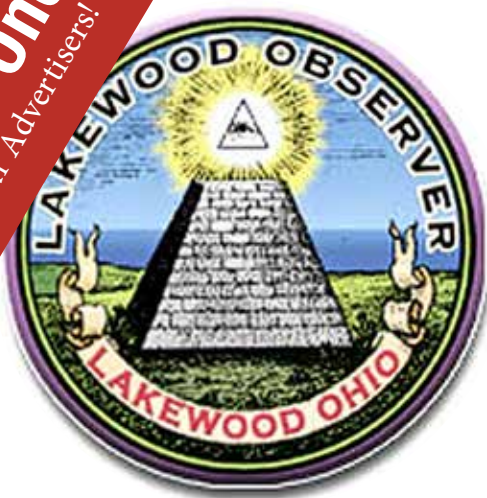


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**“Isn’t it nice to think that tomorrow is a new day with no mistakes in it yet?” - L.M. Montgomery**

# THE LAKEWOOD OBSERVER

Founder of Award Winning Observer Community-Written Newspapers & Websites

Volume 20, Issue 1, January 10, 2024

## State Rep. Michael Skindell Not Seeking Re-Election

by Caitlin Robertson

State Rep. Michael J. Skindell (Lakewood), announced his plans not to seek re-election to the Ohio General Assembly in 2024. Skindell, who is entering his 22nd year in the legislature, said he intends to serve out his current term, but not seek re-election.

Rep. Skindell represents Lakewood and portions of western Cleveland, and is currently a member of the Finance Committee, serving as Ranking Member of the Trans-

portation Subcommittee, and Government Oversight and Civil Justice Committees. He also serves as a member of the Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review and the Power Siting Board. Over his years as a member of the General Assembly, Skindell has served more than sixteen years on the finance committees and 7 years as ranking Democrat member.

“I’m deeply grateful for the confidence I have received from the voters during these years



in the legislature and for the opportunity to provide a steady voice for our shared values in Columbus,” said Rep. Skindell. “I am proud of our record having dozens of bills and amendments passed and that my office, with the help of my legislative aides, has provided superior constituent services throughout these years.”

During his legislative tenure, Skindell will have served fourteen years in the House of Representatives and eight years in the Senate. Rep. Skindell’s legislative priorities have included making the state’s budget work for average Ohioans, protecting the state’s natural resources, including air and water, providing health care for all, protecting workers and consumers and ensuring all people are treated with fairness and respect.

As a long-time member of the finance committees in the Ohio House and Senate, Skindell championed fair and equitable taxation, opposing tax cuts which mostly benefited the richest Ohioans and corporations. He successfully advocated for Ohio’s earned income tax credit, helping the working poor, and continues to argue for making it refundable. In 2007, Rep. Skindell was a leading legislator who worked to expand Ohio’s State Children’s Health Insurance Program, earning him the 2007 Legislative Champion of Children Award from the American Academy of Pediatrics and Voice for Ohio’s Children. Skindell believes that the state budget should be used

**continued on page 8**

## LO’s Holiday Decorating Contest 2023 We Have A Winner!



*Congratulations 1258 Edwards! You have won \$125.00 in gift certificates from our sponsors: Woodstock BBQ, India Garden, West End Tavern, Root Cafe and Carabel Salon.*

## H2O's Thirtieth Anniversary Year - A Year At Cove Community Center



by Emmie Hutchison

The City of Lakewood established H2O, the “Help to Others” program in 1993 as part of the Department of Human Services. The program’s foundation is rooted in the idea that if youth are provided opportunities to meaningfully serve and engage in the community, they will contribute – and they will flourish. Thirty years later, that vision continues to unfold with every project. It is profound to witness how quickly and deeply volunteer experiences impact individuals. One of H2O’s Summer Service Campers, Indigo M., wrote in her sponsor letter: “Ever since I made the decision to join H2O three years ago my heart has grown 100x the size.” We can’t

thank the supportive community that surrounds H2O enough for helping to sustain it to this thirtieth anniversary year.

In addition to celebrating H2O’s thirtieth anniversary in 2023, it was also the first full year that the Department of Human Services operated from the newly renovated Cove Community Center. It was a year of growing into the space, re-imagining and adapting old events, and truly enjoying this amazing community space.

H2O launched the year with the annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service by hosting elementary school children at Cove for a special morning,

**continued on page 11**

## Tristan Rader Announces Candidacy For State Representative



by Tristan Rader, Lakewood Councilman

I’m excited to announce I’m running for State Representative in Ohio’s 13th House District. I’m thrilled to share this moment with you!

Our campaign is rooted in our community values, fighting for a more just and equitable Ohio. Just as I have on city council, I will continue to champion renewable energy, economic justice, and fight to preserve our democracy in Columbus! Your support is critical in the fight!



*On Thursday, January 4, Police Chief Kevin Fischer and the Lakewood Police Department officially welcomed new officers Asael Negron, Shane McCarthy, and Nicholas Dascani. Congratulations to all three of you, and thank you for serving the community!*



THE MAYOR’S CORNER

Highlights Of 2023

Happy New Year! I hope that all of you had a wonderful holiday season. This time of year, it’s natural to reflect on where we have been and what we have accomplished. On behalf of the City of Lakewood, I am proud of what our dedicated and talented team of employees across all our departments were able to achieve on your behalf in 2023. Below are just some of the highlights for Lakewood over the past year.

**Safety Initiatives:** Our Lakewood safety forces continued to create and implement innovative programs to holistically address our citizens’ safety needs. That included the introduction by Lakewood Police of its Safe Place Program to partner with businesses to provide “safe places” throughout Lakewood for victims and those at risk of hate crimes, harassment, and bullying. It also included the continuation of two initiatives launched in 2022 by our

Fire Department, the Car Seat Fit Stop and the Neighborhood Paramedic, which continued to see high usage and impact for our residents.

**Fiscal Stewardship:** For the fourth consecutive year, the City of Lakewood achieved The Ohio Auditor of State Award with Distinction. To earn this prestigious award, a government entity must achieve a “clean” audit report across challenging criteria. That includes everything from strict adherence to accounting principles and avoiding material deficiencies or weaknesses in reporting to also having no ethics referrals, no financial concerns, and meeting obligations for public meetings and records standards. Credit goes to our tremendous team in Lakewood’s finance department and many

by Meghan George  
Mayor/Safety Director, City of Lakewood

in City Hall who work to ensure that our City maintains the highest levels of integrity and fiscal stewardship for your tax dollars.

**Winterhurst Operations and Refresh:** In November 2023, the City celebrated the grand reopening of this beloved city facility with major operational changes and capital investments. Our new private operating partner, Lakewood Community Ice, has brought renewed energy, service, and programming, including Open/Public Skate, Parent-Tot Hockey, Adult Drop-In Hockey, and Adult Skate. Physical upgrades include refreshing the lobby, concessions, and lounge areas, 100% replacement of skates for public rental, and necessary repairs to several areas of the facility. And Lakewood’s traditional “Winterhurst Ice Arena” signage, name,

and logo are back in use and prominently displayed inside and out.

**Foster Pool Revitalization:** In June, we celebrated the grand reopening of Foster Pool following a multimillion-dollar project to completely update and overhaul this beloved community asset. With improved accessibility, a new competition and recreation pool, water play amenities area, splash pad, and bathroom renovations, Foster Pool has something for everyone. The City saw high usage of the new pool, and looks forward to serving our community well for decades to come.

**City Parks Upgrades and Planning:** Our Planning Department and Public Works department continued to plan for and implement ongoing upgrades and maintenance work at our excellent network of city parks. This year, Lakewood saw significant work at our

continued on page 7

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Lakewood Observer

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Friday, February 2, 2024

Publish Date  
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Wednesday, February 7, 2024

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**The Lakewood Observer is produced by volunteers/residents of Lakewood.**  
If you’d like to help this history-making 19-year-old project continue to publish the words, stories and images of fellow Lakewoodites follow the QR Code to the Member Center and sign up at [www.lakewoodobserver.com/members](http://www.lakewoodobserver.com/members).  
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**Isn’t it time you joined this effort to report community news while preserving our history?**

# LAKEWOOD PUBLIC LIBRARY

## January Events

by Lisa Calfee  
Vietnamese Refugees:

### Stories of Courage, Hope and Resilience

Through exhibits and related programs involving literature, poetry, film, the study of faith traditions, art and photography, we examine the lives and important stories of Vietnamese refugees, celebrating a people’s history and culture. Our special programming, for both adults and children, will run from January 1, 2024 through April 30, 2024.

#### Vietnam Program: Documentary

“A Cloud Never Dies” (2022) Produced by Plum Village  
Continuous Screening (27 minutes)

January 1, 2024 through April 30, 2024, Main Library First Floor Lobby

A new biographical documentary of Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh narrated by actor Peter Coyote, this film weaves together original film and photographic archives, telling the story of a humble young Vietnamese monk and poet whose wisdom and compassion were forged in the suffering of war.

In the face of violence, fear and discrimination, Thich Nhat Hanh’s courageous path of engaged action reveals how insight, community and a deep aspiration to serve the world can offer hope, peace and a way forward for millions.

Vietnam Program: Documentary: “Finding the Virgo” (2018)

Directed by Barre Fong

Saturday, January 13, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. (49 minutes)

Main Library Auditorium

Brave seven-year-old Lauren Vuong escaped Vietnam with her family and fifty-seven other refugees on a small wooden fishing boat. After ten days at sea, they were lost and depleted of food, water and fuel. Death seemed imminent. A U.S. flagged cargo ship, the Virgo, spotted them and the captain ordered their rescue. Lauren Vuong’s decades-long search for the heroic captain and crew of the Virgo is a moving story of compassion, gratitude and humanity at its best.

## Children’s And Youth Services Programs

by Jeffrey Siebert  
Just Baby ‘N Me

### For You and Your Birth to 24-Month-Old Baby

Just Baby ‘N Me is a lap-sit story time ideal for babies from birth through early walkers. The focus is on rhymes, songs, finger plays and exploring short books together. Registration is required. Register for each session separately.

January 8- February 29, 2024

Wednesdays- 10:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.-6:30 p.m.

Thursdays-10:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

Madison Branch- Thursdays- 11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

### Pre-school Story Time

For You and Your 2 to 5-Year-Old Pre-schooler.

This pre-school story time is ideal for walkers, new talkers, and learning early literacy skills. You and your toddler and preschoolers will enjoy short books, songs and rhymes. The focus is on skills with your participation as a model. No registration is required.

January 9- March 28, 2024

Main Library: Tuesdays: 10:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m.

Wednesdays: 11:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m.

Madison Branch: Thursdays: 10:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

### Pajama Party

For You and Your 2 to 6 Year-Old Child

Make the Library a part of your bedtime routine with an evening story time. Children are encouraged to wear their favorite pajamas and bring their stuffed animal friends to snuggle. Join us as we wind down for the night. You and your children will enjoy short books, songs and rhymes. The focus is on skills with your participation as a model. No registration is required.

January 8 - March 26, 2024

Mondays: 6:00-6:30 p.m. and Tuesdays: 6:00-6:30 p.m.

### Family Weekend Wonders

Looking for weekend entertainment for the whole family? Look no further! Drop in to the Library’s special weekend story time. Your whole family will enjoy these programs full of enthusiastic stories, engaging activities, entertaining music and clever crafts. Family Weekend Wonders Drop-In Story Time is offered every weekend throughout the year and features a different theme each week to keep things engaging. No registration is required.

Main Library- Fridays and Saturdays at 10:30 a.m.

Madison Branch- Fridays at 10:30 a.m.

### Create a Paper Jumping Fish

For students in Third through Fifth grade. There is a popular Vietnamese tale about a carp who turns into a dragon. The story teaches students about patience and hard work. Patience and persistence will be needed to make your own jumping fish with paper, cutting with scissors, folding and glue. Registration is required.

Wednesday, January 24, 2024, 4:00pm - 5:00pm in the Main Library Activity Room

Thursday, January 25, 2024, 4:00pm - 5:00pm in the Madison Branch Children’s Program Room

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For More Info!

# Cuyahoga Reads

Readers Win

Making A Difference

CuyahogaReads.org

## Cuyahoga Reads Report



Happy New Year! It’s that special time of the year for New Year’s resolutions, which may include new financial goals, health goals, and family goals. How about setting a reading goal? The nine libraries in Cuyahoga County (Cleveland Public Library, Cuyahoga County Public Library, East Cleveland Public Library, Euclid Public Library, Heights Libraries, Lakewood Public

Library, Rocky River Public Library, Shaker Heights Public Library, and Westlake Porter Public Library) are here to help! Join Cuyahoga Reads, a year-long reading challenge for children and families in Cuyahoga County.



To track reading, find a literacy program, or to learn more, visit us online at CuyahogaReads.org.

## A Message from County Executive Chris Ronayne



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

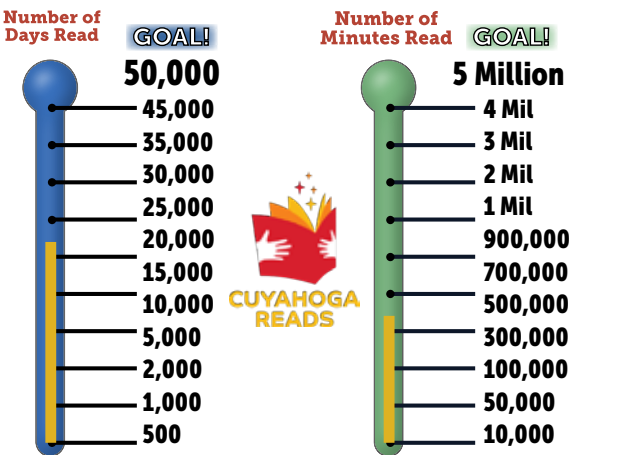
Cuyahoga Reads now has 372,000 minutes read and 18,600 days completed. We need you to keep reading. What are you reading this month? I’m enjoying *Let the Trumpet Sound: A Life of Martin Luther King, Jr.* by Stephen B. Oates.



## Cuyahoga Reads Literacy Tips

### OverDrive

Overdrive, Inc. is a worldwide digital distributor of eBooks, audiobooks, online magazines, and streaming video titles. They are headquartered right here in Cuyahoga County and one of our key Cuyahoga Reads partners. Since launching the program, they have issued 4,506 new Instant Digital Cards, allowing residents instant access to millions of titles. This month, our literacy tip is to download the Libby app and start reading today. Through the Libby app, you can find guides for Kids, Teens, Magazines, Mystery & Thriller titles and more. Children can enjoy Read & Play books, traditional read-alongs, and foreign language books. While reading, take a picture and share it online using the hashtag #CuyahogaReads.





LAKEWOOD SPORTS

# Thank You And A Call To Action!

by Ted Nagel

My name is Ted Nagel and I wanted to take this opportunity to say thank you to the Lakewood Community on the occasion of my retirement as Lakewood High School's Girls Soccer Coach. I'm mostly writing to the younger families with girls aged 6-14 to consider joining the Beautiful Game as it is known around the world.

In recent years, participation in girls soccer has dropped off to the surprise of many of us who have been involved with the sport for the past 20+ years. Lakewood has been a vibrant soccer community since my family moved here 12 years ago. The boys soccer programs have continued to thrive due to a number of factors, but the girls soccer participation rate has continued to slide over the last five years that I have coached. This trend is also nationwide (<https://www.soccerwire.com/soccer-blog/new-study-shows-negative-trend-in-youth-soccer-player-retention/?fbclid=IwAR34nhCOP7hFsVsewpSwjAFOUxpuvJRP5Z109dBpSBgeEp-4eSlpyVGEeBMo>) and to those of us who love the game, it is very concerning.

From my perspective, I believe that the national trend is due to those involved in soccer at a high level being more concerned about developing the talent that can win the USA a World Cup over developing a love for the game and a participation rate at the grass-roots level. We have adopted an "up or out" mentality in soccer that tells kids that if they haven't reached a national



photo credit - William Fraunfelder

level team by age 14, they might as well hang up the cleats. This approach is a terrible mindset for youth sports and it is not limited to soccer. The benefit for kids in sports is that it is important to their personal growth. Having an ultimate goal of playing for your high school team, as most kids dream about for most other sports, is perfectly fine. And communities should be able to provide the coaching, facilities and other resources to allow them to do that all within their local community.

Luckily, we have all of those things here in Lakewood. We have dedicated coaches and our new high school coach who is willing to put the time and effort into training both the coaches and the players. We have enough fields to sup-

port a robust local travel program and we have enough volunteers to support a larger number of kids playing. We have had great success at the high school level with our girls program winning their half of the conference last year and the boys program accomplishing the same thing this year. As I retire, my record of the last five years was 42-37-5. We have played competitively in almost every game other than maybe two or three opponents who went on to compete for state titles. We have tremendous traditions within the program and the girls accomplishments off the field were probably even more impressive with two presidents of the LHS National Honor Society and two Female Athlete of the Year recipients in

those five years along with a team GPA for a 40 student team of 4.0.

But our numbers are concerning. My first year, we had 45 girls try out. This year, we had 34 which is almost a minimum number to maintain a JV program. And maintaining that JV program is so very vital to a healthy overall program that requires a coach to develop athletes into soccer players, not just put soccer players into a system as the best schools can do. This past season we had a senior captain starter who had never played soccer before her sophomore year and never played outside of high school practices. That is indicative of a true community team.

So I ask the young families of Lakewood to sign up for Saturday soccer with Lakewood Soccer Association (LSA) at: <https://www.lakewood-soccer.com>. And for those already playing LSA and who really love soccer, take a look at playing travel soccer with Lakewood United Football Club (LUFC) here: <https://www.lakewood-unitedfc.org>.

Soccer has so much to offer young kids and Lakewood is one of the best places to learn and love the game. I hope to see some new young faces out on the field, especially younger girls. And don't be afraid to start at any age. If you are an athlete, you can succeed.

Thank you to those who have supported me these past five years! And good luck to all of those supporting our girls moving forward. Come join up!

988

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# LAKEWOOD SCHOOLS

## Dr. G's Lakewood Ranger Round-Up: Boys' Basketball, Girls' Basketball And Cheerleading

by Dr. Charles Greanoff  
January 6, 2024, Girls:  
Lakewood vs Normandy

Today, after 16 minutes of spirited play, the Lakewood Girls went into the locker room at Normandy tied at 22. Ten minutes later, they once again took the court, and in 4 furious minutes pushed out to a ten-point lead that the Invaders would never seriously threaten. The Rangers hard fought 47-36 win against a determined opponent was a team effort, but without inspired play from posts Delaney Garcia (18 points/8 rebounds) and Layla Smith (12 points/10 rebounds) the happy bus trip might have had a different tone. While Delaney and Layla were dominant inside, freshman point guard Charleigh Doxley (5 points) contributed on both ends with rebounds, assists, steals and a key rebound. Hustling Ally Bookman only had one basket, but her 3 pointer early in the second quarter cut into the Invaders five point lead and swung the momentum back to the Rangers. Speaking of hustling, guard Sophia Zarbo (2 points) gathered in loose balls, deflected passes, played tight defense without fouling, and was a real pest. Lucy Henrikson came off the bench to provide solid ball

handling, rebounds and 5 key points early in the 4th quarter to help nail down the win. Her 3 pointer was a back breaker, halting a Normandy mini-run and restoring order for the Rangers. Last year, Normandy was the only GLC East team to defeat Lakewood, a stinging home loss that was avenged twice later that year at their place. This season, Lakewood remains undefeated in the GLC East and took a big step toward their conference goals today. Hats off to Coach Work, her staff and the entire squad today. Long Live Lakewood.  
**January 5, 2024, Boys: Lakewood vs Normandy**  
Early on, when a key element of success is not working --in this case Lakewood's 3 point shooting--other aspects/players must emerge. Tonight, up stepped defensive specialist Dominic Peck (9 points) who not only made the only first quarter 3 pointer, but brought energy, stole the ball and generally wreaked havoc upon the Normandy offense.  
After a relatively tight first quarter, Lakewood (8-3, 5-0 GLC) took control through the late 2nd and early 3rd quarters, winning easily 65-32. Luke Vannucci led all scorers with 17 points, relying on aggressive drives to



the hoop until he found the range from outside. Drew Jablonowski, as is his habit, was relentless on the boards (12 rebounds, 15 points) and played stout defense. Lucas Suguine was strong at point guard (7 points) and grabbed 6 rebounds. Starter Jack Gowan did not score, but played strong defense and distributed the ball with his typical efficiency. The Lakewood bench also contributed. Peter Checkett scored 6 points, including a second quarter 3-pointer that helped stem a brief Normandy run. Luke Bonvissuo (2 points) also provided valuable minutes. Dean Albadarin, Griffin Starr and Moham-

med Abuzahriyeh each had 2 points to round out the scoring.  
The loud and large Ranger students section was out in force tonight, led by our fabulous Cheer Squad. Our loyalists were treated to a glimpse into the future at halftime of the JV Game—youth basketball—and halftime of the variety game—youth cheerleading. So, more than ever, tonight was not just a basketball game, but a celebration of community based athletics, a purple and gold extravaganza. The Lakewood Rangers are one team from one very special town. Long Live Lakewood



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### Indoor Track is Open!

Mondays - Fridays: 6 am - 8 am and 4:30 pm - 9 pm  
Saturdays: 7 am - 6 pm - Sundays: 8 am - 6 pm  
Track is closed when Lakewood High School is in session and for any scheduled school event

Indoor Track Facts: 10 lanes - 1 mile, 3 full-size lanes  
Walkers inside and runners on the outside  
Elevated around the LHS Main Gym

**Residents cost**  
60 and over \$5.00 per month  
adult \$8.00 per month  
Nonresident's fee is \$10.00 and \$15.00

Great way to stay in shape over the winter months.  
We are located at Lakewood High School (across) on the corner of Franklin and South

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Lakewood, OH 44107  
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follow us on [facebook.com/lkwdrec](https://facebook.com/lkwdrec) • [twitter.com/lkwdrec](https://twitter.com/lkwdrec)

# LUNCH & LEARN: Winter Driving Safety



Join us for Lunch and Expert Insight on Safe Winter Driving! Presentation by the Fairview General Hospital Trauma Team on the best ways to promote road safety this winter.

Monday, January 29th, 2024 | 12:00PM - 1:30PM

Registration at 11:45AM  
Event at 12:00PM  
Tours to Follow!

Dining Room - Fourth Floor  
O'Neill Healthcare Lakewood  
13900 Detroit Ave.

Please RSVP to Heather at  
(440) 941-3380 by January 24th





# LAKEWOOD SCHOOLS

## New LHS Philanthropy Club Pays Off

by Christine Gordillo

A new club at Lakewood High School, funded by a grant from the Healthy Lakewood Foundation, recently wrapped up its work this school year and in doing so, left several Lakewood nonprofits richer for it. Lakewood City Schools parent and development professional Jason Weiner proposed the idea and was

able to secure \$5,000 through Healthy Lakewood Foundation’s Neighborhood Opportunity Grant Program to fund the club. Weiner was aware of private schools having philanthropy-focused clubs and thought Lakewood High students should have the same opportunity.

Weiner teamed with Lakewood High teacher Alison Gliozzi to guide a small group of game sophomores and

juniors who wanted to learn about philanthropy and all its facets. The students worked with their advisers through a months-long philanthropic decision-making process that resulted in purposeful and mission-aligned grants awarded via the Healthy Lakewood Foundation to Colors+ (\$1,200), Gigi’s Playhouse (\$1,300) and Lakewood Young Filmmakers Academy (\$1,500).

Club member Stevie Williams said they were “happy to be able to support organizations doing work that they thought was important.”

Gigi’s Playhouse site director Lizz Maxwell said she was thrilled with Gigi’s grant: “We are incredibly honored to receive important funding from Lakewood High School’s Philanthropy Club! I was highly impressed by their diligence and professionalism and appreciate their intent to learn more while seeking out the needs of their community,” Gigi’s site director Lizz Maxwell said.

According to Weiner, the students explored what they care about (and why), what kind of impact they wanted to have with the funds available to them. Through the process, they gained an understanding about work being done in the nonprofit sector, and made difficult - but informed

- decisions when it came time to award grants. Two of the students are digging even deeper and now serving as student representatives on the board of the Lakewood Rangers Education Foundation, of which Weiner is also a board member.

“I couldn’t be more proud of these students, who knew almost nothing about nonprofits and philanthropy when we got started last spring,” Weiner said. Weiner hopes that philanthropy and community engagement will now be a part of their lives in the future.

Gliozzi wished to thank Healthy Lakewood Foundation for giving the students an opportunity to explore the world of philanthropy. “It has been eye opening as to how amazing Lakewood is and how supportive its residences are,” she said

As far as Healthy Lakewood goes, the foundation executive director Kate Ingersoll said she was eager to learn more about “what endeavors students would prioritize when given the opportunity to engage with philanthropy, learn about the social determinants of health, and respond to the needs of our community.” Ingersoll said the foundation hopes to expand this type of engagement with students moving forward.

## Happy New Year From Superintendent Niedzwiecki

At Lakewood City Schools, we know how fortunate we are to be part of a community that continually shows up for our students and school communities. We couldn’t provide the rich smorgasbord of opportunities from preschool to graduation without that support. So from all of us at Lakewood City Schools to all of you, we wish you a happy, healthy and peaceful 2024!

Gratefully,

Maggie Niedzwiecki  
Superintendent of Schools





### LAKEWOOD COMMUNITY SERVICES CENTER SEEKS VOLUNTEERS!

If you have a few hours to spare each week and if you want to join LCSC in the fight to end hunger in our community, this volunteer opportunity could be a perfect fit for you.

LCSC is the emergency food pantry for Lakewood, Rocky River, and Westlake and we could use some dedicated help during the hours of 9:45 a.m. to 12 p.m.

We currently provide food delivery to over 2,800 individuals each month! We could not do this important work without our volunteers.

Pantry volunteers are responsible for making sure that there is a consistent flow of emergency food available so that our food delivery can be done quickly and efficiently.

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CITY NEWS

# Highlights Of 2023

continued from page 2

large parks (Lakewood and Madison) as well as neighborhood parks (Kauffman, Merl Bunts, and Niagara), including the addition of the first pickleball courts for Lakewood, work on an upgraded skate park, and reconfiguring of the parking lot at Lakewood to allow more capacity and efficient use of existing space. The City also launched a planning effort to explore more access to our greatest and most breathtaking asset - Lake Erie – through our Lakewood Park Waterfront Access Feasibility Study.

**Chief Fischer Sworn In:** In July, Kevin Fischer was sworn in as Lakewood’s new Chief of Police after serving as a member of the Police Department (LPD) for over 20 years, including stints in patrol, as sergeant and then lieutenant. Chief Fischer’s goals include building on the strong foundation established by previous chiefs, exploring innovative policing methods and new training to enhance LPD, and continuing to provide the best service possible to our residents and to the public. Chief Fischer is off to an excellent start, and I look forward to working with him for years to come.

**Tree Canopy:** Our urban forestry team in Public Works continued to carry out the City’s Tree Action Plan,

strategically planting new trees on City land and assisting homeowners looking to add trees on their lots. The City was also able to once again win a Cuyahoga County Healthy Urban Tree Canopy Grant of \$50,000 dedicated to over 400 trees across Lakewood. I am especially proud of the work City staff put in to secure these dollars and receive the highest score of all grant applicants.

**Clean Water & Sewer Infrastructure Work.** The City’s continued to implement its integrated wet weather plan (IWWIP) plan last year. That included beginning a major project to replace the City’s main sewer interceptor that runs the length of the city, a project that will run into 2025. It also included Public Works efforts on a new Berea Road facility to relocate, streamline and improve recycling and refuse that allows space to be freed up for the buildout of our water and sewer infrastructure in the Metroparks. The City also began application of \$25 million in ARPA funds that were dedicated to reducing costs of water/sewer projects to our ratepayers.

**Public Works Department:** In December, the City welcomed our new Public Works Director, Chris Gordon, who hit the ground running to oversee an impressive slew of projects across the City. Besides those mentioned else-

where in this column, Public Works also oversaw or were involved in projects ranging from the complete resurfacing of all of Hilliard Road by Cuyahoga County to the resurfacing and/or sewer replacement of multiple city streets. It also includes ongoing day-to-day high demands for public works in our dense city – things like crack sealing and sidewalk replacement in warm weather months, keeping our leaves collected and

our streets clear during colder weather, and responding to the emergency issues that regularly present themselves due to our aging infrastructure. Finally, I appreciate the voters of Lakewood returning me to office for a second term as mayor, and look forward to continuing my ongoing dialogue with all of Lakewood on how we can keep the upward trajectory of our city in 2024 and beyond.

## Lakewood Dispatcher Retires After 31 Years Of Service

Congratulations to Anne Kluiber who recently retired from the Lakewood Police Department. Anne is a lifelong Lakewood resident who served as a 911 Dispatcher for over 31 years. Best wishes, Anne!



Police Chief Kevin Fischer with retiring police dispatcher Anne Kluiber.

## Snow Shoveling For Elderly And Disabled Residents

LakewoodAlive is a local non-profit organization that provides snow shoveling assistance for elderly and disabled residents. For assistance, please contact LakewoodAlive at (216) 521-0655.

## Free Rock Salt For Lakewood Residents

In an effort to help Lakewood residents keep sidewalks free from ice and snow, the City has made available rock salt at the following locations: Madison Park (North Parking Lot), Lakewood Park (Skate House), Kaufmann Park, Cove Park, Lakewood Dog Park. You must bring your own shovel and bucket to load the material yourself.

## Car Seat Safety Check January 14

The Lakewood Fire Department will hold another car seat safety check on Sunday, January 14 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at Fire Station #1, 14601 Madison Avenue. This free event is open to Lakewood families who are interested in having fire department personnel install their child safety seats or check for proper set up. Registration is required.

Sign up at <https://www.lakewoodoh.gov/car-seat-fit-stop/>

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# LAKEWOOD BUSINESS



Joe's Barber Shop was on Detroit Rd. next to the police station, making it a convenient stop for many of the city's officers. Here Joe is giving a haircut to his son, "Joe the Cop," who is currently Chief Deputy of the Cuyahoga County Sheriff's Dept.

## Lakewood Business Owner Joe The Barber To Retire

**by Mark Keating**

Joe the Barber is hanging up his shears.

Joe Greiner, affectionately known as Joe the Barber, was originally from Hart, Michigan. He graduated from Molar Barber College (Chicago) in 1961. After meeting his wife Carol at a dance at a local dude ranch, he took a chance and moved to her hometown in northeast Ohio. Joe worked in a different barber shop for a short time, and then opened Joe's Barber Shop on Detroit Road in Lakewood in 1964.

Over the 60-plus years in Lakewood he has cut a lot of hair. Joe has remarked that he's been cutting hair for so long that he has cut four generations in some families. In addition to his many loyal customers from the neighborhood, he has cut the hair of local celebrities, professional football, baseball, and hockey players, mayors and state representatives, many local police and firemen, judges, and even the original Mr. Jingleing.

Once, after giving a ballplayer a haircut, Joe told him he was getting a "home run cut." Sure enough, that day the player hit a home run. The next day the manager called Joe and joked



Joe the Barber, seen here giving a new customer his first haircut

that he would be sending the whole team.

In addition to the time he spent in the barber shop, he is proud of his work designing and cutting hairpieces for cancer and burn patients, and doing hair cuts for shut-ins at many area nursing homes.

Joe sold his business to Belle Barber Shop several years ago as a way to transition to retirement. As that time arrives, Joe would like to thank all of his many customers from the past 60 years for the wonderful journey.

*Mark Keating is a freelance writer and former Lakewood resident.*

## State Rep. Michael Skindell Not Seeking Re-Election

continued from page 1

to make investments which provide all Ohioans a chance to be productive citizens and for protection of the most vulnerable.

In the area of environmental protection, Rep. Skindell was the first legislator to introduce stand-alone legislation in 2003 to ensure that an increasing percentage of energy generation comes from renewable resources. A version of this renewable energy portfolio standard legislation was adopted in Ohio in 2008. Skindell played a key role in ensuring Ohio's adoption of the Great Lake's Compact and he continued to advocate for laws protecting Lake Erie from plastic and nutrient pollution and oil and gas drilling. He has opposed drilling in Ohio's parks and lands and has argued for stronger drilling and fracking regulations. Rep. Skindell was honored as Environmental Legislator of the Year by the Ohio Environmental Council in 2004.

Rep. Skindell authored legislation

allowing people to designate individuals to care for the disposal of their last remains, a version of which became law in 2006. He was successful in having legislation passed to allow protections orders to cover companion animals in domestic violence cases and to create special districts for the establishment of erosion control measures along Lake Erie's shoreline. Skindell played a key role in having the legislature repeal portions of House Bill 6, a bill which cost consumers for electric generation subsidies.

As a state legislator and former Lakewood councilperson, Skindell has urged the adoption of nondiscrimination laws protecting the LGBTQIA+ community for more than 25 years. Rep. Skindell has either co-sponsored or been the primary sponsor of the Ohio Fairness Act for 11 sessions of the General Assembly. He has always advocated that all people should be treated with fairness and dignity.

Following the current legislative term, Skindell intends to continue in work in the areas of law and public advocacy.

## Giving Tree Program At Cove A Great Success



by Nancy Feighan

The Giving Tree program at Cove is wrapping up. Our Home Delivered Meal volunteers, Department of Human Services staff, along with Officer Bill as Santa's elves, shared holiday cheer with 150+ seniors in need. The joy and surprise on recipients' faces were priceless, and many expressed

gratitude for receiving a gift. We want to express our gratitude to the middle school volunteers from H2O - Help To Others for making cards to go along with the gifts. Thanks to all who contributed, embracing the holiday spirit! We've made new friends and can't wait to welcome them to Cove in the New Year.

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LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

League Of Women Voters Mary Warren Impact  
Scholarship Winner  
Lila Wright's Winning Essay

by Lila Wright

Why is Equal Representation important?

More than ever, the modern day demands equal representation. When one first hears the phrase “equal representation,” the connotation often refers to political representation. Representation of different races, genders, ages, socioeconomic backgrounds, and life experiences in the people that we’ve elected to lead our communities and country as a whole. This type of equal representation that one typically thinks of is extremely important; as leaders in politics are in charge of making decisions for the greater good of the community, they should absolutely be representative of the myriad of demographics our community exhibits. Still, it’s important to recognize and explore the other ways in which equal representation is equally as important.



Lila Wright, Lakewood Chapter of the League of Women Voters Mary Warren Impact Scholarship Winner.

Children grow up as mirrors of the people that surround them from a young age. They reflect the behaviors, attitudes, and ideas of those that they see most often. Just one example of this is a young person’s political beliefs; if one grows up in a primarily democratic household, they are likely to identify with the beliefs of the democratic party, and vice versa. Just as we see this reflection of surroundings in politics, children easily reflect other parts of their environments. The turn of the 21st century and the ever increasing capabilities of technology continue to enhance the prominence of media in our lives. While actors, musicians, influencers, and other public figures may only be humans like everyone else, they hold more power than one might think. Equal representation is equally as important in the media as it is in politics.

If children grow up from a young age, only ever seeing a certain specific demographic on the media, that will create stigmas and contribute to widely believed misconceptions. Only having white, middleclass, heterosexual characters as the prominent characters in most movies is extremely harmful.

Anyone who doesn’t fit into that classification might start to believe they aren’t as worthy, and that they don’t reflect the personification of the ideal American.

Not only is equal representation in the media and pop culture important, it should be employed in any widely known area. Athletes, authors, musicians, artists, scientists, mathematicians, teachers, law enforcement, lawyers, and many more occupations are only a few examples of the places where equal representation is extremely important in order to foster an accepting community for all. America is often described as a “melting pot” of people, because it is home to any type of person one could imagine. Still, the question remains. How can America be accurately described as a melting pot, if every area of our country that should reflect its diversity doesn’t? If equal representation isn’t present? Equal representation is absolutely important, more than ever, to exhibit and bring out the beauty of every individual.

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# STATE NEWS



## January

**ARIES:** The Ram is off & running, bringing in the New Year; the Sun is shining on your career. Jupiter has just landed in your financial house. New Year's goal: finish what you've started!

**TAURUS:** The Bull is looking to travel overseas in 2024. Jupiter is shining on you. Remember all things in moderation, or you'll need to build a new Bullpen before the end of the year.

**GEMINI:** The Twins have luck landing in the house of other people's money. Jupiter is blessing you behind the scenes. We know how you like to talk; trust me, on this one, keep your lips sealed!

**CANCER:** The Crab is getting some extra sunshine in the house of relationships, business & personal. Jupiter is blessing your groups & organizations. Get out of that shell & network, baby!

**LEO:** The Lion is starting the year looking at better ways to improve its health. How can you expect to run a jungle without being in tip-top shape? Jupiter is blessing your career; let it shine!

**VIRGO:** Virgo might have some romantic interests looking your way. It's even luckier if you decide to take a trip overseas. Dust off that passport. It's getting old; come out of that stale routine.

**LIBRA:** New Year's resolution for Libras: Decide. Things are happening around the homestead. You are being

blessed by resources coming from sources unknown. Enjoy the time with your family.

**SCORPIO:** The Scorpion needs to come out of its cave for 2024. Get out in the community & circulate; you've got luck coming into your relationships. Don't be so intense. Lighten up, smile.

**SAGITTARIUS:** The Centaur has luck in the financial sector this month. However, we must keep an eye on our health; too much of a good thing is wreaking havoc on the body; aim that bow & arrow in the right direction.

**CAPRICORN:** It's all about you Goat. Climb that mountaintop until you've reached the summit. The stars are blessing you romantically. Your goal for the New Year is to take a break, go out & play.

**AQUARIUS:** Aquarius, you've got some exciting things in the works behind the scenes this month. You are being blessed enormously on the home front. Spend time with the family.

**PISCES:** It's time to swim over to another pond for 2024. Your groups & organizations are growing; it's time to move on over to the lake. Others are blessing you in your school of fish.

*Eva Starr, the local astrologer, has been studying the moon & stars since she could read. You can reach Starr at [evastarr.com](http://evastarr.com).*

## A Year In Review:

# Legislative Wrap-Up From The Statehouse

by Nickie Antonio

In January, I was sworn into the 135th General Assembly as the new Ohio Senate Minority Leader. Since then, it's been a whirlwind of both challenges and accomplishments, and I want to take a moment to thank all of my constituents and Ohioans for working together to get things done. Below is a wrap-up of some of the great things we've achieved this year.

In February, I introduced Senate Bill 57, a bill to designate the month of May as Stroke Awareness Month, as well as Senate Bill 69 to designate the week including March 22nd as Ohio Doula Awareness Week. Both of these bills have been referred to the Senate Health Committee.

In March, Senator Nathan Manning (R-North Ridgeville) and I introduced Senate Bill 100, a bill to prohibit the installation of tracking devices or apps without consent. This bill passed the Senate in June and is now awaiting its second hearing in the House Criminal Justice Committee. In the same month, I introduced Senate Bill 101 with Senator Steve Huffman (R-Tipp City) which would abolish the death penalty and replace it with life without parole. Senate Bill 101 has had two hearings, with 97 submissions of proponent testimony in November.

In April, the \$13.5 billion two-year transportation budget was finalized. Serving as the ranking member of the Senate Transportation Committee, I worked tirelessly with Chair Stephanie Kunze and several other senators on this bill to implement a series of changes aimed at making Ohio a safer place to live and to advance businesses. This bipartisan budget came directly after the devastating East Palestine train derailment and made clear the need to regulate railroad operations in Ohio further.

In May, the Ohio Senate Select Committee on Rail Safety was in full swing, as we met to hear testimony from the EPA and other institutions in addition to producing recommendations to Governor DeWine and President Biden in order to hold Norfolk Southern accountable. At the same time, Ohio's two-year operating budget was at its height. My office held countless budget meetings with advocacy groups and organizations requesting money from the General Revenue Fund (GRF). At the end of the month, we were able to submit our final amendments to House Bill 33 for consideration.

In June, I introduced the Ohio Fairness Act (Senate Bill 132), alongside Representative Michael J. Skindell (D-Lakewood), who introduced companion legislation in the House. This bill would prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression. I have introduced this piece of legislation every



Leader Antonio in Senate session.

year since I was elected. Not only is this bill a clear statement on non-discrimination, equal opportunity and inclusivity, but it also is crucial for attracting business investments to Ohio and growing its economy.

In July, Ohio's operating budget for fiscal years 2024-2025 was signed by the governor. This budget had some elements in it that hurt everyday Ohioans and rewarded the wealthy, along with some good things. House Bill 33 created universal school subsidies, slashed nearly \$1 billion from Medicaid, and cut taxes for the benefit of Ohio's wealthiest residents. Additionally, it contained a number of controversial policy provisions, including Senate Bill 1 which transferred most powers of the elected state Board of Education, to a new executive agency (DEW), as well as Senate Bill 117 to create new centers for "conservative indoctrination" at five state universities. Though portions of the budget were abysmal, there were positive highlights worthy of recognition including: increased funding for infant vitality, expanded access to greater support for childcare, \$3 million in support for behavioral healthcare for children, removed barriers to access SNAP, \$50 million in support for vulnerable multi-system youth and \$5 million to provide free period products in Ohio schools.

You can read the rest of this great article online at: [lakewoodobserver.com](http://lakewoodobserver.com)

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LAKEWOOD OBSERVER

H2O's Thirtieth Anniversary Year -  
A Year At Cove Community Center

continued from page 1

funded by a grant from the Lakewood/ Rocky River Rotary Foundation. The young children attended with their parents and heard from the dynamic Lizz Maxwell, Site Director of Gigi's Playhouse Cleveland – Down Syndrome Achievement Center. They took the Generation G pledge to be accepting, generous, and kind – what a great way to start the year! H2O volunteers hosted the morning, helping with crafts, serving food, and pledging alongside their younger peers to consciously choose being better every day.

The Tributary Bash 30th Anniversary fundraiser in February 2023 was a night to remember! The theme carried from the previous summer, "A Seat at the Table." Approximately 270 guests filled the artfully decorated Cove Community Center and enjoyed



great food, live and silent auctions, alumni guest bartenders, a wine pull, live jazz from Lakewood High School musicians, emcees Nick Aylward and Nate Kelly, a commendation by State Senator Nickie Antonio, and an inspirational video made by H2O volunteer Sean Miller. Thanks to the Bash guests, sponsors, and wine and raffle donors, we raised over \$58,000.00 for youth

programming. The volunteers who planned this event, led by Chair Brit-tany O'Connor, did a simply fabulous job at putting every detail into place.

H2O's next big event that was moved to Cove was Breakfast with the Bunny, sponsored by First Federal Lakewood. The room hosted 340 people over four seating times. Our adult and youth volunteers thoroughly enjoyed the amenities of the building, especially the kitchen! The raffle baskets full of goodies donated by local businesses was featured prominently in the space, and, as always, the volunteers decorated beautifully.

One of the events that was initially most difficult to imagine moving to Cove Community Center was H2O's HOME ALONE presentation. After applying some creativity, we decided to give it a try – and it paid off wonderfully. Six groups of high school leaders taught younger peers (9-12 years old)

safety topics in the conference and activity rooms at Cove, and the parents heard from safety professionals in the main community room. Not only did the event run smoothly, the feedback from guests and presenters was positive. The center was an ideal hosting space for this community event.

H2O Summer Service campers enjoyed frequent trips from the home base of camp at Garfield Middle School to Cove Community Center. They joined in activities with the Division of Aging and helped serve lunch to senior citizens. "My favorite service site is the Cove Community Center because senior citizens are an age group I don't usually talk to," Fiona H. wrote in her sponsor letter. The young volunteers also treasured their experiences with guests of the Lakewood Family Room, meeting them at Cove Park and playing with young children.

The H2O program has grown and changed throughout its 30-year history, continuously making new connections with other agencies and organizations and planning new programs to fill needs in the community. Having a "home" with the other divisions within Humans Services has opened new opportunities beyond what we had imagined. We look forward to many more years of connecting youth to their communities, especially here at Cove.

Emmie Hutchison is the coordinator of H2O

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Contact us today for a free consultation.  
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216.731.9500

Are you facing a legal problem that impacts Health? Housing? Family? Money? Employment?

Contact Legal Aid!

Browse legal information or apply for help 24/7 online: [www.lasclev.org](http://www.lasclev.org)

Or, call 888.817.3777 during most business hours.



Legal Aid thanks the Healthy Lakewood Foundation for its outreach support!