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Karamu House Celebrates \$5.2 Million Rejuvenation and Honors Legends

Karamu House, the nation's oldest producing Black theater, welcomed the community to its Homecoming Benefit and Community Day celebrations

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Gun Violence Leading Cause of Death Among Cleveland Children



By Sheila Ferguson

Echoes in Silence: "In the echo of silence, a shot rings clear, Shattering lives, the cost dear. A ripple of sorrow, a wave of pain, gun violence leaves, but stains remain."-- From Triggering Tears

Black males aged 14-29 years old are dying at high rates from firearm homicide, according to the City of Cleveland's 2023 Violence and Injury Report released on May 31, 2024.

Area families are grieving lost lives and snuffed potentials from firearm violence. The report stated there were 185 homicides in 2023, a rate not seen since 2000. This means 185 families will not see a loved one graduate high school or college, marry, work a job, own a home or have children.

Emergency room statistics show that the 800 gunshot

wound victims are likely to become permanently disabled or die shortly after being injured. Shooters, sentenced to over 10 years in prison, will be absent from everyday family and community life.

Cleveland's Violence and Injury Report precedes Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy's June 25 declaration that "firearm-related violence is an urgent public health crisis."

Murthy's landmark Surgeon General's Advisory on Firearm Violence report offers a broad national picture and strategies. In Cleveland's 2023 Violence and Injury Report, Murthy reports that "54 percent of U.S. adults and families were impacted by the sharp rise in gun-related injuries and deaths."

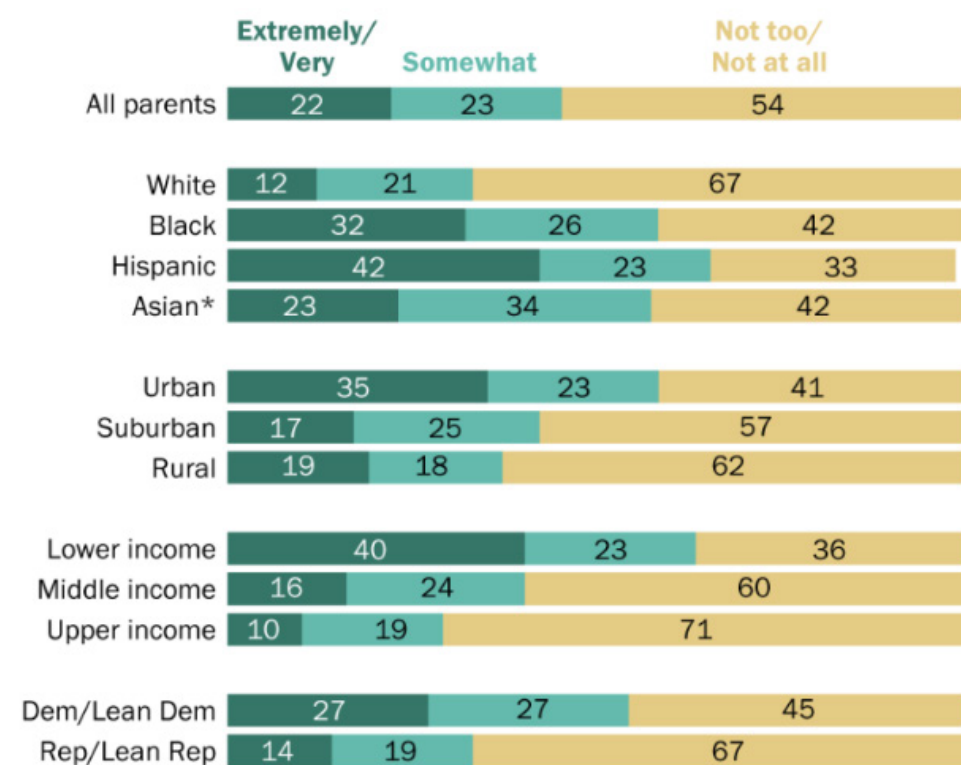
The Cleveland Observer recently spoke with local gun violence survivors about their questions on why our kids are dying.

Key Causes Questions and Answers

Continued on page 2

Around one-in-five U.S. parents are extremely or very concerned about their children getting shot

% of parents who say they are _____ worried about their children getting shot at some point



* Estimates for Asian adults are representative of English speakers only.
Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. parents conducted Sept. 20-Oct. 2, 2022.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Project 2025: What Does It Say?



By Staff Writer

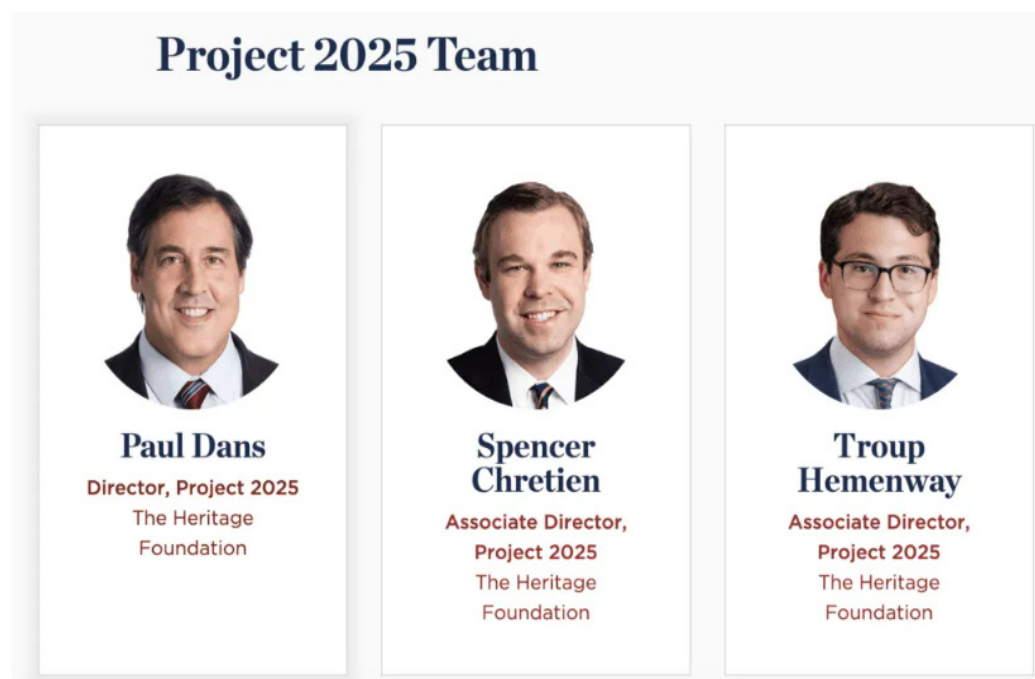
Project 2025 is a plan created by conservative think tank The Heritage Foundation. With over 900 pages, Project 2025 could impact democracy in five key areas important to our communities: education, healthcare, climate justice, criminal justice and faith.

Education

The plan suggests shutting down the Department of Education, which has been around since 1867. The idea is to remove rules and regulations so families can choose different types of schools and learning environments more freely.

Healthcare

Project 2025 aims to reduce the federal government's role in healthcare. This could mean major



The white male leadership team of Project 225 ("About Project 2025," The heritage foundation)

cuts to Medicare and Medicaid, which help millions of people with medical expenses. It could also affect agencies that research diseases and approve new medicines and medical devices.

Criminal Justice

The plan would reverse police reforms implemented after George Floyd's murder, stop federal

oversight of police departments accused of racial discrimination and enforce harsher sentencing rules. It also suggests closely controlling federal prosecutors.

Faith

The project wants to repeal same-sex marriage laws, eliminate healthcare programs for LGBTQ+ citizens and severely limit access

to abortion pills. It doesn't ban abortion outright but makes it much harder to get one. Churches would retain a tax-exempt status even if they discriminate based on race or get involved in politics. The plan also suggests reinstating a ban on Muslims immigrating to the U.S.

Climate Justice

Project 2025 recommends cutting regulations and reducing government efforts related to the environment. It proposes breaking up the Department of Energy, the Environmental Protection Agency and other agencies that deal with climate change. The plan also calls for more oil and gas drilling on public lands and cutting funding for renewable energy like wind and solar power.

Most Dangerous Aspects

- Military Use: advises the president to use military forces for law enforcement in the U.S. and to target political opponents.
- Immigration: recommends

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Leading Cause of Death

From front page

Judy Knight, a Lee-Harvard mother, minister and elder caretaker asked, “Why is it that every time I turn on the television or radio, there is a report of a shooting death somewhere in Cleveland? This is bad news for all Clevelanders.” Knight is most concerned with matters of cause and uptick.

Public health officials said today we are seeing the movement of gang and personal rivalries born online in the COVID-19 pandemic era move back to our city streets.

Author Julia Cusack reports that the youth gun violence problem around the U.S. is caused by “poverty, systemic racism, and social inequality.” According to Cusack, communities of color are disproportionately impacted. “Marginalized neighborhoods lack beauty, safe housing, and quality educational and employment opportunities. Children and youth growing up in impoverished areas are at risk for boredom and involvement in violent crime.”

Therapist Anton Cross of Shaker Heights’ Black Mental Health Corporation said families are not doing well. Foremost, parents themselves are defensive and angry, and they are not talking to their kids about violence. Many are not supervising them or healing their rage and anger. As a result, parents are not giving consequences for disruptive, violent, and destructive behaviors like racial self-hatred, toxic masculinity, or bad behaviors in the school and community. Young shooters carry around these pent-up emotions that signal it is OK to kill.”

Rhonda Derusha, a Grandmother and Cleveland human services worker, wants to know where the guns come from.

The Cleveland Division of Police and the National Association of Physicians have said, “There are too many guns on the street, more than law enforcement can confiscate, and rival gangs wanting to settle scores fuels the need to acquire firearms. Parents and grandparents add to gun violence by not securing their guns with locks and safes. Youth also get guns by purchasing them or robbing houses, cars, and businesses. Brazen offenders are also breaking into police cars to get weapons.”

What can be done about the gun violence problem?

Activists, therapists, politicians, and citizens have a shared obligation to bring about change. Activists Reverend Al Sharpton of the National Action Network and Fatimah Drier of the Kaiser Permanente Center for Gun

Violence Research and Education said, “A public health stance is a way to end community violence. They encourage community participation, voting, and pushing policymakers to first, rebuild blighted communities, second, address housing and food insecurity, unemployment, and mental health issues, and third, tighten gun laws and restrictions.”

On the interpersonal front, police, social workers, therapists, and groups like the Peacemaker’s Alliance encourage parents, grandparents, and older siblings to consider age, health, and personality, when setting limits on the hours per day of daily screen time. Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)Trusted Source show that children aged eight to 10 years old spend an average of six hours per day in front of a screen. At 11 to 14 years old, this increases to nearly nine hours per day.

They believe the levels of psychological desensitization among “today’s kids are coming from Xbox games, films and world news. These mediums create a lust for action and violence. Talking to your kids about violence and limiting screen time can help kids realize that killing and injuring others is not mere play. These activists also encourage parents to obtain gun locks and safes to prevent unauthorized use by children and teens.

Community and Family working together.

Therapist Cross goes on to say that parents and community elders play a critical role in talking to teens about violence. Most importantly, adults can model peacekeeping in the home so that it becomes a family value, said Cross.

“Parents talking to kids about the real dangers of gun violence is key to stopping us from glorifying guns and violence. Elders can teach kids that death is final and shootings can leave someone paralyzed or permanently disabled,” Cross continued.

“Young people need to know that guns can also cause someone to lose body parts, be crippled or wear a colostomy bag for life. It is an eye-opener when kids discover that killing someone destroys their own family, the gunshot victims’ families and the witnesses too. No one is ever the same after these events.”

Mental health complications like depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, alcohol and drug addiction could be results of surviving gun-related violence, Cross emphasized.

More Sources & Solutions

A World Desensitized: A world desensitized to the bang of the

gun, Where violence is rampant, and safety is none.

A call to action, loud and clear, For a future where we no longer fear. - From, Triggering Tears

Eliminating and curbing firearm violence is big! Some of the most doable solutions include:

- The community must demand that the media accurately report where gun violence is occurring. Some say that the media is not truthful about the movement of gun violence into the inner ring suburbs of Maple, Garfield, South Euclid-Lyndhurst, and Euclid.

Read: U.S. Surgeon General Issues Advisory on the Public Health Crisis of Firearm Violence in the United States | HHS.gov

- Obtain free gun locks from your local police district so that you can safely store guns in your home.
- Contact the Peace Makers Alliance at 216 243-7002. They assist families in intervening in youth gun violence issues. Peace Makers provide community outreach, conflict mediation, resolution, gang interaction, violence prevention, case management, family services, and hospital-based intervention following a violent incident.

The Ohio Department of Health indicates that Cleveland’s most dangerous neighborhoods are the Industrial Valley, North Broadway, Kinsman, The Stockyard, and Central. These neighborhoods rank highest in violent and property crimes and account for 41 – 60% higher crime occurrences than all of Ohio.

Solutions include doing your part as an individual and community member. It starts with becoming educated, attending community safety rallies, advocating for stronger families and neighborhoods, and directing policy changes. Foremost, accept your responsibility to teach and practice nonviolence in the home and the hood.

Dr. Sheila Ferguson’s published literary works span the realm of scholarly writing and technical writing to playwriting, memoirs and creative non-fiction.

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Karamu House Celebrates \$5.2 Million Rejuvenation and Honors Legends



By Vince Robinson



Karamu House, the nation's oldest producing Black theater, welcomed the community to its Homecoming Benefit and Community Day celebrations on July 13 and July 14 at its historic campus at 2355 East 89th Street. Karamu House President and CEO Tony Sias said the events were a thank you to supporters and the community for investing in the 99-year-old institution, and an invitation "to experience the newly renovated spaces, tour the facility, and learn more about our bold vision for the future 'Karamu Next Generation.'"

The festivities served as a standing ovation for the completion of Karamu's \$5.2 million theater wing renovation, which included a Karamu Hall of Fame induction ceremony.

Honoring Karamu Legends

Kicking off Community Day on June 14, the Karamu House Hall of Fame honored three Cleveland artists, whom Sias refers to as "legends" in the Karamu community: Reginald "Reggie" Kelly, Peter Lawson Jones, and Annette Bailey.

Honored posthumously, Kelly was an alumnus of Cleveland's renowned Karamu House Theater. Kelly's accomplishments include success as a national award-winning singer, actor, director, choreographer, and playwright with over 30 years of experience.



Karamu House President and CEO Tony Sias and actor Peter Lawson Jones performing on stage. Photo Credit: Vince Robinson

Kelly has received critical acclaim performing leading roles throughout the tapestry of Black musical theater classics. Some highlights include "The Wiz," "Dreamgirls," "Don't Bother Me I Can't Cope," "The Mahalia Jackson Story" and "Tambourines to Glory." Peter Lawson Jones is a Harvard Law School graduate; a former president of the Board of Cuyahoga County Commissioners; the first Black candidate nominated for Ohio lieutenant governor; and a speechwriter and spokesperson for the Carter-Mondale Presidential Campaign. Jones is best known for over 60 stage and screen roles he has made his own. Jones portrayed the devoted husband and friend

Jim Bono in "Fences" at Karamu House, defense attorney Henry Drummond in "Inherit the Wind" at Oberlin Summer Theater, and appeared in "A Carol for Cleveland" at the Cleveland Play House. Annette Bailey was a long time administrator for Karamu and has been connected to the historic theater for over 50 years.

Sustaining the Legacy

Vibrant live performances and spins from DJ Candi Fresca were the backdrop of Karamu's Homecoming Benefit fundraiser. New Orleans-based visual Artist Stuart McClean donated

an original work for hopeful bidders to add to their personal collection and to "raise funds for the sustainability of this legacy institution," said Sias. The recently completed theater wing renovations were funded in part by a \$1 million grant from the Bank of America Charitable Foundation in 2021. The grant provided capital to complete Phase III of renovations, including improvements to the newly named Bank of America Arena Theatre, a new outdoor stage, streetscape enhancements and the addition of Smucker's Q89 Bistro, a full-service eatery featuring healthy options and a patio. A \$4 million dollar grant from the Mandel Foundation will help support the last leg of the Karamu campus renewal. In a statement, Sias said the funds "will allow us to complete the infrastructure and capital improvements of Phase IV of our master plan. These enhancements include renovations in the Education and Administration Building, bringing construction of the main building to a close. We are elated knowing these funds and the new relationship will add to the bright future of Karamu."

Vince Robinson is a multi-disciplinary artist based in Cleveland, Ohio. He took up photography as a student at Kent State University in the 70's while studying Telecommunications with a minor in Pan African Studies.

Project 2025: From front page

- arresting and deporting undocumented immigrants.
- Death Penalty: promotes more use of the death penalty and quicker executions.
- Abortion and Contraception: wants the government to reject abortion as healthcare and limit access to birth control.
- Discrimination: proposes removing protections against discrimination based on sexual or gender identity, and ending diversity programs and affirmative action.
- Education: suggests abolishing the Department of Education and transferring its duties to other agencies or ending them.
- Justice Department: proposes cutting funds for the Department of Justice and dismantling the FBI and the Department of Homeland

- Security.
 - Environmental Regulations: wants to reduce environmental rules to favor fossil fuel production and end the independence of federal agencies like the Federal Communications Commission and the Federal Trade Commission.
- Project 2025 could potentially be the beginning of the end of democracy and, at the very least, make significant changes to various aspects of American life with a focus on reducing federal control and promoting conservative values.
- For more information, you can read the Heritage Foundation's Project 2025 and analyses from trusted sources, including Inside Higher Ed and The Hill.





By Vince Robinson



The 45th Annual Tri-C JazzFest Cleveland at Playhouse Square got off to a spirited start under the leadership of the college's new president, Dr. Michael Baston on June 20.

Baston's rousing introductions for the three-day event brought the audience to life as he honored five Cleveland Music Legends Award recipients before introducing the festival's opening act.

Award recipients Willard Jenkins, former JazzFest artistic director; Robert Hubbard, Cleveland drummer and band leader; composer, conductor and educator Paul Ferguson; and Telarc recording executives Elaine Martone and Bob Woods were honored for their contributions to American music.

No strangers to the Tri-C JazzFest stage, the opening act Take 6 proved why they have

been together for nearly 40 years. Partly a cappella, partly aided by instrumentation, the group took a trip down memory lane with hits of their own and others, including a rendition of Christopher Cross' Grammy award-winning classic "Sailing."

Day 2 - Friday, June 21

Day two showcased a blend of several jazz styles from the trio Jason Moran and the Bandwagon to the closer for the night, Scary Goldings with Larry Goldings and his musical companions.

Jason Moran confessed to the audience that he and his longtime bandmates, bassist Taurus Mateen and drummer Nasheet Waits, never have a setlist. The magic they created in their performance clearly showed the beauty of their process. According to Moran, Mateen picked up a new bass after 25 years with the previous one.

Next, Cecile McLauren Salvant eloquently told stories through song, transforming the blues into soulful classics like "Guess Who I Saw Last Night," a signature Nancy Wilson tune.



Legendary Bassist Marcus-Miller Photo Credit: Vince Robinson

Salvant disclosed that she was fortunate enough to have spent time with Wilson before her passing.

Bob James performed his set with musicians so young, that their combined ages did not exceed his. The 84-year-old pianist and composer hasn't missed a beat. The audience wanted to hear "Angela," the theme he wrote for the television show "Taxi." They got what they wanted.

Rounding out the smooth jazz-labeled artists was bass phenom Marcus Miller. As a producer for Miles Davis, David Sanborn and Bob James, he had plenty of material to pull from, including "Tutu," "Run For Cover" and "Maputo," with James joining his Ukrainian saxophonist, Andrey Chmut. Chmut paired up with Miller's saxophonist, Donald Hayes, as they went toe-to-toe, passionately trading solos.

Like Davis did, Miller works with many musicians who adapt to

the challenge of playing with one of the greats. This time around it was Anwar Marshall keeping time and Russell Gunn manning the trumpet in addition to Hayes' saxophone.

The organ-based Scary Goldings rounded out the second evening of the jazz-filled weekend.

Day 3 - Saturday, June 22

"Flying Home: A Trumpet Summit," celebrating the outstanding Tri-C JazzFest Jazz Academy program opened day three of the event at the Mimi Ohio Theatre on Euclid Avenue.

Jazz Academy alumni were the slated performers for this celebration, including trumpeters Dominick Farinacci, Sean Jones, Tommy Lehman and Curtis Taylor, along with pianist Jonathan Thomas, bassist Graham

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Tri-C.President Michael Baston JazzFest introduction.
Photo Credit: Vince Robinson

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64 Years of Crafting a Great Greek Recipe: The Diner on 55th



By Sharon Lewis

Demetrios Anagnostos is a remarkable man. Anagnostos, or Jim as he is more widely known, came to Cleveland, Ohio, on February 8, 1960. He owns Diner On 55th in the city's St. Clair Superior neighborhood, just east of downtown. Since then, he has married, raised a family, run a catering business, opened three restaurants, and built a community.

Anagnostos immigrated to the United States from Saint Dimitrios Nafpaktos, in Greece. He has lived in Cleveland for 64 years and considers it home.

Anagnostos's life in Greece was a testament to his resilience. Born in 1939, he endured the hardships of World War II, Greece's war with Italy, and the Civil War in Greece from 1946 to 1949. War devastated the country and resources were scarce. Anagnostos emerged not just as a survivor, but as an overcomer.

When asked why he came to the United States, Anagnostos



The Diner on 55th staff: (Left to Rt) Judi Graves, Kathy Forst, (Middle) Demetrios "Jim" Anagnostos, Lindsey Anagnostos and Joseph Vernon Photo Credit: Ron Calhoun

stickler for quality, even going as far as Akron if he cannot find what he wants in Cleveland. A typical day for Anagnostos starts at 2:30 a.m. when he rises, and he arrives at the Diner at 3:30 a.m. to prepare for the day's service. This is all done before his staff arrives at 5:45 a.m. The Diner opens promptly at 6 a.m.

The Diner has a staff of 10 people, three cooks, three dishwashers, and three to four on the wait staff. On a recent visit, one

In addition to operating the restaurant, Anagnostos continues to do all the ground maintenance at the Diner and at home. He loves well-manicured lawns and flowers. He said, "no one will do it quite how I like it." Anagnostos' love for his work is evident in every aspect of his life.

When he talks with young people, Anagnostos urges them to "get their education to have a better life. Young people getting an education improves the world."

People regularly come to the Diner to let him know they took his advice, got their education, and have made a better life for themselves and their families. Anagnostos acknowledges that he never completed his education, but knows the importance of a good education.

Anagnostos is the type of man who will help a stranger and give wise counsel when needed. But make no mistake: he is no pushover. Anagnostos exemplifies all that is good and right in the world. He does not proselytize or preach the gospel but firmly believes in the Ten Commandments. Anagnostos

lives his life in a manner that lets you know he can "walk-the-walk" of being a good person. For Anagnostos, it is essential "to look toward tomorrow, respect everybody because we all have feelings, and to like yourself," Bottom line, "we all like to be supported by close neighbors and like to see the change that our kindness brings about. If life were a recipe, it would consist of giving respect, to be respected, working to be successful, and staying away from drugs."

Anagnostos said, "Thank you, everyone, all of my customers from over the years. You are more like family and friends."

Sharon Lewis graduated from John Carroll University with a Bachelor of Arts in Speech Communications and holds a Master of Education from Cleveland State University.



The Diner on 55th Chefs' (Lf to Rt) Rafael Strozier, DeVaughn Campbell and Willam Strozier

stated, "America was like a magnet because there were so many opportunities for personal growth and financial well-being. In Greece, you had to sell your goat to do something. Then, you were without the benefits that the goat provided. But a person does not have to do that here in America."

Upon arriving in Cleveland, Anagnostos immediately began working at the family-owned Victory Lunch Restaurant on 78th Street. His unwavering commitment to quality still drives him.

At 84 years old, Anagnostos still runs the Diner on 55th six days a week. He does all the shopping for the restaurant to ensure the highest quality of food. He is a

of his daughters and a grandson were part of the wait staff.

Willie Strozier, one of the Diner's cooks, has worked at the Diner for six and a half years. Before working at the Diner, he was a cook in the Navy for 47 years. He is enthusiastic and enjoys the work, the environment and all of the people.

When asked why he is still working, Anagnostos simply said, "I am not ready to retire because I would be bored." Though he has no regrets about his life, he would not go into the restaurant business if he had to do it over.

"It requires so much time. You work your life away."



The Diner on 55th owner Demetrios "Jim" Anagnostos

Tri-C JazzFest 2024 From page 4

Guerin, drummer Gabe Jones and percussionist Patrick Graney. Steve Enos, the trumpet teacher they all had in common, was recognized by Farinacci during their masterful set.

A hard act to follow, Artemis was up to the task. The quintet of women led by pianist Rene Rosnes, came with an intensity that gave life to their instrumentals. Several pieces were written by members, including Allison Miller (drums) and Ingrid Jensen (trumpet). Artemis also features bassist Noriko Ueda and saxophonist Nicole Glover.

Playhouse Square’s Allen Theater hosted Brazilian musician Diego Figueiredo. His guitar played rhythm, melody, and ferocity such that he needed no accompaniment as he seamlessly glided through samba, bossa nova, tango, flamenco, and contemporary music.

After a heavy dose of Brazilian-influenced musical magnificence, Harold Lopez-Nussa turned up with his brother Adrian Lopez-Nussa on drums, Luques Curtis on bass, and Swiss harmonica prodigy Gregoire Maret. Known for his impressive resume, which includes stints with the legendary Herbie Hancock, Maret provided a distinctive element to the Latin fare.

Following Figueiredo and Lopez-Nussa in the Allen was prolific jazz saxophonist Charles Lloyd with his Ocean Trio II, featuring the brilliant pianist



Singer Ledisi Photo Credit: Vince Robinson

Gerald Clayton and guitarist Marvin Sewell. The absence of a drummer in this unique trio was adeptly addressed by Clayton’s exquisite grand piano dexterity and Sewell’s rhythmic sound.

At one point, Lloyd coaxed Sewell to use another guitar and a slide technique that drew gasps from the audience. This performance stood out in its nuanced, authentic presentation by Lloyd, a keeper of the tradition, who has slowed down in his movements with age, but hasn’t missed a step musically.

Singer Ledisi finalized the memorable three days of live music. The Grammy award-winning

vocalist and artist-in-residence at Berkeley Institute of Jazz and Gender Justice, unapologetically made a case for her presence in a jazz festival despite not being labeled a jazz singer.

She quelled that notion by invoking Nina Simone, as she traipsed across the stage scatting several bars, and resolutely told the Connor Palace Theatre crowd: “I’m a grown woman. I sing what I want to sing!”

Free Jazz Outside!

While all of the aforementioned performances took place in the air-conditioned

comfort of Playhouse Square indoor venues, the outdoor stages at East 14th and Euclid Avenue saw action from a plethora of Cleveland-based jazz and other genre groups, including Horns and Things, Da Land Brass Band, Chris Coles’ Gleam, Ernie Krivda and the Fat Tuesday Big Band, and others.

The perennial closers, Carlos Jones and the P.L.U.S. Band and Sammy DeLeon y Su Orchestra played through the heat of the night.

Their predecessors jammed through sweltering conditions during the day that matched the temperature of the music coming from the two outdoor stages.

In its 45th year, the Tri-C JazzFest continues to be a signature event for Cleveland and a showcase for national and local talent preserving the vitality and relevance of some of the greatest music ever written.

Vince Robinson is a multi-disciplinary artist based in Cleveland, Ohio. He took up photography as a student at Kent State University in the 70’s while studying Telecommunications with a minor in Pan African Studies

Rodney Smith Overcomes Barriers to Pursue His College Ambitions



By Michael Patterson

In May, Rodney Smith rose above several barriers, including crime and fighting, while earning an associate’s degree. Having role



models fostered his commitment towards education. Focus and hard work have made his dreams of a better life achievable.

Directing attention toward achieving goals as a kid can be a struggle. Some kids fall victim to obstacles in the community that lead them down the wrong path. During a recent conversation with The Cleveland Observer, Smith spoke specifically about the



obstacle of crime. “The crime for one, when you have students in that environment it’ll lead them to that crime,” said Smith. Smith also believes that more leadership can push kids’ interests toward taking control of their futures. College freshmen attending universities in the fall shouldn’t have to feel alone during their journeys.

Continued on page 7



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Rodney Smith’s collegiate ambitions

From page 6

Significance of Guidance

Felicia Peacock, Ursuline College graduate, and Smith’s mother, has always influenced her son to stay away from the area’s problems. Peacock’s presence has encouraged her son’s dedication toward earning a degree and eventually becoming a student at Cleveland State University in the fall. Smith talked about what happens to kids with less guidance from the people in their corner.

“They just lose focus on what they could make of themselves in this world . . . once you lose focus you lose inspiration to do better things,” said Smith.

Creating leadership outside the household would benefit kids as well, Smith added.

“Parents might be working to provide for the student and they might not have all of the time in the world. So once you have outlets to build role models around the community, if they can’t get it at home, I think that will benefit,” Smith said.

Staying focused through tribulations

However, even with a strong presence of role models, it can still be tough to chase one’s goals. Smith pushed through doubts and rough patches when dealing with certain subjects like math. He realized that sometimes you can’t become comfortable until you grow in uncomfortable spaces. Staying on the right track became tough, but his support system kept his commitment alive. Smith

is grateful to experience what it feels like to grind through tough parts of a journey.

“I definitely won’t take that experience for granted because there definitely are some people that are so smart and they taught me and helped me. Now I really appreciate the help that they gave me because I can be as comfortable as I can be at Cleveland State,” Smith remarked.

Sense of support outside of home

Another thing that brought him support was involvement with extracurriculars like choir, basketball, and soccer. Being a part of the Euclid High School’s soccer team, basketball team, and the choir let him explore leadership roles while he was captain of both teams. Smith appreciated the encouragement that these programs provided.

He said, “I was just glad to have the supporting system around me, especially in the athletic setting, and also be able to get my degree at the same time.”

One thing that is appreciated about leadership roles is the lesson of patience.

“I learned how to be patient with the youth and I feel like a lot of people don’t see that aspect when you’re trying to raise a child or you’re trying to teach somebody,” said Smith.

Changing the perception of Euclid

Stronger support systems

and better foundations of leadership can help children overcome obstacles like fighting and crime. Creating more stories like Rodney’s can help change how people view the Euclid community.

“I feel like my story can be a jumpstart at the perceptions of how people do look at Euclid. And maybe they’ll start going into depth into the Euclid system because there are some very talented and smart students at Euclid high school,” Smith remarked.

Smith’s end goal and desires

In addition to changing the perception of Euclid, Smith plans to use his college education to help fulfill his dreams of a better life for himself and his family. He plans on achieving his bachelor’s in electrical engineering technology.

“I don’t want to worry about bills, I don’t wanna be in debt, I just want to be happy,” said Smith.

Michael Patterson is currently a senior at John Carroll University studying digital media. He loves basketball, mixed martial arts, and football, and aspires to become a sports reporter or commentator.

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Opinion: Communities Unite to Speak Up Regarding Palestine and Israel



Opinion By Sarai Murdock

The views reflected in this article are the views of the writer and not necessarily representative of The Cleveland Observer.

On October 7, 2023, Hamas attacked Israeli soldiers and killed an estimated 1,200 people and took about 250 people hostage. According to the Health Ministry, 38,000 Palestinians in Gaza have been killed, which does not distinguish between combatants and civilians. This has caused people worldwide to express their feelings through multiple types of advocacy, including people in Cleveland.

“My great-grandfather emigrated to America from Palestine in 1917. So way before Palestine was occupied by the Zionists. And he would go back and forth because he was a businessman. So he had traveled from America to Palestine, and then after 1948, he was not allowed back in,” says 21-year-old Gia, founder of Student Justice for Palestine at John Carroll University.

“A lot of my family because of the occupation have either lost their homes, or they were not allowed back in, so we had to live in America and find a home here. As for my mom’s side, she was born in Jerusalem, but because there was a lot of violence happening in the 80s--when she was five, she fled

to Jordan with her family and since then she was not allowed to even visit Palestine. So that’s something that has really affected our family.”

Twenty-year-old Yazan Issawi, president of the Student Justice for Palestine (SJP) student-run organization at Kent State University, had a negative experience the last time he visited his family in the outskirts of Jerusalem.

When he was just a young boy, in 2015, he was shot in the back of his thigh with a stun grenade by Israel Defense Forces (IDF) which gave him a second-degree burn. “That pretty much opened my eyes to what the Israeli occupation is trying to do and trying to erase the Palestinian heritage by all means necessary, and so being an American didn’t help me at the time because they saw me as a Palestinian.”

According to Human Rights Watch, some of the abuse people have suffered since 2023 includes water, fuel, and electricity blockages, starving them into famine, bombing homes, hospitals, churches, and schools, using white phosphorus against them, and facilitating multiple blockades. According to Times Magazine, generations of families have been wiped out, including elders and babies.

In response, people have been advocating in the streets, on college grounds, and through social media. Palestinian social media creators and journalists such as Bisan Owda, Plestia Alaqad, Motaz Azaiza, and other smaller content creators have gained a huge platform on social media to document their experiences and

their peers, as well as get the voices of Palestinians around the world and spread awareness. Videos of decapitated children, bombs, and lifestyle changes have gone viral.

“This is one of the most documented genocides in history and we can literally open up our Instagrams and see pictures of children being killed and the videos of civilians being targeted and all that,” says Issawi.

Outside of social media, organizations such as Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) at different colleges and universities have used their voices to show their ambition to spread awareness of the situation Palestinians are currently facing.

Between the beginning of 2024 and May, there was a rise in student advocacy at colleges and universities. Some of these schools included: Case Western Reserve University (CWRU), Kent State University (KSU), John Carroll University (JCU), Ohio State University (OSU), and more.

CWRU students gained a lot of attention between April and May as they held protests and some participated in an 11-day encampment on their campus. Jad Kamhawi Oglesby, a 2024 graduate of CWRU, is a local activist who is now studying law at Cleveland State University. He has participated in protests for the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020, the Pro-choice movement, and organized his protests as well.

“Student activism is important because it creates ripples that extend beyond our scope here as students on campus,” he says. “Standing in solidarity against genocide and

apartheid is something that will not be silenced.” CWRU isn’t the only school catching attention.

In April, the Students for Justice in Palestine held a Palestinian-themed Fashion Show at their school. Not only did they represent Palestinian fashion and local designers, but they also took it as an opportunity to educate people about the conflict between Israel and Palestine and share the stories of Palestinians.

“A lot of times that we’re shown in the media, it’s violence,” says 19-year-old Yasmine, the president of SJP at JCU. “We wanted to kind of switch that narrative and show that Palestinians are not just death. We’re also vibrant people, we have a vibrant culture that we’d love to share with others.

So not only do we want to raise money for a foundation like HEAL, but also we wanted to do it in a way that says that we’re here, we’re proud of our culture, and it’s not something that can be easily erased.”

All ticket donations went towards a Cleveland-based organization called Health, Education, Aid, and Leadership Palestine (HEAL Palestine). With over 100 volunteers and several staff members, some of the work HEAL has done includes: bringing children from Palestine to the U.S. for free medical care, developing a field hospital in Gaza, feeding people every day through kitchens they run, distributing urgent supplies/aid, and running a mental health program in Gaza for children who are traumatized.

“We’re seeing so many kids with terrible injuries that have

Continued on page 9



Protesters in Downtown Cleveland Ohio Photo credit: Youtube.

Opinion: Communities Unite From page 8

never really been seen before. The kind of suffering and injuries that, you know, amputations, burns, kids who've been orphaned, lost their parents, and have been injured themselves. It's just terrible," says HEAL co-founder Steve Sosebee.

The historic conflict between Palestine and Israel dates back to 1948. During World War I, political forces in different countries competed for control of Palestinian lands. With an increase in antisemitism, the Jewish population in Palestine increased amongst the Arab, Christians, and other Jews who had already been there.

The question of whether there should be an independent state for Arabs or Jewish people was discussed during the Sykes-Picot agreement and The Balfour Declaration. This led to war and conflict between the Arabs, the British, and the Jews. In 1947, matters were left for the United Nations (UN) to decide on and they came up with "The Partition Plan of 1947." It suggested dividing Palestine into two states, an Arab and a Jewish state with Jerusalem as a separate UN-controlled entity.

A plan called the "Plan Dalet" aka "Plan D" was adopted to defend Jewish settlements outside of the Jewish state borders and take control of the area. This plan led to the Deir Yassin Massacre where

over 100 Palestinians in Deir Yassin, including children and elders, were killed and violently attacked out of their homes. This establishment led to the Arab-Israeli War resulting in thousands of soldiers and citizens being violently killed, five to six thousand were Jewish and ten to fifteen thousand were Arab.

What took place the next day is referred to as "The Nakba." Over 700,000 Palestinians were expelled and displaced from their homes through Israeli force. Some were violently forced to leave and some escaped as others were being shot and bombed. Palestinians were asked to leave without knowing they wouldn't be allowed to return.

About 15,000 Palestinians were violently murdered, turning millions of native Palestinians into refugees.

"There's so much room for interpretation, and there's so much room for missed translation," says Mara Layne, an American Jew who serves as a member of the leadership team at Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) in Cleveland. twenty-year-old MiMi, an Ashkenazi Jew, lived in Israel for three months after graduating from high school. "That was really an eye-opening experience for me because of what the Israelis think of the Palestinians.

I think we have to close these borders or else we're all gonna die,"



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visits Washington D.C. on July 24

she says. Both of them believe that there is a lot of inaccurate information being spread that alters people's perspective about the conflict."

I think the most important thing is just to have conversations and if that's all you can do then that's what you can do and just keep talking about it."

The conflict between Israel and Palestine has motivated more people in Cleveland to use their voices and actions to create positive change, and a positive environment for diverse members of society. "I would love to see

Cleveland continue to be a staple of activism and I really hope that that also starts within schools. I truly believe that Cleveland has that place where we can be a forefront for advocating for justice, for whatever it may be," says 20-year-old Kamal Alkayali.

Sarai Murdock, born in New York and raised in Cleveland, is a local journalist, multi-disciplinary artist, and the young author of *Bully Free Zone: How to Stand Up for Yourself*.

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Protester outside the Senate while Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visits Washington D.C. on July 24, 2024 (AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite)

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Real Property Tax Relief for Eligible Ohioans



By Ron Calhoun



The Ohio Homestead Exemption for homeowners who are senior citizens or permanently disabled may benefit from significant property tax savings through the Homestead Exemption Program. This statewide initiative allows eligible residents to shield up to \$26,200 of their home's market value from taxation.

The homestead exemption was originally available to all homeowners over 65 years old, as well as permanently disabled homeowners regardless of income since 2007. However, changes introduced by Ohio Sub. House Bill 59 in 2013 modified eligibility criteria starting with tax year 2014. While existing recipients under the old rules remain unaffected, new applicants must meet current income guidelines to qualify.

Income requirements for homeowners 65 and older and those who are permanently and totally disabled. must not have a total household income over \$36,100 in 2023, or \$38,600 in 2024

Additionally, a new exemption introduced in 2014 extends benefits to veterans with a 100% disability rating and their surviving spouses. Qualifying veterans with a permanent, total service-connected disability rating can receive a tax reduction equivalent to the amount of tax assessed on the first \$50,000 of their home's market value with no income restrictions.

For homeowners who do not qualify for these exemptions, there are still various resources and programs available:

- **Property Tax Payment Plans:** Some counties offer

installment payment plans to help homeowners manage their property tax payments more effectively.

- **Tax Relief Programs for Low-Income Homeowners:** Some states or counties offer specific tax relief programs aimed at low-income homeowners. These programs may include partial exemptions, deferrals, or credits based on income level and property value.
- **Energy Efficiency and Home Improvement Programs:** Many municipalities and states offer programs that provide incentives or financial assistance for homeowners to make energy-efficient improvements to their homes.
- **Senior Citizen Discounts or Rebates:** Some local

homeowners, providing advice on managing property taxes, budgeting, and accessing available resources.

- **Homeowner Assistance Programs:** Depending on the area, there may be nonprofit organizations or government agencies that provide general homeowner assistance, which could include property tax assistance among other forms of support.
- **Tax Appeals and Assessments:** Homeowners who believe their property tax assessment is inaccurate can appeal the assessment. This process involves providing evidence to support a different valuation, potentially resulting in a lower tax bill.

For homeowners seeking

Monday in June.

Property owners who disagree with the valuation of their property set by the county auditor have the option to appeal to the Cuyahoga County Board of Revision. Appeals must be filed between January 1 and March 31, and require evidence of the property's fair market value.

For more information on the homestead exemption, the owner occupancy credit or property tax assessment, contact the Cuyahoga County Auditor's office at 216-123-4567 or send an email to auditor@cuyahogacountyohio.gov.

Resources for Residents

- Homestead Exemption – Find out if you are eligible for this tax credit.
- Owner Occupancy Credit – Find out if you are eligible for



governments offer property tax discounts or rebates specifically for senior citizens, even if they do not qualify for the Homestead Exemption

- **Financial Counseling Services:** Some community organizations or local government offices offer financial counseling services to

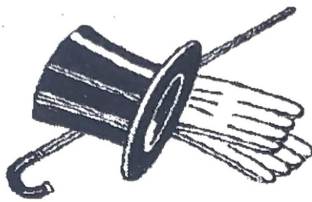
further tax relief, the owner occupancy credit provides a tax reduction for owner-occupied homes if certain criteria are met, including residency and application deadlines. Applications for the owner occupancy credit credit must be submitted annually between January 1 and the first

this tax credit.

- EasyPay – A convenient way to pay property taxes.
- Military Deferment – Property taxes can be deferred.
- Property Alerts – Protect yourself from deed fraud.



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By Sheila Ferguson



Overexposure to the ultraviolet sun rays is a serious health risk, no matter an individual's skin tone.

Life-threatening cancers, like melanoma, have been linked to lack of protection from UV rays, so taking the time to understand how to protect oneself from harmful UV rays is key to being able to enjoy the summer sun without harming one's health.

Practicing regular UV ray protection methods is highly effective in preventing overexposure and skin cancer, according to widely accepted scientific and medical research from organizations like the American Cancer Society (ACS), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Cancer Institute (NCI).

Cleveland's Summer Forecast

Cleveland is poised for a sweltering summer with a forecasted 15 to 20 days with temperatures reaching 90 degrees or higher, according to local weather experts and news broadcasts. It is recommended to avoid the sun between 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and to wear a hat

and sunscreen while outdoors to protect against harmful UV exposure.

Although the impact of overexposure to UV rays may not be immediately felt physically, the damage caused, when protection measures are not practiced, is still real and dangerous.

One Man's Story

In a recent interview with The Cleveland Observer, Len Dawes, a landscaper with 30 years of experience, shared the importance of protecting oneself from UV rays to prevent skin cancer.

Last summer, Dawes' barber noticed irregular spots on his scalp and urged him to get a melanoma check. Dawes took action and had a check-up. A biopsy was completed and he received a diagnosis of stage 3 melanoma.

"I am grateful to be alive. Radiation and immunotherapy saved me. I have learned much from my doctor and the American Cancer Association to pass on to others," Dawes said, a year after the visit with his barber and subsequent diagnosis.

UV Radiation and Melanoma

Melanoma is a serious form of skin cancer that develops in the cells (melanocytes) responsible for producing melanin, the pigment that gives skin, eyes, and hair its color.

Melanoma is often caused by overexposure to ultra UV radiation



from sunlight or tanning beds and can spread to other parts of the body if not detected and treated early.

UV rays can cause direct DNA damage in skin cells. When the DNA in skin cells is damaged, it can lead to mutations that disrupt normal cell function and growth, potentially causing cells to become cancerous.

Experiencing frequent sunburns, especially blistering sunburns in childhood or adolescence, significantly increases the risk of developing melanoma later in life.

Both intermittent intense sun exposure (like during beach vacations) and chronic sun exposure (such as in outdoor workers) can contribute to melanoma risk.

However, intense, intermittent exposure appears to be more strongly associated with melanoma.

Tanning beds and lamps are also sources of UV radiation. The use of tanning beds, particularly before the age of 30, has also been shown to significantly increase the risk of melanoma.

In 2023, the CDC reported approximately 97,610 new cases of melanoma in the U.S., which led to an estimated 7,990 deaths. Melanomas comprise about 1% of skin cancers, according to the American Cancer Society, however, melanomas cause the most skin cancer related deaths.

It is essential to remember that melanoma can affect all skin tones; and for those with darker skin tones, melanomas can be more hidden, in places like, under fingernails or toenails, on the palms of the hands, or on the soles of the feet, according to current research.

Late cancer detection can lead to death

Protection is Prevention: Here's What You Can Do This Summer

Based on the guidance from the CDC, WHO, ACS, and NCI, the following preventative

measures are aimed at reducing overexposure and the risk of skin cancers like melanoma:

Use sunscreen. Apply broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30 and reapply every two hours, or more often if swimming or sweating

Wear protective clothing, like long sleeved shirts, long pants, and wide-brimmed hats and use sunglasses with UV protection to shield your eyes.

Stay in the shade, especially during midday hours (10 a.m. to 4 p.m.) when UV rays are strongest. Don't use tanning beds and lamps, which emit harmful UV radiation.

Check the daily UV index, which provides important information on the strength of UV radiation in your area.

Use extra caution when near water, snow or sand because these surfaces reflect and intensify UV rays, increasing the risk of sunburn.

Ensure that children are well-protected from the sun with appropriate clothing, sunscreen, and shade.

Perform regular skin self-exams to detect any new or changing moles or spots, like Len Dawes, and see a healthcare professional for routine skin checks and if any skin abnormalities develop.

Dr. Sheila Ferguson's published literary works span the realm of scholarly writing and technical writing to playwriting, memoirs and creative non-fiction.



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Jam for Justice Returns to The Beachland Ballroom for 2024



By Tonya Sams

Legal Aid Society of Cleveland's annual summer fundraiser, "Jam for Justice," returns on August 21 at The Beachland Ballroom & Tavern in the Waterloo Arts District. The event will include a staggered schedule of bands on two stages for nonstop entertainment.

Doors open at 5 p.m., with the first band taking the stage at 5:20 p.m. Event emcees Stephanie Haney of WKYC, DJ Brad Wolfe of Brad Wolfe Law and Delanté Spencer Thomas, president of the Norman S. Minor Bar Association, will keep the party going throughout the evening.

Cleveland native Ken Michaels will be performing with K.G. Mojo. K.G. Mojo and the other nine bands performing at the event are all headlined by



attorneys, judges, law faculty and law students who moonlight as musicians and donate their talents to raise money for Legal Aid.

Bands performing at 2024's "Jam for Justice" include:

- Tortfeasors (* new for 2024! *)
- State Road
- K.G. Mojo
- Hayden Gilbert and The Ruckus
- Out of Order
- Case Western Reserve University's Razing the Bar

- The No Name Band
- Luke Lindberg & The Hung Jury
- Six Sometimes Seven
- Faith & Whiskey

Legal Aid is grateful to numerous local sponsors for their continued support of "Jam for Justice," particularly presenting sponsor Accellis Technology Group, media sponsor WKYC Studios, and platinum sponsors Diebold Nixdorf, The J.M. Smucker Co., RPM, and Taft.

Learn more about Jam for Justice 2024 at www.lasclev.org/2024jam and follow #Jam4Justice2024 on social media for event updates.

For more information about Legal Aid's work to extend justice throughout Northeast Ohio, visit www.lasclev.org.

Legal Aid is a non-profit law firm whose mission is to secure justice, equity, and access to opportunity for and with people who have low incomes through passionate legal representation and advocacy for systemic change. Founded in 1905, Legal Aid is the fifth oldest legal aid organization in the country. Legal Aid's 135+ total staff members (75+ attorneys), and 3,000 volunteer lawyers use the power of the law to improve safety, shelter, and economic stability for clients in Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, and Lorain Counties. All proceeds benefit The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland. Tickets are nonrefundable.

Tonya Sams is a Development & Communications Manager at The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland.

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