



# UNICO NATIONAL

PASSAIC VALLEY CHAPTER  
P.O. BOX 341  
LITTLE FALLS, NJ 07424  
PassaicValleyUNICO@gmail.com  
[www.PassaicValleyUNICO.org](http://www.PassaicValleyUNICO.org)

## Monthly Minutes April 8, 2026 ~ 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday

**Date** April 8, 2026 ~ 2nd Wednesday  
**Place** Casa Arturo's, Little Falls, NJ  
**Prayer** 6:30 pm John Morano  
**Flag Salute** 6:31 pm John Morano  
**Dinner** 6:32 pm  
**Meeting** 8:15 pm

### **Members & Guests in Attendance**

Members (49) at meeting 23  
Guests at meeting 3  
Percent % at meeting 53 %

### **Executive Board**

<b><u>Attendance at meetings</u></b>	<b><u>9/'25</u></b>	<b><u>10/'25</u></b>	<b><u>11/'25</u></b>	<b><u>12/'25</u></b>	<b><u>1/'26</u></b>	<b><u>2/'26</u></b>	<b><u>3/'26</u></b>	<b><u>4/'26</u></b>	<b><u>5/'26</u></b>	<b><u>6/'26</u></b>
President: Criscione	1	x	1	NM	1	1	1	1		
1 <sup>st</sup> VP: J. Benvenuti	1	1	1	NM	1	1	x	1		
2 <sup>nd</sup> VP: Chuck Russo	1	1	1	NM	1	1	x	1		
Secretary: Pelonero	1	x	x	NM	1	1	x	1		
Treasurer: Ponchak	1	1	1	NM	1	1	x	1		
Sgt.At-Arms: Morano	1	1	1	NM	1	1	1	1		

### **Delegates at Meetings**

1. Sal Benvenuti	1	1	NMT	NM	1	1	1	1		
2. Pat Pelonero	1	x	x	NM	1	1	1	1		

### **Board of Directors at meetings (6 past Chapter Presidents)**

Carmen Gaita	1	1	1	NM	x	x	x	x		
Bruce Ponchak	1	1	1	NM	1	1	x	1		
John Barbieri	x	1	1	NM	1	1	1	1		
Steve Pelonero	1	x	x	NM	1	1	x	1		



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## Past Chapter Presidents in attendance at meetings

	<u>9/'25</u>	<u>10/'25</u>	<u>11/'25</u>	<u>12/'25</u>	<u>1/'26</u>	<u>2/'26</u>	<u>3/'26</u>	<u>4/'26</u>	<u>5/'26</u>	<u>6/'26</u>
Joe Agresti PNP	1	1	1	NM	1	1	x	x		
John Barbieri	x	1	1	NM	1	1	1	1		
Sal Benvenuti	1	1	1	NM	1	1	1	1		
Carmen Criscione	1	x	1	NM	1	1	1	1		
Carmen Gaita	1	1	1	NM	x	x	x	x		
John Morano	1	1	1	NM	1	1	1	1		
Steve Pelonero	1	x	x	NM	1	1	x	1		
Bruce Ponchak	1	1	1	NM	1	1	x	1		
Chuck Russo	1	1	1	NM	1	1	x	1		
Angelo Verrone	1	x	1	NM	x	1	x	1		

## Opening Remarks

- **President Carmen Criscione**

Carmen welcomed everyone to the meeting and welcomed our three guests to the meeting: Steve Calantone, UNICO National 1<sup>st</sup> VP, and from Jersey Discount Tool in Totowa NJ, Nick Morelli III and Nick Morelli IV. Nicks company donated to our chapter, for the sole purpose of promoting our Italian Heritage, of which we financially supported the Italian American Museum in NYC, the Coccia Italian Institute from MSU, and also the UNICO National Italian Heritage and Photo Calendar. Carmen explained to the guests that our chapter is also heavily involved in our Passaic Valley community.

- **1<sup>st</sup> VP Joe Benvenuti**

Joe welcomed everyone and hoped that everyone had a beautiful Easter. He is looking for warmer weather and thanked the members for their volunteer work with food donations, helping at the District Pasta Dinner and also for participating in our chapter golf outing.

- **2<sup>nd</sup> VP Chuck Russo**

Chuck mirrored Joe and Carmen's remarks



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## **Secretary Minutes**

**Secretary: Steve Pelonero PNP**

Steve thanked Pat Pelonero for taking the minutes at the March meeting.

Steve noted that the minutes are on the chapter website and were also emailed to all of the members

Motions to accept were from:

Joyce O'Hara and Pat Pelonero

All were in favor

## **Treasurer Report**

**Treasurer: Bruce Ponchak**

Bruce noted that he emailed the minutes to everyone

End of month balance was \$22,876 with e CD balance of \$12,000

Motions to accept were from:

Steve Pelonero and Joe Benvenuti

All were in favor

## **Bills and Communications: John Morano**

John reported that some Golf Outing money came in

John also reported that our Gaming License renewal notice came in

## **Chapter Budget**

• N/A

## **Chapter Elections: Nominating chair to be appointed by Chapter President**

- It was reported by Chapter President Carmen that the executive board is putting through for our 2026/2027 year the following: For president, Joe Benvenuti; for 1<sup>st</sup> VP Chuck Russo, but Chuck said he was stepping down and put forward Fred DeMarco; the 2<sup>nd</sup> VP position is open; for Sgt-At-Arms John Morano is stepping down and John Barbieri put his name in; for Treasurer Bruce Ponchak; for Secretary, Steve Pelonero PNP
- Nominations from the floor will be taken at the May meeting and with or without and election, the swearing in of officers will be in June.



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## **Fundraising Committees**

- **Community Service Day: Claudine Stefanelli**

Claudine reported that our chapters Annual Community Service, which will again be a food drive at ShopRite in Little Falls, will be on Saturday, April 18<sup>th</sup>. It will be rain or shine from 8 am – 4 pm. Claudine handed out a volunteer work schedule based on those that signed up to help. She thanked all of the volunteers. She noted that our chapter now supports 6 food pantries.

- **Fifty-Fifty: Claudine Stefanelli**

Claudine reported that there was no update at this time, but that she possibly may start another raffle for July

- **Food Pantry: Carmen Gaita, Patricia Pelonero**

Pat reported that the St. Agnes Pantry is no longer active as the church has shut its doors. Pat also reported that UNICO National has a Food Pantry Grant which usually receives 75 grant requests a year. A grant was given to the First Reformed Church in Little Falls in the amount of \$1,000. Pat thanked chapter member Roni Corrado for helping the church/pantry fill out the grant request. A photo was taken and will be sent to be published in our local papers.

- **Golf Outing: Fred DeMarco**

Fred reported that sponsors and golfers are slow in coming in for our June Golf Outing and that the forms are on the chapter website

- **Holiday Cheer: Joe Benvenuti, Sal Benvenuti, Carmen Gaita**

Sal reported that there was no update, but he did remind everyone that we have helped 5 families with \$500 each in gift cards to help them with their Christmas needs, The money comes from a budgeted line item and also from donations from members



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- **Overseas Soldier Program: Evelyn Tosi / Roni Corrado**

Roni reported that this program is for current overseas soldiers. It is a program that our chapter has been doing for close to 20 years. There are currently no soldiers that we know of who are in a war zone. If we are made known of one, we get an address where we can send a box of goods to that soldier's group.

- **Scholarship: Mike Russo**

- In Mike's absence, Chuck Russo reported that we have given on average 10 scholarships in the amount of \$1,000 each, in addition to two Brian Piccolo Athletic Awardees. Chuck also noted that our Annual Golf Outing, along with other venues, is where the bulk of the money comes from to support the Scholarship program. The recipients should be announced at the May meeting. The program will again be offering the Memorial Scholarship in honor of a person of choice. That cost is \$250 per Memorial. The Scholarship dinner is on June 14<sup>th</sup> at the Barnyard for a cost of \$60. There should be a cocktail hour for members only. Pat Pelonero said she would work on a pamphlet flier that will show the recipients of the Scholarships that are available from UNICO National

- **Study Abroad: Cav. Joe Agresti PNP**

In Joe's absence Chuck reported that we are still working with Montclair State University and their Italian Club and also Seton Hall to get suggestions for our Study Abroad Program

## **Non-Fundraising Committees**

- **Flag Raising: Steve Pelonero PNP**

Steve reported that he was just contacted if our chapter would like to do another flag raising the first Monday of October, which is Italian Heritage month. Steve said that it is now on his calendar to prepare for it.

- **Good & Welfare: Joe Benvenuti**

Not report

- **Italian Heritage: Angelo Verrone**

No report



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- **Membership: Christina Castillo, Roni Corrado**

Christina reported that our chapter has 49 members with an average age of 67. The meeting in March had 49% attendance. Christina also noted that two members are celebrating their birthdays this month of April: Steve Pelonero and Bruce Ponchak.

- **Newsletter & Website: Steve Pelonero PNP**

Steve reported that the newsletter is on the chapter website and that our website now has had 20,729 hits, Steve noted that our chapter has been in existence for 54 years and that UNICO National was formed in 1922, 104 years ago.

- **Public Relations: Christina Castillo, Roni Corrado**

Roni thanked the Italian Tribune and also the Passaic Valley Today newspapers for always running our articles.

## **District and National Events**

- **District News**

UNICO National 1<sup>st</sup> VBP, Steve Calantone reported on the District: April 24<sup>th</sup> is our Annual Pasta Dinner which raises the funds for the Christmas Dinner in December where we sponsor our Special Need Friends. Steve C also reported and noted that the Annual Bus ride to NYC is where we get the funds for our District Scholarship. The chapter which scholarship recipient receives the award will be asked to host the June District meeting. Steve then reminded everyone that there are 10 neighboring chapters in our district: Belleville, Bloomfield, Cedar Grove, Montclair, North Haledon, Passaic-Clifton, Passaic Valley, Pequannock, Sparta and Wayne

- **National News**

- Chapter President Carmen reported, on behalf of the Orlando Convention Chairman Joe Agresti, who was in Orlando getting more updates on the convention site.
- Steve Pelonero, who is the chairman of the 2027 Convention in Nashville, gave a brief summary of a recent visit to Nashville with Steve Calantone



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## **Old Business**

Carmen reported that Woodland Park is still up in the air on banners. Fred DeMarco said he would look into Little Falls, Anthony Sabatino remarked on Totowa. It was voted on to earmark \$300 per town for ball field banners

## **New Business**

Chuck Russo made a motion to donate \$200 to an American Legion member, who is legally blind, whose house had burnt down, and him and his wife are now housing in a local hotel. The motion was 2<sup>nd</sup>'d by John Barbier. All were in favor

## **Adjournment**

- Motion to adjourn was made at 9:15 pm, by Sal Benvenuti and Frank Capalbo  
All were in favor.

## **Respectfully Taken by**

Steve Pelonero PNP / Chapter Secretary

## **Meeting Attendance**

The year's meeting attendance on the following two pages >>



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		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Total
Total	Members	24	20	0	n/a	28	26	20	23	0	0	
1	Agresti Joseph	1		.	.	1	1					3
2	Barbieri John		1	.	.	1	1	1	1			5
3	Barone Joseph		1	.	.	1	1	1	1			5
4	Benvenuti Joseph	1	1	.	.	1	1		1			5
5	Benvenuti Salvatore	1	1	.	.	1	1	1	1			6
6	Bifalco Mark			.	.							0
7	Breitwieser Thomas		1	.	.	1	1		1			4
8	Capalbo Frank	1	1	.	.	1	1		1			5
9	Capizzi Gerard	.	.	.	.	.	1					1
10	Carbonelli Michael	1	1	.	.	1	1					4
11	Carrubba Michael			.	.	1	1	1				3
12	Castillo Christina	1	1	.	.	1	1	1	1			6
13	Cervino Peter	1		.	.				1			2
14	Cestone James			.	.	1	1		1			3
15	Cestone Julianna			.	.							0
16	Chomko Jean	1	1	.	.	1		1	1			5
17	Corrado Roni	1	1	.	.	1	1	1	1			6
18	Criscione Carmen	1		.	.	1	1	1	1			5
19	DeLuccia Alexa			.	.							0
20	DeLuccia Alexander			.	.	1						1
21	DeMarco Fred	1	1	.	.	1	1	1	1			6
22	Dransfield Daniel			.	.							0
23	Dransfield Grace			.	.							0
24	Eoepochino Kyle			.	.							0
25	Ermolowich William			.	.							0
26	Gaeta Gerardo	1		.	.			1				2
27	Gaita Jessica			.	.							0
28	Gaita Jr Carmen	1	1	.	.							2
29	Klosik Emilia	1		.	.							1
30	Kribs Ken		1	.	.	1		1				3
31	Longo Pete			.	.							0
32	Lynch Peter			.	.							0
33	Morano John	1	1	.	.	1	1	1	1			6
34	OHara Joyce	1	1	.	.	1	1	1	1			6
35	Peloner Patricia	1		.	.	1	1	1	1			5
36	Peloner Steven	1		.	.	1	1		1			4
37	Polizzotto Philip			.	.							0
38	Ponchak Bruce	1	1	.	.	1	1		1			5

