



2024-25

Chardon

magazine

Presented by the Chardon Chamber of Commerce, The Good News and The Geauga Times Courier



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2024 CALENDAR of EVENTS

April

April 15th – 21st
Chardon Restaurant Week



April 25th – 28th

Geauga Maple Festival (Square)

May

May 5th

10 Mile Drop Race

May 4th – August 24th (Saturdays)
Chardon Square Assoc. Farmer's Market
(Square)

May 15th

State of the City presented by The
Chardon Chamber (Heritage House)

May 25th

Opening Day Chardon Municipal Pool

June

June 1st

Chardon Square Assoc. Kids Fest & Kid's
Flea Market (Square)

June 7th – August 16th (Fridays)

Concerts in the Park (Square)

June 3rd – August 26th (Saturdays)

Community Yoga on the Square

June 8th

Amphitheater Concert – The Hickory
Rockers (Big Creek Park)

June 15th

Movie Night at Observatory Park –
Raiders of the Lost Ark

June 15th

Geauga Pride Event

July

July 2nd (Rain Date July 3rd)
Chardon Area Fireworks **Tentative

July 4th Old Glory Day (Square)

July 6th

Movie Night at Observatory Park –
Guardians of the Galaxy

July 13th

Amphitheater Concert – Bent String
Band (Big Creek Park)

July 14th

(Rain date July 21st) Chardon Chamber
Classic Car & Bike Show (100 Seventh
Avenue – IS Squared)

July 13th

Dog Day of Summer (Square)

August

August 3rd

Nature & Movie Night at Observatory
Park – Migration

August 6th

National Night Out (Square)

August 4th

Chardon Square Assoc. Arts Festival (Square)

August 9th

Chardon Chamber Golf Outing (Chardon
Lakes Golf Course)



August 10th

Chardon BrewFest (Square) – 11th
Annual

August 17th

Amphitheater Concert – Hot Jazz Seven
(Big Creek)

September

September 1st – 30th

Sweets September presented by Chardon Eats

September 15th

Chardon Square Assoc. Harvest
Handmade Market (Square)
Kiwanis Cornroast (Square)



October

October 5th

(Rain Date Oct 6th) Fall Fest (Square)

October 5th

The Space Race (Observatory Park)

October 12th

Wild Maple Music Festival (Square)

October 31st

Halloween on the Square

November

November 1st – 2nd

Holly Days Artisan Boutique
(Location TBD)

November 28th

5K Turkey Trot/Walk to Stop Trafficking
(Square)

November 29th – December 25th

Chardon Chamber Holiday Business
Decorating Contest

November 30th

Small Business Saturday

November 30th

Chardon Square Christmas Lighting

December

December 14th

Chardon Square Home for the Holidays

December 21st

Winter Solstice Celebration (Location TBD)

January 12th – 18th

2025 Pizza Week presented by Chardon Eats

For complete listings go to www.chardonchamber.com

Dear Readers,

We are excited to welcome you to the ninth edition of our annual Chardon Magazine. For several years now, we have partnered with our friends at the Geauga Times Courier and The Good News to present this valuable tool to assist us in achieving the Chardon Area Chamber of Commerce's mission to promote, protect and serve the general business interests of the City of Chardon and the surrounding Geauga county area. We hope to help create a unified public spirit within our community and to that end, offer you this resource that promotes the many organizations, businesses, educational institutions and of course, the wonderful events throughout the year that call this area home!

Whether you are a lifelong resident, an adopted hometown transplant, one of the thousands of employees that work for a Chardon area based company or just happened to stumble upon one of our fine shops, eating establishments, or events held on the historic Chardon Square, we are glad you have become part of our community in some way. Chardon is a wonderful place to live, work and visit – and we hope you enjoy the time you spend here!

For more information on upcoming events, please visit chardonchamber.com or chardon.cc, and find us on social media too. We appreciate your continued support.



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Alex Lenk, chef of Cremona restaurant in Chardon, shares some of his Restaurant Week specials with Chardon Eats's marketing manager Bill Matuszak and founder Joyce Perrico.

Chardon Eats promotes people to do as it name implies, eat in Chardon

By MICHELE COLLINS

What started as a way to save their local restaurants from closing during the pandemic, has turned into an annual event to showcase the many dining options- and the supportive dining community - in Chardon.

Chardon Restaurant Week, (CRW) now in its fourth year, is set for April 15-22 and will include 16 restaurants.

The special week begins with a kickoff party on April 10 at ElevenThree Brewing Company at 211 Cherry Ave. in Chardon.

“We added the kick off party in 2023, and it was a huge hit,” said Joyce Perrico, founder of Chardon Eats, a non-profit that supports local dining and local businesses as an offshoot of the Chardon Area Chamber of Commerce.

The kick off includes a sort of tasting of the week’s restaurant features and generates excitement within the local community about the upcoming restaurant week activities.

During CRW the restaurants offer dinner specials, specialty dishes and of course prizes.

“We have customers send us pictures of their receipts and then we do grand prize drawings

after the week is complete,” she explained.

In addition, each restaurant has drawings for its own customers, making Restaurant Week fun not just for the tastebuds but also for their wallets.

Winning a prize is awesome, according to Ms. Perrico, but every one of the restaurants is also a winner thanks to the community programs.

“People learn about all the different restaurants we have in Chardon through the promotion and marketing of Chardon Restaurant Week,” she explained. “They also have a



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chance to save some money when dining out, and to take advantage of the unique specials that are offered.”

What’s more - no one has to cook dinner for a whole week if they don’t want to.

Cremona Scratch Italian, a new Italian restaurant on Hambden Street, is taking part in Chardon Restaurant Week for the first time this year.

Chef Alex Lenk has prepared two Italian dishes Shrimp Arrabita and Cavatelli Putanesque, which he will feature during CRW.

“I named the restaurant Cremona, after the village in Italy my grandmother is from,” shared Mr. Lenk. “I make everything from scratch with the best ingredients, just like my grandmother did.”

In addition to new Restaurant Week participants, some of those restaurants that have been in town for a long time will also be participating.

“Square Bistro is celebrating its tenth anniversary of being on the square,” shared an enthusiastic Ms. Perrico. “We are excited for the renewed attention these Chardon Eats programs create for our long time restaurants.”

Buoyed by the success of CRW over the past four years, Chardon Eats added two new food-related events over the past two years.

“We hosted Sweet September this year, where for a whole month, we featured the sweets in our area, whether that be candy shops, donuts, ice cream and bakeries,” she said.

During the pandemic, these types of establishments were included in restaurant week, but this year, Chardon Eats wanted to give them a special time of focus.

She said that in the month of September, social media posts told each participant’s business story in Sweet September, allowing patrons to learn the background of each shop, as a way to encourage them to stop in and meet the proprietors.

Another positive food-oriented week was completed for the first time in January.

“In conjunction with National Pizza Day we held Chardon Pizza Week, which featured ten pizza restaurants and offered special pizza promotions from Jan. 14-20,” said Ms. Perrico.

“Some pizza locations did a 12-inch pizza for \$10, while others offered specialty pizzas for the week,” she said.

One other perk for the pizza restaurants was it brought in customers during what is usually a slower time in the pizza business.

“The fall is kind of a good time for pizza, with high activity and football games and such, but after the holidays, the pizza business is a little slower, so the restaurants really enjoyed this focus in January,” Ms. Perrico explained.

The way Chardon Eats and the chamber are able to support these special food-related events is through sponsorships. Ms. Perrico said the sponsors are the lifeblood of Char-

don Restaurant Week, as well as its two newer cousins, Sweet September and Pizza Week. Sponsorships are available in three categories, Gold which includes sponsorships of all three food events for \$600, Silver which includes a choice of two of the events for \$425 and Bronze, which includes one event for \$250.

“By becoming a sponsor, your business will be featured on the Chardon Eats website, on the event flyers, and on all of our social media promotions,” said Ms. Perrico.

Ms. Perrico, along with the other members of the chamber, as well as the local restaurant owners, are all working together for one goal.

“We just want to see restaurants stay in Chardon,” said Ms. Perrico. “We want them to succeed. And we do that by supporting them as part of our small business community.”

And by the chance for residents to stay out of the kitchen and inside the restaurants for a whole week in April, during the month of September and for a pepperoni-themed week each January.

Chardon Restaurant Week participating restaurants include: 7 Ladies Tea Parlor, Beans Cafe & Bistro, Brown Barn, Buckeye Chocolate Cafe, Cleat’s Club Grille, Cremona Scratch Italian, El Patron Mexican Grill & Cantina, Element 41, ElevenThree Brewing Co., Hayaski Mayple, Joey’s Italian Grille, NOCE Pizzeria, Sluggworth’s, Spinner’s Good Time Diner, Square Bistro, and The Lodge at Bass Lake. ■



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Making a difference

Chardon Chamber Scholarships significantly impact student recipients annually

By MICHELE COLLINS

Since 1999, the Chardon Area Chamber of Commerce has been awarding scholarships to seniors in the Chardon Local School District. These scholarships have helped to support students in their college and career dreams, by providing funding for college tuition as well as for their supplies.

For Sofia Zampino, who won a chamber scholarship in 2019, the money helped her to buy a computer for her future career as a data scientist.

"I am in my fifth year at The Ohio State University, where I am a statistics major. I am currently the Data Insight Intern for Showpig.com/The Wendt Group, shared Ms. Zampino. "The Chardon Chamber of Commerce scholarship aided in purchasing a new computer that



Sofia Zampino



Hannah Holbert



Julianne Sweet

was powerful enough to run multiple AI and statistical inference softwares," she shared.

Hannah Holbert was awarded the scholarship her senior year in 2020. She said she is currently in college at The Ohio State University, and is pursuing a graduate degree.

"I am also currently interning with the Ohio Holocaust and Genocide Memorial and Education Commission while pursuing my degree," she shared.

She said that the scholarship was especially important to her financially, as she comes from a single-parent household.

"If not for the Chardon Chamber Scholarship I would have likely struggled to pay for my first year of college and the supplies that I needed to succeed in my academic and professional career," shared Ms. Holbert. "Thanks to that scholarship, especially in what ended up being a very difficult year due to the pandemic, I think I would genuinely not be pursuing higher education, if not for the help I received."

Ms. Holbert's career plans include a career in the museum field, "to make museums more accessible for individuals who may not feel welcome in those spaces," she said. "I want to



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Maple Stirs are sold on Sundays
(March 3rd - April 21st, 12PM - 4PM)
in Chardon Square, except on Easter.

For more information, visit
www.maplefestival.com

be deeply involved in a community like the one I came from which inspired me to pursue my Masters in Public History because I firmly believe that history is first and foremost human.”

Last year’s scholarship winner was Julianne Sweet who is currently attending Miami University where she is majoring in biomedical engineering with a pre-medical studies co-major.

“The Chardon Chamber Scholarship helped to offset significant financial burden and related anxiety of covering college expenses,” she shared. “This support has enabled me to focus on my studies and fully immerse myself in many new experiences at Miami University.”

She added that her future career plans include either medical or dental school.

“I hope to shadow over the summer and find the right path of medicine for me. I also hope to find an internship in Biomedical engineering during my time at Miami,” said the ambitious freshman. “My career dream would be to have my own private practice in either dermatology, oral surgery, orthodontia, or optometry.”

These scholarship recipients are just three examples of how the Chardon Area Chamber of Commerce scholarships have helped students in the Chardon community.

But the difficult task of determining the win-

ners of the scholarships, with as many as 20 applicants every year, falls on the chamber’s scholarship committee.

The selection process is very challenging because all the applicants are more than deserving to be awarded,” shared Sylvia McGee, who oversees the scholarship program for the chamber. “We have the very difficult task of vetting down to six, the candidates whom we then schedule in-person interviews with. Each year I am impressed with the level of dedication and achievement these young individuals display. They are our future leaders and entrepreneurs and are very inspiring.”

The chamber traditionally gives out three scholarships every year to Chardon seniors, but Ms. McGee shared that with more financial support they could provide even more.

“We would love to be able to give more, but what we are able to give can certainly help these students,” she said.

The scholarship committee was back at work this past March, reviewing and interviewing the applicants to select its three class of 2024 scholarship recipients.

The \$1,000 scholarships are given in a one-time payment and are announced at the Chamber’s Annual Awards and Banquet in March.

Guidelines for the scholarships include that the applicant be a resident of the Chardon Lo-

cal School District, and be continuing their education at a two- or four-year degree-granting institute of post-secondary education or vocational-technical school.

While applicants must have accumulated at least 40 hours of community service while enrolled as a student, most are involved in a lot more service endeavors.

Applicants officially must have participated in at least two extra-curricular activities or be employed. The minimum GPA for applicants is a 3.00 and they must complete 800-1,000 word essays answering the following questions.

What is a personal achievement that makes you proud?

What is a mistake you have made and what did you learn from that experience?

Describe how you view yourself.

It is in this portion of the competition where the scholarship committee learns about each of their student applicant’s goals.

“As an organization we are committed to the success of our youth as future leaders in the community. We foster involvement through engagement which in turn fosters a strong sense of community,” added Ms. McGee.

And the chamber provides the opportunity for local high school seniors to have the means to pursue their dreams in college and beyond. ■



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ISSQUARED Inc.'s Paul Gordon, Senior Account Executive, Steve Gibbs, Senior Marketing Executive, and Neil Singh, Senior Business Development Executive, stand in the high-tech "situation room" at the international cyber security company's newest office in Chardon.

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ISSQUARED Inc. brings cybersecurity to Chardon

By **MARTHA SOROHAN**

Whoever thinks that the tiny city of Chardon, population 5,200, could not rein in one of the world's top cyber security firms has another thing coming.

California-based ISSQUARED Inc. cut the red ribbon last August on its newest office on 7th Street in Chardon, another feather in its cap of state-of-the-art offices in Washington D.C., Texas, Arizona, Louisiana, Florida and Oregon, along with the U.K., Ireland, India, Singapore and the Middle East.

"A lot of people don't expect Chardon to be state-of-the-art," said Neil Singh, Senior Business Development Executive. "It brings with it the DNA of Silicon Valley."

Recognized in 2022 as one of America's fastest-growing private companies, ISSQUARED Inc. can count on one hand the reasons it chose Chardon: availability of real estate; fiber infrastructure; potential talent pool and opportunity to develop; willingness of state agencies to work with smaller companies; and the opportunity to build something from scratch. Last but not least is Chardon's strategic location and climate.

"I love the snow," said Steve Gibbs, Senior Marketing Executive who helped manage the build after coming from California in 2017.

It can also count on one hand its five lines of business: consulting, cyber security, products, connectivity and managed services. Its motto? "Our difference: simplify complexity."

It does this, according to company literature, by "leveraging the power of technology to streamline business and IT processes, taking the complexity out of the user's hands while

improving efficiency, speed, reliability and security of the client's digital infrastructure."

Simply put, the 15-year-old company's services include designing, building and managing IT solutions.

The exterior of its 7th Street building belies the futuristic interior design. ISSQUARED Inc. purchased the 66,000 square-foot 30-year-old structure in 2021 and spent more than two

years retrofitting its upper floors to house of office, training, meeting and conference facilities. It was the former home of software firm Eltech System Corporation.

"Three years ago, there was not much here. It was an empty, run-down concrete building," said Mr. Singh.

Continued on page 12



CRANE FAMILY DENTAL CARE

Drs. Brandon and Julia Crane established Crane Family Dental Care in October 2020 and we are welcoming new patients in Chardon. Our team is dedicated to providing high-quality dental care with comfort and positivity, treating our patients as though they are members of our own family.

After we graduated from Case Western Reserve University School of Dental Medicine in 2013, Brandon served in the U.S. Air Force where he completed an Advance Education in General Dentistry residency at Wright-Patterson AFB in Dayton, OH and then was stationed at Holloman AFB in Alamogordo, NM. During that time, Julia gained valuable experience caring for patients in those communities. When it came time to put down roots, we knew we had strong family ties in Geauga County and we are happy to call Chardon our home since 2019. Outside of the office, we enjoy exploring our local parks with our young children, traveling to visit our extended family, gardening, and spending time with our golden retriever, Leona.

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ACM18

Continued from page 11

Now all that has changed. Bold wall colors and innovative functional and eye-catching lighting, modernistic furniture, open spaces, and light-filled rooms with rows of desktop computers are capped by what looks like a “situation room” with two long tiered rows of computers facing a wall of monitors that alert to current world-wide cyber security threats. Lights along the walls turn red in a crisis – which so far hasn’t happened, said Paul Gordon, Senior Account Executive.

Contrasting with the high-tech accouterments is a low-tech yet equally impressive rich, shiny pool table, a testament to ISSQUARED Inc.’s laid-back corporate culture.

“Our CEO and founder, Bala Ramaiah, had the design in his mind to replicate our California headquarters in Westlake Village,” Mr. Singh said.

This local branch of ISSQUARED Inc. is starting small. Many of its current 12 employees work remotely, but the goal is to create 150 jobs, with over 100 staff members in-house. The company is working with local colleges to create cyber courses and to access a talent pool – which Mr. Singh calls a “work in progress.”

“We have the facility,” Mr. Singh said. “It’s a case of filling it to create the jobs. There’s a demand for network/cyber security people who have an understanding of IT management



services. And we are focusing on hiring from Ohio.” Mr. Singh pointed to a McKinsey report which notes a U.S. shortage of 700,000 cyber security experts. “We have no idea what that number is worldwide,” he said.

A New Zealand native with 25 years in the industry, Mr. Singh came to ISSQUARED Inc. after working with JobsOhio and the economic

“We have the facility, it’s a case of filling it to create the jobs. There’s a demand for network/cyber security people who have an understanding of IT management services. And we are focusing on hiring from Ohio.” — Neil Singh



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ISSQUARED Inc. chose Chardon as its first Midwest location upon recognizing the area is filled with “great technical people who are creating great start-ups,” such as Hyland Software in Westlake, Mr. Singh said. “ISSQUARED Inc. looked all over Ohio. The connectivity



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and the independent fiber optic lines were already here. The building was not in use, so we could do business with not only other companies – that was a selling point – but we have two sources of connectivity, one to our defense projects. Ohio has strength in its air bases and technical military capacity. There were other sites in Northeast Ohio, but this had three floors. And it was empty,” Mr. Singh said.

ISSQUARED Inc. need not fear a shortage of clients. Mr. Singh said the number of daily cyber security threats number in the tens of thousands. “The interesting thing is that these 10,000 daily threats make the business community think, ‘What are we doing to stop them?’” he said.

The threats pose a danger to not only huge banks, corporate and health conglomerates but the ordinary persons on their laptops at any public Wi-Fi hot spot.

“A person’s computer can get a virus just by logging onto public Wi-Fi,” Mr. Singh said. “Someone trying to hack the system on a public Wi-Fi network can infect your computer while you’re there. Their networks are open and insecure unless you have your own secure antivirus and malware protection software and use a VPN [Virtual Private Network]. It’s important to have these.”

Stopping these threats, and mitigating the risk factors, is ISSQUARED Inc.’s bread-and-butter.

“Our goal is to be predictive and responsive

immediately for our customers. We are at the forefront of addressing and managing these risks. If one of many machines breaks at a manufacturing company, if it’s connected to an IT system, it can end up costing them \$1 million a week. The longer it’s broken, the price goes up. The ‘bad guys’ steal or sell data. It’s a great risk to the business revenue,” he said.

While ISSQUARED Inc. does not catch the “bad guys,” it does notify authorities.

“But our role is to prevent these things from happening in the first place with a focus on network hygiene, risk mitigation and ensuring our clients adhere to security compliance as identified in NIST and ISO standards,” Mr. Singh said.

In addition to cyber threat monitoring, prevention and mitigation, ISSQUARED Inc. has another mission: to educate companies as well as the public on identifying these threats.

“How do we educate businesses to be safe? What best practices? How do you create them for your kids? Awareness and education will be part of our strategy. It’s not just cyber security as a business, but informing how we do our work, teaching good cyber hygiene and behavior. Cyber hygiene is a personal responsibility. Manage your passwords. Don’t give others access. Trust the people you provide information to,” he said, advocating for quarterly changing of passwords and multi-factor authentication. Hackers, he said, use technology to identify

long-used passwords. “People use their cat’s name. Regular words. A favorite food. Someone can guess that” he said.

Outreach is another arm of ISSQUARED Inc.’s mission. It hosts Geauga Growth Partnership’s Business Roundtable and offers late afternoon facility tours on the last Fridays of the month.

“Anyone can bring their teams into the building for meetings,” said Mr. Gordon. “We want to help people buy in.” Another exciting long-term vision is the possibility of production spaces to piggy-back on the current capability for a large-scale Zoom meeting in one of the office’s tiered presentation rooms.

ISSQUARED Inc. is also mentoring young people. It plans to replicate in 2024 a ten-week paid internship program it started last year summer with West Geauga Local Schools to expose high school students to the corporate world in areas of technology, leadership and soft skills.

“West Geauga is coming back for active learning,” Mr. Singh said. “We may try to teach them how to set up a computer network or connect a wireless to a computer system.”

When ISSQUARED Inc. snipped the red ribbon at its new Chardon facility last Aug. 17, Mr. Ramaiah called it “the most significant expansion in our company’s history.”

“We look forward to partnering and contributing to the economic and technological development in the region,” he said. ■

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This will be the start of something big



Fine Arts Association
takes over Geauga Theater

By **MARTHA SOROHAN**

For 85 years, the Geauga Theater has stood proud and tall on the Historic Chardon Square, its marquee over the sidewalk listing a line-up of current attractions.

Since the start of 2024, its marquee has read simply, "opening soon," while the theater's fate rested in the hands of Chardon City Council.

In mid-March, Chardon City Council unanimously approved turning the theater operations over to the Fine Arts Association, a 64-year-old non-profit based in Willoughby.

Starting April 1, the Fine Arts Association began leasing the iconic landmark from the city. In addition to classes, workshops, concerts and

As of April 1, the Fine Arts Association took over management of the historic Geauga Theater on Chardon Square.

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other productions, it will offer theater space to other performing arts groups in the community. Its new name will be Chardon Arts Center.

The Art Deco building on the southwest corner of the square dates to 1939, when it opened as a movie theater. It operated as the Geauga Cinema for 57 years before closing in 1996.

In 1998, owner Larry Dolan donated the building to the City of Chardon. The Geauga Lyric Theater Guild took over, leasing it from the city, delighted to have a home for its all-volunteer community theater troupe that had formed 45 years earlier in 1954.

When the arts education non-profit began renovations three years later, in 2001, the future of the theater was bright.

The Geauga Department of Community and Economic Development had awarded the Geauga Lyric Theater Guild a \$300,000 grant to redo the lobby and exterior. Eighteen years later, another grant, this one from the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission, funded another lobby update, along with repairs to the roof and electrical system.

But it was not enough. Facing mounting debt and other building issues discovered in early 2020, the Geauga Lyric Theater Guild dissolved in 2018 after its last four board members resigned. The City of Chardon formed an Ad Hoc Committee to look for a new organization and direction for the theater.

Along came Thrive, another non-profit performing arts organization, based in Streetsboro. Its director, Jason Boardwine, built on his vision to bring in a unique blend of theater, live music and movies, along with beer, wine and snacks.

But it was short-lived. Three years later, Mr. Boardwine posted an emotional online farewell. "We have realized that managing a venue requires more time and energy than we'd like to devote. The path did not lead us to where we intended," he wrote.

Its swan song was a sold-out Christmas show featuring the Chardon Polka Band.

The non-profit dissolved Jan. 1. It was back to the drawing board for Chardon City Council.

Among those seeking to manage the theater was a local non-profit troupe, Curtain 440, founded by Angela Miloro in 2019, a year after Geauga Lyric disbanded. Despite lacking a theater home, she and her three-member staff had developed a thriving business offering four to six annual "main stage" productions such as "Mean Girls" and "Wizard of Oz" in leased church or school spaces throughout Geauga County, along with annual repertory offerings and summer drama workshops that aligned with its vision is "to challenge, educate and

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entertain audiences and theater artists through presentations ranging from classics to contemporary shows to new works.”

Operating on the premise that there is strength in numbers, Ms. Miloro contacted Elizabeth Bolander, executive director of Fairmount Center for the Arts, to discuss partnering to lease and manage the Geauga Theater from the City of Chardon. It would give Curtain 440 its first real home, ending the endless

back-and-forth transport of scenery, props and sound and lighting equipment from her own home to leased theater space.

While Fairmount Center for the Arts has a charming castle-like home in Novelty, it, too, lacks stage space, requiring it to do what Curtain 440 has been doing for years: leasing stages at area schools and churches for its dance recitals and theater performances.

The conversation between Ms. Miloro and Ms. Bolander was so promising that Curtain 440 supporters attended several Chardon City

Council meetings starting in December, 2023, speaking on the non-profits’ behalf in an attempt to sway the legislators.

One of their strongest arguments was keeping theater management in local hands.

But the Fine Arts Association, with a long and successful history in Northeast Ohio, was chosen instead.

Its track record as a center for arts education and performances, its offering of classes, lessons, music and art therapy, theater performances, concerts, and cultural activities meshed with what Chardon City Council envisioned for the future of Geauga Theater.

The Fine Arts Association history dates from its 1957 founding by Willoughby residents Jim and Louise Savage, who first held classes in their home and then a local church before leasing property from the Andrews School for Girls, on Mentor Avenue, for \$1 for year for 100 years. Twelve years later, the Women’s Committee of The Fine Arts was formed as an auxiliary. Three years later, ground was broken for the Willoughby School of Fine Arts.

Shortly after the millennium, the Willoughby School of Fine Arts purchased the building from Andrews School for \$1 and became independent. In 2009, the organization was renamed the “Fine Arts Association.” Adding summer camps, music and art therapy, and other outreach programs necessitated a building addition. According to its website, the FAA now serves some 5,000 students each year, including satellite locations in Euclid and Painesville where visual arts, music classes and dance instruction are offered.

Adding space in Chardon – about 15 miles southeast of Willoughby – fulfills its commitment to community outreach.

FAA Executive Director Paul Holm says that his community-based organization drawing from 36 communities from across the region can hardly keep up with the demand. “Our long presence in Chardon and Geauga County hasn’t been physical, but 80 of our 1,200 students are from Chardon and Geauga County,” he told Chardon City Council. “Leasing this space is to build it around people who call Chardon home, in Chardon and for Chardon. That is why we suggested calling it the Chardon Arts Center.”

FAA’s lease, which includes the theater and the annex, is a compromise of sorts that gives local groups such as the fledgling Curtain 440 and the well-established Fairmount Center for the Arts the opportunity to use the space for its productions by leasing the theater on a weekly or monthly basis through the City of Chardon.

This latest chapter in Geauga Theater history also gives the City of Chardon peace of mind that its future rests in the capable hands of a regional non-profit arts organization with a proven track record.

“It is not our goal to compete, displace, or remove capacity, but add to it in ways that reflect our mission and vision of an arts-empowered community,” Mr. Holm told Chardon City Council in March. “We believe we are well-suited, resourced and up to the task.” ■



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Local man works on NASA's Artemis program

By ANASTASIA NICHOLAS

Chardon native Jeff Leiko wanted to work on rockets for as long as he can remember. Thirty years later, he works as an aerospace engineer on NASA's mission back to the moon, the Artemis program.

The Notre Dame Cathedral Latin School and Florida State University alum went to work at the space program after graduating college in 2011. He was on the ground floor for the beginning of the Artemis program in 2013 and helped launch Artemis I – the most powerful rocket that has ever successfully flown into space, Leiko said.

The buildup to launch a rocket takes years.

He watched the large elements of the rocket start coming to his workplace, the Kennedy Space Center, where they launch the rocket. The boosters came from Utah on train cars. The core stage came from the Stennis Space Center in Mississippi but was built in Missouri.

They run a series of tests on the rocket once it is put together and rolled out onto the launch pad. Leiko was among the engineers working on the integrated testing of the rocket as it was assembled and powered up for the first time.

The actual countdown for the rocket takes about 47 hours. During that time and the launch, Leiko is one of the console operators in the launch control center.

"That, of course, is extremely exciting," he said. "It can be stressful, but I find it more exciting than stressful."

He works on a team of engineers who focus mainly on helping work with issues that may arise during countdown, called "non-conformances."

"Rockets and the ground systems to launch them are some of the most complicated things ever built," Leiko said. "There are literally millions of different pieces that have to work together perfectly and inevitably, during the countdown, not everything may be exactly according to specifications."

When engineers are working to understand a liquid hydrogen leak or an antenna issue with the rocket, Leiko's team of engineers helps troubleshoot the problem and ultimately decide whether to live with it, fix it or stand down, amounting to a decision whether to launch or not that day.

He said they were thrilled with the flight of Artemis I. Everything went as planned.

The unmanned test flight was meant to shake down the capsule, rocket, and ground systems – everything they had spent the past decade working on to ensure it all worked as they had engineered it, Leiko said.

"It was a very high-stakes mission, not just to test the rocket but put the capsule into a lunar orbit and bring it back," he said.

Everything went perfectly over the course of the 25.5-day project, but they have certain opportunities for improvement going into Artemis II, the first crewed flight.

Four astronauts will fly on Artemis II, the

first to return to the lunar vicinity since 1972.

"Everything has to be perfect for the mission to be successful, and the stakes are just that much higher since there will be astronauts on board," Leiko said.

Leiko said the greatest lessons come from what he works on, systems integration. He focuses on how systems work together and how to proceed

when they do not work exactly as designed.

"Just yesterday, I was in the control room for testing of the sound suppression water system that we use," he said. "Basically, we dump about 400,000 gallons of water under the launch pad during a rocket launch to help

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suppress the sound.”

“Rockets are, of course, immensely powerful,” he said. “It’s impossible to really comprehend just how much energy a rocket engine produces.”

Leiko put the power of the rocket flown for Artemis into perspective.

“If you were standing within about a thousand feet of the launch pad during a launch, the sound from those rocket engines itself would kill you,” he said. “And if we didn’t do anything about it, the acoustic energy would destroy the rocket.”

So they dump water under the rocket during liftoff to keep the noise energy from echoing and shaking the rocket apart.

“We’re literally emptying an entire water tower in about 30 seconds,” Leiko said. “It’s a lot of fun to watch.”

To prepare for the big days, the launch team members sit through hours and hours of simulation training.

“We’ll inject problems during that simulation to test and train the team to make sure that we handle them correctly and are coming to the right conclusions and going down the right trains of thought,” Leiko said.

“Looking back into the history of the space program, the biggest risk that we have is called a failure of imagination: to not come up with

potential things that could go wrong,” he said.

The mission’s name comes from Greek mythology. Mythology has always been a part of NASA, dating back to the fact that the skies and heavens fascinated all of the prehistoric cultures, Leiko said.

Artemis is the twin sister of Apollo – Apollo, of course, being the first lunar missions that NASA flew in the late 1960s and early ‘70s. In fact, Artemis will fly the first woman to the moon.

Leiko said others sometimes ask him why NASA spends taxpayer dollars to put footprints on the moon.

“We don’t take a rocket and build it up with dollars and blast all those dollars into outer space,” he said. “All those taxpayer dollars are being spent right here on Earth and mostly right here in this country.”

That not only helps create a better economy and job market, but all of the technology with roots in the American space program – including GPS, smoke detectors, scratch-resistant lenses and more – goes back into the hands of American citizens for their daily use. ■



Aerospace engineer and Chardon native Jeff Leiko, 34, stands before the Artemis rocket at the Kennedy Space Center in Merritt Island, Florida.

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CASA for Kids fights for kids' best interests

By ANASTASIA NICHOLAS

The Court-Appointed Special Advocate for Kids of Geauga County program gives many residents the opportunity to actively better their community by helping their youngest neighbors through challenging times.

Volunteer court-appointed special advocates, called CASAs, advocate for the child in a court case. In 99% of cases, it serves the best interest of the child to help the parent succeed because the child wants to be with the parent, Executive Director Mary Ruth Shumway said.

Advocating for the child may look like constantly reminding the parent what the court expects from them in order to be successful.

Shumway has been with the program for 20 years. She said the work constantly evolves with society.

"It's a very small segment of the Geauga

Continued on page 20



Program Administrator Bonnie Glavic, intern Jason Zumerling and Supervisor Charlene Wolff take their commitment to CASA's mission seriously. Volunteers of the program advocate for the best interests of abused and neglected children in court.

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County population that ends up in the juvenile courtroom,” she said. “Unfortunately, to us it appears to be 50% of that population is generational.”

In those cases, CASAs must take a clean look at what failed the family’s first round in court that brought them to the court a second time.

Sometimes cases come in strictly because of a lack of resources.

“Every parent wishes the best for their child, and often parents respond very positively to some of the tools that we give them to improve their lives and their children’s lives,” Shumway said.

Residents from a wide range of professional backgrounds – from business and real estate to attorneys, retired educators and many more – have found a passion in volunteering for the program.

Six-year volunteer Tim Cogan, of Novelty, said it feels rewarding to see a child come out in a better place a year or two later.

“It’s all about the kids that we work with,” he said. “A lot of these kids have had rough lives and then they’re going through a lot of trauma. They just need somebody that can navigate the landscape of what’s going on and what would be in their best interest so the court can help them get there.”

“It’s all about the kids that we work with,” he said. “A lot of these kids have had rough lives and then they’re going through a lot of trauma. They just need somebody that can navigate the landscape of what’s going on and what would be in their best interest so the court can help them get there.” — Tim Cogan

One of his fellow volunteers, realtor, business owner and Chardon Area Chamber of Commerce President Susan Parker, said knowing the impact of her work as an advocate enhances her life. The role comes with such flexibility that she thinks anyone could make it work, she added.

Geauga County Juvenile Court Magistrate Abbey King began her career as a child protective services worker for the state of Montana, always feeling called to that work and knowing it is where her heart lies. Seeing how the legal system works in such cases pushed her to become a lawyer to increase her ability to affect change, she said.

She has worked with CASA for years in her position at the Juvenile Court. She said volunteers act as support systems and much more for families and are a great help and resource for the court in abuse, neglect and dependency cases.

“We could not do our job without CASA,”

she said.

The time and dedication that the advocates put in, far surpassing the minimum requirements and mandates, sets the local program apart, she said.

The vast majority of cases end with advocates and parents on excellent terms, and they usually maintain contact and continue to provide support.

“I think that speaks to their involvement,” King said.

After two years interning at CASA, Miami University sophomore and Bainbridge native Jason Zumerling appreciates the hands-on experience and insight he has gained that will help him in his desired career as a lawyer.

“A lot of people think that young people can’t make a direct change,” he said. “This is probably the most direct way you can change your community, and this is the most hands-on you can be with people that need help.” ■

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Chardon bustles with activities year round

By ANASTASIA NICHOLAS

With an abundance of festivals, celebrations and traditions unique to Chardon – and city organizations always innovating new ones – the city bustles with activity all year.

Chardon Restaurant Week kicks off a week of outstanding food and exclusive deals from local restaurants. With each receipt turned in, Chardon Restaurant Week will donate to Next Step, a local charity that offers support, housing and meals to young adults in the community who are in need.

Restaurant week continues into Sweets September, which celebrates the city’s chocolatiers and candy shops, and Pizza Week in January.

In 1926, a local merchant on Chardon Square, Art Carlson, wanted to increase awareness of maple syrup production as well as the price, which, at that time, sold for 50 cents a gallon, according to the Geauga County Maple Festival.

He and his friends began planning the first Geauga County Maple Festival. About 100 years later, the maple festival is one of the most notable events on the square.

Summer means happy times, sunshine and Concerts in the Park. Every Friday brings a different type of tunes to the square. Area bands arrive to play country, polka, rock, grunge, Beatles, and ‘70s and ‘80s TV themes – just to name a few – and food trucks come along for the ride.

The Chardon Flea Market, hosted by the Chardon Square Association, is held each year

in June. With more than 100 vendors, bargain hunters can find antiques, collectibles, produce, plants, kitchen items, glassware, new and old books, vintage jewelry, toys, furniture, yard art, and more.

The money raised from the 2002 flea market helped the Chardon Square Association maintain the beauty of the park by purchasing

flower baskets, holiday decorations, and more, Chardon Square Association Sylvia McGee said.

On Saturdays in June through August, Chardon Square is a bastion of health with the Chardon Farmers Market and Community Yoga on the Square.

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June also boasts Chardon Tomorrow's Bikes and Hikes, Movies on the Square: Hotel Transylvania 4, Geauga Park District's Cave-man Crawl 5K Run at The West Woods park, and a movie night at Observatory Park.

Decades after the first maple festival, the Chardon Square Arts Festival had its debut. Now in its 43rd year, the juried outdoor arts festival hosts more than 100 artists who come from the area and out of state.

August is never a dull month as the popular Chardon BrewFest takes place on the square days later, drawing beer enthusiasts to enjoy scores of samples as well as food from local eateries and live music. The event is family-friendly – often, a whole family arrives while only one partakes in the beer.

The Chardon Square Association's Harvest Handmade Market and Kiwanis Cornroast take place in September on the square. Attendees can browse about 75 creative booths for handmade and vintage finds.

Chardon Tomorrow, an organization that

works to preserve and enhance the city's character by encouraging investment, hosts Hungry for History in October, an informative tour around the square with food from local restaurants.

The next day, the Fall Fest is held on the square, featuring s'mores, scarecrow making, face painting, a balloon artist, live music, cider and hot dogs, and more.

The city's trick or treat is followed by Halloween on the Square. The Chardon Square Association hands out bags of candy in the gazebo, the Chardon Police Department hands out cider and doughnuts, and the Chardon Fire Department leads a parade around the square.

November commences with Geauga Park District's Holly Days Artisan Boutique at The West Woods, which traditionally features heirloom-quality ornaments and holiday décor, all-natural bath and beauty products, gourmet food and snacks, unique jewelry and accessories, stylish and functional pottery and glass items, gifts hand-turned from wood, holiday wreaths and décor, and much more.

Every Thanksgiving, Chardonites dash through the city for a cause in the 5K Turkey Trot and Walk to Stop Trafficking. Proceeds from the 2022 run went to the Harriet Tubman Movement, which helps women in Northeast Ohio who have come out of human trafficking and prostitution.

Area organizations including the Chardon Square Association and Chardon Area Chamber of Commerce highlight all small businesses in the 44024 footprint during Small Business Saturday in November. A receipt from a shop, salon, studio or restaurant can be brought to the Heritage House in exchange for complimentary gift wrapping, hot cocoa and other fun activities.

The city rings in the holiday season in a charming Christmas lighting put on by the Chardon Square Association.

The square association keeps that yuletide cheer alive with the annual Home for the Holidays event. The square becomes a bustle of activity: ice carving, reindeer, horse-drawn carriage rides, a visit from the Lake County Captains and Mrs. Claus and her elves, and more.

Gauga Park District welcomes the public to celebrate the longest night of the year in its annual Winter Solstice Celebration at The West Woods, which features skits, music, crafts, snacks, and more. ■



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Geauga Parks

A number of outstanding scenic trails and parks are located in Chardon and the surrounding area. Managed by the Geauga Park District, the trails and parks provide area residents with miles of trails and acres of green space for a variety of outdoor activities.



Big Creek Park in Chardon Township includes a popular 2.8-mile mountain bike trail.

Big Creek Park

9160 Robinson Road, Chardon Township

This 644-acre park is bisected south to north by the scenic Big Creek, creating a landscape of varied relief. Nine trails total 3.8 miles, plus a 2.8-mile mountain bike trail through the woods.

Recreation areas include a campground, nature-based playground, activity field backstop, sand volleyball court and tetherball. And recently added features include a reservable lodge, a nature-based playground, and a unique “tree house” camping opportunity.

Accessible by two separate entrances, Tupelo Pond/Bridle Trails in Big Creek Park adds an additional two trails totaling 2.9 miles. A section of the statewide Buckeye Trail also passes through Big Creek Park.

Most of this park is forested with rich beech-maple woods and carpeted with color-



Whitlam Woods in nearby Hambden Township is a popular destination for outdoor enthusiasts.

ful wildflowers each spring. Numerous species of songbirds migrate from the tropics to nest in this mature forest, which also shelters many kinds of woodland animals among the trees.

The uplands are divided by small streams, exposing the glacial deposits and bedrock in their ravines. In the area where the valley of Big Creek narrows, hemlock trees line the cool steep slopes. Distinctive plant species are found on the clay slumps and among flood plain areas.

A certified Monarch Waystation butterfly garden is also located at the Meyer Center pergola. The species of plants in the garden bloom during every month of the summer and

attract a variety of pollinators.

Whitlam Woods

12500 Pearl Road, Hambden Township

This 187-acre park, part of which is leased from the Geauga County Commissioners, is bisected by deep ravines of two streams that flow into Big Creek. Three trails total 1.1 miles.

Hemlock trees provide year-round greenery in ravines surrounded by a mature beech-maple forest, which cloaks most of the park. Lush growths of spring wildflowers carpet the woods, and a variety of birds and animals can

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be found each season.

Along the woodland margins, dense thickets and grapevine tangles provide cover to a variety of wildlife, including Ruffed Grouse, deer, turkey and fox. An old field is now covered with a second-growth red maple woods, and soft mosses and club mosses cover the ground.

In the shrubby meadow at the front of the park, Eastern Towhees, Indigo Buntings and Goldfinches nest, and American Woodcocks return each spring to perform their aerial courtship flights.



Bass Lake Preserve

Bass Lake Preserve

11445 Lakeview Road, Munson Township

This 606-acre park features the 160-acre Bass Lake, a treasured natural resource for many generations, and Spring Brook Sanctuary, a State Nature Preserve protecting Ohio's last known indigenous population of brook trout. Boating is allowed by permit; visit our website to request a permit. There is not a trail here, but the view from a bench near Bass Lake Lodge shouldn't be missed.

Bass Lake is a natural lake on the Chagrin River. The water level is maintained by a low dam on the Chagrin a short distance downstream of the outlet. The shallow lake lies in an ancient glacial flat and is largely surrounded by extensive wetlands. The sheltering wetlands have protected the lake from shoreline development, resulting in a multitude of exceptional ecological communities.

Today, parts of the lake remain as they must have appeared to early inhabitants of the region. About 90 percent of the shoreline is mantled in trees, shrubs and marsh vegetation.

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Bass Lake is an important stopover during the great spring and fall migrations of waterfowl and neotropical songbirds. Bald Eagles nest in the lowland woods near the lake. Beavers ply the swampy tributaries. Native brook trout still swim in small streams that flow into the lake. Wild rice grows in the marshy margins.

The lakeshore forest is characterized by red maple, silver maple, swamp white oak, pin oak and American elm. It is home to wild turkey, Ruffed Grouse, White-tailed Deer, Masked Shrew and Northern Long-eared Bat – species that illustrate a mature, complex ecosystem with significant diversity. Rare nesting birds in Ohio such as the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Dark-eyed Junco also habitually appear here.

Walter C. Best Wildlife Preserve

11620 Ravenna Road, Munson Township

This 101-acre park, donated in memory of Walter C. Best, founder of the nearby Best Sand Corporation, who built its 30-acre lake because of his interest in waterfowl, is home to a rich diversity of plant and animal life. Three trails total 1.6 miles.

Animals such as woodchucks, chipmunks and squirrels are readily seen, while deer,

Continued on page 28



The Walter C. Best Wildlife Preserve boasts three different hiking trails.

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raccoon, Red Fox, mink and voles leave signs of their secretive presence. Muskrat and beaver are often seen in and around Best Lake.

More than 100 kinds of birds have been sighted here. While many are migratory visitors, the marshy meadows, thickets and wooded stream corridor harbor an outstanding variety of nesting songbirds. Nest boxes shelter bluebirds, tree swallows and wood ducks. The aerial courtship display of the male American

Woodcock can be observed at dusk on early spring evenings.

In the water, aquatic plants provide a soggy "salad bar" for ducks and geese. Fish-eating birds such as grebes, mergansers, gulls, loons, terns and herons frequent. Keen observers may spot an osprey or bald eagle.

A patch of tall-grass prairie, using Ohio seed sources, offers an attractive nectar source for hummingbirds, many kinds of butterflies and other insects.



Three different sections of the Maple Highlands Trail connect the City of Chardon and Village of Middlefield.

The Maple Highlands Trail

If you're in Chardon, you can access this awesome trail from Mountain Run Station at 12601 Chardon Windsor Road or Big Creek Spur at 9280 Ravenna Road. Three sections of this trail, connected through the City of Chardon and the Village of Middlefield, stretch a total 21.1 miles across the entire county featuring two award-winning covered bridges to the south. Three links to this trail add another 1.08 miles. Horseback riding is only permitted



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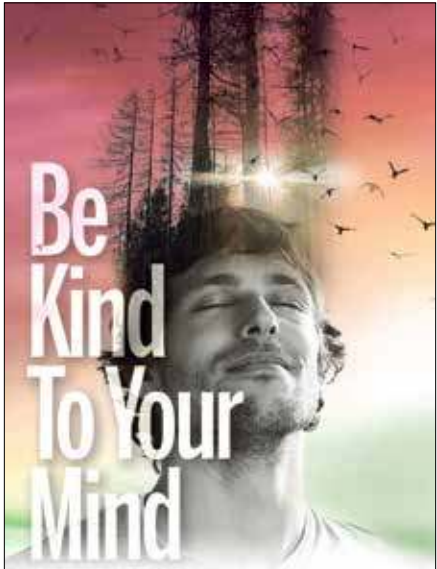
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Observatory Park



along the south section.

With more than 20 miles covered, a wide variety of natural habitats are home to varying ecosystems where wildlife encounters happen all the time.

Depending on which way you're headed,

The Maple Highlands Trail travels through a variety of habitats, including woodlands, wetlands, farm fields and Amish neighborhoods. Opportunities abound to spot Wild Turkeys and White-tail Deer, as well as turtles and snakes crossing the trail.

Observatory Park

10610 Clay Street, Montville Township

This 1,100-acre park encourages visitors to explore Nature from the ground to the galaxy-

Continued on page 30



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ies. Six trails total 3.97 miles.

Numerous site features include a trail with interactive pods representing each trail proportionate to the sun, a trail with interactive stations representing ways to study weather, life-sized cornerstones of the Great Pyramid of Giza, earthen mounds, henge stones and, via a woodland trail, access to the Nassau Astronomical Station.

Rare and endangered flora and fauna live and play here in the shadows of observatories.

Observatory Park protects the watershed of the Cuyahoga River, and holds a diversity of habitats, such as old growth forest, wetlands and open fields.

An important species that has been found is the endangered Red Swamp Current. An abundance of wildlife here includes the rare Five-lined Skink. ■

Chardon magazine

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Nature Preserve in
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