Center Mayfield building comes down

Deanna Bremer Fisher

The building for which the Center Mayfield Business District in Cleveland Heights is named has been demolished. On Jan. 9, residents noted that construction fencing and heavy machinery had been put in place. That evening, Allan Butler, housing programs director for the city of Cleveland Heights, confirmed that a demolition permit had been issued to Independence Excavating on Dec. 14, 2016.

In the city of Cleveland Heights, if the owner of a commercial property wants to demolish a structure, he must file for a demolition permit and pay a permit fee. No city board or commission must review the request before the permit is issued. Independence Excavating paid a permit fee of $128.75. The Center Mayfield Building, 9207–9217 Mayfield Road, was the most prominent building located in the “Triangle”—the district bounded by Mayfield, Noble and Warrensville Center roads. Constructed in 1917, the building contained a 1936 theater addition and had been mostly vacant for the last six years. The site also included the Mayfield Noble Building, 9266 Noble Road, which was also demolished.

Residents have known since early last year that the owner of the Center Mayfield Building, Keyes-Treuhaft Co., intended to demolish it if a buyer could not be found—the property is currently valued at $1.2 million by the county. The owner had such a purchase offer from Circle K, which planned to demolish the existing structure in order to build a 16-pump gas station and convenience store. Residents voiced their opposition to the proposed project at a public hearing on March 3, 2016. At its March 7 meeting, Cleveland Heights City Council voted to deny the developer’s request to rezone two adjacent residential properties on Vandemar Street to commercial, so

Noble Neighbors celebrates three years of accomplishments

Brenda H. May

Thirty-five people gathered at Christopher’s Pub on Jan. 3 to look back at Noble Neighbors’ achievements for 2016, and there were many.

• Carol Roe, a neighborhood resident, began her term on CH City Council in January 2016, bringing representation for the neighborhood to City Hall.

• Noble Neighbors distributed RTA to assess the 41 bus route on Noble Road, and it was determined that rider ship on the route—the only line to offer 24-hour service in Cleveland Heights—justified an additional bus shelter, which was installed in late spring.

• Vandemar Street residents successfully organized in opposition to the rezoning of two residential properties to accommodate a large convenience store and 16-pump gas station.

• Noble Neighbors distributed flyers in a neighborhood ward urging residents to deny a bar permission to sell alcohol on Sunday, and permission was voted down.

• The organization also participated in the Cleveland Heights master planning process, volunteered at schools and attended every city council meeting.

In support of Noble Neighbors’ big annual May event, FutureHeights awarded Noble Neighbors funds from its Neighborhood Mini-Grants Program to buy flowers and signs for beautification projects at five public perennial gardens and in numerous

Forest Hill Church invites community to celebrate Black History Month

Peg Weisbrod

“Speaking of Race: Black Lives Matter Here” is the theme of Forest Hill Church’s month-long Black History Month celebration, featuring entertaining, musical and educational events. All events are free and open to the public, with donations to the church’s food pantry or other free-will offerings welcome.

The series of programs kicks off on Sunday, Feb. 5, 12:30–2 p.m., with a presentation by Rev. Dr. Catherine Borchert, exploring the 19th-century history of race relations in the Presbyterian Church in Northeast Ohio. She will discuss how this history laid the foundation for race relations in the 20th and 21st centuries. Refreshments will be served.

During the weekend of Feb. 11–12, members of the church will be engaged in a direct action to help support financial justice. Small groups plan to eat at black-owned restaurants throughout Greater Cleveland, and reflect together on the importance of supporting black-owned businesses.

Throughout the month, Forest Hill Church encourages the com
About the Observer

The Heights Observer is not an ordinary newspaper; it is a nonprofit publication for residents of Cleveland Heights and University Heights.

The Observer has no writing staff; it is written by you and me.

Individuals throughout the community decide what stories they want to write, then submit them for publication.

Anyone in University Heights or Cleveland Heights is welcome to contribute regularly, occasionally or even just once.

There is something you think should be covered in the Heights Observer? If so, please write it on your own, or with friends, neighbors or colleagues. Our volunteer editors will make sure it’s ready to publish and contact you with any questions.

Writing for a newspaper, an article should be clear and factual. If you want to express an opinion, submit it as a letter to the editor or an opinion piece.

When writing a news article, it should be clear and factually correct. If you have a question, feel free to ask.

About the March issue must be submitted by Feb. 6. We publish some articles online as they come in—and still consider them for the next print issue. We also publish an e-newsletter each Tuesday.

LettErs/Opinion

Suggestion for a conversation to have with your kids

To the Editor:

Have you ever had little conversations with your kids about perspec-

tives on life? Have you ever shared the realization that their K-12 education is the largest free gift they will ever receive in life, other than perhaps from their family?

You can have any number of perspectives about how good or bad the education is, but the dollars spent and the number of people spending longs of hours caring about them will never happen again in their life.

Over several decades of volunteer and substitute teaching in the CH-IU system, every time I ask this question of the kids, from first grade to 12th grade, if they know this is the largest free gift they will ever receive in life, they always look surprised, never disagreeing, just puzzling about it.

“I think it’s the thoughts we don’t have that get us in life.” The best reason to have life conversations with your kids.

Allen Wilkinson

Cleveland Heights

Excerpts from Observer blogs

Read the whole story at blogs.heightsobserver.org

Heights Education Group Uncovers Widespread Op-
position to Reformation of DeVos as U.S. Education Secretary

(On Jan. 9, members of the Heights Coalition for Public Education pre-

sented to the local staffs of Senators Sherrod Brown and Rob Portman a joint statement—signed by 20 statewide and local educational and civic organizations—opposing the confirmation of Betsy DeVos, Pres-

ident-elect Donald Trump’s nominee for U.S. Secretary of Education. The U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee will begin the confirmation hearing on the Betsy DeVos nomination on Wednesday, January 11.

The Heights Coalition for Public Education began circulating the state-

ment for sign-ons on Tuesday, January 3 and quickly uncovered deep and wide-

spread concerns about DeVos’s record of using her billionaire philanthropy to lobby for privatizing education.

When some organizations lacked a way to meet formally to consider our letter, they polled their members. People responding by telling leaders of their organizations their own stories and their concerns about the danger of losing democratically controlled public schools whose mission it is to serve all children . . .

—Jan Resegger

Noble Neighbors continued from page 1

2016, he was a participant in the inaugural season of Interlochen’s concerto master academy. Addition-

ally, Fields was a participant in the highly competitive 2016 Logan Arts Leadership Seminar, held at Inter-

lochen.

In addition to his interest in music, Fields enjoys volunteering for political campaigns, traveling, reading, and playing soccer for Heights High. He said he is grate-

ful for all of his musical mentors, his academic teachers, his violin teacher, and his mentor, Karolina Collins, for always believing in him and encouraging him to do his best, day in and day out.

When he begins college next year, Fields would like to continue pursuing his passion for music with a double major in music perfor-

mance and arts management.

“Daniel has made tremendous strides forward as a violinist and as a leader in the orchestra, and he deserves great credit for both of those achievements,” said Daniel Heim, instrumental music direc-

tor of orchestras. “His command of the Mendelssohn is impressive, and we’re looking forward to a very exciting performance with the sym-

phony.”

The Heights High Instrumental Music Department’s Winter Con-

cert Series, at the Wiley Campus, begins on Feb. 8, at 7:30 p.m., with the Midwinter Concert, featuring the Concert Band, Chamber En-

semble, Symphonic Band and the Concert Orchestra. It continues on Thursday, Feb. 9, with the Symphonic Winds and the Heights High Symphony, featuring violin soloist Daniel Fields. Both concerts are priced on a sliding scale, and advertised specials.

Audrey Wynne is a member of the Cleveland Heights High School Band and Orchestra Parents Organization (BOPO).

The second election forum hosted by Noble Neighbors, this time regarding CH-UH school board candidates, gave residents insight into both pro and con positions. A video recording of the meeting provided access to the information-sharing event for all district voters.

The year ended with a new initia-
tive, Light up Noble! Every resident, institution and business was invited to put lights in Noble-facing win-
dows, to welcome the thousands of visitors who annually come to view the Nela Park holiday lights.

At the Jan. 3 meeting, those at-

tending identified reasons for con-

tinuing to volunteer in the neighbor-

hood: increasing the visibility of the community and attracting economic development, fostering a positive identity and sense of belonging, making sure neighborhood voices are heard and gaining needed resources.

Residents left the celebration at Christopher’s with a feeling that Noble Neighbors’ success to date is palpable and visible, and that theirs is a neighborhood on the move.

(Check out Christopher’s, Pub, located in the former Pete’s Tavern, for great food served with gra-

ciouss. More information about the restaurant, at 158 Warrensville Center Road, can be found at www.christopherpubak.)

Brenda H. May is one of the leaders of Noble Neighbors. Learn more about the organization at www.nobleneighbors.com.
Some Forest Hill residents consider autonomy

Fiona Reilly

With the recent recall of East Cleveland’s mayor and city council president, along with that city’s struggles to stay afloat, some residents in the neighborhood of Forest Hill are voicing support to secede from East Cleveland and Cleveland Heights in favor of forming an autonomous municipality, The Village of Forest Hill.

These homeowners believe the creation of a self-governing entity is needed to combat the growing number of neglected and abandoned homes that are plummeting property values and contributing to a negative perception of Forest Hill as a neighborhod on the brink.

A number of toxic houses, many of which have been vacant for years, continue to blight Forest Hill—a direct result of the 2008 housing crash, foreclosure crisis and incompetent oversight.

One of the most egregious examples is the home at 1932 Forest Hill Blvd., in East Cleveland. This eyesore has sat vacant for more than a decade. The roof is caving in, the trees are taking over, and it appears that squatters may be using the house as a drug den. Tangled up in a complicated web of tax and legal issues, this house has fallen through the cracks of the city and county bureaucracies. Shockingly, its delinquent property taxes are in excess of $75,000 and continue to be assessed. Annual convenient property taxes are in excess of $75,000 and continue to be assessed.

“How do we deal with vacant homes in an inner-ring neighborhood when the cities are powerless to act, the county is doing nothing but collecting taxes, the banks just sit on these houses, and our homeowners’ association is paralyzed to take action?” asked Mike Reilly, a 33-year resident of Blackmore Road in Cleveland Heights.

“Despite years of requests, Forest Hill has received no help from East Cleveland or Cleveland Heights,” said Michael Wells, who has lived on Glynn Road in East Cleveland for 26 years. “We need our own village to take care of the community and advocate for residents. Ohio law allows for community secession. How exciting it would be to put our energy into incorporating Forest Hill into a separate village.”

John D. Rockefeller established Forest Hill in the late 1920s as one of the first homeowner associations in the country with protective covenants in the deeds of all homes to maintain high standards and preserve and enhance property values.

“We are in a unique and powerful position because we have covenants to protect the standards, but no one is enforcing them,” Reilly added.

“The implosion of East Cleveland, the layoff of staff in Cleveland Heights, and the hangover from the housing crash have made these covenants our lifeline to protect the community. Our well-meaning volunteer homeowner’s association is just not capable of cleaning up the dredge of bank-owned homes that have sat vacant for years.”

Westover Road in Cleveland Heights has numerous homes that are in decline; at least six properties on that street are rentals. Lower Newbury Road in East Cleveland, where former Mayor Gary Norton lives, has a number of homes that are vacant or abandoned, with dilapidated cars and trucks parked in driveways, street signs falling down, and rampant porches. Short-sale vacancies dot the area, with no resolution in sight.

Representing residents of more than 3,000 homes in East Cleveland and Cleveland Heights, The Village of Forest Hill would serve as its own government agency and assume the responsibilities of the current Forest Hill Homeowner’s Association.

“For many years, homeowners flocked to Forest Hill because of the architectural charm and beauty of the homes and neighborhood,” said Rich O’Donnell, a 41-year resident of Blackmore Road in Cleveland Heights. “That didn’t happen by accident; it was the result of an active homeowner’s association enforcing standards and working with the cities to address code violations. Sadly, the attention to detail and to responsibility isn’t what it used to be. What they can’t or won’t do, residents can by creating a self-governing village. This requires a ‘can do’ attitude and we have that in spades.”

Forest Hill Homeowners association enforces covenants and protects housing standards

Pete Gre bubu

The Forest Hill Homeowners association (FHHO) is a nonprofit founded in 1950. Forest Hill spans both Cleveland Heights and East Cleveland, containing 951 single-family residences and a small number of apartment buildings. It’s important to understand that FHHO does not possess the mechanisms of a modern HOA—mandatory dues, the ability to make repairs and bill the homeowner, or the ability to easily attach liens to properties. FHHO does, however, have standards relating to siding, roofing, landscaping and general exterior maintenance that go beyond both Cleveland Heights and East Cleveland housing standards.

FHHO views its relationship with Cleveland Heights as a strong and productive one. Cleveland Heights has been responsive in assisting FHHO to address non-operational vehicles, broken streetlights and damaged fire hydrants. With the privatization of housing inspections, we did lose a tile roof, but the city renewed its commitment to preserve historic Mayor King to discuss Forest Hill, and determine how East Cleveland can support Forest Hill’s housing standards.

FHHO’s Standards Committee handled 63 violations in 2016, along with 7 variance applications. The vast majority relate to paint, gutters, landscaping and driveway condition, or other minor violations. Most of these violations are addressed by the homeowners within a reasonable time frame. However, we do have long-term housing issues that are not so easy to remedy. Each situation is different.

The house at 15022 Forest Hill Blvd., in East Cleveland, is indeed an eyesore. The previous owner passed away, after using the equity in the property to finance his business. The house has been uninhabited for a number of years. In spite of our best efforts, FHHO has not been able to identify the current owner of the property. To help with resolution, Senator Sherrod Brown’s office is assisting through contacts at the FDIC.

In another case, a resident had moved to a relative’s house for an extended period of time, due to a series of illnesses. A call from FHHO resulted in the homeowner returning to her home. With volunteer help from the neighborhood, we at FHHO did landscaping at the house and, through a Cleveland Heights grant, the homeowner was able to have her house repainted. With a single phone call, the Forest Hill community was able to help a distressed resident become a vibrant and welcome homeowner—a success by any measure.

In the case of 2518 Newbury Drive, a house acquired by the Cuyahoga Land Bank, construction took longer to begin than the Land Bank originally estimated, but work is currently underway, as is evident from the pulled and posted permits on the building. FHHO has met with the Land Bank and developer to ensure that its standards are met. We look forward to a new homeowner at this residence in the coming months.

FHHO has cultivated a relationship with the Land Bank; FHHO met with Gus Frangos, its president, last year. During that discussion, we agreed in principal how FHHO and the Land Bank can work together to identify any Forest Hill property that is facing a tax foreclosure, and ensure that FHHO can acquire the property. FHHO’s goal in acquiring these properties is to rehabilitate them in keeping with Forest Hill standards, and ensure that FHHO can maintain these properties.

With a single phone call, the Forest Hill Homeowners association enforces covenants and protects housing standards.

Pete Grebhuber, president of Forest Hill Home Owners Association, is focused on building community and enabling residents to stay in their homes as long as possible.
The Mayfield and Noble road buildings were located in a C-2 Local Retail District, which, according to the city’s zoning code, is established for “the continued operation of small neighborhood commercial establishments and to concentrate new retail businesses in buildings that typically locate side by side in order to create a pedestrian activity.” Given the denial of the rezoning request, the property owner’s intentions for redevelopment remain unclear.

Although the Cleveland Heights 2031 Strategic Development Plan called for the city to “encourage restoration of Center Mayfield Theater marquees to highlight its historic architectural character,” the city now has a vacant lot instead.

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

What CH city service will be privatized next?

Carla Rautenberg and Deborah Von Kielf

In 2015, the city of Cleveland Heights moved to privatize its water department, but backed off in the face of community opposition. Despite that strong negative response, last summer the city privatized its building department, turning it over to SAFEBuilt, a Colorado-based company now owned by the private equity firm Riverside.

As state governments have squeezed funding to cities in recent years, the trend toward privatizing municipal services has accelerated. With the Republican sweep to control all branches of the federal government added to that party’s control of 32 state legislatures and 33 governorships, pressure to privatize can only be expected to intensify.

In our July column, “Take Back Our City,” we outlined some specific concerns about privatizing a municipal service that has been a net revenue generator for the city for many decades. There may be time to reverse this. Cleveland Heights can withdraw from its three-year contract with SAFEBuilt on July 1, 2017, giving 120 days notice.

While City Manager Tanisha Bilby asked city council to approve that contract because she was unable to recruit qualified personnel to staff the department in-house, University Heights Mayor Susan Infeld recently hired a new building commissioner and maintains a three-inspector staff. How is it that a private company like SAFEBuilt can hire certified inspectors, and neighboring cities can keep their own building departments, while Cleveland Heights is unable to accomplish these tasks?

We have also begun to wonder: What city service might be next in line for privatization?

So we asked. Mayor Cheryl Stephens’ response that she had “no idea” was pretty much echoed by city council members Mary Dunbar, Michael Ungar and Jason Stein. Kahlil Seren and Melissa Yasinow did not return our calls, and Carol Roe’s voiceicemail was full.

As stated to us, council members’ views on privatization differ somewhat, but not radically. Mary Dunbar said, “I am not opposed, but I think we need to look very carefully because we sometimes may not understand the unintended consequences.”

Michael Ungar commented, “I generally lean against it. If the city manager and staff state compelling reasons why the CH taxpayers should privatize a city service, I would have to consider it, but not for anything that directly affects public health and safety. I would never support privatization of our safety forces.” He added, “The profit motive is completely misaligned with the interests of citizens.”

Given that misalignment, why is privatization occurring so frequently?

In The Fox in the Henhouse: How Privatization Threatens Democracy, authors Si Kahn and Elizabeth Minnich wrote: “The great divide and looming struggle of the twenty-first century is between two cultures: the private profit culture and the public good culture.”

By definition, for-profit companies are accountable only to their shareholders. Their highest priority is to maximize profits, and profits can only be extracted from the pockets of residents who become their customers. Privatization does not save money for cities or taxpayers, does not necessarily deliver better services, and obstructs direct public accountability.

The ideology and practice of privatization are not spread on the wind. The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), an affiliate devoted to advancing its agenda at local levels. City and county officials pay annual dues of $50, while corporate membership fees range from $5,000 to $50,000. According to Minneapolis Mayor Betsy Hodges, “ACCE is just another effort to rig our democracy in favor of corporate special interests.”

Steve Arnold, mayor of Fitchburg, Wis., attended an ACCE meeting in December. He reported: “After two years of operation, ACCE has not strayed from the ALEC model of producing model bills for and for corporate sponsors who either intend to prey on the public without regulation or retribution, or who hope to privatize the ongoing services which are democratically and cost-effectively delivered by cities, towns, counties, and school boards. . . . ALEC and ACCE are also evolving policies and structures to better insulate their corporate funders from the outrage of those they harm.”

Having run out of space and time, we close with these questions: Will Cleveland Heights bring the building department back in-house? And, secondly, which city function might be targeted for privatization next?

Carla Rautenberg is an activist and a lifelong Cleveland Heights resident. Deborah Von Kielf is a musician, writer, who grew up in Cleveland Heights and has lived here as an adult for over 30 years. Contact them at heights-democracy@gmail.com.
Silence is not an option

Susie Kaeser

What do you do when you don’t agree with the direction your elected officials are taking you? When you know their goal is to destroy something you value deeply, should you observe with disdain or act?

Is it sour grapes to disagree? Is it a violation of the principle of majority rule? Is it disloyal or unpatriotic or a waste of time?

Or is it the most important thing you can do as a citizen?

I’m taking the last option! Our voices are our most powerful political tools. You simply have to speak up if you disagree. When people are silent it implies indifference or consent, and it perpetuates compliance. Voicing your opposition encourages others to come forward and express theirs as well. This is how you build momentum and the power that comes with numbers.

Silence is the same as consent. Protest is moral and important and powerful. The First Amendment protects our right to speak up, assemble and petition our government. This right is meant to be used! It is patriotic to use it!

In my research on the early civil rights movement in Cleveland Heights, a major lesson for the activists was learning that, when they took a stand, they discovered other like-minded people. This discovery gave confidence and more voices to their work, along with personal rewards and enough supporters to make real change. A few people said no to something deeply entrenched, and over 10 years toppled a deeply engrained system that created a segregated region. Their persistence and ability to change public opinion and behavior made housing integration a new reality.

Their experience continues to be influential. I think of them any time I feel like giving up. What if they had stayed home?

I am obsessed with public education. Effective and inclusive public schools help to bind our society together in common purpose. They value every person, create opportunity, build community and create trust. The needs of the individual are balanced with the needs of society. They promote critical thinking, the truth, social skills and a strong social fabric. They release the capacity that resides within each child.

These strengths and social imperatives are currently under attack by state policies that promote testing and privatization, and at the federal level by the Trump administration’s pick of an anti-public school, pro-privatization billionaire to lead federal education policy. Education should not be about greed, profit, exclusion, blame, or who wins and who loses, and yet our elected leaders are taking it in that direction.

My blood is boiling. My only option is to get out of my comfort zone. I am most effective when I support, encourage and value others. It is difficult to be the person who says no, who visits the offices of senators and other elected officials, or stands in the cold to protest dangerous positions and potential threats to our safety—the person who has to explain her values to someone who may completely disagree. I’d rather stay home. But I can’t! Is it worth the effort? Yes!

I am a proud member of the Heights Coalition for Public Education, which started three years ago when more than 160 people participated in a reading group that focused on education privatization. Common knowledge led our group to action. We established a position statement and gathered close to 1,000 signatures. We’ve held forums and lobbied our school board members to become activists who are willing to challenge harmful state education policy.

When we started, we didn’t know if it would make a difference, but we had to try. The actions have informed people about a serious problem. That knowledge has inspired many to be vocal and not accept the humdrum narrative of public school failure. Our concern helped motivate our superintendent and board of education to join a recent statehouse protest by school leaders from around the state.

They are now engaging their peers in building a broader constituency to end privatization and testing. Each action creates something more and, in the end, many actions lead to change.

In early January, the coalition decided to challenge the choice for secretary of education. In two days we mobilized 16 state and local groups to join our challenge. Because we spoke, many others did, too. Our work will have effects. We may not win this specific fight, but we are building momentum that communicates to our elected officials that they are not representing our interests and should not claim to be.

While silence has been characterized as golden, it is the enemy during these dark times.

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

Silence is not an option.
A wiser alternative for University Heights?

Anita Kazarian

In the closing months of 2016, neighbors posted on Nextdoor.com, a social media site, that they heard gunshots. One resident posted: "It's off to the police that were here immediately." University Heights police found shell casings, corroborating resident posts.

On Nov. 6, posts by the neighbors discussed their personal experiences concerning safety and enforcement of city ordinances. One post recalled a conversation with Mayor Susan Infeld about the challenges of enforcing ordinances of homes owned by non-resident owners.

On Nov. 6, Mayor Infeld wrote her own post: "The ordinances are enforced . . . regarding the maintenance of a property, and criminal nuisance ordinances regarding noise, illegal behavior . . . rental property inspections, number of unrelated adults, etc. So, a resident recalls a conversation one way, and the mayor, differently—a classic "he said she said" moment.

At the Nov. 7 UH City Council meeting, the mayor interrupted a Q-and-A between a council member and the police chief to interject a long statement into the public record naming four citizens who used social media to discuss crime. The four residents now have their good names recorded into the public domain because the mayor placed an Annette Mecklenburg placed an Nov. 30 post on Nextdoor explaining how recent bump-and-run car robberies took place, and described likely targets based on history.

Social media is in its infancy; some approaches will work, others will not. Adapting is key.

Nextdoor offers free citywide communications for public agencies where "residents get to know each other, ask questions, share recommendations, and discuss safety."

The Cleveland Heights Police Department is active on Nextdoor. The CHPD posts crime updates and requests citizen help in finding suspects. CHPD also has a robust and active Facebook page, in addition to its Web page on the city site.

This is not to say that Cleveland Heights and its police department have the answer. Crime will never be that simple. But they are exploring how social media can best serve residents.

An example: CH Police Chief Anita Kazarian placed a Nov. 30 post on Nextdoor explaining how recent bump-and-run car robberies took place, and described likely targets based on history. She also enlisted what some call "Community Watch on steroids" by asking the virtual community to notify police if anything suspicious was seen. This is embracing social media.

To paraphrase a football term, the best defense against "misinformation" is a robust offense of open, transparent and timely information. To paraphrase a football term, the best defense against "misinformation" is a robust offense of open, transparent and timely information. Municipal agencies to provide timely, accurate, open and transparent communications to their citizens. Social media is in its infancy; some approaches will work, others will not. Adapting is key.

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University Heights City Council
Meeting highlights

DECEMBER 19, 2016
Mayor Susan Infeld and council members Susan Pardee (vice mayor), Pamela Cameron, Phillip Erdel, John Rach, Steven Sims, Michele Weiss and Mark Wiseman were present. Also present were Luke McConnell, law director; Larry Heiser, finance director; and Kelly Thomas, clerk of council.

Jerome ’Jerry’ Jacobson named University Heights citizen of the year
Mayor Susan Infeld presented Jerry Jacobson, a University Heights resident since 1950, with a certificate naming him 2016 citizen of the year. Jacobson, a member of the police auxiliary since 1977, is a longtime member of the Memorial Day Parade Committee.

City budget for 2017
Council approved, on second reading, the appropriation of funds for current expenses and other expenses commencing Jan. 1, 2017, and ending Dec. 31, 2017.

Cedar-Taylor streetscape
Council approved, on emergency, an application for a $150,000 grant from the Cuyahoga County Community Development Block Grant 2017 Mini Grant program for streetscape improvements at Cedar and Taylor roads. Patrick O’Regan-Meyers, the city’s community development coordinator, came before council to answer questions. The grant, submitted on Dec. 23, would be used to level sidewalks to make them pedestrian friendly and ADA compliant if the grant is approved and funding (is sufficient), benches and planters will be installed in city-owned areas.

Update on 3505 Tullamore Road
Mayor Infeld informed council that, within the next 30 to 60 days, the Cuyahoga Land Bank will determine whether the house at 3505 Tullamore Road will be demolished or renovated. Council expressed surprise, as some members thought the property had been scheduled for demolition. The mayor explained that when demolition funding was approved last January, they were told there would be an 18-month demolition/renovation window. Councilman Rach, an architect, said that he believes the home is beyond repair and needs to be demolished. Despite the mayor’s reservations, Vice Mayor Pardee made a motion to demolish the property sooner, saying it was poisoning the neighborhood. The motion proposed use of city money, not to exceed $14,900, at the previous council meeting. He said that if the city decides to demolish the property, it will attribute the demolition/renovation process from scratch, further delaying action. The mayor assumed council that the land bank has the expertise needed to address the property, which Councilman Rach has called a cause in the neighborhood.

Home address signs
Building Commissioner Lawrence Brown presented an update on city ordinances regarding the size and visibility of home address signs. Brown said that residents could receive a penalty for not having numbers on their home or for numbers that do not fit the appropriate size. The penalty is a fee of $500 and a possible prison sentence if owners don’t comply. Councilwoman Weiss expressed concern about the penalty, and Councilman Wiseman stressed that the city can determine how to best enforce the ordinance without using draconian penalties. Wiseman has scheduled a meeting with Brown, and the ordinance will be presented on second reading.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
and Kelly Thomas, clerk of council.

Cuyahoga Land Bank to acquire 3505 Tullamore Road
Law Director Luke McConnell reported that the Cuyahoga Land Bank has issued a decree of foreclosure for 3505 Tullamore Road, and expects to acquire the title by late January/early February. The bank will then decide to demolish or rehab the property. Councilman Sims supports rehabilitating the property, but several council members said it was beyond repair. McConnell said that if the property is demolished, demolition would be in mid-to-late March. He wasn’t given a time frame for a rehab. Mayor Infeld said the advantage of having the land bank take the property is that not only do they fix it, they also market it until it’s sold. Vice Mayor Pardee expressed concern that the land bank hasn’t provided a firm estimate for demolition or rehab, and suggested the city might be able to act more quickly. The vice mayor said that the city can determine how to address the property, which Councilman Rach has called a cause in the neighborhood.

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July 24–August 11
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HB offers a wide array of summer programming for boys and girls ages 3-11, with dozens of offerings to choose from.
CH resident Danny Williams takes new post

In January, Cleveland Heights resident Danny R. Williams became the new president and CEO of Eliza Bryant Village, the oldest African-American long-term care center in the United States. Located at East 72nd Street and Wade Park Avenue in Cleveland, Eliza Bryant Village is a nursing home, adult-daycare and independent living center.

In taking the new position, Williams stepped down as executive director of the Free Medical Clinic of Greater Cleveland (now called Circle Health Services).

“I’ve been at the Free Clinic for 10 years now, and it has gone through a significant transformation,” Williams said. “I did a number of major things at the clinic, and I think the clinic is now at a stage where my departure would not be a challenge.

“I’ve been blessed to spend the bulk of my professional career working for organizations that promote health and inclusion and justice for vulnerable communities.”

“Danny has capably led the Free Clinic through momentous transitions and challenges during his tenure here,” said Debra Rex, president of the health center’s Board of Trustees. “We are saddened that he is leaving us, but grateful for all he has done to help the organization evolve from its beginnings as a free-spirited drop-in clinic . . . He has put this clinic on a forward-looking trajectory that will enable it to grow and improve.”

Williams, 63, was born in Cleveland, and graduated from Collinwood High School. He majored in psychology at Princeton University, earned a law degree at the University of Michigan, then got a master’s degree in nonprofit organizations at Case Western Reserve University.

Williams worked as a private-practice lawyer for 13 years, focusing on civil litigation and nonprofit organization. In 1995, Cleveland Mayor Michael White selected Williams to be the city’s law director. Three years later, Williams became a Cuyahoga County administrator. In 1999, he became executive director of the Cuyahoga County chapter of the American Cancer Society.

“That cemented my interest in health issues and nonprofit organizations,” Williams said. “I knew I was not going back to law.”

Williams originally moved to Cleveland Heights in 1985 and lived there until he became Cleveland’s law director, whereupon he relocated to Cleveland. He returned to the Cleveland Heights in 1993, and now lives on Elendon Drive in the Ambler Heights neighborhood.

“The thing I like the most about the Heights is the eclectic nature of the neighborhoods,” Williams said. “If you don’t appreciate diversity, you shouldn’t come to Cleveland Heights. It would be like moving to New Orleans and not liking music! But Cleveland Heights has been a great place for me and my family.”

Williams and his wife, Lin, have two children, Jennifer Perry, a sergeant in the U.S. Army, and David Williams, a West Coast scout for the Chicago Bears football team.

James Henke, a Cleveland Heights resident, was a writer and editor at Rolling Stone magazine for 15 years, and is the author of several books. He is on the board of Future Heights, and is co-chair of the Heights Observer Advisory Committee.

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Judson Park offers a variety of assisted living options. From light assistance to full support services and 24-hour nurse oversight, residents receive personalized care in a warm and inviting setting.

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For more information, visit www.judsonsmartliving.org
Cleveland Heights City Council
Meeting highlights

JANUARY 9, 2017

Cuyahoga County Layers L. Stephans (mayor), Jason Stein (vice mayor), Mary Dunbar, Carol Roe, Kahil Seren and Multi Mullins were present. Council Member Michael N. Ungar was absent.

Road resurfacing bids

The city received bids for the Cedar Road resurfacing held by Cedar Park 28 by the city. The lowest responsive bidder was Park Company Inc., in the amount of $3,991,529.91, for which council authorized a contract.

Liquor permits

Jason C. Baric, Inc. (Upper Level, 3099 Mayfield Road, Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118) has applied to transfer permits from Highland Group LLC, doing business as Rockefellere (some address). In addition, Noble Roman Inc., doing business as Noble Gas (2610 Noble Road, Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44124), has applied for new permits. Mayfair Stephens referred the latter to the law director, and city manager for further review.

Nuisance abatement update

Kahlil Seren reported on the results of an appraised hearing held on Dec. 28 by the Nuisance Abatement Board of Review, regarding council’s designation of the following properties as nuisances to be abated:

1. 1610 South Taylor Road: The owner was given until March 1 to address code violations.
2. 950 Nelanview Road: Demolition was deemed inappropriate. The owner will have debris removed, and the property will be inspected.
3. 2562 Rockwell Road (the bar/restaurant Rix Bar). Some changes seem to have been made since June, if there is another incident within six months, however, the certificate of occupancy may be revoked.

Amendment to CH public hearing ordinance

Since 2014, council has held a public hearing each year, during the third week of January, to examine the impact on the city, state and nation of political influence by corporate PACs, in concert with the most recent election. Corporate entities include business corporations, Political Action Committees (PACs), Super PACs, 501(c) groups and unions. The third week of January typically coincides with the observance of the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr., which has made it difficult to schedule the public hearing. Therefore, council approved an amendment to Section 183-01, Public Hearing, of Chapter 183, Political Influence by Corporate Entities, of the city ordinances to establish more flexibility in the scheduling of the hearing date. With this amendment, the hearing will now be held during an evening or weekend time. The 2017 hearing will take place on Wednesday, Jan. 25, at 7 p.m., in council chambers. The city will publicize the hearing on its website and in area media at least two weeks in advance. The city will also record the minutes of the hearing and make them available to the public no later than March 1 of each year by posting them on the city’s website.

Looking for earlier and often expanded coverage of city council meeting highlights? See disclaimer on page 7.

FutureHeights offers community-building workshops and mini-grants this spring

Sruti Basu

FutureHeights is offering several tools to help Cleveland Heights residents leverage their neighborhoods’ strengths and enable creative projects to improve their quality of life through its Community Capacity-Building Program, including a series of workshops for neighborhood leaders and small grants to support neighborhood projects. Since the program’s launch in 2015, FutureHeights has awarded approximately $150,000 to support 13 projects in Cleveland Heights. Residents can apply for up to $1,000 for citizen-led neighborhood projects, events and activities. In addition, 24 residents—from several neighborhoods, including Noble, Forest Hill, Cain Park, Boulevard, Severance, Cedar Fairmont, Coventry and East Fairfax—have completed the workshop series, which takes place over several months each spring.

“When you’re community-minded, you don’t just care about your area, you care about all of it, and the workshops helped connect our individual efforts to the entire community,” said Rhonda Davis-Lovely, a 2014 participant and resident of Cain Park neighborhood.

“They were my introduction to design thinking and the workshops helped connect our individual efforts to the entire community,” said Emma Peoples, a 2015 participant and resident of Cain Park neighborhood.

“We have several principles that guide the program,” said Mark Chupp, an assistant professor at Case Western Reserve University’s Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences and former chair of the FutureHeights Civic Engagement Committee, which led the sessions. “We believe that in order to lead best by stepping back and supporting residents and voluntary groups, and that everyday people have the power to do extraordinary things right where they live.”

The program takes an Assets Based Community Development approach, which means that it seeks to build upon a neighborhood’s strengths. “For example,” said Chupp, “the Cain Park neighborhood has this tremendous asset—Cain Park—that it can leverage and build upon. That’s why when those residents came together to change a city law to enable dog walking in the park, it was a good example of this. We also see residents of other neighborhoods, such as Noble, coming together to organize neighborhood cleanups and open houses. The small grants give us a means to better support neighborhood activities like these.”

The 2017 FutureHeights Community Builder Workshop Series will take place on Sunday afternoons, beginning Feb. 19, 3-6 p.m. Below are the dates and topics for each session:

• Feb. 19: Individual Leadership and Volunteer Organizational Development
• March 5: Process of Community Change
• March 19: Cultural and Political History of Cleveland Heights and its Future
• April 6: Leveraging Community Assets
• April 20: Planning for a Community Program or Project
• April 30: Effective Network-Building Practices

All Cleveland Heights residents are encouraged to complete a two-page application to participate in the workshop series. The application, available at www.futureheights.org/programs/community-building-programs, is due by 5 p.m. on Feb. 10.

Applications for neighborhood mini-grants will be considered in the spring and fall. This year’s application deadlines are March 14 and Sept. 15. For more information and applications for both the workshop series and the neighborhood mini-grants, visit www.futureheights.org/programs/community-building-programs or contact Sruti Basu at sbasu@futureheights.org or 216-350-1423.

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

Eileen Smotzer, a seven-year resident of Rutherford Road in Cleveland Heights, said, “My husband and I are deeply concerned that city officials and our home- owner’s association continue to turn a blind eye to properties like 1932 Forest Hill that have fallen into extreme disrepair. With the lack of concern and action, we have little hope that our home values will do anything but decline. What does it take for city officials to realize that the time is running out? Our only hope is to form a new entity, the Village of Forest Hill, that applies the covenants and a sense of urgency to help our homes and our resi- dents.”

In June, the Cuyahoga Land Bank was supposed to start renovations at 2558 Newbury Road, yet [as of mid-December] nothing [had] been done—even though Cleveland Heights Mayor Cheryl Stephens, a Forest Hill resident, is one of its directors.

The Cedar Fairmont and Cedar Lee, has there been no city en- gagement in nor promotion of Forest Hill, which is why the Medusa Build- ing is deteriorating, the Rockefeller Building is an underutilized retail space, Monticello Lee is turning into another Bedford Auto Mile, Sever- ance Town Center is turning into a ghost town, and Parkland School continues to decline. For all intents and purposes, Forest Hill seems to have been written off by its very own cities. For more information, visit foresthillcampaign.com.

Fiona Reilly, a 35-year resident of the Forest Hill neighborhood in Cleveland Heights, co-founded The Campaign for Forest Hill with her husband, Mike Reilly.
Family Connections has helped Heights parents and kids connect for 35 years

Shari Nacson

When meeting new friends, it’s not unusual for a Cleveland Heights parent to realize that their paths have already crossed. “I think I recognize you. Did you use the Little Heights playroom at the library when your kids were little?” “Oh, I know you! We were in Baby & Me together.” When asking school-age families how they know one another, the winding roots often go back to one of these early moments.

Little Heights and Baby & Me are community institutions that Cleveland Heights residents often take for granted. The programs nurture families, serving as a welcoming place to bring babies and toddlers during the long, lonesome and joyful days of early childhood. Families collect friendships, parenting advice and relief before moving on to other hubs as kids inevitably evolve. Knowing that the resources were there for years prior, families often assume that the cycle will continue for the next cohort.

Family Connections, the wellspring of this rich legacy, is the result of one of the most successful nonprofit mergers known to our community. Prior to 2010, this beloved programming was under the umbrella of Heights Parent Center, which was founded in 1982 by two CH-UH teachers who saw the need to ensure kindergarten readiness by investing in the earliest years of children’s lives.

That vision evolved from a small, volunteer-operated drop-in; to a staffed grassroots organization that burgeoned through the 1980s; and on to a sustainable, grant-funded organization that launched Baby & Me and other programs in the 1990s.

Regardless of the stage of organizational development, the intention and outcomes have been remarkably consistent over the past 35 years. For Cleveland Heights resident Betsey Bell, the programming was “a lifesaver” 20 years ago, when she was a first-time stay-at-home parent. “We could come and be ourselves, bring our questions and answers, and share friendship,” said Bell. Many of those friendships endured into the elementary school years and, now, the college years.

With kids 20 years younger than Bell’s, Kristen Day’s experience has been similar. Though the programming now is in a different building and under the auspices of a multi-site organization, providing families with expanded drop-in hours in Cleveland Heights or Shaker Heights, the mission and delivery of service remains consistent.

“We commiserate when it’s going bad and we celebrate when it’s going well,” said Day, who likes having the informal connections with other parents. Social media has its role, too, according to Day, as the families she knew from her first round of Baby & Me formed a Facebook group that has become a connection for sharing parenting advice, service referrals and companionship for outings.

That is the goal of Family Connections’ programming: to build connections during a time when parents feel the most isolated, with the hope that the connections will keep growing over time. Cleveland Heights is imprinted by this exponentially growing connectivity, resulting in families who are supported to thrive and who are supported during hardship, through both the early childhood years, and the decades that follow.

Looking back, with one child in college and one soon-to-launch, the legacy of Baby & Me is interwoven through two decades for the Bell family. Baby & Me relationships served as a conduit to the CH-UH school district, volunteer roles within the community, and an investment in ensuring the legacy continues for others.

“It changes lives,” said Bell. “This agency is an enormous resource to the families who use it, impacting multiple generations and adding great value to our community, our children.”

Family Connections sites host daily drop-in programs scheduled to accommodate families’ unique needs. Visit www.familyconnections1.org/events/calendar.php for details.

Mostly a mom, Shari Nacson, LISW-S, is a freelance editor, child development specialist, and nonprofit consultant who makes her home in Cleveland Heights. More than anything, Nacson is inspired by kids and adults who build connection through kindness.
2017 HCC programs explore diversity and community

Pam Wetherill

In a time of deep division in our nation, Heights Community Congress (HCC) continues to look for ways to come together as a community. By understanding and celebrate differences, HCC strives to strengthen community bonds. For 40 years, HCC has been an advocate for social justice, a monitor of fair housing practices, and a facilitator for building a strong, diverse community. The theme of this year’s HCC program is “Hands Across the Heights: Bridging the Gaps and Moving Beyond.”

Below is a preview of programs planned for the first half of 2017. Details, along with registration information, is available at www.heightscongress.org, or by calling 216-321-6773.

Friday, Feb. 10: “Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963” (Lee Road Library). To celebrate African American History Month, we’ll read and discuss Christopher Paul Curtis’ 1995 novel Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963. The historical novel provides an opportunity to look at race, family, friendship and hope—issues that are as resonant today as they were in 1963.

Sunday, Feb. 12: “This Light of Ours: Activist Photographers of the Civil Rights Movement” (Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage). HCC will sponsor a trip to the Maltz Museum for a guided tour of this groundbreaking exhibit. “This Light of Ours” exposes the struggle against race-based disenfranchisement through the works of nine photographers who were part of the Southern Freedom Movement.

Friday, March 10: “Inspired by Art” (Lee Road Library). A variety of presenters will explore the many ways art brings people together. Pecha Kucha (Japanese for “chat”) applies a simple set of rules to presentations: Display 20 slides for 20 seconds each. Say what you need to say in 6 minutes and 40 seconds of words and images—that’s it.

March 29 to April 9: 41st Annual Cleveland International Film Festival at Tower City Cinemas. For more than four decades, CIFF has presented films from around the world. Watch for this year’s film scheduled for April 28: “Fair Housing in 2017” (Lee Road Library). In April, HCC celebrates the anniversary of the passage of the Fair Housing Act and re-commits to its goal: eliminate housing discrimination and create equal opportunity in every community. This interactive program will examine the state of fair housing and housing discrimination.

Thursday, May 18: “The Negro Motorist Green-Book and Our Search for Community” (Lee Road Library). In 1937, Victor Green published a travel guide for African Americans taking road trips. The Negro Motorist Green-Book quickly became an indispensable guide for newly mobile African Americans, helping them navigate unfamiliar and often unsafe geography as they traveled for business and pleasure. This program will use the Green-Book as a jumping-off point to explore how we all find our way through unfamiliar and dangerous areas, and how we look for common ground.

Pam Wetherill is a volunteer with the Heights Community Congress. She serves on the Fair Housing Committee and is a resident of University Heights.

GirlForce 2017 offers free fitness classes to girls 12–18

Amy Barr

Jazzercise in Cleveland Heights has launched a new initiative for 2017 to support the growth and development of young women by offering free classes to girls ages 12-18, accompanied by a paying adult.

Dubbled GirlForce, the program aims to empower young women by giving them a place to get fit, learn healthy habits, and find a place where they belong in their communities.

Judi Sheppard Missett, founder and CEO of Jazzercise, attended the State of Women Summit hosted by the Cleveland Heights Jazzercise in Cleveland Heights on February 1, 2017 to support the growth and development of young women by offering free classes to girls ages 12–18, accompanied by a paying adult.

Mary Beth McCann, who runs the Cleveland Heights Jazzercise franchise, “Being fit and active can help young girls not only with their health and body image, but also with their self-confidence,” said Mary Beth McCann, who runs the Cleveland Heights Jazzercise franchise.

In Jazzercise classes, girls can dance and sweat out the stress of their school day, and it’s a great bonding activity for sisters, moms and daughters.

Classes meet at the Cleveland Heights Community Center, One Monticello Blvd., Monday through Thursday at 6:30 p.m., Saturday at 8:45 a.m., and Sunday at 9:30 a.m.

Classes are open to residents of all communities.

For more information, contact Mary Beth McCann at marybethmccnn@gmail.com or 440-655-5394.

Amy Barr, a Cleveland Heights resident, has taken Jazzercise for 15 years and is currently a class manager.
Beaumont students awarded in regional art competition

Scott Wortman

Beaumont School students won an impressive 23 awards in the 2017 Scholarly Art & Writing competition, in the Cuyahoga County region, capturing four Gold Key and five Silver Key awards, as well as 14 Honorable Mention awards.

Gold Key recipients are: Alex- andra Andrus '17, Natalie Noble '19, Mathilde Tomter '19, and Kerrigan von Carlowitz '19. Andrus’ award was for photography, while the other Gold Key recipients all won for drawing and illustration.

Silver Key recipients are: Christ- ine Aumiller '18, drawing and il- lustration; Claire Carey '17, who won for both painting and drawing and illustration; Stephanie Mackay '17, who won for both painting and writing, and Grace Martin '18, painting.

Honorable Mention recipients are: Imani Badillo '18, who won two awards for drawing and illustration; Anna Cnolik '17, painting; Nora Dun- can '19, drawing and illustration; Mag- gie Huftman '17, who won two awards for photography; Grace Martin '18, drawing and illustration; Raphaela Mascia '17, ceramics and glass; Eliz- abeth McDermott '38, who won two awards for drawing and illustration; Natalia Pozuelo '17, photography; Rosie Sink '19, drawing and illustration; and Kerrigan von Carlowitz '19, drawing and illustration.

Beaumont faculty members Anna Foti, Sally Hudak and Kristen LoPresti are the students’ instructors. Winning student works will be exhibited at Cleveland Institute of Art’s (CIA) Reinhberger Gallery, through Feb. 3.

CIA is located at 11600 Euclid Ave., in University Circle.

Rick Haase is director of public relations and marketing at Beaumont School in Cleveland Heights. A Catholic school in the Urahian tradition, Beaumont educates women for life, leadership and service.

CH-UH BOE elects 2017 officers

Scott Wortman

The Cleveland Heights–University Heights City School District Board of Educa- tion (BOE) selected new leaders for 2017 during its annual organizational meeting on Jan. 3, at University Heights.

BOE members unanimously voted longtime board member Ron Register as president, a role he previously held. Register was vice president of the board in 2016. Also unanimously, board mem- bers elected Kal Zucker, the outgoing BOE president, as vice president.

Board member Jim Posch was appointed treasurer pro tem, which means he will serve in place of Scott Gainer, the district’s chief financial officer, if Gainer is unable to attend a board meeting. The job of treasurer pro tem includes keeping meeting minutes and recording all votes, and is a position Posch filled last year as well.

BOE members Eric Silverman and Beverly Wright both returned, to round out the five-person board for 2017.

Scott Wortman is the supervisor of com- munications for the Cleveland Heights–University Heights City School District.

Cleveland Heights-University Heights Board of Education

Meeting highlights

DECEMBER 20, 2016

Present were board members Kal Zucker (presi- dent), Ron Register (vice president), James Fuoch and Eric Silverman. Beverly Wright was absent. Also present were Talisa Dixon, superin- tendent, and Scott Gainer, treasurer.

High school renovation change orders

The board approved 14 change orders for the Heights High renovation, some of which entailed work done months ago. Among rea- sons given for the changes were unforeseen conditions, permitting and code issues, addi- tions to the original plan, and design clarifica- tions. Kal Zucker questioned why added ex- penses due to mistakes in the process always become the district’s responsibility. Patrick O’Bri en of Project Management Consultants responded that liability often ultimately lies with the design professional, as determined through litigation.

The purchase of new furni- ture from School Specialty Inc. was approved at a cost of $64,563.

Middle school renovations

An amendment for reduction of the contract with project designers Moody Nolan was ap- proved. The board awarded the Monticello and Roxboro middle schools commissioning agent services to Schweitzer Buckley Mayfield Consulting Engineers. Plans for the middle schools include new HVAC systems, updated technology, new paint, improved entrances, re- configuration of some rooms, and roof replace- ment where needed. The amount budgeted to cover renovations at both buildings is $30 million. Currently, the district has $33.2 million available to execute, so the board will decide in January among options to reduce the cost.

Finances, losses, voucher impact

A recent ruling making the Kaiser facility tax- exempt could cost the district as much as $1 mil- lion annually. Litigation is pending challenging the ruling.

Now that all district students have been made eligible for free lunch, the amount of Quill- vantaged Pop! Aid will increase, but this renders the district no longer eligible for the guarantee that is part of Ohio’s school funding formula.

In addition, in 2016, the district lost $2.8 mil- lion to charter and community schools. Educa- tion Choice vouchers, some of which are used to send students to religious schools, reci- pient in the Ohio’s school funding formula.

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Boulevard students demonstrate mastery of science curriculum

Krissy Dietrich Gallagher

When children are able to explain to others what they have learned, they are demonstrating their mastery of the material. This is what happened at Boulevard Elementary School last December, when students presented their Capstone STEM projects for the first trimester.

Students had spent the fall months responding to an essential question as part of their science curriculum. Fourth-graders studied how native Ohio plants and animals survive. Second-graders investigated how animals and the environment interact with one another.

Teams of teachers met to determine how their students might demonstrate content mastery. Students worked alone or in small groups to create their Capstone projects, which they presented to family members on Dec. 6.

Fifth graders were able to choose between creating a video on invasive species or designing and building a trap for catching an invader before it enters local waterways.

In Kristy Minnillo’s fifth-grade classroom, the video option was popular. Several girls rewrote the lyrics to a classic Queen song that became “He Will Scare You,” about the invasive white-petrel that is currently disrupting Lake Erie’s fragile ecosystem.

Three boys created a news cast that introduced “breaking news” before shifting to an image of an “environmental emergency” and superimposed it in front of a bucolic lake scene.

Other students opted to go on an “engineering adventure,” as they designed, created, tested and revised traps to thwart the influx of invasive fish.

Down the hall in Julie Walker’s fourth-grade class, students selected an endangered species, built a miniature diorama of its biome, and created a slide show, with informational text and images, describing its appearance, behavior, habitat and current threats to its survival.

Raushanta Moyer’s presentation on the black-tailed cuckoo ended with her survival plan, including three action steps to save the bird.

Stacey Colen’s second-graders created a museum walk consisting of the science projects they had completed during the previous months, including worms moving through soil in water bottles and planter fossils of animal prints and teeth. Groups of three or four students worked together to build dams in aluminum pans, then tested whether their dams could withstand an influx of water.

After each unit, the students wrote descriptions of what they had done and what they had learned. Students recorded these on Chromebooks so that parents touring the “museum” could scan RSS codes to hear the recorded descriptions on their smartphones.

A favorite project for Kristen Infeld’s second graders involved constructing paper airplanes of different shapes to determine whether birds with longer, thinner wing spans could fly farther than those with shorter, wider wingspans. When the thinner version won seven of eight trials, students had their answer. They also learned that research does not always result in uniform outcomes and that experiments must be repeated for results to be confirmed.

Infield believes that her students gained much from their hands-on experiences and from “discovering things for themselves instead of just being told.”

Jackie Taylor, STEM coordinator, was pleased with the results of Boulevard’s first Capstone event, which she had considered a trial run. She is already setting her sights on next trimester’s Capstone STEM event, which will focus on physical sciences, such as force and motion, and simple machines. Tentatively scheduled for early March, this will be an interactive event where guests will have the opportunity to interact with student creations.

Liz Fisher

Liz Fisher is a Cleveland Heights resident and works as marketing specialist for Communion of Saints School.

New principal leads push to open Communion of Saints preschool

Liz Fisher

Communion of Saints School, which offers kindergarten through eighth-grade Catholic education, plans to open a new preschool program next fall, with classrooms for 3-year-olds and 4- to 5-year-olds.

“Shortly after joining Communion of Saints School as the principal this past July, the parents approached me with the idea of opening a preschool,” said Principal Gerry Whiteley. “The more I researched the possibility and learned about our facility, the more I became convinced that we needed to open a preschool. The excitement of the parents was infectious; their mission became my mission—to offer a Catholic-based preschool program to augment our existing... offerings.”

Whiteley came to Communion of Saints after completing the Principal Licensure Program at Ursuline College. Before that, she taught for 18 years at St. Joan of Arc School in Chagrin Falls, preceded by a year at St. Pius X in Bedford.

A native of Pittsburgh, Whiteley first worked as a marketing analyst in Boston after earning a bachelor’s degree from Bowling Green State University.

After moving to Cleveland with her husband in 1986, she said she was drawn to education, and earned her master’s degree in education from Ursuline College.

“I decided to devote myself to Catholic education in order to be able to shape children spiritually as well as intellectually,” Whiteley said. “I believe that as a community we are raising the next generation of Catholics who will continue the mission of spreading God’s Word and being stewards of our planet. It is important that everyone is involved in this undertaking, it is why we exist. In partnership with the parents, Communion of Saints provides a strong education both academically and spiritually, and I am honored to be a part of the process.”

More information about the preschool is available at www.communionofsaints.org.

Illustration by Miles Willard

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Tentatively scheduled for early March, this will be an interactive event where guests will have the opportunity to interact with student creations.

Krissy Dietrich Gallagher, a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights, is a former district teacher and a freelance journalist under contract with the CH-UH City School District. A longer version of this story appeared at www.chuhd.org.
CH Senior Center News

Amy Jenkins

Preventing falls is a major focus for seniors, and the Cleveland Heights Senior Activity Center (SAC) has programs to help.

Beginning Tuesday, Feb. 7, and continuing every Tuesday, 9–11 a.m., through March 28, SAC will offer a course called Matter of Balance. The class will provide information and advice, along with exercise and group discussion.

While there is no charge for the class, taught by trained volunteers from Fairhill Partners, registration is required (call 216-691-7379), and class size is limited to 12.

Exercise is another key to fall prevention, and the senior center offers many opportunities for exercise. Seniors can start by walking on the track, taking a class in strength training, working out with Ms. Duck or practicing Tai Chi. The stronger one is, and the more exercise one does—to develop coordination, flexibility and balance—the less likely one is to fall.

Proper use of medication, an environment free of tripping hazards, maximizing one’s vision, good nutrition, staying hydrated and taking care of one’s overall health are all important factors in fall prevention. SAC will be offering talks on these topics and more in the weeks and months to come.

The SAC, located in the Cleveland Heights 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.

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

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.

Feb. 2: Mary Sue Tanis has, for 40 years, headed Youth Challenge in Cleveland. She’ll describe the work of this nonprofit organization that partners teenage volunteers with physically disabled children for sports, games, arts, plays and more. She’ll also discuss her earlier work at the University of Colorado, helping wounded Vietnam veterans, and how it inspired her to adapt recreational activities for children with different abilities. The concept has grown from an annual budget of $24,000 to $1.2 million today, with hundreds of children in the area participating in adapted sports, and some 800 teen volunteers interfacing with disabled children, assisted by individuals and agencies in the community.

Feb. 9: Nicole Burt, a biological anthropologist, was recently promoted to curator of human health and evolutionary medicine at Cleveland Museum of Natural History. She’ll discuss her unique role in the museum world, combining cutting-edge research in evolutionary medicine with pioneering outreach to visitors and the community.

Feb. 16: Longtime University Heights resident Jerome (Jerry) Jacobson, honored by Mayor Susan Infeld as the 2016 UH Citizen of the Year, will discuss his colorful history, including his 40 years’ service with the city’s police auxiliary; his role as medical supply specialist in Okinawa during the Vietnam War; his professional accomplishments in the entertainment industry, traveling with various circuses; and his role as a husband, father and responsible neighbor.

Feb. 23: Instrumentalists and vocalists from the Cleveland Institute of Music will perform a concert.
Heights Libraries offers drop-in tech support

Sheryl Banks

Though technology is everywhere, not everyone is comfortable using it. Just ask Jackie Mayse, technology librarian at the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library System.

Heights Libraries has offered free computer classes and individual tutorial sessions for years, but Mayse said staff recently decided they could do even more to put tech help within reach of customers who need it most. She and her fellow technology trainers have started offering a new service at each branch: Ask a Tech Trainer.

“Ask a Tech Trainer is a service that we started a few months ago,” said Mayse. “We were looking for a training option that was more flexible than our classes. This is a walk-in service so a customer can just walk right in, no appointment necessary, and get help on the spot.”

The tech trainers set up for a block of time in the lobby of all three currently open branches: Lee Road, Coventry Village and Noble Neighborhood libraries. Then they wait for the questions to roll in. And, roll in they do.

Mayse believes the usual service of the tech trainers encourages customers who may be shy about their lack of skills to feel more comfortable asking for help. “Unlike a class setting, where you ask a question in front a room full of people, this one-on-one setting allows people to ask about basics like how to use a mouse or get on the Internet without worrying that they’re the only ones who don’t know.”

The service also helps customers with more advanced skills who just need to be pointed in the right direction.

“I remember one woman who came in—she had a book about Adobe InDesign and she really wanted to get some one-on-one help with it. I realized that our free Lynda.com service, which offers free software training, would be a great place for her to get really good Adobe InDesign classes that she could take on her own time,” said Mayse. “We were able to get her to Lynda.com and show her how to get started with those courses.”

Technology help isn’t limited to software or traditional desktop computers. The tech trainers are also well-versed in the latest hand-held devices. Due to the holidays, Mayse said the tech trainers expect to see an increase in the number of customers asking for help with new tech gadgets.

“Holiday gifts are certainly swinging toward those tech gifts and a lot of people will receive something new but not know what to do with it,” said Mayse. “If you have questions about an electronic holiday gift, we can help you figure it out.”

For details about days, times and locations for the Ask a Tech Trainer drop-in technology services, customers can check the winter issue of Heights Libraries’ program guide, Check Us Out, visit www.heightslibrary.org, or call 216-932-3600.

Sheryl Banks is the marketing and community relations manager for the CH-UH Public Library System.
Music takes center stage at Heights Arts

Mary Ryan

As an antidote to the winter doldrums, Heights Arts has planned three free music performances during February in the nonprofit’s gallery on Lee Road, plus the second concert of its popular Clues Encounters series, which features members of The Cleveland Orchestra performing programs of their own design.

On Saturday, Feb. 11, at 8 p.m., the public is invited to join No Exit New Music Ensemble for an intimate evening of music that will spotlight three of the ensemble’s musicians: violinist Cara Tweed, percussionist Jekke Rinderer, and pianist Nicholas Unterhell. These virtuosi will be performing as a group and as soloists, bringing to Heights Arts the engaging performances that Clevelanders have come to expect from No Exit. Included on the program will be music from early-American avant-garde composer, pianist and inventor George Antheil, and the world premiere of a new work by Emily Koh.

The Cleveland Cello Quartet, a dynamic new ensemble dedicated to promoting the cello as a versatile and eclectic instrument, takes the gallery spotlight on Saturday, Feb. 18, 7 p.m. Performing a genre-bending fusion of classical and pop music, the group, only in its second season, is quickly establishing itself in the Cleveland music scene. Quartet members Anna Hurt, Carlynn Kessler, Sophie Benn and Andreas Koh met as students at the Cleveland Institute of Music (CIM), and serve as an ensemble-in-residence at The Music Settlement.

Building young musicians have a chance to shine during a piano master class performance with acclaimed piano soloist and CIM faculty member Shuai Wang on Sunday, Feb. 19, at 10:30 a.m. Master classes are open to the public, regardless of age or skill level. Northeast Ohio students in grades six through 12 are welcome to apply for inclusion in the master class via the Heights Arts website, through Feb. 5.

"Cure the Winter Blues: From Our Sleeve to Yours” heats up the landmark Dunham Tavern Museum on Euclid Ave. as part of Clues Encounters season 11 on Sunday, Feb. 26, at 3 p.m. The lively program features contemporary and 19th-century works, including Martinu’s Madrigal for Violin and Violas, Widman’s Etude for Solo Violin, and the delightful Dvorak Viola Quartet, with JinJoo Cho, Peter Otto and Isabel Trautwein, violins; Yulin and Kirsten Docter, violas; and Tanya Ell, cellist. Advance tickets are available online, by phone or at Heights Arts.

Heights Arts gallery concerts are free and open to all, and are supported by the Paul M. Angell Foundation. For more information, visit www.heightsarts.org or call 216-371-3457.

Mary Ryan is on staff at Heights Arts.

Apollo’s Fire goes around the world and Bach again
Matt Flynn

Apollo’s Fire will feature J.S. Bach’s music in its 25th-anniversary season as an homage to this master of the Baroque style. This winter, Apollo’s Fire performances will demonstrate the widespread reach of Bach’s music in two programs, “Virtuoso Bach” and “Sacred Bach.”

From the sunny Orchestral Suite No. 1 to the darkly brooding Oboe Concerto in G minor, the principal musicians of Apollo’s Fire shine in “Virtuoso Bach: An Instrumental Extravaganza.”

The apex of the program will be Bach’s beloved Brandenburg Concertos No. 3 and 4. These concertos come from a set of six pieces that Bach presented to the Margrave of Brandenburg in 1724. Pairing small groups of soloists against the entire ensemble (a style referred to as Concerto Grosso) results in wonderful dialogues between the two parts while maintaining virtuosic freedom for the soloists. These concertos are famous for merging unorthodox combinations of instruments as soloists, and Apollo’s Fire gathers musicians from around the world to perform them. The joyous Concerto No. 3 comprises intricate lines that flow around the orchestra, and for this complex texture various performers emerge for a moment in the spotlight. Recorder players Kathie Stewart of Cleveland and Francis Colpron of Montreal perform the sparkling solos of Concerto No. 4. This concerto also includes a virtuosic and intricate violin line, performed by Apollo’s Fire’s Montreal-based concertmaster, Olivier Brault.

Bach’s music as a spiritual vehicle for unity and artistic exploration is one that is furthered through the March program, “Sacred Bach.” The composer’s position as a church musician necessitated that he perform, and therefore create, a cantata every Sunday and on every holy day. Julian Wachner lives a life much like Bach did, performing a different one of Bach’s sacred cantatas each week at Trinity Church Wall Street in New York City. Wachner will join the musicians of Apollo’s Fire for an inspiring spiritual journey.

Apollo’s Fire will present two local performances of “Virtuoso Bach,” on Feb. 17 and 18, and two performances of “Sacred Bach,” on March 24 and 25. All performances are at 8 p.m., at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Cleveland Heights. For tickets and more information, visit apollosfire.org or call 216-371-3457.

Matt Flynn is the marketing manager for Apollo’s Fire.
Maybe you heard me

In February 1980 I was working at WBBG-1260 AM. Nicknamed “Super Gold,” it was the AM sister to the rock station WWWM-FM, better known as MoJo. WBBG played oldies and employed popular Cleveland radio personalities from earlier eras, like Lou “King” Kirby and the legendary Bill Randile.

During the year prior to my working there, I had been an occasional comedy guest on two shows at the station—Willio & Philil’s morning show on WBBG, and MoJo’s morning show, “Benson’s Bozo Breakfast Club,” hosted by Joe Benson (now a popular radio personality in Los Angeles).

Willio and Philil left town toward the end of 1979, and at the beginning of 1980 I was hired to handle WBBG’s promotions and public relations. But my job immediately expanded. I had been writing jokes and comedy bits for other radio personalities and stage comedians, and myself, for several years. The colorful Jay Lawrence came in as WBBG’s new morning host. Jay had been a popular DJ on Cleveland’s KYW about 15 years earlier, when it was the most listened-to station in town, also featuring Jerry G., Jim Runyon and others.

Jay Lawrence was a funny and quick-witted guy. He was fun to work with, and also a bit nerve-wracking because he would say anything (within FCC guidelines—and maybe not always!) that popped into his head, on the air.

It became an unofficial job of mine to listen to him and note when he began what sounded like it could become a comedy bit. I would then write several jokes, on the spot, to flesh out the burgeoning routine. When he said, for instance, “I went to a restaurant last night, and you know a restaurant is going to be bad when . . .” and then told a couple of jokes to go along with that, I automatically put a piece of paper in the typewriter and started churning out “you-know-a-restaurant going-to-be-bad jokes. I typed up a page full of them and ran it down to the studio and held it up against the glass in front of him. And he just started reading them on the air. I did a lot of that.

It was always a little harrowing. But nothing like Feb. 2, 1980. Groundhog Day fell on Saturday that year. Jay decided he wanted to do something special. He asked me to come in—I didn’t normally work on weekends—and not just come in to work, but to arrive at 5 a.m. He devised a plan to broadcast his show live from some transmitter about 15 miles south of downtown Cleveland. He was going to pretend to wait for, and then see, the groundhog to appear and that he called me—was outside, waiting for the groundhog to appear and that he would be checking with me periodically. He started playing records and would be checking with me periodically. He insisted that even though we were pretending everything else, we still had to actually be outside.

The day after that, Feb. 3, would set a record for low temperature on that date in Cleveland—3 degrees below zero—but while the morning we were going to spend outside, Feb. 2, was only 2 below, it felt exactly like 3 below. We drove to this place in his car and when we arrived, the radio engineer who was supposed to let us inside and run the broadcast for us wasn’t there. And he never showed up. Around 6 a.m., when it was time for Jay’s show to start, we jumped back in his car and drove to a pay phone we’d spotted on the way. Jay called the engineer back at WBBG and told him to put him on the air, where Jay opened his show. Then Jay instructed the engineer to play music until he returned to the studio.

We sped back downtown to the station. Jay got on the air and told his audience that he was back in the studio, but that I—“Dave,” he always called me—was outside, waiting for the groundhog to appear and that he would be checking with me periodically. He started playing records and told me to go hang out in my office, so that every 10 or 15 minutes he could call my phone and put me on the air to give a “report.” Which meant that about six times an hour, for the next four hours, I had come up with a new comedy bit. That was 24 bits that I had only 10 minutes each to create.

But I did it. And some of them were even funny. And, cold as it was that day, I left the station drenched in sweat.

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

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Atma Center celebrates 20 years

Laura Santoro

Cleveland’s longest-running yoga studio, the Atma Center, is celebrating 20 years of health, education and community service in 2017.

Its director, Beverly Singh, worked at the Cleveland Clinic before opening the Atma Center on Lee Road in Cleveland Heights. She had become seriously ill; her internist suspected Grave’s disease, fibromyalgia and lupus, and prescribed several medications.

While starting the regimen of prescriptions, Singh took a crash course of daily yoga from a friend, who flew all the way from Australia to teach her. After three months, Singh was off several of her medications and had reduced her dosages of the rest. She was sold on the healing power of yoga, and started teaching in her living room to share its benefits with others.

“The Atma Center focuses on accessible stretches, breath techniques and meditations, and on the therapeutic benefits of yoga. Group classes, private sessions and workshops consistently prove the studio’s motto of providing “Yoga for Every Body.”

Both YANA and the Atma Center have a mission to serve their community. The Atma Center donated more than 500 pounds of food to the Heights Emergency Food Center in 2016, and supported the Center for Senior Dogs with a January fundraiser. YANA provides free yoga classes for Orca House, Cleveland Sight Center and inner-city youths. It also hosted a sew-a-thon for Days for Girls International, helping young women in underdeveloped countries.

“We are so lucky in this country,” said Singh, who received her spiritual name of Swami Atmarupa Saraswati during one of her many visits to India. “We are lucky to have such a wonderful community. And our students always respond generously to these projects. We are lucky to have such a wonderful community.”

Laura Santoro is assistant director at the Atma Center and is on the board of directors for Yoga Academy of North America (YANA), an international nonprofit that has welcomed trainees from 30 states and 20 countries, including India.

“It is a source of great pride to us that many of our international visitors comment on how beautiful Cleveland Heights is,” Singh said. “People have often heard negative things about Cleveland and are hesitant to come, but once they experience all it has to offer, they can’t wait to come back.”

For more information, visit www.yogacademy.org.
Japanese martial arts school opens in Cleveland Heights

Neil Adelman

After 30 years of renting space from local universities and gyms, The Cleveland Kendo Association decided it was time to establish a permanent location for its dojo. On Dec. 1, it opened a school in Cleveland Heights, at 2120 South Taylor Road. The Cleveland Kendo Association provides expert instruction in the Japanese martial art of Kendo, which descended from traditional swordsmanship (kenjutsu) and uses bamboo swords (shinai) and protective armor (bōgu). "Ken" is from the character meaning sword, the character for "Do" includes the meaning of way or path—which translates as "the way of the sword." Kendo is widely practiced in Japan, where it is called "the way of the sword." Kendo in 1986 as a nonprofit organization. In 2006, the group relocated from Cleveland State University to Case Western Reserve University. In 2008, its current head instructors, Shigemi Matsuyama (5th Dan Kendo), and Mieko Matsuyama (4th Dan Kendo), assumed leadership. Cleveland Kendo is affiliated with the All United States Kendo Federation, the International Kendo Federation, and the All Japan Kendo Federation. "All of the instructors volunteer their time and do not profit from their activity. This non-commercial and community service philosophy have been instrumental in reaching an array of students from diverse backgrounds to develop a samurai spirituality that can be a powerful source of strength and focus to manage their daily lives," said Matsuyama.

Classes in Kendo are offered on Monday and Wednesday evenings, and Saturday afternoons. Aikido instruction is offered Tuesday and Thursday evenings, and Saturday mornings. For one monthly fee, students can learn both Kendo and Aikido.

For more information, visit www.clevelandkendo.com or call 216-400-9023.

Neil Adelman is an instructor with the Cleveland Kendo Association.
Bakery expands the Fix brand on Lee Road

James Henke

Robert and Allison Craig are the co-owners, along with Eric Rogers, of Sweet Fix Bakery, at the corner of Lee and Sibby roads. The bakery occupies the space that previously housed Rogers’ restaurant, Black Box Fix, which moved to 2107 Lee Road and is now called the Fix Bistro.

Rogers originally intended to open Sweet Fix Bakery himself, but changed his plan when Robert Craig, Rogers’ wife’s cousin, expressed an interest in opening a bakery.

“I gave him and his wife the opportunity to run their business full time under our Fix brand as a blessing to them,” Rogers said.

Rogers currently owns 20 percent of the bakery, while the Craigs own the other 50 percent. Rogers holds the lease on the space where the bakery is located.

The Craigs took over the space in August 2016 and renovated it, opening the bakery in October of last year.

“This is the first storefront bakery that the Craigs have owned, but Robert, 54, has been baking for many years. He started out by making sweet-potato pies for family and friends.

Robert worked in the pharmaceutical business for about 20 years. When the company he was working for closed, it offered him the chance to go to college, with the company covering the cost.

He attended Cuyahoga Community College, where he earned a degree in its baking certification program. He now does most of the baking for Sweet Fix, while Allison takes care of more behind-the-scenes projects.

Prior to opening Sweet Fix, the Craigs, who live in Woodmere, had a licensed home bakery called Craig’s Divine Desserts.

The Craigs said they love the neighborhood where the bakery is located. “I love all of the people who live around here,” said Allison. “They are very friendly, and they frequently come by and say hello to us.”

Sweet Fix Bakery offers a wide variety of cupcakes, cakes, pies and cookies.

Recently, the Craigs expanded the bakery’s product offerings, to include vegan chocolate-chip cookies and gluten-free chocolate-coconut cookies.

Among the bakery’s most popular items are red-velvet cupcakes and German-chocolate cupcakes, and the yum-yum cake, which contains bananas, pineapple and pecans. “A lot of people like it,” said Allison.

Sweet Fix also sells cold items, including oreo pie, pineapple pie and cheesecake. In the spring, the Craigs plan to offer a key-lime pie.

The bakery’s special signature drink—a white-chocolate hot cocoa—is available now. “It’s very well-received, especially during the winter,” said Allison.

The bakery offers a morning menu that includes bagels, orange juice, coffee and tea.

Sweet Fix Bakery is open Tuesday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Friday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.; and Saturday, noon to 6 p.m.

Special orders are welcome; contact the bakery at 216-371-YUMM (9866). For larger orders, the bakery requires 24 hours notice. Sweet Fix offers a 10 percent discount to policemen and firemen.

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.