December
2026
Year 24
Issue 251

Passaic Valley UNICO

Our December 2026 Monthly Newsletter

Passaic Valley UNICO
PO Box 341
Little Falls, NJ 07424

Serving
Little Falls
Totowa
Woodland Park

Page Highlights:

About UNICO	11
Be a Sponsor	11
Birthday's	2
Board of Directors	3
Chapter Delegates	3
ComUNICO Link	3
Committees	3
Committee Comments	10
Executive Board	3
Food Pantry	2
Fundraising Committees	3
Heritage Calendar Photo	6
Italian Language Lesson	3, 4
NYC Bus Ride	8
Panettone Bread	5
President's Message	1
Special Needs Dinner	7
Sponsors ~ Golf 2026/27	13-19
UNICO Charities	3,11
UNICO Core Values	2
Upcoming Events	2
Where is your family from	9

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

Hello to all

As I am writing this, we are days away from December and the beginning of a very fast and furious time of the year. On behalf of the Board and myself, I want to wish you all a Happy Blessed Thanksgiving. We are very fortunate that we a great chapter and families we all can depend on.

Our Holiday cheer program is off and running. I know that we have a lot already contributed to it and if anyone still wants to, we are thankful for all your help. We are looking to give 5 or 6 gifts bags with gift cards to Shop-Rite, Kohls, & Target worth $500.00 each

Our last meeting had a great turnout and the food collected for the pantries was so generous. We can't thank you all enough. I am sure we have helped many families get through the Holiday a little better.

Our 50/50 is going well and please if anyone can't sell all their tickets get them back to Claudine and myself as people have been asking for some, we will do our best to sell any we get back . The drawing is December 16th, 7pm at the Ties Bar in little Falls all are welcome to watch the drawing.

This year for the Christmas parade that the 3 towns put on, we will have a UNICO float, it's a gondola that our member Tom Breitwieser made for us with some help from his 2 boys and we hope to get it decorated Friday before the parade we will hand out mini candy canes on the float. I've seen pictures of the float and it looks amazing. A thank you Tom for making this happen. We will try …

< continued on page 10 >

December Birthdays

12-5 Jean Chomko
12-17 Michael Russo
12-29 Gerard Capizzi

Photo Albums

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

December 1st, 2026 ~ Tuesday ~ NJ District IV Christmas Dinner for our Special Need Friends ~ At the Brownstone ~ RSVP to chapter president ~ The flier is on our chapter website ~ Click here to go to the flier section

December 5th, 2026 ~ Saturday ~ NYC Bus Ride to Little Italy NYC ~ RSVP to our chapter president ~ The flier is on our chapter website ~ Click here to go to the flier section

December 9th, 2026 ~ 2nd Wednesday ~ Our monthly chapter meeting ~ Pizza City in Woodland Park ~ More information to follow ~ Please see our chapter website

December 16, 2026 ~ Wednesday at 7 pm ~ 50/50 Drawing ~ At the Ties in Singac ~ You must be in it to hopefully win it

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Below are our UNICO 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

Today: Oggi
Tomorrow: Domani
Yesterday: Leri
Now: Adesso
Later: Dopo

(There's more on Page 4)

==========

ComUNICO

You can now read the Com-UNICO magazine on the internet
Just click or go here >>>
www.unico.org/comUNICO

Who's Who

Our 2026-2027 Executive Board

President …… Joe Benvenuti
1st Vice President …… Fred DeMarco
2nd Vice President …… Chuck Russo
Treasurer …… Bruce Ponchak
Secretary …… Steve Pelonero
Sgt. At-Arms …… John Barbieri
Corresponding Secretary …… John Barbieri

Our 2026-2027 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*
Carmen Criscione	*Past Chapter President*	*2024 & 2025*

Our 2026-2027 Chapter Delegates

President Joseph Benvenuti … 51 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 2026-2027 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 …… Gina Bucci & Patricia Pelonero
Italian Flag Raising …… Steve Pelolnero 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

Italian Lesson

Together	*Insieme*
See you tomorrow	*A domani*
Good luck	*Buona fortuna*
Welcome	*Benvenuto / Benvenuta*
It depends	*Dipende*
I agree	*Sono d'accordo*
I don't know	*Non lo so*
No problem	*Nessun problema*
It's possible	*E'possibile*
Be careful	*Fai attenzione*
Hurry up	*Sbrigati*
I'm late	*Sono in ritardo*
I'm early	*Sono in anticipo*
What are you doing?	*Che cosa stai facendo?*
Where are you going?	*Dove vai?*
I'm tired	*Sono stanco / stanca*
I need help	*Ho Bisogno di aiuto*
I understand	*Ho capito*
I'm busy	*Sono occupato / occupata*
That's a good idea	*E'una buona idea*
See you late	*A piu' tardi*
The weather is nice	*Fa bel tempo*
It's cold	*Fa freddo*
I'd like a coffee	*Vorrei un caffe'*
The bill, please	*Il conto, per facore*
Take care	*Abbi cura di te*

Remember:
The days of the week, and months,
are always all lower-case letters
Ex: Sunday = domenica October = ottobre

Note:
<u>UNICO</u> is always "all" Upper Case, as is FBI and CIA

WHY PANETTONE IS A CHRISTMAS TRADITION IN ITALY



1 THE LEGEND OF "TONI"

(15th Century Milan)



Legend has it that a kitchen boy named Toni saved a Duke's Christmas feast by baking a rich bread with leftover flour, butter, raisins, and candied fruit. It became known as 'Pan de Toni' (Toni's bread).

2 THE HOLIDAY "LUXURY BREAD"



Historically, wheat bread was a luxury. In Milan, bakeries were only allowed to use precious wheat on Christmas Eve to make large '*pane di lusso*' (luxury bread) to share with everyone, including the poor.

Traditionally, the head of the household would slice the sweet bread, serving a piece to each family member. One slice was often saved for the next year as a symbol of continuity and good luck.



3 A RITUAL OF SHARING

Traditionally, the head of the household would slice the sweet bread, serving a piece to each family member. One slice was often saved for the next year as a symbol of continuity and good luck.

4 THE MODERN FESTIVE ICON

(Early 1900s)



In the 20th century, Milanese bakers Angelo Motta and Gioacchino Alemagna revolutionized and industrialized production, giving the bread its signature tall dome shape and making it an accessible, nationwide holiday staple.

5 SYMBOL OF GIVING & COMMUNITY

Today, it is the ultimate Italian gesture of holiday hospitality and affection. Italians bring Panettone as a gift when visiting family and friends, usually enjoyed with sweet wine or coffee.





Buon Natale!

The ultimate Italian festive tre

UNICO National Italian Heritage Calendar Photo



The above photo was taken by a Binghamton NY Chapter member

It can be seen in the December 2026 UNICO Calendar
It is of the Royal Palace in Naples, Italy

The Royal Palace of Naples (Italian: Palazzo Reale di Napoli) is a historic building located in Piazza del Plebiscito, in the historic center of Naples, Italy. The palace was built from 1600 onwards by the architect Domenico Fontana as the residence of the Spanish viceroys

UNICO NEW JERSEY DISTRICT IV

Cordially Invites You To Our

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY

"A SPECIAL PARTY FOR EXCEPTIONAL PEOPLE"

Tuesday, December 1, 2026 ~ 6:30 to 10:30 PM

The Brownstone
351 West Broadway
Paterson, NJ

$65.00 person

RSVP PLEASE BY NOVEMBER 20, 2026 to:

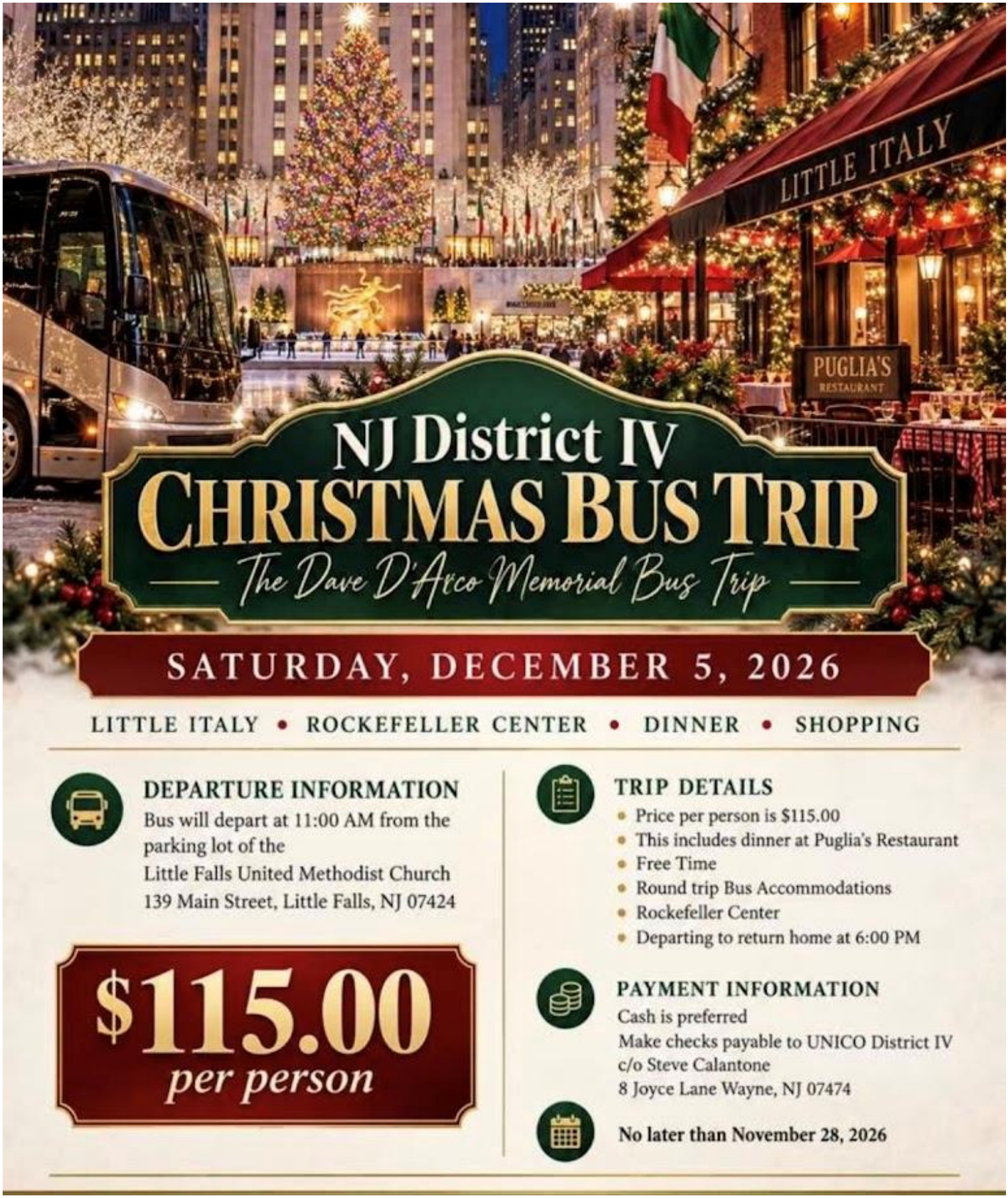
Please contact committee co chairs
Joe Agresti – 201-874-0546
Steve Calantone – 862-668-8682
Anthony DeGennaro 201-264-8984

This year's invited guests are:
Found Abilities & Clifton Rec Buddy Cantine

MENU Family Style

Italian Cold Specialities, Ceasar Salad, Pasta w/Tomato Sauce Cacio e Pepe, Sliced Sirloin, Chicken Marsala, Chicken Tenders & Fries(for the Special guests) Red Potatoes, Fresh Vegetables, Rolls Cake-Donuts – Coffee – Tea – Wine – Soda

LIVE MUSIC
and
A VISIT FROM "SANTA CLAUS" OF COURSE!


LITTLE ITALY
PUGLIA'S
RESTAURANT
NJ District IV
CHRISTMAS BUS TRIP
The Dave D'Arco Memorial Bus Trip
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2026
LITTLE ITALY • ROCKEFELLER CENTER • DINNER • SHOPPING
DEPARTURE INFORMATION
Bus will depart at 11:00 AM from the parking lot of the
Little Falls United Methodist Church
139 Main Street, Little Falls, NJ 07424
$115.00 per person
TRIP DETAILS
Price per person is $115.00
This includes dinner at Puglia's Restaurant
Free Time
Round trip Bus Accommodations
Rockefeller Center
Departing to return home at 6:00 PM
PAYMENT INFORMATION
Cash is preferred
Make checks payable to UNICO District IV
c/o Steve Calantone
8 Joyce Lane Wayne, NJ 07474
No later than November 28, 2026

Where is your Family From?



Committee & Comments

Presidents Message <continued from Page 1 >

to display our UNICO banner on the float as well. We have collected lots of toys from our members so a very big thank you to all who contributed to this very special event. The kids receiving the toys will be so happy. What a nice way to give a little back to kids in need. The toys go the St Joseph's Hospital Pediatric Unit.

The District Christmas party for our special need friends, both children and adults is Dec. 1st at the Brownstone so please if you did not get your tickets, contact Joe Agresti he will help you with that . It's a very rewarding night for sure. There is also the District Christmas bus ride to see the Rockefeller tree in NY and have great food at Puglia Restaurant. It is a fun time for sure, and you don't have to drive.

Our December meeting will be at Pizza City in Woodland Park on McBride Avenue next to the Grammer School. We will skip our regular meeting and have a nice dinner with members and wives, husbands and significant other. A get together for the Christmas Holiday. The chapter will provide red and white wine, and the restaurant will have soda and water. It's been a while since we have had a chapter Christmas dinner, and it looks like we have close to 50 people going. Looking forward to seeing you all.

Our January meeting will be at Holy Cross Church 7pm January 13th with our Beefsteak February 6th. I figured we can save a little from going to a restaurant. Let's make the Beefsteak a great success as it's been a long time since we have had one and it is always a lot of fun with music and dancing.

Thank you all for your support ~~ Joe Benvenuti President

***Food Pantries** ~ Carmen Gaita and Patricia Pelonero*

As always, we thank you for your "generous" Thanksgiving donations. Let's continue helping others especially during this Christmas season. Please consider bringing one or more non-perishables to the December chapter dinner or bring it directly to one of our town's pantries. You could even contact our pantry committee for more information: Carmen Gaita or Patricia Pelonero

***Membership** ~ Christina Castillo & Roni Corrado*

We have 47 members, and we appreciate every one of our members! Please tell your family and friends if they are interested in coming to a UNICO meeting, it is always the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 7pm for dinner 8pm for the meeting ~~ Thank you Christina and Roni

***Overseas Soldiers** ~ Roni Corrado*

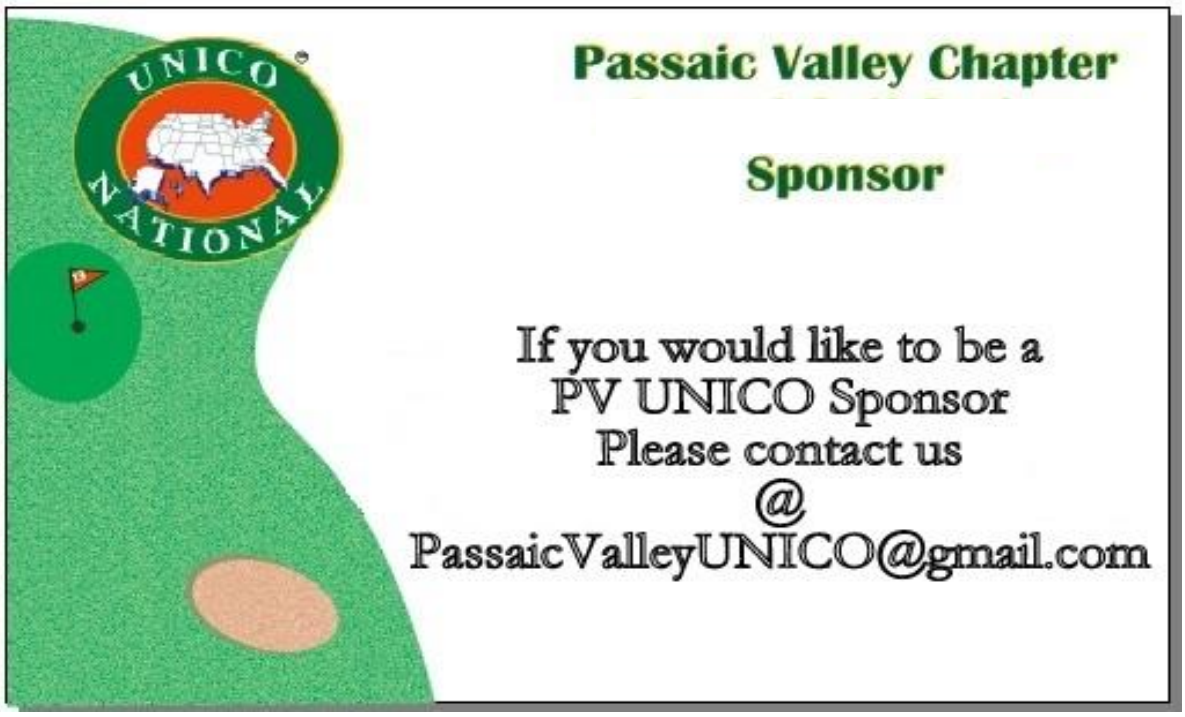
If anyone knows of a soldier stationed in a combat zone or state side, who would benefit from a package of goodies, please let a member know. The chapter is always happy to support our military.

***Publicity** ~ Christina Castillo & Roni Corrado*

Roni ~ The chapter continues to enjoy a rewarding working relationship with both the Italian Tribune and the Passaic Valley Today newspapers.

***Sponsors** ~ Please support all our supporters. They are all listed on the following pages.*

***Note** ~ UNICO is always all capital letters … Examples: when using in a sentence such as with FBI and CIA*



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 ~ Torraco 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 2026/2027 Sponsors

You too can be a sponsor of our Passaic Valley UNICO Chapter in our 2026/2027 Year

For just $100 you can be a proud business card sponsor
We also have other sponsor choices and amounts

Please email us at PassaicValleyUNICO@gmail.com for more information

Thank you to "All" of our Sponsors

Platinum Sponsors



Annual Golf Outing Sponsor

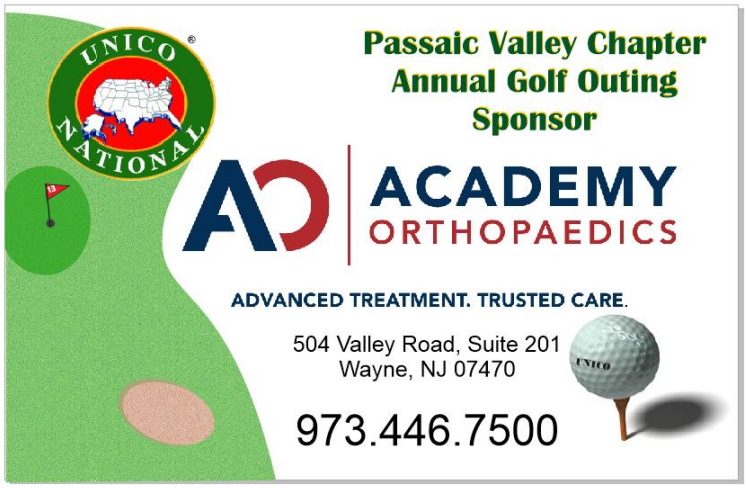
Studio 43D

310 Passaic Avenue
Building B, Suite 202
Fairfield, NJ 07004
973-837-6055
info@studio43d.com



Our 2026/2027 Sponsors

Gold Sponsors





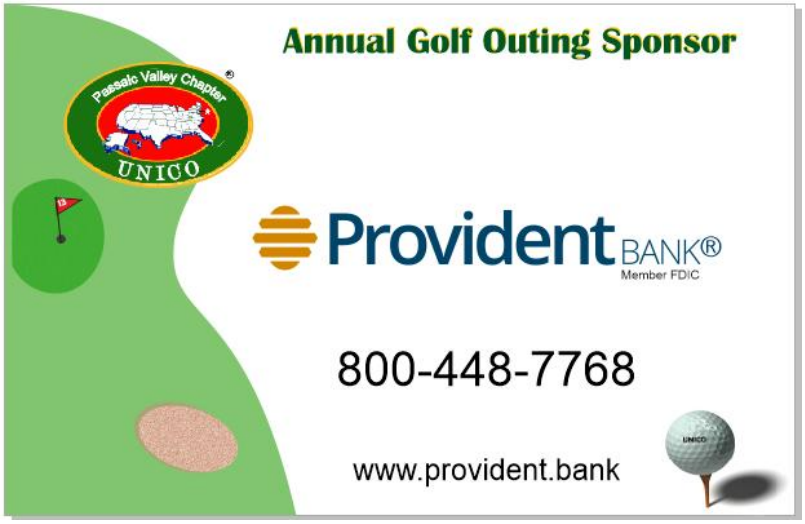




< Another Gold Sponsor is on the Next Page >

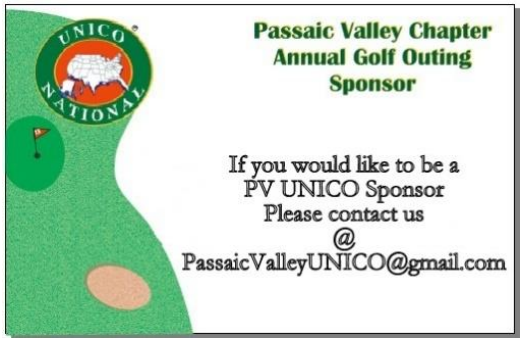
Our 2026/2027 Sponsors

Gold Sponsor



~~~~~~~~~~~~

You too can be a proud supporter and sponsor of Our Passaic Valley UNICO Chapter
There are all different levels
Please continue to see all of our Silver Sponsors


~~~~~~~~~~~~

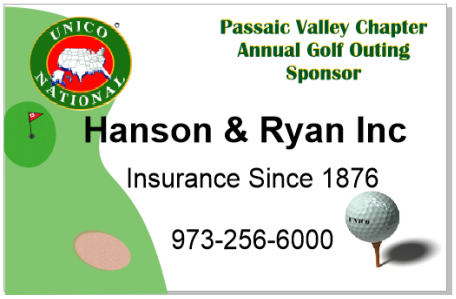
Our 2026/2027 Sponsors

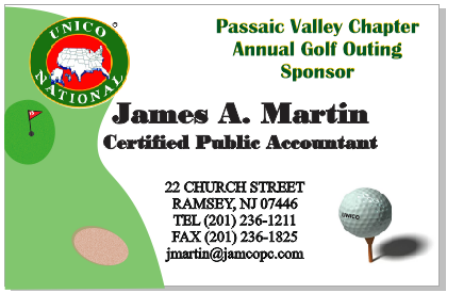
Silver Sponsors



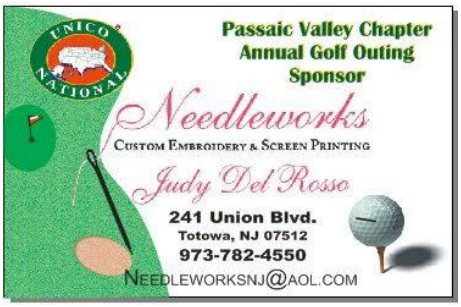


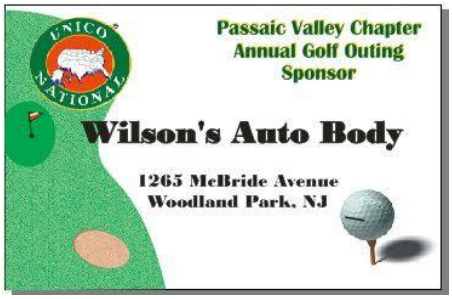




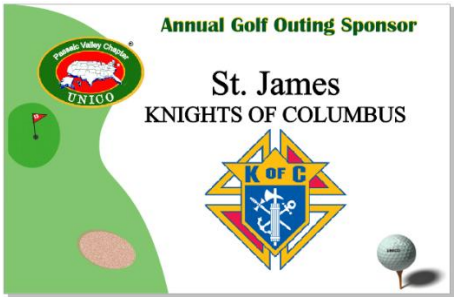




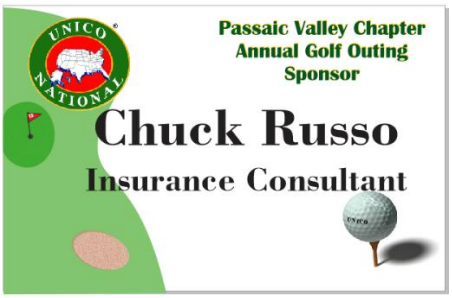












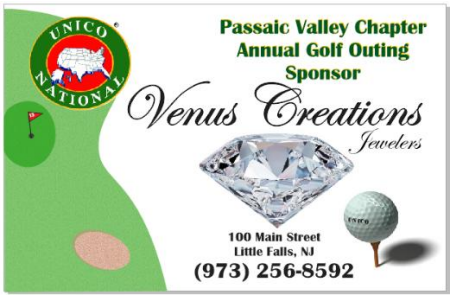
< Continued on Next Page >

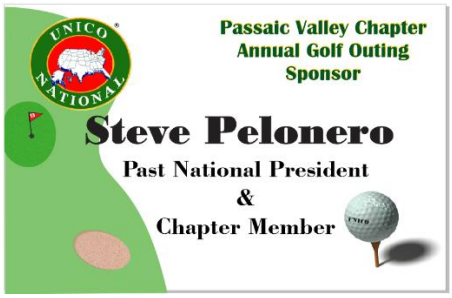
Our 2026/2027 Sponsors

Silver Sponsors

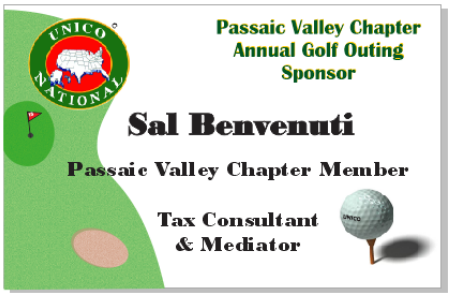


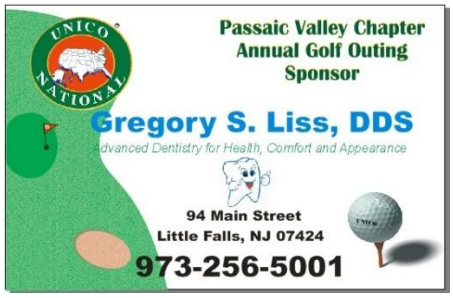


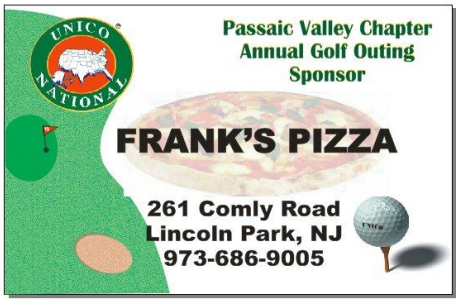


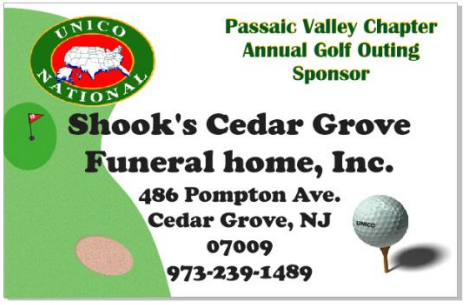




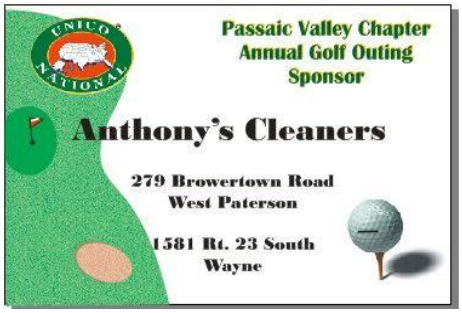


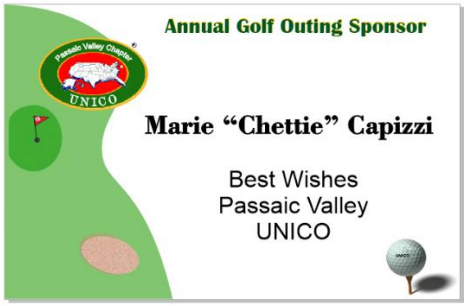










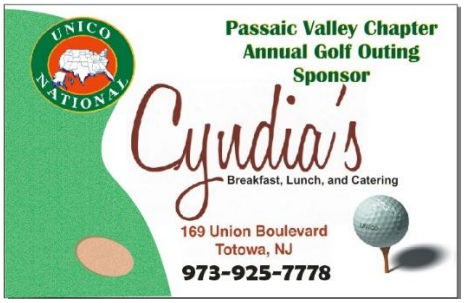


< Continued on Next Page >

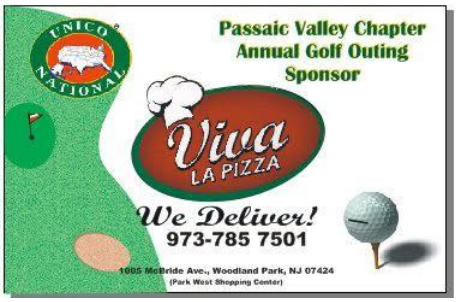
Our 2026/2027 Sponsors

Silver Sponsors

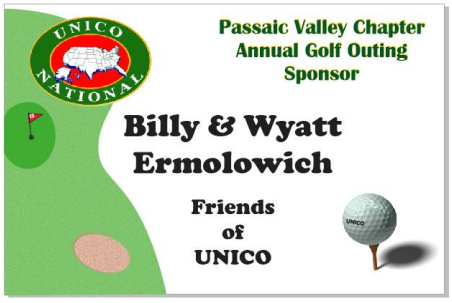






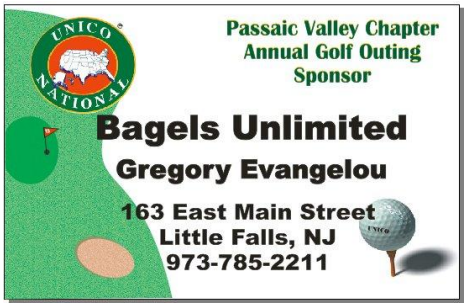


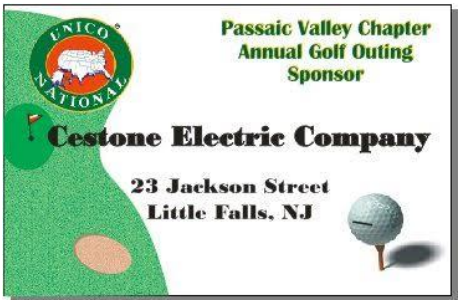












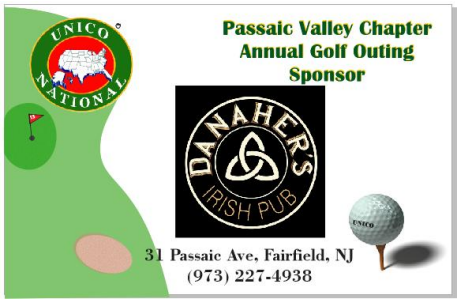


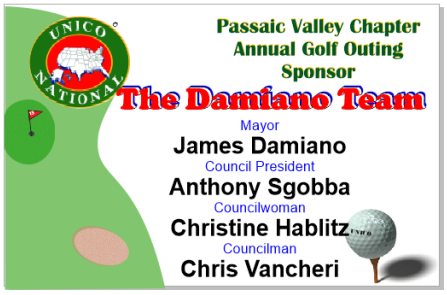


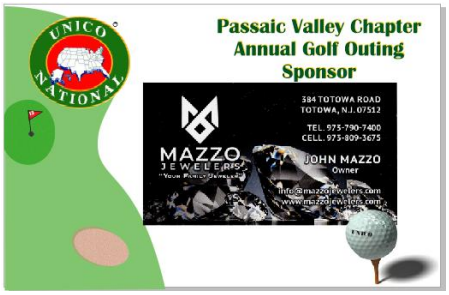
< Continued on Next Page >

Our 2026/2027 Sponsors

Silver Sponsors



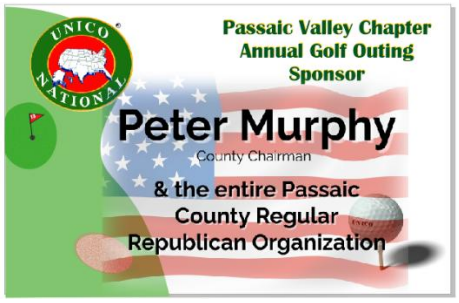


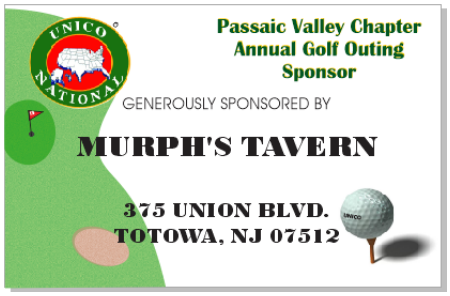






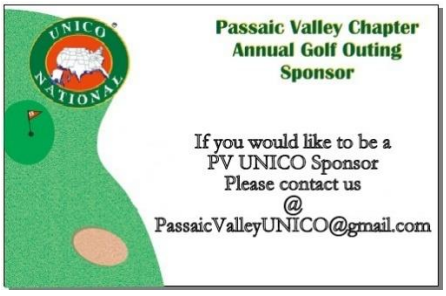


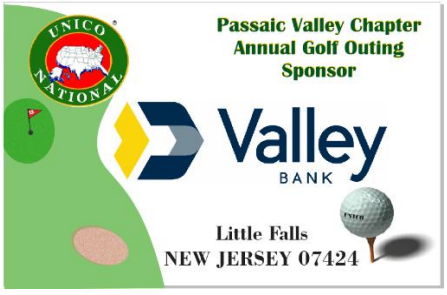












< Continued on Next Page >

Our 2026/2027 Sponsors

Silver Sponsors

