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A Lot of What I Know Today I Learned

AS A PAPERBOY

By Tom Hawrylko

When I consider how I got to be the owner of Tomahawk Promotions and editor and publisher of *Clifton Merchant Magazine*, I go back to my youth in Perth Amboy.

My big break came in 1967 when my brother John made the Perth Amboy Panthers basketball team—he was that good of a ball player. He had to give up his paper route to make practice every day after school. So I basically inherited the family business.

I was 10 years old and the paper was the Perth Amboy Evening News.

My route was five blocks in our old Budapest neighborhood, named for the many Hungarian families living there. Everyone read newspapers back then, most likely two a day. I had 75 or so customers and I delivered the newspapers on a bicycle. The cool thing was I had most every house on every block covered in my neighborhood.



Editor & Publisher Tom Hawrylko
at age 12 in 1969, back in Perth
Amboy, with his mutt Bruno.

When another kid quit his route in the nearby Dunlap Homes housing projects across Amboy Ave., I picked up those deliveries, too. To do another 25 customers, I had to get a little more organized. That meant folding the papers before I got started so that I could hang the bag over the front of my Sting-Ray and toss them on a porch.

Bundles of evening newspapers with our name and route written on it for each paperboy were delivered in the afternoon to a neighbor's garage. There we would swap school stories as we folded our papers, maybe even eat a snack and have a soda before we got started.

Back then, I used to get sidetracked a lot, just like I do now. As I was folding the papers, I'd see a headline about the Vietnam War or the drug issues facing our hometown and I'd stop and read the story. Then, before I got started, I'd find another story, and read that, too.

Clifton Merchant Magazine

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TOM•A•HAWK PROMOTIONS

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Being a paperboy taught me a lot: knock on doors, ask for the sale, give good service. Deliver the papers on time. Do good work. Expect to get paid for the work you do.

My route took about an hour, six days a week, rain, sun, summer or snow. I got out of the Ukrainian Assumption Catholic School at 3 pm, changed out of my school uniform and by 5:30, I'd be finished. From the money that I earned, I was able to buy what I wanted... bell-bottom jeans, fishing equipment, and eventually, my own car.

Fridays were collection day. Knock on doors, yell, "Paperboy!" and ask for that week's payment. Upon payment, we'd provide a perforated receipt. Subscriptions were 42 cents and often we'd get two quarters—an 8-cent tip.

Saturday mornings we paid our bill. Mrs. Horvath ran the office on Hall Ave. across the tracks in the Puerto Rican business district, where paperboys, pockets filled with bills and coins, lined up before 10 am to settle our accounts.

In December, I gave out Christmas cards. On the Friday collection day right before Christmas, a lot of people would give a card with a \$1 tip.

I was a paperboy until I was 14. Then I worked my way through Perth Amboy High School as a janitor in an Edison factory. By 1976, I joined the Navy and in 1980 moved here to my new hometown. The best thing being a paperboy taught me was to be an honest hustler. Today at age 68, I'm still a hustler. I still show up, work hard and give good value for what people pay me to do: *storytelling*.

How lucky can one guy get? I love putting words and pictures together. I'm blessed to have this job. After over 30 years in business, I expect to finish my career in newsprint, the way I started. That's my nine-to-five story—how I learned to show up early, stay late and become indispensable. On the following pages, read of friends and neighbors who also share their stories about the joys of working...

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Long Meetings, Resident Questions and Council Battles • *By Ariana Puzzo*



Nancy Ferrigno and Michele Butler at Clifton City Hall last month. Above: Michele (Marmo) as a 1976 graduating Mustang.

Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor chaotic City Council meetings of night keeps Nancy Ferrigno and Michele Butler from ensuring our city functions.

The City Clerk and Deputy Clerk were having one of those snowy days when they sat down for an interview in Ferrigno's office on the first Thursday of last month. The office is on the first floor of City Hall, the first on the right after entering the building.

Working in it are Ferrigno and Butler, along with colleagues Heeral Patel, Hayley Fabian, and Ron Liss. Patel and Fabian were hired by Ferrigno after assuming her role in June of 2013.

But the office is nearing another transition. Ferrigno and Butler's retirement dates are effective May 1 and July 1, respectively. And it isn't something that happened out of nowhere. "There were three different [reactions to my retirement]," said Ferrigno, 69. "My family said, 'Good for you', the residents said, 'I don't blame you', and here there were some who were upset and said they would miss us."

Retirement was something that both women had discussed for a while. Both women agree that they will miss their co-workers and expressed a sense of pride in the work that their office does for the community. Yet there was an undeniable nostalgia for the past.

Specifically, for a sense of decorum.

"The last two years have been tough," said Ferrigno. "Prior to this Council, our meetings usually ended around 9 or 9:30 pm. I used to get mad if they went until 10 pm."

"Now," she continued, leaning back in her chair, "they can end anywhere between 11 pm and midnight, and not much is getting done ... because of fighting."

Butler has a similar perspective and added that City Clerk work has its own inherent challenges. There's a lot of direct contact with the public, who she said aren't always receptive when they do not receive the answer that they want. "With some people, you get blamed for following an ordinance," said Butler, 66. "That's the way it is sometimes. We have to remind people that we don't make the laws; we just follow them."

But there are positives. One of the big ones is the friendship that has developed over the past decade between the two women in charge.

"The fun," said Ferrigno on what she likes most about working with Butler. "We go out together, my husband and her boyfriend are friends. Even through all of the turmoil, we have a lot of fun. We whisper to each other at meetings and get hysterical," she added, with a laugh. "Thank God we're not on camera."

The City Clerk office team: Heeral Patel, Nancy and Michele, Ron Liss and Hayley Fabian

Butler echoed Ferrigno's sentiment and added that they're "best friends now."

"We had dinner together last night," said Butler.

Stress-Free Retirement

As it would turn out, Ferrigno and Butler knew each other years before becoming city clerks.

It was when they were ages 18 and 16. One of Ferrigno's friends was married to Butler's cousin and there was a big group of them who went down the shore together.

Fast-forward 40 years to when the office needed a deputy clerk, Ferrigno got a lead that she decided was worth pursuing. It came from Butler's mother, Dorothy "Dot" Marmo, who worked as the Principal Legal Stenographer for the city.

"I knew Dot from upstairs and one day she said, 'Why don't you hire my daughter? She's very good,'" recalled Ferrigno. And she hasn't regretted following that suggestion since.

Ferrigno grew up in Wallington and started her career as a secretary at a law firm for 11 years. She stayed at home with her children for 17 years and became Deputy Clerk in Woodland Park from 2007 to 2013. She was hired by our city as Deputy Clerk in March of 2013, three months before assuming the role of City Clerk.

Today, she lives in Woodland Park with her husband, Joe. The couple have two sons Joseph and Michael, who is a Detective with the Clifton Police Department.

Butler lived in Clifton until moving to Little Falls last year. She attended School 3, Christopher Columbus Junior High, and graduated with the CHS Class of 1976. Butler's career involved a 35-year sales and managerial position with a major security firm.

She was hired by the City of Clifton in 2014 as a temporary Keyboarding Clerk. The role later became



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**Said Aref, EA
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permanent until she moved up to her current position. Her retirement will be spent with her boyfriend, Eddie, and visiting her family in Maine. Daughter Melissa is married to Johnny, son Tommy is with Lauren. Butler's grandchildren are Avery, Ollie, Frankie, and Gemma.

"I plan to live a stress-free, simple, happy life," she said. "I'll do a little traveling here and there."

Welcome Aboard

"That is what people would say when you first got here," said Ferrigno. "When we arrived, it was a great place to work and the Council was wonderful. You got along with everyone."

It was always busy and the work was never the same. There are times when they have had 27 resolutions on the meeting agenda versus the eight that Ferrigno faced in Woodland Park. The difference in working for a city of approximately 90,000 residents versus what was, at the time, 11,000 residents in Woodland Park could also be staggering.

As for the Office of the City Clerk, they handle everything from giving out garage sale permits and filing municipal budgets to handling the paperwork for marriage licenses or the residents' death and birth certificates.

The office is responsible for filing OPRA requests, the City Council minutes, and the paperwork as it relates to audits, budgets, and bond ordinances.

"We're the recordkeepers," said Butler. "We have the main number to City Hall and receive questions all day long." Even when faced with repetitive questions and sometimes rude residents, working directly with the public has had its benefits. Butler noted that it has allowed her to meet a lot of people while also seeing familiar faces of former classmates.

There are also milestones and tragedies that unite the community. Ferrigno acknowledged that despite dealing with the everyday stuff as it comes along, nothing prepared them for the loss of three "wonderful Council people" during her time at City Hall. These council members were Matt Grabowski, Peter Eagler, and Lauren Murphy.

But the losses don't exist in a vacuum. They still have a front-row seat to Clifton history.

"We were here for the 100th anniversary and saw the retirement of [former Mayor James Anzaldi]," said Butler.



Nancy and Joe Ferrigno with son Michael and his wife, Mia, and son Joe with his fiancée, Cassie.

"Every day, we help guide people to where they should go."

When they sat down for their interview early last month, there was a plan to hold interviews for the City Clerk position during the Feb. 20 Executive Session. Ferrigno would ideally like for the next person to step into the role by April 1 so that there can be a seamless transition.

Ideally, she added, the next Deputy Clerk would also be hired enough in advance for Butler to train them.

"This is not a job with 2,000 residents," said Ferrigno. "They need experience so that they know what to do and just [need to learn] the city's procedures."

Ferrigno's advice for the next person in her seat is simple: "Have fun." Butler encouraged those who follow in their footsteps to "be patient ... and willing to learn."

"Be willing to reach out to other department heads for help and enjoy your job," Butler added. "Have fun while you're working. Make it fun. There's nothing wrong with that."

As for how much they'll keep up with city politics, neither woman plans on attending future City Council meetings. But they, like so many in the era of streaming with friends, aren't opposed to having a watch-party at home.

"I watched Woodland Park for a while," said Ferrigno. Turning to Butler, she quipped, "I'll go to your house to watch."

Butler paused before responding and flipped through a nearby calendar. She smiled coyly after looking at the date that kick-starts her retirement. "We will watch," she confirmed. "July 1 is a meeting day."

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Nino 'The Stallion' Lupi at 91

Data Delay Devices Enables his Love for the Beautiful Game.

Nino Lupi doesn't do anything by halves — and when you walk into his factory on Mt. Prospect Ave., it defies any preconceived notions.

First things first, the factory is quiet. Family works in different areas of the business. Oh, and did we mention the three neighboring indoor soccer facilities?

It wouldn't be far off to say that Lupi is all about work and play. He's created his own mini empire in service of that vision. But none of it happened overnight.

Data Delay Devices, Inc., 3 Mt. Prospect Ave., was founded by Lupi in 1964. Its goal? Providing high quality modules to the electronics industry.

Today, the products range from simple lines (fixed delay, tapped delay, and trimmer delay) to more complex devices like digitally programmable pulse generators, dynamic memory timers, gated oscillators, and pulse controllers. Learn more at datadelay.com.

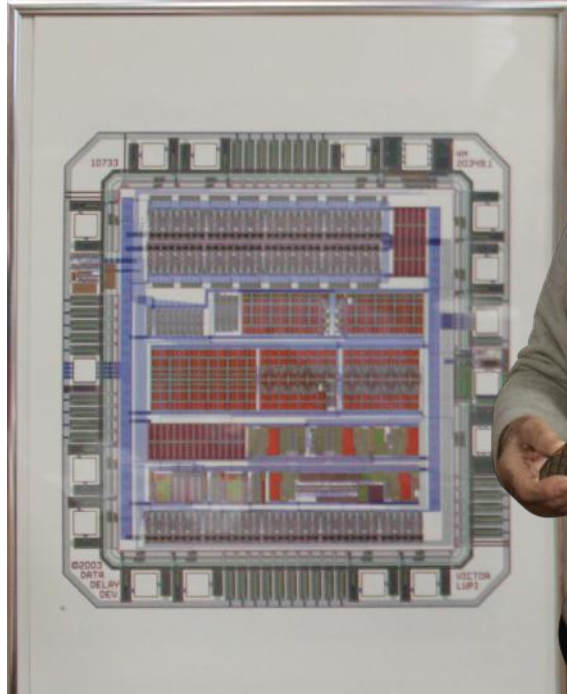
It didn't quite take a village. But Lupi knows who played a role in making it all possible.

"I basically started out with no financing. I could not afford it, because I just quit [my previous job]," said Lupi, 91. "There was no income except that my wife, Lydia, was working, so she helped me quite a bit. We started out very slowly."

Lupi was employed at Picatinny Arsenal in Dover prior to going into business for himself. He recalled that he wasn't happy and already possessed some knowledge of electronics. So he decided to get out and "be independent."

"The goal was to be a major supplier of some of these integrated circuits," said Lupi. "Now we're just about the only one that does this type of work."

Working with timing devices means that there is a lot of required precision. So much so that they use picoseconds, or a unit of time that is one trillionth of a second.



"It's been used commercially and for the military," said Lupi. "We are the exclusive suppliers of these parts."

Wife Lydia isn't the only family member who helped support Lupi's early ambitions. DDD started out by bidding for government contracts. They determined after about 10 years that they needed to sell original products. Lupi did "most of the work" until DDD expanded into microcircuits.

Lupi's brother Massimo got involved and brought his own experience as an electrical engineer. His son, Victor (CHS 1978), took over that end of the business after graduating from MIT with his doctoral degree in Electronics.

As for those soccer facilities that we mentioned earlier? They house the New Jersey Stallions Academy, where son-in-law Rich Gentile is General Manager and daughter Lisa Gentile (CHS 1976) works as the Director of Finances. Lupi also has four grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. Who knows? Maybe his "Made In Clifton" legacy will endure for generations to come.

"It has been a whole family affair," said Lupi.



Clifton's soccer patron, Nino Lupi, opened his state-of-the-art indoor soccer training facility on Penobscot St. in December 2002, when he was 67. From left, Rich Gentile, general manager of the Stallions, and his wife Lisa, Lydia and Nino Lupi and their son Victor. Since 2002, Lupi constructed two other indoor soccer pitches on his Mt. Prospect property, which abuts the NJ Transit Rail station. At left of page is Lupi today at age 91 showing the Data Delay Devices microchip, which helps fund the soccer investments.

Clifton's Circuit Contender

Born in Villalago, Italy, Lupi immigrated to the U.S. aged 16 and settled in an uncle's house near Hazel St. Alone in a new country, Lupi quickly learned the English language. He graduated from CHS in June, 1955 and attended Fairleigh Dickinson University on a soccer scholarship. Lupi became the top-scoring center forward and was


named as an All-American in 1959, the same year that he graduated with a degree in Electrical Engineering.

DDD continued to grow until it became what it is today: an international company with clients ranging from computer companies to telecommunications firms to the military and aerospace industry. It produces high-tech electronic components for over 5,000 clients.


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Today, Nino Lupi wears many hats, as seen with his son Victor who keeps the operations of Data Delay Devices humming on Mt. Prospect Ave. At right, with his son-in-law Rich Gentile, general manager of the New Jersey Stallions.

But securing their standing was never a given.

“In the 70’s, we had a lot of competition,” said Lupi. “There were about seven or eight other companies that were doing the same thing. Slowly they got out of the business because of competition from China and other countries.”

Developing products in Clifton rather than going to China kept them relevant and unlike their competitors. Introducing the microcircuit approach made their product difficult to copy. It also offered them stability.

That stability led to expansion from their Clifton headquarters and research facilities. When we profiled DDD in September, 2002, the company had manufacturing plants in Vieux Fort, Saint Lucia — Lupi was the first private investor in the Caribbean nation — and in Lupi’s hometown.

DDD employed roughly 70 people in Clifton, 120 in Saint Lucia, and 20 in Italy at the height of its operations. Today, Saint Lucia is the sole-operating plant with roughly 24 assembly workers. Clifton’s headquarters has 10 people since microchips do not require assembly and the other products are designed automatically by computers.

The business’s turning point in terms of longevity was when they developed the microchip.

“We knew everything was going to be silicon. We had to get in,” said Lupi. “That was around 2000 or 2001, and it was then that we knew we should be here for a long time.”

They did the research, designed it, and then got two patents on the chips. The company lists 22 countries with

international sales representatives and seven states with domestic sales reps on its website. One way that DDD helped market itself was by attending electronic shows not only in the U.S. but also in Europe, Asia, and Australia.

“We traveled all over the place to help our representatives with selling our products,” said Lupi. “We went to a new show every year. The United States is our biggest market, but Canada and China ... buy a lot of parts from us.”

There’s also a certain promise that they have always made to big-name clients like IBM, Dell, Boeing, and AT&T, as well as smaller companies who only need a few pieces for prototypes.

“[From the beginning], we wanted to make sure that we served our clients. We wanted to make sure that we had no rejects of any kind,” said Lupi. “We made sure that any product leaving our factory would never come back because of a default. This has helped us grow and obtain more clients.”

The Makings of an Empire

When it isn’t about handiwork, Lupi sets his sights on excellent footwork.

“All my life,” he laughed when asked how long he played soccer. “I started playing soccer in Italy every day on the streets. Then I came to the United States in 1950 and joined the club in Clifton, Parean. The owner was a jeweler on Clifton Ave.”

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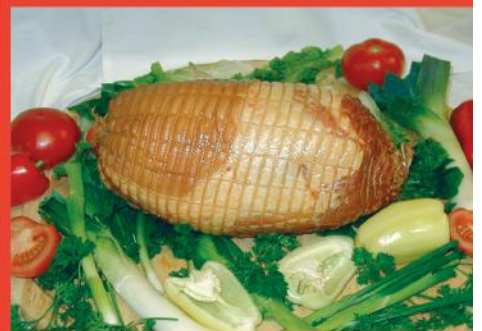
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Since there was no professional league, Lupi played for the Paterson-based Roma Soccer Club and other teams after college. An injury put an end to his days as a player, but he didn't let that become a reason to hang up his spikes or simply become a spectator.

Lupi organized the Clifton Stallions Soccer Club in 1978 with just two teams. By 2002, Clifton Recreation Department's support provided fields, plus a large group of volunteer coaches and directors. The Stallions youth recreational and travelling soccer program at that time serviced over 1,000 kids per season. Find team information and subscribe to email updates by visiting cliftonstallions.org.

"We started out with a group of parents when the United States started showing an interest in soccer," said Lupi. "We met with seven or eight parents and said, in order to keep youth off the streets and from getting into trouble, 'Let's find a sport that we can give them.'"

The Boys & Girls Club took over the Stallions in the late 80's, which is roughly when Lupi began thinking about starting a professional team. The New Jersey Stallions were established in 1992, born out of Lupi's awareness that more and more young players wanted to stay connected with Clifton Stallions after they finished grade school.

The New Jersey Stallions Professional Soccer Club joined the USL system in 1996. The club competed in the USL until playing their final season in 2004. The Men's and Women's squads achieved success in a Men's Northern Division Championship in 2000, Men's US Open Cup qualification for four consecutive years between 1999 and 2002, and a Women's W-League Northeast Division Championship in 2003.

In 2001, Lupi built the first indoor facility at 5 Penobscot St., right next-door to DDD, and added on a second facility in 2003, two years after the inauguration. At the end of this past January, Lupi added a third facility.

It's hard to picture how two income producing buildings and parking for the offices of DDD once filled an acre or so



That's four generations of Lupi! From left, Robbie Gentile, Theodore Gentile, Jeremy (Maddy Lupi's boyfriend), Abby Lupi, son Victor Lupi, Maddy Lupi, wife Lydia, Nino, Sophia Gentile in Nino's arms, daughter Lisa Gentile, Sarah Gentile (granddaughter-in-law), Rich Gentile (son-in-law), Jackie Gentile, Marco Gentile.

of land that was repurposed for the original facilities. But one thing is certain. DDD is responsible for Lupi's ability to continue funding a lifetime of soccer investments.

"We have five or six professional coaches and each has about four teams that they handle," he said. "We are close to about 30 teams and also have another section up in Bergen County with seven or eight teams that are affiliated with us."

The Stallions Arena boasts a state-of-the-art synthetic playing surface and an open playing area to reproduce an authentic and natural playing experience. The teams generate about 400 to 500 players per year. Others use the facility for training as well.

Players can rent any of the four fields and make teams with five to 10 players at a time. View all teams and field locations at njstallions.com. "It depends on how much running they want to do," Lupi laughed.

They've also witnessed their share of star athletes pass through their facilities. One is Matias Fracchia, who plays professionally as a defender for Brazilian club Coritiba. Born in Chile, he has represented both the United States and Uruguay at the under-20 level.

Then there's Samantha Rosette, a Bronx native whose career as a defender took her from Kazakhstan to Lithuania to France, before signing with USL Super League's Brooklyn FC. "A few people have really reached the top of their career," said Lupi, proudly. "That shows our program has been good. I am very happy for them that they found a career that can last them many years. It's a very satisfying thing."



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Nothing's more "punk rock" than expertly rolled, get-'em-while-they're-hot bagels in the middle of the day. Rich Roio is the man who makes that happen in Clifton.

Roio has worked at Plaza Bagel & Deli, 850 Van Houten Ave., since Jan. 1, 1994. The bagel roller first came on as a back-up roller, but he quickly realized that there was a lot to gain by staying at the shop and working in his hometown.

It doesn't just give him the flexibility to make his own hours or avoid the typical 9-to-5 job.

"I've always loved Clifton," said Roio (CHS 1989). "This happened to be the best bagel shop around and I get to live and work in the same town. I've always felt that was a pretty great thing."

There are familiar faces as well, but Roio admitted that people mostly recognize him. He attended School 12 and Christopher Columbus before CHS, meaning there is never any shortage of classmates who he sees in or out of the city.

"One of the security guards at the Prudential Center recently recognized me from the shop," he said. "I was in Montreal once and got recognized by someone saying, 'Hey, Punk Rock bagels!'" There are the local encounters as well from when Roio took his nieces out trick-or-treating and customers asked for a photo with "the bagel guy."

It makes for amusing anecdotes, but it's also immensely gratifying for Roio. He has no intention of taking people's

appreciation for the product for granted or falling short of their expectations.

"We still do things the old-fashioned way. We boil [the bagels] when we bake them," said Roio. "Customers can still get hot bagels at 1 or 2 pm. That's something a lot of stores don't have." They don't change ingredients to save money and believe that the "most expensive product is the best product to use." Most of all, they care.

"I don't want to put anything out that's not good. I want to keep our reputation," said Roio. "For some places, you will hear, 'Oh, that used to be a good place, but it's not so good anymore.' I don't want to ever hear that."

Finding His Rhythm

Born in Newark, Roio was aged 10 when his family relocated to Clifton. Life took him on the open road once he received his high school diploma. Before rolling for a living, he worked in delis and restaurants in New Jersey to earn money that allowed him to travel. For about three years, he traveled down south and out west.

He ended up in cities like New Orleans for Mardi Gras and traveled to other destinations like Florida, Montreal, Mexico, and out to California. Sometimes he traveled with others, but many times he'd hop on a Greyhound and stayed with friends that he met on previous trips.



That is, until he turned 22. That's when he met Angelo Paramonte, who was one of the owners of Passaic Park Bagels. "He gave me a job baking bagels," said Roio, 54. "I ended up loving it."

He also gave Roio a bigger opportunity, though neither man knew it at the time. The other owner of the shop was Dean Corizzi, who remains the owner of Plaza Bagels.

Roio had begun baking in April of 1993 and began learning to roll in December. He was learning the ins and outs of hand-rolling for about two weeks when Paramonte sent him to Corizzi's shop in Clifton to be the back-up roller. Roio was full time by March of 1994.

"On my very first day, it took me over 18 hours," he recalled. "I started at 5 am and I believe I got done just around midnight."

It didn't discourage him. Roio said it was a slow and gradual process in the beginning where he tried figuring out how to get it all done while managing to have a social life outside of work. The trick was not only developing his craft, but seeing how it could relate to other areas of his life.

"It's physical work, but it didn't seem too physical to me, because I was always active anyway," he said. "I went to the gym, I played sports. I was kind of like, 'OK, I won't make the gym today, so I'll use this as my workout.'"


Roio kept practicing to develop his craft and efficiency soon followed. So did an understanding that what slowed him down the most was the mental strain that the job can take on you.

"I'm kind of a perfectionist and would get kind of mad if the bagels didn't look right," he said. "It was more about comparing myself to other stores and wanting to be better."

He evolved from that way of thinking and started to use his hands differently in order to achieve new results. He also noticed that his back would tighten up after a

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while, so Roio would lift one leg up and then the other, which he discovered helped him move faster.

"I developed a better rhythm than if I was just standing there like I saw other rollers do," said Roio. "People call it a dance, and I guess that's the best way to describe it."

These days, he's still dancing to his own soundtrack in the most literal sense. It doesn't matter the genre, whether it's jazz and soul, or heavy metal and classic rock. And, of course, he is no stranger to listening to punk rock songs as he gets the job done.

"It really is more of a solitary job with not a lot of interaction with people," said Roio. "You would get bored very quickly, and listening to the TV or radio didn't do it. So I kept finding new music. Sometimes I want something faster or slower," he added. "I probably have 300 or 400 different bands that I listen to pretty regularly in my Apple Music."

Rolling in Dough

The rhythm keeps things rolling. And the rolling is paid per hundred pounds of flour. "It's another reason why I needed to roll faster. We're not paid by the hour or by commission. It's by how much we do," said Roio. "If I was doing 6,000 to 8,000 pounds per week, I didn't want to be there for 80 hours working."

He found a way to make it work, which gave him more time to spend with his family. Roio and his late wife, Chioma, were parents to son Miles (CHS 2020). Chioma passed away in 2015. This month, Roio will marry fiancée Kimberly. The couple are parents to son Desmond, aged 8 months. They live close to Nash Park.

Roio is just as focused on making sure there is enough time in the day to balance it all. He has developed a well-regarded reputation that keeps him in demand. Despite no longer freelancing, he divides his time between primarily working in Clifton and spending a few days each week at Wonder Bagels in Jersey City.

There are some days when he is in the Van Houten Ave. shop at 4 am, then catches a train to Jersey City and gets home by 6 or 7 pm. But those days are rare, and he tries not to schedule working in both cities on the same day. Between the two locations, he rolls about 5,000 pounds of flour per week.



"I used to do double that," he said. Laughing, he added, "I'm a little too old now."

A strong work ethic plays a significant role in what keeps Roio going. He credited his original boss, Paramonte, for inspiring him. "He was the first roller at Plaza, and that is where they got that reputation," said Roio. "I wanted to have that reputation, so he was probably the biggest inspiration when it came to that."

There's also his family, including his mother, Rosemary, who he described as a hard-worker. "She never took the easy way out," he said. "That kind of rubbed off on me, too." Now, Miles is following in his footsteps.

Roio works about three days per week in Jersey City and previously worked more but gave a day to his son when he expressed an interest in him learning the trade.

Miles, like his father, started as a baker. Roio has since taught Miles how to roll so that he can continue developing his skills and build up his own reputation.

As far as what sells the best in his own day-to-day, Roio said the popular types at Plaza Bagel are Plain, Everything, French Toast, and specialties like Black Russian.

But in terms of his go-to order? "An onion bagel with butter, to me, is the best thing," he said.

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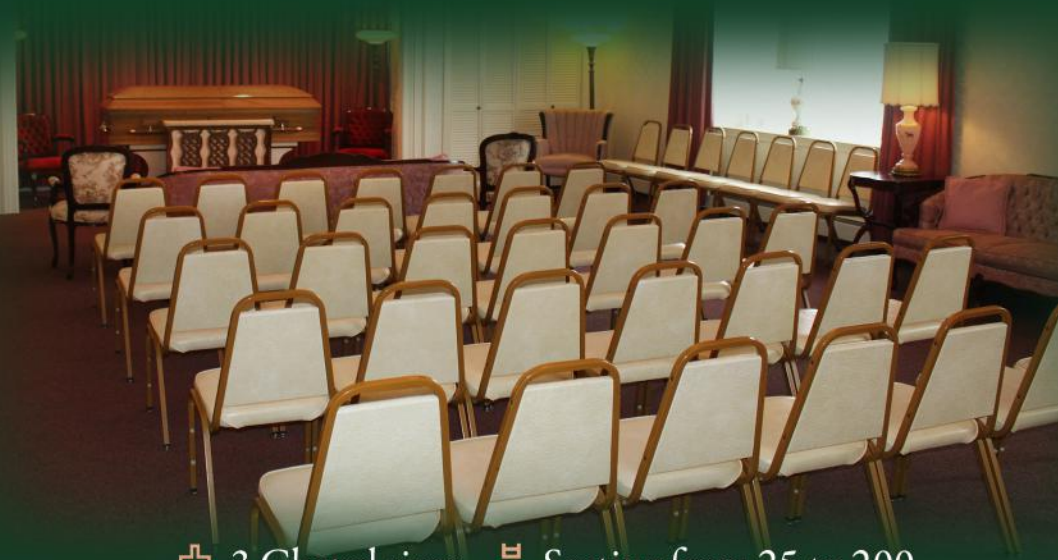
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Dinner & Dessert

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Chocolate House & Slap Burger make Clifton a Dining Destination

If there's one thing that you'll never catch Hazem Asad and Rashad Alawi doing, it's saying no to a good opportunity. That's why in mid-February the co-founders of Chocolate House and Slap Burger had seven existing locations and two existing locations, respectively, with an eye toward expansion over the next several months.

On top of that, last year saw them add these businesses to Clifton's dining landscape. Both locations are in the Richfield Shopping Plaza, where now they serve as somewhat of an anchor. "If you don't take chances, you won't go anywhere. We haven't had one location that's failed," said Asad, 31. "There are no limits on growing a business except yourself."

That certainly seems to be the case for these friends and business partners.

Creating the business model for Chocolate House started in December, 2020. The first location on the busy Main Ave. district of east Paterson opened May 3, 2021. Locations to follow were in Totowa, the Bronx across from Yankee Stadium, Astoria, Clifton, Yonkers, and Englewood.

Slap Burger in Paterson and Clifton were both 2024 revelations that took social media by storm, with their Instagram @slapburgersnj already having amassed over 35,000 followers. Chocolate House @chocolatehouseus has over 120,000 followers.

Alawi made clear that their meteoric rise and cult-following weren't by chance. "We're very focused on social media and bringing in influencers. We're also always focused on bringing in better quality. If we see something better, we go with it," said Alawi, 34. "For Slap Burger, we try to add new products here and there on the menu ... like new toppings."

"We had a promotion the other day — 50% off for the whole menu, in-store only," he added. "People came in very excited about it."

A Dream Realized

At the intersection of Allwood and Clifton Ave., there was plenty of existing draw to Richfield Plaza. The business partners capitalized on that.

Residents or people passing through might grab a slice from Clifton Village Pizza or a coffee from Dunkin'. Or perhaps it was a quick stop to pick up a small essential from Rite Aid or the perfect gift for that special-someone from Morré Lyons Jewelers.

Whatever the reason, Chocolate House and Slap Burger have succeeded in pulling people from beyond Passaic County who want signature crepes and waffles or to experience a halal Double Slap Burger with loaded chicken fries.

That last order is Asad's personal favorite from Slap Burger. Alawi noted that it's not uncommon to see some crossover with customers between their businesses.

"We see it a lot that customers who go to one, go to the other," said Alawi. "There's some leverage there."

Asad originally hails from Queens and Alawi was born in Paterson, but left from age 5 to 12 when he returned with his family to the West Bank. He moved around a few times as a child, living briefly in Florida and New Jersey before settling in New York for 17 years.

But New Jersey was never out-of-sight.

"My heart was always in Jersey and I wanted to come back," said Alawi. "Part of the whole starting a business was coming back and doing something here in Jersey."

Eyes Toward A Franchise

Alawi knew his business partner's family. Asad is one of six brothers and Alawi was already friends with one of the older ones, Geath. Their paths crossed by working in the cell phone industry and, later, Alawi would attend barbecues at the family's house.

He recalled Asad reaching out to him one day several years ago with an unexpected pitch.

"He calls me one day and says, 'Hey, I'd love to open a



crepe shop in the city," said Alawi. "It was during the pandemic, and there was a popular creperie place that we got the idea from, but we wanted to sell more than crepes."

"He felt like getting into the food business, and even though I was in the cell phone business, retail in general was not great," he continued. "Then I thought and said, 'Hey, I used to live in Jersey. Why not do this in Jersey?'"

They started looking for a location on Main St. in Paterson, which Alawi described as "densely populated with Middle Eastern [dining options] but not much [else]."

People had warnings. It wasn't "the area for it" or Chocolate House wasn't selling a product that customers would be interested in buying.

"But when we opened, there were lines," said Alawi. "At that time, I was still in the cell phone business and Hazem had his printing company. We'd open from 7 pm to midnight for the first month, then we adjusted the hours to 12-to-12 at the Main location."

Growth was the next logical step. Both men were aware that preconceived notions of Paterson would keep some clientele from visiting them. Totowa was the second location, because it was not too far from the original Chocolate House. When it came time to open a fifth location, Alawi knew as a Clifton resident that the former Boston Market in Richfield Plaza was for rent. The partners first needed to prove they were good for it.

"Being in a plaza isn't easy. You have to show that you have businesses," explained Alawi. "[An owner] won't want someone who is starting a business. They want a tenant that will stay."

They opened on June 20, 2024 and Slap Burger, two doors away, followed at the end of July. The businesses had a joint grand opening. And that's not all they have

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on their plates — both men are married and are fathers. Asad lives with his wife, Isra, and their three sons in Woodland Park. Alawi and his wife have a son and a daughter, with a third child on the way.

Growth comes in all areas of life. And there's one big plan for Chocolate House. "We're not a franchise yet," said Asad, "but God willing, we will be in the future."

Let's Make A Deal

Asad and his brothers were always business- and goal-oriented. Alawi handles the operational end — including the day-in, day-out with employees and bringing the Chocolate House menus to life — while Asad focuses on growth and development. It translates to finding new locations.

Alawi stated that while they share ambitions, he appreciates that Asad is a "go-getter." Adding: "He's fearless. ... Sometimes he'll sign a lease then tell me, 'We've got a new store.'"

It's all about the dance when negotiating with landlords and attorneys. Asad emphasized that going into a discussion prepared rather than scared is all about due diligence.



"If a deal makes sense, I'll sign the lease," said Asad. "I tend to make those decisions when I find a location that I'm comfortable with."

Asad recognized his business partner's strengths and how they complement his own. "Rashad is a hard worker and a very good people's person," said Asad. "I don't have the patience to deal with 100 or even 10 employees. That's what he is doing over there."

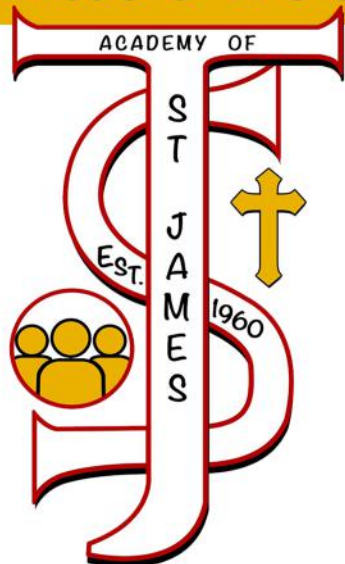
The Clifton locations for Chocolate House and Slap Burger each have about 15 employees. Despite any uncertainty about the locations being so close to the others in Paterson, and a higher rent from operating in a plaza, it is working well.

"We built a whole new customer base. There are a lot of very good and supportive families in Clifton," said Asad. "I see the smiles on their faces as they're conversing and laughing." And they want to see more of that.

There are plans to introduce Chocolate Lounge by Chocolate House, which will offer the same menu but be a sit-down environment with a mocktail bar.

There's also Yaffa Coffee & Kunafa, which is coming soon to 415 Crooks Ave. "The more you grow, the easier it gets," said Asad. "You just need to choose some good guys to have with you."

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3 Hats Make It Work

The Millennial Path to Full-time Employment



A part-time softball coach and part-time admissions counselor at Drew University, Dylan Amico puts three jobs together to make it work. Above right, she is pictured with her sister Ryan when they shared bartending duties at the The Clif.

Whether she's on the softball field or behind the bar at The Clif, Dylan Amico is always hustling.

The lifelong resident and CHS Class of 2014 graduate was a four-year Varsity Softball player and the captain of the team in her senior year of high school. It began as a childhood passion when she was 10 years old and continued with her acceptance at the University of Hartford.

Amico was there for one year before transferring to William Paterson so that she could be closer to home following her father's cancer diagnosis.

"After transferring and just life happening, I stepped away from playing the sport to focus on academics," said Amico, 28, "but it did not take long for me to find my way back to the field."

Amico worked as a team manager and in game day operations under head coach Hallie Cohen while attending William Paterson. Most importantly? She was given the opportunity to showcase her talent while also getting paid to do "what I loved."

"Coach Cohen taught me a tremendous amount," said Amico. "I can honestly say that I would not be in the position that I am in today if it wasn't for her."

A Safe Space

Millennials know the drill. Preparing your résumé for college and putting in the work will get you to first and second base.

But a good internship is what will bring it back home.

Senior year rolled around for Amico, which led to her seeking that exact thing through John Jay College's Athletic Department. But Cohen would give her one more opportunity to do what she's always loved at William Paterson.

"After finding an internship, I was asked by Coach Cohen to fill in as a bullpen catcher and put on the uniform one last time after our bullpen catcher had a career-ending injury," she said. "I found myself a college-athlete ... once again. I loved every minute of it."

In the meantime, Amico's internship involved working under John Jay's Athletic Director Carol Kashaw. She graduated from William Paterson in the spring of 2019 with a degree in Sports Management and was offered a position as the assistant softball coach for John Jay that fall.

"The world shut down only a few months later," said Amico. "It was something that so many people had to navigate through and, for me, it was a wake-up call."

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Back in 2014, that's Mustang Dylan Amico at center with Rachel Plaskon at left and Jaclyn Hanrahan. Standing from left rear: Kayla Vance, April DiAngelo, Rachel Abill, Kim D'Agosta, Karen Friedman, Megan Ingwersen. Middle, Jasmine Melendez, Caroline Shukaitis, Karleigh Davila, Ava Genardi.



“John Jay was a CUNY school,” she continued, “and all CUNY institutions did not completely open up to students and staff for almost a whole year.”

It was also located in the middle of Manhattan, which many will recall being a hotbed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Amico recalled how New York City was still locked down for months after other places began re-opening for business. One of those places opening back up for business was The Clif Tavern, located at 605 Clifton Ave.

“[The Clif is] a bar that I called my safe space when I was having a rough day,” said Amico. “Unfortunately, when The Clif opened back up, it was missing a huge part of the reason why I loved that place so much.”

That would be the late Skip Kazer, the owner and beloved Cliftonite who passed away on Sept. 29, 2019. Built in the 1800s, The Clif is one of Clifton’s oldest establishments. The tavern was bought in 1999 by Kazer, who ensured the tavern epitomized a place to go where everybody knows your name.

“My sister Ryan worked for Skip for as long as I could remember,” said Amico, “so when the bar opened back up under the new owners, Alex and Tony, I was a familiar face and around so often that they offered me a job.”

Amico needed that job — and, in her words, fast. Her first shift was with Ryan (CHS 2012) in August of 2020. Ryan now lives in Puerto Rico, but the younger Amico has worked at the bar ever since.

Doing What She Loves

Time went on and John Jay softball started back up in the fall of 2021. It required a bit of juggling by Amico in those days to make it all work.

“I was traveling in and out of the city for 6 am practices, then I was getting back home to work the night shift at the bar,” she said. “That was my life until I left John Jay College in the summer of 2023 to work for Drew University.”

“I was looking for something closer to home,” Amico continued, “and Drew was the perfect match for me.”

Amico has worked at Drew University for the past two years as an assistant softball coach and works as a recruiter in their Admissions Department. Amico is the outfield and catching coach, as well as the first base coach when they are on offense.

“I’m still juggling a hectic schedule since both of my Drew jobs are part-time, but I can honestly say that I do what I love,” she said. “Work does not feel like work at the University when I’m on the field.”

But there are still certain realities. Amico depends primarily on her job behind the bar at The Clif for her finances and pays for her own insurance out of pocket. It’s not always easy.

“I need to wake up early and be at work after closing the bar the night before,” she said. “But it is all worth it. I wouldn’t change anything that I do.”

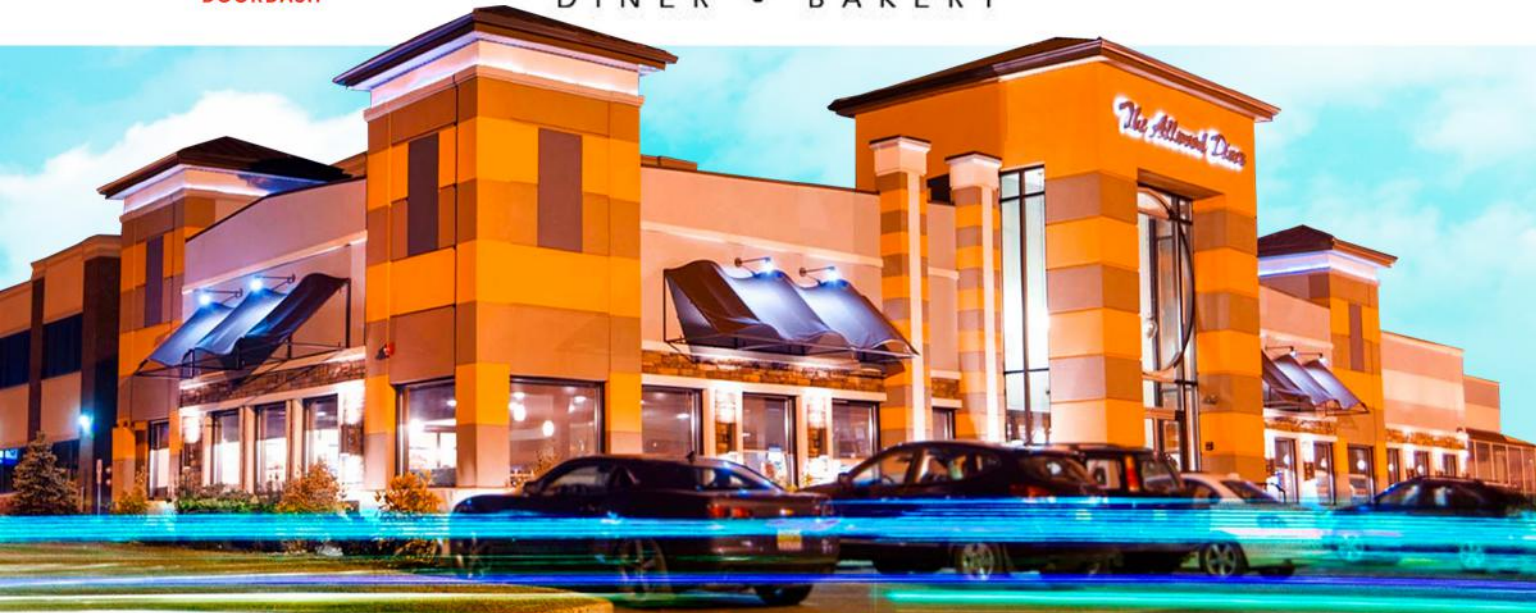


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Michael and Adriana Gielbeda and daughter Makayla, CHS 2024.

Seeing his city under ashes and dust profoundly affected Lieutenant Colonel Michael S. Gielbeda.

“It was horrific,” said Gielbeda, 50. “I had to get a special mayor’s pass to get to Manhattan and anything south of 14th St.”

Gielbeda worked for MCI Worldcom (now part of Verizon) and was part of the 9/11 emergency restorative services for communications. On a normal work day, they would laugh and listen to music. That was no longer the case.

“You were serious about the job and your friends were no longer with you,” he recalled, “so there was this sadness.”

Gielbeda already enlisted in the US Air Force after graduating high school in 1992. He served four years before joining MCI in 1997. The job saw him working from Central Park on down to the Wall Street area.

He worked in the World Trade Center every day until he switched from the day shift to a twin shift. On Sept. 10, 2001, he took the 7 Train to Queens after working until midnight. Gielbeda was devastated and angry. He helped restore Manhattan’s communication, but it wasn’t enough.

“I wanted to go back and do a lot more,” he said. “[I wanted to] hold the people responsible who did that to the city that I grew up in.”

Two-Generation Service

The Queens native’s childhood family included parents Michael and Marie, twin brother Brian, and younger sister Debra. The twins joined the military at 18.

“[Brian] was looking at the military more than I was,” said Gielbeda. “Since we’re twins, our mom said, ‘Go with your brother and take the test.’”

Their father Michael served in the US Army during Vietnam. He took his family to the local VFW, but it wasn’t something that he discussed.

“We’re fortunate that the public loves the military,” said Gielbeda. “It was definitely a different thing back in the

60’s and 70’s when those military troops came home.”

“Dad was against us going into the military. When I became an officer, he was against that, too,” he added. “He ... wouldn’t tell me not to do it, but he would say, ‘Do you really want to do this?’”

Speaking on Dec. 11 — the 19th anniversary of his father’s passing — Gielbeda suspected that wariness was due to Michael’s experiences.

“I could tell it was more of discouragement, probably because of the dangers that he faced and he was fearful of me losing my life or limbs.”

Gielbeda served in the Air Force and Brian joined the US Navy. Brian worked on one of the USS George Washington aircraft carriers and was stationed out of Norfolk, Virginia.

Gielbeda’s basic training was in Lackland, Texas before heading to Keesler in Mississippi for Ground Radio Communications Tech School for six or seven months. Gielbeda’s permanent duty was at the now-closed McClellan Air Force base in Sacramento, California.

“My job was in an engineering and installation unit,”

explained Gielbeda. “I spent over 300 days traveling on the road to install and maintain all the types of communication equipment that you can imagine around the world.”

Gielbeda got out as a Senior Airman. Brian extended for another year or two. He lives outside Orlando and works as a Project Manager for Universal Studios.

Gielbeda re-joined the service in April, 2002 as a Ground Radio Communications Specialist with the 213th Engineer Installations Squadron at Stewart Air National Guard Base. In June 2007, he was deployed to Azraq, Jordan and Tal-lil, Iraq. Gielbeda served with the 410th Air Expeditionary Group and 407th Air Expeditionary Group, respectively.

“There was nothing there. Just desert. No real infrastructure,” said Gielbeda about the former Azraq Air Base. “We set up tents, our own sandbags, and built things from scratch. For winter months, it was very cold and the summer was super hot out there. It had extreme elements.”

Leading and Mentoring

After the two six-month deployments in 2003, Gielbeda returned to New York. From 2007 to 2014, he was a Cyber Operations officer in the same squadron. He was deployed twice to Kandahar, Afghanistan.

Gielbeda was the OIC and Lead Engineer in the 451st Air Expeditionary Group from October 2010 to April 2011. Gielbeda was headquartered with the 160th Signal Brigade for six months during 2013. Over the past decade, he has



The Gielbedas with Prince Harry in early February.

served as the 111th Operations Support Squadron flight commander of the Communications section and is the Cyber Operations Officer at Biddle Air National Guard Base in Horsham, Pennsylvania.

As a lieutenant colonel since December 2020, he leads 32 military members and 23 civilian contractors. They ensure critical communications equipment and circuits are mission capable.

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"I think you can't apply one type of leadership to everyone. Some people need in-your-face leadership, and others you can give a task and let them impress you by the way they handle it."

Gielbeda tries not to micromanage younger airmen, but he doesn't hide in an office.

"I tell them, 'I know this stuff too', and it gets them to be a little less shy. They might look at rank and can get intimidated by it," said Gielbeda. "So I ask about their lives and families, and then they ask how you were successful in your career. It's like a mentorship."

Forging Bonds

Gielbeda began preparing for retirement as he approached 27 years of service.

"I don't know that I knew the time was right, because I've always loved my job," he said. "I did get injured during my tours. My leg got crushed and I've been on some medications. ... I fought [medical retirement], because I love being in the Air Force and serving my country."

Gielbeda is married to Adriana and they have a daughter, Makayla (CHS 2024). He has lived in Clifton since January, 2002 but was stationed 20 miles outside of Philly. It required traveling and spending time away from family. Now that Makayla has started college, Gielbeda is proud of his military goals and ready to make a transition.

"I've been to 96 countries around the world and served four combat tours," said Gielbeda. "I want to be there for my wife and daughter."

Gielbeda holds a Bachelor of Science in Electronics Engineering Technology at Grantham University in Slidell, Louisiana and a Master of Science in Information Management – Project Management at Grantham University in Kansas City, Missouri.

He also received major awards and decorations, including: Meritorious Service Medal, Air Force Commendation Medal with six oak leaf clusters, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, and a Humanitarian Service Medal.

As the flight commander of the Engineer Installations team, they were not kicking in doors like the Marines or Army Special Forces. But it was dangerous.

"There were rockets and mortar remnants. Picture if a backyard is fenced in," he added. "You might not have



people climbing over fences, but if rocks are thrown into the yard there is not much to do to stop them from trying to hit whatever they can."

The most dangerous part of a mission could simply be driving and avoiding IEDs in the road.

"I was never wounded by them, but I still get nightmares. You do your job and the objective is to get home. It is not until you get back home, I think the brain tries to comprehend what you did."

Gielbeda's official retirement date is April 4. There'll be a retirement party at McGuire Air Force Base. He has a three-week cruise planned with family in May from Cape Town to Barcelona.

He recently participated in the Invictus Games in Vancouver and Whistler, Canada. From Feb 8 to 16, Gielbeda was one of 50 U.S. military people chosen and 1 of 10 Air Force troops chosen in the entire U.S. military to participate in the games. They competed against 23 other countries.

"The Invictus Games, to me, symbolize the honor of representing my country and branch of service alongside my brothers and sisters in arms," said Gielbeda. "It's a powerful testament to our resilience, unshakable dedication, and relentless perseverance in overcoming any challenge that dares to stand in our path."

That unity can also be found by getting more involved with the local community, including VFW Post 7165, located at 491 Valley Rd., and the American Legion. Gielbeda has visited the VFW, where he spoke to some older veterans and mentioned how he was getting out soon.

"It seemed, not only in Clifton but throughout the country, there's a disconnect from Vietnam, Korea, and WWII vets to the Global War on Terrorism," he said. "I've been asking my peers what the reason is and think it's because there's more knowledge and greater resources ... so they don't feel they need a VFW anymore."

"I definitely want to get more involved," he stated. "I think it allows you to bond more with your brothers and sisters in arms."

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Climbing and Caring For Trees



Casey Walentowicz, Jr and his dad, Casey, who founded Aspen Tree Service in 1986. At right, the boys raising the Red, White and Blue at Rutti's Hut on July 4.

Casey Walentowicz, Jr. may oversee the family business, but he gained a bird's-eye view at a much earlier age.

Aspen Tree Service, 321 River Rd., is a labor of love and a promise of sustainability that spans two generations. Founded in 1986, the business started out humbly when his father, Casey Sr., was figuring out what came next for him.

Casey Sr., now 63, grew up in our city. He attended Woodrow Wilson Junior High (now WWMS) and CHS in the Class of 1979. As he grew older, Casey Sr. developed an interest in engineering and electronics.

But the great outdoors called to him.

"I was doing some landscaping and realized that I enjoyed being outside," said Casey Sr. "Also, taking a tree down takes a bit of engineering not to damage anything. So I started with that."

He shared that he had quite a bit of family support when it came to financing the business and getting the necessary equipment. His brother Henry, a Clifton lawyer, helped

when it came time to incorporate the business on April 16, 1986. Brother Richie is the one who provided Casey Sr. with his first good-size pickup truck.

In those days, it was Casey Sr. and two distant relatives building up the business's reputation. Today, the team consists of people who specialize in climbing and others who are equipment operators, ground people, and drivers.

The number of employees fluctuates based on the time of year, but the overall range is five to 12 people across the business. Casey Sr.'s original trio succeeded in spreading the word that they deliver a "quality job at fair prices." It's still something that Casey Jr. strives to give clients.

But there are rising costs that make certain price points unavoidable. "Fuel and insurance [prices] are up, even though we have never had a claim. Town and state fees are also up," said Casey Jr., 42. "New regulations are introduced all the time. Equipment costs are up like how car costs are inflated."

Casey Jr. went on to say that a chipper valued at \$110,000 today would have cost \$70-80,000 five or six years ago, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The same tool would have cost roughly \$38,000 in 2005-06.

“It’s difficult to pass on that expense,” explained Casey Jr. “[As for regulations], we comply with everything, but you do have companies that don’t. Sometimes people don’t care if a company complies or not. They just want a cheaper price.”

Neither man is discouraged. They know their clients expect the best from them and they bring that to Passaic, Essex, Morris, and Bergen Counties. It’s not just about removals, and the jobs that they do can be residential, commercial, or municipal.

Shortcuts are never a consideration for the certified arborists and professional crews. “We have to be safe,” said Casey Sr. “There’s no second chances in this.”

Old-School Meets New-Age

The father-son duo continues to work closely with one another, but the dynamic has shifted.

Casey Jr. lived for some of his childhood and young adult years in Clifton, attending Christopher Columbus Middle School. The family business was always front and center and he worked there after school as a teenager.

He also explored other options to confirm whether or not he truly wanted to become a second-generation arborist. Casey Jr. did a five-year apprenticeship with a licensed electrician and he earned his degree in Electrical Engineering.





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The current owner of Aspen Tree Service decided that his path was joining the family business. Casey Jr. went on to study arboriculture at Rutgers and Cooks University, becoming a certified arborist, and he holds more than 25 years of experience in the tree service industry.

Casey Jr. has a number of certifications, a few of which include: New Jersey Licensed Tree Expert, NJ Licensed Tree Company Operator, International Society of Arboriculture Certified Arborist, and ACRT Certified Line Clearance Arborist.

"Tree care is a different challenge and we're at a new site every day," said Casey Jr. "There's always a different task that we have to accomplish."

As for Casey Sr., he's what his son refers to as an old-school forester. While he's not a certified arborist, you can trust that he has a deep knowledge of the work.

"He grew up as advancements in the industry were happening," said Casey Jr. "There weren't a lot of routes, let alone specialty routes, to take in the 70's and 80's."

Casey Jr. shifted out of his daily operations role that he began in the early 2000s when he took over ownership in 2010. Casey Sr. works now on his son's previous end of the business and he said he held no reservations about Casey Jr.'s abilities as a leader.

"I knew his heart was into it and he loves what he does, so I wasn't worried at all," said Casey Sr. "It's a lot easier for me, because I don't have to deal with the headaches that he does." Cheekily, he added, "I might get color in my hair back and lose some of my grey."

It's also undoubtedly reassuring that Casey Jr.'s interests didn't develop overnight. Whether he was climbing a tree as a boy or getting his first Bailey's Echo Chainsaw at age 12, there was a clear interest in learning the business — and learning it from the inside out.

"I took the saws apart in the yard to figure out how to fix them and make them work," recalled Casey Jr. "Being up in a tree or outdoors working, nothing else bothers you. When you're up there, you can't be focused on anything but what you're doing. It's pretty unique how something that is 12 to 15,000 lbs. can support itself with a 12-inch deep root system," he added.



Casey and his dad on a cave scuba diving expedition during junior's high school years.

In The Field

For nearly 40 years, Aspen Tree Service has worked in our literal and figurative backyards.

The services include tree removal, fertilization, arborist services, insect and disease treatment, emergency tree service, pruning and trimming, turf and lawn care, and tick, mosquito and flea prevention and control.

The family-owned and operated business has done city work in Morris Canal Park and for the Clifton Board of Education. They've put nesting boxes on top of high poles so that the osprey that migrated through the Meadowlands could have somewhere to nest.

Aspen Tree Service has separately donated time and resources to churches that need a cherry picker to access lights on street poles.

They greatly appreciate the clients who have stuck with them over the decades.

"Some of our apartment complexes or East Ridgeline Cemetery have been with us for almost 40 years," said Casey Sr. "Cedar Lawn Cemetery in Paterson has a unique history, and we are proud to do work over there."

There is also Teterboro Airport, where Aspen Tree Service maintains trees for the safe operation of the airport. Neighbors appreciate the buffer that the trees provide for them, but Casey Sr. said it's a matter of trees not being allowed to grow above certain heights of lights.

Doing work for the airport since before Sept. 11, 2001 means that times have definitely changed how they do that type of job.

"Since 9/11, we've always needed an escort with us," said Casey Sr. "Before that, they didn't have a fence. I hope they're as proud of our work as we are to be there."

Casey Sr. and his wife, Barbara, live in Wallington. Casey Jr. makes the commute to our city from Kinnelon, where he lives with wife Rachel. The couple have a daughter Amanda, 22.

"I'm in and out of the office, but I still run cranes and I'm always on bigger job sites. Pops pretty much drives the truck or is at a job here or there," said Casey Jr. "We're both still in the field."

And it is a father-son team that still works.

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Here Comes Spring!

This year, the first day of spring is Thursday, March 20, and the spring season will last until the summer solstice on Friday, June 20.



The Clifton Garden Club at Main Memorial Library, from left, Laura Zelenka, Donna Fantacone, Kathy Sauerborn, Barbara Zitt, Joanie Kaynak, David Obsuth, and mascot Jax the Dalmation.

Keeping Clifton Clean and Green isn't seasonal or a relic of the past. As we leave bitter-cold days behind us and the warm months of Spring are fast-approaching, we can expect another type of blooming to take place.

The springtime beautification efforts of Passaic County Master Gardener David Obsuth and those he volunteers with in the Clifton Garden Club.

"I've had a passion for gardening since I was five when my grandfather Andrew Sr. took me to his garden," said Obsuth. "My dad Andrew Jr. was also a big gardener. He made the *Clifton Journal* and *Herald News* quite a few times for growing tomatoes and flowers from seeds."

Obsuth (CHS 1970) helped beautify our city last November when he planted daffodil bulbs as a Clifton Garden Club volunteer at Main Memorial Library, 292 Piaget Ave. Obsuth has also been a Passaic County Master Gardener of 20 years. The Master Gardener was recognized in Spring 2024 for his 1,000 hours of volunteer service.

Obsuth joined the city's Garden Club about five years ago, but he is proud of how deep the roots of his green thumb run. His family moved to Clifton in 1962 when he was about 10. The family had a large farm in Flemington that was owned by Obsuth's great-grandparents. Families from all over may have even tasted their family's tomatoes, which they grew for The Campbell's Company. "I have always been exposed to some type of farming," said Obsuth.

Planting the First Seed

That early exposure to his family's passion would lead Obsuth to becoming a Master Gardener. But first he needed to return to the classroom to develop a new skill set.

He completed a Rutgers Master Gardener course — there is one for every county — and attended class once per week. "We had different professors who taught us different aspects of gardening," Obsuth explained. "Lawns, trees, fertilizers — the full spectrum of gardening."

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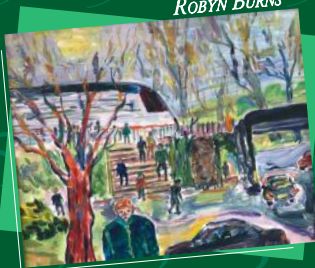
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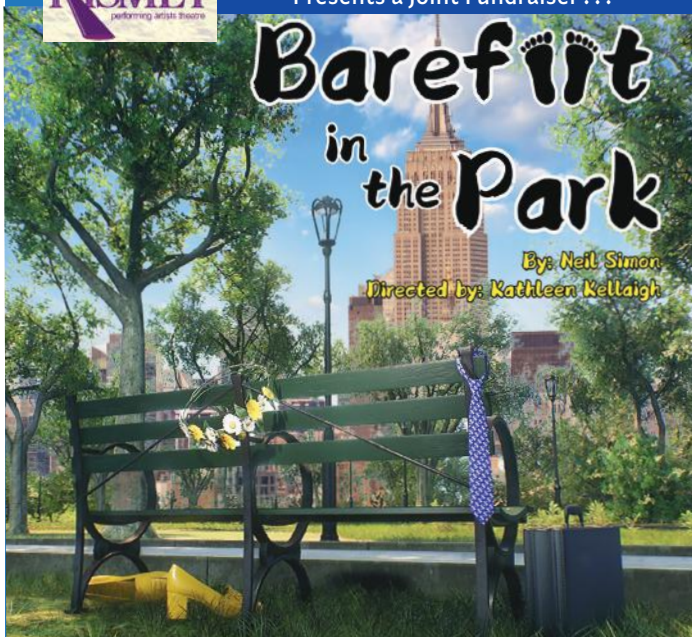
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Here Comes Spring!

The first Master Gardener program in New Jersey was established in Bergen County in 1984. Thousands of Master Gardener volunteers have since received training throughout the state and have given hundreds of thousands of hours in service to the residents of New Jersey.

Passaic Master Gardeners can join different projects that take place around the county. After he took his test and completed 70 hours of required volunteer time, Obsuth picked his project. He set his sights on preserving the Morris Canal and the two city library branches.

They are two areas of preservation that he is deeply dedicated to and credited the “wonderful group of people who come every week” for helping to do the work that is needed. The project involves restoring native plants and removing invasives in Morris Canal Park.

The Main Memorial Library and Allwood Branch volunteers focus on maintaining the butterfly and vegetable garden, plus replacing annuals and vegetables. Find more projects by visiting mgapc.org.



Clifton cares, and so do the Garden Club members and other volunteers who last fall helped to preserve the beauty of Morris Canal Park.

A Collector

It may still surprise you to learn that gardening was never Obsuth's day job or how he earned his living. He was a caterer by trade, working for over 50 years in Jersey City. He even owned his own garden center on Route 46 in Pompton Plains for a few years.

“It was a happy day when I bought it,” he laughed, “and a happy day when I sold it.”

As for following in his father Andrew Jr.'s footsteps, he has collected over 500 varieties of hostas and roughly 75 varieties of dwarf Japanese maples.

“In my own garden,” he said, “I’m a collector.”

The Clifton Garden Club strives to promote the knowledge and appreciation of horticulture, to carry out horticultural projects that benefit our community, and to build fellowship by sharing a mix of horticultural talents and resources.

The next monthly meeting is March 11 from 6:30-8:30 pm at the Allwood Library, 44 Lyall Rd. Guest speaker Margaret Zelenka is a 20-plus-year Science teacher, holding a bachelor's in Plant Science from Rutgers and a master's in Art and Education from St. Peter's University.

Zelenka is a New Jersey Licensed Tree Expert and an International Society of Arboriculture Certified Arborist. She will be doing a presentation on “Microgreens”. Guests are welcome. Interested in learning more about nature or working outdoors alongside dedicated Cliftonites such as Obsuth? Call Donna Fantacone at 973-473-0577.

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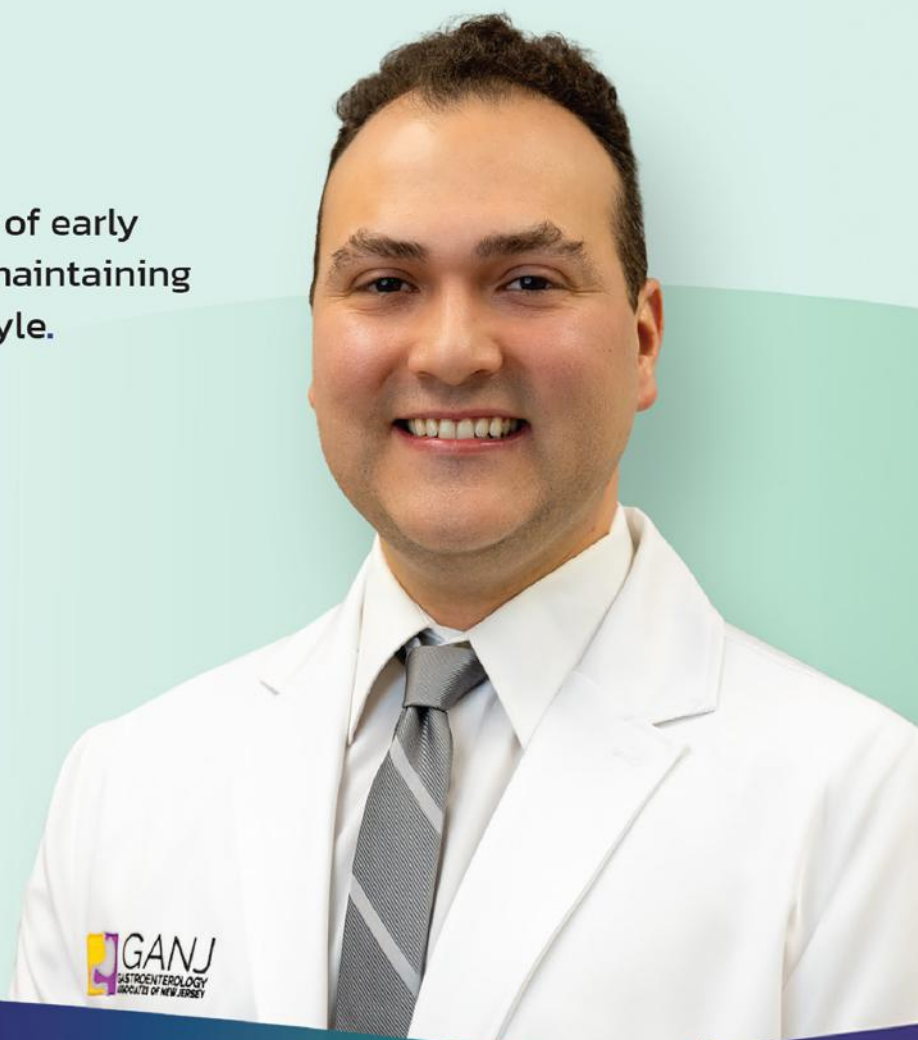
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By Ariana Puzzo

B&G Club Investor



At the Boys & Girls Club STEM Academy, from left seated: Ailani, Ashley and Veronica. Standing from left: Youth Development Coordinator Andy Jimenez-Victoria, Gabriel Blau, CEO, Board members Angelo Crudele, Maureen O'Connor, Dante Liberti, Gloria Martini and Jonathan Ford, STEM Coordinator. At right, Clifton Seahawks and a visit with Clifton Firefighters.

Angelo Crudele understands worthwhile investments.

The Boys Club invested in him when he was a boy. He, in turn, invested in himself when he started his own business.

Now, he wants to make sure other Clifton kids are set up for their futures. Crudele, 85, is the chair of the Boys & Girls Club of Clifton's "Future Ready" Campaign with a goal of raising \$150,000. The campaign runs through April, and one of his main goals is for others to understand how each dollar goes a long way.

"It's not a donation, it's an investment. You're investing in children's futures," said Crudele. "The Club makes them better citizens and keeps them off the streets. They turn out very, very well."

Crudele has spent about 42 years on The Club's Board, serving as President and as past Chairman of the Board. As part of the 2025 Campaign's committee, he works alongside his fellow committee members Dante Liberti, Mike Lesler, George Jacobs, Ray Kunz, former Mayor James Anzaldi, Gloria Martini, John Fette, and Maureen O'Connor.

"I have to stress that members of our Board are dedicated and work tirelessly to keep The Club going on sound financial footing," he said. "The members of the fundraising committee are also doing an outstanding job and working hard."

"It's not easy to ask people to part with their money," continued Crudele, "but it relieves you of some anxiety when you have other people to depend on."

To help, go to bgclifton.org and select "Donate Now."

Finding His Way

Crudele's "future" began in 1947 at what was then known as The Boy's Club.

The Club operated out of Crudele's school, the former School 7 on Parker Ave. He joined at age 8 and participated in activities like basketball and dodgeball. The Club would move to 67 Center St., the later location of Avery's Bar and Restaurant Supply, for more space. There, they set up billiard tables and hosted hot dog nights.



“If memory serves, we went to Yankees Stadium to see a ball game,” he said. “Domyon’s Hall across the street had a basketball court.”

Lifelong friends were made at The Club and at Domyon’s with ‘kids’ that included John DalPan, Thomas Cupo, Murray Kashtan, Walter Calligaro, Frank Carlet, and Felix Rossi (turn to page 52 and see a photo of some of those kids). As they all grew up and aged out, Crudele went on to graduate in 1957 from the old CHS (now CCMS).

Crudele ran track for all three years under Coach Jim Grimes. He hit the gridiron as a guard in his last two years under legendary Fighting Mustang Coach Joe Grecco and his then-assistant Bill Vander Closter.

But Electrical Shop teacher Edward Klinger is who sparked Crudele’s interest in the electronics end of electricity. “I found it fascinating how a television can produce a picture and you can transmit voices over the air,” said Crudele. “Intoxicating, I would call it.”

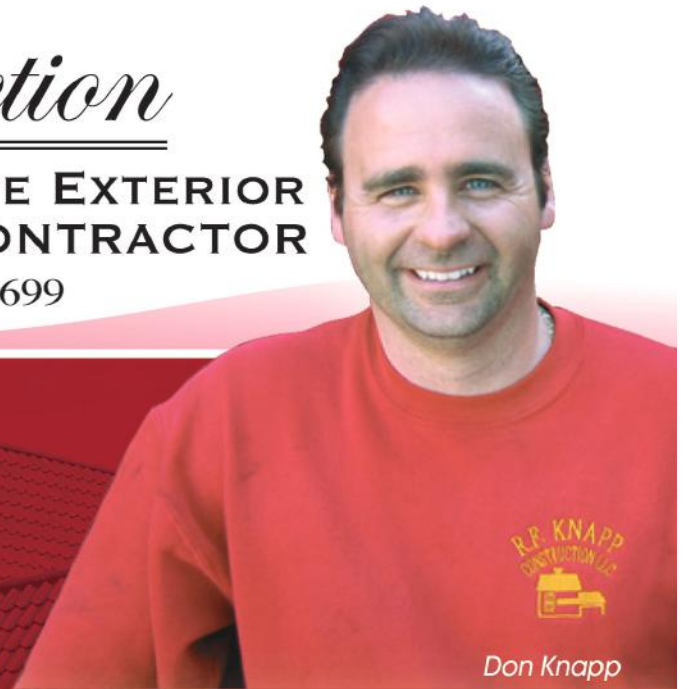


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Crudele “thought this had a great future” and decided to pursue it. He started out with Stanley Electronics in Passaic. Owner Philip Bornstein also had a wholesale electronics business that sold products to industrial-type users. That led to his switch over to United National Labs.

“Mr. Bornstein inspired me,” said Crudele. “I learned a lot from him.”

The man in charge was also eager to hear from his men. Crudele recalled how Bornstein would gather them around to discuss the day’s events and their thoughts. It was then that Crudele pointed out how they were selling to people who were selling to someone else.

“I asked, ‘Is there any reason why we’re not doing that?’” said Crudele. “He replied, ‘Well, I never thought of that. If you think there’s a market there, go for it.’”

The company primarily sold transmitting tubes, which Crudele compiled into a list and sent out to the television and radio stations that he researched were based in the U.S. The response to that brought in thousands of dollars worth of business and helped Crudele convince his boss to sell directly to the user.

A new opportunity also arose for Crudele in 1961. He had begun speaking to a competitor, Roy Gettis, and the two men shared similar ideas for the industry’s future. These ideas led to a risky but ultimately profitable one: going into business for themselves.

Coming Out On Top

“We struggled for many years,” said Crudele, candidly. The passing of his dad left him with some property that he sold for about \$15,000. He used that profit as seed money for his new business, Thor Electronics Corp. After the partners registered with the state on March 10, 1961, they started trying to sell the same product while also exploring semiconductors, integrated circuits (now, chips), dials and transistors.

Competitors were Richardson Electronics, JRH Electronics, Calvert Electronics, CECO Electronics, and, of course, his former employer.

“After a while, [Mr. Bornstein and I] sort of reconciled, but he wasn’t happy when I left,” said Crudele. “We talked as equals, and it was amazing.”

The first two to three years saw them only draw but never cash a paycheck. They cashed it in once the company was cash positive, but first they needed to set up an office, start producing mailings, make contacts, and find products.



Donations to The Club helped pay for a newly renovated outdoor playground, making it safe for toddlers

Any cash generated went toward buying desks, typewriters, calculators, and merchandise.

“We didn’t start with a lot of money. We weren’t cash rich,” said Crudele. “We prevailed and started growing.”

The business began in Union City before moving to larger quarters in Elizabeth. The mid-70’s saw them with enough money to buy a building in Linden. That is where they stayed until the partners sold the company’s assets to employees in 1998.

Their peak included operating the business with 20 employees and a pension system that the partners managed in-house. “I was very proud that all of our employees had a pension with no contributions,” he said.

Crudele gained a lot of skills — from staying patient and dealing with different personalities to organization and money management. “Believe me, when you run a business, you need to watch that cash and make that payroll.”

Bright Futures

Now in his 27th year of retirement, Crudele has a lot that he is grateful for in his own life.

Crudele and his wife, Carol, remain in Clifton and will be married for 55 years this year. They have two sons, Michael and Marc, who are Club alumni. They are grandparents to Julia, 21, Victoria, 20, and Angelo, 16.



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A proud grandfather, Crudele noted that Julia and Victoria have pursued engineering and business, respectively, and Angelo is doing well in high school.

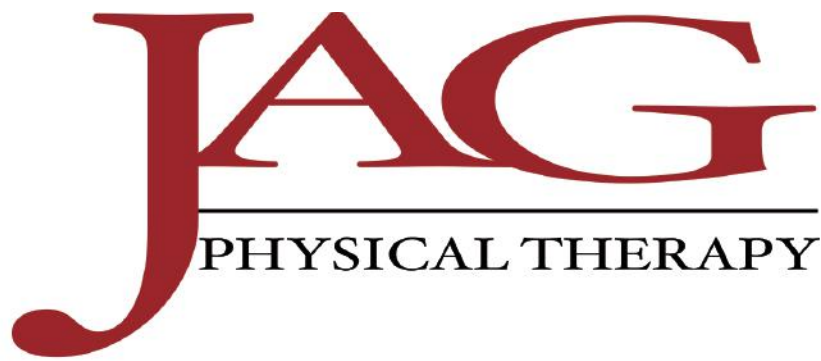
Crudele's own day-to-day life is also busy. He is committed to supporting Cliftonites of all ages by serving on the Board of Evergreen Manor Senior Housing for almost as long as The Club.

"There is a tremendous shortage of affordable housing for seniors," he said. Evergreen is a HUD facility and he gets great satisfaction knowing seniors are living in a safe, clean environment. "When we get our inspection and get a clean bill of health," said Crudele, "it makes you think, 'Boy, I really did something for our older citizens.'"

As for Clifton's kids, Crudele added that the "other beautiful part of The Club" is its tutoring program to advance youth in their academics or provide them with one-on-one support.

"Clifton is basically a blue-collar town," said Crudele. "There are single-family or both-parent families where they need to work and know their children are in a safe place."

"I felt it was necessary to take care of children and older people," he continued. "Fortunately, after I retired, I had plenty of time to do it."



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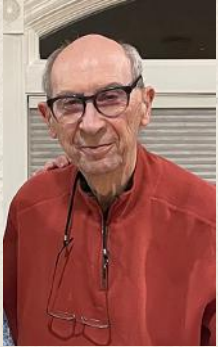


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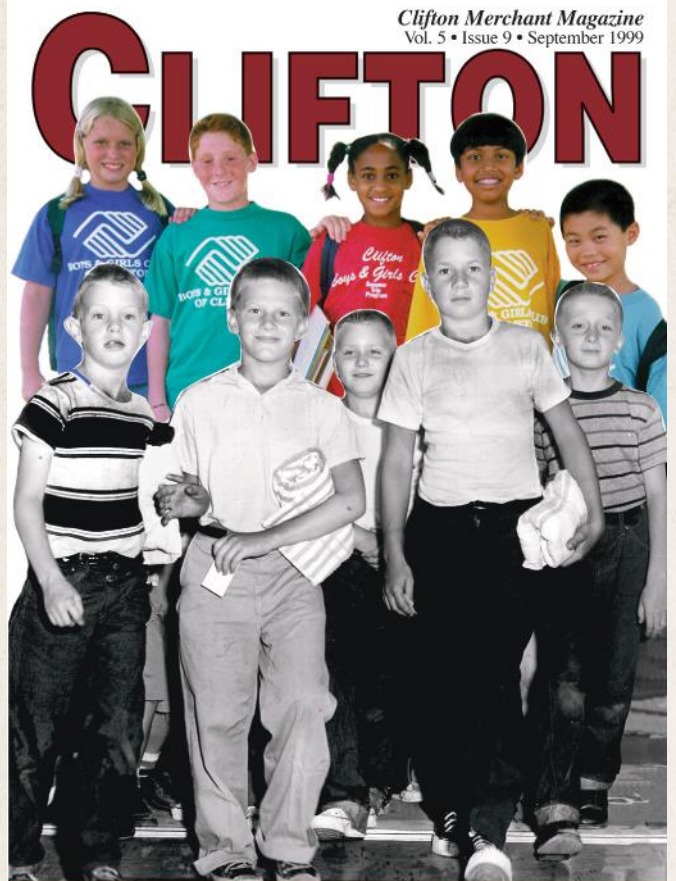
"I found it fascinating how a television can produce a picture and you can transmit voices over the air," said B&G Club Capital Campaign Chair Angelo Crudele, recalling his circa-1957 introduction to the world of electronics. "Intoxicating, I would call it."

By Tom Hawrylko

Imagine a place where you could go and see the magic of a black and white television. That's what these Clifton Boys Club kids did back in December of 1950 when Clifton Industrial Television donated that black and white set to The Club.

Seven year later as he was about to graduate Clifton High, our friend Angelo Crudele felt that same fascination as he studied the evolving world of electronics. A journey that began when he was a member of the Boys Club of Clifton.

A successfull entrepreneur, a lifelong Cliftonite and a giving person who today, nearly seven decades later, has taken the baton as the Chair of the 2025 Captial Campaign for the Boys & Girls Club. He's asking us all to make a donation.



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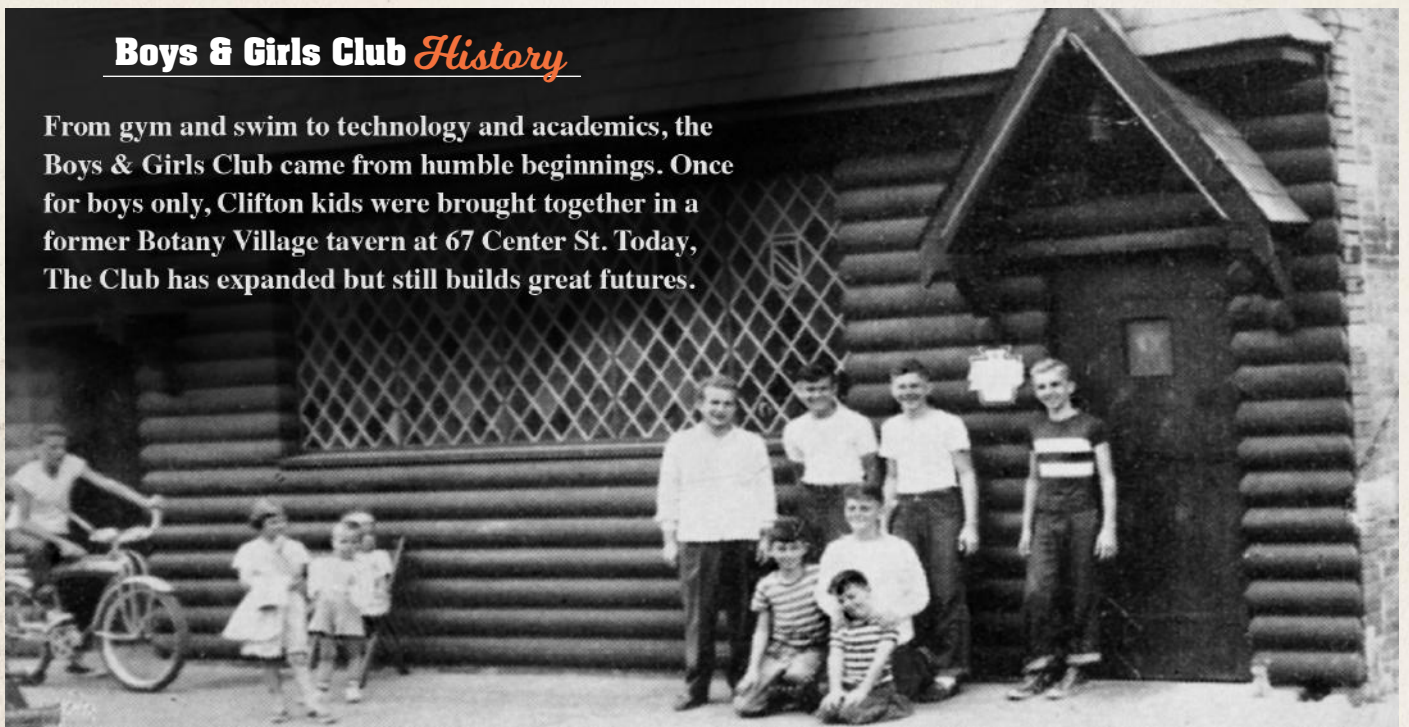
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Boys & Girls Club *History*

From gym and swim to technology and academics, the Boys & Girls Club came from humble beginnings. Once for boys only, Clifton kids were brought together in a former Botany Village tavern at 67 Center St. Today, The Club has expanded but still builds great futures.

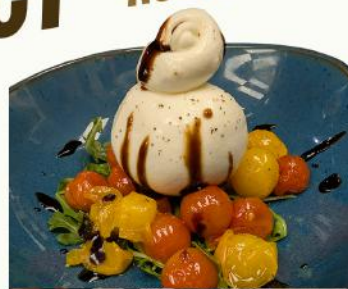


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Back in the late 1940s, the organization known as the Clifton Boys Club was just in its struggling infancy, unable to meet the needs of a rising post-war population of young kids eager for a place to call their own.

It wasn't until after it got a push with a donation by the the Clifton Kiwanis that the Boys Club really began to grow into what it is today.

The Boys Club of Clifton began in 1947 as a branch of the Passaic Boys Club, but residents and organizations wanted to have a place Clifton youth could call their own.

To get things started, civic organizations stepped forward. In a large way, The Club owed its existence to the membership of the Clifton Kiwanis, which recognized the need for a program in Clifton that would provide a home base for these boys.

Most of the Clifton Boys Club directors were Kiwanians as well.

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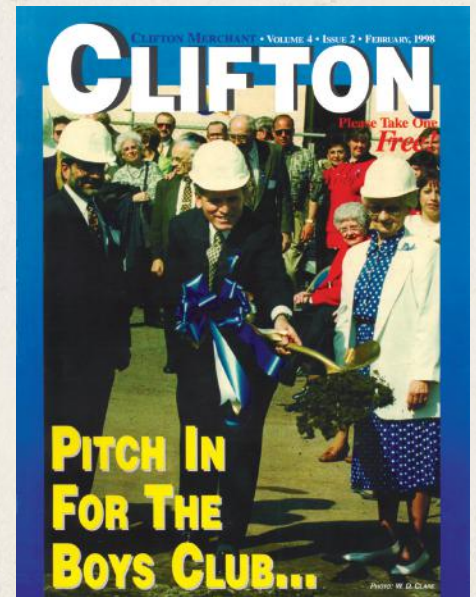
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Above: a Boys Club soda social, circa 1962. At right, our Feb., 1998 cover when Bill Martini broke ground for an expansion to add a pool, classrooms and gym space. Also pictured is Vince Ponte, Chair of the 1998 Capital Campaign and Florence Cannizzo.

Under the leadership of David Walker and the guidance of people like Stephen Dudiak, John Celentano, Martin Parian, Bob Peare, Les Floyd and more, a capital fund drive was started to secure funds for the building.

In 1947 a group of 13 ladies known as the Women's Council for the Boys Club of Clifton, under the leadership of Mrs. Suzanne Poles, realized there was a growing need for activities for young boys in the Clifton community.

With a donation of \$500 from Clifton Kiwanis and an assurance of school board cooperation, club activities began in the summer of 1948 in Athenia's School 13 on Van Houten Ave., where the attendance was over 375.

In 1949, transfers within the Clifton school system forced The Club to shift its temporary quarters to Botany, with rooms made available in School 7 on Randolph Ave.

Also in 1949, the Boys Club was listed within the groups that would benefit from the \$222,974 to be raised as part of the Neighborhood Community Chest. A \$6,650 was to be budgeted for the launch of The Club.

But by November of that year, many doubted if Clifton was ready for its own Club. The failure of the Neighborhood Community Chest Drive to raise its stated quota of \$222,974 led many to worry if The Club would have enough money to operate.

The future of the Clifton Boys Club looked uncertain, since there was no permanent home for it. More citizens had to become interested to make the dream a reality.

Newspaper reports from the *Herald & News* during December, 1949 brought the appeal to the public. The stories told the many benefits of The Club, reporting items such as that 75 boys went to the West Milford Passaic Boys Club

Summer Camp Ocawasin for swimming and recreation.

There were also stories of 20 hot dog nights arranged by sponsoring civic clubs, including the Kiwanis. One report recalled how for the Christmas of 1948, 150 Clifton boys were guests for a party at the Robin Hood Inn.

The citizens of Clifton, recognizing the pressing need for a Boys' Club in a growing community, got behind the movement and gave financial and material support.

The Kiwanis were not alone. Many civic groups such as the Optimist Club, the Moose, Lions and the Rotary joined the Kiwanis in lending a hand to the cause, making large contributions with the investment of Clifton's youth in mind.

By the end of 1949, the membership of the Clifton Boys Club grew to about 325 and it finally received a new "permanent" home at 67 Center St. in October 1950.

However, by 1958, The Club moved to its present location at 820 Clifton Ave. where it has grown, evolved and expanded various times over the decades.

A 'New' Building in 1999

On Sept. 13, 1999, hundreds of Cliftonites walked through the doors of a modern, multi-million dollar Club to register for fall programs and got to see what this new building was all about.

After four years of fundraising, about two of construction and decades of seeing a growing need for more space, a new state-of-the-art Boys & Girls Club of Clifton had become a reality. Looking back to 1947, Frank Carlet was one of the 30 young boys who were among the first members of the then Clifton Boys Club.



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Boys & Girls Club *History*

Carlet, a long-time trustee, said the people that were part of The Club back then gave him a sense of responsibility and a desire to act as a role model for other youth.

Like Angelo Crudele and other kids their age who “came up through” The Club, Carlet felt a growing need to serve and give back to the community through The Club that taught him so much.

Now, decades later, Crudele and Carlet stress the importance of involvement with The Club at such a young age. He enjoys being able to reach out and play a part in so many young people’s lives. “We take 500 kids a day and we help them,” said Carlet. “If we didn’t do it, who would?”

The Road to Growth

Once the Boys Club relocated to 820 Clifton Ave. in 1958, Carlet remembers how the facility began to grow with each new added structure. The first acquisition was in 1972, which was a two-family house. Other purchases followed: a series of four, single-family homes in 1976, 1978, and 1979. These structures became the home for the executive offices, teen program, preschool area, and recreational facility, which are all on the same site today.

In 1986, a new moniker and mission were introduced—the Boys & Girls Club of Clifton—as the Boys Club merged with the Girls Club, which was then on the corner of Mt. Prospect and Clifton Aves. “We consolidated the fund raising activities and combined everything into one building, which made sense,” recalled Carlet.

At the Boys & Girls Club of Clifton, the Future Ready campaign is all about providing the skills, mentorship, and support our youth need to succeed. Great futures start at The Club. With our help, we can empower the leaders of tomorrow. Join us in making a lasting impact today. Visit bgcclifton.org/waystogive or scan the QR code above to make a donation.



From our files in 2003 when some of Angelo Crudele’s pals visited Domyon’s Courtside Pub on Center St., another home for Boys Club members. From left: Tom Cupo, Walt Calligaro, John Kostisin, Don Petrasek, Joe Scancarella, Tony Glodova and Al Mardirossian, Jr.

The Boys & Girls Club in 1999 offered Clifton a world of renovations, most of which Carlet never thought he would see. “The new pool (which in a future expansion, funded by the Nicholas Martini Foundation, would become the Martini Aquatics Center) will be large enough to accommodate the high school swim team and various competitions. The pool’s only five yards longer than the old one, but it will have six lanes and an electronic timing system,” said Carlet. “It’s been a dream we had for a long time.”

The ‘we’ in 1999 was a team of dedicated community-minded people. Among those was Executive Director Dolores Colucci and Capital Campaign Chair Vince Ponte. “The capital campaign project was set up to cover the cost of the renovation,” explained Ponte. “At one time, the project cost \$2.5 million. Now, it is up to \$4.5 million for the total renovation.”

Ponte in 1999 cited members of a small committee who helped him with the financial considerations that such a daunting renovation project would entail. They included Gary Forester, Frank Carlet, Ken VanSanders, Angelo Crudele, Jacqueline Klein, Edward Healey, Anthony Lipari, James Anzaldi, William Camlet, Kent Bania, Thomas Cupo, Anthony Ruvo and Florence Cannizzo.

Ponte said the project would not have been possible without the help of the Board members, as well as the staff and volunteers at the Boys & Girls Club. “We are all ultimately looking to better our future,” Ponte said in 1999.

Angelo Crudele would agree.

In 2025, he calls it Clifton’s “Future Ready” Campaign. His goal of raising \$150,000 this year—perhaps more—is attainable—if we all become *B&G Club Investors*.



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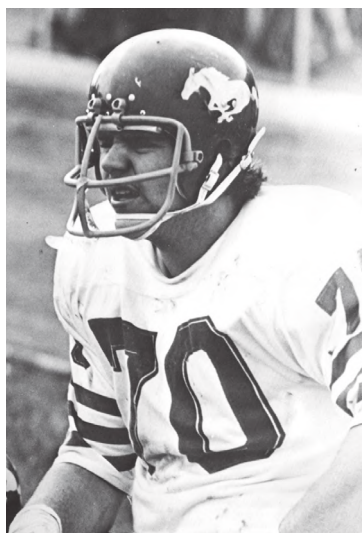
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Clifton brownie advocate Joe Siano at left. Fighting Mustang and class of 1976 reunion organizer Johnny George, center. At right, Passaic County Clerk Danielle Ireland-Imhof.

April Fools guy Joseph Siano hosts an April 1 Brownie Benefit Bake Off at Uno Pizzeria & Grill. To become Clifton's top brownie, bake your best and show up at 5:30 pm with your sweets and a \$10 entry fee made to LLS.

Savory-toothed judges will make a selection at 6:30 pm and crown the best Clifton Brownie. Beyond the brownies, there will be karaoke, cocktails and munchies. Can't make the party? Visit from 11 am on April 1, mention Siano and 25% of your bill will be donated to the cause.

Siano is the co-owner of JK Realty as well as a Board of Education commissioner. The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society raises funds to find cures for blood cancers and assist patients and families. Siano's Green Team hopes to raise \$100,000 between March 26 to June 4. To help, call Siano at 973-563-1449 or mail checks made to LLS to JK Realty, 270 Colfax Ave., Clifton, NJ 07013.

CHS Class of 1976 Fighting Mustang Johnny George (pictured) wants you all to be on notice. The Mustangs Bicentennial class will host its 50th reunion in June of 2026. Email georgesservice@gmail.com for more info.

CHS Class of 1975's 50th reunion is Nov. 15 at the Glen Ridge Country Club. Join the Facebook group "CHS Class of 1975" or email CHS1975cliftonNJ@gmail.com.

Passaic County Clerk Danielle Ireland-Imhof and her staff will be at Clifton City Hall on March 27 from 10 am to 1 pm to process passports, issue notary oaths and veterans photo ID cards. Appointments are required at passaic-countyclerk.org. Call the Clerk's office at 973-225-3690.

The Red Hat Angels, a team in the Relay for Life of Clifton/Rutherford, hosts a March 19 fundraiser at Wendy's, from 5-8 pm. No flier is needed. The team will receive 15% off dine-in, take-out, and drive-thru orders. The American Cancer Society's Relay for Life is a celebration of hope and survivorship. Team members take turns walking or running on the track, from 6 pm to midnight on May 31 at Tryon Field in Rutherford. For info, visit secure.acsevents.org. Visit cancer.org or follow on Instagram @rfl_cliftonrutherfordnj for updates.

Clifton Education Foundation's Tricky Tray is May 30, 6 pm, at the Boys & Girls Club. The CEF is a nonprofit volunteer organization and 100% of the event proceeds will fund classroom grants, programming and initiatives in the Clifton Public Schools. Interested in being a sponsor? Gold: \$500, Silver: \$400, Bronze: \$300. Donations are tax deductible. Make checks to Clifton Education Foundation, and mail to P.O. Box 2071, Clifton, NJ 07015. Email Loretta Ahmad for details: cliftonef1998@gmail.com.

The Friends of the Clifton Library will celebrate 40 years in April as it kicks off festivities from April 7-12 during National Library Week. New members are welcomed. Visit the Allwood Branch, 44 Lyall Rd., or Main Memorial, 292 Piaget Ave., from 10 am to 6 pm most days. The Friends meeting is April 30, 6 pm, at the Main Library. with a presentation by genealogist Laura Cubbage Draper. Free and open to the public, The Friends raise funds to enhance library services and encourage awareness of services. More at cliftonpl.org/friends-of-the-library.

Power of One walkers meet at Richardson Scale Park, 680 Van Houten Ave. Mondays and Wednesdays at 8 am for an hour walk. To connect or for info: powerofoneccom.org

Echo Unity Series presents “Clifton Behind the Scenes” for residents to learn about the city’s government in an up-close tour of city hall. Learn how the city departments operate and what they offer, plus explore the city’s grounds and landmarks. Hosted by Councilwoman Rosemary Pino, dates are March 26, April 10, May 15, June 12, Sept. 9, Oct. 15, Nov. 13, and Dec. 11. English and Spanish sessions are 5:30-7 pm and 7-8:30 pm, respectively. Visit @rosiepino04 on Instagram.

The “Barefoot in the Park” fundraiser is a production by Kismet Performing Arts Theatre and the Clifton Arts Center. Show dates are March 7, 8, 9 & 14, 15, 16. Details: kismetperformingartists theatre.wordpress.com.

The Clifton Arts Center is planning visual exhibits for now through 2030. Visual artists and groups are invited to enliven the CAC’s exhibition space by showcasing their work. The CAC provides 1,800 sq-ft of modern, well-lit, HVAC gallery exhibit space on the grounds of the Municipal Complex, 900 Clifton Ave. Proposals are welcome on a rolling basis. Members of the Advisory Board of Trustees of the Clifton Arts Center and city staff of the Office of Arts Center review submissions. Application submissions must be presented and prepared in their entirety. For additional info, visit the CAC at cliftonartscenter.org. To submit: email Roxanne Cammilleri at rcammilleri@cliftonnj.org or call 973-472-5499.

YWCA Northern New Jersey Summer Camp offers day camp programs in Mahwah. Kids ages 5-12 will participate in arts & crafts, STEM, archery, boating, kayaking, swimming, music, and more. Registration info at ywcannj.org/summer-camp. Nine bus stops are offered, including at the Y’s Clifton office, at 1373 Broad St. Pick-up at 8 am, drop-off at 5:45 pm. Call 201-345-4616 or jfernandez@ywca.org.

On Feb. 3, Governor Phil Murphy signed a bill into law that modifies the number of petition signatures required for candidates to be placed on primary, general, nonpartisan municipal, and school election ballots. Petition filing deadlines remain the same. Call the County Clerk’s Office, at 973-881-4127 or email countyclerkelections@passaiccountynj.org. Visit vote.nj.gov or passaiccountytvotes.org for election information.



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“SEWING” SUPPORT

The wheel just keeps on spinning for Barclay Dunn — the sewing wheel, that is.

Dunn, an 18-year resident, started knitting about 35 years ago. Pursuing it avidly was a way to “create things and satisfy my tactile senses.” Now, Dunn puts her skills to philanthropic use — and her Allwood neighbors have taken notice.

“While walking my dog on Chelsea Rd. near the Allwood Library, I came across a neighbor who had set up a stand in front of their house featuring a wide selection of pottery,” wrote Samantha DeRose to our magazine. “The sign indicated that the pottery was handmade and people could take any piece they liked in exchange for a donation.”

The artist was Dunn, who told passersby that she would match their donations and send funds to organizations aiding those affected by the California wildfires. DeRose, who selected a blue vase, learned later that Dunn has an Ebay shop with hand-knitted items in which proceeds are donated to relief efforts for Ukraine. Visit Dunn’s Ebay shop: ebay.com/usr/kewpiedoll00.

“It was a nice experience stumbling upon one of many acts of kindness and generosity in Clifton,” said DeRose.

More Than She Needs

Privilege and personal luck are strong motivators that encourage Dunn daily.

When speaking with Dunn, 61, at the end of last month, she had only recently begun selling her pottery. The plan was to donate the proceeds, because she didn’t want to get drawn into social media and all that comes with it, including sales and metrics.

“I had enough of that in my career, and I just want to make pottery,” explained Dunn, a software engineer by trade. “But I have a lot of pieces now ... [and] they can certainly bring joy to folks.”

Amidst traveling and recovering from being sick, Dunn’s total amount raised with her pottery to help those affected by the wildfires was \$50 by the end of January. Dunn hopes to pull in more when the weather is nicer. Knitting will also remain a well-meaning hobby.



“I am an expert knitter and I love doing it, but I already have more than I need for a lifetime,” said Dunn. “So I knit whatever I want [and] when I’m finished, I remember I just don’t need another shawl or hat.”

Throughout the years, Dunn has experimented with dyeing spinning fiber and yarn. It was after she moved to New Jersey that her husband, Adam Gugliciello, bought her a spinning wheel. A pastime for the married couple of 15 years is gardening together and growing cotton.

Pottery was always on the periphery, and Dunn even studied painting and sculpture at Princeton University before putting her artistic pursuits on hold. It returned to the forefront after she retired three years ago. She goes to Montclair Mud Clay Studio, which she said is good for both casual visitors and serious potters.

She encouraged others, particularly those well-positioned to give back, to do what they can.

“I have long had the motto, ‘I have more than I need,’ said Dunn. “It sounds like a horrible boast, but it is actually a really useful grounding mechanism for anyone. I’ve been saying it, and believing it, since I was eking it out, living paycheck-to-paycheck in my 20’s.”

Rose (Gibba) Klemans is no stranger to a good birthday party—in fact she has had 100 of them.

Klemans turned 100 years young on March 6. The lifelong resident celebrated the milestone with friends and family at the Mountainside Inn. Her daughter Cathleen remarked that last year's celebration at the same venue was a "huge success", with people coming in from all over the country.

"As I was making phone calls [for this year], people were responding immediately that they would definitely be coming," said Cathleen. "So I'm sure it will be something to remember." Klemans and her husband Clifford, who passed in 1976, had two daughters, Cathleen and Candy, pictured here with their mom.

Klemans, who drove until the age of 92, went to work straight out of nursing school. She pulled double shifts in the hospital and spent her career as a Registered Nurse at Passaic Beth Israel Hospital, where she retired as Nurse Manager when she was aged 79.

Klemans was an active member of the Association of periOperative Registered Nurses, Chapter 1. She was an elected Board member and served on multiple committees.



Separately, Klemans was an active delegate with the American Operating Room Nurses and traveled to conventions all over the United States.

"She went on cruises every year to the Bahamas with my sister, she traveled to Ireland years ago with a group," Cathleen told us in 2024. "I also drove up with her a few times to Canada. She's well-traveled and well-rounded."

Now Klemans will join her church, Ukrainian Orthodox Holy Ascension Church, 635 Broad St., as a centenarian. Klemans held several elected positions on their Board, including Treasurer and Recording Secretary.

She finds ways to stay active. Klemans spent days in the Summer of 2024 relaxing amongst nature in her backyard. On Sundays, she watched the church's sermon via live stream.

Come December, Klemans went with family and friends to the Poconos for the week before Christmas. The group took day trips to restaurants, casinos, and ski resorts.

"This year we went to Mount Airy Casino again, where Rose tried her luck on the penny machines," said Cathleen, "and then we had a fantastic buffet lunch."

And what a wonderful life it continues to be!



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Musician. Composer. Student. Sterling H. Kimble has many roles, but perhaps his most impressive is the one that he's destined for: Maestro.

The CHS ninth-grade Mustang is well on his way. Kimble's themes and variations in his original composition "Caribbean Caprice" earned him a seat as one of three finalists in the New Jersey Young Composers Competition. Kimble (CHS 2028) performed his work at the finals during the NJMEA Conference on Feb. 22 in the Atlantic City Convention Center.

The competitive program evaluates submissions based on originality, compositional technique, maturity, and overall appeal. Also in attendance were Kimble's parents, Barbara and Augusta, and CHS Music teacher Jennifer Liddle. Each student was interviewed before presenting their piece to the audience. Each piece received a musical critique from one of the judges.

"Sterling received a lot of really positive feedback and encouragement for 'Caribbean Caprice,'" said Liddle. "The judge highlighted that the overall spirit of the piece clearly shows that travel has introduced him to the music of

other cultures, and that this was strongly represented in his compositional style. He is encouraged to continue writing and working with other young musicians, including those at CHS."

Kimble did not come home with the gold, but his achievement underscores his individual talent and "Clifton Schools' commitment to nurturing musical creativity." The competition requires participants to submit original works that demonstrate personal style, proper musical notation, and professional-level understanding of their chosen medium. Each submission undergoes blind review by a panel of NJMEA-approved judges.

Liddle acknowledged the youth of all three finalists, who were either eighth or ninth graders. The finalists were either new or relatively self-taught in terms of music composition.

"The overall impression is that there is a bright future for young composers in New Jersey, and that Sterling and the other two finalists are encouraged to continue learning and writing so that they can continue to grow as musicians and composers," said Liddle.

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Mustangs of the Month



Evaluna Castro, Peyton Greenaway, Manan Intwala, Alexander Jakimowicz.

Here are the **Mustangs of the Month** for March 2025.

These four students, one from each grade, were selected by the vice principals at CHS, to be spotlighted for their personal achievements and school-wide contributions.

Evaluna Castro – Freshman

Evaluna Castro enjoys dance and theater at CHS and knows that her future plans involve taking advantage of the college credit programs. But the freshman keeps an eye on the past.

“I like [History class], because it gives me a picture into the past,” said Castro. “[It] shows me how everything was built from nothing and how our ancestors have worked to give us the society that we live in today.”

Castro added that she loves “learning about facts.” In a time when asking someone what their favorite era is might get you a response related to Taylor Swift’s discography, this Generation Alpha student does have a scholarly response.

“[It] would have to be the French Revolution,” she said.

The teacher that has greatly influenced her is her Algebra tutor, Ms. Regina LoMartire.

“Ever since she’s been tutoring me in Math, she has pushed me to put more effort into all of my classes, not just Algebra,” said Castro (CHS 2028). “She inspires my desire to be better and get recognition for my grades.”

Castro is involved with the Spring Musical. Focusing on her studies ties back to her mother, who she describes as a “go-getter.”

“She inspires me to do better and accomplish all my academic goals.”

Peyton Greenaway – Sophomore

Competition dance, musicals, voice lessons — Peyton Greenaway does it all.

She is keeping an open mind about CHS’ academic programs, but her hard working personality is hereditary as far as she is concerned.

“My mom [inspires me the most], because she’s the strongest person I know,” said Greenaway (CHS 2027). “She is successful, intelligent, and a beautiful woman, not only on the outside but on the inside as well. I aspire to be like her every day.”

Greenaway’s favorite school subject is English. The class is an opportunity for her to “express myself through words since I’m shy at times.” It challenges Greenaway to think critically and it expands her knowledge and vocabulary, while allowing her “to be myself.”

Greenaway is all about balance with her academics and extracurriculars. Her most influential teacher is Mr. Leonid Weismantel. Greenaway credited the Music teacher as providing a “place of comfort, laughter, and encouragement.”

“His dedication, curiosity, and passion for teaching inspire me to push myself every day to be the best version of myself possible,” she said. “Not only inside the classroom, but far beyond it as well. Words can’t even express how grateful I feel to have him as a teacher. Anyone would be lucky to have him.”

Manan Intwala – Junior

Manan Intwala knows what it means to hustle both on and off the court. That is why the CHS Mustang has set his sights on his future being at Princeton University and then later on being one of the next professional athletes.

Intwala (CHS 2026) competes in Outdoor Track & Field and plays AAU basketball. Amateur Athletic Union basketball is a competitive basketball league for players who are not part of a school team.

“Physical Education [is my favorite class], because I can show [others] my talent in basketball,” said Intwala.

The teacher that Intwala chose as the most influential to him is Social Studies teacher Mr. Joseph Voto, because “he makes class more entertaining and easier to learn.” One of his significant hurdles at CHS has included trying to get “good grades on tests.”

“At first I struggled with test scores,” said Intwala. “But by practicing and studying, I have been able to improve my grades.”

That influence and encouragement to continue bettering himself comes from those around him. It also comes from those who are among the closest to Intwala. There are clear people who he said inspire him.

“My friends,” he said, “because they push me to go harder and not give up.”

Alexander Jakimowicz – Senior

Alexander Jakimowicz has a few months left before deciding where he’ll attend college this fall, but he knows that he will major in Electrical Engineering.

The Mustang is a member of Academic Decathlon. His favorite subject is Physics, but his most influential teacher is in another classroom.

“I have had Mr. John O’Reilly for both U.S. History and Psychology, and he has managed to make both subjects engaging and fun,” said Jakimowicz (CHS 2025). “He’s been nothing but supportive both years that I have had him, and he’s a large reason why I enjoyed my time at CHS as much as I have.”

School wasn’t always an easy time, which many of Jakimowicz’s peers can attest to after they experienced remote learning. Jakimowicz’s first year back in the classroom after the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown was his freshman year.

“It was difficult to adjust to an entirely new school after spending most of the previous year at home,” he said. “Thankfully, both my friends and my teachers helped me get used to the new environment.”

He also credited two other people.

“My parents have been my greatest source of inspiration and support, acting as role models and helping me whenever I’m struggling in life or school.”



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MUSTANG

SPORTS

By Tom Szieber

Clifton made another impressive run to the North I, Group V boys wrestling championship match, but came up short against a Passaic County Tech team that, this season, had its number.

The third-seeded Mustangs (16-8) beat No. 6 North Bergen, 38-29, and No. 2 Livingston, 35-28, on Feb. 10 to earn a spot in the sectional finals. But by Feb. 12, they simply didn't have the firepower to defeat the PCTI Bulldogs, who took the trophy with a 42-24 win.

The Clifton grapplers took the mat in their final team competition—the District 6 Tournament—on Feb. 22, finishing a respectable third. The Mustangs' 122.5-point total was just six less than second place host Fair Lawn, but significantly behind Mount Olive's 295.

Four Mustangs won individual district titles—three of them beating Mt. Olive opposition in the final round. Senior 165-pounder Joe Geleta (33-4) pinned soph Scott Coppolo, junior 175-pounder Joe Dumeng (25-7) earned an 8-3 decision over junior Stephen Hayek, and senior 190-pounder Nick Doktor (28-2) beat senior Tyler Cumming, 9-5.

Isaac Cazimoski (33-4), Clifton's 285-pound senior, defeated Hasbrouck Heights junior Noel Cruz, 4-0, to take his bracket. Jarrett Rodriguez (31-6), a sophomore, took second in the 120-pound weight class. All five qualified for the Region 2 Tournament at Mt. Olive, which began Feb. 28.

Top: at the State Sectional on Feb. 22, Mustang medalists Junior Volodymyr Kozliuk, Seniors Lamarr Olive, Wander Dilone, Aaron Hatcher, Mia De Vita and Junior Tarik Pesocan. Senior Nick Doktor takes down Tyler Cumming in Mt. Olive.



Girls Basketball finishes strong

The 2024-25 season was trying for Clifton Girls Basketball, but the Mustangs showed incredible resolve by winning its final four games.

Led by first-year head coach Lou Lotito and junior guard Christina Briguglio, Clifton defeated Hoboken, Mary Help, Bergen Tech and Orange to end their campaign 7-20. That mark may not have been the Mustangs' goal, but the way they closed out the winter was encouraging to Lotito.

"It is just growth and buying into our plan," Lotito said. "Our message was that if you come to practice and work, things start happening. I feel proud of [this team]. The seniors never gave up, the underclassmen saw that, and we just kept going."

Briguglio produced games of 17 points, 18 points and 25 points against Hoboken, Bergen Tech and Orange, respectively, and had a 10-steal performance against the Knights.

As a team, the Mustangs' scoring improved tremendously over the last several weeks. For context, in Clifton's first 23 games, it reached or exceeded 35 points just four times (going 3-1). The Mustangs hit that mark three times in their final four contests (going 3-0).

Kozliuk, Phillip lead Clifton track to MOC

Two Mustang tracksters advanced to the March 2 state Meet of Champions at Ocean Breeze Athletic Complex on Staten Island—one with a big performance in the Group IV meet and the other thanks to outstanding showings throughout the year.

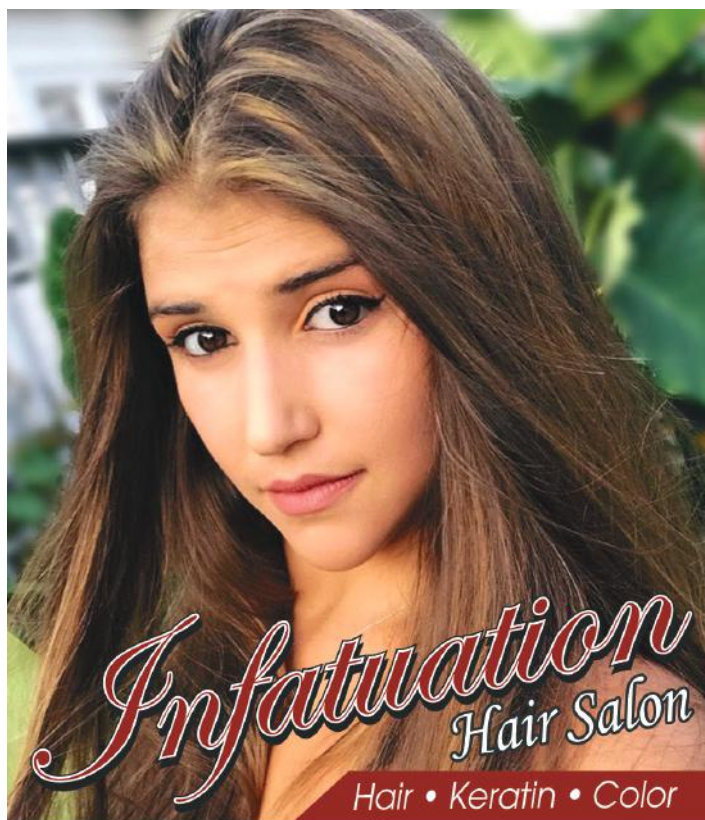
Junior Volodymyr Kozliuk continued his exceptional winter by taking fifth in the group meet with a 6'2" jump, just a week after attaining a 6'4" in his first-place sectional showing.

Both competitions took place at the Rothman Orthopaedics Sports Complex in Toms River.

Senior Nathaniel Phillip qualified for the MOC, as well, despite there being no long jump or triple jump event at the section or group meets, thanks to previous high scores.

Seniors Lamarr Olive and Aaron Hatcher and junior Tarik Pesocan reached the group stage in the 3200, high jump and pole vault, respectively, as did senior Wander Dilone in the 55 and high jump.

Senior Mia DeVita, who took sixth in the sectional meet, finished 15th in the 400 in the Group IV competition. Clifton boys won the Passaic County title in January, as well.



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Girls Wrestlers make gains in year two

Mustang girls wrestling, led by head coach Zuzana Geleta, finished 3-2 in dual matches, with several Mustangs having solid individual seasons. Freshman 114-pounder Lillianne Addabbo (11-8) beat Lakeland's Gabriella Jaquez by pinfall in just over a minute in the first round of the NJSIAA Girls North I Region tournament but fell to third-seeded senior Grace Riley of Paramus Catholic by 17-1 technical fall in the third period. Senior Samara Monahan, a 126-pounder, went 8-6, while junior 120-pounder Ruth Lara went 11-6.

Clifton United bounced from playoffs

A memorable season for Clifton United ice hockey came to an end on Feb. 24, as it fell to Morris Knolls-Hills, 5-4, in the first round of the North Jersey, Public Co-Op tournament at Wayne's Ice Vault Arena. United, the No. 7 seed, built a 2-0 lead in the first period on goals by junior forwards Ryan Montana and Eric Ring.



Clifton United junior Trevor Rascher had 19 goals and 22 assists this season.

The Golden Eagles—last year's champion in the bracket who has struggled this season—bounced back with a four-goal second stanza and got the game winning goal from junior forward Eric Bourdon in the third.

Clifton United ended at 11-9. Montana, of Cedar Grove, led the team in points with 48 (31 goals, 17 assists), while junior forward Trevor Rascher of Clifton was behind him with 41 (19 goals, 22 assists). United will lose senior defense Jonathan Montana (40 points; 11 goals, 29 assists) to graduation this June.

"It really was a great year," said head coach Mike Santosuosso. "We ran to a stretch where guys were sick and we dropped a few, but I am really proud of them and they won the [Big North Patriot Division]."

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Swimmers earn postseason honors

It was a tough season in the pool for Clifton's swimmers, though several individuals earned postseason recognition for their efforts.

The boys went 2-11 overall, but sophomore Julio Montero earned second team All-Passaic honors in the 100 butterfly. Junior Adrian Wilson-King and senior Benjamin Santana both received honorable mentions.

The Mustang girls, meanwhile, went 3-9, with senior Renata Chyshkevych and freshman Antonia Kormos also receiving county honorable mentions.

Zwiebel has stellar year; bowlers reach states

Sarah Zwiebel had a noteworthy junior campaign, qualifying for the NJSIAA Individual Bowling Tournament on Feb. 27 at Bowlero in North Brunswick. Zwiebel finished 2024-25 with a 170.63 average in 24 games (not counting the individual tournament), totaling 4,095 pins.

Sophomore Jeremias Granados had the highest season average among Clifton's male bowlers with 160.1.



Junior Sarah Zwiebel finished with a 170 average.

Mustang girls finished the year with a 1-13 record, falling 2-0 to Union City in the first round of the North, Group IV tourney at Bowl Rite Lanes. The boys went 2-12 on the year and lost 2-0 to Ridgewood in the first round of the North I, Group IV bracket at Bowler City in Hackensack.

Boys Basketball falls in first round

The Mustang boys hoopsters had an up-and-down season, but head coach Mike Cadmus remains proud of the effort shown by the Mustangs.

"I hoped to be able to build off last year, but I knew we had a lot of inexperience," Cadmus said. "But we really turned it on in the second half of the year, and we are really looking forward to [our underclass contributors] coming back next year."

The Mustangs ended the year at 10-16, falling to top-seeded Ridgewood, 78-48, in their Feb. 27 first round North I, Group IV postseason matchup.

Guard Aaden Nolan and forward Yandel Nina, both currently sophomores, will be among the key returnees next year.

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The Fette family is four generations strong. The family behind Fette Auto Group will be honored April 3 alongside the Clifton Health Department at the Boys & Girls Club's Great Futures Gala. The Fette family has a relationship with The Club that dates back to founder Henry Fette, who put the Fette Ford nameplate on thousands of vehicles. Fette Auto Group is a Ford, Infiniti, and Kia dealer that serves Clifton and beyond at the junction of Routes 3 and 46.



Top, John and Kristin Fette with sons Hart and Dan. Second photo, some of the Clifton Health Department team.

Clifton's Democratic Club's spring breakfast is March 8, 9 am at Yesterday's, 70 Main Ave. Tickets are \$30. RSVP Club President John Pogorelec, Jr., Esq. at 973-493-0508.

Clifton Firefighters Foundation's Tricky Tray is March 21 at the Boys & Girls Club. Doors open at 6 pm. Admission is \$30 which includes one general prize ticket sheet. B.Y.O. food and drink. Pre-sale ticket bundles are: 3 general prize tickets, 2 grand prize tickets, 1 super grand prize ticket. Bundles purchased by March 7 are \$60. Questions? Email foundation@cliftonfmba21.org. Mail/make checks payable by March 14 to Clifton Firefighters Foundation, FMBA Local 21, Attn: Tricky Tray, 219 Valley Rd., Clifton, NJ 07013. Visit cliftonfmba21.org for more info.





ABC's "What Would You Do?" host John Quiñones with a customer in the Tick Tock Diner. At right, three actors and a customer from the Feb. 19 episode.



We ordered hash browns, not heckling. On Feb. 19, ABC's "What Would You Do?" set up its hidden cameras and actors to catch candid reactions from unaware patrons in the Tick Tock Diner, at 281 Allwood Rd. The famed Rt. 3 eatery is known for its old-school, 1940s art deco

decor, but its patrons' thinking is more progressive. The long-running show provoked reactions from diners who witnessed a bully tease who host John Quiñones called "asymmetric" couples. Watch the Clifton segments on YouTube @WhatWouldYouDo.



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Birthdays & Celebrations - March 2025



Doris Struyk turns 92 on March 10, pictured with granddaughter Nicole Rosoline-Peterson and her husband Kenny Peterson (CHS '08). Congratulations to **Corey & Michelle Genardi**, celebrating their 33rd anniversary on March 28. Their daughter **Bianca Eda Genardi** turns 19 on March 2. **Lynn Grosser's** 23rd birthday is March 21, pictured with her mom Mercedes. **Petro Wislocki** is 84 on March 7 and his bride **Julie** turns 70 on March 30.



Crystal Castro will be 17 on March 21. **Ruth Basta** daughter of **Medhat** and **Melba Basta** of Clifton celebrates her 24th birthday on March 27. **Elaine Sassine** will be 77 on March 15, the Ides of March. **Colleen Murray** turns 85 on March 20. **Stephany Naomi Bernales** is 31 on March 19. **Rosemary Trinkle Baran** turns 64 on March 30.

Julie Generalli Dominick.....	3/1
Kathleen Pocoek	3/1
Meaghan Franko	3/1
Kenzie Lord.....	3/3
Amelia Lara	3/3
Amanda Perez	3/3
Amelia Ipenza.....	3/3
Valerie Godowsky	3/5
Alice Paxton	3/5
Patricia Vigh	3/5
Carol Crudele	3/6
Ted Grzybowski	3/6
Pat Smith	3/8
Victoria Crudele	3/9
Pamela Culque.....	3/10
Tiffany Sabo	3/10
John Gorny.....	3/11
Eddie Gasior, Jr.....	3/12
Mike Pesaro	3/12
Victor Berdecia.....	3/13



John Vatasin is 37 on March 23. **Alex Fadil** hits 25 on March 12. **Zayden Oskar Buonafina** is 7 on March 13. **Dana Aref** is 20 on March 10.

Joann Szepietowski	3/13	Nenad Vuckovic	3/20
Diego Hernandez	3/15	Monica Ahmed	3/21
Tyler Hughes.....	3/15	George Andrikanich.....	3/22
Laura Lee	3/15	Elisabel Reyes.....	3/24
Samira Abdelhady	3/16	Carmen Rivera	3/24
Joanne Szepietowski	3/13	Kyle Hooyman	3/24
Suzanne Ciok.....	3/19	Cheryl Stetz.....	3/26
Janette Hughes.....	3/19	Suzanne Wachtler	3/26
Caitlin Lotorto	3/19	Michele Andrikanich	3/27
Holly Sorenson.....	3/20	Jennifer Mondelli	3/27



Casey Bivaletz is 35 on March 2 while **Lyla** turns 4 on March 21.



Debra (Matano) and Robert Gentiluomo celebrate their 45th wedding anniversary on March 20.

Nicholas Surgent3/27
 Aidan Tedesco3/27
 Muriel Curtin 3/28
 Francis Salonga3/31
 Paul McVeigh.....3/31
 Chris Kolodziej.....3/31

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Standing from left back: Alex, Junior & John
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