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MICHAEL LOBRACE NAMED UNICO CITIZEN OF THE YEAR

The Elizabeth Chapter of UNICO recently honored Michael LoBrace with thier 2022 Citizen of the year award. Michael exemplifies the organization's motto, "Service Above Self". Michael is recognized for his commitment to community service in the city of Elizabeth and his dedication to preserving Italian-American history and culture.

Michael opened Michelino's Pizzeria, located at 169 Washington Avenue, Elizabeth, New Jersey in November 1992. The business celebrated its 29th year in business this November. He subsequently opened one in Rahway at 79 East Milton Avenue, and another at 600 E St Georges Avenue in Linden.

He was born on May 7, 1966, at Elizabeth General Hospital, to Rocco LoBrace and Carmela LoBrace (Nee DiMaggio). In his early years, Michael attended St. Anthony's Catholic School, St. Mary's High School and ultimately Elizabeth High School. Upon graduating from Elizabeth High School, Michael attended Rutger's University where he earned a bachelor's degree in Economics and Italian Literature. Upon graduation, he began working at Harmonia Savings Bank (now Santander). While working at Harmonia, Michael attended St. John's University where he earned his MBA.

Michael's maternal grandmother migrated to the United States in 1915 at the age of 20 years old. She met and married Alfonso DiMaggio and they settled down to raise their family on John Street in Elizabeth. Michael's mother lived in the family home until her passing earlier this year.

Along with being an owner of Michelino's Pizzeria, Michael is also the School Business Administrator for the Perth Amboy School District. Michael has been an integral part of the city of Elizabeth. He has sat on the advisory board of the Elizabeth Historical Society and he was the chairman of the Elizabeth Special Improvement District for many years. He also worked for the Elizabeth Board of Education for several years. He was responsible for renovating and opening a restaurant in the original



(above) Michael LoBrace with friends and family



(above, l-r) UNICO's 2022 Citizen of the Year recipient Michael LoBrace and club President Nino Quaglia.

Elizabeth Train Station. He has supported countless charities and organizations throughout the city and is always willing to help those who are in need.

Michael has been married to his wife, Diana (Nee Nigro) for 30 years. Together they share three children, Anthony, an attorney, Julia, a nurse, and Alexander, who has decided to join the family business.

The Elizabeth Chapter of UNICO is committed to supporting various organizations such as Cooley's Anemia, The Arc of Union County, Center for Hope Hospice & Palliative Care, Occupational Center, Elmora Youth League, Scholarships for Italian American Collegian Students, and many other charitable organizations, who desperately rely on our donations to continue their services.

UNICO, which stands for Unity, Neighborliness, Integrity, Charity, and Opportunity, has as its motto, "Service Above Self". Each year, UNICO sponsors a Dinner Dance as its main fundraiser. Additionally, the organization seeks to honor an Italian American who exemplifies the ideals of UNICO.

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ADVERTISING

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Find us on online: rennamedia.com facebook.com/ Elmora Hills Monthly department, and uncle to Valley Road School student Cameron Lott, recently visited the Valley Road School's kindergarten classes to discuss fire safety during Fire Prevention Week. Captain Costello wowed the students with his real-life equipment and sharing stories about the job of a firefighter. He modeled his uniform and showed the students how he might sound different with his mask on, but it's only so he can

Captain Matt Costello of the Elizabeth fire do his job safely and that they should not be afraid! The children learned life-saving information like "get out and stay out" as well as discussing what fire safety plan their family has, and where their smoke detectors are. Captain Costello took the time to listen to all the kindergarteners stories. According Kindergarten Teacher Kim Nacht, "We are so thankful for his visit and the lessons he taught our students!"



Photo by Clark Public Schools

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New Jersey Youth Symphony

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Helen H. Cho-Pyo, Artistic Director & Principal Conductor

"OUR CITY" PUBLIC AFFAIRS TELEVISION SHOW

Michele Ford, President & CEO, Inroads to Opportunities, was a recent guest on 'Our City' – an Elizabeth, NJ based television show. Inroads to Opportunities is a Union County, NJ, non-profit human services agency that provides programs and services to individuals with disabilities ranging in age from 16 to retirement.

The show is hosted by Elizabeth Mayor Christopher Bollwage. During a lengthy conversation, Bollwage and Ford discussed the significance of National Disability Employment Month, which falls each year in October. Ford emphasized the importance for individuals with disabilities to be able to find gainful employment.

According to Ford, "We need employers to be more diverse and inclusive. That's always going to be the issue, there are plenty of us around who are doing the service work, but we really need the partnership with employers." As the interview continued, Ford outlined the numerous benefits both the employer and the employee with a disability gain from each other.

With over 35 years of experience, Ford has made a tremendous impact on the lives of employees and participants in the Inroads to Opportunities program. Demonstrating selflessness and compassion, Ford has dedicated her life to support individuals with disabilities.

Within the last year, Ford has been recognized as a '2022 NJBIZ ICON' by NJBIZ, given the Shero Award by the Union County Board of Commissioners, as well as received the 'Inventive Leader in Adult Services, Courage and Compassion Award' presented by the NJ Association of Mental Health & Addiction Agencies (NJAMHAA).

To listen to the interview visit: https://youtu.be/bsuQUgDpX9E



(above) Inroads to Opportunities President & CEO Michele Ford was a recent guest on 'Our City' – an Elizabeth, NJ based television show hosted by the Mayor.

ABOUT MICHELE FORD:

For over 35 years, Michele has dedicated her life to serving the needs of individuals with disabilities. A life-long advocate, Michele has been a champion for this most vulnerable population by serving on the Union County Nonprofit Consortium, Union County Crisis Consortium and most recently addressing members of the US Commission on Civil Rights in Washington, D.C. to raise awareness of choice in defense of employment options for individuals with disabilities.

ABOUT INROADS TO OPPORTUNITIES:

Clark, NJ 07066

Since 1959, Inroads to Opportunities, formerly the Occupational Center of Union County, has provided programs and services to over 400 individuals each year with all types of disabilities and ranging in age from 16 through retirement. Programs and services include vocational preparation, transition from school to work, job placement and mental health services.

Inroads to Opportunities is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), an approved provider of the NJ Department of Labor, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Commission of the Blind and Visually Impaired. Inroads is licensed by the State of New Jersey Department of Human Resources, NJ Division of Mental Health, and Addiction Services to provide partial care and Division of Developmental Disabilities to provide Day Habilitation Services. Inroads is an approved Medicaid provider and an approved Employment Network under the Ticket to Work Social Security initiative.



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For more information visit WhartonArts.org

VETERAN'S DAY CEREMONY 2022



On Friday, November 11th, the City of Elizabeth's annual Veteran's Day Ceremony was held across the street from Elizabeth City Hall. Follow City of Elizabeth NJ - City Hall on Facebook.







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HANUKAH: A HOLIDAY OF LIGHTS AND MIRACLES

Submitted by Rabbi Paul David Kerbel

Hanukah is a 'major' Jewish holiday. You might be surprised by that. Most rabbis and Jewish educators would say just the opposite, that Hanukah is a 'minor' Jewish holiday. From the perspective of religious Jewish law, Hanukah does not have the same religious significance of Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year), Yom Kippur (our Day of Atonement and forgiveness), Passover (our Festival of Freedom), Shavuot (the holiday where we celebrate the revelation of the Five Books of Moses), and Sukkot (our Fall festival celebrating the end of the summer harvest and our relationship with God).

Hanukah is a 'major' Jewish holiday culturally and ethnically. One of the ways we can understand any religion is not just what the religion 'teaches' but what its followers actually observe and practice. More Jews observe Hanukah than any other ritual, other than participating in a Passover Seder. Part of Hanukah's 'popularity' is that it falls in the Jewish calendar between Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Hanukah represents a powerful response to the feelings of exclusion and of being a minority in the larger Christian culture of America and allows members of the Jewish community to celebrate its own traditions and be proud of the Jewish heritage even as the airwaves, malls and TV commercials are filled with the sounds and traditions of Christmas.

But regardless of where Hanukah falls in the calendar, I would suggest the following four reasons why Hanukah is a 'major' Jewish holiday and has lessons for both Jews and our non-Jewish neighbors to learn from share:

- 1. Hanukah represents the first victory in human history for religious freedom. Had the Jewish Maccabees not won their war with the Greek/Syrian kingdom, Judaism may have died out and Christianity and Islam, both of which have roots in Judaism, may never have developed. The Jewish people celebrate the value for all of us to celebrate our respective religious traditions.
- 2. Hanukah teaches us religious tolerance and to celebrate diversity and pluralism. As America becomes more diverse and welcomes citizens of many different religions from around the world, we learn from each other and how much we have in common.
- 3. Hanukah reinforces the ability and opportunity of each minority to teach, learn and celebrate its religious traditions and its principles and unique ethnic and religious identity while we all share and believe in the values of freedom and democracy.
- 4. Hanukah reminds us of the modern-day miracles that we have participated in: the redemption of over one million Jews from

the former Soviet Union who were not allowed to learn about their Jewish faith and practice Judaism while under Communist rule; the rescue and welcoming of over 100,000 Jews from Ethiopia and the rescue and of endangered Jews and other Jewish communities around the world. We must always be prepared to deliver the few from the many, the weak from the mighty and the righteous from the wicked.

Finally, I would like to share that the word "Hanukah" means 'dedication' and comes from the same Hebrew word as 'education.' Hanukah is about making sure that we maintain our Jewish identity, that we teach our children, the values, the history, the rich heritage which is ours to embrace and pass on to the next generation. May the lights of our Hanukah menorah symbolize our love for Judaism, our right to practice Judaism as a minority while at the same time, sharing symbols of light and the theme of miracles with those who celebrate Christmas even as all of us strive to make the world a better place. For our Jewish tradition has taught us this eternal message: "It is better to light one candle than to curse the darkness."

Happy Hanukah and Happy Holidays to all! Rabbi Paul Kerbel is the spiritual leader of Temple Beth El Mekor Chayim in Cranford and the current chair of the Cranford Clergy Council.



SHINING STARS – DEC. 9 CHRISTMAS SPECTACULAR

Celebrate the holiday season when the Shining Stars take the stage for their 2022 "Christmas Spectacular" set for Friday, December 9 at 7:00 p.m. The show will take place on the main stage at the historic Union County Arts Center in Rahway as this talented cast sings and dances to many of your holiday favorites.

With many cast members from all over Union County and beyond, Shining Stars Network has been producing live programming for the special needs community for ten years.

This year's Christmas Spectacular marks the return of the Shining Stars to one of the most beautiful theaters in New Jersey and will feature 35 special needs cast members and their volunteer buddies from local high schools, who serve as mentors to the cast during rehearsals.

Two previous Shining Stars shows at UCPAC drew more than 1,000 audience members for each performance, and already, the buzz is building in the community.

"We're so excited to ring in the holiday season," noted Shining Stars Network co-founder and President Mike Curci. "Our stars are ready to share their smiles, energy and amazing talents with everyone. This will be a great way to cap off our 10th anniversary celebration."

"We strongly believe in creating an inclusive environment for our cast, and our buddies are an integral part of the Shining Stars experience," noted Shining Stars co-founder and director Sally Curci. "We are so excited to bring a new show to the stage and cannot wait to connect with our incredible audience again to celebrate the holiday season."

Shining Stars Network is wrapping up a big year, which included their annual "Evening of Shining Stars" Spring Show, Summer Performing Arts Workshop, and their successful Paper Mill Playhouse debut performing in front of a sold-out audience at the Paper Mill Brook Side Cabaret.

"Shining Stars Network is not only about performing, but more importantly we're about building self-confidence and self-esteem," said Shining Stars co-director Nicole Greene. "Our cast members are not only talented, but inspire us every day, and we are all very excited about taking the stage again to share another magical night with the audience."

Tickets are on sale now at UCPAC.org. For groups of 10 or more, email shiningstarsnetwork@gmail.com.

The night will also feature a Tricky Tray and 50/50 raffle. Doors will open at 6:00 p.m.

Shining Stars Network is a 501(c)3 not-forprofit organization based in Cranford, N.J. that offers opportunities in the performing arts for the special needs community.

Plans for the 2023 season include their 2nd "Reach for the Stars" Gale, set for March 14 at the elegant Park Chateau Estate & Gardens in East Brunswick.

For more information on Shining Stars Network or to make a donation, please visit shiningstarsnetwork.org.

UNION COUNTY DAY OF PRAYER

On Thursday, October 27, over 130 people attended the Union County Day of Prayer organized by Community Access Unlimited (CAU) and the Union County Interfaith Coordinating Council (UCICC).

It was the 8th annual "Day of Prayer" event, hosted by Temple Emanu-El in Westfield. The event featured a variety of inspirational speakers and performers from Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Christian, Sikh, and Buddhist faiths. The service included a chant from the International Society for Krishna Consciousness of Central New Jersey and musical offerings from Shimon Smith, Cantorial Soloist/Artist in Residence at Temple Emanu-El, who shared Hebrew songs with attendees.

CAU spearheaded UCICC in 2012 to build bonds in the interfaith community and encourage the respect and welcoming of others regardless of faith, sexual orientation, legal status, or ability. CAU is based in Union County and works statewide to assist people with developmental disabilities and youth at risk to integrate into the community through support services and support coordination. CAU services include housing, education, employment services, behavioral management, advocacy and more.

Rev. LL DuBreuil, who has been a part of UCICC since the first Day of Prayer, said "I was looking for this kind of community because I believe that when we all come together in celebration...then we're already ready to be together in difficult times. UCICC does not only have these worship experiences, but we sometimes do vigils and marches and we raise money for causes. And it's because we know each other from this that we can more easily work together when times are more difficult." DuBreuil is the Interim Pastor of Willow Grove Presbyterian Church, Scotch Plains.

Joyce Cargle, a longtime CAU member, said of the event, "We learned inclusion and we learned about community today."



(above) The Union County Day of Prayer was held on Thursday, October 27, with over 130 people in attendance.





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TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PROGRAMS

through YMCA residential housing programs."

The Gateway Family YMCA was awarded a \$35,000 grant from the Community Foundation of NJ, on behalf of the J.C. Kellogg Foundation Fund, to assist the YMCA in serving homeless and housing insecure residents through affordable and transitional housing programs, and wraparound support services.

"We are thankful for the generous support and assistance from the Community Foundation of NJ and the J.C. Kellogg Foundation Fund. This grant assists us in supporting this vulnerable demographic during the coronavirus pandemic," stated Krystal R. Canady, CEO. "In 2021, our Y served 763 men, women, seniors and children



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The Gateway Family YMCA has served the local community for over 122 years, providing housing and social services for over 250 individuals, families and veterans each evening. Through residential housing programs in Elizabeth and Plainfield, as well as a supportive housing program throughout Union County, the Y provides emergency, transitional and affordable permanent housing opportunities along with wraparound social services focusing on mental health, food access, wellness services, chronic disease management, employment

preparation, life skills and case management.

"At The Gateway Family YMCA, we provide residential housing support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for individuals, families and veterans in our community," stated Melynda A. Disla, EVP/COO, The Gateway Family YMCA. "We continue to see an increased need for housing and social services, food access and mental health services. The COVID-19 pandemic affected everyone, and our residents lost jobs, became food insecure and struggled to access resources, which necessitated extra precautions, facility improvements and additional services provided by the YMCA."

The Gateway Family YMCA's housing programs are open to all residents of Union County regardless of age, race, ethnicity, gender,

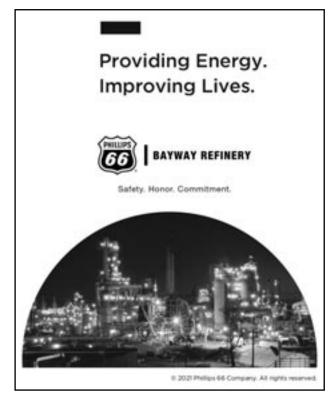
sexual orientation, physical ability, primary language, veteran status, and more. As one of more than 25 agencies collaborating in Union County's Continuum of Care unit, The Gateway Family YMCA works with other partner agencies to end homelessness and prevent a return to homelessness in Union County, NJ.

If you or someone you know is in need of emergency shelter, please contact Union County's 24-Hour Homeless Emergency Response Hotline at 2-1-1. They will direct you to the housing program and support services that can best support you and your loved ones.

The Gateway Family YMCA is a leading 501(c)(3) non-profit, health and community service organization committed to strengthening community by connecting all people to their potential, purpose and each other. Working locally, the Y focuses on empowering young people, improving health and well-being, and inspiring action in and across communities. By bringing together people from different backgrounds, perspectives and generations, the Y ensures that all have access to the opportunities, relationships and resources necessary to learn, grow and thrive.

For more information about The Gateway Family YMCA or YMCA Residential Housing Programs, visit tgfymca.org or contact 908-355-9622.







ELMORA BRANCH LIBRARY DECEMBER PROGRAMS

740 W Grand St, Elizabeth, NJ 07202 • Phone: (908) 353-4820 • www.elizpl.org/
Monday - Thursday: 8:30 a.m. - 7:45 p.m. • Friday: 9:30 a.m. - 5:45 p.m. • Saturday: 9:30 a.m. - 4:45 p.m. • Sunday: Closed
The library will be closed on December 23, 24, 26, & 31.

Stitch & Chat

Thursday, December 1 at 10:00 a.m. Come stitch your clothing back up at Elmora! Just bring the article of clothing you want to mend! Assistance will be available.

Matinee Movie

Friday, December 2, 9, 16 and 30 at 1:00 p.m.

Come-out to Elmora Branch Library to watch Thor: Ragnarok on 12/2, How the Grinch Stole Christmas on 12/9, Dune (1984) on 12/16, and All Quiet on the Western Front on 12/30

Coloring for Kids

Saturday, December 3 at 10:00 a.m. Relax & color at the Elmora Branch for an hour!

Lego Hour for All Ages

Saturday, December 3 at 2:30 p.m. It's Lego Hour at Elmora on Saturday at 2:30. Come and build an enormous tower or make a race car; the imagination is limitless!

Morning Zumba with Monica

Tuesday, December 6, 13, 20, and 27 at 8:30 a.m.

Call 908-353-4820 to reserve a spot but walkins are welcome!

Mahjong

Tuesday, December 6, 13, and 20 from 1-4 p.m.

Everyone who loves Mahjongg is welcome to come & play at the library. Bring friends or come alone & find new partners. Remember to bring your own MahJongg tiles, and we'll provide the space for open play. A minimum of 4 players are required to play the game. Ages:

18 & up **Lil' Bookworms**

Wednesday, December 7 at 5:30 p.m.
Kids will share the love of reading, learn to talk about the books they're reading, and motivate kids to read. Ages: 5-8

Drawing for Kids

Thursday, December 9 at 4:00 p.m. Join Ms. Martha for a cute storytime and learn to draw different animals!

Sign Language Storytime

Saturday, December 10 at 11:00 a.m.
A family storytime where everyone can learn sign language together. Stay for a quick activity to socialize after the program!

Art Lessons

Saturday, December 10 at 2:30 p.m. Learn to blend colors, sketch, and many more art skills! An excellent experience for children, teens, and adults! All skill levels welcome!

Crochet with Sol

Mondays, December 12 and 19, Tuesdays, December 13 and 20 at 11:00 a.m.

Learn the tips and tricks with Ms. Sol! She will teach you everything you need to know to get started, from fundamental stitches to the importance of understanding gauge.

Stitch & Chat

Wednesday, December 14 at 5:30 p.m. Come stitch your clothing back up at Elmora! Just bring the article of clothing you want to mend! Assistance will be available.

Bubbles aRe Us

Saturday, December 17 at 1:00 p.m. Located on 640 3rd Avenue, Elizabeth, NJ Join Ms. Martha for songs, stories, crafts, and oh-so-much fun! Storytime will feature stories in English and Spanish for the whole family.

Coloring for Adults

Tuesday, December 20 at 11:00 a.m.

Drop in for some relaxing coloring fun! Come discover the calming effects as well as meet some good company!

Christmas Carols: Story & Craft

Wednesday, December 21 at 5:30 p.m. Join Ms. Martha for an interactive program that promotes early learning and a happy heart and mind.

Adult Spanish Book Club

Tuesday, December 27 at 3:00 p.m. Join us for a monthly book discussion for adults in Spanish with Martha!

Boogie Woogie Babies

Tuesday, December 28 at 11:00 a.m.
Grab your little ones and join us for a groovy morning filled with songs and dancing!
Registration required.

Junior's Book Club

Wednesday, December 28 at 5:30 p.m. Tweens will share the love of reading, learn to talk about the books they're reading, and motivate kids to read. Ages: 9-12

Toddlers World

Thursday, December 29 at 11:00 a.m. An hour of fun songs to sing, music, and playtime.

Family Christmas Arts & Crafts

Thursday, December 29 at 4:00 p.m.

Join us for holiday arts & crafts that the whole family can enjoy!

*Supplies are limited

STITCHCRAFT AT THE LIBRARY

Established Elizabeth artist, Paula Borenstein, is the featured artist in December at the Elizabeth Public Library, third-floor exhibit space.

Paula is one of the founders and directors of the Elizabeth Arts Council (EAC). She is known for her fabric collages and assemblages which often depict her family's immigrant journey. Her work has been on view at various venues in New Jersey, including the Pearl Street Gallery, 73See, and the Jewish Museum of New Jersey. In 2014, she was the artist in residence at the Elizabeth Public Library. She conducted workshops and visitors were welcome to stop by and see her room-sized installation, Sanctuary, in progress.

Please check elizpl.org for library hours.





(above) Works by Elizabeth artist, Paula Borenstein, will be featured throughout December at the Elizabeth Public Library, third-floor exhibit space.

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THE MAGIC OF SCOUTING

Cub Scout Pack 23 and Boy Scout Troop 23 hosted a magic show on Friday, November 4, at St. Genevieve's Church hall. Over 40 people were on hand to watch Mr. Magico perform an hour-long show of magic tricks, comedy and balloon tying. Every child received a balloon animal, and Mr. Magico even pulled a rabbit out of a hat!

Since the magic show, some children have returned to experience the magic of Scouting by joining Cub Scout Pack 23 and Boy Scout Troop 23. The Scouting program instills character, good citizenship and physical fitness in young

people through outdoor activities such as campouts and hikes, involvement in community activities, and just plain FUN!

Cub Scouting provides activities and training for boys and girls in Kindergarten through fifth grades. Boy Scouting is for boys who are at least 11 years old or graduated from the fifth grade. New members are welcome at any time, all year round

For more details, please contact Dan Bernier, Scoutmaster, at (908) 451-1948 or webfoottroop@gmail.com.

BOY SCOUTS TO SELL WREATHS AND GRAVE BLANKETS

The Boy Scouts of St. Genevieve's Troop 23 are again selling beautiful holiday wreaths and grave blankets, at a reasonable price.

Scouts are staffing the sale lot in the St. Genevieve's Church parking lot, 822 Livingston Road, from 7:30 am to 1:00 p.m. every Sunday until December 11. In addition, there is a self-serve contactless option 7 days per week, at that same location.

Please support the activities of our award-winning Scout troop, which teaches character, citizenship and physical fitness to the boys of Elizabeth and surrounding towns. Boy Scouting is for boys who are at least 11 years old or graduated from the fifth grade. New members are welcome at any time, all year round.



(above) Holiday wreaths and grave blankets will be sold by Boy Scout Troop 23 at St. Genevieve's Church from November 20 to December 11.



(above) Mr. Magico presented an entertaining show of magic and comedy for Scouts and other children at Saint Genevieve's Church.





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