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Volume 16, Issue 24, December 16, 2020

We Lose One Of Our Own Lakewood Loses A Good Resident, Husband, Father, Mentor, And Volunteer

STEPHEN M. DAVIS
8/15/1954 – 12/2/2020

by the Davis Siblings

Steve was born in Bedford, Ohio to Kenneth and Jacquelyn Davis. He and his sister Christie Crane (David Crane) lived in many states throughout the U.S and Western Samoa before returning to Ohio to complete high school at Western Reserve Academy and college at Ohio University. He and his wife, Ruthy Davis (nee Malinak), raised five children, Lindsay Miller, Drake Miller (Jen Miller), Kelsey Whitacre (Donnie Whitacre), Julianne Davis and Trevor Davis. Their family was further expanded by the addition of eight grandchildren and a pack of loyal pooches.

A reliable phone-a-friend; Steve was a lifelong learner,



eager to share trivia with anyone who would listen. Self-taught in a variety of skills, he approached nearly everything in an unconventional way, whether it be open tuning of his various stringed instruments or woodworking without the assistance of power tools. His disdain for the extravagant was reflected

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Twenty Northeast Ohio Non-Profits Awarded Over \$1.5 Million In Grants



by Kristin Broadbent

Three Arches Foundation Announces 2020 Annual Grant Awards

Three Arches Foundation, a community-focused grant making foundation, announced awards totaling more than \$1.5 million to twenty Northeast Ohio nonprofits for their work in advancing the health and well-being of the people of Lakewood and surrounding communities. Each grant award reflects the Foundation's priority area of access to care, specifically the advancement of solutions to remove barriers and improve behavioral and physical health.

Grants awarded expand existing programs, fund new initiatives and promote collab-

orations that integrate health care and social services, which will have a direct impact on the lives of people – both young and old. "Throughout the strategic grant process we were enlightened by the innovative ways these organizations have found to not only maintain, but implement much needed programs and services despite going through a period of immense organizational adjustment this year," said Chas Geiger, board chair of the Foundation. "We're proud to provide financial resources to help carry forward these impactful efforts for the benefit of our community."

Recognizing this time of greater philanthropic need,

continued on page 2



Lakewood Public Library's Madison Branch To Undergo Historic Renovation

by Elizabeth Anthony

In the spring of this year, the Lakewood Public Library was poised to announce that Library Trustees were investing in an historic renovation of the Madison Branch to begin mid-2020. Then, the coronavirus appeared in the U.S. and all of us, in unique, but no less distressing ways were consumed by surviving a global pandemic. Today, as we continue to navigate these disquieting, uncertain times, the absence of community and the ability to gather in shared, public spaces to enjoy one another's company, engage in



civic dialogue, and enrich our singular perspectives through the world of words is palpable.

The relentlessness of this virus is staggering; yet, we choose to have hope and

gratitude. In recognition of the value of the Library as an essential community asset, the Library Trustees will move forward with the Madison Branch

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Sara Fagnilli Announces Run For Lakewood Municipal Court Judge

by Gaynel Mellino

Lakewood resident Sara Fagnilli proudly announced her candidacy for Judge of Lakewood Municipal Court.

Fagnilli's 34-year career as a lawyer has been spent practicing in the areas of municipal and public law, giving her unparalleled experience in the matters of law that will appear before the municipal court. Her vast experience includes representation of over 20 municipalities, including Lakewood, and trial work in Federal, State, and local courtrooms.

"I am excited to enter the race to serve as Lakewood Municipal Court Judge. It is imperative the person sitting on that bench not only has the experience to handle the wide variety of cases that come before the court but also has the integrity to make decisions that are fair and just," Fagnilli said.



Sara Fagnilli

nilli said. "High standards are important because I have seen firsthand how a decision can directly impact people."

Fagnilli has served as a municipal prosecutor, an attorney in private practice, general counsel for a large government entity, and as Law Director representing a multitude of Northeast Ohio communities. In addition to her legal career, Fagnilli has dedicated herself to many community organizations

including Lakewood Kiwanis and Lakewood-Rocky River Rotary, Lakewood Schools PTA, The Giving Tree Project which has provided free masks to the public during the Covid-19 pandemic, and serving the City on the Citizen's Advisory Committee for the Community Development Block Grant Program and the Lakewood Charter Review Commission

"My husband and I have made Lakewood our home. We raised our family here and it is a community that I care very deeply about. My goal is to continue protecting the safety and well-being of all of our families and neighborhoods by serving as Judge," Fagnilli said.

The Lakewood Primary Election is on Tuesday, Sept. 14, 2021. Early voting begins on Tuesday, Aug. 3, 2021. Go to www.saraforjudge.com for more about Fagnilli's candidacy.

The Mayor's Corner

by Meghan George

As 2020 comes to a close, I am proud of the work we have done and am hopeful for what lies ahead. There is no denying the tough times right now. The COVID-19 pandemic remains dangerous, and that means disruptions to life for months to come. However, even with the backdrop of a once in a lifetime pandemic, we continue to move forward on many goals and projects. We have no room to slow down.

Awards and Recognition

The City of Lakewood was awarded:

- Best Suburb in 2020 by Cleveland Scene Magazine.
- 2020 Vibrant NEO Champion Award for Lakewood's Affordable Housing Strategy.
- Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting.
- Ohio Auditor of State Award with Distinction for Lakewood's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR).

Advocacy and Planning

- Power a Clean Future Ohio hosted a local government webinar about economic development opportunities of growing Ohio's clean and renewable energy sectors. I shared Lakewood's experiences working toward our 100% renewable energy goal.
- I am also serving on the steering committee for Cuyahoga County's Lakefront Public Access Plan. The

Proud Of Lakewood



Mayor George's Christmas Card and Greeting 2020.

goal of this plan is to better access and utilize Lake Erie assets to improve economic opportunities and quality of life. There is also an important opportunity to work on needed erosion-control.

- We continue to move forward with the redevelopment of the former hospital site. With the support of City Council, my administration will begin negotiations with CASTO and North Pointe Realty, Inc. Although this is only one step in a multi-step process, their team's vision and strengths align well with the needs of this site and our community.

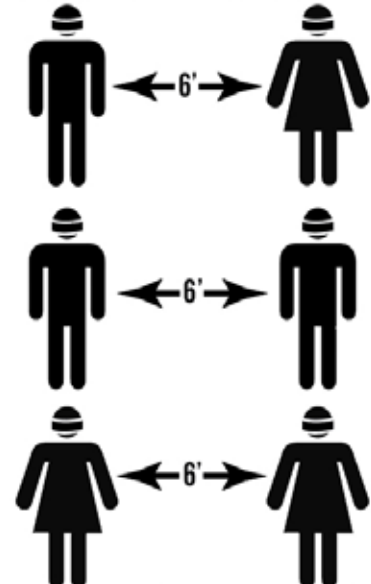
- Although there have been some delays due to COVID, the Lake Ave. Marathon re-development continues to move forward.

- Many of our planning efforts this year have been focused on COVID-19 relief. These include: pandemic related express parking, extended outdoor dining and residential and small business rent relief programs.

In closing, as we prepare for the holidays, I ask that we all do our part this holiday season. We cannot reduce the spread of the virus unless we work together as a community. I'm encouraging everyone to please adjust your holiday plans and reduce interactions outside your household as much as possible.

Please wear a mask, wash your hands, practice social distancing, and have a happy holiday season.

ARE YOU PRACTICING SAFE SIX?



MASKING For A Friend



20 Northeast Ohio Non-Profits Awarded Over \$1.5 Million In Grants

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the Foundation increased its grant spending by more than 50% over last year. In addition to the twenty grants announced today, the Foundation made eight COVID-19 Response Fund grants earlier in the year and participated in the Greater Cleveland COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund during the first phase of relief efforts.

Highlights of 2020 grants approved by the Foundation's board of directors include:

Barton Senior Center \$30,600

To develop and provide socially distanced programming and services through the Studio B channel on Senior TV for people aged 55 and above that helps avoid the feeling of isolation, maintains cognitive skills, and provides mental stimulation.

Barton Center, Lakewood Senior Citizens & Neighborhood Family Practice \$76,823

To fund a pilot program that tests the practicality and effectiveness of using telehealth and care pathways to engage low-income, senior residents at the Westerly in Lakewood, in integrated primary care and behavioral health services.

Beck Center for the Arts \$25,000

Philanthropic investment to provide technology resources that support telehealth and distance learning, as well as financial assistance that subsidizes the cost of creative arts therapies and adapted arts programming and services.

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FRIDAY: NOON - 10PM

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Education In Lakewood

Lakewood City Schools' "Access Point" Program Puts Students And School Employees At Risk

by Betsy Voinovich

Several weeks ago Lakewood City Schools launched a program called "Access Point" to help students struggling to learn remotely. Most residents haven't heard of it. It allows children to come into the closed school buildings to receive help from building employees who are not teachers, but members of the Ohio Association of Public School Employees union. In normal times they hold positions like classroom and library aides, cafeteria workers and recess monitors.

During the pandemic their jobs have been things like packaging and

sending breakfasts and lunches home, providing library services and assisting teachers with their remote classes on zoom calls.

In November many of them received an email letting them know they had been drafted into the new Access Point program. They received no warning, little to no training, and were given no choice about participating in it.

The plan calls for them to meet with individual children— for 90 minutes at a time-- with sometimes as many as ten per session—to help them with school work.

At issue is what "helping with

school work" means.

"We can't teach them; we don't have that training," said an Access Point employee last week. "We're supposed to monitor them, like study hall monitors."

But some of the students, especially the youngest ones, need more than monitoring. They need help.

Even though they are not teachers, building employees, like any parent, can sit down with a child and try to help. But they can't do it from six feet.

Which puts them in an impossible situation.

Though official emails inform them that they must stay six feet apart, in practice they are encouraged to work closely with students who need it as it is the only way they can actually help them.

And so they are. They are sitting right next to struggling students, for 90 minutes at a time. "We were told to 'help them get their stuff done' and that they need to improve their grades," says the employee. Helping a student requires that the helper can see what the student is working on and in some cases, show them what to do.

Students who need actual hands-on help are exposed for 90 minutes at a

time, at much closer than 6 feet, to helpers, who have been exposed to students before and after them.

The flaw with this system became obvious during the first week of the program when one child with Covid19 caused a whole elementary school to shut down.

LCS Administration is aware of the situation. It shut down the program for a week after Thanksgiving, then reopened with new plexiglass barriers.

But as photos show, while students and teachers are wearing masks, they are sitting, with heads together, on the same side of the barrier, causing them to share breathing space in even more confined areas.

Schools must have dashboards listing all Covid cases—staff and students— within the district. In the most recent listing, LCS reported 15 positive cases, 26 quarantining. The previous week, 30 positives were reported with 83 quarantining. And this is while the schools are "closed."

How many of these are from the Access Point program is not clear, but in a time when Covid cases are at record highs, especially in Lakewood, this program needs rethinking.

20 Northeast Ohio Non-Profits Awarded Over \$1.5 Million In Grants

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Bellefaire JCB \$99,128

Continued support for vital consultation and critical trauma-informed prevention services in Lakewood City Schools through Bellefaire's School-Based Counseling program.

GiGi's Playhouse Cleveland \$75,000 (over two years)

To expand the highly-successful GiGiFIT Program, an essential therapeutic and wellness-based curriculum that guides individuals impacted by Down syndrome towards developing healthy lifestyles and fitness routines, across all age groups.

Hospice of the Western Reserve \$150,000 (over two years)

To support the in-home palliative care program for seniors living with advanced illness in Lakewood and surrounding communities.

Journey Center for Safety and Healing \$55,000 (formerly Domestic Violence & Child Advocacy Center)

To continue the well-established role and ongoing work of the Justice

System Advocate within the Lakewood Municipal Court to help victims of, or those at risk of domestic violence, child abuse or other violence.

LifeAct \$25,000

Funding to support LifeAct's suicide prevention programs that empower middle and high school students in Lakewood and surrounding communities to better understand their own mental health and to identify symptoms of depression.

May Dugan Center \$67,160


Philanthropic support towards the launch of a Mental Health Intensive Outpatient Program designed to comprehensively treat existing mental health clients on Cleveland's west side with services using a multidisciplinary approach.

Neighborhood Family Practice \$279,379 (over two years)

To increase access to affordable health care for underserved residents of Cleveland's west side through

Read the rest of this online at:lakewoodobserver.com

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City Council Holiday Greetings

Holiday Greetings From City Council President Dan O'Malley

As we find a way to celebrate the holidays - many of us without the family and friends who make the season bright - let us take the opportunity to reflect on the sacrifices made by so many of our neighbors this year. Some have worked countless hours making sure our health care needs are met, our grocery shelves are stocked, and our basic needs are delivered. Others have felt the pain of loss as the pandemic has taken its toll. Through it all, we have learned the meaning of community and resilience. This holiday season I thank all of you who have gone above and beyond the call of duty to serve your fellow citizens. Wishing everyone



good health and happiness in the New Year!

Dan O'Malley
Councilmember, Ward 4
City of Lakewood, Ohio
(440) 552-7234



Holiday Greetings To Lakewood From Tom Bullock And Family

As we approach the end of another year in Lakewood, I'd like to extend my best wishes to all. 2020 has been challenging as we faced the COVID-19 crisis. I join my City Council colleagues in seeking to provide resources and adapt procedures to allow our community to remain strong during COVID while conducting our everyday work to the standard of excellence that has helped our city grow.

As ever, contact me any time to share your ideas on how we can improve.

Happy holidays, merry Christmas and seasons greetings to everyone in Lakewood--and to our families everywhere,

Tom Bullock & Family

Tom Bullock serves Lakewood residents as their at-Large representative on City Council. Share ideas or concerns with Tom at 216-395-7LWD (-7593) or tom.bullock@lakewoodoh.net.

Happy Holidays From Jason Shachner



Happy holidays, from my family to yours! While this year no has been challenging and has brought struggle and pain to so many, there is still much to be grateful for. I am grateful for the opportunity to spend extra time with my family and for across-the-lawn conversations with my neighbors. I am grateful for our resilient City, and our incredible health-care and frontline workers. Although this year's festivities may look different, I hope you find peace and joy, and ways to safely connect with your loved ones. Here's to a brighter year ahead!

Sincerely, Jason Shachner & Family
Jason Shachner can be reached at Jason.Shachner@lakewoodoh.net or at (216) 714-2150.

Holiday Greetings From Tristan Rader

"Holidays are special every year. That's still true after all that this year has thrown our way. I look forward to brighter days, ahead, and being together again in person."

You can contact Councilmember At Large Tristan Rader at Tristan.Rader@lakewoodoh.net or on his cell phone at 440-315- 2852



Raders at home.



Tess Neff, Ward 1 Council Woman Wishes You A Safe And Wonderful Holiday Season!

It is the time of year we love to gather with family and friends to celebrate. This year's celebrations will be very unusual and different compared to past seasons. Thank you for doing your part to help keep our community safe. My family and I wish you the happiest of times this season. Embrace family and enjoy one another. Together we will thrive!

Tess Neff is a 30-year Lakewood resident. She and her husband Rich raised their children here and both have worked in the community. She loves Lakewood and its uniqueness.

Tess Neff at 216-529-6055 (O) 216-245-2287 (P) or tess.neff@lakewoodoh.net

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Proverbs 3:5-6

Lakewood's Financial News

sponsored by First Federal Lakewood

by James Hill
Lakewood Branch Manager

Coronavirus has shown us some of the best and worst in humanity. We have seen medical professionals, truck drivers, and other front line workers step up to the plate. They are pulling long hours in sometimes thankless jobs to ensure Americans can put food on the table and get required medical care. Unfortunately, we have also seen a rise in those who would take advantage of the situation. Scammers are actively working on getting personal and financial access from those who are vulnerable and worried. These are often the same people who can ill-afford to lose money or security during trying times.

Types of Coronavirus Scams

Unfortunately, many different coronavirus scams are going on right now. These are some of the more common scams being reported at the moment.

- Many scams relate to "miracle" cures for coronavirus or offer the promise of products people order that never come. They often come in the form of teas, essential oils, and CBD products that offer no real medicinal value when it comes to coronavirus. They give people a false sense of security. Some are even offering fraudulent antibody tests to get health insurance information, which is then used for identity theft.
 - As people await news on continued government stimulus packages, scams rage on, including everything from stimulus check promises to unemployment benefits and more. Other financial scams involve student loan payments, stock scams, credit card fraud, and more.
 - These include attempts to get targets to part with valuable personally-identifiable information. Such scams are primarily focused on those under financial stress or health concerns.
 - We all know that contact tracing is an invaluable way to trace infected clusters and determine the origins of coronavirus cases. However, scammers use the guise of contact tracing to steal insurance information, bank account information, Social Security numbers, and more.
- Be suspicious if you are called for any of these potential issues. Do

Beware of COVID Scams



not give out personally-identifiable or financial information without first verifying the authenticity of the caller.

Signs of Being Scammed

The number one sign you are being scammed is an email, text message, or phone call that appears off or suspicious. Recognizing these cues can help you identify if someone is attempting to scam you.

You will need to do a little research before offering up your insurance, personal, or financial information if you see things like:

- Callers are more interested in your health insurance information than the status of your health.
 - Scammers require upfront payment before providing information about things like stimulus checks, unemployment benefits, etc.
 - Non-legitimate charities are pressuring you into providing donations right away.
 - Fraudsters contact you through an email, phone call, or text message claiming to be from the government.
 - Swindlers claiming to be contact tracers ask for any personal, financial, or insurance information. They should only ask about health information.
- These signs are not always indicators that you are being scammed, but they should place you on guard.

Avoiding Coronavirus Scams

The best way to avoid coronavirus scams is to adopt an air of skepticism when you get phone calls, emails, text messages, or door-to-door visits. These other steps can help, as well.

- through official channels.
- Do not even respond to text messages, emails, and phone calls claiming to have information about stimulus checks – even if they appear official.
- Simple actions like these can spare you the hassle of dealing with identity theft and inevitable financial disaster should someone access your financial accounts.

Takeaway

Coronavirus has shown us some of humanity's worst from scammers, thieves, and those who would commit fraud. But it has also shown us some of the best. Try to focus on that while being wary of those who would do harm during these trying times. If you have become aware of a potential scam, it is wise to notify the authorities.



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We Celebrate A Life

STEPHEN MICHAEL DAVIS

8/15/1954 – 12/2/2020



The Davis Family minus the grandkids!
continued from page 1

in his easily-recognizable uniform of white button-up shirt, blue jeans and Birkenstocks.

Although firm in his beliefs, he always sought to understand others' points of view. His ability to listen and pose thought-provoking questions made him an engaging partner in conversation or debate. His influence expanded well beyond his immediate family. He remained an active participant in local politics throughout his time in the community. Nobody would have guessed a person who grew up in places as far-flung as Upstate New York and Western Samoa was as well-connected as any native Lakewoodite.

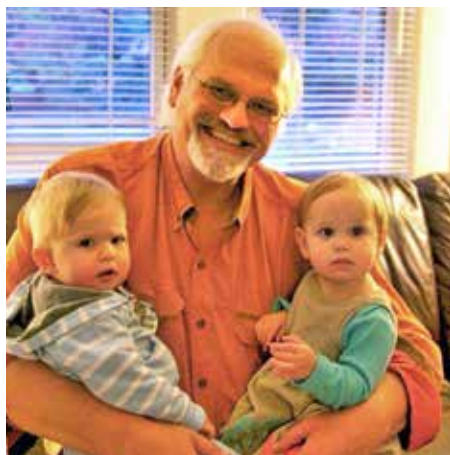
He had a kind and gentle heart and enjoyed spending time with his Lakewood family including four

grandchildren and nephew, Matt Malinak. The driveway was his social club and he was quick to pull up a lawn chair and offer a cold drink to any passerby. He spent countless hours on the drive talking, playing guitar and drinking Scotch with his closest friends.

He spent his working years as a salesman for several local printing companies, the most recent being North Coast Litho.

Fear of flying aside, he saw no flyover states. He lived for the roadside attractions between destinations you might otherwise miss in a plane. The scenic route was the only option. Together with his wife of 33 years, Ruthy, he road tripped across the U.S. visiting places like the Outer Banks, Nashville, the Utah desert, Colorado, Mackinac Island, the Eastern Shore of Virginia, and the Black Hills and Badlands of South Dakota. He and his family spent nearly a dozen summers at the Chautauqua Institute where he immersed himself in art, music and lectures.

He delighted in his own quirks; humored by his inverted signature in red ink on every birthday card and his deliberate, but playful misidentification of critters with his grandchildren. He was well loved by his family and friends. His bright smile and jovial laugh will be remembered as we continue to share his stories.



Family was everything to Steve, and with each new generation the love, respect and togetherness grew.



Here are Steve's greatest passions: music, the kids and the grandkids.



Ruthy and Steve at a summer concert.



Donations can be made in Steve's Memory to: H2O – Help to Others youth volunteer program
<http://thelakewoodfoundation.org/donate-2>

Or point your phone or tablet at the QR Code and be taken there.



Steve Davis testing \$1.00 lunch sandwiches for an article we did for the Observer.

Steve Davis, Co-Founder Of The Lakewood Observer And A Damn Good Friend

by Jim O'Bryan

I was an extremely lucky person to have met Steve Davis and share over 30 years of friendship, work, projects and mischief with him.

I first met Steve when he was my printer at BP America. After a year of working together he mentioned his wife Ruthy went to LHS 72. Her name was Ruthy Malinak. I laughed my ass off. Ruthy and I shared a sewing machine in homeroom for 3 years.

Over the years we realized we had similar crossover likes in music, art, reading, hobbies and even enjoying life.

We always laughed that he was the most normal person in Lakewood, perhaps the world. I am not sure about that but I do know that everyone whose life crossed his path enjoyed his easygoing ways.

I also know what a dedicated husband, father, and grandfather he was. In recent years all that mattered

was the children.

Thank you for so many great conversations, advice and help. You are already missed and were always loved.

RIP my friend, Godspeed.



Steve Davis deep in conversation with Kenneth Warren.



Ken and Steve after checking out a car accident. And the conversation continues.



Scan QR Code to see Steve Davis Photo Gallery

From Lakewood City Council President Dan O'Malley

I loved talking with Steve, picking his brain about the past (and the future), getting his advice and of course saying anything that would bring out that amazing laugh of his. His house was on my usual walking/jogging/biking route and it was my lucky day when he'd be sitting out front and wave me up for a beer. Conversations were never boring and I always learned something. Jim, you and I could know each other another hundred years and the nicest thing you'll have ever done for me was introducing me to Steve Davis. RIP.

We Celebrate A Life



Left to right: Fred, Steve Davis, Steve Ollay, Joe McLain

I Put Down A Book I Was Reading And Called Steve Davis.

by Joe McLain

I put down a book I was reading and called Steve Davis.

The book was “The Happy Islands of Oceania: Paddling the Pacific” by the travel writer Paul Theroux. I had just read a mention of canned corned beef, which in the South Pacific went by the name of “pisupo.”

I knew this already, thanks to Steve, who had spent part of his childhood in American Samoa. He relayed to us the island pidgin for several words and phrases such as “party” and “I’m gonna kick you in the mouth.” I forget the island translation for those undoubtedly helpful phrases, but I told Steve that I had just read Theroux’s account of the etymology of “pisupo,” which corresponded with Steve’s account. The first canned food to reach the happy islands was pea soup, which was not well received. The second, however, was canned corned beef, which was an immediate and lasting hit. But since it came in the same sort of can as pea soup, corned beef became known as pisupo. Actual pea soup, presumably, was forgotten.

“Improbable, but true,” is a good descriptor for Stephen M. Davis, whom we lost on December 2 in the already-horrible year of 2020. I met him when I worked in the publications office at Case Western Reserve in the mid-1980s. He was a print sales rep for Sherman Litho..

That was the start of our friendship. We soon discovered that we lived a few blocks from each other in Lakewood — he, Ruthy and their kids lived on Wyandotte while my wife Helen and I lived on Robinwood with our kids.

Our time together was most often spent sitting on a porch or on “hoofs” around Lakewood, wandering down the more obscure streets and pointing out interesting aspects of the vernacular architecture. And always talking. Steve was a world-class talker.

He had an enviable way of approaching complete strangers and engaging them in conversation. I’m no introvert, but Steve would easily begin a chat with anyone standing nearby. Improbably enough, Steve was uneasy when it came to anything like public speaking. His reticence in addressing even an ultra-friendly crowd under very informal conditions surprised me.

We found out early in our friendship that we were closely in accord in terms of musical taste, politics, food and beverage preferences and so on. We were both big fans of bluegrass

music and admirers of the work of David Bromberg and Clarence White. Steve called me once to state that he had just got off the phone with Bromberg. I might make something like that up; Steve wouldn’t. I don’t remember where or how he got the phone number.

Steve and I were both family men, a common denominator that was mostly acknowledged tacitly. He and Ruthy had twins the same year that Helen and I had our son.

Steve was very civic minded. He and Denny Wendell and I were on a committee to promote passage of a Lakewood Schools levy. We heard that there was some organized opposition and decided to take direct action. Under the cover of night, we drove to a printing company we believed was being used by the opposition group. We made a daring foray into the firm’s dumpster, emerging with a wad of flyers, still wet with ink. The levy committee was thus able to counter points made against the levy in advance.

The levy passed. Denny had the best line regarding this daring episode. Asked about his role in, Denny replied tersely, “Special ops.”

Steve was also involved in city government, serving on several city charter commissions. I began referring to him as Citizen Davis, a sobriquet that spread via my children.

A job offer at William & Mary caused us to leave Lakewood in 2004. Steve hosted a big goodbye party for us at his house. It was an affair of note, and not just for the sheer good time had by all. Ken Warren, the director of the Lakewood Library, met Jim O’Bryan at the party and the two of them went on to found the Lakewood Observer. With the assistance of Citizen Davis, of course.

The past couple of days, I talked with Jim O’Bryan about Steve, his life and the gaping hole he leaves in our world. “Don’t mourn, Joe,” Jim said. “Celebrate every moment we had with him.”

It’s excellent advice and I sit here trying to capture more improbable truths about my friend. For one thing, he had an excellent sense of humor and laughed easily, but had no patience for standard jokes of the setup-and-punchline variety.

One of the commonest things that has gone on inside my head for decades is a mental note that “I’ll have to mention that to Steve Davis.”

He’s been gone less than a week and I’ve caught myself thinking that twice already.

Thoughts Of Stephen Davis

by Jeff Blumenthal

This wasn’t the script I imagined. It was only tomorrow. December 2, 2020. Nothing to plan for. Nothing to stress about. But it wasn’t a normal Wednesday. Steve Davis didn’t do things conventionally. Why would he? What was the point? If it were planned then he’d already know the outcome. Better to seek out or stumble on the most unique observations, enjoy them, and save them enhance a story or conversation.

A friendship of almost 50 years gives countless Steve Davis stories. Some I can recall instantly. Others appear when I see a unique thing, something old yet useful, or something playfully crafted a purposefully understated way. Recently Steve delighted in his dead basil plant adorned with miniature Christmas lights. Perfect.

Music was a big part of Steve’s life. He listened. He played and had fun with it. We shared an appreciation for the simplicity of unproduced acoustic strings, and vocals that had texture and

soul. Blues. Bluegrass. Jorma. Bromberg. Doc, Vassar, Taj, Keb, Fahey, and so on. Always under the radar, purposefully. And Steve went beyond the appreciation of the musical sound. He was an encyclopedia of the artist’s history and influences.

Steve was an Art Major at OU and his appreciation was broad and imaginative. That connection remained an integral part of our friendship to this day. It’s a gift we all share and not likely we’d have that gift if not for Steve’s adventurous nature.

Steve was loyal. To his friends. To his brands. And to his family. Family was it for Steve. He always made time for his family. Otherwise, Steve could talk. Oh, how he could talk. About anything. The stranger the topic and more obscure the better. Convention was boring. Steve had fun and delighted in the calls, the observations, conversations that sometimes were just plain silly.

My heart aches. Til the next time I see something that makes me think of you, RIP Stephen, my friend.



When I heard Steve Davis Had Died

by Chris Eck

When I heard Steve Davis had died, I looked through my recent calls and realized that probably 70% of the calls I made or received in the last few months were from Steve. And it’s literally been like that for decades.

We met through work in 1998 and became fast personal friends. How could you not be Steve’s friend? So joyful and so clever, always willing to talk through anything under the sun just for the exercise of doing so.

I enjoyed our calls so much that I regularly answered the phone even if I was with other people. All my friends knew who Steve was, and most of them caught snippets of our conversations over the years because it was just too entertaining not to share the hilarity.

It’s hard to adjust to knowing that no more calls, no more uproarious laughter, no more clever turns of a phrase, no more random metaphysical discussions are coming.

We talked about food, usually when he’d call to tell me, “I’m driving to my Heinen’s place.” At Heinen’s, they bring your groceries to your car in the drive through, and Steve had hassled the Heinen’s employees so much about making sure he got a prime number for the lineup that eventually, he didn’t have to ask. I like to imagine they’d see him walking toward the door and say, “Prime number guy is here!”

Maybe 15 years ago we had lunch at a restaurant near Akron. He’d never been there before but he was so friendly and open that he started joking around with the waitress. I said to him, “You’re

like old friends already!” And he said, “Oh, I come in here every day for lunch. She knows me.” For 15 straight years, our running discussions around noon on any given day included what he had for lunch at that restaurant that day. One time I called him from that restaurant and said, “Hey, I’m here and it’s noon. Where are you?” and he replied, “Aw, I just left there! Sorry I missed you!”

We literally dragged that nonsense out for the last 15 years.

I’m sure he shared inside jokes and long-running threads in conversations with all of his friends, and he often cross-pollinated our discussions with inside jokes he had with others. “I was talking to my friend Denny Wendell one time...” Because I live in Akron, I only ever met or spoke to a handful of his other friends and neighbors, but I know all their names and I still remember and chuckle about many of their stories. Including Birdtown North, Pat Carroll.

My personal loss feels profound and cruel. I cannot imagine the total volume of emptiness and grief and sadness left in the wake of Steve’s sudden departure across his family and the whole crazy cast of characters he included in his life, and I will miss terribly the regular updates about his children and grandchildren, who he loved, and loved screwing with.

My deepest sympathies to Ruthy and the kids. Thank you so much for sharing your Steve with the world. It is a vastly less interesting place without him in it.

Foodwood



Players On Madison Returns With A Pop Up Menu

by Anthony Romano

If you are from Lakewood, you no doubt recall the iconic neon Players sign at the corner of Belle and Madison. For years, Players on Madison was a staple west-side eatery, offering an eclectic mix of traditional Italian and New American fare. Even though the specials changed daily, and a new menu was penned every few months, “Create Your Own Pizza and Pasta” was always offered.

When Anthony Romano took ownership of Players in 2015, it brought an end to the Players era--but not entirely. After 16 years as Execu-

tive Chef at Players, Anthony updated the location, but the spirit of Players lives on at Sarita. As the longest tenured chef in Lakewood, he has seen food trends change and has always kept an ear to his customers. So now he’s bringing back “Create Your Own Pizza and Pasta.” This Players “Pop Up” menu has all the familiar pizza and single serving pasta options, and a great value Family Pack as well. Available for dine-in, pickup, and delivery, Tuesday-Sunday, for a limited time. For more information, visit their website, www.sarita-restaurant.com.

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15. SMOKED TURKEY
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Lakewood Observer

Lakewood Public Library's Madison Branch To Undergo Historic Renovation

continued from page 1

renovation in 2021. The renovation will restore the original architectural charm of the “little library,” nestled in Lakewood’s vibrant Birdtown neighborhood, while ensuring the Branch remains responsive to community needs for generations to come.

The Lakewood Public Library has been proud to serve the Lakewood community with its two branch locations, Main and Madison, for over 100 years. The Library opened its doors on May 19, 1916 with only 10,000 books to offer the burgeoning streetcar community that built it. As the city grew, so did the Library, adding thousands of volumes of materials to serve the needs of patrons who flocked to Lakewood.

In 1921, a branch library on Madison Avenue was established to serve the city’s growing immigrant population and to provide library resources within walking distance of every Lakewood resident, a value of significant importance to the Library then and now. The small, brick building located near the corner of Madison and Clarence Avenues has been home to the Madison Branch since 1929, when Library Trustees purchased the property from the City of Lakewood for \$1.00.

Adding to the value of the Madison Branch is its significance as a Walker & Weeks building. Many may know this architectural firm for their involvement in Carnegie Libraries as well as the construction of Severance Hall, in Cleveland’s University Circle neighborhood.



Madison Branch Children’s Room. 3rd and 4th grade students from St. Hedwig School listen to a story, 1966

With only three modest renovations in its nearly 100-year existence, Library Trustees seek to invest in a renovation of this vital community asset.

In early spring 2018, Library staff and Trustees sought community input to inform the renovation. Forty Library patrons participated in a facilitated discussion about the Madison Branch’s biggest assets and challenges. The event was publicized on the Library’s website and through social media. Patrons also had an opportunity to complete an online or paper-and-pencil survey about the Madison Branch and their preferences for its renovation. Community feedback was shared with HBM, the architectural firm leading the renovation.

Proposed renovations of the Madison Branch will maintain its beloved neighborhood feel, while improving the efficiency and usability of an histori-

cally significant building. Architectural renderings call for updating building systems for the 21st century—improving heating and cooling efficiency, addressing safety and ADA compliance, and increasing usable square footage, all while maintaining the building’s existing footprint.

Renovations will be financed by reserve funds that the Library has accumulated from years of conservative spending. Property taxes will not increase as a result of this project nor will taxpayers be asked to approve a levy on upcoming ballots. To date, proposed renovation plans have been approved by Mayor George and her cabinet, City Council, and the City’s Planning Commission and Architectural Board of Review.

The Library’s goal is to minimize service disruption during renovation. While the physical Branch location will be closed, patrons will be able to access print and electronic materials in an alternate location, 13427 Madison Avenue, during regular business hours (currently Monday thru Saturday, 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.). The Library has also recently purchased Chromebooks for patrons to use in both Branch locations.

Renovation of the Madison Branch will strengthen the Library’s century-long tradition of excellence and service to the community, ensuring the Branch remains a public fixture for generations to come. To learn more about the renovation or make a donation to support the Library’s capital investment visit lakewoodpubliclibrary.org/madison.

Facts about the Madison Branch:

- The purpose of the Lakewood Public Library is to serve people of all ages, walks-of-life, and interests by selecting, organizing, preserving and making records of human experience, knowledge, ideas, information, insight and values widely accessible.
- The Lakewood Public Library is consistently ranked among the best in the nation, competing with large institutions far outside its weight class. Yet, the Library remains proud of its strong local connections, taking seriously its responsibility to be responsive to the needs of the Lakewood community.
- The Madison Branch serves everyone—circulating more children’s books than adult books and providing hours of Homework Help services, meeting space for recovery groups and a welcoming and safe space for newly arrived citizens.

Leaders Weigh in on the Renovations:

From James Crawford, Lakewood Public Library Director: "For over ninety years, the Madison Branch has successfully served the residents of Lakewood, especially the residents of Birdtown. The Library is inviting the community's support in reinvesting in the Madison Branch and ensuring its continuing service to the Lakewood community."

From Judy Grzybowski, Manager, Madison Branch: "It is time. We have been talking about this project and planning for years. We are not the Main Library and we won't become it after the restoration. We are the "little library" that could and can. Madison Avenue is flourishing and we want to be part of its development."

From William C, Lakewood homeowner and founding member of Westside Agnostics, which meets in the auditorium and conference rooms of the Madison Branch: "It is inconceivable to me that the growth and overwhelming success of our Westside Agnostic AA movement would have happened without the amazing friendship, support, and cooperation (tolerance!) of the Madison Branch staff, Lakewood Police Security, and the careful attention to our unique needs by Branch Manager, Judy Grzybowski."



Lakewood Public Library Madison Branch, 1929

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Twenty Twenty Twenty: Reviews Of Recent Releases By Local Bands, Pt. 110

by Buzz Kompier

Red Devil Ryders - Pour Me Another One - Just Because Records - 11 songs - LP, digital

In a time when shows were a thing people could go to, I think I probably brought more of my friends to see Red Devil Ryders than maybe any other band. Sure, that's partially because for a while they seemed to be on every show, but also they're a reliably decent and fun live band. I think this album brings that sense of fun and decency to the recorded medium. I wasn't quite sold on first listen (other than to sigh with relief that there weren't any songs like "Spicy Boys" on this one, which, sure, is a good first song of the live set, but not something I ever wanna listen to outside of that context), but a few listens in and I kinda started picking up on some themes and you know what? I think this is a really good album. It kicks off with the glammy power pop stomp of "Canadian Nights" (which I believe finds Adam Spektor and Carter Luckfield trading off verses on lead vocals and also features the excellent descriptive phrase "lookin' murdered out") and keeps up from there. Perhaps I'm reading into this too much as reviewers sometimes do (I once read that "Blood Visions" is a concept album about a murderer, which I'll believe when Jay Reatard comes back from the dead to tell me so), but this, to my ears, is an album about touring and about life in the immediate aftermath of touring, which has a poignant place in a world where no one is touring. The first two tracks definitely have a vibe of "the excitement of the tour." I wanted to hate "Mullet Song" on principle, but it's funny enough that it works. Perhaps it's really about tour-induced paranoia. "Sad Day For BBQ" is a tribute to someone named Melvin, who the album is also dedicated to, and is appropriately somber without losing

the plot. Side 1 ends with "Little Green Cross," a two- part suite (Spektor's country rock is the first half, Luckfield's power pop is the second) that's probably the best song about legal weed that I've ever heard. It also ends with some backwards guitar, a nice nod to the "Crowley 666" days. Side 2 is mostly devoted to the dark aftermath of touring- "Soaked Blunt Blues" and "Wings On Monday" each find their respective protagonist feeling as though they lack purpose now that they're off the road, which they compensate for by getting trashed. "Bon Soirée," like a few of the other tracks that feature piano on this record, finds the Ryders sounding a bit like The Cowboys (that's the modern Indiana band, not the one Mark Eitzel was in) and also lyrically has a bit of "Hasta Mañana Monsieur" by Sparks in there. I like to think of it and its follow-up, "Fronto Leafs (While Johnny Sleeps)," as beingslices of tour life recalled in the drunken haze that's sure to follow "Wings On Monday," "Bon Soirée" in particular. "Fronto Leafs" also features the fade out, semi-coherent chatter, fade back in trick from I'm pretty sure a couple Mott The Hoople songs. "Post-Tour Blues" is exactly what it sounds like, a musing on the relief of being home versus the excitement of being on the road- a real ambivalent state, it seems. I've had at least a brief conversation with Carter in the past about what the Brinsley Schwarz album "Nervous On The Road" means to him and in some ways this record has the same feeling in places. I'm always a sucker for when songs speed up "Free Bird" style and of course they got me with this one too. The album closes with "Hurricane," which is an upbeat cheery rocker to end on, but even this one seems a bit melancholy in the wake of some of the previous tracks. Maybe I've made up my own story for what this album is, but hey, it worked for me. The photo of the band on the insert is good enough that I

really wanted to put it in the article this week instead of the album art, but cooler heads prevailed (and the more I look at it, the better it gets- why does Spektor have some of his previous records with him? (Ricky Hell and Queen Of Hell... never realized how much Hell is in Adam Spektor's musical life) And he's got his clarinet, which is good since a Jim Davis performance might break out at any second. Not to rant and rave at the end here about Adam in these pictures, but why is he shrouded in shadow in most of them?

Is it to imply that he's the dark and mysterious one of the group?) A good record. 4/5
(justbecauserecords.bandcamp.com)

Are you a local-ish band? Do you have a record out? Email vaguelythreatening@gmail.com or send it directly to the Observer: PO Box 770203, Lakewood, OH 44107.

On Display At The Root: A Scope Into The Sacred



Artist Heather Hansen with her masterpiece.

by Nicole Nazario

As a human in Western society, I have observed my tendency to fall into the superiority-inferiority trap. The notion that some beings are inferior or superior to other beings ignores the universal intelligence that animates all life. It is a notion that has caused humans and all sentient beings harm and continues to do so.
Heather Hansen's art is a beautiful reminder of how all beings possess a sacred intelligence. Her paintings entitled "Bugs Can Fall in Love," "Everyone Was a Baby Once," and "Bugs Can Believe in God" encourage viewers to

reflect on how life force, no matter its shape or form, is able to perceive and feel.
Heather uses found materials, such as recycled canvases, paint from garage sales, driftwood, and forest gifts, for her creations. Her inspiration comes from nature and her work invites us to recognize the sacredness of all things. Her art is being displayed and sold at the Root Cafe during the month of December. I welcome you to visit, explore, and experience how these creations speak to you.
Nicole Nazario is a fellow human.

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Lakewood Is Alive

Lakewood Year In Review 2020

by Matt Kuhns

So much has happened this year, it's baffling. The following flashbacks (and a few updates) are just a sampling.

New government. Mayor George and council members Neff and Shachner were only sworn in at the beginning of January, and Kepple only appointed 10 months ago. What a first year on the job.

Big fire in Rocky River. The huge fire just across the river, on Feb. 23, destroyed in-progress condos. An explosion even flung debris across the freeway. The site is currently leveled and empty; investigation has not determined a cause.

Coin shortage. People remember the shutdown, in late winter, but a lot happened within that period. Example: coins were in such short supply at one point, that one Lakewood bank could give change for about three dollars, max.

"One Lakewood Place" is canceled. In early April the developer and the City decided not to move forward with the proposed development on the former Lakewood Hospital site, cleared and remediated at city expense, after all. The city has since negotiated a settlement, in the interest of permitting discussions with a new developer unencumbered.

The 2020 Primary. A mess. By the time a month of pandemic-shutdown overtime postal voting concluded in mid-April, hardly anyone really noticed. For what it's worth Joe Biden won a landslide first-place finish in Lakewood, perhaps not surprising given that opponents had dropped out by the time Ohio finished voting. The school levy passed, too.

Black Lives Matter actions. A BLM march and Lakewood Park event were,



A peaceful Black Lives Matters march through Lakewood.



Big fire seen from Lakewood.

it's fair to say, driven by solidarity with nationwide protests after George Floyd was killed. Local electeds nonetheless concurred with the assertion that racism is a public health crisis, and have responded with e.g. scrutiny of police procedures, and appointment of a diverse anti-racism task force.

Diner out, Superscript In. COVID-19 has not spared Lakewood households or businesses. Government, institutions and residents have so far kept a lot



Lakewood Holespital, formerly called "One Lakewood Plaza."

running, or at least limping toward an "other side." On Detroit, John's Diner closed up and won't reopen, but Cilantro will move in; on Madison, comic store Superscript opened in July and is still going.

Pyke Park. The unofficial "St. Charles Green" north of downtown is an official city park, as of August, named for Lakewood suffragist Bernice Pyke. The park remains mostly an unadorned green space, in response to resident wishes. But the Public Works Department removed various grungy debris from the ground, in addition to installing benches and a sign.

Census 2020. A pandemic disrupted a lot of plans for Census, along with everything else. Self-response became more important than ever, and the official ending was confused and vague. Nonetheless Lakewood surpassed Ohio's average—and our own 2010 showing—with a 73.1% self-response rate.

Future VP pop-in visit. Senator Kamala Harris was in Lakewood on Oct. 24. The casual, unannounced

appearance on Detroit Ave was oddly fitting with Lakewood's 2020 campaign season (see below).

Accessible Halloween. Many events canceled because of the pandemic, while others have adapted, some in ways worth thinking about in future. Some households' experiments with "contactless" trick-or-treating, for example, may have made 2020 the most accessible Halloween ever for those with physical challenges, in this city of front porch steps.

A year off from electioneering. America's general election was anxiety inducing, obscenely expensive, and turnout record-setting. But within Lakewood it was an oddly quiet autumn. Various factors, the pandemic chief among them, made 2020 a strange respite after several years when ballot measures and fierce local elections kept phones and doorbells ringing every year, even or odd.

We are (still) in this together. Stay safe everyone.

Lakewood resident Matt Kuhns is a freelance graphic designer, and occasional author.



Dedication of Pyke Park named after Lakewood suffragist Bernice Pyke.

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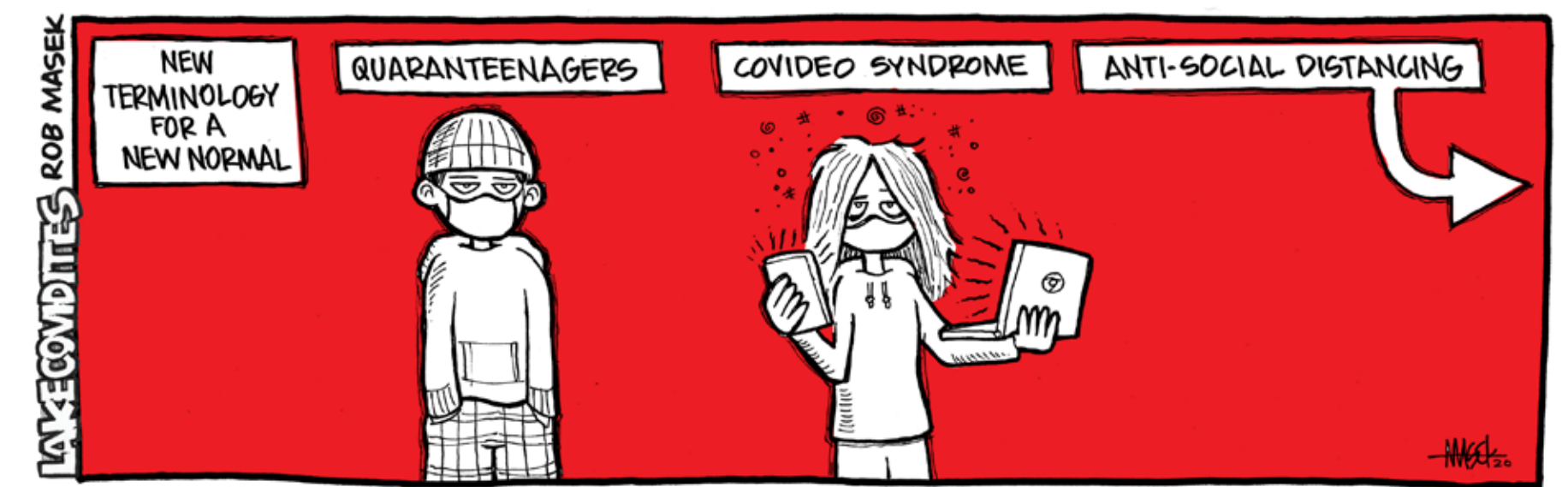
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