

Cleveland Heights-University Heights Library Board Overview

By LWV observers Judith Beeler and Elizabeth Tracy

Based on reports from May 2023 - April 2024

“Here for You, Wherever You Are”

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.

Noble Neighborhood Branch Expansion. The Noble library closed on Sunday, April 16, 2023, and will re-open on June 2, 2024. Nobel staff went “beyond the walls” to connect with the community. While the Nobel library was closed from May 2023 to November 2024, its staff established 2,000 connections with customers in the community. Programming was provided at Disciples Christian Church on Mayfield Road, Cleveland Heights WIC office, Start Right Church, Cleveland Heights-University Heights (CHUH) schools, Lullaby Infant Club, and a childcare and learning center.

University Heights Branch. Beginning August 17, 2022, the lower-level experienced flooding that lasted, on and off, for several weeks. The library contracted for repairs and to clean out drains. Hopefully, the water problem has been resolved.

Coventry Branch. Roof repair and renovation of the Coventry branch was completed. The basement now has meeting rooms. The culinary program is there.

Lee Road Branch. To make the area where distribution of food provided by the Greater Cleveland Food Bank easier for use in all types of weather, installation of double doors was completed. Study rooms were painted and updated. Electronic signs are now outside the meeting rooms listing the schedule.

Washington Blvd Property and Coventry PEACE Park. The plans for renovation of the PEACE Park have been approved. The demolition of the old playground was completed. The preparation for the tree canopy has begun. A mini forest will be behind the old Coventry school. The Fund for the Future of Heights Libraries (headed by Jack Valancy) is focusing on fundraising for the park. At its Feb. 19 meeting, the library board transferred \$2.1 million from the library general fund to the PEACE Playground.

Because the Washington Blvd property is now managed by CRESCO Real Estate, no issues have come before the Board.

Continuing Initiatives

History Unpacked. This well-received program is a continuation of the 1619 Project. The individual programs can be viewed on the date listed and also can be accessed anytime via the Library website. The last three programs include:

- March 20: How parents talk to their children about Black Lives Matter -- Onnie Rogers
- March 27: Judges and White Supremacy – Vida Johnson
- April 3: War on the Klan – Fegus Bordewich

Reading program continues with popular summer programs for children, youth and adults. The library also participated with other libraries in the “Cuyahoga Reads” program, which was intended to assist children with reading skills lost during COVID.

Culinary Literacy now has a dedicated staff position at Coventry.

Food Distribution. The library continues to participate as a site to distribute food from the Greater Cleveland Food Bank’s Mobile Pantry program. Monthly drive-through pick-up for free, fresh produce is offered at the Lee Road Branch for families and individuals in need. Up to Sept. 2023, 2,016 individuals had been served; one quarter of the residents served were under age 18. They have a very dedicated staff of volunteers.

Passport program continues to grow and be well received. The library now holds some open days for walk-in appointments.

Circulation in 2023 was 1,643,147 items.

Partner: The Centers (formerly known as The Centers for Families and Children). The social worker in-residence from the Centers for Families and Children began providing services at the library on May 5, 2023. Service continues and is well received.

Partner: Ohio Jobs and Vet Jobs. Services were expanded to two days a week at Lee Road and provided job search workshops on resume writing and job interviewing.

Finances

The library received its 10th State of Ohio Auditor of State Award with Distinction for its 2022 financial audit. Property taxes bring in the most revenue to the library, followed by the Public Library Fund, and property tax rollbacks in that order. Major expenditures for 2024 include salaries and benefits (63 percent), purchased services (21 percent), materials (11 percent), and other (5 percent). Dec. 2023 ended with a positive balance.

New initiatives and collaborations

The Heights Knowledge and Innovation Center (HKIC) added new technology equipment.

AARP. Space was provided for AARP to help seniors with tax preparation.

Eclipse. Library initiated community meetings re: response to eclipse- brought community groups together for planning. At each of their branches, they provided programming and eyeglasses to watch the solar eclipse.

Sustainability Committee. See Advocacy.

Advocacy

Sustainable Libraries Initiative. Under the direction of Youth Services Manager Sam Lapides, Special Projects Manager Kaela Sweeney, and Librarian Steve Saunders, Heights Libraries is now a member of the Sustainable Libraries Initiative (SLI), which is a global network of library leaders who want to create more environmentally sound, socially equitable, and economically feasible libraries. The initiative is designed to provide the tools and resources library leaders need to incorporate sustainability as a core value in their work, just as the

American Library Association has adopted sustainability as a core value of the profession. A plan was shared that will guide Heights Libraries to achieve certification by 2025.

Freedom to Read. In response to the many discussions on censorship and banning books, the library board approved a “Freedom to Read” resolution which was sent various government representatives. You can find the full resolution on page 2 of the September 18 minutes of the library board of trustees: <https://heightslibrary.org/locations/heights-libraries-board/board-minutes/?action=showMe&id=166>. The library participated in Banned Book week in October.

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.*

The CH-UH Library:

- A. Responds to community needs and changes with staffing and programming.
- B. Is involved and respected within the library science profession nationally.
- C. Constantly works on writing and submitting grants
- D. Is a school board library and does a lot with the CHUH schools. For example, while Noble was closed, staff made 2,000 encounters in outreach (see above).

Information about the library board, board meeting minutes and audio recordings of board meetings can be found at <https://heightslibrary.org/locations/heights-libraries-board/>

LWV observer reports can be found online at <https://lwvgreatercleveland.org/chuh-observer-corps>