



## THIRD GENERATION TO RUN JERSEY LANES

John Fatigati has been running Jersey Lanes Bowling Center since his father retired in 2014, building on a tradition that his grandfather started in 1959. The center has always been at the forefront of the industry. Their newest addition, a mini-bowling room is the first to open in America. He predicts that many more are soon to follow.

Jersey Lanes, located at 30 Park Avenue in Linden, is the longest continuously operating family run Bowling Center in New Jersey. John Fatigati ran the bowling alley from 1959 up to his death in 1987, after which his son Charles took over until he retired in 2014. Jersey lanes was originally 32 lanes and was expanded to forty-two lanes around 1975, one of the largest in New Jersey. The Fatigati family kept Jersey Lanes on the cutting edge of advances in the bowling industry, from technology to programs. Today, John is building on his father John's legacy for innovation but much more importantly his generosity. Jersey lanes has supported numerous charities in the community it serves.

John could have no better mentor than his father. Charles, or Chuck as he is commonly called, is a man of integrity, both in business and in the community. Though Jersey Lanes is located in Linden the bowlers come from all over Union and bordering counties. Chuck's charitable work reached far across the region. For instance they host an annual fundraising challenge where they match dollar-for-dollar donations to the Veterans Home in Menlo Park. Chuck is also proud of his Italian heritage and is an active member of the Elizabeth Chapter of UNICO, a community service organizations that also serves to promote and preserve Italian culture. These are big bowling shoes to fill but John says he is up to the task.

Jersey Lanes has also sponsored Pro Bowler sisters, Carloyn and Cathy Dorin, in their early days of touring on the PWBA Tour. The support that Jersey Lanes gives to pro bowlers is equal to that given to the least experienced bowler, making them feel welcomed. They work with leagues for seniors, churches, and those with special needs. Their own leagues are some of the biggest in New Jersey.

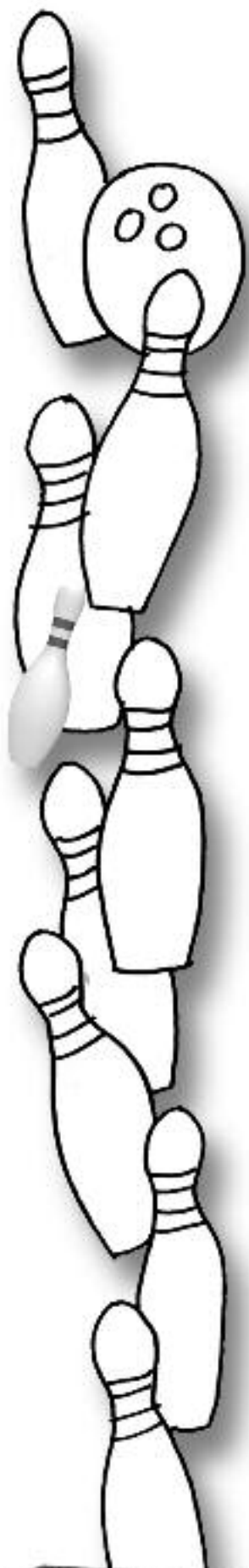
Many of the programs that Jersey Lanes has to offer are designed to encourage and cultivate the next generation of bowlers. The Junior Bowling Program is not only an instructional league with coaches but is also scholarship based where all high school graduates continuing education receives a scholarship. Over the past twenty years over a half a million dollars has been awarded. The bowlers, who range from five to twenty years of age, meet on Saturday mornings. Many players play for their high school teams and play their matches at Jersey Lanes as well.


The classic debate of whether bowling is a sport or a game was settled with both sides agreeing that it is both. There is a third category that bowling can be described as. That is recreational activity. Bowling is the background social gathering of all types like date nights or just friends hang-outs. On occasion live music can be experienced in their lounges. Alley's have been one of the most popular venues for birthdays parties and Jersey Lanes has taken this aspect of the center to the next new level by designing a party room with a circus atmosphere that features two mini-bowling lanes.

Everything about the lanes is half the size of the regulations, the lane width and length, the pins and holeless balls. Brilliant colorful murals line the walls and the ball returns out of the laughing mouth of a circus clown. The same advanced scorekeeping technology used in the big lanes tally scores for the mini lanes but with a bit more pizzazz. The private party room features oversized couches, big-screen TV and ample space to eat and play.



(above) Charles (Chuck) Fatigati was awarded the Citizen of the Year award from the Elizabeth Chapter of UNICO in 2009 in recognition of the generous support he has provided to communities he serves, year after year.



The concept and production was developed overseas. Jersey Lanes is the first in the United States to install one. The installations can fit in all types of venues, not just bowling alleys. John has become the point person for the manufacturer, Switch, for anyone who would like to put a mini-bowling set up in their facilities. He expects to entertain inquiries from gyms, recreation centers, theaters, and theme restaurants. John Fatigati can be reached by calling 908-486-6300 parties can also visit [jerseylanes.com](http://jerseylanes.com) or connect with them on Facebook. 

(left) John Fatigati, the third generation to run the family business in front of the newest attraction installed in Jersey Lanes, a mini-bowling party room.

*Around About Peterstown* is published by Joe Renna. Twelve thousand newspapers are printed and distributed bi-monthly, free throughout the County of Union and parts unknown and by subscription across the country.

Although great care has been taken to ensure the information contained within is accurate, *Around About Peterstown* assumes no liability for errors or omissions.

*Around About Peterstown* welcomes the comments and concerns of its readers put into writing and sent to:

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**President's Message**



The spirit of the old Avalon Social Club is alive and well in my butcher shop. The store front served as its club house before my father turned it into a butcher shop in 1947. Seventy years

later the old timers have come back to recapture their glory days. The two or three regulars meeting for breakfast and staying for lunch on Friday morning have grown. Last week Tony Esposito, Charlie Olivieri, Carmine Diamonte, Phil Apuzzio, Vito Bellino, and Frank Gionataiso were joined by Pete Renna who moved back north from Toms River.

Frank is 93, Charlie, Pete and Tony are 90, the rest are close behind. These guys are the part of the first original lifers from the Burg. Born during the depression, they served in World War II, and returned to build a new modern America.

Tom Brokaw called them "The Greatest Generation" and he wasn't kidding. They fully live "the art of manliness." If anyone wants to take a lesson come by on a Friday morning. Its free. They already paid your dues.

God bless,  
John Sacco, President  
Sons of Peterstown Sports Club

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Press Releases that benefit the community of Peterstown are offered free of charge. Every effort will be made to accommodate appropriate articles when time and space allows. Send any info in early.

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**Letters  
to the  
Editor**



Hi Joe,

Just before Christmas (2015) my Godmother Gloria D'Amico gave me a copy of the October 2015 issue of *Around About Peterstown*. I was thrilled to see the pictures and article about our dear Father Gennaro Sesto.

I went to Don Bosco Prep High School in Ramsey on December 27th to see him and I brought him several copies. He was very happy. My thanks to you.

Unfortunately our dear Fr. Sesto passed away on Friday January, 15, 2016 after suffering a stroke on January 5th. He was born in 1921 and was 95 years old. The funeral mass was held at Don Bosco Prep. I have attached some photos of Fr. Sesto from the program.

Fr. Jim, the director of the Don Bosco Academy talked about Fr. Sesto's years at St. Anthony's Church in Peterstown. We were blessed to have him at St. Anthony's and he loved his years here very much.

Thanks again for all you do for our community.  
Gilda Bello  
Elizabeth, NJ



(above, l-r) Fr. Sesto as a newly ordained priest in 1950, in 1975 and 2016.

Dear Battin High School Class of 1956,

The Class of 1956 Battin High School is planning a Reunion. Please contact a committee person to say if you plan to attend (or not). Reach out to classmates you are in contact with. Let's make this a big turnout. The event is open to guests. We want to get an early count to make sure enough people will attend.

The luncheon is scheduled to take place on Sunday, October 9th, 2016 at The Hotel Woodbridge at Metropark, 120 Wood Avenue South, Iselin, NJ between the hours of 1 and 6 PM.

There is a free shuttle from the Metropark train station. The cost is \$60 per person.

The contacts are Arlene Serpico Lospinoso, call 732-671-4897 or email: nomnal@aol.com and Joanne Tischler Stern, 732-548-0588 email: joannestern@hotmail.com.

P.S. Joe Renna,

We absolutely love your Peterstown Book and share our very special history growing up in Elizabeth, NJ with friends. Most thankfully,  
Arlene Serpico Lospinoso  
Middletown, NJ



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Letters must include sender's name, address and phone number (only name and town will be printed).

Letters should be typed. Letters appear as space permits. We reserve the right not to print a letter without notifying sender.

**CONGRATULATIONS ALYSSA!**



Alyssa Marie LaBrutto

Congratulations to Alyssa Marie LaBrutto for receiving undergraduate Dean's List at Rowan University in Glassboro, NJ for the Fall 2015 semester.

Alyssa graduated Arthur L. Johnson High School on Clark, NJ in June 2014 and is currently a sophomore at Rowan majoring in psychology and marketing. She is the daughter of proud parents Jack and Patricia LaBrutto, and sister of Alanna and Matthew, of Clark.

**WELCOME TO THE WORLD  
ANGELINA**



(above) Angelina Joanne Fowler was born January 19, 2016, at 2:23pm, weighing 7lbs and 8oz, and measuring 19.5in, to parents Jacalyn and Thomas Fowler Jr.

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If you are interested in participating in this class, join us for our information and sign-up session on March 22, 2016 at 1pm (118 Division St. Elizabeth, NJ). Seats are limited –Student selection by lottery.

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# Editor's Opinion

by Joe Renna

Over the years I've written about Charles Cusumano and his ten children. He was a interesting guy and had a great reputation. Stories of how he helped people in the community always resonated with me. He Helped Italians with their paperwork who did not know English. This was during a time when discrimination was institutional and acclimating was difficult and discouraged. What impressed me most about Charles was how he and wife Carmela raised ten children who flourished.

The Cusumano family story is really one of the American Dream. All parents want their children to have it better than they had. And the Cusumano clan did it in spades, all completed college, six with advanced degrees, two with PhDs. There is a good mix of achievements in both the arts and sciences. What is nicer about the whole scenario is that they still have a loving relationship with each other.

I got to know a bunch of the siblings over the years. I was event invited to one of their notable reunions, the source of Camille Cusumano's latest book.

Camille is the author of seventeen books, the latest, "Wilderness Begins at Home" is excerpted on page 10 of this newspaper. I read the book and was stunned by its raw emotion. A review of the her book "The Last Cannoli" from 1999 was reviewed here in the past. It was a wonderful depiction of growing up in an Italian-American household. It celebrated her heratage and Sicilian culture, much like I do in this Peterstown newspaper. You will read on page ten though how she considered this a faux memoir. Her new book, in contrast, digs deeper into her psych and exposes the darker side of life.

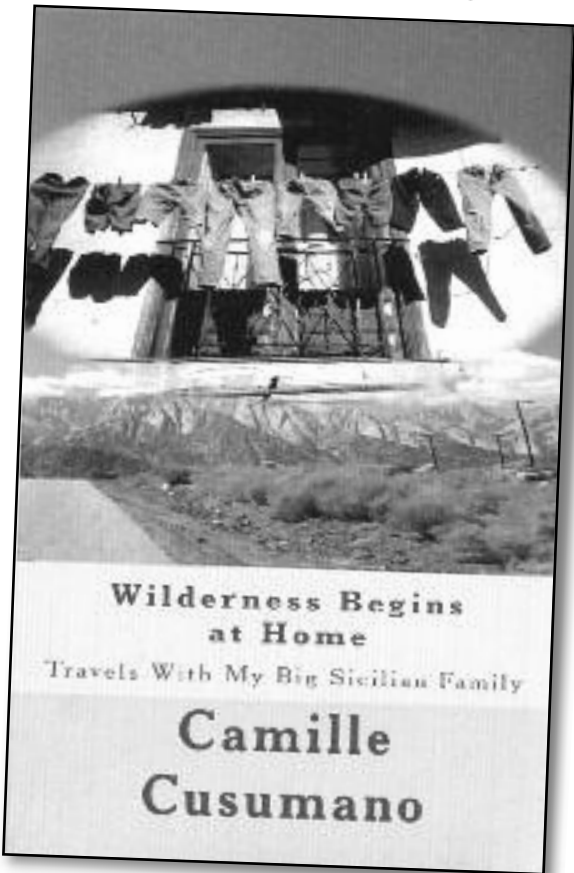
She writes about her family and upbringing, warts and all. The loving relationship that the family has still shines through but some of those rays of light can be

harsh. Camille writes about the things that everyone avoids talking about. The rough side of her father, stern and sometimes mean, challenged by alcohol and experiences of War. Camille shares her feelings as a child, adolescent and adult with honesty and, if you ask me, bravery.

I admire the unfiltered way she pours her heart and soul into this book. It the toughest thing to do as an artist. I think she recognized it was a breakthrough herself.

The book consists of twenty stories centered around family reunions she would plan every year to different parts of the world. Most involve being one with nature. There is a different combination of the twelve siblings and parents involved in each story and their relationships are deconstructed and reassembled. They are mostly intact with a few nuts and bolts left over.

The stories are entertaining, a combination of humor and pathos. I did feel sad during some points of the book but always ended up feeling better. It may be because I realized that life's hardships can be overcome, that we all have them in our own way. The book does make you look ahead optimistically and not dwell on what is the past.



.....  
**Not for Nothing But...**

would you call

The Peterstown Book

a faux memoir?

.....

(right) All seventeen of Camille Cusumano's book scan be found on [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) including her latest book "La Cucina di Carmela", a cook book her mother wrote for her children in the 1980s. Her mother passed away on November 19, 2015 at the age of 93.



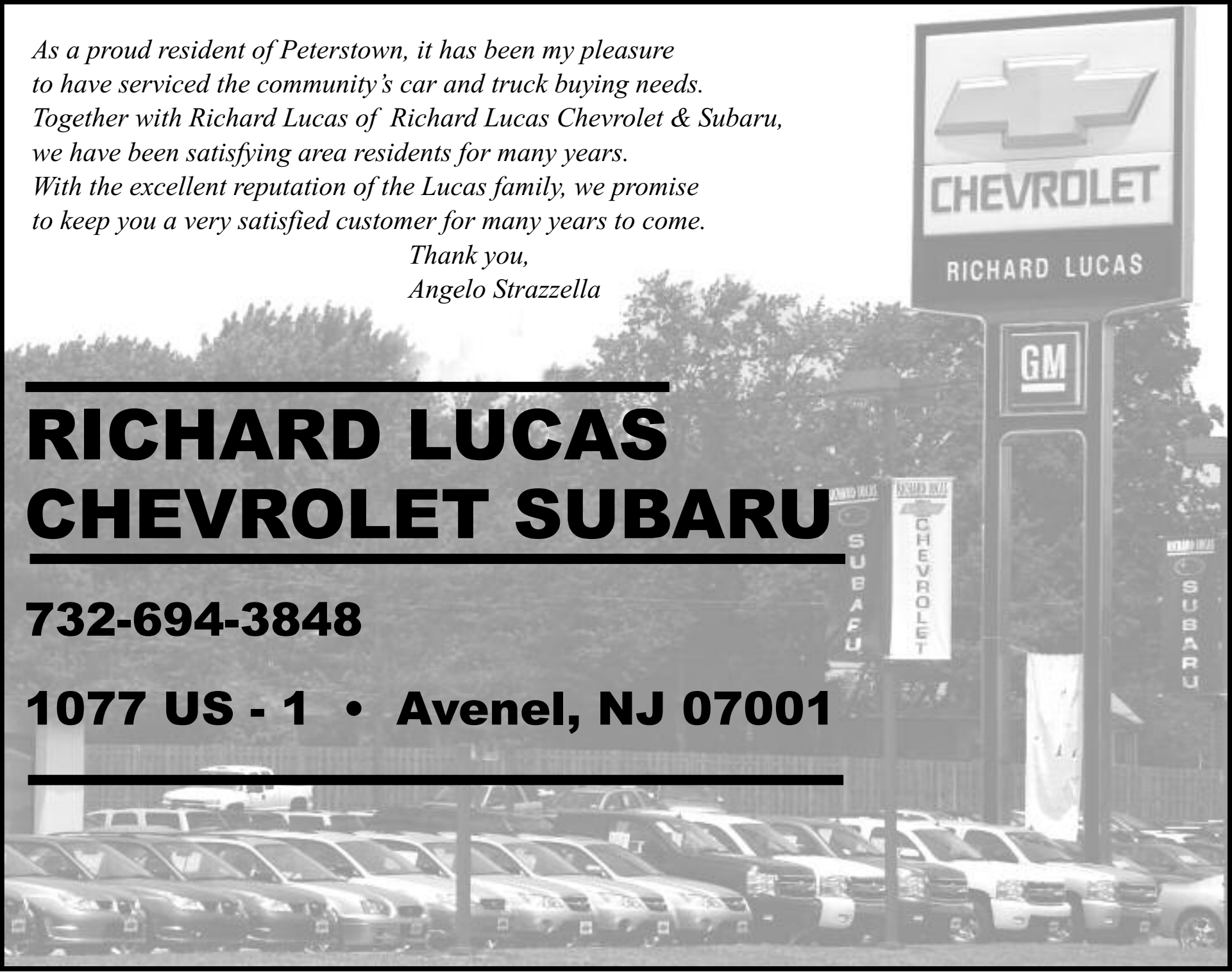
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ADVERTISER	PAGE
1000 Degrees Neapolitan Pizza.....	9
Aligator Property Management .....	2
American Plumbing & Heating Supply .....	14
Bella Gina's Italian Deli & Restaurant .....	9
Bob & Richies .....	13
Candelino Kitchens .....	14
Certified Motorcar.....	2
City Tavern Restaurant .....	11
Cleveland Auto & Tire.....	12
Colton's Pharmacy.....	4
Corsentino Home for Funerals .....	7
Dimensions Hair Salon .....	7
Dr. Nicholas Cicchetti, D.M.D. ....	7
Dr. Arthur Halicz, DDS .....	7
Dr. Richard A. Lewis, DMD.....	7
Dr. Nicholas Palmieri, Chiropractic Sports Medicine ....	7
Dr. Frank Paternostro, D.M.D. ....	7
Drew Memorial Company.....	7
Elizabeth Chiropractors.....	7
Elizabeth Yellow Cab .....	14
Flaming Grill & Supreme Buffet.....	16
Galluzzo Bros. Carting.....	14
GK Tax Service .....	2
Goodman's Restaurant & Deli .....	9
Hollywood Carpet.....	14
Il Gabbiano, An Italian Bistro .....	8
J. Sacco's Meat Market .....	11
Jersey Lanes.....	4
Jersey Uniform .....	14
John's Caffè .....	10
Larry's Generator.....	12
Magic Fountain.....	11
Michelino's Pizzeria.....	11
Miracle Plaza .....	15
Parkview Restaurant .....	8
Petrucelli Funeral Home.....	7
Pinho's Bakery .....	7
Richard Lucas Chevrolet Subaru.....	3
Richie's Automotive Repairs & Maintenance.....	12
Rocco Auto Service.....	12
Santillo's Brick Oven Pizza.....	11
TG Basile Mason Contractors & Waterproofing ...	12 & 14
Torna Di Sorento .....	11
Villani Bus Company.....	14
Weichert Realtors .....	2
Weltman Home Services .....	6

# MINI BOWLING IS BIG HIT

Jersey Lanes Bowling Center opened the next big thing bowling, a mini-version of the regular game in a circus atmosphere. The private party room hosted its first kid's birthday party on February 21, 2016. But before the big day the lanes were tested by players from the Junior Bowling League. The test went perfect and the

teens enjoyed the novelty of playing on the mini lanes designed to accommodate kids from preschool on up. Jersey Lanes is located at 30 Park Avenue in Linden. Visit [www.JerseyLanes.com](http://www.JerseyLanes.com) for more information or connect with Jersey Lanes on Facebook. The party room can be reserved by calling 908-486-6300. 📞



(above, l-r) Mark Colineri, of Cranford, tries his hand at the mini bowling at Jersey Lanes in Linden.

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# UNION TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY HOSTS PETERSTOWN HISTORY TALK

At 2:30 pm on Sunday, March 20, 2016, the Union Township Historical Society (UTHS) will host a presentation given by Joe and Tina Renna, co-authors of *The Peterstown Book: Cent'Anni* (The 100-Year History of an Italian-American Neighborhood). The event will take place at the Connecticut Farms Presbyterian Church, 888 Stuyvesant Avenue, Union.

People of all ethnicities can relate to *The Peterstown Book's* universal themes - the struggles and triumphs of families in search of the American Dream that were achieved through hard work, strong values, and dedication to their church. The volume describes the section of Elizabeth, New Jersey, that's been called Peterstown. It relates the stories of the many generations who have lived in that area.

The *Peterstown Book* covers the 100-year history of an Italian immigrant/Italian-American neighborhood by focusing on its people. The book preserves a valuable oral history in danger of being lost and beautifully illustrates the traditions and customs of the tight-knit community through thousands of photos, hundreds of recipes, and anecdotes shared by former and current residents.

The authors' presentation will be held in the sanctuary of Union's historic CFPC, following the 2 pm UTHS meeting, to which all are invited.

Come enjoy the presentation, join us for refreshments, meet the Rennas, and, perhaps, purchase an autographed copy of their book.

An admission fee of a \$5 donation will help the UTHS in its work to preserve its home, the Caldwell Parsonage, 909 Caldwell Avenue, Union.

For additional information about the book, please check out: [PeterstownNJ.com](http://PeterstownNJ.com)  
To get more details about the presentation, visit the UTHS website: [uniontwphistoricalsociety.webs.com](http://uniontwphistoricalsociety.webs.com)  
You may also call Barbara La Mort, UTHS President, at 908-687-0048 or email her at [babslamort@hotmail.com](mailto:babslamort@hotmail.com).

## SPECIAL SPECIAL OFFER!!

The Union Township Historical Society treasury took an unexpected hit when it needed to replace the boiler in its home, the Caldwell Parsonage.

In an effort to help replenish the treasury we will discount the book from \$45 to \$25 dollars and donate an additional \$5 for each book purchased.

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By Joe &  
Tina Renna

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The *Peterstown Book* is the 100 year history of an Italian-American neighborhood told through stories about the people and families who lived there. The book records the oral history in danger of being lost and illustrates the traditions and customs of the community through thousands of photos, hundreds of recipes, and anecdotes shared by residents past and present.

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(above, l-r) Authors Joe and Tina Renna will lead a discussion about Elizabeth and growing up in the Peterstown neighborhood on March 20, 2016.

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(above, l-r) An autographed photo of Joe Aprile with his long-time customer, prize fighter Gerry Cooney adorns the wall of his barber shop, Mr. J's, in Westfield.

*Not for Nothing But...*

you could say that Joe is Cooney's cutman.

(right) The young Joe Aprile at age 16 sporting a D.A. haircut, all the rage in 1960.



(above, l-r) Joe Aprile celebrating his sixteenth birthday with his life-long friends in Peterstown, Vinny DiMaria, Carmine Vella, Sal Manto, Joe Aprile, Jerry Vella, John Mareta, and sal DeMaria.



(above, l-r) Joe with grand children Joey, Gianna, Carina and Carli from 2008 at his 64th birthday party.

# JOE APRILE CELEBRATES 50 YEARS IN BUSINESS

Joe Aprile came to America from Ribera, Sicily in 1958 at the age of fourteen. Out of the limited number of opportunities to learn a trade, he chose to learn to cut hair. He worked as an apprentice for eight years before buying a barber shop at 607 South Avenue West in Westfield, New Jersey and hanging his Mr. J's Barber Shop sign.

Joe Aprile is the youngest of four children. His parents Theresa and Calogero (Charlie) came to America three years ahead of their children to establish themselves before they sent for thier children. Joe's sister, Annette, the eldest of the siblings was much older than Joe and was head of the household for the three years they spent in Ribera on their own. Annette, who's marriage name is DiGrado, was like a mother to him. Her son Peter, who is technically Joe's nephew, is only a year and a half different

in age. They are as close as brothers.

Joe, Annette and their brothers Steve and Freddie joined their parents who were settled in the Peterstown section of Elizabeth, New Jersey, an enclave of Italian immigrants, many who were also from Ribera. The Aprile family lived in a big converted farm house, big enough for five families, on the corner of Fourth Avenue and Redcliff Street.

Joe built an immediate following of local Westfield folks and a numberof customers who traveled from neighboring towns, friends from Elizabeth, Bowling buddies from Jersey Lanes and guys looking for an old-fashioned, traditional haircut, which were getting harder to find as the decades clicked by.

Not much changed in the shop over the years. He still has the original barber chairs he started with, that collectors would salivate over. memorabilia fills the walls, old photos and family snapshots. It seems that stuff gets hung but never comes down.

Joe and wife Joann are proud grandparents of four, as the photos in the shop will affirm. The photos chronicle the lives of thier children and grandchildren, son Michael and wife Donna, thier children Gianna and Joey, Daughter Lisa and husband Ed and thier children Cari and Carina.

A signed photo of retired boxer Gerry Cooney, a one time contender for the heavyweight crown, is prominently displayed. Asked if Cooney is the biggest celebrity customer, Joe says, "No, all his customers are celebrities."

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# UNCLE JOE OF THE BOWLING ALLEY

Joe Aprile has been bowling for over forty years. He started going with his nephew Peter and event though peter was his nephew they were about the same age. Peter, showing proper respect would call him Uncle Joe. He would also introduce him to his friends and bowling buddies as such. The name a bit comical when used by his contemporary but it stuck and its the name everyone

knows him as.  
Uncle Joe is president of the Linden “B” league that plays on Thursday nights at Jersey Lanes Bowling Center located at 30 Park Avenue in Linden, New Jersey. The league is competitive and has fourteen teams. In his hey day he sported a 174 average and once bowled a career high 193. 🏹



## THE APRILE FAMILY HOMESTEAD - THE OLD TUSSEL DAIRY FARM

Before Theresa and Calogero Aprile moved to the Peterstown section of Elizabeth, New Jersey from Ribera, Sicily in 1955, the home at 440 Fourth Avenue was a dairy farm belonging to the Tussel family.

Three years later, their four children, Annette, Steve, Freddie and Joe came to join them. By that time the farm was parcelled off and new homes were lining the streets. The multi-family home sits diagonally on the corner of Fourth Avenue and Redcliff Street.

Anne Tussel who was born in the house on October 18, 1914 and lived there until she was seventeen. She married and moved to Potter Avenue in Union, New Jersey in 1938 with her husband Donald Smith, where she spent the next 78 years of her life. Anne passed away on February 18, 2016 at the age of 102. 🏹



(above) 440 Fourth Avenue as it looks today.  
(below) Photos of the Tussel Dairy Farm were submitted by Anne's niece Lillian (Richel) Tussel.





### Pinho's Bakery

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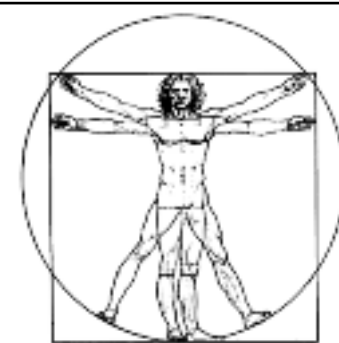
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## FIREFIIGHTERS MATCH CULINARY SKILLS TO BENEFIT THE BURN CENTER AT SAINT BARNABAS

The Sixth Annual Firefighter Cookoff and Food and Wine Tasting will be held on February 29, 2016 at the Pines manor in Edison, New Jersey. Over thirty-five restaurants, bakeries and caterers, twenty-five tables of wines, spirits, liquors and cordials and the Firefighter Cookoff involving twenty fire departments from around the State will get together for an evening of good eats, good spirits for a good cause.

The event features a cook off pitting teams of firefighters against each to be judges for their culinary skills. The event was started by Robert Hill, retired Fire Chief of Roselle, NJ. What started as a lighthearted competition for bragging rights has turned into a major fundraiser for The Burn Center at Saint Barnabas sponsored by the New Jersey State Fireman's Mutual Benevolent Association.

Though the event has a party atmosphere the there is some serious cooking going on. The event originally was to choose the team with the best "Firehouse Food", quickly made dishes that can fill the hearty appetite of firefighters on duty. Over the years the dishes that were

being prepared were elevating out of the realm of firehouse food and so a gourmet category was added to the competition. Now half of the teams, determined by lottery, compete in the fire house food category while the other half compete in the gourmet category. Then an over all winner is crowned.

Shifts are twenty four hours long so the need for breakfast, lunch and dinner is a daily concern. Usually the task of cooking is shared amongst the firefighters unless there is some one who loves to cook and then the rest are usually in for a treat. The teams are given gift cards donated by Shoprite with a \$500 limit to get the supplies they need for the cook-off.

Tickets are \$65 at the door and the event starts at 6:00pm. Besides the judged competition the public gets to vote for your favorite Firefighter Chef. Everyone who attends, approximately one thousand people, gets to vote for their own People's Choice Award.

More information can be found  
on line at [cookedanduncorked.com](http://cookedanduncorked.com)  
or by calling 973-322-4305.



(above) Maria Loffa is served by her son, Elizabeth firefighter Arminio Loffa, at the 2015 Cooked and Uncorked.

*Photos of this and other events can be found on [www.rennamedia.com](http://www.rennamedia.com)  
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# ELIZABETH FIREFIGHTERS PLATE DUCK CONFIT RAVIOLI AT ANNUAL COOKOFF COMPETITION

The Team of Elizabeth Firefighters representing their Union, Local 9 and 209 have been competing for five years. Members Captain Greg LaSpata, Tim Mulroy and Dennis Connor (ret.) are all veteran teammates. New comer Matt Okpych is a rookie both on the team and on the job.

They were picked to compete in the gourmet category of the competition and will be plating Duck Confit Ravioli. Each team member presented a dish and as a team they chose one to go with. The Ravioli dish

was Tim's. They could be easily cooked on site and would be easy to serve to a thousand people. Past years the team prepared Beef Bolognese, Irish Stew, Stuffed Peppers with Crab and Shrimp, Shrimp Enchiladas and Penne Pasta with Seafood.

The following two recipes were submitted by two firefighting foodies competing at The Sixth Annual Firefighter Cookoff and Food and Wine Tasting will be held on February 29, 2016 at the Pines Manor in Edison, New Jersey.

## Recipes

Submitted by Elizabeth Firefighter's Local 9 and 209 Cook-off team

### Easy Firehouse Meatloaf      Steamed Asian Buns

Dennis Connor

Matt Okpych

#### INGREDIENTS

- 2 lbs. of Meatloaf mix: Ground Beef, Pork, and Veal (ask your butcher)
- 2 Eggs
- 1/8 cup of Ketchup
- 1/8 cup of Yellow Mustard
- 1 package of Lipton Onion Soup Mix
- Beer
- Salt
- Pepper
- Pinch of Basil
- Seasoned Bread Crumbs to bind.

#### PREPARATION

- 1) Mix all the ingredients together
- 2) Bake for 1 1/2 hours at 350° in a pan with little beer at the bottom, basting every so often.

#### INGREDIENTS

- 1 package Asian Buns
  - 1 3-4lb Pork Belly
  - Scallions
  - Hoisin Sauce
  - Spicy Mayo
- #### PREPARATION
- 1) Braise Pork Belly in oven, 300 degrees until very tender (4-5hrs).
  - 2) Let cool, remove skin if present, slice into 1/4" thick bite size pieces 1.5"x1.5".
  - 3) Steam Buns according to package.
  - 4) Heat frying pan to medium low and warm sliced Pork Belly.
  - 5) Spread Hoisin Sauce or Spicy Mayo on bun and garnish with Scallion.



(above, l-r) Tim Mulroy, Capt. Greg Laspata and Retired firefighter Dennis Connor in the kitchen of the Elizabeth Fire Station on Trumbull Street.



(left, l-r) Rookie Fireman Matt Okpych is also a rookie on the Cookoff Team joining teammates who have been competing together for five years.

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**STEP 4 PICK YOUR VEGGIES:**

Artichokes	Fresh Tomatoes	Pepperoncini
Bell Peppers	Fresh Basil	Pineapple
Broccoli	Jalapenos	Red Peppers
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# WILDERNESS BEGINS AT HOME: TRAVELS WITH MY BIG SICILIAN FAMILY



What do a high mountain meadow, an ancient Sicilian ruin, and a New Orleans voodoo temple have in common? These are just three of the places you encounter the Cusumano clan in *Wilderness Begins at Home*. This collection of 20 stories spans more than 20 years and weaves a figurative journey along with literal adventures, that are exciting, episodic, humorous, and always probing the eternal question what does family really mean to us? Each story has a destination, but the journey and the family interactions are the things that captivate, warm the heart, and stir the soul.

Camille Cusumano is the author of many books, her (left) Author Camille Cusumano harkens back to her upbringing in Elizabeth, one of ten children of Charles and Carmela Cusumano.

latest not shown here and also of *Tango*, an Argentine Love Story (Seal Press, 2008), endorsed by Vipassana teacher Sylvia Boorstein as "a remarkable addition to contemporary dharma literature . . . [that] shows the redemptive potential of a sincere spiritual practice." She has written for numerous publications, including *National Geographic Traveler*, *Islands*, *Country Living*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Christian Science Monitor*, the *New York Times*, and the *Washington Post*. She is the author of several cookbooks and one novel, *The Last Cannoli* (Legas) and the editor of the literary anthologies, *France*, a *Love Story*, *Italy*, a *Love Story*, *Mexico*, a *Love Story*, and *Greece*, a *Love Story*, (Seal Press) She was a senior editor at *VIA Magazine* in San Francisco, where she covered travel around the world. 📖

## Not for Nothing But...

Camille is a lone voice  
crying in the wilderness.



(above, l-r) Charles and Carmela Cusumano  
(right) Cusumano clan in 2001 celebrating their parents sixtieth anniversary.  
(below) Introduction excerpted from *Wilderness Begins at Home*



### Introduction

It was not the first time my father had blood in his eye. He calmly removed the machete and the small pistol from their brackets over the hearth in the den. Both items had been gifts from my brother, Salvatore, an Air Force Academy graduate and pilot during the Vietnam War. The mementoes appealed to our father, a boastful veteran of World War II who never left his hawkish military days behind.

It might have taken ten minutes for Dad to walk down Main Street and find the blasted plumber in this blasted rural Ringtown, Pennsylvania, the ham 'n'egger who had double-crossed him. My parents, "open-door" Italians, never really adapted to the more reserved Pennsylvania Dutch culture in which they lived during the 1970s, raising the four youngest of their ten children. Now all the disappointment and hurt boiled up in one lousy incident.

Oliver (a pseudonym) had done work on a septic system and my father had paid with a \$500 check. Ollie told my father that he had put the check that Dad had given him in his work pants, his wife washed them, so he needed a new check. Dad readily made out a second payment but not before locking eyes with Oliver, a known gambler, and saying, "Don't mess with me." Oliver proceeded to cash both checks. He didn't think my father would notice—perhaps because in those days, Dad's early retirement and sudden idleness led to his heaviest drinking yet. Oliver was wrong.

Happy or sad, my father never had trouble making his presence known. He found Oliver doing work up the street. He easily got Oliver's attention. He put the gun to Ollie's head and the knife to his stomach and asked, "Which end do you want it first?" The townsmen nearby who intercepted my father's would-be crime of passion (passion, despite his warrior serene exterior) convinced him, not without some rigorous coaxing, that Ollie was not worth the trouble that killing or harming the feckless fellow would entail.

This story, now firmly ensconced in our pantheon of family mythology, is perhaps the most hair-raising of those my siblings and I witnessed over the years. There's the car chase after teen boys, Dad swinging his police baton, because the boys had flirted with my sister and me, aged fourteen and fifteen. Thankfully, the bewildered boys got away. And the time Dad threatened the persistent Jehovah Witness canvasser that he would cut his throat ear to ear and call it self defense if he didn't depart our home PDQ. There are many eye-rolling brinkmanship stories about our father who art heaven—going on twelve years now.

I give you a mere cursory glimpse of such anecdotes about my father to offer an inkling of where my ten siblings and I came from. And what my obedient mother quietly witnessed and endured. This book is not about that wild father per se, although he will invariably make cameo appearances in these stories.

I believe that art has given us enough representatives of Dad's archetype. In varying degrees, my father echoes the drunken fathers-of-ten in true-story movies, *My Left Foot* and *The Prisoner of Delancey Ohio*, and the father in *The Great Santini* who runs his family like a boot camp. He might have reminded me of the father in Pat Conroy's *The Prince of Tides* except my father was never mean for the sake of meanness. He was mean for other reasons, including his own unexamined demons and rigid adherence to excessively tough love.

Rather, this book is a collection of stories written over nearly twenty years, some of them published in shorter versions in magazines or newspapers. I fill you in on the family backstory where fitting.

The sort of big family in which I was bred, despite its *wildness*, is becoming a relic of the past. Not just because the size—ten kids + two parents—is prohibitive and undesirable for most in the developed world. But the nuclear-family model that influenced the high and low points of my upbringing is for practical, economic, and cultural reasons fading. In an article in the *London Review of Books* (September 24, 2015, James Meek noted "The nuclear family has become the quantum family, its particles entangled over vast stretches of space. And vast stretches of time." Let's note that quantum particles often have strong attractive charges that space and time cannot disentangle.

I have often been asked what it was like growing up in a big Sicilian (American) family. The closest I have ever come to honestly answering that question was the novel, *The Last Cannoli* (Legas, 2000). It was easier to answer with a fictional approach, which was, of course, only a thin veil over the truth (plus some half truths and some truths-and-a-half). There were good times and bad times and I remember them all. But I preferred to focus on the good times in that "faux memoir" and if I gave short shrift to the bad, I make no apologies. I do not ignore the difficult facts, including my father's alcoholism and meanness. But we have a rare, if disappearing, strength in our big family ties.

Twelve of us, two parents and ten kids *rhythmically* spaced about two years apart, grew up together in a tiny home in New Jersey. Given the distance that our various walks in life has put between us, sharing travels is the way we get together, the way we reunite. These stories span 1991 to 2015. They take place in our adult years, when we

have grown, entered the marketplace, and flourished.

Many of these stories bring to light my connections to wilderness, which started late in life, unlike my family, which started very early in life. What came to the fore as I wrote many of these stories was how the wilderness is an escape *from* something; for me it has proved an escape *into*—the past, the forces that shaped me, most notably my large family, the crowded household, and the natural forces I longed for, and which my childhood was short on.

As you will see, a number of these travel stories take place in the backcountry wilderness. The practice of the

wild, the practice of walking, of breathing and observing, converge at my practice of writing. My stories are not so much about *the edges between human activity and the natural world* (a phrase I read somewhere and cannot find its original author) as the threads that bind these. I contemplate my experience as family myth (like *Romulus and Remus*, say) and how I've progressed from the wilds of nurture to the etiquette of nature. My parents, stewards of my earliest habitat, gave me my first hard lessons in *leaving no trace*.

The continuum from quotidian life to sojourns in the wilderness is eminently more valuable to me than the compartmentalizing of the two. My avid reading of California poet, Gary Snyder, has lead me to see wilderness this way, as the sacred mirror of what lurks within ourselves.

Thus, what I mean to sum up is that my travel stories, whether in the literal backcountry wilds or in the front country urban wilds, graft family mythology onto these trips with varying mixtures of irony, humor, joy, sadness. My travels with my five sisters, who are as I describe, "a wilderness unto themselves," have a different, yet wildly native, flavor than those with my brothers.

*Wilderness Begins at Home*, the title story, recounts how a grueling weeklong backpack trip to Mount Whitney will be the last walk in the woods for one in our party of two families (mine and my partner's), but some of us will come back more deeply rooted in the earth. In *Saving Grace*, I introduce a sister from Union City, New Jersey, to western snowmelt in the Trinity Alps, confront a swarm of bats, as we rediscover our relationship, which was put on pause years before in New Jersey. And there's the time I coaxed even my not-so-active family members to climb a mountain to a rustic inn for an unforgettable family reunion.

Time to meet the clan. Whether your preference is for travel amid earthy wilds or in the civilized front country, I hope you enjoy travels with my big Sicilian family.

I won't ask you to keep our names straight.



# SAVE THE DATE! FOR THE SECOND PETERSTOWN BABY BOOMER REUNION OF JUNE 25TH, 2015

11  
Peterstown  
Feb 16

The first Peterstown Baby Boomer Reunion was held in 2009. A second one is being planned in 2016. It will also be hosted by the Sons of Peterstown Sports Club and held at the Peterstown Community Center. Details will be hammered out and published in the future issues of the Peterstown newspaper and on Facebook. For now, organizer Dennis Horin would like everyone to save the date and spread the word. 📅



(above, l-r) Joe Engesser, Manny Disporto, Don Mollozzo, Zeke Bucci, Vincent Guliano, Peter Espisito, Joe Marino, Anthony Pantina, Joe Tarranova, and Denny Horin.



(above, roughly l-r) Laying claim to Fourth Avenue: Nancy DiCosmo, Joe Engesser, Lois Mazza, Maryann DeStevens, Margherita Carlino, Cathy Novello (Melchione), Louis DaMelio, Connie Jaques, Andrea Paternoster, Joe Adessa, Nancy Ronaldo (Bottitta), Josephine Merlo, John DiCosmo, Joyce Coletti, Donna Dering, Cathy Espisito, Mary Ann Mele, Vickie Gurio, and Janet Esposito.

Photos of this and other events can be found on [www.rennamedia.com](http://www.rennamedia.com) and on the PeterstownNJ Facebook page.

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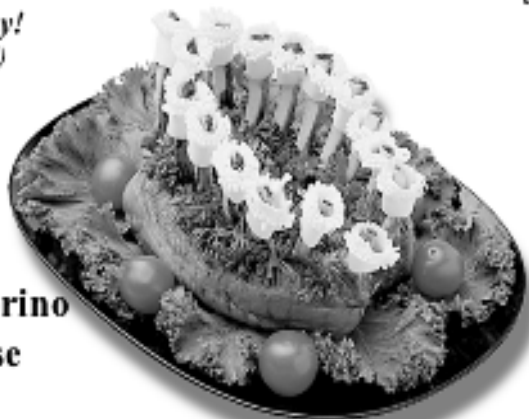
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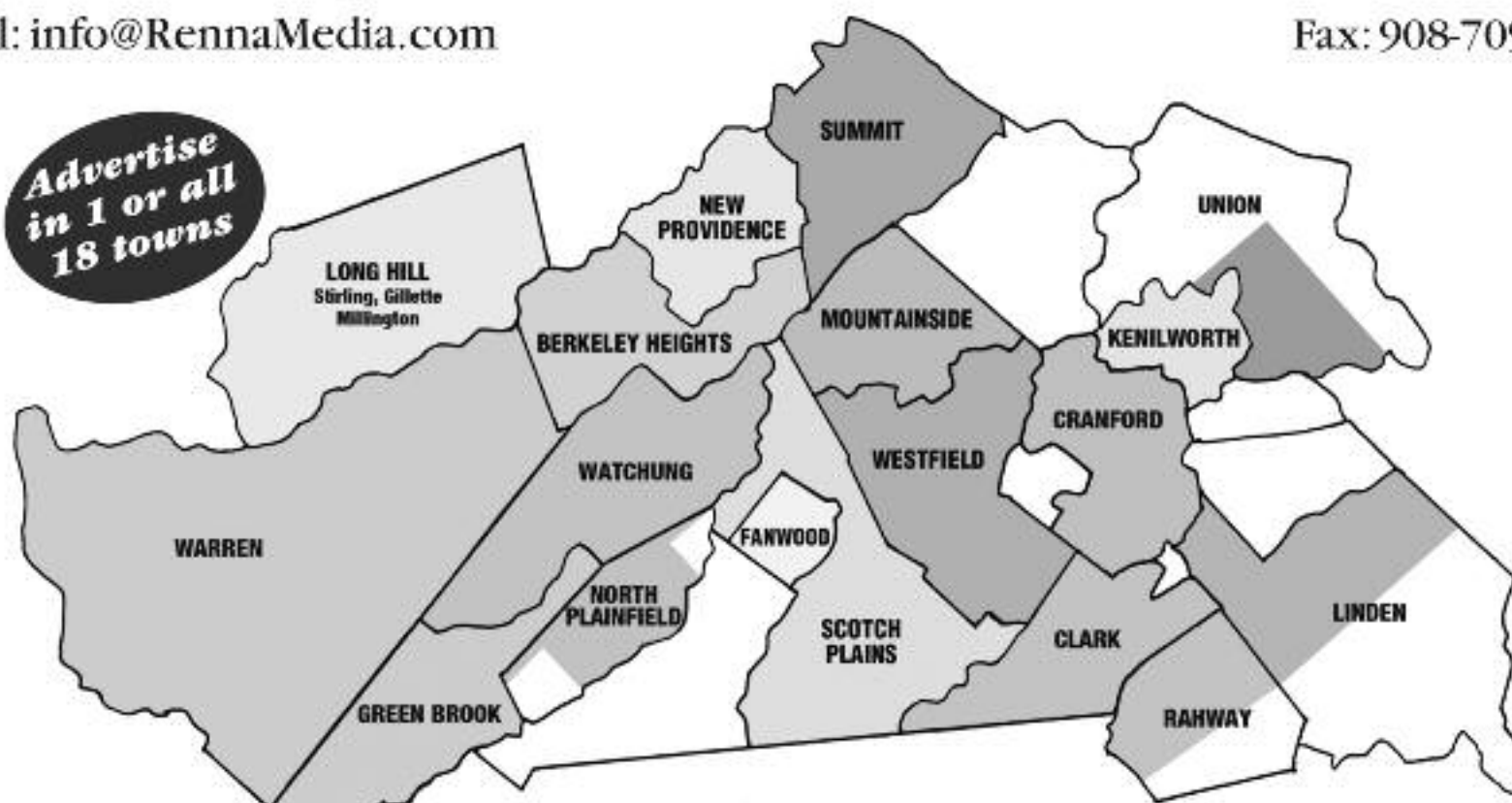
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## WHY CHOOSE OLGA?

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The school focuses on academic excellence with emphasis on moral development, respect, compassion and service to others. It has a balanced curriculum with technology, art, music and fitness for all grades. iPads are used by each eight grade student and individual attention is used to help students reach their highest potential. Student Special Ed Services are also available.

Affordable tuition of \$4,000 for one child with discounts for multiple children. Financial Aid is available for families that qualify. It is a Middle States Accredited school with outstanding NJ certified teachers and a dedicated Principal in James Feehan.

To learn more about OLGA, visit our website at [www.olgacademy.org](http://www.olgacademy.org) or call 908-352-7419. 

## OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE ACADEMY TEACHER WINS NJ TEACHER OF THE YEAR AWARD


Our Lady of Guadalupe Academy (OLGA) on Centre Street in Elizabeth is proud to celebrate one of its teachers, Jonathan Brooks, who was selected as winner of the New Jersey Nonpublic School Teacher of the Year Award, sponsored by the New Jersey Council for American Private Education (NJ CAPE).

Brooks was honored in Trenton for his dedication and commitment to nonpublic school education in New Jersey. His accomplishments have certainly reinforced the belief that nonpublic school education is alive and continues to bring quality education to the children of New Jersey. OLGA students living in Elizabeth and its surrounding areas are blessed to have such a great and

well recognized teacher.

This is the second award given in the last two years to the staff of Our Lady of Guadalupe Academy. Recently retired principal, Deacon Joe Caporaso, was honored in 2013 by the Union County Educational Foundation for his outstanding achievement in the field of education.


The Academy has been operating for six years and has made great strides in bringing much success to its students by providing a high quality education along with strong character development, integrity, responsibility and respect of self and others.

Our Lady of Guadalupe Academy is located at 227 Centre Street, Elizabeth, NJ, phone 908-469-2266. 



(above, l-r) Deacon Joe Caporaso, Jonathan Brooks with family (Kelinda Rocha, Mr. Brooks, Olivia Rocha, Daine Brooks, Amanda Brooks, Alexis Barbosa), and James Feehan, Principal.

## OLGA'S SCIENCE FAIR

Our Lady of Guadalupe Academy Annual Science Fair held on February 18 and 19, 2016, opened with a Ribbon-cutting and a speech from the Assistant Superintendent of the Archdiocese of Newark, Barbara Dolan. The exhibits are from 5th - 8th grade with the younger children doing "guest exhibits." Two students have the possibility of taking their science exhibit to Washington, DC with their teacher. 

• • • • •

*Not for Nothing But...*

I kant spel and choo gum

at the same tyme.

• • • • •



(above, l-r) Mateo Vasquez, Michaela Firetto, and Carmelo Firetto sought to find out if chewing gum helps concentration.

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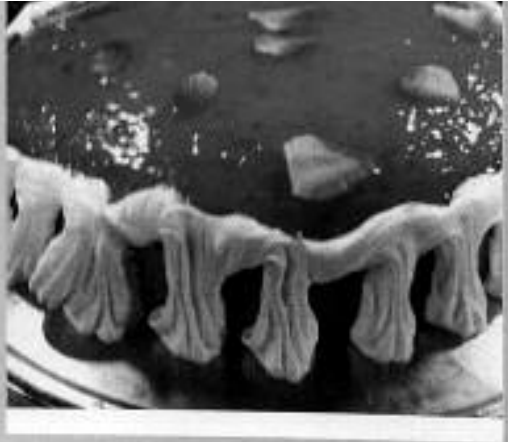
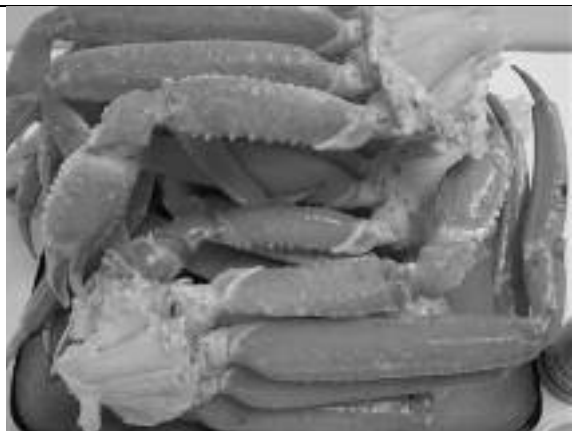
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