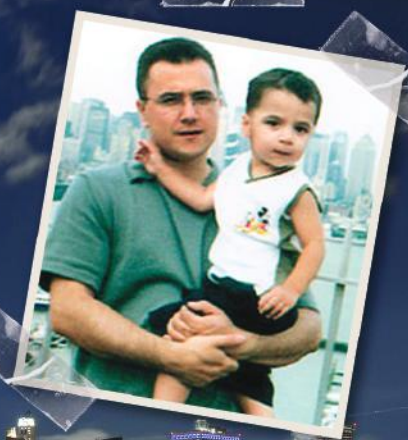


Clifton Merchant Magazine • Volume 31 • Issue 9 • September 4, 2026

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WHAT ARE THEY THINKING?

By Associate Editor
Ariana Puzzo



We spoke to six candidates running for the Clifton Board of Education. Two of the candidates are running to finish the final year of former Commissioner Lucy Danny's term, following her resignation at the start of the year. The other four candidates are running for three open seats, including all three incumbents. The candidates are running to lead our school district over the next three years, so we spoke to them about why they're running, what their top priorities are, and where they stand on the issues. Here's what they had to say.

Joseph Siano

There's no clocking out at the end of the day for Commissioner Joseph Siano; a fact that he wants to make clear to Clifton families and residents.

"The administration has resolved every problem that I've brought their way. It's why I'm running with an open-door policy. My cell phone is on my business card," said Siano, 43. "I want people to be able to contact me at nine at night and not have to wait until the next day."

The lifelong city resident is a proud 2001 CHS grad and local businessman. He owns JK Realty, 270 Colfax Ave., with his wife, Rickey Di Maria-Siano. Now running for his second term on the Board of Education, he describes his first term as "the most fulfilling thing that I've ever done."

Despite his fellow residents asking him if a run for City Council is in the cards, he has made his immediate ambitions clear.

"I think the Board of Ed is too important," he said. "[It's the] responsibility of making sure that all students get what

they need for a successful life, and it all comes down to spending money. We need to find ways to generate and save money."

On May 7, the Board meeting opened with Superintendent Dr. Danny Robertozzi discussing the district's financial obligations and needs. He recommended a 6% tax levy increase, noting what the increase would mean for taxpayers, but noted expenses out of the district's control.

Clifton Public Schools is contractually obligated to pay rising health benefits costs and charter school fees, both of which have caused a deficit. Increased health benefits costs accounted for nearly \$14 million of the school budget. Charter schools represented the second-highest fixed cost, adding \$3.8 million to the district's expenses.

Siano and Commissioner Mark Bruniak voted "no" to the superintendent's recommendation for the 2026-27 school year, with fellow Commissioner Tanya Suarez abstaining upon advising.

stories continue on page 60

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Eternal Memory

By Ariana Puzzo

In the 25 years since Sept. 11, 2001, the lives and legacies of those lost remain vivid to those who knew them and others who wish they knew them better. We begin that journey through time with a celebration of Cliftonites lost on the tragic day. Throughout the years, readers have provided us with unique perspectives and recollections about who they loved and lost. We also learned more about them by the tribute posts on memory walls. Through the eyes of colleagues, friends and family, and others across the globe, their memories remain eternal and we have striven to preserve them on these pages ...



John Skala



John P. Skala

Son. Brother. Uncle. John P. Skala wore the many roles of his life well, but there was one that he chose that made all the difference: protector.

“Everybody is special in their own way [in terms of their] bravery,” said his sister, Irene Lesiw, last month. “Johnny knew what he was up against. Unfortunately, it took his life, but he’d been hurt on his job from various incidents. I think what he’s taught us is to work hard but enjoy life.”

Skala, 31, at left with his dad John and brother Michael, lost his life in the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks while rescuing victims trapped in the World Trade Center. As a Port Authority police officer and a part-time paramedic in New Jersey, Skala answered the call to duty that contributed to the estimated survival of 25,000-plus people at the WTC.



Known as “Yash”, a Ukrainian term of endearment from his loved ones, his shift started at 7 am at Manhattan’s Lincoln Tunnel, like many others since his service began 12 years prior. Approximately two hours later, he and fellow officers were among the first notified about an emergency at the World Trade Center just after the first jet hit the North Tower. They swiftly responded and went cross town.

Where most people would run from danger, Skala’s training and immense dedication to saving lives saw him running into the WTC to assist the wounded. At one point, he was seen exiting and re-entering the burning towers with a first aid kit. Skala was the only member of his unit not to escape the wreckage.

Since that day, Lesiw remembers her younger brother on the date of his passing with her friends and his friends. They take the PATH into the city and stand beside Skala’s name at Ground Zero while his name is called. Then, they say a few words to him and place flowers, a Ukrainian flag, and an American flag on the memorial.

Next, they walk over to an Irish bar that is occupied by many firemen and police officers there for the same reason as them.

“There, we do a shot [of Black Haus] in memory of my brother. Even though we hate doing it, we do it for Johnny,” she laughed, “because that was his drink.”

Afterwards is lunch and the annual Mass for the fallen Port Authority officers at St. Peter’s Church before returning to the Ukrainian Center in Passaic.

“That is where I hang out with his friends and my friends, and we all continue celebrating and sharing the stories that we remember of Johnny,” said Lesiw. “We have pretty much done that every year.”

There are plenty of stories to share.

Skala was the youngest child of John and Slawka, and he was the younger brother of Lesiw, 61, and Michael, 59. This past June would’ve been Skala’s 56th birthday. What Lesiw remembers clearly about her brother were his remarks that made everyone smile.

“He would lighten up the room. There was just this thing with him,” said Lesiw. “He was very supportive and sensitive but, at the same time, he was strong and very, very helpful.” Skala’s “priorities in life” were his family and work. Lesiw recounted that he loved having a good time with friends, even after a 12- to 14-hour police tour.

“He was just a good guy to be around with. Even today, I still hear stories about him or how people miss Johnny,” said Lesiw.

During his 2001 memorial at St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church on President St. in Passaic, Skala’s loved ones received tokens of his dedication. Michael



In 2010 John Skala’s family: sister Irene with son Bohdan, mother Slawka, brother Michael and Susan with their kids Adrian and Victoria. They are pictured with Tom Hawrylko who rode his bicycle to Washington DC in the Police Unity Tour to raise awareness and remember Police Officers like Yash Skala who were killed in the line of duty.



received Skala's Port Authority uniform hat and mother Slawka was presented the American flag and Skala's badge (number 1639). "Stop and smell the flowers," Lesiw advised. "I know my brother did that."

Timothy and John Grazioso

Sandy Grazioso lost both of her sons on Sept. 11, 2001 — a profound, unbearable loss for any parent. But the Graziosos were a close-knit family, and no amount of time softened the losses of Timothy (CHS 1976) and John (CHS 1978), who both worked at the World Trade Center.

"You never get back to normal," Sandy (CHS 1953) told *Clifton Merchant* in September 2009. "There's not a day that I don't wake up in the morning and say, 'Good morning, boys,' and go to bed at night and say, 'Goodnight, boys.'"

There were additional layers to the grief, as loss of that magnitude was sadly multi-generational on Sandy's side of the family. As the middle child in a family with four sons and three daughters, Sandy was just 17 when her 19-year-old brother, George Fornelius, was killed while serving with the Marines in the Korean War.

Sandy, who passed in 2020, witnessed how the loss of a son affected her parents. Now she and Hank Grazioso (CHS 1953), who passed in 2023, were on the other side of that loss. The brothers were also survived by sister Carolee Azzarello (CHS 1980), pictured above with mom and brothers on her wedding day.



♡ Grazioso brothers ♡ Timothy and John

"She was very close with them," said Sandy in 2009. "They used to fight, but they would stick up for her."

And they had all grown into remarkable people. Azzarello's career began as a case manager for what was then the Division of Youth and Family Services. She later spent 27 years in the federal criminal justice system, serving as a probation officer out of the Newark courthouse until retiring on Dec. 31, 2018.

Meanwhile, her brothers — who played football together for the Junior Mustangs and the Varsity Fighting Mustangs — were working on the other side of the Holland Tunnel at Cantor Fitzgerald.

Timothy, 42, was a math whiz. His knowledge and skill saw him rise to chief operating officer for over-the-counter trading. John, 41, was a supervisor for U.S. Air and later went into sales for its subsidiary, eSpeed.

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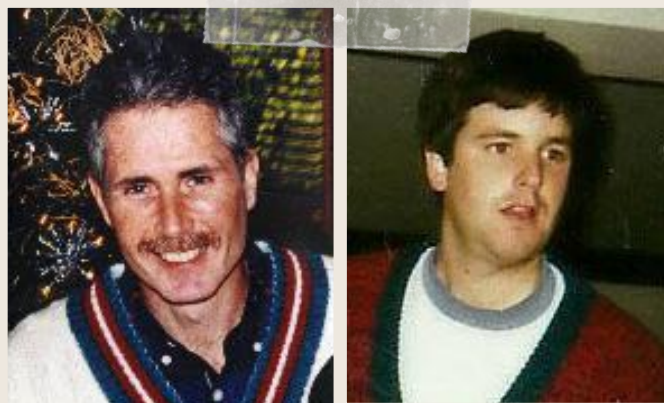
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Eternal Memory

Timothy was the one who encouraged him to join the company, highlighting the closeness of the brothers. That closeness further translated to their proximity at work. Both men worked in Tower One, with Timothy on the 104th floor and John on the 105th floor.

Prior to relocating, the brothers were members of St. John Kanty Church on Speer Ave. Timothy split his time between a Brooklyn apartment during the week and Florida with his family on the weekends. He was married to Deborah Pankanin Grazioso for 15 years and the couple shared 12-year-old twin daughters, Lauren and Briana.

John lived in Middletown with his wife of nearly 10 years, Tina. They had three children – Kathryn, 7, Kristen, 4, and Michael, 11 months. Whether they were cooking their specialty dishes — Timothy's were French toast and omelets; John's was making his silver dollar pancakes — or simply spending time with loved ones, family was never far.



♥ Edward Charles Murphy ♥

The last time that Sandy saw John was the previous Saturday. She babysat her grandchildren in Middletown, while her son played golf. As for Timothy, he took Sandy out for her birthday dinner at Bella Napoli on Sept. 10, 2001. They couldn't go on Sandy's birthday four days prior, because Timothy had to work. The brothers knew that they were blessed.

"I've got it all," said John to a relative in 2001. "I've got a beautiful wife, two beautiful daughters and I've got a son. What else is there?"

Edward Charles Murphy

The memory of Edward Charles Murphy remains a comfort to those who knew him. For some, in years past, he could be felt in the gritty guitar riffs that epitomize Motley Crue. Others have remembered him while drinking a cup of tea with lemon.

For former Councilman Steve Hatala, the friendship between him and Murphy began when the latter was 13. Murphy at the time had joined the Squires, which was a part of the Junior Knight of Columbus Regina Mundi Council.

The youngest of three boys, Murphy's older brothers were Father Daniel Murphy, a retired priest of the Paterson Diocese, and Richard, a physician who opened a practice in Boston. Though he was not Murphy's brother by blood, the bond between Murphy and Hatala ran deep.

"We were brothers joined at the heart," said Hatala. "He was a genuine person who would do anything for anyone."

Many felt similarly about the lifelong Cliftonite. Murphy, 42, worked as a managing director at Cantor Fitzgerald. Though he was an avid supporter of the arts, and his life was a mosaic of diverse interests and passions, he always prioritized family and strove to help others.

One friend, Buck LaPointe, described losing Murphy as more like losing a "big brother." The two men

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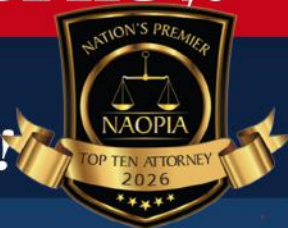


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Eternal Memory

worked at Bierbaum Martin in July of 1992, and Murphy was one of the first people that he met before quickly becoming a mentor and best friend.

“If I needed to borrow \$1,000 because I screwed up something, Eddie gave it to me and said, ‘Pay me when you can’, and he didn’t charge interest,” wrote LaPointe. “With Eddie, I always knew I’d find the answer to any problem, even though he wasn’t always right. He even came to all the heavy metal shows with me, whether it was KISS or Warrant.”

In spite of his love of Manhattan, Murphy also loved his hometown. He served as Chair of the Clifton Traffic Safety Commission and helped improve overall traffic safety, especially around our schools. He was also a former Grand Knight of the Regina Mundi Council of the Knights of Columbus and helped nonprofits with fundraising to supply food and clothing for underprivileged Clifton children.

As for the lives that he touched, the list goes on. There was Maryann Flego, who was Murphy’s “partner in life and love for [17.5] years” and held him in her daily thoughts and nightly prayers. There was Caroline Carbonaro, the former manager at Cantor Cafe, who said Murphy was the first person that she’d see each morning and with whom she’d chat over “a cup of herbal tea with lemon.”

Yet among the last people that he spoke to that Tuesday morning were Hatala and his mother. Murphy and Hatala were together talking the previous day and the former asked Hatala to pick him up a Texas-style ten gallon hat on his trip to Dallas.

Then, it was at about 8:15 am on Sept. 11, 2001 when Hatala got a call from Murphy who was on his way to work. “Don’t forget my hat,” Murphy had reminded him. “As soon as I get off the plane,” Hatala had promised.

Soon after, all air traffic was grounded and Murphy was making another phone call.

This time it was to his mother Evelyn, a 77-year-old widow, who he called every morning at 9 am sharp. He spoke with her, just minutes after the first jetliner made impact. “He said, ‘Mom, I’m OK, I’m getting out,’” recalled Father Daniel, two decades ago. “She just cherishes that moment.”

Zuhtu Ibis

Zuhtu Ibis loved being at the center of everything, and he worked hard to get there. Originally from a small city in the middle of Turkey, Ibis came to the United States



Zuhtu Ibis



when he was 18. He came with his father, but working in New Jersey was never his long-term plan.

“He came so far and he was from such a small place that he did not want to be in New Jersey,” said his wife, Leyla Uyar, to *The New York Times* in 2001. “He wanted to be working in New York, in the middle of everything.”

Like many brand-new immigrants before him, he got to work. Ibis delivered pizza and pumped gas at his father’s gas station. He would go on to put himself through technical school in North Brunswick and, like many children, was known to strangers through the pride of a parent.

“Dear Zuhtu, I never had the chance to meet you, but I think of you often,” wrote Carla Fiddler on Ibis’ Tribute Wall. “I worked for the Red Cross and met your father. It hurt me to know that your family hurt. I pray that you are free.”

Bob Carroll, a retiree of Structured Systems, also had fond memories of Ibis. He witnessed the 25-year-old’s work ethic before and after they worked together in the city. It was in 1998 that he made it across the river. Ibis began work on a temporary computer project at Cantor Fitzgerald, who would go on to hire him.

His dream of being at the center of everything became a reality. And he had the view from the 103rd floor to prove it. Wherever he worked, Ibis left an indelible mark. But that was not what made the biggest, lasting impression for Carroll. “I remember you making me pizza in Towaco. I remember you coming to work with me in NYC



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Eternal Memory

♡ Kyung “Kaccy” Cho ♡

at Cantor Fitz,” wrote Carroll in 2017. “And on this 16th anniversary, most of all, I remember you as a good man.”

People living on the other side of the world admired him, too. “Turkey has not forgotten you, and we still miss you,” wrote Pelin J. “I’ve never met you before, but I believe you’re a good man, and I know that you’re still in our minds. Turkey loves you. God bless you.”

Ibis and his wife were high school sweethearts who married when he was 20 and she was 18. The couple were raising their 2-year-old son, Mert. Despite the challenges of their life navigating a new country and learning a new language, the couple were in it together.

“His window looked out to New Jersey,” said Uyar in 2001, “and he told me he could see our house and he was keeping a watch over me.”

Kyung “Kaccy” Cho

Looking out for her loved ones was second-nature to Kyung “Kaccy” Cho — and for the past 25 years, people that she never met have paid that care and kindness forward in memory of her.

There was Eric Sessions, who only knew Cho from a picture that he saw of her on a flyer in the early aftermath of the attacks. Describing the picture as something that “gave us hope in those first stagnant days”, Sessions appreciated the humanity that it brought to senseless tragedy. “You seem to have a great calm and a great joy,” wrote Sessions. “May blessings be upon you and your family, and thank you for putting a face to such blank horror.”

Cho, 30, was part of a close-knit family that included



her mother and two sisters. Prior to Sept. 11, 2001, the three sisters spoke about how they never wanted to die before their mother. The devastation, they knew, would be tremendous.

The middle sister disappeared from the 99th floor of 1 World Trade Center. Two decades ago, her younger sister, Melissa, spoke about how her older sister contin-

ued to inspire her. “I know Casey would want me to be strong,” said Melissa on a website dedicated to her sister’s legacy. “Casey would try to make my mother get over it.”

That supportiveness was representative of Cho’s nature. She supported her mother, who had lost her husband seven years prior. She also was there for her older sister when she became pregnant and quit her job. The family, including Cho’s then 1-year-old nephew, lived together.

“Kaccy, I only knew you through your sister Jin Hee, whom I worked with at Bear. I would always hear her speaking to you since I sat right next to her,” wrote Ellen Chin. “I know you were loved very much. Rest in peace with your Maker.”

She also inspired others, and not in any one way. On Sept. 13, 2021, Timothy Sorensen shared that he and over 1,000 riders rode the previous day from Woodstock to the 9/11 Healing Field in Oak Brook, IL. Each rider had with them a lanyard bearing the name of someone who died, and Sorensen rode for Cho.

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Eternal Memory



Ehtesham U. Raja



"I had the honor of not only riding with Kyung's lanyard around my neck, but finding her flag amongst the nearly 3,000 flags at the field," wrote Sorensen. "I brought her lanyard home with me so I will never forget Kyung."

Referred to by friends as "BlueAngel," Cho held no regrets. In Summer of 2001, she got a research job in the environmental claims sector for Marsh & McLennan. The Clifton resident also loved to shop, travel, and write short stories and poems.

She even ended up in another author's story. On Sept. 11, 2021, current New York State Author Min Jin Lee shared on Twitter, now X, that the protagonist of her 2007 debut novel *Free Food for Millionaires* is named after Cho.

"On 9/11, I lived near the towers. My family and I had to be evacuated. Days later, I read this obituary in [sic] @nytimes," wrote Lee. "I loved Casey Cho's face and name, so I named the main character of my first novel after her. We remember all those we lost."

Ehtesham U. Raja

Life goals and his pursuit of a well-rounded education brought Ehtesham U. Raja from Lahore, Pakistan to the United States. But, while studious, Raja knew how to have a good time, often with Ali Agha.

"My college years at Boston University were spent

dashing back and forth from Boston to NYC on weekends only to go partying with Raja ... when he was an undergrad at Columbia," wrote Agha. "We explored New York City together, then LA, then Vegas. Hell, even during high school at Aitchison we explored all of Lahore."

Raja, 28, graduated The Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science at Columbia. He earned an MBA at Goizueta Business School at Emory and worked for TCG Software in Bloomfield. Agha described their bond as "very rare in people of such different backgrounds."

But that bond, he wrote, was indicative of Raja epitomizing the true spirit of America. "[He was] devoid of any racial inclinations, a true believer in freedom of expression, and was a militant proponent of a diverse and global world view," wrote Agha. "His was the death [of] a global citizen. A 22nd century mind struggling with 21st century problems."

Like the other Cliftonites, Raja's interests were diverse. Among them, his love for Hindi music. The Hindi movie star Amitabh Bachan was one of his favorites, and he often sang Hindi music in the shower.

Raja was ready to retire from the "party scene" and marry his girlfriend, Christine Lamprecht. In fact, he was speaking with a friend about his dreams before he was set to attend a conference at the World Trade Center. That weekend, Raja and his best friend, Maneesh Sagar, ended up at an Indian restaurant at 5 am. It was there that the friends spoke of the future over tea and skewered lamb.

Even those who didn't know him personally have felt a deep connection to his story. "I saw your name at the 9/11 Memorial as I was about to take the ferry to Ellis Island while visiting New York a few weeks ago. I took a photo on my phone," wrote



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Nabeel Jafri. “That night, when I was back in my hotel, I did some research and was really touched by your story.”

“Not only did we both grow up in Lahore, but there is something common between us that I can’t figure out,” Jafri continued. “Maybe it’s the profession or chasing the dream, maybe something else. Rest in peace.”

Edgar H. Emery

It may seem contradictory, but some people love running as much as they love eating chocolate. It is possible that Edgar H. Emery was one of those people if the stories people have shared are any indication.

Emery’s wife, Elizabeth, was used to seeing him return from cold and snowy runs with icicles in his hair.

As for those who worked with Emery, 45, in the HR Department at Fiduciary Trust, one colleague Allison Katz recalled another side of the Clifton resident.

“Ed was the first person to welcome me to the company, and I will always remember him for that. [He] was kind, smart, funny, and a true gentleman,” wrote Katz. “I remember debating politics with Ed and often talking about the Larry King Show. I remember him always eating chocolate before 9:30 am. I remember hanging out in Ed’s office and just chatting away.”

Fiduciary Trust Company International was located in the South Tower and other colleagues remembered how he would organize co-workers to run in charity races. One such colleague, Kevin Granville, participated with Emery in 5Ks.

“Only the last couple of races we ran, I guess Ed didn’t have anything to prove,” Granville told the *Telegraph-Forum*. “He’d stay back with me, make sure I was doing OK, not having a heart attack.”

Known affectionately by those who grew up with him as “Butch”, Emery grew up on Edison Ave. in Sunbury, Pennsylvania. One neighbor, Terina (Walter) Kreitzer, described him as the “brother I never had” and was best friends with his sister Dona.

“I think often of all the fun and fights we used to have growing up and will treasure them always,” she wrote. “Butch will forever be in my heart and my thoughts. Love always, a long-time friend.”



Edgar H. Emery

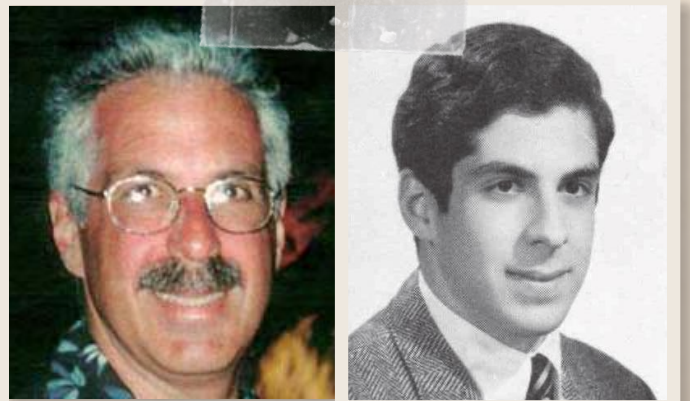


Richard David Rosenthal

Richard David Rosenthal, 50, had a “childlike adventurous streak.” In 2001, his sister, Audrey Model, told *The New York Times* how Rosenthal’s 40th birthday had a “Three Stooges” theme. It was just one example of the CHS 1969 grad’s bright spirit.

Community was another aspect of who Rosenthal was to those who knew him. He was in the Grand Order of the Aleph Zadik Aleph (AZA), an international youth-led fraternal organization for Jewish teenagers. He formed relationships there with fellow members, such as Ralph Levy and Jay Goldstein. In Levy’s case, the two attended school and Cub Scouts and spent their CHS years in AZA.

“I know you were a good family man and fulfilled the mitzvah, a good deed in Hebrew, of marriage and supporting a family, [which is] so important in our religion,” wrote Levy, of Rosenthal pictured below in the 1969 CHS Yearbook. “May God bless you and your family forever.” Rosenthal lived in Fair Lawn with his wife, Loren, and



Richard Rosenthal



then teenage sons, Evan and Seth. He and Loren had met at CHS when he was 17 and she was 14. In September 2001, the couple were approaching their 24th wedding anniversary.

As for Goldstein, he recalled how Rosenthal always “lit up the meetings with your jokes, your humor, and your fun loving ways. Yet,” the friend clarified, “you contributed insightfully to the discussions and made a real difference to our fraternity.”

Rosenthal was a tremendous presence in his family as well. He and Loren shared many fond memories, with Loren telling *The Times* that during one family vacation, he encouraged her to try white-water rafting while on their cruise.

But alongside his carefree demeanor, he was dedicated to improving others’ lives. The parents were united in navigating son Evan’s familial dysautonomia, a genetic disease that affects nerve cells. Rosenthal spent 15 years serving as treasurer of the Dysautonomia Foundation.

He was also treasurer for the Jewish Center in Fair Lawn. But his day job was working on the 101st floor as Vice President at Cantor Fitzgerald. He was only six months into the position. It never prevented him from sharing the important daily moments with people.

“On September 9th, Loren and Richard stopped by the Gift Shop just to schmooze. That’s a moment I will never forget,” recalled Laurel Bernstein. “We laughed. We kibitzed. We talked. Just two days before everything changed. It was fun.”

Loren also had a lasting memory that her husband unknowingly gave her from that morning as he went off to work. Speaking to *The Star-Ledger* in 2001, she recalled Rosenthal’s last words to her were: “Have a great day, honey. I’ll see you later.”

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Eternal Memory

Francis Joseph Trombino

Life is full of close calls, so protecting others isn't something that Francis Joseph Trombino took lightly. "He was always a happy man. He tried to make everybody smile," said his great-nephew Dennis Molner. "In 'All in the Family', there was the character Archie Bunker. A 'lovable bigot.' That was my uncle. He meant it lovingly. He was a wonderful gentleman."

Trombino, 68, lived for most of his life in Clifton. "Joe" grew up in Delawanna and served with the US Army in the Korean War. He was a communicant at St. Paul's Roman Catholic Church, 124 Union Ave.

His close calls came in three. The first was the 1981 Brink's robbery in Nanuet, NY while driving a Brink's armored car. Trombino nearly lost his arm in a shootout with members of the Weather Underground and Black Liberation Army. After two years and three arm operations, he returned to work as an armed guard.

Twelve years after the robbery, Trombino was making deliveries to the World Trade Center in 1993 hours before it was bombed. He was still working for Brink's on Sept. 11, 2001, but he planned to retire in a year. The Clifton resident was in a Brink's truck that got trapped in the parking garage after the attack.

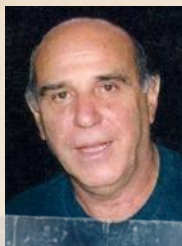
As his three colleagues made a delivery to a bank on the 11th floor of the North Tower, the attack prevented them from returning. Although Trombino could not go upstairs, his sense of duty also kept him with the truck.

"The story goes, he reached out to the dispatcher. He asked, 'What should I do?' and they told him to stay in the car, because the driver was somewhere else," said Molner. "That was just his way. He wouldn't have abandoned his post unless forced."

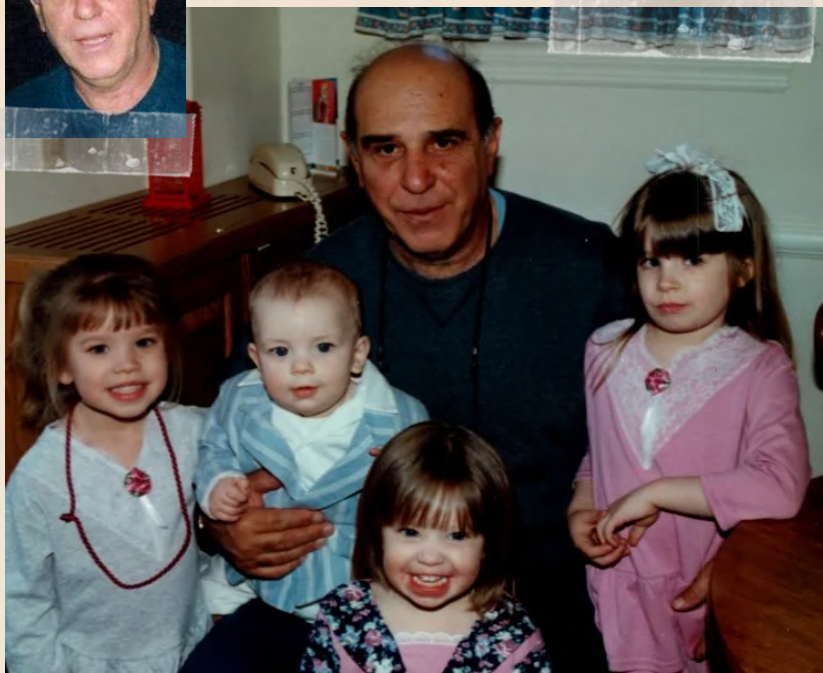
Trombino was the beloved husband of Jean (McNulty), the loving father of Lisa, Bovita and the late James Trombino, and had four grandchildren. He left an indelible mark on many more.

"When I think of Uncle Joe ... I think about his funny laugh," said Molner. "He made friends wherever he went."

When asked what he hopes others take from the 25th remembrance to bring about positive change, Molner pointed to vigilance and unity in our nation.



Francis Joseph Trombino



Joe and Jean Trombino, their daughter Bovita and granddaughter Alyssa Kirby are pictured on the cover, along with a youthful Joe in Delawanna. Above, Joe with grandkids Alyssa, Mackenzie, Caitlyn, Stephanie Kirby.

"We go through our ups and downs, but we have to be aware that there are outside and even internal threats; we've had domestic terrorism," said Molner. "The biggest thing that I would say is, let's pull together as Americans."

"The country seems to be separated along party lines or racial lines," he added. "Twenty-five years ago ... everybody pulled together and were flying flags. We need to get back to that remembrance. We are one nation. We need to take care of each other."

Helping hands are always needed at the Clifton Avenue of Flags. On Sept. 11, volunteers will raise over 2,300 flags at 6 am and return at 5 pm to lower them. Join the residents who make the tributes possible on the Municipal Complex, 900 Clifton Ave. Citizens can honor a veteran by purchasing a flag for a birthday, special occasion, or tribute for their service. \$140 for a flag, pole, sleeve, name plate, and ground socket. To get the form, visit cliftonnj.org and search for Avenue of Flags. Flags are displayed on Memorial Day, Flag Day, Independence Day, Patriots Day (9/11), and Veterans Day. To volunteer, call Marie Schultheis at 973-563-3249 or visit the Flag Barn from 9 am to noon and see the Keepers of the Flags.

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THE CLIFTONETTES

at 70

By Ariana Puzzo



The Cliftonettes at 70 from top left: Barbara Ossi Davella, Cathy Koren Richards, Ann Guida Klics, Diedra Costello Codispoti, Lynn Bartke Sichel. Kneeling: Rosie Freihart Young, Dinah Van Bochoven Krenitski, Rosemary Cebula Lipala, Diane Zasowski Brisson.

You can take these Cliftonettes out of their hometown, but you can't take the memories or lifelong friendships out of their hearts. Barbara Ossi Davella can attest to that, and so can eight of her CHS 1974 friends. They have all done life together through school, marriages, loss, and as many have expanded their families as grandmothers.

"We all know where we came from and the struggles and joys we've had," said Davella. "That makes a difference from the new friends we meet. 'Make new friends but keep the old, one is silver but the other is gold.' So true."

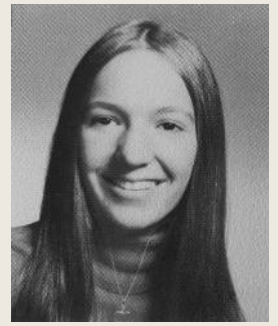
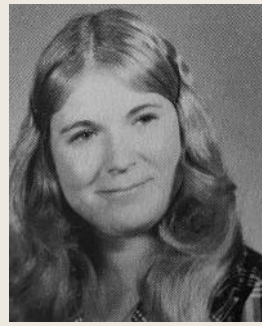
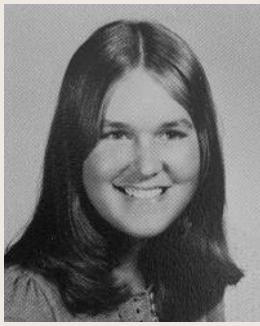
Many of the friends, Davella added, married their "first real boyfriends." They've also all "lived a relatively clean

life", which she attributes to their enduring health.

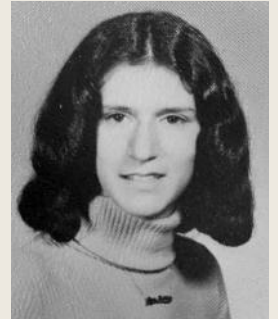
"Although we each spend a lot of time with each of our families, I feel we can still count on each other if we need to," said Davella.

Barbara (Ossi) Davella

Being a lifelong Cliftonite is a multi-generational title for Barbara (Ossi) Davella's family. Her great-grandmother lived here, then her grandmother, her mother, her, and now her daughter Jamie bought a house in Clifton, which amounts to five generations. Davella has lived in five different houses in our city.



*Rosemary Friehart,
Rosemary Cebula,
Lynn Bartke,
Dinah Van Bochoven,
Diane Zasowski,
Catherine Koren,
Barbara Ossi,
Barbara Martyna,
Ann Guida.*



"We would buy a house and my husband would fix it up, then we would move to another one. My husband never wanted to move out of Clifton, and now I am glad I'm still here," she said. "I live in an area where I can walk to everything I need. I do wish my friends were closer."

Davella and Ralph (CHS 1975) met in the Mustang Band. The couple are married for 44 years with three children: Lauryn, Jamie, and Matt. All graduated from CHS,

where Matt was captain of the football team, Jamie was captain of the softball team, and Lauryn was a Drum Major like her mother.

The Davellas are also two-time grandparents, with a third grandchild on the way. She attended Mercer County College and had a 10-year career in Graphic Design and Advertising. She then stayed home to raise their children.

"That time, for me, was priceless," said Davella.

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The Mustang Majorettes in the 1974 yearbook: Rosemarie Freihart, Sue Francisco, Donna Rederstorff, Debbie Dunkley, Lyn Raphael, Alice Moore, Lyn Sentkowski, Joyce Bongiorono, Lynn Bartke, Lynn Chuprevich, Barbara Ossi, Cathy Koren, Lisa Cattai, Debbie Kievit, Barbara Martyna, Jill Renta, Diane Zasowski, Kathy Gray, Valerie Anderle, Roe Sonye, Donna Staal.

When she returned to the workforce, she became a paraprofessional for the North Jersey Elks Developmental Disabilities Agency, located at 1481 Main Ave. She then transitioned to the Arc of Bergen and Passaic County as a support counselor for those with developmental disabilities and has worked there for 20 years.

Davella understands commitment, whether it's what she brings to her professional endeavors or her personal relationships. It all holds immense value to her. "I thank God for all our parents that made sure we went the right way,"

she said. "I remember my parents, Evelyn and Louis Ossi, making extra efforts to drive me to these girls' houses, because they didn't like the kids I was hanging out with. That might have changed my life."

As for their secret to staying together as a group?

"We make an effort to call and try to get together about once a month or maybe every other month," said Davella.

Ann Marie Guida-Klics

There's a lot of pride in being a Cliftonette for Ann Marie Guida-Klics. Beyond the friend-made title is a long Clifton tradition of taking pride in where you came from and all of the people who stood by you along the way.

Guida-Klics attended Montclair State and later married her husband, Steve (CHS 1971). The couple moved out of Clifton in 1986, and Guida-Klics lives today in Montville. She and Steve, who passed away in 2021, have three children and three grandchildren.

"I am so blessed to have known these women for 50-plus years. The length of our friendship is unique and everlasting," said Guida-Klics. "We have celebrated the joyful moments and have supported each other during troubling times. We call our group the Cliftonettes '74."

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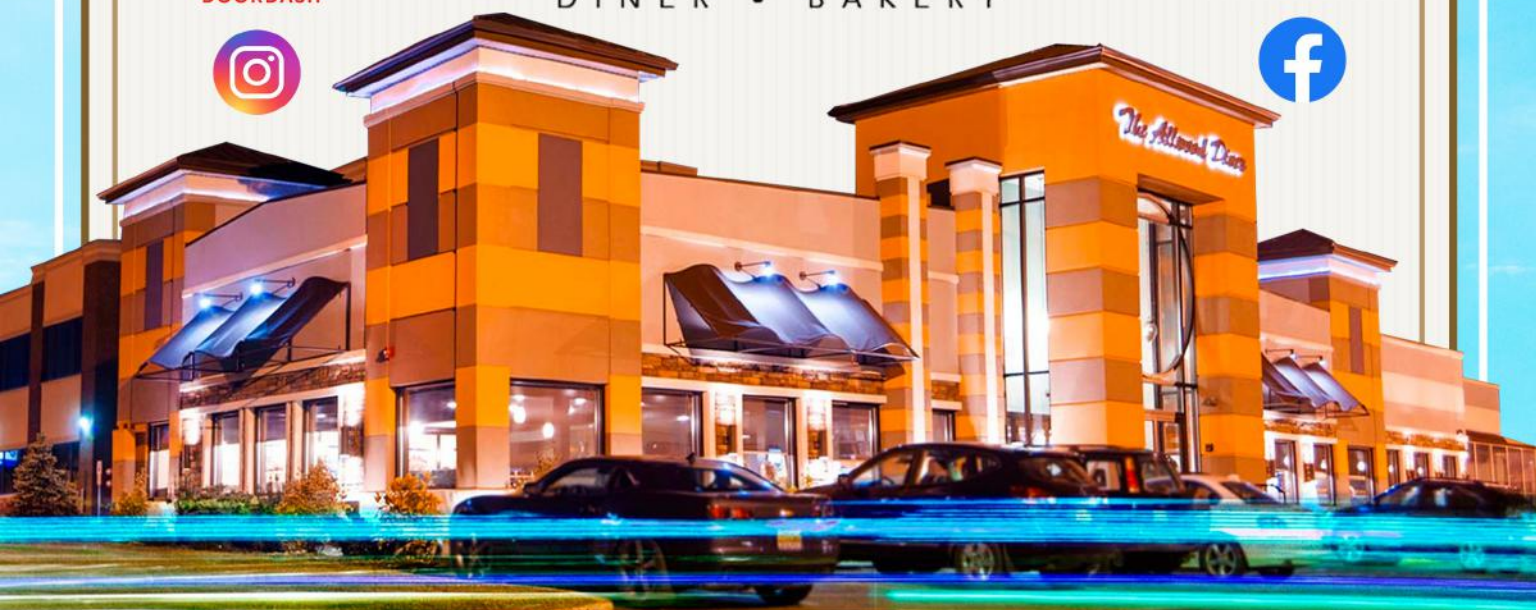


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HOMECOMING

Lynn (Bartke) Sichel

Love found Lynn Bartke and Jeffrey Sichel in the halls of Colfax Ave. The Mustang sweethearts were both members of the same graduating class, growing up on Hilltop Ct. and Huemmer Ter., respectively.

As a member of the renowned Mustang Band, Lynn was a high-stepping Majorette. She and Jeffrey went on to attend Trenton State, now TCNJ, and also completed her master's degree there in 1983. The couple moved to Hamilton Township, where Lynn taught kindergarten, plus third, fourth and sixth grades, for 35 years. The parents of Robert, Matthew, and Christopher are now married for 48 years and reside in Chesterfield, with two grandchildren.

"I love backpacking and hiking in National Parks," said Lynn. "I treasure to be with the amazing women who made adolescence and the teenage years of my life the best. And I look forward to celebrating our milestones, maybe our 80th, 90th and 100th birthdays, together on the beaches of Cape May."

Dinah (Van Bochoven) Krenitski

Faith and family are the crux of Dinah (Van Bochoven) Krenitski's life. The many roles in her life include being a "follower of Jesus," an independent college counselor, YMCA program director, teacher, and lifelong swim instructor. Krenitski holds a bachelor's degree from MSU and college counseling certification from UCLA.

Married to husband Robert Krenitski until his passing in 2007, the couple raised Scott and Erin. She is a grandmother to five grandchildren. Making time for her friends is something that she doesn't take for granted. "Birthday celebrations for friends is a priority," said Krenitski.

Rosemary (Cebula) Lipala

Living amongst nature is as natural to Rosemary (Cebula) Lipala as the friendships that she's nurtured throughout the decades.

"My friendships with my Clifton friends are a treasure," said Lipala. "Keeping in touch and celebrating life's milestones with them is truly a blessing."

Lipala earned her bachelor's degree in Marine Science and a master's degree in Biology from Fairleigh Dickinson. While pursuing her degree, she studied sea turtles at West Indies Lab in St. Croix, USVI and humpback whales



At CC Junior High: Lynn Bartke Sichel, Diane Zasowski Brisson, Barbara Ossi Davella, Donna Redderstorff, Elizabeth Liptak, Bottom left Rosie Freihart Young, Lynn Gochman, Donna Bancroft, Florence Orlando.

in Cape Cod. She wed Bob Lipala in 1984 and moved to Lake Hopatcong in 1987 near Camp Clifton, where Bob was Camp Director. They have two children, Nicholas and Sara, and one grandchild, with another on the way. Lipala is a Laboratory Specialist in the Biology Department at MSU. "I value my family, friends, and pets," she said, "and I enjoy spending time outdoors in nature."

Diane (Zasowski) Brisson

Life and the relationships in it are gifts to Diane (Zasowski) Brisson, and so is what she puts out to others in her life and as a crafty person on the internet. "I have an Etsy shop and website where I do machine embroidery [and] go to New Jersey once a year to visit my New Jersey buddies," said Brisson. "These girls mean everything to me...57 years of friendship...still going strong."

Brisson lives with her husband, George, in Deerfield Beach, Florida. She graduated Montclair State in 1978 and wed George in 1979, and moved to South Florida. George started a business while Brisson stayed at home to raise their two children, Matthew and Rebecca. The Brissons are the proud grandparents of "seven amazing grandchildren."

Cathy (Koren) Richards

Some of Cathy (Koren) Richards' most defining memories took place in the classroom. In 2017, Richards retired from teaching Special Education after 35 years. Prior to moving down the shore in 1996, she taught Resource Room at School 2. She spent 22 years in a preschool spe-

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cial needs classroom in Freehold Township and now works as an office manager in a local shop in Fair Haven. “Driving to Clifton to visit friends, buy pierogies, have lunch at the Hot Grill, and visit the homes that I grew up in is always a fun day,” said Richards.

The Glassboro State College grad was married to Steven, who passed away in 1994, and they raised Christopher and Michael. Her granddaughter, Margot, was born less than two years ago.

“[It has] been amazing,” said Richards. “I visit them every few months since they are currently living on the west coast.” She knows her bond with the Cliftonettes is rare, with many friendships spanning from their time in grammar school. She and Ann Marie Guida-Klics also participated in the Color Guard.

“Many of us still have the notes we wrote each other in high school — the notes that we used to slide under the door to a friend while they were in class,” she recalled. “It’s so much fun to read them 50 years later.”

Barbara (Martyna) Dietze

Retirement has treated Barbara (Martyna) Dietze well, whether traveling, quilting, or donating to those in need. She attended William Paterson and worked for 38 years as an IT Network Analyst at Hoffmann-La Roche in Nutley. Her early retirement came when Roche closed, but it did give her more time to spend with family. “I met Jim Dietze at a part-time job at Allwood Bakery and we got married in 1977,” said Dietze. “We have two children, Thomas and Susan, and two grandchildren. We are looking forward to celebrating our 50th wedding anniversary next year.”

The lifelong resident stayed close with her childhood friends, enjoying early playdates between their children.

Naturally, daily life made get-togethers more sporadic, but the love has remained.

“Now I enjoy keeping in touch via text messages and phone calls, with occasional visits or planned ‘girls-trips,’” she said.

Rosemarie (Freihart) Young

Back-packing together through Europe in 1976 is one of Rosemarie (Freihart) Young’s fondest memories with some of her friends. But the strength of their bond was truly shown by how they stayed in touch through weddings, birthdays, loss of parents, and birth of kids and grandkids.

“I’m so lucky to have lifelong sister-friends,” said Young. “Some I’ve known since kindergarten, others I met along the way at CCMS and CHS. We loved our adventures with the band.”

The Majorette went on to study at William Paterson and then earned her master’s at Montclair State. Young taught the first preschool intervention class in New Jersey at School 16 on Grove St. and married her husband, Mark, in 1983. They raised four children — Maggie, Mark, Maria, and Michael — and have six grandkids. “We are lucky Clifton girls,” said Young. “We moved to the country in 1996 but, as I always say, ‘You can take the girl out of Clifton, but you can’t take the Clifton out of the girl!’”

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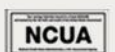


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THEIR GREATEST WIN WAS LIFELONG FRIENDSHIPS



1969-71 Fighting Mustangs got together in July. From left: John Glowacki, Joe Schiavone, Rich Tate, Glenn Zomack, Chuck Marcell, Randy Miller, Jack Marshall. Kneeling from left; Ken DeLuca, Drew Mikula, Gary Shenton, Walt Redling.



From left top row back in their Mustang days: Jack Marshall, Kenny DeLuca, Drew Mikula, Gary Shenton, John Glowacki. Bottom: Glenn Zomack, Chuck Marcell, Randy Miller, Walt Redling and Richie Tate.

When these forever **Fighting Mustangs** and CHS alumni get together, it's like they're back under the stadium lights but with a spotlight on their lives today and the memories that they've shared over the decades.

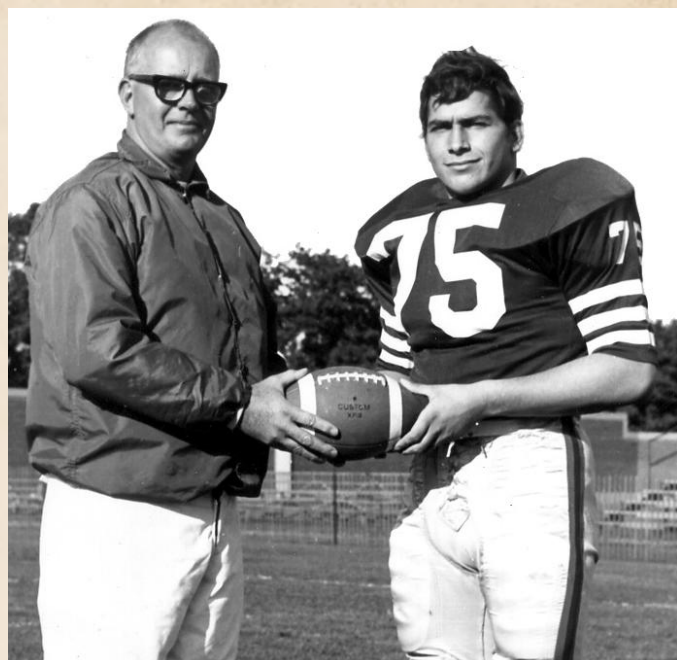
On July 22, the group pictured got together at Neko's Tavern in Fairfield to celebrate friendship, swap football stories and most importantly celebrate their families, kids, and grandkids.

Like the Cliftonettes, they forged lifelong bonds. When they gather, they pick up where they left off, which is sometimes months ago but often a year or two ago.

"Everyone fools around," said Chuck Marcell, who helped rally the men. "We joke and talk about team members and coaching staff. We reminisce."

When these Mustangs left the halls of CHS, some went off to college while others started their own businesses. Some stayed in Clifton, like Richie Tate (CHS 1969), who went into the home construction business with his brothers. There's also Randy Miller, an athlete-turned-physician, who serves his hometown.

As for Joseph J. Schiavone (CHS 1971), he's a senior member of Saiber LLC and in the firm's insurance and re-insurance practice group with over 35 years of litigation experience. Then, we would be remiss not to highlight Gary Shenton. A legendary Mustang by all accounts, he's now showcasing his trademark fighting spirit and determination as he navigates Parkinson's.



Joe Schiavone with coach Bill Vander Closter.

"We called him 'Champ', because he was good at everything," said Jack Marshall. "The guy was just a fantastic athlete."

These men have their youths in common, but they also share something else. They were part of Clifton Mustang State Championship teams 1968-69 and 1969-70. Most of them are CHS 1970 grads and, despite crossing the



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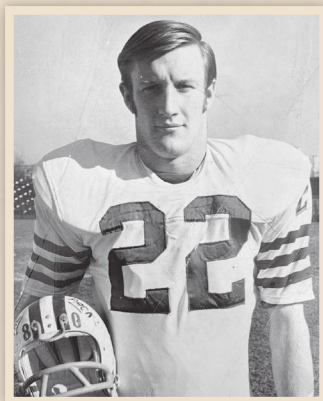
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Gary Shenton.

field one last time 56 years ago, they aren't tired of each other.

If you ask them, their greatest delight is a precious gift: friends. Which is exactly why they'll keep getting together in good times and in bad to enjoy their friendships and support one another.

Chuck Marcell

You could easily get lost in a graduating class of 1,100 students, if you don't lose your sense of self first. Part of what prevented that from happening to Chuck Marcell is what he found waiting for him on the gridiron.

The Mustang outside linebacker spent his freshman year at Don Bosco before transferring to CHS in his sophomore year. Then, as a result of the transfer, he was red shirted. It was right before junior year while down the shore that his friends convinced him to try out for football.

And there was certainly opportunity. Ahead of the '68 season, Clifton lost a few of its veteran players. Some people felt Coach William Vander Closter favored certain athletes over others, which led to a bunch of would-be senior starters quitting the team. In turn, 190 athletes came out for tryouts — a total so high that the team ran out of equipment.

"It opened slots for younger people," said Marcell, 73. "A lot of juniors got starting positions and I so-happened to be one of them. I started in junior year and then started in senior year."

Those two years saw the Mustangs reign as state champs.

But, for Marcell, it was more about having fun than being on a team that would win a championship.

"That came with it, so it made it even more fun and beneficial," he explained. He went on to say that so much of their childhoods were spent playing for fun. "We grew up and our vacation was playing sports in the parks."

"We had tons of parks in Clifton: Albion, Nash, Sperling, Robin Hood. You were identified by what park you hung out at," he continued. "We spent at least 10 hours in the park playing all different sports throughout the course of the day. We went home for lunch, maybe, to use the bathroom, and to eat dinner."

Playing in high school gave them a new type of motivation and good-natured competition. He described a team of go-getters, where there were "no slackers" and everyone had a "kick-ass type of attitude." The self-competition inspired them to strive for 10 tackles after seeing one of their teammates make eight tackles during a practice or game.

"[The goal was] to exceed and give everyone the benefit of just trying your best," said Marcell. "But in a very positive way; there was nothing negative about it."

Marcell's work ethic followed him to Tombrock College in West Paterson, now Woodland Park, which closed in 1976 and then to William Paterson. He studied Physical Education and Special Education, ultimately working at Coca Cola for 25 years. His second career was as the Head of Transportation and Logistics for Drake's Bakery in Wayne for another 22 years. After that came his third act: culinary school.

"I regret not doing it 50 years ago, because I would probably own my own restaurant," he said.

The Towaco resident is married to wife Catalin, with whom he has two children, Jessica and Christopher, and four grandchildren. As he reflected on years past, he mentioned one other person that wasn't in the room with them but had a significant influence on the team.

"The linebacker coach, Emil Chaky, was liked by everybody. He was a nice guy and a fair guy. He always had a pipe," said Marcell. "He was stern and knowledgeable about the sport with a great demeanor. Maybe he screamed at me more than once, but he was a great guy."

Joseph Schiavone

When Joseph Schiavone made *Clifton Merchant's* "Team of the Century" in December of 1999, the first word that one voter used to describe the defensive lineman was "tough."



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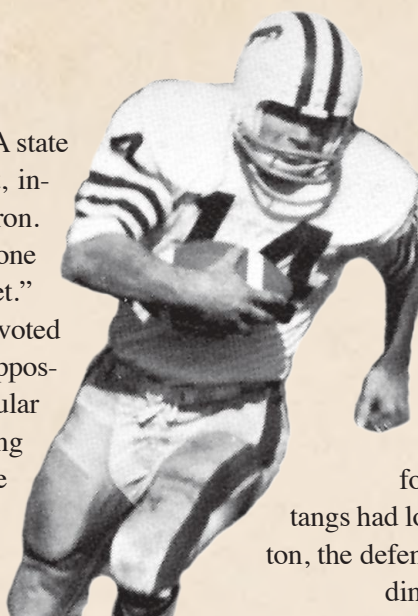


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HOMECOMING

The 1971 grad earned that reputation. A state wrestling champ, Schiavone was a quiet, intense player who was a force on the gridiron. “A big, strong, hard hitter,” remembered one voter. “The type of player you never forget.”

In his senior year, Schiavone was voted “Most Popular” by his classmates. To opposing ball carriers, he was the least popular player on the field. The only 1970 Mustang selected to the All-State team, Schiavone led Clifton to a 7-2 regular season mark and also starred on the offense line.



He started for the Mustangs as a sophomore, a clear indication of his great play to follow. During his CHS career, his Mustangs were 8-1 in 1968, 7-2 the next season, and then 7-2 during his senior year.

Richie Tate

As a kid, Richie Tate, at left, would walk home crying after Clifton-Montclair football games because his beloved Mustangs had lost. When Tate grew up and played for Clifton, the defensive back's opponents were the ones shedding tears.

“He was the best all-around player during the Vander Closter era,” said one voter. “What’s also incredible was that, as a sophomore, Richie played both ways — and that was when Clifton had teams of 100-plus players. He was that good.”

During his football career, Tate at left, played safety, fullback, quarterback, and he ran back punts and kickoffs. The CHS 1969 grad's best season was as a senior, when he earned all Passaic Valley Conference honors and helped the Mustangs to an 8-1-1 mark. On the field, no opponent was too big for Tate to take on and, as defensive back, Tate challenged even the biggest tight ends.

“He played the game like it was a boxing match,” recalled another voter. “When he went after a ball carrier, Richie had a ‘him or me’ attitude and always looked to come out on top.”

Jack Marshall

He wasn't a Fighting Mustang, but Jack Marshall was the next best thing: a devoted fan who you'd find in the stands for their games.

“Clifton always had great football teams,” said Marshall. “The thing that I remember most ... was sitting up high at Clifton Stadium and watching, whether it was a punt return or kick-off. I can see it in my mind now, [Gary Shenton] just outrunning every player for touchdowns left and right.”

“He was just a phenomenal player, as was Richie Tate and Joseph Schiavone,” he continued. “These guys were some of the greatest

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football players at that time for sure. And all of them are humble guys and great friends. They're just really good guys."

That lasting appreciation for his friends has kept him in the room during these mini reunions, like the one held in July, despite not playing the sport that links the rest of them. But Marshall played junior high and high school sports with all of them. He ran Cross Country and Track, and he was also on the Boys Basketball team.

"I knew a number of those guys from Little League baseball before we even went to school together," said Marshall. "We might not see each other for a number of years, but when we do see each other, it feels like not that long ago."

As far as running Track, he specifically remembers ninth grade at Woodrow Wilson Junior High and how each person could only participate in four events. But Coach Palmer Eklend, who was the Mechanical Drawing teacher, would put Shenton in seven or eight events. "He would win every one, it wouldn't matter what it was," said Marshall, 74.

Marshall went on to graduate with a degree in Marketing and Management from Montclair State and spent 51 years working in a sales position within the metals industry. He mostly worked for metal distributors selling copper and brass until his retirement last year.

Since 2012, he's lived in his childhood home with his wife, Cathy (CHS 1970). They went to junior high and CHS together, but they did not know each other until meeting at a reunion in 2009. His daughter, Jaclyn, is a 2003 grad. Combined, he and Cathy have seven grandkids, plus two dogs.

"They all keep us busy," Marshall laughed. "We're always running some-



where." While the sheer size of their graduating class means there are plenty of people that they never met in school, it also means that there are other Mustangs that the men would love to have join them for future reunions and get-togethers. To find out more, email Ann Marie Ayers Williams at Clifton-1970reunion@gmail.com.

"It's just really good to see all these guys. Who knows how long we'll be around," said Marshall, pragmatically. "We've lost so many good friends, so when you get to see these guys, it's just a bonus."

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HOMECOMING

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Where else but in the heart of Clifton can you feel—*thisclose*—the high stepping, heart pounding Marching Mustangs as they make their way through the midway, and crowds to officially open the Clifton Street Fair on Sept. 20? Live music, ethnic foods, thirsty crowds... you'll find it in Athenia and at other 'homecomings' over the next few weeks. So on these pages we pre-game the events that you might want to check out...

Look back some 20 or more years ago at the Van Houten Street Fair.

LABOR DAY CELEBRATION SEPT. 5

Celebrate America's 250th on Sept. 5. Ticket holders enter Clifton Stadium at 6 pm for pre-fireworks entertainment. Previous 4th of July fireworks tickets will get you in. Pre-purchase tickets \$3 or \$5 at the gate. Call 973-470-5758. Rain date: Sept. 7.



B&G CLUB CAR SHOW SEPT. 13



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The Sept. 13 Boys & Girls Club's Car Show at Summit Health, 1255 Broad St., presents 400 classic machines. Free admission; do a stop and chat with their owners from 9 am to 4 pm. Vehicle registration (\$20) begins 7:30 am. Exhibitors space is \$150 or \$200 for food & beverage. Info: bgccifton.org/car-truck-motorcycle-show.

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If you dig the sound of an accordion,
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ACCORDION NIGHT SEPT. 18



*Lilian and
Alex Chudolij.*

HOMECOMING

JIMMY STURR SEPT. 13

Get your fill of polkas and pierogies on Sept. 13 when high energy Jimmy Sturr and his Orchestra return to the St. John Kanty picnic. Doors open at 1 pm and Sturr takes the stage at 3. St. John Kanty is at 49 Speer Ave. Admission: \$5; kids up to 12 are free. Jimmy Sturr and his Orchestra have played with Willie Nelson, Alison Krauss, and the Oak Ridge Boys, but they play like on the big stage when in Clifton.



OKTOBERFEST OCT. 17

Swingman and the Misfit-Mutts headline the Ukrainian Center Oktoberfest Oct. 17. Advance tickets are \$50 (\$60 at door) and include a buffet dinner and pitcher of beer on the table. Cash bar, a big dance floor, plus tricky tray and raffles. Proceeds will be used for improvement at the new Ukrainian Cultural Center of Clifton. More info at ukrainiancenter@gmail.com.

UKRAINIAN FESTIVAL

SEPT. 20

The green lawn at Holy Ascension Ukrainian Orthodox Church turns into a picnic grove. The grand stage with the large Tryzub, Ukraine's coat of arms, will be the focus on Sept. 20 for this celebration of Ukrainian dancers and performers. Aisles of vendors, kids activities and a beer garden are at 635 Broad St., noon to 7 pm. Visit: ukrcoc.org or "Ukrainian Orthodox Holy Ascension Church" on FB.



THE HOT GRILL OCT. 10 & 11

Celebrate 65 years of the original Texas Weiners and the people who continue to *Make It Nice!* The Lexington Ave. establishment opened on Oct. 13, 1961 and this year marks 65 years of HG being famous for their *All The Way Texas Weiner*... a deep fried, custom blended, beef and pork hot dog, topped with mustard, onions and a tantalizing secret chili sauce. Cristina LaMendola is planning all kinds of surprises and specials for this two-day extravaganza!

Current owner Cristina LaMendola, her dad Carmen who passed on Aug. 29, 2019, and Carmen's long-time partner and former owner Dom Sportelli.



GOLF CLASSIC OCT. 19

Take a day off for a good cause: the Boys & Girls Club's Golf Classic is Oct. 19 with an 11:30 am registration and lunch at the Preakness Valley Golf Course in Wayne. \$250 per golfer, \$950 per foursome, \$60 dinner only. 1 pm shotgun start. Dinner and award ceremony follow. Seen above, Richard Kazanjian, Tom Garretson, and Chris Seely with Roy and Nancy Garretson. Register online at: bgcclifton.org/golf-classic.

TASTE OF CLIFTON OCT. 26



Indulge in samples from Clifton's restaurants and caterers on Oct. 26, 6:30. Walk the floor and enjoy specialty cocktails, wine and beer at A Taste of Clifton, at the B&G Club. Admission is \$40 by Sept. 26 or \$60 at the door. Register: bgcclifton.org/food-wine-festival.





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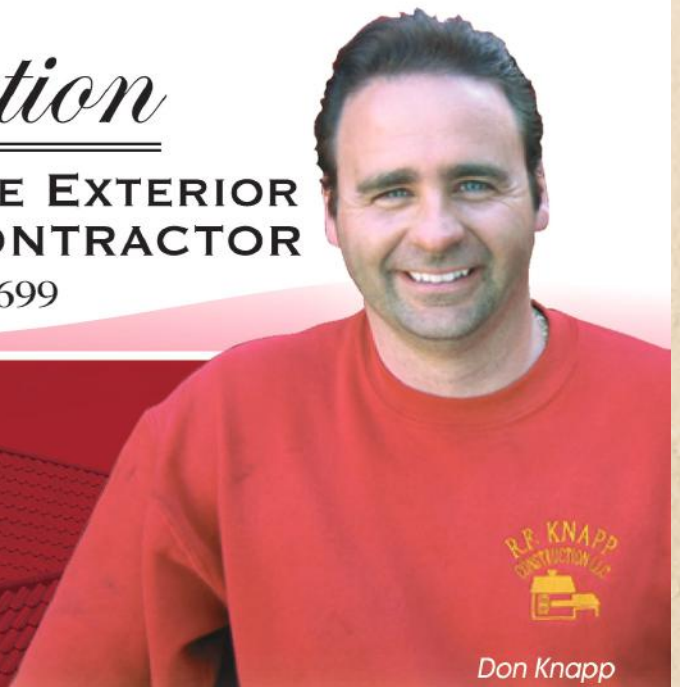
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MUSTANG

Sports Stories by Tom Szieber

SPORTS

After a winless season a year ago, Clifton football coach Ralph Cinque isn't interested in dwelling on the record. He's interested in what it didn't show. "We had an 0-9 season, but we aren't an 0-9 program," Cinque said. "We're ready to turn the page on last year."

A preseason scrimmage against Passaic Valley is evidence of the difference between last year's team and this year's. Against a formidable foe, the coach was encouraged that his team wasn't overmatched. "You shouldn't even be in that kind of game if you're still an 0-9-type of team," Cinque said. "We know we are obviously better than that."

The measuring stick, as far as Cinque is concerned, comes in Week 1. He set the bar plainly. "We should be 1-0 after the first game," Cinque said. "That's my call."

There will be no quarterback competition this fall. Junior Ryan Sisco, 53-of-97 passes completed for 495 yards, four touchdowns and four interceptions in 2025, enters his second season as the unquestioned starter.

Cinque says his quarterback has grown into the offense rather than simply operating it.

Senior Fighting Mustangs top from left: Brian Zuniga, Jarrett Rodriguez, Yandel Nina, Aaden Nolan, Aidan Pelletier, Isaiah Best, Jayden Mouzone. Kneeling: EJ Valentin, Euriel Watt, Branden Rodriguez, Elijah Benavides, Jaydan Walker, Nazarick Rivera, Kyle Farrell.

"A lot of maturity, a lot of development, a lot of growth," Cinque observed of Sisco. "He understands how to run the offense, not just run plays. He understands the 'why' behind why a play is called."

Cinque lauds Sisco's ability to make plays with his legs and his instincts, extending plays and finding throwing lanes with his feet as much as his arm.

The question for Clifton is whether that's enough to make the offense multidimensional. A season ago, opposing defenses knew Clifton couldn't consistently run or throw the ball—and played accordingly.

"If I was another defense, I would probably know that and seize on that," Cinque said. He believes this year is different: "We feel like if we have to throw the ball, he can make the throws."

Senior running back Euriel Watt is expected to carry the offensive workload after a strong summer and preseason.

“He had a good scrimmage [against PV]. He looked good. He’s had a good camp,” Cinque said of Watt, who brings breakaway speed to the offense. Watt won’t do it alone. Junior Yandiel Santana and sophomore Ronald Lopez will both see carries as change-of-pace options.

Clifton’s base offense features three wide receivers, and the top of the depth chart is set: senior Aaden Nolan, junior Ariel Tavares and junior Braylon Maldonado are projected starters, with junior Abdel Kanaan next in line.

At tight end, senior Noah Castillo tops the depth chart, with senior Yandel Nina also in the mix. The interior offensive line is settled, with senior Jaydan Walker returning at center. He will be flanked by sophomore Eamon Monaghan at right guard and senior Zaed Rahman at left guard.

The tackle spots remain open. Junior Shkamb Gjemo, senior Aidan Pelletier and senior Isaiah Best are competing for the two starting jobs, with all three expected to see meaningful snaps regardless of how the competition shakes out.

Cinque’s expectations for the group, and the offense as a whole, are about efficiency rather than explosiveness. “Expect for us to be more efficient, move the chains,” Cinque said. “You’ve got to be able to score points. I think we’re having a good camp, with a positive attitude.”

The coach doesn’t expect a shootout offense, but he wants an end to the kind of games that sank the 2025 Mustangs. “I’m not saying we’re going to go out there and score 35 a game,” he said. “But there were low-scoring games that we lost. We can’t lose those anymore.”

Defensive coordinator Steve Covello’s unit will run a four-man front, anchored by junior end Jose Paulino and junior tackles Julian Rivera and Jaeden Washington. Nina lines up at the other end with Best rotating in along the line. Inside linebacker junior Jacob Marchan and sophomore Ronald Lopez are the projected starters in Covello’s scheme, which uses two linebackers and three safeties — one who plays essentially as an outside linebacker. Senior Jarrett Rodriguez fills that strong safety role.

Cornerback is a three-man competition among Santana, Maldonado and Tavares, with Nolan settling in at free safety and sophomore D’Angelo Altidor as the nickel back.

Cinque’s evaluation of the group so far has been about effort as much as execution. “Overall, they are fast and physical,” he said. “They learn and they are getting better every day. They fly around and they make mistakes, but they make mistakes full-speed.”

Sophomore Jayden Velez takes over as kicker, while Nolan doubles as the team’s punter. In the return game, Watt and Tavares will handle kickoff returns, with Tavares also fielding punts. “Kids come with a really positive attitude, and they come with a lot of energy, and they love being there,” Cinque said. “It’s infectious.”



Mustangs freshman Quinn Farrel and brother Kyle, a senior.

Fighting Mustangs Honor the Fallen

9/11 is a historical event for Anthony Giordano’s student-athletes. As the Mustangs prepare to take the gridiron on Sept. 11, Clifton’s offensive coordinator remembers that day, even after 25 years.

“From our backyard, we had a view of the city,” said Giordano, 37. “My brother Nick (CHS 2010) and I climbed our garage when we got home, and we just saw the city and all the smoke.”

The Mustangs will remember the fallen with 9/11 Mustang T-shirts. Their first home game of the season, at 350 Piaget Ave., is 6 pm versus Paterson Eastside. Shirts are \$20. Proceeds benefit the Booster Club. Details @cliftonmustang_football on Instagram.

“We’re excited for our kids and the program going into this year,” said Giordano (CHS 2007).



Ask most programs to describe a season that ends 11-6-1 with a run to the sectional tournament, and they'd call it a success. Ask Clifton boys soccer head coach Stan Lembryk, and he'll tell you it was a down year.

That's the standard for the program.

Last season snapped a run of Clifton teams that had made trophy-hoisting a habit—the first time in a decade the program went home empty-handed.

The Mustangs missed out on the division title by the slimmest of margins, a half game. In the county tournament, Clifton's season came down to penalty kicks in the semifinals, a shootout that went the other way.

And in the state tournament, the Mustangs fell to eventual Group IV champion West Orange in the sectional quarterfinals.

If last year's group leaned on Clifton's traditional defense-first identity, this year's team is flipping the script. Lembryk points to the attack as this squad's calling card heading into the season—a shift from the program's usual emphasis on shutting teams down.

The back line is still built to be strong, but it's a young group that Lembryk expects to grow into itself as the season progresses.

Patience, he says, will be the operative word early on: a roster tilted toward underclassmen will need time to adjust to varsity speed, even with a core of experienced upperclassmen there to steady things. That experience shows up most clearly on the wing and up top.

Senior captain Aiden Masri, a returning first team all-league selection, is the engine of the attack—a shifty, unselfish winger who beats defenders off the dribble and consistently puts teammates in position to score with quality service into the box.

Up top alongside him, senior forward Emre Pescocan returns after also earning first team all-league honors, a dangerous finisher with both feet who thrives in one-on-one situations. Junior Matt Fuentes steps up to varsity with real momentum behind him.

The midfield is where Clifton connects it all. Senior Jason Caceras is the box-to-box presence, the engine linking the back line to the attack.

Sophomore Samandar Khamrakulov returns with a year of varsity experience already under his belt, and junior Brian Calixto rounds out a midfield spine that gives Clifton flexibility in the middle of the park.

Behind them, sophomore Bosko Durdic—a 6-foot-2 defensive midfielder—gives the Mustangs a physical presence who wins aerial battles, breaks up opposing possessions, and springs counterattacks the moment his team regains the ball.

On the back line, senior Evan Shepley anchors the defense after earning second team all-league and honorable mention all-county recognition a year ago.

He's joined by junior Omar Baker and sophomore Ari Martinez, giving Clifton a defensive corps that mixes experience with the kind of youthful upside Lembryk is



On the home pitch, Fernando Rossi Soccer Field, from left: Bosko Durdic, Gonzalo Chavez, Aiden Masri, Nazar Romanysyn, Leonel Solis, Mason Monroy, Esteban Alvarez, Giovanni Cassibba. Seated: Coach Matt Ahumada, Coach Peter Lynch, Jonpierre Acuna, Noah Mansilla, Arhy Martinez, Xavier Ortiz, Brian Calixto, Jayden Aguirre, Samandar Khamrakulov, Sergio Corrales, Jhosua Herrera, Christian Baires, Aiden Gomez, Coach Stan Lembryk, Coach Stephen Sarsano. Standing: Coach Majdi Zianeh, Jacob Kotowski, Omar Baker, Jason Caceres, Adrian Barriga, Thiago Ovalle, Emre Pesocan, Evan Shepley, Matthew Fuentes, Diego Rodriguez, Emmanuel Deossa, Jowell Adams, Jorge Moreno, and Coach Kishan Trivedi.

counting on to develop over the course of the season. In goal, junior Thiago Ovalle returns as the starter.

Clifton isn't chasing a return to form so much as it's chasing a new identity—a team that scores its way to wins as readily as it grinds them out. With Masri, Pescocan, and Caceras providing experienced firepower, and a wave of underclassmen ready to be pushed into bigger roles, the pieces are in place. Whether patience pays off the way it usually does at Clifton will be the story of the season.

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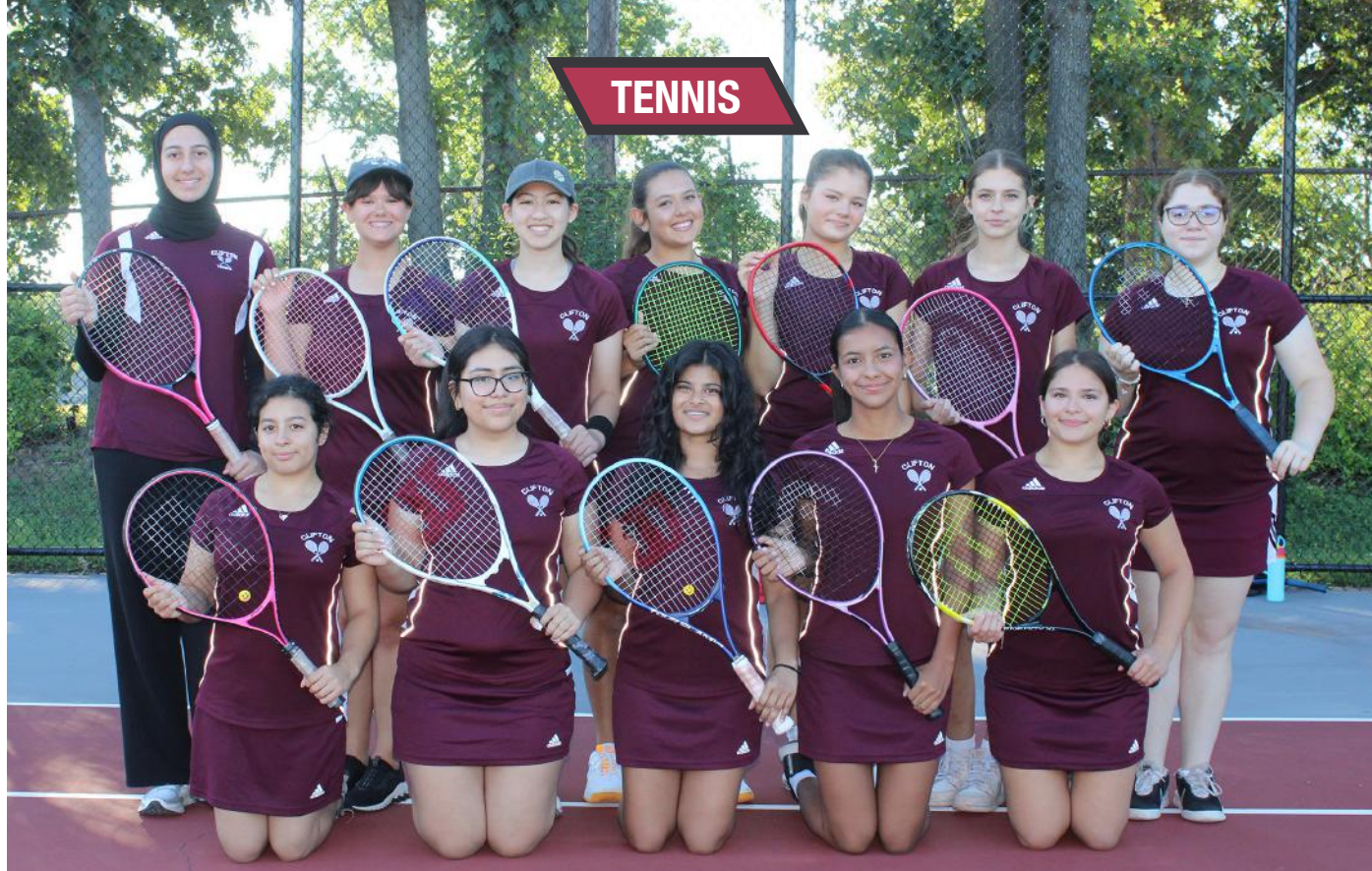
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TENNIS



Standing from left, Jenna Saleh, Kayla Kozell, Sophia Zeisel, Olivia Joynes, Isabella Adamczyk, Zuzana Durkosova, Sophia Carneiro. Kneeling from left, Jennifer Hidalgo, Miley Gonzales, Krupa Jariwala, MJ Ramos, Madison Krawiec.

In Nicole Mooney's first season as the Clifton head girls tennis coach, the Mustangs surprised some by going 7-11 — good for their highest win total since 2017. After losing to West Orange in the first round of the North I, Group IV playoffs, they enter this fall hoping to be a factor in the Big North Liberty and Passaic County races.

Mooney's optimism starts with a new addition at the top of the lineup: freshman Olivia Joynes, who will step in at first singles despite never having played a match for the program.

Joynes introduced herself to Mooney before she ever suited up, having come to watch a match on senior day last year with her father. She shared with Mooney that she'd been playing for years, developing her game at Maywood Racquet Club.

"She's got experience, which is fantastic," Mooney said.

That experience shows up in a complete game, according to Mooney, who called Joynes "well-rounded" with a strong forehand and backhand. Just as important, Mooney said, has been how quickly the freshman has folded into the team.

"She is an awesome kid," Mooney said. "She jumped in with the team and gets along with everyone. She is hard

on herself, but it shows how much she cares about what she's doing."

Senior Sophia Zeisel moves into the second singles spot, and Mooney said Zeisel will only benefit from Joynes' presence — not just through competition, but through Zeisel's own approach to her teammates.

"She is very good at helping others," Mooney said of Zeisel. "It's probably her best quality as an overall team player." At third singles, senior Kayla Kozell returns after narrowly missing out on a singles spot a year ago. Mooney said Kozell has continued to improve and has become known for her court coverage.

"She gets to balls you might not think she'd get to," Mooney said. The doubles lineup pairs junior Mariajose "MJ" Ramos with sophomore Isabella Adamczyk — who, like Joynes, plays at Maywood Racquet Club — at first doubles, while senior Krupa Jariwala, who played JV last season, teams with sophomore Zuzana Durkosova at second doubles.

"My goal is that I just want to get every person better," Mooney said. "I think having Olivia coming in will be a huge plus for us, and I think all of Sophia's experience from last year will make a big difference this year. I think .500 could be in the cards for us."

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MARCHING BAND



Drum Major Caden Kennedy will lead the 88th edition of the Mustang Marching Band on to the gridiron, as well as the Van Houten Ave. macadam for the Clifton Street Fair. When we took this photo the week of Aug. 17, he and 97 other Marching Mustangs were running drills, high stepping and perfecting their music during Band Camp.

Band Director Bryan Stepneski said the nearly 100-member band is the second largest he has trained since he inherited the whistle and baton and began his tenure in

2016. While Stepneski scores the program, selects the music and orchestrates this Clifton tradition, he cites assistant directors Robert Harsaghy, Kasey Molner, John Rivas and Alyssa Stepneski with bringing the Mustang music to life.

In addition to performances at every varsity football game, band season highlights will include appearances at the North Jersey Band Festival (Oct. 25), West Milford Tattoo (Nov. 24), and the Nov. 25 Clifton Stadium home field treat entitled Under the Lights.

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Asked about the musical theme for this season, Stepneski promised a fresh script: "We will present our traditional pregame show at halftime at the home opener against Eastside on 9/11. Then we will premiere our first of several halftime shows on Sept. 24 against Wayne Valley. The theme for that show is 'Stop and Go.'"

Asked to explain, he laughed and added: "People will need to come out and hear and see our musical choices and hear and see what this great band can do."

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Lady Mustang varsity soccer players from top left: Allison Prawetz, Sophia Fischer, Abby Rascher, Victoria Cobo, Nadine Millet, Jaide Diaz, Tracy Arotoma, Isabella De Vita. Middle: Amanda Pinnock, Julia Zybura, Elsa Schimpf, Kamila Vicente, Karina Herrera, Kristanie Bermeo, Nicole Velasquez. Kneeling: Alina Gonzalez, Abigail Kelley, Olivia Niedzialek, Melissa Garth, Kiara Restrepo, Madison Fischer, Addison O'Leary, Sara Juzga.



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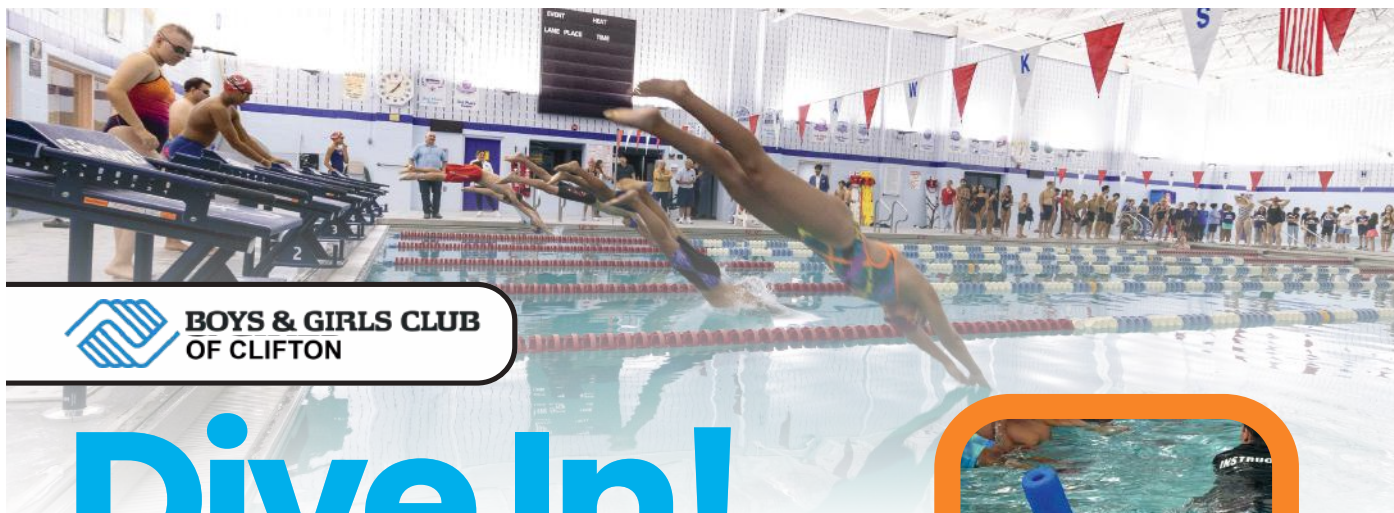
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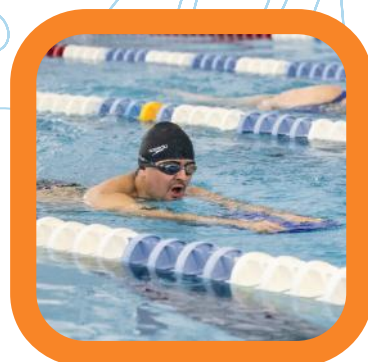
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Varsity players kneeling from left: Lesly Rivas, Rachel Flete, Georgia Papadopoulos, Melanie Garth. Middle: Zorianna Hoholuk, Yashira Lopez, Gia Caballero, Sofia Palacio, Deanna Alnatur, Annel Gamez. Top: Nataly Vasquez, Andrea Cedeno, Emma Bitar, Abigail McCoy, Leila Hatcher, Allison Rouse.

It will be a fall of transition for Clifton girls volleyball.

The Mustangs will return several front row players from 2025 but will need new faces to fill the void left by the loss of the now-graduated Mikaella Francisco and Michaela Mercado, who accounted for 314 of the squad's 445 kills last season.

The Mustangs will also be looking to achieve their first winning season since 2021 and their first under head coach Steven Alvarado, who enters his fourth season with a 25-48 record.

Leading the way will be senior setter Zorianna Hoholuk, who enters her third year on varsity.

"She is a girl that has stepped into a leadership role," Alvarado said. "We expect a lot from her running the tempo of our game."

Senior outside hitter Andrea Cedeno—a speedy player who is quick to put the ball down—will serve as Clifton's main attacker, while the middle will be anchored by senior Natalie Vasquez and junior Abigail McCoy.

One of the biggest storylines to watch this season will be the emergence of freshman outside hitter Annel Gamez, who has already turned heads in her first varsity preseason.

"She has the speed to play the outside, can put the ball down, good passer, amazing serve," Alvarado said.

Junior Melanie Garth will run the offense alongside Hoholuk as the second setter in Clifton's 6-2 formation.

The Mustangs' bench will feature junior libero Georgia Papadopoulos, senior right side Emma Bitar and junior right side Yashira Lopez, along with defensive specialists senior Rachel Flete and senior Lesly Rivas.

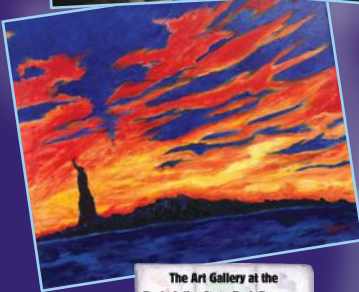
Despite the offseason losses, Alvarado is optimistic about what Clifton can accomplish in 2026.

"I think this year we should be competitive," Alvarado said. "Even though we lost key players from last year, we have a good base coming back, and the younger girls have stepped up to important roles on the team, which is always positive. I think we will win a lot more games than last year."

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CROSS COUNTRY

Clifton cross country program is leaning on quality over quantity as the 2026 season approaches, with legendary head coach John Pontes guiding both the girls' and boys' squads through a landscape still reshaped by post-COVID participation numbers.

Despite a smaller roster than Pontes would like to have—about a dozen runners—the team's expectations haven't dimmed. The Mustangs finished third in Passaic County and captured a division title a year ago, and the goal this fall is simple: match it or top it.

Leading the way is senior Samantha Rodrigues, a 2025 first team All-Passaic County and All-Big North Liberty honoree.

She'll be joined at the front by fellow senior Claire Kim, a returning top-three finisher, and junior Astrid Majano, who's back for another season of varsity experience.

Perhaps the most intriguing storyline belongs to junior Mallory Nicol, who is new to the sport but has already emerged as a team leader in preseason training.

Junior Jil Mistry, also new to cross country, rounds out the group of newcomers Pontes is counting on to contribute immediately.

The boys' squad carries a bit more roster depth than the girls, with an established top five backed by eight to ten additional runners. Their returning core is strong.

Senior Leo Spoon steps in as Clifton's No. 1 runner, with fellow senior Adam Lopes slotting in right behind him at No. 2.

Senior Julio Montero, new to the sport, has impressed coaches with his work ethic, while sophomore Gabriel Cuba returns as a proven contributor.

Mustang seniors from left front: Samantha Zamora, Dylan Delgado, Joseph Lopez, Sebastian Hurtado. Back row. Daphne Montero, Gabriel Cuba, Jil Mistry, Mallory Nicol, Claire Kim, Adam Lopes, Julio Montero.

Rounding out the top five is sophomore Sebastian Hurtado, another newcomer who has quickly established himself as one of the hardest workers on the team.

With a motivated group returning, Pontes expects steady improvement as the season progresses—with the potential to catch some competitors off guard along the way.

Both programs open the season at the Season Opener Invitational on Sept. 12 at Darlington Park.

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Starting in Spain

By Robert Niessen

A Bite of Spain

Every journey leaves something behind. For some, it's a postcard tucked into a drawer or a photo saved on a phone. For Lillian Fararjeh, it was something far more lasting: A taste of Madrid that remained with her long after she crossed the ocean back home.

That lasting impression began during the rising CHS senior's summer trip to Madrid, Spain, where the Middle Village resident explored a city with centuries of history blended seamlessly with modern life. Grand architecture, lively plazas, and historic landmarks transformed her vacation into an unforgettable journey through Madrid's culture and traditions.

Around every corner, she discovered another glimpse into the character and charm that define Madrid. Her summer vacation consisted of visiting the city, with two destinations, in particular, capturing her attention.

The "beautiful Royal Palace of Madrid" amazed her with its grandeur and intricate architecture. Puerta del Sol captured Fararjeh's attention with its energy, historic stat-

ues, and role as one of the city's most recognizable gathering places.

Madrid's historic landmarks may have introduced Fararjeh to the city's past, but its cuisine gave her a memory that she could take home. Fararjeh found the moments that she remembered the most came from a more unexpected place: the city's cuisine.

"Both of these experiences were memorable," said Fararjeh, 17, "but the most memorable memory ... was the amazing food that I ate during my experience."

Madrid's culinary scene unexpectedly became the centerpiece of Fararjeh's journey. Local cafés and restaurants introduced her to flavors that were both unfamiliar and unforgettable. Among all the dishes that she sampled, one destination left the sweetest impression.

At Churrería Chocolatería 1902, Fararjeh discovered the gluten-free churros that would become the signature memory of her trip. Freshly prepared and paired with rich chocolate for dipping, the dessert captured the warmth and tradition of Madrid's cuisine in a single bite.

"I highly recommend it to anyone visiting Madrid," Fararjeh shared.

Travel often leaves behind more than photographs; it leaves behind flavors, feelings, and moments that remain long after the journey ends. Madrid will remain within Fararjeh's mind not only through memories of its breathtaking architecture and historic streets, but through the flavors and traditions that revealed the heart of the city.

"My time in Madrid was enjoyable," Fararjeh said. "I will visit the country again if I have the opportunity to do so."



Matthew Yong.

environment will make the 2026-2027 school year unlike any before.

For Matthew Yong, a 17-year-old PCTI STEM Academy student from Middle Village near Main Memorial Park, the upcoming school year will mark a significant transition. When classes begin on Sept. 2 — matching that of CHS — students across PCTI's academies will come together while the school moves away from its traditional six-period A/B schedule and adopts a nine-period schedule.

"It's going to be a much different first day than what PCTI students have usually had," Yong said. As several adjustments occur simultaneously, he expects that the start of the year will be "pretty hectic." However, while the transition

A Different First Day

The first day of school carries a rhythm of its own: the rush of footsteps through crowded hallways, the last-minute schedule checks before the opening bell, and the excitement of reuniting with friends after summer break.

But for students at Passaic County Technical Institute, this year's return brings on an unfamiliar pace. New routines, a redesigned bell schedule, and a shifting school

may "take time getting used to," the rising senior remains confident that he and his classmates will adapt to the evolving routine.

Beyond navigating a new school structure, Yong is entering the year with personal goals focused on es-

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Back To School

establishing a healthier balance in his daily life. One of his biggest priorities is refining his time-management skills while making room for activities outside of school.

"I want to find a better balance between work, school, and my home life," Yong said.

He hopes that improving his organization will allow him to dedicate more energy to "things outside of school like hobbies and working out more." Academically, Yong is focused on developing habits that will support his success throughout the year.

Rather than waiting until the last minute to prepare for exams or complete assignments, he strives to take a more proactive approach to his workload by giving himself "more time in advance to prepare for hard tests."

"I'd also really want to get to start completing assignments earlier to be able to avoid burnout," Yong shared.

Preparation for the school year has already started. After spending the summer waking "up early every day for work," Yong feels prepared to return to a structured academic routine. Although his mornings will shift from waking around 8 am to starting his day at 6 am, he believes the transition will be manageable.

"I don't think I'll have that much of a problem with adjusting," Yong said, crediting his summer routine for helping him become comfortable with earlier mornings.

As schedules are released, Yong looks forward to seeing which friends will share classes with him. He enjoys learning "as much as I can about which friends I might have in which classes," knowing that having familiar faces to collaborate with can provide support when their courses become more challenging.

"I'll be able to know that we can help each other with the class as the year goes on," he said.

Yong is focused on approaching the transition with an open mind. While the new schedule and unfamiliar routines may require an adjustment period, he believes that the PCTI community will adapt together.

"It's definitely going to be different," Yong said, "but I think after everyone gets used to it, it will become normal."

Spreading Her Wings

Senior year arrives with a peculiar contradiction: Everything feels familiar, yet suddenly everything carries a sense of finality.

For Middle Village resident Maria Luiza Valim Vaz, the 2026-2027 school year brings a mixture of anticipation and uncertainty. She is eager to spend one final year surrounded by friends and doing the things she loves, but knowing that many of these familiar moments are nearing their end gives the year a bittersweet edge.

"Senior year is probably going to be one of the most exciting yet terrifying years of my life," said Luiza, 17. "I genuinely can't wait to have one final year doing my favorite things alongside my friends."

Beneath that excitement is the realization that moments she once imagined would last forever will soon become memories. The thought of leaving high school also means confronting a future that remains largely unwritten. Col-

lege, new responsibilities, and life beyond the familiar halls of CHS are beginning to take shape, even as Luiza remains uncertain about where she wants to go next.

"It also means it's officially time to begin planning for the next big step into a world beyond high school," she said.

It's something that the CHS senior admits she has "been dreading." Rather than allowing that uncertainty to overshadow her final year, Luiza is choosing to stay grounded in the present.

"I've decided not to let myself get too carried away with worrying," she said.

Her class choices reflect that mindset. Luiza plans to challenge herself academically while still making room



Maria Luiza Valim Vaz.



Andrew Davison.

for the interests that make school enjoyable. She has selected rigorous courses that will push her intellectually, plus electives so she can explore subjects that she genuinely enjoys.

That balance is deliberate. Luiza knows senior year will bring difficult decisions and unfamiliar challenges, but she refuses to let uncertainty about the future overshadow all the experiences that she still has ahead of her.

“As unsure as I am about what the future holds for me, I will not stop myself from creating new memories for the sake of self-doubt,” Luiza said.

Learning, she believes, should remain at the heart of her final year — but so should enjoyment. Her goal is not simply to leave high school with a list of accomplishments, but to make the most of the time that she has left while continuing to explore her interests and discover the person that she hopes to become.

“In the end, the most important thing to me is to always keep learning while also having fun,” Luiza said. “I

believe that is how I will truly have the best year and eventually discover who I want to be.”

Grade A Teacher

Sometimes the most important lesson in a classroom has less to do with the assignment on the desk. Andrew Davison discovered that with Mr. Douglas Mills, his English II Science Fiction Honors teacher, when an ordinary assignment became an unex-

pected lesson in understanding and compassion.

The junior remembers Mills for more than the science fiction stories that they studied. He recalls how Mills responded when circumstances outside of school in sophomore year made finishing an assignment particularly challenging. Rather than focusing solely on the deadline, Mills took the time to understand what Davison was facing and offered

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Back To School

the flexibility necessary for him to complete his work.

“He was able to work with me on making sure I got it done within a reasonable time despite what I was dealing with,” said Davison, 16.

That accommodation left a lasting impression on the Richfield resident. Mills did not lower his expectations; instead, he recognized that sometimes a student needs a teacher who is “understanding and reasonable” before they can regain their footing.

That willingness to meet a student where they are is what makes Mills someone that Davison knows he can depend on. Although the assignment was only one moment in the school year, the understanding Mills showed left a meaningful impression.

“I know that Mr. Mills is definitely someone that I can count on when I need it,” he shared.

Davison has moved beyond English II, but his appreciation for Mills has not faded. If he could rearrange his schedule and return to one of his former classrooms, there is little doubt of where he would choose to go. It’s not for another journey into the world of science fiction, but for the opportunity “to have him as my teacher once again.”

Less Distractions, Fewer Memories

The bell rings, the classroom doors swing open, and thousands of students like Kaitlen De Jesus pour into the hallways. In those few minutes between classes, phones can serve as schedules, clocks, cameras, and connections to home.

For the 17-year-old CHS senior, it makes the space between bells more significant than it might appear. De Jesus understands why schools want to mitigate distractions in the classroom. Her concern, however, is that a phone can be dismissed as a distraction even when it is being used for something as practical as finding the next class.

On the first day of school, De Jesus relies on her phone to navigate her schedule, keeping it “conveniently in my pocket” as she moves from classroom to classroom. For a freshman who’s unfamiliar with the layout of the school,



Kaitlen De Jesus.

she argues a paper schedule can create an avoidable obstacle.

“A teen who has no idea of the layout of this school is using a paper that awkwardly folds into their hands each period, and can fall or get lost easily,” the Delawanna resident explained. “Imagine this student leaves their schedule behind inside an East Wing class but doesn’t notice until halfway across the school?”

That possibility, De Jesus argued, could leave a new student scrambling to reconstruct a route they have only begun to learn. A phone, by contrast, keeps that information readily accessible without requiring students to carry a fragile sheet of paper from class to class.

“If they were to allow phones for the first few days, who are they to decide how long it takes a new student to memorize their route?” De Jesus said.

Checking a schedule between bells hardly constitutes a distraction to her when it can be the difference between confidently finding the next classroom and getting lost along the way. This will also add even more stress to what is already an unfamiliar and disorienting first day of high school.

Senior year comes only once and, for De Jesus, the photos and videos captured between bells are more than casual snapshots. They are fragments of a final chapter and small moments with friends that she hopes to preserve and revisit years later.

“I understand the purpose of banning phones in the classroom, as some students abuse the privilege of having them,” she said. “I believe it’s ridiculous to assume everyone should have their phones 100% turned off at all times. There is no ‘keep it in your bag’ policy.”

“CHS requires the phone to be powered down completely,” she continued. “You can’t check the time, can’t text your parents and, most importantly, cannot utilize your phone to make memories. It saddens me that my senior year [of] high school will have nowhere near the same amount of documentation regarding my last year of friendship, tradition, and youth.”

Interested in sharing with us your back-to-school memories? Message us on IG @cliftonmagazine or FB at clifton.merchant.



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WHAT ARE THEY THINKING?

Joe Siano continues...

"We can't keep putting it on the taxpayer's back. People are moving out. It's not just our school board either. Everywhere, taxes are being raised," said Siano. "I understand the need for tax increases, if it's 2%. But we can't do 4 to 6%. We need to be part of the solution."

Siano has ideas that he has introduced, including introducing a culinary program, renting out the stadium and gymnasiums, and getting endorsements from brands like Nike or Pepsi. Now it's off to the relevant committees to discuss their feasibility and how they would get started.

"One district started saving \$20,000 a year by turning the lights off in their vending machines when they're not using them," said Siano. "There are things we can do, but it needs to go to committees, get approval, then we need to [establish] a game plan."

Tanya Suarez

When voters head to the polls, Commissioner Tanya Suarez is confident that they'll end up with a nine-member Board that cares for its students.

"I'm excited to have the potential to be a part of the Board again. I keep calling it a team; that's how I function and work," said Suarez, 44. "As much as this is an election with three spots and four vying for them ... I don't see any particular person as an adversary or competitor. ... Let's see what the community wants and work together to make things better for the greater good."

The incumbent has decades-long knowledge of social work and education. She worked in social services for over 20 years, as a school social worker for 10 years, and is a doctoral candidate in Montclair State University's Teacher Education program.

As an MSU adjunct professor and part of Red Hawks Rising Teacher Academy, she'll teach Multicultural Children's Literature this semester to Newark high schoolers.

"Initially, my running for the Board was me wanting to bring my knowledge and passion about public education to Clifton," said Suarez. Now, with three years of experi-



Joe Siano, Tanya Suarez and Joseph Canova.

ence learning the ins and outs of a commissioner's role, her work isn't done. "I feel more equipped to be on the Board, so-to-speak. ... I want to be able to continue contributing."

Even with nine unique perspectives, Suarez is proud of the Board's ability to collaborate and create initiatives. One initiative is pushing for state legislation that would support full coverage for the food program and special education services.

State funds supplement a fraction of what's needed to fulfill state-mandated IEPs for students in the Special Education program, but the "robust program" attracts students and thins out existing resources.

"We're not asking for extra," said Suarez. "It can't be a mandate without [the necessary] funds."

Another moment of pride for Suarez came last year when the district came together to support families after SNAP benefits were disrupted at the federal level.

"The [district's] administration came together and said, 'We're going to feed our students', and the whole Board was in support of that and showed up at different times to volunteer," she said. "We see that there's a need within Special Education and food insecurity. I think we rise to the occasion."

An area of improvement to strive for would be connecting with the elderly population. Suarez is aware of the concerns that "those on a fixed income" have, because they still face tax hikes but don't have family members in the district.

"We should think about ways that we can engage the elderly community ... to see their value and, therefore, they can then see our value as a public education system."

Frank Kasper

A listening ear and willingness to help deliver compromise is what Frank Kasper promises the students, staff, and families who make up the Clifton school district.

“Growing up in Clifton and going through [the] school system, I have seen how the Board really tries hard to make sure the students get the best education and are offered opportunities for all of the extracurricular activities,” said Kasper (CHS 2003). “Our students have a lot of choices depending on what they like.”

Kasper, 41, brings with him a background in education. He previously worked at School 5 and Clifton Early Learner Academy on Brighton Rd. He is in his second year as an ABA preschool teacher at the Garfield Early Childhood Learning Center.

Kasper, who is running for the one-year term, previously served on Clifton’s Board of Ed from 2018 to 2021.

“I’ve been away from it for too long. I’m ready to jump back into it and be able to help the students and staff of Clifton,” he said. “I know what to expect ... and if I’m elected to the one-year term, I will hopefully run next time for the three-year term.”

The biggest issue that he hears from residents is the tax increase for this school year. His hope, if elected, is that the Board will be able to “come to more of a consensus ... to try and keep it as low as possible.” Speaking as a taxpayer himself, Kasper reflected how residents were “hit on both ends” by City Hall and the Board.

“I’m talking with people and members on the Board already,” Kasper continued. “I’m trying to brainstorm with colleagues to see if we can start other initiatives to raise money and keep the same programs that our students have now. So that way they have all the choices, like taking college classes while there or sports activities and clubs that they have already.”

“I would like to keep that implemented for them,” he added. “I’m not quite sure yet on the fundraising aspect, [but we need to] look into whatever we can to raise our money so that taxpayers aren’t as burdened as they have been.”

But he also acknowledged the Board’s ongoing successes, like respectful communication even when there is dissension. Kasper admires the current Board’s ability to work together “to make sure that students get what they need” while also taking care of the support staff that make the daily realities of education possible.

Kasper also credited the implementation of districtwide therapy dogs for students.

“Not all of our students have the privilege of coming from a stable home,” said Kasper. “Each student is different, so we want to be able to help our students as much as we can.”

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WHAT ARE THEY THINKING?

Joseph Canova

Commissioner Joe Canova knows the cost of insurance is rising each year, which is why it's important for the Board of Ed to work as a team to continue advocating for Clifton.

"I'm honest; I'm not going to pretend that something's happening when it's not," said Canova, 45. "A big issue is insurance, across the state. We can't fix it, but one thing that I can promise is we'll continue to talk to legislators to try and fix the issue."

Canova was first elected to the Board in 2018. He placed fifth in 2022 and was re-elected in 2023. His desire to help continue to lead the district stems from him having three children in Clifton Public Schools. He and wife Rose are parents to CHS sophomore Lidia, 15; CCMS seventh grader Nadia, 12; and School 3 first grader Mia, 6.

"My first focus is making sure that everything is appropriate and running efficiently for my kids," said Canova. "Then, I want to make sure the things that we're doing in the district are staying in line with [the motivation behind the big referendum]."

As Senior Director of IT Systems at Berkeley College, he credits his technical background keeping him "on top of the education in school" and the current AI trends. "I see what [students are] coming in with and can position myself in between," he said. "They're coming out of [high school] with skills that are transferable for college."

Many of the issues that he hears about revolve around perception. All school districts are rated based on their test scores, which he noted is a "conglomeration of all of the students, including students with any special needs or IEPs" and those who might not care about exams if they're uncertain about pursuing higher education.

"I don't necessarily believe test scores for a day should constitute whether a school is great. It should be more well-rounded," said Canova. He went on to point to schools like PCTI with diverse opportunities, but how they're referenced when public schools are viewed less favorably.

"[They have] great campuses ... but they're focused on vocacionals," he said. "There's a place for that, but I think people prioritize that over a school like Clifton, where we have every student and learning experience."



Evelyn Estrick Barnes, Frank Kasper and Elvia "Melissa" Lemus.

As for the school board, a major point in the win-column is that it's a certified board. He credited the nine-member collective as "putting in the time" to earn certifications.

"Not many boards in New Jersey can even say that," he said. "An uneducated board is a board that'll make bad decisions. ... [Ours is] really great to work on."

Evelyn Estrick Barnes

If Evelyn Estrick Barnes could describe joining the Board of Ed in a single word, the word would be "kismet."

On March 17, Barnes was sworn in as the newest member following the resignation of Commissioner Lucy Danny. The selection filled the vacancy until the upcoming election and was something that she sought as a parent who wanted to become more involved in the city and schools.

"I was planning to run, so I went for it," said Barnes, 40. "I'm really enjoying what I'm doing. I'm learning a lot about how the Board operates and what can be done [as a member]. I want to make a positive impact."

Now with almost half a year of experience, one of the biggest lessons is learning how funds are allocated. Barnes noted "what seems like an exorbitant amount of money" is actually distributed "to the penny" as far as where it goes.

"For instance, if the state gives \$3 million that is specifically for charter schools, the district can't even touch it," said Barnes (CHS 2003). "Learning how the district operates with constrictions is eye-opening. Really my goal is how can we really scratch the pencil and make sure funds we do have go directly to students without getting lost in the overhead or administrative side of things."

Barnes grew up in Dutch Hill, attending School 15 and WWMS. Her daughter Jersey, 5, starts Kindergarten at School 15 and Delta, 3, is in Pre-K-3. Her brothers Brandon (CHS 2003), Joseph (CHS 2007), and Evan (CHS 2013) also went through the district.

She began her career in mental health services as a Case Manager at New Hope Behavioral Health Center and as a

Mental Health Program Worker at The First Occupational Center of New Jersey. Next, she served as a Manager of Quality Improvement at New Jersey MENTOR and Sevita.

Today, Barnes is the Director of Risk Management, Compliance & Performance Improvement at Summit Oaks Hospital, with expertise in healthcare risk mitigation and regulatory adherence.

“How are we functioning? Is there waste anywhere? Can we streamline or improve things?” My whole job is analyzing data and coming up with dashboards,” she explained. “That lends itself to making sure our system runs as efficiently on the Board.”

If elected for a full three-year term, she thinks it’s important to be visible in schools aside from solely celebratory invitations. “[That means] going into each school for HSA meetings or whatever meeting is happening there to learn the common struggles of each school,” she said. “School 8 may have different struggles than Schools 17 or 4. ... I think [bringing concerns back to the Board and our committees] would go a really long way.”

Elvia “Melissa” Lemus

Elvia “Melissa” Lemus is no stranger to the “gritty work” of fundraisers. Yet front-facing civic involvement is new and has her stepping out of her comfort zone.

“I’m running, because I believe we all should leave this place a little better than we found it,” said Lemus, 46. “I believe knowledge is power, and education is important. As a director for Berkeley College’s Academic Support Center, I definitely saw how important it is for every student to feel supported, seen, and heard [in order] for them to be successful.”

Lemus grew up attending St. Cyril & Methodius School on Ackerman Ave. before moving to Florida with her family. For the past 21 years, she has lived in Botany Village and in April became the Assistant Director of Botany’s Special Improvement District. She’s also coached recreational soccer, was a parent for the Junior Mustangs, and is on the Booster Club for the Clifton Cheer team. Her children are Arianna Perez (CHS 2018), Ricardo Bodden (CHS 2023), and CHS senior Zoe Bodden.

Lemus is seeking to finish the remaining year of former Commissioner Lucy Danny’s term. As an Export Manager at BASF, a Florham Park chemical company with a focus on sustainability, Lemus brings strong communication skills and the ability to collaborate with others. “I coordinate across departments, solve problems, and communicate with people from all over the world,” said Lemus. “Also,

from working in higher education, ... [I’m familiar with] budgets, student support, and making sure students have the resources and guidance that they need.”

The existing Board’s diversity encourages her. She pointed to the youngest member, Alias Ragsdale (CHS 2024), as a voice that brings forth contemporary student perspectives. She noted how despite being non-partisan, there’s also diversity of individual political affiliations.

“We’re not always going to agree, but we can agree to disagree in a respectful way,” she said. “I’ve been to Board meetings, and they all seem very respectful to each other. They’re people that care and that’s what you need. People who want to give back to the community.”

It’s a community that she couldn’t be more grateful for on a personal level. When Lemus’ kids were young and involved in sports in 2016, she was diagnosed with cancer. She credited both fellow parents and sports directors as helping support her family.

“Whenever people say, ‘Clifton is going downhill’, [I say], ‘No, we’re just a diverse and big city,’” said Lemus. “My way of giving back is being able to help.”

She’s also eager to listen, believing that everyone’s voice should be heard, and set a positive example for our youth.

“You never know when a kid is watching you,” she said. “[It’s important to] be kind and respectful to others.”



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St. Philip's Troop 21 celebrates their 75th anniversary at the 5:30 liturgy on Sept. 12 at St. Philip the Apostle Church on Valley Rd. A cake and coffee reception will follow. Those interested in Scouting and the public are invited to join. Troop 21 meets on Tuesdays from 7:30-9 pm. To learn more, call Theresa Hogan at 201-787-0640 or email troop21clifton@gmail.com.

Last July, the Clifton Health Department was awarded a three-year \$150,000 grant from Partners for Health to support the operating expenses of the Botany Satellite Office, 207 Parker Ave. The grant will add and expand services in Botany Village, a neighborhood that was identified as showing greater need in the Health Department's 2018 Community Health Assessment. Follow the Health Department @cliftonhealth on Instagram.

Clifton Arts Center's Music Together begins Thursdays, Sept. 10 through Oct. 8 from 1-1:45 pm at the CAC, 900 Clifton Ave. The program is open to children ages six months to 5 years. Kim Latiano, Owner of Music Together, said the program is designed for kids six months to age 5. Cost: \$55 residents, \$60 non-residents. **Creepy Crawlers & More** art class for kids and teens is Sept. 26 from 1-3 pm at the CAC. Explore color, pattern, and symmetry while creating two festive beaded decorations. Cost: \$25 residents, \$30 non-residents. MaryAnn Baskinger, a retired Clifton Arts educator, will instruct. Register and pay: call 973-472-5499 or go to AllPaid.com.

Power of One's free, eight-week Christian-based Grief & Loss Support Group is Sept. 10 to Oct. 29. The weekly Thursday sessions run from 1-3 pm at Hope Reformed Church, 308 Burgess Pl. Voluntary donations are welcome. Seating is limited and pre-registration is required. To register, call Kim Castellano at 862-239-5905 or email info@powerofoneccom.org.

Join Father Marek Visnovsky's iconography workshop at St. Michael's Cathedral Chapel, 415 Lackawanna Ave., Woodland Park, on Thursdays Oct. 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 and Nov. 5 and 19 from 6-10 pm. Registration fee: \$499 (includes boards, paints, brushes, 24 karat gold leaf). Register online: stmichaelsarchangel.org. For info, email Fr. Marek at marekvisnovsky@yahoo.com.

Share your summer memories with Clifton Cable TV. Photos of family parties, summer camp, summer concerts, new babies and milestone birthdays, and more are welcome to be featured in the reel. Email your photos by Sept. 15 to: Cliftoncable7740@cliftonnj.org.

The 4th Annual Hispanic Heritage Month Carnival is Sept. 16-20 from 6-11 pm at Main Memorial Park, 1385 Main Ave. Hosted by the Latino Leaders of Clifton, featuring McDaniel Brothers rides, games, food, and fun! Tickets: \$20. Purchase online by visiting @latinoleaders_clifton on Instagram and clicking the link in their bio.

Friends of the Clifton Public Library seeks donations for its Gift Gallery on the 1st Floor of Main Memorial Library, 292 Piaget Ave. Items help fund library programs, like 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. More info: Call 973-772-5500 or write membershipFRIENDSofCPL@gmail.com.

The Friends of the Library have plenty of free events. They include: Maestro Robert Butts on “Carmen, the opera, and why it’s so unforgettable” (Sept. 24 from 6:30-7:30 pm), Laura Cubbage-Draper presenting “An Introduction to Genealogy: Discovering Your Family History, Part 2” (Oct. 17 from 2-4 pm), and special events for National Friends of Libraries Week (Oct. 18-24).

St. Peter’s Haven’s 40th anniversary will be celebrated Oct. 19 at the Valley Regency. The evening honors 40 years of The Haven sheltering the homeless and feeding our neighbors. Tickets: \$100 each. Tables of 10 available. Music by Swingman and The Misfit Mutts Band. To reserve, call: 973-546-3406 ext. 711 or visit saintpetershaven.org.

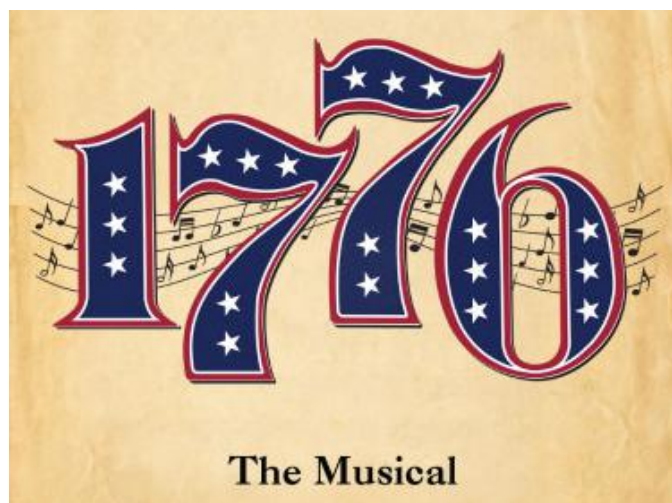
Clifton Public Library presents “West Side Story” (the 1961 original) on Sept. 22 at 2 pm at 292 Piaget Ave. No registration needed. Next up is Alfred Hitchcock’s “Psycho” (adults only) on Oct. 20, 2 pm. Questions? Call 973-772-5500 or visit cliftonpl.org.

City Green’s Farm Stand is open through Nov. 13 on Wednesdays (3-6 pm) and Fridays (10 am to 2 pm) at 171 Grove St. Purchase vegetables, herbs, fruit, eggs, and honey. Visit citygreenonline.org.

Clifton Behind the Scenes is Sept. 24 from 4-5:30 pm (in English), 5:30-7 pm (in Arabic), and 7-8:30 pm (in Spanish). Led by Councilwoman Rosemary Pino, in collaboration with ECHO and community partners, the guided sessions at City Hall let residents learn about the roles and responsibilities of city departments. Future sessions: Oct. 15, Nov. 19, Dec. 17. Learn more: echonj.org.

The Clifton Education Foundation’s 3rd Endless Summer reunion for retired Board of Ed employees is Sept. 15, noon to 4 pm at Shannon Rose. Cost is \$40 at the door. Details @[cliftoneducationfoundation](https://www.instagram.com/cliftoneducationfoundation) on Instagram or write Kim Puzzo at cefcommdirector@gmail.com.

The CEF’s 2nd Tricky Tray is Oct. 16 at the Boys & Girls Club. Proceeds enable CEF to award classroom grants and innovative programming and initiatives through Clifton Public Schools. Interested in becoming a yearly sponsor? Visit cliftoneducationfoundation.org. Checks payable to Clifton Education Foundation, Inc. should be sent to P.O. Box 2071, Clifton, NJ 07015. Questions? Call Loretta at 973-919-0118 (cliftonef1998@gmail.com) or Cheryl at 973-204-9099 (Cefsecy@gmail.com).



The Theater League of Clifton will stage *1776*, the historical musical that dramatizes the tense struggles of the Second Continental Congress to unify 13 colonies and declare American independence. Performances are Nov. 13, 14 and 15 at the Wayne Community Center. So if you have the chops to sing like John Adams, Benjamin Franklin or Thomas Jefferson, then prepare 16 to 32 bars of a song and audition on Sept. 15, 16 or 17 at Living Hope, 303 Maplewood Ave., here in Clifton. Find more info, cast and details at theaterleagueofclifton.com.

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35 Years of Independence

Some 300 people, among them Congresswoman Nellie Pou (D-NJ-09), and various civic, cultural and political leaders serving Clifton and Passaic County, met on Aug. 24 on the Great Lawn of Clifton City Hall to mark the 35th anniversary of the Independence of Ukraine.

George Oliarnyk, Board Member of the Passaic and Bergen UCCA, served as the MC. "The fight for Ukraine did not begin in 2022," he reminded those in attendance. "For more than a thousand years, Ukrainian statehood has persisted through repeated struggles for freedom and independence. Despite these challenges, the nation has maintained a profound commitment to individual liberty and the principles of the rule of law."

He then introduced Clifton Mayor Ray Grabowski, who in turn invited Congresswoman Pou to the podium. She and Congressman Josh Gottheiner (D-NJ-005) voted

in July in favor of H.R. 2913, the Ukraine Support Act, which would provide fresh funding to Ukraine and help impose long-sought sanctions on Russia for its illegal war.

"After nearly five years of horrific war, against all odds, Ukraine is clearly winning," Pou stated. "Ukraine's courage and resilience against Russia's brutality is incredible. America must give our Ukrainian allies whatever resources they need to finish the job and get the best terms they can obtain to preserve their country. At the same time, Congress should take up and pass our new sanctions packages to put even more pressure on Vladimir Putin to end his war."

After the speeches and the flag raising by members of Ukrainian America Veterans Post 17 in Passaic, a program of both American and Ukrainian music was performed by the community's youth.



Clifton Heroes Food Truck, Vendor & Music Festival is Sept. 6, 11 am, at City Hall. Cost is \$5, with kids 36 inches and under free. Enjoy food trucks, vendors and crafters, a classic car show, beer and wine garden, family fun and musical performances by Swingman and the Misfit Mutts (noon to 2 pm), Orquesta La Caribena (2:30-4:30 pm), and Alternate Groove Party Band (5-7 pm). Proceeds benefit the city's annual Memorial Day and Veterans Day Parades.

Clifton P.R.A.I.S.E. (Parents Requiring Action and Information for Special Education) Baseball returns Sept. 6 at 3 pm at Albion Field 1, at 237 Maplewood Rd. Upcoming dates are: Sept. 13, Sept. 20, Sept. 26 (9 am), Oct. 4, Oct. 11, Oct. 17 and Oct. 25. For questions, visit clifton-praise.org or email cliftonpraise@gmail.com.

The 18th Angels of Animals Tricky Tray is Sept. 23, 5 pm, at the Boys & Girls Club. Cost is \$30. Visitors can bring their own food or drinks or visit a concession stand. Limited seating, advance purchase only. Basket raffles, super 50/50, wine pull, and more. All proceeds benefit a Veterinary Care Fund for homeless animals in need. To reserve, call or text 973-826-0506. Questions? Visit angelsoranimals.org.

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Birthdays & Celebrations - September 2026

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Fanny Chem & Joey Angello
celebrate their anniversary on Sept. 2.



Paul Oliver turns 100 Aug. 5. **Jessica**
and **Sean Barone** married Aug. 12. At left,
Nick Hawrylko is 31 on Sept. 12 and his mom
Cheryl Kastrava turns 68 on the same day.



John and Debbie Tauber, Clifton's
Emeritus Animal Control couple,
celebrate their 48th anniversary on
Sept. 2nd. **Deb's** birthday is Sept. 3.
Steve & Barbara Bivaletz celebrate
their 48th anniversary on Sept. 30.

Michael Capwell 9/1
Allison Di Angelo 9/2
Liam Robert Martin 9/2
Bill Federowic 9/3
Dave Gabel 9/3
Jennifer Martin 9/3
Sharon Holster 9/4
Natasha Mendoza 9/4
Joseph Shackil 9/4
Eric Wahad 9/4
Linda Ayers 9/5
Christy Gordon 9/5
Mohammed Othman 9/5

Ana Stojanovski 9/6
Darren Kester 9/7
Helen Albano 9/8
Shannon Carroll 9/8
Liz Tresca 9/8
Geoff Goodell 9/9
Annamarie Priolo 9/9
George Andrikanich 9/10
Nicole Moore 9/10
Dolores Wyka 9/10
Ronnie Courtney 9/11
Andrew Orr 9/11
Andrew Shackil 9/11



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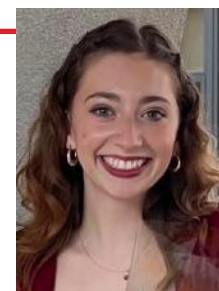
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Cameron Cummings turns 3 on Sept. 9! **Ryan Joseph Meade** turns two on Aug. 19. He has a 4 year old brother Anthony and his parents are Kevin and Lauren (Hrina) Meade. **Emily Kasa Peterson** turned 6 on Sept. 1. Her cousin **Maxwell Yoda** turns 9 on Sept. 30. **Eddie Bivaletz** will be 38 on Sept. 8. **Elena Rose Latiano** will be 22 on Sept. 7.

Lee Ann Doremus.....9/12
Wayne Funke9/12
Thomas Wayne 9/13
Sarah Bielen..... 9/14
Anthony Dorski..... 9/14
Emily Duchnowski 9/15
Manny Monzo..... 9/15
Hagar Ibrahim..... 9/16
Stacey Corbo..... 9/16
Mav Cubero..... 9/16
Nancy Ann Eadie 9/16
Joe Genchi 9/16
Jaclyn Scotto 9/16
Cindy Murcko 9/17
Kathleen Gorman 9/18
Amanda Meneghin 9/18
Dawn Smolt..... 9/18
Daniel Smith 9/18
Gloria Turba..... 9/18
Mickey Garrigan 9/19
James Graham 9/19
Rickie Ojeda 9/19
Louis DeLeon 9/20
Sara Gretina.....9/21
Lynne Lonison9/21
Annamaria Menconi9/21
Peter Skoutelakis9/21
Valerie Carestia 9/22
Beverly Duffy..... 9/22
Ryan Gorny 9/22
Timothy St. Clair..... 9/22
Keith Myers 9/23
Brian Salonga 9/23
Brian Engel 9/23
Pam Bielen..... 9/25

Deanna Crisantiello..... 9/25
Donato Murolo 9/25
William Wishard..... 9/26
Corey Genardi..... 9/26
Saverio Greco..... 9/26
Richard Van Blarcom 9/26

Kenneth Chipura 9/28
Barbara Mascola 9/29
Thomas E. Moore 9/29
Mary Perzely..... 9/29
Ryan Lill..... 9/30
Lauren (Hrina) Meade..... 9/30

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Greg & Margaret Nysk celebrate
26 years of marriage Sept. 17.

Another Good Deed

Nico's Lemon Aid stand proved what we already knew — little hands can be big helpers!

Nico Iannarella, 6, raised \$2,130 on July 31 at his lemonade stand, and all of it was donated equally to St. Peter's Haven and Clifton Little Pantries to help fight hunger and homelessness. His father, Dominic, is Chair of St. Peter's Haven's Trustee Board and runs Iannarella Law, LLC on Lakeview Ave.

"It's just a really special proud parent moment. It was totally his idea. Out of nowhere one day, he told my wife, Natalie, that he wanted to do it and donate the money," said Dominic. "For a six-year-old, it's just extremely special to have that happen. It feels like you're doing something right as a parent."

The Iannarellas have tried to make giving back a visible part of their lives for their son. Dominic, who ran for the City Council in 2022, is also a Board member at the Boys & Girls Club of Clifton. He explained that he and Natalie like helping those around them, which they hope Nico absorbs more and more as he gets older.

"Hopefully he sees that and sees the value and lesson in giving to those who need it, and in helping those who may not have as much as we do or other people do," said Dominic. Then, with a laugh, he added: "It's refreshing that he's paying attention and it's translating into real action."



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- ✓ Revamped Master Plan & Zoning Laws
- ✓ Opposed Allwood Rd. Lane Dieting

Financial Watchdog

- ✓ Audited City Budget Resulting In Cost Savings
- ✓ Greater Accountability & Transparency
- ✓ Negotiated Better PILOT Agreements

Grant Funding

- ✓ Downtown & Botany Parking Garages
- ✓ Bill Gibson Nash Park Splash Pad
- ✓ Third River Flooding Solutions
- ✓ Inclusive Parks Expansion
- ✓ PSEG City Building Upgrades

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Sales Associate



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Linton Gaines
Broker Associate



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Roselys Ramirez
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David Kelley
Sales Associate



17years
Alexandra Constandinou
Broker Associate



46years
Walter Porto
Sales Associate



32years
Sophia Constandinou
Sales Associate



22years
Patricia Elmahdy
Sales Associate



20years
Sheila Esdaille
Sales Associate



42years
Wendell Maki
Broker Associate



32years
Gladys Mesones
Sales Associate



17years
Cesar Guzman
Sales Associate



24years
Angela Cardenas
Sales Associate



27years
Bobby Persaud
Sales Associate



20years
Joanna Arias
Sales Associate



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Ramon Ramirez
Sales Assistant



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Broker Associate



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