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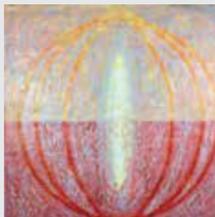
INSIDE



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18 Heights artists are focus of University Hospitals exhibition

FutureHeights
 2843 Washington Blvd. #105
 Cleveland Heights, OH 44118

University Heights is thankful for Civic Award recipients

Mike Cook

2020 has been hard on just about everyone. Despite the pandemic and social unrest, Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan said there was plenty of good to be found in University Heights. “It’s like Mr. Rogers used to say, when things are scary, ‘look for the helpers.’”

Brennan said he chose to announce the recipients of the 2020 University Heights Civic Awards on Thanksgiving to give thanks for those people “who are helping.”

“Due to the pandemic, we couldn’t meet in person for a Civic Awards dinner this year. So, we chose to bring the awards to our residents via social media while they gathered to celebrate Thanksgiving with their families,” Brennan said.

The awards were announced on Thanksgiving via the city’s Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts.



The members of the Citizens Committee on Policing Policies have been selected as the University Heights Citizens of the Year.

For their efforts to create an anti-racist and more equitable community in University Heights, the members of the Citizens Committee on Policing Policies were named Citizens of the Year, Council Member Sandra Berry was presented with the Public Servant of the Year

award, and Police Chief Dustin Rogers and Lieutenant Mark McArtor were named City Employees of the Year.

“It speaks to the strength of our community that we have a public servant like Sandra Berry to bring people together for reform, and strong

continued on page 11

‘Friends’ volunteer to maintain and restore natural habitats



Don Vicarel is a “friend” of the Bradford Cinder Path.

Peggy Spaeth

The world locked down last spring. People could not gather, travel, sit in a coffee shop with friends, shop, hug, kiss a cheek, or breathe on each other. As guidance became clearer on how the coronavirus spread, the outdoors became a refuge. Outside, people could satisfy the need to be social without be-

ing physically close. People could share experiences, breathe fresh air and walk briskly.

Some noticed that, while they’ve spent much of their lives indoors, the outdoor world of plants, water, birds, insects and animals had been neglected. One retiree, Don Vicarel of University Heights, walked with his wife,

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FutureHeights mini-grants celebration goes virtual on Dec. 8



Sruti Basu

On Tuesday, Dec. 8, FutureHeights will host its annual Neighborhood Mini-Grants Community Celebration to recognize mini-grant recipients and celebrate the work they are doing in Cleveland Heights neighborhoods.

In 2020, FutureHeights concluded its 11th round of neighborhood mini-grants, funding grassroots and neighborhood-serving groups to help fulfill their community visions. The program, which began in fall 2015, has funded 47 projects for \$30,386.08 throughout the city of Cleveland Heights.

Project types include beautification and gardening, arts, placemaking, youth engagement, community-building and social services. The projects are developed, initiated, spearheaded, and implemented by neighborhood residents, who have a cause, project, or issue they would like to showcase, design and implement, or address.

The annual gathering celebrates the year’s grant recipients and their inspiring projects. “The mini-grants celebration enables the community to learn about the many good things that neighbors are doing throughout our community,” said Deanna Bremer Fisher, executive director of FutureHeights. “The evening is fun and truly inspiring!”

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Delmore Community Orchard beautifies Noble neighborhood

Sydney Chickos

“This neighborhood used to be an orchard, and I figured it would be a nice way to bring up the community,” said Danialle Benham. Once the site of an abandoned home, the Delmore Community Orchard has become an engaging, beautifully landscaped outdoor space and a peaceful place to visit.

Benham worked with neighbors, including Margaret Lann and Michelle Moehler, to create this green oasis in the Noble Neigh-



Teens volunteering at the Delmore Community Orchard to plant trees and beautify the neighborhood. The women brought community volunteers together, including many teens, to layout the orchard site, build raised beds, install plants, and gather funding.

Lann orchestrated applications for grant and community funding for supplies, while Moehler designed the orchard’s logo and signage.

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Letters Policy

The *Heights Observer* welcomes letters to the editor. They must be submitted electronically, along with the writer's name, phone number and e-mail address, to: www.heightsobserver.org/members.

HEIGHTS OBSERVER

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About the Observer

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

The *Observer* has no writing staff; it is written by you—the readers.

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

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

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

- To make a submission of any kind, go to www.heightsobserver.org and click on "Member Center" at the left.

- For information about writing style, article length, etc., click on "Become an Observer" at the left. For questions that aren't answered there, call the FutureHeights office at 216-320-1423 or e-mail info@futureheights.org.

Articles to be considered for the January issue must be submitted by Dec. 7. We publish some articles online as they come in—and still consider them for the next print issue. We also publish an e-newsletter each Tuesday.

How to be part of the public debate



OPENING THE OBSERVER

Bob Rosenbaum

Let's begin with the notion that public finance isn't simple.

The laws that regulate it can be ambiguous and contradictory. Everybody has their own way to interpret how well money is being spent. Most of all, public finance is the expression of political processes.

So even if you could boil it down to a clear set of facts, there's going to be heated debate when a CH-UH school levy appears on the ballot twice in the same year.

The *Heights Observer* doesn't take sides on issues like the recent school levy. Its role is to host the debate—like a soapbox on the corner. The Nextdoor online platform does the same thing, but in an unmoderated environment. Some people like that.

The debate in the *Heights Observer* is moderated. It's still a soapbox, but more like one with an editor who organizes the line, asks people what they're going to talk about and, as politely as possible, stops them from

droning on, talking nonsense, making things up, or saying the same thing the last three people said.

Kim Sergio Inglis, our part-time, paid editor, gets to do most of the heavy lifting. She'll be the first to admit that she's not an expert in public finance. (She's an English major who chose her college, in part, because it didn't require her to take math.) But, part of moderating the debate over a school levy is trying to make sure that contributors who also aren't public finance experts are using facts well—or at least explaining their points of view.

You might be surprised that not everybody can be assumed to have checked their facts. Or to have understood them fully. Or to have used them in good faith. Trying to check this stuff often means being an editor to people who don't want an editor; it's literally thankless.

Kim does it well. She attempts to put together an interesting, balanced, readable package of opinions from a wide variety of perspectives. She treats people with care, even when it's not reciprocated; she maintains a higher standard than a social media post; and she seeks input on the tough calls.

There are things contributors can do to make the job go better. Here are some suggestions:

- Enter your letter or opinion directly into the "Member Center" at the www.heightsobserver.org website. It's the only way we accept them.
- Read the "policies for contributors" page on the website.
- Keep letters and opinions short. We have guidelines for word counts on the website. These aren't sacred rules; we occasionally do run longer pieces. But your odds of being published rise dramatically if you follow the guidelines and don't hog all the space.
- Be accurate. We don't have the manpower or expertise to evaluate every datum in every letter and opinion we received about the school levy. But we do consider striving for accuracy to be part of our job. So we do our best. If we can't resolve a question, we'll err on the side of caution—which may mean leaving it out.
- Remember, the opinion expressed, and the evidence cited, is that of the writer.
- When in doubt, be kind. Editing is bruising work.

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

Local businesses deserve support

Greg Willihnganz

I worry about how the small retail businesses in our community are doing, and whether they will be able to survive this winter. Grocery stores seem to be leading the way in adapting to the pandemic environment; my wife just came back from Zagara's Marketplace, where she was able to pick up six bags of pre-ordered groceries without entering the store.

My reluctance to go inside any building, with the second wave of the contagion raging in Cuyahoga County, has kept me from visiting S'Wonderful Gifts, a delightful little shop at 2254 Lee Road. I've purchased gifts there before, as have my wife and daughter. Curious about how the store is doing, I called the owner Bill Wort and had an enlightening conversation with him.

Wort runs a one-man operation from his storefront, where he markets a colorful and hip line of gifts, games and cards you won't find at Target. His website, www.extravaganza.com, lists about 75 percent of the items he carries in the store. You can order online and have it shipped to you, or you can pick it up at the store. He'll bag it up and bring it outside, though he says it "feels a little like a hostage exchange" as he sets an order down on the sidewalk and backs up into the store so a customer can pick up the goods. "Maybe I need a hollow tree where I can set this stuff,"



S'Wonderful Gifts' owner, Bill Wort, offers online and in-store shopping.

Wort mused.

When the pandemic came, in March, Wort shut down the store for in-store purchasing for two-and-a-half months, and his sales dropped to 30 percent. He re-opened the store in June and July, requiring masks and limiting clientele to five at a time; his sales went back up to about 50 percent. In August, his sales went up to 75 percent of previous levels, and in September he actually did better than in September 2019. But October has seen a drop back to the 75-percent level, possibly due to the second wave of the pandemic we are experiencing.

Like everyone in retail, Wort is hoping for a surge of holiday buy-

ing this fall. I'm hoping right along with him. He characterizes his current sales as "spotty," and hopes [as of this writing] Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas will bring more people through his door or to his website. It's the holiday traffic that keeps him going during the lean months of January, February and March. S'Wonderful Gifts offers a unique and artfully diverse line of products we will never find at the big box stores, and it deserves our support and patronage.

Greg Willihnganz and his family moved to Cleveland Heights in 2017. Since then, they have been restoring and refurbishing their 100-year-old duplex on Derbyshire Road.

Millikin's wetlands and stream must be preserved

Jim Miller

The fate of the Millikin school—11 acres, mainly densely wooded wetlands bordering Severance Center—is far from settled. There is a chance, in the foreseeable future, that the land will be transferred by the Cleveland Heights-University City School District [to the city of Cleveland Heights, and then] to a private residential developer.

Losing these woodlands would also [mean losing] the only place in the Heights where we, and our wild-life, can experience the headwaters of a stream that is part of our local watersheds, Dugway, Shaw and Nine Mile. The other starting points of these ancient streams are mostly covered by the past century's concrete, asphalt, houses and businesses.

The "Severance stream," which starts in the Millikin woods, links together four key landmarks in Cleveland Heights: Severance Center, Park Synagogue, the CH Community Center, and Forest Hill Park.

The dividing line between the Dugway Brook watershed (to the west) and the Nine Mile Creek watershed (to the east) runs beside the Millikin acreage. Crest Road, bordering the woods, is likely named "Crest" for a good reason.

The "Severance" side-stream, part of the Dugway mélange of streams, begins in this forest.

After a rainfall, the stream's flow is readily visible. The small forest around it is a wetlands, absorbing much of that rainfall. Elsewhere nearby, the rain mainly falls on hard,



The Millikin woods.

human-made surfaces and heads right on to Lake Erie through storm drains—but sometimes into our basements. The public is spending \$3 billion—with fees [part of] your household bills—for necessary giant tunnels through the bedrock to hold aside the county's overflow for a short time. These Millikin wetlands cost nothing, but do their part effortlessly.

The small stream is quickly put in a culvert pipe within the Severance area, with runoff from area surfaces likely being added [to it]. The stream culvert runs west, downhill, under South Taylor Road at the dip in the road at the traffic light midway between Mayfield Road and Euclid Heights Boulevard. The century-empty streambed can be puzzled out halfway down Rydalmount and

Compton roads.

Past Compton, the Severance stream comes back into the open at Park Synagogue. The stream is integral to the design and layout of this beautiful building. Park Synagogue was designed and built (1947-51) by the renowned German architect Erich Mendelssohn, who had taken refuge from the Nazis in the United States in 1941.

The synagogue does not face east, as is traditional, because its placement is determined in significant part by the Severance stream's course. It is likely Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater in western Pennsylvania, and other works, were an influence.

The Severance stream is then put back into a culvert as it passes under Mayfield Road. The culvert goes under Lee Road at Forest Hill Presbyterian Church, and the stream comes into the open for the last time in Forest Hill Park.

There, walkers can experience the Severance stream as it runs in a fairly deep-cut ravine between the Forest Hill playing fields, to the north, and the CH Community Center, to the south. Then, still in the park, the stream from Severance merges into the east branch of Dugway Brook.

Millikin's woods and stream are not incidental or accidental. They must be preserved.

Jim Miller has been a resident of Cleveland Heights since 1985. For more than 10 years, he has been documenting local streams, such as Dugway Brook, Nine Mile Creek, and Green Creek in photo essays and videos (accessible on YouTube).

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Former BOE member feels Millikin déjà vu

Eric Silverman

When I came across Jessica Cohen's piece in the October *Heights Observer* ["BOE can no longer abdicate responsibility for Millikin"], I had a sense of déjà vu. Was it the late 1990s, when elements of Cleveland Heights City Council came to the CH-UH Board of Education (BOE), to do the bidding of Hebrew Academy, to get us (BOE members) to part with the property? Was it around 2010, when Jason Stein, then a library trustee (now a CH City Council member and ceremonial mayor), was a vocal advocate for the BOE to sell the property to Mosdos? Was it 2014, when CH City Council was encouraging us (BOE members) to sell the property to Mosdos, intimating that we might be denied the ability to use the property for uses other than as a school if we did not sell; and then council [was] exploring how to loan Mosdos the money to close the deal, when Mosdos couldn't get financing?

I keep noticing a recurring theme here—that the BOE, for some reason, is apparently obligated to dispose of PUBLIC assets if someone wants them, regardless of the amount of the offer, or if the BOE wants to keep using the property. While I will readily admit that, on occasions, the BOE has not been the best trustee of the property, and has taken positions in regard to its disposition that have been confusing (typically when I was not on the BOE), this does not mean that, because a special-interest group wants it, the BOE must sell.

I thought the BOE's position this spring, of not seeing a future with it for Millikin, was odd if the BOE did not have a location to relocate the building trades to.

While Cohen may dismiss, deride, or condemn an owner using a property in a manner that fits its needs—regurgitating the same arguments that have been used before, when interests sought the property for their own uses—Millikin as home for the school district's trades and bulk storage is actually ideal and hard to replicate.

How do I know this? Because in 2014, when the district was looking for a new place to house these support services—a collateral outcome of renovation projects coupled with the district kowtowing to the city to sell Millikin to Mosdos—we were hard pressed to find ANY suitable spaces in Cleveland Heights, University Heights, or neighboring cities that would work. When the Mosdos deal fell through, Millikin turned out to be an excellent, centrally located site.

Cohen's [description of] the [stables—"a graffitied dumping ground for district equipment and supplies"]—likewise seems like propaganda to stoke a fire to sell; photos of the building that I recently saw online show stable, secure and dry spaces. The exterior, when compared to the original blueprints (which I am happy to share with Ms. Cohen), shows a structure very much as it was when built, minus the cupolas, slate roof, and with windows (sadly) bricked up.

I sincerely hope the BOE will be a better steward of Millikin in the future, and improve its articulation of its utilization of the site.

At the same time, I would suggest that, if Ms. Cohen is sincere in her desire to increase the amount of taxable property in the CH-UH City School District, coupled with a drive for new housing stock in the Millikin neighborhood, perhaps she should speak with Hebrew Academy, as it seems to have a large parcel of land along Warrensville Center Road (around 80 acres), and is only using part of it for its new campus.

As she seems to be someone that CH City Council might listen to, owing to her multiple city appointments, perhaps she could advocate for the city to develop the land IT OWNS at Noble-Nela, Noble-Mayfield, Lee and Meadowbrook, and the scores of other empty lots throughout the city.

Maybe when all of these sites are developed we can circle back to the idea of finding a new use for Millikin, AFTER we find a new home for the district's trades, at little or no cost.

Eric J. Silverman was a member of the CH-UH BOE, 1994-2001 and 2014-17. He was a member of the Heights Libraries board, 2003-09.



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Develop parking lots instead of Millikin forest

Michael Morse

People plan travel on weekends to see this type of view.

This photo was taken from Severance Circle, looking at the urban forest of the Millikin School property—the section some call the Severance Woods. These acres of wooded land clean our air, reduce stormwater runoff, protect the community against noise and light pollution, and provide beauty and tranquility. If this were a public park, no one would dare suggest these woods should be destroyed.

Stand on the same spot, and tilt the camera down. The foreground is one of the barren, sunbaked, windswept parking lots surrounding Severance Town Center.

These vast parking lots are a poor use of land. They provide no clean air. They are impermeable, so they contribute to stormwater-runoff problems. They contribute to noise and light pollution. They are ugly.

In the 21st century, with the world struggling against climate change, with our city struggling to attract new people and business, we need a fresh approach to planning and to using tax policy to incentivize positive developments.

Instead, the city of Cleveland Heights has a plan which would destroy the woods and build new houses with a view of the barren parking lot. The city wants to buy the school property, including this



This view could be anywhere people go to see scenery. Surprise—it's taken from Severance Circle, looking toward the Millikin property.

large woodland, for \$1, and then let a developer build private homes with 15-year, 100-percent tax abatements. We must demand better of our city. Proper incentives could turn this barren parking lot into a private development, with the added benefit of having the woods as an amenity right next door.

A sane land-use policy would incentivize the use of these parking lots for new construction, while preserving this rare urban forest. Because these parking lots are right next to the woods where the city wants to build, and walking paths are already a feature of the woods, homes built on a redeveloped parking lot would be just as close to the residential communities on Severn and Crest roads, and just as close to the religious institutions and shops on South Taylor Road.

Destroying an urban forest for more low-density housing, in a city where there is already a surplus of vacant land and houses, makes no

sense. City planning, tax policy, and tax incentives should be directed at the better use of land already cleared. Sure, the city will say it does not own this parking lot; but the city does not

own the school property, either.

A better policy toward land use would be a winner for the current property owner, the developer, the people who want the new houses, and the city, which could get increased income-tax revenue.

Let's take an enlightened approach to our future. Preserve, protect and improve our urban forest. Convert the parking lots into something positive for our community and our environment. Use tax policy to create, not destroy. If we lose the Earth, we lose everything.

Michael Morse is a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights.



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It's the season for gratitude



A TEACHER'S VOICE

Karen Rego

It is that time of year when we start to plan for the holidays. We are decorating our homes, buying gifts, and planning gatherings of family and friends. This year, however, comes with a glitch. The coronavirus has become a part of our lives.

So what do we do? Do we wallow in despair about what we're missing? Or do we find a way to be grateful for what we have? I am choosing the second option.

As teachers, we still have our jobs. Yes, they look different from a year ago, and the job has become exponentially challenging. Some teachers are working in the school buildings, meeting with their students both in-person and virtually, while some are working from home teaching their students in a completely virtual setting.

Cleveland Heights-University Heights teachers, along with teachers throughout the country, have stepped up during the pandemic to make learning work for their students as best they can.

We struggle with the day-to-day

operations, but at the end of every workday and workweek, we are grateful for the opportunity to teach our amazing students who show us what they can do in the face of adversity.

The holidays will look different for my family. My one-year-old child may not see Santa this year. My sister and niece will not visit because they live in a state that has Ohio on the COVID-19 watch list.

But that's not the focus. The focus is on what I do have, and that is my beautiful family. Santa will still come to my house this year. Dinner will still be served. After the holiday season, the countdown to spring begins. We will have a new president, and possibly a coronavirus vaccine, and the expectation of warmer days.

No matter what your holidays look like this year, find the joy in what you have—the small moments that become precious memories. My hope is that you not only find a way to celebrate what you have, but also give thanks to those who work so hard to make our lives safer. We will come through this time as a community, and we will emerge stronger.

Karen Rego has taught grades K-8 in the CH-UH district, and currently provides math and language support at Monticello Middle School. She is the president of Cleveland Heights Teachers Union.

CH should lead in green energy

Catalina Wagers

On Oct. 19, the city of Euclid, under the progressive leadership of Mayor Kirsten Holzheimer and city council, took a historic step towards a better future for its residents and the planet by passing a resolution to reduce emissions by 30 percent by 2030. Over the past several years, Euclid has shown its dedication to sustainability through several local projects. The city council created a sustainability committee to elevate these issues and create a venue for discussion among residents and local government leaders.

Euclid has been actively working toward a greener future with the installation of solar panels on top of the public library and city hall, to meet the energy needs of these government operations. The projects reduce carbon by 150 tons per year. The city has also partnered with the business community, building four wind turbines that make it a unique home to wind power.

Similarly, on July 15, 2019, Lakewood City Council unanimously passed Resolution 9082-19, which supports two congressional bills, The Green New Deal (HR 109), and the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act (HR 763), as well as the BlueGreen Alliance. Two of these climate-change plans would set priorities and provide a broad policy framework to guide federal, state and local action, while the third would implement a central strategy (cap-and-dividend) to address climate change.

The city of Lakewood has been working for years to improve its energy use, transportation system, stormwater management, and more.

It has worked on sidewalk repair, increasing bicycling, increasing urban forest canopy, weatherizing homes and commercial buildings, converting street lights to LED, sourcing clean power for city operations, installing and encouraging solar, adding electrical cogeneration to its wastewater treatment plant, expanding recycling, and keeping Ohio's densest community a vibrant destination of choice.

Though the city of Cleveland Heights has been making some progress toward renewable energy—by installing solar panels in some public buildings, retrofitting interior lights with LED, and improving energy efficiency through a nearly \$6-million overhaul of its utility infrastructure—we need a more intentional, inclusive, and systematic plan to promote clean and affordable renewable energy, to create a healthier and more prosperous future for our families.

Clean-energy policy is smart economic policy: In addition to being better for our health and the environment, renewable-energy projects create three times as many jobs as fossil-fuel energy projects.

The city of Cleveland Heights deserves a forward-thinking set of policies to reduce pollution, create jobs, build our economy, and ensure a highly desirable community that is safe, healthy and progressive. Dear CH City Council members, the time to act is now, to lead our city into an inevitable future.

Catalina Wagers is a former retail industry executive who now focuses on projects that advance Northeast Ohio (NEO) and its residents.

Leaving the leaves



HEIGHTS OF DEMOCRACY

Deborah Van Kleef and Carla Rautenberg

As we write, our Northeast Ohio tree canopy is releasing its autumn bounty. By the time you read this, any leaves not saved for use in home gardens will have been hauled away by area cities.

That's too bad for local flora, the regional watershed and, ultimately, the global food supply. Decaying leaves, brush and other biomass build our soil and create essential habitat for the insects and other creatures that pollinate our garden plants. In addition to interrupting neighborly conversations, leaf blowers blast pollinators and their habitat to kingdom come.

Every year, the city of Cleveland Heights spends approximately \$340,000 collecting residents' leaves. Exactly what currently happens to all of this biomass is somewhat murky.

Companies in the mulch and compost business charge \$5 per cubic yard to "accept" it. However, a 2018 public works staff report to the city manager stated: "Yard waste is another material that is becoming more difficult to recycle. . . . Contamination is a serious problem. . . . Registered composting facilities cannot accept contaminated yard waste because they are not authorized trash facilities."

We often note fast-food containers and plastic bags of dog-doo adorning kraft bags or curbside piles of leaves awaiting pickup. Ultimately, the consequence could be entire truckloads of contaminated yard waste deposited in landfills, where it will emit climate-warming methane.

Older readers will remember when we used to burn piles of leaves in our backyards. We have come a long way, but we have much farther to go.

Our tree canopy gives us free organic fertilizer. Let's not squander our city's resources by hauling it away and paying someone to recycle it—or, even worse, paying landfill tipping fees if it is found to be contaminated and therefore designated as trash.

Peggy Spaeth, John Barber,

Allen Wilkinson, Susan Miller and Tom Gibson are among a growing number of Cleveland Heights residents urging their neighbors to "leave the leaves."

Those who have planted small native gardens along the Bradford pollinator path and on Langton and Northampton roads in the Noble neighborhood are probably inclined to listen; likewise, the volunteers who created the Delmore Community Orchard.

The simplest method is to take the bag off your mower and mow the leaves into small pieces. Let them remain on your lawn or spread them over flower and vegetable gardens, to break down over the winter. On heavily forested lots, just leave them under the trees.

What is good for our grass and gardens is also by far the best for pollinators. Keep the bounty of the trees on site. Mowing and raking jumpstarts in-place composting, which quickly creates welcoming homes for new pollinators. And mowing feeds fungi and microbes, also essential to the life cycle of our ecosystem.

Cleveland Heights City Hall deserves kudos for getting the message. After listening to residents Spaeth, Barber and Miller, the city's parks and recreation director, Joe McRae, had piles of woodchips from the forestry department delivered to Shaker Lakes' Lower Lake, to be distributed on trails there by the Friends of Lower Lake. McRae is also considering the advantages of mowing leaves into lawns on city property. The city's communications director, Mary Trupo, has highlighted the "leave the leaves" campaign in city news bulletins, pointing out how every residential gardener can join this party.

In 1995, Cleveland Heights set a high standard as the first municipality in the country to ban pesticides on city property. We are not the first to leave the leaves, but we are learning. To see the example set in Westchester County, N. Y., visit www.leleny.org. And from now on, consider leaving your leaves!

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



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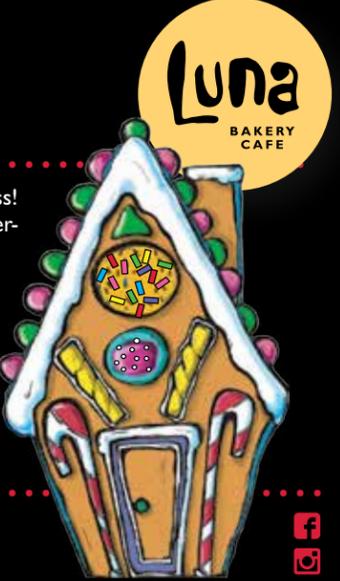
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Fair school funding could save the common good



THE COMMON GOOD

Susie Kaeser

My personal commitment to public education is grounded in the belief that all of us benefit from the education of our youth, and that's why we invest public funds to provide for an education that is free and available to all. It is an expression of equality and interconnection. It has taken our society a long way and been fundamental to making democracy work. However, as I write this column while basking in beautiful fall sunlight, I fear that the common good may go the way of the dinosaur.

Well-funded think tanks and lobbyists, the secretary of education and the departing president, to name a few, have persistently championed individual rights over the social benefits of investing in the success of all. They encourage separation. They champion the use of public resources to advance religion, and, when it comes to education, they promote privatization over investing in strong public schools.

There is a ray of hope in the Ohio Legislature, though: House Bill 305 and its companion in the state senate, SB 376. If passed into law, this bi-partisan initiative would establish the Fair School Funding Plan, which, among other improvements, would reduce the disparities among Ohio school districts by reducing dependence on the local property tax and ending "deduction funding," the system that now funds certain voucher programs, such as EdChoice, by deducting funds from the state's allocations to individual school districts.

It would also finally respond to the Ohio Supreme Court's 1997 *DeRolph v. Ohio* decision, which ordered the legislature to increase its investment in the public schools and to reduce reliance on property taxes. Until now, the legislature has chosen to disregard *DeRolph*. State lawmakers have consistently marginalized the public system and advanced private and religious education by allowing for vouchers and then requiring local communities to pay for them. They have also required local school district

budgets to underwrite charter schools, another unaccountable education option. This scheme has eaten away at local resources and shifted more of the funding burden to local communities.

The legislature's heretofore failure to comply with the court order has made local communities less desirable as places to live and pitted neighbor against neighbor. The lack of predictable resources has made it harder for our local education leaders to increase school effectiveness. It has increased tensions between teachers, administrators and boards of education. The consequences have been painful.

Deduction funding has left communities on their own to make sure public schools can meet community standards for educational services and quality, and, as we sadly learned in the recent CH-UH levy vote—a vote that was essential to saving our district from catastrophic cuts in educational opportunities—it is becoming nearly impossible to protect quality by ourselves.

While commitment to the common good took the day in the levy vote, it was only by a thread. We have reached the breaking point. Voters are left with two bad choices: hurt the community by raising taxes or hurt the community by slashing educational opportunities.

The month of December will determine the future of the common good. Through HB 305, the Ohio legislature has an opportunity to uphold its responsibility to provide high-quality public education. This refreshing example of bi-partisan policymaking would both increase the state investment in public schools and reduce reliance on local property taxes. While it would not end privatization, it would require the state to assume full funding responsibility for its private-school programs. It could save our community and it could reaffirm the common good.

The Ohio Senate and its president, Larry Obhof (R-Medina), hold the key to moving this legislation to the finish line before Christmas. Let him know you want to save the common good from extinction.

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.

Do you have a family member with Alzheimer's disease or another dementia?

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Cleveland Heights City Council Meeting highlights

OCTOBER 19, 2020

Board members present were Mayor Jason Stein, Vice Mayor Kahlil Seren, Mary Dunbar, Davida Russell and Michael Ungar. Melody Joy Hart was absent. Also present were City Manager Susanna Niermann O'Neil, Clerk of Council Amy Himmelein, and Law Director William Hanna. [Council meetings are virtual, streamed on the city's YouTube channel, and recorded for later viewing.]

Public comments

A resident inquired why council is still short a seventh member, stating there had been enough time with no progress. The writer suggested that public, rather than secret, meetings, including a vote, might hasten the process.

Police chief's report

Police Chief Mecklenburg announced that:

- The case of shots fired on Westover Road has been solved; a 19-year-old male has been charged.
- No suspects have been identified in the Oct. 6 incident [in which] shots were fired at a house on Yellowstone Road.
- On Oct. 16, two teen suspects robbed a woman of her vehicle at gunpoint at the Cedar Hill Sunoco. The victim was not injured and gave descriptions. Minutes later, the car was recovered on Chatfield Road. Fingerprints were lifted from the car and witnesses were interviewed.
- Shots were fired on Oct. 16 at 1650 Coventry Road, with no injuries.
- The Cleveland State University (CSU) Diversity Institute contract has been received. The total cost for training conducted over one year will be \$47,300. The training will commence in three weeks and include eight hours of cultural-competence training for all officers, implicit-bias training, policy analysis, traffic-stop data analysis, community engagement, and recommendations for a civilian review board.

Council actions

Council approvals included the following:

- Renewal of an agreement with the Cuyahoga County General Health District for public health services, not to exceed \$251,359.
- Ordinances refunding five series of outstanding Various Purpose Bonds, including Series 2014 to 2017, which total nearly \$13 million.

Council member comments

Responding to the public comment regarding the vacant council seat, Council Member Seren said council has tried to reach agreement and concurs that a public discussion might spur progress.

Council Member Russell said Racial Justice Task Force member applications, as well as help to small business owners for COVID-related situations, will be available soon.

LWV Observers: Blanche Valancy and Gail Larson.

NOVEMBER 2, 2020

Melody Joy Hart was absent; all other council members were present. Also present were the city manager, clerk of council, and law director.



City manager's report

City Manager Niermann O'Neil stated the CH Community Center will not open yet, as the county is at the highest level (purple) of COVID infection.

She spoke about retiring Planning Director Richard Wong's more than 20 years with the city. She called him an architect, planner, Renaissance man, and a vital part of the city hall team.

Police chief's report

Police Chief Annette Mecklenburg reported that police are actively investigating two unsolved murders, but have no updates.

In the incident of the man carrying a gun on Blanche Avenue, there are no confirmed eyewitness reports. Police are canvassing. This will be referred to the law department soon. Council Member Dunbar asked for clarification about the right to open carry. Mecklenburg stated that Ohio is one of 44 open-carry states, so this is allowed, but threatening with a gun, or pointing a gun at others, is prohibited.

The contract with the Diversity Center at CSU is complete; the training program will start the week of Nov. 9.

Racial Justice Task Force

Council approved establishment of a Racial Justice Task Force, with a membership representing a diverse cross section of the city. Each council member will nominate one individual; 20 members will be city residents, and five may be non-resident representatives of city businesses. Applications will be available soon. The task force's purpose is to analyze racial justice and equity within the city, and to recommend processes, policies and action steps to create an inclusive community [in which] opportunities are not based on race or ethnicity; law enforcement and the justice system operate free from bias; and diversity is recognized as a hallmark of a strong, resourceful and resilient community. To accomplish this goal, the task force will meet in scheduled, open meetings and prepare a publicly available report summarizing its efforts and recommendations. It will examine whether the city should establish one or more commissions to continue the task force's objectives. The task force shall complete its work no later than nine months after its first meeting, unless council extends this period.

Council member comments

Kahlil Seren requested again that council consider deliberating the council vacancy in open session so the public can observe council members' rationales for their choices.

Michael Ungar, reflecting on the man openly carrying the rifle, commented that many things that are legal and protected may not be sanctioned or tolerated by the community.

LWV Observer: Blanche Valancy.

Expanded reports are available online at www.heightsobserver.org.

MINI-GRANTS continued from page 1

This year, the event will take place at 7 p.m. via Zoom. Register for the event at <https://tinyurl.com/y6ztrlkv>.

The FutureHeights Neighborhood Mini-Grants Program is guided by a grant-making committee comprising seven Cleveland Heights residents with a history of community involvement. The

program is made possible by the generous support of the Cedars Legacy Fund.

To learn more, or to apply for funding, visit www.futureheights.org/programs/community-building-programs/.

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

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HABITATS continued from page 1

JoAnn, as she recuperated from knee surgery. He posted a cranky note on Nextdoor: "If the city can cite us for unsightly lawns, can we cite the city for the unsightly Bradford path that runs from Canterbury to Taylor?" The octogenarian said he was feeling particularly irritable because pandemic isolation prevented him from volunteering in the nearby public school.

Debra Franke, co-chair of the Canterbury Community Garden, saw his post and connected him to a fledgling group working to improve the Bradford Cinder Path.

The FutureHeights mini-grant program served as a catalyst, providing funds for plants and supplies. (See related article in the July 2020 *Heights Observer*: "Friends start work to preserve and restore Bradford path".)

In late May, seven masked people gathered as Friends of the Bradford Cinder Path. They made a plan to begin remediating a neglected, but much-loved, pedestrian path. Vicarel, no longer cranky, said, "I didn't realize that I could personally do something about it!"

Meanwhile, other University Heights residents, Emma Shook and Eran Shiloh, were doing some guerilla gardening (aka "weeding") at Walter Stinson Park, fondly known as "The Walt." (See "Weeds meet their match at 'The Walt'", *Heights Observer*, October 2020.)

The park was designed with rain gardens and meadows but, as is common in urban parks, there was no service-department expertise in maintaining gardens with native plants.

When Shook and Shiloh heard a call for a park cleanup from Mayor Brennan, they brought their experience as native gardeners to the event. Friends of the Walt was born, and its volunteers have been working most weekends since September 2020.

A third group of friends,

Friends of Lower Lake (FLL,) did not grow out of the pandemic, but did increase its number of volunteers this summer. FLL has been restoring habitat at Lower Lake since spring 2018 as a volunteer program of the Doan Brook Watershed Partnership.

Comprising 15-20 volunteers from Cleveland Heights, University Heights, Shaker Heights, Westlake and Bedford, the group has been working Sunday mornings to remove invasive species in neglected habitat at the lake on the edge of Cleveland Heights and Shaker Heights.

Particularly in these challenging times, cities cannot keep up with maintaining public green spaces. Nor are cities trained to manage natural habitat so essential to a healthy environment.

Cities can keep grass mowed, streets cleaned, trees pruned or removed; but they don't have the resources to manage the invasive buckthorn encroaching on the woodlands, or the porcelain berry vine that is curtaining trees.

There is an opportunity for people of all ages to collaborate with city staff and elected officials—not to add to their work, but to reduce or supplement it.

Friends groups can do quick and easy cleanups, or they can meet regularly for the long haul.

As Vicarel said, "I feel like I've done something positive, and I'm very glad for the opportunity!"

Andre Spencer, Cleveland Heights' superintendent of parks and recreation, told the Friends of the Bradford Cinder Path, "You are our eyes and ears in the community."

Visit www.ecologicalheights.com to connect with various Friends groups, or to be inspired to create a new volunteer group for your neighborhood.

Peggy Spaeth is co-chair, with John Barber, of Friends of Lower Lake.

NOBLE continued from page 1

Their labors have created a hidden treasure that invites neighbors to enjoy tranquility while sitting in the shade of the trees. The orchard, which opened in September, currently includes six apple trees, four grapevines, three raspberry bushes, and four pawpaw trees.

While many people may not be familiar with the pawpaw, the orchard's creators thought it important to include it. The pawpaw is Ohio's only native fruit, and was an important food source for indigenous peoples.

Pawpaws are the northernmost member of the mostly tropical custard apple family. The trees bear sweet, edible fruits with a custard-like texture that are high in vitamins, minerals and energy-supplying calories.

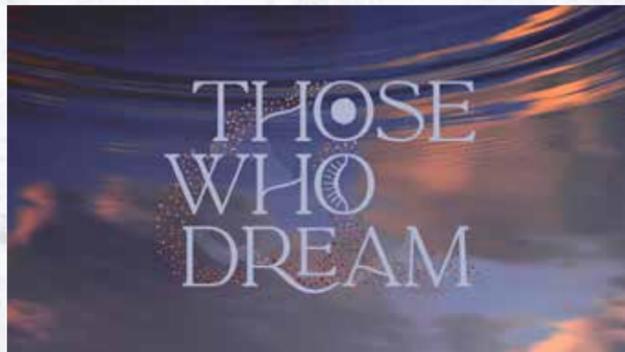
Benham and her neighbors have plans to plant cherries, pears, plums, peaches and black raspberries in the spring. The group relies

on community funding and volunteers to build raised beds, plant trees and bushes, and maintain the orchard by weeding and watering. "We can always use netting, tools, and shovels, or even someone to water the plants on dry days," said Benham.

Benham is a master gardener with the Ohio State University Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program, which provides intensive training in horticulture to interested Ohio residents, who then volunteer their time assisting with educational programs and activities through their local OSU Extension county office.

For more information, or to volunteer, contact Benham at daniellenbenham@scbglobal.net.

Sydney Chicks is a graduate student at Case Western Reserve University's Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences and a FutureHeights intern.



Join us for virtual Christmas Eve services on December 24!

The 5:00pm service is designed for families and those who enjoy hearing the voices and seeing the faces of children on Christmas Eve. Rev. Lindsay Harren-Lewis will be sharing a brief meditation.

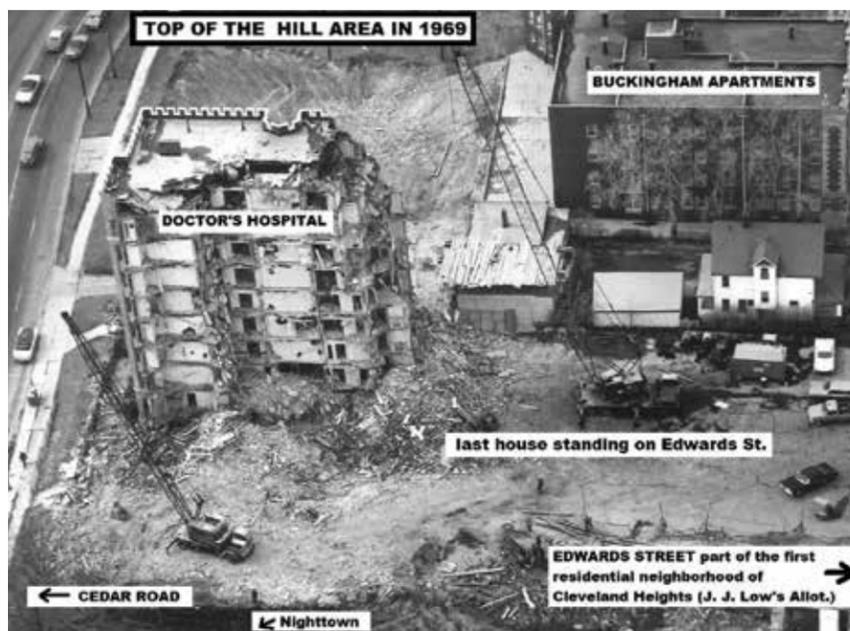
The 10:00pm service will be traditional readings and carols with a meditation focused on living out the Christmas message. Have a candle ready to light as our virtual choir sings *Silent Night!* Rev. Jessie MacMillan will be preaching.

Connect with us and find the links to our virtual services on Facebook, Youtube on the church website.

www.fpccl.org

Help us share the light of Christ!

Old Edwards Street fades away as TOH rises



This *Cleveland Press* photo taken in 1969 by Bill Nehez shows what was formerly located on the site of the new Top of the Hill project.

Korbi Roberts

At the top of Cedar Glen, between Cedar Road and Euclid Heights Boulevard, “The Ascent at Top of the Hill” (TOH), an \$80-plus-million complex, is taking shape. This same location, shown in the above photo, shows Edwards Street, a remnant of the first residential neighborhood in Cleveland Heights.

Edwards Street was created in 1871 at a time when the only access up Cedar Glen was a muddy, horse and buggy trail zigzagging along a rocky creek called Blue Rock Brook (a branch of Doan Brook). The TOH site was once a place where gypsies made their yearly camps and wild turkeys roamed in abundance. By the end of the Civil War, the huge forests that had covered the area had been “harvested.” Broad meadows and farmland remained, stretching out eastward toward Lee Road.

This area was under the jurisdiction of East Cleveland Township, as the city of Cleveland Heights did not come into being until the early 1900s. The small patchwork of farms along Cedar Road belonged mostly to the “Doan’s Corners” families, whose residences were situated just west of University Circle along Euclid Avenue, and its side streets.

Edwards Street was first laid out 150 years ago, as John J. Low and fellow developers Thomas Stackpole and James Parker worked together to create two connecting Heights allotments of Cedar, Edwards, Cliff, Parker and Franklin streets. It was a steep climb up from the city, but this “overlook” afforded a distant view of Lake Erie, and was only a walk up from Doan’s Corners. An added amenity was the natural “healing” mineral springs at the foot of Cedar Hill (where later, the old Lincoln Storage building stood).

The new neighborhood was soon dotted with the homes of city folks yearning for a cleaner “country” life. It also attracted the attention of the Seeley family of the Cleveland Water Cure fame, who purchased many house lots there (for what specific reason we may never know).

Edwards Street was likely named for Reverend Joseph Silliman Edwards (1818–1876) of Doan’s Corners, a real estate partner of Low’s. If not for his untimely death, it is likely that the “dead end” streets of the earliest Heights allotments would have been extended through his adjacent property on Cedar.

This early neighborhood lasted only about two decades before a visiting real estate developer, Patrick Calhoun (grandson of U.S. Vice President John C. Calhoun, 1828–1832), set his eyes on it. On his way to see the Garfield Monument in Lake View Cemetery, he fell in love with this “entrance to the Heights.”

Calhoun purchased connecting parcels, including most of the “J.J. Low” and “Stackpole and Parker” allotments, and fashioned his new upscale, curvy, “Euclid Heights Allotment” right over the top of it. Previous houses were torn down, and Blue Rock Creek was buried underground. Several Edwards residents refused to budge though, so the out-of-place Edwards Street stayed, even though several subsequent maps refused to include it at all.

In 1913 two apartment buildings arose: a four-story and an eight-story, fronting Cedar Road, dubbed “The Overlook Apartments.” By 1946 these apartments were converted into the Doctors Hospital complex (a forerunner of Hillcrest Hospital). The two buildings were connected to a parking garage on Edwards Street by way of underground tunnels. The Buckingham Manor (apartments, now condos) was constructed just before 1926. It has a Euclid Heights Boulevard address, even though its entrance and courtyard leads out onto Edwards. The stately Buckingham itself is a survivor, a holdout from a past golden architectural era, holding its own ground as the modern TOH project crowds in around it on three sides.

The last house on Edwards was the long-held property of the Ban/Direnfeld family. In 1967, ages after the last Euclid Heights streetcar had rumbled past it, an evil lowlife, motivated by racial hatred, bombed the house. The target was not the Direnfelds, but a civil rights worker living in a dwelling in the back of the property. In 1990, the Direnfelds sold their house to the city of Cleveland Heights, which levelled the structure to expand an already large parking lot.

This last house standing was also the last house to ever have an Edwards address. As the TOH project rises, Edwards has mostly disappeared, only a short “nub” remains. The street sign still stands—at least for now.

Korbi Roberts is a trustee of the Cleveland Heights Historical Society. Visit www.clevelandheightshistory.org to learn more and become a member.

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CIVIC AWARDS continued from page 1

police leadership prepared to work for change,” Brennan said. “I am grateful such a diverse cross-section of residents were willing to serve on the committee.”

Members of the Citizens Committee on Policing Policies are Dasha Blue, Patti Carlyle, Ronald Collier, Indira Gatlin, C.P. “Neil” Gould, Adrian Hardin, Kate Holzheimer, Joanna Homann, Sheila Hubman, Joshua Hunt, Constance Jefferson, Aliah Lawson, Thekla Long, Paul Miller, Roger Osgood, Crystal Pickus, Sheri Sax, Mike Sears, Vincent Stokes, Priscilla Tate and Sean Weiss.

“The Friends of The Walt” are the 2020 Volunteers of the Year. The group meets on Saturdays to remove noxious weeds from the park, and to plant additional native flowers and bushes. The group includes Eran Shiloh, Donald Vicarel, Joanna Homann, Darlene Floden, Brian Floden and Rosalia Rozsahegyi.

The Educator of the Year is Amanda Balzetic. A teacher at Gearity Elementary, Balzetic is a tireless advocate for her students. She raised over \$1,000 to purchase necessities for students and their families. Balzetic volunteers at every school-sponsored food distribution event.

Assistant Service Director John Puccella was named Co-Worker of the Year. Service department work is hard every year, but it is even more so during a pandemic. “John is a great

worker and an even greater person to be around,” Brennan said.

Special Recognition Awards were given to Lieutenant Dale Orians and Kim Airey.

Orians retired in April, after 33 years of dedicated service with the University Heights Police Department. He led the city’s detective bureau, and served as public information officer.

Airey spent 19 days in intensive care this summer after contracting COVID-19. She bravely shared her story with local media, and has become an advocate for wearing masks and maintaining social distance. By sharing her story, she’s likely helped slow the spread of the virus.

The following residents earned Good Neighbor awards:

- Rabbi Raphael Davidovich and Father Karl Kiser. Whenever their help was needed in 2020, Davidovich and Kiser answered the call. From offering prayers at the virtual Memorial Day ceremony, to appearing in the COVID-19 public service announcements, to promoting the 2020 U.S. Census, the two faith leaders provided important leadership to the entire city.
- The staff at Geraci’s Restaurant and Bialy’s Bagels. At the height of the pandemic this spring, both Geraci’s and Bialy’s stepped up to feed first responders. Teaming up with their customers, Geraci’s provided more than 400 pizzas to first responders at local hospitals, while Bialy’s donated many dozens of bagels.

continued on page 19

UH Mayor Brennan’s holiday tradition continues for third year



Mayor Brennan rehearses his annual reading of “The Night Before Christmas” at his office in city hall.

Mike Cook

The University Heights Memorial Day parade, summer concert series, and Fall Fest were canceled this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. One annual event, however, will not be stopped by the virus, and that is Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan’s annual reading of the poem “The Night Before Christmas” to city hall interns.

The third annual reading will be conducted on Zoom and broadcast over the city’s social media accounts starting at noon on Christmas Eve.

Brennan will read the story to intern Daniel Roche and other special guests, including the city’s brand ambassador, Cooper the Chicken, and former interns.

The poem was written by Clement Clarke Moore for his children in 1822, but was printed anonymously in 1823 in New York’s Troy Sentinel. Whether Moore thought such a light-hearted vision of Christmas was beneath the dignity of his position as a literary scholar is still open to speculation. Regardless, it is considered one of the most popular verses written by an American.

“This has become a holiday tradition here at City Hall,” Brennan said. “The interns seem to enjoy it, and I hope kids across University Heights will this year as well.”

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

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Reaching Heights board and staff at its 2017 annual meeting.

Reaching Heights seeks new board members

Krista Hawthorne

In January, the Reaching Heights Board of Directors will have three open positions, and is seeking to fill them.

The board meets on the second Tuesday of each month to share ideas and consider projects that help connect the community to the Heights public schools, enrich students and support teachers.

The board comprises a maximum of 20 people, all of whom live or work within the CH-UH City School District.

Board members who can make sizeable donations are encouraged to do so, but the only financial requirement of each board member is an

annual \$20 donation.

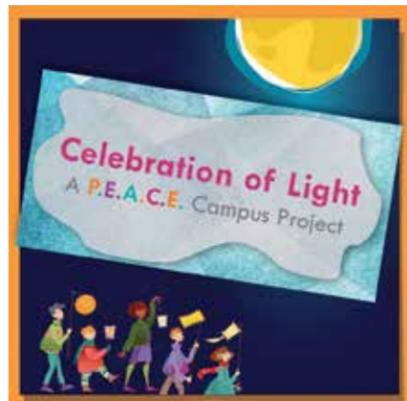
Reaching Heights encourages every interested candidate to apply, and seeks to have a diversity of ages, races, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, religions, neighborhoods, and professions represented.

To learn more about Reaching Heights and its current board, visit www.reachingheights.org.

Interested candidates should e-mail Ditte Wolin, at adwolin@gmail.com, to request information about the board's selection process and member responsibilities.

Krista Hawthorne is the executive director of Reaching Heights, and a proud and grateful Heights Tiger.

Celebration of Light: A P.E.A.C.E. Campus Project



Brady Dindia

Coventry P.E.A.C.E. Campus (CPC) will bring the community together around the themes of light and hope during the dark days of December. Celebration of Light: a PEACE Campus Project is a collaborative effort to engage the community in art and writing projects to commemorate the end of one year and the beginning of a new one.

Starting in early December, CPC will offer several free or donation-suggested workshops throughout the month via Zoom and videos posted to its website, www.coventrypeacecampus.org/celebrationoflight, and social media pages. Scheduled workshops include writing with Lake Erie Ink and art projects with Studio Cat, Living Art Origami and Art Acts

Studio. A culminating event will take place on New Year's Eve.

"With the ongoing public health crisis, we will be focused on offering our workshops virtually, and will assess how to celebrate safely on New Year's Eve," said Shannon Morris, executive director of Artful. "We will remain flexible and adjust plans as needed. Please visit our Facebook page, or our website for updated details."

CPC provides a sustainable, supportive and collaborative facility for organizations that offer artistic and educational opportunities and community services for residents of the Heights and Greater Cleveland. This unique arts and culture hub is home to Ensemble Theater, Lake Erie Ink, FutureHeights, Reaching Heights, ARTFUL Cleveland Heights - University Heights Teachers' Union, artist Katherine Chilcote and Cleveland Arts Prize-winning artist Robin VanLear's Art Acts Studio. CPC is housed in the former Coventry School building at 2843 Washington Blvd. Since 2018, the building and six-acre property have been owned by Heights Libraries, whose Coventry branch is also part of the campus.

Brady Dindia is the board president of Artful and the secretary of Coventry P.E.A.C.E. Campus.

Cleveland Heights - University Heights Board of Education

Meeting highlights



OCTOBER 20, 2020

Board President Jodi Sourini and board members Dan Heintz, Malia Lewis, James Posch and Beverly Wright were present. Also attending were Superintendent Elizabeth Kirby and Treasurer Scott Gainer. [School board meetings are held virtually, streamed on the district's YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/CHUHSchools), and recorded for later viewing. Board meeting materials, including presentations, can be found at www.chuh.org/BoardofEducation.aspx.]

other employees. It was noted that board members receive no fringe benefits from the district.

LWV Observer: Kathy Petrey.

OCTOBER 29, 2020

All board members were present, as were the superintendent and treasurer.

Second-quarter remote learning

The superintendent reviewed Cuyahoga County's COVID metrics and alert status from July 3 to present, noting that the county's numbers had improved in the past week so that it remained at the red alert level rather than moving into purple (highest level), as had been warned. For the first eight weeks of the school year, the county had remained at the orange level. Of the county's 17 first-ring school districts, while at the red COVID alert level, seven will use all-remote learning, six will use hybrid learning, and three have yet to announce their second-quarter plans. The superintendent reported that two districts have decided to go with remote learning for the remainder of the second quarter.

Superintendent Kirby recommended that the district continue with a majority of students remaining in remote learning until at least Nov. 30. If the county is declared to be at the purple alert level, all students will move to remote learning. After discussion, the board unanimously approved the recommendation.

Board members acknowledged that the uncertainty regarding return to in-person instruction places a substantial burden on students and their families. They discussed whether the district should wait until the end of the second quarter to move to in-person instruction. They emphasized that the board's and superintendent's priority is to return to in-person instruction. They requested additional survey and performance data in time for their Nov. 10 work session, when they will revisit the timing of return to in-person instruction and benchmarks for making those decisions.

Financial impact of EdChoice

Sharon Rohler, the coordinator/systems analyst for the district's education management information system, and Treasurer Gainer presented data regarding the financial impact on the district of recent changes in the EdChoice voucher program. These changes included increases in EdChoice enrollment and EdChoice deductions from the district's basic state aid. That aid has been capped for the past two school years and was recently reduced because of the state's COVID-related revenue losses. The presentation included data identifying the non-public schools receiving EdChoice vouchers at the district's expense, and data showing the contrast in demographics of EdChoice students compared to students attending the district's public schools.

Board President Sourini said that the board is advocating for direct state funding of EdChoice vouchers because the deduction method of paying for EdChoice vouchers is not financially sustainable for either the affected districts or the private schools receiving the voucher payments. Pending state legislation addresses this issue [HB 358 and Sub. HB 305].

The board also discussed the status of potential litigation challenging the constitutionality of the EdChoice program on the basis that it increases district reliance on property taxes. Any such litigation would be filed jointly with about 40 other affected school districts. The district's estimated share of the litigation expense is \$10,000.

School reopening update

The board unanimously approved the superintendent's recommendation that the district continue remote learning through Nov. 16, and possibly later, with certain special-needs students receiving in-class instruction.

Treasurer's contract amendment

The consent agenda included approval of a resolution to amend the treasurer's contract. Jim Posch explained that the treasurer had requested that his contract be amended so that the changes in his fringe benefits will be effective on Jan. 1, 2020, consistent with other district administrators. As of Jan. 1, 2020, the fringe benefits will be the same for all administrators, teachers, and

OSBA legislative platform

At the outset of the meeting, Malia Lewis announced that she would be leaving early to participate in an Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA) meeting. There, she would be voting in favor of OSBA's legislative platform support for legislation to 1) hold charter schools and their operators to the same compliance and reporting requirements as public schools, and 2) hold private schools receiving vouchers to the same standards and accountability requirements, and the same performance reporting requirements as public schools.

LWV Observer: Kathy Petrey.

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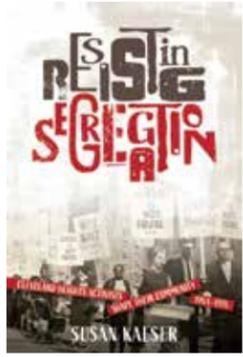
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New book looks back at CH's resistance to segregation

Kermit Lind



Susan Kaeser's new book, *Resisting Segregation*, is out this month. In it, Kaeser, a *Heights Observer* columnist, provides a book-length account of the transformation of Cleveland Heights, between 1964 and 1976, from an exclusive, insular suburb to a racially inclusive, diverse community resisting segregation.

She dedicates her book to those courageous African American families who, in spite of prevailing racism, moved to Cleveland Heights in the 1960s and early '70s.

Resisting Segregation tells its story through the living memory of the community's elders, whose courage and determination made housing choice for all a reality at a time when the government enabled redlining, blockbusting, steering, and unabashed racism, assuring that residential integration could not succeed. This resistance against segregation was the work of grassroots citizens motivated by religious faith, civic humanity and moral fervor.

Kaeser is unabashed in her love

for the community. She and her husband moved here in 1982. Hers is a study by an admiring insider.

The rich detail in this book—of people, organizations, events and institutions—assures that local readers will recognize neighbors, friends, leaders, happenings and references. There are lists, timelines and pictures. The book is divided into two parts: the first describes how courageous Black families began settling in the Heights; the second shows how fragile integration was defended, when federal and state civil rights laws did not do so. Chapters take different perspectives on the process, moving from groups to organizations and institutions, until the city government, in 1976, adopted a nine-point program of policies to strengthen the community's resilience against forced segregation.

Two side notes regarding Cleveland Heights government: Barbara Roderick, the initial convener of Heights Citizens for Human Rights in 1964, was later hired by the city as its first community relations official. She went on to help form other community organizations resisting segregation. Susanna Niermann O'Neil, the current acting (and probably the last) city manager, was a Coventry Neighbors volunteer checker for a housing discrimination case that went to federal court

in 1972. She joined the Housing Service, operated by Heights Community Congress, and headed that program when it was transferred to the city in 1976. These are examples of institutional change at CH City Hall, from the bottom up.

It would be a mistake to read Kaeser's book as nostalgia. She writes: "As we know all too well, racism has not been extinguished and integration is always tenuous. It can't be taken for granted."

Her book comes out at a moment when a renewal of resistance against racist segregation is emerging. This book can serve as inspiration to a new generation of leaders through its account of how to bring down segregation—not just residential, but also in the private and public institutions and structures that unjustly and inequitably prevent sustainable integration.

In Cleveland Heights, *Resisting Segregation* (\$19.95) can be purchased at Appletree Books and Mac's Backs-Books on Coventry.

Kermit Lind has been a Cleveland Heights resident since 1971. He taught history, and was a professor of law, at Cleveland State University. He joined the staff of Heights Community Congress in 1974, and later served as its executive director. He has remained slightly active in Cleveland Heights civic affairs and Forest Hill Church (Presbyterian) in retirement.

Heights voters pass two local ballot issues

Kim Sergio Inglis

According to not-yet-official election results posted by the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections on Nov. 4, Cleveland Heights and University Heights voters narrowly passed Issue 69, the 4.8 mill school tax levy. CH voters also passed Issue 6, the CH charter amendment.

Voters approved the school levy by a margin of just 135 votes, with 15,061 (50.22 percent) voting for the levy, and 14,926 (49.77 percent) voting against it. The victory margin is under half a percentage point, triggering an automatic recount.

The voting margin was much wider for the other local ballot issue, the CH charter amendment, with 17,753 (85.93 percent) "yes" votes, and 2,907 (14.07) "no" votes.

Issue 6 pertains to CH elections, and was intended to clarify ambiguity in the city's charter related to the potential need for primary elections, and the establishment of related filing deadlines, as the city moves forward in transitioning to an elected (by the voters, not by council members) mayor form of government.

A complete listing of unofficial Nov. 3 election results is available on the board of elections website, <https://boe.cuyahogacounty.gov>.

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



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LEI invites young writers to explore what's 'On the Other Side'

Eli Millette

What's on the other side? Lake Erie Ink (LEI) is posing this question to student writers throughout Northeastern Ohio—asking them to cross over and find out.

On the Other Side is a collection of work from students in grades 6–12. It is the fifth anthology of teen writing published by LEI, a Cleveland Heights-based creative writing nonprofit for youth. LEI will use this anthology to amplify youth voices through poetry, short stories, personal stories, and art.

Cordelia Eddy, program coordinator at LEI, has been organizing this program since its inception. She serves as the editor-in-chief for the student editors, and describes the importance of a project like this: “Teens control so much of the process. Not only do they come up with the theme, but they also brainstorm unique ways to connect with the public, read and edit submissions, and artfully compile them into a unique work of their own.”

Amber Gray, LEI volunteer and member of Americorps, said, “This project has given me the opportunity to work with youth in all things writ-



Teen editors collaborate remotely to produce *On the Other Side*.

ing. I have been a writer since I was 12 years old. Getting to see teenagers develop their own voice in writing is super exciting for me. It reminds me of why I started writing in the first place, and why I love it so much.”

Sanjana Vedavyas, a returning teen editor, noted that “My absolute favorite part of this experience is going over submissions and hearing individual voices shine. What sets Lake Erie Ink’s annual anthology apart . . . it’s a celebration of teen voices.” Henry Campbell, another teen editor, agreed, “I know we’re going to get some great [submissions] this year.”

Teen editor Anthony Koonce encourages young writers to take advantage of this opportunity, as it is rare to be published as a middle or

high school student. He added that it is a “chance to start building a portfolio and release work at a higher level.”

Members of the editorial team enjoyed collaborating to come up with the theme, Zoe Zappas recalled. She said that she and others are curious to see how people of different age groups and backgrounds will interpret *On the Other Side*.

LEI is accepting submissions for *On the Other Side* through Dec. 14. For more information about this project, go to <https://lakeerieink.org/teen-book-project>.

Eli Millette is communications and outreach director at Lake Erie Ink. He lives and works in Cleveland Heights. Members of the LEI teen editorial board contributed to this article.

Heights Bicycle Coalition joins Bike Cleveland



Angel Reyes

Heights Bicycle Coalition (HBC) signed an agreement with Bike Cleveland to become a local chapter of that organization. The process started in February 2020, and the document was signed in August. HBC sees the partnership as one that will increase its capacity to advocate for bicycling safety and infrastructure, and streamline membership benefits for residents of Cleveland Heights, University Heights, Shaker Heights and South Euclid.

The chapter will be organized around four committees focused on advocacy, communications, events and rides. Heights community members are welcome to join any of the committees to contribute to these efforts.

Financial contributions from Heights residents to Bike Cleveland will partly fund the HBC chapter. HBC will forward any donations it receives to Bike Cleveland, which will allocate the funds according to the terms of the agreement.

HBC formed in 2010 as a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization with the goal of making the Heights area more bicycle friendly. Since its inception, HBC has supported numerous initiatives, such as community rides, expanded bicycle routes and bike lanes, and increased bicycling infrastructure. It has improved relationships with school districts, created bicycle-centered events, and revived bike-safety programs.

As a Bike Cleveland Chapter, HBC will continue its mission of educating the community about bicycling as a sustainable and healthy form of transportation and recreation, increasing the participation of residents of all demographics in bicycling, and enhancing safety for bicyclists using Heights roads.

For more information about future events, and how HBC will continue working for Heights communities, visit www.heightsbicyclecoalition.org, and HBC’s social media accounts.

Angel Reyes and members of HBC’s Communications Committee wrote this article.

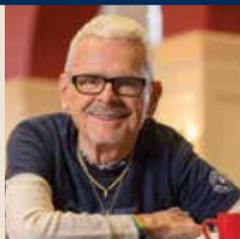


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Library reaches teens online through Discord platform

Sheryl Banks

Before Heights Libraries shut down its branches in March, due to the COVID-19 outbreak, local teens could spend time at the library during after-school hours and on weekends, socializing with friends, doing homework, playing games, or relaxing with a book or comic.

While the buildings opened again for browsing and some limited services, library administrators closed all branches to the public on Nov. 19 in response to the Cuyahoga County Board of Health's stay-at-home advisory. Youth Services staff have found another tool for reaching teens—the online chat program Discord, which is similar to Zoom.

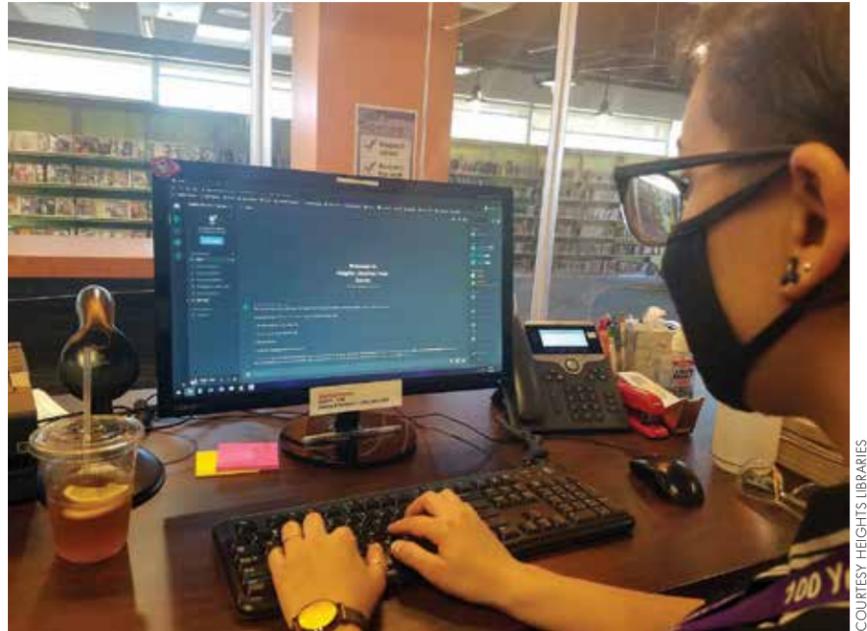
“When virtual learning started last March, a lot of teens were joking online about how much easier it would be to do classes through Discord, rather than school software,” said Youth Services Associate Talia Linina, who set up the library's Discord account. “We realized that a lot of teens already had profiles on Discord and were interested in using it as a safe alternative to socializing in person. By setting up a library account, run by staff that

the kids already know, we've tried to bring the library to the digital space they're already comfortable with.”

Discord was originally designed for video game players, providing them with ways to find one another and communicate while playing games together. Because of its usability, Discord has become a popular platform for a wide range of users. It supports video calls, voice chat, and text, enabling people to get in touch in multiple ways, and making it very popular with teens, including kids who used to spend many hours in the Heights Libraries' teen spaces.

“Our teens have been chatting with both each other and the staff,” said Linina. “When school was starting in the fall, they were checking in with each other, comparing schedules and teachers. Sometimes they ask questions about library materials and programming, sometimes they want to chat about the books they're reading, and sometimes they just want to talk about their day.”

To help teens find the information they want, staff created multiple “text channels” for different topics,



Heights Libraries Youth Services Associate Talia Linina interacts with local teens through the online platform Discord.

COURTESY HEIGHTS LIBRARIES

Library's computer classes to resume online

Sheryl Banks

After months on hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Heights Libraries' computer classes will return in January in an online format.

The library's technology trainers will teach a variety of Microsoft Office classes using Screenleap, a screensharing platform currently in use at the Cuyahoga County Public Library and the New York Public Library.

The library had to suspend in-person computer classes in March when the library shut down.

Screenleap is free and only requires that users have an internet connection in order to view the class—no special software or webcam is needed, and participants can communicate with the instructor using a chat window.

Library staff chose to offer Microsoft Office classes since they have been very popular with the community in the past.

Classes will take place every Thursday at 7 p.m., beginning Jan. 14 and running through Feb. 18, and will cover the following:

- Microsoft Word Basics Thursday, Jan. 14
- Graphics in Microsoft Word Thursday, Jan. 21
- Microsoft Excel Basics Thursday, Jan. 28
- Charts and Graphs in Excel Thursday, Feb. 4
- Microsoft PowerPoint Basics Thursday, Feb. 11
- Creating Effective PowerPoints Thursday, Feb. 18

Customers must register online at <http://heightslibrary.org> two weeks before the class date.

such as library-related questions, materials recommendations from staff and peers, and a general chat that's like the library's Teen Spot program, an after-school program that was suspended when the buildings closed.

During October, teens listened to creepy stories together in the voice chat, and played online Pictionary together, and in November the staff scheduled a round of a popular game, Among Us.

Youth Services staff are grateful that Discord has given them a way to reach teen customers, but are look-

ing forward to the day when teens can come back to [spend time in] the buildings.

“I really miss the energy of having all the teens in the same space,” said Linina. “Discord helps a lot to keep in touch, but seeing everyone in person is impossible to replace.”

Teens ages 18 and younger can sign up for the Heights Libraries' Teen Discord server by sending an e-mail to teen@heightslibrary.org.

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

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Library creates safe co-learning spaces

Sheryl Banks

In response to the community's need for study and tutoring spaces for students in grades K-12, Heights Libraries has created four co-learning spaces in the teen room of the Lee Road Branch.

Each space is surrounded by acrylic glass barriers and can accommodate one student and either a parent, sibling, tutor or another student, who can work together on schoolwork in a safe, socially distanced space. Two of the four spaces have computers with Internet access.

Co-learning space reservations last 45 minutes, must be reserved in advance and are limited to one per day, per customer.

Other requirements for using the

space include:

- At least one person using the space must be a K-12 student.
- At least one person making the reservation must have a library card.
- No more than two people are allowed in a space.
- The persons using the space must follow all Heights Libraries COVID-19 safety protocols, such as wearing a mask over the nose and mouth.

To reserve a co-learning space, call the Heights Libraries' Lee Road Youth Services Department at 216-932-3600, ext. 1293, or stop in and speak to a Youth Services staff member.

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

Cleveland Heights – University Heights Public Library Board

Meeting highlights



OCTOBER 19, 2020

Board members present were President James Roosa, Vice President Dana Fluellen, Patti Carlyle, Gabe Crenshaw, Max Gerboc, Annette Iwamoto and Vikas Turakhia. [Library board meetings are streamed on YouTube, on the Cleveland Heights University Heights Public Library Channel.]

Financial report

The board reviewed and accepted the September 2020 financial statement. Total cash balance across the operating accounts, Bauer Fund accounts, and investment accounts was \$19,134,140.46. The finance director said the tax revenue received was higher than had been estimated.

Job vacancies

There are currently 16 job vacancies, and 412 weekly hours of frozen library page hours. To be fully prepared for expanded work hours, the current hiring freeze will need to be lifted, starting this month, by filling four positions: two part-time technology assistant positions (computer lab), and two full-time circulation assistant positions. The plan is to first post the jobs internally, and then post them to the general public if they are not filled internally.

COVID response

All libraries are now offering computer services by appointment, and browsing. Curbside delivery is still offered. Outreach customers still receive materials by mail, as well. Programming continues to provide remote, online and outdoor options. Staffing is down 24 percent. As of Nov. 15, all active staff will be returned to 100 percent of their hours, to assist with covering holiday vacations and anticipated absences. The plan is to restore former operating hours sometime in January, if health conditions allow it. Ionizers were added to the HVAC systems at the Lee Road and University Heights branches in October, to help kill airborne viruses. The library continues to serve as a location for the monthly food pantry, in partnership with the Greater Cleveland Food Bank, and also offers lunches for students on Saturdays at the Noble Neighborhood and Lee Road branches.

Dementia-friendly library training

Working with Benjamin Rose Institute, the library is offering training to staff and to the public, to help make Cleveland Heights and University Heights dementia-friendly communities. Upon completion of the one-hour training session, participants are given a list of practical actions they can take to help someone impacted by dementia. In addition, attendees learn tips for communicating and engaging with library patrons who are living with memory changes; creating dementia-friendly physical spaces; taking library services to senior-care communities; and hosting dementia education programs, support groups and Memory Cafes.

Black Excellence mural

The library director thanked the Friends of the Heights Libraries for sponsoring the Black Excellence mural at the Coventry Village Library parking lot. Artists Wayne Pollard and Jimmy Hayden, and Board Member Gabe Crenshaw, placed the words "Black Excellence" across the asphalt. Embedded in the words are images of Langston Hughes, Toni Morrison, Halle Berry, LeBron James, Jesse Owens, Rich Paul, scientist Garrett Morgan, and elected officials Carl Stokes, Louis Stokes and Stephanie Tubbs-Jones. The mural also includes the words "Tiger Nation," and the logos for the city of Cleveland Heights and Safer Heights.

Activity packs

Youth services staff collaborated to create activity packs for pre-K, school-age, and teen customers. Packs included crafts, scavenger hunts, early-literacy aids, puzzles and art projects. The packs have been very popular, and library staff are increasing the number of future packs, to meet the demand.

Coventry PEACE Campus Inc. lease

The board affirmed a new lease, signed on Oct. 16, between Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library System and Coventry PEACE Inc., the nonprofit tenant of the former Coventry School building, which is owned by the library. Details of the new lease are included in the press release posted on the library's website.

LWV Observer: Elizabeth M. Tracy.

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Pick up the Heights Observer at Zagara's Marketplace



SALLY KRAMER

The pandemic has brought about many changes for businesses, and Zagara's Marketplace is no exception. Next time you shop at Zagara's, be sure to look for the numerous renovations and upgrades owner John Zagara (above) has made to the checkout, customer services and entry areas. The most notable change includes new checkout lanes, which will soon include three self-checkout registers. The newly installed sliding doors at the front of the building allow for a more customer-friendly and efficient handling of Zagara's online Presto Fresh Grocery orders (www.prestofreshgrocery.com). Other updates include the restrooms, signage, paint and wallcoverings, and flooring. Zagara's offers fresh produce, meats, seafood, bakery, and dairy products, along with specialized items and floral services. While you're there, pick up the latest issue of the Heights Observer on the racks at lane seven.

Top of the Hill rises in Cedar Fairmount



SALLY KRAMER

The Ascent at Top of the Hill, an \$83 million mixed-use project, is rising at the top of Cedar Hill. The city of Cleveland Height's development partner Flaherty & Collins began construction in summer 2020 of the a structured parking garage that will have approximately 550 parking spaces. The new buildings that will wrap the garage are expected to include 261 market-rate luxury apartments, more than 11,000 square feet of first floor commercial/retail/restaurant space, and close to 25,000 square feet of green space. The construction schedule projects completion of the development in the first half of 2022.

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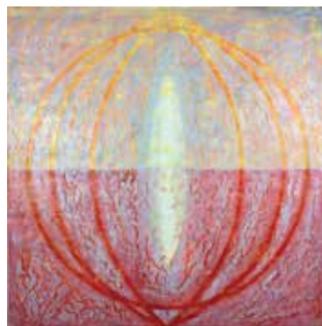
University Hospitals showcases 14 Heights artists

Amanda Bohn

Heights Arts, the multi-disciplinary community arts organization based in Cleveland Heights, is partnering with University Hospitals (UH) to showcase Heights-area visual artists as part of its 20th-anniversary celebration of connecting the arts with community.

The exhibition, which runs through mid-February, is not the first collaboration between Heights Arts and Thomas Huck, director of the UH Fine Art program. Heights Arts frequently collaborates with organizations and community members with expertise in and passion for the arts; Huck curated the *All Ohio Ceramic Invitational* at Heights Arts in September 2013, which featured the work of more than 20 artists.

Now, Huck has invited Heights Arts to curate the Heights Artists Showcase, which comprises the work of 14 artists who live and work in the Heights community.



From left to right, *Evening, Cain Park*, by Reed Simon; *As Above So Below*, by Susan Squires; *Football Sun*, by Daniel Levin.

Said Huck: “During these months of uncertainty, individuals and businesses continue to experience unprecedented hardship. UH prides itself in being an important community leader whose health care and community support extends far beyond the walls of our facilities.

“The UH Fine Art program is taking this time to extend an invitation to show our appreciation for important local arts organizations who continue to be a valued platform for our regional artists. The Trudy Wiesenerger Gallery at

our UH Cleveland Medical Center main campus provides a unique opportunity to showcase many of our talented and regional artists. We would like to take this opportunity to feature Heights Arts who continues to play an important role within our community.”

“This project exemplifies some of the reasons Heights Arts was founded in the first place, 20 years ago,” said Greg Donley, chair of Heights Arts’ exhibition committee team. “This area has long been home to a lot of working artists and musicians and arts professionals,

and the proximity of University Circle is a big reason for that concentration. We’re grateful to have this opportunity to showcase the work of just a few of our visual artists at the Trudy Wiesenerger Gallery, and we hope that the exhibition will help brighten the days (and nights, since the UH gallery is open 24 hours) of visitors to the hospital over these next few months.”

The exhibit is located in the first floor of the Humphrey building, adjacent to the Lerner Tower. The gallery is currently open to the public with the usual COVID-19 protocols, but circumstances continue to evolve, so anyone planning to visit should first check www.ubhospitals.org.

Heights Arts, like other arts organizations, has been significantly impacted by the pandemic. Currently in the midst of hosting its 19th-annual Holiday Store, Heights Arts depends on the revenue generated from holiday shoppers purchasing hand-made art and crafts from the store.

Said Executive Director Rachel Bernstein, “Our presence at University Hospitals allows us to bring the work of these excellent Heights artists to a larger audience, and will also hopefully bring new visitors to our space in Cleveland Heights. Most people don’t realize that we are a nonprofit, with 60 percent of our sales going right back to the artists.

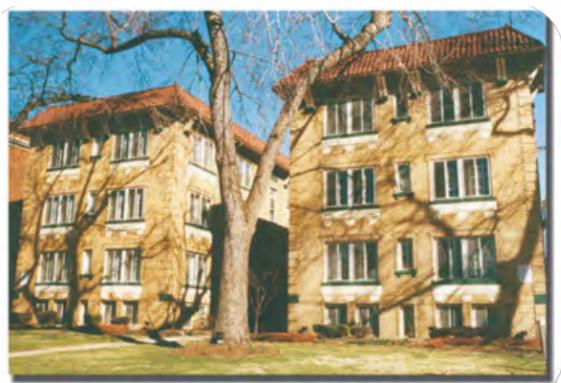
“We hope that in this, of all years, people will visit us on-site or online to buy their holiday gifts.”

Amanda Bohn handles marketing and communications at Heights Arts.

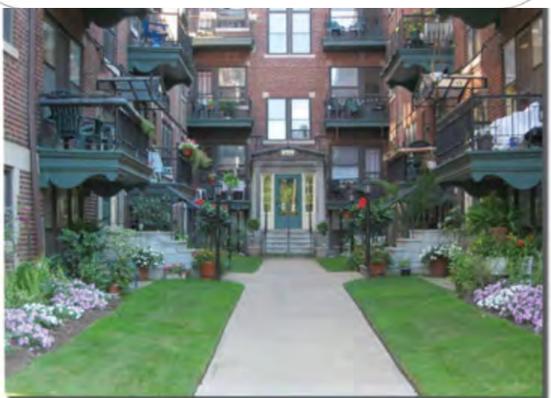
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CIVIC AWARDS continued from page 11

- Sergio Rodriguez. For many who live in nursing facilities, the pandemic caused isolation and loneliness. Rodriguez began writing letters to local nursing home residents, and struck up a friendship with Miss Marge at Chardon Healthcare Center. They exchanged letters and pictures, and shared socially distant visits.
- Joan Spoerl. Thanks to the efforts of Spoerl and The Literacy Cooperative, more than 430 kids in UH are now signed up to receive books through the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. The program sends free, brand new books to kids each month, from birth to age 5.
- The Fenwick Road "Time Out Together" crew. At the start of the pandemic, city hall administration encouraged neighbors to step outside every day at 5:30 p.m., to check in on each other, and socialize while maintaining safe distance. Neighbors on Fenwick have continued the event daily since March, and have added food, music and bonfires. "In one way, the pandemic has been a blessing in disguise," Council Member John Rach said. "We were strangers, but we've gotten to know each other. We're not just neighbors now, we're like family."
- Hallie Rybka. An editor at *Ohio Magazine*, Rybka loves living in University Heights. Her article in *Cleveland Magazine* proclaiming the city as one of the "Best Places to Live" in Greater Cleveland helped tell readers what residents already know: University Heights is indeed a great place in which to live, work, and raise a family.

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

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SONGS AND STORIES

David Budin

December is normally all about holidays—Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, New Year’s Eve—and feeling good and spending time with family and friends. This year, maybe not. Except for non-believers. I mean, those who don’t believe that the coronavirus is real. They’ll still get together with other people. Though, according to the implications of the 2020 election demographic statistics, the vast majority of Heights denizens do believe.

Further implied is that those believers will not be gathering in groups this year. That’s sad for many people. Though it’s a relief for some. But, either way, it’s only temporary. Next year—or one of these years—life will get back to normal, in most ways.

This year, we won’t be having our traditional Christmas Eve Day brunch with our adult children, their significant others and our grandchildren. But the good news is that we do get to see them at other times—and, also, that most Heights-area Chinese and Thai restaurants will be open on Christmas Day, when my wife and I will get takeout and watch old Christmas-themed movies on TCM.

So, life is still pretty good for me. But it wasn’t always. For in-

stance, December 1967 I spent walking around Cleveland Heights. I was 18 and essentially homeless. I was dealing with some untreated mental health issues. Well, I was coping with them, if not actually dealing with them. I had quit high school the previous spring. Most of my friends had gone away to college. I did have a couple of crash pads where I could usually stay, which was a great thing about the hippie era. And I did manage to play a few music gigs.

But I mostly walked around. In the cold. Often, at night, I’d land at a third-floor apartment on the corner of Euclid Heights Boulevard and Lancashire Road—a building that was soon after torn down—where several people I knew from the music scene lived and let me sleep on their couch. The place had no heat. The owner was trying to drive out the hippies.

Someone finally complained about it to Cleveland Heights City Hall, so the city sent someone to install a meter that took the temperature all day, and recorded an average. The landlord turned on our heat twice a day, from 9 to 11 a.m. and p.m. That brought the average temperature up to a legal minimum—on a meter that sat one foot away from a radiator. But the apartment was freezing; usually only slightly warmer than the temperature outside. I would come in and just lie down to sleep on the ratty couch, still in my boots, coat, gloves, hat, scarf and however many layers of clothing I could wear at the same time.

I frequented a diner near University Circle, where, for a quarter, you could



This is the building that’s no longer there. It had three entrances: the entrance to the one where the freezing apartment I stayed in was located, about where the parking lot driveway is now.

get a decent-size bowl of hot chili, plus a stack of Saltine crackers. Up in the freezing apartment, the only food I remember was Constant Comment tea and ginger snaps, which we’d eat in the kitchen with the tiny oven on and its door open. At another apartment I used to visit, on Coventry, directly above Heights Hardware, one of the residents worked at an Asian import store at Severance Center, and she’d bring home boxes of unsellable broken fortune cookies. That would be dinner those nights.

That year, the holidays came and went. I think I went to my parents’ house on Belmar for dinner a couple of nights that December. My father never made me feel very welcome there, so I didn’t visit often. One time I took an equally starving musician friend, a girl who later moved to Nashville and eventually became a much-in-demand backup singer for big country music stars. One or two other times I went there around Hanukkah time, when my older brother was visiting from college, for my mother’s potato latkes and, probably, brisket.

Obviously, my life turned out fine. But many other people are not so lucky. They’re not even as fortunate as I was back then, when I was mainly homeless, because they have no friends or family to turn to—at least none who will accept them—and there is no longer a hippie network of places to crash, and no restaurants around here that sell bowls of chili with crackers for a quarter. They’re just out on the streets, lonely, confused and hungry. Even here in the Heights area. Most of us don’t see it, but the poverty rate in Cleveland Heights is about 17 percent. The number of homeless in Cuyahoga County is around 23,000.

If you’re not having parties and big dinners this year, which should be the norm, you could put the money you would have spent to other valuable uses, like local shelters.

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.



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