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

CHGT helps navigate Earth Month

Catalina Wagers

Throughout Earth Month, communities worldwide come together to celebrate and advocate for environmental conservation and sustainability. From grassroots initiatives to global campaigns, the month of April serves as a reminder of our collective responsibility to protect and preserve the planet for future generations.

"Amidst the challenges posed by climate change and environmental degradation, there is a growing call for increased community participation in addressing these pressing issues," said Gail Larson, Cleveland Heights council member and chair of its Municipal Services and Environmental Sustainability Committee.

"The 'Earth Month in the Heights' initiative answers that call by inviting residents of all ages and abilities to engage in organizing and participating in 'green actions.' These activities have a tangible impact on



Millikin Neighbors at the 2023 Earth Month Millikin Woods cleanup.

our local environment and also foster a sense of shared purpose that inspires meaningful change in the choices we make."

Earth Month in the Heights kicks off on April 3 with "Make and Take," a free community party hosted by Made Cleveland on Coventry Road. "We'll craft bird feeders and shopping bags from upcycled materials as a way to inspire people to think about repurposing before

discarding," explained owner Ash O'Connor. "Reducing waste and being more mindful in our consumption patterns is something that collectively can make a real difference in decreasing our carbon footprint."

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Boyd resigns from CH City Council

Kim Sergio Inglis

Cleveland Heights City Council Member Janine Boyd, elected last November to a four-year term, announced her resignation at the March 18 meeting of CH City Council. Boyd and her family plan to move to Virginia.

Via letter, Boyd informed Council President Tony Cuda on March 4 that she would officially resign on March 18.

Council immediately announced it would be seeking applicants to fill her seat for the remainder of 2024. The application was posted on the city's website, www.clevelandheights.gov, on March 19, and were due March 29 (two days after this issue will have gone to the printer).

The seat will be on the ballot this November, and the winning candidate in that election will serve through Dec. 31, 2027, the remainder of Boyd's unexpired term.

The Cleveland Heights City Charter stipulates that council has 45 days in which to appoint a new council member to fill a vacated seat.

If council fails to appoint a new council member by the deadline, the mayor then assumes responsibility for filling the council seat.

That is what transpired the last time CH City Council had a vacancy, after Josie Moore resigned in December 2022. When the six council members failed to appoint a seventh by the deadline, Mayor Seren appointed Boyd in February 2023.

At the end of its March 18 meeting, council outlined a tentative timeline for filling the vacancy within the 45 days:

- April 2-12: LWV to interview applicants.
- April 15: Council to begin reviewing videotaped interviews.
- May 2: Council deadline for appointing a new candidate. (Council may choose to appoint someone sooner.)

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Best of the Heights: Nominate your favorite Heights business

Kristine Pagsuyoin

Since 2005, FutureHeights has conducted the *Best of the Heights Awards* to recognize the unique attributes of businesses in Cleveland Heights and University Heights, and their contributions to the local economy. The categories for awards, time of the year and process have varied over the years; however, the main purpose of the *Best of Heights Awards* remains the same to highlight local businesses in the Heights and to promote the importance of shopping local.

This year, FutureHeights is expanding to try to increase the visibility and variety of nominations across all Heights business districts, increase awareness of shopping local, and raising funds to help grow and strengthen our Local Business Outreach & Sup-



port program.

First, we are excited to announce that this year a formal nomination process has been added to promote visibility and increase the variety in nominated businesses. The nomination process will open online (futureheights.org) on April 1 and close on May 17. Finalists will be published in the June issue of the *Heights Observer*.

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Senior soloist Muller to perform April 26

Eve McPherson

This April, Cleveland Heights High School will present the Instrumental Music Department's (IMD) finale concerts. On April 25, Concert Band, Symphonic Band, Concert Orchestra, and Philharmonic Strings will perform. April 26's concert will feature Symphonic Winds, Heights High Symphony, and senior soloist Sophia Muller. Both concerts will take place at 7 p.m. in the school's auditorium.

Muller formally began study-



Sophia Muller

ing violin when she was 4, but has always been surrounded by music. Laura Shuster, her mother, and a Heights alumna, is a professional violist and was her first teacher. Muller recalled telling her mom, when asked to choose an instrument, "I want to play the violin," adding, "I'm sure I thought that a violin was a viola, but I had a limited vocabulary, so she got me started on the violin."

At 5, Muller began taking lessons with Cleveland Institute of Music

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HEIGHTS OBSERVER

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About the Observer

The *Heights Observer* is not a conventional newspaper; it is a nonprofit publication for residents of Cleveland Heights and University Heights.

The *Heights Observer* has no writing staff; it is written by you—the readers.

Individuals throughout the community decide what stories they want to write, then submit them for publication. Anyone in University Heights or Cleveland Heights is welcome to contribute regularly, occasionally or even just once.

Is there something you think should be covered in the *Heights Observer*? If so, please write it on your own, or with friends, neighbors or colleagues. Our volunteer editors will make sure it's ready to publish, and contact you with any questions.

If you're writing a news article, it should be clear and factual. If you want to express an opinion, submit it as a letter to the editor or an opinion piece. Either way, make sure it's about something specific to our two cities. And try to keep it under 500 words.

- To make a submission of any kind, go to www.heightsobserver.org and click on "Member Center" at the left.
- For information about writing style, article length, etc., click on "Become an Observer" at the left. For questions that aren't answered there, call the FutureHeights office at 216-320-1423 or e-mail info@futureheights.org.

Articles to be considered for May publication must be submitted by April 8. We publish some articles online only.

What's up with Wiley?

John Janssen

What is the CH-UH City School District's plan for Wiley?

Wiley opened in 1954 and was used as a middle school for 60 years. In 2015, the district closed Wiley as a middle school and spent approximately \$13 million for it to function as a "swing space" during the renovation of the high school.

The cost of the renovations at Wiley included the lease of temporary modular classrooms. All deferred maintenance and code issues were also addressed at that time. When the students moved out of Wiley, the building was in good condition. Yet Wiley has remained empty since the opening of the renovated middle schools in 2018.

The district owns three middle school buildings: Wiley to the east in University Heights, Roxboro (built in 1931) in western Cleveland Heights, and Monticello (built in 1930) in northern Cleveland Heights. Both Roxboro and Monticello received updates after the high school was completed, but the district was required to divert funds from the originally planned full upgrade of all building systems (heating/cooling, electrical, and plumbing) to pay for the necessary upgrades at Wiley, and to address unforeseen conditions related to the high school renovation.

Combined, the three middle school buildings have a total of more than 385,000 square feet. Current middle school enrollment is 1,102 students, which equals about 350

square feet per student. The Ohio Facilities Construction Commission's 2022 Ohio School Design Manual recommends 128–151 square feet per student for middle school buildings. Based on that guideline, the space needed to educate the currently enrolled middle school students is between 141,056 square feet and 166,402 square feet. Wiley, at 147,819 square feet without the modular classrooms, would be sufficient for all middle school students. Monticello and Roxboro's combined 237,932 square feet is 40% more than state guidelines recommend at the high end.

Rather than continue to maintain an empty Wiley indefinitely, the CH-UH Board of Education needs a plan: either use the building for students again or begin the process of selling the property—a difficult process for schools in Ohio.

The state requires that when a district wants to sell property it must first offer it to private and charter schools at a fair market value before it can do anything else with the property (you can google "OSBA District Property Disposal fact sheet").

It is unfair to the communities funding the schools for the district to spend money maintaining an empty building when that money could be used to benefit students in the district.

John Janssen is a Heights High alumnus (class of '84) and chair of the CH-UH Lay Facilities Committee.

BEST OF THE HEIGHTS continued from page 1

It is encouraged that participants nominate their favorite businesses online, however, a paper nomination form may be mailed or dropped off to the FutureHeights office by 5pm on May 17.

During the months of nominating and voting, FutureHeights will be running a reverse raffle to raise funds for our Local Business & Outreach program. In addition to sponsoring the *Best of the Heights Awards* annually, FutureHeights sponsors the *Heights Music Hop*, and of course, publishes the *Heights Observer*. However, we also offer support and collaborate with small businesses all year long. We know that supporting local business owners and promoting shopping locally means that your money is staying within the community, rather than being sent off to a corporate headquarters. Local businesses (not to be confused with chains) often employ your neighbors, contribute to local taxes, and reinvest in their own operations – creating a cycle

that benefits everyone. More details and tickets for purchase will be available when nominations open online, and winning tickets announced in August at the *Best of the Heights Awards* Celebration!

One last announcement, the *Heights Observer* is excited to add a new special feature monthly to announce the openings of new businesses in the Heights. If you own a new business, or know of a new business opening, contact FutureHeights at info@futureheights.org.

As always, if your business would like to be a distribution hub for the *Heights Observer* contact us and we will have a delivery volunteer add you to their route. We are always looking for VIP's, Volunteers with Intention and Purpose to deliver the *Heights Observer*. Contact VIP Coordinator Brenda Bailey at bbailey@futureheights.org.

Kristine Pagsuyoin is executive director of FutureHeights.

EARTH MONTH continued from page 1

On April 20, the Nature Center at Shaker Lakes in partnership with Shaker Heights Library will host a Community Swap. Nia Turner, community engagement manager, noted, "The purpose of this 'no-buy' event is to provide a space where neighbors can exchange, give, and take clothes, appliances, tools, home decor, and more in a sustainable and charitable way."

Other Earth Month programs at the Nature Center include a solar eclipse watch party (April 8), and a workshop on how to build an eco-friendly backyard (April 24).

"April is a special time at the Heights libraries," said Strategic Projects Manager Kaela Sweeney. "We are very focused on sustainability, and Earth Month gives us the opportunity to engage with the community in conversations and activities related to environmental stewardship."

Heights Libraries' upcoming events include a seed-starting workshop at the Coventry Village branch (April 16) and, at the Lee Road branch, a solution-focused climate discussion guided by MIT's Climate Simulator (April 18) and a native plants workshop (April 25).

Homeowners looking for ideas on how to lead more eco-friendly lives can visit the Sustainable Home Fair on April 21, hosted by the city of University Heights at the Wiley school building. There, attendees can learn how to make their homes more energy efficient, less costly to operate, and more sustainable.

On April 22, Home Repair Resource Center in Cleveland Heights will offer an Organic Lawn Care workshop which aims to inform the community about the dangers of pesticides and offer nature-friendlier alternatives.

Green-space cleanups are perennial Earth Month events, and Heights volunteers will have several opportunities to participate, including joining Cleveland Heights Green Team (CHGT) in its ongoing beautification of Caledonia Ravine (April 6), and assisting Friends of Forest Hill Park in its sweep of Forest Hill Boulevard (April 27).

CHGT will also host several cleanups with students in area parks and encourages Heights groups to join in by organizing beautification projects in their own neighborhoods.

For a complete list of Heights Earth Month events, visit www.chgreenteam.org/earth-month-in-the-heights to access the interactive Earth Month in the Heights Calendar of Events and the Events Details page, which includes links to organizers' websites and registration forms.

Catalina Wagers, a resident of Cleveland Heights' Fairfax neighborhood, is co-founder of the Cleveland Heights Green Team. She is involved with several local organizations, supporting causes and programs focused on the advancement of NEO through better access to education, policy advocacy, and environmental protection.

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HEIGHTS OF DEMOCRACY

Deborah Van Kleef and Carla Rautenberg

What a difference a year makes. After Cleveland Heights City Council deadlocked on appointing a replacement for Josie Moore within 45 days of her December 2022 resignation, Mayor Kahlil Seren chose Janine Boyd to fill Moore's former seat on Feb. 10, 2023.

Less than four months after winning election in November 2023 to a four-year term, Boyd has announced that she and her family will move to Virginia post haste, leaving council to fill her seat within the required 45 days, beginning March 18; if not, the appointment will again be made by the mayor. However, with newcomer Jim Petras on board (and absent former president Melody Hart), this is a new council. We doubt the current leadership team of President Tony Cuda and Vice President Davida Russell will have trouble finding four votes to make a timely appointment.

By the time this article sees print, the deadline to apply will have passed. Council should be starting to evaluate the applications. To retain the seat until Dec. 31, 2027, the end of what would have been Boyd's term, the appointee will have to run for election this Nov. 5. The term of an appointee losing that race would end on Dec. 31; the winner will hold the seat for three years, from Jan. 1, 2025 through the end of 2027.

We hope to see a diverse field of qualified applicants for council to consider. What do we mean by "qualified"? If the choice were ours, we would look for someone who understands what and how much a council member does, and has the time, energy and commitment to take it on. Qualified applicants would have observed Committee of the Whole and council meetings for at least several months, if not a full year. They should have some first-hand familiarity with how city government works, gained either by serving on a

citizen board or commission, or by working on an advocacy project giving them significant contact with city officials. And they should have lived in Cleveland Heights for a few years, at minimum.

We wish the best of luck to those seeking the vacant seat. Since only one can be chosen, we hope the remaining applicants, if not already serving on any of the city's many citizen boards and commissions, will consider applying for one or more of those.

We'd like to direct the public to a single, comprehensive list of boards and commissions, with a brief description and mission statement for each. Unfortunately, the information on www.clevelandheights.gov is incomplete and, in some cases, outdated. We attempted our own tally (see below), but caution that it is completely unofficial and also likely incomplete.

Per the Cleveland Heights charter, appointments to most boards and commissions are the sole purview of city council. Via legislation passed by a submissive council, Mayor Seren now has the privilege of appointing some of the members of several such groups, subject to council confirmation. In fact, at present he has authority to appoint all members of only three (the Arts and Civil Service commissions and Community Improvement Corporation), also with council confirmation.

Regrettably, the mayor has made the divisive and, in our opinion, unwise decision to separately invite residents to apply for "mayoral appointments." Since most appointments to these groups are divided between council and the mayor, all candidates should apply through a single portal, giving all elected officials access to the same applicant pool.

If you decide to apply for a board or commission, we encourage you to ignore the mayor's ill-advised appeal and submit your application through the Boards and Commissions page on www.clevelandheights.gov. The applications are identical.

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

An unofficial list of CH boards and commissions

The following is an unofficial list of Cleveland Heights' standing (i.e., continually operating) citizen boards and commissions.

Appointed by city council:

- Architectural Board of Review
- Board of Zoning Appeals
- Citizens Advisory Committee
- Climate & Environmental Sustainability Committee*
- Commission on Aging
- Community Improvement Awards Committee*
- Landmark Commission
- Lead-Safe Advisory Board*
- Parks & Recreation Advisory Board
- Planning Commission
- Transportation & Mobility Committee*

*These have a limited number of

mayoral appointments, all subject to council confirmation.

All members appointed by the mayor, subject to city council confirmation:

- Arts Commission
- Civil Service Commission
- Community Improvement Corp.

We have not included ad hoc bodies, such as the Charter Review Commission, or the Racial Justice Task Force, which are periodically convened and disbanded after their work is completed. We also did not list the Fair Practices Board, which appears to be defunct, nor the Board of Control which, as stipulated in the city charter, does not accept citizen applications.



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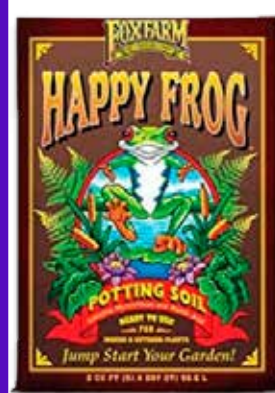
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To vote: detach the nomination form, write in names of your favorite Heights businesses, drop off or mail to FutureHeights, 2843 Washington Blvd., Cleveland Heights, OH 44118; or scan and e-mail the ballot to bbailey@futureheights.org.

Rather vote online? Scan the QR code below or visit futureheights.org and click the Program tab to access the virtual ballot.

Please note that all nominated businesses must be locally owned and located in Cleveland Heights or University Heights. One ballot per person. Please select only one business per category.

Deadline for submission is May 17.

Best Pizza _____	Best Place to Work Out _____
Best Coffee Shop _____	Best Barber Shop _____
Best Bakery _____	Best Salon or Spa _____
Best Place to Take the Kids _____	Best Place for a Manicure or Pedicure _____
Best Place for Live Music _____	Best Place to Take an Out-of-Towner _____
Best Bar, Pub, or Tavern _____	Best Place to Find Unique Gifts _____
Best Restaurant _____	Best Business to Call for Home Services: Plumber _____ Electrician _____ Carpenter _____ HVAC _____ Snow removal/ landscaper _____ Painter _____ Home Renovation/ Contractor _____
Best Place to Take a Date _____	Best Customer Restroom _____
Best Clothing Store _____	Best Place to Work _____
Best NEW Restaurant, Bar, Pub, or Tavern _____	Best Exterior Style _____
Best Place to Get Your Car Serviced _____	Best Interior Style _____
Best NEW University Heights Business _____	Best Community-Conscious Business _____
Best NEW Cleveland Heights Business _____	
Best Takeout _____	
Best Outdoor Dining _____	
Best Place for Breakfast _____	

FutureHeights

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Teachers embrace honest history



THE COMMON GOOD

Susie Kaeser

Valentine's Day, a celebration of love, falls in the middle of Black History Month. This year I got to spend part of it with fourth-graders at Boulevard Elementary, talking about the civil rights movement in Cleveland Heights.

There couldn't have been a better day to talk about the courage, values and tenacity of citizens who, in the 1960s, challenged the hate-induced housing practices that made our community one of the all-white communities in a countywide and nationwide sea of segregation. Residents transformed our community into an integrated stronghold of activism, demonstrating that, when people work together, they can confront overwhelming odds and make a difference.

The invitation to speak came after Julie Walker heard my civil rights history presentation at a session of FutureHeights' leadership-development program. Walker and Laura Preston, both of whom grew up in Cleveland Heights in the 1990s, teach the two fourth-grade classes at Boulevard. Thanks to student activism in the 1970s—part of my history lesson—the Heights High curriculum included Black history, and the district celebrated Martin Luther King Jr. Day by the time these women attended.

As part of their Black history curriculum, the teachers focused on two important questions: Why was the civil rights movement needed, and how can citizens make change? The Cleveland Heights civil rights history story that I documented in *Resisting Segregation* was a perfect fit with their topic and is something a fourth-grader can understand. The high point for me came when a 10-year-old girl, her mind not inured to the folly of such an idea, asked the fundamental question: Why segregation?

My visit was fun. The kids were completely engaged. It was especially gratifying to be able to make

the civil rights story hyper-local. Martin Luther King Jr. came to St. Paul's in Cleveland Heights in 1963, because Cleveland, home to many people with Alabama roots, was a good place to raise funds for his work in Birmingham. Local activists made it possible for Black residents whose housing options were confined to Cleveland to move to Cleveland Heights. I asked kids to raise their hands if they had roots in Alabama and then again in Cleveland. The hands shot up. This is their history.

Many local leaders who opened the doors for integration and lobbied to make our community more inclusive sent their kids to Boulevard. Bernice Lott, the first African-American member of the CH-UH Board of Education, honed her leadership skills and demonstrated her concern for education as president of the Boulevard PTA.

In 2021, Ohio was one of eight states where lawmakers introduced legislation to censor discussion of race in school by prohibiting the teaching of "divisive concepts." This ultra-vague idea was designed to intrude on teacher autonomy, promote distrust, deny history and create the aura that history is dangerous and a topic to avoid.

Even though the ban is not yet codified in Ohio, it has caused teachers and school districts to self-censor. These culture-war ideas contradict the fundamentals of public education: the equal value of all children, critical thinking, preparation for citizenship, and the truth.

I am so proud of our teachers. History doesn't scare them and neither does our fearmongering legislature. We need to celebrate our public schools and endorse and trust the autonomy of the people who make classrooms lively places for learning. Our teachers are not afraid of the truth, and we shouldn't be either. Our job is to stand by them and to challenge state policies that take us backward.

Honest education is high-quality education. It is education for democracy. Thanks to our teachers, honesty is alive and well in Cleveland Heights.

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

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Where is all the promised retail at the Top of the Hill?

Don King

Fully one year into the opening of The Ascent at the Top of the Hill, there remains no retail establishment that has moved into the first floors of the complex.

From 2016 through its completion in 2023, community meetings were held, questions answered, and promises made that led the community to believe that this project would be a benefit for all of Cleveland Heights.

“Density is Good” became an unspoken mantra, while neighbors were assured that no parking problems would ensue, and we could all take delight in the new shops and restaurants that would arrive.

Plus, the extra taxes from those services and employees would provide a civic boost.

One year in: crickets.

A simple drive-by offers a glimpse of the many “Retail Available” signs but, alas, to no avail; this after two different realty companies have been secured.

What could have been exciting new developments in the already-booming Cedar Fairmount retail/social scene have resulted in a new, yet desolate and depressing, zone that no one seems to want to touch.

Why? Surely adding to the mix of businesses like The Fairmount, Appletree Books, Zhug, etc. would create a kind of neighborhood alchemy that government leaders and planners had promised and hoped for all along.

“If we build it, they will come”; we did, but they haven’t.

One suggested clue into why these retail spaces remain empty is in the faulty parking situation that developers Flaherty & Collins have delivered.

The community was promised a five-story parking garage that would be tucked away in the

apartments of the Ascent. True to their word, there the five-story garage sits.

But scratch the surface and you’ll discover real problems with this structure; try to find much available parking between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m., and you may sorely disappointed.

Ascent residents have their own gated section, floors 3, 4, and 5 of the garage; other local residents and all current and potential retail customers are allocated floors 1 and 2.

The problem is that the garage is unmonitored, so Ascent residents park in the most convenient spots and take up nearly half of the first two floors, while the top 1 1/2 floors are completely unused. Upon several inspections, floor four is continually half-full and no car has ever been discovered parking on floor five. So, the five-story garage promised by the developer is a de facto 3 1/2-story working garage.

Contacting Flaherty & Collins, I learned that there is an employee who resides on site who has been “observing” the garage in the evening hours.

Before any more precious time is lost looking for retailers to move into the several vacant spaces, this employee, or someone who actually cares about the situation, needs to take a count of the many Ascent parking tags found in cars parked on floors 1 and 2, and step up their monitoring system, so when future retail tenants come calling, they can be assured of enough parking spaces to accommodate their prospective customers.

We all deserve much better.

Don King served as pastor of Peace Lutheran Church. He has been a resident of Cleveland Heights since 1985, and has served congregations, and been active in the local interfaith community, since 1999.



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Theoretical 'ShareMow' concept has potential

Fey Parrill

In the March issue, I described my family's journey from a "tidy" yard, to a lawn full of violets. I described how these violets feed rabbits, and how these rabbits feed red-tailed hawks. Thinking about lawn care inspired me to bring the topic to a 200-student class I teach at CWRU. In the class, students considered a theoretical business concept called "ShareMow."

The premise: Why should every household purchase expensive yard maintenance equipment used for an hour or less a couple times per month? Could sharing quiet, emissions-free electric lawn mowers and leaf blowers be a viable alternative with multiple benefits to the community? Shared equipment relieves households of some expenses, and frees up garage space. The ShareMow concept involved one neighbor hosting the equipment in a solar-powered shed, while other neighbors reserved the equipment via an app. Potential benefits included reducing noise pollution and emissions, freeing up some income, and building community among households (which has established benefits for public safety).

Students explored this business concept, considering potential problems and solutions. They learned electric mowers and leaf blowers are significantly quieter than gas-powered. They also considered lawn care in a cultural context: What looks untidy to one looks beautiful to another. Some talked about the pride family members take in immaculate green lawns and in working in the landscaping section; others came from parts of the world where lawns are considered bizarre. Students worried about liability (who is responsible for injuries?), and noted that ShareMow would be in low demand in neighborhoods with large properties that hire commercial lawn care services. Choosing the right neighborhood and a convenient location for potential participants would be

important.

ShareMow was a student exercise, but there is genuine potential. Sharing electric equipment among neighbors addresses affordability, reduces the resource consumption necessary to manufacture equipment, and encourages sharing of other neighborhood resources. It represents a shift in mindset that could benefit our community's emergency and resiliency planning. It could be a pilot project for establishing neighborhood battery backup resources for emergencies. The app is an opportunity for student involvement, perhaps a STEAM project for our brilliant Heights middle- and high-school students. Heights students could also learn about solar panel installation and electrical energy production and storage.

Heights High students have demonstrated their ability to share their gifts with our community, and the project is a good fit for existing community assets such as the Home Repair Resource Center's tool lending library. Having a mower go to a street, rather than a household, would expand capacity in the city's gas-to-electric mower swap, too.

I appreciate the city's efforts to improve air quality, reduce emissions, and reduce noise pollution. Such efforts may require pushing residents to re-think what is possible. We can respectfully and collaboratively negotiate aesthetic differences, cultural traditions, and economic models. Mitigating climate change requires us to do anything and everything we can.

Meanwhile, my family enjoys the results of our beautifully untidy yard. Since we started using electric equipment and rakes, leaving leaves in beds and shredding some for compost, and ending our use of herbicides and pesticides, our soil is healthier, better able to absorb stormwater, and more resilient in dry conditions. We offer welcoming habitat for other creatures and enjoy a quieter yard and healthier air. And the violets, rabbits, and hawks are thriving.

Fey Parrill teaches at Case Western Reserve University.

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UH Sustainable Home Fair comes to Wiley April 21

Jeffrey Pearl

University Heights residents, and those from other communities, are invited to celebrate Earth Day by learning how to become more energy efficient at the first-ever University Heights Sustainable Home Fair, on Sunday, April 21. The free event will take place at the Wiley school building, 2181 Miramar Blvd., 1-4 p.m.

“The concept of thinking globally and acting locally was never more important than it is today,” said Deanna Bremer Fisher, chief of staff for the city of University Heights. “This applies to our homes and yards, our various means of transportation, the items we purchase, the food we consume, how we handle solid waste and more. We should all learn various ways to become more sustainable.

“The ways we care for ourselves not only impacts our own lives but the greater community and the environment as a whole. Each of us can make a positive difference in the world through the choices we make.”

Local organizations and service providers—including Solar United Neighbors, First Energy, NOPEC, Rust Belt Riders, Meadow City Nursery, Fix-It CLE, and more—will host information booths at the fair, and how-to workshops will be presented by Home Repair Resource Center, Cleveland Restoration Society’s Heritage Home Program, and the Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District.

In 2022, the city of University

Heights became a Power a Clean Future Ohio community with a goal to reduce the city’s carbon emissions by 30% of 2010 levels by 2030. Efforts made by individual homeowners can help the city reach its goal.

The University Heights Sustainable Home Fair is an opportunity to learn the latest and best practices from a variety of experts, including how to become more climate aware and how to make a difference.

For more information, visit www.universityheights.com/sustainable-home-fair.

Jeffrey Pearl is a University Heights resident and member of the city’s Citizens’ Advisory Committee on Sustainability. He is an advocate for increased participation in recycling and ways to compost.

University Heights welcomes new patrol officer



COURTESY UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS CITY HALL

On March 11, Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan (at right) had the honor of swearing in Jamar Watkins (at left) as University Heights’ newest patrol officer. Patrol Officer Watkins is a lateral transfer and began work immediately.

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HEIGHTS OBSERVER

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University Heights City Council Meeting highlights

FEBRUARY 20, 2024 - regular meeting

Council members present were Michele Weiss (vice mayor), Christopher Cooney, John P. Rach, Sheri Sax, and Win Weizer. Brian King and Threse Marshall were excused. Also present were Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan, Clerk of Council Kelly Thomas, Law Director Luke McConville, and Finance Director Dennis Kennedy.

Mayor's report

The mayor reported that University Heights will host an eclipse party at Walter Stinson Park on April 8, 1:30-4:30 p.m. The event is free and open to the public. There will be activities, music, and food trucks. Eclipse-safe glasses will be provided.

Mayor Brennan met with a consortium of East Side communities regarding the pricing of recycling and solid waste. He recommends that the city continue as a member of the consortium, which includes Beachwood, Lyndhurst, Shaker Heights, Solon and Independence.

Council actions

Council approved hiring the WallacePancher Group as city engineer, after WallacePancher modified its proposal to match the scope of another firm's bid.

Council accepted the bid proposal from Ease@Work for the Fire Department Wellness Education Curriculum and other health services, to be funded by the remaining ARPA grant.

After discussion at an executive session, council authorized the purchase of the YADI property for \$1.05 million, with the understanding that the parties will continue to negotiate to finalize details for the purchase agreement and termination of pending litigation.

LWV Observer: Marilyn Singer.

MARCH 4, 2024 - regular meeting

Sheri Sax was excused. The mayor and other council members were present, as were the clerk of council, law director, and finance director.

Public comment

Several residents spoke about the last Finance Committee meeting's discussion regarding the Juneteenth event budget. Council members had questioned the size of the budget compared to other events and, in particular, the \$15,000 for security. The residents who spoke shared some thoughts on why the event should be supported and not be merged or conflated with other holidays as suggested. They noted that questions regarding the need for security implied issues regarding the type of music or attendees at the event.

A resident's e-mail urged coordination between John Carroll University and the city for safety and prevention of property damage and disorderly behavior during the upcoming St. Patrick's Day.

Mayor's report

Regarding the Finance Committee meeting, the mayor noted that the security budget was needed due to the two-time Grammy award-winning musical act and the number of people attending. The only incidents in last year's celebration were individuals needing medical attention from sun exposure. Council members who may have made racist comments should consider how their statements sound.

Weizer noted that at the Finance Committee meeting she had questioned the security budget as compared to that at other events, because, due to this year's budget process, they had numbers only with no back-up explanations.

Council actions

Council approved the 2024 budget appropriations. Council had little time to review the budget, as it was not received until mid-February.



Several major costs were added, including the purchase of the building next to City Hall, expenses for loose recycling, and police department cameras that are license plate readers to track cars going city to city.

Director of Housing & Community Development Geoff Englebrecht pointed out that the Juneteenth Planning Committee comprises residents, small business owners and several city employees, and is open to anyone who would like to join. The security budget is still in place because the committee is looking for nationally known performers. In addition to the \$10,000 grant from Dollar Bank, the committee is looking at other sponsorships or grants. Weiss said the 2023 security budget was approved because the park was not designed to hold the anticipated number of attendees and security was hired to ensure emergency readiness. The increase in the 2023 budget during the planning process was a concern and was due to the need for additional Porta-Potties and security with increased attendance.

Council discussed the \$25,000 expense for branding, which includes additional signs, possibly electronic signs at Purvis Park and City Hall to communicate updates and news.

Council approved the seeking of bids for the 2024 General Yard Nuisance Abatement Project.

Council authorized a contract with LNE Group in an amount not to exceed \$30,000 for federal and state advocacy support for the city of University Heights.

Council accepted a NOACA CFI (Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency Charging and Fueling Infrastructure) grant award of \$87,000, with a 20 percent match of \$17,400, to install four electric vehicle charging ports at Walter Stinson park.

LWV Observer: Tanis Swan.

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JULY 26 & 27
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AUGUST 6 • 8 PM
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AUGUST 8-10
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Alma Theater



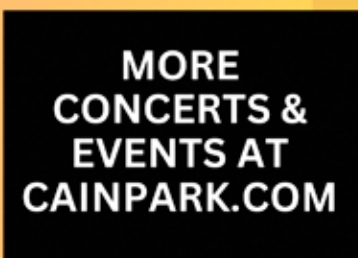
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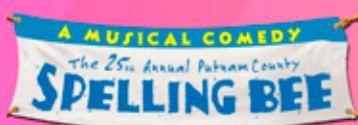


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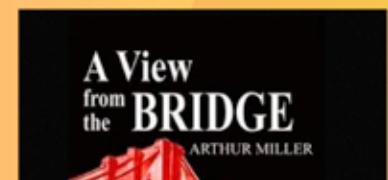
MAY 30-JUNE 9
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JUNE 20-30
Big Fish
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Cleveland Heights City Council Meeting highlights

FEBRUARY 20, 2024 - regular meeting

Present were Mayor Kahlil Seren, Council President Tony Cuda, Vice President Davida Russell, and members Janine Boyd, Craig Cobb, Gail Larson, Anthony Mattox Jr., and Jim Petras. Also present Mayor Kahlil Seren, Clerk of Council Addie Balester, Law Director William Hanna, and City Administrator Danny Williams.

Public comment

Several residents spoke for and against road camera surveillance services.

Adam Dew, representing the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, along with four Cleveland Heights and University Heights residents, praised proposed funding for lifeguards to open the high school pool for public swim hours.

An adult member of the LGBTQ community and a grade-school child who identifies as transgender expressed support for the resolution opposing Ohio House Bill 68, which restricts gender-affirming care for Ohio transgender youth. State Rep. Juanita Brent thanked council for opposing HB 68.

Seven residents, including former council president Melody Hart, expressed desire for a resolution supporting an Israel-Gaza cease-fire. One resident, while dismayed about the war, felt a city resolution would not help.

Mayor's report

Mayor Seren announced that the Northeast Ohio Area-wide Coordinating Agency (NO-ACA) will install electric vehicle fast charger ports at the Lee Road Library and City Hall.

Council actions

Council renewed an agreement with Flock Group Inc. for a road surveillance network, including license plate readers, for \$50,000 per year for five years. The cameras will not have facial recognition capability.

Council authorized an agreement with All City Management Services Inc. for crossing guard services, at a cost of \$140,481. Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School

District will reimburse half of the cost.

Council reappointed Steve Cummings and Jody Taslitz to the Commission on Aging.

Council condemned Ohio House Bill 68 as discriminatory, harmful to transgender youth, and a violation of parental rights. HB 68 bans treatments such as hormone blockers, gender-affirming hormone therapy, and surgery for transgender youth.

Council adjusted the 2024 Budget to receive two grants for the Lead Safe Fund, transfer ARPA funds to the correct line item, and increase the budget for the Police Locker Room Project.

With Cobb, Mattox, and Boyd voting no, council authorized funding of up to \$25,000, for Sept. 1 through May 31, for lifeguard positions for community swim events at the Heights High pool. Cobb, Mattox, and Boyd said they wanted more information.

Council authorized submission of the amended 2019 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application and plan, and the 2024 CDBG application.

Council authorized the agreement with WXZ CPV LLC for redevelopment of the Tudor-Taylor buildings.

LWV Observer: *Blanche Valancy.*

MARCH 4, 2024 - regular meeting

Davida Russell was excused. The mayor and other council members were present, as were the clerk of council, law director, and city administrator.

Public comment

Seven residents supported a resolution about the Gaza-Israeli war, one opposed, and one urged council to avoid resolutions on international affairs.

FutureHeights Executive Director Kristine Pagsuyoin described the FutureHomes housing rehabilitation program, expressed displeasure at the city's delay in providing more houses for the program, and requested that council work with the mayor to authorize transfer of more homes to FutureHeights.

Mayor's report

Mayor Seren reported that Febrizi Trucking and



Paving's bid of \$2,296,895.90 has been selected for the Monmouth Road sanitary sewer overflow project.

Noble Station

Paul Volpe and Alex Frazier, representing TWG, presented an overview of the new Noble Station affordable housing development proposed for 2228 Noble Road. They described the community engagement process and how concerns about density, lack of amenities, and neighborhood architectural fit have been addressed.

Council actions

Council proclaimed April 1-5 as National Community Development Week.

Council authorized a grant application to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Recreational Trails Program to support the Doan Brook restoration park improvements.

Council authorized an agreement with InVeris Training Solutions Inc. to repair and replace the existing targeting system, used to train police personnel and Police Academy cadets, at a cost of \$130,155.

Council reappointed Ira-Etta Black and Peter DeGolia to the Commission on Aging.

Committee of the Whole

All members present expressed views regarding a Gaza resolution, including the desire to bring the community together; the need to be consistent about what international, national, and state issues council addresses through resolutions; the need to be responsive to all segments of the community; the need for such resolutions to be well-informed and balanced; the need to express concern while not losing focus on city issues; and concern that such a statement would have no impact on the war while possibly exacerbating community divisions. Mayor Seren suggested that clarification of the intention of last October's resolution might be helpful.

LWV Observer: *Jill Tatem.*

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Rehabbing vacant homes is a FutureHeights priority

Hilary Schickler

The renovations of two homes generously given to FutureHeights by the city of Cleveland Heights are almost complete.

Late last year, FutureHeights embarked on partnerships with Frank Kuhar of Revived Housing Partners and Michael Leonetti of Yosemite Construction to completely renovate the homes located at 2124 Rossmoor and 901 Englewood roads. Both contractors are local to Cleveland Heights: Kuhar lives in Cleveland Heights with his daughter, and Yosemite's office is newly located on Taylor Road.

Both homes had been vacant for a number of years and required complete renovation. Each home has all new mechanicals, including new roofs, HVAC, plumbing and electrical systems. The kitchens and bathrooms have been completely gutted and feature new cabinets, appliances, ceramic, and granite.

The home on Englewood features an attached garage and an unbelievable backyard space. The property on Rossmoor features a brand-new full bath in the lower level. Stay tuned for more information.

In addition to the two renovations currently underway, the

FutureHeights Revitalization Committee has been working diligently to gather information to help guide programming. The committee is primarily focused on two areas, infill housing designs and addressing issues of existing housing stock, and meets regularly to review data and strategize best ways to preserve, maintain, and improve the city's housing stock.

At the end of 2023, FutureHeights' Revitalization program received a generous award from the Cleveland Heights ARPA allocation, providing funding through 2026. This will allow FutureHeights to expand its existing home-acquisition program to better target its efforts for a more comprehensive impact. Funds also will be used to create pre-approved new home designs to help reduce the time and cost associated with building new homes in Cleveland Heights.

Building code, zoning issues, and tax-abatement eligibility are all examples of the information the committee is gathering to best create new home designs, in addition to assessing overall "buildability" of available parcels. The committee is also reviewing design guidelines and best building practices. With information in hand, the committee

will be working with a design professional to create pre-review, approved new home-building plans.

A large part of the Cleveland Heights economy lies in its housing stock. FutureHeights' FutureHomes program began in 2019 to protect housing and help address issues affecting the local housing stock and its value. Vacancies, foreclosures, and disrepair, in addition to a surge of out-of-state investors, continue to plague the city's housing even after the foreclosure crisis of 2008.

The goal of ensuring Cleveland Heights' existing housing stock is occupied and in its best condition requires a strategy as diverse as the issues affecting the city's housing, as each situation can be quite different from the next. Collaboration is the key. Working together with the city; Cleveland Heights Municipal Court; other organizations, such as Home Repair Resource Center (HRRC); property owners; and residents is essential to bring about real change.

As a nonprofit organization, FutureHomes is driven by its mission of protecting the city's housing stock, not by profit.

Hilary Schickler is the FutureHomes and Revitalization director for FutureHeights.

BOYD continued from page 1

As in the past, the applications and videotaped interviews will be posted on the city's website.

In her resignation letter, Boyd stated, in part, "I am grateful to have had another opportunity to craft and pass comprehensive legislation from this honorable position in our local government. Legislation that further protects victims of domestic violence, members of our LGBTQI+ community, and women's health."

Boyd first served on CH City Council from 2012 to 2014, before being elected in November 2014 to represent District 9 in the Ohio State House, where she served from 2015 to 2022. In the House, she replaced her mother, Rep. Barbara Boyd, who did not seek re-election due to term limits.

Boyd was originally appointed to city council in October 2012, and, in 2013, ran unopposed to serve out the remainder of that unexpired two-year term. In February 2015, city council appointed now-Mayor Seren to serve out Boyd's unexpired council term.

Kim Sergio Inglis is editor-in-chief of the Heights Observer, and is a Cuyahoga County master gardener.

JCU and UH respond to Notre Dame College's closure news

Mike Cook

With Notre Dame College closing at the conclusion of this spring semester, John Carroll University (JCU) is one of nine local institutions of higher learning to step up to support affected students.

JCU has entered into an agreement to serve as a teach-out partner. For all Notre Dame students who qualify, JCU will offer automatic admission, no lost credit, and net price matching.

"We are deeply saddened by Notre Dame College's announcement of their upcoming closure," JCU announced on its website, www.jcu.edu. "Our deepest condolences are with all who love this institution, which has served a mission of Catholic higher education in our community for more than a century."

University Heights Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan said the loss of Notre Dame College is felt not just in South Euclid, but in University Heights as well.

"Being a neighboring community of South Euclid, Notre Dame College is practically in our neighborhood," Brennan said. "University Heights has always been at the heart of educational opportunities at every level, both within our city limits or just minutes away."

"During this difficult time, I appreciate greatly the willingness of John Carroll University and other partnering universities to provide suitable alternatives to Notre Dame College students. I am hopeful that every NDC student finds a good fit for completing their degree through the Teach Out program."

Other partnering institutions include Baldwin Wallace University, Cleveland State University, Kent State University, Lake Erie College, Ursuline College, Walsh University, and Mercyhurst University.

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

Heights Tree People receives \$18,000 grant

Pat Relf Hanavan and Eric Cohen

The Heights are about to get a little greener. On Feb. 28, Heights Tree People learned that the Ohio Division of Forestry had awarded an Urban Forestry Grant of \$18,000 to the nonprofit, all-volunteer organization that plants free front-yard trees in Cleveland Heights and University Heights. By doing so, the group is working to restore lost tree canopy.

The grant, which comes from federal Inflation Reduction Act funds, will pay for planting 50 trees each season for three planting seasons—that covers 18 months. The program focuses on urban areas that are disadvantaged as measured by the federal government's Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool and the EPA's Environmental Justice and Screening Mapping Tool (EJScreen).

"Cleveland Heights as a whole qualifies, and with this grant, Heights Tree People will make a special effort to plant in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods in the city," said the group's president, Julie Gierke.

Studies show that trees in urban areas have tremendous benefits beyond their natural beauty. They make people happier and healthier. Trees have a calming effect on people, reducing stress and related diseases, including heart attacks, strokes, anxiety, and depression. They've even been shown to reduce crime. They lower noise levels, provide privacy, and re-



Heights Tree People volunteers Laura Marks and Bill Hanavan.

duce the heating effects of pavement and buildings.

Trees save residents money on air conditioning bills in the summer, and they can offer a windbreak during the winter. Tree roots intercept and filter water runoff that winds up in Lake Erie. Foliage helps filter dust and other contaminants from the air while releasing oxygen. In general, trees increase neighborhood beauty, stability, and property values.

Cuyahoga County surveys show that Cleveland Heights lost 8 percent of its tree canopy—the area covered

by leaves, branches, and trunks of trees when viewed from above—between 2013 and 2019.

Why? Some of the trees planted in the early days of Cleveland and University Heights are reaching the ends of their healthy lives. The cities also have lost many trees to development, storms, disease, and pests such as emerald ash borer.

Heights Tree People has spent the last few years working to restore the canopy by planting free trees in front yards, with an emphasis on

continued on page 23

Talk series explores 'bringing nature home'



The owner of this Heights yard mows not at all.

Peggy Spaeth and Kate Small

Northeast Ohio barely had a snowy winter, and spring is here with green shoots popping up everywhere. Also emerging in our neighborhoods is a movement to look at green spaces differently. Instead of feeding, weeding, and mowing lawns, some landowners are growing more and mowing less.

The movement is inspired, in part, by entomologist Doug Tallamy. His books, *Bringing Nature Home: How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants* and *Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation that Starts in Your Yard*, are calls to action to restore biodiversity at home. According to Tallamy, more than 40 million acres of land in America are covered by turf grass. This monoculture results in a lack of biodiversity, increased

air pollution, and fertilizer runoff into watersheds. Reducing lawns in parks and yards is an important step toward a healthy ecosystem.

In partnership, Cleveland Heights Parks & Recreation and Friends of Heights Parks are presenting a series of talks titled "Bringing Nature Home." The talks given thus far—on our watershed, park history, invasive plant species, and gardening for birds—have been well-attended and full of questions.

The final two talks will offer practical steps residents can take to reduce their lawns. Details and registration information can be found at www.ecologicalheights.com/events.

On Saturday, April 13, 10 a.m. to noon, the talk will focus on the Heights Native Pollinator Path, a project Peggy Spaeth (co-writer of this article) initiated

in 2019 to benefit nature by connecting habitat fragments in the Heights' urban environment. She will illustrate, through images, how her yard was transformed into native habitat a few plants at a time. Learn what to plant in your own yard to be part of a nature-based solution to the climate emergency.

On Saturday, May 4, 10 a.m. to noon, landscape designer and arborist Kate Small (also co-writer of this article) will present "Grow More, Mow Less." Learn how and why to replace lawn with the native shrubs, sedges, grasses, ferns, and perennials preferred by native insects and birds, to support biodiversity and do away with the negative impacts of traditional landscapes.

Heights Libraries and The Nature Center at Shaker Lakes are also offering talks to educate and inspire Heights residents to bring nature home. For a full listing of talks and programs, visit www.shakerlakes.org/calendar/.

Peggy Spaeth and Kate Small are board members of Friends of Heights Parks, working to cultivate public and private spaces that thrive in harmony with the natural world.

Forest Hill Church celebrates America's indigenous peoples



Robin Pease in the traditional dress of her Native American tribe.

Quentin Smith

On April 27, Forest Hill Church invites the community to dive into the vibrant world of America's Indigenous Peoples!

The church will host Robin Pease, artistic director of Kulture Kids and proud descendant of Indigenous Americans, as she brings Native American music, stories, and traditions to life in an immersive performance.

Doors to the event will open at 4 p.m., with the main program scheduled to begin at 4:30 p.m. Light refreshments will be provided. Forest Hill Church is located at 3031 Monticello Blvd., in Cleveland Heights.

Pease, who has a theater background from the Boston Conservatory and Case Western Reserve University, invites the audience to engage actively in the program, which offers an enlightening journey into the heart of indigenous heritage; one that honors and recognizes the enduring legacy and contributions of indigenous peoples, often marginalized and ignored.

The program will culminate in a Q-and-A session that promises to deepen the collective understanding of, and connection to, American's indigenous culture.

To join in this celebration of resilience, culture, and legacy, RSVP by sending an e-mail to racialequitybuddies@fhcperesb.org.

This program is made possible, in part, by a grant from the Outreach Committee of the Presbytery of the Western Reserve. The program's sponsors are Racial Equity Buddies; Social Justice Advocacy Ministry of Federated Church, Chagrin Falls; and the Community Congregation of Chesterland.

Quentin Smith is an organizer for Racial Equity Buddies and is a member of Forest Hill Church.

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Reaching Heights to host annual Spelling Bee April 10



Tina Emancipator

On April 10, at 7 p.m., Reaching Heights will host its 33rd Annual Adult Community Spelling Bee at the Heights High auditorium.

In this popular event, up to 25 three-person teams compete for the coveted Bee Trophy—and earn bragging rights for a whole year.

Proceeds from this friendly competition enable Reaching Heights to support teachers, enrich students and connect the community to Heights public schools. This year, the funds raised will support the Many Villages Tutoring program and the Role Model Speakers program.

To help support Reaching

Heights, form a team of three and vie for the thrill of victory! Reaching Heights welcomes teams of all kinds: businesses, community groups, religious institutions, nonprofits, schools and universities, music groups, sports teams, school groups, street clubs, friends, and more. Team registration is \$500; additional fundraising efforts are welcome.

While teams competing is how Reaching Heights raises funds, participating in the audience is free and family-friendly. Since 1992, the Reaching Heights annual Spelling Bee has been a community favorite.

Those not comfortable getting up on stage can show their support through sponsorship of a team or of Reaching Heights directly, or by placing an ad in the event's Bee program to promote a business or organization while supporting the Heights' great public schools.

For complete information about participating, visit www.reaching-heights.org or e-mail tina@reaching-heights.org.

Tina Emancipator is the community engagement coordinator for Reaching Heights.

'Match Madness' tips off for Coventry PEACE Park



A basketball half-court is planned as part of the Coventry PEACE Park redesign.

Jack Valancy

The Fund for the Future of Heights Libraries (FFHL) has launched a "Match Madness" campaign to help pay for the basketball half-court in the new Coventry PEACE Park.

An anonymous donor will match up to \$25,000 in donations received by FFHL between March 17 and April 8, coinciding with the men's NCAA basketball tournament (aka "March Madness").

The half-court will feature a graphic representation of Dugway Brook, which flows beneath the

playground, a basketball hoop, and a concrete retaining wall that can be used for developing other ball skills.

PEACE Park—located next to the Coventry Village Branch Library, the Coventry PEACE Building, and the Coventry Village commercial district—will undergo a complete renovation in 2024, with groundbreaking scheduled for July 7. The community-driven design will comprise more than 100 trees, an ADA-accessible walking path, a 20-foot-tall cardinal climbing structure with a 32-foot slide, benches, a pollinator garden, and rainwater filtration.

Donations can be made at bit.ly/ffhlnews or by sending a check to FFHL c/o Heights Libraries, 2345 Lee Road, Cleveland Heights, 44118. Prospective donors are also welcome to send an e-mail to jack@valancy.com, or call 216-721-8990.

More details about the project also can be found at bit.ly/ffhlnews.

Jack Valancy is president of Fund for the Future of Heights Libraries, and potential donors are welcome to contact him. He helped build the Coventry PEACE Playground in 1993, and has lived in Cleveland Heights since graduating from Cleveland Heights High School in 1966.

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- Assisting with our annual benefit party (July 13)
- Helping out with the Heights Music Hop (Sept. 28)
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LWV program supports democracy's preservation



Community members discussed 10 habits of good citizens on Presidents Day 2024.

Rose Fairman and Elizabeth Tracy

On Feb. 19, Presidents Day, the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Chapter of the League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland (CH-UHLWV), in partnership with Heights Libraries, presented a free showing and discussion of the PBS video “A Citizen’s Guide to Preserving Democracy.”

The video presented a discussion between politician and author Richard Haass, former president of the Council on Foreign Relations, and PBS correspondent Hari Sreenivasan, illustrated by examples of how Americans are working to preserve democracy, such as the Great Lakes Civility Project.

In his book *The Bill of Obligations: The Ten Habits of Good Citizens*, Haass identified the following: 1) Remain civil, 2) Be informed, 3) Value norms, 4) Get involved, 5) Stay open to compromise, 6) Teach civics, 7) Promote the common good, 8) Reject violence, 9) Support public service, and 10) Put country first.

In her welcoming remarks, Wendy Deuring, chair of CH-UH LWV, said, “It is time now for we, the people, to re-engage with our system of democracy, with our fellow citizens, and to reclaim our system of government—by voting, by paying attention to our local and state governments, and by engaging with our fellow citizens and elected representatives.”

Following the video, CH-UH LWV members facilitated breakout group discussions. Each group added post-it notes to flip charts, citing habits they believe are practiced or are underused and need developing, including:

- Remain civil: Participants were positive about programs teaching students to be mediators; yet, remaining civil is elusive.
- Stay open to compromise and put country first: The political cost of compromise is high, and people may put party affiliation ahead of country first.
- Teach civics: Because “democracy is

fragile,” people need to “understand the importance of voting and to value the norm of voting.”

- Value norms: This is difficult when norms don’t reflect current values and laws change more slowly than social norms. Voter education, access to public meetings, and accuracy in reporting are essential.
- Reject violence: Attendees pointed out the importance of teaching anti-violent methods and practicing active non-violence. It is “too easy to demonize the ‘other’ if you do not actually meet/know each other.”
- Be informed: People must learn to distinguish between fact and opinion. Students must be taught how to process and analyze resources, identify logical fallacies, and know the First Amendment’s limits.
- Get involved: “People have no time for community actions,” and “burnout leads to disengagement,” contrasted with people taking informed interest and getting involved in activities such as food banks, community agencies, lobbying, and LWV involvement.
- Promote the common good: Library resources and public education promote the common good; yet, “in an economy where parents need to work a second job, they can’t work on societal issues because they are barely getting by.”

Participants, all actively committed to democracy, recognized the habits were interrelated building blocks. For example, remaining civil in political discussions also involves being able to compromise and to put country first.

“A Citizen’s Guide to Preserving Democracy” can be viewed online at <https://video.ideastream.org/show/a-citizens-guide-to-preserving-democracy>.

For those interested in hosting a viewing, CH-UH LWV members are available to assist or help with organization. Contact heights@lwvgreatercleveland.org for information.

Rose Fairman and Elizabeth Tracy are co-chairs, voter services, for CH-UH LWV.

Register for May 5 compost seminar

Elizabeth Englehart

Mark your calendars for International Compost Awareness Week, taking place May 5–11.

University Heights will take part in this global effort, kicking off the week with a free Backyard Composting 101 seminar on May 5, 1:30 p.m., at the University Heights Branch Library. Registration begins on April 23, at heightslibrary.org.

Carin Miller, education specialist for the Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District, will present the one-hour seminar. “This program will provide you the information and basic tools you’ll need to start a simple, hands-off backyard composting system,” said Miller. “On average, about 30% of household waste is compostable food scraps and yard waste. Backyard composting is one of the easiest things an individual can do to decrease the amount of waste being sent to the landfill.”

“Additionally, when food and yard waste is sent to the landfill, it generates methane gas, which has about 80 times more global warming potential than carbon dioxide in the short term.”

According to Sara Phillips, University Heights Library manager, “Heights Libraries has recently begun the Sustainable Library Certification Program process through the Sustainable Libraries Initiative, and programs like Backyard Composting

101 are part of our commitment to cultivate a greener future for both our library and community.”

Backyard composting may not be feasible or desirable for all residents, and some organic waste cannot be placed in backyard bins. This is where commercial composting comes in. Rust Belt Riders is the local provider of such services.

Zoe Apisdorf, director of residential experience for Rust Belt Riders, explained, “Composting at home is a great step for those interested in building closer relationships with their food use and biological backyard community. For all materials that cannot be composted in a backyard composter, many people choose to work with us as an option, in addition to composting at home. We believe that opting for both is the best solution to keeping all food waste from entering the landfill.”

Rust Belt Riders offers curbside pick-up as well as a neighborhood drop-off at Walter Stinson Community Park, aka “The Walt.”

Organic waste composting methods decrease methane, help mitigate climate change, reduce fertilizer inputs, and increase resilience to the effects of extreme weather conditions.

University Heights proudly shares in this global effort during International Compost Awareness Week.

Elizabeth Englehart is a member of the University Heights Citizens Advisory Committee on Sustainability.

Plan now for plant sale and swap, and other May events

Brenda H. May

Noble Gardeners’ Market (NGM) will host its annual Seedling Sale and Plant Swap on Saturday, May 18, 10 a.m. to noon.

All neighbors are invited to sell seedling plants, divide plants from their gardens, or bring potted houseplants to sell or swap. Sellers and buyers do not need to be from Cleveland Heights to join in.

The event will take place at the mini-park at the corner of Noble and Roanoke roads, one block north of Monticello Boulevard.

No fee is collected, but participants must supply their own chair and table or ground cloth, and should be aware that there are no utilities or restrooms at this pocket park.

All items must be clearly marked with the sale price or the swap option.

The NGM Seedling and Plant Swap is one feature of a weekend-long celebration of the Noble neighborhoods—We Are Noble 2024—hosted by Noble Neighbors.

On Friday, May 17, 6–8 p.m., Noble Elementary School’s PTA will host NobleFest, a family festival.

On Saturday, May 18, 1–4 p.m., Oxford Elementary School’s PTA will

host Oxford Carnival for family fun.

Watch nobleneighbors.com for updates as more events are added to the weekend schedule. All residents, businesses and institutions are invited to host yard sales, sidewalk sales and open doors to showcase the assets of the Noble neighborhood.

Brenda H. May is one of the Noble Neighbor leaders. Check out their story at [NobleNeighbors.com](https://nobleneighbors.com).

Going shopping?

Here are 4 reasons to buy from local small businesses:

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3. They support local causes and institutions
4. If you don’t support them now, they may not be around later

HEIGHTS OBSERVER
Published by Future Heights

Caddie earns full ride to college

Colton Howard



Vincent Roark

Vincent Roark, a Cleveland Heights resident who attends Saint Ignatius High School, is one of 17 Ohio students to be awarded the Western Golf Association's Chick Evans Scholarship. A full housing and tuition scholarship for golf caddies, it is the nation's largest privately funded scholarship program.

Throughout high school, Roark balanced a caddying job at Canterbury Golf Club with academics, cheerleading, and volunteer work. This fall, he will begin college as an Evans Scholar, attending The Ohio State University.

The Western Golf Association (WGA) has supported the Chick Evans Scholarship Program through the Evans Scholars Foundation since 1930. Known as one of golf's favorite charities, it is the nation's largest scholarship program for caddies.

To qualify for the Evans Scholarship, each student must meet the

program's four selection criteria and show a strong caddie record, excellent academics, demonstrated financial need and outstanding character.

More than 12,040 caddies have graduated as Evans Scholars since the program was founded by famed Chicago amateur golfer Charles "Chick" Evans Jr. in 1930.

"We are thrilled to welcome this new group of student caddies to the Evans Scholars family," said WGA Chairman Steve Colnitis. "Their dedication in the classroom, on the golf course and in their communities represents what our program has been about since 1930."

Funds for the scholarship come mostly from contributions by more than 36,000 golfers who belong to the Evans Scholars Par Club program. Evans Scholars Alumni donate more than \$15 million annually, and all proceeds from the BMW Championship—the penultimate PGA Tour Playoff event in the tour's FedExCup competition—benefit the program.

To learn more, visit wgaesf.org.

Colton Howard is an account executive with Dittoe Public Relations. Evans Scholarship Foundation is a client.

SENIOR SOLOIST continued from page 1

(CIM) faculty member Stephen Sims, with whom she still studies. She also studied in CIM's Suzuki program and played with CIM's Beginning and Youth Preparatory orchestras. Additionally, she served as concertmaster for the Cavani Quartet's Beyond Beethoven Project and was a 2022–23 Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra member. She was recently named a finalist in the 2024 Kenyon Music Scholarship competition.

Muller has played in CH-UH school orchestras since second grade at Fairfax Elementary School. At Heights High, Muller served as principal second violin of the Heights High Symphony during her freshman year, when school was held remotely, and recalls the challenge of leading sectionals online. Since her sophomore year, Muller has been concertmaster.

According to Director of Orchestras Daniel Heim, as concertmaster "Sophie really understands her responsibility. It's harder than it looks. It brings a lot of challenges and pressure with it. She's a great concertmaster and a great leader. I'm sure that's going to serve her well in other places, too."

Muller also has been the first violinist of the Heights High String Quartet, a co-concertmaster for the 2022 Heights production of "Sister Act," and concertmaster for both the 2023 Heights High Centennial and the Chicago tour.

Muller continues her family's tradition of music at Heights. Along with her mother, her aunt is a graduate of the program and an IMD Hall of Fame member, and her grandmother

was president of the Band and Orchestra Parent Organization. About her years in Heights' music programs, Muller stated, "I just want to emphasize how amazing this program is."

Muller's experience playing at Heights will culminate with her performance of Ralph Vaughn Williams' *The Lark Ascending*, which the composer described as a pastoral romance for violin and orchestra. Written in 1914 and revised in 1920, the piece was inspired by a George Meredith poem and musically depicts the bird's skyward ascension.

Outside of music, Muller is co-captain of the Heights Swim Team, where she is as a four-year varsity and A-relay member. She swims for the Blazing Barracudas club team in the off-season and the Heights Tigersharks in the summer, where she also teaches swimming. She is secretary of the 2024 Class Council, a member of the National Honor Society, and was named an AP Scholar with Distinction in 2023. Muller plans to attend college next year, majoring in psychology and minoring in music on a pre-law track.

Muller thanks her friends, family, and countless mentors for their love and support. She extends special thanks to Heim, Stewart Pharis, and Katie Holaway, for always making school orchestra one of her favorite periods of the day; to Sims, who nurtured her love for the violin; and to her mother, for introducing her to one of her life's greatest passions.

Eve McPherson is co-president of the Heights Band and Orchestra Parent Organization and professor of music at Kent State Trumbull.



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Cleveland Heights – University Heights Board of Education

Meeting highlights



FEBRUARY 20, 2024 - work session
Board members present were Gabe Crenshaw, Dan Heintz, and Malia Lewis. Board President Jodi Sourini and Phil Trimble were excused. Also present were Superintendent Elizabeth Kirby and Treasurer Scott Gainer.

District staff presented the academic performance for the past semester.

Attendance

Attendance as of February was 90.6 percent, with a target of 92 percent. In 2023, attendance was 88.6 percent. Chronic absenteeism, which includes excused and unexcused absences, was 35 percent as of February 2024, with a target of less than 28 percent. In 2023, it was 39.5 percent.

Academic proficiency

Third-grade literary proficiency is on track to reach the 69.7 percent year-end goal. Winter MAP testing results project a 54.7 percent or higher proficiency by the end of the school year. (MAP is a nationally normed, standardized achievement test.) Sixth-grade proficiency achievement is off track of the 59.6 percent goal but improving compared to 2022–23. Winter MAP results project a 43.3 percent proficiency. Tenth-grade proficiency is off track of the 63.3 percent goal but improving compared to 2022–23. Winter MAP results project a 57.9 percent proficiency.

Mathematics proficiency is off track for grades 3, 6, and 9. The third-grade math proficiency goal is 67.9 percent; winter testing results project a 51 percent proficiency by the end of the school year. The sixth-grade proficiency goal is 51.4 percent; winter testing results project a 34.5 percent proficiency. The ninth-grade algebra proficiency goal is 59 percent; winter testing results project a 26.6 percent proficiency.

Kirby noted that at the end of last year many classes performed higher than [in] winter test projections.

Graduation rate/requirements

The district's graduation goal is 93.2 percent. Each graduating senior must meet three requirements:

1) Students must acquire a minimum of 20 credits in state-specified subjects and pass state-mandated tests. Currently, the district expects 90 percent will have the necessary credits.

2) Students must pass Algebra 1 and English Language Arts state exams. If students do not pass, they can instead satisfy a career-readiness graduation requirement by demonstrating two career-focused achievements for which the district offers curricula, be accepted into an apprentice program, or obtain a state-issued industry license. In 2023, 160 students satisfied the career-readiness requirement. Students can also opt out of the graduation test requirement by earning credits through College Credit Plus, high SAT or ACT scores, or enlistment in the military.

3) Public school students must earn two of 12 state-offered diploma seals, which certify academic, technical, and professional readiness. These seals include job or college readiness, citizenship, biliteracy, community service, and others.

The administration tries to identify students who are off track as early as ninth grade. They also provide post-graduation support for college and career readiness.

LWV Observer: Paula Goodwin.

MARCH 7, 2024 - regular meeting
All board members were present, as were the superintendent and treasurer.

Board actions

The board filed tax-assessment complaints against three commercial properties. The property owners will be notified and have an opportunity to attend a board meeting to discuss the board's concerns.

The board approved a tax increment financing (TIF) agreement in connection with the development of city-owned property on Taylor Road. Phil Trimble voted no, saying he did not want to agree to any tax abatement or deferment.

The board authorized required third-grade testing for 2024–25, in paper format.

New math curriculums

Michael Jenkins, director of curriculum & instruction, and Joyce Bukovac, instructional specialist for math, presented their investigations [into] the efficacy of the new math curriculums (called Into Math, Waggle, and Zearn) currently being piloted and recommended for adoption. The curriculums improved test scores for students, and using one integrated curriculum, from kindergarten level through algebra, facilitated transitions throughout grade levels. The presentation discussed various approaches for students with different needs and recommended, for upper-level math courses, using updated editions of materials from prior publishers where available.

Superintendent's comments

Pre-school enrollment for 2024–25 is full, with a waiting list. The board discussed the cost of adding another pre-school classroom and whether the district should prioritize some students over others.

Treasurer's report

Gainer explained the process for the district to file a complaint against valuation for real property, which can occur only for commercial properties valued above \$500,000.

He explained the difference between tax abatement and a TIF (Tax Incremental Financing).

An MD&A (Management Discussion and Analysis) report, which provides a narrative overview and analysis of the basic financial statements, is available online by [putting] CH-UH FYE 6/30/23 ACFR in a search engine.

LWV Observer: Paula Goodwin.

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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HEIGHTS OBSERVER

Library celebrates hip-hop and comics

Sheyl Banks

On Sunday, May 5, Heights Libraries will celebrate the intersection of hip-hop and comics with comic writer and publisher Amy Chu, Run-DMC founder and comic publisher Darryl McDaniels, local artist John G of Shiner Comics, and Cleveland rapper Phyll Thomas.

A full afternoon of programs will take place at the Coventry Village branch, 1925 Coventry Road, beginning at 2 p.m. with a virtual conversation with Chu and McDaniels, followed by a 3 p.m. interactive snack-focused comic workshop with John G—featuring a nacho bar—called “One Page Comic Workshop: Snack Stories.” A concurrent live performance by Thomas begins at 3:15 p.m.

Registration for all May 5 programs begins April 21 at heightslibrary.org.

Chu is the founder of Alpha Girl Comics, and has written for DC, Marvel, Dark Horse, and Dynamite Entertainment, as well as for McDaniels’ company, Darryl Makes Comics. She has also written graphic novels for kids, including *Fighting to Belong!*, *Turning Red*, *Sea Sirens*, *Sky Island*, and *Ana and the Cosmic Race*. McDaniels, best known for his time with the ’80s rap group Run-DMC, founded Darryl Makes Comics in 2014, and has

written several comics in addition to publishing the work of other writers and artists.

Library staff were able to book the duo by entering, and winning, the Christopher J. Hoy Scholarship Silent Auction while attending the American Library Association conference in the fall. A virtual talk by the two was one of the auction items, and staff immediately saw the potential to reach residents, especially kids and teens, with the program.

“We saw an opportunity to land these actual rock stars (and comics rock stars) for a virtual visit,” said Youth Services Librarian E. Hogan. “With several new book tie-ins, and local rapper and comic artist connections, this all led to a multigenerational, interdisciplinary, dream-team event.”

John G is a local comic artist known for his collaboration with comic artist Jake Kelly on the comic series “The Lake Erie Monster,” and for his instantly recognizable artwork for Melt Bar and Grilled restaurants. He also is one of the founders of the local Genghis Con independent comic convention in Cleveland, and has taught cartooning to young people in the Cleveland Public Schools.

Thomas is an emerging local hip-hop artist known for his upbeat instrumentation and lyrical wordplay.

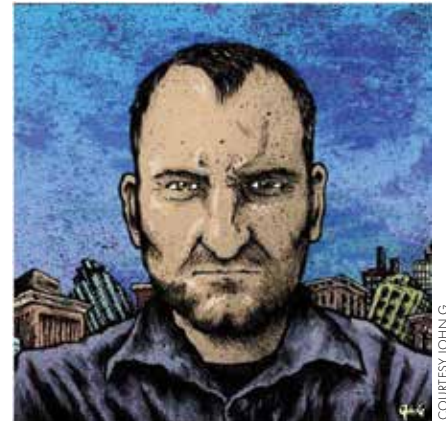
According to Thomas, his mission in music is to encourage people to be themselves.

The Lee Road branch will host two earlier comic-related programs:

On Wednesday, May 1, at 7 p.m., Valentino Zullo, Anisfield-Wolf Postdoctoral Fellow in English and the public humanities at Ursuline College and the Ohio Center for the Book Scholar-in-Residence at Cleveland Public Library, will present “The History of Comics.” Registration begins April 17 at heightslibrary.org.

On Saturday, May 4, Heights Libraries’ Youth Services Department will host Free Comic Book Day in the teen room. The event will last all day, or until the comics run out.

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



John G (self portrait).



Amy Chu



Phyll Thomas



Darryl McDaniels

Coventry library to host Memory Cafes

Gail Norris

The Farrell Foundation for Brain Health hosted its first Memory Cafe at Coventry Village Library in March.

Each program, guided by professionals, is for people with cognitive memory loss due to dementia or Alzheimer’s and their primary care partners. The sessions combine music, art and storytelling with refreshments—all in a café atmosphere.

In April and May, the cafes will take place on the second Thursday of the month, 1–2:30 p.m. Registration is recommended for the free programs. To register, call 216-321-3400.

April 11 — Baseball Memories: Ike Brooks from the Society of American Baseball Research will reminisce about baseball opening days in Cleveland and other ballparks. Participants can also partake of baseball-themed snacks and refreshments.

May 9 — Stories We Write: Professional storyteller Kathy Strawser will guide the group in a Time Slips™ writing session, in which participants get ideas from a unique photograph or artwork and have a chance to see the dynamics of the story and everyone’s involvement. Café-style refreshments will be offered.

Each program offers opportunities for engagement and socialization, which are vitally important for the well-being of the affected indi-

vidual. The programs are offered in conjunction with city of Cleveland Heights’ pledge to become a Dementia Friendly Community.

Dr. Bere Miesen, a Dutch psychiatrist, came up with the idea of Memory Cafes, which were first held in 1997 in the Netherlands. Since then, they have spread to Europe and the U.S. An attendee described them as a “place where persons with early-stage dementia and their ‘carers’ can come together to share social time unhampered by stigma, awkwardness or discomfort.”

In 2011, Dr. Charlie Farrell and daughter Rev. Katie Farrell Norris started the Carolyn L. Farrell Foundation for Brain Health to make arts-based programming available to the community in support and honor of Carolyn Farrell, their wife and mother. The Farrell Foundation has served hundreds of individuals with dementia and their families over the last 13 years, with a focus on giving meaning and support in both practical and creative ways. Participants in the programs share the positive impact that the enrichment sessions have on their ability to socialize and improve quality of life.

For more information, visit farrellfoundation.org.

Gail Norris is a volunteer contributor for the Farrell Foundation.



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Cleveland Heights – University Heights Public Library Board

Meeting highlights

FEBRUARY 19, 2024

Board members present were President Vikas Turakhia, Vice President Annette Iwamoto, Secretary Patti Carlyle, Dana Fluellen, Tyler McTigue, and Melissa Soto-Schwartz. Hallie Turnberrez was not present. The meeting lasted one hour and ten minutes.

Nancy Zelman retires

Librarian Nancy Zelman joined the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library staff in 1993, as a part-time circulation associate. On Sept. 29, 2013, she advanced to full-time adult services librarian at the University Heights Branch. She has provided excellent customer service for 31 years; impacted seniors through her program, the Senior Spot; and implemented the Bookmobile during the time the University Heights Branch was closed. Her steadfast commitment to the library's positive image, her wisdom, and her dedication and service to the community will be greatly missed when she retires March 1.

Fund for the Future of Heights Libraries

Jack Valancy, president of the Fund for the Future of Heights Libraries, reviewed current and future fundraising efforts for the library.

Family Connections

Family Connections of Northeast Ohio partners with Heights Libraries. Representatives described their program, which provides support for the family playroom at Lee Road and offers year-round free programs and services for families and children at locations throughout Northeast Ohio. Family Connections engages families with young children to nurture social connections, enhance child development, and improve school readiness. For more than 40 years, it has provided parenting support and educational opportunities for families with children from birth through age 6.

Board actions

- Approved the Guaranteed Maximum Price contract #2 for construction at the PEACE Park.
- Extended the JMC Consulting Contract for Eric Gonczy's services to manage the PEACE Park project.
- Approved the contract with Layercake LLC for landscape architect services for Coventry PEACE Park. (Andrew Sargeant LLC, the principal landscape architect on the Coventry PEACE Park project, recently established a new company, Layercake LLC.)
- Approved the transfer of \$2.1 million from the Library General Fund to the PEACE Playground Fund with one dissenting vote by Dana Fluellen, who felt that library funds should be used for library-related activities such as programming, circulation, etc. She maintained that diverting additional funds to an extracurricular project such as the Coventry PEACE Park, just because the library owns the property, beyond what has already been assigned to the park directly from the library was not good stewardship

- of the library's dollars.
- Approved the purchase of 73 desktop PCs, 14 black-and-white printers, and 7 color printers.
- Approved revised hours of operation during the April 8 Solar Eclipse so that staff can enjoy the eclipse.
- Approved a sustainability policy that is "environmentally sound, economically feasible and socially equitable."
- Approved a two-month extension to the leave of absence for Laurie Marotta.

Director's report

Deputy Director Kim DeNero-Ackroyd is running for president of the Public Library Association.

Lee Road Youth Services Librarian E. Hogan was selected to serve on the ALA Stonewall Book Awards children's and young adult subcommittee, which honors books from the LGBTQIA+ experience published in the previous year.

June 2 will be the Noble Road Library's grand opening and the beginning of the summer reading program.

The library will sponsor a program by Jeff Smith at Heights High auditorium on Oct. 19.

Public service report

Tri-C's ASPIRE ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) program at Lee Road continues to be popular with the community. This month's ESOL orientation attracted 40 participants, while 72 students attended the twice-a-week classes.

Passport applications increased compared to the previous month, with 97 passport applications, and 119 pictures. Total income for the month was \$5,180.

Cricut Crafting Equipment has arrived. Classes will be offered to the community. This equipment allows makers to unleash their creativity to do activities such as customize baseball caps; cut, emboss, and engrave; make custom mugs; design greeting cards; and heat press designs on a variety of items.

Participants in the Coventry January Earthworks program, facilitated by Branch Manager Maggie Kinney, learned how to make paper using recycled materials. Everyone left with their creations and skills to recreate the project at home.

University Heights Sound Bath program, led by one of the storytime parents, has been a big hit with attendance growing each week. A sound bath is an experience [in which] one is bathed in pure sound bringing [about] a relaxed and meditative state. Once the sound experience is complete, the participant should feel relaxed, centered, and grounded in their physical and mental well-being.

LWV Observer: Judith Beeler.

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



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Nicholson B. White Gallery opens Spring Show



You... I Met in the Rain #1, by Meryl Engler.



Untitled, by Gene Epstein.



Untitled, by Boni S. Gelfand.



Wade Lagoon, by Jeff Suntala.

COURTESY NICHOLSON B. WHITE GALLERY

Robin Outcalt

The Nicholson B. White Gallery invites the community to the opening of its Spring Show on Friday, April 5, 5-7 p.m., where attendees will have the opportunity to meet the artists: Jeff Suntala, Boni Suzanne Gelfand, Meryl Engler, and Gene Epstein. The show will be on view until Sunday, June 9, at the gallery, located at St. Paul's Episcopal Church.

Jeff Suntala is known around town for his urban plein air watercolors, featuring both familiar and obscure sites around Cleveland and its outskirts. A member of the Ohio Watercolor Society, Suntala has garnered acclaim for his Cleveland Plein Air Watercolor calendar.

Boni Suzanne Gelfand is a Cleveland artist whose work reflects her experience in interior design and the travel industry.

Utilizing materials such as silks, linens, wall coverings, crushed glass, beads, and sequins, her works—akin to mosaics—resonate with meticulous detail. Her travels to foreign lands inform and inspire her work, which also features flowers and plant life as subjects.

Meryl Engler, a resident of Akron, brings to the exhibition her vibrant woodcut prints, which are becoming known in, and beyond, Northeast Ohio. Pattern, repetition and hidden landscapes shape her work, as do magical human moments. She seeks to push the limits of printmaking, combining different art mediums in innovative and exciting ways.

Gene Epstein breathes new life into used or discarded books and found objects, transforming them into thought-provoking works of art. Expect the unexpected when viewing Epstein's inventive art, where aged books take on new shapes and complexities. Epstein has worked in bookbinding and illustration, and is also a talented jazz bassist.

St. Paul's Episcopal Church, at 2747 Fairmount Blvd., welcomes the community to its events and services. For information, visit www.stpauls-church.org.

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

UH Symphonic Band salutes spring April 7

Edward Siess

University Heights Symphonic Band (UHSB) will return to John Carroll University's (JCU) Dolan Science Center Atrium on Sunday, April 7, 3:30 p.m., for a free concert—a salute to spring and to the next day's solar eclipse.

Now in its 54th season, and under the direction of Devlin Pope, UHSB will play concert band music from Samuel Barber, Aaron Copland, John Philip Sousa, Frank Ticheli and more at JCU.

Parking and admission are free, and the facility is ADA accessible.

Dolan Science Center is the first building behind the Fairmont

Circle Campus entrance.

Next month, the band plans to kick off its summer season with a concert of patriotic music on Sunday, May 26, 12:30 p.m., at Whitehaven Memorial Park in Mayfield Village.

On Memorial Day, May 27, the band will perform at Gearity elementary school at the conclusion of the University Heights Memorial Day parade.

For additional information, and a list of upcoming concerts, visit universityheightsband.org.

Edward Siess is president and business manager of University Heights Symphonic Band.

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In 'Significant Other,' stereotypical sidekick is the protagonist

Emily Polcyn

Dobama Theatre will present the regional premiere of "Significant Other" by Joshua Harmon, directed by Colin Anderson, April 26 through May 19.

Described by *The New York Times* (NYT) as "a tenderly unromantic romantic comedy, as richly funny as it is ultimately heart-stirring," the play follows Jordan Berman and his trio of close girlfriends as they navigate companionship, loneliness, and love.

Berman would love to be in love, but that's easier said than done. So, until he meets Mr. Right, he wards off lonely nights with three best friends. But as singles' nights turn into bachelorette parties, the protagonist discovers that the only thing harder than finding love is supporting those around him when they do.

Playwright Harmon first rose to acclaim with the 2012 off-Broadway production of his comedy "Bad Jews" at Roundabout Theatre Company. "Significant Other" was first produced in 2015 off-Broadway, before transferring to Broadway in 2017. Since "Significant Other," Harmon has had three other plays produced off-Broadway, with his new play "Prayer for the French Republic" making its Broadway premiere at the beginning of this year.

"Significant Other" explores the

stereotype of the "gay best friend," but in this play, Jordan Berman is a three-dimensional protagonist.

"I will say just as an audience member whenever there's a story, I'm almost always more interested in the supporting players rather than the lead character," said Harmon. "But I do remember when "My Best Friend's Wedding" came out and what a watershed moment that was, to see a gay character in a mainstream movie and how three-dimensional he was."

In addition to queer representation, the play also explores themes of aging and seeking a life purpose. In a NYT interview, Harmon stated that his playwriting process involves exploring a theme or question without an answer. For "Significant Other," the question is: "How do you live when you know you're not living the life that you think you ought to be living?"

With this production, Dobama continues its Full Circle program, which connects audiences with relevant organizations. For "Significant Other," Dobama is partnering with the LGBT Community Center of Greater Cleveland. This includes participation in the rehearsal process, provided literature at every show, and panel discussions to follow select Saturday night performances.

Dobama's production will feature Scott Esposito, Mary-Francis



R. Miller, Kat Shy, Katherine Nash, Mike Glavan*, Adam Rawlings, Catherine Albers*, Roxana Bell, and Michael J. Montanus; with scenic design by Richard Morris Jr., lighting design by Adam Ditzel, sound design by Jim Swonger, costume design by Suwatana Rockland, props design by Andy Zicari, intimacy direction by Julia Fisher, and stage management by Barbara Kozlov*.

(*Denotes Actors' Equity Association members.)

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

Emily Polcyn is a resident associate director in arts administration at Dobama Theatre.

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A Message from County Executive Chris Ronayne

April is Poetry Month! Cuyahoga County's Poet Laureate, Honey Bell-Bey, uses poetry to inspire and motivate people.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors and Americans for the Arts recently honored her with the National

Citizen Artist Award for her significant contributions and influence. Even before becoming the Poet Laureate of Cuyahoga County in 2020, poetry has been a part of Bell-Bey's life. She wrote her first poem at age eight, and today, she encourages young people to write poetry as well. She is also the founder of The Distinguished Gentlemen of Spoken Word, which is a performance group for men. The award-winning troupe performs across the United States and around the world.

Bell-Bey's work goes beyond poetry. She is a youth and community advocate and an experienced trainer in Substance Abuse, Youth Work, Culture, and the Integration of Science and Innovative Practices.



Honey Bell-Bey: Poet, writer, educator, and community advocate.

To read Honey Bell-Bey's poetry, visit poets.org/poet/honey-bell-bey.

Log your reading for the **Cuyahoga Reads Reading Challenge!** Scan the QR Code to get started with the Beanstack app today!

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Cuyahoga Reads Literacy Tips

Celebrating National Poetry Month with your children in April is an excellent way to ignite their love for reading. The vibrant, fun and playful nature of poetry, which often involves exploring simple concepts and emotions, makes it a perfect choice for young readers. Not only does reading poems inspire their imagination, it also introduces them to language structures, word choices, and rhyming patterns in a joyful way. Encouraging children to not just read, but also write their own poem, further enhances their linguistic skills and lets their creativity blossom.



Chamber Collective premieres 'Oath Breaker'

Ty Alan Emerson

The newly reinvented Cleveland Chamber Collective takes the stage at Disciples Christian Church in Cleveland Heights for its inaugural concert on April 20, at 7:30 p.m.

The new lineup features some faces familiar to the Cleveland chamber music scene, including violinist Emily Cornelius, flutist Linda White, and pianist Eric Charnofsky. Also joining the band are up-and-coming performers, including violist Brian Slawta and cellist Trevor Kazarian, with returning percussionist Dylan Moffitt.

The collective will premiere

Oath Breaker, a piece that takes the audience on a 60-minute journey of anger, grief, and hope, “striving to come to grips with the events of Jan. 6 and the subsequent fallout.”

The composer refers to the work as a Requiem in form and presentation, stating that his hope for the piece is an “emotional and spiritual process, like a mass or similar spiritual sequence.”

The piece features the full ensemble and electronic playback, with each member of the collective taking a solo. The digital elements consist of musical sounds as well as text. Instead of the traditional Latin liturgy, the composition incorporates quotes

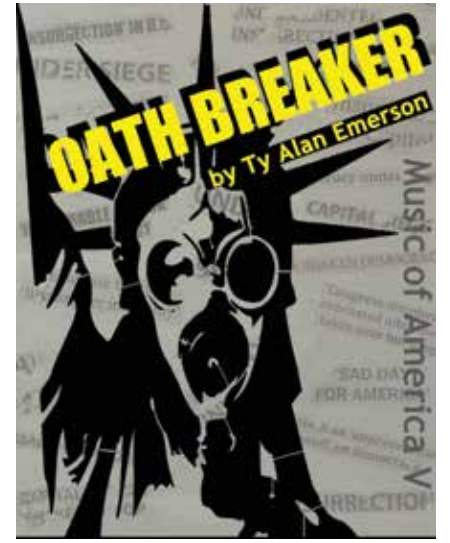
by Shakespeare, Lincoln, Cervantes, Elizabeth I and others, as well as testimony, texts and tweets, to conjure the images and emotions from that day.

This concert is scheduled to be recorded live and live-streamed through the band’s Facebook page.

A second performance is scheduled for Sunday, April 28, at 3:30 p.m., at Inlet Dance Theater’s studio, the Estuary, located in the Pivot Center for Art, Dance and Expression, at 2937 West 25th St. in Cleveland.

Both concerts are free and open to the public. For more information, visit Cleveland Chamber Collective’s website, www.chambercollective.org, and follow the group on Facebook.

Ty Alan Emerson, the composer of *Oath*



Breaker, has been presenting music in Cleveland since 2000. Following two terms as president of the Cleveland Composers’ Guild, he is currently the director and conductor of the Cleveland Chamber Collective. Learn more at tyalanemerson.com.

Mark National Poetry Month with Ekphrastacy



Heights’ Poet Laureate Siaara Freeman at an Ekphrastacy event.

Lydia Mandell

As National Poetry Month unfolds, Heights Arts will present the latest event in its Ekphrastacy series—a fusion of visual art and poetic expression.

At the heart of Heights Arts’ April 18 event is the dynamic interplay between artists and poets, epitomizing the nonprofit’s commitment to fostering cultural vibrancy. Spearheading this artistic endeavor is Siaara Freeman, Heights poet laureate, who began her two-year term in April 2023.

She is a teaching artist for Center for Arts-Inspired Learning and a celebrated poet and performer. Freeman’s collection of poetry, *Urbansbee*, released in August 2022, has garnered widespread acclaim, showcasing her ability to delve into the intricacies of urban life with grace and insight.

The upcoming Ekphrastacy event, scheduled for 7 p.m. on Thursday, April 18, at Heights Arts, will feature Freeman alongside guest poets Beks Freeman, Carrie George, and Philip Metres. The poets will weave words in response to the thought-provoking pieces showcased in the current Heights

Arts exhibition, *Irrational Objects: Backwards Into the Future*. Attendees are invited to immerse themselves in a realm where creativity knows no bounds, celebrating the power of language and imagery to transcend boundaries and ignite the imagination.

The appointment of Freeman as Heights Poet Laureate marked a significant milestone for both Heights Arts and the broader community. The position, known as the Cleveland Heights Poet Laureate through the 10 previous appointees, expanded with Freeman’s appointment, to encompass the entire Heights community through a new partnership with University Heights.

Under Freeman’s guidance, the Heights Poet Laureate program continues to uphold its legacy as the longest-running laureateship in the state.

For more information on the April 18 Ekphrastacy event, or to reserve a ticket, visit www.heightsarts.org.

Lydia Mandell is the social media and communications coordinator for Heights Arts

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Things you didn't know about where you live



SONGS AND STORIES

David Budin

I've given two talks on Coventry, on Coventry. Last November, and in December of the previous year, I spoke at the Coventry library about the history of Coventry. The presentation was about how Coventry Village came to be what it was and is.

A lot of people showed up

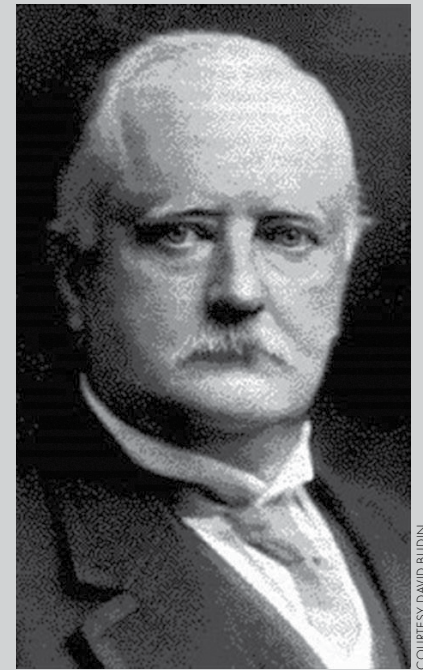
for those talks, but even more didn't. In fact, most of the world did not. As a result, I'm always running into people who say, "Sorry I couldn't make it to your Coventry thing. . . . So, how DID Coventry become what it was?"

I can't tell them the whole thing, because the story starts with the beginning of the city of Cleveland—and I mean with Moses Cleaveland. So, I usually tell them some things that I'm fairly certain they didn't know about the history of their city. Like, first of all, if they know where I

live, I point out that my house is approximately on the 9th hole of the golf course that used to cover a large part of the Cedar-Fairmount area. You've seen signs designating the area as "Euclid Golf," right? That's why.

And I tell them the course's clubhouse, which was near where Derbyshire Road and Euclid Heights Boulevard are now, cost \$50,000—at a time when average houses cost a few hundred dollars to build—and from it, you could see Lake Erie.

And why was it called Euclid Golf? For the same reason Euclid Heights Boulevard got its name. Pandering. The developer of what became Cleveland Heights, Patrick Calhoun, a wealthy railroad guy, came to town to see the new memorial for his friend, the late President James A. Garfield. He could see it from his friend's farm, which covered most of what is now Coventry Village (and much more),



COURTESY DAVID BUDIN

This is Patrick Calhoun, who started what is now Cleveland Heights, went broke, moved to California, started the famous San Francisco trolley cars, got run over (by a car) and died.

and he got the idea to build a little community here for other wealthy people.

Two super-important things happened: First, since he was a railroad guy, he worked with local rail companies to put trolley car lines up Mayfield Hill and, more significantly, Cedar Hill. Before that, it was extremely difficult for people to get up here. Second, he knew that the denizens of the world-famous Millionaires' Row—Euclid Avenue, from Public Square to the East 40s (and rapidly expanding eastward)—were becoming disillusioned with that area because it was becoming too crowded and, due to the burgeoning industry downtown and to the south of the city and in the Flats, the place really smelled bad.

So Calhoun figured (correctly) that they would move to this new area, now that they could get up here, and playing on the reputation of Millionaire's Row, called his new community Euclid Heights—a step up from where they had been living. And Euclid Heights Boulevard—which

continued on page 23

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TREE PEOPLE continued from page 11

large shade trees. The group planted its 1,000th tree last fall.

The Ohio Division of Forestry grant will enable the group to plant at least 150 more trees at no charge to homeowners or residents.

If you want a free tree for your front yard, go to www.heightstree-people.com and fill in a simple form.

A volunteer will contact you to arrange a time to take a look at your yard with you and talk about what you want. Then, expert volunteer planters will show up with a tree, plant it, mulch it, and put up deer protection. They'll even leave you with care instructions—mostly,

just add water from time to time.

Heights Tree People can also provide speakers to address service groups or congregations. And, of course, charitable donations to Heights Tree People can help bring even more trees to the community.

Pat Relf Hanavan is a writer, a volunteer at Fairfax Elementary School, secretary of Heights Tree People, and a grandma known as Socky. Eric Coben is a gifted intervention specialist at Fairfax, a CH resident, and Heights Tree People board member.

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SONGS & STORIES continued from page 22

you've always wondered how it got that name—was at the heart of the development. It worked. All of the houses were huge. There are none left, but they were twice the size of the biggest houses there now—and some of those are pretty big. In fact, there are a few houses behind that part of Euclid Heights Boulevard now that look like mansions, and those were just the carriage houses for the original homes.

Anyway, I also tell these people who couldn't come to my talk, but want me to tell them interesting stuff, that there used to be a racetrack where Euclid Heights Boulevard and Edgehill Road is. I don't know which side, but wherever it was, it's hard to imagine now.

And I explain that relatively soon after Calhoun started selling these huge lots for wealthy people to build giant homes on, he went broke, and the bank subdivided the lots, so now regular people could afford them. Suddenly hundreds of houses and apartment buildings sprung up. People needed stores. And that strip of Coventry Road was right between the two trolley car lines that came up Mayfield Road and Euclid Heights Boulevard. And people had to walk up and down that strip of Coventry to change trolley car lines.


Plus, at the same time, another guy, M.M. Brown, came to town and started what he called the

Mayfield Heights development, which was just east of Coventry, going down Mayfield to Superior Road. So, there were now all these people living near Coventry, and others with easy access to it, and lots of stores and other businesses all along Coventry—and a brand-new elementary school at the Euclid Heights Boulevard end, and soon after, the Coventry library.

So, that's what I tell them—if they're still standing there.

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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