PEACE Park renovation begins with demolition

Sheryl Banks

On Nov. 13, Regency Construction began the first phase of Heights Libraries’ Coventry PEACE Park renovation with the demolition of the original, 30-year-old playground. The demo took roughly two weeks, and included the removal of all playground equipment and associated plants.

“It was bittersweet,” said Heights Libraries Director Nancy Levin. “The playground was at the end of its life, and it held such wonderful memories for the community. But we are looking forward to the new playground, and the new life it will breathe into not only the library’s programming and activities, but the neighborhood as a whole.”

The playground area is now smooth and free of debris. The sled-riding hill is intact, so sleds can continue this winter.

A groundbreaking for the construction of the new park and playground will take place in late February or early March. Most of the work will be complete by late May, except for the installation of the large cardinal-shaped play structure, which will be installed in October 2024.

The Fund for the Future of Heights Libraries—the Heights Libraries foundation—continues to fundraise for the park, through direct donations and through the sale of wooden keepsakes made of pieces of the old play structures. Contact the foundation by sending an e-mail to ksweney@heightsplibrary.org.

For updates on the project, visit heightslibrary.org.

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

Noble Neighbors marks 10 years

Brenda H. May

Noble Neighbors will celebrate its 10th anniversary on Jan. 10, 2024. It began as a gathering of neighbors responding to a violent crime, but quickly grew into a group of citizens who considered what they could do to help make their neighborhood more friendly, safe and attractive. The list of achievements toward that goal is extensive.

What once was a neglected quarter of the city is now a top choice for first-time buyers. The Warrensville-Mayfield area of northeast quadrant of the city. This range, bringing a needed correction to a false, negative narrative about the area.

Over 90% of our properties were assessed for quality of maintenance. Almost all of the residential buildings in the area were found to be in the good-to-excellent category. Over 99% of our properties were found to be in the good-to-excellent range, bringing a needed correction to a false, negative narrative about the northeast quadrant of the city. This area is now a top choice for first-time buyers.

The 2017 Envision A New Triangle District Workshops brought about 60 participants from across the city to consider improvements for the Noble-Warrensville-Mayfield area business district.

FH awards mini-grants to eight Heights groups

Sarah Wolf

The FutureHeights Neighborhood Mini-Grant program offers funding of up to $1,000 for neighborhood groups to pursue community-building programs, projects and initiatives. The Fall 2023 round of funding resulted in eight groups being awarded a total of $4,802.

Lake Erie Ink received $1,000 for “Explore and Connect,” a three-day, spring-break program in which students from Noble and Oxford schools will learn more about their neighborhoods by conducting interviews with Heights leaders. Students will then write about their experiences and have their work on display around the neighborhood. Grant dollars will support program facilitation and supplies.

Noble Elementary School PTA received $1,000 for “Noble Pride – A Thoughtful Makeover,” in which PTA members will collaborate with students, school staff, and neighbors to give the school’s exterior a makeover. Participants believe that the project will not only improve the neighborhood, but also the school environment.

The Coventry PEACE Lantern Festival, pictured here in 2022, is one of eight FH mini-grant recipients.

Stars shine bright at UH Civic Awards

Mike Cook

Music, applause, hugs, and laughter—as well as many University Heights residents—filled John Carroll University’s (JCU) Jardine Room on Nov. 15 for the 2023 UH Civic Awards.

In his opening remarks, Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan said, “We brought in this night, in hopes that we may never forget.”

The event was hosted by JCU graduate and 19 News reporter Rachel Vadjac. “University Heights is not just my home away from home because John Carroll is my alma mater—it’s the warmth I feel in my heart from the welcoming kindness of its leaders and residents,” Vadjac said. “I hope the well-deserving award winners and talented performers will cherish the evening as much as I will!”

The University Heights Service Department was named City Employe continued on page 7

With an assist from Cooper, JCU grad and 19 News reporter Rachel Vadjac hosted the 2023 University Heights Civic Awards.

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Heights Observer

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 on 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 February publication must be submitted by Jan. 15. We publish some articles online only.

A message from our publisher

Dear Heights Observer Supporter,

One of my favorite roles is serving as the publisher of the Heights Observer.

You may already know that the Heights Observer is an award-winning newspaper, but did you know that we are in our 16th publishing year! The Heights Observer is a very good source of local news, views, events, and other information for residents of Cleveland Heights and University Heights. It is a well-run publication with editors and a sales team who are intentional in supporting writers and local businesses, along with a graphic design team that makes us look great. It takes a significant amount of time and dedication to produce a monthly print issue. I’m very proud of our staff and their commitment to creating a quality community paper.

Over the last 15+ years, the Heights Observer has been sustained by our dedicated advertisers and donors. Funds raised from these sources help to pay for printing a monthly paper (a rarity in most communities), pay for the paper and staff, and distribution of over 6,000 copies each month! The Heights Observer is also sent out digitally every Tuesday with information you may not see in print.

I know that a lot of organizations are vying for your attention and support. If you are looking to make a difference locally, supporting a paper that directly supports the community is a great choice. Whether you are a reader, advertiser, or writer, I hope that you will consider giving your support through a tax-deductible donation to help keep the Heights Observer in print and FREE to all our readers. It isn’t often that communities have such a great local resource to share what is going on right in their neighborhoods, schools, and business districts. There is always so much to share!

To make a tax-deductible donation to support the Heights Observer or to renew receiving the Heights Observer in your mailbox ($60 donation) please visit the FutureHeights website, www.futureheights.org, and click on the donate button. Remember, you may always choose to become a sustained supporter and make a monthly donation.

Thank you so much for your consideration and support of the Heights Observer. If you want to learn more about how you can contribute as a writer, an advertiser, or become a distribution site, please contact us at info@futureheights.org.

Kristine Pagsuyoin
FutureHeights Executive Director and Heights Observer Publisher

Russo family plans to bring another grocery store to Cedar Fairmount

Jack Valenay

Here’s an e-mail I sent to the Cleveland Heights mayor and city council members:

I met the Russo family in September 1970, when I moved my practice from downtown to the Cedar Grandview Building, above Merit Drug (now gone) and Russo’s Stop n Shop. My handshake with Sal was my lease.

For 40+ years, Russo’s has been a busy part of the community, a place that can be a public/private capital investment in the neighborhood. That would train the children of the community. It would train the children of the community.

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Russo’s family plans to bring another grocery store to Cedar Fairmount.

Jack Valenay has lived here since graduating from Cleveland Heights High School in 1956 and Miami University in 1970. He describes himself as a “casual photographer” whose work can be seen at jackvalenay.smugmug.com.

Bringing back civics to Heights High

Alan Rapoport

Now that the election for the CH-UH school board is over, I offer a modest proposal: The board should restore civics to the high school curriculum as an elected course.

When I attended the Heights schools, there was such a required course. It was taught poorly. Most students showed up to stay awake; few paid much attention. But perhaps that is because the board did not take its requirement seriously enough.

Children now are growing up with no understanding of how local governments operate. They could not tell a Board of Zoning Appeals from a Planning Commission. Later, as adults, they fail to appreciate how to gain access to elected or appointed officials. They become frustrated because they believe nobody at city halls listens. They lack a real ability to understand and influence important public decisions that affect them.

Civics education should not consist of indoctrination. It should convey basic information about public roles and functions. Those who perform such roles and functions could visit classrooms and talk about what it is that they do. This could include more than members of city councils. It could include police officers and service department employees. It could include all types of city personnel.

Such a course is not required by state law standards. But so what? There is no ban on a local school board taking an initiative to do what the state of Ohio has failed to do—namely, better educate the citizenry.

Starting up such a program would not be quick and easy. It would require the creation of a curriculum. There would have to be a transition period for its implementation. There would be a need to budget for it. Most importantly, talent to teach in such a program would have to be found.

That all said, the benefits would be substantial. A strong civics education program would help the children of our community feel more comfortably part of the community. It would train potential leaders of tomorrow for roles that will need to be performed. And, when the board finishes bringing back civics, maybe it then could consider bringing back shop and home economics courses, too.

Alan Rapoport, a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights, served on CH City Council (1980-85) and as council president (1984-85). A graduate of Euclid High School, he was elected to the Cleveland Heights High School Hall of Fame.

LETTERS/OPINION

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HEIGHTS OBSERVER

HeightsObserver January 1, 2024

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A 2024 wish list for Cleveland Heights

Deborah Van Kloef and Carla Rautenberg

We admit we were pretty cranky throughout most of 2023. Time wasted, opportunities squandered, communica-
tion gaffes, had behavior by elected of-

1. Mayor Kahlil Seren delivers on his campaign promise that every resi-
dent who calls or e-mails Cleveland Heights City Hall receives a timely and helpful response.

2. The mayor and city council achieve a mutually respectful working rela-
tionship, and council members have access to department staff when necessary.

3. Council members put aside personal grievances and side every gripe is a hope for some thing better. To kick off the new year, we present a few of those better things.

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Every minute counts

When I first noticed the yard sign by Boulevard Elementary School that reads “Every minute counts,” it resonated with me. I am in my eighth decade of life, and my husband is in his ninth. I want to make the most of every minute I’ve got! A few weeks later, at a meeting that included Boulevard’s social worker, Caryl Yoo, I discovered that the sign is part of a districtwide campaign to increase student attendance. Superintendent Elizabeth Kirby coined the phrase and used it while communicating district goals to staff at the start of the school year.

At Boulevard, encouraging attendance is a schoolwide project that starts with creating a school climate that is “safe, caring and inviting—place children want to be and a place where families are proud to send their children,” said Yoo.

Yoo leads Boulevard’s effort to support students in coming to school every day, being on time and staying all day. The message is simple: “We want you here, and we miss you when you are gone.”

Regular attendance is more than a slogan for Yoo and the Boulevard team. Every minute in school does matter! One has to be in school in order to benefit from the expert teaching and rich array of support that helps children thrive, develop a sense of belonging, and learn. Students fall behind academically and socially when they are not in school. Closing achievement gaps is hard to do. Preventing them is preferable. Establishing regular attendance habits is real prevention. Following up with absent students is a daily affair. The school district sends text reminders and e-mail nudges, and teachers frequently make calls when their students are absent. Last year’s attendance rate at Boulevard was just above 95 percent, close to the “chronic absence” level defined by the Ohio Department of Education. This year’s goal is 93 percent.

A bulletin board in the school entry hall has a series of bar graphs that show the attendance rate for each grade for the previous week, and whether it meets the attendance goal. Things are going well. At the end of November, four of the six grade levels exceeded the target. First grade led the pack with more than 95 percent of kids in class—the level the state defines as successful. Kindergarten and third- and fifth-graders all had rates above 94 percent.

On Tuesdays, Yoo announces which grade level has earned the attendance trophy for the week. The whole school cheers. She then delivers a trophy to each class in the winning grade. The kids love it. She does, too. Her work goes beyond cheerleading. Yoo tracks daily attendance for each of the 260 students. Her color-coded spreadsheet makes it easy to spot individuals whose absence is falling into the danger zone—greater than 10 percent. The numbers trigger greater school involvement. Yoo offers resources, guidance and problem-solving support to parents.

“Things happen,” explained Yoo. Housing, transportation and family illness can create barriers. Many parents have jobs that begin before school. “The school does offer before- and after-school care, but it costs money. In many cases, older siblings or extended family take charge of getting Boulevard students to school.”

“Our parents are doing their best. We want to work with them to solve problems. We are in this together,” said Yoo. “This is all about trust and establishing our shared goals for their children.” Simple steps can lead to improvement, even when there are difficult underlying issues. “Every minute counts” communicates great messages: Time is precious. How you use it has consequences. Attending school is essential, and every student is important!

Susie Kasner moved to Cleveland Heights in 1979. She is the former director of Reaching Heights, and is active with the Heights Coalition for Public Education and the League of Women Voters. A community booster, she is the author of a book about local activism, Resisting Segregation.

2024 New Year’s Resolutions:
- Meet new people.
- Step out of my comfort zone.
- Support local businesses.
- Make a difference in my community.
- Grow my network.

Volunteer with us and tick all the boxes! Visit futureheights.org to learn more.
Charred squash and community bonds make for a memorable Giving Tuesday

Amanda Hill

It’s almost a new year, but my mind wanders back to the warmth and camaraderie of Giving Tuesday. Amid the numerous requests from worthy causes, 2023’s Giving Tuesday took an unexpected turn for me and my business partner, Denise Shepherd: an invitation from FutureHeights for an unforgettable dinner, a unique way of expressing gratitude for our support.

As a realtor with a background in nonprofit fundraising, the importance of this day resonates with me more than most. Join me on a journey back to that memorable night with FutureHeights, Chef Rasul, and the vibrant community of Cleveland Heights.

The evening was hosted by Matt Katz and Steven Sokany in their beautiful and historic home. It was so fun to see how they’ve decorated it with modern art and design that juxtaposes the original architectural elements in such an unexpected way.

Dinner was beyond what I could have imagined. Chef Rasul first comes out to the table with a piece of slate that he sets on the table, directly in front of Denise and me. He then proceeds to fling and smash charred winter squash onto the slate! We were stunned and delighted, to say the least. Topping it off with crème fraîche and pepita dukka was the perfect start to the meal. The meal progressed in this fashion, with some elements of each course being finished tableside, while the chef shared his background, influences and cooking philosophy. It was invigorating to meet someone so passionate about what they do. (I hope people feel that when I talk about my career!) I always describe the Cleveland Heights community as eclectic, and the dinner guests were just that. Whether it was the wine pairings or the dazzling conversation, I was mesmerized to hear what brought people to Cleveland Heights and why they’ve chosen to stay and invest in it.

I left the evening so proud to be a resident and so grateful for the work that FutureHeights does to strengthen the community. Denise and I are proud to support FutureHeights with our time, talent and treasure. We do it for the dinner invitation, but it sure was a great way to spend Giving Tuesday this year!

Amanda Hill is a realtor at Keller Williams Greater Metropolitan Real Estate Brokerage and a volunteer with FutureHeights’ FutureHomes and Revitalization Committee. She lives in Cleveland Heights.

Reflections on nature’s way

Elizabeth Englehart

Lately, I have been listening to a song written in 1970 by Randy California, lead guitarist from the group Spirit, a grossly underrated group from that era. The words “Nature’s Way” float through my brain each day. “It’s nature’s way of receiving you; it’s nature’s way of receiving you; it’s nature’s way of telling you something’s wrong.”

We humans are interconnected with the natural world. Each affects the other. Nature receives us with beauty and wonder. It shares with us its clouds and mountains. We survive on its water, its land, its bounty of nourishment. Nature doesn’t care what we look like or what we believe. It does care about what humans do to it, though.

This is when nature retrieves us. It retrieves us from denial, from fear, from anger and from helplessness. It opens our eyes to what we are doing to our natural world. It shows us the truth, and allows us to take action.

It lets us realize that one person can make small changes to help the natural world. Please know this, and allow yourself to be retrieved by nature. When the out-of-control fires in Canada last summer gave us dangerous air-quality levels and smoke-filled skies, nature was telling us something’s wrong. When harmful algae blooms appear in Lake Erie, nature tells us that something’s wrong. When a young woman told me that she recently moved to University Heights from my hometown in California “because of fire and water,” nature was telling her something’s wrong.

Now is the time and we human beings are here to help with compassion. It’s nature’s way.

Elizabeth Englehart is the University Heights Green Team organizer.
University Heights City Council
Meeting highlights

NOV, 20, 2023

Council members present were Michele Weiss (vice mayor), Brian J. King, Theresa Marshall, John P. Rasch, 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 McCammon, and Finance Director Dennis Kennedy. (Sax noted that Cooney has missed 38 percent of the council meetings in the past year. The motion to excuse Cooney passed, with Sax voting against.)

Council actions

Council approved the Salary Range and Pay-Rate Range for Non-Bargaining Unit Employees. Council raised concerns regarding tasks assigned to the mayor’s special assistant and whether some of those tasks belong to a city administrator, which University Heights does not have. Sax noted that these positions (Fire, Police, and Service) have collective bargaining requirements that are not defined in the same fashion and maintained that those should be consistent. McCammon clarified that the ordinance pertained to pay rate, not job descriptions.

Council passed an ordinance entitled “Prohibited Campaign Contributions,” amended appropriations for 2023, approved a change order for the 2023 Road Program, not to exceed $18,968.75, for reinstatement of sidewalks on Glenden Road, and authorized seeking bids for the 2023-24 Fall Tree Pruning.

Council removed from the agenda an authorized seeking bids for the 2023-24 Fall Tree Pruning.

Committee and staff reports

Communications/Civic Engagement: An arts and cultural survey has been conducted and results will be provided before Thanksgiving.

The survey gathered input on improving existing events and possible additional events. It may help with applications for grant funding.

LWV Observer: Janis Swan.

DEC, 4, 2023

Present were the mayor and six council members. Christopher Cooney was not present. Also present were the clerk of council, law director, and finance director. (Sax noted that Cooney has been absent for 41 percent of meetings, but did vote to excuse his absence.)

Mayor’s report

The mayor reported a new timeline for the University Square bankruptcy proceeding. Last week, K & L Holdings consented to an extension until Jan. 20 for sale of the property. The sale will be finalized Jan. 30.

The mayor said his administration is working on the 2024 budget and will release it in January, to be finalized before the March 31 deadline. He decreed that council may not discuss the budgeting process with directors until the complete budget is submitted, as he does not want a piecemeal process.

Finance Committee report

Vice Mayor Weiss expressed dismay with the delay in receiving the proposed budget, saying the process generally begins in September to allow time for hearings and consultation with the appropriate directors. The mayor had agreed to this process over the last six years but now has taken the position that any delay in receiving the proposed budget, saying the process generally begins in September to allow time for hearings and consultation with the appropriate directors. The mayor had agreed to this process over the last six years but now has taken the position that any director who speaks with council regarding the budget before it is submitted in its entirety will be subject to disciplinary action and/or dismissal. Initially, the reason for submitting the budget is to allow the city to operate and to purchase a previously approved ladder truck.

Council authorized the transfer of funds from the general fund to the capital improvement fund for items already approved by council.

Presented at first reading was an ordinance amending the city code to be consistent with voter-approved charter amendments, including the requirement for the vice mayor to preside at council meetings. Council authorized the law director to seek an advisory opinion from the Ohio Ethics Commission on remuneration and new duties for the vice mayor.

Staff reports

The city engineer’s report (read by the mayor) said the Saybrook water line is completed, there is a new water main on Silbury, the East Scarborough/Century sewer is online, and the 2023 road program is finished. The 2024 road program is to be determined.

Economic Development Director Susan Drucker reported a discussion, held at the last Economic Development committee meeting, regarding John Carroll (JCU) proposal to put a parking lot on Fairmount Circle where there had been a BP station. She said she considers that location to be a prime area for development and sees shortcomings in JCU’s desire to use it for parking.

LWV Observer: Marilyn Singer.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
A Message from County Executive Chris Ronayne

Happy New Year! Thank you for coming along on this important reading journey. On January 10, 2024, I will join students at Cleveland Metropolitan School District’s Charles Mooney School for an Ohio Department of Education spotlight video. We will share great stories and showcase the literacy programs throughout Cuyahoga County to help our students succeed.

Cuyahoga Reads now has 372,000 minutes read and 16,600 days completed. We need you to keep reading. What are you reading this month? I’m enjoying Let the Trumpet Sound: A Life of Martin Luther King, Jr. by Stephen B. Oates.

Cuyahoga Reads

Happy New Year! It’s that special time of the year for New Year’s resolutions, which may include new financial goals, health goals, and family goals. How about...
In 2024, the City of Cleveland Heights will change its bulk collection process. Instead of trying to complete bulk collection city-wide during one week each month, the Department of Public Works has divided the city into four bulk pickup routes. Each week, the Department of Public Works will collect bulk items from a single route, and the route collected each week will rotate.

Find Your Bulk Collection Week
To find your bulk collection week:
1. On the map below, identify the color of the area where your home is located or
2. On the table to the right, identify the color of your regularly scheduled refuse and recycling collection day, and then
3. Find that color on the small monthly calendars.

Please put your bulk items on your tree lawn on the first collection day of the week and leave them there until the City collects them.

Bulk Collection Guidelines
What does the City accept?
- The City accepts couches, chairs, mattresses, box springs, washing machines, dressers, dining tables and chairs, toilets, televisions, refrigerators, and carpets for bulk pickup.

Number of items per collection
- Residents may place up to four bulk items for collection at a time. If you have more than four bulk items for collection, please visit https://bit.ly/BulkAndBrushPickup.

Preparing your bulk items
- Wrap all soft furniture, mattresses, and box springs in plastic before setting them out on your tree lawn.
- Remove all doors from refrigerators.
- Cut and roll carpet pieces into rolls no more than one foot high and three feet long.

Placing your bulk items at the curb
- Bulk collection starts on Monday of each week, except when Monday is a holiday. If Monday is a holiday, bulk collection will begin on Tuesday. Place your bulk items on your tree lawn for collection on the first collection day of your route week.
- Place all bulk items at least three feet from your refuse and recycling carts and away from any overhead obstructions.
- Do not include bags of trash with bulk items. The Department of Public Works will not pick them up.
Cleveland Heights City Council

Meeting highlights

NOV. 20, 2023

Board members present were Melody Joy Hart (president), Craig Cobb (vice president), Janine Boyd, Tony Cuda, Gail Larson, Anthony Mattos Jr., and Davida Russell. Also, present were Mayor Khalid Sereen, Clerk of Council Addie Balester, Law Director William Hanna, and City Administrator Danny Williams.

Public comments

A Noble neighborhood resident complained about piloting the use of shipping containers (for portable buildings) in Denison Park, saying that “jewel boxes” or “kiosks” noted in other parts of the city would be preferable.

Council actions

Council approved several agreements, including:
- Cuyahoga County, for services to maintain the city’s sanitary and storm sewers in 2024.
- Glass, Pyle, Schoemaker, Burns and DeHaven Inc. (GPD Group), for engineering services for water-main replacements on Edgemere and Clarendon roads, for $91,500.
- Phone Superior Sales Co. Inc., for purchase of a 2023 Freightliner Crew Cab ambulance and chassis for the fire department, for $339,713.
- The Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District for grant funding 1) for the design control of SSO CH-30, in the amount of $75,100; and 2) for the Hampshire Road Illlicit Connections and SSO Control Project, in the amount of $799,625.

Council approved a budget adjustment for the 2023 fiscal year. Council authorized application for $50,000 in grant funding from the county’s Community Development Supplemental Grant program to replace and repair decorative light fixtures in the Coventry Village business district.

Committee of the Whole (CoW)

An email from Heights Arts Executive Director Rachel Bernstein led to a discussion of the Arts Commission legislation and a decision to postpone the vote and open the Dec. 4 CoW meeting to members of the arts community.

Council will work on council rules, to be in place for the 2024 council. Current members and the member-elect will each send five to 10 rule suggestions to the clerk of council for discussion at the next CoW meeting.

LWV Observer: Blanche Valancy.

DEC. 4, 2023

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

Public comments

A Noble resident expressed appreciation for additional information about the Denison Park shipping container project, which she received in Mattox’s committee meeting, but reiterated that, if the pilot project does not work, she hopes the containers will not remain in the Noble area.

Local architect Paul Volpe expressed satisfaction with the new structure and function proposed for the Community Improvement Corporation (CIC) and the proposed Arts Commission.

Jack Slater, representing the Northeast Ohio branch of the Party for Socialism and Liberation, protested council’s resolution expressing support of Israel’s self-defense in the war launched by Hamas. Slater expressed the opposing view in support of Palestinians.

A resident expressed outrage about cuts to programs relevant to Cleveland Heights youths, such as cuts to Safety Town, sports, pools, the skating rink, and recreation programming. She said opportunities she had in her youth are not available to her children, and maintained this neglect would make it more difficult to attract or keep young families in the community.

A Milliken resident opened that Cleveland Heights is not fighting to be the best, citing problems such as Severance mall and suggesting some legislative ideas to address Severance.

A resident thanked the city for opening the ice rink this week. She advocated for more effective communication between the city and its residents, saying that staff consistently refer callers to the mayor rather than answering questions, creating a communications bottleneck with no answers.

Cedar Fairmount vacant store

Assistant Director of Economic Development Brian Anderson introduced Sal Russo, owner of 12438 Cedar Road, the space vacated by Dave’s grocery store, and presented the city’s history of working with the Russo family. Russo requested financial support from the city to redevelop the vacant space, noting that a grocery store is still the best use of the space, but the current building does not conform to industry standards. Anderson added that tonight’s presentation was an introduction, and specifics about funding would follow.

Council actions

Council presented several pieces of legislation but voted on none, including ordinances for ARPA allocations, amendments to the CIC, committee changes that effectively remove sustainability from the transportation committee to a new committee, 2024 budget appropriations, establishment of a Parks and Recreation Youth Advisory Board, an agreement with WSZ CPV LLC for redeveloping the Taylor-Tudor buildings, and establishment of the Arts Commission.

Committee of the Whole

A group of Cleveland Heights arts organizations proposed substantial changes to the Arts Commission. Council members and the mayor agreed to make changes.

LWV Observer: Blanche Valancy.

ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®

12/19/23

Cleveland Heights City Council

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Cleveland Heights

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Pfund Superior Sales Co. Inc.

Inc. (GPD Group), for engineering

for services to maintain the

services for water-main replacements on Edgemere and Clarendon roads, for $91,500.

the city’s Community Development Supplemental Grant program to replace and repair decorative light fixtures in the Coventry Village business district.

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WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS

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THANK YOU FOR 8 YEARS OF SERVICE

Cleveland Heights-University Heights Board of Education

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT CHUH.ORG

Heights Observer January 1, 2024

www.heightsobserver.org
LEI seeks volunteers and board members

Janae Bryson

For more than a decade, Chris Garson has been a steadfast presence at Lake Erie Ink (LEI), driven by a passion for writing and a profound desire to foster literacy among young minds. His journey began with a chance encounter at a coffee shop, where he overheard a conversation about LEI’s mission to support youth in finding their voice through creative expression.

Initially drawn by his love for writing and the organization’s commitment to empowering youngsters through literacy, Garson’s role evolved over the years. He transitioned from volunteering in-person at Ink Spot to adapting to virtual spaces during the pandemic. Through Zoom classes and full-day events, he witnessed the incredible imagination and creativity of the 11- to 23-year-olds he mentored.

Garson shared the story of a shy, reserved young girl who, over three years, blossomed into a confident individual unafraid to share her work. Her journey symbolizes the essence of LEI’s impact, emphasizing the development of confidence, self-esteem, and the power of self-expression.

Central to LEI’s programs is the belief that writing is a tool to enhance children’s confidence, self-esteem, and ability to articulate their thoughts. Volunteers like Garson play a pivotal role by highlighting the value of the children’s words, offering positive reinforcement, thereby fostering an environment where young voices feel heard and valued.

Garson also highlighted innovative initiatives, such as a music program that empowered children to compose songs with community-oriented messages. Such projects not only showcase the kids’ musical talents but also instill in them a sense of community responsibility, and promoting positive messages through their art.

One of the most fulfilling aspects of Garson’s volunteer work lies in witnessing the growth of young minds. The story of a struggling young writer who found inspiration and direction during their one-on-one session is a testament to the immense impact a simple conversation can have on a child’s creative journey.

Beyond the direct impact on the youth, Garson emphasized the profound personal growth he’s experienced through his volunteer work. Seeing the world through the eyes of children has broadened his perspective, kept him mind open to new ideas, and reinforced the belief that every individual, regardless of age or background, has something valuable to offer.

LEI’s volunteer journey, as evidenced by Garson’s dedication, stands as a testament to the transformative power of nurturing young voices, fostering creativity, and instilling confidence. The organization continues to be a beacon of empowerment, shaping not only the lives of the youth but also leaving an indelible mark on those who dedicate their time and energy to its noble cause.

Lake Erie Ink is looking for volunteers, board members, and interns. For more information on how to join LEI, and bring your unique talents to an organization that seeks to empower the next generation, profoundly impacting the lives of youth and the communities it serves, visit lakeerieink.org.

Janae Bryson is the marketing coordinator at Lake Erie Ink.

Reaching Heights seeks new director

Mazie Adams

Reaching Heights is a vibrant, local nonprofit whose staff and volunteers are passionate about public education, racial equity, and supporting the Cleveland Heights-University Heights public schools. For the past 10 years, Reaching Heights has been led by Krista Hawthorne, who will retire at the end of this school year.

The Reaching Heights Board of Directors is now undertaking a search for a new executive director who will continue to build on Hawthorne’s excellent work. The successful candidate will be committed to the Heights public schools and community engagement.

To learn more about Reaching Heights and the job posting, visit www.reachingheights.org.

For more than 30 years, Reaching Heights has encouraged the community to stay informed about and engaged with Heights public schools. Reaching Heights believes all students deserve the best education possible, and successful schools are a key component to successful communities. Reaching Heights events and programs support and celebrate the students and teachers in the CH-UH City School District.

Mazie Adams is a lifelong resident of Cleveland Heights, a supporter of the Heights public schools, and a member of the Reaching Heights board of directors.
String-light and power-cord recycling drive runs through January

Catalina Wagers

Cleveland Heights Green Team (CHGT), in partnership with the Nature Center at Shaker Lakes and the Lee Road and Coventry Village branches of Heights Libraries, will collect broken, burned-out string lights, extension cords and power strips, to benefit the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo’s Lights for Lions program.

The Heights string-lights recycling drive began Dec. 2 and will run through Jan. 31.

Drop-off bins are located at the parking lot entrance of Heights Libraries Lee Road branch, Heights Libraries Coventry Village branch, and in the Nature Center’s lobby.

“Recovered lights and cords are collected and shipped to recycling facilities where the parts are separated into plastic, glass, and copper,” explained Dan Dobres, metal buyer at Demilta Iron and Recycling Company in Willoughby. “Most materials will be recycled, and leftovers will be safely and properly disposed.”

According to CHGT, Heights residents have recycled more than 2,200 lbs. of string lights and extension cords since 2021.

Proceeds from the recycling drive help fund strategies to mitigate human-carnivore conflicts and develop effective, long-term conservation strategies for large carnivores in Tanzania.

“Sustainability and conservation efforts are a priority across our organization and community,” said Kaela Sweeney, strategic projects manager at Heights Libraries. “We encourage residents to support this effort and divert reusable materials from the landfill.”

“This will be our third year supporting the Lights for Lions program,” said Rachel Weller, the Nature Center’s visitor services and office manager. “The community’s response has been incredible, and we definitely want to provide this service again this year.”

CHGT reminds CH residents to avoid placing “tanglers” in their curb-side recycling bins. Tanglers—which include holiday lights and power cords—cannot be recycled through the city’s recycling program, and cause problems and shutdowns at the local recycling facility.

After Jan. 31, light strings to be recycled can be dropped off in the Cuyahoga Solid Waste District lobby, 4750 E 131st St., Garfield Heights, during business hours (Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.).

Learn more about the Lights for Lions program at www.clevelandmetroparks.com/zoo/wildlife-conservation/lights-for-lions.

Catalina Wagers is a resident of the Fairfax neighborhood. She supports causes and programs focused on the advancement of NEO through better access to education, policy advocacy, and environmental protection, and is co-founder of Cleveland Heights Green Team.
Coventry PEACE Inc. received $750 for “Heights Halloween Festive. Each project proves what research reveals—neighbors feel more safe and more connected to neighborhoods that are more beautiful and well-tended. Noble Neighbors is pleased and grateful to celebrate 10 years of such good work that is bearing such good fruit.

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

High school MSAN

Heights High students attended the Nov. 4 National MSAN conference in Madison, Wis. Last spring, they attended a City Club event with Ambassador Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley, a Heights High graduate. The students noted how the MSAN community and support system has helped them manage stress. This year’s action plan will provide students opportunities to develop mental health and wellness skills, with a goal of improving the school culture and academic performance, and reducing violence between students. The action plan steps include a pop-up event to learn about school clubs and activities that focus on mindfulness, tranquility, yoga, music, thankfulness, self-love, and self-care. The MSAN group will conduct surveys about students’ needs and preferences and review data about referrals and suspensions arising from fighting in school. They will seek the support and expertise of the superintendent, school principals, and other professionals. The student budget for the high school MSAN is currently zero.

Future activities will depend on funding. Board members praised the students and endorsed the inclusion of MSAN on our agenda.

Superintendent’s comments

Kirksey assured students and board members of the administration’s support for MSAN programs, noting that some of the students’ plans and goals coincide with those of the administration, and she will explore ways to work together to achieve them.

NW Observer: Paula Goodwin.

DEC. 5, 2023 — special meeting for library board interviews

The board interviewed seven applicants for one position on the library board, asking each:

• Can you please tell us your motivation for wanting to join the library board and describe the experiences and skills that you would bring to the board?
• Can you please tell us what you see as the strengths of the CH-UH library system and what needs improvement?
• The term of a board member is seven years; how would you measure success at the end of the term?
• If a community member asked to have a book removed from the library, how should the board respond?
• Can you please tell us your thoughts about the possibility of the CH-UH library merging with the county system?

After the interviews, the board requested comments from Library Director Nancy Levin and current Library Board Member Dana Fusslein, both of whom were present during the interviews. Levin said people who are passionate about literacy and providing services to underserved communities would best serve the board.

The school board appointed Halle Tomber, an attorney and resident of University Heights, to the board. Documents for all board meetings can be accessed at www.chuh.org/BoardofEducation. Board meetings are livestreamed at www.youtube.com/CHUHSchools) and recorded for later viewing.

Heights Observer January 1, 2024

www.heightsobserver.org
The Noble Neighborhood Branch Library expansion is on track

Noble Neighborhood Library expansion is on track.

Work completed on the site includes excavation, the creation of retaining and foundation walls, waterproofing, underground plumbing, and steam piping. Work that took place in later November included the installation of exterior framing, racking, pointing of the existing brick on the original building, and the installation of cabling and power feeds.

“We are just so pleased with the progress at the Noble branch site,” said Heights Libraries Director Nancy Levin. “Independence Construction is doing an incredible job bringing Boswick Design’s expansion plans to life.”

Levin continued, “Noble Neighborhood is a vibrant community that deserves a library that will meet their needs, with public meeting rooms, more computers, and larger areas for kids and teens. And it will also have a substantial outdoor space—not just for library programs but for the whole community to enjoy.”

Noble’s outdoor space, at the corner of Kirkwood and Noble roads, was designed by landscape design company McKnight & Sergeant, who also designed the plans for the new Coventry PEACE Park.

“The Noble project is still slated for a June 2024 completion,” Criscone said. “It will start to look like a building soon!”

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

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**What’s going on at your library?**

**Coventry Village Branch**

1925 Coventry Rd., 216-921-3400

Thursday, Jan. 18, 7 p.m.

*Elder Abuse—The Legal Issues.* The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland will present on legal rights and remedies for survivors of elder abuse and their loved ones. A Q&A will follow. Registration required at heightslibrary.org

**Lee Road Branch** — via Zoom 2345 Lee Rd., 216-932-3600

Thursday, Jan. 11, 6:30 p.m.

*Unpacking Our History Discussion: Slavery’s Legacy in Health and Medicine Part 1.* This session of the monthly series will focus on medicine in colonial America and on slave plantations. Hosted on Zoom ID: 8256485349. Passcode: 693113.

**Noble Neighborhood Branch at the DCC**

Disciples Christian Church, 3663 Mayfield Rd., 216-291-3666

Monday, Jan. 15, and ongoing

*Noble Voices Oral History Interview.* Share your Noble memories for the record as part of the Noble Voices Oral History Project. Starting Jan. 15 and continuing through April, community members can sign up for short, one-on-one recorded interviews with library staff to have their stories preserved. Call 216-291-3665 for more information or to schedule an interview.

**University Heights Branch**

13866 Cedar Rd., 216-321-4700

Monday, Jan. 22, 7 p.m.

*Medicare 101.* Are you turning 65? Are you retiring? Do you know how to enroll in Medicare? Do you understand your Medicare plan options? To learn the answers to these questions and more, join Marcy Rosenthal, a licensed Medicare insurance consultant from MCC Inc., for a free, educational “Medicare 101.”

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University Circle

**Judson Park**

Cleveland

**South Franklin Circle**

Chagrin Falls

**Judson at Home**

Cleveland
Cleveland Heights – University Heights Public Library Board Meeting highlights

NOV 20, 2023

Present were board members Patti Carlyle, Dana Fleck, Tyler McFigue, and Melissa Soto-Schwartz. Vice President Vikas Tarkhoda, and Secretary Annette Tweed were not present. The meeting lasted one hour.

Noble Youth Services Outreach Programming

Youth Services Librarian Hillary Brown, Youth Services Associate and Parks and Recreation Liaison Katrina Davis, and Youth Services Associate and WIC Outreach Coordinator Danielle Maynard reported on how the staff are “going beyond the walls” to connect with the community. Using locations such as Disciples Christian Church, the Cleveland Heights WIC office, Start Right Church, CH-UH schools, IXL Childhood and Learning Center, and Lobby Infant Club, the library is taking programming to the neighborhood. Providing books, games, lunch, educational materials for moms, and WIC (women, infants and children) kits are just a few of the ways the youth services staff from Noble branch keep in touch with the neighborhood. From May to November, more than 2,000 connections were established!

Board actions

The board authorized:

• funds to repair the Coventry PEACE building roof
• funds for additional fencing along Lee Road
• dental coverage for 2024 for library employees
• funds for additional fencing along Lee Road.

Personnel report

More than 10 candidates are going through the application and interview process for safety services. Manager and officer positions are currently open.

Director’s report

The CH-UH Library Manager’s Retreat led by Deputy Director Kim DeNero-Ackroyd and Director Nancy Levin was held at the Euclid Library. The topic was continuous improvement and mentoring.

Steel has arrived at the Noble branch construction site. The building is beginning to take shape, and the footprint of the additional section is very visible.

The Coventry PEACE building facilities assessment is underway and should be complete by March.

The director met with state Sen. Kent Smith to explore state funding options. ARPA funds from Cleveland Heights for the library are under discussion at city council meetings. Library staff presented their request at the hearing on Oct. 24.

Funding for the renovation of PEACE Park continues. The Nov. 5 fundraiser at the Grog Shop raised more than $10,000. Parts of the park equipment have been saved from demolition and are being sold as keepsakes to raise funds.

The board of directors of the Funds for the Future of Heights Libraries is recruiting new board members.

Communications Manager Sheryl Banks has redesigned the library’s website homepage to accommodate ongoing projects such as PEACE Park and Noble branch renovations. She has begun to refresh the website theme, colors, and navigation. Branch and department managers are helping to provide appropriate content. Social media posts have been exceptional thanks to photography and information about what is happening at each branch.

Strategic Projects Manager Kaela Sweeney coordinated the Climate Action Day program with Andy Booteng, the new Cleveland Heights city sustainability and resiliency coordinator. Thirty-two people attended.

Eight written applications for the CH-UH Libraries Board of Trustees have been received. The library is prepared to begin interviewing the process.

Public service report

Local history programs were well attended. Among the events was “Coventry PEACE Park: A Local History Celebration.” Sixteen people attended.

The second Passport Walk-in Day was held Oct. 24. Eleven groups came in for various passport needs.

University Heights Youth Services staff hosted Spooky Storytime at Spirit Center, the small community park on Hampshire Road near Coventry Road.

University Heights Youth Services staff created two programs with a fall theme. Glitter glue or metallic markers were used to decorate fall leaves. University Heights Youth Services staff created two programs with a fall theme. Glitter glue or metallic markers were used to decorate fall leaves.

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

Anticipation is already building for the upcoming 2024 Heights Music Hop, and FutureHeights invites Heights business owners to actively participate.

This year’s hop is planned for Saturday, Sept. 28, and planning is underway for an unforgettable evening of music, artistry, and community spirit. Starting this year, the Heights Music Hop will be an event that takes place on the last Saturday of September, on a recurring basis.

Heights businesses participate in the Heights Music Hop by transforming their establishments into venues for hosting live bands, and their participation is pivotal.

FutureHeights invites all Heights businesses and business districts to be part of this annual event, and thanks those who have participated.

If your establishment is interested in serving as a venue for the Heights Music Hop, FutureHeights asks that you express your interest by Jan. 31. Detailed information regarding payment and sponsorship will be provided in February.

Join FutureHeights in creating a celebration that echoes the unique character of this community with the 2024 Heights Music Hop, and making it a night to remember.

For additional information, or to express your interest, send an e-mail to kbufford@futureheights.org, or call 216-320-1423 x106.

Kasia Bufford is a Cleveland Heights resident, musician, and the Heights Music Hop manager for FutureHeights. Contact her at kbufford@futureheights.org.

Campbell tapped as new think-tank CEO

Emily Campbell has been named president and CEO of The Center for Community Solutions (CCS), a nonpartisan research and public-policy think tank focused on solutions to health, social and economic issues. CCS has offices in Cleveland and Columbus.

Campbell, who lives in Cleveland Heights with her husband and two children, has worked for CCS for 16 years, serving as its chief operating officer since May 2022.

Campbell was selected after a broad search by an executive search firm and the board of directors. More than 470 applied to lead the organization, which was founded more than 100 years ago.

“After reviewing many standout prospects, the CCS board of directors concluded the strongest candidate for this important post was right here in our backyard, and that leader is Emily,” said Board President Kyle Miller.

“Emily has great knowledge and understanding of the organization, public policy, networks, strategy and a vested interest in the community’s well-being. She knows where the organization has been and where it needs to go to best serve the health and human service needs of Greater Cleveland and all of Ohio.”

“I am deeply honored by the confidence the board has shown in me and energized by the opportunities and challenges ahead,” Campbell said. “Having served in several roles with the organization, I consider it a profound privilege to contribute to our mission. I am excited to work creatively and strategically with our dedicated team and many partners on our shared vision to better the lives of others and create a brighter and more equitable future.”

continued on page 19
Dobama Theatre will present the Ohio premiere of "At the Wake of A Dead Drag Queen," Jan. 26 through Feb. 18.

Drag star Courtney Berringers welcomes you to her wake in this two-person tour de force, by playwright Terry Guest, that Sarasota Magazine said is "bound to hit your heart."

Courtney has recently died—but make no mistake: this isn’t your grandma’s funeral. There will be no black frocks, no perfumed flowers, and definitely no crying. This is a celebration.

"At the Wake of A Dead Drag Queen" is a play about the fine art of drag—from African gods and goddesses to Trina and Whitney Houston. This irreverent, funny, and moving play thoughtfully uses storytelling, drama, and drag to celebrate Blackness and southern queerness, while exploring identity, illness, and the narratives we construct for ourselves.

The play has been produced across the United States, and playwright Guest has performed it himself several times. Guest recently achieved critical acclaim for the Chicago premiere of his new play, "The Magnolia Ballet," for which he received a grant from the National New Play Network’s David Goldman Fund for Best New American Play.

This production launches Dobama’s Full Circle program, which focuses on connecting audiences with organizations relevant to each production. Because "At the Wake" deals heavily with the health disparities facing BIPOC LGBTQ+ people living with HIV, Dobama is partnering with the AIDS Taskforce of Greater Cleveland to provide free testing, resources and information to audiences.

Dobama has also employed local drag queen Onya Nurve as a consultant, to help ensure that the production is rehearsed and performed with cultural competency. There will be pre- and post-show discussions throughout the run; visit Dobama’s website for details.

Dobama’s production will feature Jason Eno*, Dan Hendrock*, Adam Rawlings, and Corin B. Self, with scenic design by Ben Needham, lighting design by Benjamin E. Gan- tose, sound design by Megan Culley, costume design by Suwatana Rockland, props design by Vanessa Cook, intimacy direction by Casey Venema and Colin Anderson, and technical direction by Jeremy Paul. The show is stage managed by Joel Rathbone*, and at the helm is director Preston Crowder. (* Denotes Actors’ Equity Association members.)

Dobama is a union, professional theatre dedicated to producing important new plays that have yet to premiere in the region. The theatre offers a need-based Pay What You Can program for all performances—simply show up to the box office one hour prior to curtain, and any available seat may be purchased for $1 or more.

For a complete performance schedule, ticket prices, and reservations, call the Dobama Theatre Box Office at 216-932-3396, or visit www.dobama.org/drag-queen.

Colin Anderson is director of production at Dobama Theatre. He has worked as a director, designer, dramaturg, and more with theaters throughout Cleveland, with a special focus on LGBTQIA+ theater. Anderson is a graduate of Oberlin College with degrees in English and theater.

For healthy, beautiful trees next spring, the time to care for them is now. Let our Certified Arborists assess your valuable canopy. Call today.

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WINTER IS PRUNING SEASON

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Heights Arts’ ARTbar season heats up

The first 2024 concert in Heights Arts’ ARTbar series—events that mixed specialized cocktails, music, and poetry—will kick off on Thursday, Jan. 18, at 7 p.m., with a group sure to bring the heat.

Surrounded by the Prismatic exhibition, guests will sip drinks while experiencing a performance by William Reed Simon’s Hot Club of Cleveland—an acoustic jazz ensemble that harkens back to the historically famous Hot Club of France, a group formed in the 1930s to champion the genre. Simon describes the group’s sound as “jazz, swing with mid-century European influences as well as bebop and blues.”

“It seems every city has a ‘Hot Club,’ focusing more or less on swing with varying influences,” Simon said. “I figured it was time for Cleveland to be represented by that name.”

During ARTbar events, Heights Arts’ gallery space at 275 Lee Road transforms into a lounge-style environment, complete with seasonal ARTini drinks. The series features Northeast Ohio-based musicians selected by Heights Arts’ Music Community Team (comprising local arts professionals and enthusiasts).

As a violinist, Simon has played with many of the area’s top jazz musicians, including as a guest performer with the Cleveland Jazz Orchestra. He will be joined by Aidan Plank on Jan. 18, at 7 p.m., with a group sure to bring the heat.

Register early for Cain Park resident discounts

Before one season at Cain Park ends, the roster of concerts and events for the following year is already being planned.

While performing rights have been granted for 2024 musical theater productions and contracts signed for nationally touring artists, the summer lineup can’t be announced until later, due to contractual agreements.

However, Cleveland Heights residents don’t have to wait for ticket discounts and other benefits for Cain Park’s upcoming 86th season. And becoming a Cain Park-registered resident is easier than ever before:

Presenting a current Ohio driver’s license or Ohio state I.D. with a Cleveland Heights address at the Cain Park offices at Cleveland Heights City Hall is all that is required.

Registered residents receive a passcode that grants them a $3 discount per ticket, on top of any additional discounts they may qualify for, such as senior, student or military. Residents also qualify for a 15% discount for opening weekend performances of every Alma Theater show, and early access to premium seating at all ticketed events.

For the second time, a Residents’ Week will supplant Residents’ Day at Cain Park, but this year the week will take place at CH City Hall to facilitate parking and access. Residents’ Week is scheduled for Monday, April 8, through Saturday, April 13, from noon to 5 p.m. each day.

Registering in advance of Residents’ Week allows patrons the option of purchasing tickets online or over the phone.

Cleveland Heights residents who register last year are eligible for all benefits one year from the date of registration.

For additional information, or to arrange to register at City Hall, call 216-291-3665.

Non-Cleveland Heights residents who love Cain Park are encouraged to join, too.

Jonathan Wilhelm is a longtime Cleveland Heights resident and the assistant general manager of Cain Park.
Full Circle

SONGS AND STORIES

David Budin

My son, Dan’s, fourth birthday party was all about games and, sort of, sports. For instance, I remember sitting in our kitchen, across from one of Dan’s pre-school friends, Jared, playing a game where we tried to blow a ping-pong ball across the table into the other guy’s goal. Jared won just about every match—because he really wanted to win, and I wanted him to win, too.

After pre-school, Dan Budin attended Roxboro Elementary and Jared Lavender headed to Fairfax. Jared then went to Roxboro Middle, and Dan switched to Ruffing Montessori for a few years. But they met up again at Heights High, where they both were members of the class of 2002, from ninth through 12th grades.

Jared played on Heights High’s lacrosse team all four years, and Dan joined the team for his last two. But that wasn’t either guy’s main sport: Dan was on the swimming team and Jared played hockey. And now, in a fairly unlikely turn of events, Dan is the head coach of Heights High’s swim team, and Jared, as of this year, is the head coach for hockey.

Jared’s sister, Heather Lavender, coaches the Cleveland Heights middle school’s girl’s lacrosse team, and for the city’s summer youth lacrosse camp, in which, coincidentally, Dan’s daughter participated last year.

Dan, who became head coach in 2014, after two years as an assistant, has had tremendous success. The boys’ team has had a winning record in head-to-head meets every year in that time, and the girls’ team has enjoyed winning records since 2016. In the previous 20 years, no girls’ relay team advanced to the District Championship; last year, every girls’ relay team did. And Dan achieved his 100th victory with the Heights team on Dec. 19.

Jared is just starting as the hockey team’s coach, so there are no results yet. But he told me that “the attitude that all the players have is extremely good. It’s a tough situation because we only have 13 players right now, and out of those, about half are newer to hockey and maybe even skating, too. You need, I’d say, at least eight kids. But I’m concerned for their safety—dealing with exhaustion and injuries—so it would be really tough to play a high school schedule with a team of eight kids or less.”

After graduating from Heights, Jared played junior hockey (for those 16 to 21)—two years for Cleveland Junior Lumberjacks, and one year in northern Michigan. From there, he was recruited by a coach for Castleton University in Vermont, where he played hockey all four years. Then he played professionally for five years, for a team in the American Hockey League, which is right below the majors.

Jared then moved back to Cleveland and is currently working as a coach for the Cleveland Rocks, a junior hockey team. He is also working on his law degree at Cleveland State University.

Teen gymnast Isabella Allen was diagnosed with epilepsy at age 9. At age 14, Cleveland Clinic Children’s discovered a lesion on her brain through advanced MRI technology. Today, she drives herself to school thanks to minimally invasive robot-assisted surgery and rehabilitation that transformed her confidence on the mat and behind the wheel.

Isabella is 1 of 750,000 children who benefit each year from the funds raised at the Derby Day Soirée.

Transform the lives of children like Isabella.

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Accelerate the race toward hope. Join us on May 4, 2024.
for Ohioans.”

Campbell will lead an organization of 25 employees and a budget of over $4.5 million.

Before becoming COO, Campbell’s work included directing demographic and socioeconomic research. She led the development of the Ending the HIV Epidemic 10-year strategic plans for Cuyahoga, Franklin and Hamilton counties in collaboration with the Ohio Department of Health and others. She led needs assessments and strategic planning process for public and private entities including Akron Children’s Hospital. She has a bachelor’s degree in economics and international studies, and a master’s degree in political science, both from Case Western Reserve University.

Campbell is also deeply involved in many community organizations including the Literacy Cooperative of Greater Cleveland, Greater Cleveland Food Bank, and the Health Policy Institute of Ohio.

Betsy O’Connell is a freelance writer and media relations professional. CCS is a client of Letic & Camper Communications, where O’Connell is an associate.

### Heights Observer Classifieds

**Always Buying**

- Gold / Sterling Silver
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- Men’s Watchbands
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**The Press Club of Cleveland and the Society of**

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 musican and comedian. His writing focuses on the arts and, especially, pop-music history.

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