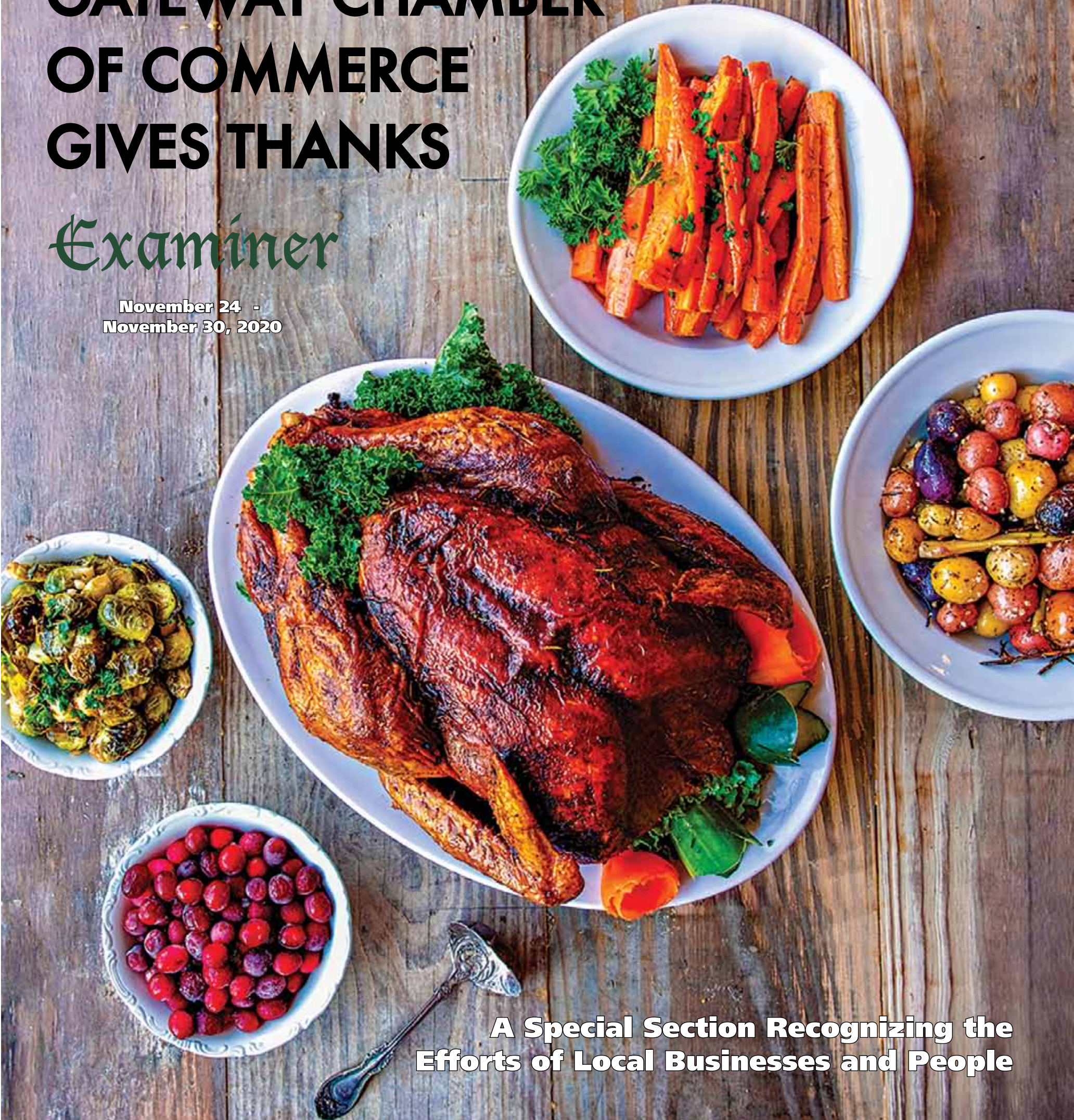


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Examiner

November 24 -
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Thank You to Everyone Who Has Gone Above and Beyond

2020 will go down as one of the most challenging years in many of our lifetimes. And challenging times bring out the best in who we are as a community.

As this year comes to a close, let us reflect on the good that has been done by many individuals, businesses and organizations who have gone above and beyond to assist during these turbulent months. Some of them are profiled in this section, but there are many others who silently helped neighbors, the needy and homeless and our social conscience. To all I say thank you!

- NewYork-Presbyterian Hudson Valley Hospital and all our Health Care institutions – our Heroes on the Front Lines!

- The Business Council of Westchester and all the local Chambers of Commerce, including HVG Chamber, for their daily communications to our business communities on loans, grants, programs, PPE equipment, surveys, and informational webinars.

- The School District Superintendents for adapting to virtual learning, providing technology to students in need and continuing to navigate the ever-changing daily challenges of the pandemic.

- The large and small grocers for keeping the shelves stocked as best they could!

- The Peekskill Business Improvement District - When the pandemic struck, the Peekskill Business Improvement District

pivoted away from events and focused on how it could help downtown businesses. The BID proceeded with the presentation of the Peekskill Farmers Market under strict COVID-19 precautions, which attracted almost 1,000 market goers each week. In cooperation with the city, the BID advocated for free minute parking for restaurants and retailers, distributed loan and grant opportunities and other important information to downtown businesses and supported street closures and the development of parklets for outdoor dining. In addition, the BID launched its “We are Peek-

skill” campaign to attract more foot traffic and promote the city’s diverse community of business owners.

And to all of us who have lost family and friends during this time, including myself, we honor their memories by persevering and living our lives to the fullest.

As we ZOOM towards 2021 in the words of Franklin D. Roosevelt “Let us move forward with strong and active faith.”

Deb Milone
President
HVGCC



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Communities Step Up to Feed First Responders, Others in Need

BY ELSBETH LINDNER

Grateful for the heroism of health caregivers, first responders, ambulance workers and police during the COVID-19 crisis, many people have found themselves wanting to give back. At the same time, those suddenly rendered food insecure by the collapsed economy need help. The result has been an outpouring of generosity from individuals and organizations in the area.

When Phelps Hospital in Sleepy Hollow set up a Meal Train Plus account in March, as a means of channeling food to front-line workers, they quickly found the slots – providing 30 meals, three times a day – filled up by donors.

“We never advertised, all the response was word of mouth,” said Pam Lipperman, Director of Volunteers at Phelps. “But the staff were super-appreciative of the generosity. They were putting in long, hard hours, doing heart-breaking work, and the emotional support of people’s gifts was priceless.”

Subscribers to the Meal Train could pick their preferred time slot and restaurant, knowing not only that the food they were



The Peekskill Rotary Club distributed food outside The Field Library.

paying for would give the medical staff one less thing to worry about, but also that their cash would be supporting local businesses hit hard by the shutdown. Caterers up and down the Hudson were tasked with delivering food – River City Grill in Irvington, Eatarry in Tarrytown, J.P. Doyle’s in Sleepy Hollow, Briar Bagels in Briarcliff, The Tasty Table in Ossining, and dozens more.

“It was a wonderful way to support the spirit of the hospital,” Lipperman said.

Meanwhile in Peekskill, Chapman “Chappy” Manzer of Manzer’s Landscape Designs and Development, Inc. and Luis Segarra of The Crescent established a fundraiser to pay for meals to go to NewYork-Presbyterian Hudson Valley Hospital and Peekskill/Cortlandt Fire Departments,

nursing homes, EMS and DPW departments. With a goal of raising \$20,000, they reached nearly \$16,000. In an addition, on Mother’s Day, Manzer delivered 450 hanging plants to staff at the Hudson Valley Hospital.

This was not Manzer’s first charitable intervention. A long-time member of the Rotary Club, Peekskill Chamber of Commerce and the HOPE for Youth Foundation, Manzer was already donating his company’s time and labor to help with community landscaping projects when he saw local businesses start to close and lay off workers because of the coronavirus. That’s when he decided he had to do something.

“These people have always been there for our community and I thought they deserved a better shot than what they’re getting,” he said. “I figured that providing groceries and meals would make what they’re going through a little easier.” So began his twice weekly giveaways of hot meals and packaged groceries to lines of waiting people.

Inspired by the generosity of individuals like Manzer and organizations like Gullotta House, which is also providing free com-

munity meals in Ossining, a new fund-raising site called the Virtuous Collective has been formed in conjunction with Ossining Innovates! and the Briant Youth Alliance, “to create a bridge between the local businesses that provide relief for the Greater Ossining Community and the not-for-profits,” explained Dr. Gayle Marchica, President of the Greater Ossining Chamber of Commerce.

“The plan is to widen the pool of involvement, inviting more businesses, philanthropies, and residents to become part of the solution of surviving the current crisis and building a foundation for the future,” she said. “For the moment our focus will be on meals, but looking beyond the pandemic, we will be doing other things, like helping with school supplies – whatever the community needs.”

Marchica sees the Virtuous Collective as a new branch of “the local eco-system,” as are all the other donations, large and small, that are being volunteered, often anonymously, by members of our communities. They are offers of comfort in a dark situation, and that’s the literal definition of a silver lining.



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Peekskill NAACP Played Pivotal Role in Promoting Effective Change

The Hudson Valley Gateway Chamber of Commerce (HVGCC) proudly congratulates Chamber member the Peekskill NAACP (Branch 2170-B) on being visible, valuable, viable and civically engaged during this year's global pandemic. The Peekskill NAACP's mission of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate race based discrimination and ensure the health and well-being of all persons. Led by Peekskill NAACP President Valerie Eaton, the Peekskill NAACP recently received branch recognition by the NAACP Regional Director for its outstanding "game-changing" community engagement! Their President adopted the motto, "Together we can make effective change!" at their 2019 Gala.

The branch, through its Civic Engagement Committee (led by Civic Engagement Chair and HVGCC Board Member Kecia Palmer-Cousins) received a NYS Census2020 Grant (\$20,000) to conduct Census2020 outreach in the Peekskill community. The Peekskill NAACP was able to



Peekskill NAACP President Valerie Eaton and Civic Engagement Chair Kecia Palmer-Cousins helped get the word out about Census2020.

provide stipends to more than 40 youth and adult Census2020 Ambassadors that worked on the Census2020 Outreach events throughout Peekskill. They assisted hundreds of Peekskill residents to successfully complete their Census. Their Get Out The Vote (GOTV) efforts includes zoom video interviews with the 17th Congressional District Primary candidates and recently, their General Membership Meeting informational discussion with

Senator Pete Harckham. The Peekskill NAACP hosted a GOTV Caravan on Black Solidarity Day (11/2) and a GOTV phone back on Election Day.

The Peekskill NAACP covers a lot of ground in our area. The Criminal Justice Committee continued their fight for justice by hosting a peaceful rally against police brutality after the murder of George Floyd. The Health Committee presented Covid-19 and Health Care Awareness through

virtual meetings.

Peekskill NAACP President and members have been appointed and served on the Peekskill Downtown Revitalization Committee as well as the current Peekskill Police Task Force. The Environmental Justice Committee will have their Green New Deal resolution adopted in January by the New York State office of the NAACP. Before the pandemic, the Economic Sustainability Committee hosted a

successful Black Business Mixer attended by over 60 local Black Business owners, hosted a virtual MWBE Certification workshop and is in the process of compiling a black business directory to be posted on the Peekskill NAACP website and available for distribution. Lastly, the Education Committee was an active community partner as a member of the Peekskill Education Technology Equity Coalition, helping to raise over \$42,000 to which they contributed over \$1,200 from their fundraising efforts. This coalition raised funds the purchase of WI-FI hotspots and Chromebooks for the students attending schools in Peekskill. In October, the Peekskill NAACP reached a major milestone when their Peekskill NAACP Peekskill Youth Council #2832 reactivation was approved at the October NAACP National Board Meeting.

The Hudson Valley Gateway Chamber of Commerce commends The Peekskill NAACP on a job well done even in the face of these challenging times. To learn more about this dynamic volunteer organization go to www.PeekskillNAACP.org.

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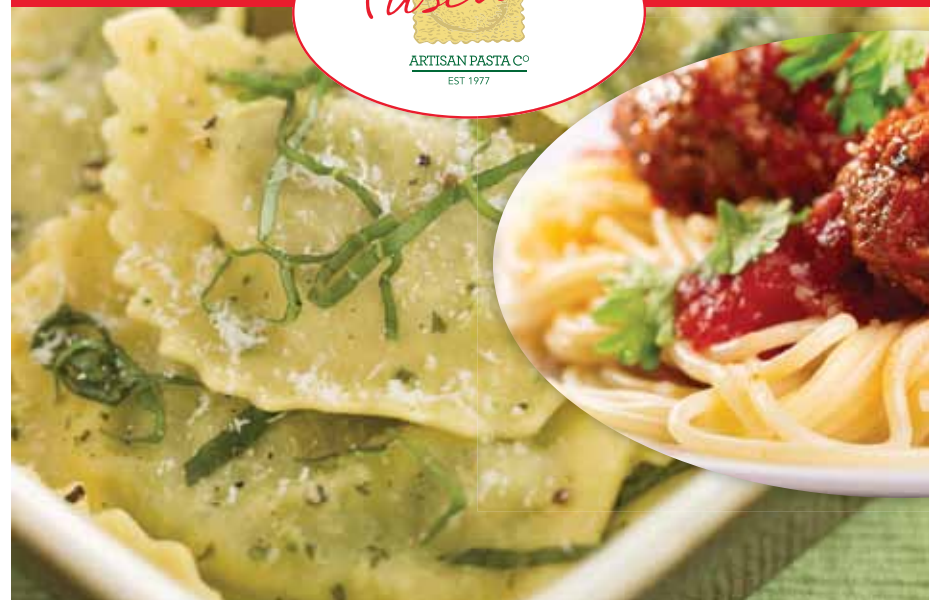
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Lanza Put Profits Behind to Help Those in Need During Pandemic

This is a look at a restaurant group's response to the coronavirus outbreak. It's also a look at the businessman behind that response, and a series of decisions and actions that show that he is far more "man" than "business."

Louie Lanza is the owner and force behind Hudson Hospitality Group, the Peekskill-based restaurant group that operates The Hudson Room, Taco Dive Bar, The Eagle Saloon, and Bajarito, as well as the Factoria Entertainment Complex, including Fin & Brew and River Outpost Brewing.

In the earliest days of the pandemic, Lanza and his team were doing all the same things that other businesses and especially restaurateurs were doing. They were keeping their eyes on the unfolding news, and trying to figure out what they needed to do to keep their operations safe and open.

As Lanza said, "In February and the very beginning of March, the talk was about hand washing, and keeping distance between people and groups. People were getting sick, and businesses were trying to figure out how to NOT be part of spreading the virus."

Then one day, everything shifted for Lanza, and for his restaurant group. "It was a Sunday in mid-March, I sat down with a couple friends, chefs and restaurateurs, and we were talking about what we should do, what was the right thing to do. I walked away from that conversation knowing, it was time to shut down. The only responsible way to keep from being part of the problem, was to close our busy dining rooms."

Today, this might seem like a logical, and almost obvious step, but this was before the Governor had locked down the state. There was a 'containment zone' in New Rochelle, and that was about it in terms of official response here in New York. Mask mandates and lockdown were yet to be enacted.

Lanza took that day to reach out to managers and employees at his string of restaurants, and in the evening, he took to social media, announcing to his many patrons that he would be closing until it was truly safe to reopen.

"It wasn't an easy decision, not by a longshot. We have lots of reservations, patrons that expect service, we have employees that need their jobs, we have parties and events planned," explained Lanza. "But I know that my greatest responsibility to those people is to do what is best for their health and safety – so we closed down."

That was just the beginning of a heroic response to the scourge of COVID. The next thing he did was to partner with Chef Eric Korn and co-found the Million Gallons movement. An effort to turn food supplies in restaurants and distributors into food security for hospitality workers.

The Lanza Family Foundation came to the financial aid of the project, donating \$100,000 to the cause. Lanza personally donated significantly of his own time, and the facilities of his businesses, to cook, warehouse and distribute soup to the community in need.

"I believe in helping those who cannot help themselves and not those who won't. That's something that I was taught to be-

lieve by both my parents," Lanza said. "But with the lockdown and pandemic, suddenly so many who normally do not need or ask for help, were in a position of need, including many in the hospitality business."

Lanza was also named Co-Chair of Westchester County Executive George Latimer's "Reopening Task Force." Along with Legislator Catherine Parker, Lanza co-chairs the Task Force, and their work to assist the county and the business community here to reopen and begin the process of economic recovery.

Lanza was quick to put himself and his

facilities to work to help those in need. As part of their volunteer efforts, the Factoria facility immediately put into place strict PPE, cleaning and disinfecting protocols, and went to work for the charitable Million Gallons cause. Lanza was slow to reopen his restaurants to the public however, choosing to err on the side of caution.

"We didn't want to reopen until numbers

continued on page 10

Louie Lanza was co-founder of the Million Gallons movement.



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Cortlandt Branding Campaign Designed to Help Businesses

The Town of Cortlandt did not stay idle during the pandemic. While COVID delayed the announcement, in late summer Supervisor Linda Puglisi and the Town Board unveiled a branding campaign designed to bolster existing businesses and attract new ones.

The Supervisor and Town Board developed an immediate response to the COVID pandemic ensuring the safe and continuing operation of Town services and many programs. One focus was on assisting Cortlandt's many businesses through the challenges COVID posed. The town instituted daily updates on its website and through social media to alert Cortlandt business owners and operators regarding the availability of state and federal business aid programs. Supervisor Puglisi and the Board made appropriate staff available to businesses to assist with applications for the Payroll Protection Plan and other programs of the federal CARES Act. Advisories were issued so business owners were aware of the latest NYS COVID related restrictions and protocols.

Early in the pandemic, the town launched a campaign labeled "It's in the Bag". The purpose was to let residents know what restaurants were open for takeout or delivery. The campaign included promotion on the town website and social media as well as signage to restaurants that were remaining open for takeout as mandated by NYS in

the pandemic's initial stages.

Three months ago, the campaign "Cortlandt...where life works" was launched. Developed by Supervisor Puglisi, the Town Board, staff and consultants, the campaign highlights the many benefits to business to expand, locate or relocate in the Town. Cortlandt features desirable commercial space at reasonable costs; a willing, educated and diverse workforce; a lifestyle second to none and a location that provides great transportation. The average household income, within a ten-mile radius, is \$113,830. Couple that with the town's population's av-

erage age of 41.4 years and there is a ripe market for all types of goods and services.

Cortlandt completed an award-winning Sustainable Master Plan that concentrated on economic development. It has guided the town to focus on trends for the future of employment, which today continue to evolve. It targeted four strategic areas for economic growth.

A prime consideration for business is expand or locate in Cortlandt is the town's stable leadership, fiscal certainty and commitment to economic growth. The Supervisor and Town Board have served together

for over a decade. The town has tripled its reserve fund over the past 30 years all while keeping Town property taxes low (an average at 1% increase over the past 29 years). It has committed over \$160 million to capital projects to enhance infrastructure, while protecting open space (over 3,000 acres in the past decade).

Cortlandt truly is where life works. What works for you? Let Cortlandt know and the team will help turn your vision into reality. To learn more about Cortlandt... where life works visit: <https://wherelife-works.cortlandt.com/>.

Lanza Helps Those in Need

continued from page 7

were lower, transmission was lower, and we had time to put into place all the protocols and precautions we could, to make our guests safe. Reopening outside was relatively easy, reopening inside was not, and we've been very slow and careful in our process," explained the lifelong restaurateur.

"We have hand sanitizer stations, barriers between tables, air purification systems, and lots and lots of staff training on how to act with caution," Lanza. "We dramatically limited our capacity, and we are always evaluating how the process is working."

"We look forward to being able to host larger events again. I am hopeful that the efforts of all New Yorkers, distancing, wearing masks, foregoing large events, will be enough to keep us all safe, and to keep businesses and the economy open through the winter," he added. "We have a tremendous industry suffering with some of the hardest working people in this nation, who want to work but can't right now. They need your help and support in any and every way possible!"

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Aero-Ba-Soul, Inc. – Motivating and Collaborating with MWBEs

During this year's global pandemic, many entrepreneurs and Minority and Women Owned Businesses (MWBEs), in the Tri-State area, gained new confidence with technical assistance from Peekskill residents, husband and wife engineer duo Kecia Palmer-Cousins and Kevin Cousins.

Kecia and Kevin motivated and collaborated with small business owners, connecting them with free resources and business management advice to sustain and grow their businesses. Their company, Aero-Ba-Soul, Inc. is a certified NYC & NYS Minority Women Owned Business Enterprise (MWBE). They specialize in project management, business management and soft skills/workforce development training. These small business therapists are the affectionately known as the "go to MWBE Consultants of Westchester!"

Kecia is an active Hudson Valley Gateway Chamber of Commerce (HVGCC) Board Member. She is VP of the Peekskill Youth Bureau Board, Civic Engagement Chair of the Peekskill NAACP, Historian for Jack and Jill of America, Inc. Mid-Hudson Valley Chapter and Facilitator for the NY2



Kecia Palmer-Cousins

Chapter of Go on Girl Bookclub! She has received numerous recognitions over the years including Peekskill's Black History Month Honoree award, nominated by the HVGCC's Deb Milone. In June, Kevin received the 1st Lou Panzanaro Family Award for his dedicated service, hard work and time to the Peekskill HS Athletic program. They are the proud parents of teenaged sons, Kendall

and Kyle Cousins.

This past year, Kecia and Kevin, Aero-Ba-Soul, Inc.'s MWBE Mondays and Philanthropy Thursdays newsletters and social media blasts were lifelines to many entrepreneurs who did not know where to turn as each day brought new challenges. Many faced decreased revenues and had to repivot their businesses. Aero-Ba-Soul, Inc. partnered with



Kevin Cousins

community organizations, prime contractors and provided "free" technical assistance, grant, and loan information, leads to contracts and training to MWBEs. They reviewed Request for Proposals, helped entrepreneurs get MWBE Certified, and assisted them in preparing responses to government contract opportunities. Their clients ranged from solopreneurs, restaurant owners,

event planners, to small business with less than \$3M in revenues.

At Aero-Ba-Soul, Inc. we build dreams to life with heart and a soul! Like a trusted friend and confidante, our personal project managers tap into their vivid imaginations, hearts, and souls to analyze client's projects and engineer solutions through project completion. www.aerobasoul.com /914-737-7237.

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Community Support Gratifying for The Pantry at Mt. Carmel

BY KACEY MORABITO-GREAN

In mid-March, The Pantry at Mt. Carmel was just 14 months old, serving almost 50 families every other Saturday from Mt. Carmel Hall in Verplanck.

Our numbers grew dramatically overnight. We quickly changed our hours to every Saturday as our weekly order to Feeding Westchester grew to more than 3,000 pounds.

Since our food delivery came on Friday, we decided to open the pantry every Friday to help ease the crowd on Saturday.

In a matter of weeks we quadrupled our hours and more than doubled our numbers as 120 families per week became our new normal.

Rather than have our guests come into our pantry, we switched to "trunk service" to allow families to stay safe in their cars while we filled their trunks with meals.

That meant getting thousands of pounds of food down the stairs into the building, sorting it out, bagging it up and bringing it back up the stairs again to give away.



Volunteers have stepped up in a big way at The Pantry at Mt. Carmel in Verplanck.

For many months, The Pantry at Mt. Carmel served hundreds of families with just a very few volunteers to limit possible exposure.

By late May, numbers fell off to a steady 75 families per week and we were able to allow The World's Greatest Volunteers to open up the indoor pantry again and spoil our guests with their special service and an abundance of food and gifts.

dance of food and gifts.

It's not unusual for Let It Shine Inc. to offer free clothes, school and household items while the volunteers bring in a steady stream of special donations.

We had a few very good months of indoor operation, but just this week, as COVID cases got too close to home, we switched back to trunk service and operating again with a skeleton crew.

eton crew.

The community support has been overwhelming. The Peekskill Elks Club has repeatedly given us food grants totaling over \$9,000. The Verplanck Seniors Club, St. Christopher's and St. Patrick's Churches, Fran Vargo, Jane Reichard, Cindy Guida, Kathy Flietz, Beth Keenan, Denise and Dave Kiley, Rosemarie Tone, Rosemary Boyle Lasher, The Buchanan-Verplanck Teachers, Blue Mountain Middle School, High School and Hen Hud Library have all gone above and beyond in serving The Pantry at Mt. Carmel. And there are so many names we never get to know; people who drop by with donations and send gift cards and checks. This is truly a community's labor of love.

We're grateful to Feeding Westchester for its generosity during this time, providing emergency pallets of food at no cost.

Second Chance Foods out of Brewster is also a faithful partner arranging weekly delivery of grocery store produce and even fresh flowers!

It takes the constant attention of dozens of people to get

the pantry cleaned, stocked and ready for service.

The World's Greatest Volunteers are Maria Morabito, Dennis Malles, Jim Petrillo, Victor Margiotta, Amanda Margiotta, Alyssa Margiotta, Nancy Turrone, Lisa Cole, V.S. Cole, Chrissy Calabro, Cheryl Harbolic, Becky Mackelainen, Susan Travis, Nancy Kellogg, Joan Robbins, Joann Puff, Laura Giarrantano, Colleen Finnegan, Debby Marriott, Martha Elder, Killeen, Conner and Decla Forte, Melinda O'Brien, Michael Muldoon, Jane McCarthy, Jill Davis, Lynn Meyer, Kathleen Spencer, Diane Fleigler, Laura Mattioli and Antionette Pio. Our motto is "enough is a feast" and our mantra is "calm and kind".

Being able to love and serve during this time has been a life affirming gift and we are so very grateful to our community for their support.

The Pantry at Mt. Carmel, 247 8th St., Verplanck operates Fridays 1 - 2 p.m. and Saturdays 8 - 10 a.m. www.gatheringlove.org

Kacey Morabito Grean is Executive Director of Let It Shine Inc. & The Pantry at Mt. Carmel

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*Town of Cortlandt
Supervisor Linda D. Puglisi
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County Office of Economic Development Working to Help Businesses

Back in April, the Westchester County Office of Economic Development sent out a survey to all the Chambers of Commerce and business organizations to find out what business owners needed. We received nearly 800 responses, read through each one carefully and crafted our agenda accordingly. The needs and concerns of business owners during the past months have been a moving target and we have done our best to keep our programs and assistance fluid, relevant and impact-

ful. The most important service we provided was to be a conduit for information with daily emails, blasts, social media and website updates. Information is power and we wanted to make sure that people had what they needed to survive and try to thrive.

Here are some highlights:

- Trained and mobilized over 300 volunteers to help with PPP and EIDL loan applications
- Created webinars on E-Commerce, Small Business Survival, Barter, Better Decision Making,

Loans, etc.

- Compiled a directory of local business and resources for reopening business safely
- Gave away tens of thousands of pieces of PPE to local business owners
- Worked with Department of Tourism as well as local municipal officials on webinar to share ideas and best practices Outdoor Dining
- Partnered with RXR to offer free Crisis Advisory for a large variety of issues
- Worked with Westchester

IDA to create a \$500,000 grant/loan program for PPE

- Created \$10 Million Business FIRST grant program for small businesses
- Created Launch1000 to help turn an idea into a business
- Worked with the Planning Department to create the Community Table Partnership grant to help restaurants and non-profits work together to address food insecurity
- Catalyst Newsletter is sent to multiple times a week to make sure that businesses and non-prof-

it organizations have up to date info (this was especially crucial during phased reopening)

- Created a Reopening task force comprised of over 30 community and business leaders to address specific concerns by category as well as overall challenges
- Partner with the Department of Tourism for the Westchester Cares safety pledge
- Worked closely with each Chamber of Commerce to assist with specific concerns and make sure businesses of ALL sizes were heard and taken care of.



PHOTO BY GINA DIPATERIO

Community-Minded to the Corps

Gina (l) and Paul DiPaterio are the married proprietors of Little Sorrento and of Savannah & Co., situated near each other on Route 202 where Cortlandt meets Yorktown. With the help of next-door business owners Tiffany and Kenny (pictured) of T&K Nail Salon, Gina and Paul prepared and delivered 200 individually wrapped meals to "our awesome healthcare professionals at NYP Hudson Valley Hospital," said Gina, "who were working tirelessly to save and take care of our loved ones, now and always! We are honored to be able to bring them a hot meal." Through late May, the DiPaterios were continuing to send hot meals every week to Ambulance Corps units in Peekskill, Mohegan Lake, and Yorktown.

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Honorable Mention Acts of Charity

• Ozzy's Auto Clinic in Peekskill is came to the aid of 22 tire-slashing victims employed at New York-Presbyterian Hudson Valley Hospital in Cortlandt.

Upon hearing news of the tire-slashing incident that was discovered by the vehicle owners the morning of Friday, April 10, Ozzy's Auto Clinic created \$50 gift cards to hand out to each of them.

In addition, Ozzy's also will provide free oil changes for all medical personnel and first responders.

During these challenging times, Ozzy's Auto Clinic said it is thankful, and stands behind all those who are working the front

lines in fighting the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

• Baked By Susan Donated left over bakery item to people in need and supported the local food bank.

• ServiceByte - deployed iPads, paid by Drum Hill, so their seniors could connect with their families. ServiceByte did the planning, configuring, and deployment (all labor) for free. Provided free instruction classes (three actually) on Zoom. Also included printed instructions and distributed those, and posted our videos on YouTube for anyone who wanted them (<http://www.youtube.com/servicebyte>).



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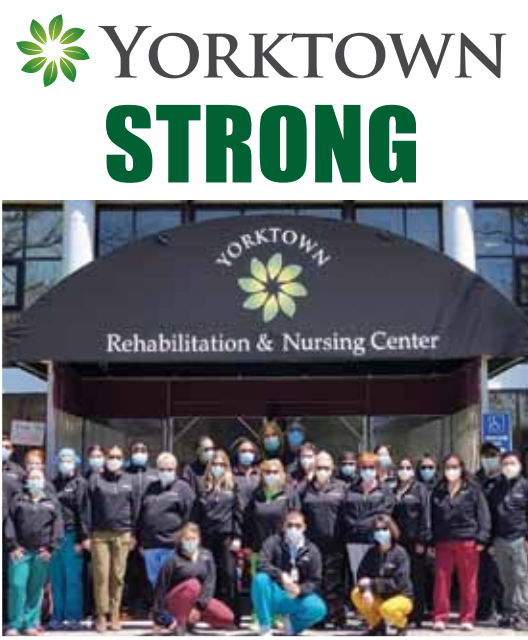
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