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

Border visit informs Oct. 14 immigration forum

Jim Hogg

When something feels very important, even if it's very far away, one sometimes has to see it in person. That's why 15 members of Forest Hill Church, Presbyterian (FHC), flew to El Paso, Texas, in February, to discover what immigrants encounter at the U.S.-Mexico border.

"The trip was a profoundly impactful experience for all of us," said Stephen Sedam, a member of the church's Immigration Task Force. A week-long stay revealed realities that made the visitors "toggle between despair and hope," he added.

Hosting the group was Caly Fernandez, executive director of Puente de Cristo (Bridges of Christ), in Hidalgo, Texas. Fernandez's energy, leadership and compassion endeared her to the group so much that they invited her to FHC.

There, on Saturday, Oct. 14,



In Matamoras, Mexico, Pastor Abraham Barberi speaks with refugees.

2-4:30 p.m., Fernandez will share her first-hand border experiences in a community forum, "Compassionate Justice for Immigrants Now!"

Joining Fernandez, to offer his perspective on the immigration process, will be Pastor Abraham Barberi, who led the visitors through the

Matamoras Refugee Encampment, just across the border in Mexico.

"There, many hundreds of migrants wait their turn to present themselves to U.S. authorities for asylum," explained task force member Jeff Smith. "Their squalid living

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UH's fall festival is back Oct. 15



The stars of Fall Fest every year are the artists, including University Heights resident Don'ty Lakina.

Mike Cook

Generous financial support from the Ohio Arts Council, as well as Dollar Bank, will result in more live entertainment at this year's University Heights Fall Fest.

The fourth annual festival returns to Walter Stinson Community Park on Sunday, Oct. 15, from noon to 5 p.m.

Award-winning singer and songwriter Jason Patrick Meyers will headline Fall Fest this year. Other performers include Wizbang Circus and Heights Poet Laureate Siaara Freeman.

Robin VanLear from Artful Cleveland will present an original theatrical production, "This Art is for the Birds." The interactive, outdoor theater piece was created in the tradition of Greek comedies, complete with its own chorus, and backed up by the reggae band No Bad Days.

"This Art is for the Birds is a comic but meaningful parable about the birds of the world banding together to figure out how to save Mother Earth after the canary in the coal mine dies," VanLear said. "Costumes, props and some of the

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Dobama presents Halloween Fest



Mariah Burks

Witches! Warlocks! Wizards! Lend us your ears—

On Saturday, Oct. 21, 4-7 p.m., Dobama Theatre will present its third annual Heights Halloween Festival, in conjunction with the city of Cleveland Heights and the Cedar Lee Special Improvement District.

The free, family-friendly event will extend along the Cedar Lee Business District, and will include the traditional Candy Crawl, where participating businesses will hand out candy to trick-or-treaters.

The festival's center of events will be located in Lot #18—the small parking lot just across Meadowbrook Boulevard from Callaloo Cafe.

Activities will include character meet-and-greets, where families will have a chance to take photos with well-known and beloved characters; balloon twisting; and face painting.

Festival signage will provide a seasonal backdrop for family photos capturing this year's Halloween memories.

The event also will include performers, giant puppets, games and prizes, a live DJ and a dance floor.

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Heights Libraries seeks new board member

Sheryl Banks

The Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library is accepting applications for an open board position, with applications due by noon on Friday, Nov. 17. The new board member will replace Max Gerboc, who is rolling off the board after serving his term.

"Our library is such an integral part of our community," said Heights Libraries Director Nancy Levin. "Serving on the library board is one

of the best ways a citizen can serve the Heights community, by helping guide the vision of the public library. It's a commitment—service is seven years—but the rewards are also big. It's a chance to make a positive, long-lasting impact on one of the greatest public service agencies in the area. Public libraries offer necessary and free services to all, and being a part of that is incredibly rewarding."

Prospective applicants are strongly encouraged to attend an in-person informational meeting about

library board service on Wednesday, Nov. 15. To RSVP, send an e-mail to nlevin@heightslibrary.org.

The Cleveland Heights-University Heights Board of Education will interview candidates on Tuesday, Dec. 5, at 7 p.m. Each interview will last roughly 15 minutes.

The following criteria are used in making an appointment to the library's board of trustees:

- Consideration will be given to a diversity of interests, a balance of

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Letters Policy

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

HEIGHTS OBSERVER

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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 and click on "Member Center" at the left.

- For information about writing style, article length, etc., click on "Become an Observer" at the left. For questions that aren't answered there, call the FutureHeights office at 216-320-1423 or e-mail info@futureheights.org.

Articles to be considered for November publication must be submitted by Oct. 9. We publish some articles online only.

Join a community of volunteers

Brenda Bailey

When we choose to volunteer, we expose our inner voice to the world: I believe in *this* cause; I support *this* candidate; I believe my neighborhood needs *this* service. Doing so naturally connects you with others who feel the same way. And just like that—you've built a community.

You meet new people or see others in a new light. You uncover local history and meet civic and business leaders. Your understanding of the Heights as a living, growing entity becomes clearer. And if you're anything like me, you'll soon be thinking, "What next?"

Through FutureHeights' Crowd Sourced Conversations, you've told us that you feel invested in this community. I would like to challenge you to develop a deeper sense of belonging in the Heights through volunteerism.

As the volunteer coordinator at FutureHeights, my goal is to give you opportunities to build relationships, to stretch your comfort zone, to learn and grow along with us.

Cynics may think of volunteering as free labor—giving something but getting nothing. As a lifelong volunteer, I have never walked away from an experience feeling empty—exhausted, yes, but never depleted. Whether I've learned something, devised a solution to a problem, or

created something tangible, the experience changed me, gave me something I didn't have before. However that personal growth manifests, it integrates into the community, resulting in change.

Check out the FutureHeights website, www.futureheights.org, for volunteer information and fill out the Volunteer Interest Form to get on the mailing list for upcoming opportunities.

FutureHeights currently seeks volunteers to deliver the *Heights Observer* to businesses, on or near the first day of each month (a delivery route should take no more than an hour). It also seeks social-media influencers, to promote all things Heights and to follow/share its social media accounts. There are also a variety of FutureHeights committees you could join.

Want more information about opportunities before you commit? Please contact me at bbailey@futureheights.org or 216-320-1423—we would love to partner with you.

"Volunteerism is the voice of the people put into action. These actions shape and mold the present into a future of which we can all be proud."—Helen Dyer

Brenda Bailey, the volunteer coordinator at FutureHeights, has been a resident of Cleveland Heights since 2020.

Start Right is a CH success story

Alan Rapoport

Cleveland Heights has problems. It has vacant storefronts. There is chaos at city council meetings. Taxes are high. But, sometimes, there are solutions. Top of the Hill is happening. Lee/Meadowbrook is underway. Taylor Commons has received approvals. Hoorays are in order.

Not as apparent are small and significant success stories. Some involve the renovation of distressed housing stock. Kudos to FutureHeights, the Cuyahoga Land Bank, and the Home Repair Resource Center for their efforts. Additional successes are projects to build new housing undertaken by Start Right Community Development Corporation (CDC), a nonprofit organization.

Rev. Jimmie Hicks Jr. opened a church in the often-neglected Caledonia neighborhood. Under his leadership, its charitable program operates hunger relief programs. It also renovates existing houses. But Hicks believed it could do more.

Start Right entered into an agreement with the city to build new houses on vacant lots in Caledonia. The first, on Nela View Road, is finished. It sold for \$250,000—a price nobody thought possible. Financing is almost ready for a second house on Nela View, and for one on Greyton Road. Hicks hopes eventually to build 21 additional houses. The church is busy fulfilling its

mission.

Start Right has accomplished even more. In cooperation with the Heights Tree People and the CH city forester, the CDC got about 95 new trees planted on Nela View tree lawns. Many existing trees were pruned. Some residents also got free, new trees on their front lawns. This project shows how a major enhancement to city streets can involve relatively little effort and expense. Hopefully, this will be repeated on other streets throughout Cleveland Heights.

Hicks deserves credit. The city has not found any other developer for its large supply of empty lots. It took courage for Hicks to submit a bid; and working with the city was difficult. The mayor and city council members consistently micromanaged everything. That was frustrating, and shows why Cleveland Heights has a bad reputation in the development community. But Hicks had faith. He persevered. He proved what could be done to improve his community despite a difficult economic and political climate.

Hicks is a homegrown product who graduated from Cleveland Heights High School. We should be proud of him. He is a problem-solver at a time when Caledonia really needs one.

Alan Rapoport is legal advisor to Start Right Community Development Corporation.

Kessler marks 44 years of Heights school involvement

To the Editor:

At 70, I've been teaching/tutoring/guiding students in the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District for 44 years!

I am still active as a substitute teacher at Cleveland Heights High School. I enjoy the daily mix of being with young people and experienced teachers, who continue to amaze me with their in-depth knowledge of complex subject matter, and their facile way of expressing it to hungry, young minds.

I have taught in other school systems, notably Shaker Heights and Solon, but have always preferred to take an assignment in the CH-UH schools, as I feel most comfortable here—so much so that I consider the Heights schools my home base.

I currently reside at the Margaret Wagner Apartments, in the heart of the CH's cultural/historical district. I moved here to be close to the Heights school system—I love it here.

Mark Kessler
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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Use your local arts resources

Greg Donley

In the past month or two, *Crain's Cleveland Business* published no fewer than four articles and opinions about the importance of arts to the future of Greater Cleveland: "Investments in artists pay dividends for regional economy," by Jeremy Johnson; "Businesses that value innovation should support creativity of local arts scene," by Fred Bidwell; "To thrive, Greater Cleveland needs to integrate art into all aspects of life," by Jennifer Coleman; and "Region buoyed by abundance of talent, creativity," by Grant Segall.

Many lifelong residents take for granted our vibrant arts and music scene, or, worse, don't take advantage of it at all. Cleveland has arts institutions such as the Cleveland Museum of Art and Cleveland Orchestra that have few peers on the planet, yet it is a medium-sized and livable city in which gaining access to these institutions is enviably easy, and where the moderate cost of living lets a broader population enjoy the "finer things" (as well as the delightful gritty things).

At the same time that these grand institutions play their leadership roles here and internationally, a host of local arts organizations have been doing their part to bring the arts to everyday life. Together, these grand and grassroots assets add up to a special opportunity in Northeast Ohio, both for our quality of life and for our economic future.

I was incredibly privileged to work for the Cleveland Museum of Art for 30 years, spanning its 75th and 100th anniversaries, and to have been a founder and two-time president of Heights Arts, which will turn 25 in 2025.

The essential premise of Heights Arts, coming out of a citizen-driven visioning process that the city of Cleveland Heights conducted in the late 1990s, was that—as a community that was home to more working artists, musicians, arts educators, and arts professionals than any other city in our region—Cleveland Heights should be a place where the arts are a major power source in everyday life. Indeed, the Heights' prime location and creative population place it in a unique competitive position within, and even beyond, our region. There's great potential here, but we have to do something with it.

From different perspectives, each of the *Crain's* articles noted that living with the arts is much more than a way to add beauty and inspiration to your own life—it can inform creative problem-solving and innovation



Artist Brinsley Tyrell created the sculptural fences in Coventry Village. The public art project was managed by Heights Arts.

in many spheres, it can teach the value of focus and discipline toward high craft in whatever you do, and, ultimately, it can produce tangible economic benefits in addition to all the valuable intangibles.

Heights Arts and other organizations large and small across our region have worked hard to champion the "creative life." For Heights Arts in particular, that has meant establishing a long-running gallery and shop on Lee Road, organizing musical and literary events, managing public art projects, and more—helping artists find broader audiences, helping Heights residents discover great art, and creating innovative new ways to bring creators and audiences together, such as, to cite one example, the "Ekphrastacy" series wherein local poets write and perform works inspired by art in Heights Arts exhibitions. It's always revelatory.

Take full advantage of local arts resources, whether your interest is literature or nonfiction or poetry, or music or theater or performance in any genre, or visual art in all its diverse forms. Whether it's creating art or appreciating it or some of each, make the arts a part of your life. You won't be sorry, and neither will the city where you live, nor its economy.

Greg Donley is a longtime Cleveland Heights resident and a founding board member of both Heights Arts and FutureHeights.

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Cleveland Heights residents deserve good governance

Jeanne Gordon

From the moment I got involved with Citizens for an Elected Mayor (CEM) in 2019, I have been thinking about what makes a good city council, a productive municipal government, an efficient city hall.

I know there are educated professionals who spend their professional time contemplating and learning about these things; people who seek Master of Public Administration degrees, study municipal government, and generally do actual professional work in this area.

I am a Cleveland Heights resident with none of those specific professional degrees or concentrated studies—but I’m a resident who thinks our city government can strive to meet best practices for good governance.

When thinking about good and effective governance, I came upon a definition from medical consultant Don L. Arnwine, who studied the topic. He determined that effective governance is efficient, allows respectful conflict of ideas,

is simple, is focused, produces good outcomes, preserves community assets, and leads to enjoyment and personal rewards for stakeholders (residents).

I agree with his definition of effective governance. I would add that, at the municipal level, effective governance is also open and transparent.

There is a palpable desire among CH residents for effective governance in this city. It was felt and heard when the amendment to the city charter to provide for an elected mayor overwhelmingly passed. It is evident today with citizens attending council meetings wanting to be included in discussions about development initiatives such as Noble Station.

I believe Cleveland Heights government should continuously work to provide good governance for its citizens. To that end, I believe that council should engage in best practices with regard to open meetings and Sunshine Laws, provide for equitable access to council meetings, require a budget process

and financial reporting that allows for department-level detail on expenditures and revenues, and limit the use of emergency legislation.

This interest in effective, open and transparent governance is what drove me to join CEM in 2019. It is what made me decide to apply for the open council seat earlier this year. And, ultimately, it is what made me decide to run for council this year.

I don’t think the work is done—I don’t know if striving for efficient governance is work that is ever completed or done. I am not certain that one person or one council can ensure that. But I sure would like to try to deliver to Cleveland Heights residents the good governance they deserve.

Jeanne Gordon is a candidate for Cleveland Heights City Council. A 21-year resident of Scarborough Road, Gordon is a tax attorney who has served on the boards of Citizens for an Elected Mayor, Friends of Build CLM, Nature Center at Shaker Lakes, and more.

CH needs servant leaders like Hart

Tom Nobbe

When I first met with Melody Hart in 2021, to learn more about her run for mayor of Cleveland Heights, she struck me as less a politician and more of a servant leader.

I knew she was involved in many social justice issues, including canvassing in the Noble neighborhood with volunteers from Greater Cleveland Congregations in a successful effort to call banks to account for at-risk properties they owned on otherwise well-kept streets. I was also aware of her work with her husband, Gary Benjamin, in rescuing a Haitian refugee from detention at a local ICE (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement) refugee center and hosting him in their home until he was able to secure employment and housing.

Melody’s calm and unassuming presence might make one wonder what she is doing in the sometimes rough-and-tumble world of city government. Yet, Melody has proven her mettle as Cleveland Heights City Council president. She is tenacious in her efforts to get things done, while at the same time constantly pushing to get council members to work as a team.

In addition, her deep knowledge of finance and budgeting, honed over years working as the chief financial officer at a number of large corporations, has brought an extremely valuable skill set to city council.

I believe Melody’s quiet, effective servant leadership is what city council needs at a time when Cleveland Heights is still emerging from the effects of the pandemic and still adjusting to an elected mayor.

Melody Hart is the right leader in the right role at the right time. Instead of burnishing her own political résumé, she has the best interest of all Cleveland Heights residents in mind.

I urge my fellow residents to vote for Melody Hart this November.

Tom Nobbe is a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights.



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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Cleveland Heights council president urges unity

Melody Joy Hart

This council has been a very productive council. In 2022, we passed about 183 legislations and we are on track this year for about the same amount. This council has moved the city forward quickly in many ways and has a good legislative and budgetary record.

A few accomplishments include:

- Unprecedented budget hearings over five days resulting in a more diligent process, resulting in a more thorough understanding by council.
- We passed major legislation such as the Pay-to-Stay extension; Cedar Lee Meadowbrook Development and the starting of construction; the lead-free homes initiative; making city fringe benefits fairer for LGBTQIA+ employees; banning conversion therapy; enacting and seating a Charter Review Commission.
- We have had two council vacancies to fill under the new 45-day time limit and we succeeded on the first and failed on the second, so the mayor appointed a replacement on the second.

What has not been productive is council relations. We should only focus our time and attention on what helps the residents, not on other

council members. As leaders, each of us is responsible for our actions and our collaboration and treating each other with respect.

Council is a body, not a basket of separate individuals. Our focus for our residents' benefit is to act like a body—to be Team Cleveland Heights. I am happily on that team and challenge all my colleagues to work with me as Team Cleveland Heights.

As we move forward, we need to complete the allocation of ARPA funds and form some specific rules of engagement. Putting in place specific rules was voted down by this council, but all council members have now committed to holding that discussion. That is all part of coming together to work as a body.

I will continue to work to be a cohesive body—Team Cleveland Heights—and to make the city a better place, moving us forward into a strong future.

Melody Joy Hart is the Cleveland Heights City Council president. She has 35 years of experience in finance as an executive, and is a certified public accountant, certified in treasury and in financial planning and analysis. She is running for re-election to CH City Council this November.

Cleveland Heights City Council needs change

Jennifer Wintner

I am adding my voice to [those of] other Cleveland Heights residents who have expressed frustration with a city council that is failing procedurally and substantively.

The council president's lack of leadership has resulted in council operating without formal rules or procedures, voting on legislation without sufficient information, refusing to address major issues facing the community, and exhibiting uncivility.

CH City Council doesn't have formal processes for meeting, or researching, drafting, and discussing legislation. Former council member Josie Moore took the initiative to write and circulate a draft of policies and procedures for council to discuss and work from. The draft is thoughtful, logical, and sensible. Rather than lauding Josie's effort and thanking her for doing the foundational work, the council president berated her and refused to have discussion of the documents.

The administration typically delays sending packets of information on legislation until the week-end before the [Monday] council meeting. Thus, council often lacks sufficient time to research matters contained in the legislation. Yet, the council president allows votes to occur on the administration's schedule. Why doesn't she defer votes until the following meeting if the administration does not provide sufficient review time?

Additionally, city staff with subject-matter expertise rarely are

at council meetings. Why does the council president think it is in the best interest of the city to have council vote on matters without being fully informed?

Issues such as Severance, infill housing, and Noble Station aren't getting [the] attention from council they need. Why don't council and [its] committees regularly address those topics? Why isn't council, under the council president, pressing the administration to conduct a thorough inspection of Severance and cite the owner for code violations? Why doesn't council, under the president, make it feasible for capable individuals and developers to acquire and redevelop some of the 300-plus city parcels while poorly thought out projects languish? Why is city council, under the council president, only now getting involved with the Noble Station project?

Council Member Gail Larson and council candidate Jim Petras offer hope for city council. Gail has proven to be hardworking and committed to advancing sound public policy during her council tenure. Jim offers a positive alternative to the council president; professionally, he has proven his leadership skills through consensus building.

Gail and Jim understand the city's important issues and can address them. Please vote for Gail Larson and Jim Petras.

Jennifer Wintner has lived in Cleveland Heights for more than 20 years. She is a member of the Severance Action Group. The opinion expressed here is her own.

Candidates should endorse SAG's vision for Severance

Larry Nowak

Namdar Realty purchased Severance Town Center in 2016, and, like many other struggling and distressed malls that Namdar owns, Severance's occupancy and condition has continually declined—except, notably, for the independently owned Dave's Market and the Home Depot. Otherwise, the face of Severance is one of many empty storefronts and buildings (most notably the former Walmart and Regal Cinema buildings) and a sea of pothole-filled parking lots.

This deteriorating property in the center of Cleveland Heights has begun to adversely impact surrounding areas and to attract vandals, most

recently those who trashed the interior of the former Walmart store.

True to its business model, Namdar profits from the rent paid by the remaining businesses, spending as little as possible on maintenance, and nothing on creative redevelopment planning that would attract additional businesses and residents to the community. It sold the parcel under Home Depot for more than it paid for the entire property in 2016. The sale of any additional parcels could well preclude the possibility of having an integrated, holistic and creative solution to the redevelopment of Severance.

Namdar's neglect contrasts with the creative redevelopment of former malls into multi-use sites around the

country, including those now being attempted by neighboring cities: in Shaker Heights, the Van Aken District; in University Heights, University Square; and, perhaps in Richmond Heights, Belle Oaks.

Since 2021, the Severance Action Group (SAG) has been urging the city to acquire control of the Severance property and has sought action by the city to plan for its redevelopment, along lines SAG has suggested and that both city council and the mayor previously endorsed for its future under new ownership.

A redeveloped Severance could be not only an asset to Cleveland Heights but also a regional model.

In the short term, the city should be enforcing all codes that

apply to Severance. The city administration and city council should direct the city's Board of Control, perhaps in conjunction with its Planning Commission, to oppose any effort by Namdar to further subdivide and sell off the Severance parcels it still owns.

SAG urges residents to ask city council candidates to clearly state their position regarding the city's role in opposing further sales of parcels, pursuing site control and promoting the redevelopment of Severance, and to support those candidates who endorse this approach.

To contact SAG, send an e-mail to info@severancerediscovered.org.

Larry Nowak is chairman of Severance Action Group.

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Resident initiative takes on CH's vacant home problem

Mike Reilly

Do you ever imagine what it must be like to live next to a vacant, dilapidated, and rat-infested home for years and, in some cases, a decade or more?

Walk in that neighbor's shoes for a minute. For years, they've called the city for help. They've attended council meetings and complained, only to be thanked for their concern. They've received endless campaign literature addressing the "housing problem." They even voted for Mayor Seren, hoping for the change that was promised.

But that abandoned house still sits there. To make matters worse, the neighbor gets a city violation notice telling them to fix their uneven sidewalk.

Since 2008, the city of Cleveland Heights has addressed the housing problem with no actionable plan in place. It's endless studies and listening campaigns. Meanwhile more than 500 vacant houses continue to fester in our city, property values drop, and tax dollars are lost to the tune of \$2 million (500 homes x \$4,000 in average property taxes) per year.

Where there is a heavy concentration of vacant houses, there is a corresponding impact on retail. Consider Fairmount Boulevard and South Taylor Road vs. Noble and Greyton roads. Other examples would be South Taylor and Blanche roads, Cedar and

Taylor roads, and Coventry Road. All these areas are ghost towns from 20 years ago.

The solution is simple. I have created a new initiative to work with the city's Housing Department: R.A.T.H.—Residents Against Terrible Housing.

Modeled after M.A.D.D. (Mothers Against Drunk Driving), R.A.T.H. is an action-oriented enterprise. Our group will identify vacant houses in designated neighborhoods and alert the Housing Department.

Then we will post a R.A.T.H. sign in the front yard and get neighbors to join in a nuisance abatement suit against the offending house. We then take the house/owner to court, with the neighbors as our allies. We win the judgment, place a lien on the property, and then foreclose. The house goes on the market and whoever buys the property is expected to clean it up, pronto.

I have executed this action successfully three times in Forest Hill, where I live. It works. It's simple. Most importantly, it brings hope to those residents who feel abandoned by their city.

For more information visit www.projectrath.com, follow the progress on our homes, and watch our signs pop up throughout our city.

Mike Reilly grew up in Cleveland Heights and is a longtime resident of Forest Hill. He is the founder and owner of Reilly Painting Inc., which he started in 1974.

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Community comes first



HEIGHTS OF
DEMOCRACY

Deborah Van Kleef and Carla Rautenberg

To say that Cleveland Heights Mayor Kahlil Seren has not, to date, embraced community involvement in civic matters would be an understatement. Locked office doors and a police officer at the reception desk in City Hall were early warning signs. Withdrawal of administrative staff support for resident volunteers serving on various boards and commissions was another red flag. The Cleveland Heights Green Team, Heights Tree People, Severance Action Group, and various groups in the Noble and Caledonia neighborhoods are just a few examples of community members whose civic efforts have been rejected or ignored by the mayor.

In last month's column, "Who owns Cleveland Heights?" we suggested that a community land trust (CLT) could protect certain parcels for specified community purposes *in perpetuity*. Property could be acquired from the county land bank, through tax foreclosure, purchase, or even donation.

Cleveland Heights resident W. Dennis Keating, emeritus professor of Urban Studies and Law at Cleveland State University, co-authored an article, "Bringing permanent affordable housing and community control to scale: The potential of community land trust and land bank collaboration," published in *Cities: the International Journal of Urban Policy and Planning*, in July 2022. It investigates CLT-land bank collaborations that are providing affordable housing in Albany, N.Y., Houston, Texas, and Columbus, Ohio.

The introduction states, "Beyond the permanent affordable housing provision, CLTs deserve more attention for the potential to advance a more equitable societal transformation through a greater share of land coming under community control. Community control in the context of CLTs means placing current and future residents at the center of decision making about neighborhood needs." Keating and his co-authors conclude, "Through community control, CLTs provide long-term shelter security by rejecting specu-

lation and minimizing its impact on lower-income communities and households of color."

Like anything else, a CLT must be done right to be successful. Without a strong foundation of community involvement—including mandated and significant inclusion of land trust residents on its board—a CLT would be subject to the whims of politicians and changes in city administration. Land trusts are forever; mayors are not.

To avoid serving entrenched agendas, a Cleveland Heights CLT would have to be a stand-alone nonprofit rather than a subsidiary of any existing organization.

From the start, any professional staff would need to be augmented with resident support on many levels, including by community members serving on the board (with some board positions eventually to be filled by land trust residents, as affordable housing is built and purchased).

The CLT would have to work closely with the Cleveland Heights Community Improvement Corporation (CIC) at City Hall, which, among other things, can operate as a city land bank of sorts. That would require a healthy, mutually respectful ongoing relationship between the CLT and any city administration.

Building a thriving community land trust would demand the commitment of a broad swath of citizens, and we believe Cleveland Heights residents are more than equal to that task. It would also require a mayor who is not afraid to give up a measure of control, believes in the collective wisdom of the community, and recognizes the creative potential inherent in struggle and collaboration.

Although we do not endorse specific candidates in this column, we definitely want to see a thriving city government that reflects both the lived reality and the aspirations of this wonderful community. When you vote in November, we hope you will keep in mind the importance of electing a legislative body that is sufficiently independent to be an effective counter to the executive power of the mayor.

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

FALL FEST continued from page 1

text were created through a series of summer camps for youth and workshops for adults."

Dr. U.R. Awesome will be back this year to present his interactive bubble show, and crowd favorites Blake Parhamovich of Balloons by Blake, and magician Richard McClendon will also return.

As is the case every year, the stars of Fall Fest are the artists who set up shop in the park. Last year, more than 75 artists participated, and even more are expected this year. Artists and vendors attending this year for the first time include Anthenna's Request, Art by Jackie, Mr. Crisp Pickles, Mystic Sone by Katelyn, Nanette Reilly, Piece Love Pastry, A Good Turn, and Barb's Bunny Hutch.

Festivalgoers are advised to arrive at Fall Fest with empty stomachs. Food trucks scheduled to appear on Oct. 15 include Yum Village, Twisted Grill 'n' Grind, Sopranos Authentic Italian, and Pop Culture CLE.

"Fall Fest has become a great way for our residents and nearby communities to enjoy a day of wonderful entertainment and shop local vendors," said UH Council Member Christopher Cooney. "I'm really looking forward to seeing everyone there."

John Carroll University's radio station, WJCU 88.7 FM, is also a sponsor of this year's Fest. WJCU will broadcast live from Fall Fest, and will distribute promotional items.

Fall Fest is made possible in part by state tax dollars allocated by the



COURTESY UH CITY HALL

Award-winning singer and songwriter Jason Patrick Meyers will headline the fourth University Heights Fall Fest on Sunday, Oct. 15, at Walter Stinson Community Park.

Ohio Legislature to the Ohio Arts Council (OAC).

The OAC is a state agency that funds and supports quality arts experiences to strengthen Ohio communities culturally, educationally, and economically.

Chris Juchno, branch manager of the University Heights Dollar Bank, said he is proud to work with University Heights to support Fall Fest. "Dollar Bank is a community bank. That means we can focus on empowering the communities we serve to do the things they hold dearest," Juchno said. "Building a sense of community through events like the Juneteenth Celebration and Fall Fest is important to residents of University Heights, and that's why it's important to us."

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

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2023
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Future Heights

Budget victory doesn't guarantee public school funding



THE COMMON
GOOD

Susie Kaeser

Public schools in Ohio are funded by the state and with local resources raised from voter-approved tax levies. For nearly three decades this important state-local partnership has been out of whack. The legislature has not held up its end of the deal—it is underfunding the public system, forcing increases in property taxes and making private education a funding priority. Public schools and private schools are in the same line item in the state budget and are in direct competition for public funds.

Fortunately, public education scored a victory in the state biennial budget that took effect on July 1. Lawmakers retained the Fair School Funding Plan, a cost-based approach to defining state spending needs, and increased its investment in the plan by about \$1.6 billion over two years. If they make the same

investment in the next budget, school funding could finally pass constitutional muster. Lawmakers also increased funding for categorical aid, which includes expenditures for each student living in poverty or with disabilities, as well as for English-language learners and gifted students.

But vouchers won, too. More than \$1 billion was set aside to pay for private school tuition. What if that funding went to public education—the option that is mandated by the Ohio Constitution?

The base cost is the amount of funding that every public school student is guaranteed regardless of where they live. In the new two-year state budget, legislators set the base cost at \$8,400, up from \$6,010 in 2020. Both the local community and state contribute funds to meet the base cost. The local contribution depends on the wealth of each school district. The state contributes a larger share to poorer districts.

Because the income level of Cleveland Heights and University Heights residents and the value of real estate are relatively high compared to many districts, the state will contribute \$1,164 to the base cost for each Heights student for the next two years. Increases in categorical aid will increase state

spending per Heights student to \$3,171 in fiscal year 2025, up from \$2,023 in the last budget. Based on enrollment of about 4,700 students, the Heights district can expect \$14.5 million in state funding in this fiscal year and \$15 million in 2025. Last year the state contributed \$11.5 million to the CH-UH budget.

More state funding means fewer levies. According to Scott Gainer, the CH-UH school district's treasurer, at current spending levels the district will have a positive funding balance until 2027. The last levy was passed in 2020 to fill a deficit created by the law requiring districts to pay part of the cost of vouchers. The end of deduction funding, the infusion of federal COVID funds, spending cuts, and an increase in state spending mean the 2020 levy is projected to last five years longer than initially predicted.

The hard-fought victory that increased state spending on public education came at a cost. Public education was held hostage by Ohio Senate President Matt Huffman's insatiable desire to make private education at public expense an entitlement. He won. The budget includes funds for five voucher programs, universal access to EdChoice income-based

vouchers, and a \$500 minimum tuition subsidy even for families with incomes 10 times the federal poverty level. EdChoice and charter school tuition are both set at a maximum of \$8,400.

When lawmakers increase the state investment in public education, it stabilizes funding, benefits local taxpayers and strengthens public education. Greater state support should be the norm, not a tradeoff for something noxious, expensive, unaccountable and outside of educational norms!

There is no guarantee that, when the legislature's latest income-tax cuts reduce revenue, lawmakers will prioritize public education and uphold their constitutional obligation to fund it. We can't confuse a short-term funding victory with long-term security for our cornerstone of democracy—public education. We have to keep fighting.

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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Here for You, Wherever You Are




REFUGEE continued from page 1



FHC Immigration Team (L-R): Natarsha Sanders, director, Centering the Sacred; Dean Sieck; Barb Hansen; Daniel Dennefer; Gary Lustic; Diana Woodbridge; Christine Henry; Eddie Canales, S. Texas Human Rights Ctr.; Mark Wedell; Carol Wedell; FHC Pastor John Lentz; Jeff Smith; Nonie Stack; Sharon Shumaker; Cynthia Lehman; Steve Sedam; Kermit Lind; host Caly Fernandez, executive director, Puentes de Cristo.

conditions included 'homes' made of plastic bags, tarps, boards and rope."

Cynthia Lehman, who also made the trip, recalled walking with "Pastor Abraham" when a woman approached, crying inconsolably, having just learned that, while she was approved to enter the U.S., her children would have to stay behind. Pastor Abraham's prayerful comfort and advice to stay with her children and resubmit forms for each person were the consoling words she needed to hear.

Forest Hill Church is no stranger to immigration concerns, having provided temporary "sanctuary" for several immigrants over the past seven years. But this journey to the "front line" offered new insights into what refugees face at the border.

The group's visit to Las Toronjas Colonia in Hidalgo County, Texas, confirmed that *colonia* settlements have "third-world living conditions," said FHC member Kermit Lind. Lots rented out by "developers" lack electricity, sewers, running water, Internet, stores, and health care. Along the South Texas border, about 500,000 people live in 2,300 *colonias*, all with similar horrific conditions. When the team, led by Fernandez, arrived with food, household supplies, clothing, health services and more, it was cause for "a festive occasion," recalled Lind.

Carol Wedell said the group's visit to "The Wall" confirmed that it is "big and brutish," sending the message that "you are not welcome."

When the group visited the Catholic Charities Humanitarian Respite Center in Hildago, Sister Norma Pimentel tasked them with playing, coloring and just having fun with 30 small children, while their parents safely rested. Families stay a night or two before moving on to their legal destinations in the States. There, said FHC member Mark Wedell, the team helped prepare and serve a meal, and left the center "in high spirits about the work being accomplished there."

Hear more from Fernandez and Barberi at the free community forum on Oct. 14, at Forest Hill Church, 3031 Monticello Blvd. Five local partner organization will be on hand to provide additional information.

To attend, register by Oct. 10 online, at <https://fbc.breezechms.com/>

form/85b03c, or by calling the church (216-321-2660).

Jim Hogg is a member of Forest Hill Church, as is his wife, Kay. He retired as a senior writer/editor with American Greetings, and currently spends much of his time playing keyboards in two rock bands, one of which has performed on the Cain Park stage.

Illustrator to appear at UHFD

Mike Cook

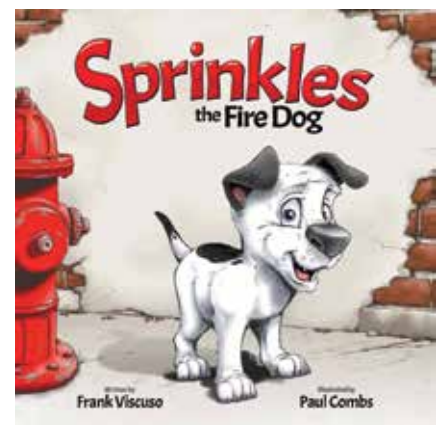
Paul Combs, the illustrator of the *Sprinkles the Fire Dog* book series, will read and sign books at the 2023 University Heights Fire Department Open House on Sunday, Oct. 8.

The open house will run from noon to 3 p.m. at the Fire Department, attached to UH City Hall, and will include tours of the station, food, and fun family activities.

Combs will read the book at 12:30 p.m. and again at 2:30 p.m. The books *Sprinkles the Fire Dog* and *Sprinkles the Fire Dog 2—Making a Difference* will be available for purchase at the event.

The theme of national Fire Prevention Week 2023 is "Cooking safety starts with YOU." At the open house, attendees will learn about fire safety in the kitchen and at outside grills.

Sprinkles the Fire Dog is an inspirational story about a little puppy from a big city who dreams of one day becoming a fire dog.



Paul Combs, illustrator of the *Sprinkles the Fire Dog* series, will sign books at the UHFD.

To achieve that dream, Sprinkles must overcome his physical limitations, the critical corner mutts, and his own self-doubt. This is a story about setting goals, putting in the work, and turning dreams into reality.

Combs is an illustrator, retired firefighter, and author of three books. The reading and book signing is presented in partnership with *Fire Engineering* magazine.

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

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University Heights City Council Meeting highlights



AUG. 15, 2023 - special meeting

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

Council actions

Council approved the planning commission’s recommendation for Drees Homes’ demolition of the existing home at 2519 Claver Road and a site plan for a new home.

Council amended the ordinance for storage of rubbish behind the rear building line.

An ordinance to eliminate the residency requirement for membership on the ARB (Architectural Review Board) was originally on the agenda for a vote, but disagreement over whether the ordinance was needed or advisable ensued among council members and the mayor, so it was presented on first reading only.

Council accepted a grant from the Ohio Arts Council for the 2023 Fall Fest.

Council approved a quote from Starfish Computer Corp. for another month of service, not to exceed \$5,500.

Council approved the fire department seeking bids for firefighter medical examinations. Chief Robert Perko noted that ARPA funds were available for first-responder grants. A wellness initiative passed in 2013, but no funding was available.

Council authorized hiring bankruptcy law firm Bricker & Graydon to represent the city’s interests in the University Square bankruptcy case, with Rach abstaining and Weiss voting nay. Weiss asked if the matter could be covered by an ordinance. McConville

said an ordinance could be prepared, and that approving the authorization would not preclude a later ordinance.

LWV Observer: Marilyn Singer.

SEPT. 5, 2023 - regular meeting

Present were all council members, and the mayor, clerk of council, law director, and finance director.

Mayor’s report

In July, the mayor sent council a memo regarding the intention of Joe Ciuni of GPD Group to terminate its contract and services at the end of 2023. Ciuni will not attend meetings going forward. He had mentioned possible retirement, but two things hastened his resignation: First, an ordinance passed in February substantially changed his role from providing to managing engineering services. The second was disrespectful treatment of Ciuni and GPD by council members during meetings and on projects. No engineers at GPD are interested in filling Ciuni’s position. The city will issue an RFP for a new city engineer.

The Waterstone Medical Building failed a building inspection. As the owner refused to work with the city to correct violations, the city prosecutor issued a criminal complaint. The owner was found to be responsible for 122 citations, fined \$122,000, and could face up to 18 months in jail. Jail time has been waived pending [correction] of the violations to the satisfaction of the city.

The former Wiley middle school building failed seven state fire codes and 18 state building codes. After some work, the building passed subsequent inspections.

Staff reports

Law Director McConville said the bankruptcy and litigation hearing regarding University

Square was scheduled to establish the time frame for auctioning land parcels. The debtors were granted a continuance, to negotiate further with Target and Macy’s.

Council actions

Council authorized an agreement with Starfish Computer Corp., and emergency IT service from Starfish, through Sept. 5, in an amount not to exceed \$1,252.50.

Council approved resolutions for special assessments for tax year 2023 for: the Core Retail Parcel in the University Square Development (\$4 million); construction and maintenance of the city’s sanitary sewers; street lighting costs on designated properties (80 cents per frontage foot); planting, maintaining, and removing trees (70 cents per frontage foot); and providing city services (lawn care) in nuisance conditions.

Council amended 2023 fiscal year appropriations, including increases for specific projects and events that came up since the approval of the budget.

Council approved a change order, not to exceed \$8,000, for the 2023 Road Program to cover tree damage on Ashurst Road in the Aug. 24 and 25 storm.

Council approved extending the jail contract with the Solon Police Department for three years at the standing rate.

Council approved a contract, for \$28,500, from SCS Engineers for consulting services to develop a plan for loose recycling. The approval was contingent on language confirming which sections of the city are to be reviewed and which days the consultants will be on site. Council discussed the two citizen surveys, what the results really meant, and what the residents really want. Cooney voted no without explanation.

LWV Observer: Tanis Swan.

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Noble Neighbors hosts CH council candidates Oct. 10

Brenda H May

Noble Neighbors will host an election forum on Tuesday, Oct. 10, 7-9 p.m., at Disciples Christian Church, 3663 Mayfield Road. Candidates for Cleveland Heights City Council have been invited to present their positions and engage in conversations.

The forum's focus will be on issues that impact the Noble Road neighborhoods, all of which impact the city of Cleveland Heights as a whole.

All voters (and young voters-in-training) are invited to attend. Those who live outside the Noble Road neighborhoods are invited learn the particular concerns of Noble residents, and the priorities and solutions the candidates offer.

Questions pertaining to Noble area matters will be submitted to the candidates in advance so that they may prepare thoughtfully. At the forum, candidates will present their responses to the audi-

ence in a brief lecture-style manner. Following these formal presentations, candidates will move to separate locations within the large meeting space. Audience members will have an opportunity to ask questions of individual candidates in one-on-one or small-group discussions, instead of within a formal presentation structure. Candidates will be permitted to distribute literature and yard signs during this second portion of the meeting.

Noble Neighbors does not endorse any candidates or election issues. Instead, Noble Neighbors encourages all voters to be educated about candidates and issues so that each person may be well informed when they cast their vote.

Learn more about Noble Neighbors at www.nobleneighbors.com.

Brenda H May is one of the Noble Neighbor leaders. Check out their story at NobleNeighbors.com.

CH Council votes no on Noble Station



A rendering of the proposed Noble Station development.

Kim Sergio Inglis

On Sept. 18, Cleveland Heights City Council voted 5-2 against Ordinance 143-2023, the proposed development agreement known as the Noble Station Apartments.

Council members Janine Boyd and Anthony Mattox Jr. voted to pass the legislation, while Craig Cobb, Tony Cuda, Melody Joy Hart, Gail Larson, and Davida Russell voted against it.

Plans for the Noble Station development called for a four-story, 52-unit, multi-family affordable housing facility, to be built on city-owned property—approximately 2.08 acres of parcels in the vicinity of Noble and Woodview roads.

“On or about” Jan. 20, the developer and city “entered into an agreement for purchase and sale of real property, contingent upon the developer and city entering into a development agreement for the property.” The purchase price was \$218,300.

At the Sept. 18 meeting, council considered the ordinance on second reading.

Proposed by Mayor Seren, Ordinance 143-203 would have authorized the mayor to enter into a development agreement with TWG Development, LLC for the construction of a residential development at 2228 Noble Road (and several adjacent parcels).

The ordinance was presented “on emergency”—the emergency “being the need to meet funding and construction sea-

son deadlines.” (Emergency status means that, if passed, the legislation becomes effective immediately. Non-emergency legislation becomes effective in 30 days.)

A Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) project, Noble Station's one-, two- and three-bedroom units were intended to be rented to those at or below 60% of the median income.

The developer, TWG, would have been eligible to receive tax credits from the state's housing and finance agency (OHFA). The application deadline for OHFA funds, for this year, was Sept. 21.

Noble residents largely spoke out against the proposed development at council meetings, citing the neighborhood's need for retail services and mixed-income—not additional low-income—housing.

Residents and some council members decried the administration's failure to engage community members in the planning process for the proposed development, then trying to rush it through.

One community meeting was held regarding Noble Station, set up by the city's Planning Department staff. Approximately 90 meeting notices were sent out—60 to residential addresses—and five or six residents attended, according to the developer. Council members were not notified about the meeting.

Kim Sergio Inglis is editor-in-chief of the Heights Observer.

Cleveland Heights City Council Meeting highlights



AUG. 21, 2023

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

Mayor's report

Mayor Seren described the need for a sustainable funding source if the city becomes responsible for sidewalk repair and replacement.

Council actions

Council approved allocation of \$5,000 to FutureHeights, to cosponsor the 2023 Heights Music Hop.

Council confirmed the mayor's appointment of Danny R. Williams as city administrator.

Committee reports

Public Safety and Health Committee: Boyd reported work on legislation to update youth mentoring and diversion programs.

Municipal Services and Environmental Sustainability Committee: Larson reported that a Quiet Clean Heights Group presentation raised awareness about gas leaf blower noise and pollution. Future meetings will work on a climate action plan.

Housing and Building Committee: Cuda reported work on legislation to regulate short-term rentals.

Administrative Services Committee: Cobb reported that a hearing on the proposed Arts Commission would take place at the end of September or beginning of October.

Council President Hart described steps necessary to approve the proposed Noble Station development, including consideration of the plan by the Architectural Board of Review and the Planning Commission, then consideration of a development agreement by council.

Committee of the Whole

Mayor Seren provided an update on the Mayor's Action Center, which can be contacted at 216-291-2323 or mac@clevelandheights.gov. Processes for tracking and reporting complaints are under development. Frequent complaints have been about bulk pickup, which city staff is working to improve. Complaints made at council meetings will be forwarded to the Mayor's Action Center.

LWV Observer: Jill Tatem.

SEPT. 5, 2023

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

Public comments

Four residents expressed opposition to the proposed Noble Station affordable housing development, criticizing the design and the lack of public meetings. They urged the city to create a development plan for the east side of the city and clean up its own property in the area.

State Rep. Juanita Brent warned that upcoming redistricting might remove Cleveland Heights from her district.

Several commenters, including repre-

sentatives of businesses and local residents, addressed the needs of the Coventry Village Business District. They thanked the mayor and council for recent attention to the district's needs, and expressed concerns about pedestrian safety, cleanliness of streets and the city-owned parking garage, business vacancies, and loitering. They asked for ARPA funding approval and efforts to attract new businesses and support existing businesses.

Mayor's report

Mayor Seren reported that supply delays have delayed completion of the ice rink rebuild until the beginning of November.

City administrator

The mayor swore in Danny R. Williams as city administrator.

Council actions

Council approved a public services plan for the Coventry Village Special Improvement District, fully funded through assessments on identified properties. The total five-year cost will be \$919,804.

Council appointed Angela Bennett to the Citizens Advisory Commission and Bob Brown to the Board of Zoning Appeals for terms ending Dec. 31.

Council authorized application to the Ohio Public Works Commission State Capital Improvement and/or Local Transportation Improvement Program to fund road and sewer improvements on North Park Boulevard.

Council authorized a contract with Nutter Consulting to prepare a Climate Action and Resiliency Plan, at a cost not to exceed \$99,100.

Committee reports

Cuda said the Housing Committee heard a report on Housing Department personnel, including the filling of four positions.

Reporting on the Community Relations and Recreation Committee, Russell announced several upcoming community health and social support events and programs. The committee is working on legislation for a Youth Advisory Board, and a partnership with Youth Opportunities Unlimited.

Larson reported that the Municipal Services and Environmental Sustainability Committee has tabled the sidewalk repair and replacement program in response to Mayor Seren's budgetary concerns.

Mattox reported that the upcoming Planning and Development Committee meeting would include discussion of the Noble Station project.

Boyd reported that the Public Safety and Health Committee would hold a hearing on the proposed menstrual products legislation.

Hart announced that council would meet in September to develop council rules.

Committee of the Whole

Council members sought clarification of the approval process for the proposed Noble Station legislation, including meeting dates for the Planning Commission, Architectural Board of Review, and council's Planning and Development Committee.

LWV Observer: Jill Tatem.

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Childhood friends reunite on Compton Road



Compton Road reunion attendees included (1) Scott McDonald, (2) Elaine Fisco Stevens, (3) Jim Hooper, (4) Ava Singerman, (5) Cheryl McDonald Palmentera, (6) Anne Hooper Webb, (7) Nissi Wang, (8) Alan Fisco, (9) Charlie McDonald, (10) Daryl Costanzo, (11) Bill Wang, (12) Tom Baker, (13) Claudia Wahl Lund, (14) Diane Baker, (15) Maureen Wahl, (16) Carol Fisco Leo, (17) Susan Lobe Wood, (18) Jean Henry Ganger, (19) Bob Topp, (20) Harold Henry, (21) Tom Whitney, (22) Phil Henry, (23) Rick Costanzo, (24) Anne Lobe Whitney, (25) Rozzy Hooper-Hammersley.

Susan Lobe Wood

On Sept. 8 and 9, a Cleveland Heights neighborhood hosted a reunion of those who grew up on Compton Road, between Mayfield Road and Euclid Heights Boulevard, in the 1950s, '60s and '70s.

Compton-roaders think of Compton Road as being like no other—it seemed special. Kids grew up together, played together, walked to school together, took part in

Girls' Army and Boys' Army. Parents socialized together and parented other people's children—lunches, sleepovers, etc. The street had woods behind it and a creek running through it—lots of places for adventure and exploration.

Maybe Compton Road was not so unusual for its time. Most mothers didn't work; there was only one car, and that car was absent during the day; kids walked to school and played outside. Perhaps there

were other streets like Compton. But, 20 or so people who grew up on Compton during those years, along with their spouses, thought it special enough to hop on a plane or drive a day's distance and come back to Cleveland Heights.

Some current and former residents kept in touch over the years; it didn't take more than one person asking about another to generate the idea of a street reunion.

The reunion organizers conducted eight months of research (using city directories to match memories to houses and last names) and hours of social media sleuthing to reach out and find former residents.

On Friday evening, Sept. 8, reunion-goers gathered at the Edgehill home of a former Compton resident. Although nametags proved helpful, it was remarkable how easy and natural it was to reconnect. The next day, everyone met on Compton Road and walked the street. Current residents were primed for this—they'd been advised a month earlier that there would be a group walking the street and perhaps knocking on their doors. Indeed, some did connect with the current residents of their former

homes, and had the opportunity to walk through their old homes and share their memories.

Later that day everyone met at the Costanzo home—still in the family after all these years—where Daryl Costanzo and another former Compton resident, Scott McDonald, hosted an afternoon repast.

In all, 47 people attended the reunion, some traveling from as far as the West Coast, and one—Bill Wang, whose father had a store on Coventry for many years—making the trip from Hong Kong.

Susan Lobe Wood, 75, is a longtime CH resident who was born and raised—and raised a family—here. Along with Nissi Wang, Diane Baker, and Anne Lobe Whitney, Wood helped organize the reunion.

LIBRARY continued from page 1

age, sex, ethnic background and socioeconomic levels, geographic distribution, and experience and/or knowledge in a variety of fields.

- The board should strive to include members with: professional experience in law, education, marketing, finance/accounting and personnel; practical business experience, executive ability, management skills, plain common sense, and political know-how.
- Because of the requirements of funding and support, consideration will be given to people who are active in community affairs and have access to resources and/or affiliations with other organizations of importance to the library.
- Nominees should have an interest in the work of the public library; a

commitment to its goals; a recognition of its importance as a center of information for community culture, recreation and continuing education; and the ability to work as a member of a team. They should be willing to ask questions, offer criticism and make suggestions. They should have the courage to plan creatively.

- A commitment to the concepts of intellectual freedom is essential.

Interested applicants can download an application from the Heights Libraries website, heightslibrary.org.

Completed applications may be submitted at the library's administration office, at the Lee Road branch, or e-mailed to director@heightslibrary.org.

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

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Author and Disney animator credits CH upbringing



Geiger (center) when he worked for Walt Disney.



Geiger's children, Emma and Claire, read *Grandpa Groundhog*.

Kevin Geiger

My career in the arts and animation has taken me from Cleveland to China. Although I reside half a world away in Taipei, my upbringing in Cleveland Heights continues to influence my life and inform my work.

Growing up in Cleveland Heights came with many advantages that I once took for granted but increasingly appreciate with time and distance. One of my favorite things is to show my overseas friends satellite views of our family home on Corydon Road, where all you can see are trees. Nothing was more wonderful than simply stepping outside into nature within an urban environment.

The diverse community of Cleveland Heights exposed me at

an early age to various ethnicities, orientations, cultures, and perspectives—fostering my ability to travel through and live in different parts of the world, flexibly and durably. That melting pot sparked my awareness as a global citizen while affectionately anchoring me to my childhood home.

Of course, the proximity of world-class educational and cultural institutions—including my alma mater, the Cleveland Institute of Art—served as a launch pad for my burgeoning interest in the arts, my career with The Walt Disney Company in Burbank and Beijing, and my current endeavors as an independent author and content producer in Taipei.

My latest children's book, *Grandpa Groundhog*, is based on an

unlikely relationship that formed between my Dad and a large groundhog that took up residence in the backyard of our Cleveland Heights home a few years ago.

I remember Dad grumbling, "Look at that guy. He acts like he owns the place!" And I imagined the groundhog having the same observation about my Dad. Dad

came to respect the squatter as a "fellow grandpa" when he discovered signs of the groundhog's family. Then, one day, the groundhogs were gone. Ironically, Dad misses them.

I think about this as I grow older and people come and go. Like so many others, my young children have faced their share of loss in recent years: friends and family who were special to them but are no longer with us. Those events—and the pandemic in general—disrupted the development of *Grandpa Groundhog*, but ultimately guided it, much as my upbringing in Cleveland Heights continues to guide me.

Kevin Geiger (www.kevingeiger.com) is an award-winning artist, author, producer, entrepreneur and former Cleveland Heights resident, with more than three decades of innovation in arts and entertainment, including 15 years with The Walt Disney Company.

'Eyes on the street' in Cleveland Heights

Lee Batdorff

A favorite saying of Jane Jacobs, author of the 1961 book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, was "eyes on the street," which is the activity taking place in city streets that keeps the movement and security of the street intact.

A recent incident on the sidewalk in front of the house next door to mine has shown that my immediate area has eyes on the street.

One late morning I went out the front door to unhook our dog, Jax, who was in the backyard, and return him indoors via the driveway and front door. Though I had just left the house the same way a couple minutes earlier, this time there was a toddler alone on the sidewalk in front of our east-side neighbor's house. I halted and held Jax firm on the leash. For a few moments I stood wondering what to do about this little boy on the loose. I couldn't go up to toddler with rambunctious Jax on leash and

expect to help.

Then, I was saved from thinking any more about what to do. An older woman, a neighbor I've seen before, came into my view from the west and went up to the little boy and started talking with him. I stood there with Jax and, within two minutes, from out of the house across the street came a lady and her daughter, holding an infant. "Call 911," the lady said to her daughter. I took Jax inside and went back out to the sidewalk, where half a dozen women were now gathered.

When the toddler bolted away from the group, the lady who was first on the scene ran after him, saying, "No, no, no," and brought him back.

A few minutes later, the first police officer to arrive was a detective in an unmarked car. He picked up the little boy, held him in his arms and walked west on the sidewalk, in the direction the child had come from. At each house he stopped and asked the boy, "It this your house?" Three or four houses down the way, the boy said yes, and the detective and boy went to the front door and knocked. By that time, four or five more CH police cruisers had arrived.

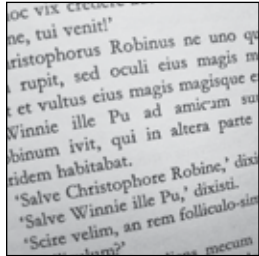
The mother wasn't aware the child had taken off. The detective returned and said the mother was beside herself that this had happened.

A couple days later, I encountered the boy and his mother on the sidewalk. His name is Joseph.

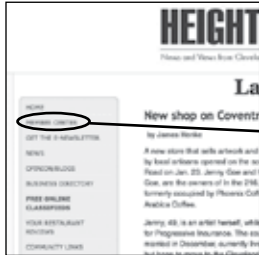
Lee Batdorff moved to Cleveland Heights from Akron on Aug. 14, 1966, the Sunday The Beatles played the old Cleveland Municipal Stadium.

Observe!

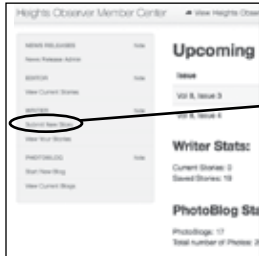
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3. After logging in, click the **Submit New Story** button in the left-hand column (Don't see it? It's nested under "Writer"). Then follow the prompts. Hint: keep your original file open so you can easily copy and paste into the text box.



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

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HEIGHTS OBSERVER
Published by Future Heights

CH's Jaycox pens his story of hope; donates proceeds



Cindy Fink

Cleveland Heights resident Kemp Jaycox has published his memoir, *A Race Against Time: A Memoir about MS, Love, Loss and Life Lessons*. Sales of the book will benefit the Forest Hill Presbyterian Church Environmental Sustainability Fund, and the Accelerated Cure Project for MS. Jaycox, age 50, was busy leading an active life of sports, travel, volunteering and working in his environmental/sustainability career. Then, a bout with a stomach virus caused his immune system to overreact, resulting in a diagnosis of multiple sclerosis at the age of 30. Now, 20 years later, in a race against time as his body shuts down and makes the simplest task impossible, he is intent on telling his life story to offer hope to others. “Everyone has different challenges in their lives,” said Jaycox. “The most important message I

hope to convey to readers is to persevere despite your challenges and circumstances.” Jaycox’s story is rooted in an unrelenting disease, and in tragic deaths and unfathomable grief he experienced in his formative years. Facing circumstances that might have crushed him, Jaycox has instead learned lessons of courage and survivorship. He has found the resilience and perseverance needed to chart a new purpose and meaning for his life. At once heartbreaking and comical, tragic and joyful, Jaycox’s memoir reminds readers that life is precious and fragile. His hope is that others can find inspiration and resilience from learning his story, and chart a purpose and meaning against whatever odds they face. All book-sale proceeds will be shared between Forest Hill Church, which Jaycox and his family have been members of since 2010, and the Boston-based Accelerated Cure Project for MS, dedicated to accelerating research efforts to improve diagnosis, optimize treatments and ultimately cure the disease. The memoir is available to purchase online at the following links: Copies with color photos — www.lulu.com/shop/kemp-jaycox/a-race-against-time-color-images/paperback/product-2knkqd.html, and copies with black-and-white photos — www.lulu.com/shop/kemp-jaycox/a-race-against-time/paperback/product-p242e7.html. Cindy Fink has lived in Cleveland Heights for more than 15 years, and works in communications. She has been married for 19 years to Kemp Jaycox.

Heights Observer launches Facebook page

Bryce Beard

The *Heights Observer* now has its own Facebook page, www.facebook.com/theheightsobserver. The main goal of the page is to establish an online community that connects with *Heights Observer* readers and Heights residents. By following the *Heights Observer*, residents will connect to local stories, events, and perspectives. The *Heights Observer* has always been dedicated to keeping Heights residents informed and engaged; its Facebook page is intended to be an additional tool to promote and support community connections. Launched on Aug. 10, the Facebook page is already connecting with local groups. It provides a space where community members can come together to share their thoughts and engage in meaningful discussions with fellow residents. Whether you’re a longtime member of the Heights or new to the area, the page welcomes

everyone to join in the conversation. As technology continues to reshape the ways in which we interact with one another, the page provides an opportunity for readers to engage with the *Heights Observer* in a new way. FutureHeights, the nonprofit organization that publishes the *Heights Observer*, is always looking for volunteers to assist with its events and programs, including delivering the monthly edition of the *Heights Observer*. If you are interested in volunteering, contact the FutureHeights office (216-320-1423) to learn more. As a FutureHeights intern, Bryce Beard developed and currently maintains the *Heights Observer* Facebook page. He is a junior at Gilmour Academy and participates in speech and debate, cross country, and yearbook club. He is interested in journalism and law.



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CH resident offers tips on low-impact leaf cleanup



Fall leaves add color to landscapes and nutrients to the soil at this Cleveland Heights home.

Alice Jeresko

In the fall, Heights neighborhoods fill with noise, dust, and invisible toxic emissions as crews or residents use gas-powered equipment in an attempt to remove every fallen leaf.

Some residents, however, are finding ways to reduce carbon emissions and noise, in keeping with the city of Cleveland Heights' commitment to climate action.

Fadi Kdayssi owns an historic home on nearly one acre, set 100 feet back from Fairmount Boulevard. Mature oaks buffer the home from weather and traffic noise. Its brick walls are two-feet thick, with triple-layer windows set in stone trim. Yet, even with windows closed, leaf-blower noise intrudes from hundreds of feet away.

Kdayssi's professional expertise in sound and video recording may make him especially sensitive, but the sound of two-stroke gas leaf blowers is both high decibel and low frequency—qualities that make sound more penetrating, over longer distances.

A hands-on property owner, Kdayssi strives to limit the effects of noise and pollution on his serene, park-like property. He's used a super-quiet electric leaf blower since 2014

to clear his long drive and walkways. He does his own leaf cleanup in sections, using an electric blower, tarps and rakes for efficient collection with minimal blowing. Kdayssi claims his corded Toro Power Jet is quiet enough to use without hearing protection. He's currently searching for an electric mower compatible with the batteries and chargers used in his other equipment.

For smaller yards, capable and affordable battery-powered mowers and blowers are easy to find. Kdayssi notes that corded models are a good zero-emissions option if a home has well-placed outdoor outlets.

Homeowners who hire professional lawn-care services can ask for quieter, cleaner options that also protect the health of the workers.

Transitioning to electric tools is just one aspect of sustainable lawn care. The American Green Zone Alliance (AGZA.net) provides training and certification in low-impact lawn care for companies and institutions.

Another organization, Healthy-Yards.org, offer practical advice for homeowners. For example, rather than being blown off a lawn prior to mowing, fallen leaves can be mulch-mowed in place—requiring one pass

continued on page 23



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DOBAMA continued from page 1

Over the past two years, Dobama has served more than 10,000 Heights community members with its Halloween Fest, bringing residents together for a safe and memorable event.

In case of rain, the Halloween Festival will move to Sunday, Oct. 22, at the same time and location.

For additional information, visit www.dobama.org/events.

Mariah Burks is the director of engagement at Dobama Theatre. For more information on its 2023-24 season, visit www.dobama.org.



Trick-or-treaters and their families at the 2022 Halloween Fest.

A triumph of harmony: 10th annual Heights Music Hop

Kasia Bufford

The 10th annual Heights Music Hop proved an unequivocal success, uniting music lovers of all ages for a night of exceptional performances.

With the streets alive with melodies and a diverse crowd in attendance, the event showcased the unifying power of music in a vibrant community.

FutureHeights extends its deepest gratitude to the city of Cleveland Heights and to all of the Music Hop sponsors for their invaluable contributions, acknowledging that the event’s resounding success would have been impossible without the

wholehearted participation of cherished local businesses.

Kasia Bufford is the Heights Music Hop manager at FutureHeights.



Unlock your chance to shape the future of Heights Music Hop. Scan this QR code to take part in 2023 Attendee Survey, and let us know about your experience at the 10th annual Heights Music Hop.



Maie/Muhammad Quartet at Noble Gardeners’ Market.



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Cleveland Heights – University Heights Board of Education

Meeting highlights



AUG. 15, 2023 - work session
Board members present were Beverly Wright (president), Dan Heintz, Malia Lewis, and James Posch. Jodi Sourini was not present. Also present were Superintendent Elizabeth Kirby and Treasurer Scott Gainer.

Strategic plan presentations
Staff members presented updates on strategic plan goals three, four and five, along with plans for the coming school year:

Goal 3: Family and Community Engagement, Partnerships and Communications. Supervisor of Communication Cathan Cavanaugh, Supervisor of Community and School Partnerships Nancy Peppler, and Engagement Specialist Lisa Hunt presented the update. Actions from the last school year (2022–23) included marketing approaches, newsletters to parents, Community Learning Centers for Noble and Oxford elementary schools, more community partnerships, and support for parent groups. Plans for the upcoming school year include social media ambassadors at the high school, school brochures, more newsletters, MetroHealth enrollment expansion, a family resource center, and increased staff support.

Goal 4: Value Professionals and a Culture of Excellence: Caring, Quality, Diversity and Collaboration. Paul Lombardo, assistant superintendent for human resources and operations, presented the update. Actions for the past year included inclusive hiring techniques, threat assessment teams in each school building, a Grow Your Own program to support advancement of current employees, a partnership with Howard University, increased certified staff of color, and a focus on retention. Plans for the coming year include increased staff support for managing students' behavioral needs, measurement of retention goals by building, increase of certified staff of color by 30 percent, increase of student athletes with a GPA of 2.5 or higher, a focus on staff wellness, and a search for Grow Your Own program financial support.

Goal 5: Operation Resources: Finance, Technology and Facilities. Lombardo and Treasurer Gainer presented the update. Past school year actions included a 10-year roof and facilities plan, HVAC evaluation, maintenance prioritization, preventative maintenance, replacement processes and equipment planning, bus drive recruitment, cyber security, improved communication of district finances, and state-level advocacy. For the coming year, goals include master facilities plan implementation, a positive cash balance through 2023, more public communication of finances, monitoring voucher litigation and its impact on the district, and continuance of last year's programs.

LWV Observer: Judith Beeler.

SEPT. 5, 2023 - regular meeting
All board members were present, as were the superintendent and treasurer.

Public comments
Gregory Nachman, career tech-engineering tech teacher at Heights High, a parent, and

teachers union steward, requested clarification of the number of situations in the last six months that concerned teacher behavior during discipline events or fights. Because only one of 26 actual events was addressed during a recent teacher training, he said more training was needed.

Candidates for University Heights City Council Jonathan Bartell, Micah Miliskas, and Alicia Sloan each expressed support for the school district and a more collaborative relationship between the city and school board.

Employee retention
The board accepted a "voluntary resignation due to job abandonment" [employee failed to show up for work]. Lewis said this was the second time this year the board had to accept such a resignation. Discussion followed regarding the difficulty of hiring and retaining staff, including teachers, bus drivers, and other support staff.

Spotlight - Gearity STEM
Gearity Professional Development School Principal Patrick McNichols detailed the school's current STEM recertification process and the overall STEM curriculum. He emphasized the importance of beginning STEM education as early as preschool.

School lockdown
Superintendent Kirby reviewed events that resulted in the Cleveland Heights Police Department (CHPD) calling a level-three school lockdown on Aug. 30. Fortunately, the concern did not materialize into a real threat, but because of anxiety from the event, a calamity day was called on Aug. 31. The district is following up on the incident in accordance with the student code of conduct, and continuing to work with the CHPD.

Student dress code
Review of feedback sessions for the school dress code will take place Sept. 11 with final recommendations provided for adoption.

Treasurer's report
Gainer attended an Ohio Ethics Commission meeting. School finance officers must uphold the Ohio ethics law.

High school swimming pool use
The board discussed public use of the Heights High pool, which continues to be a community concern. The Athletic Department manages the pool. The bond campaign for the high school renovation had implied that the pool would be available for community use. However, impediments exist to the city reviving a community pool pass, including additional costs for insurance, pool supplies, and chemicals.

LWV Observer: Rosemarie Fairman.

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



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Library kicks off reading program for kids



Library directors and young reading fans kicked off the Cuyahoga Reads Campaign at the Great Lakes Scinec Center. From left: Shaker Public Library Director Amy Switzer, Cleveland Public Library Director Felton Thomas, Heights Libraries Director Nancy Levin, and Euclid Public Library Director Kacie Armstrong, along with some young readers.

Sheryl Banks

On Aug. 5, more than 3,000 Northeast Ohio library fans, and library staff from the nine Cuyahoga County library systems, packed the Great Lakes Science Center (GLSC) to officially kick off the countywide Cuyahoga Reads reading challenge campaign.

Admission to GLSC was free that day, and representatives from every Cuyahoga County library

system, including Heights Libraries, were on hand to explain the program, sign up young readers for the challenge, and distribute nearly 5,000 free books to families.

“We had a great time, and it was so fun and inspiring to see so many kids getting excited about reading, especially in the book giveaway line,” said Kaela Sweeney, Heights Libraries strategic projects manager, who coordinates the literacy program at Heights Libraries along with Youth Services

Department staff.

Heights Libraries’ version of the campaign, called Heights Reads, will continue for more than a year, through December 2024. Participants in kindergarten through grade 12 can sign up for the challenge at heightslibrary.org, and win prizes every 20th day of reading, with the goal of encouraging them to keep reading throughout the year, not just during the library’s summer reading program.

“Some kids really fell behind in their reading skills during the pandemic, which has an impact on their ability to learn effectively in any

subject area,” said Heights Libraries Youth Services Manager Sam Lapides. “Kids love a challenge, so we’re hoping that they’ll keep up with their good reading habits all year with this program.”

The program is funded by the Ohio Department of Education’s Libraries Accelerating Learning grant, which is designed to help libraries create or expand literacy programs for Ohio’s pre-K through 12th-grade students.

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

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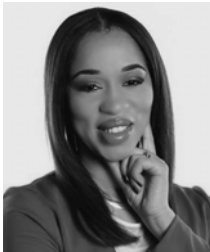
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Olie's Gift & Ship opens on Lee



Olie's Gift & Ship owners Jason and Anco Davis, with their daughter, Olivia (Olie).

Brenda Bailey

A fresh approach to gifting and shipping has arrived in the Cedar Lee Business District, at 2313 Lee Road, near the corner of Lee and Silsby roads.

Olie's Gift & Ship, which combines a gift store with shipping services, celebrated its grand opening in September.

Owners Jason Davis and his wife, Anco Davis, brought the concept of a gift/shipping shop to Cleveland Heights, moving their online-only business from Atlanta in search of a better life for themselves and their toddler, Olie.

They had seen a similar busi-

ness on a visit to Seattle, and imagined opening such a store themselves, one day.

"We have a small space, but we want to do a lot here," said Jason. "We're here to provide quality products and friendly service at a great price."

Customers can bring to the shop items to be shipped, as well as purchase greeting cards and gifts for all ages.

In addition, an online store, at <https://oliesgift.com>, enables customers to order products online for in-store pickup. The online storefront contains an expanded selection of products that are not all available

continued on page 23

Primoz on Cedar creates a Cooper-themed pizza

Cooper the Chicken

Since I came to life at UH City Hall in 2019, I have been dreaming of this moment. Thanks to my new friends at Primoz Pizza. I now have a pizza named after me.

The "Mr. Cooper" is available at the Primoz Pizza location in University Heights, at 13890 Cedar Road. Drop by in person to order one, or call 216-273-6704. If you're super tech savvy, like me, you can order online at primozpizza.com.

What does my namesake pizza taste like? Like University Heights itself, the Mr. Cooper pizza is a rich mosaic of many different ingredients. The sum is greater than the individual parts. And it's delicious.

It starts with garlic butter sauce. Then, Primoz pizza makers add their signature cheese blend. Next, the Mr. Cooper is topped off with yellow onions, jalapeno and red peppers, sausage and chicken.

(When you get your first one,



Joseph Jordan prepares the first-ever "Mr. Cooper" pizza, much to the delight of its namesake.

post the pic on social media, so I may share in your enjoyment. Tag @university_heights_ohio, and @primozpizza on Instagram)

Cooper the Chicken, the brand ambassador for University Heights, wrote this article. (He may have had some assistance from Mike Cook, the city's communications and civic engagement director.)

Surrealist small talk: on the art of collaboration



Nature is Constructive in Spite of All, by Deborah Cooper-Asberry, Meryl Engler, and Bob Walls.

Cameron Gorman

Through Oct. 15, visitors to Heights Arts have the opportunity to view a collaborative artistic effort, *Collaborage*. Inspired by surrealism, *Collaborage* was produced through the collaboration of four groups of multidisciplinary artists.

A brief conversation with two of the artists, Alison Miltner Rich and Meryl Engler, who worked on separate teams—and with poet Vince Robinson, who participated in a September poetry event inspired by the exhibition—provides a look at the collaborative process behind the work, in the artists' own words:

"[My team] worked in mixed media," said Miltner Rich, "so we all could collaborate in a way we felt comfortable."

"I am primarily a woodcut print-maker," said Engler. "Over the years I have accumulated multiple scrap pieces, extra prints, and artist proofs. For *Collaborage*, I really wanted to challenge myself to collage and manipulate my past pieces."

Robinson commented, "The collaboration offered an opportunity to observe, among other things, natural intelligence and artificial intelligence (A.I.) operating in the same space. Although I didn't work directly with A.I., I did deal with its influence on the finished pieces of art."

"It was really fun to respond to each other's work," Miltner Rich noted, reflecting on her team's dynamic. "I had no idea where I was going to go until I saw the previous work. Then I had to figure out where to go, but also how to try and keep the three pieces cohesive so they went together."

An art teacher, Miltner Rich added, "I actually worked on it in front of my students, and they enjoyed seeing each step and what I did to it. It's important for students to see their art teachers as working artists."

"I found ways to write around circumstances," said Robinson. "Part of my poetry was flowing into my consciousness as I was exiting a flight."

Asked about their takeaways from working collaboratively, Engler said, "I have learned about repurposing pieces and how to work with new materials."

Robinson said, "Finding meaning in the obscure was perhaps the lesson carried forth. I'm grateful for the inspiration that came as a result of it."

"I am going to have my students work in a similarly collaborative style," said Miltner Rich, "because the process made me work outside of my comfort zone, which was good for pushing my creativity."

Cameron Gorman is the assistant director for Heights Arts. Contact her at cgorman@heightsarts.org.

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by Jordan Harrison

Ten year old Kai is given a magical crystal door-knob by his grandfather that enables him to travel through space and time to see future events in his life. The further along he goes, the less he feels like he's seeing into his future, but more that he is living life as most people do; all too quickly. Both poignantly sad and zany, Pulitzer Prize finalist Jordan Harrison expands on the notion that life is too short to miss any moment of it.

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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What we love about Cleveland Heights (according to you)



SONGS AND
STORIES

David Budin

There are at least three Facebook groups focused on Cleveland Heights, and of which I'm a member. In one of the groups, another member asked, "What do you love about Cleveland Heights?" And, answering her own question: "I'll start: I love my neighborhood. The people are great, the housing is interesting to look at, and I can walk for so many errands!"

Then, more than 75 other people commented. I'm simply going to present some of the comments, with all names omitted, to remind us of what we like about the city. (I know there are people who have some less-positive opinions about certain aspects, too—but that wasn't the question.)

"Cleveland Heights is a wonderful mix of people and variety of housing. It's interesting to walk around and see the bustle of Coventry, Cedar/Lee, but then also see the beautiful residential areas tucked between. We have lots of parks near us and it's close to down-

town. I love Cleveland Heights."
"The diversity—social, economic, racial, cultural, you name it. And there's great food close by, no matter where you are."

"I love it so much! Beautiful homes and apartment buildings, sidewalks everywhere, cute business districts, restaurants, cafes and bakeries, TREES, religious/racial/economic diversity, parks and 'lakes,' libraries, access to University Circle . . ."

"I love my nightly winter walks around the area, too. Also, Lake View [Cemetery] is right around the corner, if I want some solitude."

"Family-focused services, like schools and libraries, are supported by the community and offer excellence to my kids."

"Beautiful historic housing, 10 minutes to tons of cultural arts in University Circle, 10 minutes to Lake Erie, wide selection of restaurants and bars, gorgeous parks."

"Walkable. Feels like it's safe for Trans people like me."

"I love that Cleveland Heights is truly an economically diverse community. Only 7% of American cities are (NPR) and I feel so lucky to live in one."

"This is the first place I've lived where it truly feels like a community. I feel like I'm part of something."

"It's so beautiful here, with all



A tree in the Cleveland Heights part of Lake View Cemetery last autumn.

the big trees and historic homes. We're so close to almost anything you want, whether you're a city person or an outdoorsy person."

"Grateful for the folks who fought for integration, in spite of the violent opposition, to allow me and my partner to live here w/o worry. My friend [first name]'s family was one of the first to move here and integrate Cleveland Heights."

"I love that there's always something new to try. We really have some unique businesses and great eateries within walking distance, and I always come across friendly people. The buildings/homes are also beautiful, so walks are never boring."

"I love that I live in the 'city,' but my street is so quiet and still in the mornings that I feel like I'm in the middle of nowhere. There's so much wildlife around my house and I love it."

"I love the diversity, the history, the architecture, and the schools. The unique neighborhoods and their identities. I love our parks and public spaces."

"All of the wonderful pollinator gardens popping up all over our city."

"Love how kind, inclusive, and welcoming our neighbors are! That was one of the biggest asks

continued on page 23

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Western Reserve Agency on Aging is working in collaboration with community partners to support multiple vaccine events. WRAAA is offering \$25 gift cards for individuals who receive a vaccine at community collaboration events.
To learn more visit areaagingsolutions.org/programs-services/what-s-happening/

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Seasonal vaccines should be an important part of your plan for good health. The flu and COVID-19 vaccines will be available this fall. Talk with your primary care provider or pharmacist if you have questions.

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For more information on how to plan for good health go to areaagingsolutions.org/public-health/

For vaccines contact or scan:

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Phone 216-201-2000 or visit ccbh.net

Department of Public Health
Phone 216-664-2324 or visit clevelandhealth.org

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LEAF CLEANUP continued from page 16

only, and less time, fuel, and noise. Mulch mowing adds protective soil cover and organic matter to the lawn. Fall leaves can also be collected with mower bag attachments, lawn sweepers, or with rakes and tarps, and placed under trees and in beds as mulch.

How can homeowners maintain lawns and collect leaves with less noise and pollution? To consider this question, Quiet Clean Heights and the University Heights Green Team are planning a November forum. At-

tendees will be invited to share their tips and tricks for managing autumn leaves. For more information and updates—including the still-to-be-determined forum date—visit www.quietcleanheights.com, or send an e-mail to quietcleanheights@gmail.com.

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

OLIE'S continued from page 20

at the store.

"Once we can handle the basic things, we hope to expand our selection, create ways for customers to save more money, and provide more convenient and requested services," said Anco. "For right now, it's just me and my husband, so we are trying to keep things simple."

Store hours will be limited initially, but the owners plan to

expand them.

For more information and updates, visit the store's website, follow Olie's on Instagram, or send an e-mail to hello@oliesgift.com.

The store is located at 2313 Lee Road.

Brenda Bailey, the volunteer coordinator at FutureHeights, has been a Cleveland Heights resident since 2020.

SONGS & STORIES continued from page 22

we had when looking to buy a house."

"The tree canopy on most streets, Forest Hill Park and Cumberland Pool. The architecture, the progressive people and environment, the proximity to cultural places like museums and botanical gardens, Coventry, the top-notch library system."

"Our small businesses are as diverse as they are dynamic!"

"I love that I can bike and walk to cool businesses."

"Cleveland Heights-University Heights School District and the teachers who love and teach our kids!"

"I love the charm of old houses! I love how walkable my neighborhood is. I love having a library, coffee shop, pharmacy, and great restaurants right at the end of my street. I love that my community embraces and celebrates our LGBTQ neighbors. I love that there are so many beautiful gardens and that they are all so different. And I love that there are so many dogs."

"Three miles from world class healthcare!!! We are all going to need

it, one way or another!!"

"My neighbors are amazing people. We all care about each other and spend time together. Very grateful."

"I love the command my kiddos have in their city! So much they can walk to! Parks! Music lessons, school, friends, pool."

"I love walking the neighborhoods year-round to see the rotating flowers and landscape! And the variety of architectural styles of old homes. So much good food nearby! I love my 100-year-old house!"

"The cultural and socioeconomic diversity and knowing my LGBTQ+ friends are safe & relatively comfortable here in our little progressive bubble."

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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