University Heights cancels summer events

Citing the health risks of holding large events during a pandemic, University Heights Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan announced on May 14 that all city-sponsored events will be canceled through Labor Day.

In addition, he announced that the Beryl E. Rothschild Pool at Purvis Park will not open in 2020.

Among the canceled events in University Heights are:

- The Summer Concert Series, including shows at Walter Stinson Community Park and at John Carroll University
- Tennis lessons
- Yoga Tuesdays at The Walt
- Family Movie Nights at The Walt
- Arts & Crafts at the Park
- Touch-a-Truck
- National Night Out
- Senior Happenings with Mr. Walter Stinson
- B’nai Britth Health Run

The city previously announced the cancellation of its 2020 Memorial Day Parade.

Permits for block parties, parades, and garage and yard sales were previously suspended, and the website www.neverevergivingupcleveland.com, as well as Instagram, Facebook, e-mail, and at events. They’ve also been dropped in a special mailbox.

In 2018, Meyer didn’t know what to expect when she took the open mic stage at a Story Club Cleveland event. Her mom had died two years earlier. Meyer, who had grown up in Strongsville, had left a job in Chicago, moved to Cleveland Heights, and started law school at land Heights, and started law school at

CH narrows council search to 4 finalists

Kim Sergio Inglis

On May 21, in a Facebook post, Cleveland Heights Mayor Jason Stein announced that he and the other five current members of CH City Council had narrowed the field of applicants for the open council seat to four finalists, out of 22 who applied. The finalists are Craig Cobb, Anthony Cuda, Anthony Martox Jr. and Robert Koonce.

Next, according to Stein, council will remotely interview the four candidates. In his Facebook post, Stein stated that next step, to take place “in the next week or so,” would be an executive session (closed to the public) interview with council. After that, stated Stein, “[W]e will make a final determination and then plan for the swearing-in ceremony.”

Of the 22 applicants, three withdrew: the other 19 each participated in a video interview process, conducted by the League of Women Voters. Those videos, as well as each candidate’s application, can be viewed at www.clevelandheights.com/1144/City-Council-Applicants.

At the May 18 CH City Council Committee of the Whole meeting, held remotely, the council vacancy was item two on the agenda. Council resumed where it had left off at a prior meeting, with a continuation of a discussion on whether to conduct a background check on applicants and, if so, what parameters to include and how to carry out the check—using

Neighbors create new mini-park on Noble

Laura Marks and Barb Sosnowski create a new space in a vacant lot at Noble and Roanoke roads.

Branda H. May

A new mini-park is shaping up at the corner of Roanoke and Noble roads in Cleveland Heights, where Laura Marks of Heights Tree People, and Barb Sosnowski of Noble Neighbors Gardeners, are turning a vacant lot into a place of beauty and delight.

Their plan includes enhancing the website www.neverevergivingupcleveland.com, as well as Instagram, Facebook, e-mail, and at events. They’ve also been dropped in a special mailbox.

In 2018, Meyer didn’t know what to expect when she took the open mic stage at a Story Club Cleveland event. Her mom had died two years earlier. Meyer, who had grown up in Strongsville, had left a job in Chicago, moved to Cleveland Heights, and started law school at Cleveland Heights, and started law school at Cleveland Heights, and started law school at

University Heights Observer June 1, 2020

1
Recognizing our graduating seniors

Due to numerous requests, we’re offering the Senior Shout Outs again in July. Details at bit.ly/observergrads

The shout-outs were paid for by parents and friends, which helped cover the cost of printing the paper at a moment when ad sales are at their lowest point since 2010.

Which brings me to the state of the Heights Observer during this pandemic. The paper is supported entirely through advertising revenue. The biggest advertising losses for us have been the many special events that get promoted in our pages, plus, of course, bars and restaurants.

A few advertisers have come back with this issue, and we’re glad to see them open again for business. A few others have already told me they plan to be back in July.

Graig Kluge

As all of us who live in Cleveland Heights know, this is a unique, special city.

It has a diverse, progressive, open-minded citizenry; eclectic mix of shops, restaurants, and commercial establishments; and stunning, historic architecture.

I have lived here for almost half of my life, and much longer than anywhere else I called home. I find it hard to imagine finding a more welcoming, livable, walkable city in Northeast Ohio, or the country.

Over the years, Cleveland Heights has suffered through many of the same problems as other inner-ring suburbs, as the housing stock continues to age, taxes increase to support the schools and city government, and the infrastructure continues to deteriorate.

Through all of these changes, the city government failed to adequately adjust to the changing times, and wanted to continue down the same path.

The electorate took the initiative to change the system, and a dedicated group of citizen-leaders led the movement to a directly elected mayoral system.

The new system should lead to more-direct accountability from our leaders and governmental transparency, both of which have been lacking in the current city-manager system over the last few decades.

Vince Reddy was absolutely correct [in his opinion, published in the May Heights Observer] that the future of Cleveland Heights now resides in an educated, informed and competent citizenry elected a qualified, visionary mayor who can stabilize Cleveland Heights and foster a change in trajectory.

If we end up with a party-chosen candidate running unopposed, it would be the worst thing that could happen to our city at this important juncture.

We must strive to push for a number of candidates to run in this important election.

The current structure and system led to this point where we needed change. We do not need another lifelong political operative looking to move one rung up on the ladder before moving on to the next step.

I have faith in this city, and I know that this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for a new mayor to make his or her stamp on Cleveland Heights will bring out the best candidates for this difficult endeavor.

I am positive about our future, and I am confident, as we approach our centennial celebration in 2021, we will elect a new mayor who will reflect everything that is good and positive about our community.

Graig Kluge has lived in Cleveland Heights for almost 25 years, and enjoys its diversity, progressive inclusivity, and welcoming environment.

Resident foresees positive future for CH
Democracy is more than elections

Deborah Van Kleef and Carla Rautenberg

“Vote them out!” We hear this all the time. It’s an exclamation we hurl in anger and frustration at every government office—and official—we feel isn’t working right, or isn’t working for us, or is raising taxes or cutting services. Or all of the above. During the recent Cleveland Heights-University Heights school levy campaign, strident cries of, “Vote them out!” were raised against school board members, despite the fact that, just a few months earlier, board members James Posch and Beverly Wright ran without opposition to retain their seats.

Without qualified candidates willing to give generously of their time and talents, who will citizens be able to “vote in”? Campaigns alone entail a significant investment of time, commitment, and probably some of the candidate’s own money. No wonder people prefer to be appointed to office!

Once one is appointed or elected to office, there is the actual work to be done, for a pitifully small salary in the case of CH City Council, and no salary at all in the case of the CH-UH Board of Education. These are demanding, time-consuming, and largely thankless jobs. Nevertheless, they are vitally important to local government, the cornerstone of American democracy. But democracy does not begin and end with voting, to form a campaign committee? To raise the necessary funds? Do you know how to get on the ballot? Above all, remember that it takes much more than elections and appointments to make democracy work. Find your niche. Some of the most effective and rewarding efforts may be outside the electoral spotlight.

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

Susie Kaeser

I used some of my time during the stay-at-home order to take a deep dive into data about which school districts lose funds through EdChoice vouchers—a state program that requires certain school districts to pay for private-school vouchers out of the district’s state-aid allotment. My hours buried in the Ohio Department of Education website confirmed in breathtaking terms my suspicions about the unfair impact of this misuse of public funds.

The EdChoice voucher program is expensive, affects some districts a lot more than others, and fuels inequality in education funding and opportunities. Most of the children enrolled in the districts hardest hit by vouchers live in poverty and are racial minorities. How much longer can policymakers ignore that their diversion of public-school funding to support private education discriminates against our neediest students?

The CH-UH district is among the hardest hit by this threat to educational opportunity. It is among the 22 of Ohio’s 612 school districts that together carried 90 percent of all of this year’s EdChoice vouchers. Because of the lost funds, the district has already cut more than $2.5 million from next year’s budget. Deeper cuts are expected.

If public school funding perpetuates inequality, public education cannot provide equal opportunity and cannot help this generation of young people overcome the nation’s wealth divide. EdChoice vouchers feed inequality by reducing funding for public education and increasing reliance on property taxes.

EdChoice funding uses money appropriated for public-school students to pay private-school tuition. Public school students get what’s left after the voucher bills are paid. The higher the number of vouchers awarded in a district, the greater the funding loss for its public school students. The tragedy is that the districts with the greatest EdChoice costs also serve the most vulnerable students.

The students who need more educational resources are most likely to receive less. Their education opportunities are diminished in order to pay for private-school vouchers—a state program that discriminates against our neediest students.

The CH-UH district is among the 6 percent of Ohio’s school districts. The CH-UH district is trapped within.

In 2019, the number of districts increased to 140. Next year’s voucher bills are about to explode to more than 400. Some legislators pushed back, but didn’t fix the problem. In the middle of the pandemic-induced financial meltdown, they agreed to allow new vouchers only in the 140 existing EdChoice districts—a designation virtually impossible to escape once a district is trapped within.

To understand who will carry the load from this decision, I focused on the 40 districts that have been under EdChoice for at least three years, because they have already given up funds for multiple years. They account for 6 percent of Ohio’s school districts. This small group of districts carried 94 percent of the voucher load this school year, and 22 of the hardest-hit districts (including CH-UH) within this group carried 90 percent of the load.

The longtime EdChoice districts transferred more than $188 million from their allotments of state aid to fund more than 27,000 vouchers. The other 100 EdChoice districts paid for 2,000 vouchers, while the other 472 districts didn’t lose a dime. Next year’s new EdChoice vouchers are likely to be concentrated in the communities where there is a demonstrated local demand for vouchers, districts that are already losing their shirts.

What makes this even more tragic is that the majority of public-school students in the hardest-hit districts live in poverty. That’s what put them in this trap in the first place. A second devastating reality is that the majority of students enrolled in 20 of these districts are not white. Our poorest and most racially diverse communities are the most vulnerable to this assault on educational opportunity.

The disparate effect of EdChoice vouchers on education opportunity is a form of structural inequality that the state legislature refuses to end. How do we compel it to make strong public schools a priority?

Susie Kaeser is a 49-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.
Education funding is in crisis

Ari Klein

It is amazing how adaptable people have been during this global pandemic. In our school district we are learning new ways to do our jobs, trying new ways to reach our students and their families, and adapting to changing parameters. We’ve had to be creative and flexible. It has been especially challenging for our union members who are caring for their own children at home, while working remotely, which, many teachers report is much harder than being in the classroom.

We are currently considering several scenarios for opening school in August. It is impossible to know what will change between now and then, so the need for contingency plans is great. While working remotely, which, many teachers report is much harder than being in the classroom.

In all likelihood, school will be different from the past. Class size, for example, may be limited for everyone’s safety. Whatever happens, there will be a need for resources; not only for instruction, but for student health, as well. Staff may be needed to ensure students are healthy when they enter the building, and to maintain a physical distance between them. Staff will surely be needed to provide more cleaning and sanitizing than during normal times. Social and emotional support will be essential because so many young people are experiencing heightened anxiety.

The other reality for the CH-UH school district is that we have just eliminated seven elementary specialist positions, and several retirees will not be replaced. Because the community defeated the levy in April, we can’t depend on additional revenue for 2021.

While we are being flexible in our own district, the state continues to play the same money game it has for the past several years. This school year CH-UH lost over $12 million to voucher programs and charter schools. EdChoice vouchers will continue to expand by allowing the siblings of current voucher students to enroll in the program, as well as allowing incoming kindergarten and ninth-grade students to participate. CH-UH will lose at least another $1 million dollars next school year.

Further state cuts are looming because the pandemic undermined the financial stability of so many workers and businesses. Education is taking one of the largest hits from proposed state budget cuts. As of this writing, Gov. DeWine has proposed $350 million in cuts to districts for the current school year. For CH-UH this translates to $215 per student.

If the state takes this money away from our allocation for each of the 5,000 students we serve, we lose another $1 million. It is important to know several facts: The state allocates foundation aid based on the total number of students enrolled in our district during the last school year, and includes students receiving vouchers or attending a charter school. The aid amounts to $3,238 per student. EdChoice vouchers cost us between $4,875 and $6,000 per student. Petersen and autism vouchers can take up to $257,000. Charter students take $6,020.

You will notice that each of these numbers exceeds the per-pupil funding we receive from the state. The governor’s current proposal will cost the district an additional $165 for each voucher and charter student. Private and parochial schools are not required to sacrifice at all in this round of cuts. CH-UH is slapped with an additional loss of $344,000 for students we don’t educate.

We are forced to become more creative and flexible in our district, but the state keeps playing the same tune. How is it fair to take more local money to pay for students to go to parochial and private schools? Even during a pandemic, when economic realities have changed drastically, our governor and legislators do more harm than good.

In the coming school year, we can anticipate enormous cuts to our foundation aid. I am hopeful state officials will hear from many CH-UH residents about their concerns and demand that the state use the rainy-day fund to avoid education cuts. At the very least, it would seem only fair that the same cuts to public schools be applied to the voucher and charter school programs.

Ari Klein is a lifelong community member, math teacher at Cleveland Heights High School, and president of the Cleveland Heights Teachers Union.
the lot into a community-building asset. They shared their ideas with the Noble Corridor brainstorming group, a project initiated by Jill Tam, in response to the Noble Road Corridor Planning process, led by FutureHeights last year. Discovering their mutual interests and priorities for the lot, Sosnowski and Marks teamed up. They got started by collecting ideas from neighbors, shop-owners and their customers, and city staff from several departments.

Funding from FutureHeights’ neighborhood mini-grant program will be used to purchase solar lighting and pay a local artist to create furniture for the children’s area. With the Noble Gardeners’ Market, visit www.nobleneighbors.com, and Noble Neighbors. Noble Neighbors held a naming contest and will be held later this year.

The formerly straight retaining wall at the rear of the property has been reconstructed with a curve. In a nod to the nearby quarries that once supplied building materials to Cleveland Heights, the wall comprises bluestone and Berea sandstone. Plants along the reconstructed wall will include pollinators and native species, like those featured in Green Noble, Tom Gibson’s pocket pollinator garden project in the Noble neighborhood. Edible landscaping is also being considered, in association with the Noble Gardeners’ Market. A children’s area, with seating made from natural materials, and a little free library will be a part of the park. Heights Tree People has planted a white pine in a rear corner to provide habitat for winter wildlife and privacy for adjoining residences. A rain barrel, filled by the roof of a neighboring commercial property, will be used to water the new landscaping.

The lot was previously the site of a gas station. The city of Cleveland Heights acquired the lot in 2015, cleaned it up and installed a few landscape elements, while holding the lot for future development. Sosnowski installed the park’s corner perennial garden using plant material donated by home gardeners. That garden, along with four other public perennial gardens, are maintained by a group of Noble neighbors.

Since those initial landscape elements were added, the space has been used for the Noble Gardeners’ Market, an outdoor produce and flower market where home- and community-gardeners sell to neighbors. Noble Neighbors held a meeting there in the summer of 2019, but no other significant uses have yet emerged.

For more information about Noble Neighbors and the Noble Gardeners’ Market, visit www.noble-neighbors.com. Heights Tree People and Green Noble can be found on Facebook.

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

Charles Drake

Now that the election is over, I think it is time FutureHeights and the Cleveland Heights League of Women Voters open their eyes to the internal management decisions of the CH-UH Board of Education (BOE). I believe almost all residents of the school district want our district to succeed. But I am concerned that higher taxes are a deterrent to attracting young families to the Heights.

CH-UH BOE members, past and present, have done grievous damage to the school system they were elected to oversee (by failing) to manage the funds entrusted to them, for the benefit of our children, in a practical manner.

The following items were NOT covered by the management letters presented to the BOE at the completion of the annual financial audit, but were uncovered through document requests made to Scott Gainer, district treasurer, who promptly complied with the law and responded to these requests.

1. Our teachers and administrators receive generous compensation packages. The administrators participate in SERS (State Employee Retirement System). The district pays 14% of salaries to SERS as its employer contribution. Did you know that the district also pays the EMPLOYEE portion—an additional 10%—to SERS? Yes, that is the full 24% contribution to SERS and the district pays all of it. Does your employer do that? This 10% means TAXPAYERS are incurring additional costs of more than $410,000 per year, over five years that is more than $2 million. The BOE recently gave layoff notices to eight teachers whose annual salaries total $417,390. If administrators paid their own employee portion of their contribution, these teachers could be retained to educate our students.

2. Teachers pay into STRS (State Teachers Retirement System). Teacher contribution is 4% of their annual compensation, which the BOE matches in full, but in addition to its 14% employer contribution, the board also pays 6% of the teachers’ contribution. I have asked what this 6% totals, but have not received an answer yet.

3. In addition to generous pay and retirement contributions, our teachers and administrators receive an unbelievable health care package. The annual cost for medical coverage for a [CH-UH district employee’s] family is $11,265.22. The employee pays only $1,850 annually, just 6% of the cost. The school district pays an astounding $34,216.12, 94% of the total cost.

4. Does your employer do that? For an individual, the cost of coverage is $11,705.84, of that, the employee pays $700. If district employees were required to pay 16% of the annual premium, which is what most employers require, this would save in excess of $3 million per year. In other words, we would ask the single employee to pay $1,844 annually, and an employee needing family coverage would pay $4,970 annually/$414 monthly.

These contracts were negotiated on the BOE’s behalf by Treasurer Scott Gainer, Assistant Superintendent Paul Lombardo, and other employees of the school system, not the BOE. (A legal mediator is also involved in the negotiation process, as an independent facilitator.)

No BOE member was on either negotiating team. The board has allowed the taxpayers’ money to be thrown away because the negotiating team receives the same benefits that are negotiated. This is an act of malfeasance and breach of each BOE member’s fiduciary responsibility to our students and citizens.

Anyone reviewing the Auditor of State’s management letters accompanying its audits for the past five years (2014–16) can clearly see that material shortcomings were noted. The board took no action (regarding) these shortcomings. Despite knowing this, the BOE gave increases to the individuals responsible for the board’s financial records. A search of the Ohio Auditor of State’s website finds the last performance audit was in 1999.

Charles C. Drake is a 1970 graduate of Heights High. His two adult daughters also graduated from the school.

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University Heights celebrates Class of 2020

Mike Cook

To put it mildly, senior year for the high school Class of 2020 has not gone according to plan. Students should be relishing their final weeks of classes with their friends and teachers. They should be enjoying softball games, concerts, and award ceremonies. There should be “promposals,” there should be big commencement ceremonies, followed by graduation parties.

This pandemic derailed so much.

“We here at City Hall can’t fix any of that,” University Heights Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan said, “but we’d like to do something nice for the Class of 2020.”

All high school seniors living in University Heights are invited to participate in the city’s Senior Spotlight program. UH City Hall staff will produce write-ups on local seniors to share on social media accounts. The features on seniors are also available at www.universityheights.com/senior spotlight.

As many seniors as possible will be included in the July issue of Mosaic, the University Heights magazine. One senior, and his or her parents, will appear on the cover of the magazine.

To be included, seniors should answer all of the following questions:

• Name
• High School
• Extra-curricular activities
• Activities outside of school

Bryson Simpson is among the seniors participating in UH’s Senior Spotlight. A cross-country and track and field star at Gilmour Academy, Simpson won many awards for his volunteer work. He will attend the College of Wooster this fall.

• Favorite class and teacher
• What will you remember most about being a senior during this pandemic?
• What will you miss most about high school?
• What message of thanks would you like to share with your parents, siblings or other relatives?
• Plans after graduation (college and/or career)

Seniors should send their responses, and a high-resolution photograph, to mcook@universityheights.com.

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

Zoom into UH with city backdrops

Mike Cook

The COVID-19 pandemic has introduced many people to Zoom meetings. Whether it’s a weekly staff meeting, a quarterly book club, or an interview, Zoom has become part of the pandemic culture.

To enhance Zoom meetings with some University Heights civic pride, Zoom backgrounds depicting the city are now available for download on the University Heights City Hall Facebook page.

Backgrounds include Walter Stinson Community Park, John Carroll University (JCU) scenes, the University Heights Library, as well as Bialy’s Bagels, Los Arcos, and Jack’s Deli & Restaurant.

Video backgrounds are also available, including drone footage of JCU, plus shots featuring the city’s brand ambassador, Cooper.

The UH Zoom backgrounds are available in the photo album section on the city’s Facebook page, at www.facebook.com/UniversityHeightsCityHall.

Mike Cook is the communications and civic engagement coordinator for University Heights.
CH crime rates drop for 7th year in a row

Bob Rosenbaum

For the seventh consecutive year, the incidence of serious crime in Cleveland Heights continued to drop in 2019, hitting its lowest level since the police department began keeping credible statistics in 2011.

The 71 violent crimes reported in 2019 were a 24 percent decrease from the year before. Property crimes were down slightly, at 702 compared to 714 the year before.

The number of burglaries jumped last year to 114 from just 63 in 2018. But, that’s due to a change in the way incidents are being classified, according to Cleveland Heights Police Chief Annette Mecklenburg.

Mecklenburg attributes the positive trend to improved monitoring of criminal activity, and targeting areas in the city where data show pockets of crimes.

“We have found that, many times, offenders will continue to commit these crimes until they are apprehended,” she said. “Our detectives work very hard to solve their cases, and when we are able to make an arrest, we are ultimately preventing that offender from continuing to commit future crimes.”

Reporting crime data to the FBI is voluntary, and there are large disparities from one community to the next in the quality of the nuanced classification process. As a result, the data don’t allow for valid comparisons between one city and another. Further, FBI guidelines limit the statistics to major crimes—so the reports don’t include numerous lesser offenses.

The CHPD has maintained consistent standards for its data since it began taking the job seriously after 2010, so its statistics can be used to compare what’s happening within the city from one year to the next.

So far this year, the positive trend appears to be continuing. In the first three months of 2020, the department reported 10 violent crimes and 121 property crimes—well below the ordinary quarterly average. With the statewide stay-at-home order that began in mid-March, that’s likely to continue.

“Probably one of the most noticeable crimes we are not seeing at this time is burglary,” Mecklenburg said. “I believe with more and more people staying home, it is not as tempting for criminals to break into homes since the likelihood of someone being at home has increased.”

However, crime is seasonal, tending to increase in warm weather.

The data cited here is available on the CHPD website at www.clevelandheights.com/369/statistics.

Cleveland Heights resident Bob Rosenbaum is co-chair of the Heights Observer Advisory Committee, and is responsible for its advertising sales and market development.
The response gave her courage to getting stories, I thought this might work," said Meyer. “People wanted to have someone really see them.”

The project began to take shape in her mind and on Instagram. “As I started getting stories, I thought this might work,” said Meyer. “People wanted to have someone really see them.”

The response gave her courage to present the idea in early 2019 at Accelerate: Citizens Make Change, an annual civic pitch competition presented by the Cleveland Leadership Center and Citizens Bank. She was chosen as one of five finalists out of some 30 pitches. The event inspired her to raise $5,000 through a GoFundMe to support her project, which she named Mailboxes for Better Stories.

At 5 feet tall, the bright yellow mailbox is hard to miss. Meyer loaded it with stories. "It's a great way to build community and empathy, and we want more people to be inspired by these contributions," she said.

And Meyer envisions a big yellow mailbox in every community. "Maybe there's a great one downtown, and Cleveland becomes known as this place that really encourages people to support others in their struggles," Meyer suggested. "You don't get a trophy for dealing with trauma and pain. But you can reach back and share wisdom and insights you've gathered. That's a trophy for helping someone else."
Neighbors collaborate to create pollinator habitats

Shari Nacson

If you went down Bradford Road last summer, you may have noticed some interesting tree lawn activity—and it wasn’t on trash night.

With guidance from residents Peggy Spaeth and John Barber, neighbors collaborated on a project—dubbed the Bradford Pollinator Path—to beautify the street while helping the environment. Participating households agreed to dedicate a patch of their front yards or tree lawns to the planting of native species that are known to be supportive ecosystems for insects and birds.

Having transformed their own front yard and tree lawn into a biodiverse habitat, Spaeth and Barber, the co-founders of Friends of Lower Lake, wanted to increase the impact by expanding it on their street. In February 2019, Spaeth e-mailed neighbors via the street’s listserve, thinking she would get a couple of households for the first year. There was a swell of interest, with 17 households ultimately participating. Spaeth hosted a meeting for interested neighbors, explaining the simple process of starting a small patch of pollinating plants, photos of which she shared via e-mail and at the meeting. She connected neighbors with The Nature Center at Shaker Lakes’ annual plant sale—which features native plants—consulting if anyone asked for advice.

Bradford resident Karl Weisel said, “The work was worth it when I saw a monarch going from plant to plant.” His wife, Diane Perl, noted that they have enjoyed “not only the flowers, but the variety of insects” the plants attracted. “It’s been interesting to see what people planted and how the plants progressed,” she added.

Molly Burke, another Bradford resident, said, “We do feel differently when we think about our yard now. Our son, Alex, is especially vigilant in reminding us to go native. We plan to expand our tree lawn this year.”

The results have been beautiful and inspiring, producing increased social connection among neighbors, as well as among bees and butterflies.

The enthusiasm has proven contagious. Inspired neighbors on adjacent streets (East Fairfax and East Monmouth) are establishing their own pollinator paths this spring.

Originally, Bradford Road participants displayed a street-specific sign in their pollinator patches, denoting their part in the project. Now that the project has spread to other streets, said Spaeth, “Meredith Hahn of East Monmouth has designed a Heights Pollinator Pathway sign for anyone to use. Anyone who would like a sign can send an e-mail to emonpollinators@gmail.com, or contact Hahn through the Heights Pollinator Pathway group on Facebook.

Spaeth and Barber created a short video about starting a pollinator path, which can be viewed at www.youtube.com/watch?v=C5285WijnQ&feature=youtu.be.

Monti a mom, Shari Nacson is a Bradford Road resident who works as a freelance editor, social worker, and nonprofit consultant. More than anything, Nacson is inspired by kids and adults who build connection through kindness.
First Baptist hosts monthly mobile pantry

Karen Cass Gill
First Baptist Church of Greater Cleveland is partnering with the Cleveland Food Bank again this summer, to serve as a mobile pantry for produce pickup. Dates for the church’s upcoming mobile pantries are June 6, July 11, and Aug. 1, from 10 a.m. to noon.

A mobile pantry is a Greater Cleveland Food Bank truck full of food that is brought to a location where clients can pick it up. For produce pickup, church volunteers served 262 people. Each family received potatoes, apples, oranges, cabbage, yellow squash, and yogurt—the total amount distributed was in excess of 6,000 lbs. of produce. For further information, visit www.firstbaptistcleveland.org/food-giveaway.

Karen Cass Gill is a longtime member of First Baptist Church of Greater Cleveland.

Free shuttle links CH to University Circle

Mary Dunbar
With the lifting of Ohio’s stay-at-home order, many are resuming their work commutes. Others are starting to get out and about more, as Ohio reboots its economy, and warmer weather beckons. If getting around by means other than driving a car is possible, and appeals to you, consider the Heights-adjacent transportation options offered at www.ucincircle.org/transportation-options, which include a free shuttle between Coventry Village and University Circle.

One of the Heights’ strengths is its location near University Circle, with that destination’s plethora of jobs and institutions in medicine, education, arts and culture, dining, and parks. University Circle also provides links to wider transportation networks, such as RTAs trains, buses and Healthline, and bike lanes and trails to Downtown Cleveland, the cultural gardens and the lakefront.

University Circle Incorporated (UCI) encourages commuters and others to consider their transportation options, which it outlines on its website. These include public transit, biking, walking, shuttles, and car or van pooling.

To reduce traffic and parking congestion in the Circle, UCI has developed a free-to-the-public shuttle service called CircleLink. Recognizing the importance of linking the Heights and the Circle, the BlueLink route of CircleLink connects Wade Oval, Uptown, Little Italy and Coventry Village, and provides access to the Little Italy–University Circle Rapid Station year-round. The transportation options Web link provides maps, scheduling and other information, including COVID-19 transportation updates, policies on social distancing, and more.

When Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) is in session, it also offers free shuttle service to the Heights. Morning service is available through the Heights AM route, and evening service is called the Evening South Loop. For information on that service, which connects the CWRU campus to Cleveland Heights’ Cedar Fairmont route, go to https://case.edu/parking/transportation/shuttles.

Mary Dunbar is a member of Cleveland Heights City Council, and vice president of Heights Bicycle Coalition.
Bradford Road extends from Lee Road in Cleveland Heights to Edgerton Road in University Heights. A unique feature interrupts the street: a pedestrian path that connects two sections of the road. One-third of a mile in length, spanning four blocks, the path extends from South Taylor Road to Canterbury Road.

Four streets have this path at their midpoints: Queenston, Kingston, Princeton and Canterbury.

(Two landmarked farmhouses that belonged to the families who owned the land on which the streets were laid out are still occupied: 3497 and 3878 Fairmount Blvd.)

The building of Canterbury School inspired the creation of what is known as the Bradford Cinder Path, a city-owned property.

In 1921, the Cleveland Heights school board began to buy properties for the school on Canterbury and Princeton roads. From 1922 to 1925, in order to make the new school more accessible, the city of Cleveland Heights bought vacant lots on Queenston, Kingston and Princeton roads. The plan was to extend Bradford Road east of South Taylor, to the University Heights border.

But in April 1926, neighbors flooded city council with objections to a paved road for vehicles. Complaints and claims for damages were filed, and 75 residents signed a petition that stated: “That said improvement is not necessary for the public health, convenience, and welfare. That it will not improve Bradford Road. That the assessment is unreasonable, unjust and is not proportionate to the benefits to be derived by the undersigned property owners who are to be assessed. That the City should pay more than 2% of the entire cost.”

Many neighbors spoke up at the council meeting, and Mayor Frank Cain stated that “he had been over the ground and he himself felt that perhaps a sidewalk through would be sufficient.” The matter was referred to committee, where it sat for 10 years. In the meantime, an unpaved path made of macadam, or cinders, was maintained. It was often muddy.

In 1936, plans for paving the path as a road resurfaced. This time the federal government would pay—specifically, the Works Progress Administration (WPA), designed to put Americans back to work on useful public projects during the Depression. There would be little cost to Cleveland Heights residents under the WPA plan.

At a January 1936 council meeting, “Mayor Cain stated he understood a great many in the audience were present to protest the proposed WPA improvement of Bradford Road.” One Queenston Road property owner said he had lived there a number of years and had never missed a cross street. He suggested, if the city wanted to do something, it “pave a good sidewalk and landscape the pathway.” At a second meeting later that year, with neighbors still objecting, council approved “that the project (a paved street) be revised to cover the installation of a six-foot sidewalk and use the top soil to level off the balance of the property and do what tree planting the money will allow.”

In 1938 the WPA completed the work, paving just the cinder path and installing 14 stone columns at the intersections.

Today, school children, dog walkers, and bicyclists use the path, flanked by these unique columns. Cleveland Heights has much WPA-built stonework, and the columns were well built. But almost 100 years later, they need restoring. Plans are underway to do just that, and an application has been made to the city’s Landmark Commission to designate this historic, well-used, and much-appreciated pedestrian path as a Cleveland Heights Landmark.

Bradford Road residents have been awarded a FutureHeights Neighborhood Mini-Grant to help fund the column restoration, remove invasive plants, and replace them with native trees, shrubs and flowers appropriate to the site. With work, the Bradford Cinder Path will become an even better corridor, welcoming birds and insects, as well as pedestrians and bicyclists. Contact peggyspaeth@gmail.com if you want to be involved.

Marian Morton is professor emeritus of history at John Carroll University. Peggy Spaeth is organizing the Bradford Politan Path, extending it to the Bradford Cinder Path.
Cleveland Heights - University Heights
Board of Education
Meeting highlights
APRIL 21, 2020
The meeting was conducted remotely, with all participants joining from their homes. Board President Jodi Sourini and board members James Prouse, Dan Haintz, Malia Lewis and Beverly Wright were present, as were Superintendent Elizabeth Kirby and Treasurer Scott Gainer. The meeting began at 7 p.m. and ended at 8:50 p.m.

Early Childhood Education Task Force
Staff members Karen Liddell-Anderson, Lisa Yañez, Danielle Foran and Erin Hanna, and several members of the Early Childhood Task Force, updated the board on progress in early childhood education programming. The task force surveyed parents of pre-K children enrolled in the program regarding their priorities. The parents’ single most important concern was the quality of programming. The task force’s goal is to identify the future of CH-UH preschool programming. There was discussion as to the best cut-off date for kindergarten entrance. The date currently used is a Sept. 30. The task force discussed how to maintain and improve best practices in preschool education, how to best use facilities, the potential impact of the school levy passage or failure, and the impact of COVID-19 on future programming.

Advanced Placement (AP) programming
Heights High staff and teachers Alisa McKinnie, Charlene Searcy, Joyce Bukovac, Sharen Washington, Olivia Fatica and Claudine McCoy spoke about the district’s AP programming. The high school offers 20 AP courses. The newest high school course is AP computer science.

The CH-UH school district was approved the AP Honor Roll designation for increasing the number of underrepresented students while maintaining or increasing the number of students receiving a score of 3 or higher on their AP exams. The goal is to continue encouraging under-represented students to enroll in AP courses and to retain a high-quality AP program.

Board approvals
The board unanimously approved a resolution to authorize distance learning for the days and hours that school buildings are closed to students during the 2019-20 school year due to COVID-19. It also approved a resolution to accept the lowest responsible and responsive bids for roof replacement projects.

JWY Observer: Robin Kuslen

MAY 5, 2020
Board President Jodi Sourini and board members James Prouse, Dan Haintz, Malia Lewis and Beverly Wright were present, as were Superintendent Elizabeth Kirby and Treasurer Scott Gainer. The meeting was held remotely and lasted one hour.

Consent agenda
The board unanimously passed the consent agenda. Two items were pulled out for separate votes: approval of administrative resignation, and approval of reheard staff resignation. On both items, four board members voted yes while Beverly Wright voted no. There was no discussion regarding the votes. [Details can be found on boarddocs@.]

District finances
Scott Gainer told the board that the five-year forecast would be presented at the next meeting. He delineated the reasons for the delay, stating he did not yet know the extent of budget cuts from the state and the still-unknown costs of the EdChoice vouchers. He suggested that a new budget had to be made by the CH-UH bus drivers, using district vans, on May 6 and 7.

“Our bus drivers know our district’s planning in dealing with the COVID-19 crisis. On the operational side, the district has commenced the tier one process to school in the fall, and continues to work with the community so well and they miss our students.”

Superintendent Elizabeth Kirby said that around 45 of the signs were also delivered by Board of Education members.

“All of our drivers miss driving their buses and seeing their students,” said Scott Smith, supervisor of transportation. “Our drivers form strong bonds with their students and miss the connection they developed over the school year.”

Six bus drivers and one volunteer installed the signs: Cameron Arafal, Vanessa Banrunt, Autumn Boyd, Jacqueline Bunton-Eddie, Kionna Jackson and Michael Lewis. Boyd’s son Antwan also helped.

Joy Henderson is the parent/community liaison for Heights High.

Nearly 400 yard signs for Heights High seniors were installed in early May.

Joy Henderson

Maybe you have seen them—nearly 400 Heights High Class of 2020 yard signs that sprouted up in early May, in the yards and windows of this year’s graduating seniors.

“Our seniors will not have the same end-of-year experience that we expected, and we feel so bad about that,” said Jane Simeri, Heights High’s senior class principal. “We want these signs to show the class of 2020 and our community that we are very proud of them.”

The yard signs were installed by the CH-UH bus drivers, using district vans, on May 6 and 7.

“Our bus drivers know our community so well and they miss driving, so this was a perfect fit,” said Superintendent Liz Kirby.

Sommers Saddler of Cleveland Heights is the deserving WINNER of our 4th Annual Helping-Hann Free Furnace Contest! Read more at VEHbrothers.com/helping-hann-2020/
SENIOR SHOUT-OUTS [SPONSORED]

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE CLASS OF 2020!

Brielle B.
Cleveland Heights High School

Congratulations Brielle! You are a true example of perfection. You make overcoming adversity look easy. Graduating with Honors and a whopping 4.3 GPA, while working and securing a full scholarship to North Carolina A&T, We’re so proud of you!
— Love Dad, Mom and Aj
CHHS 2020

Diego Bremer
Cleveland Heights High School

Always remember, you are Braver than you believe, Stronger than you seem, Smarter than you think, and loved more than you will ever know. Good luck at Walsh University.
We Love You.
— Dad, Mom, Imani

Melanie Maraa Hicks
Cleveland Heights High School

You are an amazing, young woman that has worked hard to achieve your goal, “Graduation Day.” Cherish this moment as it will lead you to a promising future. The sky’s the limit. Wishing you the best and sending much love.
— Mom and family

Ruby Kaufman
Cleveland Heights High School

Congrats Ruby! We are so proud of you. You are a scholar, musician & athlete, not to mention a lovely, kind person. We are so happy that you will be attending the school of your dreams! Although we will miss you tons, we can’t wait to see what is next for you.
— Much Love, Mom, Dad, EV & Jeremy

Jonah May
Cleveland Heights High School

Congratulations on your graduation! We’re so proud of you. Stage Crew, Band, AFS, GSA, NHS, School of Rock, and more. You are an amazing person, ready to make your mark on the world. Next stop: University of Toronto! With love and admiration always.
— Mom, Dad, Mills, Anny, and Papa

Olivia Iris Mae Mickey
Cleveland Heights High School

My sweet Olivia, Go out into this world and make it yours! Remember the advice of those you admire, stay present while you breathe in the moment, and realize your smile will carry you everywhere you want to go! As long as I’m living, my baby you’ll be.
I love you, Mom

Chandler J. Rowell
Cleveland Heights High School

Congratulations on your graduation! We are so proud of how you balanced maintaining good grades, playing varsity baseball and working part-time. You can achieve anything you set your mind to. May you continue to be blessed as you start the next chapter as a Walsh Cavalier.
Love always, Mom and Dad

Lila Shubert
Cleveland Heights High School

Congratulations! You have dazzled us on stage, touched us with your poetry, impressed us as a dedicated, thoughtful student, inspired us with your open mind and heart. We are excited to see what you’ll do next at the University of Rochester. Your community, friends and family are so proud of you.

Ethan Everett Swain
Cleveland Heights High School

From toddler legs kicking to the beat of Smashing Pumpkins to a brave leap to a Sun Devil... You never cease to amaze us. EE—Your quiet leadership and witty sense of humor will be your Heights legacy. You make us so proud!
Love, Your Family, far and wide

Rajani Jade Tabor
Cleveland Heights High School

You’re beautiful, smart, genuine and silly! We’re so proud of your achievements. 4.63 GPA, Heights Girls Lacrosse Varsity Co-Captain, Heights High Symphony. We’re excited for your next chapter: Northeastern U in the Honors Engineering program. Congratulations!!
— Love Team Tabor

Jessie Titas
Cleveland Heights High School

We are so proud of you, Jessie! You are our favorite piccolo/flute/guitar player, dancing, diving, legendar- ing, teaching straight-A student and all-around beautiful person, inside and out. We can’t wait to see what other talents you discover next year at Ohio University. We love you!
— Mom and Dad

Ronan O’Connell Karem
Cleveland Heights High School

From Cat World to the adult world, you’ve come a long way. We’re so proud of the wonderful, kind person you are. There are many uncertainties ahead but we know you will meet them with humor, creativity, and hard work. We’ll be with you every step of the way. Love you!
— Mom, Dad, Rory & Cardi
Exchange students’ year abroad ends abruptly

Krisy Dietsch Gallagher

Nadia Zampiere, an American For-

gain (AFS) student at Heights

High, knew the virus was coming.

Her family in the northern Ital-

can city of Tribano was hosting an

exchange student from Greenland

while Nadia was spending her year in

Cleveland. When the international

community decided that the students

in Italy should return to their home

countries, Zampiere was worried.

"I wasn't sure what would happen
to us," she said of the AFS students

at Heights High. "I was sure to the

virus would come to America, too.

But I still had hope."

That hope was dashed when

schools throughout Ohio closed in

mid-March, flipping the worlds of

students upside down in an instant.

For the AFS students at Heights

High, the global chaos and uncer-

ainty was felt deeply and personally.

Intense coordination began among

AFS, the U.S. State Department, rep-

resentatives from the students’ home

countries, and hundreds of facilitators

in close districts as they worked to

safely return students to their

families.

For Zampiere, Maria LaBanca of

Italy, and Nicholas Aguilar Muñoz

of Spain, the move came quickly.

Within a week of school closure, they

were told to pack their bags and be

at the airport in 48 hours.

"I was really, really sad to not say

goodbye to all my friends and teach-\n
ers," Zampiere said from her home

in Padua. "I thought about all the

things I hadn’t done: the spring vocal

auditions, and continued her schooling

in isolation with her host family,

movies,” said Joyce Tagne, who was

in Cleveland at that time, where she

spent a lot of time online.

"I've watched a crazy number of

movies,” said Joyce Tagne, who was in

isolation with her host family, Sandra,

Michael and Alexis Dixon.

"At the beginning, I was ex-

cited for a three-week vacation,”

said Tagne, echoing the thoughts of

many teens. “But then everything

changed.” She spent a lot of time on

SnapChat with her fellow AFS stu-

dents, and continued her schooling

online. She also taught her host fam-

ily to cook traditional Cameroonian

dishes. “It was really tough,” she said

of the uncertainty.

Tagne was also part of the VMD

at Heights; it was the highlight of her

year. “Every day I would see my

friends from Singers,” she said. “We

were like one big family.”

Tagne returned to Cameroon on

May 10.

Krisy Dietrich Gallagher is a freelance

diary under contract with the CH-

UH City School District.
Library launches ‘1619’ Project Web page

In May, Heights Libraries launched a new online resource featuring news, reviews, and interviews related to the library’s ongoing 1619 Project discussion group.

The group formed in September 2019 in response to high public interest in reading and discussing “1619 Project: essays published by The New York Times Magazine, which reflect on the history of race and slavery, and its impact on American life over the last 400 years.

“We couldn’t keep the magazine on the shelves,” said John Piche, adult services librarian. “Handing out dozens upon dozens of reading packets became a regular part of my job, as more and more of our patrons wanted to read and share these articles.”

In response, Piche organized a monthly program at the Lee Road branch to provide a platform for people to discuss the subjects addressed by the 1619 Project, following a curriculum designed by the nonprofit Pulitzer Center. The program has been immensely popular, attracting more than 350 participants over the course of its first five sessions.

“When the library closed its doors in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, I didn’t want the 1619 Project discussion group to be put on hold,” Piche said. “While I knew it would be a while before we could meet in person once again, I was inspired by the popularity of the library’s virtual storytimes on social media and thought, why not create a virtual space for the discussion group?”

The Web page features the complete 1619 Project discussion packet, articles on related subjects, topical interviews with professors and academics, and a sign-up page for the prospective 1619 Project discussion group news e-mail.

The 1619 Project Discussion Group page can be found on the library’s website at heightslibrary.org/services/1619-project.

Library budget cuts total $2 million

Heights Libraries is preparing its four branches for a partial reopening, scheduled for June 2 at the Lee Road branch, and June 9 for the Coventry Village, Northside, Neighborhood, and University Heights branches.

On Monday, May 18, the Lee Road branch began to offer three services: curbside hold pick-ups, phone reference, and curbside food delivery.

The curbside hold pick-up service is initially only for customers who had holds ready at the time of the library’s closure on March 13, and customers who wish to order by phone and pick up items currently available in the Lee Road building.

While these limited services were being piloted throughout the buildings, lobby new holds pick-up, obtaining new items has been reached. That number will vary from building to building.

Staff will be required to wear face masks, and special safety protocols have been established for handling returned materials.

Items can be returned to the outdoor bookdrops only, staff will not accept returns inside the buildings.

There will be no public restrooms available during lobby hours at any branch.

Days and hours for lobby service will be as follows:

- Beginning May 18, the Lee Road branch lobby-only hours will be Tuesday and Thursday, 13:00–9 p.m.; and Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, noon to 5 p.m.; with Senior Hours 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- The Coventry Village branch is open Tuesday, Friday and Saturday, 10 a.m. to noon.
- Services on the days and hours will be June 9 at Coventry, Noble and Uni.

“Our staff have been busy in our buildings getting ready to welcome back a small number of customers at a time,” said Heights Libraries Director Nancy Levin. “We have removed furniture, put up Plexiglas safeguards in front of service desks, and rearranged our lobbies to ensure customers and staff can interact safely at a proper social distance from each other. Staff will also be busy cleaning the buildings, both before and after customers come in.”

“Although we are not ready to completely reopen, we are looking forward to re-hiring our customers in the near future in June and getting used to this ‘new normal,’” said Levin. “We will be following the Governor’s Responsible Restart Ohio Guidelines, and complying with public health recommendations to keep staff and customers safe. We will continue to monitor the news and recommendations from the governor’s office throughout this process.”

Library prepares for partial reopening

Heights Libraries budgeted for a cost-reduction plan designed to trim the library’s budget by $2 million in the first half of fiscal year 2020. The library’s 2020 budget is $19,584,412, and will hit the halfway point on June 1.

“The library is anticipating severe funding cuts in the near future,” said Heights Libraries Director Nancy Levin. “Ohio’s Public Library Fund has been reduced by roughly 35 percent, and we are expecting property tax collection to fall sharply. The majority of our funding, over 80 percent, comes from these two sources.”

The library will cut $800,000 from the budget in four areas: materials, purchased services (such as staffing, building maintenance), and supplies. The remaining $1.2 million will come from cutting salaries and benefits, including a 10 percent salary cut for all full-time management staff, and a 14 percent salary cut for the director.

“The pandemic has forced us to severely limit the services we can offer while protecting our staff and customers,” said Levin. “That has, in turn, reduced the amount of work to be done by our staff.”

Out of 148 staff members, four have retired, three have voluntarily exited, and 48 have been furloughed. Those numbers total roughly 38 percent of the total staff. Of the remaining 100, 96 have had their hours cut by 20 percent.

Furloughed employees on Heights Libraries’ health, vision and dental insurance will remain covered, and life insurance and the employee assistance program provided by the library continue for all employees. Those employees working at 50 percent are eligible for assistance through the library’s enrollment in the Shared Work Ohio program.

Heights Libraries’ human resource department will be helping employees who are affected apply for unemployment.

“It is our hope that furloughed employees will be called back to work in the coming months, as we are able to serve more customers,” said Levin. “But our goal is to prepare for the worst. We just don’t know what the future will hold.”

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

Free books mailed to your young child!

If your child is 4 years old or younger and lives in Cuyahoga County:

Please register online at: ImaginationLibrary.com

Library launches ‘1619’ Project Web page

Cleveland Heights – University Heights Public Library Board

APRIL 20, 2020

Present were President James Rosso, Vice President Diana Flawell, Pat Carlyle, Gabe Crenshaw, Max Gerboc, Annette Iwamoto and Vikas Turakhia.

Financial report

The board reviewed and accepted the March 2020 financial statement. Total cash balance across the operating accounts, Bauer Foundation accounts, and investment accounts was $18,141,778.30. Due to the pandemic, the library is planning budget cuts of up to 20 percent from the general fund. Raises have been held, and a hiring freeze is in place. The total number of staff have been reduced, virtual book purchases have increased. Yard signs have been posted to remind patrons that free WiFi is available in the library parking lot.

Salary continuation during pandemic

CH-UH libraries closed to the public on March 13 following Gov. Mike DeWine’s COVID-19 orders. All meeting room reservations have been cancelled through May. No passport services or tax appointments are offered at this time. No book donations are being accepted. Library staff continue to work at home, providing online content to library customers. The board approved a resolution to continue payment of all staff salaries until such time as the state of Ohio deems it safe for businesses to open, and normal library operations are resumed.

Master plan

Staff had been meeting to tour library buildings and begin crafting a master plan for updates to buildings and the PEAK Playground. Due to the pandemic, master plan bidding has been postponed. The waterproofing project under way at the Coventry Village branch is up to code. The final costs for the air conditioning at the Lee Road branch was completed. Deep cleaning of library buildings is taking place, in turn, reduced the amount of work.

Letter to the community

The board approved wording for a letter to the community outlining services available to patrons during the closure, the hours of closure, and plans being developed for a soft opening once the state order to stay open is given. Staff are working with Center for Disease Control guidelines for protective equipment and cleaning, to enable people to enter the library safely once current restrictions are lifted.

“IWV Observer: Elizabeth M. Tracy.

MAY 8, 2020 – Special Meeting

Present were President James Rosso, Vice President Diana Flawell, Pat Carlyle, Gabe Crenshaw and Annette Iwamoto. Max Gerboc and Vikas Turakhia were absent.

Reopening the libraries

Heights Libraries anticipates reopening no earlier than June 9. Curbside service will begin, and the book drop will be open, on May 18.

Voluntary furlough package

With limited hours, the libraries will need fewer staff. Therefore, board authorized the library administration to offer staff a voluntary furlough and incentive package, effective May 30.

The library budget would allow up to 26 percent of furloughed staff to return to work. All furloughed staff would have their health insurance continued. In addition to furloughs, other staff will have reduced salaries or reduced hours. Other voluntary cuts are being planned. A re-budgeted plan will be presented to the board at the next meeting, on May 18.

IWV Observer: Elizabeth M. Tracy.
The fruits of my labor

David Budin

They built Covent Yard, the then-artistic indoor mini-mall, out of an old apartment building, on Coventry Road, just as it’s starting to turn the corner and become Euclid Heights Boulevard. Then my friend Eugene Rocco, a builder and designer who loves good food, took over what had been the apartment’s garage and transformed it into a beautiful gourmet shop, Rocco’s Market, directly across the courtyard from the original Mad Greek Restaurant.

Rocco, at around that same time, the mid ‘70s, also designed the Grum’s Sub Shoppe on Coventry, near Mayfield. It’s still there. The next time you’re in the area, look at it, starting on the outside and following your eyes inside. It’s very cleverly designed. As was Rocco’s Market.

Rocco’s sold unusual fruits, for its time; Amish cheeses and baked goods from Middlefield, Ohio; fresh fish and seafood; dairy products; and all kinds of delicacies—even cow’s tongue (it tastes sort of like corned beef)—which you could buy in bulk or get on sandwiches, which were made with bagels from Bialy’s.

I was a full-time rock musician then, which pretty much meant I had to have a full-time job doing something else. So, I went to work at Rocco’s. I spent my days there and my nights rehearsing or performing music. I used to take food home from there for dinners and off-days—like my favorite sandwich at that time: roast beef, turkey and Genoa salami, with Swiss cheese, tomato and Chef Budino’s special sauce, on a half-and-half bagel; and some things that were getting too old to sell at the market. I was probably the only—or certainly one of few—starving musician anywhere who ate lobster once or twice a week.

By the way, Chef Budino’s special sauce came about when some dignitary (I can’t remember who—possibly a local TV news anchor) wanted something with our special sauce. We didn’t have a special sauce. So, I whipped up a concoction of all the condiments we had—ketchup, mustard, mayo, pickle relish and horseradish—and slapped it on his sandwich, and he loved it. And then some people standing nearby wanted to try it on their sandwiches, and they loved it, so it became a standard item. Named after me. If I had been Italian.

I loved working there. I loved being around and working with food, and I loved talking with customers about food, and I loved talking to the guys I worked with. One of them, a longtime supermarket produce guy, said a lot of things like this (after arriving at the market later than expected): “If they hadn’t been so slow at the terminal, I’d be back by now.”

And this was typical of another co-worker, Antonio, a retired man in his 70s. When he found a lot of milk on the bottom of the dairy case, he announced that he was going to take out all the cartons and weigh them, and whichever one weighed less would be the one that was leaking. “That,” he proclaimed, “is what you call ‘elimination of process.’” Then he weighed them all and silently put them all back. “What did you find out?” I asked him. He said, “They all weigh the same, except for one. And that one weighs more.”

We used to receive the Amish cheeses in large slabs and it was Antonio’s job to slice them up and wrap the individual pieces. He amused the hell out of the group of young construction workers who came in every day for lunch when he told them, “I cut the cheese every afternoon at two.”

A third guy, a recent Greek immigrant, never wanted to answer the phone. One time he had to, and instead of saying “Rocco’s Market,” he picked up the receiver and said, “Marko’s Rocket.” Which is why he never wanted to answer the phone. He and I talked a lot, and we’re still friends now.

I was also the resident wise guy. A fancy-dressed and coiffed woman asked me, “When do you carry fish?” I said, “When they’re too tired to swim.” She looked at me, couldn’t think of what to say, and walked away.

I did that all day, every day. Then my father started hanging around on Saturday afternoons, heckling me when I was working behind the deli counter. Like when a man ordered a tongue sandwich. My father said, “Yuck! I wouldn’t eat anything that came out of an animal’s mouth. I’ll have some egg salad.”

The place closed after a few years. And I became a writer, and also a part-time chef, and in addition to my music. I write mostly about music and food, naturally. In fact, I’m writing a book now that’s a hybrid music-history cookbook. I also got an idea for a novel when I was working at Rocco’s, which I finally wrote last year, picturing that market the whole time. Working there was fruitful.

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.
On April 1, amidst the COVID-19 virus and stay-at-home orders, Cleveland Heights native Julie Schlemmer became the new owner of Atma Center, the yoga studio in the Cedar Lee district, at 2309 Lee Road.

The center opened in 1997 through the vision of former owner Swami Armarupa (aka Beverly Singh), who wanted to establish a holistic wellness center that offered yoga, massage therapy, meditation, and a retail source for vitamins and physical wellness products.

According to Swami Armarupa, she opened the business well before yoga came into the American mainstream. Even so, the yoga aspect of the center is what took off. Satyananda yoga, with its focus on the traditional yogic meditative practices of breathwork and relaxation, was accessible as a lifestyle practice for people of all physical abilities. Now, 22 years later, Schlemmer plans to continue to focus on integrating yogic tradition as a life-style practice, not just a fitness craze.

A native of Cleveland Heights, Schlemmer credits her father with inspiring her interest in yoga.

“As a child of the ‘70s growing up in Cleveland Heights,” she recalled, “my father talked about the benefits of yoga, and I began to wonder what magic it held that so captured his attention. When I was finally able to take a class on my own, I became captivated by the practice.”

“I fell in love with the movement of yoga, the strength and fluidity it generated in my body, and the deep sense of stillness and gratitude that followed. I quickly embraced its teachings of the heart and mind, and loved how it all fit together. I learned that by understanding myself, I could better understand the world around me.”

Schlemmer’s initial training was in Vinyasa, also known as Flow Yoga. Over her 16 years as a teacher, her care for the unique physical needs of her students led to additional training in the specialty of yoga therapy, which she applied to her work at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation for seven years.

Schlemmer is a Reiki master and holds a certificate in Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). She recently added two additional certifications through the Integrative Medicine Department at Duke University: as an integrative health coach, and advanced training in integrative yoga for seniors.

“There are many different ways to teach and practice yoga,” explained Schlemmer, “yet the essence of it will always remain the same for me—it is a healing practice. It invites us to learn about our body and understand what makes it work physically, emotionally and mentally.”

Schlemmer is grateful to Swami Armarupa, and to all of the Atma instructors that have continued to teach during these uncertain times.

“The Atma Center is a special place, where yoga learning and practice is the essence of its foundation,” stated Schlemmer. She assures clients, “Your beloved and gifted teachers will continue to teach in this community as it is one that is stable, steady and ready to continue to serve, connect and unite.”

Atma Center is offering a full schedule of online classes during COVID-19 restrictions. These include vinyasa (flow), chair yoga, pranayama (breathwork), and yoga nidra (a relaxation tool). The website, www.atmacenter.com, offers links and instructions on how to access classes. Students are encouraged to call 216-371-9760 if they have any questions.

While classes remain online, the Atma Center storefront, which offers yoga mats and props, Ayurvedic herbs, and various gift items, reopened on May 4.

Julie Schlemmer is Atma Center’s new owner.

New owner continues Atma Center’s mission

Cleveland Rocks and Beads welcomes back customers

Robert Brown

What if you operated a shop that was a gathering space for craft enthusiasts, then suddenly found it among those shuttered when a state order for social distancing, necessitated by a global pandemic, led to the temporary closing of all “non-essential” businesses? That’s where Cleveland Rocks and Beads owner Jennifer Gerard found herself when COVID-19 hit.

“I felt a bit like an animal in a glass cage with people hanging on the glass throughout the day,” said Gerard. “So, I took that idea to the extreme and made a jungle safari out of my shop windows, with stuffed animals and unusual objects from my trips to Asia, so that people taking their children on walks could look for exotic and mythical beasts in the windows.”

Cleveland Rocks and Beads, at 2499 Lee Blvd., in the historic Rockefeller Building, opened six years ago as a business offering crafting classes and parties, as well as selling beads, stones, metals, tools and other jewelry- and craft-making materials.

In the face of the pandemic’s restrictions, Gerard enhanced her online store, at www.clevelandrocksandbeads.com, selling her unique beads and findings, as well as imported gifts, objects and gift cards.

Gerard also stayed active on social media, hosting online trunk shows, and featuring projects created by customers, using components purchased at her shop.

As of May 1, Gerard had opened her store by-appointment to single customers and family units, and was looking ahead to May 12 when, in accordance with Gov. DeWine’s order lifting some restrictions on retail shops, she planned to open to in-store customers who are wearing masks and “sanitize on entry.” Call 216-932-3780 to make an appointment, and for more information.

Through the shutdown and gradual reopening, Cleveland Rocks and Beads continues to operate as a UPS Access Point—a pick-up and drop-off location. UPS customers are asked to knock, have ID ready to show, and wait patiently outside while Gerard brings packages to the door.

Gerard reminds residents to think local first when making purchasing decisions. “If we want vibrant, healthy communities,” said Gerard, “we have to start thinking before we buy. We have bookstores, confectioners, coffee roasters, bread bakers, gift shops, dress makers and now mask makers. Before people click and send their money to another part of the country or the world, we should think about who might need our support right here. Most of our local businesses have an online presence or are just a phone call away.”

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