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

## Heights Music Hop celebrates 10 years

Amanda Isaacson

On Sept. 23, the 2023 Heights Music Hop will celebrate its 10th year. Sponsored by the nonprofit FutureHeights, a community development corporation for Cleveland Heights and University Heights, this community event supports local artists and businesses while promoting the Heights to Greater Cleveland.

The Hop, scheduled for Saturday, Sept. 23, will be held at the Noble Gardener's Market in the morning and in the Cedar Lee District Saturday that night. The event is free.

Kasia Bufford, manager of the Heights Music Hop, expressed excitement about the upcoming event, noting, "The Music Hop committee has created an event that will be diverse with lots of ways for people to participate."

Bufford anticipates approxi-

mately 30 artists will be performing, with 14 businesses serving as music venues.

The Heights Bicycle Coalition (HBC), a chapter of Bike Cleveland formed in 2010, has teamed up with FutureHeights to encourage people to walk or ride to the Hop. Deidre McPherson, an avid rider and HBC member, is reminding everyone to, "Leave your car at home and bike to the Hop, then enjoy a casual bike ride with members of HBC." HBC will be organizing a Ride to Hop that meets at Best Gyros (a Main Stage Venue) at 6 p.m.

Once cyclists arrive, the Ohio City Bicycle Co-op, a nonprofit, volunteer-driven cooperative helping people to use bikes, will greet riders who want to valet park their bikes. This service is being offered in collaboration with FutureHeights for anyone riding to the event, and will be located at



the event information center on the corner of Lee and Meadowbrook in the city parking lot.

Kristine Pagsuyoin, executive director of FutureHeights, said, "Safety at the Music Hop is a top priority. Hopefully, encouraging

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## CH's Frabotta medals in Pan American U20 Championships

Cat Wagers

Cleveland Heights resident Damon Frabotta earned the bronze medal in the 400-meter hurdles at the 2023 Pan American U20 Championships, held in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, Aug. 4-6.

Frabotta is a rising sophomore at Boston College, and a former standout hurdler for Saint Ignatius High School, from which he graduated in 2022.

Frabotta clinched one of two coveted spots on Team USA's Junior National Team at the USA Track & Field U20 Junior Nationals, held at historic Hayward Field in Eugene, Ore., July 8 and 9. There, Frabotta took the silver medal in the 400-meter hurdles, and set both a personal record and a Boston College record in the event, with a time of 51.89.



Damon Frabotta in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, on Aug. 4.

COURTESY CAT WAGERS

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## Crowdsourced Conversations launches final 2023 survey

Sarah Wolf

Crowdsourced Conversations is a forum series that prioritizes action-oriented, small-group discussions on topics significant to the Heights community. Each topic begins with a Heightswide survey that helps to inform the discussion.

This September, a community-wide survey on the topic of "Planning and Development in the Heights," the final topic in this year's series, will be live. All Heights stakeholders and residents are encouraged to participate. All responses are anonymous.

The survey can be accessed online on the FutureHeights website, [www.futureheights.org](http://www.futureheights.org). Details about the forum itself—now in the planning stages and slated for late October or early November—will be available soon.

The goal is to use the data collected in the survey to generate a report that can be shared with the public and enable program stewards to craft action-oriented small-group discussion questions.

At Crowdsourced Conversations events, groups that average 6-10 people come together to think productively about the topic of the evening and strategize ways that any resident can take action or become more involved.

Since the program's inception in spring 2022, Crowdsourced Conversations topics have covered "Sustainability" (April 2022), "Housing and Neighborhood Preservation" (June 2022), "Community Safety" (August 2022), "Civic Engagement" (October

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## Church welcomes all to diverse arts community

Ronald Werman

The congregation of Disciples Christian Church (located at the corner of Mayfield and Yellowstone roads) is joyfully partnering with the arts community to share its 30,000-square-foot building.

The church's Cultural Arts Center (CAC) welcomes local artists of all genres, and seeks to collaborate with community partners to create a safe, accessible place where young people can engage in artistic expression that reflects the community's diversity.

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Djapo presents drumming exercises at the Cultural Arts Center at Disciples Christian Church.

RON WERMAN



## 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](http://www.heightsobserver.org/members).

## HEIGHTS OBSERVER

The *Heights Observer* is a citizen-based news source published monthly by FutureHeights, a nonprofit, 501(c)3 organization dedicated to civic engagement and quality of life.

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Cleveland Heights, OH 44118  
216-320-1423

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The views and opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the *Heights Observer*, its publisher and staff, or of FutureHeights, its staff and board of directors.

## 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](http://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](mailto:info@futureheights.org).

Articles to be considered for October publication must be submitted by Sept. 11. We publish some articles online only.

## Longtime resident sees improvements in Cleveland Heights

To the Editor:

As a citizen of Cleveland Heights for 35 years, I would like to mention some cool things Sue (my wife) and I noticed as we walked, rolled, and biked around the Heights.

People are moving into the new apartments at the Top of the Hill. We see signs of life, like plants out on the balconies. Next door, Nighttown is looking good; the deep blue wall colors are quite attractive.

It's great to see Coventry Road getting resurfaced, and it will be so much smoother for bicycles when it's finished. The "bike the city" people rode past our house recently; it sounded like they were having fun.

The new trash containers are great. The streets around here are much cleaner on trash day. We're glad to see that Horseshoe Dam is going to be dismantled. We look forward to the area reverting to a more natural state.

The new stone entryway at Mitchell's candy store is really gorgeous and perfectly level for wheelchair users. Dave's Market is spiffing up the building on Lee Road—new chill cabinets, and what fun to name the aisles after Cleveland Heights streets!

And what do you know? We have a mental health hospital right here in the city.

These all might seem like minor improvements to life in the Heights, but to us, every little thing counts.

Jerry Hannibal  
Cleveland Heights

## Loving the women of the Heights

To the Editor:

Fifty years ago, I was a pretty, young art student working on Coventry and causing romantic havoc wherever I went. All of my girlfriends were interesting and cute and also caused a lot of havoc. I hated the war and worked on ending it in between making jewelry and hanging out in

the coffee houses and bars in Cleveland Heights and University Circle.

Now, I'm an elderly, crippled woman with no car. I do have a mobility scooter, though. Had to renew my ID at the DMV to vote because—another birthday. Durn, every year! DMV is several miles away. A little worried about the range I had with the scooter, but I did it. Rode up on Sparky all the way.

Voting venue at the Rec Center also a couple miles away, in another direction. (Cleveland Heights is BIG!) Made it up there! Voted NO on Issue 1! We don't need to enable the doofy legislature to pile on the votes to thwart our rights!

Saw many wonderful, beautiful, vibrant women of a certain age doing the same thing. This is why I love Cleveland Heights!

Susan Prendergast  
Cleveland Heights

## Authorities are deaf to motorcycle noise

To the Editor:

This summer, Cleveland Heights has seemed to let the scofflaws rule. Motorcycle noise, day and even late at night, has disturbed the peace usually enjoyed by taxpaying homeowners.

Major roadways, such as Lee, Taylor, Cedar, Mayfield and Monticello, have become favorite speedways as motorcycles fly by, over speed limits, often with music blaring in addition to their no-muffler vehicles.

Cleveland Heights DOES have a noise ordinance (509.03), but authorities seem deaf to it. At one time, Cleveland Heights residents lived in fear of being ticketed for an unruly muffler. Why is this noise being tolerated now?

It would be great if motorcycle owners would be considerate while riding within the city, saving their high gear for the countryside, but more than likely, the riders are not local taxpayers and don't care. Our authorities should care.

Jan Milic  
Cleveland Heights

## Williams vetted out of sight of the public

To the Editor:

I looked forward to watching the Aug. 14 Cleveland Heights City Council hearing with city administrator nominee Danny Williams. Williams had already reached out to individual members of council, which I saw as positive a first step toward building working relationships with them.

The hearing, however, turned out to be barely even pro forma. Since private one-on-one meetings with Williams gave council members a chance to query him, only one asked him any questions in this public setting. Thus, what seemed like a good idea in effect deprived residents of a window on the vetting process.

This unintended consequence could have been avoided by having council members repeat their questions to Williams on-camera during the hearing. The public would then have gained insight into both council concerns and Williams' expectations regarding the job.

Deborah Van Kleef  
Cleveland Heights

## 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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# Cleveland Heights might now have a good city administrator

Alan Rapoport

Mayor Seren is making his second attempt to fill the position of Cleveland Heights city administrator. And he offered an excellent candidate—he nominated Danny Williams.

Mayor Seren allowed this position to remain vacant for much too long. Daily tasks of local government require supervision by a talented professional.

The mayor previously hired Joe Sinnott as city administrator. But because Mayor Seren used him poorly, his talents were wasted. Sinnott resigned in April. Since then, the new form of government has not operated as designed.

Mayor Seren had kept Sinnott away from contact with city council and the public. The mayor proved unable to use, motivate, and retain a highly qualified person. I wrote last month that I hoped his next hire would be more visible and more effective. That now may be the case.

I am a big fan of Williams. He is a gentleman. He has executive and government experience. He has the right skill set. Most importantly, he works well with others. I cannot imagine a better choice for city administrator. As critical as I have been about Mayor Seren in the past, I believe he got something right this time.

At least I hope he got it right.

Much will depend on whether the mayor uses this second city administrator better than he used the first one. Rumor has it that Williams extracted some promises from the mayor. These promises might allow Williams to have reasonable interactions with department heads, council members, and the public. If that proves to be so, government in Cleveland Heights will work much better—provided Seren does not mess the situation up again by becoming a control freak.

At times, Williams may be ordered by the mayor to implement unpopular agendas. That could happen in a political system. The response to what is unpopular is called an “election.” There will be one in November for some members of city council. Controversy about the mayor’s management style probably will become an issue then. And eventually there will be another election for mayor. Hopefully, Williams will remain in his job despite any noise or drama.

In the meantime, we may see real improvements at City Hall. This is because Mayor Seren finally found a good man to do an important job there.

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

# No Mow May raises awareness

Gerald Sgro

We will not really know whether we were able to increase the diversity and abundance of pollinators necessary for our plants to flourish this season by not mowing in May. This would make a good research thesis for some graduate student. But one of the main goals of the No Mow May movement is to get people thinking and talking about the maintenance of their yards from an environmental perspective. In that respect, Mayor Seren’s declaring Cleveland Heights a No Mow May community was a huge success.

Because of this movement, people around the country and here in the Heights have been made more aware of pollinator declines that will eventually lead to ecosystem collapse. Biodiversity loss is on the World Economic Forum’s Global Risk Report 2022 as one of the top three threats facing humans today.

Though not everyone will go all in with No Mow May, some perhaps will embrace the concept of moving away from a monoculture lawn supported by fertilizer and herbicides and instead have a diverse landscape which provides good bio-habitat. Also, people better understand the importance of letting the early spring wildflowers grow, which is important for the pollinators.

We should not only be concerned

with what we grow in our yards, but with how we care for our yards. Especially, we need to re-think our use of gas-powered equipment.

Climate change is an important driver responsible for the decline of pollinator species and abundance. Gas mowers contribute to this. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that the typical gas lawn mower adds 89 lbs. of carbon dioxide in a season. There were 30 million tons of pollutants added to the atmosphere in the U.S. by gas lawn equipment in 2018. A gas leaf blower puts out more hydrocarbons than a Ford F-150 truck.

There are a variety of non-gas alternatives to mowing and blowing lawns, from electric mowers and blowers to push mowers and brooms (the way everyone maintained their yards in the Heights prior to the 1950s).

These alternatives will eventually pay for themselves with the savings gained from not using gas yard equipment, and will greatly reduce carbon dioxide emissions even when considering the energy used to recharge the battery for electric equipment. Plus, the neighbors will be happier because our peaceful “quiet” neighborhoods will actually be peaceful and quiet, and the babies can nap.

*Gerald Sgro is a longtime Cleveland Heights resident and a retired research biologist.*



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by Jordan Harrison

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The Grown-Up" is a magical ride through time and space that serves as a stealthy extended metaphor for the power of imagination and storytelling. The play asks the fundamental questions of adulthood: is it possible to balance our earlier innocence with earned experience? Can we ever find the way back to the children we once were?

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## Cleveland Heights is a tale of two cities

Tonya Horn

A tale of two cities will continue to be my tagline for and reference to Cleveland Heights until city council and the mayor take action on more equitable efforts, including development and resources for the north side of the city. After all, this was the mayor's top priority—equitable investment in the neighborhoods. I'm still waiting.

In the noise around the Noble Station project, supporters want to use the term "affordable housing" to distinguish it from "low-income housing"—as if "affordable" is better or different. It's pretty much the same thing, when some rents will be as low as \$400.

At the Aug. 7 CH City Council meeting, residents of Noble neighborhood showed up to oppose the plan. Noble Road has more than its share of low-income, affordable apartments in a span of several blocks; one more is NOT needed. This is hardly the equitable investment we expect or want.

Affordable or low-income housing is needed, but should be planned as mixed-income housing throughout the city, not just on the already deprived and struggling north side. Apartments and single-family homes with mixed, blended income levels are the ideal, focused on homeownership, and building legacy, wealth, and pride in the community.

We want a community where our children can play; a walkable neighborhood with a grocery and drug store, a coffee shop, restaurants, goods and services; and entertainment and recreation for all

ages. North of Mayfield residents are entitled to these amenities, too!

The city should commit to a strong partnership with FutureHeights and the Home Repair Resource Center and support their efforts to rehab homes throughout the city; fund Start Right CDC's infill housing project that will create a mixed-income neighborhood and increase home values; use federal community development block grants, if possible, to help struggling businesses with repair and external, unified facelifts; repurpose the old CVS; and recruit and support aspiring business owners to the area.

This Noble Station low-income project, which received tax credits through the Ohio Housing Financing Agency, is proposed to cost \$14.7 million. If the city and the Indianapolis-based developer Together We Grow (TWG) are committed to building a multi-story complex, here's a thought: I and perhaps others in the Noble neighborhood would welcome affordable housing for our low-income aging population. (I know the struggle in my attempt to relocate my 82-year-old father back home to Nebraska. We have been on several affordable-housing waitlists for three years.)

The city administration has an obligation to DELIVER. We've waited far too long, with a lot of talk but no progress. We need this city to take action now, in our lifetime, to eliminate the long-term effects and ramifications of redlining and structural racism created decades ago.

*Tonya Horn is a concerned Noble neighborhood resident and was a member of the Citizens for an Elected Mayor campaign. She is a FutureHeights board member. The opinion expressed here is her own.*

## Hart gets things done for Cleveland Heights

Peter DeGolia

When considering candidates for Cleveland Heights City Council, we should look at what they have accomplished. Melody Joy Hart's record over the past four years includes some impressive legislative successes for our city.

Among other things, Council President Hart collaborated with the Cleveland Heights court, prosecutor's office, and Home Repair Resource Center to create a diversion program for homeowners with housing violations that keeps them out of court and helps them repair their homes.

She proposed legislation and collaborated with her fellow council members to approve permanent extension of pay-to-stay legislation for tenants so that their homes remain stable, amending foreclosure bonds, out-of-county registry and vacant

building registry, giving [legislation] more teeth and adding a civil option for prosecution of fines; creating a Racial Justice Task Force to evaluate the impact of, and provide recommendations to address, systemic racism in our city; and mandating [that] infill housing agreements require the developer to not discriminate on hiring or selling properties to LGBTQ+ residents.

A CPA with an extensive finance background, Hart instituted a thorough budget process that ensures fiscal accountability of all departments.

The distracting theatrics and finger pointing we are currently witnessing among some council members gets us nowhere. Hart has my vote on Nov. 7 because she responds to citizen concerns and gets things done.

*Peter DeGolia is a geriatrician with MetroHealth and a 33-year resident of Cleveland Heights.*

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## Hart is the council president CH needs

Audrey Hudak

The heart of a true public servant is hyper-focused on what is best for the people they serve. Melody Joy Hart is hyper-focused on the city of Cleveland Heights.

Hart has truly leaned into her position as city council president and has turned what is normally a part-time job into a full-time effort to successfully and gracefully lead our city through this time of change.

Being city council president is not an easy task! Under a lot of pressure, and sometime provocation, Hart leads her colleagues on council forward to

the betterment of Cleveland Heights.

Being both a peer city council member and a leader is no easy task—when is the last time that you led a group of people with multiple motivations? Hart takes on this responsibility and tirelessly acts as a type of “referee,” maintaining the rules-based order of council meetings.

I admire Melody Joy Hart and I support her re-election to CH City Council this November. I encourage you to vote for her.

*Audrey Hudak is a young professional, homeowner, concerned citizen, and continuous improvement expert.*

## The case for change on CH City Council

Tony Cuda

Things on CH City Council are not going well. The past 20 months have been marked by a constant struggle to get information from the administration, council’s failure to compromise on a replacement for Josie Moore, and council leadership’s inability to establish any rules or priorities after three retreats. The result has been a largely unproductive, unfocused, slow-moving, and sometimes adversarial city council.

There have, however, been moments where things have been calm and the business of the city moves forward as it should. The vast majority (98%-plus) of perfunctory legislation put forward by the administration moves ahead without incident.

But when it comes to council taking care of its own business—the clerk of council amendment, the inquiry amendment, the memorandum of understanding, equal treatment of council members, decorum at meetings and between members, establishing priorities and rules, filling a vacancy on council, creating a process for seating a charter review commission, and support for council-initiated legislation—it’s mostly been a struggle. Between a lack of communication, flawed processes, unwillingness to compromise, and very different ideas about council’s role in our new form of government, this council has had a difficult time getting things done.

Fortunately, on Nov. 7, Cleveland

Heights voters will have the opportunity to re-elect Council Member Gail Larson and elect council candidate Jim Petras.

Gail Larson supported legislation to clarify council’s right to inquiry. She supported compromise when there was a stalemate for Moore’s replacement. Gail is always calm, thoughtful, insightful, and responsive. She returns every phone call and every e-mail. Perhaps most importantly, Gail is independent. Even when we don’t agree, she is always collaborative and professional.

Jim Petras is a consensus builder. As a project director at Case Western Reserve University, he brings people together on a daily basis to collaborate to solve problems. He’s young, educated, perceptive, and a quick study. And he is the only challenger who regularly attends city council meetings. When I see Jim out in the community campaigning and building relationships, it confirms to me how important it is to support our young, talented, future leaders.

There are six candidates running for three CH City Council seats on Nov. 7. Larson and Petras are the only two candidates endorsed by the Cleveland Heights Democratic Club!

If we re-elect Gail Larson and elect Jim Petras, I strongly believe that we will become a more productive, focused, and effective city council.

*Tony Cuda is a member of CH City Council, and a longtime resident of the city.*



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Gail is a consummate professional who is truly looking to make our community a better place. Her presence on City Council is crucial to our city’s growth and future. —Robert Koonce

Gail does her homework and is always prepared to collaborate with her council colleagues on city issues. Gail listens to our citizens—and responds! —Helen Hertz

"Gail Larson conducts herself with respect, responsibility, and intelligence on our City Council. She listens to all sides and helps clarify and unite for solutions." —Anne Caruso

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FRABOTTA continued from page 1

The Pan American U20 Athletics Championships are a biennial sports event for track and field organized by the Association of Pan-American Athletics (APA) open to junior (Under 20) athletes from member and associate member associations. Sixteen countries and territories, including Puerto Rico, participated in this year's competition. Team USA delivered a dominant performance, earning a total of 58 medals. Canada placed second, with 16 medals.

*Cat Wagers is resident of Cleveland Heights' Fairfax neighborhood, and a friend and neighbor of Damon Frabotta's family. She is co-founder of the Cleveland Heights Green Team.*

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THE COMMON GOOD

Susie Kaeser

I recently used this column to beseech readers not to sit out the Aug. 8 special election. Proponents of Issue 1, a constitutional amendment that would have made it more difficult to place a constitutional amendment on the ballot and then to pass it, hoped to sneak the noxious initiative through during a low-turnout summer election.

Cleveland Heights and University Heights voters, and others across the state, went to the polls in large numbers and defeated a bad idea. Nearly 19,000 Heights residents cast ballots.

I can't resist data. The Cuyahoga County Board of Elections website reports turnout numbers and the percentage of yes and no votes for every precinct. My dive into the data gave me a wonderful lift. Voters in the Heights came through big time and showed what democracy-loving towns we are.

At 38 percent, turnout in Cuyahoga County was considered strong. Slightly more than 44 percent turned out in both Cleveland Heights and University Heights. The turnout rate by precinct ranged

from 27 to 69 percent. Participation rates in 26 of the cities' 42 precincts (there are 33 in CH and nine in UH) were in excess of 38 percent, and in 13 of those 26 the rates exceeded 50 percent. This is a good record, but it points to the ongoing issue of differences in engagement. We need high levels everywhere.

Vote-wise, our cities outdid Cuyahoga County as a whole and made a significant contribution to the no vote. Statewide, 57 percent of voters said no, as did 74 percent in Cuyahoga County. In Cleveland Heights and University Heights, the percentages were 91.3 and 81.5, respectively, and 89.3 combined. In nine precincts in the Heights, more than 95 percent voted against Issue 1.

For me, a true believer in democracy, the victory at the ballot box was twofold. People participated, and they used their vote to protect their right to seek solutions when lawmakers don't represent their interests.

Despite this win, the day was also a wake-up call for me. Being registered to vote is not enough! The state's new voter-identification law means that some registered voters turned up to vote and were denied because they lacked proper identification.

Two of the five voters I was shepherding on Aug. 8—one elderly and one young—do not drive. The alarm went off as I drove my elderly friend to the Community Center to

vote after she missed the deadline to vote absentee. She does not have a valid identification card.

I am now on a new rampage. The next election is in November, and participation will be as important as it was in August. Voters have until Oct. 10 to register or update their voting address, but don't stop there! Please spread the word: If you want to vote in person in November, you must have proper identification. People who don't have a driver's license can get a free state ID card at the local Department of Motor Vehicles office on South Taylor Road. Visit the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections website (<https://boe.cuyahogacounty.gov/>) for details on the documents you can use to prove your name, birthday, home address and social security number.

It's a hassle, but please help spread the word so the voters you know are not surprised when they try to vote in the future. The elderly and the young are among those most likely to be left out without proper identification.

Democracy depends on us. We have to be vigilant and determined. I appreciate that our community is both.

*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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# Who owns Cleveland Heights?



HEIGHTS OF  
DEMOCRACY

Deborah Van Kleef and Carla Rautenberg

Who owns Cleveland Heights? A glib answer would be: homeowners, commercial and residential landlords and, to some extent, the city itself. But to whom does municipally owned property really belong? We say it belongs to the people.

Much city government business involves controlling land use by modifying and enforcing zoning and building codes and courting economic development. Since the one-two punch of sub-prime mortgages and the foreclosure crisis starting around 2009, various Cleveland Heights administrations have grappled with the ongoing fallout.

Attempts to manage it have included contracting with two community-development corporations, FutureHeights and Start Right. Both have renovated and sold salvageable houses previously owned by the city. Start Right also is building new infill housing on city-owned lots in Caledonia. In 2017, the city created a community-improvement corporation to facilitate the management and redevelopment of property it acquires, primarily through tax foreclosure.

With skyrocketing home prices and rents, loss of low- and moderate-rate accommodations is a continual challenge. Cleveland Heights has never required new developments to include a designated number of units for lower-income people. The ugly fact is, nobody wants poor people in their neighborhoods.

At the moment, some Noble/Nela residents are up in arms at the prospect of a new 52-unit apartment building on Noble Road catering exclusively to lower-income residents. Who can blame them? When they say no other neighborhood in the city would accept such a project, they're right. When they say that instead of more low-income housing they need a decent grocery store (unlike Save-A-Lot) and other essential retail, they're also right.

A side-lot program allows the Cleveland Heights and Cuyahoga County land banks to dispose of

vacant lots along with the burden of maintaining them. If homeowners adjacent to such a lot show they can responsibly care for it, the land bank can legally transfer it to them for free or a nominal cost. However, we learned recently about two such lots adjoining a Yorkshire Road home, acquired in 2013 by the then-homeowner at no cost. They've since changed hands twice and the current owner, Community Land Holdings LLC, is currently asking \$75,000 for them. That land belonged to all Cleveland Heights residents, but now it seems we've been robbed. How many other speculators profit from formerly city-owned property, for which they pay little or nothing?

If Cleveland Heights had a community land trust (CLT), our vacant lots and renovated properties could be protected to provide low- and moderate-income housing, as well as essential amenities such as reasonably priced retail space, in perpetuity. A CLT owns the land, leasing it to the homeowner and taking the land value out of the equation, thereby reducing the price of the home. The homeowner pays property taxes and may will the house to their heirs. If they sell, they reap some equity while agreeing to price restrictions that keep the house affordable for the next qualified buyer.

CLTs are not simple solutions, but they have a track record. According to the Center for Community Land Trusts, in Madison, Wis., the U.S. has 315 CLTs, up from 162 in 2006. Establishing a CLT might help prepare Cleveland Heights to equitably redevelop Severance Center when the city finally gets site control.

We can't count on City Hall to build community; that's our job as citizens. Lots of us work on that in different ways. A community land trust could just be the next bold step Cleveland Heights needs. We hope to write more about this soon.

Note: Severance Action Group, a citizens' initiative, wants to share its vision for Severance Center with neighborhood groups. E-mail info@severancerediscovered.org to learn more.

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

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## University Heights City Council Meeting highlights

JULY 10, 2023 - special meeting



Council members present were Brian J. King, Threse Marshall, John P. Rach, Sheri Sax, and Win Weizer. Michele Weiss (vice mayor) and Christopher Cooney were not present. Also present were Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan, Clerk of Council Kelly Thomas, Law Director Luke McConville, Finance Director Dennis Kennedy, and City Engineer Joseph Ciuni.

### Committee assignments

New council member Weizer will chair the Building and Housing Committee and become a member of the Community Outreach and Development and Economic Development committees. She will be an alternate on the Finance Committee.

### Council Actions

Council appointed Shawn Belt to the Community Improvement Corporation Board, filling the vacancy created when Win Weizer was appointed to fill the council seat vacated by Barbara Blankfeld.

After considering a contract with Terrace Construction for water main replacements at Saybrook and Northcliffe roads, council voted to authorize the Saybrook project and to defer the Northcliffe project. This was the second time the projects on Saybrook and Northcliffe were sent out for bid, as no bids were received the first time. Terrace Construction was the only bidder and its bid increased from 2021—design costs by 8 percent and engineering costs by 5 percent. Cleveland Water will reimburse 100 percent of the Saybrook project, but only 50 percent for Northcliffe. University Heights can shelve the design and engineering work for Northcliffe and re-apply for funds in a future year.

After some discussion, council authorized the purchase of a used rubbish truck

for \$55,000. This would replace a current truck that suffered engine failure, leaving the city below the minimum required equipment for rubbish pickup. Repairs would take eight to 12 weeks, with no guarantees. The truck was due to be retired in 2025. Sax raised concerns about buying another truck because the last three budgets have included items for leasing new trucks. She commented that it would be a disservice to the members of the service department to get another used vehicle instead of a new truck. Weizer said she had been wary of buying used equipment but supports buying this truck as the city needs another truck now. Finance Director Kennedy said there is nothing in the budget for a new truck because such a purchase was not contemplated for 2023. Prior budget set-asides for trucks had been used when other vehicles failed. Council had specifically requested that no items be placed in this year's budget for rubbish. A discussion ensued regarding a need to better manage the process. Mayor Brennan requested and received from council a waiver from competitive bidding for purchase of the used truck.

Council approved, on emergency, a special meeting ordinance to remove anachronistic provisions and allow notice by e-mail.

Council approved, on emergency, acceptance of a NOPEC grant of \$132,038, to be used on or before Nov. 30, 2025. With money already provided, the city will have more than \$154,000 to use for any eligible project, such as upgrading restrooms at Walter Stinson Park for year-round use.

Council adjourned to executive session to discuss Aleksander Shul and University Square.

LWV Observer: Marilyn Singer.

## Superman's creators once lived in University Heights

Deanna Bremer Fisher

This fall, Cleveland will celebrate Superman, the world's first comic book superhero, with Superman's Cleveland, Sept. 6 through Nov. 2. Scholars, comic book lovers, and fans can partake of almost two months of Superman-focused book discussions, comics-making workshops, live interviews with creators, and more.

The city of University Heights shares in the legacy. Joe Shuster and Jerry Siegel, Superman's creators, moved from Glenville to University Heights in the 1940s, as they began to achieve some success.

Shuster and Siegel created Superman in 1933, as high school students in Cleveland's Glenville neighborhood.

In 1938, their Superman story was chosen as the cover feature of National's Action Comics #1.

In January 1939, Siegel and Shuster initiated a daily newspaper comic strip. A separate Sunday strip was added in November 1939. By 1941, the McClure Newspaper Syndicate had placed the strip in hundreds of newspapers. The strips ran continuously until May 1966.

In December 1941, the Shuster family purchased the perhaps un-

finished house being constructed at 3866 Tyndall Road.

Siegel and his wife, Bella, purchased a lot at 2402 Glendon Road in February 1940, as that neighborhood was being developed. Tax records indicate that they were the ones who built the house.

At its peak, the Superman comic strip appeared in more than 300 daily newspapers and 90 Sunday papers, with a readership that exceeded 20 million. But, Siegel and Shuster did not profit further from their creation. As part of their 1938 deal with Action Comics, they had sold the rights to their Superman character for \$130.

The Shusters lived in their University Heights house only until September 1943.

In June 1943, Siegel, then 28, was drafted into the U.S. Army and stationed in Hawaii. His wife and son continued to live in the house until he and Bella divorced in 1948. The property was placed in a trust and purchased by Herbert Rebman, a photographer, in November of that year.

For more information, visit [www.supermancleveland.com/](http://www.supermancleveland.com/).

Deanna Bremer Fisher works in the mayor's office at the city of University Heights.

CROWDSOURCED continued from page 1

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Deidre McPherson speaking at Crowdsourced Conversations "Traveling Around Town" in June.

2022), "Our Public Schools" (April 2023), "Traveling Around Town" (June 2023), and "Building Community with Renters and Landlords" (August 2023).

Crowdsourced Conversations 2023 is a program planned in partnership by FutureHeights, Reaching Heights, Home Repair Resource Center, Heights Libraries, elected of-

ficials, and dozens of volunteers. To learn more about the program send an e-mail to [swolf@futureheights.org](mailto:swolf@futureheights.org), or visit [www.futureheights.org/programs/speaker-series-and-public-forums/](http://www.futureheights.org/programs/speaker-series-and-public-forums/).

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



# Carlos Jones headlines back-to-campus concert



Carlos Jones

Mike Cook

University Heights City Hall and John Carroll University (JCU) are separated by only a few blocks. Sometimes, though, the distance can feel like miles. UH City Hall staff and DJs at the campus radio station are looking to do something about that—with a little help from a group of Cleveland reggae legends.

Carlos Jones and the PLUS Band will perform at the inaugural University Heights Back to School Concert on Thursday, Sept. 21, 6:30 p.m., on the JCU campus. Weather permitting, the show will be held outside at the Hamlin Quad. If it rains, the concert will take place indoors at Kulas Auditorium. All are welcome.

“With this concert, we’re looking to bridge the gap between JCU students and their city government, as well as the rest of University Heights,” Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan said.

Representatives from the city will host information tables at the event. The Police Department will present information on community policing and parking, while the Fire Department will share materials on

fire safety.

The Service Department will promote recycling, while Economic Development staff will help share materials from local businesses—including coupons, menus, and more.

The first 200 students at the event will receive University Heights promotional items.

When July’s Summer Concert Series show with Carlos Jones and the PLUS Band was rained out, City Hall staff decided to turn lemons into lemonade.

“We were disappointed that our July concert with Carlos was rained out,” explained Deanna Bremer Fisher, the city’s executive assistant to the mayor on special projects. “But this gave us the opportunity to host a concert on campus after the fall semester began.

“This is our first ‘Town and Gown’ event, and I think students and the entire University Heights community will benefit from it.”

Not only is Carlos Jones and the PLUS Band popular among concertgoers in Northeast Ohio, they are darlings of music critics as well. Sirius XM Reggae DJ Dermont Hussy said, “Carlos Jones is a great band, one of the best in America.”

*Cleveland Scene* magazine reported, “With Jones at the forefront of the scene for more than 25 years, this city’s reggae following was practically built on his back. The band’s soulful rhythms and heartfelt vocals have made it one of Cleveland’s top draws.”

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

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For more information on how to plan for good health go to [areaagingsolutions.org/public-health/](http://areaagingsolutions.org/public-health/)

This project is supported by the Administration for Community Living (ACL, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)) through USAging as part of a financial assistance award to USAging totaling \$74,999,835 with 100 percent funding by ACL/HHS. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official view of, nor an endorsement, by USAging ACL/HHS, or the U.S. Government.

### For vaccines contact:

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## FutureHomes announces partner in Noble home renovation



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Hilary Schickler

FutureHomes has entered into a partnership with Yosemite Construction and Management to renovate the home at 901 Englewood Road.

FutureHeights established its FutureHomes program in 2009 to promote fair housing practices and increase owner-occupancy rates. Since its inception, and with the generous support of the city of Cleveland Heights, the program has been able to renovate more than 20 vacant homes in the city, and make them available to owner-occupants.

The property on Englewood Road has been vacant for an unknown number of years (some neighbors say as long as 18!) After reviewing several proposals to renovate the home, FutureHeights opted to partner with local contractor Yosemite.

The property will undergo a complete renovation, from the roof down. This three-bedroom

home with an attached garage will be outfitted with all-new mechanical systems, a new roof, and a new kitchen and bathrooms. Once complete, it will be available for sale to an owner who will be required to occupy the home.

As part of updating and re-launching its FutureHomes and Revitalization Program, FutureHeights will be identifying areas of opportunity that support both existing efforts and new activities, where the nonprofit can work to ensure a vibrant and sustainable future for the community.

If you are interested in getting involved with FutureHomes, or interested in purchasing the home at 901 Englewood at the end of the renovation process, send an e-mail to [hschickler@futureheights.org](mailto:hschickler@futureheights.org) or call 216-320-1423, ext. 104.

*Hilary Schickler is the FutureHomes and Revitalization director for FutureHeights Inc.*



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# Cleveland Heights City Council Meeting highlights

AUG. 7, 2023 - regular meeting

Council members present were Melody Joy Hart (president), Craig Cobb (vice president), Janine Boyd, Tony Cuda, Gail Larson, and Anthony Mattox Jr. Davida Russell was not present. Also present were Mayor Kahlill Seren, Clerk of Council Addie Balester, and Law Director William Hanna.

**Public comments**

Several people commented in opposition to Noble Station, a proposed low-income housing development on Noble Road, claiming that the project has been fast-tracked to take advantage of federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credits. They claimed the neighborhood is lower income and has a dearth of shopping and other essential services. They also characterized the design as cell-block construction and “too concentrated.” Noting that the area was “historically redlined” and had plenty of affordable housing available, they expressed preference for mixed-income housing, rehabilitation of existing structures, and infill building. Mayor Seren said the project will be presented to the city’s Planning Commission and the Architectural Board of Review before it comes to council.

Many current and former Coventry Village Business District merchants, including Steve Presser, Tom Fello, Kathy Blackman, Ash O’Connor, and Suzanne DeGaetano, expressed concerns about the district, including numerous (18) vacancies and the condition of the parking garage. They read a statement from the executive director of the Coventry Village Special Improvement District (CVSID) requesting active intervention and resources from the city. They [said they had] a lack of clarity about what they could request and expect from ARPA funds.

Several speakers maintained that the Jewish Orthodox custom of Kapparos, the ritual slaughtering of chicken in atonement for sin, was a public health concern that may supersede freedom of religion. They noted that coins may be used by some in the Orthodox community instead of animals. A group came to council with the same concern last year.

Steve Presser, a board member of Heights Arts, read a letter from Rachel Bernstein, Heights Arts executive director, stating that the proposed city arts council is unnecessary as it would perform the same tasks as Heights Arts and could thus make Heights Arts redundant.

**Council actions**

On first reading, council:

- Amended the appropriations and expenditures budget.
- Approved implementation of the public services plan for CVSID.
- Confirmed the mayor’s appointment of Tas Nadas to the Civil Service Commission, for a term ending Aug. 31, 2029.
- Authorized purchase of a recycling-



collection truck through the cooperative purchasing program, at a cost not to exceed \$481,834.79. Recycling is up with implementation of the new bin system, and a grant from Ohio EPA will pay \$200,000.

- Extended the term with the Cuyahoga County Board of Health for grant funding under the Lead Hazard Remediation Grant Program for lead remediation work in dwelling units to Sept. 20, 2024.
- Extended an agreement with the Cuyahoga County Board of Health for funding for lead remediation on residential properties in the city through Sept. 30, 2024. This includes an award of \$200,000 from the Board of Health’s Lead Poisoning Prevention Subsidy program.

**Council member comments**

Melody Joy Hart spoke about a council reset, saying that all members are working together for the residents.

Tony Cuda said he was moved by a room packed with passionate people, that he had heard everything that was said, and that ARPA funds for businesses and neighborhoods are his priorities.

Anthony Mattox Jr. reported that the Planning and Development Committee met July 17 to discuss Dennison Park, the Noble Road Corridor, and other concerns about Noble Road. He also said he objected to public comments [suggesting] that a majority Black council and a Black mayor were trying to redline development. He said he was tired of people using race in the way some public commenters did. The audience protested Mattox’s comments; raised voices ensued from the public and Mattox.

**Committee of the Whole**

The Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District (NEORS) requested that Cleveland Heights make a community decision about primary elements and amenities for the Doan Brook restoration project, as combining these with NEORS’s planning process would save money.

Cleveland Peacemakers Alliance proposed a program with a public health approach to gun violence, working with 14- to 24-year-old clients in the community, courts, and hospitals.

Noble Elementary School Traffic Solutions proposed establishing a one-way pattern around the school at pick-up and drop-off times, along with clear traffic signals, to reduce confusion. The cost will be approximately \$39,000.

The committee discussed housing and building inspection. The administration is working to round out housing inspection with a goal of bringing it back in-house, but staff is difficult to find. The city has hired a chief building inspector.

LWV Observer: Blanche Valancy.

CHURCH continued from page 1

Over the last three years, congregation and community volunteers have transformed the entire building into flexible space to accommodate a diverse array of art experiences.

Amanda Powell, CAC’s community arts liaison, noted, “I’ve been surprised at the immense need for affordable space and am delighted that our building is a space for many organizations.”

CAC offers individual studio/classroom space, a 500-capacity fully ADA-accessible performance hall, portable Marley dance flooring and mirrors, an intimate 50-person performance space, an inclusive children’s library, and more. It has hosted educational organizations such as The Center for Arts-Inspired Learning, Roots of American Music, Lake Erie Ink, and Djapo Cultural Arts. It offers community classes in yoga, samba, and African drumming, well as music lessons; and has hosted rehearsals and performances by organizations that include the Cleveland Chamber Music Society; Les Délices orchestra; Blakk Jakk Dance; Local 4 Music Fund; the Cleveland Orchestra Chorus; ChamberFest Cleveland; and Willow’s Edge Creations, a LGBTQ+ theater company.

Upcoming 2023–2024 concerts and events include:

- Nine performances of “Jesus Christ Superstar” by Willow’s Edge Creations
- Performances of “The Wizard of Oz” by Agape Theatre
- Cleveland Chamber Music Society concerts

- Les Délices holiday concert

Members of the congregation have volunteered as hosts for the up to 15 events per month that take place at CAC, and members of the community also are encouraged to volunteer. Host volunteers learn the details of hosting, including being welcoming, answering questions about the building’s use, and locking up after the event.

Community volunteer opportunities also include:

- Grounds and building maintenance
- Event setup and teardown
- Serving on the board of Creative Spaces Cultural Arts—a new non-profit dedicated to youth arts programming in the building
- Development and fundraising support

People of all faiths or no faith are welcome to participate and volunteer in all that CAC offers. CAC welcomes all to its inclusive space.

Rev. Jason Bricker-Thompson, pastor of Disciples Christian Church, commented, “We are excited to open our doors wide to the creators, children, youth, artists and all people in our home community.”

To tour the building, become a volunteer, or host an event, contact Amy Campbell, office manager, at [info@discipleschristian.org](mailto:info@discipleschristian.org). For additional information, and a list of upcoming arts events, visit [www.discipleschristian.org/about](http://www.discipleschristian.org/about).

*Ronald Werman is an elder at, and communications chairperson of, Disciples Christian Church.*

## TWO CANDIDATES’ NIGHTS

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**. . . for University Hts. City Council**

6-8 p.m. Tuesday, September 26  
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*Jonathan A. Bartell, Micah Maliskas, Threse Marshall,  
John P. Rach, Alicia Sloan, Vincent E. Stokes II,  
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**INFORMATION SESSION**

**. . . for University Heights Charter Amendments**  
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MUSIC HOP continued from page 1

people to walk or ride will reduce traffic along Lee Road, making it safer for attendees to move from venue to venue.”

Moving from venue to venue is exactly what creators of the Music Hop want attendees to do.

“The Music Hop is not only a great way for the community to connect and support local music, but we are promoting shopping locally and supporting our local businesses,” said Pagsuyoin.

To help highlight local businesses, FutureHeights is partnering with Bandwago to launch the Heights Music Hop Mobile Passport, which enables visitors and

residents to check in at Heights businesses to make purchases to earn points that will be eligible for prizes.

Users will be able to register and start using the Passport on Sept. 13 by visiting the FutureHeights website, [www.futureheights.org](http://www.futureheights.org).

For the most up-to-date news on bands, venues and other Music Hop details, follow the Heights Music Hop on Facebook and Instagram or visit the FutureHeights website.

*Amanda Isaacson is a FutureHeights board member.*





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## Tackling climate change —one tree at a time



Heights Tree People volunteers planting trees with students from Caledonia Elementary School on Arbor Day.

Natalie Elwell

Last summer, Susan Miller, a long-time Cleveland Heights resident and environment advocate, gave the Cleveland Heights Green Team (CHGT) an infrared thermometer.

"She asked us to measure the mid-day temperature at some of the city's heat islands, such as Severance, and neighborhoods north of Mayfield Road, and compare them to temperatures in parks and neighborhoods with significant tree coverage," recalled Catalina Wagers, CHGT's co-founder. "She wanted us to see both the inequality and the need for better tree canopy distribution across the city."

A study published by the research institution Resources for the Future indicates that highly developed urban areas can experience mid-afternoon temperatures 15–20 degrees Fahrenheit higher than surrounding vegetated areas.

The Cleveland Neighborhood Progress Resiliency Plan reports that climate change in our region will manifest as an increased number of heat waves, floods, and storms of greater frequency and intensity.

"Addressing climate challenges will require significant infrastructure upgrades, which will take time and money," said Miller. "However, there are things we can do now by building on what we already have: trees, green spaces, and gardens."

The 2019 Cuyahoga County Urban Tree Canopy Assessment found that 53 of the 59 communities in the county showed a decline in tree canopy from 2011 to 2017, with nine losing more than 10% of their canopy. These include Cleveland Heights (–13%) and University Heights (–11%). Factors such as disease, clear cutting, and weather events have played a role in this

trend, as have general misconceptions about the value and benefits of trees, which leads to fewer new and replacement trees being planted.

Laura Marks, founder of Heights Tree People—a nonprofit group that has planted more than 1,000 trees in residential front lawns across Cleveland Heights and University Heights, at no cost to residents—noted, "Trees play a critical role in creating healthier, safer, and more connected communities. They clean our air, filter our water, lower our electrical bills, and increase property values."

Studies by the USDA Forest Service have found that trees properly placed around homes and buildings can reduce air-conditioning needs by 30% and save 20–50% in energy used for heating, and that healthy, mature trees can add an average of 10% to a property's value.

"Another important benefit of an expansive tree canopy is slowing down storm surge and flooding in our cities," said Miller. "Torrential rains overwhelm our aging infrastructure, and the excess runoff will find its way into our streams and rivers, polluting Lake Erie, our most valuable natural resource."

The fall tree planting season starts in September. To request a free tree, reach out to the CH Forestry Department (tree-lawn trees) or Heights Tree People (front-yard trees). The Nature Center at Shaker Lakes can provide information about tree care and the benefits of native trees. For links and additional information, visit [www.chgreenteam.org](http://www.chgreenteam.org).

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

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# FutureHeights benefit raises funds, honors Zagara



John Zagara, FutureHeights' Person of the Year.



Guests at the FutureHeights benefit party.

Julie Hammond Gierke

Despite the threat of storms, and a power outage just hours before the event, guests enjoyed a beautiful evening under the stars celebrating and raising funds for the community-building work of FutureHeights at the nonprofit's annual benefit party, "A Summer Night's Dream," on Saturday, July 29, at the Nature Center at Shaker Lakes.

The evening included live orchestral music from Opus 216, musical stylings by DJ Neilism, costumed performers from Robin VanLear and company, and a delicious selection of food and drink from The Fairmount, Quintana's, and CLE Urban Winery.

During the program, guests heard remarks from Kristine Pagsuyoin, FutureHeights' new execu-

tive director. John Zagara, FutureHeights' "Person of the Year," was honored for his commitment to Zagara's Marketplace, and he spoke of his love for the Heights community.

Auctioneer Michael Berland engineered another spirited live auction—including several bidding wars!—as guests competed to have the winning bid on items such as Guardians/Dodgers tickets, local date-night packages, and naming rights for a new *Heights Observer* mailbox on the Coventry PEACE Campus.

"FutureHeights is so grateful for the support that we receive to continue our programs and serve the communities of Cleveland Heights and University Heights. I was so inspired to meet many new supporters and happy to connect

with long-time friends" said Pagsuyoin.

As Cleveland Heights' and

University Heights' community-development corporation (CDC), FutureHeights' mission is to facilitate an equitable, prosperous and vibrant future for the two communities through economic and social development, and the meaningful engagement of residents.

Outside of the annual benefit, which raises much needed operating funds for the organization, there are many ways for residents to get involved with and support the work of FutureHeights year-round: Join a committee (there are many!) or volunteer, write for the *Heights Observer*, attend one of FutureHeights' free community programs.

continued on page 23



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## September is Library Card Sign-Up Month

September is Library Card Sign-Up Month, a time when the American Library Association (ALA) and libraries nationwide join together to remind parents, caregivers, and students that signing up for a library card is the first step towards academic achievement and building a lifelong love of learning. Children and teens who sign up in September will receive a lanyard with their new library card! (While supplies last.)



[www.heightslibrary.org](http://www.heightslibrary.org)





# Neighborhood leadership training now open to UH and CH residents



The Neighborhood Leadership Workshop Series 2023 cohort.

Sarah Wolf

Applications for the 2024 cohort of FutureHeights’ Neighborhood Leadership Workshop Series (NLWS) open Sept. 1. This multidisciplinary,

strengths- and skills-based program provides opportunities for both emerging and established grassroots leaders to take a deep dive into community-building tactics and resources that can help strengthen their neighborhoods.

For the first time, the 2024 program will expand to include University Heights residents in addition to Cleveland Heights residents. The deadline to apply is Jan. 12. Since NLWS first launched in 2015, the program has graduated

more than 100 Cleveland Heights residents, many of whom have gone on to do incredible work in their neighborhoods as well as in the city at-large. Additionally, many great friendships, partnerships, and other opportunities to uplift the community have resulted from the dedicated work of NLWS alumni.

The 2024 workshop dates are Jan. 28, Feb. 11, Feb. 25, March 10, and March 24. All sessions take place on Sundays, 3–6 p.m., at the Coventry PEACE Building (2843 Washington Blvd.).

Participants must commit to attending all five sessions to be accepted into the program.

Applications are accepted on a rolling basis. To learn more about the program, send an e-mail to [swolf@futureheights.org](mailto:swolf@futureheights.org) or visit [www.futureheights.org/programs/community-building-programs/nlws/](http://www.futureheights.org/programs/community-building-programs/nlws/).

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

# Heights Libraries preps for mini-forest installation

Kaela Sweeney

Beginning this fall, Heights Libraries will partner with Heights Tree People to build a mini-forest behind the Coventry PEACE

Building. The Heights Libraries Urban Mini-Forest project is supported, in part, by residents of Cuyahoga County through a public tree planting and maintenance grant from Cuyahoga Healthy

Urban Tree Canopy. The mini-forest will comprise the planting of 62 large canopy trees and 150 understory trees and plants, prioritizing native species to help expand Cleveland Heights’ tree canopy.

“The urban mini-forest is a unique library project that allows us to expand our services beyond the walls of the library buildings,” said Heights Libraries Director Nancy Levin. “We are excited to offer a space for environmental programming. This is an opportunity for us to model environmental stewardship at the PEACE Park.”

Preparation for the forest, including mulching and selective tree removal based on recommendations from a certified arborist, began in August. To prepare the site, seven trees will be removed, including a dead pin oak, invasive Norway maples, and a hollow red maple. A portion of the existing asphalt area will be removed and reforested. Tree planting will begin in spring 2024.

The project is a partnership with trained forestry professionals and Heights Tree People, a community-based volunteer group that specializes in tree planting and has planted more than 950 new trees in Cleveland Heights and University Heights since 2019.

“The Coventry mini-forest will grow to shade and cool the area, freshen the air, provide habitat for other species, build connections among neighbors, and give space for children and adults to spend time in the woods. This project is a step toward healing the Earth,” said Heights Tree People co-founder Laura Marks.



An urban mini-forest will be planted on the northeast side of Coventry PEACE Building. The dark spaces indicate where trees will be planted.

The mini-forest is part of Heights Libraries’ overarching urban forestry goals to expand and maintain the urban tree canopy to promote biodiversity and canopy health, offer free outdoor programming that encourages community stewardship of trees, and support workforce development opportunities in the PEACE Park.

“We are thrilled to partner with Heights Tree People to promote community forestry,” said Levin. “The library is committed to responsible stewardship of the PEACE Park, and the urban mini-forest project is the start of many improvements to this important green space.”

Community members who are interested in volunteering or learning more about the mini-forest project can visit [www.heightstreepeople.com](http://www.heightstreepeople.com).

*Kaela Sweeney is the strategic projects manager for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library System.*

# Observe!

## Submitting an article to the *Heights Observer* is a piece of cake!

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](http://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.



# Free Sept. 18 talk will explore thrumming music of nature

Alice Jeresko

The late summer and early fall season brings a chorus of singing insects. That thrumming hum is the music of nature, as described by Lisa Rainsong, a longtime music theory professor at Cleveland Institute of Music and a professional naturalist who specializes in the music of Earth's first musicians: birds, insects and amphibians.

On Sept. 18, 6:30–8 p.m., Quiet Clean Heights will host a free public program presented by Rainsong, “Birds and Insects are Listening,” to kick off a public awareness campaign across Cleveland Heights and its surrounding communities. The program will take place at the Lee Road Library, 2345 Lee Road in Cleveland Heights.

Rainsong, a longtime Cleveland Heights resident, is an active field naturalist who makes her own recordings of bird, insect, and amphibian song. She seeks to inspire an understanding of, and appreciation for, the oldest music on earth, and the protection of the avian, insect, and amphibian musicians and their concert venues at a time when their music is in danger of being silenced by climate change and habitat destruction.

Join QuietClean Heights at the Sept. 18 event to learn how crickets, katydids and other insects create and receive sound—and why. Learn to recognize insects by sound in this engaging program that will feature photographs, sonograms, and



Lisa Rainsong recording birdsong.

practical advice on how to invite a chorus into your own backyard.

Rainsong has presented programs at numerous park systems and for organizations across North-

east Ohio. QuietClean Heights is proud to sponsor Rainsong's first presentation in her home community. To learn more about her work, visit [www.listeninginnature.com](http://www.listeninginnature.com).

Alice Jeresko is an environmental advocate who started QuietClean Heights to help raise awareness of the health, hearing and environmental impacts of gas leaf blowers in residential neighborhoods.

## HRRC announces its Sept. classes

Anne Marie Goodfriend

Home Repair Resource Center (HRRC), 2520 Noble Road in Cleveland Heights, will offer the following classes in September:

Sept. 12, 7–9 p.m., Locks and Doors. Learn to repair and replace doors and locks. The fee for this class is \$25

Sept, 19, 7–9 p.m., Drywall Basics. In this class students will learn the basics of hanging and repairing drywall. The fee for this class is \$25.

Sept. 25, 7–9 p.m., Insulating and Weatherizing Your Home. Experts from Berry Insulation will provide information on preparing your home for the cold winter months. This class is free.

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

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

Anne Marie Goodfriend is the education coordinator at Home Repair Resource Center.

# Thank You

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## Future Heights

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# Cleveland Heights – University Heights Board of Education

## Meeting highlights



AUG. 1, 2023  
Board members present were Beverly Wright (president), Dan Heintz, Malia Lewis, James Posch, and Jodi Sourini. Also present were Superintendent Elizabeth Kirby and Treasurer Scott Gainer.

**Recognitions and awards**  
District staff and community partners who provided activities and services for summer student programs received awards.

**Holocaust education**  
Heights High Administrative Principal Patrick Townes presented an initiative to commemorate 50 years of Holocaust education at Heights High. He introduced ninth-grade teacher Patrick Fisher, who explained how social studies teacher Mark Sack initiated the project by discussing a student-designed mural with Nancy Rich, Heights High art teacher. She then coordinated with art teacher Sara Cooper and artist Nancy Schwartz-Katz (a Heights High alumna) to create the mural. More than 100 Heights High students participated in designing and painting the large mural. The mural will be used for education and continued awareness of the Holocaust.

**Heights School Foundation update**  
Laura Loebel, executive director of the Heights School Foundation, and Wesley Williams, marketing and development associate, presented the past year's progress. The foundation is developing a scholarship program, increasing the number of Hall of Fame recipients, supporting the TASSEL (Toward a Skillful and Successful Empowered Life) program to work with students on public-speaking skills, and contributing to the Oxford WPA Preservation

project. The foundation presented \$65,000 in scholarships on Senior Awards Night.

**Superintendent announcements**  
Superintendent Kirby announced that five teachers had participated in AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) training to gain new teaching strategies and resources that will provide in-school academic support to prepare students for college readiness and success.

Students in grades 10, 11, and 12 participated in a transition activity for ninth-graders to provide a bridge from middle school and an orientation for the class of 2027. GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) partners assisted with supplies.

Ninth-grade Principal Leshawn Perry attended the three-day National Council for Community and Education Partnerships/GEAR UP Annual Conference on "The Power of Possibility," which was held to celebrate successes and to find solutions for education's most pressing problems.

Kirby thanked Bob Swaggard, director of college and career readiness, for writing the GEAR UP grant to provide educators with these opportunities.

Equity work continues following the ICS (Integrated Children's System) for equity approach.

**Treasurer's report**  
Gainer [said he] is waiting to see how changes in the Ohio State Board of Education will affect education funding. He will not be able to make firm predictions until October, when the first payment is distributed. He also said that the state department of education is requiring school boards to supply more details when applying for grants.

Wright [said she] attended a meeting on racial justice.

Heintz encouraged people to vote on Aug. 8 and encouraged University Heights voters to check their polling stations because some had changed.

The board encouraged the community to read "When Did We Take the Wrong Road to Education Reform and Where Has It Taken Us?" by Jan Resseger, a Cleveland Heights resident who writes about education. It was posted on her blog (<https://janresseger.wordpress.com>) on Aug. 1.

LWV Observer: Rosemarie Fairman.

Documents for all board meetings can be accessed at [www.chuh.org/BoardofEducation.aspx](http://www.chuh.org/BoardofEducation.aspx). Board meetings are livestreamed at [www.youtube.com/CHUHSchools](http://www.youtube.com/CHUHSchools), and recorded for later viewing.

# Homecoming parade route extended



Boulevard Elementary School marchers at the 2022 Heights Homecoming parade.

Krissy Dietrich Gallagher

The 2023 Heights Homecoming Parade, set for Friday, Sept. 22, is on track to be bigger than ever, with a parade route that has been extended thanks to the construction on Lee Road.

The parade will begin at 5 p.m. on Scarborough Road, near Fairfax Elementary School, and head north through the Lee Road business district. Instead of ending on Tullamore Road, as in the past, the parade will continue north, crossing Cedar Road—with police assistance, and only when the traffic light is green—then turning onto Washington Boulevard, behind the high school.

Lee Road will be closed to northbound traffic from Clarendon Road to Washington Boulevard 5–5:30 p.m.; Scarborough Road will be closed between Stratford and Lee roads 4:30–5:10 p.m., and Washington Boulevard will be closed to traffic between Lee and Goodnor roads 5:10–5:30 p.m. (approximately).

Spectators can line both Lee Road and Washington Boulevard to cheer on the parade's athletes, singers, marching band, and students. There will be space for folding chairs and mingling along the route, especially in front of the Lee Road Library and near the high school football field.

The Heights Schools Foundation will host an alumni watch party at The Wine Spot.

The newly formed Heights Athletic Boosters will host a Tiger Nation Tailgate in the Heights High parking lot near the baseball field, to bridge the time between the end of the parade and the 7 p.m. football game. Food and drink will be available for purchase, as marchers and their parents reunite, take in the decorated vehicles, and socialize. Parking spots will be available for pre-purchase for those who wish to bring their own food.

All CH-UH district schools, PTAs, teams, and clubs are welcome to register and march for free, though elementary and middle school groups must be accompanied by an adult. Nonprofit organizations, local businesses, and candidates running for office may also march, for a \$25 fee. More information, including links to register to march, reserve a spot at the tailgate, or volunteer, can be found at [www.heightsatleticboosters.org/events](http://www.heightsatleticboosters.org/events).

*Krissy Dietrich Gallagher is a long-time resident of Cleveland Heights, a graduate of Heights schools, and a former Coventry School teacher. She is a freelance journalist under contract with the CH-UH City School District, and is proud to raise her two sons in this community.*

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# Register now for Open Doors after-school programs

Daa'iyah Rahman

Open Doors Academy (ODA) has partnered with the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District for more than three decades, offering a wide range of activities and support services. Its programs aim to provide young

## LEI announces its fall lineup

Maya Watkins

As kids head back to school this fall, Lake Erie Ink (LEI) is creating opportunities for youth to have happy and meaningful interactions with words.

LEI's programs encourage creative expression in an environment designed to bring out the fun. One student, who attended LEI's Dungeons & Dragons program, said, "It was a really fun experience. It made Friday my favorite day of the week."

This fall's theme is Words Shine Bright, emphasizing the power of students' words to have a positive impact on the world. LEI's programs are centered on the voice and expression of youth. Students learn to write and perform poetry, craft comics, and tell stories that are meaningful to them.

LEI's fall programs begin on Sept. 11 and the lineup includes an evening writers' club, comic storytelling, and pop-up poetry workshops. Weekend programs include Comic Fest and Stories of Suspense in Public Square.

Participants will have opportunities for exploration and experimentation that encourage them to find empowerment and joy through creative expression. Many students return to LEI because of connections made during previous sessions.

"I met new people like me," said one past participant of LEI's Young Novelist Summer Camp. Another commented, "Other kids would like LEI because it's a fun experience and helps build personalities, and show you things you like."

LEI is excited to see students shine this fall. For more information on its fall programs, visit [lakeerieink.org/fall](http://lakeerieink.org/fall).

Maya Watkins is a Lake Erie Ink staff member.

scholars with the tools they need to thrive academically, socially, and behaviorally.

Registration is open now for ODA's upcoming programs, which begin Sept. 5. Programming takes place at Roxboro and Monticello middle schools, and Heights High.

Middle-school and high-school students enrolled in ODA's after-school enrichment program gain access to a supportive community that is committed to their growth and success. The program comprises mentoring, homework support and tutoring, and character development; as well as enriching activities, including service learning and field trips.

Other key components of the program are:

- A family department that provides resources to strengthen connections between families, schools, and the program.
- A free summer camp, offering fun and educational activities during summer break. Families that



Roxboro Middle School scholars cheering on one another before a performance.

participate in ODA's programs throughout the year receive early access to camp registration.

- A daily snack is provided, to ensure students have the nutrition they need to succeed.

Upcoming fall activities include an International Festival and a Night at the Museum.

ODA, a nonprofit organization, believes in the potential of every child. Its mission is to protect, inspire, nurture, and challenge youth to reach their full potential. With this core philosophy, it has carefully curated an after-school program that offers much more than just

*continued on page 23*

**Pauline has always been passionate about educating and giving people the tools needed to succeed.** As a professor, analyst, Certified Financial Planner and recent *Crain's* Eight Over 80 honoree, she has impacted many and continues to inspire and inform as a volunteer and philanthropist.

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11:15 a.m. Holy Eucharist  
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## Cleveland Heights – University Heights Public Library Board

### Meeting highlights



JULY 17, 2023

Board members present were Patti Carlyle, Dana Fluellen, Annette Iwamoto (secretary), Melissa Soto-Schwartz, Tyler McTigue, and Vikas Turakhia (vice president). Max Gerbec was not present.

#### Technology presentation

Information Technology Manager Matt Hoffman presented data on public computer usage in each library branch for the first half of 2023. Waiting time for computer use is minimal because most computer areas do not reach enough use to start a waiting list. The suggestion was made to consider changing some 30-minute computers to 60-minute computers.

#### Noble library building

Work during July consisted of construction of a reinforcing retaining wall, demolition of lower level under slab and teen addition, excavation of site, and foundation work. First Energy needs to schedule installation. Steam pipe installation is ahead of schedule.

#### Board actions

The board:

- Approved a contract with Regency Construction Services Inc. as construction manager at risk for the PEACE playground renovations.
- Tabled the vote on changes to the service and administration policy until the next board meeting.
- Approved an after-the-fact purchase order and payment to the city of Cleveland Heights for the Noble Neighborhood Library branch project building permit.

#### Director's report

The University Heights branch is now fully open. Crosswalk safety remains a priority. Pylons have been placed on Lee Road in front of the library and have slowed the traffic. Continued monitoring will evaluate speed and driver attention to the crosswalk.

Coventry PEACE Building is 30 percent occupied. The management company is showing the space to prospective occupants. Improvements to the building continue. Persons seeking single use of the building space will need to be sponsored by an occupant who will monitor use, cleanup, etc.

The theater pavilion to be placed in PEACE Park has been approved by the donor. A structural review of the park was completed. Repairs and improvements based on this review are in the process of being completed. Fundraising efforts continue, including submission of a grant to fund wayfinding signage. The last public meeting to seek input on PEACE Park plans will be Aug. 10.

The governor has signed the 2024–25 state budget. The Public Library Fund is now set at 1.7 percent of the state's General Revenue Fund. It is expected that the new tax structure will lower funding received by libraries.

#### DEI plan

The DEI (Diversity, equity, and inclusion) plan continues to progress. The parts of the plan include: (1) developing inclusive services and programs, (2) recruiting and retaining diverse staff, (3) fostering a healthy environment that supports positive professional relationships, and (4) integrating DEI as an ongoing focus in all areas of the organization.

#### 2022 strategic plan annual report

Presented by Deputy Director Kim DeNero-Ackroyd, the plan includes four components: (1) foster diversity, equity and inclusion; (2) seek opportunities to promote an environment of safety and security for the community; (3) be proactive in facilitating communication and be a bridge builder for community concerns; and (4) be a bedrock for community workforce development.

#### Public service report

Summer Reading Program participation is quite good.

Three STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) programs were well attended.

Youth Services staff celebrated Juneteenth at Noble's Fun Friday event and at Oxford Elementary School.

University Heights Youth Services staff have provided 16 programs at Walter Stinson Park, with a total attendance of 451.

LWV Observers: Judith Beeler and Elizabeth Tracy.

AUG. 7, 2023

Board members Max Gerbec and Melissa Soto-Schwartz were not present.

#### Noble library building

Work is proceeding ahead of schedule. A videotape of the demolition was viewed. Photos of the demolition are on the library's website: <https://heightslibrary.org>.

#### Board actions

The board:

- Approved a contract with Regency Construction Services Inc. for pre-construction services.
- Approved 2023 amended Service and Administration Policies of the CH-UH library board.
- Approved an after-the-fact purchase order and payment to Gable Elevator for emergency repairs to the elevator in the Heights Knowledge and Information Center (HKIC) building. Signs have been posted for customers to enter the Lee Road Library and take the bridge to the HKIC building. The date for completion is not yet known.
- Approved the expenditure for replacement of fencing behind the HKIC parking lot and employee parking lot on Lee Road. The plan is to replace those fences and install a guardrail along part of the HKIC parking lot.
- Approved a contract for painting the HKIC building exterior, including tower, dormers, roof railings, windows, window trim, and main doors.
- Approved additional design fees to Bostwick Design Partnership for changes to interior office windows and reconfiguration of fixtures in the family bathroom at Noble library. This money will come from the available contingency fund.

LWV Observer: Judith Beeler.

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

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Heights Observer September 1, 2023

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# Sauce the City Express opens at MetroHealth CH



Sauce the City owner Victor Searcy Jr.

Angela Townsend

For the past month, Victor Searcy Jr. and his staff have been helping to feed employees, patients, and visitors at MetroHealth Cleveland Heights Medical Center at 10 Severance Circle.

Searcy's Sauce the City Express opened July 31 on the second floor of the medical office building, offering a different featured menu item, and a selection of gourmet coffees, each weekday, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Searcy is a graduate of Benedictine High School and Kent State University, where he honed his entrepreneurial skills.

Sauce the City is known for its chicken and flavorful sauces. Since

February 2022, Searcy has operated a takeout-only spot in the Cedar Green shopping center, at 14480 Cedar Road in University Heights.

Before that, he operated out of a multiple-restaurant complex in Ohio City for several years. Sauce the City also is a fixture at First Energy Stadium and Rocket Mortgage Field House during football and basketball seasons.

Sauce the City Express operates out of the kitchen area on the medical building's second floor. Because the building doesn't have a full kitchen, Searcy and his staff cook and prep all food items at the University Heights location—just over three miles away—and transport

everything to the Cleveland Heights campus.

The public is invited to stop in for takeout, but Searcy sees feeding the employees who work at the medical center as his top priority.

Searcy and MetroHealth have history together. In the spring of 2020, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Searcy organized a "Feed the Nurses Challenge."

"All of the medical people were getting worn out," Searcy said. "We established a plan that we would do pop-ups at the different hospital systems."

The challenge paired donors and local restaurants via social media, enabling them to provide lunch for health care workers at other local hospital systems, in addition to MetroHealth.

"Ever since then, we've had an open-door relationship with MetroHealth," he said. "Everyone from the administration on down knows who we are."

For the past three years, Searcy has occasionally provided catered meals for MetroHealth staff and has been a featured guest vendor in MetroHealth's main campus cafeteria.

Recently, Searcy started getting more feedback from employees based at Cleveland Heights. They told him they wished they could enjoy Sauce the City, too.

That feedback made its way to MetroHealth's Dining and Nutrition Services Department.

"They told me that they really needed some help with expanding the food options out at Cleveland Heights," Searcy said. "I'm not going to say no. I love a challenge."

To accommodate the new MetroHealth location, Sauce the City in University Heights is now open from 5 to 9 p.m. on weekdays. Weekend hours remain the same.

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

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## Heights Arts steps into the surreal



*Surreal Reverie (Composition 2)*, by Jordan McConnell, Alison Miltner Rich, and Jim Pojman.

Cameron Gorman

As a nonprofit arts organization, Heights Arts has long helped facilitate programming across disciplines, from music to writing to visual arts. Now, visitors to the Heights Arts gallery can experience an exhibition that entwines the three into one, with *Collaborage*.

Open through Oct. 15, the show

celebrates surrealism at its purest; it's a celebration of expression.

"It's a great time to explore surrealism," said participating artist Lacy Talley. "Surrealism sought to overthrow the oppressive rules of modern society by demolishing its backbone of rational thought. I believe the art scene in Cleveland

*continued on page 23*

## Dobama announces new season

Madeline Jarosz

Dobama, Cleveland Heights' own off-Broadway theater, kicks off its 64th season this fall.

Between October and May, Dobama Theatre will produce five plays by American playwrights in its Lee Road venue.

The new season begins on Oct. 6, with Dobama's production of "Make Believe," written by Bess Wohl, and directed by Nathan Motta, Dobama's artistic director. "Make Believe" tells the story of siblings who use a popular childhood pastime, a game of make-believe, to recreate and reveal their family's everyday lives, and the dark secrets that lie beneath the surface, as they grow up together.

December brings a fresh re-imagining of the classic story "Little Women," adapted by Heather Chrisler. With an attic as the setting, and a focus on family, love, and loss, Chrisler explores the ever-changing road that is life as each March sister faces joy and disappointment in the journey from childhood to womanhood.

Starting off 2024 is the dark comedy "At the Wake of a Dead Drag Queen," by playwright Terry Guest. Onstage from Jan. 26 through Feb. 18, drag queen Courtney Berringers welcomes you to her wake. In this witty combination of drag

and drama, the play will keep feet tapping and eyes glued to the stage.

In March, Dobama will present "Something Clean," by Selina Fillinger, directed by New York-based Shannon Sindelar. The play follows the story of Charlotte, a working mother who struggles to cope with her guilt and grief after a family member commits a violent crime.

Dobama will wrap up its season with "Significant Other," written by Joshua Harmon and directed by Colin Anderson. Harmon's play premiered off-Broadway in 2015 before moving to Broadway in spring 2017, to rave reviews. The comedy follows Jordan Berman who would love to be in love, but, until he meets Mr. Right, wards off lonely nights with his trio of close girlfriends. As singles' nights turn into bachelorette parties, Jordan discovers that the only thing harder than finding love is supporting the loved ones around you when they do.

Memberships for Dobama's 2023-24 season, \$180, or \$150 for young professionals under 40, are on sale now at the box office (216-932-3396) or online at [www.dobama.org](http://www.dobama.org). Single tickets for the upcoming season are also available, and range in price from \$35 to \$42.

*Madeline Jarosz is a summer intern at Dobama Theatre and an English literature major at John Carroll University.*

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# New theater company stages 'Jesus Christ Superstar' in CH

Deanna Bremer Fisher

Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice's "Jesus Christ Superstar," which debuted in the 1970s, portrays the final days of Jesus of Nazareth as told through the eyes of Judas Iscariot, one of the 12 apostles. Judas worries that Jesus' followers are heading in the wrong direction, Jesus and his movement will be destroyed by the Romans, and his message will be forgotten. The work was known for its contemporary attitude, use of contemporary slang in its lyrics, and ironic allusions to modern life.

A new production of this long-running rock opera will debut in Cleveland Heights this fall.

In a production by Willow's Edge Creations, a new Cleveland-based theater company started by longtime friends and creative partners Mary Miller and Denise Astorino, the show speaks to our current age. It describes a world in which those in power drive civilization apart through hate, violence and oppression. Those who defend personal freedoms and human rights begin to mobilize amidst the growing chaos and fear. They search for something more to guide them, and find it in the form of one who had been walking among them.

Miller, a singer-songwriter and performer who grew up in South Euclid and now makes her home in Chicago, had auditioned to play the lead role of Judas several times throughout her career, but had never landed the role because she is a woman. With this production, Miller not only has fulfilled her dream to play Judas but also has highlighted issues of gender and illuminated the diversity of gender identities in our society.

"Willow's Edge seeks to celebrate authentic voices beyond stereotypes, spotlighting performers in roles they traditionally may not have been considered for, due to more conventional, binary casting," said Miller. "We especially hope to provide opportunities for cis and trans women (queer and allies), trans masc and genderqueer folx, and BIPOC

and QPOC performers."

While Astorino has been involved in theater for more than 30 years and has an MFA in directing, this is the first major show that she is producing. "While I'm not one to think that what we are doing is going to shake up the world, theater enables people to express themselves. Human life—all human life—is reflected on stage. Some people may feel authentically represented for the first time. That is a powerful moment," said Astorino. "With all of the ugliness that is going on today—and has been for so long—if we can play even a small part in combating this by helping people feel that they are seen, respected and celebrated, then we did our jobs, and I couldn't ask for more."

Performances are Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights, 7:30 p.m., from Sept. 21 through Oct. 7, at the Cultural Arts Center at Disciples Christian Church, 3663 Mayfield Road in Cleveland Heights. Tickets, \$20, are available online at [https://willowsedge\\_superstar.eventbrite.com](https://willowsedge_superstar.eventbrite.com).

Fundraising for the production continues through a GoFundMe campaign at: <https://gofund.me/246a1263>.

*Deanna Bremer Fisher works in the mayor's office at the city of University Heights and is the proud stepsister of Mary Miller.*

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**HEIGHTS OBSERVER**  
Published by Future Heights

# Fall Show opens at St. Paul's gallery



Stormy Night at Blue Lake, by Helen Murrell.



Coventry Street Music, by Martha Shiverick.



Untitled, by Brian Sarama.

## Robin Outcalt

The Fall Show at The Nicholson B. White Gallery at St. Paul's Episcopal Church will open on Sept. 8, featuring the diverse work of three Cleveland Heights artists—Helen Murrell, Brian Sarama, and Martha Shiverick.

The community is invited to the opening reception on Friday, Sept. 8, 5-7 p.m., featuring live music by Forest City String Band.

The show, on view until Sunday, Nov. 26, will feature handmade quilts, oil and acrylic paintings, and sculptural ceramics. The artists' themes include neighborhood

and family, nature and the environment, and food and consumption.

St. Paul's Church, at 2747 Fairmount Blvd. in Cleveland Heights, welcomes the community to its events and services throughout the year. For more information, visit [www.stpauls-church.org](http://www.stpauls-church.org).

*Robin Outcalt is co-chair of The Nicholson B. White Gallery at St. Paul's Episcopal Church.*

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# School. Again



SONGS AND  
STORIES

David Budin

School has already started here in Cleveland Heights and University Heights. I think I might write this every September, but, if so, here it comes again: I hated the opening of the school year. Every year. Right from the start. I didn't want to go to kindergarten. Or any grade thereafter, in all my years at Coventry Elementary, Roosevelt Junior High and Heights High.

My granddaughter, who's starting third grade in a CH-UH school, loved kindergarten, and first and second grade. Which is wonderful. Her brother did kindergarten last year. I think he thought it was okay. Tolerable, at least. Which is better than my situation. I just wanted out. Most of the other kids seemed like babies to me. I was already listening to rock 'n' roll records and radio (mostly made possible by a record-distributor uncle; plus, the advent of early rock radio DJs like the Mad Daddy on WJW-AM).

I had very little to talk about

with the other kids. Though I did make a few friends in kindergarten, some of whom I'm still friends with, like Sandy, Barry and Murray. I'd still be friends with a couple others, too, if they hadn't died.

So, I was mainly bored and felt isolated in kindergarten. The next two school years, first and second grades, were also boring, and I never wanted to be there. I thought those teachers were okay—nice enough, if kind of bland and boring—and I didn't blame them for my not wanting to be in school; I just didn't want to be in school. But the beginning of third grade was a big turning point for me. The first minute of that grade, I took an instant dislike to my teacher.

I'm not sure why that happened so fast, though I learned over the course of the year that there was a lot to dislike about her, so my initial reaction must have been instinctive. She was backward in many ways. She was painfully old-fashioned, and blatantly, shockingly racist, even for those times.

She brought out in me things I hadn't seen in myself before. Like outright defiance. I remember that on one of the first days of the year, she took the class out into the hallway to get a drink at the water fountain. She told us to get in a single-file line, not to get out of the line, and not to talk. There was something I wanted to talk about to my friend, Kathy, who was right behind me. So, after a few minutes,



The old Coventry School. Nice building—but it felt like prison to me.

I stepped out of line and stood facing Kathy and started talking—quietly—to her. The teacher flew into an actual rage and started yelling at me, creating much more noise than I had been making. That gave me some satisfaction. And I continued that behavior with her, and almost every other teacher, from that point on.

Third grade was a terrible year. I couldn't wait to get a new teacher, so, for that reason, I was looking forward, a little, to starting school the next year. The first day of fourth grade, we reported to our third-grade room, which was the custom, and our old teacher announced, "Your teacher for the new year is going to

be . . . ME!" For some reason, we were getting her for another year.

When she said that, my friend Freddy, sitting next to me, and I both spontaneously slid way down in our seats and audibly wailed, "Oh, no!" That didn't exactly help my relationship with her. It did set the tone for the year, and the rest of my school 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.*



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FUTUREHEIGHTS continued from page 13

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For more information on ways to volunteer and get involved, visit the “volunteer with us” section of FutureHeights’ website, at

[www.futureheights.org](http://www.futureheights.org).

*Julie Hammond Gierke is volunteer chair of the FutureHeights Annual Benefit Committee. She is a Heights native and closely involved with Heights Tree People, a volunteer group working to rebuild the tree canopy and foster a tree culture in Cleveland Heights and University Heights. She is currently helping organize the Coventry Village Library Urban Mini-Forest project, which is funded, in part, through a Cuyaboga County Healthy Urban Tree Canopy program grant.*

OPEN DOORS continued from page 17

academic assistance.

The registration process for ODA’s free after-school enrichment program is straightforward and user-friendly. Parents and guardians can visit the program’s official website, [www.opendoorsacademy.org](http://www.opendoorsacademy.org), and click “enroll” to register. Early registration is encouraged as spaces are limited, and the program’s popu-

larity is steadily increasing, due to its success.

*Daa’iyah Rahman is the marketing and advancement manager for Open Doors Academy. Outside of work she spends the majority of her time performing with Blakk Jakk dance collective, attending shows in Cain Park, and enjoying her three dogs and fiancé.*

HEIGHTS ARTS continued from page 20

and across the world is in a renaissance. Living artists are receiving more appreciation for their works, and the avenues to explore artistry are endless, especially with the evolution of technology.”

A joint effort between Heights Arts and No Exit New Music Ensemble, *Collaborage* helps kick off No Exit’s “Year of Surreality,” a year-long campaign to celebrate surrealism through concerts, poetry, art, and more.

The work in *Collaborage*—displayed concurrently with a colorful Spotlight show by artist Gregory Johnson—was created through the efforts of four randomly paired teams of visual artists.

Each team was given a copy of *A Book of Surrealist Games* to jumpstart its journey. Then, Heights Arts’ volunteer community teams, made up of dedicated arts professionals, provided the artists with 12 words or phrases and 12 pieces of local music, all to be used in their creation of original art.

“I enjoy taking disparate ideas and images and mixing them in sur-

prising new ways. I find this way of working inspiring. Because of that, I was excited to participate in this project,” said artist Catherine Butler. “Never knowing what I was going to get from [my teammates] to continue was exciting and pushed me to work in images and materials that I don’t normally.”

“I loved seeing how our different artistic backgrounds and practices meshed together! One of my favorite parts about the whole process was the switching of the artworks,” Talley said. “It amazed me how we built off of each other’s works.”

Showcasing everything from sculpture to mixed media, *Collaborage* aims to open minds. At the close of the exhibition, each piece will be auctioned off—the perfect ending for a show about the slipperiness of reality.

Visitors can experience *Collaborage* at the Heights Arts Gallery, 2175 Lee Road. For more information, visit [heightsarts.org](http://heightsarts.org).

*Cameron Gorman is the assistant director for Heights Arts. Contact her at [cgorman@heightsarts.org](mailto:cgorman@heightsarts.org).*

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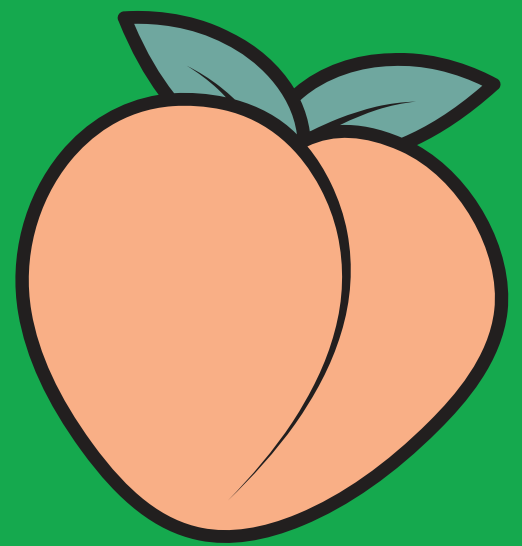
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