Heights Arts founding director to retire

Peggy Spaeth, founding director of Heights Arts, has announced plans to retire. “It’s a good time for transition—both for Heights Arts and for me personally,” said Spaeth. “I feel a sense of mission accomplished.”

“Heights Arts made the case that creative residents can enliven community life,” Spaeth observed, “and today our community knows exactly how indispensable visual artists, musicians, writers and others are to our daily lives. As [art critic] Michael Kimmelman said, “Art is never necessary. It is merely indispensable.”

Spaeth said that she plans to stay on until a new director is selected by the board—“hopefully by spring.”

Sharon Grossman, an artist and founding member of Heights Arts, commented on her time working with Spaeth. “It’s hard for me to believe that Peggy is stepping down from the helm, but she has a few other things she wants to achieve in this lifetime,” said Grossman. “We’ve been in this together, from the beginning. Thirty years of building Heights Arts—of setting and fulfilling goals to bring this community together through the arts. Thirteen years of fine art, the written word, public art, poet laureates, signs, benches, openings, murals, street concerts and more.”

Bobby Spaeth will step down as the head of Heights Arts when a new director is selected.

Remembering UH Councilman Thomas Cozzens

University Heights Councilman Thomas Cozzens died on Jan. 17, after a brief battle with cancer. Susan Infeld, University Heights mayor, shared the news in an e-mail on Jan. 18.

“He was intelligent, thoughtful and well-respected by everyone at City Hall,” said Infeld. “We will miss him.”

The wake for Cozzens was held on Jan. 20 at the DeJohn-Flynn-Mylott Funeral Home. A Mass of Christian Burial celebrating his life was held on Jan. 21 at St. Dominic Catholic Church in Sharon Heights.

In her e-mail, Infeld noted that the 71-year-old Cozzens was a longtime resident of University Heights. “In November 2011, Tom was elected to the City Council and was sworn in as a councilman on Jan. 3, 2012,” said Infeld, who added that, as councilman, Cozzens was chairman of the City Council Finance Committee. Cozzens also served the community as a 13-year member of the Board of Zoning Appeals.

Infeld said that the city will have a special remembrance of Councilman Cozzens at a February council meeting. His family will be invited to attend.

Kim Sergio Infeld

LFC considers six school building scenarios

At its Jan. 29 meeting, the Lay Facilities Committee (LFC) discussed several school building scenarios and formulated a plan to survey the public.

Plan C, the scenario approved by the CH-UH Board of Education (BOE) last July, would have closed three elementary schools; moved fourth and fifth graders to the middle schools; and, through a combination of renovation and new construction, created learning communities—flexible learning spaces—in all grades.

The BOE decided against placing a bond issue on the November 2012 ballot due to insufficient public support, and created the Lay Facilities Committee to recommend a new plan.

Eric Silverman, co-chair of the buildings subcommittee, presented six possible scenarios for the LFC to consider. He began by laying out three recommendations that applied to each: keep the current grade configuration, don’t go “all-in” for the learning communities concept, and reduce the number of middle schools from three to no more than two.

Patrick Mullen, LFC chair, added that a fourth recommendation could be added. “There will be an elementary school in University Heights,” he said.

The subcommittee recommended maintaining the district’s current grade configuration—kindergarten through fifth grade in elementary buildings, sixth through eighth grade in middle schools, and ninth through twelfth grade in a high school.

Silverman said the subcommittee considered testimony by district administrators at previous LFC meetings, continued on page 8
Help shape the future of our public schools.

Join the conversation about school facilities at: theciviccommons/conversations/ch-uh-school-facilities
Play it safe with artificial turf

Joan Spoerl

Would our community leaders and parents knowingly and willingly increase children's exposure to harmful toxins? Of course not—with the key words being “knowingly” and “willingly.” We all want to do well by our children. That is why the Cleveland Heights City Council was the first in the country to ban the use of pesticides on public property, school grounds and playing fields. The wisdom of that measure is supported by health experts, who suggest limiting one’s exposure to pesticides and other toxins.

Two years ago, artificial turf was laid down on Denison Field. Research on such fields has resulted in warnings and recommendations from public health and pediatric environmental health experts. There are concerns that the many toxic chemicals used in artificial turf’s crumb rubber infill may make their way into children’s bodies, the surrounding environment, soil and groundwater.

In 2010, the Center for Environmental Health (CEH) was instrumental in persuading the turf industry to eliminate lead from their products because lead is regulated by law. According to Michael Green, CEH’s executive director, “Lead was only one of many concerns” related to artificial turf: dangerous field temperatures (exceeding 150 degrees F on warm days), staph infections (from abrasions and turf burns) and injuries such as “turf toe.” He recommends that communities delay installing more of these fields “until questions about their safety have been studied more thoroughly.”

I am also concerned about the harsh chemicals and pesticides used to clean the fields, the price tag for these disposable fields that last only 7–10 years before they must be replaced, and the subsequent cost of their disposal. Each field costs between $750,000 and $1,000,000. Because many children are already playing on artificial turf fields, I believe that community, school and athletic program leaders should regularly publicize the concerns listed above, along with the following tips from CEHC for safer use of these fields:

- Do not use artificial turf fields on days with temperatures in the 80s and above.
- Clean and monitor any “turf burns.”
- Attempt to remove all pellets from the field before leaving the field.
- Do not eat on the field or turf.
- Avoid contaminating drinking containers with dust and fibers from the field. When not in use, containers should be kept closed in a bag or other covered container on the side of the field.
- Do not do any activities on the field.
- Remove and wash clothing and shoes if not feasible to remove clothing, especially if it is not feasible to remove clothing, especially if it is not feasible to remove clothing, it is not feasible to remove clothing.
- Use DNA-cleaning products with dust and fibers from the field.
- Keep closed in a bag or other covered container on the side of the field.

I encourage all Heights businesses to advertise this free parking in their windows and on their websites. Let’s get the word out!

Brendan Ring
President, Nighttown
Treasurer, Cedar Fairmount Special Improvement District
Locals organize to end corporate use of individual rights

Stephen Hanley

Cleveland Heights citizens are joining others across the country in a non-partisan attempt to overturn the controversial 2010 Supreme Court decision, Citizens United v. Federal Elections Commission. Equating money with speech, the judicial majority ruled that limits on corporate and union campaign contributions were a denial of First Amendment rights, opening the floodgates to unregulated political spending.

Move To Amend (MTA) is a national movement seeking to challenge and abolish corporate constitutional rights and regulate political contributions and influence from corporations and wealthy individuals in elections and government.

Taking a grassroots approach, MTA is building support and awareness as citizens of cities and states nationwide pass measures calling on Congress to amend the U.S. Constitution.

The proposed amendment declares “only human beings, not corporations, are legal persons with Constitutional rights,” and “money is not equivalent to speech, and therefore, regulating political contributions and spending does not equate to limiting political speech.”

The amendment would not only corporate misuse of free speech, but other constitutional rights as well—including the misuse of the 14th Amendment’s equal protection rights, a tactic used by mega-corporations against municipalities that have tried to protect local businesses.

The Citizens United decision was preceded by a long erosion of Constitutional rights for individuals, since corporations began to claim due process and equal protection rights in the 1870s. These 14th Amendment rights, intended for newly freed slaves, were gradually extended to corporations by the courts.

“Corporations have usurped due process and equal protection rights to the detriment of local communities,” said Carla Rautenberg, Cleveland Heights MTA supporter. “Constructing big-box stores despite community opposition and public policies that favor multinational corporations over local businesses are just two examples.”

This movement is a rare non-partisan initiative, enjoying support from across the political spectrum. Recently, President Obama called for a constitutional amendment to overturn Citizens United, and at Oxford University, Republican Sen. John McCain called Citizens United the Supreme Court’s “worst decision ever.”

The Reid Blog quotes Tea Party founder Dante Robertson: “Our Founding Fathers never wanted them [corporations] . . . these behemoth organizations that never die . . . It puts the people at a tremendous disadvantage.”

Hundreds of business leaders have condemned Citizens United and a Pew Research poll from January 2012 indicated that 75 percent believed that unregulated political spending would have a negative effect on upcoming elections.

Indeed, spending in the last election cycle hit a record $6 billion, giving the impression that average citizens are priced out of the process.

Last June, Cleveland Heights City Council passed a resolution calling for the reversal of Citizens United. However, council declined to place an initiative on the ballot explicitly confronting the issue of corporations as “legal persons” and money as speech. Members of Cleveland Heights MTA think this broader approach is critically important, and citizens should have the chance to vote on it.

Newburgh Heights, Brecksville and many other localities across the state and country have already passed similar measures at the ballot box. Members of Cleveland Heights MTA have started petitioning Heights voters to put the issue on the November 2013 ballot. However, much work remains to be done to raise awareness and collect the thousands of signatures needed.

No matter what your political persuasion, Cleveland Heights MTA invites newcomers to join the group. The next meeting will be Feb. 12 at 7 p.m. at the Ensemble Theatre, 2843 Washington Blvd. (the former Coventry School). Anyone interested in helping can contact Sally Hanley at tphal@verizon.net or Carla Rautenberg at rcarla@aol.com. Read the full text of the ballot initiative at https://move2amend.org/cleveland-hts-initiative-petition-wording.

Stevie Hanley lives on Rydalmount Road and is a member of Cleveland Heights Move To Amend.

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$5 Wines $1.50 Imports
$3 Cocktails

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Highlights from Observer blogs
Read the whole story at blogs.heightsobserver.org

The year of the Anna Kareninas
On the last day of 2012, I finished reading Anna Karenina, which some say is Tolstoy’s greatest work. Hmm, maybe . . . It was a terrifically good read! The inspiration for reading the novel was the newest and most audacious movie adaptation of the book.

Watching the promotional trailer over and over again at the Cedar Lee before the film opened there, I had a serious approach/avoidance conflict about the film. Would my dislike for Keira Knightley overcome my deep admiration for Tom Stoppard, the screenwriter?

The tipping point in my decision to see “Anna Karenina,” was the opening sentence in A. O. Scott’s review of the movie in The New York Times—a play on the novel’s famous opening line.

Tolstoy: “All happy families are alike, but every successful literary adaptation succeeds in its own way.”

A. O. Scott: “Bad literary adaptations are all alike, but every successful literary adaptation succeeds in its own way.”

—Jewel Mouldbrough

Tommy Talks
Yes, that Tommy.

The owner of 40-year-old Tommy’s Restaurant doesn’t say “no” to very many reasonable requests. He’s just that kind of guy; it seems like he’ll help out with just about anything the community needs.

But I’ve never heard him talk about himself, until I saw this video, posted on the Friends of Coventry Village Facebook page.

—Bob Rosenbaum

What’s your favorite treasure? We’ll help you show it off.

What’s your favorite treasure? We’ll help you show it off.

The New York Times — a play on

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What’s your favorite treasure? We’ll help you show it off.

What’s your favorite treasure? We’ll help you show it off.
University Heights City Council

Meeting highlights

December 17, 2012

All council members were present.

Employee of the year
Chairman V. Mark Hawn announced that John Fecula, assistant service director, as employee of the year. He is the first employee to receive this honor.

Public health services
Council authorized the contract with the Cuyahoga County Board of Health for 2013 to provide public health services for $1,990.

Check policy
Council approved establishing policy for returned checks.

Citizen of the year
Council recognized Katherine Kay Hawn as University Heights Citizen of the Year. She had been a member of the Purvis Pool swim team as a child and was disappointed to find that the team no longer existed when her own daughter was ready. She single-handedly revived the swim team, working tirelessly to encourage all children to improve their swimming skills and to enjoy the excitement of competition. Her daughter is now a coach of the swim team, and Hawn continues to serve as the youth swim team’s manager.

Joint economic development
Council authorized joining the cities of South Euclid, University Heights, Cleveland Heights, Shaker Heights and East Cleveland in their application for funding from University Circle Inc. and the Heights Chamber of Commerce for a feasibility study on joint economic development.

Steve Dzuranin of Fanning/Howey Associates, architectural consultants to the district, expressed concern that the intersection of Warrensville Center and Cedar roads, when a city bus veered onto oncoming traffic, the bus driver was the only fatality in the multiple accident.

Police presence at schools
In the wake of the Sandy Hook school shooting, there is a heavier police presence at all schools, and this will continue as long as they are needed. Safety drills are conducted in all schools as required by law.

LVW Observer: Wendy Deuring.

January 7, 2013

All council members were present.

Interim fire chief
Mayor Infeld swore in Brian Phan as the interim fire chief. He was previously the chief in Bainbridge and captain in University Heights.

Joint police dispatch
Council approved the city’s joint application with South Euclid, Beachwood, Shaker Heights and Euclid for a grant from the State of Ohio for a feasibility study for a joint police dispatch. There is no cost to the city for this study.

Wire transfers
Council approved entering into a wire transfer agreement with FirstMerit Bank. Two signatures are needed to approve a wire transfer. Council also reaffirmed the law director, finance director and clerk of council as signators on the account.

City budget
Budget appropriations were presented on first reading. The finance committee added $23,000 to improve roads, and some other minor revisions totaling $40,000. Two hundred thousand dollars was added to police and fire salaries to retain or have funds available to retain.

Traffic control council
Council approved replacing the traffic control box, pole and traffic signals on the corner of Warrensville Center and Cedar roads due to the accident in December. The cost is approximately $46,000, for which the Regional Transit Authority (RTA) is responsible. Councilwoman Frankie Goldberg asked if the city has to front any of the money. Law Director Anthony Coyle said he would speak to RTA.

LVW Observer: Michele Weiss.

Look for earlier, and often expanded, postings of meeting summaries online at www.heightsobserver.org. These meeting summaries are abstracted from LVW observers’ written reports. The summaries have been edited and prepared by Anne McFarland, Charlene Morse and Maryann Barnes. To receive e-mail postings of full reports, send an e-mail to mbarnes9515@gmail.com or join through Google groups using “lvchwobserver” as a search phrase.

The council maintains member observation and selects highlights of public meetings and are not official statements of the Heights. Chapter of the League of Women Voters Cuyahoga Area. This disclaimer must accompany any redistribution of these reports.

Steve Duraznian of Fanning/Howey Associates, architectural consultants to the district, expressed concern about the idea of using Boulevard Elementary School as the site for a single middle school. “The building would have to be three times the size of the current Boulevard,” he said. “The size would not allow for playing fields at the site.” He said the same would be true if Boulevard were to be one of two middle schools.

Steve Shergalis, director of building services for the district, expressed concerns about attendance boundaries. “If you had both Noble and Oxford as elementary schools, you said, ‘Let’s draw boundaries almost impossible. They are too close together.’”

Krispy Dietrich-Gallagher, co-chair of the community subcommittee, reported that her group had considered several approaches to surveying the public, including asking about broad community values or asking respondents to evaluate specific scenarios. “We need to know whether we should immediately move forward with a broad survey or hold off until specific scenarios are developed,” she said.

Mark Chupp, volunteer advisor to the community subcommittee, said that he preferred an earlier, broader survey. “The community wants to know what is happening,” he said. “It is important to get feedback before they are limited options or people will question why you didn’t consider other things. When you have scenarios that say which buildings would close, that will get more people to attend community meetings and engage.”

LFC committee members agreed to conduct a broad survey about preferences during February and have the results inform their decisions about scenarios at the March 6 meeting.

Dietrich-Gallagher said that her committee would distribute the survey online and would visit, district PTAs, continued on page 10.
Cleveland Heights City Council

Meeting highlights

DECEMBER 17, 2012

All council members were present.

Noble Road commercial property cleanup

Council amended a prior resolution in order to provide additional compensation relating to the city’s purchase of a long-vacant commercial property at 3920 Noble Road, previously a Medic Drugstore and Pick’n Pay supermarket. The building, condemned in June 2012, will be demolished and the property prepared for future economic development. The Cuyahoga County Land Bank and the city have agreed that the city will reimburse the Land Bank $12,130 for the costs of demolishing the property and providing a clean site. Mayor Kelley noted the city’s commitment to improving the area north of Mayfield Road.

Nighttown expansion

Council authorized the sale of two parcels of city-owned land, at a price of $25,000, to Nighttown Inc., to accommodate expansion of the restaurant’s facilities at 12935 Cedar Road. On a previous occasion, the restaurant facility expanded through an agreement under which Nighttown leased city-owned property. Now the restaurant wishes to purchase the leased property, which is west of the building, as well as an additional parcel to the north, for additional expansion.

Parking violation penalties

Council raised the penalties by five dollars for seven specified parking violations: parking in truck loading zones, in bus zones, during posted rush hours, blocking a drive, parking on private or public property, and parking unlawfully in metered zones.

City’s 2012 and 2013 budgets

Council amended the 2012 budget to balance amounts that have increased, decreased, and/or been transferred between funds. Total funds of all types available to expend for municipal activities are $88,344,013. Council also appropriated funds for the 2013 fiscal year. Overall city expenditures for 2013 are projected to be $79,293,743.

LVN Observer: Katharine Solender.

JANUARY 7, 2013

All council members were present.

Youth Advisory Commission

With one dissenting vote, council approved the establishment of a Youth Advisory Commission. This has been a priority of Council Member Jason Stein since he took office. The commission will promote understanding and awareness of government among youth, encourage their participation in government, provide advice to council on issues affecting youth, promote communication between young people and adults within the community, and work on projects that better the community. The commission will meet monthly and consist of 13 members: ten youth members (six from Cleveland Heights, four from other schools or home-school environments) and three nominating adult members (a Cleveland Heights police officer, a member of the Recreation Advisory Board, and a Cleveland Heights High School teacher). Term of office shall be one year, from Oct. 1 through May 30. Applications will be available on the city’s website, at city hall, from Jeffrey Johnston, director of student services for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District, or from Council Member Stein. Council Member Bonnie Caplan voted against the ordinance because she didn’t see the impetus coming from the city’s youth. She also noted local challenges and demands on city staff, the police department and school administrators. She said she hopes to be proven wrong, however, and that the commission will be a success. Council Members Dennis Wilcox and Jennie Boyd, along with Mayor Edward Kelley, expressed their support.

Citizens Advisory Committee (CACC)


Police Unity Tour

Council Member Mary Dunbar noted the fundraising efforts of Cleveland Heights Police Officer Larry Ricks, who will be riding a bicycle on the four-day, 320-mile 2013 Police Unity Tour (www.policeunitytour.com) from New Jersey to Washington, D.C., starting on May 15. Ricks is riding to honor his fellow Cleveland Heights Police Officer and friend, Tom Patton II, who was killed March 13, 2010 while attempting to arrest a fleeing criminal.

Sharing bomb squad services

Council authorized a memorandum of understanding with the City of University Heights for sharing police personnel and equipment for bomb squad services. When needed, Cleveland Heights will make bomb squad technicians and equipment available for explosives and handling and disposal available to University Heights. In turn, University Heights police will provide Cleveland Heights with manpower to help respond to bomb threats or incidents. Cleveland Heights has a similar memorandum with Shaker Heights.

Nuisance properties

Council declared two properties to be a public nuisance and authorized abatement: 1638 Glenmont Road and 936 Hulem Road.

LVN Observer: Katharine Solender.

LET ME PLUG IN YOUR YARD

Have Radiators? Want Central Air? Don’t resist any longer!

We’ve met with city staff, and council is due to vote on it in February,” she said.

Baldwin said the committee seeks to educate dog owners about their responsibilities to ensure that they respect the rights of those who don’t own dogs or are afraid of them. “Dogs must be controlled,” said Baldwin. “They won’t be allowed by children’s play areas, and they must be picked-up after. These are the same courtesies that you observe when walking your dog on city streets, and we want to make sure that residents understand that it is essential to follow these rules, for everyone’s safety.”

The committee conducted a survey of Cleveland Heights residents in 2012 and met with city officials to discuss their findings and formulate plans for a pilot project. The pilot project would require new legislation to amend laws passed in the 1970s prohibiting dog walking in all Cleveland Heights parks.

The committee plans to place four stations within the park to hold biodegradable dog waste bags and to post signs reminding dog owners of their responsibilities. The committee is seeking volunteers to help republish the bags and to assist in maintaining the project’s website. For more information, contact the project’s volunteer coordinator at chhcorgproject@ gmail.com or 440-478-6262.

Deanna Bremer Fisher is executive director of FutureHeights and publisher of the Heights Observer.
Free parking weekends in Cleveland Heights continue in 2013

Deanna Bremer Fisher

Cleveland Heights will extend the free-parking weekends it offered last year through 2013. On the last full weekend (Friday, Saturday and Sunday) of each month, parking will be free wherever there is a meter: on the street, in city parking lots and in city parking garages.

The February free-parking weekend will be Feb. 22, 23 and 24.

Mayor Ed Kelley said that Cleveland Heights City Council made the decision in mid-January, after hearing from a number of merchants and from people who live in other cities who had visited the Heights during last year’s free weekends.

“The response to our free parking weekends has been very positive,” said Kelley. “Business owners and residents have been very supportive of this idea. It reinforces the city’s commitment to our commercial districts and also has been an incentive to bring more people to our excellent restaurants and one-of-a-kind stores throughout the city.”

Kelley said that the last weekend of the month is generally slower for merchants than other times. He said that, although the three-day free-parking weekends cost the city an average of $4,600 in meter revenues per day, it frees police officers from writing tickets and gives the officers an opportunity to attend to other duties. “We know we are competing with free parking elsewhere. This gets people to come to the city, and maybe they return to rent or buy a house,” said Kelley.

Signs will be posted on the city’s parking garages the last week of the month to remind visitors and residents they may park at no charge the last weekend of the month.

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

UST assists refugees here in the Heights

US Together Inc. (UST) is a nonprofit refugee resettlement agency with a branch in Cleveland Heights. An affiliate of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), UST resettles refugees from all over the world—irrespective of religion or ethnicity—who are forced to seek refuge in another country. All resettlement cases are referred by HIAS.

UST was founded in 2003 in Columbus, where it is headquartered, in response to the needs of refugees and immigrants in central Ohio. In 2008, UST opened an office in Beachwood, and in 2010 moved to an office in Cleveland Heights, at 2940 Noble Road.

“The majority of UST’s clients were being placed in this area,” said Helen Tarkhanova, refugee resettlement coordinator for UST. “The organization wanted to move its office closer to the refugee population in order to serve it better. Cleveland Heights was one of the neighborhoods that presented the best opportunities for our clients.” The Cleveland Heights office resettles refugees from the former Soviet Union, Bhutan and Iraq, among other countries.

“As a mutual assistance agency,” explained Tarkhanova, “the organization was founded and is run by refugees. UST understands that refugees coming to this country are facing numerous challenges, including learning a new language, navigating a new culture and finding employment. The organization gives hands-on experience to incoming refugees from the day they arrive in the United States, and teaches them how to acculturate best to their new environment.”

UST’s services to refugee families include pre-arrival processing and reception planning; housing set up; airport pick up; case management; development and implementation of a resettlement plan; orientation, employment assessment; referrals to social services and community resources; advocacy; coordination of community volunteers; acculturation classes and workshops, and basic needs support.

The organization is currently working on a public education curriculum, noted Tarkhanova, and would like to improve awareness of the presence of refugees in the Heights. After meeting recently with Cleveland Heights Council Member Jason Stein, said Tarkhanova, UST is excited to partner more closely with the City of Cleveland Heights and work to make the city a more welcoming destination for newly arrived refugees. “We accept new cases daily, make transitions as smooth as possible, and encourage self-sufficiency,” said Tarkhanova. “UST works with the hope that all refugees will flourish and succeed in their new lives.”

Contact UST at 216-456-9630, or visit www.ustogether.us.

Kayleen Herron is UST’s resettlement support and research specialist, and volunteer coordinator. She is working to shed more light on the topic of refugees living here in the Cleveland area.


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Keylen Herron is UST’s resettlement support and research specialist, and volunteer coordinator. She is working to shed more light on the topic of refugees living here in the Cleveland area.

UST assists refugees here in the Heights

A group of Nepali refugees at the UST office, after an English class. [Photo by Bhupati Pradhan, a Nepali-speaking case manager for US Together.]

Kayleen Herron
Our youth are our city’s most precious resource. I believe they can add value and substance to the public discourse and if we make it a priority to really listen, I want our youth to have a direct connection to our city government. With this in mind, I have made the creation of a Youth Advisory Commission a focus since I began serving on city council.

Back in the fall of 2011, Mayor Kelley and I met at Tommy’s restaurant to discuss what my priorities were for the upcoming year. I proposed the concept of a Youth Advisory Commission based on a number of successful programs, such as those in Milpitas, Calif. and Pinellas County, Florida. To my pleasant surprise, Mayor Kelley told me he also had the creation of a Youth Advisory Commission on his priority list.

Following that meeting, Cleveland Heights City Council had good, thoughtful discussions on the structure, purpose and goals of a youth commission. I discussed my ideas with Doug Heuer, Cleveland Heights-University Heights school superintendent, and Jeffrey Johnston, the director of student services, and received their enthusiastic support for this Youth Advisory Commission concept.

After the appointment of Council Member Janine Boyd last year, with her pro-youth agenda, energy and extensive background with youth issues, we were finally prepared to move forward with making this a commission a reality. On Jan. 7, Cleveland Heights City Council voted 6-1 in favor of the establishment of the Cleveland Heights Youth Advisory Commission.

The commission’s membership will include ten youths and three nonvoting adults. The three nonvoting adults will be a Heights High teacher, a Cleveland Heights police officer and a Recreation Advisory Board member.

Candidates should submit a 250-word essay telling council why they are interested in serving as a Cleveland Heights Youth Commissioner. Each candidate must provide three school or community (nonfamily) references. If you know of a student in ninth, tenth or eleventh grade who you feel would make a good Cleveland Heights Youth Commissioner, please encourage him or her to complete an application.

The applications are available on our city website and at City Hall. Applications can also be obtained by contacting Jeffrey Johnston, or by contacting me on Facebook or via e-mail at jstein@clvhts.com. The application must be submitted no later than 4 p.m. on Feb. 8.

Jason Stein is a member of Cleveland Heights City Council, a Heights High graduate and a lifelong Cleveland Heights community member. Please encourage him or eleventh grade who you feel would make a good Cleveland Heights Youth Commissioner, or her to complete an application. The applications are available on our city website and at City Hall. Applications can also be obtained by contacting Jeffrey Johnston, or by contacting me on Facebook or via e-mail at jstein@clvhts.com.

Jason Stein

As the executive director of Heights Arts, and to learn more about the executive director position, visit www.heightsarts.org.

Kim Sergio Inglis is editor-in-chief of the Heights Observer. Sharon Grossman and Andrea Jobi of Heights Arts contributed to this article.

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Panel to speak on neighborhood organizing

Kevin Smith

FutureHeights will host “Won’t You Be My Neighbor?” a program about neighborhood organizing, at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 14, at The Bottlehouse Brewing Company, 2050 Lee Road. The event will feature panelists Pete Titus of Cain Park Neighborhood Association; Sarah Wuan of the Grant Deming’s Forest Hill Historic District in Coventry Village; Jason Stein, member of Cleveland Heights City Council; and Deanna Bremer Fisher, executive director of FutureHeights. The panelists will discuss their experiences with neighborhood organizing and, how others can start their own neighborhood groups. The event is free and open to the public; however, a courtesy RSVP to www.bonyneighbor.eventbrite.com is requested.

“The event brings together leaders of Heights groups who have been successful in engaging their neighbors in initiatives to improve their quality of life,” said Deanna Bremer Fisher. “Our hope is to create an alliance of these neighborhood groups that could meet periodically to share best practices and learn from each other’s successes.” Below, panelists answer the question how has neighborhood organizing affected your neighborhood?

“Since 2008, organizing has helped our neighbors feel a sense of community. It has increased communication with our neighbors and with the city, as well. Organizing has also turned the streets surrounding Cain Park into a neighborhood with great events like block parties, picnics and park cleanups. But mainly, it has helped us realize that there are a ton of great people in our neighborhood and at city hall who all share the common goal of making our neighborhood a better place to live.” ~Pete Titus, Cain Park Neighborhood Association

“Recent resident initiatives have had a huge impact on the Grant Deming’s Forest Hill District of Coventry Village. From listing the neighborhood in the National Register of Historic Places—courtesy of Lincoln Boulevard resident Mark Souther—to the creation of a neighborhood networking website with a membership of 350 and growing, Grant Deming District residents are stepping up to help maintain and build a more connected and engaged neighborhood.” ~Sarah Wuan, Grant Deming’s Forest Hill Historic District of Coventry Village

“Thereby the city, groups of residents are making a positive impact. The groups that have succeeded share a similar proactive and collaborative spirit. It is about, how we can make our little area of the city better and more appealing. It does not take a lot of money or government intervention to make a difference, but it does take a principled commitment of working together to create positive outcomes. Groups like the Berkeley Street Association, Blanche Neighbors and Cain Park Neighborhood Association are contributing to the rejuvenation of the Taylor Road area.” ~Jason Stein, Cleveland Heights City Council

Kevin Smith is a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights and chair of the FutureHeights FutureNow Committee.

Introduction to Zen Buddhism at Feb. 9 workshop

Heights Observer Editor

Learn about Zen Buddhism at an introductory workshop on Saturday, Feb. 9, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The program will feature a lecture about Zen practice and how it differs from other forms of Buddhism, a demonstration and guided meditations. A discussion of how to integrate practice with daily life will follow.

The workshop will be led by Susan Rakow, leader of the Cleveland Zazen Group. Rakow was a student of Roshi Philip Kapleau and is a senior student of Roshi Bodhin Kjolhede, Kapleau’s dharma heir. Rakow is a member of the Three Jewels Order, an organization devoted to serving the community and sharing the teaching and practice of Zen Buddhism.

The workshop will be held at the 1813 Wilton Road. The cost is $10 per person, and advance registration is required. For more information, visit www.clevelandzen.org or contact Rakow at 216-932-5084 or susanrakow@earthlink.net.

The University of Akron

The University of Akron

OPEN HOUSE

Saturday, February 9

1:30 p.m.

High school students, please join the University of Akron in Lakewood for an Open House on Sat., Feb. 9th at 1:30 p.m. Information will be provided on admission, financial aid, degree programs, and courses.

• Tour UA Lakewood
• Meet Jim Tressel
• Refreshments, Prizes and Zippy
• Talk with advisors about traditional college or college while in high school - PSEOP and dual enrollment

Call 216.221.1141 to register

UA Lakewood is located on the first floor of the historic Bailey Building in the heart of Downtown Lakewood.

The University of Akron is an Equal Education and Employment Institution.
Bob Rosenbaum

The first Holistic Fair to be hosted in Cleveland Heights will be held Feb. 23 and 24 at The Unity Center of the Heights, 2653 South Taylor Road. Hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday and 2 to 7 p.m. on Sunday.

Visitors will have the chance to experience products and services from vendors offering aromatherapy, alternative healing products, raw food, yoga, Reiki, natural pet care, organic clothing, crystals and jewelry.

Expert speakers will cover topics such as pain management, nutrition and alternative medicine. There will also be psychic mediums providing personal readings, and healthy foods available for purchase. All ages are welcome. Admission is $5 per day and includes entrance to all of the speaker sessions.

The event is produced by Cleveland Heights native and resident Judith Eugene, owner of Loving Hands Yoga and Reiki. Eugene founded the business to help other people, and animals, achieve health and balance of mind, body and spirit, and based her approach on her experience with the positive effects of yoga and therapeutic touch on her own health.

“This fair will be a great opportunity for members of our community to explore longstanding approaches and traditions to health that can benefit them,” she said. It emphasizes information, services and products that are integrative, peaceful and nontoxic.

Eugene is producing the event in partnership with Harmonic Journeys, a like-minded small business in Lakewood.

For more information visit www.LovingHandsYoga.com or call Judith Eugene at 216-408-5578.

Bob Rosenbaum is a Cleveland Heights resident, a longtime Observer contributor and its director of advertising and market development.

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Bob Rosenbaum is a Cleveland Heights resident, a longtime Observer contributor and its director of advertising and market development.
Holistic Moms Network launching chapter on Cleveland’s East Side

Patti Carlyle

The progressive underground of moms on Cleveland’s East Side is well established, and the Heights may well be the mothership.

In the past, it was surprisingly difficult to gain entry to the green, holistic underground. Lately, the signs have been clearer, with cloth diapers flapping on now-legal clotheslines, workshops on edible lawns, and CSA delivery in every parking lot. Groups are about to get even more mainstream.

Holistic Moms Network (HMN) is launching a new chapter on the East Side of Cleveland and will hold a kickoff event at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Cleveland Heights on Saturday, Feb. 16, 10 a.m. to noon.

HMN is a growing national non-profit organization with more than 1,000 chapters, connecting parents who are passionate about holistic health and green living.

"Through monthly meetings our local chapters bring parents together in a nonjudgmental environment that honors their lifestyle and parenting choices," said Nancy Massotto, the group’s executive director. "For parents who choose to raise their children holistically, having the support of like-minded parents is critical."

This year marks the organization’s 10-year anniversary. A new HMN chapter launched on Cleveland’s West Side in late 2012.

HMN’s mission is threefold: support, education and community. There is no requisite level of crunchiness to become a member, no secret password to the underground. HMN is for everyone with an interest in mindful parenting and sustainable living.

Members play a critical role in shaping the character of each chapter. Activities may include nature walks, book clubs and playgroups. Moms- and dads-to-be, new parents, parents of older children, grandparents, single parents and same-sex parent families are all welcome. Diverse perspectives lead to richer member experiences.

St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, at 2747 Fairmount Blvd., has offered space for monthly meetings. The missions of both St. Paul’s and HMN align with an emphasis on green initiatives and supporting young families.

Meetings will be held on the third Saturday of each month, from 10 a.m. to noon, and will often feature an educational speaker.

Visit www.clevelandeast.holisticmoms.org, the group’s page on Facebook or e-mail hmnclevelandeast@gmail.com for more information.

Patti Carlyle is an alternative health educator and writer with a homopathic practice in the Heights. She co-leads the Holistic Moms Network Cleveland East Side chapter and focuses in University Heights. Find her at hmnclevelandeast@gmail.com for more information.

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Sandy, 10 year resident

2450 Derbyshire Road
Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44106

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Learn simple plumbing repairs at hands-on classes

Spencer Jaffe (right) of Herb’s Plumbing teaches Bruce Menapace to solder copper pipe.

Rebecca Stager

Do you have a ghost that mysteriously flushes your toilet in the middle of the night? Does the sound of your dripping faucet annoy you and increase your water and sewer bills? Does your bathtub drain slowly or not at all? Do you want to use new plastic water lines but don’t know how to install them?

Homeowners can learn to tackle these common plumbing problems and more by attending the upcoming workshops offered by the Home Repair Resource Center (HRRC).

Class size is limited so that attendees can practice using the tools, materials and techniques required for each repair and receive hands-on instruction from experienced plumbers.

The first class, Toilet Repair and Replacement, will be held on Feb. 25, followed by Faucet Repair and Replacement on March 4. Drains and Traps is scheduled for March 11 and Copper and Plastic Water Lines will be covered on March 18.

Class fees are $10 for Cleveland Heights residents and $15 for nonresidents, with reduced rates for low-income Cleveland Heights homeowners.

For additional information about HRRC’s repair workshops, visit www.hrrc-ch.org.

Reservations are required and classes fill up quickly. To reserve a space, contact Becky Stager at 216-381-5400, ext. 16, or at rstager@hrrc-ch.org.

Becky Stager has been HRRC’s education coordinator since 1999. Visit Home Repair Resource Center’s website at www.hrrc-ch.org or call 331-6100 for more information on programs and services.

www.heightsobserver.org

Heights Observer February 1, 2013 11
Heights Libraries awarded Muslim Journeys Bookshelf Collection from NEH

Sheryl Banks

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) announced Jan. 9 that Heights Libraries will be awarded the Muslim Journeys Bookshelf, a collection of books, films and other resources designed to introduce the American public to the complex history and culture of Muslims in the United States and around the world.

Heights Libraries is one of 84 libraries in the nation to win this award, and one of only two in Cuyahoga County (Lakeview Public Library also received the award). Sam Lapides, Heights Libraries special projects coordinator, created the award application and is overseeing the project. Librarians, adults, service librarians, will design future programming around the new collection.

“With the award, we’re looking forward to offering programs that showcase the many ways that Muslim culture has shaped and enriched civilizations across the globe,” said Carole Wallencheck, adult services librarian. “Lectures, film discussions and arts tours will be in the mix.”

Developed by the NEH and the American Library Association (ALA) based on the advice of scholars, librarians and other public programming experts, the Muslim Journeys Bookshelf is intended to provide trustworthy and accessible resources about Muslim beliefs and practices and the cultural heritage associated with Islamic civilizations.

“This collection will give our community the opportunity to learn about different aspects of the Muslim experience and culture, including literature, poetry, history and art,” said Lapides. “The Heights community is diverse in just about every way and truly embraces learning opportunities, so we know these new resources will be popular.”

All four branches of Heights Libraries will receive a Muslim Journeys Bookshelf set, which consists of 25 books, three films, and access for one year to Oxford Islamic Studies Online.

Books will include the graphic novel *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi, the 1991 restored *Man from Mars*, the hit *Valentine Michael Smith, the Time Traveler’s* manuscript. We’ll explore the life and times of Valentine Michael Smith, the man from Mars, in the 1919 restored version, touching on themes of religious belief, sexuality, and government.

**Noble Neighborhood Library**
2800 Noble Road, 216-231-2665

*Monday, Feb. 11 at 2 p.m.*
Quarterly Sci-Fi/Fantasy Book Discussion: Stranger in a Strange Land. Winner of the Hugo Award in 1962, the book was first published 50,000 words shorter than author Robert Heinlein’s original manuscript. We’ll explore the life and times of Valentine Michael Smith, the man from Mars, in the 1919 restored version, touching on themes of religious belief, sexuality, and government.

**University Heights Library**
13660 Cedar Road, 216-321-4790

*Thursday, Feb. 21 at 7 p.m.*
*Quarterly Sci-Fi Fantasy Book Discussion: Stranger in a Strange Land.* Winner of the Hugo Award in 1962, the book was first published 50,000 words shorter than author Robert Heinlein’s original manuscript. We’ll explore the life and times of Valentine Michael Smith, the man from Mars, in the 1919 restored version, touching on themes of religious belief, sexuality, and government.

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Staff and customer creations enliven Heights Libraries

Sheryl Banks

The next time you visit the Noble Neighborhood Library, head downstairs to the children's area to see the long-awaited, crowning jewel of the library's renovation: a warm, inviting canopy of leaves on the whimsical tree that serves as the centerpiece of the area. Victor Cimperman, Heights Libraries' graphic designer, designed and installed the canopy, which was sewn by Carmen's Drapery, a Cleveland Heights business.

"One of Victor's many skills is his ability to create incredible three-dimensional pieces," said Nancy Levin, Heights Libraries director. "His sets for our Hobbit Quest program in December included a hobbit house, a mill and Smaug the Dragon's head."

Cimperman, however, is quick to point out that he isn't the only staff member with creative skills. "So many of the librarians are incredibly talented," he said. Cimperman cites Henry Drak, youth services librarian, as an example. Drak created Smaug’s body from scratch, including its enormous wings. Drak also created a “dream cloud” using chicken wire and coffee filters. It floats near the children's magazines in the Lee Road Library.

The children's areas in the four branches also benefit from the creative work of young patrons, whose artwork often adorns the walls and display cases. Programs such as Cozy Crafts, Creat(eens) and Saturday Craft Corner give kids opportunities for creative expression.

The adult areas also benefit from the creative touch of the staff and library users. Maggie Rose, adult services librarian, has been creating simple, humorous displays that attract curious patrons. The Computer Gallery at the Lee Road Library gives residents a venue where they can display their original artwork at no charge, and the annual Heights Library Photo Contest submissions and winners receive prominent display at the library's branches and on the website.

"The art, displays and sculptural elements in our buildings create a vivid, fun atmosphere that sends the message that our libraries are living, vital, energetic places full of creative materials and opportunities," said Levin. "What could be more conducive to our mission of 'Opening Doors, Opening Minds'?"

When you stop by a Heights Libraries branch, take a moment to walk around and enjoy the creative efforts of the staff and your neighbors.

Sheryl Banks is the marketing and community relations manager for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library.

Friends of Heights Libraries to host African American Read-In

Sarah Iammarino

The Friends of Heights Libraries will host an African American Read-In at 2 p.m. on Feb. 10 at the Lee Road Library, 3466 Lee Road.

The public is invited to share a five-minute reading by an African American author, or be part of the audience. Students and adults are welcome.

The African American Read-In is sponsored by the National Council of Teachers of English. The goal is to make the celebration of the African American literary legacy a traditional part of Black History Month.

“This will be the third time that our library is hosting,” said Joni London, Friends board member. Interested readers should contact London at 216-321-7697. For suggested reading lists, visit www.ncte.org/action/aari.

Refreshments will be served and a tour of the library will follow.

Friends of Heights Libraries is a group of enthusiastic library supporters united by a common interest in the continued well-being of our libraries. The group promotes interest in, and appreciation and use of, the four branches of the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library.

Sarah Iammarino is a member of the Friends of the Heights Libraries Board of Directors.

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Premier Senior Living that’s Ahead of the Curve
Parent involvement starts with trust

Susie Kasier

One of the lessons of my career as a community activist is that when people trust each other they can accomplish amazing things. Because of this, it is a wise use of organizational resources to invest in building trust with the people who need to be on your team. This is especially true in education. If we want our schools to succeed, we need to create trusting relationships among parents, teachers, and children. This cannot be mandated, but makes a profound difference!

Instead of harping on the need for parent involvement we should focus on something more basic: trust. With trust comes a respectful environment where everyone feels responsible and empowered to contribute. Without trust, the power of collaboration is diminished. Much less is accomplished.

Trust does not come easily. We are all vulnerable. And in the field of education, the stakes are high and the temptation to blame others strong. The situation is ripe for mistrust. Parents turn over their precious children to strangers. Will the powerful adult like their children? Treat them fairly? Understand the ways they are different and support them fully? Abandon stereotypes and have high expectations? Class and racial differences can heighten the potential for mistrust. If a parent had a bad school experience as a child, it can also throw cold water on the dynamic, and parents aren’t always skilled at navigating bureaucratic red tape, especially one that has such power over their lives.

Teachers worry too. Will parents value their work and see them as professionals? What kind of support do they need to forge those relationships with their children? Will parents respect the teacher’s expertise and effort and let the teacher have freedom to design a curriculum that supports student success? But trust is not automatic. Teachers, principals and parents all have roles to play in building trust. Experienced parents can help new parents understand the need to forge relationships with teachers, and navigate school concerns effectively. Volunteerism and visibility at school events demonstrate commitment—a building block for trust. The teacher and school can reach out and find ways to forge personal connections, that acknowledges that parents know their children best, demonstrates respect and inclusion, and build a sense of mutual support and common goals.

Heights Observer February 1, 2013
Heights High junior Vera Howard is flying. She might be a superhero. Her hair is blown back by the wind, her arms extended in front of her.

Or, she might be a student in Jeff Glass’s Digital Video Production program at Cleveland Heights High School. Howard made a 30-second video, “Vera Can Fly,” in which she appears to be flying in the clouds.

To record the image of her “flying,” she lay down on a small table as her classmate, Antonio Harper, held a fan in front of her to create the flying hair effect. Other classmates operated the camera and lights. Howard then used the video-editing program Final Cut Pro to layer the flying image over a sky background and added music.

The green-screen assignment is part of the first year Digital Video Production program. The 13 juniors in the program work in small groups to learn the basics of creating a video: writing a script, creating a storyboard, operating a camera, capturing sound and editing.

While the technical skills are important to video production, Glass said that other skills are needed, such as time management, the persistence to learn, and the willingness to work productively on a team.

The two-year program is part of the Career and Technical Education curriculum. Students enter as juniors and learn the basic skills. During their senior year, they hone their skills and complete more complex productions.

Other digital video program options are an English elective class and the after-school Tiger TV Club.

The district’s communications department partners with the video production program on many projects. Students and staff created videos such as “Tiger Proud and Bully Free” and “Get Out the Vote.” Students record architectural events and provide commentary for Channel 22, create videos about each career tech program, interview and spotlight students.

Senior Esi Israel is interning for two periods each day in the district’s communications department. “Esi is a very advanced student,” said Glass. “He has learned all the skills needed to work on projects in the communications department.”

“I have Esi on our team has made it possible for us to produce more videos, and they are videos we can be very proud of,” said Angee Shaker, communications director. “He is a very young man of high integrity and character who is dedicated to excellence. If his editing is off by a nanosecond, he insists on going back and fixing it.”

Some of the projects Israel has worked on include a description of CH-UH literacy education and a video on kindergarten to show parents what to expect when their children enter school.

After graduating from Heights High, Israel plans to study film production at Columbia College in Chicago or at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Juniors Prisma Ngoyo and Antonio Harper entered a video contest sponsored by the Ohio Attorney General’s office warning of internet scams.

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

Heights Observer February 1, 2013
In keeping with its tradition of enhancing the experiences of students in the Cleveland Heights-University Heights schools, Reaching Heights has introduced “Reaching Heights Role Models.” The new program is inspired by Ron Ferguson, director of the Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University, and a talk he gave at Cleveland’s City Club in the fall of 2011.

Ferguson suggested that schools could bridge the achievement gap by bringing adults who are satisfied with their lives into the classroom. Fifth grade is a particularly effective time to do so. Different speakers could visit monthly or bi-monthly to talk about their personal and professional journeys and expose students to “a whole menu of possible selves.”

Reaching Heights is developing a cadre of community members to serve as speakers for the program. Initially, the group plans to start with one speaker each semester in each of the district’s fifth grade classes, and hopes to provide more frequent visitors as the program grows. The speakers are professionals (broadly defined) who will speak about the path that led them to their careers and life interests. Speakers will illuminate how their education, experiences, choices and challenges have been relevant to their lives. The hope is that children will better understand the importance of their education, the need for hard work, the possibility of overcoming obstacles, and the many options available to them if they work hard and have a vision. The ultimate goal of the program is to spark student curiosity and promote the value of lifelong learning as it relates to their future careers and lives outside of work.

Already, students at Fairfax and Oxford have interacted with role models. After hearing David Jones, a local Tai Shin Doh (martial arts) instructor speak, one Fairfax fifth grader wrote, “This program was helpful because it gave me an idea of exactly how to prepare for my life.” After hearing local entrepreneur Alvin Saafir speak, an Oxford student wrote, “This was helpful because he inspired me.” Others wrote, “It helped me know what I need to do so I can have a better life,” and, “I know what I want to be when I grow up and I know to do my homework.” Not bad for just a one-hour investment of these speakers’ time.

Want to get involved? You can speak at one or multiple schools, with a time commitment of a little more than an hour for each visit. For more information, visit www.reachingheights.org.

Joan Spoerl is the parent of a second grader at Fairfax Elementary, an early childhood education program at the Fairfax Early Childhood Education Center, and a talk she gave at Cleveland’s City Club in the fall of 2011.

Joan Spoerl

This season, the Lady Tigers fastpitch softball team will play on a brand new field at the corner of Goodnor and Washington roads. After years of playing at Forest Hills Park, the Softball Booster Club, with the help of Heights High athletic director Kristin Hughes and the CH-UH City School District, broke ground in December on the new field. The Lady Tigers Fastpitch Boosters undertook an ambitious fundraising effort and raised enough money to commit to phase 1, consisting of a new backstop, dugouts, bullpens and infield renovation.

The team is now fundraising for the next phase of the project: outfield fencing, dugout covers, and mounting a scoreboard generously donated by Larry Shaw and the City of Cleveland Heights. Individuals can support the team by purchasing raffle tickets to win an iPad3 ($499 value) or making a tax-deductible donation at the Reaching Heights website (www.reachingheights.org). Indicate softball in the purpose box. Raffle tickets are $5 each, or 5 for $20, and are available from any softball player, at school athletic events, or by mailing a check to Cleveland Heights Fastpitch Club, 2981 Lincoln Blvd., Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118. You can support the team by purchasing raffle tickets to win an iPad3 ($499 value) or making a tax-deductible donation at the Reaching Heights website (www.reachingheights.org). Indicate softball in the purpose box. Raffle tickets are $5 each, or 5 for $20, and are available from any softball player, at school athletic events, or by mailing a check to Cleveland Heights Fastpitch Club, 2981 Lincoln Blvd., Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118.

Larry Sollisch is president of the Cleveland Heights Fastpitch Boosters and proud parent of two players on the team.

Larry Sollisch

The Lady Tigers Fastpitch softball team will begin the spring season on a new home field at Heights High. The team is now fundraising for the next phase of the project: outfield fencing, dugout covers, and mounting a scoreboard generously donated by Larry Shaw and the City of Cleveland Heights. Individuals can support the team by purchasing raffle tickets to win an iPad3 ($499 value) or making a tax-deductible donation at the Reaching Heights website (www.reachingheights.org). Indicate softball in the purpose box. Raffle tickets are $5 each, or 5 for $20, and are available from any softball player, at school athletic events, or by mailing a check to Cleveland Heights Fastpitch Club, 2981 Lincoln Blvd., Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118. You can support the team by purchasing raffle tickets to win an iPad3 ($499 value) or making a tax-deductible donation at the Reaching Heights website (www.reachingheights.org). Indicate softball in the purpose box. Raffle tickets are $5 each, or 5 for $20, and are available from any softball player, at school athletic events, or by mailing a check to Cleveland Heights Fastpitch Club, 2981 Lincoln Blvd., Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118.

Larry Sollisch is president of the Cleveland Heights Fastpitch Boosters and proud parent of two players on the team.

Larry Sollisch

The Lady Tigers Fastpitch softball team will begin the spring season on a new home field at Heights High. The team is now fundraising for the next phase of the project: outfield fencing, dugout covers, and mounting a scoreboard generously donated by Larry Shaw and the City of Cleveland Heights. Individuals can support the team by purchasing raffle tickets to win an iPad3 ($499 value) or making a tax-deductible donation at the Reaching Heights website (www.reachingheights.org). Indicate softball in the purpose box. Raffle tickets are $5 each, or 5 for $20, and are available from any softball player, at school athletic events, or by mailing a check to Cleveland Heights Fastpitch Club, 2981 Lincoln Blvd., Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118. You can support the team by purchasing raffle tickets to win an iPad3 ($499 value) or making a tax-deductible donation at the Reaching Heights website (www.reachingheights.org). Indicate softball in the purpose box. Raffle tickets are $5 each, or 5 for $20, and are available from any softball player, at school athletic events, or by mailing a check to Cleveland Heights Fastpitch Club, 2981 Lincoln Blvd., Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118. You can support the team by purchasing raffle tickets to win an iPad3 ($499 value) or making a tax-deductible donation at the Reaching Heights website (www.reachingheights.org). Indicate softball in the purpose box. Raffle tickets are $5 each, or 5 for $20, and are available from any softball player, at school athletic events, or by mailing a check to Cleveland Heights Fastpitch Club, 2981 Lincoln Blvd., Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118. You can support the team by purchasing raffle tickets to win an iPad3 ($499 value) or making a tax-deductible donation at the Reaching Heights website (www.reachingheights.org). Indicate softball in the purpose box. Raffle tickets are $5 each, or 5 for $20, and are available from any softball player, at school athletic events, or by mailing a check to Cleveland Heights Fastpitch Club, 2981 Lincoln Blvd., Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118.
Parenting 101: Helping your child with math
Charnice Holmes

Q. My son is in third grade, and math is truly challenging for both of us this year. I am amazed at some of the assignments he has for homework. Math was never one of my favorite subjects and I feel like I am in elementary school all over again. When I try to help him with his homework, he tells me that I am doing it wrong, and that his teacher does it differently. Can you please share some resources that will help me help my child?

A. There are several resources you can turn to for help. Ask your child’s teacher how math is being taught, so that you can reinforce at home what your son is learning in school instead of adding to his confusion by approaching it differently.

If your schedule does not allow you to come early for school drop-off or talk with your child’s teacher after pick-up time in the afternoon, call the school to arrange a time to meet with your child’s teacher or e-mail the teacher.

Family Connections has a family liaison in every elementary school in the CH-UH school district and a parent resource center stocked with items you can borrow to support your child’s learning. The family liaison can provide suggestions for learning activities using simple household items. Family Connections also offers various school-based programs throughout the year. Call your child’s school or Family Connections (216-331-0079) to set up a time to talk with your family liaison.

Several websites provide useful information for parents who are uncomfortable with the so-called new math. These online resources offer videos explaining and demonstrating math strategies in a way that can be helpful to children and parents alike. Some websites provide interactive opportunities for children to practice important math skills. Ask the Family Connections liaison at your child’s school for recommendations that fit your child’s specific needs.

Charnice Holmes is a school connections coordinator with Family Connections. Her children are in college, but she remembers the joys and challenges of being a working parent with school-age children.

Two Heights skiers head to Russia to compete in Winter International Children’s Games
Bob Rosenbaum

Two Cleveland Heights students are among ten from Northeast Ohio who will travel to Ufa, Russia, later this month as members of Team Cleveland, representing the United States in the sixth Winter International Children’s Games (ICG). Children from nearly 40 countries are expected to participate.

The local participants are Green Wright, who attends Roxboro Middle School, and Will Schneider, who attends Ruffing Montessori School. Both will compete in Nordic ski events along with Gautam Apte, Shaker Heights Middle School; Max Hannibal, Orange High School; and Colin Wadsworth, Avon Lake Learwood Middle School.

The remaining Northeast Ohio delegates are alpine skiers. Members of Team Cleveland range in age from 12 to 15 and are sponsored in part by the Greater Cleveland Sports Commission.

The games run from Feb. 26 to March 2. Wright will ski in the girls 3.5 km Nordic classic and 3.5 km freestyle cross-country ski events. Schneider will ski in the boys 3.5 km classic and freestyle events. Both are members of the 453.5 km relay team. Both are also expected to participate in orienteering events—overland navigation on cross-country ski using a map and compass.

Wright and Schneider are members of the Hilltoppers XC ski club, which practices at various locations, including Brecksville Reservation, Springvale Country Club in North Olmsted and Holden Arboretum.

The goal of the ICG, an International Olympic Committee sanctioned event, is to promote peace and friendship among the world’s youth through a focus on sports. The first ICG event was held in Slovenia in 1968. Cleveland hosted the Summer ICG in 2004. Ufa, the capital of the Republic of Bashkortostan, is located approximately 700 miles east of Moscow.

Sponsorship of the event includes part of the cost for entry fees and travel. Remaining expenses are being covered through fundraising and contributions from the families of team members.

Bob Rosenbaum is a Cleveland Heights resident and member of the Observer’s editorial board.
Heights Youth Club plans spring and summer activities

Rassoe Morgan

In its seventh year, the Heights Youth Club (HYC), 2065 Lee Road, looks forward to a busy spring and summer with many new and continuing activities designed for area youth. HYC offers afternoon programs and activities including games, swimming, bicycling, hiking, field trips, music, reading and math enhancement, self-esteem programs, nutrition classes, gardening, athletics, arts and lunch.

Peter and Barbara Averil of Chargrín Falls donated 76 bikes so far in their bicycle giveaway project, bringing them close to their goal of donating 100 bikes to HYC. In December, parents were delighted to come to the club and select bikes to give to their children as Christmas presents.

The Mosaic Arts project, featuring a tile and glass mosaic designed by HYC kids and the artist Augusto Bordeleau, begins a second phase in early February.

Frank Keim and the Immortals will return in April to perform at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and at HYC.

JFSA offers scholarships for local high school seniors

Lisa Brody

The Jewish Family Service Association (JFSA) has announced two scholarship opportunities for all local high school seniors, with no restrictions regarding religion; is a full-time student seeking a secular education; and exhibits financial need.

The Yoda-Newton “Share the Love” Scholarship was established in 2006 to help students who have faced adversity or who volunteer to help others in need. The scholarship is awarded to a high school senior who meets the following requirements: is resident of Cuyahoga, Geauga, or Portage counties; has a minimum GPA of 3.5 and a minimum SAT score of 1850 or an ACT score of 28; will take a college course in comparative religion; is a full-time student seeking a secular education; and exhibits financial need.

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Applications are available online at www.jfsa-cleveland.org. For more information, contact Toby Bresky, manager of the College Financial Aid Program at tlbresky@jfsa-cleveland.org.

JFSA of Cleveland, a private, non-profit organization, serves to strengthen families and individuals in both the Jewish and general communities in Northeast Ohio. Guided by traditional Jewish values of communal responsibility and social justice, JFSA is committed to enhancing every individual’s ability to thrive in our community.

Lisa Brody, a longtime Cleveland Heights resident and Heights High alumna, is JFSA’s manager of marketing and communications.

AFS: working for peace, one student at a time

Krista Hawthorne

The Heights High AFS Club recently welcomed David Ford, an American Field Service ambulance driver in World War II, to speak on the topic “Peace is More Than a Good Idea—AFS Past, Present and Future.” In addition to sharing his war experiences, Ford talked about the early years of the international exchange organization. Thirteen AFS exchange students who currently attend Brush, Shaker Heights, Solon and Cleveland Heights high schools, their host families, past exchange students, local AFS volunteers, and school administrators listened to Ford’s comments.

He described some of his experiences as an inexperienced 18-year-old volunteer ambulance driver, whose job it was to drive an ambulance truck near enemy territory, take care of the truck and its necessary repairs, provide basic aid to the wounded, load them onto the truck bed, and deliver them to medical posts for treatment.

One student asked Ford about the fear factor involved in his war work. In response, he recalled an incident in which he followed a corporal through ankle-deep mud and darkness to pick up wounded soldiers. Ford could see only the glow of the corporal’s lit cigarette to indicate the path to the wounded men. Suddenly, there were cannon blasts just a few yards away. He said “One skill everyone learned very quickly was to determine the difference between the sound of incoming and outgoing artillery.”

Because they worked on active battlefields, AFS ambulance drivers suffered high casualties. Ford was never injured, which he credits solely to good luck.

When asked if he would do it again, he responded without hesitation, “Yes!”

When he returned from war, Ford attended college and began a career in industrial sales, and actively supported the early years of AFS Intercultural Programs, which has become the leading international exchange organization for teens worldwide. As he explained, “AFS today is an organization that moves forward independently, without government funds and without political pressures, to lay the groundwork for world peace.”

“The Mosaic Arts project, featuring a tile and glass mosaic designed by HYC kids and the artist Augusto Bordeleau, begins a second phase in early February. Frank Keim and the Immortals will return in April to perform at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and at HYC.

Krista Hawthorne is an AFS volunteer and returns from France by plane to speak English because people were so patient with me when I [struggled to speak] Spanish.”

Walker said she enjoyed the big city life in Bangkok. She became fluent in Thai and recalled the surprised looks from Thais to hear an African American girl speaking the local language. “I loved meeting people from around the world and helping people understand more about Americans than what they see on TV or in movies,” she added.

Local AFS organizations depend on volunteers to support exchange students and their host families, to find new host families, and to interview students embarking on AFS trips. For more information about joining, or donating to, Greater Cleveland East AFS, visit www.afsesa.org or e-mail Adrienne Velsky at adriennev@msn.com.

Hi"
Focus group on senior housing scheduled for Feb. 12

Judith Van Kleef

The Cleveland Heights Commission on Aging identifies concerns of older residents and makes recommendations to city council when appropriate. Commission members are currently addressing the longstanding lack of accessible, affordable housing for older residents who no longer can, or wish to, remain in their homes. Many seniors would prefer to remain in Cleveland Heights, but have few options.

A building need not be designated “senior housing,” to meet the needs of older residents. It must, however, offer one-floor units without stairs, and allow access to units on upper floors. It must include ADA-compliant kitchens and baths, accessible laundry facilities, and garages and doorways with wheelchair clearance.

The commission recognizes that there are as many ideas about what constitutes desirable senior housing as there are potential residents. For this reason, the commission is hosting a focus group to help generate and prioritize ideas about senior housing needs in Cleveland Heights.

The meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, Feb. 12, at 10:30 a.m., at the Cleveland Heights Senior Activity Center (SAC), located at the corner of Monticello Boulevard and Mayfield Road.

For more information, contact Amy Jenkins, coordinator of the Office on Aging, at 216-693-7739, or at ajenkins@clvhts.com.

Judith Van Kleef is a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights and a member of the city Commission on Aging.

Senior Citizen Happenings

Senior Citizen Happenings are sponsored by the City of University Heights. Events take place on Thursdays at 5 p.m. at the University Heights Library. For information, call the UH Office for Senior Services at 216-397-0336.

Feb. 7: Amanda Dempsey, Market District director for Ohio City Inc. on behalf of the West Side Market, shares a PowerPoint presentation of the market’s 2012 centennial celebration and its enduring appeal.

Feb. 14: David Rohrstein, project director for asset building for Policy Matters Ohio, talks about the launch of an annual campaign to build financial security, Cleveland Saves and America Saves.

Feb. 21: Debra Janik, senior vice president of real estate and business development for the Greater Cleveland Partnership, highlights its catalytic role in the transformation of our urban neighborhoods.

Feb. 28: April Rashid, museum educator for the Western Reserve Historical Society, gives a PowerPoint introduction to its storied history, collections, resources, facilities, services and current exhibits.

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Inlet Dance Theatre to perform at Church of the Saviour

Loreta Dahlstrom

As part of its program to promote the arts, Church of the Saviour invites the community to attend a performance of the Inlet Dance Theatre on Sunday, Feb. 10 at 2 p.m. in the Great Hall.

Recognized as one of the region’s most exciting professional contemporary dance companies, Inlet Dance Theatre is dedicated to performing high quality programs with uncommon skill, innovation and purpose.

Founded in 2001 by Bill Wade, the company’s executive and artistic director, Inlet embodies his longstanding belief that dance experiences—watching, training and performing—serve as tools for personal growth and development.

The company’s artistic staff collaborates to build the company’s solid reputation for uplifting and engaging new audiences through performances and education programming.

The performance on Feb. 10 is about an hour long. Tickets are available online at www.chsaviour.org or by calling the church office at 216-321-8880. Tickets are $10 for adults; $5 for those 18 and under. Contact the church office for group sales. Church of the Saviour is located at 2537 Lee Road in Cleveland Heights.

Loreta Dahlstrom is the administrative assistant at Church of the Saviour.

Programs are generously funded by:

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For Specific Dates and Times and to REGISTER NOW, visit www.TheMusicSettlement.org

Jewell Moulthrop

Continuing its critically acclaimed 33rd season, Ensemble Theatre presents “The Gospel According to James” by Charles Smith. The play, which runs through Feb. 17, is directed by Celeste Cosentino, with assistance from Aaron Elersich.

Eyewitness accounts, as we know, are often less than accurate, and that is the premise of this play. James Cameron and Mary Ball survived history, but whose history? The play, commissioned by The Indiana Repertory Theatre, examines the past and present lives of these two people.

Set in Indiana in 1930, five young people are eager to break out of their small town. They need a car; they have a gun. Based on an actual double lynching, playwright Charles Smith has created a fictional meeting between a man who survived the event and the only woman who was with them that night.

As “The Gospel According to James” dramatizes the events leading up to the crime, it also explores how unreliable personal memory underlies what we believe to be immutable public history.

Smith is head of the Professional Playwriting Program at Ohio University and is playwright in residence at the Victory Gardens Theater in Chicago. His plays have been produced off-Broadway, such as The Acting Company, People’s Repertory Gardens Theater in Chicago. His work also has been produced for the Federal Theatre, Seattle Repertory Theatre, and Berkeley Repertory Theatre.

His work has also been produced for HBO’s New Writers Project, the International Children’s Theater Festival in Seattle, and the North Carolina Black Arts Festival.

Ensemble’s production of “The Gospel According to James” is a Cleveland premiere and features an all-star cast, including Equity members Peter Lawson Jones and Keith E. Stevens.

Performances are Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m. and Sundays at 2 p.m. Tickets are $25, $18 for seniors, and $10 for students (with valid ID). A special “meet the playwright” date is set for Feb. 16. There will also be a “Speakeasy” event to benefit Ensemble Theatre. Enjoy wine, food, song, and the show. There is special pricing for this performance and event.

For more information and to purchase tickets, call the box office at 216-321-2930 or visit www.ensemble-theatre.org.

Jewell Moulthrop is a Cleveland Heights resident, a member of the FutureHeights Board of Directors, and chair of the Heights Observer’s Editorial Advisory Committee.

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Heights Observer February 1, 2013

Lebanese-American family drama occupies the stage at Dobama

Jewel Moulthrop

At the midpoint of its 53rd successful season in the Heights, Dobama Theatre announces its next main stage production—the regional premiere of “Sons of the Prophet” by Stephen Karam. The play runs Feb. 22 through Mar. 17.

The play is about the Douaihy family, living in a run-down section of Nazareth, Penn. Although the fictional Douaihys of the play share some characteristics with Karam’s own family—they are Lebanese-American Maronite Catholics from eastern Pennsylvania—he insists that this is not his family play.

The Douaihys are a large family in which all is not well. Joseph, 29 years old and a former running champ, is desperately trying to keep his family from falling apart, even as his body is ravaged by a series of strange ailments. Karam’s play blends comedy and tragedy in its examination of how suffering capriciously rains down on some people and not others.

Not many playwrights can claim to have had a theater built for them, but that is what happened to Karam. After a reading of Karam’s earlier play, “Speech & Debate,” Todd Haines, artistic director of New York’s Roundabout Theater, recalled, “We loved [the play], and then we thought: ‘Where can we give this writer his first production where it won’t capriciously rains down on some people and not others.’

Not many playwrights can claim to have had a theater built for them, but that is what happened to Karam. After a reading of Karam’s earlier play, “Speech & Debate,” Todd Haines, artistic director of New York’s Roundabout Theater, recalled, “We loved [the play], and then we thought: ‘Where can we give this writer his first production where it won’t be so much pressure?’ There was a hole in a subbasement. We decided to build a 65-seat black-box space that came to be called the Roundabout Underground.

Scranton native Karam is a graduate of Brown University and a MacDowell Colony Fellow. He is the recipient of the inaugural Sam Norkin Off-Broadway Drama Desk Award and the Dramatists Guild’s Hull-Warriner Award for “Sons of the Prophet.”

Scott Miller, who is directing “Sons of the Prophet,” is the director of the Cleveland School of the Arts Theater Arts Program. Before coming to Cleveland, he served as the artistic director of The Children’s Theater of Charlotte. He is also the founding artistic director of the Orange Summer Shakespeare Festival, a theater program in New Jersey for urban teenagers. Miller directed “The Seafarer” for Dobama Theatre last season, and “Dead Man’s Cell Phone” during the 2010–11 season. He has also worked as an actor, appearing in Off-Broadway and regional theater productions.

Performances of “Sons of the Prophet” are Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings, and Sunday afternoons. For a complete schedule, ticket prices and reservations, call the Dobama Theatre box office at 216-932-3396. Ask about reduced prices for RUSH tickets.

The top 650 pieces are on display in the inaugural production in a 65-seat black-box space that came to be called the Roundabout Underground.

Jewel Moulthrop is a Cleveland Heights resident, a member of the FutureHeights Board of Directors, and chair of the Heights Observer’s Editorial Advisory Committee.

Heights High artists excel in regional competition

Joy Henderson

Ten Heights High artists won awards in the Cleveland Regional Scholastic Art Competition. Jade Woodson received a silver key and an honorable mention for ceramics, Kate Barcus received a silver key for ceramics and Katy Collyer received a silver key for a metal plate etching.

Faakol Faakoli T’raore won two honorable mentions. The following students also received an honorable mention: Jessica Baumgartner, Regina Bellian, Lucas Boyle, Hanna Gillispie, Alexa Sollisch and Jimmy Taylor.

More than 2,100 pieces of artwork by Cuyahoga County students were submitted to the 3rd annual juried contest. The top 650 pieces are on display in the Reinberger Galleries at the Cleveland Institute of Art through Feb. 2.

“We are very proud of these hard-working students,” said art teacher Susan Hooi. “This group of students is special because they are not afraid to try new mediums and experiment.”

The Reinberger Galleries are located at 11141 East Blvd. in Cleveland’s University Circle. Gallery hours are Monday–Thursday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Friday, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.; and Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; closed on Sunday. The show is free and open to the public.

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

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Heights Observer February 1, 2013

www.heightsobserver.org
Katz Club Diner is set to open this spring

Jewel Mallothrop

Why would an exceedingly busy man like Doug Katz take on yet another huge project—transforming a vacant restaurant on Lee Road into old-time diner and bar cars of the 1940s? His plate already seems to be overflowing.

Katz, owner/chef of fire food & drink in Shaker Square, and chef/partner of the recently opened Provenance restaurant and cafe in the Cleveland Museum of Art (CMA), responded with three cogent reasons. First is his passion for cooking good food and sharing it with others. Second, his catering business, which currently operates out of fire’s back kitchen, has outgrown its space. Third, he is motivated to do something for his staff and for the community in which he and his family live.

Katz has been cooking since he was a child, when he hard-boiled his first egg at age five. He is a friendly and genial host who enjoys being part of his guests’ dining experience—greeting them and chatting about the food they’ve ordered.

With a fondness for classic diners from the mid-20th century, Katz had been admiring the Lee Road diner cars for some time. He was inspired, he said, “because the building had soul,” adding that he “wanted to create a business that will bring spark to the neighborhood.” And it’s his neighborhood, too. A resident of Cleveland Heights for more than a decade, he likens his commute from fire to CMA to the diner to the classic kitchen triangle: fridge to sink to stove.

Cleveland Heights City Council endorsed Katz’s plans for the diner, voting unanimously at its Nov. 7 meeting to approve a loan under the city’s Economic Development Loan Fund Program. The $200,000 loan has a 3-percent interest rate, with a seven-year repayment schedule after one year’s deferral. Terms of the loan allow for up to $50,000 being forgiven, based on city income taxes generated by the business from 2014-18.

Already familiar with the diner’s super-large kitchen, Katz knew it would be ideal for his growing catering business. After the renovations are completed, Katz will have two kitchens—one for the restaurant and one to accommodate both on-site and off-site parties. The currently semi-finished basement will become office space for meetings with staff and prospective catering customers. Katz will be able to show various set-ups for private parties and other gatherings. The basement will also serve as a reference library comprising mostly cookbooks.

Many of the staff at fire have been with Katz since he opened the restaurant more than 11 years ago. With only a few spots at the top—chef de cuisine and sous chef—advancement in the restaurant business is difficult. As a way to reward his employees for their competence, experience and loyalty, Katz will be able to promote current staffers into higher positions at the new diner. He plans to employ 28 people for the two-plus shifts that will keep the place open for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Katz, who has developed strong relationships with local farmers, will continue that trend in the new Katz Club Diner. Jay Szabo, who runs the farm at Dunham Tavern and provides fresh vegetables during the growing season, will be updating the landscape around the diner cars.

As “creative dreamer and conceptualizer,” Katz will decide the menu, which is likely to include burgers, tuna melts, BLTs and other diner favorites. A coffee and dessert bar will feature cookies, donuts, puddings, cheesecake and slices of birthday cake. Katz has put out a call for family dessert recipes and the stories that go with them. He plans to highlight one each month.

With Katz’s enthusiasm and track record, not to mention his energy and creativity, Katz Club Diner is sure to succeed as well. With plans to open in the spring, he already has one party booked!

Jewel Mallothrop is a Cleveland Heights resident, a member of the FutureHeights Board of Directors, and chair of the Heights Observer’s Editorial Advisory Committee.

Cleveland Foodbank benefits from Heights Jazzercise workouts

Pam Barr

Large quantities of food and working out don’t usually go hand in hand, but one local Jazzercise group used sweat equity to raise money to feed the hungry. Early this year, the Cleveland Foodbank received almost $2,000 from the Cleveland Heights Jazzercise class works out for charity.

The Cleveland Heights Jazzercize class has been a staple of the Heights community for more than 11 years. With only a few spots at the top—chef de cuisine and sous chef—advancement in the restaurant business is difficult. As a way to reward his employees for their competence, experience and loyalty, Katz will be able to promote current staffers into higher positions at the new diner. He plans to employ 28 people for the two-plus shifts that will keep the place open for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

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Tommy Fello: from soda jerk to acclaimed restaurateur

James Henke

In 1966, when he was 14 years old, Tommy Fello began working as a soda jerk at the Ace Drug Store on Euclid Heights Boulevard near Coventry. It would have been hard to predict that in just six years Fello would own the store, and turn it into a restaurant that still exists as something of a landmark down the street on Coventry.

Fello grew up in Cleveland Heights with three brothers and one sister. His father was a chemical engineer and his mother was a fine jeweler. Fello attended St. Ann School through eighth grade and graduated from Heights High. He studied computer programming for a year, but it was his job at the drugstore that really captivated him.

In 1969, Ace was sold to a Lebanese couple. They sold Lebanese sandwich—falafel, hummus and baba ghanoush. Two years later, the Saides decided to return to Lebanon. Fello, who was then 19, bought the store. He paid $6,000 and renamed it Tommy’s.

Much of what people now associate with Tommy’s dates back to those early days. Take the milkshakes—claimed by almost everyone who’s had one, including staff from Rolling Stone magazine—who had them “best milkshakes east of the Mississippi.” He’s been making them since the early 1970s, and still makes them with ice cream from Pierre’s, a local company.

There were, and still are, unusual names for the menu items, such as the IRS (a spinach pie with mushrooms and cheese), the EZ (a falafel sandwich with mushrooms, cheese and sesame sauce), and the Joy salad (eggs, baba ghanoush and cheese). They are named after the customers who ordered the items on a regular basis. “The customers would almost always order the same thing,” Fello said. “So it was easier for me to just put their name on it instead of describing the contents of the item.”

By the mid-70s, the drugstore portion of the business was losing custom- ers due to the arrival of the Revco chain. Fello responded by focusing more on the food. “I took out some of the shelves and put in some tables,” he said. In 1977, after losing the lease on the building, he relocated down the street to where Mac’s Backs is now located.

By this time, Coventry had undergone some dramatic changes. “In those early days, there was a beauty parlor, an antique store, a jewelry store, a fish market and so on,” he said. But by the 70s, it had become a hippie mecca, with more stores that were, as Fello describes them, “alternative.”

Picking up on changes in the neighborhood, Fello expanded his menu. “More people were becoming vegetarians, so we added more vegetarian options,” he said. One of the things Fello is most proud of is the variety on the menu. “I like to have something for everyone in the family,” he said. “So if someone wants a hamburger, they can get one. But the person with them might be a vegetarian, so they can get a vegetarian item. We’re sort of like Alice’s Restaurant—you can get anything you want!”

In 1988, a fire destroyed the dining room at Tommy’s and took out a significant portion of the block. His kitchen was spared, so he kept it where it was, but moved his dining room next door. Initially, he shared that space with Coventry Cats and High Tide, Rock Bottom. In 1992, he purchased the building and took over the entire space. After extensive remodeling, it has remained pretty much the same for more than two decades.

Fello works long and hard, usually arriving there by 6:30 a.m. Visitors to the restaurant are likely to see him somewhere behind the counter.

Although he’s had a restaurant in Cleveland Heights for more than 40 years, Fello no longer lives here. He and Cindy, his wife of 37 years, moved to Russell in 1982.

Over the years, he has considered opening another restaurant, and is currently looking at possibilities on Cleveland’s West Side. He remains very happy with his longtime location, and he loves his customers. “My favorite thing is interacting with people and pleasing the customers,” he said. “That’s the thing I like most.”

[Read a longer version of this story online.]

James Henke, a Cleveland Heights resident, is a former editor and writer for Rolling Stone magazine.