Summer lunch program returns to Heights Libraries

Jay Rosen

Summertime can mean hunger for some young people in our community, who no longer have access to free meals at school. Heights Libraries is ready to serve these children and teens, age 18 and younger, by once again hosting the Greater Cleveland Food Bank-sponsored free summer lunch program at its Lee Road and Noble Neighborhood branches.

The Lee Road branch’s lunch program began June 4 and runs through Aug. 10, and is offered Monday through Friday, 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Heights Libraries’ Noble Neighborhood branch will provide lunches on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:30–2:30 p.m., through Aug. 9.

If kids can’t make it to the Lee Road or Noble Neighborhood branches, or need breakfast in addition to lunch, the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District is offering free breakfast (8:9 a.m.) and lunch (11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.), Monday through Friday (through Aug. 10), at Boulevard Elementary School and Heights High, and Monday through Thursday at Geatity (through July 12) and Noble (June 25 through July 19) elementary schools.

With the recent closing of the Heights Youth Club, which had offered free summer lunch programs in recent years, Heights Libraries recognized the need to act fast to fill the void.

“I’m thrilled that the Heights Observer, the judges wrote—in their typically abbreviated fashion—‘Its very words showcase the community’s commitment to each other.’ The Cleveland Jewish News was the first-place honoree in the same category. Among the other winners were, Akron Beacon Journal, best large daily newspaper; Medina County Gazette, best small daily; Ohio Magazine, best magazine; and Columbus Alive, best alternative newspaper. A complete list of honorees can be found on The Press Club of Cleveland's website, www.pressclub-cleveland.com.

“There’s a story about a baby being left in a hospital parking lot,” wrote the judges. “A panel of journalists from outside Ohio judged the competition. In selecting the Heights Observer, the judges wrote—in their typical abbreviated fashion—‘Its very words showcase the community’s commitment to each other.’ The Cleveland Jewish News was the first-place honoree in the same category. Among the other winners were, Akron Beacon Journal, best large daily newspaper; Medina County Gazette, best small daily; Ohio Magazine, best magazine; and Columbus Alive, best alternative newspaper. A complete list of honorees can be found on The Press Club of Cleveland’s website, www.pressclub-cleveland.com.

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Looking back at a decade of Heaths summers

Deanna Bremer Fisher

In July 2008 the foreclosure crisis had begun to hit the Heaths hard, and the top story in the fourth issue of the Heights Observer told how Heaths residents were beginning to organize a response. In “Community addresses neighborhood threads,” Ann McFarland reported on a panel discussion organized by the League of Women Voters to discuss the issue, and Judi Miles wrote “Forescence and hope in the Heaths,” about how the crisis was affecting the value of homes and our outlook on the future of our neighborhood.

In July 2010, intern Katlin Bushinsky wrote about the CH-UH Board of Education’s decision to hire Doug Heuer as the new superintendent, a decision that sparked protests at a board meeting and mixed reactions from the community because the demographics of the rural community that he hailed from were so different from those of the Heaths. Another article reported on a group of concerned residents, calling themselves Stept Up Cleveland Heights, who sought to promote strong leadership for the city by identifying five local candidates seeking to connect with the community.

In July 2011, intern Yelena Tischenko wrote about the Dog Project, and how a group of Cahn Park neighborhood residents changed a longstanding ban on dog walking in Cahn Park. Their goal was to “encourage more neighborhood activities in the park in order to reduce crime, increase foot traffic and encourage more families to spend time in Cahn Park.” Intern Philip Hewitt encouraged Heights residents to “shop in support of the many independent merchants that add character to our community, while intern James Helmworth wrote about the creation of the 11th Peace Street Fair in Cleveland Heights, and intern James Helmsworth about the creation of the 11th Peace Street Fair in Cleveland Heights.

In July 2012, intern Alastair Pearson wrote about Culture of Cutting, a new business in Cleveland Heights, and intern James Helmsworth about the Dog Project.

In July 2013, intern Jennifer Kueh and Emily Bean’s purchase of Mitchell’s Fine Chocolates, enabling a longtime Heights business to continue serving the community. Columnists Carla Rautenberg and Deborah van Spronken wrote about a group formed to “keep CH water public” at recent meetings. Intern Gabe Schaffer, who began writing during the first issue of the Heights Observer, also offered its first Chicken Coop Tour.

In July 2014, intern Alastair Pearson wrote about several Fairfax Elementary School playground projects, including a Little Free Library, built to honor both Meyer and 10-year-old Trixiana Tarkanian, who had also died the year before. The issue also covered several new initiatives within the Heights community: a citizens group formed to “keep CH water public”; a Pogo’s, formed for Heights artists, began a nonprofit Sober Living Cleveland, to provide housing to recovering addicts; Future Heights launched its Neighborhood Mini-Grants program; and Shannon Morris founded Artful Cleveland, to give Heights artists affordable studio space on Cleveland’s East Side.

In the 2016 issue covered Jason Hallaman and Emily Bean’s purchase of Mitchell’s Fine Chocolates, enabling a longtime Heights business to continue serving the community. Columnists Carla Rautenberg and Deborah van Spronken wrote about a group formed to “keep CH water public” at recent meetings. Intern Gabe Schaffer, who began writing during the first issue of the Heights Observer, also offered its first Chicken Coop Tour.

Intern Connor O’Brien wrote about Cleveland Heights City Council taking action against the operators of the Arco dumpyard in East Cleveland in the July 2017 Observer. Other articles dealt with such issues as streetscapes construction delays necessitating moving the annual Coventry Street Fair to the fall. Noble Neighbors hosting a workshop about the future development of the Noble Triangle (Mayfield Road, Noble Road and Warrensville Center boulevards), and MetroHealth Medical Center expanding its Severance facility with the addition of a short-stay hospital.

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 these pages from 2008 through 2017.
Charter Review Commission should discuss before deciding

Michael Bennett

Months of opinion-gathering and fact-finding by the Cleveland Heights Charter Review Commission (CRC) went to waste at its June 7 meeting.

Instead of engaging in thoughtful discussion about our city’s form of government, and evaluating hundreds of comments from residents, the meeting members offered their preferences, with a majority in support of preserving the current city manager-council form. This detailed the conversation, discomfited several commission members, and did little to move the process forward. A bit of conversation surfaced toward the end of the meeting, but the damage was done; the tenor was such that anyone even considering an elected mayor form of government had little ground on which to take a stand.

I urge the commission to get the deliberation train back on a better track at its June 21 meeting and beyond, for this and all other charter issues. Potential charter changes are too important to let the strongly and frequently expressed opinions of several preclude open and honest deliberation among all.

My understanding was that CRC members were chosen because they had no preconceived ideas of what charter changes would best serve residents. They spent months interviewing elected officials, stakeholders and others, and convened a community town hall meeting and online survey.

Yet there was no discussion of all that information before opinions started flying around June 7. At least one member (and perhaps more) did not even know about a 32-page report detailing solicited community opinions, which overwhelmingly favored an elected mayor form of government; there was no reference to any of the thoughtful comments it contained on both sides of the debate.

CRC members have selflessly given a lot of time and attention to this vital public service. I am grateful for their role and appreciate any toll it has taken on their lives, at home, work or other volunteer engagements. But now is not the time to shy away from more hard work (there was a reference at the meeting that it would be easier to avoid major changes).

At some point, yes, they will need to take a stand and a vote. Well before then—or even well before a show of hands indicating which way they are leaning on any issue—they should discuss and deliberate all the evidence they have gathered, starting from a point of neutrality.

CRC members could, for instance, review and discuss key take-aways or questions they had from the lineup of speakers over the past months. They could delve into the 32-page report and spend an entire meeting reviewing it to gauge the temperature of the community they represent. They could openly discuss comments from residents and council members that have been posted online as “Submissions to the Commission”—hopefully members have been reading and absorbing the information, but it is too valuable to not see the light of day in open discussion.

Charter reviews don’t happen often—the city’s charter says CIH City Council only has to determine once every 10 years whether to appoint a review commission. I hope the CRC will take sufficient time to deliberate carefully. I hope even more residents will engage in the process by attending commission meetings, submitting written filings to the commission, and sharing their thoughts with city council members—they, ultimately, will take action on any recommendations the commission offers. For more information, go to www.clevelandheights.com, and click on the Charter Review Commission link.

Michael Bennett is a 29-year resident of Cleveland Heights. A former newspaper journalist, he works at a nonprofit that inspires and connects people to transform our region. Reach him at michael@bennettstrategic.com.

Forest Hill will smile again

Jan Milic

Other than the azaleas and blooming trees in Forest Hill, the best thing here is the homeowners association, regardless of what has been said in an ongoing dialogue. The “fuss” has been about the private crusade of less than six people. Neighborhoods will always have “cranks,” but ours has been extremely aggressive. Since the 1970s, the association has nurtured the historic serenity of this area.

In the 1950s, post-war couples worked hard to get ahead, and bought in Forest Hill, then an exclusive neighborhood. The residents were the movers and shakers of the city.

We are now among an amazingly diverse population. Some treasure the historic value of our properties; some don’t and won’t. No mandatory “dues” will change their outlook. What Forest Hill really needs is a stronger sense of “community”—individuals engaged in matters relevant to living here.

The problem in any organization is that there will always be individuals who don’t agree with the majority. They will leave, and, in the case of Forest Hill, try to splinter and divide those who want to enjoy peace and harmony.

The Forest Hill Home Owners Association (FHHO) now seeks a new direction focused on peace, harmony and the involvement of residents who are smart, relatively affluent, and willing to put things back into balance.

To do this, there are plans to advertise our community in high-profile publications (such as orchestra programs) and participate more fully in city efforts, such as FutureHeights and representation at city hall for our concerns. As a cost savings, FHHO hopes to distribute timely information via e-mail rather than USPS, but people must provide their e-mails.

There must be more dialogue between side-by-side and across-the-street neighbors. We must find common interests and better understand differences. On every walk, I take and run into someone I do not know, I find out the most amazing things. I suggest a weekly (at least) walk around your block in different directions. I also find that many residents are dealing with housebound family members and/or their own restrictive health issues. These restrictions are often reflected in the less than perfect care of the property.

I can count on one hand the number of original owners still here. A number of homes have been passed on to children or other relatives who have no interest in the neighborhood or their responsibility to maintain the property. Other owners see no need to pay their mortgage or taxes. Homes go into foreclosure. The process is slow; and meanwhile the property deteriorates.

Last month (June) was designated “Neighbor Month” in Forest Hill. Events were planned for each week, and residents were encouraged to have “pop up” parties on their front lawn, inviting passersby to stop and chat. Some people had refreshments, some did not, but conversation was the focus.

I am convinced that more frequent interaction between neighbors and understanding each other’s circumstances can unify our beloved Forest Hill going into the future.

Jan Milic has been a Forest Hill resident for 42 years, and is a past-president of FHHO.
Our state legislature has set up several programs that divert public school dollars to nonpublic entities. Most people believe that charter schools siphon public dollars away from local school districts. Not so widely known, however, is another state program, known as EdChoice, which gives families tuition subsidies for private and parochial schools.

The Peterson Scholarship, a voucher for students with special needs, as well as another voucher for autistic children. The Peterson and autism vouchers enable families to request that the local public school district to evaluate their children, if there is a special need suspected. If a child is identified with such a need, then the district’s professional staff writes an individual education plan (IEP). The money lost to public schools per student can be as high as $37,000 per year, based on the identified special need and the cost of professional staff required for this work. Once the voucher is awarded, parents can use private schools to provide the services the child needs.

Looking at only the Peterson scholarships, CH-UH, with around 5,200 students, is the smallest of five districts (out of more than 600 in the state) that has more than 100 students using these vouchers. Columbus, with more than 90,000 students, has only 99 students receiving these vouchers; Cincinnati, with a population of around 360,000, has 297 scholarship students receiving them. Interestingly, with 17.5 percent of CH-UH students identified with special needs last year, our district already serves a special needs population that is greater than that of most of the public school districts in the state.

The state limits Peterson vouchers to no more than 5 percent of the identified special education population. If that limit were applied locally, then CH-UH would be limited to only 40 scholarships per year, less than half of our current number. Although still wrong-headed, this would provide some protection against an overwhelming burden on our district. Around 100 Peterson vouchers added to 136 autism vouchers creates a huge financial burden for our district.

Although special education law is extremely complicated, it is meant to protect children and ensure that they get the services they need. Often, however, private service providers game the system, enabling parents to demand a special needs identification with a higher dollar value, rather than one that addresses their children’s actual needs.

Another concern is that when parents sign up to receive services from these state-approved providers, they lose certain protections afforded them by federal law. Parents are waiving their right to appeal and to demand accountability from the provider.

Our district professionals write the IEP, we have no jurisdiction on how or if the services are provided. If a provider tells a parent that the voucher dollars were used up in November and their child will not receive services for the rest of the year, there is no recourse. What’s even worse is that the voucher service providers are not required to be licensed.

The state of Ohio, especially the governor and general assembly, do not understand the financial impact that the vouchers and scholarships have on public school districts. When funds are taken out of our state allotment, our own students suffer—they receive fewer services, and our district is forced to seek new money through levies.

The current financial impact on the CH-UH treasurer’s five-year forecast shows Community Schools, or charters, receiving $2.45 million, EdChoice $3.22 million, and Peterson/autism $2.65 million. The Peterson and autism vouchers added to 136 autism vouchers created a huge financial burden on our district.

As parents and taxpayers, we must make sure the law changes to help make public school districts self-sustaining. Bad legislation at the state level puts a tremendous burden on our schools and on us. Rigging the rules to defund public schools pits neighbor against neighbor. We must elect a governor and legislators who will level the playing field and counteract the privatization agenda.

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

Carla Rautenberg and Deborah Van Kleef

In many Cuyahoga County cities, an owner may not transfer (sell or otherwise convey) a property without a point of sale (POS) inspection. Cleveland Heights was an “early adopter” of POS inspections, back in the 1980s, because a far-sighted city council recognized them as a vital tool for maintaining the city’s greatest asset, its historic housing stock. Our city was ahead of its time, and this has served us well.

In 1995, Cleveland Heights became the first city in the United States to ban pesticides on the grounds of schools, day care centers, libraries and other public properties. Once again, Cleveland Heights was a forerunner among cities, both regionally and nationally.

Currently, as in years past, citizens’ groups have asked our city council to consider various proposals for forward-thinking legislation. Here are two that we think could make Cleveland Heights a regional model in the not-too-distant future.

Protect our neighborhoods with foreclosure bonds: The idea of this measure, informally known as foreclosure bond legislation, has been kicked around in Cleveland Heights since 2013, when it was first researched and proposed by residents from Grant Deming’s Forest Hill district and Noble/Nela. Council considered it in 2014 but declined to act.

As area citizens have learned all too well since 2008, foreclosures often lead to vacancies, which lead to blight, which in turn devalues surrounding homes and can threaten the safety and stability of entire neighborhoods. Foreclosure bond legislation comes into effect when foreclosure by a bank or other lender causes a home to become vacant. The bank must then deposit with the city a substantial amount of money (the bond). The city will draw upon the bond to pay for the upkeep of the property if the responsible party fails to maintain it. If the bank (or its servicing company) keeps the home up to code until it undergoes POS inspection and is sold, the city will reimburse the amount of the bond, minus an annual administrative fee.

Good actors have nothing to fear from foreclosure bonds, which have been effective tools for fighting blight in Springfield, Mass., and Canton and Youngstown, Ohio. Of course, less than reputable institutions do not care for such legislation. Yes, foreclosures in Cleveland Heights have declined to pre-2008 levels. However, The Wall Street Journal and other national publications have recently warned of a new housing bubble caused by relaxed lending standards. With a federal administration committed to shredding banking regulations, we think it is only prudent to prepare for the next financial crisis. Foreclosure bonds are not a panacea, but we agree with Noble Neighbors and Greater Cleveland Congregations that they can be an important tool to prevent a devastating drop in housing values due to vacancy and blight. Let’s be the first community in Cuyahoga County to be ready for the next downturn.

Consider high-speed municipal broadband: Are you fed up with paying ever higher prices for slow Internet? If so, you’ve got lots of company in Cleveland Heights. Some residents think we shouldn’t be satisfied with the duopoly of Spectrum and AT&T. They propose that Cleveland Heights fund a study to determine the financial feasibility of a municipal broadband utility, to provide high-speed service throughout the city. They envision a network that would:

• Provide high-speed, relatively low-cost Internet service to all residents, businesses, safety forces, schools, libraries and city hall.

• Guarantee net neutrality and personal privacy, with no storage, provision, or display of individual or household data to third parties.

• Be revenue-neutral; subscriptions would pay for infrastructure, overhead and payroll; any excess funds would be applied to reducing subscription prices.

• Provide equitable access to low- and moderate-income households, eliminating the digital divide.

If the study indicates that a municipal broadband utility could achieve these objectives, a charter amendment to create such a utility might conceivably be placed on the ballot for voters to decide in November 2019.

As quoted in a June 6 Cleveland.com article by Thomas Jewell, CH Council Member Michael Ungar said municipal broadband fits “right smack-dab in with our strategic plan,” because it would attract new residents, businesses and professionals to the city. We think foreclosure bond legislation, which preserves neighborhoods, supports the city’s master plan as well. One proposal is aspirational and future-oriented, the other would protect our existing assets. Both exemplify democratic ideals of equity and opportunity that Cleveland Heights citizens have long held dear.

Carla Rautenberg is an activist and a 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.
Educators speak with one voice

Susie Kaiser

No one likes a whiner. Complainers who decry how hard, unfair or useless it is, come across as powerless, not as effective change agents.

Superintendent Talisa Dixon of the Cleveland Heights-University Heights schools participates in a monthly meeting with superintendents from Cleveland and 15 inner-ring suburban districts. Because they serve our most vulnerable students, these districts are the most vulnerable to the state legislature’s obsession with basing high-stakes decisions on test scores. Because tests are predictors of income rather than school quality, these districts and their students are punished.

One glaring example was Ohio House Bill 70, which included a punitive provision giving state officials authority to take over school districts. Six variables—graduation rates and five performance measures based on test scores—are used to determine if a district is in “academic distress.” If test scores don’t improve after three years, governance responsibilities are taken from local elected boards and their superintendents. The assumption is that those leaders are slackers and the solution is to have an appointed outsider lead.

Youngstown and Lorain have already been under state control, and the outcomes have been disastrous. Three Cuyahoga County districts are next in line: East Cleveland, Maple Heights and Warrensville Heights. That’s just the local count. The takeover threat is spreading across the state like the plague.

Eight mid-sized districts facing a state takeover have joined together to propose an alternative, as have local leaders including Dixon. Earlier this year, after three vulnerable inner-ring districts led the charge to help, their peers joined in. “We didn’t want to just whine about it,” said Dixon.

They established a website, www.publiceducationmatters.org, and met with legislators to explain their views on the implications of the House Bill 70 provision. The tests used to grade districts have changed three times in the last four years, making the already questionable approach more unfair.

“We need the Ohio Department of Education to understand what it does to communities,” said Dixon. Referring to her colleagues, she went on, “We are not sitting around doing nothing. We all want the same great things for our students. We don’t want a pass, but we don’t want to be held hostage to the state tests. They are holding us back.”

The state report card gets in the way of focusing on goals related to quality education. Tests do not capture quality, nor do they account for the reality that children have many needs. School districts are committed to addressing those needs, but they can’t do it alone.

In May, state Reps. Kent Smith and Teresa Fedor proposed a three-year moratorium on takeovers. Smith also introduced an amendment to Senate Bill 216 that would do the same thing, and four Republicans on the education committee sided with him. Rather than take a vote, the chair adjourned the meeting. There is both support for change and powerful opposition to change.

For too long, educators have been left out of state policymaking. The reality of everyday life in schools seems to be irrelevant to those who have lost sight of the cornerstone role public education plays in our communities and our democracy. None of it is easily boiled down to a test score. Punishment does not create quality, and neither does taking governance of local schools away from local community leaders.

While educators have not been included, they have not really inserted themselves into the policymaking arena, but that is changing.

“There is power in speaking with one voice,” observed Dixon. She is pleased that, through the inner-ring group, they have come together to address a policy that is a very real threat to several members and to districts across the state. “They are standing up for one another.”

The takeover option is bad for public education. It is bad for communities and children. It doesn’t work. It reveals a central flaw in the state report card and the entire accountability system that makes some districts more fragile so that the children they serve. Judgment does not reduce student vulnerability or improve outcomes.

It is important that districts that are not vulnerable to state takeover side with those that are. Bad policy is bad policy. Voices are important, and the more voices that unite and speak up, the more likely we are to have policies that serve the common good.

Susie Kaiser 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 honors Stinson

Kim Sergio Inglis

Walter Stinson, pictured here with his wife, Sara, celebrated his 90th birthday at the June 18 University Heights City Council meeting. UH City Council honored Stinson, who has been an employee with the city for more than 40 years, with a resolution recognizing his birthday and his many years of dedication to the city and its residents.

University Heights honors Stinson

Kim Sergio Inglis

This summer, in addition to its annual free concert series, the city of University Heights is introducing new free events.

On Tuesday evenings through Aug. 15, 6:30–7:30 p.m., the city will host free yoga in Community Park, at 2301 Fenwick Road (off of Silsby Road).

On Wednesday, July 11, at 9 p.m., UH will host Summer Movie Night featuring a showing of “Moana” on a 25-foot inflatable screen in Community Park.

Prior to the movie, at 7:45 p.m., Dr. U R Awesome will present a bubble show.

Viewers should plan to bring their own blankets, lawn chairs and snacks.

University Heights’ Summer Concert Series, which kicked off in June, continues on Thursday evenings at 7 p.m., though Aug. 16.

Performances take place in John Carroll University’s Hamlin Quad, and audience members are invited to bring their own blankets and chairs, and partake of food offered by food truck vendors.

The July concert lineup is below. [Note that an * indicates that the evening also features an ice-cream social.]

• July 5: J Blues Band
• July 12: Lost State of Franklin *
• July 19: Blue Lunch Big Sound Blues
• July 26: University Heights Symphonic Band *

Kim Sergio Inglis is editor-in-chief of the Heights Observer.

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Heights Observer July 1, 2018

www.heightsobserver.org
University Heights City Council Meeting highlights

MAY 22, 2018
Present were Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan, Vice Mayor Susan Parmeele, and council members Pamela Cameron, Phil Erdel, John Rach, Steven Sims, Michele Weiss and Mark Wiseman. Also present were Luke McConville, law director, Michael Frederick, interim finance director, and Kelly Thomas, clerk of council. The meeting was held from 7 to 8:40 p.m.

Home improvements in the city
Mayor Brennan reported that the city is reviewing sketches of ideas for a new parklet on Silsby Road, and that the Heritage Homes program (www.hec-homeprogram.org) is still available for interested residents. He also reported that some 300 lots have been cited by the city for lawn violations. The city will now those lots (for a fee) unless the property owners can mow the grass before the city’s new regulations.

Rental permits
Council approved revisions to the city ordinances (Ordinance 2018-28) regarding rental of one- and two-family dwelling units, by increasing the frequency of inspections to annually instead of biannually. In order to cover the cost of the increased number of inspectors, fees will be doubled. Homes inspected last year will be inspected next year, as well as homes to be inspected this year. Homes occupied by a single family and in which no rent is being paid will be exempted from this policy. Councilman Sims raised the concern that the fine for violating the inspection requirement is not limited. Councilman Wiseman noted that the language is standard for this type of ordinance but suggested it could be capped at, for example, three times the fee. Law Director McConville will check with the prosecutor about the rate and said it can be amended later.

Paving contract approval
Council accepted a bid from Ronyak Paving to complete the 2018 street improvement project at a cost not to exceed $722,276. The next lowest bid was $727,000. Ronyak had the contracts for 2016 and 2017 and has done good work. The work is to be completed within 60 days of starting. Residents can check the city’s website for a list of streets receiving improvement.

Sibley home ready for sale
A home on Sibley Road that had been declared a nuisance property has been fully refurbished and is now ready for sale. Councilman Wiseman noted that not all nuisance homes need to be torn down—some can be saved. LWV Observer: Wendy S. Deuring.

MetroHealth

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Cleveland Heights City Council
Meeting highlights

MAY 22, 2018
Council members present were Mayor Carol Roe, Vice Mayor Melissa Yasmin, Mary Dunbar, Khalil Saren, Jason Stein, Cheryl L. Stephens and Michael N. Ungar.

Vice mayor Y asinow, Mary Dunbar, Kahlil Council members present were Vice mayor Y asinow, Mary Dunbar, Kahlil

Mayor’s report
Mayor Roe read a letter from the family of Miriam Johnson in which the family expressed its appreciation for the tireless work of Cleveland Heights Police Department officers and detectives in their efforts to find Miriam, solve her murder, and arrest those at fault. They said they felt the police all took their concerns seriously, kept them informed, and gave them comfort and assurance that justice would be done.

Charter Review Commission
Mayor’s report

Cheryl L. Stephens and Michael N. Ungar.

The city of Cleveland Heights is accepting applications for the Program Year 45 (2018) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), and for a new grant: the 2018 Strategic Impact Opportunity (SIO). Nonprofit organizations that serve low- and moderate-income residents, or those non-profits involved in the elimination of “slum and blight conditions” within the city, are encouraged to apply.

The SIO is a special funding opportunity that targets neighborhoods along the Noble Road Corridor, bordered by Mayfield Road, Ivydale Road, and Euclid Heights Boulevard to the north, South Taylor Road to the east, Cedar Road to the south, and Lee Road to the west. All CDBG-eligible activities that take place in those target areas can be considered eligible for funding.

Both grants share the same application process, application form and timetable for review; however, funds awarded under the SIO will be available to fund in 2018.

Applicants can indicate that they are seeking SIO funds by selecting the option in the second question of the pre-application. The pre-application must be submitted and approved before applicants may work on the main application. The open period for accepting applications will run from 12 a.m., June 6, to 11:59 p.m., July 16.

Additional information, including a link to the application portal, can be found at www.clevelandheights.com/cdbg.

Brian Iorio is a development officer in the Office of Planning & Development for the city of Cleveland Heights. He also serves as the CDBG coordinator.
North Coventry block party is Aug. 4

Courtney Arbogast

On Aug. 4, FutureHeights, in partnership with the city of Cleveland Heights and several community groups, will host a back-to-school block party in the North Coventry neighborhood. The event will celebrate the beginning of a new school year with food, music and other activities. The party will take place from noon to 3 p.m. on Avondale Avenue, a portion of which the city will close for the event.

During the party, Artful Cleveland will outline a community art piece that party attendees can help bring to life. Ensemble Theatre will facilitate theater games. Lake Erie Ink will help community members create a “story quilt” by piecing together short responses to a prompt. Children will be able to play in the bounce house provided by Amazing Bouncers Ohio. The Cleveland Heights Fire Department will visit, giving everyone the opportunity to meet local firefighters and explore a fire truck.

If you live in the North Coventry neighborhood and are interested in helping with the event, contact Courtney Arbogast at the FutureHeights office, 216-320-1423 or cxa194@case.edu.

Courtney Arbogast is an Americorps VISTA summer associate at FutureHeights.

Forum will promote ‘front porch culture’

Sruti Basu

FutureHeights invites residents and others to a free public forum, “Place-making: How to Create a Front Porch Culture,” on Tuesday, July 17, 7–8:30 p.m., at the BottleHouse Brewing Company, 2050 Lee Road.

The forum will consider: In what creative and non-traditional ways are neighbors connecting and building resilience? How can the community build on its assets, including its diversity and civic-mindedness, to make it a more desirable place to live?

Speakers will tell stories of building community, or “front porch culture,” in unlikely places, as well as on actual front porches. The event will provide participants with opportunities to listen and learn, discuss ideas and find inspiration.

Topics will include the role of the built environment in building community, and the usefulness of sometimes challenging the prevailing narrative about community life in the Heights.

Register for this free event at https://frontporchforum.eventbrite.com. For more information, visit www.futureheights.org, call 216-320-1423 or e-mail sbasu@futureheights.org.

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

Cleveland for 12 years, advocating for the needs of the poor and underserved, and has held an annual pet blessing service at the church every fall.

For one week each summer, under King's leadership, Hope Lutheran Church hosted a weeklong Christian day camp, free of charge, for neighborhood children—a camp that Peace Lutheran will continue to host.

King has lived in Cleveland Heights since 1985, in the Bucking-ham Condominiums at the corner of Fairmount and Euclid Heights boulevards. He plans to remain there following his retirement, “unless the proposed ‘Top of the Hill’ project botches things up,” he said with a smile.

King’s last Sunday serving as pastor will be July 29. He will preach at the 10 a.m. worship service at Peace Lutheran Church. Together, he and Bishop Abraham Allende, of the Northeastern Ohio Synod of the ELCA, will lead the worship service. A celebration in King’s honor will follow the service, and community is invited to attend.

Jessica Shields is co-pastor at Peace Lutheran Church. She has lived in Cleveland Heights since moving to this region in 2007.

DON KING continued from page 1

Ink will help community members create a “story quilt” by piecing together short responses to a prompt.

Children will be able to play in the bounce house provided by Amazing Bouncers Ohio. The Cleveland Heights Fire Department will visit, giving everyone the opportunity to meet local firefighters and explore a fire truck.

If you live in the North Coventry neighborhood and are interested in helping with the event, contact Courtney Arbogast at the FutureHeights office, 216-320-1423 or cxa194@case.edu.

Courtney Arbogast is an Americorps VISTA summer associate at FutureHeights.

Forum will promote ‘front porch culture’

Sruti Basu

FutureHeights invites residents and others to a free public forum, “Place-making: How to Create a Front Porch Culture,” on Tuesday, July 17, 7–8:30 p.m., at the BottleHouse Brewing Company, 2050 Lee Road.

The forum will consider: In what creative and non-traditional ways are neighbors connecting and building resilience? How can the community build on its assets, including its diversity and civic-mindedness, to make it a more desirable place to live?

Speakers will tell stories of building community, or “front porch culture,” in unlikely places, as well as on actual front porches. The event will provide participants with opportunities to listen and learn, discuss ideas and find inspiration.

Topics will include the role of the built environment in building community, and the usefulness of sometimes challenging the prevailing narrative about community life in the Heights.

Register for this free event at https://frontporchforum.eventbrite.com. For more information, visit www.futureheights.org, call 216-320-1423 or e-mail sbasu@futureheights.org.

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Jessica Shields is co-pastor at Peace Lutheran Church. She has lived in Cleveland Heights since moving to this region in 2007.
Heights Bicycle Coalition

Looking for a safe and fun way to get out and enjoy the summer while also getting some exercise? The Heights Bicycle Coalition (HBC) is sponsoring free and fun rides all summer long for riders of all ages and experience levels.

On Saturday, July 14, join HBC for “Lenny’s Tour de Cleveland Heights.” Meet at the DeLisle Educational Center, at 4898 Superior Road in Cleveland Heights, at 10 a.m. for a ride around town, led by Lenny Horowitz. The 11-mile scenic ride will travel through Cain, Cumberland and Forest Hill parks, through the Cedar Fairmount district, and then follow the North Park Boulevard bike lane to Hathaway Brown School before heading back to DeLisle. Riders are eligible to receive a 50 percent discount on a Cumberland Pool one-day swim pass after the ride.

A “Family Playground Ride” takes place on Sunday, July 22, 1-3 p.m., starting at Coventry F.E.A.C. Park (843 Washington Blvd.). Greg Jolivet will lead this family bike ride on side streets and bike paths to the playground at Horseshoe Lake Park. The ride will take a slow, family-friendly pace. Families then can enjoy the playground and other facilities at Horseshoe Lake, along with popsicles provided by HBC. The ride is approximately 5.7 miles and slightly uphill.

On Sunday, Aug. 5, the “Explore University Heights by Bike” ride will depart University Heights Community Park (2531 Fenwick Road, off Sibby Road) at 1 p.m. Led by Sarah O’Keefe, this is a great ride for biking families and family-friendly bicyclists. Explore the paths and sidewalks of the Fenwick Road neighborhood and nearby parks. The ride will be conducted at a slow and steady pace on residential roads and sidewalks, ending at the Community Park playground at approximately 2:30 p.m., with an ice cream treat for riders.

Everyone is welcome to join these rides, and reservations are not necessary. For all HBC rides, parents must accompany children under 16. Children riding on their own must be confident riding on two-wheeled bikes with no training wheels. Children on or in trail-a-bikes, bike trailers, cargo bikes and bikes with child seats are welcome. HBC encourages everyone to consider pedaling instead of driving to summer events. Getting there by bike is healthy, economical and a stress reliever that avoids the hassle of parking and traffic congestion.

Events that are “better by bike” include University Circle events, such as Wade Oval Wednesdays, museums and educational institutions, and the upcoming GardenWalk Cleveland events in Little Italy, North Collinwood and Slavic Village on Sunday, July 8.

For a current list of HBC-sponsored activities and additional Northeast Ohio bike-related events, check out the calendar on HBC’s website, www.bikesintheheights.org.

High School Foundation

The CRC’s next meeting will be held on Thursday, July 5, 7 p.m. at Cleveland Heights City Hall.

Robert Brown is a city planner with more than 40 years of experience, including nine years as Cleveland’s city planning director. A resident of Cleveland Heights for 40-plus years, Brown serves on the board of FutureHeights.
July 9 coffee explains historic preservation tax credit programs

Emily Benson

In a July 9 event open to the public, Heritage Ohio and the city of Cleveland Heights invite property owners and developers to learn how to help finance the rehabilitation of older commercial and mixed-use buildings using historic preservation tax credits.

Over coffee and doughnuts, representatives from Ohio’s Development Services Agency and the State Historic Preservation Office will introduce attendees to state of Ohio and federal tax credit programs, and explain how they can be used to make redevelopment projects more affordable.

The free event will take place at the Lee Road Branch of Heights Libraries, at 2345 Lee Road, on Monday July 9, 4:30-5:30 p.m. Cleveland Heights’ Daylight Donuts will provide the doughnuts and coffee.

“In one quick hour, we can show you how it works and introduce you to the people who manage the program,” said Joyce Barrett, director of Heritage Ohio.

Presenting at the event will be Nathan Bevil, a reviewer of the integrity of proposed work with the State Historic Preservation Office; Lisa Brownell, an Ohio Development Services Office manager who assists applicants; and Barb Powers, who runs the National Register process for Ohio, which is the qualifying designation needed to use certain historic tax credits.

As Ohio’s official historic preservation and Main Street organization, Heritage Ohio fosters economic development and sustainability through the preservation of historic buildings, revitalization of downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts, and promotion of cultural tourism.

For more information, visit www.heritageohio.org or call Brian Anderson at the Cleveland Heights Economic Development Department office, at 216-291-2657.

Emily Benson is a summer intern at FutureHeights and incoming sophomore at Loyola University Chicago.

Leadership program seeks applicants

Sandra Klok

In 2006, the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Foundation, along with then-Cleveland Mayor Michael White, established a leadership training program for engaged neighborhood leaders. The Neighborhood Leadership Development Program (NLDP) is a free, 16-session community engagement training program for residents of Cleveland and its inner-ring suburbs who are working on projects within Cleveland and who are determined to make a positive impact on their communities.

Twenty committed individuals are chosen for the program each year. NLDP participants and graduates are diverse and have many interests. They are working on a variety of issues to improve life in their communities.

Sharon Core, a University Heights resident, was a participant this past year. Core, an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), sees her life’s work as one of making connections with God, with one another and with community.

During 25 years of parish ministry, her leadership has been centered on making those connections and creating opportunities for people to explore their own gifts and callings.

One of her goals is to find ways the Presbyterian can develop a greater understanding of what its churches are doing and what they are facing in their daily work.

Core sees connection to the community as important for her church and wants to find ways to be more supportive and encouraging and to rethink strategies to strengthen community fabric.

NLDP enabled her to gain skills that will help her in her work. Core discovered ways that she could lead and work with others differently. It gave her an understanding of her strengths and the areas in which she needed to be more intentional.

Every NLDP participant has ongoing access to the services of a program coach. NLDP coaches give advice and support tailored to the needs of the participants.

The 16 sessions are held on Saturdays at Trinity Commons, 2330 Euclid Ave. The deadline for applications is Aug. 3.

For additional information and to view the curriculum and online application, visit www.nldpelev.com, or call 216-776-6167.

Sandra Klok, 23 year Heights resident, is program administrator for the Neighborhood Leadership Development Program.
Eagle Scout paints U.S. map at Noble Elementary

Jared, Dylan and Nicolas Polley.

Students at Noble Elementary School can walk along the California coastline during recess. They can run from Maine to Washington State, and hop from the islands of Hawaii all the way to Alaska—all thanks to Heights High graduate and Noble alumnus Dylan Polley, who painted a map of the United States on the Noble playground for his Eagle Scout project this spring.

Working over the course of several days in April, Polley organized a team of family and friends to help with the project, which intended to show his leadership skills.

Eagle Scout is the highest rank of scouting, with only 6 percent of those involved in Boy Scouts ever achieving the honor. The final project requires a scout to “plan, develop and give leadership to others in a service project helpful to any religious institution, any school or your community,” according to the Boy Scouts of America website.

Polley was partly inspired to paint the map by his youngest brother, Nicolas, who just finished first grade at Noble. “This is my community, and I know Principal Coleman from when I went here,” said Polley. “Plus, I want these kids to be able to learn the states without just sitting behind a desk. Now they can run across the country on a nice day.”

Finding a nice day to complete his project proved a bit of a challenge for Polley and his team. Because he had to finish before his 18th birthday in early May, and because spring was cold and wet, he had only three days to actually work. He rounded up family and friends, including his mother, Adele, and brother, Jared, who recently finished his sophomore year at Heights High and who will work toward his own Eagle Scout status next year.

“Between baseball season, finals, prom and graduation, I’m honestly just glad I got it done,” said Polley, who plans to study computer science at Kent State University in the fall. He received some donated materials from Home Depot and relied on contributions for the rest of his purchases, which included 37 giant stencils that had to be carefully placed side by side on the playground. The final product is bright and colorful and can’t be missed.

“It was like a trip down Memory Lane to come back here,” Polley said. “I walked in the building and saw Noble Knights painted on the wall, which used to be our mascot before we all became Tigers.”

Polley has participated in Boy Scouts for years, working his way up through the ranks in Troop 585. "I was cold and wet, he had only three days to actually work. He rounded up family and friends, including his mother, Adele, and brother, Jared, who recently finished his sophomore year at Heights High and who will work toward his own Eagle Scout status next year.

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Polley has participated in Boy Scouts for years, working his way up through the ranks in Troop 585. “I was amazed at his determination to do this for Noble school. I see the kids and parents loving it. And I see how proud Dylan is whenever we visit [the map] or speak about it.”

Nicolas is proud, too. “I think it’s amazing that my brother did this,” he said, pointing out the map to his classmates. While the 7-year-old struggled to identify specific states, he knew exactly who to thank for leaving such a colorful and lasting mark on his school playground.

Kristy 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.

Heights class of 2008 invites all alumni to reunion

Jazmyn Blockson

The Cleveland Heights High School Class of 2008 will celebrate its 10-year reunion this summer, and invites all Heights High alumni to partake in the free event—especially those who attended the school between 2004 and 2008.

The celebration will be held at Caledonia Park (956 Ravine Drive) on Saturday, July 21, from noon to 8 p.m. There will be food trucks, games, music and other entertainment, and the entire family is welcome.

While the event is free, donations are requested. Funds raised will support the Brandon James Scholarship Foundation at Heights High.

To RSVP and donate to the scholarship fund, go to chhs08classreunion@gmail.com. Questions and comments should be e-mailed to chhs08classreunion@gmail.com.

Jazmyn Blockson is a black young professional who has lived in the Noble neighborhood for 15 years and worked in Cleveland for three years.

Judson – Bringing Community to Life

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Cleveland Heights University Heights Board of Education

Meeting highlights

MAY 15, 2018

Board President Jim Posch, Vice President Jodi Suroini, and board members Dan Heintz and Malia Lewis were present. Beverly Wright was absent. Superintendent Talisa Dixon and Treasurer Scott Gainer were also present. After an executive session at 6 p.m., to meet with the board’s legal counsel, a reception was held to honor district retirees. The board reconvened in open session at 7 p.m. and adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

Public comments

Board President Posch opened the program, noting the district’s positive performance on the APR and the importance of maintaining a message of growth and positive transformation. Posch thanked the district’s staff and students for their performance.

Administrative staff increases

Board Member Heintz said the community has expressed some concern about the growth of the administrative staff. The middle school appointed a new administrator to address discipline concerns. Other administrative appointments may be considered for a middle school Options program, similar to the high school program, and for the Community in Schools program.

Community in Schools

Community in Schools (CIS) is a national program that began in the 1970s and aims to build relationships so that students stay in school, and succeed in school and after graduation. It is founded on the idea of bringing community resources into public schools to partner with teachers and staff to help overcome identified challenges that students face at school and home. The district plans to implement the CIS program in 2019.

The Cleveland Heights-University Heights CIS task force is currently studying why students drop out, and is identifying students’ physical and mental health needs. The task force is exploring a number of options, including whether the district should have a community center with wrap-around services, and which community partners should provide services. The CIS program would be funded by the district’s strategic plan goals, which include a four-year graduation rate of at least 90 percent, and college and career readiness in graduates; equity, empowerment, and opportunities for all students and parents; and community engagement.

Nationally, schools that use CIS have seen a decrease in grade retention and increases in graduation, attendance, grade point averages, and math and reading achievement.

Middle schools renovation update

PAC Regency (the owner’s representative) provided updates on middle school facilities renovation costs and presented slides showing progress. Hard costs include construction; soft costs are items such as professional fees, insurance, and furniture. Errors or omissions, owner requests, value engineering, conditions that differ from those anticipated, field resolutions, and design questions will necessitate change orders. Funding for these changes will come from the guaranteed maximum price, buy-out savings and permanent improvement funds. The cost summary is $11 million for Roxboro Middle School, and $7 million for Monticello Middle School, including change orders.

Cathen Cavanaugh is the communications administrator for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District.

Schools raise funds for heart health

Cathen Cavanaugh

The CH-UH City School District raised nearly $20,000 for the American Heart Association (AHA) this past school year, through various “Red Out” events. The AHA uses money raised through such campaigns to fund cardiovascular research, preventative education, quality improvement initiatives in hospitals, and advocacy work in Ohio.

Several CH-UH elementary schools participated in Jump Rope for Heart and Hoops for Heart fundraisers, where students jump rope and play basketball at school while soliciting donations from friends, family and the community.

Through these programs, students learn the importance of physical activity, proper nutrition and saying no to smoking to maintain a healthy heart.

Board of Education (BOE) staff celebrated Red Out Day on each Friday in February, purchasing T-shirts for the occasion through the AHA. Talisa Dixon, CH-UH schools superintendent, has served on the local AHA board of directors since 2016.

In what has become an annual event, the Cleveland Heights-University Elementary School celebrated this year’s fund-raising success with jump-roping demonstrations, cheering, and pie-in-the-face for the staff. The school raised $51,453.20 for the AHA this year, placing fourth out of 114 schools in the region comprising Lake, Geauga, Ashtabula and Medina counties, and half of Cuyahoga County, and placing 44th out of more than 1,200 participating schools in Ohio.

This year’s fund-raising totals by school and office were: Roxboro Elementary, $51,453.20; Gearity Professional Development, $3,457.83; Noble Elementary, $3,642.50; Fairfax Elementary, $864; Oxford Elementary, $501; BOE office, $650; Heights High, $500; Canterbury Elementary, $450; Boulevard Elementary, $280.

Cathen Cavanaugh is the communications administrator for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District.

CHHS is LEED Gold certified

Scott Wortman

The newly renovated Cleveland Heights High School building has earned LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Gold certification—a globally recognized symbol of sustainability achievement. LEED provides a framework to create healthy, highly efficient and cost-saving green buildings.

Heights High earned 65 points, out of a possible 110, to achieve the second-highest level of certification. (Platinum is the highest level, following by Gold, Silver, and Certified.)

Sustainability was a priority for the CH-UH community in the Heights High renovation project.

A key sustainability feature is the school’s hybrid geothermal system, which enabled the district to meet both sustainability and financial goals. Geothermal systems leverage the earth’s natural properties in order to heat and cool buildings. By using a hybrid system, the school can achieve approximately 90 percent of the energy savings of a full geothermal system, for approximately 60 percent of the cost.

The school’s sustainability extends beyond the geothermal system:

• The natatorium, waste heat from the pool’s HVAC unit, rather than being exhausted outside, is used to heat the pool water.

• The design incorporates interior and exterior LED lighting.

• The project team improved the envelope, provided triple-pane operable windows in classrooms, and incorporated sawtooth skylights into center science classrooms.

Heights High is projected to have annual energy consumption savings of 38 percent in total energy consumption savings, 42 percent in interior lighting energy, and 66 percent in exterior lighting energy.

To see the building’s complete LEED scorecard, visit www.ugk.org/projects/heights-high-voic.

Scott Wortman is the supervisor of communications for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District.
Students make and donate wigs to cancer patients

Scott Wortman

Students in Heights High’s cosmetology program recently donated to local cancer patients 38 wigs that they handcrafted this spring. Since 2016, the students have made and donated a total of 82 wigs.

“The school also offers three, two or four installments. In addition to a $75 registration fee, the school added the new afternoon class to accommodate more families. As those classes are currently full, the school added the new afternoon class to accommodate more families.

“We’re able to help more than just one person. The more wigs we make, the better,” said junior Serenity Jackson.

“They’re doing it on their own,” said Pollard. “They’re giving back to society. They’re actually taking from scratch, making a wig and making a difference in life.”

The students, who use human hair to create a higher-quality wig, must learn to sew and style the wigs they create. Pollard has donated much of the funds needed to purchase the materials to make these wigs over the past three years. She’s not ready to stop anytime soon, and has encouraged other cosmetology and barbering programs around the state to make and donate wigs of their own.

To make a contribution to the cosmetology wig program, contact the Heights Schools Foundation at info@heightsalumni.org or 216-320-2203.

The cosmetology program comprises juniors and seniors in the Heights Career Tech Consortium, which also includes Bedford, Maple Heights, Shaker Heights and Warrensville Heights high schools.

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

Fairmount preschool adds afternoon class

Jessica Schantz

Fairmount Cooperative Preschool (FCP), located at 2157 Fairmount Blvd. in Cleveland Heights, is currently enrolling children for its new, mixed-age preschool class. The class will meet Tuesday through Friday afternoons, 12:15–2:45 p.m., early September through mid-May, and is for children ages 3–5.

FCP, which has operated out of Fairmount Presbyterian Church for 46 years, employs a play-based curriculum bolstered by weekly enrichment activities, including a movements class and visits from local librarians and museums. The school’s experienced educators facilitate a warm, engaging environment meant to meet the social and emotional needs of preschool-aged children.

In addition to a $75 registration fee, the cost of the class is $1,850 for the school year. Tuition is payable in one, two or four installments.

The school also offers three morning classes for children ages 2 to 5. As those classes are currently full, the school added the new afternoon class to accommodate more families.

To arrange a tour, enroll a child in the afternoon class, or be placed on the waiting list for one of the morning classes, call 216-202-5430, or e-mail membershipfccns@gmail.com.

For more information about the preschool’s history and education philosophy, visit www.fairmountcoop.org or www.facebook.com/fairmountcoop.

Jessica Schantz is the e-news manager at the Heights Observer and a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights.

Students in the cosmetology program at Heights High visited the University Hospitals Seidman Cancer Center in May to donate their hand-crafted wigs.

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Thank you for your continued support and business. We’re honored to serve this community for 25 years. My staff and I look forward to many more with you.

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Heights Observer July 1, 2018

13410 Cedar Rd.

Cleveland Heights resident for over 35 years

SCOTT HAIGH

Cleveland Heights resident for over 35 years

Scott was always available, responsive and taught in all aspects of the buying and selling process. He is intelligent, creative and enjoys educating his clients in all aspects of the buying and selling process. I highly recommend him! You can be sure that he will hit all the right notes with you!

Scott is kind, professional, efficient and honest. He has become a valuable resource and friend.

Scott has been a great help to me in my efforts to improve our home and has been instrumental in the planning and construction of our new home. He has always been there for me, ready to answer any questions or concerns I may have. I highly recommend him to anyone looking for a professional who will go the extra mile to ensure their clients are happy with the end result.

www.scotthaigh.howardhanna.com • scotthaigh@howardhanna.com

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What’s going on at your library?

Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library Board Meeting highlights

MAY 21, 2018

Present were Library Board President Abby Botnick, Vice President Chris Mantek, and board members Vikas Turakhia and Dana Fluhlen. Absent were James Roosa, Max Gehrke and Suzanne Moskowitz.

Financial report

A question was raised about how library finances were impacted with the elimination of library fines. It was reported that the interest from long-term investments is more than enough to make up the difference for revenue (previously) generated from fines. The financial report will be provided at the June board meeting.

Library offers summer lunches

In response to the closing of the Heights Road Branch, the library has responded quickly to a community need. The library will work with the Greater Cleveland Food Bank to provide summer lunches for children, from June 4 to Aug. 10, at the Lee Road Branch. Lunches will be served from 1 to 2 p.m.

Library levies pass

Two Cuyahoga County library levies were passed. The Shaker Heights Public Library levies passed. The Shaker levy vote was very close, and won with 52 percent of voters supporting it.

Coventry P.E.A.C.E. Campus clean-up day

Coventry P.E.A.C.E. Campus united to present tours, playground for more than 20 years. The Coventry Village Library and P.E.A.C.E. Campus members will share plans for the Coventry building and P.E.A.C.E. park. Questions and suggestions will be welcome at the discussion.

Lee Road Library

Tuesday, July 18, 7–8:30 p.m.

Explore the Globe, Expand Your World.

Let “Ambassador” Gerry Polizzi acquaint you with Road Scholar, a not-for-profit organization that offers “learning, not touring, adventures.” From sedentary to challenging, the programs span everything from theater to hiking.

University Heights Library

Tuesday, July 17, 2–3 p.m.

CMA presents: Ancient Egypt

Mummies, pyramids and King “Tut” have fascinated students of all ages. CMA will reveal the wonders of ancient objects and allow students in grades K-5 to handle and examine works of art that were once covered in the ancient sands of the Egyptian desert. Registration begins July 3.

City of University Heights Fire Department Safety Program

This information session about home and personal safety will be conducted by UH Fire Department staff.

Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library

13866 Cedar Road, 216-321-4700

Lee Road Library

2345 Lee Road, 216-932-3600

Noble Neighborhood Library

2800 Noble Road, 216-291-7665

Monday, July 16, 1–3 p.m.

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Coventry Village Library

1925 Coventry Road, 216-321-3400

Tuesday, July 17, 2–3 p.m.

Coventry Conversation: P.E.A.C.E. Campus

Coventry P.E.A.C.E. Campus clean-up day

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Heights Libraries provides passport processing services

Circulation Assistant Dan Krowczewski gets ready to process a passport application at the Lee Road Branch of Heights Libraries.

Sheryl Banks

Heights Libraries’ summer reading theme is all about travel, encouraging customers of all ages to see the world through books and reading. When the summer reading program kicked off in early June, the library was also quietly launching another travel-related service: passport application processing.

The Lee Road Branch, at 2345 Lee Road, is now an official passport acceptance facility for the U.S. Department of State, and is staffed by the library’s circulation staff members, who underwent extensive training throughout the spring to learn to perform their new duties.

“Passport application services are a perfect fit for our library,” said Circulation Manager Ty Emerson. “Our circulation staff are already well versed in detailed customer service transactions, and we’re open for longer hours than the post office, so this is just another way we can help our community.”

Emerson points out that the library is processing applications, not evaluating applications and issuing passports—that is the sole responsibility of the U.S. Department of State. Passport services are available Monday through Saturday, by appointment only. Customers must call 216-932-3600 to make an appointment, and all appointments must be made at least 24 hours in advance.

Each application appointment takes approximately 30–60 minutes. Additional time may be needed for complex cases involving citizenship, guardianship, or last-minute travel. Routine application processing normally takes four to six weeks, but could take up to eight weeks. Expedited service (two to three weeks) is available for an additional fee.

For more information about passport fees and forms, and other details, visit www.heightslibrary.org or call 216-932-3600.

Sheryl Banks is the communications manager for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library System.

FFHL seeks honor roll nominees

Abby Botnick

The Fund for the Future of Heights Libraries (FFHL) is currently seeking nominations for its Honor Roll.

This lifetime achievement award recognizes those who have made a sustained, outstanding contribution to the Cleveland Heights-University Heights community by promoting literacy or by educating people about the importance of education.

Nominations will be accepted through Friday, Aug. 17, and should be e-mailed to Sue Pardee at suan.pardee@gmail.com. Each nomination must include the name of and contact information for both the nominee and the nominator. It must also include a description of the nominee’s relevant background and a statement as to why he or she should be chosen. Honorees will be officially inducted at a banquet in November.

Abby Botnick is serving her seventh year as a trustee of the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library System, and is currently board president. She is also the board’s liaison to the FFHL.

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Heights Observer July 1, 2018 www.heightsobserver.org
Senior Happenings, sponsored by the city of University Heights, are open to all senior citizens. Events take place on Thursdays at 2 p.m. at the University Heights Library. To receive the monthly schedule by e-mail, call 216-932-7800, ext. 205, or send an e-mail to info@universityheights.com.

July 5: Robert Perko, interim chief of the University Heights Fire Department, will talk about the department’s work in the community, to assure personal and family safety.

July 12: Dustin Rogers, interim chief of the University Heights Police Department, will discuss the work of the police department, and measures it takes to keep the community safe.

July 19: Tom Strong, a medical lecturer recommended by audiences at the Jennings Center and Myers Apartments, will speak on the topics of “Understanding Your Medications” and “Receiving the Best Doctor Care.”

July 26: Chris Urban, programs manager for Greater Cleveland Civic Connection, will discuss the work being done to foster the intersection of business, government and economic growth, and the legacy of Mayor George Voinovich, who championed the vital cooperation between public and private sectors.

Amy Jenkins is supervisor at the Cleveland Heights Senior Activity Center. She can be reached at 216-691-7379 or by e-mail at ajenkins@clvhts.com.
Home-design firm opens showroom on Taylor

Shari Nacson

“We chose to be here because we love Cleveland Heights. It’s the perfect microcosm,” explained Alexander Kolbe, co-founder of evoDOMUS, the contemporary design firm that has established roots on South Taylor Road. Kolbe and his wife, Michelle, met while designing high-end pre-fabricated homes in Berlin. After some years spent doing the same in England, the couple decided to move to Ohio, where Michelle had spent her childhood. Having visited several times a year while living abroad, the couple knew that this was their favorite corner of the United States. Kolbe cited “the friendliness of the people, the laid-back nature, the picturesque neighborhoods, and the vibrant merchant districts” as part of the Heights’ charm.

With kids at Ruffing and a century home a mile away, the former site of Taylor Road Discount store was an ideal home for evoDOMUS when the firm outgrew its office on Cleveland’s West Side. We had astounding support from the city,” said Kolbe, adding that he would encourage other business owners to choose Cleveland Heights.

The firm loves that passersby have been intrigued by the renovation of the retail space, which now serves as an exemplar of the sleek beauty that sustainable, energy-efficient building supplies can create. “We always built and designed pre-fab, energy-efficient homes,” explained Kolbe, citing the reliability of materials created in a controlled environment with reliable team members—key strategies for custom building.

All of the offered materials have been curated by evoDOMUS, with an emphasis on durability, sustainability and beauty. This “high-end approach to energy efficiency” translates to features such as super-insulated walls to reduce heating costs, triple-glazed German windows, and heat pump fueling technology.

The irony of a custom-builder setting up shop in Cleveland Heights—a city comprised predominantly of century homes—is not lost on Kolbe. Most evoDOMUS customers are not local—they are homeowners who are looking to build from scratch their dream homes; they want something crisp and sustainable. Kolbe said that most customers have done extensive research before finding evoDOMUS, noting, “The people we build for are seeking exactly this.”

The Kolbes and partner Mike Farinacci travel to work sites nationwide for construction management, but projects also require that clients come to Cleveland Heights for two days to select all of the items that will go into their homes. Because of the nature of the materials and the significance of the project, it is essential that customers choose in-person—that they touch and feel the materials directly. “It helps people enjoy the journey,” said Kolbe, sharing his affection for the process.

The two days in Greater Cleveland enables Kolbe to showcase the city he loves so much. Incorporating the beautiful drive from the airport, meals at amazing restaurants, and time at the art museum, Kolbe masterfully crafts a visit that enchants newcomers as they make their architectural dreams a reality.

Located at 2176 S. Taylor Road, evoDOMUS welcomes walk-ins. To learn more, visit www.evodomus.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.
CH’s Beard fills patient-advocacy service gap

Shari Nacson

“My real passion is helping people whose voices are too often not heard—people who are struggling with how to, or are otherwise unable to, self-advocate,” said Colleen Beard. She has spent the last several years developing a Heights-based business, CareSpotlight, which provides patient advocacy, care coordination, and visitation to aging adults and their families, as well as to individuals of all ages who are living with disabilities, illness, or serious injuries.

A board-certified patient advocate, Beard is also credentialed by Keeping Us Safe to conduct self-assessments for older drivers, which is perhaps the kindest way to help a loved one understand when it is time to retire the car keys.

Beard also offers information about driving safety and caregiving for anyone seeking supportive services for a loved one.

With a warmth that conveys her deep compassion, Beard explained that patient advocacy can include taking on responsibilities “just as a family member would do.”

Often, family members have done the first step of finding a facility for a loved one who can no longer live at home. But, sandwiched between elder care, careers, and raising their own children, family members cannot always do the day-to-day follow-up.

As a patient advocate, Beard is able to communicate with medical professionals, attend care conferences, and report back to the family. Because of her expertise, she is able to help families with the process of transferring someone from hospital to home, and linking to local businesses that offer quality in-home services.

After more than 20 years advocating for her own family members, Beard found herself lending time to friends as a way to be helpful. Realizing this was her passion, Beard transitioned her public relations expertise into individualized patient care services.

In addition to offering local hands-on support, Beard has organized CareSpotlight’s website to offer a national directory of resources in adult care. Beard is on the lookout for investors to help launch the directory in the near future.

A lifelong Cleveland Heights resident, Beard is proud to raise her own family here with her husband, who is a fellow Heights High graduate and local entrepreneur.

[CareSpotlight is offering a special summer promotion for Cleveland Heights and University Heights residents. They, along with families with a loved one who lives in the Heights and needs support, can receive a free one-hour care consultation, and/or $50 off the driving self-assessment. Contact Colleen Beard at 216-659-5519. The offer is valid through Aug 31, 2018.]

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.
McClendon is new—and youngest—CH poet laureate

Kristen McDowell

On April 1, the beginning of National Poetry Month, Christine Howey, 2016-18 Cleveland Heights poet laureate, stepped down, and Damien McClendon, the youngest poet so far to hold the post, stepped up. “Several highly accomplished and public-spirited poets applied,” said Meredith Holmes, former poet laureate and member of Heights Writes, the Heights Arts committee that chooses the poet laureate. “Damien stood out for his extraordinary commitment to poetry and for his experience of community building through poetry performance. He brings acute powers of observation to both personal and politically informed poems.”

A Youngstown native, McClendon, 26, moved to the Cleveland area when he was 13. He is a recent graduate of Kent State University, where he majored in Pan-African studies. He now lives in Cleveland and works in schools and for nonprofits doing community organizing that focuses on social justice issues. He also works with Daniel Gray-Kontar, artistic director of Twelve Literary and Performing Arts Incubator, an organization that teaches and nurtures poets, writers and performance artists of all ages.

McClendon cites Cleveland Heights as a kind of spiritual home: “Even before I moved to Cleveland, I was very familiar with the arts scene there. I remember my first time walking through Coventry Village—how expression seemed to seep from the concrete. It made me feel like I was at home I hadn’t been to before.”

Although he began writing when he was very young, McClendon didn’t expect to be a poet when he grew up. “If we went back in time and asked my 10-year-old self what I thought I’d be doing in 15 years, writing and performing poetry wouldn’t have been a single drop of rain in my brainstorm,” he said. “And now I am using words to make a living and using words to make change.”

He points to his mother, a nurse, as his original inspiration. For as long as Damien can remember, his mother wrote poems and songs about her experiences and about the people she encountered in her work. She showed him by example how the raw material of daily life can be transformed into art. “My mother took me to an open mic where she shared some of her work,” McClendon said. “Seeing her in that light inspired me.”

He continued to write in high school, but didn’t think of it as a vocation or even a hobby until he got to college, where many new possibilities opened up. He participated in an on-campus open mic, and was surprised by how strongly the audience reacted to the poem he read. “That’s when I started to know that I wanted to be involved in the craft of poetry for my whole life,” he said.

That’s when McClendon realized how poetry can connect people—how a poem that might seem to be intensely personal and particular to one person can resonate with others.

As poet laureate of Cleveland Heights, McClendon is interested in the role of poetry in social justice and healing. He will be exploring the intersection of poetry and some of Cleveland’s pressing problems, such as infant mortality and homelessness. “I want to serve life,” he said, “to be an inspiration to both kids and adults, and to poets who don’t even know they can be poets.”

McClendon appeared at the Haiku Death Match in April and presented the trophy to the 2018 Haiku Master, Cordelia Eddy. Hear McClendon and other local poets at the next Ekphrastacy event, on Thursday, July 12, 7–9 p.m., in connection with Heights Arts’ Sticks & Stones exhibition, on view through July 29, at Heights Arts Gallery, 2175 Lee Road.

Kristen McDowell is the marketing coordinator for Heights Arts.
Heights Arts presents a new exhibition in its spotlight gallery—works by its founding executive director, Peggy Spaeth. In the work on exhibit, a collection of paintings made between 1972 and 1986, Spaeth focuses on the principles of design, with particular attention to color and repetition. The paintings on display were made alongside another series of work, comprising hand-dyed and hand-sewn quilts. While making her quilts, Spaeth simultaneously experimented with pattern and color in painting form, creating combinations she was unable to achieve with cloth. Spaeth’s intense love of geometry and her ability to create illusion with color and pattern are evident in this selection of works, on view through Aug. 12.

Proceeds from the sale of her work benefit two programs near and dear to Spaeth: Heights Arts, and Sober Living Cleveland, which provides safe, affordable sober housing to those in recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs.

Heights Arts founder returns as exhibiting artist

Heights Observer July 1, 2018

On July 12, at 7 p.m., Heights Arts will host its only Ekphrastacy of the summer, wherein local poets read works they have composed, inspired by works in the current exhibition, and the exhibiting artists discuss their work. For this edition, Damien McClendon, Cleveland Heights poet laureate, has invited local poets to explore the Sticks & Stones exhibition, currently on view in the main gallery.

The experience of hearing the artists speak about their work and process, juxtaposed with the poets’ literary responses to the work, gives the pieces new meaning and can make the viewer re-look at the art in a different light.

Kristen McDowell is the marketing coordinator for Heights Arts.

Kate Bergman

Performing arts camp set to take the stage

One hot summer night in 2016, Jen Holland and India Jordan-Meesig sat on a porch in Cleveland Heights, tossing out ideas for how they could create accessible programming for all kids. Two years later, the Heights Performing Arts Camp (HPAC), a three-week theater program for 24 CH-UH students, will culminate in a performance on Aug. 4 at the Alma Theater in Cain Park, at 4 p.m.

Holland is no stranger to community building, having served as the president of the PTA Council for CH-UH schools for the past two years, as well as being a member of Building Rox at Roxboro Elementary School. She brought a number of community stakeholders together to create the camp.

Children from every school in CH-UH are invited to attend this free camp, which is run on donations.

Building Rox members Lance Godard, Holland and Jordan-Meesig approached Celeste Cosentino and Ian Hinz of Ensemble Theatre to pitch the idea of a camp. Cosentino and Hinz enthusiastically embraced the idea, and were able to take the vision provided by Building Rox and give it a structure and a home at Ensemble Theatre.

“Ensemble has always thought it was important that there be an educational component to our programming,” Cosentino said. “The partnership with Building Rox and Building Heights ended up a perfect fit.”

Together, they approached Lake Erie Ink (LEI), housed, with Ensemble Theatre, at the Coventry P.E.A.C.E. Campus, to provide writing instruction and guidance to the students. Last year, the kids voted on science fiction and fantasy as their overarching genre. LEI helped them craft storylines, which also somehow managed to tie this genre back into the lives and experiences of each of the campers.

This year, the camp’s second, it has doubled in size. Like last year, the organizers are hopeful that they will once again have 100 percent parent participation at the scheduled meet-and-greet. “We have participation from the Greater Cleveland Film Commission’s Antonio Harper, a graduate of Heights High school, and others, including Peter Lawson Jones and Cheryl Stephens,” Holland said. “We use this meet-and-greet to get to know the participants, but also to help them understand that this is big.”

“The Heights play a key role in the Greater Cleveland arts scene,” Cosentino said. “We have some amazingly talented and creative young people in our community, and we want to give them an experience they will remember. We want Ensemble and Coventry to become an anchor in the community. The organizations we are partnering with and the Heights Performing Arts Camp are a true cross section of Cleveland Heights. We’ve grown so much just after our first summer, and we hope to continue to expand and offer a very unique opportunity for CH-UH school district kids and Cleveland Heights residents.”

While the camp has met its funding goals this year, thanks to several generous donations, it is accepting contributions for the 2019 camp, with hopes that the camp can touch even more kids. For more information, visit: www.ensembletheatre.org/youngactorsworkshops.

Kate Bergman has been a resident of Cleveland Heights for 22 years, having moved here when she came for graduate school. She and her husband have two children, ages 14 and 10.
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The summer of ‘68

In the summer of 1968, 50 years ago, a great milestone came to pass in my life, and even though I was homeless, among other issues, I still recognized it as a powerful and meaningful moment. I was actually homeless for most of a couple of years. That started here in Cleveland Heights, and then went to Boston and then to New York City.

It was an offshoot of mental health issues, which were exacerbated by drug problems, both of which started when I was in my teens. But one night, in the summer of 1967, when I was 18 and had recently quit high school, I knocked on the door of a fellow folk musician, who lived in an apartment above the Heights Art Theater (which later became the Centrum) at Coventry Road and Euclid Heights Boulevard.

Another fellow folk musician opened the door and handed me a pipe, from which I gladly started smoking, unquestioningly. I could tell it was “hash” (short for hashish). What I couldn’t tell was that the pipe had been soaked in another substance, a highly potent hallucinogenic drug.

The drug produced an intense effect, much like a super-condensed LSD trip (and I knew an LSD trip when I saw one). And this particular drug was known for going to work instantly. I smoked a little of it still standing in the apartment’s open door. Then I took three steps into the place and stood between two giant speakers that were blasting an album by the Who. The “horror-rock” song “Boris the Spider” was playing.

I listened for about 30 seconds before I felt my spirit leave my body through the top of my head. Then I watched the whole scene—via my now-free spirit—looking down from the ceiling. My girlfriend, who had refused the pipe, took me by the arm and said, “Let’s take a walk.” I guess I was acting funny.

We made our way slowly down the stairs and out onto Coventry, heading toward Mayfield Road, Mary holding onto my arm tightly, and me stopping to look at everything, and maybe trying to climb a few storefronts. I remember reaching Irv’s deli and marveling at the salamis hanging in the window, slowly wiggling and changing colors. It was beautiful.

I eventually came down enough to function. I made it to my parents’ house, where I still lived. When I stepped into the living room, I stood and stared at the TV, wondering why I had never noticed before that the picture broke each object down into a palette of all its attendant colors. And when my mother asked me to move out of the way, so she could see the TV, I was amazed at how I’d never noticed that each note of every word she said was fully harmonized by an orchestra.

How could I have missed all of this before? I went to bed and hallucinated wildly all night. The next morning, Friday, I had to go to Dayton to perform at a coffeehouse called the Lemon Tree, where I was headlining the whole weekend—three nights, two sets a night.

I went, driven there by my friend, who accompanied me on wind instruments. But I couldn’t come down from the trip I was on. I also couldn’t eat or drink anything. Or sleep. Or indulge in any of my horrible habits, like drinking tons of coffee and caffeinated cola, and smoking lots of cigarettes. So, I was hallucinating mind-meltingly all night. The next morning, I went to bed and hallucinated wildly.

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I’ll omit the rest of the details of that weekend, except for two things: (a) I somehow made it through five out of six sets, or two and a half nights, at the Lemon Tree; and (b) by Monday night, every system in my body was failing and I wound up actually dying. But (spoiler alert), it was just for a few seconds and I survived. That part took place in the emergency room of Doctors Hospital, at the top of Cedar Hill, which was later torn down, and that space is being developed again. Well, I was kind of torn down and redeveloped, too.

That began with this dying incident, which led to a series of events, including getting kicked out of my house, which led to my becoming homeless. I usually could find some place to stay—the hippie era was pretty tribal and you could often find other tribe members. But sometimes, especially when I got to New York City, I was on the streets. Luckily, I was still having mental health issues, so most of it didn’t bother me.

And, over time, I fixed all those problems. The first major step was realizing, in the summer of 1968, that it had been one year since my big breakdown and that I was going to be okay. It still took a while, but that milestone gave me confidence that milestone gave me confidence that milestone gave me confidence.