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THE LAKEWOOD OBSERVER

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Volume 21, Issue 11, June 4, 2025

Lakewood Kiwanis Annual Scholarship Recipients 2025

by Anna Bacho

Lakewood Kiwanis Scholarship Foundation is proud to announce our 2025 recipients for this year's graduating high school seniors. The following 14 graduates are being awarded fourteen \$10,000 scholarships. We consider their academic, citizenship and leadership abilities. Thank you to all the applicants and their families. This scholarship fund is funded through the efforts of The Kiwanis Club of Lakewood. The Lakewood Kiwanis Birthday Bash Dance in May and legacy donations were just two of our major fundraisers.

Winners 2025 Lakewood Kiwanis Scholarships are:

Jane Wagle, Fallon Austin, Mary Burton, Stella Ziegler,



Michael Drvenkar, Jeremy Frolo, Titus McAlvey, Charieon Doxley, James Tumney, Gregory Friel, Zoey Serna, Piper McElfresh, Paige Cipollo - Helen Fraunfelder (not in photos.)

You can see all the photos at: <https://lakewoodobserver.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=7&t=26853>

Charieon Doxley Breaks Hurdle Record

Charieon Doxley breaks the long standing 100m Hurdle



record running 14.15! Kathy Hart held the record of 14.30 since 1978!

Charieon is District Champion and Div 1 Regional qualifier. Charieon was also a recent \$10,000 Kiwanis Scholarship winner where the news of her record breaking Hurdle run erupted in applause. Congratulations!

We had our weekly luncheon this week to make the presentations to the seniors. And we were joined by Judge Tess Neff, LO's Deb and Jim O'Bryan.

The Kiwanis Club of Lakewood is the leading service organization in Lakewood and we are celebrating over 100 years of service. Along with our scholarships, we also support Lakewood High Key Club, Harding Builders Club, and K Kids Club at Horace Mann (Check out the pollinator garden our KKids planted at Horace Mann).

We welcome new volunteers and new members to continue giving to our youth. Please consider joining our club. Look over our web page www.LakewoodKiwanis.com or our FB page for more information and contacts.

#KidsNeedKiwanis

Lakewood Black Caucus, Thurs June 19 Juneteenth Celebration

by Shirley Nelson
"BLACK JOY"

"When we choose joy in the face of obstacles, we are seeing reality clearly, yet being brave enough to imagine something better; a world fit for us, not the other way around." - Kleaver Cruz

Come gather together with us on June 19th to learn the origin of Juneteenth and to experience Black Joy through stories, music, poetry, art, and food. Resistance and Joy go hand in hand. Actively choosing joy is a way to resist those forces that set out to destroy us while we consider alternatives for tackling the systems that threaten to take our lives daily.

Sometimes a little cake will do while meeting to strategize plans to address the distress about unconstitutional rulings and other matters.

Join Us

Thursday, June 19th at 1-4:00 pm

Lakewood Presbyterian Church, 14502 Detroit Avenue, Lakewood, OH

Doors Open at 1:00 pm

Food catered by Sweet Pork Wilson's

B-B-Q chicken wings, ribs, mac & cheese, greens, coleslaw, and cornbread

Program begins at 1:30 pm

Black Love, Black Joy, Black Resilience

Fun and Activities begin for children and adults when the program ends

Spade Tournament, Cornhole, Musical Chairs, Black Trivia

Prizes will be given to the winners

RSVP by Friday, June 13th so that we are sure to have enough food

Call or email shirley.nelson@live.com | 216-978-2626

This is a multi-racial event, and it is FREE and open to the community of Lakewood and surrounding areas.

Rev. Shirley Nelson is President of the Lakewood Black Caucus.

Lakewood Pools Open



Becks Pool is open, and Foster Pool will open June 10.



Rangers Win District Title

by Dr. Charles Greanoff

Thanks to an epic pitching performance from Leo Soneson and some stellar defense, the Lakewood Rangers are District Champions for the first time since 1992. Leo fought like a prizefighter today, and after 7 rounds of

two hit, shutout baseball, the Rangers emerged with a 1-0 win over a determined Warren Harding squad.

History was made today in part due to some outstanding defensive plays, including two

continued on page 5

Antonio Introduces Bill To Designate "Love Makes A Family Week"

submitted by the Office of Nickie Antonio

On Monday, June 2nd, Senate Democratic Leader Nickie J. Antonio (D-Lakewood) introduced a bill to designate the first full week of June as "Love Makes A Family Week."

"If Ohio is indeed the heart of it all, it is important that Ohio has a heart for all her people," said Antonio. "This bill affirms a simple truth: what makes a family is not how it was formed, but the love and

support that strengthens it.

"Love Makes A Family Week will recognize and celebrate all families:

- Families formed through love, commitment, and care;
- Families built through adoption, fosterhood, surrogacy, or IVF;
- Single-parent families, blended families, and multi-generational households; and,
- Families of every race, sexual orientation, faith, structure, and origin.

THE PRESIDENT’S PAGE

Pride And The Nickie Antonio Way

Happy Pride Month Neighbors!
There were three LGBTQIA+ related items on Monday night’s City Council agenda, reflective of our past and working toward our future.

First, we passed Resolution 2025-27 recognizing June 2025 as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Plus Month. With this resolution the Pride flag will once again fly at City Hall in what has become a celebrated tradition for our community. It’s important to acknowledge that it was not always without controversy and it is once again not without risk.

In 2004, a councilmember introduced legislation to move the flag pole to the City refuse and recycling plant in response to former Mayor Madeline A. Cain raising the Pride flag at City Hall the previous year. That flag that happened to belong to Nickie J. Antonio, who, the very next year in 2005, ran for council and became the first member of the LGBTQ+ community to serve on Lakewood City Council. In 2010, she became the first member of the LGBTQ+ community ever elected to the Ohio House. In 2018, she became the first woman ever to hold the Senate District 23 seat and first LGBTQ+ community member ever elected to the Ohio Senate. Her historic firsts continued with her 2021 Senate leadership position of Assistant Minority Leader and her 2023 ascension to Minority Leader.

In honor of Senator Antonio’s 20 years of elected public service and critical representation, and in celebration of Lesbian Week of Visibility, Councilwoman Cindy Strebis introduced a Resolution in April to honorarily des-

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



President Sarah Kepple serves all residents as Lakewood City Councilmember at Large. Reach her at sarah.kepple@lakewoodoh.gov or 216.200.5050.

ignate Belle Avenue from Detroit to Clifton as Nickie J. Antonio Way. On Monday, which happened to be Senator Antonio’s birthday, the sign went up and Council presented her with a copy of the resolution. The numerous members of the community present to speak in support of Pride and protecting the LGBTQ+ community were a testament to her legacy, and in her remarks, Senator Antonio encouraged them to keep going and stay involved.

Part of Lakewood’s legacy is also being the first city in the region to ban so-called “conversion therapy” in 2018 with an ordinance brought by then Councilmember Dan O’Malley. At Monday’s council meeting, all members signed on to a letter encouraging Cuyahoga County Council to implement a similar ban throughout the County. It is a testament to the impor-

tance of representation that legislation introduced by one LGBTQ+ legislator is now being referred to another. Last year, Robert Schleper became

the first out member of Cuyahoga County Council, ousting an incumbent who voted against the county’s 2018 LGBTQ+ antidiscrimination ordinance.

This Pride month, let us celebrate those who have bravely led the way, and reaffirm our commitment to protect LGBTQ+ civil rights and the ability of our neighbors to live openly, equally and without fear.

- Please join us for our upcoming Lakewood City Council meetings:**
- Mon, June 9th
6:00pm Public Works & Sustainability Committee
 - Mon, June 16th
5:30pm Committee of the Whole
7:30pm Regular Meeting of Council
 - Mon, June 23rd
6:00 Housing, Planning & Development Committee
7:00 Joint Meeting of Public Safety Committee and Animal Safety & Welfare Board

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THE LAKWOOD OBSERVER

Your Independent Source for Lakewood News & Opinion

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**Lakewood Observer**

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Isn't it time you joined this effort to report community news while preserving our history?

THE MAYOR’S CORNER

LakewoodAlive Adds Value To Our Community

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

I recently highlighted some of our community’s wonderful summer events, along with the important role LakewoodAlive plays in hosting them. But the breadth of work LakewoodAlive performs as Lakewood’s local community development nonprofit goes beyond these events. LakewoodAlive has been performing many other key support roles in our city for over two decades. Their mission also includes business support & promotion and housing outreach & services to go along with their more well-known and engaging events.

Some of the most impactful work being done by LakewoodAlive is in housing services, where they partner with many City departments (everything from Building & Housing and Planning & Development to Human Services and Lakewood Fire Department (LFD) among others). LakewoodAlive also leverages partnerships with Lakewood-based and regional nonprofits and fundraising support from private sector donors to add resources to this work. A major focus is assisting Lakewood seniors and other income-limited residents stay safe in and maintain their homes. LakewoodAlive has built an excellent partnership with LFD’s Neighborhood Paramedic Program, often leading follow up to the paramedic visit to address fall hazards, install free smoke detectors, or even provide beds for seniors (though a generous Rotary Club of Lakewood and Rocky River grant). Other work in housing includes managing paint grants, a tool borrowing program, bed bug assistance, and volunteer yard clean ups and snow shoveling, just to name some.

In support of Lakewood’s thriving small-business community, LakewoodAlive wears many hats and works annually with dozens of businesses across our city. They provide technical support and act as fiscal agent for Lakewood’s four local business asso-



ciations and lead a monthly citywide business meeting. They manage a webpage for available commercial space in Lakewood for those interested in bringing their business to Lakewood. LakewoodAlive helps guide businesses seeking grants and support from City of Lakewood programs, including the City Sign Grant and the City Storefront Renovation Program. LakewoodAlive also engages in beautification support work on commercial corridors – staff mulch City Center Park and various street trees along Detroit and Madison (with help from volunteers), coordinate the Flower Blossoms Program, and support for public art installations in Lakewood. Taken together, all of these efforts bring clear value to Lakewood’s small business ecosystem.

Finally, the most visible and well-known aspect of LakewoodAlive remain the fun and inviting annual events they plan, fundraise for, and oversee. I mentioned some of the big summer events in my last column – the Front Porch Concert Series, Birdtown Picnic, and Summer Meltdown – but LakewoodAlive events happen year-round. So, whether it is the Spooky Pooch Parade and Lakewood

Chocolate Walk in October or Light Up Lakewood every December, LakewoodAlive is always finding a way to bring our city together, create community, and improve our overall quality of life through signature events.

The City of Lakewood is happy to partner with LakewoodAlive on their efforts, and we appreciate the hard work

and passion that Executive Director Ian Andrews and his staff always bring to their mission. I encourage everyone to visit the LakewoodAlive website and learn more about the value they bring to our Lakewood community: <https://www.lakewoodalive.org/>.

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FORUM

Just Call Me The Lorax, I Speak For The Trees (And Safety) On Bunts Road

by Katherine Sedar

As spring came to Lakewood, I began to spend more time outside. With an energetic dog, and an even more energetic toddler, as the weather warmed I began walking up and down Bunts Road three or four times a day. My dog likes to smell the smells, bark at other dogs, and mark his territory. My toddler loves to do sidewalk scavenger hunts. We look for robins, crocuses,

good rocks, and "perfect" sticks.

And we look at the trees. A lot.

It began when they started to bud. He loves the bright green of new buds (it's his favorite color). He loved to look at them, to touch them, we counted the new buds on the tree in our tree lawn every day looking for new ones. We talked about how they would become leaves and stay all summer. And how they'd turn orange, red, and yellow and

fall "at Halloween." The more time we spent with the trees the more I became aware that if Lakewood city continues with its plan for a shared use path on Bunts, these trees that we love so much, won't be here next spring.

He's also noticed the signs that have popped up on lawns up and down Bunts this spring. It's impossible not to notice them. Signs with slogans like, "For safety, keep our sidewalk,"

Letter To The Editor

Correction Re Proposed Bunts Shared Use Path

I am writing to respectfully request a correction to a statement published in your May 2025 article titled "The Bunts Road Shared Use Path: The Right Path Forward For Lakewood" by Cassandra Organ.

The article states:

"In its current configuration, the only legal place for a bicyclist to ride on Bunts in excess of walking speed is on the road."

This statement is not accurate based on the City of Lakewood's current municipal code. Accord-

ing to *Lakewood Codified Ordinance §373.10(f)*: https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/lakewood/latest/lakewood_oh/0-0-0-65136

"No person shall operate a bicycle on a sidewalk at a speed greater than an ordinary walk when approaching or entering a crosswalk or approaching or crossing a driveway if a vehicle is approaching the crosswalk or driveway. This paragraph does not require reduced speeds for bicycles when other vehicles are not present."

This ordinance makes it clear that cyclists may ride at speeds above walking pace on sidewalks except when a

vehicle is approaching a crosswalk or driveway. Therefore, the assertion in the article misrepresents the actual legal provisions in place.

I believe it is important that readers receive accurate information, especially when it pertains to laws that affect both safety and public opinion on infrastructure changes. I respectfully ask that the Observer publish a correction or clarification to ensure an informed public discussion on this important topic.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely, Jeff Dudzik

"No shared path on Bunts," and "Save the trees." He's had me read them all to him. And then he asks why they're there. I told him that someone wants to cut down all the trees to build a path next to the road. "Why?" he wants to know. So I tell him it's for walking and bike riding. He thinks about it for a moment, "That's what the sidewalk is for." An echo of what I tell him every time he wants to ride his bike across someone's lawn or jump in a puddle on the road. Neither of us can understand the need for a shared path when this road already has two perfectly functioning sidewalks.

I've emailed the mayor's office and spoken to my neighbors, and it is disheartening to know that Mayor George and the city council, specifically our city council representative - Cindy Strebig, are so set on this plan despite large opposition from the people who live on and use Bunts road regularly. We have expressed concerns about the trees and safety and they don't care. "They don't want to hear any more about the trees" one of my neighbors said - they think it's a non-issue because they'll just plant new ones. That is not an "issue" for the tree in my tree lawn, it's maybe five years old and a twig, but there are some trees on this road that are fifty, sixty, seventy years old. Beautiful, old trees that can't just be replaced with a sapling.

"The street was flagged as a having high probability for pedestrian accidents," the Mayor's office told me. It's about safety. But I have lived on this street for 3 years, and can't remember a single pedestrian accident. There have been several car accidents though. And one incident for a car hit my dog in the middle of the road. (The dog is fine and coincidentally, a shared use path would have made that accident worse because it would have been even harder for the woman in the SUV to see my dog). My neighbors are on the west side of the street have expressed over and over again that a shared used path would make it harder for them to pull in and out of their driveways. That it will be more dangerous, not less.

With the high school, emergency vehicles driving up and down the street almost constantly, and the direct route to the highway Bunts road is already a busy, overused street. I cannot understand how trying to add foot traffic to the street will make it safer. The only people celebrating the shared use path should be personal injury lawyers, because I guarantee there will be accidents because of it.

But our city government does not seem to hear our concerns or care. They continue to hide behind the phrase "safe streets." We all want safe streets. Most people who move to Lakewood site the walkability of our city as one of new main factors for their move. No one wants dangerous streets. But Bunts is already safe and saying your plan will make it safe does not prove that it will be.

So, please, listen to the people in Bunts. Leave our street, our sidewalks, and our trees alone. They can't speak for themselves, but I will happily speak for them.

Scope of Work

The Bunts Road Rehabilitation Project is a complete overhaul of the corridor's water mains, sewer system and storm drains, road surface, curbs, sidewalks, a new shared-use path, and safety features.

- Decorative Lighting**
Utility lines will be moved underground
- Permeable Parking Lane**
Increases stormwater absorption
- Tree Lawns**
6.5 to 7.5 feet wide from Lakewood Hts. to Merl
11.5 to 12.5 feet wide from Merl to Clifton
- New Storm Drains, Curbs, and Paved Areas**
Improves street's function and appearance
- Curb Bumpouts**
Shortens pedestrian crossing distances
- Shared-Use Path**
Offers a wide, separated area for pedestrians and cyclists of all ages and ability levels
- Colored Concrete Crosswalks**
Enhances visibility for pedestrians

Why are Trees Being Removed?

The Bunts Road Project is primarily a roadway replacement project with complete water and sewer improvements. The sewer improvements are required by Lakewood's agreement with the Federal Government.

Unfortunately, to install the new sewer line, trees must be removed on the west side of Bunts Road. This new sewer line requires an increase in the number of storm drains to accommodate storm water and meet current roadway design standards. Additionally, the installation of new water mains, gas lines, and other improvements may necessitate tree removal.

For every project, the City of Lakewood goes to great lengths to preserve and protect trees and is committed to maintaining and growing our urban canopy.

When the project is completed, the finished tree lawn widths will allow the City to plant new medium- to large-sized trees.

Why Put a Shared Use Path on Bunts?

Lakewood's **Active Transportation Plan** and **Safety Action Plan**, adopted in 2024 by Lakewood City Council, guide the designs and features for new transportation projects within the city.

These plans were created after a thorough public process involving voices from residents and many local organizations and stakeholders.

Bunts Road's characteristics (e.g. traffic volume, connections to other bike routes, presence of traffic signals at major intersections) make it an ideal location for a shared use path per ODOT guidelines.

SCHOOLS

Franklin School:

A Century of Learning Comes to A Close

by Christine Gordillo

As the 2024-2025 school year winds down, Lakewood City Schools is preparing to say a heartfelt goodbye to a building that has stood for more than a century as a symbol of education, resilience, and community — Franklin School.

Built in 1907 as a four-room school, Franklin has seen Lakewood grow and evolve around it. It began as Franklin Elementary, serving grades K-6. Over the decades, the building was reimagined and repurposed, reflecting the District’s commitment to meeting changing needs.

Franklin served as a K-6 elementary school from its opening in 1907 through the 1969-1970 school year. The following year, the District shifted the sixth grade to middle school. It would remain a K-5 school through the 2006-2007 school year. In February 2007, the Board of Education voted to close the building as a K-5 school as part of its 50-Year Master Facilities Plan that would eventually reduce the number of elementary buildings in the district from 10 to seven.

Beginning in the 2007-2008 school year, the building served as the home to Lakewood City Academy, then a community school sponsored by the Lakewood City Schools that served students in grades 7-12 both online and in person. LCA remained at Franklin until the 2014-2015 school year when it moved to the former Taft Elementary School to make room for students displaced from Roosevelt Elementary while the new Roosevelt building was



The final group of students and staff at the Franklin School, June 2, 2025.

constructed. When the new Roosevelt opened in August 2016, LCA returned to Franklin. The building also served as the brief home of the Board of Education office when pigeons infested its building on Warren Road in 2013.

At the end of the 2019-2020 school year, LCA was dissolved and a new alternative education program, Frank-

lin School of Opportunity, occupied the building beginning with the 2020-2021 school year until present day.

Franklin has always been more than just a building. It has been a second home to countless students, a place where teachers sparked curiosity, where friendships were built, and where futures were shaped. Franklin’s

legacy will be one of transformation, resilience, and family. From its start as a traditional elementary school to its use as a home for alternative education programs, the small size of Franklin has always helped nurture a sense of community and family among those who worked and learned there.

Now, nearly 120 years since its doors first opened, Franklin School’s service to the District is coming to an end. The Lakewood Board of Education has officially placed the building up for public auction, which will take place June 23, 2025.

Although we don’t know what the future holds for Franklin School, its legacy will remain in the minds and hearts of the teachers and support staff who worked there and the students who able to learn and grow there. We are grateful for its service.

Horace Man Duo Earn Team Teachers Of Year Honor

by Christine Gordillo

Horace Mann Elementary first-grade teachers Patti Cramer and Julie Harkness have been named the 2025 George P. Milbourn Team Teachers of the Year. The award is part of the Martha Holden Jennings Foundation’s Jennings Educator Awards Program that honors public school educators from across Ohio and includes a grant of \$7,500 to fund a deep learning project for students.

According to the Jennings Foundation, The George B. Milbourn Team Teachers of the Year Award honors

exceptional teams of educators whose innovative and coordinated efforts enrich the educational experience and foster success across your school community.

Cramer and Harkness, who have been teaching together for 13 years, certainly fit the description.

“Ms. Cramer and Mrs. Harkness demonstrate an unwavering commitment to student success through innovation, collaboration, and instructional excellence, making them exceptionally deserving of this distinguished recognition,” said Horace Mann Principal Sanya Henley. “They purposely and deliberately

work together to ensure deep learning for students by planning, instructing, and coaching each other in ways that maximize student engagement and achievement.”

For their part, Cramer and Harkness find two is better than one. “I love having a teammate that brings a different skill set to the table! What I don’t think of- Patti does! The kids are the beneficiaries,” said Harkness.

Added Cramer: “With my passion for literature and Julie’s boundless creativity, we have blended our strengths to create a dynamic, engaging, and highly effective first-grade team.”

Rangers Win District Title

continued from page 1

double plays, one of which required a very difficult pivot from 2nd baseman Peter Checkett, who was up to the task. Shortstop Cooper Russell was flawless on multiple chances, and also turned a double play. Center fielder Luke Legato made a diving catch on the first play of the game. Catcher Logan Ellis was rock solid behind the plate

The Rangers only run came in the "find a way" fashion when Drew Jones led off the bottom of the 6th with a walk, got a great jump and stole second on a close play, advanced to third on a perfect bunt by Nick Hart, and scored on a wild pitch. Each team had only two hits, so it took some "small ball" to win the game.

It might not have come to that if Warren Harding had not pitched well and played flawless defense. In the 3rd, with Cooper on 1st, Riley Verderber blasted a low fastball to the deepest part of the park, only to be robbed at the wall by a leaping Raider. It was one of several fine Raider plays, and could have deflated a less mentally tough team.

Once the Rangers scored, Leo needed 3 more outs to send Lakewood

to the Regional. The last inning was a microcosm of the game. First, Peter made a tough catch on a high pop up in wind swept right center. Next, Cooper fielded a grounder and coolly fired a strike to Riley at first, nipping a hustling Raider. Then fittingly, with two strikes on the batter, Leo capped off his history-making performance by blazing a high fastball past the last Warren Harding batter for a swinging strike three.

Twenty two wins, District Champions (Sweet 16 now) 4-0 vs SWC teams, and a thrilling FNUL win over St Edward. This magical story has many authors--too many to name--but congratulations to Coach Graves, all the players, and of course the parents who not only started their kids on this journey, but who travel far and wide to support our Rangers.

Next Stop, Gilmour Academy Gates Mills to take on North Canton Hoover-June 4th at 5 pm. Hope to see you there. The District Champion Lakewood Rangers are one team, from one town, that gives its all.

Long Live Lakewood.

Community Rec And Ed Commission Has Open Seat

by Leslie Favre Krogman

The Lakewood Board of Education and Lakewood Community Recreation & Education Department is looking to fill the open seat on the Community Recreation & Education Commission (C.R.E.C.) due to the recent resignation of Mr. Tom Zigman.

Mr. Zigman was an educator and principal of the Lakewood City School District, and even after his retirement, has remained an active substitute, volunteer, and supporter of the schools and our department. His leadership, commitment, and service will be greatly missed, as well as his insightful perspective on various topics that were brought forth to the C.R.E.C.

Responsibilities of a C.R.E.C. member include, but are not limited to, promoting recreation department programming to improve the health, welfare, and physical well-being of our residents, help with long-term and short-term planning, provide recommendations on financial strategy, participate in working sub-commit-

tees to improve aquatic, athletic, and educational programs, interact with sub-commissions, attend monthly meetings, and have regular interaction with the public.

Persons interested in being considered for the open seat on the Community Recreation & Education Commission will need to submit a letter of interest and a statement of qualifications to Ms. Leslie Favre Krogman, Coordinator of the Community Recreation & Education Department by June 13th, 2025.

Interviews will take place on June 17th at the C.R.E.C. monthly meeting. The Community Recreation & Education Commission will evaluate all applicants and make a formal recommendation to the Board of Education by June 24th for approval during its July meeting sessions.

Leslie Favre Krogman is Coordinator of Lakewood City Schools Community Recreation & Education Department.

LAKEWOOD PUBLIC LIBRARY EVENTS

Children’s And Youth Services Programs

by Jeffrey Siebert

Color Our World Summer Reading Club

Friday, May 9, 2025 through Monday, August 11, 2025
For all children and youth from birth up to those entering Twelfth grade. Read for fun and rewards. Participants will be entered into weekly drawings for prizes and gift cards. Readers can check in online or in person. Come to the library and check in halfway through and receive a reward. All finishers select a new book to keep.

Storytime

June 9,2025-July 17, 2025

Just Baby ‘N Me

Main Library - Mondays- 10:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m.
Wednesdays- 10:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.-6:30 p.m.
Thursdays-10:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.
Madison Branch - Thursdays- 11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
For You and Your Birth to 24-Month-Old Baby
Just Baby ‘N Me is a lap-sit story time ideal for babies from birth through early walkers. No registration is required.

Pre-school Story Time

Main Library:
Tuesdays: 10:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m.
Wednesdays: 11:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m.
Madison Branch - Thursdays: 10:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.
For You and Your 2 to 5-Year-Old Pre-schooler. Children and their parents will enjoy stories, movement and songs for thirty fun filled minutes. No registration is required.

Pajama Party

For You and Your 2 to 6 Year-Old Child. Put on your pajamas, bring along your favorite stuffy and join us as we wind down for the night with books, movement and songs. No registration is required.
Mondays: 6:00-6:30 p.m.
Tuesdays: 6:00-6:30 p.m.

Family Weekend Wonders

Main Library - Fridays and Saturdays at 10:30 a.m.
Madison Branch - Fridays at 10:30 a.m.
Drop in to the Library’s special weekend story time. Family Weekend Wonders is offered every weekend throughout the year and features a different theme each week followed by a craft. No registration is required.

Illustration Creation

Thursday, June 12, 2025 at 4:00 p.m. in the Main Library Activity Room
For students in kindergarten through second grade. In this picture book art program, each program will feature a story from a children’s book illustrator followed by an art project inspired by the story. No registration required.

ArtVenture for Teens and Preteens

Main Library Activity Room Saturday June 14, 2025 at 3:00 p.m.
Madison Branch Youth Program Room Tuesday, June 10, 2025
Designed for artistic teens and pre-teens, this program invites participants to create an artistic masterpiece each month. At the end of each program, all completed artworks will be displayed in the Library. No registration required.

Color Our World with Polka Dot Bears!

Main Library Activity Room - Monday, June 16, 2025 at 2:00 p.m.
Madison Branch - Youth Program Room Tuesday, June 17, 2025 at 2:00 p.m.
For children entering Kindergarten through Third Grade. Join us for a special story time where children will make their own colorful stuffed bear. Registration required. Call 216-226-8275x140 to register.

Japanese Magical Journey

Main Library Multipurpose Room - Friday, June 13, 2025 at 3:00 p.m
Combining Japanese theatre, music, origami, magic, and storytelling, Yasu, the magic story artist, will guide audiences to the enchanting land of Japan. Attendees will get to make origami at the end of the show that they can take home. No registration required.

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LAKEWOOD SCHOOLS



Tyrese Gatlin



Aiden Smith

Winners In Boys' Track And Field

We have two District track and field champs on the boys' side! Congrats to Aidan Smith (110 hurdles) and Tyrese Gatling (100 meters)! Tyrese also broke the school record in the 200 meters!



Book Publishing Party At Emerson

by Christine Gordillo

Last week, Mrs. Gerg's third-grade class at Emerson wrapped up its deep learning project when it hosted an amazing book publishing party featuring a class read-aloud of their collaborative story, "Stay Dog Stay"!

Each student contributed a page and an illustration to the story, show-

casing their incredible creative and critical thinking and storytelling skills. In front of a room filled with family member and staff, students read their page with confidence!

After the reading, the celebration continued with book signings and delicious ice cream treats! Well done to Mrs. Gerg and her amazing students!

District Honors Standout Students

by Christine Gordillo

Lakewood City Schools proudly celebrated the achievements of its brightest students at the 42nd annual Celebration of Excellence ceremony on May 27 in the Civic Auditorium. Held to honor the academic dedication and success of its students, 407 medals of excellence were awarded to middle school and high school students who maintained a 4.0 GPA or higher through the first three quarters of the academic year and numerous senior scholarships were awarded.

The ceremony recognized not only these top academic performers but also celebrated the District's National Merit Finalist and six Commended Scholars, who have demonstrated outstanding academic prowess on a national level.

In addition to the medals of excellence, the ceremony included the awarding of a range of scholarships to deserving students. Recipients included those honored by the Lakewood Leadership Team, Lakewood Rangers Education Foundation, and winners of various Lakewood High scholarships.

Keynote speaker Patrick McLaughlin was the keynote speaker. A graduate of the Lakewood High School Class of 1964, McLaughlin rose to become a U.S.



Attorney for the Northern District of Ohio after a decorated career in the U.S. Army, which he continued as a member of the Army Reserves after graduating law school. In his inspiring address, McLaughlin urged the students to seek excellence beyond the classroom as well. After recounting some of serious setbacks in his life, he also reminded students that when the inevitable life challenges knock them on the ground, it's important how you get back up and continue to strive for better.

The audience and students also enjoyed some beautiful music from the Lakewood High Chamber Choir. Such a wonderful evening to celebrate our student successes!

Madison Park's Becks Pool Opens June 3rd
Lakewood Park's Foster Pool Opens June 10th

Swim lesson registrations start May 13th



Dive in to Lakewood's public pools this summer. Both Foster and Madison Pools are managed by the Recreation Department and owned by the City of Lakewood. Both pools, and parks offer unique fun experiences for all members of the family! *This summer don't miss out on all the cool fun!*

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6 - 17	\$5	\$10
18 - 59	\$7	\$11
60 +	\$2	\$6

Pool passes go on sale May 6th

SEASON PASSES

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**INFO - Madison Park Becks Pool**

Lakewood Park Foster Pool - INFO



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EDUCATION

Practical Communications At LHS

by Dr. Charles Greanoff

A firm handshake, eye contact, a confident tone. While it's impossible to reduce effective communication to a set of discreet variables, some of the underlying skills can be taught, practiced and mastered. In a world in which excessive screen time levies huge opportunity costs for the social development of students, this work is more vital than ever. We ignore the pernicious effects of the online world at our peril.

Enter Lakewood High School and our local community leaders. At LHS, per our Vision of a Lakewood graduate, communication skills and collaboration are cultivated across the curriculum. That said, one class in particular—Practical Communications, taught collaboratively by Mr. Gray Copper and Ms. Amie Guzowski—fulfills these aspects directly. The capstone experience, a networking/interviewing event with local professions, is fast becoming not just a yearly highlight, but an institutionalized cornerstone of the curriculum.

Mr. Cooper summed it up this way: “The lack of practice has led to an erosion of communication skills which, in turn, negatively impacts student self-esteem and confidence. Providing our students with a safe and supportive environment to grow their communication skills and confidence is something Aimee and I are deeply passionate about.”

“We have high expectations for



our seniors, and they did an amazing job being brave and resilient throughout the entire course. As we work together throughout the semester, the class really starts to feel like a team or family. Aimee and I were inspired to see the students working through their discomfort and fear and with their support for one another.”

This year, the Clifton Club graciously hosted over 110 students and 100 plus professionals in two sessions lasting about 4 hours total. Students had multiple conversations, felt relaxed, felt anxious, fought through their nerves, and emerged with confidence to engage the wider world they will be entering. The professionals got to meet some fine students, and hone their own skills. Everyone wins.

And therein lies that magic that is Lakewood. We care about each other, and understand that our individual aspirations and success can only be fully realized within a vibrant,

well-educated community. To those adults—teachers, administrators and business people—who rallied, again, to the cause—you are doing more for our students than you might recognize. Not only are you fostering effective

communication, but more importantly, you are modelling citizenship in its highest forms--donating your time and talents to help the next generation coming along.

Drive through our town and you see century homes, tree lined streets and vibrant neighborhoods. These outward elements are special, but the magic starts with fine people that are in those homes. As Mr. Copper said, “The event is a powerful reflection of what makes Lakewood special: unwavering community support for our schools.” Long Live Lakewood.

Dr. Charles Greanoff is an LHS graduate, class of '77. He teaches History and Psychology at Lakewood High School.

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LAKEWOOD OBSERVER



Note to Starr Gazer readers:

The Stars and the Planets have other plans for me moving forward; I am passing on the baton. As much as I have enjoyed writing for such an amazing publication as the Lakewood Observer, this is my final column. This month, the Sun & Jupiter are aligned together in the sign of Gemini, sending double blessings in the same house of each Zodiac sign. Enjoy the double blessings; I send love & blessings to all of you. With much Gratitude, Eva Starr

ARIES: Stay close to your neighborhood, that's where the action is for the fiery Ram. Involve dad in an outdoor game of his favorite sport. The Rams love competition, go easy on Dad.

TAURUS: Finances are getting the green light for the Bull, just what our Taurus likes to hear. Before you put all the Moolah in the Bank, spend a little on Papa Bull this month.

GEMINI: The Twins are in the spotlight, with Mercury, the Sun & Jupiter all lined up in Gemini. This is your month to shine. Get involved in some intellectual fun with the family.

CANCER: The Crab loves to hide in its shell. This month is no different. Take some time to nurture thyself behind the scenes. You've been burning the Midnight Oil too long.

LEO: The Lion/Lioness loves to sit high on that throne, & rule the Kingdom. You shine with groups this month. Invite the entire Jungle for a June celebration, your choice!

VIRGO: Virgo has its nose to the grindstone, & June is no different. Grab some extra overtime, there'll be plenty of time to relax, make hay while the Sun shines on your career.

LIBRA: Foreign affairs, higher-learning, long-distance travel are beckoning the Libra to explore; it's time

for a little adventure. Grab the camera, the hiking boots & hit the woods.

SCORPIO: June's calling the Scorpion to delve deep into the hidden, secret areas of mysteries unknown. That's right up your alley, make amends with those who've passed.

SAGITTARIUS: Cupid's bow & arrow are aimed at the Centaur. Love is in the air, both business/personal relationships flourish. Share some of those positive vibes with Dad.

CAPRICORN: The Goat needs to take a break from climbing that mountain summit. Take a closer look at your health; put business on the back burner for a while. It'll still be there.

AQUARIUS: Nobody does eccentric quite like the Aquarian. The stars are aligned in the romance department this month. I don't need to tell you what to do. You got this!

PISCES: Home calls to the Fish this month; invite Dad & the whole gang over to the pond. Do a little kayaking, fishing, fry up what you catch, catch some rays while you're at it.



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

Mock Trial Teams Earn Contest Honors



by Christine Gordillo

Garfield's two teams together won one of four possible "Best Attorney" awards and two of four possible "Best Witness" awards. Harding's two teams won one "Best Attorney" award and two "Best Witness" awards. Garfield's "Best Attorney" was Antonia Nicholson. Harding's "Best Attorney" was George Statton and Garfield's "Best Witnesses" were Isaac Cornwell and Amelia Ketter. Harding's "Best Witnesses" were Ainsley Tracey and Caleb Chan.

Team scores are ranked into three tiers. Forty-three teams from districts across Ohio competed over three days, and only 14 teams scored in the top tier. The Garfield Gold Team received a rating of "Outstanding." Garfield's Purple Team as well as Harding Teams 1 & 2 received ratings of "Excellent."

This year the Middle School Mock Trials were based on the book "The Witch of Blackbird Pond" by Elizabeth George Spear in which the Connecticut Colony pressed charges of attempted murder, arson, and criminal mischief against the individuals suspected of leading an angry mob to Hannah Tupper's home.

Each middle school team subdivides into a prosecution and a defense squad, and prepares for two different trials against other Ohio middle schools. Students take on the roles of attorneys, witnesses, and bailiff/timers. The trials take place in front of real attorneys who act as trial judges and who rate teams on case understanding, professional demeanor, oratory skills, and understanding of trial technique and courtroom procedure. Garfield sent two teams of seventh graders and had two trials running in the morning as well as two in the afternoon. Harding sent two

teams, one seventh grade and one eighth grade, and had two trials running simultaneously in the morning and repeated that schedule in the afternoon.

Special thanks to attorney Sarah Cleves, a Lakewood resident and senior claims attorney with ABA Insurance Services, Inc., who acted as a legal advisor for Garfield's teams, coached by Mrs. Colleen Gromek. Garfield's seventh-grade participants were Maryam Adigun, Sarah Ali, Auden Brickner, Josie Bunsey, Isaac Cornwell, Enzo Flasher, Sophie Higgins, Jaiden Gibson, Luci Jones, Amelia Ketter, Gianna Martorello, Antonia Nicholson, Joseph Norris, Rilyn Rohde, Derek Schwab, Blake Sculli, David Sharosky, Julia Sharpe, Finn Spade, Sebastian Tougouma, Stella Vinkovic, and Morgan Williams.

At Harding, Mrs. Batkiewicz, Mrs. Varga and Ms. Basinski guided their seventh- and eighth-grade teams along with help from countless attorneys and judges present during the week of playoffs, which decided Harding's teams. Special thanks to attorney Jeff Gardner who acted as a legal advisor for Harding's teams.

Harding's eighth grade students participating were Sofia Brown, Marie Brosky, Deagan Carney, Ace Griggs, Lucy Heller, Lily Lipowski, Caroline Lubas, Ingrid Matera, Sulley Mestek, Italo Moncrief, Alex Schneider, Amelie Snipes, Amelia Tousley, and Anna Winchester.

Harding's seventh grade students were Julia Babson, Vivian Baker, Caleb Chan, Elise Dux, Scarlett Gage, Keira Hummer, Evelyn Payne, Audrey Revehl, George Stratton, Ainsley Tracey, Carson Westfall, and Penelope Yeager.

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LAKEWOOD OBSERVER

New Law Ends Driver’s License Suspensions For Unpaid Court Fines Or Fees

by Tonya Sams

For years, thousands of Ohioans who were unable to pay back court-imposed fines or fees were penalized by having their driver’s license suspended. With the signing of House Bill 29 (HB 29) in January (effective April 9), people that were impacted by debt-related driver’s license suspensions may be able to get their licenses back with no reinstatement fees.

“The passing of HB 29 is important because this type of driver’s license suspension – called a license forfeiture – is not because of dangerous driving but debt or failure to pay a court fine or fee,” said Michael Russell, a Senior Attorney in the Community Engagement Practice Group at The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland. “Taking away a person’s license has a ripple effect – they may not be able to legally drive to work, medical appointments, take their children to and from school or childcare. The new law provides some relief for those who can’t legally drive simply because they owed money to a court.”

Legal Aid became interested in debt-related driver’s license suspensions when the organization noticed that its client community was experiencing an increase in these types of suspensions. Legal Aid and Brian Mikelbank, an Associate Professor of Urban Studies at Cleveland State University and Legal Aid Visting Scholar, started to collect data from the BMV. The data revealed that debt-related suspensions disproportionately impacted communities that had high rates of poverty and higher percentages of people of color. Legal Aid’s resulting report, “Road to Nowhere: Debt Related Driver’s License Suspensions in Ohio,” played a key role in the statewide advocacy to eliminate debt-related driver’s license suspensions.

“This work fits into Legal Aid’s broader effort to remove legal barriers to peoples’ success and a debt-related license suspension is one such barrier,” Michael emphasized.

Drivers who are affected by court-imposed license forfeiture suspensions for failure to pay a court fine or fee should have those suspensions lifted automatically. The new law does not affect other types of suspensions, like those related to DUI’s or other dangerous driving.

“The BMV and the courts are still working out exactly how to do this,”

Michael said. “The law gives them 30 days from April 9, 2025, but it may take more time than that. The BMV should send out notices to drivers who’ve had suspensions lifted. Therefore, it’s extremely important that drivers go to the BMV website to make sure that their address is current.”

Michael emphasized the importance of getting confirmation from the BMV that a suspension had been lifted before getting behind the wheel again or stopping a payment plan that was initially set-up to get a license reinstated.

“We don’t want people to stop paying and risk an additional suspension because they were assuming that the suspension was lifted,” Michael said.

To learn about other changes to the law go to: lasclev.org and enter “driver’s license suspensions” in the search bar.

Have questions about your driver’s license suspension? Come to a Legal Aid Brief Advice Clinic. For a full list of dates and times go to: lasclev.org/events.

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How Can Insurance Protect Cyclists In A Crash?

by Kenneth Knabe

The following is taken from Chapter 12 of my latest book, "Cycling Rights: Second Edition."

Disclaimer: The information shared in this article is general. Each situation is uniquely fact based, and each insurance policy is an individual contract, with specific language and exclusions varying from company to company.

What happens when a cyclist is hit by an at-fault driver who has no liability insurance coverage?

Just because Ohio law requires insurance to drive, don’t assume a driver who carelessly hits a cyclist has liability insurance coverage, because many don’t! A driver can simply check the box that says they have liability insurance! No proof is required until the driver is pulled over.

The cyclist, however, would likely still be covered by the cyclist’s own uninsured motorist protection under the cyclist’s personal auto policy, assuming the cyclist has a car and purchased this coverage known as “U coverage.”

What about when a cyclist is hit by an at-fault driver who has inadequate insurance?

The cyclist would likely still be covered under the cyclist’s own underinsured motorist (UIM) protection in their personal auto policy; assuming the cyclist also has a car and purchased this coverage known as “UIM” coverage (as most cyclists also own motor vehicles). For UIM to apply, the amount of the cyclist’s UIM coverage must exceed the liability limits of the at fault motorist’s insurance policy.

“U/UIM” coverage is typically combined in an auto policy under “U” coverage. So, cyclists, please make sure to check your auto policy to confirm you have both U and UIM coverages under “U” coverage. Remember, a cyclist doesn’t have “full coverage” unless the cyclist also has U/UIM coverage under their own auto policy!

These days when folks are buying their auto insurance, they’re often purchasing it online without professional advice. This is risky because all insurance coverage is simply not the same, and Ohio has eliminated the mandatory requirement of insurance companies offering U/UIM coverage.

The Bottom Line: Auto insurance coverage cyclists should carry

All cyclists whose budget can allow it should purchase U (U and UIM) coverage under their personal auto liability policy that could protect them if they are hit by an at fault motorist with the bare minimum, or no liability insurance; this coverage should also protect them if they are struck by a hit-and-run motorist, assuming there is independent corroborating evidence.

Can I purchase bike insurance separately from my auto coverage?

Cyclists with no homeowner, no renter, and/or no personal auto coverage may consider purchasing a separate bicycle insurance policy. You can obtain a quote and purchase a bicycle insurance policy online at Velo-surance.

What about bike theft?

No cyclist wants to think about their bike getting stolen! However, if it happens, it’s good to know that with most insurance companies your bike is covered under “personal property/contents” on your homeowner or renter policy, as long as it was taken from a known location. This coverage is subject to a deductible. If you’ve taken the extra step of “scheduling” your bike (scheduling means itemizing specific items of value to provide higher levels of protection), not only is it covered, but you also won’t have to pay a deductible. Some deductibles are \$1,000!

Enjoy planning your 2025 cycling season!

Ken Knabe is Greater Cleveland’s Bike Attorney, promoting cycling safety and representing cyclists injured by careless drivers. 14222 Madison Avenue Lakewood, OH 44107 (216) 228-7200.

150 Years Of Wedding Dresses/Baptismal Gowns “Sacred Moments Exhibit” At Church Of The Ascension

by Corky Thacker

More than 50 wedding gowns and baptismal gowns from Lakewood’s pioneering families to present parishioners are on display as part of the 150th Anni-

versary of Church of the Ascension, an Episcopal Church located at 13216 Detroit Avenue. The “Sacred Moments Exhibit” is open to the public every Sunday in June and July following the 10:30 service, from noon to 3:00 p.m., in the church’s lower-level undercroft. There is no admission fee; however, free-will offerings to support the church’s local missions are appreciated.

Some of the heirloom gowns in the exhibit were loaned by the Hird, Beach, Elliott, and Maile families, pioneers of Rockport and Lakewood, as well as the Church of the Ascension. Every decade since the church’s founding in 1875 to today is represented, showing the evolution of bridal fashion; for example, the 1870s bridal gown is gray, which was a popular color in that era. Styles include Victorian, Edwardian, the 1920s, Depression, World War II, and the Post-war 1950s. One of the highlights is a 1948 wedding dress that was inspired by that of Queen Elizabeth II. In addition to the featured gowns, the exhibit includes bridal and baptismal photographs.

The church’s clerical history is documented by items from six Ascension ministers and four bishops of the Diocese of Ohio, including the Rt. Rev. Anne B. Jolly, who is the first woman to serve as Ohio’s diocesan bishop.

For more information about Church of the Ascension and other upcoming activities, please visit www.ascension-lakewood.org.

Corky Thacker is a novelist and a parishioner at Church of the Ascension, an Episcopal Church located at 13216 Detroit Avenue in Lakewood.



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If You Build Them, They Will Come. If You Close Them, They Will Leave: Elementary Enrollment Is Stabilizing And Even Increasing

by Caitlin Solomon

Lakewood City Schools is considering closing one or even two of its seven neighborhood elementary schools, including Grant, Lincoln, and Roosevelt, claiming declining enrollment (with outdated, cherry-picked data) and the need for “more efficient use of facilities” (a vague statement). This plan raises significant concerns for Lakewood’s families and broader community.

Let’s not forget that the same three schools that are on the table to be closed - Lincoln, Roosevelt, and Grant - were all rebuilt in 2016 with a bond taxpayers will be paying until 2043. We spent nearly \$50 million taxpayer dollars on these new facilities – because the community understood “If we build it, they will come.” And they did! Elementary enrollment has increased and stabilized post-COVID in our new buildings. If the district vacates, sells, or repurposes these buildings, Lakewood taxpayers are still responsible for repaying the bond.

The district has widely shared only enrollment data related to all grades in the context of potential elementary closures, when in fact, elementary enrollment (the very topic of the current Task Force) is stabilizing and even increasing in recent years, according to the district’s own updated enrollment data and projection.

If the district keeps chirping this narrative: “enrollment is declining and consolidation is needed,” they may be making their own bed. Lakewood’s history and rightful reputation as a walkable, family-friendly community is closely tied to its seven neighborhood elementary schools. Closing schools will erode that identity, making the city less attractive to young families which will cause our population to decrease and potentially lead to decreased property values and families with no option but to drive to school... then school enrollment will decrease. Many have already heard recent anecdotes of parents not enrolling their children in LCSD kindergarten due to the uncertainty of the school being open as an elementary school for future years and the district shouting their “declining enrollment” stats.

As the district moves forward with its planning, it’s crucial to consider the broader implications of school closures. **Why are they painting a picture of declining enrollment that is not true in recent years at the elementary level? Do they understand what we are at risk of losing?**

What is a truly walkable distance for young children? Why are we not leaning into Lakewood’s strength as a walking school district, instead of compromising it? In Lakewood, 65% of students walk or bike to school, increasing the distance they must travel could lead to higher absenteeism, especially for families without reliable transportation.

The district’s scenarios presented

to the Elementary Planning Task Force aim to keep walking distances under 1.5 miles to avoid triggering state bussing requirements. (The district saves up to \$2 million a year by not providing bussing.) This would require some young children and their parents or caretakers walking 30 minutes each way. Parents who have to get to work in the morning may not be able to swing a 50 to 60 minute round-trip walking commute to and from drop off. This truly puts Lakewood’s walkability at risk. Those who can drive, will drive. Those who can’t are at risk of not making it to school on time or at all.

by Marie Fechik-Kirk

If you don’t have a child in elementary school, you might be wondering about the purple and gold “Keep Our 7 Neighborhood Elementary Schools” yard signs. The Preserve Lakewood Schools yard signs are a sign of a thriving community where parents, graduates, and community members value the quality of their public elementary schools, and will go above and beyond to protect them. Preserve Lakewood Schools is a coalition of parents, residents, and leaders, committed to preventing the closure/repurposing of elementary schools by Lakewood City Schools, and sup-

porting the long-term vitality of Lakewood’s public schools.

The School District is currently considering closing and repurposing one or even two of its seven neighborhood elementary schools including Grant, Lincoln or Roosevelt. Closing and repurposing a school will impact hundreds of families, change traffic patterns, and reduce walkability in our community.

Walkability helps to enhance learning. Walking provides for light exercise before school, so students are better able to focus. It also makes transportation home from after-school activities easier. Lakewood students also take walking field

Maintaining neighborhood elementary schools supports not only educational outcomes but also the fabric of Lakewood’s community - from property values, to walking traffic for small businesses, to our connections to neighbors.

We urge Lakewood’s Board of Education and district leadership to look with clear eyes at the recent data showing that elementary enrollment is stabilizing and even increasing. Engage with the broad community in a meaningful way on this issue and explore alternative solutions that include marketing the strengths of our district to attract new

trips. Just this year, our daughter’s class has walked to the Lakewood Public Library, the Lakewood Plant Company, and Kaufman Park. This helps acquaint students with their community, expands their learning, and is much cheaper than paying for a school bus and a driver.

Walkability also helps to create a sense of community. The multitude of hellos, as you walk to school in the morning, the quick check-ins as you wait for the entry bell, and the impromptu playdate as you pick-up your child from school all help to create a strong sense of community. Belonging aids in reducing anxiety, and creating a school environment

that is kinder and more accepting. In a world that is increasingly disconnected, it’s nice to live in a place that is engineered for connection.

The parents, former students, residents and leaders involved in Preserve Lakewood Schools, value the unique culture created by having seven neighborhood elementary schools. They have collaborated together to create a website, a Facebook page and yard signs to inform community members. They have also canvassed over a half-dozen streets, spoken out at school board meetings and penned articles in the Observer to address concerns. I can assure you that if the quality of the elementary

families. Without these essential steps, we are concerned that the decisions made will negatively impact the future of our children, as well as the future of the whole of Lakewood.

Preserve Lakewood Schools is organizing residents to attend and/or speak at the June 16th Board of Education Meeting, currently scheduled for 7:00pm at Taft Center for Innovation. Please follow our Facebook page for more updates on this event.

Caity Walsh Solomon, Lakewood High School Class of 2005, is a member of Preserve Lakewood Schools.

schools wasn’t high, residents, leaders, and parents representing all seven schools would not have banded together to protect them.

Recently Mayor George stepped out in support of preserving our seven elementary schools, too. Her perspective in the April 16, 2025 Observer article “Letter To The Community Regarding The Future Of Lakewood City Schools” illuminated the work of Lakewood’s 50-Year Committee and its connection to the decommissioning of three facilities, and the rebuilding and renovation of the other facilities. This was done to preserve the legacy of Lakewood City Schools as a walkable school district and to prepare for the decrease in school enrollment.

The Brookings Institute, which is a non-partisan evidence-based research non-profit, has highlighted that schools need committed local leadership, not only within school systems but also from local officials like mayors, city managers, and councilmembers. A city’s well-being is contingent on the well-being of the families that live there. Therefore, the quality of the schools impact the quality of the community.

When you want a high-quality community, you need to rally behind your public schools.

Whether it’s sharing their perspective as an architect, educator, lawyer, digital marketer, data analyst, sales executive, or an expert in community engagement, community members are investing their time and talent into retaining our seven neighborhood schools. Please check out our website, <https://www.preservelake-woodschoools.org/> and in the fall vote for Monica Bruaw, who is running for Lakewood City Schools Board of Education, and helped to create Preserve Lakewood Schools. Lakewood-moveswithMonica.com

Marie Fechik-Kirk is a Lakewood Resident and parent of a Lakewood Ranger. She spent over 10 years as an educator and currently works as a project manager.



Preserve Lakewood Schools Signs are everywhere around town showing support.

LAKEWOOD OBSERVER

\$10,000 From McGregor Foundation LakewoodAlive Receives Grant

by Ava Olic

LakewoodAlive was recently awarded a \$10,000 grant from the McGregor Foundation. The grant will support the Community Engagement Specialist role, which focuses on helping Lakewood's low-income senior residents.

Nearly 75% of Lakewood's housing clients are seniors, many living on little more than social security. Additionally, 80% of our homes are 90 years or older, and few have first floor bedrooms and bathrooms. These factors make home safety paramount.

The personalized support this grant will fund helps connect these low-moderate income seniors to critical services and resources including aging in place assessments, installation of basic safety equipment, and installation of smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Aging in Place assessments are conducted in seniors' living spaces to determine how they navigate their homes, and if any improvements can be made to make moving around those homes easier and safer.

The funding also helps the program connect these residents to resources from partner organizations



including from the City of Lakewood Division of Community Development. These resources can fund major system replacements - as necessary - including furnaces and hot water tanks while funding repairs to plumbing and electrical systems among other things. Lastly, the grant will support the work of helping residents address bed bug infestations that occur which further reduce a residents' quality of life.

"We are thrilled to receive support from the McGregor Foundation to help our local senior residents. Our Community Engagement Specialist works tirelessly to build relationships with our clients and to guide them through the complexities of major home repairs from applying for City programs to getting quotes for the work to ensuring the repairs are made," said LakewoodAlive Executive Director, Ian Andrews.

LFD Hiring Lateral Firefighters/Paramedics

The LFD is currently accepting applications for Lateral Firefighter/Paramedic candidates.

Minimum Qualifications Include:

- High school diploma or equivalent.
- State of Ohio Firefighter II Certification
- State of Ohio EMT-Paramedic Certification
- Must currently or have previously been employed as a full-time firefighter
 - If previously employed there shall be no more than a one-year break in service from previous full-time employment as a firefighter
 - Current or previous full-time firefighter employment must have been as a result of a civil service examina-

tion process

- Valid driver's license and a clean driving record
 - Physical fitness to meet the demands of firefighting duties
- Applicants also must have a current Tri-C Firefighter Physical Agility Test Certificate.

For those candidates that do not possess a current Tri-C Firefighter Physical Agility Test Certificate, applicants must create a Tri-C account and register online. Please go to the following website to schedule a test date:

<https://www.tri-c.edu/workforce/public-safety/fire-ems-training/firefighter-physical-agility-testing/index.html>

Summer Equinox FREE Folk/Americana Music Concert By Congito Jaffe

by Martin Jaffe

Greet the longest day of the year with the return of singer/songwriter Congito Jaffe to his favorite venue, the elegant and welcoming Blue Cafe, 15715 Madison Avenue, Lakewood, 10AM, Saturday, June 21st as Congito shares mellow melodic original musical visions of summer joy, love lost and found, joys and sorrow of life in these profound lyrically rich and musically vibrant songs.

This event will also be attended by the noted poet and writer of Congito song lyrics Lady Ives of Rocky River whose birthday coincides with the summer equinox-- a gentle breeze, cinnamon scented pastry at the Blue Cafe, sunlight shimmering on the polished floors of this center of Lakewood community-- the event of the season.

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COVE COMMUNITY CENTER

Meet Me At Cove: Julia Dopman – "It's A Wonderful World For Seniors"

by Nancy Feighan

Born and raised in Louisville, Kentucky, Julia Dopman grew up in a family that valued creativity, compassion, and service. After high school, she joined a teen theater troupe through VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America), touring and bringing stories to life while also running summer programs for children back home.

Julia later moved to Buffalo, New York, where she married an opera singer and stayed active in the arts. Together, they supported their community—feeding those in need, donating clothing, and publishing "Undercurrent," an independent college newspaper. Through it, they interviewed music legends like Tina Turner and even John Lennon.

One of her fondest memories is bringing her three-month-old daughter



to a post-show interview with Tina Turner, who warmly welcomed them. "It was like bringing a tremendous gift to them," she recalls.

Eventually settling in Cleveland, Julia continued to sing, dance, and raise three children. She became active in local schools, serving as president of the Lakewood PTA Council. Her passion for education led to a 27-year career at Lakewood Community Care Center (LCCC), where she returned to school at age 50 to study Early Childhood Education and take on leadership roles in summer camps.



Julia with dance partner, teen theatre troupe, Louisville, KY, circa 1970

In addition to her work, Julia cultivated a small floral business and sang at Lakewood United Methodist Church. It was a minister there who told her about Cove Community Center. "I only knew the building as a church," she said. "But when I saw what was happening there now, I was so impressed." After a day of exploring, she signed up and never looked back.

Julia quickly embraced Cove's wide range of programs—from karaoke and improv to Qi Gong, bocce ball, and

Scrabble. She volunteers at the coffee bar and enjoys seminars, tech classes, and special events. "The programs here are for everyone, at every level," she said. "And the people are just wonderful."

With five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren nearby, Julia stays busy and connected. For her, Cove is more than a community center—it's a place where she's made lasting friendships and continues to grow. "That," she says with a smile, "is one of my greatest assets."

Digging Into Spring: Cove Garden Club (CGC) Preps Beds For Onions And Garlic!



by Nancy Feighan

This morning, Cove Garden Club (CGC) members got their hands dirty prepping beds for onions and garlic. We shared laughs and organized tools. Spring's here—let's grow!





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