



PHOTO BY ERIK AULT
Tuesday, May 2, 2023; St. Ignatius High School Breen Center, 2008 W. 30th St: Timothy Del Papa, resident of Ohio City since 1988, was chosen by his neighbors to be president of the South of Lorain Block Club. Tim, whose parents also live in the neighborhood, has seen many changes in the neighborhood. He is excited to bring a positive outlook to the block club and help serve his neighbors.

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Plain Press

Cleveland's Westside Newspaper

Tremont residents and stakeholders gather for annual TWDC membership meeting

by Chuck Hoven
Tremont residents and stakeholders filled the gym at Scranton Road Bible Church for Tremont West Development Corporation's (TWDC) 2023 membership meeting held on May 18. Tremont West Development Corporation's Executive Director Cory Riordan greeted guests at the door and seems genuinely relieved at the large turnout. It meant

TWDC would have a quorum for the first time in several years as the neighborhood emerges from years of people shying away from public meeting due to pandemic induced caution.
At the meeting TWDC honored residents and organizations for their contributions to the community.
Henry Senyak was awarded the Gail Long Lifetime Achievement Award for

his many years of service and exceptional contributions to the community. In presenting the award, Riordan said that the award, named after longtime Merrick House staff member Gail Long, isn't presented every year. He then noted Senyak's service that included serving as President of TWDC, serving on the TWDC Economic Development Committee and his longtime service as chair of the Lincoln Heights Block Club. Accomplishments by Senyak included the leading efforts in the development of a community plan for the Lincoln Heights neighborhood called Reaching Lincoln Heights. The plan, which other block clubs are beginning to emulate, includes voluntary contributions by developers to a fund that sets aside money to help residents make repairs to their homes--helping them to afford to remain in the neighborhood. Riordan said that while he has had disagreements with Senyak over the years, "he's our guy, and he works on behalf of the people he cares about."

TWDC also awarded five Community Impact Awards. The awards went to Sandy Smith for her efforts to establish the Scranton Road Historic District; the Duck Island Leadership Team for their inclusive community organizing efforts and work to establish community benefits agreements and hold developers accountable; Tonia Kaiser of Kaiser Gallery at Professor and Jefferson

continued on page 7



PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN
Thursday, May 18, 2023, Tremont West Development Corporation Annual Meeting, Scranton Road Bible Church, 3095 Scranton Road: Tremont West Development Corporation presented Henry Senyak with the Gail Long Lifetime Achievement Award for many years of sharing his time, efforts, skills, and experience with the people in his community.



PHOTO BY ERIK AULT
Saturday, April 29, 2023; Urban Community School, 4909 Lorain Ave: Duncan Stelle, Director of Squash at the Urban Squash League, addresses the crowd at the Racquets Rally. Squash is a racquet-and-ball game played with two or four players. The Urban Squash League is a youth program. According to the website, "Our program is designed to help Team Members build confidence, strengthen ties with their community and their peers, and develop the skills and character necessary to achieve their goals."

Blossoming cherry trees celebrate springtime and hospitality in Cleveland

by Erik Ault
Spring is heralded every year in Brookside reservation by the recurring blossoming of the sakura, known in English as the cherry blossom. The sakura is the symbolic tree of Japan where springtime is considered the start of a new year. The sakura is among the first trees to blossom, signaling rebirth and renewal. But how did these trees get from Japan to Cleveland? Chiaki Nakayama of the Japanese Association of Northeast Ohio (JANO) shared the story.
The JANO was started in 1991, and by 1996, the small group had wanted to give something back to Cleveland as an expression of gratitude for the hospitality. They decided on special gifts that would return every year to greet Cleveland to a new spring: the blossoming of the sakura. But where to plant them proved challenging.

The JANO was looking for a place where people could gather. At the same time, the Brookside Reservation of the Metroparks was looking to expand. Given its space and middle location between the east and west sides, the Reservation was the perfect location to create a green gathering spot not just for the Japanese community but for any group wanting to meet outdoors. The JANO brought their proposal to the Metroparks who agreed to care for the maintenance of the trees.
Twelve trees, specifically the *yoshino* variety, were planted first in 1996. The Metroparks continued planting new trees and maintaining them until seven years later, when they reached 100 sakura. To commemorate this, the Metroparks placed a stone monument at the site of the original trees.
From 2012 to 2016, the JANO

continued on page 5

Challenges with housing voucher programs examined

by Bruce Checefsky
The Section 8 housing program, or Housing Choice Voucher program, established in 1974 during the Nixon-Ford Administration, gives people with low-income the financial resources to acquire housing from the private sector. The voucher program, first authorized by the Housing and Urban-Rural Recovery Act of 1983, is one of

the largest components of the Section 8 program.
Participants select housing that meets the requirements and is not limited to units located in subsidized housing projects. Eligibility for a housing voucher, determined by the Public Housing Authority, is based on the total annual gross income and family size, and is limited to U.S.

citizens and specified categories of non-citizens with eligible immigration status.
Family income may not exceed 50% of the median income for the county or metropolitan area where the family chooses to live. For Cuyahoga County, that median income is \$29,900 for one person household, \$34,200 for a two-

continued on page 6



PHOTO BY ERIK AULT
Friday, April 14, 2023; Brookside Reservation, 3900 John Nagy Blvd: A blossoming branch of a sakura at the Brookside Reservation, gives hope of another spring coming to Cleveland. The sakura, also known as the Japanese cherry blossom, is the national tree of Japan and was given to Cleveland as a gift from the Japanese Association of Northeast Ohio.



PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN
Thursday, May 18, 2023; Max Hayes High School, 2211 W. 65th Street: Max Hayes Construction Program 10th Grade students Yandi Chacon, Derek Gonzalez and Zahyr Scott were among 19 students who completed a Renovation, Repair and Painting Course. The curriculum for the course was designed through a joint effort by the federal Environmental Protection Agency and the federal Housing and Urban Development department. Sherwin-Williams sponsored the teaching of the course and an additional Basic Painter Training Course led by contractor Bill Allman. Max Hayes Construction Program Instructor James MacDowell says the students learned “how to work in a lead-free environment in a way that is safe for themselves and the occupants.”



ARTS
STATION HOPE: Station Hope is a free event and will take place on Saturday, May 27, beginning at 7:00 p.m. on the grounds of St. John's Episcopal Church, located at 2600 Church Avenue. The event is open to all ages and will feature pieces inspired by Jesse Owens, Toni Morrison, a legendary Cleveland jazz club, a piece co-written by a local Poet Laureate, and much more.
ART HOUSE is offering new FREE art camps due to a grant from the PNC Charitable Trusts Robert H. Reakirt FDN Equities. The fun begins June 12th with camps Monday - Thursday from 10:00 AM - 11:30AM and 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM. 2nd graders and up are welcome to attend independently. Children younger than 2nd grade should be accompanied by an adult for assistance. Please, register in advance at www.arthouseinc.org so the teaching artist can plan accordingly for supplies and activities!
COMMUNITY ARTS CENTER, CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART AT THE PIVOT CENTER, 2937 W. 25TH STREET: Enjoy Free drop-in art making and gallery exploration with the whole family during open hours: Fridays, 2-7 p.m.; Saturdays and Sundays 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.
BUSINESS ASSISTANCE
MINORITY BUSINESS ASSISTANCE CENTER: The Urban League of Greater Cleveland has been selected as the Minority Business Assistance Center for the Cleveland area for the period from period of July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2025. Businesses can reach out to a Minority Business Assistance Cen-

ter near them for help with assistance with business planning, access to capital, and state business certifications. For more information about the MBAC network, visit MBAC.Development.Ohio.Gov.
CELEBRATION OF LIFE
GLORIA ARON'S CELEBRATION OF LIFE: Come to celebrate the life of Gloria Aron. Saturday, June 24, 2023 at the home of Chris Aron and Dan Thatcher: 6884 Anthony Lane; Parma Hts. OH starting at 1:00 p.m. Parking on the street or at Valley Forge High School.
CITIZEN ACTION
DATA DAYS CLE annual conference of interactive tutorials, presentations, and conversations on using open data and civic technology to make our community a better place will be held on October 12th at the Cleveland Public Library Main Branch.
CRIME REPORTING: Residents are encouraged to report illegal and suspicious activity to law enforcement. Call 9-1-1 in emergencies. Call 216-621-1234 in non-emergencies. Anonymous information can be provided by calling Crimestoppers at 216-25-CRIME.
EDUCATION
AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE LESSONS AND PRACTICE: Every Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. in St. Augustine Church Hall, 2486 W. 14th Street.
CLEVELAND TRANSFORMATION ALLIANCE: Find the right kindergarten for your child. Visit mycleschool.org or call 216-592-2303 for more information.
CLEVELAND TRANSFORMATION ALLIANCE'S 2023 SCHOOL QUALITY

GUIDE is now available. Visit your local library to pick up a copy. The guide lists schools by neighborhood.
LIDERES AVANZANDO THROUGH COLLEGE: Esperanza offers a \$400 scholarship upon successful completion of an online VIRTUAL PROGRAM which includes 10 Virtual Workshops. The program supports traditional, first-generation Latino students in their first/second year of college. Through team-building activities, biweekly workshops, and a service project, students receive support services relevant to their experiences. Now accepting rising freshman/sophomore undergraduate students ages 18-24. Contact Germaine Pena at 216-338-8684 or germaine@esperanzainc.org
EMPLOYMENT
FRONTLINE SERVICE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES offers employers help with their hiring needs. No cost to employers. Individualized job matches. Ongoing support. For more information visit www.FrontLineService.org
YOUNG ADULT OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAM of Youth Opportunities Unlimited offers Cuyahoga County residents ages 18-24 who are not currently in high school or college help developing the skills, training and support needed to launch a new career at no cost to you. Job readiness training. Four weeks of paid work experience (100 hours at \$13 per hour) and credential training in fields such as Customer Care, IT, State Tested Nurse Aid and Construction. To register visit www.youthopportunities.org or call the hotline at 216-973-0037.
ENVIRONMENT
CLEVELAND DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AIR QUALITY: visit online to learn about Cleveland's air quality at www.clevelandhealth.org
REPORT AIR QUALITY COMPLAINTS or for general information: 24-Hour Central Hotline: 216-664-7442.
EVENTS
WE ARE FAMILY LITERACY CARNIVAL: Tuesday, June 6th, from 11 a.m. – 3 p.m. at Max Hayes High School, 2211 W. 65th Street. Educational activities. Free games, food, and prizes. Will move inside if it rains.
CLEVELAND METROPARKS KIDS NATURE LUNCH AND LEARN SERIES will feature a mobile nature center, Nature

Max Hayes students learn how to work safely in a lead paint environment

Nineteen students at Max Hayes High School recently completed a one-day *Renovation, Repair and Painting Course* to better prepare them to work in an environment that might contain lead in pre 1978 construction.
Max Hayes Construction Program Instructor James MacDowell says the course is part of a curriculum designed jointly by the federal Environmental Protection Agency and the federal department of Housing and Urban Development. MacDowell says the course was taught by Bill Allman, a subcontractor working for Sherwin-Williams Paint Company. MacDowell says students learned “how to work in a lead-free environment in a way that is safe for themselves and the occupants.”
For three days prior to taking the *Renovation, Repair and Painting Course*, the students participated in a three-day Basic Painter Course offered by Sherwin-Williams. During the course, students painted the walls of the Construction Program workshop at Max Hayes.
Cleveland has many homes that were built prior to 1978 when lead

paint was banned in the United States. Max Hayes Construction Program Instructor MacDowell says the painting instruction will help prepare students who may want to work for a paint company or work for contractors where painting is part of a job.
This year Construction students at Max Hayes, under the supervision of MacDowell and Instructor Jim Mulgrew, have engaged in some projects in the community. These projects included building picnic tables for the Culinary Program at East Tech High School, working with Food Strong to help teach K-8 students to build wood frames for raised bed gardens at Willson, Charles Mooney and Tremont schools, and building little free libraries for other schools.
The Max Hayes Construction Program has a special relationship with Cleveland Trade Unions. Curriculum Instruction Specialist Alfred “A.C.” Fenderson helps students explore careers in the different local unions, obtain summer job placements, and learn how to become an apprentice in a local union.

Tracks and educational themes including hands-on learning about birds, mammals, insects, reptiles and amphibians, fish and trees. The Lunch and Learn will be at Lakefront Reservation near Edgewater Beach on Fridays from June 9th until August 11th, from 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.. Free lunch will be provided for youth ages 18 and under as part of Greater Cleveland Food Bank's Summer Feeding program while supplies last.
CLEVELAND METROPARKS SUMMER CONCERT SERIES presented by Serpentine Chevrolet is set to rock the lakefront this summer. The Thursday evening happy hour concerts from 4 – 8 p.m. will be at Edgewater Park on June 8th and will feature Reggae with Carlos Jones and the P.L.U.S. Band. The June 15th Concert will be at Merwin's Wharf and will feature Funk with the Shoreline Funk All Stars. The June 18th Concert will be at the Historic U.S. Coast Guard Station and will feature Rock and Indie with Front Porch Lights. On June 29th the concert will be at the E. 55th Marina and will feature Country and Rock with Country Honk.
EDGEWATER NEIGHBORFEST: Come enjoy FREE art, music and play on Clifton Blvd during this year's Edgewater Neighbor-Fest on Sunday, June 25! There will be summertime activities for all ages at this festival, produced by Northwest Neighborhoods.
SYMPHONY AT SUNSET: Pack a picnic and head to Voinovich Park at North Coast Harbor Sunday evenings in June and July from 7-9pm to experience the remarkable OPUS 216 ensemble. Wrap up your weekend and join an ever-changing lineup of the most talented musicians in the city, while the sun sets over Lake Erie.
FOOD
GREATER CLEVELAND FOOD BANK will give away FREE produce each third Monday of the month, 3-6pm, at Zone Rec (6301 Lorain Ave). This is part of a partnership with the City of Cleveland in response to the recent federal reduction in SNAP benefits.
HEALTH
LGBT COMMUNITY CENTER'S THRIVE WITH PRIDE HEALTH AND WELLNESS DAY: June 23 from Noon – 7 p.m. Free preventive screenings for the community along with information and resources

to support health and wellness.
ADDICTION TREATMENT WORKS. PEOPLE RECOVER: For information about addiction Prevention, Treatment, Recovery, Stigma Reduction and more, visit adamhsc.org. Ready for treatment? Call 216-623-6888 or 988.
ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION HELP-LINE (800-272-3900) provides information guidance and support to people living with the disease, caregivers, families and friends.
LEAD SAFETY
LEAD POISONING IS PREVENTABLE: Get your child tested. Pregnant moms should be tested too. The only way to know if your child was exposed to lead is by asking their doctor for a blood lead test. Lead poisoning can cause damage to the brain and nervous system, slow growth and development, learning and behavior problems and hearing and speech problems. For more information contact Cleveland Lead Advocates for Safe Housing (CLASH) at 216-359-1060 or visit <http://clashcle.org>
REDUCE LEAD HAZARDS: Your family may be eligible for free home repairs. To apply call 216-263-5323 (LEAD). Learn the risks. Get kids tested.
LEAD PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN WITH ELEVATED BLOOD LEAD LEVELS: Cleveland Dept of Public Health, 75 Erieview Plaza, 3rd Floor. Phone: 216-263-5323 (LEAD).
LEAD HAZZARD CONTROL ORDER COMPLIANCE LINE: 216-664-2672.
LEAD 101 SESSION, LEAD CERTIFICATION, WORKFORCE TRAINING: Lead Safe Resource Center, 4600 Euclid Ave., Suites 320-322. Phone: 833-601-5323.
LIBRARIES
CLEVELAND PUBLIC LIBRARY CELEBRATES PRIDE MONTH: In honor of Pride Month, Cleveland Public Library and its Rainbow Readers Employee Resource Group (ERG) welcomes **award-winning non-binary author and activist George M. Johnson** (they/them) on Wednesday June 7 from 6-8 p.m. at the Louis Stokes Wing of the Cleveland Public Library, 525 Superior Avenue. Johnson's bestselling memoir, *All Boys Aren't Blue*, recounts their experiences growing up as a queer Black man in America. The book has been hailed as a landmark text
continued on page 8



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Residents voice opposition to proposed Caribe Party Center

by Chuck Hoven

At the May 15th meeting of the City of Cleveland Board of Zoning Appeals, residents of the Roberto Clemente Park Block Club expressed their opposition to a party center proposed by Caribe Bake Shop. They asked the Board of Zoning Appeals to deny the requests for variances needed to build the party center. The variances included waving rules about a party center not being allowed in a Local Retail Business District or within 500 feet of a residential district. A variance was also needed because the party center would be within 500 feet of another entertainment use (Roberto Clemente Park). Another variance was requested to limit the number of parking spaces required from 47 down to 43.

The proposal by Caribe Bake Shop calls for an addition to the rear of the restaurant and bakery that would house four new retail spaces as well as a Party Center with a 90-seat capacity. The proposal calls for the party center to be served by the restaurant's kitchen, and to be available for rental seven days a week from 11 a.m. – 11 p.m. The party center would not serve alcohol and

proposes to have security on duty. Residents submitted a petition with over 50 names in opposition to the party center. Residents of Seymour Avenue and Erin Avenue also testified about their concerns of how a party center was inappropriate for the residential neighborhood. Testimony included concerns about traffic, parking, delivery vehicles and a concern about how the presence of a party center could disrupt the peaceful enjoyment of the neighborhood. Residents testified that they believed that people would bring their own alcohol to the party center and that may result in unruly behavior that would disrupt the peace and threaten the safety of the neighbors and children coming to and from Roberto Clemente Park on Seymour.

Concerns were also expressed about the failure of Caribe Bake Shop to live up to promises made concerning its parking area and fencing when the new building for the restaurant and bakery was originally proposed in 2003 and 2007. They noted the dust and damage caused by the cinder parking lot that they had originally been told would be



Thursday, May 18, 2023; Caribe Bake Shop, 2906 Fulton (between Erin Avenue and Seymour Avenue): At a May 15th meeting of the Cleveland Board of Zoning Appeals residents from the Roberto Clemente Park Block Club voiced their opposition to Caribe Bake Shop's plans to build a Party Center on the rear of their property. The Board of Zoning Appeals voted 3-1 to postpone the case until their July 17th meeting.

PB CLE re-emerges as People's Budget Cleveland, launches ballot initiative to collect 6,000 signatures

by Molly Martin

In 2021, a group of Cleveland residents, PB CLE (now called People's Budget Cleveland) mobilized around the idea that Cleveland residents should have real power to make real decisions over how public money gets spent. Legislation proposed by People's Budget Cleveland that would have piloted participatory budgeting in Cleveland was tabled by Cleveland City Council in January of 2023.

COMMENTARY

The commitment from our people did not waver when nearly 50 people showed up on our coalition call on the day following City Council's tabling of the legislation. A straw poll followed by 3 months of planning led

to this: PB CLE is launching a ballot initiative to enable Clevelanders to vote in November 2023 on a ballot question that would reform the City Charter. The amendment would require that a small percentage of the annual budget is decided on directly by all Cleveland residents using participatory budgeting. Some refer to a People's Budget (PB) as "revolutionary civics in action" because PB takes democracy beyond elections.

The time for this is now. The attacks on democracy in Ohio are relentless. HB 458? That's Ohio's latest voter suppression law, which imposes unjustified and discriminatory burdens on the fundamental right to vote by enacting stricter photo ID requirements and eliminating in-person voting the day before Election Day, among other suppressive measures. The August 8 Special Election? Voting yes would make it very unlikely for Ohioans to directly amend the state constitution in

the future (so vote NO on August 8).

Giving residents direct power over a small sliver of the city budget is not to disregard the nuanced compromises that public officials must make. It's a tough time to work in city government. The movement for a People's Budget is a movement precisely because democracy is an emergent practice that requires experimentation. And we should be warm to experimenting when 2 of 3 Cleveland residents don't vote.

PB CLE's Ballot Initiative Campaign Kickoff is on May 26th, the start of a 6-week sprint to collect 6,000 valid signatures from Cleveland residents before we get on the ballot in November. Please sign up for a shift to collect signatures at www.mobilize.us/pbcle. Learn more about our campaign and get in touch at www.pbcle.com.

Editor's Note: The author, Molly Martin, is a member of the People's Budget Cleveland coalition.

by delivery vehicles and litter left on the street by patrons of the bakery and restaurant.

The City of Cleveland Planning staff also weighed in at the meeting saying given the opposition of the neighbors the City could not support the placing of a party center in the middle of a residential neighborhood.

Block Club leader Jeff Burgess noted that the block club has a relationship with Sandra and John Burgos of Caribe and holds their meetings at the restaurant during the winter months. Members were just opposed to the Party Center.

Nick DeLeon testified that MetroWest Community Development Organization staff had attended a meeting about the project and while it was supportive of additional retail at the site, the organization did not feel comfortable supporting the proposed party center. DeLeon said, "the party center could be problematic."

The Board of Zoning Appeals voted 3-1 to postpone the hearing of the zoning appeal until July 17th. In the resolution the Board of Zoning Appeals asked that Caribe Bake Shop work with MetroWest Community Development Organization, City Planning, and the block club to hold a meeting to address the concerns brought up by residents including problems from the gravel in the parking lot, traffic, parking, hours, security, landscaping, and the probable infiltration of alcohol into the party cen-

ter. The Board of Zoning Appeals asked that a new business plan be brought before it at the July 17th meeting that would address some of the concerns brought up by residents.

Board of Zoning Appeals members Terri Hamilton-Brown, Alanna Faith and Nina Holzer voted for the postponement, and Board Chair Kelley Britt voted no.



Our ice cream is available in the Cleveland Metroparks concession stands at Edgewater Beach & Pier.

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Changes to Ohio law may increase chances of eligibility for record sealing or expungement of criminal records

by Tonya Sams

In April, changes went into effect in Ohio to the record sealing and expungement law. This allows even more people to be eligible than before.

The first change was clarifying the true definitions of “record sealing” and “expungement”. An expungement erases a criminal record. The record will be almost non-existent to most public and all private entities. When a person’s record is sealed, they are not obligated to reveal a conviction when applying for a job and depending upon the nature of the job, most employers will not be able to see the criminal record. Some public entities may be able to see the sealed record. In both cases, once a case has been sealed or expunged, the conviction is viewed as never happening.

Other changes to the record sealing and expungement law are the expanded list of offenses that are now eligible and shortened wait times to be eligible to apply.

There are some convictions that are not eligible to be sealed or expunged including sex offenses that require

registration (there are some exceptions when registration is no longer required), felonies that involve violent acts, 1st and 2nd degree felonies, three or more 3rd degree felonies in one case, those involving domestic violence or a protection order being violated, crimes against children under the age of 13 (does not include the failure to pay child support, which can be expunged or sealed), and traffic and OVI/DUI offenses.

Before a conviction can be sealed or expunged it must first be discharged. Discharged means that the terms of parole or probation have been met, the term of a jail or prison sentence has been completed, and all payments of fines and fees that was a penalty of the conviction have been made (unpaid court costs should not cause an application to be denied). After the case has been discharged, there is a waiting period. The length of the waiting period depends upon the offense that was committed.

Lauren Gilbride, Managing Attorney at The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland, said that a common question is, “what is the cost of getting your record sealed?”

“It should not be more than \$50,” said Gilbride. “The Public Defenders Office or Legal Aid can help with a waiver if eligible.”

You can get assistance from an attorney or apply on your own for record sealing or expungement. Before applying gather as much information as possible on all criminal cases, past and present. This includes information on convictions, arrests, dismissals, nolle, and bills. The Clerk of Courts is a good place to start to gather this information.

After filing, you may be required to appear before the court for a hearing. When applying there is a possibility that the prosecutor may object to your filing. If a court hearing is scheduled, be prepared to respond to the prosecutor’s objection and explain why your application should be approved.

For those who are not eligible for either expungement or sealing of a criminal record there are other options - either a pardon or a Certificate of Qualification for Employment (CQE). A pardon is when the governor forgives someone for a crime, and they can no longer be penalized for it. The Court of Common Pleas will give someone a CQE to help them overcome obstacles to getting employment.

To learn more about expungement and record sealing go to [Expungement and Record Sealing - Office of the Public Defender \(cuyahogacounty.us\)](#)

To learn more about the CQEs, visit <https://lasclev.org/cqe/> and <https://drc.ohio.gov/cqe>. If you are eligible for a CQE, Legal Aid may be able to help. Call Legal Aid at 888-817-3777 during normal business hours or apply online 24/7 at <https://lasclev.org/contact/>.

Tonya Sams is the Development and Communications Assistant at The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland.

Lakefront plans should include Cleveland’s children

by Chuck Hoven

The roll out of plans for Cleveland’s downtown lakefront offers an illustrative example of how the community development industrial complex works in Cleveland. The players lining up in support of downtown lakefront planning and spending public dollars on the project include the Cleveland Brown’s owners Jimmy and Susan Haslam; the City of Cleveland, Cuyahoga County and State of Ohio elected office holders; the City of Cleveland Planning Commission; the Cleveland Foundation; the Cleveland Plain Dealer, various real estate developers, land use lawyers, contractors, labor unions and others that will benefit from new development along the downtown lakefront.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Using \$2.5 million contributed by the City of Cleveland and another \$2.5 million contributed by the State of Ohio, lakefront planners rolled out their plans for the lakefront at the Inlet Dance Studio in the Pivot Center on the Near West Side at one of a series of public meetings they held in early May. The meeting included plenty of food for the just over 60 people who attended the event. Guests were entertained by a rap music group while they looked at a huge map of the downtown shoreline which showed the Shoreway, railroad tracks, the lakefront. The map presented several alternatives for reconfiguring the Shoreway and

continued on page 7



PHOTO BY ERIK AULT
Friday, April 14, 2023; Brookside Reservation, 3900 John Nagy Blvd: A stone monument sitting underneath the original sakura trees placed in 2001 to commemorate the planting of the 100th tree at the park. The trees are maintained by the Cleveland Metroparks.

BLOSSOMING CHERRY TREES

continued from page one

operated a Sakura for the Earth fund, which was funded by regional Japanese businesses. This allowed for the planting of even more trees, which now number close to 200. The Metroparks still maintains the trees. Whenever one dies, the Metroparks replaces it. Being ornamental in nature, these trees are also rather delicate and face threats from strong wind or deer eating saplings. Furthermore, although the trees are small enough to climb, the JANO requests that people resist the temptation because this

damages the branches.

The blossoming of the sakura is temporary. But according to Chiaki, this is what makes them beautiful. This concept is called *mono no aware in*, which describes the Japanese sensibility to the momentary nature of beauty. The flowers will eventually fall by summer, and the tree will lose its leaves by wintertime. But come spring, after every Cleveland winter, the sakura will re-blossom as a yearly expression of gratitude of the Japanese residents to their community.

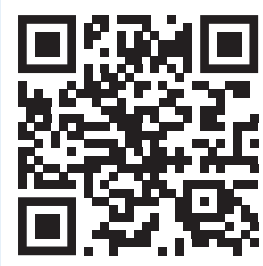
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PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN
Saturday May 6, 2023; Stockyard Neighborhood Bike-a-thon, Clark Elementary School, 5550 Clark Avenue: Bethzaida Esquilin, age 5, rides her bike while wearing her new helmet. Children under age 10 received a free bike helmet when they preregistered for the event.

HOUSING VOUCHERS continued from page one

person, and up to \$56,400 for an eight-person household.

Over 4.8 million people in the United States receive housing assistance through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Earlier this year, Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine signed a bill into law that critics say will block affordable housing developments. The change prevents a project from

receiving both Low-Income Housing Tax Credits and Historic Tax Credits. A separate provision allows county auditors to change the property value, which could result in a tax increase.

Charles ‘Chip’ Bromley, a long-time fair housing advocate and Director of the Metropolitan Strategy Group, convened a virtual forum *Challenges with Housing Voucher Programs* sponsored by the Ohio Fair Lending Coalition and Cleveland State University’s Levin College of Urban Affairs and Education.

Panelists included Charles K. Schulman, President of Carlyle Management & VP, Northern Ohio Apartment Association; Philip Garboden, HCRC Professor in Affordable Housing, Economics, Policy, and Planning at the University of Hawaii Manoa; Malia Lewis, a landlord with several properties in Cleveland Heights and a member of the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City Schools Board of Education; David Garland, managing member at Genesis Global Holdings LLC; Dorivette Nolan, Director of Policy, Planning & Housing Mobility, Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA); Emma Petrie Barcelona, Chief Operating Officer of Emerald Development and Economic Network (EDEN Inc), a non-profit which provides housing and housing-related services including Section 8 programs; and Elizabeth Zak, Supervising Attorney at the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland.

Sixty graduates at Natividad Pagan International Newcomers Academy receive bi-literate certificate for achieving fluency in two languages

At a May 24th graduation ceremony at Natividad Pagan International Newcomers Academy 60 students received a Bi-Literate seal on their high school diplomas along with a separate certificate indicating they are fluent in two languages.

Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) Multilingual and Multicultural Family Engagement and Student Support Coordinator Senaida C. Perez says the 60 students are the first CMSD graduates to receive this certification. Graduating students obtained certification of fluency in both English and another language.

Perez said the languages, in addition to English, that students choose are usually their native language, but some students also chose Latin. Perez says students choosing Latin are usually students with an interest in pursuing medical science where

many of the terms are in Latin. The languages graduates achieved fluency in addition to English, include Spanish, Latin, French, Swahili, and Arabic.

Students at the Natividad Pagan International Newcomers Academy are a diverse group representing 46 different nationalities and speaking 36 different languages, said Perez.

Perez says the bi-literate certification is part of a national certification program. She says the certification will give students a leg up in getting better positions and jobs. Cleveland graduates are also eligible for Say Yes college or post-secondary school training scholarships. Perez notes that Cleveland State University is among the universities that recognizes the bi-literate certificates and offers students college degree credits for achieving that distinction in high school.

Cleveland Heights attorney Jennifer Wintner introduced the panel, adding that most housing voucher holders do not have that many choices when finding housing, especially with landlords in higher-income neighborhoods refusing to accept their vouchers.

“Rental property owners have incredible power to define the residential option of poor families,” she said, quoting a study co-authored by panelist Philip Garboden.

Garboden presented a broad overview of findings from interviews with landlords nationwide to examine the relationship between landlords and the Housing Voucher Program. A study found that more than half of Public Housing Authorities (PHA) have a success rate of 60% or below, indicating that 30-40% of households cannot use a voucher issued to them.

“We should take this as a troubling sign,” said Garboden. “Families on the waiting list for housing vouchers suffer enormous housing burdens, which suggests that programmatic reforms with HUD and the PHA are needed. Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA) has a success rate of about 40%.”

are inconsistent and continue to plague the process for Lewis, with inspectors not showing up on time or not at all.

“Communications with CMHA is abysmal,” she said. “Nobody answers the phone, ever.”

Property owners must pay for water and sewage. Getting an agreement with the tenant to cover those costs is problematic. In a multifamily unit, it can be substantial.

Garland focused on a project at 3361 E 55th Street, in a part of the city with few good housing options. Tenants, landlords, and housing authorities have been working together to make the building work with the Olympia Foundation focused on urban renewal in blighted areas in their first project with CMHA. Garland’s experiences with CMHA have been both good and bad.

“Over time, we have gotten worn down by CMHA and the tenants,” said Garland.

The ability to hold tenants responsible is difficult with the lease agreement. CMHA does not enforce the lease, according to Garland. Some tenants refuse to pay the rent, which places the process in litigation with few results.

“Accountability is lacking,” he said. “We suffer the consequences.”

Schulman echoed the unevenness of inspections and rent payments changing without explanation, but he believes more landlords would be involved in the program if not for the administrative hurdles. It has not stopped him from offering Section 8 housing while willing to work with tenants, despite the enormous delays in processing.

“Tenants need to be more educated about their rights and responsibilities,” said Schulman, advocating for a revitalized Cleveland Tenants Organization.

Nolan presented information about the voucher program, a new mobility program in Opportunity Areas, and efforts to participate in the Housing Voucher Program. CMHA is the 7th largest housing authority with 5,911 public housing units in 33 developments, issuing 15,687 Housing Choice Vouchers to serve over 49,000 residents and a monthly economic impact of \$9 million.

The Housing Choice Mobility Demonstration Study allows tenants to seek housing in low-poverty areas that would provide positive experiences and reinforcement for children and the youth. Opportunity Areas include Cuyahoga County, where the poverty rate is below 20%.

A Landlord Engagement Team of three staff members created by CMHA will be accessible to help with landlord issues. A Landlord Resource Center, located at CMHA offices, is set up to work with and resolve problems.

“We developed and published a landlord portal guide on our website to help engage

continued on page 7

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TWDC MEMBERSHIP MEETING

continued from page one

for its outreach to include a diverse set of artists in shows at the gallery; The Buildings and Food team of Will Hollingsworth, Kathleen Sullivan, Sin-Jin Satayathum and Heidi Rolf for their investments in businesses in the neighborhood including the Prosperity Social Club and the former Lolita space; and the nonprofit organization Restorartive and its founder Emily Metzger for Restorartive’s work to install gallery boxes on Professor Avenue to display artwork of aspiring artists.

In addition to the award presentations, a meeting featured a catered dinner provided by Corner 11 Bowl and Wrap, a number of speakers, a You Tube video presentation, committee reports and the presentation of the election results for the TWDC Board of Directors.

Scranton Road Bible Church Senior Pastor Mark Pratt welcomed guests at the gym and told a story about how the church’s twenty-year effort to raise funds to move what had been an outdoor basketball court indoors so residents could enjoy playing the sport year-round.

TWDC Board of Director President Seronica Powell talked about the organization working to create a new strategic plan. She urged block club members to encourage more of their neighbors to get involved so more voices can weigh in on issues important to the future of the neighborhood such as maintaining the availability of affordable housing in the neighborhood.

The three City Council representatives for the Tremont neighborhood, all had been invited to speak at the meeting. Ward 14 City Council Member Jasmin Santana opted out due to an illness.

Ward 12 City Council Member Rebecca Maurer who was out of town, submitted a video presentation that urged residents to support businesses in the Ward 12 portion of Tremont. Among the businesses Maurer mentioned were the Christmas Story House and the Rowley Inn.

Ward 3 City Council Member Kerry McCormack was available in person and spoke of security patrols in the neighborhood, the importance of the Irish Town Bend Block Club in monitoring construction on the Irishtown Bend 20-acre park, and the near completion of the \$2.7 million restoration of Clark Field. He noted the long efforts of the Friends of Clark Field and their long-time leader Beverly Wurm in making the park restoration come to fruition.

HOUSING VOUCHERS

continued from page 6

in the landlord portal,” Nolan said. “It allows you to see information about your current contracts.”

A quarterly newsletter for landlords is in the works addressing landlord issues and providing information about training sessions to learn more about the program. Virtual office hours are available.

CMHA generally receives over 40,000 applicants for its voucher program every few years, with 10,000 placed on a waiting list that could take two years or longer. Applicants can now apply anytime rather than wait for an open call.

Petrie Barcelona explained that EDEN, Inc was founded in 1991 by the ADAMHS Board to be the Housing Development Agency for the behavioral health system and has since expanded to other areas of affordable housing in Northeast Ohio. EDEN is not a support service provider but focuses on housing. As a large non-profit with healthy revenues, most resources go directly to rent payments to owners and managers. Homeless prevention is their latest program, initiated during the pandemic.

As a housing agency, EDEN provides location services and financial resources with over 400 housing vouchers and 50 rental assistance programs.

McCormack also noted that the park will include a baseball field donated by Cleveland Guardian’s All Star Third Baseman Jose Ramirez. Lincoln West High School’s Baseball team will enjoy the use of the field for their practices and games, said McCormack.

TWDC Community and Equity Organizer Dharma Valentin presented the You Tube video titled *Tremont Experiences* which presented short interviews with six neighborhood leaders.

The TWDC reports included announcing the winners of the Holiday Food Drive, the Executive Director’s remarks, a report from the Treasurer, Economic Development Committee, the Safety Committee and the Arts and Celebrate Tremont Committee.

The Duck Island and Irish Town Bend Block Clubs contributed the most in checks and cash to the Holiday Food Drive. The Auburn Lincoln Park Block Club contributed the most food items.

Executive Director Cory Riordan said TWDC would continue to advocate on behalf of the opinions of the neighborhood on such City of Cleveland issues such as tax abatement and the proposed new townhouse code. He also noted that businesses were considering the formation of a Special Improvement District for Professor Avenue. He said to form the district, businesses with 60% of the frontage on the street must agree. Riordan said that Cleveland Foundation had invited TWDC to submit an application for funding to develop a new strategic plan. Riordan also noted some programs including safety and security patrols, lighting on Professor Avenue, the creation of two new affordable housing units in the neighborhood with rents ranging from \$450 to \$925 per month, and a Senior Home Repair program in cooperation with the Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging which offers funding for aging in place initiatives such as grab bars for bathroom safety.

The Treasurer’s report referred to the Annual Report passed out at the meeting which noted income of \$914,1900 and expenses of \$802,097.

The Economic Development Committee invited residents to its meetings on the first Thursday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the South Branch Library. Discussions include development projects underway in the neighborhood and the City of Cleveland’s proposed new townhouse code.

The Governance Committee announced the election results. In person and early votes resulted in 132 people voting in the TWDC Board of Directors

“Most of our programs offer up to ‘rent reasonable’ or market rate, but not all,” said Petrie Barcelona, noting that most of their programs serve the City of Cleveland.

Supervising Attorney at the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland, Elizabeth Zak, represents tenants in Northeast Ohio in eviction defense and affirmative cases to increase stable, safe, and affordable housing. She supports the resurrection of the Cleveland Tenants Organization.

Zak sees challenges in voucher placement and retention, which can undermine success of the program. Source of Income Protection laws prohibits landlords from denying tenants or refusing rent payments based on lawful income. Voucher discrimination could be a proxy for racial discrimination, she said.

“In Cuyahoga County, nearly 90% of voucher participants are Black, meaning when a landlord denies a voucher holder, nine times out of ten, they are denying housing to a Black family,” said Zak.

Editor’s note: For more information about the housing programs mentioned in this article check out the following resources: Dorivette Nolan, noland@cmha.net; EDEN, Inc., EdenLandlordinfo@EDENcle.org; Elizabeth A. Zak, ezak@lasclev.org; Ohio Fair Lending Coalition, organize.ohio.216@gmail.com, and Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio, rentinfo@cohhio.org.



PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN

Thursday, May 18, 2023, Tremont West Development Corporation Annual Meeting, Scranton Road Bible Church, 3095 Scranton Road: Tremont West Development Corporation Executive Director Cory Riordan presents Sandy Smith with a Community Impact Award for her work to help create and promote the Scranton Southside National Historic District. The district lies on both sides of Scranton from Parafine Avenue on the north to Valentine Avenue on the south and residential houses east of Scranton between Holmden Avenue and Valentine. The City of Cleveland recently installed signs denoting the district.

Election.

Board President Seronica Powell was re-elected to serve another one-year term as board president.

Five candidates were elected to three-year terms as members of the Board of Directors: Kate O’Neil, Dan Imfeld, Fred Calatrello, Carolyn Bentley and Jason Adams.

Announcements of neighborhood events were made at the end of the

meeting.

Kate O’Neil reported that the Farmer’s Market was back at Lincoln Park on Tuesdays.

St. Augustine announced it is hosting a Summer Camp for 5–13-year-old children from June 26 to July 28. The camp specializes in serving children with disabilities and scholarships are available, so cost is not an obstacle to attend, said St. Augustine Pastor Bill

O’Donnell.

Tremont Gardeners announced a recruitment effort seeking gardeners to participate in the Cleveland Garden Walk on Saturday, July 8th. (To register your garden visit: <https://www.garden-walkcleveland.org/add-garden/>)

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LAKEFRONT PLAN

continued from page 5

presented plans for a bridge that would extend from the greenspace between City Hall and the old Court House over the railroad tracks and the Shoreway down to the area by the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and the Science Museum.

Those in attendance were also given dots to place on various choices of activities they would like to partake in to enjoy the greater access to the Lakefront that planners say the new pedestrian bridge would allow.

When it came time for residents in attendance to see a slide show of what was being proposed, there was too much light in the room from the large unshaded windows in the dance studio to see the slides. It mattered little as planners explained that the choices had been narrowed down to just two options – both included building a land bridge from the bluff near City Hall to the lakefront. Doing nothing had been ruled out already.

While the plans being rolled out for the lakefront sound nice, crucial examination of who will benefit and who will pay for the project was not part of the public discussion. There was no attempt to weigh the opportunity cost of other alternatives ways that public resources being committed to this project could be spent. There was no questioning of what resources on the lakefront residents would be able to access with the new land bridge that they could not now access by walking down West 3rd or E. 9th Street.

It was unclear what parts of the current lakefront or pieces of the current Shoreway would be made available for new development and who would benefit from such development. There was no discussion of the tax abatements, tax increment financing and other incentives that would likely be offered to developers. Or that such incentives would mean that the City of Cleveland, the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, the Cleveland MetroParks and the Cleveland Public Library would receive little or no new property tax revenue for years after any new developments are constructed on the lakefront.

This is typical of development projects in Cleveland. The City of Cleveland chasing the shiny new toy while neglecting basic services to its citizens and neglect-

ing to address long term critical needs such as the need to contain lead in our housing stock, the need for affordable housing for low-income residents, and the need to properly fund our schools or provide our students with opportunities comparable to their suburban peers. Developers reap most of the financial benefits from such a planning process, while residents are left with no new resources to address longstanding critical needs or adequate public sector budgets for new programs.

With the community development industrial complex firmly behind the plans for the lakefront and State of Ohio Legislature already committing funds for the land bridge, it is likely some form of a downtown lakefront plan will go forward. Cleveland should make sure that all Clevelanders benefit, rather than just developers benefiting from the project.

In promoting this plan for the lakefront, several politicians have said that East Side residents don’t have the same access to Lake Erie as West Side res-

continued on page 8
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LAKEFRONT

continued from page 7

idents. It is true that there is no beach on the East Side that is comparable to Edgewater Beach. However, there is no evidence in the new plans for the lakefront that beach building is being considered.

The lakefront on the East Side has been filled over the years by dredging from the Cuyahoga River and people who used to sail along the Lake will tell you that inlets that they used to be able to go into have been filled. There are access points to the Lake on the East Side. the E. 9th Street pier offers a boardwalk, restaurants, and kayak rentals. Gordon Park and Lakefront Park areas run by the Cleveland Metroparks that extend from E. 72nd to Martin Luther King Boulevard, and just beyond that the Dike 14 Nature Preserve offer additional access to the lakefront. There is access to the lake, it is just much different than that found at Edgewater Park or Whiskey Island on the West Side.

A project now underway called the Cleveland Harbor Eastern Embayment Resilience Strategy (CHEERS), promises to create “additional open spaces, trails, fishing and other amenities along roughly 80 acres between the East 55th Street Marina and Gordon Park on the city’s east side,” according to a press release issued by the Cleveland Port Authority.

The CHEERS partnership which includes the Port Authority, the Cleveland Metroparks, the City of Cleveland, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, the Ohio Department of Transportation, and the nonprofit Black Environmental Leaders Association perhaps holds more promise for some of the lakefront amenities that downtown planners are promising to provide access to. Perhaps the public meetings should be focusing on this planning effort, rather than the one being promoted by the Cleveland Browns’ owners. The project, which is estimated by the Port Authority to take two decades to complete, includes a Maritime Learning Center for Cleveland Metropolitan School District students.

If the downtown lakefront planning project is to go forward, the focus should be to gain as much property tax as possible from any development that occurs so the City of Cleveland and the school



PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN

Tuesday, May 9, 2023; Cuyahoga River at the Columbus Road Bridge: The freighter Sam Laud out of Wilmington, Delaware passes under the Columbus Road lift bridge on its way back out to Lake Erie. Cyclists and cars waited and watched as the large freighter traversed under the lifted Columbus Road Bridge. The next bridge ahead of the freighter is the Cuyahoga Viaduct over which the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority Red Line trains travel.

system will have the funds to make sure future Clevelanders can make full use Cleveland’s water resources and the additional parkland eventually promised through the CHEERS project. End the tax abatements. Do not consider any tax increment financing schemes proposed by developers or city planners.

Instead, if lakefront access for future residents of Cleveland is the desired goal, lets make sure our children know how to make use of Lake Erie. Let’s make sure our tax dollars fully fund our recreation centers and outdoor pools. Let’s make sure all Cleveland children have access to publicly funded swimming lessons. Our schools should all have the resources to take every Cleveland

student on field trips to visit our lakefront parks. Cleveland students should also have access to lessons on how to fish, kayak, sail, and open water swim in Lake Erie. Sports such as rowing and kayaking on the Cuyahoga River should also be funded and encouraged in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District.

If we are truly committed to giving Clevelanders better access to Lake Erie and the Cuyahoga River, let’s make sure our young people have the skills they need to participate in water sports like swimming, kayaking, fishing, and sailing. Let’s make sure new developments going up are contributing property tax dollars to make this possible.

COMMUNITY BOARD

continued from page 2

that sheds light on the struggles of marginalized groups. The event is a must-attend for anyone interested in free speech and intellectual freedom. Register **TODAY** at **cpl.org**. **GRAND REOPENING CLEVELAND PUBLIC LIBRARY’S LORAIN BRANCH CAMPUS, 8216 Lorain Avenue, Saturday, June 17 at Noon.** **CLEVELAND READS:** Cleveland READS is a yearlong initiative to encourage reading in the city of Cleveland. The Mayor’s Office, Cleveland Public Library, Cleveland Teachers Union, Cleveland Metropolitan School District and nearly 30 community organizations are working together to boost literacy levels in the city. The goal is for the entire city to read one million books collectively in 2023 – and/or to read one million minutes collectively. The challenge is for children and adults. Readers are eligible to win fabulous prizes. Visit **clevelandreads.com** or **cpl.org** for information about the Cleveland READS Citywide Reading Challenge.

MEETINGS

CLEVELAND WESTSIDE VILLAGE: Have you begun to think about downsizing? On June 10, 2023, the Cleveland Westside Village (CWV) will sponsor a talk by Hilary Mason King, CEO of Creative Moves, LLC, on “Tips for Downsizing your Household.” Ms. King will address topics such as how and where to start downsizing, where to get rid of things, digitizing your records, and downsizing for a move to a smaller space. Come and ask an expert your questions! The event will take place at the Carnegie West Branch of the CPL, 1900 Fulton Road. Doors open at 10 am; the program will begin at 10:30 am.

CUYAHOGA COUNTY FATHERHOOD INITIATIVE’S FATHERHOOD CONFERENCE: A celebration of Fatherhood on Friday, June 16th from 8 a.m. – 4 p.m. at Crowne Plaza Cleveland, 1260 Euclid Avenue in Playhouse Square. The Fatherhood Conference is designed to promote healthy father-child relationships, address the social problems that result from “father absence” and strategize as to what we must do, as a community, to ensure that every child has a dad in his or her life. The family friendly event will feature a resource fair, town hall meeting, fatherhood awards luncheon and

informational workshops. All events are free with registration. For more info call 216-348-3967. Register at: <https://2023celebrationof-fatherhoodconference.eventbrite.com> **CLEVELAND BOARD OF EDUCATION’S** June Business meeting will be on Tuesday, June 27th at 6:30 p.m. at Waverly School, 1805 W. 57th Street.

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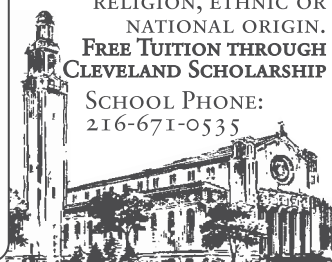
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