



UNICO NATIONAL

PASSAIC VALLEY CHAPTER
P.O. BOX 341
LITTLE FALLS, NJ 07424
PassaicValleyUNICO@gmail.com
www.PassaicValleyUNICO.org

Monthly Minutes June 24, 2026 ~ 4th Wednesday

Date June 24, 2026 ~ 4th Wednesday
Place Holy Cross Church, Woodland Park, NJ
Prayer 7:00 pm John Morano
Flag Salute 8:00 pm John Morano
Dinner 7:00 pm
Meeting 8:00 pm

Members & Guests in Attendance

Members (49) at meeting 24
Guests at meeting 3
Percent % at meeting 55 %

Executive Board

<u>Attendance at meetings</u>	<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>
President: Criscione	1	x	1	NM	1	1	1	1	1	1
1 st VP: J. Benvenuti	1	1	1	NM	1	1	x	1	1	1
2 nd VP: Chuck Russo	1	1	1	NM	1	1	x	1	1	1
Secretary: Pelonero	1	x	x	NM	1	1	x	1	x	1
Treasurer: Ponchak	1	1	1	NM	1	1	x	1	1	1
Sgt.At-Arms: Morano	1	1	1	NM	1	1	1	1	1	1

Delegates at Meetings

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

Board of Directors at meetings (6 past Chapter Presidents)

Carmen Gaita	1	1	1	NM	x	x	x	x	x	1
Bruce Ponchak	1	1	1	NM	1	1	x	1	1	1
John Barbieri	x	1	1	NM	1	1	1	1	1	1
Steve Pelonero	1	x	x	NM	1	1	x	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	x	x
John Barbieri	x	1	1	NM	1	1	1	1	1	1
Sal Benvenuti	1	1	1	NM	1	1	1	1	x	1
Carmen Criscione	1	x	1	NM	1	1	1	1	1	1
Carmen Gaita	1	1	1	NM	x	x	x	x	x	1
John Morano	1	1	1	NM	1	1	1	1	1	1
Steve Pelonero	1	x	x	NM	1	1	x	1	x	1
Bruce Ponchak	1	1	1	NM	1	1	x	1	1	1
Chuck Russo	1	1	1	NM	1	1	x	1	1	1
Angelo Verrone	1	x	1	NM	x	1	x	1	1	1

Opening Remarks

- **President Carmen Criscione**

- Carmen welcomed three guests who are prospective members, two of whom paid their new member dues. The three guests are: Gina Maria Carmella Bucci, Richard Breitwieser, and Duane Good
- Carmen made note that this was his last meeting as chapter president and thanked everyone for their support over the past two extremely successful years

- **1st VP Joe Benvenuti**

Joe thanked Carmen for his two years as chapter president and that he was looking forward to being the president of the chapter. Joe welcomed everyone to the meeting, wished everyone a great summer, thanked the new members for joining our chapter and said “see you in September”

- **2nd VP Chuck Russo**

Chuck also thanked everyone, welcomed the new members which will give our chapter a revitalization in ideas. Chuck noted that it was looking good for the future of our chapter



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Secretary Minutes

Secretary: Steve Pelonero PNP

- Steve thanked Christina Castillo for taking the minutes at the May 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 Tom Breitwieser
All were in favor

Treasurer Report

Treasurer: Bruce Ponchak

- Bruce noted that there were no minutes prepared
- But the end of month balance was \$32,713 and that figure will go up when the golf report is given.
- Motions to accept were from:
Joyce O'Hara and Pat Pelonero
All were in favor

Bills and Communications: John Morano

- It was reported that our chapter Gaming License was renewed and received
- We received a Thank You Plaque from the Totowa PAL League thanking us for our donation for a banner for their baseball / softball field

Chapter Budget

- N/A

Chapter Elections: Nominating chair to be appointed by Chapter President

- N/A



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Fundraising Committees

- **Community Service Day: Claudine Stefanelli**

Claudine reported that she will be contacting ShopRite again for a date for our April Food Pantry Drive

- **Fifty-Fifty: Claudine Stefanelli**

Claudine reported that she will be doing another 50/50 with tickets to hopefully be ready to sell at the September meeting. The drawing date will be at the December meeting

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

Pat Pelonero noted that the St. Agnes Pantry is officially closed as the property was sold. Buit on that note, Pat said that they re-opened in Totowa at the Methodist Church. Pat will be contacting them to see what their needs are. Pat was glad that they moved to Totowa which opened up another town for us to help

- **Golf Outing: Fred DeMarco**

Fred thanked everyone for their help which made this outing a huge success. It took lots of work and meetings. Fred noted that we had 101 golfers, \$12,000 in sponsorships, and \$17,000 in golf registrations. Overall, Fred reported that we had a \$16,000 profit.

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

Sal gave an update of this committee for the new members in attendance: Last year we gave 5 baskets to needy families from our 3 town Passaic Valley area. Each contained \$500 in gift cards for the holiday season. We have a budget line item of \$1500 and the balance comes from any donations given from our members

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

No report



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- **Scholarship: Mike Russo**
 - Michael thanked his committee for their help and to those who donated. Mike reported that we had 73 total in attendance at the Brian Piccolo and Scholarship Dinner at the Barnyard in Totowa. Complimentary dinners were for 14 people. With our members and spouses there were 48 in attendance. At the dinner we also had our officer installations. We did receive one notable thank you letter from one of the recipients.
- **Study Abroad: Cav. Joe Agresti PNP**
No report

Non-Fundraising Committees

- **Flag Raising: Steve Pelonero PNP**
No report
- **Good & Welfare: Joe Benvenuti**
Prayers were asked for the death of Carmen Gaita's mother-in-law at 104 years of age
- **Italian Heritage: Angelo Verrone**
Angelo reported that there might be something in October
- **Membership: Christina Castillo, Roni Corrado**
Christina reported that we are at 49 members, with two applications that were handed in at this dinner meeting. The average age is 68 years old. Christina also gave birthday wishes to our June, July and August members, seeing as how we do not meet during these summer months. Christina also asked that members reach out to their friends and family to see if they would like to join



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

Steve reported that all of our minutes and newsletters are on the chapter website at www.PassaicValleyUNICO.org. Steve also noted that the chapter website is at 21,381 visits with all of the sponsors and golf foursomes in the photo links section. Steve thanked John Barbier for taking the photos of the foursomes at the outing and also thanked Christina for taking the minutes at the May meeting in his absence

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

Christina thanked the Passaic Valley Today Newspaper and also the Italian Tribune for posting all of our photos. 10 years with the PV Today paper and 13 years with the Italian Tribune.

District and National Events

- **District News**

- Chapter president Carmen reported that himself, along with Pat and Steve Pelonero attended the most recent District meeting. Carmen noted that the district meeting is a nice way to meet other chapters and their members to also hear what they do for their chapter.
- Carmen noted that the District Christmas Dinner for our Special need friends is set for the Brownstone Catering Hall on December 1st at \$65 per person. The flier is on our chapter website in the Flier Section
- Carmen also noted that the District Bus ride to NYC's Rockefeller Center and to Puglia's Restaurant off of Mulberry Street is set for December 5th at \$115. The flier is on our chapter website in the Flier Section

- **National News**

- Sal Benvenuti talked about the National Amendment that was up for a vote at the convention. The Amendment calls for the addition of Alternate DG's to be allowed to vote at the Board of Director Meeting. Sal noted that at one time it was allowed but changed to just the DG. Sal asked the members vote to how the Delegates should vote. The members voted not to pass the amendment
- Carmen noted that member PNP Joe Agresti is the chair of this July's Convention in Orlando
- Carmen noted that member PNP Steve Pelonero is the chair of the 2027 Convention in Nashville



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Old Business

- Sal Benvenuti is looking to re-activate and do another Beefsteak, but that he only wants to do it if members step up to on the committee and take it over and get involved

New Business

- Chapter President Carmen asked Steve Pelonero to talk about the UNICO National Program: The Vastola Award. Steve gave a brief history of the award and said that our chapter would like to put up Sal Benvenuti as a recipient of the award, which if chosen he would receive the award at the 2027 National Convention in Nashville, TN. All were in favor.
- Tom Breitwieser said that he is working on a float for the Christmas Parade, which is the Saturday after Thanksgiving.
- It was brought up about creating a Venmo account so that payments for Golf, etc can be made that way in addition to the tradition way of cash or checks. Bruce said that our bank, Valley National does not have Venmo, but that he would ask again
- Pat Pelonero suggested, and she would run it, into having a Book signing from an author who has written numerous books about our Italian culture and heritage: Adriana Trigiana. She said that she would get more information if the chapter was interested, and it would be advertised as well
- John Barnieri said that he will be creating a link to the chapter website Member Section where you can enter and search any town or region Italy

Adjournment

- Motion to adjourn was made at 8:44 pm, by Tom Breitwieser and Joe Benvenuti
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	25	20	0	n/a	30	26	20	23	25	24	
1	Agresti	Joseph	1		.	.	1	1					3
2	Barbieri	John		1	.	.	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
3	Barone	Joseph		1	.	.	1	1	1	1	1		6
4	Benvenuti	Joseph	1	1	.	.	1	1		1	1	1	7
5	Benvenuti	Salvatore	1	1	.	.	1	1	1	1		1	7
6	Bifalco	Mark			.	.							0
7	Breitwieser	Thomas		1	.	.	1	1		1		1	5
8	Capalbo	Frank	1	1	.	.	1	1		1			5
9	Capizzi	Gerard	.	.	.	.	1	1			1	1	4
10	Carbonelli	Michael	1	1	.	.	1	1			1		5
11	Carrubba	Michael			.	.	1	1	1		1	1	5
12	Castillo	Christina	1	1	!	!	1	1	1	1	1	1	8
13	Cervino	Peter	1		.	.				1	1	1	4
14	Cestone	James			.	.	1	1		1	1		4
15	Cestone	Julianna			.	.							0
16	Chomko	Jean	1	1	.	.	1		1	1	1	1	7
17	Corrado	Roni	1	1	.	.	1	1	1	1	1		7
18	Criscione	Carmen	1		.	.	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
19	DeLuccia	Alexa			.	.							0
20	DeLuccia	Alexander			.	.	1					1	2
21	DeMarco	Fred	1	1	!	!	1	1	1	1	1	1	8
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	.	.						1	3
29	Klosik	Emilia	1		.	.					1		2
30	Kribs	Ken		1	.	.	1		1		1	1	5
31	Longo	Pete			.	.							0
32	Lynch	Peter			.	.							0
33	Morano	John	1	1	!	!	1	1	1	1	1	1	8
34	OHara	Joyce	1	1	!	!	1	1	1	1	1	1	8
35	Pelonero	Patricia	1		.	.	1	1	1	1		1	6
36	Pelonero	Steven	1		.	.	1	1		1		1	5
37	Polizzotto	Philip			.	.							0



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38	Ponchak	Bruce	1	1	.	.	1	1		1	1	1	7
39	Ragusso	Michaela			.	.							0
40	Ricca	Carl	1	1	1				3
41	Russo	Chuck	1	1	.	.	1	1		1	1	1	7
42	Russo	Jillian			.	.							0
43	Russo	Michael		1	.	.	1		1		1	1	5
44	Sabatino	Anthony	1	1	.	.	1	1	1	1	1		7
C45	Sisti	Gisella	1	1	.	.	1	1	1	1	1	1	8
46	Stefanelli	Claudine	1		.	.	1	1	1	1		1	6
47	Tosi	Evelyn	1		.	.	1		1		1		4
48	Verrone	Angelo	1		.	.		1		1	1	1	5
49	Youngster	Henry			.	.					1		1

Total	Members	25	20	.	.	30	26	20	23		24
Total	Guests	3	0	.	.	2	0	0	3		3
Total at	Meeting	24	0	.	.	30	26	20	26		
Meeting	Location	CA	Biga	.	.	CA	HC	Biga	CA		
Percent	at meeting	51%	41%	0%	n/a	61%	53%	41%	53%	51%	49%

Guests											
Angela	Sabetta	1	0	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Terry	DelGuidice	1	0	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Anthony	Sabatino	1	0	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Gerard	Capizzi	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.
Carl	Ricca	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.
Duane	Good	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1
Gina	Bucci	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1
Richard	Breitwieser	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1