



Hough Project

# Fizzled showdown muzzles community's voice as development partner



Councilman T.J. Dow, right, addressing supporters at March 20 press conference

Councilman's retreat leaves best community input process unresolved

By John Ettore  
Special to the Real Deal Press

It had all the elements for a 1940s film noir: a crusading metro columnist, a little-known junior councilman either sticking up for his constituents or trying to hustle his own side deal, and giant influential institutions used to getting their way.

The councilman never really

had a chance.

The showdown over a \$100-million apartment & hotel project near Cleveland Clinic — a small part of a sprawling “meds & eds” development initiative jointly pushed by the Clinic, Case Western Reserve University, University Circle and

the Cleveland Foundation — was initially blocked by Ward 7 Cleveland Councilman T.J. Dow. He eventually backed down and let the project proceed, but the showdown highlighted some deeper unresolved issues. Among them was the deep mistrust Cleveland’s black commu-

nity has long had for the Clinic as well as its major newspaper, which has long reflexively taken the side of powerful institutions while often giving the back of its hand to the black community.

The manner in which the *Plain Dealer* and its digital companion,

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Bedford

# Troubling lack of diversity at City Hall

Questions of nepotism, housing discrimination arise as integration lags

By Richard Donald Jones  
RDP CORRESPONDENT

Robert Brown moved his family to Bedford a few years ago because he believed it was a diverse community with a stable school system and a proper area to raise a growing family.

The Browns were among a growing number of black middle-class families who relocated to the Bedford area after the economic downturn of the Great

Recession accelerated the hollowing out of large swaths of Cleveland’s dwindling urban center.

“It seemed like a welcoming community,” explained Brown. “My wife works here and we saw this as a place to put down roots.”

As time passed Brown began to realize that beneath the surface Bedford

wasn’t as diverse or welcoming as at first glance.

“When our family grew we felt it was time to move from an apartment to a larger home.”

What should have been a simple process eventually drove the family away from Bedford.

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Walter Genutis  
Ward 2 Councilman

## Diverse crowd draws energy, inspiration from history of “failed bank”

Freedman’s Bank story looked at in new light

By R. T. Andrews  
EDITOR

Seen through a narrower lens, Freedman’s Bank, a post Civil War effort to bring newly freed slaves into the American economy, was a failure. The bank lasted only ten years before failing, and 70,000 depositors lost their money.

Viewed from a broader historical perspective, Freedman’s Bank was a resounding success. Opened in the immediate aftermath of the War, the Bank quickly grew to comprise 37 branches serving 70,000 depositors who put \$57 million into the bank. In today’s dollars, that equates to \$117 billion.

True, the bank failed in 1874, but so did many other financial institutions in the wake of the very severe Panic of 1873. And it should be borne in mind that the newly emancipated were not running the Bank. The main takeaway should be to notice how thrifty and industrious these new freedmen were and how much they were able to accomplish in short order when they pooled their resources.

That seemed to be a main theme of those who gathered at JumpStart on March 31 at a program sponsored by Operation HOPE, a national financial literacy and economic empowerment program that came to Greater Cleveland

last year. The program offered a discussion platform for considering how to make Cleveland a more inclusive community in its entrepreneurial and commercial spaces as a means to a shared prosperity.

A lively panel discussion, with some panelists citing a host of deflating statistics about gross economic disparities and inequities, nevertheless found its way to a general state of optimism about the potential of the city’s black community, particularly with respect to the growth and development and community support of black businesses.

Comprising the panel, which was moderated by Brian Hall of the Greater Cleveland Partnership’s Commission on Economic Inclusion, were Evelyn Burnett of Cleveland Neighborhood Progress; Michael Jeans, president and CEO of Growth Opportunity Partners; Kasey Morgan, managing partner of Executive Minds Consultant Group, and Ryan Mack, mid-Atlantic president of Operation HOPE.

An engaged audience that included bankers, entrepreneurs, consultants, economic and community development specialists, and city officials stayed well past the conclusion of the 8AM event.

The program was timed to coincide with the local opening this month of the exhibit, “The Freedman’s Bank: An American Story of Faith, Family, and Fi-



**Christopher Smith**  
*Operation HOPE introducing the program panelists*



**Maxie Jackson III**  
*Ideastream station manager, poses a question to the panel*



**Ray T Leach**  
*JumpStart CEO, welcomes guests to the program*

nance”. The exhibit, housed at the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland, is free and open to the public Mondays through Thursdays from 9:30am-2:00pm. The Bank is across from the downtown library at 1455 East Sixth St. Call 216.579.3188.

For more on the Freedman’s Bank story, visit freedmansbank.org/.

## New Business Chamber connects quickly with county executive, top staff

Budish, top economic team members, meet with black business group, pledge action

By R. T. Andrews  
EDITOR



*Clockwise from Top: Hakeem James and Whitney Holmes of Scroller Media. Presidents Council staffers Shana Braxton, Larisse Marook and Victoria Webster. Consultant Myla Moss with Trina Kinnebrew of Direct Health SolutionsHR.*

The Presidents Council Business Chamber met last month with County Executive Armond Budish and several key members of his economic development team, including chief economic development officer Ted Carter and chief innovation officer Daro Mott, both of whom joined the county earlier this year. Also on hand to discuss opportunities for the African American businesses to participate in economic development activities were Eddy Kraus and Karlton Laster of the county’s Department of Regional Collaboration.

The event, convened at Budish’s request, dovetailed neatly into a networking opportunity for Chamber members, many of whom are just getting to know each other since the Chamber’s founding last summer and its inaugural event last summer. It held promise of a maturation of the Cleveland’s black business community, which through the Chamber appears to be presenting itself as a partner for the County.

For his part, Budish outlined a series of initiatives and programs amid intimations that the County and the Chamber may

been discussing mechanisms through which increased working capital could soon be made available to minority businesses. Also discussed was an expansion of the County’s current small business enterprise program, the elimination of performance bonds for qualified contractors for jobs under \$250,000, the adoption by county council of a resolution authorizing the Executive to become signatory to the Community Benefits Agreement the city of Cleveland has entered into with area property owners, union contractors, and organized labor, and the appointment of a county inclusion officer to monitor, track, and enforce these and other initiatives.

After the county presentation, Chamber Chairman Mike Obi led an exercise which each

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# 'Bring It Back' Day rakes in close to a quarter million dollars

By R. T. Andrews  
EDITOR

Faith Community United Credit Union started out as a tiny enterprise of Mt. Sinai Baptist Church in 1952. It's a safe bet that not in the sixty-four years since has it experienced a day like Monday, March 28, 2016 when community members stopped by Faith's headquarters at Union Ave. and East 93 St. during an extended lunch hour and opened 78 new accounts with total deposits of \$230,277.

The impetus was Bring It Back Day, conceived by LaRese Purnell, chairman of Faith's board of directors and a leading advocate for economic development in the black community. Purnell and his team of Real Black Friday volunteers mounted the campaign entirely on social media, principally Twitter

and Facebook, abetted by word of mouth.

Faith had total assets of \$13,191,728 at the end of 2015 according to its audited financial statements. In a typical month, it opens about 40-50 new accounts. Last April, shortly after Deborah E. Perkins was hired as president and CEO, Faith's board and staff developed a three year strategic plan that included specific goals around membership growth, market reach, and other performance indices. One goal was to increase deposits by \$500,000, a target achieved last year in less than four months.

Bring It Back Day hit almost half that number in three hours. Small businesspeople, and leaders in the finance, medical civic arenas were among those coming to Faith's modest offices during the three-hour mid-day event. New depositors included retired banker and philanthro-



(left to right) Faith Credit Union Chairman LaRese Purnell with new depositor Pat Brown. Longtime manager Rita Haynes returns as volunteer for "Bring It Back" Day.

pist Bracy Lewis, African American Cultural Gardens architect Dan Bickerstaff, the diversity diva Kathryn Hall, political activist Kyle Early, and such popular lu-

minaries as former Browns star Josh Cribbs and Cavs announcer Ahmad Crump.

Purnell is considering repeating the event on a quarterly basis throughout 2016,

reckoning that repeat performances could go a long way in helping Faith boost its assets to \$15 million and enhance its ability to make more commercial and personal loans.

# Co-working space set to open downtown April 16

By R. T. Andrews  
EDITOR

Ashley Taylor is working feverishly to ensure that her new business, Spaces & Co., opens in downtown Cleveland on schedule but while in attendance at Faith Credit Union's Bring It Back event last month, she took a few minutes to say a few words about the new venture she's been working on since last November.

Taylor, 29, says Spaces & Co. is being designed as a

co-working space for entrepreneurs and working professionals, useful for those who either work at home or need transient space to meet the needs of their work.

Co-working spaces have become popular venues in many trendy cities across the country including Boston, Miami, New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Austin, TX. They seem to have a special appeal to younger professionals, providing a vibe similar to some social media plat-

forms.

The grand opening for Spaces & Co., located at 1536 St. Clair Ave., is set for April 16. The exact time has not been set and will likely be announced, appropriately enough, via social media.

Ashley's partner in the business is the recording artist and actress Teyana Taylor. The two are not related. Teyana, who is engaged to Cleveland Cavaliers guard Iman Shumpert, gave birth at home to Iman Shumpert Jr. in December.



Spaces & Co. co-owner Ashley Taylor, center, with good friend Joyce Allen and Real Black Friday volunteer William Alford

The Word on Small Business

# What's in Your Wallet?

By Kirby Freeman  
RDP CORRESPONDENT



More than ever before, individuals in the African American community are talking about starting and owning their own businesses — which is a very positive sign.

As I've previously argued, entrepreneurialism is the next frontier in economic development for our community. In the more 20 years that I have been working in the financial services industry, I have noticed a continued increase in the number and percentage of people within the community who have become intensely interested in starting their own businesses.

Some of this interest is borne of a self-driven intent to be independent, while some of it is due to circumstances driven by corporate downsizings. It doesn't really matter how each of us comes to understand the importance of small business development — we all now know how crucial it is for our career, personal and communal development.

Probably the first thing any individual should consider in building a business is their personal savings. Before anyone can begin to think

about building an enterprise that will support and sustain future employees and their families, the owner of the business (as the first employee) must consider how he or she will be supported.

Most small businesses — whether a bakery, barbershop, pick-up restaurant, auto mechanics shop, computer repair shop, or even newspaper [!] — will likely face losses during the first several months or even years of operation. It cannot be stressed enough that the business owner is always the last to get paid.

In any important endeavor, the first thing any early stage entrepreneur must do is count the cost. Any small business owner should maintain enough cash reserves to pay at least six months of personal and/or family expenses. This cash cushion will serve to help the entrepreneur continue paying bills while building up the business.

At the inception of their businesses, some entrepreneurs have cash reserves equal to 12 months of monthly expenses, far more than the three to six months recommended for normal "rainy day" funds. This need for beginning business owners to have a significant cash cushion to shield them from personal ruin

**The business owner's personal safety net should be considered separate from the cash reserves of the business. Indeed, business operations become compromised when entrepreneurs fail to separate their personal finances from those of their business.**

causes many of them to continue working their day jobs while aggressively seeking to build their businesses.

The business owner's personal safety net should be considered separate from the cash reserves of the business. Indeed, business operations become compromised when entrepreneurs fail to separate their personal finances from those of their business. It may sound old fashioned, but it's essential for prospective business owners to demonstrate personal budget discipline in order to build their operations.

The cash reserves of the business should be sufficient to support the operating budget of the business for at least two or three months. As

has been noted here before, business owners and managers need a cushion to operate while waiting for accounts receivables from services that have already been rendered to be fully collected.

It is very important for entrepreneurs to closely understand the nature of their customer receivables, as well as their customers' repayment habits, and how that compares with customers in their particular industry. The amount of cash on hand in small business operating accounts should reflect the repayment habits of their customers. If it normally takes customers 35 days to as long as 90 days — as it often does for many government clients — entrepreneurs need to have enough cash on hand

in their business accounts to fund payroll, pay rent and utilities, and maintain supplies.

It's a big plus if small business owners can establish and maintain a revolving line of credit with a bank, as a backstop to ensure that operations can continue while awaiting payment on customer accounts. This is just one reason among many that entrepreneurs should develop and nurture good relationships with their creditors and banking partners.

We cannot over-emphasize: cash is the mother's milk of any business enterprise. From the time you begin to think of building a new business, do whatever is necessary to build your personal cash reserves.

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## Business Chamber Continued From Page 2



Top: Chris Howse of Howse Solutions, Malike Moore of Debo Enterprises, Michelle Felder, Felder & Co. and Joseph Chubb, Comtec Information Systems. Middle: Daro Mott, Chief Innovation Officer, Cuyahoga County; Karlton Laster, special assistant for regional collaboration, Cuyahoga County; Michael Obi, chairman, Presidents Council Business Chamber. Bottom left: Cheryl Cooper Perez, Benefit Innovations Group; Jemma Jones, Financial Education Services. Bottom right: Cordell Stokes, Greater Cleveland Urban League; Ellen Burts-Cooper, Improve Consulting and Training Group.

business owner to envision a 50% growth rate in their bottom lines over the next year.

One charter Chamber member was overheard to say what

a joy it was to hear black people talk with unabashed focus on how to make money, build wealth, and grow their community. Several others talked about

joining or growing the Chamber, a contingency that has been likely facilitated by the hiring of new Chamber staffers, who were introduced at the event.

## Tri-C President announced as Black Professional of the Year

Reveal made at BPACF annual meeting

The Black Professional Association Charitable Foundation has chosen Cuyahoga Community College president, Dr. Alex Johnson, as 2016 Black Professional of the Year.

The honor was announced March 30 at the BPACF's annual meeting at Burke Lakefront Airport.

Johnson will be honored at BPACF's annual gala on November 5 at Landerhaven.

As part of the meeting, BPACF executive director Marcella Brown provided a recap of the organization's 2015 activities and announced this year's deadline for scholarship applications is April 22.

Other meeting highlights:

- Paris Lampkins, Gabriel Crenshaw, and LaRaun Clayton were sworn in as new board members.
- Cleveland Municipal Court judge Emanuella Groves was the keynote speaker and talked about her approach to making a difference on the bench while dispensing justice. BPACF scholar Bradley Hatten, Cleveland State University '17 and a mechanical engineering major, also spoke.
- The next Night Out Series event will be April 19 at Frederick's Restaurant in Warrensville Hts. A twist on this year's series is the advent of celebrity hosts. Hosting the April event will be Dr. Charles Modlin, last year's BPOY, and Jennifer Jordan of Fox 8 News.

BPACF raises and distributes scholarship funds every year. Its endowment fund is held at the Cleveland Foundation.

## BUSINESS BRIEFS

### Free Home Buying Seminars

Third Federal Savings and Loan is offering free Home Buying Seminars. Participants will learn about mortgages, private mortgage insurance, how to determine what they can afford and more. Seminars are scheduled for 6:30 to 8 p.m., April 7 at the Garfield Heights Branch, 12594 Rockside Rd. Another session is scheduled for 6:30 to 8 p.m., June 9 in Garfield Heights. Bring copies of one month's pay stubs and a recent W-2 to apply for free pre-approval after the seminar. Guests will receive a coupon for \$300 off closing costs on a Third Federal purchase mortgage, plus a \$10 gift card.

### Good Credit: How to Get It or Get It Back

Legal Aid attorneys will explain how to establish credit, get and understand your credit report, and repair poor credit. They will also provide information on dealing with debts and debt collectors and avoiding credit repair pitfalls and scams. Cleveland Heights Library, 2345 Lee Rd., Monday, April 18, 7p.

## Fizzled Showdown Continued From Page 1

Cleveland.com, framed the story, as a corrupt cash grab waged against benevolent institutions, was a reminder of why the paper has been met with such deep mistrust in many portions of the community for decades, especially in the black community.

PD columnist Mark Naymik is an old school journalist right out of central casting, with a ubiquitous presence. His “Hey Taxpayer” features strike a populist stance, and his bald head and grim, unsmiling visage make compelling TV. He regularly appears as a news commentator on local PBS affiliate WVIZ and was interviewed on CNN the day after the Ohio primary.

Naymik might have had even more reason for feeling confident in his targets lately. After he waged a months-long crusade against Beachwood’s Merle Gorden, the highest-paid mayor in Ohio, the FBI launched an investigation last year. The columnist has defended criticisms that he was practicing overkill for relatively petty alleged corruption with the not unreasonable response that his PD colleagues might have revealed the county corruption scandal themselves if they had been more attentive to petty corruption by county officeholders. Still, the nagging feeling remains that he too often focuses on relatively less powerful targets.

In any case, going after councilman T.J. Dow — admittedly not a poster child for the League of Women’s voters style of good government — was like shooting small game.

The Dow fusillade began with a March 18th story, in which the columnist characterized Dow’s efforts to wangle community concessions for phase two of the Innova project as a thinly veiled holdup. He later said on WCPN that “a lot of neighborhood concerns were jacked up over how the Clinic was going to keep plowing north into Hough,” prompting fellow panelist Sam Allard of *Scene* to say “I do sympathize with residents’ efforts to

get more information.”

The councilman tried to set the record straight two days later with a news conference in front of the Hough obelisk (in a small but telling mistake, Cleveland.com, which evidently sent a young videographer but not a reporter, referred to the venue as a parking lot).

Dow described the meeting he had with CWRU president Barbara Snyder, who needed city approval of a land swap for the project, in which he said he was asked to come alone. “She called me into the meeting, and she had a piece of paper with eight bullet points. She slid it to me and told me she needed me to support this \$100-million project. My comment was, ‘well, you’re gonna have to have community meetings.’ And she said ‘I don’t like that answer. I need your support.’ I said, ‘well, you’re not gonna get my support until we have community meetings.’ Her comment was, ‘I’ll build it somewhere else.’ And the meeting was over in five minutes.”

He added that in an earlier meeting with representatives of Cleveland Clinic about that same parcel of land, community members were treated with disdain. “What are y’all gonna put there, a car wash?”

At press time, RDP had received no comment from Ms. Snyder’s office.

### A Better Way Forward

There is an existing mechanism for resolving these kinds of stalemates, one that has gained considerable attention since it was first used in Los Angeles during a controversy over the Staples Center: community benefit agreements. They typically involve buy-in from developers, unions, cities and the local community development corporation nearest the project. Done right, they are far more effective in achieving equitable development than newspapers serving as powerbrokers, seemingly on behalf of the city’s most powerful institutions.

Norm Krumholz, legendary



**T.J. Dow**  
Ward 7 Councilman

Cleveland planning director under three mayors and a nationally known pioneer of equity planning, who now teaches at Cleveland State, recently asked a student to compile these CBA agreements. She found 42 examples. Community benefit agreements are all about “getting as much out of the developer as you can, without screwing up the deal,” says Krumholz.

Some who have been watching these dynamics for decades voiced particular frustration about this latest debacle. “We shouldn’t have to recreate the play book every time,” said longtime former Cleveland councilman Jay Westbrook on Facebook. He pointed to the community inclusion playbook already created by Mayor Jackson’s administration.

There’s only one problem with that: Cleveland City Hall, while making some modest noise about these community inclusion plans, and drawing some headlines, evidently doesn’t really believe in them. Just ask one Norm Krumholz. “That (CBA) is what I was arguing for with the Opportunity Corridor,” the giant roadway now under construction that links the Clinic campus with the interstate system, courtesy of hundreds of millions of public dollars. “And that’s what got me thrown out the Planning Commission” by the mayor.

John Ettorre has been writing about Cleveland for more than 25 years. His work has appeared in more than 100 publications, including the *New York Times*, *Christian Science Monitor* and *National Catholic Reporter*.

## Bedford City Hall Continued From Page 1

“We responded to ads and spoke with several property management companies and everything was good to go until we arrived to view the houses,” Brown said. “Once they saw we were black all of sudden there was a complication or the place was no longer available.”

Brown, 33, said that with a combined six-figure household income, renting a decent home should not be a problem.

“We heard every excuse,” explained Brown. “I told them if they felt I had credit issues my wife’s credit was fine but it was obvious this was an excuse not to rent to a black family.”

According to Brown, the experience led him to become civically and politically active in the city, eventually even considering running for Mayor.

As with most of the suburbs surrounding Cleveland, Brown assumed he would find pockets of poor and underrepresented transient populations, but what stunned him was what he didn’t find in Bedford.

“You go to the service department, and there were no blacks working there at all,” Brown said. “I go City Hall, and I didn’t see any blacks folks. How does a city with this large a black population have no African Americans in the police or fire departments?”

### Demographic shift

Between 2000 and 2010, Bedford’s black population more than doubled from 2506 to 5479, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. As of 2010, at least 45 percent of the city’s nearly 13,000 residents were black, while all other racial demographics lost population.

But the hiring of minorities in Bedford City Hall has not kept pace with the city’s changing demographics. The Bedford police and fire departments have no black employees. The city employs only a handful of blacks, less than 10 percent of the city’s workforce, with the majority being seasonal workers making minimum wage.

Bedford operates under a council-manager form of government. City Manager, Michael Mallis is appointed by the Council, and is responsible for the administration of all city business except for the law and finance departments.

The city has never had an African American mayor, council member or executive cabinet staff member.

According to records provided The Real Deal by Mallis, Bedford has about 160 full-time workers making more than \$21 an hour. Of those only one is African American. In fact, Bedford has more full-time workers who are relatives of other white city employees than it has total number of African American workers. Mallis’s sister in law is among those making more than \$21 an hour.

There are six members of the city’s executive staff, at least four of whom report directly to Mallis. None of the administrators is a minority. In a recent response to the *Real Deal Press* record request, Mallis explained that while there were no African Americans on the safety force, there were black support staff workers.

Council member Walter Genutis called the lack of African American representation at City Hall troubling.

“I find the situation peculiar as you do,” explained Genutis. “It’s a good question... why aren’t there blacks and other minority groups represented in our workforce? It’s a darn good question but honestly I don’t have an answer.”

Genutis said he is going to open a dialogue with Mallis, other council members and the city’s residents.

“This is a bad reflection on the city and going forward we need to have discussions on diversity at all levels of our city government.”

Annie McPherson, a retired educator who moved to Bedford in 1994, has met with city leaders and spoke of her concerns about the lack of blacks in the safety forces and city in general.

“The issue here is one that the mayor and city manager can control,” said McPherson. “How can you have a city with this large a minority population and not have one African American appointed to your cabinet or on the police force?”

According to McPherson many minority residents move to the city and go along with everyday life while forgoing their civic responsibilities.

“People are not paying attention to the issues in general,” explained McPherson. “Many of our people don’t even vote and nothing is going to change until we demand representation and we have to vote.”

Mallis says Bedford is committed to minority hiring. “Diversity is important and we don’t discriminate against anyone. We hire the best people for the job.”

For Robert Brown the search for a place to call home has led them to move to Warrensville. Brown and his wife still work in Bedford and are still active in politics locally.

“People should be able to live in a place where they can find a home regardless of race and a place where the local government reflects all of the people.”

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Euclid

# Plans to close Forest Park Middle School have some upset

By Derek Dixon  
RDP CORRESPONDENT

The introduction of eighth-graders into Euclid High School this fall has provoked public reaction that ranges from providing a foundation for the district's future to driving further enrollment decline.

To the chagrin of most and the agreement of others on social media, the school board at its March 14th meeting unanimously approved a cost-saving resolution to reduce its secondary education campuses from three to two. Forest Park Middle School will cease academic operations after June, leaving only Central Middle School and Euclid High School. If parents of the current 375 seventh-graders are to remain in the district, their children will need to attend the high school for their eighth grade year. That could bring the building's 2016-17 enrollment to an estimated 2,100 students, according to assistant superintendent Dr. Charles Smialek.

All current fifth-graders would attend Central Middle for

sixth grade, joining the school's current sixth-graders who will remain there for seventh grade.

"This is a difficult decision," said Smialek, slated to succeed Keith Bell as superintendent when the latter's resignation becomes effective June 30. "It's a difficult step to take as a district. There's a lot of emotion behind that."

"I'm ninety percent sure I will be pulling my daughter out of the district," responded Euclid resident and '97 EHS graduate Patrina Nickson via telephone, referring to her Shoreview Elementary fifth-grader. Nickson said the distance from her home to Central, as opposed to Forest Park, would be too long a walk for her daughter, who has special needs. "These are some of the exact reasons I pulled my older two out of the district before they got the middle school back in 2011." Bell insisted, however, that bussing would be provided for students residing outside the established parameters for walking distance to the buildings.

While he didn't reveal a specific dollar amount the district would save by closing Forest Park, Smialek confirmed it was "significant" and that passage of the pro-

posed Phase II bond issue slated for the November ballot would allow the district to address longer-term facilities issues.

Smialek said, "Phase II will renovate Euclid High School and bring the middle school onto the high school campus so that we really have a six-through-twelve secondary campus, but with two buildings that connect. So students in the middle school can take some of the upper-level courses. We really have to look at being as responsible with our taxpayer dollars as possible." Pending passage, these changes would likely go into effect starting the 2018-19 school year.

As for this fall, Smialek said adequate forethought for spacing and staffing went into the move; and that the board continues to explore all facets of the change. "We realize we have to have some segregation (between grade levels) so that people feel safe. At the high school, we will have an eighth-grade principal, we'll have an eighth grade counselor, and we'll be adding a security guard as well. We want them to feel safe, but we also want them to feel like they're part of the school."

The announcement has also drawn supporters. "I look at this as an investment into Euclid staying structurally strong," said former board member Carol Bechtel. "The district reorganized twice during my time on the board from 1990 to 2005. A lot of the concerns back then were the same ones parents are having now. All three of my children (all EHS graduates) were moved back then, including sending my son to Forest Park, which I thought was at the end of the world. But it was in fact a 12-minute drive from our home and we survived it."

Many current EHS students expressed cautious optimism. "I wouldn't mind having the eighth-graders as long as it doesn't stop me from getting my work done," said 14-year-old Chenise, a current ninth-grader.

"I think (including the eighth-graders) can be beneficial," added Rayshawn, a 14-year-old who will be in tenth grade in the fall. "When we were in eighth grade last year, we didn't like some high-schoolers, but others were OK. I already know some of the kids that are coming next year anyway."

The board also anticipates



Dr. Charles Smialek  
Asst. Superintendent

that a proposed peer-led advocacy component will help create a smooth transition. "There are a number of programs already in place, such as the "Stand Up" initiative where the "Stand Up" ambassadors go through a series of trainings at the high school. They already do outreach to the middle schools."

Kathleen, an EHS upperclassman, agreed with the idea. "If a female student was needed to help a female eighth-grader, I'd be willing to help. I think it should be the same with the males."

More information is available at [www.euclidschools.org/news](http://www.euclidschools.org/news). The board will also hold an informational session for all interested parties Monday, April 4 at 7 pm at the high school.

Garfield Heights

## Determined Trinity grad finding success, national recognition after early detours

For four backbreaking years, Sharmayne Schaffer hoisted trays heavy with enchiladas, burritos, tacos and other zesty fare while serving tables at Abuelo's Mexican Restaurant in Warrensville Heights.



Sharmayne  
Schaffer

"I can remember saying to myself, 'I don't want to do this for the rest of my life,'" the 30-year-old said. "I knew I had more in me."

So she literally crossed the street three years ago and enrolled at Tri-C's Eastern Campus, located within sight of Abuelo's at the corner of Richmond Road and Harvard Road in Highland Hills. She'll graduate next month with an Associate of Arts degree and numerous academic honors. She recently was named a 2016 Coca-Cola Community College Academic Team Scholar, a national award recognizing students for leadership, community

service and academic excellence. Judges considered more than 1,900 students for the honor.

"My time at Tri-C," the Garfield Heights resident said, "has been better than I ever could have imagined."

Schaffer found that success during her second try at college. After graduating from Trinity High School in 2004, she signed up for classes at John Carroll University. The tuition proved crushing; she left after one year, thousands of dollars in debt.

She said the time away from school, during which she pursued an acting dream while continually working restaurant jobs to

whittle away her debt, positioned her to succeed on her return.

"When I look back now, I'm thankful I was out for so long," Schaffer said. "I've lived life and understand why college is so important. It made me more determined and dedicated to my studies."

It shows, too. Schaffer entered her final semester at Tri-C with a 3.68 GPA. She also was selected for the inaugural class of future leaders attending Tri-C's Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Humanities Center. The center opened in January at Eastern Campus.

Schaffer said she has seen

changes in herself since becoming a Mandel Scholar. ("I'm much more confident," she said.) She called the leadership program "Training 101" for her future aspirations. She wants someday open a nonprofit dedicated to mentoring young women in Greater Cleveland. She plans to transfer to Case Western Reserve after graduating from Tri-C and earn a bachelor's degree in Women's and Gender Studies.

"A lot of important people in my life pushed me to do the things I've done," Schaffer said. "I want to be that person for others. I want to give back. That's my passion. That's my calling."

## Editorial

### 'Community Benefits'

Both our lead story this month and the article on the facing page focus on the notion of "community benefits." The stakes surrounding this issue are immense because there are so many urgent and vital needs in Cleveland neighborhoods, and opportunities to leverage citizen gains when hundreds of millions of dollars are being spent cannot be squandered.

Many of the construction projects at issue are in or around areas that are solidly black. Sadly, there are questions in many of these areas — indeed throughout Greater Cleveland — as to who speaks for a particular community. Too often it appears the answer is, "no one". No one spoke for the victims of Anthony Sowell. No one speaks against the continued diminution of healthcare or transportation services in the community, or against the systemic rape of public school dollars by rapacious charter school operators.

Councilman T J Dow put himself in a trick bag with his wholly inept handling of the Innova project. But his and his constituents' desires for a community development corporation that speaks for them have been opposed by an establishment that gives lip service to community voice but works against the emergence of true community power.

Unless we find ways to work together, starting with sitting down at tables where all interests are present and welcome before the pie is baked, sliced, and consumed, Northeast Ohio will continue its downward spiral, and the precious legacy assets that we have inherited will become increasingly harder to maintain.

### Two Candles on our Birthday Cake

This issue represents the first effort of our third year.

As it has been our wont to share our progress — and our struggles — with you from time to time, this new year of publication is a prime time to take a look at where we are, and then where we want to go. But first, anchored in the spirit of San-kofo, we look back to where we started.

Our first journalistic ancestor was



The Real Deal, which aspired to and sometimes succeeded in being a monthly newspaper. Its premier issue, April 1991, expressed the ambition to show Cleveland's black community in all its multi-varied, confused and confusing unvarnished condition. The front page presented side-by-side, stories of that year's Jack and Jill cotillion, alongside perhaps the area's only news account of a talk given by Min. Louis Farrakhan before a reported crowd of almost ten thousand at Public Hall. Its final issue, June 1993, contained a fulsome analysis of the campaign to succeed Marvin McMickle's as Cleveland NAACP president.

The Real Deal did not re-emerge until about 2007 when a few posts began to appear online under that rubric. You can still find those early posts, and hundreds more, at rrandrews.blogspot.com.

After years of blogging, we returned to print in April 2014 with a variant on that original name. We still aspire to share in print the collage of black Cleveland, both for the communities that comprise it, and for those who dwell in and around black Cleveland with greater or lesser degrees of sympathy.

Since our first issue, we have increased our circulation by more than fifty percent. Our print run is now at 15,000. We are now available at more than 300 loca-

tions every month, a number that is also growing. Our list of contributors is growing larger and stronger, and we have begun to cover more communities.

We intend in this third year to strengthen our business model and to broaden our base of advertisers. We will be introducing several new features in the coming months. And our long-promised website is, really, truly, almost ready.

We hope that you will continue to support us and to engage us in dialogue, not just when you see us out and about, but also via letters to the editor, on Twitter @realdealpress, and soon to be elsewhere.

We encourage you to send us news and tips, as you are beginning to do with increasing frequency. Send either or both to us, along with any suggestions for stories, at rta@TheRealDealPress.com. Feel free to let us know how we can serve you better.

And please, please, please, support our advertisers. Let them know that you see their ads in our paper. And let your dry cleaner, lawyer, real estate agent, grocer, banker, know that they should be advertising in Greater Cleveland's most up-and-coming, interesting, surprising, and wide-ranging monthly read about our shared community.

**Thank you.**

**THE REAL DEAL**  
PRESS

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Send letters, press releases, notices, calendar items, and corrections to The Real Deal Press via email at rta@TheRealDealPress.com or fax: 216.672.4304.

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# Local collaboration is key if Community Benefit Agreements are to work

By **Montrie Rucker Adams**  
Special to the Real Deal Press

“People often talk about public, private and nonprofit collaborations in theory,” said Chris Nance. “However, it’s been my experience that this is one that is actually working.”

Nance directs the construction diversity and inclusion efforts of the Commission on Economic Inclusion, an arm of the Greater Cleveland Partnership.

Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs) as outlined by The Commission on Economic Inclusion (Commission) are “... a collaborative model that is designed to develop effective workforce equity strategies with real community input on inclusion goals.” These CBA agreements promote the core values of inclusiveness and accountability. They are also tools for project owners to increase the participation and wealth building opportunities on major construction projects for local workers, including Female Business Enterprises (FBEs) and Minority Business Enterprises (MBEs).

The Construction Employers Association has been a lead partner in this effort from the beginning. CEA is a link between the project owners and the construction industry. “They are a facilitator, the bridge. Their relationship to the construction collaboration has been essential in our success to date,” said Nance. CEA has provided funding for workforce and contracting efforts, serves on several CBA committees and through its members has provided over 20 jobs.

Other partners and collaborators include:

- **The Urban League of Greater Cleveland, Towards Employment and El Barrio/ The Centers** – Provide soft skills training.
- **Advanced Technology and Training Center at Cuyahoga Community College** – Provides classroom and pre-apprenticeship training.
- **Cleveland Building and Construction Trades Council** – Provides curriculum content and plays a pivotal role in the placement of PAT graduates into the trades.

According to Nance, three years into the formal Memorandum of Understanding/CBA agreement [MOU], public and private project owners, representing Greater Cleveland’s largest employers, have been:

- 1) Collaborating by sharing outcomes, information, and best practices with The Commission and each other
- 2) Proactively ensuring the diversity and inclusion strategies are part of the overall planning and execution of major construction projects.
- 3) Providing data & reporting on a quarterly basis that is posted on the Commission/GCP website, thereby following through on a critical aspect of the MOU: a commitment to transparency

Nance stresses that CBAs exist within the broader context of economic development in Greater Cleveland and Northeast Ohio. “The strength of a local community is directly tied to the residents benefiting from economic development opportunities,” he said.

The emphasis is on “local.” As a result of being intentional about placing a priority on local people, businesses and economic development, “We have a civic responsibility to continue to both invite and embrace inclusion strategies in our major construction projects,” said Nance.

Natoya Walker-Minor, the City of Cleveland’s Chief of Public Affairs, agrees and says that construction contractors are continuing to embrace CBAs as an economic tool. “We’re not yet experiencing 100 percent participation,” Walker-Minor stresses. “CBA, under the 2013 Memorandum of Understanding, is a voluntary practice and some companies do not include it as part of the contract.”

However, the City of Cleveland enacts all the policies with an emphasis on local hires, procurement, contracting and sub-contracting. Mayor Jackson calls it “self-help.” There is a move toward increasing the local economy and CBAs are a tool to make the economic impact. “If we buy, contract, hire and procure local, the dollar turns over in the community. That’s the intent,” said Walker-Minor.

As of November 11, 2015, there were nearly \$1 billion worth of construction projects in Greater Cleveland. “How do Clevelanders get a piece of that pie?” asks Walker-Minor. “CBAs are a tool that promotes local participation. We want local employees on those jobs. Our men and women *should* get the jobs because we have Clevelanders that can do them,” she offers.

**Current project reporting as the end of Third Quarter 2015:**

Case Western Reserve Univ.	\$45,500,000
Cleveland Clinic	\$195,787,755
CMHA	\$15,000,000
CMSD	\$108,000,000
Cuyahoga County	173,888,860
Dominion East Ohio	\$18,000,000
Fairmount Properties	\$59,792,701
Finch Group	\$28,348,943
Geis Companies LLC	\$14,555,988
MetroHealth System	\$7,120,833
NE OH Regional Sewer District	\$181,533,153.08
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$847,528,233.08</b>

Since the “nine that signed” the MOU in 2013, Cleveland has had 15 projects with CBAs, Cleveland Clinic has three and University Hospitals has had two, noting that University Hospital’s *Vision 2010* was the impetus that validated the MOU adoption in Cleveland. “That’s progress,” shared Walker-Minor. “There was a lot of push back, but we keep promoting it. We keep talking to developers, contractors and owners. What’s key is that owners have buy-in. ... That’s essential.”



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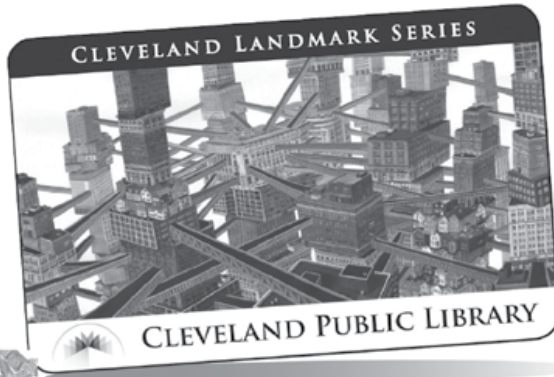
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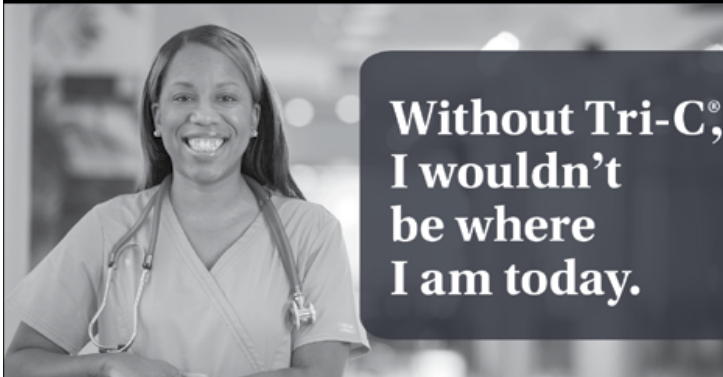
# Cleveland Landmark Series Card #3!

This Cleveland Public Library card, featuring the painting *Dissemination* by Amy Casey, symbolizes information being transferred into and out of the library in a whimsical way.



*"In Dissemination I wanted to represent how the library acts as a conduit of information and services, connecting people and places and ideas."*

Amy Casey



Valencia Collins enrolled at Tri-C to earn a nursing degree, and today she has a job doing what she loves.

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## Community Calendar



Donna Brazile



Jeff Johnson

### WOMEN OF COLOR ANNUAL RETREAT

The Women of Color Foundation will present its 14th annual Personal and Professional Development Retreat for Women of Color on Wednesday, April 13 from 8a-5p at Corporate College East, 4400 Richmond Road, Warrensville Hts. Featured national speakers include Paula E. Boggs, retired EVP, General Counsel and Secretary, Starbucks Corporation; and George Fraser, Chairman, Frasersnet.

Limited scholarships are available. For more info and to register, visit [womenofcolorfoundation.com](http://womenofcolorfoundation.com) or call 216.391.4300 x 307.

**Alexandria Johnson Boone**, founder of the Women of Color Foundation and president and CEO of Gap Communications Group, has been named 2016 Trailblazer by the Ohio River Valley Women's Business Council. The award will be presented during the group's Catch the Wave Conference in Cleveland, April 18-20. Visit [orvwbc.org](http://orvwbc.org) for more information.

The Books in a Bar discussion group will consider Edward Kelsey Moore's *The Supremes at Earl's All You Can Eat* on **April 11 from 7-9PM** at Nighttown Restaurant, 12383 Cedar Rd. Co-sponsored by Appletree Books, 12419 Cedar.

**The Rust College Choir** of Holly Springs, MS will appear in a benefit concert **April 18, 7p** at Cory United Methodist Church, 1117 East 105 St. Tickets are \$20, students \$10. 216.451.0460 or 216.765.8247.

The second biannual **Race, Food & Justice Conference** will take place at Case Western Reserve University, **April 21-23**. FREE, IMPORTANT, AND OPEN TO THE COMMUNITY. Visit [case.edu/socialjustice/events/upcoming-events/rfj-conference/](http://case.edu/socialjustice/events/upcoming-events/rfj-conference/) for details. Call Kim Forman 216-533-8611/ 216-961-4646 x 104.

The 4th Biannual **African American Philanthropy Summit** ["Impact & Influence: The Evolution of African-American Giving "] takes place Saturday, April 23 from 8:30a - 4p at Corporate College East in Warrensville Hts. T. Featuring Donna Brazile and Cleveland's own Jeff Johnson of Jeff's Nation. Contact [AAPC@CleveFdn.org](mailto:AAPC@CleveFdn.org).



Paula E. Boggs



Alexandria Johnson Boone

# Good health eludes many who live in shadow of premier hospitals

By Amy Bush Stevens  
& Martha Halko

April is National Minority Health Month, and there is still a lot of work that needs to be done to reduce the disparities in health among various groups of Ohioans.

According to national data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that was highlighted in the Health Policy Institute of Ohio's Health Value Dashboard ([www.hpio.net/2014-health-value-dashboard](http://www.hpio.net/2014-health-value-dashboard)), there are significant gaps in life expectancy for different groups of Ohioans. An African American child born in Ohio today can expect to live to age 73.9, more than a decade less than children in other racial/ethnic groups. Asian Americans in Ohio have the longest life expectancy, 87 years, 13.1 years longer than African Americans. And African Americans in other states have much longer life expectancies as well. For example, African American life expectancy is 6.3 years longer in Minnesota (the best state in the nation) than in Ohio.

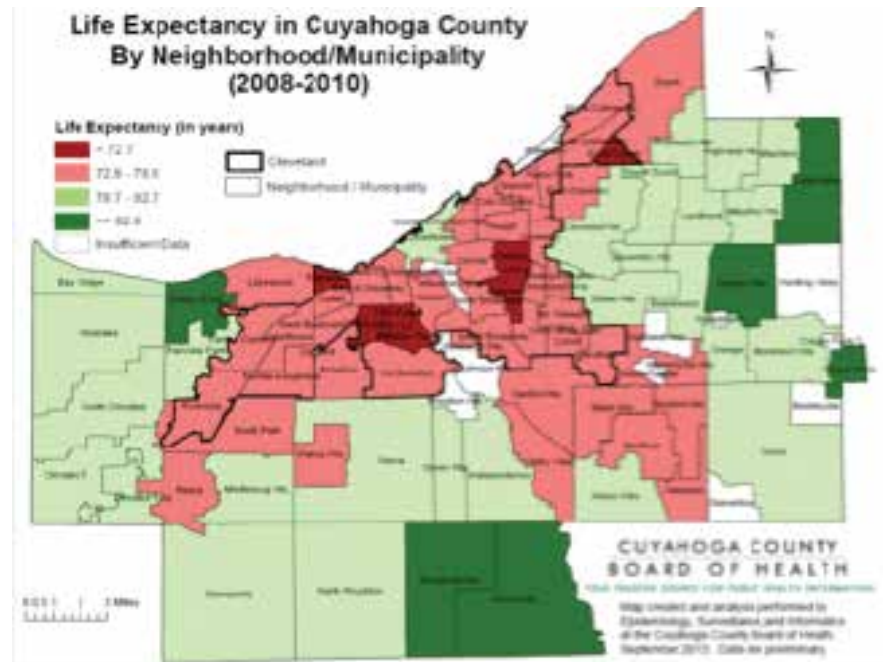
Within Cuyahoga County, there are also significant gaps in life expectancy depending on where someone lives. The worst health outcomes are in the urban core — Cleveland and its first-ring suburbs. This is where many people of color live, including African Americans, Hispanics and Asian & Pacific Islanders.

According to the newly released 2016 County Health Rankings, Cuyahoga County ranks in the bottom third of all 88 counties in Ohio for health outcomes. Even though Cuyahoga County ranks consistently in the top 10 in the state for clinical care (measured by access to and quality of care), this has not made the

area's residents healthier. That is because the conditions that shape health are not spread equitably across the county. For example, County Health Rankings finds that Cuyahoga County has the most black/white residential segregation of any urban Ohio county. As an underlying cause of health disparities, residential segregation is associated with many poor health outcomes including infant mortality.

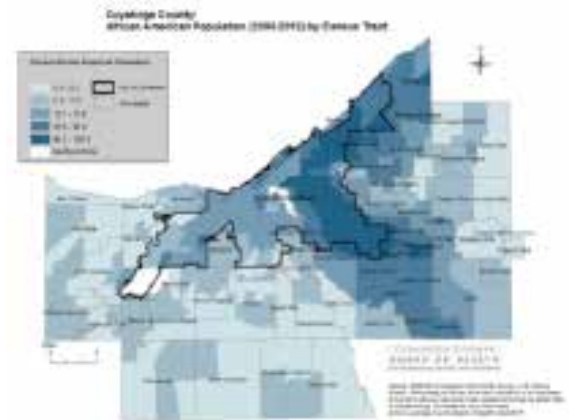
With the passage of the Affordable Care Act, more Ohioans have gained access to health insurance coverage. But access to quality health care is necessary, but not sufficient, for good health. In addition to medical care, health is shaped by our behaviors and by the social, economic and physical environment. When combined, these nonmedical factors like education, nutrition and air pollution are actually the most significant modifiable drivers of health outcomes. Genes also impact our health, but are largely considered to be "non-modifiable" in terms of public policy.

Although we know that factors outside of medical care have the greatest impact on health, we spend most of our healthcare dollars on clinical "sick care" instead of prevention. Prevention and public health strategies often address non-medical factors, such as drinking water quality (physical environment), child abuse (social environment) and smoking (behavior). Prevention spending, estimated to be approximately 5 percent of national health expenditures, includes clinical preventive services like immunizations and cancer screenings, as well as community-based strategies led by health departments, such as infant mortality and youth drug prevention programs. It's important to note, however, that the 5 percent estimate does not include preven-



tion-related spending outside the healthcare or public health systems, such as workplace wellness programs, health club memberships or law enforcement activities to deter motor vehicle crash injuries.

The Health Improvement Partnership- Cuyahoga (HIP-Cuyahoga) has found that some people are born and live in places where it is difficult to grow up healthy and thrive. In these areas, poverty is high and community conditions create barriers to good health. For example, many of these areas lack grocery stores that sell fresh fruits and vegetables and many residents have safety concerns about walking or letting their children play outside. This limits their opportunities to be healthy. Too many people in Cleveland and areas of Cuyahoga County are not as healthy as they should be, and because of this, they are living shorter lives. This cannot be explained by differences in genetics or by healthcare access alone.



The conditions in which people live, and the opportunities they have, form the foundation for health and without them, people are more likely to live shorter, sicker, and economically unstable lives. That is why more than 100 community partners have come together as the HIP-Cuyahoga Consortium to build opportunities for everyone in Cuyahoga County to have a fair chance to be healthy. When healthy living is easier, we all live longer and

healthier lives.

To learn more or to get involved in HIP-Cuyahoga, go to [www.hipcuyahoga.org](http://www.hipcuyahoga.org)

Information about the Health Policy Institute of Ohio can be found at [www.hpio.net](http://www.hpio.net)

Amy Bush Stevens is Vice President, Prevention and Public Health Policy, Health Policy Institute of Ohio. Martha Halko is Deputy Director, Prevention & Wellness, Cuyahoga County Board of Health

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## Careers



James Cowan



Carolyn Lanier



Danielle Price

**James Cowan** has joined TDA in Willoughby as a project designer. A graduate of Glenville HS '02, he earned a Master's of Architecture from Kent State University's Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative

**Ashley Gowens** is now director of marketing & communications for **Euclid Public Library**. She was previously director of communications for the City of Warrensville Hts.

**Carolyn Lanier** has joined the **North-east Ohio Medical University** as chief

of staff and vice president for diversity, equity and inclusion. A graduate of the University of Michigan (B.A. Psychology) and Seattle University (M.P.A.), Lanier's experience includes eight years as human resources manager at the Seattle and King County Dept. of Public Health and a year managing relief efforts after the civil war in Rwanda.

**Danielle Price** is the new director of community health engagement for **University Hospitals**. She was previously with Neighborhood Connections.

## Community Bulletin Board

**Greater Cleveland Urban Film Fest sets fundraiser at the 9**

The **Greater Cleveland Urban Film Festival** is looking to move into the top ten black film festival national rankings this year. To do so will require a boost in total attendance, something GCUFF planners are anticipating with an expanded schedule and the addition of several new venues, including the Cleveland Museum of Art.

This year's festival will be extended to eight days, opening September 15 and closing September 23.

A fundraiser featuring Union Club president **Randell McShepard** will be held Wednesday, April 20 from 6-8:30p at the 9, 2017 East Ninth St. Call 216.965.4142 or email [alton@gcuff.org](mailto:alton@gcuff.org) to RSVP or for more info.

**Scholarship and internship deadlines**

The Black Professionals Association Charitable Foundation is offering several programs for college students, including scholarship aid and paid internships in certain career fields. The application deadline for all programs is April 22. BPACF is also co-sponsoring a free internship boot camp for high school students on April 16 [10a-2p] at Tri-C's metro campus. Visit [www.bpacf.org](http://www.bpacf.org) or call 216.229.7110 to sign up.

**Volunteers sought for Handyman/Handywoman program to aid low-income homeowners**

Rebuilding Together is a nonprofit year-round program that helps repair and rehabilitate the homes of low-income, elderly, disabled and veteran homeowners by bringing volunteers from all walks of life and all faiths together to help eligible recipients remain warm, safe, and dry in their homes.

Rebuilding Together is starting a new handyman/handywoman program, RT DIRECT, to help improve the lives of more low-income homeowners in Northeast Ohio. RT Direct will consist of regional teams of handymen/handywomen who go out into the community to complete minor home repairs and modifications. RT is looking for volunteers who are: knowledgeable or trainable in minor home repairs; free during the week and occasional weekends; comfortable working in various situations; able to work quickly and effectively; have their own form of transportation; and willing to submit to a background check.

To enlist or for more information, call or email Rachel Jamison: 330.860.7438 or [rachel.jamison@rebuildingtogetherneo.org](mailto:rachel.jamison@rebuildingtogetherneo.org).

**GiveCamp Weekend sign up starts April 15**

GiveCamp is a weekend-long event where software developers, designers, database administrators, project managers and creative professionals donate their time to create software and web-based applications for non-profit organizations. Conceived by a Microsoft executive in 2007, there are nearly 30 GiveCamps throughout the country benefiting hundreds of nonprofits every year. Cleveland has one of the best, according to those who should know.

The sign-up dates for nonprofits to participate are April 15 through June 3. Sign-ups are online of course, at <http://clevelandgivecamp.org/nonprofits/>.

The GiveCamp weekend will be July 29-31 at Burke Lakefront Airport and the Lean Dog Boat [former Hornblowers Restaurant].

# Links program for young leaders delivers powerful, sobering, message



(left to right) Western Reserve Chapter President, Lynn Lorraine Jackson, 2nd from left, rear, Dr. Janet Morgan, chair, Links Health & Human Services (3rd from left, back row) and Central Area Director, Glenda Masingale Manson, with the Growing Leaders students [schools in brackets] from the Cleveland Botanical Garden's Green Corps program: Dasia Davis [MC2STEM], Renee Boyd [MC2STEM], Richelle Boyd [MC2STEM], Ajhasia Dumas [Cleveland Central Catholic]; Maleha Bethley [Beaumont], Tonnetta Barnes [John Hay Early College] and Zephania Galloway [John Hay Early College]. Renee Holcomb Hardwick, immediate past president, Western Reserve Links; Glenda Masingale Manson, Links Central Area Director; and Stacy Soria, MPA, LCDC 111, OCPS 1, Recovery Resources.

By R. T. Andrews  
EDITOR

Rodney Brown, one of this area's premier event photographers, likely never anticipated being part of a story he was documenting for his client when he arrived at Case's Mandel Center one Saturday morning last month. He was there to shoot pictures for the Western Reserve chapter of the Links, a leading volunteer service organization of civic-minded African American women.

The program was part of an ongoing three- to five-year collaboration between the Links chapter and the Cleveland Botanical Garden's Green Corps in which 50 Cleveland public school students receive both summer employment. Participating students also receive tutoring, mentoring, and other resources designed to equip them with essential tools for success in life.

The March 12 session

was dedicated to the chapter's HIV/AIDS Awareness Umbrella program. Special guests were the Links central area director, Glenda Masingale Manson — the Links are a national volunteer service organization with more than 12,000 members in close to 300 chapters across 41 states — and Dr. Virginia Banks, who chairs the national's HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C Initiative.

The core part of the session was a presentation by Stacy Soria, Manager of HIV Prevention for Recovery Resources, a behavioral healthcare that provides a continuum of education and prevention, outpatient treatment and supportive services. Her presentation was from start to finish a compelling, comprehensive, and coherent discussion about what HIV and AIDS are, their history and relationship, and their current status in the medical world and the Greater Cleveland community.

Soria said there were about 1.2 million people living with HIV in the US in 2012 and that about 12% of them did not know they were infected. Ohio had about 20% of that 2012 total. Law and medicine combine to provide great public sector awareness on what was once a condition that so ostracized its victims that it wasn't even mentioned in their obituaries. Today, healthcare professionals have detailed data on which zip codes are most at risk. Two-thirds of Cuyahoga County's cases are in Cleveland proper, with 44113, 44103, 44104, 44105, 44107, and 44112 having the highest indices of HIV.

Medical advances mean that HIV is no longer the death sentence it once represented. Powerful and effective treatment regimens are available to those who can access them, and the Centers for Disease Control now deem HIV "a winnable battle". Soria emphasized that testing for the virus is critical but

that African American young men are not being tested. Of 9,000 tests administered in the county in 2014, only 300 — about 4.4% — were given to African American men.

One of the tragedies of this imbalance is that what Soria described as a "revolutionary prevention method" called PrEP is being underutilized. While she said there a lot of gay white men on PrEP and thereby able to live normal lives, numerous social determinants of health, including geography, poverty, cultural norms and multiple stigmas, combine and interact in ways that mitigate against black men getting the help they need.

So engrossing and moving was her presentation that Rodney Brown, referencing his status as one of only two African American males in the room [this reporter being the other], he was going to carry Soria's message back to every group he was part of, including 100 Black Men of Greater Cleveland, to urge

black men of every station to get tested, further endearing himself to every mother, sister, or daughter in the room, and setting a course that black men throughout the county ought to follow.

Soria's talk included advice for how young women could protect themselves in the wake of the limited testing taking place in the black community.

Following a Q&A session, the poised and articulate high school students who attended the session, presented reports on their homework, and shared a lunch with Links members. Their April session will focus on increasing their financial literacy.

Later in the evening, the Links held their biennial fundraiser to support their ongoing charitable work, and presented Recovery Resources with a \$5,000 gift to continue its HIV/AIDS education and prevention work. The local chapter has about 46 members. Lynn Lorraine Jackson is president.

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# High School track and field season full of questions for many area teams

By Jay Frierson  
RDP Sports Reporter

The 2016 Boys High School Track and Field season has already begun with lots of exciting action and plenty of hopes. As the weather gets warmer and the stakes get higher, the competition will only intensify. These seven teams are among those we will be watching this season:

**Euclid High School.** The first outdoor meet for the Euclid Panthers will be the Collinwood Invitational on April 2, and Coach Ernest Kerr will be looking to build upon last season's solid showing. Senior sprinter Brian Tillman enjoyed some success last year and has already set a personal record of 7.18s this year in the indoor 60M at the University of Tiffin in January. He followed that up by setting another personal record by posting 11.13s in the 100M at the Euclid Relays. He placed first seven times in the 400M last year and then set a personal record in the D1 Regional finals of 48.3s in the 400 M.

Others to watch: **De'Quan Williams, Ronald Lee.**

**Garfield Heights.** Coach Bob Caruso and the Bulldogs are looking to have a much better year this season. Matias Vaughn and Timothy Cross will have a tough task trying to duplicate the outstanding production of last year's senior track and football star Jameel Miller. Vaughn set a personal record this season in the indoor Kent State Meet, posting a time of 2:21.34 in the 800M. Last year he ran 2:16:62 in the 800 and 5:13:00 in the 1600. Cross has already set three personal records this season in the Kent State and Oberlin High School meets. He ran 2:26.25 in the 800 and 5:29.63 in the 1600 at Oberlin, and posted 13:40.64 at the 5000M at Kent.

Others to watch: **Jamal Ervin, Darren Washington.**

**Maple Heights.** Coach Ricky Watters only has one goal for this season and that's to get past the District Finals. He will be depending on the services of last year's junior sensations Rob-



ert Taylor and Tristan Battle Hardy to do so. Taylor has already set two personal records this season at the Youngstown Indoor Invitational, a 7.35 in the 60M and a 24.22 in the 200M. In the Mayfield Invitational last season, Hardy posted a 100M personal record of 11.34. They will likely be looked upon again this season as the staples of the team.

Others to watch: **Laquan Taylor, Quartiz Long.**

**Warrensville Heights.** The Tigers are looking to repeat last season's trip to the Finals in Columbus, but they want to do better if they get there. Coach Antonio Coleman lost last year's star Darius Farmer to graduation; that means others will have to step up. Demetri Keaton might be the best candidate to do so. He personal records during this year's indoor season at the Youngstown Invitational, Kent State Indoor Meet and the OATCCC State Championships. He posted 53.61 in the 400M at Youngstown, and followed that with a 23.75 in the 200M at Kent, and at the state championship he posted a 7.00 in the 60.

Other Performers: **Abdul Aziz Yeo, Thomas Morris.**

**Brush.** The first words that Coach Cecil Shorts told me about this track season were about wanting "both the boys and girls team to qualify for state." He said that is the motivation every year for the Arcs when a new season begins. While Shorts declined to provide current or former times for his runners, he did offer the names of senior Jai Dixon, Austin Scott, Joshua Pope, Marcellus Byrd and Michael Baio.

**Shaker Heights.** The Red Raiders are looking to improve on a disappointing 2015 campaign. Coach Anthony Watkins is hopeful that Alexander Loney will continue to improve and be one of the top runners on the team. He's already set two personal records at the Northeast Ohio Indoor Track Conference Championship-Erie Division.

Others to watch: **Dallas Botchway, Darrell Brown II.**

**Cleveland Heights.** Coach Nick Contienza has only one goal for this season, and that's to "get to State's". The Tigers got close last year, reaching the District's, but they fell short of going further. This year's journey started last month when Na'Shawn Collins came in fourth at the Icebreaker Invitational, posting a 4:52.62 in the 1600M.



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