

METRODIARY

Tomorrow in MetroDiary: Aging Matters: The joke's on you: Why a good laugh is good health.

GLOBALVILLAGE

Chatty Clevelanders: Folks use 81 languages around here

Once upon a time, a world of languages shined on Cleveland streets. The voices from faraway lands did not disappear with the ethnic neighborhoods; they moved inside.



Robert L. Smith

A recent study found 81 languages spoken in the homes of Greater Cleveland, including several languages heard more often here than almost anywhere else in America.

We have the nation's largest number of Hungarian and Croatian speakers, for example, and the fourth-largest number of Serbian speakers. Our Arabic-speaking population ranks sixth nationally.

The rankings come from "Many Languages, One America," a report by the U.S. English Foundation. Using 2000 census data, the foundation tallied the languages spoken at home in all states and 203 metropolitan areas. It found that Greater Cleveland ranks 23rd nationally in its diversity of languages.

You can find complete results at www.usefoundation.org.

Wish-Muslim values: A recent Saturday night supports the local Muslim community, but it also supports civil rights. That's a cause bigger than any one faith, organizers say.

And so a Jewish lawyer, who hails from one of Cleveland's most prominent families, will deliver the keynote address at the annual banquet of the Cleveland chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, or CAIR.

Michael Ratner, who represents many of the Muslim men imprisoned at the U.S. naval

station at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, will talk about the rule of law in times of national crisis.

Ratner grew up in Shaker Heights, the nephew of the founder of Forest City Enterprises. As president of the Center for Constitutional Rights in New York City, he has been challenging the U.S. government's right to jail people without charges. "These are not Muslim community issues. These are issues that concern all of us as Americans," Julia Shearson, CAIR Cleveland's executive director, said.

The banquet, a fund-raiser for CAIR, begins at 5:30 p.m. Saturday at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Independence. For reservations, call 216-830-2247.

Feliz Pascual: Easter celebrations begin today, Good Friday, for Christians throughout the region. But few display the faith more fervently than area Latinos.

Continuing a colorful tradition, Latino families will march statues of the crucified Christ and a mourning Virgin Mary through neighborhoods on Cleveland's near West Side.

The Good Friday Procession, modeled after similar processions in Puerto Rico, has attracted more than 600 people in past years. It starts at noon today at La Sagrada Familia Catholic Church, West 77th Street and Detroit Avenue. Marchers will pause at St. Patrick Church on Bridge Avenue before walking to St. Michael Church on Scranton Road for a 3 p.m. service.

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CHUCK CROW | THE PLAIN DEALER

Defense attorney Brett Mancino shows Daniel Hines a photograph of his home during trial proceedings Thursday in Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court. Hines says his cousins kicked in his door and smashed the windshield of his van.

Hines testifies, denies rape attempt

James F. McCarty
Plain Dealer Reporter

A year and a half after he emerged as one of Northeast Ohio's most notorious defendants, Daniel Hines spoke publicly for the first time Thursday.

Hines, 26, of Cleveland, exercised his constitutional right not to testify during a monthlong trial on charges of kidnapping and murder of 11-year-old Shakira Johnson. A jury acquitted him of those charges in December.

But on the opening day of his defense in a second trial, Hines opted to take the witness stand to deny charges that he tried to rape his 13-year-old cousin in 2003.

The soft-spoken handyman said he was installing shelves and cabinets at a customer's rental home on July 4, 2003. The customer confirmed that alibi in Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court.

Hines denied his cousin's accusations that he groped her, threw her on a bed and jumped

on top of her. He said he never saw her or visited her home on East 147th Street that day.

Hines also challenged the testimony of the girl's 14-year-old brother, who accused Hines of slicing his neck with a knife and striking him with a crowbar after he and a family friend intervened.

During questioning by defense lawyer Brett Mancino, Hines theorized that his cousins and their mother were conspiring against him out of revenge. He said his aunt was mad at him for refusing to perform an estimated \$10,000 worth of home repairs for free, and the cousins were resentful because he owed them money.

Asked by Assistant County Prosecutor Richard Bombik how his cousins were injured, Hines said he suspected they hurt each other while wrestling.

Hines said his aunt, four cousins, a family friend and two police officers all lied when they testified this week.

"But you, Mr. Hines, you're

the only one who's telling the truth?" Bombik asked.

"Yes," Hines responded.

Bombik focused on three calls totaling 42 minutes that Hines' cell records show he received the night before the suspected attacks. Hines said the calls were threats from unknown people.

"They kept saying, 'We gonna get you, we gonna get you. You better not go anywhere tomorrow. We know where you at,'" Hines testified. He said he fell asleep between calls.

Hines did not tell detectives about the threatening calls after they arrested him on July 4. Nor did he tell police about his family-conspiracy theory.

During his interrogation, Bombik asked Hines a question he couldn't ask him during the Shakira trial.

"Are you sexually attracted to teenage girls?" Bombik asked.

"No," Hines answered.

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HONORED

Surgeon re-elected staff president

Dr. Vasu Pandrangi, a plastic surgeon who has been in practice in the Cleveland area since 1980, has been re-elected president of the medical staff at Southwest General Health Center in Middleburg Heights. He has been a hospital staff member since 1981. Pandrangi, of Westlake, has served as a hospital trustee and has held several medical staff offices.



Pandrangi

HAPPENINGS

Coins for Kids to start campaign

Recognizing April as National Child Abuse Prevention Month, Bellflower Center for Prevention of Child Abuse is sponsoring its annual Coins for Kids Campaign. Donations will be accepted at collection boxes in each of Fifth Third Bank's banking centers in Cuyahoga County. Contributions may be made at any branch from April 1 to April 30. Proceeds support Bellflower Center's programs for children and families. Call 216-229-2420.

Wellington ex-officer gets prison for stalking

MOLLY KAVANAUGH
Plain Dealer Reporter

ELYRIA — Despite a written request to bypass prison so he can begin healing, former Wellington police officer Ronald Barnhardt was sentenced to 33 months in prison for menacing three women by stalking them.

Lorain County Common Pleas Judge Lynett McGough could have put Barnhardt on probation or sentenced him to up to 54 months.

McGough chastised the 57-year-old Brunswick man at Thursday's hearing for using his badge to stalk women. "It tears at the very fabric of law enforcement," she said. Barnhardt had been a part-time police officer in Wellington since 1991.

She also labeled Barnhardt a sexually oriented offender, which means for the next 10 years he must register in the county where he lives and works.

Barnhardt has been in jail since last week when a jury found him guilty of the three counts of menacing. McGough refused to release him while his case is being appealed.

He spoke just two sentences to the judge, saying he was sorry he had upset the three women. "That was never my intent whatsoever," he said.

In a one-page, handwritten letter, Barnhardt told McGough that his contact with the three Wellington women was friendly and he had no idea he made them feel fearful or apprehensive.

Driver fired after child left on bus

ANGELA TOWNSEND
Plain Dealer Reporter

WESTLAKE — The school board has fired a bus driver who left a sleeping child unattended at a parked school bus.

The board on Wednesday voted 4-1 to fire Patti Parkison, 10-year driver for the district.

In a statement, board President Renee D'Errorre Wargo said that in an effort to put the needs and safety of children first, "Ms. Parkison's termination is the only way to effectively communicate that as our top priority."

On March 16, Parkison returned the bus to the garage after dropping off children at Inset Elementary School. A kindergarten remained undetected on the bus until another driver discovered the child about 10 minutes later.

Local 319 of the Ohio Association of Public School Employees, which represents nonteaching employees, has filed a grievance and will appeal the decision through arbitration, said President Karen Herzberger.

Both sides could not agree on a deal in which Parkison would have been reassigned to a non-driving position.

Earlier this month, the district moved Wanda Robinson, a 24-year employee, to a non-driving position after she failed to notice that a kindergartner did not get off the bus at Dover Elementary School. That child spent 30 minutes alone.

"The discipline in this matter was not consistently done," said board member Joseph O'Malley, who cast the dissenting vote. "We set a precedent two weeks earlier in a more egregious situation."

Second judge cites amendment

DONNA IACOBONI
Plain Dealer Reporter

For the second time in two days, a judge has ruled that part of Ohio's law against domestic violence became unconstitutional when voters approved a constitutional amendment that bars legal recognition of unmarried and gay couples.

Cleveland Municipal Judge Lauren C. Moore ruled Thursday that a man accused of backhanding his girlfriend could not be charged with domestic violence because the amended constitution forbids giving legal status to unmarried couples, in opposition to the domestic violence law, which requires giving legal status to people living as spouses.

Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Judge Stuart Friedman on Wednesday reduced a felony domestic violence charge to a misdemeanor assault, saying the new amendment, known as Issue 1 on the November ballot, contradicts the domestic violence law.

Friedman and Moore contend that the statute's "person living as a spouse" language is in direct contradiction to the new law that prohibits giving unmarried couples legal status that approximates the "qualities, significance or effect of marriage."

County prosecutors and lawyers for the Legal Aid Society said they will appeal Friedman's and Moore's decisions.

They argue that the domestic violence law does not give legal

status to unmarried couples, so it should not be seen as being in opposition to the "marriage protection" constitutional amendment, which was aimed at barring gay marriages.

"Let's hope that no victim of domestic violence is hurt or dies while we are debating this issue," said Alexandria Ruden, a Legal Aid attorney.

Moore said the new amendment must be interpreted while taking into account the political climate when it was written and approved by voters — a climate, she said, that disparaged gay marriages and any nontraditional family.

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