

January 2026

Year 24

Issue 240

Passaic Valley UNICO

Our January 2026 Monthly Newsletter



Passaic Valley UNICO
PO Box 341
Little Falls, NJ 07424

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Page Highlights:

About UNICO	9
Be a Sponsor	9
Birthday's	2
Board of Directors	3
Calendar Heritage Photo	6
Chapter Delegates	3
Christmas Cheer Photo	4
Christmas Party Photo	2
ComUNICO Link	3
Committees	3
Committee Comments	10
Italian Language Lesson	3, 5
Executive Board	3
Food Pantry	2, 8
Fundraising Committees	3
Map of Italy	7
Photo Links	2,4,6
President's Message	1
Sponsors ~ Golf 2025/26	10-14
Toys for Tots Photo	4
UNICO Charities	3, 9
UNICO Core Values	2
Upcoming Events	2
VP Message	8
Website Update	8

Chapter Website

www.PassaicValleyUNICO.org

Chapter Website

www.UNICOMembers.com

Facebook Page

www.Facebook.com/PassaicValleyUNICO

Instagram Page

www.Instagram.com/PassaicValleyUNICO

District Website

www.UNICONJIV.yolasite.com

National Website

www.UNICO.org

Chapter Email

PassaicValleyUNICO@gmail.com

A Message from our Chapter President

Good Morning All

2025 has come and gone, and we are all looking for a safe and healthy 2026.

I hope everyone and their families had a great and festive holiday season.

As we move forward coming into the New Year, I see our chapter coming together collectively. Working as a team has ALWAYS been our strong point. As you know, our chapter is one part of a large wheel which has always kept turning in a positive way.

We have our UNICO Money Raffle that we will be picking the winner at our first meeting of 2026. Last year's Superbowl Raffle was a huge success, and we will be running it again this year.

January's meeting will be held at Arturo's Restaurant. Little Falls on Wednesday January 14th - If you would like to partake for dinner, please be there by 6:15pm. The actual meeting will be at 8PM. Please email John Barbieri for your dinner attendance.

On behalf of the Executive Board, we want to take a moment to thank you all for your continued support and looking forward to working with all of you to help make another successful and fun filled year.

Respectfully Carmen Criscione- Chapter President



January Birthdays

01-15 Patricia Pelonero

Photo Albums

All our chapter event pictures can be seen on our website ... Additional pictures from our "NJ IV District" and also a lot from our "UNICO National" events can also be seen on their websites.

www.PassaicValleyUNICO.org
www.UNICO.org
www.UNICONJIV.yolasite.com

Food Pantry

Please do not forget about our UNICO Phil Arena and our many other Food Pantries ... Your non-perishable donation will help restock them.

Please contact our Food Pantry Chairs, Carmen Gaita, or Patricia Pelonero on how you can help. Or please just bring your items to any chapter meeting

Upcoming Events – Local and National

January 14, 2026 ~ 2nd Wednesday ~ Monthly Chapter Meeting at Casa Arturo in Little Falls ... 6:30 dinner ... BYO

January 15, 2026 ~ Thursday ~ NJ District IV Meeting 7 pm ... At the Chandler in Belleville ~ hosted by the Belleville Chapter ... \$45.00 ... Our Chapter president needs to reply to District Gover with how many will attend



Passaic Valley UNICO chapter members gathered at the UNICO National District IV annual Christmas Party, "A Special Party for Exceptional People", held at the Brownstone in Paterson. Each year District IV sponsors an evening of dinner, dancing, songs, and a visit with gifts from Santa for our special needs friends. This year District IV received support from the Foundabilities Foundation. District IV chapters include: Bloomfield, Cedar Grove, Montclair, North Haledon, Passaic-Clifton, Passaic Valley, Pequannock, Sparta, and Wayne. Standing to the right of Santa is UNICO National President Joseph Nasello from the Saddle Brook Chapter

Below are our UNICO's CORE VALUES

If you know of someone who has them and would like to help us make a difference, please invite them to a meeting and possibly have them join our chapter as a new member.

U – Unity
 N – Neighborliness
 I – Integrity
 C – Charity
 O – Opportunity

"Service Above Self"



UNICO Charities

Foundation Charities

... Cancer Research
... Cooley's Anemia
... Food Bank
... Italian Studies
... Mental Health
... Scholarship
... St. Jude's Hospital

National Charities

... Anti Bias
... Armed Forces
... Columbus Day
... Heritage Calendar

Italian Lesson

Bread ~ pane
Cheese ~ formaggio
Fruit ~ frutta
Vegetable ~ verdura
Meat ~ carne
Egg ~ uovo
Milk ~ latte
Rice ~ riso
Fish ~ pesce
Chicken ~ pollo
Salad ~ insalata
Butter ~ burro
... (More on page 5)

ComUNICO

You can now read the
[Com-UNICO magazine](http://www.unico.org/comUNICO) on
the internet

Just click or go here >>>

www.unico.org/comUNICO

Who's Who

Our 2025-2026 Executive Board

President Carmen Criscione
1st Vice President Joe Benvenuti
2nd Vice President Chuck Russo
Treasurer Bruce Ponchak
Secretary Steve Pelonero
Sgt. At-Arms John Morano
Corresponding Secretary John Morano

Our 2025-2026 Board of Directors

Steve Pelonero	Past Chapter President	2010 & 2011
John Barbieri	Past Chapter President	2014 & 2015
Bruce Ponchak	Past Chapter President	2016 & 2017
Carmen Gaita	Past Chapter President	2018 & 2019

Our 2025-2026 Chapter Delegates

President Carmen Criscione ... 59 Members (President +3)

Delegate: Sal Benvenuti

Delegate: Patricia Pelonero

Delegate: open

Delegate: Joseph Agresti as PNP

Delegate: Steven Pelonero as PNP

(Delegates represent our chapter and are urged to attend our district, regional, and national meetings, especially if a vote is called for)

Our 2025-2026 Fundraising Committee Heads

Food Pantry Carmen Gaita and Patricia Pelonero
Golf Outing Fred DeMarco
Holiday Cheer Carmen Gaita, Joe Benvenuti, Sal Benvenuti
Overseas Armed Service Care Packages Roni Corrado, Evelyn Tosi
Raffle ~ 50/50 Claudine Stefanelli

Non-Fundraising Committee Heads

Community Service Day (April) Claudine Stefanelli
Good and Welfare Joe Benvenuti
Heritage Angelo Verrone
Italian Flag Raising Steve Pelonero PNP
Membership Christina Castillo, Roni Corrado
Newsletter Steve Pelonero PNP
Publicity Christina Castillo & Roni Corrado
Scholarship / Brian Piccolo Michael Russo
Study Abroad College Grant Chair Cav. Joseph Agresti PNP
Website Steven Pelonero PNP
Website Member Section John Barbieri

Merry Christmas Everyone

Our Toys for Tots Committee

Thank you to everyone who donated the toys and to our chapter committee members who put this all together.

*From the left: Joe Benvenuti, Sal Benvenuti, Fred DeMarco, Anthony Sabatino,
Mike Carrubba, Mike Russo, Tom Breitweiser, Ken Kribs*



Christmas Cheer Committee

Pictured below are 3 of the 5 gift bags that will be on their way to needy families in the Passaic Valley community. Through the generosity of chapter members, 5 families will receive gift cards totaling \$500 to each family. Hats off to the chapter members for their continued support of this annual endeavor.



Italian Language Lesson

Hello

Ciao

Goodbye

Arrivederci

How are you?

Come stai

Fine, thank you

Bene, grazie

I'm fine

Sto bene

And you?

E tu?

Good morning

Buongiorno

Good afternoon

Buon pomeriggio

Goof evening

Buonasera

Good night

Buonanotte

My name is ...

Mi chiamo ...

Nice to meet you

Piacere di conoscerti

Thank you

Grazie

Thank you very much

Grazie mille

You're welcome

Prego

Please

Per favore

Sorry / Excuse me

Scusa

I don't understand

Non capisco

Do you speak English

Parli inglese

How much does it cost

Quanto costa

Where is ...?

Dove si trova ...?

See you soon!

A presto!

I'm hungry

Ho fame

I'm thirsty

Ho sete

Italian Heritage Photo
From the 2026 UNICO Heritage Calendar
Celebrating the month of January



Castello Aragonese Ischia (The Aragonese Castle)

This photo was taken by a UNICO Point Pleasant Chapter Member

The castle was built on a small island at the northern end of the Gulf of Naples, Italy.

The first castle was built in 474 BC. At the same time, two towers were built to watch for enemy fleets.

Around the year of 1700, there were about 2000 families lived on the island with about 13 churches.

Where is your Family From?



Committee & Comments

Food Pantries ~ Carmen Gaita and Patricia Pelonero

Let's start the new year helping others. Please consider bringing some non-perishables to any one of our Volunteer Food Pantries or just contact our committee (Carmen and/or Patricia) ~~~ "Let's help others"

Sponsors ~ Please try to support all of our supporters. They are all listed on the following pages.

Website Member Section Update ~ John Barbieri

The Member Section of the Chapter website is back up and running. Please go to the chapter website and click on the "Member Section" and sign in to see a lot more than what is on the website.

First VP Message ~ Joe Benvenuti

I want to wish all our members and their families a very blessed Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year to all. It's been a very good start to this year, and we want to keep that going into the new year as well. I want to thank everyone for their generosity for the Christmas Cheer gifts. We raised just over the \$1000.00 from our members. Along with the club's donation we were able to give out 5 cheer gift bags with gift cards to Shop-Rite, Kohls and Target for needy families worth \$500.00 each. Thanks to Roni who did a great job putting the gift bags together for us. The 50/50 raffle is going strong and will be pulled at our meeting on January 14th at Casa Arturo. If anyone still has tickets to sell, please contact myself, Joe Benvenuti or Claudine so we can get them sold and please turn in any money you have, as soon as you can to either one of us so we know what the price will be for the 14th. Please make every effort to attend this January 14th meeting to kick off the 2026 year for our chapter. Thank you and God bless ~~~ JoeB





Our UNICO Charities

UNICO National

Armed Services ~ Columbus Day ~ Heritage & Photo Calendar

UNICO Foundation

21st century ~ Anti-Bias ~ Cancer Research & Prevention

Cooley's Anemia ~ Italian Studies ~ Mental Health

Scholarships ~ Torracco Food Bank/Shelter

About UNICO ~ UNICO is the largest Italian American Service Organization in the United States
Unity, Neighborliness, Integrity, Charity, Opportunity

UNICO was founded on October 10, 1922, in Waterbury, Connecticut. A group of 15 men, led by Dr. Anthony P. Vastola, came together to create what has become a very special and very proud organization. It was Dr. Vastola's dream to create an Italian American service organization to engage in charitable works, support higher education, and perform patriotic deeds. Our motto is "Service Above Self".

Each year, the UNICO Foundation and the UNICO National Chapters across the country donate approximately \$1 million to various charities. Scholarships continue to be the primary focus of UNICO, as roughly one-third of all monies raised goes to deserving students from all the chapter locations throughout the chain.

UNICO National has funded major research in Cooley's Anemia and Mental Health. Through its association with the Jimmy Valvano Foundation, it has funded over 10, \$50,000 grants to help find a cure for Cancer. These worthy areas continue to receive generous support from the chapters and its members for these worthy causes.

If you would like to attend one of our meetings to see if you might be interested in joining UNICO, please contact us through any member, or through our email. We would be honored to have you as a member of our Passaic Valley UNICO Chapter.

Our 2025/2026 Sponsors

(From July 1, 2026 ~ June 30, 2026)

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It is never too late.

You will be in every newsletter for our 2024-2025 year.

And, if received early enough, you will also have a sign on one of the 18 holes at our Annual Golf Outing

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