Private school enrollment levels after ‘05 spike

Deanna Brewer Fisher and Kelli Fontenot

A recent report based on U.S. Census data raised eyebrows among those with connections to the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District. It indicated that 39 percent of eligible K-12 students in the district are enrolled in private schools—the highest such rate in Ohio.

A look at more detailed projections from the U.S. Census Bureau indicates that only a part of the story. There is a dramatic difference in the way the district’s two communities—Cleveland Heights and University Heights—utilize the schools.

While 72.6 percent of eligible students living in Cleveland Heights attend public schools, only 26.4 percent of University Heights residents do, according to the Census.

 Namen Pepple, president of the CH-UH Board of Education, said, “I’m concerned that people with school-aged children are choosing not to live here because of a negative perception of our public schools. A gap exists between perception and reality, and if not addressed, it will continue to impact our district. Families need to see our public schools as a community asset and a real option.”

CH-UH Superintendent Douglas Heuer offered a long-term perspective: “This is not a new issue. As far back as 20 years ago, a significant portion of the school-age population in CH-UH had chosen the private school option.”

According to Eric Silverman, president of the Cleveland Heights High School Alumni Foundation and former school board member, one reason for declining enrollment is the number of private and parochial school options available to parents. “If you’re going for religious education,” he said, “You’re not considering the public schools.”

What none of these perspectives address is a one-year spike—in 2009-06, children moving out of the public schools. Otherwise, enrollment data provided by the district for 2005-2010 shows enrollment is dropping by 2-3 percent each year—a number that seems to have been fairly steady for decades.

But from 2005 to 2010, the portion of eligible kids enrolled in private schools climbed from 21 to 30 percent. Some have speculated that white students must be leaving the schools. That is not borne out by the data, which show that white enrollment, on a percentage basis, has remained constant over the last five years.

Patrick Mulliken, executive director of Reaching Heights, noted that demographic shifts in the Cleveland Heights population historically have played a significant role in school enrollment, continued on page 2
Opening up the Observer

Bob Rosenbaum

Perhaps the most frequent compliment I hear about the Heights Observer is that it’s so much of its content is worth reading and important to the community.

Even so, when the editorial committee meets, we spend a lot of time discussing what doesn’t seem to get covered well. Here’s a partial list:

• Sports—the high school, middle school, and private school teams, and local clubs, such as Eastside Kickers soccer and Heights Recreation basketball.
• Programs offered by the religious congregations of Cleveland Heights and University Heights.
• Community groups—from neighborhood organizations to block parties, scout troops and book discussion groups.
• Private school events and activities.
• Activities of the various school clubs and parent groups.
• All the groups that have unique hobbies, passions and pursuits.

More photos and stories on these topics would make the Observer that much more fun to read, and that much more reflective of the community.

Here’s the problem. As I mentioned last month, we don’t have staff to ferret out and write these stories. News about the 60,000-plus people who live and work in Cleveland Heights—University Heights has to come from the people who know about them, that is, from those of you who are directly involved.

We’ve created a presentation to help local groups and organizations learn how—and why—they can use the Observer to share their stories with the rest of the community. Our knowledgeable volunteers will come to your church meeting, scout meeting, association board meeting or other community gathering to present the “how-to” on writing and submitting your stories, answer questions and help empower your group to get its news into the paper.

If you’d like someone to present our program at an upcoming meeting of your organization, please contact me at bob@therosenbaums.net, or Deanna Bremer Fisher, FutureHeights executive director, at 216-332-1423.

Remember that you can submit a story to the Heights Observer by registering at the Member Center: http://heightsobserver.org/members.

Bob Rosenbaum, chairman of the newspaper’s Editorial Advisory Committee and a member of the FutureHeights board, writes this monthly column to provide transparency about the Observer. Send your comments and questions to bob@therosenbaums.net.

Sarah Wean is a founding member of FutureHeights, a nonprofit (501c3) organization dedicated to civic engagement and quality of life.

FutureHeights has made a difference in 10 short years

Sarah Wean

I cannot let January 2010 pass without acknowledging the 10th birthday of the organization that led to not only the Heights Observer, but has given the residents of Cleveland Heights, and now also University Heights, many opportunities to be active citizens and make a true difference in their communities.

In January 2000, in response to Giant Eagle’s plans to build a 20,000 square foot store on Cedar Hill, more than 350 people from the neighborhood came together at a town meeting to voice their concern that drastically changing the historical physical fabric of the area would not be in the long-term best interest of the community.

Future Heights was born that night, and although Giant Eagle has come and gone, FutureHeights has remained and grown.

Ten years later this grassroots group is still bringing the community together in a variety of ways. If you are not familiar with FutureHeights, I encourage you to visit the organization’s Web site, www.futureheights.org.

Thousands of donors, volunteers, board members, dedicated staff, foundation partners, residents, and government and community organizations have participated in FutureHeights over the past 10 years. Their investment in the organization is not only a vote of confidence in FutureHeights’ work, but, more importantly, an investment in keeping our community strong and working together to maximize our limited resources.

In order for FutureHeights to move forward and remain sustainable, it needs everyone’s involvement.

Please donate. As a small nonprofit, the organization always needs money and in-kind services. Help us write articles for this paper. Join a committee. Attend a FutureHeights event. Talk about community issues that matter to you at the online forum. That is what FutureHeights is all about.

Sarah Wean is a founding member of FutureHeights and a volunteer for the organization. Visit www.futureheights.org.
Cleveland Heights City Council
Meeting highlights

DECEMBER 21, 2009
Vice Mayor Phyllis Evans excused

Cedar-Lee businesses worried about crime
Speaking on behalf of the owners and operators of businesses in the Cedar-Lee business district, many of whom were present, John Zagona, owner of Zagona’s MarketPlace, expressed frustration with the upsurge in crime in the district and added crime at Quim’s and other locations in the neighbor-
hood and the insufficient action being taken. Dean Symons of Cleveland Heights Boulevard and owner of Mr. Pete’s Pub stated his displeasure with drug activity near CVS and the high school and hoped that the city would not let it get out of control. Mayor Kelley responded that busi-
ness people should call the police quickly about any type of questionable activity. He stated that five police officers would be reinstated early next year.

Second-hand dealers to be licensed
In order to make it more difficult to turn items obtained illegally into cash, council adopted an ordinance amending the city code to require licensing of second-hand dealers and recording of specific information about the persons selling the items. Nonprofit entities holding garage and yard sales and residents holding garage or yard sales would not be considered second-hand dealers.

Quin’s Bar declared nuisance
Councilmember Mark Tumalo introduced a resolution declaring Quin’s Bar, 13179 Cedar Rd., to be a nuisance with hazards to the health, safety, and welfare of patrons, neighbors and the public, including numerous criminal activi-
ties, such as drugs, fighting, gang and drug activity. This resolution authorizing abatement of the nuisance was declared to be an emer-
gency measure necessary for the preservation of public peace, health and safety and passed immediately.

Recreation rates
Council set the rates for recreational activities in city facilities in 2010. There will be a 10 percent increase in season pass, swim instruction and some other fees at Cambridge Pool. The only rates to increase for entertainment and recreation pro-
gam at Cain Park and other locations for 2010 were a 10 percent increase for day camp rates. Water park rates were also set for annual and monthly passes for specified categories of nonresidents permitted to use the field house.

Budgets approved
As described by Councilmember Kenneth Mont- lock, the “almost final wrap-up of the 2009 budget,” which had been reduced by almost $3 million from the original budget, was approved. Also passed was the 2010 budget totaling $40,550,177, an increase of less than 1 percent from 2009. Notable changes include a cut of $125,000 in Cain Park expenditures and an increase of $124,000 for police officers.

Tributes to Nancy Dietrich
Every council member in turn praised retiring mem-
ber Nancy Dietrich, describing her as enthusiastic, optimistic, responsive and kind. All considered her a trustworthy friend and a true collaborator with special concern and achievement in the areas of the environment, equal rights, the public schools and regionalism. Dietrich spoke individually to each of her six colleagues and nine staff members, referring to them as “all part of one team.” She said that it had been “such an honor” to have had “the most wonderful 12 years.” on city council. Mayor Kelley closed the meeting by reading a formal tribute to her.

CWRU Law School and Heights Court continue no-cost mediation partnership
Georganne Schmidt
The Cleveland Heights Municipal Court has started the fourth year of its mediation partnership with Case West-
ern Reserve University School of Law.
The program makes mediators available twice a week for small claims, evic-
tions, parking disputes, and debt collection cases. Yuris, Lineskey and Andrew Pohls, visiting assistant professors of law, cur-
rently run the Civil Litigation and Mediation Clinics on the law school campus. The partners volunteer through the clinic to work with litigants, under their professors’ supervi-
sion, in a meeting room located in the same building as the court.

Participation in the mediation pro-
cess is voluntary. Litigants are encouraged to take advantage of the program, par-
ticularly in cases where the legal cause of action is not clearly stated. The mediators act as neutral parties, facilitating a discus-
sion between the litigants, helping them to negotiate a fair settlement and discover possible options and find a mutually satisfactory resolution to their dispute.

The program is offered at no cost to the parties or the court, under the approv-
als of Cleveland Heights Municipal Court Judge A. Dean Buchanan. It’s a community service offered by the law school through its Milton A. Kramer Law Clinic Center and the Center for Interdisciplinary Study of Conflict and Dispute Resolution.
The program has been integrated into the court schedule since 2005, when it was proposed as a pilot project by Wendy Hawbaker, a Cleveland Heights resident and mediation expert.

Georganne Schmidt is the Cleveland Heights Municipal Court Magistrate.

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www.heightsobserver.org
University Heights City Council
Meeting highlights
DECEMBER 21, 2009
All council members present.

Mayor Rothschild’s final meeting
Mayor Rothschild reminisced about her 32 years as mayor of University Heights. She urged the incoming mayor and council to address issues that are still undone and for John Carroll University to see itself as the broadest of the larger community.

Update on the Exception Report
Eliza Holt of the Northeast Ohio Sourcing Office explained that her company wanted to present the full report as a formal presentation in January instead of releasing it in written form. Council members strongly opposed this delay. Having the full report would enable them to have questions prepared by January and would allow members who are stepping down next month to see the full report. Council members felt the summary provided to them was insufficient. Holt agreed that the report would be provided immediately to all council members.

Assessment of forests
Council accepted a grant from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry, and sought agreements for the 2009 Urban Tree Canopy Initiative. The initiative assesses forests through detailed satellite imagery, measuring carbon dioxide汲取able surfaces and opportunities for mitigating storm water runoff. The cost to University Heights would be $2,663, to be paid from the Tree Fund. The lack of trees along Cedar and Warrensville was also discussed. One possible solution suggested was for the city to plant trees in front yards instead of tree lawns.

Repairs
Building Commissioner David Mann announced that the City HI report would begin tomorrow. He also reported a $1,000 emergency repair to stop a water leak on the rear roof to council’s chambers. (The $25,000 analysis, for which University Heights paid $4,500, is available at City Hall.)

New rates
Acting Law Director Dennis Newar announced the new OH RWD rate on July 1, 2010, and that NORDS will implement a new regional storm water system.

Forewarning messages
Vice Mayor Adelle Zucker urged residents to attend meetings and become involved in the functions of University Heights. Councilman Steven Sims presented bouquets of roses to Beryl Rothschild and Susan Infeld, and a rose bouquet to Frank Banker. Stephen Bullock spoke movingly about Mayor Rothschild’s 42 years of service to the community. Frankie Goldsheimer gave a tribute to the mayor by reading from Dr. Seuss’s “What in the World Are You?”

New mayor
Susan Infeld was sworn in as officially as mayor on Jan. 1, 2010, but the formal swearing-in will take place at the Jan. 4, 2010 council meeting. LWV observer: Wendy Deuring
JANUARY 4, 2010

Students welcome new council members
Ashley Johnson, Emory Polley and Erin Jackson, students from Heights High, welcomed the new council members and wished them well.

Installation of new council members
Oaths of office were alternately administered by Judge K. J. Montgomery of the Shaker Heights Municipal Court and Judge Michael P. Donnelly of the Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court. Those installed were Susan K. Infeld and council members Phillips E. Fertel, Frank D. Goldberg and Susan D. Pardee.

Council Member Frank Consolo nominated Frankie Goldberg for vice mayor. After a unanimous favorable vote she was sworn into office. All remaining officers and appointees were sworn into office. Building Commissioner David Mann will be leaving soon for a position in another city, his replacement will be William Muto.

Position of safety director
Councilman Steven Bullock challenged the tradition of the mayor appointing herself to the position of safety director. He continued that the mayor was confusing for the mayor to wear two hats, and that the real issue was to find a way to pay the mayor an appropriate salary, so that compensation would not depend on two separately funded functions. Mayor Infeld scheduled a special public meeting for Monday, Jan. 11 to discuss the matter.

Reappointment of Anthony Ianiero
The council unanimously reappointed Anthony Ianiero as director of finance on a part-time basis. Councilman Steven Sims said he was grateful for Ianiero’s willingness to continue part-time.

Strengths and challenges for the city
Mayor Infeld described University Heights as a city filled with comfortable, affordable homes, a place with easy access to parks and concerts, close proximity to University Circle, John Carroll University, public transit, and a variety of schools. The main challenge she saw was foreclosures. To address this challenge, she hopes to increase efficiency and service by reaching Web payment for residents, extending City Hall hours a couple of days a week, and bringing back the amateur Communications and Development Committee.

LWV observer: Carol Gibson

Space restrictions sometimes require the deletion of some proceedings. For more complete summaries view online postings at www.heightsobserver.org.

See disclaimer on page 3

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Remember, you’ll receive the forms by mail in mid-March. If by April 1, National Census Day, you have not responded, you may be listed for a home visit by a census taker who will try to collect your answers in person.

By year end, all the data will be turned over to the President of the United States for apportionment. A final, but important note: If we want to keep our seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, we’ll better fill in the forms, because in March 2011 the Census Bureau will give Ohio its next redistricting data. Meaning? We may lose a seat, and possibly our voice, in Washington.

Watch for more information on the 2010 Census and what it means to University Heights and Cleveland Heights residents in the March issue of the Heights Observer.

Send your comments and suggestions for future topics to Anita Kazarian at Anita-Kazarian@gmail.com.

Council’s plans for University Heights

Anita Kazarian
Last November, University Heights residents, in large numbers, became actively engaged in the political process during a heated mayoral race and in reaction to proposed changes to the city charter, and suddenly elected the first new mayor in 32 years and voted “no” on ballot issues that would have made a city charter. Residents elected the first new council members and voted to approve the city charter.

The reaction to proposed changes to the city charter was a pivotal moment and an indicator of the broad vision supported by a plan designed to sustain our city into the future.

One thing do you want to see this Council accomplish in its first six months?

Steven D. Bullock, Chairman, Safety Committee. I would like to create and implement a community-wide vision supported by a plan designed to sustain our city into the future.

Frank Consolo, Chairman, Civic Information Committee. I would like to see the budget balanced with enough carry-over to be able to fund long over due capital improvements. We have about $600,000 in requested capital improvements from city departments that we have not been able to fund.

Phillip Ertel, Chairman, Service Utilities Committee. Foreclosures—it is a problem of historic proportions and I want us to make sure that families can stay in their homes. There is more the city can be doing. Rather than wait for homes to be foreclosed the Building Committee (Vice Mayor Goldberg chairs this committee), working with the Building Department, can be more preemptive in identifying those at risk before they are foreclosed. The Building Department can advocate on their behalf with the banks, in addition to other action.

Frankie B. Goldberg, Vice Mayor and Chairman, Building Committee. I want to make city government and city services more accessible to our residents by improving IT capabilities, so people can be better informed of city activities and services and be able to pay bills online. I want more interactive IT capabilities. Accessibility also includes expanded City Hall hours.

Kevin Patrick Murphy, Chairman, Recreation Committee. I’d like us to utilize the report that will be presented to Council on Jan. 19. to incorporate the findings of the report into the budget process. (Northeast Ohio Sourcing Office Exception Analysis, for which University Heights paid $54,000, is available at City Hall)

Susan D. Pardee, Chairman, Governmental Affairs. I would like to see a commitment to, and start planning for, a community-wide survey to see what residents are interested in, what are the priorities, and begin the process of engagement on a large scale and also begin the process of a more comprehensive planning process, similar to a process I worked on as a commissioner on the Charter Review Commission in Santa Clara, California.

Steve Sims, Chairman, Finance Committee. One thing is to develop a budget that makes sense for the city of University Heights. If we can do this, we’ll be miles ahead.

Anita Kazarian
You pay taxes and about $400 billion of your tax money is put in a pot to be given back to communities. But if you want a piece of that $400 billion pie in federal funds, you’ll have to complete and return the 2010 census report. Otherwise, your tax dollars will go to communities that respond, maybe in Alaska.

“Yikes!” you say, “what do I have to do to get my tax money back here?”

Easy. First, set aside a block of time, 10 minutes. Then, find a pen and answer to short questions. Finally, return the form in the prepaid envelope.

Every residence in the United States will receive the 2010 census forms in mid-March, delivered by the U.S. Postal Service. Among the 10 questions are your name, sex, age, date of birth, ethnicity or race, household relationship, if you own or rent. The questionnaire will NOT ask for your social security number, legal status, income or tax information.

You will receive the forms by mail in mid-March. If by April 1, National Census Day, you have not responded, you may be listed for a home visit by a census taker who will try to collect your answers in person.

By year end, all the data will be turned over to the President of the United States for apportionment. A final, but important note: If we want to keep our seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, we’ll better fill in the forms, because in March 2011 the Census Bureau will give Ohio its next redistricting data. Meaning? We may lose a seat, and possibly our voice, in Washington.

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$400 billion in federal funds at stake

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Discover local authors at Coventry Village Library

Tonya Gibson

Located on both sides of the Coventry Village Library fireplace, in a position of honor, is a collection of books dedicated to local Heights authors. “We started by collecting the works of as many Heights writers and musicians as we could gather,” says Coventry Village Library Branch Manager Pat Gray. “This collection showcases some of the talented people who offer programs here. Our collection is growing all the time, and we hope it will eventually be a very comprehensive representation of Heights authors.”

Now, the Coventry Village Library has joined forces with Appletree Books, Mac’s Backs and Saint Ann Church to create the “Cedar-Coventry Local Author Series,” to highlight local writers.

Launched last fall, the series resumes on Wednesday, Feb. 3, with a talk by Dr. Maria Siemionow, the Cleveland Clinic doctor who performed the first face transplant in the United States. Dr. Siemionow has written about the face transplant procedure in her new book, *Face to Face: My Quest to Perform the First Full Face Transplant*. Subsequent talks will feature novelist Dan Chaon, on March 2, and author and Case Western Reserve Florence Noble Library renovation plans will feature novelists Wanda Coven and Laura Hermanez.

Noble Library renovation plans

The board authorized the director to contract with Studio Techne in an amount not to exceed $10,000 to produce preliminary plans and budget for the Noble Library’s renovation. Upgrades are needed for carpeting, painting and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Library board officers for 2010

Board President Eric Silverman announced the Nominating Committee’s proposed slate of officers for the 2010 year: Glenn Billington, president; Audrey Cole, vice president and Esther Mastro, secretary.

As his term ended with this meeting, Silverman reflected on his seven years on the board, “Since he joined the Heights Development Corporation, the temporary move to Taylor Academy and the need for developing the proposed foundation for the library’s fundraising activities. He was pleased to note that circulation figures have now returned to what they were at the time the Lee Road Library renovation began.

Director Levin introduced a resolution honoring President Silverman’s seven years of service. The resolution mentioned his understanding the value of an independent library system to Cleveland Heights and University Heights as well as his unfailing support of the Lee Road Library renovation project.

Computer Gallery opens Jan. 19

The Computer Gallery will open Jan. 19 in the former Heights Arts space. The gallery will continue to exhibit the work of local artists. The Community Office, which formerly housed public computers, will be a dedicated conference room and classroom.

Choose to Read Ohio grant

The State Library of Ohio has granted a $5,211 Choose to Read Ohio grant for 2010. The community will be invited to read two books by Ohio authors this coming spring: *The Amazing Escape of Curious George* by Louise Borden and Your Remind Me of Me, by Cleveland Heights author Dan Chao.

TONY GIBSON, Anne S. McFarland.

LWV observer: Anne S. McFarland.

Friends of Heights Libraries holds book sale

Tonya Gibson

The Friends of Heights Libraries will hold a book sale at the University Heights Library from Thursday, Feb. 18 to Saturday, Feb. 20.

Through book sales and other activities, the Friends support the Heights Libraries by providing funds for library programs, scholarships and staff support. New volunteers are always needed, and invited to help prepare for the book sale by sorting and packing books at the Lee Road Library. Friends president, Adaora Schmiedl, says volunteers are also needed during the book sale itself, and promises, “If you’re interested in helping, we’ll keep you busy!” No experience is necessary, and teen volunteers are welcome.

Schmiedl advises sorting volunteers to bring a bottle of water, as it tends to be warm and dusty in the sorting room. Visit www.heightslibrary.org for sale hours and to volunteer.

Tonya Gibson is an employee of the Heights Libraries who enjoys writing and photography in her free time.
National Merit and National Achievement Scholarship programs recognize Heights High seniors

Jacelyn Elwin

Matt Zucker and Nataja Roberts, two Cleveland Heights High School seniors, have been named semifinalists in the first round of the 67th annual National Merit Scholarship Program and 46th annual National Achievement Scholarship Program. Zucker is a National Merit semifinalist and Roberts is a National Achievement Scholarship semifinalist. Heights High seniors Alexander Miller and Lewis Pollis have been named National Merit Commended students, and seniors Erin Morris and Jaye Sampson are National Achievement Outstanding Participants. The semifinalists have earned the right to compete to become National Merit and National Achievement finalists and scholarship winners. The National Merit Scholarship Program awards 8,200 scholarships, worth $36 million, and the Achievement Scholarship Program awards 800 scholarships, worth $2 million.

Jackie Elwin is the administrative assistant in the Office of Communications and Community Engagement for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District.

Cleveland Heights students become abolitionists

Ange Shaker

The R.E.A.L. School at Heights High School was decorated in orange during the week of Nov. 9–13 to publicize the “Not For Sale” campaign sponsored by Stephanie Ashford’s African-American literature classes. When the unit on the literature of slavery was completed, Ashford shared some staggering statistics about the number of people who are victims of modern-day slavery in the United States and worldwide.

After further research, her students were eager to raise the awareness of others about human trafficking through a modern-day slavery awareness campaign. These included daily PA announcements; after-school sessions, such as Just for Girls: Staying Safe in an Unsafe World; a Freedom Bake sale; and Wear Orange Day, when students and staff showed their support by wearing the color of freedom.

Students raised $320, which they sent to Gracehaven House, a shelter near Columbus for young girls who have been commercially exploited. After learning about the crisis in their freshman seminar, students engaged in a project focused on raising student awareness and understanding of the global human trafficking crisis.

Cleveland Heights High School student Lillian Houser was named a semifinalist in the 2010 National Merit Scholarship Program, and 46th annual National Merit Scholarship Program.

Middle School field trips to Washington, D.C., May 7

Grant applications

The board approved grant applications to the American Federation of Teachers, Heights School Team and Community Connection Grants for $9,015 and the Bluebirds and Friends (study of the bluebird population), Service Learning in Special Education, Cleveland State University for $11,000.

Milliken Elementary School property

The board tabled authorization of the Milliken sale by public auction due to legal wording that might influence the sale.

Cleveland Heights High School Swim Team field trip to Canton, Ohio, Dec. 18–19, 2009

The Cleveland Heights High School Swim and Track team field trip to Canton, Ohio, Jan. 10–12.

Cleveland Heights High School Swimmers Group Grades 10–12 field trip to CMGEA Conference and Workshops in Cincinnati, Ohio, Jan. 28–29.

The Willey Middle School’s field trip to Washington, D.C., April 16–18.

The Monticello Middle School and Roxboro Middle School field trips to Washington, D.C., May 7.

Space restrictions sometimes require the deletion of some proceedings. For more complete summaries view online postings at www.heightsobserver.org.

See disclaimer on page 3.
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www.heightsobserver.org

School district wins award for innovative programs

Angie Shaker

The Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District has been recognized as a model for providing students with 21st-century skills, such as communication, collaboration, problem solving and critical thinking.

The Hanover Research Council recently released a report profiling 15 public school districts from across the country and two independent high schools in Ohio, all identified as providing students with these skills.

CH-UH and the other districts were cited for their traditionally high graduation rates, assessment scores and attendance rates.

The Hanover report highlighted some of the district’s programs that were said to exemplify 21st-century learning. These included the Preparing for the Future, Learning (PASSAGE) initiative; One-to-One Teaching and Learning with Technology; Infinite Campus technology for students, staff and parents; and the district’s documentary student film festival held at Heights High.

“We are very proud to be featured in this report,” said Assistant Superintendent Joseph Micheller. “It is our goal to constantly stay ahead of the curve on technology and programming to give our students the best education possible and prepare them for continuing education and our ever-changing workplace.”

All school districts described in the report share several common characteristics, including sophisticated technology programs and innovative curriculum initiatives, as well as a commitment to preparing students for the current and future workplace and environment.

RTEA is not alone in its predicament. A recent study by the American Public Transit Association found that 9 of 10 systems have cut service or raised fares — or are in the process of doing so. Citizens interested in becoming involved in the effort to secure greater and more dependable public transit funding in Ohio can visit www.policymattersohio.org/SaveTransitNow.htm.

Vince Reddy is a Future Heights board member and a member of the Greater Cleveland RTEA Citizens’ Advisory Board.

34th Cleveland International Film Festival

March 18–28, 2010 Tower City Cinemas let’s go.

clevelandfilm.org

CH-UH AMC 8 top finishers

Angie Shaker

Winners of the American Math Competition 8, held in November, were announced recently by the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District.

The American Math Competition 8 is a 25-question, 40-minute, multiple-choice exam in mathematics, designed to help students develop and enhance their problem-solving skills.

On Nov. 17, when the exam was held for this school year, 93 of the district’s 7th grade ACT math students and 35 of its middle school students participated.

The exam requires students to apply concepts taught in the classroom to problems that range from easy to difficult, and covers a wide range of applications. The problems are designed to challenge students and offer problem-solving experiences beyond what they encounter in class.

AMC 8 also aims to create positive attitudes toward mathematics and to promote excitement and enthusiasm about the subject. Another goal is to stimulate students’ interest in studying mathematics beyond the minimum required for high school graduation.

“This contest provides an opportunity for some of our most capable math students to compete on an international level and receive recognition for their achievement,” said Rebecca Quinn, director of gifted, enrichment, and middle level education.

GET THE NEWS continued from page 1

A case against the alleged conspirators. Now, many of those homes are in foreclosure. (Jan. 13)

The CH-UH School Board tabled a proposal to lengthen the elementary school day by 25 minutes. It could have been implemented as early as Jan. 25, but instead will be reconsidered in April for a September rollout. (Jan. 19)

Steve Presser, owner of Big Fun, hosted a dance on Jan. 23 at the Beachland Ballroom & Tavern to benefit his best friend, Cleveland Heights resident Jon Lash, who has lost his income, disability coverage and medical insurance due to complications following heart bypass surgery. (Jan. 17)

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The following Cleveland Heights-University Heights students had the highest scores within their respective schools and were designated as school winners by the Mathematical Association of America:

Wiley Middle School: Ann Zacari, 7th grade;
Roxboro Middle School: Thomas Pharis, 7th grade and Benjamin Sperl, 8th grade (tie);
Monticello Middle School: Ashley Cannon, 6th grade and Peyton Hastings, 7th grade (tie);
Roxboro Elementary School: Gavin Akorn and Nicholas Edwards, both 5th grade and Mary Jane Reinhardt, 4th grade (three-way tie);
Oxford Elementary School: Jaylen Harris, Amber Parks, Emilie Urban, and Michael Zapawa, all 7th grade (4-way tie);
Noble Elementary School: Charles Adams, 5th grade;
Garity Elementary School: Denas Abner, 5th grade;
Fairfax Elementary School: Andrew Bell and David Fleischer, both 5th grade (tie);
Canterbury Elementary School: Samira Reddy, 7th grade;
Boulevard Elementary School: Mariah Mendes, 5th grade.

34th Cleveland International Film Festival

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clevelandfilm.org

RTEA continued from page 1

from this tax were $99 million below the previous year.

Ohio covers only about 1 percent of operating costs—compared to a national average of 25 percent for state support. Ohio’s support for transit systems reached $43 million in 2002, but has been reduced to less than $1 million in the 2010–11 state budget. Falling ridership, tied to fewer people working in the region, will bring 2009 fare receipts of about $4 million below budget. Fare receipts cover 20 to 25 percent of RTA’s operating costs.
Parenting Q&A

Ellen Barrett

Ellen Barrett, a parent educator at Heights Parent Center for the last 12 years, feels questions from parents about the daily ups and downs of parenting. The same issues impact many parents. If you have questions you would like Ellen to respond to in this column, e-mail her at barrett@heights-parentcenter.org.

Q. For several reasons my husband and I have decided not to send our almost three-year-old to preschool next year. It seems like most kids today get some kind of formal school before kindergarten and I am worried about him not being ready for school when he gets to kindergarten. Will he be behind the other kids?

A. Many families do not send their child to preschool for either financial reasons or personal choice. Parents and caregivers can provide many opportunities for children to learn the skills needed for kindergarten at home and around town. Here are some examples of simple ways to build literacy skills in your child (and have fun together) every day:

• Build powers of observation by asking your child questions about the landscape as you walk around the block. "Show me the white houses on the street."
• Sharpen sentence structure and listening skills by having your child complete a sentence, such as "That green truck is (very noisy, going slow, the same color as my jacket)."
• Develop sorting, matching and contrasting skills by involving him in household tasks. Have your child match pairs of socks or ask whose shirt is bigger.
• Develop descriptive skills by using the grocery store for a good game of I Spy. "I spy something red, round, juicy and tastes good in pie!"

In addition to literacy, socialization is an important skill that children need to develop. Make sure you give your child opportunities to play with other children, in settings other than your own home. There are many inexpensive ways for families to do this. Be sure to take advantage of all the local resources, such as museums, libraries, Family Connections and the Heights Parent Center. Visit HPC’s free Family Literacy Playroom, Little Heights, located at the Lee Road Library. Playing with your child at Little Heights will reinforce school readiness skills and build vocabulary that will set your child up for success.

Lake View Cemetery
Enter at Mayfield and Kenilworth Roads

Lake View Cemetery is such a great place—I feel safe and freedom, but encourages me to work hard. Here at Heights gives me lots of creative inspiration. I love being athletic, and reading, as well as participating in a democratic society.

Joy Henderson is the parent/community liaison at Cleveland Heights High School.

Youth of the Year named by Heights Youth Center

Irene Smith

You would be impressed, as I was, to meet Clayton Harris, this year’s Youth of the Year at the Heights Youth Club.

Sound character, leadership and the willingness to serve are the qualities that make a Youth of the Year. Clayton has been attending the HYC since it opened in 2007. Back then, he thought the brick building with the white steeple at Lee Road and Washington Boulevard was a church, but a friend mentioned that the space had been converted into a great place for kids.

Clayton had been a good student, but had nothing interesting to do after school. He’d walk around with his friends, wasting time, before going home. Once at the club, which is operated by the Boys and Girls Club of Cleveland, Clayton reveled in participating in its myriad programs, including ballroom dancing. Basketball is a particular passion of his and he always participates in the league.

The day I met with him he was boarding the bus for a game at the Broad- way Boys and Girls Club. HYC helped him secure jobs with the City of Cleveland, making them both a great place as well as providing day care in the summer. Clayton’s current goal is to graduate from college with a degree in pharmacology and become a pharmacist like his older sister. He also wants to meet new people, try new activities and travel around the world.

Congratulations to Clayton, his mother, Beatrice Dues, his six siblings and the staff at the HYC for being part of helping one of Cleveland Heights’ top kids look forward to a bright future.

Let’s also root for Clayton to compete successfully in the next rounds of Boys and Girls Club awards: State Youth of the Year, regional finalist, and National Youth of the Year.

Irene (Ronie) Smith is a founding member and secretary of the Heights Youth Club.
Wine 101 in the Heights

Loren Sonkin

I am often asked how to educate oneself about wine. My answer is to drink as much and as often as possible. Although this usually meets with a few chuckles, it is the truth. Because I get this question a lot, I thought I would outline a few strategies for those of us living in the Heights.

First, pay attention. If you like a wine, jot down the name and as much information about the wine as you know: Chances are, you will like other wines that have something in common with this one, e.g. grape variety, origin, style.

Second, make friends with your local wine merchants. In our area, we have a couple of shops, The Grapevine and Cedar Green Wines.

Our local grocers, including Zagara’s, Dave’s and Heinen’s, also have very good wine sections, operated by people who know and understand wine. Talk to these people. Let them know your price range, as well as the wines you have liked and disliked. They should be able to direct you to other wines that may suit your palate.

Third, don’t be afraid to experiment. There are so many wines out there; the best way is to open a few bottles. That can, however, be problematic. Get a group of friends together when you do this. An easy way is to pick a theme based on grape, origin or price range. Have the host put all the bottles in plain brown paper bags so no one will know which wine is which. Taste the wines and, before the wines are identified, have everyone tell which was his or her favorite and, hopefully, why.

Fourth, order wines in restaurants. Although you pay more in this setting, the best thing is that there are no wrong choices. When you find a wine you like, no one can tell you it’s not a good wine for you. Not only will you be supporting our local stores and restaurants, you also will be having fun.

Loren Sonkin lives in Cleveland Heights. He is the winemaker for SonkinCellars.com in California and writes for IntoWine.com.

Mama Joyce’s serves up chicken and waffles with a smile

Christina Klenotic

If you’ve been missing chicken and waffles in the Heights since Phil the Fire left Shaker Square a few years ago, check out Mama Joyce’s soul food on Lee Road, which offers carry-out comfort food.

The space, located near Anatolia Café, is petite, but the flavors are mighty. Sample chicken and waffles with a smile for a reasonable $6.00.

The expertly seasoned chicken wings were tender and juicy, and the thick, buttery waffles had a delightful aroma of cinnamon ($6.00). I’ll definitely be back for more. The food kept well in the carryout boxes during our drive home.

The seasoning for the tilapia and waffles pairing was a little on the bland side, but the flesh of the fish was juicy and delicious ($8.00). Other seafood combinations include perch and catfish.

The yams ($3.00) swam in butter and cinnamon, and I couldn’t have been happier. The mac ’n’ cheese ($5.00), however, was a little on the rich side—perfect if you love a lot of cream.

Orders are served up in about 10 to 15 minutes by the friendly staff. Browse a Heights Observer on the counter or catch some TV time on the flat screen while you wait at one of the small tables up front. Per her grandmother, Christina Klenotic is a “good eater.” She enjoys sampling our area’s eclectic restaurants, galleries and neighborhoods.

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Taste the arts at Whole Foods

Peggy Spaeth

On Tuesday, Feb. 16, Whole Foods Market is donating 5 percent of the day’s net sales to Heights Arts, and customers can help simply by showing up to shop.

This 5% Day will launch Fencepiration, a Heights Arts temporary public art project in partnership with Whole Foods, the Coral Company and the City of South Euclid. Artists Carol Hammel and Debbie Apple Presser will involve community members in transforming a utilitarian construction fence on Cedar Road into a visually interesting, inspiring and attractive streetscape element during the multiyear construction process. Fencepiration will use recycled materials and recycle them again after completion. A prototype will be on view on 9% Day.

Free arts activities in the cafe during the day will include:
• 11 a.m.–1 p.m. and 6–8 p.m.; Create elements for Fencepiration with Debbie Apple Presser,
• 7 p.m.; Cleveland Heights Poet Laureate Gail Bellamy will read poems about food,
• At a time to be announced, Mayor Georgine Welo of South Euclid will officially launch Fencepiration.

Those in attendance will enjoy complimentary canned beverages, which—after ringing—will be integrated into the piece.

There will also be food haiku spring-kled about the store and chamber music by Cleveland Orchestra musicians.

“We’re looking forward to giving Whole Foods customers a taste of what we do,” said John Panza, board president of Heights Arts. “They’ll sample a public art project, poetry, and music throughout the day to become more aware of the flavor of the arts in our community.”

“We are thrilled to support the goals of Heights Arts,” said Cherri Pat- ton, store team leader for Whole Foods Market, Cedar Center. “Their initiatives to inspire public participation in the arts help to strengthen our community, and we are proud to take an active role in the organization’s current and future endeavors.”

A schedule of free community workshops to help make elements for the Fencepiration project will be announced in the coming weeks.

For more information, call Heights Arts at 216-571-3457.

Peggy Spaeth is the executive director of Heights Arts.

New ensemble presents rarely performed music

Zahari Metchkov

Ensemble Secundum Silentium, composed of alumni and students at the Cleveland Institute of Music and Case Western Reserve University, made its debut last February. The group, which is “dedicated to programming music that is both rarely performed and embraces devotional qualities,” celebrates its first anniversary with what it calls a “musical journey through ecletic compositions.”

Its upcoming concerts—Friday, Feb. 5, at First Church of Oberlin United Church of Christ, at 7:30 p.m., and Sunday, Feb. 14, at Saint Paul’s Episcopal Church in Cleveland Heights, at 7 p.m.—will include “The Last Sleep of the Virgin,” for string quartet and suspended handbells, written by John Tavener in 1991. As a curious bridge of time, ESS will perform a short work by the 16th-century composer John Tav- erner. The centerpiece of the program will be Tavener’s 2003 “Schoon Lieder” cycle, for soprano, string quartet, piano and Tibetan temple gongs.

For more information, contact Zahari Metchkov at zmetcikov@yahoo.com or 216.791.5149.

Zahari Metchkov is a pianist, organist and faculty member at the Cleveland Institute of Music.
Baroque family drama heats up musical stage

Margi Griebling-Haigh

"Generation gap!" The term became popular as recently as the 1960s. It describes the cultural differences between insufferably dull, judgmental parents and their hip, enlightened and often eye-rolling offspring. Yet generational schisms have always existed within families and are fascinating things to watch—from the outside, at least.

Incidentally, HEP is also an acronym for "historically informed performance," and describes part of the mission of Apollo's Fire, the Cleveland Baroque Orchestra, which further pledges "to engage widespread audiences in its joyous pursuit of artistic excellence."

Apollo's Fire was founded in Cleveland Heights in 1991 by Jeannette Sorrell, sometime after she was told by a conducting teacher that she might as well look into another field, because orchestras would never accept a woman conductor. "That kind of attitude came as a big surprise to me," Sorrell says, "because I grew up with parents who let me think I could do whatever I wanted to do.

No generation gap there, at any rate. Sorrell's thriving ensemble unites a select group of early music specialists from throughout North America and Europe who play authentic period instruments. It has been praised locally and internationally for stylistic freshness and buoyancy, technical excellence, and for the creativity of Sorrell's programming.

In her next series of concerts with Apollo's Fire, called "Bach Family Fireworks," Sorrell has chosen to highlight the well-documented generation gap that fired up dinette conversations over Bach. With 20 children, many trained as musicians by their illustrious parents, conflicts over musical taste must indeed have been noisy affairs. Yet each Bach was endowed with the marvelous family talent along with his or her own distinctive artistic voice.

Veteran actor George Roth, fresh from a one-man triumph as Yogi Berra at Actors' Summit in Hudson, will step back in time three centuries, don a powdered wig, like the one for which J.S. Bach's sons teased their papa, and join Sorrell and Apollo's Fire as they perform virtuoso concertos by J.S. Bach, C.P.E. Bach and J.C.F. Bach. The string players will bring their electricity to symphonies of the fiery Carl Philip Emmanuel Bach and the quirky youngest surviving son Wilhelm Friedemann Bach, and to concertos of the exuberant Papa Bach himself. Soloists for the performances are violinist Julie Andrijeski, cellist Rene Schiffer and harpsichordist Jeannette Sorrell.

These concerts will take place at 7:30 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 28, at Westminster Presbyterian Church, Akron; on Monday, Feb. 5, at Fairmont Presbyterian Church, Cleveland Heights; 8 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 6, at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Cleveland Heights; Sunday, Feb. 7, at Rocky River Presbyterian Church; and Tuesday, Feb. 9, at St. Noel's Catholic Church, Willoughby. Preconcert lectures take place one hour before each performance.

Tickets are $20-$50. Free student tickets are available in Akron and Willoughby and special discounts are available for seniors and under-30s. Visit www.apollofire.org or call 216-320-0012.

Margi Griebling-Haigh is a freelance composer, poet, and artist residing in Cleveland Heights.
When I walked into the Heights Youth Club on Lee Road, something in the air was remarkably reminiscent. I suddenly recalled the days when my own children were growing up, spent time at a Boys Club. Right past the front door, I got a blast of intense physical energy and body heat coming from the children in the gym. The room resonated with the delicious din of their play—at that moment, football. Kids were bounding up and down the floor, giving their all. But no one was out of control. Staff member Brandon Delk was in the middle of this hot contest, throwing passes as the kids stretched and strained for the ball. Delk, a graduate of the club and now in college, exerted a quiet power. That’s the magic of the Boys and Girls Club.

It’s not like school and it’s not like home, each with their own strictures and expectations. It’s that third place, as essential to kids’ lives as cafés, pickup basketball games or knitting circles are for adults. After school, the kids—about 20 a day—come through the door, sign in and after homework fun out to activities. They are in their place, a kid’s place. Sure, there’s plenty of adult supervision and they have to behave. But you see in their enlivened, focused faces the pleasure of play. That’s the club culture, and for only $60 a year.

Some of the children have that end-of-the-day look—straggly hair, untied shoes. But they also have that pent-up energy that finds its release in sports, artwork, or taking something apart. That’s when Marvin Rosenberg walks in with two computer keyboards and a toolbox under his arm. “Kids love to take things apart and see what’s inside,” he said. “When you retire, you have so much knowledge, you want to share it.” Like Rosenberg, many volunteers find much knowledge, you want to share it.”

FutureNow is charged with engaging the next generation of Heights friends and supporters by creating and planning events and maintaining a social networking presence for FutureHeights. The committee is always looking for new energy and talent.

By Roscoe Morgan, the club opened in Jan., 2007 in partnership with the Boys and Girls Club of Cleveland. It took a plucky, persevering board to buy, renovate and equip the building, at a cost of $1.6 million. The gym, now with sturdy grates on the windows and basketball hoops, was once the sanctuary of the Heights United Presbyterian Church.

This club is more structured than the one my kids attended. Children must first complete their homework in the computer room, under the watchful eye of volunteer Thomas Johnson. Once finished, they can go to the art room, the gym, or the game room with ping pong, air hockey, pool and foosball. Teens have their own game upstairs. At 5 p.m. the kids gather for a hearty meal. The day I was there, it was baked chicken, green beans, macaroni and milk from the Cleveland Food Bank.

As I prepare to leave, I see that children are gathered around Martin Rosenberg. Some are studying the underside of the opened computer keyboard; others are popping off the keys with a small screwdriver. Art room volunteer Debra Wherry-Bey poked her head in, “We can use those keys in art for collage,” she said.

Eleanor Mallet is a longtime explorer of the nooks and crannies in the Heights. Her column, Observing in the Heights, explores the special people and places in the Heights.
Big Fun owner holds dance to benefit friend

Bob Rosenbaum

On Jan. 23, nearly 200 Heights-area residents and other friends of Jon Lash gathered at the the Beachland Ballroom and Tavern in Cleveland, to dance, party and help a friend in need.

The event, dubbed Benefit for a Buddy, was the work of Big Fun owner Steve Presser, a close friend of Lash since childhood. Each attendee paid at least $10; Presser continues to accept donations at Big Fun on Cons., from supporters who couldn’t attend.

Lash, who also lives in Cleveland Heights, suffered neck and spinal damage from complications during a 7-hour heart bypass operation. The injury left him in constant pain and unable to sleep or work, Presser says. Formerly he in constant pain and unable to sleep or work, Presser says. Formerly, Presser put together the benefit.

“This would meet many of our needs!” Lash says. “I’m pretty much speechless.” Presser, who considers both Presser and Lash to be friends, attended the benefit but failed to leave a picture. Donations are still being accepted at Big Fun; checks should be made payable to Jon Lash.

Residents explore launching local currency

Greg Coleridge

“Each would meet many of our needs!”

That was the sentiment of one of 30-odd attendees at a meeting to discuss community currency and exchange systems in the Heights. The Jan. 20 meeting, sponsored by FutureHeights and the Northeast Ohio American Friends Service Committee, addressed how a local complementary currency could help both area residents and small businesses who may be short on dollars but plentiful on goods, services or time. A community currency is a tool to facilitate exchanges of goods or services that otherwise wouldn’t take place.

A presentation outlined the history and nature of money, limits and problems of the dollar-based economy, benefits of a complementary “money” system, and several models of community currency and exchange systems, such as barter, the HOURS and BerkShare forms of paper currencies, and the Time Bank and Local Economic Trading Systems (LETS) forms of mutual credit systems.

Printed and circulated local scrip or currencies existed in hundreds of communities—23 in Ohio alone—during the Great Depression. They were used to stimulate business, employment and trading. These scrips were issued by municipalities, school boards and, in some cases, businesses.

The group agreed to take three to six months to publicly explore launching a complementary local currency system. The next meeting, open to anyone interested, will take place Wednesday, Feb. 17, at 7 p.m. in the Activity Center of the Lee Road Library, 2345 Lee Road.

Greg Coleridge is director of the Northeast Ohio American Friends Service Committee.

Side by Side

“Q: Valentine’s Day is around the corner and I’m feeling anxious. I’m romantically challenged and have no clue what to do for my wife. Can you help?
A: Valentine’s Day in our culture can be a bit intimidating, but the definition of romance is very simple: Romance means, ‘You matter to me,’ and can be expressed in small or large ways. To help you send this simple but meaningful message to your wife, here are 10 ideas:

• Share a bottle of wine from the year you first met.
• Give her a family heirloom: mother’s pearls, great aunt’s cameo, etc.
• Bundle up and go on a moonlit picnic.
• Give your wife’s hands the royal treatment: massage and manicure.
•Send a love letter wrapped in a big box and have it delivered by registered mail to your home or her office.
• Send a Valentine’s Day card everyday for a week leading up to Feb. 14.
• Frame the lyrics to “your song” and give them to her.
• When planning a romantic dinner, use all five senses—smell, taste, touch, sight, and sound—to make the evening unforgettable.
• Tint your popcorn red for a Valentine’s Day movie date.
• Lead your wife to a location in your home by leaving a trail of Hershey Kisses, at the end of which is a note saying, “I kiss the ground you walk on.”

Kathy Dawson is a Cleveland Heights author and relationship coach. If you have a question for Kathy, e-mail her at kathy@kathybeachcom.com.

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COMMUNITY NEWS
Service dog helps Heights girl

Simone Quartell

In October, nine-year-old Riley O’Neill of Cleveland Heights welcomed Jingle, a service dog from 4 Paws For Ability, to help her with her Asperger’s syndrome. Riley and her family traveled to the 4 Paws headquarters in Xenia, Ohio, to receive training with Jingle. The family spent 10 days receiving full-day training. While in Xenia, they learned commands for Jingle and how to walk her, among other things.

Jingle’s training began long before she met the O’Neill family. The one-year-old dog, part Australian shepherd, and part boxer, is now in her fifth home. After being rescued at a Kentucky shelter and taken to 4 Paws, Jingle was placed with a foster family, where she learned basic obedience.

Asperger’s is an autism-related syndrome that can make it difficult for a person to pick up social cues—and therefore become easily frustrated. Riley’s mother, Michelle O’Neill, said the goal is for Jingle to calm Riley before she has a “full-blown meltdown.” Currently, Jingle is alerted if Riley starts to become upset and comes to calm her down. If Riley calms down, she then gives Jingle a treat (only Riley can give, Jingle treats).

Jingle currently accompanies Riley to martial arts class and cello lessons. 4 Paws recommends that dogs not go to school until the child and dog have a good rapport. Riley will be home schooled for the remainder of fourth grade to help build that bond.

Jingle has been helpful at home and is “a source of comfort” to Riley, O’Neill said. The dog sleeps in Riley’s room and responds immediately when Riley becomes distressed, which O’Neill credits for a decrease in the severity of Riley’s meltdowns. Jingle comes along anywhere that may be stressful for Riley, and will join the family on vacations.

4 Paws for Ability was founded by a woman with Asperger’s syndrome who was able to obtain a service dog through 4 Paws for Ability. To date, 4 Paws for Ability has provided over 500 service dogs. As of January 2010, the organization has provided over 500 service dogs.

Karen Shirk, who had a service dog to help her with myasthenia gravis, a neuromuscular disease, shirk believed it was because of her dog that she is alive today. As of January 2010, the organization has provided over 500 service dogs.

To prevent wealthier families from having an advantage, 4 Paws does not allow families to pay for the service dogs, but requires them instead to raise funds for the organization. Riley’s story included a donation request, which was printed in the December 2008 Heights Observer, and the family completed their fundraising ($1,000) in less than two months.

“We are very grateful to the community for that,” Michelle O’Neill said.

Simone Quartell is a 2009 graduate of Cleveland Heights High School and is studying journalism at Kent State University.
Maximize value of yard and garden improvements

Douglas Freer

Now is a good time to look at your yard and garden and make plans for the upcoming season. Home or yard improvement projects often feel overwhelming, if you’re unfamiliar with the work involved. Even avid do-it-yourselfers find occasion to call on the expertise of a professional contractor to help them through certain aspects of a challenging project.

To maximize the value of your investment in a landscape project, consider the order of operations to be performed as well as operations that can be combined. For example, if you are installing a patio, it might be the right time to consider adding a tie-in or connection for future drain tile.

Taking advantage of the heavy equipment on-site for the patio will decrease costs for the drainage later on. Also, if the future drainage work will require pulling up a section of the new patio, installing a tie-in beyond the patio will avoid disruption of the patio and additional restoration costs later.

Regardless of the size of the project, consider these money-saving steps:

1. Remove existing undesirable elements.
2. Excavate the site.
3. Perform rough grading for major changes.
4. Repair or install drainage.
5. Install base/footer.
6. Install infrastructure, such as plumbing and electrical.
7. Install hardscaping, such as patio, retaining walls and structures.
8. Perform grading to establish lawn and bed areas.
9. Install low-voltage lighting and irrigation systems.
10. Prepare/install planting beds and plants.
11. Install lawn/yard.

Whether working with a professional to design and plan out your project or going it alone, energy and effort invested during the planning stage of your project will help to keep you on target and on budget.

Douglas Freer is a Cleveland Heights native and the owner of Lawn Lad, Inc., which provides residential landscape services in the Heights area. Call 216-371-1935 or visit www.lawnlad.com

The CIM Opera Theater Presents

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