John Gibbon, longtime CH law director, retires

Deanna Bremer Fisher

On Dec. 31, John Gibbon, law director for the City of Cleveland Heights, retired from the position he held for 28 years. Gibbon, a partner at Walter Haverfield LLP, a Cleveland law firm, also served the city for six years as its assistant law director.

The law director, a part-time position, oversees several full-time staff members in the Law Department, which represents the city in all criminal prosecutions and civil litigation; acts as legal advisor and counsel to the city manager, city council and all city offices, employees, departments, boards and commissions; and prepares legislation at council’s request.

Prior to his work in Cleveland Heights, Gibbon was law director for the City of Aurora. He served as special counsel for several cities and has represented many public entities and nonprofits in Ohio during his career.

“An active citizenry has made it an interesting job,” said Gibbon.

As noted in Gibbon’s profile on the Walter Haverfield website, the City of Cleveland Heights has “historically been on the cutting edge of many municipal legal issues.” The city’s proclamation to Gibbon, delivered at the Dec. 16 city council meeting, mentioned several areas in which Gibbon’s knowledge has been helpful to the city: nuisance abatement, housing initiatives; fair housing, economic development; and telecommunications and right-of-way issues.

During Gibbon’s tenure, in 2003, the City Council selected two of its longest-serving members as the positions was expected. Signaling a fresh approach, however, newly elected council member Melissa Yasinow nominated her fellow freshman council member, Jeff Coryell, for vice mayor.

Stephens won handsomely with five of the seven council votes.

Prior to the selection, five members of council were sworn in. Two re-elected members of council, Cheryl Stephens and Jason Stein, took their oaths of office, and three newly elected members took theirs: Janine Boyd, Jeff Coryell and Melissa Yaszinow.

On Jan. 10, the district announced it had selected the property at $770,000 and $600,000, and Mosdos estimated the value of the property at $3 million. The appraisals commissioned by the district and Mosdos estimated the value of the property at $770,000 and $600,000, respectively.

Register said in October that the board had agreed to “negotiate with Mosdos” to sell the property with the expectation of receiving a fair market value and has set a timeline of Oct. 17. Angee Shaker, director of communications for the district, confirmed on Jan. 14 that the board discussed Millikin at its Oct. 17 executive session meeting, and said, “Unfortunately, the district and Mosdos weren’t able to come to an agreement. Negotiations with Mosdos have concluded at this time.”

“We were disappointed that we weren’t able to reach an agreement with [Mosdos] after all this time, but we feel very good about the direction we are heading,” said Register in the district’s Jan. 10 release. “The latest plans are to bring the Heights Youth Theatre into Millikin along with our futureoscope and moving some district staff to the property for neighborhood use, for neighborhood use, for neighborhood use. The Millikin neighborhood is going to be a new home for Heights Youth Theatre (HYT) as a tenant, and we will work closely with the Cleveland Heights planning department as these changes are implemented.”

The district must seek approval from the City of Cleveland Heights for any nonschool use of Millikin. Former CH Mayor Edward Kelley, quoted in the district’s release, said, “My first choice would have been Mosdos Ohr Hatorah for the Millikin site. However, it is time to move forward, and I am pleased that Millikin will be put to good use again. The Millikin neighborhood is going to be a new home for Heights Youth Theatre (HYT) as a tenant, and we will work closely with the Cleveland Heights planning department as these changes are implemented.”
Mosdos remains interested in Millikin property

To the Editor:

Mosdos Ohr Hatzolah has learned that the CH-UH Board of Education proposes to convert its long-abandoned Millikin property into something other than a school. Mosdos is disappointed that negotiations with the board have so far been unsuccessful. It remains willing to negotiate further if and when the board changes its mind and agrees to sell the property for something without excluding the old stadium. Otherwise, Mosdos could not develop a reasonable land use plan with adequate recreational area for children.

The board has used the stabilized illegally as a garage and a dump. Instead of a school that would improve and anchor the neighborhood, the board proposes an illegal use of residency-zoned property for a full-time office building and part-time theatre. It does not mention the high financial cost of doing this. Nor does it mention whether it will spend bond money voted for other purposes.

This new proposal would violate the city’s zoning code. It would misuse public money. It would undermine the confidence of Mosdos parents and put the neighborhood at risk. The board’s proposal therefore is a lose-lose solution.

Alan Raporto
Attorney for Mosdos

CH police are doing a fine job

To the Editor:

I am writing a reply to Joshua Schaefer’s letter about Cleveland Heights police not following traffic laws (Heights Observer, January 2013). [He stated] that the CH police park illegally, run lights and use their sirens when there is no emergency. . . . I have lived in Cleveland Heights for more than six years and have had two or three interactions with the police. They have always been professional and treated me with respect. So what if they park in a no-parking zone or use the siren. They have always been professional and treated me with respect.

Steven Ronick
Cleveland Heights

Elegantly Packaged Chocolates and Truffles
Old-Fashioned Marshmallows and Classic Favorites
Exquisite Handcrafted Chocolates

A Sensory Experience to Delight Sweethearts of Every Age

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A Sensory Experience to Delight Sweethearts of Every Age

CH AWAY continued from page 1

In his acceptance speech, Wilcox noted that the City of Cleveland Heights will celebrate its 100th anniversary in seven years and that the city-manager form of government has served it well. “Our greatest strengths are our people who have expressed a dedication to diversity, the arts and sustainability,” he said.

Wilcox stated that the many challenges that the city faces are opportunities. He said that the new city manager is working on a capital budget, but that it would be a challenge to “find the resources to implement this with traditional debt levels.” Wilcox said the city needs to find new sources of revenue and that it would partner with the school district, other cities and the county, and would look for resources outside the city to implement some of its plans.

Wilcox said that while the city has focused its limited resources on reversioning and demolition of distressed and blighted properties, it now needs to focus on redevelopment of vacant lands, such as the new projects on Edgeworth Road and at Cedar and Coventry roads. “Any city needs to expand its income tax base, work on promoting our city and communicate our successes,” he said.

Wilcox said that the school facility bond issue passed by citizens in November 2013 was a “tremendous opportunity” and pledged that the city would work with the district to “ensure that the new buildings are everything that was promised to the community.”

During the meeting, the council announced the committees that each member will serve on for 2014. Melissa Yasinow will chair the Administrative Services Committee, with Janine Boyd as vice chair and Jason Stein as a member. Jeff Coryell will chair the Community Relations and Recreation Committee, with Yasinow as vice chair and Cheryl Steiger as a member. Stephens will chair the Finance Committee, with Mary Dunbar as vice chair and Yasinow as a member. Dunbar will chair the Municipal Services Committee, with Coryell as vice chair and Janine Boyd as a member. Stein will chair the Planning and Development Committee, with Stephens as vice chair and Dunbar as a member. Boyd will chair the Public Safety and Health Committee, with Stein as vice chair and Coryell as a member.


Yasinow, as chair of the Administrative Services Committee, announced the names of those residents chosen to serve on the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) for 2014 and the newly formed Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC).

Members of CAC are Jeffrey Bendix, Melissa Bilancini, Vetella Camper, Jessica Cohen, Douglas Dykes, Carol Gibson, Jonathan Goldman, Christine Henry, Benjamin Hoen, Allison McCallum, Marian Morton, Donalene Podolski, Rebecca Price, Kahlil Sereen, Amanda Shaffer, Keba Sylva, Steven Tichenal, Diana Wellman, George Witherspoon, Parker Zabell and Kevin Ziegler. The committee has one vacancy—the Canterbury neighborhood is not yet represented.

Members of TAC are Chris Cameron, Mar de Leuwzitia, Julie Lustic, Howard Maier, Charles Mosbrook, Sarah O’Keefe, Akshai Singh and Gary Schumacher. The committee will also include a representative from the Regional Transit Authority Board of Directors.

Deanna Brewer Fisher is executive director of FutureHeights and publisher of the Heights Observer.
What I’d like to see from CH City Council and the school district in the next four years

Gary Benjamin

The 2013 election was unusually important for both the City of Cleveland Heights and the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District. Sixty percent of council members who had been serving Cleveland Heights in 2009 retired after long and distinguished service: Mayor Kelly, Nancy Dietrich, Bonnie Caplan, Mark Toms, Ken Montlack and the late Phyllis Evans.

All did great things for the city.

The passage of the increase in school millage will improve the education offered in the CH-UH school district. The juxtaposition of a new council and new hope for the schools presents great opportunities for Cleveland Heights.

In this article, and another to follow next month, I suggest some approaches we can take to guarantee a strong future for Cleveland Heights.

First, I ask council and school board members to look at every policy and tax as if you were a person or family considering moving in. Everyone wants a good school district. Strong schools mean a strong community. So an improved school system should attract families. But high taxes make it increasingly difficult for people to choose CH-UH, as we are often competing with other suburbs which have lower taxes and schools rated better than ours. I call this the "residential equation."

Second, we need more openness. We have many talented people who can be enlisted for ideas to make our government more effective. A detailed budget should be posted with basic information about each department, such as number of staff. With this information residents can more easily make suggestions that might help us grow.

The ‘committee of the whole’ practice should be ended. Council meets as a ‘committee of the whole’ before its regular meeting. Debate takes place there and that is where members determine how they are going to vote. This gives the appearance of secrecy because debate seldom takes place at the televised meeting. We would be better served by more public debate.

The city should openly analyze its income, expenses and priorities for the future. We need to ask, “How can we best structure the city to position it for the future?” A public budget, public debates, and publicly posted basic information should involve those of us who have ideas that would be valuable.

Third, coming from Detroit, I learned that a divided region creates weak cities and weak suburbs. All council members need to be involved in some regional effort whether it is trying to combine services or helping Cleveland improve.

As Cleveland goes, so go its suburbs. I want to know how council will work with Cleveland to improve our ability to attract residents. It may seem counterintuitive that I suggest that we improve Cleveland so that we can grow in Cleveland Heights. But a strong and vibrant Cleveland is our economic engine from which we will all benefit.

Fourth, little things do matter: pothole repair, maintaining vacant buildings and not boarding them up, maintaining lawns and vacant lots. Seeing a boarded up storefront on a main business strip is bad marketing for Cleveland Heights.

Council needs to be attentive to these little things and make sure they get taken care of quickly.

We need policies that encourage people to move in and stay. We, as citizens, must keep the focus on attracting new people to the city while keeping those who already live here as residents. This ‘residential equation’ needs to guide every action the council and school board take.

Gary Benjamin moved to Cleveland Heights in 2008 from Detroit. In 2009 he ran unsuccessfully for city council. A lawyer, licensed in Ohio and Michigan, he is best known here for his work on health care reform with UH-CAN Ohio. He is married to Melody Hart.

Cleveland Heights became the first city in Ohio to offer a domestic partnership registry, which legally recognizes and documents same-sex relationships. Ten other Ohio municipalities have since followed suit. “There were no models to follow and we were being watched by organizations that didn’t want it to happen,” said Gibbon. “But, we won.”

Gibbon successfully argued before the Ohio Supreme Court to expand the definition of nuisance abatement to enable cities to combat not only public safety issues, but also the adverse impacts of the uses of property on neighborhoods. Gibbon cited several instances in which the city used the expanded nuisance abatement ordinance to bring about change both at businesses and private residences, most recently at a gas station on Noble Road.

Cleveland Heights became the first city in the nation for each of the following: special improvement districts; Cedar Fairmount, Coventry Village and Cedar Lee. Gibbon said the legislation has been an “effective tool for revitalizing those business districts.”

Gibbon said that the city’s legal department has actively assisted in the purchase of properties and the creation of partnerships and legal agreements to enable commercial redevelopment in all parts of the city. The city assisted the tenants at the building on Coventry Road where Tommy’s restaurant is located to create a partnership and purchase the building, and it helped create the Coventry parking deck and parking lots through the use of property acquisition, long-term leases and easements.

On Lee Road, the city purchased the building currently occupied by New Heights Grill, and created the parking lots surrounding it, which served as a catalyst for other restaurants to locate there. At Severance, the city used the public nuisance legislation to acquire and improve the ring road.

Gibbon said it was almost by accident that he became an expert in telecommunications and right-of-way issues when federal regulation of the industry changed in the 1980s. “I had intended to read the legislation,” he said, “and then I ended up throwing out my back so I had some time on my hands and became the first person to read all 300 to 400 pages of it. Then, everyone came to me.” The changes in regulations enabled cities to charge franchise fees, link public buildings via cable, and create public access cable television stations. “Cleveland Heights was among the first cities, for better or worse, to televise its city council meetings,” said Gibbon.

Gibbon recently won what he called the biggest case of his career, against the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer Dis- trict (NEORSD), which was created in the 1970s to manage a regional sanitary sewer system. “The district decided that it also wanted to be in the stormwater management business, but decided not to involve the cities and other interested parties as it is required to do. This is a tax, it was not voted upon, the district didn’t follow the process and it is not re- gional,” said Gibbon. Several cities have been fighting NEORSD, and Cleveland Heights has been in the forefront because of Gibbon’s expertise. “Recently the 8th District Court of Appeals said that [NEORSD] had not followed the process and can’t assess a fee,” said Gibbon.

The biggest challenges currently facing the city are a result of the recession, said Gibbon, who noted that it would be challenging for the city to maintain first class, innovative services because staffing in support departments, such as planning and economic development, has been cut.

Gibbon plans to continue his work at Walter Haverfield and be a resource for the city. He would like to devote more time to his other interests—he recently earned a Performance Diploma in cello from the Oberlin College Conser- vatory of Music—and his family, including several grandchildren.

Tanisha Briley, Cleveland Heights city manager, said that the city has been accepting law director applica- tions since Nov. 1, and reviewed the first group of applicants on Nov. 22, but that the position is still open. In the interim, Briley has recommended to council that Jim Juliano, who has overseen the city’s civil litigation and labor matters part time since 1997, serve as law director.

Juliano has 35 years of municipal law experience and is a partner in the law firm of Nicola, Giudrason and Cooper LLC.

The law director reports to, and is hired by, the city manager. The city’s charter requires that city council con- firm all appointments to the position.

Deanna Bremer Fisher is executive direc- tor of FutureHeights and publisher of the Heights Observer.
Veneration of private over public is a mistake

Susie Koesser

“A private school experience at a public school cost,” reads the headline on the Lake Erie Preparatory School’s home page. The school is one of six charter schools in the Cleveland area sponsored by the for-profit ICAN charter school company.

What exactly is a “private school experience”? This website message implies that it is something to aspire to, better and safer than a public school education, but out of reach because of cost. Remember that private schools exclude some people, and public schools don’t. By likening itself to a private school, this charter is saying, “You can have an elite education for free!”

By funding charter schools—out of funds allocated to local school districts—and allowing them to operate in ways that violate our expectations for public institutions, the state legislature has embraced private education at the expense of the system of public schools for which it is responsible.

I don’t blame disappointed parents for wanting the best possible education for their children. My beef is with the legislature for taking a low-cost, divisive and dangerous approach to education in the state.

By creating private alternatives, the state legislature has undermined traditional public schools and put them into competition with charters. The private alternatives that are funded with public funds lack the very essence of what makes public schools so valuable: their public purpose, public governance, public oversight and commitment to the common good.

I urge our elected officials for wanting the best possible education for their children. My beef is with the legislature for taking a low-cost, divisive and dangerous approach to education in the state.

By creating private alternatives, the state legislature has undermined traditional public schools and put them into competition with charters. The private alternatives that are funded with public funds lack the very essence of what makes public schools so valuable: their public purpose, public governance, public oversight and commitment to the common good.

Legislators are willing to support unregulated for-profit alternatives while underfunding, testing, ranking and judging the mainstream public system. Instead of enlisting educational professionals in a search for effective strategies that build teacher expertise and engage students with diverse needs, they grade and blame teachers and refuse to address core issues that put many children behind before they even start school. They look at education as widget production, not human development, and they undermine local control.

Instead of building confidence in the hallmark of our democracy, current policies promote a narrative of failure and encourage disinvestment.

The legislature is quick to measure, blame and shame, but unwilling to ensure adequate funding for a fair system. The legislature is the steward of public funds, but it has created a system that endorses profitmaking with those public funds, and limited accountability. These policies don’t fix anything. Our elected officials have abandoned their constitutional responsibility to provide a system of public schools that works.

Public schools serve the common good, not customers. They build communities of respect and mutual obligation, not fear. Public schools unite; a dual system divides. Charters pull away resources and fray the fabric of communities rather than build an awareness of our responsibility to one another.

Education is worthy of public investment because it is a resource for the common good. When public policies push a private agenda over a public purpose, it erodes our commitment to success for all. By providing a supposed “way out” for a few, rather than ensuring a quality education for all, we abandon those who depend on the public solution. Do we really want to do that? There is plenty of evidence that the market discriminates and leaves people behind. Just look at the history of urban neighborhoods! It scares me.

We cannot abandon our children, the principles of public institutions, or our democracy. Public schools are a bulwark of commitment to the well-being of all children and our commitment to one another. Veneration of the private over the public is a mistake.

There isn’t anything more valuable or essential in our society than our public schools, which challenge, nurture and inspire all our children. If schools fall short of these expectations, we need to fix them—together. It’s time to end a dual system of schools that creates an escape valve for a few and creates profits for private education companies. It’s time to reclaim our commitment to the common good by electing a legislature that is willing to pursue meaningful solutions to vexing problems.

We need the legislature to build a system that is cherished because it is a “public school experience at a public school cost.”

Susie Koesser is a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights, former director of Reaching Heights, and serves on the national board of Parents for Public Schools.
University Heights City Council

Meeting highlights

DECEMBER 17, 2013

All council members were present.

Citizen of the Year

Robert Walton was honored as Citizen of the Year. Walton has been a volunteer magistrate for the Juvenile Divorce Program in University Heights for many years. He serves as a defense attorney during the day, but on Wednesday evenings he meets with juvenile offenders in council chambers, issuing sentences of community service and essays. According to Detective Sergeant Dale Orians of the police department, Walton has been present at the council chambers, issuing sentences of community service and essays.

Public Servant of the Year

Vice Mayor Frankie Goldberg was honored as Public Servant of the Year. Goldberg has served 12 years on council, and was vice mayor for the past four years. She was praised as a strong advocate for the city, particularly regarding safety issues. She has been an independent thinker and a calm voice during contentious discussions. Female council members were grateful for her mentorship and guidance. Goldberg is stepping down due to term limits.

Health insurance

Council authorized participation in the Cuyahoga County Benefits Regionalization Program. The county is now offering cities an option to join the regional employee benefits plan. This initiative, as stated by County Executive Ed Fitzgerald, has the potential to lower health insurance costs by four to 11 percent, depending on the plan selected. There is at least one plan that meets the requirements of the city’s current labor contracts. At this point, the city is looking at a premium increase of $115,000 from its current insurance provider. Mayor Infeld would have to sign a three-year contract, but there is no contract currently in place for the next three years.

Removal of hazardous tree

Council authorized payment of $6,500 to Armorer Tree Service for removal of a rear yard tree at 3837 Northwood Road, a rental property.

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Cleveland Heights City Council
Meeting highlights

DECEMBER 16, 2013
All council members were present.

Law Director John Gibbon
Mayor Edward Kelley began the meeting with a proclamation honoring Law Director John Gibbon, who is retiring. Kelley mentioned Gibbon’s many accomplishments over his 26 years in the position. Throughout the meeting, each council member in turn gave praise and thanks to Gibbon for his service to the city.

Cedar Road section to honor John West
Council passed a resolution to name the section of Cedar Road from Coventry Road to Lee Road "Jazz West Road," to honor the memory of the Cleveland Heights investigator who was killed in the line of duty on May 26, 2007.

Housing discrimination
Council amended the city code to expand the role and jurisdiction of the Fair Housing Board, hereafter renamed the Fair Practices Board, to hear and investigate complaints concerning discrimination in places of housing and public accommodation, and to assure equal access “regardless of race, color, religion, sex, familial status, national origin, disability, or sexual orientation.” Council Member Janine Boyd noted that neither state nor federal law protects all of these classifications.

Turkey Ridge development
Council approved a $6 million agreement with Vicona Companies Ltd. for development of city-owned property on Edgewood Road, also known as Turkey Ridge. The land purchase price will be $775,000, tax abatement for the units will be 100 percent for 15 years, the projected closing date will be June 16, 2014, and construction will begin Oct. 1, 2014, to be completed within three years after closing. There will be public meetings. Soil studies, view corridors, and tree preservation will all be seriously considered.

Retiring Council Member Caplan
Bonnie Caplan spoke about her 20 years on city council—everything she had learned during her tenure, the impressive residents who generate good ideas and demand change, the importance of listening, and the amazing city staff. She expressed gratitude for her family’s support and understanding of her obligations.

Retiring Mayor Edward Kelley
In his last mayor’s report, Mayor Kelley said it had been an honor and a privilege to serve on council for two decades, and gave highlights of his council years. He said that he was born and raised in Cleveland Heights. He thanked his supportive wife and family, his talented and dedicated colleagues (past and present), and the excellent city staff.

LIVESTOCK License transfer
Hi Top Lounge LLC (2221 Noble Road 44122), has applied, under the TREX process, which allows surplus liquor licenses to transfer from one community to another, to transfer a permit from Cedars Lounge Inc. doing business as Cedars Lounge and Restaurant (23 N. Hazel Street, first floor basement and patio, Youngstown). This was referred to the Public Safety and Health Committee, the city manager, and the law director. LWV Observers: Blanche Valtany and Katie Solender

You can connect with Cleveland Heights at Facebook.com/clevelandheights Twitter.com/cvheights

www.heightsobserver.org
CH Historical Society has new president

Michael Rotman

The Cleveland Heights Historical Society (CHHS) Board of Trustees announced the appointment of Ken Goldberg as the organization’s new president.

A trustee since 1996, Goldberg serves on the Cleveland Heights Landmark Commission and spent many years as a member of the Cleveland Heights Improvement Awards Committee.

He also is a former president of the Western Reserve Architectural Historians and was principal editor of AIA/Cleveland’s Guide to Cleveland Architecture, 2nd edition.

Many Heights residents are familiar with his articles, lectures, architectural walking tours, preservation consulting, and architectural color consulting. Goldberg holds an M.A. in art history from Binghamton University and an M.L.S. from Syracuse University.

Working with Michael Rotman, CHHS’ new executive director, Goldberg hopes to strengthen the organization’s core programs: producing “View from the Overlook,” a publication featuring articles about local history; CHHS’ website (www.chhistory.org) and related new blog; the organization’s new Facebook page; and local history presentations; as well as fostering community outreach and cooperation with other historical organizations.

Michael Rotman is the executive director of Cleveland Heights Historical Society.

Time for a CH Time Bank

Greg Coleridge

Cleveland Heights residents are invited to a public meeting to discuss establishing a community Time Bank on Tuesday, Feb. 11 at 7 p.m. in Meeting Room A at the Lee Road Library; 2345 Lee Road.

Time banks are local service exchange systems in which time is the unit of currency. For every hour you spend doing a service for a time bank member, you receive that much in time credits that can be spent on services you need from fellow members.

Leah Davis, coordinator of the Akron Time Bank and staffperson with the Northeast Ohio American Friends Service Committee, will speak about the system, answer questions and offer suggestions for launching a program in Cleveland Heights.

A time bank is one of several types of local complementary alternative currencies designed to strengthen and shield the local community from external economic conditions.

Ideas behind time banking include the following:

• Abundance: We all have valuable things to offer the community. Together, we can meet one another’s needs.
• Recognition: We need to have our contributions recognized and valued for what they are.
• Reciprocity: We all rely on one another to offer our own gifts in grateful response to gifts received.
• Relationships: Any work we do should emerge from a story about how we all relate to one another, and what we each have to offer—and receive.

Time banks exist in 27 nations, with several hundred systems throughout the U.S., including in Akron, Cleveland, Kent, Twinsburg and Ravenna in Northeast Ohio.

For more information about the Feb. 11 meeting, contact Susan Miller at millerbowen@gmail.com or John L. Clark at jlc6@po.cwru.edu.

Greg Coleridge is director of the Northeast Ohio American Friends Service Committee and member of the Program on Corporations, Law and Democracy collective.

We love having the Orchestra and the Art Museum in our back yard now!”  —Beth Bohn, Judson Park resident since 2006

Beth Bohn is part of a growing trend at Judson—she and her husband Earl moved to Judson Park from the west side of Cleveland.

“We love having the Cleveland Orchestra and the Art Museum in our back yard now,” says Beth. “Plus, it’s great being close to the world-class healthcare of Cleveland Clinic and University Hospitals.”

Beth shares her life long passion for art as co-chair of the Howson Gallery, booking local artists for shows open to the public. “The gallery has built a strong reputation. Artists want to show their work here,” she notes. “People look forward to the shows.”

Judson Park’s distinct personality, which marries the best of Cleveland Heights with University Circle, appealed to Beth. “There’s a special mix of people here and it’s easy to make friends” she says. “I believe a good life includes strong bonds with friends.”

This is Smart Living™ defined at Judson Park. Interested in learning more? Call (216) 791-2004 to arrange for a tour today.

To read more about Beth, visit www.judsonsmartliving.org/Beth

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Mullen to leave Reaching Heights for overseas adventure

Saroya Queen-Tabor

On Dec. 12, at the Reaching Heights annual meeting, Patrick Mullen announced that he will be stepping down as executive director of the organization in 2014. Mullen and his family plan to move to New Zealand for a year, where his wife, Dr. Heather Mullen, will practice medicine.

"With gratitude for the chance to lead this organization since the fall of 2007, and excitement about the adventure that awaits, I will step down as executive director of Reaching Heights in the spring of 2014," said Mullen.

"Leading Reaching Heights has been a blast. It’s been my great fortune to work with and learn from terrific colleagues, board members, volunteers, and of course the phenomenal educators and students of the Heights schools," said Mullen. "Our work remains as needed and important as when Reaching Heights began in 1989, and will continue through, and beyond, what I will work hard to make a seamless transition."

On behalf of the Reaching Heights board, Reid Vail, board vice president, thanked Mullen for his leadership and service to the community, and commented, "You had the unenviable task of succeeding the organization’s founder, Susie Kaesser, who had established strong connections with both the schools and the greater Heights community. We believe you strengthened those connections and helped to ensure that Reaching Heights continued as a valuable and relevant resource to the community. We thank you for your service, and wish you and your family all the best on your fantastic journey."

On behalf of the Reaching Heights Governance Committee, launched its search for a new executive director in December and set a Feb. 1 deadline for applications.

Reaching Heights is a nonprofit organization that views Heights public schools as the community’s greatest asset. Its mission is to mobilize community resources—human and financial—to foster excellent public schools in Cleveland Heights-University Heights. Reaching Heights provides grants to students and schools and provides ways for parents and community members to participate in the schools.

Saroya Queen-Tabor, a 20-year resident of the Heights, is board president of the Community Resources—human and financial—to foster excellent public schools in Cleveland Heights-University Heights. Reaching Heights provides grants to students and schools and provides ways for parents and community members to participate in the schools.

Saroya Queen-Tabor, a 20-year resident of Cleveland Heights, is board president of Reaching Heights and a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. She and her husband, David, are proud parents of CH-UH elementary and middle school children.

Forest Hill Church plans events for Black History Month

Vikki Nowak

February is Black History Month and, for the third consecutive year, members of Forest Hill Church, Presbyterian, at 3031 Monticello Blvd. in Cleveland Heights, have organized events for each weekend of the month that they say are designed to "educate ourselves, strengthen our ties with one another and stir our souls." All events are open to the public.

On Friday, Feb. 7, at 7 p.m., "Beasts of the Southern Wild" will be shown. Following the screening, Nobles C. Darby IV, youth pastor at New Spirit Revival Center, will lead a discussion of the film and the issues it raises. A light lunch will be provided.

On Friday, Feb. 7, at 7 p.m., "Beasts of the Southern Wild" will be shown. Following the screening, Nobles C. Darby IV, youth pastor at New Spirit Revival Center, will lead a discussion of the film and the issues it raises. A light lunch will be provided.

A discussion of the book The New Jim Crow, by Michelle Alexander, will be held on Sunday, Feb. 16, from 12:30 p.m. to 2 p.m. A light lunch will be provided.

Praised by historians, legal scholars and journalists, the book challenges the notion that the presidency of Barack Obama signals a new era of colorblindness. Legal scholar Alexander argues that "we have not ended racial caste in America; we have merely redesigned it."

By targeting black men through the War on Drugs and decimating communities of color, writes Alexander, the U.S. criminal justice system functions as a contemporary system of racial control—relegating millions to a permanent second-class status, even as it formally adheres to the principle of colorblindness. Hailed as a "call to action" by Benjamin Todd Jealous, president and CEO of the NAACP, this is a book and discussion that shouldn’t be missed.

For more information about the church’s events for Black History Month, call 216-372-1060 or e-mail vikininowak@gmail.com.

Vikki Nowak is a resident of Cleveland Heights, a member of Forest Hill Church, and serves on the Black History Month committee.

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Patrick Mullen at Reaching Heights’ Renegade lunch in 2012.
Music Settlement offers new summer ‘Camp-tacular’ program

Lynn Johnson

At 102 years old, The Music Settlement has long been known for its Suzuki, early childhood Music Builders and Musical Theatre camps.

Now, its new Summer Camp-tacular combines elements from these camps and more to provide a wide-ranging experience that gives children a chance to sample a broad spectrum of musical instruments, genres and styles.

“This is the opportunity for young musicians and musicians-in-training to really spread their wings. Nothing beats two weeks of intensive music instruction while bonding with like-minded peers in a beautiful setting,” said Megan Clay Constantine, chair of The Music Settlement’s Center for Music Education. “We decided to put all of our camps together to give our campers the full musical experience: a smorgasbord, if you will.”

Each day begins with an all-camp morning meeting, after which students are dismissed to their music courses, ranging experience that gives children the chance to sample a broad spectrum of musical instruments, genres and styles.

“Think about what to learn and then read. Think about what to say and then speak. ‘Fresh Camp Theme Song’),” said Doc.

“Garies 4th-grade student, wrote these lyrics:

Break from your cage, Break from your hate, Don’t stand there and just regulate, Be the power, Be the freedom, Come on just you and me, Let’s go change the world that you wish to see.

Lake Erie Ink strives to offer young people opportunities for collaboration and teamwork. The live performances give participants an opportunity to take pride in their work and connect with the larger community. Students develop technology skills while learning to create their own recordings and videos.

The Hip Hop Recording Project is open to all teens, and meets on Wednesdays for students in grades 6 through 12.

“‘Our music is ‘change music.’ If given the opportunity to honestly and creatively express their opinions and vision through art, they can articulate the change they want to see. It also helps them change,” said Doc.

As Doc’s lyrics suggest (in the “Fresh Camp Theme Song”):

Think about what to say and then speak
Think about who to know and then meet
Think about what to learn and then read
Think about what to do and succeed.
From start to finish, till it’s complete.
That’s how real change comes to the street.

Doc’s students use iPads and other equipment to create and record their work, and to perform their songs in front of a live audience.

In the past, Doc’s programs at Lake Erie Ink have been theme-based, with themes such as Words that Change the World. The projects are about creating positive messages through song, while offering students a way into writing for those who may not be interested in other genres.

Leilani, a Words that Change the World participant, was 14 when she composed the following:

Lake Erie Ink is a nonprofit organization located at 2843 Washington Blvd., in the building formerly occupied by Coventry Elementary School. The organization strives to give youths in the Greater Cleveland Community opportunities for creative expression and academic support. For more information about arts programs or volunteer opportunities, visit www.lakeerieink.org

For more information, visit www.lakeerieink.org.
McDaniel delivers CH-UH State of the Schools address

Patrick Mullen

On Jan. 21, Nylajean McDaniel, CH-UH schools superintendent, gave what will be her only State of the Schools address, as she will retire in July. Highlights included updates on the high school renovation project, middle school consolidation, state report card and literacy instruction in the elementary schools.

Noting that she cannot disagree “that the district has too many initiatives, and that each year there seem to be new changes,” McDaniel called for a continued focus on literacy instruction in the early grades, and acknowledged the need to streamline instruction at Heights High and at Monticello and Roxboro middle schools, to expand welcome students from Wiley Middle School when it closes in June.

Phase One of the district’s Master Facilities Plan is underway, with the first of five monthly community workshops set for Feb. 6, in the Heights High Social Room, from 6–8:30 p.m. Community Work Groups will be established at that meeting. McDaniel thanked the 10 members of the new Facilities Accountability Committee, who will “serve as the eyes and ears of our residents, watching the renovation planning and implementation closely; and keeping an eye on timelines, budgets, and community engagement activities” and report to the community at school board meetings.

McDaniel thanked all who helped pass Issue 81.

McDaniel said that both Monticello and Roxboro middle schools will be International Baccalaureate (IB) schools, with a global focus emphasizing problem solving, hands-on and inquiry-based learning, and community service. Monticello will retain some of its current STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) focus. Next month, middle school families will receive a letter indicating which middle school their children will attend (a map is available at the district website). Schedules are being drafted in April and McDaniel expects them to be final in May.

McDaniel said that while the Small Schools project at Heights High has achieved some of its goals, “the model has struggled to present defined separate educational philosophies, and that “achievement data, staff, parent and student feedback show us that we are falling short in our implementation, and the rigid structure limits access to courses.” Andrea Celico, assistant superintendent, will lead a team that will seek to increase student achievement, knock down scheduling barriers “and allow students to carve the own career paths through what will look more like one high school.”

The district “showed tremendous growth in grades 4-8 when looking at value-added data” on the most recent state report card. Value-added measures student growth in one year’s time. CH-UH is the only district in Cuyahoga County and one of eight in the state to receive A’ in all four value-added areas: district overall, gifted students, students with disabilities, and students in the lowest 20 percent in achievement.

The report card found that 30 percent of CH-UH students continue to perform below expectations each year. One key to improving those results is Ohio’s 3rd Grade Reading Guarantee, which identifies students lagging in reading in grades K-3 and gives them intensive interventions as part of a 135-minute block of literacy instruction. Starting this summer, the state has mandated that this include summer school for students showing insufficient progress.

McDaniel confirmed her plan to retire this July, calling her service as superintendent the pinnacle of her career. A search for her successor is underway. She anticipates enjoying “our renovated, revitalized, and renewed Heights High School!” as a resident and community member, noting “the Facilities Plan will keep the treasured historic core of the building and create a 21st-century facility around it.” Full text of the speech is available at www.ch-oh.gov.

Patrick Mullen is executive director of Reaching Heights.

Heights Observer February 1, 2014

www.heightsobserver.org

ST. PAUL’S YEAR OF REASON — Join us at 10 a.m. for this Forum series
Perspectives on Faith & Ethics
February 2 — The Golden Rule Around the World: Interfaith speakers will share what their faith teaches regarding one’s responsibility for others. Dr. Deepak Sarma, professor of South Asian religions and philosophy at CWRU, and Ani Palmo Rybicki, Director, Songtsen Gompa Buddhist Center in Cleveland
February 16 — The Role of Ethics in Clinical Practice: Mark Aulisio, Director of the Center for Bioethical Medicine, MetroHealth Medical Center
February 23 — Advance Healthcare Decision Making: Diane Hartt, Hospice of the Western Reserve, and Attorney Patricia Schraff, Schraff & King Co., LPA

ST. PAUL’S EPIPHANY SERVICE
7:45 a.m. Holy Eucharist 11:35 a.m. Holy Eucharist (1st, 3rd, 5th Sundays)
9 a.m. Holy Eucharist Morning Prayer (2nd, 4th Sundays)
10 a.m. Christian Formation for All Ages 5 p.m. Choral Evensong, or scheduled

Heights Observer February 1, 2014
Heights High's instrumental music concert set for Feb. 14

Florence D’Emilia

Heights High’s instrumental music department (IMD) presents its midwinter concert on Friday, Feb. 14, at 7:30 p.m., in the school’s Dina Rees Evans Performing Arts Center. The evening features the Symphony and Symphonic Winds, the school’s top performance groups.

Several chamber ensembles will perform in the Social Room at 6:30 p.m., prior to the concert, and two jazz ensembles will perform during the post-concert reception. Tickets will be available at the door the day of the show.

Daniel Heim, IMD director, will conduct the orchestra in the first movement of Beethoven’s Symphony No. 1 in C Major and selections from Sergei Prokofiev’s “Romeo and Juliet,” and Georges Bizet’s “L’Arlesienne Suite No. 1.”

Under the direction of IMD director Brett Baker, the Symphonic Winds will perform two works inspired by traditional folk music and a third modern piece. The American westward push is the inspiration for “Jubilate,” three variations on the melody “Prospect” by James Curnow. Percy Aldridge Grainger’s “Tune from County Derry” is a variation on the Irish folk tune “Danny Boy.” In contrast, David Holsinger’s “Prelude and Rondo” sounds very modern with its frequent shifts in time signature.

Early attendees will hear a selection of works by the chamber ensembles performing in the Social Room. These groups, ranging in size from two to six musicians, select their own repertoire and work with professional musicians during the school year.

Heights High’s instrumental music program is considered one of the premier programs in the state. Founded in the 1920s, the program has benefitted from extraordinary music directors and a supportive community and school board.

The school’s concert orchestra serves as the training ensemble for string musicians aspiring to join the Symphony, and the concert band serves as training for Symphonic Winds. With the exception of string players, all musicians are required to participate in marching band, a for-credit program that rehearses outside regular school hours and performs at football games.

The pit orchestra, which plays for the annual musical, provides another performance opportunity for student musicians. Advanced students take AP music theory.

Every year several Heights students are invited to join the Cleveland Orchestras Youth Orchestra, the Contemporary Youth Orchestra, Cleveland Youth Wind Symphony, Camarata and other performance groups.

Florence D’Emilia is a Cleveland Heights resident and parent of a Heights High student.

CH-UH BOE appoints Facilities Accountability Commission

Deanna Bremer Fisher

At its Jan. 7 meeting, the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Board of Education (BOE) selected 10 community members, from among 39 applicants, for the Facilities Accountability Committee (FAC), which is tasked with overseeing the district’s facilities master plan. Heights voters approved a $134.8 million bond issue to fund the first phase of the plan last November.

FAC will monitor the progress of construction and expenditure of funds for Phase 1 and report to the BOE on a regular basis. Specifically, FAC will monitor the implementation of the plan; review the status of construction, financing and fundraising; monitor proposed and actual construction costs; and review community engagement in regard to school planning, construction contracting and the construction workforce.

The BOE held an open nomination process from Nov. 20 to Dec. 31, 2013 and sought to include a “diverse representation from a cross section of stakeholders.” The members of FAC are: Alexis Abramson, Fairfax Elementary School parent and Heights High graduate; teaches mechanical engineering at Case Western Reserve University.

Fiona Connor-Kunz, resident of University Heights, parent of two CH-UH students, and teacher and teacher leader at Garity Elementary School.

Jim Cull, 32-year resident of Cleveland Heights, with degrees in chemical engineering, economics and finance; served on the Lay Facilities Committee.

John Jansen, parent of four CH-UH students and graduates, with more than 20 years of experience in engineering and construction project management.

Jim Lentz, pastor at Forest Hill Church, Presbyterian, and parent of three CH-UH students; is active in the Heights Interfaith Council and Sustainable Heights Network.

Mario Mastrandrea, parent of three CH-UH students, member of the PTA and partner ambassador for the district; works for a small business in Cleveland Heights.

FAC members will serve until the completion of renovations at the high school, at which time the BOE will either expand FAC or create a new FAC to monitor renovations to the middle schools. FAC will meet quarterly and select its chair at its first meeting.

In addition to the 10 members selected by the BOE, the mayors of Cleveland Heights, University Heights and South Euclid will each appoint a FAC liaison. Steve Shergalis, director of operations for the district, will serve as the district’s representative.

The district has said that it will post the FAC meeting schedule on its website and that materials, meeting notes and products of FAC will be made publicly available.

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

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Heights Observer February 1, 2014 11

www.heightsobserver.org
Parents and guardians of prospective preschool and kindergarten-age chil-
dren in Cleveland Heights and Univer-
sity Heights are invited to learn about their
local school on Tuesday, Feb. 4
from 9:30–11:15 a.m.

Attendees will be able to tour
school buildings, meet with preschool
and kindergarten teachers, and meet
principals.

The kindergarten open house sessions take place at all CH-UH ele-
mentsary schools; the preschool open
house sessions take place at Garity and Noble elementary schools.

Elementary school addresses are
as follows: Boulevard, 1749 Lee Road;
Canterbury, 2530 Canterbury Road;
Fairfax, 3505 Fairfax Road; Garity, 233
Wrenford Road; Noble, 1293 Arden
Street; Oxford, 939 Quilliams Road;
and Roxboro, 2405 Roxboro Road.

For more information about the
open house sessions, contact the Early
Childhood Center at 216-371-7506.

Call the registrar’s office at 216-371-
7530 if you are unsure about your child’s
school attendance zone.

This event is made possible through the
efforts of Kindernews, a joint project of the
PTA, CH-UH Early Childhood Department, the cities of Cleveland Heights
and University Heights, Reaching
Heights and Family Connections.

Camilla Welsch is the communications and
community engagement assistant for the CH-
UH City School District.

February – Valentine’s Day
a day for attempted reconciliations

two ex-lovers meet at Lopez bar
what could be so difficult?

they have a drink, they’re seated
second drink, server comes for the order
third drink, they quarrel
and then it gets bad, real bad

she cries, goes to ladies room
he waits long enough, leaves
she returns, sees he is gone …
… and leaves

hostess seats table again
food arrives for the previous couple
confusion ensues

server falls apart and then recovers

– story of Valentine’s Day

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CH-UH Board of Education
Meeting highlights

DECEMBER 16, 2013
All board members were present.

Middle School Consolidation
Community Meeting

Background

After welcoming attendees, board president Ron Register explained that the meeting’s purpose was to address issues and concerns from parents and community members regarding middle school consolidation. Enrollment has declined by half in the last 40 years, yet there are still three middle schools. He described the timeline for consolidation: In fall 2014, Wiley Middle School will close and all middle school students will attend either Roxboro or Monticello middle schools. Wiley will be used “as swing space” for Heights High during the high school construction work, from summer 2015 through spring 2017. From fall 2017 through spring 2019, Wiley will be swing space for all middle school students during Roxboro and Monticello construction work. The district will try to make the transition run smoothly.

Perspectives

Fred Thomas, Wiley principal; Mustafa Bayram, Wiley teacher; and Andrea Celico, assistant superintendent, presented their perspectives on the benefits of consolidation. Benefits included increased opportunities for student participation in art, music, drama, athletics and extracurricular activities, access to support services; inclusion of special needs schools; and specialized teaching and collaboration.

Marcia Denton, Monticello PTA president, described PTA plans to ease the merger, starting with joint PTA meetings in January 2014. Traditions and artifacts important to all merging groups will be incorporated at the two middle schools. A new merged identity will be created through activities, such as a school mural in which every student will participate.

LWV Observer: Nancy Dietrich

DECEMBER 17, 2013
All board members were present.

Reception for Karen Jones

Before the meeting there was a reception for Karen Jones who will be leaving the board at the end of the year.

Stadium project

Stephen Shergalis, business services director, discussed the high school stadium project. The school district will pay for the grandstands, field and track. Fundraising will pay for the rest.

LWV Observer: Adale Cohn

DECEMBER 18, 2013
All board members were present.

Facilities Plan Phase 1

This was an introductory meeting for district administrators, the school board, the architecture firm, construction firm, and the owner’s representative. Timelines, board actions, and key milestones were covered. Board decisions included goals, expectations, identification of key participants, and executive-level alignment and reporting. It was suggested that the board meet monthly to handle reports and decisions. The board will appoint a point person for direct contact.

LWV Observer: Adale Cohn

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

See disclaimer on page 5.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
Kids Café fuels the body and feeds the mind

Julia Murphy

“The library is not just a house for books. Thinking in business mode, the library tries to fill market gaps in the community,” said Nancy Levin, Heights Libraries director. Those gaps include the need for after-school programs for children and technology literacy for people of all ages. “The library acts as an agent of serendipitous discovery; it is a place for learning that is definitely not school,” said Levin.

One need in the Cleveland Heights–University Heights community is access to nutritious food for children. According to the Ohio Department of Education, 66 percent of children attending CH–UH public schools in 2011–12 were economically disadvantaged.

For the past three years, Heights Libraries has partnered with the Cleveland Foodbank to provide healthy and nutritious food for children at its branches. Initially, the Lee Road Library served lunches throughout the summer. Now, the library hosts Kids Café, an after-school snack program at the University Heights and Noble Neighborhood libraries. Snacks include 100 percent fruit juice, Sun Chips, granola bars, milk and fruit.

The idea behind Kids Café is to provide healthy food at safe places where kids are already congregating. At the Heights Libraries, kids of all ages, from babies to 18-year-olds, are invited to enjoy a snack while participating in library activities or just hanging out.

“We put out age-appropriate books and hold extra story times during the snack program,” said Sam Lapides, special projects coordinator at Heights Libraries. “It’s a different way for us to promote literacy.”

The Noble Neighborhood Library has participated in the Kids Café program for about two years. University Heights Library recently added the program because of its success at Noble. “We’re really hoping to expand from one day to three days a week,” said Aurora Martinez, University Heights Library manager, “but we need volunteers before we can add the extra days.”

The University Heights Library also plans to host a nutrition educator from the Foodbank who will lead Kids Café participants in fun activities that teach children about healthy eating.

Volunteers are needed after school on Wednesday and Friday at the University Heights Library. Anyone interested in volunteering should talk to a librarian at any Heights library branch or visit www.heightslibrary.org for an application.

Julia Murphy is the marketing assistant for the Cleveland Heights–University Heights Public Library.

What’s going on at your library?

February weather may be unpredictable, but the library always has something fun going on. As always, all programs are free. For a full listing of programs, visit www.heightslibrary.org.

Coventry Village Library

1925 Coventry Road, 216-332-3400
Thursday, Feb. 13, 7 p.m.

Step Out of Time: Tarot for Self-Exploration

Tarot’s ancient archetypal symbolism is a powerful tool for self-discovery and spiritual growth. Olga Paz, tarot and Reiki master, guides an evening of reading tarot spreads for beginners and more experienced readers.

Lee Road Library

2345 Lee Road, 216-932-3600
Sunday, Feb. 23, 2 p.m.

Great Lakes Theater presents “Seven Ages” (world premiere). “All the world’s a stage, And all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances; And one man in his time plays many parts, His acts being seven ages.” So summarized the melancholy courtier Jacques in “As You Like It.” In this original, new work, written by seven Cleveland-area playwrights, characters from this romantic comedy meet in the Forest of Arden and share tales about the seven ages of man and woman. This one-hour touring play is appropriate for ages 12 and older.

Noble Neighborhood Library

2800 Noble Road, 216-291-5665
Monday, Feb. 27, 2 p.m.

Minute to Win It: Children, are you up for a challenge? See if you have what it takes to complete one outrageous activity after another, each in only one minute. Register at www.heightslibrary.org.

University Heights Library

13860 Cedar Road, 216-721-4700
Monday, Feb. 24, 6:30 p.m.

Science Night: Weather it Rains or Snows. Kids in grades K–7, grab your favorite adult as your assistant and come to the University Heights Library for weather-related science activities. Register at www.heightslibrary.org.

“Buy local. Your merchants are your neighbors too.”

Heights Observer February 1, 2014
**Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library Board**

**Meeting highlights**

DECEMBER 16, 2013

Board member Jeffrey Emmor was absent.

2013 Staff changes

Laurie Marotta, human resources manager, provided the board with a summary of the year’s staffing activities. The library welcomed 42 new staff members, had six staff promotions, and said farewell to 39 employees who retired, went to college, moved out of state, or advanced outside of the library. During the year, the library advertised 17 positions and received 928 applications of which 117 applicants were interviewed.

James Roosa to serve new term as trustee

Nancy Levin, Heights Libraries director, announced that, on Dec. 3, James Roosa was reappointed to the Heights Library Board of Trustees for a seven-year term, 2014-20. She introduced a resolution summing up his work on the board during the three-year partial term to which he initially had been appointed to serve. [For this past year, 2013, Roosa has been serving as library board president.] Roosa summarized the state of the library at the end of his term as president. The collection has 270,000 books, 38,000 videos and 79,000 eBooks; the Baldwin-Wallace study compiled crucial data on library patrons, the fund for the Future of Heights Libraries was launched; and the library’s partnerships with the Home Repair Resource Center, Dobama Theatre and other organizations remained vital. He also mentioned the possibility of a levy in the next couple of years.

Security staff reports fewer incidents

Since the security staff is now complete, there has been a significant decrease in the number of incidents reported, especially those minor in nature. From June through December of 2012, there were 722 incidents while the corresponding period in 2013 [reported] 434 incidents, a decrease of 66.5 percent.

December Public Service Report

Among the highlights are:

- The library’s ongoing partnership with the Ingalls Library of the Cleveland Museum of Art resulted in a tour of the recently renovated Islamic Gallery. This was a program of the Bridging Cultures: Muslim Journeys series, as was an interactive map walk of the geography of the Muslim world at Cleveland State University by Dr. Stephen Cery.
- Urban Oaks, the Waldorf School in the former Convent School Elementary building, does not have a library so Maggie Kinney provided the glow of Valentine’s Day at the event. Ticket sales for the event are $15 for Friends members and $20 for nonmembers. Memberships can be purchased online or at the door.
- On Sunday, Feb. 23, at 1:30 p.m., the Friends will host a local African-American Read-In at the Lee Road Library, 2345 Lee Road. Part of a national celebration of writings by African-American authors, the gathering will feature readings by students and adults, sharing favorite excerpts from poems, novels and nonfiction works. Participants can share readings up to five minutes long, and can sign up by calling 216-932-3600, ext. 134. Light refreshments will be served. All are welcome to attend and enjoy the readings.
- For information about the Friends, and to become a member or volunteer, visit http://friends@heightslibrary.org.
Facts about diabetes

According to NIA, Type 2 diabetes (formerly called adult-onset diabetes) is characterized by the body's inability to make sufficient insulin. According to NIA, Medicare will pay for you to learn how to care for your diabetes. It also helps pay for diabetes tests, supplies, special shoes, foot exams, eye tests and meals planning. Medicare can be reached at 800-633-4225.

For more information about diabetes, its prevention and management, call NIA at 800-222-2225 and NDEP at 888-663-6373.

Judith Eugene is a native of Cleveland Heights who provides classes and activities for senior adults and those with physical and mental challenges. She can be reached at 216-408-3574 or judith@livinghandygroup.com.

Senior Citizen Happenings

Senior Citizen Happenings, sponsored by the City of University Heights, are open to all. Events take place on Thursdays at 2 p.m. at the University Heights Library. For information, and to suggest program topics, contact the UH Office for Senior Services at 216-397-0336 or info@universityheights.org.

Feb. 6: Sarah Siebert, project manager for LAND Studio (Landscape Art Neighborships Development), discusses the work of this nonprofit that designs, builds and activates Cleveland’s public spaces and promotes public art.

Feb. 15: Nancy Levin, Heights Libraries manager; and Sheryl Banks, Heights Libraries marketing coordinator, host a community visioning session, inviting residents to share ideas for the future renovation of the University Heights Library.

Feb. 20: Nina Freedlander Gibans, project director and executive producer of “University Circle: Creating a Sense of Place,” presents the 80-minute film that captures the history, landscape, architecture, public artwork and cultural scope of University Circle.

Feb. 27: Christi Carlson, supervisor of visitor services and the welcome desk for the Nature Center at Shaker Lakes, chronicles the history of this local nonprofit, dedicated to the preservation of the environment and well-being of the community.

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Burning River Baroque

Ariane: Abandoned and Adored

Experience the drama of Adriane... French cantata settings of her heartbreak and glorious transformation by Bourgeois, Courbois & Montéclair.

With lush instrumental music by Clérambault and Couperin.

Saturday, February 8th – 8:00 p.m.

Become an observer

Send us your story at www.heightsobserver.org
Heights High artists win regional awards

Joy Henderson

In the 34th annual Regional Scholastic Art Competition, nine Heights High student artists won a total of 14 awards.

The students’ work was selected from the more than 2,100 pieces of art that were submitted to the juried contest. The winning pieces were exhibited at the Cleveland Institute of Art.

“I am especially excited about this group of seniors—they are such a talented group” said Susan Hood, Heights art teacher. “It has been exciting to see them learn about the materials and techniques as they developed their skills.”

The group is special to Hood because she plans to retire at the end of this year. “I couldn’t ask for a better group of artists for my last year at Heights!” she said.

The Scholastic Art award categories are Gold or Silver Key and Honorable Mention. All Gold Key winners advance to the national competition this spring in New York City.

Senior Adrian Berr received a Gold Key for his eight-piece portfolio. The work included painting, prints, drawings, photography and sculpture.

Berr also received a Silver Key for a cut-metal jewelry piece. (Nancy Eisenberg is the jewelry design teacher at Heights High.)

Berr plans to study art next year and has applied to several schools and institutes, including the Cleveland Institute of Art, California College of the Arts and Rochester Institute of Art and Design.

The Heights High Scholastic Art winners are:

- Adrian Berr: one Gold Key (portfolio), one Silver Key;
- Deonte Martin: one Silver Key, one honorable mention;
- Gretchen Drushel: one Silver Key;
- Meredith Maria: four honorable mentions;
- Anastasia Cyr: one honorable mention;
- Sophia Madosky: one honorable mention;
- Arianna Murray: one honorable mention;
- Kaitlyn Waters: one honorable mention.

Joy Henderson is the parent/community liaison for Heights High.
JCU’s Christopher Sheil is a scientist of many talents

Christopher Sheil is all of those things: a mandolin-playing, bicycling herpetologist who is also a scientific illustrator and painter. Which came first, the turtle or the egg? Sheil’s family background holds some of the clues.

Sheil’s American father met his German mother while stationed in Germany with the U.S. Air Force. When the couple moved to the United States, Sheil’s father learned that he would need to further his college studies to work at the Pentagon. He ended up earning a bachelor’s degree in geology and a master’s in American history.

Living on the edge of a small rural town, the Sheil children—six boys and two girls—were outdoors every weekend, hunting for fossils with their father. At home, their mother instilled in them an appreciation for their father. Sheil’s family background holds some of the clues.

As adults, the Sheil siblings are professional musicians, artists, a chef and—Christopher, sibling number seven—a mandolin-playing, bicycling artist who is a professor in the biology department at John Carroll University (JCU).

Sheil’s interest in music began in fourth grade with the trumpet. He played French horn in his high school marching band. In the 1980s, he listened primarily to punk music (Black Flag, Bad Religion and the Ramones) and early hip-hop from groups such as the Beastie Boys. After high school, Sheil did not pick up an instrument again until 2003, when he moved to Cleveland to join the JCU faculty.

Sheil’s Ph.D. in systemics and ecology—earned under the wing of JCU’s Environmental Issues Group. Sheil’s research focuses on the skeletal development of turtles in an evolutionary context, and his direct observations of specimens connect to evolutionary trees generated by molecular biologists.

Sheil lives with a half-dozen dogs and cats and his wife, singer/guitarist, veterinarian and certified animal acupuncturist Julie. But, she is another story . . .

As an undergraduate, Sheil dropped out of KU for two years to establish residency for reduced tuition. During that time he volunteered at a wildlife rehab center, washed dishes, and worked in a pet store and bike shop. “That’s where I got my passion for cycling, fixing bikes, and keeping bikes on the road. Over the years I’ve fixed and given away an unknown number of bikes . . . it’s been a lot of bikes.” In recent years, Sheil launched a bike-sharing initiative with JCU’s Environmental Issues Group.

As an artist, Sheil created comics and doodles influenced by Stephen King’s Creepshow comic and MAD magazine, which he continues to read today.

At the University of Kansas (KU), where he earned his B.S. and Ph.D., a scientific illustrator saw Sheil doodling one day and said, “Come with me.” She gave him a box of Rapidograph pens and inks, and he subsequently illustrated not only his own research papers and his tattoo, but also was hired as an illustrator for the Natural History Museum at KU.

Today, Sheil teaches a summer course in scientific illustration at JCU, and has begun to explore the medium of watercolor to capture atmosphere and light in landscape paintings.

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Sheil’s Ph.D. in systemics and ecology—earned under the wing of herpetologists at KU—defines his deep involvement in field biology. Summer jobs in the Gulf of Mexico, from Louisiana to Florida, included trapping snakes, frogs, gators and turtles.

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Choral Arts Cleveland to perform contemporary music concert

Marge Geiger

Choral Arts Cleveland, directed by Heights resident Martin Kessler, aims to show its audiences that contemporary choral music is exciting, beautiful, sensual, and thoroughly appealing and accessible.

On Sunday, March 2 at 7:30 p.m. at Grace Lutheran Church, 1001 Cedar Road, singers and instrumentalists will present "New Music from Old Friends," a concert of contemporary choral works. The program features pieces from five living composers whose works Choral Arts has performed in recent years.

Supported in part by a grant from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture, the program includes the North American premiere of two previously unperformed movements of Antony Pitts’ oratorio, Jerusalem/Israel, movements from Bob Chilcott’s rhythmically ambitious “Making of the Drum,” a work that celebrates the instrument as it is honored in African culture; pieces by Robert Cohen and Morten Lauridsen; and a jazz-influenced work, was performed two years ago by Choral Arts, and is being repeated at the request of concertgoers who heard it then.

Choral Arts Cleveland is in its 38th year of presenting concerts to Greater Cleveland audiences. Singers have performed a variety of music, including folk songs, spirituals, and smaller masterpieces by such composers as Copland, Brahms, Thompson, Rutter, Verdi, and others. Choral Arts also regularly performs larger masterworks, including the Brahms Requiem, Bernstein’s Chichester Psalms, Haydn’s Creation, Off’s Carmeniana, Mendelssohn’s Elijah, Dvorak’s Stabat Mater, Handel’s Israel in Egypt, and Beethoven’s Missa Solemnis.

Choral Arts Cleveland’s mission is to broaden the artistic experiences of its members, to perform new music, and to collaborate with local professional singers and instrumentalists.

Since 2000, Martin Kessler has directed the group. Kessler graduated from Harvard University where he directed the Bach Society Orchestra and Leverett House Opera. He received his master’s degree in composition from Cleveland State University (CSU). He also holds conducting diplomas from the Salzburg Mozarteum and London’s Trinity College of Music. Recently retired as musical faculty from University School, Kessler now serves as adjunct professor in CSU’s Department of Music. He also conducts the Suburban Symphony Orchestra.

The March concert promises to be an exciting opportunity for Choral Arts audiences—a program filled with power and beauty. The event is free and open to the public. For more information about Choral Arts Cleveland, visit www.choralartscleveland.org.

Marge Geiger has been a member of Choral Arts Cleveland for 23 years.

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Cleveland premiere of ‘The Aliens’ opens at Dobama

Jewel Moulthrop

Dobama Theatre’s fourth mainstage production this season, and a Cleveland premiere, is “The Aliens” by Annie Baker. The play will run through Feb. 23.

The play opens with KJ and Jasper, two aimless 30-somethings—loitering behind a coffee shop in a small town in Vermont. They discuss women and Charles Bukowski (poet, novelist, and short-story writer) while occasionally singing an original song or two. Then Evan, a high school student and loner who works at the coffee shop, arrives to get rid of them. KJ and Jasper decide to teach Evan everything they know. The play, described as a modern-day “Waiting for Godot,” won an Obie Award for Best New American Play. It is a compassionate meditation on art, friendship and loss about a generation of young Americans trying to find their place in the world.

Playwright Annie Baker grew up in Amherst, Mass. She has been nominated for and has won several awards, including a Best Play/Emerging Playwright nomination for “Body Awareness” and an Obie Award for Best New American Play for “Circle Mirror Transformation.”

Her work has been developed and produced at New York Theatre Workshop, Soho Rep, the Orchard Project, Ars Nova, the Cape Cod Theatre Project, the Bay Area Playwrights Festival, and the Sundance Institute Theatre Lab, among others. Baker was also a recipient of a MacDowell Fellowship and commissions from Center Theatre Group and Playwrights Horizons.

She has an M.F.A. from Mac Wellman’s playwriting program at Brooklyn College.

Nathan Motta is directing “The Aliens.” Motta, Dobama’s fifth artistic director, worked with Cleveland Play House, Opera Cleveland, Ohio Light Opera, Cain Park, Cleveland Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Mercury Opera Rochester, and Civic Light Opera (Pittsburgh).

He is the founding artistic director of the Dobama Emerging Artists Program (DEAP), a summer acting program. He holds a B.F.A. from Carnegie Mellon University and an M.M. from the Eastman School of Music.

Performances 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 (as available, no earlier that five minutes before curtain).

Jewel Moulthrop is a Cleveland Heights resident and member of the Heights Observer’s Editorial Advisory Committee.
When it comes to Cleveland-area bands, Uzizi, a group led by Cleveland Heights resident Craig Matis, is unique. The group features five musicians—Matis on guitar and vocals, Jim Van Cleef on lead guitar, Reed Simon on violin, Darren Frate on bass and Noel Howard on drums—as well as a seven-member backup choir Uzizi's music blends world music, folk music and what's known as sacred-harp singing.

Sacred-harp singing is a form of a cappella singing that dates from the mid-1700s, when it developed in rural churches throughout England. “Traditionally an a cappella form of singing, sacred harp has been adapted, reconfigured and incorporated into Uzizi’s music,” Matis said. “While not a literal rendition of sacred-harp music, some of our compositions have been strongly influenced by the melodies and harmonies of its tradition.”

At a recent house concert in Cleveland Heights, Uzizi put on a wonderful show. Many of the songs, all written by Matis, started with a cappella vocals, after which the band would kick in. Some of the songs had a distinctive Irish sound, while some had an African flavor or a Middle Eastern feeling. “I call our music ethnic rock,” Matis said. “It’s folk music from all over the world. We find inspiration in the beats and melodies that range from Ireland to Bulgaria to the Middle East, interweaving heavy doses of lyrical poetry, rowdy drinking ballads and meditations on death, violence and the general human condition.” In addition to the music and singing, two dancers, Lori Jo Folger and Naila, entertained the audience during some of the songs.

Matis, 63, grew up outside Chicago. Influenced by the Beatles and the other British Invasion bands, he started playing guitar in his early teens and then began writing songs. He attended the University of Illinois, where he focused on art and music and first learned about sacred-harp singing. He moved to Cleveland in 1970 and formed Uzizi the following year. He made up the band’s name because, Matis said, he wanted something that sounded exotic.

Matis is also a visual artist. His parents were artists, so art was something he grew up with. His work was recently featured in a show in Coshocton, and is also a part of Uzizi, as he has created slide shows to accompany many of his songs. In addition to his art and music, Matis has been teaching at Laurel School for some 20 years.

Over the years, Uzizi has recorded a handful of CDs. Two of the band’s most recent are “Loss and Wonder,” which came out in 2009, and last year’s “Rehearsal for a Drowning.” The group doesn’t play as many live shows as it used to, in part because Matis doesn’t enjoy performing in bars and clubs. The band now tends to focus on playing house parties, like the one in Cleveland Heights. It has also performed at various music festivals, including Ingenuity Fest, the Bay Arts Festival, the Raccoon Folk Festival and the Taste of Hudson.

Though he has several other interests, Matis still loves his music, and that passion was evident at the Cleveland Heights concert.

James Henke, a Cleveland Heights resident, was a writer and editor at Rolling Stone magazine for 15 years. He is also the author of several books, including biographies of Jim Morrison, John Lennon and Bob Marley.