

THE CINCINNATI ENQUIRER

CINCINNATI.COM

TUESDAY, JUNE 16, 2009

75 CENTS

DON'T SINK YOUR TRAVEL BUDGET

A cruise can be a good summer vacation deal, but experts say it takes plenty of research and planning to make sure you're getting the best bargain. Booking a few months ahead can save money, and a travel agent can be a valuable guide. For more tips, see our Big Summer Deals Week series.

Your Life, B5

CIVIL RIGHTS GAME 2009

Muhammad Ali, to be honored Saturday, changed lives in Cincinnati. Sports, C1

Reds vs. White Sox

Saturday at Great American Ball Park



Muhammad Ali

KIDS LAYING BEATS STAY OFF THE STREETS



Photos by Cara Owsley/The Enquirer

Malik Reed (from left) Courtney Miller and Sedan Scott laugh as they edit song lyrics during a music workshop sponsored by the Music Resource Center at Withrow University High School.

Teens become MCs at MRC

Music Resource Center opening program in July

By John Johnston
jjohnston@enquirer.com

Masai Cawley stares intently at the rap lyrics he's written on lined notebook paper. Some words have been scratched out.

"It just feels like you're taking all the oomph out of it," the Oakley teen says to Karen D'Agostino.

In this case, Cawley means curse words. D'Agostino is adamant that the song not contain any.

"You can put the oomph in it in a different way," D'Agostino tells him.

School's out on this warm spring afternoon, but two classrooms at Withrow High buzzed. Cawley and other teens have spent a portion of their week producing their own rap songs. This day, using microphones and laptop computers, they'll record them.

The students are participants in the final school outreach program of a fledgling nonprofit called the Music Resource Center-Cincinnati. Its mission: Use music education and performance experiences to teach life skills and build self-confidence.

Work is nearly complete on the center's permanent home, a yellow brick and concrete building in Evanston that once was a meeting place for cement masons and now includes a Cincinnati



Masai Cawley does a microphone check with the help of Karen D'Agostino, executive director of the Music Resource Center-Cincinnati.

Nation, A4

Report on music, art education in schools shows mixed results.

police substation. D'Agostino, the center's executive director, is hoping for a mid-July grand opening.

"The goal is to get kids off the street," she says. "If we can get one kid that was going to make a bad decision to be in here instead, it's been worth all of it."

Anderson Township resident D'Agostino, 40, a married mother of four kids ages 9 to 15, would seem an un-

likely person to lead such an effort.

While driving through Over-the-Rhine four years ago on the way to pick up supplies for her art studio, she noticed what seemed like hundreds of teens hanging out on street corners.

"I couldn't stop thinking about it," she says.

She did some research and found that many after-school programs target younger kids. She knew any venture aimed at middle and high school students would require a certain coolness factor. And music is unequivocally cool.

See **MUSIC**, Page A10

City may cut back paid time

Dohoney lays out options for plugging budget hole

By Jane Prendergast
jprendergast@enquirer.com

More than 4,000 city of Cincinnati employees could see six unpaid days off this year and 10 next year as one of the ways city leaders suggest making up a deficit that could hit almost \$20 million this year and \$40 million in 2010.

Layoffs are virtually certain next year as well, City Manager Milton Dohoney said, and residents should expect "deep service cuts" unless the city sees a significant – and unexpected – upswing in revenue.

His Plan A makes up the deficit with almost \$9 million in cuts to 15 departments. The unpaid days would save \$4.2 million. Federal grants anticipated for the Police Department would total \$3.6 million. He also proposed

using almost \$300,000 from a reserve fund and moving almost \$6.5 million in extra income taxes received in 2007 and 2008 from a special income tax fund to the general fund. The total in cuts and anticipated grants: \$19.9 million.

If the federal Community Oriented Policing Services grant doesn't materialize, the department would have to take deeper cuts, Dohoney said. That federal money would be used to retain 157 officers.

His preferred plan also recommends taking two ambulances off the street, going back to 10; eliminating yard waste collection; closing the Carthage and Camp Washington recreation centers; and closing pools eight days early.

See **CITY**, Page A10

■ SPEECH TO DOCTORS

Obama rejects malpractice cap

Health costs a 'time bomb'

The Associated Press

CHICAGO – President Barack Obama bluntly told doctors Monday he opposes their highest legislative priority – limiting malpractice awards – and got a smattering of boos from an audience he was here to court for his health care overhaul plan.

Vigorously defending the plan to reshape the nation's health care system and extend coverage to millions

Opinions, A9

Your Voice: What U.S. can learn from other countries.

who don't have it, he also took on "naysayers," "fear-mongers" and other critics who he said are falsely portraying his effort as a big step toward a national government program.

See **OBAMA**, Page A10

INDEX

Three sections, 169th year, No. 68
Advice B8 | Obituaries B4
Business A7 | Opinions A9
Comics B6 | Sports C1
Lotteries A2 | TV B8
Movies B7 | Your Life B5
Legals C4

Copyright, 2009, The Cincinnati Enquirer



■ HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS MARCH IN SILENT PROTEST

Iran says it will investigate election

The New York Times

Inside WORLD, A6

■ Experts call vote count suspicious.

OPINIONS, A9

■ Columnist: Obama urges on protests.

TEHRAN, Iran – Hundreds of thousands of people marched in silence through central Tehran on Monday to protest Iran's disputed presidential election in an extraordinary show of defiance that appeared to be the largest anti-

ti-government demonstration here since the 1979 revolution.

The march was largely peaceful, but gunfire broke out in at least one clash between protesters and militia members, and one protester was killed.

The march began hours after Iran's su-

preme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, called for a inquiry into claims that the election was rigged in favor of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

The ayatollah's call was the first sign that Iran's top leadership might be rethinking its position on the election.



The Associated Press

Supporters of Iranian presidential candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi rally Monday in Tehran.

Music: Center opens soon

From Page A1

D'Agostino happens to be a fan of the Dave Matthews Band, which plays tonight at Riverbend Music Center. The group has been a big supporter of the original Music Resource Center in its hometown of Charlottesville, Va.

She visited, and came away impressed.

Now in its 14th year, the MRC features a state-of-the-art studio – used by 900 students last year – that gives teens hands-on experience in every phase of music production. Life-skills mentoring is an integral part of the program. This is what Cincinnati needs, D'Agostino told herself.

She closed her art studio, then began recruiting an advisory board and raising money. The center will open with at least a \$90,000 budget, a digital recording studio and two rehearsal studios. Additional funding is pending to equip more studios.

A year ago she hired program director Josh Elstro, who has an electronic media degree from the University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music. She also started outreach programs at two high schools, Shroder and Withrow, and three elementary schools, Hoffman-Parham, Bond Hill Academy and Hays-Porter.

D'Agostino devotes as much as 60 hours a week to the project. Staffers at the Charlottesville center "have held my hands every step of the way."

A goal of the outreach programs, D'Agostino says, was to recruit a core group of teens to be student leaders. That group includes Chafonte Williams, who attended outreach sessions at Hoffman-Parham. He'll be a freshman at Withrow University High this fall.

"I like coming up with new songs, making new beats, and helping other people produce songs," the 14-year-old from Evanston says.

But his initial effort at writing a rap drew a rebuke from D'Agostino.

An ongoing challenge, she



The Enquirer/Cara Owsley

Karen D'Agostino, executive director of Music Resource Center-Cincinnati, listens to music by Withrow students Jonathan Ellery Jr. (left) and Marcus Davis Jr.

How to help

The Music Resource Center, which is aiming for a mid-July grand opening, still has many needs, including money, equipment and volunteers, executive director Karen D'Agostino says.

Volunteers are needed to give music lessons and serve as mentors; money is needed for start-up costs and to buy equipment. Donations of used equipment – instruments, amplifiers and the like – also are being sought.

The center is for students in seventh to 12th grades. Membership will be \$24 a year. Regular hours are expected to be 2:30-6:30 p.m. Monday-Friday. Information: www.mrccinci.org or 513-544-8422.

says, has been to rein in teens who attempt to push boundaries when it comes to content. She won't bend: No curse words; no drugs-are-cool references; no lyrics that put killing in a positive light.

Chafonte tore up his curse-word laden lyrics and returned with a song titled "Terrible Father."

"It's about how his dad was not a very good dad, but how strong his mom is," D'Agostino says, tears in her eyes. "It's moving. These kids have a lot to say."

Chafonte is the middle of Yolanda Williams' three boys. The oldest, 19, is serving time for a robbery conviction, and the single mother says he might have benefited from a program like the Music Resource Center.

For Chafonte, the benefits go beyond producing a "clean" rap song, his mother says. "It was a learning experience, and now he's able to teach other kids how it's done. It keeps him focused, and gives him something

constructive to do with his time. It helps him express himself and build up social skills."

D'Agostino's hope is that what young people learn at the center – about following rules, respecting others, collaborating with people from different neighborhoods – will seep into other areas of their lives.

Masai Cawley counts himself among the program's fans. "I'm glad I got the opportunity to do this," he says a few weeks before graduating from Withrow University High. He's in a classroom putting finishing touches on his rap song – which no longer contains curse words.

He tells D'Agostino he's ready to record. Then, holding a microphone, he takes a deep breath and launches into "The Hottest."

Moments later he dons headphones and listens to the recording, his body moving and swaying to a pulsating beat, satisfied that his song hasn't lost any oomph.

City: Council ponders cuts

From Page A1

Unions would have to approve the unpaid days Dohoney suggests. The 10 days would save \$7.1 million in 2010.

The cuts became necessary when, after the end of tax season in mid-April, officials realized estimated revenues were down from \$365 million to \$345 million. That's primarily because of a reduction in income tax revenue, the city's largest single source of money.

Dohoney wrote a Plan B, but didn't talk much about it at Monday's special Finance Committee meeting. That plan would cut 99 police officers and 105 firefighters – something council members clearly do not want to do. It also would reduce recycling pickup to twice monthly, eliminate litter control and day-care inspections, close 11 pools and the Mount Auburn recreation center, and stop the Fire Department's paramedic training program.

Councilwoman Laketa Cole, chairwoman of the Finance Committee, said she was surprised by some of the ideas because they were things council has specifically

said it doesn't want to do, such as closing the rec centers. She suggested the administration look into taxing stock options.

She's considering suggesting that the property tax rollback, which council has authorized since at least 2002, be changed to charge wealthier people more but give a rebate to low-income residents, she said. If council chose to raise the property tax from the current 4.53 mills, which generates about \$29 million a year, to the maximum 6.1 mills, the city would get an additional \$9.5 million, Dohoney said.

But council has historically been unwilling to do that. Some council members have said they'd consider raising the millage, but not to the maximum. Committee members voted 5-3 Monday to keep the current millage, but that amount isn't final until fall.

Cole wants all council members to give her their recommendations for cuts by Thursday. They'll look at all those recommendations Friday and over the weekend so a plan can be developed before Monday's committee meeting. Council goes on recess after its June 24 meeting, and Dohoney said it is imperative

that these decisions be made before then.

Dohoney also proposed:

■ Holding the economic development director position vacant.

■ Eliminating funding for the Center for Closing the Health Gap and cutting back on in-school nurses.

■ Cutting outside legal counsel and temporary jobs promoting the importance of the 2010 Census, one of the mayor's top priorities.

Eighty percent of the city's budget is spent on personnel costs, the bulk of that in the Police and Fire departments.

Those numbers prompted council members Roxanne Qualls, Leslie Ghiz and Vice Mayor David Crowley to suggest Dohoney look harder at cutting police and fire administrative costs.

Qualls said it would be irresponsible in the private sector to allow a department that takes 37 percent of an agency's budget – which the Police Department does – to suggest it can't make any administrative cuts.

Dohoney cautioned that cutting civilian police personnel can mean officers must be pulled off the streets to do those jobs.

Obama: Says plan costs \$1T

From Page A1

A senior administration official said Obama is open to offering some sort of lawsuit protection for doctors but did not want to get into how – or even telegraph his support for the concept – in this speech intended more as a broad approach. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to more freely discuss the president's behind-the-scenes strategy.

Obama flew to his hometown to deliver one of the lon-

gest speeches of his presidency to the annual meeting of the American Medical Association, painting the need for change in dire terms.

Obama declared the nation's health care system, with its ever-rising costs and inconsistencies in care, a "ticking time bomb" for the federal budget. "If we do not fix our health care system," Obama said, "America may go the way of GM – paying more, getting less, and going broke."

GOP Rep. Tom Price of Georgia – a former orthopedic

surgeon – reacted preemptively to Obama's speech by accusing him of seeking a "government takeover" of health care.

The president said for the first time publicly that his health care overhaul, including covering the almost 50 million Americans who have no insurance, would cost about \$1 trillion over 10 years.

"That's real money, even in Washington," he said. "But remember: That's less than we are projected to have spent on the war in Iraq."

NEW! NOW ALSO AVAILABLE ONLINE.

Cincinnati.Com/weeklyads

Search: weekly ads



This article has been reprinted with the permission of the Cincinnati Enquirer and the author, John Johnston.