 National Association of Broadcasters Education Awards.

“I’m extremely proud of the work Zach and the 808 & Mixtapes team have done over the last two years, and I look forward to seeing what they accomplish in the year to come,” said Jasen Sokol, general manager of WJCU. “I thank Mayor Brennan and his administration for their continued support of our students.”

The 808 crew is looking to continue its winning streak at the upcoming 2023 Collegiate Broadcast Incorporated Awards and bring some more hardware back to the Tim Russert Department of Communications at JCU.

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

LWV continued from page 1

13866 Cedar Road.

The LWV, FutureHeights and Heights Libraries are co-sponsors of the forums.

Councilors forums give voters an opportunity to hear the candidates discuss issues important to them in this election. At each candidate forum, candidates will present brief statements and answer written questions from the audience.

At the Issues forum, the substance of each ballot issue will be presented by proponents and opponents, who will then answer written questions from the public. The LWV of Greater Cleveland is a nonpartisan organization dedicated to informing the public about the election process and the individuals who are asking to represent us in government. The LWV neither supports nor opposes candidates or political parties. It advocates for policies and issues that support good government. League-sponsored voter education forums follow League procedural rules. In the event that a race is run unopposed, League rules require that no forum be held.

VOTE411.org is an LWV-sponsored website that provides the public with verbatim candidates’ responses. This is another avenue for voters to compare and choose among candidates and issues. Heights-specific candidate and issue information will also be published as a printed Voters Guide, to be included as a special insert in the October Heights Observer.

The LWV urges voters to mark their calendars and, as the general election season proceeds, take advantage of the opportunities offered by LWV of Greater Cleveland, FutureHeights, and Heights Libraries to become fully informed on the candidates and issues.

Elizabeth Tracy and Blanche Valacy are members of the Cleveland Heights/University Heights Chapter of the League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland.

VOTE FOR change continued from page 3

cil meeting, where President Hart reached over to turn off a council member’s microphone after he asked the vice mayor and fellow council members, and threatened to change the number of votes required for making appointments to various boards.

Council approved the seventh amendment proposal to modify the method to put initiatives and referenda on the ballot by basing it on the previous election.

Council approved the ninth amendment proposal, making the vice mayor, rather than the mayor, the presiding officer at council meetings.

Council approved the tenth amendment proposal, which would add anti-discrimination language to the charter.

Other council actions
Council standardized the rental/property process by creating uniform timing for requests.

Council modified a 2021 pilot program for electric scooters by removing the pilot program language on certain things, and prohibiting more than one rider per scooter.

Council modified an ordinance, adding enforcement regarding trash cans left out overnight.

Council passed an ordinance giving the city the right to inspect common areas and dwelling units in a property for the purpose of fire prevention and protection of tenants.

Council extended IT support services from Stachek Consulting for another year.

Council passed an alternate tax budget for tax purposes with no change in tax rate.

Council tied an agreement with SEC Engineers regarding the recently passed recycling ordinance to allow input from the new service director.

LWV Observer: Marilyn Singer.

BOB continued from page 1

LWV continued from page 1

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VOTE FOR change continued from page 3

City Council approved a bill to extend the community garden along the Noble Road right-of-way to the park.

Cindy Evans is a 30-year resident of Cleveland Heights who raised both of her children in the city. She is currently working to revive the Calene Neighborhood by attending council meetings, voicing her concerns, and joining other organizations. She is trying to be the change she wants to see.

NOBLE GARDENERS continued from page 1

Cindy Evans is a 30-year resident of Cleveland Heights who raised both of her children in the city. She is currently working to revive the Calene Neighborhood by attending council meetings, voicing her concerns, and joining other organizations. She is trying to be the change she wants to see.

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Cleveland Heights City Council

Meeting highlights

JUNE 20, 2023 - regular meeting

Council members present were Melody Joy Hart (president), Craig Cobb (vice president), Janine Boyd, Tony Cuda, Gail Larson, Anthony Mattice Jr., and Davida Russell. Also present were Mayor Khalil Seren, Addie Balzwater, clerk of council, and William Hannis, law director.

Horseshoe Lake
Council authorized amending the 2018 Stormwater Project Agreement with Shaker Heights and the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District (NEORSD) regarding the Shaker Lakes dams. The amendment will accept NEORSD’s recommendation to not rebuild the Horseshoe Lake Dam and instead decommission the dam and return the lakebed to its naturalized state.

Denison Park splash pad
Council authorized the purchase and installation of a splash pad for Denison Park, at a total cost of $476,618.18.

Lead hazards
Council amended “Lead Hazards” and other pertinent sections of the city code dealing with lead-safe certification of rental dwellings built before 1978.

Other council actions
Council approved the Coventry Village Special Improvement District’s public services plan and the 2024 tax budget.

Council authorized an agreement for paper products, mats, and cleaning and other supplies for up to 60 months for $25,000 to $30,000 per year, and an agreement for a zoning parcel record dataset, which will assist planning and zoning professionals and developers doing business with Cleveland Heights. Council cancelled its July 3 and 17 meetings for a recess. The next council meeting will be Aug. 7.

Council member comments
Gail Larson reported that the Municipal Services and Environmental Sustainability Committee spoke with the parks and recreation director about sidewalk snow removal. LWV Observer: Blanche Valancy.

JUNE 22, 2023 - special meeting

Council members present were, as were the mayor, clerk of council and law director.

Charter Review Commission
Council appointed Stephanie Morris, Jonathan Casta, and Graham Ball to the Charter Review Commission (CRC), with Davida Russell voting no. She explained that her vote was not an objection to the individuals but concerned geographic representation and diversity. 35 percent of the city’s population lives north of Mayfield Road, and council ultimately decides what will be put on the ballot.

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Brown celebrates Coventry with ‘Lov for Cov’

Robert (Bob) Brown has lived in Cleveland Heights for 47 years. For the past 20, he’s been a resident of the Coventry Village neighborhood with his wife, Susan Berger. They share their home with their current dog, a Labradoodle named Ori.

In spring 2023, Brown self-published a 68-page photo essay he authored, Lov for Cov. In it, he provides a loving history of Coventry Village and its unique architecture, people and walkable neighborhood.

Bob Brown and Ori at Spirit Corner near their Coventry Village home.

From Marcus M. Brown, who pushed the streetcar and inter-urban rail line through Coventry in about 1903; to the late Rabbi Zalman Kazzen, the butcher at the old Coventry Poultry Market; to interviews of the owners of Tommy’s and Mac’s Backs—Lov for Cov has it all. There is a reference copy in the Coventry Village Library, and a pdf of Lov for Cov can be found online at www.citybobbrown.com/single-post/lov-for-cov-coventry-village-in-cleveland-heights.

Brown grew up in Philadelphia and, later, in an adjacent suburb he describes as similar to Coventry but “not nearly as cool.”

He started college at the counter-culture Goddard College in rural Vermont, where, Brown recalled, “I didn’t know what I wanted to do as a job,” though he wanted to do “societal good.”

His life changed when he read the great urban theorist and activist Jane Jacobs’ book, The Death and Life of Great American Cities. “I realized that a small town in rural Vermont was not the place to be to learn about cities,” said Brown, who found a bachelor’s degree program at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) that “was a good fit for my newfound interest in city planning.”

(Though Brown didn’t come to study in Northeast Ohio because of it, the region played an important role in America’s history of local zoning regulation and land use planning. In a 1926 landmark case, the Village of Euclid v. Ambler Realty Co., the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that land zoning is a valid exercise of government’s police power. Soon thereafter, most local governments in the U.S. began practicing what became known as Euclidian Zoning.)

In 1976, after graduating from CWRU in 1973, and undertaking a two-year master’s program at Columbia University, Brown hoped that his first full-time city planning job would be working in the city of Cleveland for Norm Krumholz, who was nationally known for his pioneering work in “equity planning,” which focused on creating choices for residents who otherwise had few

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Bob Brown and Ori at Spirit Corner near their Coventry Village home.
West memorial fund awards scholarship to police academy cadet

The Officer Jason D. West Memorial Fund (OJWMF) awarded a $5,000 tuition reimbursement scholarship to Jermaine Smith, a June graduate of the Cleveland Heights Police Academy.

The $5,000 award honors Officer West, a member of the Cleveland Heights Police Department who lost his life on May 26, 2007, while responding to a disturbance call.

“The board felt that Jermaine exemplifies all the qualities that endeared Officer West to the Cleveland Heights community and made him an exemplary police officer,” said Lita Gonzalez, OJWMF board president. “He will be an asset to whatever police department and community he chooses to serve.”

In his application, Smith wrote that he sees becoming a police officer as not just a job but a calling. He said he is passionate about helping people and making a difference in his community.

Previously, Smith worked in a mental health hospital. That experience, he said, has helped him approach crisis situations in a way that can help de-escalate potential conflict and maintain a safe environment for everyone.

The Officer Jason D. West Memorial Fund. For more information, visit www.officerjasonwest.org and follow the Office Jason D. West fund’s Facebook page.

HRRC’s August classes include popular plumbing series

Anne Marie Goodfriend

Home Repair Resource Center (HRRC), located at 2520 Noble Road in Cleveland Heights, announces the following lineup of classes for the month of August.

Aug. 2, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Paver Patios and Walkways. This hands-on workshop will teach the step-by-step process of designing, planning, and creating outdoor spaces using paver stones.

Aug. 10, 7-9 p.m., Siding Installation and Repair Class. The instructor will explain the different options available when it comes to siding. Participants will also learn how to prep for a siding job, what tools they’ll need, and even get a chance to try installing siding on HRRC’s model exterior wall.

Aug. 14, 7-9 p.m., Common Household Fixes. This free class will cover such topics as vinyl floor tile repair, loose hinges, stuck window sashes, sticking doors, loose floor boards, dripping faucets, and more.

Aug. 15, 7-9 p.m., Knob and Tube Wiring. For the many homeowners who have knob and tube wiring in all or part of their home, this workshop will help answer any questions. Participants will learn how to ground the system, how to ground individual plugs, how knob and tube is replaced with Romex, see knob and tube up close, and learn the issues one may face. The fee for this class is $25.

Aug. 16, 7-9 p.m., HRRC will present the first of six classes in its popular Plumbing Series for Women. The six-week course will cover how the plumbing in your house works, how to make common repairs, and even how to work with contractors on jobs that you don’t want to tackle yourself. This series will provide the tools, terms, and know-how for you to start tackling plumbing issues yourself. Space is limited, so early registration is advised. The fee for this series is $50.

To register for any HRRC class, visit http://hrrc-ch.org or call 216-381-6100 ext. 16.

Income-based discounts of 50 percent to 100 percent are available for individuals who qualify.

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1. The Heights Observer is written by people like you. So write something. Use a computer.

2. Register/log in at the Member Center (www.heightsobserver.org).

3. After logging in, click the Submit New Story button in the left-hand column (Don’t see it? It’s nested under “Writer”). Then follow the prompts. Hint: keep your original file open so you can easily copy and paste into the text box.

4. Reward yourself; you’re about to be published. We’ll review and edit your article, and let you know if we have any questions.

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Submit an article to the Heights Observer is a piece of cake!
Reaching Heights’ Hawthorne plans 2024 retirement

Ditte Wolin

After nearly 18 years with Reaching Heights—the organization that champions the excellence and opportunities of public education in the Cleveland Heights University Heights City School District—Executive Director Krista Hawthorne will retire in June 2024.


Hawthorne joined Reaching Heights as a communication assistant, then served as assistant director before becoming executive director—a role she has filled for nearly 10 years.

“We’re lucky in the Heights to have a rich and diverse community committed to public education,” said Hawthorne, “and the generous and hardworking people who support our public-school students and their teachers, the role models and tutors who visit classrooms and share knowledge, the volunteers and donors who make the work of Reaching Heights possible. But all of that has to be guided, managed, and led. That’s where Krista shines: in bringing people into our schools to participate in the education of our students, in motivating our residents to give, and most importantly, in executing the direction and vision of the board and the organization to champion our schools.”

Hawthorne and her husband have lived in the Heights for more than 35 years. Their two daughters attended Coventry and Boulevard elementary schools, Roxboro Middle School, and Cleveland Heights High School. They have hosted seven AFS exchange students—Hawthorne has been a lead volunteer with AFS Intercultural Programs for more than 20 years—all of whom attended Heights High.

“I am proud to have been involved in bringing people into our schools,” said Hawthorne, “for the community spelling bee, to tutor and speak with our children, for our summer music camp and Reaching Musical Heights, and more. Many moments stand out for me, like the privilege of giving the awards for Friend of Public Education and Outstanding Community Partner at the Reaching Heights annual meetings.

“Over the past 18 years, I’ve had rare access to a full view of the school district. I’ve been welcomed and trusted as a partner in every building and by the district administrators. This access is critical for Reaching Heights: it allows us to help promote to the Heights community the deep learning, excellent teaching, and great care our school and district staff provide our children. It has truly been an honor and privilege to work at Reaching Heights and carry on the legacy of my predecessors to support public education in the CH-UH City School District.”

A search committee has been formed to find a new executive director for Reaching Heights, with the goal of hiring a replacement in early 2024 to facilitate a smooth transition before Hawthorne steps down.

Reaching Heights Inc. is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that works to connect the community to the Cleveland Heights-University Heights public schools with information, programs, and events that raise awareness of public education, support teachers, and enrich students.
Student musicians connect with community at summer camp

Diana Drushel

During the second week of summer, 75 instrumental music students from the CH–UH City School District’s middle and elementary schools were not quite ready to put their instruments away. Instead, they attended the 17th annual Reaching Heights Summer Music Camp, learning from alumni and experts in the community, that culminates in a full orchestra performance.

Every summer, Reaching Heights organizes a weeklong, affordable music-immersion experience for the district’s middle and elementary schools’ orchestra and band students.

Over the course of the five-day camp, the student musicians participate in orchestra rehearsals; work in their instrument group in a master class and a sectional rehearsal; participate in a chamber group; and explore a new musical interest such as jazz, a percussion ensemble, ukulele or choir. This is all in preparation for a recital on Friday that features the chamber groups, and a final full orchestra performance on Saturday morning.

The 47 staff members, comprising music educators, Heights High students, and local musicians—many of whom are alumni of CH–UH and the camp itself—come back year after year to “pay it forward” to an experience and program that helped many of them grow as musicians and individuals.

Maple Buescher (Heights High class of 2021), a junior at Bates College who has opted not to pursue music professionally, recalled her time as a camper and being encouraged by staff to be involved with music. “I think that’s just a super cool part of camp,” Buescher said. “It’s so open to everyone, no matter if their career is going to be music-based or not.” Being a camper, and then a counselor as a high school student, played a part in Heights High alumna Kym Carter’s (class of 2013) decision to become a music educator. Now the orchestra director for Roxboro Middle School, Carter has been involved in the camp since 2006. There, she met her first violin teacher, who later convinced her to pursue music education. As the teacher for many of the current campers, Carter said the immense progress they make during the week nearly brings her to tears. “It’s important for the middle schoolers to see how much they can progress and grow in their time at the camp,” Carter said. “It just gives them more confidence.”

The camp’s success would not be possible without the 28 high school student counselors, who work in tandem with adult staff. From teaching theory lessons, to helping with the many small tasks that make the camp run smoothly, to providing musical

continued on page 23
Cleveland Heights – University Heights Public Library Board
Meeting highlights

JUNE 26, 2023
Board members present were Miss Gerber (president), Annette lwamoto (secretary), Dana Fluellen, Patti Carlyle, and Melissa Soto-Schwarz. Vice-Treasurer (vice president) and Tyler McTigue were not present.

Summer reading program
Nearly 300 people attended the summer reading kick-off program. Youth Services Manager Sam Lapides and Adult Services Librarian Jen Mihalik shared positive feedback about the summer reading program, which runs from June 1 to Aug. 16. The summer program engages participants who read, or are read to, for 20–30 minutes each day. Youth sign-up number is 1,100. The adult program offers an opportunity to enter a raffle with each book read. To date, there have been 689 entries. Details for these programs can be found online at https://heightslibrary.org.

Noble Neighborhood Library building
The interior demolition has progressed well. Steam piping is underway. Digging the trench for underground wiring has begun. Budget remains as expected, except for a recent significant [price] increase for Cleveland Heights city permits.

Board actions
The board:
• Authorized a contract with Preferred LLC for painting exterior and interior items at the Lee Road branch and HMK building.
• Approved a purchase order to Cresco Real Estate for additional cash for repairs with the expectation that the library will be revascularized in the future.
• Approved a contract with Findley Landscaping to improve the grounds around the Lee Road Branch and the HMK, and to launch the children’s garden at the Lee Road Branch.
• Approved the lease with People’s Choice Payee Services at the Coventry PEACE Building. This is a nonprofit organization that empowers people with resources they need to thrive and to live the lives they envision in their communities of choice.
• Approved a Procurement Diversity Policy.
• Approved 2023–2024 employee medical and prescription coverage with CIGNA. Employees will continue to share the costs.
• Approved a contract with Payee Services at the Coventry PEACE Building.
• Approved a contract with Preferred LLC for repairs and prescription coverage with CIGNA. Employees will continue to share the costs.
• Approved an additional 35 cents per hour additional pay for those certified as Passport Application Agents.
• Approved an increase in base salaries for 2023 (2 to 5 percent based on market ranges) for all active employees, effective June 25. This includes a step-pay increase for pages, starting at $15 per hour, and a $1,500 lump-sum payment to librarians with 10 years or more experience. Its Full-time employees.
• Approved the elimination of page PTO

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Let’s help you landscape!
On July 6, Heights Libraries’ University Heights branch officially reopened its lower level, home to its Teen and Children’s departments, which had been closed since August 2022 due to damage caused by flooding. The flooding destroyed flooring, walls, and built-in furniture, rendering the space unusable. The library hired construction company Millstone Management Group to perform the renovation work, after Neptune Plumbing installed new clean-out drains in the space to prevent future flooding.

"Several engineers were consulted and all agreed that there was nothing structurally wrong with our building, the storm sewers, or the water lines around our building," said University Heights Branch Manager Sara Phillips. "It was a freak incident, a perfect storm of factors, like days of heavy rain and concurrent roadwork, but regardless, we’ll be in good shape if anything like it ever happens again."

Millstone was able to return the popular space to its previous layout, and the flooring has been updated with more durable materials that should last for years to come. The children’s service desk and all lower cabinetry are brand new, while other, movable furniture, such as tables and chairs, were saved. The popular murals, created by local award-winning artist Jamey Christoph, were reprinted and reinstalled.

"We had about 15 people waiting at the door the day we reopened the space, including two tween boys who were very excited to learn that the teen area was reopened," said Phillips. "Youth services staff are beyond thrilled to have the full collection back, and are looking forward to holding storytime in a dedicated space again."

Phillips added that she appreciates how patient customers have been during the lower-level closure, and how creative and flexible the staff were during the past year. Staff moved the entire teen and children’s collections to the branch’s meeting rooms, and held storytimes in a makeshift area on the first floor and at nearby Walter Stinson Park.

All cleaning and repair costs were covered by the library’s insurance.

Sheryl Banks is the communications manager for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library System.
Yiddishe Cup will play its final outdoor concert of the season on Thursday, Aug. 17, 7 p.m., at Walter Stinson Community Park, 2301 Fenwick Road, in University Heights. The band plays klezmer and Motown. The concert is free. “To some,” noted Bert Stratton, leader of Yiddishe Cup, “Walter Stinson is a park, aka ‘The Walt.’ To some, Walter Stinson is a person. He died in October. He worked for the city of University Heights for decades. He first hired Yiddishe Cup in 1994 for a University Heights concert. On Aug. 14, 2003, the entire East and Midwest had a power blackout on a brutally hot and humid night. I thought Walter was joking when he said the show must go on. I said to him, ‘McDonald’s is closed, there are no street lights, and the radio says stay home.’ He said play. Our keyboard player switched to upright bass, and our sax player went to acoustic guitar. We did an entirely acoustic show. Yiddishe Cup dedicates its Aug. 17 concert to the memory of Walter Stinson. Gotta respect Walter’s show-must-go-on ‘tude!” [Yiddishe Cup members pictured above (from left): Steven Greenman, Alan Douglas, Bert Stratton, Tamar Gray, and Alice Stratton.]

Yiddishe Cup dedicates Aug. 17 concert to Walter Stinson

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Make a date for free performances at Cain Park

Marc Lefkowitz

Free concerts and performances are dotted throughout the month of August at Cain Park. Mark your calendars and schedule a sitter (or bring the kids; many of the events are family friendly). With 250 seats in the intimate Alma Theater, 2,532 split evenly between the Evans Amphitheater’s pavilion and lawn, an art gallery, and a summer program schedule that features free and paid live performances through September, Cain Park provides ample opportunity to enjoy local and national talent—in some cases with no admission fee.

August’s schedule starts with a performance from Cleveland Public Theatre’s Student Theatre Enrichment Program (STEP), a rigorous arts-based program that provides hands-on job training, and engages young people in a powerful learning experience that develops job skills, academic achievement, and interpersonal skills. STEP will showcase the work of its students in a free performance on Tuesday, Aug. 1, 7 p.m., on the pathway outside the Alma Theater.

It pays to read the fine print, as ticket-holders can bring children under the age of 3 for free to an Aug. 3 performance of Bindlestiff Family Cirkus, a troupe of contemporary circus, vaudeville, burlesque, and sideshow performers who celebrate the diverse world of circus arts. The performance takes place at 7 p.m., in the Evans Amphitheater.

Cain Park has two free concert series running throughout the 2023 season: its Tuesday Evening and Sunday Afternoon concerts.

On Sunday, Aug. 6, 1–4 p.m., the Sunday series features AirChiefs, a 1960s-soaked rock band hailing from Cleveland. On Sunday, Aug. 20, 1–4 p.m., the Don DeSantis Quintet, a jazz ensemble inspired by the Las Vegas lounge acts of the 1960s, will perform.

On Tuesday, Aug. 15, at 7 p.m. in the Alma Theater, catch a performance by Alla Boara, a Cleveland group whose modern arrangements of near-extinct Italian folk songs bring recognition and new life to Italy’s diverse history of regional folk music. Jazz enthusiasts should mark their calendars for a Tuesday, Aug. 22 performance by the Brad Wagner Quintet. Its lineup features songs by musicians who would have turned 100 years old in 2023, including Dexter Gordon, Thad Jones, Wes Montgomery, Milt Jackson, Percy Heath, Tito Puente and more.

Don’t miss Artrageous, an electrifying art and music circus that offers a free family event at 11 a.m. on Aug. 16 (ahead of its ticketed performance that evening at 7 p.m.). Round out an artful summer with a visit to the Feinberg Gallery at Cain Park to see A Smoker’s Etiquette: Social Complexities at a Designated Smoke Table. This show—the gallery’s second summer art exhibit, is curated by Daly Horton and runs from Friday, July 28 through Saturday, Sept. 22.

To see all of the performances scheduled for August, visit www.cainpark.com.

Marc Lefkowitz is a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights. He has served on the city’s Transportation Advisory Committee, and on the board of the Home Repair Resource Center, and is currently a public relations specialist with the city.

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Baseball kids—it runs in the family

David Budin

I watched some of my granddaughter’s Heights Youth Baseball League (7- and 8-year-olds) games this summer. This was the first baseball team experience for these kids. There were more girls than boys on the team, the Purple People Eaters, with their uniforms of purple jerseys, caps and socks, and white pants. My daughter-in-law was the coach and my son was one of the assistant coaches. All of the coaches were volunteers.

At this level, the teams’ coaches pitch to their own teams. They play with a regular baseball, a hardball. Three or four of the coaches go onto the field when their team is playing defense, to guide the kids, but the coaches don’t do any fielding; for that matter, neither do the kids, much; though that did improve by the end of the season. Games were played in early evening, and parents, and others, came to watch and cheer the teams on.

All of this was quite different from my baseball experience when I was growing up in Cleveland Heights and playing for the Cumberland Park team. It was only for boys, for one thing. And it was softball. Hardball was for Little League, but you had to be pretty good to play Little League back then. Our team was not very good. I don’t remember ever winning a game.

Cumberland and Cain parks and most of the elementary schools in Cleveland Heights had teams, with a paid coach—usually a college guy—assigned to each place.

Cumberland’s coach, every year I played on the team, was a nice guy named Mike. Even though I started out big for my age, my eyesight was bad, which hurt my hitting and fielding. But I was fairly strong, so if I accidentally hit the ball, it went far. And I was fast, which helped if I ever got on base, which I mostly didn’t. Teams had 10 players, rather than nine, on the field, with an added position called short-center. That was my position, because there would be three guys behind me to go after the balls I misjudged.

I started in the summer between sixth and seventh grades. Since Cumberland was in the neighborhood of the junior high I was about to start, Roosevelt, I met a bunch of kids I’d be going to school with in the fall. I didn’t really care about most of them, but I did a couple, and became good friends with those guys, one to this day.

We practiced every day, on a baseball diamond that no longer exists in Cumberland Park. We had games against other teams almost every day. Parents never came to watch, this was just a kid thing. We didn’t have uniforms; we just wore our street clothes.

We played on each team’s field, which, in the case of some schools, like Coventry, was completely asphalt. I don’t remember that anyone of us minded that. Cumberland’s home games were played at Forest Hill Park, probably because our own field wasn’t regulation size, outfield-wise. Many of my granddaughter’s team’s games were played at Forest Hill, too, but on newer and greatly improved baseball fields.

My second summer playing on the Cumberland team found me bigger, but with no better vision, thus not improved. Except I was still a fast runner, and a man who started coming around to Cumberland noticed that and pulled me aside after one of our practices. He told me that his name was Mr. Tupta, and that he was in charge of the Cleveland Heights part of the Junior Olympics, and he asked me to try out for it.

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STUDENT MUSICIANS continued from page 16

support and encouragement when it gets overwhelming—they do it all, and more.

“It is a really important connection,” said Daniel Heim, the director of orchestras at Heights High, who has been involved with the camp since 2010. “And it’s a great source of support and encouragement for the campers to see their peers, who are just a few years ahead, doing so well.”

Instrumental music is a beloved program in the CH-UH school district, and Reaching Heights helps its young musicians grow by providing an opportunity for them to stretch themselves with the more challenging music that is a precursor to high school. With support and encouragement of alumni and community members, they truly see what their hard work can do.

The Reaching Heights Summer Music Camp is open to instrumental musicians in grades five through eight who live in the CH-UH City School District. Scholarship support is available, as are school instruments to borrow. Reaching Heights Summer Music Camp 2023 is planned for June 10-15 at Heights High.

Diana Drushel is a 2011 Heights High graduate, parent and community liaison for Reaching Heights. Drushel strongly suggested that I try out for the school’s football team in 2009, so I would always be available for football practice and games. I made the team, but I had to make the team, and made the team.

I raced—still in street shoes and clothes—in Junior Olympics preliminaries, held on Heights High’s track. Trying out consisted of running a 50-yard dash on a section of the stairs that take you up to Hampshire Road west to the runs—through Cumberland Park, a 50-yard dash on a section of the track where you have to jump over the hurdles, and a 400-yard race.

Afterward, Mr. Tupta, who was my race coach, held on Heights High’s track. Tupta, strongly suggested that I try out for the school’s football team in 2009, so I would always be available for football practice and games. I made the team, but I had to make the team, and made the team.

I really liked doing that, though I lost my race.Direction, and a lot of self-esteem. That whole experience gave me a little more confidence in my ability to compete with bigger guys on the field, which is an important aspect of playing football. By high school, I had quit all sports to concentrate on music. But after I made the team, I was relegated to the line, which means crashing into bigger guys on every play. I also made the track team later.

He made me the team, but, again, despite my potential, I couldn’t see without my glasses, so I was relegated to the line, which meant crashing into bigger guys on every play. I also made the track team later.

By high school, I had quit all sports to concentrate on music. But that whole experience gave me a little more direction, and a lot of self-esteem. Plus, it was fun. And it changed my life.

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.

STUDENT MUSICIANS continued from page 16

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