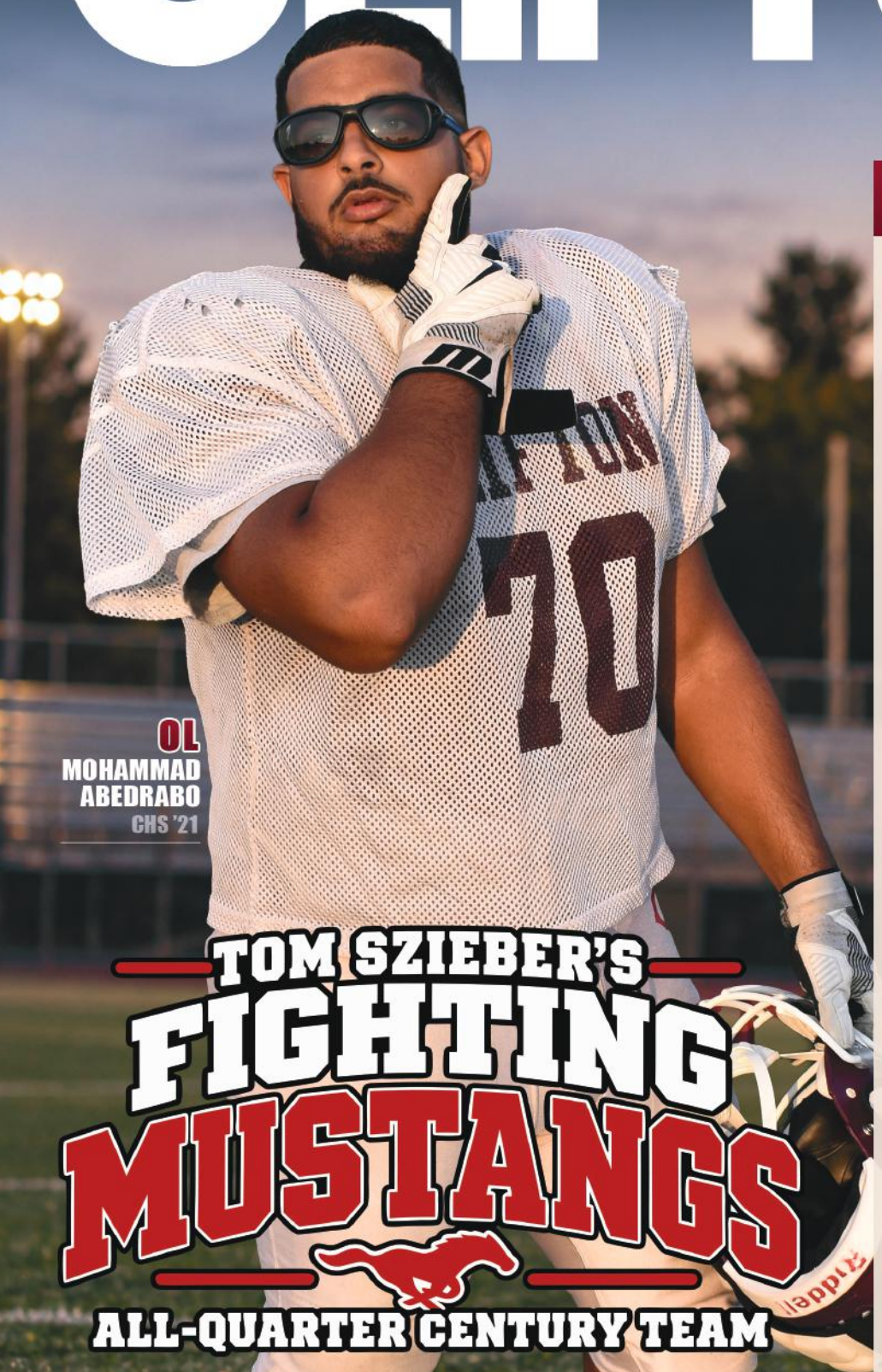
Clifton Merchant Magazine • Volume 31 • Issue 11 • November 6, 2026

CLIFTON

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MOHAMMAD ABEDRABO
CHS '21

TOM SZIEBER'S FIGHTING MUSTANGS ALL-QUARTER CENTURY TEAM

THE LINEUP



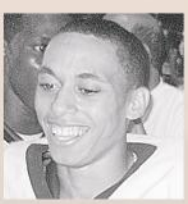
QB
KYLE VELLIS
CHS '22



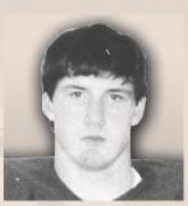
RB
DAVID MARTINEZ
CHS '19



LB
MATT DAVELLA
CHS '08



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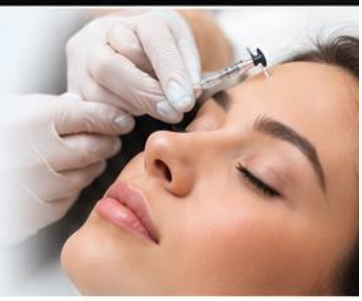
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From the **Editor,**
Tom Hawrylko, Sr.



You can't play basketball or even ping-pong at the Clifton Rec Center. But the city spends thousands annually to maintain it. Clifton should sell this building to a private firm and receive property tax income. Residents deserve a real Rec Center and the funds from this sale should go toward building a realistic center in Anzaldi Park.

Over the last few weeks about two dozen readers called to say thanks for our October edition, the all-in-one place where residents can read the views of the candidates who are running to serve Clifton.

To make that reader-friendly collection of what was to be 25 profiles, we began in April with the first batch of interviews for our May magazine. Picking up in October where we left off in May, Ariana Puzzo and I conducted phone or in-person interviews with all but two of the 19 City Council candidates, as well as six of those running for the Board of Education.

For the dozen candidates running for Passaic County Commissioner and Surrogate, as well as U.S. House and Senate, we worked from their websites and other sources to write a synopsis of their positions, also in October.

When I look at the work we do, I get a little high and know it's an honor to provide this service to our readers. And thanks to those who called, wrote or spoke with me, even at 69 years of age, it still is great to hear an attaboy.

When I started this magazine back in 1995, it was with the goal of serving the general interest of our hometown and doing this kind of community public service.

My team and I have done it now for 32 years and I still get a kick out of getting good reviews, a confirmation that journalism, public service and positive storytelling all mix well in this home-grown magazine.

As we go to press on Nov. 3 at 6 pm, the election is history and seven top vote getters will take office on Jan. 1, 2027. Tradition dictates (but not law) the seven to meet on the first day of the new term and nominate one from among themselves to be the mayor, usually the top vote getter.

Four years ago in 2022, the tradition became a panic when Ray Grabowski finished first but did not get the majority vote needed during the first meeting. As we hit the streets on Jan. 6, 2023, public chatter rallied for tradition and people spoke at the second Council meeting and Grabowski received the majority vote and took the gavel.

Clifton politics since then has grown more course, mean and disrespectful. So to the new Mayor and Council, please address our shared future with grace and decorum and find ways to compromise and build upon our future.

Clifton Merchant Magazine
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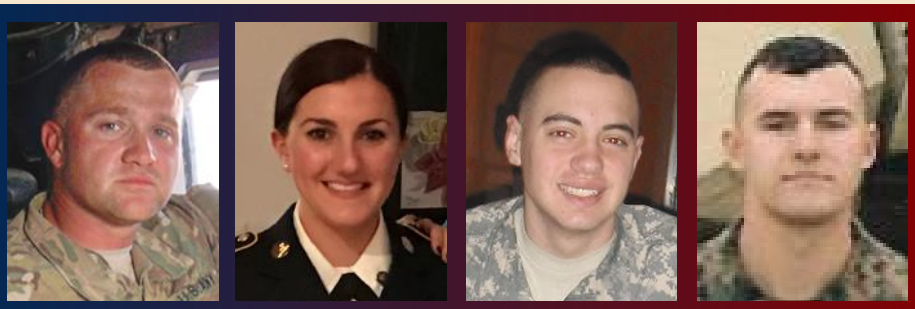
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By Ariana Puzzo

There's more than one way to remember the lives and sacrifices of those who served our nation during war and peace. One idea is to create a street banner program, sort of like the designs we created here. That's what veterans and community-driven supporters aim to do by bringing a Hometown Heroes military banner program to Clifton. Since late 2025, it was an idea brought up by Councilman Antonio Latona that has gained traction.

Now, with support from veterans and the Clifton Avenue of Flags, it is seeming more likely that we'll be able to walk down Clifton or Van Houten Ave. and see some of the individuals who put their lives on the line for our country.

It might be our own family members, colleagues or noted community figures, or someone we have yet to learn about — like Helene Lenkowec, at left, who served in the U.S. Coast Guard during World War II, from 1943 to 1946.

It began when Latona saw how other municipalities honor veterans.

"I met one of the VPs at Gates Flag & Banner," said Latona, a retired Clifton Firefighter and retired US Air Force Senior Master Chief. "I said, 'I want to get this going in Clifton', and I spoke to different groups who said, 'Oh, yeah. Ten or 15 years ago, we were talking about this, but it never got off the ground.'"

Other local veterans who support the effort include: Lieutenant Colonel Michael Gielbeda (Air Force), First Lieutenant Ted Skripzak (US Army), Electronics Technician – Navigation Edward Farnon (US Navy), Specialist Tom Killman (Army), and Senior Airman Ryan Farnon (Air Force).

Gates Flag & Banner could provide the materials, with a banner and bracket costing around $250. Funds can be raised through organizations or family members can offer to pay for the printing and installation.



Dutch Hoogstraten, George Telesh, Bill Eakins, Pat Salerno, Mario Talamari.



Guy Tulp, Thomas Dando, George McClelland, Bohdan Kowal.



A committee can be created to set guidelines on which veterans receive a banner. Whether it comes from families, businesses, nonprofits, or anyone else eager to help raise funds, one thing is certain: It won't be a city-funded project.

But it will honor those who were likely involved in local veterans affairs, whether it was with the organizations now serving our city. Among them: the Athenia Veterans Post on Huron Ave., the Disabled American Veterans, Chapter 2 on Hazel St., the V.F.W. Post 7165 on Valley Rd., the American Legion Post 347 on Main Ave., or Post 8 Clifton on West 1st St.

An early proposal would be highlighting veterans who were killed in action and combat veterans. There could also be "Clifton notables", like the late Avenue of Flags co-founders John Biegel, Jr. and Walter Pruiksma. Biegel served with the US Marines in the Korean War and Pruiksma was a WWII vet who landed on Utah Beach in Normandy, France.

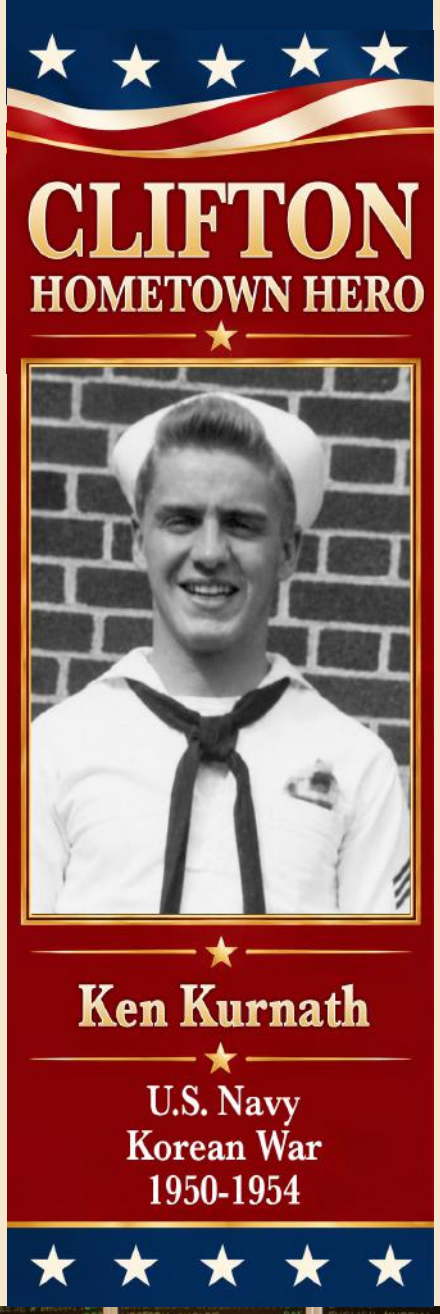
Latona also mentioned the late Thomas Miller, a Navy veteran of the Korean War who lived in our city for over 60 years. Miller served aboard the USS Pittsburgh, was Director of Veterans Services for 19 years, and was a member of Post 8, DAV, the V.F.W., and the Wounded Warriors of St. Philip's Church.

Gielbeda hopes the veterans inspire young people to learn more about veterans since they're not "strangers from distant places" but were once members of our community who many knew and still remember today.

"They coached our children, joined our community organizations, attended our houses of worship, and became our friends and neighbors," he said. "They called Clifton home." On these pages are photos of some of the folks we have written about over the decades. Hopefully this article will reignite the idea and sometime in 2027 Clifton will launch its own Hometown Heroes program.



Ed Holster, Bob Janscek, Bill Van Eck, Joe Rivera, Gil Collazo.



Clifton Veterans Parade

November 8

Kenneth Kurnath will lead the Veterans Parade along Van Houten Ave and and into the City Hall complex on Nov. 8, where over 2,300 displays of patriotism will greet him at Clifton's Avenue of Flags. Step-off is 2 pm on Huron Ave. across from the Athenia Veterans Post.

Kurnath served aboard the USS Cambria from 1951-1953, an attack transport, and was brought back to active U.S. Navy service in 1950 due to the Korean War. Cambria alternated between local operations, training exercises in the Caribbean, training off Labrador, and deployments with the U.S. 6th Fleet in the Mediterranean Sea.

The always colorful Kurnath, who turns 96 on April 12, is synonymous with public education, community service, and Mustang sports. He's been married for 62 years to Marianne, a former educator, and they live in Dutch Hill.

Looking back at his time in the Navy, he called it a great four years of learning. His duty station aboard the Cambria wasn't considered 'round the clock. "I worked in the laundry division while we were in the Med. Our job was to keep the sheets clean and make sure officers' uniforms were properly ironed. We had 300 Marines aboard and they were pretty choosy about their uniforms."

The teen-aged Kurnath (CHS 1950) had no choice but to learn to be strong and independent and to save money. "We earned $110 a month. I used to send home $70 of that every month. I built a nice little nest egg over those four years."

He came home to Clifton in 1954, picked up a job at Roche in the yard and machine shop. Within a year, he enrolled at William Paterson, earning a teaching certificate. He taught sixth grade in Passaic's School 1. Rising through the ranks, he became a principal, a position he had for 26 years. He retired in 2000.

In 1993, Kurnath was one of 19 candidates to run for Clifton's first-elected Board of Education. He was one of three candidates to prevail and has been part of Clifton's social and civic life for decades, serving on various boards and as a member of the Mustangs Hall of Fame.



Ken Kurnath at George's Coffee Shop with some of his breakfast buddies, from left: Norm Tahan, Bruce Rubano and Ralph Davella.

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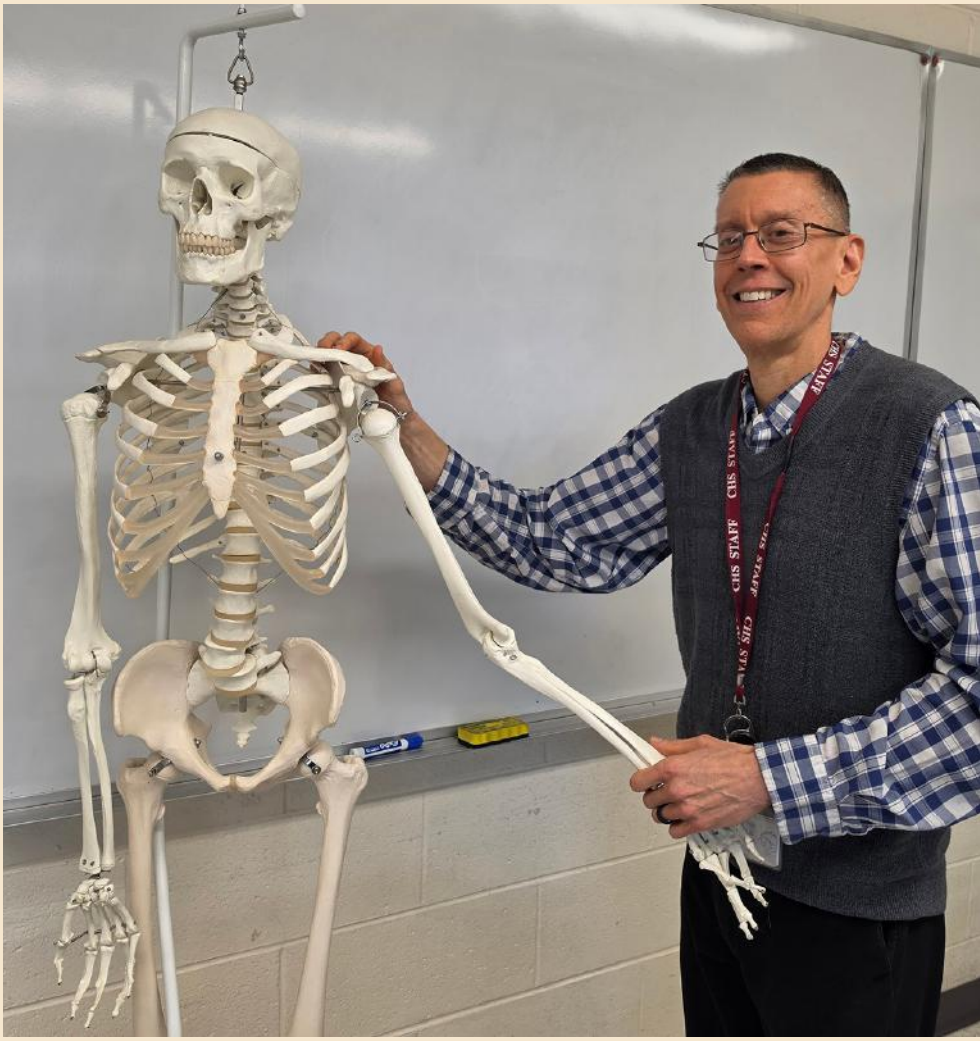
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CLIFTON
HOMETOWN HERO

From Navy Doc to Science Teacher

By Robert Niessen



The ocean stretched endlessly toward the horizon, the deck vibrated beneath thousands of tons of steel, and the hum of a nuclear-powered engine carried a crew across the world.

Aboard the USS Enterprise (CVN-65), a physician moved through the ship's corridors, preparing to care for the sailors who depended on him. Far from home, with the weight of responsibility resting on every member of the crew, Lieutenant Eric S. Campenot discovered that military service means more than merely wearing a uniform.

Today, the vast ocean as his daily work station has given way to the halls and classrooms of Clifton High School, where Campenot has taught science since 2019. The River Vale resident has traded the responsibilities of a US Navy medical officer for the opportunity to educate the next generation.

His journey to the classroom began long before he became a familiar face at CHS. From 1999 to 2010, Campenot served on active duty in the United States Navy. His decade-long service was marked by rigorous military training, service aboard one of the Navy's most historic vessels, and a deployment during a pivotal moment in American history.

Campenot's military training began in 1996 at Officer Indoctrination School (OIS) in Newport, Rhode Island. The six-week program prepared civilian professionals — including physicians, nurses, lawyers, and chaplains — to assume the responsibilities of military officers.

The training experience was defined by early morning wake-ups, inspections, physical fitness testing, and academic courses in leadership, protocol, administration, military law, ethics, and naval history.

"The tight schedule and physical demands were grueling at times," Campenot recalled. "That said, the overall experience was educational, constructive, and rewarding."

His preparation continued in 2000 with the Combat Casualty Care Course at Camp Bullis in San Antonio, Texas, followed by the Surface Warfare Medical Department Officer Indoctrination Course in Portsmouth, Virginia.

In 2001, he completed his Surface Warfare Medical Department Officer qualification aboard the USS Enterprise. As a physician assigned to the Navy's Medical Corps, he was commissioned as an Ensign.



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CLIFTON HOMETOWN HERO



Following medical school, Campenot was promoted to Lieutenant and eventually rose to the rank of Lieutenant Commander before his honorable discharge.

Among these milestones, one assignment would leave the most lasting impression: serving as the General Medical Officer aboard the USS Enterprise (CVN-65).

Commissioned in 1961, the Enterprise was the world's first nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, a groundbreaking vessel that transformed naval aviation and demonstrated the potential of nuclear propulsion at sea.

The ship's significance extended beyond its historic engineering for Campenot. It was home to the sailors with whom he served and the place where he experienced the extraordinary bonds that military service can create.

From August 2000 to 2002, Campenot served aboard the Enterprise, witnessing firsthand how military service could take on a deeper meaning during a defining moment in American history. When the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks shook the nation, the grief and uncertainty reached even those stationed thousands of miles from home.

For Campenot and his shipmates, the tragedy intensified their sense of duty and strengthened the bonds that held them together.

"Our hearts grieved for the fellow Americans who lost their lives and suffered great pain on this tragic day in United States history," said Campenot, 53.

In the aftermath of the attacks, the shared grief became a powerful source of unity. While he was deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Campenot experienced what he described as a "profound sense of camaraderie and patriotism" among his shipmates.

Their "shared sorrow forged a razor-sharp focus onboard the ship," where Campenot and his shipmates "worked as a cohesive unit to ensure the mission was accomplished."

The deployment's lasting significance lies not only in its place in history for Campenot, but in the unity



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CLIFTON HOMETOWN HERO

that it forged among those who served.

Faced with extraordinary circumstances, the sailors who were aboard the Enterprise leaned on one another, united by a shared mission and a commitment that transcended individual interests. It's this sense of collective purpose that Campenot hopes civilians come to grasp.

"I wish people could better understand the deep sense of patriotism and commitment to duty that defines military service," he said. "Serving in the military is all about helping one another and truly sacrificing for your fellow man in pursuit of a cause greater than oneself."

Though his surroundings have changed considerably, the values Campenot carried through his years in the Navy continue to shape his work at CHS.

The aircraft carrier's steel corridors have given way to science classrooms, and the sailors who once depended on his medical care have given way to students seeking his instruction and his guidance. Despite the changes, his journey reflects how the principles of service, responsibility, and commitment can endure long after the uniform is put away.

Campenot's message to those who have never served is a reminder that honoring veterans begins with recognizing the people behind the uniform.

"With that in mind, please remember to thank a veteran for their service," Campenot encouraged. "It truly is the greatest gift you can offer them."

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TOM SZIEBER'S FIGHTING MUSTANGS ALL-QUARTER CENTURY TEAM

I've been around the Clifton football program for a long time, writes Tom Szieber...

...I began playing youth football for the Junior Mustangs as a fourth-grader in 1996. I was a Clifton High freshman during the 2001 season and played offensive tackle and defensive end for the Mustangs, graduating in 2005 after four years in the program. Since then, I've served double duty as the Mustangs' statistician/historian (since 2005) and a local sports writer (since 2006).

Long story short—I've watched a lot of Mustang football in the 21st century. With 26 seasons in the books, it felt like the time to recognize the best of the best of this quarter—plus one—century.

Before we get going, let's talk about the methodology. Truthfully, there isn't a specific specific logic I employed. This All-Quarter Century Team is a product of my recollections playing for and covering the Mustangs since 2001.

I've tried my best to balance a number of factors, including era, team success, statistical impact and the "eye test" (that is, my observations of a player that may not be quantifiable). I didn't give much credence to postseason honors from local media, since making, say, an all-county team in one season may be significantly more difficult than in another.

"Running backs" includes fullbacks, halfbacks and every variation thereof. "Offensive line" will be represented by my top five selections, irrespective of whether they were centers, guards or tackles. "Defensive line" includes defensive ends, four-man front defensive tackles and nose tackles. I picked three "defensive backs"—not two corners, a free safety and a strong safety. You get the idea.

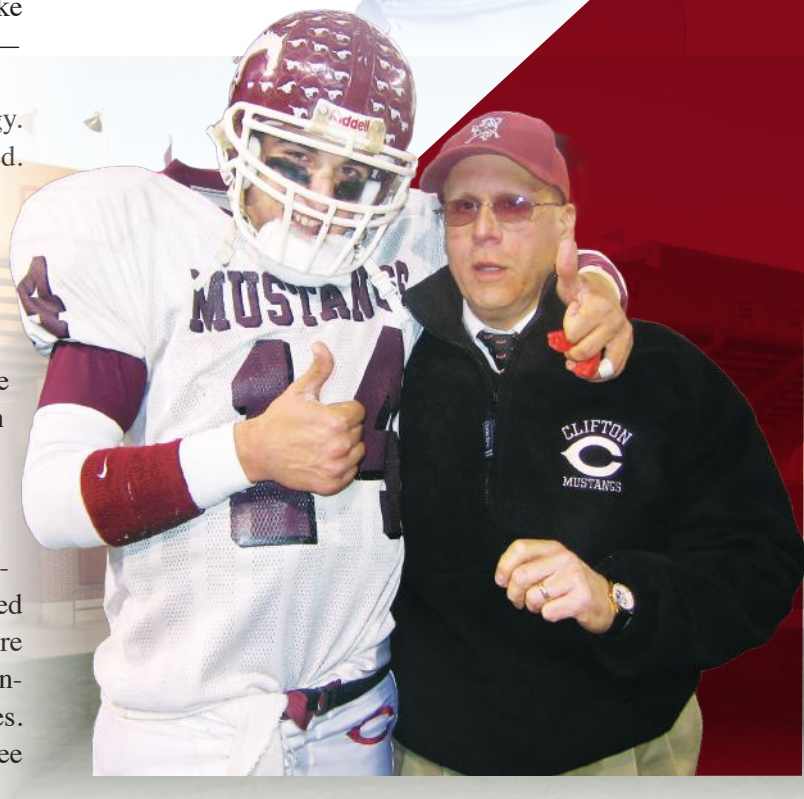
I've tried not to overlook any one obviously worthy. I don't think I have, but hey, I'm only human.

I suppose it's possible.



CHS '22

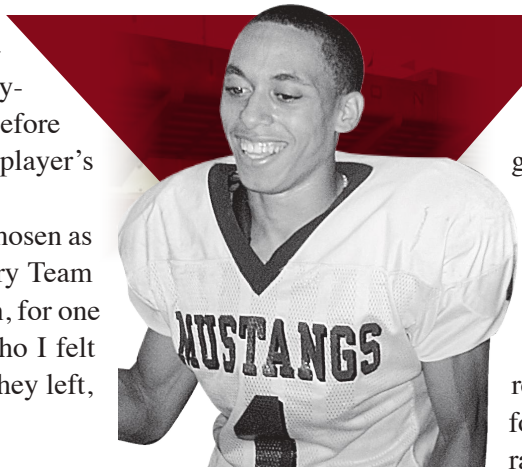
Kyle Vellis



Anthony Giordano, CHS '07 with Coach Ron Anello in 2006, when the Mustangs won the North I, Group IV championship at Giants Stadium. At right, Giordano being carried off the field in Randolph following Clifton's playoff semifinal win.



Armani Brinson, CHS '19; R.C. Scarpa, CHS '02; Patrick Ferrara, CHS '12; Randy Cabral, CHS '05.



I've noted each player's graduation year. Keep in mind that a player's final season came the year before (for example, a CHS Class of 2027 player's final football season is 2026).

One final note: the players I've chosen as members of the All-Quarter Century Team are in **bold.** Other players I mention, for one reason or another, are Mustangs who I felt deserved a shout-out for the mark they left, but did not land a spot on the team.

Let's get to it.

Under center, the choice is pretty clear. There have been some talented and successful quarterbacks this century, but none had the combination of talent, production and team success that **Kyle Vellis** (CHS 2022) did.

He was, of course, the signal-caller who led Clifton to the 2021 North II, Group V title, putting together one of the greatest performances ever by a Mustang quarterback in the sectional semifinal against Phillipsburg—when he went 14-for-19 for 233 yards and three touchdowns.

A week later, he connected with wide receiver Donovan Swasey on a 75-yard fourth-quarter score that capped Clifton's rally from an 18-0 halftime deficit to beat Paterson Eastside, 19-18, for the championship. For his career, he went 296-for-551 (53.7%) for 3,744 yards, 32 touchdowns and 15 interceptions.

Anthony Giordano (CHS 2007) is one of the most important figures in the program's recent history—if not all time—thanks to having led Clifton to its first sectional title in 33 years when the 2006 Mustangs beat Paterson Eastside for the North I, Group IV crown.



Patrick Ferrara (CHS 2012) was the only four-year starter this century, while early-2000s QBs like R.C. Scarpa (CHS 2002) and Randy Cabral (CHS 2005) were dual threats before that was the norm.

Armani Brinson (CHS 2019) had it all—pocket presence, accuracy, speed and a stellar deep ball. He went 106-for-204 (51.9%) for 1,554 yards, 15 touchdowns and 11 interceptions in two seasons as a starter (plus some limited action as a sophomore).

FIGHTING MUSTANGS



David Martinez
CHS '19

with Coach
Ralph Cinque

In 2007, Matt Davella (CHS '08) at center, getting the Mustangs fired up. Inset below: Christian Boneparte, CHS '20.



Clifton has had no shortage of great running backs and, frankly, there are some outstanding ones who won't make this story because of the sheer volume of standouts. So I gave the nod to those who were simply the most productive.

David Martinez (CHS 2019) was a workhorse who had back-to-back monster seasons as a junior and senior. In 2017, he carried the ball 239 times for 1,434 yards and 15 scores; in 2018, he rushed for 1,573 yards and 15 touchdowns on 235 attempts. He finished his career with 517 carries, 3,228 yards and 33 TDs.

Christian Boneparte (CHS 2020) stepped in after Martinez's graduation and had a senior season for the ages, running the ball 266 times for 1,604 yards and 10 touchdowns. While the statistics from older eras can be spotty, Martinez is believed to be the Mustangs' career rushing leader (I've been unable to verify numbers for George Telesh in the late 1950s).

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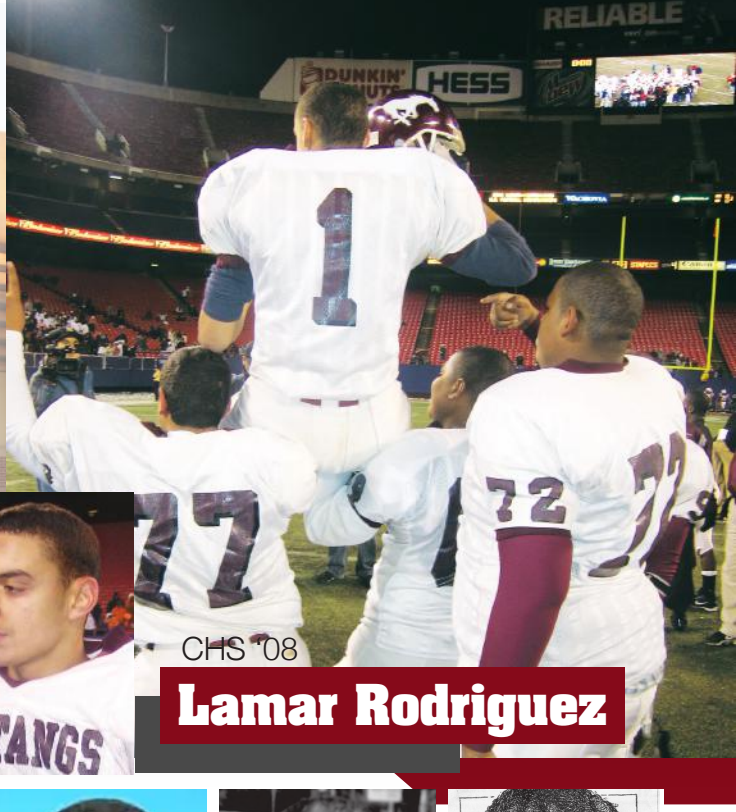
Jacob Maldonado, CHS '22; Bryan Feliciano CHS '22; Donovan Swasey, CHS '22.

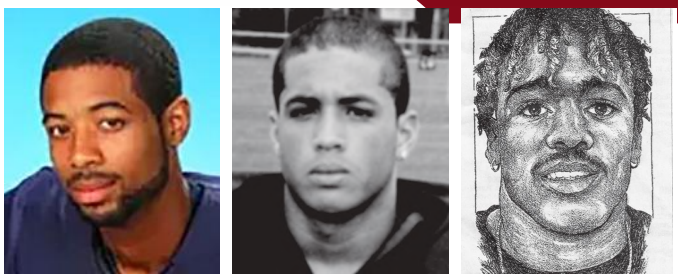
Martinez's 2018 total appears to have been a single season program record, topping the last-known high of 1,546 yards set by Paul Fego in 1975, before Boneparte surpassed it the following year.

Matt Davella (CHS 2008) was a prototype Wing-T fullback who combined with halfbacks Derrick Stroble (CHS 2007) and Louis Feliciano (CHS 2007) to fuel Clifton's 2006 title run.

Ray Ramirez (CHS 2004) was a bruising runner who embodied the attitude of the Parlavecchio era and was the feature back during Clifton's 2003 playoff season.

Emmanuel Ihim (CHS 2005) and Geoff Goodell (CHS 2005) were among the quarter-century's fastest backs, as their raw numbers (1,318 rushing yards and 19 touchdowns combined as seniors) likely suffered a bit from the





Derrick Stroble and Louis Feliciano, CHS '07; Saadiq Pitts, CHS '17 as sketched for The Record's Athlete of the Week.

Chet Parlavecchio-to-Ron Anello coaching change that disrupted their junior-to-senior offseason. The tandem had to switch from a traditional I-Formation offense to a Wing-T with just three months to prepare following Anello's May 2004 hiring.

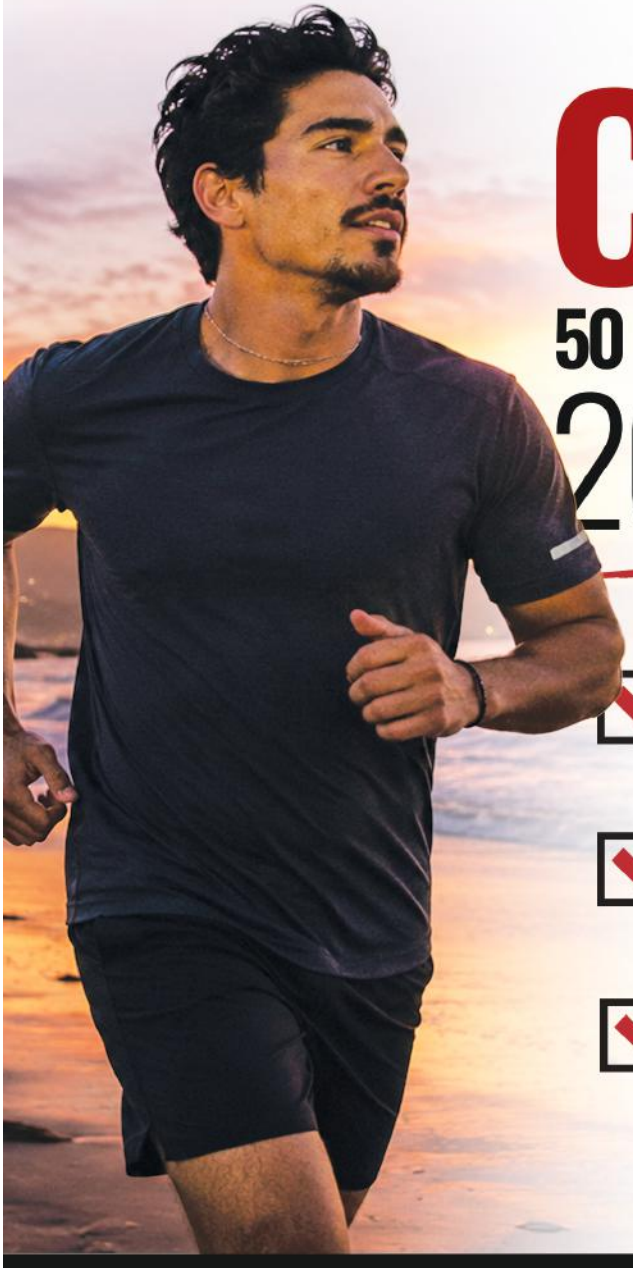
Al-Aziz Pitts (CHS 2009), Jacob Maldonado (CHS 2022) and Bryan Feliciano (CHS 2022) all made their marks with physical running styles, while Saadiq Pitts (CHS 2017) broke a 60-year-old record by rushing for 23 touchdowns in 2016. Euriel Watt (CHS 2027) ran for 1,416 yards and 15 touchdowns in 2026.

The Mustang program has been ground-and-pound for virtually its entire history, but it has had some stud receivers during the 21st century. **Donovan Swasey** (CHS 2022) hauled in seven touchdown passes as a senior and was one of the sparks behind Clifton's 2021 sectional title run. He was a playmaker on defense, as well, setting a Clifton (and Carrier Dome) record with a 102-yard interception return touchdown when the Mustangs played Cicero North Syracuse (N.Y.) to open that year.



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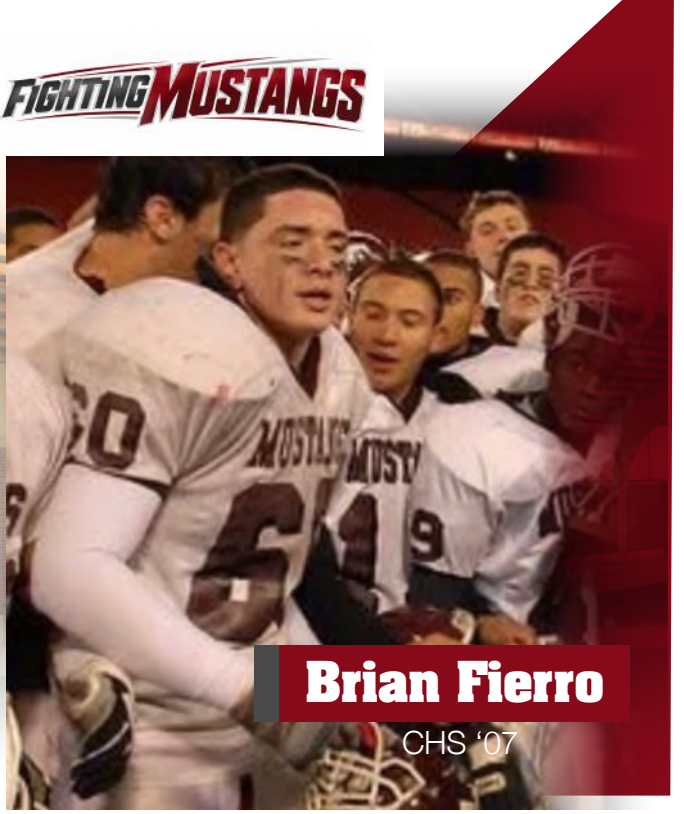
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Devin Garcia, CHS '19; Tyler Williams, CHS '22; Robert Urban, CHS '20.

Lamar Rodriguez (CHS 2008) demonstrated game-breaking ability for a Wing-T offense that didn't throw much. Still, he was Giordano's top target on the 2006 championship team, catching 23 passes for 381 yards and three touchdowns.

Joe Hathaway (CHS 2005) thrived in the early-2000s at tight end despite playing in the run-heavy offenses of Parlavecchio (traditional I-Formation) and Anello (Delaware Wing-T). A powerful blocker with soft hands, he was the starter for the 2003 Mustangs' playoff team and the top target for Cabral in 2004.

Nick Cvetic (CHS 2007) was a converted interior lineman who, as a result, was a devastating blocker in Clifton's 2006 Wing-T offense. Maurice Greene (CHS 2016) and Tim Brown (CHS 2012) deserve honorable mentions.

The Cinque era has produced some beastly offensive linemen, among them left tackles **Devin Garcia** (CHS 2019), **Mohammed Abedrabo** (CHS 2021), and **Tyler Williams** (CHS 2022).

From an earlier era, **Teddy Kwolek** (CHS 2004) was strong, athletic and technically sound. Guard **Robert Urban** (CHS 2020) was a physical presence on an offensive line that pushed Clifton to 22 wins in three years.

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Guard Adam Miranda (CHS 2017) and tackle Brian Fierro (CHS 2007) also deserve mention among the better offensive linemen this century.

Brian Fierro made an even greater impact as a defensive end, tallying 75 tackles and a team-high 6.5 sacks as a senior on the Mustangs' 2006 North I, Group IV championship squad. **Khalid Pitts** (CHS 2009) was as well-rounded a player as Clifton has had on the edge, recording 10.0 sacks and 69 tackles during the 2008 playoff season.

Joe Abill (CHS 2023) spent time at both defensive end and linebacker during his career—what today's game calls an "EDGE" player. He had 157 combined tackles in 2021 and 2022 and led the Mustangs with 9.5 sacks during their 2021 title run.

Trumain Lawson (CHS 2024) was a three-year starter and now plays plays at Ohio University, a Division 1 FBS program. Hathaway, Chris Acevedo (CHS 2013), and Joshua Hernandez (CHS 2021) were all premier ends. Defensive tackle Mahmoud Ramadan (CHS 2009) had 57 tackles as a senior and was among the grittier trench players of the Anello era.



Khalid Pitts, CHS '09; Mohammad Abedrabo, CHS '21; Tim Brown, CHS '12; Nick Cvetic, CHS '07; Maurice Greene, CHS '16.

At linebacker, **Matt Davella** was a throwback who finished his career with 262 tackles (a program record). He was The (Bergen) Record's North Jersey Group IV Defensive Player of the Year in 2006, a 115-tackle season in which he was the sectional champions' best player.

Franklin Duran (CHS 2009) had 242 tackles between 2006 and 2008 and was a key member of the '06 champs and the '08 playoff team. Tackling machine **Adam Linares** (CHS 2013) shone in a tough period, racking up 104 tackles (plus 3.5 sacks) in 2011 and 93 in 2012.

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Caleb Boneparte, CHS '21; Ryan Liszner and Joe Abill, CHS '23.

The midseason transfer of **Luis 'Kiko' Mangual** (CHS 2004) from Don Bosco Prep in 2002 was the biggest reason Clifton made the playoffs in 2003—ending a six-year postseason drought. Adam Miranda was arguably the best defensive player during Ralph Cinque's first two seasons as head coach.

Lamar Rodriguez had 20 career picks from his safety spot and was a second team Associated Press All-State selection as a junior. His shining moment came in the 2006 sectional final, when he intercepted Paterson Eastside quarterback Tahree McQueen three times to keep the Ghosts off the scoreboard at Giants Stadium. He isn't officially on our defensive team, since he qualified at wide receiver and the DB crop this quarter-century was substantially deeper.

Safety **Bryan Feliciano** (CHS 2022) had 52 tackles from the secondary in 2021 and was the heart and soul of that title team's defense. **Caleb Boneparte** (CHS 2021) was a true shutdown cornerback and a four-year starter whose teams went 26-14 and reached the 2019 North II, Group V final.

Randy Cabral played corner and safety and started three seasons (2002–04), picking off seven passes. Saadiq Pitts was an athletic multi-dimensional corner who could shut down a WR1 and come up to make tackles when needed.





This story's author, Tom Szieber (CHS 2005), was an OT/DE for the Mustangs from 2001 to 2004. He is pictured center with teammates and friends days after sustaining a career-ending leg injury against Paterson Kennedy in Oct. 2004. Today, pictured left, he is a Trusts & Estates attorney and contributor to Clifton Merchant Magazine.

As far as specialists go, there's been no Mustang kicker that was a game changer in the way **Ryan Liszner** (CHS 2023) was. Liszner was basically a guaranteed touchback, and he also connected on six combined field goals and 48 combined extra points in 2021 and 2022. **Matt Capo-Knoll** (CHS 2010) was a consistant, accurate punter for three seasons.

So there it is: two dozen Mustangs, pulled from 26 seasons of watching, playing, keeping stats and writing about Clifton Football.

I fully expect some of you are already composing an email about the guy I left off, and honestly, that's half the fun. Every name on this list, in **bold face** or not, helped shape what this program is today.

And somewhere in the stands this fall, there's probably a fourth-grader watching the Mustangs the same way I did back in 1996. With any luck, a few of the kids on the field right now will make whoever writes the All-Half-Century Team in 2051 lose some sleep. I'll be there for it.

Somebody has to keep the stats. *by Tom Szieber*





80 YEARS OF MIKULA CONTRACTING

By Ariana Puzzo

A FAMILY LEGACY BUILT ON PEOPLE, HARD WORK AND BIG EQUIPMENT!!!



Whenever a colleague or client brings a problem or question to Dennis Mikula, Jr., you can trust that he's thinking of the age-old wisdom that his father passed down to him.

"I try to be where my feet are. Not just in the room, but in the conversation," said Mikula, 49. "I learned everything about business and about life from him. People are always first. He always took care of his people."

That's a multi-generational value held by all of the men who have led Mikula Contracting, Inc. It started 80 years ago when Dennis Sr.'s father, Nick Mikula, Sr., founded Nick Mikula Excavating with the purchase of a single dump truck in 1946.

The company expanded into a corporation by 1968 and was eventually renamed before Dennis Sr. (CHS 1973) assumed the leadership role of the company in the early 1980s.

"I was fortunate to be alive to watch the [transition in leadership] between my grandfather and my father, and now it's our generation," said Mikula. "What's kept us [successful] is having an itch. We have a great group of clients that we've worked for through all these years."

> **"I WAS FORTUNATE TO BE ALIVE TO WATCH THE {LEADERSHIP} OF MY GRANDFATHER AND MY FATHER, AND NOW IT'S OUR GENERATION,"**
>
> **-DENNIS MIKULA, JR.**

Since Dennis Sr.'s passing in December of 2021, his sons are heading up the family business. While Mikula (CHS 1995) is the Chairman of Mikula Contracting, Inc., it's his younger brother, Ryan (CHS 1999), who handles the day-to-day operations as the company's president.

"He handles everything with the business right now," said Mikula. "He's doing a tremendous job with carrying on the family tradition."

And the men have found ways to make their family's legacy their own. After more than 50 years operating in a facility on Route 46 West, they made the move in 2023 to

their current location at 69 Clifton Blvd. Described as a state-of-the-art facility, it allows the company to continue offering "first-class services" that range from excavation and demolition to environmental services.

"Timing is everything. The location we were looking for was available and someone was interested in our property. It was kind of perfect timing," said Mikula. "It was divine intervention possibly from the man above, and from my father."





Founder Nick Mikula and in 2006 Ryan, Dennis Jr., and their dad Dennis.

Evolving Technologies

Instilling a strong work ethic at an early age is a generational standard for the Mikulas. That dates back to Nick, who brought his son into the fray at an early age.

"I was using the equipment and doing jobs way younger than I should've been," Dennis Sr. told *Clifton Merchant* in January 2021 edition. "I was knocking down houses in my early teens, working on sewer lines and using backhoes."

There are many technological advancements that the Mikula family have witnessed through the years. Along with environmental changes and new regulations that Dennis Sr. saw occur in the mid-80's, today, his son sees a surge in technological and operational efficiencies.

"Now there are GPS systems built in where you can set the grade or the depth right into the machine if you're digging a hole," said Mikula on the evolution of the industry. "Whereas a few years ago, someone would be holding a stick in the hole and someone else would shoot with a laser to relay it back to the operator."

"More and more, this is where the industry is going. We're starting to see more autonomous vehicles out there on sites," he continued. "I think that'll be the next jump in the next five to 10 years: equipment operating with an operator outside of it."



Despite seeing that autonomous push at trade shows, the third generation strives to prioritize all of their dedicated workers. The brothers have worked for years with uncles on both sides of the family, including Andrew Mikula, who joined the company in 1963 and retired this year, and their uncle Leonard Wieczerzak, who has worked for the company since 1981.

Both men have worked as equipment operators and project managers. As for the rest of their team, the number is in the 20's and the average "non-family employee" has worked with their company for about 15-plus years.

"I think [that longevity] has benefitted the business the most with our clients," said Mikula. "They love the fact that whether it's year-over-year or decade-over-decade, they know who's showing up on their job site."



Ryan Mikula, Drew Mikula, Len Weiczerzak, and Dennis Mikula Jr. Drew is also pictured a few years ago in the lead photo of this story.

Prioritizing that familiarity runs parallel to each client and employee knowing that all of the heavy equipment will be managed safely and expertly. Mikula described the team and equipment as a "well-oiled machine" who understand each other.

"Our clients love that we're effective and efficient," Mikula added. "As a leader, knowing that you have an experienced crew out there who are looking for solutions and not at what the problem is — you can't put a price on that. … They look after each other and work well together."

Getting Home Safe

Along with the timing being right, paying that respect forward to their workers is also what led to the new facility purchase in 2023.

Prior to their move, Mikula Contracting, Inc. was one of multiple tenants despite having a lot of property. Their current location on Clifton Blvd. is their own building and property with updated offices and repair bays. They also offer a state-of-the-art locker room, a shower, a kitchen, and laundry facilities for the employees.

"These are things we were able to do to make our business more effective and efficient … while making employees feel like it's their home," said Mikula. "[The move was done to help] take care of our employees."

"Where we are now is probably conservatively about a third of the size it was, but it's just ours," he continued. "Making the property fit our business is perfect versus making our business fit the property."

That enduring care yields not only good will in-house, but positive recognition in the community. Mikula Contracting, Inc. received a New Jersey Family Business of the Year Award in 2020 from Fairleigh Dickinson University's Rothman Institute of Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

The company is also a three-time recipient of the Commerce and Industry Association of New Jersey's Companies That Care Award and a three-time award winner of the New Jersey Land Improvement Contractors Association's Safety Award.

Mikula also recognizes the importance of having a strong personal support system. Along with his brother, Ryan, and fellow industry workers that he bounces ideas off of and learns from, he has his own immediate family, including wife Diana and daughter Lucy, 13.

And, when he's having a tough day or dealing with something frustrating, he doesn't need to look far for some guidance. "I have a picture in my office of my father holding my daughter when she was much younger. He has this wonderful grin on his face," said Mikula. "When I get frustrated, I look [at the photo] and remember him saying, 'Take a deep breath. It'll be fine.'"

"What a calming influence he was because, when things were falling apart, he was always the calmest. It's something that I work on every day," he continued. "His whole mantra was 'as long as everyone gets back safely every day, we can fix everything else.' He did such a great job at putting everything into perspective. … Not a day goes by that I don't think of a lesson I learned from him."

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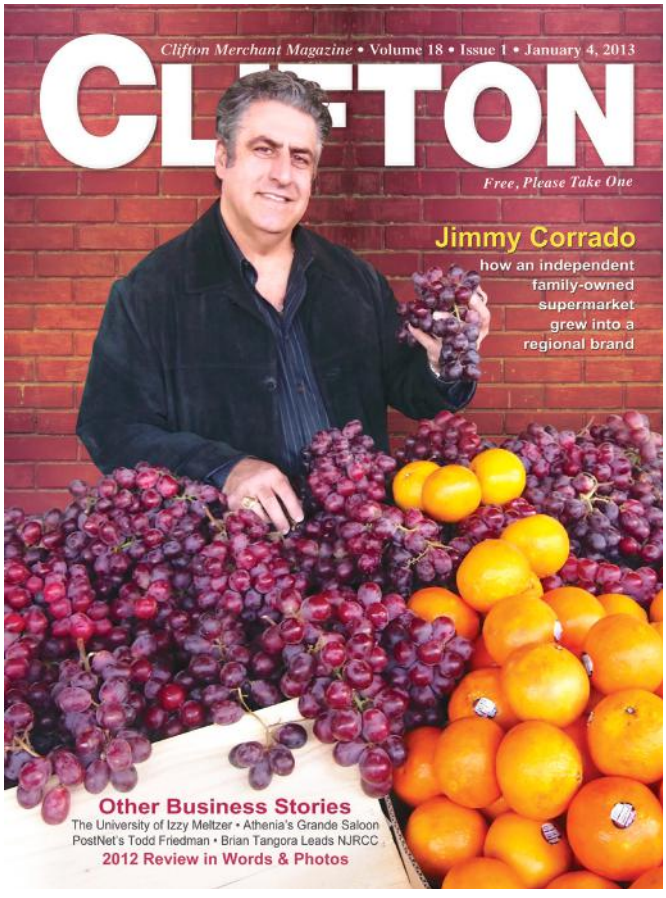
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Corrado's Still A Family Affair

October 10, 2026 • 76th Anniversary



At Corrado's Family Affair on Main Ave., shoppers will be greeted by second, third and fourth generation familia.



When it first opened on Main Ave. in 1975, Corrado's Family Affair was a simple grocery store catering to the larger Italian-American community in Clifton and the surrounding regions.

However, the business has changed quite a bit since it first opened up over 50 years ago.

"We started as produce, just fruits and vegetables at the core," said Jimmy Corrado. "In the 50's, this was a predominantly Italian neighborhood. The store evolved to take care of people in the community."

Over the last half century, the offerings at the store have evolved to reflect the changing demographics. Once primarily imported Italian goods, Corrado's carries a wide variety of ethnics foods, produce and spices from around the world.

But while those are more recent additions over the past two decades, the success of the family business traces back to produce. While the current Corrado's supermarket has been around since 1975, the origins of the business trace back to the 1920s, when Pietro Corrado started as a merchant in Paterson's Island market.

In 1932, Pietro, along with sons James and Anthony, moved into a converted shed (where the Paterson Farmer's Market now stands on Railway Ave.) and began speculating and selling produce on consignment.

Gradually, the lineup began to expand to include flowers, shrubs, watermelon and California juice grapes. James Corrado would log 20-hour days, personally traveling through New Jersey and New York to get the best goods possible for his customers.

In the 1960s, the business continued to grow, and James brought aboard his sons Jerry, Peter and Joey, who are the current principle owners. Corrado's Family Affair opened on Main Ave. in 1975, and gradually evolved into the shopping complex that it is today.

"Clifton is a family town. The city grew as businesses grew," said Jimmy Corrado. "More Mediterranean, more Latin and more recently, more Middle Eastern and Indian."

Perhaps most important in the success of the business has been the presence of the family in day-to-day activities. It's a large Corrado family members—three fathers and their nine sons—work across the company's many stores, as do the children of the nine boys. At the checkout aisles, you can always find at least one Corrado greeting customers and overseeing the floor on any given day.

"If we were in an office somewhere, or out on a golf course, we wouldn't have the success we've had," explained Corrado. "It still has that neighborhood feel, that mom and pop store feel. You're not going to go walk up and find the owner in a big chain store. Whether it is a concern or compliment, you can speak to the owner here. In this age of big departments stores, you can't do that normally."









In March of 2003, it's a family affair with two generations of the Corrado's pictured. From top, left: Jerry, Peter and Joey, sons of the late James Corrado. Top right, from left: Paul and Jerry Jr., son of Jerry. Also pictured is Frank, son of Peter. At right, from left: Jimmy, son of Peter, Joey Jr., son of Joey, and Anthony, son of Jerry. Inset, at left, the late James Corrado.

Ukrainian Cultural Center OF CLIFTON

Tradition Community Culture

By Ariana Puzzo



Possessing a legacy of generations who've learned traditions, culture, language and dance at the Ukrainian Center, leaders say that the move to and investment in Clifton will provide a new home for the growing community.

Love, community, celebration, and resiliency: These pillars fortified the Ukrainian Center in Passaic for over six decades. Amidst war, global unrest, and a deep desire to strengthen an essential bond between generations who are proud of their heritage and ancestry, the Center is now moving.

"The address of the Center is changing, but our purpose isn't," said President Maryann (Kosciolek) Zawojski (CHS 1988), noting the organization has purchased the 1.9 acres of land where Grace CityChurch, 45 Hazel St., has long stood, near the intersection of Kuller Rd.

After the closing later this month, the move incorporates a new name — the Ukrainian Cultural Center of Clifton — and the UCCoC is now a registered non-profit, 501(c)(3).

"We are carrying more than six decades of memories, and our responsibility now is to build [upon] that legacy for the next generation."

Founded in 1959 by immigrants often referred to as the second-wave of Ukrainians to America, the Center was established as a home for the Ukrainian-American diaspora and its organizations. A tradition of leadership began in 1959, with John Chomko elected as the Center's first president, and continues today under the leadership of Zawojski.

After viewing the property this past summer, it was a clear choice by the volunteer board to start the transition just a couple of years before the Center's 70th anniversary.

The move will help solidify the Center's future for another several generations, as the pictures here illustrate.

"This transition has been a lot of work and has required a lot of patience," said Zawojski, who became the Center's first female president in 2023. "We have all tried to approach each step thoughtfully and carefully."

That deliberate approach has helped the Center navigate several key efforts through the years. Maintaining the Passaic facility and keeping it sustainable enabled the group to acquire Hazel St. with funds from the existing one's sale.

Now with the move to Hazel St., there are many logistical steps to take. "Whenever someone asks, 'What are you going to do about this?' [Board Vice President Peter Zielonka and I will] answer, 'We'll do it one step at a time, one day at a time,'" said Zawojski.







John Chomko





The existing Hazel St. property is a landmark and the UCCoC received approval to make renovations, such as the open air reception area facing AGL on Kuller Rd. Among the folks who will enjoy the new facility are these young adults and their families.



Opening Their Doors

Spanning generations and decades, the Center connects numerous Ukrainian organizations, providing a place where culture, heritage, and traditions could be preserved, celebrated, and passed from one generation to the next.

It welcomed organizations — such as the Ukrainian American Youth Association (CYM), the Bergen-Passaic Branch of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA), the Organization for the Defense of Lemkivshchyna (OOL), Ukrainian American Veterans (UAV) Post 17, and other groups who regularly utilized their space for meetings and events.

Families and friends also passed through their doors, and many made their way to the hall or bar, which is a cherished social spot for members. That is a tradition and feeling that was passed down from parents to children, often two times over, and was certainly the case for Zawojski, Zielonka, and board member Roman Diduch.

"It's like *Cheers*. Everyone knows everyone," said Diduch, 70. "Back in the day, everybody showed up. We had all kinds, like police and firemen, except a mailman," he added with a laugh. "It's where everyone met everyone."

Diduch's early memories at the Center are in the mid-to-late 1960s after emigrating from Poland with his parents and three siblings when he was 8. He attended St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic School in Passaic, William Paterson, and then he worked for 35 years at Hoffmann-La Roche in Nutley until its closure in 2013.

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Although he has never visited Ukraine, he grew up with the language spoken in his house and emphasized how language, culture and time at the Center connected his family to those roots. "My father would say we could speak English outside, but not in the house. I think we're losing those values," said Diduch. "But I don't care if you're Ukrainian, Italian, Spanish, or Arabic. You need to learn the history of where you've come from."

The Center is also where milestones were celebrated in Diduch's family. All his siblings and their friends got married upstairs in the Center's ballroom, including Diduch and his wife, Anna. The couple have been married for 46 years with four children, plus three grandkids, and another soon-to-come.

Diduch was the President from 2012 to 2017 and today serves on the Board and is a voice for maintaining the traditions of its founders. His contributions and improvements that he led are done with them and other younger people in mind.

"We have brought [in] a lot of business. Different types of summer parties, after-summer parties, and a lot of New Year's events, grab-bags, and tricky trays," said Diduch. "There have been a lot of accomplishments with bringing business back to the Center."

He has also witnessed plenty of upgrades to maintain the Center, including new upstairs and downstairs bathrooms, plus installing air conditioning in the bar, new flooring, LED lighting, and heating units. In anticipation of a sale a few years ago, oil tanks were removed and other issues were resolved in the nearly 100-year-old structure. Incidentally, on Oct. 6, a fire broke out in a second-floor apartment. It was quickly contained and damage was minimal, so the sale of the structure was not affected.

Diduch said the move will give younger members something that excites him and other older members: a place to call home. "There are young people who are coming up behind us on the Board, and we're not going to leave. We'll teach them everything that we can," said Diduch. "Hopefully they'll take over and keep it going, because … it is a big thing to have a Ukrainian Center in this area."

"A lot of Ukrainians are coming from Ukraine or all over and packing in here," he continued. "So, where [else] are the young kids going to go? We've got volleyball, [indoor soccer]; a lot of things for little kids. They can learn Ukrainian traditions, like dancing and how to make pierogies."



For over 25 years, the legendary Pani Vera Czyrniansky was the bartender in the Ukrainian Center. Still a member today, visitors and old-timers alike remember Pani Vera for her unique ways.

Making the Move

It's more than a place to visit a bar or rent a hall. As Marianna (Znak) Hoholuk reflected, the Center is "the glue that binds the daily lives of many people." She attested to that in a 2009 story in this magazine, where she wrote about meeting her future husband Ricky at the Center's folk holiday Malanka on Jan. 12, 2002. They wed on Jan. 11, 2003 and remain active in the Center, as well as other programs there, along with their two children.

Programs and activities have included billiard league games on Tuesday nights, volleyball team scrimmages and practices in the auditorium-sized upstairs hall on Wednesdays, and CYM having their youth group meetings and dance practice on Fridays. "They come here, because the service is great and the atmosphere is fun," Hoholuk wrote.

But for others, it's not about the activities that they did at the Center. It's the people that they got to know or the memories of those they loved who walked through the building. For many people, their memories invariably include Vera Czyrniansky, known affectionately as Pani Vera, which is a polite honorific title for a Ukrainian woman.

Czyrniansky's many years behind the bar made her a familiar and cherished presence at the Center. Whether welcoming the longtime members, serving guests at celebrations, or simply sharing a smile and lifting a glass in a toast or in conversation, Czyrniansky became part of the Center's fabric and is now woven into the memories of generations who have gathered here.

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For decades, the weekly sale of hand-made pierogies was a long-standing tradition in Ukrainian Byzantine Catholic and Orthodox churches and communities. Those ladies pictured here in 2012 are the moms and grandmothers of many members and leaders of today's Ukrainian Center.

As for its current president, Zawojski associates the Center with another person who she has held dear for her entire life. "My father, Stefan Kosciolek, was very involved with the Ukrainian Center while I was growing up there. He was on the Board of Directors for many years," said Zawojski. "I know he'd be so proud of me right now and what we're doing as far as moving the Center to a new location."

Zawojski's earliest childhood memories involve spending time throughout the week with her three siblings at the Center. Her father was also involved with the CYM, so Zawojski spent a great deal of time there as well.

"As I got older, it continued to be a big part of my life. My husband and I went to our first dances there. We attended many of our friends' weddings there, plus many birthdays and christenings," said Zawojski. "We had the opportunity to watch our three sons grow up there."

Zawojski and her husband, Jerry (CHS 1983), both grew up in Clifton and started their family in our city. Their adult sons are Ryan, Stefan, and Alexander. The couple live in Hawthorne today, but the new location for the Center ended up being on Hazel St., across from their first home.

"My uncle still lives there and my cousin lives in that same neighborhood. It's full circle," said Zawojski. "I love that the Ukrainian Center is coming to Clifton."

When speaking with *Clifton Merchant* at the end of last month, Zawojski was even more excited following a Clifton Zoning Board of Adjustment decision.

On Oct. 21, the Zoning Board approved the Center's use variance for the Grace Church site. The approval brings them a step closer to establishing a new home for the community, which is something that they've striven for over the past six years. She recalled an earlier attempt by the Center to move and how it fell through.

"I'm very tight with my Executive Board and always in the back of our minds was the thought: 'If we can find another property where we can grow and expand, it would be great if we could try one more time," said Zawojski.

That one more time came mid-year when Zielonka, Maryann and Jerry Zawojski visited the property. "We all said, 'This is going to be our new home, one way or another,'" said Zawojski. "The hall is absolutely beautiful and about the size of our current hall. What made it even better is that the whole downstairs has classrooms."



2009 Ukrainian Center directors rear left: Roman Andrach, Andy Zurawski, John Zielonka, John Karlicki, Michael Skala, Peter Mychalko, Roman Diduch, Zenon Betley, Steve Oliver. Middle: Bohdan Zurawski, Wasyl Harhaj, Peter Gres, Stefan Kosciolek, Zenon Chalupa, Nick Kulyk, Mike Zielonka. Seated: Marianna Hoholuk, Vera Czyrniansky, Stefan Zurawski, Tosia Oliver, Julie Karlicki.

Following the closing on the sale and the purchase of Hazel St., upgrades are needed. Among them: landscaping, ADA restrooms and access ramps, and any requirements mandated by the city and county, like sidewalk or lighting upgrades. Most importantly, as far as the social aspect, there's a need for a bar.

"Some people want a new bar, some people want nostalgia," said Zielonka about whether they will bring part of the Center's existing bar in the move. "We're working to see if that's feasible, but the buzz is big. People have reached out to us, saying, 'Let me know how I can help or what I can do.' The welcome at the City Hall meeting was phenomenal."

Zawojski has also felt that support — though, in her case, it also comes from a place of history that is a huge source of encouragement. The Center's first president has since passed away, but Chomko's daughter Mary (Chomko) Guida is in touch regularly with Zawojski.

"She sends me messages telling me how proud she is that I'm continuing this legacy. I'm getting teared up, because it just means so much to me [that she's] speaking on her father's behalf and is happy that we didn't just let the Center go," said Zawojski. "There have been other Ukrainian centers that have closed down, but we are continuing."



Zawojski regularly invites Guida to the Board's meetings and the latter put in her proxy vote of 'Yes' to move the Center to its new location. Zawojski added that although she couldn't attend, Guida sent her a message congratulating them all after the Zoning Board's approval.

"It means the world to me," said Zawojski. As she considers her own place as the Board's first female leader, she added that she recently found a photograph of Chomko's original Board of Directors. "It looks like there were 40 of them in the picture, and there was only one woman on that entire Board."

After the Oct. 21 Zoning Board meeting, members of the Ukrainian community gathered to send thanks to Clifton.

Grace Church: New Beginnings

The Ukrainian Center is not the only institution looking to further its mission, and it's also not the sole institution with its roots in Passaic.

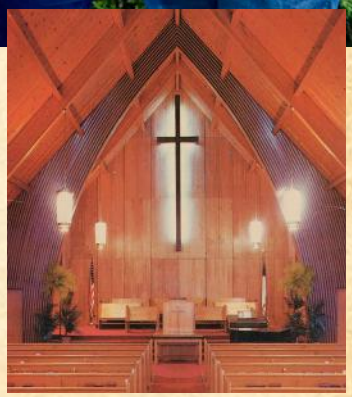
To trace the history of Grace Church, we need to return to the home of James R. Morris of 277 Passaic St., where the Passaic Gospel Mission first met on Nov. 7, 1889. Morris was aged 28 and ceased his work as an inventor for the New York Belting and Packing Company in 1893 to devote himself to the mission. He was ordained on July 23, 1900.

According to the church's centennial history, the congregation voted unanimously to incorporate on Aug. 8, 1900 as "The Church of Jesus Christ at the Passaic Gospel Mission." Fast-forward to Oct. 22, 1910, the congregation purchased the Grace Presbyterian Church at 122 Hamilton Ave. in Passaic.







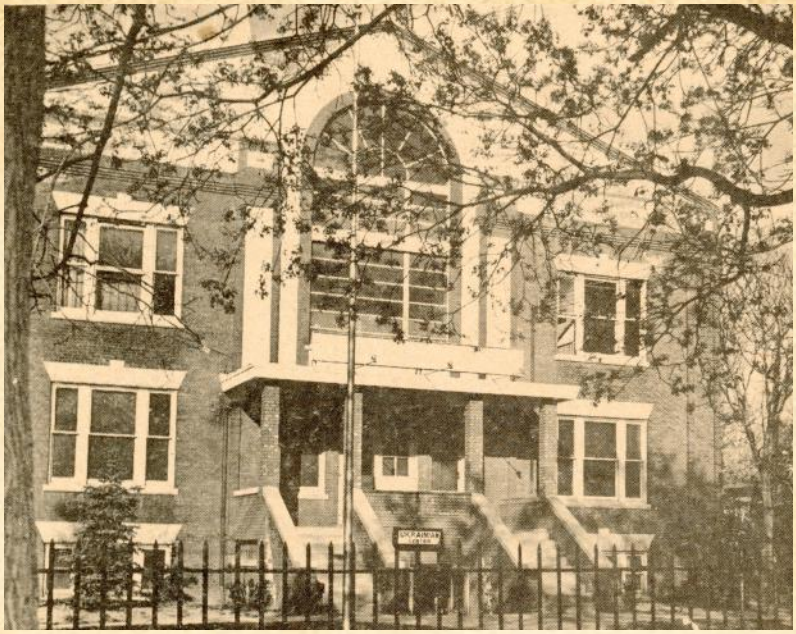


Top: Grace Church leaders: Zach Canion, Christine Canion, Scott Canion, Tom Monroe, Claire Monroe, Grace Conklin, Roxanne Williams, Mark Williams. Pictured here, the interior of the Grace Church, circa 1990.



By 1940, it became known as The Grace Church. In March 1956, the church acquired just over three acres of farmland, near what today is Kuller Rd. and Hazel St., from Gerbrand and Lena Smith. The new landmark church opened in 1960, followed by the addition of a Sunday-school building in 1961 to accommodate some 400 students.

But in 2026, the congregation continues to evolve. The sale of the property allows Grace to grow in new ways: gathering in homes, developing its leaders, and being part of a network of churches in the region and internationally.



Ukrainian Center, 240 Hope Ave., Passaic, as seen in 1965.

Community to Rely On

All of that was achieved by the sale of the Hazel St. campus to another community that is singularly committed to strengthening its heritageand furthering its community ties. While it was a united effort, it was also guided by Zielonka's business acumen.

That began in June 2000 when Zielonka and his father, John, opened Precision Electric Motor Works. For two decades, they grew it into one of northern New Jersey's largest electric motor and pump repair facilities.

As an entrepreneur, Zielonka has found the time and flexibility to be the volunteer point guy on the sale and purchase of the Ukrainian Center. His ability to see business decisions from 360 degrees, and his knowledge of commercial real estate, is invaluable. His skills are also acknowledged and appreciated by Zawojski, who as president keeps all parts of this project moving.

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"I really think it was time to find a new location, and I live and breathe this every day now to make it happen," said Zielonka, 53. "There's not a day that goes by where I haven't wondered, 'How are we going to do this?' since we first looked at the property in June."

Zielonka emphasized that there's a team of people working hard and dedicating an enormous amount of effort. "Time means nothing to me as long as we meet our goal," he said. "I can't explain the passion that I have for this or the want that I have for kids to be happy here, or the adults. I want them to have a feeling of a new home."

Zielonka attended St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic School K-8 and then CHS for two years before his family moved to Wallington. The years at school, church, and the Center were formative as he became more proud of his culture and heritage.



Peter and Jody Zielonka with their kids Nicholas, Anna, Alexander.

"It developed me as a child. It gave me a safe place to be, a place where I wanted to be," said Zielonka. "It gave me heart, having that community there when you need something or even if you don't need something."

It is that place in his soul, and that of other committee members who share the ideal of making the Ukrainian Cultural Center of Clifton a place for generations to come, that makes every part of it possible. It began with his grandfather Michael who worked at the Center in the 60's. Then his parents, John and Antonina, brought their young family there. The tradition of embracing a person's heritage continued when Zielonka and his wife, Jody, had their kids.

"My wife's not Ukrainian and she's been such an inspiration to me and given me the drive to do what I do, because she helps everywhere that she can," he said. "Having a person next to you celebrate and share your heritage and bring up your kids in it is amazing."



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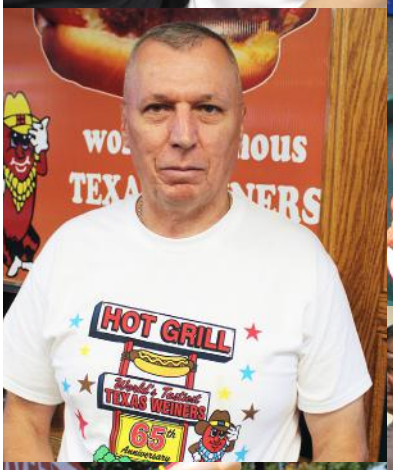
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Second-generation owner Cristina LaMendola considered many options for the 65th anniversary of Clifton's culinary landmark. "The celebration had to be about value and giving back to customers and the community," she said. Two days of 65-cent hot dogs—*All The Way Texas Weiners* —and BOGO on burgers and cheeseburgers produced thousands of appreciative customers. Tents went up overnight as Saturday's sunshine turned to Sunday downpours. Rain did not stop the line from forming to Lexington Ave. "Thanks to my loyal customers," said LaMendola. "My dad Carmen was smiling down on this milestone event. Thanks and gratitude to our staff (see team photo pg. 49) who kept the food coming and the service extraordinary."





































The Hot G









Grill @ 65 YEARS











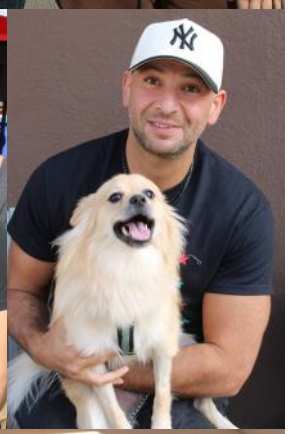


The Hot Grill @ 65 YEARS









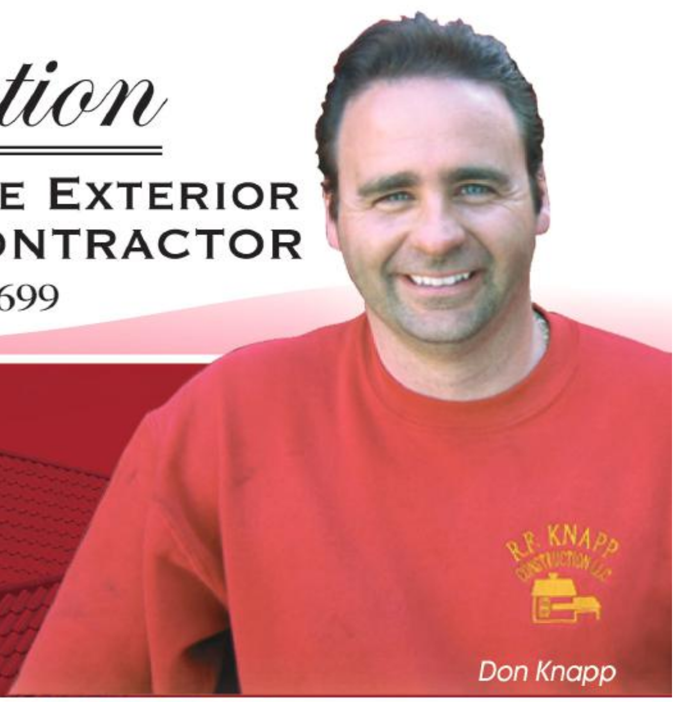









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During this season of giving, Boys & Girls Club Board Member Joe Cupoli shares his thoughts about providing amazing experiences for kids in Clifton. See page 59. Visit bgcclifton.org/donate or mail a donation to BGCC, 822 Clifton Ave, Clifton 07013, or scan the QR Code at right.

The People Along The Trail



By Robert 'Robbie' Niessen

A compass can point north, a map can chart a trail, and a knot can hold two pieces of rope together. But some of life's most important lessons cannot be learned from a handbook. For CHS senior Joly Abdelnour, the greatest adventures begin with the people who make them worthwhile.

Abdelnour's love of adventure begins at home in Botany Village, where her parents have encouraged her to embrace new experiences and her sister has joined her in some of her favorite memories. From hiking scenic trails to camping beneath the stars, the sisters have shared countless moments exploring the outdoors together.

"I am most grateful for my parents and sister, who gave me a wonderful life full of many new opportunities and adventures," said Abdelnour, 17.

Abdelnour's parents also introduced her to an organization that would become a cornerstone of her life: Scouting America. Scouting America is a youth organization where kids and teens take part in activities like camping, hiking, earning merit badges, and community service while learning practical skills, responsibility, and leadership.

"My parents encouraging me to join Scouting America was one of the best things that happened," Abdelnour explained. She developed "skills like knot tying, outdoor navigation, and leadership... that I'll carry with me forever."

But the organization's influence reaches far beyond the skills learned along the trail. Abdelnour is especially thankful for the "adult leaders that never gave up on me when I wanted to give up on myself. Those who have encouraged me through life, had patience with me, and helped me overcome my fears."

That same appreciation extends to her friends, who are there to listen, whether she's recounting her day, sharing weekend stories, or catching up on the latest high school gossip. It's these little moments and people that make even an ordinary day feel special.

At the heart of Abdelnour's gratitude is her faith, which shapes how she views the opportunities that she has been given and the people who've helped her along the way. Appreciating her life means recognizing the blessings behind both the big adventures and the everyday moments.

"Above all, I thank God for blessing me with all of these incredible opportunities and the people who make life so meaningful," said Abdelnour.

As she prepares for life beyond CHS, she carries forward the lessons and memories that have shaped her along the way, knowing that the best adventures are not defined by the distance traveled, but by the people who make every step worthwhile.

The Cultural Stew of Thanksgiving

James Zuniga, 17, reflects on what Thanksgiving means to him and his family.

"For me, Thanksgiving typically comes in two forms. With split parents, my brother and I usually alternate between spending the holidays with our mom's family or dad's family. One thing that is true no matter who I am celebrating with is that family and food are paramount.

With my mom, we spend the long weekend at my grandparents' in Lakewood. The celebrations include 15-20 people, cooking Italian dishes on the days prior to and after Thanksgiving, preparing typical Thanksgiving dishes on the holiday, and being woken up to Mitch Miller's Christmas album blasting on the radio the morning after.



When I'm with my dad, we always stay at my family's apartment in Jersey City, where we usually play dominoes, sing karaoke late into the night, and binge-watch movies on the days after while eating leftovers.

Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday, because it means so much to me that I am able to spend it with the people that I've grown up with, who raised me and cherish me the most. Whether I'm spending it in Lakewood or Jersey City, I know that I'm surrounded by love, laughter, warmth, and delicious food.

One of the most special traditions that means a lot to me is the different spreads of dishes that both families eat during the holiday.

Spending Thanksgiving with my mom means blending traditional American dishes like turkey and cranberries with Italian-American plates like chicken cutlet and stuffed artichokes. Spending it with my dad means eating mashed potatoes and stuffing with Hispanic foods like rice and pernil.

I love these traditions, because they represent the blends of cultures and cuisines from all over the world into a traditional American celebration where family and kinship are centered, regardless of where we originally came from or how we grew up."

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Bill Gibson died in May, 2026 and his wife Robin wrote that his legacy is his family. Below: Niko Esperancilla.

The Memory is Eternal

"My family has become my entire world and my absolute anchor since losing my husband," wrote Robin Gibson, speaking of her husband Bill, the former councilman who died in May, 2026. "Before he passed, he left me the most precious gifts a person can ask for: our children and our grandchildren. Seeing his spirit, his love, and his laughter live on through them brings me a profound sense of comfort. They are a constant reminder of the beautiful life that we built together and the enduring bond that we will always share. In my deepest moments of grief, their presence has given me the strength to stay resilient, reminding me every single day that I am never truly alone. I will be so sad that my Bill is not with me this Thanksgiving but, looking around my table, he will actually be."



The Many Voices of Harmony

A choir brings voices together in harmony, but sometimes the greatest harmony happens beyond the music. Through the Mustang Marching Band and the CHS Choir, senior Niko Esperancilla has discovered how a shared passion can foster exactly that.

"This year, I've really grown to love and appreciate all the activities I do and the people that I participate with, especially the stuff I do musically in Clifton High School," said Esperancilla, 18.

One recent highlight was a Choir Invitational field trip to SUNY New Paltz in New York, where the Madrigal Choir performed alongside ensembles from several New York high schools and a collegiate-level choir. As the only New Jersey high school in attendance, CHS represented its community among talented young musicians from across the region.

Beyond the performances, Esperancilla embraced the opportunity to connect with fellow participants. "I did short interviews with people, asking who they were, what school they went to, and what they enjoyed most about the event," the Richfield resident explained. "[I] got to connect with so many new and talented people that I otherwise wouldn't have met without being in CHS' Choir."

While graduation day 2027 is still months away, the days do go quickly. Esperancilla said among the things he will take from CHS is his love of music, expressing that he is "glad for all these opportunities and friendships" and hopes "to continue pursuing these hobbies in the future."

The music may end when the performance is over, but the friendships and memories that it creates can last a lifetime. That is where the harmony plays on.

Happy Thanksgiving!

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Marge Beissel and Sgt. Derek Fogg in 2025 and in 1982 with Abraham and Bernadette Fragosa. CHS teacher Liam Smith.

Staying Active: Don't Stop

Even though she handed in her "STOP" sign and yellow reflective vest last June, Margaret "Marge" Beissel isn't slowing down just yet. There's a lot that the retired Clifton School Traffic Guard is grateful for, including her health and safety after 50 years on the job.

Her posts included: Clifton and Lexington Ave., Ackerman Ave. and Cutler St. by St. Cyril's school, Lakeview and Merselis Ave., outside the former CHS Annex, and then her last post near CHS at Van Houten Ave. and Kathryn St.

"I'm grateful for all the children I crossed, for all the people that I met on the corner, and for everyone that waved and said hello to me," said Beissel, 74. "[I got greetings from] people I didn't know. I'm grateful for being part of the city for all these years."

The Athenia resident grew up in Botany. Beissel and siblings Susan (CHS 1968) and Michael (CHS 1974) grew up with parents and CHS alums George and Helen (Koromhas) Zayatz. She attended School 12 and Christopher Columbus before graduating with the Class of 1970. Beissel and her husband, James, wed three years later and have been married for 53 years.

Beissel is keeping hopes for the new year practical. That means staying active and healthy while also seeing longtime friends. And even though she is adjusting to a different lifestyle as a retiree, one thing is for certain.

"I do look out the window when it's raining or so hot with no shade from a tree and think, 'I'm glad I'm not out there,'" she laughed. "When the first winter comes, I know I'm going to think, 'I'm glad I don't have to shovel to make sure I'm out by [5 am].'"

Embracing the Present

Liam Smith may not teach art, but he understands that life's most meaningful masterpieces are painted through the relationships. As a CHS Physical Ed. teacher and football coach, Smith recognizes that a life well-lived is not defined by individual achievements, but by the people, experiences, and everyday blessings that give it color.

In two years at CHS, Smith has learned that the most important lessons rarely end when the clock runs out. The football field may offer a playbook and the classroom may offer curriculum, but neither can fully capture what it means to help a young person find their footing.

The real reward for Smith lies in the moments that follow: when a student begins to believe in their own potential and carries that newfound confidence into a world far beyond the school's walls.

"Not everyone gets the opportunity to work in a profession where they can make a positive impact on someone's life each and every day," said Smith, 25. "Being able to help students grow, develop, and become better people is something that I take a lot of pride in."

The relationships he has cultivated "through teaching and coaching" have become another source of gratitude, complementing his appreciation for family and friends. As Smith works toward his master's degree, he continues to look ahead with ambition while also remaining grateful for the opportunity to pursue his goals.

"I know that there are still many things that I want to accomplish in my life, both personally and professionally," he acknowledged, "but I am really thankful to be in a position where I can work toward those goals."

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The Masri family: dad Firman, Morgan, Aiden and Connor, mom Lauren. At right, the late Councilwoman Lauren Murphy.

Smith's gratitude doesn't rest solely in what lies ahead, but also in what he already has. In a world that is often preoccupied with its next milestone, Smith recognizes the importance of pausing to appreciate the present.

"Most importantly, I am grateful for the life that I have and the people who are a part of it," said Smith. "Sometimes, it is easy to get caught up in the stress of everyday responsibilities, but I think it is important to appreciate what you have and recognize how fortunate you really are."

Daily Growth and Discoveries

Childhood moves to a clock of its own, its hours slipping by before we realize how precious they are. The beauty, as Lauren Masri put it, lies not in slowing down time, but in witnessing it unfold through the lives of her three children.

"They are my world," Masri shared. The Athenia resident finds her greatest joy from watching Aiden, Conner, and Morgan discover the world and grow into the people that they are each meant to become. Masri also cherishes the fleeting moments that make motherhood meaningful.

"I'm incredibly thankful for every moment that I get to spend with them, watching them experience life and continue to grow just a little more each and every day," she said.

There is no clear line between the days that children are growing up and the moment parents realize how much has changed. For Masri, watching Aiden, Conner, and Morgan discover the world makes each passing day meaningful, reminding her that some of life's greatest gifts are not found in grand occasions but in the simple privilege of being there with her children. "My kids are truly a gift," said Masri.

Grateful to Have Known Her

Clifton is grateful to Lauren Murphy — and her enduring legacy is now responsible for warming hands and hearts during the coldest months of the year.

Folks will gather on Nov. 10 at 5 pm for the dedication of the Lauren Murphy Warming Center at the Clifton Rec Center, 1232 Main Ave. The late councilwoman was a champion for those less fortunate, an unwavering advocate for vulnerable residents.

"[Councilwoman Murphy] was instrumental in establishing the Code Blue Warming Center, a place of warmth, safety, and refuge for the unhoused during the coldest months of the year," stated Jennifer Kidd, the Coordinator of Health Projects for Clifton Health. "She gave her heart and soul to this cause, working tirelessly to advocate for individuals struggling with mental illness, substance use disorder, and homelessness."

Murphy, who passed away on Jan. 13, 2024, moved to our city in 2006. She was the Executive Director of the Passaic County One Stop Career Center in Paterson for 10 years and an Administrator for the Passaic County Board of Social Services, where she worked for 34 years.

She was serving her third term on the Council, a seat that she first won in 2014, and was the President of the Clifton Democratic Club. The upcoming dedication of the Lauren Murphy Warming Center will honor her legacy of service and ensure that her commitment to helping others will keep making a difference in the community for years to come.

"Her compassion, dedication, and commitment to those too-often overlooked reflected her deep belief that every person deserves dignity, care, and support," Kidd stated.



Generosity of Any Size

Gratitude and giving back go hand-in-hand for Joe Cupoli, which is why he remains a longtime supporter of the Boys & Girls Club of Clifton. "What makes this organization especially meaningful to me is that my connection goes well beyond the boardroom," said Cupoli, the Club Board's vice president. "My granddaughter is enrolled in our Gingerbread House program, and she is absolutely thriving."

"As a grandfather, there is nothing more rewarding than seeing her happy, excited to learn, making friends, and growing in an environment where she feels safe and valued," he said. "I get to experience firsthand what thousands of other Clifton families experience every day."

Cupoli said his request for donations to The Club is more about asking residents to consider the investment in the future of Clifton youth. That generosity, he added, also strengthens families while supporting working parents. "I have seen firsthand the difference that investment makes, and I cannot think of many causes more worthy of my time, energy, or financial support," said Cupoli. To make a donation for kids in Clifton, visit bgcclifton.org/donate or snail mail a donation to BGCC, 822 Clifton Ave, Clifton, NJ 07013.

Cans For Dan Returns

Gratitude comes in a can — just ask Dan! The 7th Annual "Cans for Dan" Fall Food Drive runs through Nov. 30. Donations will support Saint Peter's Haven and the Lauren Murphy Warming Center, plus additional agencies serving those in need. Donations can be placed directly in the bin at the front of the Little Falls ShopRite or send a Venmo monetary donation to Dan-shackil. In 2019, Dan Shackil (CHS 2008) and Heather Shasa created Cans for Dan, which has grown since with last year's drive collecting 2,900 non-perishable items, including a whole pallet of turkeys.





Mustangs of the Month






George Cowan, Alinet Pena, Karol Czaplinsky, Robert Niessen.

Here are the Mustangs of the Month for November 2026.

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.

George Cowan – Freshman

Even though he's one of the newer students in the halls of Colfax Ave., George Cowan has had teachers who've already made an impression on him.

"[My] ninth grade English teacher Mr. David Radler [inspires me the most], because he knows that I will try my best and not give up," said Cowan (CHS 2030). "Mr. Radler is a very positive person, and his friendly and respectful personality inspires me to do well."

Outside of the classroom, Cowan participates in the Boys Lacrosse program. He enjoys learning about the past in History class and "how I can change the present for the better." It provides him with a sought-after "optimistic outlook." His most influential teacher is Mr. Paul Hlat.

"In the class, he believes that everything can be achieved if earned," said Cowan. "He is a great teacher and makes history exciting."

During his first few months of high school, Cowan would describe a major hurdle as being the desire to earn high grades. One potential future career path is becoming a welder, which he is interested in exploring.

"Getting a high grade is a great feeling, because you have to earn it," said Cowan. His self-motivation is simple. "Never give up and keep going."

Alinet Pena – Sophomore

Alinet Pena knows all about curating beauty in her surroundings, which is exactly what she will be doing in a couple of years if she attends college for Interior Design.

When life gets tough, Pena understands what she needs in order to lock in and move forward.

"[It usually helps] knowing the planned future that I have set up and being fully aware that I need to focus," said Pena (CHS 2029).

The sophomore is most influenced by ninth grade English teacher Ms. Rania Shair. Pena is also deeply inspired by her closest friends and fellow peers at CHS.

"[I am mostly inspired by] my friends in how they express their lifestyle or anyone who has the opportunity to express their full creativity," said Pena.

The hurdles that Pena has overcome may be standard ones in high school — namely, drama that "stressed me out but fizzled out." In the future months and years, she would like to join Stage Crew, Gallery, or anything that involves design.

As for her favorite class subject at the moment, she enjoys learning the topics in History class.

"I like to know the morals in each topic," said Pena. "[I also like] Art because of all the inspiration that I can receive."

Karol Czaplinsky – Junior

Karol Czaplinsky's future aspirations may start with attending an out-of-state college to explore life beyond New Jersey, but in the long run, she's really most interested in how she can help others.

To do that she may have to set her sights further down the line as she would also attend law school with the goal of becoming a lawyer in corporate or personal injury law.

"I want to go into law, as it has been an interest of mine ever since I was young," said Czaplinsky (CHS 2028). "I want to be able to help people."

Czaplinsky is well on her way, serving as the Mock Trial President and was one of the counsel's last school year. The junior also regularly volunteers with the Key Club.

"I like to stay active around our community, and help out whenever I can."

She's also engaged in the classroom, especially in her favorite subject of English. Czaplinsky appreciates how "English is different for everyone" and changes from person to person.

"No one writes the same way, and I think that's beautiful," said Czaplinsky. Her greatest inspiration is her mother, who Czaplinsky turns to in hard times. "My mom is my hero and my best friend, and I know I can rely on her no matter what," she said. "I aspire to be like her one day."

Robert Niessen – Senior

Although his high school years are nearly over, Robert Niessen makes the most of his academic and extracurricular opportunities. And it reminds him how lucky he is to have overcome a major life hurdle in May of 2025 — a brain injury that he sustained while playing soccer.

"What I initially thought would be a temporary setback has become a much longer journey; more than a year later, I am still working toward recovery," said Niessen (CHS 2027). Niessen has navigated appointments, therapies, and changes to his favorite pastimes. It was all a tough adjustment while maintaining his academics, but it taught him resilience.

"Sometimes, it means discovering new interests, finding new ways to contribute, and continuing forward even when the path looks different than you expected."

Today, he's a historical researcher, docent, and author at Kingsland Manor, a journalist for *Clifton Merchant*, a sports broadcaster for CHS Soccer, and volunteers with the Homeless Animal Adoption League in Clifton.

He plans to attend college as a Biology major while exploring possible careers and is especially grateful for his mother. "Much of what I strive to accomplish is driven by the desire to make her proud and to show her that everything she has done for me has mattered."











Halloween Parade & Harvest Fest 2026

October 25th

Great weather, costumes and lots of fun! On Oct. 25, along Van Houten Ave., hundreds of families and their dogs, plus spooky characters and those fabulous Marching Mustangs, paraded as these pages of photos will testify! Clifton Rec's Halloween Parade then wound into the City Hall campus where kids enjoyed hayrides, bouncy houses and all kinds of inexpensive and old-fashined fun. Bravo to Clifton Rec employees and volunteers who make this tradition so awesome. And don't miss: Clifton 5K (Nov. 15), JK Realty's Candyland (Dec. 12), and register for the Holiday Door Decorating Contest by Dec. 4. Go to cliftonnj.myrec.com.











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Halloween HarvestFest 2026



















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Ages 6 - 8

Halloween HarvestFest 2026
























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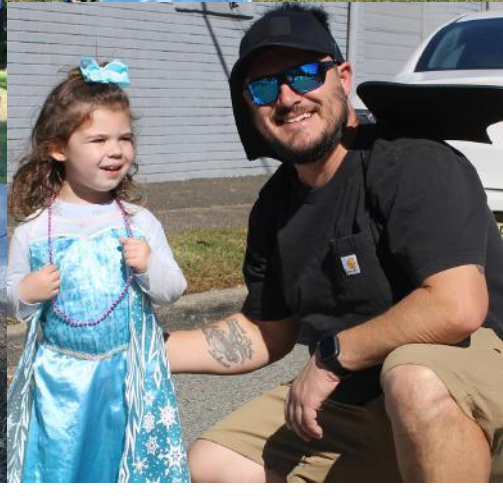

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Questions? Contact Maureen Cameron at
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Halloween HarvestFest 2026























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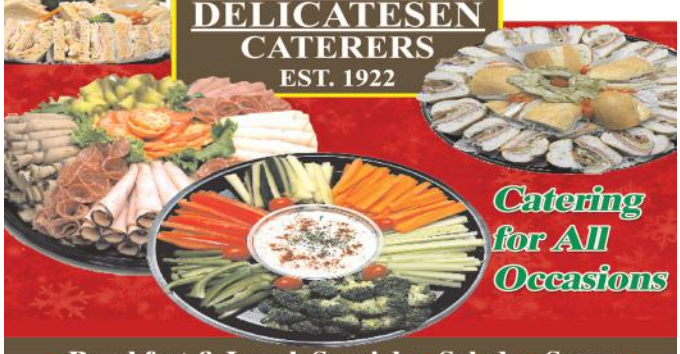
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Halloween HarvestFest 2026















CLIFTON ARTS CENTER
Upcoming Events



ART EXHIBIT • Open to the public

Nov. 18th thru Dec. 12th, 2026

Wednesdays thru Saturdays • 1pm till 4pm

We will be closed on Thanksgiving Day and weekend November 26th, 27th and 28th.
Instead we will be open to public on Monday, **November 23rd** 1pm-4pm and Tuesday, **November 24th** 1pm-4pm and Wednesday, **November 25th** 1pm-4pm.
Also, **Saturday, December 12th** we will be open only from **9 am — 12 noon**

CLIFTON Arts CENTER
CELEBRATING AMERICA'S 250th
www.cliftonartscenter.org

Office Hours • Mon. to Fri. • 8am until 4pm
Call to Confirm for Appointment

City of Clifton Human Services

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1pm till **4pm**

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Thursday, Nov. 12th, 2026
11 am - 1:30pm

Free Shuttle Bus - Senior Center Parking Lot

Meet Bus:	*Tour & Shop:*
10:45am - 10:55am	*11:00am - 11:30am*
11:45am - 11:55am	*12:00pm - 12:30pm*
12:45pm - 12:55pm	*1:00pm - 1:30pm*



HAMILTON HOUSE MUSEUM

971 Valley Road, Clifton, NJ 07013

For more information call
Clifton Arts Center • 973 472-5499



Community members gathered at Assumption of Holy Virgin Mary Church on Orange Ave., for the blessing of the flagpole in memory of John Peter Koribanics (enlarged center). Attendees included City Council candidate Tarek Alnatur, Sharon Koribanics, Mayor Ray Grabowski, Michael Koribanics and wife Monique, daughter Christen, and Joseph Koribanics.

John Adams and Benjamin Franklin share center stage in the Theater League of Clifton's musical story of *1776*. The play tells of a tense, hot summer in Philadelphia, where the Second Continental Congress members debate, fight, and finally sign the Declaration of Independence. Performances are Nov. 13-15 at Rosen Theater, Wayne Community Center. Info: theaterleagueofclifton.com or call 973-928-7668.



Agatha Christie's Murder at the Vicarage is presented Nov. 6-8 and 13-15 at the Clifton Arts Center. The show opens Nov. 6 at 7:30 pm with a reception of beverages and charcuterie boards. Cost is $55. To purchase in advance, visit: kismettheatre.org. Questions? Contact 973-559-3276 or kismetperformingartiststheatre@gmail.com.

Arts on the Go Holiday Pop-Up is at the Hamilton House Museum, 971 Valley Rd. on Nov. 7, 12, 14, and Dec. 5. Cash or check. Free coffee and tea. Info: 973-472-5499.

Clifton Behind the Scenes is a residents' guide to understanding government. Offered in three languages on Oct. 15, 4-5:30 pm (English), 5:30-7 pm (Arabic) and 7-8:30 pm (Spanish). Led by Councilwoman Rosemary Pino, the guided sessions explain the roles and responsibilities of city departments. Learn more: echonj.org.

Clifton Garden Club meets on Nov. 10 at 6:30 pm at the Allwood Library, 44 Lyall Rd. Kamala Anupindi, a Rutgers master gardener, will discuss large community gardens and growing vegetables using seeds. Free event. The nonprofit group of volunteers keeps Clifton cleaner and greener. Call Karin Christiaens at 973-420-8212.



The Clifton Fire Department's annual Pet Food Drive runs throughout November in support of the Clifton Animal Shelter. Suggested donations include Temptations or Friskies Cat Treats - Lickable & Dry, Sheba Kitten, Kitten Chow, and more. Drop-off locations: All six firehouses and the Clifton Fire HQ, 880 Clifton Ave.; the yellow house on the Municipal Complex.

School 5 HASA's Friday Night Lights Tricky Tray is Nov. 13, 6-10 pm at the Boys & Girls Club. Cost: $25; must be 16 or older. Bring your own food and drinks. Purchase tickets: school5hasa.membershiptoolkit.com. Any questions? Write school5hasa@gmail.com.

Power of One Christian Coaching and Outreach Ministries walkers meet at Richardson Scale Park, 680 Van Houten Ave. on Mondays and Wednesdays at 8 am for an hour walk. The walk is free and so is parking.

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The Dennis John Benigno Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Program Reauthorization Act passed in the U.S. Senate. The legislation renews the federal government's public health programs related to TBIs, including the national TBI surveillance program, named in honor of the late Congressman Bill Pascrell, Jr.

The legislation was led by Senator Andy Kim (D-NJ) and passed unanimously. The namesake of the Senate-passed legislation stems from lifelong resident Dennis John "DJ" Benigno, who passed away in January, 2024. Benigno was struck by a car at age 15, which permanently altered his life with a devastating brain injury that left him totally disabled.

"Our family knows firsthand how profoundly a traumatic brain injury can change a life and affect an entire family," stated DJ's father, Dennis Benigno, pictured-above in a file photo with his wife Rosalind and DJ. "We are deeply grateful for the work of the late Congressman Bill Pascrell and Senator Andy Kim, and for the continued advocacy of Congresswoman Nellie Pou."

The Clifton Advisory Committee for Individuals with Disabilities seeks new members, wrote Arnold Korotkin, seen above right with Joyce Frommer. The Committee — made up of residents with disabilities, a Council liaison, and a Clifton Health liaison — advises on the disability needs within the city. The Committee consists of nine individuals with a four-year staggered term. Meetings are on the third Monday of each month, except August and December, at 6:30 pm. Apply at cliftonnj.org by completing the "Serve on a Board" application.

We the People: Home & Hearth is a Clifton Arts Center exhibit which brings together the historical collections from the Hamilton House Museum and Clifton Fire Department archives. The display is unveiled Nov. 18 and displayed through Dec. 12, Wednesdays through Saturdays, 1-4 pm. Closed Thanksgiving weekend, the CAC's Meet & Greet Reception is Nov. 21, at 1 pm. Questions? Call the CAC at 973-472-5499 or visit cliftonartscenter.org.



Clifton Cares is low on supplies and needs your help. This Season of Giving, fill the box at City Hall, 900 Clifton Ave., with supplies until Nov. 14 so the group can send packages to active military. Mailing cost $36 is per box and monetary donations are appreciated. Items to give: Ramen noodles, beef jerky, canned soup, mac & cheese, candy, and cookies. Boxes are packed in mid-November. Tax deductible donations, payable to Clifton Cares, Inc., can be sent to Clifton Cares, Inc., Clifton City Hall, 900 Clifton Ave., Clifton NJ 07013. Know any deployed military person? Clifton Cares will send them a package. Email info to Chris Liszner at grandmachrissy99@aol.com. The list now includes military members stationed in Kuwait, Okinawa, Dubai, and aboard military carriers in the Arabian Sea.

Support Clifton Cares' Wendy's fundraiser on Dec. 1 from 5-8 pm by placing dine-in, takeout, or drive-thru orders at Wendy's, 83 Main Ave. Clifton Cares will receive 15% of your check to raise funds to support mailing packages to our deployed military.

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2026 Business of the Year: Santos Flowers!



Santos Flowers will be recognized on Dec. 8 as Business of the Year at the Statewide Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey's Gala at The Legacy Castle. A landmark at Lexington and Clifton Aves., Santos Flowers began in 2021 in Garfield, opened in Fair Lawn in 2022 and in Clifton in 2024. Now with over 30 employees, they open daily at 7 am. Founders Joseph and Maria Santos (above center) credit their work ethic to former ShopRite mentor, Rafael Cuellar.

Clifton veterans free hot meal home delivery is Nov. 10. Veterans of all stripes and services can receive a turkey dinner with all the sides delivered to their home on Nov. 7 between 4:30-7 pm. Register by Nov. 9 with a call to the Rec Dept. at 973-470-5956. Veterans will need to supply their full name, address, phone number, branch of the military and if someone will be assisting you if you cannot come to the front door. Volunteer delivery people cannot enter homes. To volunteer to drive and deliver the meals, email Clifton Rec at cliftonrec@cliftonnj.org.

The Friends of the Clifton Public Library seeks donations for its Gift Gallery sale on Nov. 16 at Main Memorial, 292 Piaget Ave. Find new and vintage gifts, costume jewelry, home decor, and more. Cash only. Follow @FRIENDSoftheCPL on Instagram. Money raised fund a variety of library programs, such as free museum passes, STEM kits, crafts, musical performances, and author events. Bring your donations, new or gently used, to the front desk at the Main Library. No clothes or stuffed animals. Info: 973-772-5500 or membershipFRIENDSofCPL@gmail.com.

The Friends of the Clifton Public Library's semi-annual membership meeting, followed by "A Tribute to Dolly Parton" presented by Robbie Amodeo, is Nov. 12 at Clifton's Main Memorial Library at 6:30 pm. Free, public event. Ages 10 and up are welcome when accompanied by an adult. Questions? Email MembershipFriendsofCPL@gmail.com, call the Library at 973-772-5500, call the Allwood Branch at 973-471-0555, or visit www.cliftonpl.org.



William Shakespeare's comedy, "A Midsummer Night's Dream." is staged Nov. 13-15 at Clifton High. Mustang thespians include Maximiliano Valencia, Laila Fairley, Jordan Jones, Makayla Falayas, Zahir Diaz, James Zuniga, Mikaela Jorge, Joseph Zuniga, Keyla Sanchez, Alexa Daum, Roqaya Aly, Sophia Carneiro, Stella Martinique, Ava Munck, Robert Niessen, Emilie Beldie, Jesse Chuaco, Abby Waddell, Angelus Castillo, Khail Rocas, Angie Arevalo, Arianna Rubino, Arianna Alvarez Rojas, Hailey Elizalde, Jennifer Hidalgo Lopez, Karol Sanchez, Keenya Botreau, Miley Gonzales, Oscar Nava, Twiloo Knight and Yaneli Medina.



CHS History teacher John Lesler on Oct. 26 unveiled a Mustang history display of 36 Varsity jackets spanning eight decades. He and the coaches and contributors are pictured above. From concept to completion, the initiative took over five years and follows the 'new' athletic display cases of trophies and historic items unveiled two years ago.

St. Peter's Haven hosts Empty Bowls Nov. 13, 6 pm, at the Athenia Veterans Post. The $40 admission includes a hand-crafted soup bowl and bowlfuls of chili, soups, breads and desserts provided by local restaurants. Buy tickets in advance. Go to saintpetershaven.org to send a donation. Info: 973-546-3406.

Bring Sam for free dog rabies shots Nov. 7, 2-4 pm at the DPW Garage, 307 E 7th. Owners with valid ID must be aged 18+ with dogs on leashes. Questions? Call 973-470-5760.

Clifton Holiday Door Decorating Contest will be judged Dec. 7. Register your door by Dec. 4 at cliftonrec.com, call 973-470-5956, or at the Rec Office in City Hall. Ten winners will be selected based on categories like: Most cheerful, colorful, creative, traditional, original, craftsmanship, old-fashioned, unusual, most trendy, and Santa's favorite.

CLIFTON CITY HALL

Holiday

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For More Information: Contact Ashley at 201-739-0665

City of Clifton Human Services

Clifton Health Department Public Health

PHAB

Birthdays & *Celebrations* - **November 2026**








Ed & **Casey (Hawrylko) Bivaletz** are celebrating their 6th anniversary on Nov. 11. **William Wishard** and **Amber Casey** will marry on Aug. 8, 2026. **Joey Angello** is 67 on Nov. 6. **Rosario LaCorte** blows out 80 candles on Nov. 16. **Bev Lacsina** turns 37 on Nov. 8. Shout out to our friend **John Seiple** who turns 85 on Nov. 26. **Spencer Olivia Guzowski** turned 2 on Oct. 31. Parents are **Paul** (CHS 2008) and **Cecelia.**

Jazzlyn Caba 11/1
Robyn Jo Paci 11/2
Thomas Scancarella 11/2
Kelly Tierney 11/3
Paul Guzowski 11/3
Lance Dearing 11/4
Olivia Nysk 11/4
Andrew Seitz 11/4
Mr. Cupcakes 11/4
Victoria Krzysztofczyk 11/5
Tanya Ressetar 11/5
Kristina Azevedo 11/6
Nicole Lorraine Bonin 11/6
Martha Derendal 11/6
Danielle Osellame 11/6
Kristen Soltis 11/6
Gabriella Marriello 11/7
James Ball 11/7
Kevin Lord 11/7
Francine Anderson 11/8
Ray Konopinski 11/8
Marie Sanzo 11/8
Donna Camp 11/9




Andrea Rozo and **Iván Cepeda** celebrate their 9th Anniversary on Nov. 20. **Samantha** and **Joseph Hrina** (CHS '06) announce the Aug. 3 birth of daughter **Caroline Lauzon**. Grandparents are **Michael** and **Jacquelyn Hrina.**

Tricia Montague 11/9
Brandy Stiles 11/10
Tom Szieber 11/10
Stacey Takacs 11/10
Joseph Franek III 11/11
Laura Gasior 11/12





The Sister Act: **Mary Vatasin** is 68 on Nov. 6 and **Anna Diduch** turned 69 on Oct. 29. **Adeline (Lombardo) DeVries** turns 90 on Nov. 29. She and **Jack** have been married for 70 years.

Geraldine Ball 11/13
Patricia Franek 11/13
Robert Paci 11/13
Gabriel Garcia 11/14
Gregory Chase 11/15
Ken Peterson 11/15
Kathy Schmidt 11/15
Matthew Phillips 11/16
Anthony Wrobel 11/16
Michael Zangara 11/16
Marilyn Velez 11/18
Joseph Tyler 11/19
Joseph Guerra 11/20
Jon Whiting 11/21
Andreas Dimitratos 11/22
Katerina Dimitratos 11/22
Margaret Egner 11/22
Carol Peterson 11/24
Brian Derendal 11/25
Eileen Fierro 11/25
Peter Kedl 11/25
Crystal Lanham 11/25
Rachel Prehodka-Spindel 11/25
Brian Derendal 11/25
Kristen Bridda 11/26
Jessi Cholewczynski 11/26
Dillon Curtiss 11/26
Bethany Havriliak 11/26
Kelly Moran 11/27
Sami Suaifan 11/28
Amanda Grace Feiner 11/29
Anne Hetzel 11/29
Christopher Seitz 11/29
Adeline DeVries 11/29
Kaitlyn Graham 11/30
Barbara Luzniak 11/30

Dennis and **Janet Kolano** celebrate their 56th wedding anniversary on Nov. 21.





Last chances to catch the 2026 Marching Mustangs include the Nov. 8 Veterans Parade, the Nov. 14 West Milford Tattoo and the Thanksgiving Eve 'Under the Lights' performance on Nov. 25 at Clifton Stadium. Follow them @chsmustangband on Instagram.

Photos by Cameron Villanueva @capturedbycameronn on Instagram

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CLIFTON $850,000
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CLIFTON $699,900
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CLIFTON $570,000
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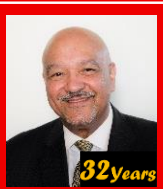
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