Noble Neighbors hosts panel on school levy
Vince Ruddy

On Oct. 11, Noble Neighbors hosted a panel on the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District’s proposed 5.5-mill operating levy, which will be on the Nov. 8 ballot as Issue 109. The nonprofit neighborhood group invited pro- and anti-levy groups to participate, and gave each side the option to send as few or as many representatives as it wanted, to speak within set time allotments.

Ron Register, school board member; Lisa Hunt, Reaching Heights assistant director; and Jayne Geneva, CH-UH Lay Finance Committee chair, spoke for the pro-levy side.

Charles Drake, of the anti-levy Citizens Leadership Political Action Committee (PAC), spoke for those opposed to the levy.

Meredith White, pastor of Noble Road Presbyterian Church (the site of the forum) counted the audience of approximately 70. Brenda May, a leader of the Noble Neighbors group, then set out the format for the evening. As with the Noble Neighbors’ candidates’ forum in 2015, audience members were asked to agree to sit quietly while the panelists talked. Questions from attendees were gathered on index cards, and panelists stayed after the formal discussion so that audience members could talk with them individually.

Register told the group about district efforts to better serve students and families, including an education equity plan designed to assure that resources are available where they are most needed—whether to address learning disabilities or provide opportunities for gifted students. He noted that some of the district’s “best leaders” had been directed to the district’s more-challenged schools, and said that work was underway to have Monticello Middle School designated an International Baccalaureate School. “A newly established pre-kindergarten program at Oxford Elementary, which is open to all children in the district, shows the

Remembering Sunny Ravi Patel
Shari DeCarlo, Donna Bremner Fisher and Erin Setzer

On Friday, Oct. 14, just after 8 p.m., 15-year-old Sunny Ravi Patel was murdered by an armed robber while helping at the Mr. Hero sandwich shop that his aunt and uncle own on South Taylor Road in Cleveland Heights. He was not an employee, but a helpful neighbor working hard to help his family succeed. The criminal shot Sunny, and he passed away from his injuries just hours later.

Sunny Ravi Patel is the only son of Ravi and Pinal Patel of Highland Heights. A sophomore at Mayfield High School, his friends describe him as hardworking, caring and an avid Cleveland Cavaliers fan.

Mayfield students hosted a candlelight vigil on Oct. 21, prior to the school’s varsity football game. They asked students, staff and community members to wear Cleveland Cavaliers attire for a “Cavs Night” theme in his memory and to show support for his family. Upon hearing the news, his friends designed special T-shirts to honor their friend in the wine and gold colors of his favorite sports team.

Like many in the community, Cleveland Heights resident Erin Setzer wanted a way to express her sorrow and support the Patel family. She created a Go Fund Me Campaign to help the Patels pay for funeral expenses and other costs. Within six hours, the campaign had already reached its

Cleveland Heights announces developer for Top of the Hill project

City of Cleveland Heights

Editor’s Note: The Heights Observer received the following press release from the City of Cleveland Heights and is publishing it in its entirety.

The City of Cleveland Heights’ Top of the Hill Project took the next step in the development process at its Oct. 17 meeting. City Council [voted on] legislation to authorize the city to negotiate a non-binding letter of intent with Fairmount Properties.

“We were very pleased with the results of our Request for Qualifications process. Several excellent development teams were interested in partnering with us to bring a spectacular development to the Top of the Hill,” said City Manager Tanisha Briley. “We believe that says a lot about the interest and excitement surrounding this site and in new development in Cleveland Heights.”

The Top of the Hill Project refers to the approximately four acres of city-owned property at the corner of Cedar Road and Euclid Heights Boulevard at the top of Cedar Hill. As a highly visible property at the gateway between the Heights and University Circle, developing this property has been a long-time goal of the city.

The selection of a development partner is the culmination of a six-month process. The city received six responses to a Request for Qualifications issued in April that was then narrowed down to two firms, Fairmount Properties and Flaherty.

Heights residents invited to community building forum
Sruiti Basu

Heights residents are invited to attend Community-Building for Change—a free public forum and workshop, hosted by FutureHeights and Neighborhood Connections—on Wednesday, Nov. 16, 6:30–8:30 p.m., at the CH Community Center atrium, 1 Monticello Blvd.

The interactive workshop aims to provide attendees with the knowledge and skills they need to create and maintain strong, effective neighborhood groups, and empower residents to take effective action in supporting and improving their community. The forum will explore effective organizing and goal-setting for volunteer organizations, and strategies for creatively solving challenges.

Austin Bodner, director of community involvement at Detroit Shoreway Community Development Organization, Erika Brown, community network builder at Neighborhood Connections, and Mary Reynolds Powell, of Resident Voices, will collaboratively lead the interactive workshop and discussion.

For more information, visit www.futureheights.org.

Sruiti Basu is director of community-building programs at FutureHeights.
Quality vs. exclusivity, and the potential value of student testing

Ten years ago, it was pretty easy to see the scientific flaws in the State of Ohio’s school ratings: no valid test samples, no comparison of pre-test and post-test, no time-series tracking of student results over the years, meaningless descriptions for the attainment levels—basically, no way of telling which schools were having what effects on their students. Instead of scientifically based conclusions, essentially they said Panama is more effective than Canada because it’s warmer. Since that time, the state has managed not to fix those flaws, but to bury them under a hopelessly tangled mess of complexity that no one can decipher (while shamelessly declaring the system is easier to understand because they have affixed the familiar A, B, C, D, F grades). If it weren’t already 2016, you’d swear it was 1984 (George Orwell’s that is). There is no evidence to support that sentence. The Sustainability Working Group (SWG) reviewed the design in July-August 2015 and found too many inadequacies to make any claim of remarkable energy performance for the building. The SWG used the highly respected ASHRAE high school building design guide for this climate zone to benchmark the original accepted Lay Facilities Committee (LFC) report to the Board of Education. . . .
— Allen Wilkinson

Why My Husband and I Will Vote ‘Yes’ on the Heights School Levy

Our children are grown and live far away, but my husband and I will be voting for Issue 109, the Heights School Levy. We believe supporting our community’s children is a responsibility and a privilege.

Our high school students can study advanced chemistry and physics, a range of foreign languages, advanced placement Calculus, and computer programming. They can play in a marching band, a symphony orchestra or a jazz combo, take a class in sculpture or jewelry or photography, participate in the theater, and play a range of sports. Our community has understood the importance of these opportunities as necessities, and our levy dollars pay for them.

—Jan Reeger

Correction to October Octavfest article

The October issue of the Heights Observer misspelled the last name of one of the contributing writers to the article about Octavfest. The correct name is Louis Adrain. The editor regrets the error.
There are an increasing number of residents who are becoming tax delinquent because of our increasingly higher tax rate.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to sell homes in the area for fair market value. Prospective buyers are discouraged when they become aware of the extremely high tax rates and less-than-stellar school system. This situation leads to more rental properties, which destroy the substance of our neighborhoods.

An increase in property tax will further increase hardships in our community.

We all know that CH-UH school system employees earn a very good salary. The school system must take drastic steps to control (it) spending and be (a) responsible partner in our community.

Dennis Fioritto
University Heights

Parent wants all children to have more opportunities

To the Editor:

It’s one of those parenting clichés that we all want our children to have better lives and greater opportunities than we had ourselves. My children already have.

My daughter Amber, a senior at Heights High, is currently taking a full course load at Cleveland State University while simultaneously attending classes at Heights. She will finish high school with her entire freshman year of college under her belt. I cannot even begin to describe what this means to me financially and emotionally. For her to start college without the worry of being burdened by crippling debt is a huge weight off my shoulders.

More than saving money or earning credits, Amber has gained things that are immeasurable from her years in Heights schools. She is now the student activities coordinator for the Vocal Music Department. This has given her a sense of confidence and responsibility usually reserved for adult leaders. She knows that she has the power to make a positive difference in the school experiences of herself and her classmates.

These kinds of experiences aren’t available to all students, especially not in many urban districts. But CH-UH does more, and my children are incredibly lucky for that. From Chinese and chess clubs to instrumental music lessons, from Amber’s passion for music to Dave’s athletic talents, Heights schools nurture, challenge and support my daughters.

They’ve traveled with their schools from Shaker Lakes to Nashville, Chicago and Washington D.C.—experiences many children may never have.

I am voting for Issue 109, the upcoming school levy, because I want all children to have the opportunities that my daughters have had. I hope you’ll join me.

Tier Briggs
University Heights

Vote ‘yes’ invest in our community

To the Editor,

By now, readers are likely to be aware of these basic facts about the Cleveland Heights-University Heights school budget and levy: The requested tax increase is the smallest ask in about 30 years; our district has lost about 3 percent of its state funding due to EdChoice and charter school programs, and this loss has been increasing every year; once inflation is taken into account, teachers are working for less pay than they did five years ago; the district has not gone this long without a levy passing for at least 20 years; the district cut more than 50 teaching positions this spring.

Readers also probably know about our district’s exemplary technical education program, and (that) our district provides pre-kindergarten education in an effort to close the achievement gap that occurs when [some] children don’t have the same advantages as others. Readers surely are aware that our music program has received honors and recognition at state and national levels.

Readers might not be aware of Ohio House Bill 920, passed in 1976. The result of this law is that the only thing keeping property tax revenue (not rates, but actual dollars) for our schools from being exactly what it was 40 years ago is the passage of levies.

While operating on a tight budget, our school district provides wonderful and necessary opportunities for our children. Many of these programs will be cut without the passage of Issue 109. Please invest in our community and vote YES for Issue 109 on Nov. 8!

Marcie Denton
Cleveland Heights

How we chose the public schools

To the Editor,

In 2012, choosing an elementary school for our daughter felt like a matter of subtraction. We aren’t Catholic, so we crossed religious schools off our list. I was working part time as a community college English professor, so we crossed the more expensive private schools off our list. I knew my patience limit enough to know that home-schooling was never on the list. After all of these subtractions, the local public school was the only one left.

But school choice isn’t a subtraction problem where the public school is the last answer. After four years in the public schools, I under-
stand that our choice was actually a matter of addition. We can easily walk to school, meeting neighbors along the way, adding a deeper sense of community to our lives. Our daughter is receiving an excellent education, feeling both challenged and supported by her teachers. She is learning to value herself and others—classmates with unique perspectives and backgrounds dramatically different from her own. Field trips, gifted services, art and music, and extracurricular activities all add inestimable benefits to her life experience.

Choosing a school for your child is a complex equation that requires more than basic arithmetic. We chose public and are very glad we did. I fervently hope the school levy passes, so that current and prospective families can do the math and end up with the same answer we did, not because it’s the last choice but because it’s the best choice: public school.

Megan Lubbers
Cleveland Heights

Fourth-generation Heights family supports school levy

To the Editor:

I am voting for the CH-UH school levy this November.

In the past few months, I visited two schools, including the high school, and met with a variety of school administrators and teachers. I witnessed schools that were well-run even after years of cuts in operating expenses, limited payroll increases, teacher layoffs and the elimination of teacher and staff positions.

One of the primary concerns for me and for many in the community is the graduation rate. The graduation rate in 2015 was an unacceptable 81.3 percent. I observed special summer programs for seniors and others who were missing graduation credits; math enhancement classes to help students pass the Ohio graduation test, and the two high school programs that operate out of the Delisle Center for creditor-deficient and otherwise troubled students. It obviously costs more per student to offer these enhancement programs. The cost is far less than the long-term cost to a child, and to the community of someone, without a high school diploma.

The school district has set a goal of increasing the graduation rate to 90 percent. From my observation, these well-run programs will allow the district to reach that goal.

Some opponents to the levy cite the benefits of charter schools. While some charter schools are well-run, many are not. One charter school operator, with a school in Cleveland Heights, went bankrupt. The online charter school, ECOT, received $105 million in state funds for 15,300 students. It is now being sued by the state because there is no record that almost 60 percent of its students attended their courses.

It is wonderful that the students residing in our district have choices as to which schools to attend. It is one reason why many families, like ours—our children have attended both public and independent schools—choose to live here.

Our district stretched the last three-year operating levy for an extra year, even in the face of millions of dollars of state budget cuts and declining tax revenue. I encourage those who are against or undecided about the levy to visit our schools and talk to our teachers, administrators and students. As a fourth-generation Cleveland Heights family, we ask our fellow community members to join us in voting for the levy on Nov. 8.

Mark Hoffman
Cleveland Heights

This parent will vote with pride for levy

To the Editor:

The Cleveland Heights-University Heights school district spends a lot of money on its students. Some people point to this as a reason not to support public education. I actually think it’s a fact about which we should all be proud.

We spend this money because our community values opportunity, equity and access. We believe that children should be introduced to foreign languages in elementary school. We believe that fourth graders should have the chance to learn musical instruments, regardless of their parents’ ability to afford private lessons. We believe that students should be enriched by some of the most highly regarded musical programs in the nation. We believe in providing programs and clubs that match up with the varied interests and abilities of all of our community’s children, and that keep them engaged in, and returning to, school each day.

This community also values doing what is right in the face of need, again reflected in the money the district spends on its students. Whether it’s providing wrap-around services for refugees and their families (who make up nearly 10 percent of the student body at Noble Elementary School), or providing academic or behavioral intervention services to any child who needs a personalized strategy, our district has made careful choices about providing what it believes is right and good and necessary.

It is difficult and expensive for districts to provide high-quality educational experiences for all children regardless of their background or ability, but that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t do it. I will vote for Issue 109 so that our schools can continue to offer all children access to the opportunities they need to succeed in life. And I will do it with pride.

Kristy Dietrich Gallagher [a member of the Steering Committee for Citizens for Our Heights School]
Cleveland Heights
Don’t be fooled by school levy opponents’ false and misleading claims

Jayne Geneva and Ryan Routh

Several [opinion] articles in last month’s Observer cited so-called “facts” about the Cleveland Heights-University Heights School levy (Issue 109). We are writing to correct just three of the false or misleading arguments of levy opponents.

First, levy opponents love to compare graduation rates from 2006 to today, but they do so in misleading ways.

They don’t explain that they’re comparing the four-year graduation rate with today’s four-year rate—and so today’s rate is understandably lower. They omit [mentioning] that, in 2007, the state made the graduation test significantly harder, which lowered graduation rates across Ohio. And they simply ignore that the district’s four-year graduation rate has gone up four years in a row to 85.7 percent—much higher than the 83 percent statewide average.

Second, levy opponents love to cite inflated cost-per-pupil figures. Their figures include millions in “expenditures” that are not, in fact, expenditures on district students—including the combined $6.1 million the state diverts to charter schools and voucher programs, the $1.5 million spent on busing independent and parochial school students; and expenditures on business-like services for which the district is paid (such as rent paid by third parties at the old Coventry school).

Third, levy opponents make false claims about district expenditures on district students. They omit [mentioning] that, in 2007, the state made the graduation test significantly harder, which lowered graduation rates across Ohio. And they simply ignore that the district’s four-year graduation rate has gone up four years in a row to 85.7 percent—much higher than the 83 percent statewide average.

When deciding how you should vote on Issue 109, don’t be misled by levy opponents’ so-called “facts.” Cast your vote for strong community schools.

Jayne Geneva is chairperson of the Lay Finance Committee for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District. Ryan Routh is co-chair of Citizens for Our Heights School. Both are longtime residents of Cleveland Heights and parents of current or former CH-UH students.

www.heightsobserver.org
Setting growth targets for students

Ari Klein

I have never really been a football fan, but now that I have a daughter at University of Michigan, I find it impossible not to pay attention, at least a little. As I wrote this article, an Ann Arbor steakhouse was offering patrons a percentage discount by whatever point spread Michigan might win over Rutgers. Michigan won 78-0, which is a little more than was expected.

How did the restaurant decide to make this offer? Did [the owners] look at data and then gamble how much they could afford to give up in profits versus the advertising they would get? Looking at past games with Rutgers, coupled with the individual players’ abilities, could they have predicted the point spread?

As I wrote this article, teachers in the Cleveland Heights-University Heights schools were setting targets for how much our students will grow this year. Teachers give a pre-test, analyze the results, look at each student’s academic history, and then try to guess how these students will do on a post-test in March. This might seem clear-cut, but is it not as scientific as it sounds?

To start with, the tests are different from one year to the next, so there is little basis to gauge how students might score three-quarters of the way through the school year. Even with all that is known about students, it is impossible to know how students will score months later. Teachers can guess. Teachers always have hopes and dreams for their students, but there are many variables that are unpredictable. Illness, family circumstances, and both positive and negative interactions with one’s classmates and teachers are among factors that might help or hurt student learning.

Children are not predictable, mechanical bots—nor should they be. In no way am I discounting the fact that teachers have an impact on learning. I believe that teachers can have a tremendous impact on student learning. I just have a hard time believing that they play the only role.

Patrick O’Donnell reported on the socioeconomic impact on learning in the Oct. 9 Plain Dealer. It is clear that socioeconomic status is directly related to how students perform. This knowledge has been around for decades and is shown time after time, test upon test. The playing field is not level when used to compare teachers and school districts.

Setting growth targets may in fact be a wonderful activity for teachers to work on. I believe in setting goals so I can see if I achieve what I set out to do. The issue I have is that the state of Ohio’s teacher ratings is 50 percent based on these guesses. Decoupling student growth measures from teacher evaluation is allowed by the new federal law Every Student Succeeds Act. Ohio could take away part of the pressure-cooker mentality for teachers, schools and students: Less testing, more learning. Everyone wants everyone to be accountable.

Setting growth targets may be a wonderful activity for teachers to work on. I believe in setting goals so I can see if I achieve what I set out to do. The issue I have is that the state of Ohio’s teacher ratings is 50 percent based on these guesses. Decoupling student growth measures from teacher evaluation is allowed by the new federal law Every Student Succeeds Act. Ohio could take away part of the pressure-cooker mentality for teachers, schools and students: Less testing, more learning. Everyone wants everyone to be accountable.

Ratifying schools, students, districts and communities based on guessing how students will test makes little sense. There has to be a better way.

A public school insider’s perspective

Joan Sporl

Between us, my husband and I have lived in many exciting cities, both in the U.S. and abroad. We are so grateful to have landed in the wonderful community of Cleveland Heights, with all of its richness, diversity, conveniences and complexity.

Our family has been enriched by our use of the public schools, where we’ve encountered a common wish of interesting citizens contributing good to our society. By serving as good neighbors and using the public schools, we are investing in the future vitality of this community.

Because we experience the public schools every day, we see the real, tangible work occurring within them, and we see beyond the state’s very narrow definition of quality and success. We see all kinds of children learning and growing together. We’ve witnessed progress in many areas in recent years and we advocate and work together for further improvements.

We also see that, in just two years, our new superintendent has listened to the community both within and outside the schools. She has enacted many important measures that will allow for continued improvements. She is striving for greater transparency, scrutinizing programs and spending, working to expand preschool opportunities for those in need, and working to more effectively address issues of equity.

None of the fine institutions that my husband and I have graduated from or worked for could have excelled if they’d been poorly funded and under resourced. Like many citizens, I, too, would like to see a change in Ohio’s unconstitutional approach to funding schools, which forces us to depend upon periodic school levies just to keep up with inflation. I will continue my advocacy for change at the state level and urge others to do the same.

I know that increasing taxes pose a challenge for my [family and other[s]. However, I also recognize there is a very real cost to not supporting one of the most important institutions in our community. Deep cuts in resources will impair our district’s ability to implement continued improvements.

For all of the reasons stated above, I’ll vote for Issue 109 and urge others to do the same.

Joan Sporl is an early childhood consultant with more than 20 years of combined experience teaching kindergarten, Head Start, preschool and college, and is a proud resident of Cleveland Heights.
Participate in democracy: Vote!

Susie Kaeser

The election is upon us. No one has expressed the importance of the vote better than Martin Luther King Jr. in his “Give Us the Ballot” speech of 1957. “So long as I do not firmly and irrevocably possess the right to vote,” he said, “I do not possess myself. I cannot make up my mind—it is made up for me. I cannot live as a democratic citizen, observing the laws I have helped to enact—I can only submit to the edict of others.”

Nearly 60 years later, author and political analyst Donna Brazile observed, “For Dr. King, the right to vote was sacrosanct and foundational. It is the very essence of our social contract. Free elections create legitimacy. They imply the consent of the governed. He knew that unfair elections laws did not just hurt minorities or the working poor, they rendered hollow the very essence of American government.”

As neighbors, volunteers, workers, taxpayers and, yes, voters, each of us helps shape our community and workplace, civic life and public institutions, and our democracy. The vote is essential to the common good and to our responsibility as citizens, so, during this fractious political season, in an era of a resurgence of voter suppression, as citizens, so, during this fractious political season, in an era of a resurgence of voter suppression, so, during this fractious political season, in an era of a resurgence of voter suppression, so, during this fractious political season, in an era of a resurgence of voter suppression, we must use it. And so you must go out all across America and tell young people, and people not so young, tell all of us: “Vote. The vote is powerful.”

There are three ways to vote. Early in-person voting started in Ohio on Oct. 12. Cuyahoga County residents can go to the Board of Elections at 2925 Euclid Ave. to vote on weekdays, and on the weekend of Nov. 5-6. No voter identification is required.

Another option is to vote by absentee ballot. You must obtain an absentee ballot from the Board of Elections at least three days prior to the election. If you request an absentee ballot, you must use that ballot to vote. Absentee ballots must be post marked by Nov. 7 or hand-delivered to the Board of Elections by Nov. 8. Do not take them to your polling place. Again, no voter identification is required.

The third option is to vote in person on Nov. 8. The polls will be open from 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. A photo ID, utility bill or other legal document that shows your name and voting address will be required.

Visit the Board of Elections at www.boe.cuyahoga county.us for questions about your registration, voting location, or voting hours.

Whatever method you use, be an active creator of our democracy. Vote!

Susie Kaeser is a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights and former director of Reaching Heights. She serves on the national board of Parent for Public Schools.

Geneva decried Ohio’s system for funding public education, stating she had been working since the 1980s to bring about changes to the system, which, despite being declared unconstitutional several years ago, remains in place. The levy is needed now, she said, so that district finances can stay even in the face of declining revenue from property taxes, the schools’ main source of funding. Geneva made note of the $7 million in spending cuts in response to the failure of the May 2013 levy, and criticized the Citizens Leadership PAC for “calculatingly miscalculating” and cherry-picking the numbers it uses to argue that the school district does not make efficient use of its funding.

Hunt added that 2011 revenues are insufficient to cover 2016 expenditures and urged audience members to keep children “...the most vulnerable among us”—in mind when going to the polls. She relayed the positive experiences of her sons in the CH-UH schools.

Drake then spoke against the levy, stating that the school district had not presented enough information to justify another tax increase. He complained of the district’s lack of transparency and accountability, and stated that school board members lack backgrounds in finance, resulting in their treating school funds as an “open checkbook.”

He presented figures as evidence of the schools’ mismanagement of funds and noted that, at the current rate of spending, the district would need another levy as soon as 2020. Drake also pointed out the long-term decline of enrollment in the public school system—a 15.5 percent contraction since 2006.

Drake cited an increase in the number of teachers in the district, which he said did not make sense in light of the declining enrollment, but gave the system credit for its efforts to improve the district’s underperforming schools. During the rebuttal period that followed, Geneva said the schools could not automatically cut teachers in response to enrollment drops. “We are talking about teaching, not making gadgets,” she said.

Panelists argued about whether the state’s system for funding charter schools penalized the public schools and, in response to an audience question about how the system measures success in regard to the state ratings, Register, said, “If teachers had the opportunity to teach, students could do better. Having to ‘teach to the test’ makes teaching more difficult.” Hunt stated that the best way to measure success is to observe whether students are well-rounded, happy, and prepared for college and citizenship.

Drake closed by saying he agreed that “we’ll pay later if we don’t educate today,” but went on to ask if, as taxpayers, we could afford this levy. Art, music and sports are important, he stated, but not as important as being able to read, write and think critically.

Additional information can be found at www.chubsy.com and chubswaymoreweekly.com.

Vince Reddy is a FutureHeights board member and a 20-year resident of Clevel-

Land Heights.
initial $10,000 goal. By press time, more than 1,000 people had contributed more than $37,000.

Setzer posted an update to the campaign page on Oct. 20, stating that, according to Sunny’s aunt, Binta, the family had decided to change the campaign’s purpose. “In a beautiful act of selflessness, they have chosen to donate the funds to several organizations that were close to Sunny’s heart. As she said, it is what he would have done with the money. It just goes to show what an amazing young man he was.”

Thousands attended Patel’s funeral on Oct. 17 at the Busch Funeral Home in Parma.

Community members and friends attended a prayer vigil for Sunny Ravi Patel and his family at the top of the Cain Park sledding hill on South Taylor Road on Oct. 23. Local community-building nonprofit Funereal Heights and clergy members of the Heights Interfaith Network organized the vigil, which began with Mayor Cheryl Stephens and other members of Cleveland Heights City Council walking with the family from the Mr. Hero restau- rant to Cain Park. Family members wore the wine and gold T-shirts that Sunny Patel’s friends had designed.

Reverend Donald King of Hope Lutheran Church, along with other clergy representing the diverse faith traditions present in the Heights community, led the crowd of about 200 people in a series of readings and songs. Mayor Stephens spoke, and State Rep. Janine Boyd presented the family with an official statement of condolences from the State of Ohio. Binta Patel then read a statement on behalf of the family, thanking the community for its support, the Cleveland Heights Police Department for apprehending the suspect, and the medical personnel for caring for Sunny during his last hours.

To conclude the ceremony, Reverend Joe Cherry of the Unitarian Universalist Society led the crowd in an “Ohm” ritual, at the conclusion of which each participant placed a glass bead in a vase to symbolize their hopes and prayers for the family.


On Oct. 16, Cleveland Heights police arrested Danielle Perry, 20, of Cleveland Heights. He was indicted on charges related to Patel’s murder, and the subsequent armed robbery of the University Heights Subway restaurant and attempted robbery of the Dollar General in Cleveland Heights. On Oct. 26, Perry pled guilty to aggravated murder, five counts of aggravated robbery, four counts of kidnapping, two counts of felonious assault, breaking and entering, obstructing official business and tampering with evidence. On Oct. 28, the court sentenced him to life without parole.

Shari DeCarlo is a parent mentor for the Mayfield Heights City School District. Erin Setzer is a member of the CHI community and the parent of two young boys. Deanna Bremer Fisher is executive director of FutureHeights and publisher of the Heights Observer.

Public Water—Yes!

SUNNY RATE continued from page 1

Carla Rautenberg and Deborah Van Kleef

For 101 years, the City of Cleveland Heights has purchased water from the City of Cleveland and marked it up for resale to its residents and businesses. Most University Heights residents and businesses—with the exception of 700 UH households, which are part of the Cleveland Heights water distribution system—have paid Cleveland directly, without their city serving as middleman.

As of Jan. 1, 2017, Cleveland Heights will join 67 other direct service communities in Northeast Ohio, and the city will be out of the water business. Water bills, which have climbed over the past year to cover the Cleveland Heights Water Department’s growing deficit, will actually drop slightly. Rates will fall more sharply when the deficit is retired after seven years.

Things might have gone very differently had the community not come together to form a large corpo- ration and keep an essential utility in public hands. We are just two of many who gave their time to this fight.

The story began 17 months ago, on May 21, 2015, when the city announced a plan to lease its water system for 20 years to Aqua Ohio. A public forum was scheduled for May 26, to enable residents to learn about the proposed “public-private partnership.” On June 1, CH council members would vote on whether to begin negotiations, which Aqua Ohio stipulated must be completed in three months.

Online research acquainted us with the folks who wanted to control our access to water. Aqua Ohio’s parent company, we learned, is the $3.76 billion corporation Aqua America. Its subsidiaries have records of poor water quality, inade- quate service, frequent rate hikes and a propensity to sue communi- ties that seek to recover control of their water.

Our city council, mayor and council members were trying to solve the increasingly urgent prob- lem of a water fund deficit that orig- inated before most of them came into office, and we sympathized. Still, we feared they were about to make a decision that was not in the community’s best interest, and that would have serious long-term consequences.

We contacted everyone we could. When we arrived on May 26, the meeting room was rapidly filling, and staffers were bringing in more chairs. To our surprise, we counted 230 in attendance; we passed around clipboards to collect contact information.

As the official presentations proceeded, the crowd grew restive. Once the floor opened to comments, dozens of people lined up behind the mic and, for more than two hours, expressed doubts, con- cerns and anger. Not one person spoke in support of the Aqua Ohio proposal, nor for any arrangement with any for-profit entity.

The next day, city council an- nounced that it would table the vote on Aqua Ohio. But the problem of our water utility and its deficit re- mained.

We continued to move ahead. A few residents met regularly to strategize, Susan Miller set up a Facebook page: Cleveland Heights Citizens for Safe, Affordable Water. University Heights resident and lawyer Justin Gould joined us, Joyce Briley created “Public Water—Yes!” stickers for supporters to wear. Our goal: Keep our water in public hands by joining the regional water system owned and managed by the City of Cleveland.

One member of city council, Jason Stein, had been advocating this course for a couple of years. As far as we knew, the rest were either skeptical or opposed.

Over the next three months, nu- merous concerned residents spoke at council meetings and wrote to city officials, Susan Miller and John Clark created a spreadsheet compar- ing water rates that residents would pay under various options. Alison Ausciello of Food and Water Watch, a national advocacy organization, provided background materials and advice.

On Sept. 21, 2015, by unanimous vote, Cleveland Heights City Coun- cil authorized City Manager Tanisha Briley to negotiate an agreement with the Cleveland Water Division. This has been accomplished and, as of Jan. 1, Cleveland Heights resi- dents will receive direct service from the Cleveland Water Department. By the time this column sees print, Cleveland Water officials will have held public meetings for Heights residents to learn more about the transition.

Democracy is messy, inconve- nient, time-consuming and often unsatisfying. But the purpose of public bodies is to serve human needs, and on that basis we can hold them ac- countable. In Cleveland Heights, in 2015, when we joined together and spoke up, our elected officials listened.

Carla Rautenberg is an activist and a lifelong Cleveland Heights resident. Deborah Van Kleef is a musician and writer, who grew up in Cleveland Heights, and has lived here as an adult for over 30 years. Contact them at heigthsdemocracy@gmail.com.
University Heights City Council
Meeting highlights

SEPTEMBER 19, 2016

Municipal land bank
Council approved adoption of Chapter 5722 of the Ohio Revised Code regarding realization of “nonproductive” land in the city. Council members Mark Wiseman and Pamela Cameron voted “no.” This authorizes the city to develop a municipal land bank, which can take over, hold and sell foreclosed property instead of leaving it with the county land bank. It enables the city to keep better control of development, the properties can be obtained without a public bidding process, and the city is protected from liability. Otherwise, the city must depend on the county to manage the options for each property. While the county usually wants to refurbish foreclosed homes in good condition, less desirable properties are often allowed to languish.

Councilman Wiseman requested a written protocol stating the steps to be followed in determining which homes to bring into the city’s land bank, and how to decide the use of those properties. Mayor Infeld felt that protocols are already contained within the city’s existing ordinances. Luke McConville, law director, noted that each situation is unique and a fixed process can’t be applied to all situations. Councilwoman Cameron was concerned that the city’s administration seemed to be moving into the real estate business and [cited] possible conflicts of interest.

Because the cost of each property will almost certainly exceed the mayor’s spending limit and thus require a council vote, Councilman John Kach, [said he] felt the ordinance empowered council.

Employee compensations
Council approved, on emergency, an ordinance to update the annual compensation rates of specified employees. This increases the pay rates for specified director positions, and a proposed because of the recent departure of Eric Tuck-Macalla, former building commissioner, to another city that the city could publicize the services the county could. The mayor suggested having someone from the county health department give a presentation about the program and answer questions. Councilwoman Weiss asked if the city could publicize the services the county board of health offers, and Councilman Sims suggested that the board of health offer a presentation to the community on opiate abuse. Mayor Infeld was enthusiastic about both suggestions, and suggested moving forward with these ideas in a future meeting.

LWV Observer: Siobhan Leftwich.

Council approved a contract with Greenleaf for the 2016–17 tree planting program. Pokorny, service director, reported that after working with four bidders, he recommended approval of the Greenleaf Group’s bid of $80,483. He said it provided the best service and included the species of trees the city had requested. Other bidders wanted to use substitutes.

County health services
Council authorized a contract with the Cuyahoga County Board of Health for health services in an amount not to exceed $55,781. Mayor Infeld reported that the contract was required because the city lacks its own health department. Vice Mayor Susan Pardee questioned whether University Heights was receiving the best services it could. The mayor suggested having someone from the county health department give a presentation about the program and answers questions. Councilwoman Weiss asked if the city could publicize the services the county board of health offers, and Councilman Sims suggested that the board of health offer a presentation to the community on opiate abuse. Mayor Infeld was enthusiastic about both suggestions, and suggested moving forward with these ideas in a future meeting.

LWV Observer: Siobhan Leftwich.

Look for future and often expanded postings of meeting summaries online at www.heightobserver.org.

These meeting summaries are abstracted from LWV observers’ written reports. The summaries have been edited and prepared by Anne McFarland, Charlene Morse and MaryAnn Barnes. To receive email postings of full reports, send an email to info@lsv.org.

All proceeds benefit local and global missions.

I earned my first degree from Tri-C®

Stephanie Bayne saved thousands of dollars by starting her college career at Tri-C. Tri-C has allowed Stephanie to save money on the way to completing her bachelor’s degree in four years.

Are you a high school student who wants to earn college credit before you graduate? Are you ready to start your college career? Tri-C is the smart choice for earning your first degree.

www.churchofsaviour.org

University Heights News

MEMBER SPECIAL PREVIEW NIGHT

Thursday, November 10, 5:00 - 8:45pm

*memberships available at the door for $10

Book Sales, CDs & Audio Books - 1/$1

Small Paperbacks - 10/$1

Children’s & Teen Books - 2/$1

Sets & “Specials” as marked

Heights Library

Stephanie chose Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C) for its convenience and affordable tuition. Her credits transferred seamlessly to Kent State University, where she began as a junior. Tri-C has allowed Stephanie to save money on the way to completing her bachelor’s degree in four years.

Are you a high school student who wants to earn college credit before you graduate? Are you ready to start your college career? Tri-C is the smart choice for earning your first degree.

www.churchofsaviour.org

Heights Observer November 1, 2016

www.heightsobserver.org
Cleveland Heights City Council
Meeting highlights

SEPTEMBER 19, 2016
Public comments
Candidate forum: Blanche Valancy, of the League of Women Voters of Greater Cleve-
land, invited residents to the Eastside Can-
didates Forum which took place on Sept.
22, at Charles F. Brush High School (in
Lyndhurst). (Video of the forum is available

High school sports seating: Resident
Gerard Parisi questioned the policy of
denying seating on the home side of
the high school stadium during sporting events
to those who enter through the visitors gate.

Alkoha Chewtham spoke in support of Parisi.

Zoning variance

By a vote of four to three, council denied
a variance requested by Lona Roff and
Melivan Rajan, 3500 Fenley Road, to permit
use of part of their house to create a chicken
coop rather than construct a separate structure. Council members Carol Roe,
Jason Stein and Melissa Yasnow voted
in favor; Council members Mary Dunbar,
Kabah Swain, Chery Stephens and Michael
Ungar were opposed.

Nuisance properties

Council declared four vacant properties to
be nuisances and authorized abatement:
• 950 Nalaview Road
• 1610 South Taylor Road
• 1617 Eddington Road
• 3380 Beechwood Ave.

Fact-finding reports

Council approved two ordinances, accept-
ing fast fact-finding recommendations related to
pending collective bargaining agreements for two of the city’s unions, the Fraternal
Order of Police/Ohio Labor Council (police
dispatchers), and the Ohio Patrolmen’s
Benevolent Association (patrol officers and
rank officers, including sergeants, lieuten-
ants and captains).
LWV Observer: Katherine Solender.

October 5, 2016
Public comments
Rehabbing abandoned properties: Resident
Susan Sanders, representing Noble Neighbors,
noted that CHUH City School District officials and supporters, as well as
Citizen’s Leadership PAC representatives,
will be discussing Issue 109, the proposed
school levy that will be on the November
ballot, on Oct. 11, at Noble Road Presby-
terian Church, 2780 Noble Road. Informa-
tion is available at www.nobleneighbors.
com.

County demolition program

Council authorized the city’s participation in Cuyahoga County’s demolition program,
which was established to eliminate vacant,
abandoned, and nuisance or blighted properties in the county, through a coop-
erative agreement that will enable the city
to receive a $347,000 reimbursement for
the costs of demolition and other approved expenses.

Wage and salary ordinance

Council approved an ordinance that incor-
porates new terms agreed to by the city and
the Northern Ohio Patrolmen’s Benevolent
Association and the International Associa-
tion of Fire Fighters. The agreement covers
the period from April 1, 2015 through
March 31, 2018.

Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Joining communities throughout the nation,
council proclaimed October 2016 as Na-
tional Breast Cancer Awareness Month and
designated Oct. 13 as Metastatic Breast
Cancer Awareness Day, and Oct. 21 as
National Mammography Day.

Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Council designated October 2016 as Do-
meric Violence Awareness Month.

Auditing services

Council authorized extension of an agree-
ment with James G. Zapko CPA Inc. for audit
services for the four fiscal years ending Dec.
31, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019. For these
services, the company will receive the total
sum of $143,000 for the four-year period
(2016: $35,360; 2017: $35,360; 2018:
$35,880; 2019: $36,400).
LWV Observer: Katherine Solender.

Why Montessori?

Learn how a Ruffing Montessori
education helps prepare your child
for success!

Fall Open House: 2-4 pm
Sunday, November 6, 2016
Contact our Admissions Office at
216-321-7571 or info@ruffingmontessori.net.
3380 Fairmount Boulevard, Cleveland Heights, OH
www.ruffingmontessori.net
Mayfield Lee Business District is attracting shops and services

James Henke

Over the past year or so, several new stores have opened near the intersection of Mayfield Road and Lee Road in Cleveland Heights. Though that area along the south side of Mayfield Road has never been a major commercial district in the city, it may be turning into one. Among the businesses are clothing stores, hair salons, barber shops and manicurists.

Coco Merci, which opened in January 2016, is located at 1631 Lee Road. The store carries both men’s and women’s clothing. “We really want people to get a different perspective on clothing, and we have clothing so that people can get a different kind of view,” Von Bolden said. “We know how to make sure that our customers’ attire is different and bold, and we really want them to embrace the modernity of evolving fashion.”

Barcode Beautique, at 1645 Lee Road, opened in July 2015, and offers clothing for women, in sizes small to 3X. “We are really for working women,” said Tia Thomas, who owns the store. “We have clothes they can wear to work and then wear out afterward.” Barcode also carries gowns for special events; accessories, including purses and jewelry; and support garments, such as specialty bras. The store also provides alterations for its customers. “Our first year has been abundantly successful,” Thomas said. “We have connected with other like-minded business owners in this area, and we have built great relations with our customers.”

Thomas believes the area is starting to boom. “It’s really a one-stop shopping area,” she said. “You can come to this area and get clothes, shoes and accessories, and you can get your hair dyed, cut and braided, and you can get your nails done. It’s really a story of small business owners taking a risk, and it’s paying off.”

The Upscale Fitness Boutique, at 3012 Mayfield Road, sells high-end fitness clothing.

Nearby, at 3054 Mayfield Road, is Blanc Boutique, which carries chic women’s apparel, jewelry, candles, cosmetics, bath and body products, as well as other items. It opened in January 2013.

In addition to the retail stores, Naturally Gifted Fitness center is also in this area, at 1651 Lee Road. It has been there since March 2013, and it is now considering an expansion.

The space at the corner of Mayfield and Lee roads, formerly occupied by Greenwald Antiques, remains empty. The antique shop had been located there for more than 50 years, until 2012, when the owners decided to open a store in Woodmere Village, and then another in Beachwood, and close their Cleveland Heights location.

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.

FutureHeights Mini-Grants Program awards five Cleveland Heights projects

Sruti Basu

FutureHeights awarded the third round of its Neighborhood Mini-Grants Program this fall, approving $3,840 in grants to support five projects in Cleveland Heights. Grants are intended to spur small, grassroots projects to improve quality of life and build community. The fall 2016 grantees are:

• Forest Hills Homeowners Association, $350 for its Forest Hills Historical Signage Beautification Program.
• Oxford Community Garden, $480 for its Garden Shed Repair project.
• Fairfax Community Garden, $500 for its Community Garden Upgrade project.
• Urban Oak School, $610 for its Cleveland Heights P.E.A.C.E Park Garden project.
• The Welcome Hub, $1,000 for its Driver’s Education Scholarships for Refugees project.

Do you have a great idea to improve your CH neighborhood? FutureHeights invites you to apply for a grant. Attend a workshop to learn more about how to apply, and get tips about completing the application and process. The next application deadline is Wednesday, March 15, at 5 p.m. Workshop dates will be announced in January 2017.

The Neighborhood Mini-Grants Program is a component of FutureHeights Community Capacity-Building Program that awards small grants of up to $1,000 to fund citizen-led neighborhood projects, events and activities that benefit Cleveland Heights.

Through grants, FutureHeights seeks to build community with increased resilience through grassroots resident participation in civic life. In so doing, Cleveland Heights becomes better equipped to address challenges in the physical and social environment, drawing and activating the assets of residents, nonprofit organizations, public resources and departments and other stakeholders.

The FutureHeights Neighborhood Mini-Grants Program is guided by a grant-making committee comprised of seven Cleveland Heights residents with a history of community involvement. The committee reviews and makes all grant decisions. For more information, contact FutureHeights at shasa@futureheights.org or 216-320-2431.

Sruti Basu is the director of community-building programs at FutureHeights.

16th Annual Cleveland Heights High School Alumni Foundation Cocktail Party

Join alumni, friends and partygoers at The Wine Spot for cheese and crackers plus desserts from The Stone Oven and Luna Bakery. Proceeds from the event fund scholarships, grants and the operations of the Cleveland Heights High School Alumni Foundation.

Thursday, November 10 - 7 to 10 p.m.
The Wine Spot | 2271 Lee Road
$20 in advance - $30 at the door
Valet Parking / Cash Bar

For tickets or more information call 216-397-3871 or visit www.heightsAlumni.org

11
Rebecca’s Gift helps grieving families

Shari Nacson

“We did it!” said Kat Meyer, of Rebecca’s Gift. The Cleveland Heights-based nonprofit, founded in 2015, has already provided meaningful help to local grieving families. And it feels really good.

Meyer and a dear friend, Karla Winnan, started Rebecca’s Gift to honor the loss of Meyer’s six-year-old daughter, who died from brain cancer in June 2014. Over the months that followed Rebecca’s death, Kat and her husband, Eric, wrestled to manage grief and day-to-day living, while also rediscovering their other two children.

Young siblings of a terminally ill child may never have experienced their parents without the preoccupations of illness, explained Meyer. “They never had their mom’s full focus.”

It was hard for the Meyers to go on their first family vacation without Rebecca; the longing for her was strong. The togetherness with their surviving children was essential—for parents and for each child. To be together, to have permission to have fun, to do new things, to indulge in treats—these are rites of passage that every grieving family needs. Thus was born Rebecca’s Gift, a nonprofit that sends grieving families on their first vacation following the death of a child.

There are many generous organizations that provide for terminally ill children and their families. After a child’s death, a lot of that help goes away. The goal of Rebecca’s Gift is to buoy the family through that transition by bringing focus to grieving siblings, who notice the evaporation of support during an intensely painful era.

Meyer designed the organization so it can cover all vacation expenses for the grieving family. This includes admission tickets, transportation, meals, and spending money for souvenirs. “I wanted it to be as all-inclusive as possible,” said Meyer. “I wanted parents to not have to say ‘no’ due to money.”

Raising money through charitable events, and building relationships with generous venues [known] for family fun, Rebecca’s Gift has come out of the gate successfully. This past summer, two local families were sent on unique driving-distance trips: a Pittsburgh getaway, and family fun at Cedar Point and Kalahari. The families choose the destinations, based on what Rebecca’s Gift can afford. As funds increase, the organization plans to increase the number of families sponsored, and the variety of destinations.

Family time together is meaningful. Despite “a long road of surgeries, radiation, chemotherapy; tears, laughter, and a lot of stress,” Jillian’s family went on many family trips to lift her spirits. When it became clear that Jillian would not survive her illness, each family member broke “into tiny pieces of hurt and sadness.”

Said Jillian’s mother, “We all handle it in different ways because of age and how each of us lost a slightly different person. I lost a daughter, [my husband] a step-daughter, and my girls a sister.” The opportunity to travel together [to Pittsburgh] “was much needed for our family. It was emotional for this momma who tried her hardest to hide the tears of missing Jillian on our very first trip without her.”

Rebecca’s Gift has funds to sponsor one more family in 2016, and accepts referrals from therapists, hospice centers, or clergy members who are actively working with an Ohio family that has lost a child due to terminal illness in the past six months to two years. The family must include surviving siblings under the age of 18. Visit http://rebeccagift.org/contact/ recommend.shtml to refer a family.

For more information, find Rebecca’s Gift on Facebook or at beccasgift.org. Upcoming fundraisers include an Un-Event during the month of November; and Fundstands for Help at JumpStart Gymnastics (Dec. 20). Donations of goods and services to include in family getaways are also welcome.

The simple pleasures of getaway moments like this, with son, Joshua, are what inspired Kat Meyer to create Rebecca’s Gift.

The Cleveland Heights Chapter Q of P.E.O. International will host an intimate afternoon with author D.M. Pulley on Saturday, Nov. 5, 2 p.m., at Forest Hill Presbyterian Church, 3531 Monticello Blvd. in Cleveland Heights. Proceeds will benefit P.E.O. International Projects for Women’s Education.

The afternoon will include a book reading, a Q-and-A session, and book signing by Pulley, the 2014 winner of Amazon’s Breakthrough Novel award for her debut novel, The Dead Key. Her latest novel, The Buried Book, was published in August. She lives in Greater Cleveland with her husband and two sons, and writes in the mystery/thriller genre. This is the fifth annual author event hosted by Chapter Q, a philanthropic educational organization. The event showcases popular Greater Cleveland authors, promotes literacy and raises money to educate women.

Books will be available for purchase at the event through A Cultural Exchange, a local non-profit that promotes multicultural educational programs. A dessert reception will immediately follow. To purchase tickets ($10), contact Jan Hornack at 440-442-9751 or jhornack@gmail.com. For more information, visit www.facebook.com/PEOClevelandChapterQ.

Ellen Bartz is a Cleveland Heights resident and current president of Chapter Q of P.E.O. International.

The Cleveland Heights Chapter Q of P.E.O. International will host an intimate afternoon with author D.M. Pulley on Saturday, Nov. 5, 2 p.m., at Forest Hill Presbyterian Church, 3531 Monticello Blvd. in Cleveland Heights. Proceeds will benefit P.E.O. International Projects for Women’s Education.

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Some levy opponents have tried to sway residents with inaccurate or misleading numbers. Here are the FACTS:

**FACT:** Issue 109 is the smallest levy request in more than 30 years. It’s a no-frills levy that will protect crucial school programs and services.

**FACT:** Heights Schools’ spending has decreased four years in a row (in real dollars) through staff and administrator reductions and careful cost-cutting measures.

**FACT:** The District’s graduation rate has gone up every year since 2011 and is now nearly 3 percentage points higher than the statewide average.

**FACT:** If Issue 109 fails, the schools must cut an additional $6 million, leading to significant teacher layoffs, potential cuts to special education, gifted programs, and arts and music education, and likely cuts to extracurriculars, including athletics.

**FACT:** To help balance the District’s budget over the past five years, teacher salaries have only risen at half the rate of inflation and the average CH-UH teacher salary is right in line with area districts.

**FACT:** Only 7% of CH-UH employees are administrators, and those are in crucial positions like principal, security coordinator, or special education coordinator. Eliminating them wouldn’t save much money but it would hurt schools and students.

**FACT:** On average, most Ohio school districts must ask for a new operating levy every 3 or 4 years. Heights Schools haven’t passed a new operating levy since 2011, which means their local funding hasn’t increased in five years.

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5. CH-UH 2015 Consolidated Annual Financial Report
Big Fun hosts book signing for Heights Hall-of-Famer Henkin

Lisa Hunt

On Nov. 9, 7-8 p.m., local author Barry Henkin will sign copies of his 2014 autobiography, Why Am I So Special, at Big Fun, 1814 Coventry Road.

Henkin, who has faced developmental challenges since birth, wrote the book in the hopes of motivating others to live their lives to their fullest potential.

A 2013 inductee into the Heights High Hall of Fame, Henkin is also a two-time gold-medal-winning Special Olympian.

"Hosting this book signing is an honor," said Steve Presser, owner of Big Fun and a longtime friend of Henkin.

Henkin is an advocate for, and inspirations to, individuals living with disabilities and challenges, and is a popular motivational speaker.

He has received numerous awards, including high praise and repeat commendations for being a stellar employee at Menorah Park, in Beachwood, where he has worked for more than 35 years.

Henkin’s life, his positive attitude, and his accomplishments are an inspiration to others.

In a 2013 Heights Observer article, Presser said of his friend, "In a world that sees so many negatives, Barry finds all the positive things in life."

Wanda Ngolo, a parent and Reaching Heights board member, said, "As a mother whose child was born with developmental delays, when I look at all that Barry accomplishes, and all that he stands for, I am encouraged about the future for my child and the community that surrounds her."

Henkin is at work on a second book that he plans to release in 2017.

Lisa Hunt is assistant director of Reaching Heights and founding member of the Exceptional Children’s Advocacy Group (ECAG). She is a resident of Cleveland Heights and a graduate of the Heights School. She also serves as board secretary for the Cuyahoga County Board of Developmental Disabilities (CCBDD).

HRRC offers repair classes for all

Pam Wetherill

"Aren’t your repair classes just for women? . . . for Cleveland Heights residents? . . . for people with a low-enough income?" Home Repair Resource Center (HRRC) staff members hear questions like these all the time.

In fact, the people who take HRRC’s home repair classes are young and old, rich and poor, men and women, total beginners and folks with some know-how, the physically able and the physically challenged. They have one thing in common: they want to learn how to repair their homes themselves.

Among those who have taken HRRC’s classes are:

• Mothers and daughters, like Marian and Kathryn, who learned to do plumbing repairs together;

• New homeowners Priyanka and Ryan, who came to learn how to maintain their new South Euclid house for years to come;

• Joe, a senior, who’s lived in his Shaker Heights home for decades but still wants to do his own repairs when possible;

• Eda, the proud owner of a Rockefeller home in East Cleveland, who wants to preserve its character;

• Out-of-towners, including Marissa from Pennsylvania, who takes HRRC’s electrical series because there’s nothing like it near her.

HRRC’s classes are made possible by Community Development Block Grant funds, administered by the City of Cleveland Heights; donations from countless individuals; and class fees from students who can afford to pay.

HRRC’s model is simple: Learn what you need. Pay what you can. Of its 300 or so students this year, nearly 70 percent qualified for discounts. Based on income and/or residency, discounts range from 25 to 100 percent.

HRRC offers practical, accessible, hands-on repair education to everyone, without exception. To see a list of HRRC’s classes, and for more information on registration and discounts, visit www.hrcc.org.

Pam Wetherill is HRRC’s home repair education coordinator.

Reason #1 to VOTE NO on CH-UH School Levy Issue 109

SKY-HIGH ADMINISTRATIVE SALARIES

The average CH-UH ADMINISTRATIVE salary is

$105,743!

Now COMPARE that to the average salaries at HIGH-PERFORMING, TOP-TIER districts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOL DISTRICT</th>
<th>2015 AVERAGE ADMIN SALARY</th>
<th>ACHIEVEMENT INDICATORS MET</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CH-UH</td>
<td>$105,743</td>
<td>29.4% = F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>$104,193</td>
<td>93.8% = A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aurora</td>
<td>$102,150</td>
<td>100% = A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solon</td>
<td>$101,265</td>
<td>100% = A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chagrin Falls</td>
<td>$101,110</td>
<td>97.0% = A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westlake</td>
<td>$100,229</td>
<td>100% = A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bay Village</td>
<td>$99,332</td>
<td>97.0% = A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaker Heights</td>
<td>$83,529</td>
<td>85.3% = B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IN ADDITION:

CH-UH Treasurer Scott Gainer is the 5th highest paid Treasurer

in the State of Ohio (yes, you read that correctly) at:

$160,914

CH-UH Publicity Director Angee Shaker was the 2nd highest paid PR person

in the State of Ohio (seriously, we can’t make this stuff up) at:

$112,908

Source: Ohio Dept. of Education District Profile Report FY 2015

Citizens Leadership PAC is a Ballot political action committee. Diane L. Hallum, Treasurer, 1059 Oxford Road, Cleveland Heights, OH 44121.

Washington & Lee Service, Inc
2080 Lee Road, Cleveland Hts., OH 44118
(216) 371-2850
Chip Ramsey Owner

W&D Services, Inc.
1250 Park Rd., Chagrin Falls, OH 44022
(216) 664-9422
Denny Fisher Owner

Washington & Lee Service, Inc 
2080 Lee Road, Cleveland Hts., OH 44118 
(216) 371-2850 
Chip Ramsey Owner

Washington & Lee Service, Inc.
2080 Lee Road, Cleveland Hts., OH 44118
(216) 371-2850
Chip Ramsey Owner
Heights Bicycle Coalition

The holidays are wonderful, but putting food on the table is a challenge for some. You can do something about that!

On Saturday, Nov. 19, starting at 10:30 a.m., bike Cleveland, a local non-profit that promotes bicycle use, will be hosting an event that combines exercise with giving back. The event is called “Give thanks—and donate food—by bike,” and it aims to mobilize the Heights community to provide food and support to those in need.

**What you'll do:**

1. **Bike to the event:** Ride to the Heights Rec Center with your bike, and sign in. If you don't have a bike, you can participate as a pedestrian.
2. **Receive a map:** You'll be given a map of local stores that are participating in the event. These stores include grocery stores, bike shops, and other local businesses.
3. **Collect food and groceries:** At each store, you'll collect non-perishable food items and groceries. Each participant will receive a bag to carry their groceries.
4. **Return to the Rec Center:** After collecting as much food as possible, return to the Heights Rec Center. There, you'll be encouraged to ride your bike to different stores to continue collecting food and groceries.
5. **Return to the Rec Center:** After collecting as much food as possible, return to the Heights Rec Center. There, you'll be encouraged to ride your bike to different stores to continue collecting food and groceries.
6. **Organize the food:** You'll work with volunteers to organize the collected food items and groceries for donation.
7. **Donate the food:** The collected food will be donated to local food banks and pantries.

**What you need:**

- A bicycle
- A bag to carry your groceries
- Comfortable clothing and shoes
- A map of participating stores
- A sense of community

**Why it matters:**

The holidays can be a time of giving, but for many, the cost of groceries can be overwhelming. By participating in this event, you'll be helping to provide food and support to those in need. You'll also be promoting the use of bicycles as a healthy and sustainable mode of transportation.

**About Heights Bicycle Coalition:**

Heights Bicycle Coalition is a non-profit organization that promotes bike use in the Heights community. They host events like this one to encourage people to bike and to collect food and groceries for donation.

**Contact:**

Heights Bicycle Coalition

[heightsbicyclecoalition.org](http://heightsbicyclecoalition.org)

[submitnewstory@heightsobserver.org](mailto:submitnewstory@heightsobserver.org)
Nepali refugees transform district culture

Krissy Dietrich Gallagher

A Noble Elementary School student excitedly announced that he was signing up for Boy Scouts and couldn’t wait to “build anything—like build a car and go hiking, and treasure maps and stuff. Cool.”

This may not sound remarkable until you learn that this boy was born in a refugee camp on the border of Bhutan and Nepal. His family moved to Cleveland Heights as part of a wave of Nepali refugees that have arrived over the past four years. These refugees—originally from Bhutan but resettled into U.N. camps in a refugee camp on the border of Bhutan and Nepal. His family moved to Cleveland Heights as part of a wave of Nepali refugees that have arrived over the past four years.

These refugees—originally from Bhutan but resettled into U.N. camps in Nepal in the 1990s—now comprise nearly 10 percent of the student population at Noble, and their presence has changed the culture of the entire building. “We are multicultural in a way we never were before,” said Principal Rachael Coleman. “This has forced the kids to look at what it truly means to be different.”

“It’s also forced me, and my staff, to look more closely at how we engage parents. If our Nepali parents can’t read, we have to rely on things like robo-calls. But if they don’t have phones, we have to find ways to connect with them one-on-one.” [Many of] the parents had no formal schooling and are illiterate in all languages. Their children, born in a refugee camp on the border of Bhutan and Nepal. His family moved to Cleveland Heights as part of a wave of Nepali refugees that have arrived over the past four years.

The group comprises 33 English language learners and 14 native speakers, many funded through a 21st Century grant secured by the district, as well as through Title I and Title III dollars.

Wendy Craven is the full-time English language teacher, who “pushes in” to her students’ classrooms. “That allows me to support them while they’re learning the core curriculum,” said Craven. “Despite the challenges, this work is easy when you meet the kids. They’re so kind and good and have such a strong work ethic. They absolutely appreciate the opportunities here in America.”

Craven also helps in the Peer to Peer (P2P) mentoring program that pairs Nepali students with native speakers before and after school, four days each week. Tiffany Rowan is the P2P coordinator, a grant-funded position.

The group comprises 33 English language learners and 14 native speakers who gather for 15 hours each week to practice reading, speaking and listening in English through both real-world interactions. The children play games, engage in theater productions and create art, including a large mural they painted on the exterior of the building that reads, “E pluribus unum” (“out of many, one”), a perfect description of the new environment at Noble.

P2P students go on field trips to fully understand the American experience, from bowling to visiting a farm. “We’re always looking for new partnerships,” said Rowan. “Anyone who has an experience to offer to our children, from touring the back of a grocery store to visiting a pet shop to picking apples. They’re all valuable learning experiences.”

Noble staff member Draupadi Pradhan, who immigrated from Nepal in 2011, serves as an interpreter, funded through the grant, and a lunch aide. She’s often invited to parent-teacher conferences, and PTA or schoolwide events, including three P2P Parent Nights each year. “I am very glad for the opportunity to help,” Pradhan said, “to be near people who speak my own language.”

Monticello Middle School also has a cohort of Nepali refugee students. Kari Queen is the building’s English language teacher for half of each day, and then splits her remaining time between Boulevard and Oxford elementary schools. Ten of her 14 Monticello students are Nepali. Most already speak Nepali and Hindi, so English is their third language. Students come to her during their foreign language block, as teaching them Chinese or Spanish would only confuse matters.

“We work on all aspects of language development, including reading and comprehension, writing, speaking and listening,” said Queen, noting that their “tremendous” progress “might not show up yet in their test scores, but they are functioning in school and in life.”

Queen and Craven agree that their students are picking up social English quickly, helping them integrate into their schools. Their academic English, however, is lagging, especially when it comes to specific content vocabulary in science and social studies.

“But they’ll get there,” promised Queen.

Krissy Dietrich Gallagher is a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights, a graduate of the Heights school and a former Coventry School teacher. She is a freelance journalist under contract with the CH-UH City School District, and a member of the Steering Committee for Citizens for Our Heights Schools, the volunteer group that runs school campaigns. A version of this article appeared online at www.chuh.org.
McMillan Early Learning Center celebrates expansion

Amy Brown

On Oct. 11, The Centers for Families and Children (The Centers) hosted an open house at its McMillan Early Learning Center, at 1941 S. Taylor Road, to celebrate the site’s recent expansion.

Attendees toured the renovated center which now offers care for infants ages 6 weeks to 18 months, in addition to its toddler and preschool programs. The expansion included a new infant classroom, serving eight children; a toddler classroom, serving 10 children; and a large indoor gym for physical development. Added to the existing toddler classroom and three preschool classrooms, the expanded space enables the center to serve a total of eight infants, 20 toddlers and 29 preschoolers.

“Our McMillan Early Learning Center has been a high-quality option for families in Cleveland Heights for nearly 20 years,” said Elizabeth Newman, president and CEO of The Centers. “We are responding to the community’s need for more quality infant and toddler care with this expansion, and look forward to serving as a trusted partner and provider to families.”

Mary Dunbar, Cleveland Heights City Council member, spoke at the open house about the importance of education starting at an early age, and praised The Centers for providing high-quality care to the community. Also in attendance was Sandy McMillan, grandson of the building’s namesake, Samuel Sterling McMillan. Payton Waller, a former student of McMillan Early Learning Center who started kindergarten this fall, was the event’s official ribbon-cutter.

McMillan has earned a Five Star Step Up to Quality rating—the highest rating a center can receive from the Ohio quality rating system—and is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. The Centers offers a comprehensive model of care focused on preparing children for success in school and life, which includes an evidence-based curriculum, health services, nutrition and family engagement.

McMillan Early Learning Center is open Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. For more information call 216-355-9678 or visit www.thecentersohio.org.

Amy Brown is marketing and communications manager at The Centers for Families and Children.

CH-UH district recognized nationally for equity work

Scott Wortman

In September, the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District was recognized in Washington, D.C., for fully reflecting America’s diversity at the highest levels of K-12 schools by equally including students of all backgrounds in Advanced Placement (AP) courses.

The district, represented by Superintendent Talisa Dixon, was honored in large part as a result of its partnership with the nonprofit Equal Opportunity Schools, which has assisted the district in identifying ways to provide equitable academic opportunities to all students, especially in regard to access and support for minorities taking AP courses.

“When we met with our Strategic Planning Committee two years ago,” said Dixon, “our community members were adamant that our plan address equity issues within the school district. As a result, goal 2 of our Strategic Plan centers on equity and our educational approach to empower all students.

We want to provide an excellent education to each student in every district school and classroom. “Paramount to this is access to rigorous courses, especially at the high school level. It is our goal to ensure that all students have equitable access to AP and high-level courses. We know that many of our students are capable of handling the rigor of AP courses but need encouragement and additional support.”

CH-UH was among a select group of districts recognized by Broderick Johnson, White House cabinet secretary and My Brother’s Keeper Taskforce chair, at the September dinner celebration, hosted by Equal Opportunity Schools and the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation.

Scott Wortman is the supervisor of communications for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District.

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Engineering program grows with partnership

Joy Henderson

Heights High students in the Digital Electronics (DE) Engineering course are learning about digital logic by creating a random-number generator—think of it as an electronic way to roll dice. To begin the activity, each student received a kit that included a circuit board, sockets, chips, capacitors, resistors, LED lights and a switch. After three days of assembly work, everyone in the class had a working random-number generator.

The DE course is one of two engineering courses offered this year as part of the district’s partnership with Project Lead the Way, a national nonprofit organization dedicated to using hands-on projects to increase the number of students who graduate with a background in science and technology. The Heights High engineering program is in its second year, following a restructuring that created the Project Lead the Way engineering courses.

“The DE course covers the foundation of the electronic devices that students use—cell phones, laptops and hi-def TV,” said engineering teacher Greg Nachman, who is also coach of the Robotics Club. “Students enjoy learning about how their devices work and doing the actual work to solder a circuit board.”

In addition to the DE course, the school also offers an entry-level Introduction to Engineering and Design course that is focused on the design process and includes projects that use 3D-modeling software and a 3D printer.

In the 2017–18 school year, Heights High will add a Principles of Engineering survey course to the program, which will expose students to concepts they will encounter in a college engineering program. Topics will include mechanisms, energy, statics, materials and kinematics. In the 2018–19 school year, a capstone project course for seniors will be added to the program, in which students will identify a problem and design a product to solve the challenge.

Heights High’s engineering courses are part of the school’s Career and Technical Education Program.

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

Cleveland Heights-University Heights Board of Education

Meeting highlights

SEPTEMBER 20, 2016

All board members were present.

Board actions on policy, contract and personnel

The board approved a Standard-Based School Counselor Evaluation Policy on third reading; a contract with the Educational Service Center of Cuyahoga County/Inter-District Service Area for 2016–17, which entails three positions, and several routine personnel items.

Work session on special education programs

Jeffrey Johnston, director of student services, presented an overview of special needs programming and its alignment with the district’s strategic plan. In the 2015–16 [academy] year, 1,003 special needs students attended CH-UH schools. Typically, special needs students comprise 16–18 percent of the district’s student population, similar to most inner-city suburban districts. Special needs students transfer from school to school with disproportionate frequency.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 provides federal funding for certain qualified students, but school districts are mandated to provide accessible programming to all disabled students, so the districts themselves are responsible for funding special services for those disabled students who do not qualify for federal funds. In all, the district receives $1.6 million in federal funds for special needs education.

In keeping with the strategic plan goal of equity, empowerment and opportunity, the district strives to provide equitable access to a rigorous, relevant curriculum that includes differentiated instruction and service by support staff, such as social workers and counselors. In light of state report card scores, the current emphasis is on special needs students spending more time focused on core curriculum, which necessitates a shift toward a less-restrictive environment and more inclusion in regular classrooms. The changing nature of state testing makes it difficult to demonstrate the progress of a special needs student.

The Child Find [mandate] requires districts to identify any student who requires special services. If parents or staff suspect a disability, the district must evaluate the student within 60 days and provide appropriate services, which can range from full inclusion to a separate environment.

Some of the more specialized services offered include the Wilson Reading Program for students who read significantly below grade level, the Special Olympics, Fieldstone Farms and Advancement via Individual Determination. A district autism team is also being established. To address the strategic plan’s goal of readiness for college and/or career, the district has added community-based work experience and career-based intervention courses at the high school. Transition services have also become increasingly important.

As a result of Child Find, more special needs students are being identified, so the cost of serving them is increasing. The district is also responsible for identifying non-public school students at a yearly staff cost of $350,000. CH-UH ranks in the top quarter of state districts in provision of special needs services. The district meets expectations set by the Ohio Department of Education, showing that identification is equitable and timely, and the student/teacher ratio is appropriate.

Lisa Hunt and Amy Kerr-Jung are parents of special education students who are also employed as district staff (through Reaching Heights), paid with federal special education funds. They are developing connections among parents of children in special education programs and between the parents and the district. They have spearheaded the inclusion of these parents in curriculum nights, and the establishment of an Exceptional Child Art Exhibit, and installing parent support representatives in every school and in parent workshops.

LWV Observer: Nancy Dietrich.

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Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library Board
Meeting highlights

SEPTEMBER 19, 2016
All board members were present.

UH Library groundbreaking
Renovation of this library got underway with a groundbreaking ceremony on Aug. 28, attended by University Heights Mayor Susan Inkelas, UH city council members, library board members and staff.

Check Us Out
The fall issue of Check Us Out has been mailed to every Heights residence. It includes the library’s 2015 annual report.

ADA-compliant desks
Noble Neighborhood Library’s current reference desk is not ADA compliant in allowing a disabled user to approach the desk. A desk similar to the one now in use on the second floor of the Lee Road Library will be purchased. The desk in the teen room will be replaced as well.

Annual staff training day
The library was closed to the public on Sept. 13, to allow for staff training activities. The keynote presentation was on rational detachment, a means to handle difficult situations with patience by remaining calm and professional. Staff were able to choose from 15 break-out sections.

Correction to Unattended Child Policy
Last month, it was reported that “adequate supervision” included “... a caregiver who can understand and follow the library’s code of conduct and be mature enough to care for the child without an adult present. We suggest the caregiver be at least 12 years old.” The age of the caregiver is suggested to be at least 12 years old. The Marketing and Communications Department prepared an Unattended Child Policy handout for caregivers.

Salary survey
In 2011, the library hired a compensation design consultant to do a comprehensive study. Nothing has been changed in the pay grades as a result of that study. Amy Petrus of Petrus HR Solutions LLC has been hired to perform a salary survey to determine whether the library’s current salary structure is still competitive. The board approved a sum not to exceed $9,500 to cover the cost of the survey.

August Public Service Report highlights:
• A composer for the Collaborative Garden was constructed by staff with materials paid for through the grant received from the Master Gardeners of Cuyahoga County. The computer will be used for programs about recycling and building rich soil. Staff and customers harvested herbs and vegetables from the garden in August.
• Now in its ninth year, City Fresh offers shares of fresh produce weekly at the Coventry Village Library.
• At Noble Neighborhood Library, the Great Lakes Light Opera presented “Cinderella” to an audience of 30 children and adults.
• New library card sign-ups in August totaled 463 for adults, and 96 for children.
• Ask a Tech Trainer tutorials continued at Lee Road Library and were well attended.

What’s going on at your library?

Coventry Village Library
1925 Coventry Road, 216-932-3600
Tuesday, Nov. 29, 4 p.m.
A Celebration of Dreams: Celebrate the moving memoir, Brown Girl Dreaming, by Jacqueline Woodson. Bring the whole family for conversation, creative writing, crafts and other activities. (Reading part or all of the book before a program is suggested.) Registration is open.

Lee Road Library
2345 Lee Road, 216-932-2600
Wednesday, Nov. 16, 6 p.m.
18th Annual Poetry Slam. Are you a talented young poet? Celebrate the poetry of Jacqueline Woodson’s Brown Girl Dreaming, and share your story through verse. There will be prizes and free pizza on the night of the slam, and workshops will be offered prior to the event. Contact the library for further details.

Noble Neighborhood Library
2800 Noble Road, 216-293-9665
Friday, Nov. 18, 4 p.m.
Tinker Lab. Calling all future scientists, engineers and inventors, in grades K-5, for hands-on learning and fun! Attempt exciting experiments using the scientific process. Registration begins Nov. 4.

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Community Forum Discussion
The 2016 Election: What Happened and Why?
Sunday, Nov. 20, 2016 9:30-10:45 a.m.

Once the seemingly endless 2016 campaign has finally ended, what can we make of the outcome? Was this finally “The Big One” reflecting major party realignments?
What role did voter demographics, negative messaging, super PACs and other factors play in the election?

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Caregiver Boot Camp provides support to those caring for older adults

Julia Murphy
Pat Gray, Coventry Village Library manager, did what librarians do best: track down the most-reputable resources to share with the public. The usual image is that of a librarian pulling books from a shelf or printing articles from an online database. In this instance, Gray tracked down the best human resources she could find: experts in the area of senior services, financial empowerment, Alzheimer’s disease education, home safety and housing for older adults.

In September, Valerie Reed, senior services liaison with University Hospitals, kicked off the library’s Caregiver Boot Camp series by sharing a wide range of local resources for the elderly and those who care for them, including home services, homeless services for seniors, eviction assistance, food resources, transportation services, energy assistance and more.

Valerie shared her resources, and we’ll also be able to pass them out to participants at the rest of the events that are part of this series,” said Gray. Coming up on Thursday, Nov. 17, at 7 p.m., is the second installment of the series, Managing Caregiver Stress (and Guilt?), co-sponsored by the Cleveland Chapter of the Alzheimer’s Association. Cynthia Davenport, education and outreach specialist with the Alzheimer’s Association, will present a holistic approach for recognizing and addressing the mental and physical health of caregivers.

“Alzheimer’s takes a devastating toll on caregivers. Nearly 60 percent of Alzheimer’s and dementia caregivers rate the emotional stress of caregiving as high or very high, about 40 percent suffer from depression,” said Davenport. “The best thing caregivers can do for the person they’re caring for is to stay physically and emotionally strong. It is equally important to be able to identify stress, understand how it affects our physical and emotional health, and incorporate strategies to manage stress while caring for someone.”

The series continues on Thurs., Jan. 19, with Recognizing and Managing Difficult Behaviors, by Bert Rall, director of mental health services at Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging. This session will focus on recognizing the multiple and often interacting causes for a loved one’s inappropriate or difficult behaviors, and provide real-world tips and strategies for managing—or better yet—preventing them.

On Thursday, Feb. 17, Mindi Thal, physical therapist for the Visiting Nurse Association, will present Home Safety and Housing Options.

The series will end with Hiring a Caregiver: How to Locate, Interview, Hire and Contract for Outside Help, on Thursday, March 16.

“Being a caregiver can be overwhelming if you don’t have support,” said Gray. “We designed these sessions to offer practical, immediate help and information for those who need it most.”

For more information on the Caregiver Boot Camp series, visit www.heightslibrary.org or call 216-932-3600.

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

Library offers special card for teachers

Sheryl Banks

A 2013 report by the National School Supply and Equipment Association found that, nationwide, teachers spent $6.8 billion of their own money on school supplies for their students. Not much has changed since then, and the teachers in Cleveland Heights-University Heights schools no doubt are part of this national trend.

However, teachers in the community can borrow—no buy—books, DVDs, CDs and audiobooks from the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library System. In October, Heights Libraries made it even easier for teachers to use library materials to enhance their lesson plans by creating the Educator Card.

“With the Educator Card, teachers can check out most juvenile materials for twice as long as they could with a personal library card—that’s six weeks for books, audiobooks and music CDs, and two weeks for Blu-rays and DVDs,” said Sam Lapides, youth services manager. “It also allows teachers to keep their teaching materials separate from their personal items.”

The card also gives teachers access to the new Educator Collection program, which enables busy teachers to call the library or fill out an online form requesting up to 25 books on a topic of their choice. The collection will then be held for them at any Heights Libraries branch.

“This is an important resource for educators and want to help them succeed in the classroom, or at home, by making it easier for them to access supplemental materials,” said Lapides. “This program lets teachers draw upon the wide variety of materials owned by Heights Libraries at all reading levels. We hope these materials will help teachers enrich their students’ learning.”

The new Educator Card is available to all who teach at public schools, private schools or preschools, or who home-school their children. Teachers must apply in person at a Heights Libraries branch, and present a photo ID, proof of current address and proof of educator status, such as a school employee ID badge, pay stub from a school employer or a home-school certification letter from the appropriate authority, such as the Ohio Department of Education.

Educators and home-schooling parents can find more information at www.heightslibrary.org.

Sheryl Banks is the marketing and community relations manager for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library System.
Retirement can be a new beginning for professional artists

Artists Susan Squires with her work.

Judith Eugene

Reaching retirement age does not necessarily mean you want to stop working. This is especially true if your work is also your passion. The Life Reimagined Institute, a division of AARP (www.lifereimagined.aarp.org), helps working seniors feel more rewarded and fulfilled by their careers. The institute’s mission is to help seniors rediscover what truly matters and focus on what they really want to do with the next chapter of their lives.

For creative seniors who are passionate about art, retirement offers advantages and opportunities to pursue their passions.

The Heights is home to many professional artists who also happen to be seniors. Among them is Mona Kolesar, a professional artist for more than 40 years. After receiving a B.S. in art education from Penn State University, she spent her early career teaching—helping others discover their creative personalities. In 1973, she struck out on her own, creating her own art while also offering art consulting services. She gave up consulting in 2000 to focus solely on her passion for creating.

Kolesar’s earlier works were large-scale sculptures made of stone and metal for commercial buildings, influenced by her childhood environment, growing up in the oil fields of Pennsylvania. Her current sculptures are smaller and lighter, made of bent wood and metal, and are inspired by the creative processes of the brain.

Asked how reaching retirement age affected her work, Kolesar said, “Art has no age boundaries. As you age you refine your own craft, and you focus on more of the things that appeal to you.”

Cleveland Heights resident Susan Squires has been a professional artist for more than 20 years. She received a B.F.A. in painting and drawing from the Cleveland Institute of Art. Shortly thereafter, she began experimenting with adding wax to her paintings. “Wax adds depth and surface to my work,” she said. Her paintings take historic writings, geometric shapes and city plans, and add layers of color and wax over them to create contemporary works.

Squires feels that retirement is a perfect time for beginning, or continuing, a creative endeavor. “I can spend a lot of time with my art now,” she said. “There is more time for discovering and learning.”

Kolesar and Squires agree that expressing oneself through art in retirement is a metaphor for life. The longer you live, the more confidence you gain—in who you are as an artist as well as who you are as a person. “After years of experimentation, I am more confident in my work, and everything flows better than ever before,” commented Squires. Said Kolesar, “Artists don’t retire, we just keep on keeping on as long as we can.”

Kolesar’s work can be viewed at her studio (call 216-408-5578 or judith@lovinghandsgroup.com). She can be reached at 216-488-578 or judith@lovinghandsgroup.com.

The institute’s mission is to help seniors rediscover what truly matters and focus on what they really want to do with the next chapter of their lives.

“Cascade” by Mona Kolesar.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position, District/School</th>
<th>2015 State Achievement Indicators Met</th>
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We could keep going but you get the point.

So ask yourself:

1. How can the district need more money from us when they obviously feel there is still enough money to accept salary increases?

2. How can all of those F’s continue to be tolerated by any of us, let alone the staff listed above, who we entrust with our children’s education?

Source: Ohio Dept. of Education District Profile Report FY 2015
Source: State of Ohio Treasurer’s Transparency Project FY 2015
Citizens Leadership PAC is a Ballot political action committee, Diane L. Hallum, Treasurer, 1059 Oxford Road, Cleveland Heights, OH 44121.

Weights Observer November 1, 2016 21 www.heightsobserver.org
CH Senior Center News

Amy Jenkins

Cleveland Heights Meals on Wheels began in 1978 as a cooperative effort between local churches and the Cleveland Heights Office on Aging. The program’s volunteers deliver meals to Cleveland Heights senior residents. A few of the original volunteers have remained active in the organization for all of its 30-plus years.

One of these dedicated volunteers is Mary Sayre. Active since 1982, she has delivered meals, acted as volunteer coordinator, served on the board of directors, and held every office, including president. Volunteers like her are the heart of this organization that continues to serve seniors in Cleveland Heights.

Meals are prepared at the McGregor Home, heated and packaged at Fairmount Presbyterian Church, and delivered around the noon hour on most weekdays. The cost for a hot meal and a cold lunch delivered together is $6.25 per day and you must be at home to receive your meal. For more information about the program, call 216-691-7379 or e-mail ajenkins@clvhts.com. A social worker will return your call and help you sign up.

The Cleveland Heights Senior Activity Center (SAC), located in the CH Community Center at 1 Monticello Blvd., offers a wide variety of programming for Cleveland Heights residents 60 and older, and is open Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5 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.

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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. in Council Chambers at University Heights City Hall. To receive the monthly schedule by e-mail, call 216-932-7800, ext. 205, or send an e-mail to info@universityheights.com.

Nov. 3: Farida Ejaz, Ph.D., senior research scientist at Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging, will present an overview of financial wellness for the elderly, and strategies for avoiding elder financial abuse. His talk will include a Q-and-A session, and acknowledge the interplay of financial wellness, health and family relationships.

Nov. 3: Caitlin Browdie, M.A., will reflect on her recently completed two-year experience as a Peace Corps volunteer in Paraguay. There, her fluency in Spanish and master’s degree in global interactions and international relations, from Cleveland State University, helped facilitate her understanding of Latin America’s history, culture and destiny.

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

Nov. 24: Thanksgiving Day. No senior citizen meeting today, but much for which to be grateful.

AMY JENKINS
Supervisor at the CH Office on Aging and the Senior Activity Center. She can be reached at 216-691-7379 or e-mail at ajenkins@clvhts.com.

Longtime Meals on Wheels volunteer Mary Sayre.

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Cleveland Cuts sets up shop in the Rockefeller Building

Melissa McClelland

Growing up with a dad who owned a salvage yard, and with a large farm in the family, Dee Coker began repairing and making metal items at an early age. He learned to repair parts by straightening them or to forge new ones when necessary. Those early skills led him to an interest in making knives.

About a year and a half ago, Coker forged a new partnership with his personal trainer, Al Stokes Sr. They already had another close bond; Coker is Stokes’ pastor. The two knew they could work well together and complement each other. At first Coker made the knives and Stokes made the wooden items they sold: cutting boards, knife handles and rolling carts. They now each sell: cutting boards, knife handles and antler. Once a customer picks a knife, they want to spread the word about a Communist revolution in the political arena.

The pair began selling their wares on Etsy and locally at spots such as the Cleveland Flea. Then the Rockefeller Building at Lee and Mayfield opened in August at 2495 Lee Blvd. The store features complementary items, including aprons and knife rolls, and the pair plan to include some locally produced, shelf-stable food items, which will enable them to craft customized gift packages.

A Cleveland Cuts knife begins as a strip of high-carbon steel from A grade’s Commercial Steel in Alsip, Ill. It is shaped to the desired shape, the piece is sent to Kowalski Heat Treating, on Detroit Avenue in the Detroit Shoreway neighborhood, to be hardened and tempered. These two treatments give the blade strength, and also prevent the steel from becoming brittle. The blade comes back to the shop where it is fitted with a unique handle, made from a variety of woods, and even antler. Once a customer picks a knife, it is then sharpened. Cleveland Cuts sharpens using only a whetstone, never a grinder. To further personalize the knife, the customer can have it etched with a name or personal symbol.

Coker and Stokes are happy to make custom orders. A knife is often such a personal and long-lasting item that some customers want specific lengths or handles. In addition, they offer knife sharpening and etching for customers’ existing knives.

The store is open Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., and by appointment. The pair is happy to interrupt their time making knives and wooden items to meet with customers and discuss their individual needs. Melissa McClelland is a photo stylist and contributor to Edible Cleveland. She lives in Cleveland Heights with her husband, Len Maitri, a retired commercial photographer.

Heights Observer November 1, 2016
On Oct. 29, Simply Michele’s Cookies & Cupcake Boutique opened at 2265 Lee Road, in the space previously occupied by Shawn Paul Salon (which moved to larger quarters in the Heights Rockefeller Building). The Cleveland Heights bakery is the latest location in a chain of three; the other two are in Garfield Heights and Warrensville Heights.

Simply Michele’s sells cupcakes and cookies, as well as ice-cream sandwiches and other products made from vanilla, chocolate and strawberry ice cream. In the summer, it will sell milkshakes as well. The bakery also offers Garrett’s Popcorn, made in Chicago, and assorted pastries, cheesecakes and mini-cakes, and custom cakes that are made-to-order.

Owner Stacey Michele Stoudemire, 43, bestowed her middle name on her bakeries. She grew up in Cleveland and moved to Cleveland Heights with her family when she was 16. Stoudemire graduated from Heights High in 1990. In February 1998, Stoudemire started Simply Elegant Catering. “We do catering for a lot of nonprofit organizations, and we also do corporate catering,” she said.

In 2007, at age 34, Stoudemire had a heart attack. Many other members of her family had also had heart attacks, and that prompted her to change the food she made, especially for Simply Elegant. “I adjusted to a heart-healthy menu,” she said. “I got rid of pork, sodium, salt and a lot of processed foods.”

On Dec. 18, 2014, she opened the first Simply Michele’s in Garfield Heights. “It really came out of my catering business,” she said. “I had started making cupcakes, and I thought it would be great to have a place that sold the cookies and cupcakes.”

Her Warrensville Heights shop opened exactly a year later, on Dec. 18, 2015.

She decided to open a shop in Cleveland Heights because “there were no stores [in the city] that specialized in cupcakes or cookies,” explained Stoudemire.

While her first two bake shops opened on the same December date, Stoudemire said that she “didn’t want to wait until December to open the Cleveland Heights store.”

Over the years, Stoudemire has won many awards for her cooking. In 2015, she won a City of Cleveland Black History Month Award for her work, and in 2014, she won a Garfield Heights Distinguished New Business Award.

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.
CH’s Ronna Kaplan impacts lives through music therapy

Lynn B. Johnson

Music therapist Ronna Kaplan, who was born, and grew up, in Cleveland Heights, has a Heights teacher to thank for leading her to her profession.

“My senior year at Heights High,” recalled Kaplan, “we had a new band director named Robert Bergantino. When it was my turn to audition, he asked about my career aspirations. I said I wanted to go into music therapy, and she waited,” said Kaplan.

Louise Steele Markland, who became Kaplan’s mentor and supervisor, had started working at TMS three years earlier. “My senior year, I observed her and talked with her. Louise actually introduced me to the head of the music therapy (MT) program at Michigan State University, which is where I ended up going to school,” Kaplan said.

Kaplan moved back to the Heights after completing her schooling and internship, and started working part time at TMS in 1988, when her children—Erin Cochran, now of Portland, Ore., and Zach Davis, of Cleveland Heights—were both in elementary school.

“Louise sought me out to work for her, which was validating,” Kaplan said. “She was a leader in our profession and her work was groundbreaking; plus, she was the director of the first community-based music therapy program in the country, which was founded at The Music Settlement in 1966.”

Since 2004, Kaplan has served as chair of the Center for Music Therapy at The Music Settlement. She is proud of the organization’s contributions to the profession over the past 50 years: “We’ve trained intern and supervised students, helping to prepare subsequent generations of music therapists. We have contributed to the body of literature regarding MT, both in MT journals and journals or organizations of related professions. Plus, we’ve been a model for other like institutions.”

TMS will celebrate the 50th anniversary of its pioneering Center for Music Therapy with an evening of events on Monday, Nov. 7. Tickets are available online at www.themusicsettlement.org/golden. People with special needs, along with their families and caregivers, are also welcome to attend the free (with RSVP) Arts for Us Concert on Sunday, Nov. 6. Visit www.themusicsettlement.org/golden for more information.

As she embarks on the start of the next 50 years of music therapy at TMS, Kaplan looks forward to the continuing diversification of the Center for Music Therapy’s therapists, clientele and funding sources, and to providing more opportunities for intentional inclusion for clients with special needs.

“We’ll continue to cultivate new outreach partnerships in the community, and to sustain the long-term ones,” said Kaplan. “We are seeking more diverse partnerships, especially to tie-in to our upcoming west-side campus. Additionally, we’ll continue to seek alternate funding sources to help the people who need our services the most.”

Lynn B. Johnson is the director of marketing and communications for The Music Settlement.

Lake Erie Ink will host Nov. 12 storytelling workshops for families

Barbie Estrada

Every holiday season offers opportunities to share family stories across the generations. On Nov. 12, from 10:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Lake Erie Ink will explore the art of storytelling with kids of all ages. Using family stories as the inspiration for the day’s interactive workshops, participants will engage with guest artists from the Cleveland Association of Black Storytellers (CABS) and GroundWorks DanceTheater.

At 10:30 a.m., Eris Eady, artist, poet and CABS member, will share her secrets for keeping an audience intrigued. She will help attendees craft their stories into tales that can be shared for years. Pizza will be served at 12:30 p.m.

At 1 p.m., GroundWorks DanceTheater will present a program about dance as a form of storytelling. Using family stories as a guide, participants will learn basic dance elements while responding to prompts, and create their own original dances. No dance experience is required.

Both workshops will be held at 2843 Washington Blvd. (the Coventry School building), and families are encouraged to attend together. For more information, and to register (there is a fee for each workshop), visit www.lakeerieink.org.

Lake Erie Ink is a writing space for youth is a non-profit organization that provides creative expression opportunities and academic support to youth in the Greater Cleveland community.

Barbie Estrada is a staff member at Lake Erie Ink.

Lake Erie Ink: a meeting space for youth is a nonprofit organization that provides creative expression opportunities and academic support to youth in the Greater Cleveland community.
Heights Arts Holiday Store celebrates 15 years of showcasing local artists

Mary Ryan

Part of Heights Arts’s mission as a community nonprofit is to showcase and support our region’s artists, whether they are visual, literary or musical. Northeast Ohio—and particularly Cleveland Heights—is a hotbed of creative talent.

This season, Heights Arts hosts its largest holiday store since it first opened its doors on Lee Road as a pop-up gallery in 2001. Beginning on Friday, Nov. 4, and running through Dec. 30, the store will be filled with a broad selection of gift-able art—ceramics, glass, jewelry, painting, printmaking, photography, fiber works, artist tees, paper crafts and handmade holiday cards, as well as artisan items for the home and for the littlest ones in the fam-
ily (not to mention poetry chapbooks and CDs from Cleveland musicians). That’s one long list, but it is a reflection of the depth and variety of local talent as the Heights Arts Holiday Store fills the entire gallery space with works from more than 80 artists.

Here is sampling of what’s new to the Holiday Store this year: greeting cards and artwork by Cleveland Heights illustrator Jamey Christoph; eco-printed scarves by fiber artist Christine Mauersberger; modern, copper jewelry by Jessica Kayse of Souls Repurpose; hand-felted accessories and wall hangings by Maria Ianaro.

Local, handmade items continually arrive throughout December, so visitors are encouraged to return and support local artists with their holiday purchases.

Special seasonal shopping days include Small Business Saturday on Nov. 26, at which Heights Arts will pamper post-Thanksgiving shoppers with refreshments, complimentary gift-wrapping, and the chance to win a gift basket filled with artisan goodies.

The 15th Annual Holiday Store is open seven days a week through December, with participating artists volunteering their time to help patrons in the gallery and share information about their craft.

For further information on community programs, upcoming events and the 15th annual Heights Arts Holiday Store, visit www.heightsarts.org or call 216-371-3457.

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

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Peter and the Starcatcher returns to Dobama for the 2016 holidays

Jonathan Wilhelm

Peter and the Starcatcher, which won five Tony Awards, returns to Dobama Theatre for the 2016 holiday season. The Plain Dealer named last year’s Dobama production of Starcatcher one of the Top 10 Theatrical Performances of 2015, and it was an enormous hit with children of all ages.

Starcatcher, a prequel to James M. Barrie’s immortal Peter Pan, finds 13-year-old Molly Aster in the company of pirates, a giant crocodile, and some unusual singing mermaids. Adventures abound as Molly and three orphan boys (one of whom is the future Peter Pan) attempt to return a trunk of precious “starstuff” to her father as the pirate captain Black Stache and his sidekick, Smee, pursue them.

A dozen actors will portray more than 100 characters using talent, theatrical magic and the limitless possibilities of imagination. Among the returning cast members are audience favorites Christopher Bohan as Black Stache, Andrew Gorrill as Smee, Luke Wehner as Peter and Molly Israel as Molly.

Adapted by Rick Elice from a series of young adult novels by Dave Barry and Ridley Pearson, Starcatcher will be directed this year by Melissa Crum, based on Dobama Artistic Director Nathan Motta’s original production.

Peter and the Starcatcher runs Dec. 2–31, with five performances each week, including Saturday matinees and special matinee performances on Christmas Eve and New Year’s Eve. At a special preview performance on Dec. 1, at 7:30 p.m., all seats will be $10, general admission. A special performance on Dec. 1, at 7:30 p.m., all seats will be $10, general admission.

Children and adults are encouraged to visit the Pirate Dress-Up Station in Dobama’s lobby prior to the performance. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit www.dobama.org or call the box office at 216-932-3396.

Dobama Theatre is located at 2340 Lee Road in Cleveland Heights.

Jonathan Wilhelm is the associate managing director of Dobama Theatre.
Euclid Heights Boulevard freeze-out

I grew up near Coventry Road, on Belmar. In the 1970s, my family would often walk up to one of the delis on Coventry for dinner—especially Benky’s, which later became Irv’s. Irv’s is a story unto itself, but not for right now. At Benky’s, and then Irv’s, I usually ordered a chopped liver sandwich. I know, I know. But I grew up on that and I liked it.

In November 1967, when I was 18, I stopped eating chopped liver, because I became what I still am today, which I describe as a “non-practicing vegetarian.” Because I was (and am) a hippie. I lived in a series of crash pads with other young hippies, in the Coventry area. Though all of us hippies knew each other (whether we actually knew each other or not), and we all helped each other in any way we could, no each other or not), and we all helped each other in any way we could, no

But the hippie movement, at least in the beginning, was tribal. You knew you could trust them if you saw people who looked like you, you knew you could trust them and rely on them. Each of us knew of someplace to tell others to go for food and shelter.

That was at the beginning. The system broke down fairly quickly, though, with the movement splitting into many factions—drug-users, political radicals, religion-seekers, peace-and-love activists, peace-and-love non-activists, and others. Not to mention undercover-cop infiltrators. But Cleveland—with a high (so to speak) concentration in Cleveland Heights, and specifically in the Coventry area—played host to all of them. And the adjacent University Circle, like almost all college campus areas, had its share as well.

I lived for a while in a large apartment complex at the corner of Euclid Heights Boulevard and Lancashire Road. Each apartment included three bedrooms, plus a sunroom with a hidden Murphy bed, where you’d open a fake wall and pull down the bed, and a living room, or, in other words, another bedroom. So 10 or 12 people could easily stay in one unit. Rent was probably around $120 a month, so that could break down to as little as $10 a month per person. Many of the Coventry-area apartments were like that.

The city of Cleveland Heights and almost everyone in it who wasn’t a hippie tried various ways to get rid of us. My apartment building’s contribution to that effort was to turn off the heat. That was tolerable in November. Not so much in December and January.

City Hall, which we’d called to complain, did send out an inspector—after tipping off the building’s owner. A guy came out and placed a meter near a radiator. The owner turned on the heat from 9 to 11 a.m. and 9 to 11 p.m., and that provided enough heat to fulfill the city’s requirements.

But it didn’t heat the place, and by midnight, inside the apartment was almost as cold as outside. I would walk home from playing music at, for instance, La Cave, the folk club at the western edge of University Circle, or Farragher’s, on Taylor Road near Superior, at 1 a.m., in 20-degree weather, and with my coat, hat, gloves and boots still on, lay down on the couch under some thin blanket and try to sleep.

I couldn’t take it anymore by mid February and I took off for New York City, determined to make it big in the music business. I lived pretty much the same way in NYC for a while. Things got better eventually. But five years later, in 1972, I found myself back in Cleveland Heights. I noticed that Coventry Road, which had first changed from old, Eastern-European Jewish food stores of all kinds to rustic hippie head shops, had now replaced those hippie stores with fanker gift shops. I also saw that the big apartment building where they’d tried to freeze out the hippies was gone, that space just a patch of grass (today it’s a parking lot).

The Jewish restaurants, except for the legendary Irv’s (legendary for things other than its cuisine), were gone, too, but I discovered Tom’s, then a seven-seat counter in the rear of Ace Drugs, with a kid, Tom Fello, making just a few types of sandwiches, but writing the names of customers’ invented dishes on the mirror behind the counter.

The tiny restaurant was brand-new that summer. I made up a sandwich of my own—a spinach pie with mushrooms, vegetables and sesame sauce—and called it the DB, which Tommy wrote on the mirror. Today, 46 years later, the DB is still on Tommy’s menu. And though I’ve eaten at Tommy’s at least 7,000 times—literally—that day in ’72 was the only time I’ve ever eaten that sandwich. I didn’t like it. But apparently others have, for it has stood the test of time. And why not? I mean, what is it—chopped liver?

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.

David Budin

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Apollo’s Fire performs Love in Venice

Melania Emig and Matt Flynn

Venice, where East meets West, was one of the world’s greatest artistic centers that fostered geniuses of Western art music, such as Monteverdi and Vivaldi. Simultaneously, the city was alive with the sounds of Sephardic romances, dances by Jewish composer Salamone Rossi, and Arab improvisations. Cleveland Heights-based Apollo’s Fire continues its 25th-anniversary season with an eclectic program that celebrates the sounds of the City of Water, Love in Venice.

Apollo’s Fire musicians Olivier Brault and Kathie Stewart lead the ensemble in Vivaldi’s Autumn violin concerto and LaNotte flute concerto. Sopranos Amanda Powell and Erica Schuller and tenor Owen McIntosh sing Monteverdi’s timeless love duets that remind us that love knows no ethnic boundaries.

The program will be performed on Nov. 18 and 19, at 8 p.m., at St. Paul’s Episcopal in Cleveland Heights. Information and tickets are available at www.apollosfire.org or by calling the box office at 216-320-0012.

Melania Emig is the box office associate and Matt Flynn is the marketing manager at Apollo’s Fire.

Auerbach-Brown is a 2016 Creative Workforce Fellow

Christopher Auerbach-Brown

James Henke

Music has been an important part of Christopher Auerbach-Brown’s life since he was in second grade. That was when he started taking guitar lessons from his father. Now, nearly 40 years later, Auerbach-Brown’s life focuses on music. He is a sound artist and composer, and a member of Trepaning Trio, an acoustic instrumental group that has released three CDs, and the Quiet Trance Ensemble, a group that holds community improvisation evenings. He is also the conductor of the Amati Chamber Orchestra, a string ensemble at The Music Settlement, and he has taught music classes at various schools in the Cleveland area, including The Music Settlement, Lakeland Community College and the Cleveland Institute of Art.

Auerbach-Brown was named a Creative Workforce Fellow at the beginning of 2016 by the Community Partnership for Arts and Culture (CPAC). “It’s basically a project-based grant,” he explained. “You propose an artistic project that can connect you to the Cleveland community.” His project was musical performances that combine experimental music with audience involvement. “We did a show at Spaces in September,” he said. “We asked people to bring something to the show that could make noise, and we figured out how to incorporate their sounds into our music.”

Auerbach-Brown, 46, was born in Rochester, N.Y. When he was 3, his family moved to Geneva, in the Finger Lakes section of central New York. He stopped taking guitar lessons from his father when he was in fifth grade; three years later, he started singing in his school choir. “I took a state-mandated, musical aptitude test,” he said, “and my score was very, very high.”

As a result, he started playing French horn, and then saxophone, about six months later. “When I was in high school,” he said, “I learned how to play about 10 instruments.”

After graduating from high school, Auerbach-Brown attended Ithaca College, where he earned a bachelor’s degree in music composition. “During my freshman year, I took some group-composition classes and really learned the basics about writing music,” he said. “I really got into composition.”

He then came to Cleveland, where he received a master’s degree in music composition at the Cleveland Institute of Music. “A professor at Ithaca recommended that I go there,” he said. “And it was really great. I studied with Donald Erb, who was an American composer who did large, orchestral works.”

Auerbach-Brown currently performs with the Quiet Trance Ensemble, a group that has released three CDs, and the Quiet Trance Ensemble, a group that holds community improvisation evenings. He is also the conductor of the Amati Chamber Orchestra, a string ensemble at The Music Settlement, and he has taught music classes at various schools in the Cleveland area, including The Music Settlement, Lakeland Community College and the Cleveland Institute of Art.

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Auerbach-Brown currently lives in Cleveland Heights. His wife, the former Deby Auerbach, is from here. (When they married in 1997, they decided to hyphenate their last names.) They have two children, Caleb, 13, and Caroline, 10. They also have a cat, Isabel, who Auerbach-Brown says is like a guard dog. “If a stranger comes onto our property,” he said, “Isabel starts acting like a dog.”

Cleveland Heights seems like a good fit for Auerbach-Brown. “I like the community feel here,” he said. “It’s a very multi-cultural community, and it’s close to University Circle, which I love. And there are a lot of creative people here. It’s a strong artistic community.”


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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5. Blown-glass swirled bowls in a variety of sizes add a festive touch to any setting, by Shayna Roth Pentecost. ($40.00 and up, Heights Arts)
6. Assorted handmade soaps, made by people of the marginalized Harijan community in a village in Tamil Nadu region, southeastern India. ($3.00, Ten Thousand Villages)
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9. In Case of Emojincy adhesive bandages. ($5.95, S’Wonderful Gifts)
10. Wooden magnets celebrate our town. ($5.00 each, Heights Arts)
11. Charm-It jewelry. (Necklaces: $10.00 to $12.00, Bracelets: $7.00 to $12.00, Charms: $6.00, S’Wonderful Gifts)
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15. Loop candle holder. ($35.95, S’Wonderful Gifts)
16. Cupcake bath bombs. ($12.25 to $12.95, S’Wonderful Gifts)
17. Puzzle pieces wooden cutting board. Made in Indonesia by the Mitra Bali artisan group, this cutting board is designed as four separate pieces that fit together for a presentation that is whimsical and fun. ($39.99, Ten Thousand Villages)
18. “The King” scented candle with hand-painted jar. Named after Cleveland’s own NBA hero and filled with the signature scent “Hot Man.” ($18.00, The Cleveland Candle Co.)
20. CLE Magic scented candle. Bring the magic of Cleveland into your home with this warm, inviting scent. ($12.00 to $20.00 depending on size, The Cleveland Candle Co.)
21. Cleveland Snow scented candle. Send the fresh scent of Cleveland Snow to out-of-town friends and family. ($12.00 to $20.00 depending on size, The Cleveland Candle Co.)

Find something for everyone on your list at the many independent merchants in the Heights. Most will gift wrap or ship your items, too. Here are some of our favorites:

STOCKING STUFFERS ($10 OR LESS)

- Assorted handmade soaps, made by people of the marginalized Harijan community in a village in Tamil Nadu region, southeastern India. ($3.00, Ten Thousand Villages)
- Quotable notebooks with letterpress covers to inspire and engage, from fourfishink. ($8.00 each, Heights Arts)

WOOD AND METAL MAGNETS CELEBRATE OUR TOWN. ($5.00 EACH, HEIGHTS ARTS)

GIFTS LESS THAN $50

- Wines by the bottle, featuring pictures of Cleveland, including the limited release Cleveland Rocks Christmas Red, available now. ($25.00 and less, CLE Urban Winery)
- Enjoy holiday cheer with ceramic mugs handcrafted by William Brouillard and Susan Gallagher. ($30.00 to $40.00 each, Heights Arts)
- Square floral notepad. ($8.00, Mavec Collections pop-up shop, located above Eastwood Furniture, 3451 Fairmount Blvd.)
- Blown-glass swirled boxes in a variety of sizes add a festive touch to any setting, by Shynna Roth Pentecost ($40.00 and up, Heights Arts)
- Live poinsettias. ($7.99 and up, Bremec on the Heights Garden Center)
- Loop candle holder. ($35.95, S’Wonderful Gifts)
- Cupcake bath bombs. ($12.25 to $12.95, S’Wonderful Gifts)
- Puzzle pieces wooden cutting board. Made in Indonesia by the Mitra Bali artisan group, this cutting board is designed as four separate pieces that fit together for a presentation that is whimsical and fun. ($39.99, Ten Thousand Villages)
- “The King” scented candle with hand-painted jar. Named after Cleveland’s own NBA hero and filled with the signature scent “Hot Man.” ($18.00, The Cleveland Candle Co.)
- Three-piece candlestick set. Choose from more than 150 scents to build a custom set of 4 oz. jars. ($38.00, The Cleveland Candle Co.)
- Foodie silicone baby bibs. ($23.95, S’Wonderful Gifts)
- Cooking It Up In Cleveland: A Directory of Illustrators. An illustrated spiral-bound cookbook from members of the Northern Ohio Illustrator Society. ($15.00, Mac’s Backs Books on Coventry)
- Cleveland Snow scented candle. Send the fresh scent of Cleveland Snow to out-of-town friends and family. ($12.00 to $20.00 depending on size, The Cleveland Candle Co.)
- Charm-It jewelry. (Necklaces: $10.00 to $12.00, Bracelets: $7.00 to $12.00, Charms: $6.00, S’Wonderful Gifts)
- Live poinsettias. ($7.99 and up, Bremec on the Heights Garden Center)
- Vintage 45 rpm record clock. ($33.95, S’Wonderful Gifts)
- Loop candle holder. ($35.95, S’Wonderful Gifts)
- Cupcake bath bombs. ($12.25 to $12.95, S’Wonderful Gifts)
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Fleece-lined glittens. ($29.00, Revive Eco-Boutique on Coventry) 11

The Comeback: LeBron, The Cavs & Cleveland. Terry Pluto writes about all the events leading up to the Cleveland Cavaliers playoff run, the championship games and the celebrations afterward. ($15.95, Mac’s Books on Coventry) 10

Land Recycles. ($25.00, Mac’s Backs Books (Prices vary, Bremec on the Heights Garden Center))

Fleece-lined glittens. ($29.00, Revive Eco-Boutique)

Five-piece wine set in wooden box. ($84.00, 5’Wonderful Gifts)

Organic handwoven Yakay panorcho. ($138.00, Revive Eco-Boutique)

Bob Dylan: The Lyrics 1961–2012. Just in time, after the bard’s Nobel Prize in Literature award. Published in November 2016. ($60.00, Mac’s Backs Books on Coventry)

An Apple for the Teacher. ($11.99, Eastwood Furniture)

Five-piece wine set in wooden box. ($84.00, 5’Wonderful Gifts)

Gift Certificate for the Manicure and Spa Pedicure Package. Includes a woman’s basic manicure and a 90-minute spa pedicure with therapeutic paraffin and various mineral scrubs. ($100.00, Quintana’s Barber & Dream Spa)

Aprons ($85.00), steak knives and utility knives ($150.00), boning/fillet knives ($175.00, Cleveland Cuts)

GIFTS FROM $50 TO $150

Freshwater pearl and sterling silver jewelry by Genevieve Schwartz. ($50.00 and up, Heights Arts) 15

Clicks pictures of Bonnie Dolin’s vibrant pastel drawings capture the vitality of Cleveland’s scenic neighborhoods. ($125.00 each, Heights Arts)

Dollhouse in a box. This 8” x 8” wooden dollhouse opens up to reveal rooms, stairs, furniture and the happy couple that lives there. When playtime is over, all the pieces fit neatly inside the box. ($55.00, Pinwheel Kids)

Vegan “leather” purses and wallets. ($22.95 to $64.95, 5’Wonderful Gifts)

Tiki watches. ($105.00, 5’Wonderful Gifts)

216/CLE skyline zip-up hoodie. ($50.00, In The 216)

Woven stainless steel men’s billfold. ($74.00, S’Wonderful Gifts)

Live-edge serving tray. Each tray is uniquely crafted from natural wood. ($75.00, Eastwood Furniture)

Rocking horse. This child’s rocking horse can be passed down through the generations, with several sizes and styles to choose from. ($137.00, Eastwood Furniture)

Active wear leggings. ($88.00, Mavec Collections pop-up shop, located above Eastwood Furniture, 3451 Fairmount Blvd.)

Gift Certificate for the Dream Spa Signature Package. Package includes a deep-cleansing facial to smooth and brighten skin, a 25-minute Swedish relaxation massage, a basic woman’s manicure and Dream pedicure. ($192.00, Quintana’s Barber & Dream Spa)

Mural Essential C Night Moisture. Replenish and nurture your skin overnight with this vitamin-C infused moisturizer. ($65.00, Quintana’s Barber & Dream Spa)

Infuse any room in your house with some classic aromatherapy scents. ($45.00, Archipelago Havanna or Positano Diffuser)

Organic handwoven Yakay pancho. ($138.00, Revive Eco-Boutique)

Bob Dylan: The Lyrics 1961–2012. Just in time, after the bard’s Nobel Prize in Literature award. Published in November 2016. ($60.00, Mac’s Backs Books on Coventry)

Mural Essential C Night Moisture. Replenish and nurture your skin overnight with this vitamin-C infused moisturizer. ($65.00, Quintana’s Barber & Dream Spa)

Aprons ($85.00), steak knives and utility knives ($150.00), boning/fillet knives ($175.00, Cleveland Cuts)

GIFTS MORE THAN $150

Bentwood rocker. The classic, delicate style of this rocker complements any decor. Available with a flat or round arm, it can be made in a variety of woods and colors. ($200.00, Eastwood Furniture)

Children’s table and chairs, built from solid oak. Various table sizes and chair styles are available in a choice of woods and colors. ($117.00 for table, $96.00 for each chair, Eastwood Furniture)

Chefs Knives and Slicers. ($200.00 to $300.00, Cleveland Cuts)

Mission rocker. A handsome piece that is sure to become a family heirloom, offered in various woods with fabric or leather. ($669.00 for leather, Eastwood Furniture)
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Handwoven Cecilia bucket bag. ($218.00, Revive Eco-Boutique) 28

GIFTS FOR THE PERSON WHO HAS IT ALL

Lampe Berger home fragrances. ($33.99 to $88.99, Bremec on the Heights Garden Center)

Hear Cleveland’s world-class musicians perform four chamber music concerts in spectacular private homes and unique public venues with a full-season subscription to the Close Encounters Chamber Music Series. ($180.00 and up, Heights Arts)

Multi-function tool and flashlight. ($27.50, S’Wonderful Gifts) 29

Commission an original portrait of a furry family member for a good cause. Heights Arts Pet Project offers custom pet portraits in an array of sizes, with part of the commission fee benefiting one of five local animal welfare organizations. ($50.00 and up, Heights Arts) 30

28-piece tool set in leatherette case. ($32.50, S’Wonderful Gifts)

Leather key fob. ($16.00, Revive Eco-Boutique)

Gift card. May be used toward cocktails and charcuterie boards. (Any value, Speakeasy at Quintana’s Barber & Dream Spa)

Personalized cutting board and knife block sets. (Prices vary, from $515.00 to $950.00, Cleveland Cuts)

Spalded spruce coffee table. Each piece is a one-of-a-kind original that makes a beautiful statement to any room. Live-edge dining and console tables also available. ($1,400.00, Eastwood Furniture) 31

Hand-painted leather tote. ($350.00, Mavec Collections pop-up shop, located above Eastwood Furniture, 3451 Fairmount Blvd.)

Gift card. May be used toward cocktails and charcuterie boards. (Any value, Speakeasy at Quintana’s Barber & Dream Spa)

Personalized cutting board and knife block sets. (Prices vary, from $515.00 to $950.00, Cleveland Cuts)

Spalded spruce coffee table. Each piece is a one-of-a-kind original that makes a beautiful statement to any room. Live-edge dining and console tables also available. ($1,400.00, Eastwood Furniture) 31

American Heritage barn-beam server. Part of a collection of unique pieces designed by Eastwood’s own designers. Each piece is one-of-a-kind, built with a combination of maple wood and reclaimed barn beams. ($2,024.00, Eastwood Furniture)

Cutting board kitchen carts/tables. ($540.00 to $648.00, Cleveland Cuts)

Socks in a box. This set of three pairs, in a gift-ready box, is made by Conscious Step, which partners with nonprofit organizations to support causes around the world. ($44.95, Ten Thousand Villages)

Need more ideas? Consider a gift certificate from one of the many Heights shops and restaurants. Most provide them upon request.

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