

Clifton Merchant Magazine • Volume 31 • Issue 10 • October 2, 2026

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A STRONGER
CLIFTON.

Our magazine is a business that serves a diverse purpose. While much of what we publish is designed to entertain readers, an important part of our mission is to keep our community informed and provide a forum for public opinion.



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

In that spirit, the next 41 pages present the opinions and positions of candidates for Board of Education, City Council, Passaic County Commissioners and Surrogate, as well as profiles of individuals running for the US House of Representatives and Senate.

Within those pages, Clifton voters have also shared their thoughts on political leadership as it relates specifically to City Hall and the issues facing our hometown and its future.

We remind you, however, that no one politician, individual or organization has a monopoly on ideas for the future of our city. Given that statement, I'd like to offer the following idea for your consideration:

With the sprawling and disjointed neighborhoods—Allwood, Athenia, Botany, Delawanna, Downtown, Dutch Hill, Lakeview, Montclair Heights, Richfield and Rosemawr—and an explosive population of 90,000 and climbing, I and others often consider whether it is time for Clifton to change its form of government.

For decades, Clifton has been managed under a City Manager form of government. Basically, the seven-person Mayor and Council all run 'at-large' every four years and from among the top seven vote getters, they select a Mayor.

The Mayor in this form of government has very little power other than to run the meetings and make a few board appointments. And the Mayor gets paid \$4,500 annually. That is \$500 more annually than the six council members.

The City Manager is the chief executive and the seven council members are essentially the board of directors, who write policy and oversee the government.

In August, the topic of changing the form of government was presented and Council members Joe Kolodziej, Rosemary Pino and Mayor Ray Grabowski asked for support to do what is called a charter study. Basically a study of the best way to govern our town—as AI describes Clifton—"a densely populated suburban city that blends urban energy with a traditional suburban feel."

If it would have gained the fourth vote, volunteer charter study commissioners would be appointed. Those citizens would begin a study process to collect information and present findings, costs associated and recommendations, perhaps a year forward. But the vote did not pass.

That brings us to Nov. 3. We hope the profiles of candidates will help you decide who to vote for to steer and govern Clifton into 2030. We also hope that the Mayor and City Council who take office on Jan. 1, 2027 may begin to look at new ways to lead our mature suburb.

With about 90,000 residents, Clifton has many challenges—and many attributes. The value of our homes have reached all time highs but so has the cost of living.

Clifton is often cited in national reports as among the best places to live. But it's also getting awfully crowded in our neighborhoods, on our streets and in our schools.

While our municipal government has tried to address issues, more innovation is needed. Government, the media and residents need to discuss a new vision for Clifton, one that balances quality of life issues with well-planned Smart Growth. Elect leaders who are open to change, ones that can think out of the box and innovate.

Clifton Merchant Magazine

CLIFTON

TOM•A•HAWK PROMOTIONS

1288 Main Avenue, Downtown Clifton, NJ 07011

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Contributing Writers

Ariana Puzzo, Joe Hawrylko,
Irene Jarosewich, Tom Szieber,
Jay Levin, Michael C. Gabriele, Jack
DeVries, Pat Alex, Robert Niessen

Editor & Publisher
Tom Hawrylko, Sr.

Art Director
Ken Peterson

**Associate Editor &
Social Media Mgr.**
Ariana Puzzo

Business Mgr.
Irene Kulyk

Graphic Design Intern
Michael Shimabukuro

WHAT ARE THEY THINKING?

By Associate Editor
Ariana Puzzo



All told, there are 19 candidates running in the Nov. 3 City Council election. Yes, you read that right—19!

In May, we spoke to the first batch of prospective candidates ahead of the crowded election. Those 10 featured on our pages were among the early risers (note: Gerard Scorziello opted not to run, and Councilwoman Mary Sadrakula's schedule did not coordinate with our deadline).

To those whom we did speak to, we asked: What do you consider the most immediate issue facing Clifton, and how would you address it? Our profiles continue in this magazine with seven stories on the remaining candidates. There is also a statement from John Thomas whose name will appear despite withdrawing from the election on Sept. 15.

Also, despite multiple phone and email requests to

speak, Rajnikant Rana did not confirm his availability.

For the others, we asked that these candidates also offer their insight on the issues and how we should address them. The common answer: finding a way to work together respectfully, as a community. Candidates further discussed what sets them apart and why they think they should get a seat on the dais.

On the following pages, we've also included previously written profiles on the six candidates who are running to fill a three-year or one-year term on the Board of Education, as well as a collection of brief biographies on the candidates running for: Passaic County Commissioner, Passaic County Surrogate, U.S. Representative, and U.S. Senator.

Turn these pages and learn a bit more about the issues that matter most to these candidates...

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- ✓ SECURED \$850,000 FOR HOLSTER PARK
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REMINDER
EARLY VOTING STARTS OCT 24

PAID FOR BY NELLIE POU FOR CONGRESS. APPROVED BY NELLIE POU.



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What should your
next Council deliver?

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#9

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OCT 13

EARLY VOTING

OCT 24 - NOV 1

ELECTION DAY 2026

NOV 3

MujtabaForClifton.com

NOV 3 POLLS: 6 AM - 8 PM

Paid for by Assad Mujtaba for Clifton City Council, 859 Clifton Ave, Clifton, NJ 07013.

Matthew J. Ward

Ever since John and Mary Ward built a foundation for their family on Hilton St., their son Matthew Ward has seen himself as the beneficiary.

“That’s something that I want to see protected and enhanced for the current generation of Cliftonites and for future generations,” said Ward, 69.

Ward’s campaign for a seat on the seven-member City Council is built on the three C’s: Civility. Collaboration. Consensus. His civic experience includes serving on the Planning Board (1988-1992), Board of Education (1999-2002), and City Council (2006-2014).

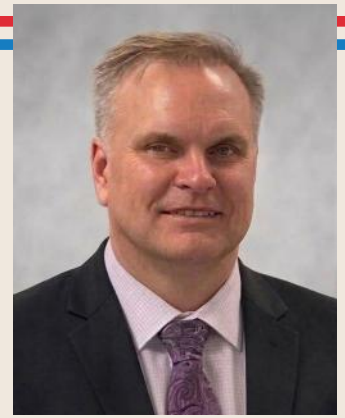
“We’ve gone backwards. The amount of division and strife has just exploded in the last four years,” said Ward. “We don’t have a strategic plan for the city and, not to flatter myself, but when you have serious issues, you have to have serious people and people with some real proven results that have been tested.”

As President of the Board of Ed in his final year, Ward points to how School 17 was built as the city’s first new school in 50 years.

“That’s not to say it was a singular success on my part, but I kept the focus on the main issues,” explained Ward. “We have priorities, and we all have to listen to one another.”

Ward attended Saint Paul School on Main Ave., now Classical Academy Charter School, and graduated in 1975 from Paul VI, now Maple Valley Middle School. He earned his Masters in Public Administration at the University of South Carolina and is a Senior Editor at Golf Today.

One of our city’s major assets to him remains its proximity to major highways, New York, and hospitals. He emphasized the importance of taking advantage of these positives to entice the businesses and families who might move to our community.



Matthew J. Ward, George D. Sikora.

“You really need to understand some of the past to understand where the future is ... and we’re a much older community. Clifton is over 100 years old,” he said. “So we have to have systems in place that reflect the people who live here and how they can feel engaged.”

For him, it means pushing for a charter study to examine our current city-manager system of government, if it’s something that the voters want to see happen. It also means seeing a dais that works with one another rather than being “silo-oriented.”

Ward ultimately believes that the Nov. 3 election is about “getting us back on track” and voting the right people into office. “The promise of Clifton was, it provided a pathway that it was going someplace,” said Ward. “We’ve gone off the rails, so the goal is to bring it back into play.”

George D. Sikora

Over 40 years in retail environments has afforded George Sikora a unique perspective when it comes to hearing what people need or negotiating to ensure a realistic and satisfying outcome. This November is the lifelong resident’s first time running for public office, but he is eager to take care of his hometown “as best as I can” while showing his potential colleagues respect.



LET’S MAKE CLIFTON WORK

ASSAD

MUJTABA

CLIFTON CITY COUNCIL

#9

Could business growth help ease your tax burden?

I built my business in Clifton. I’ll work to attract investment, pursue grants and grow revenue to support a tax freeze.

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MujtabaForClifton.com

Paid for by Assad Mujtaba for Clifton City Council, 859 Clifton Ave, Clifton, NJ 07013.

“As someone who’s managed commercial properties, I’m used to getting along with situations and people whether it’s a lease negotiation or a customer coming in the door,” said Sikora, 59. “You can’t take it personally. I’m doing this for the City of Clifton, not for ‘George.’”

Sikora attended School 12, Christopher Columbus, and is a 1985 grad of CHS. He earned a bachelor’s degree from William Paterson College and then three master’s degrees in Accounting, Business Management, and Marketing from Saint Peter’s University.

From 1983 until 2015, he worked at the family-owned Marchesin Shoes in Botany Village and started managing the neighborhood’s commercial properties in the 90’s.

“My character was developed there, day-in and day-out. I’m a Botany Village guy,” he said. “I have a special place in my heart for it. When you manage strip malls and apartment buildings, you start to have a feel for what people’s concerns are.”

Today, the big concerns that he’s heard from residents involve “animosity or tension” between Council members and the ongoing mandated citywide revaluation to ensure that all properties are assessed accurately.

“Taxes are going up and the older people on fixed incomes are very concerned about it. They’d like to be more in tune or updated more by the Council on the budget,” said Sikora. “Not toward the end of the year, but at the beginning of the year.”

If elected, Sikora’s primary goal would be to ensure open dialogues and communication with the residents. That would mean making himself available and “seeing what their temperature is, as far as what’s going on with the city.” He acknowledged he’d need to review the bud-



Avraham Shaya Eisenman.

get once given access to a council member’s resources, but he added “making sure police and firemen are taken care of the right way” is another top priority.

“I would try to improve quality of life ... whether that’s garbage collection, cleaning the streets, or recycling. I would try to make these things better, because Clifton is a family town. You want that to be safe,” he said. “I can promise to work to listen to [everyone’s] needs and ... work with the other six people on the Council to get this done for the City of

Clifton, not for ourselves.”

Avraham Shaya Eisenman

As Clifton and other communities continue to evolve, Avraham Shaya Eisenman is looking to meet these changes and progress with the times.

Eisenman, who ran for a seat in 2022, sees the city’s biggest challenge as “a transition of times” in relation to 21st century technologies, like AI and data centers, taking control. Along with these factors, there are the rising costs of goods and services, which is a challenge to taxpayers.

Our city, he added, is also one that had “a lot of industry at one point” that it’s moved away from over the past few decades.

“We’re a city in transition, and we have to meet that challenge of the times and fully integrate into the 21st century while maintaining the beauty of Clifton that either made us choose to live here or grow up here,” said Eisenman, 35.

The Passaic native has lived in our city for the past 10 years and is now a local business owner. The Family Nurse Practitioner, specializing in emergency medicine, owns Eismed Urgent Care, 786 Bloomfield Ave., and maintains his ER skills by working shifts up in Port Jervis,

LET'S MAKE CLIFTON WORK

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#9

MujtabaForClifton.com

Paid for by Assad Mujtaba for Clifton City Council, 859 Clifton Ave, Clifton, NJ 07013.

NY. He has also served on the Clifton Zoning Board for almost three years.

High taxes, flooding, and the issue of cannabis are all concerns brought up to him by residents. On the tax side, Eisenman is committed to the idea of a two-year tax freeze on the city portion that would require “creativity with the budget” and finding ways to cut city government costs. It would mean making sure that all “positions are still relevant in 2026.”

As far as the other two issues, he emphasized prioritizing smart development rather than overdevelopment, to address flooding, and putting the issue of cannabis dispensaries on a referendum in front of the voters.

“My approach is simple: What is best for Clifton? If this is what’s best for Clifton that’s what we go with,” said Eisenman. “[It’s about] working with everybody, listening respectfully to all ideas, not calling people names, and finding a common ground for everybody.”

And even though he cannot make any decision-making promises, there are certain things that voters can expect if they vote for him.

“I’m young, I’m invested in the city, my business is here, I own a home here, and my family lives here,” said Eisenman. “Will there be tough decisions if I’m elected? [Yes], but I’ll still be there, because [the residents are] the people who put me in that position.”

Matthew W. Mullins

As a lifelong resident, Matthew Mullins is eager to bring his “next generation” ideas to the dais. As a son who greatly admired his dad, his decision to run is also rooted in a tradition of service.

“My father, Bill, was very big into labor,” said Mullins, 29. “He was always working through some grievances, scratching notes down. He did so much.”

Bill retired after a distinguished 35-year career as a Toll Collector with the New Jersey Turnpike Authority in East Brunswick. He was a member of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers Local 194 in East Brunswick, where he served as Tolls Grievance Chair-man before becoming a Business Agent for the union.

“I never understood how much he did and how hard he worked until I saw [his] impact.”

Disenchanted by what he sees in local politics, Mullins has adopted an “if you want something done right, you’ve got to do it yourself” approach. He attended Schools 16 and



Matthew W. Mullins, Tafari Anderson.

17, graduating from Chapel Hill Academy in Lincoln Park.

The William Paterson grad is a Logistics Manager for Bullet Electric in North Arlington and spent five years working as an aide for the late Passaic County Commissioner Bruce James.

“I’ve ... seen firsthand what ‘good government’ looks like, acts like, and seems like. I’ve seen none of the above [with this Council],” he said. “I hear from people: ‘Where’s the next generation to bring in some youth?’, so here I am. Send me in.”

While he cannot promise to lower taxes, he wants to make sure the city is making realistic investments with strong revenue streams. It means using Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) programs only as long as the city has a long-term strategy for making up revenue.

“It really comes down to the financial health of the city,” said Mullins. “I’d like to see the bond rating go up as well, [which would mean] not borrowing at a crazy high interest or sinking the city into further obligation. Right behind that is infrastructure.”

Improving communication between the municipal government and the residents is another top priority. Whether it’s through a Communications Director or by utilizing social media, it requires “more imaginative or creative thinking” when it comes to tackling the issues.

“I’m union-built, Clifton-made, and I’m riding for Clifton,” said Mullins. “I’m not here for political grandeur. I’m not here for an underlying agenda. This is people’s lives, this is their tax dollars, this is their homes.”

Tafari K. Anderson

Tafari Anderson condemns in-fighting and public chaos as shadows cast on Clifton being a city where people want to live or raise a family.

Anderson, who sent his three children to Clifton Public Schools, has lived in our city for over 25 years. In

Clifton needs leaders who solve problems, not leaders who create them.



- Ray chooses leadership over confrontation, maintaining his professionalism.
- He protects the dignity of the office by keeping his composure and refusing to engage in chaos.
- He believes the mayor's job is to bring people together, not add to the division.
- He stays focused on the issues-not the arguments.
- He believes government works best when people debate ideas-not attack each other; disagreement is

part of government, but disrespect doesn't have to be.

- Personal attacks and shouting over colleagues are signs of an inability to govern.
- Leadership requires emotional maturity; if you can't control your temper in a public meeting, then how can you be rational in making tough decisions for the city's future.



THE CHOICE IS SIMPLE.

***We cannot continue to tolerate the chaos,
we must demand accountability.***

***Our residents deserve public servants
driven by vision, integrity,
professionalism and progress.***

***Let's reject the dysfunction
and support Ray who is dedicated
to moving Clifton forward.***

Re-Elect

**RAY #4
GRABOWSKI**

CLIFTON CITY COUNCIL

VOTE - NOVEMBER 3, 2026

Paid for by Committee to Re-Elect Ray Grabowski to Clifton City Council,
800 Van Houten Ave., Clifton, NJ 07013

2012, he was elected to the Board of Education, going on to serve two terms. His first time running for the City Council was in 2022.

“I pledge to be aggressive when it comes to the oversight of our tax dollars, with DOGE-style financial auditing and zero-based budgeting,” said Anderson, 49. “As a pro-law enforcement supporter, I will 100% support our law enforcement, including ... [their collaboration] with ICE where the need exists.”

Another priority for Anderson includes “developing and supporting” the city’s recreation program, which would translate to a partnership with the Boys & Girls Club of Clifton. The Paterson native would like to see our youth and seniors have programs that keep them safe.

“[The programs] will keep them out of the streets so we don’t become Paterson or Passaic,” he said. “[It’s about creating] a healthy, successful community for Clifton.”

A large part of that is making a final determination for the city’s garbage contract. He noted that “people don’t want garbage picked up once per week” and that the issue should’ve had a proactive approach taken to address it four years ago. Anderson singled himself out from other candidates by emphasizing how, in his six years on the BOE, there was a zero tax increase.

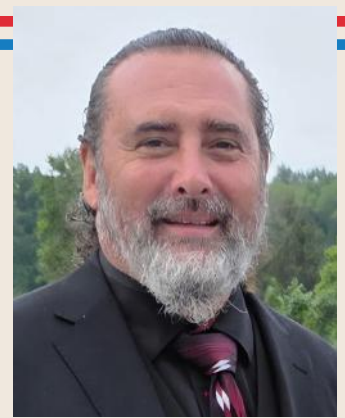
“I want to ... make sure that our tax dollars are properly spent. President [Donald Trump] did it. He’s lowered the cost of living for people,” said Anderson. “At the end of the day, what is it that we can do in Clifton to be proactive about where dollars are going?” Anderson works in public sector information technology, specializing in automation integration and cybersecurity. He’s committed to advocating for individuals with special needs.

“I still am and will always be an advocate, having a kid of my own on the spectrum,” he said. “[Fighting for services] exposed the reality of politics, but I stayed true to my values and beliefs.”

Norman A. Tahan

Norm Tahan’s one promise to voters is he’s not someone who says “should have.” The lifelong resident is interested in using his insight to take action, but he’s in staunch opposition to conducting a charter study. “I believe in making [the form of government] that we have better. [Changing it] would be disastrous,” said Tahan, 70. “Yes, we’ve had our problems, but you fix it. By making the Council better, we will get things done and make the city better.”

Tahan’s roots in Clifton start as a 1974 grad of Paul VI.



Norm Tahan, Fred Barnes.

He coached baseball at Paul VI before the school’s closure and got involved in local coaching for Little League, American Legion, and Babe Ruth teams. He also joined the Board of Directors of the Clifton Stallions Soccer Club.

In 2014, Tahan retired as a Deputy Chief after 35 years with the Clifton Fire Department. Since 2015, he’s run a travel agency that he’s worked for since 1978. He ran for Council in 2014 and served for 12 years on the BOE (1993 to 1999 and 2004 to 2010).

“I think, with my experience in multiple things, I have insight into a million aspects of what’s going on in the city,” said Tahan.

Further development is a non-starter for Tahan because of overcrowding. He brought up the issue of taxes, stating that he’s only interested in raising revenues.

“If you look at the ... \$3,400 that I’m paying [in Clifton taxes], I’m getting a pretty good bang for my buck. But the DPW is down over 30 guys. The police and fire department numbers are down. Where are we going to cut things?” Tahan asked. “I know people don’t want to pay taxes at all, but that’s not realistic. You want a certain quality of life.”

There could be higher penalties for parking and cracking down on “rampant illegal housing”, which includes basement and attic apartments. Tahan pointed to the parking issues in Botany, Delawanna, and Athenia.

“I would never vote for a tax hike,” Tahan asserted. “I’d do whatever I could to raise revenues.”

Fred Barnes

Fred Barnes has served as the sympathetic ear on the other side of the bar. Now, he hopes to serve residents from the other side of the dais. The owner of Dingo’s Den and Dingbatz on Van Houten Ave. takes pride in his approachability and accessibility.

“I’m used to dealing with a lot of different personalities, attitudes, and opinions. There’s nothing wrong with that. It doesn’t have to be what I think,” said Barnes, 61.

VOTE #16



Joe Kolodziej, MPA, CMFO

#16
**JOE
KOLODZIEJ**
CITY COUNCIL



Joe is a municipal CFO working in NJ, watch his videos explaining Clifton's budget shortfalls, how grants work, and proposals for new revenue to hold down taxes.



www.CouncilmanJoe.com



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PAID FOR BY KOLODZIEJ FOR COUNCIL

"I hear so many different ideas and a lot of people come up with a lot of good things ... [so why not] tweak it and make a good or decent idea even better?"

"I listen to other people," he continued. "You don't learn things when you're talking; you learn things when you listen."

Barnes opened the doors to Dingo's on Jan. 11, 1999 and then Dingbatz right across the street in 2004. The Passaic native has lived in our city for three decades.

"Clifton's been very good to me ... so we'll see what happens," said Barnes about throwing his hat into the election. "Maybe I can give a little bit back to the city and its people."

Barnes knows the major issues and wants to tackle them. The three big ones that he hears from people often are taxes, parking, and the storm drains. It all requires the next Council to do what is best for the city.

"That's why everybody is there in the first place," said Barnes. "It doesn't matter whose idea it is. If it's best for the people, then you've got to go for it."

Although Barnes doesn't anticipate lower taxes, he'd like to find ways to maintain rather than increase them. One proposal was speaking with investors about building parking garages. It could charge a "minimal price", like other municipalities do, and the city could " earmark that toward taxes" instead of cars sitting in spots for days or weeks.

What Clifton has going for it is its access to New York and major highways, but Barnes would also like to see greater emphasis and support shown to the local businesses that defined our community and helped it prosper.

"We need to remember, small businesses are what Clifton was built on," said Barnes. "Clifton is pretty unique. Between the Botany area, sections of Allwood, Main Ave., and Van Houten Ave., we have a few different 'downtowns' that you can [support]."

John Thomas, Jr.

You'll find John Thomas, Jr. at the top of the ballot next month, but he's not a politician. On Sept. 15, he temporarily informed us that he'd ended his campaign for City Council after a "smear campaign" in the Facebook group, "The City of Clifton NJ Unfiltered".

But after learning his name would still appear on the ballot, Thomas reassessed the situation. "I will not run a smear campaign; that is not how I operate. I'm just a long-time



John Thomas.

first responder that's been solving problems for the last 40 years," said Thomas, 65. "My uncle was a police officer. When I started out, he said, 'You're there to solve people's problems. That's your job.'"

"I've held strong to that, even today with my business," he continued. "I do my homework, I look at different things, like expenses, and then I come up with a program."

Not one for empty promises, Thomas is out driving his truck through different parts of the city every week. It helps him learn about the issues facing each neighborhood.

"I want to hear from the people," said Thomas. "If you present me with an issue, I will do my homework and, if I can come up with a solution, I will. If not, I will bring it back to you and ask what more we can do to get this program started."

Thomas attended School 3, Christopher Columbus, and is a 1980 grad of CHS. All four of his kids went through Clifton Public Schools. In 1981, he began a career as a firefighter and EMT for the Paterson Fire Department's Ambulance Division. Thomas' career included working as a Law Enforcement Officer for the Passaic County Sheriff's Department and as an Emergency Services Instructor for the Essex County Office of Emergency Management.

He spent 30 years working in multiple capacities for the Montclair Fire Department, retiring as a Fire Official in 2020. He's a New Jersey Licensed Private Detective for his own business, Fire Inspector Services, LLC.

When discussing a charter study he discussed how he has worked for towns with a form of government favoring a "strong mayor and weak council" and vice versa.

"Right now, the city can't afford [a charter study]," he said. "It's \$20-90,000 that can be put into other services. ... Every resident and business is tightening the belt, and the city needs to do the same thing."

As for local highway flooding, he would like for the Department of Transportation to send some environmental engineers to look at Routes 3 and 46 to determine why the flooding is severe and to help prevent people from driving through water or turning around.

"I've cut more people than I can count out of cars because of accidents," said Thomas. "There's also flooding here on local streets, so let's get environmental engineers out to solve it. It's about the safety of anyone using the roads; not just residents."

VOTE

TAREK ALNATUR

★ **CLIFTON CITY COUNCIL** ★

MOVING CLIFTON FORWARD

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

STRONG SENIOR & YOUTH SERVICES

PUBLIC SAFETY & POLICING

BALLOT

6



www.TarekForClifton.com

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of Tarek Alnatur

In anticipation of there being too many candidates to feature in one edition, editor & publisher Tom Hawrylko reached out for our May edition to profile those running for City Council. Some were incumbents, others have held other civic roles in our city, and the rest have shown a deep commitment to the community. Interviews were conducted in mid-to-late April on the phone and sometimes in person. On the following pages, you will find shortened versions of their previous profiles that opened up our May issue. To read the full versions, visit cliftonmagazine.com.



Assad Mujtaba, Tony Latona, Tom Whittles.

Assad Mujtaba

“Time is moving; Clifton is not.” That was Assad Mujtaba’s perspective in April in the context of a recent vote regarding ON3. “Being a safe voter is not what Clifton needs right now,” said Mujtaba. “Progress starts with debates and discussion. This Council shouts and digs into positions and takes sides on yea or nay. It seems they avoid compromise.”

Mujtaba believes that ON3 is good as proposed and rather than following a state-suggested recommendation of the 20% affordable housing on the proposed high-rise apartments, the revenue would be better managed in CHIP, the fund established that offers grants to homeowners whose homes are in need of repair.

“It seems the Council doesn’t want to discuss ways to find a solution that is doable,” said Mujtaba, the owner of Mujtaba Clinic on Clifton Ave. “If an idea doesn’t work, admit the problem, change paths, and move on. What happens is they pile on problems rather than addressing them.”

Tony Latona

Councilman Tony Latona doesn’t believe that Clifton isn’t happy. Perhaps, it’s social media spin.

“It’s the same 10 or 12 people making the chaos and noise,” said Latona. “Because when you get off Facebook

and leave the Jerry Springer drama, people I meet are less worried about us and more concerned with their families, Scouts, and Little League.”

The retired Clifton Firefighter, who is concluding his first Council term, acknowledged personal conflicts on the dais are a bad look for the city. But the now retired US Air Force Senior Master Chief stated that “this council has accomplished more in the last three years than the previous councils did over the past 30.”

Grants are coming in from both the federal, state and county levels, as well as incentives and grants from utilities such as PSEG. He added the Council has passed laws to take the burden off homeowners when trees are buckling sidewalks in front of their homes and need repairs.

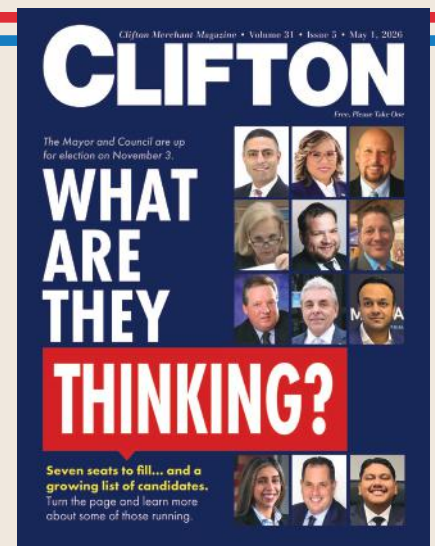
Tom Whittles

Tom Whittles wants Clifton to elect people ready to listen, eager to find a middle path, and ready to create consensus on budget priorities.

Whittles has had a decades-long front row seat to city government as Chair of Clifton Against Substance Abuse. And what he sees is not making him happy, with in-fighting and a lack of solutions. The income and expenses of the city are also unbalanced with taxes inevitably increasing. “The fighting and bickering on the dais is sophomoric and a bad look for a city of nearly 100,000,” said Whittles, a security industry executive.

He proposed looking at every municipal program outside of what is mandatory and see if it is financially feasible to continue. Events offered by local nonprofits like the Saint Peter’s Haven run and Little League parades often face big city services bills that diminish their profit.

“We need to do better at teaming up with them so they can continue their good work.”





George D. Sikora #3

for Clifton City Council

SMALL BUSINESS OWNER • CALM LEADERSHIP

Greetings Cliftonites!

Some of you may know me from when I worked at Marchesin Shoes in Botany Village. That began in 1983. I was a 16 year old kid living on Mahar Ave. I worked hard at what was suppose to be a summer job.

But I stayed with it and learned from the owner, Clif Marchesin. I worked there when I graduated CHS in 1985 and William Paterson University in 1989. Eventually, my wife Nancy and I bought Marchesin Shoes—the store we still own and operate on Route 23 in Pompton Plains.

Over the decades, I continued my education at St. Peters University, earning an MS in Business, Marketing and Accounting.

In addition to running Marchesin Shoes, I manage commercial properties and apartments. My skills include business management, personal & group communication, conflict resolution and disaster preparedness.

My background & goals:

Small business owner and lifelong Cliftonite. I can bring a calm voice to our government. Make Clifton a better place to live and work. Listen & help solve problems of our neighbors. Work to help our hometown grow & prosper.

Please Vote #3 George Sikora

Paid for by George D. Sikora

Iris Reyes

Iris Reyes' expertise is listening. And that's what she's done since growing up in Paterson and hearing how Clifton was a great town for its parks, schools, and neighborhoods. A good life ... just down the road.

"I knew I made it when I moved to Clifton 16 years ago," said the Albion resident. "I moved to the land of opportunity. Now I want to help figure out how to preserve this great melting pot."

Reyes attended PCTI, served in the National Guard, pursued higher education, and then began a career with the Somerset County Prosecutor's office. She now works at Woodrow Wilson as a security specialist.

"When emotions are high, rationality is low. That is what is happening on this Council," said Reyes. "Emotional solutions do not work."

She noted with rising taxes and a struggling education system, everyone is nervous on a local and national level. Therefore, Clifton needs leaders who can "listen, create calm, and come to consensus."



Iris Reyes, Tarek Alnatur.

Tarek Alnatur

Tarek Alnatur is tired of "watching Clifton crumble." Hearing from his Lakeview neighbors who've lived here for six decades that morale is lower than ever inspired him to run for Council.

The father of four owns and operates a martial arts school and child development center, Elite Child Development Academy, in Paterson. He is also Director of the John Maxwell Leadership Forum. So why take on another 30-hour-per-week job?

"If you don't like something, come up with a solution, a better way of doing things," said Alnatur. "It's my time to step in." Alnatur, who worked in finance in corporate America, cited a flawed vote to mandate 20% affordable units on housing of 10 or more units, affecting ON3's plans for 1,078 apartments on the former Roche campus.

"There was no due diligence. Transparency and consistency is what builds accountability and trust," he said. "We can make an educated vote for the best interests of our constituents."

VOTE RICHARD MEJIA FOR CLIFTON CITY COUNCIL



#2

CLIFTON CITY COUNCIL

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Raymond Grabowski

Raymond Grabowski loves serving his hometown, even when his nice-guy demeanor draws skepticism. Some believe the 23rd mayor of Clifton didn't swing the gavel enough to bring order in the first years of his term. But it costs nothing to be nice — an approach that he's taken.

Beyond running meetings and making appointments to the Planning and Library Board, the mayor and his six colleagues have the same power: a single vote to create laws.

The problem is that many of the votes have come down to 4-3 decisions. "It's not been a good look for our city," said Grabowski, who volunteers as Chair of the Athenia Business Association.

Dominating issues have included the development of ON3, rising taxes, and the building of the mosque in Richfield. Grabowski said an investment in quality-of-life staff and stronger laws for enforcement are needed now. "People want to live in peace, but dump trucks in driveways, illegal apartments, and noisy neighbors don't allow that."

Joseph Kolodziej

Joseph Kolodziej has got government chops. He served seven years on the Board of Education and is in his third term, now in his 12th year, on the City Council.



Ray Grabowski, Joseph Kolodziej, Rosemary Pino.

He has a master's in Public Management from Penn State and has spent 16 years working for municipalities in finance and management. He's the current Chief Financial Officer of Mount Olive Township. Running for re-election was a clear choice: "I'd love not to run, but I can't leave things this way."

"This way" in city politics is well-documented: Lawsuits. Public bickering. Personal fights. Seat changing. Time-outs from meetings to restore decorum. Not exactly an agenda of progress. Quality-of-life enforcement is an issue that Kolodziej believes is worth investing in to address illegal living quarters, property overuse, and sub-standard renovations.

"We have four part-time people covering 24,000 properties," he said. "We need to hire full-time people that will generate more revenue to offset their salaries. Isn't it worth the investment?"



Frank Kasper

#2

CLIFTON BOARD OF EDUCATION

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Rosemary Pino

Second term Councilwoman Rosemary Pino wants to be remembered as the daughter of Clifton. When it comes to conflict on the Council, her view is that the old and new Cliftons are trying to forge a way to a better Clifton.

In 2023, she switched parties and ran for County Clerk as a Republican but did not prevail. "It was meant for us to test the machine," said Pino. "We got 46% of the vote [when] a Republican typically gets 38%. That shows we can cross party lines, and there are many voters who believe in change." In November, she seeks a seat on Council and also against Nellie Pou for Congress. "This is an opportunity to get Clifton representation on the national level...when I go to Congress, I represent Clifton. People want to see me succeed."

Richard Mejia

Richard Mejia has led others since his Clifton High days, which wasn't all that long ago, despite his civic experience. In 2023, Mejia was elected at age 23 to Clifton's BOE. He went to Felician University, earned a BA in busi-



Richard Mejia, Mary Sadrakula.



ness administration in three years, and then in 2023 added an MBA, focusing on innovation and leadership.

"[It's] important for the younger generation to see that a 20-something guy from Botany can run for office and succeed," said Mejia, who works as a project manager of grants and budgets in higher education.

Mejia is a Trustee of Historic Botany and worked with AmeriCorps in the area of community development, real estate, and "seeing how affordable housing can be done right." Decisions on the Council, begin with listening. "Answers come from the community, not top-down."

Mary Sadrakula

For May's edition, Tom Hawrylko emailed Councilwoman Mary Sadrakula to ask for a phone interview on April 22, 23, or 24. But none of the times worked, she replied. On April 24, she did call our office. So we called her and left a message. The councilwoman wrote back: "I must have dialed you in error. I am off the grid today. Let's discuss next week!" Thus no interview, no Sadrakula profile.

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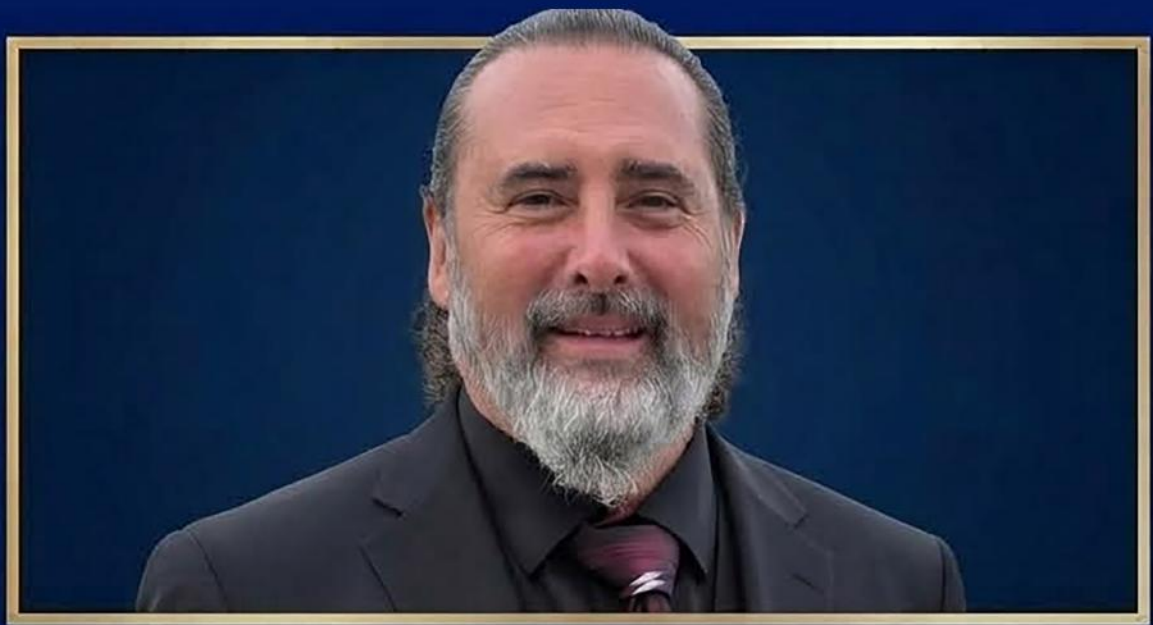



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FREDDY “DINGO” BARNES.

for Clifton City Council

ADVANCING A POSITIVE CLIFTON

VOTE #17

NOVEMBER 3, 2026

Paid for by Friends for Fred Barnes for Council

We spoke to the six candidates running for the Clifton Board of Education. Two are running to finish the final year of former Commissioner Lucy Danny's term. Four candidates are running for three open seats, including all three incumbents. The top three vote-getters will help lead our school district over the next three years on the nine-member Board. We spoke to them about why they're running, their top priorities, and where they stand on the issues. Their longer profiles begin on page 3 of our September edition.



Joseph Siano

There's no clocking out at the end of the day for Commissioner Joseph Siano.

"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."

Siano (CHS 2001) owns JK Realty on Colfax Ave., with his wife, Rickey Di Maria-Siano. He is running for his second term on the Board of Education with the belief that "we can't keep putting [4 to 6% tax increases] on the taxpayer's back."

He recommended introducing a culinary program, renting out the stadium and gymnasiums, and getting endorsements from brands.

"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 ... we need to [establish] a game plan."

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.

"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).

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, previ-



Joe Siano, Tanya Suarez and Joseph Canova.

ously served on the BOE from 2018 to 2021. The biggest issue that he hears from residents is the tax increase for this school year.

"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," said Kasper.

Tanya Suarez

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

"As much as this is an election with three spots and four vying for them," said Suarez, 44, "I don't see any particular person as an adversary or competitor."

The incumbent worked in social services for over 20 years, as a school social worker for 10 years, and is a doctoral candidate in MSU's Teacher Education program.

Even with nine unique perspectives, Suarez is proud of the Board's collaboration. One initiative is pushing for state legislation to support full coverage for the food program and special education services. An area of improvement would be connecting with the elderly population.

"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," said Suarez.

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“Clifton you trained me. I am the daughter of Clifton.”

Rosie Pino is a mom, wife, educator, cancer survivor,
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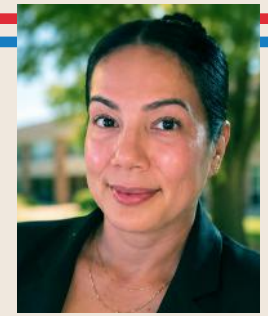


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Evelyn Estrick Barnes, Frank Kasper and Elvia "Melissa" Lemus.

Joseph Canova

Joseph Canova knows the cost of insurance is rising each year, which is why it's important for the BOE to continue advocating for Clifton. "I'm not going to pretend something's happening when it's not," said Canova, 45. "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 professional background is as Senior Director of Systems in the IT Department at Berkeley College. As for Canova's desire to help continue leading the district, it stems from having three children in Clifton Public Schools.

"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]."

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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 Board's newest member following the resignation of former Commissioner Lucy Danny. "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]," said Barnes, 40. "I want to make a positive impact."

Barnes (CHS 2003) grew up in Dutch Hill and her two daughters are enrolled in the district. She is the Director of Risk Management, Compliance & Performance Improvement at Summit Oaks Hospital, with expertise in healthcare risk mitigation and regulatory adherence.

One of the biggest lessons was learning how "what seems like an exorbitant amount of money" for the budget is actually distributed "to the penny." Her goal is to "scratch the pencil and make sure funds we do have go directly to students without getting lost in the overhead."

Elvira "Melissa" Lemus

Elvia "Melissa" Lemus is running for the Board to leave her community even better than she found it. "I believe knowledge is power, and education is important," said Lemus, 46. "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."

Lemus attended St. Cyril & Methodius School on Ackerman Ave. and has lived in Botany for 21 years. She volunteers on Botany's Special Improvement District and has coached recreational soccer. Her three children have attended Clifton Public Schools. Lemus is seeking to finish the remaining year of former Commissioner Lucy Danny's term. As an Export Manager at BASF, a chemical company with a focus on sustainability, Lemus brings strong communication skills. "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."

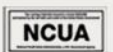
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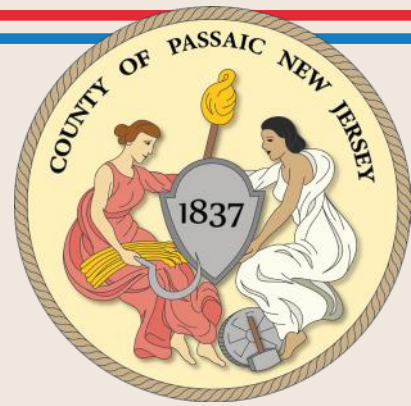
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A seven-member Board of County Commissioners governs Passaic County. On Nov. 3, eligible voters will elect three commissioners in a slightly different way. There are six total candidates, but only four are running for a three-year term at large. Two candidates will be appointed to the open seats. The remaining two candidates will vie to finish the remaining 13 months of retired Commissioner John Bartlett's term. These elected officials are the middle layer of government between the federal and state governments and municipalities. Here's what we know about them...



Edward Leonard (Republican)

Wanaque Councilman Edward Leonard is running for a three-year term on the Passaic County Board of Commissioners.

"My road to 'Republicanism' started in July 1981 when I enlisted in the US Navy," he stated in 2025. "[I'm also a] proud member of the American Legion Chapter 246."

Leonard has served on Wanaque's council for over 15 years, with his term expiring on Dec. 31, 2028. He helped spearhead full funding for the Wanaque Dog Park with an Open Space grant.

Leonard is the current Liaison for the Board of Adjustment and Wanaque Historical Commission. He's also the chair of multiple committees, including: Ordinances, State Planning and Economic Development, Technology and Cyber Security, and Public Works.

In 2025, he had served as President of the Wanaque Haskell Education Foundation for 12 of his 15 years. The foundation raised and donated over \$45,000 "for curriculum purposes" to the two elementary schools' classrooms.



Edward Leonard, Bill Rodriguez.

"[I] created a Parental Rights group, to inform all our parents of issues involving our public schools and advocating to stop the policy allowing biological boys from going into the girls' restrooms," said Leonard.

Bill J. Rodriguez (Republican)

Clifton resident Bill Rodriguez has two promises with his bid for County Commissioner.

"I promise to bring common sense back to our local government and ensure that every official is held accountable to the people they serve," Rodriguez stated in February.

Rodriguez expressed "a deep sense of honor and pride" after he was unanimously nominated to represent the party in this year's race by the Passaic County Regular Republican Organization.

"In an era often defined by divisiveness, I believe now is the time to stop waiting for change and start becoming it," said Rodriguez. "Our county deserves leadership that prioritizes the people over politics."

"I am incredibly grateful ... [for] this opportunity to



LET'S MAKE CLIFTON WORK
ASSAD

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CLIFTON CITY COUNCIL

#9

What does a lifetime of service bring to Council?

A healthcare provider, educator and business owner bringing listening, problem-solving and accountability to city decisions.

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MujtabaForClifton.com

Paid for by Assad Mujtaba for Clifton City Council, 859 Clifton Ave, Clifton, NJ 07013.

champion our shared values: family, faith, and the dignity of hard work,” he continued. “Lastly, to the residents of Passaic County: regardless of your background or walk of life, I am standing up for you. If you value your family, your faith, and your future, you have a seat at my table.”

A native of Paterson, Rodriguez is a former law enforcement official with the Paterson Police Department and a career-New Jersey Transit locomotive engineer.



Orlando Cruz, Nicholas Veliky.

Orlando Cruz (Democrat)

County Commissioner Orlando Cruz is running for reelection on the Board of Commissioners, where he’s currently the youngest member of the governing body.

Cruz, 42, filled a vacancy left when Theodore “T.J.” Best resigned in 2023. The Paterson native promoted the necessity of equitable communication throughout the 16 municipalities.

“Particular programs may come about and people ... may say they didn’t know about it or get a chance to take advantage of it,” said Cruz at the time. “Passaic County is a diverse community. I want to make sure everyone gets a message and understands it.”

In June, Cruz ranked 38 in 8th Edition Insider 100’s “Rising Generations” list, which recognized the next wave of leaders shaping New Jersey.

“I am grateful for the opportunity to serve our communities and committed to continuing the work of building a stronger, more inclusive, and prosperous county for all,” said Cruz.

A former professional DJ and later Chief Operations Of-



ficer for one of the largest entertainment companies in the Northeast, Cruz was selected in 2018 to serve as the Executive Director of the Downtown Paterson Special Improvement District. In June 2021, Cruz was named the President of the Greater Paterson Chamber of Commerce as the first Latino/minority to hold the

Chamber position. Later, he was also named President of the Greater Wayne Chamber of Commerce.

Nicholas Veliky (Democrat)

Nicholas Veliky is proudly “people focused, solution driven” when it comes to serving the ninth most populous county in New Jersey.

The lifelong Clifton resident is a business leader with over four decades spent in public service. His professional roles have included Owner & Publisher of The Jersey Insider, Passaic County Edition and Bergen County Edition, President & CEO of Nicholas J Veliky Marketing Strategies and Solutions, and Partner & Founder of P Squared Consulting & Campaign Management.

“My focus has always been the same: helping communities grow and succeed,” Veliky stated in April. “My record of service includes leading the Clifton Board of Adjustment, promoting economic development, mentoring young people, [and] supporting families and expanding civic engagement as President of the Clifton Democratic Club.”

Veliky was officially sworn in on July 14, following a vacancy left by former Commissioner John Bartlett. Passaic County Democrats selected Veliky after Bartlett’s June resignation to assume his new post as general counsel of the Gateway Development Corporation.

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2026 | REGISTER OCT 13 • EARLY OCT 24 • NOV 1 • VOTE NOV 3

#9



Paid for by Assad Mujtaba for Clifton City Council, 859 Clifton Ave, Clifton, NJ 07013.

MujtabaForClifton.com

He won the Democratic nomination for county commissioner in the June 2 primary and is seeking the seat of the late Commissioner Bruce James in the general election.

"I encourage everyone to stay informed and to participate in this very important election," said Veliky. "Our county's future depends on leadership, experience, and commitment."

Marko Kopic (Republican)

Hustling hard and exploring new opportunities has produced results for Marko Kopic. It started at an early age but became more apparent as he began entering adulthood.

"I'm a plumber by trade, so what I kept doing was installing boilers and a whole bunch of side jobs," Kopic told SQR Podcast in 2020 about independently buying his first house at age 19.

Born into a blue-collar Croatian family, Kopic attended Montclair State University. By the age of 22, Kopic owned over 80 properties in the Paterson area that he fixed up and sold to solidify his status as a real-estate investor.



Marko Kopic, Aleksandra Tasic.

Today, the Passaic native is running to fill the unexpired term of former Commissioner John Bartlett. Last April, Kopic ran to fill one of three available seats on the Passaic City Board of Education. When speaking to SQR Podcast in 2020, Kopic stressed a memorable piece of advice and life guidance that he received from his father, who had immigrated to the U.S. "If somebody

wakes up at six o'clock, make sure you wake up at five o'clock," recalled Kopic. "Beat them to it."

Aleksandra Tasic (Democrat)

Whether she's standing before a courtroom or sitting with her fellow council members, Haledon Councilwoman Aleksandra Tasic knows the issues that range from public safety to finances.

Tasic will face Republican Marko Kopic in the November general election for the remaining 13 months of former Commissioner John Bartlett's term. The Becker & Poliakoff senior attorney is based in Becker's Condo, Co-Op & HOA practice in Morristown. She handles complex contract drafting, negotiations, and representation for civil litigation.

In her capacity on Haledon's council, Tasic chairs the Administration and Personnel Committee and the Ordinance Committee, serves as a liaison for the Office of Emergency Management on the Public Safety Committee, and is a member of the Finance and Special Events Committees. She has served three terms and previously held the role of Council President.

Tasic, who earned her Juris Doctor degree from Seton Hall University School of Law in Newark, is dedicated to supporting those facing adversity and fostering spaces for empowerment among women in her community. She also serves as a Commissioner on the Passaic County Technical Vocational School Board of Education in Wayne and is proficient in Serbo-Croatian.



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Jessica Sprague (Republican)

As a certified matrimonial attorney, Jessica Sprague has dedicated her career to serving clients who need her expertise in family law during life's most challenging moments. Sprague, who is a shareholder at Jardim Meisner Salmon Sprague & Susser, P.C., is running for Passaic County Surrogate Court Judge.

In 2006, she earned her Juris Doctorate at Seton Hall University Law School. The member of the NJ State Bar Association was the 100th President of the Passaic County Bar Association from 2019 through 2020. She is also General Counsel for the Passaic County Regular Republican Organization and previously served a term as an elected member of the County Committee for that organization.

Zoila Cassanova (Democrat)

Modernizing court operations is one of the causes that Surrogate Judge Zoila Cassanova has prioritized in her first term as Surrogate Court Judge. Cassanova previously served as a court attorney to the Manhattan County Surrogate and served as an Attorney for the New York State Unified Court System.

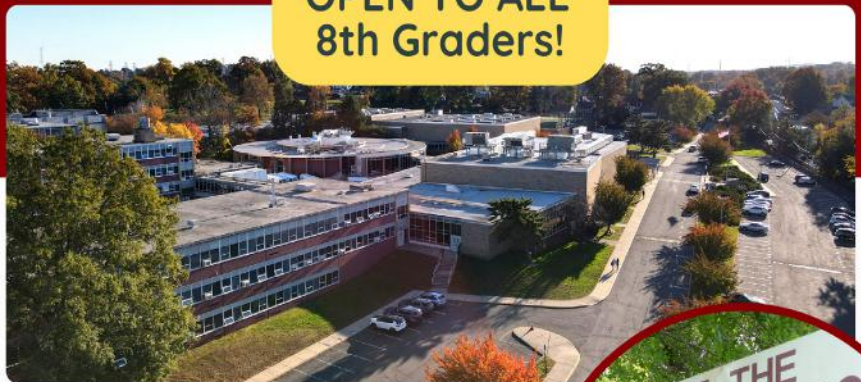
Since her election to Surrogate Court Judge in 2021, she has supported becoming the first in the state and county government to introduce Artificial Intelligence to help make the Surrogate's Court more accessible to non-English and English speakers. Cassanova received her Juris Doctorate from Seton Hall, where she taught and served as Director of the Legal Education Opportunity Program and as a member of the admissions Diversity Council.



Jessica Sprague, Zoila Cassanova.

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The legislative branch of the U.S. government consists of 435 members serving in the House of Representatives and 100 in the Senate. Representatives serve fixed, two-year terms. Senators, two from each state, run for staggered six-year terms. The candidates for Congress are...

Nellie Pou (Democrat)

Congresswoman Nellie Pou is an advocate of education, health-care, economic development, consumer protection, social justice, and criminal justice reform. The North Haledon resident is the first Latina from New Jersey to serve in Congress.

On Jan. 3, 2025, Pou was sworn in to finish the late Congressman Bill Pascrell's term. Her lawmaking career began three decades ago in the NJ Assembly from 1997 to 2011. Her platform focused on abortion rights, gun control legislation, and immigration.

Pou was first elected to the NJ Senate in 2011 and was re-elected in 2013, 2017, 2021, and 2023. She is one of just two New Jersey members on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. One of her subcommittees includes the Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment.

On Feb. 6, Pou secured over \$14.4 million for 15 projects in the 9th Congressional District, including a grant of \$850,000 for Holster Park Rehabilitation and \$200,000 for City Green's meal delivery program, including vehicles and equipment.

After the enactment of the 2026 government spending bill package, Pou secured funding this year for 26 separate community projects in North Jersey, totaling over \$24 million for NJ-09.

In 2025, Pou emphasized her dedication to ensuring access to healthcare by her condemnation of President Donald Trump's Administration for firing workers at the World Trade Center Health Program. The group is tasked with providing health benefits to 9/11 first responders.

"Cutting funding and personnel at the World Trade Center Health Program, which supports our heroic first responders and firefighters, is cruel and unconscionable," stated Pou at the time. "If this government will slash support to 9/11 heroes and survivors, they will target any American."

Rosemary Pino (Republican)

Councilwoman Rosie Pino uses her voice within our city's borders — and, she wants to bring that voice to the U.S. Capitol. On July 10, 2025, the councilwoman declared her candidacy for the Republican nomination in NJ-09.

Last year, Pino was set to square off with U.S. Air Force veteran Billy Prempeh in the 2026 June Primary prior to him suspending his campaign in December of 2025.



Nellie Pou, Rosemary Pino.

Pino was first elected to political office after a second run for a seat on the Board of Education. She served for two years on the BOE. In 2018, Pino ran for City Council and her second term will conclude this December. She is running for both seats — for a third term on the City Council and a first term in Congress.

Pino wants parents to have the "freedom to choose the best education" for their child and is anti-abortion, believing that it should be "rare and limited" with exceptions in cases of "rape, incest, or when the life of the mother is at risk." She takes a hardline approach to immigration.

"I support President Trump's border security policies that put safety first," stated Pino. "I believe that Border Patrol and ICE should be equipped with the tools they need to arrest and deport violent criminals." Read more: rosiepino-for-nj.com/issues.

Her activity also includes community work. Pino is involved in several nonprofit organizations. She founded both the Latino Leaders of Clifton, a civic organization, and PINO (Providing Individuals New Opportunities), a collaborative effort by businesses and elected officials to address poverty.

Pino is also the organizer behind the ECHO Unity Series' "Clifton Behind the Scenes", which lifts the curtain for residents and gives them an inside look at how their city operates. Each of the guided sessions happen at City Hall, in collaboration with ECHO and community partners, with an opportunity to learn about the roles and responsibilities of city departments in English, Arabic, or Spanish.



Cory Booker, Justin Murphy,

Cory Booker (Democrat)

Incumbent Cory Booker has built a platform on fighting for all those who are left behind or left without a voice. Booker received his undergraduate and master's degrees from Stanford, and he was later awarded a Rhodes Scholarship and studied at the University of Oxford and then Yale Law School.

At 29, Booker was elected to Newark's City Council, on a platform to improve public safety and expand access to healthcare. From 2006 to 2013, Booker served as Newark mayor. In October of 2013, he won a special election to the United States Senate and in the following year was re-elected to a full term.

Booker also helped craft the First Step Act to reform federal prisons and sentencing laws in order to reduce recidivism, decrease the federal inmate population, and maintain public safety. He has staunchly advocated to protect and build upon the Affordable Care Act.

Justin Murphy (Republican)

Justin Murphy, a former committee member in South Jersey's small town of Tabernacle, has run a campaign with priorities such as private sector growth, tax cuts, and spending reductions. The Republican candidate for the U.S. Senate additionally "supports

federal legislation codifying and protecting parental rights, and children's rights from sexualized public school curriculum."

From 1983 to 1987, Murphy was a US Navy, E-5 Second Class Petty Officer. In 2000, he earned his Juris Doctor from Widener University Delaware Law School. On the topic of healthcare, Murphy takes the stance that "under no circumstance should vaccinations be mandated." When sharing his views on national security, he believes "weakness invites aggression" and that our enemies need to "respect and fear America; our allies need to know America is strong and a reliable ally."

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Tom Whittles #5

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Decisions. Decisions. Clifton voters are at a crossroads...

...as they prepare to decide who they want representing the city and county ahead of the Nov. 3 General Election.

Appearing on the ballot are candidates for the City Council,

Board of Education, Passaic County Commissioner and Surgeon, and both chambers of the United States Congress.

It requires plenty of consideration and, with that in mind,

we asked residents to share how they're feeling about the current direction of Clifton and where we're headed.

All conversations led back to the City Council — a seven-member dais plagued by in-fighting and unexpected vacancies.

Since the 2022 election, the Council lost the late Councilwoman Lauren Murphy and Councilman William Gibson. Five of the remaining elected members are running for re-election.

On Election Day, Clifton's voters have a choice to make: to re-elect their incumbents or bring in new voices from among the other 14 candidates.

To help get to that decision, it means weighing the issues and who voters think is most likely to address them. Topics that kept coming up included quality of life issues, traffic, and concerns about the flooding and crumbling infrastructure.

The other throughline was wanting stronger, cohesive leadership for our city. Yet, no one was willing to name any names for who they thought should be the next mayor. Read on to see what some voters were willing to share with us ...



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Tuesday, October 20th: 2:30pm - 4:30pm

Location: Botany Satellite Office
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Wednesday, September 30th: 4:00pm - 6:00pm

Location: Township of Little Falls
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WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?

Destination Clifton

It's a comment we have often heard: Clifton is a quiet, move-up community. In fact, Clifton claimed the #1 spot among New Jersey cities in the widely reported *U.S. News & World Report* Best Places to Live rankings.

Edelyn Garcia (CHS 2023) agrees. She moved here with her family four years ago from the Bronx. "My perspective is fresh," said the 21 year old Realtor and administrative assistant with JK Realty. Clifton has many positives, among them: the community is quiet and diverse.

"Every neighborhood is different, serving different foods and cultures. I appreciate that diversity." Living in Allwood offers an easy bus ride into NYC or a short drive to Garret Mountain, or other green destinations further west.



When considering the upcoming election, she wants to elect leaders who share her views on diversity.

"It is important that we continue to respect and embrace all religions, cultures, communities. There should be no controversy simply because a mosque is being constructed in Clifton. As a Muslim," she continued, "I believe every community should have the freedom to practice its faith and have a place to worship. This is something that we should approach with mutual respect, understanding, and acceptance. So it is important to me that who we elect for City Council will respect this as well."

What Edelyn Garcia enjoys most is the calm hometown she has found: "I feel I can take a breath."

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Nineteen candidates for City Council seems like a lot to Dominic Iannarella, but he hopes that it encourages residents to learn more about each candidate before making decisions.

"I'm hoping that everyone really does their homework and pays attention to the forums and the questions out there," said Iannarella, the owner of Iannarella Law on Lakeview Ave. "That they make an informed decision and select the people who have the best interests of the city at heart."

Iannarella ran for City Council in 2022. The most pressing issue facing Clifton for him is finding ways to raise revenue so "we don't have to keep raising taxes the way we have been." Another major issue that he mentioned was putting more focus on improvements to infrastructure.

"The flooding issues are caused by drainage, not overdevelopment. The drains haven't been maintained or cleaned out," he said. "It's about getting the appropriate people to push those issues forward, but we also need county and state involvement."

"A lot goes into infrastructure. We need forward-thinking people who have this vision," Iannarella added.

Pointing Fewer Fingers

"Not people who are just bickering over the minor issues that this Council seems to hang onto, [such as] who's in charge of [what] or who said what or called somebody this."

Seeing the city get out of the "mess of the past four years" is Iannarella's overarching hope and he re-emphasized the importance of focusing on

what is affecting residents most.

"The city is in such a deficit right now, and [the Council is] wasting time on ... pointing fingers," said Iannarella. "[Being a council member is] a position that's supposed to be born out of, and driven by, service. It's supposed to be about serving the city [to improve] Clifton and the quality of life."

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“...once you reach the acceleration lanes, they’re death traps.”

WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?

Driving in New Jersey is not for the faint of heart — or for the impatient.

As a fourth-generation Clifton resident and third-generation native of our city, Ethan Nouhan would like to see more attention paid to infrastructure on the local and national levels.

“I think our potholes could use a little work,” Nouhan joked good-naturedly. “As for the on-ramps by Grove St. and Allwood Rd., once you reach the acceleration lanes, they’re death traps.”



“It’s especially dangerous for people who don’t live around this area,” he continued. “And we all know how impatient most New Jersey drivers are.”

Nouhan, 29, knows that better than most as someone who grew up bearing witness to the way drivers whip off Route 46 and enter the residential neighborhood behind Fette Ford. That same situation applies in reverse to people who cross through to access the highway from Grove St.

“Getting a better flow of traffic [should be a priority]. I’ll see cars lined up on Conklin for hours,” said Nouhan. “Interstate traffic, local traffic, rush hour traffic. I’ve seen and heard it all.”

“I would like to see the meetings move much smoother.”

“I hope most of the [the existing City Council members] get voted back in,” said Grace Lisbona, Executive Director of the Clifton Adult Opportunity Center. “I think that no matter what, they do try, and it’s not an easy job.”

“For [\$4,000 per year], the council members put in so many hours and experience so much stress. I really feel for them and, as someone



who is still working [long hours], I sympathize with them. As a leader, you also cannot please all of the people all of the time.”

“From our next elected leaders, I would like to see the council members get along more. I would also like to see meetings move much smoother and be shorter. It gets hard for the Council to stay there so late.”

“To me, it’s whoever can say what they mean and mean what they say.”



“Speaking as a Clifton resident [for 52 years], we see a lot of changes in Clifton. Some positive, some negative,” said Michelle Stroble, Founder and Executive Director of Stroble Outreach for Kingdom Kids, Inc. “The race this year is more predicated to me on how things have

changed and how we can continue that change. I see a lot of different avenues [with the election].”

“To me, it’s whoever can say what they mean and mean what they say. It’s a tough one this year, but I want whoever is the outcome to do good for Clifton. To me, politics is about making a change for the people who need help, and income is changing for our seniors who, along with our youth, need supportive services.”

“There’s also the issue of overpopulation and traffic. I’m all into affordable living, so let’s separate that, but there has to be a [limit] to what they’re building and allowed to build in Clifton. It makes the traffic way out of control, where it takes 10 minutes to get to one side of Clifton.”

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WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?

The role of the mayor is straightforward to Barbara Levi James: leading a united council for the City of Clifton.

"Right now, we have a very dysfunctional City Council without a leader. I think [former Mayor James Anzaldi, for all of his issues, was a fantastic leader who knew how to unify people and get things done," said James, who has lived in Clifton since 1988. "I may not have agreed with him, but we spoke a lot and I have tremendous respect for how he tried to manage the city."

"[Mayor Raymond Grabowski] is a wonderful man, but I unfortunately think that he's lost control of the Council," she continued. "I don't think that he's the most effective choice for mayor."

The problems that James sees as not improving in the city include

"My job is to unify you and your job is to get things done."

"crumbling infrastructure, flooding, and traffic." One solution, she said, could be creating a task force to identify all the problems that need to be addressed. But a specific kind of leadership is something that she thinks could also help our city.



"There are so many problems and I think the mark of a great leader is someone who will sit down with his team and say, 'I know that you guys hate each other, but we're going to sit in this room and get things done ... because my job is to unify you and your job is to get things done,'" said James.

As for the 19 candidates appearing on the ballot, James admitted that the size of the election is overwhelming. She encouraged everyone to "do their homework" and look at each public social media profile for the candidates to see how personas differ online from in-person.

"Choosing seven [candidates] out of 19 is a huge responsibility, and I'm very familiar with [some of them], like the incumbents," said James. "But then I looked at some other names like, 'Who's that?' I had never seen them on social media or at meetings, so why are they running?"



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“Stop reflecting on the Clifton of the past.”

A crowded ballot can make choosing a candidate feel a little like trying to pick a single voice from a room full of people talking at once. That crowded field raises a different concern for Ken Kowalski: too many candidates can spread the vote thin, making it harder for voters to rally around a clear direction for Clifton. Four decades in one city have given Kowalski, 71, plenty of time to watch change — and perspective on where he believes it should go next. What he is looking for is “honest, dynamic leadership” that can resist the temptation to govern by nostalgia. Clifton has 109 years of history, but Kowalski believes that its leaders should do less waxing nostalgic and more on shaping the city that it can become. “Stop reflecting on the Clifton of the past,” Kowalski said. “Look to the future.”

Perhaps a younger leader with a fresh perspective?

Since 1974, Nellie Babula has watched neighborhoods evolve, generations come and go, and the city take on new shapes. So what type of leader is she looking for in 2026?

Priorities for her on Election Day are leaders willing to improve the services of senior citizens. And perhaps the person with the right ideas does not have to come from the same generation as those who have led before.

A younger candidate, she said, may “bring a fresh perspective that is need-



ed to help move Clifton forward.”

Babula believes Clifton’s future should be one that carries every generation forward, especially the seniors who want to remain in their Clifton homes and be part of the story that evolves and made the city it is today.

After more than half a century in Athenia, Babula wants to see progress without leaving behind the people whose lives, work, and memories helped build a community that future generations now have the responsibility to carry forward.



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Looking to Clean House

Gerard Scorziello doesn't want more of the same — in fact, he wants Clifton voters to wipe the slate clean when they head to the polls next month.

"We have a pool of candidates, including 19 candidates and five incumbents, and the city is very frustrated with the incumbents," said Scorziello. "So, that means you really have to dig deep into what the challengers are all about."

"I would hope that the city looks at the candidates and chooses pretty wisely," he continued. "Hopefully we don't get the same old slate of people coming in and do get some changes."

When we last spoke with Scorziello for our May 2026 edition, he wasn't "100% yet" on whether he was running for a seat on the Council. The Delawanna native, who has lived in the Richfield section for 29 years, served on the Zoning Board for 16 years.



He emphasized the value of leadership and the importance of working together. Although he refrained from stating on the record who he thinks is best suited to address the issues facing Clifton, he said that he has heard the "same thing" from the different candidates.

"They're talking about quality of life, no new taxes, cleaner streets, overdevelopment. These are issues that we've heard over and over again during every single election cycle," said Scorziello (CHS 1980). "What they need to address is economic development."

Bringing in more revenue is how Scorziello sees the city effectively addressing quality of life concerns, including hiring more police officers and providing necessary services.

"The system is just built so that, over time, things do not go down in value, they go up in price," he said. "We



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haven't had an Economic Development person in years, but you have to bring in revenue."

"I don't want to see more revenue brought in by charging more fees to citizens or charging us for parking," Scorziello added. "[The city needs to] find creative ways to generate the revenue, and I'm still waiting to hear where that will come from."

Like many, he also spoke about seeing stronger leadership from elected officials. To him, it means voting for someone who's fully committed to the position that they're seeking; not anyone running for multiple positions.

"If someone's elected to two positions, [one position will get stood up], and I think it's unfair and unreasonable. I don't think it's a good thing," said Scorziello. "I think that voting for an individual running for two different positions is a waste of a vote."

Expecting stronger leadership also means witnessing the council members putting "their egos aside" in order to work together as a team of seven. "I've seen through some of these forums that everything is about 'Me, me, me.' I've worked on multiple boards, both public and private. You need to [reach a] consensus," he said. "Someone has to step up as a leader, and I'm waiting to see who that can be."



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88 Ways to Say Thanks

By Ariana Puzzo



The people who helped Jihea Hong-Park excel and transform into an internationally acclaimed pianist and pedagogue aren't black and white like the keys on her piano. But many of them are a part of her life to this day and are responsible for her continued return to our city.

Hong-Park will return to the Clifton Arts Center on Oct. 18 for a 4 pm piano recital, featuring four of her award-winning students from Brigham Young University in Utah. Admission for the event is free, but contributions are accepted. Light refreshments will be served after the performance, at 900 Clifton Ave., by sponsor, JK Realty.

It's not the CHS alumna's first time returning to the city where she honed her earliest talent, and there's every chance that it won't be the last.

"I have so many wonderful memories of growing up in Clifton," said Hong-Park (CHS 1997). "Coming back to the community where my journey began, now as a professor and performer bringing my own students, feels incredibly special. And full circle."

88 Keys to Her Success

Born in South Korea, Hong-Park immigrated to the United States with her family in 1991 when she was in seventh grade. She and her brother, Dr. Hyunouk Hong (CHS 2002), both attended WWMS and graduated from CHS.

Today, her brother is an internal medicine and primary care physician at Dartmouth Health in New Hampshire. He is also a Clinical Assistant Professor of Community and Family Medicine at the Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth. Her father, Chae Eui, still resides in Clifton.

"I once asked my late mother, Ok Sup, why our family had chosen to move specifically to Clifton from Korea," said Hong-Park. "She told me that Clifton was the perfect location, because it was only about 20 minutes from New York City, the 'mecca of the performing arts.'"

"In fact, my parents specifically chose the Allwood neighborhood, because there was a direct bus to Manhattan just a few steps from our house," she continued. "My parents sacrificed so much for my brother and me so that we could pursue our dreams."

Upon graduation from WWMS, Hong-Park received the Class Salutatorian Award, a major turning point in her journey. "It gave me a tremendous boost in confidence, especially as an English learner, and I continued to excel academically throughout high school," said Hong-Park.

Her four years on Colfax Ave. is where she met inspirational teachers such as Barbara Novak, the choir director who helped make Hong-Park's Arts Center return possible, and MaryAnn Baskinger, her AP Art History teacher whom she greatly admired.

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Jihea Hong graduated CHS in 1997. After earning her bachelor's and master's degrees from The Juilliard School, she teaches at Brigham Young University. Pictured in 2019, with former teachers Fred and Rita Foti, Jihea Hong-Park, Barbara Novak, Sandra Hartman and MaryAnn Baskinger.

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Hong-Park's gratitude for Novak is in part due to the retired educator's belief that Hong-Park "had something special to offer the world as a musician."

When Hong-Park was a Mustang senior, her teacher took her to play for one of her piano teachers, Lillian Freundlich, a "legendary piano faculty member" at the Peabody Conservatory, at her apartment in Manhattan.

"Mrs. Freundlich's feedback gave me a tremendous boost of confidence as I prepared for my college auditions. When I was accepted to Juilliard, Ms. Novak was one of the very first people that I shared the news with," said Hong-Park. "I still remember her reaction: 'I knew it! I knew it! I knew you could do it!' Those words meant so much to me."

Hong-Park served as Student Director in the Concert Choir and participated with the Madrigal Singers, the musicals, Math Team, and several other activities.

In her junior year, she received the Rotary Youth Leadership Award. As a senior, she earned a Clifton Rotary Club Scholarship.

One of her fondest memories, though, is performing with the late Mayor Gloria Kolodziej.

"[We did that] to help raise funds for the various programs in Clifton, including the Beautification Program," said Hong-Park. "Those experiences gave me an early opportunity to see how music could bring people together and serve the community."

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Clifton Arts Center
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Clifton NJ 07012

*Opening night reception
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TICKETS

MORE AT THE CAC

A Triumphant Return

Following her CHS graduation in 1997, Hong-Park earned her bachelor's and master's degrees from The Juilliard School. She also received Juilliard's prestigious William Schuman Commencement Prize for exceptional achievement, leadership, and service.

Her postgraduate studies saw her attend Teachers College, Columbia University. Formerly a faculty member at The Juilliard School and New York Philharmonic Education, Hong-Park is now Professor of Piano at Brigham Young University. Her students have earned national and international recognition, and she's received honors that include the 2025 BYU Class of 1949 Young Faculty Award.

Amidst these professional achievements is a deep, abiding appreciation for her pianist origins.

"I have remained in touch with many of my Woodrow Wilson and CHS teachers over the years. Some of them even came to hear me perform at Juilliard and Carnegie Hall long after I had graduated," said Hong-Park. "I feel blessed to have had these remarkable people in my life. Now, as an educator myself, I hope I can offer my students even a small measure of the encouragement, belief, and unconditional support that my teachers gave me."

In 2005, Hong-Park was invited to return to CHS as the keynote speaker for the CHS Academic Awards Banquet, which she described as "a tremendous honor" and meaningful experience.

As she returns to our city with four students — Abigail Billyard (an award-winning pianist and composer), Norah



The cast of Kismet's Murder at the Vicarage from front left: Shah Ahmed, Susan McDonald, Sneha Kodappully. And rear: Lisbelis Torres, Alan Neibuhr, Barry Roy, Tanvi Jani and Andrea Young.

Day (a soloist, chamber musician, and award-winning teacher), Bethany Parker (an award-winning pianist and collaborative artist), and Elizabeth Weber (a pianist, collaborator, and educator) — she's full of appreciation. "I have so many wonderful memories of Clifton, and it is difficult to talk about my journey without mentioning the people and experiences that shaped me there," said Hong-Park.

There's more at the CAC...

Moonlit Memories: Night Visions of America at 250 through Oct. 23, Wednesdays through Saturdays from 1-4 pm. Open to the public. The collaborative exhibition is presented in partnership with The Art Gallery at Rockefeller State Park Preserve. For more details, visit cliftonartscenter.org or call 973-472-5499.

Fall Pressed Flower Lantern Workshop for Families on Oct. 17 from 1-3 pm. Registration fee: \$35 (residents), \$38 (non-residents). Ages 7+ and adults are welcome. Create your own pressed flower lantern with fall flowers and colors. All supplies and instructions included. One battery-operated lantern included with each registration. Clifton native Chrissa Van Duffelen is the instructor, holding a degree in Floral and Landscape design. Register online at: cliftonartscenter.org/classes.

Kismet Performing Artists Theatre will present Agatha Christie's *Murder at the Vicarage* with performances from Nov. 6-8 and 13-15 at the Clifton Arts Center, 900 Clifton Ave. For future available tickets, visit: kismettheatre.org. Questions? Contact 973-559-3276 or kismetperformingartists theatre@gmail.com.





George D. Sikora #3

for Clifton City Council

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Greetings Cliftonites!

In my business at Marchesin Shoes, we have a philosophical approach to our customers: it's called **Sit and Fit**. Basically it means that we want to sit and get to know you. We want to understand your needs and not simply make a sale; we want to make a fit.

My approach to public service and government is much the same. When leading a city of some 90,000 residents we know not every problem will respond to the same fix. What may work in Botany Village may not work in Montclair Heights. I think readers get the picture.

In short, my philosophical approach as a Clifton City Council member will be to **Listen and Learn**.

Community service, giving back and being a good neighbor is something I learned as a boy growing up on Mahar Ave. and working for the legendary Clifton Marchesin. I've taken those skills and built upon them through college and in my career as a business owner and a manager of commercial properties and apartments.

To give back, to help build a better Clifton and to manage our community professionally are among the reasons why I am a candidate for Clifton City Council.

Please Vote #3 George Sikora

Paid for by George D. Sikora



THE HOT GRILL OCT. 10 & 11

Come for the 65 Cent Texas Weiners on Oct. 10 and 11 and take home the BOGO on hamburgers and cheeseburgers. The Lexington Ave. establishment opened 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. Come for the savings, surprises and specials!



OKTOBERFEST OCT. 17

Maryann (Kosciolek) CHS 1988 and her husband **Jerry Zawojski** CHS 1983 are heading up the Ukrainian Center Oktoberfest Oct.17. Music by Swingman and the Misfit-Muitts, lots of Ukrainian food, a big dance floor, plus tricky tray and raffles. Maryann is also president of the soon-to-come Ukrainian Cultural Center of Clifton. Info: ukrainiancenter@gmail.com.



Fred Torres in the 1970s, daughter-in-law Kim, Anna, Brian and daughter Jessica.



When Fred Torres passed on Jan. 20, 2014, his family knew they wanted to keep his legacy alive and launched the Fred Torres Memorial 5K that same year. This year, it is on Oct. 11, 9:30 am at Garret Mountain Reservation. For over 13 years, they have raised over \$60,000, which has been distributed as grants and scholarships to Mustang runners. Info: runsignup.com and search Fred Torres Memorial 5K.



EMPTY BOWLS NOV. 13

This sells out quick so get your tickets. St. Peter's Haven—Clifton's food pantry—is preparing for Empty Bowls on Nov. 13 at the Athenia Veterans Post. The \$40 admission includes a hand-crafted soup bowl and bowlfuls of chili, soups, breads and desserts provided by local restaurants. Can't make the event? Perhaps you can send a donation to St. Peter's Haven. Go to saintpetershaven.org or call 973-546-3406.



TASTE OF CLIFTON OCT. 26

Visit 40 or so Clifton restaurants and caterers on Oct. 26, 6:30. Walk the floor, meet your neighbors and enjoy specialty cocktails, wine and beer at A Taste of Clifton, at the B&G Club. Admission \$60 at the door. Register: bgccifton.org/food-wine-festival.





Ready to get your freak on? Brighton Asylum has two haunted houses and four escape rooms right off Van Houten Ave. Tickets: brightonasyllum.com. Clifton Rec's Halloween Parade, HarvestFest and the 24th Annual Apple Pie Contest is Oct. 25. Pre-register: cliftonrec.com. The parade steps off 12:15 pm at Richardson Scale Park and Van Houten Ave. with the Mustang Marching Band who will lead all to HarvestFest at City Hall until dusk.

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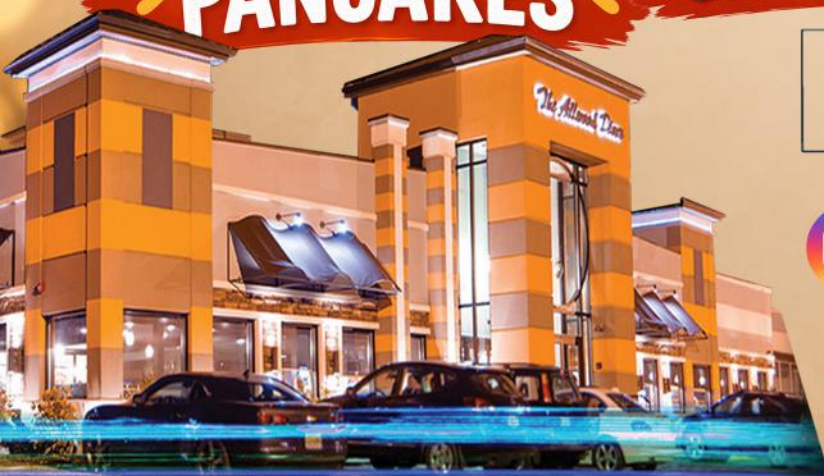
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TROOP 21 PANCAKE BREAKFAST

OCT. 11



A Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent. And the Boy Scout Troop 21 also whip up some pretty fabulous pancakes. The troop's annual Pancake Breakfast is Oct. 11 from 8 am to noon in the St. Philip the Apostle School Auditorium, located at 797 Valley Rd. Last seating is 11:30 am.

FREE RABIES SHOTS

NOV. 4 + 7



Pooches of all types are welcomed to the Clifton Health's free dog Rabies Clinics on two dates: Nov. 4, 5-7 pm and Nov. 7, 2-4 pm at the DPW Garage, 307 E 7th. Residents are welcome with valid ID. Owners must be aged 18+ with dogs on leashes. Questions? Call 973-470-5760.

BE GREEN THROUGH... NOV. 13

City Green's Farm Stand is open through Nov. 13 on Wednesdays (3-6 pm) and Fridays (10 am to 2 pm) at City Green Farm, 171 Grove St. Get vegetables, herbs, fruit, eggs, and honey. Visit citygreenonline.org or contact City Green: 973-869-4086 or info@city-green.org.



CLIFTON GARDEN CLUB OCT. 13

The Clifton Garden Club's next monthly meeting is Oct. 13 from 6:30-8:30 pm at the Allwood Branch, 44 Lyall Rd. Guest speaker: Linda Grinthal, a flower farmer in Sussex County, where she's developed a successful dahlia tuber business, Sunset View Farm Dahlias. Free event; public welcome. Questions? Call Karin Christiaens at 973-420-8212.

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For questions, contact Maura Holden at mholden@bgcclifton.org or 973-773-0966 x155



Photos taken 9/11 2026



The Connecting Threads of 9/11

This month, we continue to reflect on the significance of Sept. 11, 2001 and how it changed the lives of countless people both in our community and throughout the nation and world. Ahead of this month's publication, we learned about Frederick C. Rimmele III and Lieutenant John P. Van Dorn Jr.

On 9/11, Rimmele was aboard United Airlines Flight 175 that was hijacked and crashed into the South Tower of the World Trade Center. As for Van Dorn, he served with the Clifton Fire Department and answered a call to duty by joining response efforts at Ground Zero. In 2020, he died from a 9/11-related illness.

But before we tell their stories and remember the lives that they both lived in service to others, there is another story that we received from JoAnne (Conserva) Palfreyman. In her own words, she recounted how she and her late husband, Stuart, wed on Sept. 11, 1966.

Fast-forward 60 years, she was visiting the Avenue of Flags on the 25th anniversary of Sept. 11, 2001. Stuart, who served in the US Army during the Vietnam War and became Clifton's first health officer in the 1970s, has a flag amongst the patriotic display.

But the story goes even deeper for the 1962 CHS grads — and JoAnne's words act as a strong reminder of how we're all connected, even if we don't know it yet.



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Eternal Memory

Two September 11 Dates

By JoAnne Palfreyman

Sometime between three and four in the afternoon, on a cool, breezy, sunny September day in 1966, we were married at St. Paul Church. We were young — just 22 years old.

We were educated, had our plans, and we had our whole lives ahead of us. We had carefully planned our wedding and were anxious to celebrate the occasion so we could finally begin the life that we had been waiting for. Then it began; nearly 60 years filled with love, family, work, children, joys, challenges, and countless memories.

It has been three and a half years since my husband Stu died. Sept. 11 would have been our 60th wedding anniversary. My sister, Tina Zanni, and my dear friend Carleen Ulinsky and I decided to go to Clifton City Hall to see the magnificent display of 2,299 flags.

My husband was one of those honored with a flag for his service.



JoAnne and Stu Palfreyman: Sept. 11, 1966.

We waited until the schools had dismissed, hoping to avoid the inevitable traffic, and arrived sometime between 3 and 4 pm.

We visited the park bench that is dedicated to my husband, beneath the tree closest to the window of his former office.

Then, the three of us walked through the section where my husband's flag was routinely displayed.

As I approached a bench along the path, I noticed that one flag was missing. This was odd, because there was a very definite empty space in the row. I stopped for a moment.

Then, I heard my friend calling me. She called me "Jo." At that exact moment, a small vehicle stopped on the path in front of me. A man, one of the "Keeper of the Flags" volunteers, got out and answered my friend. His name was Joe.

He asked if he could be of assistance, and I told him that I was looking for my husband's flag. I glanced in the back



Stu Palfreyman in the US Army during Vietnam.

of the vehicle and saw one flag. He asked for a name — as we then both looked at the flag and simultaneously said: "Stuart Palfreyman." And then, the tears came.

My friend began squealing in disbelief. She simply could not believe what was happening. Joe then proceeded to plant the flag next to me in the vacant hole of the missing flag.

My sister was there by now and could not believe the extraordinary events.

Another man, John, was getting out of the truck and was approaching my sister. He said, "I know you." My sister had worked at City Hall, as well as my husband, so that seemed entirely possible. But John said, "No, you're Bill Foote's mother-in-law." It turned out that John had lived on the same street in Clifton as my sister's daughter

and son-in-law. He knew them well.

They had been good friends and neighbors. He was sad to hear that both of the parents had passed away, but their children, Tina's grandchildren, were doing well.

By this point, we were all crying from the sheer improbability of everything that had just happened. And there was still more.

John had moved to Wayne, where he was neighbors with a classmate of mine from nursing school. Who knows? If we stayed there talking longer, perhaps we would have discovered still more connections. There are so many things that had to come together to make this happen.

The date. The time. The three of us there. Joe being there. John being there. The flag.

And that flag, my husband's flag, being the only one in the back of



Stu and JoAnne Palfreyman in 2019.

that vehicle, at the precise moment, stopped directly in front of me, beside the empty space.

And most of all, it all happened at almost exactly the same time that we had stood together and said our vows 60 years earlier. There are some moments in life that are simply too improbable to explain. Some moments that leave you speechless.

On what would have been our 60th wedding anniversary, I went looking for my husband's flag — and somehow he found me.

There are no words.



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Last month, Clifton Merchant honored the lives of 10 people who grew up or lived in Clifton and later lost their lives on Sept. 11, 2001. After our September 2026 edition went to press, marking 25 years since the tragedy of 9/11, we heard from Robert Kluck. It was Kluck who brought to our attention the name of another person lost who grew up in our community. His story follows...



Frederick C. Rimmele, John P. Van Dorn Jr.



Clifton Fire Lt. John P. Van Dorn Jr. was ready and willing to answer a call to duty when his country and fellow Americans needed him most.

Now, his fellow Cliftonites are stepping up to ensure his lasting memory in our city. On Aug. 25, the Clifton Fire Department organized a dignified transfer of his memorial stone. Accompanied by an official Honor Guard, the memorial

Frederick C. Rimmele III.

"I had the pleasure of knowing Fred as a part of Troop 121 when I grew up in Clifton," reflected Kluck. "It was not until years later, listening to the memorial reading of the names, that I heard his name and realized it might be the same person I knew."

Rimmele, while en route to a medical conference in Monterey, California, was a passenger on United Airlines Flight 175. The flight scheduled to fly from Logan International Airport in Boston to Los Angeles International Airport was hijacked by five al-Qaeda terrorists who deliberately crashed it into the South Tower of the World Trade Center complex.

Referred to as "the doctor with the beard and the ponytail", Rimmele achieved a great deal in an otherwise too-short life. He graduated from Montclair Kimberley Academy in 1986 and achieved his degree in English and chemistry at Amherst College, where he graduated magna cum laude.

In 1994, he completed his studies at Duke University School of Medicine and would eventually join the faculty of the Family Practice Residency based at Beverly Hospital and Hunt Memorial Hospital in Danvers, Massachusetts.

Rimmele, who passed aged 32, was also described in his obituary as "an Eagle Scout, amateur naturalist, avid Scrabble player, and dabbler in the stock market." His survivors included his wife of four years, Kimberly Trudel; his parents, Marilyn (Kunzier) Rimmele and the late Frederick C. Rimmele Jr.; and his sister, Karen Connors.

"It was sad to realize that he fulfilled his talent and became a doctor, but had the misfortune to have been on a journey to continue his education on the flight out of Boston that was hijacked," said Kluck. "A Cliftonite who did his city proud but died on that tragic day."

stone was relocated to the World Trade Center 9/11 Memorial Garden located at Clifton City Hall.

"The permanent tribute places Van Dorn alongside the community's surrounding 9/11 memorials," stated Clifton FMBA 21, "honoring his selflessness and enduring bravery."

It's a fitting tribute and shows how many Cliftonites remember the lifelong resident who passed away aged 66 from a 9/11-related illness on Aug. 8, 2020. The illness stemmed from his exposure during the response efforts at Ground Zero following the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

Van Dorn's heroism was born in his hometown and forged through service to our community. He began serving the City of Clifton as a police officer in 1977 and, after several years, went on to join the Clifton Fire Department in 1981. During Van Dorn's 27 years with the Fire Department, he rose to the rank of lieutenant and retired on June 1, 2009.

The dedicated firefighter and loving father voluntarily responded to the World Trade Center on Sept. 13, 2001 to assist in the rescue and recovery efforts. He was officially honored as a Line of Duty Death and nationally recognized in 2022 when his name was added to the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation Memorial Wall in Emmitsburg, Maryland.

Van Dorn is survived by daughter, Kelly; his three sons William, Ryan, and John III; and by his sister Clare Kuch.

"My thoughts and prayers for all of John's family, friends, and police and fire department family," said Clifton Fire Department Chaplain Pastor Jeff Miller on Van Dorn's tribute wall. "I thank God for his service to our community and the many lives he touched. May he rest in peace. And may our heavenly Father comfort you and bless you with peace in the days ahead."



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Surviving 9/11

By Ariana Puzzo



It's a different world today than the one David Ricca remembers from 25 years ago on the 73rd floor of 2 World Trade Center.

As a Mustang and as a kid growing up in Clifton, he remembers the pride that he felt working as a financial advisor at Morgan Stanley. It was his first big-time, adult job, and he had the view of the city and all the action to excite him as a 24-year-old with something to prove.

Ricca, now 49, would make that daily commute along Route 3 from Clifton and then take the subway downtown. There, he'd get his usual breakfast order: four egg whites and tomato on toast.

The 1995 CHS grad, like many others, had no idea that his life would change in a flash when one of his colleagues ran out of their office on the morning of Sept. 11, 2001.

The office faced Tower One, and the message was clear: Everyone needed to leave the building.

"My whole life changed once 9/11 happened. Since then, it's been a battle within myself with the PTSD that I have and the stuff going on in my brain in the aftermath," said Ricca. "Along with the survivor's guilt, there's the challenge to force myself to get out there and share my story."

It's history, and Ricca went on to say that it's not only something that happened to the country.

"This happened on our watch," said Ricca. "I'm very grateful that I'm able to tell my story and educate people who weren't around or were very young ... [and didn't] feel what we all felt at that moment."

Emotional Reunions

When the noise has gotten too loud or the sights and smells were too vivid, it's the people in Ricca's life who have helped ground and support him.

That support began as he and others in his office started walking two-by-two down the stairs. Ricca stuck close to his friend, Brad, who started working at the company at about the same time in August, 2000.

Brad was from Long Island and worked in the cubicle right in front of Ricca. At first, they told jokes on their way down the stairs, unaware of the severity of what had happened. Between floors 31 and 38 was when the second plane hit Tower Two. Ricca described everyone falling to the ground and bouncing hard off of it from the force of the impact. That's when he and Brad lost sight of one another.

"Then, as I was going downstairs by myself, I met a lady and we were walking down crying," he said. "I never got her name or anything."

Loud noises, plus the smells of smoke and burning electrical wires, have stayed with Ricca, but his relief came when he reached the mall on the ground floor. He and thousands of others finally had enough room to walk faster.

Once he crossed the street, he found Brad and the two of them were hugging and crying before they made the journey on foot to Brad's apartment on 40th St. and 1st Ave. The men stayed in contact for the past 25 years.

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The Connecting Threads of 9/11

“[As] we walked to his apartment, it was like a war zone. People just had their car doors open, listening to the radio,” said Ricca. “I talked to [Brad] on 9/11 this year and sometimes we send texts. He’s my brother for my life. We all saved each other.”

But it wasn’t until much later that Ricca could let his family know that he was alive and safe. He was fortunate to board the one train leaving the city that he took to Bloomfield and called his mother using a pay phone at 8:30 pm.

It was his older brother, John, who answered the phone. After nearly 12 hours of uncertainty, the first words out of John’s mouth were how good it was to hear Ricca’s voice. There was another emotional exchange when Ricca reunited with his father, Oscar, who passed away in 2025.

“When I saw him at the Argentina Soccer Club in Paterson, he was crying like a child, because he thought I had died,” said Ricca. “When he saw me, he hugged me forever, and he cried so much. I miss him so much.”

Journey to Healing

Healing hasn’t felt linear to Ricca, but the support of his loved ones is steadfast.

Ricca lives in New York City with his wife, Tamara Thelander, and he runs his soccer company, Vamos Venture Group, which supports underserved communities. He speaks openly and often about how he has used soccer to help cope with his PTSD and general anxiety.

But there was a period when he lost that passion. Ricca played Mustang Soccer on the State Championship team in 1994 with a 22-0-1 record and ranked 3rd nationally.

He was First Team All-State, receiving a full scholarship to play for The College of St. Joseph in Vermont, where he earned his Bachelor of Business Administration. But after about five or six years of feeling lost in himself, Ricca would take a year-long sabbatical from the business world.

“Leading up to that, we were the largest producing office at that time, so the bigger executives and brokers needed to go somewhere [after 9/11],” explained Ricca. “I didn’t grieve or anything, because I went to work on Thursday. It’s really sad thinking about it to this day. I didn’t get help.”

What made him realize he needed help was seeing how his pain affected his mother. Ricca was visiting Clifton to see her and late step-father, Wesley, and saw his mother crying on his old bed. When he asked his step-father what was wrong, he still remembers Wesley’s response.

“‘She’s been crying like this since 9/11, because she just wants her son back.’ I was lost in this world,” said Ricca. “I



David Ricca at right with brother John and their dad Oscar.



David’s mom Mabel and his wife Tamara Thelander.

had gained a lot of weight and didn’t play soccer. I continued working and was making good money, but that didn’t help. There was always something to do in New York, but I wasn’t living life.”

That’s what he does daily now with the help of the people closest to him. Ricca is still in touch with many Clifton friends, especially fellow 1995 grads William Mills and Chris Brynczka. He’s also grateful to his wife, Tamara, for having “been my rock” through life’s challenges.

“She’s been here through the late-night sweats and being scared of loud noises,” said Ricca. “I didn’t think that I’d ever be so blessed to have someone like her. She’s always pushing me and being my number one fan as I continue to pay it forward and try to do good in the world.”

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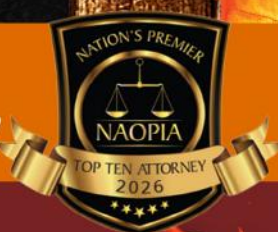
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Piast—*Ukrainian Style Borsht*
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William Shakespeare's comedy, A Midsummer Night's Dream, was written in 1594 and 1595 but a team of Mustang bards will make it work at CHS on Nov. 13, 14 and 15. Joseph Zuniga (left), a senior, plays Oberon, the King of the Fairies. In this scene, Oberon casts a spell on Titania, the Queen of the Fairies, played by senior Keyla Sanchez. The spell causes Titania to fall in love with Bottom, played by senior Robert Niessen, who has been transformed into a donkey by Puck. Other cast members include Maximiliano Valencia, Laila Fairley, Jordan Jones, Makayla Falayas, Zahir Diaz, James Zuniga and Mikaela Jorge.

John Adams takes center stage in 1776, the musical story of that tense, hot summer in Philadelphia, where the members of the Second Continental Congress debate, fight, and finally agree to sign the Declaration of Independence. Clifton TLC stages it Nov. 13-15 at Wayne Community Center. Info: theaterleagueofclifton.com or call 973-928-7668.

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

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

Arts on the Go Holiday Pop-Up is Oct. 31, 10:30 to 2 pm at the Hamilton House Museum, 971 Valley Rd. Other dates: Nov. 7, 12, 14, and Dec. 5. Preferred payment: cash or check. Credit cards are accepted. Free coffee and tea. For info, call the Arts Center office: 973-472-5499.

The Clifton Education Foundation was awarded a \$5,000 PepsiCo Foundation Community Impact grant. CEF will use the funds for classroom grants and innovative programming and initiatives throughout the Clifton Public Schools community. But the fundraising continues year round...

CEF's Tricky Tray is Oct. 16 at the Boys & Girls Club. The volunteer team is soliciting for gifts and donations. Find out more at cliftoneducationfoundation.org. Checks payable to Clifton Education Foundation, Inc. should be sent to: CEF, 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).

Clifton P.R.A.I.S.E. (Parents Requiring Action and Information for Special Education) Baseball continues Oct. 4 at 3 pm at Albion Field 1, 237 Maplewood Rd. Upcoming dates are: Oct. 11, 17, and 25. Questions? Visit cliftonpraise.org or email cliftonpraise@gmail.com.

Come hungry to Wendy's Oct. 7, 5-8 pm and support Clifton Garfield Elks. The 83 Main Ave. location is near Kohl's. The Elks will receive 15% of the total receipts for all dine in, take out, and drive-thru orders. The Elks support special needs children, veterans, and many community non-profit organizations. No coupon or flyer needed.



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Mustangs of the Month

*Melissa Garth, Alexandra Bartnik,
Daniela Parillo.*



Meet the **CHS Student Leaders** for 2026-27

These six Mustang leaders guide their peers as Student Council Association Executive Officers. Read more about them, their goals, achievements, and who inspires them.

President Melissa Garth

As President of the Student Council Association, Melissa Garth understands that she'll have a lot of responsibility. But the senior is used to balancing her extracurriculars with academics.

"I want to give 100% to whatever activity I face, [although] many do overlap," said Garth.

Some activities include Girls Varsity Soccer, Tri-M, Athletic Trainers Club, and Madrigal Choir. Her most influential teacher is Mr. Christopher Henry, who teaches AP US History I and II.

"Despite whatever challenges are thrown at him, he stays true to himself and at the end of the day will always do what he believes is right for his students," said Garth.

Garth's plans for the future include college, though she is undecided on her major, and her favorite school subject is English. That is because the topics that are covered "[encourage] individual thinking" and are open to different interpretations.

Her greatest inspiration is close to home.

"My mom inspires me the most because of her constant optimism toward the world and how she is always authentically herself."

Vice President Alexandra Bartnik

Working with numbers and solving equations is right in Alexandra Bartnik's wheelhouse, so it makes perfect sense that she sees a career for herself in finance.

The senior's most influential teacher at CHS was her junior year English teacher, Ms. Meghan Anderson. Bartnik credited her as "an amazing teacher" who she always enjoyed working with to organize Student Council events.

"She is such a kind and bubbly person who was always there whenever I needed help or assistance," she said,

"whether it was with schoolwork or something outside of school."

Outside the halls of Colfax Ave., Bartnik is inspired by the can-do attitude of her brother. That has helped her with overcoming time management struggles. It was important to Bartnik that she do her best academically while maintaining her social life and doing extracurriculars, like Heroes and Cool Kids, DECA, Key Club, National Honors Society, National English Honors Society, and National Social Studies Honors Society.

"He motivates me to work hard, believe in myself, and never give up on my goals."

Treasurer Daniela Parillo

Everything that Daniela Parillo strives for is motivated by her sisters, who she describes as her biggest strength.

"They remind me that I am not alone and give me a reason to keep going when things become difficult," said Parillo. "I want to be a good example for them and show them that with hard work, dedication, and determination, they can achieve their goals, too."

The senior's aspirations include studying International Business and International Relations so she can build a career that allows her to connect with people from different cultures. She's also interested in growing a jewelry business while making a positive community impact.

Learning English was a major hurdle when she started high school, and she often felt "nervous about speaking or expressing my ideas." As Parillo became more confident, she learned to ask for help and kept pushing herself.

"This experience taught me that struggling with something at first does not mean that I cannot improve," she said. "It motivated me to keep challenging myself and become more confident in my abilities."



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Mustangs of the Month

Secretary Claire Kim

Claire Kim's aspirations involve studying Pharmaceutical Sciences or Pharmacological Chemistry at a four-year college.

Kim's top options are between UC San Diego, Rutgers, and The University of Texas at Austin. The senior's plan is to pursue a career in medicine development — and she has her father to thank for inspiring her through his own ambition.

"I have seen him experience setbacks in important aspects of life that might discourage or deter the average person, and [he used] those experiences as motivation to work harder and adopt a tougher mindset," said Kim.

Navigating the busy schedule of a student-athlete who is also balancing extracurriculars and her own personal life has meant knuckling down as far as time management. In the past four years, Kim has learned how to create a "proper routine" while also successfully managing to take care of herself.

"I used to think that I had to sacrifice one or multiple of these aspects to do well in the rest, but I have since learned that that is not true."

Communications Director Mia Cruz

Repeating her positive affirmations and giving herself pep talks helps ground Mia Cruz. It's also how she maintains her optimistic outlook on life.

"A line that I often find myself repeating is, 'Today you are defeated, but what will you become tomorrow?' It's from my favorite show 'Haikyuu' and is one of my favorite quotes," said Cruz. "It reminds me that I'm allowed to start over again and again as long as I'm alive. I find that



Claire Kim, Mia Cruz, Antonina Kiszkiel

thought very comforting."

Aside from her executive officer role on the SCA, Cruz is the Communications Director for CHS' Gender Sexuality Alliance and the CAST Club president. She plans to pursue Communications in college and is interested in working closely with the film industry, but the senior is keeping her options open.

"I would love to travel a lot and experience many different things ... [and] recently I've considered becoming a flight attendant," she said. "I'd be able to travel, meet people of all backgrounds, and help others. I also love the airport, so that's a plus."

BOE Student Representative Antonina Kiszkiel

As the SCA's student representative to the Board of Education, Antonina Kiszkiel sees firsthand the importance of civic engagement. The senior is eager to study Government, International Relations, or possibly Communications.

"Ultimately, I want to build a career in politics where I can advocate for others and create lasting change," said Kiszkiel.

NextGenVotes is a youth-led civic organization that educates young people about voting and civic engagement. Kiszkiel is the founder and Executive Director, and she also brought it into CHS as an official club. Outside of school, she's a swim instructor at the Boys & Girls Club of Clifton and an assistant teacher at Jin-A Child Care Center, 77 Jay St.

She credited WWMS History teacher Mr. Erik Oxenbridge and CHS teachers Mr. John O'Reilly and Mr. Christopher Henry for fostering her love of history.

"I admire those who strive to improve broken systems, activists who stand up for what they believe in, and people who fight for the rights of others," she said. "They inspire me to use my own voice and opportunities to create meaningful change."

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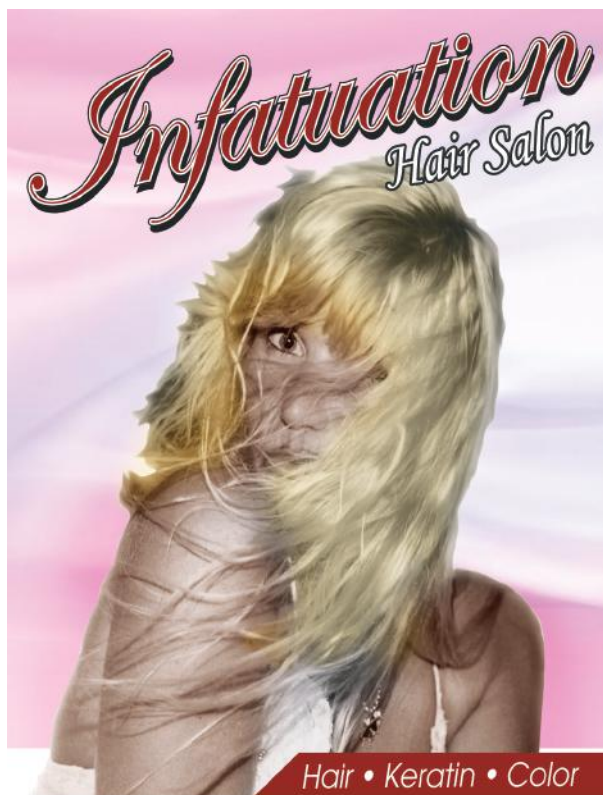
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The Clifton Police Bike Patrol is on the road again thanks to funding from Ross International, a firm that purchased five police grade road bicycles. From left: Det. George Figueroa, Sgt. Robert Domski, Det. Jaime Kincherlow, Det. Samuel Rodriguez, Chief Thomas Rinaldi, Det. Kevin Collucci, Capt. Christopher Stabile, Det. Malek Badeer, Lt. Jason Ingargiola, Det. Lance Gardner.



832 Clifton Ave., Clifton 973.365.0220



Clifton Police Chief Thomas Rinaldi said thanks to the visibility of the Community Police Division, following five new police-designed mountain bikes donated by an Athenia business. Raj Thadani, of Ross International, Inc., is a global buyer, exporter, and recycler of office imaging equipment on Lisbon St. He often witnessed community police officers interacting with citizens in a positive and productive manner, which motivated him to provide the donation.

“When officers engage with the community, good things happen. Officers are noticed,” said Rinaldi. “We are appreciative of the donation by Ross and proud to bring the bike patrol back after a long absence and doing so without any expense to taxpayers.”

The Community Policing Division was formed by Chief Frank J. LoGioco in April 1995 and deployed in Lakeview with officers Roger Schneider and David Kishbaugh on mountain bikes and Crime Prevention Officer Bill Hernandez.

By 1998, the division had offices at 209 Parker Ave., 217 Lakeview Ave. and 653 Van Houten Ave., and patrolled Botany, Lakeview, Athenia and Downtown Clifton. Led by Lt. Gary F. Giardina and Sgt. Gerald Wyhopen, officers included Thomas Campbell, Philip Cibiniak, James Flanagan, Thomas Lanzalotto, Joseph Klein, John Michal, Mark Centurione, Esly Panduro, John Cusack, Randy Colondres and Carmine Petrone.



Eight new Clifton Fire Department recruits were sworn to duty on Sept. 25 at City Hall. They include: Raul Torres, Jorge Lopez, Christian Diaz, Rocelin Ertilien, Tyler Jopling, Angelo Decclassis, Ulysses Santos and Troy Staton. Also pictured are Training Captain Douglas Wallace, Admin Analyst Michael Onder, Fire Chief Michael Rowan, Councilman Antonio Latona, and Mayor Raymond Grabowski. Clifton Fire is staffed currently at 143 officers, but seven more were approved a few council meetings ago. So the final number in a few weeks will be 150 if they get approval to hire the additional. The seven sworn to duty on Sept. 25 will attend fire and EMT academy and probably will be in the firehouse by mid spring 2027.

Clifton Fire Department's 40th Annual Awards is Oct. 29 at City Hall at 6 pm. Firefighter of the Year is Mark Zidiak, Martin Ramos is EMT of the Year and Joel Matalon will receive the Civilian Service Award. More info, go to cliftonfmba21.org or follow @cliftonfmba21 on Instagram.

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

Power of One's Grief & Loss Support Group is a free eight-week Christian-based program that continues 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. Power of One is a 501(c)(3) public charity, impacting Clifton seniors, veterans, people with disabilities, and families with children. To register, call Kim Castellano at 862-239-5905 or email info@powerofoneccom.org.

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What Clifton Needs Now is **Connection...**

Between Neighborhoods, Residents and Government



By Robert Niessen

Eighteen neighborhoods. Thousands of residents. Countless different experiences. All in the same city. For Antonina Kiszkiel, the challenge is not necessarily bringing those voices to Clifton, but finding a way to make them be heard by one another.

“I think one thing Clifton is missing is a stronger sense of a central community,” said Kiszkiel, 17. “We are a large, incredibly diverse city, but sometimes it feels like we are a collection of different neighborhoods rather than one connected city.”

The CHS senior and Albion resident is the founder and executive director of NextGenVotes, a New Jersey youth-led nonprofit dedicated to civic engagement. Kiszkiel sees Main Ave. as one opportunity to strengthen that much-needed connection.

“I would love to see Clifton continue developing areas like Main Ave. into places where people actually want to spend time,” said Kiszkiel.

“More restaurants, small businesses, and places for young people to meet would help local businesses while also giving residents more reasons to stay in Clifton rather than spending time in other cities,” she added.

Kiszkiel also believes that some of the city’s most noticeable issues can be found in its everyday surroundings.

“There are areas where roads, sidewalks, litter, and the general appearance of our streets could be improved,” said Kiszkiel. “These things may seem small individually, but they change how people feel about where they live.”

Yet Kiszkiel does not place the responsibility entirely on city government.

“I don’t think everything falls on our elected officials,” said Kiszkiel. “Something I have learned through NextGenVotes is how much can get done when people work toward the same goal.”

Kiszkiel founded NextGenVotes after noticing that many young people cared about issues in their communities but did not always know how to make their voices heard. The organization has since grown to seven chapters across New Jersey and more than 60 members.

A chapter was also recently established at CHS, where members are working to expand civic education, register eligible students to vote, and encourage greater participation in the Clifton community. That experience has also shaped what Kiszkiel hopes to see locally.

"I would like to see more communication between our local leaders and residents, and more collaboration within our city government," she said. "There will always be disagreements, but everyone should ultimately be working toward making Clifton a better place to live."

She believes that residents have a role to play, too, particularly younger ones. "Residents have a responsibility to attend meetings, bring forward concerns, and get involved," said Kiszkiel. "I especially think younger residents should have more opportunities to be part of these conversations, because we are the generation that will experience the future of Clifton."

It all comes back to the same idea for Kiszkiel. "I think that is really what Clifton is missing most: connection. Connection between neighborhoods, residents and government, and the future of the city."

**The 2026 voter registration deadline is Oct. 13. Voting Questions?
Call 1-877-658-6837 or visit nj.gov/state/elections/voter-registration.**

Alfred Hitchcock's "Psycho" will be shown at the Clifton Public Library on Oct. 20, 2 pm. Adults only. Call 973-772-5500 or cliftonpl.org.

School 5's Friday Night Lights Tricky Tray is Nov. 13 from 6-10 pm at the Boys & Girls Club. Purchase tickets \$25 for 16 and older: school5hasa.membershiptoolkit.com. BYO food and drinks. Info: Write school5hasa@gmail.com.

Boys & Girls Club's Golf Outing is Oct. 19 with 11:30 am registration and lunch at the Preakness Valley Golf Course, 209 Totowa Rd., Wayne. \$250 per golfer, \$950 per foursome, \$60 dinner only. 1 pm shotgun start. Dinner and award ceremony to follow. Register online at: bgccifton.org/golf-classic.

Friends of the Clifton Public Library seek donations for its Gift Gallery in the Main Memorial Library, 292 Piaget Ave. Once sold, items help fund programs such as free museum passes, STEM kits, crafts, musical performances and author events. Bring donations, new or gently used, but no clothes or stuffed animals. Call 973-772-5500 or write membershipFRIENDSofCPL@gmail.com.

Friends of the CPL presents Laura Cabbage-Draper in *An Introduction to Genealogy: Discovering Your Family History* on Oct. 17, 2 pm and events for National Friends of Libraries Week which is Oct. 18-24.

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Clifton's Post 8 is still great and the 40th reunion of the 1986 Legion NJ Baseball State champs gave them a chance to reminisce. The team won many games by one or two runs, but on Aug. 15, 1986, Clifton 8 defeated Irvington, 6-1, to earn the NJ American Legion title. It was the first state crown in the team's history. Clifton 8 won the tourney after losing the first game and coming back to win six consecutive, including back-to-back victories over Irvington. Pictured from left: Coach Paul Pignatello, John Hanle, Stephen Thomas, Tommy Penn, John McClain, Mark Tomaskovic, John Luciano, Ed Klimek, Ken Krozcenski. Kneeling: Rich BelBruno, Greg Tufaro, Jeff Aimone. Unable to attend: Coach Angelo Intile, Bill Cicenica, Ken DeVita and Edgar Feliciano.

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- Lease Review & Drafting
- Lease Violations

*Also Represents Buyers
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Insects? Pests?

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201-304-4982 - Same Day Call Back

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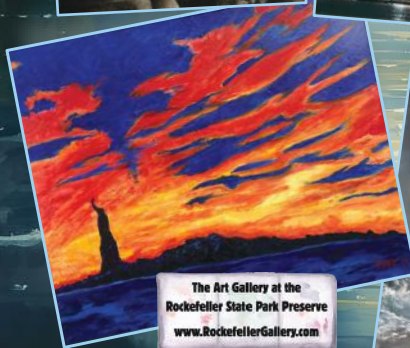



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CLIFTON ARTS CENTER

Upcoming Events

Moonlit Memories: Night Visions of America at 250



ART EXHIBIT • Open to the public

Now thru Oct. 23rd

Wednesdays thru Saturdays • 1pm till 4pm



CELEBRATING AMERICA'S **250th**

www.cliftonartscenter.org



www.cliftonnj.org

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

RETURNING HOME: A MUSICAL JOURNEY

SUNDAY,
OCTOBER 18TH, 2026
4:00 PM



FEATURING PIANIST – **JIHEA HONG-PARK**

AND STUDENTS FROM
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY (UT):

**ABIGAIL BILLYARD, NORAH DAY,
BETHANY PARKER, AND LIZZIE WEBER**

Admission FREE

Contributions accepted

Light refreshments
after performance.



900 CLIFTON AVENUE
CLIFTON, NEW JERSEY 07013

ON THE GROUNDS OF THE
CLIFTON MUNICIPAL COMPLEX

973-472-5499

Birthdays & Celebrations - October 2026



Joe and Arielle Hawrylko celebrate their fourth anniversary on Oct. 14! **Noel Coronel** turns 22 on Oct. 16. **Kim Oeffler** has a birthday on Oct. 8. Congratulations to **Orest** and **Barbara Luzniak** who celebrate their 46th anniversary on Oct. 11. Belated greetings to **Andrea Roza** whose birthday was Sept. 24. At the Paulson Ave. ShopRite, let **Maryann Illenye** know about her 65th birthday on Oct. 31. **Joseph** and **Louise Siano** celebrate their 56th anniversary on Oct. 4.



Jennifer and Kevin James celebrated the second anniversary Sept. 28! Twins **Jeffrey and Renee Angello** turn 24 on Oct. 4. **Susan** and **Ray Cramer** celebrate 32 years of marriage on Oct. 1. Our favorite retired Clifton cop **Edward Holster** has a birthday on Oct. 18. **James Zutic** turns 66 on Oct. 18, writes his lovely wife **Carmen**!

Sarah Bekheet..... 10/1
Melissa Szwec 10/2
Awilda Gorman 10/3
Ashley Messick 10/3
Christopher Papademetriou 10/3
Charlene Rivera 10/3
Grace Robol..... 10/3
Frank Antoniello 10/4
John Brock Jr..... 10/4

Kimberly Ferrara 10/4
Kayla Galka 10/4
Lisa Junda 10/4
Alan Merena..... 10/4
Bruce Merena 10/4
Rosalie D. Konopinski..... 10/5
Kyle Takacs..... 10/5
Gene D'Amico..... 10/6
Nicole Nettleton 10/6

Joseph Tahan..... 10/6
Cheryl Cafone..... 10/7
Christopher Phillips 10/7
Jilian Fueshko 10/8
Nick Kacmarcik..... 10/8
Michael Biondi..... 10/10
Rich Montague..... 10/10
Kyle Zlotkowski 10/10
Eileen Patterson..... 10/11

Grace Labriola is 7 on Oct. 19.
William and Antoinetta Kelleher
 mark their 69th anniversary Oct. 26.

Anthony Shackil	10/11
Michael D. Rice.....	10/12
Stephanie M. Palomba.....	10/13
Kimberly Beirne.....	10/14
Lil Geiger	10/14
Mary Anne Kowalczyk	10/14
Andrea Kovalcik	10/15
Stephen Kovalcik	10/15
Maria Kulyk.....	10/15
Marianne Meyer	10/15
Nicole Zlotkowski	10/16
Benjamin Brody.....	10/17
Nancy Hromchak	10/17
Devin DeVries.....	10/18
Matthew Fabiano	10/18
Jamie Norris	10/18
Brian James Grace	10/19
Kristen A. Hariton.....	10/19
Ben Brody	10/19
Joseph Siano	10/19
Joan Bednarski.....	10/20
Jean Chiariello	10/20
Lea Dziuba	10/20
Patrick M. Doremus Jr.	10/21
Eugene Osmak.....	10/21
Nathaniel Santelli	10/21
Kathryn Siano.....	10/21
Katelyn Smith.....	10/21
Ted Guzowski.....	10/21
Jonathan Rossman	10/22
Toni Van Blarcom	10/22
Daniel Atoche	10/23
Andrew J. "Dez" Varga.....	10/23
Allison Beirne	10/24
Sandra Kuruc	10/24
Heather Fierro	10/24
Paul G. Andrikanich.....	10/25
Matthew McGuire	10/26
Joe Siano Sr.....	10/26
Kristofer Scotto.....	10/27

Send your dates & names...
tomhawrylkosr@gmail.com







Clifton Health Department

2026 Fall Rabies Clinics



Location: DPW Garage
307 E 7th., Clifton, NJ 07011

Dogs: (Free)

Wednesday, November 4th
 5:00 pm - 7:00 pm

Saturday, November 7th
 2:00pm - 4:00 pm

2026 Dog Licenses available for those who still need to license their dog for Clifton Residents Only

2027 Dog Licenses NOT available until January 2, 2027

- CALL CLIFTON AT (973) 470-5760 FOR MORE INFORMATION.
- DOGS **MUST BE** ON LEASHES;.
- NO ONE UNDER THE AGE OF 18 WILL BE ALLOWED IN WITHOUT AN ADULT;
- MUST HAVE VALID FORM OF IDENTIFICATION

ALL NEW JERSEY RESIDENTS ARE WELCOMED



The Clifton Health Department is a contractual health agency serving the Township of Little Falls.

2026 Fire Safety Month

The improper use, charging and disposal of lithium-ion batteries can cause fires in homes, storage units and in businesses. To help promote that message and promote safe charging, the Clifton Fire Safety Coloring & Activity Book is once again available. *Clifton Merchant Magazine*, Clifton Fire and Clifton FMBA 21 members have joined with businesses listed below to print 7,000 copies of the book. During October, Clifton Firefighters will visit public and private schools to talk about fire safety. To pick up a copy, visit our office at 1288 Main Ave. or stop by Clifton Fire Headquarters on the city hall campus.

- State Farm Agent Thomas Tobin
- Corradino & Partners, LLC
- Pina Nazario, Realtor
Coldwell Banker Realty
- Clifton FMBA 21 Members
- Clifton Fire Prevention Bureau
- Clifton Fire Department
- Clifton Merchant Magazine



- Downtown Clifton
- Sen. John F. McKeon
- Dominic Iannarella, *Iannarella Law, LLC*
- Mr. Cupcakes
- New Bairn School
- Shook Funeral Home
- Tenaftly Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine
- Call Tom Hawrylko @ 973-253-4400



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Honesty ★ Integrity ★ Leadership



Antonio Latona
Clifton Council • Vote #11

You Trusted Me...
to **Protect** Your Country...
to **Protect** Your Family...

You Can Trust Me In City Hall!

Quality of Life Advocate

- ✓ Code Enforcement Task Force Implemented
- ✓ Homeowner Sidewalk Reimbursement Program
- ✓ Increased Developer's Sewer Connection Fees
- ✓ 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

Join Team Clifton
Teamclifton2026@gmail.com

Paid for by Tony Latona for Clifton Council



SERVING WITH PURPOSE...

NOT POLITICS!

Nov. 3, 2026 Vote #4

Joseph Siano
Board of Education

Striving for Excellence
A Fiduciary Responsibility
An Open Door Policy
A Drive to Help Our Community

CONTACT ME
ANYTIME

973-563-1449

JosephSianoJr@gmail.com

Paid for by the Committee to Elect Joseph Siano

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Clifton, NJ 07011

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Cell: (973) 725-3778

Nick@NicholasRealEstate.com



CLIFTON \$850,000
LOCATED IN ALBION SECTION
½ DUPLEX, LIVING ROOM, DINING ROOM, MODERN KITCHEN WITH GRANITE COUNTER TOPS. 3 BDRMS, 2 FULL BATHS & 2 HALF BATHS CENTRAL AIR. 1-CAR GAR.



CLIFTON \$830,000
LOCATED IN ALBION SECTION
½ DUPLEX, LIVING ROOM, DINING ROOM, MODERN KITCHEN WITH GRANITE COUNTER TOPS. 3 BDRMS, 2 FULL BATHS & 2 HALF BATHS CENTRAL AIR. 1-CAR GAR.



CLIFTON \$699,900
SPLIT LEVEL ON NICE CORNER LOT
6-BEDROOM HOME, LIV.ROOM, FORMAL DIN.ROOM, LARGE EAT IN KITCHEN, 2 FULL BATHS, FIN. BASEMENT, 2-CAR GARAGE.



CLIFTON \$570,000
WELL MAINTAINED COLONIAL
4 LEVELS OF LIVING SPACE, POWDER ROOM, LIVING ROOM, DINING ROOM, EAT-IN-KITCHEN, 3 BEDROOMS, ATTIC WITH REC ROOM. DETACHED GARAGE.

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- ❖ INVESTMENT ❖ FORECLOSURES
- ❖ DIVORCE ESTATE RELATED SALES & MORE

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For nearly 50 Years, Nicholas Real Estate has helped Property Owners navigate every type of Real Estate situation. Over 20 agents on our team to Help You!



48years
Fred Spoelstra
Broker Associate



22years
Nancy Rodriguez
Sales Associate



32years
Linton Gaines
Broker Associate



17years
Roselys Ramirez
Sales Associate



46years
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



22years
Ramon Ramirez
Sales Assistant



27years
Juana Torres
Broker Associate



17years
Alberto Mesones Jr.
Sales Associate



9years
Angelica Saenz
Sales Associate



10years
Raquel Familia
Sales Associate



7years
Denny Cruz
Sales Associate



NICHOLAS REAL ESTATE AGENCY
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