Youth of Coventry gives kids a voice in the community

Lewis Polis
Youth of Coventry wants “to make Coventry a safer place for the youth of today and the youth of tomorrow.” Those are the words of Randall Walker, public relations officer for the group.

As a 17-year-old who frequents Coventry Village often, he knows first-hand the impact of recent crime and safety issues, as well as the new special curfew ordinance. He does not want problem-solving that affects him and his peers left up to adults. “We aren’t tools to be used to push agendas,” Walker told the Cleveland Heights City Council, after a group protested the alleged racism of the curfew law before the July 18 council meeting.

Youth of Coventry has two main goals, according to Adin Colie, age 20, the group’s co-chair: communicate information and ideas between the kids and local officials, such as city council; and represent the “nondestructive” local youth as a voice in the community.

Cole thinks the group—there are 14 active members, but they have many more supporters—is already starting to make a difference. He cited the new curfew ordinance—which bans unaccompanied minors, without legitimate reasons for being on the street, from the Coventry Village and Cedar Lee business districts after 6 p.m.—as a major action in response to growing problems of crime and flash mobs in the area. “We had an essential part in that,” he said.

The organization that became Youth of Coventry started to take shape a few hours after the disruption at the Coventry Street Fair on June 26. John Nelson, 23, was at home feeling “sick and tired of the way that kids are acting in this day and age” when he started talking to his friend John Waltrip, 20. “We need to get something concrete going,” Nelson said.

On June 27, a group of young people appeared at the meeting of the Cleveland Heights Council Committee of the continued on page 7

New CH-UH gifted program explained, parent concerns aired

James Helmsworth
Tensions were high at a meeting of parents, teachers and administrators to discuss the new procedures for identifying and educating gifted students in the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District.

In the fall, students who qualify may enroll in closed, gifted-only classes at Roxboro and Boulevard elementary schools beginning in fourth grade. Selection will be based on the Otis-Lennon School Ability Test that students take in 2nd and 4th grades. To qualify, students must score in the top fifth percentile.

As superintendent Douglas Heuer and Assistant Superintendent Jeffrey Talbott answered questions, parents’ frustrations often rose to a point where many talked over each other and a few excused themselves from the room. The meeting took place on July 22 at Wiley Middle School.

Currently, a larger group of gifted students participate in a pullout program. They leave their classrooms for separate instruction in language arts and math. According to a letter Jane Simeri, CH-UH’s coordinator of gifted/arts, sent to parents, the range of students in the pullout program was too wide to be effective. “We are reorganizing staff to be able to provide a more comprehensive program to meet the instructional needs of gifted children all day, every day,” she wrote.

Only 24 percent of those in the pullout program earned an “advanced” score on the Ohio Achievement Assessment’s reading portion, and 57 percent scored an “advanced” on the math portion. A handful of students in the pullout program did not even maintain marks of “proficient” on the OAA.

Reading competency is a concern in the district. One-third of students are not reading at grade level. Closed classrooms for gifted students is part of a series of changes the district is making over the summer to boost literacy and tailor curriculum to fit the needs of gifted children.

County releases annual residential recycling report

Jim Parkins
The Cuyahoga County Solid Waste Management District recently released residential recycling totals for University Heights and Cleveland Heights. These results may surprise some Heights residents.

University Heights disposed of 4,273 tons of solid waste and recycled 1,879 tons of materials, which translates to recycling about 30 percent of its total waste. Cleveland Heights disposed of 17,532 tons of solid waste and recycled 16,667 tons of materials, recycling about 31 percent of its waste.

Robert Jamieson, service director of University Heights, is leading the charge for recycling in that city. He believes that recycling benefits the environment as well as the residents of University Heights.

“Young people want to create a greener environment,” Jamieson says. “They don’t want to eat and throw out the bones. They want to do the right thing by recycling.”

He adds that recycling is easy and convenient.

FutureHeights partners with League of Women Voters

Jeanette Sloan
FutureHeights is partnering with the League of Women Voters (LWV) to produce the 2011 edition of the voters guide. The LWV is a trusted source of information, and compiles an annual voters guide. Future Heights, which publishes the Heights Observer, and the LWV are both nonprofit organizations that do not endorse candidates. The organizations are working together to avoid duplicating information. Both have produced voters guides in the past.

The LWV is responsible for assembling questions to send to candidates running for city council and school board seats in Cleveland Heights and University Heights.

FutureHeights has partnered with the LWV in the past. They have hosted candidate forums, and FutureHeights regularly publishes abstracts of city council, school board and other public meetings prepared by LWV observers.

Look for this year’s voters guide in the October issue of the Heights Observer.

continued on page 3

continued on page 4
Volunteer committee sought for new Observer forum

Our Students Say:

“Now in our 14th year!

Heights Observer on the Street

"Today, I met Sam. Sam has just re-located from Cleveland Heights to Beachwood. I wonder if he will go to the same school?" I can’t answer that question. But what scares me about his choice is the admission that he did not seek out any information in formulating his assessment of the schools. Sam’s choice admittedly came without the analysis of any information other than word of mouth and personal observation . . . There was no trip to the Cleveland Heights school board or to his closest elementary school. He did not seek out the advice of a principal or a teacher of the CH-UH school system. He and his wife simply made the decision. In Grown Folk’s World, that and participation in a community level of two-way communication. Our city, which for nearly 40 years has had a city manager form of government, has not yet moved to that level of crisis in safety here. They want to feel involved in helping to make the city a safer place. This is a moment of consideration but who’s to say it deserved one more comprehensive analysis of any information other than word of mouth and personal observation?"

- Andrea Davis

Fly In The Ice

"In the kitchen, on the top shelf of the freezer, in the ice cube container is a fake, plastic ice cube with a fly embedded inside. It’s a cheap gag my son brought home from Big Fun on Coventry a couple years ago, when he was going through his practical joke phase—which I’m beginning to suspect may not be a phase at all.”

- Bob Rosenbaum

Fighting Fire With Fire: Why a Curfew Isn’t The Solution

The main sense I get about public safety from CH residents, who write to me frequently, is that: They sense some level of crisis in safety here. They want to feel involved in helping to make the community safer.

People want to be able to help, but that means the police department must be willing to establish a nontraditional level of two-way communication. Our city, which for nearly 40 years has claimed to be on the cutting edge of innovative policing, has not yet moved very far down this path.

One local resident is mounting a campaign to bring Nicé—or something like it—to Cleveland Heights. It’s a “re-versive” system, in which police can communicate proactively with members of the community who sign up to receive alerts. It could be used for everything from announcing parking bans on snowy days to soothing frazzled nerves after a flash mob. Facebook could be used the same way.

- Bob Rosenbaum

Heaven Pekar, the Niestest Curmudgeon You Ever Met

My own favorite story about living in the Heights also involves Harvey: This would have been 2005, I think, when I was editor of Free Time and Harvey was an occasional contributor. I was showing one morning when my wife knocked on the door and said, “Harvey Pekar is here.” I told him that I would pick up his latest column at his house, but apparently he’d decided to deliver it to me instead. “OK,” I said to my wife, “tell him I’ll call him when I get to the office.” “He said he would wait,” she replied. “He’s watching SpongeBob with Daniel” (our then-4-year-old son).

- Frank Lewis

Excerpts from recent posts at blogs.heightsobserver.org

Heights Observer

The Heights Observer exists to provide information and air issues of interest to anyone who lives and works in Cleveland Heights and University Heights. We post newsworthy information and e-mail newsletters, a website and a collection of blogs, is missing one vital element: an online forum where people can fluidly discuss topics of their choice.

We initially launched a forum four years ago—when we began publishing the paper. But that forum never achieved the critical mass to take on a life of its own, and participation waned. We recently took it offline. I don’t know precisely why the forum failed to fly the way it has in other communities. But when I’ve asked people why they stopped using it, their answers all fall in among the following themes:

Required use of real names: People have said they don’t want to participate if they have to use their real names—specifically, according to a few, if there’s a chance their names can be matched to other personal information, such as an e-mail address.

Incivility: People have said they were driven away by a small number of users who acted like bullies—shouting down others’ opinions, or burying them under long and unrestrained responses.

Authoritarianism: People have said there was a small group of volunteer moderators who took responsibility for managing the forum arbitrarily, quelled opinions that they didn’t like, and drove away users who didn’t agree with them.

Apathy: Some have said they aren’t interested in discussing the issues.

The medium: Others, after trying it, simply didn’t like the dynamic of online forums and decided not to use it.

FutureHeights believes an open forum is an important part of engaging citizens and serving the community. So we’re going to relaunch the forum sometime this fall.

Before we do that, we are putting together a committee of people to think through the issues, write the policies and establish the terms of use that will allow the next version of the Heights Observer forum to fare better than the first.

If you believe in the importance of open discussion and are interested in joining the committee, please contact me.

To express your opinion privately, e-mail Bob Rosenbaum at bob@therosenbaums.net. To express your opinion as a letter to the editor, register at the Observer Member Center (http://heightsobserver.org/members) and click on “Submit New Story” to contribute your letter.

Bob Rosenbaum, chairman of the Observer’s editorial advisory committee and a nontraditional board member, writes this column to provide transparency and understanding about the newspaper.

OPINION
New curfew punishes many for acts of a few

To the Editor:

I have mixed feelings about the new curfew being imposed on teenagers in the Coventry and Cedar Lee business districts. The homeowner/taxpayer/mother in me applauds Cleveland Heights City Council for its quick response. But, I am also sad that the acts of a few will punish so many. I spent my high school years in Westlake. This was pre-Crocker Park Westlake. There was no Coventry-like area, nor any gathering spot, unless you counted the strip malls and fast food restaurants. It was boring, and we were fairly aimless on weekend nights, choosing to drive to Lakewood for entertainment. At least Coventry and Cedar Lee offer teens a destination. Unfortunately, things have gotten completely out of hand, and now no teen, regardless of his or her motives, will be able to enjoy an evening in either business district.

To the Editor:

I’d like to say that the parents of these teens need to take action: monitor your child’s Facebook, Twitter, and general whereabouts. But, the parents of the teens involved in Sunday’s flash mob do not care. They do not care about our city, and it’s health and safety. If they did, their children would have been on Coventry to enjoy the festival, not to cause problems, nor to intimidate businesses and patrons.

I am going to continue to enjoy Coventry and Cedar Lee with my family; maybe more so now, just as I have for the past 11 yrs. But, I wonder where summer vacation boredom is going to take Cleveland Heights’ teens, if not to Coventry or Cedar Lee.

Clare Taft
Cleveland Heights

Citizens for Oakwood seeks referendum on South Euclid zoning change

To the Editor:

It seems that South Euclid voters are getting the message: If Intersite is allowed to develop, they’re not going to get a “lifestyle center” like Legacy Village. Mr. Schneider has said all along it will be big-box “value-oriented” retail. People know what that means, and it is not what most South Euclideans want.

Having gathered more than enough signatures to qualify for the ballot, Citizens for Oakwood is now launching a major campaign to reverse South Euclid Ordinance 05-11 with a loud and clear citizens’ veto in November. Although only South Euclid citizens can vote on this, many in surrounding communities grasp that Oakwood is a regional treasure, and should be a regional resource.

The 150 acres of Oakwood are graced with majestic trees that have been there for more than a century, a sweeping meadowland, Nine-Mile Creek flowing to Lake Erie, and, on the Cleveland Heights acreage, an historic clubhouse. Building a strip mall and parking lots on this unique parcel of land would be an irrevocable and mistaken move, focused on short-term profits, but denying the imperatives of the future.

Citizens for Oakwood is proud and grateful for the support of the Sierra Club and the Shaker Heights Nature Center, as well as many local businesses and area residents. If you would like to help with time, money or talent, please e-mail us at info@citizensforoakwood.org, or call 216-694-8304 to volunteer.

Carla Rautenberg
Berkshire Road
Cleveland Heights

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
When I moved to Cleveland Heights, the big attraction was that it was a walkable, walkable neighborhood. It was a recent MFA and a divorced mother of a preschooler. If I couldn’t go back to New York City then I was determined to live in what I felt was the closest thing to it in Cuyahoga County. So, 13 years ago, I settled into Coventry Village.

When my son started at Coventry school, I got involved in volunteering, teaching, and trying to improve our neighborhood. This led me to becoming a member of the city council and chair of municipal court. In Cleveland Heights I found a safe, nurturing, affordable, beautiful, diverse, and artistic community in which to raise my son. I didn’t know the data on how many other artists lived here, but I certainly felt the vibe.

According to a report put out by the Cuyahoga Community Partnership for Arts and Culture, Cleveland Heights is home to the largest concentration of artists in the county. In Coventry Village alone, 30.2 per 1,000 residents are artists, but there is also a large population of poor and under- and unemployed adults with children. It seems that there is a strange disconnect between these groups. With the recent trouble with mobs of teens at the Coventry street fairs, the city may have an opportunity to effect real, meaningful and lasting change.

We hear about how artists move in and improve neighborhoods, such as Waterklo and Gordon Square, attracting home buyers and small-business owners. But we don’t hear about the human investment potential that artists can bring. The CPCAC study notes that “artists have the ability to infuse creativity, spark community discourse and attract attention to their communities through their work.” It’s is enough to make an area art to attract businesses! What about the business of raising our children?

What if the artists of Cleveland Heights were more connected to the youth of Cleveland Heights? What if the city made it a part of its mission to connect its young people to its artists—like a summer program that any child, regardless of socioeconomic status, could walk into and learn an engaging art and skill that could lead to future employment, such as video production, animation, Web design and graphic design, or theater, dance and the literary and visual arts.

As wonderful as it has been living here, a few summers ago, my son and his friends were robbed at gunpoint by a teen and a preteen. As the community with the most artists per capita in the county, investing more in our youth is not only in the interest of public safety, but our duty as civically engaged and socially responsible citizens.

It’s time for the city to make a concerted effort to connect its artists to its children.

Without an audience, there can be no art. In the theater arts, the product isn’t finished until the audience arrives. We have a large audience of bored, poor, and unengaged young people who are looking for some form of affordable entertainment/engagement/connection. How can the city of Cleveland Heights, and its artists sit back and ignore this potential development of our young people and our community? What, exactly, is that we are creating?

Christine McBurney is the theater arts department chair at Shaker Heights High School, a performer, writer, and proud Heights High soccer mom.

At FutureHeights, we are dedicated to building community. Our programs inform, educate and advocate for the issues that are important for Heights residents. Whether its an article in the Heights Observer, a community forum, or the Best of the Heights awards program, we promote civic engagement to ensure a vibrant and sustainable future for our neighborhoods.

Now is the best time to join us as a member. Every dollar you donate to FutureHeights’ membership campaign—now through Aug. 15—will be matched by an anonymous supporter dollar-for-dollar.

We can’t do it without you! FutureHeights is an efficient, grassroots organization. Only with your help can we continue to offer our community-building programs.

To donate, fill out the form below and mail it to us or donate online at www.futureheights.org. For more information, call 216-310-1425.

Thank you for your support!

Christine McBurney
Cleveland Heights City Council

Meeting highlights

JUNE 20, 2011
Vice Mayor Phyllis L. Evans was absent.

Website redesign
Council authorized an agreement with Vison Internet for redesigning the city’s primary website. Fifteen proposals had been received and evaluated. The agreement also includes the addition of three subites (for the police department, Cain Park, and the recreation department), onsite training for staff, development of FAQ internet links, content migration, payment options, and tech support. Compensation shall not exceed $43,260. A fall 2011 rollout is expected.

Road projects
Council voted to proceed with Taylor Road rehabilitation from Euclid Heights Boulevard to the city limit of East Cleveland. The project includes pavement narrowing, base replacement, curbs, drainage improvements, resurfacing, and signal removals. Estimated costs are $786,040, less an Ohio Public Works Commission Grant of $438,020 and less a SBR loan for $438,020, leaving a balance due of $0.00. The city’s ultimate share of the cost will be known when final actual costs are determined.

Phase two of the Monticello Boulevard project, from Taylor Road to Mayfield Road, will begin July 12. Additionally, 30 streets will have surface improvements.

Zoning code changes
An ordinance to change the zoning code in order to adopt regulations for adaptive reuse of existing nonresidential buildings in residential districts was presented on first reading. “Industrial design” establishments, which may only create prototypes of products, but may not manufacture products for sale and distribution, are prohibited from outside storage or display. All business, servicing, processing and storage uses shall be conducted in such buildings as green technology, biotechnology, pharmaceauticals, medical instrumentation or supplies, communica- tion and information technology, electronics and instrumentation, and computer hardware and software. Other amended subsections refer to day care centers and nursing homes in a school, religious institution, or conditionally permitted adaptively reused nonresidential building. The planning commission will look at the ordinance at its July 13 meeting, and a public hearing will take place July 25.


tech center at Coventry school
Council contracted SOGI Global Business Advisors, LLC for consulting services related to the establishment of a technology center at the former Coventry school building and for company recruit- ment, including international companies. At this time the last two of four phases of the project will proceed. Compensation for such services shall not exceed $25,000 plus expenses as approved by the city manager.

IWy observer: Patricia Solomon.

CH council approves budget for
2012 with nearly $800,000 in cuts

Cleveland Heights City Council passed a budget for the 2012 fiscal year at the council meeting on July 18. It includes nearly $60,000,000 in cuts from the 2011 fiscal year.

The budget resolution, introduced by Cheryl Stephens, chair of the fi- nance committee, passed by unanimous vote, and included a budget of $40,201,515—a decrease of $792,102 from the 2011 budget of $40,993,617.

Stephens said that the biggest decrease came from switching to the Regional Income Tax Agency (R.I.T.A.) for income tax collection, which saved the city $400,000.

Other savings came from the decision to not replace the retiring capital projects manager, Carl Craga; lower electric bills, thanks to the use of more energy-efficient light bulbs and lighting systems in the Cleveland Heights Commu- nity Center; and keeping a careful eye on health-care costs for municipal employees, Stephens said.

“Quite frankly, this is still a work in progress,” said Dennis Wilcox, vice chair of the finance committee. He said the new state budget, as approved by the Republican-controlled state govern- ment, “was balanced on the backs of local governments.”

In addition to these cuts, the city will have to reduce its budget by an ad- ditional $1,000,000 in 2013, with the repeal of the estate tax, Wilcox said.

Cleveland Heights Mayor Edward Kelley denounced Republican state legislators for cuts in funding to lo- cal governments. “If they think these budget savings are wise, they’re from

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CH expands exceptions to curfew law

Lewis Pollis
Cleveland Heights City Council unanimously voted to implement changes to the Minors’ Curfew ordinance at a meeting on July 5. Youths are now allowed to travel to and from school or school-related activities, and attend public entertainment, under parental authorization. They may exercise their First Amendment rights, e.g., right of assembly, if so authorized by their parents and with permission from the police chief 24 hours in advance.

The ordinance already allowed exceptions for minors who were accompanied by an adult relative. They may now perform errands or legitimate business, such as going to the library, after 6 p.m., with parental authorization. They may go to and from their jobs, but must carry written authorization from a parent or employer, stating the location of the job and hours of employment.

In addition, the ordinance now gives the city’s director of public safety the power to declare Temporary Special Curfew Areas if there is sufficient reason to believe that a flash mob is planned.

“This will in all likelihood not be the last change,” said Kenneth Montlack, council member and chair of the public safety and health committee. Addressing the more than 20 teenagers and young adults in attendance, he likened the situation to enhanced security at airports. “Our intent is not to try and punish any youth. Our intent is to protect the safety and security of the community.”

Cheryl Stephens, council member, said, “We took to heart your concerns.” Exceptions were made after Nancy Levin, director of Heights Libraries, and Kathy Blackman, owner of the Grog Shop, expressed concerns about the curfew preventing teens from attending library events and concerts.

John Nelson, co-leader of the Youth of Coventry, thanked the city for taking their concerns seriously. “I think the ordinance is a good ordinance,” he said. “We are here to call on the Cleveland Heights City Council to remove the ordinance from the books that targets our children,” said Kathy Wray Coleman, leader of the Community Congress and the Heights Community Dialogue.

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Mayor Edward Kelley continued from page 5

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Lewis Pollis, a lifelong Cleveland Heights resident and graduate of Heights High, is an Observer intern and sophomore at Brown University.

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Matthew Reed, another member of the Youth of Coventry, said the curfew was already making a tangible impact. Commenting on a visit to Coventry Village since the curfew’s enactment, Reed said, “We looked down the street, and all we see is families.” Reed added that he still had reservations about the strictness of the law. “I just think six o’clock is kind of early.”

Acting Judge Russell Baron, who has lived a few blocks from Coventry Village for 47 years, expressed optimism, and said that he has seen the area “come up and go down and go up again. And it’s up.”

“You guys know what you’re doing, that’s for sure,” Baron told council. The audience applauded when Baron noted the diversity of the Youth of Coventry and announced, “They represent our city.”

“The city made a very wise decision to listen to the community,” said Steve Presser, owner of Big Fun. The new measures are better, he said, but “it will continue to be a work in progress; there’s no right answer.”

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LEWIS POLLIS
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CH expands exceptions to curfew law
Resident questions CH government transparency

Lewis Pollis

As the bidding for the Taylor Road construction project began on July 21, at least one local resident was unhappy with the plans. Douglas Whipple, a Taylor Road resident, is upset both by the fact that the planned renovations will not include extending the curb on the residential west side of the street, and by what he believes was a lack of transparency by city officials in making the decision. Initially, the plan called for narrowing the road by a lane on each side, instead of adding two lanes of curb space on the east side of the street, on the over Severance Town Center side, Whipple said.

In 2002, according to a city document Whipple obtained through a public information request in March, local residents chose a plan that would extend both curbs as the best choice for the neighborhood. There has been no public hearing since, Whipple noted. Bonita Caplan, the CH council member who introduced the resolution to authorize the city manager to put the project in motion on June 20, said the plan was changed for practical reasons. "It would have been nice to put the land on [the west] side, but it is not financially feasible," she said. "It’s not gonna happen."

The biggest problem, Caplan said, are curb cuts—driveways and other paths to the street that need to be built. "We didn’t know that," Caplan said. "We’ve learned a lot." In turn, Caplan said she has been trying to help the group grow and become a sustainable organization. Adin Colie said that council has been receptive to the group’s ideas, and that city officials expressed their appreciation for the young people’s participation. "Youth of Coventry has been very appreciative of their city leaders’ time. "We love you guys," Nelson told council at the July 18 meeting. At another meeting, Nelson sat down with Big Fun owner, Steve Presser, to share his concerns and exchange perspectives following the decision to cancel the second Coventry Street Fair.

"While most of the group’s members know the Cleveland Heights community, their impact has not been limited to a single city. Members of Youth of CH have talked with Cuyahoga County Councilman Pernel Jones and Sheriff Bob Reid. In addition, Nelson and Colie said parents from several other Northeast Ohio cities have thanked them for the group’s actions and asked about their efforts in Cleveland Heights. Not everyone has been supportive of Youth of Coventry’s message, but that city officials expressed their appreciation for the young people’s participation. Youth of Coventry has been very appreciative of their city leaders’ time. "We love you guys," Nelson told council at the July 18 meeting. At another meeting, Nelson sat down with Big Fun owner, Steve Presser, to share his concerns and exchange perspectives following the decision to cancel the second Coventry Street Fair."

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Douglas Whipple seeks Cleveland Heights City Council for an explanation of their alleged lack of transparency in planning the Taylor Road construction.

Douglas Whipple asks Cleveland Heights City Council for an explanation of their alleged lack of transparency in planning the Taylor Road construction.
Delay and avoid: UH and John Carroll

Winifred Weizer

University Heights might be John Carroll University’s namesake, but relations between the two continue to be “tensed” at best. The university made a request to modify three parts of a 2002 agreement for the use of Shula Stadium. In essence, the request asks that the university be allowed to increase the use of the stadium for non-JCU events and for intramural sports, with a change in the restrictions for use of lights and sound.

On the surface, this appears to be a reasonable request. Today’s college students factor fitness centers and sports (intramural and varsity) into their choice of where to attend school.

Residents in the immediate area of Shula Stadium expressed concerns and objections to any increase in use at the June 20 city council meeting. Council deferred any decision until it had more time to study the issue—using Council of the Whole (COW) work sessions on July 11 and 18.

At these work sessions, the university presented more information in response to questions from council members. After an extensive presentation at the July 18 meeting, council came to a decision: It referred the request to the city planning commission for review and recommendation.

Council expanded the number of items for the commission to review beyond the original three presented by JCU.

The planning commission will send its own report and recommendation back to council. Council will then decide whether to support the planning commission’s recommendations. At that point, one hopes that JCU will finally receive a decision on its request.

Delays like this can sometimes be beneficial to all sides when decisions will have real impact on residents. Delays can occur when information is submitted for consideration at the last minute, as was done by JCU. The process enables both sides to consider objections and modify plans, to be amenable to everyone affected by the changes.

Doing only what is legal may not be doing what is best for the long-term well-being of the area. The goal should be to reach decisions that are in the best interest of the city—the whole city—the residents who are affected and the university.

For that to happen, all of the parties must develop some level of trust with one another.

Since taking office in 2010, Mayor Susan Infeld has had ongoing discussions with JCU over the needs of both the city and the university. This dialogue represents a change from prior years, when the administration and the university rarely spoke, and can lay the groundwork for a more trustful relationship between the city administration and the university. It is a start.

Council also has to do their part in this relationship. They must remember that they do not just represent the residents who are directly affected by the request; they also represent the university and the city as a whole. At the meeting on July 18, the law director advised council members to come to a decision on the JCU request and not refer it to the planning commission.

Council needs to take responsibility for a decision. The university deserves a yes or no to their request, not delay for the sake of delay.

Winifred Weizer, a former councilwoman and longtime resident of University Heights, is filling in for Anita Kazarian.

University Heights hosts free summer concert series

Sherri Winiarski

University Heights is sponsoring a series of free concerts this summer. Performances are at 7 p.m. on Thursdays, on the lawn at Wiley Middle School at 2181 Miramar Boulevard.

• Aug. 4: Mark Grey and the Northcoast Jazz Collective
• Aug. 11: Clear Fork Bluegrass Quartet
• Aug. 18: Frank Moravcik Polka Band
• Aug. 25: Yiddishe Cap Klezmer Band (Jewish folk and American swing)

Sherri Winiarski is assistant to the mayor of University Heights.

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www.heightsobserver.org
Youth at forum see lack of activities for young people

Vince Reddy and Kris Hopkins

Open Doors Academy, a nonprofit out-of-school-hours program for local youth, hosted a community forum on July 14, at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church. The forum, moderated by Open Doors executive director Annemarie Grassi, provided an opportunity for young people to discuss Cleveland Heights’s new curfew policy and the incidents leading to its enactment. The curfew restricts the presence of minors in the Coventry and Cedar Lee commercial districts after 6 p.m.

For the first hour or so, only those under the age of 21 spoke. The 30 or so youths in attendance expressed varying points of view, including the idea that too many kids in one place often leads to trouble and that Coventry, “a big scene,” has always attracted young people. Courtney, age 20, called Coventry a huge party area where kids see adults “getting away with lots of stuff,” and suggested that maybe the city direct its enforcement efforts at college kids first.

A recurring theme was that there is not enough for teenagers to do, especially close to home. Coventry is attractive to kids, but “to actually have a relationship with the police, put them in the schools so kids don’t feel intimidated by the police.” Another said that “to actually have a relationship with the police, put them in the schools so kids can get to know them and learn how their jobs work and open up discussions.” Another theme that arose was the scale of the problem—something people don’t know how to settle their differences without fighting, and suggested that making Coventry and Cedar Lee off limits would cause people to migrate to other places, such as Cain Park.

Some thought that better youth/police relationships could address some of the problems. Some youth reported being intimidated by the police. Another said that “to actually have a relationship with the police, put them in the schools so kids can get to know them and learn how their jobs work and open up discussions.”

Another participant stated that some people don’t know how to settle their differences without fighting, and suggested that making Coventry and Cedar Lee off limits would cause people to migrate to other places, such as Cain Park.

One of the most troubling incidents was reported by Miles, who lives on East Overlook Road and set up a Facebook page for Coventry Village residents. “I hope the page will promote communication, cooperation and friendship among Coventry Village residents,” said Sarah Wean, who lives on East Overlook Road and set up the site. “Facebook is a terrific way to share information and ideas and provide an outlet for neighbors to meet one another and work together on issues of interest.”

Registration with Facebook is required for access. Posting is open to all Coventry Village residents. Go to www.facebook.com and search for “Covington Village Neighbors” to join.

Questions? Call Sarah Wean at 216-932-9106.

Coventry Village has a history of neighborhood organizing, and it is in that spirit that a new Facebook page for Coventry Village residents has been created.

“Open Doors is a great example of the kinds of programs that are needed to engage these young people and to allow them to be agents of change,” said Anne Marie Grassi, executive director of Open Doors Academy.

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www.heightsobserver.org
Emotions run high at forum on youth issues

Lewis Pollis

On July 18, about 150 people filled a meeting room at the Lee Road Library for a Heights Community Congress forum. They were there to discuss the recent problems with flash mobs and the new Special Curfew Districts at Coventry Village and Cedar Lee.

Topics of discussion ranged from issues of flash mobs and social media, to safety and security, to the fairness and effectiveness of the new curfew laws. Kasey Greer, Heights Community Congress executive director, facilitated the discussion by posing questions to the audience, which included such local officials as Cuyahoga County Council Member Julian Rogers and Cleveland Heights Mayor Edward Kelley.

Tom Longo, former Garfield Heights Mayor Edward Kelley.

Member Julian Rogers and Cleveland official as Cuyahoga County Council Congress executive director, facilitated to safety and security, to the fairness issues of flash mobs and social media, Topics of discussion ranged from Coventry Village and Cedar Lee.

For the last comment,” said Beatrice Tolls. “I had to breathe real deep after that moment, the police department is “still investigating.”

Robertson also said that, to this point, the police department is “still trying to get the word out to the youth.” Police have been informing minors of the curfew when they stop them during restricted hours. Only two kids have been arrested under the new ordinance so far, when they went back to the Cedar Lee district after police had asked them to leave.

Lewis Pollis, a lifelong Cleveland Heights resident and graduate of Heights High, is an Observer intern and sophomore at Brown University.
Corydon neighbors attend court to show support for assault victim

Deanna Bremer Fisher

About 30 residents packed the courtroom of Judge Patrick F. Corrigan on July 6 to support their neighbor, Michael Madison, who was assaulted in June. The neighbors got what they wanted, the 17-year-old accused in the incident is behind bars until at least Aug. 1, when he will appear in court again for a determination of probable cause. If cause is found, a date will be set to determine if he will be tried as an adult.

The dinner on Lee Road on June 18, Madison, his wife Julie, and two friends were walking toward their home on Corydon Road at around 10:55 p.m., when they noticed they were being followed by a young male who had been hanging out with a small group near the library. The youth punched Madison in the face, knocking him to the ground. Madison required stitches, according to reports of the assault.

Madison’s alleged attacker faces two counts: felonious assault and aggravated robbery. Ryan Malay of the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor’s Office said that the seriousness of the crime and the three pending cases against the suspect are why he is in the juvenile detention center. “This is a major victory,” said Madison of the ruling. “This attacker went from playing video games at home to spending time in jail.” Madison believes the presence of his neighbors in court made a difference in the judge’s decision.

In the wake of this assault, and recent incidents such as the disturbance after the Coventry Street Fair on June 26, Cleveland Heights residents are sending a message that the community will not tolerate criminal behavior. Resident Anne Finnegan sent an e-mail to her neighbors encouraging them to attend the July 6 hearing “We have a chance to show the juvenile justice system how we feel about violent youth in our community.”

“It makes me angry,” said Marilyn Meadows of Corydon Road. “We can’t let things like this destroy a community that we love and support.”

Her husband, Dick Meadows, agreed. “I was sad and a bit frightened, but also I feel a real strength in my neighbors. Many of them took time off from work to be at the courthouse to support Michael, and our presence made a difference,” he said.

Tom Rask and his wife, Jen, have lived on the street for more than 30 years. “We’ve never seen anything like this,” he said. “It’s a very walkable neighborhood, and that’s one of the things we value about living in Cleveland Heights. I support the city’s new curfew law. It gives the police another tool to deal with the problem, and I hope they use it—sparingly.”

Madison, a psychologist, grew up in Cleveland, and moved to Cleveland Heights in 1980. “I liked its diversity and its beautiful streets,” he said. “I run and bike everywhere. I’ve been overwhelmed by the caring and support from my neighbors . . . stopping by, offering support, inviting us to dinner. One woman, who I had never met before, brought me a pie.”

Cleveland Heights Mayor Ed Kelley attended the hearing. “I will be with them throughout this whole process,” he said. “This behavior is not acceptable in any community, and certainly not Cleveland Heights.”

Madison was impressed with city personnel. “Cleveland Heights police responded rapidly and professionally. Officer McHugh stayed with us and supported us after the trauma, providing a safe presence. And the next night, the mayor and police chief came to our house.”

“It’s been a very good experience. People are not going to run away; we’re in this together. The stranger gift of this is that my love for Cleveland Heights has deepened,” Madison said.

In the past month, two local groups hosted community discussions on the topic of youth violence (see articles in this issue).

Mayor Kelley declared, “I don’t want anyone else hurt on my watch. In the past couple of weeks, Cleveland Heights Police Chief Jeffrey Robertson has been meeting with the police chiefs of surrounding communities, and county officers, to discuss these issues. I will do my best to ensure that Cleveland Heights remains the safest city 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.”

Deanna Bremer Fisher is executive director of FutureHeights and publisher of the Heights Observer.

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University Heights fraternity honored for autism work

Deanna Nyer Mandlowski

Pop culture gives us its version of what life is like for frat boys. It almost always shows a group of self-centered guys who think only about partying. Unfortunately, it rarely spotlightsthe kind of men who make up Beta Theta Pi—and more specifically, Eta Epsilon—the John Carroll University chapter of this fraternity.

The brothers of JCU’s Beta Theta Pi chapter were honored with the Milestones Volunteer of the Year award at this year’s Milestones conference. Milestones Autism Organization was created in 2003 to educate Clevelanders about autism and Asperger’s.

The fraternity adopted Milestones as its philanthropic focus this past year, and its members have done much more than just raise money. They have actively volunteered at events, joined the Milestones team for the Cleveland Autism Speaks walk, created more than 200 mobiles for a kids’ craft table, and made themselves available to help Milestones in any way they could. Beta Theta Pi members because its members were looking for a Northeast Ohio organization that assisted children, and would give them the opportunity to engage in a service partnership.

The Milestones ninth annual conference took place on June 21, and more than 900 people attended, a record. The conference offered 30 workshops and 13 specialized tracks to provide parents, educators, social workers, doctors and others with detailed information about local resources, and to help participants continue learning the best practices for home, school, community and the workplace.

For information about Milestones, visit www.milestones.org, e-mail deana@milestones.org, or call 216-464-7600.

Deana Mandlowski is a communications associate at Milestones Autism Organization. She performs most weekends at Big Dog Theater in Coventry Village.
Heights Observer August 2, 2011

COMMUNITY NEWS

Heights church crosses city lines to support youth

Church of the Master staff
Church of the Master gave a $2,500 grant to the city of South Euclid for its 2011 Summer Youth Initiative.

The grant comes from American Baptist Home Mission Societies (AB-HMS) and its Children in Poverty (CIP) initiative.

This past spring, Sonya Pryor-Jones, a South Euclid resident, asked the church to consider providing support to a proposal made by Councilwoman Ruth Gray. Pryor-Jones, an education and organizational development consultant, submitted a proposal to the denomination’s mission department on behalf of Church of the Master.

“Research shows that where and how youth spend their time outside of school has critical implications for their development,” Pryor-Jones said. “Impoverished youth, in particular, benefit from participation in structured activities that offer constructive interaction with adults and peers, service and leadership opportunities, and challenging, engaging tasks.”

Church of the Master is located in Cleveland Heights, in a community that has more than 170,000 school-age children. The church has historically made youth ministry a cornerstone of its mission.

Rev. Rena B. Hunter has pastored the congregation for more than eight years. “Many adults in their 70s and 80s will remember Teen Town, a highly successful event sponsored by Church of the Master that attracted hundreds of teens from all over the city in the 1960s and 70s. When I tell people I am associated with Church of the Master, they reminisce with a smile, whether they now live in Willoughby, Chagrin Falls or Lakewood, or still live in the Heights. It is our mission to return to those days of being both missionary and sanctuary to our youth,” Hunter said.

The church moved to Cleveland Heights in 1921. “We have the benevolent seeds of John D. and Laura Spelman Rockefeller planted in our church family tree,” continued Hunter. “Of course, we would give!”

For more information, go to www.thechurchofthemaster.com, call 216-381-1001, or e-mail churchofthemaster@sbcglobal.net.

Former Coventry School adds tenants

Richard Stewart

With the recent additions of the Cleveland Sight Center (CSC) and its Heights Futures preschool program, the former Coventry School is busier than it’s been since the building was closed in 2007. Cleveland Heights officials, along with Sight Center and InfoCision employees, celebrated the new enterprises at a midday open house on July 20.

InfoCision, a large call-center company, is training CSC clients to become eligible for employment in telemarketing services in nonprofit fundraising, direct-to-consumer sales and business-to-business applications.

“We’ve created an InfoCision call center right here in the facility. People go through extensive training that prepares them to communicate with our clients’ customers and, at the same time, creates jobs for them. It’s been a real win-win situation all around,” said Steve Brubaker, InfoCision’s chief of staff.

CSC occupies more than 13,000 square feet inside the spacious, open-classroom-style former elementary school. Its mission is to empower people with impaired vision to realize their full potential, and to educate the community about that potential.

At its April meeting, the Cleveland Heights City Council approved a $15,000 loan to the Sight Center from the Community Development Block Grant fund.

CSC’s preschool program provides an alternative preschool experience for children ages 3 to 5, with a primary or secondary vision impairment-blindness.

“We prepare kids for kindergarten by teaching pre-braille skills,” said Sylvia Snyder, program director. “We help them domesticate and explore their worlds with their hands, differentiate texture and navigate the world around them.”

Snyder said that last year the program served 14 children, 8 of whom were vision impaired. Ten of them moved on to kindergarten this year. The program is now seeking additional participants, including non-vision-impaired children from the neighborhood.

The addition of the new tenants marks a high point in the four-year transition from elementary school to an active facility. For almost two years, local residents prepared to welcome the Music Settlement but that plan was abandoned last August, after Music Settlement officials were unable to raise the funds necessary to make the project a reality. The Ensemble Theatre, which formerly performed at the Cleveland Playhouse, moved into space in the former school in February.

Residents, school personnel, and families are invited to contact the Cleveland Sight Center (216-658-8777) to discuss or observe the preschool program as a possible placement option.

Richard Stewart is president of Digizoom Media, a Cleveland Heights-based video production company and a member of the FutureHeights Board of Directors.

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RATS, CATS, TRASH—and books

Carole Wallencheck

You wouldn’t think any organization would be proud of being filled with RATS, CATS and TRASH, but at the Heights Libraries the acronyms have special meaning. RATS are Readers’ Advisory Team Volunteers. CATS are Children’s Advisory Team Services, and TRASH stands for Teen Readers’ Advisory Team Services (for adults), CATS and TRASH, but at the Heights Libraries, the key team is simple—helping patrons find their next good book.

With all the emphasis on new methods of delivering information, and keeping up with the changing needs of communities for entertainment, meeting space and various forms of electronic media, the readers’ advisors at Heights Libraries have not forgotten that one of life’s greatest pleasures can be sitting down with a compelling, comforting, inspiring or thrilling story to read. The staff members can recommend a variety of novels, nonfiction, short stories and biographies, carefully matched to an individual’s reading tastes. Well-meaning friends may suggest their own favorites, and family members may gift a relative with the latest bestseller at birthday time, but library staff go beyond that and take the time to discover what patrons enjoy (or don’t enjoy).

By learning a patron’s likes and dislikes, librarians can customize their recommendations. Keeping up with the newest releases and trends, they can help readers find books they may be unfamiliar with; match them to stories set in their favorite country or time period; offer a well-written non-fiction book that illuminates the novel they are reading; guide the teen whose tastes are changing; and unearth new favorites for kids who don’t know what to read since Harry finally defeated Voldemort. Whether one’s interests are cozy mysteries, ancient Rome or modern Scandinavia, hard-core action, mythical fantasies, glitzy romance, time-honored children’s classics or graphic novels, librarians love to put good books in patrons’ hands.

The readers’ advisors of Heights Libraries are found at all four locations, and offer a variety of blogs, printed lists, displays with reading suggestions, book discussion groups and in-person assistance. Visit and talk with them, and experience the joys of heading home to the coffee shop, or to the beach with that next intriguing read.

Carole Wallencheck is an adult services reference librarian at the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library.
Parenting Q & A

Ellen Barrett, a parent educator at Family Connections, fields questions about daily ups and downs of parenting. The same issues impact many parents. If you have questions for Barrett, e-mail her at barrett@family-connections.org.

Q. I have a sweet and curious 2 1/2-year-old daughter, except when she melts down into a completely head-turning temper tantrum, which seems to be happening a lot lately. It’s so unpredictable—sometimes at her grandparents’ home. When they occur, I feel completely helpless. I don’t what causes them or how to make them better. What can we do?

A. There are few parenting challenges greater than tantrums. Their ability to reduce happy kids (and grown-ups) to a puddle on the floor is striking. Add to this feelings of shame, embarrassment, failure as parents, plus the advice we know that we are in public, find a space where you can carry on. Be prepared to leave a full grocery cart in the store or a full plate of food in a restaurant.

Although tantrums usually appear as an out-of-proportion response to an incident, it is essentially “the straw that broke the camel’s back.” For this reason, tantrums are unpredictable and stem unwarranted. Don’t try to analyze it while it’s happening, but talk about it afterward. Help your child come up with words to describe her feelings. Let her know that you understand.

Remember that tantrums are most likely to occur right before or during periods of big developmental growth. For example, when cognitive development outpaces language development, many two-year-olds experience frustration. Their ideas and desires are strong and clear to them, but the ability to communicate effectively is lacking. Head off tantrums by giving simple and clear information about impending transitions or expectations. For example, tell her “You can play for 10 more minutes, then we are going to the store.”

Two-year-olds are egocentric. They know what they want, but they lack the ability to see other people’s point of view. Add to that a desire for independence, and most two-year-olds are on a collision course with you and the rest of the world. Give limited choices and avoid open-ended questions. At bedtime, “It is time to get ready for bed now.” Then offer a simple choice: “Would you like to wear your blue pajamas or red pajamas?”

Don’t take tantrums personally. Children do not have them to get back at or embarrass you. Remain calm and be prepared.

Finally, like any other parenting strategies, knowing your child and yourself is key to dealing with tantrums. Follow your own good instincts for ways to handle tantrums that are in accord with your child’s temperament and your parenting style.

No summer break for school support

As parks, pools, and camps libraries keep students busy this summer, “Go Public! Great Schools are Everybody’s Business.” encourages all parents and community members to stay or become involved in CH-UH district schools.

In late June, Go Public!, along with Reaching Heights, hosted a discussion with Stacy Stahlreher, coordinator of elementary curriculum, about the district’s plans for elementary instruction. Jeff Talbert, assistant superintendent, also addressed questions and concerns from an audience of about 30.

This past spring, the Go Public! Book Drive collected and distributed more than 2,000 books to elementary school students throughout the CH-UH district.

“My students were thrilled to receive these books,” said Laura Preston, Title I reading specialist at Boulevard Elementary. “They were especially excited to know that someone donated the books to them, and that each book had real meaning to another child. I made a big deal of the fact that their book had a history.” Preston added that she thought the book drive was a great way for the whole community to support public schools.

District and elementary school staff were crucial in seeing that children were matched up with books that suited their reading level and interest. Credit is due to the local businesses, schools and libraries that were drop-off locations throughout the Heights. A special thanks to Mac’s Backs and Renaissance Unity Church, each donated a few hundred books to the drive.

“I am so pleased that our first effort to engage the community was a success,” said founder Joan Sperl. “It’s a small but critical first step to show that if we work together, we can make a positive difference for the schools in our community.”

To learn more, e-mail Lisa Manzari at womanzari@ameritech.net.

Lisa Manzari is the communications director for “Go Public!”

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Cleveland Heights-University Heights Schools School Board

Meeting highlights

JULY 5, 2011
All board members were present.

Full school levy

The Lay Finance Committee recommended that a 7.2 mil levy be placed on the November 2011 ballot. The need is based on a stable enrollment, a decrease in estimated property tax collection to 97 percent, and the district has already made a 7.2 mil levy would last three years and is the same amount as the previous levy, which was the lowest in 30 years. If it doesn’t pass, the committee determined that an 18 mil levy would be needed in 2012 just to “stay afloat” and avoid fiscal emergency, which would require borrowing from state.

Treasure Joe Gainer provided alternative models, e.g., for 6.9 mil and 6.5 mil, with the necessary budget cuts for the fall of 2011. He reminded the board that the previous levy monies had been stretched to four years and typically the subsequent levy would be for an increase, but the Lay Finance Committee had recommended no increase. Had there been no salary freeze, the necessary reduction would have been 1.4 mil. Gainer and Superintendent Douglas Haefer said that to bring down the millage, numerous small administrative cuts could be made that wouldn’t affect academic programming. The board approved a 6.7 mil levy.

Gifted and enrichment programs

Jane Simeti, coordinator of gifted and arts, along with other staff, explained the new program. Most importantly, gifted programming, presently available in all elementary buildings, will be shifted to only two buildings. Students and their families must decide whether to change schools to take advantage of the gifted program. Students not meeting state criteria for giftedness, but whose performance and test scores indicate they need a separate curriculum, will be clustered at their home schools.

The change is proposed because the provision of gifted activities in the math and reading blocks did not meet the needs of all students, some identified students were insufficiently challenged, and the current program has become financially burdensome.

A program called Primary Education Thinking Skills (PETS) will be at all elementary schools to provide all students with enrichment opportunities and to identify additional students as gifted. PETS will expose every child to high-quality critical thinking and problem-solving experiences through whole-group lessons and the use of small groups to practice these skills.

[The online publication of this report presents details of the board’s response to this presentation.]

Grievance procedure

Cleveland Heights Teachers’ Union President Ari Klein requested that the board describe the process (“step 3”) wherein the board hears a grievance. He believed the union had not received a response to its letter asking the board to hear the grievance submitted on behalf of Barry Egan, Heights High’s head basketball coach, whose contract had not been renewed. Treasurer Scott Gainer stated that the issue of board response to step 3 in the grievance process had come up in previous years and that legal counsel had communicated with the union in regard to this particular grievance. Klein replied that the union believed this procedural issue has not been satisfactorily addressed over the past seven years and urged the board to clarify the process.

OUV observer: Cassandra Tallock-Kaplin

JULY 12, 2011
All board members were present.

Facilities Planning Committee

This committee was formed to review and analyze the viability of the Ohio School Facilities Commission’s assessment. This included reviewing and analyzing learning environments, facilities’ planning options, and funding options and developing specific recommendations.

Their presentation revealed that despite the best efforts of the staff, buildings are worn and troubled by outdated systems, and solutions have been undertakings. Additions to the new buildings built prior to 1970 undermine their architectural integrity and often reduce light. Changes in educational technology have created new challenges for their electrical systems. On the positive side, the schools are structurally sound. Many now have roofs, windows and other upgrades. Older buildings have historic value and architectural integrity.

Data suggests that students perform better in newer/updated schools. The district lacks flexible spaces that can yield higher outcomes at lower costs. Minimal required repairs and improvements are estimated to cost more than $40 million. Current facilities, inefficient in their use of space, could be reduced from 1,300,000 square feet to 800,000. A building plan based on 800,000 square feet could range from $170 to $180 million.

The committee felt it needed more input from the board and the community. No specific scenarios were recommended. The longer it takes to act, the higher the cost. The board must balance replacement versus renovation, and must have experts to craft a detailed plan. A ballot initiative would be required; therefore, community support is necessary.

New principal and new coach

The board approved Joseph Nicklos as the new principal of Oxford Elementary School and Andrew Suttell as high school head basketball coach.

OUV observer: Adie Cohn.

Look for earlier and often expanded postings of meeting summaries online at www.heightsobserver.org.

See disclaimer on page 5.

Garrett Morgan returns to enrich learning at Boulevard Elementary School

SUSIE KAESER

I’m a regular at Lake View Cemetery. It’s a grand place to walk, view nature and enjoy the serenity while experiencing Cleveland history. The headstones tell so much.

My route frequently passes by the grave of Garrett A. Morgan, the African-American inventor, philanthropist and publisher who is credited with more than 40 inventions, including the gas mask and traffic lights. This spot is special. It’s a reminder of how empowering this important African American. The students were changed forever.

It all started in the fall of 1993 when the students started their research on Cleveland history. The two teachers valued real connections as part of every lesson, so a visit to Lake View Cemetery seemed like a logical way to bring some history to life. After touring Garfield’s monument and visiting John D. Rockefeller’s towering obelisk, they found Garrett Morgan’s modest grave tucked away at the far edges of the cemetery. It was a powerful contrast that upset the students, who thought it fell short in representing their significant African American. They felt there was an injustice and they wanted to do something about it. They wanted to set the record straight.

They, who still teaches at Boulevard, remembers that their history lesson ignited student passions and history suddenly connected to them. The best one can ever hope for in teaching: the students took the lead. Several months after their cemetery visit, they had named a campaign, developed posters and news stories, and plotted a strategy for giving greater recognition to Garrett Morgan. They raised more than $200 by selling their toys, popcorn and surprise bags, and gave it to Lake View. The plaque they purchased is still there reminding people about this important African American. The students were changed forever.

I have some good news for those 25 and 26 year olds who honored Garrett Morgan 17 years ago. Garrett Morgan will once again be a source of project-based learning for Boulevard students. Call it serendipity. Or what goes around comes around. This July, Boulevard received preliminary approval for a large grant from the Garrett Morgan Foundation to support project-based lessons as part of the school’s new emphasis on science and technology. If they are as empowering as the 1993 history lesson, the grant will surely change another generation of students.

Susie Kasaer is a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights. She is the former director of Reaching Heights and current board member of the Home Repair Resource Center.
Facilities committee offers renovation plan to school board

James Helmsworth

After more than a year of research and planning, Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District’s facilities committee made a five-point recommendation to the board of education on how to renovate the district’s facilities.

The committee stated that renovation must occur rapidly as it will become worse the longer the district waits to fix problems such as these, the worse the district facilities will fare compared to neighboring districts.

The district must have the funds to carry out an extensive renovation of facilities, the committee recommended. “The minimum cost of repairs would be an estimated $40 million, with one firm estimating the costs at $245 million.”

The facilities committee said that a capital bond issue would be needed to raise funds for a comprehensive renovation program.

The facilities committee recommended hiring designers to start crafting an actual plan for reconstruction and stated that the district needs input from parents and the community when planning.

While neither the district nor the committee has scheduled any such meetings, committee member Eric Silverman said, “At this stage, what I foresee is a lot of meetings where architects and planners meet with residents from various neighborhoods and ask them what they like about the current buildings and what they would like to change.”

Finally, the facilities committee emphasized that whatever the extent of the renovation, it needs to be sustainable for 50 or more years. Many of the schools encountering problems were constructed in the 1970s.

Two schools have multiple classrooms sharing one large, high-ceiling space, which has frustrated teachers for decades due to the poor lighting and poor acoustics. The facilities committee wants to ensure that past mistakes are not repeated. The spaces from the 1970s are the most likely to be demolished and rebuilt.

The school board approved the committee’s findings, agreeing that more input was needed from parents and community members before any significant steps are taken.

James Helmsworth is a student at Oberlin College and a Heights Observer summer intern.

CH-UH hires new Oxford School principal

Angee Shaker

Joseph Nicklos will join the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District in September as the new principal of Oxford Elementary School.

DeniceLeddy, who was Oxford Elementary’s principal during the 2010–11 school year, will begin her new position as the district’s coordinator of testing/ accountability on Aug. 8.

“We’re delighted to have Nicklos as our new Oxford Elementary principal, and we’re confident he will work well with our teachers, students and the community to make Oxford Elementary an even more vibrant school,” Superintendent Douglas Heuer said. “And, as Denice Leddy proved during her years as Oxford principal, she has the vision and skills to move our curriculum forward. We’re very fortunate to have both Joseph and Denice in our district.”

Nicklos was principal of Garfield Heights Middle School during the last school year and has 29 years of experience as a guidance counselor, social studies teacher, principal and assistant principal, working at the middle school and high school levels.

In her role as the district’s co-ordinator of testing/accountability, Leddy will focus on testing and accountability standards to ensure that students reach their potential and that CH-UH schools are constantly improving.

Leddy’s predecessor, Caroline Kaczala, had served in the position for 20 years before retiring this summer.

Angee Shaker is director of communications for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District.

CH-UH Board of Education takes first step toward November ballot issue

Angee Shaker

After months of close study and analysis, the lay finance committee of the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District recommended that the board of education place an operating levy on the November 2011 ballot.

Jayne Geneva, chair of the six-member committee, stated to the board that a $2.72 mill levy in November would sustain the district’s current programming. Scott Gainer, chief financial officer, described additional scenarios to the board that would lower the millage amount, but require cuts.

After careful consideration and debate, the board agreed on $2.72 mill levy, an amount that will require $250,000 in additional cuts, but at the same time, protect educational programming.

The board approved the first of two public readings of the resolution necessary for the issue to go forward. In the last 20 years, 6.9 mil is the smallest operating levy requested.

The levy would cost the average taxpayer an additional $75.20 a month per $100,000 of property valuation. According to Gainer, “Without the levy, the district would be forced to make more than $7 million in cuts.”

“This school district has made consistent academic improvements in recent years, and we must protect and build on those achievements,” said Eric Goble, CH-UH board president. “The board and administration have placed great importance on limiting costs in all areas. District staff has taken the lead by consistently making cuts in all departments without compromising classroom instruction, and all school employees have agreed to a two-year pay freeze.”

“We are at the point now,” said Superintendent Douglas Heuer, “where any more significant cuts to personnel and services, like those that would be necessary without a levy, would directly hurt education. We cannot let that happen.”

“Our schools are part of what makes Cleveland Heights and University Heights such a special place to live,” added Goble. “The school district is improving every year, with the great leadership of Superintendent Douglas Heuer and the hard work of all our students, teachers, and staff. As a community, we cannot allow our schools to take a single step backwards. That would hurt the children of this district, and the quality of the community as a whole.”

Angee Shaker is director of communications for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District.

Advertise in the Heights Observer

216-320-1423
This year marks the 100th birthday of Heights Hardware in Coventry Village.

Heights Hardware was opened in 1911 by the Weiskopf family, co-owner Andy Gathy said, and ownership moved to his family when a distant cousin bought the store about 60 years ago. Gathy’s father, Tom, bought the business in 1979. “We like to think that Cleveland Heights grew up around the store,” Andy said.

Gathy, 36, has no plans for a celebration to mark the occasion. “We’re not looking to really wag our own tail,” he said. “We’re just happy to be around.” He added that they have no idea what the store’s actual birthdate is, and noted that, while a store like Big Fun (which celebrated its 20th anniversary earlier this year) easily lends itself to a party, Heights Hardware doesn’t do that.

Much of the store’s layout has changed since Tom Gathy, now 73, bought it. Most notably, he added 1,800 square feet of space to the back in the late 1990s, after Home Depot opened at Severance Town Center. Some of the original design remains intact, however, including the southern wall, which is covered with wooden shelves and drawers (the highest ones accessible via a sliding library ladder), all 100 years old.

Aside from service and “our old charm,” Andy Gathy said the business continues to be successful because they carry hard-to-find items, like repair parts for old houses. He said many customers are surprised that, after failing to find things they need elsewhere, they can be helped at Heights Hardware “in a minute or two.” Gathy does not think of his business as a specialty store, but said, “in our own little way, we are.”

Heights Hardware is “a real vintage place,” said Jef Lowell, an employee for five years. “I think it’s a marvelous store. I’m very proud to work here.”

Today, the store’s biggest competitor is Home Depot. Before the big box opened, “it was always steadier business,” Andy Gathy said, “but business has been a little bit better recently.” Gathy attributes part of the increased business to customers’ renewed preference for repairing old appliances (a need which “as long as the community still supports us,” Andy Gathy said, though he is not sure the store has another 100 years left in it. “We’ll see,” he said. “I don’t know.”

Tom Gathy was more optimistic. “We’re going to stick around,” he said confidently.

Deborah Zaccaro Hoffman is an attorney with Fanger & Associates, a full-service law firm. She concentrates her practice in general estate planning and family law, special needs planning, disability law, and guardianship. She can be reached at 440-605-9641.
A new hair salon has opened in Coventry. Eddy’s On Coventry, LLC, is located in the former Fast Eddy’s Chop Shop at 1785 Coventry Rd., now under new management.

Owner Eddy Maddox has opened his own hair salon in Coventry. "I want to give them a great haircut, but I also want to give them a great experience and for them to feel at home."

The 800-square-foot location houses six cutting stations and employs three stylists—Raqui Brown, who works at Fast Eddy’s for five years; Renee Bennett, formerly of Crazy Mallets; and Maddox, who has 23 years of experience cutting and styling hair.

Originally from Cuyahoga Falls, Maddox opened Fast Eddy’s with a partner in 2004, and also helped to open five other establishments in the area. While he gained technical skills from his studies in Chicago, Toronto and London, Maddox also loves to “cut free form,” like a musician, he said. His passion for styling originally stemmed from a need to help pay for college courses. Since then, he estimates he has given thousands of haircuts, and is continuing his work at Eddy’s On Coventry.

Opening a business is extremely difficult, said Maddox, adding that he hopes to expand his newest endeavor, after its first year, by opening a second salon.

In addition to high-quality, full-service hair cutting and styling, the salon has a warm, homey feel that resembles the side of a barn, and fireplace mantel, a product storage unit for interior design, Maddox added a mix of vintage instruments and parts dating back to the 1800s. “We never throw anything away,” Maddox said.

A welcoming atmosphere, friendly service and artistic décor are among the features that Maddox hopes will attract customers to Eddy’s On Coventry, LLC, in addition to high-quality, full-service hair styling.

Product lines such as Pureology, Aquage and Reifkin are used for styling, and staff serves visitors homemade cookies and lemon ice water, made from organic lemons, Maddox said. Focusing on interior design, Maddox added a professional musician. Trumpet was his main instrument, but he also played clarinet and saxophone with groups, such as the one that eventually became the Cleveland Jazz Orchestra. He demonstrated his musicianship, playing an early version of a piccolo trumpet from the 1920s, one of only 50 such handmade models in the world, and part of the store’s collection if vintage instruments and parts dating back to the 1800s. “We never throw anything away,” Maddox said.

In addition to selling and repairing instruments, Academy offers private lessons in its studios. Having local professionals like woodwind player Dave Sterner teach students “makes it a little special,” noted Ianni.

Much of Academy’s business comes from local schools. “I’ve tried to form good relationships with the districts surrounding the stores,” said Ianni, who attended Oxford Elementary and Monticello Middle schools before graduating from Heights High in 1974. Ianni’s work with the schools has kept business “pretty steady,” even with the economic downturn. As an instrument repair business, Ianni said, “Academy is kind of a niche thing. We’re more of a destination.”

That’s not to say that the store hasn’t been affected by the recession. “People can’t afford lessons,” he said. Even when partial scholarships are available from organizations like Reaching Heights, “people won’t spend the time or the money.”

Ianni is also troubled by the decline in music on local schools. “People don’t take music,” he noted, “but it just adds so much to any kid’s education.”

Ianni said that the luckiest thing about his career has been the support of his wife, Patti. When he worked long hours at the store, she understood, he recalled, adding “Anybody else would have divorced.”

Look for Academy to stick around for a while, as Ianni has no plans to quit: “I enjoy what I do.”

Lewis Pollis, a lifelong Cleveland Heights resident and a graduate of Heights High, is an Observer intern and sophomore at Brown University.
PC Handyman makes computer repairs fun

Charley Bass and John Pierce want to put a friendly face on the electronics repair and service business.

“It’s not such a bad thing to have to drop off your computer,” said Pierce, who is co-owner, along with Bass and silent partner Brett Angney, of PC Handyman, which opened this month in Cedar Fairmount, above Starbucks.

“We like to have fun,” he added.

“A handyman has to be able to do a lot of things,” Bass pointed out. In addition to computer repairs and Web development services, PC Handyman offers graphic and gaming design, videography, and search-engine optimization services. They also offer one-on-one classes for computers, software and mobile devices.

Bass and Pierce, both 40, have been friends for 15 years, and bonded over shared entrepreneurial aspirations.

“Charley and I were always talking about ideas,” Pierce recalled.

The partners say that the reason they decided to open up shop in Cleveland Heights is simple: it’s where they live. “We’re your neighbors,” said Bass, who was born and raised in Cleveland Heights. “We try to do everything lo-cal.”

“We love Cleveland Heights and want to support our community,” added Pierce, who has lived in the city since 1996.

Pierce and his wife, Rosemary, have a daughter, Brynn, 10, and two sons, Trey, 8, and Miles, 4. Bass has a daughter, Anabel, 7, and an older brother, Baxby.

“Anabel’s vision for Cleveland Heights: “I think this town should have a more positive vibe,” and noted that he hopes to see more eclectic small businesses open in the city.

Bass and Pierce see themselves as more than just tech guys. One package that PC Handyman sells to musicians offers not only Web development and marketing, but also music video production and studio time organization tools.

“That’s how we handle all of our Web exploits,” said Pierce. “It’s not just, ‘We got you 50 page views today’?”

“This is a cool place,” Bass said. Pierce pointed out that their office is "an open environment," as opposed to other computer repair centers, which he compared to “going into a Laundromat.

“We care a lot about people,” Pierce said. “That’s the fun part for us.”

Lewis Pollis is a lifelong Cleveland Heights resident and a graduate of Heights High. He is an Observer intern and a sophomore at Brown University.

Ice cream cart is sweet on Coventry

Perhaps you’ve noticed something different on Coventry Road lately. Maybe you’ve seen more people than usual relaxing on street benches, or just strolling down the street. Maybe you’ve noticed a street cart between two trees outside of Phoenix Coffee. If you’ve seen any of these things, the reason is probably Sweetie Fry.

Sweetie Fry is the newest addition to Coventry, bringing artisan ice cream to Cleveland Heights. Like its ice cream, this new addition is anything but ordinary.

It all started when Keith Logan, creator and owner of Sweetie Fry, became bored with the business world. Frequent meetings and travel had become dull. Then, Logan took a faith development class at Forest Hill Church, and discovered he loved craftsmanship.

“Craftsmanship to me is learning to do a task and continuing to learn that task ten years down the line,” said Logan.

Logan also learned that he loved hospitality and bringing community together. So, when his wife suggested that his next career move should be ice cream, Logan recognized an exciting opportunity.

Logan sees ice cream as combining craftsmanship and hospitality. “Ice cream brings the community together,” he said.

He spent several months taking classes and participating in training programs, to learn the craft of making ice cream. One class was the 119th annual ice cream training program at Penn State. Logan then traveled the United States, visiting the best ice cream shops in the nation. He learned unique methods of making ice cream and rounded up the best ingredients he could find.

The next step was to find a Cleveland Heights location where he could share his new expertise. Although Coventry was one of his first choices, there were no openings for him. Logan eventually found a spot on Lee Road.

“It was not sold on Sweetie Fry... until she was proud that Coventry merchants were so accepting of Sweetie Fry and believes that the merchants and the Cleveland Heights community should see this cart as one of their own.

When Sweetie Fry opens on Lee Road, Logan plans to offer French fries, along with ice cream flavors, such as peanut butter, vanilla bean, mango-banana, maple bacon, and a Phoenix-inspired espresso.

The name Sweetie Fry came from Logan’s youngest daughter, Maura. Logan had asked his family for help, but after 150 suggestions, nothing inspired him. Then, Maura suggested Sweetie Fry. Logan instantly loved the quirky and affectionate sound of the name, as “quirky and affectable name of the sound, “as quirky and affectionate as Sweetie Fry will be,” he said.

Look for Sweetie Fry to open some time in September, at 2307 Lee Road.

Jim Perkins, a Heights Observer intern, is earning a master’s degree in communications management at John Carroll University.

PC Handyman co-owner John Pierce sits at his desk.

The 34th Heights Heritage Home & Garden Tour

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All proceeds benefit Heights Community Congress.
A young woman walked into Winds of Change recently, eager to find an outfit for a date that night. The boutique’s managers matched her enthusiasm, helping her choose the right dress, accessories and boots.

“She was excited about a special time in her life and we got to be a part of it,” said manager Drew Walker. “Our clients are not just customers, they are people we spend time with and get to know individually.”

A sense of hospitality and love of retail is evident in Coventry Road’s newest boutique. Opened in June, the name Winds of Change (WOC) comes from Mayan philosophy and the study of light and magnetic wind.

The boutique’s intimate décor channels Urban Outfitters gone Boho, and fits the eclectic style of the neighborhood. Tie-dyed ribbons dangle from the ceilings, as stacked vintage aluminum cans with the WOC logo and repurposed wooden pallets add earthy tones.

With another store in Chagrin Falls, Walker said the boutique’s second location is not only convenient, but adds to the diversity of its customer base. “[We attract] a younger demographic with students from nearby universities, such as John Carroll and Case Western Reserve, as well as a heavy Beachwood and Shaker clientele,” he said.

Well-known designer labels, such as Free People and J Brand, bring in those who love fashion with an earthy, chic feel. Lesser-known brand names, such as Lauren Moshi, Alternative Apparel and Jeffrey Campbell shoes, attract customers looking for a unique, vintage look. Free People devotees will find pieces by Gypsy, which have similar laid-back hippy style.

The apparel and accessories appeal to all ages. Manager Sabrina Jetli said customers range in age from 15 to 65.

“All of the [apparel, shoes and accessories] have a way of blending together and working with one another; that’s the beauty of it,” said Walker.

As proof, Walker and Jetli cite the story of the woman shopping for a date outfit. She left with several WOC pieces assembled into a perfect look. Mission accomplished.

“It is exciting to be a part of that,” said Walker. “She’s going to come back and tell us about her date; and we’re part of that, too. It’s about having customers come back and getting them more excited.”

Jennifer Holton is a writer and managing editor for JCU’s The Carroll News.

Winds of Change Boutique
1780 Coventry Rd., Cleveland Heights
Mon.–Weds. 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Thurs.–Sat. 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.
Sun. noon to 5 p.m.
216-371-8883

Managers Sabrina Jetli and Drew Walker, with owner David Walker outside of Winds of Change.
Lake Erie Ink offers year-round programs

Jeanette Sloan

Looking for a way to express your creative side? Need help with homework or looking to tutor those in need? Lake Erie Ink (LEI) offers numerous writing and homework assistance programs for the youth of Greater Cleveland. Founded by Amy Rosenbluth and Cynthia Larsen, LEI helps youths find a voice, the power of creative expression, and an audience, and teaches them skills to communicate effectively.

Since 2006, Rosenbluth and Larsen have facilitated their own school poetry clubs. During the 2020 school year, they collaborated to form LEI and offered four after-school Library Writers clubs to students in grades 4–12, as well as three elementary school lunch-time writing clubs. In addition, Rosenbluth has facilitated the Heights Teen Poetry Slam for 11 years, and Larsen taught project-based creative writing in collaboration with teachers at Boulevard and Coventry elementary schools for four years. They are both credentialed teachers who bring valuable youth programming and teaching experience to LEI.

Programs offered at LEI include after-school homework assistance and tutoring, creative expression workshops, teen cafe and writing workshops, teen tutor-training workshops, play writing, and in-school project-based creative writing experiences.

LEI is looking for dedicated high school and adult volunteers interested in youth education and creative writing. Volunteers are required to attend tutor workshops, and pass a background screening to ensure they are a good match for the program.

Mikale Thomas, a 15-year-old Cleveland Heights student, is an active volunteer for LEI, who previously worked with 4th–6th graders in youth writing. Mikale said: "I thought volunteering was fun and am looking forward to doing it again!" Mikale, who writes on her own time at Heights Arts, is an intern at FutureHeights Arts and is studying environmental studies at Cleveland State University.

Lewis Pollis

Filming for the upcoming major motion picture, "I, Alex Cross," is taking place in Cleveland Heights.

A film crew will be shooting in a house in the Roxboro area for seven days this month, according to a resident of the house.

The film is based on a series of books by Dr. John A.Ｇ. Gray. Cross, a private detective, investigates a series of multiple murders and is passionate about working with other young writers.

"I, Alex Cross" films in Cleveland Heights

Lewis Pollis

Filming for the upcoming major motion picture, "I, Alex Cross," is taking place in Cleveland Heights.

A film crew will be shooting in a house in the Roxboro area for seven days this month, according to a resident of the house.

The film is based on a series of novels by James Patterson. "Alex Cross, doctor of psychology and expert homicide detective, investigates a series of murders and uncovers evidence that the killer has a much grander plan," according to a press release from the Cleveland Film Commission. "After thwarting the killer's next attack, Cross soon finds himself and his family among the killer’s next targets."

The movie stars Tyler Perry, Matthew Fox, Ed Burns, and Janet Reno and is directed by Rob Cohen, the press release said. It is scheduled to be released in 2012, according to IMDb.com.

Lewis Pollis, a lifelong Cleveland Heights resident and a graduate of Heights High, is an Observer intern and sophomore at Brown University.
Heights Arts brightens up construction site

Fencepiration, a temporary public art project of Heights Arts, is in full bloom through the month of August. For a second summer, artists Carol Hummel and Debbie Apple Presser are transforming the utilitarian construction fence that runs along Cedar Road, at the site of the now razed Cedar Center, into an eye-catching and unexpected landscape, using recycled materials. The idea for Fencepiration was hatched by Peggy Spaeht, Heights Arts director, at a meeting with the Coral Company in early 2010. Spaeht suggested, “While you’re waiting to build, why don’t we do something with the fence?” The group liked the idea, and Heights Arts recruited Carol Hummel and Debbie Apple Presser, professional artists who use nontraditional materials in site-specific installations. In spring, their collaborative efforts resulted in a vision for Fencepiration, and the project was launched.

Last summer, with the support of sponsors and community volunteers, Hummel and Apple Presser created the first phase of Fencepiration, installing hundreds of tree blossoms, colorful flowers and sparkly leaves made from plastic bags, milk jugs and aluminum cans on approximately 200 running feet of the construction fence. Through the winter and spring, passers-by were treated to a burst of cheerful color, as Fencepiration endured the snow, wind and rain. Responding to positive feedback from the community, and learning that the redevelopment of the site had stalled, Heights Arts, with a nod from the Domino Foundation and from private contributions, put the project’s wheels back in motion. Heights Arts found new and renewed support from several Cedar Center merchants, from the Dominion Foundation and from private contributions.

Heights Arts connected Fencepiration with youth in the Young Audiences of Northeast Ohio’s ArtWorks program—an arts-based jobs-training program for high school students—and the Heights Youth Club. The students learned about Hummel’s and Apple Presser’s artistic careers and the complexities of site-specific installations. They also collected recycled materials for the project, created pieces for the fence, and assisted the artists during a day of installation.

Heights Arts provided after-school workshops at the Heights Youth Club, where students became engaged in the community-based public-art project, learning about recycling and reuse, and created many imaginative elements for the fence. Always intended to be a temporary public art project, it will be removed from the fence in early September. Hummel, a resident of Newark, Ohio, is best known in the Cleveland area for her “Free Cozy” and “Knitscape” projects. She has completed large-scale, site-responsive installations in Utah, Colorado, India and, most recently, at Chicago’s Morton Arboretum.

Apple Presser, a graduate of Heights High and a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights, has created many site-specific installations, including ones at the Nature Center at Shaker Lakes and at Akron’s Stan Hywet Hall & Gardens. She teaches at Hathaway Brown School and at the Cleveland Museum of Art.

Heights Arts needs to raise an additional $500 by Aug. 15 to capitalize on a generous matching grant of $1,000 from the Dominion Foundation. To make a donation, call Heights Arts at 216-371-3457.

Andrea Joki is a program administrator at Heights Arts.

‘Once Again’ showcases Heights High alumni and stirs memories

James Helmsworth

July 15 was a typical weekend night on Coventry Road—couples walking arm in arm, restaurant patrons enjoying the night air, and a throng of people gathered outside the Grog Shop.

Yet, July 15 was special. The crowd was gathered to see their own friends, neighbors and former classmates perform. The night was third in the series, “Once Again Cleveland Heights Throwback Artists Showcase,” a concert featuring Heights High graduates. Like the first concert in April, the night featured a heavy hip-hop line-up, with excursions into pop, jazz, and even comedy.

The show’s headlining act was Wildlife Soundz, a rap-rock group. The highlights of the show, however, were sets by The INR CRCL, whose punk-meets-funk sounds were fresh and energizing, and Kounterclockwise, a psychedelic rap group that drew a crowd early in the evening. Also appearing onstage were Harry Bacharach, a jazz artist; Gwen Maul, a soul singer; Obie Won, a dancemhall rapper; Rum Roxier, a house DJ; Grown Blak, a hip hop act; and DeLonte, a comedian who offered a raunchy, impromptu set.

“There is so much talent from Heights it’s unbelievable,” said Mai Moore, who organized Once Again. “I simply like power and knew I could bring together quality artists, all from Heights.” Moore, a Cleveland Heights High School graduate, was eager to showcase the talented musicians who have come out of the school. She runs Knowledgeable Marketing, a Cleveland-based marketing firm specializing in online content.

Though at least one member of each act attended Heights High, it might not be accurate to describe Once Again as a showcase of local bands; many have a national presence. Kounterclockwise, started in New York City has made beats for internationally acclaimed rapper Yela Wolf, and composed the music for “Lover Rome,” a film by Carter B. Smith, Smith is known for his work directing music videos, such as “Jane Says,” a 1990s hit by Jane’s Addiction.

Despite the high profile of some of the artists, the Grog Shop had the feel of a high school reunion as old friends reunited to enjoy music and share memories. A stream of chatter came from the bar, while several people filmed and took photos of the sets. The performers felt the nostalgia, too. Deacon Burns, Kounterclockwise’s MC, opened his set, declaring, “I represent all the Cleveland Heights kids who didn’t really go to class much.” Before his set, Obi Won, better known as Hasaan Adams, gave a shout-out to the tennis team, and recalled his football days as “the worst split end in history.”

The artists felt there was something special in seeing so much community support. “It’s nice to see Heights coming together,” said Burns, better known as Doug Johnson, Class of ’93. During his set, several audience members in the front row were rapping along with him. LaToya Kent, lead singer of The INR CRCL—as well as a classmate of Johnson’s—was also thrilled. “Heights has so many different spectrums of personalities and talents. I am proud to say I am part of this legacy.”

The fervor of the evening was briefly reined in when host Anthony Johnson called for a moment of silence to honor the Heights High alumni who died since the audience’s time in school. After a few moments, the silence was broken by members of the crowd shouting the names of absent friends. This action, perhaps best typified the concert: a celebration through sound of what Heights has been and is now.
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The Rainforest
Car Wash,
in Cleveland Heights, is now open.
Located on the corner of Mayfield and Middlehurst (enter from Middlehurst), this state of the art car wash is open to the public. Featuring a rain forest theme both inside and out, The Rainforest Car Wash will be the best car wash you’ve ever had.