PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN
Saturday, August 22, 2020; Women's Suffrage Walk – A Celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the Ratification of the 19th Amendment, Professor Avenue in Tremont: For African American women the fight for voting rights included a struggle for both gender and racial equity.

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Plain Press

Cleveland's Near Westside Newspaper

Empowering Youth, Exploring Justice (EYEJ) works to close the digital divide

by Colin Murnan

The EYEJ (Empowering Youth, Exploring Justice) is hard at work trying to close the digital divide in Cleveland. Founded in 2013, the organization works to give voice to the youth and promote change for the greater good in Cleveland.

As the EYEJ press release states, "Of the 38,000 students and 27,000 families in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD), 40% of those families do not have access to broadband internet in their homes and 3⁄4 of students do not have access to devices, according to CMSD Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Eric Gordon from the Cleveland Metropolitan School District." [Editor's Note: To address this issue, CMSD CEO Gordon said last school year the district distributed 16,000 devices with the goal of having at least one device per family. Gordon said the goal this school year is to have a device for each student.]

NEWS ANALYSIS

The enormity of this problem has become increasingly evident now that Cleveland schools are making the switch to all online, and students without internet access are facing an uphill battle for education.

Diamond Bottoson, an incoming high school senior and member of the EYEJ youth council, talked about the problem.

"The first nine weeks are online, completely remote," Bottoson said. "If you don't have Wi-Fi or anything, how are you going to be able to attend class, stay up to date on everything?"

The problem has been acknowledged by several organizations in Cleveland, but so far there hasn't been an urgent enough plan to provide these students with the connection they need for the Fall.

"A lot of the proposed solutions involve installing hotspots or giving CMSD family homes a hotspot, which is a step in the right direction, for sure, but it's a temporary, band-aid solution," community organizer Delaney Jones said. "Hotpots are not meant to be long-term connectivity solutions . . . they're not a reliable, long-term solution for connectivity for entire neighborhoods."

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PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN
Thursday, August 20, 2020; St. Luke's Episcopal Church, 1349 W. 78th Street: Children from kindergarten to grade 12 pick up book bags filled with school supplies. Moriah Thomas, age 10, and Aiden Lester, age 8, don their new book bags. Moriah Thomas is in the 5th grade, and Aiden Lester is in the 3rd grade. Both are students at the Cleveland Metropolitan School District's Halle School, and will start the school year remotely with online education.

PHOTO COURTESY OF AUTUMN BLAND
Lynn Rodemann, 39, stands in front of a mural on E. 55th and Fleet Avenue created by local artist Scott Pickering in Slavic Village.

COVID-19 evictions could leave more women without a vote

by Malcolm Burnley and Rachel Dissell, *The Fuller Project*

This story was originally published by The Fuller Project, a nonprofit newsroom reporting on issues that affect women.

Lynn Rodemann walked up the driveway, a mask fixed tightly to her face.

A mother of five welcomed her into the backyard, where she was cleaning up the colorful, damp decorations from a child's birthday party the evening before.

Rodemann, a community outreach specialist, is part of a pandemic response team traversing Slavic Village to check on residents and offer information on a rent assistance program – and an application to vote by mail in the upcoming November presidential election.

Working the overnight shift as a corrections officer at a women's prison during a pandemic, coupled with limited childcare options, is a daily struggle, the woman said.

"You could see how tired she was," says Rodemann, who broke social distancing protocol to give the woman,

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Cleveland Tax Abatement Study's recommendations stir policy debate

by Bruce Checefsky

Michael H. Norton, Chief Policy Analyst at Reinvestment Fund, summarized the 109-page Cleveland Tax Abatement Study at the Committee of the Whole Council Meeting streamed live on July 29 on YouTube. He concluded the presentation with six broad recommendations: Cleveland should continue to offer tax abatement for residential properties tied to green construction standards; cap the maximum abated value for single family abatements at $300,000; implement a "but-for" requirement for market rate multi-family projects with abatement values above $5 million; establish a framework for community benefits agreements (CBAs) for developers of multi-family market rate in block groups experiencing high displacement pressure; develop a specific housing market displacement pressure threshold under which the City would automatically trigger adjustments to the tax abatement time period and percentage by block group; and implement process improvements to enhance transparency and streamline the application timelines.(https://www.reinvestment.com/wpcontent/uploads/2020/07/Reinvestment-Fund_Report-ClevelandTaxAbatements-July2020.pdf)

NEWS ANALYSIS

When it came to housing displacement concerns in high construction areas like Tremont, Ohio City, and Detroit Shoreway, Ward 12 Councilman Anthony Brancatelli was quick to point out the study showed 'little effect' of displacement due to new construction. However, Norton and his research team at Reinvestment Fund revealed that property tax bills are impacted by changing property assessments "which could be influenced by abatement-induced renovations or new construction" or changing millage rates from the City, County, and school district.

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PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN
Saturday, August 22, 2020; MoveOn's Nationwide Action to Save the United States Postal Service, Cleveland Main Post Office, Orange Avenue: Protesters express their concerns about cutbacks at the Postal Service that have led to delays in mail delivery and the possible impact of mail service cuts on timely delivery of ballots during the November election.

PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN

Saturday, August 22, 2020; Our Neighborhood Votes Celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the Passage of the 19th Amendment enshrining the right of women to vote, Professor Avenue, Tremont neighborhood: (L-R) Seronica Powell and Marian Heffernan work to register new voters and pass out vote by mail applications.

Coping with COVID Collaboration seeks stories and ideas about experiences of Clevelanders during pandemic

Coping with COVID is a collaboration between 90.3 WCPN/ideastream and more than a dozen community news outlets, including the *Plain Press*. Our aim is to bring you more stories about the experience of Clevelanders during the pandemic. We hope to learn how the virus is impacting your ability to work, pay bills, stay healthy, and raise and educate children. We also want to know how people are connecting and supporting each other.

Most importantly, we want these stories and ideas to come from you.

• Do you have unanswered questions about the coronavirus, how it spreads, or the long-term effects of the disease?

• Has the virus affected your life or future plans in ways large or small that you didn't expect?

• Are you currently receiving assistance with rent or utilities? Do you have concerns about how long that help will last?

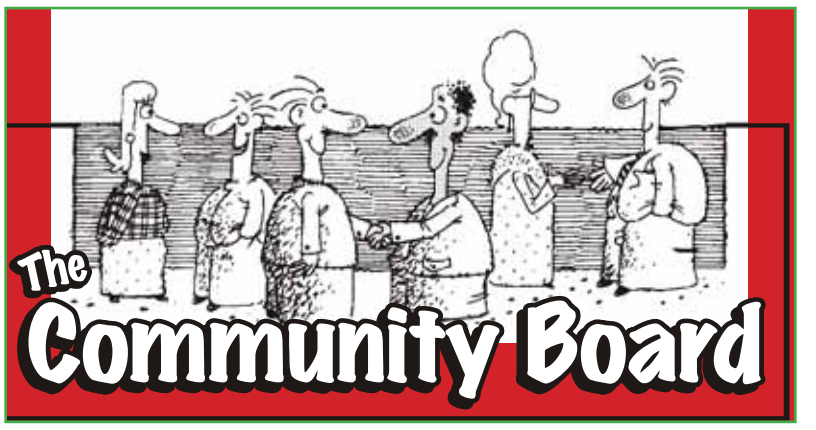
• How are you managing to work? Have you found childcare? Or are you staying home? How will you deal with schools reopening, if they do?

• Have you and your neighbors come up with creative ways to make ends meet and take care of each other during this time?

• How have you dealt with isolation? Have you reached out for help? Or relied on or given support to family, friends or neighbors?

Tell us what questions you have or share story ideas here: **https://tinyurl.com/CleCoronaIdeas**

Please cc the *Plain Press* when you send your stories and ideas to the Coping with COVID Collaborative: plainpress@gmail.com



The Plain Press Community Board is a listing of a variety of free activities and resources for neighborhoods served by the Plain Press. The printing of the Community Board is sponsored by Organize! Ohio through donations from readers and supporters.

ADVOCACY

KEEP COVID-19 OUT OF OHIO JAILS, PRISONS AND COURTS: Visit the Ohio Immigrant Alliance website at www.ohioimmigrant.org for a link to a petition.

POOR PEOPLE'S MORAL JUSTICE JUBILEE POLICY PLATFORM: The legislative and Policy Priorities of the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival: download a copy of the platform at: www.poorpeoplescampaign.org.

BENEFITS

STIMULUS CHECKS: If you have no income or your income is less than $12,200 and you did not file a tax return, you may be missing out on claiming your stimulus check! Cuyahoga County which is one of the poorest and most populous counties, has tens of thousands of residents who are eligible for the $1,200 stimulus checks and have not yet received them. Here are tools that can be used to ensure that those who are "non-filers" and eligible to receive the stimulus payments get them: For those with internet access you can apply today using the "nonfilers: enter payment info here" tool at freefilefillableforms.com. For those who do not have easy access to the internet, or if more information and assistance is needed, dial 211 for assistance. The deadline to apply is October 15th.

INTERVIEW ABOUT YOUR BENEFITS: Northern Ohioans for Budget Legislation Equality wants to hear about your experiences applying for or renewing your benefits like food stamps or Medicaid. To get information to improve the system, they are doing short interviews with people on benefits. If you can do a brief interview, contact Jacie at jacie@organizeohio.org or call (216) 651-2606.

HOW TO APPLY FOR PUBLIC BENEFITS: Visit www.benefits.ohio.gov to apply for food, medical, cash, and childcare assistance. Available 24 hours, 7 days a week. Or call the Eligibility Contact Center at 1-844-640-OHIO (6446) for real-time eligibility and case changes for food, cash and medical assistance. Available Monday - Friday 8:00a.m. to 4:00p.m.

BUSINESS & LABOR

LEGAL AID WORKER INFORMATION LINE: Call 216-861-5899 to get answers to your employment questions.

OHIO UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS: Visit unemployment.ohio.gov (available 24 hours a day) or try calling 877-644-6562 or TTY -614-387-8408 – Monday thru Friday 7 a.m. – 7 p.m. or Saturdays 9 a.m. -5 p.m. or Sundays 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

CENSUS

NORTHERN OHIOANS FOR BUDGET LEGISLATION EQUALITY (NOBLE), urges you to take the Census right now! The Federal Government sends Ohio $2,880 per person to support health, human services, and education programs. The State stands to lose this amount for each person not counted! PLEASE TAKE THE CENSUS RIGHT NOW AND PASS THIS INFORMATION ALONG! CALL: 1-844-330-2020 or VISIT: www.my2020census.gov to complete the Census today!

CITY SERVICES

FREE EVICTION HELP: The Right to Counsel – Cleveland Program (RTC-C) gives Clevelanders facing eviction living at or below the federal poverty line with at least one child the right to free legal help in Housing Court. If you are facing eviction, have a child, and are living at/below the federal poverty contact Legal Aid online at FreeEvictionHelp.org or call 216.687.1900.

RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM: If you are having trouble paying your rent because of Covid-19, you may be eligible for Rental Assistance from the City of Cleveland or Cuyahoga County. Visit neorenthelp.org now to apply and submit all required documents, or call the hotline, 833.377.RENT (7368).

COMMUNITY

CUDELL IMPROVEMENT AND DETROIT SHOREWAY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION offer a list of resources at cudell.com/coronavirus or www.dscdo.org. The list includes free meals and free food banks and distributions in the Detroit Shoreway, Cudell and Edgewater neighborhoods. The organizations have also created a list of businesses selling take-out food. The list is available at www.dscdo.org/food.

METROWEST offers a list of resources for residents of the Brooklyn Centre, Clark Fulton and Stockyard neighborhoods on its website at www.metrowestcle.org. They are also seeking input from residents for a neighborhood plan.

OHIO CITY INCORPORATED lists local resources, information and delivery food options in the Ohio City neighborhood at www.ohiocity.org/covid19.

WESTOWN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (CDC) offers a list of resources for the Westown neighborhood on its website at: www.westowncdc.org. Westown CDC released a Racial Equity Economic Development Statement and challenges other community development organizations to do the same.

CONSENT DECREE

CLEVELAND COMMUNITY POLICE COMMISSION has two working groups the Accountability Work Group and the Interactions with Youth Work Group. For more information about joining a work group send an email to info@clecpc.org or call 216-505-5920.

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) RESOURCES

MASK COMPLIANCE: Cuyahoga County has an interactive map on its website at www.cuyahogacounty.us/maskcompliance . You can enter the address of a business and check for their mask compliance record and for any violations. You can add reviews of businesses with favorable or unfavorable reports of conduct of staff or customers. Complaints can also be submitted by phone at: 216-698-5050.

CLEVELAND PANDEMIC RESPONSE – COVID19 COMMUNITY HUB, at Cleveland.recovers.org, offers assistance to individuals and families with a need by linking them to goods and services that they need. The site also connects those who want to donate supplies to those that need them. Volunteers can also use the site to connect with organizations that need them.

CONNECTED IN CLE: offers a comprehensive list of local resources and help for COVID-19, link via freshwatercleveland.com

CUYAHOGA COUNTY CORONAVIRUS HELP LINE: 855-711-3035.

METROHEALTH 24/7 COVID-19 HOTLINE: 440-59-COVID or 440-592-6843

EDUCATION

COMPUTER BASICS: Join Detroit Shoreway's judgement-free computer lessons with Alicia, Digital Literacy Coordinator, **each Monday at 9am** on Facebook Live. Please help a loved one who is interested in computer basics to join us! Watch the live lessons on Monday mornings at facebook.com/detroitshorewayor search "Detroit Shoreway Community Development Oganization" in your Facebook app. For questions, call Alicia at 216.961.9073 ext. 235. You can

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Resources available for determining educational options for area students

There are a number of resources for parents and students interested in finding out how local schools are approaching this upcoming school year. While the Cleveland Metropolitan School District has announced its first quarter (9 weeks) will happen remotely with online education, information on other charter and private schools and their plans have received less publicity. Area schools offer a mix of online and in person educational options.

The Cleveland Transformation Alliance website lists school reopening plans for the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, Cleveland Charter Schools and a number of area non-religious private schools. The Cleveland Transformation Alliance website is: mycleschool.org. At its August 17th Board meeting, The Cleveland Transformation Alliance staff said they were doing their best to keep the information up to date.

For area Catholic Schools information can be obtained by contacting the individual schools: St. Rocco School, 216-961-8557; St. Ignatius of Antioch School, 216-677-0535; Our Lady of Mt. Carmel School, 216-281-7486 or www.OLMC-Cleveland.org; and Metro Catholic School, 216-281-4044, est. 128 or www.metrocatholic.org.

Urban Community School can be contacted at: 216-939-8330.

PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN

Saturday, August 22, 2020; Our Neighborhood Votes Celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the Passage of the 19th Amendment enshrining the right of women to vote, Professor Avenue, Tremont neighborhood: (L-R) Shannon Adams, Becca Riker and Sandy Smith are ready to help register new voters. Sandy Smith urged voters to check and update, if necessary, their registration, or request an absentee ballot by visiting: 443vote.com.

Living with the Bear: *"Over and over again in my practice I saw kids who had experienced terrifying situations. For one patient, the bear was his dad who verbally demeaned and physically abused his mom."* -- Nadine Harris, M.D.

The Elephant In The Room

To the Editor:

Cultures across our nation have the absolute right to raise their children the way they seem fit. The Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment protects this liberty, incorporating "the right to marry, establish a home, and bring up children." However, this amendment does not give parents or caregivers the right to emotionally, physically, and sexually degrade each other in the presence of their own young, influential children.

LETTER

In the United States, between 4.5 million and 15 million children are exposed to physical violence in the home. The nonprofit research organization Child Trends reported in 2018, approximately 4.5 million children had seen or heard parents or other adults use offensive language, slapping, hitting, kicking, or punching each other in the home. If this pattern of ongoing destructive behavior among adults in the home is not professionally addressed, especially during a child's developmental years, there is a higher risk of continuing the cycle of violence within the family structure over the years.

Together, we must address the extraordinary number of American children who are witnessing domestic violence in the home at a very young age. These adverse childhood experiences can negatively alter a child's behavior long-term if buffers are not in place. Either way, any number or level of severity of this type of an early childhood experience, parental and caregiver support is pivotal to overcome a young child's trauma over time. Without assistance, there may be health consequences, including physical, psychological, and developmental disruptions throughout his/her life. Mental health consequences may include aggressive behavior, anxiety, academic problems, and difficulty interacting with peers.

When the child's stress-response system is over-activated too frequently by witnessing ongoing incidents of domestic violence in the home (toxic stress), simultaneously, the hormone "cortisol" enters the child's bloodstream more frequently. This prolonged activation of cortisol sends a biological message to inhibit or disrupt the development of the child's brain and immune system. Moreover, ongoing high levels of cortisol in the child's developmental years can even affect how DNA is read and transcribed. The book, *The Deepest Well* by Nanine Burke Harris, explains this biological concept very well for parents and caregivers to understand this vital issue. By understanding the connection between witnessing ongoing adversity experiences in the home and its long-term, physiological effects on a developing child's body, healing can begin within the family structure.

In my opinion, educating the public on adverse childhood experiences and their biological effects on the developing child can be accomplished if we have the will and funding to do so. Together, we need to come up with a plan that provides child-trauma prevention mobile classroom units that would be distributed throughout the districts of Cleveland. An example of a name for this project may be The Cleveland Domestic Violence Reduction Project (CDVRP) that will provide educational services to schools, churches, community centers, libraries, businesses and other institutions if needed on a regularly scheduled basis. The mission is to increase access to preventative mental healthcare for families living in Cleveland communities.

Example goals of this project may be:

- To reduce the risks of childhood trauma exposure in the communities of Cleveland.
- To reduce incidents of domestic and sexual violence in the communities of Cleveland.
- To educate middle and high school students on the awareness and prevention of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's).

An example of staffing may be the following:

A plan to purchase five fully equipped mobile units (laptops, smartboards, etc…) which will be staffed with a social worker, paralegal, child psychologist, teacher and a secretary. The child psychologist will provide professional, preventative, educational support services to students who were exposed or at risk of being exposed to emotional, social, behavioral and academic challenges. The psychologist will administer surveys/tests to help guide instruction for students who are at risk of adverse childhood experiences. The child psychologist will be the lead instructor. The social worker will assist the child psychologists by researching and providing all requested educational materials related to human developmental psychology/ACES needed for instruction. The social worker will also manage and provide data analysis reports related to the project. The social worker will assist the lead instructors. The legal assistant will assist the child psychologists by researching and providing all requested educational materials/documents related to family law needed for instruction. The legal assistant will assist the lead instructors. The curriculum specialist will develop, facilitate and evaluate the mobile unit curriculum and prepare all lessons plans for the lead instructors. The curriculum specialist will assist the lead instructors on surveys/tests to help guide instruction. The curriculum specialists will be in constant communications with the social worker and legal assistant for any requested updated, educational materials needed from the lead instructors for preparing updated lesson plans. The secretary will assist the social worker on managing and providing data analysis reports. The secretary will be in charge of scheduling appointments for the mobile unit. The secretary will assist on producing any reports the lead instructors may need for future data analysis reports.

Finally, now is the time to address the elephant in the room head on. We must all come together to figure out how we as a society can reduce the long-term exposure of domestic violence in all communities of Northeast Ohio.

Michael Lauer, Director of the Unforgiving Light Society, Lakewood, Ohio

Editor's Note: *To reach the Unforgiving Light Society send an email to: theunforgivinglightsociety@gmail.com*

DIGITAL DIVIDE

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The current timelines for hotspot projects are around 2-5 years, much too long for students that need internet now.

"We really can't wait," Bottoson said. "We need more of a sense of urgency because 2-5 years is a very long time and we really don't have that much time."

It's important to look at how neighborhoods in Cleveland arrived at this predicament, with some neighborhoods having full internet access while others are left behind. The term digital redlining has been used as a way of explanation.

"[Redlining] refers to housing policies that started way back in the 1930s. Basically, banks mapped out neighborhoods and decided which neighborhoods were deserving of good loans for their houses and which neighborhoods could not get loans for their houses," Jones explained. "And this was largely based on average income of the neighborhood and the racial makeup of the neighborhood. It was intentionally discriminating against low-income, African American communities."

"Those policies . . . had really lasting impacts on the way neighborhood makeups were shaped. And we see a lot of the effects of the redlining policies today," Jones said.

The old redlining has evolved into a modern form, which Jones talked about.

"When we talk about digital redlining," Jones said, "we're talking about similar intentional policy that has to do with internet connectivity and these big name internet providers intentionally discriminating against low income, usually African-American neighborhoods in terms of the speeds that they're able to get on their internet."

But there are achievable solutions to the current problem. The answer would involve looking at internet in a new way, much different than the usual profit-driven method.

"There's other models of internet connectivity that make sense," Jones said. "Normally the way we think of providing internet, the way that it's been done before in the United States, is with routers . . . we're advocating for a shift in which we view internet as a public utility, as a municipally owned utility that is community-owned."

The solution would involve constructing internet nodes on top of community buildings that give connectivity to the entire community.

"Something more communal, that's treated like a public utility, is really what's needed, and it needs to get done quickly," Jones said. "We can't wait two years, which are what these other proposals timelines are."

Diamond Bottoson talked about the importance of getting education to the youth.

"It is very important to have leaders within the youth today, because we are the generation that is going to lead once the current people are out of power," Bottoson said. "I think it's very important to have somebody that has good intentions for the world."

ATTENTION PLAIN PRESS READERS

Please feel free to pick up extra copies of the *Plain Press* to drop on a neighbor's or friend's porch. The *Plain Press* distribution crew will monitor many of our distribution points and provide additional newspapers as they run out. Thank you for helping to bring the *Plain Press* to those who are staying at home.

"He Loves to Fight for all the Little Guys"

After 30 years as a MetroHealth doctor, and a number of years before that serving as a community organizer, Doug Van Auken is set to retire. Doug Van Auken's mission in life was perhaps best captured in that headline from a 1984 *Plain Dealer* profile, "He Loves to Fight for all the Little Guys."

His lifetime of fighting for social justice began as a high school student when he volunteered to picket grocery and other stores on behalf of a national grape boycott organized by the fledgling United Farm Workers Union (UFW).

In 1976, after he graduated from Ohio University, both Phi Beta Kappa and Summa Cum Laude, with a B.A. in Government he joined the organizing staff of the United Farm Workers Union and worked in both in New York City and San Francisco.

He returned to Cleveland to work as a community organizer for the Collinwood Community Congress (CCC), a community organization working in both north and south Collinwood.

PHOTO BY JOHN CORLETT

March 2018, March for Our Lives Rally in Downtown Cleveland: Doug Van Auken joins this rally in response to the Parkland School shootings.

Shortly thereafter, the Executive Director of Citizens to Bring Broadway Back (CBBB) "stole" Doug from CCC to work in the North Broadway neighborhood, organizing block clubs and building lasting relationships with the residents. Doug became Executive Director, where he made many important contributions to protecting the neighborhood. These included a Community Reinvestment Act challenge against National City Bank for redlining in Cleveland, where he combined his commitments to Broadway and the UFW with a successful campaign to prevent the large bank from gobbling up a small community bank in the heart of farmworker country in Northwest Ohio.

Doug left CBBB and joined the staff of the West Side Community House where he was again involved in neighborhood issues and worked closely with Low Income People Together, a welfare rights organization. While at the West Side Community House, Doug staffed a coalition of organizations working to establish emergency housing for the mentally ill. Bridgeway, then known as the West Side Community Mental Health Center, established such a program.

During Doug's time at the West Side Community House there were many articles in the *Plain Press* about Low Income People Together and efforts of its members to improve programs and services to the poor. During this time period, Doug was also involved with the efforts of groups such as the Emergency Shelter Coalition and Citizens for a Fair Budget.

In 1984, he joined a Witness for Peace delegation and traveled to Nicaragua to oppose a secret war being supported by the U.S. Government. This was followed by a trip to Washington, D.C. to lobby members of Congress to cut off funding for the Reagan- backed "contras".

In 1987, Doug was one of the organizers of Citizens to Save Our Metro Health which successfully blocked a proposal to convert the MetroHealth Medical System from a public hospital to a private hospital. Citizens to Save Our Metro Health worked out of Merrick House. Gail Long, who served as Merrick House's executive director at the time, recalls Doug was real-focused and a good organizer. "He kept us going, strategized. He didn't let us forget what our mission was," said Long. Today the hospital is one of the largest, and most respected public hospitals in the United States.

In the mid-80s Doug enrolled as a Pre-Med student at Cleveland State University, attending night classes, to prepare for gaining admission to the Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine. He quickly distinguished himself as a leader and was awarded The Sue Rubenstein Prize; awarded to 4th year students showing significant involvement in meeting social needs through medicine. He graduated with his M.D. from the Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine in 1990. He performed his residency at the MetroHealth Medical Center, Department of Family Practice.

This led to a 30-year career as a family medicine doctor with the MetroHealth System, nearly all of that time was spent providing care at the former McCafferty Health Center on the City's Near West Side - helping to open the family medicine program at the Thomas J. McCafferty Health Center.

Doug is fluent in Spanish and initiated the first MetroHealth collaboration with the Hispanic Urban Minority Alcoholism and Drug. Abuse Outreach Program (HUMADAOP) serving as their medical director. He also served on the board of Nueva Luz Urban Outreach Program and was active with the Hispanic Senior Center. He was a founding board member of the Jeffrey D. Heard Center a drop-in program and nighttime shelter for persons with HIV in 1998 that primarily served persons of color.

Doug is a committed teacher and is an Assistant Professor, Family Practice at the Case Western Reserve University, School of Medicine, and has been on the faculty of the MetroHealth Infectious Disease (HIV) Clinic since 1990. He has precepted dozens of medical students over the course of his career at MetroHealth.

In 1988 Doug organized the largest hearing in the state on LGBT discrimination in Ohio seven years after Governor Richard Celeste had issued an executive order banning discrimination based on sexual orientation in state employment. In 1990 he was appointed to the State of Ohio's Advisory Committee on Gay and Lesbian Issues. In 1993 he was elected President of the Northern Ohio Physicians for Human Rights, the Cleveland chapter of the American Association of Physicians for Human Rights. The organization provided LGBT health care referrals, HIV and AIDS education, advocacy, and public education at a time when few LGBT health care providers were willing to be out of the closet. He was a hotline volunteer and a board member of the Cleveland LGBT Center in the 1990s.

Doug Van Auken was the founding Physician of the Federacion Dominicana de Organizaciones Populares, a sponsored medical clinic in the Dominican Republic. Over 100 CWRU medical, dental, nursing and other students rotated through the clinic and gained medical experience between 1995-2012. In 2007, he was a founding physician of MetroHealth's Pride Clinic - an LGBTQ focused clinic. It was the first hospital-based LGBTQ focused clinic in the United States. For nearly 25 years, 1989 to 2013, he organized an annual LGBT lecture for medical students at the Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine. He now leads the MetroHealth Pride Clinic at Cleveland's LGBT Community Center.

Doug has been honored with a number of awards over the years. He was honored by West Side Community House in 1985. In 2001 he received the Voice Against Silence Award from the AIDS Task Force of Greater Cleveland. In 2003 he received the distinguished Leonard Tow Humanism in Medicine Award presented by the Arnold P. Gold Foundation. In 2012 he was awarded the LGBT Heritage Award for Health Care by the City of Cleveland. In 2018 he received the Lifetime Achievement Award, Saul Ramos Award from Nueva Luz.

He is a member of the American Academy of Family Physicians and the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association. He has provided countless presentations for these groups and other in Greater Cleveland, in Ohio, and across the country.

Doug is also devoted to his family; helping take care of his late mother Lois and father Robert. He is the proud father of Andy Van Auken and married to John Corlett. He is never one to forget a birthday and is always shipping packages off to relatives and friends. He is kind and generous and provides financial support to scores of organizations and individuals that "fight for all the little guys."

COVID-19 EVICTIONS

continued from page one

who started to cry, a hug. "I was so devastated for her."

After that encounter, she wondered how a mom like the one she had met could have any energy left to worry about voting. A few days later, Rodemann returned to the home with a care package: masks, alcohol wipes and a thermometer.

"If there's a possibility that they're losing their house, they don't give a shit about voting," says 39-year-old Rodemann, who has worked for Slavic Village Development in the historic but under-resourced neighborhood for six years.

"They're worried about keeping a roof over their head and still eating."

And just as fears of evictions remain in this community 10 minutes south of downtown Cleveland, it's a concern facing thousands of Americans nationwide.

Policy experts predict an "avalanche" of evictions to hit low-income renters across the country this fall. Women are expected to be the majority of the 30 to 40 million Americans at risk of eviction by year's end, according to findings from the Aspen Institute. If income-insecure women face losing their homes - and access to a stable address to receive voting registration, ballots, applications, and critical change-of-address forms - this could impact how many of them vote in the upcoming presidential election, experts say, adding this could also have a significant impact on the outcome of the November election.

"These aren't issues that people look at together; but they should be looking at them together," says Shailly Gupta Barnes, policy director for the Poor People's Campaign and the Kairos Center.

A recent National Public Radio (NPR) analysis found neighborhoods with higher evictions had lower voter turnout than the rest of the city, including other low-income neighborhoods. In Slavic Village, the worry is that voter turnout, which hasn't rebounded from the last housing crisis more than a decade ago, could get worse. In 2016, only 38.5 percent of eligible voters cast ballots, the second-lowest among neighborhoods in the city.

Cleveland and Cuyahoga County have allotted $18.1 million in federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and Community Development Block Grant money to help renters. As she goes door-to-door, Rodemann and others spread the word about the rental assistance program, administered by CHN Housing Partners, a housing nonprofit, which can cover rent for up to three months.

Energizing people to vote in a community like Slavic Village could prove difficult. The same has been true for encouraging people to fill out the U.S. Census.

The neighborhood has followed the pattern of other industrial and urban communities: a booming population at the start of the century, then deindustrialization post World War II, urban flight, and declining populations, empty homes and increases in poverty and crime rates. By the Great Recession, the 5-square-mile neighborhood had more foreclosures in its 44105 zip code during the spring and summer of 2007 than any other zip code in the United States. The housing market, then in crisis across the country, was devastated in Slavic Village. As it continues its climb to recovery, the community again staves off another wave of housing displacement wrought by COVID-19.

Now get-out-the-vote efforts are more difficult as coronavirus cases top 5 million in the U.S. and nearly 4,500 in Cleveland. That's why a vote-by-mail application is included in the same handout packet alongside rent payment assistance information that Rodemann hands out.

Organizers are also helping voters navigate Ohio's ballot request process through smaller hands-on events at places like Daisy's Ice Cream on Fleet Avenue-and Neighborhood Pets, a local pet food pantry and resource center.

Women have consistently outpaced men in voter turnout across racial groups and education levels since the 1980s. And because women, as a voting bloc, have historically leaned toward Democratic party candidates, evictions could mean a partisan impact. In 2016, then -Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton led among women voters by 13 percent compared to President Donald Trump. That gap has widened in 2020, putting former Vice President Joe Biden ahead of President Trump by 25 percent among women voters, according to recent polling.

For now, the anticipated surge in evictions hasn't manifested. In July, there were 423 eviction filings in Cleveland, down 55 percent from the same month the year prior. But there's reason to believe the data doesn't yet reflect the situation to come.

The national moratorium on evictions — a 120-day freeze that applied to many renters and was part of the CARES Act — was lifted in July. On August 11, President Trump said: "We are stopping evictions. We're not going to let that happen," But the president's top economic policy analyst, Larry Kudlow, walked back those comments days later.

Meanwhile, Congress has been unable to agree on further relief for keeping people in their homes, despite the success of CARES Act protections.

"Eviction and voting don't go real well together. It becomes a form of voter suppression," says Bill Faith, executive director of the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio.

In the months leading up to the election, community groups in Cleveland have stepped in to register voters and recruit poll workers, and canvassed door-to-door while passing out supplies like masks, bandanas and hand sanitizer.

One of those groups is Cleveland VOTES, a nonpartisan organization founded by two Black women. The group aims to get low-income residents involved in the democratic process in tandem with the board of elections. As of Aug. 17, the county elections board had received more than 40,000 vote-by-mail applications.

"I know that people are getting the message, I know that more people are applying for vote-by-mail," says Jennifer Lumpkin, civic engagement strategist for Cleveland VOTES.

In this year's primary election, Ohio voter turnout was down close to 45 percent compared to 2016, according to a July report by the Stanford-MIT Healthy Elections Project. That was the steepest four-year dip of any state.

The decline has been attributed to a confluence of factors, including fear of the virus, conflicting information about when and how to vote, slowed mail delivery and primary races that were less competitive than in 2016. Another factor was the two-step process to vote by mail, or absentee, in Ohio. Voters have to fill out and return a paper ballot application to their local board of elections before getting a ballot to cast.

PHOTO BY RACHEL DISSELL

Chris Mobley, Nicole "Nic" Abraham and Maria Garcia-Olalla (left to right) walk up East 63rd Street in Cleveland's Slavic Village neighborhood on July 29th. They are part of an effort by University Settlement and Slavic Village Development to check on residents and pass out resource packets with information about the neighborhood food pantry, rent payment assistance and how to apply for a mail-in ballot to vote in the November presidential election.

Early and in-person voting will still be offered, though the state is limiting secure ballot drop boxes to one in each of the state's 88 counties. Given health and safety concerns, particularly in the city's Black community disproportionately hit by COVID-19 infections and deaths, groups like Cleveland VOTES are emphasizing mail-in ballots.

When it works properly, voting by mail can actually help to overcome some of the gendered barriers – like lack of transportation – that interfere with women's votes, Lumpkin says.

That aligns with Rodemann's conversations with women in Slavic Village.

"You can talk about voting and say, 'I also want your voice to be heard. I want you to be counted,'" Rodemann said. "Folks who don't feel like they have a voice, or they feel unheard, they feel unseen, then they don't participate."

Fuller Project reporter Jessica Washington contributed to this story. Malcolm Burnley is a journalist with The Fuller Project, a global nonprofit newsroom reporting on issues that affect women. Rachel Dissell is a contributing journalist with The Fuller Project.

Editor's Note: A Vote-by-mail application can be accessed at the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections website boe.cuyahogacounty.us or by calling the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections at 216-443-VOTE (8683). Ballot applications can be dropped off in a secure drop box in the parking lot of the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections at 2925 Euclid Avenue. Rental assistance applications: Information on applying for rental assistance applications can be obtained from CHN Housing Partners: visit their website at: chnhousingpartners.org or call 833-377-RENT (7368).

Trump Administration ends pharmacy coupons when patients need them most

by Peter J. Pitts

For chronically ill Americans, the economic damage from COVID-19 could be nearly as life-threatening as the virus itself. More than 40 million workers have filed for unemployment since the beginning of the outbreak. For many, the financial challenges of joblessness have made it harder than ever to afford their insurance companies' medication copays.

NEWS ANALYSIS

That's why a new decision from the Trump administration couldn't have come at a worse time. The rule, which was finalized in May, enables insurers to artificially inflate patients' out-of-pocket drug costs. In so doing, it creates unnecessary challenges for Americans who are already struggling to stay healthy.

For many patients, high pharmacy bills were a heavy burden even before COVID-19. A November Kaiser Family Foundation survey found that half of patients in poor health had difficulty paying for their medications. Three in ten reported skipping doses for financial reasons.

This "non-adherence" causes 125,000 deaths each year and as many as a quarter of hospitalizations. It also inflates U.S. healthcare spending by up to $289 billion annually.

Now that coronavirus lockdowns have sent our economy into a tail-

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COVID 19 Update

As of August 23, 2020, the city of Cleveland Department of Public Health reported 4,840 confirmed cases of COVID-19 with 110 deaths due to the coronavirus. Zip codes 44102, 44113 and 44105 had the highest number of confirmed cases among city of Cleveland zip codes (coded red meaning they have between 401-479 confirmed cases).

The rate of increase in new cases in Cleveland was slower in August than in July, with roughly 640 new cases so far in August (thru August 23). There were 2,500 confirmed cases of COVID at the end of June; and 4,200 at the end of July – meaning roughly 1700 newly confirmed cases in July.

As of August 23rd, Cuyahoga County reported roughly 14,400 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and the State of Ohio weighed in with 108,700 confirmed cases.

PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN

Saturday, August 22, 2020; Women's Suffrage Walk – A Celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the Ratification of the 19th Amendment, Professor Avenue in Tremont: A painting on display is of suffragettes marching for the right to vote.

Local agencies hope to aid working parents by providing safe spaces for students during virtual school hours

This story is provided by ideastream as part of special community coverage of COVID-19 and funded by Third Federal Foundation and University Settlement.
by Rachel Dissell

For some parents of school-age children, the decision of most area school districts to start the school year with remote and virtual learning came as a relief, as uncertainty about increasing cases of COVID-19 and possible outbreaks loom.

But for many Cleveland-area parents, the news sparked worry. Parents who can't work from home, don't have reliable internet or necessary virtual-learning technology, or who live in neighborhoods with rising levels of gun violence are balancing concerns over the coronavirus and fear of their children falling behind in school or being unsafe at home alone.

Community after-school programs and some area churches are stepping in with plans to offer safe, digitally equipped, socially distanced places for students during school hours beginning in September. The hope is that they can help parents keep working and students keep up with studies this school year.

Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeast Ohio accelerated plans to expand its programs as soon as Cleveland Metropolitan School District CEO Eric Gordon announced in July that students would learn remotely for the first nine weeks of the school year, a decision followed by many other local districts.

One of many concerns was the well-known "digital divide" in the city's poorest neighborhoods, said Jeff Scott, president and CEO of Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeast Ohio. More than 40% of Cleveland households don't have regular access to broadband, according to a digital inclusion study and U.S. census data from 2018.

The clubs normally serve about 2,000 youths, ages 6 to 18, daily at 39 centers in Cleveland, Akron, and Lorain and Erie counties. The arts and recreational activities and tutoring and career-readiness programs traditionally are provided after school.

The idea that students, through no fault of their own, might lose academic ground, "It just makes your stomach churn," Scott said. "That's why we are so committed to figuring out a model that allows us to operate during the [school] day."

In April, a CMSD survey of parents led to estimates that as many as two-thirds of families did not have electronic devices needed for learning at home. The district scrambled in the spring to distribute more than 10,000 computers and WiFi hotspots to students. Local foundations and businesses have contributed millions of dollars and donated hotspots for the fall, though it is unclear how many students still lack adequate computers and high-speed internet access needed for remote learning. CMSD schools last week were conducting parent surveys about technology needs.

A challenge for churches

Local pastors will also offer support to working parents and their children by opening up as many as 20 churches to school-age children in September.

The Cleveland Clergy Coalition hopes to offer safe places with digital connections and adult supervision during the nine weeks or longer of remote learning, said the Rev. Aaron Phillips, who leads the coalition. Some of the congregations provided after-school programming and tutoring before the pandemic, Phillips said, but the demand is expected to be greater this fall, especially for parents who must work.

The churches that will open to students, mostly on Cleveland's East Side and in the inner-ring suburbs, face a litany of logistical issues to get their spaces ready and to make sure proper health protocols are in place for children who would come during the daytime hours to learn.

The project, Phillips said, won't be easy. "It's a huge undertaking and we don't know where the funding resources are going to be to help us with any of this."

The challenges of opening to students are also compounded by the higher rate of COVID-19 infections in Cleveland's Black community, Phillips said. As of July 15, Black Clevelanders made up 73% of the hospitalizations for COVID-19 and 57% of the deaths attributed to complications from the disease, though they make up about half of the city's population.

Other organizations, such as YWCA of Greater Cleveland, charter schools and youth development programs, are also looking at operating small learning centers for school-age children.

A test run

The Boys & Girls Clubs estimates it might be able to serve 500 to 700 students at its standalone centers, three of which are in Cleveland, where 37,000 kids attend district schools and more attend charter and parochial schools.

Churches are still gauging demand and figuring out how many students each building can accommodate.

With a small number of students using the facilities each day, Boys & Girls Clubs believes it can operate safely. The organization already had a test run of sorts, Scott said. In June, it reopened nine of its Northeast Ohio locations to provide meals and safe gathering places to kids dealing with stress from the pandemic, social and racial unrest, and community violence, Scott said.

The first time a club learned of an exposure to the virus, which has happened a handful of times, it shut down for several days to clean. Leaders personally made sure front-line staff were comfortable with reopening, Scott said.

The organization activates a task force within the hour of learning of a positive coronavirus case involving a club member. It uses a process similar to the one when a club member or family experiences community violence: Learn what happened, find out how staff and families are feeling, make a plan to respond to concerns and plan for next steps, he said.

The effort includes balancing both virus-related health issues and the other safety issues some kids face daily. In July, the week the decision was made for Cleveland schools to open remotely, the city had recorded 83 official coronavirus deaths, five more than the 78 reported homicide deaths.

"It really is about the nuances of all these situations," Scott said. "And you're in a tactical battle on a day-to-day basis and make the best decision

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LOCAL AGENCIES

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that you can based on the information that you have. But the inputs are many. The inputs are about the virus, the inputs [are] about our kids' safety and all of the social unrest and the racial equity issues that we're dealing with," he said.

Violent crime in Cleveland neighborhoods is up. Homicides have increased about 20% from last year and shootings have jumped nearly 40%, according to Cleveland police crime statistics.

Four kids involved with Boys & Girls Clubs in Cleveland have been killed or had a family member killed by gun violence since the beginning of May, Scott said. Pre-pandemic, a single such incident might have happened once every couple of months, he said.

Attendance at the King Kennedy club on the East Side was down recently following several shootings, Scott said. Children were afraid to walk the 200 yards to the club from the King Kennedy Estates, where many of the members live.

National effort

Efforts similar to those in Cleveland are emerging across the country, particularly in urban areas, where concerns about COVID-19 have to be balanced with the realities of keeping children fed and safe from violence and other risks where they live.

Higher-income families are creating "learning pods" by hiring educators to help with instruction for small groups of children while schools are closed or operating virtually, said Jen Rinehart, vice president for research and policy at the Afterschool Alliance, a non-profit organization based in Washington, D.C.

Replicating that pod-style learning among local organizations or programs that serve low-income families can help prevent existing inequities from being exacerbated, she said. The alliance created a blueprint for programs looking to partner with school districts.

But those endeavors will need public policy support and funding so that all young people have access to a safe, supervised place that offers technology support, access to food and additional enrichment, she said.

One obstacle is that current federal funding, through childcare and education grants that support before- and after- school programs, only allows money to be spent when school is not in session. The Afterschool Alliance and others have asked the U.S. Department of Education to relax those rules so money can be used to serve children who are learning virtually during the school day, Rinehart said.

Planning for school

Over the next few weeks, staff from the Boys & Girls Clubs will prepare each site that will open to students, working with school districts from Cleveland to Sandusky, Scott said.

Staff members are trying to answer a long list of questions, including:

- How many kids they can safely serve?
- Should gyms be used to spread kids out?
- What hours should they be open?
- What infrastructure — from desks to power cords, fiber-optic cables and hotspots — are needed?
- How long will it take to ramp up and how much it will cost?

Ideally, the clubs will create distance-learning pods where children can set up to do schoolwork and the center's youth development staff can monitor and help them with their work.

Depending on the club, the plan is to serve ages 6 to 18 and group them by age, like the old schoolhouse model, Scott said.

The centers hope to also continue to offer after-school programs by closing to clean for a few hours each day and then reopening, Scott said.

The churches that will open to students, mostly on Cleveland's East Side and in the inner-ring suburbs, also face a litany of logistical issues to get their spaces ready and to make sure proper health protocols are in place for children who would come during the daytime hours to learn.

"It's a matter of safety as well as providing the tutoring and educational piece that we know our students are going to need during this virtual period as well," he said.

The Boys & Girls Clubs and the clergy coalition both said they were working closely with CMSD to reach families that might need help the most. They are also learning how to use the district's new online education software and discussing whether district transportation might be available for some students.

Cleveland Metropolitan School District officials did not respond to questions sent last week about the community efforts to support students' learning.

Contact info for parents seeking help: Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeast Ohio: 216.883.2106 [Editor's note: The three Boys and Girls Club locations on the Near West Side – at Luis Muñoz Marín, Joseph Gallagher and Lincoln West schools-- all remained closed as the *Plain Press* went to press. Ken Woods, Director of Communications for Boys and Girls Clubs of Northeast Ohio, said at this point they do not have permission from the Cleveland Metropolitan School District to go back in the schools.]

The Cleveland Clergy Coalition: clevelandclergycoalition@gmail.com

YMCA: The YMCA is offering programming Monday – Friday 7a.m. – 6 p.m. in coordination with local school districts to support online learning with dedicated staff. The Y CARES Learning and Enrichment Programs will provide a safe and structured environment that will allow for students to attend virtual class, have peer interaction, and participate in enrichment activities, while parents return to work. The YMCA of Greater Cleveland's highest priorities are the safety and well-being of our participants and staff, **meeting or exceeding all health department and CDC guidelines for COVID-19 prevention.** The YMCA has been operating in this environment for months, having provided pandemic (essential worker) childcare from the onset of COVID-19. The YMCA's Westpark facility is located at 15501 Lorain Avenue. For more information about the program and the cost per child visit the YMCA's website at: clevelandymca.org.

West Side Community House School Year Sisterhood Program will be a virtual program to start the school year. Signup online at: wschouse.org, or call 771-7297, Ext. 315.

The Great Lakes Science Center (GLSC) has opened a Learning Lab where students can go during the day and engage in supervised online learning with their home school. For costs and possible scholarship information visit the GLSC website at: greatscience.com.

Editor's note: Most of the Youth Programs on the West Side of Cleveland had not yet determined their fall schedules when the *Plain Press* went to press. Some have indicated they will remain closed until the Cleveland Metropolitan School District reopens schools for in-person education.

Additional Information on Resource Needs:

More than 40% of Cleveland households don't have regular access to broadband, according to a digital inclusion study and U.S. census data from 2018.

Some 37,000 children attend Cleveland Metropolitan School District schools, not including charter and parochial schools.

The Cleveland Metropolitan School District distributed more than 10,000 computers and WiFi hotspots to students this spring. Local foundations and businesses have contributed millions of dollars and donated hotspots for the fall, but it is unclear how many students still lack adequate computers and high-speed internet access needed for remote learning.

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeast Ohio, which has 39 centers in Cleveland, Akron, and Lorain and Erie counties, estimates it might be able to serve 500 to 700 students at its standalone centers, three of which are in Cleveland.

As many as 20 local churches plan to open to school-age children in September to support working parents, though funding is an issue.

Other organizations are considering small learning centers for school-age children, including YWCA of Greater Cleveland, local charter schools and youth development programs.

PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN

Thursday, August 20, 2020; St. Luke's Episcopal Church, 1349 W. 78th Street: Children from kindergarten to grade 12 pick up book bags filled with school supplies. Gena Shukri with her daughter Celine Makhoul, age 5, who just picked out a book bag. Celine will be attending a Lakewood school this year.

View more Community Board notices and articles online at: https://plainpress.blog

COMMUNITY BOARD

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replay the previous lessons: "Introduction to Computers" and "The Internet".

ELECTION 2020

REGISTER TO VOTE or update your registration at VoteOhio.gov. The deadline to register is Monday October 5th, if you would like to participate in the Tuesday, November 3rd General Election. The Cuyahoga County Board of Elections (boe.cuyahogacounty.us) also has links on its website to update your address or register to vote, or to print out a blank voter registration form.

REQUEST AN ABSENTEE BALLOT via Cuyahoga County Board of Elections: www.boe.cuyahogacounty.us : of

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF OHIO urges voters to request an absentee ballot early for the fall election to help both local boards of elections and the post office by flattening the ballot request curve.

EMPLOYMENT

ESSENTIAL BUSINESSES SEEK WILLING AND ABLE WORKERS during this time through Coronavirus.Ohio.gov/JobSearch. Employers at essential businesses are also encouraged to post job openings on the site.

OHIO MEANS JOBS: Complete an application at www.ohiomeansjobs.com AND a local application at www.omjcc.us.

FOOD

THE FULTON BRANCH OF THE CLEVELAND PUBLIC LIBRARY, 3545 Fulton Road, will be offering children's meals Monday thru Friday from 3-4 p.m. on a first come first served basis throughout the school year (beginning August 31st).

CLEVELAND METROPOLITAN SCHOOL DISTRICT's 22 meal sites will remain open (M-F: 11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.) for the first quarter of the school year, providing grab-and-go breakfast and lunch bags for children ages 18 and under. The local sites are: Buhrer Dual Language, 1600 Buhrer Ave.; Clark, 5550 Clark Ave.; Denison, 3799 W. 33rd St.; Garfield, 3800 W. 140th; Louisa May Alcott, 10308 Baltic Road, and Waverly School, 1805 W. 57th Street. RTA will honor student bus passes

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FLEA MARKETS/THRIFTS

ST. PAUL'S THRIFT STORE: W. 45th and Franklin, Clothing, bric-a-brac, household items and more. **Open Wednesdays** 1 to 5pm (regular prices) **First Saturday** of Month 10 to noon store and Gym, Bargain Prices, Clothes $**1.00 a bag**. **Third Saturday** of Month 10 to Noon Store only, All unmarked racked clothes $**1.00 a bag.**

FOR RENT

SEEKING SECTION 8 LANDLORD to accept 1 Bedroom Voucher: MHcleaningm@aol.com. 216-312-9746.

PROPERTY OWNERS NEEDED: If you are a property owner with nice, clean, reasonably priced apartments, and are looking for tenants, please call Care Alliance at (216) 372-2348 and ask for Jim Schlecht.

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Women's Suffrage Walk offers insight into American struggle for universal voting rights

The Women's Suffrage Walk, a self-guided tour by Our Neighborhood Votes, held on Professor Avenue in Tremont on Saturday August 20th offered a history of efforts toward universal suffrage from the organizing of the first Woman's Rights Convention in 1848 up to the present day. The event celebrated the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution which granted women the right to vote. It also featured the continued struggle by African American women to secure voting rights which led to Congress voting to approve the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Eight stations along Professor Avenue featured story boards depicting various eras of the struggle for universal suffrage. The stations also included photos and paintings to go with the story boards. Story Boards offered lessons in the history of the women's suffrage movement, Ohio's critical role in the fight for women's right to vote, the contributions by African American women to voting rights both before and after the passage of the 19th Amendment and some thoughts on current issues involving voting rights.

Neighborhood volunteers and volunteers from the League of Women Voters were stationed along the Walking Tour to offer participants assistance in registering to vote, applying for vote by mail applications, and updating their voter registration information by checking at 443vote.com.

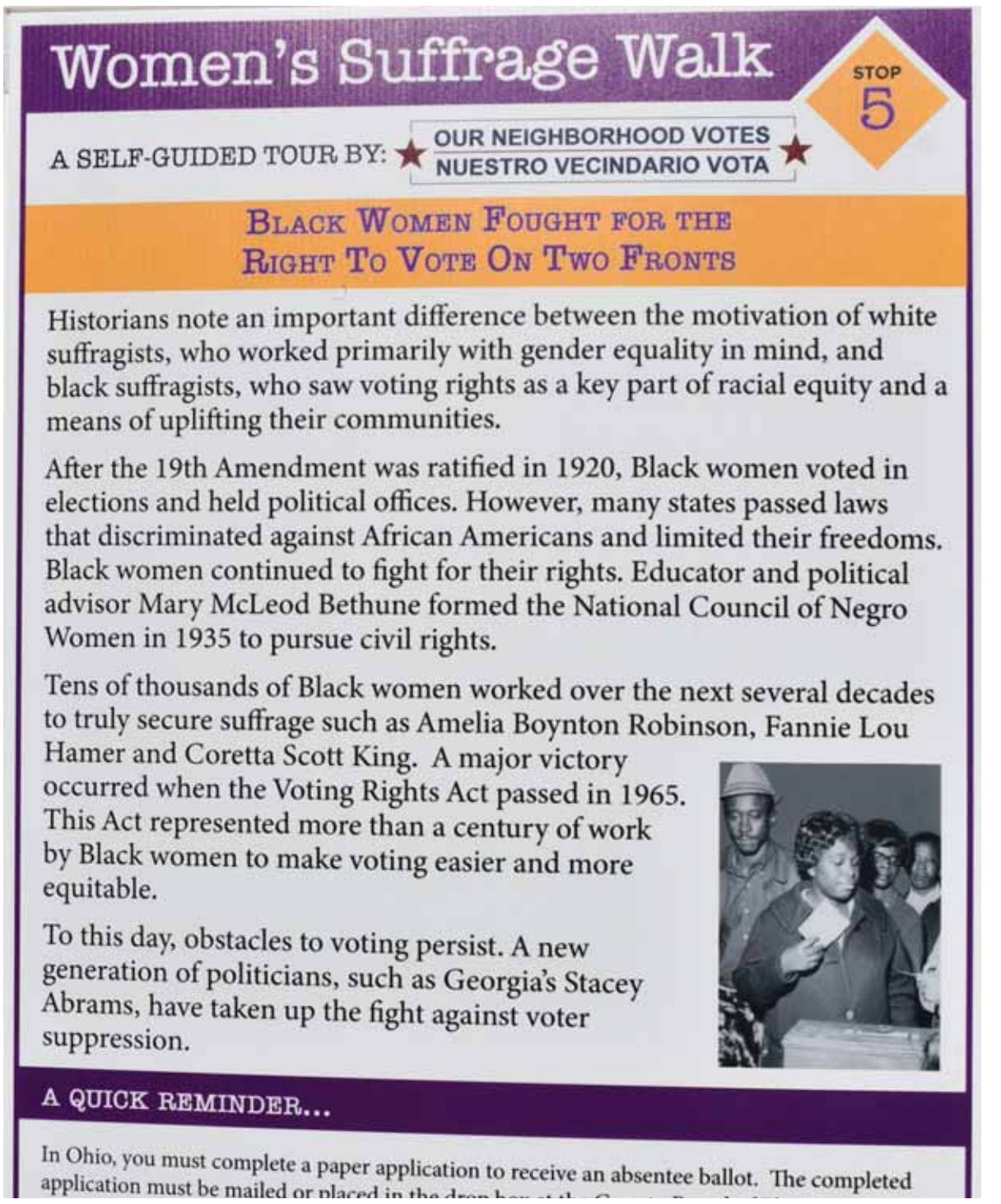

PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN

Saturday, August 22, 2020; Women's Suffrage Walk – A Celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the Ratification of the 19th Amendment, Professor Avenue in Tremont: A story board with some history of the voting rights efforts titled "Black women fought for the right to vote on two fronts". Story boards, each containing some of the history of the women's suffrage and voting rights efforts in the United States, were placed along the self-guided Our Neighborhood Votes Women's Suffrage Walk.

TAX ABATEMENT

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Whether abatement construction has 'little effect' on changing property assessments as expressed by Brancatelli, or property tax bills are "influenced" by abatement as identified by Norton in the Cleveland Tax Abatement Study may be a matter of semantics. But what's clear from residents living in those areas serviced by residential tax abatement is property taxes have risen as much as 300% forcing some long-term residents to sell their homes and move from the city.

"I had a good friend who was living in one of the trendy neighborhoods put their house up for sale and move to Copley," Ward 8 Councilman Michael D. Polensek said. "There's a direct correlation with properties increasing in value and quality of life including crime and public safety. It's not just about tax abatement anymore. We have to give people quality of life. Very few neighborhoods are stabilized."

"We have some very big challenges in front of us," he added.

Ward 1 Councilman Joseph T. Jones asked council members why billions of dollars were being invested in downtown Cleveland and University Circle, and hundreds of millions invested in select westside neighborhoods while investments in his neighborhood were nonexistent.

"We didn't even get an Opportunity Zone in Ward 1," Jones said. "I'd like to see fair and equitable investments. How do we begin the process of having a strong investment program across the entire city?"

"I've had developers come into my neighborhood, but they couldn't find any investors or financial institutions to invest in housing. They couldn't find anyone in the state of Ohio to help with financing. We invest millions of taxpayers' dollars in these financial institutions, and they should invest in our city," he added.

More than 35% of Cleveland lives in poverty and 45% of its property value is tied to nonprofit and other institutions, such as schools and hospitals, paying no property taxes. Cleveland ranks second in working-age adults living in poverty and third in older-adult poverty, according to the U.S. Census and Community Solutions.

In some of the Cleveland's poorest neighborhoods it's hard to find a home or business in the tax abatement program. While supporters of property tax abatements including developers, trade unions and city officials are quick to point out the programs spur economic growth and increase revenues as abatements expire, these tax breaks draw money away from public schools. Policy Matters Ohio, a non-profit policy research institute dedicated to improving the lives of Ohio families and strengthen Ohio communities, found that Cleveland-Elyria reported the forgone revenue of $53.8 million in Fiscal Year 2017. The actual total amount of property tax revenue lost to abatements and incentives is likely far more.

"If the program is successful it can create economic diversity in city neighborhoods," said Terry Schwarz, Director of Kent State University's Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative, in a phone interview with the *Plain Press*. "The amount of abated taxes is staggering given that our public schools are in such dire need of financial support."

Researchers from Reinvestment Fund, Public Financial Management, Greater Ohio Policy Center, Neighborhood Connections and Leverage Point Development, did not make any specific recommendations in their study to address the needs of longtime residents or residents on fixed incomes that may be experiencing high tax increases relative to new development in their neighborhoods. Schwarz believes residents that have lived in the city for many years need some type of tax relief.

She suggested a more nuanced tactic is needed when it comes to abatement policy. A 15-year, 100% tax abatement is unusual in cities similar in size and population to Cleveland. The term for tax abatement in St. Louis ranges from up to 10 years at 50% or 5 years at 95% in some sections of the city to up to 10 years at 95% + 5 years at 50% for others. In the City of Des Moines, Iowa, new construction and rehabilitation projects of more than $40,000 are eligible for 100% abatement for five years anywhere in the city; properties in specified locations are eligible for a 10-year abatement.

"A surgical strategy is needed for effective tax abatement. Housing values haven't recovered from the last recession and we are heading deep into another recession," added Schwarz. "Developers should demonstrate the need for tax abatement to determine whether the project would or wouldn't happen without the subsidy."

In a community virtual meeting organized by Neighborhood Connections to review the Cleveland Tax Abatement Policy Study, Kaela Geschke, Community Network Manager, said the number one concern people have with tax abatement was rising property taxes and long-time resident displacement for those living in high density areas where most of the abatements have taken place. Those areas include Ohio City, Tremont, and Detroit-Shoreway.

Norton reiterated the conundrum. "In roughly 2% of the city, increasing home prices are also creating challenges to affordability for long-time residents because of increased property tax burdens," he said.

The report also found an increasing concentration of tax abatements in a very limited number of higher-priced and higher-pressure housing markets. This is in opposition to the expressed interests of residents and institutional stakeholders who participated in the study. Those stakeholders said they would like to see abatement serve as a tool to incentivize reinvestment and redevelopment across Cleveland.

With Cleveland's abatement policy set to expire in 2022, Ward 3 Councilman Kerry McCormack is ready to see a new tax policy put into place without delay.

"I fully agree that we shouldn't delay these recommendations," said McCormack in a chat room breakout during the community virtual meeting organized by Neighborhood Connections. " I see no reason for delay. There's been almost two years of hard work put into this with residents and developers. The community is ready to implement these changes."

At the closing moments of the City of Cleveland Committee of the Whole Council virtual meeting, Councilman Brancatelli said millions of tax dollars will flow back into the city once the abatements expire. Resident displacement wasn't significant, according to him.

"Resident displacement isn't a significant factor in deterring tax incentives," Brancatelli said. He added, "To re-emphasize the point, there is no constant relationship to displacement. The notion that we are displacing lots of people is not real. Only 2% of the market faces displacement."

Tell that to over 8,000 Cleveland residents.

PHARMACY COUPONS

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spin, drug adherence rates are likely to plummet further as Americans look for new ways to make ends meet.

Consider that a quarter of the country has dipped into savings in recent weeks, while 14 percent have borrowed money from friends or family, per Northwestern Mutual. It's only a matter of time before large numbers of Americans stop filling the prescription medicines they need.

In times like these, helping the hardest-hit patients take their medications ought to be a top priority. Yet the Trump administration has done precisely the opposite. The new rule from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) would help insurance companies nullify the prescription drug coupons that make medicines affordable for millions of Americans.

In many health plans, patients pay for their own drugs up to a certain limit, known as a deductible, after which they are responsible for a smaller copay. The patient remains on the hook for those copays until he or she reaches the federally mandated out-of-pocket limit, which in 2020 was $16,300 for families.

To help defray out-of-pocket costs, drug firms usually offer generous coupons on brand-name medications.

For cash-strapped patients, these discounts can be life-changing. About a fifth of commercially insured patients use coupons to lower their pharmacy costs. These coupons cut out-of-pocket drug spending by $13 billion in 2018. Just as important, drug coupons have been shown to increase adherence for everything from cholesterol medication to anti-inflammatory drugs.

These coupons only benefit patients if they count towards the out-of-pocket limit. Otherwise, patients would still be on the hook for huge pharmacy bills.

Unfortunately, the new CMS rule allows insurers to stop counting coupons towards the out-of-pocket cap. That means insurance giants will extract more money out of struggling Americans' pockets.

Officials in states like Virginia, West Virginia, Illinois, and Arizona have already banned this practice. Unless other states follow suit -- or Congress intervenes and passes legislation nullifying the rule -- millions of Americans could face higher pharmacy bills while battling the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression.

Barring intervention, America could face a pandemic of non-adherence that puts millions of lives at risk. Unlike COVID-19, this new public health emergency won't be caused by a wily virus, but by the callousness of Washington policymakers. *Peter J. Pitts, a former FDA associate commissioner, is president of the Center for Medicine in the Public Interest.*

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