

SUMMER 2024

the SHAD Connection

Vol. 47 No. 4

FOR THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE, WORK AND SHOP IN THE SHAKER SQUARE AREA

Rock the Blocks

Sunday, June 9, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
A parade down Larchmere is the highlight of this community-bridging event. rocktheblocks.info.

Larchmere PorchFest

Saturday, June 29, 1 to 10 p.m.
This full day of free music, with 30 bands on 30 porches, keeps growing in popularity. Larchmereporchfest.org.



SHAD Annual

Members Meeting

Thursday, July 11, 7 p.m.
Join us at Cummins Hall, Our Lady of Peace. Not a member? Sign up at shad.org/why-join or join at the meeting. See Page 3.

Shaker Soirée

Saturday, July 13, 7 p.m.
Party in the gardens of the Shaker Historical Society, 16740 South Park Blvd. shakerhistory.org.

Renovare concert

Thursday, July 18, 7 p.m.
Buckeye and Woodhill residents share their stories via documentary songwriting, at Tavern Coffee House, 12302 Buckeye Road. See Page 5.

Author Alley

Aug. 9 to 11
Meet and greet local writers at Loganberry Books' signature summer event. Loganberrybooks.com.

Morelands Festival

Saturday, Aug. 10, 1 to 4 p.m.
The Morelands Group hosts this community party at Helen Simpson Park. Part of the Summer Health and Wellness Series. See Page 9.

Garlic Festival

Saturday & Sunday, Aug. 24 & 25, noon, Shaker Square
Follow your nose to the smelliest festival around. Clevelandgarlicfestival.org.

Take to the Lake

Saturday, Aug. 24
Go boating on Lower Shaker Lake on this one day of the year. Hosted by the Doan Brook Watershed Partnership.

Shaker Square

Visitors Center opens doors on southeast quadrant

By Thomas Jewell

Call it a “welcoming addition” to the lineup of storefronts on Shaker Square. Square co-owner Burten, Bell, Carr Development Inc. (BBC) has opened a new Visitors Center on the southeast quadrant in what promises to be a “multifunctional space” for all.

In addition to serving as “a convenient hub for merchants, property management, and visitors, as well as a welcoming environment for the community to gather,” the center will also provide police with a stopping point on their patrols. Although Cleveland Fourth District police prefer not to use the term “mini-station,” the shared-space agreement with the nonprofit owners of the Square has been in the works for more than a year, with considerable remodeling needed.

“We are excited to welcome everyone to the Visitors Center,” BBC Executive Director Joy Johnson said. “We see it as a place to engage with residents around

Shaker Square in real time as well as connect them to other resources.”

Operated by BBC and its staff members, the Visitors Center, next to Shaker Square Animal Hospital, will be open to the public from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday

and on weekends by appointment, with community group rentals available.

Coffee shop

Over on the northeast quadrant, negotiations continued in the spring for a new coffee shop – along with *See Visitors Center opens doors on southeast quadrant, page 9*



Photo by Cleveland Department of Public Safety

Two “blue light” security cameras were installed in early May at Helen Simpson Park at South Moreland and Buckeye roads after more than a year of efforts by the Morelands Group and Councilwoman Deborah Gray.

Shaker Square

Visioning process tries to consider all viewpoints

By Thomas Jewell

When it comes to community engagement for envisioning the future of Shaker Square, the consulting team takes all viewpoints into account.

During a “Stroll the Square” event May 2, one youngster gave a quick assessment as his family made the rounds to various surveying tables, this one by the RTA train station.

“It’s not really a ‘square,’” he said as they headed for the free Captain Tony’s pizza in the newly opened Visitor’s Center.

Team member Allen Penniman, project manager with Agency Landscape + Planning, conceded that “it’s actually more of an octagon,” although he said later the year-long visioning project is “really not about the geometry.”

“Right now, we’re at the ‘big picture’ stage.”

– Allen Penniman, Agency Landscape + Planning

A lot of moving parts also are at play – along with large stationary pieces of equipment to navigate around – as the physical transformation of the square continues over the summer.

The work includes million-dollar infrastructure projects by the city of Cleveland and long-needed building upgrades to address years of deferred maintenance on the four quadrants, now owned by local nonprofits.

By year’s end, the consulting team – selected by a steering committee of neighborhood and civic leaders, along with Cleveland city officials – will have that plan ready for stakeholders.

“Right now, we’re at the ‘big picture’ stage of what it is that people would like to see in the future at Shaker Square,” Penniman said, “whether it’s coming from the residents within walking distance or visitors attracted from across the city.”

As a co-founder of the Boston-based Agency firm, Brie Hensold actually grew up in Shaker Heights about half a mile from the Square.

The visioning process has three main components, Hensold said: retail and marketplace strategies, public realm designs and community engagement.

“It’s three pieces, but retail strategy and market success are key to what we want to be a community vision,” Hensold said while taking recommendations at another survey table set up in the Visitors Center during “Stroll the Square.”

Joining Agency on the visioning team are Cleveland-based urban design consultants Seventh Hill along with retail, merchandising and market expertise from Streetsense.

“We will be putting together a consensus-supported concept, with marketing strategy to back it up,” Penniman said.

With another table set up outside Dave’s Market, the team

See Visioning process tries to consider all viewpoints, page 2

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Visioning process tries to consider all viewpoints

Continued from page 1

took a variety of approaches in engaging the public.

These included stickers for priorities and questions like "What do you want to see more of at the Square and what do you want to stay the same at the Square?"

A fill-in-the-blank questionnaire card described an ideal day in the future on Shaker Square.

The vision plan will also build on insights from a 2019 planning study at the Square, including the uproar caused by a preliminary proposal to close Shaker Boulevard to cars and route traffic along the circular roads.

That idea is dead, but not interest in easier access to public green space, adding a

playground and recruiting an ice cream shop in the lineup of businesses to attract families. Shaker Square has one of the "highest percentages of children among Cleveland's retail areas," Agency urban planner and designer Jamaica Reese-Julien said.

As Hensold said earlier in calling Shaker Square both "a significant landmark broadly and a treasure to those close by," the planning effort is one that needs a "visionary yet realistic roadmap for inclusive success."

"The goal is to come up with a strategy on how to make retail thrive," Hensold said. "Everything's being explored, including amenities. Then our job is to coalesce on that vision and bring it all together."



Shaker Square visioning team consultant Brie Hensold, right, co-founder and principal of Agency Landscape + Planning, takes ideas from residents and neighbors during the May 2 "Stroll the Square" community engagement event.

Poet packs Loganberry

Quartez Harris addressed a packed house at Loganberry Books in February during a pre-launch event for the re-release of his 2020 poetry collection, "We Made It to School Alive." Harris, the Ohio Poetry Association's 2021 Poet of the Year and a Cleveland native, was thrilled by the reception. "It was actually breathtaking," Harris told The Land. "I was invited in such a warm way. I didn't think anybody would have an interest in the book being re-released because it had a launch [in 2020], but Rebel Readers believed in it, felt that it deserved an audience, and highlighted the story and concerns I agonized over in my collection. There was press built around it, a bridge to going live on Ideastream. There was a new momentum. Loganberry Books was flooded, and my fiancé couldn't find a seat. They are champions of my work. I am grateful."

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The SHAD Connection Deadlines Fall Issue

For advertising rate and ad size information and media kit go to shad.org or email jgdalessandro@gmail.com.

Reserve ad space for the SHAD Connection Fall issue covering September, October and November by July 10, 2024. Ad artwork is due no later than: August 2, 2024.

Send artwork to Jim at jgdalessandro@gmail.com.

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SHAD MISSION STATEMENT

To provide the Shaker Square area with the leadership needed to re-imagine and foster well-maintained, diverse and vibrant neighborhoods.

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- CHALK
- Drexmore/Chadbourne
- Historic Shaker Square
- Larchmere
- Ludlow

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- Shaker Square
- Larchmere Blvd.
- Van Aken Plaza
- Shaker Boulevard West

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The SHAD Connection

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Mailing Address

The SHAD Connection
Shaker Square Area Development Corporation
11811 Shaker Boulevard
Suite 106
Cleveland, Ohio 44120

Telephone

216.421.2100

Editor

Chris Ball
info@shad.org

Design

Spiral Studio/Sandra Graubard

THE SHAD CONNECTION

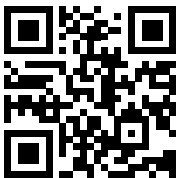
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To become a member, call 216.421.2100 or go to shad.org.

A story in the Spring 2024 issue of The SHAD Connection misspelled the name of artist Jacques Payne. We regret the error.

All eyes are now on Shaker Square

By Mary Ann Kovach, SHAD President

Shaker Square is booming with construction projects, carpentry and other restoration of the buildings, and infrastructure upgrades to roads and sewers. South Moreland improvements are done, with North Moreland and Shaker Square roadwork next in line. We’re pleased to report that Shaker Square Area Development (SHAD)’s longtime dream of adding a sidewalk along Drexmore, behind Dave’s Market, is finally coming true after a long string of broken promises. We’re looking forward to this safety improvement for pedestrians.

Be on the lookout for an abundance of activities for neighbors of all ages to enjoy, including the Saturday morning Farmers Market, Larchmere Sidewalk Sale, PorchFest, Rock the Blocks, Morelands Group Festival, and Garlic Festival.

On the restaurant front, look for the encore of Barroco on Larchmere after its interim period as Hola Tacos, Scorpacciato at the former Larchmere Tavern location, and Batuqui in its larger location in the former church at East 126th Street. No need to leave the neighborhood to dine out.

Bravo to the SHAD Connection team for compiling, editing and producing a high-quality neighborhood paper that stands above other hyperlocal publications. Our gratitude goes to editor Chris Ball, graphic designer Sandra Wolk Graubard (Spiral Studio), and ad sales manager James Dalessandro for their exceptional work and sharp focus on detail in bringing this to you quarterly.

Did you know that SHAD (in its former iteration as Friends of Shaker Square, or FOSS) began publishing the Connection in 1977? SHAD has been

preserving the many years of Shaker Square news with a project to digitize all the past issues with the help of Cleveland Public Library’s Digital Department. When completed, the digitized issues will be available online for researchers and anyone else to view free of charge. We’re approaching the end of the project, so keep an eye out for an announcement when it’s completed.

Without you, there would be no SHAD Connection. We rely on membership support and advertising to produce this community asset. You can help continue our legacy of reporting the local news in a quality format by becoming a member online at shad.org/why-join or sending your contribution to SHAD, 11811 Shaker Blvd., Suite #106, Cleveland OH 44120.

Be sure to put SHAD’s annual Members Meeting on your calendar: Thursday, July 11, 7 p.m., at Our Lady of Peace’s Cummins Hall, 12601 Shaker Blvd.

SHAD continues to advocate for the historic neighborhoods of Shaker Square.

We ask you to keep engaged with the community and with SHAD, which has remained an “independent, membership-controlled, neighborhood-centered community development corporation” since its inception as FOSS. SHAD has received no funding support from Cleveland Neighborhood Progress since it attempted to merge SHAD with Buckeye Area Development Corp. a decade ago, so we truly rely on “a little help from our friends.”

It’s been my great honor to have served on the SHAD Board of Trustees for the past 10 years. As I rotate off the board, I look forward to its bright future and your part in helping SHAD move forward. I’ll be off the board but still involved as a community member and volunteer. I hope you’ll join me.

“Without you, there would be no SHAD Connection.”

– Mary Ann Kovach, SHAD President



A stack of sewer pipes awaits installation in the median of North Moreland Boulevard on April 23.

Photo by Chris Ball



Photo by Chris Ball

A sidewalk is planned for Drexmore Road behind Dave’s Market so pedestrians will no longer have to walk in the street.

Shaker Square

Mulch ado about proposed sidewalk behind Dave’s Market on Drexmore

By Jason Novak

The work to renovate North and South Moreland Boulevard is well underway, with construction on the north side beginning in late April and work continuing on the south side.

Among the many welcome changes to the Shaker Square neighborhood will be a short sidewalk behind Dave’s Supermarket, north of Drexmore Road and west of South Moreland. However, a recent development puzzled residents, including Shaker Square Area Development Corp. (SHAD) President Mary Ann Kovach.

Kovach was a leading voice in the push for the sidewalk, as previously reported by the *SHAD Connection*. “[SHAD’s then-treasurer] George Palda and I had been proposing the sidewalk for years,” Kovach said. It’s a safety issue, as people often walk in the street, dodging large semi-trailers delivering groceries.

“We worked with [former City Councilman] Ken Johnson, who didn’t go forward with it. Then we worked with [former interim City Councilwoman] Anita Gardner, but she didn’t have the time with her short tenure to start it.” Kovach and Palda also contacted Burten, Bell, Carr Development Inc. when they purchased Shaker Square, but the project was not within the scope of the organization’s renovations.

It wasn’t until the Cleveland Capital Projects Department began funding for the North and South Moreland Rehabilitation Project that Kovach found success. Kovach and Palda took the idea to James DeRosa, director of Capital Projects for Cleveland, who agreed that the lack of a sidewalk needed to be rectified. As construction plans were drawn up, the new sidewalk was included.

However, Kovach recently found that the site for the sidewalk was covered in mulch, with newly planted trees.

“[The city] promised the sidewalk would be going in at the site, but it’s not framed out or anything,” she said.

The sidewalk project is still on track, said city of Cleveland Capital Projects Engineer Ron Mason. “The trees and mulch will be removed to install the sidewalk, as this work is in the city [work order],” he said.

“It doesn’t affect the timeline at all.”

As to the purpose of the mulch and the presence of trees, Mason is as much in the dark as residents. “The contractor has not requested payment for either the mulch or planting the trees at that location, and indications are these were not installed by the contractor,” he said.

While the mulch mystery remains unsolved, the sidewalk is still scheduled to be completed by the end of May. For updates on the North and South Morelands Rehabilitation, including changes in traffic patterns, go to northandsouthmoreland.com.

Mary Ann Kovach recently found that the site for the sidewalk was covered in mulch, with newly planted trees.

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Heard Around the Square

By Margaret Simon

Time to get in gear with **Bike Your Neighborhood**. Riders roll from Amos Norwood Park at 12805 Drexmore Road and East 128th Street at 11 a.m. on the second Saturdays of summer months: June 8, July 13, Aug. 10, and Sept. 14. Riders gather 30 minutes before each ride in the parking lot behind Dave's Supermarket. Need a bike? No worries. Free rentals are available on a first-come, first-served basis with a valid ID. Riders of all ages and experience are welcome to join in the five-mile rides through the east side neighborhoods of Buckeye-Shaker Square, Ludlow, Mt. Pleasant and Woodland Hills. Thanks to sponsors **Saint Luke's Foundation, Neighborhood Connections,** and **Bike Cleveland**. Learn more at bikeyourneighborhoodcle.org



The city of Shaker Heights has launched **The Listening Project**, a communitywide conversation aimed at fostering dialogue around policing policies and practices. The project begins with a Town Hall at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 29, at Shaker Middle School, 20600 Shaker Blvd. Your voice matters to help to shape the future.

Join **Renay and Tracy Fowler of Fashions by Fowler** at Hattitude, Cleveland NAACP's Brunch and Tea event themed "A Journey of Perseverance," from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 3, at Pine Ridge Country Club in Wickliffe. Experience the elegance of a Best Hat Contest, exciting raffles, a variety of vendors, and a captivating Fashion Show presented by **Fashions by Fowler**. Call 216.410.8039 for details.

Exciting news for film lovers and community supporters alike: After 13 stellar years at the cinema theater on the Square, the Greater Cleveland Urban Film Festival is opening an office at 13200 Shaker Square, Unit 114, to enhance its organizational capacity. They've begun a public fundraising campaign to cover the expenses of securing office space and essential furniture and equipment. For details, visit facebook.com/gcuffcleveland.

Mark your calendars for an unforgettable evening Saturday, July 13, at the Shaker Historical Society's **3rd Annual Shaker Soirée**. Prepare to enjoy live music, indulge in delicious margaritas, and savor mouthwatering barbecue at their beautiful grounds at 16740 South Park Blvd. Whether you're a history buff, a music lover, or simply enjoy good food and company, the Shaker Soirée is sure to delight.

The Nature Center at Shaker Lakes and Doan Brook Watershed Partnership are offering a **Rain Barrel Workshop** from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Thursday, June 13, at the Nature Center, 2600 South Park Blvd. They will supply the barrel, parts, and tools and demonstrate how to construct a 55-gallon rain barrel system, which you can attach to any standard downspout to collect and conserve rainwater for your plants and yard. Learn how rain barrels may save you money on your water bill. Tickets are \$60. Register at givebutter.com/Zarzxj.

Congratulations to **Andrew Medvedev** (Case Western Reserve University's Class of 1997), who steps into the role of dean July 1 at the Weatherhead School of Management. Medvedev shares his South Park Boulevard home with his wife, **Christine**, an architect running a sustainability-focused design studio, and their three children. Known for his fervent support of Northeast Ohio, Medvedev loves exploring for culinary and artistic treasures in the region.

Shaker Square's **Ann Hunter** is back at Shaker Library. Join her every Wednesday from noon to 1:45 p.m. for personalized guidance on

job searches, resume and cover letter writing, and interview preparation. No registration is necessary. Simply drop in for invaluable support with your career search from a veteran coach.

Get ready for **A Lit Summer Night**, Literary Cleveland's annual fundraiser where the creative community shines bright. Join them at Ariel International Center at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, June 6, for an unforgettable evening dedicated to increasing equitable access to writing and publishing opportunities in Cleveland. This year's story slam theme is "illumination," promising illuminating tales from remarkable local writers. Prepare to be captivated by the storytelling prowess of screenwriter **Debra Gibson**, 2021 Ohio Poetry Association Poet of the Year **Quartez Harris**, and Pulitzer Prize winner **Connie Schultz**. Plus enjoy a stirring welcome poem from Heights Poet Laureate **Siaara Freeman**. These talented wordsmiths will share true, personal stories about moments of insight, social change, and the luminaries who brighten our lives. For details and tickets, email info@litcleveland.org. Help light up the night with literary magic.

Summer reading is in full swing, and there's something for everyone. Dive into "Shaker Reads" presented by Shaker Library, where you can sign up and earn exciting prizes, including a coveted yard sign, from June 10 to Aug. 10. Don't miss the Summer Reading Kickoff Party from 3 to 5 p.m. Monday, June 10, at the Bertram Woods Branch Lawn. Over at Cleveland Public Library, the *Summer Lit League* runs from May 30 to July 23. Join this eight-week challenge designed to ignite a passion for reading among Cleveland residents and Northeast Ohio families. It's the perfect way to spend those lazy summer days. And don't forget about the *Adventure Begins at Your Library* summer reading challenge by Cuyahoga County Public Library, running from June 1 to July 31. Read your way through thrilling adventures and win fantastic prizes along the way. The best prize of all? A treasured trip through the pages of a good book.

Looking to connect with fellow fiber enthusiasts? Look no further than **Liz Tekus'** Fine Points, 12602 Larchmere Blvd. Join in Sit and Knits on the first and third Sundays of each month. Bring your knitting project and enjoy the company of other knitters to share inspiration, knowledge, and social connections. Up on Van Aken Boulevard, join an exciting in-store retreat weekend planned by **Pam Berkson** and **Beth Billings** of **Around the Table Yarns**, Friday to Sunday, Aug. 2 to 4. Stop by either shop for creative project ideas and all the materials you need to bring your knitting visions to life.

Judy and Ron Stenta, longtime Shaker residents and beloved community boosters, are embarking on an exciting new chapter. They've sold their Falmouth Road home to **Tommy** and **Sarah Mulligan** and are relocating to the Blair House Apartments on Van Aken Boulevard. Wishing them all the best in their new home.

Kudos to the creative and dedicated efforts of **Andre Taylor, Sally Levine, Susan Rotatori, Sandi White,** and **Anna Hsu**. Thanks to their artistic fundraising endeavors, the Shaker Arts Council has truly come of age. To celebrate this milestone, the group organized a vibrant two-day celebration at EDWINS's Too on Shaker Square. Here's to many more years of creativity and inspiration.

Enjoy fruitful Saturday mornings at the North Union Farmers Market on Shaker Square, where you can relish the fun of meeting friends and indulging in fresh, locally sourced foods. While I won't recommend circling the Square as the walkways may be blocked due to ongoing work, I encourage you to observe the progress and stay tuned for updates. Keep your ears open for me. I'll be sure to share any exciting news about the Square's transformation.

Congratulations to **Julia Koops**, who earned the Shaker Library Research Prize at Ohio History Day for her paper entitled, "A Contradictory Turning Point: The U.S. Occupation of Haiti."

Email news items to heardaroundthesquare@gmail.com.



Don't be surprised to see packs of cyclists cruising through the neighborhood this summer. From *Bike Your Neighborhood* to *Bike Cleveland* to *Slow Roll Cleveland*, group rides are gaining in popularity.



Shaker Square storefronts are getting spruced up with fresh paint.



Music

Buckeye and Woodhill residents share stories with documentary songwriting

By Chris Ball

They don’t have to sing. They need not play an instrument. Still, they’re sharing their stories in song.

Seven Buckeye and Woodhill residents are stepping into the spotlight for something called documentary songwriting. The collaborative project combines their words with the talents of a cellist and violinist. Their songs will debut this summer in a series of local concerts.

The seven “story sources” are Rev. Dogba Bass, Marilyn Burns, Jackie Dixon, Yvette Hunt, Denise Moore, Jerrod Amir Shakir and Ronnetta Stallworth.

They were recruited by Renovare Music, a nonprofit founded in 2018 by Shaker Heights resident Rebecca Shasberger. She is driven by a need to “hear stories that I wouldn’t hear if I stayed in the concert halls and traditional spaces that people expect a classically trained cellist to be in,” she said.

She grew up playing the cello. “But I always felt this tension that the spaces I was inhabiting were so, so removed from so many people’s everyday lives, and when I moved to Cleveland, that sense just got heightened.”

The Indiana native, 31, came to the Cleveland Institute of Music nine years ago to pursue a master’s degree. “One day I got turned around and ended up in East Cleveland, and I felt like I had gone to a different country,” she said. “So I began to ask myself what would it look like to be a musician but to do it in a different way.”

She learned about the justice system and redlining and began teaching and performing music in prisons. “The more I and my colleagues were doing that, we were so moved and humbled and inspired by the stories we were

learning from people, and the resilience people had shown, and had this deep sense that we were missing something because of the distance we had had from so many people.”

Others could benefit from the experience too, she felt. “So that’s where documentary songwriting came into Renovare’s framework, as a way to intentionally sit with people and hear their stories and then create a way to share those stories.”

They perform mostly in Northeast Ohio, in churches, art galleries, coffeehouses, prisons, community gardens and homeless shelters. In 2023, they gave 81 concerts, all focusing on a theme or neighborhood. Recent topics include the Black infant and maternal mortality and morbidity crisis, the Great Migration, Cleveland’s Near West Side, and homelessness.

A friend suggested the Buckeye-Woodhill area and introduced Shasberger and Lalia Mangione, Renovare’s violinist and community manager, to local residents.

They began writing songs in March and hope to finish by late May or early June.

Their Christian faith inspires their work but isn’t a requirement for participants. “Absolutely not,” Shasberger said. “You wouldn’t necessarily know from hearing one of our concerts or class sessions that we are people of faith, but it’s always our motivation.”

Funding mostly comes from individual donors. Grant sources include Cuyahoga Arts and Culture and the Ida B. Wells Foundation.

Shasberger wants to add a violist and a managing director to handle the business side so they can expand their projects and focus more on the music. “I always have more ideas than are realistic, so Lalia reins me in and says not right now,” she said. “Maybe someday.”

They’ve already chosen a theme for next year: urban women beekeepers.

“I began to ask myself what would it look like to be a musician but to do it in a different way.”

– Rebecca Shasberger, Renovare founder

Jerrod's Song:

Born at Saint Luke’s, lived here my whole life.

Earliest memory is with my grandfather

Out on the porch in the morning.

I remember the sunshine

I’m proud to stand in the shoes

Of people who have grown roots here

My grandmother called it a light ghetto

A product of white flight and redlining

She took us to Shaker Square for ice cream.

And to ride the Rapid downtown

I’m proud to stand in the shoes

Of people who have grown roots here

I was a bad kid growing up

So they gave me something to do

I was the kid on the PA system

Prepared me to be a speaker, rapper, poet

I am proud to stand in the shoes

Of those who have grown roots here

I always thought the neighborhood was beautiful

The sun shines differently here

Like something out of a painting

The light is better on the hill

Advocacy work is my purpose

Took me a while to gain that confidence

Being active in my community fills me up.

I have to be the one to use my voice.

I am proud to stand in the shoes

Of those who have grown roots here



Joining forces on a documentary songwriting project in April are Jerrod Amir Shakir, left; Lalia Mangione, center; and Rebecca Shasberger on cello.

Shakir shakes off his inhibitions to help write a song about himself

By Chris Ball

Jerrod Amir Shakir taps his left collarbone with his open right hand. “Advocacy work [tap] is my purpose. [tap] I’m proud to stand in the shoes [tap] of the people who have grown roots here,” he says.

“How do you feel about that?” says Rebecca Shasberger. “It’s cool,” Shakir says. “I like to find it here because I feel it,” Shasberger says as she taps her collarbone. “Do it another time, just for fun, to see if it comes out differently.” “I didn’t even know this was part of the process,” Shakir says. “Oh, just wait,” says Lalia Mangione. “I think if we told everybody all the steps in the process, nobody would do it,” Shasberger says.

They’re starting the second of two documentary songwriting sessions. Shasberger and Mangione are with Renovare. Shakir, 37, is a community organizer with Bike Cleveland who lives on East 127th Street and grew up in Buckeye. He volunteered to share his story and help turn it into a song. Even though he says he can’t sing.

“Everyone says that,” Mangione says. “They all have to go through this. This is how we write songs.”

The process is intensive. First, a “story source” talks about themselves while Mangione types away furiously on her laptop, “because the goal is to capture the words as they come out of their mouth,” Shasberger says. “So the final song, the words that you’re hearing, are the very words that somebody said. And if you know how that person talks, you’ll often hear in their song their unique phrases and cadence, because it gets captured from the beginning of that first session.”

After getting up to five pages of material, they boil it way down. “We highlight phrases and sentences we especially love,” Shasberger says. They repeat this five or so times, “perhaps deciding let’s focus on this scene and leave that scene out, until we get a paragraph or so.”

After some reorganizing, it looks like free verse. “Then we start to notice themes that are emerging, and perhaps something feels like it could be a refrain, because they kept talking about chaos or hope, or learning to see, or something,” Shasberger said.

The second session starts with a polished poem. “We pick one verse, whichever one the story source wants, and we start to find a rhythm,” Shasberger says. “So we invite them to find a pulse and then speak the words to the pulse.”

They record and play back each take. On one, Shakir’s voice cracked. “I can’t keep listening to that,” he says.

It’s a struggle, because it takes time to reach a comfort level to get creative collaboratively. Shasberger coaxes Shakir along but tries not to influence his choices. “The whole point is to tell people’s stories well,” she says. “They have veto power.”

After more than an hour, they’re ready to add melody. Shasberger pulls out her cello and plays some notes. Shakir gets into it.

“That sounds good,” he says. “A little folksy. The bow definitely turns it up. It feels more epic with the bow.”

“You wrote that,” Shasberger says. “I don’t know any chords,” Shakir says. “OK, we wrote it together,” Shasberger says. “I like that energy it brings to it.” She plays more notes. “That’s awesome,” Shakir says.

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Total Solar Eclipse

EDWINS Too regulars fill patio to share experience as skies darken and clock ticks down to 3:13 p.m.

By Olivera Perkins

At first glance, it could have been mistaken for a typical early spring day in Cleveland. The type of day Clevelanders welcome after a spate of cold days. April 8 was the type of sunny, warm day that makes one want to sit outside.

The patio at EDWINS Too restaurant on Shaker Square was full. Others sat on benches scattered around the square. A few dozen people clustered in small groups in the green space.

One telltale sign let all know this was not a typical weekday afternoon. Solar eclipse glasses were the giveaway. On the EDWINS Too patio, one woman tried on her eclipse glasses over her eyeglasses and then without them. Nearby in the green space, a man sorted through a few pairs of eclipse glasses. He tried each on, trying to choose before the solar eclipse began.

It was just after 3 p.m. Several feet away, Aaron Holland sat on the grass with three others. Why weren't they at a downtown eclipse event?

"We didn't need to," he said. "We can see the eclipse right from here."

At EDWINS Too, many of the diners were positioning themselves on the patio and the sidewalk just front of it. They wanted the best view of the once-in-a-

lifetime experience only a few minutes away.

The skies began to darken as the moon passed between the Earth and the sun, blocking the view of the sun and its warmth. The crowd's anticipation became palpable.

"Look, the patio lights came on," one woman said with excitement.

Of course, this usually only happened at twilight. Today, it was an indication that 3:13 p.m. was only a few minutes away. Some put on jackets as the temperature dropped.

"I didn't expect it to be this dark in the middle of the day," said Peggy Gallagher of Cleveland. "I expected it to be a moment, but it's a process. I liked watching it slowly change."

She viewed the eclipse from EDWINS Too with nine friends. Most lived in condos near the square. Her friend, Elaine Dovas, who lives in New York City, came to Cleveland specifically to see the eclipse.

Dovas had seen partial eclipses. She had even seen a total one as a child, but she was too young to remember it. As she looked at the sky, Dovas was wowed.

"I feel accomplished," she said after witnessing the eclipse. "I met my goal. I'm with friends. I'm having an

experience. Life is good! I'm very happy."

Among the EDWINS Too regulars dining on the patio was Marita Hayes of Cleveland.

"This is our neighborhood," she said. "We knew seeing it here would be a blast. It was perfect."

Brandon E. Chrostowski, founder, president and CEO of EDWINS Leadership & Restaurant Institute, knew he would be in France during the eclipse. Still, he thought it important to have the event.

"We wanted to do something for the neighborhood to celebrate this once-in-a-lifetime experience," he said a week earlier. "Our neighborhood shouldn't have to go somewhere else to see the eclipse."

Ramal Keeler, who waited on Hayes' table, said he enjoyed working during the solar eclipse.

"It was a great vibe," he said. "Everybody was happy."

Keeler said the eclipse wasn't bad either.

"I just loved it," he said. "Tingles just went through my body."

Jay Croom of Cleveland, who lives nearby and works from home, took a break to view the eclipse from the EDWINS Too patio. She was in awe.

"It was the first time I saw an eclipse," she said. "It makes you think about how big the world is and how small you are inside of it. It is beautiful to witness the universe working without human intervention."

This story first appeared in Signal Cleveland, at tinyurl.com/3dcstdse. Used with permission.



Photo by Chris Ball

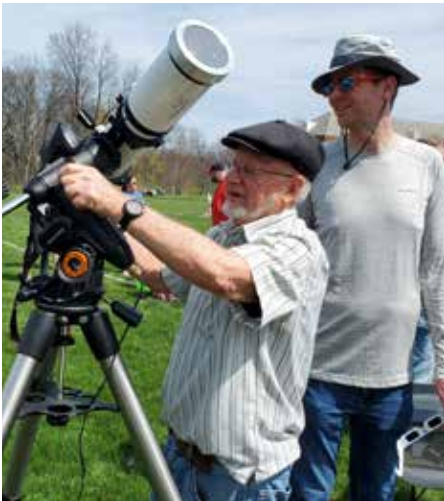


Photo by Mary Ann Kovach



Photo by Susan Rozman



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Photo by Mary Ann Kovach

People gathered to watch the April 8 solar eclipse in various spots, including behind Onaway and Woodbury schools in Shaker Heights, the Lower Shaker Lake, and the Sunbeam school.

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Eric Kohn helps the Friends of Lower Lake tend an old boathouse foundation that the group has excavated.



Greg Van Niel and Katie Starr cage a young tree at Lower Lake to protect it from the area's abundant deer.



Ryan Miller (left) and Sean McCleery cage a young tree as members of the Friends of Lower Lake.

Friends of Lower Lake

Nature lovers are doing their best to raise up Lower Shaker Lake

Story and photos by Grant Segall

Tami Masuoka digs into the turf near Lower Shaker Lake and scoops out a chunk of a stump bearing a fat white larva.

She identifies it through her phone. “I’m getting red rot decay stag beetle.” Then she buries the chunk and its occupant. “There you go, little guy,” she whispers. “Become a beetle!”

Planting native flora, removing invasives without pesticides, pruning, snatching up litter, caging trees to protect them from deer, and doing much more, the Friends of Lower Lake have beautified a beloved haven.

“It’s amazing, the transformation,” says the Friends’ Greg Van Niel. “It’s amazing what a small group can do over time if we stick with it.”

Among their accomplishments, the Friends have restored paths, unearthed a long-razed boathouse’s foundation, researched the lake’s complex history, advised other organizations about it, and planted a wildflower garden near South Park Boulevard. They recently moved the garden out of the way of a bike path that Shaker Heights will build this summer alongside South Park Boulevard

from Larchmere to Coventry roads with \$309,721 in state funds.

The Friends have progressed through trial and error, says co-founder Peggy Spaeth. “We’ve all gotten poison ivy. Now everyone knows how to ID it.”

The Friends group, six years old, is part of the Doan Brook Watershed Partnership. It helps maintain Lower Lake and the surrounding parklands, which Cleveland leases to Shaker Heights and Cleveland Heights.

The group has drawn about 100 volunteers from ages 14 to 83. Some 10 to 25 of them show up at 10 a.m. on a typical Sunday from April through October at the mulch mound on South Park Boulevard. They come for many reasons.

“I started complaining about the lake, the look, the litter,” recalls La Mar Shepherd. “My wife said, ‘What about

the Friends of Lower Lake?’”

“I needed to garden because I lived in an apartment during COVID, and I was losing my mind,” says Katie Starr. Now “I feel very connected to community.”

Most of the Friends live nearby and spend a lot of time at this gathering place for bald eagles, osprey, herons, hikers, birders, picnickers, and other creatures. A few have come from Euclid, Mentor and other towns to learn to tend nature at their homes or other parks.

Spaeth and John Barber, her partner and co-founder, have been certified by the Cleveland Metroparks as watershed volunteers. They volunteer at other parks. They give talks around town. And they often tend Lower Lake several times a week, bringing along Scouts or students to help.

Some of the lake’s many visitors greet the Friends, thank them, and question

them. “People complain when we take stuff out. When we replace it, they’re impressed,” says Van Niel. “The things we put in are just as beautiful, if not more. So, people have to give them time.” Some trees might take 15 years to provide much shade.

Officials welcome the Friends’ work. Charles Orlowski, assistant director of Shaker Heights public works, says, “It’s great to have residents get involved and help keep up the city.” Cisco Rivera, a watershed leader for the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District, says, “It is great to see volunteers working to protect public health and the environment through responsible watershed management.”

The Friends are helping not just the lake but the Doan downstream, where it flows through University Circle to Lake Erie, and, in a modest way, our challenged planet. Says Spaeth, “One small thing we individuals can do is making the most of the land we steward.”

For more about the Friends of Lower Lake, see their Facebook page, at [tinyurl.com/4wtwstwh](https://www.tinyurl.com/4wtwstwh).

“It’s amazing what a small group can do over time if we stick with it.”

–Greg Van Niel, Friends of Lower Lake

New to the neighborhood

Why Gene Rogers made his move and landed on Larchmere

Story and photo by Chris Ball

Gene Rogers rented in Cleveland Heights for 30 years before moving to Kendall Road off Larchmere in December. The Oberlin native, 68, works full time at Medical Mutual and part time at Whole Foods. Over omelettes at Big Al’s Diner, the pickleball player explained his leap across the border.

Q: What brought you to Larchmere?

A: I saw an ad on Zillow for this house on Kendall, and it looked really nice. I kind of dragged my feet and waited a couple of days before I responded to it, and I thought it’s got to be gone by now. I didn’t do the Zillow application, I cut to the chase and texted the guy, and he responded right away. ... So I went to see it and thought this is awesome, I’ll take it.

Q: Is it upstairs or down?
It’s the first floor of a house. I’ve got a garage, my own laundry, front porch, back porch.

Q: And you’re steps away from the action.

Right. It’s a 30-second walk to Academy Tavern. I’ve heard good things about this neighborhood. I moved in December. I wasn’t happy with my last place. I was paying way too much rent.

Q: You lived in a Berkshire Road apartment for 30 years?

Yes. I went through a lot of owners, and the current owners weren’t taking care of the place very well. My apartment needed work, and it became a real pain to get them to do anything.

Q: So you moved to Hampshire Road for five months?

Yes, it was an upstairs of a house. I paid \$1,300 a month, and the parking wasn’t good. It was a bad idea to move in there to start with.

Q: How did you get out of your lease?

It was only month to month. So that was in my favor.

Q: What have you heard about Larchmere?

That it’s a trendy neighborhood. A nice area.

Q: What do you like about it?

I haven’t been here in the summertime yet. But it’s only a 10-minute walk to Shaker Square and the farmers market every Saturday.

Q: Do you use the Rapid Transit?

I don’t really need the Rapid. But I probably will at some point. Another reason I moved here is it takes 10 minutes off my travel time to work. My office just moved to Brooklyn. So now I don’t have to deal with Cleveland Clinic traffic coming and going out of Cleveland Heights. And it cuts 10 minutes off my trip to Oberlin. I go back to Oberlin about every week.

Q: What else have you discovered on Larchmere?

I don’t drink, so I don’t go to Academy Tavern a lot. My nephew [Chad Hoffman] recommended Poppy’s because he played music there once or twice. He plays solo guitar. I haven’t been to Poppy’s yet. It’s on my list.

Q: Have you heard about PorchFest?

I have not been to it. I hear it’s awesome. I’ll be smack in the middle of it. I’m planning on that. I was looking at a recent map, and somebody was right next door to me on their porch.

Q: Are you glad to be in the city of Cleveland.

I’m actually in Shaker Heights. The Zillow ad said Cleveland, but when I signed the lease, it said Shaker Heights, and I was like, what? Shaker Heights?

Q: You know it has a higher tax rate?

Yeah, that’s kind of a downer. But the services are better. ... I’ll be OK, I guess. I’m right on the border. I think I’m going



to like this neighborhood. I’ve moved twice in the last year. I don’t want to move again for a long time.

Q: You prefer renting?
A couple years ago I was thinking of buying a condo. That was the right time to buy. But I missed the window, interest rates went up. I decided to hold off on that. Oh well.

Q: But you pay less rent now?
Yes. My rent’s locked in for the next year. I think I’m going to like it here.

This interview was lightly edited for length and clarity.



Gene Rogers stands on the front porch of Kendall Road house he moved to in December. >>



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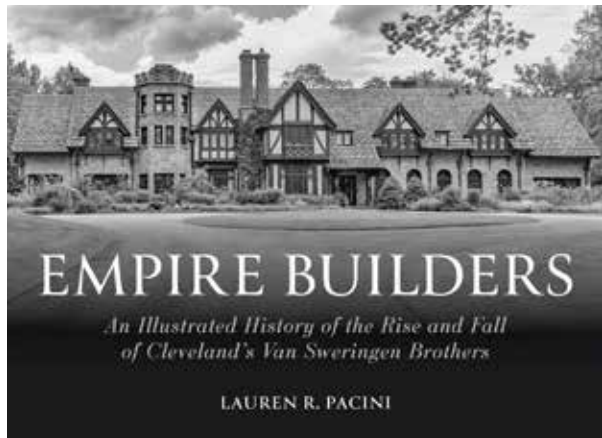
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Lauren Pacini has written “Empire Builders” about the Van Sweringens, who created Shaker Square, Shaker Heights, and much more.



Book Cover, Courtesy of Indiana University Press

Books

‘Empire Builders’ examines stunning rise and fall of reclusive, inseparable Van Sweringen brothers

By Grant Segall

It’s hard to portray recluses. But Shaker Heights historian and photographer Lauren R. Pacini has tried to draw out the Vans.

In his forthcoming “**Empire Builders: An Illustrated History of the Rise and Fall of Cleveland’s Van Sweringen Brothers**” (Indiana University Press), Pacini chronicles Oris Paxton (O.P.) and Mantis James (M.J.) Van Sweringen’s rise from poverty to create Shaker Square, Shaker Heights, the Terminal Tower complex, and the nation’s biggest railroad. Then their empire imploded.

“Against all odds,” Pacini writes, “the brothers’ boundless vision became a reality. That meteoric rise and the brothers’ unending drive for success ultimately set them up for catastrophic failure.”

The book contains many historical and new photos of the Vans’ creations in Shaker, Cleveland and beyond.

O.P. was a sluggish but visionary salesman who charmed fortunes from investors. M.J. was smaller, quicker, and rather paternalistic, making sure Big Brother had tickets, money and luggage for chasing his dreams.

The Vans mostly spent their rare time off with their two sisters, who shared their South Park Boulevard mansion, and with two close friends, who shared their Daisy Hill estate in Hunting Valley. The Vans

slept in twin beds in a shared bedroom in each home and in Terminal Tower. A young M.J. dated women, but O.P. was never known to socialize one on one.

Once, when M.J. was away, O.P. stayed with friends Benjamin and Daisy Jenks (perhaps Daisy Hill’s namesake). The wife later wrote that M.J. returned and disapproved. “Shaking his little blond head, he told me I had been too nice to his brother and would thank me not to pay him more attention. I ... advised him when his brother wanted to stay another night to remain and sleep in the bed next to him. This he did, and we almost never saw one brother without the other.”

Born in Wayne County, the Vans were the fourth and fifth surviving children of an alcoholic Civil War veteran and a mother who’d die young from tuberculosis. Soon the boys were hustling real estate in Cleveland and making wealthy contacts. In an interview, Pacini says, “They made a policy of working with other people’s money.”

They assembled Shaker Heights with strict building codes and mysteriously issued permits. They admitted at least one Jew, retailer Salmon Halle, and one Black, Dr. E. A. Bailey. But the Baileys fled from bricks, stones, fire, and frisking by police. Only in the 1950s did Blacks return, facing more violence.

The Vans ran a transit line to Shaker from a new station downtown, topped by

the 52-story Terminal Tower, then the tallest building outside New York City. Their Nickel Plate Railroad accumulated nearly 30,000 miles of tracks. Their estimated personal worth reached at least \$140 million (or \$2.6 billion today) and their empire’s worth at least \$3 billion (or \$54.8 billion today).

During the Depression, the Vans kept borrowing and building. Eventually came bankruptcies and an auction. O.P. reportedly said, “I’m sorry it had to be done this way. I’d rather have paid the bill.”

In 1935, while O.P. and Daisy Jenks held his hands, the 54-year-old M.J. died of hypertensive myocarditis. O.P. later said, “God, how I miss that brother of mine!” Every morning, he turned M.J.’s desk lamp on. Every night, he turned it off.

Eleven months later, a train bumped the surviving railroader’s parked one. A few hours later, the 57-year-old died of coronary thrombosis. The Vans were buried together in a Lake View Cemetery plot marked “Brothers.”

Historian Pacini came from New Hampshire to Cleveland Heights at age 10 so his father, the Rev. Richard, could pastor Fairmount Presbyterian Church. The son worked mostly in IT before retiring. He has created or contributed to eight books on local history.

“*Empire Builders*” comes out June 4 at \$45. For details, see artographypress.com.

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Ralph Valentino, interim commander of the Cleveland Police Department's Fourth District, describes police efforts during a special community meeting on safety issues at Cummins Hall on Feb. 29.

Crime

Thieves damage but don't steal Huntington ATM on Buckeye Rd.

Story and photo by Chris Ball

Efforts to reopen the Huntington Bank branch on Buckeye Road took a hit April 16 when thieves tried to steal the ATM.

The front of the ATM was heavily damaged, but the robbers failed to remove it or take any cash, said Ralph Valentino, interim commander of the Cleveland Police Department's Fourth District.

Several news media incorrectly reported that the ATM was stolen, including the Plain Dealer and Scene Magazine. Removing it would be difficult, Valentino said. "You could drive a car into the wall," he said, and still not shake the ATM loose.

The ATM was back in service April 18. Bank officials, who cited rising crime when they closed the rest of the branch Feb. 9., issued a statement: "We're still working with the city in the hopes of finding a solution that will allow the branch to open again." The branch opened in 2003.

The attempted theft took place at 10 p.m. "I can't believe we didn't get an alarm from the bank," Valentino said. A passerby reported the damage to police at 4 a.m.

Security cameras captured the incident, and police have issued warrants for three

suspects. One of them went right up to a camera. "You can clearly see his face," Valentino said. "That wasn't too smart."

The incident was a blessing in disguise, said Robert Render III, president of the East 128th Street block club. "Sooner or later, they're going to catch them," he said. "And it's a federal offense, so they're going to do federal time. You've got to be awfully desperate to try to rob an ATM with two big cameras right there."

Render sees a silver lining. "More than likely, these bad actors have records as long as my arm and probably have been involved in other robberies, home invasions, stickups. And if you take them off the streets, in the long run that's a good thing for the community. And they went to all that effort and didn't get anything except get ready to go to jail. To me, that was the upside."

Render is looking forward to Aug. 9, when bank officials said they would reconsider the closing. "That rarely happens," he said. "Usually if a bank puts a sign on the door, they're gone."

A grassroots petition drive helped, he said. "The pressure was brought to bear by City Hall and all these other people that got involved when we got almost 800 signatures in a month. Then we got great media coverage, and that helped."

Visitors Center opens doors on southeast quadrant

Continued from page 1

an undisclosed "complementary" retail business – sharing the 2,500 to 3,000 square feet most recently occupied by Biggby Coffee, which closed at the end of 2022 after three and a half years.

Akil Hameed, broker and CEO of FASS Real Estate Services, the property manager for Shaker Square, said Psychopomp Coffee remained the likely successor to Biggby, and before that, Dewey's, which enjoyed a 15-year run leading up to the owner's retirement.

The Shaker Heights-based Psychopomp has been operating out of a trailer on the square, recently moving around to different quadrants as ongoing construction projects dictate.

The complementary business sharing the space would help sustain the coffee shop, which would otherwise need vast sales just to stay afloat on its own, Hameed said.

New tenants
Directly across North Moreland Boulevard in the northwest quad, Hameed expected an announcement soon about a new restaurant opening in the former Balaton's, which closed in late January 2022.

"They'll have a liquor license, but it will be family-friendly, and we're expecting it will generate a lot of interest, as it has already," in terms of curiosity over the renovations, the Shaker grad Hameed said.

Already open in the old T-Mobile space on the corner near the Visitors Center is

Kamron Kahn Photography. The staffing agency Employment Specialists International (ESI Inc.) is also moving into the square from nearby on Shaker Boulevard, Hameed said.

Officials with BBC announced earlier that office space had been

leased in Shaker Square by the Greater Cleveland Urban Film Festival and Perry House Photography.

The Shaker Square Dave's Market has also signed a five-year extension on its lease.

Helen Simpson Park

Also near Shaker Square, Cleveland City Councilwoman

Deborah Gray announced in early May that two "blue light" security cameras were installed in Helen Simpson Park on South Moreland Boulevard.

The cameras will tie in to the Cleveland Department of Public Safety's network after Gray obtained the funding in the city budget this year.

"This fits together with the overall safety work that is going on in our community," said Meg Weingart, co-founder of the Morelands Group, advocating for the residential apartment corridor of the Shaker Square community since 2021.

The Morelands Group earlier received a \$25,000 discretionary grant from the St. Luke's Foundation to help the organization to continue its work in preserving and protecting the Shaker Square neighborhood.

"We are excited to welcome everyone to the Visitors Center."

- BBC Executive Director Joy Johnson

Burten, Bell, Carr

Plans for seven fun outdoor summer events are starting to take shape

By Chris Ball

Summer just isn't complete without fun outdoor events. They've dwindled in recent years due to COVID, crime and other factors, but they're coming back.

The newly minted Summer Health and Wellness Series is bringing seven events to different nearby locations from June through September. The goal is to create enjoyable spaces in the neighborhood for residents, said Robert Edwards, community engagement coordinator for Burten, Bell, Carr Development Inc. (BBC).

"I don't think there are enough times that residents get together around positive things," he said. "It's often around safety or stuff going on in the neighborhood, and that creates a negative perception."

Edwards, a 2016 Heights High graduate, joined BBC in December 2022.

"As I've door-knocked and engaged with the community over the last year, I've realized neighbors don't know each other as much as they used to, and I think COVID played a big part in that, but I remember when I was young, I could go ask my neighbors for butter, and we all knew each other, and I don't think there's a sense of that anymore."

Edwards hopes the concert series also will help mend the age gap between seniors and younger residents, he said. "There's just a disconnect there that I've noticed over the past year, so really just creating connectivity among residents is the biggest goal of the Summer Health and Wellness Series, for sure."

Each event will have a different style and be hosted by the closest community organization. Renovare will bring its documentary storytelling project to Artha Woods Park (see story on Page 5). Britt

Oval will feature a family-friendly movie night. Details are still being finalized for all of the events. Putting the series together is challenging.

"Our Achilles heel is we're always scrambling to find funding," said Robert Render III, president of East 128th Street block club, which will host an event at Amos Norwood Park.

"What you really want is a corporate entity to come in and say, 'This is something we could identify with,' and that stabilizes you and gives you an anchor," Render said. "We've never had one."

But he's not giving up. "If we don't do it this year, you try for next year," he said.

Edwards has been submitting applications to the city, which allocates \$1,200 per event. That money comes with a lot of restrictions, he said.

"You can only really get tables, chairs, porta-potties. You can't do any food with it, which makes it really difficult, and you can't pay someone to come and perform, it has to be just the sound system, and you have to put the language and verbiage a certain way so it can pass through the city," Edwards said.

And so the search for additional funding continues. "Especially when you want to do something fun, you need food and music," he said.

Planning events is a lot of work, but Edwards said he enjoys it. "I didn't really figure out my job until earlier this year, because there's so many moving parts, and every initiative has a different role for me to play, which took me a while. But it's been a blessing to be here. I love working for the community, so I'm happy I found this work, for sure."



2024 SUMMER HEALTH AND WELLNESS SERIES

SUNDAY, JUNE 9, 11 A.M. TO 5 P.M.:
Rock the Blocks, Larchmere Blvd.

SATURDAY, JUNE 15: Juneteenth,
at Ubuntu Park, 10299 Shaker Blvd.

SATURDAY, JULY 27: Amos Norwood
Park, hosted by the East 128th Street
Block Club.

SUNDAY, AUG. 4: John Hay Reunion at
Artha Woods Park on Woodstock Rd.

SATURDAY, AUG. 10, 1 TO 4 P.M.:
Helen Simpson Park, Buckeye and
South Moreland, Morelands Festival,
hosted by the Morelands Group.

SATURDAY, AUG. 17, 2 TO 4 P.M.:
Documentary Songwriting Concert
at Artha Woods Park, hosted by
New Image Block Club.

SATURDAY, SEPT. 7, 6 TO 8 P.M.:
Movie Night at Britt Oval.



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Up and Down the Boulevard



Barroco is back



Poppy's bike rack



Literary Cleveland



Batauqui's future home

Photo credits: Andrea C. Turner

By Andrea C. Turner

Barroco is back

Food lovers seem thrilled that Hola Tacos switched back to Barroco Arepa bar in April. **Juan Vergara**, who originally opened Barroco at 12718 Larchmere Blvd. in 2017, told Scene Magazine he always considered the switch to Hola as a temporary one. No longer will this location serve lunch, but its later operating hours are intended to coincide with a new speakeasy-type cocktail lounge under renovation in the adjacent property, formerly Dancing Sheep. The bar will serve cocktails, small plates and wood-fired pizza. Vergara expects to open the club this fall with an entrance inside Barroco as well as street side.

On the move

Work continues on Batauqui's new home two doors to the west at the former St. Paul's Evangelical Church, 12624 Larchmere Blvd., with the move now slated for this fall. "We are looking forward to staying in the neighborhood," co-owner **Carla Batista** recently told Scene Magazine. The new space will expand to seat 110 people, including space at the bar and a smaller front patio. The lower level will be reserved for private parties for weddings and the like, as well as live entertainment.

Getting crafty

Unleash your inner crafting genius at one of this summer's First Friday Craft Nights from 5 to 8 p.m. at Fiddlehead Gallery, 12736 Larchmere Blvd. Materials are provided for a \$10 fee, and all supplies are upcycled and repurposed. That way, you can feel better about saving the planet by creating sustainable art. On June 7, make a mini faux terrarium. On

July 5, create mixed media birds. On Aug. 2, construct driftwood mobiles, and on Sept. 6, dream up a mixed media landscape. Craft supply donations are welcome. Call ahead (216.231.9400) to reserve your spot.

Keep those rags and machines hummin'

Clear away the winter salt and spring pollen at the car wash at BP's gas station at 13165 Larchmere Blvd. — now back in service after a renovation.

Writing camps

Budding and established writers can sign up with Literary Cleveland, 13002 Larchmere Blvd., for summer month-long camps for novelists (June), poets (July), and nonfiction (August). They are intended for writers looking for support, inspiration, productivity, and community. Each camp features weekly online writing and craft sessions, along with Saturday in-person field trips around town. Visit litcleveland.org for details.

Book it

Author Alley, Loganberry Books' signature summer event, celebrates Local Voices from Aug. 9 to 11. The weekend kicks off at 13015 Larchmere Blvd. with a ticketed author reception Friday, followed by the book fair Saturday and Sunday with local writers, author signings and readings.

The first-ever Book Club Open House takes place Sunday, Sept. 29. Bring your book club friends to mingle, shop and learn about great books. Open to all kinds of book clubs — casual neighborhood and community groups, formal clubs hosted by organizations and institutions, or individuals wishing to connect with a club. Come socialize and take advantage of the discounts or host a table to recruit new members.

While cats **Alice** and **Tiger** still happily greet customers, Loganberry's beloved 16-year-old cat **Otis** passed away April 7. Loganberry has chosen Book Industry Charitable Foundation as a worthy donation recipient for those who wish to commemorate his life. The nonprofit is dedicated to assisting booksellers in need. Honor booksellers with a contribution in tribute to Otis at bincfoundation.org.

Closed for business

The thrift store MfitXchange permanently closed its doors at 12721 Larchmere Blvd. in March. But next-door neighbor Karla Henderson of Monarch Boutique, 12723 Larchmere Blvd. (curated vintage and resale clothing and home goods store for men and women), continues to welcome customers Wednesdays through Saturdays from noon to 5 p.m.

New officers elected

Tina Haldiman and **Lisa Hopps** were elected officers of the Larchmere Community Association at its April 10 general meeting. Haldiman, co-owner of Larchmere Fire Works, becomes second vice president, replacing **Ben Stein**. Hopps, a Kendall Road resident, is the new secretary, taking over from **Nicole Thomas**. **Diane Pride-Mays** returns for her third and term-limited final year as president, while **Carol Mitchem** stays on as first vice president, as does **Susan Price** as treasurer. All five officers were elected without opposition.

Party at Poppy

With a Mother's Day brunch under their belt and wedding season underway, Poppy, 12502 Larchmere Blvd., offers an opportunity for couples to host bridal showers, wedding rehearsal dinners and

other celebrations for intimate friends and family, as well as larger groups. If you're planning to savor an informal dinner, why not ride your bike? You can park it in the carrot-shaped bike rack out front.

Now hiring

As of this writing, Scorpacciata Pasta Co. is hiring servers, bartenders, hosts, food runners and other kitchen staff ahead of its planned May opening in the old Larchmere Tavern space, 13015 Larchmere Blvd. If interested, send a resume to scorpacciata@yahoo.com. Chef and owner **Peter Reuter** will prepare handmade pasta dishes created with local, seasonal ingredients. Meanwhile, the restaurant has closed its stand at Van Aken Market Hall.

Everybody sing

Try your singing voice at Karaoke every Saturday evening from 7 to 9 p.m. at UnBar Café, 12635 Larchmere Blvd. Or celebrate National French Fry Day on Saturday, July 13. Grab a bite (with a side of fries) from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Walk with neighbors

Witness the dawn and the rising sun with neighbors in a new walking group, "Out and About, Walk the Neighborhood." This informal group meets every Tuesday at 7 a.m. for anyone interested in a long or short walk, depending on the participants' preferences. So far, groups of two to eight have taken walks with different routes each week, lasting about an hour, depending on weather and personal schedules. To learn more and find out where to meet, text or call 216.269.9060 or email LarchmereCommunity@gmail.com.

Email news tips to act_one@sbcglobal.net.

Residents First

Sweeping reforms show 'great potential' to fix Cleveland housing woes

By Thomas Jewell

Since enactment of Cleveland's comprehensive building inspection reforms known as Residents First, the initiative remains a "work in progress" for Shaker Square-area housing advocates.

City Council passed the legislation in February, after representatives from the

Morelands Group gave their support in committee hearings.

"It's going to take a good three to six months to get everything in place," said Shaker Square resident Sarah Wean. "But Residents First has great potential."

Wean also feels that Cleveland Building and Housing Director Sally Martin-O'Toole will continue to do "a great deal of reorganizing" within the department.

While proposed internal inspections of one-, two- and three-family homes were eliminated from the final package by Council, Morelands Group co-founder Meg Weingart believes there is still plenty to work with.

Martin-O'Toole agrees, saying in a recent city update that "the tools in Residents First will give us the ability to address the conditions that we see

on the ground and better address outside investors who are destroying the community."

The sweeping reforms will work in tandem with the city's 2022 survey of all 167,000 parcels in Cleveland, looking for lead risks, vacancy and individual property condition.

See *Sweeping reforms show 'great potential' to fix housing woes*, page 11

Sweeping reforms show ‘great potential’ to fix Cleveland housing woes

Continued from page 10

“Residents First allows us to take a data-driven approach with a proactive stance, as opposed to a reactive or complaint-driven model, which the city has had for many decades,” Martin-O’Toole said.

As for the individual property conditions – scored with an “A-to-F” rating – Martin-O’Toole noted earlier that more than half of all vacant structures surveyed in 2022 were graded “D” or “F.”

Building and Housing Department records showed that “A-” and “B-graded”

properties fell from 78 percent to 54 percent in 2022, while “C-grade” properties rose from 16 percent to 37 percent.

“We’ve seen 52 percent of properties sold to out-of-state investors,” Martin-O’Toole said. “They are all business buyers – we’ve lost 30 percent of the home ownership on the city’s east side. This has to change.”

Under the Residents First legislation, all nonowner-occupied residential properties must be registered and current on registration

“We’ve lost 30 percent of the home ownership on the city’s east side. This has to change.”

– Sally Martin-O’Toole, Cleveland Building and Housing Director

fees in order to obtain a rental occupancy permit.

These changes will also require additional documentation, including an affidavit naming a local agent-in-charge, proof of current taxes or an established payment plan and lead-safe certification, city officials said.

Weingart also thinks the issuance of civil tickets to landlords in violation will make a big difference, rather than the city relying on criminal citations only.

“It’s going to cost the owners money if they’re not in compliance and the city can charge them daily for violations,” Weingart said.

Shaker Square Alliance Director Charles “Chip” Bromley also said the Building and Housing Department still

needs to hire many more inspectors. This includes provisions for rolling out a Lead Safe Compliance Unit for one- to three-family rental homes.

“And this is a specialty unit, where we will have lead-risk assessors available to go into these units and help landlords bring their properties up to Lead Safe standards,” Martin-O’Toole said.

“It will allow us to get control of properties that are lead risks for children and complete the blight removal job,” she said, noting that “many houses have a long way to go.”

“And we need to help link them to resources and let them know what is needed to bring their units into Lead Safe condition and help them make their units safe,” Martin-O’Toole said.



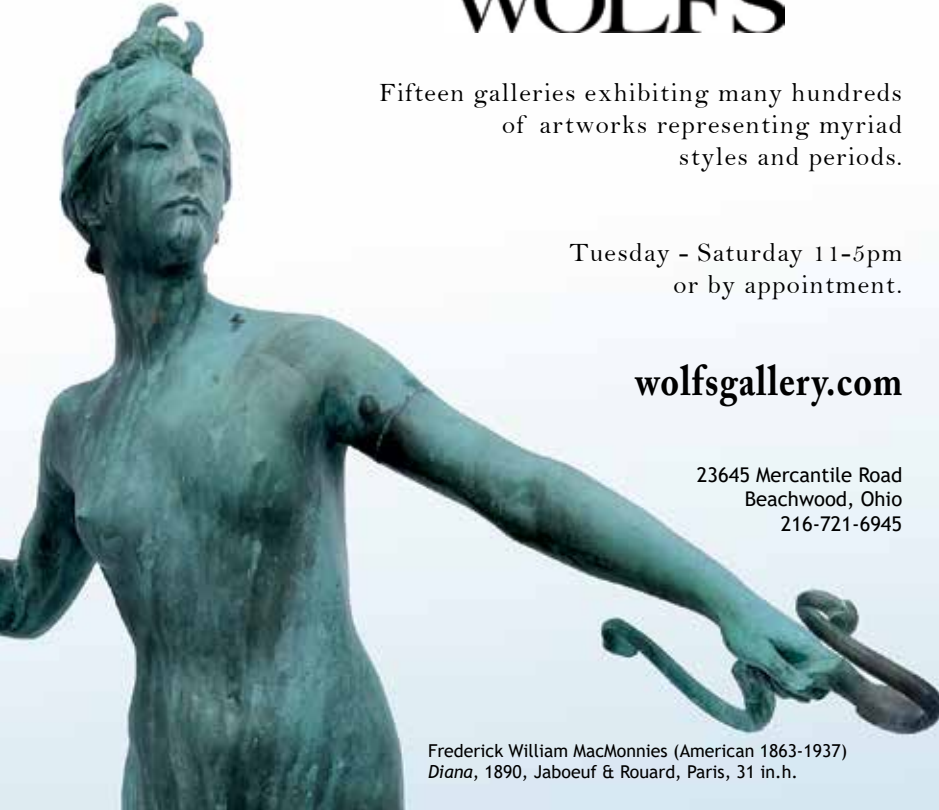
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Ronnie Sims enjoys a hot dog served by Mattie Morman during Customer Appreciation Day on April 4 at the Shaker Finance Post Office.

Shaker Finance Post Office

Grab a stamp and a bite: Postal worker gives back to regulars

Story and photo by Chris Ball

Ronnie Sims ate a hot sub and fries for lunch April 4. So he wasn’t hungry at all when he made an early afternoon stop at the Shaker Finance Post Office.

Then he saw the food. It was Customer Appreciation Day at the East 130th Street branch. Custodian Mattie Morman stood behind a table to the right of the counter, serving up hot dogs, buns, condiments, drinks, chips and cookies. All for free.

Sims was surprised but couldn’t say no to having a hot dog. It was worth it, too, he said.

“I’ve never heard of anyone doing something like this,” another impressed customer said.

Credit Pamela Taylor, lead sales associate. “I won a gift card, and I wanted to give back,” she said. The USPS rewarded her for selling an unusually large number of greeting cards. She could have spent the money on herself but

instead used it to buy decorations and food, including 75 hot dogs, for her loyal customers.

The branch closed in November 2020 after a robbery but reopened a year later after lobbying from a grassroots campaign.

“I wanted to do something for my customers because I

wanted to let them know I appreciate their business,” Taylor said. “More customers are coming in here than before.”

The event was a success, she said. “It went very well. The customers really enjoyed it.”

“I wanted to do something for my customers.”

– Pamela Taylor, lead sales associate, Shaker Finance Post Office

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