

2018-19



SOLO CONNECTION



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Solon TIMES

October 22, 2015 - 75¢
Volume 37 / Number 14



Solon TIMES

April 11, 2016 - 75¢
Volume 38 / Number 38

A tisket, a tasket, fill that Easter basket



Fifteen-month-old Juliana Bonnette of Bedford collects eggs from volunteers during last Saturday's Easter egg hunt at the Solon High School football field. More than 13,000 eggs were stuffed by the Solon Italian Club for the annual event. More photos on A14.

Solon TIMES

April 18, 2016 - 75¢
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Dr. Parvati Das, executive director for the Alliance of Black Families of Solon, invites guests at the First Annual Spring Community luncheon Saturday to clap along with the beat of "Happy." by Pharrish Williams. The luncheon honored community leaders who advance opportunities for youth.

Celebration of love Black alliance honors women who help youths

By BOB REED

Traditionally a pillar of strength, Solon's African American community celebrated the first annual Spring Community Luncheon Saturday at the Alliance of Black Families of Solon on Saturday.



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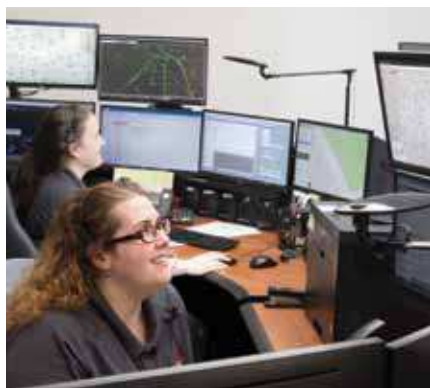
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A message from the president & CEO



Welcome to the 2018-19 edition of the Solon Connection Magazine. This is our seventh year of providing this publication to the Solon Community. You'll find great stories and information about all the exciting things happening with our businesses and in our community.

When I took on this role as president and CEO of the Solon Chamber of Commerce this past January, I challenged myself to take a hard look at how we deliver value to our members by connecting to you! As it turns out, the answer is quite simple:

"Businesses want to grow and consumers want to know what is out there."

So what does this look like now and beyond? We have streamlined our operations to ask these two simple questions in all that we do:

1. How does this serve our members?
2. How do we know it worked?

This year is a big year for us as we continue on the strong traditions of the Solon Chamber to empower, educate and engage business while we introduce enhanced and new offerings to meet the needs of our members. Examples of this include:

- The Business Directory is a standalone piece which you'll find useful as a reference to locate more than 500 local businesses and organizations. This is a change from years past when the directory was part of this magazine.
- A new Member Referral Incentive has been introduced. Current members who refer two new members in 2018 will have zero dues in 2019.
- Streamlined Event Sponsorship for our annual golf outing on Sept. 7, NEO 5K GLO Run on Oct. 12 and NEO Taste of Solon on Nov. 11.
- A robust Member to Member Discount Program will be launching this fall, providing not only our members access to discounts, but to community members as well.
- Strategic opportunities in business building, cost savings, professional education and learning and special events, resulting in an average of six events per month.

On behalf of our members who represent more than 15,000 employees, I invite you to participate in our activities and see for yourself all that our members have to offer.

*Thomas M. Bennett
President & CEO
Solon Chamber of Commerce*

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Two scoops

Mitchell's renovates shops for an even sweeter experience

By LAURI GROSS

Even in these divisive times, there are three words that make every Clevelander happy: Mitchell's Ice Cream. Brothers and life-long Clevelanders Mike and Pete Mitchell founded the company in 1999 and now have nine shops across Northeast Ohio, including Solon (a tenth Mitchell's shop is opening this summer in the Van Aken district in nearby Shaker Heights).

Their ice cream also is sold at nearly 50 area grocery stores.

Mitchell's in Solon and Beachwood recently re-opened following a closure of several months for extensive renovations. That alone is cause for even more happiness, as Mike and Pete promise that a visit to the new Solon or Beachwood Mitchell's will be sweeter than ever.

In Solon, the renovated shop will offer new doors to the patio, plus more seating inside and out. Its newly brightened interior will feature new playful and decorative elements around the seating areas.

"We have learned some things since we



Photos by Peggy Turbett



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opened (the Solon shop) 16 years ago," said Pete. "We thought we could make it more comfortable for our guests," he added, as he explained the addition of display freezers. "When you select ice cream, you look into the freezers to see all the flavors we sell. As we have incorporated those into the last few shops we opened, people really like that. It's the centerpiece of the shop."

The newly re-opened Solon location also features a lot more glass. "The front has always been all glass but now the side will also be glass," Pete explained. "For the warm half of the year, large doors will be left open for meandering from outside on the patio to inside the shop," he said. "We were also able to take on more space in the shopping center so the inside space is larger with more tables and chairs."

Visitors to the Beachwood shop will find a brighter and more open space with more of a visual connection to the outdoors and new doors leading directly to the patio. "There will be quite a bit more natural light," said

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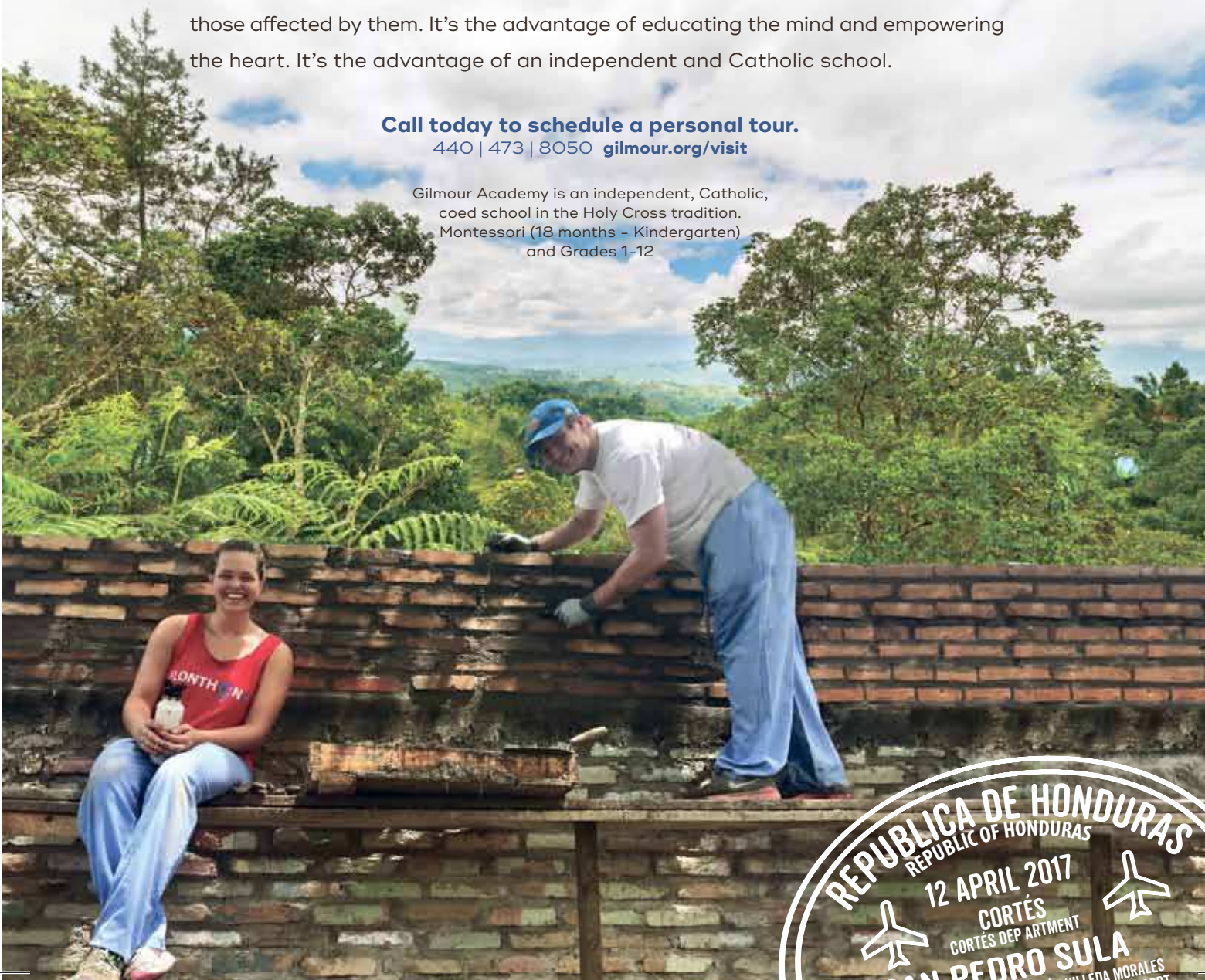
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Pete Mitchell, left, and his brother Mike Mitchell oversee the ice cream making at Mitchell's Homemade Ice Cream flagship kitchen and shop in Ohio City. The brothers recently reopened their 16-year-old Solon shop after closing for several months for extensive renovations.

Continued from page 8

Pete. Additionally, new options for seating will include special areas for children.

One mouthful of ice cream is all it takes to convert a set of taste buds into a Mitchell's fan, but a little more knowledge quickly converts hearts and minds as well. Each batch of Mitchell's ice cream is handcrafted in the company's Ohio City kitchen where they offer

tasting tours and rooms to rent for private events. Most ingredients are sourced locally including herbs, fruit, wheat flour, maple syrup, beer, milk, cream and more. Remaining ingredients – such as salt, mangos, coconut, vanilla and cinnamon come from India, Pakistan, France, Vietnam, Ghana and elsewhere. Everything is organic and free trade whenever possible.

The company website [MitchellsHomemade](http://MitchellsHomemade.com)

.com features ingredient lists and notes the location of origin for each ingredient, for all the 30-plus flavors, including vegan varieties made with coconut milk.

But wait. There's more! Mitchell's sources for furniture, lighting, photography, signage, architecture, graphic design and trains are nearly all Cleveland-based as well. Trains? Yes, trains! All but one Mitchell's location features a colorful toy train set speeding around a track placed near ceiling height around the perimeter of the shop. "We do not have trains at our uptown shop where we are on the Case (Western Reserve University) campus," said Pete. "We would love to have it there but it has low ceilings. (In the other shops,) we would never dream of taking the train away."

Mitchell's is also dedicated to maintaining a sustainable environment by incorporating solar panels; high-efficiency lighting, water heating, cooling and heating; sky lights; locally reclaimed wood; and water, heat and rainwater conservation/re-use systems in the company facilities.

"With everything we do, we have more focus on energy efficiency and sustainability," Pete explained. "So any choice we make where we could bring these to bear, we do. The lighting is on sensors that ramp up when there is less natural light and ramp down when there is more natural light. Our furniture is recycled steel and plastic bottles."

Each location has a different look and feel while still sharing some common elements, including Pete and Mike's dedication to sustainability. And great ice cream. ■



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Photos by Peggy Turbett

Haircuts become happy times with fantasy cars, a treasure chest of lollypops and cartoon DVDs at Cuts N Curls for Boys and Girls (and grown-ups, too), a hair salon catering to kids on Kruse Drive.

Cut it out!

Eliminate the hassle of a kid's hair cut, and replace it with fun!

By LAURI GROSS

“Every day is fun and interesting,” said Lindsey Terry, owner of Cuts N Curls for Boys and Girls in Solon. A cosmetology graduate of Paul Mitchell the School Cleveland, Ms. Terry worked as a stylist at Cuts N Curls for about six years before becoming manager five years ago.

“I always wanted to own my own salon,” she added, and as of November 2017, she did just that, since she purchased Cuts N Curls, at 6025 Kruse Drive, which originally opened in 2007. “I always loved working here,” Ms. Terry said. “The girls I work with...the customers. And I love working with kids. It’s the best of both worlds and a fun atmosphere,” said Ms. Terry, who now has her own infant daughter. “She hasn’t gotten her hair cut yet,” Ms. Terry laughed, “But she did come in to get her ears pierced.” In response to customer requests, the salon added ear piercings to its list of services a few years ago.

At Cuts N Curls, catering to young clients isn’t just an empty statement and it doesn’t just mean the décor appeals to little ones (although it does). Cuts N Curls is an adult and children’s hair salon, toy boutique and party facility. Like everyone else, kids just want to be themselves. Allowing them some

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freedom to do that while getting a haircut shouldn't be a revolutionary idea but the uniqueness of Cuts N Curls makes it seem pretty revolutionary indeed.

Their specialty salon chairs allow kids to sit in oversized toy cars or other vehicles against the backdrop of a rainbow-colored floor and walls while getting their hair cut. Clients can play Skee-Ball, shoot baskets, play with trains and blocks, watch movies or play video games. While these offerings create their own kind of chaos, it's of the enjoyable and worry-free variety and generally prevents the typical chaos of adults trying to get their hair cut while somehow keeping the kids entertained and not disrupting everyone else in the salon, or wrestling with kids who just do not want their hair cut in the first place.

"We have kids that fall asleep when getting a haircut," Ms. Terry said. "We had a kid lose their first tooth during a haircut. That was exciting. We see a lot."

Ms. Terry said the salon runs smoothly and she doesn't plan many changes. "I do plan on having a private room for children



Owner and manager Lindsey Terry clips a young lad's hair at Cuts N Curls for Boys and Girls in Solon. Ms. Terry hopes to offer private rooms for children with special needs as well as orthodox women.

that have special needs, or orthodox women or kids that hate getting their hair cut," she

offered, adding that she hopes to introduce this option in about a year.

The salon's services include highlights, waxing, manicures and more. Their award-winning retail area includes hair accessories made by local moms, plus toys, and cute and sassy apparel.

"We also sell organic and nut-free hair products," said Ms. Terry. "These make hair feel like silk. These products have benefits for hair, are sulfate-free and are good for kids and adults," she added. Cuts N Curls has products for curly hair and also products for treating lice that "is all organic, that will get rid of lice, is safe for kids, and if it gets in your eyes, it's OK," Ms. Terry explained.

A party space in the back of the salon invites kids to don spa robes, superhero capes or princess dresses while they enjoy games, crafts, and temporary tattoos while getting their hair done. At the end of the party, the kids put on a fashion show. There are also camps for spring break and winter break, and during summer.

"These provide 2 ½ hours of free time for parents," Ms. Terry explained. Potty-trained kids starting at age 2 are welcome at the camps. Cuts N Curls can sometimes accommodate walk-ins but Ms. Terry strongly recommends that clients call 440-542-1750 for an appointment instead. ■



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Food and family

Rose Italian Kitchen newest venture of Chef Art Pour

By SUE REID

Enter Rose Italian Kitchen and warmth abounds.

From the soft wheat that serves to partition the dining room and bar, to the warmth of candlelit colored glass jars that top harvest tables, rose gold mirrors and Roman plastered walls, Solon's newest restaurant is rooted in food and family.

Rose Italian Kitchen, the newest concept from the Chef Art Pour group, has an old world farmhouse feel and was set to open and breathe new life into the long vacant corner of SOM Center and Solon roads in Spring of 2018.

The restaurant name pays homage to the late Rose Gentile, grandmother of Michele Adams, a 1991 graduate of Solon High School. Chef Art Pour's M Italian in nearby Chagrin Falls is named after Mrs. Adams. The restaurant group brought a Burntwood Tavern to Solon in 2012 which is within sight of the new Rose kitchen.

Mrs. Gentile's photos, as well as those of her husband Anthony and family, adorn the walls throughout the restaurant. Not just photographs, but printed canvases plastered into the wall, they come to life thanks to the design of Solon native Christian Kalinyak.

"We felt there was a definite need on the eastside of Cleveland for this type of restaurant," said Bret Adams, founder of Chef Art Pour Group, which operates 11 Burntwood Taverns and the one M Italian.

"Solon has just been phenomenal," he noted, so the decision was made to locate Rose Italian Kitchen there.

A gathering place for anything from family style dinners or intimate dinners for two, the restaurant will feature an array of Italian entrees as well as a variety of pizzas, appetizers, salads, sandwiches and more.

Entrees, prepared by corporate Chef Joe Tuller, will include pastas like lasagna, ravioli, spaghetti and gnocchi.

Mr. Adams explained that restaurant goers will have the option of accompanying all of the



Photos by Peggy Turbett

Christian Kalinyak, a Solon native and designer of Rose Italian Kitchen, incorporates dried natural wheat and murals based on family photos of the restaurant's namesake in a restaurant set to open on SOM Center Road in Solon in the spring of 2018.

entrees with beef, veal, chicken or salmon, prepared in a number of ways including grilled, Marsala, Milanese or picatta, to name a few.

"It offers you a little more variety and a segue into family style," Mr. Adams said.

"There will be many traditional dishes," Mr. Adams continued of the offerings, with one of the signature dishes being baked rigatoni and meatball.

Pizzas will also be a focal point. Rose Italian Kitchen will offer large pies Neapolitan style, as opposed to the wood burning style at M Italian. Pizza varieties include the traditional pepperoni and sausage with mushrooms, as well as a supreme with sweet pepper and onions, a veggie with artichoke and arugula, as well as the option to build your own with such toppings like pancetta, spicy peppers, mozzarella and more.

Appetizers represent a wide variety of choices, with Italian favorites including stuffed peppers, calamari and both margherita and steak bruschetta, among others. Salads include the house, which features gorgonzola, pancetta, red onion and tomato with a house dressing, Caesar and wedge, among others. Mr. Adams said a favorite will certainly be the Little Gems salad, which is popular on the east coast and a modern day chopped salad featuring super greens, almonds, sundried cherries and feta.

Sunday will be designated with a family-style menu, and guests have the option of dining at large harvest tables that will be partitioned off with rich fabric and topped with lighted candles in colored glass jars.

"It's about food, family and friends," he added. The whole restaurant is designed to expand to accommodate gatherings of 20-50 people or to shrink down for more intimate groups.

"Adaptability and versatility are very important," Mr. Adams said. The restaurant will boast a very open, interactive feel.

Rose Italian Kitchen will be housed in a 6,000-square-foot space, with large glass doors that will open to the outside.

"Cleveland loves the outdoors," Mr. Adams said. A beautiful and ornate French door leads to the patio to pull that element from the outside in.

The restaurant will boast illuminated dogwood trees surrounding the property and in the tradition of Burntwood, Rose Italian Kitchen will serve private parties as well as offer catering services. The restaurant will also feature nightly happy hours and a full bar.

Mr. Adams said in pairing with the theme, there will be a handful of different Moscow Mules, as well as light and fresh summer drinks with infused vodka. Whimsical offerings will incorporate such things as rosemary in the martini. There also will be a wide variety of Italian wines.

"Farm to table is not a trend here but more of a feel than it is a menu item," Mr. Adams

said. Rose is to Italian food what Burntwood is to tavern, he added.

Other beautiful touches at the restaurant courtesy of Mr. Kalinyak are a wall of vases, made of pages from an 1843 Bible. They are filled with – you guessed it – dried roses.

Mr. Adams is finding closure in opening his newest venture at the vacant corner close to the Route 422 highway. Previous eateries in the building were "corporately driven" to close and not the fault of the restaurant itself, he said.

"We have been blessed here," Mr. Adams said, "and we are blown away by the volume (at Burntwood).

"Solon has just been phenomenal." ■



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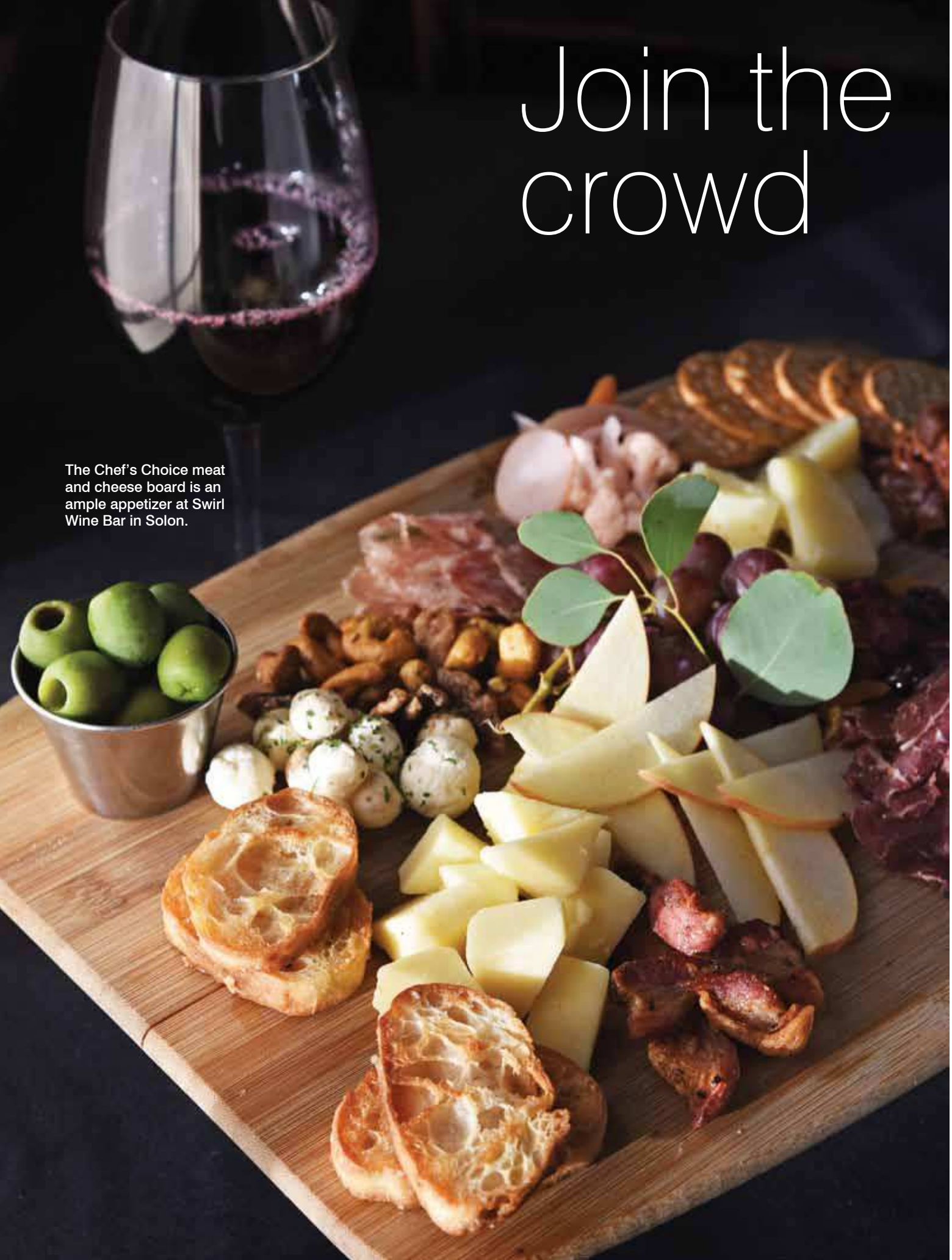
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Join the crowd

The Chef's Choice meat and cheese board is an ample appetizer at Swirl Wine Bar in Solon.



Swirl boasts extensive wine list and tempting cuisine

By SUE REID

Pick most any night of the week, and Solon's only true wine bar is hopping.

Whether it is ladies night, taco night or whiskey and cigar night, Swirl Wine Bar in the city's historic district on Bainbridge Road packs in a crowd.

"It's a 'Cheers' type atmosphere," co-owner and former Solon resident Rich Alaimo said, referring to the television series about a Boston bar with the theme, everyone knows your name.

"We have such great customers who enjoy the place, and we enjoy serving them," he said.

Swirl opened in November of 2011, and was the brainchild of Mr. Alaimo, who used to have an expansive wine cellar at his Solon home from his travels to the Napa Valley and Sonoma, California.

"When we were out in Napa, we went to this wonderful Italian restaurant and it had a bocce ball court, and I said to my wife, wouldn't it be great to open up a wine bar in Solon because there is nothing like that around."

With that in mind, a business plan was



Photos by Peggy Turbett

Keeping the charm of the 1850's Victorian home, Frank Bonsignore, left, and Rich Alaimo opened Swirl Wine Bar in 2011 with an extensive wine and bar list and a full menu in a comfortable setting on Bainbridge Road.

formulated. At that point, he had an idea, but no set location.

"We were looking around for an old house," said Mr. Alaimo, now of Reminderville, when he stumbled on the house. The

price was high at first, but about a year and a half later, the market came crashing down and they made the purchase.

He partnered along with his two good

Continued on page 18

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Continued from page 17

friends Tom Steinbauer of Solon and Frank Bonsignore of Aurora, who pulled their funds together and opened the wine bar in the 2,000-square-foot home.

It took an entire year to remodel, with it being taken down to the studs, Mr. Alaimo noted.

"It's basically a brand new house inside and out."

Swirl boasts hues of deep red surrounded by dark wood, resulting in a very warm and cozy atmosphere.

"It's stress free here," Mr. Alaimo said. "People sit down, relax and enjoy the atmosphere."

"The bar area gets a little bit louder and people are laughing and talking."

They come from all over the Solon and surrounding communities to sit by the fire, enjoy a glass of wine, cheese board, or the full menu.

Hudson resident David Lucarelli said he enjoys the warm atmosphere at Swirl, along with a welcoming staff and a wide selection of food and wine pairings.

Swirl has wine and whiskey tastings and dinners throughout the year to give patrons unique and hard-to-find offerings, Mr. Lucarelli said.

A recent dinner featured pinot noir from around the world. A five-course dinner prepared by Swirl Executive Chef Kelly Fitzgerald and staff featured Peking style duck, pinot noir braised lamb meatball with mushroom risotto and pomegranate chocolate cheesecake. Wine dinners are held monthly to sold-out groups.

"We went from cheese boards and small plates to basically a full-blown menu," Mr. Fitzgerald said from the front room by a roaring fire. "We have great entrees and great specials."

A favorite of many is the award-winning sun-dried tomato and artichoke dip, which is served with warm pita. Mr. Alaimo noted that



Swirl Wine Bar's signature artichoke dip features sun-dried tomatoes, roasted garlic and warm pita triangles. The bar was the idea of co-owner Rich Alaimo, who wanted to open a bar similar to ones he had visited in Napa Valley and Sonoma, California.

the original game plan was just cheese boards and small appetizers, "but over the years, people wanted more and so we began to expand our menu."

Other signature palate pleasers include housemade meatballs with marinara as well as mini chicken pot pies.

"Our small plates are so popular," Mr. Fitzgerald said. "People like to come and try a few different things."

Then there are the pizzas, with Mr. Fitzgerald's personal favorite, the Carolina porker pizza, featuring house smoked pork butt, house pickled red onion and the chef's own golden barbecue sauce.

Entrees include a variety of seafood like bouillabaisse which he described as a "wonderful fish stew and fish broth with mussels, mahi mahi, fresh salmon and calamari and shrimp. Another customer favorite is Swirl's

crispy chicken, pan seared until the skin is crispy with sage parmesan risotto and garlic spinach and brown pan sauce.

"People are blown away by that," he said.

Swirl also boasts nightly events and specials, like taco Tuesday, which Mr. Fitzgerald likes to "mix up" along with sous chef Joe Vivino. Offerings include pork and fish tacos.

Mondays are retail night when guests receive a bottle of wine for retail price, and other nights include burger nights on Wednesdays ladies and martini night Thursdays and wine tastings the last Tuesday of each month.

There are cigar and bourbon nights in the summer as well as cigar and scotch night and even steak and stogie night.

Then there are the wines.

Mr. Alaimo noted that Swirl, named after the way one "swirls" a wine in a glass before tasting, boasts 250 wines from around the world, 25 wines by the glass, an extensive captain's list as well as Italian wines to verticals of Opus One.

Mr. Alaimo does all the wine buying and works with 12 different distributors. He tastes the wines with his partners, but ultimately it's the customers who choose their favorites.

"We have about 80 percent of customers who come in all the time, and 20 percent who are new," he said. "It's a good mix."

It's hard to make one's way from the front of the bar to the back on a weekend night while live music pumps through the crowd, and that's just how Mr. Alaimo likes it.

While the business is a lot of work, often taking 50-60 hours a week, "it's extremely rewarding," Mr. Alaimo said.

"It's so much fun because we have great customers," he said. "We give great wine, great food and great service, and they keep coming back."

The future of Swirl is bright. Plans are being discussed for a roof over the patio, outside fireplace and a larger kitchen.

"Eventually, it will come to fruition," Mr. Alaimo said. "We grow a little bit each year." ■

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ASC17

Building stronger chamber

New president reaching out to meet needs of businesses in city

By SUE REID

New Solon Chamber of Commerce President Thomas M. Bennett Jr. is brimming with enthusiasm when it comes to a vision for the future of the organization and the excitement surrounding the city's vibrant business community.

"The limit of this chamber is endless," said Mr. Bennett from his office at chamber headquarters on SOM Center Road. He took over the reins from former president Jennifer Natale in January who moved on to a new opportunity.

In order to reach those limits, Mr. Bennett said, the Solon chamber must excel at several things all determined by the 450 members.

"The unifying factor of any business joining a chamber is an opportunity to grow their business or reputation over a period of time," said Mr. Bennett. Businesses grow in various ways, from a brand awareness standpoint to gain exposure within the community through attending events.

One of his initial goals is to increase membership to possibly 600. He plans to build the roster by finding out from members the programs they find beneficial and others they would like to see started.

"For new members, we have to have a very intentional and strategic process in place to take them from joining to retention."

Under his leadership, Mr. Bennett commits to meeting with every new member within a month of joining to assess what they want to get out of their membership and "then provide a roadmap to achieve those goals."

"It's not surprising what people want when you ask the right questions," he explained. "Depending on the business, it is going to determine what they want to see out of their membership."

Understanding the differences between types of business and appropriate programmatic offerings is key to sustaining and growing the membership, he noted. This is one of his many strengths, as Mr. Bennett has had direct experience developing strategic

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Continued from page 19

partnerships during his tenure with Global Cleveland. There, he worked with local colleges and universities to determine the best ways to connect talent to the needs of the business community.

He also did the same at Saint Martin de Porres High School, where he once served as executive vice president of the Corporate Study Work Program for 10 years. He was responsible for servicing partnerships with the business community and ensuring high levels of both student and partner engagement.

He also successfully guided the Diabetes Partnership of Cleveland through a dissolution process. He has also held management positions with Edwins Leadership and Restaurant Institute.

Mr. Bennett said that the biggest factor in attracting new members is the chamber's current membership.

"They make referrals, and it makes it an easy sale," he said.

New members can also be seen in strong relationships with the city of Solon, learning what businesses are in Solon and being systematic in approaching new business as to the benefits of chamber membership, Mr. Bennett continued.

Mr. Bennett sees member benefits as business and networking opportunities, event exposure, professional learning opportunities and more.

He plans to make his mark in other ways as well.

"My goal is that we be the best at three to five things the Solon chamber does better than anyone else," he said. That includes being a connector in the community by having active partnerships with local, state

Thomas M. Bennett Jr. took the reins as the Solon Chamber of Commerce president in January.



Photo by Anton Albert

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TSC16

“In the first six months, we will be taking a strategic view of everything we do and how it ties back to member value. Member value equals membership.” — Thomas M. Bennett Jr.

and government officials as well as support collaborative efforts with other chambers and civic groups.

“In the first six months, we will be taking a strategic view of everything we do and how it ties back to member value,” he said. “Member value equals membership.”

Mr. Bennett noted that the chamber has a variety of great programs and events “and how that transfers to delivering value to members by empowering, educating and engaging businesses” is key.

“By determining the needs of the members, you can engage and promote specific programmatic opportunities that suit their needs,” he said.

The chamber offers more than 100 programs and events during the year, including the Western Reserve Safety Council, a variety of mixers, golf outings, round tables, groups targeting young professionals, women in business and more.

“As a member, how many would you like to attend and how do we tailor the engagement to meet these needs?” That’s a central question in growing the chamber, he explained.

A graduate from the College of Wooster

where he earned a bachelor’s degree in urban studies, Mr. Bennett said he is looking forward to his new role and the future of the Solon chamber.

“I’m personally excited because this is an opportunity that is a culmination of my last 15 years of experience in successful, non-profit management,” the Montclair, New Jersey native explained.

His overarching vision for the chamber is clear. “There is such energy and enthusiasm

about the Solon chamber and I want to take that energy and bring the chamber where it needs to be and to take that energy and tie it into strategic goals.”

In his spare time, Mr. Bennett serves on the Communications Advisory Council for the Shaker Heights Board of Education.

Mr. Bennett, who was chosen from a pool of 11 candidates for the position, lives with his wife of nearly 20 years, Megan, and the couple’s two children, Eliza and Mason in Shaker Heights.

“The Solon Chamber of Commerce has a strong base to build upon, and it is my hope that the chamber stands as a model for what a great organization can look like,” he added. “By listening to our members, we ensure a strong chamber that helps provide support for businesses to thrive in Solon.” ■

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Jana Massary, franchise co-owner of Primrose School of Solon, reads with a preschooler during a morning session at the early education center on Solon Road.

A place for kids

Primrose School educates and nurtures young children

By SUE REID

It's Valentine's Day, and the halls of Primrose School in Solon are bustling with activity, all draped in a sea of red and pink.

With a warm smile, Director Jana Massary walks through decorative streamers that lead youngsters into a Valentine themed photo booth. Nearby another group of children happily and busily create handmade cards and themed crafts for friends and family.

At Primrose School of Solon, which opened on Solon Road in January of 2018, educational care is rooted in a friendly environment.

"It is such an honor to be part of families at such a special time," said Mrs. Massary, who opened Primrose School with her husband, Dave.



Photos by Peggy Turbett

Dave and Jana Massary, franchise owners of Primrose School of Solon, built the early education center for newborns through pre-kindergarten to fill a childcare need, in a setting that features colorful interactive classrooms and activities.

The couple searched for the best daycare for their two children and ultimately decided to open their first Primrose franchise in Hudson and second in Solon.

"I've always worked full time, and I needed full-time care," she explained.

The Massarys tried nannies, group babysit-

ters and daycare centers and continued to be disappointed, she said.

"It is not where I wanted my kids to be," she said.

It was while searching online that she found

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Preschoolers at the Primrose School of Solon play with clay and colors during a visit to the early education classroom by Stephanie Daetwyler, director of the center, left, and franchise owners Dave and Jana Massary.

Continued from page 23

Primrose School. It looked like a college campus, she recalled. After investigating further, both the school's mission and high standards convinced the couple to take the plunge.

"I said to my husband, I want to quit my job and open a Primrose."

The Fairlawn residents left their perspective careers and followed their dream.

"It was the quality that drew me in," Mrs. Massary said. "Everything with Primrose is top-notch, and it is everything I wanted my kids to have."

With Mrs. Massary at the helm, families at

Primrose get the passion of a parent and the commitment to quality.

"The standards I hold are how I would want my place to run," she said.

The Massarys opened their Hudson location of Primrose School five years ago when there were no others of this franchise in northeast Ohio.

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Primrose School began in 1982 by Paul and Marcy Erwin, who opened the first location in Marietta, Georgia. The couple pioneered the curriculum-based approach used at the school and developed it based on the type of education they dreamed of for their own children, Mrs. Massary explained.

The original Primrose campus grew to include 16 classrooms, farm animals, nature trails and gardens. The concept was very well received and eventually led to the first national educational childcare franchise in 1989.

Today, there are 275 schools across the country with 26 in Ohio.

They serve children from birth through pre-K and also boast before and after school programs for children through age 12 as well as a variety of summer camp programs, appropriately named Summer Adventure Club.

"Daycare is not what we are going for," Mrs. Massary noted. "We're educational care."

She explained that, for children, their basic needs have to be met before they are ready to learn.

"They have to be loved, fed and nurtured properly," she said. "Once that happens, the magic happens and they are ready to learn and thrive in an educational setting."

"There's lots of love here."

Mrs. Massary described a top-scale curriculum that is proprietary and written at Primrose corporate by leaders of education. At Primrose the curriculum, which meets the highest standards in all states, is well rounded and written by leaders in the field of early childhood, many of whom hold doctorate degrees.

"Our teachers bring them to life," she said of the curriculum created for Primrose.

The 13,000-square-foot Solon location has about 13 full- and part-time employees, but is expected to grow to as many as 35 staffers.

Primrose School of Solon boasts 12 classrooms, four different age-appropriate playgrounds, as well as a Primrose "patch," which is a garden that is part of the curriculum that guides the students knowledge of gardening, nurturing and healthy foods.

The chef at Primrose creates a meal plan that focuses on active and healthy children.

"We focus on a whole child philosophy here," she explained.

Primrose School of Solon is peanut free and tree nut free.

The interior of the school is warm and welcoming, complete with soft earth tones and hardwood floors.

Mrs. Massary said the Solon location, which can serve 225 children, was selected because of the city's strong commitment to education.

"The community has a strong value for that and are invested in that for their children's future," Mrs. Massary said.

Primrose is committed to giving children a sound foundation before they enter kindergarten, she said.

"A lot of working parents have the need for extended care for their children, and all parents want their child to have the best start in life."

Primrose groups the children in developmental milestones, she said, giving the school a unique approach to education.

"We make sure these milestones are met," she explained. "Infants are also being instructed in sign language, and then parents are given a sign language card so they can practice it at home."

Both Mr. and Mrs. Massary, who travel between Hudson and Solon, are "best friends," Mrs. Massary said, and work in tandem.

"It's our family business and it's our family passion," she said. The couple have two sons, Ethan, 13, and Luke, 10, both of whom

were at the opening of the Solon location with their parents.

"So far we are getting great reception" from the community, she said. "Our families are loving it and telling people. We are ramping up quickly, lots of phone calls and enrollments."

Mrs. Massary prides herself on taking all feedback, good and bad. For example, many students were vegetarian but Primrose didn't have a strong vegetarian menu so that is something she changed.

"It's about how you get better and give a better experience for our children," Mrs. Massary said. ■

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Kraus at the helm

Longtime councilman becomes mayor with new vision for city

By SUE REID

Meet Solon's newest Mayor Edward H. Kraus – a familiar face not just at City Hall but along city roads. Whether it is Aurora or Bainbridge roads, through the Thornbury subdivision or on Portz Parkway heading to the Community Center, the avid runner sees his constituents in a number of ways throughout the day.

"It's kind of funny, people will see me and say 'Hey mayor,' as I'm huffing and puffing," Mayor Kraus, 57, said with a laugh. Or some say, 'Hey aren't you the mayor?'"

Mayor Kraus, who began in Solon's top office following the November 2017 election, said the principal reason he runs is for exercise, but he likes being seen on the city streets.

"The mayor should be out and visible," he said. "I don't like sitting here in the office. It's a nice office, but I would rather be out there running."

Mayor Kraus runs "anytime I can," and completed two marathons when he was in his 20s.



Photo by Anton Albert

Solon's newest mayor Edward H. Kraus is an avid runner and is found throughout the city streets and in the Cleveland Metroparks.

"Running has become a way of life," the University Heights native said.

His first dream, though, was to play on the Cleveland Heights High School basketball team, but he got cut in the 10th grade.

"The coach wanted the tall guys," Mayor Kraus said. That is when he turned his focus to running, finding his path through the Heights in tunnels. One day, he was spotted by the high school track coach, who needed guys for distance races.

"I wasn't fast, but I was able to have endurance," he said.

Track only required a pair of sneakers, and Mayor Kraus said that held great appeal.

"I just loved it and took it up," he said. "I didn't have to do it with anyone else. The more I practiced, the better I got."

Through the years, Mayor Kraus has met many people through running, including Bob Zelwin, Councilman Jeremy Zelwin's father.

"We used to run at the old Jewish Community Center on Taylor and Mayfield roads," he said.

The mayor's favorite path in Solon is along Hawthorn Parkway. "That's Nirvana," he said. "I go there and forget about everything."

The mayor runs about four days a week at least 5 miles, often more.

His other passion is basketball, and he can be found at the Solon Community Center shooting hoops with friends or his son, Jacob, 15, a freshman at Solon High School or with neighbors in the Ledgehill Subdivision, where he has lived for 24 years.

"I just love that neighborhood," the mayor said of the subdivision, which is off of SOM Center Road. "Ledgehill is one big family. We all take care of one another."

When his father Bill passed away, neighbors gathered at the mayor's home, as they did when former Councilman Richard Mendelsohn, who also lived there, died a couple years ago.

Mayor Kraus, an attorney, enjoys spending quality time with family. In addition to Jacob, Mayor Kraus and his wife, Bonnie, a lawyer who teaches preschool at Mandel Jewish Day School in Beachwood, have two daughters, Rachel, 23, "an independent minded child who wants to save the world and has no fears

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or inhibitions,” and Hannah, 21, who will follow her parent’s footsteps and pursue a career in law.

“I call Jacob Mr. Solon,” his father said. “He lives and breathes Solon.” His son walks and bikes all over Solon, plays recreation sports and serves as manager of the ninth-grade basketball and football teams.

His mother Mickey, 91, lives at Menorah Park in Beachwood.

The Kraus family holds strong core values centered on their Jewish faith.

“We believe strongly in that you have to practice what you preach because if you don’t practice it, your kids won’t follow along,” the former councilman said.

The Kraus’ family are longtime members of the Chabad Jewish Center of Solon.

“It’s important to us to be together as a family and share the Sabbath and love of our family and faith,” he said. “That’s what my parents did. They instilled that in me.”

Mayor Kraus also learned a path to service from his father. While growing up, he watched as his father became immersed in local politics and really took that all in.

That sense of public service continued to take root throughout his life, including while he attended law school at Cleveland State University.

He opted to being a public lawyer, instead of a private practice, and worked at the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor’s Office, serving victims of crime and fighting for justice. He supervised the mortgage fraud task force for six years.

“I wanted to go to law school, be a prosecutor and give back to Cleveland,” Mayor Kraus said. “In my early years with the prosecutor’s office, I was working with police officers every day and advocating for the victims.

“That set the tone for my career.”

He realized that he wasn’t in it for the money, but that “public service was my passion.”

When he moved to Solon in 1994, Mayor Kraus ran unsuccessfully for the Ohio House of Representatives, campaigning all over the district and knocking on 12,000 doors.

“I lost the election, but decided I wanted to get involved in Solon,” he said. “It’s interesting how loss can turn into something positive.”

Shortly after this decision, Mayor Kraus received a call from former Mayor Robert Paulson suggesting he get involved in the community. He began by being a member of the cable commission, which helped spark his interest even greater in Solon, he said.

He sat on that commission for several years while his children were young and he had a busy career. Then, in 2001, Mr. Mendelsohn decided to give up his seat and so Mayor Kraus decided to run. His opponent was former Planning Commission member George Hrabak.

“It was a friendly campaign, and it really set the tone,” Mayor Kraus said. In his early years on council, he worked with former Mayor Kevin Patton, who was a mentor, along with seasoned council members Edward Suit and John T. Scott.

“They taught me the ropes,” Mayor Kraus said. “I was new and learning municipal government and finding my way.”

He became well versed in zoning laws, how engineering products worked and infrastructure budgets as well. “Everyone on council became great friends, especially in those early years,” he said.

By his second term, things started to really gel and Mayor Kraus served through such large-scale events like the rainstorm of June,

2006, where over 1,000 city homes flooded, as well as the Central Park project, a development planned for the former Sears site on SOM Center Road.

As the years went by, Mayor Kraus said he always felt that if he would pursue the mayoral seat, he would never run against an incumbent.

“That’s my own philosophy,” he said. “I believe the only time to run was when it was open.”

He would not run against Mr. Patton or former Mayor Susan A. Drucker, but when she decided she would not seek a third term of office, he gave the move a hard look.

“I was thrown into the loop she wasn’t running, and I had to make a decision,” he said. Mayor Kraus considered his options, run for mayor or go for a fifth term on City Council.

“I had to determine, ‘Do I really want to be mayor and what impact can I make?’” He was committed to changing the community for the better if he decided to run for the top office.

“I always wanted to be mayor,” he said. “I thought it is probably my time.”

At that point, Mayor Kraus thought of all of his passions related to the city, such as redevelopment of the core shopping centers, a rails-to-trails project to make Solon a more walkable community, and bringing more restaurants and retail to the city.

The administration works as a team. “Whatever we do, we let everyone know.”

He said of his ultimate choice to run for mayor, “I have a lot of friends in Solon who have implored me to do this.”

His supporters wanted him to use his vision to lead the city in a new direction.

“I look at my job as being an entrepreneur,” he concluded. ■

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Photo by Anton Albert

Nick DiCicco of Solon is the director and founder of the regional Chagrin Valley Dispatch, serving Solon and 15 other surrounding communities.

Top technology

Regional center dispatchers equipped to send help fast

By SUE REID

When residents in the City of Solon and surrounding communities dial 911, they can rest assured dispatchers have the top technology at their fingertips.


That's just the way Solon resident Nick DiCicco, director and founder of Chagrin Valley Dispatch, likes it.

In fact, the ability to purchase state-of-the-art, top-of-the-line technology to equip dispatchers to be able to give the quickest, most accurate and best response, was part of the mission when he first began the regional organization, which took root in January of 2014.

"Nobody could afford the big stuff," Mr. DiCicco explained of the equipment needed in the area of providing the best dispatch services possible. "For a single entity to afford it, it is expensive."

But broken into 20 agencies, including the City of Solon, it is affordable, he noted.

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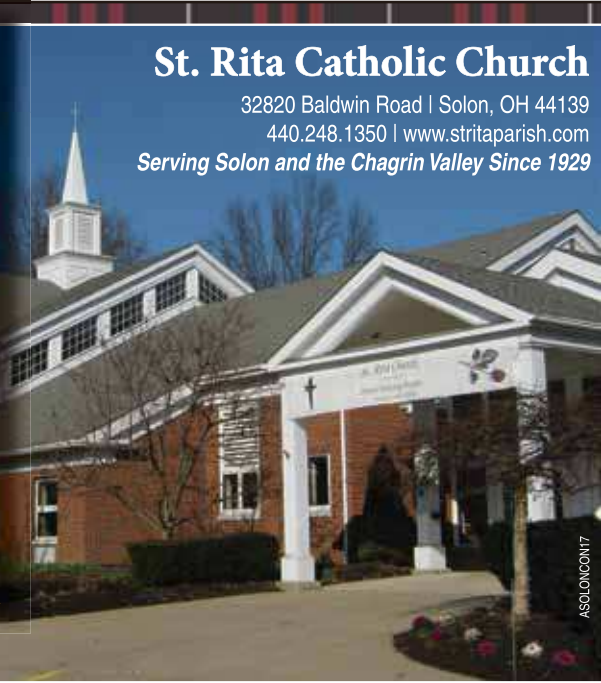
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land Heights and soon in Brecksville, boasts roughly \$3 million in technology.

It has been awarded Public Safety Communications Technology Leadership for its utilization of top technology from the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials, which is an international leader committed to providing public safety communications expertise to its members.

One major piece of technology that CVD uses daily are large video walls which enable dispatchers to watch everything in real time for fire station alerting, as opposed to over radio. The CVD has three of these walls, which are displayed at the MetroHealth Cleveland Heights Medical Center facility, which cost \$1.4 million to construct.

"Now, we can alert multiple stations at a time of an incident," Mr. DiCicco said. The video walls cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, he noted.

Radios are another big piece of the investment in technology at CVD. In the past, there used to be a single radio in a back room in many agencies, and now, CVD has the ability to communicate with anyone in the state who share the same core connection.

"That alone at CVD is worth a half a million dollars," Mr. DiCicco said. "With major incidents, we can patch through a public safety announcement with anyone, no matter what channel they are on."

"The radios simplify interoperability between police, fire and EMS," he explained.

With their radio infrastructure, CVD also pays for a maintenance agreement that keeps them up to date with advancements in technology associated with them, Mr. DiCicco explained.

CVD dispatchers, which number 40 and will expand with an additional 16 once the Brecksville location opens, answer about 300,000 calls annually. They also serve as the countywide data warehouse for Cuyahoga County in constructing their web portal. This gives CVD the ability to enable searches of any kind of police involvement.

CVD also supports all the 911 wireless calls for Cuyahoga County.

"Technology is the biggest thing to help us do our job," Mr. DiCicco said.

CVD also provides IT services to its member communities, which include Chagrin Falls, Moreland Hills, Hunting Valley and

Euclid, among others.

"A lot of the smaller cities can't afford backbone equipment to their networks," Mr. DiCicco said. "So their networks are completely contained and managed by our IT staff."

"It's pennies on the dollars for us because we have invested money in our infrastructure so they don't have to do it," he said.

Technology at CVD is up and running 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Multiple centers are a must, Mr. DiCicco explained.

"If something happens, we can still come to other locations," he said. "All of our data

is replicated every 15 minutes at the sites."

Mr. DiCicco said he is proud of the fact that since the CVD opened in 2014, "We have never been down."

"In the old days, when a single agency would go down, it didn't matter," he said, "but now, with a regional center and 20 agencies, that's a problem."

The CVD staff is trained regularly in all areas of this technology and is committed to being successful, Mr. DiCicco noted.

"It is a very talented staff and is comprised of dispatchers from the areas we pulled," he said.

Continued on page 32

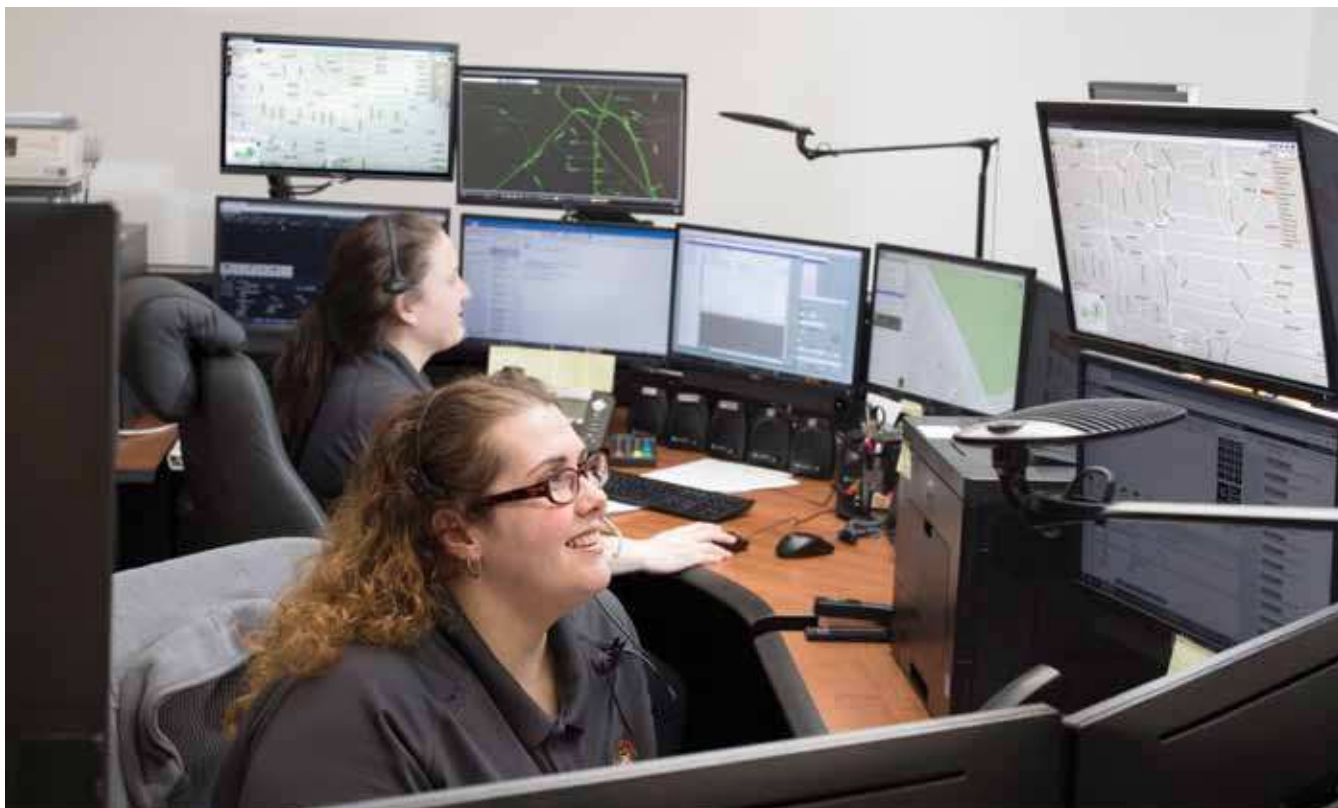
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Dispatchers Kaylie Imbrogno, back, and Katie Friday answer calls in the basement of University Hospitals Bedford Medical Center, where the Chagrin Valley Dispatch is housed. The regional communication center serves 16 municipalities of the Chagrin Valley and greater Cleveland area.

Continued from page 31

As technology always is ever changing, Mr. DiCicco said CVD will remain ahead of the pack. The next step in advancement is body and car cameras being replaced and regularly used by area police departments.

"We will have the ability to stream that live here," he explained. "It's just another set

of eyes."


With its current and any new equipment, on the job training is utilized to get the dispatchers up to speed.

Time is of the essence when it comes to dispatchers taking that initial call to respond to an emergency.

"Our standard here is that from the mo-

ment we take a 911 call for police, fire or EMS, they have to have that call dispatched in 90 seconds," he said. "We base it on technology No. 1 and the second piece is because we are a regional center, there are so many more people in the room.

"Teamwork is crucial when it comes to regional services," he said. ■





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Photo by Anton Albert

LPV Productions employees from left, Bob Seitz, Jim Wagner, Peter Tellep and Brad Neides, work to bring City Council and Planning Commission into Solon residents' homes by broadcasting and live streaming the meetings. Most of the company's employees have Solon connections.

Hometown crew

LPV Productions focusing cameras on city events

By SUE REID

LPV Productions workers are the faces behind the camera when it comes to filming and broadcasting special events and government meetings in the City of Solon.

A Solon connection runs deep for the majority of the employees, many of whom grew up in the city and know it like the back of their hand.

"Growing up in the city, you have pride in

Solon," said LPV President and CEO Pete Tellep. He grew up in Solon, but now lives in Mentor. "Even though I don't live in the city anymore, I consider myself a Solonite."

Mr. Tellep's family moved to Solon in 1984 and his father Dennis was both the assistant finance director and then director of the company. Mr. Tellep graduated from Solon High School and was a member of the Video Club and part of the first student produced news program on the school television station.

He began his involvement with LPV in 2003 and later, he and his father purchased the company in November of 2014. LPV was started by former Solon resident Jim Leib in

the 1980s.

Today, Mr. Tellep, who is a regular face at City Hall in the control room, leads a staff of nine employees, eight of whom have a connection to Solon.

Brad Neides, who graduated from Solon High School in 2000, joined LPV in 2015 and met Mr. Leib through the Solon video club. He began working home football games during his sophomore year. He began at LPV as a summer intern, and recalled his first "big project," he said.

That was taking part in a "Solon Speaks" segment with Water Reclamation Director Paul Solanics.

Continued on page 34



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Continued from page 33

"As summer ended and my internship concluded, I continued working with Jim Pete and LPV throughout my senior year," Mr. Neides recalled. He went on to help out during summer breaks and shares his time between LPV and his full-time job at Nestle in Solon.

LPV employee Bob Seitz, now a resident of North Ridgeville, met Mr. Leib while living in Solon and became a member and then chairman of the city's cable commission. During his time in Solon, his three children went through the schools. Today, his work at LPV is not only familiar in that he knows the inner workings of the city, but enjoyable, he said.

"I've lived here so long and know everything," Mr. Seitz said. "When you are involved in the city through the school and athletic boosters for so many years, we will interview council people and they will talk about areas and I know where they are all at."

"I know the information to understand what is going on," he said.

"It's just that we are very aware of the city and have a pride growing up here," said LPV employee Jeff Gazdacko, a 2000 graduate of Solon High School who now resides in Michigan. "I have lived here long enough that I have a context to the conversation knowing my way around the city."

"It's nice to get to know the city more behind the scenes and how it operates," he

continued. Mr. Gazdacko, who began with LPV in 1998, added that he learned far more about how a government actually works through filming City Council and the Planning Commission than any class at Solon High School.

While he did not grow up in Solon, LPV employee Jim Wagner's grandparents did, so he spent a lot of time in the city growing up.

"I was very familiar with Solon," Mr. Wagner said.

In addition to Planning Commission and City Council, LPV films all of the special committee meetings including Finance, Safety and Public Properties and Public Works as well as the State of the City and Home Days, among other events. The city business is shown on Channel 20 on Spectrum and Channel 99 on U-Verse. LPV live streams their productions.

"It's very beneficial to me," Mr. Gazdacko said of his experience with LPV. "I now have a greater appreciation for how the city operates."

"As the city grew, I learned what it does by watching it behind the scenes," Mr. Seitz added.

His experience at LPV has been a "good fit," Mr. Telep said. "We see how the city actually runs."

Ofentimes in the control room, the Solon natives reminisce or if a certain topic is delved into, they share opinions with one another based on their time in Solon.



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“It’s nice to get to know the city more behind the scenes and how it operates,” Jeff Gazdacko continued. Mr. Gazdacko, who began with LPV in 1998, added that he learned far more about how a government actually works through filming City Council and the Planning Commission than any class at Solon High School.

“That can be interesting,” Mr. Tellep said, “getting all those different viewpoints.

“We talk about that (in the control room) and try to understand the process,” he added.

All of the employees have some tie to television, production or broadcasting.

John Rinaldi, whose family moved to Solon in 1984, said his course to LPV was set in the summer of 1988. That is when he and Mr. Tellep worked summer jobs at the Midwestern Inn. Later, in 2013, at Mr. Tellep’s suggestion, Mr. Rinaldi started to work at Future Media “then the die was cast and I was drawn into LPV in the fall of 2017.”

The staff enjoys highlighting for viewers the holiday tree lighting ceremony as well as the Veterans Day parade and ceremony. They also filmed mayoral debates as part of last year’s November general election.

Looking ahead, Mr. Tellep said LPV will look to try to expand its offerings and work with city businesses.

“We are members of the chamber, and we are trying to promote our services within the chamber to help them grow their business,” he explained.

Since video online is a huge trend, Mr. Tellep noted that LPV actually began streaming city meetings online in 2006.

“We were one of the first cities in the area to stream meetings online,” he said. “We set all that up.”

They also have a licensed drone, a remote pilot, that assist them with commercial aerial

photography and video.

“One of our main focuses is doing more with the city to promote it further,” Mr. Tellep noted, adding that it aligns with initiatives of Mayor Edward H. Kraus who wants to highlight businesses and promote the city. ■

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Photo by Anton Albert

Fran Barber, left, was among the volunteers at a recent Sacks for Seniors food pantry event sponsored by the Solon Rotary. The civic group has left its mark on Solon through its many philanthropic projects.

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Rotary serves Solon through food pantry, safety programs and scholarships

By SUE REID

Whether it's around a table at Panera on Kruse Drive or in a room at Rollhouse Entertainment, members of the Solon Rotary find a meeting place to discuss projects that could benefit the community.

The 25 or so members, who either live or work in Solon, are committed to charitable work that benefits residents.

President Glenn E. Gable, a resident of Pepper Pike, said he and his family have been instrumental for the past two decades in raising more than \$100,000 for the Leukemia/Lymphoma Society as well as supporting other causes. In 2010, when the Solon Rotary began, they would hold their formation

meetings at his business, once Freeway Lanes and now Rollhouse Entertainment.

"I was hooked right away," Mr. Gable said of his involvement in Solon Rotary. "All the people who are involved are so interested in service, and Rotary provided me with an avenue to chase any passion I wanted to, as well as help other people support their passions in service."

"It provided an avenue that many times I feel is the best thing in my life," Mr. Gable said.

Solon Rotary has left its mark on many areas in the city, including the monthly Mobile Food Pantry, Safety Town, Sacks for Seniors, National Night Out, to name a few. Members also work to provide scholarships for Solon students and fund sixth- and eighth-grade camps for those who cannot afford to attend.

"It's always surprising how much need there is," Solon resident Matt Liebson said. "You don't see it, but it's there."

"It's important to be face to face with people and not just write checks," Mr. Liebson, an attorney, said.

The members are no strangers to rolling up their sleeves and helping especially at the monthly Mobile Food Pantry, which feeds 100 families a month now in its sixth year.

"Our involvement with the food pantry has always been a burning thing for me," Solon resident and member Jim Hyde said. "Helping hunger, not just world hunger, is a great thing we do. We roll up our sleeves and it's the coolest thing we have done, not just for ourselves, but for our children."

"Our children have participated in some of the events we have done," Mr. Hyde said.

The Mobile Food Pantry is presented from 4:45-6:15 p.m. the third Tuesday of the month at Church of the Resurrection in Solon. Recently, the Rotary kicked off a senior produce giveaway, where, on the fourth Tuesday of the month, the group provides fresh fruits and vegetables for anyone who needs them. There is no income requirement for this service offered at the Solon Senior Center.

"The sense to help other people and be with others that have the same mission is quite frankly overwhelming at times," Mr. Gable added.

The Rotary's mission is Service Above Self, "and that is not meant for everyone, but for this group, we live it," he said.

South Russell resident Chris Janson, a member of the group, said the Rotary makes sure that its projects are sustainable.

"Rotary International not only provokes us to act locally, but also internationally," Mr. Gable explained.

The Solon Rotary has helped raise funds for a project in El Salvador that provided water for those in need. Bowl for Water, held at Rollhouse Entertainment, has raised nearly \$70,000.

"We bring water to those who have had to walk 2 to 3 miles to get it," Mr. Janson said.

"A great benefit of Rotary is we can leverage our local fundraising with grants on a district

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level and a national level,” Mr. Liebson said.

Solon resident Masroor Malik sees his involvement in Rotary as an extension of his Muslim faith.

“For me, it’s living my faith,” he said. “Service above self is one of those things that is just so attractive.”

The Solon Rotary gives to a number of local charities, Solon resident Bob Wilson explained. Those include Littlest Heroes, a Prom to Remember and more.

They present two large charity events annually, including Night at the Races and Bowl for Water. The Solon Rotary is a 501-3C non-profit organization and always happy to take donations and welcome new members.

“All the donations go to causes,” Mr. Malik noted. “With more members, we can enlarge our area of influence.”

Mr. Wilson said there are business leaders in the community who want to give back.

“Our mission is to tie those business leaders to projects that can help the community,” he added. “We’d love to have more folks.”

Mr. Hyde said membership in the Rotary is about giving back on a local level “where you can feel the impact and not just write a check.

“If you want to roll up your sleeves and actually see and do something, we are your organization,” Mr. Hyde added.

Mr. Wilson said the group is always looking for the next large project. Recently, they saw a renovation to the theater at the Solon Center for the Arts come to fruition due to their efforts.

“Every other year, we’d like to do several large projects in Solon,” Mr. Wilson said.

The Rotary also sponsors First Responders Night which honors exemplary members of the police and fire departments, funds Eat with the Heat at Solon High School and supports National Night Out.

Safety Town was the Rotary’s first project in the city along with the Solon Kiwanis Club. City officers teach children about to enter kindergarten safety rules, such as what stop signs mean, in a mini town at the city park with streets, houses and traffic lights.

“I like how much closer it has brought me to the service people and the administration of the city,” Mr. Gable said of the police and fire departments. “Think about it, these guys are into service as well, and I had no idea I had so much in common with them. They have become my friends as well, and we are all chasing the same goal of service.


“I never realized this before Rotary,” Mr. Gable said.




“We are excited to work with the new mayor (Edward H. Kraus) and see how we can support him,” Mr. Hyde added.

The Rotary is also a tremendous opportunity to meet people, Mr. Wilson said.

“We are all civic minded individuals,” he said. “We want to think broadly, and all groups are welcome.

“This is an opportunity to give to our town.” ■


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Just call him Coach

Announcer and scorekeeper, David Peleg does it all

By SUE REID

His nickname says it all. Solon Community Center's E. David Peleg is "Coach," plain and simple, and the name has stuck for decades.

Given to him by Community Center Director Donald W. Holub from when Mr. Peleg was a freshman at Solon High School, that name is how he is known by just about everyone who walks through the center doors or onto an athletic field.

"No one really knows David," Mr. Peleg, 52, said with a laugh. "They know Coach."

For more than 25 years, Mr. Peleg, a 1983 graduate of Solon High School, has played a number of roles in the city's recreation department. He began in sports programming and as head of the concession stands at the log cabin in the Community Park.

He began coaching pee wee basketball and middle school athletics about 17 years ago. Through the years, he has coached middle school boys soccer, basketball, and golf.

He was co-coach for boys junior varsity tennis and coordinates the Solon High School basketball intramurals. A California native who moved to Solon in 1978, Mr. Peleg is the public address announcer for soccer and girls basketball, and is a back-up for boys basketball.

He is the official scorekeeper for girls and boys home basketball games and is in charge of the scorebook for the girls when it is on the road. Prior to coaching in Solon, he coached junior varsity golf at Chagrin Falls High School.

What he enjoys most about coaching is "just the interaction," Mr. Peleg said, sitting in the gathering area of the Solon Community Center on a recent afternoon.

"I like helping kids get to their next level," he said. "I look at them as the next student athletes and like helping them develop the next stage of their life."

"It's great to see that," he said.

Mr. Peleg said he has worked alongside great coaches at Solon and Chagrin who have been role models to him as well.

"I see how they act, and that rubs off on me."

As a coach, Mr. Peleg considers himself "tough but fair."

"I want them to do their best," he said. He tries to give everyone an opportunity to play "but athletes have to earn the playing time because it's not guaranteed."

Continued on page 40



Photo by Geoff Powers

E. David Peleg has been a full-time Solon employee for 18 years and is commonly known simply as "Coach." The 1983 Solon High School graduate has played a number of roles in the recreation department including coaching at Solon High School.



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"I had a coach tell me once, 'I don't care if you win a single game. Your responsibility is to teach the kids the game and develop them.'"

Mr. Peleg said he loves every moment of coaching and the camaraderie with the student athletes. Earlier this year, he was set to head to states with the Solon High School boys varsity basketball team to do their books at the game in Columbus.

"I travel with the boys now for the fourth year, and traveled with the girls (to state) three years ago," he said. "To see what these young men have done and the coaching staff is amazing.

"As a coach, I get to know the kids and see them develop into great men and women."

At the Community Center, where Mr. Peleg is known to walk through every corner. He manages the banquets and events, which number about 1,000 annually. On many weekends, he will arrive at the center in the morning and not leave till the wee hours. There are times he manages 10 events a day.

A graduate of Kent State University where he studied international relations, Mr. Peleg said there is no "typical day" when it comes to his schedule.

"I'm constantly busy," he said. Whether it's managing a large party or small meeting,

he is constantly active and on the go, which is just the way he likes it.

He has played sports most of his life, including soccer, basketball, tennis and golf.

Mr. Peleg is going on his 18th year as a full-time employee with the city and his hobbies including recreational sports, travel, cooking and watching television, especially the news or a good drama.

"People know who I am throughout the city," he said. "It's great because it's fun to be amongst the people."

Mr. Peleg is always willing to lend a helpful hand to anyone and even gets into friendly competitions with his athletes. Most recently, he took a bet he hopes he loses, he said with a laugh.

"Everyone knows the yellow coat," Mr. Peleg said of the coat he wears most always and while coaching. "The bet is if they win the state, they get to burn the yellow coat." He has worn it for the past 13 years.

"I would love to lose this bet," he said with a smile. "If they win the whole thing (at states), I'm in trouble!"

The boys came close, but did not win the state title. So, the coat is safe for now.

In all, coaches get the opportunity to develop tomorrow's leaders and that is something Mr. Peleg takes to heart.

"You always want to be a positive role model for the athletes," he said. "I coach great kids and they have great parents. We have fun but we are also serious.

"It's the teaching I enjoy the most." ■





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Instructor Thia Brabson leads a Silver Splash class with bravado at the Solon Community Center's indoor pool. The indoor pool is one of three public pools in the city, including the outdoor Community Center pool and the outdoor Solon Municipal Pool on Arthur Road.

Photos by Peggy Turbett

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Big splash

Residents don't hesitate to take plunge in three city pools

By SUE REID

Regardless of the season, members of the Solon Community Center experience the joys of swimming both outside under the sun and inside in a heated area.

On any given day, the indoor pool at the center, which recently underwent renovation for its heating, ventilation and air conditioning, welcomes at least 300 swimmers, Aquatics Director Jim Sordi said.

Whether it's to swim laps, take part in a number of water exercise classes or take advantage of open swim, the pool appeals to all ages, said Mr. Sordi, a city resident.

"We make it a facility for all ages," said Mr. Sordi, who has been aquatics director since 1994.

Solon has three public pools – an indoor pool and an outdoor both at the community center on Kruse Drive and the outdoor Solon Municipal Pool on Arthur Road.

Mr. Sordi explained that hours of operation begin at 5:30 a.m. and run to 9 p.m. weekdays and until 5:30 p.m. on weekends, allowing adult lap swimming in the early morning and classes and open swim other times of the day. Classes range from basic swimming to water therapy.

Some popular classes include water jogging, which takes the class through the zero depth area and the current stream, as well as includes a cool down portion and stretching after the 45 minute session.

There is also Watercise, which has the class enter the current stream to walk and stretch; as well as Aqua Diva, which is a musical blend of Bollywood, Zumba and Hip Hop rhythms, adding the noodle to work the entire body.

For the senior citizens, there is Silver Splashes, which is designed to work on strength, balance and motion.

Continued on page 45

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A Silver Splash class in the indoor pool is one of the many year-round activities at the Solon Community Center. The class is designed to work on strength, balance and motion, and is among the many offerings that also include Aqua Diva and water jogging.

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Continued from page 43

"Our water classes are really popular and draw hundreds on a daily basis," Mr. Sordi said.

The pool also is home to American Red Cross Learn to Swim classes Monday through Thursday as well as Saturday. The program is open to anyone from 6 months of age to adults with as many as 40 in a class. There are also Mom and Me swim programs for youngsters 3 and under.

The indoor pool has four, 25-yard lanes for lap swimming and a currents stream which looks like the number eight, Mr. Sordi explained, and is great for exercise as people walk both with and against the stream.

The indoor slide draws lots of kids.

The outdoor pool has a 1-meter diving board, a large play area with fountains as well as a slide.

Kids can slide down the tongue of a whale or cool off by the elephant squirting water through its trunk.

There is also an outdoor concession stand, about 200 lounge chairs, picnic tables and umbrella tables.

"In the summer, it is totally packed here," Mr. Sordi said. People who work out on the exercise equipment at the center often cool off in the pool after and finish their workout there.

Those who visit the Arthur Road pool, which is 50 meters, enjoy a relaxing summer day poolside, swimming laps or just splashing around.

The Arthur Road pool is 12 feet at its deepest and 3 feet 6 inches at its shallowest. The pool is often used for competitive swimming, laps and diving, and also draws more of a teenage crowd. It has a separate kiddie pool and colorful outdoor picnic tables.

Arthur Road also is home to the Solon Stars Swim Club, which holds morning practices there, as well as the American Flyers Diving Club. Membership to the Community Center includes the Arthur Road pool. Day campers in the city program also swim at this pool.

"Summer is always centered around the pool and families," Mr. Sordi said of the pools that open on Memorial Day weekend.

There are also many special events held at the pool, Manager Rich Parker said. "It's a pretty important feature of the Community Center."

"The outdoor pool at the community center is more for younger kids and their parents and a lot of sunbathers," Recreation Center Director Donald W. Holub added.

He noted that when the Community Center opened in 2003, plans were to eventually phase out the Arthur Road pool. But due to the need and demand by residents, the older pool is being renovated.

"People love it. The best part of our pools is we have something for everyone," Mr. Holub said. "We once said you can't be all things for everybody, but we are." ■



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Photos by Geoff Powers

LingYun Rising Star Gymnastics and Dance School performs during the Ohio China Day celebration, hosted by the Solon-based Cleveland Contemporary Chinese Culture Association, held earlier this year at Cleveland Public Auditorium.

Sharing culture

Chinese association draws students to lessons in language and more

By SUE REID

Members of the Solon Chinese community shared the limelight during the Ohio China Day celebration earlier this year at Cleveland Public Auditorium where more than 4,000 gathered.

It was one of the many ways that the Cleveland Contemporary Chinese Culture Association, based in Solon, is broadening its reach.

Founded in 1995 by a group of Solon residents, the CCCCA is a nonprofit organization run by volunteers of all walks of life, many

of them American Chinese professionals. Its purpose is to promote multicultural activities and diversity, as well as to foster a better understanding of Eastern and Western cultures through language and cultural exchange programs.

Since its founding, the CCCCA has grown to become one of the largest and most active Chinese cultural organizations in Northeast Ohio.

CCCCA oversees a weekend Chinese language and culture school named the Cleveland Contemporary Chinese School, housed in Solon High School, and a Cleveland Chinese Culture Center in Twinsburg, and various sports teams and arts troupes.

The troupes have performed locally at Solon Home Days, but also at cultural events like Cleveland One World, Cleveland Asian Festival, Cleveland International Day, and Chinese New Year Celebration galas in Cleveland, Columbus and Pittsburgh.

"Since 2012, the troupe performs annually for many Cuyahoga County senior centers with the general support from Cuyahoga County Arts and Culture," said Dr. Liming Wang, president of CCCCA. "It's about promoting a mutual understanding of different cultures to make the Cleveland area diverse.

"Only when you know each other, you can live peacefully," said Dr. Wang, principal of

the school and a Solon resident.

At its founding in 1995, the CCCS was housed at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation's main campus education building, then moved to Solon in 1998, where it is spread out throughout classrooms at Solon High School.

Last year, 300 students were enrolled. The school teaches the Chinese language, the arts, as well as painting, dance, acrobat, sports, martial arts, chess and more.

Each year, students' knowledge of the Chinese culture and other talents are showcased at the annual Chinese language and cultural competitions.

This year, the Solon group took the stage at Ohio China Day in Cleveland, along with members of Chinese schools in Buffalo, Detroit, Cincinnati and Akron. They showcased their talent in dance, violin, piano, martial arts, duet singing and other categories.

"We wanted to give the general public knowledge of China without traveling to China," Solon resident Bo Li, executive director of CCCCA said. "Next year, it will be at an even bigger scale."

"We appreciate the diversity in Northeast Ohio, and we think it's a good idea for people to see more of China for Chinese New Year," Mr. Li explained.

Mr. Li said it is hoped that this event leads to more collaboration with other groups.

"That is what we are gunning for," Mr. Li said, "because people may not know that we have such a diverse, large population of Chinese in Cleveland, especially in Cuyahoga County."

The Solon group planned and organized the Cleveland event and offered a large amount of financial support.

Closer to home, Mr. Li said, the program teaches students about Chinese culture and offers opportunities to adults as well.

"It's education in all aspects, but language is the main part," Mr. Li said of the schools'



Ohio Contemporary Chinese School Parents Troupe performs at the Ohio China Day earlier this year at Cleveland Public Auditorium. The event is one of the ways that the Solon-based Cleveland Contemporary Chinese Culture Association is expanding its reach in the community.

offerings. More than 40 experienced language and art teachers take part and some are certified by the state of Ohio

The CCCS was established as both a community gathering place and a community center/school function, Mr. Li said.

"We provided opportunities for parents and have meaningful interaction and at the same time open it to the public," Mr. Li said. "Anyone can come and enjoy activities."

"We are open to all cultures," Dr. Wang noted, adding that not all members of the CCCS are Chinese.

Students ages 3 to 70 come from Solon, Youngstown, Canton, other parts of Cuyahoga County and some areas of Lake County, noted

Nianfa Tang, chairman of the board of CCCCA.

"There is no age limit," Mr. Li said.

"We are a good role model for our kids," Dr. Wang said.

The Chinese culture is rooted in education and being good, responsible citizens.

"We are all volunteers," Dr. Wang added. "Our community service gives them (the student) a good role model and example."

A future goal of the association is to expand on programming and community service and continue to broaden its reach, Mr. Li said. They also hope to have a building big enough one day to host classes seven days a week.

"We want to contribute to the community and to Northeast Ohio," Mr. Li said. ■



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Photo by Geoff Powers

David Marbury battles to maintain possession against Moeller senior Jeremiah Davenport during the Comets' Division I state championship loss at the Schottenstein Center. The junior averaged 10.5 points and 4.3 rebounds for the Comets.

Hoop dreams

Both the girls and boys Solon High School basketball teams reached the Division I state finals in the 2018 season and finished as state runners-up. Led by an all-senior starting lineup of Valencia Myers, Mariah Modkins, Katherine Dittoe, Gabby Mitchell and Kyra Lance, the Lady Comets finished the season with a record of 26-3 after falling to Pickerington Central, 49-45, in its first state title game since 2006. The boys team finished 27-2, falling to Cincinnati Archbishop Moeller, 83-65, in the program's first-ever state final and were led by seniors Sincere Carry and Ryan Bergen, and juniors Michael Bekelja, David Marbury, Trent Williams and Nick Close.



Photo by Philip Botta

Solon senior Mariah Modkins drives to the hole against the defense of Wadsworth junior Sophia Fortner, left, during the Lady Comets' 52-31 victory in the Division I state semifinals March 16 at The Ohio State University's Schottenstein Center in Columbus. The Kent State University recruit finished the season with 279 points, 132 assists and 66 steals.

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