

# The Neighborhood News

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CUYAHOGA HEIGHTS, INDEPENDENCE, VALLEY VIEW, MAPLE HEIGHTS AND BEDFORD

95th YEAR NO. 42

THURSDAY, JULY 5, 2018

PHONE: (216) 441-2141 • EMAIL: NNEWS1923@AOL.COM

FREE

## GHPD investigating shots fired in Bonkers lot; owner offering reward

Garfield Heights police are still investigating shots fired in the back parking lot at Bonkers, a bar on Turney Road, on Saturday, June 16th. Bonkers owner, Rick Shuba, is offering his own \$500 reward for information leading to the capture and arrest of the persons involved.

According to footage shown on Fox8.news.com, surveillance video inside the bar shows a man in a black Adidas t-shirt looking to argue with another patron. Once outside, a surveillance camera on Turney Road shows the same male outside the bar trying to throw a punch at a second male. The males are then seen running to the back parking lot and one of the males begins firing a gun. It is unclear whether

the male in the Adidas shirt returned fire. No injuries were reported, but a vehicle parked on Thornton Avenue had its windows shot out, according to a police report.

Shuba said a new light is being installed in the back lot and police will be patrolling the area to provide more security.

"Having extra security measures is necessary to prevent this from happening again. I'm frustrated and sick over it," he said.

He and his wife have owned the bar for about 14 years. In a phone interview, Shuba said the incident was so spur of the moment and unlike anything that has happened there recently.

Anyone with information about the incident is urged

to call the Garfield Heights Detective Bureau at 216-475-5686.

## G.H. 911 lines down

Garfield Heights 911 emergency lines have been down since Monday morning due to an issue with AT&T, according to police officials. The lines remained down as of press time Tuesday.

Garfield Heights 911 calls are going to Chagrin Valley Dispatch which are then transferred to GHPD.

Residents can also call 216-475-1234 for police and fire emergencies in Garfield Heights.

## Maple Hts. man accused of plotting July 4th terrorist attack downtown

*(The following information was provided by Cleveland FBI Special Agent Vicki D. Anderson. The FBI notes that a criminal complaint is merely an allegation, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.)*

Demetrius Nathaniel Pitts, aka Abdur Raheem Rafeeq, aka Salah ad-Deen Osama Waleed, 48, of Maple Heights, Ohio, was charged with one count of attempting to provide material support to al Qaeda, a designated foreign terrorist organization. Pitts was arrested Sunday by members of the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force.

"Pitts, a U.S. citizen living in Ohio, pledged his allegiance to al-Qaeda, a for-

eign terrorist organization, and was planning to conduct an attack in Cleveland on Independence Day, the very day we celebrate the freedoms we have in this country," said Special Agent in Charge Stephen D. Anthony.

According to an affidavit filed in the case, between 2015 and 2017, Pitts expressed anti-American sentiments and expressed a desire to recruit people to kill Americans. The defendant expressed a desire to meet with an al Qaeda "brother" and in June he was introduced to an FBI employee acting in an undercover capacity (UCE), who Pitts believed was such a "brother."

Pitts and the UCE met on June 22, in Walton Hills, Ohio, where they discussed launching an attack for al Qaeda during the July 4th holiday. Later Pitts discussed having a bomb blow up during the 4th of July parade.

Pitts and the UCE searched Google for a map of downtown Cleveland. After learning the fireworks would be launched from Voinovich Park, Pitts said: "Oh there you go. Oh yeah."

The meeting concluded with Pitts indicating to the UCE that he would travel to downtown Cleveland soon to take photographs and videotape footage as part of surveillance efforts of Voinovich Park and the nearby U.S. Coast Guard station.

The UCE texted Pitts later on June 22, where he indicated al Qaeda "brothers" would provide Pitts with a bus pass and cellular phone.

On June 26, Pitts contacted the UCE via text

message and relayed that he had completed the reconnaissance of the designated spots in downtown Cleveland and that he desired to "destroy the government."

Pitts also indicated he intended to travel to Philadelphia, since Philadelphia is his hometown and he knows it best. Pitts indicated it was his "job" to "go look at the base of the ground" and that it was up to other "brothers" to complete other parts of the job.

On June 27, Pitts met with the CHS and turned over the phone that contained the reconnaissance photos and videos so they could be provided to the al Qaeda brothers.

Later on June 27, Pitts and the UCE met in Maple Heights then drove to downtown Cleveland, where they discussed the impending July 4th bombing.

A search of the phone that Pitts provided to the CHS included four videos taken by Pitts that show him walking down East 9th Street in Cleveland, pointing out potential targets such as the federal building, the Coast Guard station and St. John's Cathedral, which he said could be taken "off the map."

On July 1, Pitts met with the UCE in Garfield Heights, Ohio, for Pitts to explain his plan for Philadelphia. Pitts said he planned to travel there to conduct reconnaissance for a future attack there.

Pitts faces a statutory maximum sentence of 20 years in prison.

**READ THE N.N. ONLINE AT**  
[theneighborhoodnews.com](http://theneighborhoodnews.com)

## SLAVIC VILLAGE CELEBRATES THE 4TH



Independence Day came a little early to Slavic Village with the Iron Ward Music Festival's red, white and blue patriotic tribute to our founding fathers last Monday at Dan Kane Park. Live music, facepainting, free hot dogs and ice cream were enjoyed by the appreciative crowd on hand for the annual festivities.

Photos by Michael Psenicka



# Stroll, bike through gardens of Slavic Village this Sunday

Come explore the gardens and natural amenities of Slavic Village at this year's Garden Walk, slated for this Sunday, July 8, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

This city-wide, self-guided walking tour will take you through some of Slavic Village's outstanding hidden home gardens and public community gardens.

Two guided biking tours will roll out from Fleet Bike Shop, 5002 Fleet Ave., promptly at 10:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. Cyclists should bring water and bike lock; helmets suggested.

Check in at any of the event hubs for tour maps: 6729 Indiana Ave., 6700 Claasen Ave.; and 5002 Fleet Ave. (block party site, too!).

For more info: <https://www.gardenwalkcleveland.org/neighborhood/broadway-slavic-village>

## 'Back to Basic' tips on recycling in Cuy. County

Recycling contamination is an issue across the nation and world, but is also a major problem in Cuyahoga County. Recently, many media outlets have reported on how we're being affected by China's new environmental policies and the best ways to recycle properly.

Recycling contamination happens when well-intended recyclers mistakenly put the wrong items into their recycling. It can wreak havoc on the recycling process in Cuyahoga County and throughout the world.

In Cuyahoga County, the best way to avoid recycling

contamination in your curbside recycling is to only recycle these five core items:

- CANS: Empty and rinse.
- CARTONS: Empty and rinse. Replace the cap - it's too small to be recycled by itself.
- GLASS BOTTLES & JARS: Empty and rinse.
- PAPER & BOXES: Flatten cardboard items, like cereal boxes, to save space.
- PLASTIC BOTTLES & JUGS: Empty and rinse. Replace the cap.

Place these items loose – not bagged – in your recycling bin or cart. All items should be clean, empty and dry. Plastic bottles and jugs include items with an opening or neck that is narrower than the body.

Learn more about recycling practices at [www.cuyahogarecycles.org/how\\_to\\_recycle](http://www.cuyahogarecycles.org/how_to_recycle).

## WTNO meets at G.H. library

The Warner Turney Neighborhood Organization will meet on Thursday, July 5, at 7 p.m. at the Garfield Heights Public Library, 5409 Turney Rd., Garfield Hts., in meeting room "B". Plans for the Ice Cream Social will be finalized and the August event will be discussed. There will be a 50/50 raffle.

## G.H. trash pick-up reminder

Residents of the city of Garfield Heights are reminded that because there was no trash pick-up yesterday, July 4th, due to the Independence Day holiday, trash pick-up will be one day late for Wednesday, Thursday and Friday scheduled collections.

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 Thursday, 10:00AM - 7:00PM  
 Friday, 10:00AM - 4:00PM  
 Saturday CLOSED

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**Community Health Fair**

at The Rock Community Church  
 (9403 Garfield Blvd, Garfield Heights, 44125)

**Saturday, July 28, 12-4pm**  
 (rain or shine)

Free Turkey Burgers & Bratwurst, Fat Free Hot Dogs, Popcorn, Drinks, Smoothies, Prizes

**Free Health Screens, Eye Exam, Inflatable Obstacle Course, Bounce Houses, Alpacas, "Ask a Nurse", Balloon Artist, DJ, Photobooth, Giant "Operation" & "Connect 4" Games, 25+ Health Vendors, Posters, Giveaways**

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**LET'S DO LUNCH!**  
 (For a small donation)

Seniors in Cuyahoga County aged 60 and over at the

**GARFIELD HTS. SENIOR CENTER**  
 11:30 A.M.  
 Mondays thru Thursdays  
**CALL FOR RESERVATIONS 216-475-3244**  
**COME EARLY & SOCIALIZE**  
 MEAL APPROVED BY WESTERN RESERVE AREA AGENCY ON AGING



# Newburgh Hts. police arrest suspect in rape

The Newburgh Heights Police Department arrested Chinyere "Ray" Okoronkwo, a 20-year-old male suspect in a strong arm rape incident reported on June 17th on Alpha Avenue, according to a press release from Police Chief John Majoy.

Okoronkwo, of Newburgh Heights, was apprehended without incident on Tuesday, June 26, around 5 p.m., while walking near E. 49th St. and Harvard Ave., according to Majoy. He was charged with rape and felonious assault and held on a \$1 million bond, according to Majoy. He said NHPD will be seeking other indictments in addition to these charges resulting from the same incident.

He appeared in Garfield Heights Municipal Court Tuesday morning and waived a preliminary hearing. The case has been bound over to the grand jury, according to Majoy.

"The NHPD extends its special thanks to the Cuyahoga County Regional Forensic Lab for their assistance in this case," said Majoy.

# County Medical Examiner reports on 2017 drug deaths

Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner Dr. Thomas Gilson recently released the 2017 Preliminary Drug Deaths Report. While this report marks an increase in the number of fatal overdoses, the rate of increase has slowed.

Overdose fatalities increased by 80 percent between 2015 and 2016, but only increased by 9 percent between 2016 and 2017. Notable trends/data include:

- 727 total drug overdose deaths (includes prescription drugs) - 666 in 2016.
- 604 drug overdose deaths (includes heroin, fentanyl and cocaine) - 591 in 2016.
- 492 fentanyl deaths - 399 in 2016.
- 100 fentanyl deaths among African Americans - 58 in 2016.
- 191 carfentanil deaths - 54 in 2016.

"The evolving opioid epidemic has proven to be complex and multifaceted. Last year, we lost 727 victims to a drug overdose – the most we've ever lost in Cuyahoga County's history," said Cuyahoga County Executive Armond Budish.

"This is a human tragedy. And this crisis impacts our services in many different ways from our jails to the number of children in foster care. We will continue to attack this epidemic through treatment and prevention. And we have filed a lawsuit to hold those pharmaceutical companies accountable for the damage they have caused," said Budish.

Furthermore, the evolving drug epidemic continues to impact caseloads, staffing and various medical examiner/laboratory operations.

• Drug chemistry items processed increased by 47 percent (21,422 items processed in 2017, 14,577 items processed in 2016). Note: Items processed may include but are not limited to drugs, packaging, paraphernalia, tablets, etc.

• Toxicology testing increased by 2.4 percent (3652 submissions in 2017, 3565 submissions in 2016).

• Five additional staff members were hired (Toxicology, DNA, Firearms, Pathology (Autopsy) Assistant, Forensic Pathologist).

- Purchased new equipment.

"In 2017, we saw a continued worsening of the drug overdose epidemic that has plagued our county. It is heartening to see a relative decline in deaths towards the end of the year, but we are still a long way from the end of the crisis," said Dr. Gilson.

For additional information and to view the complete report, visit [http://medicalexaminer.cuyahogacounty.us/pdf\\_medicalexaminer/en-US/HeroinFentanylReports/2017CCMEOPrelimDrugDeathRpt.pdf](http://medicalexaminer.cuyahogacounty.us/pdf_medicalexaminer/en-US/HeroinFentanylReports/2017CCMEOPrelimDrugDeathRpt.pdf).

WEEK 5 Monday, July 9th at 7pm

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Hours: Sun.-Mon. 10-4; Tues.-Fri. 9-7; Sat. 9-6

**The Board of Directors of Washington Park Community School**

will conduct a Special Meeting  
on Thursday, July 12, 2018  
at 5:30 p.m. at  
4000 Washington Park Blvd.,  
Newburgh Heights, OH



N.N.: 7-5-18

**Public Notice**

In compliance with auditing standards of the Auditor of State's office, State of Ohio, the City of Garfield Heights hereby gives notice that the City's unaudited 2017 General Purpose External Financial Statements have been completed and are available for inspection, during normal business hours, in the Finance Director's Office, located at the Garfield Heights Civic Center, 5407 Turney Road, Garfield Heights, Ohio 44125.

Neighborhood News – Thursday, July 5, 2018

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

The City of Garfield Heights will hold a Budget Hearing Meeting regarding the 2019 Fiscal Tax Budget at 5:30 p.m., Monday, July 9, 2018 at the Garfield Heights Civic Center, Council Caucus Room, 5407 Turney Road, Garfield Heights, Ohio 44125. All citizens are invited to attend and have the right to provide oral and written comments and ask questions concerning the 2019 Fiscal Tax Budget.

A copy of the 2019 Tax Budget is available for public inspection in the Office of the Finance Director from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

City of Garfield Heights  
5407 Turney Road  
Garfield Heights, Ohio 44125

Neighborhood News – Thursday, July 5, 2018

**NOTICE OF CITY OF STRONGSVILLE APPLICATIONS FOR LATERAL TRANSFER FOR PUBLIC SERVICE DISPATCHERS**

Applications and requirements can be downloaded from City of Strongsville website at [www.strongsville.org](http://www.strongsville.org), Human Resources Tab; or picked up at Strongsville City Municipal Offices at 16099 Foltz Parkway, Strongsville, Ohio, 44149. Applications, with all requirements, will be available beginning Friday, June 22, 2018. You must be at least eighteen (18) years of age and have a valid driver's license. Applications along with the required materials **must be returned in person no later than Friday, July 20, 2018 by 4:30 p.m.**

The City of Strongsville is an Equal Opportunity Employer  
NN: 6-27-18 & 7-5-18

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<b>HARD SALAMI</b> \$4.89 LB.	Rothenbuhler <b>SWISS CHEESE</b> \$4.89 LB.	Beef <b>T-BONE STEAKS</b> \$6.89 LB.	Beef <b>PORTERHOUSE STEAKS</b> \$6.89 LB.	Beef Boneless <b>SIRLOIN STEAKS</b> \$4.89 LB.

**CARRY-OUT CAFE OPEN EVERY FRIDAY 11AM - 6:30PM**



# Death Notices

**ELLEN JOYCE LONGO** (nee Yanish), 84, of Garfield Heights, went home to be with the Lord on Sunday, July 1st.

She was the beloved wife of the late Walter A., loving mother of Deborah Heath (Michael), Leonard (Connie), Donald, David (Sarah), Diane Evans (Glenn), and Denise St. Andrassy (Bill); devoted grandmother of Ambrosia, Samantha, Jamie, Taylor, and Abigail; great-grandmother of Adina. Daughter of the late Henry and Pearl Yanish;

## DOROTHY T. JOHNSON

March 23, 1929 --- July 13, 2013

**WE LOVE YOU  
AND MISS YOU.  
YOU ARE IN OUR PRAYERS  
ALWAYS.**

Husband LYNN, KATHY & GARRY



sister of Joan, Roger and the late Joanne, Elaine and Hank. Beloved aunt, great-aunt and friend to many.

Joyce was a dedicated member of Broadway United Methodist Church and Garfield Heights United Methodist Church.

Family will receive friends Sunday, July 8, from 2-6 p.m. at Nosek-McCreery Funeral Home, 8150 Brecksville Rd., Brecksville, where Joyce's funeral service will be held Monday, July 9, at 11 a.m. Interment at Knollwood Cemetery.

**MARY A. DORULLA** (nee Sczypta), 88, of Garfield Heights, passed away on June 13th.

She was the beloved wife of the late Stanley J.; loving mother of Stanley Mark; dearest sister of Caroline Bota, Joanne Barcikowski, Stella Kochis, and the late Joseph, Andrew and Frank. Dear aunt and great-aunt of many.

Mary was a beloved longtime employee of Ferfolia Funeral Home and St. Alexis Hospital.

Arrangements were handled by Ferfolia Funeral Home, and a Mass of Christian Burial to celebrate Mary's life was held at St. Monica Catholic Church. Interment in Calvary Cemetery.

**HERBERT E. WOOD**, 90, of Garfield Heights, passed away on June 13th.

He was the beloved husband of the late Margie; loving father of Alice Ann; cherished brother of John "Jack" Arthur (Kay) and predeceased by two.

Private services were held. Arrangements were handled by Ferfolia Funeral Home.

## Health Fair on Kimmel Rd.

A Community Day & Health Fair, sponsored by The Greater Cleveland New Beginning Missionary Baptist Church, 3585 Kimmel Rd., Cleveland, will be held on Saturday, July 28, from noon to 3 p.m.

A Save the Babies program will be held to educate young mothers on caring for their newborns and themselves. There will also be nurse practitioners taking blood pressures and doing diabetic prescreenings, as well as literature on health care, nutrition and Alzheimer's. A representative will be on hand to answer questions.

## Gas line replacement project begins on E. 75 St.

On Thursday, July 5, Dominion Energy Ohio's gas pipeline infrastructure replacement project will begin on East 75th Street, from Aetna Road to Union Avenue.

The improvements include replacing the old steel mainline with a new plastic mainline in the sidewalk area on the north side of the street. One lane of traffic will be maintained at all times through the work zone with traffic control personnel directing traffic flow. Access to adjacent driveways will be maintained throughout construction and the work will take place Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The project is scheduled for completion in August 2018.

"I am pleased that this investment in our aged infrastructure is occurring and understand that there will be some traffic and access issues on this high traffic route," said Ward 12 Councilman Tony Brancatelli.

Road construction invariably presents hazards to the public. All travelers are urged to use caution in construction zones. Public safety and the safety of workers is a top priority, Cleveland officials said.

Submit Community events to NN via Email: [nnews1923@aol.com](mailto:nnews1923@aol.com)

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Pernel Jones, Sr.  
Michael Jones

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Cleveland, Ohio 44103  
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## GHUMC free bible school

Garfield Heights United Methodist Church, 4977 Turney Rd., will host its Vacation Bible School for children, titled "Ship Wrecked," on Wednesdays, July 11 through August 8, from noon to 2 p.m.

The program will include lunch each day. The cost is free, but donations will be accepted. To register call 216-641-4919 or email [ghumchurch@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ghumchurch@sbcglobal.net).

## Vito-Nero

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# THESE NEIGHBORHOOD CHURCHES WELCOME YOU

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4977 Turney Rd. 216-641-4149  
Garfield Heights  
Sunday Worship and Sunday School 10:30am

**Greater Holy Ghost Missionary Baptist Church**  
12210 Miles Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio 44105  
Services 11:30 am Sundays  
Rev. Robinson Crenshaw, Pastor

**The Greater New Beginning Missionary Baptist Church**  
3585 Kimmel Road, Cleveland, OH 44105  
216-341-5522  
James C. Ligon, Sr., Pastor Emeritus  
Sunday 9:30AM Sunday School: 11:00AM Morning Worship  
[www.tgnbcleveland.com](http://www.tgnbcleveland.com)

**The Lutheran Church of the Covenant**  
19000 Libby Rd.,  
Maple Heights, Ohio  
(216) 662-0370

**St. Monica Church**  
13623 Rockside Road  
Garfield Heights 216-662-8685  
Pastor: Rev. Thomas Haren  
Daily Mass time: 8:00am,  
Saturday Vigil Mass: 4:00pm,  
Sunday Mass times: 8:00am, 10:00am & 12 Noon  
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- Background check • References required

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**RENT HALLS**

**RENT HALLS**

**HALL FOR RENT**

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**REAL ESTATE WANTED**

**RENT APARTMENT**

Real Estate Wanted. I buy houses for cash. As-is condition. Pat, (216) 324-3934.

**RENT HOUSE**

Newburgh Heights 4 bedroom single. 2 baths. Central air. Walk-out basement. Nicely renovated. \$950 + gas and electric, plus deposit. No pets. No Section 8. (216) 570-5984.

Union area. 2 bedrooms down. Some appliances. \$450 month + deposit. (216) 262-3101.

Vista Ave., Garfield Hts. 2 bedroom, 1 bath, full basement, central air, 1 car garage, front porch. Close to parks and shopping. \$795 month + security deposit. (440) 488-4862.

**RENT ROOMS**

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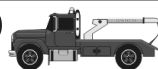
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## Community police reports

By Amber Weisbarth

(The following information was obtained from filed police reports and police dispatch logs.)

### GARFIELD HTS.

#### Aggravated Robbery

The manager of Family Dollar, 5068 Turney Rd., told police someone came into the store on June 26th, around 7:45 p.m., and began concealing items in a green bag he was carrying. She said she confronted the man and told him to take the items out of the bag, but the man took a gun from his pocket, pointed it at her and demanded she "back up." She complied and the man fled from the store northbound. Police were able to get a description of the male by watching surveillance camera footage and warned the Metro PCS store manager nearby in case the man returned to the area. Police searched the area for the suspect with negative results.

On June 28th, around 3:50 p.m., a different store manager at the same Family Dollar reported a robbery. She told police a man came into the store and began putting air fresheners, vice grips and work gloves into his pockets. He then walked past the counters towards the exit and the manager confronted him, asking him if he was going to pay for the items. She said the man then lifted his shirt, exposing a gun in his waistband, then left the store headed northbound on Turney. Surveillance video footage was to be forwarded to the Detective Bureau for further investigation. It is unknown if the robberies are related.

#### Burglary

A 40-year-old resident of the 10000 block of Langton Ave. told police she was upstairs exercising on June 19th, between 8 p.m. and 8:40 p.m., when she heard footsteps in the living room and dining room area below. At the time, she believed it had been her children coming in from outside, but when her son went downstairs he found the TV and blu-ray player had been stolen.

Police spoke to the other two children who said they had left the house about 25 minutes before police arrived and claimed they had locked up the house before leaving. Police said there was no sign of forced entry. The Detective Bureau was called to follow up.

#### Robbery

An employee of Eustis Cable Enterprises on Broadway Ave. told police he watched security camera footage and saw two men in a U-haul truck steal a 10' x 6' trailer from the lot between 3:30-3:40 a.m. on June 27th. He said the trailer contained nearly \$9000 worth of construction equipment and the trailer itself was valued at \$2500. He said a DT100 dump trailer was also stolen from the lot overnight between June 23rd and June 24th.

#### Weapon Offense

Police were dispatched to a home in the 10800 block of Wadsworth Ave. on June 20th, around 11:45 p.m., and spoke to a resident who said someone shot a bullet through her front window. Police found one round had been fired through the window and into the living room couch. The resident said moments before the shot was fired she had been sitting with her three-year-old daughter on that couch. Her two other children that live in the

house were questioned and said they do not have problems with anyone and did not know who would shoot at their house.

The next night, around 11:10 p.m., the resident again called police and said her son had been standing outside the home and saw a vehicle drive slowly past the house and believed it may have been involved in the shooting. The son described the vehicle as a newer silver/gray Chevy Impala being driven by a dark-skinned black male with short dreadlocks. He was the only occupant. Police searched the area for the suspect vehicle with negative results.

GHPD and Cleveland police were dispatched to the area of Grand Division and Burleigh Ave. on June 26th, around 12:05 p.m., for a report of a man walking down the street with a gun which he may be pointing at his head. The anonymous caller said it appeared the man was holding the gun up and filming himself on his cell phone. When police arrived they found the man walking on the street talking on his cell phone. He was identified as an 18-year-old Cleveland resident and told police he did have a gun in his pocket that he carries "for protection." He said he never held it to his head. Police said the gun had 12 rounds in the magazine and an empty chamber. He was arrested and held on no bond for investigation of carrying a concealed weapon.

### CLEVELAND

#### Felonious Assault

Cleveland police said a 30-year-old male was found with a gunshot wound to the chest near E. 71 St. and Indiana Ave. overnight between June 26th and June 27th. No further information was available as of press time.

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## G.H. Municipal Court offers 2nd Chance Program

The Garfield Heights Municipal Court is once again giving individuals the opportunity to resolve their cases with the court without being arrested. The court is initiating its 2nd Chance Program for the fourth time in the past two years. For the next three months, persons with warrants out for their arrest are being given a second chance to appear in court without further penalty or punishment.

While hundreds of people have taken advantage of the 2nd Chance Program in the past, many more could have cleared their outstanding cases if they would just show up. The court currently has about 10,000 warrants for people's arrest.

"We have to issue arrest warrants when people do not appear for their cases. If they come into contact with police through a traffic stop or otherwise, they are immediately arrested and taken to jail. You can imagine the impact on their families and jobs if they are caught in this situation. They can avoid the loss of time from work and embarrassment by just coming to court," said Garfield Heights Municipal Court Judge Deborah Nicastro.

The 2nd Chance Program involves both criminal and traffic cases. When an arrest warrant is issued for failure to appear, the court notifies the BMV which suspends or blocks the person's driver's license.

"This adds additional fees which the person has to pay to the BMV and just more headaches. Your insurance rates go up and you may

have to get special insurance. I tell people that the consequences of not showing up for court are often worse than just coming in and resolving your case," Judge Nicastro said.

If the person's case is not concluded or there is a probation violation, the person can surrender to the clerk's office and obtain a new court date. An attorney will be appointed to represent him or her if they cannot afford one. Bail bonds will not be required if the person voluntarily surrenders.

When a person does not pay the court fines and costs on time, the case is sent to a collection agency and an additional 30 percent late fee is added to the outstanding balance.

The court is willing to give everyone a second chance to pay the original bill without any additional charges. The additional collection fees will be forgiven. "By law, we can't suspend the fines, but we can suspend the additional costs," Judge Nicastro added.

With the 2nd Chance Program, there is no need for another court appearance and the person does not have to surrender to the court. Payment can be made in-person, online at [ghmc.org](http://ghmc.org) or over-the-phone to the Garfield Heights Municipal Court cashier. The court accepts cash or credit cards. However, a 3 percent convenience fee is added to all credit card payments.

Clearing up these outstand-

ing court cases also means a person can once again have a valid driver's license. Driving without a license increases the chance of getting stopped and being charged with driving under suspension.

"This has a negative snowball effect. Your points go up and your insurance costs become outrageous when you drive under suspension," Judge Nicastro pointed out.

If an individual cannot pay the amount due in full, he or she can surrender to the clerk's office and obtain an appointment with the Collection Division to set up a payment plan, seek a reduc-

tion in the amount due or complete community service in lieu of payment of fines and costs. "This is a great opportunity for people to clear their outstanding court cases," Judge Nicastro emphasized.

The 2nd Chance Program also gives a person peace of mind. "They don't have to keep looking over their shoulder for the police to arrest them," said Judge Nicastro.

The 2nd Chance Program runs until September 30th.

The court jurisdiction covers Garfield Heights, Maple Heights, Brecksville, Independence, Cuyahoga Heights, Newburgh Heights, Valley View and Walton Hills.

## Lupus support

The Lupus Foundation of America, Greater Ohio Chapter, will hold its monthly Maple Heights Lupus Support Group meeting on Saturday, July 21, from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at South Pointe Hospital, 4th floor conference room, at 2000 Harvard Rd. in Warrensville Heights.

The support group is an open, small-group environment which encourages discussion among lupus patients and their families. [www.LupusGreaterOhio.org](http://www.LupusGreaterOhio.org).

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