

From the President

My commitment to the long term success of FutureHeights is personal. My family arrived in Cleveland Heights in the early 70's. I was raised by a single mother who deeply valued education and instilled the belief in her children that we could achieve anything that we set our mind to. She set a tremendous example by earning an undergraduate degree, immediately followed by a law degree from CWRU, all while raising three kids alone. This wouldn't have been possible without the support of this great community.

The Heights is a unique place. While growing up here, I attended CH-UH schools exclusively, and was nurtured by this diverse community to become who I am today. This is my sixth year of serving on the FutureHeights Board of Directors and my first year serving as its president.

Through its many programs, FutureHeights fosters collaboration and empowerment to create a vibrant and sustainable future for our communities. In 2015, FutureHeights launched some exciting new programs to help strengthen our neighborhoods: we now offer a Community-Building Workshop Series for Cleveland Heights residents and mini-grants to help them build on their areas' assets and create meaningful change in their own neighborhoods. We also hired Sruti Basu as our director of community-building programs. Sruti is a bright and energetic practitioner of Assets Based Community Development, who has the ability to work with a wide variety of people and help mentor neighborhood groups as they seek to organize and mobilize resources.

Fourteen residents from a variety of neighborhoods participated in our inaugural Community-Building Workshop Series last spring, and we awarded \$2,400 to three neighborhood projects in our first round of mini-grants. As Sruti gets to know more residents, we are looking forward to working with the next group of neighborhood leaders and seeing those initial projects come to fruition.

FutureHeights is looking forward to making an impact on our neighborhood-serving commercial districts. As we work with residents from various neighborhoods, we notice that they often share common concerns about the commercial districts that border them. It is here that residents from different neighborhoods get together, whether to socialize at our diverse restaurants or patronize shops for needed goods and services. They have noticed, as we have, that many of our storefronts are vacant and many of our existing businesses are struggling.

FutureHeights had long supported our local businesses through its Shop Local and Best of the Heights Programs, and through stories and low-cost advertising opportunities in the *Heights Observer*, but we sensed that our city needed more.

In May, we began meeting with a group of concerned residents and business owners in the Cedar Lee area. They were concerned about ongoing negative perceptions of both their neighborhood and the city as a whole, including the potential short-term impact of construction—with the high school renovation project and the planned Cedar-Lee streetscape project—and wanted to do more to address commercial vacancies.

The group met every week, calling itself the Heights Community Development Alliance (HCDA), crafting a mission and detailing potential programs. Although the origin of the group was for Cedar Lee, group members quickly realized that the issues it outlined applied to all Cleveland Heights districts and sought to include them.

In November, HCDA became an official program of FutureHeights. We are looking forward to supporting this initial group's efforts to strengthen our commercial districts through data-driven programs designed to attract and retain storefront businesses, and innovative ways to temporarily enliven vacant spaces. We piloted this concept by partnering with Heights Arts and Artful during the 2015 Heights Music Hop to fill four vacant spaces on Lee Road with artists during the event.

As we close out an exciting year of growth through enhanced service of our mission, we are looking forward to another year of growth in 2016. There is much to be done, but the Heights has many strengths and many assets—not the least of which are diverse, educated and engaged residents who volunteer their time in so many ways to make this community a better place. Together, we can figure this out. We can create strong neighborhoods and strong commercial districts that will ensure that this place remains a vibrant and desirable place to live and visit, and will continue to nurture its young people.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,
Richard Stewart
President
FutureHeights Board of Directors



Staff



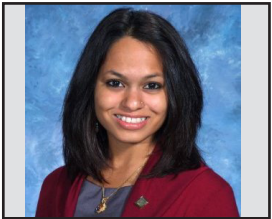
Deanna Bremer Fisher
Cleveland Heights resident for 20 years • Co-authored the nomination to have her neighborhood listed in the National Register of Historic Places • Is very happy to see more individual citizens nominating their Heights neighborhoods for listing in the National Register



Hannah Baldwin
Grew up in Cleveland Heights • Loves the diversity of the Heights and its niche neighborhoods



Kathleen Fant
Appreciates the unique character and benefits of living in Cleveland Heights • Committed to preserving and enhancing our neighborhoods and businesses for residents of all ages



Sruti Basu
Loves the parks and areas for outdoor activities, wonderful restaurants and coffee shops • Appreciates the caring and interesting people

Heights Observer Staff
Publisher: Deanna Bremer Fisher
Editor-In-Chief: Kim Sergio-Inglis
E-News Editor: Andrea C. Turner
Advertising: Bob Rosenbaum
Design and Production: Temma Collins, Diane Roberto
Distribution: Hannah Baldwin

News and Notes

Over the last 18 months, we have accomplished much with a small staff and many dedicated volunteers:

Empowering the community to tell its own story

Through the *Heights Observer*, residents tell the story about our community. They contribute news stories and opinion pieces, and our local businesses support this hyper-local community news project through their paid advertising. In 2014, we published another 12 issues of the print edition and 50 issues of the weekly e-news. Ninety-three new volunteers signed up in the member center to write, edit and distribute the paper, which brings the total number of people engaged through the *Heights Observer*, to 1,061.

We have published more than 6,228 stories since the beginning of the project in April 2008. In 2014, the print edition averaged 26 pages and 90 advertisers each month. The e-news, which is published on Tuesday, now reaches almost 5,000 people and averages a 29% open rate.

A dedicated team helps Heights residents find their voices and create a professional-looking publication that is available to all, free of charge, at our many local businesses. Deanna Bremer Fisher, executive director of FutureHeights, serves as the *Heights Observer's* publisher. Kim Sergio-Inglis is editor-in-chief, assisted by Andrea C. Turner. Bob Rosenbaum manages our ad sales, Kathleen Fant manages billing, and Hannah Baldwin oversees distribution. Members of the *Heights Observer* graphic design team are Temma Collins and Diane Roberto. All are assisted by a committee of advisors, led by co-chairs Bob Rosenbaum and James Henke, a member of the FutureHeights Board of Directors.

In 2014, prompted by safety concerns in Cleveland Heights, the *Heights Observer* began a collaboration with the Cleveland Heights Police Department to publish crime statistics on a quarterly basis. The first report appeared in January 2015. Through publishing and providing context for the data, we seek to empower residents to make their own educated judgments about the relative safety of Cleveland Heights and the effectiveness of city policing.

Educating and empowering neighborhood leaders

After years of planning, we launched a Community Capacity-Building Program in 2015 to strengthen our neighborhoods by helping residents leverage their many assets and providing tools to enable neighborhood leaders to work together on creative solutions to their challenges. Our program has four components: a series of workshops to train neighborhood leaders; public forums on specific issues of importance to the whole community; a small grants program to enable neighborhood-based projects; and the hiring of a Community Builder, a new staff position at FutureHeights. Bill Traynor, the keynote speaker at our annual meeting helped us introduce the program with his talk about Community Network Organizing.

In spring 2015, we held our first annual series of community-building workshops to train participants in effective community-building and place-making practices. Members of the inaugural class of 14 community builders came from several Heights neighborhoods. While some had had strong resident organizations for years, others had more recently formed or formed during the sessions. Noble Neighbors, a group which represents residents in the northeast quadrant of Cleveland Heights, began meeting in 2014. Boulevard Neighbors formed during the workshop series. The Community Builders met this fall to share some of the successes they have had. In 2016, we will host another series of workshops. Look for the application and dates on our website.

We held the first of two planned forums for 2015 on June 9 on the topic "Understanding Policing in Cleveland Heights." CH Police Chief Jeffrey Robertson and his staff spoke about the implementation of new technologies and new efforts in community policing. A second forum on the topic of "Re-Imagining Severance" took place Oct. 21. Topics for future forums will be determined by our Civic Engagement Committee in concert with needs expressed by our community builders.

In July 2015, we announced the creation of a Neighborhood Mini-Grants Program to facilitate improvement of the physical and social

environment of neighborhoods. Grants of up to \$1,000 are available to Cleveland Heights neighborhood-based groups for projects that strengthen their neighborhoods. FutureHeights intends to hold two grant application rounds, one in the fall and one in the spring. Applications were due for the first round on Sept. 15. The second application deadline is Feb. 15.

On Aug. 31, FutureHeights welcomed Sruti Basu as director of community-building programs. Sruti comes to us with a wealth of experience in working with community groups. She has a Master of Public Administration from the Bernard Baruch College at City University of New York, is a graduate of the National Urban Fellows Program, and holds a Master of Science in Social Administration from the Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences at Case Western Reserve University. She has worked for the Greater Houston Community Foundation, the Cleveland Foundation, Neighborhood Connections and Slavic Village Community Development Corporation. In this new full-time staff position with FutureHeights, Sruti will attend neighborhood meetings, identify potential leaders, work with existing groups and assist in starting new groups.

FutureHeights continues to work with several community-based groups—acting as fiscal sponsor for Sustainable Heights Network, Montford Community Garden Association, Spirit Corner, Plant One Tree and Growing Heights (formerly the Heights Community Garden Network)—enabling them to seek funding and present programs that enhance our community.

Strengthening our local economy

The locally owned, independent businesses that comprise our 14 business districts are strong contributors to our local economy and the unique character of our community. Through "shop local" programs, such as the *Heights Observer's* Holiday Gift Guide, Online Auction, and Best of the Heights, and low-cost advertising opportunities in the *Heights Observer*, we encourage residents to patronize these businesses and help keep our community vibrant.

We also sponsor and present several special events designed to showcase our community, bring people together and stimulate the local economy. We have presented a series of Welcome Home events, featuring some of the amazing people who make their home in the Heights. Among them are chefs, foodies and restaurateurs; authors and poets; and musicians. We are a sponsor of community events, such as the Cedar Fairmount Special Improvement District's Discover Cedar Fairmount Festival and the Cleveland Heights High School Alumni Foundation's Pancake Breakfast. We are a co-presenter of the Cedar Lee Kids Candy Crawl, which brings hundreds of costumed children and their families to interact with our local businesses.

Our newest annual event, the Heights Music Hop, is a celebration of local music that takes place in several venues along Lee Road and is free to the public. With the help of our many partners and sponsors, we have been able to increase the number of venues and hours of music each year since the inaugural event in 2013. In 2015, we worked with Heights Arts and a new group called ARTFUL to enliven empty storefronts along Lee Road with pop-up artists. We are looking forward to continuing to present community-building events like these in coming years.

Investing in our organization

FutureHeights continues to look for ways to become more efficient, more effective and more visible in what we do. In March 2014, we moved into shared office space with Reaching Heights, a nonprofit that supports public education in the Heights. Since then, we have been working to improve our new office, located at 2843 Washington Blvd. in the former Coventry Elementary School, by building an entry door to separate our space from the rest of the building and installing two new workstations. We are continuing to investigate strategic collaborations to enable us to maximize your investment in us and fulfill our mission of ensuring a vibrant and sustainable future for the Heights. Thank you for your support!

Meet the 2015 FutureHeights Board of Directors



Richard Stewart
President
Owner of Digizoom Media
• Raised in the Heights and attended Fairfax, Roxboro and Heights High • Loves his friendly neighbors on East Fairfax Road



Susan Christopher Riethmiller
Senior Marketing & Communications Officer for the Cleveland Foundation • 13-year Heights resident • Loves the collaboration, pride and long-time commitment of homeowners in the Noble neighborhood



Julia Kious Zabell
Coach & Facilitator at re:Invigorate • Moved back from San Francisco to live in the most beautiful and accessible neighborhood in Cleveland ... Cleveland Heights!



Amanda Shaffer
Professional coach at Case Western Reserve University and www.shaffercoaching.com • Dedicated to equity, inclusion, community and social progress • Living in Cleveland Heights since 2000 because all those things are possible here



Daniel Budin
Vice President
Works for Division of Parks and Recreation of Cleveland Heights • Lifelong resident of Cleveland Heights • Loves the walkability of the Heights



Mark Chupp
Assistant professor in Community Practice for Social Change at the Mandel School at CWRU • Loves living on a walkable tree-lined street near Coventry • Bicyclist, social activist and gardener



Joan Moore
Boomerang resident of Cleveland Heights • Active participant in the multifaceted living experience of Cleveland Heights • Loves being close to many fabulous bakeries



Kathleen Tark
Architect, urban designer and owner of Metropolitan Architecture Studio • Heights resident since 1996 • Loves the Garden City history and neighborhood character of Cleveland Heights!



Mike Kinsella
Vice President
Instructor of Nonprofit Management and Economics, Lake Erie College • 15-year resident of Cleveland Heights • Drawn to its active and engaged citizenry



Jessica Cohen
Managing Director, Community Relations for the Jewish Federation of Cleveland • Heights resident for 5 years • Loves raising her children in such a tight-knit community



Rebecca Price
Estate Planning & Probate Attorney, Law Offices of Rebecca Yingst Price, LLC • 15-year resident of Cleveland Heights • Loves the beautiful historic walkable neighborhoods, and the fantastic independent restaurants!



April Urban
MSSA, CWRU, is a researcher at the Center on Urban Poverty and Community Development • University Heights resident since 2012 • Loves proximity to University Circle, Shaker Square, all Heights commercial districts and easily bikeable streets



Douglas Whipple
Secretary/Treasurer
Heights resident for 18 years • Celebrates our trees and the vitality of our local businesses • Lawyer at www.whipple-law.com



James Henke
Freelance writer • 17-year Cleveland Heights resident • Loves all the independent stores and restaurants as well as the city's commitment to the arts



Saroya Queen Tabor
Development Director for Cleveland Kids in Need Resource Center • Wife and mother of two true TigerNation kids • NYC transplant who would live nowhere else in Ohio but Cleveland Heights ... really!



Patti Carlyle
Writer, activist and Northeast Ohio native • University Heights resident, with daughter in the CH-UH school district • Loves the sense of place here in the Heights



David Keller
Owner of the Cleveland Heights based insurance brokerage, Keller National • Lifetime Cleveland Heights resident • Loves the unique architecture in our walkable community



Vince Reddy
Project manager for LAND studio • Moved to Cleveland Heights in 1996 • Despite the challenges facing the community, is hopeful for the future of Cleveland Heights

Our thanks to former board members Lloyd Bell, Greg Bonanno, Susan Delaney, Shawn Paul Gustafson, Amy Roth, Sagree Sharma, Kevin Smith and Clare Taft for their dedicated service to the mission of FutureHeights.



FutureHeights

2843 Washington Blvd., Suite 105
Cleveland Heights, OH 44118
www.futureheights.org
216-320-1423



FutureHeights Executive Director Deanna Bremer Fisher (middle row, left), and board member Mark Chupp (front row, 2nd from left), meet with the inaugural class of community builders.

Our Mission

FutureHeights works to inspire and facilitate collaboration and empowerment across our communities to ensure a vibrant and sustainable future for Cleveland Heights and University Heights.

FutureHeights values:

- Diverse, inclusive, active and informed citizen participation in community decision making
- Appreciation for the time, talent and various forms of support offered to our organization
- Innovative ideas in addressing the challenges in our communities
- Open and effective communication and partnerships among nonprofits, schools, local business, city government and citizens
- Thriving local business community
- Preservation of historic neighborhoods and commercial districts
- High quality sustainability in design and architecture
- Regional approach to innovation, planning and development

Join Us

Your tax-deductible membership contribution goes directly to supporting the community-based programs and projects of FutureHeights that help strengthen our wonderful neighborhoods. Join online today at our secure website, www.futureheights.org, or by calling 216-320-1423.

2014 Financial Statement

Unaudited condensed statement of activities

Revenue and Support

Grants	\$33,983
Memberships	18,844
Annual fund	7,876
Fiscal Agencies	2,235
Other Fundraisers	0
Online Auction	13,521
Earned Income	137,359
Misc.	1,651
Total Revenue and Support	215,469

Expenses

Program	\$162,559
General and Administration	57,599
Fiscal Agency Expense	2,793
Fundraising	3,770
Depreciation	380
Total Expenses	227,101

Change in Net Assets	(11,632)
Net Assets at Beginning of Year	76,016
Net Assets at End of Year	\$64,384

The FutureHeights financial year begins January 1 and ends December 31.

FutureHeights is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

Contributions to FutureHeights are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law. FutureHeights participates in GuideStar, the online standard for nonprofit accountability. Please visit GuideStar.org to view the organization's Annual Form 990 and other organizational information.

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