Weil captures rare moonlit images of Lake View

Greg Donley

Cleveland Heights photographer Michael Weil first began to think about making nighttime photographs in Lake View Cemetery almost 10 years ago.

“Lake View was part of my growing up,” said Weil. “As a child I would go with my father to visit the gravesite of his parents. Even as a child it struck me as not the typical cemetery where you’d hold your breath as you drove past.”

That early connection has developed into a two-part photographic presentation, Moonlight in the Gates: 150 Years of Lake View Cemetery in a New Reflective Light which will be on view in a special installation throughout the cemetery from July 22, 2019, through October 2020. Meanwhile, prints from the series also will be on view at Weil’s Foothill Galleries in Cleveland Heights, July 23 through Aug. 31.

Katherine Goss, president and CEO of Lake View Cemetery, recalled the first time Weil contacted her: “I met Michael shortly after I came to Cleveland about nine years ago. I didn’t know who he was, but he called me up and asked if maybe he could camp out in the cemetery overnight and take pictures. We get a lot of unusual questions—you know paranormal and things like that. I said I wasn’t sure. He asked a couple more times—could he come in and camp out overnight and photograph? He was experienced with the outdoors.

Continued on page 2

Elected-mayor petition drive exceeds its goal

Michael Bennett

Citizens for an Elected Mayor (CEM) delivered to the city 3,962 signatures on petitions to put a charter amendment on the Nov. 6 ballot that, if approved, would create the office of a full-time elected mayor in Cleveland Heights for the first time since the city was chartered in 1921.

Susanna Niermann O’Neil, city council acting clerk and assistant city manager, accepted the petitions on June 17 from members of CEM. The grassroots local ballot issue committee had planned to collect at least 3,200 signatures to help ensure it reached the 2,200 valid signatures needed.

“This fast and impressive show of support assures us that citizens eagerly want to be able to elect their own mayor,” said Tony Cuda, CEM campaign manager. “We look forward to the issue being placed on the ballot and working with volunteers to ensure it passes.”

More than 50 volunteers collected the signatures in just over three weeks at community events, public areas, and businesses such as Zagara’s Marketplace.

Under state law, the clerk will forward the petitions to the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections to verify signatures. The board will confirm the number of registered voters who signed. If there are enough valid signatures and the petition is otherwise valid, city council will approve an ordinance.

Crime rate in UH dropped 32 percent in 2018

Maya Khawam

The crime rate continues to drop in University Heights, in part due to the hard work of the University Heights Police Department (UHPD).

Serious “Part I” crimes dropped by 32 percent in 2018, according to the UHPD’s annual report, as presented to UH City Council last month. Adult and juvenile arrests fell 12 percent.

Under Police Chief Dustin Rogers, the UHPD has implement-
Letters/Opinion

City’s original goals for TOH have been lost

Steve Rajki

What’s refreshing about ascending Cedar Glen is that you’re entering a neighborhood of greenery.

The city of Cleveland Heights and its Top of the Hill (TOH) developer have chosen to monetize the TOH land to the max by placing a confrontational wall-like structure at the city’s most valuable and prominent property—a site which should be welcoming, not in-your-face.

Civic council members, in despera-
tion to get TOH as they come in—and still consider
work that major issues are left unad-
dressed? Is it because council doesn’t
have a checklist to make sure all issues
are attended to, and something like
maintenance of the water system [is]
forgotten for decades?

What happened with CH government?

To the Editor:

A column by Deborah Van Kleeft and Carla Rautenberg in the May 2019 Heights Observer asked for a change from a city manager form of govern-
ment to an elected full-time mayor for Cleveland Heights.

The motivation for this call is stated as a poorly working city manager form of government. They state that CH City Manager Robert Downey “left a mess” and had a “sud-
den departure,” in 2012.

They and others call for chang-
ing the form of government partly because they think council members are overwhelmed. They think that the city manager was less than forthright about doing his job and our elected council members were too tuckered out to keep tabs on him.

To my knowledge, there has been no investigation into former city mair-
downey’s suspicious behavior. Apparently, the people in authority in CH government have no idea what happened and haven’t had an idea in the seven years since his departure.

It appears that instead of deter-
mining how the city manager form of government in Cleveland Heights went off the rails—without learning what happened—some citizens simply want to change the form of govern-
ment instead.

There were two opinion stories in the June 2019 Heights Observer describing the advantages of a city manager form of government. And I agree that city manager government is better than a politicized strong mayor government, given that the fire working properly, which apparently is not the case in Cleveland Heights.

What is missing is an analysis as to what happened with city manager government to cause its demise in Cleveland Heights.

Is it really because city council members are so overloaded with work that major issues are left unad-
dressed? Is it because council doesn’t use a checklist to make sure all issues are addressed, or something like maintenance of the water system [is] forgotten for decades?

What happened? What can we improve?

Lee Bardof Cleveland Heights

Cleveland Heights government should serve current needs

To the Editor:

This letter is a response to Alan Rapoport’s opinion article, “A city manager form of government works well,” published in the Heights Ob-
server’s June issue.

As a former mayor, Rapoport understands that Cleveland Heights’ government structure, cit-
ing history, progress and a contrast-
ing example.

However: 1) The current struc-
ture is a “good government” initia-
tive of the 1920s Progressive Era, but 100 years later, Cleveland Heights is almost three times larger with different challenges, demographics and context. 2) He thinks the sys-
tem works well and cites as proof several new buildings (a new city hall and two fire stations). But these are mere updates, neither visionary nor forward thinking. 3) He is right that no form of government is a “magic solution,” and points to East Cleveland as a negative example. But he could just as well have pointed to University Heights or Shaker Heights and other nearby suburbs that are operating very well with elected mayors.

Cleveland Heights needs to move forward and elect our mayor.

Cristine C. Rom

Cleveland Heights

Advertise in the Observer

CRIME continued from page 1

has decreased during this time. The decline in theft was a large contributor to the reduction in the overall crime rate, with 264 cases in 2017, and only 171 in 2018.

“Part II” crimes, including less serious offenses, decreased by 15 percent during this same time period as well. The Investigative Bureau has also seen success in the last year, with 42.4 percent of cases cleared.

Rogers credited all members of the UHPD, and all of those in the community, who collectively worked together to have a positive impact on crime in 2018.

“Our department personnel are dedicated professionals who take pride in providing ethical and diligent service to the community; their hard work and sacrifice is noticed and appreciated, and it’s a privilege to work alongside them,” said Rogers.

In 2018, the UHPD also im-
plemented programs aimed at strengthening the relationship between police and citizens via community engagement and social media presence. New initiatives include Coffee with a Cop, Police National Night Out, and increased use of Facebook and Nextdoor.

Calls for police service dropped from 24,182 in 2017 to 20,559 in 2018, 15 percent. This decrease is due in large measure to the significant reduction in crime, plus [the UHPD’s] active and more engaged role in the community.

The UHPD will host its second National Night Out on Tuesday, Aug. 6, at Purvis Park.

Maya Khazam is an intern at Univer-
sity Heights City Hall.
Great? TOH design isn’t even good

M. Joan Mallick

CH officials have repeatedly said that citizen input into the Top of the Hill (TOH) design is a matter of personal opinions and not worthy of serious consideration. They say design decisions should be left to credentialed architects and city planners who understand principles of good design. At the suggestion of a city official, I’ve read some key city planning texts. I found not only that the principles are easy to understand, but that the current TOH design violates at least four major principles of good design.

The primary design principle is scale. The structures should be built to focus on space; space is not merely something to be filled in with buildings. Once CH officials decided that the four-acre TOH land would be a high-density housing project, it became impossible to use space as a basic and crucial design element. What remains of space in the complex are three small green spaces located on the periphery of the buildings. This lack of space is directly responsible for the claustrophobic feeling of the design. It is also no small matter that the space once enjoyed by the residents of the Buckingham will be obliterated.

The next design principle is to incorporate wandering paths that provide a sense of calmness and personal harmony with the area. There are no dedicated roaming paths in TOH. The paths that will naturally develop for residents and visitors will be to and from the parking garage. Cedar Fairmount is one of the most walkable neighborhoods in the city. This complex is essentially a fortress disfiguring casual entry and spoiling the pleasure of wandering.

The next design principle is scale; meaning buildings should be proportional to one another and the surrounding neighborhoods. The 10-story building at the apex of the project is radically out of scale with the neighborhood, if not the entire city. Developers have tried to substitute graduated buildings from the eastern end of the complex to the apex building. However, anyone coming up Cedar Hill will be confronted by 10-stories of massive structure which show no sign of being graduated from any surrounding buildings. In addition, the Cedar Road buildings at the east end of the complex dwarf the adjacent buildings on a horizontal scale. Their flat fronts contribute to the fortress-like impression.

The final design element is harmony, meaning that buildings should have a unifying theme to tie them to one another and to the neighborhood. When CH City Council decided against replicating the Tudor and Georgian architecture of the area, they precluded a design that would easily blend in. Most egregious is that each of the TOH buildings is totally different from the others in design and building materials. There is not a single design element that is carried throughout the complex. The result is visual chaos. One urban planning text stated that one of the major mistakes developers make is to cluster buildings with significant design differences together and pass the design off as an example of modern architecture.

There is currently a dispute about design differences together and pass the design off as an example of modern architecture.

M. Joan Mallick is a 47-year resident of Cleveland Heights who has lived for the past 40 years on South Overlook Road.
It is somewhat difficult to explain how education today differs from what it was 15-plus years ago. Much is the same, but the differences are both subtle and obvious. There are still textbooks, homework, tests, classes kids enjoy and those they don’t. Heights High has not changed as much as people might think. (Most of the building is new and we finally replaced the 1970s windows that allowed snow and rain to come inside.)

When I was in ninth grade at Wiley Junior High, more than 40 years ago, I worked on the school newspaper. I am not sure how this happened, but it was probably through the prompting of my English teacher, Mary Chaitoff. I have been thinking about Mrs. Chaitoff recently because she passed away, at age 90, not long ago. How did this teacher encourage me to work on the newspaper? Why did I enjoy her English classes so much, even with her constant pushing everyone to do better?

I had never really had much interest in English, but somehow Mrs. Chaitoff inspired me to work pretty hard. The newspaper was hard work, but I enjoyed doing the layout. Stories were written, edited, and sent to the typesetter. Then we would lay them out by hand, with scissors and glue—not computers! The finished layouts went to the printer who did the rest. We produced several Wiley Wigwams that year, including one introducing the new principal, Jim Cipolletti, to the school.

We produced several Wiley Wigwams that year, including one introducing the new principal, Jim Cipolletti, to the school. Chip, as he was known, stayed in that position for 20 years, before filling in at the high school, after I became a teacher there. After my ninth-grade year, Mrs. Chaitoff invited several students to her house for a swim during the summer. She lived way out near SOM Center Road and a few of us decided to bike out there. She was a welcoming and terrific host. I kept this tradition of visiting once during the summer for many years. Later, I would bring my family to visit for lunch or a cookout. By then, Mary Chaitoff was my colleague at the high school.

After she retired, she continued to substitute on a regular basis, well into her 80s. She was an amazing person with so much energy it was hard to imagine her ever standing still. I suspect that there were many former students who had similar relationships with her.

There are currently all sorts of board policies that probably inhibit, or at least discourage, fantasizing with students and former students. I am not all that certain that Mary and I would have had this long-standing relationship had we not been able to meet outside of class.

Nowadays, so many concerns about liability and lawsuits exist, especially for non-sanctioned events involving students and staff. For example, there was never any thought about having a lifeguard on duty for our get-togethers. Today, administrators and school board members would cringe at the thought of this taking place. I know that board policies are meant to protect everyone from injuries and lawsuits, but so much has been lost. There were freedoms that we had years ago that are gone, and that saddens me. There are still teachers who find opportunities through clubs or sports to create and nurture close relationships with students, but in the litigious nature of today’s world, obstacles exist that make it hard to create and nurture those relationships.

Being on Facebook with former students is nice, but it is not quite the same as a real, in-person relationship. Although many aspects of school life remain the same as they were, other intangibles have been lost as society has changed.

Ari Klein is a lifelong community member, math teacher at Cleveland Heights High School, and president of the Cleveland Heights Teachers Union.
We applaud Cleveland Heights for a recent national honor. Out of 66 plans adopted during 2018, the city’s Complete and Green Streets policy was named best in the country by the National Complete Streets Coalition, a project of Smart Growth America. (See related article on page 9.)

In particular, the policy garnered praise for attention to detail, binding language, and balancing the needs of all users, according to WCQN-FM.

We’re highlighting it here because its creation and adoption were driven by citizens, ably supported by CH City Council and staff.

Adopted by city council on May 16, 2018, the policy requires the city to consider the safety and convenience of everyone who uses our sidewalks, roads and parking lots—pedestrians, cyclists, public transit riders, children, the disabled and the elderly, along with motorists and drivers of service, delivery and emergency vehicles.

Complete streets advocates often talk about “traffics calming” and “road diets.” These concepts involve such design changes as narrowing lanes or reducing the number of lanes, adding turn lanes and buffered bike lanes, and making crosswalks shorter and more prominent. All these elements encourage drivers to slow down and be more conscious of sharing the street, leading to safer conditions for pedestrians and cyclists.

Citizens appointed by CH City Council to the the newly formed Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) launched the city’s complete streets initiative in 2015. TAC members, led by former co-chairs Marc Lefkowitz and Howard Maier, worked closely with Planning Director Richard Wong and Council Member Mary Dunbar to develop the policy.

They chose to add “green” to “complete” so that, in addition to prioritizing “ease of travel, comfort and safety for [the] most vulnerable users,” the policy requires minimizing stormwater runoff and coordinating sewer line and road improvements. This should help as the city works to bring its sewers into compliance with EPA regulations. One oversight: We wish the policy had promoted the use of native plants in public landscaping.

Wong listed eight completed or ongoing projects that bear the stamp of Complete and Green Streets so far.

A major missed opportunity occurred with the repaving of Noble Road, when the county declined to include bike lanes, on the grounds that the cost of painting and maintaining them would be prohibitive. Lefkowitz suggested that a formalized communication process between the city, the county and its engineering consultants could lead to more effective problem-solving in the future.

The policy requires a detailed, annual report to the TAC, city council and the public. Wong hopes to complete reports for both 2018 and 2019 by January. We look forward to reading those.

It’s not unusual in many cities for progressive legislation to result from resident-initiated campaigns, which gradually wear away municipal government resistance.

The three years it took to bring Complete and Green Streets from idea to passage suggest some sort of snag. Nevertheless, that’s better than council taking five years to pass foreclosure bond legislation, not to mention 23 years to amend our landmark ordinance so it finally meets Ohio historic preservation standards for Certified Local Governments.

Despite the long time frame, we commend the collaboration of a council member, a city planner and a committee of dedicated, knowledgeable residents that has earned national recognition for a plan to make the city a safer, more welcoming and environmentally friendly place to live, work and visit. That’s something to celebrate.

Now it is up to the TAC, staff, council and watchful residents to make sure that the high standards of this award-winning policy are upheld.

Deborah Van Kleef and Carla Rautenberg are longtime residents of Cleveland Heights. Contact them at heigthsdemocracy@gmail.com.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2233 Devonshire Road</td>
<td>must see garden, mature plantings surround a pool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2197 South Overlook Rd</td>
<td>colorful perennial garden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2216 South Overlook Rd</td>
<td>attractive front garden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2218 South Overlook Rd</td>
<td>unique water feature, front only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2222 South Overlook Rd</td>
<td>front porch living at its best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2226 South Overlook Rd</td>
<td>unusual garden of cactus and succulents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2855 North Park Blvd</td>
<td>one of a kind garden, tropical plants and yard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2235 Woodmere Dr</td>
<td>three season beauty in former Victory Garden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2270 Tabor Dr</td>
<td>great use of rock &amp; mulch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2281 Tabor Dr</td>
<td>variety of sun and shade perennials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2180 Demingston Dr</td>
<td>surprise secluded area in back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2201 Demingston Dr</td>
<td>well landscaped back and front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2232 Demingston Dr</td>
<td>mature sun and shade garden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2224 Middlefield Dr</td>
<td>interesting Japanese-style garden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2176 Chaffield Dr</td>
<td>English perennial garden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2229 N. St James Parkway</td>
<td>cottage shade garden, sprinklers in flower boxes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Noble Neighborhood, Langton Road, 3696, 3684, 3680, 3646, 3674, 3703, 3697, 3687, 3683, 3681

10 pollinator pocket gardens: Tom Gibson, Elsa Johnson and Madeline Macklin worked with CHS residents to attract birds, butterflies and bees; unify a street; and expose a new generation to the value of gardens and neighbors.

**Fairfax Community Garden**

Fairfax Elem. School, 3150 Fairfax Rd

**Oxford Community Garden**

Oxford Elem. School, Oxford Rd S. of Noble

Tour the Garden Walk with a map on your phone

Supporting strangers strengthens community

“The Common Good

Susie Kaeser

“We need to pay more attention to the good news,” observed Jaqueline Blockson at a reception honoring two college scholarship recipients. Community members had gathered at Forest Hill Church to offer financial and emotional support to students and express confidence in their capacity to navigate the future. It was affirming and hopeful.

Blockson, a wonderful ambassador to the community and advocate for Heights High students, is the point person for connecting community donors who want to provide college scholarships with the students who need them. This year, Heights High graduating seniors received $96,000 in scholarships from 45 different scholarship funds. Blockson was the matchmaker that made it work.

Many of the scholarship donors were so impressed with the students who applied for support that they raised additional funds to be able to help all of them. This was another reason Blockson thinks we have a lot to celebrate.

The uplifting Forest Hill gathering shined the spotlight on two strangers to the church, 2019 Heights graduates Treasure Eiland and Trevious Johnson. The congregation provided the seed money in honor of one of its activist members, retired school board member Ron Register, and garnered additional support from community members who wanted to honor his service by investing in future leaders.

They wanted to do more than send a check. The reception was an opportunity to meet the students and give these young adults a chance to meet the people who want the best for them. One of the biggest hurdles for community members who want to make a difference to individuals is access to the intended recipients. This can be especially daunting when working with an institution, like the public schools, which has massive needs and faces endless demands. Who do you call when you want to help a student?

When it comes to scholarships, it is Blockson. A member of the guidance staff at Cleveland Heights High School for the last 28 years, her work complements that of the guidance counselors. She does everything college-related.

A master of relationships, she is the connector between the school and college representatives, and between scholarship donors and students.

From her office inside the school, she guides students and families through the daunting, and often intimidating, process of planning for college and finding the funds to finance it. She tracks down students to make sure they reach high and follow through. She manages the process from when the scholarships are set up to when they are awarded. Her warmth, tenacity and commitment help students and families access the life-changing process of higher education. She loves her job and it shows.

As the past director of Reaching Heights, one of my roles was to mobilize and direct community resources to support the success of our schools. This required finding meaningful, realistic and nonintrusive opportunities. Harnessing and directing goodwill is a valid and essential activity. I am grateful that Reaching Heights continues to play that role, and I am grateful that the school district invests in a staff member who can play this role in supporting our students to pursue education beyond Heights High. They found a truly approachable person when they hired Blockson.

I am always moved when the members of our generous community invest in the well-being of strangers. This impulse to want others to succeed, and to share in our good fortune, strengthens our society. All of our lives and our community are made better from these acts of kindness. It happens both in big ways and small. It is profound and humane.

It is important to remember the value of embracing those we don’t know, and it is good news when we do.

Susie Kaeser is a 40-year resident of Cleveland Heights and the former director of Reaching Heights. She is active with the Heights Coalition for Public Education and the League of Women Voters.

Opinion section continues on page 10.
Home-repair assistance available to eligible University Heights residents

Mike Cook

Help is on the way for University Heights residents who need assistance keeping their homes in good shape and up to code.

Thanks to a unanimous vote by UH City Council, low-income residents and seniors are now eligible to receive up to $3,000 to pay for needed repairs to the exteriors of their homes. Residents who are issued a citation ordering that a repair be made may apply for the grant. Homeowners would be required to match the grant at 10 percent.

“Making needed home repairs can be a financial burden, so I hope this grant program will be helpful to our homeowners,” Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan said. “This is another big step in our strategy to maintain and improve our city’s housing stock.”

The Property Maintenance Grant Program aims to improve aesthetics and eliminate blight by promoting investment in existing homes, and incentivizing upkeep and modernization.

Housing and Community Development Director Patrick Grogan-Myers explained to council that this grant came to be after evaluating resources available to residents. “We identified an opportunity for the city to be able to do more for our low-income residents,” Grogan Myers said.

To be eligible to receive grant funding:
• the property must be a single- or two-family, owner-occupied property;
• the property must be current on property taxes or on a county payment plan;
• the project must be the result of a violation notice from the Housing and Community Development Department;
• the property owner must meet income guidelines and provide at least a 10 percent match to awarded grant funds.

The program follows income outlines from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. To be eligible, a one-person household income cannot exceed $39,000 annually. For a two-person household, the maximum income is $45,250. The income limit for a three-person household is $50,900, and for a four-person household, the limit is $56,670.

For more information about the Property Maintenance Grant Program, or to download the program application, visit www.universityheights.com/housing-grant. University Heights residents who may also call the Housing and Community Development Department at 216-923-7800.

Budin’s award was likewise based on submission of three sample columns, about which the judges commented: “Witty, real and sincere insights given into the life of a true independent. So enjoyable and inspiring.”

The winner of best column was Jim Ingraham of the Elyria Chronicle-Telegram, which also was named the best newspaper for the third year running.

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

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University Heights City Council

Meeting highlights

MAY 20, 2019

Present were Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan and council members Pamela Cameron, Phil Bird, John Rach, Michelle Wass and Mark Wiseman. Steven Sims arrived at 7:10 p.m.

Public comments

Cleveland Heights City Manager Tasha Briley stepped down.

Property maintenance grant program

Council approved the creation of a new grant program to assist low-income residents who must make repairs to their homes. They can receive up to $2,500 with at least a 10 percent match from the owner. There are income guidelines based on household size and income.

Tennis court rebuild

Patrick Grogan-Meyers, housing, and community development director, will submit a grant application to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources for rebuilding the second set of tennis courts at Purvis Park. City Engineer Joe Gazi is working on an estimate of the cost, but the grant application is due June 1. The city can apply for 75 percent of the projected cost. The work would be budgeted for, and done, in 2020.

Fire safety inspection

Council authorized ordinance 2019-26, which will require a fire safety inspection before occupancy of any commercial building.

Parks and Recreation zoning change

Grogan-Meyers stated that the new zoning code would govern the use of all parks and recreation areas for permitted and accessory uses, including requirements of buffer zones between parks and adjacent homes. Current uses will be grandfathered into the code. This was presented on first reading.

Inspection fee schedule

A proposal to update the Bureau of Fire Prevention ordinance would clarify the fee schedule for nonresidential or commercial inspections, and determine when someone would be turned over to the city prosecutor for non-compliance. These “inspections” include uses of fire hydrants, hot roof projects, and mobile food truck inspections.

Yard nuisance abatement

Council approved a contract with Top Level Lawn Service LLC to cut grass higher than 8”, trim shrubs, and clear debris as needed when homeowners do not respond to complaints. Top Level will charge the city $25 per property, but the cost plus fees will then be passed on to the property owner. The city crew had to
Cleveland Heights leads in complete and green streets

Deborah Van Kleeft

In May the National Complete Streets Coalition chose Cleveland Heights’ Complete and Green Streets policy as the “complete street policy of the year.” The policy was adopted in the United States in 2018. The policy is the result of three years of work by the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC), a panel of residents who work closely with Planning Director Richard Wong and City Council Member Mary Dunbar. TAC members made sure the goal of passing a complete streets policy was included in Cleveland Heights’ master plan, adopted March 20, 2018. CH City Council approved the policy on May 16, 2018.

“Complete streets” means re-thinking street design, which for most of the 20th century was oriented toward cars. Examples of complete streets principles, including the redesign of the intersection of Edgehill and Overlook roads, the addition of a buffer strip to the North Park Boulevard bike lane, and the ultimate installation of 900 ADA-compliant curb cuts throughout the city.

City Council charges the departments of Planning and Public Works with prioritizing the safety and comfort of the streets’ most vulnerable users, while at the same time considering the needs of motorists, delivery and service personnel, and emergency responders. Examples of enhanced safety include reducing the width and number of lanes in order to slow traffic, creating buffered bike lanes, shortening and increasing the viability of crosswalks, and making sure curb cuts comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

The “green” part of the policy refers primarily to minimizing rainwater runoff off paved surfaces directly into storm sewers. Measures include eliminating excess pavement and installing retention basins, which filter the water and allow it gradually to be absorbed into the ground.

The policy applies to both public and private streets and parking lots. The city will revamp business districts, roadsides and dangerous intersections in coordination with other infrastructure projects, such as sewer and road improvements.

Wong cited several recent and ongoing projects that incorporate complete streets principles, including the redesign of the intersection of Edgehill and Overlook roads, the addition of a buffer strip to the North Park Boulevard bike lane, and the ultimate installation of 900 ADA-compliant curb cuts throughout the city.

Also consistent with the policy are improvements funded by Safe Routes to School, an Ohio Department of Transportation program, which funds both infrastructure enhancements and educational activities.

Accountability is integral to the policy, which requires the Planning Department to report annually in writing to the TAC, the Citizens Advisory Committee (which oversees Community Development Block Grants), and the general public. The report must include quantitative information in 16 areas, for example: miles of bike lanes added, net number of trees added, and numbers of car accidents, including those involving pedestrians and cyclists. The report must be posted online and made available in hard copy at city hall and libraries. Wong hopes to begin by issuing two reports in December, for 2018 and 2019.

While city staff are making complete and green streets considerations a prominent part of their planning process, Wong encourages residents to look for new design possibilities as well. “If there is an interesting and affordable place that you feel is underused, let us know,” she said.

The TAC comprises eight Cleveland Heights resident appointed by city council for a two-year term. Current co-chairs are Sam Bell, Gayle Lewin and Charlie Mosbrook. The committee will be seeking new members to serve starting Jan. 1. The application form is available on the city’s website. “One of our major objectives,” said Mosbrook, “is to gain diversity.”

Cleveland Heights City Council
Meeting highlights

MAY 20, 2019
Council members present were Mayor Carol Roe, Craig Cobb, Mary Dunbar, Karlhe Sersen and Jason Stein. Melissa Yasnow and Michael N. Ungar were absent. The meeting lasted from 7:35 to 8:44 p.m.

Public comments
Abortion resolution: Eight citizens spoke about Resolution 20-30, “in support of the right to bodily autonomy and the right of women to make abortion decisions.” Committee Member Veronica Hallam explained this was important because, at this stage, the legal strategy and associated costs are unknown. Prior to voting, Council Member Dunbar requested a vote allowing her to receive her husband’s case (according to the Ohio law) an abortion counts as a vote in favor, rather than a non-vote. According to the court’s ruling, allowing the record has to be unanimous, but the vote was 3-3. The amendment passed with Sersen and Stein voting no. Before coming to the amended measure, council members Yasnow, Ungar, Sersen and Rowe stated their support; Council Member Stein stated his view that “it is not our jurisdiction.” The resolution passed 6-1.

Top of the Hill
City Manager Tanisha Briley reported that the final plan for the Top of the Hill development is expected to be presented to the Architectural Board of Review in July and updated drawings will be circled before that meeting.

Lower Shaker Lake
Briley described the Lower Shaker Lake Dam Rehabilitation Project of the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District. The district is constructing compliance upgrades to the dam to improve water quality in the Deer Creek watershed. Plastic safety fencing has been placed around the lake to prevent a repeat of the incident last year in Shaker Heights at Horseshoe Lake, where two children were trapped in the mud of the drained lake.

Top of the Hill parking
Council heard first reading of an ordinance authorizing transfer of city-owned property. Lot 22, in Grandview-Bellfield Development LLC, to address the need for temporary public parking during construction of the Top of the Hill project. The city will control about 40 parking spaces, but Grandview-Bellfield would take responsibility for maintenance, including landscaping, lighting, paving, insurance and utilities.

Mayor’s report
Mayor Roe stated that council’s usual level of agreement is the result of work in the committee of the whole meetings to achieve consensus. When consensus doesn’t happen, the goal is to continue to remain friendly.

CH Senior Center News

Amy Jenkins

Did you know that the city of Cleveland Heights offers social work services to its senior residents through the Cleveland Heights Office on Aging? Two part-time social workers are available to answer questions and offer guidance on a wide variety of topics. They can also offer information on, and connections to, services that can meet more complex needs for seniors.

The services include: Meals on Wheels, for those needing assistance with meal preparation; transportation, for those needing help getting to the doctor or the grocery store; and information on senior housing options, for those who may be ready to downsize but want to remain in the Heights.

Family and friends of senior residents can also call with questions and concerns. This is a valuable service that our city offers, and we encourage you to use it!

To contact an Office on Aging social worker, e-mail jjenkins@clvhts.org, or call 216-961-7377 to arrange an appointment.

Amj Jenkins is supervisor at the Cleveland Heights Office on Aging and the Senior Activity Center. She can be reached at 216-691-7379 or by e-mail at ajenkins@clvhts.org.

Cleveland Heights leads in complete and green streets

Deborah Van Kleeft

In May the National Complete Streets Coalition chose Cleveland Heights’ Complete and Green Streets policy as the “complete street policy of the year.” The policy was adopted in the United States in 2018. The policy is the result of three years of work by the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC), a panel of residents who work closely with Planning Director Richard Wong and City Council Member Mary Dunbar. TAC members made sure the goal of passing a complete streets policy was included in Cleveland Heights’ master plan, adopted March 20, 2018. CH City Council approved the policy on May 16, 2018.

“Complete streets” means re-thinking street design, which for most of the 20th century was oriented toward cars. Examples of complete streets principles, including the redesign of the intersection of Edgehill and Overlook roads, the addition of a buffer strip to the North Park Boulevard bike lane, and the ultimate installation of 900 ADA-compliant curb cuts throughout the city.

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A proposal to change the Cleveland Heights form of government would reject the past. Before supporting such a drastic change, please consider the history of Frank Cain. Cain came to Cleveland Heights when it still was a village. He was elected to village council in 1909, and became mayor in 1914. When Cleveland Heights became a city in 1921, Cain headed a charter commission that defined a new council-manager plan, still in use. Elected as first mayor under a new council-manager plan, still a charter commission that defined the city’s first comprehensive zoning laws. It developed Cain Park. Cain personally influenced the Rockefeller’s to donate land for Forest Hill Park and lobbied them to plan a $60-million Forest Hill residential development. He also lobbied successfully for express bus service on Cedar Road and Fairmount Boulevard. He was a recognized regional spokesman for all Cuyahoga County suburbs. He helped establish Cleveland Heights as the first of Ohio’s cities over 10,000 in population to become debt-free. All these accomplishments occurred under that new plan of government Cain had advocated. A local historian observed that Mayor Cain became “a prominent booster for the early twentieth-century vision of suburbia: an escape from the city—it’s in a combination of unhealthy pollution, visible poverty, and unengaged neighbors—to green spaces and tree-lined streets of single-family homes.” His vision was of a type of Cleveland Heights we still strive to achieve.

During this time, Mayor Cain and city council members had professional assistance from capable city managers. One, Harry Canfield, helped secure millions of federal dollars during the Great Depression for widening and landscaping Cedar Glen, painting school interiors, and constructing parks. Canfield literally took a bullet for Mayor Cain in 1938 when an angry former city employee fired three shots at Cain at the end of a city council meeting. Cain was safe, Canfield took the bullet, and council members wrestled the assailant to the floor. Such was the level of coordination and cooperation between elected officials and city managers.

Present proponents of change argue that only a new form of government can allow our city to progress now. History demonstrates otherwise. Recent history alone includes significant projects implemented by city managers, such as a new modern city hall, two fire stations, improved ambulance service, and a remodeled Cain Park. More recent managed projects include Top of the Hill, Meadowbrook/Le Development, College Club development, improvements to the Cedar Lee Business District, the emerging plan for Noble Road development, and formation of a citywide Community Reinvestment Area to encourage development through tax abatement. The past informs us, and shows these proponents of change are wrong.

A system of government is as good as those people we elect to operate it—and those people our elected officials hire to manage it. Frank Cain proved this with the council-manager system of government he worked so hard to get our city to adopt almost 100 years ago. The record since has established the continuing wisdom of his vision.

Alan Rapoport, a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights, served on CH City Council 1980–1987, and was CH mayor 1982–1987.
Cleveland Heights needs an elected mayor

Michael Bennett and Tony Cuda

Energy and excitement for a charter amendment enabling CHI citizens to elect our mayor are building, buoyed by a successful campaign to gather signatures to place the issue on the Nov. 5 ballot.

Why? Cleveland Heights residents are not satisfied with the status quo. They want a mayor with authority to enact the council’s direction. They want a more dynamic, responsive and accountable government. They want a better future. The proposed amendment addresses these needs in several ways.

The full-time, elected mayor would appoint and work with a full-time professional city administrator. The mayor will appoint the administrator from a list of candidates based on the criteria the council establishes. The administrator will oversee all departments and divisions. The amendment provides the best of both worlds through a partnership of an internally focused administrator who makes the trains run on time and a mayor who, as chief executive, can focus on the community, neighborhoods, residents, businesses, and our position in the region.

The new structure would create more accountability to voters: An elected mayor position creates checks and balances between executive and legislative branches. Today’s voters have no mechanism to show dissatisfaction with management of government. Since council appoints the mayor, dissatisfied residents who want better results must elect four of seven council members who agree. The new structure would put power in the hands of voters to directly elect their executive. The mayor’s appointment authority to the city administrator and the directors of law finance and planning would be subject to council approval. The mayor will approve or disapprove the city’s full-time, elected city administrator. The council will be positioned to attract revenue. Developers told the CRC the current structure made it challenging to do business here. Cleveland has missed major economic opportunities due to declining population and housing values while cities around us with comparable demographics seem to be faring better. Just look at Shaker Heights or Lakewood to see what an elected leader with bold vision can help a city accomplish.

The mayoral election process is explicitly nonpartisan: The amendment proposed by our nonpartisan committee specifies that candidates for mayor will run in nonpartisan elections.

Democracy requires the people, not the government or a commission appointed by it, decide how they want to be governed. Michael Bennett is secretary of Citizens For an Elected Mayor. Tony Cuda is the group’s campaign manager.

How long a shadow does a 50-foot dump pile cast?

Sarah West

Between 2014 and 2017, Arco Recycling in East Cleveland—on Noble Road, just minutes from the north side of Cleveland Heights—operated a dump that Diane Bickett, director of the Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District (CCSWD), described as “a sham facility” that was going to take in material, claim to be recycling it, make money off of having the material dumped there, pocket the money and then abandon the site, in an article by Nick Castrele (www.wideastream.org/news/how-publicly-funded-demolitions-fed-an-east-cleveland-dump). Full of noxious waste, including carcinogenic drywall, the Arco site filled a space the equivalent of five football fields, in a residential area.

As an 18-year resident of Noble neighborhood, I was aware of the environmental concerns the Arco site posed—not only to immediately adjacent homes in East Cleveland, already vulnerable due to municipal neglect, but to all of us living in close proximity to its toxic dust. At its zenith, the height of the litter rose to 50 feet—Bickett rightly noted, “We knew the material would pile up!” Despite CCSWD’s 2015 appeal to the Cuyahoga Land Bank, the agency that gave Arco contracts to demolish properties across the county, to stop dumping, the Land Bank declined to do so. Bickett told Castrele, “The Land Bank said, well, it’s the cheapest location. We’re going to take material there.” It was not until January 2017 that the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency intervened.

The "cheapest location" the Land Bank says appears to cost Ohio taxpayers $9.1 million dollars to clean up. We don’t know yet the extent of Arco’s legacy on public health, let alone the environment. Mr. Bickett made it clear for all of us: this is not a facility that was going to take in material, claim to be recycling it, make money off of the material dumped there, pocket the money and then abandon the site.

Resident in CH and across our region support having an elected mayor: At a April 2018 town hall meeting and in an online survey conducted by the Charter Review Commission (CRC), more than two-thirds of participants said they preferred an elected mayor. As 55 volunteers gathered signatures across the cities, representatives told us the city needs the leadership and accountability that would come with an elected mayor. They want what 55 of the 57 municipalities in Cuyahoga County have: an elected mayor as chief executive. The ability to elect one’s mayor is part of the political culture of Northeast Ohio.

The new structure would replace two current positions at no extra cost: City council’s 2019 salary ordinance has ranges of $250,374 to $668,856, for the city manager, and $144,030 to $375,663, for the city administrator. The mayor, as chief executive, would replace those current positions. As an elected official working in city hall full-time, the mayor will be better positioned to attract revenue. Developers told the CRC the current structure made it challenging to do business here. Cleveland has missed major economic opportunities due to declining population and housing values while cities around us with comparable demographics seem to be faring better. Just look at Shaker Heights or Lakewood to see what an elected leader with bold vision can help a city accomplish.

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Longing for change are necessary when new executive leadership is warranted in a city manager or in the council—selected mayor. Whatever way you do the math, there is that many more opportunities for direct democratic accountability to Cleveland Heights voters than a strong-mayor-type provision.

Our council members have three main responsibilities: 1) Work on our civic priorities (see the Cleveland Heights Master Plan at www.clevelandheights.org/our/master-plan); 2) Authorize and allocate our annual budget; 3) Guide, oversee and hold the city manager accountable for his or her performance.

The Charter Review Commission’s (CRC) proposed charter update strengthens the policy leadership role of city council and expressly clarifies the executive authority and expectations for the city manager. Without the problems we see in much of Cuyahoga County with partisan-focused, uncaccountable governance in our strong-mayor-type cities. We urge voters to support this proposed charter update.

We believe abandoning our council-manager system for a strong mayor system makes little sense and would create more problems than proponents claim this change would solve. Following an extensive 16 month study of our city’s council and best governance practices, the CRC voted 10-2-1 (with one abstention) against adding a strong mayor, and 11-2 to retain our current council-manager structure, maybe when they emphatically answered the question: “What is in the best interest of the residents of Cleveland Heights?”

Cleveland Heights needs both the leadership of a directly elected, democratic governing body and the proven-effective, day-to-day expertise of a professional city manager. Changing from a weak to a strong-mayor type form of government rather than switching to a strong mayor is the best strategy for ensuring success in our city both immediately and in the longer term.

Jack Neuman, a retired attorney, was chair of the CRC. Mike Gaynier, a leadership consultant, was a CRC member.

Local news that speaks to you

Catch the HeightsNow podcast from WJCU Live Mon-Fri at 9 am and 4 pm

Stream on demand: wjcu.org/medialinks-now
It would be fine. I still wasn’t comfortable.

For Weil, a scholar of photography with a Ph.D. in art history from Case Western Reserve University, the idea was not entirely without precedent. “Having studied photographs, I was intrigued by the moonlight photographs of Steichen, and Brassai, who was nocturnal by habit—he was mainly photographing at night wherever he decided to walk. And Steichen’s image of the sculpture of Balzac, looking up at the moon, has stuck in my head from the moment I saw it. So I called the cemetery and asked if I could maybe spend the night there and photograph one full moon. They said, ‘No, are you crazy?’ Like any determined artist, I kept trying. It got as far as ‘maybe,’ but then the idea went away for a while.”

Goss also moved on to other concerns, including planning for the cemetery’s upcoming 150th year. “But then, tragically, in 2015 Michael’s son Josh was killed in a car accident. I spent a lot of time with the family and realized I needed to know . . . we’ll get you a key .’”

“A few hours and was totally intrigued. I recalled, ‘I photographed for a few hours and was Jan. 2. “It was 4 degrees,” Weil explained, “because I was worried that it would become about high-lights or the ‘important’ people buried at Lake View. I wanted it to be a reaction to the experience of being there. This is such a huge space, and the moon plays its tricks and does its magic on every single object, so the hardest part was trying not to photograph the entire cemetery. Depending on cloud cover and the time I was there, the color temperature of the moonlight was so different. The mood changed every single time I was there. I kept going back to Steichen’s night photographs that were hand-colored with different tonalities to them, and realized that was probably as much his reaction to the moonlight of the night as it was his attempt to replicate it.”

After 12 full moons and hundreds of images, Weil edited the cemetery presentation down to 45 photographs.

“What we’re doing to,” he said, “is put these on metal framework that Ken Roby, a talented blacksmith out in Chagrin Falls, is making. They’re rather elegant in their simplicity, and they’ll hold the 4-foot images, which will be displayed throughout the cemetery.

‘Also, on July 23 at Fourhills Gallery I will open a show of a selection of these images. For the last six months I’ve been listening to a playlist of moon songs ranging from Beethoven to Chopin to the Rolling Stones and Joe Cocker. I feel like the Brassai werewolf. My approach to a playlist of moon songs is a resident of the community, and it’s a local artist, with a personal and family connection to the cemetery, who is a resident of the community, and the photographs are just beautiful and depict this place in a way that no one ever sees it. I hope we can help people appreciate Lake View today and make it a part of their future.’

‘Of course I hope people appreciate the photographs as my artistic expression,” said Weil, “but what has been really special about this project is how my personal desire to photograph this space at night has become a celebration of Lake View Cemetery for our community. Cemeteries like Lake View were built around the same time, with a Victorian notion of embracing the reality of death—while also enjoying a beautiful park-like space. For me, it has been very special to be able to present this unusual perspective on Lake View. I hope people will both appreciate my photographs and appreciate how unique this cemetery is. Ideally, they’ll see it in a new light.’

Greg Donley is a longtime Heights resident and photographer.

FutureHeights to host two public meetings: July 16 and 18

Deanna Bremer Fisher

On Tuesday, July 16, 7 p.m., a FutureHeights-sponsored panel will discuss neighborhood revitalization through beautification at The BottleHouse Brewery & Meadery, 2050 Lee Road. (The event, which was originally slated for June, was rescheduled due to the city’s scheduling of a Top of the Hill public meeting for the same evening.)

They will consider such questions as: What positive or impactful social implications gardening, planting flowers, and beautification can have on a neighborhood, or, in some cases, an entire community.

Then, on Thursday, July 18, FutureHeights will host the last in a series of community meetings to share plans for, and gather input about, the Noble Road commercial corridor. (The meeting was re-scheduled from its original June date due to unforeseen scheduling conflicts.)

At the meeting, which will take place at 7 p.m. at Central Bible Baptist Church, 2285 Noble Road, project consultant Camiros LTD will present the team’s final iteration of research and ideas, encompassing feedback gathered from the community over the past several months. The venue is handicapped accessible, and free childcare is available with a reservation.

To learn more, visit www.futureheights.org or contact Sruti Basu at 216-320-1423 or sbasu@futureheights.org.

Deanna Bremer Fisher is executive director of FutureHeights and publisher of the Heights Observer.
Heights home and school garner restoration honors

On May 22, the Cleveland Restoration Society and the American Institute of Architects granted 12 awards to significant restoration projects in Northeast Ohio at their annual Celebration of Preservation ceremony at Playhouse Square. Two were awarded to prominent Cleveland Heights restoration projects. Cleveland Heights High School received an award for Community Impact, and Harcourt Manor, a residence in the Chestnut Hills neighborhood, received the Craftsmanship Award.

Cleveland Heights High School, designed in 1926 by Franz Warner and W.R. McCormack, was dramatically altered through the years. Ken Goldberg, a member of the Cleveland Heights Landmark Commission and president of the Cleveland Heights Historical Society, said, “The renovation and partial rebuild of Heights High involved many preservation-related compromises but its majestic original facade, with enhancements, was returned and the community has been given a far superior facility in terms of current needs and expected trends.”

At the awards ceremony, Cleveland Heights Board of Education Vice President Jim Posch said, “While I thank our great team of planners, architects, engineers, construction experts and contractors, this project was only possible because of the generosity of our Cleveland Heights and University Heights residents.”

Harcourt Manor is perched at the top of Cedar Hill. Kermode F. Gill, renowned builder of the Terminal Tower and Union Station, built (1911–15) and lived in the home. Designed by architect Frank Meade in the Elizabethan Revival style, with grounds landscaped by Ellen Biddle Shipman, the home has had only three owners in its 103 years of existence: the Gill, Herget, and Rudd families.

Goldberg noted, “The Rudds, who purchased the property in 2016, took one of Cleveland Heights’ grand mansions that sat empty for several years, and brought it to its full potential and beyond by creating a fabulous architectural, decorative, and landscaping environment which is a great asset to the community. The original exterior features, in particular, were considered with utmost respect, and Anya and John have brought back the glory days of Harcourt Manor as a member of the Ambler Heights Historic District.”

Accepting the Craftsmanship Award on behalf of her team of artisans, contractors and tradespeople, homeowner and interior designer Anya Rudd said, “The spirit of collaboration and the pursuit of excellence among these artisans was remarkable and there was a feeling of pride of project throughout the two years it took to complete the house. At the beginning these old buildings are so needy and so greedy. And then one day something so extraordinary happens. You turn a corner and the house starts giving back. And the giving back is far richer and far greater than what you have given to it.”

Angeline Bair nominated the Rudds’ home for the Cleveland Restoration Society award. Owner-founder of the property research firm Bair Consulting Services LLC, Bair is a board member of the Cleveland Heights Historical Society. She was hired to research the history of the Rudd property.

COURTESY ANGELINA BAIR

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Fifth annual Pekar Comic Book day is July 20

Isabelle Rew

On July 20, the Pekar Park Comic Book Fest will return to Coventry Village for its fifth year. Since 2015, this free festival has honored the legacy of late Cleveland Heights resident and graphic novelist Harvey Pekar by offering a wide range of arts- and comics-themed activities for visitors of all ages.

"Harvey continues to be the most renowned comic writer from the area. He was a regular patron of Heights Libraries’ Lee Road branch, and wrote notable, relatable, and internationally recognized comics," said Kate Atherton, Heights Libraries’ adult services associate, ‘zine collection curator and artist. "He set the standard that other Cleveland writers and artists could also be recognized, and that their stories could be shared through this unique format."

The Coventry Village Library and Pekar Park will host workshops, panels and hands-on activities to inspire community members to engage with comics in their own ways. The event’s varied activities will spotlight local comic book and graphic novel writers and illustrators, and include movie screenings, hands-on crafts, and performances. From noon to 6 p.m. in the Coventry Village Library, visitors can join arts panels and comics experts who will discuss women and their role in comics, and view anime shorts and the film "My Friend Dahmer," introduced by local graphic novelist Derf, who wrote the graphic novel on which it was based.

The festivities will also take place 1-6 p.m. at Pekar Park, at the northwest corner of Coventry Road and Euclid Heights Boulevard. Activities will include a chalk art contest organized by photographer Tyler Federico and sponsored by Blick, comic book and zine making facilitated by Lake Erie Ink, and other crafts organized by Heights Libraries staff.

Atherton noted, "Cleveland has so many artists making all kinds of comics; from autobiographical to totally surreal and ethereal, from handmade to professionally published volumes. Come and talk to artists, make your own work, and celebrate this art form with the creative community of Cleveland Heights and the library, which houses so many comics and graphic novels. We would love to have you!"

For the first time, the event will culminate with a cosplay fashion show, organized by Cleveland-based anime club Urban Otaku. Cosplay, the act of dressing up like a character from a movie, television series, book or videogame, frequently draws inspiration from Japanese comics and animation.

"We wanted to add more of the so-called ‘geek culture’ experience to this year’s Pekar Comic Day. Anime and manga add to the layers of comic culture by showcasing diverse styles of storytelling and artistry," said Curtis O’Neal, Urban Otaku club president. "We hope people who visit our activities will learn just as much as they will have fun."

For more information about the Comic Book Fest, visit www.heightslibrary.org.

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

County and solar co-op host July 25 meeting

David Nader

On Thursday, July 25, the Cuyahoga County Department of Sustainability and the nonprofit Solar United Neighbors will co-sponsor a free, informational meeting for home and business owners interested in going solar. The meeting will take place at the Lee Road Library (2345 Lee Road), at 6 p.m.

Topics will include the history of solar technology, financial incentives, such as the 30 percent Federal Solar Tax Credit, and financing options, including the low-interest Cuyahoga County HELP Loan Program. Attendees will learn how to save money by joining the Cuyahoga County Solar Co-op. Once the co-op has grown to sufficient size, members will solicit bids from installers and choose democratically from among those bids. There is no obligation and members can quit at any time. Since the program began in 2016, it has helped 66 people save on the cost of solar installation.

Solar power is growing in Ohio. Nearly 25,000 Ohio homes use solar power, and the industry has created 7,500 jobs in the state.

To learn more about this emerging green technology, and the Cuyahoga County Solar Co-op, visit www.solarunitedneighbors.org/cuyahoga.

David Nader, a resident of Cleveland’s Cedar neighborhood, is the outreach coordinator for the Cuyahoga County Department of Sustainability. He hopes to use grassroots techniques such as door-to-door canvassing to increase public awareness of the problems posed by climate change.

Brennan endorses county ban on plastic bags

University Heights Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan has endorsed a proposed countywide ban on single-use plastic bags of the sort associated with grocery and other retail stores. Brennan’s comment came in the context of news that Cuyahoga County Council is considering banning single-use plastic bags throughout Cuyahoga County.

"Writing on a community Facebook page, Brennan stated: “I was initially skeptical of a ban, but understanding that there is a connection between plastic in the water and plastic shopping bags, and knowing that there are innovative alternatives (both canvas bags and renewable paper), I would favor a ban. Such a ban would be most effective on the state level, or barring that, the county level. I understand Councilmember Sunny Simon has been working towards that on the county level.” Brennan is not endorsing a ban on single-use bags in University Heights only.

In University Heights, the merchants mainly affected by such a ban would be Heinen’s on South Green Road and Target in the virtually abandoned University Square shopping center, but it would also extend to convenience stores, restaurants and shops. University Heights’ other major grocery retailer, Whole Foods, offers only paper bags.

Global changes in the markets for recycled rubbish, mostly in Asia, have brought about changes in what is, and is not, considered “recyclable.” The single-use bags are not, generally, recyclable as part of the normal weekly recycling pickup of aluminum cans, plastic bottles, paper, and some other waste items for which there is still a market. The county ban would exempt paper bags that are entirely recyclable and made of at least 40 percent recycled material. Other paper bags would be banned.

The proposed ban on single-use plastic bags would be to encourage customers to utilize multi-use, sturdier bags. The proposed county ban, sponsored by county council members Sunny Simon and Dale Miller, would include many exceptions, including bags used for newspapers, perishable groceries, garbage, dry cleaning, pet waste, and prescription drugs.

In his endorsement of a proposed ban on the bags, Brennan cited a 2016 Rochester Institute of Technology study that found there is no solution to the plastic pollution problem that does not involve reducing consumption. Brennan stated in the context of news that Cuyahoga County Council is considering banning single-use plastic bags throughout Cuyahoga County.

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Heights High grads win first Register scholarships

Quentin Smith

Two accomplished Cleveland Heights High School 2019 graduates are winners of the first Ron Register scholarship. Treasure Eiland was student vice president, and captain of the volleyball team. Trevion Johnson was a soccer all-star who has been working multiple part-time jobs to live on his own since junior year.

The scholarship was awarded May 26 at Forest Hill Presbyterian Church, where the scholarship committee, members of the congregation, and donors celebrated the winners.

The scholarship is named in honor of Ron Register, who served on the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Board of Education for 16 years. When he retired in 2017, the Black Caucus of Forest Hill Church brought together diverse elements from the church and community to create the fund. Its purpose is to continue Register’s passion for quality education, and uplift academically deserving, but financially challenged, students.

At the ceremony, Register said he was deeply moved, and humbly thanked those responsible for creating a scholarship in his name. Noting the credentials of the inaugural recipients, Register said, “America’s future is in fine hands and I am proud to have played a small part.”

The committee said both students surpassed their selection standards: intelligence and academic achievement, an awareness of social/political issues, a commitment to working toward building a fairer and more equitable society and world, and financial need. Eiland will be the first in her family to attend college. She graduated with a 3.8 GPA, was the 2018–19 student vice president, and served three years as captain of the school’s volleyball team. She also volunteers at her church and other organizations. Eiland intends to major in biology/pre-med at Fisk University, a historically black college in Nashville, Tenn.

Johnson was raised by his grandparents. In his junior year he struck out on his own. This required him to work two or three part-time jobs. He excelled academically (3.1 GPA) and athletically. He was named to the second team All Greater Cleveland Soccer Team. Johnson will attend Loyola University in Chicago, where he intends to major in business.

As high school seniors, both Johnson and Eiland attended John Carroll University’s early college program. Church members on the scholarship committee are Quentin Smith (chairman), Doris Allen, Barbara Cloud, Darla Charcter-Johnson and Diana Woodbridge. Community members are Susie Kaeser, Reg T. Evans and Louisa Oliver.

The scholarship fund welcomes donations. The church maintains the fund and covers all administrative costs, so 100 percent of donations go to recipients. If you would like to support future graduates, make out a check to Forest Hill Church (1031 Monticello Blvd., Cleveland Heights, OH 44121), and in the memo line indicate that the donation is for the Ron Register Scholarship Fund. All donations are tax deductible.

Quentin Smith is a transplanted New Yorker, former prosecutor, community organizer and high school teacher.

Cedar Fairmount SummerFEST moves to Saturday, Aug. 10

Myra Orenstein

Cedar Fairmount SummerFEST organizers promise some new twists and changes for the upcoming festival, Aug. 10, 1–6 p.m.

The biggest change for merchants and shoppers? SummerFEST is on a Saturday this year.

“Many of our merchants are closed on Sunday and so requested a day change. We’re accommodating them by moving SummerFEST to Saturday. We’re also only closing a part of Lennox this year, so traffic may move smoothly down Surrey,” said Sal Russo Sr., president of the Cedar Fairmount Special Improvement District.

The format of SummerFEST is also changing. Look for more arts- and music-focused events than in previous years. Cleveland Museum of Art (CMA) will feature its mobile art van, Studio Go, as well as chalk artists, and artist Meghann Hennan utilizing DayGlo paint.

The Music Settlement (TMS) will offer children and adults the opportunity to sample various instruments. Members of its staff will be part of the festival’s music offerings.

Praxis Fiber Workshop will invite attendees to create their own bookmarks using botanical dyes, and will sell unique silk scarves.

Creative Cans provided by Faber-Castell will be the ideal platform for fostering children’s creativity as part of the family-oriented activities.

“We’re envisioning this year’s SummerFEST as being more interactive. We’re hoping for an increased merchant presence, and know that there will be outstanding food, music and more for everyone,” Russo said.

For more information about SummerFEST, and other events taking place in the Cedar Fairmount Business District, visit www.cedarfairmount.org.

Myra Orenstein has been a Cleveland Heights resident for more than 30 years, and is president of CATV, a marketing/advertising/marketing collaborative acting as executive director of Cedar Fairmount SID and Cleveland Independents.
First Baptist is a summer mobile pantry site

Karen Cass Gill

This summer, First Baptist Church of Greater Cleveland is partnering with the Greater Cleveland Food Bank to become a mobile pantry produce distribution center. A mobile pantry is a food bank truck full of food that is brought to a central location where clients can pick up food, as they would from a regular pantry.

During First Baptist’s 24th year of Faith in Action, on Sunday, June 2, church volunteers kicked off of its summer food giveaway program, preparing and distributing the food, including potatoes, corn on the cob, watermelons, tomatoes, butternut squash, eggplant and zucchini.

For the remainder of the summer, First Baptist Church will distribute food on the first Saturday of the month —July 6, Aug. 3, and Sept. 7—from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Those picking up fresh fruit and vegetables are invited to park in the large lot at the back of the church, at 3630 Fairmount Blvd., then head to the portico entrance under the arches.

Library foundation seeks award nominations

Chase Kilngenstein

The Fund for the Future of Heights Libraries (FFHL) is currently seeking nominations for its 2019 FFHL Honor Roll. Winners will be chosen by the FFHL board and will be celebrated at the Honor Roll Dinner on Sunday, Nov. 10, at the Acacia Clubhouse at Acacia Reservation, 26899 Cedar Road, in Lyndhurst.

The honor is a “lifetime achievement” award, recognizing those who have made a sustained, outstanding contribution to the Cleveland Heights/University Heights community by promoting literacy, or by educating through literacy.

Modeled after Heights Libraries’ mission of “Opening Doors, Opening Minds,” the award recognizes both “door openers”—those who provide access to education, literature, and opportunity through literacy—and “mind openers”—those who stimulate the minds of community members through literature and thoughtful discussion, or through connections with thought-provoking ideas or individuals.

Last year’s recipients were Drapaudi Pradhan, Suzanne DeGaetano and Rachel Wayne Nelson. They joined John Jarvey and Marilyn McLaughlin from the inaugural year of the Honor Roll.

Nominations will be accepted through Friday, Aug. 2, and should be sent via e-mail to heightchase@gmail.com.

Each nomination must include the name 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 she or he should be chosen.

Those chosen will be officially inducted at the November dinner banquet. Ticket and sponsorship information will be available soon. If you are interested in joining the FFHL board, contact Heights Libraries’ Director Nancy Levin at nlevin@heightslibrary.org.

Chase Kilngenstein is a member of the FFHL board.
Veteran teacher embraces new instructional method

Ask a roomful of teachers the most challenging part of their job and many will mention meeting the needs of every single child, especially when they come to school with wildly different ability levels, background knowledge, learning styles, and life experiences.

Stephanie Petty, fourth-grade teacher at Fairfax Elementary School, has been teaching in CH-UH for more than 20 years. She finally found a method of differentiation that truly works. After attending a break-out session at the district’s professional development day last November, Petty fully embraced the Grid Method, which, according to its website, “is a student-centered, competency-based system, created at the classroom level and designed to fit any teacher’s style, within any curriculum, in any classroom.”

Students monitor their own progress as they move from one level of knowledge to another, from the basic recall of information (Depth of Knowledge 0) to independent exploration (Depth of Knowledge 6). On any given day, a student may be learning a concept or completing an activity that is different from his or her classmates.

Petty partnered with Anthony Provenzale, gifted intervention specialist, to create two units using the method. The first unit was an English language arts (ELA)-focused five-week curriculum on tall tales. The second, which took about a month to complete, focused on natural disasters, combining ELA with science and social studies.

For the natural disaster unit, all students started at the first level, which required reading informational texts, watching educational videos, applying vocabulary, recalling information, answering questions, and creating a poster summarizing what they had learned. Once they finished each task with 80 percent mastery, they were able to move on to the next level. Depth of Knowledge 4 involved writing and illustrating a children’s book explaining natural disasters, and then reading it aloud to second graders.

Students who move at a faster pace are able to continue to study the same topic as their classmates, but do so in a more in-depth and challenging manner.

“This method gives students so many different options, so many opportunities to show what they know,” said Petty, who was recognized as Fairfax’s Teacher of the Year this year. Many tasks are hands-on, and none are traditional worksheets. Students take ownership over their learning—and the pace of that learning—while the teacher spends more time as a facilitator, moving about the room, meeting one-on-one or in small groups to reinforce or clarify concepts.

“This is a whole different way of teaching for me,” Petty said, admitting that it has been challenging. Having so many kids working on different skills and activities has been a major shift from traditional teacher-centered instruction, and one that requires a lot of flexibility and the extra help of classroom volunteers, or Provenzale.

Petty feels it’s worth it, however, noting, “They are so engaged. And the students and I both get instant feedback on how well they understand things thanks to short mini-lessons and assessments.”

Petty said she couldn’t have done it without the help of Provenzale, who had learned the Grid Method the year before, and spent time with Petty to create their grids. “This isn’t just for gifted classrooms,” he said. “It’s a good teaching method for everyone.” And, according to Petty, the students “absolutely love it!”

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

Commutation of Saints welcomes new teacher

Patricia Sheridan McGinty will join the staff of Communion of Saints School as the new second-grade teacher this coming 2019-20 school year.

She has been working in Catholic education for 15 years and holds a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education, and a master’s degree in curriculum and instruction, with a specialization in early childhood intervention. She also holds a reading endorsement from Cleveland State University (CSU) and senior professional teaching licenses. She was awarded a Master Teacher designation by the State of Ohio in 2016.

When not teaching younger students, she is an adjunct professor and Early Childhood Intervention Specialist Program coordinator at CSU. McGinty lives in Cleveland with her husband, Tom, and two daughters, Maura and Erin. She spends her free time with her family, traveling and sailing.

Liz Fisher is marketing specialist at Communion of Saints School.
Heights Libraries unveiled its new book bike at the University Heights Memorial Day Parade on May 31 as part of the library’s parade display highlighting summer reading.

A gift from the Friends of Heights Libraries, the book bike is a sturdy touring-style bike that pulls a custom-made trailer that can hold and display roughly 200 books.

“It’s a small library on wheels,” said Community Engagement Associate Isabelle Rew, who manages the bike and fills out the request form. “The new design is more robust and easier to ride, which ensures that we can continue our mission to reach more people and events in our community in this very green, sustainable way,” said Rew. “The Heights community has always embraced environmentalism and green initiatives, including cycling, so the book bike creates a lot of excitement—people really enjoy and appreciate not only the free books but the entire concept of people-powered literacy. They get it.”

Watch for the book bike this summer. Residents interested in arranging a visit from the bike can visit www.heightslibrary.org/services/community-outreach/book-bike and fill out the request form.

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

Library rolls out new book bike

Cleveland Heights - University Heights Public Library Board
Meeting highlights

MAY 20, 2019
Present were President Chris Mentrek, Vice President James Russo, Secretary Dana Sweeney, and board members Marc Gerbus and Vikas Turakhia.

Coventry P.E.A.C.E. Campus
Deborah Brown-Fisher, president of Coventry P.E.A.C.E. Campus and executive director of FutureHeights, gave a presentation about the current financial status of grant proposals planned for, and upcoming events at the campus. The nonprofit members of the Coventry P.E.A.C.E. Campus through June 30, 2020. The annual financial statement. Total cash balance across the operating accounts, Bower Fund accounts and investment accounts at the end of April was $15,501,851.01.

Budget submission
The board approved a resolution that the tax budget, indicating the income needed by Heights Libraries for the year 2020, is $22,728,342 in revenue from the general fund, of which $2,700,000 would be received from the Public Library Fund of the state of Ohio, to be submitted to the Cleveland Heights University Heights Board of Education for submission to the county on or before July 20.

Lee Road Library basement repairs
The board approved a purchase order for $12,761 to Cleveland Building Restoration for concrete repair in the Lee Road Library basement. 2019–2020 medical benefits
The board authorized the finance manager to enter into a contract with United Health Care for employee medical and prescription coverage, effective July 1, 2019; through June 30, 2020. The health insurance cost to the library is not anticipated to exceed $590,000 annually.

Coventry Village Library waterproofing
The board approved a contract with Studio Techne for $16,500 for assistance in technical drawing, bid and permit specifications review, and construction administration associated with a proposal to waterproof the basement of the Coventry Village Library. They are the only free advanced ASL classes in the area.

Coding for Kids program
The University Heights Library presented a Coding for Kids program in which those attending explored a variety of fun, educational coding toys and learned how to use Cosmo robot and code for Kids.

Circulation report
The circulation report showed that physical materials constitute more than 90 percent of current circulation; all four branches showed an increase in circulation in April 2019, compared to April 2018, and the overall total number of visitors to the libraries is also higher this year than last year.

Look for earlier and often expanded postings of meeting summaries online at www.heightslibrary.org. See disclaimer on page 8.

What’s going on at your library?

Coventry Village Library
1927 Coevrsey Road, 216-321-3400
Saturday, July 20, 12 p.m.
Pekar Comic Book Fest. “This free festival honors the late graphic novel writer and Cleveland Heights resident Harvey Pekar with a wide array of activities for children and adults. The festival will spotlight local, independent comic book and graphic novel writers.

Lee Road Library
2345 Lee Road, 216-932-3600
Wednesday, July 10, 7:30 p.m.
Original Voices Book Club: Walden by Henry David Thoreau. Called “an ecstatic rendering of spiritual individuality and a hymn to the natural world,” this American classic has inspired generations of readers, and helped spark the environmental movement. The author’s “experiment” to live simply and deeply speaks across time.

Noble Neighborhood Library
2800 Noble Road, 216-291-5665
Monday through Friday, July 8–12, 3:30 p.m.
Maker Lab Nature Camp. Each day will feature an exciting hands-on project inspired by nature and the great outdoors! Kids in grades K–5 will explore, create and get messy.

University Heights Library
13866 Cedar Road, 216-317-4700
Wednesday, July 31, 1 p.m.
Harry Potter Birthday Party. It’s Harry’s birthday and to celebrate we’re turning the library into our very own Wizarding World! Join us for games, crafts, and of course cake. We promise you’ll have a magical time! For ages 5–12.

Library Foundation of Cleveland
March 18, 2019
COURTESY HEIGHTS LIBRARIES

The new book bike can hold and display approximately 200 books.

Sheryl Banks

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Co-ed slow pitch softball league is open to all

In the late 1980s, Dave Kolb and his wife, Alice—both professors in organizational behavior at Case Western Reserve University—played slow pitch softball in a league with various university departments. They eventually became uncomfortable with the level of competitiveness, so, in 1991, they took their department out of the league and started a Sunday morning pick-up softball game with an emphasis on having fun.

Today, 28 years after its formation, this group is called the Free Play Softball League. Dave and Alice recently retired and now live in Hawaii, but their dream of having fun playing softball is going strong.

Steve Calhoun has taken on the role of facilitator and captain of the league. He is dedicated to maintaining the mission created almost 30 years ago, of having fun while playing softball. Four field captains make sure everyone has a good time while following the rules.

Opening day each year is the Sunday after tax day, and play continues until about November, noon, weather permitting. Games are held on a beautiful expanse of grass on field #11 in Forest Hill Park in Cleveland Heights. Entrance to the field is just west of Monticello Boulevard and Lee Road, and ample free parking is provided.

The game is open to men and women 16 and older. There are no fees required to play, and there’s no need to commit to playing every week, either. Extra equipment is available for those who don’t have bats and gloves.

Friendly rules include: no strikes or balls called, substitute runners allowed after the batter reaches first base, and special rules for players over the age of 80.

Calhoun sums up the experience beautifully: “Every Sunday I show up because I really love experiencing the incredible, novel events and fun that animates each game.”

Free Play Softball is free in every sense of the word, and fun beyond imagination. The group is looking for new players—stop by some Sunday and check out a game.

Tom Woodworth is a retired advertising and public relations professional. He is a charter member of Free Play Softball, and one of its four field captains. When not traveling he plays softball every Sunday. Diminishing skills at 81 don’t hinder his enjoyment of the game.

The 33rd B’nai B’rith Health Run, planned for Sunday, July 28, will showcase Walter Stinson Community Park in University Heights. Both registration and the award ceremony will take place at the park’s gazebo, at 2307 Fenwick Road.

Both the 1-mile and 5K events start at the park’s entrance on Saybrook Road and end at its Fenwick Road entrance. The 1-mile has overall winners and youth division winners, while the 5K has overall winners plus winners in 13 age groups.

Participants receive a tie-dyed T-shirt with registration. Refreshments will be available after the race. Race parking is available at the park’s Saybrook entrance, at the University Heights Library on Fenwick Road, and on Northwood and Faversham roads.

To register for the race, and for race details (entry fees, starting times, etc.), visit www.bnaibrithhealthrun.org or e-mail bbfunrun@yahoo.com.

Robert Grossman is an organizer of the B’nai B’rith Health Run.

B’nai B’rith Health Run is July 28

Robert Grossman

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Robert Grossman is an organizer of the B’nai B’rith Health Run.
The three Loretz siblings, all Heights High alums, wanted to bring a version of the TV-bar Cheers to their hometown. Bryan Loretz (class of ’84) said they didn’t want to open another watering hole or a sports bar. “We wanted to create a place like ‘Cheers,’ where everyone knows your name. We wanted a place where patrons could come, feel safe, dance, meet friends and make new ones, have good food and drinks in an upscale atmosphere.” His brother, Damon (class of ’93), agreed, “If you close your eyes, we wanted you to think you were in Atlanta, New York City, or Chicago. That’s the vibe we wanted to create.”

After years of wishing, planning and hard work, Networkz Restaurant & Lounge (3560 Mayfield Road) opened last October. Sister Lillian Loretz-Williams (class of ’76) led the way. When the Loretz siblings graduated from Heights High, they followed different career paths. Lillian became a podiatrist and moved to Savannah, Ga. Bryan went into law enforcement and eventually became coordinator of safety and security for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights school district. Damon went into education, eventually becoming an administrator in the South Euclid-Lyndhurst school district. But, when they got together at family functions, they shared a common dream—to open a restaurant.

Lillian was the first to make the leap. She opened a restaurant in Savannah and ran it successfully for seven years, until the building it was in was sold. After Lillian’s restaurant closed, the three siblings decided the time was ripe to collectively open a restaurant in Cleveland Heights. They scouted various buildings but nothing seemed like the right fit. Finally, in early 2018, they found a site in Cleveland Heights. They scouted various buildings but nothing seemed like the right fit. Finally, in early 2018, they found a site in Severance Circle that had once been a restaurant/bar. They didn’t want to just reopen the restaurant with a new name. They wanted to remake it, rebrand it, make it different from anything in the area. They wanted to “create an upscale venue where one makes and meets acquaintances while promoting the exchange of ideas and information that is mutually beneficial; a place where friendships and businesses flourish.”

The description was so important to them, they put the words up on the inside wall of the restaurant, right under the new name, Networkz Restaurant & Lounge.

It took five months to transform the space. Lillian brought a wealth of expertise, sharing everything she had learned from her years as a restaurant owner. She took Damon around Savannah to see other restaurants, and her husband, Arthur Williams, came up north to help with the start-up process.

The restaurant has a full bar and extensive menu. Honey wings are the big seller. The owners have hosted everything from line dancing to ballroom dancing, and catered large events. Bryan’s wife, Feleisha (class of ’86), is the event coordinator. This summer the Loretz family hopes to expand to outside seating. “Who knows, we might even host a tailgate party in the fall,” Bryan said.

Networkz has live music and a “pick your own sound” jukebox. The restaurant has a full bar and extensive menu. Honey wings are the big seller. The owners have hosted everything from line dancing to ballroom dancing, and catered large events. Bryan’s wife, Feleisha (class of ’86), is the event coordinator. This summer the Loretz family hopes to expand to outside seating. “Who knows, we might even host a tailgate party in the fall,” Bryan said.

Check out Networkz’s Facebook page for hours and special events.

They wanted to create a place like ‘Cheers,’ where everyone knows your name. We wanted a place where patrons could come, feel safe, dance, meet friends and make new ones, have good food and drinks in an upscale atmosphere.”
Blank Canvas CLE is new Lee Road arts center

Shari Nacson

A hub of art-making, art-purchasing, and community-building, Blank Canvas CLE is a collective that opened in the Cedar Lee district in February. Owner Michael Newman, a University Heights resident, started the business because of his love of art and community.

With a range of products at every price point—from vintage baseball cards and graphic art giftables to wall art and custom framing—Blank Canvas CLE makes original artwork accessible to all. Newman invites local artists to approach him about exhibitions and showcase events. “We will have monthly shows, with constant movement of works on display,” said Newman.

Dobama names Wise managing director

Colin Anderson

Trevor Wise to be the theater’s new managing director.

“As we approach our 60th year, the Dobama board is very excited to welcome Trevor to Cleveland as our new managing director,” said Board President Marcel Duhamel. “Trevor brings skills and experiences that will help lead Dobama into a new decade of growth.”

“I am honored and thrilled to be joining Dobama to help lead the theater at this exciting moment in the theatre’s history,” said Artistic Director Nathan Motta. “Trevor is one of the most talented new leaders in the field, and his training, knowledge and personality make him the ideal person to guide Dobama as we move forward toward a promising future and remarkable new possibilities. I look forward to introducing Trevor to Dobama’s dedicated supporters and the incredible Greater Cleveland community.”

Wise came to Dobama from Barrington Stage Company in Pittsfield, Mass., where he was donor relations manager. He holds a Master of Fine Arts in theatre with an emphasis in arts administration from Texas Tech University, and an undergraduate degree in theater with an emphasis in writing for performance from the University of Missouri-Columbia. Wise formerly worked as development manager of Bucks County Playhouse in New Hope, Pa., and was part of the staff of The Eugene O’Neill Theatre Center when it received the 2010 Regional Theatre Tony Award.

Beyond theater, Wise was raised on a farm in Missouri, is conversationally fluent in German, and is a proud alumnus of the Rotary International Youth Exchange Program.

“I am honored and thrilled to be joining Dobama to help lead the theatre at this exciting moment in the theatre’s history,” said Wise. “I look forward to introducing Trevor to Dobama’s dedicated supporters and the incredible Greater Cleveland community.”

Wise came to Dobama from Barrington Stage Company in Pittsfield, University of Missouri-Columbia.

Signature pieces that have a commercial vibe—such as Cleveland skylines with graphic art overlays—are affordable works that brings in customers, who then get to experience the rotating exhibitions by local artists.

“Commercial products help support the fine arts,” Newman said of his marketing philosophy.

More than a gallery—which happens to have salon-style displays wherein the walls are packed end-to-end—Blank Canvas CLE is an intentional social space for all ages. Newman designed Blank Canvas CLE to host affordable and accessible art-making, networking, and video gaming parties.

Gaming tournaments cost an average of $5 per hour, per participant, and can be booked online via the company’s website.

While cultivating support for artists, the collective’s location, a block from Heights High, provides the opportunity for young people to spend time together, and to be known within the community.

Dobama Theatre opened the Blank Canvas CLE on April 30. Its rotating exhibits are open to the public Monday through Thursday and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.; Sundays 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Newman says it’s “an intentional social space for all ages.”

“Everything here looks original. ‘I want this guy to have a conversation with another person, which is what we do well,’” said Newman. “‘I want this guy to have a conversation with another person, which is what we do well.’”

“Story, who stumbled upon the collective when in the district to see a movie, “It automatically gave me that feeling—that I want this guy to have a conversation with another person, which is what we do well.”

Upcoming events include a family-friendly drawing lesson, Drink a Draw Jr., July 12, 6 p.m.; Ujamaa Circle’s book release celebration for Dana Grant’s book, Learn from My Truth, July 19, 6 p.m.; Icebreaker, a networking social for artists and community members, July 20, 6 p.m.; a pie-a-thon with Cleveland Soup and Bread Experiment, July 24, and a special showcase of Little Italy artist Hannah Mannociah’s clothing brand, snakes + acey’s, opening July 27.

For more information, stop in at 2174 Lee Road, or visit www.blankcanvascle.com.

Mostly a mom, Shari Nacson, is a freelance editor, social worker, 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.

Blank Canvas CLE’s owner, Michael Newman, welcomes artists with a diversity of styles.

 blanket Canvas CLE's "artistic vibe."
Cleveland Heights vocalist presents concerts

Caleb A. Wright and his band, Alexander Wright & The Collective, will perform a free concert at Forest Hill Church in Cleveland Heights on Sunday, July 7, at 6:30 p.m.

Wright, a vocalist and entertainer, is a member of the Cleveland Heights-based Wright Family Singers, who have been performing in the Cleveland area for more than 40 years.

Wright has been performing on his own, locally and nationally, for the past five years. He is a member of multiple groups and choirs, including the Wright Family Singers, Eligie, the Voices of Koinonia, the Cleveland Orchestra Chorus, and the Cleveland Opera Circle. He has been a featured soloist for the Cleveland Orchestra, Forest Hill Presbyterian Church, South Euclid United Church of Christ, Mt. Zion Fellowship of The Brethren, Mt. Zion of Oakwood Village, First Baptist Church of Greater Cleveland, and St. Mark’s Presbyterian Church, and was a national anthem soloist for the Cleveland Indians.

He has been granted the Karamu House’s Room In The House Artist Residency. This arts prize and residency is funded by Cuyahoga Arts & Culture through a Support for Artists Grant. The goal of this residency is to empower artists by providing space and support at Karamu’s theater arts facility. Artists were selected by a panel of artists and arts professionals from the Karamu House Board of Directors and Cuyahoga Arts & Culture. Wright said he plans to use his residency period to “present a concert series that will explore the impact of African-Americans in American music.”

This series will kick off with a live recording Wright and his band in concert at Forest Hill Church, featuring original songs.

The band will go on to present a History of Jazz concert at Karamu’s theater arts facility. Artists by providing space and support at residency is to empower artists for Artists Grant. The goal of this Arts & Culture through a Support Residency. This arts prize and residency is funded by Cuyahoga Arts & Culture. All children in attendance dressed like a science fiction character will receive a University Heights Elementary. Local favorites Otis and the Shoreway Saints will bring their rock show of originals and covers to The Walt on July 8. The eight-piece band will play original songs from its three studio albums, as well as covers from the 1960s through the present. The group has been named the Number-1 local band in the Cleveland City Voter Hot List. Ye Olde Scholl Treats N’ Eats will offer classic funnel cakes for sale before and during the concert.

Back by popular demand, J. Blues will perform at the Summer Concert Series on July 11 at 7 p.m., at The Walt, presented by the Local 4 Music Fund. J. Blues has modeled his own style of blues from the greats, including B.B. King, Elmore James, Taj Mahal and Lightnin’ Hopkins. The SmoQued CLE food truck will be on site, serving up barbecue starting at 5 p.m.

The University Heights Symphonic Band will perform pop music and movie soundtrack selections at the Hamlin Quad at John Carroll University on July 12. On July 30, University Heights will be the first community in Northeast Ohio to present a free showing of “Captain Marvel.” All children dressed as superheroes will receive a University Heights promo item, while supplies last.

Move to Have a Seat? Some magazine calls Carlos Jones, the PLUS Band the “undisputed champ” of Cleveland reggae bands. Sirius XM DJ Dermot Hussey says it’s “one of the best in America.” The band will make its University Heights debut on Aug. 1 at 7 p.m. at the Walt. City officials anticipate a large crowd for this concert, and ask attendees to arrive early. The Chef Grey Wolf food truck will be on hand to serve concertgoers at this show, as will Off the GRIDdle.

Carlos Jones is presented by a grant from the Cleveland Indians. Carlos Jones and the PLUS Band the “undisputed champ” of Cleveland reggae bands. Sirius XM DJ Dermot Hussey says it’s “one of the best in America.” The band will make its University Heights debut on Aug. 1 at 7 p.m. at the Walt. City officials anticipate a large crowd for this concert, and ask attendees to arrive early. The Chef Grey Wolf food truck will be on hand to serve concertgoers at this show, as will Off the GRIDdle.

The final event of Wright’s Karamu residency will be an opera masterclass and recital Saturday, July 13, at 3 p.m., in the Arena Theatre at Karamu. This recital will feature Cleveland Opera sopranos Marley Lieberman and Lauren Wright-Harris, and tenors Governor Harris and Matthew Jones.

For information about Karamu events, visit www.karamuhouse.org, or call 216-731-7070. For information about the live recording at Forest Hill Church, visit the church’s website, www.fhcpresb.org, or call 216-321-2660.

Peg Weissbrod is the media advisor and public relations manager for Forest Hill Church. She and her husband, Steve Maranowski, are Cleveland Heights residents and active members of the Forest Hill Church community.

Movies and bands are coming to ‘The Walt’

E.T., Captain Marvel,” and Carlos Jones and the PLUS Band are all coming to Walter Stinson Community Park, aka The Walt, as part of the continuing “Best Summer Ever” celebration in University Heights.

Steven Spielberg’s classic sci-fi movie “E.T.” will be shown under the stars at The Walt on Tuesday, July 2. Pre-movie entertainment will be provided by RW Magic. All children in attendance dressed like a science fiction character will receive a University Heights Elementary.

Local favorites Otis and the Shoreway Saints will bring their rock show of originals and covers to The Walt on July 8. The eight-piece band will play original songs from its three studio albums, as well as covers from the 1960s through the present. The group has been named the Number-1 local band in the Cleveland City Voter Hot List. Ye Olde Scholl Treats N’ Eats will offer classic funnel cakes for sale before and during the concert.

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Carlos Jones is presented by a grant from the Northeast Ohio Public Energy Council.

Mike Cook

Mike Cook

FUTURE DATES

July 14: Music for Everyone, 7:30 p.m., at the Walt. The Chef Grey Wolf food truck will be on site, serving up barbecue starting at 5 p.m.

July 21: The History of Jazz concert. The expanded ensemble will include horn players Robin Blake, Joe Kardos and Garrett Folger, and harmonic player Jarred Goldwebber.

July 28: The Cleveland Orchestra, Forest Hill Church community.

The final event of Wright’s Karamu residency will be an opera masterclass and recital Saturday, July 13, at 3 p.m., in the Arena Theatre at Karamu. This recital will feature Cleveland Opera sopranos Marley Lieberman and Lauren Wright-Harris, and tenors Governor Harris and Matthew Jones.

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Where did we go?

I've lived in my current house for 33 years. Our street has a block party every summer. The first time I attended one, I asked several people how long they had lived on the street. A few of them said they'd been here for 30-some years, and I thought, "What a loser." Now younger new neighbors come up to me at the block party and ask how long I've lived here, and I say, "Oh, a while..."

After I'd lived in this house for about 10 years, I ran into an old friend from junior high and high school at a Little League game at Forest Hill Park, where our kids were playing on opposing teams. I hadn't seen him since high school. I asked how long he'd lived and it turned out he'd been living one block east of me. For 10 years.

Two years ago, I attended my high school reunion at Nighttown and ran into another old friend from junior high and high school, whom I hadn't seen in about 40 years. I asked where he lived and it turned out he'd been living one block east of me. For 10 years.

And I've run into many other old friends who also live in the area, but whom I rarely see.

Why is that?

For one thing, we—we most of us—drive almost everywhere. When I was growing up, my parents, and everyone else, walked everywhere they could. We lived near Coventry, so they could walk to almost any kind of business they needed to—for butcher shops, grocery stores, banks, dry cleaners, an appliance repair shop, bakeries, a hardware store, barber shops and beauty parlors, drug stores, restaurants.

And I could walk to get whatever I needed, too. The three drug stores on Coventry sold toys, baseball cards, candy, comic books, even the current hit singles. And I walked up Coventry to Coventry School for seven years. Even in high school, I often walked home from Heights High via Washington Boulevard and Coventry Road, stopping at one of the three bakeries on the way for a giant pecan roll (which didn't ruin my appetite).

Driving-versus-walking is one reason. Another big one, I think, is that we all built decks onto the backs of our houses. When I was a kid, everyone hung out on their front porches or front steps or front lawns. My family did all of those. We lived upstairs in a duplex owned by my father's aunt, who lived downstairs.

I remember sitting on her porch, when I was young, on hot, humid July days. We didn't converse much—she was so much older, and she spoke mostly Yiddish—but any time a breeze blew, she'd say, "Oy. It's a mechaye." I still think that, when I'm out side on those hot, humid July days and nights, and a breeze blows—"It's a mechaye." But I don't say it out loud. Usually.

My father used to stand on the front lawn most evenings, watering the grass. That lawn was the size of my current living room and I knew it didn't need that much water. But I figured out later that he was standing there to talk to neighbors who passed by, or who just walked over to talk. Now we put sprinklers on our front lawns. And we go to the back, to hang out on the deck.

When he wasn't watering, my father would sit on the front steps on summer evenings with a portable radio, listening to Cleveland Indians games. I can still hear the sound of the AM radio's tinny, little speakers: "Hello, spawts fans. This is Jimmy Dudley-faw Kahn's all-meat weenahs."

Sometimes I'd hear him say, "I see my old friend Danny Budin sitting behind the Indians' dugout."

Danny was my father's cousin, who owned Budin's Delicatessen, which was on Coventry in the '40s, and then in Shaker Heights. Danny used to play golf with Indians players and take one golf bag full of clubs and another one full of corned beef sandwichwiches. The restaurant was started by Danny's mother, my father's aunt, who owned Budin's Delicatessen, was on Coventry in the '40s, and then in Shaker Heights. Danny used to play golf with Indians players and take one golf bag full of clubs and another one full of corned beef sandwichwiches. The restaurant was started by Danny's mother, my father's aunt—the one who lived downstairs and who still made the secret sauce for their chocolate phosphates in our basement.

During those summer days, I would sit on those same stairs with that same radio, listening to the pop hits of the day on WERE, WJW, KYW and WHK—with the Mad Daddy, Bill Randle, Tommy Edwards,Specs Howard, Carl Reese, Joe Finan, Johnny Holliday—and reading Superman comic books.

I still sit outside on many summer nights. But now it's on the back deck, working on my laptop. After driving to a store three streets away.

And, well...I guess that's why.

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.