

PHOTO BY DEBBIE SADLON
Tuesday, November 17, 2020; Tree removal in Tremont, W. 5th and Jefferson: Van Curen Tree Service's logo on their truck. The company was cutting down trees on W. 5th and filling the truck with tree trunks. [Editor's note: Plain Press staff finds the Tree Monster]

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Plain Press

Cleveland's Near Westside Newspaper

Black physicians help build trust in clinical trials, medical care after decades of community skepticism, mistreatment

by Rachel Dissell and Brie Zeltner

Dr. Jackson Wright is successful at recruiting Black patients to participate in his research studies. That's in part because he — and much of his team — look like them.

Considered a global authority on high blood pressure and heart disease, Wright is familiar with the deep-seated distrust many Black Americans have with medical research. That's because of past exploitation, including but not

limited to the 40-year Tuskegee Syphilis Study, which starting in 1932 followed the effects of untreated syphilis in Black Alabama men without their consent and withheld treatments that became available.

Memories of that betrayal have lingered for generations. Black adults are still less likely to get seasonal flu shots than white ones. When it comes to preventive health, Black Americans are less likely to trust their doctors, and consequently less likely to seek preventive care such as mammograms and other cancer screenings, as well as routine care, according to multiple studies.

At the same time, having Black patients included in clinical trials and medical studies is critical to reducing current health disparities in Black communities, said Wright, a University Hospitals internal medicine doctor and professor (now emeritus) of medicine at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine.

That includes the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 in America's Black and Latinx communities, where people have been three times as likely as their white neighbors to be infected by the coronavirus and are nearly twice as likely than whites to die from it, ac-

continued on page 4

Cleveland City Council removes the city's requirement to hire off-duty police officers at neighborhood block parties

by Lee Chilcote, The Land

Spurred by a grassroots, citizen-led petition that garnered more than 1,000 signatures, Cleveland City Council passed legislation at its November 18th meeting to remove the requirement for hired police at block parties. The proposed ordinance (523-2020), introduced by council members Kerry

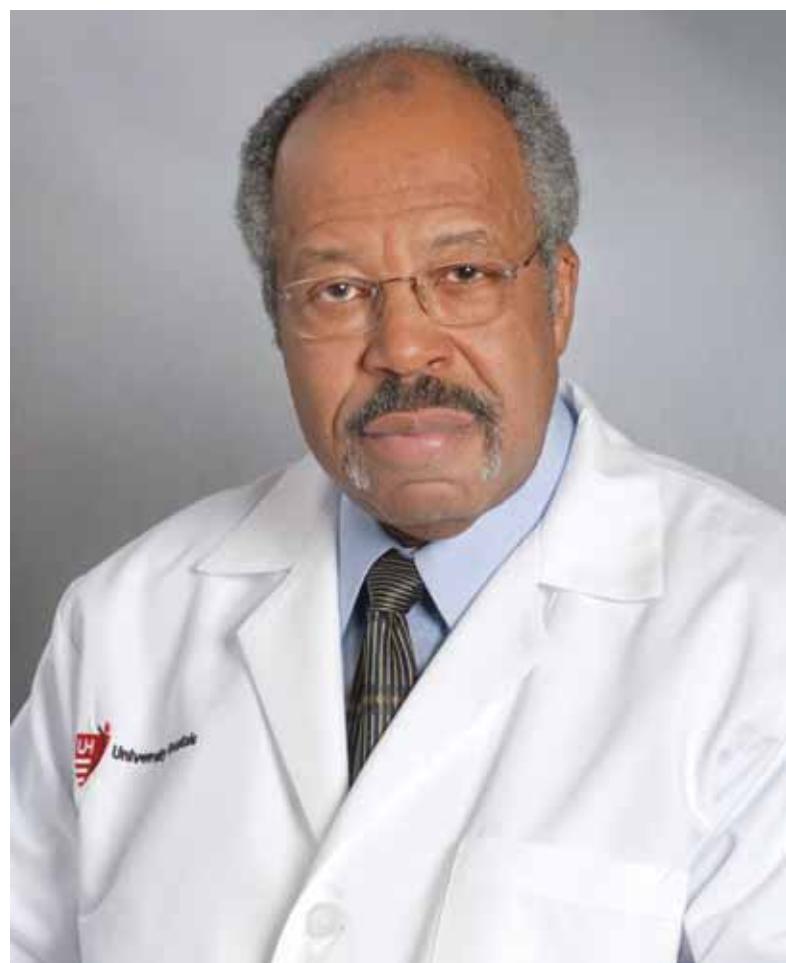


PHOTO COURTESY OF UNIVERSITY HOSPITALS

Dr. Jackson Wright, director of the clinical hypertension program at University Hospitals, has for decades pushed for more minority participation in clinical trials because the results can mean better treatments for Black patients.



PHOTO BY DEBBIE SADLON

Saturday, October 31, 2020; Cemetery Installations by Mark Jenkins with Nina V. Huryn at Día de Muertos festival presented by Cleveland Public Theatre/Teatro Público de Cleveland and Día de Muertos Ohio, Church Parish Hall and surrounding area, 6205 Detroit Avenue. Artist Nina Huryn stands by a Cemetery Installation.

RTA's NEXT GEN planning process for changes to the 2021 bus routes raises questions about equity

by Bruce Checfsky

In 2019, Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (GCRTA) facilitated a study for improvement of the bus network with Jarrett Walker + Associates. Jarrett Walker, PhD, an international consultant in public transit network design and policy, has been a full-time consultant since 1991 and has also led numerous major planning projects in North America, Australia, and New Zealand.

Two on-line surveys were administered from riders and non-riders regarding service priorities. A series of community engagement meetings were held throughout the city. Attendees were asked to comment on two different service plans: one to maximize frequency and attract as many riders as possible; and the other, to maximize market coverage by being available in as many places as possible. Both plans were developed within the constraint of the current operating budget.

Respondents were evenly split on the

question of whether to move towards ridership or coverage with existing resources and showed a preference for a greater focus on coverage with additional resources. When asked about additional resources, respondents were more likely to select an option with a greater focus on coverage than the existing system, according to the report. (<http://www.riderta.com/sites/default/files/pdf/presentations/2019-04-26SRSSurveySummary.pdf>).

Overall, 47% of responses came from frequent or semi-regular RTA riders categorized as one ride per week or more, while 41% came from infrequent or non-riders. Only 12% of respondents did not own a car in their households. Compared to the population at large, seniors were the most underrepresented in the survey population. People ages 25-34 and under 24 were the most overrepresented.

Walker recommended increasing frequency on high-demand routes

McCormack, Tony Brancatelli, Matt Zone and Basheer Jones, applies only to gatherings of 100 or fewer people; larger gatherings would still require security.

"We've all gone through the process of residents scrambling to find police and badge numbers when filling out the permit applications," said Ward 3

Councilman Kerry McCormack. "When we come out of COVID, we want to encourage gatherings without adding additional burdens."

"It's a big deal for our community to move forward with this," added Ward 4 councilman Ken Johnson.

Council's ordinance says the re-continued on page 5

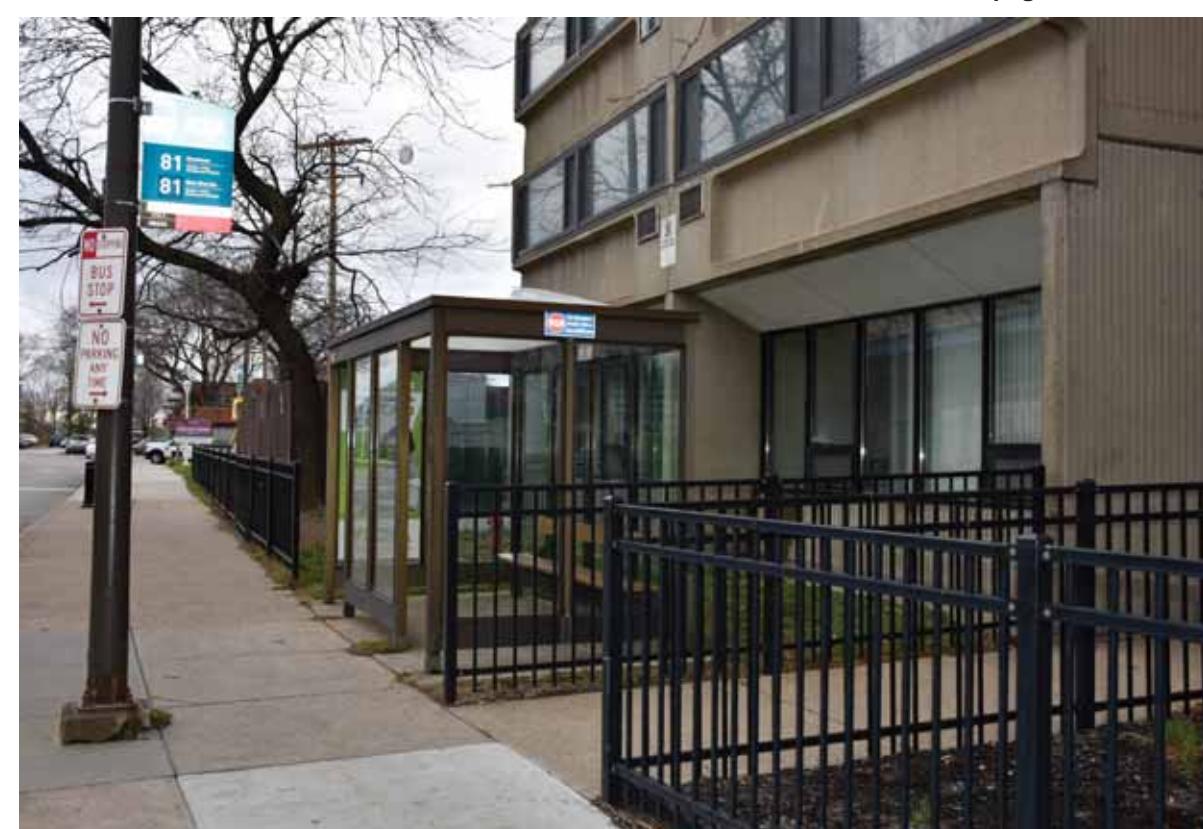


PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN

Monday, November 23, 2020; #81 Bus Stop at Lakeview Tower Apartments, 2700 Washington Avenue: The Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority Next Gen Plan proposes eliminating the #81 Bus line. Stops on the line include downtown Cleveland, Lakeview Tower, West Side Market & W. 25th Rapid Station, Tremont neighborhood, Steelyard Commons, Storer Avenue, Dave's Supermarket at Ridge & Denison, and the Cudell/West Boulevard W. 98th Street Rapid Station.

continued on page 6



The Community Board

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.



Bring financial relief to your neighbors.

BRING SMILES TO CUYAHOGA COUNTY



Volunteers Needed!

The Cuyahoga EITC Coalition helps hardworking families and individuals file their taxes for free. Every family should be able to receive all the refunds and credits they are due, regardless of their income. Credits like the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). Just one hour of your time can provide an eligible family with up to \$6,600 in EITC refunds and save them hundreds of dollars in fees that would otherwise be spent on paid preparers. Our mission is to help move families from financial uncertainty to financial security.

We cannot do this without the help of volunteers like you! *No experience is necessary!*

Volunteering for the Cuyahoga EITC Coalition offers:

- A way to help give back to families in the community and build their financial security
- Free training to become IRS-certified as a VITA tax preparer
- All returns are reviewed, making for a stress-free onboarding experience
- Flexible hours and virtual options for volunteering
- Resume-building experience preparing taxes



To sign up for an upcoming training, visit us at refundohio.org.

Or for questions, contact us at volunteer@refundohio.org.

ADVOCACY

UTILITIES FOR ALL fights for accountable and equitable utilities in Northeast Ohio, because we believe in protecting utilities as a human right. Open Public Meetings Thurs. Dec. 3, 2020, 11:00 am or 7:00 pm. Register for zoom meeting at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZErdemrpj0sGNU5sivQXRmHr00f-BofkEAbn?fbclid=IwAR1FwvW-CRHuzY580604vi1YbXsxDmgQQT-TIIZQi-OtYypvUnBkxQy4IW34c>

We envision a region where every household has access to its right to utilities. To learn more about the current state of shutoffs and reconnections,

available financial assistance, and how we can fight for affordable, transparent and accountable utilities in Northeast Ohio, visit: <http://organizeohio.org/utilitiesforall> Email: utilitiesforall@organizeohio.org, Facebook.com @ Utilities4All.NEOH, Twitter: @Utilities_4_All.

ASSISTANCE

MERRICK HOUSE has Prevention, Retention and Contingency (PRC) funding available to assist anyone with rent or utility payments. Payments are limited to \$125.00 per household and will be paid directly to the vendor. Interested parties should call Merrick House at 216-771-5077 for an application.

BUSINESSES

SMALL BUSINESS GRANTS: The City of Cleveland's Emergency Working Capital program is designed to assist businesses whose operations are specifically impacted by COVID and have had to take exceptional measures to maintain operations throughout the pandemic. Businesses may receive a \$10,000 loan for working capital and operations costs and a \$10,000 grant to offset costs of PPE and other safety measures. Applicants must complete the Emergency Capital Working Fund [Loan Application](#) and the 1-page supplemental questionnaire. Both are available at: clecitvhall.files.wordpress.com. Completed applications should be submitted electronically to economicdev@clevelandohio.gov.

COVID-19

DETROIT SHOREWAY RESOURCES DURING CORONAVIRUS: Contact DSCDO specialist for help finding and applying for rental assistance, food, health, or utility resources. Call 216-961-4242 x243 or email intern@dscdo.org.

CUYAHOGA COUNTY STAY AT HOME ADVISORY encourages residents to stay home to the greatest extent possible due to the rapid rise of COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations in the state. Residents are advised to only leave their home to go to work or school, or for essential needs such as seeking medical care, purchasing essential items from a grocery store or pharmacy, picking up prepared food, or receiving deliveries. Additionally, residents are strongly advised to avoid traveling in and out of the State of Ohio and to forgo having guests in their homes or residences during the upcoming holiday.

WEBSITES WITH INFORMATION ON COVID-19: CDC: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus. Ohio Department of Health: <https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/covid-19/Cleveland-Health-Department>: <http://www.clevelandhealth.org/>

COVID-19 TESTING SITE: Testing for those with COVID-19 symptoms or who have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 is available at *Neighborhood Family Practice*: W. 117 Community Health Center – 11709 Lorain Ave. By appointment only. Tests are available regardless of one's ability to pay. Call (216) 281-0872 for information or to schedule an appointment. Results are back in one to three days.

DRIVE-THRU AND WALK-UP COVID-19 TESTING will be offered at Cuyahoga Community College from December through April as part of a partnership with Care Alliance Health Center. Testing will take place Thursdays beginning December third—rotating between 4 college sites. Testing is available to Tri-C students, faculty and staff as well as community residents. The program offers testing to individuals regardless of their symptom status, insurance status or ability to pay. Individuals will not be charged for the test. An ID with name and address — plus an insurance card, if applicable — is required for testing. At the Metropolitan Campus, 2900 Community College testing will take place in the Lot 4 underground garage off Community College Avenue – 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. Jan. 14, Feb. 11, March 11 and April 8. At the Western Campus, 11999 Pleasant Valley Road, Parma, testing will take place in the circular drive fronting the theater off Pleasant Valley Road, 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. Dec 10, Jan. 28, Feb. 25, March 25

and April 22. Additionally, testing will be offered at Metro Campus by Care Alliance on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays for the remainder of November and throughout December (except for Dec. 25). No appointment is necessary on any of the testing days. Testing will be done on a first-come, first-served basis. Visit tri-c.edu/covidtest or call 216-317-1250 for more information.

CODE RED: Sign up for CodeRED alerts to receive calls and emails with important info regarding the coronavirus. To sign up online, visit <https://bit.ly/CLECodeRED>, get mobile alerts by downloading the CodeRED app via the Apple or Google Play stores. Seniors who need assistance signing up are welcome to call the Department of Aging at (216) 664-4383 for periodic phone call messaging.

CLEVELAND MANDATES: Cleveland City Council approved the mandatory use of masks in public spaces as well as certain penalties for individuals and businesses that do not comply. On July 3, Mayor Jackson signed an amended order mandating the use of masks in public in the City of Cleveland to slow the spread of the highly contagious coronavirus. This includes mandatory use in bars, restaurants, shared office settings, rideshares and other shared spaces. Any business or person violating the mask or safe-seating order (which maintains social distancing of at least six feet between patrons) is subject to civil penalties. Any business in the City of Cleveland with an employee who becomes ill with the coronavirus is required to immediately disinfect and sanitize the premises. **Business complaints:** CDPH hotline at (216) 857-7165. **Individual or private residence complaints:** Cleveland Police non-emergency line at (216) 621-1234

DONATIONS

CLEVELAND POLICE ANNUAL SECOND DISTRICT HOLIDAY SOCK AND UNDERWEAR DRIVE from now until December 25th to support our homeless community with socks and underwear for the cold months. Please donate socks and new underwear for adult men and women. Any questions call 216-623-5209 and ask for Lt. Maffo-Judd. Drop off donations at the Second District or request a pick up.

EDUCATION

CLEVELAND BOARD OF EDUCATION BUSINESS MEETING is scheduled for **Tuesday, December 15, 2020** at 6:30pm and will be **conducted exclusively via video conference**, pursuant to Substitute House Bill 404. The public can access this Board Business Meeting through a link that will be posted prior to the start of the meeting on the School District website home page at www.clevelandmetroschools.org. Persons wishing to publicly share a comment with the Board at this Board Business Meeting can access a public comment form that will be posted on the School District website home page on Tuesday, **continued on page 7**

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Father McNulty retires as Pastor of St. Augustine Church after 43 years

Cleveland City Council
— Councilman Kerry McCormack is offering well wishes to the Rev. Joseph D. McNulty, who retired this month as director of Catholic Charities Ministry to Persons with Disabilities for the Diocese of Cleveland and as pastor of St. Augustine Parish, a position he has held since 1977.

Father McNulty became pastor of St. Augustine Parish in Cleveland's Tremont neighborhood after five years as associate pastor there. St. Augustine Church is known for, among other good works, its regular meals programs for the needy that for decades included Sister Corita. Sister Corita and Father McNulty made numerous media appearances

appealing for volunteers and donations for their meal service, especially at holiday times.

Father McNulty, while associate pastor also was an instructor of religious education at Cleveland Central Catholic High School. He was also the Episcopal Liaison for Persons with Mental Illness and their families since 1988.

Ordained to the priesthood May 31, 1969, his first assignment was as associate pastor of Parma's St. Francis de Sales Parish and coordinator of pastoral counseling at Nazareth Academy.

Prior to his ordination, he occupied part-time positions as both a supervisor and caseworker with the Department of Human Services, Cuyahoga County

Welfare Department, and as a coordinator for Project PEACE (Program of Educational and Cultural Excellence).

Fr. McNulty's educational degrees include a Bachelor of Arts from Borromeo College of Ohio, a Bachelor of Sacred Theology from Catholic University of America, and both a Master of Theology and Master of Divinity from Cleveland's St. Mary Seminary.

Fr. McNulty is being replaced by Cleveland-native Fr. William "Bill" O'Donnell, C.P.P.S. (Missionaries of the Precious Blood) who has worked in ministries outside of Cleveland and outside of the United States since leaving for seminary in 1964 and being ordained in 1977.

Adam Stalder is appointed as the new executive director of Detroit Shoreway Community Development Organization by DSCDO's Board of Directors

Open Letter to the Community:

The Detroit Shoreway Community Development Organization (DSCDO) Board of Directors is pleased to announce that, following a robust search process, we have appointed Adam Stalder as our organization's new Executive Director.

Adam has been an integral leader at DSCDO for the past ten years. Since May of 2020, he has served as Acting Executive Director of DSCDO. With the support of staff and the Board, he has helped the organization weather a year of significant transitions with grace. Adam is dedicated to helping DSCDO

innovate as a neighborhood, city, and industry leader in the community development field.

LETTER

"Adam stands out as a thoughtful advocate who is ready to continuously learn as a leader," said Patty Jurca, DSCDO Board President. "He is passionate about this work and cares deeply for the wellbeing of our community."

Adam began his community development career at Metro West Community Development Organization, working for five years as Economic Development Director and another two years as Managing Director. He served as DSCDO's

continued on page 6

Merry Christmas: Our neighborhood churches welcome you!



Calvary Reformed Church

1918 W. 65th ST., 44102 | (216) 961-4271

www.calvary-cleveland.com and on Facebook

Advent with Calvary: "Do Not Be Afraid"

11/29, 12/6, 12/13, 12/20 Online Worship Services: 10:30am

December 24th: An Outdoor Christmas Eve, 6:30pm

HISTORIC ST. ROCCO CHURCH

3205 Fulton Road, Cleveland OH 44109

Ph: 216-961-8331

Christmas Holiday Schedule

Confessions:

December 21st, 22nd, 23rd @ 7:00pm-8:00pm (Chapel)
December 24th 3:00pm-4:00pm

Masses:

Christmas Eve: 4:00pm, 6:00pm & Midnight Mass @ 12am
Christmas Day: 7:30am, 9:30am & 12:00pm (Traditional High Latin)

Come and see our beautifully decorated Church with over 20 trees and our traditional Italian Praesepio (nativity scene) with Fontanini figurines.

St. Malachi — Parish —

West 25th & Detroit Ave.
Cleveland 44113

CHRISTMAS BLESSINGS!
• MASS SCHEDULE •

December 24

4:30 PM in the Church and
4:30 PM in the Lower Hall

December 25

10:00 AM

December 31

4:30 PM

January 1

10:00 AM

Live streaming Mass at
www.stmalachi.org

ST. JOHN CANTIUS CHURCH

906 College Avenue
216-781-9095

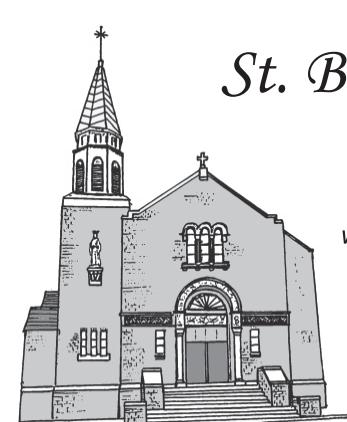
CHRISTMAS MASS SCHEDULE

THURSDAY DECEMBER 24th

4:00 pm ... (ticket required due to seating restrictions)
5:00 pm(No ticket required)
10:00 pm ..(formerly Midnight Mass/No ticket)

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 25th

9:30 am(Polish)
11:30 am(English)



St. Barbara Church

1505 Denison Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio 44109
216 661-1191

www.tinyurl.com/SaintBarbara

Merry Christmas!

Wesoły Świąt

Bożego Narodzenia!

May the blessings of Christmas fill your hearts with true happiness and bring you joy and peace throughout the coming year

For a schedule of Mass times during the Christmas season please call us at 216 661-1191



PHOTO COURTESY OF DSCDO

Adam Stalder, Detroit Shoreway Community Development Organization's (DSCDO) new executive director.

Director of Administrative Services and Real Estate Project Manager from 2017 to 2020.

Adam combines extensive knowledge in the broad responsibilities of managing a community development corporation (CDC), including economic development, real estate development, property management, strategic planning, fundraising, accounting, and community and government relations. He has also developed a solid understanding of and strong relationships within Cleveland's CDC ecosystem.

As Executive Director, Adam will

work directly with DSCDO's Board of Directors, staff, community partners, and stakeholders to continue guiding the physical, economic and social development of the neighborhoods we serve.

While Adam begins his new role during the challenging time of the COVID-19 pandemic, we know he is uniquely positioned to ensure the organization's strength and quality of service in its next chapter.

Please join us in welcoming Adam to his new role as Executive Director.

DSCDO Board of Directors

IMMANUEL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH 2928 Scranton Rd. • 216-781-9511

SUNDAY SERVICES:

German service..... 9:00 am

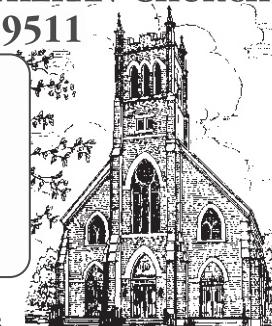
English service..... 10:30 am

CHRISTMAS EVE:

German service..... 3:00 pm

English service..... 7:30 pm

Serving God's People Since 1880



REV. JERRY WITT-JABLONSKI, PASTOR

REV. HORST HOYER, PASTOR EMERITUS

REV. HORST HOYER, PASTOR

</div



PHOTO COURTESY OF CLEVELAND CLINIC

A man gets a health screening during the 2019 Minority Men's Health Fair at the Cleveland Clinic.

BLACK PHYSICIANS HELP BUILD TRUST

continued from page one

cording to data from the CDC analyzed by The New York Times.

Though patients often mention Tuskegee, more recent experiences or perceptions of medical institutions may be just as important, Wright said.

"We don't have to go back to 1932," Wright said. "We can probably just look at the issues today."

Historical mistrust is reinforced by more recent experiences with health systems and other broader discrimination, researchers found in 2015.

Black adults across a range of ages and incomes equated medical research with being treated like a "guinea pig." Many believed the research would not benefit the Black community and shared examples of their friends or families getting second-rate medical treatment.

In Cleveland, those perceptions are influenced by issues like the shorter life spans of residents who live in mostly-minority neighborhoods within a mile or so of the heart of local medical research — the campuses of Cleveland Clinic, University Hospitals and Case Western Reserve University — compared with people in suburbs just a few miles away.

More trust in Black doctors

Since the 1990s, Wright has studied high blood pressure, also called hypertension, which is more common

in Black populations than in white and when left untreated increases the risk of heart attack, heart failure and sudden cardiac death.

"It's much easier for me to approach a Black patient about participating in a study looking at issues that affect the Black population," Wright said.

He's led research studies on optimal blood pressure in which 35% of the participants were Black, and on the management of hypertension in which all of the participants were Black.

That's higher than the overall enrollment for Black participants in clinical trials, which was about 14%, according to a 2017 U.S. Food and Drug Administration report.

Differences in immune system responses

In America, younger Black adults are 50% more likely to have high blood pressure and twice as likely to die from heart disease than their white counterparts, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Genetically, there's little difference between white, Black and Hispanic people that could account for such disparate health outcomes. Much of increased risk among Black people can be traced to lack of routine primary care and higher rates of conditions, such as obesity and diabetes, that aggravate heart conditions.

While it was once assumed that heart-disease symptoms and the best ways to treat and manage high blood pressure were the same for all people, Wright and other doctors discovered this was not the case after they pushed for more Black patients to be included in large-scale clinical trials and population-specific research on the disease.

Most medications available to treat serious health problems have been predominantly tested in white men, said Dr. Charles Modlin, a Cleveland Clinic kidney transplant surgeon and urologist.

Responses to the medications can vary, though, said Modlin, director of the Minority Men's Health Center in Cleveland Clinic's Glickman Urological & Kidney Institute.

For example, a medication called Bi-Dil used to treat congestive heart failure alongside other standard therapeutics reduced death rates in Black patients by more than 40% while having virtually no effect in white patients.

The difference in response to a medication by race may be due to slightly different types or amounts of the proteins in the liver that break down medications, a factor that wasn't recognized until Black populations were more widely studied.

Once infected with the coronavirus, Modlin said, there's some evidence that Black patients have a higher immune response that causes tissue damage in the lungs and kidneys — which makes the cases more serious and patients more likely to end up on a respirator or die.

Men's health fair and other efforts

While it's clear that having Black patients involved in studies of treatments and medications is important, that doesn't mean doctors and researchers can overcome suspicions or other barriers to clinical trial participation overnight.

For Modlin, who is Black, it has taken years of effort. When he helped create the Clinic's Minority Men's Health Fair in 2003, it drew about 35 participants. In recent years, more than 1,500 men have shown up for the event, which offers free health and dental screenings.

In addition to the annual health fair, the hospital also opened a Minority Men's Health Center, which Modlin directs.

The day the center opened, he recalls finding a man waiting for him. George Fraser, an entrepreneur and author, had come to scope out the operation, not just for himself but for others in his community.

Said Modlin: "He told me point blank, he said he was coming in to check this thing out to see if it was legitimate."

Fraser, 75, considers himself a com-

munity elder -- an influencer of sorts -- and said he believes Black professionals have an obligation to give back to their communities. He tested Modlin with this question: "Are you serving yourself or are you serving your community?"

The doctor passed the test "with flying colors," Fraser said, because he navigated the Clinic power structure to build something that served Black men. "He's not pontificating ad nauseam about our issues, he's actually doing something about it," he said.

Fraser saw those actions as essential for creating connections and trust with a doctor and, therefore, an institution.

The Clinic also has expanded minority focused care for stroke patients, respiratory issues and dermatology and has plans for outreach to the surrounding Black community when it opens its new biorepository to collect and store specimens and samples used in medical research.

Modlin said there aren't measures he can point to yet, aside from anecdotally, of how many health fair participants or center patients form long-term relationships with physicians or the Clinic.

But one thing that sticks out to him: The number of men who come in for prostate exams — not something men generally look forward to — speaks to the value of improving health literacy and an understanding of the importance of early detection of the disease.

To Modlin, the men who show up and those who keep coming back are "testament and evidence that we have been successful in building trust between men of color, their families and the community."

Editor's Note: This article is the third article in a series. The series is a partnership between the Northeast Ohio Solutions Journalism Collaborative and The Cleveland Observer. It is presented as part of ideastream's Coping With COVID-19 project, which is funded by the Third Federal Foundation and University Settlement.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CLEVELAND CLINIC

Cleveland Clinic President and CEO Dr. Tomislav Mihaljevic and Dr. Charles Modlin at the 2019 Minority Men's Health Fair.

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Cleveland efforts to recruit black, minority patients for COVID-19 vaccine trials is an uphill battle

by Brie Zeltner

Dr. Carla Harwell, an internist who is the medical director of the University Hospitals Otis Moss Jr. Health Center is Black. So are almost all of her patients, and nearly everyone who lives in the city's Fairfax neighborhood, where the center is located.

In early September, Harwell agreed to help recruit patients for one of the many clinical trials testing a vaccine for COVID-19.

Currently, [11 vaccines are being tested worldwide in large-scale trials](#), often with 20,000 people or more, to determine if they protect people from the coronavirus and are safe for wide use.

Harwell knows how important it is to include more Black people and other minorities in clinical trials, particularly for a disease that has sickened and killed them more than any other racial or ethnic group.

"You know, we're the ones that are dying," she said. "This is our community that's dying at a higher rate than we even represent in the U.S. population."

Black and Latinx residents in the United States have been three times as likely to be infected by the coronavirus and twice as likely to die from the virus than their white neighbors, according to [data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention analyzed by the New York Times this summer](#).

In Cleveland, 60% of the deaths reported from COVID-19 have been Black residents, though Blacks make up only about half of the city's population.

Recruitment in the Black community to test a vaccine that could protect against the virus has been an uphill battle, Harwell said. She's handed out brochures about the trial for the vaccine being developed by Pfizer and BioNTech and talked with about 75 patients. Only five have expressed even tepid

interest in participating, she said.

There's no way to track minority participation across all vaccine trials, though many of the biotechnology companies have ramped up recruitment through social media, such as Pfizer's "[Undo Underrepresented](#)" campaign. Some have slowed down study timelines, like Moderna did in September, to do more targeted enrollment of Black and Latinx participants.

As of Oct. 9, Moderna reported 34% of volunteers enrolled from "diverse communities." About 28% of participants in a final-stage Pfizer and BioNTech trial are minorities.

Harwell never expected her patients to jump at the chance to join a clinical trial testing a COVID-19 vaccine, she said, despite her two decades of building trust and credibility in the community. Most have given a flat-out, "No."

Their reasons reflect the mistrust, abuse and exploitation that riddle the history of clinical trials in the Black community, as well as pandemic-era confusion stemming from politically driven mixed messages about the virus and its severity, and even conspiracy theories about its existence.

They're also an indication that the decades-long trust-building battle to boost minority enrollment in clinical trials is far from won.

Skepticism born of history

Harwell's patients tell her they're afraid of being "guinea pigs" in the COVID-19 vaccine trials, and that because they're Black, they'll probably be given something harmful instead of a vaccine.

"They'll probably give me something different in the syringe than what they're supposed to," is what they've told her.

Patients often bring up the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, she said, as a reason to doubt the motives of researchers. In that

the street shut down for anything but a bad reason. So, we don't have block parties at all. In Cleveland Heights it's normalized – you'll see the street shut down with barricades and people sitting at tables in the street under tall trees."

Khan said neighbor-to-neighbor gatherings can be a crime deterrent, yet the requirement to hire off-duty police actually deters small events. "Think about the history of policing in my neighborhood. How I was treated as a young kid, I have a lot of sour memories. In black and brown neighborhoods, who wants that presence? It's always casting a shadow over the community and neighborhood, part of the larger shadow of the criminal justice system."

"Without these spaces, would I ever know my neighbors?" he added, noting that many residents in his neighborhood do not have relationships with police officers. "Yet many times, people get to the point of identifying the police officer [on the permit application], and they ball it up and put it in the trash."

Trivisonno made a public records request for block party permits from the city of Cleveland and said in interviews with residents it became clear that communities of color, and people lacking connections to police, were charged higher rates. Specifically, he found numerous instances in which residents in Ward 17, which encompasses West Park, did not pay for police. Either a police officer did it for free, or the councilperson helped to cover the cost. On the other

40-year-long experiment, researchers never informed the Black men, who participated, about the intent of the research, and did not offer them treatment for the disease even when treatment became available.

"There's a history in this country of medical and research abuse of African Americans before and well beyond Tuskegee," Harwell said. "But what I reassure them of is that we have mechanisms in place to make sure that that doesn't happen anymore."

One of these mechanisms is the institutional review board, or IRB, a group that independently reviews and monitors human research trials. Patients often don't know about it, she said.

Harwell has discovered "there's still a lot of patient education that still needs to be done, probably in general about clinical trials," she said.

In addition, information about the illness has been inconsistent and marred by partisan politics, Harwell and other Cleveland-area experts said.

"The messaging has clearly been a less-than-optimal incentive for ... potential participants who you would like to recruit into these trials," said Dr. Jackson Wright, director of UH's William T. Dahms Clinical Research Unit.

The mixed messages about the virus from political leaders are creating a "real sour taste" for Black people, Harwell said.

Even knowing someone with COVID-19 doesn't seem to encourage participation in trials, Harwell said, in part because of the newness and mysteriousness of the illness, and the lack of a consistent message about it.

Of all the responses Harwell's heard when she talks about the vaccine trials, the oddest, she said, was from a woman who said that there was no such thing as COVID-19, and that the pandemic was

hand, he found other communities where people did not hold events because of the bureaucratic hurdles or the steep costs.

"Part of the reason why the numbers of block parties being organized are low across the city is the large bureaucratic hurdles and the money that people have to pay for off-duty police," Trivisonno said.

Editor's Note: This article was produced and provided to the Plain Press by The Land. The Land is an online Newsletter that reports on Cleveland neighborhoods and inner ring suburbs. To subscribe to The Land visit: www.thelandcleveland.org.

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PHOTO BY TIM HARRISON
Dr. Carla Harwell, medical director of the Otis Moss Jr. Health Center in Cleveland's Fairfax neighborhood, has faced an uphill battle recruiting patients for a clinical trial for a vaccine being developed to prevent COVID-19.

"just one big conspiracy to shut stuff down."

"Wow, now I've heard a lot of different things," she said. "But that was a first."

Reason for hope

Despite the numerous obstacles to recruitment, Harwell sees some reason for hope.

Several of her patients have asked her for her thoughts about the vaccine trials, displaying the trust she has built over years in caring for them.

"That makes me feel good on several levels that they ... truly trust my opinion and that at least they're being a little open-minded about it," she said.

And some of the trepidation about the vaccine trials is not unique to the Black community, she said. Many people across the country are concerned about the pace at which the trials are moving and worry that corners are being cut when it comes to safety.

"So, what I'll hear is ... 'Now, I don't want to be the first person to try this out.'

I want to wait and see.' I don't think that's just an African American thing," Harwell said.

Some of that is fueled by disinformation that spreads like wildfire on social media, like the false claim that those vaccinated would be secretly "microchipped."

The stakes right now, though, are high, reminding Harwell of an oft-repeated adage: Sometimes if you're not at the table, you'll be on the menu.

"We want to make sure that we're represented so that we know that the vaccine will be safe and that it works for us," she said.

Editor's Note: This article is the fourth in a series. *The series is a partnership between the Northeast Ohio Solutions Journalism Collaborative and The Cleveland Observer. It is presented as part of ideastream's Coping With COVID-19 project, which is funded by the Third Federal Foundation and University Settlement.*

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PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MAKE THEM PAY OLD ANGLE BOXING GYM
Make Them Pay Old Angle Boxing Gym, 3212 W. 25th Street: Gary Horvath says this debris from a collapsed wall is just one example of the neglect by the building's landlord. Horvath would like to find a new affordable place in the neighborhood for the boxing gym.

NEXT GEN RTA

continued from page one

while decreasing it for less-used routes. By adding more buses to high-demand routes and changing some stops, Walker said RTA could improve access to employment for 11% more riders, according to *Crain's Cleveland Business*. Another suggestion from the study is to make changes to the RTA Circulator line, which Walker said duplicates existing bus routes.

Dana Beveridge, lead organizer for Cleveland Public Transit (CPT), attended several community engagement meetings and described public attendance as minimal. CPT is a riders' organization in partnership with labor and community allies that hosts monthly riders' meetings to discuss and strategize about concerns and opportunities with GCRTA.

"I attended a number of in-person sessions, and they were never well attended by the community," Beveridge said. "There were more RTA staff persons at the meetings than the actual riding public."

Beveridge isn't discouraged by the lack of community participation even considering low turnout at the RTA meetings. Not everyone wanting to participate or contribute comments could; residents without computers or internet access were dependent on attending the in-person sessions and the timing of the RTA public meetings didn't always fit their schedules, according to her.

"We were concerned about the on-line responding issue and tried to find ways to make sure people could submit comments either in person by mail or telephone. GCRTA is trying to achieve equity with their proposal but not everyone is going to get what they want," said Beveridge.

Those without internet access can still participate by calling the RTA Answerline at 216-621-9500 to learn more about the redesign, and request that an information sheet be sent to their home so they can provide feedback.

In 2016, CPT actions helped to preserve the #81 bus service around CMHA (Cuyahoga Metropolitan

Housing Authority) properties on the near west side such as the Lakeview Tower high-rise residences and Lakeview Estates near the Shoreway, and Riverview Tower along West 25th Street. The GCRTA plans recommend a cancellation of route #81 service as part of their NEXT GEN RTA proposal starting the summer 2021 with pending approval from the RTA's Board of Trustees.

The route #81/Tremont - Storer bus travels from Downtown Cleveland to West 25th Street and Ohio City, then continues through Tremont and Steelyard Commons, to Trowbridge Avenue, Storer Avenue, Denison, Clinton Road and West 98th Street to the West Boulevard Rapid Station.

The proposed RTA changes include discontinuing the #81 and replace daytime service between West Blvd-Cudell Rapid Station and Steelyard Commons with the #18. RTA will provide service between Steelyard Commons and Downtown with the #25 on Quigley Rd, W 7th St, Jefferson Ave, Starkweather Ave, Professor Ave, Fairfield Ave, and I-90. Additionally, NEXT GEN Route #18 will not run in the evenings.

Residents of Lakeview Tower and Estates, and Riverview Tower, many of which rely heavily on the #81 for transportation to Steelyard Commons for work and to purchase supplies and food, will have to take the #25 bus to downtown Cleveland, then transfer to the #18 bus, nearly doubling the amount of time needed to get there.

Rosetta McKinney moved to Riverview Towers ten years ago from E. 140th Street because of easy RTA access to Metro Hospital and the West Side Market, as well as service to retail and drug stores in Ohio City and Tremont. She depends on the #81 bus to take her to the Steel Yard Commons. While an average trip might take her about 35-45 minutes each way, with the new NEXT GEN service and transfer to a second bus, she expects to add another 35-45 minutes to her travel time, and that's only if the bus makes the connection on time. Otherwise, it could take hours longer.

"It's going to be hard for many of

PCs for People is offering 10,000 free computers and hotspots to Cuyahoga County residents

by Collin Cunningham, *The Land*

As part of their continued collaboration with Cleveland Public Library to provide digital resources to local families, PCs for People is offering 10,000 free computers and hotspots to qualified Cuyahoga County residents who need them most during the pandemic.

PCs for People executive director Bryan Mauk said the need for free computers and hotspots is significant in Cleveland, with the city having recently been named one of the Worst Connected U.S. Cities of 2019 by the National Digital Inclusion Alliance. Mauk said he's now hoping to change that by giving away hotspots and computers for people to keep for free, so long as they qualify for the program.

"I would say about a third of households just need a computer, a third need just internet and a third need both," Mauk said. He added that the new initiative is an expansion of their longtime partnership with Cleveland Public Library, which has been renting out PCs for People hotspots to members for the past three years.

Enter COVID-19, which Mauk said made owning a computer and having internet access even more of a necessity as pretty much everyone was forced to apply social distancing measures and

conduct business online, from senior citizens and students to potential job seekers.

To qualify, potential recipients must be 200 percent below the poverty level or be enrolled in an income-based government assistance program, according to the PCs for People website. If eligible, seniors and job seekers can call 216-777-4441 or email cuyahoga@pcsfpeople.org for additional information, while families who want equipment for their K-12 or charter school students can apply at pcsfpeople.org/ohio before picking it up.

According to Mauk, computers and hotspots will be available for pickup at the South Brooklyn, West Park and Woodland branches of the Cleveland Public Library. The Collinwood Branch on East 152 Street will host a pop-up computer distribution event between 1 and 4 p.m. on Nov. 23, with residents being encouraged to pre-register via forms available at the library.

"So, schools are always in the spotlight now with digital learning, but there are many populations that have been affected," Mauk said. "Senior citizens (are) one of the most vulnerable populations due to COVID. Being forced by the virus to stay home, not to see family, not to have things like Facebook and video chats to see their children and

grandchildren."

"Unemployed folks who need a job, will find that almost all of the job market has moved online through COVID. From doing job applications to Zoom interviews, the onboarding process is almost entirely online."

Mauk added that the library's involvement is crucial for this program because it will help them distribute hardware more easily. The program's goal is to distribute more than 10,000 computers in Cuyahoga County.

"There's just no way we could physically get all those people to come into our store," Mauk said. "Being able to partner with the Cleveland libraries for curbside pickup was huge in being able to let us reach people in a socially-distant manner."

Editor's Note: Having graduated from Kent State in May of 2019, Collin Cunningham is a freelance journalist who has recently moved to Tremont. When he's not writing or reporting, Collin likes to read, bike the city and spend time with his two lionhead rabbits, Curtis and Cloud. This article was produced and provided to the Plain Press by The Land. The Land is an online Newsletter that reports on Cleveland neighborhoods and inner ring suburbs. To subscribe to The Land visit: [www.thelandcleveland.org](http://thelandcleveland.org).

Neighborhood Family Practice awarded over \$350,000 from Three Arches Foundation

ability to pay.

"Telehealth has emerged as a critical service for health care providers and patients alike during the COVID-19 pandemic," says Jean Polster, RN, MS, NFP's president and chief executive officer. "NFP was able to quickly implement telemedicine care and will continue to offer this type of appointment going forward. We're excited to partner with the Barton Senior Center and Lakewood Senior Citizens Service Corp to introduce telemedicine care to residents of the Westerly."

The first is part of a joint award with Barton Senior Center and Lakewood Senior Citizens Service Corp to fund a pilot program that tests the practicality and effectiveness of using telemedicine and care pathways to engage low-income senior citizen residents of The Westerly Apartments in Lakewood.

The second grant is a multi-year award to assist NFP in increasing access to affordable healthcare for underserved residents of Cleveland's west side through funding support for the Financial Eligibility and Assistance Program. This program connects individuals and families to primary care, behavioral health, dental, midwifery and pharmacy services regardless of their

blood. Using grants from the National Institutes of Health, researchers at Stanford University unearthed this B cell technology in the 1970s and 1980s.

This discovery may never have become a commercially viable cancer treatment had those researchers not left Stanford and formed Biotherapy Systems in 1985 to further develop and commercialize their B cell technology.

Finally, in 1997, the FDA approved their drug rituximab under the brand name Rituxan.

I'm far from the only patient who owes her life to the drug innovation ecosystem Bayh-Dole supports. Under this law, private companies have been able to bring patients hundreds of treatments -- including the epilepsy drug Lyrica, the ovarian and breast cancer therapy Taxol, and the multiple sclerosis medication Tcelna.

But chemotherapy didn't slow the progression of my disease. A few months into treatment -- and in the nick of time -- a new type of treatment for NHL hit the market: radioimmunotherapy (RIT). Unlike chemotherapy, which attacks both cancerous and healthy cells and requires up to eight treatments, RIT targets cancerous cells only, and takes only one or two injections.

In September 2002, I received two doses of the cutting-edge RIT drug Zevalin and have been in remission and healthy ever since.

A crucial part of Zevalin's therapeutic regimen is the infusion of the drug rituximab, a medication designed to reduce the number of cancerous B cells in the

COVID-19 effects are not just physical

by Pat Takacs, MSN, RN

COVID-19 effects are not just physical--as devastating as these are to the person infected. It also has emotional, mental, and spiritual effects. Everyone deals with anxiety from this virus in different ways. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), stress from this pandemic might reveal itself in a variety of ways: fear about your own health and the health of your loved ones; changes in sleep, concentration, or eating patterns; worsening of chronic health problems; and increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.

Things you can do to support yourself include stepping away from the constant drone of the newscasts now and then, including social media. CDC also recommends taking care of your body through deep breathing exercises; physical exercising, stretching and meditation; eating well-balanced, healthy meals; getting plenty of sleep; and avoiding excess alcohol and drugs.

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention states: "We are not helpless in light of current events. We can always choose our response." The Foundation offers these guides on coping with uncertainty: 1) Separate what is in your control from what is not. Wash your hands, keep your distance, wear a mask. Skip the news if you want. 2) Do what helps you to feel a sense of safety. This will be different for everyone, so don't try to compare yourself to others. 3) Go outside, take a walk in the neighborhood, wave hello to those you see. 4) Stay in the present. When you find yourself worrying about something that hasn't happened yet, gently bring yourself back into the now and enjoy the sights, sounds and other sensory experiences in your environment. Journal your thoughts and leave them there on the page, don't take them back.

The Mayo Clinic also encourages taking care of your mind and spirit. They state you need to make connections with those you love, including your spiritual community. Do something for others by find-

ing purpose in helping the people around you, especially those who are elderly. They go on to state: "Everyone entered these times with their normal everyday stressors. But the crisis of COVID-19 can push you beyond your ability to cope". If your feeling overwhelmed with sadness, depression or anxiety, here are some other options: 1) Contact a close friend or loved one, or a minister or spiritual leader, or someone in your faith community to share your feelings. 2) Contact your Employee Assistance Program and ask for a referral to a mental health professional. 3) Call your Primary care Provider or Mental Health Professional to ask for an appointment by phone, video or online.

If you need help right now, call 911 if it's an emergency; Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255; Contact the Crisis Text Line by texting TALK to 741741; or call the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990 (TTY: 800-846-8517).

When the COVID-19 crisis ends, stress won't disappear. Continue these self-care practices. Above all, be gentle with yourself and others as, "...the greatest of these is LOVE".

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FOOD

GRAB AND GO MEALS FOR YOUTH: Available at all Cleveland Public Library branches M-F from 3-4 p.m.

FESTIVAL

WINTERTIDE at Gordon Square, an arts-infused holiday experience in the Gordon Square Arts District and online. **Saturday, December 12**, join us for merriment and performances in-person (12pm-6pm ET) and live-streamed (1pm ET). WINTERTIDE at Gordon Square is a free, all-ages, arts-infused festival, presented virtually and in-person this year. This event is presented by Detroit Shoreway Community Development Organization (DSCDO) in collaboration with Cleveland Public Theatre and features wandering performers, pop-up murals, and seven local businesses paired with neighborhood artists and arts organizations presenting online performances. WINTERTIDE at Gordon Square mixes holiday merriment with artistic wonder like nowhere else in Cleveland and supports our vibrant neighborhood businesses, celebrates the arts, and brings a moment of light and joy amidst the growing dark of winter.

HEALTH CARE

OPEN ENROLLMENT in the Health-Care Market ends December 15th. To see if you qualify for a health care insurance subsidy visit: HealthCare.gov.

LIBRARIES

CLEVELAND PUBLIC LIBRARIES: Due to the recent increase in COVID-19 cases across the county all Library buildings will close to the public. Curbside and walk-up services will still be available on Monday through Friday 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. For more information on how curbside pickup works visit cpl.org.

OHIO

OHIO HOUSE BILL 404 extends the expiration date of driver licenses (DL), identification cards (ID), and vehicle registrations beyond December 1, 2020. Now, if a customer's expiration date on their DL, ID, or vehicle registration is March 9, 2020, to April 1, 2021, the expiration date has been automatically extended and will remain valid until **July 1, 2021**. Many of the services Ohioans rely on at the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) can be accomplished online at www.OPlates.com.

UTILITIES

CLEVELAND PUBLIC UTILITIES TO RESUME DISCONNECTIONS: On December 1, 2020, the City of Cleveland Department of Public Utilities' (DPU) will lift the moratorium



PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN

Monday, November 23, 2020; River Road/Willow Avenue and Elm Avenue south side of the Willow Avenue Bridge: The City of Cleveland plans to rebuild the Willow Avenue Bridge. Some area residents and businesses concerned about truck traffic going to and from Whiskey Island would like to see the Willow Avenue bridge moved further west to W. 45th Street when it is rebuilt. A sign near the bridge announces plan to open the Wendy Park Bridge in 2021. The plan calls for pedestrian/bicycle bridge to span over the Norfolk Southern Railroad tracks just north of the Willow Avenue Bridge. The Wendy Park Bridge would link the Towpath Trail to Whiskey Island and the Lakefront and Lakelink Trails. Under current plans cyclists and pedestrians could cross the Old River Channel of the Cuyahoga River at the Willow Avenue Bridge to reach the Wendy Park Bridge.

on shutoffs and reconnections. DPU will resume the regular process for collections and disconnection of service for delinquent water and/or electric accounts. Financial relief tools are in place to assist customers in need. In addition to current affordability programs, the city utilities are offering extended payment plan options as well as coordinating with outside agencies to refer customers for additional services. The Division of Water and Cleveland Public Power will notify customers with past due accounts, so they receive notice in addition to the regular multi-notice procedures. Customers who need assistance are encouraged to contact Cleveland Water at (216) 664-3130 or Cleveland Public Power at (216) 664-4600 to discuss their payment options as soon

as possible.

TEENS

ESSAY CONTEST: Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C®) is asking Northeast Ohio teens to weigh in on a question society often struggles to answer: *What is racism, and what should we do about it?* An essay contest based upon that question opens today for high school students in a seven-county area. The contest is part of Tri-C's Stand for Racial Justice, which seeks to advance racial equity and healing in the community. Essays cannot exceed 500 words and are due by midnight on Friday, Dec. 18. Submit entries at tri-c.edu/essaycontest. Submissions will be judged in two groups

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School of One opens site at LGBT Center

CMSD NEWS BUREAU

The Cleveland Metropolitan School District's School of One has opened a site at the LGBT Community Center of Greater Cleveland, a partnership that might be the first of its kind in the country.

Classes, like those across the District, are remote for now but will be held at The Center, 6705 Detroit Avenue, in the West Side's Gordon Square area when public health conditions permit.

The LGBT Center, which is providing the space for free, is the second nontraditional site for the nontraditional, individualized high school. It joins one opened in 2018 at The Foundry, a nonprofit rowing and sailing facility in The Flats. The other seven School of One sites are in buildings shared with District schools.

CMSD Career and College Readiness Manager DaJon Battle proposed the partnership. She said the site might be a fit for LGBTQ youth are seeking a sense of community.

"I'm excited," said Battle, who identifies as queer. "We are going to change students' lives."

Enrollment has yet to take off at what is formally known as the School of One: Solutions for Global Issues, but advocates believe the option will gain momentum as awareness grows. They also speculate that LGBTQ students might be distracted at the moment by COVID-related family and economic concerns brought on by the pandemic.

Seats will be limited at the new School of One site, which is not restricted to LGBTQ students.

School of One sites typically offer morning and afternoon sessions, capped at 15 students each. Due to the risk of COVID-19, the capacity of each session will be reduced to 10 when students eventually report to The

Center.

Center Program Director Gulnar Feerasta looks forward to integrating the students with a leadership development institute and an after-school program that last year served 201 youth. She said many LGBT youth already frequent The Center, often changing into clothing that reflects their identities when they arrive and changing back before they leave.

"For the few hours they are here, their entire demeanor changes," Feerasta said. "This weight is lifted from their shoulders."

CMSD offers a variety of school models so students can find the right fit. And School of One is definitely for students who need a certain fit.

Students enroll in the School of One for various reasons. For example, some work or have children.

The individualized computer-based program currently serves more than 200 students, with the number fluctuating, or rolling, throughout the year as students — ranging from overage eighth-graders to 20-year-olds — get back on track or graduate, some of them ahead of schedule. A handful of staff assist students as they work at their own pace.

Cheryl Dzuro, in her 32nd year of teaching, is excited about working at the newest School of One site.

"I saw this as an awesome, awesome opportunity to work with youth," she said. "We are providing a place where they can reach their full potential."

Feerasta said LGBTQ students who attend classes at The Center will get a warm — and understanding — welcome.

"The staff is so eager to have the youth here and have them in a space we didn't have," she said.

The School of One requires an application. To apply, go to www.clevelandmetroschools.org/SOI



PHOTO BY DEBBIE SADLON

Tuesday, November 17, 2020; Tree removal in Tremont, W. 5th and Jefferson: Van Curen Tree Service cuts down trees, filling a truck with tree trunks.

Cleveland Metropolitan School District shares information on COVID-19 planning and budget projections at Board of Education meeting

Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) Chief Executive Officer Eric Gordon shared information with the Board of Education at its November 17th meeting on the administration's planning to manage COVID-19. Gordon said CMSD plans to announce their next decision on reopening, hybrid or full remote learning, on Dec. 11.

Unless public health trends improve, Gordon said CMSD will remain fully remote until Dec. 21. The week of Nov. 30, caregivers, students and teachers

will receive surveys asking for their input on decisions around reopening and wellness and safety measures for the district. If the district were to open upon COVID-19 case numbers improving, Gordon presented a three-phase plan — starting with ELL (English Language Learners), Off-Track 12th grade students, CTE (Career/Technical Education) students, and winter athletes. Phase two would include Pre-K to 2nd grade students, Off Track 9th grade students, and the rest of the CTE students. Phase 3 would include the remaining students.

CEO Gordon also noted that the School Choice portal has opened. Eighth Grade students and their families can use the portal at ChooseCMSD.org to select high schools for next school year. According to the CMSD website, the portal will accept high school choices until February 5th. Families can select up to five schools and rank them in order of preference. Families and students can also use the portal if they are already enrolled in a high school and would like to change schools.

In an effort to make CMSD a more racially just school system, Gordon said he met with Black Lives Matter Cleveland and Black Spring Cleveland to begin the discussion of potential actions the district could take toward reaching that goal.

The Board of Education Agenda included a resolution to express support for The Ohio Fair School Funding Plan and urged the Ohio Senate to pass Senate Bill 376 and the Ohio House of Representatives to pass House Bill 305. The bills will attempt to adjust the school funding system in Ohio. If they become law, they will shift the funding from solely

a property-tax allocation system to a balance of property and income wealth. It also segregates voucher, community and charter school and school district payments so the state will make payments directly to those schools rather than having those allocations come out of the funds allocated to local school districts.

The Board of Education approved its Five-Year Financial Forecast of Revenues and Expenditures. The forecast includes projected property tax revenue increases from the 15-mill renewal and 5 mill additional tax levy Cleveland voters passed on November 3rd.

The five-year forecast notes that assessed property values "increased by 10% with the 2018 reappraisal from \$4.8 billion to \$5.3 billion." The report notes that HB 920 (passed in 1976) limits the ability of the school district to take advantage of increase in property value due to appraisal until a new levy is passed. The district says the current property values are projected at \$5.2 billion. The levy will assess 20 mills on the current value of property and is projected to bring in \$87.6 million in School Year 2021-2022 and \$88.8 million in each of the three years after that. CMSD projected that if the levy did not pass by the 2024-2025 School Year its Unencumbered Balance would be a negative \$322 million. Instead with the passage of the levy the projection is to have a positive balance at the end of the 2024-2025 School year of \$74.8 million.

The five-year forecast notes that currently 32.2 percent of the CMSD General Fund revenue comes from local property tax. It states that property tax collection rate is currently 88.2%. According to the report 59.8% of CMSD's General Fund Revenue comes from the State Foundation Formula.

Another resolution passed by the Board of Education authorizes the Chief Executive Officer to offer school buildings that haven't been used as schools over the last twelve months to Community Schools as required by the Ohio Revised Code.

Editor's Note: Notes and documents from the November 17th CMSD Board of Education Meeting were provided to the Plain Press by Cleveland Documenters. Many thanks to Cleveland Documenters and Candice Wilder, the documenter who took the notes used in this article. Cleveland Documenters, powered by City Bureau and Neighbor Up, trains and pays Greater Clevelanders to document government meetings in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County. Find out more at cleveland.documenters.org or call 216-361-0042.



PHOTO BY DEBBIE SADLON

Tuesday, November 17, 2020; Literary Road just east of W. 5th: High end rental housing is being constructed near the Towpath extension trail where a pedestrian bridge spans Literary Road.

Transformation Alliance's Communications and Engagement Committee discusses how best to reach out to families with information about school choices in the city of Cleveland

At its November 17th meeting, the Communications and Engagement Committee of the Cleveland Transformation Alliance, which is charged with marketing responsibilities for the Cleveland Plan for Transforming Schools, discussed how to best reach parents looking to select a school for their child. Cleveland Transformation Alliance Executive Director Meghann Marnecheck said the organizations' School Quality Guide (available online at mycleschool.org) was due for an update and should be ready soon. There was some discussion about whether or not to include schools that have closed in the guide. Several committee members opposed including pages for schools that have closed.

Tina Rice of TRice Communications LLC, director of the marketing campaign for Cleveland Transformation Alliance (CTA), promised to use her contacts and expertise to reach parents in a budget conscious way. Committee member August Napoli said CTA would benefit most from "grassroots outreach that is as organic as possible, including nontraditional marketing and advertising."

Pam Turos from Good Cause Cleveland said her goal is to be specific in messaging, especially in the monthly general newsletters that are distributed to target audiences. She is gleeful about the success of incorporating an opt-in popup that allows the website to track the critical demographic information that identifies interested entities. The challenge is to encourage visitors to

stay on the website longer. She said the Find a School link is the most visited page on the site and zoning in on areas most visited on the site would increase length of visits.

Nic Abraham from Good Cause Creative discussed how a \$10,000 October 2020 Google Grant for digital advertising boosted website analytics. Page views doubled from September to October, with impressions and appearances in Google search ads also revealing "powerful upward trends." An expansive keywords list and geo-tracking were highlighted as the largest factors in this increase. Marnecheck suggested a budget of \$1,000 per month to continue to reap the rewards of geo-tracking. The committee nodded at the idea.

Napoli conferred with the commit-

tee on decisions made. Marnecheck motioned to defer decisions until 5:30 p.m. Monday, Dec., 7th at the Transformation Alliance Board of Directors meeting. Access that meeting with this link: <https://zoom.us/j/98094926783?pwd=MCtSYVFzbi9ENS9OaEVxREMyQ3UvZz09>

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