Free parking at all Cleveland Heights meters

Volume 13  Number 5  May 1, 2020
HEIGHS OBSERVER

Heights Observer May 1, 2020     www.heightsobserver.org

FREE TAKE ONE

Pandemic forces cancellation of UH Memorial Day Parade

Mike Cook

The University Heights Memorial Day Parade is one of the oldest and largest parades in Greater Cleveland. On April 3, the city’s mayor informed streamers were cancelled. This tribute will be organized by the parade committee that, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there will be no parade in 2020.

Given the stay-at-home order and ongoing need for social distancing, to even plan the parade at this juncture is not feasible, much less holding it.

In lieu of a parade and ceremony, the city will produce a video tribute to its fallen. This tribute will be streamed via www.universityheights.com, and on the city’s Facebook page and YouTube Channel, on Monday, May 25, at 7 p.m.

Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan said he plans for the Memorial Day

The University Heights Memorial Day Parade is set to return in 2021. Parade to be back in 2021, and that it will be “extra special.”

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

continued on page 6

continued on page 10

continued on page 7

Community supports Lee Road restaurants

Fred D’Ambrosi

“Dewey’s Pizza, please hold. There are two people ahead of you, and we’ll get to you as quickly as we can,” said the polite, but a little stressed, voice on the other end of the phone. (Never have I been more pleased to be put on hold while working a story!) Results weren’t much different at another Lee Road purveyor, Mitchell’s Fine Chocolates. “No one will be able to talk to you until after Easter. We’re too busy,” an employee told me.

In-person visits brought similar results, with waiting in line a requirement for getting a coffee at Phoenix and a whole wheat Pugliese loaf at Stone Oven. Many Lee Road food and beverage businesses are providing service through the pandemic, and grateful customers are responding with purchases, and kindness.

Kelli Kral, an owner of New Heights Grill (1206 Lee Road), said she got an anonymous $500 check in the mail, which, she later figured out, came from a man who is a longtime customer. “One lady called last week, and she wanted to set up a Go Fund Me page to help employees out with their rent,” said Kral. She told the woman it wasn’t necessary. Others call with good wishes, and to check up on Kral and the bar. “Our customers have been very supportive,” she said.

continued on page 6

Healthcare workers face new challenges during pandemic

The coronavirus pandemic “will likely lead to significant reduction in revenue sources for the City,” stated Cleveland Heights City Manager Tanisha Briley in an April 14 e-mail. Briley said the city has laid off 114 seasonal and part-time employees, and has implemented other cost-containment measures: a wage freeze for non-union staff, a hiring freeze for non-essential functions, and spending limitations.

While no one can predict the magnitude of the problem, Briley wrote, “We know that income tax and property tax are the two major revenue sources for the City, and we should expect a substantial decrease in those sources. Other revenue sources, such as fees and charges for services, will also take a hit as residents and businesses cope with severe financial hardships.”

The statements came in response to a list of questions the Heights Observer e-mailed to the city’s communications department. The Observer also offered all city council members an opportunity to comment on the crisis. Councilpersons Michael Ungar, Melody Joy Hart and Davida Russell responded.

Russell said she is most concerned with the budget and how the city will operate once it reopens. As chair of the Community Relations and Recreation Committee, she said she is worried about lost revenue from the closure of the recreation center that helps fund programs for all residents, especially kids and seniors, and whether those programs can restart, given the health crisis.
All the news that’s fit to print—if we had room

OPENING THE OBSERVER

Kim Sergio Inglis

Six articles—that’s how many had been submitted for the Heights Observer’s May issue as of April 10—three days before the April 13 article deadline. I’d expected a drop off in submissions; much of what the Observer publishes in any given month is a look ahead at events and programs. The coronavirus means no events on the horizon, and no articles about them. Feeling a bit desperate, I sent an e-mail to members of the Observer’s newly re-forming advisory committee, and some regular contributors, asking for articles and asking that they spread word, far and wide, to anyone who might have ever considered writing for the publication. Usually, it just works out. We generally end up with more than enough articles and photos to fill an issue, no matter how many pages we have to fill. It worked out this month as well. The response was far beyond what I anticipated. A week after sending that e-mail, the number of articles submitted would have filled an estimated 26 pages.

Besides the cancellation of events (and death of event-related articles), another impact of coronavirus has been a precipitous drop in print ads we understand. But fewer ads means fewer pages, as ad sales determine how many pages we can afford to publish each month. Ad sales for May suggested we should be publishing a 12-page issue. We upset it to 16. The 26 pages needed to accommodate the many articles submitted.

So, this month, especially, we remind readers that we publish many online articles only. Please visit www.heightsobserver.org to read them.

For every article that appears in this issue, there’s another that will be published online only, or held over to the June issue.

Putting together the May print issue meant making uncomfortable decisions. I had to omit a column from Ari Klein, one of our regular columnists. I had to drop the University Heights News page altogether (UH-themed articles appear on page 1 and page 2). I left out a straight opinion piece to make room for Kathy Ewing’s first-person reflection on daily life in this coronavirus age; but I didn’t have room in print for Krissy Dietrich Gallagher’s first-person account of what she, her friends, and their children are missing at this time.

The printed first-person, this issue contains several articles about what businesses are doing to try to keep going at a time when customers can’t visit them in person. At the Grog Shop, it’s a project that aims to benefit laid-off employees. For Lee Road restaurants, it’s a shift to takeout, as documented in detail by Fred D’Ambrosi, who regularly walks to Lee Road from his nearby home.

What’s not in this issue, or online? News from businesses in the North Side of Cleveland Heights. We want to hear from and about them. Please, if you’re a business owner, let us know how and if you’re adapting.

We anticipate ad sales will remain far below normal, for possibly longer than we can anticipate. That means the print issue we published this month will continue to publish far fewer pages than usual.

Whether in print, or online, we remain committed to publishing all relevant Heights-focused news. So please, keep your articles coming.

Kim Sergio Inglis is editor-in-chief of the Heights Observer, and is a Cuyahoga County master gardener volunteer.

Voters must insist on qualified leadership

Vince Reddy

The coronavirus crisis has reminded us of the fragility of our species and the frailty of the local communities that support us. We sometimes take our communities for granted and relate to them as consumers, rather than as citizens. We have to be careful to break from this pattern in our current up-ended situation.

In the Heights, we have an enviable collection of retail and restaurant businesses, many of them locally owned, along with arts organizations, theaters, citizens’ groups, and other community institutions. Though it has been heartening to see how residents have rallied to support these enterprises during this difficult time, we are still at risk of losing many of them, and must continue to be supportive.

In Cleveland Heights, we must also pay close attention if we wish to maintain control of our city government. This year will usher in a significant change beginning with the November 2021 election.

Last November, voters decided to switch from our city’s manager form of government to one in which voters will directly elect a mayor. The elected mayor will replace the city manager as the city’s chief executive.

Under the current system, the city manager is chosen by our seven-member city council and serves at the council’s will. Under the system that will come into use in 2022, an executive mayor, who will be the first full-time elected official to serve in Cleveland Heights city govern ment, will be directly elected by the voters.

Though city council is elected at-large, and thus subject to the will of all registered voters in the city, the new system has the potential to give voters a more-direct say in who runs the city on a day-to-day basis, albeit from a much smaller number of possible candidates than the current system affords.

The new system’s potential can only be realized, however, if voters pay close attention to who the mayoral candidates are and how they come to be candidates. Otherwise, we run the risk of our next city executive being an underqualified political-party appointment, in the manner of U.S. Rep. Marcia Fudge, or our representatives in the Ohio Legislature. Though the elected official usually does not run unopposed, they never have viable opposition, and their candidacy would not go forward without party approval.

In our first mayoral race in late 2021, we must insist that candidates not be required to be party insiders, and we must strive to have a choice of candidates. If we don’t, we will merely have shifted the power to choose our city executive from our city council to our local political party. The possibility of a mayoral candidate running unopposed is illustrated by last November’s election, in which 19 of the 36 mayoral contests in Cuyahoga County had only one candidate on the ballot.

In the aftermath of the coronavirus crisis, our city government is likely to face problems as severe as, or worse than, those it faced as a result of the Great Recession and the accompanying foreclosure crisis.

We will need the skills and temperament of a qualified leader. Only an informed and responsible citizenry can assure that we will have the leadership we will need.

Vince Reddy is a former Future Heights board member and a 25-year resident of Cleveland Heights. He received his law degree from the Ohio State University College of Law, and is a member of the Ohio State Bar Association. He is a member of the Ohio chapter of American Physicians for a Socially Responsible Healthcare.
Normal and not normal

Kathy Ewing

I feel like I’m slipping around on a slick surface that’s covering over reality. On this surface are many familiar things. I wash the dishes, I do laundry, I read, I cook, I pet the dog. These activities are comfortably mundane. Emptying the dishwasher and setting the table provide an illusion of normalcy. Everything’s okay right now, right in this moment.

But then, at any given time, I become conscious merely of my hands. When did I wash them last? What if my hands are infecting the plastic bag holding the apples? What if my hands are infecting me?

I suddenly think, why are those hands:
- When did I wash them last?
- hands:
- When did I wash them last?
- But then, at any given time, I
- Immersed in a movie on TV, I suddenly think, why are those people standing so close together?
- Why do they keep touching their faces?
- It’s normal for my husband to stand a meter away from me.
- It’s normal to meet with others while wearing a mask.
- It’s not normal to meet with my book groups via Zoom, laughing because half of us newbies are alternately pointing our phones at the ceiling or at the palm of our hands.
- All of that which is not normal, though, I perceive as deeper and farther beneath my feet. It’s an unfathomably deep lake that I’m skating around on with my dishwashing and baking and Zooming.
- I maintain my precarious balance by putting my phone away and turning the radio off. I scroll quickly through Facebook, only glancing at the anti-Trump diatribes. I stay sane by沉grating for my home, my family, my health, my lucky circumstances.
- Most of the time I feel fine, skimming on this surface. I check in with others and try to cheer them up. But now and then the ominous reality underneath me surges up: a statistic on the news, a worry about my child in New York, a shot of a refugee camp, a phrase about the breadline Mother, appeared in 1916, and her second book, Lead Me, Guide Me: The Life and Example of Father Dan Bagen, was set to be published in April 2020. She teaches Latin at Cleveland State University and blogs at www.kathyewing.com.

We were surprised and disconcerted that council would delegate this vital responsibility to the city manager, but that was last year’s council; the decision was consistent with its style of operation. Now, we are even more concerned that the new council has failed to make the transition a priority.

We have spoken with several council members including Mayor Jason Stein to urge the immediate creation of a transition committee comprising council members, staff and residents. This committee must at a minimum:
- immediately draw up a timeline identifying priority action items and deadlines
- research the experience of other cities that have made this transition
- formulate specific recommendations for Cleveland Heights

This is a time of exceptional stress for everyone, but it is imperative that our local elected officials provide leadership on a matter of great importance to Cleveland Heights citizens. The issue is that amid the pandemic, we think, pretty much everyone: a 64 percent “yes” vote, with pro-charter amendment votes prevailing in every single one of our city’s 35 precincts. The mandate is unassailable.

For a link to the charter amendment, go to the “Government” tab at www.clevelandheights.com and click on “Elected Mayor Charter Amendment.” It is also linked at “Form of Government.”

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

13 Month CD
1.00% APY*

Whether online, over the phone or our drive-thru, you’ll still receive the friendly, personalized service you expect when you work with us.

Open an account today at FFL.net/OpenCD

Whether online, over the phone or our drive-thru, you’ll still receive the friendly, personalized service you expect when you work with us.

Open an account today at FFL.net/OpenCD

FIRST FEDERAL LAKewood
Vouchers during a pandemic

The Common Good

Susie Kaeser

I am a slow learner. As both an optimist and defender of public education, I don't want to give up the fight to ameliorate the destructive impact of voucher costs on public schools.

I keep thinking that if we just make more calls, share more facts, mobilize more people and explain the problem, lawmakers will do the right thing. Surely, they don’t want to foster disparity in educational opportunities or run our public schools into the ground.

The pandemic adds new urgency to this issue. We don’t know the extent of human and financial suffering that lies ahead, but we do know unemployment will continue to skyrocket, household income will fall, local and state tax revenue will decline, and new demands will be put on public resources. We will need our public institutions more than ever, but funding for them is sure to shrink—a lot.

This puts our schools in jeopardy; at a moment when we need them as a resource for equal opportunity, economic strength and an educated citizenry. They are an essential engine of prosperity and a key factor in the economic recovery that lies ahead.

My hopes for voucher relief were raised this winter as an explosion in the number of school districts eligible for vouchers triggered widespread outrage. The unreasonable growth highlighted the flaws of Ohio’s voucher program, which relies on highly biased tests and a convoluted and inaccurate report card to determine where vouchers are available. It laid bare the damage to school-district budgets caused by the deduction method of funding vouchers, which requires districts to divert their state aid to cover voucher costs.

There was public debate and bipartisan criticism. Republicans control both the state house and senate, and each body passed different solutions. The house rejected high-stakes testing and advocated the end of the EdChoice Scholar Program. The senate demanded it stay in place.

Progress fizzled when the pandemic hit. When Gov. DeWine, a staunch defender of testing, vouchers and deduction funding, pulled the legislature together in March to address education and other issues linked to his stay-at-home order, the legislature chose a short-sighted solution to the unresolved voucher crisis. Just when we thought it couldn’t get worse, it did.

Vouchers cost grow next year in 140 school districts, the same districts designated as eligible for EdChoice this school year. This includes 37 districts that have had EdChoice since before 2017, most of which have already lost substantial funds to vouchers. All are high-poverty—between 56 and 200 percent—and, in 17 of these districts, more than 70 percent of the students are minorities.

This policy again takes funds from the districts that are chronically underfunded and serve students with the greatest needs. It will fuel greater disparities in educational opportunity and lead to greater reliance on property taxes. These are underlying causes of the health disparity that has become so evident during this pandemic.

Voucher costs are already destroying school finances for the CH-UH City School District; we will soon suffer even more. The district receives about $21 million in aid from the state. In 2019, about half of that aid went to deductions for vouchers, charter schools, transfers to other districts, and transportation to nonpublic schools.

This year, EdChoice voucher costs increased by $2.5 million; next year at least another $1 million will be lost. These rising costs will leave public-school students with less than one-third of the state aid that was appropriated for their use, making us one of the hardest-hit districts in Ohio.

It is with deep sadness and great fear that I have to face the facts. Neither DeWine nor the divided legislature will lift a finger to protect public schools. Going forward, Ohio families will face serious financial challenges, and state government will be strained to alleviate problems that have become more severe. The legislature missed an easy way to plan for the worst, and now tragedy is on the horizon.

It’s time to elect new lawmakers.

Susie Kaeser 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.
The COVID-19 crisis has impacted every aspect of our lives and our community; the 2020 U.S. Census is no exception. While the goals of the Census Bureau have not changed during the pandemic, field operations have. Plans for door-to-door canvassing and census-related public events have been delayed, to be reevaluated in June. The U.S. Census Bureau is also pursuing a 120-day extension to deliver the final count.

This doesn’t mean that Cleveland Heights residents should delay in getting themselves counted. Perhaps now more than ever, residents are witnessing the many ways the city is supported by programs whose funding is based on census data; the more CH residents are counted, the more federal funding the city will receive for services in the coming decade. These programs include Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicare Part B, special education grants, National School Lunch Program, Head Start/Early Head Start, foster care and health care programs.

As of April 19, an estimated 52% of Cleveland Heights residents had completed a census report, which is slightly higher than the current national average of 50.8%, but below Ohio’s average of 53.9%. Over the course of the next few months, the Census Bureau and city staff will devise strategies to count the other half of the city’s population.

Residents can track Cleveland Heights’ progress at www.2020census.gov/en/response-rates. The website breaks down the numbers by city and by census tract (see the above map), showing the response rates of neighborhoods in the city. Areas shaded in orange have a response rate below 50%; the darker the shade of orange, the fewer responses a tract has.

The city’s goal is to be counted at 100%. If your household has not yet been counted, know that the census questionnaire is designed to be quick and simple. Only one person needs to respond for each home or apartment unit, and the responder should count everyone who is living there, including infants and children. Visit www.my2020census.gov to fill out the questionnaire online now, or keep an eye on your mail for the paper form.

Hannah Morgan serves as an AmeriCorps VISTA to FutureHeights.

CH census response below state average

Hannah Morgan

Some Buckingham Condominium residents are concerned about the impending construction of the Top of the Hill (TOH) project immediately adjacent to their building, and its detrimental impact on their property values. They have decided to legally oppose the construction of the project.

The group, Heights Voices Count, has engaged Conmick Law of Beachwood as legal counsel, formed an LLC to direct its opposition, and hired Beachwood as legal counsel, formed the Heights Voices Count LLC. He served as pastor of Peace Lutheran Church, and has been a resident of Cleveland Heights since 1985.

As April 19, the Cleveland Heights 2020 U.S. Census response rate was slightly above 50%, but some neighborhoods lag behind.

TOH opponents seek to place an ‘advisory vote’ on the ballot this November

Don King

residents’ complaint is that the city of Cleveland Heights and Flaherty & Collins, the developer, did not fully consider the development’s impact on their property values when designing the proposed 10-story apartment building adjacent to their building, the other apartments, and the project amenities, including a dog park in front of the Buckingham building. Numerous requests by Buckingham residents to meet with city officials and the developer to discuss their concerns have been ignored or rebuffed.

This action is similar to the recent advisory resolution in Hudson, brought by the group Voice of Hudson, that successfully stopped a development project in downtown Hudson proposed by the city of Hudson.

Don King is a resident of the Buckingham and has taken a leadership role in the Heights Voices Count LLC. He served as pastor of Peace Lutheran Church, and has been a resident of Cleveland Heights since 1985.

One step away from an amazing smile

FAIRMOUNT CIRCLE DENTISTRY
Robert E. Schneider, DDS

FREE SNORING & SLEEP SCREENINGS
• Home Sleep Testing
• Oral Sleep Appliances

General, Restorative and Aesthetic Dentistry
• Clear Correct Braces
• Digital Dental Technologies
• Treated to Busy Families
• Comfortable Stress-Free Visits

Located near John Carroll
Easy free parking
216.321.2545

20020 John Carroll Blvd., Suite 220
dds_wlant.net
www.fairmountcircledentistry.com

Call now to prep your system for winter
Herb’s Plumbing & Heating

• Experts in old homes
• Water tanks & heating systems
• Eco-friendly updates
• Fully trained, licensed, bonded & insured
• Residential & commercial

216-691-2300 • herbsplumbingandheating.com

You can have a beautiful, healthy lawn

Despite your best efforts, are you disappointed with the appearance of your yard?
Are you tired of calling an 800 number and not receiving the personal service you deserve?
Are you frustrated with high pressure sales calls for services you don’t want or need?
Our customized lawn care program and lawn renovation services make distressed lawns healthy and green again. To find out how we can make your yard the envy of the neighborhood call today.
www.lawnlad.com | (216) 371-1935

Lawn Lad. Passionately committed to making your yard and garden look their beautiful best.

As of April 19, the Cleveland Heights 2020 U.S. Census response rate was slightly above 50%, but some neighborhoods lag behind.
Cleveland Heights City Council Meeting highlights

MARCH 16, 2020

Council members present were Mayor Jason Stein, Vice Mayor Kohili Sern, Mary Durbin, Melody Joy Hart, Davida Russell, and Michael Ungar. Also present were City Manager Tani- albe Briley, Acting Clerk of Council Susanna Niemres, Mary Lou McHenry, and Law Director William Hanna. The meeting was conducted remotely, and lasted one hour.

Public comments

The city manager read an email, which she said typified almost a dozen received on the topic of preserving the playground at the former Ward school site, outside the neighborhood. As develop- ers for the site will soon be sought, the writer requested a legal commitment by the city to preserve the playground.

Council actions

Council approved, on emergency, Resolution 32-2020, authorizing the city manager to amend various Economic Development grant agreements in response to the COVID-19 emergency.

The following occurred in reading order:

Ordinance 33-2020, authorizing the city manager to take all actions necessary to participate in the services of the Coventry County Aggregated Solar Project. There will be a presentation by the vendor for this equipment at the April 20 meeting.

Resolution 34-2020, authorizing an agree- ment with Panzica Construction for consul- tation services as owner’s representative (i.e., the city’s representative) for the Top of the Hill Redevelopment Project.

City manager’s report

The following bids, the lowest and best, were made a matter of record:

- Selwyn Road Resurfacing and Waterline Replacement: Fabricant Trucking and Paving, Middletown Heights, $3,140,987.58
- Fire Vehicle Source Capture Exhaust System: Clean Air Concepts, Cincinnati, $118,185.00

2020 Surface Treating Program: Special- ized Construction Inc., Coventry Heights, $264,266.65

City Manager Briley presented highlights from her report. The federal CARES Act does not seem to benefit cities with population less than 50,000, but there will be some increases in Community Development Block Grant funds and some reimbursement from Federal Emergency Management funds. Ongoing analysis indicates that revenues from various taxes will begin to decline as early as the third quarter of 2020.

The city manager said the federal CARES Act does not seem to benefit cities with population less than 50,000, but there will be some increases in Community Development Block Grant funds and some reimbursement from Federal Emergency Management funds. Ongoing analysis indicates that revenues from various taxes will begin to decline as early as the third quarter of 2020.

New dock of council/finance manager

At the request of City Manager Briley, council approved the appointment of Amy Himmel on as clerk of council and finance manager, effec- tive April 13.

Coronavirus emergency

The city manager made lengthy comments about the local coronavirus response, which she termed “aggressive and proactive, agile and responsive.” The city is in touch with state and local authorities. Staff are working from home with appropriate social distancing, but the build- ing is closed to the public. Emergency police and fire responses are in place, and trash collection continues. All employees are being paid. Staff is receiving protocols and guidance. Appropriate sick, family, and medical leave is available to city employees. Courts are limiting in-person contact, and suspending eviction temporary. Utility shutoffs are also suspended. Parking (4 meters) in all city lots is free. Community center staff is taking this time clean and organize, with parameters met. Briley reported on the local business community and small- business loans, and urged carry-out of meals.

DVR Observer: Blanche Valanoy.

APRIL 6, 2020

Council members present were Mayor Jason Stein, Vice Mayor Kohili Sern, Mary Durbin, Melody Joy Hart, Davida Russell and Michael Ungar. Also present were City Manager Tani- albe Briley, Acting Clerk of Council Susanna Niemres O’Neil, and Law Director William Hanna. The meeting was conducted remotely, and lasted one hour and 13 minutes.

COVID-19 continued from page 1

Hart said that, while the city has done a “pretty good job on all of it,” she wants to make sure resi- dents “have the food they need, the healthcare they need.” While she understands the rationale for the lay- offs, she said, in the future she’d like to see a “heads up” from the city manager, so she has the opportunity to give input, and so she could be prepared to answer questions from constituents.

Ungar said he is pleased with the city’s response so far: “I think the way people have stepped up has been fantastic.” He complimented Briley for creating a Readiness and Response Team well before the presi- dent and governor called for changes.

He agreed that city revenues will be impacted and wants to see financial modeling with a range of best- and worst scenarios, “so we can say we’ve got our arms around it.” But, he con-cedes, “There’s no playbook for this.”

Hart said the city was running a surplus, and she hoped that money would be first used to deal with any revenue shortfall.

Briley and Ungar all said city projects, such as Top of the Hill, are continuing as normal. Ungar said the Economic Develop- ment Department continues to work with new businesses, and several have indicated they are moving forward with plans to open locations in Clevel- and Heights in the coming months.

Russell has taken to social media, urging residents to fill out their 2020 U.S. Census forms. She wants every- one to be counted to ensure the city gets its fair share from the state and federal governments, and said, “We’re going to desperately need that money.”

Briley said the city would be receiv- ing the Additional Community Develop- ment Block Grant dollars, but noted the federal government’s recent $2 trillion stimulus package does not provide direct assistance to cities under $500,000 in population. (The city’s current population is about 45,000.) She hopes future bills will provide some relief.

Council adopted legislation providing payment relief for city borrowers in the Commercial, Store- front and Economic Development Loan programs, said Briley. Staff is researching a forgivable loan program and working to keep businesses up- to-date on new government programs as they become available.

Briley said city employees work- ing non-essential functions are on paid leave, but are required to be available for work as needed. Es- sential employees are working from home or on site.

Ungar said the city has done an “excellent job” connecting staff and set- ting up virtual council meetings. Briley said the meetings were made legal by a new state law, passed in response to the crisis. Residents can comment on, or ask questions about, council’s upcoming agenda by e-mailing clevel- andheightscitycouncil@chibs.com.

Briley said all first responders and public works crews have adequate safety gear, but the city welcomes do- nations of equipment from businesses and as gear gets tougher to buy, “All police and fire personnel have N-95 masks, shields and gowns, and disposable suits, as necessary.”

As some businesses are re-opening, safe distancing. CHPD has limited its patrols to one officer per car. In traffic stops, the officer approaches from the passenger side of the vehicle. Briley reported that police officers had been quarantined “because of pos- sible exposure to the virus at a March social gathering,” but all have since returned to work.

Ungar and Russell are concerned about elderly residents living alone. Uner said he shops for a neighbor who is widow and immune-sup- pressed, with no family nearby. He says they’re working to create a system where any at-risk residents will get a daily safety check, either from vol- unteers or the city. They said the city needs to do a better job of identifying those in need. “Your heart goes out to them,” Ungar said.

“Council and the city are working hard to address everyone’s need,” said Hart. Hart was asked citizens to follow health guidelines and be patient, add- ing, “With the help of the residents, there’s nothing we can’t conquer.”

Updates from the city man- ager and city council on Cleveland Heights’ COVID-19 response are available at https://tinyurl.com/clecho-covi- d.

Fred D’Ambrosi has been an award- winning journalist for 40 years, mostly as a TV news director in Cleveland, D.C., San Diego and Milwaukee. He’s enjoyed living in Cleveland Heights since 2015.

Cleveland Heights News
Barr’s legacy inspires volunteer corps

Krisy Dietrich Gallagher

Jill’s Literacy League. If it sounds like a band of superheroes, that’s because it sort of is. Formed in memory of Jill Barr, the University Heights mother who died of complications of pneumonia in February 2018, the Literacy League is the newly launched volunteer corps of The Literacy Cooperative’s Imagination Library program. The Literacy Cooperative’s Imagination Library (DPL) is a national program, managed by The Literacy Cooperative here in Cuyahoga County, that makes reading fun by providing new books to interested child each month from birth to age 5. For a child enrolled at birth, the result is a home library of nearly 60 books at no cost, which helps to increase family literacy, increase vocabulary, and prepare children for a life of learning and love of reading.

Barr, who majored in English at Albion College, loved to read. She also loved to help. She is remembered by friends and family as someone who always stepped up to fill any need, sprinkling acts of kindness wherever she went. She always stepped up to fill any need, taking on the work of many with an ever-present smile. Literacy was one of her pet projects, according to her husband, Rob, who said she organized the volunteers at Canterbury Elementary School in Cleveland Heights, which her children attended.

“She would be really fond of this program,” he said. “She’s always been a strong proponent of early literacy, believing that you have to catch kids at a certain age, or they’ll be behind for the rest of their lives.”

Joan Spoerl, The Literacy Cooperative’s DPL director for Cuyahoga County and a friend of Jill’s, believes that each of the monthly books rep-resents a tiny act of kindness. “We track the number of books by the number of times each one is read as a child and their caregiver,” said Jill Barr, “and all of that is being done in Jill’s memory.”

Spoerl is the only full-time, paid staff member overseeing the program in the county, and participation continues to grow.

Volunteers are needed for a variety of tasks: enrollment of eligible children and family interest forms; spreading the word to schools, libraries, PTAs, religious institutions, city councils and the like; entering data from paper enrollment forms; and stuffing and sealing welcome envelopes for families without e-mail addresses.

The launch of Jill’s Literacy League was scheduled for The Literacy Cooperative’s Read Across America luncheon on April 1, which Rob Barr and his three children were going to attend. Obviously, that event has been postponed. “But, with the closure of schools and libraries, the need for home libraries is more important than ever,” said Spoerl.

Barr believes the presence of his wife’s name could serve a useful purpose. “Jill had such a large tribe here, was such a part of this community that she could inspire people to get involved.”

If you are so inspired, contact Joan Spoerl at jsvoie@literacycoop-erative.org. To learn more, visit www.literacycooperative.org.

Krisy Dietrich Gallagher is a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights, a graduate of Heights schools, and a former Coventry School teacher.

CH Senior Center News

Amy Jenkins

The Cleveland Heights Senior Activ-ity Center remains closed due to virus concerns, but Cleveland Heights seniors need not feel alone.

The city’s Office on Aging social workers are available by phone, and food insecurity issues are being addressed with a variety of new program options.

Opportunities for enrichment, health maintenance, and community connection during this time of social isolation are being explored. Staff are managing the office and will return phone calls and e-mails. Stay con- nected by calling 216-691-7759, or by e-mailing ajenkins@chvhs.com.

Amy Jenkins is the supervisor of the Cleveland Heights Office on Aging and the CH Senior Activity Center.

FutureHeights awards spring mini-grants

Sruil Basu

FutureHeights awarded $3,175 in grants to support six projects in Cleveland Heights in the spring round of its 2020 Neighborhood Mini-Grants Program.

Noble Neighbors received $500 for the Noble Nook project, which seeks to transform the vacant lot at Noble and Roanoke roads into an attractive, safe space that encourages com- munity use. For more information, visit www.noblenighbors.com.

Maple, Crest, Wood, & Parkhill Neighbors received $750 for the Millikin Playground Enhancement project, which will enhance the playground at the former Millikin Elementary School building and facilitate community-building in the neighborhood.

Heights Performing Arts Camp was awarded $1,000 for its 2020 per-forming arts camp at Ensemble Theatre, which emphasizes developing the creative abilities of learners while strengthening literacy, teamwork and problem solving. Learn more at www.musicaltheatrearts.org/heightsperform-arts-camp.

Cumberland Neighbors received $575 for its 2020 Community Event at Cumberland Park. The event seeks to build on the success of its 2019 event, continued on page 15

AMIS seeks help for immigrants during COVID crisis

Stephen Sedam

A new Heights-based organization, AMIS (AMerican Immigrants Services), is seeking to help some of the most vulnerable Ohioans affected by the coronavirus pandemic—our undocumented neighbors.

AMIS is a 501(c)3 nonprofit, formed in 2019 as an outgrowth of the effort to assist Ansley Damus, a Haitian man who, upon requesting asylum in the U.S., was committed in a windowless Geauga County prison for more than two years without being allowed to communi-cate directly with his family. In 2019, NasciessDamus received funds, in a February 2019 Heights Observer article.

A group of concerned Greater Clevelanders successfully fought to have Damus released while his application was before the ACLU. Damus lived for about a year with his sponsors, Gary Benjamin and Melody Hart (now a member of CH City Council). He now has a full-time job, Facetimes daily with his wife and two chil-dren in Haiti, and recently moved into his own Cleveland Heights apartment.

AMIS also led a fundraising drive to enable three men from Burkina Faso to be released on bond from a prison where they were interned by the government. They had sought asylum after their families were killed in random acts of vio-lence in their home village. They now reside safely in an apartment in a Cleveland Heights church, where they help out, and are learning English.

AMIS has now turned its at-tention to immigrants affected by the health and economic crisis created by COVID-19. “Immigrants make up a significant part of our workforce, often in high-risk jobs that are especially rare for traditional sup-port programs and benefits,” said Anne Hill, president of AMIS.

Undocumented immigrants are

• Less likely to have health insur-ance or paid sick leave, putting them at further risk.

• More likely for unemployment insurance.

• Unable to receive cash payments included in the $2 trillion federal relief package—even if they pay taxes and have children that are U.S. citizens.

“We are all facing an extraor-dinarily challenging time right now,” noted Hill. “The generosity of our community is needed now more than ever,” said Spoerl.

If you are so inspired, contact Joan Spoerl at jsvoie@literacycoop-erative.org. To learn more and to make a donation, send a check to AMIS Ohio, P.O. Box 1858, Cleveland Heights, OH 44118.

The AMIS Board of Directors comprises Cleveland Heights resi-dents Joan Jenkins, Gary Benjamin, Jeff Smith, Stephen Sedam and Sue Dean Dyke. Pam Tuors and Brian Boswell serve in an at-large capac-ity from nearby communities.

Stephen Sedam, AMIS treasurer, is a 35-year resident of Cleveland Heights and active in immigrant rights through Forest Hill Church.

MURAL continued from page 1

As of mid-April, 600 signed post- ers had been sold, at $30 each. All proceeds are split between Kelly and the unemployed Grog Shop and B-Side Lounge employees. The posters can be ordered at www.groghopgte.

Stepping into the Grog Shop today, one is greeted by Kelly and Blackburn working together in protective masks, rolling up the signed prints and prep-ping them for delivery. It’s been tough to keep up with demand.

“Everyone has been very under-standing,” said Blackman, “and I am really stunned and appreciative of the amazing support and generosity of the music community near and far. There are so many more out there of the same mind-set, as far as the neighborhood is concerned.”

In the mural, as everything de-scends into chaos, the band plays on.

“As much as the world might need music right now, that is not the reality for Blackman.

While many local restaurants are able to scrape by with to-go service, there is no take-out equivalent for local music. “I am honestly not sure what the reality of the post-virus restrictions will mean for the live-music scene,” Blackman said. “I have thought about it a lot and believe we will be slow in bouncing back for many reasons.”

Almost all of my shows through June have postponed until fall, or even 2021. I do have stuff booked in July and August still, but touring bands seem to be looking further out now than back, just in case. Even when restrictions are lifted, I am con-cerned that people will be hesitant to gather in large groups, which I need for either of the clubs to really be successful in the long term.

Adam Dew is a proud member of Heights High’s Class of ’94. He owns Dew Media, Inc., a video production company.
Chatfield lights up for Bill Mangano

Once the candles were lit, Bill’s wife, Amy, their teenage daughters, and two dozen family and friends emerged from the Mangano home and took a slow, cathartic walk down Chatfield.

I found out that afternoon that Chatfield was going to be lit up for Bill,” said Amy Mangano. “Jay and Sylvie Hart, our neighbors, came over and told me through their tears. It was the perfect night, as many of our friends and family members were at our house. Brian Linihan (Marotta’s owner) was sending dinner for all of us. We had an amazing feast and then headed outside. Seeing the lights and the neighbors lined up on Chatfield was such a heart-warming.

We were overwhelmed.

Bill Mangano loved Cleveland Heights. After graduating from Cleveland-Marshall law school, he built his union-side labor law practice here, devoting his career to fighting for working-class men and women all over Ohio. Local 860, representing the Cleveland Heights service workers, was one of Bill’s longtime clients.

Bill was a fixture at Heights girls’ soccer games, usually leading the cheering section, enthusiastically ringing his cowbell. Katie Herr, who also has a daughter on the team, said, “Bill was a force of nature. He was at the center of our community. Bill brought us together and made us laugh.”

Bill was a whatever-it-takes kind of person. Need someone to put on the tiger mascot outfit at halftime to fire up the crowd? Bill was your guy. “His impact can’t be summed up into one event, one moment, or one story,” said Coach Patrick Gleba. “Bill was our truest, biggest fan who cannot be replaced.”

Bill poured that same limitless enthusiasm into supporting his fellow business owners in Cleveland Heights. He was a fixture at Quintana’s, Marotta’s and Mister Brisket, just to name a few.

Michael Weil, a Chatfield neighbor, remembers Bill at a backyard fundraiser for Roots of America Music. At one point it started to rain. A few minutes later Bill was setting up his tailgate tent on the driveway, to give people some shelter. “No request was made, and he made no announcement of his plan,” said Weil. “He simply took care of what was needed to be done to make others more comfortable.”

Weil’s 18-year-old son Josh died in a car accident in 2015. “I remembered how meaningful and manageable (for us as the recipients) was the gesture of the luminaries when Josh passed away,” said Weil. “I sent out an e-mail to the neighborhood wondering if anyone thought this would be a good idea to do for the Manganos. Within minutes people were out shopping for bags and candles.”

“I have no doubt that Bill would be out doing whatever he could to help his neighbors right now during this strange, challenging time. I know from cruel experience that tragedy brings people closer together, and that beautiful, simple gestures can be uplifting beyond what we might believe possible. We see so many simple gestures and heroic acts being performed on behalf of our whole community. I imagine Bill would have been right in the thick of this.”

Adam Dew is a proud member of the Heights High Class of ’94. He owns Dew Media, Inc., a video production company.

Deciding to go to college can be hard.

Enrolling shouldn’t be.
Get hands-on help registering for summer and fall semesters with Enrollment Express!

tri-c.edu/visit
216-987-4420
Two Heights students describe concerns and hopes

If you’d asked CH-UH students two months ago what they thought would make the end of the school year memorable, they wouldn’t have envisioned this.

They might have said they’d be wrapping up their favorite classes with creative projects and presentations. They might have hoped for in-person playing on school sports teams, taking part in spring plays and performances, or enjoying end-of-the-year activities like field trips and class picnics.

Since Gov. Mike DeWine closed all Ohio schools on March 12 due to the coronavirus, all of those activities are up in the air. [As of this writing], nobody knows if schools will reopen before the scheduled end of the school year, or even return to a normal schedule next fall.

The uncertainty is weighing heavily on young members of the CH-UH community. With only a few days’ notice, students had to abruptly shift to online learning. As experts debate when precautions can be safely lifted, students have no idea when, or even if, they’ll return to their classrooms.

“I was worried about missing out on school experiences and the end of my junior year in person,” said Zelda Thayer-Hansen, a Heights High junior. Especially hard-hit by the uncertainty are Heights High’s seniors. The end of senior year is a famously boisterous time—with class celebrations, prom, graduation, and more.

“Everything that was worth looking forward to has been up in the air,” said senior Laynie Gosselin. She listed things she’s missing: senior projects, choir performances, her senior solo audition, her part in Heights High’s spring production of “As You Like It,” prom, and even—perhaps—walking across the stage for graduation.

Even the day-to-day social life that Heights High provides has been affected. “Isolation from friends and family has made senior year lonelier than I ever pictured,” Gosselin said. She’s not sure what the future will bring.

As students grapple with uncertainty, they are still expected to complete a full load of schoolwork. For Thayer-Hansen, with an intense academic schedule that comprises five AP classes, her virtual-school experience includes five or more hours of work daily. “I rarely have extra time to prepare study materials and watch extra AP help videos,” she noted.

Thayer-Hansen is finding online learning a challenge, as it doesn’t involve live engagement with teachers. Most teachers post assignments on online forums, but don’t hold virtual class sessions. “I am an extremely visual and hands-on learner, and this separation has been difficult,” Thayer-Hansen said. For many, independent work simply isn’t as engaging as in-person classes with teachers. Gosselin admits that it’s “easier to procrastinate or ignore assignments” when everything is online, and she misses the energy and camaraderie of in-person school.

Despite the challenges, Gosselin is choosing to adopt a positive attitude about the crisis. “I got very lucky that we were not hit with it sooner,” she said. She’s grateful that she was able to complete her fourth year on the swim team before schools closed.

Thayer-Hansen is looking ahead to the future, feeling proud of coping with the crisis, and wiser because of the lessons her perseverance through unexpected circumstances taught her. “I hope that the new AP-testing methods will prove that at-home learning is possible, and that I can get through changing teaching environments,” she said.

Gosselin agrees that good times lie ahead, and that the virus’s disruptions won’t change the things that matter most to her. “I will be over everything I’m missing out on soon enough,” she said. “Pushing forward toward college, and dodging all the obstacles, is much more important to me than the moments I will be missing. Coronavirus won’t change who my friends are, it will only make the times we spend together afterward more special and important.”

---

Cleveland Heights - University Heights Board of Education
Meeting highlights

APRIL 7, 2020

The start of the meeting was delayed due to technical difficulties as the meeting was conducted remotely. Board members Jodi Sourini, James Posch, Dan Heintz, Malia Lewis and Beverly Wright were present. Also participating were Superintendent Elizabeth Kirby and Treasurer Scott Gainer.

Impact of EdChoice vouchers on budget

Treasurer Gainer discussed why he could not currently estimate the impact of EdChoice vouchers on the school budget. He expects that the cost may be $1 million greater than the original $75 million estimated. The board stressed that it would need additional data concerning voucher numbers to determine the kinds of cuts the board would need to make. Superintendent Kirby expressed concern at the impact of the state legislature’s EdChoice funding decision on the CH-UH district.

Board approvals

The board unanimously passed three resolutions: 1) to conduct board meetings virtually, 2) to accept the lowest responsible bid for maintenance, and 3) to consider the purchase and sale of four parcels adjacent to the DeLisle Center to University Heights. The board also approved the five-year budget forecast.

COVID-19 update

Kirby thanked everyone for their hard work in dealing with the health crisis. She explained that the district was finalizing plans for student work, grades, engagement, etc., while students are working from home. Resources can be found on the district’s website. She also said she was proud of the district’s work to distribute meals and Chromebooks.

Upcoming meetings will be held virtually and streamed on the district’s YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/COUNIGSchools). They can also be viewed at: https://stream.montgly.edu/044237284b6e484616-0ebe-3ac3-07de-653a.

LWV Observer: Robin Kozler.

---

SUITES AVAILABLE

Shaker Heights
Cleveland Heights
Lakewood
Cleveland

- Large 1, 2 and 3 Bedrooms
- Walking distance to CWRU, Shaker Square and RTA
- Renovished Kitchens
- Hardwood Floors
- Parking
- Laundry Facilities
- Dishwasher and Disposal

“...All together sunny, spacious, superbly maintained and well located apartments!”

CALL NOW (216) 421-8400
12000 Fairhill Road
Cleveland, OH 44120
office@montlackrealty.com
www.montlackrealty.com

---

Maple Buscher is a junior at Heights High who is studying this semester at the High Mountain Institute (now remotely). At Heights, she is a member of the symphony orchestra and soccer team.
Boss Dog Brewery is open daily 4–8 p.m. for carry-out food, and six packs and growlers of its craft beer.

Kelli Kral, an owner of New Heights Grill, said customers have been "very supportive." One even sent her an anonymous $500 check.

Mojo World Eats & Drink is offering curbside delivery of food and cocktails, Tuesday through Saturday. The new restaurant offers a varied menu, from fried rice, to pasta, to tacos.

The WineSpot is using its back patio as a drive-up window for online orders during the coronavirus crisis. It is also hosting virtual wine tastings.

The Cedar Lee Theatre had to close its doors, but parent company Cleveland Cinemas is offering the latest independent films on its website, for a fee.

Prior to the crisis, Igel said takeout was about half of Dewey's business. Now all customer service is curbside. Employees get their temperatures checked when they arrive for work, and answer questions about how they're feeling. All wear masks and gloves. Igel said the pizza chain has re-doubled its commitment to cleanliness, assigning one employee on every shift to continuously clean work areas. He said he's been inspired by "the bravery they've shown."

Tatyana Rehn and John Emerman are celebrating 25 years as owners of Stone Oven Bakery & Café (2267 Lee Road) in the middle of the pandemic. Emerman said that when the governor’s close order came down March 16, the first issue was employees who decided to stay home because they were concerned about the virus—a decision the owners say they respected. "Fortunately, the business was diminishing at the same rate, so they all came down together," said Emerman. Stone Oven went from 20 employees to seven or eight.

The next challenge was getting online ordering up and running. Emerman said they had resisted the change for two years because they weren't sure of the impact on the business, "and because I'm lazy," joked Emerman. "Please put that in there."

Now that online ordering is going, "We are loving it," said Emerman. But Rehn noted that 80% of business is still walk-in: "People insist on coming here and picking and choosing from the display."

The situation has changed not just how, but what, people are buying. "People who aren’t going out to restaurants are now looking for more meals for their homes," said Emerman. "So we’re selling more bread, more bulk quantities of soup, chicken salad, tuna salad, all those sorts of things, as well as desserts."

For safety, Rehn and Emerman was delivering to relatives who were too frightened to leave their homes. Others have bought pizzas to deliver to healthcare workers in local hospitals.

LEE ROAD BUSINESS continued from page 1

Kral said she's gone from 16 full- and part-time employees down to four or five. "The kitchen guys left on their own," out of fear of the virus, she said, and employees who had other full-time jobs they could do from home also opted out. Kral applied for one of the new small-business grants from the federal government, but doesn’t want to take a loan yet.

Takeout has gone from comprising 25–35% of New Heights Grill’s business, pre-virus, to 100%. Kral is offering $1 bottles of domestic beer, and $2 to $3 for craft and import brands. The bar’s comfort food—the chicken avocado club sandwich, pork mac ‘n’ cheese, and fish fry—continue to be best-sellers.

"There’s a sense of community in the neighborhood that keeps us going," said David Igel, one of the owners of Dewey’s Pizza (2094 Lee Road). "We’re so thankful for everybody being understanding, generous and patient." Igel said he’s seen the “emotional connection” customers have with their food, and many have expressed gratitude that Dewey’s remains open.

Igel said he’s witnessed touching acts of generosity from customers. One woman bought eight pizzas that she was delivering to relatives who were too frightened to leave their homes. Others have bought pizzas to deliver to healthcare workers in local hospitals.

Prior to the crisis, Igel said takeout was about half of Dewey’s business. Now all customer service is curbside. Employees get their temperatures checked when they arrive for work, and answer questions about how they’re feeling. All wear masks and gloves. Igel said the pizza chain has re-doubled its commitment to cleanliness, assigning one employee on every shift to continuously clean work areas. He said he’s been inspired by "the bravery they’ve shown."

Tatyana Rehn and John Emerman are celebrating 25 years as owners of Stone Oven Bakery & Café (2267 Lee Road) in the middle of the pandemic. Emerman said that when the governor’s close order came down March 16, the first issue was employees who decided to stay home because they were concerned about the virus—a decision the owners say they respected. "Fortunately, the business was diminishing at the same rate, so they all came down together," said Emerman. Stone Oven went from 20 employees to seven or eight.

The next challenge was getting online ordering up and running. Emerman said they had resisted the change for two years because they weren't sure of the impact on the business, "and because I'm lazy," joked Emerman. "Please put that in there."

Now that online ordering is going, "We are loving it," said Emerman. But Rehn noted that 80% of business is still walk-in: "People insist on coming here and picking and choosing from the display."

The situation has changed not just how, but what, people are buying. "People who aren't going out to restaurants are now looking for more meals for their homes," said Emerman. "So we're selling more bread, more bulk quantities of soup, chicken salad, tuna salad, all those sorts of things, as well as desserts."

For safety, Rehn and Emerman
HEIGHTS BUSINESSES

FRED D’AMBROSI

Marotta’s Italian restaurant provides takeout and delivery seven days a week using partners Door Dash, Slice, and Post Mates.

The front doors of Mitchell’s Fine Chocolates are locked, but customers can order by phone or online. A Lee Road staple since 1939, a clerk said Easter orders were pouring in.

The Tavern Co. is open for takeout orders Thursday through Saturday.

have increased sanitizing, and put Plexiglas up along the food counter. Getting masks for all employees was an issue, but an order was on its way. They said business is down by about half, but tips are way up from customers grateful for the servers who are taking health risks to provide good food and a sense of normalcy.

Rehn and Emerman said they appreciated the city providing free parking at meters. Rehn said she applied for a payroll protection loan from the federal government, but has not heard back. “I don’t think we could sustain ourselves like this forever, but we’ll certainly get by,” said Emerman.

“I do miss walking by, seeing people, hearing people. We can’t wait to resume business with them. We miss them all,” said Rehn. “We thank those that are still supporting us.”

Phoenix Coffee Co. has been in Cleveland Heights for about 20 years. Christopher Feran, director of coffee, compared the crisis to “standing in the middle of a frozen lake, and you start to see cracks.” He said you can either start running for shore, or hope for a helicopter rescue.

Phoenix is running hard. Feran said the company has gotten its “head above water.” It’s cut its workforce by two-thirds, mostly employees who chose not to work or volunteered to stay home. “We’re proud of them,” he said. Top managers have cut their salaries by more than half, and store managers have gone from salaried to hourly. Phoenix closed its downtown cafe (in a now empty office building), and kept neighborhood locations, including its two in Cleveland Heights (1933 Coventry Road and 2277 Lee Road), open.

The CH locations are getting take-out customers, but business is still down 60-65%. On the positive side, Feran said Phoenix had more online sales in March than in all of 2019, and tips have doubled. The company immediately applied for a federal payroll protection loan, and hasn’t heard back. Like Stone Oven, Feran said the city’s free parking policy has helped.

The crisis has led to an innovation for Phoenix: bike deliveries. A barista at the Lee Road cafe, Stephen Shaum, had been planning to start his own bike delivery business. Instead, he’s riding for Phoenix, delivering coffee and pastries for a flat $5 fee. Feran said Shaum has made about 120 deliveries in the last three weeks, and is “the healthiest person in the city right now.”

The community has “come out in a big way,” said Feran. “Cleveland Heights has shown so much loyalty to small business. We could not be more grateful.”

Fred D’Ambrosi has been an award-winning journalist for 40 years, mostly as a TV news director in Cleveland, D.C., San Diego and Milwaukee. He’s enjoyed living in Cleveland Heights since 2015.
Bialy’s Bagels is back with online ordering

On April 17, Bialy’s Bagels reopened after closing nearly a month due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Owners Rachel and Sarah Gross are now accepting exclusively online orders with curbside pickup. They request that customers place their orders 48 hours in advance, while they adjust to the new system. Bialy’s Bagels plans to be open Wednesday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., and Saturdays and Sundays, 7 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Bialy’s is also giving back to those who are keeping Northeast Ohio safe during this pandemic. For $10, customers can purchase one dozen bagels to be donated to frontline workers. Bialy’s owners will match each donation purchased.

“Thanks to all of our loyal customers who continue to support us in these uncertain times,” Rachel Gross said. “We’re here to keep making you the best bagels.”

To order, visit www.bialysbagels.com. Select a menu item, then use the + or - button to select the quantity desired. In addition to bagels, drinks and cream cheese, T-shirts are also available.

Local bakery rises to the occasion

Libba Jackson-D’Ambrosi

On the Rise is living up to its name, in the age of coronavirus. Managing Partner Brian Evans said before COVID-19 the bakery was doing 200 to 300 orders a day. Today, it’s averaging 450. All orders are now placed online, and pre-paid, through Toast Takeout, available through a link at onthericartianbreads.com. Customers are given an order number with a pick-up time, then follow social distancing guidelines while waiting in front of the store.

“When we chose to close down for a few days, it wasn’t from lack of demand, it was to find a way to meet demand in a safe manner,” said Evans. “We had a lot of bakers who wanted to keep working. We didn’t want to force anyone to work. Unfortunately, the whole Market Hall [in the Van Aken District, where On the Rise has a second location] closed down, so between the two places we had plenty of people who were still interested.”

Evans said they rearranged to give people plenty of space to work. “For instance, we used to have four people around a table, shaping baguettes throughout the morning and having conversation. Now everybody has a separate table.” The bakers start earlier to space out production. “Then,” said Evans, “bakers clear out and the upfront team gets things packaged.”

On the Rise has started offering takeout, available through a link at onthericartianbreads.com. Custom orders are given an order number with a pick-up time, then follow social distancing guidelines while waiting in front of the store.

“Will this new system help them know which croissant people want? Evans said, “We had regular, steady business, but certain items that didn’t sell as well are now hotter sellers. We don’t know whether it’s because of the [online] picture and description, or reaching a new audience; so I’m interested in seeing when we’re open all the way.”

The bakery made bananas Foster croissants one weekend, and Easter pastries for the holiday weekend, and staff is planning to take time to do some R&D. “We’re playing around with pita for Zhug [the Doug Katz Mediterranean/Middle Eastern restaurant],” said Evans, “trying to produce all their pita and naan.”

Libba Jackson-D’Ambrosi went for the croissant, then went back for the story. She earned a bachelor’s in journalism from University of Missouri. Her communications career in radio, television, education, philanthropy, water and wound runs through seven states.
Library expanding digital resources

Isabelle Rew

With the closing of libraries, schools, shops, and more, Heights residents are now relying on resources they can access from their homes for education and entertainment. While the Heights Libraries system temporarily closed, it has greatly expanded access to many of its online services.

“Most of our digital collection is available to anyone with a Heights Libraries card in good standing,” said Communications Manager Sheryl Banks. “But this leaves out anyone whose card is blocked, or who didn’t get a chance sign up before we closed our buildings.”

CLEVNET, a consortium of 45 library systems across Northeast Ohio, is now offering an Instant Digital Card (at www.clevnet.org). The card provides access to Overdrive’s online collection of eBooks, eAudiobooks, magazines and more, and requires only a mobile phone number to sign up.

Hoopla now offers more than 1,000 titles that do not count against a user’s monthly limit of 10 Hoopla items.

The online geological site Ancestry.com, which usually limits library customer use to library buildings, has expanded access to private residences when the service is accessed through Heights Libraries’ website, http://heightslibrary.org.

Heights Libraries is also adapting to meet the needs of children and families who are adjusting to new routines, online learning, and unfamiliar technology. It has added a new resource Web page, “Digital Resources for Kids and Families,” which compiles quality content from various providers, to support families.

Youth Services Librarian Mary Looby urges Heights Libraries website visitors to “start your morning with an easy yoga sequence, try the newest craft from the Children’s Museum of Cleveland, say hello to wildlife virtually, read an eBook from Tumble Book Library, listen to LeVar Burton read a book to you, or learn a new language.

“The possibilities are endless, and we will be adding new resources as we find them so be sure to check back often!”

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

Greg Donley

As with every other area business and organization, Heights Arts has had to change plans.

“We had our opening for the Members Show on March 6,” said Heights Arts Executive Director Rachel Bernstein. “That was just as we were learning about the pandemic, and recommendations were changing daily. We were already planning to cut our hours back the following week, which we did. By the following Monday the governor was ordering the general shutdown, and we closed to the public until it is safe to reopen. We’re evaluating programming possibilities, but in light of the situation, it’s a question of our small staff capacity and available resources. Of course, this is true for all arts organizations and most small businesses—we are all in this together.”

Various events that had been scheduled for April were postponed. This includes the Cavani Quartet concert that had been scheduled for April 11. The 20th-anniversary exhibition Evolution is moved to July 10 through Aug. 23, and Steven Calhoun’s Spotlight exhibition is now June 26 through Aug. 10. The Close Encounters concert, May 3, and the Joseph von Kerkhove Spotlight exhibition, scheduled to open May 8, will most likely be postponed.

Four events have been canceled: the Members Show, Ekphrastacy, on April 2 (though Heights Arts may come up with a way to present online poetry readings); the annual Show Off exhibition, featuring work from Cleveland Heights High School students, June 12 through July 9, and the Pain the Question exhibition, July 10 through Aug. 23, along with its accompanying ekphrastic poetry event.

“We’re very saddened that we needed to cancel the student show and postpone the 20th anniversary exhibition,” said Bernstein, “but we’re very hopeful that we’ll be able to present Evolution in the summer, and that all the artists will still be able to participate. Meanwhile, we’re exploring all kinds of creative ways to reimagine what our poets, visual artists and musicians do. Plans are in the works for links to live or recorded poetry readings, and we have already begun showing our current Members Show online.”

Heights Arts will also provide new ways for artists to connect with the community via www.heightsarts.org, and on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook, all with the @HeightsArts handle.

“To send out a little good news,” Bernstein said, “I’m thrilled to announce that our Heights Writes community team has chosen Ray McNiece as the next poet laureate of Cleveland Heights.” The two-year appointment begins this month. McNiece will be the 10th poet serving the community in this capacity.

“I have high hopes for being poet laureate,” said McNiece. “In the short term, we will find ways to respond creatively to our no-contact situation. I’ll be doing some workshops using Zoom, for example, which lets you do the live stream while also showing the printed poem on screen. But for me, nothing like that will ever replace the visceral experience of being in the room, making eye contact with the audience, and having that immediate synergy between the poem and the listener. It’s so in the moment. But until we can get back to that, we will improvise.”

Greg Donley is chair of the Heights Arts exhibition community team.

LEI hosts online writing ‘spaces’

Eli Millette

During this time of social distancing and staying at home, Lake Erie Ink is maintaining its identity as a writing “space” for youth though a free, virtual program series.

The series, Creative Communities Online, will use Zoom meetings to host workshops. The series has something for everyone—regardless of age or interests—including a podcasting workshop, a poetry challenge, collaborative comic writing, and a D&D campaign. Register online at lakeerieink.org.

If you are a teacher looking for a more targeted program to help with your own online classes, contact Program Director Jill Levin at jill@lakeerieink.org. The organization is always looking for new ways to support educators.

Eli Millette is the communications and outreach director at Lake Erie Ink.
which brought neighbors together.
Noble Neighbors received $500 for the Noble Little Free Library project, which will build, install and provide maintenance for five Little Free Libraries in the Noble neighborhood. Learn more at www.nobleneighbors.com.
Cedarbrook Society was awarded $500 for its Placemaking Ambassador Program, which works with young people to steward the Cedar Lee Mini-Park through weeding and plantings throughout the summer.
The next application deadline is Sept. 15, at 5 p.m. To learn more, visit www.futureheights.org/programs/community-building-programs, e-mail slavos@futureheights.org, or call 216-320-1423.

Future Heights has been retrofitting its community-building efforts to fulfill its mission using online technology. Save the date for these upcoming May events:
- Eat & Engage — Share with us and your neighbors how you’ve been coping to get through this time, Wednesday, May 20, noon.
- Advocating for Neighborhood Interests during an Economic Development Project, Tuesday, May 26, 7 p.m.
Each event will be held online. Details for how to participate will be published as we get closer to the events. Subscribe to the Heights Observer e-news, visit and follow our social media @futureheights, or e-mail info@futureheights.org for more information.

Srai Banu is the director of community-building programs at Future-Heights.
One day, in May of my 11th-grade year at Heights High, the unit principal calls me in and sends me to the school psychologist because of something I had written on a vocational preference test that they couldn't comprehend. (Cleveland Heights was more conservative then than it is now.) The psychologist is waiting for me in, of all places, one of the instrumental music department's little practice rooms. He tells me to sit down opposite him at this little table. He ruffles through the papers and says he's going to give me a bunch of words and that I should tell him the opposite of each word. We start that, but it gets boring right away, so after about the 12th word, when he says, "ineffable," I immediately pick up a piece other piece. I'm putting pieces together in four seconds. Which he enthusti-
cally notes on his pad.

"Then I look at him and say, "Cucumber." He squirts up his nose, a banana in his left ear and a cucumber in his right ear. He says to the doctor, 'What's the mat-
ter with me?' The doctor says, 'You're not eating properly.'"

The psychologist tries hard not to laugh, but he does, a little bit, but he suppresses it. He says, "Okay, let's . . . " and I tell him another cucumber joke. He really wants to laugh now, but he's still holding it in. The princi-
pal opens the door and says, "How's it going? It's time for David to go back to class."

The psychologist says, "I want you to see something." He tells me to put this new puzzle together. So I immediately pick up a piece, and he starts the stopwatch. I try putting the piece together with some ran-
dom other piece. I'm putting pieces upside-down, stacking them up five pieces high, making little tents out of some of them.

The psychologist says, "A few minutes ago, you put another puzzle together in four seconds." I say, "Well, that one was much easier. Plus . . . , and I look at the psychologist and I say, "Cucumber." He bursts out laughing, and he can't stop. He becomes hysterical. He's hollering with laughter. The principal tells me to go to class. As I get to the door, I motion the principal out and I say, "You know, this guy has been completely out of control this whole time, I didn't really know what to do. But, well . . . he's your problem now."

And that was the last time Heights High ever sent me to see the school psychologist.

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.