Why citizen journalism?

Turn on the local TV news at 6 p.m. and you won't find it. Flip through the pages of any local "news" paper, free or otherwise, and you won't feel satisfied. Sit down at your computer, search for "Cleveland Heights Local News," then sift through banners and pop-up ads, and you might get lucky. You would probably learn more while sipping a mocha at the local coffee shop, or walking down your sidewalk, hoping to encounter a talkative neighbor. All you want to know is what someone (anyone) in your community thinks about the new housing development being built down the street, or when that new restaurant on Lee Road is going to open, or when that pothole riddled road around the corner is going to be repaired. None of this news is terribly important on a national or even regional level; but, it is, perhaps, the information that is most relevant to your daily experience. And, it is information that has not been easy to find. It is hard to select an event or moment in time that represents the birth of "citizen journalism." At what point did it become possible for an average person, rather than a trained, compensated professional, to routinely spread information beyond their normal circle of influence? One can argue that the invention of the printing press gave everyday citizens the opportunity to disseminate their opinions and ideas to an extended audience. In the modern era, author Dan Gillmor acknowledges the increasing importance of video documentation by nonprofessionals. From JFK, to Rodney King, to YouTube, the steady rise of this form of nonprofessional participation cannot be overestimated (see www.pbs.org/mediashift/200609). The interaction of two primary themes has largely been responsible for the growth of citizen based journalism: dissatisfaction with the content of traditional media and advancements in technology.

As the number of companies that control traditional sources of news and information continues to shrink, people (consumers) are beginning to grasp the limited and narrow perspective offered by this system. "A common goal of citizen journalists is to recapture journalism as a truly democratic practice that is thoroughly rooted in—and thus directly serves—the real lives and interests of citizens." (see megreport.org/largemouth.htm). While the origins of citizen journalism can be debated, its real power is becoming evident to almost everyone, largely as a result of the proliferation and success of the internet.

The year 2000, a frustrated South Korean journalist launched a website called OhMyNews. As one of the first continued on page 8

Coventry Elementary future studied

Committee to make recommendation May 20

Sarah Wean

The future of the former Coventry Elementary School property is being studied by a nineteen member volunteer committee which has been meeting since March 3rd. With three meetings of a six meeting schedule completed, the Coventry School Study Committee hopes to present one, or several, recommendations for the property's use to the Board of Education on May 20th. The 61,000 square foot "open school concept" building, designed by Cleveland architect Richard Fleischman in the 1970's, was closed in 2007 due to declining enrollment. The building served students in Kindergarten through 6th grades, and also accommodated early childhood and Heights Youth Center aftercare programming. The adjoining playground, sitting on roughly three acres of the six acre property, was built through volunteer effort in 1992 and continues to be maintained and enhanced through a joint effort of Coventry P.E.A.C.E., Inc. and the District. The Coventry Arch, an iconic public art project that was sponsored by Heights Arts and Coventry P.E.A.C.E, sits on the school property as well. The decision to close the school in 2007 was at the epicenter of a lawsuit brought by OPEN (Openly Promoting Enrollment Now), a grassroots group of concerned parents and community advocates who sought an injunction against its closing. The continued on page 3

City Council slashing $2 million in spending this year

Tobias Rittner

Cleveland Heights is no different than many other struggling cities. With both federal and state budgets strained, Cleveland Heights is feeling the pinch. Budget cuts are on the horizon. After soundly defeating Issue 29, a proposed income tax increase, City Council has aggressively begun to address fiscal challenges facing the city. Heights residents, on March 4, 2008, stuck down Issue 29, a ballot initiative that would have raised the city's income tax rate. The proposed measure would have increased the city's income tax point four (.4) percent from the current two percent tax to two point four percent. The initiative, which was placed on the ballot by City Council rather than unilaterally approved without voter referendum, has sent a clear message to council that budget cuts are preferred over tax increases at this time. Voters will now get what they asked for.

City Council member Mark A. Tumeo was not surprised by the defeat of Issue 29. Tumeo and his fellow City Council members believed all along that the voters of Cleveland Heights should be given the choice continued on page 9
Dear Readers,

You hold in your hands the inaugural edition of the Heights Observer, a project of FutureHeights.

FutureHeights’ stakeholders encouraged us to continue to innovate and to find new ways to promote community involvement, public expression, and communication. Study of the increasingly popular concept of “hyperlocal journalism”—and a timely encounter with the publishers of the Lakewood Observer—convinced us that our communities need this new voice, the Heights Observer.

Note the phrase “our communities.” Our masthead says “News and Views from Cleveland Heights and University Heights.” While FutureHeights will continue to focus on Cleveland Heights, the Heights Observer is dedicated to serving both University Heights and Cleveland Heights—including our shared schools, library system, neighborhoods, friends, students, and unique local businesses. With this project, we embrace both Heights communities, celebrating commonalities which transcend the dotted line marking the political boundary.

The Heights Observer will provide a voice for you and all of our neighbors. This is the place to share information, ideas, questions, and opinions. The Heights Observer will succeed and grow only if you participate. We encourage you to read and discuss the articles. Talk with your family, friends and neighbors about it. We encourage you to sign up as writers, editors, or photographers. We also need the support of local businesses who can reach those who are digitally inclined, please also see the web-based version of this publication. Please contact the FutureHeights office for more information.

We hope that you like the print version of the Heights Observer. For those who are digitally inclined, please also see the web-based version at www.heightsobserver.org.

Continued development of this web site will provide many features and services for our local governments, public and private schools, business community, local organizations, and worship communities. Current features include the Observatory; an online forum for local discussions; a Community Events Calendar where you can submit your own events to the site; and a Photo Gallery.

Welcome to the Heights Observer!
Mark Majewski, President, FutureHeights
Heights Arts proposes community arts center to Coventry study committee

Sarah Wean

The Heights Arts Collaborative, a Cleveland Heights arts organization, has a vision for re-using the Coventry school building that calls for the creation of a model community arts center with strong partnerships, diverse programming, and the formation of an umbrella organization to oversee it all.

“We want to be as proactive as possible and we are interested in exploring what an arts and nonprofit center could be,” said Heights Arts Director Peggy Spaeth in a recent interview. Heights Arts presented best practices and national models of successful programs, as well as their concept for the arts center, to the Coventry School Committee at its April 8th meeting. “We want to put some vibrant ideas on the table,” she said. Ideas include the creation of a flexible performance space, summer arts camps, daytime classes for adults, artist spaces, and early childhood programs in the arts, among others.

Ms. Spaeth, a committee member, said Heights Arts has had a number of conversations with local organizations that are “confirmed in the concept” and who have expressed an interest in the idea of forming a partnership for use of the building. Interested groups are the Heights Parent Center, Reaching Heights, and The Cleveland Music School Settlement. Ms. Spaeth believes that with a core group of tenants, all of whom run programming that serves the CHUH School District’s priorities and interests, the arts center would be a good fit for the District, and for Cleveland Heights. And the location is appropriate. “Coventry Village,” she said, “has a history as a place where creative people congregate.” Heights Arts believes the re-use of the Coventry school as an arts center presents an additional opportunity for strong partnerships with residents, businesses, community groups, and the public library to reinforce and continue the holistic growth of Coventry Village as a unique and special neighborhood.

Financial sustainability of the re-use of the property, with the District as landlord, will be integral to the success of any project that the CHUH district decides to back if it retains ownership of the property. To that end, Heights Arts is exploring a diverse revenue stream including grants, large-scale individual gifts, and other resources that could be used to fund the center’s upkeep and maintenance. Also under discussion is the creation of a governing organization to manage the facility.

The next step, should the Board of Education decide to pursue the concept, would be to commission a feasibility study that would outline in greater detail what would be required to build and sustain a community arts center at the former Coventry elementary school.

Heights Summer Music Camp offers expert instruction and fun!

Susie Keeser

Reaching Heights is accepting applications to the Heights Summer Music Camp, June 16-21 at Wiley Middle School. Students living in the Cleveland Heights University Heights school district who are currently enrolled in grades 5-8 in their school’s instrumental music program are invited to participate in this intensive week of music making. $130 for the week; scholarships available. More information and applications are available at www.reachingheights.org or by calling camp coordinator, Betsy Neylan at 440-725-6845. Deadline is May 15. Space is limited.

This is the fourth year that Reaching Heights, a citizen support organization for the Heights schools, has partnered with the school district to offer this engaging enrichment opportunity. Heights High Instrumental Music Director Scott Askley is the music director. District music teachers and local professionals, Heights High Alumni, and current students work with campers in orchestra and sectional rehearsals, chamber groups, music theory, recreation time, and in workshops focused on jazz, guitar, and choral music. Camp hours are 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. daily.

Students perform a finale concert at the end of the week. They display the wonderful growth and musicianship that they’ve honed during a week of concentrated instruction and practice and exploration.

Susie Keeser is retired director of Reaching Heights.
Coventry Village Street Arts Fairs fundraiser scheduled

Snow and ice may be covering the ground but the Coventry Village Special Improvement District in Cleveland Heights is already making plans for warmer days ahead.

The increasingly popular Coventry Village Street Arts Fairs are scheduled for June 19 and July 17 from 6:00 until 9:00 p.m. Discussions are underway regarding the feasibility of having an August fair. According to Myra Orenstein, Coventry’s Executive Director, “It is totally dependent on the amount of money that we are able to generate over the next few months. If grants, private donations and our fundraiser help, we certainly would love to continue the tradition and have an August fair.”

Now entering their fifth year, the Coventry Street Arts Fairs have become family favorites enticing neighborhood residents of all ages, their families, friends, and yes...even their dogs! While the reintroduction of the fairs brought approximately 2,000 attendees to Coventry police estimates for last year’s fair were at 12,000.

Jugglers, balloon clowns, stilt walkers, oversized puppet people and other street performers delight walkers, oversized puppet people and Jugglers, balloon clowns, stilt walkers, oversized puppet people and other street performers delight walkers, children while adults have their chance to “hang out” and listen to local live music.

Cleveland Museum of Art will continue to provide family-friendly art projects. Over 50 vendors and local farmers will, once again, be invited to participate. Coventry restaurants will feature outdoor dining and merchants will hold sidewalk sales.

Coventy is also planning another incredibly popular fundraiser for May 2 from 6:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m. at the B-Side Lounge (downstairs from the Grog Shop) at 2785 Euclid Heights Boulevard (the corner of Euclid Heights and Coventry). Attendees recognize this laid back affair as possibly the best deal in town since all of the Coventry restaurants provide food while the cost for attendance is only $25 ($30 day of the event). Checks, made payable to CVSID and requested, should be mailed with a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Coventry Village Special Improvement District, 2535 Euclid Heights Boulevard, Cleveland Heights, OH 44106-2709.

Artists, vendors and farmers interested in participating in this summer’s fairs should contact Myra Orenstein at 216.932.3322 or catv@earthlink.net.

Mary Patton
Cleveland Heights resident Scot Rourke, president and chief executive officer of OneCommunity, has been named the Intelligent Community Visionary of the Year for 2008 by the Intelligent Community Forum (ICF) (www.intelligentcommunity.org), a New York-based think tank dedicated to studying economic growth in the broadband economy.

The award was presented at a ceremony in Cleveland on March 25. Rourke will deliver the Intelligent Community Visionary of the Year address at ICF’s annual Building the Broadband Economy summit in New York City on May 16.

OneCommunity (www.onecommunity.org) is a Cleveland-based nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering economic development and improving quality of life by leveraging information technologies. ICF selected Rourke based on his groundbreaking work as a social entrepreneur in Northeast Ohio and his willingness to share hard won lessons in information and communication technologies (ICT)-based economic development with communities around the world.

“OneCommunity is proud to be a leader in the movement to ensure the success of Northeast Ohio in the new broadband economy, and I am privileged to accept this honor,” Rourke said. “We remain committed to our transformative efforts in education, healthcare, workforce development and government that have helped establish our region as a model for communities worldwide.” ICF Chairman John G. Jung added, “In addition to taking OneCommunity from concept to dynamic reality, Rourke has freely shared its innovative business model and approach.”

As OneCommunity’s CEO, Rourke led the successful effort to develop an ultra-broadband community network serving first the city of Cleveland and then the entire Northeast Ohio region. The effort began in 2002 when Cleveland’s Case Western Reserve University named Lev Gonick as its new chief information officer. Believing that the region’s nonprofits should play a more active role in its recovery from industrial decline, Gonick assembled a group of community leaders that founded OneCleveland, OneCommunity’s predecessor.

Rourke joined the effort, turning this vision into reality. Under his leadership, OneCommunity forged partnerships with the region’s telephone and cable carriers. The OneCommunity network has expanded and will soon connect 1,500 schools, libraries, governments, hospitals, and universities, cost-effectively delivering ultra broadband to enables applications such as distance learning and telemedicine. In recognition of the region’s achievements, ICF named Northeast Ohio a 2008 Top Seven Intelligent Community of the Year. ICF will announce the Intelligent Community of the Year winner on May 16.

Meals On Wheels needs volunteers

Sarah Wean
Cleveland Heights Meals On Wheels is an all-volunteer, non-profit, non-subsidized independent program working in cooperation with the Cleveland Heights Office On Aging to deliver meals to elderly and disabled residents of Cleveland Heights.

For as little as two hours of donated time a week you can make a significant difference to a service that enriches the community and the lives of the people in it.

Volunteers are needed to substitute for drivers who are absent due to travel, illness, appointments, etc. This will require 1 to 2 hours one day (M - F) a week around noon for you to pick up the food at Fairmount Presbyterian Church (Fairmount & Coventry) and drive a delivery route (about 4 - 8 stops) within Cleveland Heights.

You can become a regular driver (same day, same route, once a week), if desired, when openings occur.

We can accommodate your day preferences, vacations, appointments, etc.

If you would like to be added to our list of substitutes, please contact Art Glassman at 216 371-0316 or artmmary@stratos.net.
Faith matters: prophetic or profane?  

Rev. John Lentz  

Being a pastor in the Heights (Forest Hill Church, Presbyterain), I have followed the recent US presidential campaign's role in the controversy surrounding President Barack Obama's relationship to his pastor, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, with great interest. For me too have said things from the pulpit that many disagreed with. I too have been caught up in rhetorical flourishes to make a point that later I wished I might have toned down. But then again, the role of a preacher, particularly one who claims the mantle of the prophets, is not to preach an easy, comfortable, or socially acceptable sermon. The role of a prophetic preacher is to agitate, confront, and disturb.

Whether or not Reverend Wright can be called a prophet of our time is open for debate. However, his style, rhetoric and message have much in common with the historic prophets of Israel of almost 3,000 years ago.

The primary role of the prophet was to hold the secular authority accountable to the justice of God. Amos, one of the first prophets to make his mark, said this: “Hear this word which the Lord has spoken concerning you, house of Bacchur who are subject to the government’s foreign policy: Hosea declared: “For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind.” (Hosea 8:7) This is another way of saying that the “children of the community are coming home to roost.”

Certainly one does not have to agree with Rev. Wright. But his language and style is as old as faith. The role of the pastor in her or his preaching is to “afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted” and to speak truth to power. This is not an easy role to play. But for those of us who climb into the pulpit the discomforting word is often the word that must be preached.

The pastor’s role model is not only the prophets but Jesus himself. It should be remembered that the “Prince of Peace” was perceived as a political firebrand and therefore executed. The Romans did not crucify him because he wanted his followers only to pay attention to the lies of the field. Jesus’ first sermon was about God’s priority for the poor and release for the captives. His own hometown, after hearing that sermon, almost lynched him. Furthermore, in Jesus’ sermon on the plain (Luke 6:17-25) he contrasts the blessedness of the poor (v.20) with the rich (v.24 “Woe to you who are rich for you have received your consolation.”) These words of Jesus are difficult to hear in a nation that is both rich and powerful. They are still “good news” to many who suffer below the poverty line.

So, here is the rub. Faith will speak to power. The torrent of prophetic images and language will burst forth from pulpits again and again as it should. Most of the time, we will not like what we hear. But as the sixth century prophet Amos exclaimed, “I prophesy, and the word that I speak is not for you to hear.” (Amos 8:2)

Cleveland Heights-University Heights library board cancels program on the Middle East  

From Mantich

I was pretty angry when this whole thing started with the Library canceling the program on the Middle East primarily due to the pressure of one individual. Like most public libraries, the CH-UH Public Library is an important and respected part of our community. Many of us have fond memories of taking our children to story hours and other children’s activities, and attending the adult program- ming ourselves. We love being able to have free use of new books, films, music, and access to computers and the Internet. The CH-UH Library branches help form the fabric of our neighborhoods, and we have a great deal of affection and respect for the library staff, who work to keep the library a valuable part of our community.

When you think about it, public libraries are some of the few public spaces left to exercise free speech. People no longer meet at the public square; our gathering place has become the mall or shopping centers— all private property, so subject to the owners’ restrictions. And, public libraries are touted as bastions of free speech. All citizens are entitled to free speech, whether or not they are members of the Jewish community. I believe that the individual who brought about this entire mess, the person who canceled the program on the Middle East, did not cancel the program, they only permitted a single citizen to assume the role of arbiter of what is “balanced” material on the Middle East. All citizens are entitled to free speech, but that right should only be allowed to everyone’s else speech in the process.

Who did the library board allow to intimidate them into canceling the program by leveling unsubstantiated claims that the Middle East program was anti-Semitic, and that the library director is a bigot? Should one citizen decide for us what we can and cannot watch, listen to and be allowed to talk about? I believe this one citi- zen’s tactics deserve exposure.

According to his own web site, he is the Cleveland District Office vice president of the Zionist Organiza- tion of America. If you feel up to it, you can find more information about the individual who brought about this entire mess at the library’s history he may find that he has never had any complaints, or threats. I believe they have a right to their program, and they should not have to prove it is “balanced.” I hope they prove what I think that if Barry Manilow wants to bring a boycott upon himself, I say go for it! Barry!

Become an Observer!  

The Heights Observer is looking for people, ages 16 - 100, to be- come volunteer writers, editors, photographers, distributors and delivery people (a.k.a. newsies).

Amateurs and professionals alike are welcome!

Get involved! If you have a story idea or know of one, we want it! info@futureheights.org 216-320-1423
Big Fun leaves customers smiling

Jeff Bandix

If you grew up anytime from the 1950’s through the 1980’s, stepping through the doors of Big Fun on Coventry Road will instantly whisk you back to your childhood. The store features a vast array of toys, board games, dolls, action figures, comic books, gag gifts, and other memorabilia from those decades. “For most people, childhood was a happy time of life,” observes Big Fun founder and owner Steve Presser. “It’s special.”

If soup merited inclusion in the Smithsonian Institution, Jack’s Deli & Restaurant would have the inside track. Regulars call it “Mish-Mosh” soup, and it more than lives up to that billing. Intensely flavored, hued of rich gold and laden with a girth-expanding symphony of noodles, rice, chicken, aromatics and soft-ball-sized matzo balls, it is arguably the defining anti-viral weapon of mass destruction of this genre, not to mention an otherworldly delicacy sure to leave you trembling in its shadow.

A University Heights institution since 1980, Jack’s remains local, humble, accessible and above all, driven by friendliness and quality. Founded by the late Jack Markowitz and son Alvie, Jack’s has served countless sandwiches, plus deli standbys such as blintzes, stuffed cabbage, chopped liver, kugel, knishes, potato pancakes and a dizzying array of menu mainstays. Markowitz says all dishes are made from scratch, using only the freshest ingredients—many of which are sourced from key outlets throughout the United States.

Jack’s Deli moved to 14490 Cedar Road, just around the corner from its original location of 25 years. Markowitz now co-owns the deli with partner Gary Lebowitz. Based on the frenetic rush of a recent midday lunch service, the move clearly has worked well for ownership and patrons alike. “We really try to nurture a family feel here,” says Markowitz. “We like to think of ourselves as the Jewish ‘Cheers’ of Cedar-Green, where everybody knows your name.”

Indeed, employees at Jack’s seem to take a personal interest in the patrons, from the deli mavens behind the counter who make your sandwich to servers working the dining room. “Whatever’s happening in our customers’ lives, whatever’s happening in Cleveland, it usually gets talked about at Jack’s,” says Markowitz.

Service and ambiance aside, food remains the primary attraction. The expanded digs accommodate 50 percent more customers than the old space. That’s plenty of room for a fiercely loyal legion of deli denizens, some hailing from as far away as Ashtabula—room for more people and more waistsline.

Consider, for example, the Triple Decker of corned beef, hot pastrami, Muenster cheese, and lettuce and tomato between thick slices of rye bread and served with creamy cole slaw and Thousand Island dressing, or the Fressers Delight—corned beef layered atop two potato pancakes and served with apple sauce or sour cream, or the boiled knaaken, a true cult classic. For something truly unique, try Jack’s legendary pickled tongue on challah—an otherworldly delicacy sure to leave you (not to mention the cow) speechless. The towering sandwiches are complemented by the requisite sides of potato salad, farfel and noodle kugel and crisp dill pickles.

Jack’s also features nine soups daily, a full range of dinner selections, and a veritable bounty of the sea that includes Nova lox, sable, smoked whitefish, and more waistline. Ashtabula—room for more people and more waistsline.

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Jack’s also features nine soups daily, a full range of dinner selections, and a veritable bounty of the sea that includes Nova lox, sable, smoked whitefish, and creamed and chopped herring. Breakfast is also available throughout the day, with specials running through 11 a.m.

The restaurant biz will never be easy, and Jack’s is no exception. Sixty-hour weeks are the norm for Markowitz, and the challenge of meeting high customer service expectations remains constant. Clearly, though, he enjoys the payoffs. “I grew up here in University Heights, so I feel at home every day I come to work,” he says. “This community has very friendly people, and what really is satisfying is watching families who frequent the restaurant grow—seeing the different generations over time. From grandfather to father to son—we really become very close with our customers. It’s special.”

Jack’s Deli and Restaurant is located at the intersection of Cedar Road and South Green Road, facing Cedar Road. Hours: Monday – Saturday 7 a.m. to 9 p.m., Sunday 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. The restaurant closes early on Jewish and national holidays.
Review: Anatolia Café

Anatolia Café brings authentic Turkish cuisine to Cedar-Lee district

Anatolia Café, the Turkish restaurant formerly located at Cedar Center, recently moved into its new home in the Cedar-Lee commercial district of Cleveland Heights. Known for its fine food and attentive service, Anatolia Café now has a larger space and sophisticated new décor to accommodate its growing clientele.

When I made my first visit, the restaurant had been scarcely open a week. I entered into a high ceiling foyer that faces a row of brightly lit display cases filled with Turkish pastries and entrees. Behind the display cases, the open view kitchen is immaculate. I watched cooks busy behind the display cases, the open view kitchen is immaculate. I watched cooks busy preparing food. The hostess led me under high brick arches into the dining halls. The restaurant bustles with activity and happily feasting diners. A blazing fire—place in the back adds a nice touch. The walls are painted a burnt orange hue and covered with beautiful hand woven rugs, Ecru paintings (a traditional Turkish marbling technique), copper urns and other artifacts from Anatolia, the region encompassing the Asian part of Turkey between the Black and Mediterranean seas. You will even cook you pancakes! Locally owned business and shake the owner's hand. (In the case of Tommy's, the owner will cook you pancakes) Locally owned businesses have an intangible value. He likes the Cleveland Heights' community. And, you'll help out the local businesses. I'm not asking you to spend every dollar in the Heights, but why not make a conscious effort to give local businesses a chance? I guarantee that if you do you'll discover a little bit of what makes the Heights such a great place to live. And, you’ll help out the community you live in at the same time. Got comments? You can e-mail me at Trevoryg@motorcarshonda.com, or post them on the Heights Observer's interactive Observatory.

Why buy local?

Trevor Gile

What does it mean to “buy local”? Does it mean to shop within the Heights’ borders? Does the size of the business matter? Or does buy local mean refusing to shop at chain restaurants and limiting your spending to “mom and pop” stores? When I’ve asked Heights residents what they like most about our community, people often mention the unique, charming businesses you find in the Heights. For me, buying local is important to our community for a few key reasons.

1) You can shake hands with the owner. The Heights is one of few places left where you can actually visit a locally owned business and shake the owner’s hand. (In the case of Tommy’s, the owner will cook you pancakes) Locally owned businesses have an intangible quality. Having the proprietor involved with day to day operations ensures exceptional service and a unique shopping experience.

2) Sixty-eight cents of every dollar spent at a locally owned business is reinvested into the community. Compare that to the forty-three cents that is returned to the community when you shop at a chain store. Local businesses are more likely to be owned by residents of the community who by nature are more inclined to buy local. This cycle keeps more money in the community. With chain retail operations, the majority of every dollar goes back to non-local suppliers and distant corporate offices. You can check out national statistics and further information about the economic benefit of locals vs. chains at The Hometown Advantage, a project of NewRules.org.

3) Vacancies scar our community. When we lose a local business it creates a ripple effect throughout the community. Local jobs are lost. Vacant store fronts reduce the desirability of surrounding businesses and reduce the amount of local taxes that our local government can collect in order to provide community services. Because starting a small business is difficult and many new businesses fail, local businesses often give way to chain franchises. This in turn causes a little bit of the Heights charm to disappear and puts pressure on the City to cut expenses or raise taxes on its remaining residents and businesses.

My father taught me that in order for our business to succeed in Cleveland Heights we need many other successful local businesses. I’m not asking you to spend every dollar in the Heights, but why not make a conscious effort to give local businesses a chance? I guarantee that if you do you’ll discover a little bit of what makes the Heights such a great place to live. And, you’ll help out the community you live in at the same time. Got comments? You can e-mail me at Trevoryg@motorcarshonda.com, or post them on the Heights Observer's interactive Observatory.

Trevor Gile is the General Sales Manager/Honda of Motorcars in Cleveland Heights.

Anatolia Café is now located at 2270 Lee Road at Kensington, in Cleveland Heights, OH.

Business Hours: Monday–Thursday 11:00 a.m.–Midnight Saturday & Sunday 12:00 noon–Midnight

216-321-4400
www.anatolicafe.com
Lakewood Observer co-founder O’Bryan shares observations

G. M. Donley

Four years ago, the near-west-side community of Lakewood was embroiled in controversy over a plan to develop land overlooking the Rocky River—land that would have to be taken by eminent domain because some of the homeowners who lived there weren’t interested in selling. As the heated discussion took place on a community web site, three guys—one of them vehemently opposed to the project, another adamantly in favor, and a third remaining neutral—decided it was time to launch a community newspaper in which discussions such as these, as well as other important civic matters, could reach a broader audience than a web site could. The Lakewood Observer was born.

Publisher Jim O’Bryan was one of those three (the others being printer Steve Davis and Lakewood Public Library director Ken Warren), recalls how the seeds of the idea took root. “The first web site permitted people to post under fake names. As editing day approached, we started to see what they call ‘spiral dynamics,’ as someone would post a comment under one name, then log out and log on again under a different name to second their own opinion, and so on—pretty soon it looked like there was a big swell of opinion trending in a certain direction, because no one could tell that many of the messages were posted by the same person. Meanwhile, the Plain Dealer and the local Sun paper would show up every once in a while and do a shallow gloss of stories, visit heightsobserver.org, the tools for
discussion were there, but there wasn’t a strong voice or her opinions to both a worldwide audience and to peers with similar interests and concerns. The technology and the desire have converged at this point in history, and now, ideally, we are all in a position to benefit.

As noted in an earlier article on heightsobserver.org, the tools for citizen based journalism have also recently become more accessible to residents of Cleveland Heights and University Heights. With the launch of Heights Observer by the local nonprofit FutureHeights, residents now have a citizen-generated source for
new homes in the area. The result: an

Editorial Director of FutureHeights, Deanna Bremer Fisher, stated in an earlier article, “Civic engagement is the wave of the future for grass-roots civic participation and the Heights Observer looks forward to working with any one who would like to participate in this exciting and important project.”

Become an Observer

To read stories and opinions created by your community, and to submit articles, opinions, events, and photos to the Observer, visit heightsobserver.org or call 216-320-1423.

Join the conversation at heightsobserver.org
As the new executive director of FutureHeights, I am very excited to be leading this organization as we embark upon the exciting project of creating a hyperlocal news resource for our community.

There are many very talented and dedicated people who call the Heights their home—people who have unique perspectives and interesting stories to tell; people who care deeply about this community and want to apply their best effort to develop successful solutions to the challenges we face as an inner ring suburb of a struggling city; people who have the courage to tell it like it is; and people who have the confidence to celebrate our many successes.

The Heights Observer will give us the means to tell our own story the way that we know it should be told. I am very much looking forward to working with all of you as we learn how to become citizen journalists. Together we will create a community asset that will deepen our relationship, strengthen our local economy, and ensure that the Heights remains a highly desirable place to live.

It’s great to be working in the community I know and love. Thanks to all of you for your encouragement and support!

—Deanna Bremer Fisher

Banner year for FutureHeights

Mark Majewski

Many readers of this inaugural edition of the Heights Observer may not know about the organization that organizes FutureHeights. FutureHeights is an eighty-year old nonprofit that evolved from a gathering of residents who successfully fought an ill-advised local bond rating. The city’s reserve fund is $10 million, and the city is facing a $24 million deficit. In short, the current budget crisis is the most serious the city has faced in decades.

The Community Center will be affected as well with both a rate increase and the reduction of operating hours. New rates and shortened hours have not been finalized but are imminent. Finally, the city will not provide flower baskets this year, a small but important element of Cleveland Heights.

What is on the cutting block?

Cuts from page 1

City Council has indicated several initial cuts paid with fee and parking rate increases. The combination is designed to boost the city’s stagnant revenue while slashing spending. An estimated $8 million will be cut from this year’s budget with an additional $2 million to be eliminated next year.

Obvious remedies include the freezing of all city hall salaries at their current levels, with the exception of negotiated fire and police union increases. Ten full-time public service positions will be eliminated within the city government and five police officers will not be replaced after expected retirements. Nine seasonally hired public service positions will also not be filled in the fall.

City services will take a big hit with the closing of our real estate programs, student services, after school programs and animal control. Spring leaf cleanup and animal control. Spring leaf cleanup and the reduction of operating hours. The Community Center will be affected as well with both a rate increase and the reduction of operating hours. New rates and shortened hours have not been finalized but are imminent. Finally, the city will not provide flower baskets this year, a small but important element of Cleveland Heights.

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The Future of Cleveland Heights

Tumeo indicated that morale at city hall is very low and that the expected round of cuts is a deep blow to city spirits. While the elimination of high-ranking city positions has not been discussed, it is possible that future budget cuts could impact these city positions.

In addition, some on Council have been exploring the potential for merging services with University Heights to save money and eliminate duplicative activities. These talks are in early stages and could lead to a long-term merger of the two cities.

The future of Cleveland Heights has perhaps never been more in question than it is today. Decisive moves toward more efficient city management will be needed to sustain the community in 2008.

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Sponsoring the State of the City Address by Mayor Ed Kelley

Receiving a Community Vision Award from Heights Community Congress

Participating in commercial district street festivals

Sending monthly eNews emails to over three thousand subscribers

Publishing an award-winning web site www.FutureHeights.org

Also during 2007, FutureHeights experienced the departure of the organization’s first executive director, Julie Langan. Julie’s commitment and energy were the driving force for much success, including laying the groundwork for the Heights Observer.

The board and community are thankful for the continued support of our members and funders. As always, we welcome ideas and comments about the work FutureHeights will continue to accomplish on behalf of the community in 2008.

Mark Majewski is board president of FutureHeights
Heights Arts

Animating the Community

David Budin

Look around Cleveland Heights—all over, outside. It’s almost impossible not to notice the proliferation of public art that has been appearing, with increasing frequency, over the past few years. There is the Peace Arch at the Coventry playground; murals on buildings in the Cedar-Lee and Cedar-Fairmount business districts; the whimsical wrought iron fences around the storefront gardens, and the beautiful benches, both on Coventry Road; the colorful knitted “tree cozies” and sculptures on the road circling Severance Center; and more.

This is all the work of Heights Arts, a nonprofit organization founded in 2000 by Peggy Spaeath and a handful of likeminded visionary Cleveland Heights residents. The idea came to Spaeath—who had already served as an arts activist, first in the schools and then in the community—at large—when she realized that this city was home to a seemingly large percentage of artists, including visual artists of every genre, musicians of all kinds, dancers and choreographers, actors and directors, writers, filmmakers, and others.

Heights Arts has quickly grown into a major arts force in the area, with a 15-member board of trustees and two public locations—Heights Arts Gallery near the Cedar Lee Theater and Heights Arts Studio in the Cleveland Heights University Heights Library’s recent addition on the west side of Lee Road. The Gallery offers six annual exhibitions of regional art including a year-end holiday store featuring works for sale by dozens of area artists. The Studio also presents exhibitions, plus musical concerts and art classes and workshops for all ages after school, evenings and weekends.

Heights Arts presents house concerts as well, often featuring Cleveland Orchestra and other top classical musicians, playing chamber music in an intimate setting, offering a unique and thrilling opportunity to experience the music as it was originally heard. The organization also presents poetry slams and other written-word events, and, in fact, sponsors a Cleveland Heights Poet Laureate position, which it created—one of only a tiny number in the country.

The concept for Heights Arts was and is to “realize the potential of the arts to animate our community,” with goals including inspiring all Heights citizens to participate in the arts, supporting the arts in K-12 education, expanding exhibition and performance opportunities; and fostering public appreciation for the arts in Cleveland Heights, thus enriching the quality of life in the Heights by cultivating a strong, diverse, and collaborative arts community.

Recently Heights Arts has initiated the discussion of the potential of the former Coventry School building—or another building—to become an arts center. “Our dream,” the organization wrote in an open letter to community leaders, “is a vibrant, multi-disciplinary arts center with galleries, theater, music, dance, community outreach activities, classes and more. This center would be a wonderful cultural, educational and economic asset for the neighborhood, the community and, indeed, the region.”

To learn more, visit Heights Arts’ web site at www.heightsarts.org, or call the Heights Arts office at 216-371-3457.

Interfaith Arts Collaborative

Katherine Chilcote

Building Bridges Mural Program and The Rumi Foundation have recently joined efforts to create the Interfaith Arts Collaborative. The Interfaith Arts Collaborative is a joint effort to support visual and performing artists who are exploring the relationships between art and spirituality.

The purpose of the Interfaith Arts Collaborative is to allow the arts to be a vehicle for peace between our faith communities, by seeking to understand and reach the other’s traditions as they are expressed through the arts.

Musicians will perform various forms of spiritual music on Sunday, April 27th from 7:00-8:30 p.m. at Fairmount Presbyterian Church. Emrah Gursoy, a renowned Ney Reed Flute player is in Cleveland as part of a conference on Islamic Art being held at John Carroll University. Emrah Gursoy will be performing on the reed flute, and sharing the Sufi traditions of Turkish music. Metin Aytekin and Hakan Aydin, who are also from Turkey, will perform on the Bendir and Saz instruments.

From two other local traditions we have pianist and composer Don Chilcote, performing modern interpretations of Christian spirituals. His work is inspired by traditional hymns and spiritual praise music, but is transformed into contemporary classical jazz.

The final performer for the evening, sitar player Hasu Patel, will collaborate with visual artist Katherine Chilcote to create a new original work exploring reconciliation as it can be expressed through the inter-relation of visual arts and music. Hasu is internationally renowned for her Sitar performances, recently having debuted concertos with orchestras in Austin and Detroit. Hasu Patel performed at Building Bridge’s unveiling of the Interfaith Mural at Case Western Reserve University this past November in collaboration with Katherine Chilcote.

This new work will be an expression of the synesthetic energy between art and music, as they both served as artists come together for interfaith dialog.

Author Katherine Chilcote is Director of Building Bridges Mural Program and can be reached at 216-374-9329 or by email: kchilcote62@gmail.com. Fairmount Presbyterian Church is located at 2757 Fairmount Blvd, at Coventry Road, in Cleveland Heights, OH.

To reach other sources in the article, please visit www.hasupatel.com and www.clevelandmurals.org

We proclaim God’s unconditional love that transcends all human distinctions
A new historic district for Cleveland Heights

Michael Wellman

The City of Cleveland Heights will soon boast a new National Register Historic District. According to the Ohio Historic Preservation Office, the new district will be the eighth nationally listed district that is in whole or in part located within the city boundaries. It will join Ambler Heights, Euclid Golf Allotment, Fairmount Boulevard, Overlook Road Carriage House, Fairhill Road Village, Forest Hill, and Forest Hill Park historic districts. Sometimes referred to as “Pill Hill,” because of the abundance of doctors that once lived there, the Inglewood Historic District will include houses on Inglewood, Yellowstone, Oakridge, Quilliams, Glenwood and Cleveland Heights Boulevard. Originally developed by the Van Sweringen brothers as part of the Shaker Heights Improvement Company’s subdivisions number four and six, the district is centered around Inglewood Drive, North of Mayfield and East of Taylor Road, behind Lutheran East High School. The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of properties recognized by the federal government as worthy of preservation for their local, state, or national significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, or culture. To qualify for the National Register, a property must meet one of four broad criteria, it must be associated with an important historic context and it must retain the integrity of the historic features that convey its significance. The Inglewood Neighborhood meets three of these criteria: Criterion A, relating to historic events; Criterion B, regarding association with individuals that have made a significant contribution to society; and Criterion C, architecture. In accordance with the National Register’s fifty year rule, the period of significance for the district begins in 1920, when the land was purchased by the Shaker Heights Development Company, and ends fifty years ago, in 1958. The district showcases prominent residential architectural styles popular during Cleveland Heights’ period of tremendous growth and transition from a rural landscape to a suburb of Cleveland. The homes encompass Tudor Revival, Colonial Revival, Mediterranean Style, Shingle Style and other popular styles and includes significant homes designed by prominent Cleveland architects. Commercial architects, such as Walker and Weeks, Howell and Thomas, Bloodood Tuttle, Abram Garfield, Charles S. Schneider, and John Graham, along with residential architects, such as Best and Hoeffer, George Johnston, William D. MacIvor, M.F. Halperin, and H.O. Fullerton, designed the homes built in the early years of the Van Sweringen development. Later architects include Ray Moulthrop, George H. Burrows, Maxwell Norcross, Munroe Walker Copper Jr., Walter Harris Smith, and Chester Lowe. The Pill Hill area of Cleveland Heights includes two other non-Van Sweringen developments. The 23 acres that make up Oakridge Circle, previously known as Oakridge Park or the Oakridge Drive cul-de-sac, was purchased and developed by the architect Francis Wirgau. Beginning in 1936, the homes along the west side of Yellowstone were built on land previously occupied by the Glen Allen Estate and became known as Prentiss Park. While at least one of the two developments may be eligible for listing in the National Register, neither one was included in the Inglewood nomination. Diana Wellman of Inglewood Drive drafted the nomination and submitted it to the State Historic Preservation Office in early April. The Ohio Historic Site Preservation Advisory Board review the nomination at their August meeting. The Advisory Board will review and recommends nominations to the Secretary of the Interior at the National Parks Service, who then places properties in the National Register. Residents expect the Inglewood Historic District to officially appear in the National Register of Historic Places by the end of 2008. Once the district is listed, residents hope the City of Cleveland Heights will post a Historic Landmark sign in a prominent location in the neighborhood. Listing in the National Register will not prohibit residents from making changes to their homes, nor will it require them to do so. As are all property owners in Cleveland Heights, residents will still be required to meet permitting and construction requirements enforced by the City. For more information about the National Register of Historic Places visit: www.ohiohistory.org.
A strong foundation for Kindergarten

Michael Dougherty

CH-UH City School District's Early Childhood Center offers excellence in a diverse learning environment. Amy Mangano's twin girls, Grace and Sophie, are eager to start kindergarten next fall and aren't shy about sharing their new passion for "playing school" at home. Their mother sees the improvement in their academic and social skills and marvels at the progress both girls have made. The two are currently enrolled in the CH-UH Early Childhood Center and are thriving thanks to the strong programs offered by the preschool.

The Early Childhood Center is part of an elementary school community located in a wing of the Gearty Professional Development School in University Heights. Mangano feels that expectations for kindergarten are easier to grasp because her daughters see other kindergartners and teachers in the building. It's part of a special learning community at Gearty that encompasses the preschool through fifth grade student population.

The co-teaching environment consists of lead teachers and teaching aides. They are meticulous in their approach to educating preschoolers, and their passion for teaching radiates from every classroom.

"When a parent discovers the high school they've heard about is right next door, they are just as excited as their child is about beginning their educational journey," said Amy Mangano. "Heights High is an excellent school with a diverse student body and a strong academic focus.

"I went and asked her best friend's mother, 'Why?'' The response that came back was 'because the high school isn't a good school; the students are out of control; nobody cares here.' I asked my middle-schooler why. She managed to choke and spill out and begin making their argument on and on. Her friend is moving? I asked my middle-schooler. What's a parent to do when a child comes home in tears because her best friend is moving? I asked my middle-schooler why. She managed to choke and spill out and begin making their argument on and on.

"This isn't anything like I was told," said Amy Mangano. "I'm a good parent…I CHOSE to use Heights High for my 12-year-old daughter. "Heights High" was the right choice to make; that wasn't a mistake. Our daughter is happy because she is surrounded by friends, laughing, making plans for the future. Her life appears online.

"This perception of Heights that is present in the CH-UH community 'perception' is commonly held by a parent-to-parent mentoring program; a way of building positive relationships with prospective high school parents, those present in the CH-UH middle schools as well as those whose children attend many of the area's private schools. By sharing their knowledge and experiences, PATH volunteers help to counter the "perceptions" of Heights that are present in the CH-UH community, making it easier to grasp school's impact on the area. PATH volunteers are accepted for both half-day and full-day tuition programs.

"Security has everything you could want in a school," said Mangano. "It has diversity; dedicated teachers, excellent academics and, most of all, a real sense that you are part of a family working toward the education and growth of our children in a safe and nurturing environment. I could not be happier with the entire program." To register or for more information, please contact the Early Childhood Center at 216-377-3536. Child care vouchers are accepted for both half-day and full-day tuition programs.

Taming the elephant in the room

Lito Gonzalez

What's a parent to do when a child comes home in tears because her best friend is moving? I asked my middle-schooler why. She managed to choke and spill out and began making their argument on and on. Her friend is moving? I asked my middle-schooler why. She managed to choke and spill out and begin making their argument on and on.

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Scholarship honors Officer West

Lita Gonzalez

New scholarship to honor Officer West’s memory

On May 26, 2007, Officer Jason West, a member of the Cleveland Heights Police Department, lost his life while responding to a disturbance call. This tragedy touched so many people—his family, friends, fellow officers and the entire Cleveland Heights community.

A scholarship has been set up as a way of honoring Officer West’s memory and his dedicated work as a police officer. The Officer Jason D. West Memorial Scholarship will be awarded to a graduating senior from the Criminal Justice/Law Enforcement Program at Cleveland Heights High School.

The scholarship selection committee—which includes members of the community and a fellow police officer who is representing Officer West’s family, has been meeting to develop the scope of the scholarship fund, the criteria that will be used in selecting recipients and to actually select the recipient. The first Officer Jason D. West Memorial Scholarship will be awarded at this year’s Senior Scholarship Awards Ceremony on Wednesday, May 28, 2008.

Jason always wanted to be a police officer. A close friend of Jason’s and a fellow police officer said that “Jason embodied all of the qualities that we strive to achieve in life and as a law enforcement officer—he was honest, sincere, dedicated and loyal to himself, his family, his friends, and to the police department.” That officer went on to say that “protecting and serving the City of Cleveland Heights was something that Jason did willingly each and every day he put his uniform on.”

Volunteers needed for tutoring pilot project at Heights High

Lita Gonzalez

The Mosaic Experience, one of the five small schools at Heights High School, is launching a new community-based volunteer tutoring program.

The Mosaic Experience’s Shared Governance Team (SGT) has been working closely with Reaching Heights to develop a tutoring pilot program that will match volunteer tutors with freshman and their teachers.

“We want to recruit about 15 community and parent volunteers interested in working with Mosaic core subject teachers after school to tutor some of our freshman,” said Mosaic Principal Nick Perry. “This is an excellent way for the community to interact with our students in a positive way,” he added.

Students will be tutored in Math, Science, and English/Reading.

For a commitment of as little as one hour per week, volunteers can make a positive difference in the lives of our students. Community members interested in volunteering can contact Lita Gonzalez at 216-410-4577 for more information.

Heights-based Kulture Kids receives $25K grant

Tom Kerr

The Eugene M. Adler Foundation has renewed its $25,000 annual operating support for Kulture Kids, a nonprofit organization based in Cleveland Heights, Ohio.

“Kulture Kids is the poster child for what we like to help,” says Constance Adler, President of the Adler Foundation, which is based in Silver City, New Mexico. “The work they do throughout Ohio is critical in helping children gain access to (and learn from) the many cultures of the world. Now, more than ever, that is a key aspect of any child’s development.”

To learn more visit www.kulturekids.org

Event listings online

To see a full listing of events in the Heights, see www.heightsobserver.org
Celebrate National Poetry Month with children

Serena Olson

April is National Poetry Month and it is the perfect time to introduce (or reintroduce) your child to poetry. Children's poetry is similar to poetry for adults, except that it attempts to observe life in a manner that will resonate with children. A great deal of children's poetry is intended to be shared orally and encourages participation. You can find shelf upon shelf of poetry in the Children's Services Department. There is something for every age group and a wide array of subject matter ranging from the absurdly hilarious to serious reflection. Here are some suggestions to get you started:

Anthologies:
- A Family of Poems: My Favorite Poetry for Children edited by Caroline Kennedy
- A Poke in the I: A Collection of Concrete Poetry selected by Jane Yolen
- Almost Late to School and More School Poems by Carol Diggory Shields
- Casey at the Bat by Ernest L. Thayer
- Ellington Was Not a Street by Ntozake Shange
- Frankenstein Makes a Sandwich by Adam Rex
- Handsprings by Douglas Florian
- If Not For The Cat: Haiku by Jack Prelutsky
- Moon, Have You Met My Mother? by Karla Kuskin
- Where the Sidewalk Ends by Shel Silverstein
- You Read to Me, I'll Read to You edited by Mary Ann Hoberman

To find these books of poetry along with many more, stop in to any of the Heights Libraries and ask a librarian for help! For more information about sharing poetry with children, visit The Children's Book Council at www.chbbooks.org.

Ridiculous Rose

Her mama said, "Don't eat with your toes!"

"OK," said Ridiculous Rose,
So she ate with her toes!

—Shel Silverstein

Where the Sidewalk Ends

Michael Is Afraid Of The Storm

Lightning is angry in the night.
Thunder spans our house.
Rain is hating our old elm—
It punishes the boughs.

Now, I am next to nine years old,
And crying's not for me.
But if I touch my mother's hand,
Perhaps no one will see.

And if I keep herself in sight—
Follow her busy dress—
No one will notice my wild eye.
No one will laugh, I guess.

—Gwendolyn Brooks

A Family of Poems: My Favorite Poetry for Children edited by Caroline Kennedy

Elise Paschen

The 20th Century Children's Poetry Treasury selected by Jack Prelutsky

Collections by Individual Authors:
- Almost Late to School and More School Poems by Carol Diggory Shields
- Casey at the Bat by Ernest L. Thayer
- Ellington Was Not a Street by Ntozake Shange
- Frankenstein Makes a Sandwich by Adam Rex
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Get poetic at the Heights Main Library

What’s in your future?

Kevin Ohrner and Steve Wood

As a “bustion of free speech,” it is hard to think of anything a library finds more important than communication. That is certainly the view of the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library, its staff and board. And what could make better sense in this day and age than a local newspaper that has its genesis truly in our community.

When the library first heard of FutureHeights’ plans to create a community newspaper, modeled after the successful Lakewood Observer, we were thrilled to be a part of the planning process. We recognized that the time had come, especially in communities such as Cleveland Heights and University Heights where the citizenry is more involved than you find elsewhere, for local residents to take responsibility for their own news efforts, rather than leaving that entirely to the for-profit sector.

The Heights Observer gives all of us the opportunity to prepare our own stories about what we feel is important in our community. It also provides the opportunity to bring issues and programs to the awareness of our friends and neighbors in ways that cannot be found in commercial journals. This is our chance to bring to people's attention those good things that are happening around us — that are important to all of us — but that wouldn’t be considered worthwhile for “selling” newspapers.

Because it is both online and, now, in print, it has an immediacy that isn’t found in other newspapers, even those coming out daily. But more importantly, the online version, with its various pieces-parts, gives us the opportunity to comment, discuss and debate the vital issues happening in our community. What power that gives us!

What is most interesting to con-template is how the Heights Observer will grow and change over time. To be honest, we don’t know. Through the power of the Internet we see around us a movement away from hardcopy newspapers and the leaning toward information online. That is clearly a way for the Heights Observer to move — and it is prepared to do so. But are we “there” yet? We think not.

We believe that, just as with libraries and their propensity for the written word in hard copy, the paper version of the Heights Observer will be with us for some years to come. How fun that will be!

Kevin Ohrner is a member of the board of library trustees. Steve Wood is director of the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library.
Can you be an environmentally responsible gardener even when yard work is only one of the many tasks to fit into your already busy schedule? Yes, you can. Here are some simple tips for a safer, more environmentally sound lawn.

- **Start with the right grasses.** Yes, grasses, plural. A mixture of grasses adapted to our region will be able to withstand problems better than if you have just one kind of grass. A mixture of perennial rye, fescue and Kentucky blue is great for Northeast Ohio.

- **Focus on your site.** Almost all grasses prefer full sun; but, a few, such as fine fescues, tolerate some shade. Sometimes the best grass is no grass. Groundcovers or planting beds might make the most sense.

- **Mow with a sharp blade.** A dull lawn mower blade tears the grass instead of cutting it. Frayed grass is more susceptible to disease. Sharpen your mower blades at least once at the beginning of the season and when the grass looks ragged after mowing.

- **Raise your mower blades.** Tall grass grows longer roots which can access more water and nutrients. Tall grass has more leaf area so it is more vigorous than closely cut grass, and it shades out weeds. No matter what height you let your grass grow, remove no more than one-third of the grass with a single mowing.

- **Leave the clippings.** Grass clippings left on the lawn decompose and add nitrogen and organic matter to the soil. (And, you don’t have to rake as often.) Clippings do not contribute to thatch buildup. Using a mulching mower to finely mince blades that will decompose quickly is a good option.

- **Remove thatch.** Thatch is an impenetrable mat of grass blades, roots and rhizomes that forms over the soil. A thick layer of thatch invites disease and insects. If thatch isn’t severe, aeration may solve the problem or raking the ground with a hard garden rake. Don’t worry; raking will pull up only the ugly brown patches. Anything green and healthy will stay.

- **Aerate when the lawn is actively growing.** Aeration is a process that removes plugs of soil and leaves them on the lawn to break down. Aeration improves drainage, breaks up thatch, stimulates lawn growth and improves lawn health, without pesticides and fertilizers. So, if your ground is hard, if it has dry spots where grass fails to grow, or if a pencil can’t be poked four to six inches into a moist lawn, it needs to be aerated.

- **Water your lawn only when needed.** When grass takes on a dull green or bluish color, when leaf blades begin to roll or fold, or when footprints remain in the grass after you’ve walked on it, it’s time to water. Water deeply and infrequently; you want roots to grow deep into the soil. Healthy roots extend six inches or more. Take into account weekly rainfall before setting out the sprinkler. Do not stand with your hose in your hand and “sprinkle” your grass. You are doing more harm than good. This only encourages short surface roots that can’t survive any problems. One inch per week is the general rule of thumb. So if Mother Nature already did the job, turn off the timer and don’t set out the sprinkler.

- **Use a balanced, natural fertilizer to feed your lawn.** Most natural fertilizers are slow-acting, remain available over time in the soil and rarely burn the grass. Apply fertilizer once or twice each year. Be careful not to use too much. More is not better. Follow the directions on the packaging.

- **Try a natural weed killer.** Healthy lawns naturally defeat weeds, so weeds may indicate a different problem. Corn gluten is proving effective in preventing crabgrass and other grasses from sprouting in the spring. It is also a natural, slow release nitrogen filter.

Don’t waste time pursuing the perfect lawn. Artificial turf looks perfect because it isn’t real. Lawns are living, growing and dying things. They aren’t supposed to look perfect. Enjoy your healthy, sustainable lawn.

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