Memorial Day parade is May 27

Bob Rosenbaum

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OPINION

Letters Policy
The Heights Observer welcomes letters to the editor. They must be submitted electronically, with a name and e-mail address, to www.heightsobserver.org/members.

About the Observer
The Heights Observer is not an official newspaper, it is a nonprofit publication for residents of Cleveland Heights and University Heights. The Observer has no writing staff, it is written by you—the readers.

Individually throughout the community decide what stories they want to write, then submit them for publication. The Observer publishes in University Heights and Cleveland Heights is welcome to contribute regularly, occasionally or even just once.

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

If you’re writing a news article, it should be clear and factual. If you want to express an opinion, submit it as a letter to the editor or an opinion piece. Either way, make sure it’s about something specific to our two cities.

• To make a submission of any kind, go on “Member Center” at the left. For questions that aren’t answered there, call the futureheights.org office at 216-401-9342 or e-mail info@futureheights.org.

Articles to be considered for the June issue must be submitted by May 15. We publish some articles online as they come in—and still consider them for the next print issue. We also publish an e-newsletter each Tuesday.

Concerns about Top of the Hill
Eric Silverman

While the design and massing for Top of the Hill (TOH) are extremely disappointing, what irks me to no end is the math behind the project. The answers I receive from City Hall.

What no one has been able to explain to me is why—with land that is ostensibly “free” at the most developable site in the city, with a parking structure that makes the project viable, paid for with taxes that would otherwise go to the public schools—the developer is unable to secure financing and the city is covering a funding “gap.”

No one at City Hall is able to tell me why there is a “gap,” why the city is covering $1.85 million of this “gap,” or what $1.85 million in public money is paying for. As the city does not have $1.85 million sitting around, it is going to borrow this money, which means the cost will be around $2 million with interest.

Based on the ONE-PAGE economic impact study that projects revenue from TOH, the city will take around 10 years for Cleveland Heights to recoup the $2 million in PUBLIC money that is being spent to develop TOH.

If the rationale to commit $2 million in public money for 10 years is as a catalyst for economic development, how will it create demand for the Cedar-Fairmount neighborhood? Where is the stand-alone report or addendum to the city’s Master Plan that articulates future infill projects?

There is none, at least none I was allowed to see, despite making a direct request for these materials from City Hall.

Speaking of reports, when I ask for any type of analysis comparing TOH to comparable projects in Cleveland Heights, neighboring communities, downtown Cleveland, or the plethora of infill projects in an arc from Tremont to Lakewood—which are cropping up like mushrooms after the rain—I am told my request is not specific enough.

Really? I didn’t realize City Hall was over flowing with so many market feasibility studies of TOH from the last five years that I had to make which specify what is a City Hall warehouse like the warehouse at the end of “Raiders of the Lost Ark,” filled with boxes and boxes of reports, drawings and analyses?

More likely, the study was conducted, OR the results were not flattering.

I am curious as to the demand for only 1- and 2-bedroom units geared for millennials at TOH, when that market appears to desire a higher-density, “grritter” urban locale.

I recall, during discussions on the city’s Master Planning Committee, a need for units for current Cleveland Heights residents downsizing, where a 3-bedroom unit on one floor would be compelling. There are no 3-bedroom units planned for TOH.

At the same time, the current massing for TOH using a double-loaded corridor style with a tower-like “apex” building means that for 30 units, the first five floors on the north side of the building, their views will be of a parking lot and the unadorned rear brick wall of the Buckingham Building. Where is the demand for this?

The city’s approach to TOH appears to get on board the train, as it has left the station and any criticisms or suggestions will be ignored and crushed under the weight of momentum.

It increasingly feels that City Hall waited too long to develop TOH after the Great Recession, was unable to sell a deal with a local developer with a history of attractive, successful infill projects in our region, and now feels compelled to push forward with ANYTHING from council’s second choice, so council members can say “progress” even if they have to use $2 million in PUBLIC money for a private, for-profit development in the city’s wealthiest and least diverse neighborhood.


Correction
An article in the April issue of the Heights Observer, “CH-UH district loses 14 percent of state money to vouchers in 2019,” erroneously reported that expansion vouchers are funded by a line item in the state budget using lottery funds, and not from state school district allocations. All funding figures and statistics in the article were accurate. The Heights Observer regrets the error.

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reviewing the movie, “Won’t You Be My Neighbor?" The film is about Fred Rogers’ impact on the world, young people, and a perfect theme for the weekend.

Noble Neighborhood Library will host a variety of events. It will continue a book giveaway, and NobleFest, which will be supplemented throughout the weekend with the library’s “book bike,” the Heights Libraries’ outreach van, which will circulate around the neighborhood, and, more free books at the library. Family games will take place on the library’s lower level, and a special BluePrints community showcase will be on display.

On Saturday, May 18, Denison Park will buzz with “let’s-play-in-the-park” activities for both building athletes and creative folk, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Supervised sporting activities will include soccer, basketball and baseball, hosted by Cleveland Heights Parks and Recreation staff. Families will have the opportunity to sign their kids up for summer activities. The Cleveland Heights Pickleball Club will demonstrate this fast-growing, intergenerational sport, and will give visitors a chance to try it out. There will be sidewalk chalk art, a build-date- and-fly-your-own-kite event, and music and dancing.

Businesses, including Christo- pher’s Pub, will offer specials on food and merchandise, and neighborhood churches will host activities. Noble Road Christian Church will host rummage, plant and bake sales, and the Home Repair Resource Center will put on its annual tool sale from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Visitors will have the opportunity to tour the center’s facilities and learn about its programs.

The Cleveland Heights Police Department will open the doors of the Sherin & Gertsch Lents Police Academy, where visitors will be able to see the bomb squad, robots, and various kinds of safety equipment. The historic building, a former fire station, also houses a history museum and the Cleveland Heights Police Academy graduates will be on hand to talk about their role in the city.

All Noble residents are invited to host a yard sale over the weekend. Those interested in being included on the event map should send a message to noblenighbors@gmail.com, with their address, by May 10. Instructions on how to list high-demand items on free websites will be provided.

Real estate professionals will host open houses for Noble-area homes on Sunday and Saturday. Potential buyers can walk through a variety of houses, including colonials, bungalows, ranches, and grand homes developed by the Van Sweringen brothers. Houses in $300,000 to $500,000 every 500,000 in the area that are being currently used by families. Noble Home Values have risen significantly since the current real estate market.

For details about 2019 We Are Noble events and interactive and printable maps, visit www.noblenighbors.com.

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

www.heightsobserver.org
Beaumont students need athletic fields

Wendy Hoke

It was with great interest that I read Colin Compton’s opinion, “In opposition to Beaumont’s plans to demolish the Painter Mansion.” As the president of Beaumont School, I’d like to add additional perspective on this issue.

The Painter family sold the building in 1942 to the Ursuline Sisters, who found the house in severely deteriorated condition when they assumed ownership. Most of the interior had been stripped bare, including wood paneling, the electrical system and even the doorknobs. While the Ursulines invested heavily to renovate and restore the property, it was a structure that required significant expenditures simply to maintain in habitable condition as a convent. Even before Beaumont assumed ownership in 2009, outside experts provided the opinion that the cost to renovate the building and convert it back to an academic use would be cost-prohibitive. Indeed, two reputable firms with deep experience in preservation and adaptive reuse have each estimated the state of deterioration is such that it would cost $7 million to $8 million just to bring the building up to code, plus untold additional amounts for interior build outs and amenities were the building to be used for anything other than office space.

Yes, under ideal circumstances, all historic properties should be considered for preservation. That assumes they still have a purpose, they have not deteriorated beyond the point of rescue, that funds can be found to upgrade them to new uses, and historical factors continue to support the need to maintain or transform them. For Beaumont, which has run out of land to serve its core mission, and operates as a nonprofit with limited dollars for operations and a limited endowment, these are not viable options.

One option, of course, is to consider moving the mansion off of Beaumont’s property. If we were approached with a sound plan that would absolve the school of all liabilities and costs, and guarantee that the removal would be completed by a deadline acceptable to us, we would consider that option. No one has come forward with such a proposal.

Students who attend Beaumont choose the school because it offers young women the opportunity for a well-rounded, global education that prepares them to be leaders. According to the Women in Sports Foundation, “61 percent of women executives held a belief that sports participation was essential to ask: is this action a trade up or a trade down?”

“First Baptist Church is the community that keeps me grounded in my faith. Growing, learning and living alongside the congregation is a reminder of what heaven might be like.”

Dan M.
CH Branding Survey needs second round

Jessica Schantz

[The writer sent the following as a letter to Cleveland Heights City Council on April 17; City Manager Tanisha Briley responded promptly, and a possible meeting is in the works.]

The most recent issue of Focus magazine provided a synopsis of Cleveland Heights’ self-appointed Brand Steering Committee’s branding initiative findings, and the committee’s plans for translating those findings into a new city logo and tagline.

While no one should fault the committee for its intentions, there are deeply concerning issues with its approach, most especially regarding its intentions, there are deeply concerning issues with its approach, most especially regarding its intentions, there are deeply concerning issues with its approach, most especially regarding its intentions, there are deeply concerning issues with its intentions, there are deeply concerning issues with its intentions.

Not surprisingly, those who did respond selected Cleveland Heights’ diversity—using the most encompassing sense of that word—as the city’s number one asset (followed by its sense of that word—as the city’s number one asset (followed by its sense of that word—as the city’s number one asset (followed by its sense of that word—as the city’s number one asset).

Indeed, our diversity is, as the Focus article put it, a treasure. But ironically, according to the committee’s report, close to 80 percent of respondents were white, rendering the number of results from residents of color, given the study’s variance and small pool, nearly negligible.

Over 60 percent of respondents live in households with only 1-2 people, and over 40 percent are also over the age of 45. Nearly 70 percent have bachelor’s degrees or higher, over 40 percent have household incomes of over $100,000 annually, and nearly 40 percent live south of Cedar Road.

While it’s wonderful that this concentrated demographic values our community’s diversity—and while a more representative variance might have resulted in a similar, if not identical, outcome—there are real dangers in not reflecting on the disconnect between what a non-representative sample of us says we appreciate and how that appreciation manifests.

Cleveland Heights is more complicated and wrought—and in many ways more fluid and resilient—than the survey reveals. While our community has an abundance of lovely, walkable residential and commercial districts, we must also acknowledge that we live in pockets overly defined by race and socioeconomics.

And if we tout our love of this community’s diversity, we must work much harder to invite diverse voices to the proverbial table. There may be an impulse to question why a wider demographic didn’t take the survey, but that’s a scapegoat response.

Rather, the city must re-open the branding survey and work harder to reach out to, and hear from, a more robust swath of this community. For example:

• Distribute fliers to all of the schools (public and private) for distribution at evening events and in student take-home folders.

• Put short plugs in the announcements of our religious institutions.

• Put up posters and signs in all the commercial districts with pull-tabs listing the branding survey link.

• Ask members of the many civic engagement groups to go door-to-door to take survey results.

• Host tables at community events around town where residents can take the survey; offer qualitative interviews then and there.

• Ask for volunteers to staff tables at the community center and libraries during high-traffic times.

• Allow community organizations and religious institutions to conduct their own focus groups and report responses. Again, while the outcome on paper may be the same, the opportunity to enfranchise more respondents, to increase civic engagement, and to send the message that every voice is valued in this process, will pay much higher, long-term community dividends in the forging of a better brand.

To not do so is to risk cynicism, as evidenced by the first-wave response to the proposed logo and tagline—a slogan that sadly and ironically highlights white privilege above diversity.

[The committee retracted the slogan after a negative response from the community.]

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OPINION
Why elect a mayor?

Deborah Van Kley and Carla Rautenberg

Last month, we wrote that we support the objective of Citizens for an Elect ed Mayor to change Cleveland Heights’ form of government via charter amendment. Now, we want to explain why.

Our interest in the intricate workings of city government dates to 2015, when CH City Council and the city manager attempted to privatize our water service. Since then, between us we have attended well over 100 meetings of the committee of the whole—the weekly working sessions of city council—along with about 50 regular bi-weekly council meetings.

We have observed City Manager Tanisha Briley grappling with a host of problems created by her predecessor, Robert Downey, whose tenure lasted more than 25 years, until his sudden departure in 2012. Plainly speaking, he left behind a mess. We have seen our part-time city council members struggling to keep up with the legal and practical challenges of maintaining an economically and racially diverse inner-ring suburb in a period of state and federal funding cuts. Most of our council members hold full-time jobs, in addition to juggling the demands of running a city of 45,000 souls. Frankly, we don’t know how they do it.

Here is one consequence of Downey’s inaction, of which council was unaware for some years: The city is now under a consent decree from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for violations of the Clean Water Act. We are spending $12 million to study our 100-year-old sewers, which are spending $12 million to study how our 100-year-old sewers can be brought into compliance. The cost of actually rebuilding the system is still unknown, but in addition to the final figure, we’ll be on the hook for punitive EPA fines.

Our city needs an elected mayor, accountable to voters, work ing full time at City Hall. We also need a professionally qualified city administrator to assist the mayor with the day-to-day running of the city. Under this form, city council would serve solely as a legislative body, without also overseeing the chief executive—a more reasonable role for part-time citizen legislators.

In an interview with the Charter Review Commission last year, Briley summed up her job since 2013: “I make the trains run on time.” That’s a vital function, but it falls far short of the leadership Cleveland Heights needs. (She has also lamented, more than once, having to answer to seven bosses, i.e., the members of city council.) What most residents may not understand is that, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, there is not a single elected official present at City Hall. Our council members may be intelligent and well-meaning, but how can they really know what’s going on?

Cleveland Heights has suffered for decades from a lack of vision, leadership, and economic development—deficiencies that long pre-date Briley’s tenure. Council has talked about Top of the Hill for—literally—five decades. Sever ance has been deteriorating for over 15 years. The Noble commercial strip is moribund, and Coventry has at least 14 commercial vacantancies visible from the street. Eleven years after the 2008 financial crisis, the bulk of bank foreclosures are behind us for now, but a huge tax forelosure crisis looms. Our neighborhood still suffer from hundreds of vacant and abandoned properties.

Our problems are more than one full-time manager can handle, and management, however competent, is not enough. We need a full-time mayor reporting to a full-time elected mayor, balances by a council of part-time legislators. That is what Shaker Heights has, as does Davenport, Iowa—where Briley was assistant city administrator before coming to Cleveland Heights.

No system—and no individual—is perfect. But we have seen ample evidence that the current system is not working. It’s time for a change.

[See related article on page 9.]

Deborah Van Kley and Carla Rautenberg are longtime residents of Cleveland Heights. Rautenberg served on the CRC. Contact them at heightsdemocracy@gmail.com.
I recently watched the Heights High Drama Club perform “The Phantom Tollbooth,” the story of a bored young boy who travels to a different realm with two imaginary kingdoms. After a disagreement, the kingdoms banish the two princesses, Rhyme and Reason. Without these two royals the whole realm is in chaos, as you might expect. This all strikes a little close to home in our current era of national and state politics.

In the play, one of the most interesting scenes is a banquet where the spoken word is taken literally, with “square meals” being some sort of square-shaped food. Students updated the “half-baked ideas” part of the dinner with their own reflections of current society. One pulled out a half-baked idea and read “the earth is flat,” which made everyone chuckle. Another picked “vaccines cause autism.” Clearly, our students are up-to-date with the current news. The last student’s half-baked idea was “standardized tests accurately measure student learning.” Our students know that the tests they are forced to take are a joke. Half-baked ideas abound around standardized tests. How can real teaching go on when students are being tested for 90, 110 or 180 minutes, seven different days in April. This disruption leads to shortened periods two or three times per week, so teaching starts and stops constantly. It is difficult to teach new material in 30 minutes to students who have just concentrated intensely for 90 minutes on a high-stakes test that will determine if they will graduate high school. By the second week of this regimen our kids are exhausted, frustrated and angry. Similar testing schedules also occur in elementary and middle schools during April. Thanks to oppressive testing, April is the doldrums for learning; it is hard to get anything done.

One hopeful possibility in Ohio is that there seems to be some recognition by state lawmakers that, in creating a new biennial budget, there is an opportunity to create a funding formula that works properly for more schools. Currently, more than 80 percent of school districts in Ohio are not funded by a formula because it would strip them of needed funds—they are on a “guarantee” of some random amount of money. Perhaps this makes our current funding formula a 20-percent baked idea, even less than half-baked. Representatives Bob Cupp (Republican) and John Patterson (Democrat) have been working together on creating a new formula that has promise. It still needs some work, but appears to try to address funding issues through a lens that takes into consideration multiple factors, such as poverty of students, property wealth of the district, and services needed.

Even though voucher and charter students are counted in the number of students enrolled, the amount of funding our district loses for these students is disproportionate to the money allocated on a per-student basis. Local property tax revenue is forced to subsidize students our district does not teach. This school year, CH-UH lost more than $5 million through this flawed method—a number that will continue to grow unless there is change at the state level. The Cupp-Patterson plan would fund these parallel school systems so that public schools’ will not suffer a loss of funding for students they don’t serve.

I am often inspired by my students, especially through the arts. “The Phantom Tollbooth” was refreshing to see. I am proud of the Cleveland Heights Teachers Union. Ari Klein is a lifelong community member, math teacher at Cleveland Heights High School, and president of the Cleveland Heights Teachers Union.

There’s no rhyme or reason in school testing and funding

Ari Klein

I recently watched the Heights High Drama Club perform “The Phantom Tollbooth,” the story of a bored young boy who travels to a different realm with two imaginary kingdoms. After a disagreement, the kingdoms banish the two princesses, Rhyme and Reason. Without these two royals the whole realm is in chaos, as you might expect. This all strikes a little close to home in our current era of national and state politics.

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School board rejects high-stakes testing

Susie Kaeser

I am grateful to the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Board of Education for taking a stand on high-stakes testing. At its March 19 meeting, the board unanimously approved a resolution titled “Time to Teach, Time to Learn,” which rejects “the overuse and misuse of standardized testing.”

For too long, public schools in Ohio have been tethered to a destructive judgment system that legislators said would ensure that all children succeed in school. This approach uses standardized tests to make consequential decisions that are supposed to motivate high achievement. The goal is admirable, but the strategy is misguided. High-stakes testing is a misuse of standardized tests.

Rather than passively accept a policy that is counterproductive, the board expressed its opposition using the resolution process. That’s the way elected bodies can put their views on the record.

This resolution has many “whereas” and “therefore” statements that capture concerns and solutions. They are worth reading. The first statement sets the tone. It expresses a broad set of purposes for public education that cannot be measured on tests. The resolution rejected the use of standardized tests to make high-stakes decisions that define children, teachers or schools as failures. Our local leaders propose a different approach to define education quality that is worthwhile.

The board called their resolution “Time to Teach, Time to Learn,” because testing wastes precious time and subverts both teaching and learning. The resolution rejected the use of standardized tests to make high-stakes decisions that define children, teachers or schools as failures. Our local leaders propose a different approach that focuses on the classroom and relies on teacher-designed assessments to gather information about student learning and inform their teaching.

Our Board of Education wants more for our children and teachers than test scores. These elected representatives and guardians of our public schools want more for our community than a school system that conforms. They want more for our society than test scores.

Susie Kaeser is a 40-year resident of Cleveland Heights and the former director of the League of Women Voters. Reaching Heights. She is active with the Ohio Board of Education, the League of Women Voters and the League of Women Votors.

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The University Heights Memorial Day Parade kicks off on Monday, May 27, at 11 a.m.

The parade starts at 11 a.m. on Memorial Day, at the intersection of Silsby and Ashurst roads. It will travel east on Silsby, then head south on South Belvoir Boulevard.

The parade will end at John Carroll University, where a post-parade memorial ceremony will be held, with Major Sergeant General Royce Achterberg as the featured speaker. After the ceremony, there will be fun activities for kids, including inflatable and pony rides.

Mike Cook is the communications and civic engagement coordinator for University Heights.

Heather Kwedder
Hann Free Furnace Contest
winner of our Ugahoga County Employment Collaborative $5,000 Community Energized Grant

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The parade will end at John Carroll University, where a post-parade memorial ceremony will be held, with Major Sergeant General Royce Achterberg as the featured speaker. After the ceremony, there will be fun activities for kids, including inflatable and pony rides.

Mike Cook is the communications and civic engagement coordinator for University Heights.

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Citizens for an Elected Mayor (CEM), the Cleveland Heights organization seeking to change the city’s form of government, is finalizing its proposed charter amendment and the initiative language intended for this year’s Nov. 5 ballot. CEM members would like to see their city government headed by a mayor elected directly by the voters. “We have had hundreds of people express support [for an elected mayor] at our two public forums, as well as at half a dozen house meetings,” said CEM secretary Michael Bennett.

Once the language is final, CEM will circulate petitions for signature by registered voters. State law requires a number of signatures equal to 10 percent of total voters in the last municipal election. Placing an initiative on the ballot for Cleveland Heights in 2019 will require 2,119 signatures, certified as valid by the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections. According to Bennett, CEM aims to obtain 3,200 signatures, knowing that some will be deemed invalid due to illegible signatures, incorrect addresses, and other problems.

CEM, an all-volunteer organization, is encouraging supporters to participate in its campaign. Those interested should visit www.citizensforanelectedmayor.com, to sign up for the mailing list, learn more about the issue, get involved, or donate funds.

Under Cleveland Heights’ current council管理模式，city council hires a professional administrator to serve as the city’s chief executive, under the title of city manager. The city manager reports to all seven members of council, and they collectively supervise her work. The council members elect from among themselves a mayor and vice mayor, who serve as president and vice president of council and perform various ceremonial functions.

The council管理模式 form of government became popular in small- and medium-sized U.S. cities a century ago, during the Progressive Era, when it was seen as a way to prevent corruption. Also, accord-

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Jessica Schantz

On April 2, Cleveland Heights Mayor Carol Roe announced that Cleveland Heights City Council had selected Craig Cobb to serve as the seventh city council member. Cobb, a longtime resident of the city, fills the vacancy created in November 2018, when Cheryl Stephens resigned from CH City Council after being elected to Cuyahoga County Council.

“We are thrilled to welcome Craig to the Council,” stated Roe, “and believe he will be a great asset to us and to the city’s knowledge and experience with city government will be immediately capitalized on as we go forward with a number of important issues.”

Cobb, a branch legal office managing attorney for Farmers Insurance Exchange, served as chair of the city’s Planning Commission and a member of the recent Charter Review Commission.

In accepting the position, Cobb said, “I am proud and honored to have been selected to serve the community of Cleveland Heights, a city I love and have called home for many years.”

Council members vetted the more than 30 applicants with the help of members of the Heights Chapter of the League of Women Voters, who conducted video interviews of the applicants, which were posted on the city’s website.

Roe emphasized that council members worked diligently to choose the right candidate, stating, “In the end it was Craig’s experience with city government that directed our decision making. We welcome him aboard and look forward to his contribution.”

Cobb was sworn in on April 15 during a council session. He was appointed to serve through the end of 2019. To serve out the remainder of Stephens’ unexpired term (she was elected to her third four-year term in November 2017), Cobb would have to run in this November’s general election.

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

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CH council appoints Cobb as new member

Craig Cobb

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Campaign for elected mayor moves ahead

Deborah Van Kleef and Carla Rautenberg

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Cyclists, pedestrians and motorists traveling between Cleveland Heights and University Circle will no longer need to navigate the daunting sea of asphalt and confusing traffic movements at the intersection of Edgehill and Overlook roads.

Construction is now underway to transform the excessively wide intersection into one that is safer for all travelers.

“The official completion date of the project is July 1,” said project manager Joe Kickel. Access to properties will be maintained, with minimum impact to pedestrian and vehicular traffic anticipated.

According to Cleveland Heights Planning Director Richard Wong, by removing excess pavement the project will shorten crosswalks, add landscaping, create two bioretention areas (rain gardens that hold stormwater), and tighten turning radii to improve traffic safety.

The project will also add a bus stop on Overlook Road, southbound.

The project is consistent with the “Complete and Green Streets” policy that Cleveland Heights adopted in July 2018. Cleveland-based City Architecture designed the streetscape plan for the intersection.

Funding for the project comes from the city of Cleveland Heights and the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency’s Transportation for Livable Communities Initiative.

The city advises travelers to use caution when driving through the work zone and to direct questions to the Office of Capital Projects at 216-291-2470.

Robert Brown is city planner with 40 years of experience, including nine years at Cleveland’s city planning director. A resident of Cleveland Heights for more than 40 years, Brown is a member of the FutureHeights Board of Directors.

FutureHeights awards mini-grants to three CH projects

Sruti Basu

FutureHeights completed the spring 2019 round of its Neighborhood Mini-Grants Program, approving $2,415 in grants to support three neighborhood projects in Cleveland Heights. The grants are intended to spur small, grassroots projects to transform the excessively wide intersection into one that is safer for all travelers.

The grants are intended to improve quality of life and build community.

FutureHeights awarded the Cleveland Heights Aging Well at Home Initiative $720. Residents of the Forest Hill neighborhood developed a guide of resources for Cleveland Heights residents who have chosen to age at home or who are living at home with disabilities. The group developed the guide to assist their neighbors in navigating service providers. To learn more and access the guide, visit www.futureheights.org/ourcommunity/neighborhoodorganizations/.

FutureHeights awarded Maple, Crest, Wood, & Parkhill Neighbors $449 for the Millikin Playground Enhancements project. Residents of Maple, Crest, Wood, and Parkhill roads began working together to strengthen their sense of community by identifying issues within their neighborhood that would benefit from coordinated efforts, activities and problem solving. As a result, the group has chosen to focus on improving the public space and playground at the former Millikin Elementary School building. The project will add enhancements to the space through public art and gardening. The group hopes to create a space that will build community by facilitating people meeting others from this diverse neighborhood with whom they might not otherwise interact.

FutureHeights awarded Heights Performing Arts Camp $750 for its 2019 camp. Three years ago, a group of Cleveland Heights parents envisioned creating a performing arts camp to bring together kids from each elementary school in the CH-UH school district to help prepare them for middle school. The parents reached out to Ensemble Theatre, which has a commitment to non-traditional casting, culturally diverse programming, and educational outreach activities impacting youth and underserved populations. As a result, Heights Performing Arts Camp (HPAC) was born. What distinguishes HPAC from most other theater camps is that it is made available at no cost, thus removing possible barriers to participation.

The camp emphasizes developing the creative abilities of learners while also strengthening literacy, teamwork, and problem solving. To learn more visit www.ensembletheatrecle.org/heightsperformingartscamp/.

To learn more about these and past mini-grant projects, visit www.futureheights.org/community-building-programs.

The FutureHeights Neighborhood Mini-Grants Program awards grants of up to $1,000 to fund citizen-initiated neighborhood projects, events and activities that benefit Cleveland Heights. The program is guided by a grant-making committee comprising seven Cleveland Heights residents with a history of community involvement.

If you have an idea to improve your neighborhood, FutureHeights invites you to apply for a grant. The next application deadline is Sept. 15 at 5 p.m. For more information, e-mail sbasu@futureheights.org or call 216-330-1439.

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

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.
New website considers ‘great design’ and current development projects in CH

Michael Kohnlauch

Several Cleveland Heights residents have created the Citizens for Great Design website, www.citizensforgreaddesign.com. In creating it, their intention is to raise awareness about the importance of design and architectural attributes of significant and important Cleveland Heights developments.

They have identified several development projects in the planning stage throughout the city. These are privately funded, or may involve city supported financing and/or tax support, such as Tax Increment Financing (TIF). Each project requires city approval through the planning/ zoning and Architectural Board of Review process.

The Citizens for Great Design website contains links to articles and websites that explore and discuss current issues regarding urban design, planning and architecture. The website also includes a survey — and a link to the survey’s results—where Cleveland Heights residents and non-residents are invited to comment on the current Top of the Hill project.

Michael Kohnlauch is a sponsor of Citizens for Great Design. A 49-year resident of Cleveland Heights, he is a former Futures Heights board member.

Cleveland Heights City Council Meeting highlights

MARCH 18, 2019

Council members present were Mayor Carol Roe, Vice Mayor Melissa Yasinow, Mary Dunbar, Kahlil Seren and Jason Stein. Michael N. Unger participated by telephone but did not vote. The seventh seat is unoccupied. The seventh seat is unoccupied.

• Because of the interdependence and interrelationship of the various provisions of the amended charter, the CRC suggested that its recommendations (assuming acceptance by council) be put before the city’s website concerning the Refuse District’s goals has been to improve residential curbside recycling by increasing the number of single operator trucks picking up bags of trash and blue bags of recyclables from 15,000 residential units. The city uses single-stream recycling, meaning items are unsorted. Recyclables are compacted and sent to a county facility. The city has its own transfer station where trash from garbage trucks is moved into tractor trailers and hauled to the dump in Shiloh, Ohio.

The Updated Cuyahoga County Waste Management Plan, which the city unanimously adopted in March, pushes cities toward an automated system using specialized carts (64- and 96-gallon plastic cans with wheels). Bags can be thrown into the trash cart, but recycling goes loose into a separate blue cart. Residents wheel trash and recycling carts into the street along the curb, and a specialized truck with a side-lift, operated by the driver, grabs the cart and dumps the contents into the truck.

The county plans, “One of the (Waste) District’s goals has been to improve residential curbside recycling by increasing the number of communities using automated collection with recycling carts...”

A Cleveland Heights worker tosses recycling into a truck. Forty cities in Cuyahoga County have gone to automated collection systems.

Fred D’Ambrosi

Blue bags or blue bins? Public or private trash collection? These are just two of the major questions the newly formed Refuse and Recycling Task Force has to answer for Cleveland Heights over the next six months.

At the first task force meeting on April 18, Director of Public Works Colette Clinkscale said the city’s aging system is at a tipping point. “Equipment is at a point where we need to make an investment, and we don’t want to make the wrong investment,” she said. Clinkscale is one of three city staffers who will act as non-voting consultants to the volunteer committee.

The 10-member task force (eight attended the initial meeting) is a diverse group that includes John Blackwell, professor emeritus from Case Western Reserve University with expertise in plastics; Carli Lohn, coordinator at Cleveland’s Office of Sustainability; Jordan Davis, a music administrator with a commitment to recycling; and Jesse Kight, who described herself as a regular citizen with a background in communications and realtor Susan Clement, who expressed concerns about trash carts and their effect on the community’s image. Carlin Miller talked about her long-term commitment to environmentalism, which includes growing from the elementary school’s Master Recycler program. She said she picks up trash while she walks her dog. Kelly Menaker said she does the same walks with her children, teaching them environmental responsibility while picking up trash bags. The group chose Constance Johnson, an administrator at Central Bible Baptist Church, as its chair, and Melissa as vice chair. The second task force will meet with an official from a Cuyahoga County city that made the transition to automation. The county plans say 40 communities currently use automation, about half since 2016.

Going with a private trash hauler might eliminate capital costs but can create other problems. Yasinow said the city needs to consider its transfer station. “Our transfer station is grandfathered in under federal regulations, and it helps us keep transportation costs low.” She said if the city decides to contract with a private trash service, it could lose the transfer station and be unable to relicense it. That would make returning to public trash pick-up more expensive, and using the city’s options down the road.

The task force plans to meet twice a month, at 6 p.m. on Thursdays, in council chambers, but which weeks may vary according to members’ schedules. Johnson said she plans to keep meetings to 90 minutes. The next meeting will be a tour of city facilities. Future topics will include current recycling methods, automated systems and a discussion with the executive director of the county waste district.

The task force’s final report and non-binding recommendations are due in October. All meetings are open to the public. You can listen to audio of the meetings and track the task force’s progress at https://tinyurl.com/debttritab.
The nonprofit members of Coventry P.E.A.C.E. Campus are Ensemble Theatre, ARTFULL, Family Connections, Lake Erie Ink, FutureHeights and Reaching Heights.

The campus provides a sustainable, supportive and collaborative environment for these organizations that offer artistic and educational opportunities, as well as community services, for residents of the Heights and Greater Cleveland. Their goal is to transform the building into a modern and self-sustaining arts, culture, education and incubation center, which will interact with an improved playground and park, be open to all, and capable of hosting even more community events. With thoughtful creative placemaking, Coventry P.E.A.C.E. Campus seeks to solidify Cleveland Heights' reputation as "Home to the Arts."

More information and tickets for the fundraiser, which start at $50, are available at http://coventrypeacecampus.org/events/the-art-of-community-fundraiser/. The program begins with a Meet & Greet with Michael Mikel for PEACE Maker ticket holders at 6 p.m. The talk will take place at 7 p.m. The movie screening, which is free and open to the public, will screen at approximately 9 p.m. in the park. The movie is not rated, and may not be suitable for children.

Among property crimes, there were significant declines in burglaries and thefts, while the number of auto thefts and arsons rose slightly.

Police Chief Annette Mecklenburg credits much of the decline to good teamwork. "It takes the efforts of everyone, from beat officers to patrol officers to detectives to supervisors," she said. "Most of our arrests are based on evidence collected at the scene by patrol officers, and investigative work performed by our detectives."

She also noted that many suspects turn out to be involved in multiple crimes. As a result, each arrest has potential to prevent several future crimes—which is why the crime rate has continued to fall each year.

The charts present a year-to-year comparison of serious crimes reported in Cleveland Heights since 2011, which is when the CHPD began compiling data with a view toward using it to manage police operations. Since then, the CHPD has emphasized consistency in its data collection process. This allows the FBI to include the data in its national report, which helps Cleveland Heights compete for federal grant funding.

"Based on past crime stats we’re able to determine which areas are likely to have a greater likelihood of crime, and we will increase our visibility in those areas—which includes patrols and traffic enforcement," Mecklenburg said. "I also believe that we should recognize the communications we have with residents. . . . Sometimes it is because of an alert citizen that we are able prevent a crime or apprehend an offender committing a crime."

The data reported here don't represent every crime that occurs. Rather, these are serious crimes as defined in Part 1 of the FBI guidelines: violent crimes against people, and serious crimes against property.

The FBI does not collect data on less serious Part II crimes—such as trespassing, disorderly conduct, sexual imposition, public intoxication and drunk driving—because the rigorous classification process would be too costly for municipal police departments to apply to these lesser offenses.

For more information about how the CHPD collects and validates crime statistics, and why the Heights Observer publishes them, see the original article in this series at http://bit.ly/chcrimestats.

Cleveland Heights resident Bob Rosenbaum is co-chair of the Heights Observer Advisory Committee, and is responsible for its advertising sales and market development.

Monday, May 20, 2019
Lost Cleveland Memories Presents
Pride of Cleveland
Hometown Rockers from the Sixties and Early Seventies

Slide show and narration featuring audio clips from local bands including James Gang, Glass Harp and Raspberries.

Nighttown
12383 Cedar Road
Doors open at 6:30; show at 8 p.m.
Make your dinner/program reservations at
Call: 216-795-0550
$10 admission at door

All proceeds benefit The A-T Children's Project
For more information about local historian Dennis R. Sutcliffe visit: lostcleveland.com

Michael Mikel, co-founder of Burning Man.

Michael Mikel, co-founder of Burning Man.
Local programs mark National Preservation Month

Kara Hamley O’Donnell

May is National Preservation Month, and four Cleveland Heights institutions are joining together to sponsor a series of local history programs that take place in May, and beyond.

The Cleveland Heights Historical Society, Cleveland Heights Landmark Commission, Cleveland Restoration Society (CRS), and Heights Libraries kicked off the first of five programs on April 25, and the series wraps up on June 1. All programs are free, and do not require registration.

Saturday, May 4, noon, In My Day Wrap Party—Celebrate the wrap of Heights Libraries’ In My Day Oral History project. All day, library staff will be recording stories, and ice cream will be available 2:30–3:30 p.m. [Lee Road Library, 2345 Lee Road.]

Wednesday, May 22, 7 p.m., Gatsby and the Van Sweringens—with Christopher Whipple—Author of Cleveland’s Colorful Characters, Christopher Whipple will explain how F. Scott Fitzgerald used the Van Sweringen family and their friends as the basis for his famous book, The Great Gatsby. [Lee Road Library, 2345 Lee Road; sponsored by the Cleveland Heights Historical Society and Heights Libraries.]

Wednesday, May 29, 7 p.m., Sacred Landmarks Lecture—Michael Flenor, CRS’s director of preservation, will give an overview of Cleveland’s most significant sacred landmarks—those that represent this region’s rich diversity of faith traditions and ethnicities. He will talk about issues with which these congregations have had to contend, and how CRS has been able to help them. Finally, he will demonstrate the local creativity undertaken in adapting empty sacred landmarks for new uses. [Lee Road Library, 2345 Lee Road.]

Saturday, June 1, 10 a.m., Best of the Bricks Bike Tour—Cleveland Heights Council Member Mary Dunbar has led many past bike tours, including a 2018 Best of the Bricks Bike tour of residences and commercial buildings south of Cedar Road. This year, she’ll lead a bike ride featuring the excellent brickwork on view north of Cedar Road. [Tour begins at the Noble Neighborhood Library, 2800 Noble Road.]

Kara Hamley O’Donnell is City Planner II at the Cleveland Heights Department of Planning & Development, an historic preservationist, and staff the city Landmark and Planning commissions.

Nighttown hosts Officer Jason D. West scholarship fundraiser May 5

Lita Gonzalez

Nighttown will host the 2019 Officer Jason West Memorial Scholarship Mega Raffle fundraiser on Sunday, May 5, 5–8 p.m. Raffle tickets are $2 and can be purchased from any committee member, at Quintana’s Barber & Dream Spa, CLE Urban Winery, Shawn Paul Salon and Nighttown, or at the event.

This year will mark the 12th anniversary since a group of Cleveland Heights residents and business owners first came together to start the scholarship, which honors the memory of Officer West, a member of the Cleveland Heights Police Department, who lost his life in 2007 while responding to a disturbance call.

“Officer Jason West was a hero, not because of the way he died, but because of the way he chose to live his life—as a devoted son and brother, loyal friend, a mentor and community member, at Quintana’s Barber & Dream Spa, CLE Urban Winery, Shawn Paul Salon and Nighttown, or at the event.

This year will mark the 12th anniversary since a group of Cleveland Heights residents and business owners first came together to start the scholarship, which honors the memory of Officer West, a member of the Cleveland Heights Police Department, who lost his life in 2007 while responding to a disturbance call.

“Officer Jason West was a hero, not because of the way he died, but because of the way he chose to live his life—as a devoted son and brother, loyal friend, a mentor and role model to young adults in the community, and as a dedicated police officer,” said Liz Radivoyevitch, co-chair of the scholarship committee.

West had always wanted to be a police officer. He felt it was important to serve as a role model to young adults. “Because of the scholarship, Jason’s memory and beliefs continue to touch the lives of young men and women hoping to continue on a path to a career in law enforcement,” said Radivoyevitch.

The first scholarship was awarded in 2008 to a graduating senior from the Criminal Justice Program at Cleveland Heights High School. Since then, the scholarship committee has given out a total of 17 scholarships to graduating seniors from the Criminal Justice Program at Heights High, and paid the full tuition for two award recipients to attend the Cleveland Heights Police Academy.

The Mega Raffle is the only fundraising event the scholarship committee holds each year, and all money raised during the event goes directly to the scholarship fund. Contributions can also be mailed to: The Officer Jason D. West Memorial Scholarship Fund, c/o The Treasurer’s Office, Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District, 2345 Miramar Blvd., University Heights, 44118. Checks should be made payable to “Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District,” and be sure to include “Jason D. West Scholarship” on the memo line.

For more information, call 216-430-4477, or visit www.facebook.com/jasonwestscholarship.

Lita Gonzalez has lived in Cleveland Heights since 1995. She is recently retired, and an avid volunteer.
Cleveland Heights SIDs kick off May with Bike the Heights

Myra Ornstein

May is Bike Month, and the Cedar Fairmount, Cedar Lee and Coventry Village special improvement districts (SIDs) will be celebrating a big way with the introduction of their first collaborative Bike the Heights weekend, Friday to Sunday, May 3 to 5.

Recognizing the increasing popularity of bike riding in the districts, leaders of the three SIDs determined an event was in order. In addition to rides, special offers will be available at select merchants in each of the districts.

The Heights Bicycle Coalition (HBC) is taking an active part in the weekend with a family-friendly ride on Saturday, May 4, at 5 p.m., originating and ending at Coventry P.E.A.C.E. Park. Since Saturday is May 4 (“May the Fourth Be With You?”) Coventry Village will tip its hat to “Star Wars.” Crank Set Rides asks everyone to arrive in “Star Wars” costumes to become eligible for prizes as part of its Star Wars Bar Crawl ride through Cedar Lee, Cedar Fairmount and Coventry Village.

The weekend isn’t only about bike rides. Green Tara Yoga, in Cedar Fairmount, across from Nighttown, will offer special stretching for bicyclists on May 3, 4 and 5, at 11 a.m. Those who ride their bikes to Green Tara Yoga’s studio on May 4 for a yoga class from 9:30 to 11 a.m. Confluence Cycle and Yoga on Coventry Road is offering a 9 a.m. drop-in special on Friday, May 3, and a 9:45 a.m. drop-in special on Saturday, May 4 (mention code Bike 10 for both classes). Confluence wraps up its offerings with a Woodward business ride at 8:30 a.m. on Sunday, May 5.

In celebration of Cinco de Mayo, Lopez on Lee will feature a Brunch Fiesta from noon to 3 p.m. on Sunday. In need of bike repair? Stop by the parking lot adjacent to Nighttown on May 4, where HBC will have six mechanics working to get bikes running like new. Self-service bike stations will be open throughout the weekend at the Lee Road Library and at the northwest corner of Lee and Superior roads, across from Cain Park.

Those interested in purchasing bikes should stop by the Cleveland Heights Police Department’s Annual Bike Auction on Sunday, May 5, 1 p.m. It will take place in the parking lot adjacent to the police entrance at CH City Hall.

In addition to their own activities, the SIDs are also helping promote activities in University Circle, where the Stone Roll takes place on Monday, May 6. For more information visit www.ugohcirclevic.com/events.


Myra Ornstein has been a Cleveland Heights resident for more than 30 years, and is president of CATV, a marketing/advertising firm that collaborates and executes director of Cedar Fairmount SID and Cleveland Independents.

Senior Center News

Amy Jenkins

This month, through a partnership between the Cleveland Heights Office on Aging and University Circle Interactive Cleveland, Senior Activity Center (SAC) members are invited to participate in cultural outings that will take them to the latest exhibits, concerts and museums in Cleveland. Using video-conference technology, the SAC is able to bring educational programs, and to register.

The Cleveland Heights SAC, located in the CH Community Center at a Monticello Blvd., offers a variety of programming for those 60 and older. A complete schedule of programs is published in the community center’s newsletter, available online at www.sacpar.org.

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 Cathi Cohn, (216) 932-7400, ext. 203, or pgrgo@university-heights.com. Membership is $10 for University Heights seniors.

Amy Jenkins is supervisor at the Cleveland Heights Police Department’s Senior Activity Center. She can be reached at 216-691-7379 or ajenkins@clvhts.com.
Goines installed as Forest Hill co-pastor

Peg Weissbrod

On Sunday, May 5, at 4 p.m., Forest Hill Church, Presbyterian, begins a new era of pastoral leadership and ministry. The Rev. Dr. Veronica R. Goines will be installed as co-pastor. All are welcome at this service of installation.

A nearly lifelong resident of California, Goines is excited by the call to work collaboratively with co-pastor John C. Lentz Jr. in leading the church. She brings extensive ministry experience in cross-cultural and multicultural contexts to her post.

Forest Hill has a legacy of being a leader in the community and in its PC(USA) denomination. With the call of Rev. Goines, Forest Hill Church more faithfully seeks to pursue Christ’s call to the Beloved Community, and manifest relationships of diversity, equity, and transformative love.

Forest Hill Church is located at 3031 Monticello Blvd. Learn more at www.fhchcpresb.org.

Peg Weissbrod is a freelance writer and publicity coordinator for Forest Hill Church in Cleveland Heights.

Cedar waxwings feed on native insects, which in turn feed on native trees.

Peggy Spaeth

We choose each plant that we place in our garden. But what if birds and insects chose instead? After all, to humans plants are beautiful and fragrant, but to wildlife they are essential food and shelter.

Human health is inextricably bound to the health of wildlife for a healthy environment. Global-scale policies are needed to mitigate the impact of climate change, but individuals, neighborhoods and communities can do what is necessary to make a difference, such as choosing to plant native flora to support native wildlife.

Change can start small. This spring, 20-plus homeowners on Bradford Road are each planting a small patch of native flowers on their tree lawns and front lawns to create a pollinator path. The cumulative effect will be the creation of a quarter acre of native habitat—the Bradford Pollinator Path! Plants include milkweed varieties (Asclepias syriaca, A. incarnata, and A. tuberosa), cardinal flower, blue lobelia, Calver’s root, obedient plant, wild bergamot, and more.

What do spring warblers migrate through Northeast Ohio need to eat? Insects. What do the insects need? Flowers. The first native spring flowers are on trees and shrubs, and that’s where the migrants are seen feeding. Oak trees, according to entomologist Doug Tallamy, support the ground layer of the garden is a Nature Center at Shaker Lakes plant sale, on May 11, will contain a large selection of hard-to-find native species. For information about the sale, go to www.shakerlakes.org/blogspot.com.

Peggy Spaeth volunteers as a Cleveland Metroparks certified watershed steward, is co-chair of Friends of Lower Lake, and loves to garden. Learn more at www.friendsoflowerlake.org/blogspot.com.

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Annual RoxEl Run benefit set for May 18

Jessica Schantz

The annual RoxEl Run, one of Roxboro Elementary School’s most popular fundraisers and community events, will take place this year on Saturday, May 18, at 9 a.m. Now in its seventh year, the PTA-organized event, with the tagline “Run Like It’s Recent,” promotes physical fitness as a fun and social pursuit.

Race co-chairs Gillian Grim and Clare Taft emphasize that the RoxEl Run is an event for everyone. “In our seventh year, the RoxEl Run is so much more than just a fundraiser for our PTA,” said Taft. “The run is a chance to engage families, the business community, the district and the Roxboro neighborhood, while having fun and celebrating our students.”

The race includes four-mile and two-mile runs, and a two-mile walk, which begins at the same time as the run and follows the same route. The race sets off from the Roxboro Middle School track, 2400 Roxboro Road, and loops through the neighborhoods surrounding the school.

The Kid’s Fun Run, exclusively for elementary-age children and free this year for participants, begins at 10 a.m. and takes place inside the middle school track. Childcare is offered again this year for caregivers who would like to run. Sign up is available on the online registration form.

Following the race, runners, families and community members can enjoy healthy snacks and refreshments, games, face painting and a DJ inside the track. Spectators are encouraged to bring their own blankets and chairs.

All Heights residents are welcome to sign up, regardless of whether they have children in the district. The event has gotten so popular that other CH-UH school run clubs now regularly participate.

Approximately 500 people attended the event last year, to run or spectate, and similar numbers are expected this year. Last year’s proceeds, used to support Roxboro Elementary School students and teachers, totaled $5,000.

Past and present event sponsors include the Cleveland Clinic Foundation, Romanin Concrete, Eastside Landscaping, Braeger’s Bagels, Luna Bakery & Café, Tommy’s restaurant, Zagara’s Marketplace, Mitchell’s Ice Cream, Heights Dental Group, Two One Fix Bicycle, CareSpotlight, the Children’s Museum of Cleveland, St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, EDWINS Leadership & Restaurant Institute, Tom Waina of Farmer’s Insurance, Justin Ragor of State Farm Insurance, the Little River Pet Resort, Buchanan and the Brewer, Hoff & Leigh, Confluence Cycle and Yoga, Inspiral Motion, and Real Estate Agent Steve Toth.

The entry fee for the four- and two-mile run options and the two-mile walk is $25 for adults and $10 for kids. T-shirts are included in the fee. Kids Fun Run participants can purchase T-shirts at registration for $10.

Online registration is now open. For all event and prize details, including registration and course information, visit runsignup.com, follow the event on its Facebook page (www.facebook.com/roxelrun), or email roxelrun@gmail.com.

Jessica Schantz is the e-news manager at the Heights Observer and a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights.
Heights High team wins televised Academic Challenge

Cleveland Heights High School junior Maple Buescher has “always really liked reading,” and commented, “I retain a lot of (seemingly) useless information”—a skill she puts to use as captain of the high school’s Academic Challenge team.

Bruce and teammates Maple Buescher and Leo Kenealy competed against St. Ignatius and North Ridgeville high schools on the Academic Challenge program on March 23 on WEWS-TV (Channel 5/ABC). Their Heights High team won, scoring 505 points to St. Ignatius’ 485. North Ridgeville came in third with 380.

Academic Challenge is a quiz show for high school students, testing their knowledge of topics ranging from literature and history to physics and geography. A fledgling club was started at the middle school level a few years ago, which is where sophomores Buescher and Kenealy got their start.

Buescher hoped to continue competing in high school and proposed a club to administrators, who approved the idea as long as she could find an advisor. Social studies teacher Karl Neitzel stepped up to the challenge, so to speak.

“Each student has their own areas of expertise,” said Neitzel. “One might know everything about history while another reads all the time.” The quiz structure includes team rounds, where students have time to confer with one another, and lightning rounds, where they have to buzz in as quickly as possible.

All three students said they were extremely nervous about competing on television. In fact, Bruce said she was so scared at the start that she thought she might be sick. But, according to Buescher, “The WEWS staff and our competitors were all super friendly. We had an intense and competitive game, that was also incredibly fun and rewarding.”

Kenealy called the experience “amazing,” and said, “Maple, Rohan and I were proud to represent Heights High on TV.”

The team won first place in an intense back-and-forth final minute that started out with Heights 20 points ahead and saw them tied with St. Ignatius 30 seconds later. With just ten seconds remaining, St. Ignatius was up by 10 points, until Rohan correctly identified Mozart’s opera “The Magic Flute” to pull ahead as the final seconds wound down.

Krissy Dietrich Gallagher, a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights, is a former District teacher and freelance journalist under contract with the CH-UH City School District.
Read your way through ‘the great outdoors’ this summer

with “The Great Outdoors,” a brand new summer reading theme, and will kick off the summer with exciting reading challenges and literacy-rich activities for participants of all ages. From June 1 through Aug. 9, for every book they read, adults will be invited to drop an entry into a ballot box at a library branch for the chance to win weekly gift bags and a grand prize at the end of the summer. Grand prizes include a Fitbit Inspire heart rate and fitness tracker, an Amazon Fire HD 8 tablet, and a Roku Premiere streaming media player.

Adults can further embrace this year’s theme by joining a group discussion of nature-themed classics, such as Henry David Thoreau’s Walden and Alan Weisman’s The World Without Us, at the Lee Road branch; participating in seed saving with the Cleveland Seed Bank at the Coventry Village branch; and testing out their nature knowledge at a “great outdoors” trivia night at Christopher’s Pub.

“We hope adults will find this to be a fun incentive to find time to read this summer, and maybe take a book with them on their way to a park or the beach,” said Chuck Collins, adult services manager. “Some parents find it easier to get their kids to do their summer reading if mom or dad are reading at the same time.”

Children and teens are also encouraged to exercise their literacy skills while participating in their own version of the summer reading program. According to the American Library Association, summer reading programs play an integral role in ensuring that children retain reading and learning skills over the summer recess.

Throughout the summer, young people will be invited to join library staff in celebrating the natural world through free programs about gardening, bicycle maintenance, and outdoor survival. They’ll also have a chance to meet a naturalist from the Nature Center at Shaker Lakes.

“We hope this year’s programs are a ‘down to earth’ way to spend the summer,” said Lapides. “We’d love to see kids enjoy as much time outside as possible and even maybe discover the joys of reading outside, too!”

To learn about more Great Outdoors programs, visit any Heights Libraries branch, or go to www.heightslibrary.org.

Heights Libraries’ summer reading program participants—lots of them.
Isabelle Rew

HEIGHTS LIBRARIES

The Great Outdoors
Isabelle Rew

Summer is just around the corner, and what goes hand-in-hand with picnics, beaches and parks? A good book, or—for many of Heights Libraries’ summer reading program participants—lots of them.
This year, Heights Libraries is encouraging literacy and exploration of a world without walls in a world with “The Great Outdoors,” a brand new summer reading theme, and will kick off the summer with exciting reading challenges and literacy-rich activities for participants of all ages. From June 1 through Aug. 9, for every book they read, adults will be invited to drop an entry into a ballot box at a library branch for the chance to win weekly gift bags and a grand prize at the end of the summer. Grand prizes include a Fitbit Inspire heart rate and fitness tracker, an Amazon Fire HD 8 tablet, and a Roku Premiere streaming media player.

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Isabelle Rew is the community engagement associate for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library System.

Cleveland Heights - University Heights Public Library Board

Meeting highlights

MARCH 18, 2019

Board members present were President Chris Mastror, Vice President James Rossi, Secretary Dana Fowles, Miss Geboor, Annette Iwamoto, Suzanne Mikowski, and Vik Aunmho.

Purchase of computers
The board approved a resolution to approve the purchase of 101 new replacement computers for the library. Computers are re-placed on a five-year rotating basis.

Financial report
Heights Libraries’ fiscal officer reviewed the February financial statement. Total cash balances across the operating accounts, Bower Fund accounts, and investment accounts at the end of January was $16,012,834.76. The board accepted the financial report.

Suicide prevention training
Last month, 27 employees attended Gatekeeper (GPR) suicide prevention training. People trained in GPR (Gestation Prevention, Referral) learn to recognize the warning signs of a suicide crisis and how to question, persuade, and refer someone to help.

Lee Road space utilization study
Staff members are making notes on how library customers use the Lee Road Library during a two-week time period in March. It has been 12 years since the use of the building has been examined. Results of the study will inform planning for future revisions, such as carpeting, meeting rooms, and staff spaces.

Mobile pantry at Coventry Village Library
The library will partner with the Greater Cleveland Food Bank to host a mobile pantry one day a month this summer at the Coventry Village Branch. This event will serve adults 18 years and older. More details will be forthcoming.

Report on elimination of overdue fines
Circulation Services Manager Ly Enerson presented a report on the elimination of nearly all overdue fines since January 2018. This fine was eliminated on March 1, 2018. Total fines on all accounts collected in March was $1,182.83. The board accepted the report on elimination of overdue fines.

Cleveland Heights - University Heights Public Library Board

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Report on elimination of overdue fines
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UH Branch Sunday events
Weekend programs were moved from Saturdays to Sundays at the University Heights Branch, to improve attendance. Reading & Rescue, typically offered on Saturdays, saw an increase of 168 percent when held on Sundays.

Youth services
In February, youth services staff visited six preschools, daycares and schools, reading stories to 249 children. Librarians visiting the high school engaged with 75 teens. Youth services librarians also produced two African and Caribbean-themed puppet shows, attended by 91 people.

DWW Observer: Elizabeth M. Tracey

Look for earlier and often expanded postings of meeting summaries online at www.heightslibrary.org. See disclaimer on page 8.
Every day is Earth Day at Fairmount Cleaners

Mike Cook

Earth Day is April 22. For the owners of Fairmount Cleaners, every day is Earth Day.

Verne & Ellsworth Hann Inc., the Cleveland Heights-based heating and cooling company, selected Heather Kwedder of Willoughby as the winner in its third annual Helping Hann Furnace Giveaway. The company provided her with a free furnace and installation. "We’re on the same page as our customers, and we are always making environmental improvements." Fairmount Cleaners’ solvent of choice, SOLVONK4® is now bio-based, and has been awarded the USDA BioPreferred product label. SOLVONK4® is the first and only bio-based solvent in the dry-cleaning industry.

As defined by the USDA, bio-based products are derived from plants and other renewable agricultural, marine and forestry materials, and provide an alternative to conventional petroleum-derived products. Made primarily from corn, SOLVONK4® is also completely biodegradable. "Bio-derived and sustainable are words never before applied to the dry-cleaning industry," Steve said. "There is peace of mind in using SOLVONK4®. We know we are safe using it, our customers are better off, and the environmental liability is eliminated as well."

Solvant use is not the only way Fairmount Cleaners tries to help the environment. "We use plastic bags made with 50-percent recycled material, and we offer reusable fabric garment bags to further reduce our need for plastic," Steve explained. "We use many recycled paper products as well. In addition, we manually recycle many hangers we receive back from our customers."

"Heights Observer readers named Fairmount Cleaners, at 216 South Taylor Road, “Best University Heights Business” in the 2019 Best of the Heights Awards.

Mike Cook is the communications and civic engagement coordinator for University Heights.
Lusty Wrench closes after 40 years

Patti Substelny

Cleveland Heights has many intelligent, knowledgeable, skilled, dedicated and civic-minded entrepreneurs. Sam Bell, who has been one such local treasure for nearly 40 years, made the decision to close his business, The Lusty Wrench, as of mid-March.

Bell started The Lusty Wrench in 1979, after having taken his own car to be serviced before a road trip. Despite the “trip check,” the car broke down en route. The frustration of having just paid a professional to attend to the car to prevent such misery and inconvenience spurred Bell to wonder: “Is it feasible to run an auto repair shop based on competence, honesty and integrity?” He opened The Lusty Wrench the next week.

Bell said of his business, “Our goal has always been to provide excellent mechanical repair and maintenance services to all our automotive customers. We’re in the service business, so our job is to say, ‘Yes.’ ”

“Our customers see the results of our continued devotion to ongoing training to stay on top of rapidly evolving technologies. Over the years,” said Bell, “many customers have become friends. My employees are as devoted to service as I am, and they are the key to our success.”

Bell cited “a number of factors” for his decision to close The Lusty Wrench. “Mostly,” he said, “it’s a question of age and energy. Auto repair is still very physically demanding work, and some mornings I can barely move my fingers. I’ve been doing this for 40-plus hours a week for 40 years.”

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“Knowing I’d have access to high quality healthcare was an integral part of my decision.”

Bell himself has been honored with awards and other recognition, including being named ASE Technician of the Year in 2010, and receiving an Entrepreneurs for Sustainability award as a Champion of Sustainability for his pioneering concept of what he calls “eco-conscious auto repair.” He is profiled in Case Western Reserve University’s Weatherhead School of Management’s “Business as an Agent of World Betterment” collection.

Bell’s civic involvement has included supporting youth soccer, scouting, the National Ski Patrol, and serving on the CH-UH City School District’s Lay Facilities Committee as chair of its Sustainability Working Group. He currently serves on the Cleveland Heights Transportation Advisory Committee.

Patti Substelny was a Lusty Wrench customer for more than 20 years, and is a proud resident of Cleveland Heights.
S’Wonderful Gifts delivers personalized service close to home

Libba Jackson-D’Ambrosi

S’Wonderful Gifts at 2354 Lee Road can solve a gift emergency faster than a drive to a big box store. Bill Wort opened his shop in the Cedar Lee shopping district in November 2015, after 32 years as a buyer for museum shops in Washington, D.C., and elsewhere. The store stocks a cross-section of gifts, from whimsical to wearable—silly and sassy socks are a perennial best-seller during the holidays.

Wort’s collection is curated but eclectic. Maybe that’s because he worked for 16 years at the Smithsonian’s Asian museums in D.C., buying things that had to be related to their Asian collections. “I don’t have that restriction now!” exclaimed Wort. “It’s fun when you go to market and think . . . I love this. I haven’t seen this before.”

May 17 workshop will focus on home-based businesses

On May 17 home-based business owners will have the opportunity to learn strategies and techniques on how to move into an office or storefront. Future-Heights is sponsoring the free workshop “From Home-Based to Storefront,” which aims to teach business owners about the resources available to them in the community, what to consider when determining whether to move into a storefront or rented office space, and strategies for growth.

The workshop will host two speakers, Jennifer Corso and Marc Rosen of Petronzio Schnier Co., LPA, who have both focused much of their careers on small business development. Corso practices in the area of employment law, and advises entrepreneurs and small businesses with such issues as setting up a business entity, protecting business ideas and intellectual property, funding a growing business, acquiring new businesses and more.

“From Home-Based to Storefront” will take place at Ensemble Theatre at the Coventry PEACE Campus, 2843 Washington Boulevard at 8 a.m., on Friday, May 17. RSVP at www.homebasedtostorefront.eventbrite.com or e-mail sbasu@futureheights.org.

S’Wonderful owner Bill Wort made his colorful Lee Road shop.

His products fall into five categories: jewelry and other wearable accessories, such as watches, scarves and purses; games and toys; stationery/cards; pens/pencils; and books (mostly children’s). Whether big or small, items are laid out to be seen and enjoyed, as if in a museum. “I hate to say this because it’s so unhumble, but I have a lot of things you don’t find everywhere,” said Wort. “Unique things make this a good destination.”

Wort looks at the completed Lee Road rejuvenation as “momentary pain for long-term gain,” noting that street parking and turn lanes have improved business.

S’Wonderful Gifts has more natural light now, thanks to restoration of the storefront’s upper facade. Building owner Alan Kraus says co-ordinated new signs are in the works for all the businesses in his building, and he’s also adding a patio at the Lee/Meadowbrook corner.

Wort, who also worked as a buyer for the Navy Memorial, the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and the Ringling Museum in Florida, is planning to buy new games at ASTRA, the American Specialty Toy Retailing Association show in Pittsburgh, this June. He enjoys giving the personal attention shoppers don’t get in a chain store, and sees beyond his own business. “It’s about this whole block,” Wort said. “There’s a lot of vitality, and I do appreciate that my customers make the choice to shop locally. I’m enthusiastic about what’s happening at Cedar-Lee in general.”

People are realizing that it’s not true that everything on Amazon is cheaper, Wort said, adding, “Shoppers like things now, but I can get people things today. Walk in! There’s a name for that . . . a store!”

Libba Jackson-D’Ambrosi earned a bachelor of journalism from University of Missouri. Her communications career in radio, television, education, philanthropy, water and wonder runs through seven states.
Dobama Theatre wins Actors Equity award for diversity

Karen Sandstrom is the next featured artist in the Heights Arts Spotlight Gallery in a show opening May 10. Sandstrom's recent body of work, "Such Agreeable Friends," pays homage to George Eliot's quote, which observes the personified virtues of the kinship animals offer. Sandstrom's work in this show combines handwritten text and illustrated imagery in an article-style composition. Mentions of local weather, animals, seasonal fruits and trees, etc., construct a life that is familiar to any number of suburban Cleveland residents. The mellow exterior and visually flowing scroll of the lettering sits in contrast to the sharper, snarkier voice of the text. Focusing a humorous and honest lens on a calmer, softer approach to dissecting the everyday, Sandstrom's pieces do not aim to critique or to settle for paying homage. They heighten an awareness of the existence of these pleasantly simple and small moments that would otherwise be overlooked. Come to the opening reception on May 10, 6 to 9 p.m., to see how the narrator works in conjunction with an interwringing collage of tenderly rendered watercolor pieces, and converse with the artist herself.

Heights Arts' Ekphrastacy: Artists Talk + Poets Respond program combines short talks by exhibiting artists with readings by area poets of poems written specifically in response to the works on view. The event is slated for Thursday, May 23, 7 p.m., for the exhibition Emergent, which showcases the work of 11 recent graduates of the region's college and university art programs. The exhibition will be on view through June 9.

Michelleangelo Lovelace's Spotlight exhibition closes on May 5. An exhibition of Lovelace's work in New York City last summer sold out every painting. Now that he has legitimately hit the "big time," this may well be his last exhibition in Cleveland. Heights Arts is able to present this show because of the longterm friendship between Lovelace and Bill Schubert, the Heights Arts exhibition community team member. Schubert championed Lovelace's work when Schubert operated Footsteps Gallery some years ago in Larchmere. Layers of realism and commentary distinguish Lovelace's work, visually providing recognizable locations throughout Cleveland juxtaposed with an emotional and socio-political reality depicted through darkly humorous labeling. Don't miss this chance to experience the work of a Cleveland original.

For more information on Heights Arts community programs and events, including house concerts, gallery performances and outreach, visit www.heightsarts.org.

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Birthday presence—food, music and baseball

My birthday has always been in May. Every year of my life. All 54 of them. I’m not totally sure of that number, but I know it’s been at least 54. I have eaten dinner at Tommy’s on Coventry on my birthday for, I believe, 42 of the past 46 years.

One birthday that really stands out in my memory was the one in 1978, when a woman I was dating at the time convinced Tommy Fello to sell her an enormous restaurant-size Cherry Cheese Pie—my favorite dessert for many years—which she presented to me for a birthday present. I took it home and didn’t share it with anyone, not even that kind, thoughtful woman (I lived alone, which made that easier), and I ate the entire, enormous Cherry Cheese Pie. In two sittings, in a two-day period. I kept thinking, while I was indulging in that exercise of gluttony, that I would really regret consuming so much of it in such a short amount of time. But I was wrong. I didn’t. I felt great afterward. And back then, in an era during which I was super-skinny, I remained so, even after ingesting so many calories, carbs, fat grams and whatever else.

My mother was well known among her family and friends for several things, two of which were her cooking and baking, and her imaginative creation of themed birthday cakes. The first one I can remember was for my fifth birthday: a sheet cake on top of which was a complicated, mostly edible, playground scene. And then my birthday party took place at a playground—the one that was in the section of Forest Hills Park on Superior Road, at the north end of the street where I grew up, Belmar.

And, for some reason, I remember that my main birthday present that year, when I turned 5, was a record album I had actually asked for—Rossini’s William Tell Overture. That was the last year of my life that I didn’t want rock or folk records. I knew the music because it was the theme from “The Lone Ranger” TV series, but I wanted to really hear the music—all of it, and without the narration over it. (Narrator: “A fiery horse with the speed of light, a cloud of dust and a hearty, ‘Hi Yo Silver!’ The Lone Ranger!” The Lone Ranger’s voice: “Hi Yo Silver, away!”) I remember that my main birthday present that year, when I turned 5, was a record album I had actually asked for—Rossini’s William Tell Overture. That was the last year of my life that I didn’t want rock or folk records. I knew the music because it was the theme from “The Lone Ranger” TV series, but I wanted to really hear the music—all of it, and without the narration over it. (Narrator: “A fiery horse with the speed of light, a cloud of dust and a hearty, ‘Hi Yo Silver!’ The Lone Ranger!” The Lone Ranger’s voice: “Hi Yo Silver, away!”) It was the first—place Detroit Tigers. The Indians had lost a bunch of games before this series, but they had won the first two of this one. We kept giving up runs, but then coming back and tying the score. We were losing in the last half of the 13th inning, when, with two outs and two on, Detroit’s best relief pitcher intentionally walked a batter to load the bases, and then, in the funniest and oddest ending I’ve ever seen, that pitcher, with an injured Asdrubal Cabrera on third base, balked, allowing Cabrera to walk home and score the winning run.

Then we went to Tommy’s for dinner. An Uncle Gay and a Fresh Fruit Freeze for me. Tommy’s no longer offers the Cherry Cheese Pie. But I didn’t need to order dessert there, because my mother had made me a batch of my lifelong favorite cookies—Hurry-Up Butter Cookies, chewy diamond-shaped cookies made of just flour, butter, sugar and lemon juice, with nuts on top. I was not living alone, but I still managed to eat pretty much all of them. And that’s memorable—not that I ate them all, which is, sadly, normal, but that my mother made them, because that was the last time she made them.

She moved to a nursing home a year later, where she spent the next four years. She died a couple of months ago. And I do have her cookie recipe, if you’re wondering.

So, anyway, this month, for my birthday, I’ll be back at Tommy’s, as usual.

I’ll probably see you there.

David Budin is a freelance writer for national and local publications, the former editor of Cleveland Magazine and Northern Ohio Live, an author, and a professional musician and comedian. His writing focuses on the arts and, especially, pop-music history. If you’d like the recipe for Hurry Up Butter Cookies, you can contact him at popcycles@sbcglobal.net.

This is not a Tommy’s Cherry Cheese Pie, but it looks like it, except that the one from Tommy’s, that I ate all of, was much larger.