CH celebrates 16th annual preservation month
Kara Hamley O’Donnell

The Cleveland Heights Landmark Commission, Cleveland Heights Historical Society and Heights Libraries are collaborating again this May to present a series of programs to celebrate National Preservation Month here in the Heights.

Spanning the month of May, a series of tours and lectures will explore the ways in which preservation is important to this community, and will delve into its history. Programs will explore parks, a secret stream, Cleveland Heights’ connection to the Shakers and Shaker Heights, and will celebrate Gain Park’s 80th birthday with a behind-the-scenes tour.

A description of programs is listed below. [Note that reservations are required for the May 12 and June 2 tours.]

Tuesday, May 1, 7 p.m., Cleveland Heights’ Emerald Necklace: Parks, Property, and Politics
Speaker: Marian Morton
For more than a century, our parks have been important players in the city’s economic and political life. Initially intended to enhance the property values of an ambiguous young suburb, our parks also sometimes enhanced the political reputations of its elected officials.

Backyard chickens are now legal in the city of University Heights
Robert Brown

Like their neighbors in Cleveland Heights, residents of University Heights can now keep chickens in their backyards, legally.

After considering the arguments of many proponents and opponents of backyard chicken keeping, University Heights City Council voted 7-2 on April 2 to approve regulations allowing up to 25 residents to keep up to four chickens in a backyard. Councilmen Steven Sims and Phillip Ertel voted against the ordinance.

The ordinance, which was amended 11 times in response to issues raised in the discussions, requires any resident seeking to keep chickens to apply for a special use permit from the city’s building department. The permit must be renewed each year, following an inspection by the city’s building department.

“Chickens are coming to University Heights, and the sky is not falling,” said UH Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan. “Chicken keeping will be highly regulated, and anyone willing and interested in keeping chickens must do so in a mindful and lawful way.”

Resident Paul Miller spoke out against the ordinance, citing concerns over sanitation, odors, disease and noise, particularly given the relatively small lot sizes in University Heights. “It’s now chic to keep chickens in the city,” he said, “but chickens belong on farms, where there is more land.”

Resident April Urban said that she, like her neighbors in Cleveland Heights, supports keeping chickens in University Heights.

CH residents share views on charter review at public forum
Robert Brown

On April 19, approximately 80 Cleveland Heights residents participated in the first community forum held by the city’s 15-member Charter Review Commission (CRC).

The meeting began with a presentation that described the current council-manager form of government in which seven part-time city council members are elected at-large and are assisted by a full-time city manager, whom they appoint.

The presentation also described other forms of municipal governance, including the one most common in Cuyahoga County, in which there is a popularly elected mayor, and a city council to which some or all members are elected by ward.

Reference was also made to “hybrid” forms of local governance, such as that of Shaker Heights, in which a popularly elected full-time mayor works with an appointed professional manager who holds the title of chief administrative officer.

After the presentation, participants gathered in small groups to discuss and answer the following two questions:

- What type of government do you prefer for Cleveland Heights and why?
- What other elements should be added to or changed in the city charter to improve our local government?

Annual ‘We Are Noble’ weekend to showcase Heights musicians
Brenda H. May

We Are Noble, the annual celebration of the neighborhoods along Noble Road, will take place Friday through Sunday, May 18-20.

Preparations are underway for Noble Elementary School’s NobleFest, a family fun night hosted by the Noble PTA on Friday evening, and nearby Noble Road Presbyterian Church will host a movie night on the same evening. Oxford Elementary School will participate with attractions that include a new art installation by its fifth-graders near the school’s main driveway entrance on Quilliams Road.

There will be numerous activities and sites to visit on Saturday, May 19, beginning with a pancake breakfast at Bethesda Church. An Oxford Elementary School student art show, a baby clothes giveaway at Peace Lutheran Church, and a lunch cookout will

The site of the long-gone Glen Allen Estate, owned by Elizabeth Severance Allen, is a feature of the May 12 walking tour (reservations required).

Most often places that promoted political unity and harmony, our parks have sometimes done the opposite. [Heights Libraries Lee Road Branch, 2345 Lee Road]

Wednesday, May 9, 7 p.m., From...
Support ‘one of our own’ in county race

To the Editor:

I write this letter to ask my fellow Cuyahoga County District 10 residents to support Cheryl Stephens in her bid to be our Cuyahoga County Council representative. I believe Cheryl is the most qualified candidate for the job. Her record of accomplishments is unmatched and her dedication to our community is beyond reproach.

I have known Cheryl for over 30 years. When I first met her, we were members of the mayoral administration of George Voinovich. She was a dynamic and impassioned economic development officer. She was very knowledgeable about the city and what it would take to create lasting, sustainable businesses to grow our community. I could hardly believe she had only been in Cleveland a few years. Her love for our city was found in a “home-towner.”

In the ensuing decades I have watched in admiration as Cheryl became director of planning and development for the city of Cleveland Heights; director of development for Cuyahoga County; executive director of Leadership Cleveland; a director for the National Development Council; director of acquisition disposition and development at the Cuyahoga Land Bank; and an elected member of Cleveland Heights City Council, eventually becoming mayor.

Cheryl has developed her expertise in the area of economic development and is one of only a few people in the state of Ohio to hold specialized financing certification. Cheryl is an inclusive person who truly believes in diversity. She counts people from many different cultures and backgrounds among her friends. She has been in their homes and they in hers. Cheryl has spent her career as a builder. Not just of physical structures but of relationships, networks and resources.

I have no doubt that as the Cuyahoga County Council represenative for District 10, Cheryl would continue her distinguished record of service.

Paula B. Brazil
Cleveland Heights

Maryann Barnes

Chances are you’ve been asked to sign a petition to stop the gerrymandering—drawing district lines to favor a candidate or party—of Ohio’s congressional districts. Spearheaded by the Fair Districts + Fair Elections coalition, this constitutional referendum effort culminated in successful negotiations with state legislators to put Ohio Issue 1—an alternative, but solid, solution—on the May 8 ballot.

Issue 1 has the full endorsement of the Fair Districts coalition (which includes the League of Women Voters of Ohio and Common Cause), the Democratic and Republican parties, and a growing list of organizations statewide.

The Ohio legislature’s refusal to address gerrymandered congressional districts made the Fair Districts citizens’ referendum necessary. Since late June, volunteers across Ohio gathered more than 200,000 good signatures, nearly two-thirds the number required to put the proposal on the November 2018 ballot.

More than 40 volunteers from Cleveland Heights and University Heights collected close to one-third—about 12,000—of the signatures collected locally through efforts organized by the League of Women Voters (LWV) of Greater Cleveland.

Thanks to this citizen ground-swell, state legislators began working on their own proposal last fall. Their initial ideas were unsatisfactory and Fair Districts prepared to pull out of negotiations several times. Remarkably, the legislators kept coming back and a proposal emerged that all could support.

While the Fair Districts proposal called for a seven-member redistricting commission, the legislators felt strongly that the legislature draw the maps. Fair Districts agreed to this, as long as important safeguards were in place:

• Any 10-year map must have significant minority party support.
• Districts are compact, with limits on splitting communities.
• The process is transparent, re-
Forest Hill can be the next Tremont

Mike Rally

For Greater Clevelanders, it has been the best and the worst of times depending on the neighborhood you live in. Destination neighborhoods like Cedar Fairmount and Tremont are thriving with increased property values and the buzz of restaurants and retail. Forest Hill as a neighborhood once enjoyed this status. No more. Now it is lumped into a collection of neighborhoods many call “north of Mayfield.” Instead of buzz, there is the ghost town called Severance Town Center and the only restaurants are fast food. Retail consists of Walgreen’s and The Dollar Store.

Forest Hill is at a crossroads. We can look west and connect to the vibrancy of Little Italy and University Circle. Or continue to plod along and stagnate.

This choice is at the center of a furious debate within the Forest Hill community that erupted five years ago. After the housing crash of 2008, Forest Hill, like other neighborhoods north of Mayfield, saw an alarming rise of vacant homes and foreclosures. This impacted property values and retail development. Cleveland Heights cut back on housing inspections. East Cleveland faced a financial crisis. Suddenly Forest Hill was no longer a “destination neighborhood.” But Forest Hill had one thing that other struggling neighborhoods did not. It had an actual Home Owners Association (HOA) in the form of Forest Hill Home Owners Inc. (FHHO). It could take action independently to combat housing blight. But would it?

And so the debate began. Would FHHO shift gears and move from a volunteer-based social club to a modern HOA to stem the decline? This debate has played out in Cleveland Magazine, the Heights Observer and NextDoor.com. It has finally reached its climax with the upcoming vote for new by-laws by its members (the home owners). Reformers want FHHO to be that agent for change by aligning itself with the Ohio Planned Community Act passed in 2010, which allows FHHO to become a modern HOA. Opponents want the status quo.

Forest Hill faces an existential question. Change and grow or stagnate and decline? This is a decision for the owners, not a dictate by a few. I believe that with a reformed FHHO, Forest Hill can become the “bell cow” for neighborhoods “north of Mayfield.” We can jump-start the restoration.

We have all the ingredients to achieve this:

• Proximity to the energy of University Circle;
• An amazing array of custom homes;
• The Forest Hill Park that could someday be part of the Metroparks System;
• The “Monticello Triangles” and a street grid with no visible cable or power lines;
• The Forest Hill Swim Club;
• The East Cleveland/Forest Hill Neighborhood Group, working with East Cleveland and its own 501 Foundation for community improvements;
• An incredible collection of residents, from Cleveland Orchestra members and college educators, to judges and city officials.

And we have our own icon to define our “destination neighborhood.” It’s the Medusa Building at Monticello and Lee boulevards. In its heyday, Medusa was the gateway to Forest Hill with its beautiful fountain glowing at night. Close your eyes and imagine what Forest Hill can be. A restored Medusa Building of shops, galleries and restaurants. Signage and lighting at the “Monticello Triangles.” Forest Hill Park with bike paths to University Circle. And the restoration of vacant homes.

Forest Hill can be that destination neighborhood again. It’s there. All we have to do is move toward it.

A 35-year resident of Forest Hill, Michael Rally is the founder and owner of Rally Painting and Contracting in Cleveland Heights.

HCC decrees proposed HUD mission statement change

Pam Welkwill

Recently, Dr. Ben Carson, secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), issued a statement that alarms Heights Community Congress (HCCO) members, who feel it should alarm their neighbors as well. Carson said that HUD will amend its mission statement to remove, among other things, references to creating “inclusive and sustainable communities free from discrimination.”

One of HUD’s most important responsibilities is the enforcement and promotion of the Fair Housing Act. This governmental responsibility is so important because, for generations, the federal government denied equal housing opportunities to people of color, which helped to create and perpetuate residential segregation. The Fair Housing Act, passed 50 years ago this year, was designed to undo the prior years of discrimination. It was to eliminate all forms of housing discrimination and to create integrated, healthy and inclusive communities.

HUD has a responsibility to use its mission statement to express its commitment and priorities: that it will fulfill the federal law’s requirement to provide for fair housing throughout the United States. To remove anti-discrimination language from the HUD mission statement and to reduce spending on fair housing programs sends a negative message that victims of housing discrimination are not priorities.

HCC continues to use all of its resources to eradicate housing discrimination and to promote healthy, safe and inclusive neighborhoods. HCC deplores the idea that HUD will eliminate anti-discrimination language from its mission statement, since this is not just a local issue but one that touches every community in the country. We and all Americans need HUD to speak strongly and be at the forefront of national efforts to ensure that our community and others are free from discrimination and policies that create red lines meant to separate those who might be considered “other.”

Here’s a look at HUD’s current and proposed mission statements (from The Washington Post):

Current mission statement: HUD’s mission is to create strong, sustainable, inclusive and sustainable communities and quality affordable homes for all. HUD is working to strengthen the housing market to bolster the economy and protect consumers; meet the need for quality affordable rental homes; utilize housing as a platform for improving quality of life; build inclusive and sustainable communities free from discrimination, and transform the way HUD does business.

Revised mission statement: HUD’s mission is to ensure Americans have access to fair, affordable housing and opportunities to achieve self-sufficiency, thereby strengthening our communities and nation.

Pam Welkwill is a volunteer with Heights Community Congress. She serves on its Fair Housing Committee, and is a resident of University Heights.
Community Reinvestment Areas: Buyer beware?

Carla Rautenberg and Deborah Van Kleef

Property tax abatements are a controversial subject, and rightfully so. When Cleveland Heights residents dutifully pay our—notoriously high—property taxes, only to learn that neighbors purchasing units in some new developments will pay a mere fraction of their high-end home’s assessed value for up to a decade, we understandably bristle. It doesn’t feel like “equal treatment under the law”—a cornerstone of our democracy. It seems more like a subsidy to already wealthy people.

According to the city, however, developers will only build in an aging inner-ring suburb with the incentive of tax abatements. New housing attracts new residents, meaning increased revenues in the form of income taxes that support city services, from which all residents benefit.

It is hard to argue with this theory when municipalities all around us (notably Cleveland, in University Circle) abate taxes on new developments. However, since abatements mean reduced dollars for public schools, cities may hesitate to support city services, from which all residents benefit.

One way a municipality may offer tax abatements is to delineate certain parts of town as Community Reinvestment Areas (CRAs), subject to approval by the state of Ohio. Cleveland Heights has used CRAs to attract residential developers for decades. The largest example is the Severance CRA, which encompasses the Courtyards at Severance, the Bluestone complex of lofts and townhomes, and Severance Place, a condo conversion of the former Kaiser Permanente building. The city currently has a total of seven CRAs, some of which have been more successful than others.

In a major shift, Cleveland Heights is now applying to the state of Ohio to designate the entire city as a CRA. As currently envisioned, tax abatements would be available for newly constructed homes and commercial properties, and for abatements of existing ones. Cleveland, South Euclid and Fairview Park are some other Cuyahoga County municipalities with citywide CRAs.

Seeking to understand the city’s plans, we spoke with Tim Boland, director of economic development, and Richard Wong, planning director, and listened to discussions in CH City Council Committee of the Whole meetings.

Because CRAs are complex and our space is limited, we will address just one aspect of the proposed citywide CRA: Abatements on the tax value added to existing homes by substantial remodeling or “transformative” renovation projects. Here’s how it would work: Suppose your taxes are currently $8,000 per year. You build an addition onto your house, which raises your taxes to $20,000. All or part of that additional $1,000 could be abated for a specified number of years.

Before trying something new, it is generally worthwhile to consult someone who has already done it. Talking with Sally Martin, South Euclid housing director, we learned that incentives for renovation of existing homes rarely work. Why? Because property reassessments by Cuyahoga County seldom reflect the value added by a renovation, unless it involves a very substantial addition. Otherwise, taxes increase little, if at all, so there is nothing to abate. In Martin’s words, “In terms of being a useful tool for existing homeowners, our citywide CRA has not been utilized much.”

Offering incentives to current homeowners may be a laudable idea, but if it does not work in practice, it amounts to an empty offer. Martin noted, “We had discussed the idea of modifying the CRA to allow ‘significant rehab’ to qualify for tax abatement. However, we have had no difficulty in getting properties fully renovated—mostly thanks to our vacant building ordinance, passed in 2010. Over 1,000 homes—more than 10 percent of our housing stock—have been fully renovated and brought into complete code compliance since then, without the incentive of the CRA. Now, inventory of vacant and distressed homes is very low. Those homes are quickly sold and renovated with no need for tax incentives.”

It is also worth noting the short duration of South Euclid’s CRA (five years) and the rationale for it. Keith Benjamin, community services director, told us, “We do short-term abatements to balance attracting development with protecting our school district, which receives the majority of property taxes.” Contrast this with Cleveland Heights’ current proposal for abatements of 7–15 years.

Martin observed, “For new construction, the CRA has been a tremendous help in getting projects moving. We have had 15 new in-fill homes constructed throughout the city since 2010.” However, we hope Cleveland Heights will explore further before finalizing the citywide CRA. In our view, there’s still more to discover.

Carla Rautenberg is an activist and lifelong Cleveland Heights resident. Deborah Van Kleef is a musician and writer, who has lived in Cleveland Heights for most of her life. Contact them at heightsdemocracy@gmail.com.
Protecting public education through local collective bargaining

Ari Klein

As I write this article, teachers in Oklahoma and Kentucky are starting their second week of striking. [Teachers in Oklahoma] ended their walkout on April 12. Due to decades of neglect, conditions for students, faculty and staff in those states (and West Virginia, which recently settled its strike) are appalling. From our outdated textbooks and unsafe buildings, to low wages for teachers, the tipping point for accepting those conditions was finally reached.

Most teachers I know try to work with what they have. A few of my colleagues may be disgruntled, but seldom is our entire membership enraged at the same time. One of the big differences, in my opinion, between teachers in these states and in CH-UH is that they do not negotiate contracts locally. In this district, we negotiate contracts directly with a locally elected board. School board members represent the community’s interests and values, and we have succeeded in reaching agreements for a long time. Teachers in states that have a single contract for the whole state have little say about what goes into their contract.

Another difference between CH-UH and those states is that they are so-called “right to work” states. This means that unions must represent everyone in the bargaining unit regardless of whether they are union members. In Ohio, no one is required to join the union, but must still pay a fair share for representation. Contracts in right-to-work states are weak because there is little in the way of a unified voice at the bargaining table. Management knows that there is no collective will, so there is little effort toward fairness or compromise.

Concerns are more readily heard and acted upon when teachers are in discussion with administration on a constant basis. In CH-UH we discuss hard issues—such as textbook adoption policies, class sizes, services for special needs students, student behavior and expectations—more often than wages and benefits. The teachers union does not always agree with management on these issues, but at least we talk about them and seek solutions. These discussions help shape the priorities for contract negotiations. Some of the serious issues that are commonplace in Oklahoma simply don’t happen here. They have 50-year-old textbooks, broken chairs, little or old technology, class sizes of 40–60 students, and many more signs of complacency and neglect. We have none of those problems here. Our differences with management usually have more to do with philosophy and priorities, not neglect.

My hope is that when this article is published the strikes will have been settled in a way that ensures a renewed commitment to public education. I fear, however, that it is going to take a large infusion of money to make those schools habitable and safe, to buy and maintain updated curricular materials, to invest in current technology, and to pay teachers and support staff fair wages.

We know from our own experience in CH-UH that keeping current with the needs of our students, maintaining and upgrading our buildings, and providing competitive wages to attract and keep highly qualified teachers is an expensive undertaking. Our community’s support of our public schools proves that our citizens value public education. My pride in our community grows even deeper as I read about places that allow their public institutions to languish and fall into disrepair.

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

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Cleveland’s 15th Annual

The Race

Kids & their families making a difference one step at a time

Join Us for a 5-K or 1-Mile Walk/Run!

Mother’s Day, Sunday, May 13, 2018

Honorary Chair: Monica Robbins

Channel 3 News Senior Health Correspondent/Reporter

Register at: DoTheRace.com

Legacy Village, Lyndhurst

University Hospitals Seidman Cancer Center

Proceeds support breast cancer research at University Hospitals Seidman Cancer Center.

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OPINION
Lobbyists for the common good needed

Susie Kaeser

As a true believer in democracy, I take my rights as a citizen seriously. These rights are a lot like muscles. Use them or lose them. Our democracy was set up to give citizens the power to make government accountable and useful. Because government appears to me to be veering off course, I am propelled to exercise a broader range of what is available to me as a member of a democratic society. It is an almost religious experience to cast my vote. We will have that chance again on May 8. Big issues are on the ballot, including a vote on the system that defines how state legislative districts are drawn. Be sure to exercise your vote.

The right to assemble is newly important to me. Until recently, the last time I had demonstrated was as a college student protesting the Vietnam War, but in the last 15 months, I have put up with a lot of cold weather to show my opposition to Betsy DeVos’s appointment by demonstrating in front of Sen. Rob Portman’s Cleveland office, march with women in Washington and Cleveland, and demand an end to gun violence with thousands of young people in Washington, D.C. The signs, energy and shared resolve of hundreds of thousands of citizens together are motivating and critical to energized and determined engagement. It has strengthened my resolve.

In March, following a Heights Coalition for Public Education forum about ways to influence state policy, I took a big leap. I decided to speak directly to state legislators who I consider to be barrières to what I think is good for public education. In mid-March I took the 100-minute drive to Columbus for my five minutes in front of the House Government and Accountability Oversight Committee. I registered opposition to H.B. No. 512, because it would further politicize public education policy and curtail citizen input by severely limiting the role of the elected state school board and transferring some of its powers to the governor. It proposes to merge K-12 education with workforce development. It’s a damaging proposal for education and governance.

While public speaking always makes me anxious, I stepped to the podium and looked the author of the bill, Rep. Bill Reineke (R-Tiffin), in the eye and criticized the legislation that he had drafted. I was thankful to see some committee members nodding their heads in agreement as I registered my support for public education and democratic governance. I kept going. I was among the last to speak, and when it was my turn only a handful of committee members were still there to hear my testimony. Several home-school parents gave testimony in opposition to the bill, as did our state school board member, Meryl Johnson. A lobbyist for the Ohio Chamber of Commerce spoke in favor. A small business owner from Lorain and an education activist from Cincinnati registered their concerns. The mix of voices was interesting.

The trip was worth it. I was reminded that all kinds of people care, and for different reasons, but they show up. Second, it isn’t hard to do. The public is supposed to have a turn, and this is how you participate. I realized I am guilty of demonizing the opposition and this cripples my engagement. By speaking to the author of this bill, I have to acknowledge him as a valid player too. The legislative process expects stakeholders to share their perspective, concerns and evidence. If you dismiss legislators as bad guys, you forfeit the chance to inform their decisions with your perspective. You derigourize the process.

News coverage of the hearings was informative. Reporters listed categories of witnesses, but none of them described me. Their reporting portrayed the stakeholders as organized groups, usually of people who are employed in schools. That didn’t describe me. I spoke as a beneficiary of public education. Like the residents of every community, I pay for public education and I benefit from it because we all depend on an educated citizenry. All residents of Ohio, whether they use a school or not, have a vested interest in a strong public education system. It’s about the common good.

The common-good constituency is not easy to capture in news reporting, but our collective voices of hundreds of thousands of citizens together are motivating and critical to energized and determined engagement. It has strengthened my resolve.

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.
University Heights City Council
Meeting highlights

MARCH 19, 2018
Present were Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan and council members Pamela Cameron, Phillip Ertle, John Rash, Steven Sims, Michele Weiss and Mark Wiseman. Vice Mayor Susan Pardew was absent. The meeting was held from 7 p.m. to 9:58 p.m.

Public comments
Chicken coops: More than 15 residents spoke for and against two ordinances that would allow 25 residents to apply for a one-year permit to keep chickens. A spokesman for a newly formed group opposing chicken coops said that if the ordinance is passed, it will submit a petition requesting its repeal. The residents spoke in favor of the ordinances, with one saying it would allow parents to show children where their food comes from, and another stating that government should stop out of his yard and allow him to raise chickens.

Planning commission
April Urban, an urban researcher at Case Western Reserve University’s Center on Urban Poverty and Community Development, has been appointed to the planning commission.

Rain barrel workshop
The city will hold a rain barrel workshop at city hall on Tuesday, June 5, at 7 p.m. Registration is required.

Coop ordinances pass
Council passed legislation for chicken coops, on emergency. One ordinance will allow up to 25 residents to apply for a special-use, one-year permit to keep chicken coops. The second ordinance limits the number of chicken residents can keep to four, and requires that chicken coops be 20 feet from adjoining properties. Councilman Wiseman, who sponsored the legislation, said council’s goal was to pass the ordinances and see how they work. Vice Mayor Sue Pardee added that council will review them in February.

School board resolutions
Council passed two resolutions, on emergency. The first is to support the Cleveland Heights-University Heights school board’s rejection of House Bill 512. If passed, the bill would transfer most of the state school board’s power to a government-appointed agency. The second resolution urges the state of Ohio and the Ohio Department of Education to review the existing system of ranking schools. Councilman Wiseman said no on both resolutions, saying that school ranking is a contentious issue and she didn’t think council should vote on it.

LWV Observer: Siobhan Leftwich

March 26, 2018
Present were Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan and council members Susan Pardew (vice mayor), Pamela Cameron, Phillip Ertle, John Rash, Steven Sims, Michele Weiss and Mark Wiseman. The meeting was held from 7 p.m. to 9:15 p.m.

2018 budget
Council had approved a temporary budget in December for the first three months of 2018, and needed to finalize a budget for the remainder of the year by March 31. The budget was approved as presented, but on emergency in order to go into effect immediately.

Mayor’s spending limit increased
Council voted to increase the mayor’s spending limit from $5,000 to $15,000 per purchase. Vice Mayor Pardew noted that the $15,000 limit was chosen because purchases above $5,000 are required by state law to be sent out for bid.

LWV Observer: Wendy S. Deuring

APRIL 2, 2018
Present were Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan and council members Sue Pardew (vice mayor), Pamela Cameron, Phillip Ertle, John Rash, Steven Sims, Michele Weiss and Mark Wiseman. The meeting was held from 7 to 10:32 p.m.

Ohio Senate passes two chickens-related bills
Council tabled two chicken coop ordinances until the April 2 meeting: one allowing residents to apply for a one-year permit to keep chickens, and a second establishing safety regulations.

Despite the planning commission’s recommendation that council not approve the ordinances, Mayor Brennan and council members Cameron, Rash, Weiss and Wiseman stated their support for it. Wiseman said that Vice Mayor Pardew, who was excused from the meeting, had also voiced her support. Councilman Ertle and Sims spoke against the ordinances, citing concerns about safety and the close proximity of homes.

Mayor’s spending limit
Council presented an ordinance increasing the mayor’s spending limit from $5,000 to $15,000 on first reading

2018 city budget
Council presented the 2018 city budget, on first reading. Mayor Brennan said the city had a $3 million surplus last year, and that even with additional staff hires—which will include a police officer and firefighter—there will be a $1 million loss this year. Finance Director Sheehan said the budget may need to be amended to include a $19,000 budget allowance for the fire department. The budget will be presented on second reading at a special meeting on March 26.

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Present were Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan and council members Sue Pardew (vice mayor), Pamela Cameron, Phillip Ertle, John Rash, Steven Sims, Michele Weiss and Mark Wiseman. The meeting was held from 7 to 10:32 p.m.

Council tabled two chicken coop ordinances until the April 2 meeting: one allowing residents to apply for a one-year permit to keep chickens, and a second establishing safety regulations.

Despite the planning commission’s recommendation that council not approve the ordinances, Mayor Brennan and council members Cameron, Rash, Weiss and Wiseman stated their support for it. Wiseman said that Vice Mayor Pardew, who was excused from the meeting, had also voiced her support. Councilman Ertle and Sims spoke against the ordinances, citing concerns about safety and the close proximity of homes.

Mayor’s spending limit
Council presented an ordinance increasing the mayor’s spending limit from $5,000 to $15,000 on first reading.
FutureHeights awards mini-grants to five Cleveland Heights projects

Sruti Basu

FutureHeights completed the spring 2018 round of its Neighborhood Mini-Grants Program, approving $5,577 in grants to support five neighborhood projects in Cleveland Heights.

To date, the Community Development Corporation has awarded 23 grants—a total of $44,961. The grants are intended to spur small, grassroots projects to improve quality of life and build community.

The mini-grants recipients are:

- **CUE** was awarded $1,000 for its Lower Shaker Lake Public Space Reclamation project, which seeks to restore and enhance the public space at the southwest intersection of Coventry Road and North Park Boulevard in Cleveland Heights. The site is sunken below street level and, as such, has become somewhat forgotten. The project will enable neighbors to reclaim the space in a way that honors and enhances its historical and ecological significance while adding social and recreational vibrancy.

- **Friends of the Delisle Center** was granted $5,000 for its Beautifying the Delisle Center project. The Delisle Center, located in the Coventry Village neighborhood, plans to update one of its most visible assets: the landscaping on the front hill, facing Euclid Heights Boulevard. The finished project will result in a space that is attractive, contains a healthy garden, and can be shared with the neighborhood.

- **Montford Community Garden** received a grant of $757 for its Gardening Set-Up Grants project. The garden was established to provide a focal point in the Noble neighborhood, where residents rent garden beds to grow vegetables and flowers. Garden members hope to draw people from the neighborhood together, to connect with one another and share gardening knowledge. With the grant, the group will provide scholarships for two new members/families. The scholarships will cover the yearly plot fee, plants, plant support and a fence. This project aims to make gardening affordable for residents, create a healthier community, and create opportunities to build community, as gardeners often serve as neighborhood ambassadors.

- **Noble Neighbors** was awarded $500 for its Talent of the Heights project. The organization is hosting a community-wide event, We Are Noble, May 19-20, to celebrate and showcase the neighborhood. Talents of the Heights will take place on Saturday, May 19, on the vacant site that was once home to a McDonald’s restaurant in the Noble-Nela Business District. The event will feature live music from local families, and entertainment for family.

- **St. Alban’s Episcopal Church** was awarded $750 for its Beautifying the Hill project. St. Alban’s, located in the Coventry Village neighborhood, hopes to revitalize an underused park with a playground, plant support and a fence. This project will become a model for other public spaces in the community.

FutureHeights invites Heights residents to share their ideas about how to make the Cedar Lee Mini-Park—which many people walk through on their way from the parking lot just east of Lee Road—into a special place. FutureHeights will host a visioning workshop on Saturday, June 2, 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., at CUE Urban Winery, 2018 and 2180 Lee Road.

Situated near Cleveland Heights’ newly renovated high school, the exceptional restaurants, bars and shops in the Cedar Lee Business District, and the Cedar Lee Theatre, the mini-park gets significant foot traffic.

The community-development group FutureHeights and other stakeholders believe that the site has the potential to be much more than just a pass through. It could become a place where residents and visitors gather, converse and spend time. Through careful design, it could become as unique a place as the district itself, and positively impact its surrounding businesses and neighborhood.

While its Cedar Lee Mini-Park Placemaking project, FutureHeights hopes to gather resident input as it works to create a dynamic space to reinforce the Cedar Lee Business District as a hub of social and commercial activity.

In addition to hosting the visioning session, FutureHeights will conduct an online survey to enable additional residents to share their ideas.

RSVP for the June 2 session at https://cedarleeminipark.eventbrite.com. For more information and access the survey, visit www.futureheights.org.

Sruti Basu is the director of community-building programs at FutureHeights.
Cleveland Heights City Council
Meeting highlights
MARCH 19, 2018
Council members present were Mayor Carol Roe, Vice Mayor Melissa Yasenow, Mary Dunbar, Khalil Seren, Jason Stein and Cheryl L. Stephens. Michael N. Ungar was absent.

The meeting lasted from 7:50 to 8:25 p.m.

Top of the Hill property tax agreement
For the Top of the Hill development, council and the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Board of Education agreed to a property tax exemption, collection of service payments in lieu of taxes, and an urban redevelopment tax increment equivalent fund for depositing these service payments.

New standing committee names
The new names of standing committees, which were approved by council on Feb. 20, were inserted into the city code. They are: Administrative Services, Finance, Housing and Transportation, Planning and Development, Recreation, Community and External Relations, and Safety and Municipal Services.

Beyond essential operations of city government
Council outlined priorities beyond the essential operations of city government in order to not limit the ability of the city in any way to respond to and/or address other matters of concern to the community.

Executive sessions
Presented on first reading, this ordinance, drafted by Khalil Seren, amends the city code by repeating Section 10701:01(9), to remove the ability of the council, or a city board or commission, to enter into executive session more than four times per year to discuss general plans for the future or general issues before the city.

In response to community feedback, this should clarify confusion about differences with state law. Although home rule allows such deviations, it may not always be necessary to discuss these matters in executive session.

Mayor’s report
Mayor Roe thanked city staff for the newly launched [redesigned] Cleveland Heights website, and for the many positive stories in the media lately. The next joint meeting of city council and the school board will be on June 25 as mayor, Roe attends the Ohio Mayors Alliance, this body will meet with gubernatorial candidates this summer to help them form agendas relating to city concerns.

Cleveland Heights-University Heights Board of Education agreed to a property tax exemption, collection of service payments in lieu of taxes, and an urban redevelopment tax increment equivalent fund for depositing these service payments.

Future Heights CDC partnership
Based on the recommendations of a working group formed in 2017, council voted to authorize the city manager to negotiate the terms of the city’s involvement in the evolution of Future Heights into a community development corporation (CDC) for the city. The resulting agreement will require separate authorization from council.

System for ranking schools
Council heard the first reading of a resolution urging the governor, legislature and Ohio Department of Education to revise the way schools and school districts are ranked to more accurately reflect the public school performance. The current version of the resolution requests that this be done through a process that meaningfully involves parents, school board members, civic leaders, school administrators and other school patrons. The city manager is working with the school district to further customize the language of the resolution to the Cleveland Heights-University Heights district, so changes will likely be made before the next council meeting.

Rejection of House Bill 512
Council approved support of the March 20 resolution passed by the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Board of Education that rejects House Bill 512, which would transfer most of the powers of the elected state board of education and department of education to a governor-appointed cabinet agency. Council agrees with the school board that passage of H.B.512 would go against the OH USB school district’s interests by significantly decreasing accountability and transparency concerning public education in the state of Ohio.

Immigration Task Force
Council established an Immigration Task Force to identify and examine immigration issues, including those related to civil immigration enforcement that affects the city, its residents and its employees. The task force will also examine any possible future actions to be taken by the city in response to the issues identified. The task force will give council a written summary of its findings and recommendations, if any, by July 31. The task force will have nine members, including the police chief, city manager (or designee), and mayor. Members will also include the following, all appointed by the mayor: a member of council; a member of the City Council’s Benevolent Association (OPBA) who is a classified service captain, lieutenant, or sergeant in Cleveland Heights; a member of the OPBA who is a classified police officer or unclassified service basic patrol officer in Cleveland Heights; and three city residents.

25 As mayor, Roe attends the Ohio Mayors Alliance, this body will meet with gubernatorial candidates this summer to help them form agendas relating to city concerns.

APRIL 2, 2018
Council members present were Mayor Carol Roe, Vice Mayor Melissa Yasenow, Mary Dunbar, Khalil Seren, Cheryl L. Stephens and Michael N. Ungar. Jason Stein was absent. The meeting lasted from 7:36 to 8:26 p.m.

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The Shakers to Shaker Heights Park: The Curious History of Why A Part of Cleveland Heights Once Called Itself ‘The Real Shaker Heights’

Speaker: Virginia Dawson

Learn about the history of North Union, the sale of the Shaker property, and the history of Van Sweringen brothers in developing the old Shaker property located along both sides of Doan Brook. [Heights Libraries Lee Road Branch, 2145 Lee Road.]

Saturday, May 12, 10 a.m. to noon, Cleveland Heights Rocks and Waters Tour 2018: Shaw Bankrock Gulch

Tour guides: Roy Larick, Korbti Roberts and Kara Hamley O’Donnell

Do you know Shaw Brook, the city’s secret stream? Explore its sandstone gully—once the Glen Allen estate’s landscape centerpiece—and learn about the long-gone home of Elisabeth Severance Allen, John L. Severance’s sister. It’s beauty where least expected.

Reservations are required for this tour, which will take place rain or shine. Space is limited, and this tour always fills. To register, call 216-291-4878 after May 1. [Registered participants will meet at Lathan High East parking lot, 1400 Yellowstone Road.]

Monday, May 21, 7 p.m., Why Preservation?

Speaker: Margaret Lann, Cleveland Restoration Society

What are the important architectural features on an older house? What should be repaired rather than replaced? This program looks at the importance of taking a preservation approach in our homes and neighborhoods. It also highlights some common preservation blunders. [Heights Libraries Lee Road Branch, 2145 Lee Road.]

Saturday, June 2, 10 a.m. to noon, Cain Park Behd the Scenes tour

Tour guides: Kara Hamley O’Donnell and Ksenia Roschkovsky, city of Cleveland Heights staff

As we celebrate Cain Park’s 80th anniversary, take a downtown Cain Park’s rich history, its evolution and its importance as the heart of Cleveland Heights’ arts community: You’ll get to see areas of the park usually inaccessible to the public, including the scene and costume shops, Evans Amphitheater backstage and dressing rooms, and work on the set and lights for the 2018 musical in the Alma Theater.

Reservations are required for this tour, which will take place rain or shine. Register, call 216-291-4878 after May 1. [Registered participants will meet at the top of the Cain Park sledding hill, on Taylor Road near Superior Road.]

Kara Hamley O’Donnell works at the Cleveland Heights Department of Planning & Development as the city’s historic preservation planner.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Noble Neighbors.

Are Noble events and interactive and informative? Have you noticed any significant changes in the neighborhood since the first real estate development around 1899? Home values have risen significantly since the first real estate fair in 2014.

To find details about the 2018 We Are Noble events and interactive and printable maps, visit www.nobleneighbors.com.

Brenda H. May is one of the leaders of Noble Neighbors.

Noble continued from page 1

Many residents will host yard sales. All residents are welcome to host a yard sale at their home, and those interested in participating in the celebration at Noble Road Presbyterian. Those interested in being included on the event map should send a message to nobleneighbors@gmail.com, with their address, by May 11. Instructions on how to list your high-demand items on free websites will be provided.

Real estate professionals will host open houses for Noble-area homes on Sunday, May 20. Potential buyers can walk through a variety of houses, including colonials, bungalows, ranches, and grand homes developed by the Van Sweringens. Housing in Noble fits every need, from growing families to one- or two-person households and those seeking homes where they can "age in place." Now is the time to buy in Noble. Home values have risen significantly since the first real estate fair in 2014.

In the district will participate in the festival with food specials and invitations to their shops. Local entrepreneurs will have tables on-site, the 8th Street Farmers Market, and Central Bible Baptist Church will offer free car washes.

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Heights Observer May 1, 2018
www.heightsobserver.org

COMmunitY NEWS

Heights teen helps other bereaved families

Shari Nacson

Asked to describe Rebecca’s Gift, Heights eighth-grader Carolyn Meyer said, “It’s an organization that sends families on their first vacation after the death of a child.” Meyer and two classmates are currently doing an International Baccalaureate (IB) project to raise funds for Rebecca’s Gift. The project will culminate with an ice cream social fundraiser on Sunday, May 27, 5-8 p.m., at Ben & Jerry’s at Fairmount Circle, in University Heights.

This is not the first time that Meyer has raised funds for the nonprofit. In 2017, she raised $4,700 through her Bat Mitzvah project—enough money to pay for two bereaved families to reconnect through travel.

Rebecca’s Gift was inspired by the way Meyer and her brother, Josh, reconnected with their parents during a trip eight months after their sister Rebecca died.

Traveling as a family of four, not five, was hard. Meyer’s mother, Kat, explained that—due to the grief process—she was not yet able to plan an itinerary, so the kids mapped out destinations, including six Ripley’s Believe It Or Not museums, snow tubing, and The Titanic Museum.

The trip was an opportunity for the family to reconnect, and for the kids to get one-on-one attention that they really needed. This became the spark that led to Rebecca’s Gift—helping other grieving families by lifting the burden of itinerary planning, helping them get over the hurdle of the first trip after the death of a child, and focusing on joy and connection for the surviving siblings.

In talking about the nonprofit’s mission, Meyer explained why the focus is on bereaved siblings. Amidst the grief, “siblings feel invisible,” she said. “The vacation helps you feel more part of the family.”

Families who have received vacations from Rebecca’s Gift have echoed Meyer’s observation. Siblings of terminally ill children struggle with lack of attention when parents are focused on medical crises.

“Whoever I spent time with, someone didn’t get attention,” said Jennifer Jones, whose son Isaac died in 2015. Intentionally spending vacation time together after such a profound loss was pivotal. “Staying busy is how we coped when he was sick,” said Jones. “There are parts of the grieving process that require more focus. The trip took away distractions and allowed us to focus on it in a good way.”

As part of giving the vacation, Rebecca’s Gift arranges all of the trip details and, when possible, meets with the recipient family. The presentation of the gift is a special moment. Jones recalled that when it came time to meet with the Meyer family for the trip to be announced, her twin boys and daughter were “too excited to eat.”

Connecting with another bereaved family is also a comfort—one that seems reciprocal. Meyer noticed that she has grown from being part of these moments, and said, “It was eye-opening. I realized that our situation isn’t the only one around us.”

Working together to give this opportunity to other families has been meaningful for each Meyer family member. “No matter how alone you feel, your parents are there for you and are thinking about you,” said Meyer.

Founded in 2015, Rebecca’s Gift provides bereaved families with their first vacation after the death of a child. To date, five families have received trips via Rebecca’s Gift. Visit www.rebeccasgift.org to learn more.

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.

Free books mailed to your young child!

If your child is 4 years old or younger and lives in 44106, 44120, CH-UH, East Cle., Euclid or Shaker, visit heightsfamily.org for registration information.
Jill Barr remembered for her kindness and compassion

Jill Barr’s smile was legendary. Spread- ing from her mouth to her eyes, that smile was quick to be offered to anyone who needed it. Her gentle kindness, her bottomless well of generos- ity, marked a life that was much too short.

“Call of CoTS. “She was a force in her community,” said the Rev. Andy Barr of Cleveland Heights’ Church of the Saviour (CoTS), to which all three of her children at- tended, and ran the Upward basketball program at CoTS.”

But Barr’s older daughter, Helen, de- scribed her as “the most caring person I’ve ever known.” And 12-year-old Tom said, “My mom taught me niceness.”

I wanted to give her grandchil- dren,” said Helen. “She would have loved that.”

“I feel like the doctors and nurses saw this as another way of bring- ing people together,” said Rob. “Singing and dancing helped me feel joyful.”

“Barr coordinated volunteer tutors at Canterbury Elementary School, which all three of her children attended, and ran the Upward basketball program at CoTS. “She didn’t give up her moments of the community.”

“The University Heights mother of three died from complications of pneumonia in early March, at the age of 47. But Barr’s legacy lives on in the many people she touched with her grace, selflessness and authenticity.

“I think Jill had a genuine connec- tion with every person she met,” said the Rev. Andy Call of CoTS. “She was a force in her community.”

“I wanted to give her grandchil- dren,” said Helen. “She would have loved that.”

“Barr coordinated volunteer tutors at Canterbury Elementary School, which all three of her children attended, and ran the Upward basketball program at CoTS.”

Barr coordinated volunteer tutors at Canterbury Elementary School, which all three of her children attended, and ran the Upward basketball program at CoTS. “She didn’t give her a hoot about sports,” said Call. “But she saw this as another way of bring- ing people together.”

“Barr coordinated volunteer tutors at Canterbury Elementary School, which all three of her children attended, and ran the Upward basketball program at CoTS.”

“I feel like the doctors and nurses saw this as another way of bring- ing people together.”

“It’s like having the best mom in the world. But I know this is just the kind of love she gave so freely came back to her in spades.”

“Those who knew Barr are com- mitted to carrying on her legacy: engaging more with their neighbors, making time to connect with friends, stepping up whenever they see a need. But some holes—and some roles— won’t be so easily filled.

“I wanted to give her grandchil- dren,” said Helen. “She would have loved that.”

“I feel like the doctors and nurses saw this as another way of bring- ing people together.”

“I wanted to give her grandchil- dren,” said Helen. “She would have loved that.”

“I felt nervous at first,” said Emily. “But she saw this as another way of bring- ing people together.”

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“I felt nervous at first,” said Emily. “But she saw this as another way of bring- ing people together.”
Peace Lutheran hosts ‘We Are Noble’ events

Don King

Peace Lutheran Church, 3740 Mayfield Road, will host several activities in support of Noble Neighbors’ We Are Noble weekend in mid-May.

On Saturday, May 19, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., guests will be welcome at a cookout lunch in the church’s front yard. The light lunch will be free and open to anyone participating in the weekend events throughout the community.

At the same time, the congregation will open its “baby shop” to young families. They will be invited to choose free clothing items for their children, up to size 6X. The baby shop is also open every Tuesday morning from 10 a.m. to noon, but more clothing will be made available on this special Saturday.

OBSERVER continued from page 2
Preservation Planner Kara Hamley O’Donnell estimated that 90 percent of CH homes and 50 percent of CH commercial buildings were over 50 years old and might be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. At that time, CH had eight National Register historic districts, and the article listed four more potential districts in CH and one in UH. Today, three of those four CH districts have now been listed, as has one additional district, Grant Deming’s Forest Hill. What’s amazing is that most of the districts were nominated by residents who initiated the research for their neighborhood, wrote the nomination and shepherded it through the arduous state process.

Heights residents have great pride in their neighborhoods. Celebrating the rich history isn’t so much about mourning what has been lost, but rather recognizing that great change has taken place. The Heights is constantly renewing and reinventing itself—that welcoming new people as we appreciate the contributions of those who have come before.

Deanna Bremer Fisher is executive director of FutureHeights and publisher of the Heights Observer. To commemorate the 10-year anniversary of the Heights Observer, we are taking a look back at stories that appeared in those pages from 2008 through 2017.

Heights Observer
needs volunteers

FutureHeights publishes the Heights Observer and delivers it throughout Cleveland Heights and University Heights on or around the first of every month. Volunteers are needed to assist with deliveries to local businesses and institutions. Most routes take about an hour to complete. For more information, contact FutureHeights at 216-320-1423 or info@futureheights.org.

May is Bike Month in the Heights

Heights Bicycle Coalition

Since 2010, Cleveland Heights has joined with cities nationwide to celebrate May as National Bike Month. Activities take place in and around Cleveland Heights and University Heights throughout the month, including Bike to Work Week from May 15 to 18, and the Ride of Silence—a memorial that honors those injured or killed while riding their bicycles—on May 16.

“Biking has been on the rise in the past few years in our community and across Northeast Ohio,” said Steve Reinhartd, Cleveland Heights resident and head of Heights Bicycle Coalition (HBC), which plays a major role in organizing Bike Month in Cleveland Heights.

“Bike Month is one way we can spread the word about the safety of cycling, the health benefits of riding and the fun that biking can provide.”

On May 9, all Cleveland Heights-University Heights public schools and some private and parochial schools will take part in Walk or Bike to School Day. Walking or biking to school is a good way to get exercise, and children and adolescents should get 60 or more minutes of exercise each day, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Research also shows that children who walk or bike to school arrive more ready to sit down and learn than children who get a ride to school.

Bike to Work Week concludes with Bike to Work Day on Friday, May 18. That morning, from 7 to 9 a.m., HBC provides free coffee, courtesy of Phoenix Coffee, and home-baked oatmeal cookies at the corner of Edgehill and Overlook roads—Northeast Ohio’s most traveled commuter bike route.

The May 16 Ride of Silence—a worldwide coordinated event—takes place each year on the third Wednesday in May. Heights-area bicyclists depart from John Carroll University’s (JCU) southeast parking lot at 7 p.m. and finish in front of University Hospitals on Adelbert Road in University Circle, where they are joined for a memorial observation at about 7:30 p.m. by riders coming from the Free Stamp sculptor in downtown Cleveland. Along the route from JCU, the eastside rides progress west along Fairmount Boulevard to North Park Boulevard, then down Grandview Avenue to drop off flowers where Cleveland Orchestra bassist Charles Bartz died in a bicycle accident in 2006. Bike Month in the Heights wraps up on June 2 with Bike Tune-Up Day at the Coventry Courtyard on the northwest corner of Coventry Road and Euclid Heights Boulevard. This free event runs from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Experts from Hirobel, Two One Fix Bicycle, and HBC will be on hand to assess bicycles and make minor repairs. This event, presented with support from Coventry Village Special Improvement District, is first-come, first-served, so attendees are advised to arrive early—and no later than 12:30 p.m.

For more information on Bike Month, or to get involved in bicycle advocacy, visit www.bikewebsites.org.

May is Bike Month in the Heights

Heights Bicycle Coalition

Since 2010, Cleveland Heights has joined with cities nationwide to celebrate May as National Bike Month. Activities take place in and around Cleveland Heights and University Heights throughout the month, including Bike to Work Week from May 15 to 18, and the Ride of Silence—a memorial that honors those injured or killed while riding their bicycles—on May 16.

“Biking has been on the rise in the past few years in our community and across Northeast Ohio,” said Steve Reinhartd, Cleveland Heights resident and head of Heights Bicycle Coalition (HBC), which plays a major role in organizing Bike Month in Cleveland Heights.

“Bike Month is one way we can spread the word about the safety of cycling, the health benefits of riding and the fun that biking can provide.”

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For more information on Bike Month, or to get involved in bicycle advocacy, visit www.bikewebsites.org.
Heights seniors earn peace officer certification

The certification qualifies students for employment in private security. Additional certifications earned by the students are in CPR, first aid, automated external defibrillator, and 12 sections of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. A partnership with the two colleges grants students up to 23 Tri-C credits and up to 19 Bryant & Stratton credits.

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

Alum Taylor Pickens is new soccer coach

Taylor Pickens, a Cleveland Heights High School alumna and two-time Lake Erie League (LEL) Player of the Year, is returning to her alma mater as head girls soccer coach.

“We are excited to announce the hiring of Taylor as our new girls soccer coach,” said Athletic Director Joe D’Amato. “Taylor brings a wealth of knowledge and experience across many levels in the sport. Her commitment to building a program within our community and the success she’s had previously bodes well for the future of our girls soccer program. We are excited to welcome another Tiger alum back home!”

Ten seniors in the Heights High Criminal Justice program have received Ohio Peace Officers Training Academy (OPOTA) certification. Students also earned college credits from Tri-C Community College and Bryant & Stratton College.

OPOTA is part of Heights High’s Career and Technical Education program, and is taught by Commander Johnnie Lemons, a retired Ohio State Patrol trooper.

Joy Henderson

Ten Heights High seniors are OPOTA certified. Back row (from left): Darryl Collins, Jumal Fisher, Kyle Motto, Jeytozay Lee and Rashawn Creer. Front row: Taygh Simmons, Marie Carstarphen, Maya Sparks, Maya Stevenson and Armonni Whittiker.

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Pickens has spent the past two seasons as the head girls soccer coach at Euclid High School. She has also coached with the Eastside Kickers Soccer Club and is currently coaching with the Ohio Premier Futbol Club. In 2015, Pickens was Heights High junior varsity coach under veteran coach Paul Eyre.

Pickens holds a bachelor’s degree in criminal justice from Youngstown State University, 2007-11.

Pickens was a four-year starter, she earned LEL Player of the Year honors as a junior and as a senior. Pickens was a two-time state club champion with the Cleveland Cobras Soccer Club, and participated in the Olympic Development Program.

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

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Project Lead the Way comes to CH-UH middle schools

Kriszy Dietrich Gallagher

According to its website, Project Lead the Way (PLTW) is a national K-12 program designed to engage students in hands-on activities, projects, and problems; empower them to solve real-world challenges; and inspire them to reimagine how they see themselves.

Recently adopted as a course for CH-UH middle school students, it is offered as an elective for seventh- and eighth-graders at Roxboro and Monticello middle schools. Because the two schools are currently operating under one roof, the PLTW classroom has combined as well, with Amy Statler and Dianna Neal team-teaching the classes.

According to Statler, PLTW takes a human-centered approach, and the projects are challenging. One recent assignment asked students to design an orthopedic shoe for a patient with cerebral palsy who has specific medical and lifestyle needs.

To kick off the orthopedic shoe lesson, a specialist from the Veterans Affairs Hospital visited the students to talk about patients with cerebral palsy and how shoes and orthopedic devices can improve a person’s ability to lead a full life. “The students really had to think about what a patient might need or want to do, and then design the shoe specifically for [the patient]. They were particularly inspired by the stories about children,” said Statler.

In addition to mastering the steps of the design process, students learned how hard it is to bring their ideas to fruition. “I had a great idea for the shoe project,” said Jervon Cole, a seventh-grader, “but I was focused too much on comfort and it didn’t help the person the way I wanted it to.”

Eight-grader Graham Anderson-Reitz had a similar experience, when he designed a wallet for a classmate as a get-to-know-you project at the beginning of the year. “It turned out better in my head than it did in real life,” he said.

Despite some real-world disappointments, students are enthusiastic about the class. Olivia Gettis said she enrolled because she’s “more of a visual and hands-on learner than paper and pencil.” Cole said he chose it because “he hopes to be an architect or engineer one day.”

The course has changed how the students look at the world around them. Devin Eding, a seventh-grader, said, “You might look at an object and think it was easy to build, but when you actually break it down and think about every little step, you realize how much time and effort it took.”

Both teachers hope their students will continue PLTW coursework when they transition to the high school, where it’s offered as part of the Career and Technical Education program, and includes opportunities to earn college credit.

Meanwhile, Neal is excited for the upcoming Pringles project, in which students are asked to work with peers to design packaging for mailing a single Pringles potato chip, with minimal damage to the chip.

“Students will mail their Pringles to a school in California where it will be evaluated based on the amount of damage the chip sustained,” Jervon Cole, a seventh-grader, said. “You might look at an object and think it was easy to build, but when you actually break it down and think about every little step, you realize how much time and effort it took.”

This brief glimpse at their friends and classmates engaged in designing, building, and exploring is the best possible recruitment tool for Project Lead the Way.

Kriszy 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 article appeared at www.chuh.org.
Coventry library hosts children’s author Terri Libenson

Jay Rosen

Local author and illustrator Terri Libenson will read from and discuss her new book, Positively Izzy, at the Coventry Village branch of Heights Libraries on Wednesday, May 9, at 7 p.m. The event is part of Heights Libraries’ Cedar-Coventry Author Series, in partnership with MacY’s Backs - Books on Coventry.

In the following Q-and-A, Libenson speaks about her writing process, favorite authors, and her upcoming book.

Q: How would you describe your new book, Positively Izzy? A: It’s a spin-off of Invisible Emmie. Both books are set in the same school and town, but this one stars two new characters: Brianna, Emmie’s best friend, and Izzy, a new character I’ve introduced. These girls have different personalities, kind of like Emmie and Katie. Bri is smart and bookish, while Izzy is a dreamer who loves playacting. Like Invisible Emmie, Positively Izzy also takes place over the course of a day, but this time it focuses on the school talent show.

Q: What inspires you to write for middle-grade readers? A: It’s more to writing or illustrating? Do you ever find it challenging to work more to writing or illustrating? Do you find some subjects easier to write or illustrate than others? A: I grew up thinking I would become an artist, and I absolutely love doing it, and letting these crazy lives could really relate to. That’s how the comic strip was born. I loved drawing. But over time, I grew to love writing just as much, if not more so. Cartooning and writing graphic novels combines my love for both. It’s always challenging, but it’s my favorite way to express myself.

Q: Tell us a bit about “The Pajama Diaries.” What inspired you to start the [comic strip] series, and how did you go about creating such relatable characters? A: I tend to write what I know, so I came up with the concept when I was a young, multitasking working mom (now I’m an old multitasking working mom). I wanted to create a character that modern parents who were juggling these crazy lives could really relate to. That’s how the comic strip was born. I absolutely love doing it, and letting the characters age in real time keeps the material fresh.

Q: Do you have any advice for aspiring illustrators and storytellers? A: Be patient and persistent. It took me 10 years on and off to get syndicated. Also, practice. (Check out all these “p” words!) Take art lessons, writing classes. Be earth friend helped me develop all those skills. It also takes place over the course of a day, but this time it focuses on the school talent show.

Q: What’s going on at your library? A: It really seems to come naturally. I think there’s just a big part of me that is kind of like Emmie and Katie. Bri is smart and bookish, while Izzy is a dreamer who loves playacting. Like Invisible Emmie, Positively Izzy also takes place over the course of a day, but this time it focuses on the school talent show.

Q: What do you find about your new book, Positively Izzy? A: It’s more to writing or illustrating? Do you ever find it challenging to work more to writing or illustrating? Do you find some subjects easier to write or illustrate than others? A: I grew up thinking I would become an artist, and I absolutely love doing it, and letting these crazy lives could really relate to. That’s how the comic strip was born. I absolutely love doing it, and letting the characters age in real time keeps the material fresh.

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Q: What are you reading right now? A: I’m reading a great book my editor sent me, called Why Comics? by Hillary Chute.

Jay Rosen is communications coordinator at Heights Libraries.
May is Older Americans Month, a time for older adults to join together with others in the community to locate and integrate. Each year, the Cleveland Heights Senior Activity Center (SAC) celebrates this designation on the last Thursday in May with an Older Americans Month Forum.

The forum will take place on Thursday, May 31, 1-3 p.m. Reservations are not necessary.

This year’s topic is Senior Safety, and the event will feature presentations by Annette Mecklenburg, Cleveland Heights police chief, and Janet Montoya, MetroHealth’s community health and fall prevention specialist. The program will begin with a reading by the Cleveland Heights poet laureate, and will conclude with light refreshments.

The forum is arranged by the Cleveland Heights Commission on Aging—an advisory group comprising senior residents whose mission is to advise city council on matters of importance to seniors.

Past forum topics have included Arts in the Heights, Women who Lead and Inspire, and Housing Matters.

Other special events planned for May include a presentation by Eric Kish on the Genius of Leonard Bernstein, on Wednesday, May 9, at 7 p.m.; a lunch and learn sponsored by Judson Retirement Community on Aging in Place, on Tuesday, May 15, at noon; a bus trip to Great Lakes Theater to see a production of “Threepence,” on Wednesday, May 16; and much more. If you have never visited SAC, plan to visit in May.

The senior center is closed on May 8 for voting. Please remember to vote!

SAC, located in the Cleveland Heights Community Center at 1 Monticello Blvd., offers a variety of programming for those 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, and available online at www.clevelandheights.com.

SAC membership is $5 for Cleveland Heights residents. To sign up, bring a recent piece of mail (such as a bill) and a photo ID.

University Heights residents who would like to join SAC must first register with Patrick Grogan-Myers, University Heights community development coordinator, at 216-932-7800, ext. 203, or pgrogan@universityheights.com. Membership is $10 for University Heights seniors.

Amy Jenkins is supervisor at the Cleveland Heights Office on Aging and the Senior Activity Center. She can be reached at 216-691-7559 or by e-mail at ajenkins@clvhts.com.
Blush Boutique hosts Sip & Shop fundraisers

Mallory McMaster

Looking for a meaningful way to give back to the community, Blush Boutique owner Laurie Klopper recently launched a series of fundraisers that are a win-win for the nonprofit and for the merchant. For each Sip & Shop event, Blush Boutique donates 20 percent of the evening’s proceeds to the designated nonprofit. The result is a financial benefit for the nonprofit organization that also introduces its supporters to a popular local merchant that has been part of the Coventry Village neighborhood for almost nine years.

Blush Boutique offers a pleasant venue that—during Sip & Shop events—features wine and cheese, along with a carefully curated selection of products that include clothing, jewelry and accessories. Participants have heralded the events as a fun way to give back.

Carlita Skok, board secretary of Heights Youth Theatre (HYT), said, “It was the easiest fundraiser we’ve ever done.” It was so successful that the board of HYT hopes to host another Sip & Shop in the autumn.

To date, Blush has raised more than $1,000 for local nonprofits that have included The Leukemia Lymphoma Society, the Heights High Hockey Team, Heights Youth Theatre, and Cleveland State Law Review.

Contact Laurie Klopper at 216-721-5319 if you would like to host a Sip & Shop event for your nonprofit.

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.

Shari Nacson

COURTESY SHARI NACSON

YWCA honors CH’s McMaster

Dawn Hanson

The YWCA of Greater Cleveland has named Cleveland Heights resident Mallo-ry McMaster a winner in its 2018 Distin-guished Young Woman Awards, recognizing her as one of 50 women between the ages of 25 and 40 who are making a difference in Northeast Ohio.

McMaster and the other recipients will be profiled in the YWCAs annual Achieve magazine and honored at an upcoming private reception.

An accomplished nonprofit leader and community organizer, McMaster has experience in communications, marketing, engagement, storytelling and advocacy. She is a sought-after writer with an impressive portfolio of pieces published in national outlets such as Cosmopolitan, Teen Vogue, The New York Times and Vice.

In 2017, McMaster joined the Cleveland Heights-based marketing communications firm The Fairmount Group. As a strategy consultant, she helps nonprofit clients develop and execute strategic social marketing plans and create and refine communications campaign content.

McMaster’s current nonprofit leadership roles include serving as a board member for NARAL Pro-Choice America, the board chair of NARAL Pro-Choice Ohio, an abortion storyteller with We Testify, and the event director of Pride in the CLE, an annual Pride festival hosted by the LGBT Community Center of Greater Cleveland.

Prior to The Fairmount Group, McMaster served as the outreach and advocacy coordinator at Preterm, a nationwide leader in compassionate women’s and reproductive healthcare, where she led a nationally recognized campaign to destigmatize abortion care through multi-level advertising, coalition building, grassroots and volunteer engagement and political advocacy.

Earlier, she led employee engagement programs, monitored quality initiatives and supported nursing education and onboarding as the assistant to the director of nursing at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation.

Dawn Hanson is the founder and president of The Fairmount Group. She lives in Cleveland Heights with her husband and dog. She serves on the board of NARAL Pro-Choice Ohio and is president of the Textile Art Alliance of the Cleveland Museum of Art.

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Heights Observer May 1, 2018

Shari Nacson

“We wanted a storefront so people can see all the fun that’s going on here!” said Sarah Nemecek. After a pilot year in a 3,000-square-foot space in the Douglas Fine Arts Building on Lee Road, Nemecek was excited to move into the Coventry Village neighborhood, adding a retail space where customers can access designer fabrics, yarns and crafting gear that correspond with studio classes.

A shop and studio for “the modern maker,” Studio How-To supports crafters of all abilities—from novice to seasoned. “Anything you can make with your hands, we are here to teach you,” said Nemecek.

Studio How-To hosted an open house and ribbon-cutting on April 7. Guests filled the studio, chatting about the arts and Cleveland, while they made pom-poms and other art together.

“The community-building is part of what I really love about running this business,” reflected Nemecek. “Crafting brings people together. It lets down our natural barriers so we can find ways to connect without even trying.”

“Dream-doers” by nature, Nemecek and her husband, Jon, moved here after several years as accountants-turned-farmers in Virginia. “We chose Cleveland Heights because it felt great,” said Nemecek, citing the walkability, architecture, family-friendly venues and diversity. “There are so many interesting people doing amazing things—all packed into the area. I’ve lived in a lot of places—Alaska, Hawaii, California—and this is my favorite.”

Studio How-To has worked well with the family’s homeschooling lifestyle. Sam, age 6, has been able to use the studio for self-directed learning. In preparation for the grand opening, he designed his own business cards and helped assemble handmade furniture. During the pom-pom class, he helped guests use supplies.

Studio How-To’s spring offerings, mostly adult classes, can be found on its website. Classes for kids will be added this summer. A welcoming place for families, the studio is also available for parties and team-building activities. For class schedules and store hours, visit www.studiohow-to.com.

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.

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Stalwarts of the Cleveland arts-and-culture scene, Nina and Jim Gibans had accumulated a lifetime’s worth of memories in their Shaker Heights home. But when health demands challenged their independent lifestyle, the couple agreed it was time to move to Ambler Court - a beautifully renovated assisted living neighborhood that offers signature programing and care in an ideal environment for those in need of increased assistance.

“It felt like home from the start,” says Nina of the couple’s suite, filled with a curated collection of the books, music and art they love. And they take comfort in the easy access to the onsite health and wellness programs they both need. “We love it here,” says Nina.

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Friends of Cain Park raffle offers free season tickets

Lisa Manzari

What’s better than going to a show at the Evans Amphitheatre at Cain Park? Going to every show—for free.

Friends of Cain Park is raffling two free season tickets in a fundraiser for its activities to support Cain Park. Each raffle ticket costs $50, and sales are limited to just 100 tickets.

Tickets are available through May 31 at www.cainpark.eventbrite.com. Tickets will also be available on Saturday, June 2, at Residents Day at Cain Park, when the ticket booth opens for sales to Cleveland Heights residents only.

Friends of Cain Park is a non-profit founded in 1995 to support artist prizes for the July Arts Festival, music and dance performances, actor stipends and college scholarships for Cleveland Heights High School. Each year, the organization provides thousands of dollars to support activities at the unique civic-owned summer arts and theater facility.

Membership to Friends of Cain Park is $40 for individuals and $50 for families. Benefits include ticket discounts and preferred seating. Other ways to support Friends of Cain Park are through a tax-deductible donation, or the purchase of an engraved brick on the Cain Park grounds for $50.

“We hope that our neighbors throughout the Heights and Northeast Ohio will support us so we can keep supporting Cain Park,” said Molly McGuigan, president of the Cain Park Board of Directors.

Membership forms are available in the spring/summer issue of the city’s Focus magazine and online at www.cainpark.com. Contributions can be sent to Friends of Cain Park, 40 Severance Circle, Cleveland Heights, OH, 44118. For more information, contact Lisa Manzari at cainpark@clvhts.com or 216-906-7496.

Lisa Manzari has been a resident of Cleveland Heights since June 2006, and has been on the Friends of Cain Park board since shortly after visiting its booth at the Cain Park Arts Festival.

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COURTESY COMMUNION OF SAINTS SCHOOL

In the mood for some ogre-sized family fun? The Communion of Saints School Drama Program, now in its ninth year, will present “Shrek Jr. The Musical” on May 4 and 5, at 7 p.m., in Powers Hall at Communion of Saints School. More than 70 students are involved in this year’s production, on the stage and behind the scenes. Under the guidance of Lydia Channenke, director and scenery painter, and Maria Batt-Ladovice, choreographer and musical director, the magic of the swamp is brought to life through music and magical scenery. Adult tickets are just $3. For more information, visit www.communionsaintsschool.org.
Homeschool art show to benefit ARTFUL youth programs

Shannon Morris

On Wednesday, May 23, six homeschool artists will showcase their masterpieces at The Mary Proctor Project art show, hosted by ARTFUL Cleveland in its studios on the Coventry P.E.A.C.E. Campus, 2843 Washington Blvd., in Cleveland Heights. The event takes place from 1 to 7 p.m., and light refreshments will be provided.

The artists are Kaitlynn Bamler, Elise Bolton, Lennice Bolton, Chiara Koonce, Mary Proctor and Juliana Walther.

Proctor, a 12-year-old home-schooled Cleveland Heights artist, founded The Mary Proctor Project in 2014 to showcase young artists and their work within the Cleveland community, and to raise awareness and funds to directly benefit local nonprofits. Proctor wants to share her passion for art with others, inspire other young artists, and give back to the community.

The event will benefit local nonprofit organizations, including one that helps local children with the cost of art supplies.

In its review of the play, The Washington Post praised, “…the playwright’s gift for drawing his characters into an escalating conflict and sustaining, with humor and craft, our curiosity…”

The cast of Dobama’s regional premiere of “Appropriate” features Abraham McNeil Adams, Tracee Patterson, Tom Woodward, Ursula Catana, Kelly McCready, Ireland Derry, Jacob Eeg and Miles Pierce.

“Appropriate” runs Thursdays through Sundays. Ticket prices range from $29 to $32, with senior, student and military discounts available. Call the box office at 216-932-3396 for information or to purchase tickets. Tickets are also available at www.dobama.org.

Anne Bukan is the assistant managing director of Dobama Theatre.
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Standing my ground

I learned the Pledge of Allegiance early in elementary school. I learned it, but I never felt comfortable saying it, even as a little kid. I probably couldn’t have articulated this back then, but it seemed like something that shouldn’t have to be forced. That’s the way I felt about prayers in religious services, too: Either they should be natural and sincere, or you shouldn’t say them, because, I mean, what’s the point?

But during an assembly near the beginning of second grade at Coventry School, when we were supposed to be reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, an older kid standing next to me said, “All you have to do is say ‘watermelon,’ watermelon,’ and no one will know the difference.” So that’s what I did, for years, for the Pledge and for prayers.

Then when I got to Heights High, in the mid-’60s, when protesting was the norm, I decided that I no longer needed to say “watermelon” or anything—and when the rest of the school was saying the Pledge, I just kept my mouth shut. Then it occurred to me that I didn’t have to stand up for the Pledge, either. Standing for the Pledge was not a law, and it was within my rights not to participate.

No one ever said anything about it—though I got a lot of dirty looks from teachers and fellow students—until one day in May of my 11th-grade year. I guess I was more noticeable that day, sitting in the first row of the second section of the Heights High auditorium seats.

And I and my friend Harry were sitting together there, and when everyone else stood up for the Pledge and started reciting it, we sat silently in our seats. Until a teacher, Alva Kilgore, a huge guy who had played professional football, spotted us, walked over and stood in front of us, grabbed each of us by the fronts of our shirts and calmly lifted us out of our seats.

I quickly started explaining to him all of the reasons we didn’t feel the need to say the Pledge, but he interrupted, saying, “That’s fine. You don’t have to say it. But stand up, out of respect—not for your country, if that’s the way you feel, but for the other students, who are standing.” I said, “Okay. That sounds fair.” Then Mr. Kilgore added, “Plus, it will probably keep you from getting beaten up by some of these guys.”

Harry and I nodded and thanked him for the advice.

Some of those guys did rough me up, however, for other forms of protest. It was the mid-’60s and the height of the Vietnam War, and the burgeoning, and growing, anti-war movement. I marched, carrying signs, in protests all over the area. Many Heights students did. People called us names, and FBI agents tried to intimidate us by taking our pictures at close range. But no one touched us. Until we protested inside Heights High.

One day in May, we—the protest types—wore black armbands as a way to honor the soldiers who had died in the Vietnam War. That seemed to make us targets to a bunch of big guys who didn’t understand the nature of our actions that day. I was on my way to the choir room, between third and fourth periods, when a much larger guy named Tom (I can tell you his last name if you want to know), grabbed me by my hair and slammed my forehead into a locker. I tried to explain the purpose of the armband, but he yelled bad words at me and called me all kinds of names.

There were other times, too, when those guys manhandled me and others. We all shared our stories and compared notes.

For the final assembly of that school year, I was looking for a seat when I spotted an empty one just one seat away from that guy Tom. I took it. And when it was time for the Pledge of Allegiance, I decided to ignore Mr. Kilgore’s advice, and I remained seated and silent, just to bait Tom. He glared at me the entire time and practically screamed the Pledge. It was not quite as brave of me as it might appear, though, since the seat I took was on the aisle. And I was totally ready to run.

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