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ISSUE 16

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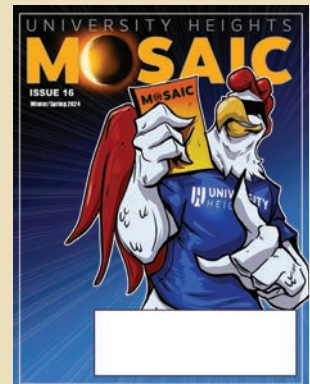
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University Heights Mosaic Magazine is a publication of the City of University Heights. We are looking for interesting University Heights people and places to profile in upcoming issues. If you have any story ideas, please share them with us by contacting Mike Cook at [mcook@universityheights.com](mailto:mcook@universityheights.com).

## On the Cover

This issue's comic book-style cover and page 4 article were designed by local freelance artist Lee Johnson. He is a contributor to 50-Fifty Comix.

Cover art by: **Lee Johnson**



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\* Bring this ad with you for \$2 off of general admission, October 25, 2023 - April 28, 2024. Good for up to 4 visitors. Not valid for use on programs. Cannot be used with any other offer. An exhibition at the Maltz Museum in cooperation with the Galicia Jewish Museum, Krakow, Poland.

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# Thank you, Pete!

## Pucella retires after 33 years of service

Firefighter Pete Pucella began his service with University Heights on March 4, 1990. In a career spanning more than 33 years, from Infection Control Officer, to Lieutenant, to Captain, Pete has served the City and its residents with compassion, honor, and an unyielding dedication to public service and to the public good.

Pete had an impactful and eventful career, starting on his very first day when he responded to a gang drive-by shooting. He responded to countless emergencies, including major fires on Tyndall Road in 2009, Silsby Road in 2010, and Brockway Road in 2018.

In addition, Pete saved a man from a burning car in 2002, delivered a baby during a blizzard in 1993, and was on duty during the Blackout of 2003.

Pete's last shift before retirement was January 31. Co-workers, family, and friends celebrated with a reception at the Fire Department. Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan officially declared it to be "Pete Pucella Day" in University Heights.

At the same ceremony, John Novosilski was promoted to Captain, while Joe McGee and Luke Curkowicz were both promoted to Lieutenant.



Pete Pucella receives a proclamation from Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan on January 31, 2024.



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## Who is telling our stories?

By Alexandra Fleksher  
Guest Columnist



**W**hen any new show about Orthodox Jews pops up on Netflix, the immediate question Orthodox Jews ask is, “Is this good for the Jews?” And in almost all cases, we already know the answer.

From shows such as *Unorthodox* to *My Unorthodox Life*, our stories have been told by those who have rejected

traditional Judaism. And while those who have left have a right to tell their stories, we as Orthodox Jews are misrepresented when their stories are presented as our stories. When tropes, stereotypes, misconceptions and generalizations are peddled about Orthodox Judaism and Orthodox Jews, viewers believe them to be true, especially viewers who have never met a religious Jew before.

We have no alternative to present that portrays the beauty and depth of living as observant Jews in the modern world.

When Netflix launched *Jewish Matchmaking* last year, I could hardly believe what I was seeing. Here was Aleeza Ben Shalom, a proud Orthodox Jewish woman, wife, mother and entrepreneur, who confidently walked into scenes kissing a mezuzah scroll on the doorway. She shared Jewish values and wisdom about dating and marriage with her clients, and the world was watching. Here was a woman who was proudly observant – and presented as likable, warm, strong and wise, far from the descriptions we’ve heard before of Orthodox Jewish women as fundamentalist and oppressed.

And the world fell in love with her. Tweets touted Aleeza Ben Shalom as the best thing about *Jewish Matchmaking*, citing her non-judgmental attitude and caring personality. One fan told Aleeza that when she’s faced with an ethical challenge, she now asks herself, “What would Aleeza do?”

One cannot underestimate the significance of this type of real, non-fictionalized representation on-screen of an Orthodox Jewish woman and the positive response towards Aleeza Ben Shalom as a human being. If she were an actress playing a religious Jewish character, it would have been enough! But for the first time, we have a real-life Orthodox woman, proudly wearing modest clothing and head coverings, starring in a Netflix show. Aleeza, by just being Aleeza, provided the foil to the backward Orthodox woman Netflix viewers thought they knew.

This is a start. But we need more. We need to be telling more personal, human stories of Orthodox Jews.

We need to show the world who we are and what we believe. Yet most Orthodox Jews wouldn’t want to be the stars of a Netflix show, nor would they want cameras rolling in their homes. While film is arguably the most powerful tool at our disposal, we also have another powerful communication device: social media.

After launching the #myorthodoxlife social media campaign which got international attention (the hashtag was used by thousands of social media posts) in response to *My Unorthodox Life* in 2021, I realized we need to be telling our stories as Orthodox Jews. Participants in the campaign were extremely motivated to dispel the myths and stereotypes purported on the show by sharing their own stories. How could we continue to share with others who we really are?

With the support of the Orthodox Union, one of the largest Orthodox Jewish organizations in the United States, we launched the social media initiative *Faces of Orthodoxy* in 2022. *Faces of Orthodoxy* puts a human face on Orthodox Jews by telling the day-in-the-life stories of diverse religious Jews through portrait photography, personal photos, and journal-style posts. Each season takes place in a different city in the United States. We’re highlighting our everyday heroes of faith, not perfect people, who share their triumphs and struggles. Our followers engage daily with our content, cheering on our subjects as they share their life journeys.

The mission of *Faces of Orthodoxy* is to expose the non-Jewish and non-Orthodox Jewish communities to the diversity within the Orthodox community while emphasizing the universal values we all share. We also aim to inspire Orthodox Jews to be proud of who they are, what they do, and what they believe. *Faces of Orthodoxy* has become a supportive online community and a positive space on social media that celebrates the individuality of the Orthodox Jews in our communities.

One of my favorite pieces of feedback from a follower was in response to our profile on David Sacks, a Torah-observant Hollywood producer. She said, “Thanks for sharing your story. There is a narrative that if you are brilliant and talented, you are naturally not religious. Your life story counteracts that completely.”

And another about one of our “faces,” Shalom Goodman who’s a search engine optimization (SEO) editor at the *Wall Street Journal* and has a significant speech impediment: “I love to follow this page so I can learn more as a non-Jew. And you speak beautifully and I’m so glad you shared your voice. It’s so important for all groups that a diversity of voices and experiences are shared. Thank you for your courage.”

We hope we’re sharing stories of Orthodox Jews in various careers, of various ethnicities, ages and religious backgrounds, who serve as role models to us all – and maybe break stereotypes along the way – as they live their lives committed to their faith.

More than ever, we need to put a human face on

Orthodox Jews. We need to tell our stories. We need to show the world that we share similar human struggles, overcome universal challenges and live fulfilling lives in the modern world guided by the values and traditions of our ancient wisdom.

Because if we won't tell our stories, who will tell them for us?

A recipient of a 2023 "Good Neighbor Award," Alexandra Fleksher is the creative director of the Faces of Orthodoxy social media initiative. She's a speaker, writer, thought leader and co-host of the Deep Meaningful Conversations podcast. This opinion piece previously appeared in the Cleveland Jewish News.



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# Learn much about history

*Don't know much about University Heights history? We have just the prescription to change that.*

**J**oin University Heights Chief-of-Staff Deanna Bremer Fisher at the University Heights Library on May 16 at 7 p.m. for her popular presentation on city history.

“University Heights: From Idlewood Village to the City of Beautiful Homes” will trace the unique development of University Heights from its origins as a small farming community to an inner-ring suburb.

Early struggles in the 1920s with zoning and ethnic diversity were evident when the Cleveland Jewish Orphan Home (now Bellefaire JCB) sought to relocate to the village, prompting a federal lawsuit. John Carroll University’s decision to purchase land in the village had a profound impact—and initiated a name change to University Heights.

By 1940, having gained enough population to become a city, it attracted professionals and innovators, such as Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, co-creators of Superman; Josephine Morhard, founder of the first baseball league for boys; and Father Henry R. Birkenhauer, the “Polar Priest.”

Seeking to promote neighborliness, beautification, and community engagement, elected officials partnered with civic groups, including the University Heights Women’s Club and the City Beautiful Commission, to initiate the annual Civic Awards, the Memorial Day Parade, a “Series of Discoveries,” and more.

Bremer Fisher is also co-author of “The Euclid Golf Neighborhood.”



## Save the date: MDB SOTC 2024.

**M**ayor Michael Dylan Brennan will deliver the annual State of the City address on Thursday, April 11 at 6:30 p.m. at the University Heights Library. Brennan will recap the past year and look to the future of University Heights. Several new initiatives will be announced, and the 2024 Summer Concert Series schedule will be revealed.



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# Local stars shine bright at Civic Awards

**M**usic, applause, hugs, and laughter—as well as many University Heights residents—filled John Carroll University’s Jardine Room on November 15 for the annual Civic Awards.

The event was hosted by JCU graduate and 19 News reporter Rachel Vadaj.

“University Heights is not just my home away from home because John Carroll is my alma mater—it’s the warmth I feel in my heart from the welcoming kindness of its leaders and residents,” Vadaj said. “I hope the well-deserving award winners and talented performers will cherish the evening as much as I will.”

In his opening remarks, Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan said, “We brought back the Civic Awards in 2018 because it is important to take time to celebrate our community, and give recognition where it is deserved, to amplify and tell the story of the people who make a difference in the community.”

The University Heights Service Department was named City Employees of the Year. In introducing the department, Brennan said he always believed in them and what they do.

“I believed in their effort, and every day they show up and validate that belief through their labor, through their heart, through their sweat,” Brennan said. “They literally embody what it means to put your back into your living... I have never been more proud to have on our team here at City Hall the entire University Heights Service Department—our 2023 University Heights Employees of the Year.”

State Rep. Juanita O. Brent earned “Public Servant of the Year” honors, while Charter Review Commission members Lee Crumrine and Chris Myrick were named “Volunteer of the Year” and “Citizen of the Year,” respectively.

Sally Mascia took home the “Educator of the Year” award, and Police Lt. Todd Kinley was named City Co-Worker of the Year for his 35 years of service.



19 News reporter Rachel Vadaj (left), and Cooper.

Good Neighbor Awards were presented to the following:

- Primoz Pizza, for its support of local events and the creation of the “Mr. Cooper” pizza;
- Robin VanLear, for her work on the UH Memorial Day Parade;
- Chocolate Emporium, for its sustainability efforts;
- Heights High Academic Challenge Team, for winning the 2023 Academic Challenge Tournament;
- Krystof Juncho of Dollar Bank, for financial support of the Juneteenth Celebration and Fall Fest;
- Rabbi Elle Muhlbaum, for earning the Cleveland Jewish News’ “12 under 36” recognition;
- Alexandra Fleksher of “Faces of Orthodoxy,” for her work to dispel negative stereotypes;
- Dan Plato, for his work on the Gesu Bolt fundraiser.

Hartley Love of the city’s Beautiful Homes Committee presented this year’s awards for homes, in categories including Curb Appeal, Sit a Spell, Best Front Door, and Green Home.

New this year was the “Good Stewardship” award, presented to homeowners who have lived in their homes for 20 years or more. This award celebrates homes that are well-maintained, have attractive landscaping, and are an asset to the neighborhood.

The Mal Barron Trio entertained attendees during the pre-awards reception. During the ceremony, Heights Poet Laureate Siaara Freeman performed an original poem about University Heights. The Heights High Barber Shoppers performed three songs.

And, to top off the evening, Beaumont School senior and Rising Star CLE 2023 Champion Lauren Ravas performed “When You Wish Upon a Star.”

Deanna Bremer Fisher, Chief-of-Staff, observed that this year’s ceremony was special. “It really makes you proud to be part of a community that not only has so many stars who are doing great things, but to work for a City Hall that makes the effort to celebrate those achievements,” she said.



Chris Myrick.



Rabbi Elle Muhlbaum.

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## Cleveland Heights-University Heights City Schools update What's Happening in Your Neighborhood Schools

By Cathan Cavanaugh

### Canterbury Third Graders Learn About Local Government

Studying the executive, legislative, and judicial branches and how they compare to their classroom and school as well as to the state and nation, Canterbury students focused their attention this winter on how city councils use their values to set priorities and make decisions.

Students were given a prompt – their city council had received a \$100,000 grant to improve the overall community – and then worked in groups of five to brainstorm possible ways to spend the money. Each group had to use majority rule to narrow their many good ideas down to one. Ideas ranged from new sidewalks to animal shelters. They then researched their solution and created posters to try to earn the mayor's (their teacher's) approval.

As part of the unit on government, University Heights Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan visited the three classes to discuss the executive branch of local government and how it works with the legislative branch to create the best city possible.



### Gearity, Monticello Awarded Bronze Recognition for PBIS Efforts

Since fine tuning their PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) strategies, Gearity Elementary School and Monticello Middle School have greatly improved student behavior, and the state has noticed. State Team Region 3 presented both schools with the Ohio PBIS Bronze Recognition Award in the fall.

Gearity is guided by four goals under its PAWS system:

Personal Best, Acting Responsibly, Working and Playing Safely, and Showing Respect. Each month, there's a schoolwide PAWS Assembly where students from each class are celebrated for their outstanding behavior as it relates to each of the four goal areas.

Some of the ways Monticello encourages positive behaviors are surprisingly simple. Assistant Principal Brigitte Pronty uses Tiger Time, the 20 minutes opposite lunch, to publicly announce and hand out certificates to students who are meeting behavioral, academic, and attendance goals. "You would think getting a certificate might not be a big deal" to middle schoolers, said Ms. Pronty. "But it really is."

Gearity Principal Patrick McNichols appreciates the consistency of language and expectations across the building and the community and sees how this will grow as students, families, and teachers become increasingly familiar with the program. "It's like a rolling snowball. Everything is a lot more positive."



### Bowling Team Heading to Nationals After Perfect 300 Game

It's not often that a high school bowling match draws a crowd that sounds like a basketball game. But that's just what happened when Heights High's bowling team competed in its first match of the season against Brunswick at Medina AMF on November 29.

Following each player's two traditional ten-frame match-ups, the top five bowlers participate in a Baker game, which pits one team of five against another. On this particular night, Heights High's team consisted of Gabe McKay, Matthew Catron, Tyler McCann, Kevin Clark Jr., and Marcus Holland.

Gabe started the match off bowling a strike. Matt followed. Then Kevin, Tyler, and Marcus did the same. And as the Heights team began to roll their second frames, they had quite a crowd watching. Gabe bowled another strike. Matt followed. Kevin too.

According to Coach Charmaine Allen, a 200 is a very good score for a Baker match, something she

encourages her team to achieve. "You have to close your frame," she always tells them. "You have an obligation to finish your frame, even if it's with a spare."

But Heights didn't have any trouble closing their frames and they didn't need to rely on any spares. Tyler rolled a strike. Then it was Marcus' turn: Strike. Now he had two extra frames to bowl. Strike. Strike.

As spectators, parents, and fellow bowlers broke into shouts and cheers, Marcus turned around and joked, "Coach, how's that for 200?" The Heights High team had bowled a perfect score, 300 points, which is good enough to automatically qualify them for the national tournament in Pennsylvania in June.



### Kindergarten Information Nights March 6-14

Each Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District elementary school will host a Kindergarten Information Night this March for incoming and prospective families. Attendees can meet school principals and teachers, ask questions, and take tours of the buildings. Each event will run from 6 to 7 p.m.

- Boulevard - Thursday, March 14**
- Canterbury - Wednesday, March 13**
- Fairfax - Tuesday, March 12**
- Gearity - Wednesday, March 13**
- Noble - Tuesday, March 12**
- Oxford - Thursday, March 14**
- Rox El - Wednesday, March 6**

Kindergarten in CH-UH is tuition-free and full day. Specials include Music, Art, Spanish, Physical Education, and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math).

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# Library welcomes new board member

by Sheryl Banks

**T**he Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library System announces the appointment of its newest board member, Hallie Turnberrez, whose term began in January.

She will serve a seven-year term on the library board, replacing outgoing board president Max Gerboc, whose seven-year term ended in December.

Turnberrez is a staff attorney at the Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court and a member of the University Heights Civil Service Commission. She graduated from the Case Western Reserve University School of Law and has lived in University Heights for seven years.

“I am passionate about community engagement—especially in relation to the few community spaces that are free for all people,” said Turnberrez. “Libraries are one of the few remaining guaranteed free spaces in society. This means libraries are now even more important to the health of the community.”

“Public service is a core value of mine,” Turnberrez added, “and I strive to serve where my skill set is needed.”

Gerboc was appointed to the library board in 2016, and his tenure included the purchase of the Coventry PEACE Park and building, the COVID-19 pandemic, the elimination of fines, and the beginning of the Noble Neighborhood branch renovation.

“We will truly miss Max’s passion and support of our mission,” said Heights Libraries Director Nancy Levin. “He also was very supportive of the library staff, and had great respect for them, which they in turn deeply appreciated.”

Gerboc’s parting message to staff and the Heights library community included a call to action. “Threats abound and are real, so if you love the library and care



New Heights Libraries board member Hallie Turnberrez.

about its future, get involved,” he said. “Take advantage of the incredible programming, learn something new, consume some media for pure pleasure and for free, apply to join the board, join the Friends, etc. Whatever your passion, you can find some way to express it through the library.”

Gerboc has been succeeded as board president by Vikas Turakhia, who previously served as vice president and chair of the operations committee

*Sheryl Banks is the communications manager for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library System.*

# University Heights takes a social media leap forward in new year with Threads

**S**ay goodbye to the old and hello to the new – University Heights City Hall is on Threads.

As of January 1, 2024, the city government has officially abandoned the toxicity of X (formerly Twitter) in favor of Threads. Via this new social media, the City hopes to provide one more platform to share positive news with residents, as well as Northeast Ohio.

**What is Threads?** Launched in 2023, Threads is the latest app from Meta, the parent company of Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. The platform looks a lot like X, with a feed of text-based posts, in addition to photos and videos. To join Threads, log in via your Instagram account.





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# Get green at the Sustainable Home Fair

*By Mike Lonsdale and Jeffrey Pearl*



## Sustainable Home Fair



**D**o you live a sustainable lifestyle? How do YOU impact the earth? Would you like to have a more positive effect? The things you do really can make a difference. Find out how by attending the University Heights Sustainable Home Fair.

In April, our nation commemorates Earth Day. In celebration, University Heights is sponsoring a Sustainable Home Fair on Sunday, April 21 from 1 to 4 p.m. at the Wiley School building (2181 Miramar Boulevard).

This is a free event that is open to all residents as well as interested parties in our neighboring communities.

The University Heights Sustainable Home Fair will feature workshops, vendors of sustainable products and services, and organizations that offer homeowners and businesses assistance with making their homes and buildings more energy efficient.

Also attending the fair will be members of the Citizens' Advisory Committee on Sustainability to discuss ways the City of University Heights is working to meet its climate goals for the future. Mayor Brennan convened the committee in January 2022, and University Heights

City Council passed a resolution in June of that year to become a Power a Clean Future Ohio community with a goal to reduce the city's carbon emissions by 30% of 2010 levels by 2030.

Since then, the committee has met to discuss various strategies to address the reality of climate change and work to improve UH residents' quality of life and resiliency.

Sustainability is not only about environmental impact, but a holistic concept that promotes fulfillment of the needs of the current generation without negatively affecting the needs of future generations. It encompasses environmental care, economic growth, and social well-being.

The University Heights Sustainable Home Fair will be an opportunity to learn the latest and best practices from experts. Learn how to become more climate aware.

For more information, visit [universityheights.com/sustainable-home-fair](http://universityheights.com/sustainable-home-fair).

*Mike Lonsdale and Jeffrey Pearl are University Heights residents and members of the Citizens' Advisory Committee on Sustainability.*

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Come and visit us at Council Gardens, founded by the National Council of Jewish Women, and open to all seniors over 62 years old.

*Drinda K. - Tenant of Council Gardens for 4 years*



For more information about Council Gardens contact Marina Markovich at 216-382-8625 x 1004 or visit our website [www.councilgardens.org](http://www.councilgardens.org)



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## A move in the right direction

# John Carroll University to join NCAC



Starting in the 2025-26 school year, JCU will compete in the North Coast Athletic Conference.

**L**ate last month, John Carroll University announced the institution will join the North Coast Athletic Conference (NCAC) beginning in Fall 2025. The athletic conference change is the latest step in John Carroll's three-year, \$100 million strategy to bolster the student experience, grow the academic portfolio, enhance the campus, and expand the institution's reach.

Membership in the prestigious North Coast Athletic Conference aligns John Carroll's nationally competitive athletic programs with other liberal arts colleges and universities that share a focus on rigorous academics and high-level athletics. The Blue Streaks will become the 10th member of the conference which includes institutions from Ohio and Indiana that serve students well beyond the Midwest.

"Athletics has been an integral part of the student experience at John Carroll for more than a century and we are pleased to accept the invitation to join the NCAC during a pivotal time in our history," said President Al Miciak.

"Our Board of Directors and University leadership are committed to ongoing strategic investments that will ensure that the gift of a Jesuit education from John Carroll is available for generations to come," Miciak said. "We are pleased to align with a group of academically and athletically competitive partners in the NCAC who enjoy national reach and reputation as high-

ranking liberal arts institutions."

Current North Coast Athletic Conference full-time members include Denison University, DePauw University, Hiram College, Kenyon College, Oberlin College, Ohio Wesleyan University, Wabash College, Wittenberg University, and The College of Wooster. Affiliate members include Allegheny College, Earlham College, Transylvania University, and Washington & Jefferson College.

Miciak continued, "We are grateful to the OAC and its partner institutions for more than 30 years of incredible rivalry and competition and we look forward to maintaining our relationships with them both on and off the field."

"I congratulate everyone at JCU for leaving their comfort zone and doing something bold," said Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan. "This will give student-athletes a chance to compete against regional schools and this competition will be strong on the fields of play as well as the classroom.

"I feel this is part of an evolution, and a great next step."

The Blue Streaks will depart the Ohio Athletic Conference after being a member since the 1989-90 academic year. John Carroll also competed in the OAC from 1932-49. In between, JCU was a founding member of the Presidents Athletic Conference in 1955,

competing for 34 years in the PAC.

“At John Carroll, students can pursue excellence in the classroom and on the playing field without sacrificing one for the other,” said Director of Athletics Brian Polian ‘97.

“We work every day to attract the type of student who wants an exceptional Jesuit education and who wants to compete at the highest level of Division III athletics,” Polian said. “We believe today’s announcement aligns John Carroll with peer institutions that share a common mission and that attract students from across the country.”

Polian continued, “It is bittersweet to lose our OAC rivalries and we will work to keep some intact. However, we are excited about developing new rivalries in this new era for JCU athletics.”

The NCAC sponsors championships in 23 sports — 11 for men and 12 for women. The 12 women’s sports are among the most offered by any Division III conference. The NCAC frequently enjoys success on a national stage. NCAC member institutions have collected 71 national team championships since the conference’s first playing season in 1984-85.

JCU Athletics is nationally competitive with top-30 finishes in the LEARFIELD Directors’ Cup in each of the last two years, along with 7 individual national championships, 55 individual All-Americans, and

29 NCAA Championship appearances since 2021.

Since joining the OAC, the Blue Streaks have captured 190 conference championships (combined men and women, regular season and tournament). John Carroll has also won 12 men’s all-sports trophies, including each of the last eight.

The decision to join the NCAC is another step in John Carroll University’s Inspired Futures strategy that includes the launch of a Bachelor of Science in Nursing program – featuring two new Nursing labs – and the debut of a College of Health. John Carroll’s investment in healthcare will also include new majors in Public Health (2024), Healthcare Administration (2025), and Master of Science in Nursing (2025).

A three-year, \$100 million investment in campus facilities kicked off in 2022, with renovations to the D.J. Lombardo Student Center, the Grasselli Library and Breen Learning Center, and multiple residence halls, and the construction of a state-of-the-art 100,000 square foot Athletic, Wellness and Event Center, scheduled to open in 2025.

“We are thrilled with the progress to date on the implementation of our Inspired Futures strategy,” said Miciak. “These investments in our student experience signal our desire to innovate and evolve with the focus always remaining on successful outcomes for our students.”

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## CANINE ENRICHMENT

April 11

Learn more about what enrichment is and how incorporating enrichment activities in your dog's routine can help improve their physical and mental well-being. The first 20 registrants will be able to make their own enrichment toy and a snuffle mat to take home to their dog. Valarie will be joined by Michelle Brown, Catch Certified Dog Trainer. Registration is required to secure your snuffle mat making supplies, and begins on Thursday, March 28.

## SERVICE DOGS, THERAPY DOGS, AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ANIMALS - OH MY!

May 9

Learn more about the differences between service dogs, therapy dogs, and emotional support animals, and what kind of training is necessary to prepare a service dog for public access work. Valarie will be joined by Tiffany Shields, service dog handler and trainer. Registration is requested, though not required, and begins on Monday, April 25.



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# A love letter to University Heights



Heights Poet Laureate Siaara Freeman has written a poem – a love letter, if you will – to the people of University Heights. She performed this work at the 2023 Civic Awards.

People live in a city but a city can also live in its people.  
University Heights has a heart and each citizen is a valve,  
each citizen is intricate to the rhythm that keeps the city  
pumping, its blood creating a family without genetics.

A D.N.A made from nothing but neighborhoods and compassion.  
Everyone here is an inheritance of empathy and dedication.

University Heights has a spine and it is educators reading.

University Heights has a strong pair of lungs and it is leaders,  
leading.

University Heights has eyes and it is the children, dreaming.

In 1950 University Heights smiled with all of its hearts, all of its  
hands grabbed each other and shook. University Heights looked  
at itself in the mirror and liked what it saw.

University Heights has legs long as volunteer lines, so the  
strides are wide.

When University Heights needs help it knows how to help itself.  
University Heights practices fantastic self-care, it has learned  
how to hug itself close, knit like a Midwest sweater.  
University Heights has so many minds so it has gotten great at  
changing them.

University Heights does not have a voice, instead it has thou-  
sands, all saying, "how can I help, thank you, you're welcome.

*Thank you, please join us, thank you.*

*I appreciate you, thank you.*

*Congratulations, thank you.*

*You have my condolences, thank you, I'll be there, thank you,  
you can do this, thank you, we can do this. Thank you. We can  
fix this, thank you, what do we need, thank you, you need a  
hand, thank you, help, thank you.*

*Thank you. I love you too, I love you too,  
I love you too.*





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