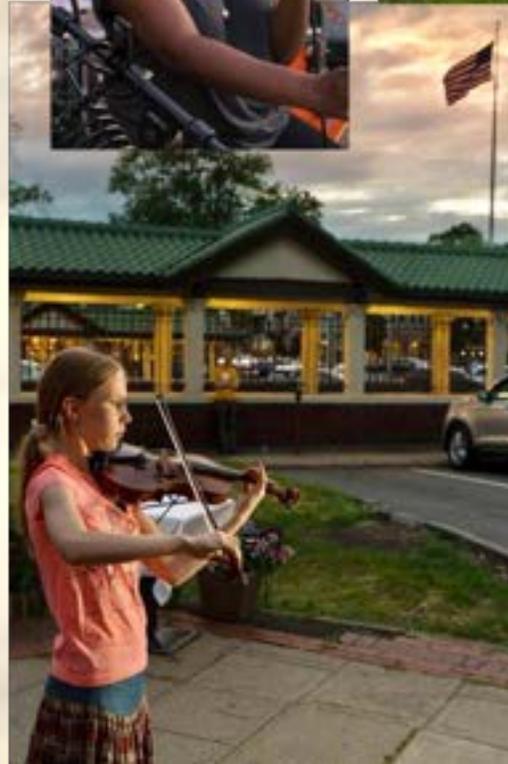
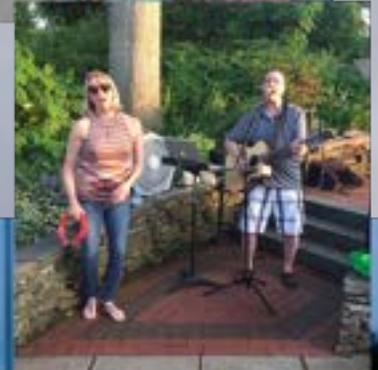


# Downtown

with the Ridgewood Guild



## "Music in the Night"

- Everything Senior: Age Friendly Ridgewood, Ridgecrest Apts., Share, HILT, Senior Bus, Zoom Rides
- Coping with A Global Pandemic: The New Normal Part 2
- Celebrating Mother's Day
- New in Town: Rey Sol, Sombrero Tacoria, Fastachi
- Steel Wheel Tavern: Good Food, Good Drink, and Good Music

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# Editor's Note



The Ridgewood Guild, now in its 12th year continues to provide our community with the very best events and programs. Founding and governing The Guild as your president has been an honor and a joy unimaginable. I have loved every minute of it. Earlier this year I decided to pass the baton. Max Viola, owner of Pearl restaurant has accepted the position of President. Max assumed the role in March and I have accepted the role as Executive Director. Max will continue to have the dedication, enthusiasm, and creativity that I put into place 11 years ago. Please join me in welcoming Max as your new president.

We are looking forward to this year as a renewal. After the trials and tribulations of the 2020 pandemic, we are looking forward to bringing back some of the events that were canceled last year. Events like Music Fest, Art in the Park and Winterfest will be on this year's calendar. We will approach these events with renewed vigor.

In this edition we pay homage to our seniors, we celebrate Mother's Day, and we give you an update on the pandemic that tried to cripple our CBD.

A huge "thank you" to all of our sponsors, members, supporters, and magazine contributors over the years. Your support has helped build and strengthen The Ridgewood Guild beyond belief! I hope everyone will continue to support our wonderful organization so we can grow further. You are all helping to fulfill our mission in, "Creating A Better Ridgewood."

A warm and heartfelt, "thank you."  
- Tony Damiano - Executive Director



Seniors Helping Seniors: Sue Ullrich, Beth Abbott, and Sheila Brogan spearhead Age Friendly Ridgewood



## Vol. 5 - SPRING/SUMMER 2021

### Contributors:

<b>Editor</b>	Tony Damiano
<b>Editorial</b>	Betsy Murphy, Tony Damiano, Courtney Marie Savoia, Bruce Brackett, Barbara Sax, Barbara Cheng Kiernan, Rosemarie Barone, Andrew Walsh
<b>Layouts</b>	Bon Lapin Visual Communication ( <i>BonLapinVC.com</i> )
<b>Columns</b>	All Around Ridgewood with Betsy Murphy Resident Spotlight I Could Write a Book - Featured Book Club That Was Then, This Is Now
<b>Sales</b>	Tony Damiano
<b>Photography</b>	Zigi Putnins, Tony Damiano

### Contact Us:

Are you a Ridgewood Guild member?  
Have a great story? Celebrating a business anniversary?  
Contact us at [ridgewoodguildnj@gmail.com](mailto:ridgewoodguildnj@gmail.com) or 201-493-9911

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## Inside this issue

(vol. 5 - SPRING/SUMMER 2021)

- Pg 1 Editor's Note; Contributors
- Pg 2 Inside This Issue/Where in the Wood Contest
- Pg 4 Meet Max, your new Ridgewood Guild president
- Pg 6 Summer Giving - Summer Living
- Pg 8 All Around Ridgewood with Betsy Murphy
- Pg 9 Steel Wheel Tavern: Good Food, Good Drink, Good Music!
- Pg 11 Paris Jewelers - Celebrating Life's Moments
- Pg 12 It's All About Mom - Mother's Day, May 9
- Pg 19 Spice It Up!
- Pg 20 Music in the Night
- Pg 21 Movies in the Park
- Pg 26 A Senior Moment: Age Friendly Ridgewood, Ridgecrest Apartments, Share, HILT, The Senior Bus, and Zoom Rides for Seniors
- Pg 32 The Ministries
- Pg 34 Resident Spotlight: Louise Jennee
- Pg 38 New in Town: Nuts About....Fastachi
- Pg 39 New in Town: Sombrero Tacoria - It's Taco Night!
- Pg 40 New in Town: Rey Sol - Coffee, Family Traditions and Heart
- Pg 42 Coping with a Global Pandemic: The New Normal
- Pg 46 Design Focus: P. Smith Interiors
- Pg 50 Smile! You're Behind the Camera
- Pg 52 Meet Children's Book Author, C. Spliedt
- Pg 54 I Could Write a Book: Featured Book Club
- Pg 55 A Sweet Story: Maman
- Pg 56 E. ClarkeTravel: Turks and Caicos
- Pg 58 Fabulous Pet Contest Sponsored by Woof Gang Bakery
- Pg 60 That Was Then...This Is Now: The Play House
- Pg 62 Gaming Addiction
- Pg 65 Business Directory
- Pg 68 Continued Stories

The Ridgewood Guild would like to thank  
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Visit us at [www.ridgewoodguild.com](http://www.ridgewoodguild.com) to learn more about our events and programs  
or contact us... 201-493-9911 [RidgewoodGuildNJ@gmail.com](mailto:RidgewoodGuildNJ@gmail.com)

## WHERE IN THE WOOD?

Guess what's pictured below and win!



Email your answer to [RidgewoodGuildNJ@gmail.com](mailto:RidgewoodGuildNJ@gmail.com)

Win a \$50.00 gift card of your choice to one of our Ridgewood Guild businesses listed in our Business Directory in the back of the magazine.

The first to respond via email will win. Send in your answer and your business choice for the gift card. The lucky winner will be announced in Holiday 2021 edition.

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Our 2021 Pedestrian Walkway began in April allowing restaurants to expand seating into the streets.



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# Meet Max!

by Tony Damiano

## We welcome in our new Ridgewood Guild President, Max Viola

It gives me great pleasure to introduce you to Max Viola, our new President of the Ridgewood Guild. He is certainly a familiar face around town. Max is the owner of Pearl restaurant on S. Broad St. An active member, Max has been on our Board since 2015 serving first as a Director and then as Treasurer. He is also on the CBDAC and the Ridgewood Arts Council making him very civic minded. Here's a little bit about Max.....

**Q: How long have you and your family owned Pearl?**

**A:** I have owned Pearl Restaurant for over 10 years now.

**Q: How have your parents influenced you regarding your restaurant?**

**A:** My father is my best friend. He has shown me the ins and outs of operating and managing a round the clock establishment. Moms are moms, they only want the best for you, to be happy and spread the love.

**Q: How would you describe the cuisine at Pearl?**

**A:** The cuisine at Pearl is Italian with modern true Italian flavors and a classic twist of old school dishes that I enjoyed growing up with.

**Q: How has the town changed since you opened 10 years ago?**

**A:** The town has changed immensely via a brand new parking garage centrally located right next door to me. New apartment complexes have gone up within walking distance of the restaurant. Some places have come and gone but overall the core group is still here and I am excited for the future.

**Q: What other changes would you like to see?**

**A:** I would love to see the town host more street fairs, perhaps throw in an annual feast. Also, more utilization of our centrally located, beautifully landscaped, Van Neste Square at Memorial Park for music and events for all to enjoy.

**Q: What did you do before you owned Pearl?**

**A:** I have always been in the restaurant business even after I graduated from school.. I fell in love with it at an early age and never lost sight of it. It is in the blood LOL.

**Q: Where did you grow up?**

**A:** I grew up in Closter, NJ where my parents still reside today.

**Q: Where did you go to school?**

**A:** I went to school at Northern Valley Regional High school in Demarest and graduated from the Barney School of Business at the University of Hartford in CT with a bachelor's degree in business.

**Q: Are you married?**

**A:** I am not married yet, but I am living with my beautiful, fun loving and caring girlfriend.

**Q: How would you describe your interest in the Ridgewood Guild?**

**A:** My interest in the Ridgewood Guild was brought to my attention when my wonderful former president, and predecessor Tony Damiano came through the doors of my restaurant. He explained to me what The Guild was all about and what the goals were for the town, and community as a whole... I never knew I would become so civic minded growing up until I actually became a part of the Ridgewood Guild.

**Q: What would you like to accomplish in your new role as President?**

**A:** In my new role as president of the Ridgewood Guild I will continue with the utmost respect and love to carry the torch. Going forward, I will build on the legacy that Tony has left me, adding to our events and continuing to let them be known and grow them on a larger scale, on a statewide level, and maybe adding some new events along the way. ▀



Passing the torch:  
Max Viola and Tony Damiano

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Chaffey Pillow  
Custom Pillows (prices vary)  
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Tifosi Swank Sunglasses  
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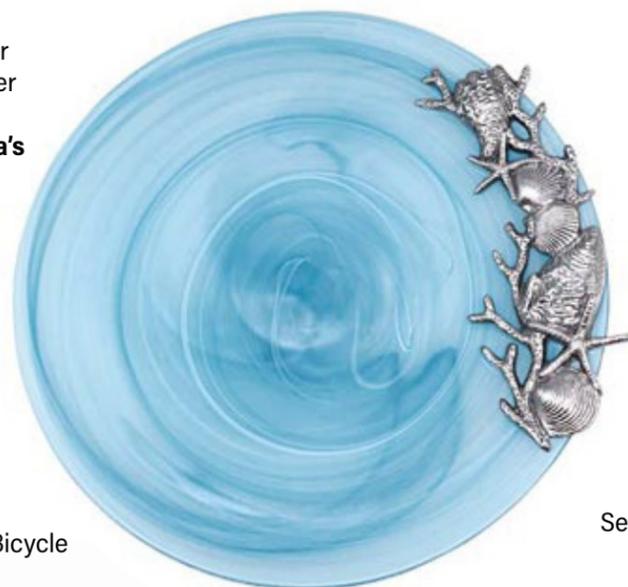
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**Ridgewood Cycle Shop**



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**Coco Interior Design**



Look for addresses and phone numbers for these fine retailers in our Business Directory on page 62.

# Good Food, Good Drink, Good Music!

## It's Sizzling at the Steel Wheel Tavern

by Rosemarie Barone

The Steel Wheel Tavern has been a driver of Ridgewood's restaurant and music scene since it opened in 2016. Located across the street from the Ridgewood train station, and named after the steel wheels on a train, owner, Glenn Carlough, says it's actually his customers who drive the place.

Glenn got a taste of the hospitality business post-college when he took on bartending gigs. He spent his career in team sports and coaching professional hockey, but something was missing. He kept thinking about his bartending days and that triggered a career switch and search to buy a bar/restaurant of his own. First stop, Hoboken. Perfect stop, Ridgewood. Having grown up in the area, Glenn came full circle when he bought Smith Brothers on N. Broad Street in Ridgewood and transformed it into the Steel Wheel Tavern.

"We're a family here and we have a very loyal group of regular customers," said Glenn. "We supported our customers during the lockdown by staying open for pick-up and delivery six days a week while operating at a significant loss. Our customers supported us by consistently placing orders. Many people ordered from us every week!"

Since the Steel Wheel's menu is eclectic, customers could order a dish to suit their mood - Rhode Island Calamari, the Maryland Crab Cakes, the Steel Chopped Salad, the Wagyu Burger, the Honey Bourbon Chicken Sandwich, and our Cedar Plank Atlantic Salmon - for takeout. Fortunately, since May 2020, the bar's signature New Jersey Lemonade and Manhattan with oak barrel-aged rye, and craft beers were also legally on the takeout menu.

Glenn and his team - Cheryl Tigs (General Manager), Bryan Tortella (Chef) - never slowed down. They spent their time giving the bar area a pandemic redesign, updating the two Live Music areas and implementing stringent Covid-19 protocols. "HEPA Air Purifiers were installed in the bar and dining room," said Cheryl. "Every area of our space is strictly sanitized."

They also worked with the Village to come up with an outdoor dining plan. Their most popular additions have been their fire pits. "We have ten fire pits outside," said Cheryl. "People needed to come together. Socially distanced and safe but still together. Customers really enjoyed eating and drinking fireside on chilly nights!"

The Steel Wheel has a commitment to local live music. They currently have music five days a week, but look forward expanding to seven days a week soon. This includes six hours of live music on Friday and Saturday nights and six hours on Sunday starting at 12:30.

"It's been a tough time for the restaurant business," said Glenn. "We're looking forward to the warm weather and expanding our patio café dining. We've been blessed with a lot of new faces coming through the door every day." ▀

**Steel Wheel Tavern**  
steelwheeltavern.com  
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201.888.1800



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WHERE THERE'S A WHEEL, THERE'S A WAY!



# Ridgewood

With the stages going dark, theaters staying empty, entertainers had to be especially creative to make sure the show must go on. Parlance Chamber Concerts were among the first to present past concerts online. New Jersey Choral Society offered virtual programs, **Kristen Plumley** hosted Friends of Music, with performers appearing at home. Irish tenor, **Ciaran Sheehan**, opened the Ridgewood Arts Assn and FOM celebration of St. Pat's Day Celebration with his glorious voice. In addition, The Ridgewood Guild created a Virtual International Film Festival featuring 85 films, both domestically, and from around the world.

Faced with missing the 75th RHS Jamboree, the annual fundraiser for RHS Scholarships, producers, **Annette Testa, Carolyn Mullen, Dana Feeney** and **Tom DeVita**, just shrugged and started earlier. With a cast of 150 parents, that meant a lot of work. Director, **Rosie McCoee**, worked with **Lisa Plasse, Lisa Callahan** and lead choreographer, **Holly Cocuzzo**, part of a large production staff, to begin rehearsal at 7 a.m. Oct. 31. n East Ridgewood Ave. Numbers were shot at Graydon Pool, the high school field, Kasschau Shell, The Stable's Ski Park. The women's jazz was shot at Park West Tavern Loft. Old Paramus Reformed Church and First Presbyterian Church offered rehearsal space.

With the invaluable **Zigi Putnins** at her side, Rosie called on two RHS grads, **Hayes Walsh** and **Spencer Muhlstock**, whose film she had worked in 7 years ago, and asked for their help. Using drones, the pair shot most of the show from above. "We love working with her. I have known her for a very long time and she is just great people," says Spencer. "I really applaud Rosie and the Jamboree producers for putting this show together with all the challenges. Every shooting day the cast showed up, wearing their masks, super well rehearsed and ready to perform the number take after take."

The 90-minute show flew by in glorious color, with tap dancers strutting their stuff down Ridgewood Avenue, women in bright sequined tops jazzing it up, an a Capella choir, each one singing from home.

There was a special tribute to parent/performer, Jean Thomas, who died last year. Celebrity parents, **Christy Tarr McVey, Sally Ann Skoric** sang solos and Kristen Plumley offered "Love is Where You Find It."

The show, "Mission imPossible," raised \$200,000 for scholarships, following a tradition, that in the last decade has earned \$1.5 million.

Dedication and determination hopped the hurdles to make sure the show - and the scholarships - will go on! ▀

*(Editor's note: pg 50 features story on the two young videographers)*

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www.beersflowers.com  
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# Paris

## Jewelers & Gifts

Celebrate Life's Moments

107 E. Ridgewood Ave., Ridgewood, NJ 07450 • 201-652-2856 • [parisjewelers.com](http://parisjewelers.com)

## Celebrating Life's Moments

with Courtney Marie Savoia

### with Paris Jewelers & Gifts

For Vahak Medzadourian, family has always been at the heart of success. Since the early 1980's, his family's business has been a staple in the village of Ridgewood and now Vahak and his wife, Tamar, have taken the reins of Paris Jewelers & Gifts. With guidance from the generations that came before them, the couple continues to uphold the values of family and friendship in every interaction.

While the past year has been challenging for local businesses, Vahak has kept his dreams at the forefront. Living in Ridgewood from the time he was in kindergarten and graduating from Ridgewood High School in 1997, Vahak has collected many fond community memories, including the annual tree lighting.

"I've wanted to be part of this business ever since I was a kid," he shared. "The store opened up on my third birthday and now I'm thrilled to be working with my wife and also have our children learn from our experiences."

Coming from a long line of jewelers, including his grandfather and father, Vahak was taught to set diamonds and went through a series of trainings to perfect his craft. He received schooling from the Gemological Institute of America (GIA) and credits his family for letting him in on the tricks of the trade.

"Over our nearly 40-year history, the business has seen a number of recessions and other tough times in our society," Vahak said. "With those periods, comes change and the need to transition, and the true key to overcoming is adaptability."

Tamar explained that the store has been able to thrive, thanks to a strong online presence and a commitment to excellent customer service.

"In the early days of COVID-19, we were still communicating with our customer base through phone and online orders, offering curbside pickup and free delivery," she stated. "It was our pleasure to show clients our custom designs and collections through video calls and they were very appreciative of that 1:1 attention."

Paris Jewelers & Gifts carries over 40 name brands of china, crystal, flatware, frames, glassware, and other gifts. Many of these exclusive brands come from France and other parts of Europe, such as Bernardaud and Herend. Other popular names include Jay Strongwater and Waterford Crystal and the owners find value in brands that can also be used for everyday events.

"With people being home and cooking more, we've seen an increase in purchases with home décor and china. Instead of spending on vacations, families are investing in items they can use in a variety of ways - from the kitchen to the office and everywhere in between," Vahak added.

A favorite part of the job for both is being part of their customer's celebratory occasions, whether it's an engagement, anniversary, or creating a sentimental piece of jewelry.

"We think of our customers as extended family and friends, since they have known Vahak's family for decades," Tamar expressed. "Meeting new generations and hearing the stories behind the heirlooms that have been passed down are so special and we know that these pieces are allowing memories to live on."

In summing up this family business, the phrase 'Celebrating Life's Moments' rings true. ▀

[parisjewelers.com](http://parisjewelers.com)  
107 E. Ridgewood Avenue

## History of Mother's Day

Celebrations of mothers and motherhood can be traced back to the ancient Greeks and Romans, who held festivals in honor of the mother goddesses Rhea and Cybele, but the clearest modern precedent for Mother's Day is the early Christian festival known as "Mothering Sunday."

Once a major tradition in the United Kingdom and parts of Europe, this celebration fell on the fourth Sunday in Lent and was originally seen as a time when

the faithful would return to their "mother church"—the main church in the vicinity of their home—for a special service.

Over time the Mothering Sunday tradition shifted into a more secular holiday, and children would present their mothers with flowers and other tokens of appreciation. This custom eventually faded in popularity before merging with the American Mother's Day in the 1930s and 1940s.

by Tony Damiano

# It's All About Mom

## What do moms want for Mother's Day?

Some ideas we love include a spa appointment or mani/pedi together. Moms always deserve pampering and Moms of all ages love a nice massage, facial or having pretty nails. Another great idea is taking Mom to her favorite restaurant or cooking her favorite dish.



**M**other's Day is a holiday honoring motherhood that is observed in different forms throughout the world. In the United States, Mother's Day 2021 will occur on Sunday, May 9.

The American incarnation of Mother's Day was created by Anna Jarvis in 1908 and became an official U.S. holiday in 1914. Jarvis would later denounce the holiday's commercialization and spent the latter part of her life trying to remove it from the calendar. While dates and celebrations vary, Mother's Day traditionally involves presenting moms with flowers, cards and other gifts.

**Did you know? More phone calls are made on Mother's Day than any other day of the year. These holiday chats with Mom often cause phone traffic to spike by as much as 37 percent.**

One-fourth of the flower and plant purchases made for holidays occur at Mother's Day, according to the Society of American Florists. Consumer purchase data shows that in 2010 more than 25 percent of adults bought florals for Mother's Day gifts. Fresh flowers accounted for 63 percent of the purchases. Another 35 percent were in the form of outdoor bedding and garden plants, and 22 percent were flowering houseplants. Another 12 percent of the overall purchases were for green, indoor houseplants.

## Mother's Day Around the World

While versions of Mother's Day are celebrated worldwide, traditions vary depending on the country. In Thailand, for example, Mother's Day is always celebrated in August on the birthday of the current queen, Sirikit.

Another alternate observance of Mother's Day can be found in Ethiopia, where families gather each fall to sing songs and eat a large feast as part of Antrosht, a multi-day celebration honoring motherhood.

In the United States, Mother's Day continues to be celebrated by presenting mothers and other women with gifts and flowers, and it has become one of the biggest holidays for consumer spending. Families also celebrate by giving mothers a day off from activities like cooking or other household chores.

At times, Mother's Day has also been a date for launching political or feminist causes. In 1968 Coretta Scott King, wife of Martin Luther King Jr., used Mother's Day to host a march in support of underprivileged women and children. In the 1970s women's groups also used the holiday as a time to highlight the need for equal rights and access to childcare.



Letters to My Mom  
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**Beers Flowers and Events**

Some of the most popular Mother's Day flowers include lilies, orchids, tulips, roses, irises, and callas. Although pink is a traditional color favorite for Mother's Day flowers, brighter, bolder color combinations are becoming the trend. Popular

Plants for Mother's Day include hydrangea, azaleas, chrysanthemums, and blooming kalanchoe plants. The numerous varieties of hydrangeas produce beautiful blossoms, but the plant requires some work to make it grow. Kalanchoe, also known as the Mother of Millions, is another popular plants that is easy to care for.

While flowers are a common gift to give for any occasion, they remain one of the best-selling gifts that women receive on Mother's Day. The best part is there are flower gifts available to suit nearly any gift-giving budget. Fresh flowers and arrangements make a thoughtful and special gift, especially if you live a long distance from the recipient. If you can't be with your mother on Mother's Day, you can still let her know how much you care. Order your floral gift from a local florist who will hand-deliver fresh flowers in a vase. Cut flower bouquets shipped in a box can dehydrate, leaving flowers arriving at their destination dried out and withered.





1.

What better way to celebrate! Make a dinner reservation at one of Ridgewood's sumptuous restaurants. Many, like Pearl, have a pre fixe menu. Make it special by purchasing a bottle of her favorite champagne from **Super Cellars**.

2.

If you prefer to stay at home and avoid a crowded restaurant, put your chef's hat on and partner in the kitchen with mom. Give her a special bottle of flavored olive oil from **Olive R. Twist**. Create a special meal just for the two of you, or ask the whole family to join in. Purchase a new selection of serveware from **The Table at Latona's** to present your food in a special way. Think of it as a gift within a gift.



5.

Grab some caramel popcorn from **Kilwin's** and have a movie marathon. The perfect pair, a movie and popcorn for you and mom. Find a movie that you'd both enjoy and escape to the movies.

7.

Share a cup of tea from **Spicer's Naturals**. Pull out the dusty old family albums and take a trip down memory lane. Now that you're grown up enough to understand your family better, you'll be amazed at how much you'd missed when you'd looked at these photographs earlier!



# Good Old Mom!

What better time for a mother and daughter to spend time together. Your mother is your BFF. The two of you share a bond like no other. Through your childhood she has cared for you, nurtured you and guided you. She's brought you to where you are today. Now that you're all grown up it's time to reconnect

with her and what better time than Mother's Day. Now, you are equals. Here are a few activities that will definitely bring you a little closer together. Especially after a year of COVID. It's time to reconnect. Celebrate Mother's Day like you never have before!



6.

Give your mom a style update and experiment with new looks. Try the make-up counter at **Town & Country Apothecary**. Their expert staff is there to help. Or, how about a new do? Try at **Lora Celli Salon**.

8.

Do something totally different. How about booking a painting party for mom and her friends. **Pinot's Palette** is the perfect spot to enjoy a night out. Bring some wine and appies and enjoy a night of painting.



3.

Take mom on a shopping spree. Let your sense of style become a guiding force for mom. Who doesn't love a new outfit especially on her special day. Try **Apricot Lane**, or **La Casita** for mom's new look.



4.

Indulge in a day of beauty and relaxation at a day spa. Let's face it, you could both use a good massage. Take this opportunity to de-stress and unwind together. You know what they say, you're worth it! Try **Araya Rebirth**, **Ridgewood Day Spa**, or **Namaste** to pamper yourself and mom.



Look for addresses and phone numbers for these fine retailers in our Business Directory on page 62.

9.

Host a party for all her friends. Invite her friends and have a nice long chat over tea and snacks. Find out everything about what they used to do when they were your age. Knowing that all these graceful women went through what you're going through really gives you hope about your future! Let **Mango Interiors** set your table. Purchase a floral centerpiece from **Beer's** or **The Little Flower Shoppe**.



10.

Recreate an old photograph. Relive your fond memories by recreating a favorite old photograph. Book an appointment with **Little Nest Photography** for a private photo session.





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# Daffodil Festival Earth Day Celebration Will Return In 2022 But Environmental Activities Still On This Spring

by Bruce Brackett

The COVID crisis has forced cancellation of Ridgewood's popular Daffodil Festival and Earth Day celebration scheduled for April 18th, but the Conservancy for Ridgewood Public Lands (CRPL) and Green Ridgewood (GR), organizers of the event, are assuring residents the event will be back next year.

Meanwhile, these two organizations and the Ridgewood municipal departments they work closely with are encouraging families to take advantage of other upcoming outdoor activities to have fun, learn and support the environment.

The Conservancy's nature celebration for children in grades K-3 will be held Sunday April 18th from 12 to 2 pm in the Children's Butterfly and Sensory Garden at The Stable, 259 North Maple Avenue, next to Graydon Pool. Kids can enjoy a Story Walk, planting pansies to take home and do hands-on arts and crafts activities. Limited space, families should register in advance at cfrpl501@gmail.com.

Saturday April 17th the Green Team and the Green Ridgewood Committee will hold a Styrofoam collection drive in the Graydon Pool parking lot from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. or until collection trucks are full. First hour reserved for Ridgewood residents.

Saturday April 24th from 11:30 am to 1:30 p.m. the Ridgewood Youth Environmental Council will celebrate Earth Day with a Sustainable Scavenger Hunt at the HealthBarn USA facility in Habernickel Park, 1057 Hillcrest Road. More information at [www.healthbarnusa.com](http://www.healthbarnusa.com).

Saturday May 15 master beekeeper Frank Mortimer will give a program on beekeeping at the Ridgewood Apiary, 561 Prospect Street, Glen Rock, 2-3:30 p.m. Admission \$20 for village residents. Register at [www.ridgewoodnj.net/communitypass](http://www.ridgewoodnj.net/communitypass).

The Conservancy provides funding and direct support to restore and enhance Ridgewood's parks and other public land. They have planted 25,000 daffodils, one for every village resident. Green Ridgewood is focused on recycling issues and environmental education. ■





## Join Us!



**To Provide Funding and Support to Restore and Enhance Ridgewood Park Lands**

[www.cfrpl.org](http://www.cfrpl.org)

Look for addresses and phone numbers for these fine retailers in our Business Directory on page 62.



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# The Ridgewood Guild

One of our first programs at the Ridgewood Guild is still one of the all-time favorites. Our Music in the Night program, is now in its 12th season! We are very pleased to add to our roster of musicians, students from George Washington Middle School. Under the direction of music teacher Kevin Feeley, we look forward to hearing these talented youths play for us.

So join us every Friday evening between Memorial Day and Labor Day as music fills the air chasing away the pandemic blues. Musicians of all ages, including students, amateurs, and professionals alike, play and sing for your enjoyment. Solo performers, duets, and up to 5-piece bands are included in the program. Just about every genre... classical, jazz, pop and country, to name a few, are heard each week. Over 30 musicians are a part of the program this year.

For more information on The Ridgewood Guild's Music in the Night program, call 201-493-9911.

# Music in the Night



12<sup>th</sup> season

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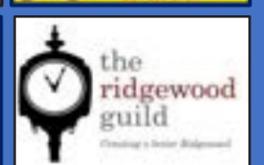
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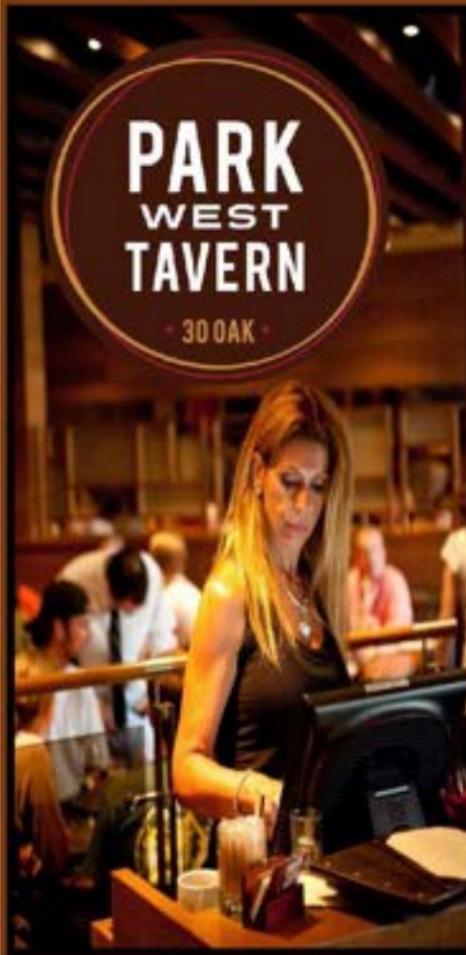
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# "A Senior Moment"

## Everything "Senior"



(left) Age Friendly leadership, Sue Ullrich, Beth Abbott, and Sheila Brogan. (right) Sheila Brogan, Sue Ullrich, Deanna Schablik, Nancy Bigos, Barbara Farrell, and Beth Abbott at an Age Friendly gathering.

by Barbara Sax

Diversity is having its moment. Yet too often, when we think about how diversity helps create a strong, healthy community, we leave seniors out of the equation. Ridgewood residents may chuckle when they see a graduation announcement on the lawn replaced a few weeks later with a for sale sign, but when residents over 55 continue to leave town, it alters the fabric of the village.

Convincing residents to stay in town depends on affordable and/or maintainable housing, a welcoming environment with plenty of age-appropriate activities, transportation alternatives and a community support system. Thanks to some very active organizations and individuals, Ridgewood checks all those boxes.

"The focus of the village should be on families, schools, sports, and the arts, as well as older adults," said Sheila Brogan, co-chair of Age Friendly Ridgewood. "There are real benefits to having a multigenerational community. Older residents hold the history of the town, they have paid taxes and have volunteered and contributed to the community for years. Leaving a community that you've helped enrich for many years should be a choice, not a necessity. We want to create a place that is comfortable for people to age in place. A place older residents want to stay."

To better serve the roughly one quarter of Ridgewood residents who are 55 and older, Brogan and her Age Friendly Ridgewood co-chair Beth Abbott created a collaborative team of grant-funded part-time staff and volunteers to assess, then promote the needs of these residents. Based on the results of an initial survey done in 2016 and a 2019 follow-up survey, the team identified several key areas of need, rolled up their sleeves and got to work.

One key area of opportunity was an expansion of retiree-friendly accessible and affordable housing. "More varied housing choices and town taxes are the hardest issues to solve," said Abbott. The organization's advocacy team has weighed in on Ridgewood's new Master Plan and continues to investigate options such as shared housing and Accessory Dwelling Units and makes sure older residents are aware of housing opportunities that currently exist, especially affordable options like Ridgecrest and SHARE. (see related story) Age Friendly Ridgewood also investigates tax relief initiatives for older residents, provides advice on universal designs for making one's home age-friendly and serves as a resource for information about local low-cost chore, household task and home repair services.

*continue to pg 70*

## May is.... "National Older American's Month"

Age Friendly Ridgewood also investigates meaningful ways for seniors to share their skills in the community and pinpoints opportunities for intergenerational connection. The organization piloted a program to connect elementary school students and parents with neighboring older adults to assist with outdoor household tasks. Age Friendly Ridgewood, along with its partners, plans annual social events, such as Welcome Breakfasts for older adults at the start of the Village pool season and the Giving Thanks Elder Dinner in November.

"We include middle and high school students at the Elder Dinner and worked with the Civic Youth Corps on a Ping Pong Tournament in November," said Deanna Schablik, program coordinator at Ridgewood Parks and Recreation. Schablik oversees Ridgewood Parks and Recreation's HILT (Highlights in Leisure Time), a social club open to village residents 55 and older for an annual fee of \$15. The club has more than 110 members.

HILT holds monthly meetings, informational presentations and sponsor's events including picnics, socials and a



## Communities of Strength Multigenerational Connections

variety of trips to dinner theaters, museums, historical sights and sightseeing tours. "COVID affected our programming, but we managed to do three smaller trips in September and October, with a very limited number of members," said Schablik. The group did a historical tour of Ridgewood and Ho-Ho-Kus with Stage Right Broadway Trips out of Waldwick. Following COVID safety precautions, 24 HILT traveled in their own vehicles to attend tours of the Old Paramus Reformed Church, The Hermitage, The View at Crest Right, Hanks House and The James Rose Center. "We have trips planned for this year beginning in May, so we are hoping to start venturing out again," she said.

Pre-pandemic, HILT's members could join a number of targeted exercise and adult education programs at the Community Center (including Zumba, yoga, strength and motion, cardio knitting, bridge and mahjong) all offered at a discounted senior rate.

To keep seniors active during COVID restrictions, Age Friendly Ridgewood funded an outdoor exercise class through Ridgewood Parks and Recreation on the Community Center's patio. Now exercise classes are shared on Zoom. "We didn't know if seniors would be

tech savvy, but they are very resourceful. It's been great," said Schablik.

Pre-pandemic, an average of 50 people attended HILT meetings. "Some of our members have been in HILT for 25 years. Seniors want an opportunity to socialize even for an hour or two. They want to get out, see others, exercise. HILT helps then keep their minds sharp and their bodies strong," said Schablik.

The Ridgewood Public Library also offers seniors programming. Topics such as decluttering and organizing the home, property tax relief and how to navigate Medicare are being explored for future presentations. Brogan said as seniors have embraced Zoom, the audience for library programs has expanded, since many seniors prefer not to drive at night.

"Age Friendly Ridgewood's partnerships with the Ridgewood government, Public Library and other organizations make us strong and benefit the entire community," said Abbott. "The whole network or organizations support and work with each other to best serve the needs of our seniors," said Janet Fricke, assistant to the Ridgewood Village Manager. ■



*(this page, collage above) HILT members enjoying a Jamboree performance;*

*(this page, left) Seniors had a hands-on cooking experience preparing Southern Minestrone Soup at "Soup's On" at HealthBarn through our partnership;*

*(pg 27, left) HILT Seniors at the Fiesta Taco Lunch for our Annual September Picnic (indoors because it rained);*

*(pg. 27, middle) HILT Couple dancing at The Brownstone at the "Shake, Rattle & Roll" show and luncheon with Jersey Dreamers;*

*(pg 27, right) HILT Seniors on a "Tour of the Shore" with Stage Right Broadway Trips (picture on the boardwalk in Spring Lake).*



Ridgewood offers a variety of housing options for older residents. Ridgecrest Apartments, located on Ridge Road in the Heights section of Ridgewood, is an independent living, affordable housing community for adults age 62 and older and people with disabilities. Home to over 150 residents, Ridgecrest is owned by a 501C(3) nonprofit organization that is subsidized by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Residents live in private apartments and enjoy communal activities. Thanks to generous community support, Ridgecrest was able to open their Ever Thankful Community Pantry in October 2020. Their pantry is named in celebration of lifelong Ridgewood resident and former Ridgecrest resident Eugene "Jean" Thomas. Jean was instrumental in the planning of the pantry and was a "true advocate for

inspiring HOPE and empowering Ridgecrest residents to live their best lives". Ridgecrest's Ever Thankful Community Pantry includes fresh and frozen food items, non-perishable food items, toiletries, paper products, and cleaning products. These items help to bridge the gap for residents when necessary.

"This is a very vibrant and caring community," said Sue Ullrich, social programming director for Ridgecrest Apartments. "Our Circle of Love group knits and crochets items for those in need in shelters or at Valley Hospital. Gardens of Hope Project volunteers help to decorate rocks that are placed in community gardens throughout our community. The Sunshine Committee promotes positivity and encouragement throughout the Ridgecrest community. Our residents have a passion to give back."

## Senior-focused housing



*(1) Kathleen McCann and (2) Roberta Sonenfeld - Executive Directors, SHARE, INC; (3) Ridgecrest Apartments at 9 Ridge Road; (4) 176 Cottage Place Holiday volunteers*

Ullrich said the community is integral to connecting school-aged children, scouts and other volunteers to meaningful multigenerational activities that are enriching for all involved.

SHARE, Inc., another affordable housing option for seniors with locations at Prospect St. and Cottage Place, has a different funding model and offers a shared living experience. "My goal has always been to keep Ridgewood intergenerational," said Gwen Hauck, president of SHARE. "As Ridgewood resident, I noticed our senior population was waning. That's what is so attractive about SHARE. It was started in the 1980s by families who wanted to have their independent senior parents close by," said Gwen Hauck, president of SHARE. "It's an easy and social place to live."

Roberta Sonenfeld, executive director of SHARE, explained that SHARE is a home-like shared living option with private rooms and shared bathrooms and communal space. "Our residents are involved in the Ridgewood Guild, the Chamber of Commerce and HealthBarn Foundation activities. There's been more interaction between residents and community

members, particularly since COVID. Partnering with the community is part of the history of SHARE. It really does take a village," said Sonenfeld.

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# "Get on 'da Bus"

## Transportation Alternatives

Access to transportation is important to older people's quality of life, their sense of freedom and independence. Many seniors may decide they no longer wish to drive themselves, but want to maintain their active lifestyles. Thankfully, alternatives to driving are readily available and accessible in Ridgewood.

The Ridgewood Senior Bus, made possible by a grant from Valley Hospital, offers seniors door-to-door transportation services every Tuesday and Thursday from 9:30 AM to 2:30 PM. Fees are on a suggested donation basis.

"The bus gives older residents an inexpensive way to get out," said Janet Fricke, assistant to the Ridgewood Village Manager, who oversees the bus program. "One of the biggest advantages is the ability for residents to go to the Stop & Shop or Shop Rite. They can do a small shop and it's social," and driver Billy Flynn, a retired Ridgewood resident, is on hand to help residents with their purchases.

Normally, the bus operates on Tuesdays on an established route within Ridgewood, stopping at many apartment and senior housing buildings and making a loop through Ridgewood's Central Business District. Riders have easy access to banks, pharmacy, grocery stores, restaurants, hair salons and the



Parks and Rec Director, Nancy Bigoes with seniors who, "Get on 'da Bus."

Ridgewood Public Library. On Thursdays, the bus travels by appointment to Ridgewood Parks and Recreation exercise programming, HILT activities or the mall. On the last Wednesday of each month, the destination is the Wyckoff ShopRite.

To comply with current COVID restrictions, the 12-seat bus now can only accommodate five riders at a time. Riders and driver wear masks and sign a waiver to enable contact tracing if needed. Due to restrictions, appointments must be made in advance for the chauffeured residents to get their COVID vaccines.

Other village transportation alternatives include the Senior Citizen Discount Taxi Coupon Program, through which Ridgewood residents aged 65 and older can purchase coupons for use with Village Taxi for local transportation needs. Uber and Lyft are also raising their profile in both the senior markets. ▀

## Zoom Rides For Seniors

Zoom Rides for Seniors provides a specialized senior transportation concierge service. For a \$25 annual registration fee, owner Trish Manzo will ferry senior residents to their destination for fees comparable to other car services, but will also accompany seniors to their physician appointments, make sure they have their keys or carry groceries into the house.

"I provide that extra touch," said Manzo. "I'll report back to a client's family on how their appointment went, put groceries on the table so they don't have to bend and lift. Families want the comfort of knowing that I'm not just pulling up to the door and letting their loved one out of the car."

Started in 2017, Zoom Rides for Seniors has been vetted by a number of local organizations, including the Christian Health Care Center in Wyckoff, and has recently added an additional driver. ▀



Trish Manzo - Zoom Rides for Seniors

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# The Ministries: Dealing with COVID-19

A recent NY Times study noted that one in three Americans  
has lost someone to the coronavirus...

Just over one year ago COVID-19 touched our shores infecting its first U.S. citizen with a deadly virus the world has not seen since the H1N1 flu pandemic of 1918. National and worldwide havoc followed as infection rates rose and spread changing our lives forever. A recent NY Times study (published 3/6/21) noted that one in three Americans has lost someone to the coronavirus.

Hours, days, weeks and months tick away seemly like bleak eternity! For many, staying at home can mean confining yourself along with your immediate family members, but what about the population of people who live alone with no one looking out for them? How does one deal with the New Normal when your normal circumstance is not normal to begin with?

The Village of Ridgewood is fortunate to have a united front of Village Houses of Worship, as well as Local Service Organizations who utilize their Community Outreach programs to assist our elderly, disabled, disadvantaged, and those experiencing hardship. We all need help or know someone who does. Considering the sad, negative news we are bombarded with on a daily basis, reading POSITIVE updates from our Village Friends on the GOOD that has resulted from this madness is a welcome change. Contact them directly for assistance or for info on how you can help.

## Old Paramus Reformed Church

660 E. Glen Ave. (201-444-5933) OPRC.office@gmail.com

"Not having Wi-fi in the Sanctuary until October didn't stop our faithful from worshipping and serving. We have a strong loving community!" said Rev Rob. "Our church budget may be tighter but people have been more generous in many ways." OPRC continues to support; The Ridgewood Interfaith Ministerial Program; provides food and financial assistance to SSA, and Center for Food Action; help local missions such as The River Ministries of Hackensack thru the Second Reform Church, The Daun Treader School of Paterson (a Christian inner city K-8 school Project Hospitality of Staten Island (a social svc agency) providing food, counseling, career training and homeless housing for women and children; is in partnership with the Village Health Barn and Ridge Crest in providing meals to seniors, has played host to auditions for RHS Jamboree and the RHS Crew Team practices during the pandemic, and tends to the Ridgewood Community Gardens. **Rev Rob Miller - Minister**

## Our Lady of Mount Carmel

1 Passaic St. (201-444-2000) ronr@olmcrdigewood.com

"OLMC's many Community Outreach programs run year 'round and we found levels of need increased in every category especially during the pandemic. COVID demanded we first tend to and support the needs of our own parishioners who suffered personal loss. We have been following strict CDC state and local guidelines re: cleaning sanitizing monitoring and maintaining social distancing. Our GW and BF Middle School students continue to volunteer with other area



students prepare and drop off Sat lunches and Sun dinners for SHARE, Youth Group holds monthly drive-thru food drive collections Saturdays, 9am-12pm in Convent/School parking lot benefitting SSA, Ridge Crest, and the Father English Food Pantry. Youth group also held a month long 'new sock drive' as well as their annual Holiday Gifts drive for Needy Families where funds, small gifts, toiletries and Target Gift Cards were collected benefitting SSA, Family Promise, Ridge Crest, and other individuals or families in need. Our Knights of Columbus had a special Christmas collection directing funds specifically for Ridge Crest Seniors, and they replaced their annual Senior Citizen Party with the Snacks for Seniors Program (snack items were collected, gift packaged and delivered with over 130 handmade Well Wish cards). Fortunately, we have been able to worship both in-person and online and see the benefits online streaming has made in keeping contact with our parishioners" Glen reported. **Rev. Msgr. Ronald J. Rozniak, P.A. - Pastor Glen McCall - Director of Parish Youth Ministry gmccall@olmcrdigewood.com**

## First Presbyterian Church

722 E. Ridgewood Ave. (201-652-2504)  
pastorbruce@firstpresridgewood.org

"Our Congregation at First Pres is generous and community minded. Although in-person worship halted March 15th, live stream worship has been successful and will likely continue. Community outreach has strengthened and we will continue to support our partnered programs and other needs as they are presented," Pastor Bruce humbly shared. "We have hosted the RHS Poinsettia Sale and Citrus Sale and Football Team Home Game Pasta Dinners, held food drives or made financial contributions benefitting SSA, Eva's Village, Oasis, Center for Food Action, CUMAC/ECHO, and St Paul's Community Development," continued the Pastor. FYI- Not only does First Pres support Family Promise's programs like "Camp Lots of Fun", and their overnight homeless shelter by providing volunteers, making meals, and raising funds - their tireless volunteers also collect unsold fruits & vegetables from the Ridgewood Farmers Markets and redistribute them to other organizations in need through Table to Table. **Bruce Ballantine - Pastor**

## West Side Presbyterian Church

6 S. Monroe St (201-652-1966) moehler@westside.org

"We have a tremendous loving family here! Yes, we supported and will continue to support our ministries in need. I pray we as people learn and remember from this pandemic the life lessons - the wise reminders - that the church exists for the world to serve others, to be more generous, to focus on important matters not minutia, to be helpful partners in the community, to see possibilities where others don't, bringing growth to humans." Pastor Marc. The generous community of West Side Pres has raised huge funds to support Family Promise and their multi programs benefitting homeless families, Paterson Mission Partners, Eva's Kitchen, OASIS, New City Kids Tutoring & Leadership Program, as well as, work on 4 new missions in Paterson and a project specifically designed to benefit a Family Promise service program initiative, developed a "Buddy System" and "Ministry of Deacon" program loving those lost or isolated by contacting them on a regular basis. Online Worship has been successful and well received and has opened other new forums for program and community conversation. **Marc Oehler - Pastor**

## Family Promise of Bergen County

100 Dayton St (201-833-8009)  
kduggan@bergenfamilypromise.org

"Thankfully, we have been able to continue to provide shelter, food and support for our working families who have become homeless providing them temporary housing while they address barriers to self-sufficiency. Since the pandemic, families need have increased emotional support as well as additional services. It was also not safe to gather our client families and volunteers at congregations where they were typically sheltered, so they are now being placed temporarily in extended stay hotels with efficiency kitchens. Family Promise also manages five transitional apartments which are currently filled. Clients who lost their jobs during the pandemic are now receiving interim job training while each family

(continue to pg 68)

by Barbara Cheng Kiernan



(top) Bags of food items being delivered to Ridgcrest Apartments; Family Promise Meal Program Volunteers; (next page, left) OLMC Youth Ministry Food Collection for SSA, Ridge Crest & Father English Food Pantry; (right) Eva's Kitchen



# Louise Jennee

**How long have you lived in Ridgewood?**  
11 wonderful years.

**Children?**  
I have one son, Bob and a daughter-in-law, Elizabeth

**Grandchildren?** 2, Austin and Ryan

**Describe a "perfect day" in Ridgewood.**  
Walk and shop on the avenue, coffee and pastry at Sook, and dinner at one of the many wonderful restaurants.

**What is the best thing about Ridgewood?**  
Ridgewood is a lovely town with wonderful people.

**What are your favorite spots in Ridgewood?**  
The local parks and Sook

**Over the years, have you belonged to any organizations besides The Ridgewood Guild?**  
Yes, I belong to the College Club of Northern NJ and the Ridgewood Woman's Club.

**What's on your Bucket List?**  
One of my best vacations was visiting several cities in Italy with my siblings. It was a great experience finding my father's birthplace (Marrone del Sanio in Campobasso) and I would like to return during one of their religious festivals. I would love to spend more time in Italy and do another tour of other places in Italy. I would also love to take some cooking classes in Tuscany, and spend time with the Italian locals.

**A favorite hobby?**  
One of my hobbies is reading. I love reading, and one of my favorites that I read recently was "Where the Crawdads Sing" by Delia Owens. I also love attending sessions with authors to hear their personal stories. Some of the most interesting events were with Harlan Coben, Mary Higgins Clark, David Baldacci, Mary Calvi and Diane Chamberlain.

**I am most proud of.....**my children  
**The quality I like best about myself.**  
The ability to enjoy being with my family and friends.

**I am really good at.....**cooking and baking, and sharing with my family and friends.

**A favorite memory.**  
Vacations with my children and siblings.

**Something that's on my mind lately.**  
I very much miss being able to have breakfast, lunch or dinner in town with my friends. I think about being able to be free to make reservations at restaurants as in the past. As I am sure many others feel this way, but I look forward to being able to socialize with friends and family and to entertain like I did before the pandemic. The sooner we can do this, the happier I will be.

**My guilty pleasure is.....**dessert.

**A talent I wish I had is.....**I wish I could play the piano.

**A person I admire.** My son Bob.

**My most treasured position is.....** Working with the CEOs of Ingersoll Rand Company for 40 years.



Austin Jennee, Chelsea Catherman, Elizabeth Jennee, Ryan Jennee, Louise Jennee, Robert Jennee

To all of the RHS seniors, congratulations are on the way. To all of those Maroons who are my students, I am always so proud of you—during our lessons and as you prepare to pursue the lives you envision.

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# Nuts about...

## fastachi

by Courtney Marie Savoia



Owners Tro and Sally Taslakian

## Why Taking a Risk During Difficult Times Can Lead to Sweet Success

Over the last few decades, popular Boston-area shop, Fastachi, has become one of the country's leading purveyors of gourmet roasted nuts and recently found a home in Ridgewood. Husband and wife team, Tro and Sally Taslakian, are the owners of the North Jersey location and take pride in the history and legacy of the famous Fastachi nut – inspired by the word "pistachio."

Souren Etyemezian started this delicious business in a suburb of Boston in 1990 (then called Mixed Nuts) and has operated out of Watertown, MA since 2003.

"A few years ago, I was in Boston for work and visited Fastachi with a friend and really enjoyed the products," said Tro Taslakian. "A year later, Sally stopped in and also fell in love with the atmosphere. After some discussion, we decided to take a chance and approached the owner about exploring a new business opportunity."

With COVID-19 delays, the process took a little longer than anticipated, but the couple was able to open their doors in December 2020.

"People have called launching a storefront during this uncertain time 'brave and crazy' and we certainly understood the challenges," Tro Taslakian recalled with a laugh. "This starting period is a chance to learn and when business is back in full swing, we will have had the necessary time to become fully acclimated." He added, "Both Sally and I are optimistic by nature and Ridgewood is definitely the right place for these types of creations. The community is extremely friendly, and everyone likes to support local shops."

What makes the Fastachi nut so special? According to Tro Taslakian, it stems directly from the passion of Souren Etyemezian and the love for the brand, reflected in the amount of attention given to each individual piece. The nuts are carefully sourced and roasted in small batches - - always fresh and made for snacking. Popular items also include Fastachi's chocolates -- another best seller and handmade in MA. The bar chocolates are sourced from Belgium and Switzerland, with Fastachi's nuts also used in some varieties. Peruse the shelves for even more selections - with dried fruits, marzipan treats, nut butters, and more available. Pistachio, hazelnut, walnut, pecan, cashew, almond, and mixed nut, all with no preservatives added, make up these delectable flavors that showcase the prized nuts in a spreadable form. Gifts are specially created for different occasions or price points and can be packaged as an impressive tower or beautiful tray.

"We love when customers come back and tell us how they've used our offerings in their own recipes -- it's fun to hear their creative ideas," Sally Taslakian shared.

Both having previous careers in advertising and media, the Taslakian's are excited to dive into their next chapter. "We love that our jobs now are seeing customers walk in happy and leave happy," Sally Taslakian said. "That brings us both so much joy and we want the Ridgewood community to know the story behind our journey and that we love what we do." ■

**Fastachi**  
14 Wilsey Square  
Fastachi.com

**NEW IN TOWN**  
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# IT'S TACO NIGHT!



by Rosemarie Barone

Ridgewood's newest restaurant, Sombbrero Tacoria, is all about family – family recipes, family staff and fresh Mexican food served in a fun, family friendly setting. The Chaljub family - parents Al and Jenny and sons Ruben and Gus - worked together to make their business a reality. "Teamwork, passion and family," said Al, "Is what got us started and keeps us going." They began with a Food Truck in 2018, opened their first restaurant in Totowa, NJ in 2019 and their second dream location on Oak Street in Ridgewood, NJ in December 2020.

Going ahead with the restaurant's opening during strict Covid-19 indoors dining restrictions was a leap of faith. Sombbrero's take out orders kept them afloat. Their bold take on chicken and fish tacos, quesadillas and burritos

quickly made them a hit with their Ridgewood customers. "If you're craving authentic Mexican food," said Al, "

We've got you covered. Our family can't wait to meet your family." ■

**Sombbrero Tacoria**  
14 Oak Street  
thesombbrero.com



by Courtney Marie Savoia

Coffee is Rey Sol's family business and providing the highest-quality experience is at the heart of their mission statement. Since 1966, Mr. Lisimaco Ramirez has dedicated his life to the cultivation of coffee – from the mountains of the family's farm in Colombia – and now locals and visitors can get a taste of this delightful pick-me-up at their Ridgewood coffee shop.

Owner, Johanna Porras, expressed that her greatest wish is to keep the family's traditions alive. After spending a few years visiting Ridgewood with her daughter, she found a space and hoped it would one day be home to a new business – allowing her faith to take over during the waiting period.



"If something in life is for you, you won't have to push it," Johanna Porras said. "When our family finally got the call about securing the location, we were ecstatic. Shortly after, COVID-19 hit North Jersey and it took another several months to safely launch Rey Sol Coffee in November 2020."



**Mr. Lisimaco Ramirez was born in Balboa Risaralda, Colombia and has dedicated his life to the artesian cultivation of coffee there since 1966. Together with his family he wishes to continue his legacy of bringing the mountain's coffee right to your cup.**



## Coffee, Family Traditions, and Heart: Rey Sol Brings a Piece of Colombia to Ridgewood

The family's expertise in coffee spans generations and with that comes an important responsibility to bring customers the freshest beverage – from seed to cup. Rey Sol Coffee imports their beans and roasts three times a week, with Johanna Porras's preferences being light and medium, so that the delicious notes shine through. She also explained that the coffee tree takes at least two years to produce beans and a great deal of labor goes into every single sip.

"My dream has been to own a unique coffee shop and to bring a piece of Colombia to Ridgewood, through every menu item. Everything is prepared with love," she shared.

Johanna Porras's daughter, Linda Ramirez, is her partner in the business and their whole family has lent their time and talent to run daily operations. The staff has also become a second family during their time together.

Offerings include house coffee, espresso, Americano, cappuccino, different types of lattes, and more. An example of one of Rey Sol Coffee's seasonal creations is the virally-famous S'mores latte. Other variations of this indulgent treat have featured a chocolate Oreo rim with torched marshmallows on top, as well as adding white chocolate

hearts for Valentine's Day. Guests look forward to trying something special that will satisfy their cravings and cool designs that will impress their friends on social media – with the shop taking great pride in the presentation of every product.

"Colombian coffee is very well-balanced, as a result of the elevation and soil," added Linda Ramirez. "We love to be creative and strive to make our food and drink choices fun and innovative."

Other tasty options include avocado toast; salmon toast; a Colombian sandwich with roasted pepper chimichurri, chorizo, and manchego cheese; and fresh-baked goods.

Johanna Porras said, "While it hasn't been easy starting a new business during a global pandemic, I feel blessed to introduce our culture, traditions, and love for our work to this amazing community that has welcomed us." ▀

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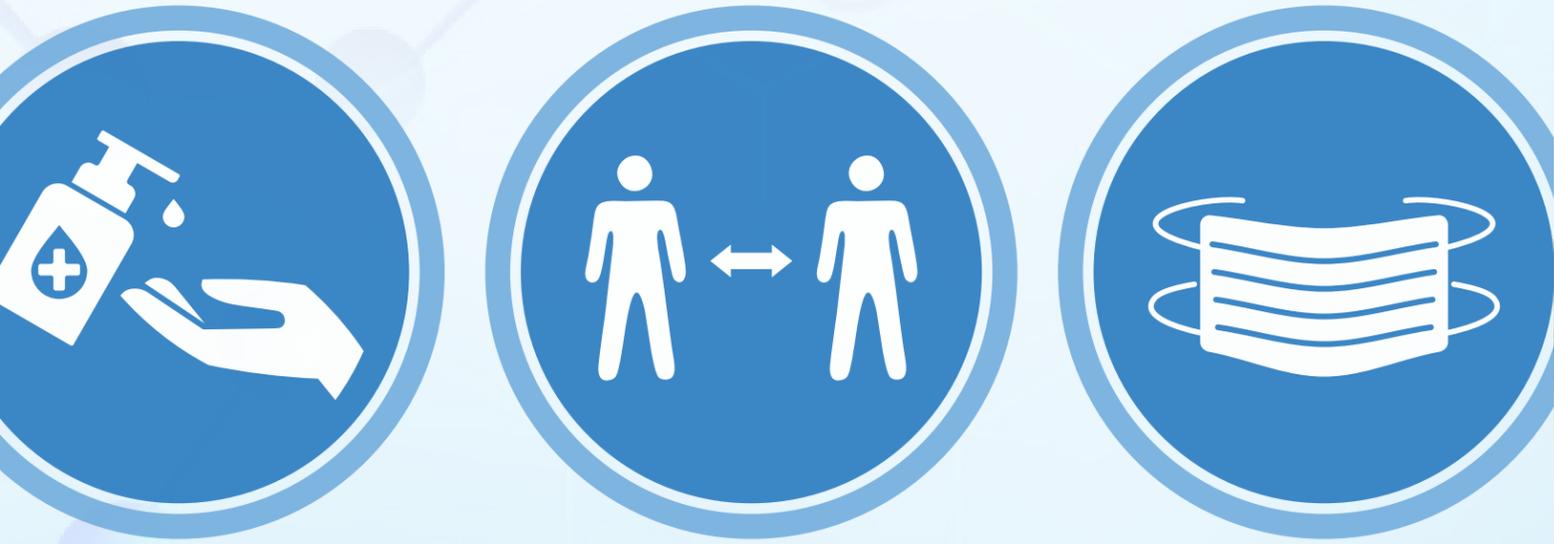
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# Coping with a Global Pandemic: The New Normal

by Barbara Sax



Like people everywhere, Ridgewood residents are longing to return to their normal lives. At the end of the most difficult year in recent memory, it looks like there's light at the end of the tunnel. We just might have to squint to see it. Experts say that death rates and hospitalizations from COVID-19 are on the decline in Ridgewood while vaccination rates are up. But they caution that more contagious variants emerging in other parts of the country could complicate recovery over the next several months.

"During the worst of the pandemic the Emergency Department saw as many as 40 patients a day and Valley Hospital had an inpatient census of about 250 patients suffering from COVID-19," said Marc Dreier, MD, a physician at The Valley Hospital's Department of Emergency Medicine.

"COVID-19 visits had dropped to just several a day late in 2020 but are currently rising again to about 10 patients a day with a daily inpatient census of 30-40 during March of 2021." At one point in March, New Jersey had the highest COVID case rate in the country. "The current case rate in Bergen County is about 49 per 100,000 and a safe rate to relax restrictions would be in the single digit range per 100,000. We have a way to go," he said.

**According to John's Hopkins University, as of April 6, 2021**

**Total US cases - 30,785,201**  
**Total US deaths - 555,608**  
**Total NJ cases - 930,026**  
**Total NJ deaths - 24,609**  
**Total cases in Bergen County, NJ - 93,767**  
**Total deaths in Bergen County, NJ - 2,748**

Dr. Drier said while a larger proportion of patients had more severe disease at the onset of the pandemic, he continues to see many patients with severe disease requiring supplemental oxygen, and in some cases, mechanical ventilation. Thankfully, treatments have improved. "We have several treatment options including steroids, antiviral medication, convalescent plasma and monoclonal antibodies," he said.

There have also been huge strides in protection for healthcare workers. "At the start of the pandemic, there was inadequate personal protective equipment (PPE) for healthcare providers, which resulted in many doctors and nurses succumbing to the virus, some of whom gave their lives in the line of duty. In Ridgewood, the community pulled together donating masks and gloves to the Valley Hospital staff. Now healthcare providers are well protected with adequate masks, gowns, face shields and gloves," said Edith McCarthy, MD a pediatrician at the pediatric clinic of North Hudson Community Action Corp in Hackensack, who has been working on the front lines and at Valley Hospital during the pandemic.

## New Sign Up Procedure--

The Village of Ridgewood now has a form on their website to put Ridgewood residents on the wait list to receive the COVID-19 vaccine at clinics at Village Hall ([ridgewoodnj.net/menu-health/covid-registration](http://ridgewoodnj.net/menu-health/covid-registration)) If they obtain vaccines and can schedule you an appointment they will email you. Those who are not comfortable with email can now call Marianny at 201 670-5500 ext 244. Also if you have previously registered with the Village and have received the vaccine elsewhere so wish to take your name off their waiting list please email [Vaccine@RidgewoodNJ.net](mailto:Vaccine@RidgewoodNJ.net).



(from left) Ridgewood resident, Dotti Fucito gets shot #2; Villagers line up at Village Hall to receive the Moderna vaccine; The pedestrian walkway once again went into place in 2021.

"Anyone who spent time in a hospital during the worst of the pandemic will tell you that the most important lesson learned is the incredible ability and resolve of people to come together and function as a team in the face of constrained resources and the uncertainty of personal peril in order to care for our patients," said Dr. Drier. "Equally inspiring was the outpouring of support from our neighbors through donations of PPE, daily preparation and contribution of meals by local restaurants to feed the hospital staff and the constant moral support of the community."

While vaccinations are on the rise, Dr. Drier said we have a way to go before aggressive reopening would be safe. "According to the New Jersey Department of Health COVID-19 Website, in mid-March 15 percent of the population of Bergen County is fully vaccinated. If we add in the presumed immunity, we can assume that about 24 percent of the population has immunity. Experts tell us that 'herd immunity' does not develop until about 70 percent of the population has been infected or vaccinated," he said. In the meantime, Dr. Drier said "the 'treatment' for this virus is prevention through the

use of proven public health practices of effective masking, social distancing, good hand hygiene and vaccination."

"With new variants popping up, it is not the time to throw caution to the wind and take our masks off when we've come this far," said Dr. McCarthy. "Vaccination is what will bring us out of this pandemic, but we have to be patient until everyone is protected," she said.

Dr. McCarthy said that masks are here to stay for the near future—even as more people get vaccinated. "I have confidence in CDC guidelines and feel comfortable in very small groups with individuals who are vaccinated but I continue to wear a mask, maintain social distance and attend to hand hygiene when out in public," said Dr. Drier.

Dr. McCarthy said Ridgewood residents have done a good job adapting to new CDC and state recommendations as they shift. "At the beginning of the pandemic people were eating outdoors, then with the cold weather came the igloos, area heaters and fire pits. Now as it warms up, people are eating outdoors again," she said. "Even as indoor dining

(continue to pg 67)

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# Smile - you're behind the camera!

by Betsy Murphy

Hayes Walsh and Spencer Muhlstock have always been happiest behind the camera. Hayes has been making home videos since he was 10, doing skits with friends using a home movie camera. Spencer's dad, a camera operator for film and television, always had a ton of camera gear lying around the house, "so it was inevitable," says Spencer. "that I was going to become interested in it."

"Hayes and I met at a Magic camp, believe it or not, realized we went to Benjamin Franklin, then found we were in Mrs. Rispoli's BFTV 7th grade class together. That's where we discovered our shared interests extended beyond card tricks.

"My parents are both movie-buffs, so I was shown some pretty intense classic films at a very young age," Spencer says. "Instead of watching animated I saw Kubrick and Tarantino. I think seeing these types of films at such a young age really influenced my passion for storytelling.

"As I grew up," he says, "my dad would take me to every one of his film sets. I'd usually show up for a day and be able to meet the actors, the directors, etc. He'd let me sit on the dolly and use his camera.



(left) Spencer Muhlstock with dad, Jeff and their drone.; (right) Winning Best Student Film at The Ridgewood Guild Film Festival, 2011.

I loved it. And the coolest part about it was being able to spend that whole day watching the process of making a movie. It really gave me such a head start in understanding filmmaking, and how much goes into it. It was the best hands-on experience I could've gotten for someone my age."

"I did a lot of work with Spencer," says Hayes. "We started making content together; it started with pairing up for class assignments but then we took off and started doing our own work- music videos, and short-skit videos that we began uploading to a YouTube channel. It seemed like most kids were playing sports or playing an instrument but we were playing around with cameras. I think because we were some of the only kids our age focusing that heavily on media, it really allowed us to grow."

That growth led to their first film, "The White Crayon," which won Best Student Film at the annual Ridgewood Film Festival, stunning the judges when they realized the creators were 14 years old.

Forging a friendship as well as a work ethic in middle school, both flourished in Ridgewood High School. "The school didn't offer any film production courses but we were still were able to hone our craft based on the time we spent outside of the classroom," Hayes claims. New Players, choir and



Hayes Walsh (left), and 2 time Tony award winning actor, Christian Borle, who starred in several of Muhlstock/Walsh films; (middle) Lily Walsh.

(continue to pg 70)

## Mango Interiors



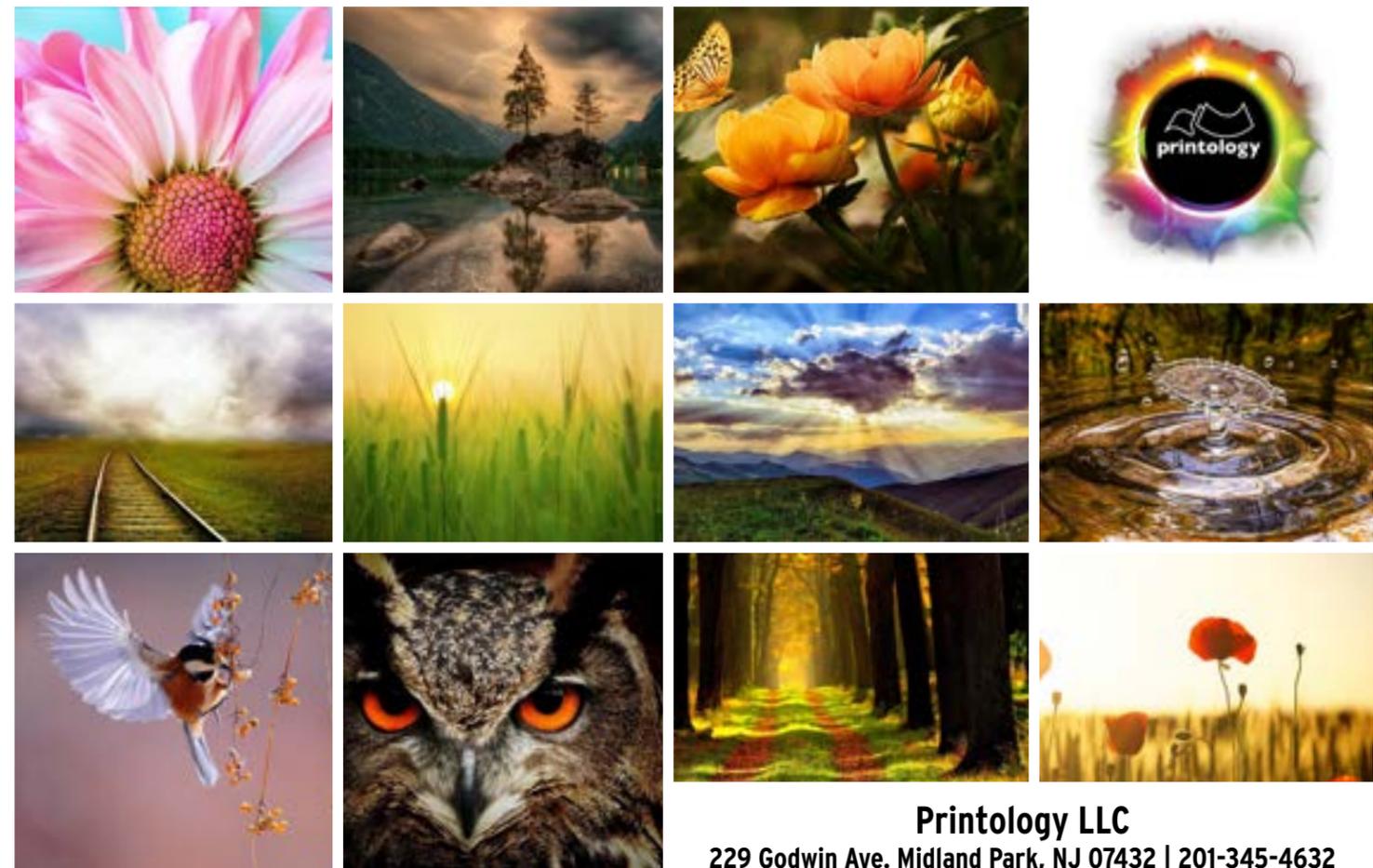
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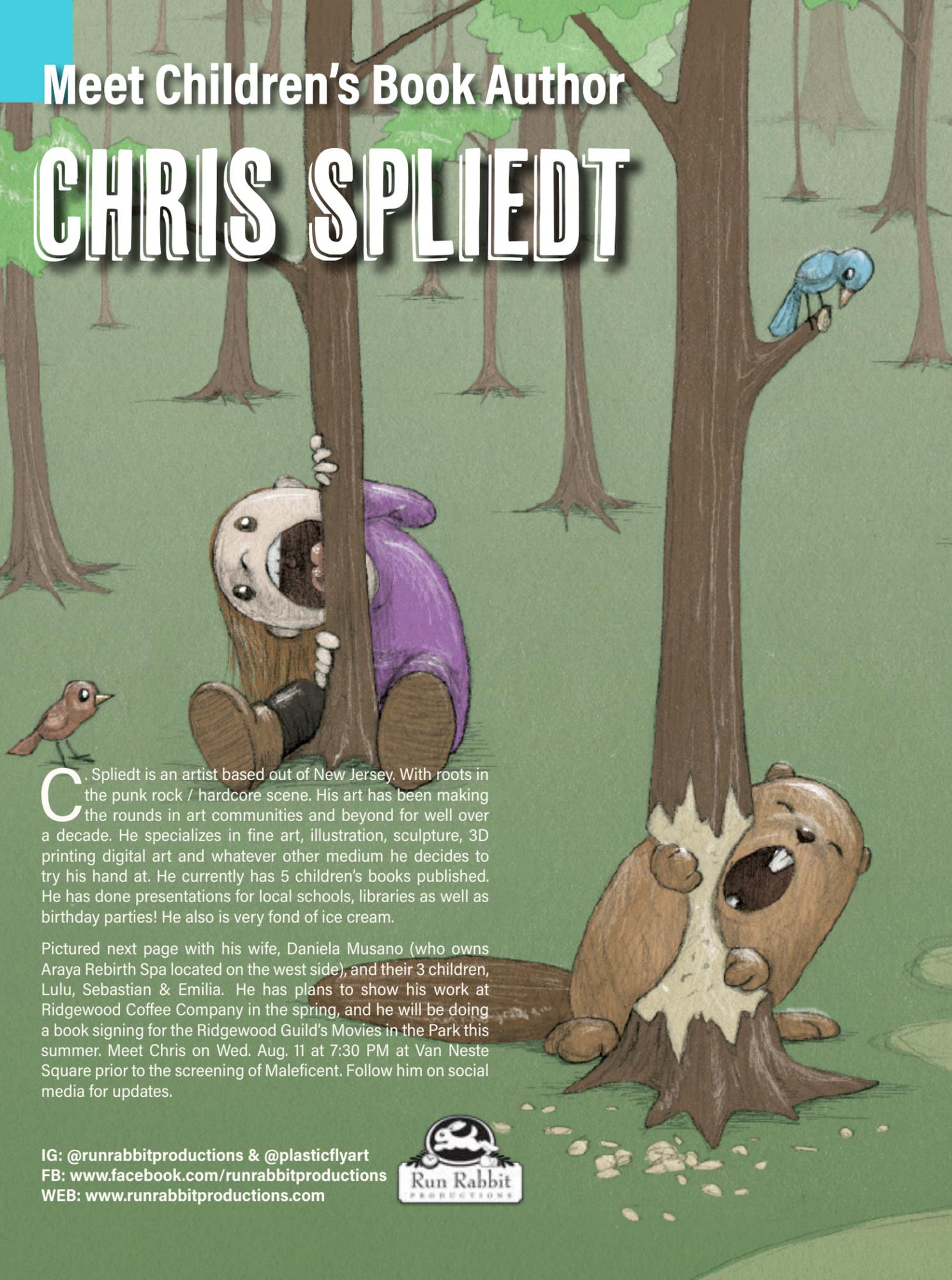
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# Meet Children's Book Author CHRIS SPLIEDT



Chris Spliedt is an artist based out of New Jersey. With roots in the punk rock / hardcore scene. His art has been making the rounds in art communities and beyond for well over a decade. He specializes in fine art, illustration, sculpture, 3D printing digital art and whatever other medium he decides to try his hand at. He currently has 5 children's books published. He has done presentations for local schools, libraries as well as birthday parties! He also is very fond of ice cream.

Pictured next page with his wife, Daniela Musano (who owns Araya Rebirth Spa located on the west side), and their 3 children, Lulu, Sebastian & Emilia. He has plans to show his work at Ridgewood Coffee Company in the spring, and he will be doing a book signing for the Ridgewood Guild's Movies in the Park this summer. Meet Chris on Wed. Aug. 11 at 7:30 PM at Van Neste Square prior to the screening of Maleficent. Follow him on social media for updates.

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The inspiration for Chris's first book, "How Do the Animals Live" was his stepdaughter Lulu who is now 13. ▀

Local Author



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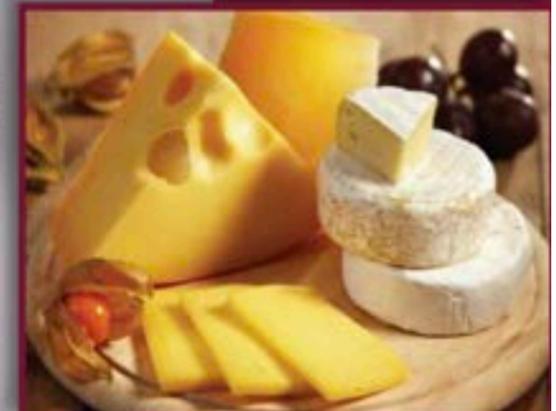
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# Fur-bulous Photo CONTEST

We are so excited to announce the winners of our first annual Furbulous Photo Contest! Our contest is being sponsored by Woof Gang Bakery. We viewed over 100 entries! Our 5 categories are... **Funniest Pet**, **Best Dressed**, **Best Family Photo**, for this year, **Cutest Covid Puppy**, and in keeping with our magazine's senior theme, **Sweetest Senior**.



**Best Family Photo**

Huxley



**Funniest Pet**

Benji

**Sweetest Senior**

**Best Dressed**

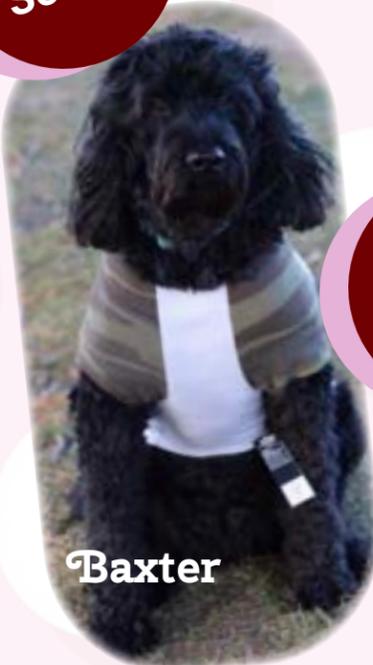


**Cutest COVID Puppy**

Rosie Poo



Penny



Baxter



Top 25  
Pet Retailers  
in North America #8  
2021

Pet Business Media

Woof Gang Bakery® is Your Neighborhood Pet Store®. The leading specialty retailer of pet food, pet supplies and professional pet grooming in North America, with more than 150 locations open or under development across the U.S. Woof Gang Bakery offers the very best in pet care by providing quality products and grooming with a service-oriented approach. Each location is a neighborhood store committed to the well-being, health and happiness of pets.

**And our Honorable Mention Dogs Are...**



Congratulation to our winners! Prizes can be picked up at Woof Gang Bakery.

**WOOF GANG BAKERY®**  
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Each winner will receive a Woof Gang Bakery gift basket and gift certificate to a local pet friendly business!.

# I Could Write a Book



Front row L-R Katie Vogt-Salducha, Mindy Dauber, Shannon Andrews, Heidi Nidds Back row L-R Geri Abdo, Lori Colin, Leigh Warren, Rebecca Nelson, Becky Simpson, Linda Aktar, Cathy Brienza, Nancy Scanlon

Missing in photo- Kathy Entwistle

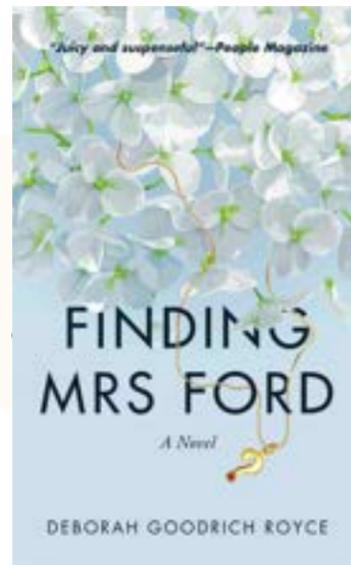
by Geraldine Abdo

Most of us have been in a book group at least once in our lives. These usually were formed in school by our teachers. Rarely, if ever, were we in a book group with our friends. Today we chose our book groups. Who wouldn't want to join an inspiring group of women, who come from vastly different perspectives (Detroit MI, Cincinnati OH, Indianapolis IN, Long Island, Brooklyn NY, New Jersey, Connecticut) and landed in the same town. We are lawyers, artists, designers, teachers, business-women, actresses, realtors, musicians and activists.

Prior, during, and post the pandemic, just having a book group is a highlight in itself. A good book offers a way to escape and land yourself in another time and consciousness. Take that singular activity and unite it with the real pleasures

of being in a group of bright, thoughtful, but refreshingly not always like-minded women, and yet another world and awareness opens up because of that same book. We talk about anything and everything - personal, political, cultural or emotional using the book as a starting point for the discussions. In this way, we have come to know each other on a deeper level than we ordinarily would have. Hearing different perspectives is always mind expanding. Always agreeing with them is another matter. We go light on the food and heavy on the connection. We agree, we disagree, we move on. Yes we still have our "teacher" but the role of moderator rotates according to who hosts the group on any given night. The moderator's job is to

Most of us have been in a book group at least once in our lives. These usually were formed in school by our teachers



ask questions to keep the conversation going and gently bring people back to the topic. Best of all, whether you despise or devour the book, the wine is always delicious and the caramel cheese popcorn is always plentiful.

When the pandemic shut down everything, we decided to meet via Zoom. What was this new crazy Jetson-ish invention? Leave it to the teacher and the business woman to show the group. ("You're muted", "turn your camera on", "we can see you doing yoga", "please mute yourself",

"we hear the screaming in the background"). A learning experience for all. Our very first Zoom book group was about the book "Finding Mrs. Ford" by Deborah Goodrich Royce. What an amazing read, twists and turns that we did not see coming. A few weeks before we met, a member said to us, "I have a surprise! Guess who's coming to the book group?", it was on April 7, 2020

less than a month into the lockdown, Deborah Goodrich Royce was joining us via Zoom. It was AMAZING! Ms. Royce is not only a great writer but she is a fascinating speaker, telling us how she started writing after a full career in movies and TV. Some of us recognized her as Erica Kane's younger sister on All My Children. We discussed the characters, how they came to be, and how she writes her story with such suspense.

Ms. Royce recently recollected, "Here at the one year anniversary of the WHO's declaration of a pandemic in the entire world—and the cancelled book tour for the paperback release of Finding Mrs. Ford in my own little universe—I am so happy to chat about my first Zoom book club visit! Last April 7, I had the pleasure of joining the wonderful book club in Ridgewood, NJ.

Today, we are all old pros at "Zooming." A year ago, I was anything but. However, the ladies welcomed me warmly, we all had our own glasses of wine, we chatted about my book that they had read and my upcoming book, Ruby Falls. It was such a fun and joyful experience that I was an instant convert. While I am excited to return to in-person events, I do love a good Zoom here and there! And thanks to the ladies of Ridgewood for that." In the following months, Zoom became such a casual tool for us to feel normal. We would prop that phone or computer up right next to the popcorn and no one missed a beat. Definitely a shining light in the middle of such a dark time. ■

## A Sweet Story....Bonne Maman: Please pass it on....and buy the jelly!

by Tony Damiano

Incident in a NJ Supermarket - tweeted by Michael Perino @ProfessorPerino

"At the supermarket today, I found a small, elderly woman standing in front of a high shelf holding @BonneMamanUS preserves. She was having trouble finding the flavor she wanted because the jars were set back on the shelf.

She couldn't read the labels. She could barely reach them. I offered to help.

After I handed her the raspberry preserves, she thanked me, paused, and then asked, "Do you know why I buy this brand?"

I laughed and replied, "Because it tastes good?"

"Yes, it tastes good." She paused again. "I am a Holocaust survivor."

This was not the conversation I expected on a Sunday grocery run. "During the war, the family that owns the company hid my family in Paris. So now I always buy it. And whenever I go to the store, my grandkids remind me, 'Bubbe, don't forget to buy the jelly!'"

I told her that that was the best reason I ever heard to buy any company's product. And then we both smiled behind our masks and went our separate ways."

Someone else on Twitter looked into the story and indeed, the town that Andros Company, the makers of Bonne Maman, comes from, hid and saved Jewish families in WW2. It was called Biars sur Cere, which then had about 800 villagers.

From an article, "You have to understand what it was like then. There were posters on the walls, from the Nazis and from the collaborators, and they said that if you are found to help a Jew, a freemason, a communist, a socialist, or a pervert, you will be shot on sight." Despite the great danger in which helping them put the villagers in, still they kept the children safe."

A good reason to buy Bonne Maman products. And a poignant reminder that when we look out for each other it can change lives, and that there are good and selfless people in the world. ■



Maman Preserves can be purchased in town at the new Greenway Markets (formerly King's) 201-493-4924

# That Was Then

by Tony Damiano



The Play House had its grand opening on Nov. 20, 1913. Courtesy of Ridgewood Public Library.

The Play House Theater opened on November 22, 1913. The theater was equipped for both movies and live performances, but on opening it had only a piano for music. An organ was installed later. The parquet seated 800, and a balcony accommodated an additional 200 patrons. The Play House Theater originally presented feature films of the Famous Players Company, at prices of from ten to twenty cents.

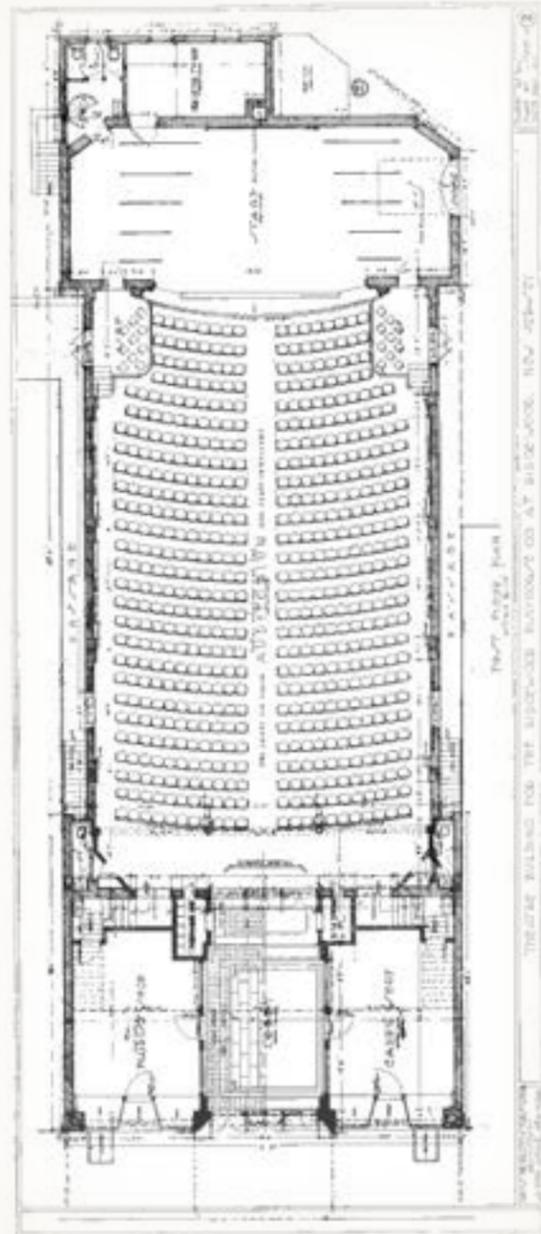
Built by developer Walter W. Wilsey, the theater was part of an ensemble of structures which all featured similar architectural elements, including tiled pent roofs supported by brackets. The facade of the Play House Theater was simple, mostly stucco with a bit of tile trim, but the lobby and auditorium, while still restrained, were a bit more ornate.

Although the auditorium and stage house have been converted for office and retail use, the facade of the building, still sporting the name 'The Play House' below its pent roof, is largely unchanged in appearance from the time of its opening in 1913.

On May 26, 1913, the Village Commissioners, through the Building Inspector, gave the Ridgewood Play House Company permission to erect a building on Wilsey Square between the Van Orden Garage and the Osman Building. The directors of the company were: Walter W. Wilsey, President; Thomas Nichols, of Nutley, Vice-President, A.B. Van Liew and A.W. Fish of Bloomfield, and Howard Peck of East Orange, Directors. W.W. Young, formerly of Bloomfield was Resident Manager and under his direction the company furnished a daily program of high-class moving pictures, except when the building was used as a place for events connected with the social and civic activities of the community.

The land and the building which was of fireproof construction cost the company between \$40,000 and \$50,000 and was built by Ridgewood contractors. The mason work was done by Thomas Vanderbeck, carpenter work by J.L. Brown, the plumbing and heating by W.H. Moore, and the painting and decorating by J. Uhlman. Bigelow and Maxham provided the furnishings.

On November 21st 1913, in the presence of a larger assemblage of citizens than had ever before gathered in an auditorium in the



Contributed by Joe Vogel

Village, the building was formally opened. The program included an address by His Honor, Mayor Daniel A. Garber, a response by Walter W. Wilsey, the father of the project; the presentation of Pinero's comedy in four acts "Trelawney of the Wells" by Miss Gelbart and her associates, all Ridgewood young people; and the reading of a "Dedication Poem" written by Roland Clinton.

Equipped for both movie showings and live performances, the building had a parquet that seated 800 patrons with a balcony accommodating an additional 200. The Play House was built by developer Walter W. Wilsey as part of an ensemble of structures featuring similar architectural elements. Its facade was simple, featuring mostly stucco with a bit of tile trim. The theater was unique in having two storefronts on either side of what once was the entrance lobby. On the right, one would find the "Wigman," a soda shop that served as a concession stand for theater goers and passerby's alike. The theater building was showcased in The Architectural Record (November 1915) as exemplary for its time.

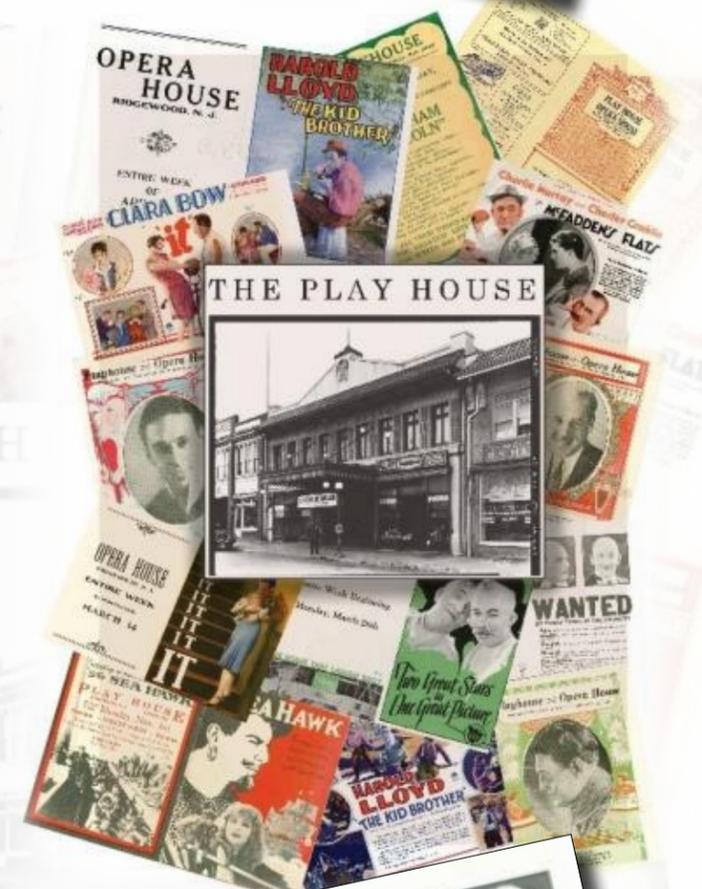


Interior of the historic Play House Theater located at 10 Wilsey Square

Today, it houses multiple businesses, and although the interior no longer serves theatrical purposes, current owners Nick and Stacey Tsapatsaris have gone to great extents to renovate and preserve the unique elements of the décor and facade. After purchasing the building in

1998, the couple began removing materials that entirely covered the original details to reveal the

history behind the space - for example, a relief sculpture at the top of the building, original stucco and Spanish tile. Post renovations, the newly fabricated lettering, "The Play House," above the entrance was based on old photographs. The owners researched and selected a font style that most resembled the original lettering, bringing back the building's identity. Multiple original interior features, including the skylights, scenery, rigs, and curtain pullies, are still intact and have been incorporated into the design of the fly loft. The fly loft located on the 3rd floor, which historically housed the scenery and props for performances back in the early 1900's was an inaccessible attic which was discovered and transformed into the new home of an architectural and real estate development firm in 2015. For more information, or to schedule a tour, contact Ridgewood Walks or Stacey Tsapatsaris at 201-447-7044.



Nick and Stacey Vlavianos Tsapatsaris have lived in Ridgewood for the past 24 years and are the proud parents of daughters Anika, 20, Ellie, 19, and Michaela, 16. In March 2005, Stacey traded in her investment banking executive position to working alongside Nick in real estate development where their passion is bringing neglected areas and buildings back to life. In Ridgewood, they renovated and relocated their family business to the historically iconic building at 10 Wilsey Square, known as the "The Play House." Stacey says, "It was there - in the building's attic - where we uncovered the theater fly loft where props were once stored and rigs that raised backstage scenery back in the early 1900's were still in place."



This is *Now*



Today, the building is owned by Ridgewood residents Stacey and Nick Tsapatsaris who take great pride in this iconic building. The Playhouse is long gone and in its place a series of new businesses presently occupy the space.

Fastachi opened in December of 2020. Read all about Fastachi on page 38.

# Gaming Addiction: Getting It Wrong in the USA

by Andrew Walsh, MSW, LSW, MRHM

Life has a funny way of turning out. Sometimes it is just going along when something happens that changes our trajectory. Maybe it is a big event that is clear the moment it happens like the birth of a child. Other times we can only see the pivotal moment with the passage of time. I remember most of my pivotal moments. The most recent one started with my phone ringing.

"I just don't know what to do. I love him so much and he's floundering, and I want to help but I am completely lost. He is so addicted and it's destroying his life." The voice on the other end of the phone was full of desperation. As someone who specializes in addiction I am used to these types of calls. But this one was different. It wasn't a spouse or parent calling me because of their loved one's addiction or emotional struggles. This was a mother calling me because her adult son was addicted to video games. I took the mother's information and assured her that I would call her back once I put together a list of resources. Immediately I did what I always do when I am searching for information. I googled it. I looked for therapists that specialize in video game addiction among college students in Morris County New Jersey. No results. I realized that my search was too specific. I expanded the geographical region to state-wide. No results. I removed the college student specifier. No results. I eventually ended up searching for video game addiction in the U.S. Nothing.

I never did end up working with that family. I spoke with the mother and her son was not willing to get help. Life continued to move forward and I didn't realize until later that a pivotal moment had occurred. I eventually expanded my career to include public speaking. I focused on issues that youth and young adults face. The more I spoke, the more I was asked to speak. What started out as small events in church basements became large events at state-wide conferences. I went from speaking to five people at a time to hundreds. Somewhere along the way my discipline became a therapist for youth and young adults. I handled questions on alcohol, drugs, self-esteem, and social media with ease. But an old familiar topic started to come up; video games. This time I searched for video game addiction globally. It made all of the difference.

It turns out that certain countries in Asia have treated video game addiction as a public health crisis since 2003. I read everything I could get. I went for long walks and let the information soak in. I formulated my thoughts. And then I wrote. I first started with a series of articles. Eventually I realized that I had enough information that I moved onto writing a book focused on video game addiction.

A lot has happened since then. I have spoken to hundreds of therapists, parents, and teachers. I am invited to speak at conferences all over the country. But as my profile has increased, I have very mixed feelings. I have always loved poetry. The way the words dance play to me. In my therapy sessions I routinely weave in poetry. When I was reflecting on the source of my mixed feelings a poem came to mind. In Thomas Gray's poem Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College he states "Where ignorance is bliss, tis folly to be wise." This line perfectly captures the issue I run into.

I am an expert on video games and the impact they have on a neurological and emotional level. I understand how their design has changed to increase the rate and frequency at which people play. I know the research on the link between loot boxes and gambling addiction. I even have a pretty good idea of how to treat it. What I don't have is a list of programs that can help people struggling with video game addiction. The best program in the United States is also one of the only programs. It is based in Washington state. With 8.5% of youth in the U.S. struggling with video games, one program is not enough to help them. If we had one hundred programs, we might make a small dent. If we had one thousand programs, we could actually make some headway. But we have just a handful of programs. My stomach twists when parents and professionals ask me what resources there are for video game addiction. There aren't nearly enough.

A common question I face is if video game addiction is even a real thing. After all, in the U.S. we don't recognize it as diagnosis. My counter is that even though we don't recognize it here, the rest of the world does. It begs a question. What is more likely; the United States is right, and the rest of the world is wrong or vice versa? My hunch

(continue to pg 69)

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**Congratulations!**

Ridgewood resident  
**Bob Voeglie** won a \$50.00 gift  
card from Café 37 for the correct  
answer to our Wood Find in  
our Holiday 2020 edition. The  
answer was.....the Federici  
sculpture at the entrance of our  
new Parking Garage.



**Stay Tuned for our  
Holiday 2021 issue!**

(continued from pg 43) opened up, Ridgewood restaurants  
have done a great job of keeping  
tables at least six feet apart, requiring people to wear masks  
when they leave their table and limiting the number of  
people in the restaurant to 25 percent. They've also adapted  
by telling patrons they need to be finished and out of the  
restaurant within an hour to allow for other diners to enter.  
Some restaurants are also taking temperatures and phone  
numbers to allow for contact tracing."

Ridgewood restaurants and businesses have struggled  
to balance their financial needs with safety demands and  
have found some brilliant solutions. "COVID made us think  
outside the box," said Paul Vagianos, owner of It's Greek to  
Me. "We've seen a huge shift in flexibility working with local  
government. There was no hesitation—the response was  
always 'What do you need?' so when restaurants wanted to  
set up bollards and corrals for outdoor dining, the Village was  
very supportive," he said.

Local restaurants also had full support for the addition of  
Grab and Go parking and the creation of the pedestrian mall  
during weekends. "The pedestrian mall was an absolute  
savior for businesses during COVID," said Vagianos. There  
are developments Vagianos would like to see continue well  
after the threat of COVID has passed.

"These strategies made a viable difference in the business  
district. We could have done these things before, but COVID  
changed everything and forced us to find something good in

an otherwise very bad situation. Getting 25-30 businesses on  
the same page was previously like herding cattle, but since  
COVID, we are all rowing in the same direction and it's been  
good for downtown Ridgewood. We put our differences aside  
to fight a common enemy. I think there's a very sunny day on  
the horizon for our business district after a very dark time,"  
he said.

Restaurants have gotten a boost from a \$1 million grant from  
the New Jersey Economic Development Authority for the  
Feed the Frontlines program. Partnering with Bergen County  
Commissioner Tracy Zur and HealthBarn USA founder Stacey  
Antine, 20 Ridgewood restaurants will be paid to provide  
100,000 meals to food insecure residents over a three-month  
period.

"This is such a win/win program," said Vagianos. "There are  
more than 100,000 people who are food insecure in Bergen  
County. Through this magnificent program, we are giving  
restaurants a lifeline to help them make it through the winter  
while feeding people who are hungry." Vagianos said the  
combination of grant funding, ease of parking for takeout and  
an uptick of outdoor dining as warm weather returns should  
help insure that "the restaurant you enjoyed one year ago will  
still be here next year."

During spring and summer Ridgewood residents may have  
to mask up and maintain a healthy distance, but they can still  
find many ways to enjoy the entertainment, shopping and  
dining downtown. ■

(continued from pg 33)

navigates childcare depending on their particular job situation. Funds are still needed and greatly appreciated. We are so grateful to the community for continuing to support families in need, especially during this chaotic time!" said **Kate Duggan - Executive Director**

**Temple Israel and Jewish Community Center**  
475 Grove St. (201-444-9320) rabbi@synagogue.org

"I'm happy to say our community remains united and strong!" said Rabbi Fine. "We've had to implement a few changes because of social distancing. We held worship services in the parking lot until inclement weather hit, then our worship services went online. We plan on keeping virtual services in some hybrid form to benefit our homebound as well as offer future online adult education. Our religious school is operating while following all CDC protocols and we continue to hold life cycle events. Temple Israel volunteers have kept quite busy throughout the pandemic cooking and delivering meals for/to seniors at Ridge Crest thru SHARE, co-partnering with Park Wood Deli by cooking and delivering dinners for Family Promise Walk-In Dinner, collecting food and funds for SSA, and driving our senior community members to receive their vaccinations." "We look forward to in-person worship again!" Rabbi added. **David Fine - Rabbi**

**Mount Bethel Baptist Church**  
399 S. Broad St. (201-445-9108) gnobles@optonline.net

"Although we could not gather face to face, thankfully we continued our fellowship, meetings, prayer services and worship online. Going virtual has been well received" said Pastor Nobles. "Our Youth Meetings continue every Friday evening, and our Community Outreach programs remain strong. We still hold food drives to support Ridge Crest and local families in need. We had a community outreach in Partnership with Valley that we were able to inform people about the vaccine. Also, during this time, we have been able to reach many people across the world to minister God's Word to them. At Mount Bethel we have a strong support system that enables us to reach out to the members and community in need." "The pandemic has forced us to be more creative in finding ways to serve our congregation and our community." Mount Bethel is celebrating 116 years of service to the Village of Ridgewood. **Rev Gloria Nobles - Pastor**

**Emmanuel Church**  
14 Hope St. (201-444-7300) office@emmanuelridgewood.org

"Because we've been forced to use technology, this has brought more people to participate in our programs," said Pastor Gill. Emmanuel Church has been online streaming for staff gatherings, worship, and music for 5 years before the pandemic, however, production and quality has improved since the pandemic. In person worship has increased to 50%. Emmanuel's community continue to support: The Bergen County Homeless Shelter/Hackensack providing meals directly, donating cash and perishables to SSA, assist senior

Emmanuel Church Food Drive



residents at Ridge Crest, and offer online and in-person support groups for Grief counseling, Divorce, Breakups, Alcoholics Anonymous, AI-Anon. **Pastor Kenneth Gill - Senior Minister**

**Metropolitan AME Zion Church**  
259 S. Broad St. (201-445-1003) mbrandon3@gmail.com

"At 137 years Metro AME is the oldest African American House of Worship in the area. Sadly, we were hit hard with deaths, especially in March and April. We were in "self-care" trying to take care of our own grieving congregants. Then in May the murder of George Floyd sent shock waves across the country and especially through our congregation. The subject of our weekly Community Outreach Zoom meetings turned to Civil Rights. As a result, a new forum to communicate across all borders was developed with the South Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to address civil government, civil rights and civilian rights. Listening and in participating service is a blessing and necessary of people." Rev Mack also serves as Convenor of The Religious Leaders of Ridgewood, a clergy advisory group who participate in the Interfaith Association of Ridgewood. **Rev Mack Brandon - Pastor**

**Upper Ridgewood Community Church**  
35 Fairmount Rd (201-445-4082)  
CCUR2@verizon.net NPALSMA@optonline.net

"Until we are all vaccinated, people are hesitant to participate fully in worship and ministry here. People need assurance of Safety!" Rev. Palsma explained. When the pandemic hit, the church building was closed completely to the congregation.. Worship went totally virtual and communal ministry ceased. Volunteers from church could no longer walk the Crop Walk, serve meals at Eva's Kitchen, provide hospitality for Family Promise or serve the traditional ziti dinner at Friends to Friends Community Church. On Sept. 13th, the church started in-person worship, utilizing YouTube and Facebook, and following all CDC state and local pandemic guidelines re: cleaning, sanitizing, monitoring and maintaining social distancing. The church was able to do an outside Pet Blessing in October and a Community Christmas Tree lighting in December, as well as collect funds for St Paul's Episcopal Church (Paterson), and the River Ministry Hackensack). Some of the community groups have not returned to the building, but the Women's

AA Group gradually has begun to reconvene and the church lives in hope that it will be fully open again. Rev. Palsma stated: "We haven't stopped our community out-reach; we're just doing things a little differently to adjust to the circumstances." **Rev. Nolan Palsma**

**Community Meals on Wheels Inc.**  
354 Rock Rd Glen Rock (201-447-8295) c/o Community Church of Glen Rock communitymealsonwheels@gmail.com

"Community Meals is a private non-profit meals-on-wheels organization that delivers healthy meals to residents unable to shop or cook for themselves. Thanks to our incredible volunteers, we have not had to skip a single day of delivering nutritious meals to our clients during the pandemic. But we have had to completely pivot the way we package and deliver the food, in effort to keep volunteers distanced from each other and from clients." Said Penny, "Volunteers pick up the food packed into coolers and deliver the meals to coolers outside clients' homes, ensuring the delivery is "contactless". We serve seniors in Allendale, Glen Rock, HoHoKus, Midland Park, Ridgewood, Waldwick, and parts of Saddle River. Each meal costs \$4.90 (hot) \$4.50 (cold) and financial assistance is available. CMI allows seniors to live independently and with dignity while still safe and nourished. **Penny Schildkraut - Executive Director**

**Social Service Association of Ridgewood & Vicinity**  
6 Station Plaza (201-444-2980) info@ssaridgewood.org

"The pandemic has brought a growth - a stronger desire in the community to help those in need. As an agency, it's wonderful to receive support of this magnitude from the community!" said Catherine Estes. Donations are sorted and shelved at the SSA food pantry and bags are pre-packed with family food for client pick-up. In addition, as possible, extra food donations are shared with other area pantries and organizations in need. During the early pandemic months from March through August, pre-packed bags of food were delivered to the homes of families in need. Since August 2020, clients have been able to visit the pantry during a scheduled 'window of time' for contactless drive-up pick up of boxes of fresh foods, including produce, milk & meat as well as pre-packaged bags with non-perishable foods, toiletries, cleaning supplies and diapers. The annual Thanksgiving food drive and Holiday Gift program were modified this year, but clients were notified in advance and delivery/pick up was arranged. SSA continues to feed over 100 area families each month. Clients include the elderly, disabled, individuals living on fixed incomes, and families struggling especially during the pandemic, and people experiencing special circumstances. Please call for more information on how we may assist you. **Catherine Estes - Agency Director** ■

(continued from pg 63)

is that the rest of the world is right. My concern is that my hunch is right. If it is, we are so far behind that we have a massive problem and do not even know it exists.

Another common question theme is on whether the adverse impact of video games is significant. Basically, is this really having a negative impact. There are two main arguments for why we need to treat this. First, in extreme cases people can destroy their lives with video games. Now some believe that I am being dramatic when I say that. But a look at South Korea quickly illustrates my point. South Korea is the gaming capital of the world. However, they have what they call the lost generation. It is comprised of youth and young adult males. They estimate that up to 50% of that population is struggling with video game addiction. Sometimes people shrug this off. They say "Yeah sure but that is South Korea." What they miss though is that South Korea is just further down the same road. They started sooner than we did. If we want to see what is going to happen in the U.S., we just need to look at what's already happened in Asia. The second reason that I believe we need to treat video game addiction is for what comes next. Recently I spoke at the state-wide gambling addiction conference in New Jersey. The topic of my presentation was on the link between video game loot boxes and gambling addiction. My presentation was based off of research in the U.K. which showed that gambling addiction quadrupled among their youth population in the past three years. The cause? Loot boxes which normalized gambling.

If you think about video game addiction as a warning light on your car's dashboard, you need to think about gambling addiction as your car shouting that something catastrophic is about to happen. Gambling addiction has incredibly high rates of suicide. Up to 46% of people struggling with gambling addiction will contemplate suicide. Up to 20% will attempt it. Furthermore, up to 75% of individuals struggling with gambling addiction will also struggle with substance abuse. Based on my research I feel like I can see around the bend of the road a bit. What I see is terrifying. Kids play video games. They start to gamble in the video games with loot boxes. This normalizes gambling. They transition to other forms of gambling. They develop substance abuse issues. They contemplate suicide. They attempt suicide. Not everyone who plays video games becomes addicted. Not everyone who plays video games gambles. But enough do that inaction is not an option.

About Andrew: Andrew holds Masters Degrees in Social Work and Human Resource Management. He is a therapist, writer, and speaker who specializes in issues that youth and young adults face. Andrew wrote a book entitled Video Game Addiction 101: The Latest Behavioral Disorder in 2019. Additionally, Andrew has advanced training in substance abuse and addiction. Andrew works in private practice. If you or a loved one would like to work with Andrew or have questions you can contact him at 973-978-5502 or via email at [andrew@familyaddictioninstitute.com](mailto:andrew@familyaddictioninstitute.com). ■

*(continued from pg 50)*

the arts were most influential for him.

Says Spencer, "we found a way to bring our filmmaking into the school and I think that was the biggest thing - being motivated to pave our own way. Our greatest mentor was definitely Basil Pizzuto. Basil is a grade administrator and assistant principal who really understood what Hayes and I were trying to do. He recognized our talent and truly believed in us. Before we knew it, he was coming to us with project after project to create media for the school. Whether it was a video to help raise money to renovate the library, a video to be shown at an assembly or a trailer for a New Players production, we were doing it all. Advisor, Meg Schaefer, enthuses, "Hayes was an actor in New Players. We were so lucky to have him and Spencer to photograph, to do trailers - "we never had trailers before!" She adds, "It was clear how talented they were. And really fun to watch them walking down that path."

"They filled our need," says Pizzuto. The school needed a new library and we needed funds. They created a terrific video showing the old library and what a new one would provide. When we had a bigger challenge - attracting future parents to give money - they caught the essence of the school in a video. I proposed independent study: they would answer to me. As a result, they were given a free period to create their own projects."

"I can't help but feel like Basil made us almost famous at RHS," says Spencer. "Every staff member and most of the students knew us as the 'film guys.' Again, we found ourselves as some of the only kids in the entire school focusing so much time on the medium. This opened up so many opportunities outside of school as well, doing work for local businesses and clients in and around Ridgewood. And on the side, Hayes and I were getting more serious with our narrative work, too, even going as far as making our first feature film, "A Colorful Romance" when we were Freshmen. It was pretty bad, but I feel like a lot of people say that about their first film. I think looking back it was more about the learning experience of making a film with no budget than the final product. It led us to create "Shutterflies" our Junior year, a 40 minute film that won a couple of festivals, including Sun Dance. Villager, Rosie McCooe, an actor in that film, became a friend and admirer. She asked them, now 24 and both videographers to help with Jamboree 2021.

Matthew Cheplic, also a mentor, taught Literature in Film. "The best class I took at RHS," says Spencer. "He was trying to make film a more common practice at the school. He showed me some great films, opened my eyes to the importance of the page and its relationship with visual language."

After college, Hayes to Emerson where he studied film production ("I didn't like it.") and Spencer to Ithaca (I met some incredible people I still collaborate with, who all shared a love for storytelling") the two are professional videographers, working with companies like Netflix, Hulu,

Showtime, following their passion, and going where the path takes them. ■

*(continued from pg 26)*

### **Keeping seniors informed**

"A big part of our mission is getting information and resources out to older residents," said Abbott. In addition to providing referral services to benefit older adults and their families, the organization serves as a hub about village events and services. The role of trusted communicator became even more important during pandemic.

"Many seniors didn't have the technology to order groceries and attend Zoom meetings. We have helped them adapt along with our excellent partners, especially the Ridgewood Public Library," said Abbott. During pandemic, the organization worked to connect residents, especially those homebound, with assistance. The group's monthly email newsletter ramped up from a monthly basis to a weekly or biweekly update during COVID.

Another critical focus for the organization is promoting greater understanding between the business community and the village's older population. "Older adults have a lot of buying power and it's in the interest of local businesses to make their stores appealing to this demographic group. Things like wider spacing between aisles and improved lighting in stores can make a big difference to older adults," said Sue Ullrich, Age Friendly Ridgewood team member and social programming director for Ridgecrest Senior Housing. "We worked on a project with the Ridgewood Chamber of Commerce to identify ways retailers can make their stores more age-friendly."

Upgrades made with seniors in mind benefit the community as a whole. Age Friendly Ridgewood's Walkability Study and updated Sidewalk Audit resulted in improved sidewalks and upgraded crosswalk signage and the donation of three new benches in the Central Business District.

"Our Sidewalk Audit improved walkability for everyone," said Brogan. "As little as a quarter inch difference sidewalk height can create a hazard not only for a wheelchair, but for a stroller. Improvements for seniors mean improvements for the whole community. Good lighting, available benches, affordable restaurants and parks for gathering benefit young families as well as older residents."

Ongoing priorities are a walkway from the Ridgewood train station to the Ridgecrest Housing complex, additional bus shelters and improvements to existing bus shelters, and upgrades to intersections and crosswalks. Flexible transportation options for those wishing to drive less is another focus for the non-profit group. Ridgewood's Senior Bus and ride services enable senior residents to maintain their independence (see related story). ■



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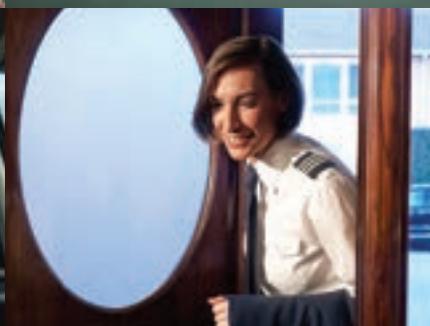
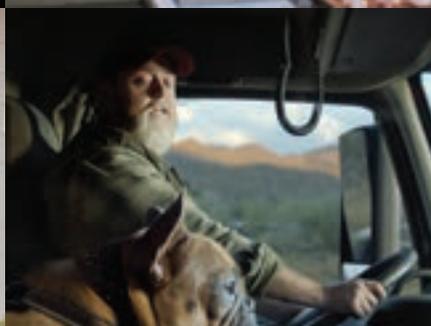
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