

CH-UH Library Board of Trustees Overview
based on meetings from October to April 2023

Construction/Renovation/Major Repairs: Consistently doing repairs and upgrading library properties is a significant focus of the Library Administration and Board of Directors. Their goal is to provide facilities that are responsive to the needs of the community.

- A. Noble Branch Expansion: The purchase of the property at Kirkwood and Noble has brought an opportunity to expand the services provided to those in the Noble Neighborhood. Bostwick Design Properties was contracted to be the architect on this project and Independence Construction-DeGeronimo Companies as construction manager. The library will close on Sunday, April 16, 2023. It is anticipated that the library will be closed for approximately 1 year. While the library is closed, children after school programming will be held at Disciples Christian Church on Mayfield Road and computers and selected holdings will be at 2940 Noble Road.
- B. University Heights Branch: Beginning August 17, 2022, the lower level experienced flooding that lasted, on and off, for roughly two weeks. The lower level is home to the branch's child and teen areas, including the collections for both age groups. While the flooring, walls, and built-in furniture were severely damaged, none of the collection was damaged due to the work of the library staff. They moved approximately 14,000 items up to the first floor. Approximately 10,000 gallons of water were removed from the basement. Ms. Levin said it has been determined that flooding at the lower level of the University Heights Branch came from a water line break and rain that saturated the ground. Two new cleanout drains will be installed to prevent any future issues. Neptune Plumbing has been contracted for these repairs.
- C. Coventry Branch: September 2022 began the final stage of renovating Coventry Branch with a new HVAC system, new electrical power supply, new main floor restroom, new Park level meeting room, Maker Space, and general spiffing up. The Coventry staff and Julie Criscione helped make this process go as smoothly.
- D. Lee Road Branch: To make the area used by the Greater Cleveland Food Bank easier for use in all types of weather, the removal of the lockers and the installation of double doors were completed. Three additional private study rooms on the second floor were constructed as well as the duct work needed for heating and air conditioning to these areas. The partitions in the first-floor meeting space were replaced.
- E. Washington Boulevard Property: In November 2022 the Heights Library board and its current nonprofit tenants agreed to settle all disputed claims from the holdover lease. The Board of Trustees approved the settlement, which included a \$21,000 refund to the tenants on utility payments made while they were managing the former Coventry school themselves. For details on the settlement, see <https://www.cleveland.com/community/2022/11/peace-accord-heights-libraries-settle-with-coventry-campus-nonprofits-on-prior-lease-utilities.html>

As of the Feb 2023 board meeting all tenants had signed leases at the Coventry PEACE building. With Cresco managing the property, making repairs, and dealing with tenants, the

library board members stated they will be able to return to their primary focus, the library. At the April 2023 meeting, the board authorized a lease with two new tenants at the Coventry Peace Building: Encore Employment Services and People's Choice Payee Services.

- F. Coventry PEACE Park fundraising is half-way to the goal of \$1.2 million dollars. Library Giving Day raised nearly \$7,000. "I survived the Big Slide" tee-shirts were introduced to assist with the fundraising. Tee-shirts can be ordered on Facebook or on the Fund for the Future of Heights Libraries (FFHL) webpage. The library continues to lobby city government for American Rescue Plan Funds. The Board has reviewed the updated plans for PEACE park. These plans will be reviewed by the city's architecture board. See link for details and a map of the park renovations: <https://www.cleveland.com/community/2023/02/new-coventry-peace-campus-leases-signed-with-longtime-tenants.html>

Continuing Initiatives

- A. History Unpacked: This program is a continuation of the 1619 Project, expanding its impact. In the beginning it was unclear on how well the community would respond to this initiative. The response was overwhelming. Over 400 participants attended the first four programs. All the programs presented thus far can be seen using the library website (<https://heightslibrary.org>) by searching under the header of "Read, Watch and Listen." John Piche, Adult Services Librarian, is the creator and coordinator of this programming. John has received a grant to get this programming on its own website and organized so that searching for specific topics is possible.
- B. One Community Reads: This program returned again Spring 2023. The focus will be child poverty with the book *Invisible Child* by Andrea Elliott. Planned group discussions occurred at the Lee Road Branch.
- C. Diversity, Inclusion and Equity (DEI): The library's DEI plan deals with service, organization climate and workforce. The 2022 diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) progress report included the following:
 - a. The collection services department continues to work at maintaining and increasing a diverse collection of materials. Twenty percent of the library collection covers diverse topics, more than the industry average.
 - b. The library expanded recruitment resources to include sources where African American or Black professional candidates may visit to seek jobs, such as LinkedIn, Black Caucus of American Library Association, and the online news publication, Black News. The library also partnered with Youth Opportunities Unlimited (YOU) to provide an opportunity for youth to intern at the library over the summer.
 - c. The staff association co-chair is also a member of the DEI Committee in order to have a direct connection between staff and DEI committee members.
 - d. The library established a budgetary process to support all specialty teams, including the diversity team, and purchased collection software to provide a monthly diversity audit of the collection.

New Initiatives

- A. Cuyahoga Reads: The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) has recently awarded “Libraries Accelerating Learning” grants to Ohio libraries, which are focused on helping students recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and are funded by federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds. Cleveland Heights-University Heights Libraries are one of eight library systems participating. The grant provides \$21,000.
- B. Food Distribution: The library participates as a site in the Greater Cleveland Food Bank’s Mobile Pantry program. Monthly free fresh produce drive-through pick-up is offered at the Lee Road Branch for families and individuals in need. The monthly Greater Cleveland Food Bank Mobile Pantry served 1318 people and 596 households in 2022.
- C. Culinary Literacy: The library makes use of the newly renovated kitchen area in the Coventry Branch to offer culinary skills training programs for youth, especially teens. A seed library is also at each branch.

5. New Collaborations

- A. The Centers (formerly known as The Centers for Families and Children): A resource specialist from the Centers will begin holding office hours in the Lee Road Branch of the Heights Libraries as part of a pilot project. The resource specialist is available to serve the public and staff as needed. Appointments may be made in the Adult Services Department. The social worker in-residence from the Centers for Families and Children will begin at the library on Friday, May 5, 2023. A resource fair will be held on Saturday, May 6, 2023 to launch the program.
- B. Ohio Jobs and Vet Jobs: Along with resume assistance, the CH-UH Libraries now offers free job searches available on their website — “Job Now” and “Vet Now”. Community Development Specialist Denise Oliver from Ohio Means Jobs (OMJ) started April 12, 2023. She will provide guidance, tools, resources, and support on one’s path toward wage-sustaining employment on Wednesdays at Lee Road 10 am 6 pm.

6. Advocacy

- A. Traffic Issues: Library administration has been in conversation with the city about traffic calming at the Noble Branch as well as at the Lee Road Branch. Last month a pedestrian was struck and killed by a hit and run driver on Lee Road. The library has asked for a traffic study at the corner of Lee and Corydon in the hope that a traffic light would be installed there. At Noble there has been discussion of using one-way traffic to make the crossing between library and elementary school safer.
- B. Ohio House Bill 1 legislation: Deborah Herrmann, fiscal officer, pointed out that Ohio HB1, if passed, would reduce the amount of state money for local communities. The library could lose \$793,000. Library staff continue to monitor Ohio House Bill 1 and the Public Library Fund distributions.
- C. Censorship: The library director urged all to call or write Senate Speaker Robert Cupp to stop HB 327, which would stop teaching or sharing of "divisive topics" by political subdivisions and schools in Ohio on the grounds that it is censorship. The library has held

two lectures on banning books this past year. The library has joined with the school district in a resolution against censorship legislation.

- D. Dementia Week in Cleveland Heights: Director Nancy Levin and Librarians Ben Gulyas and John Piche are on the planning committee for a May 23 Dementia Friendly Week in Cleveland Heights. The week will feature training and information for caregivers and people experiencing any of the many forms of dementia. Partners include the Benjamin Rose Institute and the Cleveland Chapter of the Alzheimer's Foundation as well as Dementia Friendly Ohio.

Congruence of CH-UH Heights Libraries Mission/Activities with the LWV Library Positions

LWVGC supports:

- *The best possible public library services that reflect the needs of the community*
- *Continuing evaluation of financing and future development.*
- *Cooperation between public libraries and school libraries.*

Based on our observations, the library programs and services do address each of these points. Programs offered meet multiple needs of the community. The board monitors finances and the future of the library. Many programs are offered in public schools. In 2022, Lee Road's youth services department expanded homework help through partnerships with Cleveland State University and Case Western Reserve University, instructed fifth graders in evaluating online sources and basic research skills, added a weekly art program, and expanded outreach to school sites with 21st century grant programs. In addition, a full-time librarian was hired to introduce and expand services to meet the needs of tween visitors. Summer reading program registration included 1,318 children, 152 teen and 1,950 adults.