



HEIGHTS OBSERVER

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

Best of the Heights 2021 award winners

Deanna Bremer Fisher

This winter, Heights residents cast their votes for Best of the Heights 2021, and 23 local businesses were named winners and finalists in this year's contest.

FutureHeights, a nonprofit community development corporation and publisher of the *Heights Observer*, hosts this annual awards program to recognize the locally owned, independent businesses that serve Cleveland Heights and University Heights, and contribute to our local economy.

As in prior years, FutureHeights created a list of 12 unique categories, showcasing the wide variety of establishments that call the Heights home, and asked residents to vote by writing in the names of their favorites in each category.

This year's categories, which



Zhuge Executive Chef Andrew Albert and co-owner Todd Thompson with staff. Zhuge was the winner for Best Pandemic Pivot and a finalist in Best Curbside Pickup and Best New Restaurant or Bar.

included Best Curbside Pickup and Best Socially Distanced Dining, recognized that the global pandemic has upended everyone's lives and forced local entrepreneurs to innovate as they struggled to stay afloat, while keeping customers and employees

safe. Despite the pandemic, several new businesses opened in the Heights. The winner of this year's Best New Bar or Restaurant was Doug Katz's Chimi, while Zhuge, Foodhisattva, and Voodoo

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CH City Council appoints Cobb

Deanna Bremer Fisher

After more than a year, the stalemate is broken—and Cleveland Heights again has seven council members. At the March 15 Cleveland Heights City Council meeting, Council Member Davida Russell unexpectedly announced that she had concluded her preferred candidate would never be appointed, and moved that Craig Cobb fill the vacancy on council.

Russell stated that she had not discussed the motion with any of her colleagues prior to the meeting, and had, in fact, decided during the meeting to make it.

The regular council meeting followed a Council Committee of the Whole meeting, during which a lengthy discussion took place about a possible charter amendment regarding filling council vacancies.

Cobb said the motion came as a complete surprise to him. "I had the council meeting on in the background—not paying any attention—and then I heard my name mentioned," he said in an e-mail.



Craig Cobb

After discussion, council voted 5-1 to appoint Cobb, with Council Member Kahlil Seren voting "no."

The seventh council seat had been vacant since March 2, 2020, when former council member Melissa Yasinow resigned, effective immediately, at that evening's council meeting. Yasinow's term is due to expire on Dec. 31, 2021.

But council members could not agree on a replacement.

By the April 6 deadline (extended from the original March 23 deadline), 22 residents had applied to fill the vacant council seat.

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CH charter limits signing of candidate petitions

Heights Observer staff

With at least four candidates already having declared for Cleveland Heights' first mayoral race, plus four Cleveland Heights City Council seats on the Nov. 2 ballot, residents should be aware that there are limits to the number of candidate petitions they can sign for those two races.

According to the Cleveland Heights City Charter (Section VII-3), "No elector shall sign more nominating petitions for different candidates for a particular office than there are positions to be filled for that office at the election for which the petition is signed. If he does so, his signatures on all petitions which postdate his signing the permissible number of petitions shall be invalid."

That means Cleveland Heights residents can sign only one candidate petition for mayor, and no more than four would-be council candidate petitions.

Asked what happens if a Cleveland Heights resident signs five petitions for CH City Council—a race for which there are four available seats in this year's election—a supervisor with the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections Candidate & Petition Services Department cleared up some of the misinformation that has been circulating.

He explained, "The first four petitions filed with that signer will be counted toward the total valid required for the candidate. If a fifth petition is filed with the same voter's signature, that individual's

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Free native trees available on Earth Day

Peggy Spaeth

This Earth Day, April 22, The Nature Center at Shaker Lakes will offer a limited supply of seedlings of three native tree species. They'll be available from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the Friends Pavilion, at 2600 South Park Blvd. If seedlings remain at the end of the day, those will be distributed on Saturday, April 24, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The bare-root 12- to 15-inch seedlings will be accompanied by planting instructions. The three



A redbud tree on Bradford Road.

native species are:

Cercis canadensis, redbud, is one of the first spring flowering trees in Northeast Ohio, blooming simultaneously with *Cornus florida*, white flowering dogwood, creating a pink haze in the landscape. Redbud is a small understory tree with an umbrella-shaped crown often seen on the woodland edge. The flowers bloom on the twigs before leaves appear, and the heart-shaped leaves glow yellow in the fall. The tree sprouts easily

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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 May issue must be submitted by April 12. 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.

Honoring graduating seniors, and explaining a decision about candidates



OPENING THE OBSERVER

Bob Rosenbaum

We introduced "Senior Shout Outs" last year to provide an opportunity to recognize the high school seniors who couldn't do anything but watch as the pandemic ruined every anticipated senior-spring rite of passage—from prom to skip day to commencement itself.

It was a last-minute idea that allowed parents and friends to shine the spotlight on 2020 graduates whose big moment had been overrun by current events.

The class of 2021 has had a strange and disappointing year, too, and we're offering Senior Shout Outs again, in the June issue, so you can give public recognition to the graduating senior(s) in your bubble.

It's open to anyone anywhere—public school or private. Cost is \$25 (\$50 with a photo). Deadline is May 10, and all proceeds support the ongoing publication of the *Heights Observer*, which lost nearly half its revenue to the pandemic, and will likely take a few years to rebuild.

Details and purchase are available through Eventbrite at bit.ly/seniors21observer.

seniors21observer.

(Disclosure: I get paid commission to manage the *Heights Observer's* advertising sales, but I didn't take any commission for money that came in from the Shout Outs last year, nor will I this year.)

All four of the people who are running so far in Cleveland Heights' first-ever mayoral campaign used our March issue to announce their candidacy.

We published an ad from Kahlil Seren, opinion pieces from Barbara Danforth and Josie Moore, and a news article about Melody Hart.

At least one reader noticed the different treatments, and asked why they weren't all handled the same way.

The first is easily explained: Seren paid for the ad space and we thank him for the financial support. He could have contributed an announcement (free) as the others did, and he may yet do so.

Danforth and Moore submitted first-person pieces under their own names, which immediately categorized them as opinion pieces. Both focused on their reasons for running.

Hart's piece was submitted by Gary Benjamin, who is her husband and campaign manager. It was written in third-person journalistic style, and focused more heavily on Hart's credentials and factual background.

It could easily have been treated like the others simply by placing it on a page labeled "Opinion." I don't have an argument with anyone who thinks that's what we should have done.

But another consideration in publishing an article is the author's intention. For the most part, our contributors aren't professional writers; we don't always know if the decisions they make around a submission are intentional, or if they reflect unfamiliarity with our processes.

In this case, Benjamin's piece met the basic standards of a news article, and we opted to treat it as one. We thought his intention was clear in submitting the piece as news rather than opinion, and he disclosed his connection to the candidate, as we ask.

In the end, I believe all four candidates were reasonable and transparent in their submissions. I believe the editorial decisions we made were judicious and considerate of each candidate's intention. I also acknowledge that it may have looked funny to those who noticed, and offer assurance that something similar could happen again at any time.

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

CH mixes messages on tree canopy

To the Editor:

Reading recently of Shaker Heights' application for a Cuyahoga County Healthy Urban Tree Canopy grant, to plant nearly 150 trees in their community, I'm reminded that Cleveland Heights received the same grant in 2019. At that time, we received a \$50,000 grant for an ash tree mitigation program. The plan was to replace about 150 mature ash trees affected by the emerald ash borer.

It's becoming increasingly evident that the tree canopy is shrinking across our region. In 2011, Cuyahoga County's tree canopy stood at 37%. Six years later, in 2017, it fell to 35%. In Cleveland Heights, a "Tree City USA" community since 1977, our canopy sits only slightly above the average, at 38% and falling, compared to, say, Chagrin Falls Township, at 70%. Yet, so proud are we that we even have a tree growing out of the "ch" in our logo!

Grants aside, look at what's happening to our area in real time. Last May, at the onset of construction for the four-acre Top of the Hill project, all but four mature trees were cut down. Twin 10-story concrete towers now stand in place of dozens of mature trees. If this weren't enough, in late February work began across from that project, on Euclid Heights Boulevard, on construction of a boarding house aimed at more housing for

graduate students. Sure enough, the sound of buzz saws and stump grinders filled the air, and now another one-fifth of an acre at the top of the hill is rendered nearly barren of trees.

If we aren't careful, Cleveland Heights could more and more resemble a bland, nameless suburb. There are sociological, architectural and environmental reasons why many of us choose to call this place home. And none of them has to do with the strip-mined appearance of recent "development."

Don King
Cleveland Heights

Court dismisses civil complaint against CH City Council

To the Editor:

Heights Observer Election Policy

"The *Heights Observer* will review election-related submissions with a goal of providing fair and equitable access for those seeking office.

"Candidates for office are expected to identify themselves as such when submitting anything for publication.

"Candidates' supporters and campaign representatives, and anyone writing about any candidate or election issue, are expected to disclose any personal or professional relationship they may have with any candidate, or with the subject of

The complaint I filed in January with the Cuyahoga Court of Common Pleas has been dismissed.

The city had filed a motion to dismiss my writ of mandamus, which asked the court to compel city council to fill the council vacancy that had existed since March 2, 2020.

The court agreed with city council that, absent a deadline, council had no obligation to perform an act the CH Charter specifically says they "shall" do.

They "win." We The People lose.

I hope everyone remembers this when as many as five of the six current city council members may be on the ballot for mayor or council this November.

Garry Kanter
Cleveland Heights

Join Monticello Middle School in honoring community members

To the Editor:

Monticello Middle School has been selected to participate in the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) with Johns Hopkins University.

As part of this partnership program, Monticello is kicking off its "It Takes a Village" initiative, honoring the school's families, children, local businesses and the entire community—from churches to nonprofit organizations, and more.

As we continue to rise above recent challenges, what better way to honor and celebrate one another than through recognition.

Help us spread the word, and participate today—it's as easy as sending a text or e-mail! #spreadloveandpositivity.

Alisa Bray
Cleveland Heights

Cleveland Heights is home to sports

To the Editor:

With COVID-19 finally slowing down, it is important to remember that Cleveland Heights is the home of sports in Northeast Ohio.

With locations such as Forest Hill Park, Denison Park, Cain Park, Cumberland Park, Barbara Boyd Park, many smaller parks, and the community center, we are second to none.

We have nine excellent ball fields; 18 lighted tennis courts; five outdoor full-court basketball courts; two high-school-size full-court indoor basketball courts; numerous indoor and [outdoor] pickleball courts; an indoor volleyball court; two indoor ice rinks, for hockey, figure skating, speed skating and open skating; numerous indoor and outdoor running and walking trails and tracks; a fitness center, Jazzercise and martial arts programs; and the largest outdoor swimming pool in Northeast Ohio.

In addition, our schools offer numerous sports facilities, including the fantastic new pool, courts and fields at Cleveland Heights High School, which offers [its students] baseball, softball, basketball, volleyball, swimming and diving, ice hockey, track and cross country, lacrosse, field hockey, soccer, golf, bowling and other sports for boys and girls.

We are fortunate to live in Cleveland Heights when it comes to youth, teen, men's, women's and senior sports.

Go Heights!

Larry Shaw
Cleveland Heights

Cuda announces candidacy for CH City Council

Tony Cuda



Tony Cuda

I am running for city council to serve our community and give something back to the city that has given me so much. If elected, I want to seize this unique opportunity to work with my fellow council members, the new mayor, and the community to set a bold vision for all of Cleveland Heights.

My family moved here in 1960. My brother and I were raised on Desota Avenue, and later on Woodview Road, by the only single mom we knew of at that time. We went through the entire CH-UH school system and graduated from Heights High. I went on to become the first person in my family to graduate from college and get a master's degree. Cleveland Heights, for me, is a place where dreams come true.

Now, I own a home on Fenley Road (in the Oxford neighborhood)

with my wife, Sandy Moran. I have three stepchildren and eight grandchildren.

I retired last year after teaching government and sociology in Shaker Heights schools for 20 years. I have the time, the determination and the experience to be an effective member of Cleveland Heights City Council.

My experience includes:

- Being campaign manager for Citizens For An Elected Mayor (CEM) in 2019 (garnering a 64% "yes" vote).
- Being chosen by CH City Council as a finalist for the council seat vacated in March 2020 by Melissa Yasinow.
- Serving as an advisor to CH City Council as a member of the CEM Citizens Transition Committee.
- Attending most of CH City Council's meetings over the past four years.
- Helping organize three forums on the elected-mayor form of government over the past six months.
- Working as a community organizer (1988-1991) for Heights Community Congress (HCC).
- Organizing eight neighborhood

groups and conducting race relations forums for HCC.

Housing, economic development, safety, our schools, equity, supporting the arts, and transitioning to an elected-mayor form of government are all central to moving our city forward. Our government must be more responsive and follow through on every complaint.

If elected, I will work to set forth and execute an ambitious agenda that will show measurable results in a timely manner.

For more information, please visit my website, www.tonymuda-forcitycouncil.com, and my Facebook page, [Facebook.com/CudaForCouncil](https://www.facebook.com/CudaForCouncil).

This year will be like no other. We will be electing our first mayor and celebrating our city's centennial. Let's seize this unique opportunity to create a bold vision for all of Cleveland Heights.

Tony Cuda is a Heights High graduate, teachers' union member, former Cleveland school board member, three-time Big Brother, and musician/composer, who still plays in an organized hardball league.

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Two pools are better than one

Robin Koslen and Scott Watcher

We share so much—schools, libraries, friends, and more. Why can't we also share our pools? Wouldn't it be nice to double our communities' swimming pools without the effort and expense of building?

Wouldn't it be nice for your kids to go to the pool with their school friends? Wouldn't it be nice to have more single-sex swimming nights, and also to have another pool to use as a family on the nights designated for single-sex use? All this, and more, is possible.

Both the Cumberland and Purvis pools have amenities that benefit all residents. For example, Cumberland offers an established summer synchronized swimming team that might appeal to many UH residents. Purvis has 1-meter and 3-meter diving boards, which might attract a diving team.

For lap swimmers, Cumberland offers several lanes throughout the day, while Purvis offers earlier lap swim hours. Talented swimmers can benefit from a combined swim team, raising the level of competition within the team.

There are economic benefits, as

well. More people may purchase passes, and the community as a whole will look more attractive to prospective home buyers looking to move here. The cities will be better able to compete with other communities that have pools and fitness centers.

Because of COVID, this may be an opportune time to consider a collaboration that we believe benefits all. As pools are looking to open this summer, there's a realization that the hours may be limited. Perhaps Cumberland and Purvis can provide staggered times between the two pools so there's consistent access for everyone.

The new indoor pool at the high school can be utilized by all members in the district. It may be time for residents to have access to all the pools in the district.

Please add your name to the more than 200 members of the CH-UH community who have signed this petition to combine our two pools: www.change.org/search?q=ub%020cb%020pools.

The real question here is: Why not?

Robin Koslen is a mom, grandma, Cleveland Heights resident, retired teacher, part-time activist, and full-time rebel. Scott Watcher, a University Heights resident, contributed to this article.

Fair housing ensures strong communities

Eric Dillenbeck

At Heights Community Congress (HCC), we believe an open and fair housing market results in inclusive communities and neighborhoods. Since the passage of the Federal Fair Housing Act in 1968, fair housing practices in renting and selling homes has been the law, but we know it is not always practice.

The law must be constantly monitored, upheld and protected. April is Fair Housing Month, and a perfect opportunity for the city of Cleveland Heights and its residents to recommit to upholding fair housing in our community.

A key element of Cleveland Heights' commitment to fair housing is testing, which organizations such as HCC do for the city. Testing consists of sending two people, matched on factors such as age and gender, to inquire [separately] about renting or buying a home.

The testers have similar background stories but vary on a significant characteristic, such as race. If, for example, an African American tester is told there are no units available, but a white tester is shown a unit, that would suggest racial discrimination. HCC performs these tests to determine whether landlords and rental agents are following the Federal Fair Housing Act. We also see it as an opportunity for education—to teach landlords and agents about illegal and suspect behavior.

In addition to testing and providing educational programming, HCC urges county, state and federal policymakers to enact legislation to protect fair housing. In a letter HCC sent to presumptive U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary Marcia Fudge, we outlined several key actions we believe HUD should take, including:

- Acting swiftly, in conjunction with other federal departments, to address the looming eviction and foreclosure crisis by extending the eviction moratorium, providing rental and mortgage assistance, and offering legal representation in eviction cases to vulnerable residents.
- Expanding the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program to ensure all eligible residents have access to safe, healthy and affordable housing.
- Returning the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) rule to its prior iteration, focusing on encouraging and holding communities accountable to make plans to promote fair housing, reduce racial segregation, and provide affordable housing.
- Campaigning for an expansion of the Fair Housing Act's protected classes to include sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and source of income.

Such policies will ensure cities like Cleveland Heights remain strong, diverse communities.

While we believe fair housing is something that must be protected all year, we encourage Cleveland Heights to pay particular attention to ensuring our community is accessible to everyone during Fair Housing Month.

If you would like to get involved, or learn more about fair housing, we encourage you to contact us about joining HCC's Fair Housing Committee. To learn more about the systemic racism that contributes to inequities in housing access, HCC encourages you to attend our free Groundwater racial equity training, to be held virtually on Sunday, April 18, 1-4 p.m. To register, go to <http://heightscongress.org/heights-conversations.html>.

Eric Dillenbeck is executive director of Heights Community Congress and a minister in the Presbyterian Church USA.

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FutureHeights supports mixed-use development in Cedar Lee

Deanna Bremer Fisher

FutureHeights has become aware of a request by some in the community that all or most of the Cedar/Lee/Meadowbrook development site become green space or a public park, rather than a mixed-use development.

FutureHeights fully understands and appreciates the value of public parks in our community as significant contributors to our quality of life, and believes that both the need for economic development and public access to green space can be accommodated in either of the two development proposals that are currently before the city.

- The thoughtful addition of public space to a proposed mixed-use development will enhance the existing assets of the district and increase the vitality and sustainability of the neighborhood. Both development proposals address the desirability of ensuring appropriate amenities for the neighborhood—in one case incorporating a small park on the southern end of the development at Lee Road and Meadowbrook Boulevard (www.clevelandheights.com/DocumentCenter/View/8935), and in the other incorporating a substantial public plaza (www.clevelandheights.com/DocumentCenter/View/8934).
- Both developers are aware that FutureHeights engaged in a robust civic-engagement process and created a plan to transform the public space located between the Cedar Lee Theatre and Boss Dog Brewing

Company into a mini park that contains passive recreation spaces and gathering places for activities and artistic performances. Both proposals would integrate with that plan. (See the plan at www.futureheights.org/programs/cedar-lee-mini-park/.)

- Both the city of Cleveland Heights and merchants in the Cedar Lee Business District need a larger population base for tax revenue and business sales support. Cedar Lee merchants have struggled since the Great Recession, and store turnover and vacancies are an increasing concern following the pandemic. An increase in the residential population and introduction of new consumers directly into the business district, as a result of new housing-unit construction, can help mitigate these needs.
- The vacant Lee/Meadowbrook lot is a large gap in the existing fabric of the Cedar Lee Business District. Experience suggests that filling the gap in a manner that strengthens the “retail/building wall” that prominently characterizes the district will facilitate an increase in foot traffic and spending activity to benefit neighboring businesses and property owners. A development project of this type will not cannibalize existing businesses; rather, it will support them and help spur additional investments needed to fill existing vacancies.
- There is clear recognition by the city of Cleveland Heights that a parking and traffic study is an essential pre-

requisite to a finalized and approved development plan.

- Both proposals embrace significant public discussion of the development plan before it is finalized. As the city’s community development corporation that advocates for residents’ needs—with its executive director and 25-member board all being residents of Cleveland Heights—FutureHeights expects to be an active participant in such discussions.

We are fortunate to have the wonderful Cain Park as an anchor to the north end of the Cedar Lee Business District, and we are interested in ideas to increase its usage by residents and visitors alike. We applaud residents for thinking creatively about development in Cleveland Heights and encourage everyone to participate in the public process.

Deanna Bremer Fisher is executive director of FutureHeights, and publisher of the Heights Observer. She wrote this position statement on behalf of FutureHeights. The Heights Observer supports open dialogue and does not take sides on issues or endorse specific proposals.

Be an influencer about our public schools

Krista Hawthorne

Your opinions shape the narrative about your public schools. Maybe you’ve read an article, or heard a story, about a student attending a local public school. And maybe you then shared that story with your neighbor. Good news about inspiring teachers and successful students is expected and quickly forgotten, but bad news travels fast and lingers long.

Rick Hanson, psychologist and author, explains that “negative experiences tend to have more urgency and impact than positive ones,” and that human beings are “naturally designed to internalize them.” Our brains have a “negativity bias” to help us survive. “Most positive experiences flow through the brain like water through a sieve, while negative ones are caught every time.”

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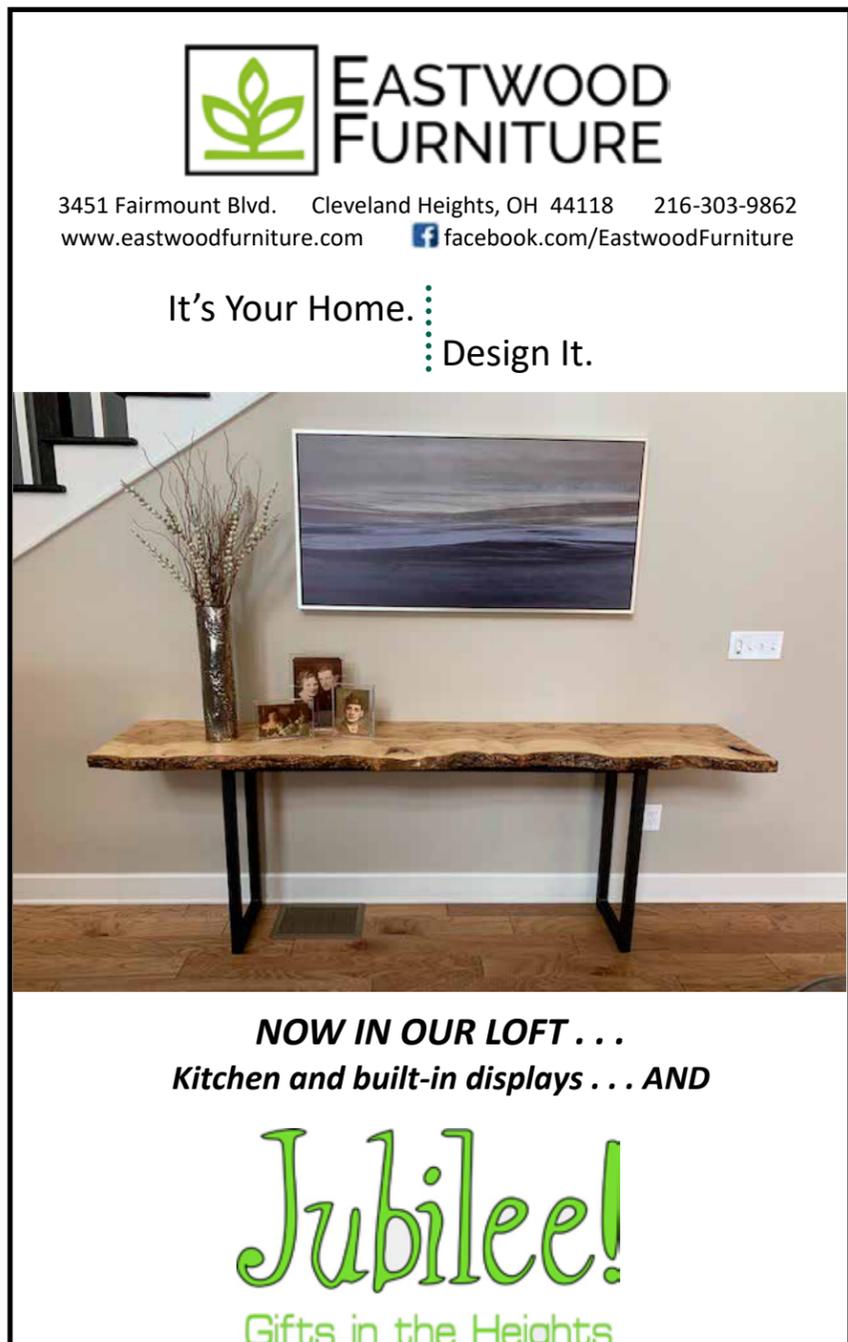
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Can the Ohio Constitution save public education?



THE COMMON GOOD

Susie Kaeser

“Two hundred years ago our Founding Fathers gave us two gifts. Both were relatively unknown in the world. The first was democracy. The second was public education. These gifts were inextricably intertwined.” So begins Derek Black’s book, *Schoolhouse Burning: Public Education and the Assault on American Democracy*, the focus of a March 10 discussion sponsored by the Heights Coalition for Public Education. More than 75 participants joined the first session of a three-part conversation.

Black, a constitutional-law scholar at the University of South Carolina, public school advocate, and unapologetic defender of democracy, kicked off the evening. He explained that he set out to write about testing and privatization, but soon realized he needed to take a step back and look at the relevance of education in our history and in our democracy. He likened undermining public education to attacking voting rights. As Black put it, this “is not about policies, it is about our values.”

Are we ready to sacrifice something so basic to who we are as a nation? Public schools are not without faults, but marginalizing them is dangerous. It amounts to an attack on democracy itself.

It’s the bigger picture that made reading the book so important to Toni Thayer, one of the event planners, who noted, “We are caught up in the vacuum of the present. It is so useful to understand the deeper story.” Greater awareness of the 200-year history of public education as a constitutional mandate gave other participants, and me, a sense of urgency.

I looked for education in the original Ohio Constitution of 1803, and found it in Article VIII, Section 3: “. . . religion, morality and knowledge being essentially necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of instruction shall forever be encouraged by legisla-

tive provision . . .” Section 25 of the same article went even further, stating, “no law shall be passed to prevent the poor . . . within this State, from an equal participation in the schools . . .” Responsibility for funding a high-quality education is captured in the 1851 update, and remains in Article VI: “The General Assembly shall make such provisions, by taxation, or otherwise . . . and will secure a thorough and efficient system of common schools throughout the State.”

The Constitution is hardly a page-turner, and yet the sparse and simple words are important to fairness, equal citizenship and a functioning democracy. The Constitution is an essential statement of our values, and it is these values that are at risk.

While the Constitution has hardly changed over 200 years, the legislature’s commitment to upholding its intention has. Black asserts that, until the last decade, public education was a nonpartisan issue. It was not controversial. Sadly, the supermajority in the Ohio Legislature has repeatedly failed to prioritize the public system. Instead of delivering adequate resources for education, it has created and funded a dual system that operates under different rules, one accountable and one not—one where resources grow and the other where they shrink.

In our district, we feel the sting of this retreat from the public system. There is a lot at stake, and Black’s book is a warning: We can no longer take lawmakers’ commitment to public education for granted.

This spring, Ohio lawmakers can make our public school system the state’s top priority. If they adopt the Fair School Funding Plan and increase the state investment in that plan, they can demonstrate fealty to the Constitution and to democracy.

It will save the CH-UH schools and districts across the state from the devastation imposed by years of putting vouchers and charter schools ahead of public education.

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.



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2020 YEAR IN REVIEW

total sales volume	\$18 million	homes sold	72
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Into the woods of Millikin



HEIGHTS OF DEMOCRACY

Deborah Van Kleef and Carla Rautenberg

“Cleveland Heights will be an environmentally sustainable community that uses green infrastructure to capture and slow stormwater . . .

“The City will be required to contain additional stormwater as part of the ongoing efforts for environmental compliance . . . to promote green infrastructure investments that keep stormwater out of the City’s sewer system and treated via natural means like trees and native plants.”

So reads the Cleveland Heights Master Plan, adopted March 20, 2017. Unquestionably, the city has made progress in sustainability. Just one example is the award-winning Complete and Green Streets Policy. But policies are not actions, and only actions count.

Severance Center and the residential streets to its south appear on the Master Plan map of areas designated for “Tree Canopy Investment.” The adjacent Millikin woods were preserved in the early 1960s, to buffer the original Severance development from residential neighborhoods. The trees in these woods keep stormwater out of our overtaxed drains; they clean it before it returns to Lake Erie via a small stream leading into Dugway Brook. They filter pollutants from the air we breathe, and reduce heat in the summer.

Yet, in early March, Cleveland Heights staff and MetroHealth Medical Center officials presented the CH Planning Commission with a plan to expand the hospital’s Severance campus, which calls for removing a 40-foot swath of trees to create approximately 80 parking spaces. The city’s Planning Commission, Board of Control, and council members approved the expansion in short order.

Metro intends to replace the lost woodland strip with trees on islands in the parking lot; but these young trees will not effectively replace the carbon sequestration, oxygen transpiration and cooling capacities of the mature ones lost—some of them more than 100 years old.

Residents, including environmentalists and sustainability professionals, are upset. So are we. Some background:

- MetroHealth owns the land in question, but still must obtain city approval to develop it.
- The long-rumored sale of the Millikin school property to the city for private residential development appears to be off the table. The CH-UH Board of Education currently uses it for storage.

We wholeheartedly support MetroHealth’s addition of a behavioral health unit. This service is much needed, and Severance is an ideal location for it.

But that hardly means our city should ignore the sustainability goals in its own master plan. The proposed siting of new parking spaces should have raised a red flag early in talks with MetroHealth and its architect.

Just across from MetroHealth, at Severance Town Center, are some 70 acres of unused parking spaces. It should be unthinkable to strip nearly an acre of trees within sight of that sea of asphalt. The hospital might have been able to lease spaces from the mall owners. Employees and patients crossing the road could be protected by a crosswalk and a traffic light. Instead of exploring the feasibility of such an arrangement, MetroHealth officials and planning commissioners dismissed it out of hand.

At a special CH City Council meeting on March 24, council members heard more than 100 public comments against removing old-growth trees to add parking. Only three citizens who commented did not object.

Before the vote on the enabling legislation, Council Member Melody Hart introduced an amendment which passed unanimously:

“While moving forward on the project, the Applicant shall actively investigate parking alternatives, such as renting of Severance existing parking area, that could preserve the trees adjacent to the buffer zone.”

As amended, Resolution No. 28-2021 (PD) endorsing the MetroHealth plan passed with five “yes” votes. Council Member Khalil Seren voted “no.”

At press time, we received a tip: City staff “continues to work hard with MetroHealth . . . investigating parking options.” Here’s hoping . . .

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



Kathy Carvin

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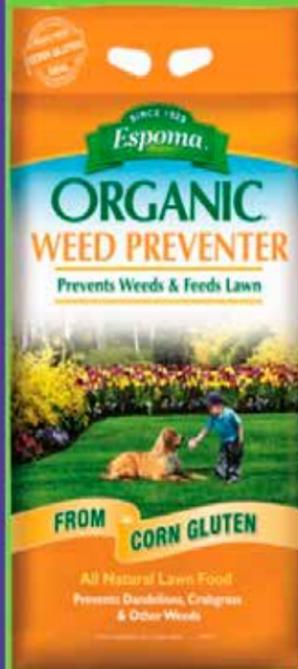
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Cleveland Heights City Council

Meeting highlights

FEBRUARY 16, 2021

Present at this regular meeting were Council President Jason Stein, Council Vice President Kahlil Seren, Mary Dunbar, Melody Joy Hart, Davida Russell, and Michael N. Ungar. Also present were Susanna Niermann O'Neil, city manager; Amy Himmelein, clerk of council and finance director; and William Hanna, law director.

Public comments

There was a lengthy complaint about regional 911 dispatchers' handling an emergency call in a threatening and racially charged manner. The resident, who apparently had called twice in January about an unknown car in his driveway and a person banging on his door, considered questions asked by the dispatcher about the situation as intrusive and hung up. He did not answer a return call, and did not answer the door when police came to investigate. The police chief's investigation stated that review of the call recording did not reflect poor performance. The city manager concluded that the police inquiry was unrelated to the caller's race.

Police chief's report

Police Chief Anita Mecklenburg reported that both suspects in the Jan. 28, 2020, killing on Berkeley Road are in custody. The Nov. 28, 2020, road-rage episode in which shots were fired resulted in a gunshot wound. The grand jury recently returned a "true bill" against the suspect on several felonies, including assault and various weapons charges.

Finance director's report

The finance director reported that year-end financials were much better than expected; \$4 million was received from COVID funding and income tax outperformed projections.

Council action

Council authorized an agreement with GPD Group for construction administration and residential inspection services for the Shannon Road Rehabilitation and Water Line Replacement Project, not to exceed \$89,363.

First readings of new legislation

First readings included:

- The issuance and sale of \$1.5 million of economic development nontax revenue bond anticipation notes for the city's portion of the Top of the Hill project.
- Submission of the 2021 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) entitlement application.
- Submission of an amended CDBG entitlement application and plan for 2019.

Committee of the whole meeting (COW)

A two-and-a-half-hour COW preceded the regular meeting, which therefore started late. For that reason, council members made no comments in the regular meeting. About half the time for the COW was an executive session to discuss the appointment of a public official and investigate complaints about a public employee.

MARCH 1, 2021

All council members were present, as were the city manager, clerk of council, and law director.

City manager's report

The next Focus magazine will include explanations and deadlines for the city's automation of refuse and recycling. The information will also be on the website.



Council actions

Council authorized submission of the 2021 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) entitlement application, and an amended CDBG application for 2019; approved issuance and sale of \$1.5 million of economic development nontax revenue bond anticipation notes for the city's portion of the Top of the Hill project; updated 2021 expenditures; and approved a consent agenda that included several equipment purchases, a planning and construction agreement for the 2021 Refuse and Recycling Transfer Station, and two proclamations for March.

Council member comments

Kahlil Seren invited council to a National Arboretum tree planting on April 30, 10 a.m., at the Roanoke/Noble garden. The city's Forestry Department and Heights Tree People will plant trees.

Melody Joy Hart said that revenue from the Top of the Hill contractors for employee income taxes has been less than projected. The payroll taxes were supposed to offset the costs of the bonds for the project. The city manager will ask the economic development director to collect information from the contractor.

Committee of the whole meeting (COW)

During the COW, which was held prior to the regular meeting, Nancy Levin, Heights Libraries director, presented library initiatives. She asked council to consider eliminating the youth curfew, noting that high school students working at the libraries have had issues getting home after curfew. She suggested there may have been some racial profiling. The suggestion of racism upset council members Dunbar and Stein, both of whom noted that the curfew was enacted to prevent the flash mobs taking place several years ago. Council members and the city manager supported revisiting the curfew.

MARCH 3, 2021

At this special committee of the whole meeting, all council members and the city manager were present to hear three proposals for infill housing development with the Neighborhood Redevelopment Program. (Infill housing is the insertion of additional housing units into an already-approved subdivision or neighborhood.)

Links for the proposals can be found on the city's website at: Home/Government/Departments/Economic Development/Neighborhood Redevelopment.

LWV Observers: Blanche Valancy and Gail Larson.

Meeting packets, legislation, and other information can be found on the city website at: www.clevelandheights.com/1142/2021-Agendas-and-Minutes.

Videos of all public council meetings can be viewed on the "City of Cleveland Heights" YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/user/ClevelandHeightsOH.

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Volunteers at work in the new park at Noble and Roanoke roads.

CH celebrates Arbor Day with plantings and cleanup work

Laura Marks

On April 30 at 10 a.m., Cleveland Heights' forestry crew will lead an Arbor Day celebration at the city's new park, at Noble and Roanoke roads. The celebration will mark Cleveland Heights' 43 years as a Tree City USA.

City foresters will plant two trees on the tree lawn, and Heights Tree People will plant three trees inside the park. Noble Neighbors' garden patrol will lead spring cleanup work, including weeding, mulching, and planting new native pollinator plants.

Heights community members are welcome to attend and participate, and are asked to wear a mask and observe 6 feet of social distancing. Those who don't want to volunteer in the work are invited to be part of the beehive of activity.

Six generations of Laura Marks' family have lived in Cleveland Heights. She is a member of Heights Tree People.

Heights Libraries purchases Noble Road Presbyterian Church

Sheryl Banks

The Heights Libraries Board of Trustees has approved the library's purchase of the Noble Road Presbyterian Church building and surrounding 1.3 acres of property, at 2780 Kirkwood Road in Cleveland Heights. The church is located next to the Noble Neighborhood branch of Heights Libraries.

The library board voted on the purchase on March 15, at its regular meeting, and the Noble Road Presbyterian Church board approved the sale at its own board meeting on March 22.

The \$315,000 property purchase will enable Heights Libraries to expand the Noble branch building, to broaden the services it offers to the surrounding community. Heights Libraries has already budgeted funds for the work, and will not need to assess any extra taxes or bonds to renovate the branch.

"We have noticed over the past 10 years that the building feels more crowded than ever, and the needs of the community have changed and grown," said Heights Libraries Director Nancy Levin. "And this perception of ours is backed up by a recent community survey about the building."

In January and February, Heights Libraries surveyed the community about the building and its services, asking residents to weigh in about their likes and dislikes, and what they thought could be improved. The survey



Heights Libraries Noble Neighborhood branch. The Noble Road Presbyterian Church can be seen in the background, at right.

received nearly 500 responses, with roughly 72 percent of respondents indicating the building needs more room.

Heights Libraries is meeting with the public, via Zoom, to present the survey results and gather residents' concerns and suggestions about the branch. One meeting already took place, on March 8. The next is scheduled for Wednesday, April 7, at 7 p.m. Registration is available at www.heightslibrary.org.

After compiling and assessing community feedback from the Zoom meetings and surveys, the library plans to conduct a visioning and pre-architectural study lasting several months, tentatively planned to start in April. It will then give the community a chance to offer feedback on possible renovation plans, both online and via a display in the Noble branch, most likely in the summer or early fall.

"We want to make sure the community has a voice in the planning process at every phase," said Levin. "We continue to be dedicated to serving the

Noble community and look forward to providing the best library possible."

"We are very excited that our beloved building will continue to be a space for the community to learn, live, and grow together," said Meredith White, pastor of Noble Road Presbyterian Church. "We have partnered with our neighbors, both the school and the library, throughout the years, and believe the sale of our property marks a new phase in that relationship."

"We will continue to be a congregation and are exploring what it means for us to be a church in the world without a building. We are honored to have been a part of the Noble Neighborhood, and we look forward to seeing what the future has in store for all of us."

Heights Libraries will add regular updates about the Noble Neighborhood Branch Renovation project to its website, www.heightslibrary.org, as information develops.

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

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UH Mayor Brennan delivers State of the City address

Mike Cook

Despite detours in 2020 caused by the pandemic, University Heights Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan reported in his State of the City address that redevelopment is within sight, and more than \$2.5 million in federal aid is on the way.

In his virtual address, delivered on March 18, Brennan announced, “Summer is back,” and outlined plans for a parade and summer concert series, and the reopening of the Purvis Park pool.

Brennan noted that the break-neck pace of progress in his first two years as mayor slowed in the third year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Our focus shifted nearly exclusively to crisis management, public safety, and survival,” Brennan said. “As a result, our work here is not finished.”

Despite the pandemic, new infill homes are being constructed on once-vacant lots across University Heights. New townhomes are set to be built on South Taylor Road. And slowly, but surely, Phase I of the University Square redevelopment is on track.

In anticipation of worst-case scenarios, University Heights made big budget cuts in 2020. Even with lower tax revenue, last year the city took in nearly \$1.2 million more than was spent. “We will make up for that this year,” Brennan said, “as this year’s budget smartly makes much-needed investments in roads and infrastructure, vehicles and equipment.”



University Heights Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan delivered the 2021 University Heights State of the City address on March 18.

Brennan said \$2.5 million in funding from the federal American Rescue Plan will help University Heights reinvest in projects important to residents.

“I will work with city council to direct most of this aid to infrastructure. We need to fix our aging sewers, and resurface the roads that need it the most,” Brennan said. “Capital purchases will be recommended as well, to get us back on schedule for vehicle and equipment replacement.”

Brennan announced that the city pool at Purvis Park will reopen in 2021. Capacity will be limited at the start of the season, and perhaps for the entire season, to allow for social distancing.

A parade will return to University Heights sometime in 2021. Brennan said it will either be a socially distanced parade on Memorial Day, or a tradition-

al parade on July 4, complete with bands and candy throwing. He said a decision will be announced by mid-April.

The UH Summer Concert Series will return in 2021, with a diverse and eclectic lineup featuring Diana Chitester, Aaron Malik, Carlos Jones and the PLUS Band, Old Skool, Böaterhead, and Yiddishe Cup (a.k.a. Funk-a-Deli). The season will kick off on July 1 with a concert by the University Heights Symphonic Band, followed by a showing of “Raiders of the Lost Ark.”

Both the video and transcript of Mayor Brennan’s State of the City 2021 address are posted on the city’s website, www.universityheights.com.

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

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PETITION continued from page 1

signature will not count toward the total required for the candidate.”

Cleveland Heights’ mayoral and city council candidates have from March 18 through June 15 to collect enough signatures to qualify for the Nov. 2 ballot. For both races, the minimum number of qualifying signatures required is 222; the maximum number is 666.

If three or more Cleveland Heights mayoral candidates file qualifying petitions with the Board of Elections by the June 16, 4 p.m., filing deadline, they will face off in a primary election on Sept. 14, with the top two vote-getters earning a spot on the Nov. 2 ballot.

Also on Heights ballots this November will be three CH-UH City School District Board of Education seats. As a separate entity, and one that represents residents in three cities, the CH-UH Board of Education is not governed by the Cleveland Heights City Charter, and there is no limit on the number of school board candidate petitions an elector can sign. Those candidates have until Aug. 4, 4 p.m., to file petitions with the Board of Elections. School board candidates need a minimum of 150 signatures, and a maximum of 450.

In University Heights, voters will elect a mayor and three University Heights City Council members on Nov. 2.

University Heights’ City Charter does not specify any candidate petition signing limits for the city’s electors. The number of signatures required for University Heights mayoral and council candidates’ petitions is a minimum of 59 and a maximum of 177, and the filing deadline is Aug. 4, at 4 p.m.

The Cuyahoga County Board of Elections has compiled an election calendar for each city and village in the county, as well as courts and school districts. In it, the board of elections indicates any petition rules and restrictions for, and specific to, each entity. To view the calendar, go to https://boe.cuyahogacounty.gov/pdf_boe/en-US/2021/CPS/2021ElectionCalendar.pdf.

Three Heights Observer staff members contributed to this article: Bob Rosenbaum, co-chair of the Heights Observer Advisory Committee, and responsible for its advertising sales and market development; Kim Sergio Inglis, editor-in-chief; and Deanna Bremer Fisher, publisher.

Advertise in the Observer

Housing stock is CH's main asset

Melody Hart

I don't think anyone would disagree that our housing stock is our main asset. Without good housing we would not be able to afford schools. City government could be diminished by 25 percent. To maintain city services, we must maintain or increase property values.

I walked the Noble area twice with Greater Cleveland Congregations. We picked Noble because that was the neighborhood hardest hit by the foreclosure crisis. We looked for vacant and blighted houses because on any block where there is such a house the values of homes on the block diminish.

Don't get me wrong—Noble is a wonderful neighborhood. The city contains solid housing. We are not in imminent danger of [not] having enough funds to provide services. But the city has not been vigilant enough in fighting to maintain the housing stock for homeowners' wealth and for tenants' safety.

During our last walk through Noble we discovered that there are an increasing number of investors who never even look at the property they buy. Sales are often done by Internet of blighted buildings.

There are an increasing number of buildings owned by Limited Liability Corporations (LLCs). Cleveland Heights' enforcement code is ill-suited at regulating an LLC. We use only criminal penalties and it's easy for an LLC to simply sell the property to another LLC, owned by the same person, and get the case dismissed because the second LLC was not served with the complaint. In civil court such a motion would likely be denied.

And for our neighbors who are still living in their homes but unable to make needed repairs, the court can only find them guilty of a crime. This seems unfair to retirees, and I know if it happened to my mother she'd be appalled. We need to fix this for our homeowners' sakes.

I have a plan. First, add a civil penalty to the Housing Code. Then the court can simply add the new LLC as a defendant. Second, use nuisance law to put vacant, blighted homes in receivership; get them repaired, and back on the market. Third, add to the staff of both the Housing and Law departments to move cases along more quickly. Fourth, add to the fund that helps homeowners make needed repairs.

What are your thoughts on this and ideas for change? Let me know at www.melodyjoyhart.com.

Melody Hart is a member of CH City Council and is running for mayor.

New CH mayor must protect environment

Michael Morse

On the first Earth Day, 51 years ago, our eyes were opened to the realization that we are part of the Earth, not just visitors roaming the surface. Everything we do, every decision we make, affects everyone and everything on this planet, our home.

The world is in crisis—environmental, social, economic, and healthwise. We can act to resolve this crisis, or we can worsen it. Cleveland Heights has the opportunity to improve, rather than further degrade, our world. As we look at candidates for our first elected mayor, we need to ask how they will lead us in doing our part locally in solving this crisis.

Severance Forest is a rare treasure, a mile-long corridor of woods and wetlands at the headwaters of Dugway Brook. This urban forest is a complete ecosystem—not merely a patch of trees, not just scenery to block the view of Severance Center.

These woods clean the air we breathe and the water we drink. It gives homes to birds and wildlife. Dugway Brook's waters flow under most of Cleveland Heights, ultimately reaching Lake Erie, and returning to us as the water we drink, cook with, and bathe in. The air cleaned by these woods is in your lungs.

Most people see only a line of trees as they drive along Severance Circle. There is so much more to



Severance Forest is not vacant land.

understand.

This small but mature urban forest extends east from South Taylor Road to Millikin school and Metro Health, then north to Mayfield Road. Some of this land belongs to public institutions; some of it is private but restricted, to act as a buffer. All of it is vulnerable to development if the city allows it. Our public officials, elected or appointed, must act to protect the public interest. We must make sure that our public officials understand that protecting our environment is fundamental to protecting the public interest. Our newly elected mayor must be a leader in protecting our environment.

I am embarrassed to find that it is still necessary to make the case for preservation in terms of money. We can launch a study to assess the economics in detail, with many cost and benefit projections of a development. The study would tell us what we already know: Trees improve property values by making a neighborhood more attractive, quieter, and cleaner. Families young and old prefer to move to areas with access to parks and woods. Trees improve health, reducing medical costs. Trees improve mental health by providing recreational opportunities. Wooded land filters water and reduces runoff. Larger, established woodlands provide an exponentially larger benefit than small, scattered plantings.

Development is important. Cleveland Heights has many distressed or vacant properties in need of redevelopment. Severance Forest, including the Millikin school property, is not vacant land. All over the world, communities are working desperately to find land that can be re-forested to combat climate change. We already have the land; it already has a mature urban forest. We are lucky to have it, and would be foolish to destroy it.

If we lose the Earth, we lose everything.

Michael Morse is a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights.

Add your support to Cedar Lee park efforts

Fran Mentch

We all want to use the city-owned land at Meadowbrook Boulevard and Lee Road to help our city do better. We all share the same concerns about our community: high taxes, schools, keeping our wonderful local businesses, supporting the arts and our brand as an arts community, and having housing that will attract and keep residents.

Cleveland Heights city officials have tried, unsuccessfully, four times before—in 2011, 2013, 2018 and 2019—to have the Meadowbrook-Lee land developed as some sort of apartments/mixed-use project. They are now trying for the fifth time with the same kind of project.

Isn't it time for the city to try something new? There are two parcels of land at the site: one is 3.73 acres, the other is 1.07 acres. How about a call for proposals for a park at the 1.07-acre site?

What is the rush to finalize this project when we will have a new form of government—a new mayor elected in November? A vote for a mayor was a vote for new ideas; using one of the two parcels at Meadowbrook-Lee for an urban park is one such new idea. Let's wait and see if the new administration will think differently and consider a park there.

A Cleveland Heights resident hired a landscape architect to create a design for Cedar Lee Park; you can

see the design and ideas at www.cedarleepark.com. Be sure to look at the "comments" section to read what your neighbors have written about Cedar Lee Park. (And check out my favorite part, the plan for a fountain.)

The most common reason people give for not wanting a park is the belief that parks do not provide any income to the city. This misconception is understandable, but incorrect. Research indicates that urban parks increase property values, tax revenue, and tourism revenue; attract homebuyers and businesses; and decrease storm-water treatment costs. Don't believe me? Google "urban parks economic benefit."

PUBLIC SCHOOLS continued from page 5

Undoing negative impressions is possible, but it is neither easy nor quick. To avoid spreading information that creates negative or false impressions, share facts from reliable sources and stories that come from your personal experience.

You can access facts about the CH-UH City School District from the district's website: www.chub.org. You can find additional information in the district's e-mail newsletter and in the notes from the semi-monthly Board of Education meetings. Form your opinions from personal experiences by visit-

Consider joining 456 others who, as of this writing, have signed our petition at www.change.org/Cedarleepark. Signing it sends an e-mail to Cleveland Heights City Council and other officials telling them that you want a park at the Meadowbrook-Lee site.

Visit www.facebook.com/Cedarleepark or contact us at cedarleepark@yahoo.com if you want to put a sign in your yard, pass out fliers, or stay informed. Thank you.

Fran Mentch is chair of the Northeast Ohio Sierra Club Group Executive Committee. An activist, she was a leader of Citizens for Oakwood, the group that tried to stop the development of the former Oakwood Country Club.

ing classrooms, tutoring students, or attending music or sports events.

Your expressed opinions are part of the narrative about our public schools. Once established, negative impressions are not easily changed, even with a huge amount of evidence to the contrary.

By gathering your information directly, you can feel assured that the information you share is from a reliable source, and that you are using your influence appropriately.

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

GardenWalk Cleveland Heights tour returns on July 17 and 18

Judith Elaine Walker Miles

The third annual GardenWalk Cleveland Heights garden tour will be held Saturday, July 17, and Sunday, July 18. The free, self-directed tour will feature private yards, community gardens and public spaces, with more than 20 spots expected to be included in the event.

Because of the pandemic, the 2020 GardenWalk was held as a virtual tour of more than a dozen local gardens. This year's GardenWalk returns to its in-person "roots" (pun joyfully intended), with leisurely outdoor browsing and visiting.

Each year GardenWalk spotlights the creativity Heights residents infuse into their outdoor spaces. A new structure that is sure to be a crowd pleaser was built by Janet Kious and her family. Kious, the founder of GardenWalk Cleveland Heights, spent the early days



The Kious "Corona Cottage" will be featured on GardenWalk Cleveland Heights 2021.

of the 2020 quarantine building a "Corona Cottage" in her yard. At once lovely and functional, its design elements complement her home's architecture, and enhance

her family's ability to enjoy the all-too-precious summer months of Northeast Ohio.

For more information, visit Cleveland Heights GardenWalk's

Facebook page. To register your own garden as one to be included on the tour, contact Jan Kious at 216-534-6172, or janetkious@sbc-global.net.

GardenWalk Cleveland Heights will observe the public health recommendations with regard to the pandemic.

Judi Miles is a longterm resident of Cleveland Heights, community gardener and lover of corny puns. She enjoys volunteering with GardenWalk Cleveland Heights. Unfortunately, she can only grow vegetables and shade-loving houseplants.



Mental health seminar open to teens and caregivers

Kelley Pernicone

At 7 p.m. on Saturday, April 10, the Youth Department at First Baptist Church of Greater Cleveland will host a special event for parents and students on the increase of mental health issues among young people, and how to recognize signs of opioid and other addictions.

The interactive seminar recognizes the impact of pandemic-related isolation that many teens have experienced this past year. It will provide the opportunity to ask questions, connect with resources, and find out more about mental health issues in young people.

Panelists are LoToya Logan, LISW-S, founder and executive director of Project LIFT Services; and Ayme McCain, LSW, OCPC, associate director of Prevention, Wellness & Community Outreach for Recovery Resources.

This event is open to the public and designed for parents, caregivers and students. For more information, and to register, visit www.firstbaptistcleveland.org/conversation.

Kelley Pernicone is a longtime member of First Baptist Church of Greater Cleveland and a member of its communications and outreach cluster.

Park restoration group seeks volunteers

Emma Shook

Friends of the Walt is a volunteer organization of University Heights residents who are beautifying and maintaining the Walter Stinson Community Park on Fenwick Road, to benefit people and wildlife. Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan organized a volunteer workday last August, after which several participants decided to form an organization to continue the effort.

Bird and insect populations and diversity have declined over the last century, especially the last 30 years, due to habitat loss and fragmentation (unlinked patches of undeveloped land), climate change, pesticide use, and pollution. Invasive exotic plant species have started to dominate natural parklands here in Northeast Ohio. There is a growing national movement to start restoring communities and yards to ecological health. Planting native species encourages a resurgence of native beneficial insects, including bees, moths, and butterflies such as the painted lady,



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail butterflies benefit from native plants.

red admiral, buckeye, mourning cloak and monarch. More native insects and invertebrates will in turn bring back native bird species.

Volunteers have created a restoration plan for the garden based on the original blueprints, and plan to install educational signage. They are removing plants on Ohio's noxious-weed list (bull thistle, bindweed, buckthorn, cleavers) and replacing them with bird- and pollinator-friendly species.

Please join them for continued weeding and preparation on Saturdays in April, 9-11 a.m. Wear long sleeves and bring gloves and weeding tools. Volunteers observe safe social distancing, as recommended by the

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and ask that all participants respect one another's safety.

The 2021 work season will comprise cleanup, weeding and planting preparation in April; a spring planting event in May; garden care and preparation for fall planting in June, July and August; and a fall planting event in September. Removal of invasive plants, shrubs and trees will continue through November.

Friends of the Walt is open to all interested people (adults and supervised children), regardless of residency. To sign up, or for more information, visit www.ecologicalheights.com/friends-of-the-walt, or just stop by on a Saturday at 9 a.m.

Emma Shook is a violinist in The Cleveland Orchestra, with a passion for nature and animals. She and her partner, Eran Shilob, are volunteers with Friends of The Walt, Friends of Lower Lake, and Friends of the Bradford Cinder Path. Shook has lived in University Heights for six years and previously lived in Cleveland Heights for 14.

EARTH DAY continued from page 1

from seed, and seedlings are easily moved and shared.

Carpinus caroliniana, musclewood, is another understory tree, and is named for its sinewy gray branches. The form is more sculptural than bushy, and it provides a structural element in the forest or garden. It is a larval host for Tiger swallowtail butterflies, will tolerate periodic flooding or a wet streambank, and has an interesting seed pod for fall interest.

Carya ovata, shagbark hickory, is a tall (up to 75 feet), straight tree that is easy to identify. Its trunk is covered with vertical shaggy curls of gray bark. Shagbark hickory grows in sun or shade, in sandy or

clay soil. The nuts are edible by humans as well as squirrels.

This year is the 51st annual Earth Day. The trails are open at the Nature Center for all to enjoy a walk in its restored woodlands.

For more information, contact Natural Resource Specialist Nick Mikash at mikash@shakerlakes.org, or call 216-321-5935 ext. 240.

Peggy Spaeth works on improving habitat with the Heights Pollinator Path; Friends of the Bradford Cinder Path; as the co-chair of Friends of Lower Lake, a volunteer program of the Doan Brook Watershed Partnership; and in her yard.



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Novel celebrates LGBTQ+ life and Coventry's culture



Doug Henderson

COURTESY SARAH WEST

Sarah West

Award-winning author Doug Henderson has had a long-term love affair with Coventry Road. It's the setting of his forthcoming novel, *The Cleveland Heights LGBTQ Sci-Fi and Fantasy Role Playing Club*, which focuses on a group of, in his words, "D-list gays," who haven't been well represented in modern fiction. These are characters who, Henderson notes, deserve acknowledgment, recognition and inclusion in the larger sphere of LGBTQ+ life and culture.

Why Coventry? Why Cleveland Heights?

Henderson recalls the first time he visited Coventry in its 1990s heyday, and the "vibe" about the neighborhood, which "bubbled up" as he explored its bustling shops and services. "I knew I would write about it someday," he said. "The novel is a love letter to Cleveland. Every time we visited family, I would return to Coventry to refresh my memory, see the changes, see what stayed the same."

Henderson will return again on April 15, at 7 p.m., via Zoom, to participate in Heights Libraries' Coventry Author Series. The program, co-sponsored by Mac's Backs-Books on Coventry, also features author Marie Vibbert. To register, visit www.heightslibrary.org or www.macsbacks.com.

Henderson grew up in Barberton and graduated from Kent State University. During his tenure as an ESL instructor in San Francisco, he earned his M.F.A. from San Fran-

cisco University. Henderson's first break into the national literary scene came in 2018; his short story, "The Manga Artist," was named runner-up in the Iowa Review Awards for fiction. It then went on to win a PEN America Best Debut Short Story award in 2019.

At that time, Henderson was busy raising two young children with his husband, Chuck Chung, a scientist, in the Castro District. *The Cleveland Heights LGBTQ Sci-Fi and Fantasy Role Playing Club* had been finished for several years and had received, as Henderson noted ruefully, "something like 27 rejections." The editors of the Iowa Review reached out, post-PEN America awards, and asked Henderson if they could read it. Their feedback to him: "WE LOVE YOUR NOVEL."

Set in the present day, the novel follows protagonist Ben, an awkward, nerdy young man who earns a living selling thrift on eBay, and revels in nostalgia for the cultural milieu of his late childhood and adolescence. He suffers through unrequited love, plummeting self-esteem, and the isolation that comes from what Henderson describes as "never seeing yourself as an included person, as a represented person" in American gay cultural life.

The role-playing club Ben joins at Readmore Comicx and Games to try and ease his social anxiety—a motley crew of queer-identifying men and women—provides him with a means to connect with other young individuals who are on similar paths of self-discovery and maturation.

Careful readers will recognize Henderson's contemporary interpretations of Coventry's past. Jitterbugs, Ben's favorite coffee shop, is a re-visioning of the Coventry Arabica. Destroyer Records and its basement mini-shop, Vinyl Vault, hearkens to Record Revolution's place as a THE music shop on the East Side.

Other iconic establishments, well known to Heights residents, flow through the novel as fictionalized characters in their own right.

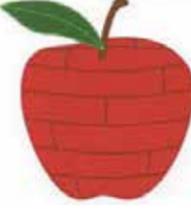
The Cleveland Heights LGBTQ Sci-Fi and Fantasy Role Playing Club is sure to resonate with a broad range

of readers: those who want to revisit, in their own imaginations, the vibrancy of Coventry life; those who want to amplify the representation of historically marginalized characters in literature; and those who are on their own journeys of identity development and stabilization.

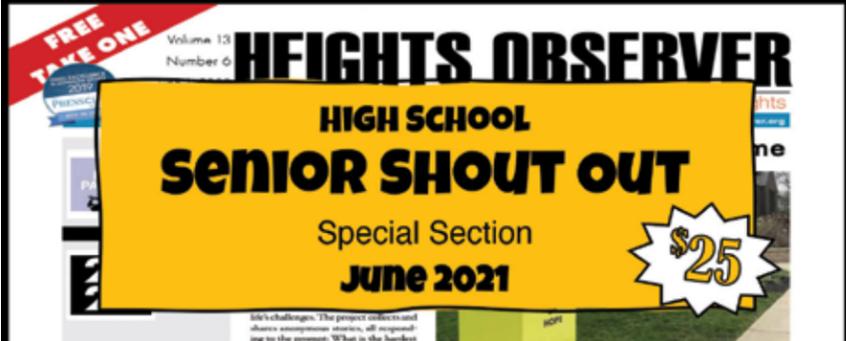
Doug Henderson has given the Heights the gift of an LGBTQ+ nar-

rative that is personal and political, local and cosmopolitan.

Sarah West has taught English at the middle-school, secondary-school and college level since 1993. She has been friends with Doug Henderson since 1991 and was with him when he first visited Coventry. She has never completed a game of D&D.



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CH's Democracy Day presented powerful testimony

Greg Coleridge

Cleveland Heights City Council members, speakers and virtual viewers called January's 8th annual Democracy Day public hearing "inspiring," "informative," and "enlightening"—hardly the "waste of time" claimed by Robert Shwab in a letter published in the March issue of the *Heights Observer*.

Federal and state court decisions, and laws created by the president, governor, U.S.

Congress, and state legislature directly impact our city government and residents. Those decisions and policies are increasingly influenced by, and disproportionately benefit, the super-rich and corporations.

Most Cleveland Heights residents understand we don't live in a cocoon, which explains how 77% of voters in 2013 passed the local ballot measure calling on Congress to support a Constitutional Amendment ending corporate

constitutional rights and political money in elections, defined as free speech. That initiative also mandated, by ordinance, the annual public hearing in Cleveland Heights, where individuals can testify on the impact of big money in elections, and of corporate power on their lives and community.

Powerful testimony at this and previous CH Democracy Day hearings addressed the undemocratic influence of corporations on education, health care, energy, agriculture, transportation, employment, the environment and many other issues. One could add pandemic relief funds, which have gone disproportionately to large corporations, including Paycheck Protection Program funding intended for small business. Can anyone legitimately claim such policies and actions have no impact on Cleveland Heights and its

residents?

It's true the ACLU supports corporate constitutional rights—at least its leadership does. Many of its members do not. The We the People Amendment is hardly radical.

As more people understand how our society has been captured and corrupted by the outsized influence corporations have gained via never-intended inalienable constitutional rights, support for House Joint Resolution 48 grows. More than 700 communities and 600 organizations are part of a growing movement to build power and a democratic culture to pressure Congress. Cleveland Heights' annual Democracy Day plays an important role in this movement.

Greg Coleridge is outreach director of the Move to Amend Coalition and a Cleveland Heights resident.

Library appreciates 1619 Project interest and concern

Sheryl Banks

In a "request for reconsideration" in January, Robert Shwab asked that Heights Libraries' 1619 Project program be balanced by information from "critical scholars and other Black voices." He asked that the program's moderator be removed, and that the program include *1776unites.com* curricula. Heights Libraries' Board of Trustees discussed the request during its Feb. 1 board meeting. The board and library responded by e-mailing Mr. Shwab:

1. A report by the originator of the program that included a program overview, rationale for the discussion group, and historical sources consulted.
2. A three-page bibliography of the works the program moderator has studied to prepare for the 1619 Project programs. These are works by scholars who are recognized in their fields. The program moderator has worked hard to put together a scholarly and thought-provoking program that has been very popular with our community.
3. Our Materials Evaluation and Selection Policy. The 1619 Project meets the criteria described in our policy. The *1776unites.com* curricula does not meet our

inclusion standards as delineated in the Materials Evaluation and Selection policy. (The policy is available at www.heightslibrary.org.)

We have heard Mr. Shwab's call for balance, and will be dedicating the May 13 program to address the controversy and criticism of the 1619 Project in a program called "1619 Project vs. 1776 Project." Additionally, when applicable and relevant, scholars critical of the project will be included in future discussion packets.

Regarding his charge of being muted: The rule of the library's online Zoom programs is "one mike, one speaker," to avoid cross talk. Participants are muted after they speak. Mr. Shwab made his point, then he was muted after he finished speaking to allow the moderator to respond. He left the program before it was his turn to speak again.

We invite all community members to attend our upcoming 1619 Project discussions. Details may be found at www.heightslibrary.org.

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

Participant charges 'falsehoods' in library's 1619 Project program

Robert Shwab

The CH-UH library has sponsored and promoted a [series of programs about] The 1619 Project, a collection of essays compiled by a *New York Times* staffer about the role and impact of slavery in the U.S.

Shortly after the program [about the project] was distributed to schools and libraries in 2019, [some] prominent American history scholars condemned The 1619 Project for its bias and falsehoods about America's founding and the role of slavery. Mary Grabar of the Alexander Hamilton Institute called it a "jumble of lies, half-lies, bad history and bad faith." Historian Robert Paquette of Hamilton College called it "dangerous rubbish."

The materials on the library's 1619 Web page do not include any of the criticisms, and exclude the views of dissenting Black intellectuals. Kay Coles James, president of the conservative Heritage Foundation, said that the dubious history of The 1619 Project hurts the cause of racial reconciliation by creating a "false narrative."

I zoomed in to two sessions conducted by Heights Libraries' employee and moderator John Piche. A recording of the sessions shows that when I made my first and only comment—to refute a recurring false claim about the Constitution, the first contrarian comment of any kind in the entire program—Piche soon interrupted and muted my comment, as he had never done to other, more contentious and long-winded participants.

The general theme of the

material and discussion is the never-ending misery, hopelessness, and lack of opportunity for African Americans. A group of Black intellectuals and writers who reject the "grievance peddling" and "victimhood culture" of the 1619 Project have launched www.1776unites.com, which offers "a special focus on stories that celebrate black excellence" and "showcases African-Americans who have prospered by embracing America's founding ideals."

I asked Piche about the scholars' criticisms of the program and if the library had any standards for evaluating programs. Piche replied that "supervisors" approved the program. I submitted a formal review request to the library, recommended the 1776 Unites curriculum, and suggested Mr. Piche was too biased to present a balanced view on the subject.

In a written reply, Library Director Nancy Levin advised me that a library board committee reviewed my complaint, and said, in part: "We have heard your complaint and will be dedicating the May 13 program to address the controversy and criticism of The 1619 Project in a program called '1619 Project vs. 1776 Project'." Additionally, when applicable, conservative scholars will be included in future discussion packets."

The library declined to include the 1776 Unites material, and John Piche continues as the moderator. The 1776 Project is a different program than 1776 Unites.

Robert Shwab, an arbitrator for FINRA and a business consultant, is a resident of Cleveland Heights.

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SCAN TO DONATE



Preservation Month starts early with Heights history programs



Station Square's northern building, at Taylor Road and Superior Drive, in the 1930s.

COURTESY CLEVELAND HEIGHTS HISTORICAL CENTER

Wednesday, April 21, 7 p.m.: Economic Benefits of Historic Preservation

This presentation will share highlights from Cleveland-area historic preservation projects that help stabilize neighborhoods, increase property value, influence community revitalization, and generate a stronger tax base for cities. Panelists Diana Wellman, a preservation consultant with Naylor Wellman, and Brian Mikelbank and Stephanie Ryberg-Webster, both with Cleveland State University, will share project examples and data to demonstrate how historic buildings and older housing stock contribute to the economy.

Wednesday, April 28, 7 p.m.: History of Stadium Square

Nearly one year ago, Stadium Square was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Also known as the Monroe Subdivision, the area encompasses 6.92 acres on South Taylor Road and Superior Park Drive. This program will explore Stadium Square's history, preservation and economic development opportunities. Construction began in 1926, and Stadium Square soon became known for its Tudor Revival-style buildings, including the Taylor-Superior Building (1912-1926 South Taylor Road) and Barclay Courts Apartments (3436-3640 Superior Park Drive). This program's presenters are BreAnna Kirk, planning technician with the Cleveland Heights Planning Department, and Heather

Rudge from Historic Preservation Group.

Wednesday, May 5, 7 p.m.: Researching Your House's History

Are you interested in learning how to research the history of your home and neighborhood? Jamie Miles, of the Cleveland Restoration Society, will explain the variety of resources available to homeowners, to help them trace a property's chain of ownership, learn about its builder or architect, find out how their neighborhood developed over time, or learn about their home's historic style and architecture. Tune in to this presentation to get started on your research journey.

Wednesday, May 26, 7 p.m.: History of Cleveland Heights

As Cleveland Heights marks its 100th birthday, this program will look back on the city's path from rural farmlands, to streetcar suburb, to inner-ring city. Cleveland Heights has developed into a community that celebrates its diversity, cherishes its architecture and art, and looks forward to another 100 years as vibrant home to its residents. Presented by the Cleveland Heights Landmark Commission.

Mazie Adams is the chair of the Cleveland Heights Landmark Commission, a local historian and history museum professional. She will present the May 26 program about Cleveland Heights' history.

Mazie Adams

In the lead up to National Preservation Month, in May, several Heights institutions are joining together to sponsor a series of local history programs that kick off on April 12, and wrap up on May 26.

The Cleveland Heights Historical Society, Cleveland Heights Landmark Commission, Cleveland Restoration Society, and Heights Libraries are the series' sponsors.

All programs are free and will be presented remotely, through Heights Libraries, via Zoom. To register for any or all of the programs, sign up on the Heights Library's events page, at <https://heightslibrary.org/events/event-calendar>.

Monday, April 12, 7 p.m.: History of the Cinder Path

A paved pedestrian path extends along Bradford Road between South Taylor and Canterbury roads. Why is it there? Find out the unique history of this path, and what neighbors currently are doing to improve its green space. Presented by Friends of the Bradford Cinder Path.

Church hosts online Easter egg hunt

Kelley Pernicone

First Baptist Church of Greater Cleveland will hold a free online Easter egg hunt for young children at approximately 11 a.m., immediately following the scheduled Easter Sunday worship service, on April 4.

Modeled after "Blues Clues," the hunt is designed to be interactive and includes a visit from the Easter Bunny. With each clue, a First Baptist Church member will lead participants to a different part of the First Baptist Church facility and provide a fun fact about Easter. Topics to be addressed include why we have an

Easter Bunny rather than an Easter Chicken, why we hunt for eggs, and why so many people are obsessed with marshmallow Peeps.

The activity will be livestreamed on the church's YouTube channel. If you can't make it, a replay will be available on YouTube, as well as on the church's Facebook page. For links to this and other Easter events from First Baptist Church, visit www.firstbaptistcleveland.org/lent.

Kelley Pernicone is a longtime member of First Baptist Church of Greater Cleveland and a member of its communications and outreach cluster.

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Neighborhood discussion April 29

Sydney Chickos

FutureHeights, the community's nonprofit community development corporation, would like to hear from you about how you view your neighborhood. On April 29, at 7 p.m., FutureHeights will host "Shared Space: What Makes a Neighborhood?" via Zoom.

The forum will explore the various neighborhoods in Cleveland Heights and University Heights, what makes them unique, and how residents and neighbors can best help them thrive.

Elizabeth Kirby, superintendent of the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District, will provide opening remarks. Then, participants will split into small breakout groups to discuss a series of questions about their neighborhoods: How do you define your neighborhood? What unique assets does it have? What do you want the broader community to know about your neighborhood? Participants will then come back together to share information with the entire group.

"It's important for community members to discuss issues at a neighborhood level," said Deanna Bremer Fisher, executive director of FutureHeights, "especially as the city



of Cleveland Heights will directly elect a mayor for the first time this fall, and we will all be voting in new city council and school board members."

For more information and to register in advance, visit www.futureheights.org/sharedspace, or contact FutureHeights at 216-320-1423, or info@futureheights.org.

Sydney Chickos is a student at Case Western Reserve University's Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences, and an intern with FutureHeights.

Reaching Heights announces 30th annual spelling bee

Diana Drushel

Heights Libraries has launched a Reaching Heights' Community Spelling Bee is going virtual for the second consecutive year.

For 30 years, Reaching Heights has presented this competitive event to bring the community together for fun and to raise money in support of excellence in public education. This year, the spelling bee will take place on Wednesday, April 28.

Teams of competitors from

the Cleveland Heights-University Heights community, representing its public schools, local businesses, churches, colleges and universities, and The Cleveland Orchestra, are gearing up to compete for the coveted Big Plastic Bee Trophy.

Although last year's event was virtual, more than 400 people watched as the Dewey Decimators—staff members of the CH-UH libraries—captured the prize and maintained their multi-year winning streak.

This year, Reaching Heights is trying something new. Competitors will need to brush up on their knowledge of trivia because, for the third round, teams will have an opportunity to answer a trivia question that will earn a "pass," which can be used to excuse a spelling error made during that round.

Anyone interested in participating in the 30th Annual Reaching Heights Spelling Bee, or in becoming a sponsor for this zany, exciting event should contact Jen Holland, event chairperson, at jen@reachingheights.org.

Diana Drushel is the special projects coordinator for Reaching Heights.

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Cleveland Heights-University Heights Board of Education

Meeting highlights



FEBRUARY 16, 2021

Board President James Posch and board members Dan Heintz, Malia Lewis, Jodi Sourini, and Beverly Wright were present, as were Superintendent Elizabeth Kirby and Treasurer Scott Gainer. This was the first in-person meeting of the board for the 2020-21 year. It was held in the high school auditorium, so members of the public could socially distance. Posch and several administrative staff members attended virtually, which caused some minor audio issues. The meeting was livestreamed on the district's YouTube channel.

Standardized testing waiver

The board unanimously approved a resolution advocating a waiver of state-mandated standardized testing for 2020-21. The motion will be submitted to the Ohio General Assembly. The resolution will be distributed to local school boards with the hope that other districts will support the resolution. The resolution can be found on the board of education's Web page (www.chuh.org/boardofeducation.aspx), under Board-Docs.

The board's consensus is that statewide standardized testing, including the time taken to administer tests during the pandemic, will contribute to inaccurate evaluations of students, teachers and the schools, which will impact funding.

COVID monitoring and school reopening

Superintendent Kirby said that COVID cases continue to be monitored, and that staff will receive their COVID vaccinations the week of March 8. The reopening committees continue to plan for the beginning of the fourth quarter, on April 6. Instruction will adhere to CDC guidelines. A remote-learning option is available. The return to in-person learning has been positive.

Responding to a request by Board President Posch, Kirby said a plan to return elementary students to in-person instruction five days a week for the fourth quarter is coming in April. The community, libraries, and other organizations will be involved. Currently, a plan is in development for targeting student needs. Important decisions will be made for retention based on third-grade reading scores.

Elementary achievement trends

Kirby presented the four-year trend for elementary school grades in core classes. In the 2019-20 school year, D and F grades increased. She said that the primary intent now is to provide students with in-person instruction to improve grades.

Fair School Funding Plan plank

Posch noted that Ohio House Bill 1, the Fair School Funding Plan, is still in committee. He asked the board if it would support reintroducing a plank to the Ohio School Boards Association to support Ohio HB1. All board members supported adding such a plank.

Five-year forecast

Treasurer Gainer presented the five-year forecast and noted changes from the previous month related to supplemental contracts. The board approved the forecast, and a deficit plan will be re-submitted to the Ohio Department of Education.

LWV Observer: Rosemarie Fairman.

Meetings are livestreamed on the district's YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/CHUH-Schools) and recorded for later viewing.

Student progress under virtual instruction

Superintendent Kirby and administrative staff reported on student progress during the pandemic and plans for remediating lost progress. Remediation plans will emphasize literacy in reading and writing.

Board members stated concerns about lost progress and achievement gaps in reading, but also praised the administrative staff's remediation plans.

Performance audits

Treasurer Scott Gainer provided a cost-benefit analysis of the state auditor's performance-audit process, including data drawn from the last 10 years of audits appearing on the state auditor's website. He reported that \$80,000 is the current cost for a performance audit done at the request of a school district. His report identified areas of cost reduction that tend to appear in all of the performance audits, and reviewed specific cost reductions suggested in the district's 1999 performance audit, many of which have been addressed. He also presented information about the "peer groups" that the state auditor uses as the basis for cost comparisons in the audit.

Board members discussed whether other sources might provide cost-reduction recommendations that are better targeted to the district, compared to what is likely to come from a state performance audit. This topic will continue to be considered at upcoming board and Lay Finance Committee meetings.

LWV Observer: Kathy Petrey.

MARCH 2, 2021

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

Public comments

A parent, new to the schools and the community, explained why he and his family chose to live in the Heights and send their child to the district's schools. He noted that his neighbors do not seem to know the schools or the school programs. He is impressed with the schools and said that the district's programs and values need to be better communicated to the community.

Two parents addressed equity issues concerning the security staff, questioning whether their compensation was equitable.

Two Heights seniors are national scholarship finalists



Maple Buescher and Xavier Routh, seniors at Heights High, are National Merit Scholarship Finalists.

COURTESY CHUH CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Cathan Cavanaugh

Heights High seniors Maple Buescher and Xavier Routh have been named National Merit Scholarship Finalists by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC).

"Being named a National Merit Scholarship Finalist is a tremendous achievement," said CH-UH City School District Superintendent Elizabeth Kirby. "I'm proud of Maple and Xavier and excited to see all that they continue to accomplish."

The National Merit Scholarship Program is an annual academic competition for recognition and college undergraduate scholarships. Buescher and Routh qualified for the award because of their performances on the PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test). They were named semifinalists in September.

Buescher is a violinist in the Heights High Symphony and plays on the varsity soccer team. Among her favorite classes at Heights High, she said, are ones that challenged her.

"My AP Calculus BC class with Mr. O'Deens has given me several moments where my mouth literally hung open with delight," recalled Buescher. "I also really enjoyed American Studies with Mr. Meister, who always challenges my preconceptions and has taught

me how to ask good questions instead of merely providing decent answers."

Routh has participated in marching band, tennis, golf, and the environmental club. He especially enjoys studying mathematics and history.

"The real-world applications of math, and how it applies to other subjects, such as physics, are really interesting to me," said Routh.

"My best advice for a rising senior," said Routh, "is to continue to challenge yourself with classes you are interested in up until graduation. If you plan to go to college, start working on your essays early!"

Both students plan to attend college next year.

More than 1.5 million students enter NMSC's competition each year. Approximately 16,000 students were semifinalists this year, representing less than 1 percent of the nation's high school graduating seniors.

The selection of some 7,500 merit scholarship winners from the group of more than 15,000 finalists is now in progress. In March, the program will begin notifying scholarship winners.

Cathan Cavanaugh is the supervisor of communications for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District.

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Library book bike rides again



The Heights Libraries book bike is set to head back out into the community.

Sheryl Banks

After putting its book bike program on hold in 2020 due to COVID-19, Heights Libraries is ready to bring the bike out of quarantine and hit the road this spring and summer, offering outdoor library events in Cleveland Heights and University Heights.

A gift from the FRIENDS of Heights Libraries, the book bike is a sturdy touring-style bike that pulls a custom-made trailer that can hold and display roughly 200 books for customers to take. These free books are also provided by the FRIENDS, who comb through their book donations to find books that will appeal to children and teens.

“It’s a small library on wheels,” said Isabelle Rew, community engagement associate, who manages the bike and is its primary rider. “The only difference is that customers don’t have to return these books—they get to keep them, which is especially important for our kids.”

“Numerous studies over the past decade point to book ownership as an important part of early literacy,” Rew continued. “When children have their own books, they tend to read them over and over, which aids in the recognition of letters, sounds and words. Book ownership also

sends the message to children that books and reading should be part of their daily lives.”

To keep book bike staff and customers safe, the library is requiring the same safety precautions it has implemented in its buildings: Customers must wear facemasks and stay 6 feet away from others. Staff will provide hand sanitizer and have extra masks on hand for those customers who don’t have a mask.

“Taking the bike out in the community again makes me feel so hopeful,” said Rew. “It feels like another way the world is opening up a little bit—I hope it gives our community a sense of hope and a sense of fun. I’ve really missed seeing everyone.”

Families can find the book bike at outdoor storytimes and other events throughout the spring and summer. Check www.heightslibrary.org for a schedule of events, or check the spring and summer issues of the library’s program guide, *Check Us Out*, which is mailed to every household and is also available at each library branch.

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

COURTESY HEIGHTS LIBRARIES

Cleveland Heights – University Heights Public Library Board

Meeting highlights



FEBRUARY 15, 2021

Board members present were President Dana Fluellen, Vice President Gabe Crenshaw, Patti Carlyle, Max Gerboc, Annette Iwamoto and Vikas Turakhia. Tyler McTeague was absent.

Security services

Kevin Echols presented and discussed the 2020 security services report with the board. In 2020 there were 57 incidents, none of which rose above the general disturbance level; one incident was a minor medical event. Because the libraries were closed for a large portion of the year, the safety and security focus was building up PPE (personal protective equipment) supplies. Other enhancements included moving to a different emergency-alerting system, a computer-controlled lock/unlock system, and an automated emergency-locking system for entry and exit doors at all branches.

Pat Gray’s retirement

The board approved a resolution in recognition of Coventry Village Branch Manager Pat Gray’s retirement.

Financial and investment report

The fiscal officer shared the 2020 financial report. General fund revenue in 2020 totaled \$11,931,674—better than expected, and 1 percent higher than 2019 revenue. The fiscal officer reported that credits from the state of Ohio for unemployment and use of the Shared Work Ohio program helped make up for losses that had been expected due to the pandemic. Investment income in 2020 was down from the previous year. Revenue from passport and copier services was down as well. General fund expenditures in 2020 totaled \$8,151,499, reflecting the cuts that were made to the library budget due to the pandemic.

The board reviewed and accepted the December 2020 and January 2021 financial statements. Total cash balance across the operating accounts, Bauer Fund accounts, and investment accounts at the beginning of 2021 was \$18,306,663.25.

Permanent appropriation

The board approved permanent appropriations of \$75,000 for non-CLEVNET databases, \$10,246,635 for the general fund, and \$1,906,000 for the building and repair fund during the fiscal year ending Dec. 31, 2021.

Director and fiscal officer salaries

The board recently completed performance evaluations for Director Nancy Levin and Fiscal Officer Deborah Herrmann, and approved a 3 percent salary increase for each. In approving these increases, the board noted the leadership and stewardship displayed by both the director and fiscal officer during this pandemic year.

Building operation hours

The board approved changes in building operation hours. Beginning Feb. 16, all branches will be open for lobby service, browsing, and reserved computer appointments as follows:

- Tuesday and Thursday, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
- Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Sunday, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Masks will be required for all patrons ages 2 and older.

Curbside service will be extended until 6 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and will continue to be extended as the sun sets later in the coming months.

Coventry PEACE Inc. Board of Directors

The board approved Max Gerboc, a member of the library board of trustees, as the designated library representative (an ex officio position) on the Coventry PEACE board. If Gerboc is not available to attend a meeting of the Coventry PEACE board, a member of the library’s administration will attend in his place.

Consulting services

The board authorized a contract with JMC Consultants, for an amount not to exceed \$15,000, for the HVAC project at the Coventry Village branch, and for assistance with community engagement for the PEACE Park playground changes.

Touchless doors

The director reported that, continuing an initiative that coincided with the COVID response, touchless door openers have been installed on more doors throughout the system. The goal is to improve egress/ingress for people with disabilities, as well as cut down on high-traffic touch areas.

Public services annual report

Library Deputy Director Kim DeNero-Ackroyd shared the 2020 public services report. Circulation was just below 1.2 million items (1,199,969). The report highlighted the programming pivot that was needed during library closures, and reduced lobby hours due to the pandemic. The library sent 30 hotspots to schools, for distribution to families in need of Wi-Fi access at home. Homebound-delivery staff sent out 1,050 items—a 33 percent increase from 2019. Curbside delivery was introduced at all four branches in May. A variety of virtual programs were delivered. Information on job searches and unemployment resources was developed, to help job seekers during the pandemic. The local history digital collection saw an increase in users.

LWV Observer: Elizabeth M. Tracy.

Library board meetings are recorded and available on YouTube on the Cleveland Heights University Heights Public Library Channel.

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Frances Cheng and Josh Sias, owners of Foodhisattva, hold the winner certificates for Best Cleveland Heights Business and Best Ecologically Friendly Takeout, and finalist certificates for Best New Bar or Restaurant and Best Online Ordering.



Atma Center owner Julie Schlemmer holding the finalist certificate for Best Cleveland Heights Business.



Don Trivisonno, co-owner with Cathy Zalocki of Voodoo Brewery, with the finalist certificate for Best New Restaurant or Bar.

BEST OF THE HEIGHTS cont. from page 1

Brewery were finalists in this category. The honor of Best New Business (other) went to Kandace Marchant's Marchant Manor Cheese. Finalists for this category were Made Cleveland and Wiz-bang Circus Theatre. (See the complete list of this year's winners and finalists at the end of this article.)

To help support local businesses, FutureHeights purchased \$1,000 in gift certificates from a variety of them, and entered each unique Best of the Heights ballot entrant into a raffle, for a chance

to win one of four gift-certificate packages worth \$250 each. Winners were drawn on Feb. 26 (see article below).

In its award ballot, FutureHeights also asked Heights residents what they missed most about pre-pandemic times, and what they look forward to doing once again when the pandemic is behind us. Here is a small sample of responses:

"I miss browsing without any specific item in mind to purchase."

"I miss the community! Seeing friends and acquaintances while dining out and attending live music events."

cont. on page 20



Tommy Fello (left), owner of Tommy's Restaurant, and his employees, (l-r) Ian Anderson, Becky Dedenbach, Karla Zagari and Ivan Lemus, holding winner certificates for Best Curbside Pickup and Best Community-Conscious Business, and finalist certificates for Best Online Ordering, Best Socially Distanced Dining, Best Ecologically Friendly Takeout, Best Employee Pandemic Support and Best Pandemic Pivot.

FutureHeights announces Best of the Heights raffle winners



Sarah Forsythe and her daughter Laura



Destiny Burns



Lauren Marshall



Grace Harper

To thank voters in the 2021 FutureHeights Best of the Heights Awards, and to support Heights local businesses, FutureHeights purchased \$1,000 in gift certificates from a variety of local businesses and raffled them off. Each Best of the Heights voter received a chance to win one of four gift certificate packages worth \$250. Additional chances to win were available for a \$10 or \$25 donation to FutureHeights. The four winners were: Destiny Burns, Sara Forsythe, Grace Harper, and Lauren Marshall.

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Josh and Jason Sweet, owners of Boss Dog Brewing Company, with Josh's daughter Isabella, who is holding the finalist certificate for Best Socially Distanced Dining.



Geraci's General Manager Patrick Brown, son of owners Greg and Marti Spoth, holding the finalist certificate for Best University Heights Business.



Employees of On The Rise Artisan Breads and Pastries holding the winner certificate for Best Online Ordering and the finalist certificates for Best Pandemic Pivot and Best Curbside Pickup.

BEST OF THE HEIGHTS cont. from page 19

"I miss coffee shops! We have some great ones, and it was such a big part of our community-gathering experience."

"I miss the feeling of being a part of the community that I get when I

go out to local businesses, spend time in the library, or sit in a restaurant. I miss being around people, even if they are strangers."

"I miss the Cleveland Heights [Music] Hop. When that happens, the community feels alive."

"I miss being able to walk down

to Lee and pop into all of our favorite shops, restaurants, and bars. We would grab a cocoa and truffle at Mitchell's, and then meander down to Wine Spot or Boss Dog, catch a movie at Cedar Lee, and then end up at Bottlehouse. We love our neighborhood so much and miss being able to casually enjoy it."

"I miss feeling the energy and atmosphere."

In addition, FutureHeights asked residents what new business they would like to see in the Heights. Responses included unique concepts such as a "waste-free store" and "independent soda shop," and expressed nostalgia for—and hope for the return of—old favorites, such as Blush Boutique and Big Fun.

Places to gather to enjoy activities, such as bowling, rock-climbing, and listening to live music, as well as businesses that cater to an active and healthy lifestyle, such as a "juice bar" and an "outdoor and adventure shop," were also mentioned by respondents.

Some readers suggested offering a monthly parking pass to residents, to enable them to park at any city meter. [Currently, the city of Cleveland Heights is offering free parking at any metered parking spot, as it has done since the beginning of the pandemic.] Others suggested offering more incentives for businesses to locate in the business districts along Noble Road, such as lowering rents and incentivizing locally owned businesses, rather than chains. For a list of the new business ideas voters suggested, send an e-mail to info@futureheights.org.

Following is a list of all the 2021 Best of the Heights winners and finalists:

Best Online Ordering

Winner: On The Rise Artisan Breads and Pastries; Finalists: Foodhisattva, The Stone Oven Bakery & Café, Tommy's restaurant

Best Curbside Pickup

Winner: Tommy's restaurant; Finalists: Zhug, On The Rise Artisan Breads and Pastries

Best Socially Distanced Dining

Winner: Mojo World Eats & Drink Finalists: Boss Dog Brewing Company, Tommy's restaurant

Best Ecologically Friendly Takeout

Winner: Foodhisattva; Finalists: The Stone Oven Bakery & Café, Tommy's restaurant, Zhug

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Originally from nearby University Heights, the Culp's love their two-bedroom apartment overlooking downtown and University Circle. They especially enjoy the fitness center at Judson, in-house live musical performances, and being within walking distance of The Cleveland Museum of Art and The Cleveland Orchestra.

"We've met a great group of people who share our interests. We also feel good about a place that's safe, and so near to two major medical centers, which gives our children peace-of-mind as well," says Peggy.

Read the full story at judsonsmartliving.org/blog

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Heights United Soccer Academy members (left to right) Eric Jackson, Jarrod Robinson, Sean Sullivan, Desi Pelligree and Kristin Wagner holding the finalist certificate for Best Community-Conscious Business.



Deanna Bremer Fisher, executive director of FutureHeights, and Suzanne DeGaetano, owner of Mac's Backs - Books on Coventry, holding the finalist certificates for Best Community-Conscious Business and Best Pandemic Window Display.



Alex Quintana, co-owner with his wife Dawn of Quintana's Barber & Dream Spa, holding the finalist certificate for Best Employee Pandemic Support.



Sean Miller, cafe manager at the Phoenix Coffee Coventry Village location, with the winner certificates for Best Employee Pandemic Support and Best Pandemic Window Display.



Ash O'Connor, founder of Made Cleveland, holding the finalist certificate for Best New Business, has extended her lease in Coventry Village through April.



Jason and Danielle Tilk, owners of Wizbang Circus Theatre, with the finalist certificate for Best New Business.



Tatyana Rehn and John Emerman, owners of Stone Oven, holding finalist certificates for Best Online Ordering and Best Ecologically Friendly Takeout.



Kandice Marchant, owner of Marchant Manor Cheese, with the winner certificate for Best New Business.



John Zagara with the finalist certificate for Best Cleveland Heights Business.



Mojo owner and chef Michael Herschan holding the winner certificate for Best Socially Distanced Dining.



Rachel Gross, co-owner along with her sister, Sarah, of Bialy's Bagels, holds the winner certificate for Best University Heights Business and finalist certificate for Best Employee Pandemic Support.

Best Employee Pandemic Support

Winner: Phoenix Coffee Co.;
Finalists: Bialy's Bagels, Quintana's Barber & Dream Spa, Tommy's restaurant

Best Pandemic Window Display

Winner: Phoenix Coffee Co.;
Finalists: Appletree Books, Mac's Backs-Books on Coventry

Best Pandemic Pivot

Winner: Zhug; Finalists: Tommy's restaurant, On The Rise Artisan Breads and Pastries, The Wine Spot

Best Community-Conscious Business

Winner: Tommy's restaurant
Finalists: Heights United Soccer Academy, Mac's Backs-Books on Coventry

Best New Restaurant

Winner: Chimi; Finalists: Zhug, Foodhisattva, Voodoo Brewery

Best New Business - Other

Winner: Marchant Manor Cheese;
Finalists: Made Cleveland, Wizbang Circus Theatre

Best University Heights Business

Winner: Bialy's Bagels;
Finalist: Geraci's Restaurant

Best Cleveland Heights Business

Winner: Foodhisattva;
Finalists: Zagara's Marketplace, Atma Center

Deanna Bremer Fisher is executive director of FutureHeights and publisher of the Heights Observer.

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Heights Arts celebrates Poetry Month



An Ekphrastic performance from early 2020



Cleveland Heights Poet Laureate Ray McNiece.

Megan Gallagher

Poetry has a way of elevating the meaning of simple words and phrases, while simultaneously allowing readers to create their own interpretations of the art form. The nation's first-ever youth poet laureate, Amanda Gorman, and her speech at the inauguration of President Joe Biden, reminded the nation of the power of words. April is National Poetry Month, and Heights Arts will present its popular *Ekphrastic: Artists Talk and Poets Respond* event in conjunction with its current group and Spotlight exhibitions.

During this program, artists talk about their inspirations and processes for the work on display, and

poets respond to the work in poetry they have written, inspired by those works of art. The series title comes from the Greek word “ekphrasis,” meaning the description of a work of art produced as a vivid, dramatic, verbal description of a visual work of art, either real or imagined.

The current exhibition, *Group Show 2021*, on view at the Heights Arts gallery at 2175 Lee Road, includes paintings, sculptures, and mixed media by artists Julie Friedman, Paula Izydorek, Mark Keffer, Alessandro Ravagnan, and Dante Rodriguez.

In addition, the Spotlight Gallery features artist Bernadette Glorioso's works, inspired by her time in the Cleveland Metroparks.

Any art is open for interpretation, and can even inspire additional art—as *Ekphrastic* curator and

Cleveland Heights Poet Laureate Ray McNiece knows well, as one ongoing Heights Arts program features poetry inspired by visual art.

McNiece was chosen as the 10th Cleveland Heights poet laureate in April 2020 by the Heights Writes Community Team, a group of volunteers passionate about and trained in the literary arts. He is one year into a two-year term, and will be presenting periodic poetry events through April of 2022. A core program of Heights Arts, the Cleveland Heights Poet Laureate program was the first locally, and is the longest-running poet laureate program in the state of Ohio. Said McNiece, “Poetry is about connection; connecting with what is essentially human. So, at this particular time when it’s problematic to be in the company of—let alone actually embrace—others, poetry becomes all the more relevant and meaningful as a way of keeping in touch with what makes us human.”

McNiece assumed the poet laureate title amid the pandemic, meaning he had to adapt to changing times, and reach people “where they’re at.” He works with the Heights Writes team to choose poets for the *Ekphrastic* series, and explained its lasting relevance: “[Poetry is] a way of moving through the world, a bit like a bat sounding and echoing back. But as American poet Archibald MacLeish said, a poem should not mean, but be, so it is the Zen in the moment practice.”

Ekphrastic will be presented via livestream on April 22, at 7 p.m., and the poems will remain on display at Heights Arts through the end of the exhibition, on May 16.

Ekphrastic: Artists Talk and Poets Respond is presented four times a year in conjunction with Heights Arts’ exhibitions.

To learn more about Heights Arts poetry programming, visit www.heightsarts.org/heights-writes.

Megan Gallagher's love of the arts fuels her work as Heights Arts' marketing intern. Contact her at marketing@heightsarts.org.



Bill Wade, Robin VanLear and Celeste Cosentino talk about the benefits of collaboration for CAEC.

CAEP offers guide to nearby arts programs

Judith Ryder

Those seeking art experiences nearby need look no further than Cleveland Arts Education Consortium's (CAEC) *Ready To Go Arts Programs* booklets. Two distinct volumes are regularly reviewed and updated twice a year. January 2021 editions—one for online programs, the other in-person—are available to download from CAEC at <https://class.csuohio.edu/caec/caec>.

All kinds of activities and resources, for all ages, are offered by Heights-based consortium members, which include Ensemble Theatre, Heights Arts, Reaching Heights, and Sing and Swing Cleveland.

Those curious about music can look for Apollo's Fire Baroque Orchestra's Virtual Music School; City Music Cleveland Chamber Orchestra's puppetry and live music in “Daniel and the Snakeman”; or Roots of American Music's “People on the Move” program, which reflects on the ways that people of different races, backgrounds and cultures came to the United States and settled throughout the country.

Creative writers can turn to Cleveland Heights' Lake Erie Ink and its comic writing and journaling programs, or “Inside Out: a Writing Workshop for LGBTQ+ teens,” or “Inkwell: Creative expression exploring identity and community.”

For drama, there's Dobama's annual Marilyn Bianchi Kids' Playwriting Festival, open to any Northeast Ohio student in grades 1-12.

If you're looking for something you don't find in *Ready To Go Arts Programs* guides, check out CAEC's online member roster, a complete list of member organizations in the Heights and Northeast Ohio. Click any organization for contact and programing information.

Judith Ryder is a Cleveland Heights resident, former director of Cleveland Opera on Tour, and founder-manager of CAEC.

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COBB cont. from page 1

On May 21, 2020, Council President Jason Stein announced in a Facebook post that he and the other five council members had selected four finalists from among the applicants: Craig Cobb, Anthony Cuda, Anthony Mattox Jr., and Robert Koonce.

Thus began a series of lengthy negotiations among the council members, each of whom had a preferred candidate among the finalists; but they remained unable to reach an agreement on who should fill the seat.

Community members were angry at the months-long stalemate. On Jan. 8, resident Garry Kanter filed a complaint with the Court of Common Pleas to compel city council to act to fill the vacancy; it was dismissed on March 5. At the Jan. 19 city council meeting, the Heights League of Women Voters issued a statement chiding council for not selecting a replacement and noting that "this failure to fill the vacancy has

disturbed Cleveland Heights residents, who see this as a symptom of council dysfunction."

Russell said that she decided to act because it was in the best interests of the community, and she wanted to move things forward.

Seren, who cast the lone dissenting vote, said that he was voting on principle. "I think that it is generally a bad move to appoint someone twice. . . . You're basically providing that person incumbent advantage on two occasions," said Seren.

Cobb previously had been appointed to Cleveland Heights City Council on April 2, 2019, to fill the seat vacated by Cheryl Stephens when she resigned after being elected to Cuyahoga County Council. Cobb then ran against Davida Russell for that seat in 2019, and lost.

"I am shocked by the unexpected development at tonight's meeting," said Cobb. "I can't imagine how

difficult and courageous it was for Ms. Russell to set aside her personal feelings she had against a former opponent to appoint them to come back to serve with her on council. If she had not been willing to change her mind for the good of the city, the stalemate over the appointment may have continued to the end of the year."

Cobb said that he is eager to "get back to work with my colleagues on council to address the challenges the city faces and help to make sure that our elected mayor in 2022 has what she/he needs to be successful on day one in office." While he said that he is "still digesting" what happened, he said he expects to run for city council in this year's election. Four CH council seats will be on the ballot this November.

Cobb, a branch legal office managing attorney for Farmers Insurance Exchange, served as chair of the city's Planning Commission and as a member of its Charter Review

Commission. Following his previous appointment to CH City Council, he served from April 2019 through December 2019. In January 2020, he joined the FutureHeights Board of Directors—a position he will vacate now that he has been appointed to council.

Deanna Bremer Fisher is executive director of FutureHeights and publisher of the Heights Observer.

Shop Local

Some things do change



SONGS AND STORIES

David Budin

Our next-door neighbor was going to be singing on the Gene Carroll Show on a Sunday morning in 1958. We were excited because the teenager would be competing for some kind of prize and the opportunity to perform on the program again. So, my mother bought 100 postcards—printed with postage worth 3 cents each—and made us all fill them out with the kid’s name on them and address them to WEWS Channel 5 to vote for him.

Our 100 postcards weren’t enough. The next-door neighbor kid lost, though he had performed well. But he had sung “I Believe,” an inspirational ballad. “I believe for every drop of rain that falls, a flower grows,” it begins. The song had been a hit in 1953 for Frankie Laine, and then covered by Elvis Presley, Frank Sinatra, Pat Boone, and many others.

Our friend Amzie did it well. But the winner was probably some white kid, singing something like Bobby Darin’s “Splish Splash.” Oh, yeah—did I mention that Amzie was Black? And that he wasn’t really, exactly, our next-door neighbor?

We lived on Belmar, in the first

house after the apartment building that fronted Mayfield. Amzie lived in that apartment building, in the basement, with the only Black family in the building, or on the street, or—almost—in the whole city. His father was the custodian in the building, which was, I believe, the only way Black people got to live in Cleveland Heights at that time. He was the only Black kid I remember at Coventry School at that time.

My great-aunt, my father’s father’s sister-in-law, who owned the house we lived in and who lived in the downstairs unit, was racist enough that I picked up on it when I was very young, like 6 years old. Even at that age, I was offended by some things she said and couldn’t understand why she would say them. And it wasn’t just she, in my family, who said these things; it was pretty much my grandparents’ whole generation—ironically, Jews who had been persecuted themselves, in Europe, which had prompted their move to this country in the early 1900s. (And whether they knew it or not, people didn’t like them too much when they got here, either.) But their racism was not passed down to my parents’ generation, nor to mine.

Even when I went to Heights High in the mid-to-late-’60s, when the school’s population was around 3,000, there were still hardly any Black kids there. Once, when I was lecturing a journalism class at Heights, in the early 2000s, I started by saying that when I had been a student there, I knew literally every Black kid in the school. There were cries of disbelief.

I said, “No, really—I did. All six of them.” They could scarcely believe that, either.

But it was true. Cleveland Heights was pretty happily completely white. But around that time—mid-’60s—many of the original homeowners, especially in my neighborhood, north and east of Coventry and Mayfield roads, started moving out and/or dying; and their kids, who had already moved to University Heights or South Euclid or Beachwood (or Florida or Arizona) started selling their parents’ houses or renting them out, many to Black people who had been living in Cleveland or East Cleveland. That only hastened white flight.

In my neighborhood, white families merely fled. In more upscale areas they took stronger actions, like bombing houses that had been sold to Black people. And, of course, conspiring with real estate agents to keep them out altogether.

Susan Kaeser, who also writes for the *Heights Observer*, has written a book about all of this. *Resisting Segregation: Cleveland Heights Activists Shape Their Community, 1964-1976*, published by Cleveland Landmarks Press, delves into the history of racism in housing in the Heights, and the organizations that formed to help the situation, such as the Committee to Improve Community Relations (CICR), in 1970, and the Heights Community Congress (HCC), beginning in 1972.

I moved out of my parents’ house in late 1967. The first Black family moved onto the street, across from my parents, in around 1974. By 1978,



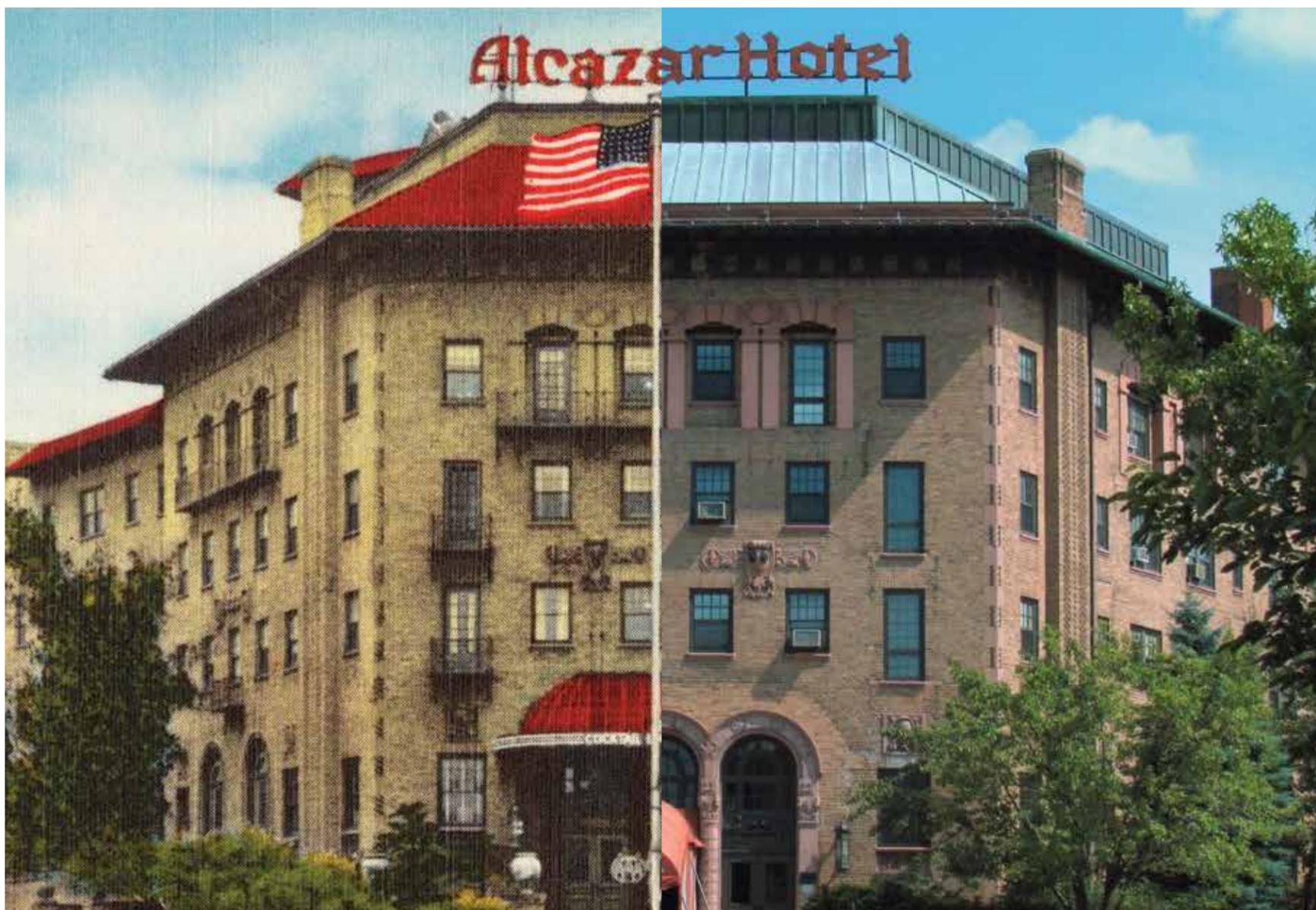
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I was sitting with friends at a playground one summer night in 1967, when this house on E. Overlook was bombed. We ran over to it and got there just as the fire trucks arrived.

my parents were practically the only white people left on the street. A couple of years later, one of the members of that first Black family told my parents they were moving. My father asked, “Why? I thought you liked it here.” The woman said, “We do. But we moved here because we wanted to live in an integrated neighborhood. And this isn’t.”

With the help of those organizations, racial relations and balance in Cleveland Heights became more normalized. By the time my kids started school, in the early ’90s, they were in the minority (in the public schools), and it took them years to figure out that there was any difference between us and the Black families they knew, which would not have pleased my relatives, just two generations away.

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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