Heights Libraries celebrates 100-year anniversary in 2016

Sheryl Banks

Heights Libraries marks its centennial this year and, starting in March, will celebrate in ways both big and small.

In 1916, John Barden was elected to the board of education of what was then the Village of Cleveland Heights. Part of Barden’s election platform was a promise to start a public library for the village. In 1916, Barden headed a committee that selected the first members of the future public library board, which was established that same year. The fledgling library didn’t have a building yet, so it was located in the high school lobby.

When it was founded in 1916, the new library had one employee, librarian Helen Keeler, and fewer than 2,000 books.

Today, 100 years later, the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library System has roughly 160 employees in four buildings, and its collection has grown to more than 418,000 items, including books, CDs, DVDs, mp3s, eBooks, eReaders, and digital music and movies.

Beginning in March, library staff will sport new purple centennial lanyards, and all four libraries will be decorated with banners, inside and out.
Are constitutional rights a local issue?

Carla Rautenberg and Deborah Van Klee

Is amending the U.S. Constitution a local issue, and, if so, how? Cleveland Heights citizens placed Issue 32 on the November 2013 ballot, some residents have asked that question. Two city council members expressed opposing views on this at a public hearing, where residents testified about abuses of corporate power and the corrupting effect of money in politics.

Issue 32 stated: “Shall the proposed ordinance entitled ‘Political Influence by Corporate Entities,’ establishing annual public hearings before City Council on this subject, and sending a summary of the public hearing to Congress-ional and State representatives, and calling for an amendment to the U.S. Constitution, be enacted?”

With a resounding 78 percent “yes” vote, Issue 32 became Title XV, Chapter 183 of the Cleveland Heights Codified Ordinances. Similar laws have been approved by voters in six other Ohio cities, and in hundreds of municipalities across the United States. Another will be on the Toledo ballot on March 15, and citizens are collecting signatures for ballot initiatives in Shaker Heights, South Euclid and Cleveland.

So, how is the proposed amendment to the U.S. Constitution a concern of local city councils and mayors?

Corporate agenda-setting has led to much less effective regulation and to the slashing of funds for safe water, clean air, public education, roads and bridges, public health and many other civic concerns. At the state and federal levels return less of our tax money to municipalities, thereby impoverishing our cities and school districts.

With the passage of Issue 32, Cleveland Heights joined a grass-roots, nonpartisan, national movement of citizens, Move to Amend, which arose in response to the U.S. Supreme Court’s 2010 Citizens United decision. That decision built upon long-standing (though obscure) precedents of treating corporations as legal “persons” and money as constitutionally protected free speech. After the 2008 presidential race, up to then the most expensive in history, Citizens United made an already terrible situation dramatically worse.

It makes sense to build support for a federal constitutional amendment from the local level up. Once approved by Congress, an amendment must be ratified by three-fourths of the states. Local initiative campaigns educate citizens and prepare them to pressure state governments when the time comes for ratification.

The annual public hearing affords any citizen the opportunity to place into the public record evidence of how, in the guise of legal and constitutional interpretations, corporations usurp the sovereign rights of We the People.

On Jan. 21, 17 area residents cited dozens of ways that corporate lobbying and secret campaign contributions have degraded the ability of government to address our most pressing problems, including:

• damaging effects on public educa-tion funding for preschool teachers and the corporate-funded Common Core State Standards;

• Ohio’s failure to regulate energy tax breaks as a result of “invest-ments” in the campaigns of state legislators and governors—the loss to Cleveland Heights, $2.5 million per year;

• loss of jobs, tax revenue and national sovereignty to past and future international trade agree-ments.

They connected the dots: poli-cies serving the needs of unaccount-able, unmediated corporate interests too often negatively affect our daily lives.

After listening to the public testimony, Mayor Cheryl Stephens thanked citizens for their contribu-tions and asked council members if they had any remarks.

Council Member Mary Dun-bar suggested that council’s time would be better spent working on specific local problems. She cited as examples the lack of suit-able housing for senior citizens who wish to remain in Cleveland Heights, and the priority set by the Ohio House of Representatives for in-cum-bents making campaign contribu-tions on funding new roads rather than repairing existing ones. “I just don’t feel this is the best use of our time,” and I know that’s not a popular message to this group,” Dunbar stated.

Council Member Melissa Ya-sinow disagreed, and said, “[W]e are the most basic and important intersection between the people and their government. . . . If we can’t have one night a year on this issue for people to come and say what matters to them and what matters to their democracy, then I think we’ve failed as a local govern-ment.”

You can watch the third annual hearing on video, posted on the city’s website. Jan. 21 was the sixth anniver-sary of the Citizens United deci-sion.

Carla Rautenberg is an activist and a lifelong Cleveland Heights resident. Deborah Van Klee is a musician and writer. She grew up in Cleveland Heights, and has lived here as an adult for 30 years.
Deny the petition to rezone Vandemar Street homes

To the Editor:

I write to urge that Cleveland Heights City Council reject Circle K’s application to rezone two residential properties on Vandemar Street to enable yet another gas station—this one with 16 pumps and a convenience store—that will clearly encroach on a residential neighborhood, likely with lights and traffic well into evening hours. I have lived in this community long enough to remember when you could not come out of the parking lot with a rental movie and make a right hand turn onto Vandemar. It is a residential street after all. Let’s keep it that way!

My objection to this project goes beyond the obvious impact on the residential neighborhood. Cleveland Heights needs economic development, for sure, but a 16-pump gas station within feet of another gas station is not my idea of the kind of development that will jump-start this community and strengthen the area north of Mayfield Road that suffered most from the predatory lending/foreclosure crisis which has resulted in vacant, deteriorated properties and deteriorating property values in these neighborhoods.

So, I urge rejection of this rezoning request, but I also hope that the CH Master Plan, currently in process, will include a vision of what could be possible in this area. For example, what if the city would/could find another place to house what is ion the old Hillsdale Dairy property it owns, and the day-care building south on Noble Road, and the vacant lot which held the former Medic/Pick n Pay, and the investor-owned Center Mayfield buildings could be brought together in a package of land for redevelopment?

Imagine the possibilities!

In the meantime, while we wait for/look forward to the CH Master Plan and the hiring of a new economic development director to guide its implementation (an essential step; kudos to council), I urge council to reject the Circle K rezoning application. The proposal is not good for the neighborhood, and it is definitely not the kind of development that this community needs or wants.

Diane Woodbridge
Cleveland Heights

Ian Griffith

At its Jan. 15 meeting, Cleveland Heights City Council acknowledged receipt of a petition to rezone the two occupied residences on Vandemar Street closest to the Center Mayfield Theater, from residential to commercial (C-2). The rezoning is so that they can be demolished, along with the Center Mayfield Theater and Mayfield Noble Building, to make room for a 16-pump Circle K gas station/convenience store.

The planned gas station is de-structive. It would turn two occupied homes; two buildings that, until last year, housed four businesses, including a day care; and a historic building into one large gas station. It would turn two backyards and a small play ground into a “greenspace” between the convenience store and the neighborhood house. (I do not expect this “greenspace” to be just as well-kept and family-friendly.)

The draft for the Community Vision section of the impending Cleveland Heights Master Plan (www.clevelandheights.com/master-plan) sets a course for development in our city. It says lots of good things. It says we want walkable business districts. It says we want to “continue to promote the preservation of historic homes and buildings.” It says cleaner and greener.

Gas stations prioritize drivability. This gas station proposal cheapens the character of our neighborhood and displaces existing historic homes and buildings. This gas station goes against almost every stated goal of the CH Master Plan.

We want to invest (to commit resources in hope of gain) and encourage others to invest in our city and in our neighborhoods. This gas station would do the opposite: We would be committing resources sure of a loss. The proposed gas station would pollute our neighborhood. Because of these reasons, there should not be a gas station at Vandemar Street and Mayfield Road. Because of these reasons, Cleveland Heights City Council should join hands with its citizens and do the right thing for everyone, safeguarding our neighborhoods and our character. Deny the petition to rezone the homes on Vandemar Street.

North Mayfield residents and other concerned citizens are organizing support to deny the petition to rezone. You can catch up with them at mayfield.nextdoor.com. Noble Neighbors has set up an action group for this issue as well. Information can be found at www.nobleneighbors.com.

Ian Griffith lives on Vandemar Street in Cleveland Heights. He is the office manager at the Locust Wrench and a Cleveland State University graduate.
CH Teachers Union embarks on listening initiative in schools

Ari Klein

Most people probably think that teachers are better at giving information than receiving it. Over the summer, the leadership of the Cleveland Heights Teachers Union had discussions about what we don’t know; including what the parents of our students want from teachers and the schools. We have always worked closely with parents through PTAs and in other ways, but we figured it could be interesting to dig a little deeper and have conversations to see what common interests we have with parents of varying backgrounds.

We came up with a way to find out more through small listening sessions with parents at as many schools as possible. Teams formed and trained to meet with parents and ask four questions:

- What do you like about your child’s school?
- What changes do you believe will help your child be more successful in school?
- What other services would be helpful to the community that might be offered through the school?
- How can we, as local teachers, assist in advocating for your children?

Listening teams were instructed to listen without comment—just to listen and record what they heard (which was probably the hardest part).

So far, we’ve conducted sessions in eight different schools involving about 65 parents from PTAs and other groups, as well as our own parents. Although the groups were small and in no way a perfect sampling of the incredibly diverse families that use the district’s schools, these sessions identified some interesting commonalities.

Many parents were surprised that our union is interested in [learning] what they think is important. Parents and teachers are natural allies, but don’t always realize that working together will be mutually advantageous. Like parents, teachers want the best for our students—and many of us are parents. In fact, part of our union’s vision statement speaks to creating and maintaining supportive environments conducive to learning and not just teaching.

Many of the additional services that would be helpful to our parents fit nicely under the “wrap-around services” umbrella that I wrote about in the December 2015 Heights Observer—fitness and enrichment classes, parenting classes, open gym, affordable after-school care, English Language Learners classes, and more. Parents have great ideas for what could happen at school.

Some of the ideas were about helping orient parents to the school and finding more time to meet with teachers. The thoughtfulness of parents who were able to participate in these conversations was gratifying. Some teams have taken the summaries from their schools to building leadership, to discuss if there are issues that can be addressed right away. I have shared every summary with Superintendent Dixon, to make her aware of what parents are saying so that administration might act on some items as well.

When we started this project, we did not know where it would lead. Every team that I have spoken with felt that its conversations have all been resoundingly positive, even though some team members were reluctant to ask these questions of parents, concerned that there would be unpleasant reactions.

I think most people are happy when someone listens to what they have to say, without being defensive or judgmental in response. I know our teams of teachers might have had things they wanted to say, but that was not our mission. We still have to discuss this within our own organization, but there are probably good reasons to try to refine this process and repeat it in the future. There are always things that teachers can learn.

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

BIG FUN continued from page 1

After graduating from college, Presser decided not to pursue a medical degree. Instead, he started working for PVA Circle of Homes. "It's a nonprofit organization that provides direct care to people suffering from severe mental retardation," Presser explained. He left PVA in 1983 and took a job as a stockbroker at Paine Webber and Company in Beachwood.

Meanwhile, in 1982, while on a trip to New York, Presser dropped in on a store called Goodies. "When I walked into that store, it changed my life," Presser said. "It was a small store, but it had all of these old toys that were still in new packages. They just had a lot of new old stock. It was like going to a rock concert for the first time."

Presser became friends with the store’s owner, Ted Fello. "I told him I was interested in opening a toy store," Presser said. "And I started going to 20 or 30 house sales a week. I was accumulating merchandise, which I stored in my parents’ basement.

Frankel eventually closed Goodies and opened a store called Uncle Fun. He was also helping Presser with his plan to open a store. Originally, Presser was going to name his store Marvin’s Fun House (Marvin being Presser’s father). Then, Frankel suggested Big Fun, and that became the store’s name.

Asked what his favorite toys are, Presser said he loves Rock’em Sock’em Robots. ‘Also, I really like toys from my childhood," he added. "I grew up in the ‘60s, so I like ‘Lost in Space,’ ‘Man from U.N.C.L.E.’ and ‘The Munsters.’"

Big Fun gets visitors from all over the United States. “We’re fortunate in that we have been on a list of best stores,” Presser said. “And, in fact, Playboy’s website named us one of the 20 coolest stores in America. So when people come to Cleveland, a lot of them will stop by Big Fun.

The store draws some famous customers, as well. "A lot of bands will come to town here when they are in town for a show," said Presser. "Fred Schneider of the B-52s has been here a lot, and Anthrax, Pantera and other bands have come by." He noted that comedian and actor Paul Rudd has also been to the store.

Presser said he loves being part of the Coventry neighborhood, and really appreciates how many people have helped him along the way.

“I’m blessed to have a handful of people who have been mentors and who made me appreciate life,” said Presser. In particular, he praised Tommy Fello, the owner of Tommy’s restaurant, two doors down from Big Fun. "Tommy is not only a mentor, he’s a good friend," he said. "As a human being, he’s been innovative. He offers a lot of kindness to his staff and his customers, and he’s a tireless volunteer. He is not only involved in his business, but in the neighborhood around him. And I am very proud of what we have done with this neighborhood."

James Henke, a Cleveland Heights resident, was a writer and editor at Rolling Stone magazine for 15 years. He is on the board of Futures Heights, and is co-chair of the Heights Observer Advisory Committee.
Choice in education benefits the community

Kathleen Tark and Yitz Frank

Choosing the appropriate type of education and school for our children is a fundamental liberty. In Cleveland Heights and University Heights, options range from public schools to parochial schools, private schools and homeschooling. Unfortunately, for many families, the tuition of parochial and private schools eliminates these options. The time commitment required by parents for homeschooling eliminates that option as well, leaving many families a single alternative—the public system.

There are a variety of reasons parents desire a choice in education: It may be that a child is not thriving at a particular school; a child may be having social problems with a particular group of children; parents may disagree with teachers and/or the curriculum being taught; they may desire a more faith-based approach to learning. It also may be that parents are opposed to the national Common Core Standards now used in the public schools, and are seeking a more creative, locally based approach. Ohio’s EdChoice Program gives families who reside in underperforming districts some alternatives in their choice of schooling.

The EdChoice program works like this: If a child is assigned to a public school that is, for lack of a better term, chronically underperforming, the state provides the resources for that child to go elsewhere. Nothing requires the child to leave, but that is an option. When a child leaves to go to a nonpublic school with an EdChoice Scholarship or to another public school district through “open enrollment,” funding (up to $4,650 for K-8 EdChoice Scholarships and $5,900 for public schools) follows that child to his or her school of choice. The district has combined revenues (per pupil) from federal, state and local sources of approximately $16,500, which is far more than the scholarship amounts, and the difference (more than $10,000) remains with the district. So, EdChoice and other public school choice programs in Ohio allow more local dollars to be left for the remaining students in the district of residence.

Supporting and enabling parents to make informed choices (particularly through data from tests, which all public school students, and nonpublic school students who use a voucher to attend a private school, are required by law to take) is a role that districts are uniquely equipped to fill. Ensuring that parents are aware of the performance of their child’s school is an important piece to improving our schools and ensuring that all students the opportunity to succeed. Coupling this knowledge with real school choice is a powerful tool for student success.

An opportunity for school choice is particularly important in the Cleveland Heights-University Heights area.

For families with school-age children, the public school system is often the determining factor in deciding where to live. Because many suburbs have public schools that are viewed as superior to CH-UH schools, many families choose to leave the Heights in search of another choice. People leave the Heights for other reasons as well, such as lower taxes, city services, or larger property tax revenue. Offering them choice in education is an incentive to stay. Fewer residents means less income tax for the community and less property tax revenue to fund the public school system. If more people knew they had options in education they might choose the Heights as a place of residence, and contribute to the income and property tax base, rather than move to places like Solon or Orange.

We should not view EdChoice as a threat to the CH-UH schools, but as a win-win. EdChoice can remove a roadblock for many choosing to raise a family in the Heights, with the net effect of benefiting the entire community.

Kathleen Tark, a Cleveland Heights resident since 1996, is an architect and urban designer. Yitz Frank, a resident of University Heights and father of two, is a government relations professional with experience in education policy.

At the Feb. 1 Cleveland Heights City Council meeting, residents who live near the site voiced their opposition to the environmental, light pollution and noise impacts of the proposed demolition and re-development, citing several research sources.

Other residents voiced concerns about quality of life, property values, and traffic and safety issues. Almost all of the speakers described their appreciation for the historic building, with its walkable neighborhood curb appeal. Many cited specific businesses they had patronized at the site, until they were vacated recently.

Residents understand the need for development planning for the “Triangle”—the district bounded by Mayfield, Noble and Warrensville Center roads. Some suggested restaurants or arts-related businesses, while others offered retail-residen-
tial ideas.

The overwhelming sentiment expressed by residents is that they want to be involved with the city, property owners and developers to find businesses that will thrive and will support the strong neighborhood vibe.

They echoed the priorities published in the Cleveland Heights Community Vision draft document that the Master Planning Steering Committee published on Jan. 22, regarding vibrant neighborhoods and an environmentally sustainable community.

This new effort to save a historic building and maintain the integrity of the neighborhood recalls the successful grassroots campaign that stopped a large Giant Eagle grocery store from dead-ending Grandview Avenue and radically altering the Cedar Fairmont neighborhood in the early 2000s.

Through the efforts of community members, Cedar Fairmont was able to maintain its pedestrian-scale architecture and walkable neighborhood appeal.

Residents who live near the Center Mayfield property are hoping that the wisdom and experience of such community organizers will help find the resources to restore the historic building and maintain the integrity of the Mayfield/Noble/Warrensville Triangle neighbor-
hood.

For more information, visit www.nobleneighbors.com.

(Zoning petition documents and the Cleveland Heights Community Vision document are available on the City of Cleveland Heights website, www.clevelandheights.com, and at www.nobleneighbors.com.)

A public hearing on this rezoning request will be held on March 3, 6:30 p.m., in Council Chambers at Cleveland Heights City Hall.

Brenda H May is one of the leaders of Noble Neighbors (www.nobleneighbors.com).

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7:30 p.m.: Tenebrae Service of Shadow

Good Friday
12 a.m.: Community Communion Service of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church

Holy Saturday
7:30 p.m.: Easter Vigil
 Begins with outdoor watchfire

EASTER SUNDAY
9 a.m.: Inquirers’ Worship in Chapel with Communion
 Children’s Easter egg hunt
11 a.m.: Traditional Worship in Sanctuary with Communion and Holy Eucharist

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5
Change happens: Rap Art closes its doors

Suzie Kaser

After more than 40 years of close-up work with adolescents in Cleveland Heights and surrounding communities, Rap Art, a community fixture, has closed its doors.

Jewish Family Services started Rap Art as a drop-in center for adolescents in a former pool hall near Cleveland Heights High School around 1973. In 1975, Rap Art became a program of the Center for Families and Children, and Paula Atwood took the reins. In 1997, the agency moved to a new building on South Taylor Road, which became the home base for this touchstone program for struggling adolescents and their families.

The building at 1943 S. Taylor Road will now be called The Centers McMillan Early Learning Center, and services offered there will focus on expanded early childhood education. The Heights Family to Family Collaborative will remain at this site.

Rap Art was a unique community-based service that used the arts to promote behavioral health and positive social skills among adolescents. Over the years, hundreds of youths and their parents have benefitted from these programs, which were designed to support good decision-making and avoidance of risky behavior. It’s a loss for our community.

Pam Bradford directed Rap Art Center starting in 1992. “I’m an old fashioned social worker. I believe deeply in community-based programs for youth, and in hands-on, interactive programming,” explained Bradford as she reflected on Rap Art’s programs, strategies and influences. Drawing a deep breath, she broke into a wide smile and her eyes twinkled as she highlighted programs she had helped design and implement. Her commitment to her work with young people and their families was obvious.

She remembered receiving calls from three different parents asking for help for their children whose school behavior had led to out-of-school suspension. “I couldn’t ignore that call for help,” recalled Bradford. The result was Pinpoint, a program to help suspended and expelled students keep up with schoolwork and tackle the behavior that landed them in trouble.

For the last 20 years, the City of Cleveland Heights has funded Pinpoint with Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. The Citizens Advisory Committee, which makes recommendations on the city’s use of its CDBG funds, and city council gave it high marks.

“We are disappointed to see Rap Art go to bat within her agency to become the sponsoring partner for Family to Family in the Heights. She was a wonderful collaborator when a committee of community volunteers that I chaired pushed for the new community resource. She took up the call. Her reputation and determination made it a reality.

Last year, Rap Art’s parent agency, the Center for Families and Children, merged with West Side Ecumenical Ministry and El Barrio. These three social service agencies, with 19 locations in the Cleveland area, are now known as The Centers. Their focus will be early childhood education and health and wellness for behavioral-health clients.

The change reflects some of the challenges human service agencies face as they seek to remain viable and sustainable in an era of limited funding and changing priorities. It will bring new opportunities to our community.

The Rap Art Center has been Bradford’s home base for more than 25 years. She will soon relocate to The Centers’ downtown headquarters. Thank you, Pam Bradford and Rap Art. We will miss you. You made a difference.

Suzie Kaser is a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights and former director of Reaching Heights. She serves on the national board of Parents for Public Schools.
University Heights City Council
Meeting highlights

JANUARY 19, 2016
Councillor Phillip Eitel was absent.

State of the City address
Mayor Susan Infeld read her State of the City address, which will also be included in the newsletter to residents. Her goal has been to make the City of University Heights a place where people want to live and raise a family. The city has carri-
ried forward a $2.5 million surplus into 2016 and will continue to seek grant funds to supplement the budget. The $1 million street repair budget for 2016 will allow the city to repair or improve more streets than ever before. She looks forward to the opening of the new com-
nunity park and the remaining of several tennis courts. New swim programs have been successful and, in 2016, the city’s senior citizens will be able to use the Cleveland Heights Senior Activity Center.

Community safety
Council authorized the mayor to expand funds for the printing and mailing of a community survey for the city’s master plan, with an additional clause to limit expenses to $10,000. The mayor was still awaiting a committee’s estimate to provide return postage for using randomized one-in-six mailers versus return postage on all mailers. The mayor will also look into providing bar-coded envelopes so that only returned surveys are charged postage. The estimated cost thus far was $6,800, but she was asking for approval of up to $7,500. Council did not want any further delays for approval of additional costs, but also did not want to provide open-ended approval, so it settled on a cap of $10,000.

2016 street repair
Council authorized a request to seek bids for the city’s 2016 street repair program, with Councillor Mark Wiseman voting no. Joseph Cluni, city engineer, reported that, with lower oil prices, he is hoping to receive a lower bid for street repairs, enabling the possibility of repairing ad-
ditional streets or parking lots (primarily the lot adjacent to the new park or the lot by the Purvis Park tennis courts). Wiseman expressed concern that the list did not represent the streets in the worst condition. Cluni and Mayor Infeld explained that the list considers a number of factors including the amount of traffic, the impact on traffic flow when repairing too many streets in one area, and expected waterline replace-
ments. Council has budgeted $1 million for street repairs in 2016.

SWEDISH SOLUTION
GALLOP TIVIC IN UNITIV

LWV Observer: Wendy Duering.

Pedestrian safety and roadways
improvements
Council approved an application to the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA) for funding from the Transportation for Livable Communi-
ties Program for pedestrian safety and roadway improvements on Warrensville Center Road. There is no cap on the amount of grant money that can be requested, but $500,000 is available for possible projects across five coun-
ties. University Heights will apply for the grant in an amount between $100,000 to $175,000 to install two mid-block crosswalks on Warrensville Center Road, replaced by a grass and concrete paver-to shorten the distance required to cross Warrensville. (There is currently a graphic on the city’s website displaying the proposal.) These two sections were chosen based on feedback and traffic studies. Councillor Steven Sims voted against the resolution, expressing concern that the changes would impede the flow of traffic on War-
rensville.

Bellefaira parking area
Council approved Bellefaira CJB’s application for constructing a parking area on the north end of its campus. Councillor John Rach asked if there was a plan to replace the trees that are to be removed, some of which are quite large. Building Commissioner Eric Tuck-
macall was quoted as saying that these would be a temporary parking lot, as it is part of a larger proposal potentially including a new building, no landscaping plans and stipulations were needed. Additional plans will be brought before council and replacement of trees can be addressed then. Rach voted against the motion because of the loss of trees.

LWV Observer: Wendy Duering.

FEBRUARY 1, 2016
Vice Mayor Susan D. Pardee was absent.

Park construction
Mayor Infeld reported that all park construction updates are being posted to the city’s website. The work will resume early in spring as soon as the ground is dry. A number of change orders have resulted in an increase of approximately $22,000 thus far, but the project is still well within budget with room for possible additions.

LIBRARY
Customers can trade in their current library cards for a limited-
edition centennial card featuring the library’s centennial logo.

Local history fans can learn about the library’s past through an interactive timeline on the library’s website, www.heightslibrary.org, which will also feature the audio re-
memb rence of former library staff and board members. Libraries will celebrate its Centennial Kick-Off on Sunday, May 1, starting at 2 p.m., at the his-
toric Coventry Village Library, 1927 Coventry Road. Local author Mary Doria Russell will give a special talk, followed by a time capsule burial, birthday cake, live music and chil-
dren’s activities. The event will be presented in partnership with the Friends of Heights Libraries and the Fund for the Future of Heights Libraries.

Centennial-related program-
ing includes activities for kids: a centennial poster contest (see article on page 141, and Picture Book Mad-
ness, which gives kids the opportu-
nity to vote for the best picture book of the past century.

The results of both contests will be included in the library’s time capsule.

Visit www.heightslibrary.org for information on all of Heights Librar-
ies centennial-related programs.

Sheryl Banks is the marketing and com-
munity relations manager for the Cleve-
land Heights University Heights Public Library System.
Cleveland Heights City Council
Meeting highlights

JANUARY 19, 2016
All council members were present.

Ruffing Montessori School students observe council
Mayor Cheryl Stephens recognized two Ruffing Montessori School seventh-grade students observing the meeting.

Rezoning residential parcels
The city has received a petition from Circle K to rezone two parcels from residential to commercial as part of a development plan proposed for the site of the Center Mayfield Building.

Bids and requests for qualifications
Council granted to the city manager authority to obtain bids for sand, gravel and limestone; and to issue two requests for qualifications: the first for building inspection and plan review services, and the second for executive search firms to recruit an economic development director.

County sewer maintenance services
Council authorized an agreement with Cyphogah County for services that will help maintain the city’s sanitary and storm sewers and catch basins at a price that is less than that of a private company. The agreement will expire on Dec. 31, and the total amount to be paid by the city shall not exceed $100,000.

New police chief
Kahlil Seren, chair of the Public Safety and Health Committee, congratulated Arnette Meckleburg on her appointment as the city’s next police chief, succeeding Jeffrey Robertson, who is retiring. She will be sworn in Feb. 1.

Citizen appointments to architectural board

LWV Observer: Katherine Sladler.

FEBRUARY 1, 2016
All council members were present.

Public comments
Rezoning issue on Mayfield Road: Fourteen residents spoke against the rezoning request.


LWV Observer: Katherine Sladler.

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Rezoning issue on Mayfield Road: Fourteen residents spoke against the rezoning request.


LWV Observer: Katherine Sladler.
Greater Cleveland Congregations identifies key challenges facing CH

James Henke

More than 80 Cleveland Heights residents came together on Jan. 31, at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church on Fairmount Boulevard, to identify what they consider to be the biggest challenges facing Cleveland Heights.

Called the Cleveland Heights Listening Session, the program was initiated by Greater Cleveland Congregations (GCC), an organization representing 40 different religious congregations in the Cleveland area, as well as partner organizations in Cuyahoga County.

GCC comprises diverse groups of Catholic and Protestant churches; the Islamic Center of Cleveland; Jewish synagogues and temples; and Unitarian Universalists.

Members of both St. Paul’s and Forest Hill Presbyterian Church, located at the intersection of Monticello Boulevard and Lee Road, organized the program. Khalilah Worley, associate organizer of GCC, moderated. Two representatives from Cuyahoga County Executive Armond Budish’s staff attended the event.

The two-hour program began with an opening prayer by the Rev. Richard Israel, associate rector at St. Paul’s, followed by a brief history of Cleveland Heights presented by Joyce Koper, a member of Church of the Redeemer (United Methodist) on South Taylor Road.

The attendees then broke into nine groups for a 40-minute discussion of what they considered to be the most pressing issues facing Cleveland Heights.

Ultimately, they identified the two biggest issues facing the city:

- The first is the generally negative perception of the CH-UH public school system, especially in the eyes of outsiders considering moving to the area. This negative view is countered by the positive experiences of many residents whose children attend Heights public schools.
- The problem is seen as being exacerbated by subjective school “ratings” on real estate websites, such as Zillow.com, which rate school districts based on state standardized tests. Currently, all CH-UH public schools are rated at the red-yellow “low” level, far from the green “high” level rating. A score of 2 out of a possible 10 is now assigned to Cleveland Heights High School.

The second most pressing issue is the ongoing decay of many Cleveland Heights houses and buildings.

Many in attendance cited absentee landlords, a higher number of rent defaults in the area, and high income-tax rates that prevent some potential homeowners from purchasing homes in the city.

Worley acknowledged that the two predominant issues were related.

In addition to those two key issues, breakout groups also reported these concerns: improving community relations with city police; safety in some neighborhoods and schools; juvenile misbehavior, while traveling to and from school; declining housing values and business districts, including Severance Town Center and Lee Road.

Residents also expressed concern about a proposed Circle K convenience store and gas station, which developers seek to build on the current site of the former Center Mayfield Theater.

GCC formed in 2011. “It was organized to be a voice for citizens so they could take a place alongside government and business interests to bring social justice to Cleveland,” said Israel.

When GCC formed, Israel explained, it identified five key issues to focus on: healthcare, jobs, criminal justice, education and sustainable food. Since then, it has added gun violence as a sixth key issue.

St. Paul’s became involved with GCC when the organization undertook a campaign to bring about an expansion of Medicaid coverage in Ohio.

“We managed to get the governor to put a Medicaid expansion in the state budget, and, as a result, 500,000 to 400,000 people who were previously uninsured were able to get healthcare,” Israel said.

He noted that GCC also worked with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District to help pass its school levy and to persuade the government to support the Cleveland Plan, which gave more autonomy to local schools.

Israel added that the organization also managed to get Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson and the Cleveland Police Department to sign a consent decree with the U.S. Department of Justice to reform the police department.

After GCC’s initial successes, many of which involved the city of Cleveland, the organization decided it was time to work toward similar successes in other cities, including Cleveland Heights, where nine of GCC’s 40 congregations are based.

Cleveland Heights Council Member Mary Danbar, who attended the Jan. 31 GCC event, invited participants to the Cleveland Heights Master Plan community meeting on Feb. 23, to discuss and set priorities for strategic development.

GCC is planning two future meetings to address the issues identified at its Jan. 31 session, so that the group can work collaboratively to find solutions.

More information about the organization can be found at www.greaterclevelandcongregations.org.

James Henke, a Cleveland Heights resident, was a writer and editor at Rolling Stone magazine for 15 years. He is on the board of FutureHeights, and is co-chair of the Heights Observer Editorial Advisory Committee. Andrea C. Turner, Heights Observer managing editor, contributed to this article.

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A remembrance of Monique V. King

Halida Dinova

Monique V. King (née Wolf), a long-time Cleveland Heights resident, died Feb. 3 in Tucson, Ariz., where she had been living for the past 25 years. She was 84.

Born in Paris, King survived the German Occupation during World War II and came to the United States in 1948 on an American Field Service scholarship. In 1950 she married Richard C. King, according to an obituary published in the Arizona Daily Star.

She graduated magna cum laude from Case Western Reserve University in 1954 and, from the same school, earned a Ph.D. in chemistry in 1959 and an M.D. in 1965. She received training in psychoanalysis from the Cleveland Psychoanalytic Institute, and became a training/supervising analyst there in 1981, according to the obituary. On moving to Tucson, she worked to build a psychoanalytic community in Southern Arizona. Committed to lifelong learning, King helped to form the Splendidio Intellectual Pursuits Program — a mini-university offering courses to area residents — and, among her many other pursuits, organized a series of chamber music concerts with artists from the Tucson Symphony Orchestra.

I met Monique King while studying piano at the Cleveland Institute of Music; I was taking English writing lessons from her husband (who died in 2007). They both took an interest in my concert performances and followed my career over the years. After they moved to Arizona from their home on Mornington Lane, we communicated frequently and I always received their encouragement, advice and affection. They were fully aware of how difficult life could be for a young artist from a foreign country.

I will never forget the encouraging gifts they gave me, such as air miles that allowed me to travel to Europe for performances and recordings; monetary donations for recording projects; and even a warm coat in a cold winter, when they discovered I was ill with bronchitis.

Monique King was a brilliant and disciplined person. I marveled at how she continued to practice medicine in Tucson, passing the difficult qualifying exams to obtain a medical license in Arizona at age 62. Soon after, she purchased a Steinway piano and, starting as a beginner, became proficient enough in three years’ time to perform Mozart’s Sonata in C major for friends.

She always enjoyed learning and never accepted any idea of “being too old to do it.” This quality in her has always inspired me. In one of our last conversations, she said, “Nobody should ever hear the ‘organ recital’ — meaning the list of health complaints about growing old. “Instead, there is so much to see, learn and think about.”

University Heights resident Halida Dinova was born in Kazan, Russia, and is a globally acclaimed concert pianist.

COTS hosts talk on lead exposure dangers

Connie Crihfield

Anyone following the news out of Flint, Mich., or Sebring, Ohio, knows that lead poisoning is serious.

Exposure to lead is especially dangerous for young children and pregnant women, and, here in the Heights, we have many old homes with old pipes.

On March 16, at 7:30 p.m., Dorr Dearborn, M.D., will discuss the current status of lead issues and lead poisoning in the Heights and in Greater Cleveland. The talk will take place at Church of the Saviour (COTS), Calvary Hall, 2537 Lee Road. Dearborn has done research and treated children with lead poisoning, and is active in getting children screened for lead exposure.

All members of the community are welcome to attend. For more information, call the church office at 216-321-8880 during normal business hours.

Connie Crihfield is a member of Church of the Saviour’s Health Ministry Team.

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Pets provide many benefits

Senior Citizen Happenings

Senior Citizen Happenings, sponsored by the City of University Heights, are open to all senior citizens. Events take place on Thursdays at 2 p.m. at the University Heights Library. To receive the monthly schedule by e-mail, call 216-932-7800, ext. 205, or send an e-mail to info@universityheights.com.

March 1: Crystal Culler, director of the new Center 4 Brain Health at Menorah Park (27100 Cedar Road, Beachwood), will outline services and programs that can enhance memory and thinking skills, including brain aerobics classes, memory assessments, support groups, memory screenings, Bright Minds book club, and special cognitive fitness sessions.

March 10: Irwin Weinberger, an art educator and musician, will discuss his experiences performing with the Yiddishe Cup Klezmer Band, and teaching middle school art classes. Weinberger plays guitar, ukulele, mandolin and banjo, and has a special passion for impressionistic painting from the early 1900s.

March 17: Instrumentalists and vocalists from the Cleveland Institute of Music will perform.

March 24: Today’s speaker will be Anda Cook, vice president of Cleveland Cultural Gardens Federation, a haven of plants, monuments, sculptures and fountains in landscaped gardens along East Boulevard and Martin Luther King Jr. Drive. The federation is planning to celebrate its 100th anniversary.

March 31: Today’s speaker will be Amanda Walsh, who started playing piano when she was 7, is a 1998 graduate of University of Cincinnati’s College Conservatory of Music, and teaches piano at Motter’s Music in Lyndhurst. Walsh is a songwriter and performer (who appears) on various occasions with guitarist Rick Szekely, and a Heights resident who loves the diversity of the community.

Pets do more for us than just keep us company. They also provide us with many health benefits. According to The Centers for Disease Control, regular walking or playing with pets can decrease stress, and lower blood pressure, cholesterol and triglyceride levels. The companionship that pets provide also can help manage loneliness and depression.

Mayo Clinic studies have found that pets help reduce stress and anxiety in medical patients, increase the survival rate for heart attack victims, and help increase the appetite of overweight elderly patients.

Dr. Julie Shell of Cleveland Veterinary Acupuncture in Cleveland Heights (216-630-1450) noted that having a pet helps increase the quality of life for her senior clients who live alone or have chronic health issues. Pets also help maintain their owners’ health. “Clients have told me, ‘If it weren’t for my dog, I would never leave the house,’” said Shell.

Dr. Linda Mitchell of Rainbow Veterinary Clinic in Cleveland Heights (216-291-3931) said that pets provide valuable unconditional love that helps one feel connected and secure. Many of her clients can’t imagine not having a pet. “A client in her mid-80s lost her cat and was devastated,” said Mitchell, “but she soon adopted another one.”

Adrienne Brockway, owner of Animal Zen in Cleveland Heights (216-402-6513), a company that provides various services for pets, has observed that her senior clients are especially diligent about taking care of their pet’s health, and that seniors and their pets have strong bonds. “When we pet-sit for seniors,” Brockway said, “they let us know all of the animal’s likes and dislikes.

If you are thinking about adopting a new pet, make sure to choose one that you are able to take care of, and that is safe for you. Some dogs pull too hard when they are being walked. Some dogs and cats walk between legs or lie on the floor, becoming a tripping hazard. It may be difficult for some seniors to reach up to clean a bird cage, or bend down to clean a cat litter box.

The American Veterinary Medical Foundation recommends that one research the specific needs of the animal before making a decision.

Some questions to consider are: What does the pet eat and how much does it cost? How much exercise does the pet need? What else does the pet need to stay healthy? What is its personalty? How large will it become? How much will veterinary care cost? Am I able to properly care for and clean up after the pet? Will neighbors complain? How long will the pet live? Who will take care of it if I no longer can?

The physical and emotional benefits of living with pets are many. The right pet will not only enrich your life, it will also help you stay healthier.

Judith Eugene is a native of Cleveland Heights who provides life-enrichment classes and activities for senior adults and those with physical and mental challenges through www.lovingseniorbandgroup.com. She can be reached at 216-488-5737 or judith@lovingseniorbandgroup.com.

Senior Eugene is a Heights resident who loves the diversity of the community.

The Senior Activity Center is preparing to celebrate its Creative Aging Ohio Initiative—to encourage new, innovative arts programming. SAC will use the grant to focus on storytelling from a personal perspective.

The program, Our Stories: Portrayals of Life, is free, but can accommodate only 12 participants. Register soon to reserve a spot.

Participants will meet at SAC on Saturdays, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., beginning April 2 and culminating in a reading at Cain Park on June 15. Arts professional Joanna Hunkins has been hired to direct the group in play reading, essay writing, theater games and thoughtful self-exploration.

Starting March 2, SAC will offer classes in Basic French ($51 for an 8-week session).

The Senior Activity Center is open Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. A complete schedule of programs is published in the community center’s newsletter, which is available at Cleveland Heights City Hall, local libraries, the community center and online at www.clevelandheights.com. For more information and to register for any program, call 216-691-7377.

Amy Jenkins is supervisor at the Cleveland Heights Office on Aging and the Senior Activity Center. She can be reached at 216-691-7379 or by e-mail at ajenkins@clhobi.com.

Heights Observer March 1, 2016
Heights Kids

Heights Observer March 1, 2016

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LEI to host fundraiser and Kids’ Comic Con

Cynthia Larsen
Lake Erie Ink: a writing space for youth (LEI) is holding two special events this month. The fourth annual Giant Bananagrams Tournament will take place on March 12, 2–4 p.m., at Cleveland Heights High School (Wiley campus). Then, on March 19, LEI will host its fourth annual Kids’ Comic Con, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., featuring workshops with professional writers and illustrators, including keynote speaker Marc Sumerak, an Eisner and Harvey Award-nominated comic book writer (for Franklin Richards: Son of a Genius).

LEI’s Giant Bananagrams Tournament is a fundraiser that celebrates words and teamwork. Teams of two to four players will compete against one another in front of an audience for prizes. Other entertainment includes a banana-inspired haiku contest, food, door prizes and a cakewalk. If you want to go bananas with words, visit www.lakeerieink.org for more information, and to register.

On March 19, LEI’s 2016 Kids’ Comic Con will give young people a chance to work with local independent comic creators during four hours of workshops. In addition to Sumerak, guest artists include: Jake Kelly and John G. (The Lake Erie Monster), Bryn Adams (The Crooked Cuyahoga), Lee Smith (The Ohio Chronicles), Miguel and Michelle Hernandez (4th Hanzo and Karata Coco), and freelance artists Sequoia Bostick and Clare Kolar. Workshops will cover both drawing and writing comics, as well as the ever-popular "create your own comic character in clay." This year, LEI will also facilitate a panel on "Girls and Women in Comics—as Characters and Creators."

Attendees will have the opportunity to purchase comic books, art and graphic novels at LEI’s Artist Alley. Lunch will be sold on-site or attendees may bring their own. Costumes are encouraged, but super heroes and super villains should leave their weapons at home.

The Comic Con is open to all people ages 8–18. Adults are welcome if they are accompanied by a kid, and teachers may attend if they show a staff ID. Admission is $5o, with scholarships available on request. On-site registration begins at 9:30 a.m.; pre-registration is available online at www.lakeerieink.org or by calling 216-320-4757.

The fourth annual LEI Kids’ Comic Con is supported in part by the residents of Cuyahoga County through a public grant from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture. Lake Erie Ink is located at 2843 Washington Blvd. (the Coventry School building) in Cleveland Heights. Lake Erie Ink: a writing space for youth is a not-for-profit 501(c)3 that provides creative expression opportunities and academic support to youth in the Greater Cleveland community. LEI offers programming all year long, including summer camps for youth in grades 3–8. Camp registration begins March 1.

Cynthia Larsen teaches writing at Lake Erie Ink: a writing space for youth.

Families invited to March 2 kindergarten information night and March 9 open house

Cathan Bricker

The Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District will host its annual kindergarten information night on Wednesday, March 2, 6:30–8:30 p.m., at Noble Elementary School, 1203 Ardoon Street in Cleveland Heights.

Representatives from each of the district’s seven elementary schools will occupy a classroom where parents can meet CH-UH kindergarten teachers from their school and ask questions about the program. Parents will also receive information about before- and after-school programs, student services, food service and transportation.

District leaders will speak briefly on kindergarten readiness, curriculum, registration and related matters.

“This event is a great opportunity for families to meet the educators and learn what their child can expect when coming to kindergarten,” said Superintendent Talisa Dixon. “I look forward to meeting our future Tiger Nation students and their families.”

The event is free and childcare will be provided by Family Connections. For more information, contact the Early Childhood Center at 216-371-7356.

On March 9, 9:30–11 a.m., each district elementary school will host an open house. Parents can tour the schools, meet with teachers and principals, and observe the learning that is taking place in the classrooms.

Cathan Bricker is the communications administrative assistant for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District.

 Heights Observer March 1, 2016 12 www.heightsobserver.org
Edwards sisters hope to play hockey internationally

If you’ve recently attended a Heights High hockey game, a AAA Pee Wee boys hockey game, or a 14U (age 14 and under) girls hockey game in Cleveland Heights, you may not have been able to identify who was beneath those massive helmets. Chances are good, however, that you were watching one of Charone and Robert Edwards’ four children tearing up the ice.

For the Edwards family, hockey is a lifestyle. Robert, a local painting subcontractor, played for Heights High as a teen and has been involved with adult men’s hockey leagues. Bobby, 17, is a senior at Heights High and captain of the Heights High hockey team. Colson, 8, plays youth hockey. Chayla, 14, and Laila, 12, both started playing in the Cleveland Heights Youth Hockey Program, based at the Cleveland Heights Recreation Center, before they were 8 years old.

Ever since they started playing, the girls have grown impressively, playing elite hockey (AAA) with boys for the Cleveland Jr. Lumberjacks and Cleveland Barons respectively, competing against the top boys’ teams from other cities. Laila and Chayla also have participated in the Pittsburgh Penguins Elite Girls hockey program, one of the top girls programs in the country. Last year, Chayla made it to the national championship game with the Penguins.

Having positive female role models early on inspired the girls to pursue their own success in the sport. They watched other Heights players, such as sisters Kasidy and Kendal Anderson, Ann Marie Fitzgerald, Lauren Bernard and Lora Clarke, excel on the ice, often against boys.

Despite the time and energy commitment hockey demands, both Chayla and Laila have excelled academically, and both also play the violin. Chayla, a ninth-grade honors student at Shadyside Academy, a boarding school in Pittsburgh, won the Outstanding Math Student of the Year Award last year at Roxboro Middle School. She now attends Shadyside in order to continue playing with the Pittsburgh Penguins Elite team, which she has been a member of for six years.

Laila, also an honors student, is a sixth-grader at Roxboro Middle School. As a fifth grader, she won the Roxboro Elementary School spelling bee.

“I’m so proud of the girls’ tireless efforts to work hard and be better at the game … getting up at 5 a.m. to get extra skills on a school day and then going back for more practice; possibly missing social events that a pre-teen and teenager normally would have,” said their mother, Charone Edwards, an Oxford Elementary School employee. “I admire their drive and will to be the best!”

“I have had the pleasure of competing with and against two very special young women in the sport of hockey,” said Taylor Clark, assistant coach with the Pittsburgh Penguins Elite 14U and Cleveland Lumberjacks teams. Clark, a former Michigan State hockey player, is currently Chayla’s coach, and coached both girls when they played with the Ohio Flames.

“I think the world of both Chayla and Laila Edwards. What both have already accomplished and what they are about to accomplish in the game of life cannot be underestimated. When their names are brought up in conversation, I always use the word ‘polished.’ Both are an inspiration to young girls.”

Both girls have been invited to play internationally this spring and summer, as members of West Coast Selects teams—part of the Selects Organization, which brings together elite female hockey players from across North America to compete with some of the best international players. Laila has been invited to play with the U14 West Coast Selects in Sweden and Finland in April, in Chicago and Toronto in May; and in Rochester in June. Chayla has been invited to Minnesota in March for nationals; to Chicago and Toronto in May; to Rochester in June; and to Minnesota and Prague in July.

The Edwards family has devoted much time and resources to supporting their children’s hockey pursuits, and the financial commitment has been both worthwhile and immense. To help offset the costs, three fundraisers are in the works to help Chayla and Laila pursue their hockey-playing goals.

A 50/50 raffle began Feb. 7 and continues through March 16. Tickets can be purchased for as little as $2.

In February, the Edwards family hosted a #TeamEdwards Write a Check Campaign at their home, where attendees are asked to make a donation toward the goal of raising $10,000 to cover expenses for the trips. Both girls will attend the event, and speak about their experiences.

On April 9, supporters are invited to the Team Edwards Gala at Bodega Restaurant and Lounge, 1854 Coventry Road, 7-9 p.m. To purchase raffle tickets or tickets for the gala, e-mail jggroups26@gmail.com.

Jennifer Holland and Gennifer Hurtt are partners of the JG Consulting Group, a concierge firm that includes event planning among its services. They are the event planners for the Edwards sisters’ fundraisers.

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

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

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

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

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

Visit www.judsonsmarthving.org and click Judson at Home.
Library seeks student art to celebrate centennial
Julia Murphy

The year 2016 marks the centennial of the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library System. While celebratory programming will begin this spring, the library’s Centennial Poster Art Competition and Exhibition asks children and teens to start thinking now about what the library has meant over the past 100 years, how patrons use it today, and how it may evolve in the future. Young artists are invited to submit two-dimensional, rigid-mount artwork inspired by books and libraries to the Lee Road Library, April 1-7. A committee of library staff, as well as representatives from the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District Art Department and Blick Art Materials, will choose a winner for grades K-4, 5-8 and 9-12 categories. Those who win will receive gift certificates to Blick Art Materials for $50, $100 and $250, respectively.

All entries will be exhibited in the Lee Road Library’s art gallery in May. Winners will be announced at the Centennial Celebration at the Coventry Village Library on Sunday, May 8, where images of the winning artwork will be included in the library’s time capsule, to be unearthed in the year 2066. Prizes will also be made for display in library branches.

“We are happy to provide support for our city’s library system and very excited to see what the students create for the competition,” said Justin Willis, manager of Blick Art Materials on Mayfield Road, which donated the gift certificate prizes.

“We think this will be a great way for us to see how the young people in our community view the library and share their perspectives with everyone else in our art gallery,” said Nancy Levin, Heights Libraries director. “Our strategic plan for the next year includes getting involved in community conversation, and this is just one more way for us to hear, or rather see, what our community thinks is important.”

In 2015, Heights Libraries transformed its art gallery, located on the first floor of the Lee Road Library, into a place where people can explore their imaginations and interact with one another in a unique format. The library created interactive exhibits inspired by the library’s programming themes: superhero heroes to tie in with summer reading themes, Alice in Wonderland in October, and Peter and the Starcatcher in November, in a collaboration with Dobama Theatre. This year the theme is art, with the Centennial Poster Art Exhibition and other ideas in the works, including a library staff art exhibition.

For more information about the Centennial Poster Art Competition and Exhibition, visit www.heightslibr ary.org or call at 216-932-3600, ext. 1250.

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

Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library Board Meeting highlights
JANUARY 25, 2016
All board members were present.

Board officers for 2016
Board officers for 2016 are: Rick Ortme y, president; Ron Holland, vice president; and Abby Bostock, secretary.

New adult services librarian
John Piche, formerly employed by Heights Libraries from 1997 to 2010, has returned from California to accept the position of adult services librarian.

2015 summary report (hours, staff turnover, budget programs)
Laurie Marotzo, human resources manager, presented a summary report for 2015. The library’s hours of operation reached a record high with all four branches open on Sunday. Staff turnover increased to 20 percent from 16 percent. Forty-one vacancies were filled, with 16 filled internally by promotion or transfer. Benefit costs reported were: medical, up 5.05 percent; dental, no increase; and long-term disability insurance, no increase. Participation in the library’s wellness program saved $9,000 on medical insurance. The library targeted a 3 percent renewal credit, but did not reach the necessary 75 percent participation in the wellness program. Non-participants receive a financial penalty.

University Heights Library seeks temporary waist-height wall
During the time that the University Heights Library is closed for renovations, a mini-branch is planned to serve the community. Space is currently being sought.

Balanced Scorecard review
Kim DeFelice-Ackroyd, deputy director, presented highlights, including a partnership with ASIA (Asian Services in Action), which will aid the Noble Neighborhood Library in its services to the Nepalese population; negotiation of a reduced speaker fee for the “On the Same Page” community read; and completion of both interior and exterior lighting installation at the Coventry Village Library.

Website/Social Media report
Sharon Banks, youth services manager, reported that, as with circulation and in-person visitor numbers, there was a 10 percent drop in website use. The number of visitors to the research database website fell by 24 percent. A hypothesis is that, with a better economy, fewer people need these services. However, Facebook “likes” and Twitter followers increased.

December public service report
The new reference desk on the second floor of the Lee Road Library was in

What’s going on at your library?
For a complete list of library programs, and to register, visit www. heightslibrary.org.

Coventry Village Library
1925 Coventry Road, 216-321-5400

Thursday, March 3, 7 p.m.
Poetry with The Poet Laureate. Meredith Holmes, Cleveland Heights poet laureate, will read selected works, including her most recent collection of poems, Familiar at First, Then Strange (Pond Road Press, 2013).

Lee Road Library
2345 Lee Road, 216-932-3600

Thursday, March 10, 6-8:30 p.m.
17th Annual Poetry Slam. Are you a young poet? Show off your skills and compete to win prizes at this annual event. Free pizza will be served and workshops will be offered prior to the event itself. Contact the library for details. This program is offered in conjunction with Lake Erie Ink and Cleveland Heights High School. Only those who wish to perform must register in advance. Registration opened on Feb. 25.

Noble Neighborhood Library
2800 Noble Road, 216-931-9665

Monday, March 14, 7 p.m.
What Can a Woman Do? Watch the public premiere of “Womyn Space,” a short film by three Cleveland artists presented in collaboration with Dobama Theatre, in a unique format.

University Heights Library
15866 Cedar Road, 216-321-4700

Tuesday, March 22, 6:30 p.m.
NEO-RLS Tech Lab. Families, try out the latest technological gadgets and gizmos, including wearable tech, Snap Circuits, a 3D pen and a drone. This program is presented by the North-east Ohio Regional Library System. Registration begins March 8.

Community Forum Discussion
The Cleveland Conceal Decree
Sunday, March 20, 2016, 9:30-10:45 a.m.
Is there cooperation between Cleveland and suburban police departments regarding basic elements of the U.S. Department of Justice consent decree? Many of the decisions affect community safety policies throughout the county. What can citizens do to help ensure safety in their own communities?

James Hardiman, Esq., Chair, Citizens for Safe and Fair Communities and Vice-President, NAACP in conversation with Dr. Yvonne Coneer, member of the Cleveland Community Police Commission.

First Unitarian Church
21600 Shaker Blvd.  Shaker Heights
www.firstunitariancleveland.org

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

In the Heights
Heights Observer March 1, 2016
Tigers athletes ink letters of intent

The following students signed letters of intent committing to college athletic programs.

•  Raymond Hudson, football, Baldwin Wallace University (Ohio)
•  LeAndrew Woody, football, Malone University (Ohio)
•  Alphonzo Terry, football, Malone University (Ohio)
•  Jahquan Primm, football, Baldwin Wallace University (Ohio)
•  Lee Price, football, Hocking College (Ohio)
•  John Miller, football, Hocking College (Ohio)
•  Artemus Watts, football, Wittenberg University (Ohio)
•  Zachary Ford, football, University of Delaware (Ohio)
•  Gabe Pewu, soccer, Cleveland State University (Ohio)
• Demonte McGregor, football, Central State University (Ohio)
•  Kadin Lockhart, football, Notre Dame College (Ohio)
•  Kadin Lockhart, football, Baldwin Wallace University (Ohio)
•  John Miller, football, Hocking College (Ohio)
•  Brandon Parks-Hayes, football, Hocking College (Ohio)
•  Lee Price, football, Hocking College (Ohio)
•  Jabqun Primm, football, Baldwin Wallace University (Ohio)
•  Gabriel Pewu, soccer, Cleveland State University (Ohio)
•  Malik Smith, basketball, University of North Carolina, Asheville

On Feb. 3, National Signing Day, 15 Heights High senior student-athletes officially announced the names of the colleges they will attend after graduation. National Signing Day is the first day that Class of 2016 high school athletes can sign binding letters of intent committing to college athletic programs.

Family, friends and team members attended the ceremony in support of the athletes, as did Talisa Dixon, superintendent, and Felisha Gould, assistant superintendent.

Mac Stephens, head football coach, Par Gla, assistant boys soccer coach, and Jeremy Holmes, head boys basketball coach, spoke proudly about the athletes. The seniors then took turns speaking, expressing gratitude to their families, coaches, teachers and teammates. The event culminated in the ceremonial signing, followed by a standing ovation from the audience.

The following students signed letters of intent to play a sport at the college level:

• Zachary Ford, football, University of Toledo (Ohio)
• Raymond Hudson, football, Baldwin Wallace University (Ohio)

Joy Henderson

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• Demonte McGregor, football, Air Force Academy (Colo.)
• Devonte McGregor, football, Central State University (Ohio)
• John Miller, football, Hocking College (Ohio)
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• Gabriel Pewu, soccer, Cleveland State University (Ohio)
• Malik Smith, basketball, University of North Carolina, Asheville

The video of the ceremony can be viewed at www.chuh.org/high-schoolvideos.aspx.

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

Heights Barbershoppers win excellent rating in international competition

The Heights Barbershoppers, a Heights High vocal music group, sings old-time barbershop music with a bit of a modern flair. The a cappella music is in four-part harmony, and the performers use theatrical movements to accentuate the lyrics. In late January, the group attended the International Barbershop Harmony Society’s Mid-Winter Convention in Reno, Nev.

The convention drew top-notch barbershop groups—from all over the globe. For high school attendees, the event offers exposure to seasoned and award-winning singers who can offer formal and informal instruction.

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The Heights students attended master classes with experienced barbershoppers from Westminster Chorus, an international champion ensemble, and received feedback from judges during the competition. The Heights Barbershoppers earned a rating of Excellent for their performance of three songs.

Director Jesse Lange was very pleased with the students’ performance on- and off-stage. “The boys really shined during the competition,” he said, “[They] appreciated and learned from the master classes, and are respectful and passionate about the music.”

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Heights Barbershoppers at the January convention: Director Jesse Lange, Ted Byers, Grant Hanes, Garret Vandall, Michael Garrett, Andrew Pecoraro, William Aiken, Gerald Shazor, Orion Brock, Betsy Warner, Agent

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Cleveland Heights-University Heights Board of Education

Meeting highlights

JANUARY 19, 2016

All board members were present.

Facilities: middle school renovations
The board was given an overview of the middle school phase of the district facilities project. The time frame for this phase is for Monticello and Roxboro middle schools to be completely renovated and ready for student occupancy by August 2019.

Contractors: Representatives of the companies working on the project introduced themselves and their companies. Anne Hartman, the Cleveland Heights-based company specializing in mechanical, electrical, plumbing and technical work, with a focus on sustainable design. The Coniglio Company, represented by Oweny Rease-Coniglio, and Ozanne Construction Company, represented by Fred Rodgers, are EDGE firms (Encouraging Diversity, Growth and Equity) which will help the district reach its goals of minority participation in the facilities project.

Assessment process: Project teams are assessing current conditions in the two buildings. They are familiarizing themselves with the community and the curriculum in the belief that program drives design. They will seek input from district administrators, hold visioning sessions with Monticello and Roxboro staff and students, and confer with current third-graders, who will comprise the first class to occupy the renovated schools. Two design charrettes for the public will occur in late February or March.

LEED: The project leaders stressed their goals of staying within the budget as well as being energy efficient and using durable materials. The design team is experienced in LEED (Leadership in Environmental and Energy Design). The high school project is currently on track for LEED silver certification, the level that most school projects aim to achieve. Reduction of energy use is one of the highest goals in LEED certification, but energy-saving options can be expensive. Decisions affecting cost will be decided by the board.

During discussion, board members emphasized the importance of the CHUH community of sustainability, minority participation and communication.

Board committee assignments
The following board committee assignments were made:
• District calendar: Eric Silverman
• Cleveland Heights Recreation Board: Jim Posch and Beverly Wright
• Lay Finance Committee: Ron Register and Jim Posch
• Minority Student Achievement Network: Kal Zucker and Ron Register

Summer Ruffing It!
Summer camps for ages 18 months - Grade 9
June 20 - July 29, 2016
For more information or to register go to: www.ruffingmontessori.net/camps

Field tripsThe following field trips were approved:
• Monticello and Roxboro middle school students to the Model UN Conference, Columbus, Ohio, March 13–16
• Heights High Ensemble to Ohio University and Holmes County, Ohio, April 15–17
• Heights High French Club students to Niagara Falls, Ontario, April 16
• Heights High Robotics Club to California University of Pennsylvania in California, Pa., May 20–21

Safe school strategies
The district’s safe schools strategy includes collaborations with the communities and the police; incident management teams; six part-time Cuyahoga County Sheriff’s deputies at Heights High; and emergency procedures in place in all schools. Specific strategies for special-needs students include the availability of case managers with whom to discuss and report any problem, incident or harassment. Communication with special-needs students and their families will be a focus. Along with the effort to promote positive student behavior, understanding underlying factors in behavior problems, every building has a student-assistance team that includes the counselor and social worker.

Student harassment
On behalf of the board, administration, staff, parents and community members, Board President Kal Zucker expressed dismay over a recent incident of student-on-student harassment, and stated that the district must not be defined by one noncompositional act. He advised that students need encouragement to make positive choices.

FAC openings
The board has received a number of applications for two openings for community members on the Facilities Accountability Committee (FAC), and will make the appointments at the next meeting. The board will also assess how the FAC is working and discuss the possibility of a second committee to monitor and report on the upcoming middle school projects.

Joint meeting with library board
A joint meeting with the library board will be arranged for March.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®

FEBRUARY 2, 2016

All board members were present.

Awards and recognitions
Superintendent Talisa Dixon recognized students who won awards in the Cleveland Heights Martin Luther King Jr. essay contest, Heights High’s student of the month for January, the career tech student of the month, and the career tech program of the month.

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LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
WJCU Radio offers wide-ranging and local programs

Mark Krieger, general manager of WJCU, and Zach Chapman, a JCU freshman and deejay.

James Henke

WJCU-FM, John Carroll University’s (JCU) radio station, is unlike just about any other radio station in Northeast Ohio. WJCU plays a wide mix of music, ranging from classic rock from the 1960s and ’70s, to soul music, rhythm & blues, heavy metal, blues and alternative rock, as well as music from other countries.

“We play all kinds of different stuff,” said Mark Krieger, the station’s general manager. Krieger, who’s 60 years old, has been at WJCU since August 2004. He began working in radio back in 1975 and has worked at numerous stations in the area. He was director of engineering at WQAR for 13 years.

In 2001, he decided to go back to school, and got his master’s degree in communication research from Cleveland State University (CSU). After receiving his degree, he started teaching at CSU. Then one day he got a call informing him that JCU was looking for a new general manager and asking if he would be interested. He decided to take the job. In addition to overseeing the radio station, he also teaches classes in electronic media, audio production and journalism.

WJCU started as WABU in 1969. The station’s name changed a few times over the years, until it became WJCU in 1997. The station can be found at 88.7 FM.

Numerous famous television and radio personalities got their start at WJCU. Most notable among them is Tim Russert, who spent 16 years as the moderator of “Meet the Press” on NBC. He died in 2008, and the university’s communications department, which oversees the radio station, is now called the Tim Russert Depart-

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Heights Arts celebrates food and art with At Table exhibition

Hailey Bickett

At Table: Cleveland Culinarium, a collaborative exhibition combining elements of food and art, opens on March 4, at the Heights Arts gallery on Lee Road.

The exhibition features 27 visual artists, culinary experts, and local poets gathered into five teams, each working with a culinary theme. In addition to food, art installations feature tabletops, custom furniture, ceramics, glass, metal, fiber, photography, drawings, paintings and prints.

“This exhibition speaks to the art of food and community through the materials we use to eat and drink,” explained Mary Ryan, marketing coordinator for Heights Arts. “What we use everyday can be thoughtfully designed. The food you eat is so influenced by the tools you use to eat.”

During the exhibition’s run, attendees can purchase tickets to any of five food and drink events in which they will partake of hearty small plates and craft cocktails designed by local chefs while listening to poetry by local poets in the intimate gallery setting.

The first food and drink event, on Sunday, March 19, features a Scandanavian brunch theme designed by Bridget Thibault of Luna Bakery and Café and Noelle Celeste of Edible Cleveland, as well as poetry by Gail Bellamy.

On Sunday, March 20, Melissa McClelland, a local food and photo stylist, will provide spring family comfort food alongside guest poet Paul Ryland.

Help welcome spring on Thursday, March 24, with tapas crafted by Bob Sterz of Culinary Occasions and poetry by John Donoghue.

On Monday, April 4, Marc-Aurele Buholzer of Vero Pizza Napoletana will serve seasonal small plates, accompanied by guest poet Kathleen Cerevy.

The final food and drink event, on Sunday, April 10, will feature world cuisine by Douglas Katz of fire food & drink, Provenance, and Fire Spice Company, with poetry by Meredith Holmes.

Tickets for each food and drink event are $30 ($20 for Heights Arts members) for food and drink, or $35 ($25 for members) for food only.

To accompany the exhibit, and further involve the community, Heights Arts has created a mixology contest, “ARTinis & Creative Cocktails,” in which neighborhood restaurants and bars will compete for the most creative Heights Arts-inspired beverage, based on popular vote.

Julia Friedman

Dobama Theatre presents the regional premiere of “The Revisionist,” a new play by actor, playwright, and The New Yorker humorist Jesse Eisenberg, which opens March 4.

The play tells the story of a young writer, David, who arrives in Poland with a crippling case of writer’s block and a desire to be left alone. His 75-year-old second cousin Maria (played by the renowned Dorothy Silver) welcomes him with a fervent need to connect with her distant American family. As their relationship develops, she reveals details about her postwar past that test their idea of what it means to be a family.

“The Revisionist” is Dobama Theatre’s fifth mainstage production of its 2015–16 season. The play is directed by Leighana Delorenzo, an actor and director who most recently directed Dobama’s production of “Slowgirl” last season. Delorenzo is the Upper School Theater Director at Laurel School in Shaker Heights.

In addition to Silver, the play features Andrew Gombas and John Basros. The scenic design is by Aaron Benson, with lighting design by Marcus Duna, sound design by Jeremy Dobbins, costume design by Zachary Hickle and props design by Yessenia Real Rivera.

“The Revisionist” runs March 4 through April 3. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit www.dobama.org or call the box office (216-941-3106). Dobama Theatre is located at 2340 Lee Road, at the Lee Road Library.

Juli Friedman is the managing director of Dobama Theatre.
St. Paul’s spring art show opens March 4

Mary Cushing

Shaping Color: Paper and Clay, the spring show at the Nicholson B. White Gallery at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, 2747 Fairmount Blvd., opens with an artists’ reception on Friday, March 4, 6–7 p.m., where participating artists will describe their creative processes and meet with guests. The show runs through June 5.

Featured artists are Cathy Bryan (watercolor on paper), Hilton P. Murray (paper-on-paper construction), Christine Weigand (hand-cut paper) and Andrea LeBlond (ceramics). Bryan directs the Creative Art Therapy program at Judson’s three retirement communities. She loves to show others how to experience joy in their own creative process. Bryan’s artwork reflects her love of nature and keen sense of color. Her favorite medium and ongoing challenge is watercolor. She has taken, as well as taught, community art classes for many years.

Murray’s art reflects monuments of the human spirit, such as those found in architectural structures throughout history. In an effort to reflect the city, sky, earth and water, Murray employs elements of line, shape, value, space, form and texture, and principles of balance, movement, patterns, rhythm and variety. He enjoys working in paper because of the medium’s naturalistic look and feel, and the ways light plays on the surface.

Weigand’s images are made of layered and inset card stock, meticulously cut by hand using an X-Acto knife. After cutting, the card stock resembles a delicate piece of lace. She then has one shot to glue it down or else dozens of hours of work could be down the drain. Her favorite subjects include architecture, flowers and animals—especially cats.

According to LeBlond, “natural order is startlingly beautiful and complex. Microscopic particles, cellular structures, geological formations and the relentless force of entropy are all things that continually fascinate me. I engage these principles by manipulating clay to make these abstract concepts tangible, employing containment, mass, form and color.” Her current works focus on the bowl form, as she is attracted to its mass and interior space. LeBlond feels the bowl itself is ripe with metaphor, it simultaneously conceals and reveals. All are welcome at the opening reception. The gallery is open weekdays, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and on 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.

Western Reserve Chorale performs Mozart and Haydn

Joanne Poderis

Western Reserve Chorale (WRC) continues its 24th season with music by two of the most recognized composers of the Classical Period, Joseph Haydn and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. In its ongoing spirit of serving the Greater Cleveland community audience, the chorale returns to Church of the Gesu (4290 Miramar Blvd., University Heights) as part of the Gesu Chapel Recital Series. The concert, which is free and open to the public, takes place on March 13 at 3:30 p.m.

The concert program, titled Classical MASStery, under the baton of David Gilson, includes Haydn’s Threemiessi/Theresa Mass and Mozart’s Vesperae Solennes de Confessore (K339). Soloists are: soprano Marian Vogel, alto Sandra Ross, tenor Timothy Culver and bass Brian Keith Johnson.

Western Reserve Chorale is a nonprofit group of amateur and professional singers, many of whom are Cleveland Heights residents, dedicated to bringing high-quality performances of choral music to Greater Cleveland. Generously supported by Cuyahoga Arts & Culture, WRC welcomes new singers to join the group.

Rehearsals are held September to June, on Tuesday evenings, 7:15 to 9:30 p.m., at Disciples Christian Church, 3663 Mayfield Road, Cleveland Heights. David W. Gilson, artistic director, leads the vocal ensemble.

For information, visit www.westernreservechorale.org, or call 216-791-0061.

Joanne Poderis, a 45-year Cleveland Heights resident, is executive director of, and coordinator for, the Western Reserve Chorale, a Cleveland Heights-based adult community choir.
The kosher Chinese Philadelphia coloring book Seder

David Budin

I recently found a coloring book among lots of papers in old file folders I was sorting through, trying hard to get rid of stuff I no longer needed. And, no, it wasn’t one of those fancy adult coloring books that are all the rage now. It was one that I bought for 25 cents, one March, about 16 years ago. My kids were in their early teens 16 years ago, so it wasn’t theirs. It was mine.

When I was a teen, March was always one of the hardest months for me to actually make it to high school classes. Every month was bad—I really hated school—but March was probably the worst. But even on many of the days I skipped school, I often snuck into Heights High for a 4th-period choir slot (if you could get back then, but can’t now). Especially in March, because that was the month we usually had spring break (or, as we used to call it, “Easter vacation”), and that was when the Heights Choir went on tour for a week, to different cities, to perform and see the sights.

Choir—and band and orchestra—tours were, and are, educational and a lot of fun. I went on two of them with the Heights Choir. The first was to New York City. Two years later, I was living in New York City, and working in the music business and touring with rock bands (rather than choirs).

Thirty-five years later, my son was a member of Heights High’s orchestra. Early in that school year, the Band and Orchestra Parents Organization asked—begged, actually—for a parent volunteer to head up the tour committee. I immediately volunteered, because I knew how to do that, having been a high school kid and having done it in my professional life as well.

That year we took the orchestra to New York City. I served as one of the chaperones on the trip, too. Being a chaperone is nowhere near as much fun as being one of the kids. It’s kind of a 24-hour-a-day thing, with real responsibilities and work. It was a little educational, too. The main thing I learned is how easy it is to spot kids who are breaking the rules—as I did when I was one of those kids—while the kids really believe you can’t see them doing whatever it is they’re not supposed to be doing. Another thing I learned is how many food items most kids have never eaten or heard of—like, for just one example, mushrooms (really?), which were in one of the dishes we were served in a Chinatown restaurant.

The next year, I volunteered, again, to head the committee and chaperone the trip, this time to Philadelphia. The planning went smoothly, until—just a few weeks before our scheduled departure—I got a call from the school’s principal, Mr. Cipolletti, who sadly died just last month. He called to tell me the Board of Education had announced that we couldn’t go on tour, because the first night of Passover fell during that week. I told him that there were only about six Jewish kids in the school or so going on tour, and that of those, maybe only three were practicing Jews. He said he knew that, but the board was afraid to let it happen.

I said, “What if the Jewish kids’ parents sign a waiver saying it’s OK with them if their kids go?” He said that wouldn’t satisfy the board. I thought about it for a day and called him back. I said, “OK—what if I provide a Seder that night for the Jewish kids who want to participate?” He asked the board and they agreed to that, if the parents would sign a waiver.

I’m not a practicing Jew, but I was raised in that culture. I asked a rabbi friend what I would need to do to make it an official Seder. He said all you really had to do was to tell the Passover story. And have a few food items that are rituals in the service. And don’t eat any bread.

So I booked dinner for the group for that night in a kosher Chinese restaurant. And I went to Frank’s Hebrew Book Store to buy 10 Hagadot (the plural of Hagada, the book that is used at a Seder to tell the story). All of the Hagadot were too expensive for my budget. I wasn’t sure what to do. Until, on my way out, I spotted a stack of coloring books. Of the Passover story. For 25 cents each.

We were, apparently, ahead of our time.

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

Heights Arts puts spotlight on work by Valdivieso Troya

Mary Ryan

Heights Arts launched a new series of spotlight exhibitions on Jan. 29, with a show featuring works by Heights artist Rafael Valdivieso Troya.

Born in Ecuador and now a Cleveland Heights resident, Valdivieso Troya creates intricate compositions using pen and ink, wash, acrylic, and collage techniques. A single work might contain hundreds of figures or faces layered into imaginary spaces that evoke a sense of teeming wildness, and interwoven themes of human joy and struggle. Works in this exhibition range from small pen-and-ink drawings to large muralistic paintings.

The exhibition will be on view in the Heights Arts spotlight gallery through March 12.

Mary Ryan is on staff at Heights Arts, a nonprofit community arts organization.
Cleveland Running Company moves to a new location on Lee Road

Jeff Fisher, owner of Cleveland Running Company.

James Henke

Cleveland Running Company, formerly located on Van Aken Boulevard in Shaker Heights, has relocated to 2246 Lee Road, between Meadowbrook Boulevard and Kensington Road. The store opened in mid-February.

“They’re re-doing the building we were in,” explained owner Jeff Fisher. “Our space was being downsized, and it was priced more than we could afford.”

Fisher said he decided to move the store to Cleveland Heights, where he once lived, because he has always liked the city. “I really like that it has all of these walkable neighborhoods,” he said. “And it’s got a great mix of people. I’m looking forward to running in Cain Park next summer.”

Fisher, 50, originally opened Cleveland Running Company in July 2011. The store sells running shoes, accessories and apparel. It carries Adidas, Brooks and Saucony shoes, as well as some lesser-known brands, such as Altra, Newton and Vibram FiveFingers. It also sells socks, water bottles, hydration packs and reflective safety gear.

Fisher grew up in the Youngstown area and attended Poland High School, then Bowling Green State University, where he majored in history. He was on the track and cross-country teams in both high school and college, and still runs about five days a week and takes part in 5K and 10K races in the summer.

After graduating from college, Fisher took a job at Second Sole, an athletic-footwear store on Mayfield Road in Lyndhurst. He eventually became the manager of the store, and worked there until 2008. After he left Second Sole, he frequently encountered former customers who told him they missed him. Eventually, he decided to open his own store. “Your customers become your friends,” he explained, “and I missed the interaction with them.”

Fisher said he loves to connect with the community. Every Saturday, the store will host running groups. “It’s a chance to meet people, and we give them tips on running. We also talk about nutrition and footwear,” Fisher said. Anyone can show up for the Saturday events, which begin at 8:30 a.m. “It doesn’t matter how fast or how slow you run,” Fisher said. “We break up into groups, and we run five to 10 miles, depending on what group you are in.”

This fall, the store plans to sponsor running groups for fourth, fifth and sixth graders. The kids will train on Monday and Wednesday nights, in preparation for the two-mile Ohio Athletic Committee Cross-Country Championship race—an annual statewide event that usually takes place in the fall. Cleveland Running’s boys’ team won its division in 2013 and 2015, and the girls’ team won in 2014. “I’m really focused on trying to get kids interested in running and cross-country,” Fisher said.

Fisher hopes to establish relationships with the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District and the Cleveland Heights Recreation Department. “We will continue to seek opportunities to interact with our partners to promote running and exercise and to contribute meaningfully to our community,” said Fisher.

Fisher and his wife, Kathy, currently live in Lyndhurst. They have two children, Rebecca, 22, and Sam, 17.

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.
Chef John Bausone and partner Meghan Guthrie had a vision for creating a unique events-based dining experience in a distinctive setting. That vision became a reality in fall 2015 when the co-owners opened Forest Hill Kitchen & Ballroom, in the space formerly occupied by Rockefeller’s restaurant, and before that Cleveland Trust, then Key Bank, in the historic Heights Rockefeller Building on Mayfield Road.

The duo admired the former banking hall’s character, which provides an open and historic venue for both private and public events. Bausone, a Cleveland native, has worked in the culinary industry since he was a teenager. He attended culinary school in Portland, Ore., and later worked at the famous Biltmore Estate in North Carolina before returning to Cleveland to serve as executive chef at Grooverwood Tavern. Cleveland Scene magazine bestowed the honor of Best Brunch on Bausone in 2012 and 2013.

Forest Hill Kitchen & Ballroom can be reserved for special events, with menus that can be specially designed to suit the clients, drawing from a wide variety of food and drinks the chef can prepare. “We focus on foods that are seasonal, local and fresh,” said Bausone.

In February 2016, Forest Hill began hosting pop-up events, each of which features a menu that is specially crafted around a unique theme. These pop-ups range from diners and brunches, to cocktail parties featuring hearty appetizers and specialty drinks. The owners intend the pop-up events to be occasions where community members can come together and try new foods and styles of dining.

On March 10, Forest Hill’s Glenmorangie Scotch Pairing Dinner will showcase how different varieties of scotch complement specific foods. On April 14, Forest Hill will host Ramp It Up!, a gala presented by We Are Cleveland Heights. Local chefs, including Bausone, Doug Katz and Bridget Thibeault, will come together to create small plates and craft cocktails for guests to enjoy throughout the night.

Learn more about Forest Hill’s pop-ups, including a full schedule of events, and menus at www.foresthill-kitchen.com.

Hailey Bickett spent her formative years in Cleveland Heights and now attends the University of Dayton where she is studying communications and photography. She will graduate in May 2016 and plans to pursue a career in visual communications and event planning.

Marking territory in the Heights

Jeida Doba

While I’m not as fanatical as some, I admit I’m a fan of “Harry Potter” movies. It seems I can always find some way to relate a situation from one of Harry’s adventures to a contemporary circumstance.

What does “Harry Potter” have to do with life in the Heights? Not much, really…except I’m reminded of one of the four houses that the students at Hogwarts are assigned to upon their arrival. Take the Gryffindor and Slytherin, houses, for example. Members were easily identified by the maroon and gold, or green and white, neck scarves they wore.

The students may have belonged to different houses—even may have competed mightily in an occasional high-stakes Quidditch match. Still, they all belonged to Hogwarts and they knew it.

Here in Cleveland Heights, we all “belong” to one city, but we live in our distinctive “houses” or, bringing the metaphor to the real world, our respective neighborhoods or commercial districts.

The city has 11 commercial districts at last count: Cain Park Village, Heights, Fairmount Taylor, Heights Village, Noble Monticello, Noble, Nela and Severance. Each has unique characteristics and qualities. I suggest the city could be made that much stronger if each district claimed what makes it unique—whether it’s an attitude, history, landmark or reputation.

Why not identify those qualities and values that make a district or neighborhood unique, own them, and communicate those qualities and values to locals and potential visitors? As a district is telling it, it can show it—by delivering the district’s unique “brand” experience. Each business is its neighborhood’s unique selling point, the first thing that visitors see or feel when in a district.

Speaking of what the eye sees, there’s nothing wrong with “marking your territory” with physical identifiers—colors, flags or banners, a symbol or logo, etc. And while the district is showing, it can appoint a neighborhood spokesperson or ambassador to tell others—internal and external—what the district is, what it stands for, and what makes it a great place in which to live or visit.

As I think more on this idea, it could actually be kind of fun for the various Cleveland Heights districts or neighborhoods to engage in a friendly contest to see which one can come up with the most compelling brand identity. Of course, we’ll never see anything close to the members of the Cedar Lee “house” and the Coventry Village “house” soaring and flipping through the air on flying broomsticks, trying to capture the elusive winged Golden Snitch in a Quidditch match.

Still, the idea of claiming and communicating a neighborhood’s unique brand identity and values has merit. While each is unique, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. After all, we may dwell in different houses, but we are all Cleveland Heights.

Jeida Doba is an associate with Cleveland Heights-based Dorsey & Company Strategic Consultants to Management. Doba has called Cleveland Heights home since 2010.

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Three new businesses bring new life to Cedar Lee corner

James Henke

The Douglas Fine Arts Building, on the northwest corner of Cedar and Lee roads in Cleveland Heights, is seeing an influx of new businesses. Lucky Sparrow Tattoo opened on Feb. 4, and two takeout restaurants are coming soon. Tarita’s Wet Burritos and Fresh & Meaty Burgers hopes to open its restaurant no later than early April.

Lucky Sparrow Tattoo has opened at 228 Lee Road (216-505-3885), in the space previously occupied by Heights Guitars. The shop is open Tuesday through Saturday, noon to 8 p.m., and accepts walk-ins as well as advance appointments. Owner Tony DeRigo also owns Chronic Tattoo in Elyria, which he opened in 1994. “I had always been artistic,” he said, “then a friend told me I should try tattooing, and within a month I decided that this was what I wanted to do.”

In 2001, DeRigo played a major role in getting tattooing legalized in Cuyahoga County. “It was legal just about everywhere else in the state of Ohio,” he said, “but then the ACLU approached me about seeing what we could do to make it legal here. We wound up filing a lawsuit, and it was legalized.”

DeRigo believes that his shop will bring a unique type of tattooing to Cleveland’s East Side. At the end of January, DeRigo and his team won four awards at the Cleveland Tattoo Arts Convention, taking first and second place in the best overall tattoo category, first place for best Japanese tattoo, and second place for best back piece.

DeRigo will be at Lucky Sparrow one day a week; the Cleveland Heights shop will be run by Shawn Nutting, who worked at Chronic Tattoo for four years. Nutting, who lives in Ohio City, got into tattooing in 2001, while living in Alabama. “I’ve tattooed all over the world, and I think I bring a lot of experience and a lot of professionalism to the table,” he said. “There’s nothing on this side of Cleveland that can mimic what we do, in terms of scale, size and quality.”

“I’ve wanted to be in Cleveland forever,” DeRigo said. “And I’m excited to see how Cleveland Heights works out.” He plans to host musicians and guest artists at the shop, and to raise money for various charities.

Tarita’s Wet Burritos will focus on Mexican food, including burritos, tacos, tostadas and nachos. According to owner Tarita Oates, it will be “a little different than what most people are used to,” noting that the food will have more of a West Coast style, and “a little more flair to it.”

Oates, 43, lives in South Euclid. She first discovered the West Coast style of Mexican food in Colorado, where she was born and raised. She moved to Cleveland about 30 years ago, and always wondered why the Mexican food was different here.

Oates, who has never been in the restaurant business before, said she and her husband, Eddie, came up with the idea of opening a restaurant that would focus on this unique style of Mexican food.

Gerald Hood, owner of Fresh & Meaty Burgers, opened a Los Angeles Fresh & Meaty in January 1990, at the age of 22. The original restaurant is still open, and Hood is currently expanding the company, opening additional restaurants in California and Atlanta, as well as Cleveland Heights.

“I really wanted to focus on traditional American hamburgers, with no gimmicks,” he said. “A lot of places are trying to re-create the hamburger, but I keep it in the traditional style.”

Hood’s wife is from Cleveland, which Hood described as “my second home.” He lived in Cleveland Heights in the late 1980s, and when he came back to visit recently, he saw that the space on the corner of Cedar and Lee roads, previously occupied by Heights Soul Food and Grill, was vacant. “It took me about six months to secure a lease,” said Hood, “but now we’re ready to go!”

Fresh & Meaty sells beef, turkey and veggie burgers. “We have the best turkey burger in Southern California,” said Hood. “And, at our restaurant there, we sell more turkey burgers than beef burgers.

All of the ingredients we use are of the highest grade, and we get all of our meat and produce delivered daily.” The French fries are fresh-cut frozen, and the menu also includes tacos and chicken breast and catfish specials.

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.

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