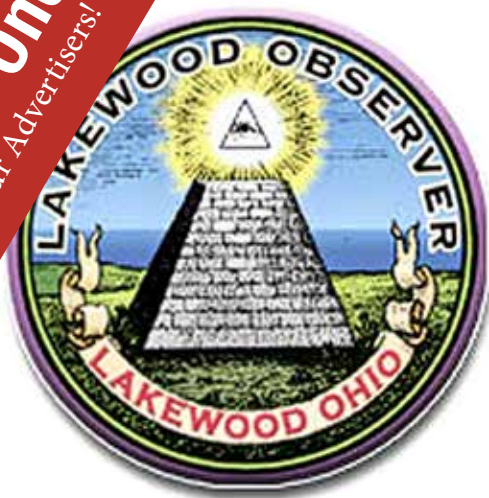


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See you all at Light Up Lakewood, Saturday, Dec. 7th, 4-8 p.m.
“To Kindness and Love, the Things We Need Most!” - The Grinch

THE LAKEWOOD OBSERVER

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Volume 20, Issue 23, December 4, 2024



LCAC Wraps Up Thanksgiving Food Drive, Prepares For Christmas Food Drive

by Sara Crawford

With the help of hundreds of Lakewood community members, Lakewood Charitable Assistance Corporation delivered non-perishable and perishable bags filled with Thanksgiving fixings to 300 Lakewood residences.

This was part of LCAC's Thanksgiving Food Drive, which took place the weekend before Thanksgiving.

On Nov. 22, volunteers came in the morning to sort all the non-perishable food within

an hour. Later that night, more volunteers came to bag the non-perishable food into 300 bags, taking less than an hour.

On Nov. 23, volunteers came to bag all of the perishable foods, such as turkeys and pies, and were off to deliver them to Lakewood residences.

Now, with the Thanksgiving Food Drive over, LCAC is already back in full swing to prepare for its Christmas Food Drive which will take place at the Lakewood Masonic Tem-

continued on page 9

Lakewood Historical Society Holiday Sale Dec 5 thru Dec 7

by Robert Shimp

Kick off your holiday shopping with the event that offers the best bargains of all—Lakewood Historical Society's annual Holiday Sale on the Grounds. The Nicholson House (13335 Detroit Ave) will be filled to bursting with everything you need for holiday celebrations the first weekend in December.

Lakewood Historical Society's Holiday Sale on the Grounds has become a tradition, featuring antiques & collectibles perfect for one-of-a-kind gifts; gleaming silver, sparkling crystal and heirloom china for setting a festive table; barware; serving pieces; cookie tins and plates—everything you need for holiday entertaining. There are beautiful vintage and contemporary ornaments, nativity sets, wreaths, garlands, indoor and outdoor decorations. You'll also find new gift wrap and ribbon, greeting cards and candles.

You have four oppor-

tunities to shop at the Sale, so you can also fit in all the other activities of Light Up Lakewood. This no-cost public sale is open Thursday, December 5th, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.; Friday, December 6th; 4:00-7:00; Saturday, December 7th, 9:00-3:00. Sunday, December 8, noon - 3:00 p.m. is your final chance, and offers the best bargains, as merchandise is half-price, excluding items in the Top Shelf Room. But

don't wait till Sunday to buy that item you really want—it could be gone!

All proceeds from Holiday Sale on the Grounds benefit the programs and properties of the Lakewood Historical Society.

Don't miss this terrific sale—you and your wallet will be glad you shopped here first!

Robert Shimp is the Director of the Lakewood Historical Society.



Holiday treasurers await!



The Christmas display that started the annual LO contest.

from Lakewood Observer Archives

Holiday Fun For All LO's Holiday Decorating Contest 2024

by Deb O'Bryan and Jim O'Bryan

As Lakewood lights up this year, we know our residents already have, or are ready to. Some of the best displays can be found in our hometown. As a thank you to some of the hardworking homeowners who brave the elements to give their neighbors a festive display, we once again launch our Holiday Decorating Contest for 2024!



It takes talent to make a big impact with Lakewood's small front yards.

We will be offering prizes for the 8 best holiday decorated homes that are nominated and voted on by Lakewood residents. We will also offer a prize for the home whose decorations best exemplify or project a message of PEACE ON EARTH. From a simple natural display, to the over the top, see it from space effects, everyone is welcome to participate.

The nomination process

starts today December 4th and runs through the 17th. Just go to our homepage: lakewood-observer.com and click on Daily Question on the right hand side of the page. A person must nominate at least 3 homes. List only addresses with house number and street. If no house number is provided it will not be counted. You may enter everyday, but

continued on page 8

Three Arches Foundation 2024 Grants Local Nonprofits Receive \$2 Million To Boost Equitable Access To Care

by Kristin Broadbent

Three Arches Foundation, a community-focused grant making foundation, announced \$2 million in funding toward grants to twenty-two local nonprofit organizations working to address barriers to health care. Each grant reflects the Foundation's priority focus on equitable access to behavioral and physical health care



faced by communities and populations most impacted by health disparities.

This year's grants address a diversity of needs accomplished through the expansion of existing programs and services, funding of new

continued on page 10

H2O And St. Eds Students Rake Leaves For 26 Residents



Now, this is the way to rake in the goodness! Teams of amazing volunteers from H2O - Help To Others and St. Edward High School gathered to rake leaves for our senior citizens, and the results were heartwarming. A big thank you to the Lakewood Ohio Division of Aging for coordinating this wonderful effort.

Over 30 youth volunteers came together to rake the yards of 26 older residents, creating a beautiful community connection. The sweet interactions between the kids and seniors were truly special—both groups shared smiles, stories, and appreciation for one another. What a fantastic example of kindness and teamwork in action!

COUNCIL PRESIDENT’S PAGE

Lighting Lakewood Yearlong

Dear Neighbors,

It’s Light Up Lakewood Week! This launch of the holiday season encapsulates the quintessential Lakewood experience, both of a bustling city, with delectable restaurants and enticing shops, and of a small town where you’re sure to run into neighbors at every turn, maybe some volunteering with Lakewood Alive, the lead organizers of this event and of so much good in our community.

I find this magical atmosphere even more inspiring as I reflect on the ways that Lakewood comes together to create it. Walking up on our tree-lined

by Sarah Kepple

President of City Council/Council Person-At-Large

streets, I’ll appreciate our City arborists and citizens of our Tree Advisory & Education Board, and be grateful for the Healthy Lakewood Foundation who recently pledged funds to double the tree-giveaway program for private plantings.

Reaching Detroit Avenue, safe from errant drivers due to the Public Works vehicles blocking cross streets, and free of debris due to crews working diligently all night, I’ll see families enjoying the activities sponsored by

local businesses. I’ll reflect that, typically, 70% of every dollar spent locally stays in the community and be grateful for folks shopping here and for the small businesses who give back by sponsoring events, sports teams, and school fundraisers. As I pop into a shop with a Safe Place Initiative sticker, I’ll appreciate the community focus of our Police who not only initiated this program in Lakewood to assist vulnerable populations, but who are also working hard to keep attendees safe.

There are more examples to name than space in this column of ways that folks in our community are working together every day to create both long term and short term light in Lakewood. As we watch the fireworks temporarily illuminate downtown, let’s reflect on ways that we can continue to spread light

in our community. Whether volunteering with Lakewood Alive to shovel snow for an elderly neighbor, serving on a City advisory board, or shopping locally, we can all be part of maintaining the magic throughout the year.

As always, I invite you to join us for upcoming Council meetings. Sign up for our email list to receive agendas for upcoming meetings, livestream or watch past meetings: <https://www.lakewoodoh.gov/lakewood-city-council/>

Dec 9th 6:00pm Finance Committee - Budget Hearings

Dec 16th 5:30pm Finance Committee - Budget Hearings

Dec 16th 6:30pm Committee of the Whole - Downtown Development

Dec 16th 7:30pm Regular Meeting of Council- Budget and Downtown Development



On Dec. 3rd, City Council passed Resolution 2024-75 highlighting Zonta International’s 16 Days of Activism campaign that raises awareness and advocates for an end to violence toward women and girls. Free and confidential services are available through Journey Center for Safety and Healing. Call our text 216-391-4357(HELP).

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Lakewood Observer

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THE MAYOR’S CORNER

Lake/Clifton Project Will Enhance Safety And Enjoyment Shared-Use Path Creates Community

by **Meghan George**
Mayor/Safety Director, City of Lakewood

Lakewood continues to be rightly known as one of Ohio’s and even the country’s most pedestrian and bike friendly cities. We have a long history of being a highly walkable and bikable community, a place where those who prioritize these qualities – everyone from families with young children walking to school to those seeking an active lifestyle on foot and cycle – can find a home. The City of Lakewood is currently partnering with Cuyahoga County and The City of Rocky River to create an additional public asset on the Lake-Clifton Corridor across the Rocky River valley that will further enhance safety and enjoyment for walkers, runners, and cyclists.

The project includes a 1.25-mile segment of road and bridge from Webb Road in Lakewood to Linda Street in Rocky River. When finished, it will create a dedicated and separated shared use path for pedestrians and cyclists on this entire span, introducing Lakewood’s first trail fully separated from car traffic outside of the Metroparks. This will greatly increase safety while also offer-

ing walkers, runners and cyclists an opportunity to enjoy the vistas of Lake Erie and the Rocky River valley as they cross the bridge. The project is also intended to further address stormwater capacity in line with our overall Integrated Wet Weather Improvement Plan (IWWIP) and it will include new tree plantings to address our tree plan and overall environmental goals.

The project will be achieved by repurposing existing westbound lanes into the shared-use path and repurposing existing eastbound lanes into one eastbound lane and one westbound lane. Situating the shared use path on the northern portion of the project will allow better views for those using it. The plan will also add a mid-block crossing at Forest Road and a roundabout at the Lake Road intersection, both of which will help calm traffic and improve overall safety and access.

Overall, this project will greatly

expand and enhance what began with the 2015 introduction of limited bike lanes from Lake Road to Clifton Road. This early effort was a good first step and created momentum, but its impact was limited and somewhat isolated. Now with the involvement of our neighbor to the west, Rocky River, and Cuyahoga County, this current project will make the shared use path fully cross the river, safely connect people on foot and cycle to the neighborhoods on either side, and address ADA compliance in the project footprint. In addition, there is currently no sidewalk for nearly a half mile on Clifton Boulevard between Clifton Road and Lake Road. This stems from a historical omission decades ago when Route 2 was extended through this area of Lakewood, and this project provides an opportunity to remedy that.

The budget for the Lakewood portion of the project stands at \$9.6 million. Fortunately, 80% of the project costs

are being paid for through Cuyahoga County funds, with the City of Lakewood responsible for a maximum of \$1.4 million – this amount may be reduced as the County continues to pursue outside grant dollars. Rocky River and the County will be responsible for costs associated with the project in Rocky River’s municipal footprint. We are very grateful to the County Department of Public Works and its Planning Commission for their ongoing partnership in this exciting project. The County Department of Public Works will oversee contracting and construction administration for the project, with Lakewood Public Works involved along the way.

The City of Lakewood has also chosen to include additional work to address aging water mains within the project footprint, as doing them at the same time will save on costs for those necessary upgrades and repairs. Currently, our expectation is that construction will begin in late 2025 and run throughout 2026. Once finished, the new shared use path will be an important addition to Lakewood’s strong tradition of supporting safety for our walkers, runners, and cyclists and improving the overall quality of life for our residents.

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January 9, 2024 | 11:45am Registration | Event Begins at 12:00pm

Featured Speakers:
Cassie Rainey, PT Director of Rehabilitation at O’Neill Healthcare Lakewood
Krista Weartz, ATP Director of Sales & Operations at Central HME

Enjoy lunch at O’Neill Healthcare Lakewood while learning valuable tips from Cassie Rainey, director of rehabilitation, on how to best prepare for staying safe in the icy winter months. Also, hear from Krista Weartz, ATP of Central HME about the essential role of proper medical equipment in navigating the challenges of the winter weather!



O’Neill Healthcare
(440) 808-5500 | ONeillHC.com

Please RSVP to Heather at (440) 941-3380 by January 2nd

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Lakewood, OH 44107
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LAKEWOOD PUBLIC LIBRARY EVENTS

Upcoming In December

by Lisa Calfee

Film: “A Christmas Story” (1983) (94 minutes)
Presented by Sue Stewart, author of “My Christmas Story Story”
Sunday, December 8, 2024 at 2:00 p.m. Main Library Auditorium

Filmed in Cleveland, the hilarious adventures of nine-year-old Ralphie Parker (Peter Billingsley) and his Christmas dream of a Red Ryder Range 200 Shot BB gun have become a holiday favorite, along with the House from A Christmas Story Museum on West 11th Street. Presenter Sue Stewart was growing up on the street while the movie was being filmed and will share a few recollections from her book, “My Christmas Story Story” before the show. Books will be available for sale and signing.

Film: “After Stonewall” (1999) Presented by Tom Stebel
Saturday, December 14, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. Main Library Auditorium
After Stonewall, the sequel to Before Stonewall, chronicles the history of lesbian and gay life from the riots at Stonewall to the end of the century. Narrated by Melissa Etheridge, it captures the hard work, struggles, tragic defeats and exciting victories experienced during this time, and it explores how AIDS dramatically changed the direction of the movement. Presented by Tom Stebel from the LGBT Community Center of Greater Cleveland.

Meet The Author: “Family of Choice: Raising Each Other” by Corky Thacker
Wednesday, December 18, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. Main Library Auditorium
“Family of Choice: Raising Each Other” draws on the author’s three decades of experience in the recovery community as well as her interest in roses and vintage homes (the first garden she created was featured in This Old House magazine). Books will be available for sale and signing at the event.

Film: “A Cloud Never Dies” (2022) Directed by Max Pugh
Saturday, December 21, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. Main Library Auditorium
A new biographical documentary of Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh, 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.

Children’s And Youth Programs

by Jeffrey Siebert

Family Weekend Wonders
Main Library- Fridays and Saturdays at 10:30 a.m.
Madison Branch- Fridays at 10:30 a.m.
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.

Bricks and Books
Sunday, December 15, 2024 6:00pm - 7:30pm in the Main Library Activity Room
For students in Kindergarten through Fifth Grade. In this hands-on experience, kids will use Lego building bricks, gears, and figures to design and construct amazing structures and imaginative creations. Alongside their building, we will be exploring the library’s extensive collection of Lego-themed books, offering inspiration, challenges, and stories for all levels. No registration required.
To sign up for any program, register online at lakewoodpubliclibrary.org/youth or call (216) 226-8275, ext. 140.



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LAKEWOOD SCHOOLS



Lincoln students surround Municipal Judge Tess Neff and fill the courtroom.

Lincoln Elementary Students Have Their Day In Court

by Caitlin Magner

On November 1, 2024, Judge Tess Neff of the Lakewood Municipal Court held a special session in her courtroom, complete with attorneys, witnesses, and a jury. Playing these roles were a group of 3rd grade students from Lincoln Elementary school, invited into the courtroom by Judge Neff as part of the students' larger visit to City Hall.

The students sat in the gallery while Judge Neff gave an overview of the judicial process, after which they were invited into the well of the court, the area of the courtroom where judicial proceedings occur. A student volunteer

sat in the witness stand and was "sworn in" by Judge Neff. The witness was questioned by a student attorney under the watchful scrutiny of the student jury, seated in the jury box.

Some students were then given the opportunity to occupy the top seat in the court room – Judge Neff's bench – and bang the Judge's gavel. Although generally employed to establish order in the court, in this case it resulted in a cacophony of enthusiastic banging thanks to the mini-gavel pencils Judge Neff had provided to each of the students.

Once order had been restored, it was Judge Neff's turn to be questioned by the students. Dressed in her black judicial robe, the Judge addressed questions such as "Is this the Supreme Court?" to "Is there a jail here?"

With the students' questioning concluded, and a full docket of hearings about to commence, Judge Neff dismissed the students to continue their tour of City Hall, including meeting with Mayor Meghan George!

Connecting with the Lakewood community has been a cornerstone of Judge Neff's tenure on the bench. The Judge saw the visit from the Lincoln Elementary students as an opportunity for civic engagement with the younger generation. "Kids are never too young to learn how their city works," said Judge Neff. "I am honored to serve the community I live in and I'm grateful to have had the opportunity to share the courtroom with Lakewood students."

LHS History Club:

Emma Gjergji's History And Culture Of Albania

by Dr. Charles Greanoff

Thanks to Lakewood High School History Club sophomore Emma Gjergji and her family--father, mother and aunt--40 plus students and staff were treated to an informative, engaging presentation on the history and culture of Albania.

Not only did we learn about Albania's historic journey to independence/sovereignty, we also explored unique and fascinating elements of Albanian language, national identity, religion and culture.

Emma and her father Eduart created and delivered the slide show, and mother Marcela and aunt Mirela Shyte provided many additional insights and fabulous Albanian food.

Given the presence of so many wonderful Albanian families in our community, it was great to have Kyle Baker (City Council) and Nora Katzenberger (School Board) on hand today. Their presence signals the accepting,



LHS sophomore Emma Gjergji and her family.

vibrant character of our town.

The world has many times come to Lakewood, and we are immeasurably better for it. The Gjergji's were great teachers today, bringing Albania to life in our magical 44107.

Long Live Lakewood.

Harding Students' Art To Hang In Library Lobby

by Christine Gordillo

Congratulations to the 10 Harding Middle School students who had their art-work selected for display in the entryway of the main branch of Lakewood Public Library! The art of Braydon Raycher, Lily Swift, Chloe Scharfield, Fiona Forni, Lillian Gingerich, Caitlyn Fegely, Myroslav Pasternak, T'Honest Holloway and Rio Blaze will be on display for two weeks beginning Dec. 5.

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LAKEWOOD SCHOOLS

Dr. G's Ranger Round-Up: Girls' Basketball

by Dr. Charles Greanoff
NOVEMBER 26:
RANGERS VS BAY

Freshman Ari Hueter was a great closer tonight, scoring 7 of her game-high 16 points in the last five minutes to lead the Lakewood Girls to a hard fought 38-32 win over Bay. Sophomore point-guard Charleigh Doxley scored 10, including a key floater that stemmed the Rockets late momentum, and hit 2 free throws to seal it. The Ranger showed mental toughness after surrendering an 8 point lead early in the 4th quarter.

Senior Madison Comer paced the Lakewood attack early, scoring all her 7 points in the 1st quarter. Off the bench, sophomore Maeve Andrews (4 points) and junior Addison Garrett (1point) provided scoring, rebounds and ball handling. Seniors Elizabeth Doup and Ava Cuffari did not score, but chipped in with rebounds, steals and hustle plays. Ari and Charleigh led the way, but in this nail-biter, stout team



Freshman Ari Hueter led the Lakewood Girls to a hard fought 38-32 win over Bay.

defense--every rebound, steel and possession of loose ball--was decisive. Congratulations to the Bay Rockets for their strong showing, and congratulations to Coach Work and her entire squad on a well-earned team victory tonight at our fabulous East Gym. Long Live Lakewood.



Lakewood Stem Students Create Mini Movies

by Christine Gordillo

Our fourth- and fifth-grade STEM students are diving into the creative world of stop motion animation, and we can't wait to see the magic they bring to life! With software funded by a grant from the Lakewood Rangers Education Foundation, they've spent the last two weeks brainstorming plot ideas, selecting materials, and crafting detailed plans and beginning to film their mini-movies. Stay tuned for the premieres of their finished products!

Harrison's Thanksgiving Event Fosters Strong Sense Of Community

by Christine Gordillo

Harrison Elementary was abuzz with excitement this past Saturday as it proudly hosted one of five area Thanksgiving events sponsored by Local Legends Foundation in collaboration with Molina Healthcare.

Legends and Molina provided turkey donations for the school community. The Harrison Family Engagement Committee tied the event to its annual Turkey Trot fundraiser (to a local food bank) and a community lunch that was served by the Harrison staff as a way to thank the Harrison families for their support.

Food for the lunch was donated by staff and several Lakewood restaurants/businesses. A raffle included gifts donated by GV Art & Design and the Cleveland Cavaliers. This event truly embodied the Vision of a Lakewood Ranger, fostering



collaboration, gratitude, global citizenship and a strong sense of community. A great time was had by all!

Rangers Earn All-CLE West Honors

by Christine Gordillo

Congratulations to our Ranger student athletes who have been recognized by the CLE West Conference for their outstanding efforts during the fall 2024 season.

1st Team:

- Cheerleading: Claire Noelker, Jana Peterson
- Cross Country: Porter Gilliland
- Football: Jackson Comer, Avery Holt,
- Golf: Justin Lacquement
- Soccer: Isaac Craciun, Riley Forster, Quincy Zvomuya
- Volleyball: Layla Smith

2nd Team:

- Cheerleading: Kenla Hamilton
- Cross Country: Mae Mohar, Quinn Sutliff
- Football: Malachai Davis, Riley Verderber
- Golf: Aidan Smith
- Soccer: Camden Fegley, Helen Fraunfelder, Seth Hammersmith
- Volleyball: Stella Ziegler

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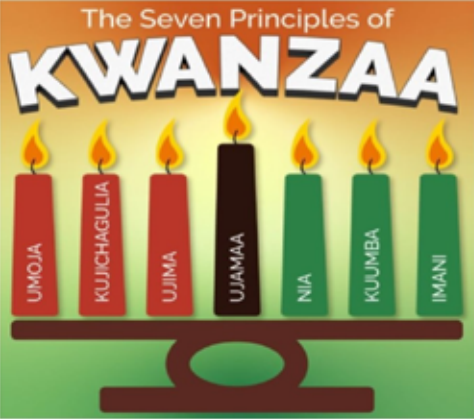
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LETTERS TO THE LO



The Downtown Development:
Lakewood Gets The Short
End Of The Stick - Again

by Micah Zakem

As a small Lakewood landlord, certified public accountant and spouse of a local business owner, I have grown to appreciate Lakewood where locally owned businesses thrive, there is a strong sense of community and people are not judged by the thickness of their wallet. The city’s funding of the downtown development is contrary to these values. It will benefit the well-off while emptying the wallets of existing homeowners through the illusion that it will create affordable housing.

For the non-accountants who would prefer a root canal over an accounting lesson, please bear with me as the fleecing of existing homeowners is in the details.

Lakewood will provide funding for constructing the downtown development through Tax Increment Financing (TIF). To do this, Lakewood will sell municipal bonds. These bonds are typically purchased by wealthy individuals (bondholders) as the interest paid on the bonds are exempt from taxes. After Wall Street takes its fees for underwriting and marketing, the remaining proceeds are loaned to the developer to pay for construction costs. To repay the bondholders, part of the real estate taxes on the downtown development will go to the bondholders instead of Lakewood schools for the next 15 years. In exchange for the taxpayer provided funding, the developer will rent about 80 apartments to those with lower incomes, creating “affordable housing.”

To summarize this convoluted process, the developer gets a loan that is paid back by diverting real estate taxes, while homeowners must pay their mortgages out of their own pocket and

their real estate taxes in full.

In theory, the community benefits from the “affordable housing” created. In reality, the “affordable housing” is just a temporary illusion – after 15 years the developer is no longer required to keep rents low. Rents will be raised to the full market value, forcing tenants out on the street. No services such as job training or childcare are provided to help these tenants increase their income to purchase a home before the 15 years is up. Even if these services were provided, a TIF does nothing to address the root causes of unaffordable housing such as high material costs, tariffs, a shortage of tradespeople and increasing regulatory costs. This will keep homes out of reach for those with lower income. If we measure a TIF by its ability to create affordable permanent housing, a TIF is a complete failure.

A TIF also makes existing homeowners and businesses vulnerable to property tax increases as schools will not get their full share of taxes from the downtown development. The city is already working on a compensation agreement to give the schools some of the city income taxes generated by the downtown development’s residents. As the school board believes this will not be sufficient, they are planning on asking voters for an increase in real estate taxes in 2026. Even if voters reject this levy, the 13 remaining years on the TIF leaves plenty of opportunities for future levy attempts. Many of our Lakewood neighbors are already struggling to afford their homes. To subject these residents to a tax increase while granting breaks to a developer with over 6,200 residential units and more than 26 million square feet of commercial space is

This Season Of Giving,
Consider The Refugees Of Gaza

by Laura Beans Sika

Winter has a way of humbling us, especially in Northeast Ohio, where the Lake Effect reminds us of our shared humanity. While it may lay dormant during the rest of the year, this collective compassion is unmistakable in the cold - strangers hold doors as others hurry in and drivers yield the right of way on icy streets. From inspiring food drives to supporting local businesses, the spirit of the season nourishes a collective sense of gratitude and generosity.

This year especially, as we give thanks for all we have, we’d be remiss not to expand our mutual compassion beyond our borders, here in the Greater Cleveland area and beyond. 2024 has been a turbulent year with biting truths and magnified disparities both in America and abroad, but none quite so stark as Israel’s military onslaught in Gaza. Funded in large part by U.S. tax-payer dollars, the attempted extermination of the Palestinians is the culmination of decades of dehumanization.

As Americans, our nation’s foreign policies produce conflicts like these that yield millions of refugees in Gaza and across the world. As such, we would do well to recognize that rather than ‘collateral damage’ these are individuals just like us with the same international human right to self determination.

With conventional nonprofits like UNRWA banned and aid heavily restricted in Gaza, Palestinians refu-



Zenia and Maher Milad, refugees in Zawaida, central Gaza.

gees are being starved to death and are relying on the generosity of everyday people to survive. This year, they have been forced to use social media not only to livestream their own genocide but to beg for donations as well.

Across the board, you’d be hard pressed to find any demographic more worthy of charitable giving than refugees. Forcibly displaced and expelled from their homelands, refugees are left with nothing.

In this season of giving, do not turn a blind eye to Gaza. There are a few grassroots organizations like The Sameer Project, INARA and Operation Olive Branch still functioning in limited capacity and they are in dire need of funding during the cold, rainy winter. Listen to the stories, bear witness to the suffering and consider donating. Ultimately, aren’t we all the same; just human beings trying to stay warm?

the antithesis of Lakewood’s values.

As a small landlord, my tenants are already facing increasing rents before ground is broken for the downtown development. Like homeowners, they are vulnerable to property tax increases when the schools do not get their full share of taxes. Over the last several years, tenants have been staying longer as homes have become unaffordable. While most of my tenants would not qualify for low-income housing, they should also have a fair opportunity to own their own home. If the city were to work on resolving the root causes of unaffordable housing instead of providing false help to those

with lower incomes, the city could help citizens across all income levels.

The city administration is pushing city council to approve the downtown development before the end of the year. I strongly encourage citizens to tell their councilperson they oppose getting the short end of the stick.

Attend the city council meeting on Monday, December 16th at 7:30 pm at city hall or e-mail your council representatives to share your concerns.

Micah Zakem is a small landlord and certified public accountant with 15 years of experience in commercial real estate. He enjoys working on homes and woodworking.

Happy
Holidays
From our family to yours

Wishing you and your loved ones
warmth, joy, and peace this season!
- Tristan & Caitlin Rader

LAKEWOOD OBSERVER

Op-Ed:
First Federal Lakewood
Headquarters Building Sale

from Megan Bauccho

Since 1935, First Federal Lakewood has been a steward of our community. Our prominent headquarters and branch, located at the corner of Detroit and Warren Roads, is a downtown Lakewood landmark. We recently decided to sell part of our Lakewood Headquarters building complex to Co-Hatch, a membership-based company providing work and event spaces. We are excited to be a part of adding coworking and community gathering spaces to our hometown.

We are confident we have engaged the right partners to honor our historic real estate and use the property appropriately to enhance our hometown. Although you may see future changes to the portion of the building we sold, customers and community members will not notice any change in their in-person interactions with us.

To further deepen our commitment to our employees and customers, we are also undergoing a renovation in the portion of the building we still own. This part of the project will bring to life significantly improved office and workspaces for our team members. Creating a flexible workspace that evolves with the workforce makes First



Moments in Lakewood's History thanks to FFL. The temperature hits 103, a record that still stands to this day.

Federal Lakewood better positioned to meet the needs of our employees, customers and neighbors.

Please join me in sharing our enthusiasm for this positive change. Be assured that our longevity and dedication to the Lakewood community remains as strong as ever. We are proud of our place in Lakewood's development and intend to remain at the community forefront well into the future. This dedication is what sets us apart and has made First Federal Lakewood THE community bank for nearly 90 years.

Thank you,
Tim Phillips
President & CEO
First Federal Lakewood

For Community Support
Healthy Lakewood Foundation
Announces Funding

by Sharon Schult

The Healthy Lakewood Foundation (HLF) Board of Directors awarded \$104,800 in Neighborhood Opportunity grants at its November Board meeting.

The HLF Board awarded these grants to twenty-one local organizations for community-based projects that support community building and engagement through innovation and learning. These projects support meaningful work at the hyperlocal level in Lakewood. This funding seeks to address the social determinants of health and

the conditions of our community that impact our health and well-being.

Awarded Neighborhood Opportunity Grants include:

\$4,000 to Empower Sports for sports league programming and participation for students with a disability/disabilities.

\$4,500 to College Now Greater Cleveland, for a series of college planning workshops for high school students and their parents, from FAFSA prep to college transition and more.

Read the entire list online at lakewoodobserver.com

Holiday Fun For All
LO's Holiday Decorating Contest 2024

continued from page 1

PLEASE ONLY NOMINATE A HOME ONCE. Once it's nominated, it's in the contest. We will happily go out and photograph all nominated homes. Nominations will only be accepted through December 17th. On Decem-



A lovely tribute to the start!



ber 18th, the voting starts. More on the voting process in the next issue of the Lakewood Observer.

Prizes are courtesy of of Carabel Beauty Salon and Store, India Garden, Woodstock BBQ, and The Root Cafe. If your business would like to donate a gift prize, just give us a call. We are grateful for your support.

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LAKEWOOD CARES

Involved In A Custody Battle
Free Legal Advice For Domestic Violence Survivors

by Tonya Sams

Family turmoil can be difficult to manage, and a custody battle can add even more strain. If your case goes before the court, it's important to understand what to expect.

The most common custody cases involve both parents, and the court's primary goal is to create a parenting plan focused on the child's best interests. Generally, there are two types of plans: residential parenting and shared parenting.

Several roles or responsibilities may be assigned by the court (or agreed upon by both parents). For instance, the designation of "residential parent" can sometimes be limited to decisions like choosing the child's school district. In other cases, it may include broader rights, such as making choices about healthcare and extracurricular activities.

"Something less than a 50/50 split is considered shared parenting time, and that's more typical," explains Andrea Gonzalez-Burton, Senior Attorney in the Family Law Practice Group at The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland.

The court determines the appropriate custody plan by considering multiple factors beyond Ohio law alone. Input from child advocates, mental health professionals, psycholo-

gists, and parents is carefully weighed. Often, a thorough review of the family's background is essential to ensure the child's safety and well-being.

In some cases, a child may be appointed a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) or an attorney called a guardian ad litem. Both roles serve the child's best interests, and sometimes an additional guardian ad litem is appointed to represent the child's personal wishes.

"Occasionally, a child's desires may differ from what's in their best interest," Andrea said. "In unique cases, especially with older teens, the child might become a party to the case so that their wishes can be considered, though this is rare. Ultimately, it is up to the judge to decide what parenting time will look like."

Even in cases involving domestic violence, the court generally believes a child should still have the opportunity to build a healthy relationship with both parents. To prevent any risk to the child, structured guidelines are put in place during visitations or custody exchanges. For example, drop-offs might be arranged in public places, at a police or fire station, or via school transfers, where each parent takes turns picking up or dropping off at the school.

Andrea emphasizes that custody

cases are not about "winning" or "losing" in the traditional sense.

"Winning means being able to see your child in a therapeutically appropriate setting with safe, healthy behaviors. That's the only standard of winning that we recognize."

Are you a victim of domestic vio-

lence and involved in a custody case? Legal Aid may be able to help! To apply for assistance, call 888-817-3777, or complete an online intake 24/7 at las-clev.org.

Tonya Sams is the Development & Communications Manager at The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland.

LCAC Wraps Up Thanksgiving Food Drive,
Prepares For Christmas Food Drive

continued from page 1

ple, at 15300 Detroit Ave., over two days.

Dec. 13 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., non-perishable food donations will be sorted. Later that evening, LCAC members and volunteers will gather from 6 to 7:30 p.m. to bag non-perishable food.

Dec. 14 from 9 a.m. to noon, LCAC members and volunteers will bag perishable food and then hand deliver both non-perishable and perishable bags filled with food fixings to the community.

LCAC will need volunteers of all ages to sort food items, bag over 300 bags of food, and deliver them to the community.

The event will be held regardless of the weather, so dress accordingly to stay warm and dry.

With the success of the Thanksgiving Food Drive and the number of volunteers that came to help, LCAC members hope for a similar success at its upcoming Christmas Food Drive over Dec. 13-14.

For more information or to make a

monetary donation, visit www.LCAC.info. Make sure to follow Lakewood Charitable Assistance Corporation on Facebook and @lcafooddrives on Instagram for updates on everything LCAC does and to keep up-to-date with the organization.

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2 Items	\$10.25	\$12.25	\$16.25	\$18.25
3 Items	\$11.00	\$13.25	\$17.50	\$20.00
4 Items	\$11.75	\$14.25	\$18.75	\$21.75
Deluxe	\$12.50	\$15.25	\$20.00	\$23.50
Extra Items	\$0.75	\$1.00	\$1.25	\$1.75
Chicken	\$2.25	\$2.75	\$3.75	\$4.75
Extra Cheese & Special Toppings	\$2.00	2.50	3.50	4.50

Available items: Pepperoni, Sausage, Mushrooms, Onion, Green & Red Bell Peppers, Anchovies, Ham, Bacon, Fresh Garlic, Black Olives, Hot Peppers, Ground Beef, Pineapple, Jalapeño Peppers. Special Toppings: Artichoke Hearts, Fresh Tomato, Broccoli, and *Chicken

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LAKEWOOD OBSERVER



DECEMBER

ARIES: The New Moon lands in Ram’s house of long-distance travel, so have yourself a Merry Little Xmas somewhere hot. The more heat, the better for our Ram, Feliz Navidad anyone?

TAURUS: The Bull is having the most Wonderful Time of the Year this Christmas; the New Moon landed in your 8th house of other people’s resources, an inheritance, or the Lotto perhaps.

GEMINI: The Twins are having double the pleasure, double the fun this Christmas in the relationship house. Did someone see Mommy kissing Santa Claus under the mistletoe?

CANCER: The Crab will be looking for ways to trim not only the tree but the waistline as well; with that New Moon on your house of health, try some Rocking Around the Christmas Tree.

LEO: The Lion/Lioness is hot to trot in the Jungle this Christmas, that New Moon is lighting up your house of romance like a forest fire, All they Want for Christmas is You, baby you, Roar!

VIRGO: Virgo, you might want to get a head start on sprucing up your abode this Christmas; the New Moon is shining on home & heart, get ready to Deck the Halls with the family around.

LIBRA: Santa Claus is Coming to Town for our Libra friends this year, & no better place to shop than right in

the community, the neighborhood; the New Moon is lighting up the local town.

SCORPIO: The Scorpion is coming out of its cave this Christmas; the New Moon just set your house of Finances ablaze. Take advantage & Roast some Chestnuts on a Yuletide open fire.

SAGITTARIUS: The New Moon is shining its Sunshine & Moonshine on the Centaur’s physical self; it’s all about you: get outdoors, go for an adventure, take the gang on a Sleigh Ride.

CAPRICORN: The Goat is spending time behind the scenes this Christmas, with that New Moon taking a rest in your 12th house; meditate so you can hear the Angels when they whisper.

AQUARIUS: The more, the merrier, for our Aquarians this Christmas. The New Moon is lighting up your house of friendships; gather the whole gang for a celebration of Joy to the World.

PISCES: The Fish is spending the Twelve Days of Christmas at the office with the New Moon lighting up your house of career; grab your Christmas bonus, & swim on over to the office party.

Eva Starr, the local astrologer, has been studying the moon & stars since she could read. You can reach Starr at evastarr@evastarr.com & her website evastarr.com

Three Arches Foundation 2024 Grants Local Nonprofits Receive \$2 Million To Boost Equitable Access To Care

continued from page 1

initiatives, and support of general operations. “These grants reflect a multitude of approaches that strengthen important systems of support in our communities in order to meet the respective needs of those who often face challenges in accessing essential health care,” shared Kristin Broadbent, president and CEO of the Foundation. “From partnering with organizations that embrace a culturally centered care approach to funding programs that utilize trauma-informed care to promote healing, to supporting preventive and wrap-around behavioral health services, this work is designed to boost health equity.”

“We’re proud to support our 2024 grant recipients who recognize and understand barriers to access that make managing care difficult for individuals and families impacted by health disparities,” comments Gina Gavlak, board chair of the Foundation. “Together, these investments help fill gaps that

exist within the health care landscape.”

In addition to this year’s recipients, four nonprofit partners will begin year two of their multi-year grant awarded last year. These include Colors+, In Harmony Therapeutic Services, LifeAct, and Nueva Luz Urban Resource Center. The Foundation also contributed to and continues its participation in the Greater Cleveland Funder’s Collaborative.

Highlights of 2024 grants approved by the Foundation’s board of directors include:

B. Riley Sober House - \$61,250 for the addition of a part-time psychiatrist and full-time Licensed Independent Social Worker to the staff which represent a new component in providing onsite comprehensive mental health counseling, improved substance use disorder counseling, and integrated treatment for co-occurring disorders.

Bellefaire JCB - \$228,647 to sustain access to vital behavioral health

Read the entire list online at lakewoodobserver.com

NALC President’s Vows Come Up Short Letter Carriers Fight Back Against Tentative Agreement

from Leah Hudak

The National Agreement between the Postal Service and the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) expired on May 20, 2023. Since then, the president of the NALC and the Postal Service have been in meetings to draw up a new contract that then needs to be voted on by the NALC membership. As of December 2, 2024 we are 562 days without a contract.

During this time, NALC President, Brian Renfroe, has not been transparent with the negotiations, but has stated several matters and his stand on them. Now that a tentative agreement has come out, Renfroe’s vows have come up short.

Renfroe stated that he would not accept any agreement that still had non-career employees. The tentative agreement still has City Carrier Assistants (CCA) still in place.

Renfroe implied that the raises would be historical. The tentative agreement offers raises that are only 1.3% every November. We have had higher yearly raises previously.

Renfroe said that there would

be measure implemented to protect from abusive management. The tentative agreement provided none.

Renfroe ensured we would have means other than the grievance procedure to ensure that management would follow the contract. The tentative agreement provided nothing for this either.

There are carriers across the country that live in their cars or live on friends and families couches because they cannot afford food and gas and rent.

Letter carriers worked every day during the global pandemic in which most of America was home and carriers were their only form of contact every day; their only consistency and normalcy. Letter Carriers worked 12 hours a day 6 days a week. It was not uncommon to see carrier pay stubs of 72 hours per week.

This and many more reasons are why we are saying NO and hosting a rally on December 8, 2024 at 27300 Center Ridge Rd, Westlake, Ohio 44145. Come stand with us as we stand up against this tentative agreement.

An advertisement for 'Pause Before You Play' featuring a basketball player in a white jersey with the number 24, jumping to shoot a ball. The background is dark with orange and yellow accents. Text includes 'PAUSE BEFORE YOU PLAY', 'THE BEST GAME PLAN FOR EVERY BET.', and 'SET LIMITS', 'RECOGNIZE THE RISKS', 'KNOW WHEN TO STOP'. It also mentions 'Online betting takes just seconds. But betting too quickly could put you at risk. Learn why you should pause before you bet at PauseBeforeYouPlay.org.' At the bottom, it says 'GAMBLING PROBLEM? 1-800-589-9966' and 'PauseBeforeYouPlay.org'.

COVE COMMUNITY CENTER

In Memoriam:

Valerie Carmen Martin, A Life Well Lived, A Legacy Of Adventure

by Nancy Feighan

Valerie Carmen Martin, a vibrant and adventurous spirit, was to be featured in the upcoming "Meet Me at Cove" series, where we hoped to share her incredible story. Unfortunately, Valerie passed away before we could submit her profile, but we still want to honor her memory and the remarkable life she led.

A resident of Lakewood since 2003, Valerie was known for her passion for life, her adventurous nature, and her infectious enthusiasm. Born in Cleveland, Valerie spent much of her childhood moving with her family as her father worked for various radio stations, eventually settling back in northeast Ohio. Her father's career as an engineer at WGAR and later as Chief Engineer for WEWS Channel 5's transmitter introduced her to a world of storytelling and technical expertise that would shape her own path.

Valerie's love for adventure began at an early age, inspired by her mother's thrilling story of flying in a Piper Cub. Determined to follow in her footsteps, Valerie took her first flying lesson in 1967 with no prior experience, armed only with a \$5 coupon from Flying Magazine. Despite nerves and chal-



lenging winds, Valerie quickly found her place in the cockpit, developing a deep passion for flying. She excelled in steep bank turns—often pushing beyond the FAA's standard 30-degree limit to 50 degrees—showing a natural talent for the sport.

In 1968, Valerie completed her first solo flight, and by 1969, she had earned her private pilot's license. In 1973, she achieved her commercial pilot's license, a remarkable accomplishment during a time when very few women pursued aviation. Valerie financed her flight training with personal loans, as

she was unable to secure traditional loans, often flying until the money ran out, then pausing until the loan was paid off. Her perseverance and dedication were a testament to her passion and determination.

Though her flying career took many twists and turns, Valerie's love for aviation never faded. In 2021, a friend gifted her a one-hour flight at Burke Lakefront Airport, reigniting her love for the skies. Whether she was in the air or on the water—often on the Goodtime III, where she preferred the starboard side for the best views of Cleveland—Valerie found joy in exploring the world around her. "If it's not the sky, it's the water," she often said, reflecting her zest for life and adventure.

In addition to her love of flying, Valerie found joy in her community at Cove Community Center, where she was an active participant in activities like bocce, cornhole, chair volleyball, and tabletop bowling. She embraced every opportunity to learn, have fun, and make new memories, whether at the Leap Year Senior Dance Party or the summer Luau.

Valerie's story was one of perseverance, adventure, and joy. Her motto, "Do what you love and die happy,"



encapsulated the way she lived her life—fully and fearlessly. Even in her 74th year, she took to the skies again, connecting with the memory of her late grandmother, who had passed away at the same age. In July, she celebrated her 80th birthday, a testament to her indomitable spirit and love for life.

Though Valerie is no longer with us, her legacy of adventure, passion, and community will continue to inspire all who knew her. She touched many lives with her warmth and spirit. While she has taken her final flight, her memory will live on, encouraging us all to pursue our passions and live fully. Valerie will be remembered for embracing life to the fullest and inspiring others to do the same. Rest in peace, Valerie.

Nancy Feighan is the Project Specialist II, Department of Human Services, City of Lakewood.

Bucket Wish: Part 2 Of A 3-Part Series Wish No. 2: A Dream Spa Day

by Nancy Feighan

Thanks to a generous grant from the Healthy Lakewood Foundation, three seniors from Lakewood's Division of Aging enjoyed a special day at Mario's International Spa. For two of them, it was their first spa experience.

The day began with a choice of steam baths, followed by rejuvenating massages and a delicious lunch. The pampering continued with manicures and pedicures, leaving all three participants feeling refreshed and revitalized.

After a lifetime of hard work and caring for others, this special day was a well-deserved treat.

"Spending the day at Mario's Spa was a true delight—relaxing in the whirlpool, enjoying a massage, delicious lunch, and a perfect mani-pedi. The historic 1800s house made it even more special. I'm so glad I chose a spa day for my bucket wish!"

-Eliza

"My day began with a relaxing sauna, followed by a soothing massage. After enjoying a delicious meal, I had my first pedicure, made even better by a great conversation with the manicurist. For the next three days, I felt like I was walking on air. Thank you to the Healthy Lakewood Foundation for this unforgettable experience—it made me spectacularly happy."

-Tina

"With a number of bucket list options to choose from, I selected Mario's International Spa, and it turned out to be a great decision. After we were welcomed with beverages, we began our excursion into delights one of which was an hour-long soothing



massage, followed by a delicious lunch. The salmon was excellently prepared—one of the best I've had in years. Then, I experienced a superb pedicure with a very flattering polish that I'm still enjoying today."

-Stephanie

Stay tuned for Part 3 of our Bucket Wish series—you won't want to miss it!

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