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Werner Heisenberg

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Volume 21, Issue 03, February 5, 2025

LHS National Honor Society Members Inducted

by Christine Gordillo

The Lakewood High National Honor Society welcomed 56 new members to its chapter in an induction ceremony at the Civic Auditorium on Jan. 30, 2025. To be inducted into the National Honor Society, students must possess a GPA of at least 3.5. Students are also evaluated based on their character, which means the nominating committee looks at community involvement, extracurriculars, leadership skills, and other intangibles.

Prior to the induction of new members, NHS President Helen Fraunfelder offered a President's Message and the introduced the night's guest

speaker, LHS social studies teacher and LHS graduate Ron Lewis. Following Mr. Lewis' speech, the four remaining NHS officers each spoke on one of the four tenets of the organization: scholarship, leadership, service and character. Vice President Mae Mohar spoke on the topic of service; Treasurer Elizabeth Schuldt spoke on leadership; Secretary Josie Kavc spoke on character; and Sergeant at Arms Charieon Doxley spoke on scholarship.

Following the speeches, the new members were presented by Principal Joy Morgan before they took the National Honor Society Pledge to conclude the evening.

Congratulations to all

our our new NHS inductees, thank you to the current members for welcoming the newest members and thanks to Dayna Hansen for her guidance as the chapter's advisor.

2025 Inductees

Alexandra Adamov
Abraham Ballard
Ella Bower
Erin Boyer
Livia Brahaj
Gabriela Carroll-Greeves
Connor Coleman
Mallory Derrick
Amelia Diemert
Nyle Donaldson
Sophia Eccher
Abigail Emerson
Lewis Frantz
Ruby Fraunfelder
Jada Goings
Avery Greene
Iliana Harris
Abriana Heinz
Elle Heller
Owen Hill
Gwendolyn Hongosh
Averi Johnson
Nathan Kopko
Abigail Kovach
Nathan Lardi
Josephine Lautzenhiser
Brianna Lehman
Nora Lipka
Grace Lowmiller
Alessio Matera
Titus McAlvey
Audrey McNulty
Paisley Norris
Daniel O'Brien
Gray Olson
Abigail Peck
Benjamin Reba
Charlotte Reed
Jelenia Rodriguez
Cooper Russell
Evan Seiler
Zoey Serna
Vincent Shell
Riley Stallbaum
Delaney Starr
Gavin Stimic
Ashley Tomsic
Maya Trempe
Louis Van der kuil
Isabella Wacker
Sebastian Warnock
Cecilia Whiteamore
Stevie Williams
Dylan Wolson
Brynn Wolfgram
Rita Yost

Residents Launch Petition Drive To Save Schools

by Monica Bruaw

Recently, the Lakewood City School District has been discussing plans to "repurpose" (close) up to 2 elementary schools - with Lincoln, Roosevelt, or Grant being on the chopping block. These changes may deprive hundreds of children of their convenient access to primary education and could lead to overcrowded classrooms in the remaining institutions.

Local elementary schools are the heart of the communities they serve, providing more than just education. This petition seeks to express our collective concern and to urge the Lakewood City School District to suspend the repurposing process, instead exploring alternative options, while collecting accurate data and focusing first on the passage of the upcoming levy.

Notable to ALL residents, the district is planning to propose an increased levy on the ballot in 2026 after fellow residents just saw their property taxes increase at least 30%.



State funding for this district is not tied to enrollment, being a guaranteed district. Taxpayers will be asked for more money even if schools are repurposed and it is important that our voices are heard on how the schools should be serving the needs of Lakewood's families.

Stand with Preserve Lakewood Schools to safeguard the quality of education for our children, preserve walkability and culture, and maintain real estate values in Lakewood.

Because this issue affects all Lakewood residents, please consider signing this petition at <https://change.org/preserve-lakewood-schools> or use the QR code above.

Lakewood Black Caucus Celebrating Black History Month

by Shirley Nelson

Feb. 15th • 1- 4:00 PM •
Lakewood Presbyterian Church

Black History Month is celebrated to honor the rich heritage and resilience of Black people despite facing historical oppression. It is also a time to acknowledge African Americans who have made significant contributions in society.

On Saturday, February 15th, Lakewood Black Caucus will host a community event to recognize key figures, achievements, and struggles throughout Black history. Our theme is "Telling Our Stories – Now and Then."

Angelina Steiner Ham-

continued on page 7

March 1 Begins Open Enrollment Period

by Christine Gordillo

The Lakewood City Schools' Open Enrollment period for the 2025-2026 school year will begin on March 1, 2025 and continue until April 15, 2025. An online form will be available on the district website beginning the morning of March 1. Notifica-

tion of open enrollment status will be as follows: The first-round of notifications will occur the week of June 9, 2025. Kindergarten notification will only be made the week of August 11, 2025. If you have any questions regarding Open Enrollment, please call 216-529-4244.

Correction: Lakewood Kiwanis Foundation Scholarships

In the January 8th issue article "Calling All Graduating High School Seniors," the website and QR code were not correct. To apply please go to: <https://sites.google.com/view/lakewoodkiwanisfoundation/scholarships>

You must be a graduating senior, a U.S citizen and resident of Lakewood who has applied to a college or university, and have displayed academic success. Applications are welcome until April 1, 2025.

Lakewood Senior Olive Rodemann Wins Highest Honors

by Christine Gordillo

Congratulations to Lakewood High senior Olive Rodemann, whose artwork has been honored in the Regional Scholastic Art & Writing Awards competition!

Olive's photography earned six Gold Keys, the highest honor given, and two Silver Keys. Gold Key winners move on to be judged at the national level of the longest-running and most prestigious scholarship and recognition program for young artists and writers in grades 7-12. The Scholastic regional



competition recognizes creative achievement in students across the Midwest.

In addition to Olive, West Shore Career-Tech Media Art & Design student Gabe Cosgriff earned two Honorable Mentions in photography and one for digital art, and fellow MAD student Jaiden Goan won an Honorable Mention in animation.

Congratulations again to Olive and to her AP Photography teacher, Dayna Hansen and to Gabe, Jaiden and MAD teacher Anne McQuay.



PRESIDENT’S PAGE

Council Designates February As Black History Month

Happy Valentine’s Day Neighbors!

This edition’s column is full of updates that are more practical than romantic, but are part of our continual work for the city we all love.

On February 3rd, City Council passed a Resolution to designate February 2025 as Black History Month in the City of Lakewood by celebrating African-American culture and paying tribute to the contributions of African-Americans to our community, region, state and country.

Council also adopted a Resolution accepting \$157,800 through the Northeast Ohio Public Energy Council (NOPEC) Energized Community (NEC) Grant Program which provides funding for energy efficiency and infrastructure projects to reduce

by Sarah Kepple
President of City Council/Council Person-At-Large



On February 3rd, City Council passed Resolution 2025-04 to designate February 2025 as Black History Month in the City of Lakewood by celebrating African-American culture and paying tribute to the contributions of African-Americans to our community, region, state and country.

energy consumption. The City can use these funds for a variety of projects supporting our Climate Action Plan including electric vehicles, traffic signal upgrades, energy efficient windows and appliances, electrical upgrades, tree canopy restoration, LED lighting upgrades, insulation and more. These funds are awarded in part based on the number of NOPEC customers in the city, so some of our dollars as energy consumers are now able to be reinvested toward our Climate goals. We anticipate further discussion of how the NOPEC NEC funds will be used at an upcoming Public Works & Sustainability Committee meeting.

Prior to the Regular council meeting on Feb 3rd, Committee of the Whole met at 6:30 to learn from the Administration about findings of a space study conducted at City Hall and the Annex across the street. Some

of the high level challenges discussed were the need to expand the female police locker room to accommodate increasing numbers of female officers as well as ADA compliance, customer experience, and department efficiency.

This is the beginning of a conversation, and I invite you to watch the video on the council website to learn more.

Coming up at the February 18th Finance Committee at 6:30pm are a number of ordinances related to bond anticipation notices to finance capital improvement projects as laid out in the 2025 budget and budget hearings. Join us virtually or in person for the annual update from our bond and finance advisors.

Please join us for our upcoming Lakewood City Council meetings:

6:30pm Tuesday, February 18th - Finance Committee

7:30pm Tuesday, February 18th - Regular Meeting of Council

Sign up for our email list to receive agendas for upcoming meetings, livestream meetings or watch past meetings, and learn more about Council on our webpage: <https://www.lakewoodoh.gov/lakewood-city-council/>



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Lakewood Observer

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THE MAYOR’S CORNER

Managing The City’s Space Needs

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

The City of Lakewood regularly works to evaluate and align its municipal offices, facilities, and real estate holdings to create efficiencies, address capacity needs, ensure high-quality resident services, and maintain our shared goal of strong fiscal stewardship. This tradition dates back to Lakewood’s early days – in 1920 our first city hall moved from a house at Warren and Detroit to another house located in Lakewood Park, and then Lakewood ultimately built our current civic headquarters in the late 1950s.

A recent example of success in this effort to manage the City’s space needs was the unification of the Department of Human Services offices and public spaces at the Cove Community Center and the subsequent sale of the multiple spaces that previously served those purposes. That effort improved service to residents and created efficiencies. Another example is the current work to shift our Lakewood Animal Shelter to sit jointly on the same site as our Berea Road Refuse and Recycling, which will allow the City to expand its water treatment and storm water capacity in the Rocky River Valley to eventually use the soon-to-be-vacated current animal shelter campus.

In the same vein, last year the City released an RFP for a firm to complete a space assessment of the Lakewood City Hall campus (Administrative Offices, Lakewood Municipal Court, Lakewood Police Headquarters, and the nearby Annex building). After review, the City engaged Weber Murphy Fox Architects (“WMF”), who completed the assessment, which was discussed with Lakewood City Council this past Monday.

The WMF report confirms what we already suspected through our day-to-day use of Lakewood City Hall – the demands of our many users of this campus have now meaningfully out-



City Hall designed in the 50s, built in the 60s has been a solid performer for decades. Unfortunately time flies, and things change, and the building has not kept up with the times and technology.

paced the existing space capacity and layout present on site. Many aspects of the building have become meaningfully outdated over its 65-plus years in service, and some of those involve issues of providing equal facilities for male and female employees and building access for the physically disabled. An additional challenge is the existing layout and infrastructure, which limit overall options moving forward.

The most pressing and immediate issues lie with the Police Department headquarters, where the space demands are significant. Another major problem is the lack of a separate dedicated locker room for our female officers. (Keep in mind that when City Hall was built in the late 1950s, it would still be decades until Lakewood hired its first female officer).

The City of Lakewood must develop a solution for these challenges with our Lakewood City Hall building. Based on estimated from the WMF report, a solution for addressing our space needs in our current building would demand an expansion and rehabilitation project that

would cost between \$10M to \$20M. That is a significant number, especially given Lakewood’s other major capital demands presently putting pressure on our budget and financing capacity. The needs of police are only the first of many space issues and challenges faced by the multiple departments housed in

Lakewood City Hall. For example, the building’s age also means that it is not aligned to modern regulations present in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

The consultants at WMF have provided an initial menu of options to address some of our space challenges, but additional analysis that holistically considers the City’s space needs is required. While this situation poses a challenge to the City, with this assessment in hand and with the highly useful information it provides, the Administration can now endeavor to seek, further analyze, and price potential options to address the situation and develop a space plan for the City of Lakewood.

Our team in the Planning and Development Department along with the Finance and Law Departments have begun to explore options based on the WMF report. We expect to complete this work expeditiously, and should be able to present specific options and a recommendation in the near term.

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LAKEWOOD PUBLIC LIBRARY EVENTS

Upcoming Events

by Lisa Calfee

Presentation- Douglas Phillips, Cleveland's Modern Stained Glass Artist and Jamie Miles from the Cleveland Restoration Society

Wednesday, February 5, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. Main Library Auditorium

Throughout churches in Northeast Ohio and around the world, the artistry of the Phillips Stained Glass Studio stands out for its unique use of color, shape, and movement. Jamie Miles will highlight the career of Douglas Phillips, believed to be the only African American artist to run his own stained glass studio between the years of 1952 and 1995.

Film: "Scarlet Street" (1945) Presented by Terry Meehan

Saturday, February 8, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. Main Library Auditorium

Femme fatale, Kitty March (Joan Bennett) takes advantage of middle-aged store cashier Christopher Cross (Edward G. Robinson) after he does her a good turn in this film noir classic.

Presentation: A Visit with Abraham Lincoln

Sunday, February 16, 2025 at 2:00 p.m.

Main Multipurpose Room

Local historian Mel Maurer stars as Abraham Lincoln who speaks frankly on the Civil War and other topics.

Besa Film: "The Free Men"

(2011: French with English subtitles)

Presented by Dr. Ethan Katz from the University of California, Berkeley

Sunday, February 16, 2025 at 2:00 p.m. Main Library Auditorium

Join Dr. Ethan Katz for an introduction of this French war film recounting the role that Algerians and other Muslims played in the French Resistance during WWII.

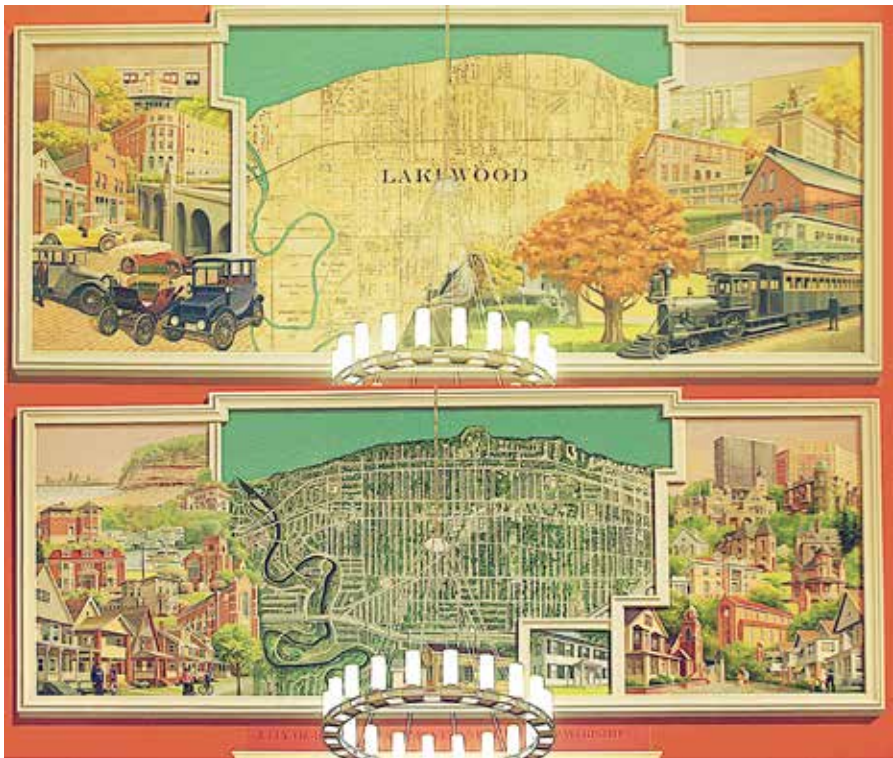
Presentation: Cleveland Civil Rights Trail

Presented by Margaret Lann from

the Cleveland Restoration Society

Wednesday, February 19, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. Main Library Auditorium

Join Margaret Lann as she explores the local sites where history was made along the Cleveland Civil Rights Trail, a project of the Cleveland Restoration Society where she serves as the Director of Preservation Services.



Often Taken For Granted

The Art Of The Masters In Lakewood

by Jim O'Bryan

When the late great library director Ken Warren worked to put together the new library, being a New Yorker for a period of time he wanted the best and most metropolitan for Lakewood, and the Library.

Ken always saw Lakewood as a great metropolitan community. So when the Library secured the funding for the new library, Ken went out and hired the best.

The first to be drafted was Robert A. M. Stern, how great is that? Robert Stern and his team are some of the best archi-

itects in the country. Doubt my word? Google his name and sit back in awe.

They worked out a deal where they could use some of the plans for a building they had designed earlier, but repurpose it for our needs. The results speak for themselves.

Robert Stern in the deal-making process, had the right of refusal and approval for all art and photos in the library. For the murals in the Great Room, Robert chose his favorite muralist, Richard Haas. It ends up that Mr. Haas is a favorite muralist of many of the top architects all over the world



February

ARIES: The Sun is in the Ram's house of friends & Jupiter has landed in the 3rd house of the neighborhood. Take your Valentine for a spicy dinner in the neighborhood, & wear Red.

TAURUS: The Bull's got double luck this Valentine's Day. The Sun is in the house of career & Jupiter is in the house of finances. Splurge on your sweetheart, money's no object, wine & dine.

GEMINI: Jupiter is in the Twin's house of self, but the sun is shining on shores overseas. You're calling the shots, pick the destination, schedule the flight - double the pleasure, double the LOVE.

CANCER: You've got some extra resources coming your way, Crab, be gracious & say thank you. Jupiter is in your 12th house behind the scenes, a secret admirer maybe? Hmm!

LEO: The Lion/Lioness will have a Jungle full this Valentine's Day. I hope your wallet is as big as your heart! You've got a lot going on in the house of friendships & personal relationships.

VIRGO: Virgo needs to look at its health this Valentine's Day, where the Sun is shining. You might be feeling a little extra frisky. Jupiter in your house of career brings you extra cash.

LIBRA: Libra, you are never lacking for friends. However, the Sun is shining on your romantic house this Valentine's Day & Jupiter landed on a beach somewhere; make a decision, love.

SCORPIO: Scorpio, you'll have to come out of that bat cave. The Sun is shining in the house of home & family. Jupiter's landed in your house of extra resources; money's coming in.

SAGITTARIUS: The Centaur has the Sun shining in the community, Jupiter's landed in your house of relationships. Do the right thing, spread the wealth in the neighborhood with your partner.

CAPRICORN: The Goat can't help but have the Sun shine on its finances, while Jupiter is looking over your health. Looks like all systems go, share the love, caution; moderation is key.

AQUARIUS: Aquarians, you



Richard Haas stands over one of the two murals making sure the installation follows his design.

are the birthday chosen; it's all about you. Jupiter is spending some time in your house of creativity, children & romance. Share the Love. There is a plan.

PISCES: The Sun shines on the Fish's waters behind the scenes. An underwater cave, perhaps? Looks like you're going to be throwing those hugs & kisses on the home shores.

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

including I.M. Pei of Rock Hall fame.

I had the pleasure of helping Richard with his background of Lakewood driving the streets, talking with old timers and new wash-a-shores all in an effort to capture not just Lakewood, but what would work in those large spaces.

He particularly loved Bird Town, and the streets between Clifton and Madison. He said he could feel the heartbeat of the community there.

After a 6 month break, he arrived back at the new library to install his artwork, a masterpiece that truly captures the heartbeat and history of Lakewood in a way fitting for the library and the mural space.

LAKEWOOD EDUCATION



Lakewood Police Bring "Books And Badges" To Elementary Schools

by Christine Gordillo

Last week a group of Lakewood Police officers visited Emerson Ele-

mentary to bring the new "Books and Badges" program to the school's first-graders. This week, LPD officers stopped by Horace Mann and Roosevelt Elementary Schools and read with their students as well.

Officers read a book to first graders while students follow along with their own book, which they are able to take home to keep!

What an awesome program. Thank you, LPD!



Harding Model UN Team Shines At Conference

by Christine Gordillo

Harding's Junior Model United Nations Team had a fantastic experience at John Carroll University earlier this month. They began the process of preparing for the conference in October with researching problems facing their respective committees and constructing a position paper with their partners.

They began the process of preparing for the conference in October with researching problems facing their respective committees and constructing a position paper with their partners.

The next step was to participate in committees with students from all over the Greater Cleveland area sharing their positions in hopes to come to resolutions; collaborating, communicating, and cooperating throughout the process.

On the second day of the conference the committees were given crisis

scenarios that forced them to put aside their work to that point and act on each of the scenarios.

Harding's teams of delegates rose to the occasion with Andrew Babson and Tyler Kinder taking home a Superior Delegation Award, Audrey Gregory and Laine Taylor taking home an Excellent Delegation Award, and Gia Jirousek and Delaney Mason taking home a Honorable Mention Delegation Award.

The entire team of 16 students showed the conference what it means to embody the Vision of a Lakewood Ranger with their participation in the conference.

Special thanks goes out to the Lakewood Ranger Education Foundation and Principal Chip Plush and Assistant Principal Hadeel Nimeh for making this experience possible.



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Join District's Elementary Winter Walk

by Christine Gordillo

As part of Lakewood City Schools' Hike & Bike partnership with the City of Lakewood and Bike Lakewood, we are encouraging students in grades PreK-5 to walk to school if they are able on Tuesday, Feb. 11. Walking to school is not just for warm weather...grab your hat and gloves and a warm coat and enjoy the crisp air!

The Winter booklet is now out

Adult Activities
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Registration:
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LO SCHOOL FORUM

Response To District’s ‘Elementary Planning Task Force’ FAQs

by Caitlin Solomon

Preserve Lakewood Schools is working to educate Lakewood residents about Lakewood City School District’s current process which may result in the closing of one or even two of our neighborhood elementary schools. We are a growing collective of parents and residents concerned about preserving our neighborhood schools, and more than 850 residents have signed our petition to halt the closing of any of Lakewood’s elementary schools.

Below we share our response to the recently published FAQs by Lakewood City School District on their website and in the Observer. The questions were generated by the district, with their answers copied and pasted below. You will find our group’s response below each one.

Who makes up the task force?

District response: “The task force is made up of parents from all seven elementary boundaries, community members, city leaders, alumni, district administrators and teachers who reside in Lakewood. Community members, including District parents, make up two-thirds of the task force.”

Preserve Lakewood Schools response: We have performed an analysis of the list of Task Force members as published on the district’s website and derived the following breakdown of the 49 members:

- 5 Board of Education Members
- 2 City Council Members (1 of which was appointed to council after Task Force
- 29 parents/residents
- 13 Lakewood City School District employees

The total of Board of Education (BOE) members plus district employees serving on the Task Force is 18 people, or 37% of the 49-member Task Force. This doesn’t account for City Council presence. Are district employees free to speak openly without fear of retribution? Why are BOE members serving as members of a Task Force that will make recommendations to the superintendent for a final decision, who will in turn make recommendations to the BOE to vote on? FutureThink, the outside consulting firm, has a representative present at the meetings and seems to be involved from a presentation and public relations perspective. We welcome more clarity on this role.

It is misleading to claim that this process was shaped by the community, when in fact, 37% of the task force is either a school board member, or is employed by the school district, and may be reluctant to speak their mind.

Finally, the process for developing the task force itself has not been transparent or widely shared. The task force was formed by the superintendent and Board of Education members, with potential members specifically and individually invited to apply to participate. The application process was not advertised widely in the school district’s communications and had a very short window for response.

Why weren’t more scenarios created?

District response: The District created seven draft scenarios to share with the task force. It was stated early in the process that the District is open to other suggested scenarios, whether they come from the task force or the community at large. It is also possible that any of the seven scenarios could be modified.

Preserve Lakewood Schools response: The district, in conjunction with an outside consulting firm FutureThink (based in Columbus, Ohio), created the seven scenarios to share with the Task Force upon their arrival to the first meeting. We have not heard one single anecdote of a Task Force member or concerned parent having their alternate suggestions taken into consideration in any manner. Six of the seven scenarios presented involve closing a school, and only one retains the seven elementary schools. Why are more creative scenarios involving retaining seven elementary schools not being presented or encouraged to be developed based on data?

Finally, it is concerning that the scenarios were created by FutureThink, an outside consulting company, under instructions from the school district. Why were scenarios not also devised by the task force based on their own analysis of the data? It is misleading to say that the scenarios were developed using buy-in from the community, when the task force was only asked to react to scenarios that had already been created by a firm.

Why wasn’t community input sought before convening the task force?

District response: Part of the task force’s charge was to sift through all the data provided on enrollment, finances, walking distances, etc., and determine how best to share with the community information that took hours to analyze in a 40-minute presentation. It is not the community’s responsibility to sift through all of the data, although we welcome anyone who wishes to review the data themselves to do so. No decisions were made regarding the seven scenarios in the first round of task force meetings. Now that the meetings are concluded, the task force will reconvene in February to review the input from the Community Conversations and the communitywide survey as it considers its recommendation to the superintendent.

Preserve Lakewood Schools response: Why were Community Conversations held after the seven scenarios were generated by an outside firm? How will feedback from these Community Conversations be shared with the Task Force in an unbiased manner?

The school district released a survey in January to gather public feedback. The survey asks respondents to rate the importance of, for example, keeping costs low while maintaining a quality education, expanding the availability of preschool and daycare, and creating additional space for Lakewood Community Recreation and Education programming. The survey does not ask respondents whether they feel

that retaining Lakewood’s high quality neighborhood schools should be a priority. It is also concerning that the school district’s survey does not have any safeguards to ensure respondents actually live in Lakewood.

The survey suffers from omission bias. It leaves out the effects of having a centralized pre K building, so that respondents are likely to say they prefer the centralized option without the context that it will be at the sacrifice of an elementary school(s).

Why didn’t the District use current data for enrollment figures?

District response: The information shared with the task force, the community and on our website comprises years of work and data collection. The draft scenarios used the last full year of elementary student enrollment data that was available to us (2023 -2024).

Preserve Lakewood Schools response: The enrollment projection from FutureThink has proven to be lower than the actual current enrollment count. The district has stated that “our numbers have stabilized over the years”, but has reengaged FutureThink to create an updated projection. Considering that the most recent FutureThink projection has proven to be incorrect, why would we expect it to be correct the next time around? Worse still, the task force, Superintendent and BOE will make a recommendation and base a decision to close an entire elementary school from revised projections.

If there are “years of work and data collection” on this issue, then can the community view the same data that was available to the consultants and task force?

Why can’t more preschool classes with before and after care be added to the buildings with excess capacity?

District response: State licensure requires dedicated space for before and after care that is separate from the space used for our K-5 education and has specific square footage requirements. We are considering all possible avenues to be able to provide these services.

Preserve Lakewood Schools response: Lakewood residents should expect that the school district research and devise many creative solutions to providing expanded Pre-K services. The school district has stated that it is open to suggestions from the community. However, it has been reported by Task Force members that the District has been unwilling to provide floor plans of all elementary buildings to further discussions on this subject, along with the pre-k square footage requirements. There may be state exemptions that can be explored to allow pre-k to work within the framework of our current elementary schools. Furthermore, with enrollment numbers decreasing at the two middle schools, why not offer a creative solution for offering Pre-K at the two Middle Schools? This is just one example of an alternate solution that has not been forwarded to the Task Force for exploration.

How will repurposing a building impact the need for a levy?

District response: The need for a levy is not dependent on any decision the Board of Education makes regarding elementary buildings. What could change is the amount of mills the District seeks for that levy although the public should keep in mind that we would repurpose a school for primarily educational benefits, not financial.

Preserve Lakewood Schools response: Residents should also note that state funding for this district is not tied to enrollment figures, being a guaranteed district. Per district presentations, it only costs as low as \$500,000 to \$750,000 additional per school year to keep an entire elementary school open (which is less than 1% of the overall operating budget).

If we were to repurpose two schools, how many students would be in a class?

District response: Grades K-2 would range from 20-23 and grades 3-5 from 23-25. Occasional exceptions may occur.

Preserve Lakewood Schools response: According to research and expert opinions, the ideal class size for elementary schools is generally considered to be around 15 students per teacher, with many advocating for classes no larger than 18 students to maximize student learning and individual attention from the teacher. Lakewood can and should strive for more than meeting minimum criteria.

What does being a walking district mean?

District response: To understand a walking district, you need to understand Ohio Revised Code-3327.01.

Some districts bus all their students; others only provide busing for groups of students in K- 8 who reside outside a 1-mile or 1.5-mile radius. For example, Bay Village provides busing for grades K-2 outside a 1-mile radius, grades 3-4 outside a 1.5-mile radius and grades 5-8 outside a 2-mile radius. It all depends on the district. Therefore, most schools in Ohio have a mix of students who walk/drive and students who get bused. As a dense city of only 5.5 square miles, Lakewood, per Ohio Revised Code, provides transportation to qualifying students with a disability, and all of our other students walk/bike or drive.

Preserve Lakewood Schools response: We are concerned that, in this matter, the school district is simply looking to meet the State of Ohio’s minimum requirements for remaining a walking district. Many Lakewood residents consider our high quality neighborhood schools as essential to Lakewood remaining an outstanding place to live. The school district saves an enormous expense from not providing bussing to the general school population in Lakewood. Walkability is an asset to the entire culture of Lakewood. Increased walking distances would translate to more car riders, more traffic, longer commutes, and more accidents involving pedestrians, including children. The district has not done a traffic or

LO SCHOOL FORUM

safety study, nor do they have accurate data regarding the breakdown of how many students walk, bike, or drive to school (which could easily be collected by teachers).

Will there be another community meeting once the task force makes a recommendation?

District response: We are committed to continuing to work through our process and analyzing our survey data. We pledge to keep the community informed as we proceed. The plan is to have one final community meeting once the task force makes a recommendation. We do not have a date as to when that would be.

Preserve Lakewood Schools response: We appreciate the promised engagement of a final community meeting, and welcome the opportunity to participate. We remain concerned that feedback is not actually being taken into consideration and that this process has been unfairly executed, with predetermined solutions and lack of authentic openness to alternate solutions. Lakewood residents deserve a transparent process and leaders that are open to alternate solutions.

What will be done to address the social-emotional needs of those students who will need to change schools?

District response: Once a decision is made, the District will allow an entire school year to strategize how to address all the needs arising from redrawn boundaries, including student wellness. Student Services Department staff, such as student wellness specialists, social workers, psychologists and family resource coordinators, families will be deeply involved in this process.

Preserve Lakewood Schools response: Thank you for adding the consideration of social-emotional needs, as this topic was not originally addressed in any of the Community Conversation presentations, and seems to have been added from parent feedback. We appreciate you taking that feedback into consideration. We remain concerned about the social-emotional transition for our elementary children, many of whom have already experienced disrupted schooling and childhoods due to the COVID pandemic. There is already a shortage of counselors in the district. Mental health providers for children in both school and private settings are in high demand. This remains a large concern and we believe that our elementary children should not be uprooted at the expense of other outcomes (i.e., centralized Pre-K), particularly when the school district is not providing the community with a data-supported business case for why a centralized Pre-K school building would provide more benefit to Lakewood than retaining its high-quality neighborhood elementary schools.

In conclusion:

We share three questions that we respectfully request that the school district answer for the community:

- 1 - What data do you have to demonstrate that creating a centralized Pre-K and/or community recreation center would provide a greater value to Lakewood?
- 2 - Two years ago, during the discussion about changing the way elementary specials are offered (specials include music, art, P.E., library, and STEM, you stated that the specials teachers would have no problem moving from school to school, and even teaching hundreds of students at multiple elementary schools. Why, now, are you stating that moving classroom teachers to a different school from time to time would

be too difficult and is a main impetus for needing to consolidate schools?
3 - What are the district's plans to perform a traffic study as has been requested both verbally and in writing by many parents>?

Lakewood's residents have paid high taxes and have continued to approve school levies for many years - it is clear that we value our neighborhood schools in their historic and present fashion. Our residents have made investments in our neighborhood schools that are walkable, and should continue to receive what we have invested in.

Repurposing or closing even one elementary school in Lakewood would be a drastic, permanent change, with severe negative impacts on the surrounding neighborhood, such as decreasing home values, longer and more dangerous routes for children to walk or bike to school, and the irreparable loss of the community cohesiveness the school provides.

As voters, we should expect that our school district not make drastic changes to the services it provides, without researching and presenting a solid business case backed up by data and with meaningful input from the community throughout the process.

We are concerned that this process is eroding residents' trust in our school district, and that the school district is putting the passage of a school levy in 2026 in jeopardy.

We urge the school district to put a hold on this process until after the 2026 levy is approved, giving them time to rebuild trust with the community, conduct pertinent studies (safety, traffic, community needs assessment), gather and evaluate meaningful data, engage with and listen to residents in a meaningful way, and conduct an open community process before making these decisions.

Respectfully,
Preserve Lakewood Schools
Learn more: <https://www.preservelakewoodschools.org/>

Lakewood Black Caucus Celebrating Black History Month

continued from page 1

ilton, Member of Council, At-Large, the first Black woman appointed to Lakewood City Council, will begin the program with stories to bring light to such a time as this.

Michele Rudolph, Cleveland Association of Black Storytellers, spotlights Ella Baker, a civil rights leader and organizer who helped shape the Civil Rights movement in the United States.

Join us for an uplifting cultural experience with food from a local Black-owned restaurant, Sweet Pork Wilson's. Vendors will be present selling art, jewelry, African clothing,

accessories, and other items.

Lakewood Black Caucus is a Black grassroots organization dedicated to the mental health and well-being of our Black community, while also providing all citizens of Lakewood with stimulating educational programs for the betterment of our entire community.

JOIN US Feb. 15th at 1:00 pm at Lakewood Presbyterian Church, 14502 Detroit Avenue, Lakewood, OH.

RSVP: shirley.nelson@live.com or 216-978-2626 - FREE and Open to the Public.

Shirley Nelson is LBC president.

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LO SCHOOL FORUM

Consulting Firms Should Not Replace Community Engagement Why Are We Discussing Closing A School In The First Place?

by Katie Slife Rustad

In the last issue of the Observer I outlined what, in my mind, are the main issues with the proposed elementary school closures. But the one big question that remains is: **Why are we even discussing closing a school in the first place?**

On the agenda of the first task force meeting, the purpose of the task force was discussed. It states:

“As educational leaders, we are responsible for caring for, protecting, and maintaining our facilities and buildings. Additionally, we have the responsibility to periodically review the use of our facilities and the role each facility plays in helping us achieve our mission in financially responsible and sustainable ways, as well as providing the greatest opportunities for our students’ growth.

The purpose of the Elementary Planning Task Force is to provide informed guidance and strategic recommendations to the superintendent

on optimizing the use of district facilities, **particularly where there is excess capacity.”**

The charts showing capacity in the schools, however, reveal that **elementary school capacity is the highest of all of the buildings.**

So why are we talking about closing some of the most used buildings in the district? And whether at full, or partial capacity, as long as the community supports neighborhood schools and are willing to fund them, what is the significance of a building at 70% vs 85% capacity?

This has never been mentioned in the community meetings.

The purpose statement goes on to say: “The Task Force will assist in analyzing scenarios for utilizing Lakewood’s elementary schools; evaluating the financial, educational, and logistical impacts of potential changes; and developing opportunities to engage the community.”

A consulting firm was hired before the Task Force convened, to put together suggested scenarios for building utilization. In a world where 99%+ of school districts are consolidated, this consulting firm recommended that Lakewood City Schools... should consolidate. The August 28, 2024 Task Force Meeting presentation lists the scenarios as:

- 1 – Reinvent Lincoln
- 2 – Reinvent Roosevelt
- 3 – Reinvent Grant
- 4 – Reinvent Grant & Roosevelt
- 5 – Reinvent Lincoln & Roosevelt
- 6 – Reinvent Lincoln & Grant
- 7 – Modify current boundaries

In the community meetings the scenarios were boiled down to three basic options: close one school to use for expanded pre-k OR do that plus close another school for “community education and recreation programming,” OR... redraw the district maps.

We were not told where the proposals for expanded pre-k or community space came from, or even given a clear definition of what the community building would be used for, yet it appears to form the basis of the need to close up to two schools.

The need to periodically review and redraw the district maps seems as if it should just be a normal course of business. Consulting firms are not cheap, I question the wisdom in enlisting this firm rather than community members to kick off this project... community engagement seems to be a little too far down on the priority list. Lastly it states:

“Additionally, the Task Force will explore opportunities to enhance early childhood education through expanded PreK programs and to utilize available spaces for community purposes, ensuring that our facilities serve the evolving needs of our students and the wider community.”

Again, what is the basis for these goals?

The Task Force was given a plethora of data (with data points that are at best debatable and at worst intellectu-

ally dishonest) and marching orders to get community feedback before choosing an option.

I clearly disagree with all but the last option: **We should be redrawing district lines.** A look at the current maps shows that the Hayes district, which is currently at 76% capacity, actually comes within a block of the Roosevelt district, which is only at 58%. There is plenty of opportunity to address class size discrepancies without the permanent reduction of elementary schools. I also question why this isn’t reviewed annually, and changes made every so often starting with incoming kindergarten classes in order to mitigate the potential upheaval and chaos we’re being told that we need to face.

I do not believe we have seen proof of unmet demand for pre-k, which is not a free program.

The suggestion that we need an empty Elementary building to be used for “community education and recreation programming” is ambiguous and a bit of a head scratcher. Lakewood already has community spaces in the brand-new Cove Community Center, our world class libraries, and a new fitness center in our high school. Lakewood Rec already utilizes school buildings for community programming.

What would be the benefit of keeping an empty elementary building for purposes already being met by the other buildings? If there is not a plan to divest the buildings - which we were assured there is not - we should continue to use these brand new schools for what our tax dollars went towards: state of the art, neighborhood elementary schools.

We should be enlisting community members rather than consulting firms at the beginning of any attempt to discuss the closing of any school buildings.

Katie Slife Rustad is a lifelong Lakewood resident, graduate of the Lakewood City Schools, and mother of four Rangers.

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"Pentitent"



"Pentitent" by Maria Winiarski

LAKEWOOD CARES

Senior Cats Seeking Forever Homes!

by Stephanie Jarosz

Sammy and Jackie, two sweet senior cats, are hoping to find loving new homes after the recent passing of their owners.

Sammy, a 12-year-old Domestic Shorthair, is a lovable boy who thrives on affection and enjoys a good back scratch. Due to previous health issues, he requires a special gastrointestinal diet. Sammy is a sweetheart and would bring happiness to any home!

Seventeen-year-old Jackie, a beautiful British Shorthair, may be a bit reserved at first, but she quickly warms up. She loves chin rubs and long naps. This girl deserves to spend her golden years with a family who adores her!

Visit Sammy, Jackie and the other animals at the Lakewood Animal Shelter located at 1299 Metropark Drive, just past the Dog Park. Contact the shelter at (216) 529-5020.

Lakewood Animal Shelter hours: 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday, closed on Sundays.

This message is shared by the Citizens Committee for Lakewood's Animals and Shelter (CCLAS), an all-volunteer nonprofit dedicated to protecting and improving the lives of Lakewood's companion animals. CCLAS provides financial aid and resources to the Lakewood Animal Shelter, ensuring quality care for abandoned, orphaned, sick, and injured animals. We also promote pet adoptions and advocate for animal welfare through community outreach and



Sammy



Jackie

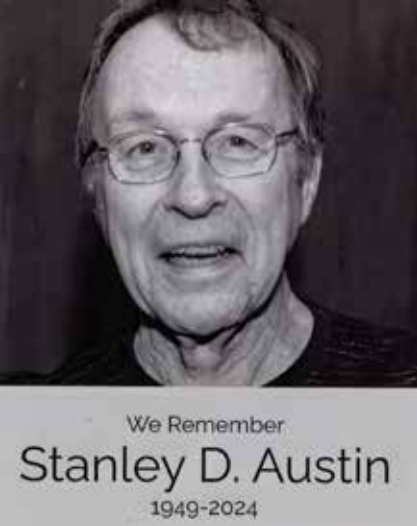
education. CCLAS is committed to treating animals with empathy, kindness, and respect, recognizing their capacity to experience pain, suffering, and a range of emotions. Learn more at cclas.org.

Stanley D. Austin 1949 - 2024 Remembering "The Grand Stan"



by Deb O'Bryan

A small group of family, friends, and neighbors came together to honor life-long Lakewood resident Stan Austin at the home of Holly Gigante. Stan embodied what a true civic-minded individual is. His love of Lakewood was apparent in everything he did, from campaigning for the first ambulances in Lakewood to the creation of C.E.R.T. (Community Emergency Response Team), along with his passion for working on his home. He dedicated most of his adult life to local politics and mentored many who chose to run for office. His warmth and kindness touched all who met him and his indelible laugh will continue to resonate. State Rep Tristan Rader presented Stan's brother with a memorial proclamation from the State House, and former State Rep/Senator/Lakewood Council-



man and long-time Stan friend Michael Skindell did a beautiful eulogy.

I know I shouldn't say it, but a good time was had by everyone listening to Stan Austin stories. Stan would have loved it. Godspeed.



Stan celebrating the start of the second Observer in Cleveland Heights.

Rep. Rader Announces In-District Office Hours To Meet Constituents

by Joshua Meek

State Representative Tristan Rader (D-Lakewood) today announced that he will be holding a series of informal events across Ohio's 13th House District in various coffee shops on the last Friday of each month to meet with constituents and talk about issues facing the community.

"One of my biggest commitments while running for office was to meet you where you are and keep the lines of communication open. That's why I'm excited to host 'Coffee with Rep. Rader', a chance for us to connect, chat about the issues that matter most to you, and work together for a stronger community," said Rep. Rader.

'Coffee with Rep. Rader' is set to occur on the following dates:



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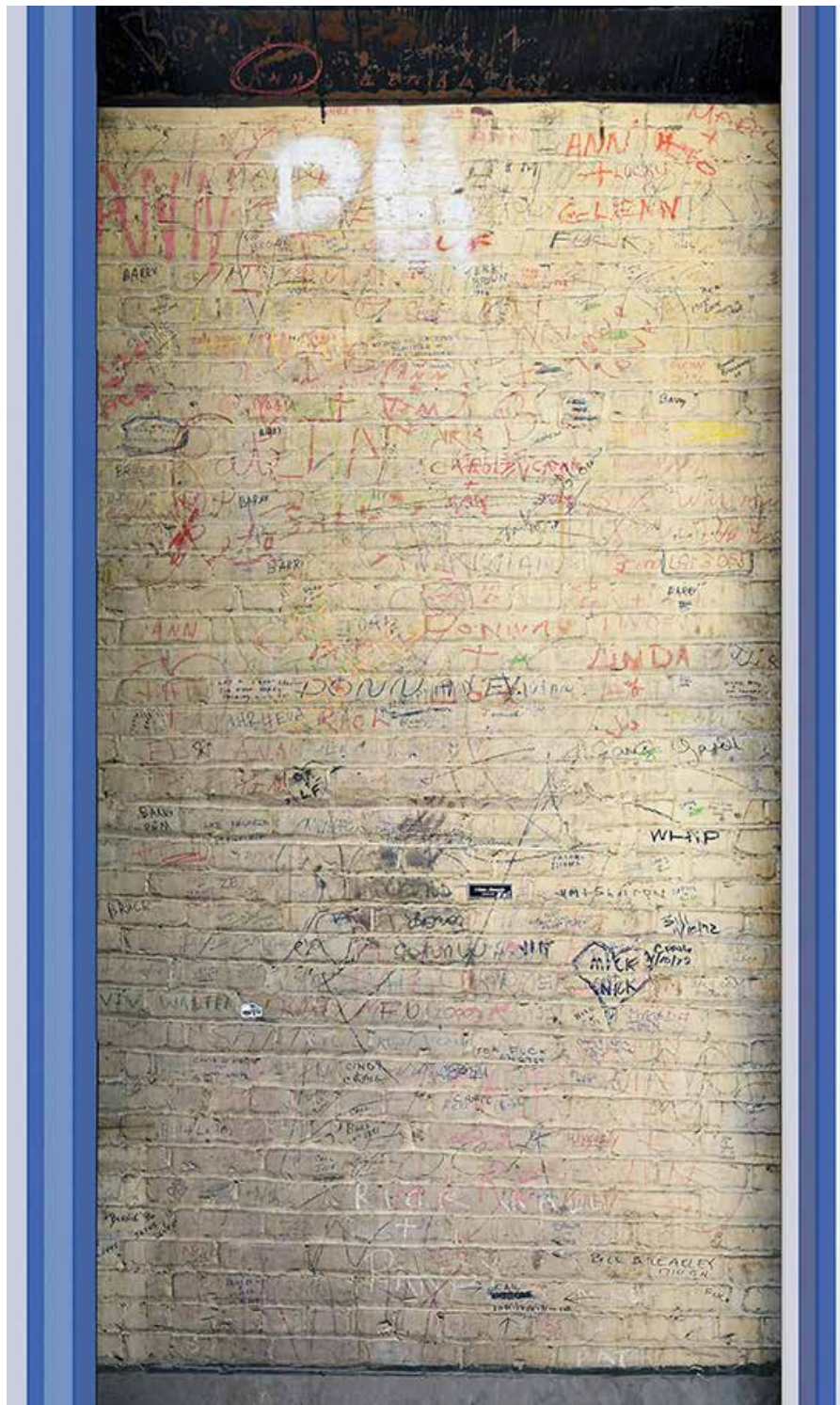
Fridays		
February 28, 9-11am	Propaganda Coffee	17806 Detroit Ave. Lakewood
March 28, 10am-noon	Las Villas Deli & Pastries	3216 W. 41st St. Cleveland
April 25, 9-11am	Civilization	2366 W. 11th St. Cleveland
May 30, 10am-noon	Root Café	15118 Detroit Ave. Lakewood
June 27, 9-11am	Koffie Café	2517 Market Ave. Cleveland

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LAKEWOOD IS ART



Lakewood Observer Saving Lakewood’s History
One Image And Story At A Time

by Jim O’Bryan

AGS and the Lakewood Observer have had an office at 14900 Detroit Ave for almost 30 years. The Detroit Cook Building in Lakewood Ohio started life as a Young’s Furniture Store, then a F.W. Woolworth’s, then Rozi’s Wine Shop and State Liquor Store, to finally, Rozi’s Wine House.

It’s an odd building as it is built on an incline and the Mezzanine level is wedge shaped. This creates the need for a 23’ gap between the first floor and the second floor. In 1924 the third elevator in Lakewood was installed and instantly people started to stop the elevator between the first and second floor, to sign their names and leave cute messages like “Double CHECK their FACTS!” and “For A Good Time...” Today there are over 100 years of graffiti! You can see the decades go by, as at first there are street names, then 4 digit phone numbers give way to letters and numbers, then numbers with area codes. An amazing look back.

Layers and layers of graffiti reveal each message turning into and over the others. Until a hillbilly Jackson Pollock emerges. Much like the “Herb Score Ball,” if you look closely, you can see history in all of the writing.

About ten years ago, I had tried to capture it, but it was in a format of little use

to anyone. You couldn’t read it, or appreciate techniques, color, messages, etc.

A month ago I was told that the elevator was being upgraded and gutted, and the graffiti will be painted over, and or enclosed in the new machinery.

So I started trying to save it any way I could. The biggest issues: there was no way to get all of it. Even what seemed the easiest ways were tough. The elevator does not run with the door open, and emergency stopping can create two problems, one it is not a consistent speed or distance, even when timed. And the movement of the car makes single focus and exposure a nightmare. Add in various colors of paint and plaster and you get the idea. Also, every now and then the elevator gets stuck, with no easy way to get out.

This past week I was determined to do it. I set up a grid, and started to take hundreds of individual images of the graffiti and brick work at 1-1 in scale. After two days, I had over 350 photos of the space. This I was able to narrow down to 108 images. Then I started putting them together. After another 11 hours, it was finished!

Now in its final printed state it is 20’ tall, 6’ wide.

Here is a thumbnail of the final for you to check out.

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Deluxe	\$12.50	\$15.25	\$20.00	\$23.50
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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

COVE COMMUNITY CENTER

Meet Me At Cove: Janet Leonard, Administrative Assistant, Department Of Human Services

by Nancy Feighan

If you’ve spent time in Lakewood, Janet might look familiar. With her warm smile and strong ties to the community, she’s a proud product of the city that shaped her. Raised here, Janet’s life reflects her deep connection to her roots and her commitment to family, community, and the values that have guided her over the years.

Born and raised in Lakewood, Janet received an excellent education through Lakewood City Schools, attending Hayes Elementary, Harding Middle School, and graduating from Lakewood High School in 1996. Those years laid the foundation for the values she holds today.

Janet’s pride in her upbringing is reflected in the way she lives her life. She fondly recalls her school days in Lakewood, where the close-knit community and dedicated teachers helped her thrive. When it came time to raise her own son, she chose to do so in the same schools and community that had shaped her and his father, fostering a special bond between them through their shared experiences. She and her son had the same teacher and crossing guard at Hayes who remembered her and knew he was her son. Janet raised her now 27-year-old son with the same pride in Lakewood that she carries herself.



Family is everything to Janet. Her mom still lives in Lakewood, and the two share a close bond. Janet loves the time spent with her mom, especially during their visits to the casino—where, even though they know the house always wins, sometimes it doesn’t. They have a great time together.

Janet’s passion for helping others began early. In high school, she took a child/elder care course and worked at a senior center, where she enjoyed con-

necting with older adults and listening to their stories. A cherished part of her life is her husband Kyle’s grandma, who turned 100 in October. Despite her age, she remains independent, with a sharp memory and fascinating stories, including her time as a World War II nurse and her travels, like a trip up the Amazon River!

Janet and Kyle share a love of travel, especially hiking. A couple of years ago, they visited Yellowstone and the Grand Tetons. Country music is also a big part of Janet’s life, she attends many concerts and festivals including Country Fest with her group of best friends.

Janet and Kyle share their home with a rescue dog named Duke. They stay in touch with Duke’s first family, sending photos and videos of their beloved pet, who still holds a special place in their hearts.

Although Janet no longer lives in Lakewood, she still works here and maintains a strong connection to the city where she built her life. Over the past 24 years, she has formed some very special bonds with people who also work for the City. During her 22 years with the Lakewood Police Department, supporting four Chiefs of Police, she met co-workers who quickly became some of her closest and most cherished friends. “Fifteen years ago, I met Bonnie, who began working with the City as a dispatcher. She’s become one of my best friends and was my matron of honor in 2019. Another best

friend, Valerie, started her career with Lakewood nine years ago and is commonly referred to as my ‘Twinnie.’ Had I not had the amazing opportunity to work for Lakewood, I would have never met some of my dearest friends, so I am truly thankful for that.”

Janet knows that life’s true value is found in the everyday moments and the meaningful connections we make with the people who matter most. Through her relationships, community involvement, and unwavering commitment to family and friends, she shows us that life’s true treasures lie in the moments that shape us.

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

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The Back Page



Another beautiful sunset over the Emerald Canyon. Taken 2/2/2025 on Riverside Dr, some say “the most picturesque street in Lakewood.”

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