



## From the Director's Desk

Happy Spring!

It's time to shake off the drudgery of the long winter and re-engage with our community. We have many new events and trips planned, in addition to our regular activities, and a milestone celebration with events taking place throughout the year.



This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Johnston Senior Center's move to Hartford Avenue. We've come a long way since our days on Priscilla Lane, and we're still growing and evolving every day with new activities, events, partnerships, and of course, new members. There are many fun-filled festivities planned to celebrate this anniversary that I hope you will be able to attend, such as a comedy show, a movie watch-party, an ice-cream social, a cake-making demonstration, a 20-week club, a month of raffles, a dinner dance, and some surprise events and special guests.

In addition to our devoted staff, our community partners have also been an integral part of bringing joy to the center. Loraine DiLorenzo from Cherry Hill Manor and Jennifer Burns from Anchor Bay at Pocasset hold a monthly event at the center. Whether they are making treats for everyone, holding an informative session, or creating unique arts and crafts, their handiwork is invaluable. And who can't smile when Cupid, Lucky the Leprechaun or St. Joseph appears at the center bearing gifts? These characterizations are all brought to us by Maurizio Marchese of Morgan Health Center. We never know when or who will appear as next.

Construction is underway on our new bocce court that will be ready in time for the upcoming season. This modern court design is user-friendly and will offer an easy-access playing area for daily use and tournaments.

So, put away the hats and gloves and join us for Spring celebrations in a way that can only be done at the Johnston Senior Center.

Here's to the next 20 years!

Sincerely,

**Richard J. DelFino, Jr.**  
Executive Director

## Our Mission, Vision and Promise

*To empower adults 55+ to live active, healthy, happy lifestyles by reimagining aging through activities, shared interests, experiences and perspectives, that create a culture and community of belonging.*



## Message from the Mayor

Dear Members,

As we begin to turn the corner from what has been a long, cold and challenging winter here in Rhode Island, there is a renewed sense of energy and positivity here in Johnston. Warmer days are ahead, and with them comes an exciting season of celebration at our Johnston Senior Center.



This year marks a special milestone: the 20th Anniversary of the Johnston Senior Center at its Hartford Avenue location. For two decades, the Johnston Senior Center has been a place where friendships are formed, memories are made, and our senior community thrives. It's a testament to our town's commitment to supporting active, healthy, and engaged living for our residents.

To celebrate this anniversary, a full calendar of events and activities is being planned throughout the year. From social gatherings like ice cream events and breakfasts, to engaging programs, raffles, and special

entertainment, there will be something for everyone to enjoy.

At the time of writing this to you all, many of these events are still being finalized. The amount of work that has already gone into this planning has been incredible. I want to thank the dedicated staff, volunteers, and community partners who are working hard behind the scenes to make this anniversary year truly memorable. Their efforts ensure that the Johnston Senior Center continues to evolve while honoring the traditions and connections that make it so special.

After a tough winter season, this is the perfect time to get out, reconnect, and take advantage of everything the Johnston Senior Center has to offer. Whether you're a longtime member or considering visiting for the first time, I encourage you to take part in the exciting opportunities ahead.

Here's to brighter days, new experiences, and celebrating twenty wonderful years of the Johnston Senior Center. I look forward to seeing many of you there throughout this special anniversary year.

Sincerely,

**Mayor Joseph M. Polisena, Jr.**

## Operations Director's Report

Finally, after a long cold, snowy winter, spring is here! We are celebrating our 20th year at 1291 Hartford Avenue and there are a number of celebrations scheduled throughout the year. Stay tuned for emails and fliers specific to these events.

The bocce court build has begun in earnest over the last few weeks. We are excited for our members to begin playing once completed. Additionally, the Annual Bocce Tournament will have its championship game played on our new court.

As part of the 20th anniversary, we will have two fundraisers – a 20-week club and a raffle

calendar, similar to last year's, but with prizes of \$50 each day during the month of August. The 20-week club tickets will be available shortly, so expect a mailing in early April.



As you should all be aware we are now strictly digital. We no longer mail the quarterly newsletter so stop by the front desk to make sure all of your information is up to date, including email address and cell phone numbers. Newsletters are also available for pick up at the Senior Center.

**Bob Piscione**  
Operations Director

# ON THE SCENE | For and about seniors

Lt. Gov. Sabina Matos held a Senior Resource Fair at the Johnston Senior Center on Feb. 20, where representatives from healthcare, financial, veterans, housing and other service agencies, shared information. The event was coordinated by Sen. Ana Quezada, who is also a social worker at the center. Richard DeFino, Jr., the center's executive director, introduced Matos and Quezada, and praised their tireless work in advocating for seniors. For more information about state programs available to seniors, contact the Lt. Gov.'s office at (401) 222-2371 or visit [ltgov.ri.gov](http://ltgov.ri.gov).



*Lt. Gov. Sabina Matos welcomes members of the Johnston Senior Center at the Senior Resource Fair on Feb. 20.*

**SERVING SENIORS:** (L-R) Kasim Yarn, director of State Veterans Services; Richard J. DeFino, Jr., executive director of the Johnston Senior Center; Phanida Phivilay, United Healthcare community outreach manager; Carol Anne Costa, executive director of Senior Agenda Coalition of R.I.; Sen. Ana Quezada (Prov.-Dist. 2); Brenda Settuba, United Healthcare volunteer; Rep. Deborah Fellela (Johnston-Dist. 43).

## Let's Dance

Among the sea of red and white hearts and balloons that decorated the Johnston Senior Center on Feb. 10 were the members of the ballroom dance group who stepped in style to love songs provided by DJ Eddie the Fixer, aka Eddie Catoni, in what has now become a monthly tradition of music, food and fun at the center. There is no charge for this event and all are welcome.



**RACK 'EM UP:** The Johnston Senior Center was gifted four new custom-made wooden racks to hold pool sticks, as part of the pool room renovation, built and installed by professional woodworkers Paul and Richard Jutras. The father and son duo play pool at the center every Thursday and wanted permanent holders for the pool sticks. Richard, 93, a retired cabinet maker, has been a member since the original Senior Center opened in the late 1980s on Priscilla Lane. Paul, now retired, owned and operated Jutras Woodworking, known for building custom, high-end furniture.

## Celebrating Valentine's Day

**A FOUNTAIN OF TREATS:** Jen Burns of Anchor Bay at Pocasset and Loraine DiLorenzo from Cherry Hill Manor treated members of the Johnston Senior Center to a chocolate dipping fountain where they enjoyed chocolate covered strawberries, marshmallows, pretzels and graham crackers, on Feb. 12, as part of the center's weeklong Valentine's festivities. The two senior living and care facilities regularly partner with the Senior Center to celebrate holidays and hold events.

*Jen Burns (L) and Loraine DiLorenzo make chocolate covered treats at the Johnston Senior Center on Feb. 12.*



**SWEET HEARTS:** Cupid (aka Maurizio Marchese of Morgan Health Center) arrived at the Johnston Senior Center on Feb. 13 in full Valentine mode to spread love and happiness and to pass out chocolate hearts to members during lunchtime. Marchese visits the center regularly, often in festive attire, bringing smiles and joy to every celebration.

**MEN AT WORK:** Construction began in March on the new bocce court at the Johnston Senior Center. The new court is scheduled to be ready this spring, in time for the annual tournament.



## IN THE NEWS | Johnston Senior Center to celebrate its 20th anniversary at Hartford Ave. location, with events throughout the year



*The site of the original Johnston Senior Center on Priscilla Lane*

What began in a garage on Priscilla Lane in the late 1980s and described in a 2006 grant proposal as an “old, claustrophobic highway garage with little natural light and inadequate

program space,” has since become a state-of-the-art facility for active living and healthy aging that will celebrate its 20th anniversary at the Hartford Ave. this year.

The center’s staff, along with their community partners, will be hosting several celebratory events and activities throughout the year, including a comedy show, a movie-watch party, a 20-week club, an ice-cream social, an anniversary dinner dance, among other events.

“Reaching this 20-year milestone is a testament to the dedication of our members, staff, volunteers, and community partners. We are not just celebrating two decades of operation here. We are also celebrating the many personal stories, experiences, and connections made at the center, and a brighter future for our community. We look forward to building on this legacy for many years to come,” said Richard J. DelFino, Jr. executive director of the Johnston Senior Center.

He added that the center’s core mission to provide essential wellness, educational and entertainment resources for older adults remains at the forefront of every program and event offered by the center.

The current location, which many recall as the site of the El Marocco restaurant at 1291 Hartford Ave., was funded with a \$1 million grant from Senator Jack Reed and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), along with town funds and nearly \$100,000 raised by senior center members. The new center opened its doors in spring 2006, significantly expanding its services and programs. The Town Council passed an ordinance on December 11, 2006, formally establishing the new center. In July 2018, the center was accredited for 10 years.

“With this anniversary, we also celebrate the personal stories, experiences, and connections made at the center, and the treasured memories of those members who are no longer with us,” DelFino said.

### Johnston Senior Center’s Super Bowl rally excites longtime Pats fans

They may not have won the big game, but the New England Patriots won the hearts of fans and members of the Johnston Senior Center, who celebrated their comeback season and their trip to Super Bowl LX, with a rally on Feb. 3 that was attended by over 100 people, all sporting Patriots gear and spreading Patriots cheer.

Many remembered when it all began for the then Boston Patriots in 1960, witnessed the Tom Brady glory days, the lost momentum following Brady’s departure, and now, the resurgence of the New England Patriots with quarterback Drake Maye and player-turned-coach Mike Vrabel at the helm.

Debbie Iannucci came because she is “a die-hard Patriots fan.” Gail Casci said she wanted to support the Patriots and the Johnston Senior Center. Steve Macchioni was ready “to get pumped for the Super Bowl.”

But it was Beverly Williams’ stories of bygone days and her extensive collection of Pats memorabilia on display that took center stage. Williams, a former police officer and Pats superfan, was a live-in nanny to Pats’ guard Joe Andruzzi’s children and was his guest at many games, including Super Bowls XXXVI and XXXVIII, both won by the Pats. During her time in his employ, she collected everything from signed footballs to helmets and shoes, and of course, hundreds of photos.

“They were the greatest people you’d ever want to meet,” she said of the team during

the Andruzzi years (2000-04). “They treated everyone like family.” She recalls the birthday celebrations for Brady in the clubhouse and gathering with the Brady family before each game, toasting Brady to wish him good luck. Williams remembers Mike Vrabel as a focused player that has carried over to his coaching.

“He brings respect, discipline and hard work, and treats those players like his own sons,” she said. As for Drake Maye, Williams said, “He is a great upcoming quarterback.”

Older New England Patriots fans are known for their deep-rooted loyalty, many having supported the team since its inception before changing their name to the New England Patriots in 1971 when they moved to their new stadium in Foxboro, Mass.

The Johnston Senior Center rally was evidence that the 55-plus demographic remains a significant part of the Pats fan base, and even though they lost this one, loyal fans are hopeful for next season.



**SUPERFAN:** Beverly Williams holds her favorite photo of her with former Patriots quarterback Tom Brady.

**CHEERING ON THE PATRIOTS:** Patriots cheerleaders come in all ages at the Super Bowl rally at Johnston Senior Center on Feb. 3.



## March celebrations at the Johnston Senior Center brought special guests and treats

It was a March celebration that can only take place in Rhode Island – Johnston, Rhode Island, that is!

Two revered Catholic saints, who are patrons to different ethnicities, have feast days two days apart in March so the Johnston Senior Center combined the celebrations with festivities that took place on March 17, 18 and 19.

On March 17, St. Patrick's Day, which honors the patron saint of Ireland, the members were treated to Irish music and a visit from Lucky the Leprechaun who offered an Irish blessing and passed out gold candy coins to spread the luck of the Irish. St. Patrick is credited with bringing Christianity to the Irish people in the 5th century, converting them from paganism. The legend of him driving the snakes out of Ireland is thought to be a metaphor for removing paganism from the country.

March 18 was an afternoon of treats with green shakes, Italian pastries, and a special raffle prize courtesy of Loraine DiLorenzo, marketing director at Cherry Hill Manor, and Jennifer Burns, director of sales and marketing at Anchor Bay at Pocasset. The two health care facilities are frequent partners of the Johnston Senior Center events.



**Lucky the Leprechaun tosses gold coins into the fountain at the Johnston Senior Center for good luck on St. Patrick's Day.**

On March 19, the feast of St. Joseph, honoring the foster father of Jesus Christ, brought a visit by the "saint" who recited a story and devotion about St. Joseph to celebrate the occasion. For Italians, St. Joseph is considered their protector, having saved them from a severe medieval drought and famine. As of the last census, more than half the population of Johnston claim Italian ancestry, the second largest in the country (after Fairfield, New Jersey), reflecting a strong cultural heritage in the town.

Both the leprechaun and St. Joseph were portrayed by Maurizio Marchese, director of admissions and marketing at Morgan Health Center, also a community partner of the Johnston Senior Center.

The mission of the Johnston Senior Center is to empower older adults to live active, healthy lives through activities and connections that create a community.

"Celebrations such as these are strong indicators of the heritage, traditions and life experiences of our membership. To be able to celebrate our cultures is what makes our role at the Johnston Senior Center so meaningful," said Richard J. DelFino, Jr., executive director of the Johnston Senior Center.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Johnston Senior Center at its Hartford Avenue location and has many special events planned throughout the year to celebrate the occasion.



**St. Joseph made an appearance at the Johnston Senior Center to celebrate his feast day on March 19.**

### SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Johnston Senior Center will celebrate its 20th year at the Hartford Avenue location in 2026.

Look for special events to commemorate the occasion.



**Johnston Senior Center**

The Place For Active Living and Healthy Aging

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