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# the SHAD Connection

FALL 2025

Vol. 49 No. 1

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

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### Ward 3 Candidates Forum

Wednesday, Sept. 3, 5:30 p.m.

The League of Women Voters hosts this event at Alpha Phi Alpha DAL Headquarters, 2820 E. 116th St. Or watch online at [tinyurl.com/Ward3Livestream](https://tinyurl.com/Ward3Livestream).

*See our election preview story, Page 8.*

### First Friday Craft Nights

5 to 8 p.m. monthly

Get crafty with expert guides. Themes are Harvest People, Sept. 5; Tin Shrines, Oct. 3; and Paper Puppets, Nov. 7. \$10 fee per craft. Fiddlehead Gallery, 12736 Larchmere Blvd.

*Fiddleheadgallery.com*

### Clothing Swap

Friday, Sept. 12, 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Donate fall and winter clothing and shop in Abide Yoga's free store. 13001 Larchmere Blvd.

*abideyogacleveland.com*

### Utility box unveiling

Saturday, Sept. 13, 11 a.m.

Shaker Arts Council presents nine newly wrapped boxes, designed by professional artists, during a ceremony at Shaker Square's southwest corner.

*Shakerartscouncil.org*

### Bike Your Neighborhood

Saturday, Sept. 13, 11 a.m.

Group rides depart from Amos Norwood Park (behind Dave's Market).

*bikeyourneighborhoodcle.org*

### Greater Cleveland

#### Urban Film Festival

Sept. 18 to 26

Four days of screenings at Atlas Cinemas on Shaker Square and a seven-day virtual exhibition.

*Gcuff.org*

### Music on the Square

Sept. 19 and 25, 6 to 8 p.m.

The Shaker Square music series wraps up the season with Stan Miller (Sept. 19) and Tommy Link (Sept. 25).

*shakersquare.com*

### Organ Concert

Sunday, Sept. 28, 4 p.m.

World renowned German organist Felix Hell performs at Our Lady of Peace, 12601 Shaker Blvd.

*olpchurch.com*

### Southern Gothic Book Club

Thursday, Oct. 16, 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Nathan Klainer leads a discussion of William Faulkner's 1930 novel "As I Lay Dying," the first of four customer-led explorations of Southern Gothic classics. Loganberry Books, 13015 Larchmere Blvd.

*Loganberrybooks.com*

### Shaker Lakes

## NEORSD plan to drain Lower Lake makes waves

Story and photos by Grant Segall

Lower Lake attracts many herons, turtles, hikers, bicyclists, and lately opinions.

"I'm appalled that it has to be abandoned," pedestrian Mary Brown said recently, after the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District's sudden call in July to turn it back into a marsh.

"The proposal looks great," said Todd Holmquist.

"As long as they keep the park, that's all we need," said Jay Khatri. "It's beautiful."

Scott Williams said he'd probably accept a compromise under consideration of a smaller pond.

For several years, NEORSD had recommended rebuilding the dam, which is at Lower Lake's western end. In July, the district called for razing it, citing new research, the rebuilt dam's obtrusive and expensive design, and a new opportunity for flood control downstream.

Three cities will decide the dam's fate: Cleveland owns the Shaker Lakes

and surrounding parkland. Shaker Heights and Cleveland Heights govern, lease and maintain them.

At press time, NEORSD was offering to spend an estimated \$37 million to remove the dam and the lake's thick, littered sediment, plus \$7 million for related work.

The suburbs might pay for a pond, pedestrian bridge and other amenities to the resulting 17-acre marsh.

The work might start in 2030.

To rebuild the dam, the suburbs would split an estimated \$43 million,

*See NEORSD plan to drain Lower Lake makes waves, page 9*



*The Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District wants to remove this spillway and the historic earthen dam beneath, turning Lower Lake back into a marsh.*

### Housing

## Landlord's delaying tactics bring court crackdown

By Christine Jindra

An unusual order handed down in August by Cleveland Housing Court Judge W. Moná Scott gives the city another significant victory in its ongoing battle to force out-of-state apartment building owners to fix health and safety hazards.

Despite an appellate court's stay of a similar ruling in January, Scott placed the owners of three Shaker Boulevard buildings, totaling 249 units, under community control, essentially probation, for four years. The decision is Scott's second order instructing the landlords to correct code violations at 12500, 12600 and 12701 Shaker, just west of the Square.

Scott ordered the owners, Shaker Heights Apartments Owner LLC (SHAO), to repair elevators, provide heat, deal with trash, mold and flooding and fix other code violations – all under the watchful eye of Chief Housing

Court Specialist Carl Kannenberg. The property manager, who lives in New York City, was ordered to meet monthly with Kannenberg to discuss ongoing repairs, which Kannenberg will supervise.

Scott also warned SHAO they might lose the buildings through bankruptcy, foreclosure or receivership. In 2022, SHAO paid \$12.4 million for them.

The buildings have 34 housing code violations and face more than \$1 million in back taxes, \$400,000 in past water and sewer bills and two ongoing city violations of \$200 a day each.

Morelands Group housing activists work to make these and other Shaker Square buildings habitable. About 20 members attended Scott's Aug. 7 hearing.

After hearing four hours of testimony, Scott called living conditions "horrible" and said owners were "disrespectful" of the residents, especially seniors, by ignoring their years-long complaints.

Anderson Waldon, 73, moved into 12701 Shaker five years ago. He testified that climbing to his fourth-floor apartment is a hardship.

"I plan my day by making only one trip up and down. I can only carry small bags of groceries and I only purchase small items from Amazon because I can't carry anything heavy," Waldon told Scott. "I wanted to go to a neighborhood festival but didn't because the elevators don't work."

About 10 times a year, he said, he has leaks and flooding in his \$810-a-month apartment.

Vincent Perez said a heart condition makes it difficult to take the stairs to her \$975-a-month fourth floor unit. Perez said the building often has no heat for months, and her bathroom light hasn't worked for two years.

Scott's August order is unusual because it's a workaround of a stay issued by Ohio Eighth District

*See Landlord's delaying tactics bring court crackdown, page 11*



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Message from the SHAD President



*Melissa Garrett-Hirsch*  
in leading this long-standing  
community organization. For nearly  
50 years, Friends of Shaker Square and  
then Shaker Square Area Development  
Corp. have existed to provide support  
to Shaker Square and its surrounding  
communities, Larchmere, Buckeye,

Melissa  
Garrett-  
Hirsch,  
the new  
President  
of SHAD,  
offers her  
heartfelt  
greetings  
and  
expresses  
excitement

Ludlow, and CHALK. Although the  
organization’s core mission remains  
unchanged, Melissa underscores the  
significance of adapting strategies and  
increasing engagement to maintain  
vitality and measurable outcomes.

**PRIORITIES** Melissa’s leadership will  
focus on four key principles:

**1 COMMUNITY VOICE:** Ensuring  
that the organization’s efforts are  
guided by the perspectives and needs  
of residents.

**2 COLLABORATION:** Partnering  
with like-minded organizations  
to amplify SHAD’s impact  
through strategic alliances.

**3 MISSION CONTINUITY:**  
Planning for effective leadership  
succession and focusing on long-term  
sustainability.

**4 EFFICIENCY AND  
EFFECTIVENESS:**  
Consolidating resources  
and initiatives to enhance  
community outcomes.

**A Call to Action**  
Melissa invites everyone to join in  
shaping a vibrant and resilient future  
for Shaker Square and its neighboring  
areas. She emphasizes that the shared  
vision, collaboration, and dedication of  
the community will be the driving force  
behind ongoing success.

**Advertise!**

**The SHAD Connection  
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For advertising rate and ad size  
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**Reserve ad space for the  
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Send artwork to Jim at  
[jgdalessandro@gmail.com](mailto:jgdalessandro@gmail.com).

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Photos by Chris Ball



*Larchmere PorchFest is beloved for its 30 bands on 30 porches, but it also makes for great people watching.  
Here are pictures from this year's event on June 28. More photos on page 10 and story on page 12.*



SHAD MISSION STATEMENT	
To provide the Shaker Square area with the leadership needed to re-imagine and foster well-maintained, diverse and vibrant neighborhoods.	
NEIGHBORHOODS	COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Apartment Corridor</li><li>• CHALK</li><li>• Drexmore/Chadbourne</li><li>• Historic Shaker Square</li><li>• Larchmere</li><li>• Ludlow</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Shaker Square</li><li>• Larchmere Blvd.</li><li>• Van Aken Plaza</li><li>• Shaker Boulevard West</li></ul>
SHAKER SQUARE AREA DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION	
<b>Officers</b> Melissa Garrett-Hirsch <i>President</i> Kristen Schmidt <i>1st Vice-President</i> Brian E. Siggers <i>2nd Vice-President</i> China Brown <i>Secretary</i> Fran Kalafatis <i>Treasurer</i>	<b>The SHAD Connection</b> is a free, nonprofit tabloid-size newspaper published by Shaker Square Area Development Corporation four times a year in September, December, March, and June. Circulation: 6,500 per issue and online at <a href="http://shad.org">shad.org</a> . Published with the support of St. Luke's Foundation.
<b>Trustees</b> Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley Peg Gallagher Theresa Pollard Hughley Karen Nelson Harriet Niles Mary Norris-Pack Terrell Pruitt heide rivchun Johnnie Spates-Greene	<b>Mailing Address</b> The SHAD Connection Shaker Square Area Development Corporation 11811 Shaker Boulevard Suite 106 Cleveland, Ohio 44120
	<b>Editor</b> Chris Ball <a href="mailto:info@shad.org">info@shad.org</a>
	<b>Design</b> Spiral Studio/ Sandra Graubard
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**YOUR MEMBERSHIP IN SHAD:**

- Maintains our charming, artistic, accessible residential community
- Preserves this architectural gem
- Encourages local businesses and restaurants to thrive
- Contributes to fun, area activities
- Provides you with discounts from our merchants

**MEMBER BENEFITS**

- Tax deductible membership fees
- The SHAD Connection mailed to your home or business
- Special discounts from participating local merchants listed here in Neighborhood Shopping Savings



SHAD Annual Meeting

A change at the top and a look to the future

By Isaac Imas

SHAD’s 48th annual meeting July 17 ushered in a change in leadership and offered a view toward a bright new phase of Shaker Square development. Outgoing SHAD Board President Mary Ann Kovach presented a slate of nominees to the SHAD board. She shouted out St. Luke’s Foundation for a grant last year to support the *SHAD Connection*. This follows an unexpected \$25,000 grant in honor of St. Lukes’ 25th anniversary in 2022. “If you see Tim Tramble, say ‘Thank you,’” Kovach said. Notable accomplishments of the last year, she said, include serving as a fiscal agent for the CHALK neighborhood on a project to create a pollinator path; partnering with Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging to create Larchmere Village, a neighborhood model that provides services to senior citizens while allowing them to live in their homes; and “just about finishing up the last bit” of digitizing past issues of the *SHAD Connection*. A standout for Kovach was the construction of a long-awaited sidewalk behind Dave’s Market. She had been lobbying for it for years (“It’s a safety issue,” she said in 2024), but at least three tries never got off the ground until SHAD board members successfully got it included in the North and South Moreland Rehabilitation Project. “Dave’s sidewalk. This was victory at last,” she said to spontaneous applause. Kovach then introduced incoming SHAD Board President Melissa Garrett-Hirsch, who thanked Kovach for her four-year leadership. Garrett-Hirsch, owner of Larchmere’s UnBar Café and Café Indigo on Shaker Square, reintroduced herself by describing the philosophy that had first prompted her to join SHAD. “I believe that community engagement is very, very important, both for the residents and the merchants,” she said. “And you guys know, I’m a business owner in both the Larchmere area as well as Shaker Square now ... so I do have a deep-seated motivation, if you will. But I also like to see the community, because I think that’s where vitality comes in.” Garrett-Hirsch announced plans for a survey to ensure that a reformulation of SHAD’s strategic plan would stay grounded in residents’ priorities. “We’re thinking about some big things, but the bigger things will come as you provide the information and input to us,” she said. The keynote speaker was Cory Riordan, neighborhood investment strategist for Cleveland Neighborhood

Progress (CNP). He discussed the Shaker Square visioning process, which he has managed since May 2024. Repairs have stabilized the Square. Now comes the task of “relaunching” it: implementing the Vision Plan and preparing for its future sale. A steering committee surveyed 1,215 community members in person, 604 online, and many others at 19 events and workshops held to gather additional feedback, he said. “Other communities throughout the country are trying to build their version of what we already have,” Riordan said. “[A] pedestrian-friendly, transit-rich environment with retail, surrounded by mixed housing.” Safety is a prerequisite, he said. Another issue is curating a diverse mix of retailers. “The existing population of the Shaker Square area can support roughly 60% of the retail square footage at Shaker Square,” Riordan said, which means the Square is over-retailed. While visitors value CVS and Dave’s Market for meeting their daily shopping needs, the Square can’t compete with the breadth of suburban shopping centers. To fill retail space unsupported by demand from residents, CNP is seeking one-of-a-kind vendors who would attract visitors. “When all of you travel to other cities, you’re not looking to go to the mall in the suburbs,” Riordan said. “You’re looking to find those trendy, quirky neighborhoods that provide something different.” The final element is shoring up affordable housing. New construction is “possible” on several vacant lots, he said. He also acknowledged “real criticism” that CNP’s focus on the Square had been too narrow. After stabilizing the Square, CNP considered how supporting neighboring residential areas fed into their mission. “If those properties are failing, how is the Square going to be supported?” Riordan said. “Because the lifeblood of the Square has always been the success of the North and South Moreland corridors and beyond.” To that end, Riordan said CNP is “working on a creative solution” to acquire 15 rundown apartment buildings near the Square, which are in foreclosure with Fannie Mae. *Imas recently moved to Cleveland after earning a bachelor’s degree in Russian Studies and Education from Oberlin College. He reported on local government, student organizations, and small businesses for the student newspaper, The Oberlin Review.*



Cory Riordan

Community organizations

Merger in the works for SHAD and Shaker Square Alliance



Photo by Chris Ball



Mary Ann Kovach, right, stepping down after four years as president of the Board of Directors of the Shaker Square Area Development Corp., passes the baton, actually a microphone, to incoming president Melissa Garrett-Hirsch at the group’s July 17 annual meeting at Our Lady of Peace’s Cummins Hall.

By Christine Jindra

A potential merger of the Shaker Square Area Development Corp. (SHAD) and the Shaker Square Alliance is under discussion in hopes of amplifying community support for the ongoing rejuvenation of Shaker Square, Larchmere and Buckeye neighborhoods. Over the past three years, the two well-respected grassroots organizations quietly considered merging. The idea gained traction recently as Melissa Garrett-Hirsch prepared to become president of the nearly 50-year-old SHAD and did what she described as “due diligence” on the merger. Garrett-Hirsch, owner of UnBar Café on Larchmere Boulevard and Café Indigo on Shaker Square and a technology manager for Progressive Insurance, replaced Mary Ann Kovach, who led the group for four years. Chip Bromley, Alliance director and founder of the 10-year-old activist group, sent a merger letter of intent this spring, and the SHAD executive board recently endorsed the idea, Garrett-Hirsch said at an August Alliance meeting. SHAD’s membership will have to vote on the merger, she said. The merger would be a way to attract new, younger and more active members, add board members, leverage volunteer skills of residents, work with existing organizations on the region’s redevelopment, attract more support and funding for the neighborhoods and develop a legacy plan, she said. “We want the membership to be visible, active, intentional,” Garrett-Hirsch said. The tagline will be “Many neighborhoods, one community.” Bromley said the two groups will work together on a project or two, possibly redevelopment of the Moreland Theater on Buckeye Road, and, if all goes well, the merger is likely. They have cooperated in the past. Over the past decade, both groups lobbied Cleveland Housing Court to stop the demolition of three properties on Larchmere near East 127th Street and turn them over to a new developer to rehabilitate. Some of that space is now UnBar, Bromley said. The combined group will be a merger of equals, with a new name and purpose statement, Garrett-Hirsch

said. She hopes to keep SHAD’s bylaws because of its nonprofit status, which the Alliance doesn’t have. It operates through Organize! Ohio. Bromley is a huge presence in the Shaker Square area, she said, and his legacy needs to be preserved. “He can help us engage with the federal community,” Garrett-Hirsch said. “Chip has brokered relationships; he has most of the connections. He can make a phone call and the Federal Reserve will call back. He has a reputation and level of credibility that is unparalleled.” Bromley, a longtime fair housing advocate, has led several community efforts to keep bank branches open, most notably last year pressuring Huntington Bank to reopen its Buckeye branch. He, along with SHAD and other local groups, also helped persuade the U.S. Post Office to reopen its East 130th Street branch. SHAD has largely been an advocacy and informational group – publishing the quarterly newspaper the *SHAD Connection* and acting as a liaison in the Shaker Square community – after it lost its funding and status as a community development corporation a dozen years ago. Cleveland Neighborhood Progress and Burten, Bell, Carr Development Inc. now have those roles. The merged group could hire a person or an agency to help turn Larchmere into an arts district, Garrett-Hirsch said as an example. A start is a \$16,000 grant SHAD received from Neighborhood Connections, said Fran Kalafatis, the Alliance’s facilitator and a SHAD board member. All the funds are going to City Architecture to develop an ironworks lighting template for use throughout the Shaker Square area, with each neighborhood able to personalize the design. “Imagine if we could light up the whole area from the Opportunity Corridor to Shaker Square with a distinct look that would tell people this is a lively district for the arts and restaurants,” Kalafatis said.

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The SHAD Connection Fall 2025 3



# Heard Around the Square

Story and photo by Margaret Simon



*Making a fashion statement.* **Fashions By Fowler** clothing boutique has moved across the Square, from space in the northwest quadrant of Shaker Square to a smaller space in the southeast quadrant. Owners **Tracy** and **Renay Fowler** will still provide their personalized service and dedication to “Keeping Your Pretty.” Shaker Square is happy to welcome back Luchita’s along with the new Coyoacán Taqueria. Congratulations to Shaker High senior **Rubin Harris**, winner of a National Merit LPL Financial Scholarship, a corporate-sponsored National Merit Scholarship Award. And how appropriate that he plans to study finance in college. Shaker super swimmer and swim team captain **Anna Kuhel** will swim at Denison this fall, and SHHS’s football standout **Trey McNutt** will play for the University of Oregon. This year marked the 17th anniversary of the Maltz Museum’s Stop the Hate program. Kudos to the young writers recognized for their essays, including Shaker Heights High School 10th grader **Addison**

**Captain;** Laurel School eighth and ninth graders **Lyla Levin** and **Sophia Tsuang;** and Hathaway Brown seventh grader **Asha R. Bauer.** More kudos to winners of the 47th Annual Marilyn Bianchi Kids’ Playwriting Festival, SHHS 12th graders **Evan Mears** for “FORMY” and **Jayaira Johnson** for “My Brother’s Keeper.” Mears’ play will be performed at Dobama Theatre June 5, 6, 7, and 8. Another famous winner of the contest is **Carter Bays**, who created the long-running TV show “How I Met Your Mother.” Shaker’s **Dr. Lisa Damour**, renowned psychologist, best-selling author, and leading expert on adolescent and young adult development, spoke on the *Science of Happiness* to the 2025 graduating class at John Carroll University. *Milestones.* Architectural pioneer **Robert Madison** celebrated his 102nd birthday, and **Bobbie Davis**, aka “Mr. Call & Post,” was honored by the historic Black newspaper for his five decades of service. ... Parkland Drive’s **Jeri Chaikin** retired after 24 years of managing day-to-day operations for the city of Shaker Heights. ... **Danielle Sydnor**, a Normandy Road resident, has been elected to lead the President’s Council, an engine for Black business growth. Her goal is to champion African-American businesses in Northeast Ohio to help create generational wealth for the Black business community. ... **William McRae** has been appointed to the Shaker City Civil Service Commission. ... **Mario O. Bynum** has been appointed to the Shaker Library Board. ... SHHS grad **Jennie Wallace** welcomed a son, **River Byron Wallace**, and reports that her daughter, **Talia**, is getting used to having a baby brother. Happy grandparents **Jan** and **Byron Wallace** live on Southington. Shaker Heights began Drop-Off

Composting last spring. Very Square folks can drop off their food waste at nearby Boulevard and Onaway elementary schools and at the Shaker Library on Van Aken, where they can check out books about the environment. Congratulations to two of the 2025 Cleveland Arts Prize winners: poet and educator **Ali Black**, a Moreland area resident; and Grammy-winning guitarist **Jason Vieaux**, a Larchmere resident. Winthrop Road’s **Joanie** and **Tom Adler** have donated \$3.5 million to UH Rainbow Babies & Children Hospital. Their generous gift will help to expand bereavement services for parents who have lost a pregnancy, infant, or child. *Reader Reveal.* SHHS grad **Dr. Dan Ratner** has a new book, “Crushing Doubt: An Advanced System for Mind-Body Pain and Symptom Relief,” released in early February. Hear him on his YouTube podcast, Crushing Doubt. ... **Roschelle Ogbuji** lost three daughters in a Shaker Heights house fire, and her book, “Good Grief, Great Grace: Finding Light After Darkness: A Journey Through Unimaginable Loss,” offers words of comfort to others facing unimaginable loss. **Donna Salaam**, research assistant at Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging, is recruiting 120 African-American families dealing with memory loss to help them plan for the future. Call 216.791.8000. On Sept. 14, 1814, Francis Scott Key wrote “The Star-Spangled Banner.” On this date in 2025, the Shaker Lakes Nature Center sponsors its annual **Hike and Run** to benefit its programs. Enter the run or bring your banner and wave your favorite runner on to victory. Want to help? Go to [volunteer@shakerlakes.org](mailto:volunteer@shakerlakes.org). Join the Shaker Historical Society on Friday, Sept. 26, for its **Shaker Soirée: Gala in the Grove.** Enjoy live music, an autumn-inspired menu from Bon

Vivant Catering, and signature cocktails. (For ticket prices, call 216.921.1201.) Then return Saturday, Sept. 27, for AppleFest, a family-friendly day of history, culture, and fall harvest fun. Enjoy live music, craft demonstrations, walking tours, seasonal refreshments, and engaging activities for all ages. Congratulations to Shaker Schools Alumni Hall of Fame Class of 2025: **Judge Adam B. Abelson**, Class of 2001; **Joanie and Tom Adler**, Class of 1958; **Cyrena Davis**, Class of 1993; **Andrew Geronimo**, Class of 2001; **Quiana Howard**, Class of 1998; **Melinda Kassen**, Class of 1974; **Robyn Minter Smyers**, Class of 1987, and **Brigadier General Jeff Watkins**, Class of 1985. A dinner and induction celebration will be held at 6 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 11, at the Shaker Heights Country Club. For ticket information, call 216.295.4200. **Kym Whitley**, a 1979 SHHS grad, appears in the new film “Happy Gilmore 2.” As families take to the road this fall, they may be forced to deal with the whiny complaint, “He’s on my side of the car.” Lytle Road’s **Ellen Velez** and her friend **Sarah Filipovitz** have an answer: FlipFort (which has nothing to do with fingers). The “fort” is a unique tent that serves as a place to nap or as a way to separate truculent travelers. For details, visit [flipfort.com](http://flipfort.com). When she isn’t developing new products, Velez is manager of The Gathering Place Warehouse. Finally, as you stroll the Square and enjoy a cup of coffee or tea at **Café Indigo**, read Ohio! I was privileged to serve as a reader/judge in the Fiction category for the 2025 Ohioana Awards. And keep your ears open for me. *Email news items to [heardaroundthesquare@gmail.com](mailto:heardaroundthesquare@gmail.com).*

## Dining

# Two new Mexican restaurants under one roof combine new and classic

By Christine Jindra

The two restaurants that opened recently at Shaker Square – Coyoacán Taqueria & Brew and La Casa de Luchita’s – embody the philosophy of the Square’s revival: A New Era for a Cleveland Classic. Coyoacán is the new – a fast-casual Mexican concept for takeout or sitdown dining that opened in June, by longtime chef Rey Galindo and his nephew Jorge Sierra and daughter Elisa Maria Galindo. The restaurant, in the former Balaton restaurant space, offers customizable tacos, burritos, tortas, empanadas and bowls and seats 12. La Casa de Luchita’s, next door, is the classic – a nod to the legendary Luchita’s chain started by Galindo’s mother in 1982 and closed completely in 2022. Galindo was chef for two decades at the Luchita’s once near the former Colony Theatre. The reinvented Luchita’s menu offers a dozen classics from the original menu, such as chiles rellenos, tamales, queso fundido, flautas, enchiladas and wet burritos. However, the exciting draw for La Casa de Luchita’s is a rotating selection – every three months – of regionally influenced dishes from Mexico’s 32 states, all vastly different from beans-and-rice Tex-Mex offerings at so many Mexican restaurants. Galindo plans to open a Mexican brewery this year at the back of the restaurant and eventually open new Coyoacán restaurants in Ohio and beyond.

The name “Coyoacán” means “place of the coyotes” in the Aztec language and is also the name of his hometown neighborhood in Mexico City. Galindo plans to open just one more Casa de Luchita’s, hopefully in Lakewood near the original West 117th Street namesake. Décor at the 40-seat Luchita’s at the Square is bold, painted a rich blue in honor of the favorite color of Mexican artist Frida Kahlo, also from Coyoacán. A large self-portrait Kahlo print is on a wall near the 18-seat bar. A traditional Day of the Dead altar honoring his late mother, Maria de la Luz Galindo, and late older brother Jorge is in a corner, with cultural items including candles, bowls of white rice and black beans and cardboard skulls. Luchita’s debut menu is from the Oaxacan state and includes chicken mole in green sauce, sea bass in almond mole, and pork shank in three types of dry peppers. The menu is on La Casa de Luchita’s Facebook page and soon will be on its website. Galindo says dishes from Puebla, then Veracruz, will be highlighted in the next two quarters with recipes drawn from his travels across Mexico, working with local restaurants to perfect each dish. Galindo expected approval of his liquor license in mid-August, just after the *SHAD Connection’s* deadline. The bar menu will include margaritas and craft Mexican beers from his partner brewpub,

Compass Rose Brewery in Raleigh, North Carolina. Once his brewery gets the go-ahead, Galindo will produce beer in four microbrewery tanks he imported from Mexico. He is also working on federal approval, hopefully next year, for his own brand of mezcal, to be made in Oaxaca, for the margaritas. Two outdoor patios are planned – one outside Coyoacán along North Moreland Boulevard; the other outside of the Luchita’s entrance. The Square’s owners and several Cleveland commissions first must approve the plans. Coyoacán ([coyoacanoh.com](http://coyoacanoh.com)) is open daily from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. at 13133 Shaker Square. 216.528.0030. Luchita’s hours are 4 to 9 p.m. daily, 13129 Shaker Square. Lunch hours are eventually planned. **Finally! Batuqui moves:** The iconic Brazilian restaurant has set Sept. 2 for its move two doors west to a former church and the former A Cultural Exchange at 12624 Larchmere Blvd. Owners Carla Batista and Gustavo Nogueira worked for a year creating a serene open space restaurant, expanding the seating to 140 with a first-floor dining room and downstairs dining room and event space. A new Brazilian market has a separate entrance.



Jorge Sierra Galindo, Coyoacán co-owner, crafts a custom burrito behind a glass barrier bearing the restaurant’s logo, which he designed.



Rey Galindo, Coyoacán co-owner, patrols the kitchen on opening day June 10.



In Memoriam

By Grant Segall



Photo courtesy of Larry Albert family

Larry Albert often stopped by his tenants’ stores at Shaker Square and made suggestions. “You know, your windows are dirty,” Nancy Silverman of Plantscaping would hear from Albert, who owned the Square with his wife, the former Maureen “Steve” Stephens, from 1978 to 2000. “You need bigger plants.” As Silverman recalls, “He’d want to rearrange everything.” She liked some of his ideas, such as putting together bouquets up front. She ignored others, and “he’d absolutely let them go.” The widowed Albert died March 25 at home in Shaker Heights at age 91. Merchants recall him as tall, slim, fit, dapper, meticulous, gruff, kind, handy with a pocket notepad and devoted to the Square, the Alberts’ only commercial property. Speculation holds that they had slim profits and reserves, spending down to help the occupants and the complex. “Having had a lot of landlords,” says Arabica’s Carl Jones, “Larry was pretty darned good from a tenant’s perspective.” The Joe Gross Gallery’s namesake says of Albert, “You either loved him or hated him. If you got on his wrong side, he’d let you know. If you got on his good side, he’d bend over to help you out.” And maybe bend over too far. “He got stiffed plenty of times.” Gene Veronesi of Shaker Wines calls Albert the most accessible landlord he’s had. “He was compassionate. He listened.” The soft-spoken Steve was something of a buffer for the outspoken Larry. He often turned down requests at first but granted them later, admiring the seekers’ persistence. Under the Alberts, many big and

small tenants came and went. The couple favored local operators such as the North Union Farmers Market. Lawrence Albert was born in Toronto. Maureen Stephens was born in London, England. After high school, Larry became an accountant and moved to Vancouver to consult for shopping centers. Steve moved there for adventure and worked as a secretary. They met on one of their favorite sites, a tennis court. In 1971, the Alberts and their two young children took a home in Shaker Heights that the couple kept for the rest of their lives. There Steve tended parakeets, cats and a cockatiel. Albert managed the opening of Severance Center, then Great Northern. In 1978, the couple paid \$1.575 million for the historic Square’s roughly 150,000 square feet of Georgian brick commercial space. The Alberts hired more security guards, who escorted female workers to their cars at night. They helped expand the Friends of Shaker Square to about 1,200 families. They drove used Jaguars and held a British car show at the Square yearly, among other events. Like most people at the Square, the couple was patient with Richard Gildenmeister, an outgoing bookseller prone to bipolar episodes. The Alberts’ son, Braden, who’d paint and mow the Square, says his father was also patient with panhandlers. “You’re welcome to stay here as long as you want,” Albert would say. “Just please don’t bother the folks who are here to shop.” As Braden recalls, “They would absolutely abide by that, because no one else had ever treated them that well.” The Square struggled in the 1990s. The Alberts finally sold it for a sum missing from Cuyahoga County records and several news stories about the transfer. The new owners promised big improvements and soon defaulted. Now it belongs to Cleveland Neighborhood Progress and Burten, Bell, Carr Development Inc. In his free time, Albert played tennis on public courts and rooted for the Browns and the Cavs. He liked biographies, politics, jazz, opera and classical music. He was a trustee of the St. Luke’s Foundation. In retirement, he walked a few miles daily in his neighborhood and took long trips with Steve. She died on Christmas 2020. Five years later, he was buried beside her at Lake View Cemetery. Schulte Mahon-Murphy handled their arrangements.

In Memoriam

By Thomas Jewell

The late John J. “Jack” Boyle’s longstanding service and record of achievement extended well beyond a life firmly rooted in the Heights – as well as Shaker Square. Growing up in University Heights, he and his wife, Mary, raised their family in Cleveland Heights. There, in 1971 he became the first Democrat and the youngest member elected to City Council, serving into the mid-1980s. With their four children grown, they moved to the Shaker Square neighborhood in 1995, living in three different places, finally in Larchmere until his death May 22 at 85. But many lasting contributions came along the way, at the local, state, federal and even international levels. Settling in Cleveland Heights after they married in 1962, the Boyles quickly became active in efforts to improve their community, notably advocating for fair housing and integration. “This commitment to community marked the beginning of a lifetime dedicated to serving others and improving his surroundings,” son Pete Boyle said in a family statement. After his time in elected office, Boyle transitioned behind the scenes, managing campaigns for congressional, gubernatorial, and state legislative candidates. It included his wife’s election as a state representative as well as becoming the first woman commissioner in Cuyahoga County, serving three terms. There was also Ohio Gov. Richard Celeste’s successful run for his second term, with Jack serving as his campaign manager. In a statement shared by the family, Celeste called Boyle “a good friend and a wonderful community leader,” finding Jack’s “gentle but tough advice compelling whenever we would visit during my time in Columbus.” “That generosity of spirit—and the pride he radiated in Mary’s own public service journey—are vivid in my mind as I reflect with great appreciation for a life well-lived,” Celeste said. While his father’s passion for politics was strong, Pete said he balanced it with a successful professional career as a partner at the Boyle Insurance Agency (now United Agencies). There, Jack Boyle III worked alongside his father and Pete’s grandfather, John J. Boyle II.



Photo courtesy of Jack Boyle family

Also away from the political fray, Jack served as vice-chairman of the U.S. Federal Court Evaluation Committee for more than a decade. He chaired the Ohio Public Employment Advisory and Counseling Effort Commission, playing a crucial role in crafting legislation that eventually led to collective bargaining for public employees. Locally, Jack also sat on the planning commissions of both Cleveland Heights and Shaker Heights. He also held leadership roles at two prominent institutions: the City Club of Cleveland and the Cleveland International Film Festival. His dedication to human rights took him overseas as well. Appointed by President Bill Clinton in 1997, Jack served as an election supervisor for the United Nations in Bosnia in 1997. In passing a June 16 resolution honoring Boyle, Cleveland Heights Council President Tony Cuda recalled rooming with Jack in Croatia. “Then we went to Sarajevo for what was their first election in 50 years,” Cuda said of the former Yugoslavia. “Just two years after the war, over 95% of the people in Bosnia came to the polls,” Cuda said. “Wouldn’t we love to see that here in the states?” Cuda said he and Jack had a wonderful time, with Mary Boyle adding that they became “friends for life.” What could be considered Jack Boyle’s “third career” began in 1989 when he was appointed to the Board of Trustees at Cleveland State University. His tenure at CSU spanned decades, most notably as Vice President of Business Affairs and Finance. He was instrumental in executing the university’s \$500 million Master Plan. Mary Boyle remains a member of Our Lady of Peace church on Shaker Boulevard, where Jack’s funeral was held. In thanking City Council for the resolution, Mary Boyle said it could top off a “box of campaign and issue stuff.” This included “the big, fat folder Jack still had on the federal court case that Cleveland Heights took against steering by the real estate industry.”

Retail

Larchmere’s A Touch of Rain provides shelter from the storm

By Jason Novak

While storefronts may come and go, Larchmere has its share of seemingly permanent landmarks – businesses that have become anchors of the neighborhood. These stores, restaurants, and services draw customers from all over to the 10-block commercial district nestled in the historic neighborhood. One of these mainstays is A Touch of Rain Nailspa. Rain Burnside has owned and operated A Touch of Rain at 12407 Larchmere Blvd. for more than two decades. “I’ve always been interested in art and painting,” she said, “and I love being able to create art on the smaller canvas [of nails].” And while Burnside has been painting nails for others since she was 10, it is far from the only service A Touch of Rain provides. “We are a full-service hair and nail salon,” she said. “We also specialize in

diabetic foot care.” While A Touch of Rain provides services to anyone seeking a relaxing day of self-care, Burnside also has an advanced license as a Medical Nail Technician with certificates in diabetic and oncological foot care. Community is important to Burnside. “It’s well known that the key to a community has always been its nail salons and barbershops,” she said. A Touch of Rain is a hub on Larchmere. She co-sponsors the Rock the Blocks event every June and runs the event’s petting zoo, providing her own animals, including alpacas. “Yes, those are our personal animals,” Burnside said. When not providing entertainment during the annual event, the alpacas live with other animals on a farm where they provide “alpaca therapy.” Burnside said, “We take local kids to the farm and let them live farm life.” The kids

learn about the various animals and get to feed and interact with them. Enriching the lives of children is important to Burnside. In fact, she recently returned from taking 140 local children to a mental health festival in Toledo. “A lot of them had never been out of Cleveland before,” she said. Besides field trips, Burnside organizes a variety of programs with other Cleveland-area organizations. “We have a hip-hop violin program, a culinary program, and we run a boxing program with the Cleveland Rec Center and Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church,” to name a few. A Touch of Rain even provides access to mental health services. The Cleveland-area HUGS-Hands Uniting Generations operates “under the umbrella of A Touch of Rain,” Burnside said. “If you need resources, give us a call.” A Touch of Rain (216.244.7290) is



Photo by Chris Ball

*They’re not your llama. These adorably odd creatures, a staple at the Rock the Blocks festival on Larchmere every June, are alpacas, owned by A Touch of Rain.* open Tuesday to Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. A list of salon services is on its webpage at atouchofrainnailspa.com. The salon’s Facebook page provides updates to various events and programs all year.



# The first Larchmere Cultural Arts Festival blends art and community

By Kevin McLaughlin

The inaugural Larchmere Cultural Arts Festival unfolded July 11 to 13 with a dazzling mix of visual art, music, poetry, film, and community events — all rooted in the historic Cleveland neighborhood known for its creative spirit.

Conceived as a modest benefit for the Larchmere Arts gallery, the event quickly expanded into a multivenue celebration sparked by conversations among organizer Vince Robinson and collaborators Mary E. Weems, Bonnie Venable, and Rodney Carpenter.

The festival began Friday evening with an exhibition opening at UnBar Café titled “Shades of Our Hue-Man Existence,” followed by music and spoken word at Larchmere Arts, led by Robinson and Weems.

Families gathered Saturday afternoon for a hands-on African drumming workshop with Jordan R. Lee, an Oberlin College alum whose teaching career bridges generations. Actress and arts ambassador Lorie Ingram and Hue People vocalist Steven E. Boyd, both open-eared receivers of Jordan’s rhythmic wisdom, were among those who tried their hands at the djembe.

Later that day, author Nicole D. Miller led a well-attended writers workshop titled “How to Get Your Ideas from Thought to Page.”

“I thoroughly enjoyed the work shared by the participants,” Miller said. “Based on their feedback, I believe the foundational tips I gave on completing a manuscript and publishing were highly valued and needed.” She added, “This city is chock-full of talented writers just waiting to burst on the literary scene.” Miller is already considering a follow-up session for next year.

Workshop attendee Charles Burkett Jr. praised Miller’s structured and accessible teaching: “Nicole’s presentation described the publishing process step by step in a way that was easy to understand.” Given a choice

between nonfiction and fiction, Burkett shared a personal narrative about his time at Cleveland public schools’ Supplementary Education Center — an experience that kindled his lifelong passion for photography and the arts.

Saturday afternoon’s Shorts Film Festival showcased the work of local filmmakers Weems, Ashley Wheaden, Michael Oatman, Crystle Paynther, Jeannine Gaskins, Wayne Smith, Terrence Spivey, and Robinson himself.

The evening brought LitCLE’s Poetry Slam, filling the room with bold, expressive verse. Sunday’s offerings included a spirited poetry reading — “Ekphrastic: Live Poetry in Response to Art” — and a conversation with veteran photographer Jeff Lawson, known for his portraits of Muhammad Ali and Julian Bond.

The festival concluded with a rousing performance by the Hue People Vocal Ensemble — a Cleveland treasure since 2003. Vocalists Boyd, Ceko Selinas, and Anita Rose Banks, backed by sound engineer Rex Sims, took the audience on a joyous ride with songs by Al Jarreau, Bob Marley, and Earth, Wind & Fire, and gritty blues and funk numbers. The finale — James Brown’s “I Feel Good” — brought the crowd to its feet.

Supported by Literary Cleveland, Assembly for the Arts, UnBar Café, Kings and Queens Cultural Village, and others, the festival drew enthusiastic responses from attendees and artists alike.

Though a few logistical hiccups crept in — like a postponed quilt raffle and a canceled gallery crawl — Robinson and his team are already thinking ahead to next year, with hopes to expand into Shaker Square and Buckeye.

For Robinson, the weekend was about more than art — it was about community visibility, cultural affirmation, and the power of creative expression to preserve identity.

*McLaughlin is a freelance writer, podcaster, and radio host. He writes for ClevelandClassical.com, Cleveland.com (Plain Dealer), and The Land and recently joined Ideastream Public Media as a part-time host for JazzNEO.*

“This city is chock-full of talented writers just waiting to burst on the literary scene”  
– Nicole D. Miller



The Hue People Vocal Ensemble closed the first-ever Larchmere Cultural Arts Festival with a rousing performance July 13.

Photo courtesy of Vince Robinson



Jordan R. Lee led an African drumming workshop July 12 as part of the Larchmere Cultural Arts Festival.

Photo courtesy of Jordan R. Lee

## A conversation with festival founder Vince Robinson

By Kevin McLaughlin

Who better than Vince Robinson, photographer, musician, writer, and owner of Larchmere Arts, to spearhead July’s inaugural Larchmere Cultural Arts Festival? The grassroots effort was born out of a simple idea: to celebrate the culture of arts broadly and Cleveland artists in particular. By situating it in Larchmere, the festival had the further benefit of showing off the cultural excellence of Robinson’s own neighborhood.

“You know, when you talk about culture, you look at the impact that people of African descent have had on all types of culture,” Robinson said. “Rock ’n’ roll, for instance, has its roots in Black music. If you look at what Picasso did, there were African origins for his style of art. So, yes, it involved Black artists. I don’t think that you necessarily have to say that [a particular art or music] is Black. It is what it is.”

Robinson was involved in every aspect of the festival, from planning to execution. He invited visual artists, photographers, poets, and musicians

“Sometimes you just have to do what you do”

– Vince Robinson



from across Cleveland to participate, and those who were able or willing to attend were featured.

The Shorts Film Festival was a highlight of the weekend for Robinson. “There were some amazing films done by people here in Cleveland,” he said. Robinson also screened his own film on Winston Willis, calling it “a great reward.”

Another standout was a photography conversation held at UnBar Café, featuring Robinson’s goddaughter Karima Stitt, who used cameras he lent her. “And the thing about Karima is that she didn’t default to the automatic setting, she switched it to manual mode, and she did what real photographers do. I was so proud of her.”

See A conversation with festival founder Vince Robinson, page 11



Nicole D. Miller shared self-publishing tips at a writers workshop July 12 as part of the Larchmere Cultural Arts Festival.

Photo courtesy of Vince Robinson



# On the move we go, across Larchmere and direct to Hopkins airport

Story and photos by Chris Ball

It may soon be possible to ride the Rapid Transit directly from Shaker Square to Cleveland Hopkins International Airport without needing to transfer downtown. New railcars would make that happen, according to the NeoTrans blog. It reports that the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority is preparing to buy 60 new railcars to replace the oldest rail transit fleet in the nation. Read more here: [tinyurl.com/b3jstrsn](https://tinyurl.com/b3jstrsn). ...

Eclectic Eccentric and Monarch Boutique shops are joining forces and moving south across Larchmere Boulevard into the former Wolfs Gallery building (13010 Larchmere Blvd.), most recently occupied by Fawaky Burst. In addition to clothing, they reportedly plan to sell food. ...

**Walter Allen Rogers Jr.** has set up an art studio in the former Gentleman’s Quarters storefront at 12807 Larchmere Blvd. **Walter Thompson** closed the longtime clothiers shop last year. Rogers, 83, of East Cleveland is a disabled veteran with a variety of artistic talents, including oil painting, drawing, photography, sculpture, poetry and jewelry making. “It’s a bad habit, doing jewelry, when I should be painting, the main thing I do,” he said softly in June while sitting in a wheelchair in front of the store, displaying a small sample of his work. He plans a gallery opening Oct. 2. His website, [walterallenrogersjr.com](http://walterallenrogersjr.com), includes a profile and links to galleries of his work. It



Robert “Bobby” Edwards Jr.

also features his motto, “Always remember, your education is your masterpiece.” ...

**Robert “Bobby” Edwards Jr.**, who was laid off last year from his position as a community outreach organizer at Burten, Bell, Carr Development Inc., has a new job at Beech Brook, a behavioral health agency in Cleveland. ...

**Miss Marilyn Burns**, the self-described Mayor of Woodhill, won the “Unsung Hero” award at the NAACP



Miss Marilyn Burns

Progress Inc. chose its outside PR agency, Shark & Minnow Inc., which has offices on the Square. Free activities this summer have included yoga classes, live music, an ice cream social by Indigo Café, and a Safari on the Square with **Outback Ray**, who delighted a crowd of children by letting them come up and touch various unusual creatures. ...

The Greater Cleveland Urban Film Festival returns to Atlas Cinemas on Shaker Square from Sept. 18 to 26 for its 14th annual event. Details at [gcuff.org](http://gcuff.org). ...

Cleveland police said they have no suspects in a drive-by shooting at 1:30 p.m. March 11 on East 130th Street. Gunfire struck three vehicles and two houses in what **Lt. David Lam** said may have been a road rage incident. Shell casings and a light from one of the weapons were recovered, and DNA was collected and sent to the state crime lab for examination. Police are examining surveillance footage and do have a potential suspect vehicle. ...

Someone broke the large glass window on the front door and gained entry to the lobby of US Bank on the northwest quadrant of Shaker Square in the middle of the night April 20, police said. The suspect, who attempted to pry open the ATM, was caught on surveillance footage and identified and arrested. The bank closed for at least a week after the incident. ...

Scene reported in July that Colina, an intimate wine bar, will open in September at 12104 Larchmere Blvd., but little activity was visible inside in August. ...

The 728-foot-wide mural spanning the eastern wall of the RTA bus facility on Woodhill Road, created last year by Elevate the East initiative, has won the National Mural Awards’ Community Award. We wrote about the mural in the Winter 2024 issue of the *SHAD Connection*.

Cleveland Branch’s Freedom Fund Dinner on June 21. ...

After advertising for someone to program events on Shaker Square, Cleveland Neighborhood



With a Burmese python around his neck, Outback Ray entertains a throng of young people Aug. 5 on Shaker Square.



Melissa Garrett-Hirsch, left, owner of Café Indigo, adds sprinkles to a dish during an ice cream social Aug. 5 on Shaker Square.

People of SHAD

Matt Weinkam ➔

Photo by Chris Ball

Matt Weinkam was largely preaching to the choir when he sang the neighborhood’s praises to the Larchmere Community Association. The executive director of Literary Cleveland was the main speaker at their July 9 meeting, held at the nonprofit’s storefront, 13002 Larchmere Blvd. He discussed funding concerns for arts programs after recent large federal budget cuts before talking about Larchmere. – Chris Ball

“We moved to Larchmere in 2023, and it honestly felt like we won the lottery. We were already big fans of this neighborhood, went to all the restaurants, lots of the businesses. ... So when this space came available across the street from Loganberry Books, who is one of our longtime partners, it felt like a dream come true, and already this neighborhood feels so special to be a part of. You all are so welcoming. And frankly, this is like truly one of the best neighborhoods in Cleveland. It’s integrated, it’s community centered and focused, it’s on the hinge of Cleveland. It’s one of the most vibrant suburbs that we have.”





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Election preview

Races to watch include new Ward 3, Housing Court

SHAD-area voters have some notable races to consider this election season: the newly drawn Ward 3, Cleveland Housing Court, and Cleveland Mayor. But not Blaine Griffin. The City Council President is running unopposed for the new Ward 6.

The Primary is Tuesday, Sept. 9, and the General Election is Tuesday, Nov. 4. Polls are open from 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. The Cuyahoga County Board of Elections has moved to 1803 Superior Ave. Cleveland. 216.443.8683.

**Cleveland Ward 3**  
*The League of Women Voters’ Education Fund provided this analysis on Vote411.org:*  
**Term: 4 years, Salary: \$80,133**  
Cleveland’s wards were reduced from 17 to 15 this year, resulting in ward redistricting across the city. The new Ward 3 is shaped like a chunky U and spreads from Shaker Square in the east to Slavic Village in the west. Cleveland municipal races are nonpartisan.

Deborah Gray, who represents the current Ward 4 on City Council, is running for this Ward 3 seat. Two other candidates are also running: Sharon M. Spruill, a community activist, and Erich V. Stubbs, a Cleveland business owner.

The two candidates who win the most votes in the Sept. 9 primary will move on to the Nov. 4 General Election.

*Nick Castele, government reporter for Signal Cleveland (signalcleveland.com), prepared these sketches of the candidates:*

**Deborah Gray, Ward 3**  
A longtime homeowner on the Southeast Side, Gray was elected to council in 2021. She won election after the area’s longtime council member, Ken Johnson, was convicted on corruption charges and sentenced to prison time.

When she took office, Gray worked with Cleveland State University to survey residents and map her ward’s strengths and needs, she said.

“After we analyzed that and broke everything down, that’s when the investment started,” she said.

Gray cited a few examples of investments in Southeast Side neighborhoods, including new homes built by CHN Housing Partners.

Asked about building more single-

family homes in Slavic Village, Gray said she was new to the neighborhood and wanted to hear what kind of housing residents wanted. Slavic Village hasn’t been part of her ward before.

“First we have to have a conversation,” she said. “We have to build a relationship. We’ve got to find the funding and the contractors and the developers that are going to build the right homes in the neighborhood of Slavic Village.”

**Sharon Spruill, Ward 3**  
Spruill, a Buckeye resident, has worked at local community development corporations. In that work, she saw how seniors struggled to afford repairs on their aging homes, she said.

Residents have told her that one of their big concerns is the glut of abandoned buildings, Spruill said. The owners of those buildings need to be brought to the table, and the city’s new local agent law (tinyurl.com/mr3f7d6f) can help in finding them, she said.

“Because it costs so much to demolish abandoned buildings, we have to try and reimagine what we can do with some of those abandoned buildings and abandoned houses so that we’re not tearing them all down,” she said.

Asked about crime, Spruill said police staffing numbers are uncertain. She said she would convene residents to meet with police and draw up a safety plan.

“We cannot solely depend on the police department in order to do public safety in our area,” she said. “So the one thing that I would want to do is form a coalition, a grassroots coalition, with the residents and concerned citizens in all the neighborhoods that are merged together.”

**Erich Stubbs, Ward 3**  
Stubbs worked for more than a decade at the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections, where he maintained relationships with local mayors and other elected officials, he said. He lives in the Shaker Square area and said he wants to listen to Slavic Village residents.

The two neighborhoods sit at either end of Ward 3. They may be different, but representing both would be like “having two children with different needs,” he said. Slavic Village was

part of his territory when he worked for the elections board, he said.

“The Slavic Village area has a lot of opportunity to grow,” he said, while “the Shaker Square area has a lot to learn from the Slavic Village area.”

Stubbs emphasized his experience working with local elected leaders, including Cleveland’s member of Congress. He said he would also draw on the work of grassroots groups in the ward — particularly if federal aid tightens.

“We need folks on the ground to really find out what the needs are, to support their needs,” he said.

**Cleveland Housing Court**  
*Signal Cleveland’s Castele also filed this report:*  
Sometimes it’s news when no candidate wins an endorsement.

Judge W. Moná Scott, who has led Cleveland Housing Court since 2019, fell just shy of winning the Cuyahoga County Democratic Party’s endorsement this summer.

Scott won 58.9% from Cleveland members of the party’s executive committee in late June, according to one attendee. That wasn’t enough to win. She needed 60%. Cheryl Wiltshire, an attorney running against Scott, won 33.6%.

A party endorsement has financial consequences. Endorsed candidates can participate in the Ohio Democratic Party’s mailing program, saving themselves money on postage for campaign literature.

Plus, endorsed candidates’ names are usually listed on the county party’s “sample ballot.” That’s the slate of contenders with the Democratic seal of approval, which the party circulates before Election Day.

Scott is seeking a second six-year term on Cleveland Housing Court.

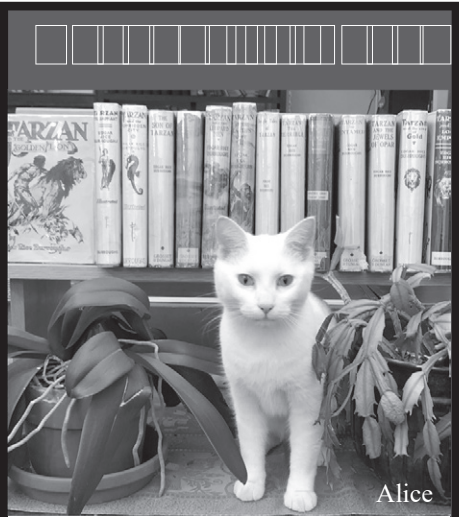
The court oversees evictions and housing code cases — placing the judge right in the middle of Cleveland’s tussle with out-of-town landlords.

Scott won her seat on the bench by defeating incumbent Judge Ron O’Leary, a Republican, who had been appointed after the death of longtime Judge Raymond Pianka.

Wiltshire brings her own Housing Court experience to the race. She clerked for Pianka and served as a magistrate with the court in 2022.

**Cleveland mayor:**  
*Signal Cleveland’s Castele also wrote this:*  
Laverne Jones Gore has filed to run against Mayor Justin Bibb as he seeks a second term leading the city of Cleveland.

Gore, a Republican, ran for Congress in 2021 and Cleveland mayor in 2009, among other offices. Bibb is the president of the Democratic Mayors Association. Cleveland’s races are nonpartisan, so party affiliation does not appear on the ballot.



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# North Union Farmers Market marks three bountiful decades at Shaker Square

Story and photos by Chris Ball

The North Union Farmers Market celebrated its 30th anniversary at Shaker Square on July 12 with free cake, live music and a shiny van.

An arson fire April 19 at 3 a.m. destroyed the nonprofit’s 2005 Chevy van, which was out of order and being used temporarily for storage. The blaze also damaged an adjacent shipping container used to store market signs. They were parked behind Shaker Square’s southwest quadrant in what turned out to be a blind spot for recently installed security cameras.

And so began a fundraising campaign. “We raised almost \$50,000,” said Emma Visnic, a North Union spokeswoman. “And that covered the cost of the van, and then a donor through the Jewish Federation Foundation donated \$1,500 for the signs separately.”

They purchased a used van and branded it with market signage. “We had some great news coverage for it,” Visnic said. “And the community support was great. So this is our new van. This is driven by your generosity.”

But this time, they will park it behind their offices on the northwest quadrant. “We’ve not had any issues there,” she said.

The celebration was about more than just the van. Veteran vendors’ stands were decorated with colorful balloons and signs saying how many years they’d worked at the market.

It’s been 30 years for Julie Richards. The owner of Northridge Blueberries in Conneaut remembers when the market started.

“It was fairly small, and everybody knew each other,” she said. Only one side of Shaker Boulevard had vendors.

“In the beginning, it was just farms. And they were, like, really strict about it. You had to grow everything that you sold. ... They’d actually come out and visit the farm to make sure that you were growing everything you sell.”

She’s glad the rules have loosened up to allow hard goods and baked goods. “It’s kind of well rounded, and people come for all the different things. You don’t have people that, you know, just come for the food and they’re like, ‘Oh, I hate that they have those.’ ... So, yeah, I think it’s great.”

The family business originally was Wintergreen Tree Farm in Mantua. She recalls riding to the market with her father. “I was about five at the time, and he’d load up the truck and pull me out of bed, and I’d sleep in his lap on the way over.”

Tom Wiandt of Killbuck Valley Mushrooms in northern Wayne County has operated his stand for 26 years. He has witnessed many changes. “Obviously,

the crowds are larger, it’s grown a ton,” he said. “What I’ve really noticed is we actually get a much more diverse crowd now. You know, it used to just be people right in the immediate neighborhood, but man, we have people that travel a long distance to come to the market now.”

“You had to grow everything that you sold.”

– Julie Richards



Julie Richards was five when her father, Bob Stehli, started selling blueberries at the debut of the North Union Farmers Market at Shaker Square 30 years ago.

## NEORSD plan to drain Lower Lake makes waves

Continued from page 1



Locals support Lower Lake before an Aug. 11 meeting of the Shaker Heights City Council

plus \$12 million if they want to dredge the sediment, according to NEORSD. Shaker Mayor David Weiss said his staff was exploring how to split those big expenses. Shaker controls about 57% of the dam but pays two-thirds of its state fee.

The Shakers dammed the Doan Brook in the 1800s, creating Lower Lake and Horseshoe Lake. Despite repairs, the dams were declared by the state in the late 2010s to be failing. Crews breached Horseshoe’s dam, restoring marshland.

Next year, NEORSD plans to start a two-year, \$31 million project to remove Horseshoe’s dam, plant native species, and add amenities such as a nature playground and a pedestrian bridge. Shaker Heights will contribute \$4.6 million and Cleveland Heights \$2.5 million.

Until July, officials said lake lovers could enjoy Lower Lake, always more visible and visited. At recent city council meetings in Cleveland Heights and Shaker Heights, some residents called the changing recommendations a shell game or bait and switch.

Matt Scharver, NEORSD’s watershed programs director, denied deception. He said a preliminary design for Lower Lake’s dam more than tripled the estimated cost, requiring “obtrusive” concrete flood walls up to 8 feet tall and a 200-foot-long protrusion from a second spillway.

Meanwhile, new technology showed the dam not blocking

enough water to fit the district’s mission of controlling water quantity and quality. But Scharver said its failure might send a deadly amount of water all at once toward University Circle. Cleveland’s precipitation

has risen by more than a third since 1951, with heavier storms.

Now the Cleveland Museum of Art plans to redo its campus, which covers the culverted Doan. NEORSD sees a chance to run a second culvert there, carrying more water.

Before Shaker’s meeting, dam supporters stood outside with

protest signs. During both cities’ meetings, many residents praised the lake’s beauty and history. But two members of Friends of Lower Lake said a restored marsh would be scenic and much better for the environment, slowing floods, filtering pollutants and attracting native species. Many of the world’s dams have been removed in recent years.


Officials said they’d consider removing Lower Lake’s dam and embanking a pond alongside the freed Doan. Scharver said the district might be able to fund the pond.

By press time, the dam had drawn support from Cleveland Heights Mayor Kahlil Seren, Friends of Horseshoe Lake and the Cleveland Heights Historical Society. Mayor Weiss said he’d seek more information before taking a stand. He did not rule out an independent study, which some residents have demanded.

More public meetings about the dam were expected soon.

“I’m appalled that it has to be abandoned.”

–Mary Brown



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# Up and Down the Boulevard



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Bonfim Wish Ribbons



New awning

Story and photos by Andrea C. Turner

## Bonfim Wish Ribbons

Have you noticed the colorful ribbons tied to the front gate of the former St. Paul's Evangelical Church, soon to be the new home of Batuqui? These Bonfim Wish Ribbons are a famous Brazilian tradition, related to the Basílica do Senhor do Bonfim, one of the most famous Catholic churches of Salvador, in the State of Bahia, Brazil, with traditional African roots. In this northern area of Brazil, people wear bright ribbons tied around their wrists, often worn today by tourists. The ribbons have a long, complicated story that traces back to 1745. The church became famous for its power to heal and cure. People flocked to the church to pray and would often tie a ribbon, originally around their neck, to remind them of the healing their faith had provided and to help them stay healthy and strong. "Senhor do Bonfim" translates to "Lord of the Good End" in Portuguese. A fitting phrase for the future site of Batuqui.

## Celebrate Jane Austen's 250th Birthday

Loganberry Books looks deeper at the intellectual world of English author Jane Austen for the 250th anniversary of her birth. On Thursday, Oct. 23, from 7 to 8:30 p.m., Jennifer Weinbrecht, owner of Jane Austen Books (est. 2008) and co-coordinator of the Jane Austen Society of North America's annual convention, coincidentally held in Cleveland in October 2024, will present a forum highlighting some of the social, political, and literary trends that informed Jane Austen's

popular novels like "Emma," "Pride and Prejudice," and "Sense and Sensibility." Loganberry is at 13015 Larchmere Blvd.

## Clothing Swap

Donate your (clean, in good or like-new condition) fall and winter clothing and then come and shop at Abide Yoga Studio's free store Friday, Sept. 12, from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Drop off clothes during class times or email hope.abideyoga@gmail.com for a 24/7 dropoff location on the East Side. Clothing swaps are a reminder of community care and abundance. We have SO much. Let's share it. Things that don't quite fit right, things you're done wearing ... bring them in. Clothing swaps are a fantastic opportunity to try on different styles and expressions. All unclaimed items will be donated to City Mission and Laura's Home Women's Crisis Center.

## Feed People, Not Landfills

Big Al's Diner and Fine Points have teamed up with Rust Belt Riders. A sign for the local food scrap compost and small worker-owned cooperative directs its subscribers to access a lock code to bins placed at the rear of the parking lot. Neighborhood members can drop off compostable food waste. It collects food waste from people, organizations, and businesses, then turns it over to its sister company, Tilth. They create living soil blends from the organics collected through Rust Belt services. This organic material serves as the base for soil blends that in turn nourish the very food that we grow within our region. The company is seeking a part-time commercial food scrap hauler and cleaner for \$20 an hour. Apply at [tinyurl.com/2s9zh559](https://tinyurl.com/2s9zh559).

## First Friday Night = Craft Night

Fiddlehead Gallery continues its First Friday Craft Nights from 5 to 8 p.m. Upcoming dates and craft themes are: Sept. 5 – Harvest People; Oct. 3 – Tin Shrines; Nov. 7 – Paper Puppets; and Dec. 5 – Scrap Fabric Trees. \$10 fee per craft. Materials provided, and all supplies are upcycled and repurposed. Call ahead to reserve your spot at 216.231.9400.

## Barista for hire at UnBar Café

Restaurant pro? Take the next step in your food-related career. UnBar Café is hiring. Call 216.205.4180 or email [melissa.garrett0602@gmail.com](mailto:melissa.garrett0602@gmail.com).

## HoneyBirch Bakehouse Ranks in "Scene's" Best

Great news for this Larchmere eatery worthy of *Scene's* Best of Cleveland 2025 – Food & Drink. For Best Bakery/Pastries, the HoneyBirch Bakehouse, 12204 Larchmere, ranked in third place citywide. Rachel N. of Westerville, OH, wrote this review on Yelp: "Great little wife and husband owned bakery & deli. The sandwiches are amazing with my favorite being the apple brie and fig with turkey. Tried a boureka today which was like a flaky puff pastry with spinach and cheese and was so good! The baguettes they use are so good that I have bought them to make other sandwiches at home too ... free street parking and was pretty readily available each time I was there. There was not any indoor seating that I saw, but two small two seater tables outside that were nice and clean. The owners were so nice

and our sandwiches were ready pretty quickly. Would highly recommend!"

## Hot Jazz in a Cool Space

Loganberry Books hosts hot jazz in a cool space every second Wednesday of the month. Join the CLE-OH Jazz Trio for poetry and performance on Sept. 10, Oct. 8, Nov. 12, and Dec. 10 from 6:30 to 8 p.m. This lively musical group is comprised of three of the area's most accomplished musicians. Reed Simon, violin in the tradition of Joe Venutti and Stephane Grappelli, plays in ensembles with many of our finest local jazz players. Brad Smedley, guitar, is founder and leader of the well respected *Hot Djangl*, described as gypsy jazz in the style of the famous Hot Club of France. Gene Epstein, upright bass, performs with various local groups, including *George Foley and his Rhythm*, and was nominative leader of the quartet *Gene's Jazz Hot*.

## One Mic Open

This free, long-running poetry open mic series hosted by Eric Odum resumes Friday, Oct. 10, at Literary Cleveland's storefront (13002 Larchmere Blvd.). Readings begin at 7 p.m. RSVP to share your work in community with others by calling 216.400.9488 or email [info@litcleveland.org](mailto:info@litcleveland.org), or sign up to read when you arrive. Readings take place on the second Friday of most but not all months, so check the schedule at [tinyurl.com/5n7uvehe](https://tinyurl.com/5n7uvehe).

Email news tips to Chris Ball at [chrisballatwork@gmail.com](mailto:chrisballatwork@gmail.com)



Photos by Chris Ball

Larchmere PorchFest is beloved for its 30 bands on 30 porches, but it also makes for great people watching. Here are pictures from this year's event on June 28. More photos on page 2 and story on page 12.



Landlord’s delaying tactics bring court crackdown

*Continued from page 1*

Court of Appeals. In a wide-ranging order in January, Scott had placed repairs for the three buildings under the court’s authority.

The appellate court stayed that order after SHAO lawyers argued that Scott overstepped her authority and asked for the order to be thrown out. A decision is not expected for a year.

When she issued her second order, Scott said SHAO has fought the city’s housing violations since 2022 by filing delay after delay, appeal after appeal.

“It’s like Groundhog Day,” Scott said. “Same violations, different day.”

Because of the buildings’ continuing violations, she said court rules allow her to issue a new order.

“I wanted to go to a neighborhood festival but didn’t because the elevators don’t work.”

– Anderson Waldon

In her second ruling, Scott added a fourth year to her supervision.

She ordered SHAO to put all rents in escrow so the money can be used for repairs. The buildings can’t be sold without her approval.

Mindful of SHAO’s delaying tactics, Scott said if the appellate



Photo by Chris Ball

A large wood board covers a first-floor broken window at The Vista at Shaker Square, 12600 Shaker Blvd., one of three apartment buildings facing court orders to fix health and safety hazards.

court orders another stay, SHAO must tell each tenant they have the right to place rent in escrow until code violations are corrected.

SHAO is part of the troubled Chetrit Group, a New York real

estate empire that owns numerous buildings nationally. New York Crain’s newspaper recently reported court records show the group has defaulted on \$1.6 billion worth of debt, with an additional \$300 million at risk.



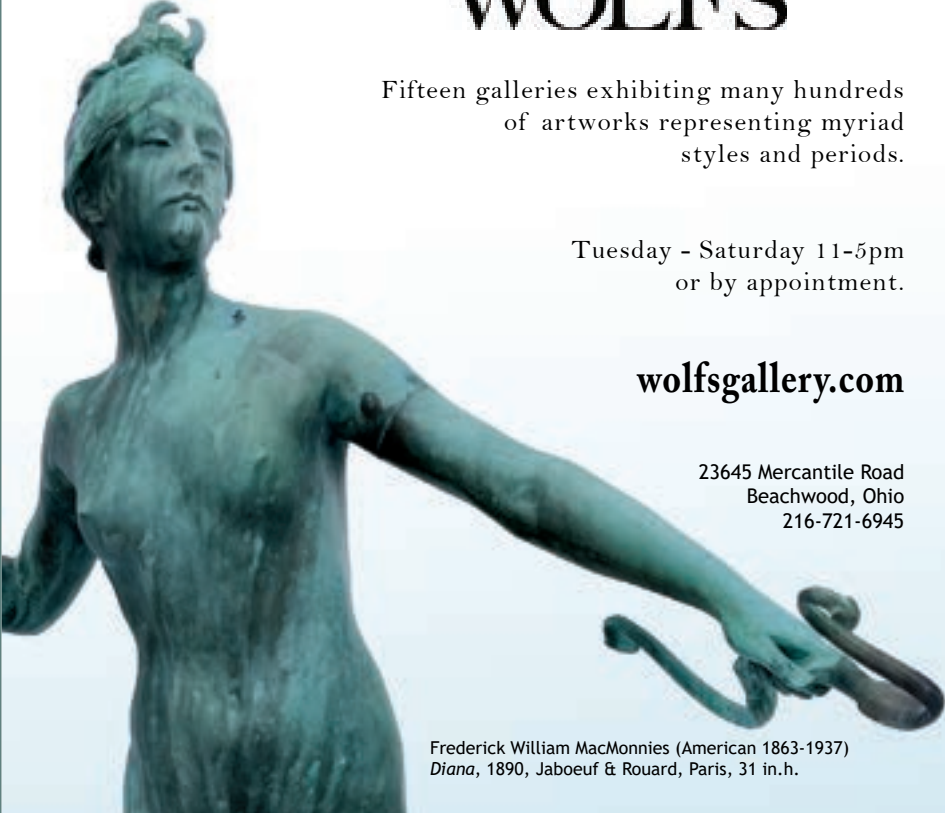
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A conversation with festival founder Vince Robinson

*Continued from page 6*

The legendary photographer Jeff Lawson was also on hand. “Just to be able to interact with him and to hear his approach to photography was extremely rewarding,” Robinson said.

The Hue People Vocal Ensemble’s performance Sunday closed the festival on a high point. “Hue People is national-level talent. ... They rehearse every week. The effort they put into their craft showed clearly on that stage,” Robinson said.

The festival’s roots go back only a few months, sparked by a message from Mary E. Weems, who proposed a small benefit event for Larchmere Arts. “After we had the meeting, all these ideas jumped into my head,” Robinson said. The scope quickly expanded to include multiple venues and disciplines.

While the festival had a strong showing of Black artists and cultural themes, Robinson chose not to brand it explicitly as a Black event. “There was intentionality about the folks I invited ... because we get excluded so much. But I didn’t use the word Black. Sometimes you just have to do what you do.”

Born in Utah and raised in a military family, Robinson lived in Japan, Delaware, and California and had a long career in radio and insurance. He has hosted radio shows and remains a committed cultural advocate.

The following weekend, July 17 to 19, Robinson applied his many talents to a Fringe Festival piece at Borderlight called “Traveling at the Speed of Life.” In this work, he blends spoken word, film, photography, and original music for “a powerful journey through relationships, injustice, and self-discovery.” And at Larchmere PorchFest in June, Robinson hosted “Poetry Corner” at Literary Cleveland.

For Robinson, the future of the Larchmere Cultural Arts Festival is about more than art. He leans in when talking about the arts and the Black community. “This is really important to me. ... One of the reasons that Larchmere Arts exists is to maintain the community’s place so that we don’t become erased. ... Art and culture are really the fuel of our existence.”

People of SHAD

Blaine Griffin ⇨



Photo by Chris Ball

Cleveland City Council President Blaine Griffin opposes bringing stoplights back to Larchmere Boulevard to try to force speeding cars to slow down. Asked again about it near the end of his monthly Ward 6 meeting July 8 at Cleveland Public Library’s Rice branch, Griffin gave this response, drawing the largest applause of the evening. – Chris Ball

“I would tell you, because I live on Larchmere, we had more accidents when we had those lights at 121st and 127th. What people were trying to do is hurry up and speed through lights, and we had more people rear ended, more accidents, more street backups. So it did not work, but I will tell you that streetlights, and I’m gonna say this and just be honest with you. These people don’t care about streetlights. They don’t care about stop signs. And at the end of the day, give me some good, old-fashioned police work in order to really send a message for some of these folks, ’cause streetlights and stop signs are not going to do it.”



# Mt. Overlook tenants surrender their porch to landlord for one day a year

Story and photos by Chris Ball

How much does Nikki Jaworski love Larchmere PorchFest? She moved away but still hosts a band on her porch and a party in her driveway each June.

How is that possible? She rents her former home and writes it into the lease.

How do her tenants feel about this? “We were just kind of like, OK, cool, there’s going to be a party on our porch,” said Ian Nocente, who moved into the Mount Overlook Avenue duplex in February.

Why does Jaworski love PorchFest? “It is the single greatest day of the year,” she said. “I think Larchmere is such a unique and special neighborhood, and you see it on PorchFest.”

A community leader and political operative, the Cleveland native moved to Larchmere from Washington, D.C., in 2015. Her first PorchFest was in 2016, “the day before Cavs won the championship,” she said.

She rented on Mount Overlook first before buying a house four doors down in 2017. The land bank was auctioning it for demolition. She had different ideas. “I had to get a really complicated HUD

loan to do the renovation work. It took about a year. I moved in in May 2018 and had my first PorchFest party.”

Now she rents out the house after moving to Cleveland’s Edgewater neighborhood in 2022. But not all of it. “I keep the third floor of the house vacant so I can use it for PorchFest.” It has a bathroom and kitchen, and

she stores her party gear there. Her mother, Lynn Kennedy, says Jaworski is extremely social, so her PorchFest devotion is no surprise. “That’s her. She misses this neighborhood immensely,” Kennedy said. “It is such a sense of community, which she doesn’t get where she’s at now.”

Finding the right tenants is crucial. “Whenever I show the apartment, it is honestly what I lead with, because I don’t want any surprises,” Jaworski said.

“I realized that when I moved ... I wanted to ensure that whoever the tenant is realized that they would be relinquishing control of their porch one day a year and that I could not promise a quiet home environment for that day.”

“She let us know right away for sure,” Nocente said. “PorchFest is definitely something that we do enjoy. So, yeah, it didn’t really bother us.”

In fact, he invited friends over for a cookout in the backyard at the same time. “It was an awesome time.”

Jaworski likes her band to play early so she can enjoy the rest of PorchFest. “I don’t want people to hang out at my house all day. I want them to leave and then explore the neighborhood and venture out and see as many bands as possible.”

This year, the Black Island Condors played instrumental space rock on her porch at 2 p.m. Guests began arriving at noon for a light brunch set up on tables along the driveway. The hot midday sun sent many in search of shade, first on one side of the driveway and then the other. By 3 p.m., the party had moved on. Until next year.

“I wanted to ensure that whoever the tenant is realized that they would be relinquishing control of their porch one day a year.”

– Nikki Jaworski



Larchmere PorchFest is Nikki Jaworski’s favorite day of the year.



Nikki Jaworski’s driveway is where the action is during PorchFest.



Ian Nocente gets into the spirit of PorchFest, cooking on a backyard grill while his landlord hosts a band on the front porch.



The hot midday sun can’t keep people from gathering to hear music at Nikki Jaworski’s place during PorchFest.



The Black Island Condors rock out during PorchFest.



Nikki Jaworski displays signs from all the times she has hosted a PorchFest band.



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