Heights houses are at risk
Demolition requires no review

Hugh Fisher

The street is typical of Cleveland Heights: tree-lined, picturesque, with beautiful houses built at the turn of the last century. This one happens to be in one of the city’s more upscale neighborhoods, but the story could play out anywhere in our city: A house is in foreclosure and neighbors worry that a purchaser could demolish it without notifying or consulting the community.

An investigation of city ordinances reveals that obtaining permission to demolish a building is as simple as obtaining permission to put up a fence. It requires only a $100 permit. There is no review by city planners. No notification to the neighbors. No opportunity for comment. No consideration of the impact on the neighborhood, either aesthetically or on property values.

Richard Wong, director of planning and development for the City of Cleveland Heights, confirmed that city ordinances do not require a formal review of a demolition request.

“Certainly one of the issues with demolition would be the long-term impact on a neighborhood, but it is not regulated and not addressed by our ordinances,” Wong said.

There are a variety of property-related activities that fall under the auspices of the Planning Commission, the Board of Zoning Appeals and the Board of Control, and thus require an official review, complete with public notification and official approval. A plan to join two properties, or lot re-subdivision, for example, would require Planning Commission approval, and thus a review.

Moreover, any new construction or an alteration of any kind to an existing building— for example, an addition— requires going before the Architectural Board of Review. This too would require a review.

But a demolition would not be subject to this public process, Wong confirmed.

“Recently, when Zagara’s wanted to tear down a house to expand their parking lot, we notified 350 people in the immediate neighborhood,” said Wong, “but not because of the teardown. Zagara’s wanted to change the use of the property for parking and, under zoning appeals regulations, we were required to make notification.”

Even at that, the city received complaints that more people should have been notified.

UH Mayor wants citizens to know city governance may “be dismantled”

Anita Kazarian

University Heights Mayor Beryl Rothschild called a town hall meeting on Feb. 27 at Grattery School to alert citizens to what she says will lead to the elimination of checks and balances if the Charter Review Commission proposal for a city manager system of government replaces the current federal system.

FutureHeights to host State of the City

Deanna Brenner Fisher

Cleveland Heights Mayor Ed Kelley will give his annual State of the City address on Thursday, March 19, at 7 p.m. at the Cleveland Heights Community Center, 1 Monticello Blvd. (corner of Monticello and Mayfield roads).

Since 2006, FutureHeights, an organization dedicated to quality of life and civic engagement, has sponsored the address as part of its annual speaker series.

“This is a unique opportunity to hear the mayor’s plans for how we will move forward through these tumultuous times. It also gives the mayor a chance to hear what’s on the minds of residents,” said Gina Cheverine, president of the board of trustees for FutureHeights.

“These are tough economic times, on a state and national, as well as a regional level,” said Mayor Kelley, “the foreclosure crisis, development in our community, quality of life, public health and safety, senior and recreational programs—all of these areas are impacted by necessary budget cuts and we need to figure out how to do things differently. I’ll talk about partnerships we are developing with the Home Repair Resource Center and other nonprofits, with University Circle and its institutions, our neighboring counties, and the city’s new land banking program.”

Residents will have an opportunity to pose questions to the mayor after his talk. Questions can also be submitted in advance by posting them online at www.heightsobserver.org/deck or sending them to info@futureheights.org. The talk will be taped and aired on Channel 20. For more information, contact FutureHeights at 216-320-1423.

Deanna Brenner Fisher is the executive director of FutureHeights and a 15-year Heights resident.

Brunner to make area appearance

Jeff Coryell

Heights-area residents will have the opportunity to hear and ask questions of Secretary of State Jennifer Brunner on Wednesday, March 11.

Secretary Brunner, who is running for the U.S. Senate seat of retiring incumbent Sen. George Voinovich, will speak on “Free, Fair, Open, and Honest Elections in Ohio: Building on the Success of 2008” at the D’Amico Community Center, 1750 Victory Drive in South Euclid (behind the Giant Eagle on Mayfield near Green) at 7 p.m.

Jeff Coryell is president of the Cleveland Heights Democrats. For more information visit ClevelandHeightsDem.com.
by the board, to ensure that personal opinion on the removal did not follow board policy.

The board wrote in the prevailing defense that the process was “fair and transparent.” The board empowers the administration to apply only to patrons, and was never staff or pupils may challenge materials.”

There shall be a procedure by which citizens, for the schools’ media centers. “The ability to remove or ‘weed’ materials...”

There is a citizen-based news source published monthly by FutureHeights, a nonprofit, 501(c)3 organization dedicated to civic engagement and quality of life.

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enjoy the birds eye view where the sky meets the horizon.

I drove over to the University Square can be Hip! Bring memories should be made of.

“Let’s have a rock concert on the rooftop. Wow, what a great way to replace fear and darkness with fun festival memories. Perception is reality. Beams, waterproofing and structural integrity are important. "Ralph Solnitara, the University Square garage is nearing repair completion — will you feel safe?"

The site has been reviewed by the University Heights City Engineer Joseph Ciampi, and his project manager, Edward Frank. They report a Dec. 18, visit with engineering consultants Raths, Raths & Johnson for the owner of the property, Inland Management Company of Chicago.

The review concluded that reinforcement, supplemental steel supports, painting, waterproofing the top deck and on and on will result in a safely restored structure.

Knowing that I’m safe is different than feeling safe in a specific space. I drove over to the University Square site.

My 1980s Olds Aurora, triple black beauty had no problem maneuvering up the ramp to the top level, past the areas were reinforced up and under the birds eye view where the sky meets neighborhood rooftops ... a beautiful view if you take the time to simply look up instead of searching for that close parking space.

My thoughts drifted off to a time when the "Old May Company on the Heights," held Rock ’n Roll record hops on the parking lot grounds. They were complete with 45 rpm records and free HIFI buttons. Google that.

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Oaths of office
The oath of office was administered to Director Nancy Levin, clerk; James Teknipp, deputy clerk; and CarDala Carter, new board member.

Item pulled from school library
Mary Gibson, long-time resident and teacher in Cleveland Heights, expressed concern over the removal of one periodical and at the lack of diversity on the commission.

Reductions in funds and expenditures
The Public Library fund produced $35,000 less than the amount received the preceding year under the prior formula. Board Vice President Glenn Billington reported a 16 percent reduction between December 2007 and December 2008, with the biggest decrease in expenditure in the area of acquisitions, "perhaps the worst place to balance the budget." Library management indicated that some of the expenditure reduction was due to new heads in some divisions and that orders would increase as those librarians became more familiar with their divisions.

Library activities
Director Levin reported several activities: a summit on economic issues co-hosted with the Heights Hillcrest Regional Chamber of Commerce; a Friends of the Library reorganization meeting, featuring a speaker on March 22, at 7 p.m.; and a Great Lakes Theater production.

New hires
Constance Dickerson has been hired as children's services coordinator. Deborah Rothman, new adult services librarian, will be in charge of the Community Office.

Mini-retreats planned
Three mini-retreats have been planned for board members. Board development will be addressed in March, organizational redesign in May, and board direction next year in July.

Local author speaks at Lee Road Library
Tonya Gibson is an employee of the Heights Libraries who enjoys writing and photography in her free time.

Food, Fun and FRIENDS
Tonya Gibson
The Heights Libraries invite you to join them on Sunday, March 22 from 2 to 4 p.m. at the Lee Road Library for an afternoon of food, fun and FRIENDS! Receive an update on our FRIENDS organization:
* Learn how you can plan special library events,
* Hear about some of the FRIENDS' goals,
* Learn about the state of library book sales,
* Learn how to become involved with the FRIENDS, and
* Become part of a growing social network of fun library supporters.

The meeting is open to anyone who is interested in learning more about how to support the library. Food and fun provided. FRIENDS needed.
Contact Tonya Gibson at 216-932-3600 ext. 230 with questions.

Hugh Fisher is a Cedar Fairmount resident.
Cleveland Heights City Council
Highlights of January/February meetings

TUESDAY, JANUARY 20, 2009
Council members Mark Tumeo and Dennis Wilcox were excused.

Walk-Roll
Deanna Bremer Fisher, executive director of Future Heights, urged Council to consider having a Walk-Roll event in July. The event encourages people to walk and bicycle in their daily lives. Essentially big block parties on closed streets, such events have been planned in several places in the Cleveland area. Lori Moss, executive director of Walk-Roll Cleveland, explained that the event is inexpensive, with the main costs relating to security and traffic control. Fisher and Moss were encouraged to consult with the assistant city manager.

Doan Brook watershed plan
Council authorized an agreement with the Doan Brook Watershed Foundation to pay $18,000 of the organization’s operating expenses as it develops and to pay $18,000 of the organization’s operating expenses as it develops and implements a watershed management plan for the preservation and improvement of Doan Brook.

Community Emergency Response
Citizen volunteers were invited to join the Cleveland Heights Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), a positive and realistic approach to emergency and disaster situations. For more information, residents can call Community Relations at 216-291-2323.

Community Emergency Response Training
Cleveland Heights residents listen intently as Fire Chief Kevin Mohr explains the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program at City Hall. The city is seeking volunteers for training (eight classes, each two hours in length). For more information, call Community Relations, 216-291-2323.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®

Money woes
With the decline in city income tax revenues and other poor economic news, the city’s balance at the close of 2008 now appears to be $5,754,543, instead of the $4 million projected a month before. The 2009 budget stands at $42.5 million with some general fund increases but static or even decreased funding in some areas – a cause for concern and caution.

Inspection of culverts and bridges
Council approved an agreement with Mackay Engineering and Surveying Company for inspection of city culverts and bridges, as required every two years by the Ohio Department of Transportation.

Inauguration Day accolades
All council members expressed positive feelings about this historic and hopeful day. Mayor Kelley likened the new spirit in Washington to the spirit we have here in Cleveland Heights, and predicted great progress. Residents were urged to look at their responsibilities as citizens and to participate in civic life and public service.

LWV Observers: Katherine Solender and Blanche Vally.
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2009
All council members present.

Restoration Society consultations
Kathleen Growher, executive director of the Cleveland Restoration Society, reported that, based on consultations done for Cleveland Heights residents, $16 Heritage Program home improvement loans have been made to city residents and, it is believed, over $9 million invested in homes. Growher added that people who take the loans tend to stay in their homes longer and properties near them have a higher appreciation. Residents interested in a free consultation should call 216-426-1000.

Concern over child maltreatment
Resident Fran Menth expressed concern about child maltreatment in Cleveland Heights and felt that city residents should consciously work toward making the city a “child-friendly” community. Council members Bonnie Caplan and Mark Tumeo mentioned that Cleveland Heights is very supportive of its families and children. Tumeo added that, given the current economic stressors, the city needs to be conscious about how the community’s children and families are being affected. He would like to discuss Menth’s ideas with her.

Regionalism important
Council member Ken Montlack said he was impressed by a recent Plain Dealer article about regionalism and regional revenue sharing but found Cleveland Magazine’s rating the suburbs issue to be divisive. He believes that honest dialogue about regional issues is important in this economic climate.

Saturday garbage collection
As a cost saving measure, Saturday garbage pickups will be eliminated. When collection is delayed due to a holiday, garbage normally picked up on Thursday or Friday will be picked up on Friday.

Contract for home loan program
A resolution extending the contract period of the agreement with the Cayahoga Housing Consortium for funding of the city’s no-interest and deferred loan programs through the consortium’s HOME program met with approval.

Solar panels power garage lights
The Cedar Lee parking garage solar panels, which were funded as part of the bond issue for the garage, as well as a grant from the state, have been installed and activated to power the garage’s lights.

Budget cuts pinching
Council member Nancy Dietrich commented that city residents are beginning to feel the effects of the cost cutting necessary to balance the budget. Every expense, however small, was scrutinized and all needed cuts made.

LWV observers: Lisa Peter and Blanche Vally. See disclaimer on page 5.

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MONDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2009
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University Heights City Council
Highlights of January/February meetings

TUESDAY, JANUARY 20, 2009
Councilman Steven Bullock was excused.

Sewer work contracting
Council passed two motions: one to advertise for bids for the 2009 catch basin, inlet and main line sewer cleaning and filming; and another to advertise for bids for contractor services for emergency sewer repairs in 2009. The second motion would ensure that someone would be on hand if emergencies occurred during weekends or when the city’s crew was already busy.

University Square
Gary Mehl, building commissioner, reported that some stores were moving out of the shopping center, but that property managers were working to bring in new businesses and were optimistic that the spaces would be filled.

Rental signs
Councilman Peter Bernardo reported that the Building Committee was considering changes in rules regarding rental signs to allow them to be posted in front yards, but they must be standardized.

JCU’s five-year plan
Councilman Frank Consolo reported that the University Affairs Committee would be posting John Carroll University’s five-year plan on the University Heights Web site.

Operational regionalism
Councilman Kevin Patrick Murphy announced that the Governmental Affairs Committee was working on submitting a joint application — along with Shaker Heights, Cleveland Heights and related school boards — to the Fund for Our Economic Future. This proposal would be a step toward operational regionalism and could be replicated in other communities.

New areas of responsibility
Mayor Rothschild reported that the Community would evaluate both the needs assessment study regarding the City Hall complex, prepared by architect David Siebold of Herman, Gibans, Fedor, Inc., and the proposal presented by David B. Hartt of David B. Hartt, Inc. to update the city’s zoning code.

International soccer event at JCU
Council approved a request from the Cleveland Sports Commission to hold the AC Milan Continental Cup at John Carroll University, including fireworks. This will be the third year for this event; last year 96 teams participated. The fireworks will be held July 2. Fire Chief Pitchler has approved this. Doors will open at 7 p.m. and admission is free.

The request to hold the World School Games at JCU was tabled because the date of July 17 for fireworks and show conflicted with observance of the Jewish Sabbath.

Road improvements
Council authorized joint bidding with Shaker Heights for 2009 road improvements. Shaker has a $1 million road program and has allowed University Heights to bid with them for a cost savings. The city will bid to improve Edgerton Road between Silsby and Washington roads and Silsby Road between Edgerton and Fenwick roads for an estimated cost of $58,000 per street.

Council also approved joint bidding with Cleveland Heights to resurface South Taylor Road at a cost of $54,000. University Heights’ portion will extend from Cedar Road to Silsby Road.

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LWV observer: Sue Pardue.
See disclaimer on page 3.

We call it Wellness because “working out” doesn’t sound like fun.

Let Judson help you meet your 2009 fitness goals! Join our Wellness Center. A monthly membership includes water and land classes, access to strength training equipment, a massage therapist and more. Get helpful tips from our friendly, professionally trained fitness instructors. Call (216) 791-2393 or visit judsonsmartliving.org.

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Judson at University Circle | Smart Living at Home | South Franklin Circle
Search firm for CH-UH superintendent selected based on approach, not cost

Simone Quartell

Hudepohl and Associates, the same search firm that recruited Deb Delisle as the Ohio Superintendent of Public Instruction, has been retained to find her replacement as superintendent of the Cleveland Heights-University Heights school system.

At its Feb. 3 meeting, the board voted 4-1 to hire Hudepohl. Three other search firms were considered: the Ohio School Board Association, Finding Leaders and Marsich & Associates.

Board Member Ron Register voted for the association due to the lower potential cost for its work. While Hudepohl’s contract is for $24,500, the association charges by the hour — estimating a $30,000 cost for the project ($65 an hour for 480 hours of on-site work).

Zucker countered that quality is more important than cost. Further, the search is being undertaken by city and county funds — not district funds.

The board interviewed the association, Finding Leaders and Hudepohl at its Jan. 20 meeting. A session with Marsick was scheduled to be held due to a winter storm. That meeting wasn’t rescheduled, said Board President Kal Zucker because “it’s important to get to work right away” on finding a new superintendent.

Zucker described Hudepohl as “aggressive and proactive; they go out of their way to find candidates rather than advertise. They were also the only search firm that factored a comprehensive plan for a high-quality background check.

Board Member Mike Cicero said Hudepohl gives all candidates an equal chance, whereas Finding Leaders’ approach tends to give internal candidates an advantage. “All candidates need to compete equally,” he said.

Board Member Eric Cohl said he liked the fact that Hudepohl was clear about staying in touch with the board, and seeks out people who “think they don’t want the job, but may be more qualified than those who they think they do.”

And Board Member Nancy Pepper said she appreciated how Hudepohl “encourages candidates to do all they can to make themselves a strong contender.”

Zucker declined to talk about qualities the board is looking for in a new superintendent; that’s a topic for the board’s next public meeting. Meetings with Hudepohl to discuss candidates and what it will take to bring on the right person will also be public.

“We want to preserve the integrity of the process, and find a strong leader for our district,” Zucker said.

Simone Quartell is a senior at Cleveland Heights High School. She has been a member of The Black and Gold student newspaper since her freshman year, where she is an editor and has covered school district issues in depth.

Heights High student honored for community service

Michael Dougherty

Cleveland Heights High School senior Howard Johnson was recently honored by the Cleveland Orchestra and the Greater Cleveland Partnership for his diligent service to improve the lives of others. Howard received the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Service Award for his commitment to volunteering. As president of the Youth Council of the NAACP, Howard worked to organize a voter registration drive and a food drive for area homeless people.

At Heights High, Howard is a member of the band, Spanish Club, a special education aide, and a member of the R.E.A.L. School shared governance team. He enjoys studying math, science, and Arabic, the latter a course he takes at Cleveland State University through the Post Secondary Enrollment Option program.

Howard also understands the importance of being a global citizen and reaching out to those less fortunate in other countries. He worked abroad to help build a library and a school in Mexico. As a member of Amigos de las Americas, Howard traveled to Panama to assist in the construction of a latrine, a road and a roof for a school.

Continuing his education is a priority, and Howard is considering studying international relations or translation of Spanish or Arabic. Alliant International University (Mexico City); Kent State University; and University of California, Sacramento, are among the colleges he may choose to attend.

Michael Dougherty is the coordinator of communications for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District.

Heights High to host annual Northeast Suburban College Fair

Michael Dougherty

It’s never too early to start planning a post-secondary education. Cleveland Heights High School (1325 Cedar Road) will host the 15th Annual Cleveland Northeast Suburban College Fair on Thursday, March 12, from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Students will have the opportunity to meet guidance staff, college admissions officers and alumni representatives from over 140 colleges, universities and technical schools. Students and their families are invited to gain information about a wide variety of schools, specifics about student life on campus, programs and majors, admissions and financial aid.

“The college fair gives students a chance to begin the very important task of planning their futures,” Career Education Coordinator Michelle Phelps said. “The college fair is an important planning tool and the perfect opportunity for students and parents to talk one-on-one with college representatives at one location. Students are given a list of suggested questions to ask representatives to help jump start the conversation and information gathering.”

The college fair is open to all local public, private, and parochial schools and admission is free. Additional parking will be available in the municipal lot next to Wendy’s, off Cedar Road, across from Heights High.

The 2009 Cleveland Northeast Suburban College Fair is sponsored by: the Tri-Heights Career Development Program of the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District.

For additional information, please contact Michelle Phelps, career education coordinator, Cleveland Heights High School, at 216-371-7149, or http://resources.chuh.org/Careerdev.

Michael Dougherty is the coordinator of communications for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District.

Kindergarten information night welcomes new families

Michael Dougherty

The Cleveland Heights–University Heights City School District will host its annual Kindergarten Information Night Thursday, March 19, at Noble Elementary School (243 Ardoon Street) from 7 to 8:30 p.m. This informational evening is an opportunity for parents to meet CH-UH kindergarten teachers and to have questions answered about the kindergarten program and the school district. Topics to be discussed include kindergarten readiness, curriculums and related services. Parents will learn more about the before-after-school program, student services, food service, transportation and more.

Due to the format and time of the meeting, attendance is limited to adults only. Registration will not occur at this event, but parents will have the opportunity to make a registration appointment. For more information, contact the Early Childhood Center at 216-371-7356.

Michael Dougherty is the coordinator of communications for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District.
CH-UH Board of Education: Highlights of January/February meetings

TUESDAY, JANUARY 20, 2009
All board members present.

Superintendent search
The board interviewed three superintendent search firms:

• Ohio School Boards Association has done over 800 searches and has a comprehensive database. Services included brochures, mailing contract, fee, mileage, posting, paper screenings, and interview coaching. The firm would narrow the search to three candidates and guarantees a match. The cost was under $10,000 ($6,400 plus expenses) and the search would take about three months.

• Hudepohl and Associates had recruited former Cleveland Heights-University Heights Superintendent, Deborah Delisle, for the state superintendent position. They are a Columbus-based firm that began in 1994. They actively recruit and sell opportunities to the board. They are a Columbus-based firm that began in 1994. They actively recruit and sell opportunities to the board. They will provide leadership searches, transition planning, executive coaching, succession planning, and personality profiling. They would conduct community focus groups and actively recruit candidates. The total cost would be under $10,000 and the search would take nine months including a transition period.

A fourth firm was scheduled for an interview on January 28.

Hiring a search firm
The board debated whether to spend the money for a search firm, but felt it was the right thing to do to get the best candidate. Treasurer Scott Gainer noted that restrictive dollars were available for these kinds of services.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2009
All board members present.

Presidential Youth Inaugural Conference in Washington, D.C.
Interim Superintendent Christine Fowler-Mack introduced five students, representing Cleveland Heights High School, Monticello Middle School, and Oxford Elementary School, who attended the Presidential Youth Inaugural Conference in Washington, D.C. for the presidential inauguration.

Field trips
The board approved field trips for the High School Girls Track team and the College Tour.

Superintendent search
After a lengthy discussion the board approved hiring Hudepohl and Associates to search for a new superintendent. Vice President Ron Register voted ‘no’ due to the cost. The money will come not from instructional funds, but from city and county money that can be used for consultants. Weather caused a cancellation of the planned Jan. 28 interview of a fourth firm. Timely rescheduling was not possible and Board Member Eric Coble was unable to reach the firm by phone. Therefore, given the need for a new superintendent, the board chose to make the hire based on the three interviews completed and written information from the fourth.

Michael Dougherty
Cleveland Heights High School students are reaching out to the community to collect residents’ stories, contributions, and recollections about the wars of the 20th and 21st centuries. The project has students working together to write, edit, interview, and produce a documentary to be entitled “Everyone Has a Story: Student Led Documentaries.” Students from TV Production class, AP Literature and Composition classes, and AP United States History class are working together to complete the documentary. The project will span all three subjects as well as teach the students interpersonal skills they can use outside the classroom.

“Our students are very excited to begin this project, and we hope they will gain a further understanding of the subjects they are studying in the classroom and about their community,” TV Production Teacher Jeff Glass said. “It is a great blend of history, literature, and technology, and we are fortunate to offer that opportunity to our students.”

Community members and their stories are needed. Any Cleveland Heights or University Heights residents who would like to share their experiences should contact Jeff Glass at 216-371-7101 ext. 8116 or J_Glass@chuh.org by March 15.

“We really hope that this becomes an ongoing relationship between the students and the community,” Glass said.

“This is a great learning experience and it will provide a unique look at the history of our community for years to come.”

To fund this project, the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District received a grant from the Reaching Heights Foundation and Cleveland Heights High School Alumni Foundation. The finished project will be shared with the community this spring on Channel 22.

Michael Dougherty is the coordinator of communications for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District.

Ruffing teacher masters art of teaching science
Carol Provan
For 40 years Cary Seidman has taught science, almost exclusively to middle school students. He exudes enthusiasm for his subject and his students. Cary was honored recently by the National Science Teacher’s Association for Excellence in Inquiry-Based Science.

“I still enjoy helping kids discover how the world works and I especially like this age, when they are developing skills, like the ability to apply abstractions to real life situations,” he said.

Cary helps students succeed in understanding complex scientific concepts with a lab-based approach. The two-year curriculum he developed has students investigate topics exclusively in a lab setting.

“My method of teaching science reaps the benefits of the skills and work habits, independence and curiosity that begin in Montessori Preschools,” said Cary.

Prior to coming to Ruffing in 1998, Cary taught in the East Cleveland Schools for 30 years. By 2002, he had reshaped Ruffing’s science program to engage students in activity-based science using their research abilities, mathematical proficiencies and writing skills. This is effective with this age group because, as he states, “science de-mystifies the world for them.” Cary continues to find ways to make the study of science more relevant, exciting and engaging, and has received grants for equipment to augment his modern lab classroom. The McGinty Family Foundation has awarded grants for a light emitting diode color mixing apparatus for improved study of visible light and the spectrum of colors without distortion and for a Video Flex camera to enhance images viewed in a compound microscope for display on a computer monitor or SmartBoard.

Cary also has received a FirstEnergy Mathematics, Science & Technology Education Grant to obtain working models of fuel cell operated devices to expand the study of renewable energy sources.

Cary and his wife Karen have lived in Cleveland Heights for over 30 years. He holds a BA from Oberlin College and an MA from John Carroll University.

Carol Provan is director of development at Ruffing Montessori School.
Saint Ann School and Parish to host a Magical Evening

Stephanie Applegate

Do you believe in magic?

The students of Saint Ann School and the parishioners of Saint Ann Parish do. They believe in the magic of friends, parents, and alumni who come together every year for their benefit. Well… for the benefit of a benefit, actually.

On Saturday, March 14 at the Ritz Carlton Hotel, Saint Ann School and Parish will host its annual charity event, “Thir Magic Moment,” to benefit student scholarships and parish operations. And you’re invited to be a part of the magic act.

Cocktails and hors d’oeuvres begin at 6:30 p.m. As harpist Joelyn Chang and flutist Michael Leese provide a tranquil backdrop, magician Rick Smith will circulate throughout the crowd performing tricks and illusions. But it’s the silent auction and raffles that will truly enchant:

• Ultimate Book Club (dinner, book signing, and discussion with a nationally known author)
• Drive a convertible for the summer
• Ohio State University/University of Michigan Football package
• Pamper Yourself Makeover Package

And while the live-auction items offered during dinner may seem like a sleight of hand trick, trust us—they’re entirely real. Up for auction is a trip to New York City and a tour of MSNBC, and a week at Pebble Beach Golf and Tennis Club in Florida. And to top it all off, the final act of the evening’s magical performance will be the induction of all Saint Ann School alumni into attendance in the Father John Mary Powers Alumni Society. So, if you’re a Saint Ann School alum reading this now, here’s a chance to be a part of history.

Tickets for the dinner are $125 per person. For more information contact the Saint Ann Parish Rectory at 216-321-0024. Be a part of the magic—conjure up capital for Saint Ann School and Saint Ann Parish!

Stephanie Applegate is a life-long resident of Cleveland Heights and the mother of two boys. She also currently serves on the board of Heights Community Congress.

Heights Youth Club receives awards!

Jeff Haynes

The Heights Youth Club, now in its third year, was recently honored by the Boys and Girls Clubs of Cleveland with the 2009 Club of the Year Award. Dawn Parker, a parent volunteer who serves on the club’s board of directors won the organization’s Parent of the Year Award.

In its pioneering role as the first suburban Boys and Girls Club in Cuyahoga County, the Heights Youth Club is showing the need for youth clubs in the suburbs and the effectiveness of its programming in a suburban setting. It is the newest club in Cleveland and also its fastest growing: In 2008 the club had a 32 percent increase in membership, averaging 71 youth per day, and offered more than 70 programs.

The winning club must excel in four areas: membership growth, program implementation, facility management and administrative organization.

“the club is an outstanding example of the power of partnership to effectively address community needs,” said Louise Westfall, president of the club’s board of directors.

“Engaged citizens, city officials, the Boys and Girls Clubs of Cleveland, the CH-UH City School District, faith communities, businesses — it took all of these to build an award-winning club that directly benefits Heights youth and their families. We’re grateful for the community’s continued support.”

Boys and Girls Clubs offer structured academic support as well as physical, life skills and social opportunities for children and youth in a safe, well-supervised place where they can go after school and during the summer. Programming is provided in five major focus areas: character and leadership development; education and career development; health and life skills, the arts, and sports, fitness and recreation.

Jeff Haynes is the Heights Youth Club’s assistant club director.

Get summer off to a beautiful start Heights Summer Music Camp, June 8-12

Susie Kower

Reaching Heights is now accepting applications to the Heights Summer Music Camp to be held June 8 to 12 at Wiley Middle School in University Heights. Students currently enrolled in fifth to eighth grades who reside in the Cleveland Heights-University Heights school district and have two years of experience in their school’s instrumental music program are invited to participate.

This is the fifth year that Reaching Heights, a citizen support organization for the Heights schools, has partnered with the schools to give students this summer music opportunity. Heights High Instrumental Music Director Scott Astey is the music director for the camp.

District music teachers and local professionals, Heights High alumni and current music students work with campers in orchestra and sectional rehearsals, chamber groups, music theory, and in workshops focused on jazz, guitar and choral music. Camp hours are 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. daily.

The public is invited to the finale concert on June 12 when campers demonstrate the musical skills that they’ve honed during a week of concentrated instruction, practice and exploration.

The fee for the one week camp is $130. Financial assistance is available. Applications are due May 15 and are available at www.reachingheights.org. Space is limited. Call camp coordinator, Betsy Neylon at 440-725-6845 for more information.

Susie Kower is an advocate for public education. She founded Reaching Heights, a citizen advocacy organization for the CH-UH schools, in 1989 and retired as executive director in December 2007. She is a resident of Cleveland Heights and her two adult children are graduates of the Heights schools.
It’s a wonderful bank

Lisa Gonzalez

Every year around the holidays I watch the 1946 film “It’s a Wonderful Life.” It’s comforting wrapping myself in nostalgia, reintroducing myself to the Bailey Savings & Loan. In today’s world, do banks like Bailey’s still exist? The interior of the U.S. Bank on Lee Road looks like 2005, but there is a warmth about it that feels more like 1946. Walk inside and you are greeted with a welcoming wave, nod or smile. I sat down with Eureka Herd, the branch manager, who said, “U.S. Bank is in the business of serving the community, and we pride ourselves on customer service. Our bankers address customers by name and customers feel a connection with the bankers. Some of our customers grew up in families that banked with us and now their own children are coming in.”

Dyann Coutee, assistant manager of customer service, points out that the bank is a welcoming place for children. She told me about the family of eight that comes in regularly. “The children have their own accounts and they are learning from their parents how to manage their own money,” Herd agreed that it’s important that families begin teaching their children how to bank at an early age. Here are some steps families can follow to assure that children grow up making responsible financial decisions:

- Children are bright enough to learn how to save, so starting in elementary school, have them make a deposit into a custodial savings account every time they get birthday or holiday money. Parents can help them go on the Internet, log on to their account and watch their money grow. Herd points out that this can help children develop a sense of pride and accomplishment.
- At 18, children can get a debit card and a checking account. They can learn to use online bill paying for their cell phone, for instance, and they can monitor their spending habits. “Students need to learn how to budget their money so they don’t get overdrawn and how to consistently pay on time,” said Herd, “so they can build a sense of independence and a strong credit rating.”
- Parents also can help their children save for big-ticket items – their first car, their first apartment, or college.
- “It’s a sentiment that I turn down has a different story to tell: the gentleman on Essex Drive, who clears the snow off his driveway in shorts; the Lee Road library, which is busy enough to be a city itself; the Tavern on Lee Road happened to be in the bank that day and I asked him what he liked about this branch. “It’s my neighborhood bank.” Everyone knows you, he said. He added that he followed many of Herd’s recommendations to open a custodial savings account and a debit card,” O’Neill said. “She’ll be learning how to use the debit card before she graduates from high school.”

U.S. Bank’s slogan is: “We put the power of US to work for you.” But Eureka said that’s more than just words at her branch. “We give 5-Star Service Guaranteed, and by giving great service, our customers, whether businesses or individuals, come to rely on us as part of their ‘family.’” It’s a sentiment that would make George Bailey proud.

Lisa Gonzalez, a long time community volunteer, lives in Cleveland Heights with her husband Mark. Both her daughters are Heights High graduates.
Vixseboxse prints on sale to benefit Heights Arts

Peggy Spaeath

American and European 19th and 20th century prints from Vixseboxse. Art Gallery will be on sale at the Heights Arts Gallery from March 7-April 18.

Peruse engravings, etchings, color lithographs, mezzotints, Nast and Homer wood block engravings from Harper's Weekly, and more. Subjects include botanicals, birds, civil war, hunting, lawyers, maps, Appleton, Caddart and more.

We are extremely grateful to Vixseboxse, Art Gallery for the opportunity to offer these prints to our community. The collection assembled over three generations provides a rare opportunity to see and buy prints not offered elsewhere, and a fascinating glimpse into times and places that chronicled political, social, and scientific history and art.

The prints cover a wide expanse of time and geography, subject matter and media. Today prints are valued for their artistic value. But many of them were originally mass media, such as the Winslow Homer wood engravings from Harper's Weekly, one of the first illustrated newspapers. Illustrated newspapers were a new medium during the Civil War, bringing the war home in fact-filled newsletters. Join today!

Heights History: Picture This!

Erica Wareham

During the Baroque era, Venice was at home to numerous composers, all competing fiercely for fame and recognition.

"Several ambitious composers vied for attention," said Jeannette Sorrell, music director of Apollo's Fire. "Between 1715 and 1740, Italy, and Venice in particular, reigned as the musical capitals of Europe."

Antonio Vivaldi was a violin star and Thamazis Albinoni was the diva of the oboe. In Virtuoso Fire, Grammy award-winning oboist Lee Klein performs the virtuosic oboe concertos of both composers, while Apollo's Fire principal players rival for the attention of our community through public programs, an informative Web site and fast-filled newsletters. Join today!

Heights History: Picture This!

John Panza

Apollo's Fire performs "Virtuoso Fire: Italian Concertos by Vivaldi & Rivals"

Erica Wareham

In observance of the 200th anniversary of the death of Franz Joseph Haydn's in 1809, the Western Reserve Choral, under the artistic direction of Dr. J.D. Goddard, will present an all-Haydn concert with orchestra and soloists on March 8 at 7:30 p.m. The concert will be held at Grace Lutheran Church, 13001 Cedar Road, Cleveland Heights. Admission is free and there will be a meet-the-artists reception immediately following.

The chorale will perform works including "Praise We Sing To Thee;" "Come Gentle Spring," from the oratorio The Seasons; "The Heavens Are Telling," from the oratorio The Creation; and the orchestra will perform the first movement, vivace assai, from the Beethoven Symphony No. 82.

The evening's major work will be Haydn's dramatic and timpani inspired, Mass in Time of War. Now in its 17th season, the Western Reserve Choral is a nonprofit group composed of both amateur and professional singers. The chorale's mission is to present free, high quality performances of choral music to the residents of Northeast Ohio. The concert will be conducted by artistic director Dr. J.D. Goddard. Guest soloists will be soprano Andrea Chenoweth, alto Joanne Uni- atowski, tenor J.R. Fralick, and baritone Brian Johnson.

My Neighborhood by John Panza

John Panza produces a weekly Heights Arts podcast at heightsartsradio.blogspot.com and serves as a trustee for Heights Arts. He is Assistant Professor of English at Cuyahoga Community College's Eastern Campus and is drummer for the band Chief Bromide.

Meredith Holmes was Poet Laureate of Cleveland Heights 2005-2006.

Heights Writes is the literary committee of Heights Arts (www.heightarts.org) and works to bring poetry to public life in Cleveland Heights.
Cleveland Carbon Fund to support local carbon reduction projects

Mary Patton

With Americans annually emitting more than 7.5 billion tons of carbon that contribute to a global increase in temperature, rise in sea level and dramatic changes in climate and weather patterns, the need for reduction in carbon output is drastically important.

Recently, a group of innovative founding partners organized a fund for the public to play a role in eliminating carbon emissions. The Cleveland Carbon Fund is the first community-based, open-access carbon reduction fund in the United States with a mission to sponsor the formation and implementation of local carbon reduction projects that help foster economic development, social well-being and environmental stewardship in Cleveland.

The City of Cleveland, Cleveland Clinic, the Cleveland Foundation, Cleveland Museum of Natural History and the George Gund Foundation make up the collaborative group of the Cleveland Carbon Fund’s Founding Partners.

“There can do everything, but everyone can do something. Have fun in our neighborhoods, like these: the Community Calendar, located on Heights Observer’s Web site, www.clevelandcarbonfund.org, has a personnel calculator to determine your footprint. A donation to the fund is tax-deductible and donors will receive notification of how much carbon will be removed from the atmosphere as a result of his or her donation.

To calculate your carbon footprint, to donate or to find out more, visit www.clevelandcarbonfund.org.

Mary Patton is a public relations consultant and a longtime resident of the Heights. She currently lives in University Heights with her husband and daughter.

Community Calendar

As many of you know, the Heights Observer is also an interactive Web site: www.heightsobserver.org. Anyone may post an event happening in the Heights on the Community Calendar, located on the right side of the site. Check in often to post events and to learn about events in our neighborhoods, like these: Friday, March 6: RoxArt’s “Don’t Worry, Be Happy” benefit and auction. Heights Rockefeller Building at 7 p.m.

Saturday, March 7: Noble Elementary hosts “March Madness Family Fun Night” to benefit playground renovation. Community Center Gym 6 to 8 p.m.

Monday, March 9: Yale Gospel Choir. At Ruffing Montessori School at 10:30 a.m. and at the Church of the Savior at 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 15: Cedar Lee Theatre hosts the 3rd Cleveland International Film Festival’s special screening of “Dean Spanley” at 7:30 p.m. Attend a pre-film reception at Nighttown at 5 p.m. and take advantage of dinner specials from 9 p.m. to midnight.

Friday, April 3: Application deadline for Cleveland Bridge Builders leadership development program. Visit www.clevelandbridgebuilders.org for more information and an application.

Visit www.heightsobserver.org for more information about these and other events.

Community News

It’s never too late to date your mate

Kathy Dawson

Dating is at risk of becoming extinct, especially between spouses and lifelong mates. Before you catch yourself saying, “That’s not true, my partner and I date each other all the time,” read the following selection from Kathy Dawson’s book.

“Dating means spending time together without running errands, without spending an evening with another couple, without eating out with the kids, spending at least two hours with your mate doing something interesting and fun; creating a memory together.

Research shows that when you and your mate spend time together doing something new and different, you change your brain chemistry. When you make a conscious effort to get out of a dating rut and experience life in an out-of-the-ordinary way, your body secretes the adrenaline-like chemicals, dopamine and norpinephrine, that make you feel light on your feet and as if butterflies are doing an air show in your stomach. In short, when you and your mate really date one another, you don’t feel bored.

Boredom creeps up on you. It hides behind the excuse of feeling “comfortable.” That comfortable feeling of continued dining at the same restaurant or going to see a movie time after time is what prevents you and your mate from living a life built on creating memories. At the end of the day, those memories play an important role in your relationship. They keep you talking; they keep you laughing. Your job... is simply to make them.

Kathy Dawson is a Cleveland Heights-based relationship coach who has written an eBook, 101 Dates In and Around Cleveland. To learn more about Dawson and her book, visit www.kathydawsoncoach.com.

Meeting to discuss crime in Severance neighborhood

Fran Mentch

A meeting to talk about neighborhood crime in the Severance neighborhood, and what to do about it, will be held on Thursday, March 26 at 7 p.m. at Cleveland Heights High School, 2400 E 130th Street. Cleveland Heights police officer, a member of City Council and Jim Chris, Cleveland State University sociology professor and expert on policing, will meet with residents, answer questions and address neighborhood concerns. Police Chief Martin Lentz was invited to attend but at press time had not replied.

Severance Neighborhood Organization, a new Cleveland Heights nonprofit dedicated to advocacy and building community for the residents and merchants in the northeastern section of the city, will sponsor this public meeting at the Cleveland Heights Community Relations Department. All are welcome, but the discussion will focus on issues in the Severance neighborhood.

Questions? Contact Frances Mentch at 216-384-9365 or franmentch67@yahoo.com.

Fran Mentch is a resident of the Severance neighborhood in Cleveland Heights.
Cross-racial socializing builds new friendships in the Heights

Barbara Danforth

When was the last time you had someone in your home that did not look like you? That is the challenging question that forms the foundation of the book “Racing Across the Lines: Changing Race Relations Through Friendship” by Dr. Deborah L. Plummer.

As the president and CEO of the YWCA of Greater Cleveland, whose mission it is to eliminate racism and empower women, I was embarrassed to admit my difficulty in answering that question. I work in a very diverse professional world but I socialized and worshiped in same-race communities. This book challenged me to consider the patterns of my social interactions.

As part of the YWCA commitment to re-engage in our mission work of racial justice, I decided to explore this notion of cross-racial socializing. I gathered a group of 18 women – Asian, Indian, Korean, Latino–Mexican, Puerto Rican, Guatemalan, African American and Caucasian – for a series of five dialogue and dinner parties in my home. The women who were invited were intentionally similar in socio-economic and professional status, age and education. Geographically, they live in Cleveland Heights, University Heights, suburbs further east as well as from several west side communities. The primary point of difference, however, was race or ethnicity. The objectives of these gatherings were to raise awareness about other racial/ethnic backgrounds, increase the social network of the participants and, for those interested, to replicate this dialogue model.

We were very fortunate to have Dr. Plummer, a Cleveland Heights resident, to facilitate the dialogues. We began with “cultural introductions,” an exercise in which we introduced ourselves with several specific criteria and explored our differences and similarities. In preparation for the next session, we completed an “adaptability assessment,” which raised awareness about our individual reactions and responses to differences. An “action plan” was included with strategies to enhance our adaptability. This session was shortly after the presidential election and we considered what the campaign and election meant to each of us. In the next session we examined our patterns of friendship as young children, adolescents and adults. With another tool we identified the dominant race and ethnicity of our current circle of friends and considered whether we wanted to choose to be more inclusive in developing new friendships.

In our next session we will consider how our choices of social and leisure-time activities affect our cross-racial socializing. And finally, we will decide where we go from here individually and collectively.

When I decided several years ago to move into University Heights and then Cleveland Heights, I was particularly drawn to its racial and ethnic diversity. And yet as a resident I have done very little to expand the diversity of my social network. This project has raised my awareness about the value of friends who look different and it has enabled me to begin building new friendships.

These dialogues have been rich and stimulating; they have been enlightening and have challenged some of our assumptions. As this nation collectively moves into a commitment to change, each of us in our communities has an opportunity to be an intentional participant in that change.

Barbara Danforth has resided in the Heights for over a decade. She is president and CEO of the YWCA of Greater Cleveland, whose mission is to eliminate racism and empower women.

Whole Foods 5% Days

Jared Earley

Whole Foods Market has established itself as a community supporter. The store’s quarterly Community 5% Days are one example. On designated days, 5 percent of the store’s sales are donated to a nonprofit organization. Past beneficiaries have been Reaching Heights, Friends of Cain Park, Heights Youth Theatre, and the Cleveland International Film Festival. For more information, visit wholefoodsmarket.com/cleveland.

Jared Earley serves as the marketing specialist and community liaison for Whole Foods Market in University Heights.

Hope Lutheran celebrates ordination

Rev. Donald King

Kimberly Vaughn was ordained into the Christian ministry at Hope Lutheran Church in January, becoming one of a handful of African American women ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Vaughn grew up in Cleveland’s Mount Pleasant neighborhood. Early in her studies at Cleveland State University, she attended the Lutheran Student Movement national gathering in Atlanta, GA, and became involved in Lutheran Campus Ministry. Vaughn served in many lay ministry positions throughout Ohio before her decision to enter seminary. Upon her return to Cleveland in 2000, she joined Hope Lutheran Church, eventually serving as president of council.

Vaughn earned her Master of Divinity degree at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago, focusing on urban ministry. Vaughn will serve as director of youth ministry for the Southeast Michigan Synod of the ELCA and pastor of Genesis Lutheran Church.

Heights community joins the battle against cancer

Ron Werman

Disciples Christian Church has hosted seven “Meet the Neighbors” free community meals, and Pastor Kristine Eggert is always thrilled to see returning guests and meet new ones.

“Meet the Neighbors” is held the last Thursday of every month from 5:30 p.m. and consistently serves about 100 people. All are welcome at the next meal on Thursday, March 26.

For more information, contact Disciples Christian Church, 3663 Mayfield Road (at Yellowstone), 216-382-5344.

Ron Werman is a Cleveland Heights resident and member, elder, choir member and communications chairperson of Disciples Christian Church.

Nela Florist Inc.

Phone (216) 451-8333 Fax (216) 451-8333 www.nelaflorist.net
2132 Noble Road (Opposite Nela Park) East Cleveland, Ohio 44112

Members of Heights Youth Theatre perform to promote Re–Community 5% Day at Whole Foods Market in University Heights.

Get involved with the Cancer Society Relay for Life hosted by Case Western Reserve University April 17 to 19. Go to www.heightsobserver.org for more information, or contact Hilary Mickel at 330-323-8301.
Planning a Heights 'staycation' this spring

Sarah Routh

Disney is offering an unprecedented “kids stay and eat free” rate this Spring Break season. But there’s a new trend that’s an even better deal: the ‘stayca-
ty.’ That is, stay right here and take advantage of what the Heights have
to offer. On top of substantial savings and unbeatable logistics, with the right
itinerary a staycation can equal a tra-
ditional vacation for memory-making
potential.

If you stay home this month, here are suggestions for a week-long Heights
staycation.

Heights History: The Superior Schoolhouse, home to the Cleveland Heights Historical Center, lets children experience school life in the late 1800s. My third-grade daughter loved hearing about what kids wore, their lunchboxes and
rubbing of their favorite tile. While
on and paper, kids can make a souvenir
tary’s playground and find the reading
tions. For more information, visit www .heightsyouth.org.

Next, head to Boulevard Elemen-
tary’s playground and find the reading
garden mural — a tile mosaic with bright
colors and a garden theme. With a cray-
on and paper, kids can make a souvenier
rubbing of their favorite tile.

Covington: The Coventry Peace
Park (playground) is a popular spot for
downhill fun. If there’s snow, bring sleds
and enjoy one of the city’s best slopes.
In better weather, enjoy the giant slide
instead. Need an afternoon snack? There are too many options to name.

To find out more, reach Mark at
trainermarkk@sbcglobal.net or 216-262-
2626. And, just in case he is unavailable
to take your call, be sure to leave a mes-
message. He’ll get right back to you – as soon as he finishes his last rep, that is.

Fitness instructor develops the right fit
Cindy Straffon

How often do you reach someone’s
touchscreen and they promise to get back
to you as soon as they’ve completed their last rep? Well that’s the case when you
mark Katrinak, a certified personal
trainer who resides in Cleveland Heights
with his wife and three-year-old son.

A dedicated professional, Mark has
been employed as a fitness instructor by
the Cleveland Skating Club since 2004.
In his third year working with clients at
the club, Mark offers the flexibility of
training clients either in his home or in
the comfort of their own. His previous
training experience includes working at
the Jewish Community Center in Beach-
wood, Kings Gym in Bedford Heights and
Fireworks.

Mark bases his training programs
on compound, functional exercises and
core strengthening. “Every client I work
with has a program tailored to his or her
specific needs,” Mark explains. “Clients
will find that each training session var-
ies from workout to workout. I believe
this approach allows people to obtain
their greatest potential and prevents
the monotony of having to perform the
same workout over and over.”

This adaptability enables Mark to
work with those in good health looking
to improve their fitness levels, as well as
those who face special challenges and
physical disabilities such as Parkinson’s
disease, blindness, osteoporosis and
back pain. Mark has helped clients harten
their recovery from injuries and joint re-
placements. Student athletes also benefit
from Mark’s expertise, including those
who participate in soccer, track and field,
baseball, ice skating, horseback riding
and sculling.

Mark’s easy-going demeanor is
paired with a serious commitment to
meeting fitness goals. He inspires clients
to take their training to a higher level by
providing the gentle encouragement and
knowledge required to adhere safely to
a challenging exercise program.

“Although I have been training with weights for over 30 years,” says Mark, “I
still can recall what really motivated me
to begin exercising with weights in high
school – being the weakest boy in my
physical education class.”

To look at Mark now that seems
hard to believe, but it is clear to see that
he has developed a training program
that is highly effective over a long period of
time.

Like so many other Heights resi-
dents, Mark has a variety of interests.
Another talent about which he is equally
passionate is poetry. As a published poet
he has read from his work at various
Heights venues including Mac’s Backs
and Ruffing Montessori School. Then
there is the organic vegetable garden
he carefully tends in his backyard that
yields bountiful amounts of fresh kale
tomatoes.

To find out more, reach Mark at
trainermarkk@sbcglobal.net or 216-262-
2626. And, just in case he is unavailable
to take your call, be sure to leave a mes-
 message. He’ll get right back to you – as soon as he finishes his last rep, that is.

Cindy Straffon grew up in the Cedar Fair-
mount neighborhood of Cleveland Heights.

Healthy Alternatives
Heart and Sole
Huntington Learning Center
University Heights
Island of Beads Inc
The Above Boutique
The Stone Oven Bakery & Cafe
Washington & Lee Service Wood Wheel

Motorsco Honda Inc
Motorsco Toyota Inc
On Cue Billiards
Paul Harris Interiors
Pizza D'Ollo
Sanctuary by Joyce Satz Agin Hardwood & Antiques

Diamond’s Men’s Store
Fashions by Fowler
Everything By Face
Guy’s Pizza
Huntington Learning Center
I Buy NEO

Catch A Critter
Diamond’s Men’s Store
Fashions by Fowler
Everything By Face
Guy’s Pizza
Huntington Learning Center
I Buy NEO

Cleveland Heights

Cindy Straffon
Save time and money: Hire a reputable contractor

Douglas Freer

Spring time means home improvements and yard projects, which may mean hiring a contractor to help. Hiring a contractor can cause fear, anxiety and increase stress. Who can you trust to do a good job, stand behind their work and do it at a fair price?

The process of hiring a contractor for a project varies on the type and scope of work, as well as the budget. With a deepening recession, homeowners will likely see more offers from unfamiliar individuals and companies. Many unemployed or laid off workers have started entrepreneurial ventures with the hopes of making ends meet. Don’t rule out these newer contractors who may be qualified for your job, but consider the risks. Taking the time to select a reputable and professional contractor may save you time, money, emotional energy and will dramatically increase your odds for a positive outcome.

Three key points to consider when hiring a contractor:
1) Use your gut instinct to determine if you like the personality, style and professionalism of the contractor. If it feels like a good fit, take the next step before you enter a business relationship that has financial consequences. Be sure to interview at least two or three contractors and get several quotes. Be leery of claims from contractors that simply state they can do the same job for less.

2) Does the contractor carry the proper insurance including both general liability and Workers’ Compensation coverage? Business insurance is one way to help legitimize a company and provide essential protection for the homeowner from certain liabilities.

• General liability coverage protects the homeowner should an accident occur and there is property damage or a personal injury. It also increases the chance of recovering any claims should a law suit be necessary from a project that fails to perform.

• Workers’ Compensation coverage protects the contractor’s employees, and potentially the homeowner, if the employee is injured on the owner’s property. An injured worker who does not have Workers’ Comp coverage through the contractor may have expenses that they seek to recover. The homeowner’s policy may not provide coverage, leaving the homeowner exposed to the liability.

3) Workers paid under the table or paid as “contractors” are really considered employees by the IRS, and often are not covered by Workers’ Compensation.

4) Does the contractor put the quote or bid in writing? Verbal agreements are the root cause for many problems between contractors and homeowners. A written agreement, or contract, should detail the scope of service, timeframe for the job, agreed upon price and the terms. A fixed cost contract prevents escalating costs that are common in time and material bids. Change orders to the original agreement and warranties should also be in writing.

To minimize forgotten commitments.

In a depressed economy homeowners can’t afford to gamble unnecessarily. For a free list of tips on how to safely select a contractor and what questions to ask, send an e-mail to info@lawland.com.

Douglas Freer is a Cleveland Heights native and the owner of Lawn Lad, Inc. Lawn Lad provides residential landscape services in the Heights area. Call 216-572-1935 or visit www.lawnlad.com.

Heights homes risk foreclosure

Bill Kushner

Many Heights area homes have adjustable loans that make them a foreclosure risk, according to a project initiated by the nonprofit organization Neighborhood Progress Inc.

The organization took information provided by a title company database to create a list of all adjustable rate mortgage loans in Cuyahoga County that would reset to a higher rate between July 2008 and August 2010. Over 1,000 of these loans are on homes in Cleveland Heights and University Heights, according to the database. Historically, these types of loans have a much higher foreclosure rate, as homeowners often default after the loan resets and payments increase.

Paul Bellamy of the Cuyahoga County Foreclosure Prevention Program says that homeowners often wait until very late in the process to take action but are better off taking action sooner rather than later.

Homeowners can be referred to one of four nonprofit agencies that will contact the company servicing the mortgage. Bellamy says that these agencies “have had success in preventing a rate increase for a set period of time or in forgoing a rate increase altogether, depending on the situation.” Residents can call the Cuyahoga County Foreclosure Prevention Program/First Call for Help at 216-436-2000. Heights residents can also contact the Home Repair Resource Center on Noble Road at 216-381-6100.

Bill Kushner, formerly of Los Angeles, CA, has lived in Cleveland Heights with his wife and six children for the last 20 years.

Condition Outsells Price

In a tough market, buyers will pay a premium for a house in top condition.

Matthew Feld

In the spring of 2005 we put our Cleveland Heights house on the market. No part of the consultation with our realtor prepared us for the market slowdown that was just beginning in Cleveland, or gave us any hint that we might have trouble selling. By the end of summer we had less than a handful of showings. Eventually, three years of few showings, two more realtors, and a bad experience with renter (who stopped paying rent and trashed the place before we could evict them) convinced us that we needed a new approach.

We found an agent who could oversee repairing the property and getting it rented or sold. We selected Olsen Ziegler Realty because they provided a detailed plan for repairing and marketing the house along with a comprehen- sive market analysis.

Olsen Ziegler proposed a variety of options, from investing nothing in the property and listing the house at a rock bottom price to a complete renovation that would increase the initial asking price by at least $75,000. We elected to invest $20,000 to repair and renovate the property over an eight week period. Olsen Ziegler managed all aspects of the project, from material selection to coordinating contractors and laborers, and provided me final approval. We completely renovated the kitchen with new cabinets, appliances and granite counter tops, renovated two bathrooms, waterproofed and renovated a finished basement, sanded and coated all hardwood floors, painted throughout, spruced up the yard, staged furniture and decorated the empty house.

“Condition will outsell price nine times out of ten,” says Olsen Ziegler broker and owner Chris Olsen. “In a strong buyers’ market, where sellers are competing against so many other properties, buyers will pay a premium for a house in top condition.”

After the renovation, just weeks after the banking collapse of 2008, we put the house back on the market. And 78 days later we were rewarded with two offers at 95 percent of our listing price.

Even in the worst economy in generations, if you have the right information and a clear strategy properly executed, it’s possible to sell a home.

Matthew Feldt and his wife lived in Cleveland Heights while his wife attended residency at Metro Health Medical Center. In 2005 they moved to the Southern U.S. and then moved ever further south to New Zealand. Now back in the Southern U.S. they are contemplating their next move.
Barry Zucker

My good friend Rasul found himself in an elevator stuck between two people wearing wool sweaters. He almost passed out. Why? Because the two people used an outdated and dangerous method to repel moths: they stored the sweaters in mothballs.

You may not know that mothballs contain incredibly toxic carcinogens, such as paradichlorobenzene and naphthalene, that can damage the kidneys, liver, eyes and nervous system. Children and adults have been poisoned just by wearing clothes treated with mothballs, and children have ingested mothballs, mistaking them for candy.

Here are safer ways to repel moths:
- Use oil of cedar wood around clothing to work: The Greeks and Romans used it on the backs of parchment manuscripts to prevent insects from eating them;
- Clean your woolens regularly: Moths don’t actually bother your clothes – it is their barely visible larvae themselves don’t actually bother your clothes;
- Place infested items in a freezer for a few days to kill the larvae; and
- Regularly vacuum to eliminate hair and fur that larvae fed on.

Mothballs and the toxins they contain have no place in your home or on your clothes. By using the safe and effective alternatives listed above, you can repel moths without putting your family’s health in jeopardy.

For more information contact Beyond Pesticides Ohio, 216-207-3244 or visit www.beyondpesticidesohio.org.

Barry Zucker is executive director of Beyond Pesticides Ohio, a nonprofit organization that promotes the safer, more cost-effective pest-control practices of Integrated Pest Management.

Home Repair Resource Center offers classes
Rebecca Stoger

As winter turns to spring, free workshops at the Home Repair Resource Center will move from interior to exterior repairs. Classes teach participants what goes into a good quality job, whether you do it yourself or contract the work.

Most classes are held at the resource center’s Teaching Center, 2520 Noble Road (two blocks north of Monticello), at the corner of Oxford and Moon. Thursdays from 7 to 9 p.m. Attendance is limited to Cleveland Heights residents. Reservations are requested, call 216-381-960 to reserve a spot. For a complete description, see the resource center’s website at www.hrrc-ch.org and select Schedule of Workshops from the list on the left side of the Web page.

The resource center’s interactive Financial Fitness classes are open to residents of all communities. These runs on a mixture of Tuesday and Thursday nights in March, and four Wednesday nights in April, from 6-8 p.m. Call 216-381-6100 to reserve a spot for any of the following classes: Avoiding Delinquency, Understanding Refinancing (March 4 or April 3), Creditworthiness (April 2 or April 18), Power of a Personal Budget (March 19 or April 13), Understanding Mortgages and Selecting a Home (March 24 or April 28), Home Maintenance for the New Homeowner (March 31).

The HouseMender University series is open to residents of all communities. On March 26, learn about Care and Maintenance of Trees and on April 5, Options in Organic Lawn Care. Both classes are from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Reservations are requested; call 381-9610.

Finally, mark your calendars for the annual Community Home Remodeling Fair, sponsored by Home Repair Resource Center and the City of Cleveland Heights. The fair, held on Saturday, April 8, at Cleveland Heights City Hall, 44 Severance Circle. For the fair schedule, see the resource center’s website (www.hrrc-ch.org) or the April edition of the Heights Observer.

Bucky Stagner has been the repair education programs coordinator for Home Repair Resource Center since 1989.

Will spring bring recessionary house work? Seitz-Agin doesn’t even know
Jason Jaffery

On a gray, cold day at Seitz-Agin Hardware Store, it’s still too early to tell how business will be for the spring home-improvement season. It’s not the weather that’s the source of the uncertainty; it’s the economy.

“We’re still in unchartered waters,” says Bill Sheck, manager of Seitz-Agin on Lee Road.

Seitz-Agin (www.seitz-agin.com) has been through many recessions and, according to Sheck, homeowners often use an economic downturn as an opportunity to work on their homes.

“Hopefully, since people are likely stuck in their homes for the next three to four years, they’ll fix up their houses themselves,” he says. “We’re here to offer advice.”

One suggestion: use caution when hiring contractors. “We get a mix of individuals and contractors here at the store,” Sheck says. “Sometimes, during a recession, you have people who have lost their jobs and decide to become contractors. People need to be careful, and check credentials and references before they hire someone for work on their home.

Sheck says that based on past recessions, he and others at the store would expect to see a rise in more economical home-improvement projects, such as painting and lawn-and-garden. “You see a resurgence in people doing their own lawn care. I expect lawn care service companies to take a hit, since that’s an easy item to cut from your budget.”

For homeowners looking to prioritize their projects, Sheck suggests that people who are able to remodel their kitchen should do so, “to move their houses to the head of the class” when the recession ends and the housing market improves.

Still, he acknowledges that the country’s institution like Seitz-Agin doesn’t offer any more insight about what’s to come than any other economic indicator. “In the past, these things have lasted 18 months. But with this recession, who knows.”

Jason Jaffery is a resident of the East Fairfield neighborhood of Cleveland Heights.

Will spring bring recessionary house work? Seitz-Agin doesn’t even know
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Andrea A., Cleveland Heights

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