Heights merchants celebrate season with Holiday Stroll

James Henke

The holiday season is upon us, and three Cleveland Heights shopping districts are planning a celebration. On Saturday, Dec. 12, the Coventry Village, Cedar Lee and Cedar Fairmount business districts will all take part in the second-annual Holiday Stroll.

The stroll will run from noon to 8 p.m., and from 4 to 8 p.m. shoppers can hop on the Trolley, at designated stops, to travel between the three districts and partake of the activities. All of the neighborhoods will offer shopping deals, plus music, movies and other entertainment. Some bars and restaurants will offer music later in the evening.

In addition, the City of Cleveland Heights will offer free parking at all city parking meters on Dec. 12.

The old Centrum Theater in Coventry Village will show the movie "Elf," starring Will Ferrell, Bob Newhart, Ed Asner and Zooey Deschanel, at 2 p.m., and the Gateway Heights Church will provide free drinks, popcorn and other snacks during the free movie showing.

"The Santa Clause," which stars Tim Allen, will be shown at 1 p.m. (free showing) at the Alcazar in the Cedar Fairmount district, and the Cedar Lee Theatre will screen "A Christmas Story" at 10 a.m. (St. admission).

The BottleHouse Brewery on Lee Road will present "The Nightmare Before Christmas" at 8 p.m.

Several of the restaurants and businesses in the Cedar Lee neighborhood will feature live music throughout the day, including the Social Room, Parnell’s Pub and Heights Arts.

Future of Severance

Town Center is focus of public forum

James Henke

Severance Town Center—the shopping center located at the intersection of Mayfield and Taylor roads in Cleveland Heights—has been deteriorating for much of the past decade. On Oct. 21, about 200 people attended a forum at the Cleveland Heights Community Center to discuss the future possibilities of Severance.

FutureHeights presented the forum, which featured presentations by five people, including three members of the FutureHeights Civic Engagement Committee. The forum’s attendees also shared their thoughts about what could be done with the Severance area.

Vince Reddy, a project manager at LAND studio and a member of the FutureHeights Board of Directors, opened the program by giving the history of Severance.

Severance Town Center opened in October 1963, and was the first fully enclosed shopping mall in Ohio. When it opened, it contained two major department stores—the Higbee Company and Halle Bros. Company—as well as a Fisher Foods grocery store and a Woolworth’s discount department store. The shopping center was built on property that had been owned by John L. Severance, a Cleveland industrialist and philanthropist. His family’s house was demolished in 1959, and construction on the mall began in 1962.

Eventually, Dillard’s took over the two department stores, and, in

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continued on page 9

continued on page 8
After the tax increase: An agenda for CH City Hall

Bob Rosenbaum

Congratulations Cleveland Heights. We’ve voted ourselves a tax increase.

I happen to believe it was the smart thing to do. But here’s a message for the city manager, members of city council, and all the rest of us, as residents, who are responsible for keeping them focused: The successful campaign buys us time, but it doesn’t solve our real problems.

It doesn’t change the fact that: • Cleveland Heights is perceived by many across the region as a place to avoid—either to visit or live. • Our city government is comprised by many to be bureaucratic and frustrating. • It’s an expensive place to live and work. • The population is still declining. • Cleveland Heights is fighting to stand its ground amid rising waters, when it should be fighting to occupy higher, dryer and better ground.

Most of us have made a choice to live here for a variety of reasons that together create a quality of life you can only find in an old, inner-ring suburb. But old suburbs are expensive. Water lines rust, sewers crumble, homes need to be repaired, schools need to be refigurated. . . The truth is that we’ve been losing ground for years in the effort to maintain quality of life here. When I was a kid, city employees rode scooters to bring your garbage to the curb each week—as they still do in neighboring communities.

Until the last recession, we had an animal control officer who would respond to calls about skunks and raccoons and stray dogs. We had two swimming pools, multiple leaf pickups, four fire stations. Over the years, we’ve given up dozens of amenities in the effort to manage costs. We barely miss most of them, but at some point you realize the amenities matter, too.

I’m not calling for a return of backyard garbage pickup. The point I’m trying to make is that the tax increase just passed doesn’t change the trajectory. It merely puts off the next round of cuts—which were inevitable even before Gov. Kasich balanced Ohio’s budget on the backs of cities.

But we can change this. Across the nation, inner-ring suburbs like Cleveland Heights are being rediscovered—hailed as the frontier of “new urbanism.” Everything we have to offer—population density, high-quality homes, walkability, diversity—access to population centers—is a hallmark of areas that are once again cool, desirable and investment-grade.

We already have active move—continued on page 3
• Take parking enforcement away from the police department. Assign the job instead to a small group of parking enforcement officers dressed in any color other than blue. People will still complain about the tickets, but they won’t be able to make the case the police are doing the wrong work.

Increase transparency. There is a pervasive mistrust of City Hall that is out of place in a community of this size. I don’t believe it’s because of corruption or mismanagement. It has been earned over years of calcified management.

But if you haven’t noticed, we’ve turned over the entire leadership of our city in the last four or five years. The people who earned this reputation aren’t in charge anymore. So now’s the moment at City Hall to proactively get it done.

Be easy to do business with. For every business owner who enjoys working with the city (and there are some), many others will tell you it’s dogmatic, dictatorial, mercurial and frustrating. The city’s last two economic development directors have come and gone without making a mark. I don’t know if it’s because they didn’t know what to do, or because they were stonewalled by the old culture in trying to make it easier for businesses to set up and operate here. But we need to fix it.

Reinvigorate housing investments. Our housing department fights to maintain an old housing stock while defending against absentee landlords and unscrupulous real estate flippers. But the policies employed to do this also make it uneconomical for the right kind of investors to work here.

I spoke at length with a guy who rehabs houses for a living. He does high-end work and saved a beautiful home in my neighborhood from rotting in foreclosure. Regulations here required him to tie up about $75,000 in cash for most of a year. It took another six months to sell the house.

“There are a dozen homes here I’d like to do,” he told me. “But . . . there are other places where I can do the same work without tying up all my cash.”

I don’t have a solution, but protecting our housing stock even while welcoming the right kind of real estate investment needs to be high on the agenda.

Shape up our public schools. This is not City Hall’s responsibility, but it’s a problem for the city. Young families won’t move here for a school district that doesn’t have a great reputation. Ours doesn’t. All of my children have gone through the public schools here and have received a fine education. The facilities project that’s underway should create schools that look like a place you want to send your kids.

At the same time, I’ve seen five or six superintendents during my children’s journey through the district—and just as many educational visions. I’ve seen administrators’ heads spin as they reinvent entire curricula on the fly. We don’t need an STEM district, or an International Baccalaureate district or an arts district; we need a good, urban school district that is exceptional in its management, accountable to the community, and exciting to parents of young children.

Promote our assets. Cleveland Heights is home to the most vibrant art community in Ohio. Some of the region’s most admired personalities live here—from celebrity chefs to musicians to architects to novelists to academic stars. It is a city of diversity, of culture, of ideas, of action. It has nightlife and neighborhoods, independent businesses and innovative nonprofits.

So why do we allow our city to be defined by negative stories from drive-by journalists? Why are we passive in telling the world what Cleveland Heights is all about? We need to invest in our own reputation. Other cities do it all the time.

Instead, we let people think our city is beleaguered. Maybe it is. But it’s less so than before we voted for an income tax increase. As I said, that bought us time. City Hall’s challenge is to use that time well, by leading us to higher ground.

Cleveland Heights resident Bob Rosenbaum is co-chairman of the Heights Observer Advisory Committee, and is responsible for its advertising sales and market development. The perspective expressed here is his own. The Heights Observer does not take editorial positions.
CH-UH schools to offer more wrap-around services

Ari Klein

When I was growing up in Cleveland Heights in the 1960s, I remember that Taylor Elementary was not only a school my older siblings attended, but also a place where the Cub Scouts met, I attended summer day camp, and my family played volleyball one night a week. Students and families in the CH-UH public schools have access to a treasure trove of services outside of the normal curriculum, including after-school programs, partnerships with community agencies, referrals to health and mental health services, free- or reduced-price lunch programs through the federal government, and countless others. On Oct. 28, Superintendent Dixon and I took a small team of community members and district staff to Columbus, to learn how Cincinnati has coordinated “wrap-around” services into its schools. Cincinnati has been working for the last dozen years on creating partnerships that serve each school building’s unique needs. These coordinated efforts are called Community Learning Centers (CLC), or wrap-around services. We listened to CLC coordinators, a board member, the president of the teachers union, and some of the partners who work in the schools, to learn how these learning centers have evolved in Cincinnati and how they have helped make public schools hubs for each community. I was struck by how far along CH-UH is toward realizing the benefits of having CLCs. What we need to do is coordinate our efforts and be more intentional about how we decide what services are needed and offered at our various school buildings.

Those of us who attended the Oct. 28 meeting will hold a debriefing in November, after this article is written. My hope is that we can start to have deep conversations about how CLCs would look in CH-UH. CLCs can include all sorts of different services, such as enrichment, tutoring, medical and eye exams, mental health professionals, adult classes and more. CH-UH has a few of these types of services, but tailoring the services to the needs of the building, and having someone at the building responsible for coordinating services, makes so much sense.

Many like-minded educators and community leaders around Ohio saw a need for a statewide CLC initiative. During this past legislative season, the Ohio Federation of Teachers helped craft and support the Community Learning Centers House Bill 70, which had widespread support and passed both chambers with amendments. During the conference committee meetings to find resolution between these two versions of the bill, there was a last-minute 60-page amendment added that allows for a state takeover of school systems deemed ineffective for a period of time—mostly based on test scores.

This is the basis of legal challenges for the state takeover of Youngstown City Schools in October. This is also the basis of the CH-UH Board of Education’s resolution against this egregious part of HB 70. How CLCs got lost in this amendment is beyond understanding. What started out as a bill that promised support in creating and refining services turned into something that school districts like ours, Youngstown’s, Lorain’s, and others that serve high-poverty populations, will fear—a loss of local control by a state that can barely run itself.

Members of the Cleveland Heights Teachers Union will likely hold few of the potential positions in CLCs, but we are strong advocates of these types of services for our students and their families. We know that we will have a better chance of teaching students if other important aspects of their lives are supported. Try teaching a child to read when he has a dental infection, needs glasses, or has not eaten in several days. It just does not work. The concept of wrap-around services is an old one—the school is a hub of the community where families and community come together. Schools are community assets that should be accessible to more people for extended hours, offering a safe place, with a library, meeting rooms, a gymnasium, and other resources. It is time we back away from the narrow test-test-test focus that schools have had forced on them by an unreasonable “accountability” system, and broaden our reach to the whole child and family in building a stronger community.

Ari Klein is a lifelong community member, math teacher at Cleveland Heights High School, and president of the Cleveland Heights Teachers Union.
Color coding doesn’t account for complexity

THE COMMON GOOD

Susie Kaeser

Some bad practices never leave us. One of them is reducing complex issues to simple ratings and using them to make big decisions that create inequality. I am talking about redlining. It is illegal, but the Heights Community Congress (HCC) tells us it’s back.

Our ignominious history is important. A devastating home foreclosure crisis during the Great Depression prompted the first federal housing program, an agency to refinance mortgages so that desperate homeowners could keep their property. In 1939, Congress established the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC) and made protecting homeownership a new national priority.

Sadly, while the agency saved more than a million homes from foreclosure and established new lending practices that made homeownership affordable for generations to come, it also codified racial discrimination in lending. HOLC created a national system for evaluating mortgage risk that made the race of residents in a neighborhood a defining factor in where to lend money.

This practice gave all-white neighborhoods access to mortgages, and defined African Americans, and any neighborhood that had black residents, as too risky to be creditworthy.

In 1939, HOLC teams surveyed 230 cities and created color-coded “residential security maps.” Green and blue neighborhoods were places to encourage lending and investment. Yellow areas, the standard color of caution, were less safe. Red, the symbol of danger and hazard, ruled out investment. The maps made it easy for the federal government, and subsequently bankers and realtors, to make a quick assessment of where to invest. Urban historian Antero Pietila called it “mapping bigotry.”

Assessing risk is a fundamental step in making loan decisions. It is a complex judgment. A wide range of variables affect a good investment: the characteristics of the property, the neighborhood’s assets. Despite the complexity of this decision, HOLC relied heavily on the racial makeup of neighborhoods.

As far back as 1909, the white real estate industry had decided that the presence of African Americans was a threat to property values. The HOLC system adopted this as truth. It used a pernicious “desirability index” created by the racist eugenics movement to rate an ethnic group’s creditworthiness. The presence of African Americans automatically earned a neighborhood a red rating.

Creditworthiness of the individual seeking the characteristics of the property, the variables affect a good investment: a complex judgment. A wide range of step in making loan decisions. It is a threat to property values. The presence of African Americans automatically earned a neighborhood a red rating.

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Susie Kaeser is a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights and former director of Reaching Heights. She serves on the national board of Parents for Public Schools.
JCU football player David Porter earns national award for community service

Andrea Simon

On Oct. 29, a large group gathered at John Carroll University (JCU) to surprise defensive lineman David Porter with an Allstate AFCA Good Works Team® trophy—a national award and a prestigious off-the-field honor.

Porter arrived at Don Shula Stadium under the assumption that he was attending a typical football practice in preparation for the weekend’s game against Muskingum University.

Shortly after the team warm-up, however, Coach Tom Arth asked the team to take a knee as representatives from Allstate and JCU; the Blue Streaks mascot, Lobo; and family (and) friends all stormed the field to surprise Porter.

The event was orchestrated to present Porter with his Allstate AFCA Good Works Team trophy, honoring his outstanding community service involvement.

Coach Arth kicked off the surprise with a few words about Porter’s strong leadership on and off the field, and Richard Prude, local Allstate agency owner, presented Porter with his trophy. Mike Cleary, emeritus executive director of the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics, was also present.

Porter is one of 22 college football players from across the country to be named to the 2015 Allstate AFCA Good Works Team. He is the first-ever JCU Blue Streak to be named to the team in the award’s 24-year history.

Andrea Simon is a representative for All-state’s AFCA Good Works Team program.

University Heights City Council Meeting highlights

OCTOBER 19, 2015
All council members were present.

Leaf season

Leaf pickup has begun. The same trucks are used for leaf collection and snow removal.

County public health services

Council approved the Cuyahoga County Board of Health 2016 contract for public health services in an amount not to exceed $35,073. This rate is calculated on a per-person rate of $3.92, which is unchanged from last year. The rate is standard for all cities that use the county board’s services, which include home visits to newborns, restaurant inspections, travel advisories, lead paint exposure and rabies control.

Sewer camera system

Council accepted the $9,800 quote from Jack Doheny Companies for a lateral sewer camera system. The goal is to find ways to keep stormwater from entering the sanitary sewer system. Councilman Mark Wiseman asked Ciuni to find out if the district was considering green methods for water abatement instead of just laying more pipe.

Sanitary and storm sewer systems

City Engineer Joe Ciuni, along with Service Director Jeff Pokorny, will be attending a meeting of the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District (NEORSD) to learn about the upcoming study of the sanitary and storm sewer systems for the Heights/Hilpark Interceptor sewer. The goal is to find ways to keep stormwater from entering the sanitary sewer system. Councilman Steven Sims expressed concern regarding the high cost of the external study, as well as the probable improvement costs that are likely to be borne by the local communities in spite of possible changes to the city’s legislation regarding women and minority business contracts.

Council committee meetings

The building committee will be meeting to discuss the issue of the backyard day camps. The civic affairs committee will meet this week to discuss possible changes to the city’s legislation regarding women and minority business contracts.

No observer was available to report on this meeting.

Look for earlier and often expanded postings of meeting summaries online at www.heightsobserver.org. See disclaimer on page 18.
Cleveland Heights voters approve tax increase; elect Carol Roe to city council

Kim Sergio Inglis

In the Nov. 3 general election, Cleveland Heights voters approved an additional 2.5 percent income tax (Issue 53), with 59.59 percent (7,573) voting in favor of the increase, and 40.41 percent (5,135) voting against it. The increase raises the city income tax rate from 2 percent to 2.5 percent.

Cleveland Heights voters elected three council members, out of a field of six candidates. They re-elected Mary Dunbar to CH City Council, and elected Kahil Seren and Carol Roe. Seren, who had previously been appointed to council (in February 2013) to serve out the term vacated by former council member Janine Boyd, was elected with 5,080 votes. Dunbar received 6,827 votes, and Roe garnered 5,083.

In University Heights, where three candidates were running for four open council seats, the results were: Michele Weiss, 1,332 votes; Pamela T. Cameron, 1,138 votes; and Steven Sims, 1,093 votes. Both Cameron and Sims currently serve on UH City Council. According to UH City Charter, UH City Council will have 30 days to fill the council vacancy, after Jan. 1, 2016. If it does not, the mayor is responsible for the appointment.

Heights voters also elected two candidates—James Posch, and Beverly R. Wright—to serve on the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Board of Education, out of a field of three.

Posch received 7,330 votes (41.34 percent), and Wright received 5,397 (30.40 percent), narrowly edging out candidate Katrina Simmons, who received 5,015 (28.25 percent) votes.

Cuyahoga County voters overwhelmingly approved renewal of Issue 8, the county tax on cigarettes which provides arts funding to county arts programs and organizations, including many based here in the Heights. Issue 8 passed with 75.46 percent of the vote.

Election results for Heights candidates and issues are as follows:

**Issue 53:** 7,573 (59.59 percent) for / 5,135 (40.41 percent) opposed

**CH City Council** (*three elected)*:
- Mary Dunbar - 6,827 (67.67 percent)
- "*Carol Roe* - 5,643 (52.78 percent)
- Kahil Seren - 5,080 (50.47 percent)
- Julie Love - 3,532 (33.54 percent)
- T. Nadas - 2,380 (21.42 percent)
- Keba Sylva - 2,350 (21.93 percent)

**UH City Council** (*three elected; four open seats)*:
- "*Michele Weiss* - 1,332 (37.38 percent)
- "*Pamela T. Cameron* - 1,138 (31.94 percent)
- "*Steven Sims* - 1,093 (30.68 percent)

**CH-UH BOE** (*two elected)*:
- "*James Posch* - 7,330 (41.34 percent)
- "*Beverly R. Wright* - 5,397 (30.40 percent)
- Katrina Simmons - 5,015 (28.25 percent)

To view a complete list of election results, visit the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections website, www.boe.cuyahogacounty.us.

Kim Sergio Inglis is editor-in-chief of the Heights Observer. She lives in the Shaker Farm Historic District in Cleveland Heights.

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Elected officials comment on Nov. 3 results

**Andrea C. Turner**

On Nov. 3, Cleveland Heights voters approved Issue 53—raising the city’s income tax to 2.25 percent, from 2 percent—with 59.59 percent (7,573) voting in favor. The ordinance goes into effect on Jan. 1, 2016, to support general municipal functions and replace revenue lost through cuts by the State of Ohio.

Cleveland Heights Mayor Dennis Wilcox, who did not seek re-election, stated, “I am thankful to the city’s voters for passing Issue 53. It’s gratifying to know people understand the issue and are willing to invest in our future. This is a victory for our city and for the people here.

The city can continue to provide the quality of services that citizens desire.”

Wilcox added, “Council still has its task to keep the tax base through business development and housing.

Wilcox’s term expires Dec. 31; he announced in late July that he would not run for re-election. He has served four consecutive four-year terms on council, and was elected president of council—mayor of Cleveland Heights—in 2014. In Cleveland Heights, city council members elect the city council president.

Mary Dunbar, an incumbent Cleveland Heights City Council member, received the largest share of the vote—26.17 percent—in her successful bid for re-election.

“Voters with passionate political views played an active role in the city council election this year as has been the case in the past,” said Dunbar. “My personal view is that, at the municipal level of government, we are mostly dealing with ensuring the most cost-effective basic services we can work to meet the needs of the community, including police, fire, EMS, road repairs, and leaf pickup, removal of snow from roadways, recreational programs, and so on. These should not be particularly partisan issues.”

Wilcox added, “Passage of Issue 53 was far more important than my candidacy. Passing this issue was imperative to maintaining basic city services and financial stability. Our firefighters made an amazing commitment to the campaign; they took a lot of their own personal time to make the case to voters, going door-to-door, serving on phone banks and much more. I have always been impressed by the dedication of our firefighters—now more than ever.”

Carol Roe, newly elected to Cleveland Heights City Council, received the second largest share of the votes, 22.78 percent, behind Dunbar, and ahead of Kahil Seren, who garnered 19.47 percent. Seren has served on council since February 2015, when he was appointed to fill the seat vacated by Janine Boyd upon her election to the Ohio State legislature.

“I found campaigning for city council exhilarating,” said Roe. “I learned so much from studying the issues to be prepared for candidate forums and interacting with voters. I was thrilled by my win, but also humbled by the number of people who helped me. One of my goals is to look for ways to enhance communication between our citizens and government, so that we may together move the city forward.”

In University Heights, where three candidates ran for four open council seats, voters elected newcomer Michele Weiss and incumbents Pamela T. Cameron and Steven Sims. According to the city charter, University Heights City Council will have 30 days to fill the council vacancy, after Jan. 1, 2016. If it does not, the mayor is responsible for the appointment. Council began accept ing letters of interest and resumes to fill the council vacancy beginning Nov. 6, with a deadline for applying was Nov. 19.

In addition to council members, Heights voters elected two new members to the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Board of Educa tion: James Posch and Beverly R. Wright. Both Posch and Wright were elected to four-year terms.

Board members Eric Coble and Nancy Pepper did not run for re-election; each served two four-year terms since being elected in 2007.

Posch, who garnered the most votes (41.34 percent), thanked the community for its support: “This was a big win and we worked really hard. But the real work is ahead of us. We have many challenges to address, but we have many things going for us. We’re in the middle of a world-class facilities upgrade project and our superintendent is a great leader. I’m looking forward to serving and working hard to bring excellence to this district—excel lence our students and community deserve.”

Andrea C. Turner is the Heights Observer e-news editor.
Cleveland Heights City Council
Meeting highlights

OCTOBER 19, 2015
Council Member Mary Dunbar was absent.

Public comments
Home-based businesses: Jason Boarde of Yorkshire Road, owner of Burn Toast Farms and Studio, asked council to consider revising the city code to reflect current values of the community regarding home-based businesses. He referred to “regressive” sections of the city code that prohibit business in a yard and that require hours, employees, parking and other aspects. Resident Steve Warner, who would like to start a home-schooling support and tutoring business in his home, also asked council to look at the current rules. He feels that respectful, unique home businesses could contribute to community pride and image.

Boulevard Neighbors: On behalf of Boulevard Neighbors, Paul Greenberg of Euclid Heights Boulevard commended the city for street improvements and cleanup of debris in that neighborhood. He also thanked the fire department for swift containment of a house fire on Colindale Drive. However, he pointed out that 3344 Beachwood Ave., long slated for demolition, still stands.

Liquor license opposed
Council passed a motion opposing an application to the Ohio Department of Liquor Control for a new permit for Art Patkauem, 2603 Noble Road. Council Member Joan Stein, who made the motion, noted that Police Chief Jeffrey Robertson objects because the neighborhood has been saturated with nuisances and authorized abatement. Except for making the ordinance easier to understand, thanked Law Director Jim Juliano and his staff for their input; noted that neighborhood residents are sensitive to the number of businesses selling alcohol there.

NeuroWave loan
Council authorized a second amendment to the Commercial Revolving Loan Agreement with NeuroWave Systems Inc. The city had authorized an addendum to this agreement on April 3, 2015, which extended the term of the agreement from 60 months to 84 months in exchange for a personal guarantee on the loan of $100,000 by NeuroWave’s chief officer. The company now requests that the agreement be amended again so that payment for the balance due may extend over the term of 10 years, rather than a single lump sum, in exchange for payment of principal and interest at an interest rate of 1 percent. The loan would no longer be a forgivable loan.

County public health services
Council renewed an agreement with the Cuyahoga County General Health District for public health services to the city and its residents at a fee of $180,794 for one year, commencing Jan. 1, 2016. These services have been in place for many years. The cost will be the same as the previous three years.

CBG funds
Council authorized submission of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding application for the year beginning Jan. 1, 2016. Details may be found at www.clevelandheights.com concerning the plans to disperse $14 million in 2016.

HRRC agreement
Council authorized an agreement with the Home Repair Resource Center (HRRC), a nonprofit corporation 125, the use of HOME Funds to administer its down-payment assistance loan program. Up to $10,000 will be made available to loans.

Look for earlier and often expanded online versions online at www.heightsobserver.org. See discliner on page 18.

“Through his leadership, Jeff has brought many areas of the community together,” said Richard Stewart, president of the FutureHeights Board of Directors. “Most recently, he’s been involved with the formation of the Heights Community Development Alliance, a group of residents and merchants who are working to market the city and fill storefront vacancies. His leadership will be missed.”

“At $4,000 a dot, I was tickled pink,” said Dan Mather, who has been a realtor in the city for 26 years. “We’re seeing a lot of upside.”

Jeff Caryell continued on page 1

“Beyond the beautiful exterior, the house has potential for being old,” saidyper Randy, a local developer. “It’s a great opportunity.”

Jeff Caryell continued on page 1
Future Heights takes on new grassroots economic development effort as official program

Jinida Dobu

The Future Heights Board of Directors voted in October to make a newly formed Cleveland Heights Community and Economic Development group official.

The group, the Heights Community Development Alliance (HCDA), was formed out of an effort to gather merchants, institutions and residents in the Cedar Lee area to discuss ways to strengthen relationships to promote economic vitality and quality of life in the business district.

HCDA is working with a citywide focus, but is initially concentrating in the Cedar Lee Business District to develop successful programs that can then be rolled out to other areas.

HCDA will initially focus on three core areas: cross-promoting Cleveland Heights events; marketing Cleveland Heights to outsiders and residents; and economic development, primarily around commercial vacancies.

The organizational priorities of HCDA fall right in line with the mission of FutureHeights and its reason for being, making the decision to designate HCDA an official program of FutureHeights an easy one, said Richard Stewart, Future Heights board president.

"The more engaged citizens working toward a common goal, the brighter the future for Cleveland Heights and University Heights have, so we see this new program as a strong step in that direction and toward fulfilling our mission," Stewart said.

A deejay will perform at the BottleHouse Brewery, 5 p.m., and the Wine Spot will offer live music after 8 p.m. Classical Revolution will perform at the Cedar Lee Special Improvement District, 5–7 p.m. Many Holiday Stroll details and dates can be found at www.cedarlee.org.

Both the Coventry Village and Cedar Fairmount districts will offer free gift wrapping for shoppers, 12–4 p.m. The Coventry gift wrapping location had not been determined at press time, but signs will be posted along the street on Dec. 12, informing shoppers where to go. In Cedar Fairmount, members of the Roxboro PTA, who will be accepting donations, will wrap gifts from noon to 4 p.m., at 12433 Cedar Road (the space formerly occupied by Four and Twenty Mercantile).

Kelley Robinson, executive director of the Cedar Lee Special Improvement District, said she loves the event. "It promotes good cheer in our community," she said. "People can gather with their friends and family and explore the unique vibe in each of our business districts."

Two Holiday Stroll details and events were still to come, at press time. For updates, visit the websites of the three participating business districts: www.cedarfairstreet.org, www.cedarlee.org and www.coven-
ytwivillage.org.

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. He is on the board of FutureHeights, and is co-chair of the Heights Observer Advisory Committee.

A program of FutureHeights

"Everything we do is for Cleveland Heights and University Heights," noted Stewart, "but Cleveland Heights is the larger suburb and where (the most) business districts are located. It makes sense to initially focus efforts on areas that attract residents and sustain business owners."

The third area of concentration — commercial vacancies — is of particular interest to FutureHeights, said Executive Director Deanna Bremer Fisher. A recent FutureHeights study reported 15 commercial vacancies in Cleveland Heights’s Cedar Lee Business District alone.

"FutureHeights has long had programs targeted at supporting our local economy—a shop local program, Best of the Heights, the Heights Observer— and has conducted two storefront vacancy studies in Cleveland Heights, " she said. "Our mission is to promote a vibrant and sustainable future for the Heights, and we see the vitality of our business districts as a key part of achieving this goal. The goals of HCDA are in alignment with these strategic goals."

The group was born out of an initial gathering that took place at Cleveland Heights eateries New Heights Grill in May, which was initiated by Cleveland Heights resident Julius C. Dorsey Jr., president of Dorsey & Company, Strategic Consultants to Management.

After that, a working steering committee formed to develop a vision and mission, set organizational priorities and areas of concentration, and decide what the group would stand for.

The steering committee has been meeting weekly since the spring, and the group has presented updates to the community twice since.

Aside from Bremer Fisher and Dorsey, other subcommittee members are: Charley Bach, owner of PC Handymen and a Dorsey & Company associate; Sheryl Banks, marketing director for Heights Libraries; Suri Basu, director of community-building programs for FutureHeights; Rachael Berstein, executive director of Heights Arts; Tanisha Blythe, city manager for the City of Cleveland Heights; Jeff Coryell, a member of Cleveland Heights City Council; David Dale of Dorsey & Company; Jinida Dobu of Dorsey & Company; Lisa Dunn, owner of Revive; Adam Faller, owner of New Heights Grill; Karen Greelas of Sanctuary by Joyce; Karen Kearney, an intern with FutureHeights; Deanna Necitillo of HERBCO; Joy Roller of WCPN; Zoraba Ross, principal of Cleveland Heights High School; and John Zagara, owner of Zagara’s Marketplace and president of the Cedar Lee Special Improvement District.

As he looks back on what prompted him to call the initial gathering last spring, Dorsey credits his professional inclination to explore competitive advantage in order to win—as he counsels his clients.

"As I walk my Cedar Lee neighborhood," Dorsey said, "it occurred to me that we have a lot to be proud of just along the Lee Road corridor alone—not to mention all of the assets in the city, like Cain Park, Coventry, Cedar Lee Theatre, Heights High, and so much more.

"There’s no reason why the residents, business owners and anchor institutions can’t use their collective voice to ring the praises of Cedar Lee and the city and tell others to shop, visit or plant roots here, all while improving the quality of life in our community."

HCDA program leadership has not yet been named, but Stewart sees great things for the city to come from the program in the long run. "Robust economic development is critical to the long-term viability of any suburb," Stewart said. "It’s our goal to partner with the city’s efforts to build storefronts, attract business and build a tax base."

The group’s communitywide HCDA meeting is planned for Jan. 20 at New Heights Grill.

For more information and updates, visit https://www.facebook.com/HeightsCDA.
Residents participate in survey on future of Severance

Vincent Reddy

A preliminary tally of responses to a survey undertaken in association with the recent Future Heights community forum on the future of Severance Town Center showed results that most will not find surprising.

Of the 318 completing the survey, about one in 10 reported having attended the forum, and a slightly higher number said they watched the video of the event that is viewable at www.futureheights.org. Nearly 80 percent reported going to Severance at least monthly (42 percent reported going there at least weekly), and, though the focus of both the forum and the survey was the future of the retail center inside Severance Circle, both were set in the context of the entire district, which includes the struggling center and the mostly viable properties outside the circle.

More than 90 percent said they went to Severance to shop, and more than 70 percent cited government services as reasons for going there. Forty-one percent reported going there to shop for groceries at Dave’s, and smaller percentages of respondents reported going there to eat, for medical services, or to bank.

More than nine of every 10 participants lived within a 10-minute drive of Severance, with about half of those living within five minutes. Seventy-one percent agreed that the part of Severance inside Severance Circle was critical to the community as a whole, and all but a handful thought it was at least somewhat critical. More than half of those taking the survey thought the vitality of Severance was critical to the community as a whole, and all but a handful thought it was at least somewhat critical.

In response to the question of whether the part of Severance inside Severance Circle should be reconfigured to better fit into the character of Cleveland Heights, 69 percent answered in the affirmative, though more than one in four expressed uncertainty in that regard. Fewer than 6 percent of respondents did not see the importance of Severance as a revenue generator for the city.

Most survey participants—91 percent—were in agreement with the idea of including planning for Severance in the city’s master planning process, which is currently underway. Two-thirds thought public investment in partnership with a private developer would be essential for creating a positive outcome for the district, though close to 20 percent expressed uncertainty on that question.

Three open-ended questions were also included in the survey. The first queried participants on what they believed were the most promising ideas for all or part of the Severance continued on page 11.
When a friend challenged Bill Jones to hike a portion of Spain’s Camino de Santiago last summer, he utilized his membership in Judson’s Smart Living at Home program to give him a leg up. Bill and his wife, Susan, became members because they needed home care support for Susan. Eventually she moved to Judson’s Bruening Health Center, where Bill visits her every day with their dog, Oliver.

With Susan’s healthcare needs taken care of, Bill focused on nurturing his own wellness. With the help of Judson wellness staff he developed a fitness program that simulated the trail in Spain. Bill left in August and spent several weeks on the trail—about 165 miles overall.

“Judson inspired me to take charge of my own health, with a focus on prevention. I have a plan in place to get the care I need when I need it.”

“Whatever is decided for the future of Severance will determine whether I remain living in Cleveland Heights,” wrote one respondent. “I am open to possibilities and want to be trusting and optimistic, but need to experience thoughtful, strong, intelligent proposals fused with the commitment, honesty and integrity for carrying them out.”

Vince Reddy is a FutureHeights board member and a 19-year resident of Cleveland Heights.

“You’re never too young to begin planning for your future. Why wait for a crisis?”

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“Judson inspired me to take charge of my own health, with a focus on prevention. I have a plan in place to get the care I need when I need it.”

Take charge of your health and wellness. Join Judson Smart Living at Home today. Call (216) 791-3211 for more information.

Visit www.judsonsmartliving.org and click Smart Living at Home.
The Liberty Oaks

Christopher Roy

North Park Boulevard between Coventry Road and Martin Luther King Jr. Drive is popular with commuters heading into Cleveland. There are no stoplights on this stretch of road, allowing drivers to quickly get to the hill that descends from the Heights down into University Circle. Even at 35 mph, it’s easy to notice the tall oak trees that line the south side of North Park Boulevard. To see the nearly 100-year-old pieces of history that lie at the base of a number of these trees, however, one must exit the car and take a closer look to find the cement stones with little bronze plaques, each bearing an individual man’s name. Who are these men, and why are they being honored on the side of a busy road in Cleveland Heights?

Following the armistice that ended World War I on Nov. 11, 1918, American Legion posts, garden clubs, schoolchildren, communities and families around the country planted trees to honor fallen soldiers. In an August 1918 issue of American Forestry, editor Percival Sheldon Ridsdale praised the concept of “trees for the dead,” stating that the fallen soldiers “are to have living monuments. Their memory will literally be kept green.” He claimed that these “Victory Oaks” would doubtless be preferable to “marble monuments.” He noted that “there will be an oak tree planted there for each soldier who makes the supreme sacrifice. It will bear a bronze tablet inscribed with his name and military record. The trees will be, in their very greenness and robust strength, reminders of the youth who gave their vigor to win the war.”

Greater Clevelanders lost little time in making Ridsdale’s vision a reality. They mobilized to such a forceful extent that by Memorial Day 1919, the planting of a long chain of “Liberty Oaks” was already underway. In fact, the plan for Cleveland’s memorial actually began before the war ended. Cleveland Councilman Jerry R. Zmunt, in a July 7, 1918 article in the Plain Dealer, noted: “This is a splendid way of honoring our boys. It is particularly fitting that one of our finest boulevards in the city be chosen. The naming of trees after our dead heroes is the best tribute we can pay them, and their names will thus be perpetuated in a living thing.”

Under the leadership of Zmunt, Cleveland Director of Parks and Public Property Floyd E. Waite, and City Forester Harry G. Hyatt, a path was selected. On July 15, 1918, Ordinance 47790 was passed: “relative to changing North Park Boulevard, running through Amberly Park, Rockefeller Park and Shaker Heights Park from Cedar to Center (Warrensville) Road, to ‘Liberty Row’.” Liberty Row was to begin at Gordon Park by Lake Erie; move down what had been Lower Boulevard through Gordon, Rockefeller, and Wade parks; wind up Amberly Drive into Cleveland Heights; and then continue along North Park Boulevard through Cleveland Heights and Shaker Heights. This path would take advantage of Cleveland’s east side chain of parkland. Additional memorials would be planted and installed later in other areas, including oaks around Sterling Playground at East 31st Street and St. Clair Avenue, and sycamores in front of the Tom Johnson monument on Public Square.

Almost 100 years later, a surprising number of North Park’s Liberty Oaks and plaques are intact. You can also see quite a few along Shelburne Road in Shaker Heights, southeast of Shelburne’s intersection with North Park Boulevard, near Horsehoe Lake. Unfortunately, the trees and plaques along Martin Luther King Jr. Drive have fared less well, succumbing to theft and sudden encounters with our control automobiles. Nevertheless, the spirit of the oaks and the majesty they bring to the area is uncompromised. For many years, the American Legion Glenville Post 130 decorated the plaques. On patriotic holidays, flags are still placed by at least some of the remaining markers.

The City of Cleveland Heights has installed signage to draw attention to the Liberty Row Oaks, which are located in Cleveland Heights, Shaker Heights and Cleveland. To start, two signs will be installed along North Park Boulevard in Cleveland Heights. Additional signs may be installed at a later date, and the hope is that signs can be placed in all three cities in which the Liberty Row Oaks are located, educating the public about the legacy of these oaks and their importance in remembering fallen World War I soldiers.

Christopher Roy is a former president of the Cleveland Heights Historical Society.
Local teacher realizes dream with purchase of summer camp

Bob Rosenbaum

Cleveland Heights native Joe Mendes has left his teaching job in the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District to realize a lifelong dream to run a summer camp. He is the new owner of Camp Firebird-Roosevelt on Leeves Lake, 90 miles south of here.

Many Heights residents have fond memories of the overnight camp, which for years has hosted a steady stream of children from the area. But Mendes will have his work cut out for him—attendance has dwindled in the past decade under an absentee owner.

Mendes is undaunted. “That’s why I was able to afford to buy it,” he said, adding that he’s been able to assemble a team of expert advisors to guide him.

The deal was struck quickly. Mendes learned on Sept. 9 that the camp was for sale, after the unexpected death of owner Andrew Schwarz—who turned out to be a childhood friend of Mendes from their own shared camp experience in northern Wisconsin. The transaction was done by early November.

“In every way, this was just meant to be,” Mendes said. “When I first went to look at the property, I was moved on. I didn’t expect at this point that it would ever happen. I’m as surprised as anyone.”

The co-ed camp will cost $900 a week next summer, and campers can attend for two, four, six or eight weeks. A ninth week will be offered for families with children who aren’t yet ready to attend on their own.

The camp’s focus will be on leadership, citizenship and service. “Camp is fun, but it’s more than that,” Mendes said. “Its activities are a context for how to get along in the world—how to be independent, make healthy relationships, resolve conflicts and develop a sense of greater good.”

Cleveland Heights resident Bob Rosenbaum is co-chairman of the Heights Observer Advisory Committee, and is responsible for its advertising sales and market development.
Heights barbershoppers give back

As Cleveland Heights City Council Member Melissa Yasinow drove to work on the morning of Friday, Nov. 6, her mind was on her grandfather. Stuck in a hospital, hooked to machines, what would cheer him up? Blind for several years, he couldn’t watch a Cavs game or enjoy a new book. What would bring some joy to this beloved old man’s day?

Meanwhile, across town, Cleveland Heights High School musicians were sitting in class, exhausted from weeks of intense rehearsals for the musical “Grease” and gearing up for a weekend of four full-length performances. If anyone had asked them to find an extra couple of hours in their day, the students would have thought they were crazy.

But then Yasinow was struck with an idea: Her Papa may not be able to see, but he could definitely hear. After a few quick phone calls, and the willing approval of school administrators, four members of the nationally recognized Heights Barbershoppers were pulled from their classes to rehearse for another type of show altogether.

It was all to honor their hero, James Yasinow, a 1949 Heights graduate and a member of the CHHS Alumni Hall of Fame. Yasinow didn’t participate in any of the Cleveland East Suburbanaires, he wanted to encourage the school’s vocal music director, Craig McGaughey, to start an a cappella barbershop group. But McGaughey was busy and the musicians were fully booked already, so he put off Yasinow’s repeated phone calls for weeks on end. Finally broken by Yasinow’s persistence, the Suburbanaires were invited in for a visit.

Current high school senior Graham Ball described the visit, a story that has been passed down as part of the lore of the Heights music department. “Picture four bald, old white guys walking into the fourth-floor music room, filled with mostly black teenagers. Everyone looked around like, ‘Really?’ But then they started singing, and the students were mesmerized by what they could do.” Inspired by the intricacies of mixed harmonies, McGaughey and the students quickly established the Heights Barbershoppers, who have been guided and supported by the Suburbanaires ever since. Yasinow’s group has provided scholarships for students to attend Harmony Camp at The Ohio State University, and the two groups have performed in each other’s shows.

So, Ball and fellow Barbershoppers Maurice Powers and Orion Brock, both seniors, and sophomore Grant Heineman were eager to give back, and spent Friday rehearsing some songs they had heard Yasinow sing. By 2 p.m. that afternoon, the impromptu quartet was on its way to Ahuja Medical Center in Beachwood for the big reveal. Melissa Yasinow, her husband, Matt, and her aunt, Debbie Yasinow, wheeled an unsuspecting James Yasinow out to the lobby where the boys gathered in front of him. He couldn’t see them and it wasn’t until they started singing that a big smile spread over his face. “I watched his whole face light up,” said Melissa. When she told him who was there, he shook his head in wonder and said, “Well, how about that!”

Nurses and other patients gathered around to enjoy the show, which comprised five songs, including “Coney Island Baby,” which the boys had learned just that afternoon as a special tribute. Yasinow sang along, tapping his feet, tubes attached to an IV pole at his side. [To view the video, visit youtube.com/watch?v=lfu97eE0Pjo] “It felt really good to be able to make him so happy,” said Ball. “It was one small way to thank him for all he’s given to us.”

Kheshia King was working on the floor that day and said the performance moved her to tears. “This needs to happen in the hospital more often,” she said. “Music and laughter are the best medicine.”

Yasinow agreed. “I think music is a great way to enhance your life. Even if you’re just an audience member.”

Kristy Dietrich Gallagher is a graduate of the Heights school and a former Coventry School teacher. She is active in the Fairfax PTA, and is proud to raise her two sons in this community. She blogs at http://kristygallagher.wordpress.com.

Krisy Dietrich Gallagher

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Disciples Christian Church invites community to live Nativity on Dec. 13

Ronald Werman

To help everyone get into the Christ-mas spirit, and as a gift to the community, Disciples Christian Church is hosting a live Nativity on Sunday, Dec. 13, 2–5 p.m.

Attendees will see the Holy Family, and have an audience with King Herod. There will also be wise men and shepherds, as well as live animals, including a camel.

Afterward, guests are invited to listen to music performed by members of the church’s music ministry, and enjoy refreshments.

Disciples Christian Church is located at 3663 Mayfield Road (at Yellowstone Road, across from Severance Town Center) in Cleveland Heights.

For more information, call 216-382-5344 or visit www.discipleschristian.org.

Ronald Werman is an elder at, and communications chairperson of, Disciples Christian Church.

Noble Presbyterian welcomes new pastor

Joanne Westin

Noble Road Presbyterian Church (NRPC) has announced that Meredith Anne White has been called to serve as its new pastor. In a way, White is returning home—she grew up in Cleveland Heights, and even attended Girl Scouts at the church. She is one of those rare individuals who has successfully managed to make the transition from east side to west side, and now lives with her partner, Susan Strohm, in Lakewood.

White earned a B.A. in peace and conflict studies from Kent State University in 1996, and received a Master of Divinity from Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary in 2003. Underscoring her versatility, White has worked as a church secretary at Fairmount Presbyterian, coordinator of a women’s center, a Hebrew tutor, and a chaplain intern in a hospital. She served for seven years as organizing pastor for the Phoenix Project New Church Development, a storefront church in Lakewood that provides a safe space for worship for people “on the fringe of society.”

Most recently, White has held the position of praise and worship leader for the Sunday evening service at Old Stone Church in Cleveland. She plays the guitar during worship and joins other NRPC musicians to accompany hymns. She has been preaching at NRPC since the previous pastor left, and is very willing to roll up her sleeves and jump right in to help with the church’s multiple ministries.

According to parishioners, White is warm and compassionate, and fits in well with the longstanding progressive activist spirit at NRPC, the first open and welcoming Presbyterian church in northern Ohio.

Joanne Westin is a retired biology instructor at CWRU, a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights, and 35-year member of the Noble Road Presbyterian Church.
ShopCLE hits streets—misses actual target

Lee Batdorff

Each Wednesday for the past few months, ShopCLE, a free “shopper” publication produced by the Plain Dealer and Cleveland.com, has literally hit the streets in Cleveland Heights. It’s raising ire among residents because many copies, wrapped in thin plastic bags, don’t land on private property, perhaps violating the city’s littering law.

Residents have complained to city administrators and council members, saying the papers sit for days or weeks on streets and treetops.

Section 577.09 of the littering ordinance states: “No person shall throw or deposit any commercial or noncommercial handbill in or upon any sidewalk, street or other public property.”

On Nov. 2, residents Gail Larson and Carla Rautenberg complained about the haphazard distribution of ShopCLE to Cleveland Heights City Council. “If these bagged papers are not picked up and are carried into the sewers, the plastic of the bags will eventually break down and pollute Lake Erie, our drinking water,” Rautenberg said.

Mayor Dennis Wilcox asked city staff if the Plain Dealer could be cited for littering. City Law Director Jim Juliano replied: “The delivery standard for ShopCLE is to place them in a home’s driveway closer than the sidewalk,” McBrade said. “It is silly that they are landing in the streets.”

An inquiry to the Plain Dealer was referred to Cathy McBrade, who said she is president of Brunswick-based AOZ Trucking, but whose LinkedIn profile says she is depot manager at Plain Dealer Publishing. Talking from an office phone at the Plain Dealer, McBrade said it’s a new product and acknowledged “bumps in the road.”

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She said AOZ hires subcontractors who do the delivery “[Because] the deliverers are independent contractors, we don’t tell them exactly how to do their job,” she said. “We are addressing each complaint swiftly. We take the delivery of ShopCLE seriously.”

By mid-November there were some signs of change. Writing on Facebook, Gail Draxton Larson, who lives in the Monticello neighborhood, said one delivery driver told her they had been instructed to drive into each driveway to ensure papers landed on private property. But spotters the following week found other instances where delivery accuracy had not improved.

The issue likely isn’t limited to Cleveland Heights. Cleveland.com’s online media kit says ShopCLE is distributed “to 645,000 Cleveland-area non-subscriber households.” Streets in University Heights have been littered as well.

Some Cleveland Heights residents are working with the Northeast Ohio chapter of the Sierra Club to address the concern about papers entering the sewers. There have been active discussions on the Nextdoor.com social media site; and a public Facebook group (facebook.com/groups/shopcle/) is documenting complaints.

To opt out of receiving ShopCLE at your address, call 888-440-4216 or visit www.shopgreatercleveland.com.

Lee Batdorff is a Cleveland Heights resident.
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Cleveland Heights-University Heights Board of Education

Meeting highlights

OCTOBER 20, 2015
Board Member Eric Coble was absent.

Educational services update
Assistant Superintendent Felisha Gould provided an educational services update. District enrollment. District enrollment has decreased by 500 students, or 8.4 percent, in the past five years. The high school has lost 12.5 percent of its students. Grafton, Fairfax and Oxford elementary schools have lost 20 percent, 17 percent, and 12 percent, respectively. Boulevard and Roxboro elementary school enrollments have increased while Noble and Canterbury elementary schools have remained stable. With the closing of Wiley middle school, Monticello and Roxboro middle school enrollments have increased. Across the district, kindergarten enrollment has dropped 17 percent. Sixth grade has the lowest enrollment of all grades. Student who leave the district often do so after kindergarten, fifth grade, eighth grade, or ninth grade. The percentage of enrolled minority students has changed little. Superintendent Talsa Dixon stated that schools nationally are having trouble keeping students engaged and that schools nationally are having trouble keeping students engaged. The percentage of students who leave the district often do so after kindergarten, fifth grade, eighth grade, or ninth grade.

Other indicators: The district's graduation rate improved in 2013-14, and is in line with the state average on the five-year graduation rate. ACT scores and college-ready assessment results are below state averages. However, the district's Advanced Placement test scores compare well with districts around the state, indicating college readiness among students testing in that category. Dixon commented that students need a more-solid foundation in math before reaching high school.

State accountability results: The state is in line with the state average on the five-year graduation rate. ACT scores is in line with the state average on the five-year graduation rate. ACT scores and college-ready assessment results are below state averages. However, the district's Advanced Placement test scores compare well with districts around the state, indicating college readiness among students testing in that category. Dixon commented that students need a more-solid foundation in math before reaching high school.

Field trips
The board approved the following field trips:
• Heights High Students of Promise to Washington, D.C., scheduled for Nov. 5-7.
• Heights High girls’ varsity basketball team to the National Basketball Tournament, Newark, NJ, scheduled for Dec. 27-28.
• Monticello Middle School eighth graders to Washington, D.C., scheduled for May 11-13.

Gifted programs
Toia Robinson, gifted coordinator, gave an update on enrollment in gifted programs. The identification of gifted students is up, but enrollment is down. Ohio policy identifies gifted students based on test scores, not other criteria. Not all of the students identified at the elementary level are enrolling in classes, based on data from the 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years.

Facilities Accountability Committee
The board approved a contract with Moody Nolan as architects for architectural services related to the reconstruction of Monticello and Roxboro middle schools.

Change order for Wiley
The board approved a change order for the Wiley enabling projects, with a total value of $282,153. This is one of the last series of additional supporting programs for the high school’s move to Wiley.

Calendar
Saturday, December 5th
Cleveland Bazaar on Coventry
10:00AM - 8:00PM
1854 Coventry Road & Grog Shop Cleveland Heights
Cleveland Bazaar is North East Ohio’s longest running handmade show.

For more information:
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Twitter: @clevelandbazaar
Email: clevelandbazaar@comcast.net
Website: www.clevelandbazaar.com
Heights High student to serve on philanthropic panel

The Jewish Federation of Cleveland has selected David Fleischer, a Heights High junior, to serve on the Saltzman Youth Panel. Fleischer is one of 40 students who will meet weekly this school year to learn about the Cleveland Jewish community’s contributions to the development of the Jewish community and share their stories of communal decision-making, philanthropy and community engagement.

Joy Henderson

CH-UH school district hosts partnership event for businesses and community organizations

The Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District hosted businesses, community organizations and partners for a Celebration of a New Era of CH-UH Schools event on Tuesday, Oct. 20, at Heights High.

Each school in the district was represented by the principal and two students, including Heights High students in early college, art, music and career tech programs. They shared the schools’ programming and successes with businesses and community organizations, and told their stories of development and future aspirations.

Superintendent Talisa Dixon also spoke about the district’s facilities plan and its new strategic plan, and goals for the future.

Dixon and Desiree Caliguire-Maier, the districtwide coordinator of business and community partnerships and enrichment programs, recognized five organizations for their key contributions to the development of the strategic plan, and ongoing support of districtwide programming.

Dixon presented recognition plaques to representatives from the Cleveland Clinic, John Carroll University, Lake Erie Ink, Reaching Heights and the Cleveland Orchestra—all of whom provided important insight during the strategic planning process.

Additionally, the district received forward-thinking and supportive proposals from the College of Engineering of Cleveland State University and the Cleveland Museum of Art on Oct. 20, to leverage school programs and student development.

With this event and other ongoing initiatives, the CH-UH City School District is placing an emphasis on creating and strengthening business and community partnerships. The district is seeking to enhance its connections and collaboration with community partners, and expand and improve resources, communities, labor and markets.

“This is a new era for not only the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District but also for public educational organizations in the U.S. in which visionary yet effective operational and collaborative partnerships with businesses, higher academic institutions, organizations, and nonprofits are key in order to provide an engaging, yet more importantly, challenging education for students and generations to come of labor and markets,” said Caliguire-Maier.

Scott Wortman is the coordinator of communications for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District.
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Future oncologists research cure for cancer

Joy Henderson

Nicole Miller, Heights High anatomy and physiology teacher, had a deceptively simple question for her students: How will you cure cancer?

The assignment asked students to research a specific gene that is prone to mutation and the resulting cancer that occurs because of the mutation. The project also asked the budding research oncologists to describe current treatments and design their own treatment and possible cure. The students then presented their research for peer review, in front of their classmates. “I was very impressed with the students’ level of focus, engagement and perseverance on this project,” said Miller, who is co-advisor of Heights High’s Science Olympiad club. “They were constantly asking questions and digging for more information.”

Some of the gene mutations and resulting cancers targeted by the students were: BRCA gene (breast cancer and ovarian cancer), KIT gene (gastrointestinal cancer, leukemia and lymphoma), APC gene (colon cancer), and RB1 gene (retinoblastoma).

The assignment required students to apply their knowledge about cells, DNA and genetics—information that was covered earlier in the school year and in the biology prerequisite.

Many students in the class have expressed an interest in pursuing a career in the medical field. “Science is so cool,” said Miller. “It is fun to see students drawn into the excitement of scientific research.”

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

Heights High demolition nears completion

Joy Henderson

The demolition phase of the Cleveland Heights High School building, at the corner of Cedar and Lee roads, is nearly complete. External demolition, including the science wing, was completed in October, and the interior selective demolition will be complete by the end of December. Inside the building, most of the interior walls will be eliminated to accommodate modern programming needs. However, the original red quarry tile on the hallway floors will be re-used, as will some of the original brick that was removed, and several external stone architectural elements.

Many truckloads of fill-dirt have been used to fill the basement areas (tunnels) under the former science wing. New foundations were recently installed, marking the start of construction on the new additions to the original 1926 building.

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

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CH-UH school district selects architect for middle school renovations

Scott Wortman

The Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District has selected Moody Nolan as the architectural firm to handle the design of the Monticello and Roxboro middle school renovations.

Moody Nolan, which has received numerous awards for past design projects, was selected from a group of four firms that were interviewed by a committee of district representatives on Oct. 21. The CH-UH Board of Education officially awarded the contract to Moody Nolan at its Nov. 2 meeting.

“We are excited to work with Moody Nolan for our middle school renovations,” said Talisa Dixon, CH-UH superintendent. “It became evident very quickly during the interview process that they possessed the experience and the expertise that we were looking for when considering the building designs. Moody Nolan has an impressive track record of working with schools like ours, and we are certain they will deliver top-notch designs for us.”

Moody Nolan has done extensive work in designing facilities for other school districts and academic institutions. Most recently, the firm designed the new building for the Cleveland School of the Arts in University Circle and a new facility for New Albany-Plain Local Schools. That background gives the firm expertise in designing flexible, engaging and high-performing academic environments.

“We are deeply honored to be part of the Cleveland Heights-University Heights school design team,” said Curt Moody, president and CEO of Moody Nolan. “We look forward to creating an exciting design that represents the school district and the community it serves. Our team brings a lot of enthusiasm to the project, as well as innovative ideas as we develop the right concept for Monticello and Roxboro middle schools. We feel very fortunate to have been selected for this project.”

Moody Nolan and the district have begun preliminary meetings to discuss the design of the middle school projects. The groups are planning to hold forums to gather input from community members, parents and students on the design process. More information will be disseminated once those forums have been scheduled.

Next, the district will conduct interviews to select a Construction Manager at Risk (CMR) for the middle schools project. Interviews were scheduled for mid-November.

The Monticello and Roxboro middle school renovations are slated to begin in 2017 following the completion of the Cleveland Heights High School project. The middle schools will move into the Wiley building swing space (the former Wiley Middle School) for two years until construction is completed in 2019.

Scott Wortman is the coordinator of communications for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District.
Heights Libraries earns top rating for seventh year

Sheryl Banks

For the seventh year in a row, the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library System has received the highest possible rating in Library Journal’s 2015 Index of Public Library Service.

Library Journal—a national publication with a circulation of 100,000 that reports library news, emphasizing public libraries—awards five-star rating to the top U.S. libraries each year.

Heights Libraries has earned five stars in seven out of the eight years that Library Journal has published the ratings, starting in 2008.

Libraries are categorized by yearly expenditure and rated on four criteria: circulation, visits, program attendance, and Internet terminal (public computer) use.

Heights Libraries circulation came in at 41 per capita, meaning that roughly 31 items were circulated for every resident in the Cleveland Heights-University Heights service area.

Visits per capita averaged 18.5 (down from 19.6 for 2014), program attendance averaged 1.3 (up from 1.2 in 2014), and public computer use held steady from 2014, at 7 per capita.

“We just passed a levy a year ago, but we never want to take our place in this community for granted, so we are absolutely delighted by the rating,” said Nancy Levin, Heights Libraries director. “These numbers make it clear that our community continues to need our services; that’s one of the reasons we decided to upgrade and expand our University Heights branch next year. All of our buildings are heavily used by customers of all ages, and they deserve a library that will continue to give five-star service.”

Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library Board

Meeting highlights

OCTOBER 19, 2015

Board member Susan Beatty was absent.

Room named to honor Grace F. Brody

On Dec. 21 at 7 p.m., the Lee Road Library children’s room will be named the Grace F. Brody Children’s Room in honor of Professor Brody, who taught at CWRU’s Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences for 20 years, and left a $500,000 bequest in support of her academic. She was the panda's child relationship. The children’s room will contain an early literacy space for language learning following for children ages 5 and under, and similar spaces will be in all of the branches. The public is invited to attend, and light refreshments will be served.

Sara Phillips to head the University Heights Library

Phillips had been the public services manager at the East Cleveland Public Library. Pam Spangler, the interim manager, will return to her position as youth services librarian at the University Heights Library.

Book Bike in the news

On Sept. 4, “NBC Nightly News” featured a segment on the rising popularity of book bikes. Heights Libraries Book Bike was shown in a photograph representing the Cleveland area.

Youth Services Associate Terraya Lewis talked about the book bike on a WINK7 Your World of Libraries program focused on literacy.

Librarian blogs successful

Sheryl Banks, marketing and community relations manager, presented the quarterly report for the website and social media. Although most statistics held steady, she noted a 24 percent drop in visits to the research and database areas. This drop seems to parallel the reduction in visits to the research and database areas.

September public service report highlights

• The annual staff development day was held Sept. 7.

• The local history series continued with a House History workshop on Sept. 10.

• Programming for both adults and children continues in the celebration of the 150th anniversary of Lewis Carroll’s “Alice in Wonderland.” An all-ages scavenger hunt, “The Hunt for the Snopek,” can be followed throughout the library.

• The circulation department issued the new eMedia cards as well as the “3 for Me” teen cards.

• The Friday morning Exploratory program returned to the Coventry Village Library with an immediate audience response.

• Youth Services Associate Terraya Lewis was invited to participate in Ward Shelley’s “The Last Library” exhibit at SPACES Gallery. The exhibit is a walk-through installation,Lewis read stories, led a group in dance, and assisted in a craft project.

• Planning is taking place for “On the Same Page,” a communitywide read, in 2016.

• Technology Trainer Alyse Giannotti worked with Librarian Pam Spangler in the mobile classroom to teach computer/web-course coding to 21 children at a Sept. 8 program at University Heights Library. This popular program will be repeated at University Heights Library and will also be held at Noble Neighborhood Library.

• CWRU’s School of Dental Medicine held its annual A Toothy Affair on Sept. 27. Den-Angel, which attracted 40 students from John Hay High School. The mega sale was held November 19 and 20.

GIFT CERTIFICATES AVAILABLE

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Heights Libraries welcomes new branch manager

The University Heights Library welcomed its new manager, Sara Phillips, on Nov. 16. Phillips comes to University Heights from the East Cleveland Public Library, where she served as the public services manager. She takes over the position from Aurora Martinez, who is now director of the Morley Library in Painesville.

Phillips began her library career in Painesville. In 2006, as a reference substitute and then part-time library associate.

Phillips has experience in community-building. In her previous position at East Cleveland Public Library, she worked with numerous community partners, including the Cleveland Clinic, the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Museum of Natural History, the Cleveland Clinic, and the Greater Cleveland Food Bank.

"I look forward to working with staff members to continue the University Heights branch’s existing programs and implement new programs. With the staff’s help, I hope to make the University Heights Library a must-visit destination for residents of all ages,” said Phillips.

Julia Murphy is the marketing and volunteer coordinator for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library System.

What’s going on at your library?

Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health

The purpose of the study is to assess if adding investigational drug to donepezil will improve memory, thinking, reasoning when compared to donepezil and placebo.

Enrollment Criteria:

- Aged 50 years and older
- Diagnosed with probable Alzheimer’s disease
- Able to communicate with study doctors
- Have a caregiver who can join you every study visit
- Taking a drug containing donepezil for at least 6 months

If this is you, or someone you know, we would like to hear from you.

For full details about what is involved and to find out if you might be suitable to take part in this study, please call: 216-445-9009 or email cbhresearch@ccf.org

This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at the Cleveland Clinic.
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Local businesses and organizations are offering fun holiday social and cultural activities for Heights seniors and their families. Events are free, unless otherwise noted. Please call ahead to confirm times, make reservations and inquire about handicapped accessibility if needed.

Happy holidays to all of our readers, and best wishes for a wonderful new year.

McGregor will present several holiday events: a Holiday Christmas Concert with the Hillcrest Band on Dec. 2, 7 p.m.; Music for Sam Fosh on Dec. 5, 2:30 p.m., a Winter Choral Concert on Dec. 6, 7:30 p.m.; a Market Bazaar offering holiday gifts, keepsakes and baked goods on Dec. 19, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.; and a performance by the McGregor Pace Choir on Dec. 22, 11:30 a.m. (49000 Private Drive, Cleveland, 216-871-8200).

On Dec. 5, Coventry Village will host the Cleveland Bazaar on Coventry, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., featuring wares from more than 70 artisan craft makers as well as Coventry shops. (1854 Coventry Road and 2785 Euclid Heights Blvd., Cleveland Heights, 216-356-9327)

On Dec. 6, The Stone Gardens Assisted Living Residence will hold its annual Rock to All Ages Chanukah concert with Noah Budin on Dec. 8, 7:30 p.m. (57090 Cedar Road, Beachwood, 216-292-0270)

Ten Thousand Villages will host a Stop to Support Heights Community Connection (HCC) event on Dec. 11, 6–8 p.m. The store will donate 15 percent of net sales to HCC. (12425 Cedar Road, Cleveland Heights, 216-771-6508)

The Coventry Village Festival will be held Dec. 12, noon to 10 p.m., and is part of the second-anual Holiday Stroll, taking place in the Coventry Village, Cedar Fairmount, and Cedar Lee shopping districts (see article on page one of this issue for details). Events include live music, community caroling, arts events, “ugly sweater” contests, holiday movie showings, and complimentary gift wrapping. Lolly the Trolley will provide free transportation between the three shopping districts, 4–8 p.m.

The First Reformed Church of Greater Cleveland will present A Festival of Lessons and Carols on Dec. 13, 4 p.m.; a Unified Service (featuring) Handel’s Messiah on Dec. 20, at 12:00; and a Chabad Pageant with live animals on Dec. 24, 7 p.m., and a candelight service on Dec. 24, 11 p.m. (5650 Fairmount Blvd., Shaker Heights, 216-932-7480)

At 7 p.m. on Dec. 13, 15 and 16, Nightingale will present its 10th annual Musical Theater Project performance of “A Christmas Cabaret in Cleveland.” This show features performances of well-known classics and hidden gems, as well as a few sing-alongs. Call 216-246-8878 for tickets ($1 to $40). (1328 Cedar Road, Cleveland Heights)

The Nature Center at Shaker Lakes will hold the 115th annual Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count on Dec. 19, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. This is the longest-running citizen science survey in the world that provides critical data on bird population trends. Bird walks will be held to locate and identify resident winter birds. Registration required.

The Cleveland Heights Senior Activity Center will hold its annual New Year’s party on Jan. 7, noon to 3 p.m. A catered lunch, musical entertainment and refreshments will be provided. Registration required; $12 admission.

Judith Eugen 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.livingbundsgroup.com. She can be reached at 216-408-5728 or judith@livingbundsgroup.com.
Filling the Void

Jinida Doba

Who’s going to fill the empty space?

More than predictable lyrics to a sappy pop ballad, these words may be close to a truthful pleading from many inner-ring suburbs across the country.

They’re likely asking: Who’s going to fill the vacant commercial spaces in our city?

With an estimated 89 vacant retail properties in the city of Cleveland Heights, according to the Commercial District Inventory of Cleveland Heights study published in 2013 by FutureHeights, the question is a legitimate one—and one that can be addressed with competitive strategy.

If the matter is important, don’t guess! Cleveland Heights must identify and weigh crucial elements that define the contest. The place to start is with a measurable definition of the goal. Next, determine the competitive environment, and define the geographic area, participants and parties influential to the outcome. Define factors such as who, current positions held (if issues), resources, vested interests and related motivations.

Define the market. In the case of commercial vacancies, many influencing factors exist. The “givens,” such as what’s offered and where, help to define the next dimension: the target market segments (including competition), why and what we seek from each. Once we’ve collected and evaluated, we have a map; we have the landscape understood, and our current position and goal plotted.

With these factors and others in play, how can our city attract business owners (existing or start-up) to set up shop here when they could be lured by many others?

Segment: Who do we want to convince? Yes, the primary objective is for companies to stay, move back to, or start anew in our city. The plan to achieve this will not move back to, or start anew in our city. If you’ll pardon another cliché, presence must be sustained.

If you’ll pardon another cliché, any good relationship requires work and definition and evaluation phases to make the next cycle of effort even more productive.

We’ve got them—now what?

Whether the prospects are found in returning operators, pioneers who ventured to the city for the first time (whether seasonal pop-up or permanent), by the way, or flexible property owners who see the big picture, their presence must be sustained.

If you’ll pardon another cliché, any good relationship requires work from both sides. The relationship requires checking in to make sure everyone’s “good,” getting ahead of timetabled outcomes, and measuring and evaluation phases to make the next cycle of effort even more productive.

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NextStep offers small business owners tools for successful growth

Lisa Sands

Small business owners in the Heights are invited to apply to participate in NextStep: Strategies for Business Growth, a program of University Circle Inc., presented by KeyBank.

NextStep gives small business owners an opportunity to gain knowledge and experience through an award-winning curriculum that incorporates ready-to-apply tactics shared by fellow business owners and experts. Participants will be in a unique position to connect with other businesses in the area. With a rapidly expanding market, business owners complete the program with a customized three-year strategic growth action plan and new networks for business development.

NextStep graduate Brooks Jones is managing member of Grandview Place in Cleveland Heights, a business that provides furnished apartments for visitors to Cleveland Clinic and the University Circle area. With a rapidly expanding business, said Jones, “We couldn’t plan because we were operating minute-to-minute. After completing the NextStep program, we are on fire with our books and are generating very viable numbers. We’ve hired three key people, and we’ve been able to delegate about 30 percent of the activities we used to handle ourselves, leaving us to focus on the strategic.”

Beginning in January 2016, NextStep will offer three-hour classes, every other week, lasting approximately seven months. Class size is limited to 15 participants, to enable individualized instruction and close collaboration among peers.

To be eligible, applicants must have owned their business for at least three years, have annual sales of at least $350,000, and have at least one employee in addition to the owner. University Circle Inc., which provides the NextStep program, is a service, development, and advocacy organization for University Circle—one of the fastest-growing employment districts in Northeast Ohio. University Circle Inc. is in a unique position to connect NextStep graduates with more than 40 nonprofit organizations in the education, medical and cultural sectors that may introduce them to new business opportunities.

Partial scholarships are available for business owners located in one of the Greater University Circle neighborhoods or who currently do business with University Circle organizations.

For more information and to access the application, visit www.universitycircle.org/nextstep.

Lisa Sands is director of marketing for University Circle Inc.
Coventry’s Houde School is a home for aspiring actors

James Henke

The Houde School of Acting, at 1777 Coventry Road in Cleveland Heights, opened in 2007. The school offers classes for people of almost all ages, with three classes for children ages 6–13, and other classes for teens and adults.

Jessica Houde Morris, 37, founded the school. Born in Massachusetts, Morris moved to the Cleveland area with her family when she was 18. Shortly after they moved here, she was wondering what she should do with her life, and her parents suggested that she look into acting or modeling.

Eight months later, she moved to Los Angeles and began taking classes at the acting school Playhouse West. Robert Carnegie, the founder of the school, worked with Sanford Meisner, who developed what’s called the Meisner style of actor training. The Houde School focuses on the Meisner style. “His theory was that, in order to act, you have to live truthfully under imaginary circumstances,” Morris said.

“There are 10 levels of technique you have to go through to learn the entire thing,” she noted. “That’s the thing that can take up to four years for a student to learn the Meisner style.

After three and a half years of classes at Playhouse West, Morris began teaching at the school. Then, two years later, Morris returned to Cleveland to open her own school. Her father had died in 2004, and she decided to use her maiden name for the school’s name.

Houde’s students come from all over Ohio and neighboring states. “We have students from Mansfield, Lodi, Canton, Columbus, Wooster, Pennsylvania and many other places,” Morris said. She estimated that she has around 100 students enrolled in the school at any one time. Three months ago, she opened a second school, in Kent.

In addition to classes about the Meisner technique, Houde offers improv classes and “camera” classes, which focus on acting in commercials.

The school also offers audition technique classes. “I give the students a script for the first time,” Morris said. “They act out that script, and I give them critiques and adjustments, and then they come back the next week with those adjustments.”

Over the course of her career, Morris has worked with several well-known actors, including James Franco, who has starred in many movies; Shawnie Smith, best known for her role as Linda in the CBS sitcom “Becker”; and Scott Caan, a regular on “Hawaii Five-O.”

Several of her students have gone on to pursue successful acting careers. One student, who is now in Los Angeles, will appear in two upcoming shows on NBC. Another student has appeared in commercials for Mr. Hero, Kurt Yue, an instructor at Houde, frequently appears in Ohio Lottery commercials.

Morris lives in Cleveland Heights. She is married and has a daughter, Es- sic, who is 17 months old.

For more information on classes at Houde, visit www.houdeschoolofacting.org or call 330-348-1106.

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.
holiday store and stroll spotlight local artists

Mary Ryan

For 10 months out of the year, Heights Arts uses its Lee Road location to host art exhibitions, poetry readings, musical performances and gallery talks, and feature a limited selection of works by local artists in its gallery shop.

At the beginning of November, the gallery gets turned on its head and the entire 2,400-square-foot space fills with an expanded selection of new works—ceramics, glass, jewelry, prints, wearables, cards and holiday items. This expanded holiday store enables Heights Arts to feature new and local talent, which is curated by a gallery committee of artist-peers throughout the year.

This year, the Heights Arts Holiday Store welcomes 16 new artists: jewelry from Blooming Enamels, Emily R Studio, Abbey Blake and Zenia Lis; drawings and paintings by Linda Ayala, Kate Atherton, Leslie Arian and David King; ceramics by Lauren Herzak-Bauman; mixed-media work by Matthew Gallagher and Nancy Luken; hand-printed textiles from Giardino; scarves and tees by Pure & Sweet and GV Designs; hand-turned wood items by David Shatton, and bags from Cleveland Recycles.

Leslie Arian—a Shaker Heights artist and Cleveland Institute of Art alumna who only recently began exhibiting her work—"noted, "It can be quite intimidating to approach a new gallery, but I found Heights Arts to be extremely supportive. It’s clear that the staff and board of Heights Arts make a serious investment in their artists."

In support of artists and the community, Heights Arts is rolling out a number of special gallery events for December.

On Saturday, Dec. 12, during the Cedar Lee Holiday Stroll, acclaimed pianist Megan Clay Constantine will perform in the gallery from 6 to 8 p.m. A past Heights Music Hop performer and current director of the music department at The Music Settlement, Constantine can play virtually anything on request. All are invited to stop by the gallery to hear favorite tunes while enjoying refreshments and holiday shopping.

Stroll-goers may also contribute writings and drawings of their personal hopes and dreams for the Heights community to the Heights Arts Wishing Tree—a project inspired by cultural traditions in India and other parts of Asia.

Heights Arts is sponsoring a “holiday hashtag” contest, Dec. 1-12, in which gallery visitors can snap a photo of their favorite gallery item, and upload it via their Instagram or Facebook accounts with the hashtag #HeightsArtsHoliday. Participants will be eligible to win a Heights Arts gift certificate. The winner will be announced via Heights Arts’s Facebook and Instagram pages.

The Heights Arts 14th Annual Holiday Store is open every day through Dec. 30. For extended gallery hours and event information, visit www.heightsarts.org or call 216-371-5520.

Mary Ryan is on staff at Heights Arts, a nonprofit community arts organization.

‘Peter and the Starcatcher’ debuts at Dobama Theatre

Owen Schneider

The five-time Tony Award-winning play “Peter and the Starcatcher” makes its Cleveland debut at Dobama Theatre this month. “Starcatcher,” a prequel to Peter Pan, is based on the young adult series of novels by Dave Barry and Ridley Pearson. It explores Peter’s origins while telling the story of Molly Aster and her attempts to return a special trunk of “starstuff” to her father.

“Peter and the Starcatcher” is Dobama Theatre’s third mainstage production of its 2015-16 season, promising to continue a strong line-up. The play is directed by Nathan Monroe, Dobama’s artistic director, and features music by Wayne Barker. Scenic design is by Aaron Benson, with lighting by Marcus Dana, sound by Richard Ingraham, costume design by Tessa Dugan Benson and music directed by Jordan Cooper.

Motta applauded Dobama’s creative team, saying, “Our incredible team has been working for nearly eight months straight to bring this innovative story of magic stardust, mermaids, pirates and Peter Pan to life onstage through music and imagination. There will be surprises around every corner in what will be a truly memorable, intimate and unique experience of entertainment!”

The play features a talented cast of 13 actors with strong ties to Greater Cleveland: Kyle Adam, Christopher Bohan, Robert Ellis, Andrew Gorrell, Molly Israel, Tim Keo, Jason Leupold, Joe Pine, James Rankin, Eugene Suelmin, Ryan Thurman, Luke Webner and Ryan Zarecki. They will be playing more than 100 characters using the limitless possibilities of imagination.

According to Motta, “The show will be a magical theater experience for adults and families alike. This play brought storytelling-style theatre to the big stage when it hit Broadway three years ago. Now major theaters all over the country are bringing it to their communities, and we’re honored and grateful that Dobama is presenting it to North-east Ohio.”

The production runs from Dec. 4 through Jan. 3, with five performances each week, including added Saturday matinees, and special performance times around the holidays. For more information and to purchase tickets visit www.dobama.org or call the box office at 216-932-3396. Dobama Theatre is located at 2340 Lee Road, in Cleveland Heights.

Owen Schneider is a media relations intern at Dobama Theatre.

Heights Observer December 1, 2015

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Owen Schneider is a media relations intern at Dobama Theatre.

Heights Observer December 1, 2015

28

www.heightsobserver.org
Music is the focus of Kevin Richards’ life

James Henke

Kevin Richards has been a key figure in the Cleveland Heights music scene for the past few decades. Not only does he play in Heights-based bands, he also owns the Fairmount School of Music (FSM), and is the founder of the nonprofit organization Roots of American Music, headquartered in Cleveland Heights.

Richards, who is 60, was born in Euclid, but his family moved to Cleveland Heights when he was 4 years old. He attended school in Cleveland Heights, and graduated from Heights High in 1973. He attended Cuyahoga Community College for a year, studying architecture, then transferred to Cleveland State University (CSU), where he majored in music.

He got into music at a very early age. “As a youngster, my brother and I were into George Foreman and Frank Sinatra, and my mother was into Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong and Frank Sinatra, so I became familiar with a style of music that other people of my age weren’t into.”

During his junior high years at Roxboro, Richards played alto sax and piano. “During my junior high years, I was in a band called Flapjack. That was the first band I was in that was successful, and I loved it.”

When he was in high school, he started playing guitar. While attending CSU, Richards decided he wanted to be a musician and teach guitar. He landed a job at the Dick Lurie Guitar Studio in Cleveland Heights. He also joined a band called Flapjack. “That was the first band I was in that was successful, and I loved it.”

About a decade later, Richards opened FSM, which is located at 3473 Fairmount Blvd., near Taylor Road. The school’s slogan is “Educating the Heights since 1988.” FSM employs more than 15 instructors, offering lessons for a variety of instruments, including guitar, piano, violin, drums, clarinet, saxophone and brass instruments.

“After opening the Fairmount School, I began thinking about creating an outreach educational program in the community,” Richards said. “I wanted to create something that was not limited by geography or by finances.”

In the summer of 1999, Richards formed Roots of American Music. The nonprofit organization takes teaching artists who have backgrounds in jazz, blues, hip-hop and other styles of music into schools all over Northeast Ohio, and teaches the students about music and other subjects, using the music. Recently, the organization has broadened its mission by going into old-age homes and assisted-living centers.

This past July, Richards stepped down as the executive director of Roots of American Music. He was replaced by Chip Coakley. Richards now serves as the organization’s artistic director. “Now I have more time to focus on our programs,” he said. He wants to increase the number of community events that the organization puts on. Currently, Roots of American Music presents community picking sessions on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month at MT Glass on Cedar Road near Taylor Road. Roots of American Music also presents a “pickin’ party” on the last Monday of every month at Dise and Company, at 20660 Chagrin Blvd. in Beachwood.

Richards said he is also thinking about having the organization put together an annual roots-music festival, perhaps in the University Circle area, beginning next summer. In addition to his involvement with Roots of American Music and FSM, Richards also plays guitar in a few area bands. On the first Thursday of every month, he plays fiddle, banjo and mandolin with his band the Spyder Stompers and Sugar Pie at the Barking Spider Tavern in University Circle.

Richards is also a member of Hot Djang!, a gypsy-jazz band whose music is influenced by the music of Django Reinhardt, and he plays with Gene’s Jazz Hot, a group that features a traditional New Orleans sound, and Long Road, a 60s-style folk group. On Monday nights, Richards often sits in with George Foley during his shows at the Tavern Company on Lee Road.

Richards has also performed and taught outside of Cleveland. He has appeared at the MerleFest, an annual tribute to Doc and Merle Watson that is held in North Carolina, and has given music lessons at the Augusta Heritage Center in West Virginia.

Richards said he loves the diversity of Cleveland Heights. “I also love all of the restaurants, from the Wine Spot to the Tavern Company to Nighttown,” he said. “I love the entertainment.” He frequently takes bike rides around the Heights. “I love looking at all of the houses and the great architecture,” Richards said.

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.

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Merry Chris Mis

David Budin

Cleveland Heights has long been known for its diversity. That’s why—well, one of the reasons—I was surprised to read a letter to the editor in the Plain Dealer a few years ago by a person from Cleveland Heights, who complained that people who aren’t overjoyed by someone saying “Merry Christmas!” to them just aren’t... I don’t know—Christian, I guess.

So I wrote a letter to the editor myself. I don’t write many letters to the editor. My letter was, well... it was the only one I’ve ever written. It said:

“The Dec. 16 letter from Chris Mis (“Merry Christmas! Now did that hurt?”) succinctly summarizes what I feel that it is improper to use the phrase ‘Merry Christmas!’ to people who consider themselves followers of faiths other than Christianity don’t observe or celebrate Christian holidays.

Are we really damaged by being wished Merry Christmas? A little—over time it grinds away at you, makes you feel as if you’re not part of the club. Deprived? Yes. We have our own beliefs, different from many others but just as valid. By constantly ignoring, denying and dismissing our beliefs, Christians are depriving us.

I’m sure Chris Mis is very merry, and I hope he stays that way. But he should try to see the other side.

The morning my letter appeared, my phone rang at 9 a.m. I answered. An unfamiliar man’s voice said, “Hello, Dave?” I said, “Yes?” He said, unusually loudly, “Merry Christmas to you and yours!” and then slammed the phone down. He was still using a phone that you could slam down to end a call.

I went back to what I had been doing. About a half hour later the phone rang again. I answered and had the same brief conversation with the same man. The guy was old and simple, so he didn’t know that I could hit star-6-9 and find out the number of the phone from which the call had originated. And because he was old and simple, he also had no idea that I could enter that number into a reverse-lookup site on my computer and find out the address of that phone number.

The call had been made from a phone booth—one of the few left in the world—on a Cleveland Heights corner I knew well. A pay phone—because the guy was old and simple and the last movie he had seen was made in 1942, when people used pay phones to retain their anonymity.

A half hour later, the same thing. I did star-6-9 and then reverse-lookup and found that he’d made the third call from his own home. So I now knew his name and address and phone number. He lived not far away from me. I drove past his house.

I found it ironic that he lived in an area that John D. Rockefeller had commissioned a man named Taylor to map out for development in the early 1900s, in what became known as the Taylor Plan. And it seems to be common knowledge—in the form of a badly kept secret—that the plan stipulated the neighborhood had to remain restricted: no Jews or blacks. I figured my cowardly phone caller had lived there since Taylor had laid out the area. And had been friends with Taylor. And had suggested the part about no Jews or blacks.

Two days later, I received a Christmas card in a bright red envelope. It was not signed, but inside someone had scrawled in large, angry letters: “DEAR DAVID—YOU DON’T HAVE TO BELIEVE IN JESUS TO ENJOY CHRISTMAS. SANTA CLAUS IS NOT A CHRISTIAN SYMBOL. JUST BE HAPPY AND LOVE.”

Except that I hadn’t mentioned Santa Claus. And you kind of do have to believe in Jesus to enjoy Christmas. Unless you just need an excuse to buy people presents. Christmas. Unless you just need an excuse to buy people presents.

The next day I received another, identical Christmas card, in a bright red envelope, unsigned, in which was scrawled in large, angry letters: “I WISH YOU AND ALL OF YOUR LOVED ONES A VERY MERRY AND HOLY CHRISTMAS.”

Now that one was kind of religious, I’m thinking. I mean, can you have a holy Christmas without being religious? He was beginning to lose his perspective.

The next two days, two more cards: “Merry Christmas, Dude!” and “Hope it’s good XXXXX Honey Buns.”

This guy had gone to quite a bit of trouble just to make me feel bad because I didn’t agree with his very happy message that everyone should be Christian. You may not think so, at first glance, but that’s what he was saying. And that’s what makes this country great—that we’re all one religion, and all one race and all of one national origin. Oh, wait—we’re not. Well, that guy is. If you know what I mean.

Okay, so I understand that many people think and feel the same way this guy who calls himself Chris Mis does. That’s never going to change. And I don’t really care if people say “Merry Christmas!” to me, because I understand that many people don’t think about a lot of things—plus, it is a nice time of year (or, at least, it can be). The amazing thing, to me, is that the guy actually used Jesus, theoretically a symbol of love and peace and acceptance, as a weapon, to literally try to hurt me. Ironic. And increasingly common.

Daved Budin is a freelance writer for national and local publications, the former editor of Cleveland Magazine and Northern Ohio Life, an author, and a professional musician and comedian. His writing focuses on the arts and, especially, pop music history.
St. Paul’s winter art show features adventurous artists and experimental media

Mary Cushing

The Nicholson B. White Gallery at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, 2747 Fairmount Blvd., announces its winter show, Spaces/Places/Structures. The show opens with an artists’ reception on Friday, Dec. 4, 5–7 p.m., where participating artists will be in attendance to greet guests and discuss their creative processes. The show runs through Feb. 28.

Featuring artists are Todd Leech and Stephanie Craig in collaboration (clay), Susan Griffith (photography), and Stephanie Craig (oil on canvas) with Dawn Tekler (encaustic wax). Stephanie Craig and artist/husband Todd Leech maintain a ceramics studio, Hectic Studio, in Cleveland. In addition to pursuing their individual studio practices, they often work collaboratively on projects.

Most recently, Craig and Leech completed collaborative sculptures for a two-person exhibition at Kent State University. Together, they seek to push the limits of ceramic materials to innovate, experiment and explore the possibilities of the medium.

Susan Griffith’s images begin with cardboard shapes or textures that provide the image’s scaffolding onto which other photographs are added until something new and original appears and emerges into focus, much like a regular photograph in the lens of the camera. The final image becomes the starting point for the observer to construct his or her own story about what should come before and after. Rita Schuenemann strives for a dynamic relationship among color, line, shape and space and is interested in patterns of color which she weaves into her paintings. She works in oil on canvas because she loves the buttery fluidity of oils and the “give” of the canvas. Her paintings are a colorful celebration of ordinary, everyday life, and her inspiration comes from our daily surroundings—nature, architecture, still life or people.

Dawn Tekler’s encaustic series is an experimental departure from her conventional photography. Through the layering of wax, adding color and texture, she aims to create an environment that allows viewers to bring to the work their own stories. All are welcome at the opening reception. The gallery is open weekdays, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and weekends, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. The artists receive all proceeds from the sale of their work.

Mary Cushing is a member of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church.

Amahl and the Night Visitors visit Forest Hill Presbyterian Church

Peg Weisbrod

The classic Christmas opera Amahl and the Night Visitors will be performed at Forest Hill Presbyterian Church on Sunday, Dec. 20, at 11 a.m. and 7 p.m.

Gian-Carlo Menotti’s uplifting opera tells the story of Amahl, a disabled boy who walks with a crutch and likes to tell tall tales. When he and his mother are visited by the Three Kings, faith and generosity lead to an emotional miracle.

Menotti specified that Amahl should always be played by a boy, not a young adult. A forlorn casting opportunity has eight-year-old Cleveland Heights resident Henry Dyck singing the role of Amahl alongside his own mother, soprano Lara Troyer, as Amahl’s mother.

Troyer, a former associate artist with Cleveland Opera, is a voice faculty member at Kent State University. Her recent roles include solos with the Akron Symphony in The Messiah, Faure’s Requiem with Performers and Artists for Nuclear Disarmament, Susanna in The Marriage of Figaro, and soprano in Kapilow’s Green Eggs and Ham.

Forest Hill Church Music Director Anne Wilson describes Henry Dyck as having perfect pitch and uncommon skill in jazz improvisation. “The duets he sings with his mother in Amahl,” she said, “will bring a tear to the eye of every listener.”

Other Cleveland Heights residents in Amahl include Mia’s Craig, Carl Jenks and Caleb Wright as the Three Kings, Jack Lentz as the Page, and oboist Cynthia Watson. Henry’s younger sister, six-year-old Margaret, will play a shepherd in the opera.

Admission is free. Forest Hill Church is located at 3031 Monticello Blvd. Additional information is available at 216-332-2660 or online at www.fhpres.org.

Peg Weisbrod is a freelance writer and outreach coordinator for Forest Hill Church.

Amahl and the Night Visitors visit Forest Hill Presbyterian Church
Wanderlust makes one-of-a-kind jewelry in CH studio

James Henke

Wanderlust Jewelers specializes in one-of-a-kind, handmade pieces of jewelry, including engagement rings, wedding rings, earrings, necklaces and bracelets. Wanderlust’s owners, Wes and Heather Airgood, have lived in Cleveland Heights since 2010. They recently moved their studio from Little Italy to 12459 Cedar Road, above Starbucks in the Cedar Fairmount district.

In November, Wanderlust held an open-house event. “We want people to see what we do and how we do it,” said Wes Airgood.

Wes, 33, was born in northern Indiana. His family moved to Toledo when he was in junior high school. In 2005, he earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, and then went on to the University of Georgia, where he earned a master’s degree in fine arts, with a concentration in metalwork and jewelry design.

His first job after graduate school was at Heather Moore Jewelry, which was then based in Cleveland Heights. That’s where Wes met his future wife, Heather Terrell, who had graduated from the Cleveland Institute of Art, where she earned her BFA degree. “We worked well together, and we had a lot of fun,” he said.

In 2010, the Airgoods decided to start their own business, and opened a studio in Little Italy, above Presti’s Bakery.

“We focus on old-fashioned, custom jewelry,” said Wes. “Everything is one-of-a-kind, and everything is made from recycled gold and diamonds.” Many of their clients bring old jewelry from home, and ask to have it redesigned. “If someone wants to get married, they often want to use a diamond from one of their grandparents’ pieces of jewelry,” Wes said. “Jewelry is made to be worn, but it often winds up sitting in a box. So we take it and make it into something new.”

Jaeda Kinkoph, who handles sales and marketing for Wanderlust, said they have three different types of clients: “Some people come in and know exactly what they want. Then, some people come in with existing diamonds and other pieces of jewelry, and they want it made into something new. The third group has no idea what they want.”

“When someone comes in, we talk for about an hour, and I take notes,” said Wes. “Then I draw a couple of sketches based on our conversation, and once they decide on a design, it usually takes about four to six weeks to get the piece done. And everything is done by hand. I take a bar of gold and loose diamonds, then I carve the pieces and I use a torch to solder the pieces together.”

Kinkoph is currently in discussions with retail outlets, to explore opportunities for Wanderlust to start selling some jewelry in stores across the country.

Wes said he and Heather love Cleveland Heights. They live on Lee Road near Monmouth Road, across from Church of the Savior. “It’s such a wonderful community,” he said. “I love all of the shops and other things along Lee Road, and I also love the recreation center.” In September, his parents moved from Connecticut to Cleveland Heights.

The Airgood’s first child, Olivia Hazard Airgood, is now two years old. The couple named her after Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry, who won the Battle of Lake Erie during the War of 1812. “When we had Olivia, it was the bicentennial year of the Battle of Lake Erie,” Wes said. “So we decided to name her after the commodore.” The couple is expecting a second child in January.

Wes is considering writing a book about many of the stories he has heard related to the jewelry he has worked on. “I love the storytelling that goes along with the jewelry,” he said. “Jewelry is so personal, and many of the people just have great stories about the items they bring in to have us work on.”

For more information on Wanderlust Jewelers, visit wanderlustjewelers.com or 216-505-0551.

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.

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