



PHOTO BY ERIK AULT

Thursday, June 8, 2023, Word on the Street Block Party, Carnegie West Branch of the Cleveland Public Library, 1900 Fulton Road: Officer Big George, Cleveland Mounted Police Department's newest horse, with his handler Officer Derek Davis, inspecting the activities and keeping the children and families safe at Word on the Street the Block party at the Carnegie West Branch of the Cleveland Public Library.

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Plain Press

Cleveland's Westside Newspaper

Cuyahoga County Council passes wage theft legislation

by Bruce Cheecksky

Cuyahoga County Council Chambers burst with applause from supporters of wage theft legislation after Ordinance O2023-0009 passed with a majority of votes on May 23.

Guardians for Fair Work, an advocacy group of labor unions, community organizations, and

residents across Cuyahoga County, lobbied for wage-theft protections and helped draft the county ordinance co-sponsored by Councilmen Dale Miller, Martin J. Sweeney, and Patrick Kelly.

Miller thanked Nora Kelley, an organizer for the Guardians for Fair Work and Northeast Ohio Worker Center, for bringing the issue to



PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN

Tuesday, June 6, 2023; North Coast Harbor: Argonaut Captain Sam Landgraf and 10th grade Davis Aerospace and Maritime High School student Quinn Schumann aboard a barge towed by the Flotsam use their pikes to position a log so it can be hauled aboard by the Flotsam crane.

Cleveland Public Library opens reimaged Lorain Campus

The Cleveland Public Library celebrated the grand opening of its renovated Lorain Campus at 8216 Lorain Avenue on June 17, 2023 with food, balloons, speeches and a ribbon cutting.

The library renovation includes new additional space on the west and rear of the original building. The interior has been completely redesigned. The Cleveland Public Library says newly renovated building includes: "flexible spaces with a new community room; a dedicated teen space and an expanded children's area; a laptop bar and cafe space and a book locker for after-hours access to materials."

Cleveland Public Library Board President Maritza Rodriguez said the reimaging of the Lorain Campus was part of Cleveland Public Library's Facilities Master Plan to revitalize its 27 branches. Rodriguez says the renovations were made possible when Cleveland voters passed a tax levy in 2017.

Executive Director of the Cleveland Public Library Felton Thomas, Jr. noted

his attention. He thanked County Executive Chris Ronayne and Council President Jones for their support of the legislation. Miller also recognized the other council members who voted for the legislation.

Miller said that thousands of employees have a hard enough time surviving on wages paid even when accounted for, let alone when shorted on pay. The ordinance was modeled on wage theft legislation passed in Cleveland and Columbus.

"This legislation benefits workers and our economy by helping ensure employees receive the wages they have earned," he said.

District 6 Cuyahoga County Councilman Jack Schron was the only dissenting vote. District 5 Cuyahoga County Councilman Michael J. Gallagher recused himself, saying he was a victim of wage theft. He offered no additional explanation.

Gallagher, a registered Republican, represents Olmsted Falls, Middleburg Heights, and Strongsville. He recently voted against a \$500,000 contract for environmental testing on a potential site for a new county jail, calling it a waste of money.

Schon represents Gates Mills,

Continued on page 8

Davis Aerospace and Maritime students help cleanup floating debris from the Cuyahoga River and Lake Erie

by Chuck Hoven

High school students from the Cleveland Metropolitan School District's Davis Aerospace and Maritime High School regularly spend three or four days a week aboard the Flotsam and Jetsam vessels in Lake Erie and the Cuyahoga River cleaning up debris to make the river

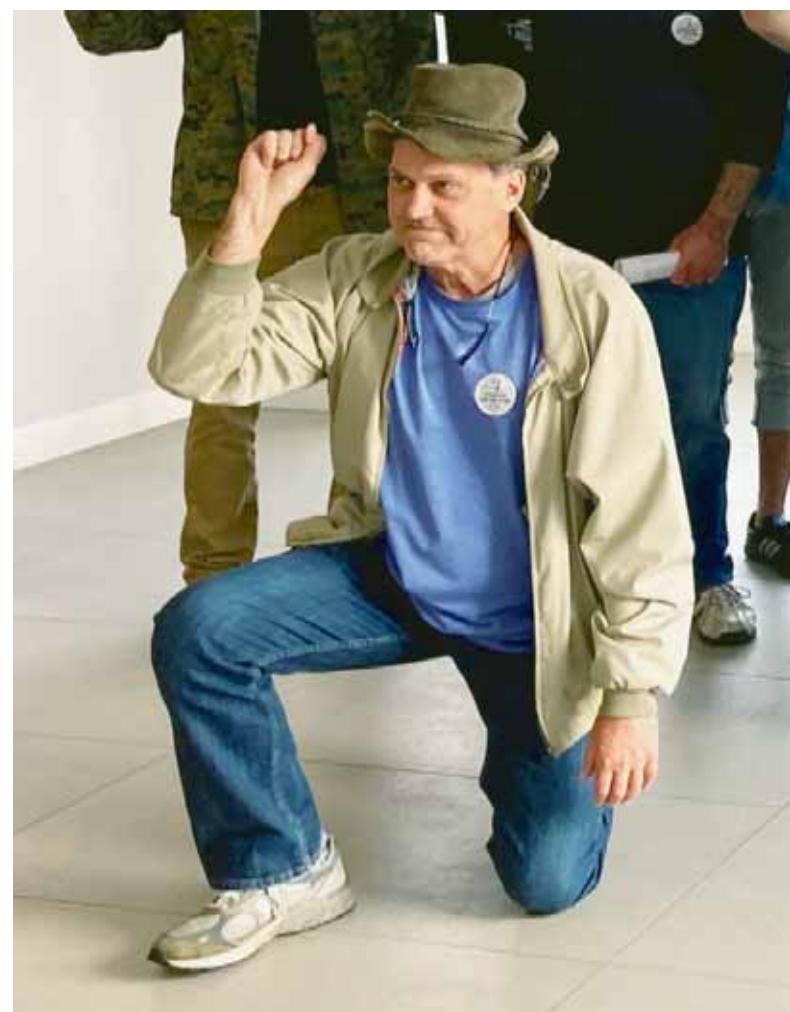


PHOTO BY BRUCE CHEEFSKY

Tuesday, May 23, 2023; Cuyahoga County Council Chambers, Cuyahoga County Administrative Headquarters, 2079 E. 9th Street: A supporter of legislation to offer protection to workers against wage theft pumps his fist as members of Guardians for Fair Work celebrate Cuyahoga County Council's vote to pass the legislation.

and lake safe for recreational and commercial vessels. The students working on the vessels have paid internships as part of their high school experience.

How do students like the program? Tenth grade student Kayla Peterson, talking to a Plain Press reporter about being out on the river and the lake on a regular

basis as part of her high school experience, said "I love it." This was the sentiment of all the students visiting with members of the press at North Coast Harbor to demonstrate how they help to remove debris from North Coast Harbor and the Cuyahoga River.

Continued on page 7

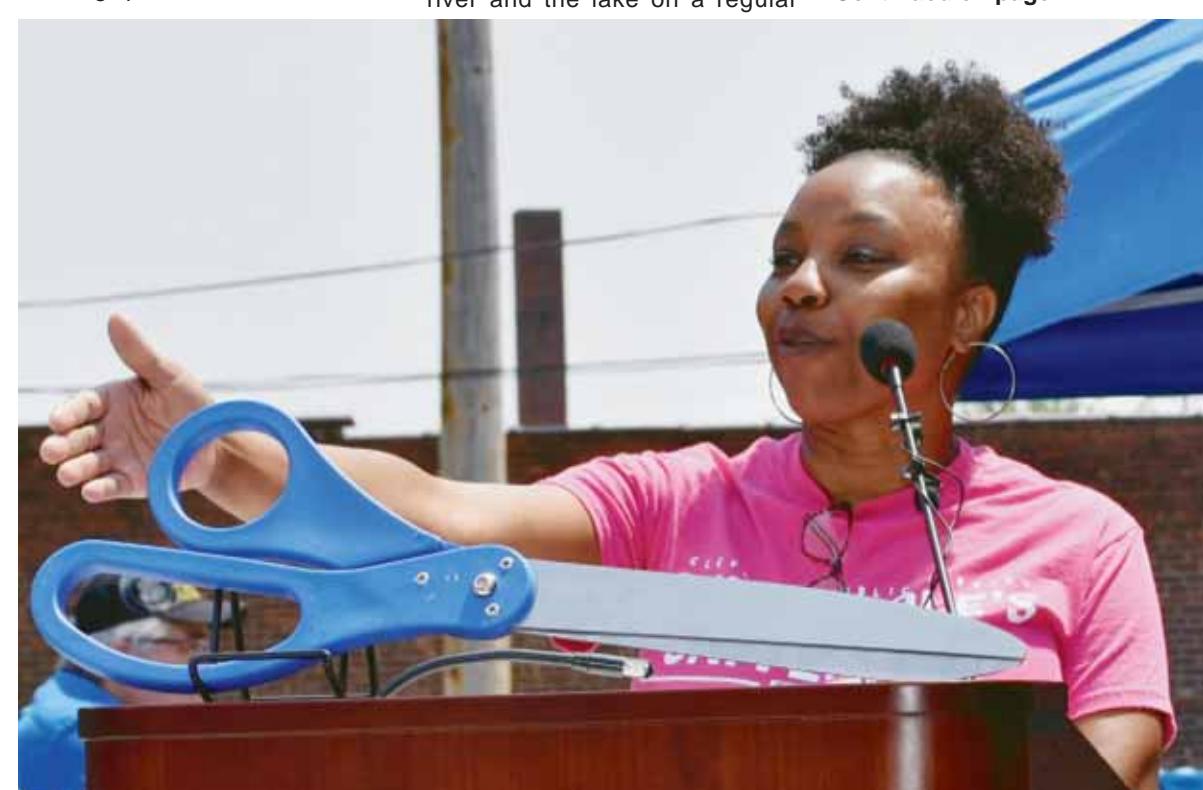


PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN

Saturday, June 17, 2023; Grand Opening of the reimaged Lorain Campus Library, 8216 Lorain Avenue: Tamara Steward, Director of the Lorain Campus of the Cleveland Public Library, welcomes guests to tour the newly renovated library.



Saturday, June 17, 2023; Roberto Clemente League Saturday games; Roberto Clemente Park, 3690 Seymour Avenue: Members of the Los Lobos team and their coaches Genesis Alvarado and Jose Alvarado are ready to compete in league play in the 7-9-year-old baseball team bracket. Their opponent will be La Familia Cultura.

ARTS

CLEVELAND SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL will perform As You Like It on Friday, July 7th at 7 p.m. at Lincoln Park, 1200 Starkweather in the Tremont neighborhood.

ART HOUSE VIRTUAL ANIME DRAWING SUMMER CAMP: July 24-27. Learn from an illustrator how to draw anime and manga characters in this FREE summer class. Sign up at the Art House website: <http://www.arthouseinc.org>

CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART'S COMMUNITY ARTS CENTER at the Pivot Center, 2937 W. 25th Street: Free drop-in art making and gallery exploration on Fridays from 2-7 p.m. and Saturdays and Sundays from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.

JULIA DE BURGOS LATINA IMAGE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM builds leaders by inspiring and educating young Latina women ages 13-17 to achieve their full potential through the power of sisterhood. Participants will be taken through an intense 6-month course in which they will learn: student voice, art expression, interview skills, social etiquette, civil engagement, positive self-image, personal development, academic responsibility, social media responsibility, social emotional development, and elements of diction, dance, modeling, and photo-pose. For more information visit: www.juliadeburgos.org and click on Programs & Events.

WALKABOUT TREMONT: Second Friday of the month, 5-10 p.m. Professor Avenue and surrounding streets. View a variety of art and crafts.

78th STREET STUDIOS, 1300 W. 78th: Free open house on Friday, July 21, from 5-9 p.m.

TASTE OF TREMONT: Sunday, July 16 from Noon – 8 p.m. Professor Avenue. Enjoy a day filled with exquisite cuisines, live music, and shopping.

SPACES, 2900 Detroit Ave: View Kiss the Floor by artist Nereida Patricia of Brooklyn, New York in the Gund Gallery through July 28th. View Presence and Absence by artist Atefah Farajolahzaden of Chicago, IL in the Oracle Gallery through July 28th.

BLOOD DONATION

AMERICAN RED CROSS is seeking donations of blood or platelets. All who come to give blood, platelets or plasma July 1-11 will receive an exclusive Red Cross dry bag, while supplies last. Details are available at RedCrossBlood.org/gifts. By scheduling and keeping appointments right now, donors can help ensure patients relying on blood donations also get to enjoy their summer.

ELECTION

COMMON CAUSE OHIO urges voters to "Vote No on August 8". Common Cause says "Issue 2 is an attempt by corrupt politicians and special interests to fool voters into giving away their power. Say NO to the amendment that would make citizen-led ballot measures almost impossible and give a minority of voters the power to determine the fate of the Ohio Constitution and our state. Protect Majority Rule in Ohio." www.votenoaugust.org

EVENTS

CLEVELAND FIRE ICE CREAM SOCIAL offers residents a chance to meet firefighters in a non-emergency setting on Saturday, July 15 from 11 a.m. – 3 p.m. at Fire Station 20, 3765 Pearl Road. Children can sit in the fire trucks, tour the station, and enjoy free hamburgers, hot dogs, and ice cream. Tables featuring fire safety, fire recruitment and other community organizations. Event made possible with a donation from MetroHealth. Ice cream donated by Honey Hut and Pierre's.

GARDEN WALK CLEVELAND: Saturday July 8 and Sunday July 9. For locations visit: gardenwalkcleveland.org/neighborhoods

FOOD

GREATR 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

Changes to SNAP benefits are underway

by Brittney Madison
SNAP

There have been changes made to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) that will impact every food assistance recipient in Cuyahoga County.

What's Happening?

In 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Congress approved the issuance of an emergency SNAP allotment.

For nearly three years, Cuyahoga County SNAP customers received two payments. One payment is in the beginning of the month as part of their standard benefit. The other payment is part of the emergency measures approved by the federal government.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Last December, as part of the 2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act, the U.S. Congress eliminated funding for the emergency allotment. The final emergency SNAP allotment was issued in February 2023.

Since March 1, 2023, Cuyahoga County residents who receive SNAP have been receiving the standard SNAP allotment.

Instead of receiving two allotments, Cuyahoga County residents went back to receiving one SNAP allotment.

Depending on income and family size, SNAP customers lost between \$95 to \$300 in emergency benefits.

Next Steps:

The standard benefit for SNAP customers is determined by household income and expenses.

If you have different income or expenses

to report, please submit verification(s) to Cuyahoga County Job and Family Services (CJFS).

For those who want to check standard benefit amount or status of your case call the Ohio Direction Card Customer Service Center at 1-866-386-3071. You may also visit the Self-Service Portal at ssp.benefits.ohio.gov to check status and update your case.

Since the changes to SNAP are from the federal government, SNAP customers cannot request a hearing regarding the ending of the SNAP emergency allotment.

Information for Cuyahoga County Jobs and Family Services:

Phone: 216-881-5554. Fax: 216-263-4684

Addresses: **Jane Edna Hunter Building**, 3955 Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44115 Hours: Mon – Fri 9-4 PM

Virgil E Brown Building, 1641 Payne Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44114 Hours: Mon – Fri 9-4 PM

Westshore (Document Drop off), 9830 Lorain Ave, Cleveland, OH 44102 Hours: Mon – Fri 8-4:30 PM

Mt. Pleasant (Forms Only Center), 13815 Kinsman Rd, Cleveland, OH 44120

Protect your food, act now!

Editor's Note: This article was submitted by Brittney Madison. Madison is an organizer for Northern Ohioans for Budget Legislation Equality (NOBLE). Visit ohiobudgetequality.com to learn more about Northern Ohioans for Budget Legislation Equality (NOBLE). You can contact Brittney Madison an organizer with (NOBLE) at ohiobudgetequality@gmail.com with any questions, comments, or concerns.

and grow together with your library. Carnegie Branch, 1900 Fulton Rd. For more information on dates and times visit: www.cpl.org/familyspace or call 316-623-7114.

0 TO 3: READ TO ME: Literacy begins at birth and every parent can learn and use simple, research-based techniques to build language and literacy skills right from the start. Check out the Cleveland Public Library's new collection of programs designed especially for children from birth to age 3 (36 months) and parents or other adult family members. Visit: cpl.org/read-to-me. Questions? Call 216-623-7114. These programs are made possible by a generous grant from the Bruening Foundation.

CLEVELAND PUBLIC LIBRARY will hold free Microsoft Word certification training in partnership with Ohio Means Jobs, Cuyahoga County Job and Family Services, and Aspire Greater Cleveland starting August 1, 2023. Class meets Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. This Microsoft Word training will prepare you for career pathways in office and administrative roles. High School Diploma or GED are not required to participate. Orientation sessions are July 18, 20, 25 & 27 from 10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. at Lorain Campus of Cleveland Public Library, 8216 Lorain Avenue. Visit this link for participation survey: <https://tinyurl.com/CPL-survey>.

GRANTS

CLEVELAND COMMUNITY POLICE COMMISSION (CPC) is launching a Community Grants Program with a goal of reducing the need for police activity. Cleveland residents and nonprofits are encouraged to apply for grants to fund local, community-based violence prevention, restorative-justice, and mediation programs. The CPC will award grants up to \$50,000 to Cleveland non-profit 501c3 organizations or individuals with a fiscal sponsor. Applications are due by July 31, 2023. For more information about the program, eligibility, and to apply for the CPC community grants program, visit: cpc.org/community-grants.

HEALTH

MULTICULTURAL CHILDREN'S HEALTH EXPO at Cleveland Metroparks Zoo is a partnership of MetroHealth and the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo. The expo will take place on Mondays – July 24, August 14 and September 11 – when entry to the Zoo is free for Cuyahoga County and Hinckley Township residents (proof of residency required). There will be music, giveaways, hands-on activities and more from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day. The first 200 children each Monday will also receive \$5 concession vouchers.

LEGAL HELP

LEGAL WORKS AT CLEVELAND PUBLIC LIBRARY provides legal consultation and assistance for qualified low-income youths and adults in underserved communities. Legal Works will be at the Fulton Branch of the Cleveland Public Library, 3545 Fulton Rd, on Tuesdays from Noon – 3:30 p.m. 216-623-6969. Service is provided by appointment. Registration is required. Register at: www.legalworksfulton.eventbrite.com

LIBRARIES

FAMILY SPACE is a special play area and dedicated staff connecting you to resources in the community for families with children ages 0-5. Play, learn,

PETS

FRIENDS OF CITY DOGS CLEVELAND has a variety of volunteer opportunities. Volunteers help raise funds through special events. If interested email: info@friendsofcitydogsCLEVELAND.com

PETS FOR PATRIOTS: Serving Veterans. Saving Pets. Pets for Patriots serves veterans from WWII to active duty, from all armed forces and at any stage of their careers. We save cats and dogs who are adult, special needs, or chronically homeless. We partner with animal shelters nationwide to place the most overlooked dogs and cats with military veterans, recruit veterinary partners to offer affordable pet medical care, and make pet adoption a reality for veterans. Services include re-adoption counseling, adoption perks, savings and discounts and post adoption follow up. For more information call toll free: 877-473-8223, or visit petsforpatriots.org.



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Ohio voter identification requirements

by Russ Smith

What do I need to bring for identification to vote on election day or to vote early at the Board of Elections offices?

Changes to the law governing identification needed to vote went into effect for the May 2nd, 2023 Primary/Special Election. The Cuyahoga County Board of Elections' website at: <https://boe.cuyahogacounty.gov/voters/2023-ohio-voting-law-changes> spells out the new requirements under the following links: [Identification for Voting on Election Day at the Polls](#) AND for [Voting Early In-Person at the Board of Elections](#).

The Board of Elections says the following are acceptable forms of identification (ID) for voting a regular ballot at the polls on Election Day and for voting early in-person at the Board of Elections: 1) An Ohio driver license (must be unexpired but may be suspended or may have voter's previous address); 2) An Ohio state ID card (must be unexpired but may have voter's previous address); 3) An interim identification form issued by the Bureau of Motor Vehicles; 4) A U.S. passport or passport card (was previously not a valid form of ID); 5) A U.S. military ID card, Ohio National Guard ID card, or U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs ID card (*that includes the voter's name and photograph*).

Digital (or copy) versions of ID are *not* acceptable, except for the Veteran ID Card (VIC) issued by the Department of Veteran Affairs, as the VIC is now only issued digitally.

No Longer Accepted form of ID for voting are: Current utility bill, bank statement, government check; paycheck, other government document, and concealed carry permit. Also, a voter can no longer provide the last four digits of their SSN and vote a

regular ballot during Early In-Person voting.

Free State ID Cards

“What documents do I need in order to get a free ID card from the BMV?”

Key Changes: Beginning April 7th, 2023, any person 17 and over who applies for and receives a state ID card from the BMV will receive it for *free*. New law deems a state ID card as the primary form of photo ID for a person who does not hold any type of driver license or whose driver license is suspended. Visit the Ohio BMV website, Ohio ID Card section for details on identity documents that are acceptable to provide proof of the following: 1) Full legal name; Date of birth; Social Security number (if ever assigned); Legal presence; and Ohio residency.

To receive a state ID card, you must visit a deputy registrar license agency in Ohio. Some nearby locations include: 7000 Bidulph Road, Brooklyn, Ohio 44144; 8039 Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio 44103; 3345 Edgecliff Terrace, Cleveland, Ohio 44111; and 2765 East 55th Street, Suite 4, Cleveland, Ohio 44104.

What to bring to a deputy registrar agency or documentation required to obtain free state ID card?

Documents you bring to the BMV deputy registrar's office must prove the following: Full Legal Name; Date of Birth; Proof of U.S. Legal Presence; Social Security Number; Proof of Address; and Legal Name change if applicable. <https://bmvonline.dps.ohio.gov/bmvonline/Home/documents/standard-documents/>

Note that the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections contains a link to the “Bureau of Motor Vehicles website Ohio ID Card section.” Found within this section is a link to “Acceptable documents” for identification. For more information visit the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles website at: <https://bmvonline.dps.ohio.gov/bmvonline/Home/documents/standard-documents/>

continued on page 6

Election to decide how to amend constitution

In a special election on August 8th, registered voters in Ohio will be asked to cast their “yes” or “no” vote on Issue 1, a proposed change in how citizens can amend the Ohio Constitution.

If passed, Issue 1 would change the requirements for a citizen petition to amend the Ohio Constitution that have been in place since 1912.

Under the current constitution, signatures equaling at least 5% of the total vote in the last gubernatorial election are required from 44 counties to place a constitutional amendment on the Ohio Ballot. The Constitutional Amendment proposed by Issue 1 would up that requirement to require signatures from all 88 Ohio counties.

Both the current and proposed constitutional amendment process would require signatures equal to at least 10 percent of the total vote in the last gu-

bernatorial election.

Under the current constitutional amendment process, if petitioners are determined to not have enough valid signatures, they will be allotted 10 days to collect and file additional signatures. Under the process proposed by Issue 1, petitioners would have to start all over again.

The current constitutional amendment process requires a majority of voters (50% plus one) to approve a constitutional amendment. The process proposed by Issue 1 would require approval of 60% of voters to pass a constitutional amendment.

Voting

To vote in the upcoming special election, you must be a registered voter in Ohio. The deadline to register to vote in time for the August 8th Special Election



PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN

Monday, May 29, 2023; Memorial Day Hike on Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail in the Cuyahoga Valley National Park – near Hunt Farm Trailhead: Samuel Lord, Matthew Nicholson and Max Faass are marching 22 miles carrying forty-pound packs to bring attention to the need to address the high suicide rate among United States veterans. The trio of friends, who are members of an Ohio Army National Guard unit headquartered in Stow, Ohio, said the twenty-two miles commemorate the twenty-two United States veterans who commit suicide each day.

Irishtown Bend Park proposal unveiled

by Erik Ault

On Tuesday, June 20th, Ohio City Incorporated hosted a meeting to update the community about plans to stabilize and revitalize the hillside around the Cuyahoga River.

The area focused on is called Irishtown Bend. This is the area of the river east of W. 25th in between Detroit and Columbus roads. It is called this because it housed the Irish community in the 19th century. Over the years, the neighborhoods have been demolished and replaced with industry.

However, this hillside has not been maintained, and erosion is a major threat. The solution is to re-cut and re-grade the hill and install bulkheads to stabilize the hillside. Complementing this stabilization is a proposal for a park,

is July 10th. You can check to see if you are registered at <http://voterlookup.ohiosos.gov>. If you are not registered to vote, or need to update your address, you can do that at: <http://olvr.ohiosos.gov>.

Early in person and absentee voting for the Special Election will begin on July 11th. The deadline for requesting an absentee ballot is August 1st.

turning this area into a greenspace with a trail connecting Edgewater Park to the Towpath trail.

Demolition has already begun on W. 25th north of Franklin Ave. This has allowed views of downtown Cleveland. The plan is to construct a new sidewalk and bike path from the Detroit intersection down Franklin, including many green areas and a replanting of over 1,000 trees.

Construction to stabilize the hillside is anticipated to start in the fall and will last two years. Franklin Boulevard east of W. 25th street will be closed during

this time. Construction of the park can start once the hillside is stabilized and is projected to begin in the summer or fall of 2025. The target completion date for the entire project is fall of 2027.

Those who are interested can sign up for updates at: www.courbanize.com/projects/irishtownbendpark

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Neighborhood Leadership Development Program & Community Development Corporation Leadership Program seek 2023 applicants

If you are passionate, committed and dedicated to taking an active role in improving your community, you may be excited by, and ready for, one of two valuable leadership development programs. Neighborhood Leadership Development Program (NLDP) and the Community Development Corporation Leadership Program (CDCLP) are programs of the Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandel Foundation. Both programs are at no cost to participants.

The Neighborhood Leadership Development Program (NLDP), for 16 years, has offered community engagement leadership training for residents of Cleveland, and its inner ring suburbs, who are working on projects in the City of Cleveland and who are determined to make a positive impact on their communities.

The Community Development Corporation Leadership Program (CDCLP) just graduated its second cohort. CD-

NOBLE urges residents to lobby Ohio House/Senate Conference Committee to avoid State Budget disaster

Northern Ohioans for Budget Legislation Equality (NOBLE) urges residents to contact members of the Ohio House/Senate Conference Committee to express concern about provisions in the Senate version of the budget. The Ohio House and the Ohio Senate have each passed a version of the 2023-24 State of Ohio Budget and are working out their differences in the Conference Committee.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Two weeks ago, the Ohio Senate passed their version of the 2023-24 Ohio Budget Bill. It is an absolute disaster for low-income people, and another volley fired in the state Republicans' war against the poor. The full text can be found at: <http://legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/135/hb33>.

Among the worst parts are: removal of free school breakfast and lunch for public school children; a \$15 million

CLP is the Cleveland area's only leadership program specifically designed for Community Development Corporation Executive level leadership.

Both programs are currently seeking applicants for their 2023 cohorts.

NLDP and CDCLP are designed to help emerging neighborhood leaders reach their potential by expanding their knowledge base and personal development through education, coaching and ongoing interaction with their peers and other leaders. Participants, as well as graduates of both programs, have ongoing access to the services of a Program Coach who will give advice and support tailored to the needs of the participant.

The programs cover topics such as organizational and program planning, marketing and communications, program fundraising, board governance, conflict resolution and more. NLDP and CDCLP participants and graduates are a diverse group with many interests

who are working on a wide variety of issues that positively impact Cleveland's neighborhoods. Both programs hold their in-person sessions at Trinity Commons at 2230 Euclid Avenue. NLDP sessions take place from 8:30am to 4pm on Saturdays, CDCLP sessions take place from 8:30am to 5pm on Thursdays.

The application period is now open!

The deadline for NLDP applications is August 10th. For additional information on NLDP and to view the curriculum and online application, visit www.nlpcleveland.com or call 216-776-6167.

The CDCLP deadline is August 3rd. For additional information on CDCLP and to view the curriculum and online application, visit www.cdclp.org or call 216-776-6172. Think you have what it takes? Apply to make a difference!



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Dr. Josh Allen, PhD of John Carroll University, juggles while making a presentation titled "Who you are, is how you lead" to the second cohort of the Community Development Corporation Leadership Program (CDCLP). The class just graduated from the CDCLP program in June of 2023. The program is currently recruiting the next group community development leaders to participate in the free program.

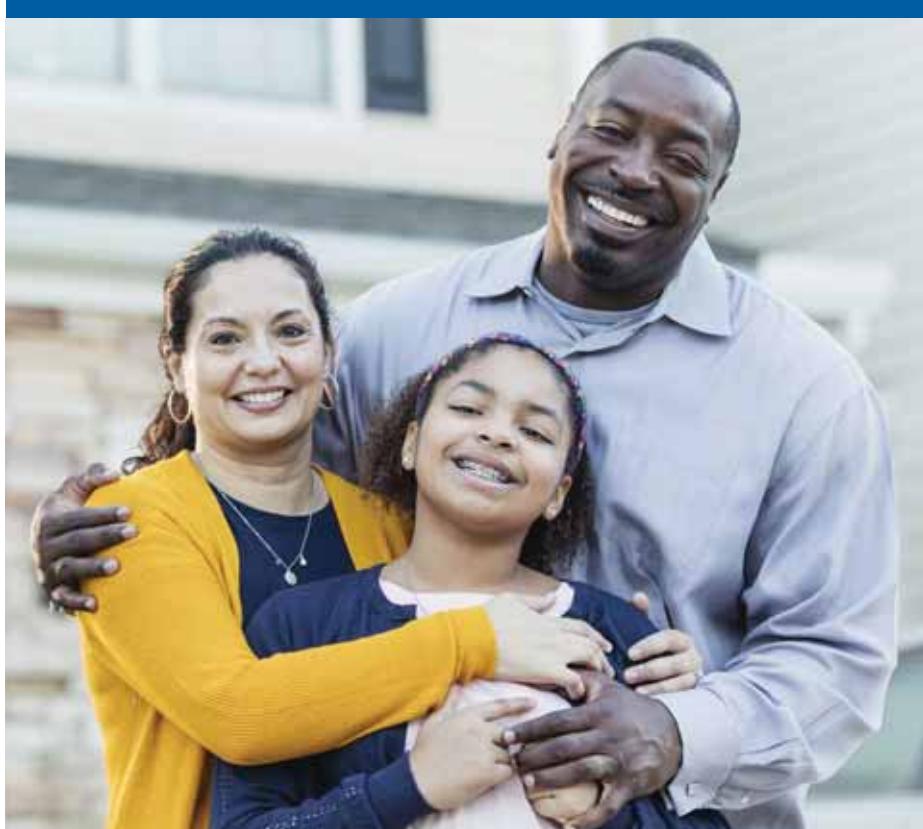
of the Budget Bill, with its full coverage of pregnant mothers and children up to age 3, as well as coverage of doula services.

Please feel free to focus on all or even just one of the demands. It is just extremely important to make contact with one or more of these elected officials. Your voice is extremely important, and

we thank you for your commitment!

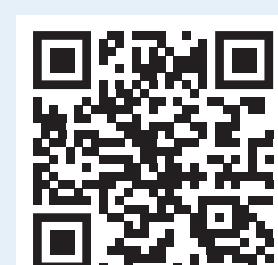
Contact the Conference Committee: Rep Bride Sweeney (D): (614) 466-3350; Rep Jay Edwards (R): (614) 466-2158; Rep Jeff LaRe (R): (614) 466-8100; Sen Jerry Cirino (R): (614) 644-7718; Sen Matt Dolan (R): (614) 466-8056; and Sen Vernon Sykes (D): (614) 466-7041.

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Thursday, June 8, 2023; Rock the Block Party, Carnegie West Branch, 1900 Fulton; Kisha Nicole Foster performing original poetry for block party attendees. The party was thrown to celebrate literacy and cultural diversity with live music, free food, and activities for families.

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How to prepare for the return of federal student loan payments

by Tonya Sams

With the pause on federal student loan payments expected to come to an end this summer, there are many ways that borrowers can prepare themselves when it is time to resume payments.

Federal student loan borrowers can go to the Department of Education's website and apply for repayment plans. One set of repayment options are known as Income-Driven Repayment plans (IDR). These plans set a monthly payment based on a borrower's income and are especially beneficial for borrowers who are low-income.

There are two ways a borrower can enroll in an IDR plan. First, a borrower can ask their loan holder or servicer to put them into the plan with the lowest monthly payment. This is likely the best option for most borrowers seeking IDR.

A borrower can also choose their own IDR plan. More details about these plans are available at studentaid.gov/idr/.

There are also time-limited options available to certain student loan borrowers. The borrower would need to apply over the next year. One option is

the Fresh Start program. This program is good for borrowers who defaulted on their federal student loans before the pandemic. It allows those borrowers to be put back in good standing with their loans without suffering from the consequences of defaulting on their loans.

This program gives those borrowers access to federal student aid again and makes them eligible for other federal student loans. It also stops collections and helps to repair credit reports that had been negatively impacted by student loans that were in default. Borrowers who are eligible can apply for the Fresh Start program by calling the Default Resolution Group at the U.S. Department of Education at 1-800-621-3115. If a borrower has a federal loan that is held by a commercial entity, they can figure out who to contact by going to studentaid.gov/manage-loans/default#guaranty-agencies.

Another time-limited option is the Income-Driven Repayment (IDR) Account Adjustment. With this policy, the Department of Education looks at borrowers who were making payments

before the pandemic and ensures that those payments count towards their IDR forgiveness. This includes those borrowers who were in forbearance for over a year, in cumulative forbearance for over three years, and those in deferment including economic hardships and military deferments (except for school deferments before 2013). Borrowers with commercially-held federal loans will need to consolidate those loans to be eligible for the account adjustment.

Legal Aid offers a number of online student loan resources. Visit lasclev.org, click on the "Services & Resources" tab and hit "Legal Resources." Then select "Money" and click on "Student Loans."

Do you have questions regarding your federal student loans? Legal Aid may be able to help! Call our Economic Justice Information Line at 216-861-5899. You can also call Legal Aid for civil legal matters at 888-817-3777 during normal business hours or apply online 24/7 at lasclev.org/apply.

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

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Students clean debris from Cuyahoga River and Lake Erie

continued from page one

Students say they get a good feeling when other vessels passing them on the Cuyahoga River or in Lake Erie, thank them for the work they are doing. The vessels they are aboard, the Flotsam and Jetsam, were designed for the Port of Cleveland to help keep Cleveland's navigational channels clean of debris. The Port of Cleveland contracts with Argonaut to captain the vessels and work with Davis Aerospace and Maritime high school students.

Argonaut, a nonprofit corporation, founded by Drew Ferguson and Douglas McConnell, partnered with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District to create the Davis Aeronautics and Maritime High School which opened in downtown Cleveland in 2017. Drew Ferguson says planning and fundraising for the "experiential education" school started about 10 years prior to its opening. Ferguson said he was working for MetroHealth's Life Flight at the time and spoke to his friend Douglass McConnell about his vision for the school. McConnell joined with him and Cleveland Metropolitan School District staff in working to make the vision a reality. Students at the school gain experience in maritime and aerospace fields through paid internships while in high school. Davis is a year-round high school.

McConnell says that this school year and summer about 20 students have worked on the Jetsam and Flotsam vessels. The vessels go out six days a week. McConnell says the students learn skills that will help them to gain employment in the maritime industry. He says even if students choose not to have careers in the maritime industry, they are learning about Cleveland's freshwater resources, and opportunities for recreational and commercial activities. He sees the students growing to appreciate and take advantage of Cleveland's freshwater resources.

Jarad Magyar, Vice President of operations for the Cleveland Port Authority, says the Flotsam and Jetsam vessels removed about 300,000 pounds of debris from the Cuyahoga River and Lake Erie this past year. He said the largest obstacle they removed was a 50- or 60-foot tree.

Argonaut staff team with the student interns from Davis High School to staff the vessels. Reporters went aboard the vessels at North Coast Harbor to witness the crews of the two vessels at work on June 6th. Three argonaut employees -- Lead Captain Aidan Hall, Captain Sam



PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN

Tuesday, June 6, 2023; North Coast Harbor: High School students from the Cleveland Metropolitan School District's Davis Aerospace & Maritime High School along with Argonaut employees work on the Port Authority's Flotsam and Jetsam vessels removing debris from North Coast Harbor and the Cuyahoga River. Davis Aerospace & Maritime High School students and an alumnus work on the vessels. Ready to go out on the water are: (L-R) 12th grade student Xavier Harshaw; 2021 Davis High School graduate, Captain Quinton Oliver; 10th grade student Kayla Peterson; 10th grade student Quinn Schumann; and 12th Grade student William Whalen.

Landgraf and Captain Quinton Oliver (a 2021 Davis Aeronautics and Maritime High School graduate) -- supervised four Davis High School students serving as crew that day. The students out on the vessels that day were two soon to graduate 12th graders Xavier Harshaw and William Whalen and two tenth grade students Kayla Peterson and Quinn Schumann.

The Flotsam and Jetsam vessels each tow a small barge behind them which has a large tarp on it on which they place debris. Each vessel has a small crane on it. One of the cranes is equipped with a pincher arm which can grab a log and lift it from the water. The crane on the other vessel has a basket attached which can be maneuvered to lift debris from the water. The students are equipped with long pikes that can stab the debris and bring it closer to the vessel. If the debris is too heavy to lift onto the barge with the pikes,

the captains maneuver the vessel so the crane's arm or basket and reach the debris. The students use their pikes to assist in getting the debris in position to get hauled onto the barge.

Argonaut Chief Executive Officer Drew Ferguson says there is a big need for workers in the local maritime industry. He hopes that students from Davis Aerospace

and Maritime High School will help to fill those jobs. Graduating senior Xavier Harshaw says he already has his captain's license. He said he is interested in piloting vessels on the Great Lakes. Harshaw says he plans to start with being a captain on a small vessel, but his goal, he says, pointing to a large freighter in North Coast Harbor, is to be captain on one of those.

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PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN

Tuesday, June 6, 2023; North Coast Harbor: 12th Grade Davis student Xavier Harshaw uses the Flotsam's crane to lower a tree stump into the debris pile on the barge while 10th grader Quinn Schumann watches.

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COUNTY COUNCIL PASSES WAGE THEFT LEGISLATION

continued from page one

Chagrin Falls, and Hunting Valley, where most village and city mayors are registered Republicans. He explained his vote against the wage theft legislation, saying Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost stated that current disbarment policies are already in place as an effective tool against employers stealing wages.

In 2022, Schron was publicly criticized for backroom deals, along with other council members, involving the distribution of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds and former Moreland Hills Mayor Dan Fritz, as reported by cleveland.com. The Village of Moreland Hills was eventually awarded \$186,173 for the President Garfield Birth Site and Cabin Path Stairs Project. Fritz, a career firefighter and paramedic who served as Moreland Hills mayor since 2000, died suddenly on March 16 at age 55.

Schron took to the microphone before the vote and explained that wage theft legislation was unnecessary.

"We cannot go down this road of adjusting every single piece of legislation that we have passed during the last 12 years. It is not a good practice," said Schron. "I do not want to follow what the City of Cleveland did."

Cleveland City Council passed an ordinance in December 2022 that establishes the Fair Employment Wage Board, a seven-member board to oversee the enforcement of the wage theft policy as well as other pro-worker policies, and creates the Adverse Determination List, where any person or entity that has received an Adverse Determination or has committed wage theft within the last three years will not be eligible to enter into a City contract. The legislation also applies to businesses working as subcontractors on City contracts.

Wage theft is not paying the proper wages due to a worker or paying inordinately low salaries and failing to abide by employment laws and regulations. Cheating workers on holiday pay is wage theft, as is paying less than minimum wage, not paying workers overtime, or not allowing them to take meal and rest breaks. Wage theft affects workers across all income levels but is most commonly associated with lower-income positions and the service industry. It is responsible for roughly three times as much economic loss as other types of theft, including bank robberies, shoplifting, and credit card fraud combined.

A new analysis from Policy Matters Ohio shows employers steal from about 213,000 Ohioans every year by paying them below the minimum wage. The federal minimum wage has not been raised since 2009, which at \$7.25 per hour works out to \$290 a week and \$15,080 a year before taxes.

The hourly minimum wage in Ohio ranks 23rd in the nation at \$10.10 per hour. A new proposal would raise the Ohio minimum wage to \$12.75 in 2024 and \$15 in 2025, then index it to inflation. Twenty states currently have a \$7.25 minimum wage.

Researchers have found that an increase in minimum wages does not correspond to increases in income. Most employers cut labor costs by cutting hours when hourly wages rise.

Wage and hour enforcement occurs when a worker files a complaint. But workers are the least likely to come forward to report a violation because they lack information about their legal rights or fear losing their jobs. Immigrant workers are especially

vulnerable. Employers guilty of violating wage and hour laws pay less in fines than paying workers owed wages.

Greater emphasis on enforcement and a focus on changing social norms is needed, the research cited. Enforcement strategies that increase compliance with wage and hours laws, such as wage insurance and enforcement, could improve the situation.

Nearly 52 million workers, almost one-third of the labor force, earn less than \$15 an hour, disproportionately women and people of color, according to a study by Oxfam America, an anti-poverty advocacy group. Low wages lead to poverty. Cleveland has a poverty rate among the highest in the nation.

From 2000 to 2022, the cost of fuel and utilities increased by 115 percent in most American cities, while the poverty rate has remained flat for decades even as federal relief has surged, reported the New York Times. The lack of organized unions is just one of the many reasons workers are being underpaid.

Grace Heffernan, Kelley, and a dozen Guardians for Fair Work supporters met outside council chambers afterward to celebrate their victory.

LIBRARY REOPENS ON LORAIN AVENUE

continued from page one

guests to enjoy the food provided and to tour the new facility. She said she was especially glad to see the children that attended the ceremony.

Cleveland Public Library Executive Director Felton Thomas asked that the youngest children to do the honor of cutting the ribbon marking the grand opening of the Lorain Branch.

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Heffernan, board chair of the Northeast Ohio Worker Center, an organization built by workers for workers to organize and fight back against the systems that have workers feeling isolated, overworked, underpaid, and exploited, said that Cuyahoga County will no longer do business with businesses that steal from their workers.

"[Wage Theft legislation] is an important value system that says we will not tolerate exploitative business practices in the county," said Heffernan. "We are committed to educating workers on their rights in the workplace and ensuring they get every dollar owed to them."

Kelley said the victory would provide momentum for people working in the county, meaning more workers know about wage theft than before.

"People came to the wage theft clinic at the Northeast Ohio Workers Center and learned about the legislation," she said.

"This is a significant win for us. We have the momentum to initiate similar policies in larger suburbs in the county. The biggest challenge is worker education. Wage theft is complaint-driven, so if workers do not know their rights, these policies do not live in real life."



PHOTO BY ERIK AULT

Wednesday, June 21, 2023; Summer solstice, Wendy Park, 2800 Whisky Island Dr; The solstice sun setting on Lake Erie as onlookers of a passing sailboat gaze on. The summer solstice is the day with the most sunlight. From this point forward, there will be incrementally less sunlight until the winter solstice in December.

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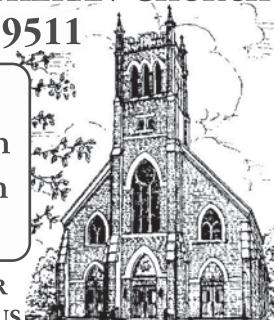
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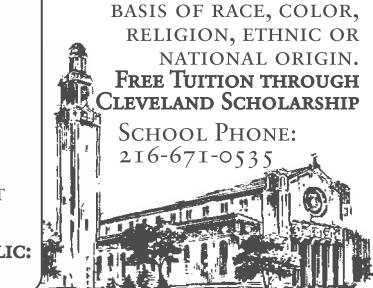
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