Residents celebrate UH at sold-out civic awards

There are problems, and then there are good problems. Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan explained his good problem in his welcoming remarks at the 2019 University Heights Civic Awards, held on Nov. 13.

Even after moving the event to a larger banquet room at John Carroll University (JCU), the event completely sold out. “We had to tell people they could not attend this event,” Brennan said. “We had to turn them away because so many people wanted to be here.”

JCU graduate and Cleveland Indians in-stadium host Gabriella Kreuz hosted the event, and also received an award for her work with her nonprofit organization Love Doesn’t Shoe.

“It was so nice of the city to recognize Love Doesn’t Shoe for the violence prevention education it provides the community,” Kreuz said. “Thanks to all those who support our initiative to connect with young people and facilitate interactive, informative conversations about how to build and maintain healthy relationships.”

Mike Cook

Hannah Morgan

Continuing a long-held holiday tradition, GE Lighting will illuminate its Nela Park headquarters with a festive display beginning Friday, Dec. 6. This is the 97th year the company will have created the light show. This year’s theme, Deck the Halls, uses more than 500,000 LED light bulbs and features a replica of the National Christmas Tree in Washington, D.C., and a selfie station in front of a big red ornament at which visitors can take festive, personalized pictures.

The display will be visible from the street through Jan. 6.

At 5 p.m. on Dec. 6, FutureHeights, Noble Neighbors, NOAH (East Cleveland’s CDC), East Cleveland’s Neighborhood 9, and other community partners invite the public to gather at Chester’s parking lot (across from Nela Park at Noble and Neladale roads) to celebrate the beginning of the show, when GE officially flips the switch to illuminate the displays.

At the event, volunteers from neighborhood organizations from Cleveland Heights and East Cleveland will greet visitors with hot chocolate and holiday treats as they gather to celebrate the winter season and the neighborhood’s rich history, as well as learn about neighborhood revitalization efforts.

GE will illuminate the display at 5:30 p.m., and neighbors are invited to stroll down the west side of Noble Road to enjoy views of the dazzling displays and patronize local businesses.

The company asks that visitors respect GE’s security protocol.

Continued on page 2

21 Heights Arts seeks community volunteers

FutureHeights, the community development corporation for Cleveland Heights, has launched Future Homes, a housing rehabilitation program. In partnership with the city of Cleveland Heights and the Cuyahoga Land Bank, the program is intended to strengthen neighborhoods in which there are vacant and abandoned properties.

FutureHeights works with its partners to secure vacant houses and facilitate their rehabilitation with trusted contractors. “We develop a scope of work, monitor the process, and assist with the marketing of the completed property to a new owner-occupant,” said Deanna Bremer Fisher, executive director of FutureHeights.

“The first home we completed is located on Goodnor Road, about one block north of the high school,” Fisher said. “From this location, we have a view of Noble Road that is a beautiful opportunity to work with trusted contractors to transform properties.”

Bremer Fisher, executive director of FutureHeights, and incumbent John Rach at the University Heights Civic Awards.

Mike Cook

Kim Sergio Inglis

Voters approved Cleveland Heights Issue 26, the charter amendment that will allow residents to directly elect the city’s mayor, with a vote of 6,922 (64.10 percent) to 3,877 (35.9 percent). In Cleveland Heights City Council races, five candidates vied for three 4-year term seats, while two candidates vied for a single 2-year term, to fill the seat vacated by former council member Cheryl Stephens and serve out the remainder of her unexpired term.

In the 4-year term race, Melody Joy Hart garnered the most votes, with 6,378 (55.56 percent), followed by incumbents Kahlil Seren, with 5,644 votes (49.69 percent), and Mary Dobar, with 4,670 (41.77 percent). Candidates not winning seats on council were Anthony Marro Jr., with 4,209 votes (36.60 percent), and Mary Dunbar, with 6,358 (25.56 percent), followed by incubents Carol Roe, with 3,995 votes (16.06 percent), and incumbent Carol Roe, with 4,209 votes (36.60 percent). Roe is the city’s current mayor (elected by city council).

In the race for the 2-year term, Davida Russell, with 5,699 votes (57.84 percent), beat out Craig Cobb, with 4,133 (42.16 percent). Cobb was appointed by council in April 2019, to serve through the end of the year.

The race for University Heights City Council was uncontested, with four candidates and four open council seats. On the ballot were new council members Barbara Blankfeld and Justin Gould, and incumbents John Rach and Michele Weiss.

Blankfeld and Gould will take the places of current UH Council members.
About the Observer

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

The Observer has no writing staff, it is written by you—the readers. Individuals throughout the community decide what stories they want to submit them for publication. Anyone in University Heights or Cleveland Heights is welcome to contribute regularly, occasionally or even just once.

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

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

• To make a submission of any kind, go to heightsobserver.org and click on “Member Center” at the left.
• For information about writing style, article length, etc., click on “Become an Observer” at the left. For questions that you haven’t answered, call the FutureHeights office at 216-317-6423 or e-mail info@futureheights.org.

Articles to be considered for the January 2020 issue must be submitted by Dec. 9. We publish some articles online as they come in—and still consider them for the next print issue. We also publish an e-newsletter each Tuesday.

Heights Observer December 1, 2019

One last look at the Observer’s role in Issue 26

Bob Rosenbaum

With the contentious Issue 26 campaign behind us, residents of Cleveland Heights seem dedicated to moving forward together.

But the purpose of this column is to provide transparency to decisions made at the Observer. So at the risk of opening old wounds, here’s some background on the past several months.

We set out to serve as a forum for discussion about Issue 26 without inserting ourselves into the debate. It was easier said than done, and we weren’t fully prepared for the aggressive lobbying we’d receive along the way, or the pressure we’d feel.

The opinion pieces and letters to the editor started arriving in June and grew steadily in volume and intensity until well past the deadline for the Nov. 1 issue. Each was reviewed by Editor Kim Sergio Inglis and then edited by someone from our corps of editing volunteers.

Many of these pieces were straightforward—a meaningful point of view, one side or the other. Others were position statements from campaign leaders, which we felt a need to pass along even when they seemed repetitive or peripheral.

We also received responses to previous letters, and airing of grievances large and small about conduct on both sides of the debate.

There was too much to print all of. What we couldn’t print, we published online. Some pieces couldn’t be published at all because they made no sense or made strong claims that couldn’t be edited away.

More than occasionally, these decisions were viewed from the outside as bias. I understand why it may have seemed that way.

Here are big things that factored into decisions for handling every contribution we received:

Length: Long pieces squeezed out other voices, and readers tend to skip over them. They’re hard to shorten and push big burdens onetter editors.

The longer the campaign went, the less patience we had for pieces that exceeded the recommended word counts in our written guidelines.

Authorship: We favored new voices.

Originality: We favored fresh ideas and new insights over those that had already been published multiple times.

 Tone: We ran plenty of contributions that I thought were mean or snide, but we favored civility.

Factuality: We identified statements on both sides of the debate that were unsupported, exaggerated or not wholly accurate, and we asked the authors to clarify or eliminate them.

Clarity: Many pieces were confusing—sometimes by mistake and sometimes intentionally.

In either case, we edited for clarity and leaned against publishing items that couldn’t be brought into shape with the author’s cooperation.

Innuendo: We favored submissions that said what they meant, rather than implying it between-the-lines.

Balance: In preparing the print edition, we tried to balance the number of opinions on both sides of the issue. But this was the last consideration after all others had been applied.

Overall, I think we got it mostly right. We found plenty of submissions from both sides of the issue to be problematic. But by Nov. 5, I believe we reviewed the submissions and it was clear what there was to be said without taking sides.

Here’s a noteworthy exception that I promised as soon as it became appropriate:

On Oct. 18, four days after the article deadline for the November issue, a breaking news story was submitted from the campaign against Issue 26. In that story, this was the pro-Issue 26 campaign’s first grassroots movement, but rather a conspiracy orchestrated by local politicians Cheryl Stephens and Janice Eggleston.

In the context of politics today, it was just another campaign volley. It drew the most prejudicial conclusion possible from a given set of facts. It was written to be divisive, and submitted when it would have the biggest impact. If we published it, it would have come out on Nov. 1.

The Observer is in a no-win situation. With a policy of being open to articles from untraditional sources, if we didn’t publish this one, some would view it as not justifiable and accuse the Observer of siding in favor of Issue 26.

If we published it, others would accuse the Observer of siding against Issue 26 by facilitating an “October Surprise.”

There was a lot going on at that moment. Issue 26 was one of the largest, most logistically complicated issues of the year. Everyone on the Observer team was fatigued and brittle.

Roughly or not, I viewed the submission as an attempt to manipulate the Observer into taking sides at the moment we were most vulnerable to error.

We never published the article, either as news or as a campaign press release. It fell short of proving the accusation it made, and failed to meet some basic journalistic principles. So in the end, voters made their choice on election day after a thoughtful, four-month debate of issues—not because of a late-breaking, bombastic headline.

I wish all politics worked that way.

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

Opinion

Heights Observer December 1, 2019

www.heightsobserver.org

mike cook is the communications and civic engagement coordinator for University heights.

 honoring her for creating the league. (Ruth Morband, Josephine’s daughter-in-law, is the author of Mrs. Morband and the Boys, a book that chronicles Josephine’s life and the creation of the league.)

After years of service to the city’s Finance Advisory Council, Mike Bohan was presented with the Volunteer of the Year Award.

Local businesses were recognized for their anniversaries this year. Flowerville is celebrating 70 years in University Heights, while Heine’s is commemorating its 60th year in the city. The Athletic department at JC柚 was awarded for 100 years of intercollegiate competition.

Cook, a lawman-elect Barbara Blankfeld presented the 2020 Beautiful Homes awards. In addition, the city presented Good Neighbor awards to Gesu Kindness Rocks, the Labe Project at JC柚, Shari Garzone, Future Cleaners, Rick Greger, Sean Weiss, and Sarah Lehmann.

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

OPENING THE OBSERVER

Bob Rosenbaum

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

Mike Cook is the communications and civic engagement coordinator for University Heights.
CEM says ‘thank you, let’s work together’

Michael Bennett

Cleveland Heights voters made history on Nov. 5, 2019. They voted—by a majority in every precinct across the city—to transform a nearly 100-year-old council-manager system to an elected-mayor form of government they believe will be more accountable to the voters.

They said they want a mayor who will spend full time leading Cleveland Heights in a new way to address our challenges and maximize our assetsa mayor who will be our voice across the region and state.

Now that voters have spoken, we need to pull together and make the transition as one community: city council, the administration, city employees and citizens need to collaborate to transform our government into one that is truly representative of the voters’ decision.

About a year ago, 10 people created Citizens for an Elected Mayor (CEM) to launch the charter amendment initiative. Support came from a nonpartisan, broadly based, grassroots coalition of volunteers who put in hard work, diligent effort and, ultimately, votes that achieved a new reality that can benefit us and future generations.

CEM would like to thank everyone who attended events, gathered signatures, signed the initiative petition, invited neighbors into their homes, shared thoughts on social and traditional media, talked to elected officials, put up yard signs, distributed literature, made financial contributions and donated professional services.

Passionate volunteers made it all possible. Thank you for showing that people—friends, neighbors and even strangers—can make a difference.

With Issue 26 now in the history books, we ask everyone, regardless of how they voted or whether they voted, to apply their energy to the next challenge, which is just as great. Our community must come together to begin preparing for a mayoral election in November 2021, and the first directly elected mayor taking office in January 2022.

All those who cast ballots acted from sincere conviction and desire to continue to make the Heights the best it can be. We are fortunate to live in a city where people have great passion about the community’s future and are deeply engaged in civic affairs.

Outgoing council members Carol Roe and Craig Cobb are among those who have been dedicated to Cleveland Heights; we thank them for their service on council. We congratulate incoming council members Melody Hart and Davida Russell, and re-elected members Mary Dunbar and Kahlil Seren.

We encourage all citizens to remain civically engaged and help ensure a strong future. There is much work to be done. We look forward to working side-by-side with everyone to ensure that Cleveland Heights remains a special place.

Michael Bennett, a 29-year resident of Cleveland Heights, is secretary of Citizens for an Elected Mayor. He submitted this opinion on behalf of the organization.
Beyond race, CH marketing video remains problematic

Daniel Levin

I have no doubt that the Cleveland Heights marketing department now has an understanding that race was mistakenly misrepresented in its initial marketing video.

While the marketing staff is bound to fix it, it was unfortunate, and certainly preventable. I have a profound concern that the original video failed for a second, and entirely different, reason, and I’m concerned that, for likely contractual reasons, it will not be fixed on the second go-round.

The video’s stagnant camera work, the rigidly scripted “older” voice of the voice-over talent, the editing, and music were ’80s school and corporate in approach. I believe that any company that produces marketing films—whether it was a film production house or a marketing firm—that ignores contemporary film aesthetics and techniques will be incapable of making “the proper” video that the city needs and deserves.

Although I don’t know him, I am grateful to Adam Dew for his talent and dedication to our community, as reflected in his unsolicited unofficial promotional Cleveland Heights video, posted on Vimeo following the release of Cleveland Heights’ official marketing video.

While Dew pulled his video together from existing footage, with just a few hours of editing, it was dynamic and represented the similarly dynamic community that so many of us proudly call home. I hope the city will only release videos promoting Cleveland Heights that package the city directly to young singles and young families, keeping [the aforementioned] four film qualities at the top of their priority list. Otherwise, any marketing video will be reverse marketing; it will not promote our city to this target market, and, in fact, it may repel it.

The approach to making a film is every bit as important as the content within it. Young people today are sophisticated regarding all things communication related. Our city deserves to be continually flooded with a new young population, and it has a responsibility to market to young people in the language that they value.

I recommend breaking off the relationship with the current marketing firm and hiring one made up of the demographic we are targeting.

At the very least, our city’s marketing department should have one employee who is in this demographic and is aware of current film trends (but possibly it already has such an individual on staff). I feel for the marketing department. It cannot be easy having so many caring and vocal citizens passionately speaking out. However, I’m certain our city can make this happen, and I’m sure that it will. We will all be the beneficiaries when it does.

In advance, I thank you for listening to our community and responding.

Daniel Levin has been a Cleveland Heights resident since 2009. He’s a father of three, and a professor of photography at Cuyahoga Community College.
A modest proposal to participate in Cleveland Heights redevelopment

Joan Mallick

After presenting many rejected concerns about Top of the Hill (TOH) to the city, I realize that it’s time to stop resisting and join the city in its redevelopment efforts. I’m offering the city a proposal: instead of selling my 100-year-old house, I will stay in Cleveland Heights and convert it and the house next door into a high-density, mixed-use residential property including a restaurant. In return, I expect the city to grant me the same financial and other assistance it gave to the Indiana-based developers for TOH.

My credentials are that I’ve lived in my house for 40 years, restored the interior to its original condition and added amenities, including a second-floor enclosed porch and a formal garden. I have successfully developed and sold property in Noveltys, Ohio and Sedona, Ariz. Unlike the TOH developers, I know that the main road is called Cedar Road, not Cedar Street.

Here are the specifics of my proposal: First, I’ll buy the property next door and sell it to the city which will then convert it and my house into a tax increment financing (TIF) overlay district (to guarantee the health, safety and well-being of my neighbors). The city will then lease the property to me for $1/year for 30 years. The city will also help me get a low-interest TIF loan from the Port Authority, which will also exempt me from sales tax on construction materials.

Second, the city must restructure my property taxes, which should be at least $100,000/year after construction is complete. I’m not asking for tax abatement. I will pay $100,000 each year. The city will rebate $75,000 to me after taking $25,000 for the schools. I’ll use the rebated money to pay off my loans and put any leftover funds into my pocket. I’ll agree to use that extra money for a public good, like putting new curbs along the neighboring streets. But I doubt the city can force me to do anything once I’ve booked the money.

Third, I’ll publicly promise to use $2 million of my own money, although I plan to contribute only about $750,000. But I expect the city to use the $2 million pledge in all public presentations so residents will believe in my financial dedication to the project. Also, I will need a bridge loan to secure construction financing. I expect the city to give me enough cash to convince lenders that I am a good credit risk. If the city doesn’t have that money, I expect it to get it somewhere, even if the city must issue debt bonds.

Fourth, I will need a zoning variance so that I can add parking spaces for my new, high-income tenants. I will own the parking area and collect all parking fees at the completion of construction. There should be no concern about the lost parking revenue because the city will get payroll taxes from my new employees (chef, housekeepers, handyman and yard workers) and my new tenants.

Finally, design-wise I will promise to leave some elements of my house’s original Georgian design visible, but I will not reconstruct another Georgian building. Instead I will integrate the two properties using a respectful and tasteful design that emphasizes CH’s new look of visually imposing, glass-dominated structures. I expect the city to publicly reject any criticism directed toward me about the design because it will certainly be emotionally based, totally unenlightened, and indicative of backward thinking. I hope CH City Council will consider an emergency ordinance authorizing a memorandum of understanding with me so that I can assume my role in the reimagining of Cleveland Heights.

This is a condensation of a presentation I made at the last CH City Council meeting. It is obviously satirical, but it is serious in that it very clearly outlines all of the special considerations the commercial developer was given for the TOH project.

Joan Mallick is a 48-year resident of Cleveland Heights. For 40 years, she has lived in a 100-year-old brick Georgian, which she and her husband restored. She cannot imagine living anywhere else, but is concerned about the direction the city is going in, in terms of viable economic development.

Call Jared Lavender
216-965-0646
www.KellerNational.com
Top of the Hill—bottom of city council

Martin Cosentino

For the last six issues of the Heights Observer, there have been two major subjects addressed in its pages—the first, the CH elected mayor and new council members; and the second, the Top of the Hill (TOH) development project at Cedar Road and Euclid Heights Boulevard. We have been relieved, after an election, of the first issue—and the right thing happened at the polls.

The second issue, not subject to election, or any other visible means of effective citizen response has, after nearly 40 meetings, and approaching 50 years, not been relieved, and portends even further absence of relief.

I painfully note that nearly every writer responding to the TOH project in these same pages has accurately noted the total absence of the criteria and policy set by CH City Council itself for the project: Its familiarity and sensitivity to the neighborhood that surrounds it, the scale and appropriateness of the building volumes, the blatant absence of a visual design that begins to express these qualities. Further, the down-grading of construction specifications, traffic problems, parking problems, the lack of immediate residents’ response to this project, all keep piling the straws higher on the citizens’ backs.

Suddenly, there is a call to obtain the same 4,000 signatures that put the elected mayor on the ballot. Just exactly how these signatures would be presented, and received, at a TOH meeting, sounds like someone holding a grenade with the pin removed. This is the effect of frustration and years of neglect.

Exactly one year ago this month, the publisher of the Heights Observer, Deanna Bremer Fisher, in her capacity as executive director of FutureHeights, Cleveland Heights’ Community Development Corporation, sent an extensive letter to CH City Council, voicing many of the concerns I listed above, along with many others. And, as of this current issue, these concerns still hang precariously in the balance.

Again, as has been voiced in the numerous opinions appearing here, CH City Council has failed to focus the TOH project into the very clear criteria set by the city itself. Seven part-time council members, who are primarily legislators, cannot maintain the now 30-year momentum to bring TOH to fruition. To wit, no single planning individual from the city has taken the TOH project under wing, thus forcing on us the distasteful proverb of “art by committee” with its obvious results. And, to boot, Cleveland Heights touts itself as “Home to the Arts”! It is certainly cosmic coincidence that CH voters have finally approved an “elected mayor,” who would hopefully provide the robust leadership necessary to bring TOH to a bright, well-accepted and successfully timely conclusion.

But we will now have to wait another two years to have a hopefully well-chosen, and elected mayor. This would provide the spearhead TOH desperately needs, to overcome all the inertia, indecision, and negligent planning that has plagued this sorely needed project for years in the short-term, and decades in the long-term.

Can this ill-fated project wait, or survive, another two years, before the first shovel goes into the ground?

Martin Cosentino, design/builder and managing director emeritus of Ensemble Theatre, has lived in Cleveland Heights for 49 years. He was a member of the planning committee that successfully saved the Coventry P.E.A.C.E. Campus building and park, a cooperative arts center, from demolition and commercial development.
Looking back, and looking forward

As the winter solstice approaches, we consider events of the past year and our hopes for the future.

Cleveland Heights City Council kicked off 2019 by establishing the Refuse and Recycling Task Force. Composed of residents and city staff members, the group’s charge was to address the need to modernize our collection system, tackle the perennial debate over bags versus carts, and recommend future actions.

We urge everyone to read the task force’s findings, which will be released early in 2020. Meanwhile, the group’s agendas, minutes, e-mails and other documents are available at www.clevelandheights.com. As we said last year (“Heights of Democracy: Trash talk,” Heights Observer Vol. 11, Issue 12), we oppose privatizing this essential service.

During its abortive re-branding process (aired in March, and withdrawn shortly afterward), the city found that survey respondents valued diversity shortly afterward). For example, the city government eventually took over dozens of the pro-integrative programs launched by grassroots organizations.

Now, as then, it is up to citizens to make our city what we want it to be. Economic diversity is an inherent characteristic of Cleveland Heights, with its wide variety of housing stock. As we seek to improve our most distressed neighborhoods in the aftermath of the foreclosure crisis, economic disparities may be one of our greatest challenges. We must ensure that residents of the target areas are involved in all planning efforts. Anything else will amount to a gentrification scheme.

Last summer we wrote with pride of our city’s award-winning Complete and Green Streets plan. We look forward to a progress report early in the new year.

In October, the city completed a two-year, $6-million capital improvements project, expected to pay for itself through energy savings. Upgrades and repairs have eliminated 2,822 metric tons of carbon emissions per year, and reduced the community center’s energy use by 50 percent. We applaud these results, and hope to see Cleveland Heights become a regional leader in sustainability.

On Nov. 5, Cleveland Heights voters made history, with 64 percent voting for a charter amendment (Issue 26) to change the city’s government from a council/manager to a mayor/council form. Hundreds of residents contributed time and money to this grassroots effort, which succeeded despite well-funded, powerful opposition. A particular low point was Council Member Melissa Yasinow’s weaponizing of the firefighters’ union, by convincing a fraction of the membership who happened to be present at a union meeting to formally reject and campaign against Issue 26. This stunt demeant our safety forces and ultimately backfired. We are proud of the thousands of Cleveland Heights voters who ignored constant fearmongering by the opposition and embraced the potential for positive change.

As the city embarks on a two-year transition, leading to the first mayoral election in 2021, a reconstituted city council will play a key role. Newly elected council members Mary Dunbar and Kahlil Seren, along with Jacek Stein, Michael Ungar and Melissa Yasinow, whose terms extend through 2022. Until then, we will be watching and sharing our observations, as will our friends from the successful Issue 26 campaign.

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

Cleveland Heights Tax Savings Program.

With Grow, you can receive cost-saving tax exemptions when you build or remodel your home. To find out if your project qualifies, call Brian Anderson 216-291-2617 or visit clevelandheights.com/grow

Lower the ceiling on raising your roof.

Introducing Grow. The Cleveland Heights Tax Savings Program.
Join us for Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship December 24th, 5:00pm & 10:00pm (childcare provided at 5:00pm only)
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Cleveland Heights, OH 44118
216.321.5800
www.fpccle.org

Heights Observer December 1, 2019
www.heightsobserver.org

Celebrating community ownership of our public schools: Reaching Heights turns 30

Sue Kasser

My, how time flies!
It’s already been 30 years since an idea that was hatched on my deck became a reality. Fresh from a two-year examination of the best ways to support a successful, integrated school district, a half dozen public-school advocates, who shared a commitment to equity and excellence, created Reaching Heights. This community-based organization—an independent of district administration, the teachers’ union, and the Board of Education—was designed to stay out of elections and mobilize the community as a full partner in providing a quality education for its students. The mission also called for nurturing public appreciation and respect for the public schools.

To this day, Reaching Heights provides connection, appreciation and information, in place of grumbling and rumors. It reminds our community that our public schools belong to us and that we have a lot to bring to the success of this important community asset—an asset that benefits all of us. Reaching Heights advocates for public education by providing support to teachers and parents and offering events such as its annual summer music camp.

In 1987, after two years of intensive public input, school visits, and discussion focused on the challenges facing the public schools, the schools’ consensus project task force completed its work. The final task force report noted the crucial role of the community: “The expectations that the community holds, as well as the investment of money, time, talents, caring and energy, and demonstrated support by a broad base of community residents will be the driving forces toward excellence in education.” Task force members followed their own advice and created Reaching Heights to make sure residents had a way to advance excellence. Steve Bullock and I, two members of the task force, served as founding trustees, along with other activists committed to public education. By 1989, we had incorporated and earned a start-up grant from the Gund Foundation. Two years later, I became the executive director—my dream job.

For the next 17 years I was energized and driven by our mission and by a wonderful board of trustees who shared my passion for our children, our schools, our community and the equal opportunity afforded by public education. Collaboration with dedicated advocates for students and the common good was uplifting and fun, and was the model for what we hoped to do for our educators, which was to create a sense of shared purpose and responsibility.

Over the years, Reaching Heights has focused on the community as a resource. While its programs and activities have evolved, the organization continues to facilitate connections and build trust, communicate high aspirations, set achievable goals, and deliver support in large and small ways.

It is at the community level that we can see, hear, feel and assess what is going on in the schools. This is where problem-solving, built on trust and high expectations, not judgment, can advance needed changes. This is where each of us can make a difference by encouraging students and educators, shaping informed perceptions of life in our schools and the value of our students, and advocating for public education.

On Dec. 10, Reaching Heights trustees and staff, past and present, along with donors, teachers and friends, will gather to recognize the endurance and continued relevance of this small community-based non-profit. I will be there to celebrate this 30-year legacy and to congratulate Krista Hawthorne and the Reaching Heights board on keeping alive the vision and purpose we found so compelling when we met on my deck so many years ago.

Authentic voices are needed more than ever, and so is Reaching Heights.

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

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www.heightsobserver.org
Participation in fall musical teaches students essential skills

Ari Klein

I expect some students will succumb to illness following the high school musical production. There is such a build-up; late evening rehearsals, along with all of the exhaustion that comes when teens pour their hearts and souls into a common effort.

There always seems to be some magic at work when the fall musical finally comes together. This year was no exception with Heights High’s production of “Damn Yankees.”

Students from all of our schools came together to sing, dance, and perform, comprising two different casts over four performances. Orchestra members were in the pit playing some complicated jazzy tunes, alongside a handful of hired professionals.

An army of students, all dressed in black, moved sets and props that they had created and built, operated spotlights, and adjusted sound levels. Each contributed a special part to the practice, study, and mountain of work that goes into producing a show. At the same time, these students were expected to attend classes, complete their homework, participate on sports teams, and do all of the other things kids are signed up to do. It is no wonder that some students get sick after the final performance—they are completely spent.

I keep reminding myself that I am a math teacher, but I really think that the learning that goes on in an authentic experience, such as putting on a play with all of its complexities and necessary cooperation, is probably more useful to most students than some of the curriculum they are required to learn in school.

Aside from developing competence in whatever one’s part is in the production, a student needs to understand teamwork, leadership, patience and determination, and should have the skills to cope with frustration.

There is no test for these skills. Every student involved in this year’s production will remember it and will have grown in some way because of it. I wish I could say that students will have similar fond memories of solving quadratic equations, but math experiences seem unlikely to stick with them in the same way as the play.

What if skills could be learned through experiences more like the musical? Having something real to present to an audience raises the stakes in learning. We have classrooms and entire buildings that present projects on a regular basis to the community, not including musical performances. But these are part of the curriculum.

Ever since testing and standards have overtaken logic in the state of Ohio, it is harder to have project-based and authentic learning activities. We are so set on what needs to be learned, and how that learning will be assessed, that we lose out on the kind of open-ended, large-scale projects that lead to real interest and discovery on the part of our students.

I am, perhaps, somewhat jaded because I tried to teach this way early in my career. But if specific standards are required for a particular project, it narrows the scope of what students are free to question and discover through their own curiosity. If the outcome of a project creates restraints that limit the scope so completely, then it hardly seems worth doing.

I am not against standards, but I believe there are many valuable things to learn that may not be prescriptive.

Perhaps things will change in education to allow more flexibility in how and what students learn. Unfortunately, I believe things will get worse before they get better.

As school districts fight for additional money through levies, the arts are usually among the first things to go. A case in point is Willoughby Eastlake that lost a school levy on Nov. 5, and has begun making cuts to arts education. Our district has always valued the arts. I hope we have the will and determination to continue funding our schools so that enriching activities, like the fall musical, will continue.

Ari Klein is a lifelong community member, math teacher at Cleveland Heights High School, and president of the Cleveland Heights Teachers Union.
New UH logo scarves are available

Mike Cook

This winter, University Heights residents can stay warm while looking cool. The new University Heights city logo scarf is now available, exclusively at UH City Hall, for $10.

The soccer-style scarf prominently features the city’s new logo and colors. The scarf made its debut at the recent University Heights Civic Awards, and is available while supplies last.

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

VOTES continued from page 1

Communion of Saints Parish

We invite you to join us in celebration of the birth of Christ!

Tuesday, December 24th - Christmas Eve
4:00pm St. Ann Church
4:00pm St. Philomena Church

Wednesday, December 25th - Christmas Day
12:00 Midnight-St. Ann Church
10:00am - St. Philomena Church
11:00am - St. Ann Church

Tuesday, December 31st - New Years Eve
4:00pm - St. Philomena Church

Wednesday, January 1st - New Years Day
10:00am - St. Philomena Church
11:00am - St. Ann Church

St. Ann (Office) 2175 Coventry Rd, Cleveland Heights, Oh
St. Philomena 13824 Euclid Ave, East Cleveland, Oh

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FutureHeights Neighborhood Mini-grant helps community leaders create aging-well guide

Sarah Wolf

Forest Hill neighbors Sue Kenney and Judy Charlick saw a need for a resource at home services for the aging members of their community. Through discussions with others involved in a local senior center, they decided to do some research and compile a list of nonprofit and public organizations that could benefit the older population. The result: Cleveland Heights Aging Well At Home Resource Guide. “This document lists background into about services available by category. For example, grocery delivery, home repair assistance, social activities, and transportation,” Kenney said. Both the city of Cleveland Heights and the Forest Hill Homeowners Association offer online access to the guide, which can be found at https://eclarks.com/DocumentCenter/View/577/CH-AgingWellAtHome-Resource-Guide-May-2019. Kenney and Charlick soon discovered that some of the older residents of the community don’t have access to (or knowledge about) the technology required to find the guide online. If they wanted it to reach everyone it could benefit, they were going to need a hard-copy version, something that proved a strain to fund on their own.

Kenney and Charlick searched for partners to help finance the process; it was during that phase that they met Sruti Basu, director of community-building programs at FutureHeights, who suggested the pair apply for a mini-grant to cover printing costs. “The application process was straightforward, relatively easy,” Kenney said. They submitted their paper work and then met with a panel to discuss their ideas in person. “They appeared very interested in our initiative, very aware of the need for this type of resource,” Kenney said. Kenney and Charlick applied for a mini-grant process, Kenney and Charlick were awarded $720 to proceed with their project in spring 2019. “We were ecstatic to get the funding. A few days after learning of the grant receipt, we began planning and executing—identifying volunteers, purchasing printing supplies, getting documents printed. We started right away,” Kenney said.

Thanks to the FutureHeights mini-grant, they were able to meet their goal of printing and distributing 240 resource guides. Twice annually, FutureHeights offers mini-grants of up to $1,000 for neighborhood projects like Kenney and Charlick’s. The goal of the program is to support neighborhood leaders by supplying some funding to turn their community-driven dreams into reality.

Details about the program and how to apply can be found at www.futureheights.org/programs/community-building-programs/ or by e-mailing sha@futureheights.org. The next deadline is March 15, 2020.

FutureHeights invites all community members to the 2019 Neighbor- hood Mini-Grant Celebration, to mix and mingle with past and current mini-grant recipients, at The BottleHouse (500 Lee Road) on Dec. 15 at 7 p.m. Sarah Wolf is an intern at FutureHeights, a resident of Cleveland Heights, and a grad uate-level community practice student at MSASS/Case Western Reserve University.

It’s Christmas at ACT II Thrift Shop! Holiday decor & gifts | Women’s clothing, shoes, jewelry & accessories Men’s clothing & accessories | Small housewares, books & games

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Cleveland Heights City Council Meeting highlights

OCTOBER 21, 2019

Council members present were Mayor Carol Roe, Craig Cobb, Mary Dunbar, Kahlil Seren and Michael Ungar. Mayor Roe, Mary Dunbar and Vice Mayor Melissa Yasnow were absent.

Evans Energy presentation

Jeff Evans reported on the two-year project in its company, Evans Energy, implemented to improve energy efficiency of city-owned buildings. The work primarily upgraded city hall, the community center, and the service garage. The project was in partnership with the county’s sustainability program. Improvements will generate an expected $6 million in savings in energy use and maintenance.

Public comments

Animal control ordinance: Three residents spoke in favor of ending the practice of designating specific breeds as criteria for defining a dangerous dog. They cited research and experience indicating that dangerous dog behavior is not a function of specific breeds.

Severance redevelopment plan

Planning and Development Committee Chair Michael Ungar introduced, on first reading, a resolution to approve an agreement with AE7 Pittsburgh to provide planning services for redevelopment of Severance Center. He also introduced a resolution to remove the emergency clause from the legislation, which was approved, with Mayor Roe voting “no” and the service garage.

Change in code on dangerous animals

Saftey and Municipal Services Committee Chair Craig Cobb introduced, on first reading, an ordinance to end the practice of naming specific dog breeds as vicious.

Mayors July report

Mayor Roe, acknowledging the acronym surrounding the referendum on city leadership, called for some form of reconciliation process after the election so the community can move forward together.

Public comments

NOVEMBER 4, 2019

Council members present were Mayor Carol Roe, Vice Mayor Melissa Yasnow, Craig Cobb, Mary Dunbar, Kahlil Seren and Jason Stein. Michael Ungar participated by telephone, but did not vote. The meeting lasted from 7:31 p.m. to 8:39 p.m.

Public comments

Small Business Saturday: Mayor Roe intro duced Myn O’Connor, executive director of Cedar Fairmont Business District and Cleveland Independents, who spoke on behalf of Shop Small and Shop Local on Small Business Saturday. November 30. Because the Heights’ community is home to “so many wonderful small businesses,” O’Connor said, they would be celebrated on Nov. 30, the 10th annual Shop Small event, supported by American Express. Later in the meeting, council unanimously approved proclaiming Nov. 30 as Small Business Saturday.

Master Plan update

City Manager Tara taka Briley gave the third quarter update. She reviewed successes to date, pointing out the tracking mechanism that can be found on the city website, called the Master Plan Dashboard. More than 1,000 individuals participated in the plan to the city’s date. Highlights include five houses that have been rehabilitated, and 18 public improvements through partnership efforts with other organizations. Cleveland Heights now has the lowest crime ranking in the Northeast Ohio region for America for complete streets policies. The city has continued to add businesses, including the new Golf Lounge, and new Canvas CLE, the new Lee Road art center. Her department continues to make progress on the 24 priorities to be completed in two years, such as addressing delinquent properties through payment plans and foreclosure board sales.

Severance Town Center redevelopment

Council introduced a resolution for entering into an agreement with AE7 Pittsburgh. A full presentation will be made to the planning and Development Committee.

Delaware Drive NEORSD grant

Council approved a grant agreement with the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District (NEORSD) to fund the Delaware Drive Base ment Flooding Relief Project.

Refuse and Recycling Task Force

Council approved extension of the Refuse and Recycling Task Force term until Jan. 31, 2020. Vice Mayor Roe encouraged everyone to visit the leaf date map pick up on the city website, under Residents/League specific neighborhood and street information.

LWV Observers: Jeanine Guzy

To receive email postings of full reports, send an email to heightsobserver@gmail.com through the Google groups list of club observer reports as a search phrase. This group contains discussions on selection and highlights of public meetings and are not official statements of the Heights League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland. This disclaimer must accompany any redistribution of these reports.

CH prepares for 2020 U.S. Census Count

Hannah Morgan

With the first phase of the 2020 U.S. Census just six months away, Cleveland Heights is preparing for this initiative. In 2020, the U.S. Census Bureau will collect data on more than 350 million people—more than double the number of residents in the Electoral College. On Oct. 7, p.m., Heights Lib raries will present “The 2020 Census: What You Need To Know” at the Heights Library, Lee Road Branch. Audrey Wynn, partner specialist for the U.S. Census Bureau, will explain what the Census is and why everyone should participate. Her presentation by all those ages 50 and older, and residents of the city are important to the future of the city. The more individuals confirmed as residing in Cleveland Heights, the more funds will be available to the city in the coming decade.

Traditionally, residents, who comprise about 41.1 percent of Cleveland Heights’ population, and families with young children (children younger than 5) who comprise about 6.2 percent of the city’s population, are the groups most responsible for lower rates than the general population.

Because a correct count of every person in every household directly impacts how governmental funding is distributed, Heights-organizations—including the city of Cleveland Heights; the League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland, CH-UH Chapter; Heights Libraries; and FutureHeights—make the charge to organize complete count initiatives.

To reach the most comprehensive count in each neighborhood, the U.S. Census Bureau is employing residents to help with outreach and data-collection efforts. Learn more at 2020census.gov/jobs.

Hannah Morgan serves as an AmeriCorps Vista at FutureHeights.
Heights Observer December 1, 2019

COMMUNITY NEWS

SCOTT HAIGH
Cleveland Heights resident for over 35 years

“Scott was always available, responsive and timely to our needs and requests... I am happy to offer an unqualified and enthusiastic endorsement of Scott. He is intelligent, creative and enjoys educating his clients in all aspects of the buying and selling process.

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The garage at the Hampstead house had caved in on itself. A third car was found underneath the rubble.

from neighbors, we already know it’s having an impact on the surrounding neighborhood.”

Home Consulting Solutions LLC renovated the circa 1920s, three-bedroom, one-and-a-half-bathroom home on Goodnor, including porch repair; all new plumbing, electrical, heating and air conditioning; as well as an upgraded and expanded kitchen, and updated baths. After renovations were complete in October, the home sold to a new owner-occupant for its full asking price after only three days on the market.

FutureHeights currently has five other homes in the program, two of which are nearing completion.

“The Cleveland Heights housing stock exhibits a variety of architectural styles and details that highlight our rich history,” said Fisher. “These homes represent the time in which they were built and are a big part of what makes Cleveland Heights unique. Recognizing the importance of preserving these homes and showcasing their distinctive features is what led to the creation of our FutureHomes program. We seek to set a high standard for housing renovations and restore neighborhood pride.”

Another home, 2036 Hampstead Road, constructed in 1922, is being renovated by Frank Kuhar of Revived Housing Developers Inc. Kuhar updated the kitchen and baths, and installed new electrical, heating, air conditioning and plumbing systems. He finished a portion of the basement and added a second full bathroom. He also completely rebuilt the front porch and the garage, which had collapsed.

FutureHeights and Kuhar will host a community open house at 2036 Hampstead on Sunday, Dec. 8, from 2 to 4 p.m. so that the public can see the renovations firsthand and learn more about FutureHomes.

“We are excited about the amazing transformation of this house, but there are still many homes that need attention throughout Cleveland Heights,” said Fisher. “We are looking forward to continuing to work with our partners to enhance our city’s housing stock and build more resilient neighborhoods.”

Abby Lawless is the director of real estate development at FutureHeights.

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Neighborhood Leadership series helps realize a dream

Donna Johnson has lived on the same street in Cleveland Heights since 1995. Her children attend Heights schools, her professional life is rich with connection to the nonprofit world, and she has an active sense of volunteerism. “Community is important to me,” Johnson said. “Without it, neighborhoods decline.”

In recent years, though, Johnson felt a disconnect with her neighbors. “It seemed like every spring there were new faces on my street. I knew my neighbors on either side, but felt a strong need to connect and engage with more of my neighbors,” Johnson said.

One day she read a Heights Observer article about how FutureHeights was conducting a Neighborhood Leadership Workshop Series and decided to apply. The workshop series is for any Cleveland Heights resident who, like Johnson, wants to take a more active role in the community. The free program consists of six, three-hour sessions that cover a range of topics, such as leadership, project planning, an understanding of the various Cleveland Heights neighborhoods, city policies, and advocacy related to those neighborhoods. The workshops provide an opportunity for residents to gain skills and resources, and a chance for them to connect with other community leaders and learn what they are working on or hoping to achieve.

For Johnson, her dream was to have a Little Free Library (LFL) installed on her street—a dream she discussed during the workshop with Sruti Basu, FutureHeights director of community-building programs. Basu was able to connect Johnson with Nancy Levin, Heights Libraries director.

“As a result, a nicely painted, and registered, LFL house was donated by the library! A very kind and supportive neighbor allowed us to install the house on his front lawn. We unveiled it at a neighborhood block party in September,” Johnson said.

As part of the process of obtaining an LFL, Johnson co-hosted a Common Ground event on June 30 to discuss any and all community engagement projects for the neighborhood. (Common Ground is a series of community conversations sponsored by the Cleveland Foundation.) Based on the response and success of these initiatives, Johnson said 2020 will include more Common Ground events, as well as another block party.

“If you are seeking resources to help improve your neighborhood or need technical assistance developing a neighborhood project, FutureHeights Neighborhood Leadership program is worth the time,” Johnson said.

FutureHeights is now accepting applications for its 2020 Neighborhood Leadership Workshop Series. Dates and program details are available at www.futureheights.org/programs/community-building-programs. Additional questions can be directed to Sruti Basu at sbasu@futureheights.org. The deadline to apply is Jan. 17.

Sarah Wolf is an intern at FutureHeights, a resident of Cleveland Heights, and a graduate-level community practice student at MSASS/Cate Western Reserve University.
Heights Observer December 1, 2019

CH Senior Center News

Amy Jenkins

If you enjoy trivia and want to be part of a team, this event is for you! The Cleveland Heights Office on Aging is excited to be participating in the second NEO Mind Challenge for the New Majority. The first year was great, and we look forward to more fun and continued success in year two.

The concept is similar to Academic Challenge, with teams representing as many as 36 senior centers competing in playoff tournaments similar to NCAA’s March Madness.

The initial competition for Cleveland Heights will take place on Thursday, Jan. 16, 10 a.m., at the CH Senior Activity Center (SAC). There is no cost to participate, but you must register in advance at the senior center.

All participants will receive a T-shirt and an opportunity to attend the championship round, to be held at Jack Thistledown Racino on Sunday, May 6.

Bragging rights and cash prizes will be awarded to the winning team members and their senior center. The local competition schedule and playoff information is available at www.theMindChallenge.com.

The Cleveland Heights SAC, located at the CH Community Activity Center at 1 Monticello Blvd., offers a variety of programming for those 60 and older. A complete schedule of programs is published in the community center’s newsletter, available online at www.chparks.com.

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

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

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

Look for window lighting on Noble Road from Euclid Avenue to Mayfield Road. Participating businesses include: All Auto Car Repair, Noble Food Deal, Metro’s Mobile, Eddie’s Discount, Hilltop Lounge, Hair by Nora, New Era Barbershop, Premier Barbershop, Hair Melodies, Journey Hair, C.J’s Passion Cuts, Mike’s Deli, Hair Melodies, Journey Hair, Nela Florist, Quality Braiding, Island Nails, I Style Hair Design, Nela Florist, Quality Braiding, Island Nails, I Style Hair Design, Island Style Jamaican Restaurant, and International Hair Salon.

For more information, visit www.noleighheggers.com or http://noahorganizing.org.

Hannah Morgan serves as an AmeriCorps VISTA to FutureHeights.

First hosts Advent service and reception

G. Michael Skerritt

As part of its Advent season observances, First Baptist Church of Greater Cleveland will present a service of Lessons and Carols, followed by an International Tea reception, on Sunday, Dec. 15, at 4 p.m. All are welcome to attend this traditional service, and the reception afterward, which will be held in the church’s Spahr Center, and feature edible treats from around the world.

The Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols is a service of Christian worship that is traditionally celebrated on Christmas Eve. Thanks to the inspiration of Bob Schneider, the church’s late music director, the First Baptist Chancel Choir several years ago began presenting this traditional service during Advent, as a way to prepare hearts and minds for the coming celebration of the birth of Christ.

In the service, the story of the fall of humanity, the promise of the Messiah, and the birth of Jesus is told in short Bible readings— or “lessons”—from Genesis, the prophetic books, and the Gospels, interspersed with the singing of Christmas carols, hymns and choir anthems.

Until the late 19th century, Christmas carols were primarily performed by singers visiting houses. Generally considered to be secular in content, carols had been excluded from Christian church worship.

In the Victorian era, the rising popularity of hymnody encouraged church musicians to introduce carols into worship services.

On Christmas 1858, the composer and organist John Stainer introduced carols into the service of Choral Evensong at St Paul’s Cathedral in London. In 1880, Rev. Edward White Benson, at that time Bishop of Truro Cathedral, conducted the first formal service of Nine Lessons and Carols on Christmas Eve. Benson, concerned at the excessive consumption of alcohol in Cornish pubs during the festive season, sought a means of attracting revelers out of the pubs and into church by offering a religious celebration of Christmas, and a member of First Baptist Church.

Music and theater are his avocations.

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New memoir sheds light on early Heights history

Stephen Davies

In a new memoir published by her family, Eleanor (Ellie) Hinig Davies vividly describes her experiences growing up in Cleveland Heights and Shaker Heights in the early 20th century.

Her father—Benjamin C. Hinig—was a prominent builder who built 26 houses in Cleveland Heights between 1910 and 1928, a dozen of them on prestigious Fairmount Boulevard. While many of these houses were built for prominent Clevelanders, the family lived in a series of homes that he built speculatively. The family stayed in each new house until it was sold, then moved on to the next new house, until Hinig’s bankruptcy in 1928 brought it all to an abrupt halt.

With a unique asset of 20 rooms of furniture, the family demonstrated exceptional resolve after “losing it all,” moving into “other people’s houses” that were sitting vacant in Shaker Heights. As before, when a house sold, they “moved on” to another.

Davies shared her eloquently written memoir with her friends and family in 2010. After her death in 2017, at age 97, her family came across an exceptional archive of journals, poetry, photographs, and other short works.

Her memoir tells the compelling coming-of-age story of a remarkable woman who transcended a series of family tragedies during the Great Depression and World War II, when she moved from Cleveland to Meadville, Pa. The lessons she learned through those very difficult years are timeless, and have much to teach about resilience, love, and the families we choose.


Stephen Davies, Ellie’s son, is co-founder of Project for Public Spaces, a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping people create and sustain public spaces that build strong communities.

HBC invites all to holiday party on Dec. 8

Heights Bicycle Coalition

Every December, Heights Bicycle Coalition (HBC) celebrates its progress, outlines its plans, and recognizes community “roll models” at a free public event. This year, join the fun on Sunday, Dec. 8, at 4 p.m., in the Secret Garden room at Nighttown, 12383 Cedar Road. Everyone is invited!

Jessica Yox, HBC president, will provide a brief update on the group’s accomplishments in 2019 and the outlook for 2020.

Then HBC will recognize its roll models—those members of the community who either exemplify or contribute to the thriving bike culture in the Heights. HBC will honor four this year—one from each of the communities represented in the organization: Cleveland Heights, University Heights, Shaker Heights, and South Euclid.

Visit HBC’s website (www.bikesintheheights.org) or Facebook page (facebook.com/bikesinthheights) for more details and updates.

This Dec. 8 event is open to the community and offers free refreshments for all, as well as a cash bar.

Heights Bicycle Coalition is a 501(c)3 nonprofit dedicated to educating and encouraging Heights community members to use bicycles as a sustainable and healthy form of transportation and recreation. Ángel L. Reyes-Rodríguez and members of the coalition’s communications committee wrote this article.

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• Spacious living room, dining room & three season room
• Attached garage for convenience
• Two master suites with vaulted ceilings & private bathrooms
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School collaborates with Heights businesses to make book fair local

Sorensen, also present were Superintendent Elizabeth Kirby, Tessour Scott Gauer, and Director of Data and Assessment Allison Byrd. The meeting began at 7:05 p.m., after an executive session, and ended at 9:45 p.m.

Ohio School Report Card performance, part II

Allison Byrd presented the second in her Data Series reports spoke about the disparity in performance based on the latest Ohio School Report Card. She discussed the five-year trend in the district’s performance, and how it compares to Ohio overall and other districts. She also explained what is does to make progress and impact achievement. The charts and analyses presented can be viewed on the BoardDocs site for this meeting, which is accessible at www.chhs.org/boardofeducation.aspx.

Proposed residential development

The district now has an app for smartphones, and district website improvements are forthcoming. The district received an award from the city of Cleveland for the renovations to Roxboro Middle School. The district website improvements are forthcoming.

Proposed UH residential development

The school board voted unanimously to accept a letter of intent so that the proposed development can start. The proposed development will be a mixed-use development that includes residential and commercial spaces.

Eileen Ryan Ewen

Eileen Ryan Ewen is a local artist and children’s book illustrator living in Cleveland Heights. She’s also a volunteer librarian at Communion of Saints School, and mentor to students who attend the school.

Join us for Christmas Worship!

Tuesday, December 24: Christmas Eve

Advent Festival of Lessons & Carols

Sunday, December 8

4:30 p.m. Handbell Prelude

5:00 p.m. Service of Lessons & Carols
Middle school students propose green solutions

We’ve all seen it: puddles of water gathering around the clogged drains in our driveways, rivulets of water running down the sidewalks, and standing water pooling in our yards. That’s stormwater runoff, and it’s a problem.

As that water moves over impervious surfaces, such as roads and parking lots, it picks up pollutants and harmful chemicals and carries them into freshwater and oceans. Due to urban development and an increase in paved surfaces, stormwater is increasing in communities throughout the country, including Cleveland Heights and University Heights. But seventh-graders in Lee Ann Chambers’ and Sarah Cusick’s science classes at Monticello Middle School, and Christine Smrdel’s and Joshua Luton’s classes at Roxboro Middle School, have solutions.

The students began their Earth’s Water unit by visiting Cleveland MetroParks’ Watershed Stewardship Center to learn about stormwater runoff and explore green infrastructure options to reduce its impact. They worked in pairs or small groups to research solutions, eventually settling on one or two that they would like to see implemented on their own school campuses.

Students priced out the options, from installation of permeable pavements in the parking lots to planting and maintaining rain gardens on their school grounds; sketched prototypes of their ideas; designed 3-D models on top of GoogleEarth images of their school buildings; created slideshows detailing their proposals; and presented them to their classmates, teachers, and guests from the Board of Education.

The most popular student suggestions were permeable pavers, either in school parking lots or near frequently used entrances and exits, along with rain gardens and green rooftops.

Students were aware of the challenges some of these ideas presented, such as the risk of rooftop gardens leaking from the added weight, and the need for someone to maintain rain gardens, which most felt could be done by members of their schools’ environmental clubs.

While the proposals are hypothetical at this stage, the lessons learned extended beyond the classrooms. Roxboro student Olivia Bruening plans to talk to her parents about installing permeable pavers around her garage, where water accumulates after rain. Other students said the unit helped them to think differently. “I didn’t realize how much runoff actually affects us. I’m going to make my mom more aware,” said Marissa Woods, a student from Monticello.

Krissy Dietrich Gallagher, a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights, is a former district teacher, and a freelance journalist under contract with the CH-UH City School District.
What’s going on at your library?

**Cleveland Heights – University Heights Library Board Meeting highlights**

**OCTOBER 21, 2019**

Board members present were President Chris Menchik, Vice President James Russo, Dana Fluellen, Annette Iwamoto, Susan Moskowitz and Vikas Turakhia. Max Gerboc was absent.

**SPARK (Supporting Partnership to Assure Ready Kids)**

Chinny Zalel, a parent partner from Family Connections, gave a progress report on SPARK, a program for preschool children intended to build academic and social-emotional skills for school readiness.

**Incidents report**

Kevin Echols, security manager, gave an update on incidents reporting. The library is on pace to match the previous two years for the number of incidents. There have been 571 incidents this year, as of Sept. 30. Current visitor numbers are 545,059 as of Sept. 30, so the rate of inci- dent is 0.0406 percent of accidents per visitor.

**Financial report**

The board reviewed and accepted the September financial statement. Total cash balance across the operating accounts, Bauer Fund accounts, and investment accounts as of September was $17,156,976.55.

**Policy amendments**

The board approved two changes to the Service and Administrative policies of the library board of trustees. In section E, Civic Responsibilities, the following sentence was added: “Political materials may be distributed to the public outside of the library, but not inside of any building.” In Appendix C, Meeting Room Guidelines, the following sentence was added: “Any violation of the library Code of Conduct or Meeting Room Guidelines can be cause for suspension of meeting room privileges.”

**Library cleaning services**

The board approved and advertised the bid for cleaning services for all of the library facilities at a cost not to exceed $130,000.

**Covington waterfront project**

For the waterfront project on the Covington Village branch, the board accepted the bid of F. Buddie Contracting, Ltd., which had a lowest base bid of $296,100, and the lowest alternate bid of $40,630, for a total contract of $336,730.

**Library equity training**

All staff participated in library equity training in October, and the board of library trustees will undergo training in December.

**The 1619 Project**

On Monday, Sept. 30, the Adult Services Department hosted more than 90 people for a discussion on slavery in America, prompted by the book “The 1619 Project,” published in The New York Times Magazine. The event was such a success that follow-up discussions will be held in November and January. Staff members John Polio, adult services, and Peyton Meeks, circulation, facilitated the program.

**Greater Cleveland Food Bank’s Mobile pantry**

The mobile pantry served 61 families during the last outdoor event at the Covington Village branch in Septem- ber. It will continue on the fourth Monday of every month at the Lee Road branch starting in October.

**Ohio Library Council (OLC) Convention**

Seven employees attended the 2019 OLC Con- vention in Cincinnati, Sept. 23-27. Mayor Mary M. C. Emerson presented a program there, “Fine free is Cleveland,” in which she showed the library’s use of social media to build an online community to target an audience of users in the process of eliminating fines and the tangible results of that change.

**Strategic plan community survey**

An online survey was conducted to gather infor- mation regarding the challenges the community fac- es to tell the library what community needs. In addition, library staff administered surveys in person at programs and community events; attended community meetings to take notes, and spoke with patrons and neighbors. Data has been collected and will be presented to the board. This information will be used to influence the direction of the (library’s) strategic plan for 2020-21.

**New Youth Services programs**

Youth Services launched several new programs in September. Librarian Charlotte Blaser started a monthly STEM-based program called “ASTRO Bound” for kindergarteners on Tuesdays and a monthly Saturday drop-in lego pro- gram. Associate Kenan Anam has brought back the Teen Advisory Board. Associate Chris Fries intro- duced Pediatric Mindset, a competition where the community votes for its favorite pediatric ani- mals. In September, Youth Services staff visited five preschools, daycares, and schools to read stories to 210 children. Youth Services Librarian Sarah Rosen- berg and Associate Cale-Merrall had students in the Teen Advisory Board. Teen Advisory Board teen members will be provided with a list of library cards.

**Circulation report**

Electronic-media streaming currently makes up about 10 percent of materials circulated. Three of the four library branches increased circulation from a year ago. Visitors to the library remained about the same, except for the Noble Neighborhood branch, which showed an increase com- pared to a year ago.

**LVW League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland**

Look for earlier and often expanded postings of meeting summaries online at www.heightsobserver.org. See disclaimer on page 11.

**Noble Neighborhood Library**

13660 Cedar Road, 216-321-4700

**Foodie Movies**

This series of movies that will whet your appetite kicks off with “The Hundred-Foot Journey” (2014, PG, 122 minutes), in which the teenage son of an Indian restaura- teur finds work across the street with his dad’s culinary cube. With a war between the two eateries brewing, the teen displays his unique talents in the kitchen by merging Indian and French cuisines.
Heights Libraries cooking up ‘Culinary Comforts’ this season

Isabelle Rew

“Cast off the winter doldrums and dig into our savory menu of programs this quarter,” invites Heights Libraries’ winter program guide, Check Us Out, introducing this season’s Culinary Comforts theme.

From December through February, the library will offer a feast of culinary-themed literature, film and tasting experiences for all ages as a way to celebrate the multifaceted role that food plays in our lives.

“Our adult programming team was throwing around ideas for the library’s upcoming quarterly themes, and food and food-related topics seem to be perennially popular,” said L.P. Coladangelo, adult services associate. “We agreed that winter is a great time to highlight the fact that, in the darkest time of year, we often come together as families and communities to connect through shared meals.”

With this in mind, the library will offer food-related twists on some of its regular programs, such as the Original Voices Book Club and Lee Road Movie Night, which will feature My Life in France by Julia Child with Alex Prud’homme on Dec. 11, and the film, “Julie & Julia,” on Dec. 12.

For those who cannot consume food-related content without drooling, there will be plenty of opportunities for tasting.

“In some cases, we’ll be talking about stories that focus on how food and cooking can change our lives,” said Coladangelo. “But we’ll have other events where we can come together to enjoy culinary delights with our friends and neighbors.”

Among the edible food programs on the winter program menu, amateur cupcake decorators can test their talents in “Nailed It! Adult Edition,” a confectionary contest at the University Heights branch on Feb. 18. Library visitors can sip on hot chocolate at five programs throughout the winter months, including Hot Chocolate and Cookies Book Swap Night at the Lee Road branch on Dec. 10, and a number of cocoa-themed storytimes for kids.

In the children’s department, which consistently offers food-related programs for children and teens, staff chose to combine the culinary theme with their ongoing goal of offering more Afrocentric programs.

“This was a major request in the community survey that was completed in 2018,” said Shamekia Chandler, youth services associate. “We hope to provide children with culinary literacy skills that may help them in forming future career choices, and give young people a cohesive understanding of the African Diaspora and its place in our country’s history through food.”

Chandler will facilitate a Black History Month cooking series for ages 10 to 18 at 3:30 p.m. on Tuesdays in February. She will invite a local chef to demonstrate how to make simple meals that are both rich in flavor and history.

For more information, visit www.heightslibrary.org.

Isabelle Rew is the community engagement associate for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library System.
‘The Power of Ten’ fills White Gallery

Robin M. Outcalt

The Power of Ten opens Dec. 1 at the White Gallery at St. Paul’s Church, with an artists’ reception planned for Dec. 6.

The exhibition features the work of 10 talented Northeast Ohio fiber artists—Deb Berkebile, Joann Giordano, Ann Kmieck, Barb Lind, Ruta Marino, Amy Reed, Sandy Shelenberger, Mary Ann Tipple, Kathleen Vanmeter, and Martha Young.

“We call ourselves ‘The Tens’ because there are 10 of us . . . who have been meeting once a month for years,” explained Young. “Through those years we have supported and guided each other through the joys and sorrows of our lives.”

The members also offer one another constructive criticism on work in progress, advice on useful techniques, and updates on exhibits to enter and to view.

Since its inception, some members have come and some have gone. Each comes to fiber arts with a vision formed by her own background and experience. The resulting artwork is unique to each member of The Tens.

The community is invited to view this exhibition and attend the Dec. 6 artists’ reception, 5–7 p.m. The nonprofit gallery is located at the church, at 2547 Fairmount Blvd.

For additional information, and gallery hours, visit www.stpauls-church.org/music-and-art/gallery-shows.

Robin M. Outcalt is the co-chair of the White Gallery at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Cleveland Heights.
Heights Arts invites community involvement

Rachel Bernstein

It’s been almost 20 years since Heights Arts began shining a light on greater Cleveland’s local artists, musicians and poets.

Its most visible program, the Heights Arts Holiday Store, is currently in full swing at 2175 Lee Road. More than 100 artists are participating to ensure that visitors can purchase one of thousands of unique and beautiful gifts created by artists who live and work in the region, while contributing to the creative economy at the same time.

While the holiday and year-round store is highly visible and has become a favorite destination, residents and visitors may not be aware of many other opportunities Heights Arts has for residents to become engaged, whether they dabble or work professionally in the arts.

Currently, the organization is accepting submissions for its popular Members Show in March. With just a $10 entry fee, all are welcome to submit a work of art for this show, which celebrates the Heights’ creative community. The work is not curated, and all submissions are accepted until the show is complete, so participants are encouraged to submit early.

Exhibitions at Heights Arts are planned, designed and hung by a volunteer Exhibition Community Team, along with Heights Arts staff.

As the Members Show comes together, Heights Arts’ Heights Writes Community Team will be choosing the 10th Cleveland Heights Poet Laureate for a term beginning April 2020. Applications from poets who live in, or have a strong connection with, Cleveland Heights are being accepted through the end of the year. The Heights Arts Cleveland Heights poet laureateship is the longest-running poet laureateship in the state, and serves to educate and delight the local community by providing public readings and poetry programming in association with Heights Arts exhibitions and community engagement efforts.

Heights Arts continues to offer a range of opportunities for residents to become more deeply involved with the nonprofit arts organization. Its exhibition, Heights Writes, and music community teams all enable members to provide expertise and use their connections with the arts community to create vibrant, creative and relevant programs.

Those interested in becoming more involved are invited to visit www.heightsarts.org for information about opportunities to deepen their relationship with the local arts community through these teams, as well as others, to support the arts in the Heights.

Rachel Bernstein is executive director of Heights Arts. A professional musician, educator and administrator, she has worked in the arts for more than 30 years, partnering with many regional arts organizations, businesses, and people who share her belief in the power of the arts.

It’s been almost 20 years since Heights Arts began shining a light on greater Cleveland’s local artists, musicians and poets.

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Shadow puppets and live music create mystical setting

Colin Anderson

Dobama Theatre’s 60th anniversary Mainstage Season continues with “The Old Man and the Old Moon,” opening Dec. 6.

“The Old Man and the Old Moon,” written by PigPen Theatre Co. and directed by Melissa T. Crum and Nathan Motra, is a mystical epic—an odyssey of music and theater magic in which actors playing instruments create live sound effects on stage, and interact with elaborate shadow puppets.

In the play, the old man has the important job of filling the moon with liquid light each night. When his wife is drawn away by a mysterious melody, he abandons his duties and crosses the seas in search of her lost love. Along the way, he contends with apocalyptic storms, civil wars, monsters of the deep, irritable ghosts, and the fiercest obstacle of all: change.

PigPen Theatre Co., which describes itself as “a band of storytellers,” was founded in 2007 by a group of Carnegie Mellon School of Drama students. Since its creation, PigPen has toured its original plays around the world. It was the first theater company to win the NYC Fringe Festival’s top honor for a play for two consecutive years.

PigPen Theatre Co. members stated that they “created ‘The Old Man and the Old Moon’ as friends and collaborators. There were no rules other than to follow what excited our imaginations. Through years of performance, we discovered the Old Man and the Old Woman’s quest to seek out adventure, rekindle lost love, and rediscover their past as universal as it was magical. We can’t wait to see how new ensembles will come together to tell this story in more ways than we could ever imagine!”

Dobama’s production of “The Old Man and the Old Moon” features Gabe Reed, Emmy Brett, Jourdan Lewanda, Tim Kess, Josh Ianerst, Treva Offutt, Kieran Minor and Amy Bransky.

Performances, which run through Jan. 5, are Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m., and Sundays at 2:30 p.m. Visit www.dobama.org for a full schedule, ticket information, and box office hours.

Colin Anderson is the general manager of Dobama Theatre and a graduate of Oberlin College. His training is in directing and dramatic literature.

THE SHOPPING

6:00-7:00 p.m.

Restrians Elementary PTA
Students walking through the District singing holiday favorites

6:30-8:30 p.m.

Appletree Books
Roberto Chaco Foundation Latin Jazz Camp
The Music Settlement
Ilda Merze and Eric Monroogen
Still Point Gallery
Ellie Glorioso String Duo
Luna Bakery and Cafe
Reflections Interior Design
Criticcide

8:00 p.m.

Nighttown
Hubby’s Groove/Marianne Weyne - $20

8:00-10:00 p.m.

Parnell’s Irish Pub
The Local Obel
When I was 4 years old, I started going to nursery school in a big house on Taylor Road, between Shannon and Bendemeer roads. The women who ran it were nice, but I hated going there, just like I hated going to every other school I attended. However, I did look forward to being there every day for a few weeks in December, when we started learning Christmas carols.

I loved the music. I didn’t understand the words. Having been raised in a Jewish family, and being only 4 years old, I had no background in the Christmas story, no reference points. But I had never heard these songs before and I thought they were beautiful. I still do—even now, when I understand the words.

The next year, I started kindergarten at Coventry School. We sang Christmas carols there, too. And did so every year of elementary school. Christmas carols and Christmas songs. I never cared what they meant; I just liked hearing them and singing them. Well, I liked the carols, not the songs so much. I thought the songs were kind of contrived and silly and musically simplistic (though I might not have described them that way in the third grade—but I felt it).

At Roosevelt Junior High, I played sax in the school band, so I didn’t get to sing carols. But the kids in the school choir did. (When my kids went to Roxboro Elementary and Middle schools, they still sang Christmas songs there, but the schools had added a couple of Hanukkah songs, too, to make it all equal. So they’d sing a bunch of songs about how Jesus was born to save the world, and then, for balance, a song about potato pancakes and one about a toy, the dreidel.)

It got really good at Heights High, when I joined the Choir and we sang not only beautiful versions of Christmas carols, but also the amazing religious choral works by all of the great composers. I found it all quite gratifying to be a part of and the music was great composers. I found it all quite gratifying to be a part of and the music was very moving. And I still do.

And if I was annoyed by commercial Christmas songs in the third grade, I’m exasperated now—not because of their content, but because they’re just full of such bad music. And I hate, like most of us do, that these insipid songs start playing, on radio stations and in stores, constantly, relentlessly, six, and in some cases eight, weeks before Christmas. And we really don’t need 900 versions of “Santa Claus Is Coming to Town” or “Jingle Bells” or “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer,” by everyone who ever sang a pop song. But, of course, with so many radio stations and stores playing nothing but Christmas music around the clock for two months, they’re desperate for material to fill up the time. It’s a circular problem, which I could easily remedy, if given the opportunity. And speaking of requiring too much Christmas music, if you’ve ever wondered why songs that have nothing to do with Christmas—like “Let It Snow,” “Winter Wonderland,” and even “Baby, It’s Cold Outside” (both the politically incorrect and the newly politically corrected versions)—are considered “Christmas” music, that’s why: They just have to fill the time.

My wife and I go to a Christmas Service every year, mainly for the music (and also, a little, because everyone is nice that night). We spent a few years trying to find the church with the best music. It’s a slow trial process because you only get one chance a year. We enjoyed the music in many Cleveland Heights churches, but we finally settled on Church of the Covenant, in University Circle, on Euclid Avenue, a few steps from the end (or is it the beginning?) of Mayfield Road. The church is in Cleveland, but for this publication’s purposes, proclaiming it Cleveland Heights—because it’s so close to Cleveland Heights, and because so many of its members are Heights residents. In fact, if I had a map—the kind we used to have, printed on paper—I would take it to the President, so he could use his black marker to officially make Church of the Covenant part of Cleveland Heights.

That church’s Christmas Eve service includes a good choir, organ, trumpet, tympani and sometimes other instruments, and usually some songs by their bell ringers. They do traditional carols and lesser-known older and newer music. It’s all majestic and heart-warming.

I haven’t been a practicing Jew for decades, though almost everyone in my extended family is, and I have been steeped in that culture. But I have loved Christmas carols since I was 4 (and that’s a long time). It’s not the religion, it’s the music. And the memories.

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.