

BEREAN Newsletter

MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

CYRIL M. KLEEM



In my 18 years as mayor, I have worked with a diverse set of City Council members. They have been of differing backgrounds, ethnicities, religions, races and genders. They truly represent the melting pot that is Berea.

I also realized early on that I had to develop a relationship with Council. I find out what is important to them versus what's important to me. That often leads to compromise and working together to do what is best for the City.

Together we have to deal with some serious issues, especially when it comes to finances. What will a new project or service cost? Most of what a City provides to its residents is services – police and fire protection, trash pickup, street repair, park maintenance and recreation. The cost of such services can become very expensive.

In reality, the City's revenue has not kept up with those costs. Federal and state funds that we used to rely on to supplement income tax and property tax revenues are now at a much lower level.

The City also has major projects to honcho, such as the Browns' CrossCountry Mortgage Campus Expansion on Front Street and the construction of townhomes at the North End. We're also looking at appointing a Charter Review Commission this year. A review of the City Charter is mandated by the charter every five years.

Funding the services you rely on and dealing with new projects has become a challenging process – one that requires the City Council and my administration to work closely together.

We have some new faces on Council this year. Most of Council was sworn into office on Jan. 4 with Vance Redding joining Council for Ward 1 and Michael Kurtz representing Ward 2. They all serve two-year terms.

I look forward to working with this Council. It is our joint responsibility to move the City forward. As has been my experience in the past, this group just wants to take care of business. And together, we will do just that.

BEREAN Newsletter

The Monthly Berean is published monthly by the City of Berea and is distributed to residents, organizations and businesses in Berea.

Mayor Cyril Kleem
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bereannewsletter@gmail.com or (440) 274-5608

Please submit stories and information
by the 10th of every month.

VOLUNTEERS HONORED AT SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY BANQUET

A record number 22 individuals and groups were honored with Spirit of Community Awards at the annual banquet this year.

Mayor Cyril Kleem began the awards in 2008 when he was first inaugurated as mayor. He presented the first Spirit of Community Award to his parents, John and Farrell Kleem, for their volunteerism, which included hosting dozens of students. The second Spirit Award was given to American Legion Post 91 at a Memorial Day ceremony.

"At that point, we decided to have a banquet," the Mayor said. "As I said then, there is a difference between a city and a community. A city is a geographic place. A community is more like family."

"Volunteers do things that are good for the community, for their neighborhoods, and don't expect anything in return."

The 2026 recipients included:

John Kelly is a volunteer with Berea Community Outreach. "He is committed to doing the right thing and is never afraid of hard work," the Mayor said. John helps at the food pantry on Thursdays, helping clients to register, filling wagons with food and loading cars with supplies. He also rebuilt a mailbox for an elderly resident who contacted BCO seeking assistance.

"In moments when life feels heavy, John offers something just as important as food – human connection and encouragement."

Steve Dole has volunteered with Berea Arts Fest for 20 years. He serves on the planning committee and helps with fundraising and promotions. He helps with booth set-up and teardown and coordinates with vendors and artists. Steve also has been with the Baldwin Wallace University radio station WBWC (88.3 The Sting) since 1984. He is a member of the WBWC Hall of Fame.

Christopher Kleem, the Mayor's brother, is known as the Candy Man. He collects tons of candy throughout the year, making multiple trips to the VA Hospital at Wade Park and Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton to deliver the goodies, which are donated by Malley's Chocolates. Chris also volunteers as Santa to visit veterans in nursing homes with the Northern Ohio Veterans Association.

Berea Elks Lodge 1815 celebrated its 75th anniversary in 2025. The lodge partners with the Berea Police to host a Drug Take Back Day. It also brings the drug education trailer to National Night Out and other city events. The Elks paid for the installation of new basketball hoops for the Recreation Department and sponsors a Hoop Shoot for youth every year. They also donated funds to the Berea Branch Library for the Story Walk project.

VFW Post 6676 has provided a home for the Northern Ohio Veterans Association's monthly coffee chats and donated \$15,000 to NOVA for the Military Tribute at McKelvey Park. They host community food drives and donated funds to the Berea Fire Department for a hose roller.

Steve McPhee is a volunteer with Berea Community Outreach. He packs food bags, replenishes the shelves, stocks the freezer and refrigerator and is incredibly well-organized. "What makes Steve truly special is his deep commitment to every person who comes through the doors," the Mayor said.

Ken Mantifel is a long-time volunteer in the City and a member of the Planning Commission and Civil Service Commission. He was a member of the Charter Review Commission in 2016.

Sherri Phelps is past president of Berea Kiwanis and planned the club's 100th anniversary celebrations in 2021. She also served as division lieutenant governor and adviser to the Community Aktion Club, which serves adults



with special needs. She initiated Operation Berea Kind, which collects warm weather clothing for those in need. She also is very active with Mount Zion Baptist Church.

Rev. John Singler is pastor of St. Mary's Catholic Church. He offers the church's social hall, Father Garrity Center, free of charge for City events, such as the Spirit of Community Banquet, and for Active Senior Network programs. The City also uses the church's large parking lot for shuttle service during the Live at the Lake concerts and city festivals.

Northern Ohio Veterans Association volunteers. Original volunteers were honored with the Spirit of Community Award in 2019. Newer volunteers were honored this year. They are members of the NOVA honor guard, visit veterans in nursing homes, present programs on the history of the U.S. Flag to students and serve as crossing guards at Grindstone Elementary School.

Dennis Billow – Army.
Mike Black – Marine Corps.
Richard "Doc" Schaebler – Marine Corps. Vietnam.
John Kickham – Navy. Purple Heart & Silver Star. Vietnam.
Jose Guerra – Army. Vietnam.
Kevin Moore – Army.
Catherine Baldrey – Navy & her husband, **Michael Mason**.
Flo & Marlin McKinley – Army.

Also nominated for the Spirit of Community Award were **Patricia Murray** (Navy), **Craig Mills** (Navy) and **George Voicik** (Army). They could not attend and will receive their awards at a later date.

The Spirit of Community banquet was Jan. 20 at St. Mary Father Garrity Center. Catering was by JoJo Carloni's with coffee service by Café Ah Roma.

NEWS briefs



BEWARE OF JURY DUTY SCAM

Berea police are cautioning residents about a telephone scam about missed jury duty. The caller claims the resident has skipped out on jury duty and there is now a warrant for their arrest. The caller also asks about credit cards and a payment method to avoid arrest. The Cuyahoga County Sheriff warns that this particular scam has been active for the past several months. If you have any doubts about any telephone solicitation, call the Berea Police Department at (440) 234-1234 or the Scam Squad operated by the Cuyahoga County Department of Consumer Affairs, (216) 443-7226.

FIRE CALLS INCREASE IN 2025

Fire Chief Terry Ledwell reports that calls to the Fire Department in 2025 showed an increase of 3 percent over 2024. As of Dec. 22, 2025, the fire department handled 3,317 calls for service, including fire and EMS calls. At the same time in 2024, that number was 3,221. The 2025 figure includes 2,591 EMS calls and 726 calls for fire service. The average time from dispatch to enroute to the scene was 2.5 minutes.

HOSPICE SEEKS VOLUNTEERS

Cypress Hospice is looking for volunteers to work with patients in a variety of roles. Volunteers can provide companionship, music or certified pet therapy, for example. Veterans can visit with patients who are veterans. Go to cypresshospice.com or call Laurie at (440) 973-0250 for more information. Cypress Hospice is headquartered in the Berea Commons.

BEREA BASEBALL RECRUITS COACHES

The Berea Baseball Association is looking for coaches at all levels for the 2026 season. No experience is necessary.

The BBA is revamping its Coaching Youth Baseball instruction program, which is aimed at first-year coaches and assistants in T-Ball and Coach Pitch Leagues. Coaches will view a self-running presentation with tips, techniques and videos to assist in running drills and practices. On completion, coaches can earn a Coaching Certification.

A separate session on coaching is being developed to teach pitching mechanics. It will use the new ThrowMo pitching mats and video training system.

Contact Gary Seitz at Gary@BBABaseball.com with questions and coaching opportunities and certification.

VFW DONATES TO MILITARY TRIBUTE

VFW Post 6676 donated \$15,000 to the Northern Ohio Veterans Association for the Military Tribute planned at McKelvey Park.

VFW Commander Andy Dickson presented the check to Chaplain Willie Springer at the annual Spirit of Community Awards banquet on Jan. 20.

Plans call for the pergola at McKelvey Park to be converted into a tribute to active-duty military and veterans. Each pillar of the pergola will display a bronze symbol of one of the branches of the armed forces. The plaques should be in place in time for America 250 celebrations in July.

The U.S. Flag will be front and center, replacing a potted plant, and the flags of each branch will be located to the rear of the pergola. Floodlights will be installed.

Donations to the Military Tribute project can be made via PayPal or Zeffy. Checks can be mailed to NOVA, 398 W. Bagley Road, Unit 4, Berea, OH 44017.



MEET YOUR FIREFIGHTERS



MEET YOUR FIREFIGHTER
People serving people

Allen Scott has deep roots in public service. He grew up on the west side of Cleveland as the son of a firefighter, so helping others was part of everyday life from an early age. In 2004, Allen and his family made Berea their home, and just a few years later—in 2008—he was proud to join the Berea Fire Department.

For Allen, serving Berea is especially meaningful because it's the same community where he and his family built their lives. He and his wife, Nicolette—an optometrist and part-owner of Broad View Eye Center—raised their two children here and remain deeply connected to the

city they call home. One of Allen's favorite parts of the job is the simple fact that he often gets to walk to work, serving neighbors he knows and cares about.

When he's not on duty, Allen enjoys spending time with his family and traveling. He's grateful to live and work in a city that values community, service, and connection—and he's proud to do his part to keep Berea safe.



Allen Scott

Allen is a Coast Guard veteran.

SOLO SQUARES DANCE GROUP CELEBRATES BEREA POLICE

To celebrate Law Enforcement Appreciation Day, Solo Squares, the oldest square-dancing group in the Cleveland area, invited Berea police to join them on Jan. 9.

Retired officer Dave Kammerman, who admitted he hadn't square danced since grade school, took up the challenge. He arrived with a dozen Dunkin' donuts to add to the buffet.

"I never ate a donut while on duty," Kammerman said. "But I guess I can have one now."

He said the myth about police and donuts began decades ago when about the only store open on nights and Sundays was a donut shop. "Police stopped by, especially in winter, to keep warm and grab a bite to eat," he said.

Solo Squares President Diane Moore invited Kammerman to talk a bit about his law enforcement career. Kammerman said his uncle was a police officer in Tennessee. At the time, Kammerman worked for the Cuyahoga County prosecutor's office and the uncle encouraged him to take the police test. He did and Berea hired him. Over the years, he served on the regional bomb squad, worked in the detective bureau and ended his career as a school resource officer at Grindstone Elementary. "I loved that job," Kammerman said. He retired last year and now works part-time for Mayor Kleem's office.

Kammerman also is the public address announcer for Baldwin-Wallace University sports, the Cleveland Charge and Akron Rubber Ducks. He is the emcee for Berea parades and other City events, where he can deliver an awesome National Anthem.

But now it was time to practice some do-si-do. After a tutorial by caller Ray Wiles, Kammerman joined a square (four couples) with volunteer partner Betty Clay.

"Square dancing has changed," Wiles said. "It used to be country music; now it's more modern." The practice round was danced to Michael Jackson's "Billie Jean," before Wiles switched to a more traditional square-dance sound.

Kammerman said he thoroughly enjoyed his refresher course on allemande left and swing your partner. Clay



said, "He did fine. He's a fun guy."

Moore said Solo Squares was founded in 1961 as a dance group for singles but over time, it evolved into a social and square dance group for couples as well. Its 56 members come from throughout the area. Moore lives in North Olmsted. Other members hail from Middleburg Heights, Brook Park, Columbia Station and Olmsted Falls as well as Berea.

Solo Squares has met at St. Paul Lutheran Church for the past 17 years, except in the summers. Friendship Hall was not air-conditioned so the group had to go elsewhere.

"We decided to kick-start the church's funding for air-conditioning in Friendship Hall with a \$5,000 donation and the air-conditioning was put in last summer, so that now we can dance there comfortably year-round," Moore said.

Solo Squares offers dance lessons on Mondays during the school year. She began lessons in 2015 when she joined the group. Graduates are called "Angels," who then can help out new learners. Classes begin in September.

"Most people think square dancing is for older folks. It's not," said Mike Bays, vice president of Solo Squares. "It's healthy and friendly."

Bays, who lives in Berea, said he joined Solo Squares in 2018 at the suggestion of his wife, Sharon, who is the club's treasurer. He's training to be a caller and is an apprentice caller now. "Years ago, calling was up to the individual. Every caller was different," Bays said. "You could go to a dance and not understand what they were calling. Now they've codified the calls. I do it for the heck of it."



Solo Squares dances 7:30-10 p.m. on the second and fourth Fridays of every month. St. Paul Lutheran Church is at 276 E. Bagley Road, Berea. Next up is a Valentine's Dance on Feb. 13. Go to solosquares-danceclub.com for more information.

COMMUNITY MEETINGS WILL UNVEIL PLANS FOR AMERICA 250



A tri-city committee putting together plans to celebrate America's 250th birthday this year will unveil the various activities at two community meetings in March.

The presentations will be Tuesday, March 3 at the Middleburg Heights Community Center, 16000 Bagley Road, and Wednesday, March 18 at the Berea Historical Society, 118 E. Bridge St. Both meetings begin at 7 p.m. and are open to the public.

Mayor Kleem's office is designing a tri-fold pamphlet that will include maps and information plus a QR code for further details. The pamphlets will be available at the March presentations.

The cities of Berea, Brook Park and Middleburg Heights are collaborating to make plans for the local America 250 festivities. All three communities were once part of Middleburgh Township. The township was founded by Jared Hickox, who arrived in 1809 to claim 50 acres in the Western Reserve.

Representatives of each community plus civic organizations are meeting at the Berea Historical Society to brainstorm. The big push will launch in time for the Fourth of July.

Members have listed designated sites in each community that will be included on historical tours. The tours can be in person or virtual. The committee will set up a web site where visitors can view the locations and read their history.

The committee is hoping to highlight about 10 locations in each city. Berea's list includes the Tree of Knowledge, which was commissioned by the Berea Board of Education and mounted on Berea High in 1968. It was removed when the school was razed in 2020 but was renovated and remounted on the new school.

Other Berea sites to be noted are Buehl House, home of the Berea Historical Society; Cuyahoga County Fairgrounds; Baldwin Wallace University; and the Pearl Street neighborhood, among others.

Brook Park will feature Cleveland Hopkins International Airport, NASA Glenn and the IX Center. Middleburg Heights will highlight the Little Red Schoolhouse, the Lake-to-Lake Trail in the Metroparks and Woodvale Cemetery, among others.

Lisa and Gene Zacharysz of Luna Marketing are creating a logo for America 250 T-shirts and other apparel. Those items will be available at Luna's online site, lunamarketinginc.com.

Bill Boone, a teacher at Berea-Midpark High School, is working with his AP History students to research various aspects of the project.

The next America 250 committee meetings are set for 4:30 p.m. on Feb. 11 and Feb. 25 at the Berea Historical Society, 118 E. Bridge St.

America 250 is a national program through the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission encouraging communities to celebrate the 250th birthday by emphasizing local history.



At the Library

for Sphero. Registration required for each date. 7 p.m., Wednesday, Feb. 4 & 7 p.m., Wednesday, March 4.

FELT WREATH: (Grades 6-12) Make a wreath using felt scraps. Registration required. 7 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 19.

FOR CHILDREN

Children's weekly storytimes continue throughout the month. No registration required. Programs are available for ages birth through 5.

MUSIC AND MOVEMENT: (Ages 19 months to 5 with a caregiver) Enjoy a high-energy session of music and movement using shakers, bean bags, scarves and more. 10 a.m., Thursday, Feb. 5.

MARIO PARTY! (Grades 3-5) Jump into the world of Mario Party—no video game console required! In this real-life edition of the classic Nintendo game, participants will move around a giant game board, complete hilarious mini-games, collect coins, and race to earn the most stars. Costumes are welcome! 11 a.m., Saturday, Feb. 21.

KINDERGARTEN COUNTDOWN: Strong Bodies, Strong Minds! (Children entering kindergarten in the fall of 2026 and a caregiver) Help your child start kindergarten with confidence as we learn how to keep our bodies strong and ready for learning! 10 a.m., Tuesday, Feb. 24.

THE MAGIC OF MAGNETS: (Grades 2 to 5) Have you ever wondered how magnets work? They seem like magic but it's actually science. Explore how magnets interact with common everyday objects, showing how simple and fun science can be! 6:30 p.m., Tuesday, Feb. 24.

LIBRARY HOURS:

9 a.m. to 9 p.m., Monday – Thursday
9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Friday – Saturday
1-5 p.m. Sunday

Please contact the Berea Branch Library at (440) 234-5475 to register for programs or for more information. Registration is required for all programs unless otherwise noted.



BENEFITING VETERAN HOUSING SOLUTIONS

WHEN

February 22
10 am - 1 pm

LOCATION

TopGolf
Independence
5820 Rockside Woods Blvd.

TICKETS & REGISTRATION

Full bay registration: \$450
Includes 6 golfers & 6 buffet tickets
Buffet only- \$40
Cash bar

SCAN TO PURCHASE
TICKETS →

SPONSORSHIPS

- ◆ \$2,000
2 reserved VIP bays with logo display & 12 tickets for golf/buffet
- ◆ \$1,500
1 reserved VIP bay with logo display & 6 tickets for golf/buffet
- ◆ \$1,000
1 reserved bay with logo display & 6 tickets for golf/buffet
- ◆ \$500
Logo display

For additional info, contact
Cathy Thomas (440) 334-3506 or
Annette Tibbs (216) 798-5999



The Berea Fine Arts Club

Art Classes

New Winter Schedule Now Available

Register Today BereaArts.org

Pysanky Ukrainian Egg Decorating
Logo Design & Branding
Calligraphy
Printmaking Series

Bob Ross® Oil Painting
Pen and Ink Drawing
Drawing & Illustration
Acrylic Painting

323 E. Bagley Rd. | Berea

The Berea Fine Arts Club, Inc.

James B. Hovanec Memorial Scholarship Award

Applications Available for High School Seniors

living in Berea, Middleburg Heights, Strongsville, Brook Park, Olmsted Falls or Columbia Station who intend to pursue further studies in the Visual Arts.

Visit BereaArts.org for more info



VETERANS NEWS



Veterans' Corner is a monthly listing of activities and resources for military veterans. Submit items to The Berean at bereannewsletter@gmail.com.

VETERANS CORNER

MILITARY DATES TO REMEMBER IN FEBRUARY

FEB. 2, 1901: Army Nurse Corps established.
FEB. 4, 1941: USO established.
FEB. 13, 1943: Marine Corps Women's Reserve established.
FEB. 19, 1941: Coast Guard Reserve established.

WOMEN VETS SCHEDULE SATURDAY BRUNCH

Lady veterans from throughout northeast Ohio are invited to a get-together and brunch at Mission BBQ, 3412 Pearl Road, Brunswick, at 11 a.m. on Saturday, Feb. 21. The monthly social hours are hosted by Medina County Women of the Military. For more information about Medina County Women of the Military, email mcwomilitary@yahoo.com or check out Facebook.

STATE VETERANS CONVENTION SET FOR AUGUST

The Ohio Department of Veterans Services will host the 2026 Ohio Veterans Convention on Saturday, Aug. 8 at the Ohio Union on the campus of The Ohio State University. This daylong meeting of veterans, families and advocates from throughout Ohio will feature guest speakers, breakout sessions and a resource fair with more than 100 vendors offering services in healthcare, benefits, employment and education. Registration begins April 1. Look for information on OhioVets.gov.

WIRELESS & INTERNET DISCOUNTS FOR VETERANS

Several carriers offer discounts for military veterans. Among them are, AT&T: 25 percent off unlimited wireless plans; Verizon: Home internet starting at \$30 per month, discounted cellular service and 25 percent off accessories. Xfinity: Discounts on Xfinity mobile plans, NOW TV, internet and Xfinity Rewards Diamond member status.



MESSAGE FROM CHAPLAIN WILLIE

Giving honor to God and to all who are reading this Chaplain's Corner. To all our Men and Women that is serving our country and to all our Veterans and families. Thank you, Lord, for February 2026. We have come this far by faith and not by sight, being thankful and grateful to see another year. God is Good all the time, and all the time God is Good.

Trusting in His Holy words, knowing that He has never failed me yet: although, there are times we question ourselves. Like, have we accomplished our goals for 2025, or have we left them behind? Did we try to forgive the past, and the people we had offended? Or did we take it into 2026?

The question you may be asking yourself is, I am service-connected and have health concerns. Why is it taking so long to get assistance? You can contact me at the NOVA office and I will point you in the right direction.

I am thankful for the once-a-month Saturday Coffee Chat. My Spiritual insight is the meeting was not just by Company Orders. It was by His Grace and Mercy. The Good Lord put us all together. I am grateful for my fellow men and lady Veterans for a long-lasting relationship and friendship.

To all our Veterans and families, we continue to pray for each other, as we are blessed to be here on earth. Despite our health condition and strength. We pray for all who have served and currently serving. For they will never be forgotten. Let us continue to pray for the families of the deceased and the living. We are family. United, we stand. Divided, we fall. I pray for your safety. May your Higher Power, no matter how you perceive that, Bless each one of you for your service to your country! May God's love continue to flow with every one of you throughout our lives.

Jeremiah 29:11 NIV-11 "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

John 15:13 "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." I truly believe when one serves our country, we are serving One Nation Under God.

Many Blessings,
Rev. Chaplain Willie Springer, MAPT
Executive Director- Northern Ohio Veterans Association (NOVA)
Army/Vietnam Veteran
(440) 973-4567 (work) | (330) 391-4622 (cell)
wspringer@cityofberea.org.

Ps.133 (KJV) Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

MILITARY SERVICE TRANSLATES TO SERVICE TO COMMUNITY

Mike Black says he's had a boring life. But after six years in the Marine Corps, donating a kidney and learning a trade plus tending to his fellow veterans, maybe it's more about giving back.

Black served in the Marines from 1971-1977 active duty and reserves.

"I was a high draft number, No. 7 or 11, I think, so I thought I would just get it over with and enlist," he said. He went to the local recruiting office and talked to the Army recruiter. It didn't go well. As he was leaving, a Marine in full dress uniform beckoned him into a nearby office. Black was hooked.

Boot camp at Parris Island, S.C., was "a rude awakening," he said. "I needed some tightening up."

He was trained on computers and spent one year on Okinawa where his prize possession was a motorcycle. "I rode it all over and beat it up," he said. Eventually, the cycle got fixed "good as new." However, "Just before I shipped out, it was stolen," Black said. So much for plans to take it home. He ended active duty at Camp Pendleton in California.

Black considered computers and sitting at a desk all day boring, but he used the G.I. Bill briefly to study programming after his discharge. "I got bored," he said. "Math came easy to me. I was first in the class and I dropped out."

In the meantime, he got married in 1974 and decided he needed a job. His brother was in the carpet business. Black learned to lay carpet and tile and other flooring and moved to Texas for about 15 years. As his parents aged, he moved back to the Cleveland area, landing in Fairview Park.

By 1990, his sister, who was diabetic, needed a kidney transplant. Black was a good match. "The operation and recovery for the donor are more compli-



cated than for the person getting the kidney," Black said. "Everything in my body hurt. It hurt to move." He was given a morphine pump to use whenever the pain became too much but he never used it. Until, that is, a couple of nurses insisted that he get up and walk. "I started pumping that thing like crazy," he said.

Was it worth it? "My sister came to visit me the night before the operation," Black said. "She was so pale and weak." The next day, she visited again. "Her cheeks had color in them and she looked like she should. When I saw her, I knew it was worth it," he said.

What is also worth it is his time volunteering for the Northern Ohio Veterans Association. After Black retired in 2010 — "My knees were shot," he said — he was looking for something to do. He visited the NOVA popcorn stand at a Live at the Lake Concert and talked to Chaplain Willie Springer, executive director of NOVA, and to Norma Kleem, the volunteer social worker. He's been a mainstay on the Veterans Security Team and visits to veterans in nursing homes ever since.

"I enjoy talking to the guys," Black said. "We sing songs and visit. At Christmas, we give them gifts and veterans hats."

He recalls visiting an older Marine in Medina — a veteran who received no visitors. "I gave him a hat," Black said. "He was so thrilled with that hat. It was a small thing for me to give him a hat, but it was a big deal for him."

That made it all worth it.

VETERANS
Coffee Chat
WITH CHAPLAIN WILLIE
A place for Veterans to connect

SATURDAY, FEB. 7
Presentation of Four Chaplains Day

SATURDAY, MARCH 7

10 AM - NOON

LOCATION: VFW POST 6676
590 N. ROCKY RIVER DR.

MAJOR SPONSOR:
WESTPOINT
WEALTH MANAGEMENT

REGISTRATION REQUIRED:
Please contact
(440) 822-3312 or
wspringer@cityofberea.org

BUILDING THE BELOVED COMMUNITY: MLK JR. DAY

The theme of Martin Luther King Jr. Day in 2026 was "Building the Beloved Community."

Deacon Harold Stewart, main speaker at the annual prayer breakfast at Mount Zion Baptist Church on MLK Jr. Day Jan. 19, said his remarks would "zero in on love."

"Martin Luther King Jr. loved us so much he worked tirelessly for our rights," said Stewart, who was ordained as a deacon for Mount Zion in 2025. That love was brought home to Stewart when he volunteered with a church group to help the residents of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina.

"People were on rooftops, holding signs for help," Stewart said. "It was the most memorable experience and it was a labor of love. But why does it take a natural disaster for us to help our brothers and sisters?"

Stewart said the days he spent in New Orleans "changed my life."

He quoted Dr. King, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can."

"We live in a world of war, injustice and devastation," Stewart said. "What affects one of us, affects us all, even indirectly. And we've all been affected."

Addressing the Berea-Midpark High School boys and girls basketball teams that attended the service, Stewart urged them to serve, vote and stand up for what is right.

"Take a pledge," Stewart asked of them. "Be for love."

"This is our community. Let's work to make it better."

Stewart was raised on Cleveland's East Side where he was originally ordained as a deacon in 1987. His job took him to New Jersey and then back to Ohio where he served as a union official with UNITE for 30 years. He is an Army veteran and has been married to his wife, the Rev. Patricia Stewart, for 55 years.

Local pastors took part in the service. Pastor C.J. Harkness of People's Community Church led in singing "Lift Every Voice and Sing." Pastor Patrick Hunt led the congregation in the "Let My People Go" response.

Pastor Donald T. Warren of Mount Zion Baptist Church closed the service, urging the audience to "make a difference. It just takes one person."

"Understand that we all are one," he said. "We may not walk on the same side of the street but we're headed in the same direction."



STUDENTS CREATE ART TO HONOR MLK JR. WEEK

In recognition of Martin Luther King Jr. Week, art students in teacher Tom Conti's Design Concepts class at Berea-Midpark High School created an art display at the Berea Branch Library.



The theme of the project was "light" to reflect Dr. King's message that "Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can."

The display combines a sculpture of Dr. King and digital design.

Students creating the sculpture were Lucas Bobula, Jackson Clark-O'Neill, Victor Cook, Logan Keilholt and Grant Ziaja. Digital art students were Brooke Brady, Lyla Chong, Victor Cook, Gavin Wagner and Ad'Dan Warren.

MLK Week in Berea is a collaboration among Baldwin Wallace University, the Berea City School District, Berea Branch Library and the City of Berea.

SAVING ONE VETERAN AT A TIME

The suicide rate among military veterans is a continuing concern with 18 a day losing their lives.

"We need to connect with each other," said Pastor Brad Borke, "but we are disconnected in so many ways." Borke is pastor of Vision Baptist Church on the East Side. He visited the Northern Ohio Veterans Association coffee chat on Jan. 10. "I heard about this and I wanted to check it out," Borke said. He said the coffee chats might be a project for him to bring to his community.

"There is nothing like this on the East Side," he said.

A 19-year Air Force veteran, Borke was deployed to Libya, Iraq and Afghanistan as an intelligence officer. He said listening to the stories of Vietnam veterans, who were vilified when they returned home, is "something I cannot relate to."

But he is determined to help those with lingering emotional and mental baggage. His church ran a special support group for vets one day and had 50 veterans show up.

"You can sit there and complain and cast blame or you can reach out," Borke said. "It's a matter of mutual respect."

"This organization (NOVA) is so therapeutic," he said. "It's relationship building. It's powerful."

He told the 20 plus vets at the Coffee Chat, "Your service didn't stop when you stopped wearing that uniform. Reach out to just one veteran. Invite them to come with you. If everyone here brings in one other veteran, your organization will grow and you will make a difference."

Borke can be reached at pastor@VisionBaptistCLE.org.





'RHINOCEROS' TAKES THE STAGE AT BW

"Rhinoceros" (Free ticket required): A small town is besieged by one roaring citizen who becomes a rhinoceros and proceeds to trample on the social order. 7:30 p.m., Wednesday-Saturday, Feb. 11-14, Fawick Art Gallery, Kleist Center for Art & Drama, 95 E. Bagley Rd.

All events are free unless marked with (\$). Tickets available at bw.edu/tickets. The schedule is subject to change, and additional events may be added. For a full list of events, visit bw.edu/events. Other events in February include:

SYMPHONIC WIND ENSEMBLE: Program to be announced. 7 p.m., Friday, Feb. 13, Gamble Auditorium, Kulas Musical Arts Building, 96 Front St.

FACULTY RECITAL: Featuring Dr. Kaleb Chesnic in collaboration with BW faculty members. 2 p.m., Sunday, Feb. 15, Gamble Auditorium, Kulas Musical Arts Building, 96 Front St.

HONORS BRASS INVITATIONAL: Program to be announced. 7 p.m., Monday, Feb. 16, Gamble Auditorium, Kulas Musical Arts Building, 96 Front St.

SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: Program to be announced. 7 p.m., Friday, Feb. 20, Gamble Auditorium, Kulas Musical Arts Building, 96 Front St.

NEW MUSIC SERIES: Featuring BW Music Composition majors premiering their original works. 7 p.m., Sunday, Feb. 22, Gamble Auditorium, Kulas Musical Arts Building, 96 Front St.

LIVESTREAMED INTERACTIVE THEATRE PROJECT (\$): An ensemble-created, Twitch-streamed show uses live performance and audience choices for a unique experience each night. 7:30 p.m., Wednesday-Sunday, Feb. 25-March 1, See bw.edu/events for streaming details.

SYMPHONIC BAND WITH CHAMBER WINDS: Program to be announced. 7 p.m., Friday, Feb. 27, Gamble Auditorium, Kulas Musical Arts Building, 96 Front St.

BALDWIN WALLACE COMMUNITY ARTS SCHOOL

The BW Community Arts School offers a series of summer music camps, dance camps and theatre camps for students ages 10-18. These immersive experiences enable students to grow as artists and performers and make new friends along the way. Also offered are day camps, classes, and ensembles in music and dance for infants through adults. Learn more and register at bw.edu/cas.



OPERATION BEREA KIND

Join Berea Kiwanis and the Berea Community once again in filling the fence around Safety Town at the Berea Recreation Center (451 Front St.)

We need the following items:

Gloves, socks, hats, scarfs, mittens

Items need to fit in a gallon size zip lock bag and can be new, homemad or gently used.

Give what you can, take what you need!

You can drop off donations at:

1. Our box in the Berea Recreation Center.
2. Our box in Parkway Barber Shop (near Giant Eagle)

We will bag and hang the items on the fence for those in need. Let's work together to make sure everyone stays warm this winter!

BEREA COUNCIL WELCOMES TWO NEW MEMBERS



Two newly-elected members joined Berea City Council during inauguration ceremonies on Jan. 4.

Vance Redding is the new council representative for Ward 1 and Michael Kurtz represents Ward 2. They were sworn into office by Mayor Cyril Kleem.

Redding is a retired Teamster and member of Local 507. He worked as a painter at the I-X Center and was security manager at the Variety Theatre on Cleveland's West Side. He spent his childhood in Berea, attending Loomis School. He is a graduate of John Marshall High School where he was captain of the football and wrestling teams.

Kurtz is from the Akron area where he was active with Special Olympics and other community projects. He was twice named Akron Volunteer of the Year. Kurtz is an 8th grade science teacher at a charter school on the East Side. In Berea, he coaches through the Berea Recreation Center a girls 7/8 softball team, the Berea Youth Running Club and sponsors the Kurtz Classic basketball tournament for children in grades 1-4, now in its third year.

Also receiving their oaths of office at the ceremony in Berea Municipal Court chambers were council members who were re-elected in November. They are Jim Maxwell, president of council; Chris McManis, council at large; Lisa Weaver, Ward 3; Erika Coble, Ward 4; and Rick Skoczen, Ward 5. Gene Zacharyasz, council at large, was on vacation and will be sworn into office when he returns.

In his remarks, Mayor Kleem said it was important to develop a relationship with council members. "I find out what's important to them versus what's important to me," he said.

Maxwell noted that this is the 12th time he has been sworn into office, first as a ward councilman in the early 2000s. He said all council members share a dream of giving back to the community. "I grew up in a home where serving the people of Berea was important," he said. Maxwell's late father, Stan Maxwell, was also council president, and his mother, Beverly Maxwell, owned a small business in Berea.

Retired Berea police officer Dave Kammerman served as master of ceremonies. He said, "Sitting on City Council isn't about recognition. It's about responsibility and an opportunity to move the City forward."

Following the inauguration ceremony, there was an organizational meeting. Chris McManis was voted by council members to be president pro tem. He will serve as council president in the absence of Council President Jim Maxwell. Alycia Esson was elected as council clerk.

Maxwell made committee appointments:
BUILDING & ZONING- Zacharyasz, chair; Coble and Skoczen.

COORDINATING- Maxwell, chair; all members of council.

COURT- McManis, chair; Kurtz and Zacharyasz.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT- McManis, chair; Skoczen and Zacharyasz.

FACILITIES- Weaver, chair; Coble and Redding.

FINANCE- Skoczen, chair; McManis and Zacharyasz. Public Safety & Service – Redding, chair; Skoczen and Weaver.

SENIOR & COMMUNITY SERVICES- Coble, chair; Redding and Weaver.

UTILITIES- Kurtz, chair; Weaver and Zacharyasz.

Kurtz, Maxwell, McManis and Skoczen were appointed to the Mayor's Ad Hoc Water and Sewer Rates Committee.

Council members serve two-year terms.

NEWS From the Pews

KEYBOARD STUDENTS

PERFORM AT ST. THOMAS

The monthly lunch program at St. Thomas Episcopal Church will feature BW keyboard student performances on Thursday, Feb. 12. A free lunch will follow. The menu includes meatloaf, potatoes, mixed vegetables and dessert. Reservations are required for lunch at least one week in advance. Call (440) 220-2494. The S.T.A.R. programs at St. Thomas run September-May on the second Thursday of the month. St. Thomas Episcopal Church is at 50 E. Bagley Road.

THE MAN OF THE SHROUD EXHIBIT AT ST. MARY CHURCH

According to National Geographic, the Shroud of Turin is "One of the most perplexing enigmas of modern times." There will be an extensive exhibit exploring the history and science of the Shroud at the Father Garrity Event Center, 250 Kraft Street, Berea, Ohio 44017-Saturday, February 21st from 8am-8pm and Sunday, February 22nd from 8am-4pm. The exhibit is free and open to the public.

MASTER CLEANERS IS NOW CAVALIER CLEANERS

Master Cleaners, a mainstay in Berea for decades, has been sold to Cavalier Cleaners, a family-owned business based in northeast Ohio.

Cavalier Cleaners has been in business for 90 years and has locations in Brunswick, Mentor, Fairlawn and two locations in Medina. It offers free pickup and delivery.

Cavalier has moved into the Master Cleaners building at 232 Front St. Call (440) 234-9132. Hours are 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday-Friday and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday. The business is closed on Sunday.



FOOD PANTRIES AND MEAL DISTRIBUTION

BEREA COMMUNITY OUTREACH PANTRY, 398 W. Bagley Road, Unit 3, (440) 826-4891, nguzzo@cityofberea.org; or (440) 202-0272, loverbaugh@cityofberea.org. Drive-up service only. Open 11:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thursdays.

SCAN HUNGER CENTER PANTRY, 398 W. Bagley Road, Williamsport Plaza, (440) 260-7226. Open 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on the second Friday of the month and 4-7 p.m. on the fourth Friday.

PEOPLE'S COMMUNITY CHURCH PANTRY, 628 Wesley Drive, (440) 234-0609. Open 10 a.m. to noon on the third Saturday of the month. Next pantry is Feb. 21.

SECOND MILE OUTREACH PANTRY, 1480 Bagley Road, (440) 239-0549. Open noon to 2 p.m. on Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

ST. JOHN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH FOOD PANTRY, 8888 Prospect Road. 9:30-10:30 a.m. on the second Saturday of every month. Fresh food, staples and toiletries. Next pantry is Feb. 14.

BREAD MINISTRY, Berea United Methodist Church, 170 Seminary St., (440) 234-3525. Bread and pastries only. Noon – 2 p.m., Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday. Go to church addition on north side of church off Seminary. Pantry is through double brown doors.

FREE COMMUNITY MEALS. St. Paul Lutheran Church, 276 E. Bagley Road, served twice a month, 5-5:30 p.m., on the second Wednesday and last Wednesday of the month. Drive-up only. Next meals are Feb. 11 and Feb. 25.

KIDS CAFÉ. Brook Park Branch Library, 6155 Engle Road. For students 18 and younger. In collaboration with the Greater Cleveland Food Bank. 3:30-4:30 p.m., Monday-Friday through May 29, 2026.

PET FOOD PANTRY, Animal Rescue Friends, 10015 E. River Road, Columbia Station, 10 a.m. to noon the second and fourth Sundays of every month. Visit www.bereaanimalrescue.com or call (440) 234-2034 for more information or to donate. Next pantries are Feb. 8 and Feb. 22.

There also are Little Free Pantries located near the Berea Branch Library and People's Community Church. The Prospect Pantry is at the corner of Prospect Street and Jacqueline Drive. St. Paul Lutheran Church has a food donation box located near the side door. Non-perishable items only please. St. Paul's also has a clothing donation shed to the rear of the parking lot.

FILL THE CRUISER BENEFITS FOOD PANTRY

The Berea Police Department hosted a Fill the Cruiser donation for the Berea Community Outreach Pantry on Dec. 20. The campaign was in the Marc's parking lot at West Valley Plaza with Lt. Tom Walker and Patrolman Justin Carey honchoing the Tahoe. Shoppers donated non-perishable food items as well as cleaning products and personal care items.



TITANS

SCHOOL NEWS

FASHION DESIGN PROGRAM TO LAUNCH AT BMHS

A new Fashion Design & Merchandising program will debut at Berea-Midpark High School in the fall. This will be a two-year program managed by Polaris Career Center and is open to incoming juniors from all six high schools partnering with Polaris. The curriculum was developed with the Kent State University School of Fashion. The instructor will be Jevon Terance, who has nearly two decades of industry experience. He is based in Lorain. For more information, go to www.polaris.edu/fashiondesign or call (440) 692-2110 or email JMcGarey@polaris.edu.

POLARIS HIRES NEW EDUCATIONAL TECH DIRECTOR

Polaris Career Center has hired Kelly Gonzalez, former director of innovation & technology for the Avon Local Schools, as its new Director of Educational Technology & Innovation. She previously served for 10 years as an English Language Arts and technology teacher with the Avon Schools and in 2019 was named district media specialist. She is a graduate of The Ohio State University and Baldwin Wallace University. She will oversee all Polaris IT functions and technology innovation in support of learning and operations.

BMHS JUNIOR BREAKS BASKETBALL SCORING RECORD

Nick Reece, an 11th-grade standout on the Berea-Midpark High School boys basketball team, has become the all-time leading scorer in program history. He scored 36 points in a game against Elyria High School to surpass the previous record of 928 career points held by Austin Clay, who graduated in 2024.



SHOP CARRIES ON 70-YEAR BARBERSHOP LEGACY



Mom & Pops Barbershop may be a new name with new owners but the business has been a fixture in Berea for 70 years.

David Sutton, co-owner of Mom & Pops, said the business was begun by Tony in the 1950s. When he retired, the shop became West Valley Barbershop with Connie as owner. Sutton and his wife, Alyssa, bought the business in 2024.

"Connie gave me my first job when I graduated from barber school," David said. "So, I've been lucky to spend my career in the same place."

"The torch has been passed," Alyssa said.

The shop moved a few doors down the plaza in October 2025 to make way for Pet Supplies Plus, which is relocating from its stand-alone structure at the plaza.

This is Sutton's first time operating his own shop. "We wanted to create a family environment," he said. "We get a lot of police and fire, NASA employees and lots of kids." And veterans, too. David is an Air Force veteran, who served six years working in electronic warfare systems, stationed mainly in Alaska and Arizona. He was discharged in 2004.

"After I was discharged, I did a lot of different jobs," he said. "I worked in sales for a while, worked on oil drilling rigs and supported fracking operations. I always thought of being a barber but never did anything about it."

Alyssa, who has been a barber for 13 years, encouraged him to go for it. He graduated from barber school in 2019. Alyssa, who describes herself a "quiet person," said barbering "gets me out of my shell. It's a very relaxing experience. I enjoy interacting with clients."

"I love working with kids. You cut their hair when they are small and then watch as they grow up," she said.

The Suttons said business is flourishing and they are looking at adding a third barber to the staff. "Fridays and Saturdays are very busy," David said.

Mom and Pops Barbershop has qualified for two small business grants from the City. It received the Rent Reimbursement Grant and the Sign Rebate Grant, according to Matt Madzy, Director of Planning & Development.



"The City has been great to work with," David said.

Mom & Pops Barbershop is at 443 W. Bagley Road. Call (440) 532-7001. Hours are 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. Tuesday-Friday and 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday.

THREE KINGS DAY & EGGNOG: CHRISTMAS IN PUERTO RICO

For many of us, Christmas is THE day. Santa, presents and a decorated tree.

In Puerto Rico, Three Kings Day rules the holiday. Three Kings Day celebrates the Three Wise Men (Gaspar, Melchior and Balthazar) bringing gifts to the Christ Child. It is always observed on Jan. 6, also known as Epiphany.

"It took them a while to find their way," said Melissa Kleem, wife of Mayor Cyril Kleem. "They were 12 days late. They got lost."

Kleem, who is of Puerto Rican heritage, brought a bit of the Three Kings Day vibe to the Active Senior Network and Mount Zion Baptist Church on Dec. 30 with traditional foods and a history of Dia de los Reyes (Three Kings Day).

While seniors dined on beef and chicken empanadas, corn sticks, mini potato balls and alcapurrias (a blend of green bananas, cassava and potato), Kleem explained that when she first arrived, "I was shocked to see how Christmas was celebrated here." In Puerto Rico, Christmas is more of a religious day with small gifts exchanged. Three Kings Day is party time – good food, music, many presents and visits with family and neighbors.

"I want to share my culture with you," she told the 30 plus people in the Mount Zion social hall.

For Three Kings Day, families put out boxes of hay for the kings' camels the night before. There are parades with some people going door to door with songs and music. At the last house in the neighborhood, the homeowners are expected to put on a feast.

As a surprise, Kleem capped off the program with a makeshift band of musicians and a visit by some local Three Kings dressed in traditional costumes – Mayor Kleem, retired police officer Dave Kammerman and Guy Turner, assistant to Mayor Kleem. They passed out small cups of coconut eggnog to the guests.

Next came the feast – roasted pork, rice and beans and pasta salad. And more eggnog or coquito. In Puerto Rico, rum is added. But for this program, the coquito was strictly condensed milk and cinnamon. Check out the recipe at the end of this story.

Kleem said Puerto Rico has a diverse population with a mix of Spanish, African and Taino or Native Islanders. The culture, customs and cuisine are a reflection of that.



Guests said they enjoyed the program and the food. Martha Neeley Naylor said she "learned a lot about Three Kings but the best part was the coquito."

COQUITO (Puerto Rican Coconut Eggnog)

1 1/2 cups rum
2 cinnamon sticks (optional)
1 14-oz. can sweetened condensed milk or coconut sweetened condensed milk
1 15-oz can cream of coconut
1 13.5-oz can coconut milk
4 oz. evaporated milk
1/2 tsp. freshly ground nutmeg
1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
1/2 tsp. vanilla extract
Chill for 4 hours and serve. Makes eight servings.



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UPCOMING FEBRUARY EVENTS

FEB. 2: BEREAL CITY COUNCIL. 7:30 p.m., 11 Berea Commons.

FEB. 5: BEREAL PLANNING COMMISSION. 7 p.m., Berea City Hall, 11 Berea Commons. Agenda is posted online at www.cityofberea.org.

FEB. 7: VETERANS COFFEE CHAT. 10 a.m., VFW Post 6676, 590 N. Rocky River Drive. Four Chaplains Day.

FEB. 8: SUPER BOWL LX.

FEB. 10: BEREAL DEMOCRATIC CLUB. 6:45 p.m., Berea Branch Library, 7 Berea Commons.

FEB. 11: COMMUNITY MEAL. 5-5:30 p.m., St. Paul Lutheran Church, 276 E. Bagley Road. Free. Drive-up only.

FEB. 13: NO SCHOOL. Berea City School District. Professional Development Day.

FEB. 14: VALENTINE'S DAY.

FEB. 14: FOOD DRIVE. 11 a.m. – 2 p.m., Berea Giant Eagle, 50 W. Bridge St. Non-perishable food items, cleaning & paper products. All proceeds to Berea Community Outreach Pantry. Sponsored by the Berea Democratic Club.

FEB. 16: PRESIDENT'S DAY. City Hall closed. Curb-side trash collection not affected. Schools closed.

FEB. 17: LUNAR NEW YEAR. Year of the Horse.

FEB. 17: RAMADAN BEGINS AT SUNDOWN.

FEB. 17: BEREAL CITY COUNCIL. 7:30 p.m., 11 Berea Commons. Note date change because of President's Day.

FEB. 18: MILLSTREAM QUILTERS. 1-3 p.m., Berea Branch Library, 7 Berea Commons. Usually meets on the third Wednesday of every month. Contact Lorraine, (440) 826-0467 for updates.

FEB. 19: BEREAL PLANNING COMMISSION. 7 p.m., Berea City Hall, 11 Berea Commons. Agenda is posted on City web site – www.cityofberea.org

FEB. 22: BEREAL ANIMAL RESCUE VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION. 5 p.m. Berea ARF Community Room, 10015 E. River Rd. Volunteers must be at 18 years old. Learn about volunteer opportunities including dog walking, cat companionship, fundraising, welcome desk, etc. To register, go to bereanimalrescue.com/ become-a-volunteer. For more information, contact volunteerwitharf@gmail.com.

FEB. 25: COMMUNITY MEAL. 5-5:30 p.m., St. Paul Lutheran Church, 276 E. Bagley Road. Free. Drive-up only.

MARCH 2: BEREAL CITY COUNCIL. 7:30 p.m., 11 Berea Commons.

MARCH 7: VETERANS COFFEE CHAT. 10 a.m., VFW Post 6676, 590 N. Rocky River Drive.

MARCH 8: DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME BEGINS.