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101st YEAR

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2024

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

FREE

## Ribboncutting held for Beacon Grove senior apartments in Maple Heights



Mayor Annette Blackwell and other dignitaries participate in ribboncutting ceremonies yesterday for Beacon Grove Apartments, a senior living community in Maple Heights. *Photo by Elena Psenicka*

Northeast Ohio organizations PIRHL and Jennings hosted a ribboncutting yesterday to open Beacon Grove Apartments, 5500 Beacon Ct., a new senior apartment building in Maple Heights.

The building will be home to adults 62 and older, offering affordable independent living and supportive services. Located in a serene setting, Beacon Grove offers 53 apartments with one-bedroom and two-bedroom floor plans. The apartments are part of Jennings' life plan community serving older adults.

Tuesday's event featured remarks from U.S. Congresswoman Shontel Brown, Cuyahoga County Executive Chris Ronayne, State Senator Kent Smith, State Representative Darnell Brewer, Cuyahoga County Council President Pernel Jones, Maple Heights Mayor Annette Blackwell, Key Bank Vice President Ryan Olman, PIRHL CEO David Burg and Jennings President and CEO Allison Q. Salopek.

There will be a public open house for Beacon Grove Apartments on Tuesday, March 5, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. For details, visit [www.beacongrove.org](http://www.beacongrove.org) or call 216-581-2902, ext. 2390.

## All-Star Basketball Event today at Garfield Hts. High

Booby Gibson's Stop the Violence All-Star Basketball Event will be held today, Feb. 21, from 6 to 9 p.m., at Garfield Heights High School, 4900 Turney Rd.

In addition to a celebrity basketball game, there will be live entertainment, opportunities to win prizes and giveaways, a 3-point contest, dunk contest, autograph signings and a special guest, as well as community resources from local organizations.

Gibson, a former guard with the Cleveland Cavaliers, hopes the event will shed light on the pressing issues affecting our inner city while fostering discussions on ways to enhance togetherness, positive change and a community where peace and unity prevail.

Tickets to the basketball event are \$10 for those 18 and older; free for those 17 and under, and are available through Eventbrite. Visit: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/booby-gibson-stop-the-violence-basketball-game-tickets-836153145567?aff=ebdssbdestsearch>

## G.H. Town Hall Meeting

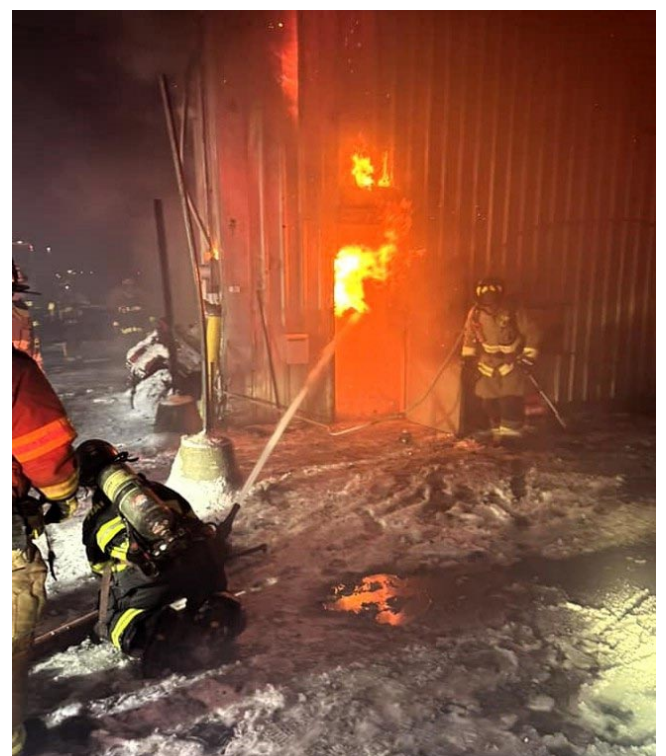
A Community Town Hall Meeting will be held on Wednesday, Feb. 21, from 6:30 to 8 p.m., at the Garfield Heights Civic Center, 5407 Turney Rd., Garfield Heights.

At the meeting residents will be introduced to Garfield Heights School District Superintendent Richard Reynolds, Treasurer Phil Oko and School Board President Millette King.

City Council President Avery Johnson and GHPD Chief Mark Kaye will also attend. All are invited.

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## Firefighters battle blaze Sunday a.m. in Bedford



Firefighters battle a 3-alarm fire early Sunday morning at a towing company in Bedford. *Photo from Maple Heights Firefighters Association Local 184 Facebook post.*

A 3-alarm fire at a towing company in Bedford early Sunday morning brought firefighters from Bedford and throughout the area to battle the blaze.

Units responded to Always Towing at W. Interstate St. and Cross St., Bedford, at 5:32 a.m. Sunday, for a working commercial structure fire with heavy fire found in the rear of the structure, according to a Facebook post by Maple Heights Firefighters Association Local 184.

The building was reportedly unoccupied and no injuries were reported. Cause of the fire is under investigation.

## G.H. Block Watch meets

The Garfield Heights Ward 7 Block Watch, sponsored by Councilwoman Jenn Newrones, will meet Thursday, Feb. 29, at 7 p.m., in the cafeteria of St. Benedict School, 13633 Rockside Rd. Guest speaker will be Garfield Hts. Police Chief Mark Kaye. Nonperishable items for the St. Vincent DePaul Food Pantry would be appreciated. All are welcome. For more information contact Gail, 216-662-9213.

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# Slavic Village Stakeholders make plans for 2024

At its first meeting of the new year, held last Tuesday evening at the former Seven Roses restaurant on Fleet Ave., the Slavic Village Stakeholders reviewed the achievements of 2023 and began making plans for 2024.

Odetta Jordan of the Southeast Cleveland Resource Center recalled the big success of last October's Trick-or-Treat on Fleet, which attracted over 3000 children and parents. She announced that the event's springtime counterpart, Fleet Bunny Hop, would take place on Saturday, March 23, from noon to 3 p.m. Vendors are needed.

## Cleveland Council report

A representative of Ward 12 Councilwoman Rebecca Maurer reported on a request-for-proposal for the site of the former Fullerton School, one street south of Fleet. Demolition of the elementary school building was completed in January.

Also detailed was recently passed legislation to stiffen point-of-sale regulations for Cleveland real estate, and to require out-of-state landlords to retain local agents answerable to city hall.

Some landlords present at the meeting expressed bewilderment with what they characterized as an "adversarial" tenor in Cleveland's current housing court system. "We are not all bad guys," one professed.

They got measured pushback from Susan Gordon of Slavic Village Development, who was present at the meeting. Gordon recounted the numerous phone calls coming from tenants to her organization which seemed to justify the court's firm stance.

Activists from the Art and Gardens Initiative reported on their own winter meeting in late January, where plans for nature-related activities along the local streetscape were made. GardenWalk Cleveland 2024 will again include the neighborhood in its annual citywide tour on the weekend of July 13-14.

Stakeholders heard more about an ongoing neighborhood history initiative for the area. Photographer Mark Silverberg and museum entrepreneur Darl Schaaff are teaming up on a project to photograph and interview a wide assortment of local residents for an eventual book/film project. Glenn Sobola, director of the Slavic Village Historical Society, offered his support. Silverberg extolled the palpable cultural diversity he's encountered so far in Slavic Village.

Local bandleader Danny Hearn, who helped produce last fall's Backdoor Concert series at PLAV Lincoln Post 13 on Fleet, talked about the relationships forming among artists and fans as a result of the area's growing music scene. "We may be doing better than we think we are," he said.

## The Stakeholder story

Evolving from the old Fleet Merchants Association, the Slavic Village Stakeholders is a grassroots group of volunteer activists who live, work or run businesses in the neighborhood. All friends of Slavic Village are welcome to join.

In the last year they have begun to focus on four development areas: building rehabilitation, organizational competency, promotion and economic diversity in its market area, which they've redefined as being the entire Slavic Village service area, not just Fleet Ave. The four development areas are based on recommendations by the nationwide research and advocacy group Mainstreet America, an affiliate of the National Trust For Historic preservation.

At Tuesday's meeting elections were held, resulting in these officers: president, Jeanette Lloyd; vice president, Charles Gliha; treasurer, Jeff Domzalski; sergeants-at-arms, Ed McDonald and Danny Hearn. They'll serve one-year terms. At a motion by Lloyd the group decided to change their meeting schedule from monthly to quarterly.

In the meantime, hoping to lend more structure to their group, officers will draft written bylaws for review and revision by the full membership at their next meeting in May. Anyone interested in joining the group or attending a meeting can call Vice President Chuck Gliha at 216-469-4806 for more information.

# LIBRARIES PLAN SPECIAL PROGRAMS

## Bedford (Bedford Heights/Oakwood Village) Branch Library

Here are some of the **FREE** programs coming up in this month at the Bedford Branch of the Cuyahoga County Public Library, located at 70 Columbus Rd., Bedford, Ohio 44146. For more information, or to register for any program, please call 440-439-4997.

**Chapter Book Champs, Saturday, Feb. 24, 3:30 p.m.** Whether you have finished the book or not, join us for activities and a book discussion based on the following book: Feb. 24 - "A Rover's Story" by Jasmine Warga. Registration will close one week before the program. If you would like to attend after registration closes, please call the Bedford Branch at 440-439-4997. This program is both in person and virtual. **MUST REGISTER**

**African American Authors Book Group, In-Person or Virtual.** All Adults Are Welcome, Thursday, Feb. 29, 7 p.m. "Better Living Through Birding: Notes From A Black Man In The Natural World" by Christian Cooper. Join us for a lively discussion of this book. Equal parts memoir, travelogue and primer on the art of birding. This book is available in many formats: regular print, eAudio and as an eBook.

## Garfield Heights Branch Library

Here are some of the **FREE** programs available in February at the Garfield Heights Branch of the Cuyahoga County Public Library, 5409 Turney Rd. Call 216-475-8178 to register or for more information.

## ADULT PROGRAMS

**Innovation Center Orientation** Learn about the equipment and policies of the Innovation Centers throughout Cuyahoga County Public Library. Attending this orientation allows users to utilize the Innovation Centers throughout the library system. For adults 18 years and older. Upcoming session: Saturday, Feb. 24, 11 a.m.-12 p.m. Registration required.

**Innovation Center Hands-On Help** Bring in a project you're working on and get help from a staff member. A previous Innovation Center orientation is required. Thursday, Feb. 22, 6-8 p.m.

**Tuesday Evening Book Discussion** Join us for our monthly book discussion. This month's title is "House of Eve" by Sadeqa Johnson. Tuesday, Feb. 27, 6-7 p.m.

## TEENS

**Eating Books** Come learn about recipe books and cooking while preparing a tasty treat. Tuesday, Feb. 27, 3:30-5 p.m.

## CHILDREN & FAMILIES

**Kindergarten Countdown** Join us for fun activities to build your child's kindergarten readiness skills! Wednesday, Feb. 21, 6-7 p.m.

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<b>TUE</b> Feb 27 Italian Sub w/choice of Chips \$6.00	<b>WED</b> Feb 28 2 Whole Wings and Fries \$6.00	<b>THU</b> Feb 29 Po Boy \$6.00	<b>FRI</b> Mar 1 Shrimp Snack (4) \$6.00

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# Community Police reports

(All information is preliminary and subject to change pending investigation.)

## Theft

On Feb. 5, an officer was dispatched to GHPD headquarters for a theft report, and contacted the complainant by phone and learned he works for D.R.S. Enterprises as the quality control manager. He said some time within the last two weeks a backhoe had been taken from their property on Canal Rd. The complainant checked the backhoe's GPS tracker and discovered it was pinging in the area of the 7500 block of Bittern Ave., Cleveland. He was asked to contact Cleveland police for assistance with vehicle ping.

## Traffic Offense - Fleeing

• On Feb. 8, shortly before 11 p.m., an officer on patrol at Broadway Ave. and Park Dr., saw a grey Mazda sedan going east on Broadway at a high rate of speed and weaving in and out of traffic. The car was going so fast the patrolman had to go about 90 mph to catch up with it. The Mazda had front end damage and parts of the car were dragging on the ground causing sparks to fly as if it had been involved in an accident. The officer was now directly behind the fleeing car and turned on his lights and sirens to initiate a traffic stop but the Mazda crossed E. 131 St. and continued west on Broadway at a high rate of speed. It entered the ramp onto I-480 east but eventually stopped before getting on the freeway. The female driving the car was ordered to exit the vehicle and she complied. She was placed in handcuffs and secured in the rear of the police car. She was arrested for reckless operation and fleeing and eluding.

• On Feb. 18, at about 1:35 a.m., officers on patrol spotted a vehicle committing a marked lane violation while going south on Henry St., driving in the center of the roadway. The officers activated the cruiser's overhead lights and sirens as the vehicle was pulling into Garfield Club Apartments, 4810 Henry St. The car continued "slow rolling" through the parking lot and refused to stop. It accelerated as it approached the dead end of the

parking lot and struck a parked, unoccupied vehicle on the north side of the apartment complex, then stopped. The occupants jumped out of the car with their hands up and stopped briefly when ordered by officers. They then began to run eastbound down the embankment towards Henry St. Police were able to arrest both suspects and take them to GHPD jail for booking. GHFD responded to the jail to treat minor scratches and cuts the suspects received while running from police. The driver of the vehicle was charged with fleeing/eluding, hit-skip, obstructing official business and issued traffic citations for lanes of travel and no operator's license. He also has numerous felony warrants through the Cuyahoga County Sheriff's Office. The juvenile who was an occupant of the suspect vehicle has a pending charge of obstructing official business after review by the GHPD Juvenile Bureau.

## Criminal Damage - Auto

On Feb. 12, an officer was dispatched to a home in the 4900 block of E. 111 St., for a caller who said the windows on her car had been broken out. She told police that she parked her car in her garage on Feb. 11, at about 6 p.m., and she returned to her vehicle the next morning about 9 a.m., and found both rear windows were broken out. The victim thinks the suspect entered in and out of a side door of the garage. Victim was given a report number and advised.

## Theft from Auto

On Feb. 12, about 4 p.m., police arrived to Overdrive Way on a report that someone had stolen a catalytic converter from their vehicle in the parking lot. The victim said he left work and went into the parking lot about 3 p.m., and when he started his car he heard a very loud noise coming from near his exhaust. He looked underneath the vehicle and saw his catalytic converter had been stolen. Management's surveillance video captured the incident. Detective Bureau requested to follow up.

## Theft of Vehicle

On Feb. 14, at about 9:50 p.m., an officer was dispatched to the 12700 block of Woodward Blvd., regarding a stolen auto. The victim said her 2015 Toyota Corolla was stolen from her driveway sometime between Feb. 12, at about 10 p.m., and Feb. 14, at about 9:30 p.m. She said she normally leaves her car unlocked but had the only set of keys in her possession when the car was stolen. GHPD dispatch was able to locate the Corolla in Wytheville,

VA, after it had been towed by the VA State Highway Patrol.

## Burglary

On Feb. 18, at 8:48 p.m., an officer was dispatched to Creekside Dr. for a burglary report. The homeowner said he had just returned home from out of town and noticed some of his property was missing and his house had been ransacked. He said his rear screen door had been damaged; he believes he left the glass rear door unlocked. He said a television and tablet from his bedroom were missing, and a television from his son's room was also gone. Report forwarded to the Detective Bureau.

## Trial to begin in shootings of father, baby in Garfield

The trial of Khayree Sullivan and Kameran White on assault charges related to an incident in Garfield Heights will begin this Wednesday, Feb. 21, at 9 a.m., in the courtroom of Judge Joan Synenberg, according to a media release from the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office.

On Sept. 21, 2023, the victim, 22, was walking outside with his nearly 7-month-old daughter near Langton Ave. and East 111 St., in Garfield Heights.

Sullivan, 23, and White, 22, were allegedly driving their vehicle on Langton Ave., and spotted the victims. They exited their vehicle and shot at the 22-year-old victim, striking both he and the baby, prosecutors said. Sullivan and White then fled the scene.

The Garfield Heights Police Department and EMS responded to the scene. The victims were transported by law enforcement to a nearby hospital where they were both treated for their injuries. On Sept. 22, 2023, both Sullivan and White were arrested.

On Oct. 5, 2023, they were indicted on three counts of discharge of firearm on or near prohibited premises and five counts of felonious assault.

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N.N.: 2-21-24

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## People in the news

# Retired fireman Ray Gaiduk, 95, still whittling away in his Maple Hts. basement

By Dave Lange

Ray Gaiduk, a lifesaving former firefighter who grew up in Cleveland's North Broadway neighborhood and has lived in Maple Heights since 1953, is still plugging away in his basement woodshop at the age of 95.

The son of immigrant parents, his father from Riga, Latvia, and his mother from Warsaw, Poland, Gaiduk grew up during the Great Depression, a time when young boys learned to work with their hands to help support their families. He served as an altar boy at St. Wenceslas Church, was an usher at the Olympia Theater and graduated from the Cleveland Trade School.

In an interview for The Neighborhood News, Gaiduk recalled some troubling memories from his youth. During the Prohibition years, his mother was caught distilling alcoholic beverages by federal agents and spent time in a Cleveland jail, he said.

His neighborhood lived in fear of the 1930s serial killer known as the Mad Butcher of Kingsbury Run. The murders were characterized by the dismemberment of 13 known victims whose remains were disposed in the area. Famed lawman Eliot Ness assisted in the investigation, but the killer was never apprehended.



## Independence Branch Library

Here are some of the **FREE** programs being offered in February at the Independence Branch of the Cuyahoga County Public Library, located at 6361 Selig Dr., Independence. For more information or to register for any program, please call 216-447-0160.

### ADULT

**Wednesday Evening Book Discussion. No registration required.** Please join us for a casual and lively book discussion of "Dopesick" by Beth Macy. The books will be available approximately one month before the discussion date. Wednesday, Feb. 21, 7:15 p.m.

**Thursday Afternoon Book Discussion.** No registration required. Please join us for a casual and lively book discussion of "Dopesick" by Beth Macy. The books will be available approximately one month before the discussion date. Thursday, Feb. 22, 2:15 p.m.

**Concertina Bookmaking Workshop – Adults.** Registration required. Explore the world of bookmaking and learn how to create this no-sew design. Wednesday, Feb. 28, 7 p.m.

### CHILDREN

**Baby & Toddler. No registration required.** Join us for rhymes, songs, fingerplays and books. Birth – 35 months with caregiver. Mondays and Wednesdays, 10 a.m.

**Family. No registration required.** Join us for stories, songs and fingerplays. All ages with caregiver. Mondays, 6:30 p.m.

**Preschool. No registration required.** Join us for rhymes, songs, fingerplays and stories. Ages 3 – 5 (but not yet in kindergarten) with caregiver. Thursdays, 10 a.m.

**Toddler. No registration required.** Join us for rhymes, songs, fingerplays and stories. 19 – 35 months with caregiver. Thursdays, 11 a.m.

**Family Game Day. Registration required.** Children and caregivers can join us for a family game day. There will be a variety of games, from familiar favorites to newer games, along with a few jumbo versions of those classics! Saturday, Feb. 24, 2 p.m.

Gaiduk enlisted in the U.S. Navy at the age of 17 in 1946, serving as a Naval air technician, and was honorably discharged in 1948.

Not only did his handiwork lead to work as an upholsterer with Holzheimer Furniture and other firms, but his footwork enabled him to become a professional dancer with Arthur Murray, which is how he met his future wife, Maria Bonacci. Their romance and 1950 marriage were the highlights of his life, he said.

They raised two daughters, Gloria Gaiduk, who resides in Maple Heights, and Linda Lange, a special-education teacher in Garfield Heights for 35 years until her retirement in 2009. After 54 years of marriage, Maria Gaiduk died in 2004.

Gaiduk's most noteworthy professional accomplishments began in 1956, when he was appointed to the East Cleveland Fire Department.

A newspaper headline in October 1959, "Fireman Saves Little Girl," recounted the near-death trauma of a 13-month-old toddler who had fallen from a shopping cart and stopped breathing at a store in North Randall. Gaiduk conducted artificial respiration on the little girl four times and assisted the emergency squad en route to the hospital.

After he was promoted to captain in 1976, and then to deputy chief in 1981, Gaiduk and other members of the fire department's B Platoon received commendations for carrying an 83-year-old woman and her 3-year-old granddaughter from a burning house in East Cleveland. Suffering from smoke inhalation, the elderly lady was successfully revived by the heroic firefighters.

An emergency medical technician, Gaiduk completed the arson investigation course at Case Western Reserve University and the fireground commander seminar at Lakeland Community College. He was certified in emergency treatment and transportation of the seriously injured by the Academy of Medicine of Cleveland and in fire safety inspection by the State of Ohio. One of his inspections was for the USS Cod submarine in North Coast Harbor.

After 26 years of service, Gaiduk retired from the fire department in 1982.

But the woodworking creations that he began in 1958, with detailed reproductions of merchant sailing vessels,



**From replica battleships to totem poles, birdhouses, wall plaques and plant stands, 95-year-old Maple Heights resident Raymond Gaiduk continues his woodworking projects.** Photo by Dave Lange

military ships and even an 1800s Ohio River paddlewheel boat, continue to this day. It took him more than a year to complete his replica of the German battleship Bismarck. In more recent times, Gaiduk has focused his skills on everything from various themed totem poles, one-of-a-kind birdhouses and wooden plant stands to decorative wall plaques.

He still attends Mass each Sunday at St. Martin of Tours Catholic Church in Maple Heights and has been a member of the Bedford Lions Club for 48 years.

### Legal Notice

Notice is hereby given that sealed bids will be received by the Fiscal Officer of the Village of Walton Hills, Ohio at the office in the Village Hall, 7595 Walton Road, Walton Hills, Ohio 44146 until 12:00 o'clock on Friday March 1, 2024 for the 2024 season of the Senior or Handicapped Resident Lawn Care Program in accordance with specifications and instructions to bidders on file in the office of said Fiscal Officer.

Said bids shall be enclosed in an opaque, sealed envelope, marked "SENIOR OR HANDICAPPED RESIDENT LAWN CARE PROGRAM," and shall bear the name of the bidder.

The Villager reserves the right to reject any and all bids.

Nickol Sell  
Fiscal Officer  
Village of Walton Hills, Ohio  
The Neighborhood News 2-21-24 & 2-28-24

## Letters to the Editor

### Why was Fullerton School demolished?

I had the opportunity over the years to confer with several developers in the area regarding Fullerton Elementary School. All of them unanimously stated that the building was structurally sound and could very easily, at minimal cost, continue to be maintained. They went on to indicate that the building could be used for any number of possibilities. Senior housing (Harvard Village Senior Apartments) certainly comes to mind. This combined with some sort of social service center would enhance the quality of life for those residing on Fullerton Ave. along with the remainder of Slavic Village.

It's too bad that area is not organized into block clubs. They most certainly would have seen this coming and acted in a way to allow for the people living and working there to determine the fate of the building. But this is "par for the course" in Slavic Village. Nobody knows anything until it happens and then all of a sudden somebody has a plan. Let's hope the people of this neighborhood determine the proper outcome for this now vacant property. We will all be glad they did... and then some.

Joe Bialek  
Volunteer Community Organizer  
Cleveland (Slavic Village)

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- Pinzone's Market (6046 Broadview Rd.)
- Maple Hts. Catering (17330 Broadway Ave.)
- Buckeye Quality Meats (9356 OH-14)
- Fairfax Market (2190 E. 105 St., Cleveland)
- Vermilion Farm Market (2901 Liberty Ave.)

# Beat the Streets in Slavic Village uses wrestling to support neighborhood youth

By Caitlin Johnson

Seventeen-year-old Jemil Pace has seen lives change on the wrestling mat. One of his friends was making poor choices, but the coaches, volunteers and teammates at Beat the Streets (BTS) Cleveland never gave up on him.

“He’s a good kid, but was just doing the wrong things with his free time,” said Pace, who lives in the Lee-Harvard neighborhood. “It was hard to keep him here. But as the season progressed, he got better.”

Beat the Streets is a national organization that empowers young people “through mentoring, building community and the sport of wrestling.” BTS Cleveland is one of 12 chapters across the country. It recently received \$45,000 from the Neighborhood Safety Fund spearheaded by Mayor Justin Bibb and administered by the Cleveland Foundation.

BTS Cleveland Executive Director Demetrius Williams says the funding is supporting the spring wrestling program, which will engage 200 children in grades K through 12 - many of them struggling like Jemil’s friend.

Wrestling is a means to an end as far as Williams is concerned. BTS Cleveland puts a child’s social and emotional development above athletic achievement.

“When you commit to what you’re doing, the wrestling will come,” he said. “We’re one of the best in the area, but we don’t pride ourselves on that. I pride ourselves on our kids doing well in school.”

Mayor Bibb said he created the Neighborhood Safety Fund to support programs like BTS Cleveland, because he knows firsthand what it’s like to grow up in an underserved community.

“I wish my friends and I had something like this when we were kids in Mount Pleasant,” Bibb said. “Too many kids are lost to violence when they don’t have trusted adults engaging them. This is exactly the creative approach we want to see more of in the city of Cleveland.”

Williams said children have told him that BTS Cleveland saved their lives. Most of the participants come from Cleveland or the inner ring suburbs. Many regularly witness violence.

Since its 2016 inception, BTS Cleveland has grown significantly. Participation grew from 600 kids in 2021 to 1,500 in 2023. BTS Cleveland hopes to serve 3,000 kids by 2028.

After operating out of various locations, BTS Cleveland bought a former Dollar Tree building at 6107 Broadway Ave., in Slavic Village last year. BTS deliberately chose to permanently locate in Slavic Village for its central location and because the neighborhood was one of the hardest hit by the foreclosure crisis and economic downturn.

By 6 p.m. on a weeknight, BTS is full of kids, their family members and lots of excited chatter as they wait for practice to start. Head of Coaching and Mentoring Anthony Spooner said any kid who wants to can stop by to use wi-fi, do homework, use the exercise equipment, or just hang out – without even being a part of the wrestling program.



“There’s no restrictions to who can walk through that door,” said Spooner, a former teacher. “I can’t imagine ever telling a kid ‘no.’ We never stop inviting you back. Because those are the kids who have been pushed away by so many adults. They don’t know what to do when you say, ‘Hey I love you, I’m not thinking bad thoughts, I’ll see you tomorrow.’”

Youngsters who would like to become a BTS member can go online: <http://Btscl.org> or walk in and sign up in person. Hours for the 6107 Broadway Ave. site are: Monday through Friday, 1:30 to 8:30 p.m.; and 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday.

BTS Cleveland’s programs are completely free and open to all kids. The organization supplies equipment, uniforms, shoes and anything else a child needs. Coaches and volunteers go above and beyond to make sure everyone who wants to can participate, including providing transportation and homework help. BTS Cleveland programs also include guest speakers, team building exercises, summer camps, college visits and even trips to Africa. This approach has paid off. Williams said participants have a 100% high school graduation rate. Most graduates go on to college, the workforce or the military; 11 are actively wrestling at a collegiate level.

“They’re coming back and pouring into our high schoolers,” Spooner said. “And our high schoolers are seeing people who look like them doing it successfully at another level.”

Jemil Pace is on track to be another success story. The junior at Cleveland Central Catholic said he plans to go to college and become a nurse. For now he’s focused on his studies, wrestling and giving back to younger kids at BTS.

“I love BTS because it’s like a second family,” he said. “When I come here and I wrestle and I mess around with the little ones, it’s just fun.”

*(Caitlin Johnson is a former journalist who is working with Neighbors for Bibb to tell some of Cleveland’s success stories.)*

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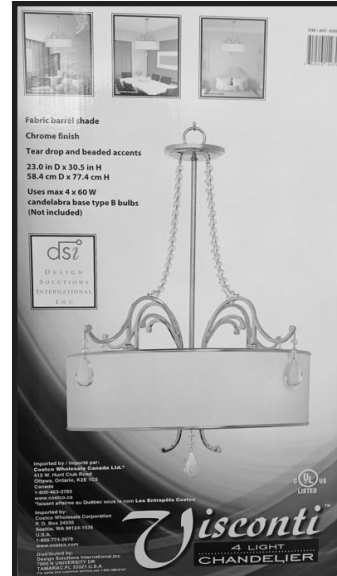
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# Independence Schools superintendent announces resignation effective April 1

Independence Local Schools Superintendent Ben Hegedish, in an email Sunday to Independence families and the community, announced his resignation from his position effective April 1, 2024.

Hegedish said he will be leaving education altogether to pursue "a unique opportunity in a leadership role for an Akron-area business." Also influencing his decision, he said, was the fact that he wishes to be as active and involved as possible with his children Carrie, Benny and Allie.

The Board of Education has already begun its work to launch a comprehensive search process, Hegedish noted, and has identified Tom Dreiling to serve as interim superintendent until a permanent replacement is selected.

"To close, I offer my heartfelt gratitude to our school community," Hegedish said. "You entrusted me with one of the greatest responsibilities that an individual can have, the education of our community's children... The Independence school community has made a significant impact on my life, and together I believe we have positively impacted a generation of Independence Local Schools children."



**Ben Hegedish**

# Death Notices

## STEPHANIE STEPAC

Stephanie Stepac (nee Krusinski), 84, passed away Feb. 8, 2024. Loving mother of Stanley (Robin), Susan Bird (James), and Steve (Michelle).



Cherished grandmother of Dean Spong (Robynn), Jamie Mileti (Antoinette), James Bird IV, Christopher Stepac, Tyler Stepac, Derek Stepac, Sydney Bird, Lillian Stepac, and Alex Sturgill. Great-grandmother of Greyson Spong, Asher Spong, and Lorenzo Mileti.

She is survived by her brother Walter (Stella), and sisters-in-law Carole and Joyce. Preceded in death by her brothers Henry (Natalia), John (Helen), Joseph and Stanley and her sister Mary (Joseph). Aunt, great-aunt and great-great aunt to many loving nieces and nephews.

Services were held Friday, Feb. 16, 2024, at Fortuna Funeral Home, 7076 Brecksville Rd., Independence, with Mass of Christian Burial Saturday, Feb. 17, 2024, at The Shrine Church of St. Stanislaus. Interment Calvary Cemetery.



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This project is supported by the Administration for Community Living (ACL), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) through USAging as part of a financial assistance award to USAging totaling \$74,899,635 with 100 percent funding by ACL/HHS. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official view of, nor an endorsement, by USAging/ACL/HHS, or the U.S. Government.



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