Harvey Pekar honored with Coventry park

James Henke

More than 100 people attended the dedication of Pekar Park on Saturday, July 25. The newly named park—previously the Coventry Outdoor Courtyard—is at the intersection of Coventry Road and Euclid Heights Boulevard, near the Grog Shop and the Inn on Coventry.

Harvey Pekar, well-known author, music critic and media personality, lived in Cleveland Heights for many years, until his death in 2010. He frequently hung out on Coventry, and loved the neighborhood. Pekar is probably best known for his graphic novels, including the autobiographical American Splendor, which was released as a film in 2003; it starred Paul Giamatti as Pekar and Hope Davis as his wife, Joyce Brabner. Brabner worked with the City of Cleveland Heights and the Coventry Village Special Improvement District (CVSID) to get the park re-named. “My purpose was to bring this corner back to the kids,” she said. “I saw an opportunity to return the corner to a youth- and arts-friendly state.”

Joyce Brabner, Steve Presser and Suzanne DeGaetano in front of the new Pekar Park sign.

Forum to address potential future of Severance Center

Vince Reddy

FutureHeights will host a forum on the future of Severance Town Center—Reimagining Severance—on Oct. 21. The focus of the meeting will be on the future of the shopping center located within Severance Circle, but its relationship with surrounding properties and neighborhoods will also be considered. The forum will take place at 7 p.m. at the Cleveland Heights Community Center, 1 Monnetella Blvd.

At the event, presentations on the history of Severance and the current status of the foreclosure proceedings on the retail center will provide context for the discussion, and information regarding how other communities have rethought and, in some cases, redeveloped or partially redeveloped troubled properties like Severance will be provided.

At the June 15 meeting of the Cleveland Heights City Council, Mayor Dennis Wilcox noted that the city has been working closely with the court-appointed receiver for the center toward maintaining the value of Severance and finding solutions for its problems. “One of the things that we discovered is that the note and mortgage on the center have restrictions on the type of retail business that can go in there—very structured restrictions on the type of business that can go in there,” said Wilcox. “So, through the foreclosure process, which is going on now, that note and mortgage will be sold, and it will allow a new buyer to maybe try and do

Cleveland Heights residents monitor city’s search for water solutions

Deborah Van Kleef

Approximately 40 Cleveland Heights residents crowded into city council chambers on July 13, as City Manager Cleveland Heights resident John Ewing, director of CIA’s Cinematheque.

Cinematheque currently offers: “We will show new films that otherwise wouldn’t come to this city, and we’ll show classic films,” he said. “In addition, we will continue to show second-run films that didn’t get a fair shake at the box office, and we’ll also show different film series that are touring around the country.” The one new addition will be digital restorations of old classic films. The Cinematheque currently offers. “We will show new films that otherwise wouldn’t come to this city, and we’ll show classic films,” he said. “In addition, we will continue to show second-run films that didn’t get a fair shake at the box office, and we’ll also show different film series that are touring around the country.” The one new addition will be digital restorations of old classic films. The Cinematheque will continue to bring filmmakers, directors, producers and...
Excerpts from Observer blogs

Read the whole story at blogs.heightsobserver.org

Cleveland Heights

Citizens Police Academy filling 2015 class

In August 2014, the Cleveland Heights Police Department inaugurated the Citizens Police Academy and accepted the first cohort of students. The Academy was part of Chief Jeffrey Blackwell’s desire to deepen mutual understanding and regard between the department and the Cleveland Heights community. He considered the Citizens Police Academy as an opportunity for citizens to learn about police training and police work, and for the Department to bear citizens’ perceptions about policing in Cleveland Heights.

In 12 classes conducted over six weeks, students covered nearly the same material as the full-time cadets in the daytime Police Academy. . . .

—Bill Brown

Ohio Regulator favors politically correct

nected charter school sponsors, resigns when exposed

Things unraveled quickly last week for David Hansen, the director of school choice at the Ohio Department of Education. On Tuesday, the State Board of Education, dominated by appointees of Republican Governor John Kasich, met and discussed why, as Ohio begins to evaluate the sponsor-authorizers of Ohio’s charter schools, the test scores of students at online charters were quietly omitted—a violation of state law as Republican chair of the state senate’s education committee, Peggy Lehner, and Republican state auditor, Dave Yost, have both confirmed. . . .

—Jan Resinger

Update on CH water system from City Council Member Jason Stein

The water system in Cleveland Heights is in need of significant repair, estimated at $60 million. It also owes more than $7 million to the Cleveland Water Department, which supplies water to Cleveland Heights through a ‘master meter’ (i.e., Cleveland pays for all the water it uses, and then distributes the water to residents for a fee that it collects).

With such large immediate expenses the city is looking for ways to reduce the short-term burden on residents. CH City Council Member Jason Stein has kept residents aware of proceedings through his blog. See here’s the latest update, on a proposal by the Cleveland Water Department to take over management of the Cleveland Heights water system.

Cleveland Heights has submitted a proposed framework to begin direct service with Cleveland Heights. This is a positive first step. But, there are still important questions that will hopefully be answered sooner than later.

—Bob Rosenbaum (reposting a blog from Jason Stein, originally posted at councilmanstein.blogspot.com)
East Cleveland’s challenges provide opportunities for a regional approach

Vince Raddy

The daunting financial problems of the City of East Cleveland are well known. Mayor Gary Norton states that the city has an annual budget shortfall of $7 million, and State Auditor David Yost sees the city’s financial situation as the worst among Ohio’s 214 cities. According to Yost, the city’s only options are bankruptcy, cutting deals with its creditors, or merging with another city.

Because it borders only two other municipalities, Cleveland and Cleveland Heights, those cities would be its only possible merger partners, and, while East Cleveland City Council President Barbara Thomas is on record as favoring bankruptcy, prevailing opinion—though not necessarily in East Cleveland itself—seems to be that annexation to the City of Cleveland is the most viable way to address East Cleveland’s problems. In April, Norton began to lay the groundwork for annexation, a process that he said could take up to two years—and considerable political effort—to complete.

Perhaps there are other possible solutions to consider, some of which have not yet been widely discussed, including having the responsibility for providing municipal services to East Cleveland taken over by Cuyahoga County—an approach that could be more beneficial to East Cleveland, less burdensome to Cleveland, and could provide an opportunity to examine and improve, from a regional perspective, our overall approach to local government.

The county taking responsibility for providing a wider array of services to local communities is one of the possibilities that accompanied county voters’ decision to adopt a charter government in 2009. Cuyahoga County was only the second county in Ohio’s 83 counties to adopt a charter government; the first was neighboring Summit County—home to Akron—in 1979.

Charter counties are different from the state’s other counties in that they have home rule powers, much like a city, while non-charter counties are limited to the activities specifically set out for them in the Ohio Constitution. Though Cuyahoga County’s charter precludes it from imposing its municipal powers on unwilling municipalities or townships, it explicitly notes that Cuyahoga County government has the power to exercise “any powers vested in municipalities by the Ohio Constitution or by general law.”

Of course, Cuyahoga County is not set up to provide many of the services—such as fire protection or garbage pickup—that are typically assigned to municipalities, but it could contract for those services to be provided by other municipalities or private entities, and there are some services, such as law enforcement, that the county could perhaps provide directly.

It is realistic to approach East Cleveland’s difficult situation as a regional rather than a local issue, not only out of fairness to East Cleveland citizens, whose municipal income and property tax rates are among the highest in the State of Ohio, but also because the problems stemming from one ailing municipality’s inability to provide adequate levels of services to its citizens are likely to spread beyond that one municipality’s borders.

Cleveland is in a far better position financially than East Cleveland, but it has many problems and beleaguered neighborhoods of its own to deal with, and, in most ways, it already does the region’s heavy lifting. Cleveland Heights, East Cleveland’s neighbor city, provides a much higher level of services to its citizens but is facing financial challenges of its own. The possibility of having either of East Cleveland’s neighbors provide such with certain municipal services is certainly worth study and consideration, but neither neighboring city would be well-positioned to pick up the tab for providing those services, nor should either be expected to.

Many of the public ventures that are successful in Greater Cleveland—Metroparks, RTA, CLEVNET, for example—are regional in nature, and, Cuyahoga County’s still-nascent charter government provides us with another opportunity to work together as a region. The challenges facing East Cleveland, as well as numerous other communities in Cuyahoga County and elsewhere in Northeast Ohio, are often too immense for those communities to address on their own. Help from Columbus is not to be counted on, so a regional approach to addressing these challenges is likely to be the most effective and the most likely to benefit the entire region.

Vince Raddy is a FutureHeights board member and an 18-year resident of Cleveland Heights.
Many tensions surround intradistrict school transfers

Sarah West

Every year, according to state law, parents may apply to their local school districts to secure their children a place at a building in the district other than the one to which they would normally be assigned.

Districts generally make an attempt to accommodate requests. Enrollment at the requested school is but one factor to consider; the Ohio Department of Education also requires, for example, that districts consider the racial imbalances that could result from large-scale movement into or out of a particular school.

Districts are not, however, required to address other considerations, such as socioeconomic status or gender. In Cleveland Heights—University Heights, the yearly intradistrict transfer game can create tension that negatively affects every school’s climate.

In this district, as in others, the need to consolidate certain types of services in one building is administratively efficient.

But what about children who are typically developing—for whom there is no “special” educational reason to transfer; no differentiated learning needs? Should parents of these children feel socially obligated to remain in their home school? In doing so, they would appease a variety of stakeholders: other parents who feel betrayed by their peers for taking advantage of an “unfair” policy; buildings that can be dramatically impacted with a spike in free and reduced lunch rates, schools that have ballooning class sizes of struggling learners (or, conversely, small class sizes largely comprised of strong learners), and school report cards that fail to meet performance indices. For some parents, it can be difficult to decide where responsibility to their own child ends and their responsibility to the community begins.

To illustrate this, Fairfax Elementary School’s economically disadvantaged percentage has risen from 57 percent in the 2008-09 school year to 70.4 percent in 2013-14. Roxboro Elementary School’s, however, dropped from 51.8 percent to 44.7 percent in the same time period.

Fairfax earned a D on last year’s performance index while Roxboro earned a B.

Despite Fairfax having a lower rate of gifted-identified students than other schools in past years, the district is developing a self-contained highly-abled program at that site for 2015-16. Fairfax families with qualified students can now remain in their home school instead of requesting transfers to one of the other programs at Boulevard or Roxboro elementary schools. Whether Fairfax will see a positive return on that curricular investment won’t be known for some time. Ultimately, the root causes of why people seek intradistrict transfers must be frankly discussed. It cannot merely be that parents who request them are selfish or disinterested in their neighborhood school. There is a problematic perception—intentional or not, advanced formally or not—that privileges some schools over others. No one wins with this unspoken competition.

Perhaps a new marketing strategy that highlights the features of each school building—its history in the district, its unique school climate, its programming and its children—would be a worthy campaign before the start of the term.

Ultimately, some families may still opt to leave one school for another, no doubt a highly considered choice. They should not be shamed or feel guilty. Modeling social empathy is as valuable as modeling school loyalty. Children learn from both.

Sarah West is Ph.D. candidate in urban education policy at Cleveland State University; a curriculum developer, instructor and programming specialist in undergraduate studies at Cleveland State University; parent of three CH-UH students—would be a worthy campaign before the start of the term.

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Sarah West is Ph.D. candidate in urban education policy at Cleveland State University; a curriculum developer, instructor and programming specialist in undergraduate studies at Cleveland State University; parent of three CH-UH students at Canterbury Elementary School, a member of the Citizens’ Advisory Committee and 15-year resident of University Heights.
On the Fourth of July, my neighbors on Compton Road strength-
ened the connections that fuel commitment to the common good, and it was nearly effortless. It took just two phone calls, 15 minutes at the computer, a few text messages, two seventh-graders delivering fly-
ers, two gallons of lemonade, and less than $20 for our street to come together to celebrate.

At 9:30 a.m., car traffic ended when the barricades delivered by the city (one of the phone calls) made the street the domain of bikes, dog walkers and strolling neighbors. Young people from the street and their friends gathered in the Dooners’ backyard (second phone call) to decorate bikes, strollers, wagons and dogs. At 10 a.m., parade grand marshal Pat Dooner led off on his 1948 fat-tire bicycle with Carole Dooner bringing up the rear, patriotic music blaring from her phone. Suddenly there was magic! Kids of all ages were parading down the street, streaming by flying, as adults ambled behind with their dogs, and enhu-
siastic neighbors along the parade route stood at the curb to applaud them and make everyone feel spe-
cial. After the parade, kids zoomed up and down the street while small groups gathered along the route to chat. By 11 a.m., car traffic had resumed and participants went on with their Saturdays.

A lot happened in less than two hours. New residents met their neighbors, elders like me got the thrill of seeing exuberant young people, and children enjoyed the bliss of owning the street. The parade created memories, com-
municated neighborhood interest in the lives of our children and added to the fabric of life on our street. It reinforced connections on our street that extend beyond those that exist within our separate houses.

Like it or not, we are interde-
pendent. While it is easy to feel powerless, each individual made a big difference by coming together for our bike parade. It feels great to belong to a community, and it is comforting that neighbors can express their interest in others by joining a 15-minute parade!

Through shared experiences we discover our commonality. We are no longer anonymous. Failure to grow these bonds makes it easy to appeal to fear of the “other,” and to emphasize competition, privatization, getting what is mine, without worrying about the well-being of others. Simple activities that build ap-
preciation for other people are the building blocks for making the common good a priority, but it is not enough to reverse today’s emphasis on private interest over the com-
mon good! Public policies in many realms, including education, now push privatization. Civil society is shunned in favor of profits. It is terrifying.

In a recent blog post, my friend Jan Resseger quoted political philosopher Benjamin Barber’s cri-
tique of privatization: “It dissipates the bonds that tie us together. It puts us in a state of nature where we possess a natural right to get whatever we can on our own, but at the same time lose any real ability to secure that to which we have a right. Private choices rest on individual power. Public choices rest on civic rights and common responsibilities and presume equal rights for all. With privatization, what we experience in the end is an environment in which the strong dominate the weak.”

Democracy becomes a sham when the powerful are the only ones with rights. A Fourth of July parade that brings together a neighborhood in common affection and support for its children is a simple affirmation of our common civic bond and a powerful antidote to the narrative of private rights. I am glad to see a renewed interest in neighborhood organizing, part of the Cleveland Heights tradition that engages citizens in owning their community and solving its problems. It uses citizen con-
nections and power to rekindle commitment to one another, the common good and the rights of all.

We need vigilant citizen en-
gagement, practiced every day, to reinvigorate service of the com-
mon good as the driving purpose of public policy. It can’t end when the parade ends.

Susie Kaiser is a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights and the former di-
rector of Reaching Heights. She serves on the national board of Parents for Public Schools.
PEKAR continued from page 1

mounted on one of the stone walls near the edge of the park. Three large planters were removed from the side walk, to open up the space. “I wanted to roll back this courtyard to a golden era when people hung out here and read books and played music,” Brahner said. “Harvey always hung out here and practiced his stories here.”

The ceremony featured comments from Brahner; Suzanne DeGaetano, owner of Mac’s Books bookstore; Steve Presser, owner of Big Fun toy store; and others. Cleveland Heights Mayor Dennis Wilcox said, “This is a special and unique area, and it’s appropriate to honor a person who was special and unique. I’m proud that Harvey was part of our community.”

After the dedication ceremony, the Heights Jazz Group performed. Later, several people—including Cleveland-based cartoonist Derf; Carol Walsencheck, a librarian at the Lee Road Library; and Cindy Barber, owner of the Beachland Ballroom—told stories about Pekar. The evening ended with a showing of “American Splendor” at the Coventry P.E.A.C.E. Park.

Most longtime Coventry merchants remember Pekar from his frequent visits. “Harvey always sold me his American Splendor comics,” DeGaetano said. “So when I needed some, I’d call him, and he’d bring them by and sign them. This was his commercial district, and it was one of the only bohemian neighborhoods in Cleveland at the time.”

Presser recalled, “He would frequent all of the places on Coventry, and he was quite the character. He was frequent all of the places on Coventry,” Presser recalled, “He would frequent all of the places on Coventry,” Presser recalled, “He would frequent all of the places on Coventry,” Presser recalled, “He would frequent all of the places on Coventry,” Presser recalled, “He would frequent all of the places on Coventry,”

In mid-April, an artistic message suddenly appeared woven into the chain-link fence opposite the Oxford Elementary School driveway. “You Are Noble.” Our Noble communitywide home and yard sale was coming up soon and it certainly seemed that this display anticipated our April 26 event, but no one from Noble Neighbors had considered including public art in our mass communications strategy. Who knew the artists and what was their intent?

Early the next day, I saw that the word Noble in the message had been torn to shreds and was littering the ground. I returned home to fetch a shovel and broom, and fielded phone calls from city personnel and residents complaining about the mess, assuming we were responsible for the artwork.

Remarkably, this simple public art installation quickly became a focal point for the neighbors, although it was not yet a focus of pride or joy. When I was finally able to return to the damaged art, I found a young mother picking up pieces of braided T-shirt strips that she and her second-grade son, Reuben, had used to create the letters in the display. The family had moved here only a few years ago, and I asked the mom, “Are you aware of the rivalry between Noble and Oxford schools?” I explained that, for a long time, the city’s neighborhoods had been identified by their local elementary schools. Not only was she unaware, but she and Reuben had also heard about the efforts of Noble Neighbors to showcase our area. They had wanted to celebrate the efforts of the people who live near Noble Road by using the term, with its multiple meanings of place, character and event. As an author, Reuben’s mom appreciated the power of a single word and would use this disappointment to help her son learn a critical lesson about communication.

Reuben came home from school a few days later announcing that he had solved the mystery of the art gadgets. They were fourth- and fifth-graders who also attended Oxford Elementary School and believed they were valiantly defending the Oxford neighborhood with their misguided actions.

Reuben still wanted to encourage his classmates, so he and his mom considered a revised message. They reinstalled the perfect words: “We Are Noble.”

“We Are Home” proclaims the sentiment we all share. This propels us to continue our efforts to improve this important Cleveland Heights neighborhood.

Public art has become one of the projects in the works. We hope to create focal points that declare our place in our place and our joy in our journey through life together as neighbors. We’re considering murals and sculptures, permanent and temporary works, and public art installation projects. While Reuben’s installation is nearing the end of it’s natural material life, it is still proudly proclaiming that we share a voice worth rallying around. A second-grade boy and his desire to make his friends smile is inspiring us to continue toward a hopeful future. Come and join this project of “place-making” in our neighborhood. It will be a truly Noble project.

Brenda H. May is one of the many Noble Neighbors—residents who are finding ways to uplift their neighborhood. Find them at www.nobleneighbors.com and join in our journey.

Noble Neighbors: We are Home

Brenda H. May

In mid-April, an artistic message suddenly appeared woven into the chain-link fence opposite the Oxford Elementary School driveway. “You Are Noble.” Our Noble communitywide home and yard sale was coming up soon and it certainly seemed that this display anticipated our April 26 event, but no one from Noble Neighbors had considered including public art in our mass communications strategy. Who knew the artists and what was their intent?

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Kathleen G Carvin
Licensed Health Insurance Agent
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216-375-5902
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www.heightsobserver.org
In Cleveland's eastern suburbs, a group of neighbors has been working to establish a "virtual senior village" in University Heights. The organization, to be known as Village in the Heights, is now in line with gear with an operational startup expected this fall. Membership for residents in University Heights is open to anyone 65 or older.

The concept of a virtual village is simple. Working with the idea of aging in place, villages are membership groups that help older adults remain in their homes, maintaining a healthy and active lifestyle, as long as they are able. Members have access to a wide variety of no-cost or low-cost services, transportation, home maintenance, health and wellness programs, information about numerous community services, as well as local social and cultural connections.

Villages are new to Northeast Ohio, but have existed in Europe for many years. Some villages date back to World War II. More than 150 Villages now operate in 42 states, with 120 currently in development. Ohio currently has three other Villages, two in Columbus and one in Athens. Village in the Heights will serve its members as consolidator of local services to seniors and by providing programming that its members want. The Village, as a grassroots, member-directed, nonprofit organization, will operate with extensive volunteer commitment.

Village in the Heights is currently vetting vendors and volunteers to build its membership support bundle. Numerous local businesses, community organizers and private foundations are in discussion with the Village's development board to help create what will become the newest and most comprehensive Village in the United States, right here in Northeast Ohio.

For membership information, to volunteer, or for other inquiries, e-mail villageintheheights@gmail.com, or call 216-906-6240.

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**University Heights City Council Meeting highlights**

**JUNE 15, 2015**

*Minutes available online at www.heightsobserver.org*  

**Electronic signage**

The Board of Zoning Appeals asked council to review the city's code regarding commercial signage. Donin's Donuts had received permission to install a sign in the current size, shape and location but had changed the sign to an electronic graphical sign at installation. The city has requested the property owner change the sign to only display time and temperature until the store's appeal can be settled. Council Member Steven Sims will take this issue to the Building Committee of Council for a review of the code, which was written before the advent of electronic graphically addressed signs.

**Issuance and sale of bonds**

Council heard on first reading an ordinance for the issuance and sale of bonds in the principal amount of $1.8 million for paying costs of improving the city's park and recreational facilities. The ordinance, written by the bond attorney at Squire Patton Boggs, is "on emergency" in order to preclude a referendum to try to recall the residents' vote. This is the first step in the process for issuing the bonds.

**Resident permit parking**

Council heard on first reading legislation to amend the city code to create a resident permit parking program on certain city streets in the neighborhood surrounding Wiley School, which is being converted to a temporary high school. Police Chief Hamrett is requesting this change, which would provide four free permits to each household on those streets, and restrict parking to only those cars with the permits. This same process is in place for streets surrounding Euclid High School. Police Chief Hamrett would like to be proactive and put these rules in place before problems occur. Community Senior Steve Ewens said this was a good start, adding that the city and council will review the current ordinances and look at options before the next meeting.

**Village in the Heights in development to serve local seniors**

Art Raby

Aging in the year 2015 is very different from what it was a generation ago. Today, more people live well into their 90s, many seniors have some form of a weekly work schedule, and even those who retire to the "golden years"—the last two or three decades of their lives—strive to live fully and vibrantly in their homes.

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**Art Raby is a longtime resident of University Heights, a member of Gesu Parish, a retired engineer and volunteer with Village in the Heights.**
Heights Observer August 1, 2015
www.heightsobserver.org

Cleveland Heights
City Council highlights

JUNE 15, 2015
Council member Jeff Coryell was absent.

Public comments
Resident Diane Hallum expressed concerns about budget shortfalls, water department problems, failing schools, the state of alderman to address a defaulted loan for a Taylor Road building, and the possibility of two tax issues being placed on the November ballot. She described council’s solutions as “frantic” and felt that the issues she brought up had not been faced head on by the outset.

The city’s recently lowered bond rating and announced a fundraising meeting of her organization, the Citizen’s Leadership PAC, on June 24.

CDBG funding
Council approved the following agreements for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Year 1 funding for the period July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016:

• Start Eight Community Development Corporation - $5,000 for the payment of operating expenses for its food bank program.

• Heights Youth Club, Inc. - $35,000 to provide funding for assistance with its Project Learn: The Educational Enhancement Program, which serves approximately 500 young clients.

• Lake Erie Ink - $6,780 to provide funding for assistance with the organization’s after-school writing program at Noble Elementary School.

• Heights Community Congress - $3,500 for assistance with its educational programs on Diversity in Our Community.

• Gesher - $5,000 for operating expenses. Gesher’s mission is to help eliminate cultural barriers to applying for benefits in the services area of Cleveland Heights, University Heights and South Euclid.

• Open Doors Academy - $8,000 for assistance with the organization’s year-round enrichment program for 80 young people living at risk.

Sorority Town Center
Mayor Dennis Wolkos reported that the city is meeting with the court-appointed receiver for Sorority Town Center. The note and mortgage of the condominium restricts the type of businesses that can occupy the center but new ownership may be able to expand the uses that can be established.

Council members defend city efforts
Council members Cheryl Stephens, Melissa Yasinow and Mayor Wolkos commented about council and staff efforts to address the city’s financial issues. They noted that there have been no raises for most city staff, small raises for safety officers, positions left empty, and equipment stretched beyond its expected life. Wolkos also pointed out the $6.7 million loss of state funding over the last 10 years. He said many cities have sought income and property tax increases to fill the gaps, and there would have to be a decision between cutting city services and raising rates.

Cleveland Heights Citizens for Safe, Affordable Water can be reached through its Facebook page www.facebook.com/chafsafewater or by contacting Jim Miller at jmil3rfg@icloud.com or 216-321-9983.

Deborah Van Kleeck is a musician and writer. She grew up in Cleveland Heights, and has lived here as an adult for 30 years.

LAWG OF WOMEN VOTERS’

Cleveland Heights
City Council highlights

JUNE 15, 2015
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Public comments
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The city’s recently lowered bond rating and announced a fundraising meeting of her organization, the Citizen’s Leadership PAC, on June 24.

CDBG funding
Council approved the following agreements for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Year 1 funding for the period July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016:

• Start Eight Community Development Corporation - $5,000 for the payment of operating expenses for its food bank program.

• Heights Youth Club, Inc. - $35,000 to provide funding for assistance with its Project Learn: The Educational Enhancement Program, which serves approximately 500 young clients.

• Lake Erie Ink - $6,780 to provide funding for assistance with the organization’s after-school writing program at Noble Elementary School.

• Heights Community Congress - $3,500 for assistance with its educational programs on Diversity in Our Community.

• Gesher - $5,000 for operating expenses. Gesher’s mission is to help eliminate cultural barriers to applying for benefits in the services area of Cleveland Heights, University Heights and South Euclid.

• Open Doors Academy - $8,000 for assistance with the organization’s year-round enrichment program for 80 young people living at risk.

Sorority Town Center
Mayor Dennis Wolkos reported that the city is meeting with the court-appointed receiver for Sorority Town Center. The note and mortgage of the condominium restricts the type of businesses that can occupy the center but new ownership may be able to expand the uses that can be established.

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CH City Council appoints Master Plan Steering Committee

Deanna Bremer Fisher

At its July 6 meeting, Cleveland Heights City Council announced the names of residents appointed to serve on an 11-member committee to oversee the development of a master plan for the city.

The members are Michael Ungar, chair of the city’s Planning Commission; Howard Maier, co-chair of the city’s Transportation Advisory Committee; Jeanne Diamond, a member of the city’s Commission on Aging; Ken Dowell, a member of the city’s Recreation Advisory Board; Allison McCallum, a member of the city’s Citizens Advisory Committee; Bill Mitchell, owner of Mitchell’s Fine Chocolates in the Cedar Lee Business District, representing city merchants; Saroya Queen-Tabor, a CH-UH City School District parent and chair of the district’s Strategic Planning Committee, representing education stakeholders; Julia Kious Zabel, a member of the FutureHeights Board of Directors, and residents Kristin Hopkins, Yovan “Lou” Radivoyevitch and Chuck Miller, Hopkins is a principal planner with CT Consultants and lives on Bellfield Avenue. Radivoyevitch is vice president of sales for RAD Graphics Inc., a tactical marketing firm, and lives on Dartmouth Road. Chuck Miller is a principal with Doty & Miller Architects and lives on Mayfield Road.

A first-meeting date for the committee is not yet set. Committee members will serve for the duration of the process of drafting the master plan, which is expected to take 8–12 months. All of the members will serve as volunteers; they will receive no financial compensation.

Cleveland Heights is one of four cities the Cuyahoga County Planning Commission chose to work with this year to develop a city master plan. According to the commission, the goals of the county program are to “bring older plans up to date, encourage regional collaboration and focus on action plans that have a strong potential for implementation.” University Heights, Parma Heights and Olmsted Falls were also included in the program.

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“City dedicates Forest Hill Park ball field in honor of Jim Brennan

Deanna Bremer Fisher

On Saturday, July 11, the City of Cleveland Heights dedicated Ball Field #5, the main field at Forest Hill Park, in honor of Jim Brennan, the former owner of Brennans Colonoy on Lee Road who was murdered last year.

“City dedicates Forest Hill Park ball field in honor of Jim Brennan, speaks at dedication ceremony at Forest Hill Park. Brennan was murdered last year, and the field was dedicated in his honor.

“Jim Brennan was an enthusiastic supporter of our recreation programs for over 20 years,” said Mayor Dennis Wilcox. “He sponsored softball teams and held many an after-game celebration at The Colony. This dedication celebrates and honors the energy and commitment Jim brought to our Cleveland Heights community.”

A dedication ceremony was held prior to the All-Star softball games, which are traditionally held the second weekend in July each year. The city also declared that, from now on, the weekend will be called the Brennan All-Star Weekend. In 1999, Brennan was inducted as a member of the Cleveland Heights Softball Hall of Fame, because of his sponsorship of many softball teams over the years.

Larry Shaw, former commissioner of parks and recreation for the city and a close friend of Jim Brennan, spoke about Brennan’s support for Heights sports teams. He said that Brennan sponsored many softball teams—women’s, men’s and co-ed—and contributed to the Barden Brennan Carter Memorial Youth Hockey Fund and the Raymond A. Robinson Memorial Youth Hockey Tournament.

“Jim made Forest Hill Park a destination for all who participated in Cleveland Heights sports in all capacities,” Shaw said. “Jim made Brennan’s Colony the place to be on Lee as many a post-game celebration was held there, whether we won or lost.”

Cathy Murphy, who was Brennan’s fiancee, thanked everyone for coming to honor him. Noting that Brennan would have shrunk from the publicity, Murphy said, “He really did deserve it. All of us that played softball—we may have been foes on the field, but we would go back to The Colony, take a couple of beers back with us, and have a great old time, and everybody got along. It was a great community.”

A sign above the scoreboard, designating Ball Field #5 Jim Brennan Field, will be installed later this summer. Funds for the sign were raised by the We Are a Colony committee, in partnership with the Cedar Lee Special Improvement District and the City of Cleveland Heights.

A video of the dedication ceremony can be viewed under the 2015 special events playlist on the city’s YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/clevelandheights.

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

“ "I want to have a plan in place so my family doesn’t have to scramble.”

—Dr. Louise Keating, Judson Smart Living at Home member since 2013

Connecting with people is important to Dr. Louise Keating. The daughter of Italian immigrants and a retired physician, she lives with her daughter’s family in Cleveland Heights, where she savors whipping up authentic Italian meals for her grandchildren.

“Living at home is important to me, but I want to have a plan in place so my family doesn’t have to scramble,” says Louise. “That’s why I decided to sign up for Judson Smart Living at Home. When the time comes, Judson will take care of everything with one phone call. In the meantime, I can access services whenever I need them.”

Indeed. When she’s not in the kitchen, Louise is working out at Judson. As a Smart Living at Home member, she takes advantage of Judson’s health and wellness classes which offer both physical and social benefits.

“Exercise keeps me nimble. I’m at Judson three times a week for yoga, strength training and water aerobics,” says Louise, who has had both hips replaced. “Plus, I’ve made many close friends.”

To learn more about how Judson can help you stay in your own home, please call (216) 791-3211.

Visit www.judsonsmartliving.org and click Smart Living at Home.
In introducing the proposed increase since 1979.

Jan. 1, 2016. It would be the first rate increase would take effect on November, the quarter-percentage-income tax rate. If approved by voters proposing an increase in the city's income earned outside of Cleveland Heights would remain in effect.

After Stephens formally introduced the ordinance authorizing the tax hike, Mayor Dennis Wilcox explained why the increase is needed. He reiterated the effect of reductions in state funding of local governments, which have included significant cuts to the Local Government Fund and the elimination of the inheritance tax. Wilcox also acknowledged the financial problems caused by the Great Recession and the foreclosure crisis, neither of which Cleveland Heights has fully recovered from. He explained that about 80 percent of the city's budget goes toward personnel costs. Forty-four percent of the budget pays for safety forces, and 30 percent is put toward public works.

Wilcox went on to describe how the city has actively worked to cut expenses in recent years, including cutting staff by 16 percent from its peak size—a reduction of about 100 full-time employees. Programs have been reduced or eliminated, employee health care has been restructured, and regional solutions have been sought where possible.

Cleveland Heights joined the Regional Income Tax Agency a few years ago, participates in a regional dispatch system, and is now providing waste-hauling services to University Heights and Case Western Reserve University. Wilcox noted that the city has held off in seeking an income tax increase, while neighboring Shaker Heights and nearby Lyndhurst have recently increased their municipal income-tax rates.

“It is about more than just what will happen to services [if the rate increase is not passed],” the mayor stated. “It is about investing in our future, about understanding that maintaining our services is critical to attracting new residents and families and keeping Cleveland Heights one of the best places in our region to raise families.”

Wilcox asserted that there would be a communitywide discussion and process around the proposed tax increase, which will include the appointment of an advisory panel made up of citizens experienced in finance and management. One of the panel's tasks will be to review the revenue projections on which the proposed rate increase is based. He made assurances that city taxpayers would have ample opportunities to have their questions answered and express their concerns.

A video of the July 6 meeting of the Cleveland Heights City Council is viewable in its entirety at www.youtube.com/clevelandheights.

Bill Braun

The Cleveland Heights Police Department (CHPD) is accepting applications for the second class of the Cleveland Heights Citizens Police Academy.

Participation is free. The brief application process is open to anyone interested in learning more about how police are trained and how CHPD operates.

In 12 classes conducted on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings over six weeks beginning Aug. 11, students in the Citizens Police Academy will receive survey-level instruction on the same topics taught to full-time cadets who train there. Each topic is covered by an academy instructor who is knowledgeable, highly trained and active in the field.

The instructors speak from substantial, personal knowledge and experience, according to members of the 2014 Citizens Police Academy, and were open to dialogue while providing straightforward answers to questions.

CHPD introduced the program last year as part of Police Chief Jeffrey Robertson's effort to deepen mutual understanding and regard between the department and the community it serves. It’s an opportunity for citizens to learn about police training and police work, and for the department to bear citizens' perceptions about policing in Cleveland Heights, Robertson said.

Topics covered include laws of arrest, use of deadly force, criminal investigation and crime scene techniques, drug investigations and search warrants, traffic enforcement, patrol techniques and other topics. Participants also get exposure to the SWAT, K-9 and other specialized units within the police force.

The curriculum includes a self-defense overview and hands-on weapons safety training, but it does not involve shooting or require a specific level of fitness.

If you are interested in applying, contact Captain Geoffrey Barnard at the Cleveland Heights Police Academy at 216-691-9721 or chadagency@msn.com. Applications are available at bit.ly/chpa.

To read blog posts from a member of the inaugural Citizens Police Academy, visit bit.ly/chpa-blog.
Heights Music Hop set for Sept. 19 on Lee Road

The third annual Heights Music Hop will take place on Saturday, Sept. 19, in Cleveland Heights’s Cedar Lee Business District. The event will feature numerous bands and musicians with a wide range of musical styles, performing in shops, restaurants and bars along Lee Road.

“It’s one of the best events in the Cleveland region,” said Shawn Paul Gustafson, owner of Shawn Paul Salon at 2256 Lee Road. “It brings a lot of people out and shows what the Cedar Lee area has to offer. It’s really amazing!”

The music will start at 5 p.m. and continue until 11 p.m. There will also be an after-party at the BottleHouse Brewery, at 2070 Lee Road. The Hop is free, but tickets will be needed for the after-party.

The Cedar Lee Special Improvement District (SID) is once again presenting a sponsor of the event, which is a project of FutureHeights, the nonprofit community group that also publishes the Heights Observer. Heights Music Hop is supported in part by the residents of Cuyahoga County through a public grant from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture. Other sponsors include Simply Charming, Motorcars, New Heights Grill, Dewey’s Pizza, The Wine Spot, realtor Susan Delaney of Howard Hanna, and Keller National.

“The relationship between FutureHeights and the businesses in the area is key to this event’s success, and we are excited to have the continued support of the Cedar Lee SID,” said Dan Budin, head of FutureHeights’s Music Hop Committee. “One of the many benefits of the Music Hop is that it draws people to the area and shows the great things the Heights has to offer.”

Heights business plans local events for visiting Tibetan monks

Cleveland Heights-based Loving Hands Yoga and Reiki is planning events for the Cleveland leg of a national tour for a group of Tibetan Buddhist monks. The events will be held throughout the Cleveland area Sept. 21-26. Presentations are non-religious, and are suitable for people of all faiths and traditions.

Judith Eugene, a Cleveland Heights native and the founder of Loving Hands Yoga and Reiki, is seeking businesses, schools, churches and other organizations that are interested in holding events at their facilities. Eugene organized a similar tour last fall. The events were well attended, and most sold out.

Events include lectures, debates, healing rituals, and empowerment ceremonies. School programs for grades K-12 include discussions, chanting demonstrations and performance of traditional Tibetan instruments. The monks are also available to create beautiful works of art including sand mandalas, butter sculptures and calligraphy. They also perform blessings of homes, businesses, and public buildings. There are suggested donations for each event, but no one is turned away for inability to pay. All donations are tax-deductible.

The monks are refugees from Tibet, living in a monastery in southern India. The monastery currently houses more than 4,500 monks of all ages, and the population increases daily. All money raised on the tour goes directly toward building an addition onto the overcrowded monastery, providing sanitary living and bathing accommodations, medical needs, and teachers’ salaries.

To host an event, call Judith Eugene at 216-408-5578. For more information and a program schedule, visit www.mysacredartatthebodhgaya.org or www.a-lovinghandsyoga.com.
Deidre McPherson is finally back where she belongs—in Cleveland Heights, where she joins other young adults who have “boomeranged” back to the place where they grew up.

McPherson graduated from Cleveland Heights High School in 1995 and attended Miami University on a violin scholarship, initially majoring in zoology and violin performance. She soon realized she much preferred marketing to zoology and decided against becoming a doctor like her father.

After graduation she lived in Boston and then Washington, D.C., where she obtained a master’s degree in business administration with a focus in marketing from the University of Maryland. Life in both of those cities is very expensive, and McPherson soon realized that the cost of living in Cleveland is more affordable and that there were lots of new and exciting things happening here.

In 2009, McPherson signed on as the marketing manager for the Cleveland Orchestra, and later worked as a marketing manager at the Council of Smaller Enterprises (COSE). Three years later, McPherson founded the Cleveland chapter of Sistah Sinema, a national organization that brings people together around films by and about LGBTQ women of color, a community whose narratives and experiences are rarely represented in mainstream media.

A moderated discussion follows each film to encourage dialogue on the topics raised by the film. McPherson has programmed more than 20 Sistah Sinema events at local venues, including Waterloo Arts, Negative Space Gallery, SPACES and MOCA Cleveland. Founding the Sistah Sinema Cleveland chapter helped McPherson meet people when she returned to her hometown. It also positioned her as a leader in the LGBTQ community and led to her current job at MOCA.

McPherson’s passion for the arts and creating community serve her well at MOCA. As curator of public programs, she develops exhibitions, performance-based experiences, and culturally relevant social activities that connect adult audiences to the museum in creative and compelling ways.

The current exhibition at MOCA, titled How to Remain Human, features the works of 14 artists from Cleveland and the extended region whose art explores the complexity and intensity of the human experience. A central figure in the show is d.a. levy, who lived on Hampshire Road, off Coventry Road, in the late 1960s.

Another featured artist in the show is Cleveland native Jae Jarrell, one of the founders of AfriCOBRA (African Commune of Bad Relevant Artists), an artist collective that began in Chicago during the Civil Rights Movement. The group formed in response to the lack of positive representation of African and African-American people in media and the arts. McPherson was deeply moved by the work of Jae Jarrell and the goal of AfriCOBRA—to produce art that conveyed the power, pride, history and energy of their communities.

She curated a program called AfriCOBRA: Power, Politics + Pride, featured the documentary film about the collective, followed by a panel discussion that featured Jarrell and other artists from the collective, moderated by Dee Perry from ideastream.

When asked about the values she admires, McPherson immediately said “kindness, hard work and beauty.” She appreciates people whose creativity inspires community. This is a common theme in her life and work—using creativity to celebrate our common humanity: “Getting people together to discuss and explore subjects is something that comes naturally to me,” said McPherson. “Together we can accomplish anything.”

Jan Kious has lived in Cleveland Heights since 1974, and, with her husband, raised four children here. She is interested in people in the Heights community who fit the description of “living ‘out of the box.’”
The SGI-USA Buddhist Center is set to open at 2455 Lee Road on Aug. 9, in a portion of the space previously occupied by Petland, which vacated the space about six years ago.

SGI-USA is part of a worldwide Buddhist organization called Soka-Kakkai International, which has more than 500 chapters and 100 centers throughout the United States, and more than 12 million members in 192 countries and territories around the world. SGI has about 650 members in northern Ohio, from Toledo to western Pennsylvania. Based on core Buddhist principles, such as respecting the dignity of human life and the interconnectedness of self and the environment, SGI focuses on various peace activities, including human-rights education, abolishing nuclear weapons and efforts to promote sustainable development.

"Buddhism became very popular in the 1960s and ’70s," said Barb Jenkins, vice-national women’s leader of SGI-USA. "It helps bring out the positive aspects and the strengths and power of your life, particularly in the midst of adversity." Jenkins, 61, lives in Chagrin Falls. She spent much of the 1970s and ’80s in Cleveland Heights, and said, "It’s still my stomping ground.”

Jenkins said that the organization looked at more than 100 locations before selecting the Lee Road space. "We looked everywhere," she said. "And we are so excited about what we have here: the diversity of the community, all of the things on the street, including restaurants and shops. And the people are so wonderful."

The center is planning a community open house on Aug. 15 and 16. The center’s many free programs and activities will be open to both SGI members and non-members. On the first Sunday of every month, it will hold world peace prayer sessions, starting at 10 a.m. Also once a month, on Thursdays, it will conduct introductory meetings, beginning at 7 p.m. It will also host discussions about various Buddhist topics, and present speakers. In addition, SGI plans to put together exhibits in the space, and host bookclub meetings and youth activities. The center will have four chanting rooms, lobby areas in the front and the back of the space, and a bookstore, which will carry Buddhist related books and materials.

Anne Perusek, SGI’s women’s division member-care advisor, said, "To become a member, a person commits to make a sincere effort at Buddhist practice—which includes learning to chant, studying Buddhism, setting up a Buddhist altar in one's home, and participating in monthly discussion meetings when possible. As a custom, new members offer $50 when joining.”

Perusek, 60, a longtime Cleveland Heights resident, described SGI as “significantly different from other Buddhist organizations.” She said most of them have priests and temples, but SGI focuses on “individual daily practice.” According to Perusek, “Consistent practice can bring a wellspring of hope. It brings out the hopeful aspects of life.”

Bibi Potts, SGI’s women’s division chapter leader for the Heights, University Circle, East Cleveland and Mount Pleasant, said that SGI offers the opportunity of diversity of thoughts and opinions to be considered before we make any decisions.”

Port, 61, has lived in Cleveland Heights for the past 30 years.

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Buddhist center to open on Lee Road

Barb Jenkins, Bibi Potts and Anne Perusek inside the new SGI-USA Buddhist Center on Lee Road
Aug. 15 fashion event at Nighttown is dedicated to women’s empowerment

Laura Potter

For a second year, Ten Thousand Villages in Cleveland Heights and Dress for Success Cleveland are partnering for a fun event that brings together fashion and fundraising. The event also combines a passion for fashion with the empowerment of women. It will be held on Aug. 15 at Nighttown, from 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Dress for Success will showcase high-end fashions as the group members purge their closets. The clothing will be paired with accessories from Ten Thousand Villages.

From noon to 1 p.m., Traci McBride of T eeMcBee Image Consulting will host the fashion presentation. She will focus on how to dress for different body types using versatile pieces of clothing. McBride will explain the seven different body types and show how staple pieces in your closet can be worn in multiple ways.

Guests are welcome to ask questions during the presentation and purchase items afterward. McBride said she is able to see in others what they don’t see in themselves. “My purpose is to give confidence and influence to others,” she said.

From 1-3 p.m., both organization will sell merchandise in their pop-up shops. All items from Dress for Success have been donated but are not able to be used in its program to help women with appropriate clothing for job interviews. The pop-up shop will offer designer wear for beyond the office—fur coats, evening gowns and more—all at $10 each.

Ten Thousand Villages works with more than 130 artisan groups; more than 70 percent are women working in the poorest of regions. The fair wages they earn support healthcare, food and supplies for their families and ensure that their children are educated and not victims of forced labor.

The event will open at 11:30 a.m. Tickets are $10 each or four group tickets for $35. A cash bar will be available for brunch cocktails, with coffee and tea provided by the two organizations. Nighttown is offering guests a 15 percent discount on their lunch with proof of ticket purchase.

Call Melony Butler at Dress for Success Cleveland at 216-881-6048 to purchase tickets in advance, as seating will be limited.

Laura Potter-Sadowski is executive director of Ten Thousand Villages in Cleveland Heights. She is active on the Ohio Fair Trade Expo Committee and the Cedar Fairmount SID Marketing Committee.
Heights Green Machine wins Pony League title

Michael Adams

In thrilling but ultimately convincing fashion, Cleveland Heights beat the South Euclid Indians 26-8 on July 17 to capture the 2015 Quad-City Pony League championship for the 14-under age group.

The win did not come easily, as South Euclid claimed an early lead. Down by two runs with two outs in the bottom of the third inning, Heights scored 12 runs to take a commanding lead and never looked back.

Taking over for starter Justin Rink, pitchers Owen Lang and Jake Rzepka—backed by solid defense—held South Euclid to zero runs the remainder of the game.

Coached by Jeff Rink, the team finished the regular season with an 11-1 record and was seeded first in the post-season tournament. "I was really impressed with this squad, especially after they fell behind early," Rink said after the game. "A lot of these guys have been together for a long time, been competitive but have not won a championship until today. I am thrilled they ended their pre-high school careers on such a high note."

Rink was assisted by coaches Chris Thomas and Mike Iammarino.

Calling themselves the Green Machine, the team members are: Justin Rink, Owen Lang, Michael Iammarino, Tristen Truit, Ned Trivisano, Kinsly Trivisano, Patrick Kelley, Andrew Pecoraro, Jake Rzepka, Peter Eyerman, Suki Truit and Luke Karbocki.

The Quad-City League provides a travel opportunity for the older age groups of the recreation baseball leagues in Cleveland Heights, South Euclid, Mayfield Heights, Lyndhurst and Beachwood.

Michael Adams is a Cleveland Heights resident.

Heights student attends congress of future scientists

Kate Gillooly

Alex Gillooly, a rising sophomore at Cleveland Heights High School, attended the Congress of Future Science and Technology Leaders, held in Boston, June 28-30.

The congress is an honors-only program for high school students who are passionate about science, technology, engineering or math (STEM). Its purpose is to honor, inspire, motivate and direct the top students in the country who aspire to be scientists and technologists, to stay true to their dream and, after the event, to provide resources to help them reach their goals.

Astronaut Buzz Aldrin, science director of the National Academy of Future Scientists and Technologists, nominated Gillooly to represent Cleveland Heights High School, based on Gillooly’s academic achievement, leadership potential and passion for science and technology. Gillooly enjoyed Aldrin’s Q&A and passion for science and technology.

"This is a crucial time in America when we need more nimble-minded and creative scientists and technologists who are even better prepared for a future that is changing exponentially," said Richard Rossi, executive director of the National Academy of Future Scientists and Technologists. "Focused, bright and determined students like Alex Gillooly are our future and he deserves all the mentoring and guidance we can give him."

The academy offers free services and programs to students who have the desire to learn more about their future in science or technology. Its services and programs include: online social networks through which these future scientists and technologists can communicate; opportunities for students to be guided and mentored by tech and science leaders; and communications for parents and students on college acceptance and finances, skills acquisition, internships and career guidance.

Kate Gillooly is a long-time resident of Cleveland Heights and mother to Alex Gillooly. She and her husband, Greg, graduated from Cleveland Heights and are grateful to raise their family here.
Felisha Gould named CH-UH district assistant superintendent

Angee Shaker

The Cleveland Heights–University Heights City School District has named Felisha Gould as its new assistant superintendent. Her term will begin Aug. 1. Gould succeeds Andrea Celico, the new superintendent of the Bedford City School District, who came to the CH-UH district as assistant superintendent in July 2013.

Gould comes to the position with extensive experience and leadership skills. She began her career as a high school biology teacher in Akron Public Schools before being promoted to middle school principal and then high school principal. Gould has received a number of awards, including Akron Urban League Educator of the Year, Akron Alliance of Black School Educators Outstanding Administrator, Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators Middle School Principal of the Year, and the Ohio Alliance of Black School Educators Principal and Student Appreciation awards. Gould earned her B.A. in biology from Talladega College, and holds her master’s degrees in biology, secondary education and educational administration from the University of Akron.

“We are very lucky to have someone as talented and experienced as Mrs. Gould coming to our district,” Superintendent Talissa Dixon stated. “I believe she’ll make an invaluable addition to our Tiger Nation family and we are eager for her to get started.”

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

Cleveland Heights-University Heights Board of Education Meeting highlights

JUNE 16, 2015

Board Member Eric Coble was absent.

Jesse Lange

Superintendent Talissa Dixon introduced Jesse Lange, newly hired vocal music teacher.

Sustainability presentation

Laura Storbink of HEMS Solutions presented a sustainability report on the high school facilities renovation. The report included an overview of the project, decision-making criteria, 2014 eco-goals, and a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, or green building design) update. Sustainability includes meeting the needs of the present without compromising future generations, and preserving resources.

The report discussed the following five goals based on the 2014 intensive brainstorming meeting on achieving sustainable design:

• Achieve a net-zero ready building, reducing 1876 tons of emissions.
• Reduce 4000 square feet of space.
• Reduce 133 GB of water use.
• Achieve a LEED Silver Certification.
• Achieve a 90% energy-efficient building.

The board approved the financial reports toward this goal.

New hires

The following new personnel were introduced:

• John Fullemann, assistant principal, CHHS
• Brigitte Pronty, Oxford Elementary School principal
• Dwight Hollis, CHHS supervisor of athletics
• Karen Battle, girls basketball coach
• Jeremy Holmes, boys basketball coach

Leadership for Change course proposal

The board heard a second reading of the new course proposal, Leadership for Change, for Heights High for the 2015–16 school year. This course would provide student leaders with the structure, opportunities, resources and curriculum for developing leadership skills. Students enrolled in this one-credit, elective course would work to implement schoolwide service projects, orientation and social events, and mentoring opportunities with underclassmen.

This course would help build a positive, student-led culture and is needed to build the necessary skills in student leaders so they can help facilitate a positive transition to the high school’s relocation to the Wiley campus.

Food service agreement

The board approved a financial report and the alternative tax budget for the CH-UH Public Library System.

Library budget

The board approved the financial reports and the alternative tax budget for the CH-UH Public Library System.
New vocal music teacher named for Heights High

Angee Shaker

The Cleveland Heights - University Heights City School District has hired Jesse Lange to be the new vocal music teacher at Cleveland Heights High School.

“I am excited Jesse Lange is joining our Tiger Nation family,” said Superintendent Talisa L. Dixon. “Mr. Lange is an accomplished vocal music teacher and will help continue our tradition of excellence in the high school’s vocal music program. While we wish he could have been Craig McCaughey, who served in this role after 15 years with the district, it is incredibly helpful to read over the summer. Students who do not read over the summer slip backward in their education. Our Heights libraries and librarians can help guide families to great choices that are appropriate for children of all ages and abilities.”

I wish summer math was assigned as well, but there are opportunities for kids to solve practical problems around the house to keep up their basic skills, such as following a recipe or woodworking projects. Don’t discount video games that provide math practice and can be lots of fun when it is raining outside.

At least one week before school starts, get out of the summer routines and re-establish school bedtime, waking and meal schedules. Setting alarms, eating breakfast, and starting the day will save a lot of trouble once school starts. Talk with your children about why it is important to be well-rested for learning and school work so they understand there is a reason and that it is not a punishment.

Look for information coming from your child’s school and read it carefully. Usually there are health forms, bell schedules, and important calendar events to record. Pay attention to changes in rules, notes about proper attire, bus schedules, and a host of other details that parents need. Hopefully your school offers volunteer opportunities for parents—volunteering is a great way to see how things work at school and get to know the staff.

Raising children who are ready to be successful for school takes work and planning. Two good sources of information are the National Association of School Psychologists (www.nasponline.org/families/index.asp) and the American Federation of Teachers tips for parents (www.aft.org/education/publications/resource/parents).

Ari Klein is a lifelong community member, math teacher at Cleveland Heights High School, and president of the Cleveland Heights Teachers Union.
School social workers help students and parents

Carmen Kottha
For some students, life gets in the way of academic success. School social workers are charged with reducing or removing non-academic barriers to academic success. At families prepare for the start of a new school year, Reaching Heights—a nonprofit that supports student achievement and teacher recognition, eworks to connect the community to our public schools—asked Carmen Kottha to describe the role of social workers like herself.

As a school social worker, I'm taken aback by all the services and activities we provide for the students and families of the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District. There really is no typical day in social work. We constantly apply our skills and adapt our time to meet the needs of the various schools, students and families. We work with teachers, principals, psychologists, nurses and guidance counselors.

Every social worker in our district faces non-attendance for excessive absences. When a student misses instruction, it's difficult to learn, and a student's lack of attendance often indicates other needs. Perhaps a student is missing school because of transportation problems, housing issues or the need for a winter coat. School social workers help families address problems, housing issues or the need for a winter coat. School social workers help families address these issues, and sometimes join a parent at the hospital when a child is ill.

Heights school social workers may assist with the logistics of state testing, and play a role in the special education identification and re-evaluation processes. We also support many extracurricular programs, and helped establish Faiths Alive, an interfaith collaboration with local church and synagogue communities who adopt curricular programs, and helped establish Faiths Alive, an interfaith collaboration with local church and synagogue communities who adopt

Our students and families who struggle with mental health, substance abuse, or grief and loss. Children and adolescents may need help with family strife, risky behavior, anxiety, depression, self-harm, peer pressure and bullying. We help create emotionally safe schools, facilitate peer mediations, and sometimes join a parent at the hospital when a child is ill.

Heights school social workers work with the logistics of state testing, and play a role in the special education identification and re-evaluation processes. We also support many extracurricular programs, and helped establish Faiths Alive, an interfaith collaboration with local church and synagogue communities who adopt

our schools to provide strong supportive relationships. Social workers ensure that the content of these community partnerships remains secular while assisting students and families in need.

The school social work department aims to strengthen the district’s working relationships with regional partners and connect with local mental health providers, children and family services, the Family to Family Collaborative and the Juvenile Court System. One of our school social workers is the Youth Mental Health First Aid Certified Instructor/Trainer for the school district. Social school social workers also created the Cleveland Heights threat assessment and, bullying policies and procedures.

Students and families should contact their school principal with any questions about receiving services from their school social worker. School phone numbers and principals’ e-mail addresses can be found at www.chubs.org, or by calling 216-371-7171.

Carmen Kottha has been a school social worker in the Heights schools for the past five years. We worked with the night school program and the Emotional Disturbance Unit Classroom at Heights High. She earned a B.S. in psychology from John Carroll University and an M.S.W. from Tulane University in New Orleans.

New Heights High assistant principal is former CHPD officer

Angela Shaker
The Cleveland Heights-Uni- versity Heights City School Dis- trict has named John Fullerman as a new assis- tant principal of Cleveland Heights High School. Fellow assistant principals are Jane Simeri, Alisa Lawson-McKinnie, and Joseph Nicklos (former Oxford Elementary School principal), with Zoraba Ross as head principal.

Fullerman was previously the principal of Summit Academy Sec- ondary School in Canton, where he was also head coach of the basketball team and director of student coun- cil. Prior to entering the education field, initially as a teacher, Fullerman served as a Cleveland Heights police officer, 2003-09.

He obtained his B.A. from Myers University, then secured his master’s in education from John Carroll Uni- versity. Fullerman also completed Cleveland State University’s princi- pal licensure program, and is in the process of finishing the advanced curriculum and instruction program from Wright State University.

“We’re lucky to have John Full- erman coming to our district, as someone with so much unique ex- perience in both education as well as in protecting our community,” said Superintendent Talisa L. Dixon. “His leadership skills and passion for Cleveland Heights will make a great addition to our Tiger Nation family.”

Under the high school’s new academic structure for fall, small schools will be eliminated in favor of a more comprehensive structure. In addition to the head principal, there will be four assistant principals, each of whom will be responsible for spe- cific grade levels and content areas to focus on teaching and learning.

The counseling services depart- ment will work under a “house sys- tem” model in which counselors will work in teams with case managers and social workers. Their services will be provided to students from specific grade levels, and incoming freshman students will work with the same counselors through their senior year.

“I’m very excited to embark on this new path for our high school,” said Zoraba Ross, administrative principal. “I believe, under this new model, students are able to obtain a more targeted and individualized education experience. I believe this change is very much a step in the right direction.”

Angie Shaker is director of communica- tions for Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District.
Tips for avoiding scams

It's a good idea for people of all ages to be aware of potential scams and cons, but senior adults can be especially vulnerable. Because many seniors own their homes and have accumulated retirement savings, they are a popular target for con artists. Older adults also grew up in a time when people were more trusting, considerate and polite. Con artists, also known as "scammers," attempt to take advantage of these traits to scam seniors out of their money.

Scams are perpetrated by phone, mail, e-mail, text message, social media and door-to-door contact. Scammers are very good at making their targets feel guilty about saying no. They typically act very friendly, call you by your first name and pretend to care about your family and your health situation, while making you feel guilty for not trusting them. Scammers also try to confuse you into accepting their offer. They will talk fast, avoid questions, give incomplete or confusing explanations and pressure you into accepting immediately. If you are not completely clear about and comfortable with what they are proposing, either say no or tell them you need time to think it over. Always consult with a trusted friend or family member before you decide.

According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), common telephone scams include claiming that you have won a prize or a lottery, offering free or low-cost products or vacations, promoting business investments that have low risk and high return, offering low-cost loans or credit cards, and asking for charitable donations.

When you receive one of these calls, the FTC recommends that you ask the person's name, company name and what they are selling. Also ask them to send you their offer in writing (including all documents they want you to sign), and tell them you will get back to them after you have time to review the information. This is not being rude. It is being practical.

The Housing Research and Advocacy Center (HRAC) warns that several popular housing scams, including fraudulent mortgages and reverse mortgages, home equity loans, foreclosure and debt assistance, and home repair offers that require large upfront payments. They recommend that you ask lots of questions, research all companies you plan to do business with, and get estimates or offers from several different companies.

Remember never to give your social security number, bank account number or credit card information to anyone who contacts you—even if they are asking you to “confirm” the information—no matter how legitimate or official the offer seems. You should initiate all financial transactions and make sure you are dealing with reputable individuals and companies.

Finally, remember this old saying: if something sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

Judith Eugene is a native of Cleveland Heights who provides life-enrichment classes and activities for senior adults and those with physical and mental challenges through www.lovinghandsgroup.com. She can be reached at 216-408-5578 or judith@lovinghandsgroup.com.

Seniors invited to annual HRRC expo on Sept. 1

Becky Stager

Home Repair Resource Center (HRRC) invites seniors to attend its annual Senior Expo, to be held on Tuesday, Sept. 1, 10 am to 2:30 p.m., at the Cleveland Heights Senior Activity Center, 1 Monticello Blvd.

Workshops and exhibitors will help seniors plan ahead to protect their biggest investment—their home. Speakers will discuss such topics as understanding homeowner’s insurance and how to use it, deciding which home improvements will have the biggest effect on a home’s resale value, options for using home equity to pay for repairs and improvements, and avoiding scams by unscrupulous lenders and contractors.

No reservations are required for the Senior Expo, which is free and open to residents of all communities. Light refreshments will be provided. For additional information, call Wesley Walker at 216-581-6100, ext. 22.

Becky Stager has been on the staff of HRRC since 1999 and currently serves as marketing and development associate. Visit www.hrrc-ch.org or call 216-581-6100 for more information on programs and services.
Library and HRRC offer programs for ‘heroic’ homeowners

By Sheryl Banks

With roughly half of its housing built before 1930, Cleveland Heights is a city with an older-than-average housing stock. These old homes are a great source of pride for many homeowners and residents, with 11 neighborhoods and 10 residential buildings in the National Register of Historic Places. Keeping these homes in good shape does require effort, though, and some residents aren’t sure how to go about maintaining these older homes.

That’s why the Home Repair Resource Center (HRRC) decided to team up with the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library System on a series of home repair classes: Heroic Homeowning. The series will provide basic information to get homeowners started, and cover budgeting, working with contractors, and simple repairs that most owners can do themselves.

“One of the library’s summer reading theme is all about heroes,” said Benjamin Faller, HRRC executive director. “Taking care of an older home presents a unique set of challenges and joys. Learning how to take good care of your home—especially an older home—is truly a heroic undertaking. It keeps our community strong, and makes it a desirable place to live for both new and current residents.”

The Heroic Homeowning series is free and open to all, and takes place on three Thursdays in August, at 7 p.m., at the Lee Road Library, 2345 Lee Road (216-932-3600).

• Aug. 6 — “The Other Costs of Homeownership. This program looks at the costs of keeping your home in good shape and suggests strategies for budgeting, saving, and paying for upkeep and improvements. Learn how planning ahead can help.

• Aug. 13 — Working with Contractors. This session will cover the ins and outs of working with contractors: how to find good ones, how to compare bids, and how to make sure you’re getting what you bargained for.

• Aug. 20 — Doing It Yourself. Even if you’re new to working with tools, there are home repairs that you can handle. This program will provide instructions for some basic and common repairs, and discuss strategies for building your skills, planning your project, and completing it successfully.

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

Meeting highlights

JUNE 15, 2015
All board members were present.

Architect for University Heights Library renovation
CBLH Design Inc. has been chosen from eight presenters as the architect for the University Heights Library renovation. Principals in the practice, Marc Bittinger and Michael Earhart, have experience with library design for many Cuyahoga County library systems. Their next step is to prepare three design schemes with price points ranging from $1 million to $4.5 million. A timeline for the project will follow.

New circulation services manager
The board approved the appointment of Ty Emerson as circulation services manager at an annual salary of $53,019. Emerson has a background in customer service and employee training. He’s had academic library experience at Johns Hopkins University. Outside of work, he holds a leadership position with the Cleveland Composers Guild.

AQUOS Board
Aquat Board
The board approved the expense of $8,654 from the technology fund to purchase an Aquos Board for classroom use. Technology Coordinator Matt Hoffman explained the interesting features of this 70-inch wall-mounted, touch-screen monitor.

Balanced Scorecard review
Carlton Sears introduced himself to the board and staff. A former library director and facilitator, he will lead the work for the Balanced Scorecard/Strategic Planning process for 2016–17.

Deputy Director Kim DeNero-Ackroyd presented highlights of the Balanced Scorecard Measures of Success for May 2015, focussing on:
• The acquisition of the New York Times Digital Database.
• Partnering with CWRU, YMCA, and the Sisters of Charity Foundation to prevent at-risk teens from becoming homeless.
• Library staffer Monica Wilson will assist in researching the number of such teens.

• Youth Services Department visits to schools to promote the summer reading program.
• Training of four new Book Bike volunteers.

Friends board seeks new members
President Louise Oliver highlighted the success of the mega book sale in early May. She talked about the challenges involved in disposing of the books that don’t sell, and called attention to the moral created by Heights High art students in the Harvey and Friends bookstore on the second floor of the library. The organization is looking for new board members.

May public service report highlights:
• With May as National Preservation Month, the library’s partnerships with the OH Landmark Commission and the CH Historical Society resulted in two lectures: “The Seven Lives of Severance Town Center” and “Landscaping by Design.”
• The spring series of the Cedar-Cuyahoga Friends author series concluded with author Mary Doris Russell speaking about her new book Epitaph: A Novel of the O.K. Corral.
• The mobile classroom took the intro to computers class to residents of Musicians Towers, and the MS Word Part 1 class to the Cleveland Heights Senior Center.
• At University Heights Library, The Kulas Foundation Steinway piano was tuned and is ready for use in programs as well as for practice by community members.

Associate Chris Fines hosted the annual Free Comic Book Day for 105 participants who came to play games and receive comic books. Many dressed up as their favorite comic book characters.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS’

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Look for earlier and often expanded postings of meeting summaries online at www.heightsobserver.org. See disclaimer on page 7.
The porches of August

David Budin

I was sitting on my deck, at the back of my house, communicating on Facebook, when something I read reminded me of the front porches of old, and how, when I remember the one on the house where I grew up, it makes me think of August.

Why August? I’m not sure. Possibly because, after spending about 10 weeks out there, I became aware of the subtle hints of the impending change of seasons, rather than—during the rest of the year, when I stayed inside much more—the big, obvious ones. Being out there every day, I’d notice signs, like the slight thinning of the leaves on our big trees that in June and July had blocked much of the sun from our west-facing upstairs porch. Or maybe it was because I knew, every year from the age of 5 through 18, that the new school year was only weeks, and then days, away, and how I dreaded going back to school every one of those years.

Our house, on Belmar, near Mayfield Road, was not a big one, but the porch stretched across the entire width of the structure, making the porch relatively large. For most of the time I lived there, in the 1950s and ’60s, the porch was furnished with dark-green-painted wicker pieces that had belonged to my grandmother, probably made in the ’30s or ’40s. Besides the couch, two big chairs, table and planter (which my mother had turned into a beverage holder, sometimes filling the galvanized-steel insert with ice and bottles of pop), there was also a “glider,” a suspended couch that swung back and forth.

Until my teenage years, I kept to myself a lot, and I spent most of my summer vacation time on that porch—including sleeping out there almost every night. My mother had put up chicken wire, from the top of the porch’s three-foot wall to the ceiling, convinced that a kid would fall off the porch. Because the chicken wire was always there, we never had the opportunity to find out if she was correct.

At different stages and ages, I spent my time out there reading comic books and Mad magazines (which I bought at one of Coventry Road’s three drugstores—Coven-try Drugs, Uberstein’s and Merit Drugs), sorting through that year’s baseball cards, practicing guitar and listening to the radio. These devices started out as big wooden pieces of furniture and, over those years, became smaller plastic boxes and then hand-held transistor radios. There were always one or two stations in Cleveland that played rock ’n’ roll, with great DJs like the Mad Daddy (Pete Meyers), Bill Randle, Johnny Holiday and Jerry G.

One of Coventry’s drug stores, Merit, also sold records; a metal rack featured the top-40 singles of the day, which they sold at three for a dollar, meaning you got six songs for one dollar, and since most albums then contained 12 songs, that meant you could buy an album’s worth for two dollars, which was about what albums cost at that time.

It was a great day, in mid-August 1957, when I was 8, and a visiting relative handed me a dollar. I walked into Merit Drugs and bought “Searchin’” by the Coasters, “That’ll Be the Day” by Buddy Holly and “Bye Bye Love” by the Everly Brothers. I came home and played them, many times, on the little record player I had dragged out onto the porch.

When I was 18, the last year I lived with my family, we moved from upstairs in one house to downstairs in the house next door. There was a reason for that, but when people asked my father and me how we usually say, “It’s just the gypsy in us.” By then we had a better record player—stereo—with portable speakers that I’d pull through the front window onto the new porch. Now I was playing albums, not singles, by the likes of Bob Dylan, Ian & Sylvia, the Byrds and the Beatles. Friends and handmates would come over after band practices or gigs, and we’d sit out on the porch and talk all night until my father, a very early riser, left for work, which reminded us to go to sleep—on the porch.

But something happened. Some time between playing Dylan records on the front porch, while dreading the new school year, and when I had kids of my own, we all moved to the back yard. We put decks on the backs of our houses. And we stopped hanging out in our front yard, where we used to see all of our neighbors. Now we see only the people we plan to see, and only at times we’ve determined in advance—except in our other neighborhood, Facebook. And we’re missing those spontaneous chats with people, where we used to pick up news and gossip—though we now do that on Facebook, too.

I use Facebook a lot—and there’s much about it that I find useful and enjoyable. But it will just never be the front porch.

David Budin is a freelance writer for national and local publications, the former editor of Cleveland Magazine and Northern Ohio Live, an author, and a professional musician and comedian. His writing focuses on the arts and, especially, pop-music history.

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Good Neighbor, Good Advice
Public Art talk and bike tour planned for August

Heights artist wins illustration award

For a community of fewer than 50,000 people, Cleveland Heights is home to quite a few public art installations. The city refers to itself as “home to the arts,” so it seems fitting that public artworks can be found in parks, on street corners, at schools and libraries, and elsewhere around town.

When Heights Bicycle Coalition (HBC) president and Cleveland Heights City Council Member Mary Dunbar contacted former Heights Arts executive director Peggy Speath about leading a bicycle tour of public art, she consented enthusiastically. Instead of talking and riding at the same time, however, Dunbar and Speath will present a two-part event—an illustrated public art talk at Heights Arts’s newly renovated gallery on Thursday, Aug. 20, at 7 p.m., and an accompanying bicycle tour on Saturday, Aug. 22, from 10 a.m. to noon.

In the past 15 years, Heights Arts has helped facilitate the installation of permanent and temporary public artworks—primarily in Cleveland Heights business districts—so there is plenty to see. “Part of Heights Arts’s mission is to make the creativity of our residents visible,” said Speath, who helped establish the nonprofit community arts organization in 2000. “We knew we had a lot of artists in the community and felt that the city itself should tangibly reflect the creativity of its residents. Public art was just one of the initiatives, along with streetscapes, signage, and the gallery on Lee Road.” From 2000 to 2013, three permanent murals were created, along with a tile mosaic, six streetscapes consisting of artist-designed furniture and signage, and one site-specific sculpture.

“Our initial public art project was developed just as Heights Arts was starting,” Speath explained. “I was contacted by Coventry to help raise money for a soccer field, which wasn’t my area of expertise, so we started with the Coventry Arch. We had a statewide competition for the project, which was ultimately awarded to Barry Gunderson, a professor of sculpture at Kenyon College.” The aluminum arch, with its whimsical, abstract figures, was designed as “a symbol of greeting, accommodation, and celebration of differences,” in line with the Cleveland Heights community spirit. Most of the public art projects were funded through grants, gifts from individuals and businesses, and fundraisers. The arch, for example, benefited from the generous help of Tom Fello, owner of Tommy’s restaurant, which has been sponsoring an annual New Year’s Day pancake breakfast to benefit community arts programming since 2004.

While the Aug. 22 bicycle tour will focus on permanent public art installations around Cleveland Heights—starting at the Cedar Lee mini-park next to Heights Arts and pedaling through the Coventry and Cedar Fairmount neighborhoods—the hour-long illustrated talk on Aug. 20 will also highlight four temporary art projects that are no longer on view. A public art street map, with information on all the works facilitated by Heights Arts from 2000 to 2013, is being published in conjunction with the talk and tour. Both events are free and open to the public. Because seating is limited in the gallery, please RSVP for the talk by calling 216-371-3457.

Heights artist wins illustration award

Heights illustrator Jamey Christoph received an Award of Excellence from Communication Arts for his work on the children’s book Gordon Parks: How the Photographer Captured Black and White America. The publication’s 59th Illustration Annual features an illustration from the book, which depicts impoverished families living in the shadow of the U.S. Capitol.

The competition reviewed more than 4,300 applicants and awarded Christoph its top award for illustrations in published books. Christoph, a resident of Cleveland Heights since 2002, currently resides in Grant Deming’s Forest Hill Neighborhood.

Information about his children’s books and illustrations are available at www.jameychristoph.com.

Bradley Eckert, partner of the artist, is a resident of Cleveland Heights, and a medical student.

The Coventry Arch was installed in 2001. The permanent and four temporary public artworks—primarily in Cleveland Heights business districts—so there is plenty to see. “Part of Heights Arts’s mission is to make the creativity of our residents visible,” said Speath, who helped establish the nonprofit community arts organization in 2000. “We knew we had a lot of artists in the community and felt that the city itself should tangibly reflect the creativity of its residents. Public art was just one of the initiatives, along with streetscapes, signage, and the gallery on Lee Road.” From 2000 to 2013, three permanent murals were created, along with a tile mosaic, six streetscapes consisting of artist-designed furniture and signage, and one site-specific sculpture.

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More information on HBC and other sponsored rides can be found in an article in this issue of the Observer. No registration is required for the Aug. 22 ride, but helmets are mandatory. For more information on public art in Cleveland Heights, visit www.heightsarts.org.

Mary Ryan is the marketing and communications coordinator at Heights Arts.

Bradley Eckert, partner of the artist, is a resident of Cleveland Heights, and a medical student.
Heights ensemble Elégie to perform at Cain Park

Peg Wensbrod

The male vocal quartet Elégie, four young men who met while they were students in Heights High's Vocal Music Department, will open the show for Black Violin at Cain Park on Friday, Aug. 14, at 7 p.m.

Elégie members Caleb Wright, Brian Barron, Mist'a Craig and Michael Hives began singing together four years ago. Each is classically trained and performs in numerous ensembles and chorales, including the Cleveland Orchestra Chorus. However, Wright leaves the upper registers of their young age, they display a surprising range of vocal talent, especially when Wright leaves the upper registers expected for a singer his age.

Although Elégie has performed at churches, schools and clubs all over Northeast Ohio, its fan base grew significantly after the group appeared on the WJW Fox 8 "Morning Jukebox News" program in 2013.

Their repertoire of barbershop, smooth jazz, gospel, rock and R&B trained viola and violin players Wil B & inspiration from the Kokoon Arts and literary manager at Kulture Kids. Sarah Pease-Kerr, a writer, educator, and theater enthusiast from Cleveland Heights and a formal fundraiser in October. The October event will draw its inspiration from the Kokoons Arts balls of the early 20th century, which were some of the biggest events in Cleveland during those years.

“Everyone on the Artful team is volunteering their time and expertise. Other skilled community members have volunteered their time in the areas of law, grant research and writing, construction, community development and real estate,” said Eric Mundson, Artful’s online brand manager. “With more than 600 followers on Facebook, 450 plus on Twitter, and more than 100 on Instagram, Artful looks forward to working with members of the community and making the Heights even more Artful.”

For more information, visit www.artfulcleveland.org or www.facebook.com/artfulcleveland.

Artful plans fundraisers

Brody Dindia

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Artful is a community effort, intent on creating an Artful space in the Heights. The founding committee consists of artists, educators, and local business owners, all with strong ties to the area. Artful (which, as ARTFUL LLC, is a registered nonprofit in the state of Ohio) has been approved by Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts to receive free legal assistance as committee members move ahead with the project. Another beneficial development has come in the form of an anonymous challenge grant of $25,000. While this requires that the committee raise $25,000, members are hopeful that, with community support, they will raise enough funds to receive the matching grant.

Artful’s first fundraiser, called PLAYFUL, will be a kickball tournament to be held on Aug. 9, 3-7 p.m., at Denison Park. According to Sarah Curry, Artful’s artists and education advocate, the intention is to encourage the community to come together to be playful,” while helping Artful secure the funds it needs to develop the project and make it a reality. Registrants will receive free tickets for planned raffles, and have a chance to win door prizes. There will be crafts for kids, food and beverages, and all ages are welcome.

The deadline for online registration is Aug. 5.

Artful is also working on a potential art show to run in conjunction with the Heights Music Hop this August, and a formal fundraiser in October. The October event will draw its inspiration from the Kokoon Arts balls of the early 20th century, which were some of the biggest events in Cleveland during those years.

“Everyone on the Artful team is volunteering their time and expertise. Other skilled community members have volunteered their time in the areas of law, grant research and writing, construction, community development and real estate,” said Eric Mundson, Artful’s online brand manager. “With more than 600 followers on Facebook, 450 plus on Twitter, and more than 100 on Instagram, Artful looks forward to working with members of the community and making the Heights even more Artful.”

For more information, visit www.artfulcleveland.org or www.facebook.com/artfulcleveland.

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Heights resident Bachtell shines on Broadway

Cleveland Heights resident Barbara Bachtell began steering the venerable Broadway School of Music and the Arts (BSMA) 18 years ago, in the same Slavic Village neighborhood where her mother lived as a baby. Bachtell’s mother, an artist and writer, was descended from Bohemian immigrants who settled there. One of her mother’s first cousins was Cleveland mayor Ralph Perk. As Bachtell put it, “They didn’t agree on politics but enjoyed lunching together occasionally.” Perhaps it was this mixture of art and politics in the family lineage that resulted in one of Bachtell’s brothers becoming The New Yorker’s Town cartoonist, another brother becoming chair of the U.S. Communist party, and Bachtell herself becoming an artist and community arts administrator.

Bachtell’s diverse experiences in the arts prepared her for a multi-tasking career at BSMA. She majored in studio art and minored in creative writing at Wesleyan University in Connecticut; worked in Boston as a freelance graphic artist; was a painting major at Cleveland Institute of Art; worked as a gallery assistant at SPACES, and as program assistant for Peoples and Cultures gallery; and had a studio in Little Italy.

She was the second director of the now-defunct New Organization for the Visual Arts’ (NOVA) Cleveland Art Festivals (1981–84), procurers to today’s Ingenuity festival that brings artists and organizations together in downtown Cleveland. She then became NOVA’s first program coordinator when the organization became more focused on direct services to artists, rather than events. She facilitated projects such as slide registry exchanges with Chicago, Boston, and Washington, D.C.; artist open studio tours, and art in special places programs, bringing artists into hospitals and community settings.

Bachtell is the third director of BSMA, founded in the 1980s as a branch of the Cleveland Music School Settlement. The organization became a nonprofit a few years after its founding, and has continually adapted to a loss of population and decline in the economy. Bachtell’s continual challenge is “How do we sustain this organization when the people we serve don’t have the resources to pay?” Like many small nonprofits, BSMA has a diverse revenue stream, but Bachtell especially credits Cuyahoga Arts & Culture public funding as “our saving grace.”

BSMA partners with neighborhood organizations, including Community Assessment and Treatment Services, a substance abuse rehabilitation center. Its program alternates weekly drum circle and dance classes. For seven years, BSMA has brought Suzuki violin classes to Villa Montessori school, which is closing after 20 years. A third program is after-school art and music classes at University Settlement, a neighborhood center that provides social services to residents of the Broadway-Slavic Village neighborhood. Bachtell said that BSMA also has a “wonderful relationship with the Cleveland Orchestra,” which held its third neighborhood residency in Slavic Village with free kick-off concert. BSMA has always offered on-site music lessons, both instrumental and voice, and a youth drum corp.

Special projects, such as Rooms to Let: CLE, bring a sparkle to Bachtell’s eyes. In the spring of 2014, she was one of three curators for this project, which brought site-specific installations into three vacant houses in Slavic Village. “It was a terrific experience,” she said. “I ended up with 20 artists in the house I curated (which, alas, was later demolished, despite its ‘good bones’), along with photos from the 1950s and ’40s showing the house’s original residents in the very spaces the artists altered.”

Bachtell is nourished by a leadership program of the National Guild for Community Arts Education. “You must nurture yourself as a person and learn what your values are to be an effective leader,” advised Bachtell. “A leader is different from a manager—as a leader you bring people together.” Today, Bachtell said, she is “trying to integrate my artist-self with my administrator-self” and trying to find the time to work on her studio art while bringing arts to the Slavic Village community. Truly, Bachtell is a shining star on Broadway.

Peggy Spaeth writes about Heights residents and their impact locally, regionally and worldwide.
Bussey’s Upholstery has been in CH since 1954

James Henke

Bussey’s Upholstery Foam ‘N’ Fabric Inc., located at 2311 Lee Road, has been a Cleveland Heights institution since 1954, when it moved into one side of its current location. In 1975, Bussey’s expanded, taking over the space next door, which had been occupied by the New York Kosher Butcher. It has filled both storefronts ever since.

The store is owned by Mark Bussey, 63, and his wife, Marlene. His father, Irving M. Bussey, founded the store back in 1930. It was originally located at 12305 St. Clair Ave., near East 123rd Street, in Cleveland. Bussey’s sells fabric that can be used for upholstery, slipcovers and draperies, and it sells foam for virtually every size of mattress. Bussey’s also sells various tools and other supplies for upholstery work. Bussey’s will also do upholstery work for its customers, including refilling cushions.

Almost all of the products it sells are made in the U.S.A.

Mark Bussey was born in East Cleveland, but spent most of his early life in Cleveland Heights. After graduating from Heights High in 1971, he started working at his father’s store. “My father liked doing upholstery work, and I decided to join him because he was getting older,” said Bussey.

His father continued to work at the store until 1977 when, at age 81, he decided to retire. Mark then took over the store with his mother, Emilie Bussey. His father died in 1982, and his mother died in 1993.

After Bussey married Marlene in December 1984, his new wife started working at Bussey’s. She still works at the store, where she handles most of the phone calls, as well as some of the sales. The Busseys have two children, Irene, 25, and Emilie, 15. They have lived in South Euclid since 1985.

The store’s only other employee is James Amie, who has been at Bussey’s since 1998 and is now the store’s manager.

Bussey said that he really loves the store’s location. “We get a lot of people walking by who decide to stop in and see what we sell,” he said. “I also enjoy being only a block away from the Cleveland Heights University Heights Library. Whenever I need a book, I go over there.”

He also said he enjoys patronizing the area’s restaurants. “If I have time to get lunch,” he said, “I’ll go to one of the restaurants around here. But we don’t always have the time, unfortunately.”

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.

Bussey’s Upholstery Foam ‘N’ Fabric
877-267-4548
2311 Lee Road
Mon., Wed., Thurs., Sat., noon to 6 p.m.
Tues., noon to 8 p.m.
Fri., noon to 5 p.m.
www.busseysupholstery.com

Local musicians entertain the crowd at a past Cedar Fairmount festival.

Kaysa Lowe

Plans are complete for the 14th annual Cedar Fairmount Summer Festival to be held on Sunday, Aug. 9, from noon to 5 p.m. The festival committee has added more entertainment and venues for this year’s event. The goal of the festival has always been to thank the community for its support of Cedar Fairmount businesses and to give residents an opportunity to enjoy the talents of local artists and musicians in a family-friendly environment.

The arts and crafts sale will be located on Lennox and Surrey streets, and in the Zoss bakery parking lot. This year there will be paintings, photography, glass art, jewelry, basketry, bath and body potions, purses, handmade bags, fiber art and clothing, pet products, and much more.

The Eclectic Vision, Get Back Duo, Wright Reynolds Project and Blue Spruce Cats will be returning to entertain. Musical Mark and Whipples the Clown will perform to the delight of young festival attendees.

Cedar Fairmount businesses, neighbors, the Cedar Fairmount Special Improvement District and a grant from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture, is made possible by donations from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture.
Trapped! Escape room opens on Coventry

James Henke

Real-life escape rooms are booming all over the world. The rooms are based on video games, where the player is locked inside a room and must explore his or her surroundings in order to escape. Players must be observant and use critical-thinking skills to escape the room. The first real-life escape room opened in Japan in 2008. The rooms quickly spread across Asia, and then, a couple of years later, one opened in Budapest, Hungary, followed by many more in Europe. In 2012, the first North American escape room opened in San Francisco, and more soon opened, first in New York, then Toronto. Now, Greater Cleveland has its first real-life escape room.

Called Trapped!, the escape room opened on Coventry Road in Cleveland Heights on July 17. It’s owners are Cleveland Heights resident Alan Applegate and his brother, Scott Applegate. Alan first discovered the concept in Toronto in March, when he and his two sons—12-year-old Robbie and 14-year-old Tyler—were attending a film festival. “We wanted to do something besides watch movies,” Applegate said. “So I went to TripAdvisor, the online travel website, to see what else was in Toronto. Three of the top 10 things listed were escape rooms.”

Applegate and his sons went to one of the Toronto escape rooms. “We had the best time ever,” he said. “I talked to the owner and found out more about it. Then I went to one in Pittsburgh, which opened in November of last year, and checked that one out. There’s also one in Cincinnati, which opened this past April.”

Applegate, 46, and his brother, 24, decided to open one in Cleveland. They both grew up in Shaker Heights and graduated from Shaker High. Alan then went to DePauw University in Indiana, where he majored in economics. He and his brother both moved to Cleveland Heights in 1992. Alan still lives in Cleveland Heights, on Essex Road, while Scott recently moved to Larchmere Boulevard in Cleveland.

The two brothers own Applegate Construction, and they have worked on many real-estate projects. When they found out that the space at 1796 Coventry, where the Next clothing store used to be located, was available, they immediately went for it. “Coventry is so unique and such a great walking neighborhood,” Applegate said. “And it’s close to Case, John Carroll and the Clinic, so we thought it was close to a lot of people who would like to come to our escape room.”

Trapped will eventually feature five different themed rooms. One is open now—called the Cell, it is essentially a prison from which people need to escape. Two other rooms—Apocalypse, which Applegate described as “a zombie lab,” and Pirates Tavern, based on “Pirates of the Caribbean”—are slated for opening sometime in August. Chainsaw, which is “geared more toward horror fans,” according to Applegate, and a still-to-be-determined final room, are also planned, and the owners hope to open them by Halloween.

Up to eight people can play each game. They are given a backstory and a set of rules, then have 60 minutes to solve the mystery of the room. Each of the game rooms also features cameras and audio to give clues to the players.

“It’s something different to do with your family,” Applegate said. “And it’s also great for corporations who want to build relationships among their employees. And it’s not scary, it’s family-friendly, pure fun and very entertaining.”

Trapped is open Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., and Thursdays through Sunday, 11 a.m. to 1 a.m. It is closed on Mondays. The cost of taking part in one of the games is $28 for adults, $25 for students and $22 for children ages 12–15. For information, visit www.facebook.com/trappedcle.

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 Tim Morrison, John Lennon and Bob Marley.
Best Business

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