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Cover Photo: Terrie O'Connor Realtors

Cover Photo: Terrie O'Connor, wearing a white furry hat, and many of her staff at Terrie O'Connor Realtors participated in a "Sleep Out" on the streets of Newark last fall to raise funds and support for Covenant House, which works to help abused, abandoned and homeless youth.

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Enviro Stewards Receive Honors Awards Celebrate Earth Day

By Anthony Russo
President, CIANJ

We are proud that our Environmental Leadership Awards Breakfast last month saluted two individuals and 11 companies and institutions of higher education for their outstanding efforts to preserve and

protect our land, air and water, enabling us all to enjoy them.

CIANJ has a long history of working in the environmental industry as many members are dedicated to the field. In our annual celebration of Earth Day, we like to ask them to highlight their most innovative projects or to nominate individuals whose accomplishments deserve special recognition.

Our April issue focused on the theme of "Protecting Our Environment." We printed the accounts given by our members. Two judges, Bob Martin, the former commissioner of the state Department of Environmental Protection, and Tracy Straka, the co-chair of the CIANJ's Environmental Business Council, reviewed the submissions and selected the winners of this year's competition.

The two individuals cited for their stewardship are: Timothy Eustace, executive director of the North Jersey District Water Supply Commission, and Theodore A. Schwartz, a partner at the Little Falls-based law firm, Scarinci Hollenbeck, who was instrumental in the creation of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection in 1970. In its nomination of Schwartz, the law firm described him as a "pioneer" in environmental law, recalling he authored many laws and regulations, including the New Jersey Air Pollution Control Act, which became a national model.

Eustace was nominated by Alan Ashkinaze, one of the water supply commissioners. Ashkinaze noted that under Eustace's leadership their agency will be the first in the state to provide its own green power supply. In 2019 Eustace set a goal of converting the commission's Wanaque facility to 100 percent renewable energy by 2024. To achieve its goal, the commission uses solar rooftop panels, is developing a hydropower project at its Dundee Dam and it is building the largest floating array of solar panels in the country. These new sources of energy will ultimately power the commission's water treatment plants.

The corporations, colleges and universities selected by our judges were chosen as winners in a variety of categories. EAI was honored for its efforts in Brownfield Redevelopment. The firm installed millions of square feet of vapor barriers, which are used to help ensure that sites with previous uses – such as oil tanks, manufacturing plants, and locations with methane gas in the soil – become safe for re-development and reuse.

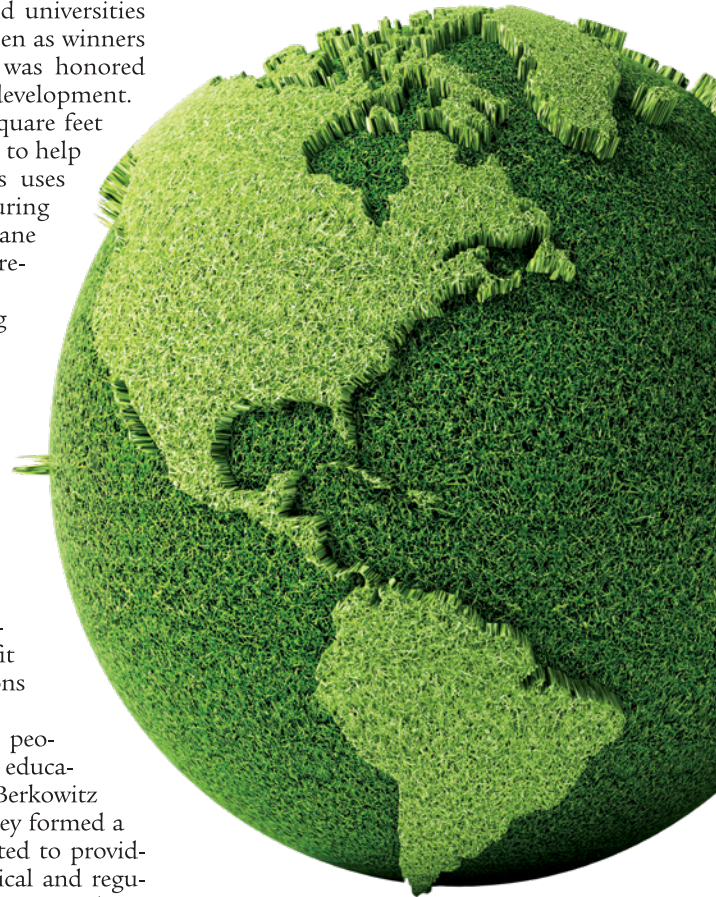
Veolia and Continuing Professional Education Services (CPES) were honored for their work in the community and with environmental education. In its submission, Veolia emphasized the company is dedicated to education programs that stress the importance of protecting the environment and encouraging public engagement in watershed cleanups and ecological projects that will benefit New Jersey residents for generations to come.

CPES was founded by three people dedicated to environmental education, Julianne Mosolgo, Jorge Berkowitz and Philip Brilliant. Together, they formed a non-profit organization committed to providing the highest quality of technical and regulatory education to assure New Jersey residents that their public health and the environment are protected.

The Atlantic Health System received the Green Building Award for its energy-saving heat and power plant at Morristown Medical Center. The innovations to the physical plant at Bergen Community College also won it recognition. The college took steps to become a model of sustainability in its actions, including doubling the number of on-campus electric vehicle charging stations, converting lighting fixtures to LED and replacing traditional water fountains with "bottle fill" stations.

In the Recycling category, our judges selected AnythingIT and Princeton NuEnergy Inc. AnythingIT is celebrating 30 years as a certified electronics recycler and secure data destruction vendor for enterprise and government IT organizations. Princeton NuEnergy is an innovative clean-tech company spun out from Princeton University. It focuses on direct recycling of lithium-ion batteries.


BergenNewBridgeMedicalCenterwashonored for reducing its carbon footprint by partnering



with PSE&G to make improvements in the air handling of a building that houses acute care, long-term care and several intensive care units.

William Paterson University received an award for reducing its energy usage. The university has a huge solar panel installation. Over the past two decades, while increasing the size of the campus by 47 percent, it has lowered consumption of electricity by 30 percent, natural gas by 50 percent and carbon emissions by 1,350 tons.

The winners in the Site Remediation category are: Haley & Aldrich Inc. and PSE&G. Haley & Aldrich led the project at Rutgers University to successfully complete remediation at the Busch campus, combining thermal remediation and in-situ chemical reduction technologies to achieve source area remediation in the vicinity of a maintenance garage. PSE&G was recognized for using an innovative excavation technology while remediating soil at the former Hoboken Gas Works. The technology relied on a frozen wall system on the site. We applauded the efforts all our winner 🍀

An illustration of several hands of different skin tones and ages stacked together in a circle, symbolizing unity and teamwork. The hands are wearing various watches and bracelets, and the sleeves of their clothing are visible, showing different patterns and colors like stripes, plaid, and solid colors. The background is a solid blue color.

Thank you to our
Atlantic Health System
team members who support
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Making a Difference

By Diane C. Walsh
Editor, COMMERCE

The good works and generosity of corporations, small businesses and community leaders sometimes go unnoticed. The Commerce and Industry Association of New Jersey believes their contributions are essential to our neighborhoods and towns. Private industry's charity and outreach can offer stability and lay the foundation for growth and success. Each year CIANJ salutes "Companies that Care" by highlighting their stories in a special section here and hosting an event to honor them. This year we are showcasing the efforts of more than 50 companies. Their stories are inspiring.

Helping Children

Amerihealth

Giving back to the community through volunteerism and donating is embedded in the culture among associates at AmeriHealth New Jersey, who see their involvement as a privilege and an opportunity to improve the quality of life for others.

An example of the team's commitment is its work with Project Sunshine. In November 2022, AmeriHealth New Jersey teamed up with this dedicated nonprofit that brings joy and play to pediatric patients through volunteer-led programming in various medical settings and raises awareness for the emotional needs of children facing medical challenges. AmeriHealth New Jersey associates gladly rolled up their sleeves to assemble, package, and deliver special activity kits for pediatric patients designed to keep them busy and engaged during their checkups and treatments.

Lakeland Bank

In 2022, Lakeland Bank was proud to award a \$20,000 Community Impact Grant to St. Joseph's Health Foundation – its fourth grant since 2019 – to help expand pediatric dentistry services at the hospital that support underserved children living in Paterson and the surrounding area. The bank has remained a steadfast partner of the foundation and recognized the tremendous impact this program could have for providing access to professional oral care for some of the most vulnerable children and families in the Paterson community. In addition to the monetary grant, Lakeland provided over 500 brand-new toothbrushes to distribute at the hospital as part of the routine checkups offered through the program. This grant is one of many awarded by Lakeland Bank, which contributed over \$1.5 million to various organizations throughout New Jersey in 2022, including more than \$200,000 in Community Impact Grants.

Community Outreach/ Volunteerism

Alfred Sanzari Enterprises

Inspired by the powerful legacy of Alfred N. Sanzari, the founder of Alfred Sanzari Enterprises, the Alfred N. Sanzari Family Foundation (ANSFF) was established in 2006 to promote and support a wide range of charitable causes throughout northern New Jersey. Reflecting the values of Alfred and his family, the ANSFF provides financial support to various organizations with a special preference for patient care and Parkinson's disease, local education programs, and programs that assist disadvantaged populations such as shelters/housing, and services for women and children in need. Since its founding, the ANSFF has donated over \$2.5 million to such organizations throughout the region and has been a dedicated supporter of Hackensack University Medical Center.

Hoping to expand its reach across New Jersey, the ANSFF launched a grant program in 2020. Since the program's launch, it has awarded thousands of dollars to a variety of organizations across the region.

Atlantic Health

Atlantic Health System's commitment to building healthier communities extends far beyond its delivery of innovative and personalized health care. The organization's Corporate Social Responsibility philosophy is a dedication to the well-being of team members and our communities through programming and partnerships designed to improve the society and environment within we work and live.

As part of the system's second annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of volunteerism, hundreds of Atlantic Health System executives, physicians, nurses and other team members donated more than 450 hours of work to pack meal kits for those dealing with food insecurity. In total, more than 63,000 servings were packed into more than 10,500 meal kit bags.

Atlantic Health System team members have also donated care packages for service members on three continents, participated in housing improvement projects to assist the homeless and collected pallets of humanitarian and medical equipment for the people of Ukraine.

Bergen Community College

Bergen Community College students secured a \$1,000 grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to create two portable, accessible and sensory mini-golf courses for adults with intellectual disabilities. Working with the Bergen County Special Services School District Stepping Stones Program, an initiative designed to develop skills for adults with intellectual disabilities, the students completed the project as part of their work with the honor society of two-year colleges, Phi Theta Kappa (PTK).

To secure funding, design and build the project, the students conducted research on inequities in sports for those with disabilities, played mini-golf with members of the College's Turning Point Program for intellectually disabled adults and visited the USGA Golf Museum in Liberty Corner.

The mini golf course features sensory elements, including textured golf club handles, colorful hazards and a first-of-its-kind musical golf cup.

Continued On Page 11



With the help of a grant by Lakeland Bank, St. Joseph's Health Foundation expands pediatric dentistry services to support underserved children living in Paterson.

Photo: Lakeland Bank

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Continued From Page 10

Stepping Stones participants also received “Golf is for Everyone” t-shirts designed by the students.

Citrin Cooperman

Giving back to our local communities is a huge part of the culture at Citrin Cooperman. The firm participates in numerous charitable initiatives including sponsorships, food and consumer goods drives, holiday giving, and donations to numerous charities supporting the victims of natural disasters. Throughout the year, our “Charitable Fridays” in each office provides a rotating list of charities and collects donations from our partners and staff, which the firm matches. Citrin Cooperman’s donations to charitable initiatives total more than \$170,000 in 2022.

We are deeply committed to doing our part to help create a bright future for New Jersey’s communities by donating our time and money to charities that support youth, healthcare, homelessness, and the arts. These include The New Jersey Community Food Bank, YWCA of Northern New Jersey, Josephine’s Place, The Valerie Fund, the Newark Public Library, Repertorio Espanol, Eva’s Village, and Angels On The Bay.

Caring for our people and our communities is a cornerstone of Citrin Cooperman’s values. We are honored to support the work of such impactful initiatives and look forward to continually expanding our philanthropic reach and involvement.

CohnReznick LLP

In 2022, CohnReznick LLP’s New Jersey offices came together to support social impact initiatives in communities throughout the state. Our team members aided families in need by donating fleece tie blankets to the Interfaith Food Pantry in Morris Plains and to Mary’s Place by the Sea in Ocean Grove in support of women facing a cancer diagnosis. They also put together snack bags for children experiencing food insecurity which were donated to both the Interfaith Food Pantry

in Morris Plains and the Monmouth County Boys & Girls Club in Red Bank. In addition, team members participated in annual charitable collection activities including our winter coat drive benefiting Jersey Cares and United Way Warmest Wishes and our annual golf outing benefitting the CohnReznick Foundation. The golf event raised \$25,000 and the funds were donated to charities focusing on children and other crucial social causes. The New Jersey offices also collected toiletries to create care packages for patients at Jersey Shore University Medical Center. Looking ahead, the team is preparing to launch a food drive to support the local community.

Columbia Bank

Over the past two years, Columbia Bank in conjunction with the Columbia Bank Foundation has shown that it is a ‘Company that Cares’ in various ways. Columbia Bank sets the expectation that volunteering is an important part of our mission. Team Columbia has volunteered for 140 unique organizations and has volunteered over 8,674 hours. The Bank allows employees to volunteer on company time, aims for 100% participation and allows employees to nominate organizations for donations. Our teams sit on local boards, host financial seminars and more. Additionally, the Columbia Bank Foundation contributes to the funding of impactful efforts across the state. From providing warm blankets to the homeless to supporting affordable housing the Foundation disbursed over \$5.2 million in donations between 2021 and 2022. We manage these efforts not only because we care, but because we know that communities thrive when the people within them work together to help others succeed.

Delta Dental of New Jersey

During Delta Dental of New Jersey (DDNJ)’s third annual observance of its All-Associate Volunteer Day (Oct. 7), 83 percent

of associates volunteered at 22 New Jersey and Connecticut community organizations, including DDNJ Foundation grantees dedicated to improving the oral health of uninsured and underserved populations.

2022 marked the first year the event was held in-person again since 2019. DDNJ associates taught over 85 preschoolers about oral health, made 21 no-sew blankets for animals at local animal shelters, prepared over 10,150 meals, and gleaned more than 1,800 pounds of apples for America’s Grow-A-Row. They also engaged in various indoor and outdoor activities at Boys Girls Club of Newark, Community Hope (Parsippany), and Morris Habitat for Humanity.

All-Associate Volunteer Day is the kick-off of DDNJ’s month-long celebration, Associate Impact Moments, where associates plan activities and events that foster engaging and connecting with each other, the community, and customers.

EAI, Inc.

EAI has had the pleasure to support Preacher Rob’s Brotherhood, a program that helps to feed senior citizens who live in Coney Island, N.Y. The community there continues to recover from the deluge of Hurricane Sandy, and the lasting impacts of the pandemic. With a donation and efforts from the company and our staff, we were able to feed many families, including at important holidays like Thanksgiving. We are also proud to have a history of supporting women in non-traditional careers, both those that work with us in the construction industry, and as a sponsor of women boxers. We believe supporting women enhances the safety and richness of our community; and we are proud to have worked with Alicia Ashley in the past who was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame, Class of 2023. We’re currently sponsoring AIBA world champion gold medalist boxer, Tiara Brown, and Maureen Shea.

Goldstein Lieberman & Company

When companies truly care, it isn’t for a moment or for the duration of an event – it is for a lifetime. That kind of commitment is the bedrock of the Goldstein Lieberman Cares program. We established our program fourteen years ago when tremors in the economy caused many companies to reduce or eliminate their charitable donations and support. We have never faltered on the commitment we made then – to be there, dependably there, during the best and the worst of times. When the COVID-19 epidemic gripped our community, the charitable organizations we helped in the past turned to us for help in the present. We do not categorize or strategize our donations – whether the call comes from food pantries, health centers or veterans’ groups, we lend a helping hand. One example is Benjamin Mills, CPA, partner at Goldstein Lieberman & Company LLC, and an Eagle Scout was elected president of the Boy Scouts

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Photo: Citrin Cooperman

Caring for people and communities is a cornerstone of Citrin Cooperman’s values. Here staff volunteer at the Community FoodBank.



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of America Hudson Valley Chapter. Whether the need is for advice, financial assistance or direction Goldstein Lieberman is there because Goldstein Lieberman cares.

A partial list of the groups we've helped includes: American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, Community Foundation, Breast Cancer Options, Equine Rescue, Gilda's Club of Northern New Jersey, Animal Care Center, Inspire, an affiliate of United Cerebral Palsy, The Center for People with Disabilities and Special Needs, Mental Health Association, Meals on Wheels, Pets Alive, United Hospice, Wounded Warriors Project, American Red Cross, New Hope Community, People to People, Center for Discovery, Holocaust Museum and Study Center, Autism Foundation and The Lupus Foundation.

Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey

At Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey (Horizon BCBSNJ) community service is integral to our values and culture. Since January 2021, some 1,569 employees volunteered 10,308 hours at hundreds of nonprofits in the state, generating an economic impact of more than \$333,000. We're particularly proud of our strategic partnership with the Community FoodBank of New Jersey (CFBNJ). "Horizon has been one of the only companies that has been in our warehouse consistently since we first allowed corporate volunteers back. Your help makes such a difference," said Carlos Rodrigues, President & CEO, CFBNJ.

Our employees continue to volunteer each month at their locations.

The company's commitment to food security continues to deepen, with the recent announcement of Growing Healthy Pantries, a multi-year \$200,000 initiative with the five New Jersey food banks. One of the primary goals is to increase healthy food choice and nutrition education for New Jerseyans in need.

Kearny Bank

Since its founding in the 1880s, Kearny Bank has been passionate about supporting the communities where it has the privilege of conducting business. This deep ongoing commitment is reflected in a variety of current initiatives.

Among these are continued support of Paterson, NJ-based Eva's Village community center by Kearny Bank employee volunteers, which recently was supplemented by a \$20,000 corporate donation to help address a need for expanded services.

The bank's Ocean Grove branch has established an ongoing partnership with Jewish Family and Children's Services of Monmouth County that provides financial literacy instruction for individuals recovering from substance abuse.

Highlighted by donations totaling \$70,000 to date, a partnership with the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey helps support the "Village Program," which each year



Horizon employees volunteer with the Greater Newark Conservancy to pack fresh produce and food essentials for over 1,400 Newark seniors and families on May 13, 2021

provides financial instruction to multiple families in need.

Riker Danzig

Riker Danzig is providing critical pro bono legal representation to a vulnerable immigrant community at risk of deportation. Our clients, devout Christians who fled Indonesia in 1996 due to religious persecution, were part of a larger group who came to New Jersey seeking asylum. When U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) began detaining members of this group, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) filed a class habeas action in 2018, and obtained a stay of the enforcement of orders of removal.

Riker Danzig then represented three sets of class members, filing motions to reopen proceedings for asylum, which were granted, and then filing asylum applications. In December 2022, the Immigration Court granted asylum for one set of our clients, determining that they had demonstrated a well-founded fear of persecution based on immense evidence we provided documenting the significant decline in conditions for Christians in Indonesia. Riker Danzig Attorneys Taleen A. Kradjian and Cristin M. Boyle represent these clients.

Saint Peter's Healthcare System

Saint Peter's Healthcare System awarded one-time grants totaling almost \$500,000 to 13 diverse, community-based organizations. The organizations selected address social determinants of health, especially among the most vulnerable in the community significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Saint Peter's Catholic mission of providing humble service to humanity includes extending its good work beyond the hospital's walls and supporting the efforts of mission-driven entities who lift those in need spiritually, emotionally, and physically.

There are many factors that impact one's health and overall well-being and addressing social determinants of health improves the lives of those affected by food insecurity, mental health issues or lack of education and resources. The awarded grants addressed the environmental and socioeconomic factors that affect one's health by providing funds for tuition, mental health support, nutritious food, and pathways to career success, among other benefits.

Sax LLP

For a child, illness, treatment, and hospitalization is a difficult and isolating experience. The pandemic heightened this by disrupting a hospitalized child's normal routine – and reducing visitation from family. St. Joseph's Children's Hospital's Child Life Department understands these challenges and offers high-impact holistic therapies to their pediatric patients, including art therapy, animal-assisted therapy, music therapy and horticultural therapy. These programs are funded solely by donations and are highly beneficial in mitigating the adverse effects of hospitalization, particularly for patients with chronic, life-threatening, or terminal illnesses. Since 2012, Sax LLP has sponsored the "4 MILE" run/walk event that brings together over 400 participants, 40 SAX volunteers, company sponsors and individual donors to raise funds for the Child Life Department. In 2021 the event raised \$90,000 and in 2022 the event raised \$115,000 for a total of \$205,000. Sax raised over \$800,000 for the Child Life Department of St. Joseph's since the event's inception.

SLR Consulting

SLR Consulting (SLR) strongly embraces charitable initiatives. Across the firm, our staff contribute thousands of hours each year

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STEVE ADUBATO'S LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP

with co-host Mary Gamba

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to community service. Through SLR's Global Diversity, Equity and Inclusion strategy, and our One Team approach, our staff are encouraged to "get involved" at SLR and in our communities. SLR's Women's Mentoring Circle Program is an opportunity for our female professionals, at all levels, to meet, support and encourage each other through connection, education, shared experiences, best practices, and mentoring. Dozens of SLR offices volunteer for our Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service. Our New Jersey office donates expertise to non-profit land preservation organizations, and SLR volunteers with a number of causes and philanthropies including the American Heart Association and American Lung Association to help reinforce awareness of heart disease and lung health, respectively. These are just a few examples of how SLR helps make a difference in our communities.

T&M Associates

At T&M Associates, for over 55 years we've worked to improve the infrastructure, environment, and communities throughout the nation through volunteerism and support for the people, organizations, and charities in those communities. In 2021 we established the T&M Associates Foundation to support this work.

The Foundation gives to civic, cultural, community, and healthcare organizations that align with the Foundation's mission. In the past two years through acts of kindness, charitable outreach, educational and social support we have donated \$200,000 and have partnered with Habcore, Clean Ocean Action Beach Sweeps, Boy Scouts Trail Clearing, Dune Restoration & Planting, Water for People, Caring for Friends and adopted the Barnett Community Center. Our employees participate in local food/toy drives and assembled hygiene bags for those in need in honor of Martin Luther King Day. Our STEM education support includes scholarships, sponsorships, classroom presentations, and site visits serving students of all ages providing more accessibility for the underserved.

Terrie O'Connor Realtors

Ever mindful of the plight of so many suffering and at risk in our communities, a situation further compounded by the devastating impact of a global pandemic, Terrie O'Connor Realtors has made a commitment to support the communities where they live and work. Whether collecting Thanksgiving dinners, picking up a hammer with Habitat for Humanity, running an on-site blood drive or organizing collections of food, toys, coats and pajamas for children in need, this family company believes in the rewards of giving back. Their nine offices are filled with community warriors, generous spirits actively seeking communities, organizations and individuals to serve.

While community service projects are carried out throughout the year, Terrie O'Connor Realtors dedicates the entire month of November to expressing gratitude for the people

and communities they serve. Company-wide food drives benefit the Center for Food Action, the Hasbrouck Heights Food Pantry and the Kinnelon Food Pantry. Staff and sales associates provided much needed assistance unloading trucks and stocking shelves this November at St. Peter's Haven Food Pantry in Clifton.

Traphagen CPAs & Wealth Advisors

For more than 50 years, Traphagen CPAs & Wealth Advisors has had a vested interest in the community. We believe it is our responsibility to enhance the community where we live and work. Traphagen CPAs & Wealth Advisors is compassionate about the issues facing our community, as one author wrote, we are "accounting with a heart." Traphagen CPAs & Wealth Advisors has been instrumental in meeting the educational, medical, nutritional, and financial needs in our community, state, nation, and around the world. Our firm uses its talents and resources to raise awareness and develop programs in support of others. For the past 12 years, Traphagen CPAs & Wealth Advisors has participated in the Bergen Volunteer Center ALL WRAPPED UP Holiday Giving Program by "adopting" a family during the holiday time to ensure they are remembered. Our associates respond with contributions of gifts, gift certificates, toys, clothing, and household items.

Valley Bank

Valley has partnered with the Walter Hoving Home in Oxford, New Jersey, for over five years with their Career Readiness program, providing financial education to women recovering from life-controlling issues, such as human-trafficking, abuse, drug addiction, alcoholism, and judicial proceedings. Residents benefit from a program tailored to enable them to regain their lives, establish a healthy work ethic, gain financial stability, and return to their families having become productive members of their communities. Providing financial education to these women is crucial to their future success and Valley is committed to supporting them every step of the way. Beginning in 2018, Valley introduced Financial Empowerment to the curriculum using the CFPB's "Your Money, Your Goals - Financial Empowerment Toolkit". This multifaceted program consists of nine modules covering topics such as consumer advocacy, income, credit, debt management, and navigating financial setbacks. Since 2020, Valley has volunteered over 65 hours and served nearly 200 women with Hoving Home.

Valley Bank

Valley's partnership with Invest Newark, the City of Newark's Economic Development Corporation, includes the Language of Capital (LOC) program. The program provides Newark-based entrepreneurs with technical resources to build business acumen and access capital, equipping them to make the most informed decisions to achieve their entrepreneurial goals. Topics covered in the series include planning and access to capital, business insurance, using

merchant services and more. Valley has partnered with Invest Newark for four cohorts of the LOC program, including the first program offered completely in Portuguese. Led by Valley's Community Lending team, this impactful resource for entrepreneurs was realized through the efforts of over 30 volunteers from across the bank contributing over 200 community service hours, demonstrating the bank's commitment to furthering economic development opportunities for small businesses.

Valley Health System

To assist Valley Health System employees to relax, have fun, build resilience, and strengthen relationships with one another – believing that a patient care team that knows each other well is an optimal patient care team(!) – Valley's nursing leadership established RN Vibe.

RN Vibe offers many monthly events and activities that not only support staff, but also give back to the community.

Just a few examples of RN Vibe events and activities over the past year include a Gratitude Day that collected Thanksgiving food and Shop Rite gift cards for families in need, a Holiday Giving Tree that assisted fellow employees in need to purchase gifts for their loved ones, and a Share the Love Day that collected donations for families with pets in need.

RN Vibe offers the opportunity for thousands of Valley employees to gather, enjoy each other's company, build resilience, and most importantly give back to the community Valley serves.

Whitestone

In 2014, Whitestone established the Community Outreach & Volunteering Group to promote a charitable spirit and foster reinvestment in the communities where we live and work. Highlights over the years included providing labor for Habitat for Humanity construction projects, clean-up and food service work at various shelters and soup kitchens, and an annual toy drive. Since that time, Whitestone has continued to support humanitarian organizations and serve the public, despite the challenges we've all faced due to the global pandemic. Over the past year, Whitestone's team of volunteers organized trash and debris removals along various waterways of New Jersey and participated in the statewide beach cleanup effort organized by Clean Ocean Action. We also aimed our efforts at providing aid to teachers and students by donating supplies to local school districts, children's shelters, and community centers in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Florida, and Connecticut. To close out 2022, Whitestone focused on relieving food insecurity by volunteering at local soup kitchens and distribution centers in multiple regions and organized another successful holiday toy and winter clothing drive. Whitestone embraces the privilege to be of service to the communities that support us, and we look forward to another impactful year.

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The Earle Family Foundation

As part of Earle's commitment to the communities in which we live and work,
The Earle Family Foundation was created as Earle's philanthropic arm.

Our foundation is dedicated to helping numerous
nonprofit organizations within our local communities.



Hackensack Meridian
Hackensack University
Medical Center



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Fund-raising Efforts

Earle Companies

Earle is a family-owned business leading the industry with divisions in heavy civil construction, asphalt and aggregates, environmental, and trucking. As part of Earle's commitment to the communities in which we live and work, The Earle Family Foundation was founded. As Earle's philanthropic arm, the Foundation is dedicated to helping nonprofit organizations.

Over the past six years, The Earle Family Foundation has been dedicated to beating the opioid epidemic. Through our strategic partnership with HOPE Sheds Light and Hackensack Meridian Health at Jersey Shore Medical Center, we actively contribute to this cause helping local families combat the opioid epidemic through aggressive education and treatment.

We hold a successful Annual Charity Golf Classic to raise funding, we participate in the annual HOPE walk, and we offer a wellness program in the workplace for employees. The Foundation raised approximately \$1.5 million in charitable funds in the last six years.

Through these efforts Earle is helping to provide a safe and supportive environment along with the resources needed to address emotional health and well-being for employees, their families, and our communities.

Fennelly Associates

Hamilton-based commercial real estate service provider Fennelly Associates has been an institution in central New Jersey's business

community since 1986. The company has left an even more enduring mark on local communities through its support of local non-profits such as Eden Autism and PEI Kids. In 2022, 100 percent of staff participated in fundraising events.

Eden Autism focuses on improving the lives of people with autism through support services. Fennelly Associates President Jerry Fennelly, SIOR, organized Eden Autism's first 5K fundraising race over 25 years ago and continues to be an annual sponsor. Additionally, Fennelly Associates serves as an annual super-sponsor for PEI Kids' fundraiser, was a gold sponsor of their first post-pandemic "Wine and Food Tasting" event and Nancy Fennelly, the firm's Director of Finance, serves as a member of PEI Kids Board of Trustees to support its work promoting and maintaining a safe environment for all children.

Mazars

Mazars annually donates \$100,000 to organizations dedicated to each year's cause. This year, each U.S. office selected a charity or charities to receive support. Supported causes include veterans' services; safe-haven programs for youth and young-adults; refugee and immigrant services and homelessness and addiction support among many others. In 2022 we celebrated our sixth annual Days of Service – a volunteer initiative that encourages employees to devote a full workday to assisting local service organizations. Hundreds of employees and partners spent the day at many different community and non-profit programs. We also partnered with veteran service organization American Corporate Partners (ACP), the only nationwide veteran mentorship program that offers year-long, customized, one-on-one career counseling and networking opportunities with seasoned corporate mentors to transitioning service members and active-duty military spouses. In addition to other efforts previously mentioned, in 2022 Mazars and its employees donated over \$62,000 to over 132 supported causes.

Peapack-Gladstone Bank

Peapack-Gladstone Bank is committed to making a difference in the quality of life of individuals in its communities. In November and December, the Bank presented its 2nd Annual Charity Christmas Tree Sale. Orchestrated by Bank employees and held on the property of its Boonton location, the event showcased 300 trees, in various species and sizes, which were netted on site and loaded for transport. Sale proceeds totaling \$30,607 were donated to youth mental health programs offered by the Lakeland Hills Family YMCA in Mountain Lakes. Each year, a new community beneficiary is named. This annual sale brought together the community, while making the holidays merry and bright for many local individuals and families. Through volunteerism and monetary and in-kind donations, Peapack-Gladstone Bank is committed to making a difference in its

communities, not only during the holiday season, but the whole year through.

Global Outreach

Holy Name

Holy Name is a leading independent health system, providing world-class care through a combination of medical expertise, innovative technology, and humanity at the heart of every interaction. The Teaneck-based system is also home to Hôpital Sacré Coeur, the largest private hospital and public health provider for the more than 250,000 people living in the Milot region of Haiti, the poorest country in the Northern hemisphere.

On that island there is little to no access to adequate housing, sanitation, water, electricity, or food. Forty-three percent of Haitians, or 4.7 million people, face acute hunger – including 2.4 million children. Managed hand in hand by Holy Name clinical and administrative leaders in Haiti and in Teaneck, Hôpital Sacré Coeur provides medical assistance and crucial relief to those in the community. The hospital also serves as a food distribution center for the Milot community, distributing much-needed nourishment, which has been packed by volunteers through Packathons across the United States – all led by Holy Name. To date, 5,300 volunteers have packed more than 1.3 million meals and raised nearly \$450,000 for the most vulnerable in Milot.

NPZ Law

NPZ Law Group has made a significant impact in the community for the past two years through various charitable efforts.

In India, our team worked closely with local organizations to provide education and resources to underprivileged children by supplying educational materials and technology to underprivileged children in India.

In our local community of Paterson, New Jersey we organized a clothing drive for the underprivileged and distributed the items to those in need. We also partnered with a Church in Prospect Park to provide meals and support to the homeless population.

Furthermore, we also partnered with the Women's Rehabilitation Group (WRG) to raise funds for their programs and services. Our team organized a fundraising event which helped to support the critical work that WRG does in helping women rebuild their lives.

We are proud of the impact that our team has made in these communities and will continue to support and give back to those in need.

Terrie O'Connor Realtors

The Grace Foundation of Terrie O'Connor Realtors' mission is to identify local, legitimate and worthy areas of need for the agents, staff and clients of Terrie O'Connor Realtors to invest in for the ongoing betterment of our local communities and the people who live here,

Continued On Page 20



Photo: Mazars

NY Cares reached out to Mazars to ask for help sorting coats for those in need ahead of winter. Volunteers wrote notes of encouragement to be distributed with the coats.



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Hackensack University Medical Center Helena Theurer Pavilion



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Hackensack Meridian
Hackensack University
Medical Center

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by providing financial, educational and manpower support and encouragement to families and individuals directly and through other local and proper charitable organizations. Last year, in support of those impacted by the war in Ukraine, the Grace Foundation and Terrie O'Connor Realtors collected supplies for babies and children, medical supplies and toiletries, and monetary donations. Multiple car-loads of supplies were delivered to Baranova 26 in Fort Lee, an organization that shipped humanitarian supplies directly to Ukraine and border countries aiding refugees. Donations for Ukraine may be made online at www.gracefoundation.charity.

Assisting the Homeless

Terrie O'Connor Realtors

Celebrating over 30 years in the real estate business, Terrie O'Connor Realtors is dedicated to helping people find their dream home, their sanctuary, their safe place. Recognizing that not everyone is fortunate enough to have a place to call home, Terrie O'Connor and the TOCR Cares Team stepped up to help the kids of "the Cov." Covenant House helps New Jersey's youth who have suffered from abuse, abandonment, homelessness and human trafficking to build a life that is good and meaningful. Serving youth ages 18 to 22, Covenant House helps get their kids off the streets, to residential crisis centers, then to transitional living homes and on to independent living. Every November since 2017, the TOCR Cares Team has participated in the Covenant House's Executive Sleep Out, a yearly fundraising initiative where participants sleep outside on the streets of Newark to experience the devastation facing New Jersey's homeless youth. During the event, participants share in the stories and experiences of Covenant's residents and meet the organization's loving staff. Last November, the Executive Sleep Out returned to Newark for the first time since pre-COVID-19. Understanding the value of experiencing the Sleep Out together, a team of 18 agents and staff took to a cardboard box – supplied by Ridgewood Movers – and made their bed outside in the parking lot across from Covenant House in Newark. While they raised more than \$40,000 last year for New Jersey youth facing homelessness, Terrie O'Connor Realtors and the TOCR Cares Team have raised approximately \$250,000 in support of the Covenant House kids since 2017.

Valley Bank

Affordable housing is one of Valley's four Corporate Social Responsibility pillars. Valley is a long-time partner with Homeless Solutions, Inc. (HSI) whose mission is to offer shelter, services, and supportive housing to homeless and low-income people. In 2022, HSI honored Valley and our Community Pledge CD, one of

the Bank's pandemic responses, and our all-in support of HSI's fundraising event, A Night in the Cold. Dorothy Kahlau, Director of Women in Business at Valley, serves on HSI's Corporate Advisory Council. As an ambassador, Dorothy has led a Valley team at HSI Women's Day, a women's philanthropy event focused on ending homelessness, for the past two years. Additionally, Ira Robbins, Chairman & CEO at Valley, along with other Valley associates and their families have participated in A Night in the Cold by sleeping outside in December to raise awareness and funds for HSI's programs that provide a safe place for homeless families. Image: Dorothy Kahlau, Director of Women in Business, and her nephew supporting "A Night in the Cold" by sleeping outside in December to raise awareness and funds for HSI's programs that provide a safe place from homeless families.

Combating Hunger

A.J. Perri

A.J. Perri, among the state's top plumbing and HVAC companies, continues its long tradition of community support by participating in a variety of charitable initiatives statewide. Among other efforts, in the past year A.J. Perri supported Students Change Hunger (SCH), a friendly competition in which local schools and youth groups host food and fundraising drives to provide food for those in need throughout New Jersey. This was A.J. Perri's 10th year of participation. A.J. Perri was also proud to once again host its A.J. Perri Cares program, which provides free plumbing and HVAC equipment to deserving veterans in need in the communities served by A.J. Perri. The company, which celebrated its 50th year in business in 2021, is a previous recipient of the CIANJ "Companies That Care" award. Thank you once again for considering their candidacy for this honor!

Berkeley College

In September 2022, the Berkeley College Foundation opened a Food Pantry at the College's Woodland Park campus. The student resource – the third of its kind on a Berkeley College campus – ensures students have access to proper nourishment without sacrificing their education.

The Community FoodBank of New Jersey estimates that 140,000 college students experience food insecurity across the Garden State, an "invisible epidemic" that has been exacerbated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and inflation.

The Berkeley College Foundation Food Pantry, established in collaboration with the Community FoodBank of New Jersey with support from local businesses, offers not only meal essentials, but also household items and toiletries. Students can also place orders online, and the College offers a "Grab and Go" option, with themed bags of food such as breakfasts, lunches, or holiday dinner items.

Eastwick College

"The demand for food continued these past two years, so we added three more food banks as beneficiaries," explained Tom Eastwick, president, Eastwick College.

After the Meadowlands YMCA opened its food bank in January 2022, David Kisselback, president, 10 months later said, "We now have over 1,000 individuals enrolled in our food pantry, up from 100." He added, "We also continue monthly food distributions to the general public on Tuesdays. Those lines are still well over a mile long." The Boys & Girls Club of Paterson/Passaic and North Jersey Salvation Army are the other two new beneficiaries.

Eastwick's Feed The Hungry program started nine years ago with a \$25,000 donation to five food banks. Last December \$55,000 was awarded to 11, bringing the total to \$350,000, half from President Eastwick and half from staff, students, and corporate colleagues like New Bridge Medical Center, Good Samaritan Hospital, M&T Bank, Visions Federal Credit Union, Unico, and Inserra Supermarkets.

Eva's Village

Eva's Village, located in Paterson, provides hope for individuals struggling with hunger, homelessness, substance use disorders and mental health challenges. In FY 2022, which overlapped with the COVID-19 pandemic, our Community Kitchen served over 287,000 meals to neighbors in need and residents in our emergency overnight shelters and halfway houses. During COVID-19, we switched from indoor service to providing packaged to-go meals. In April 2022, we returned to indoor service. The Community Kitchen provides more than just a meal. It's warm and friendly and offers connections to social services and behavioral health programs. Eddie, who came to Eva's for free meals, was suffering from a substance use disorder. After meeting with counselors in the Kitchen, Eddie was connected with the services he needed. He says Eva's

Continued From Page 22



Photo: Valley Bank

In June 2022, Valley associates volunteered at Hoving Home's Beautification Day, where they mowed, planted flowers, spread mulch, and helped spruce up the property in preparation for a Hoving Home Graduation ceremony.

Valley Bank is honored to be a

Companies that Care

recipient for our community partnership with Homeless Solutions, Inc. whose mission is to offer shelter, services and supportive housing to homeless and low-income people.



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CIANJ - COMPANIES THAT CARE WINNER
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Our Mission: To improve quality of life through acts of kindness, charitable outreach, educational programs, and social support in the T&M family and the communities in which we live, work and play.



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Our ambition is to build a fairer and more prosperous world by supporting our clients' sustainable performance, caring for our people and local communities, and preserving the environment.

www.mazars.us

mazars

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Village is a “safe haven” and a place that gave him the resources, guidance and hope he needed to turn his life around.

GZA GeoEnvironmental Inc.

While GZA has completed varied community service projects in the last two years, the firm’s commitment to feeding the hungry has been a focus. In 2022, volunteers from three different GZA offices (Fairfield and South Bound Brook, New Jersey and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) worked with America’s Grow-a-Row to harvest 12,000 pounds of corn – which translates to more than 48,000 servings for those struggling with food insecurity. This non-profit farm brings together volunteers to plant, pick and deliver fresh produce distributed through local food pantries. Additionally, the firm made a sizable monetary donation to Grow-a-Row. GZA has also held food drives in the office to benefit the Community FoodBank of New Jersey (CFBNJ) and has made CFBNJ one of the non-profits to which employee donations are matched.

Jersey City Medical Center

The Green Apple Rx Food FARMacy program run by Jersey City Medical Center is an exceptional initiative serving the Hudson County community since its inception in 2021. The program has successfully addressed food insecurity and provided nutritional counseling to those living with chronic diseases such as diabetes, obesity, and hypertension. The program has screened over 1,200 primary care patients for food insecurity, distributed over 3,000 food bags to community members, and provided nutritional counseling to nearly 200 clients. The program is free of charge, and participants are eligible for free food through its partnership with various community organizations and donors. Moreover, the program has successfully reached out to community organizations such as the Anti-Violence Coalition of Jersey City and the Children’s Specialized Hospital. We are proud to nominate the Green Apple Rx Food FARMacy program for its exceptional contributions to the well-being of the Hudson County community.

Pandemic Relief

Altice

For over three years, Optimum has partnered with the Coalition to Back Black Businesses (CBBB), a multi-year initiative supporting Black-owned small businesses as they recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and chart a path forward. Since becoming a partner with the CBBB in 2020, Optimum has supported 50 black-owned businesses in New Jersey through \$300,000 in funding to provide needed resources to the Black business community. These businesses include The Mind and Body Movement, 2 For Care Early Childhood Learning Center LLC, Elite HomeCare LLC, StraightPath Consulting LLC, and more. Following these

grants, Optimum employees had the opportunity to provide mentorship to these business owners by volunteering their time to help in areas including human resources, business development, and marketing. Optimum’s initiative with the CBBB has had a real and lasting impact for New Jersey businesses at a time when it is needed most.

Bergen New Bridge Medical Center

Since March 2020, Bergen New Bridge Medical Center has been on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic leading the way with healthcare, testing, vaccinations, and education. With support by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, two alternate care facilities were built in 2020 to expand access to therapeutic services which are still in use, providing bivalent booster shots and more.

In 2022, our Community Health Team recorded 18,505 COVID-19 vaccinations and 3,867 bivalent boosters. Our mobile COVID-19 testing unit completed 31,324 COVID-19 tests in communities around the county. Several universities needed a testing partner to allow them to open their doors and we provided testing programs for Bergen Community College, The College of New Jersey, Drew University, NJIT, Stevens Institute of Technology, William Paterson University and more.

In the last year, we have distributed more than 3,000 at home test kits. Our team provided 400 of these test kits to veterans, 300 to seniors, 500 to families attending the Earth Day Celebration at Van Saun County Park, and 450 in partnership with the NAACP.

The Medical Center’s efforts were recognized by the Bergen County NAACP, iLearn Schools, Felician University, the NJHA, and other community organizations.

Gibbons P.C.

Gibbons P.C., led by the Gibbons Diversity Initiative and Gibbons Cares pro bono program, launched three pro bono efforts to assist small, minority- or women-owned businesses throughout New Jersey that typically face hurdles in financing and sustaining their operations and have limited access to services and resources. These efforts have provided free legal counsel and advice, among other assistance, to help such businesses overcome challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Small Businesses Need Us, an initiative of the Institute for Entrepreneurial Leadership in which Gibbons is a partner, helps women- and minority-owned small-business owners specifically impacted by the pandemic; the Equitable Small Business Initiative, a joint venture structured by Gibbons for longtime clients, New Jersey Community Capital and the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ), addresses the business needs of Black business enterprises; and the AACCNJ Pro Bono Alliance, a Gibbons-AACCNJ partnership, directly supports AACCNJ member companies.

Guardian Data Destruction

The past two years have been challenging, but the Guardian Data Destruction Team rose to the occasion to improve lives by volunteering and feeding front-line workers and supporting the local community.

The Steve Rich Group and GDD’s employees coordinated and executed two events: Tankque, Unsung Heroes and Taco Fest where they cooked and fed over 2,000 COVID-19 essential workers. To pull this off, a tremendous effort was put forth to solicit food donations, coordinate supplies and volunteers to cook and deliver meals. As part of the events, Guardian supplied seventeen pallets of donated food to the Tri-Boro Food Pantry and an additional truckload to Toni’s Kitchen, a non-profit serving 27,000 pandemic meals a week.

Guardian employees donated their time and hundreds of laptops to Laptop Upcycle, a not-for-profit organization for low-income students. Additionally, \$7,500.00 was raised and donated to Tackle Kids Cancer, a pediatric cancer research charity. Another day of cooking and meals was provided for the Meadowland 9-11 children’s fundraiser, and, most recently, employees sent virtual Valentines to the Boston Children’s Hospital patients.

Dr. Avinash Gupta

Monmouth Medical Center Southern Campus cardiologist Dr. Avinash Gupta serves his community, both in Ocean County and in his native India, with selfless dedication for more than 40 years. Through his role with the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin, Dr. Gupta organized a team of over 50 physicians, pharmacists, nurses, and non-clinical volunteers during the COVID-19 pandemic to partner with the Ocean County Health Department on their testing and vaccination drives. Weekly, he and wife and fellow physician Geeta, led this volunteer team to administer thousands of vaccines to his local community. Simultaneously, as the healthcare system in India surpassed its breaking point, they launched a growing coalition of Indian-American doctors in the U.S. using telemedicine to treat patients. The two would follow a 10-hour hospital shift with a different kind of shift at home, selflessly triaging and treating more than 500 COVID-19 patients in India via Zoom.

Habitat for Humanity of Bergen County

During the pandemic of 2020, Habitat for Humanity of Bergen County was seeking a way to reach out to the Bergen County communities to make a difference. In a response to the overwhelming amount of requests for student desks at the Habitat ReStore, Habitat Bergen created what is called the “Desks 4 Homes” program. Habitat Bergen, in conjunction with volunteers and local corporations, built desks for students in need. These desks were then donated to students in need who were learning virtually

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at home. Habitat Bergen was able to gift these desks to over 225 students throughout Bergen County and provide them with a home workspace that assisted in their virtual learning. Donors were encouraged to donate \$35 to build one desk for a student in need. Desks 4 Homes was sponsored by Lakeland Bank and NVE Bank and provided a more successful home learning environment for students in Hackensack, Teaneck, Bergenfield, Cliffside Park, and Garfield. "There are children in our community without access to an appropriate learning environment," said Teri Capparelli, Habitat Bergen ReStore Director. "We have volunteers willing to provide the time to build these simple desks that will have a profound positive impact on a child's remote learning experience." Capparelli spearheaded this initiative.

Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey

As the leading health solutions company in the state, Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey's (Horizon BCBSNJ) response to the impacts of COVID-19 was an all-hands-on deck effort. Committed to helping employers, members, employees, and communities through difficult times, the company implemented no-cost coverage for in-network COVID-19 diagnosis and treatment, expanded access and eliminated out-of-pocket costs for telemedicine, and donated \$2.5 million for 500,000 N95 masks and 81,000 face shields, as well as \$2 million to the New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund.

Horizon BCBSNJ's philanthropic arm, The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey, focused on supporting immediate health and basic needs and addressing health disparities, by providing more than \$800,000 in grants in the areas of childcare, food security, and physical and mental health needs. Horizon BCBSNJ matched employee donations for COVID-19 relief dollar for dollar, totaling over \$88,000. Employees also volunteered thousands of hours across New Jersey.

Table to Table

The small but mighty team at Table to Table, NJ's first food rescue organization, operated nearly 24/7 throughout the pandemic, feeding its most vulnerable neighbors throughout Bergen, Essex, Hudson, and Passaic Counties. Hungry seniors, veterans, children, and families relied on each and every food delivery from Table to Table. The need was staggering, unpredictable and never ending. The task was daunting, but Table to Table persevered.

With its deep connection to its recipient partners in the community, Table to Table received unprecedented food requests. Thanks to the generosity of our leading food and corporate partners such as HelloFresh, Bank of America, and Inserra Supermarkets, Table to Table moved swiftly and resourcefully, creating food distributions where more than 50 million

pounds of food were provided from 2020-2021. With each delivery, Table to Table not only provided fresh nutritious fruit, vegetables, and protein, they also provided hope.

Terrie O'Connor Realtors

At the height of the pandemic, when the entire state of New Jersey shut down, the agents of Terrie O'Connor Realtors stepped up to help. Joseph Lehr, Broker Associate of the Saddle River office, organized a group of five volunteers in the Copsaw Lake community of Ringwood to form Copsaw Cares, a 501c3 organization dedicated to providing much needed PPE (gloves, masks, face shields, goggles, hand sanitizer) to their communities and to first responders and hospitals in Bergen, Passaic and Morris Counties in New Jersey and Rockland County in New York. To date, this group of dedicated citizens has distributed over \$150,000 worth of PPE.

Kristine Grieco of the Ramsey office, helped the Dater School PTO launch Ramsey Strong to solicit more than \$110,000 in donations. The monies were used to purchase meals from local restaurants to feed front-line healthcare workers. "It was a win-win: we helped local restaurants struggling to survive amid COVID-19 restrictions while feeding nurses and doctors working to save our neighbors, family and friends," she said.

Helping Veterans

Bergen New Bridge Medical Center

Bergen New Bridge Medical Center is proud to be a VA Community Care Provider, providing healthcare and behavioral health services to our veterans. Our team assists veterans who need help scheduling appointments and coordinates transportation for those in need.

We also go where veterans live and work to provide the care they need in their communities. Our Community Health Team visits VFW and American Legion posts throughout northern New Jersey, distributing at-home COVID-19 tests, providing vaccinations and boosters, health screenings and more. The team has hosted lunch and learn events for veterans at the Medical Center, attended veterans' events, organized health fairs for veterans and more.

Bergen New Bridge has hosted veteran suicide prevention trainings and has partnered with the Bergen County Rise Suicide Coalition. We held several career fairs for veterans at which we also provided legal aid and health insurance enrollment resources. We thank veterans for their service by providing high quality healthcare and services when and where they need it.

McCarter & English

McCarter has a long history of service to veterans. Throughout our footprint, our lawyers help veterans seek the benefits to which they are entitled; appeal the all-too-frequent wrongful

denials of benefits; and apply for discharge upgrades so that veterans with an inappropriate 'other-than-honorable' discharge can become eligible for benefits. We also represent veterans with the range of community integration challenges they face after returning from service, and have done so for many years. We help screen veterans for legal needs at a VA hospital in the Greater Boston area, and we handle evictions, divorces, estate planning, and help clear criminal records for veterans in NJ, CT, and MA. We were humbled to receive the 2021 TVC Law Firm Pro Bono Mission Partner from The Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program and 2022 Outstanding Pro Bono Service Award from Veterans Legal Services. As a firm, we believe it is our responsibility and privilege to be of service, and we are grateful to all of our partner organizations for making it possible for us to lend a hand.

Mikula Contracting

Mikula Contracting was truly honored to be featured on the NBC show *George to the Rescue* in May 2022. Mikula was called in by George Oliphant, the host and producer of *George to the Rescue*, to volunteer to help out former Marine Victor Alamanzar and his family when they discovered mold issues and water inside the basement of their new home in West Orange. This small basement renovation turned into one of the largest projects yet to be seen on *George to the Rescue*. This project included a major excavation that included new drainage to be installed around the property. Mikula's team excavated around the entire perimeter of the house and then installed the new drainage system in order to prevent water from getting into their home again. Once the project was completed, Victor and his family could use their basement without worry and enjoy family movie night together!

Monmouth Medical Center

Monmouth Medical Center's (MMC) LiveWell Center, which provides free health programs and activities for individuals of all ages, partners with Soldier On in Tinton Falls, a facility that provides housing and support for over 60 military veterans. Soldier On residents attend programs at the LiveWell Center, and weekly from August through December, MMC delivered 60 produce boxes to residents. In November in conjunction with Veterans' Day, LiveWell Center Registered Dietitian Jennifer Klein, MS, RDN, brought the programming to Soldier On with a cooking demonstration that showed how to prepare a simple, healthy meal with the fresh produce they receive. This March, Klein will take part in a Cancer Prevention, Screening, and Nutrition Lunch and Learn program at Soldier On, discussing the importance of fiber for a healthy colon and providing residents with education on different sources of fiber and simple tips to help them meet their daily fiber needs. 🍌

Time to Rethink SWOT



By Joseph P. Truncale, Ph.D.
Contributing Editor

It's not uncommon to begin a strategy and planning session with a thorough, open, honest assessment of the organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis). In my experience, having facilitated any number of these sessions, it seems apparent that the time to re-think this approach may be at hand.

Consider this exercise which begins with a list of strengths. These mostly center on capabilities, equipment, processes, experience, and sometimes "we have great people". Nothing wrong or even inaccurate here. However, this begs several questions. Among them, what will you do with this list once it's completed? And, more to the point, if your primary competitors were having this very same conversation, how

likely is it that their list would look similar, if not nearly identical to yours?

The idea of identifying and articulating your organizational strengths takes on far greater meaning when you instead focus on generating a list of your unique strengths. That is, what makes you different than your competitors? What sets you apart as the provider of choice among your targeted customers?

In his seminal article "What is Strategy", Michael Porter makes the case that the essence of strategy is about being different. This differentiation marks a dividing line between you and everyone else. It addresses the question "what sets you apart from the competition in a way that gives you more running room in the marketplace, leading the way to greater margins and increased customer loyalty?"

Unique, by definition, means one of a kind (first coined in French, taken from the Latin "Unicus"), like no other. What about your organization makes you different? Where do you stand out in a way that is unique?

During strategy sessions, the following question can help planners address the matter of differentiation: "If your business went out of

business tomorrow, one just like it would be created the next day because somebody has to (fill in the blank)". If this question is answered with a list of commodities (things others can easily do) your business may be short on differentiation which can negatively impact pricing power.

Listing organizational strengths, all of them that come to mind, can be a "feel good" exercise and there is something to be said for that. If your team prefers this approach, go ahead and list all of your strengths. Then, take a second cut at it by culling out those strengths that make your organization clearly different and better than the competition.

Making this subtle but important change, moving from listing your "strengths" to identifying your "unique strengths" may yield a shorter list, but one that is far more powerful and useful. These unique strengths are raw material for developing your corporate strategies; how you will leverage your competitive advantage into a compelling and enduringly successful plan.

For more tips on strategy and planning for your best future, contact me at joe@ajstratgy.com.



When analyzing your company's strengths, it is important to stress the qualities that make your organization clearly different and better than the competition.

Joseph P. Truncale, Ph.D., CAE, is the Founder & Principal of Alexander Joseph Associates, a privately held consultancy specializing in executive business advisory services.

He is the former CEO of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), the world's largest public relations organization. Prior to joining PRSA, Joe was President & CEO of NAPL, a business management association representing leading companies in the printing, graphic communications, mailing, fulfillment and marketing services industry.

Joe specializes in strategy, customer analysis and organizational effectiveness.

He is a graduate of Monmouth University and he holds a Masters' Degree from Rutgers University. In 2011, he earned his Ph.D. in Media, Culture and Communications at New York University and was the recipient of the Prism Award for Academic Achievement. His dissertation was a ground-breaking study of the leadership styles of highly successful entrepreneurial business executives in the graphic communications industry.

Joe served as Co-Chair of the New York University Board of Advisors and is an adjunct faculty member at NYU teaching graduate courses in Executive Leadership, Financial Management and Analysis, Finance for Marketing Decisions, and Leadership: The C Suite Perspective. He resides in Colts Neck, NJ.

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COMPREHENSIVE CANCER CARE

Christie Advises Republicans "Be Bold" To Win Voter Support

By Diane C. Walsh
Editor, COMMERCE

In the blunt style that's defined his career, former Gov. Chris Christie told an audience at a CIANJ event that New Jersey will be confronting a fiscal crisis by 2026 – at the latest.

He faulted Gov. Phil Murphy for “boosting” the state economy with federal money that has poured in since the COVID-19 pandemic struck. Since Murphy took office, Christie said state spending has grown by \$19 billion. “If you don’t think that’s artificial, tell me what it is,” he said during a free-wheeling conversation with CIANJ President Anthony Russo that touched on political divisions across the nation, the debt ceiling, voting by mail, and, of course, Christie’s possible run for president.

Republican Christie stunned the political pundits in 2009 when he was elected governor in the blue bastion of New Jersey, where the Democrats enjoy a 1 million vote margin over the GOP. In his first year in office, he slashed

spending and delivered a \$29 billion budget to overcome a huge deficit. Most of the state budget is pre-determined by the cost of debt payments, pensions, and health benefits for public workers, he explained, alluding to the “awful choices” left to reduce spending in other programs for a balanced budget.

After two terms in office, Christie’s budget topped out at \$34 billion – a \$5 billion increase. He asserted it was a “flat budget,” with the exceptions of increases for debt service, pensions and health benefits. While the budget proposed by Murphy in this his sixth year in office is \$53.5 billion.

Christie charged his Democratic successor “has done nothing to make the economy grow” in the Garden State. In Christie’s estimation, the state’s had a “lackluster” recovery from the pandemic and is still burdened by a huge corporate tax and other levies that are sending residents fleeing.

Still, he said Murphy is “among the luckiest people I have every met” because the Republican believes New Jersey’s financial nosedive will not



Former NJ Governor Chris Christie

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occur until the Democrat's last year in office. Christie predicted the state's financial woes will hit in 2025 or 2026.

The crisis could open the door for a Republican gubernatorial candidate. Jack Ciattarelli, a former assemblyman who made the Democrats sweat when he came within 3 points of unseating Murphy, was in the audience for Christie's talk and the former governor gave him a few shout-outs. Christie said he was on the phone with Ciattarelli late into the night on Election Day 2021.

Ciattarelli was winning on the voting machine tallies. But his lead was wiped out when the vote by mail numbers came in from Democratic strongholds, like Camden, Hudson, and Essex counties. There's a lesson there for the GOP, Christie said. "If we don't get better at vote by mail, we're not going to win another election," he asserted. "There's nothing inherently wrong or crooked about vote by mail. It's always been here, it just got easier to do now."

True to form, Christie recommended that the next Republican candidate for governor be bold. "You don't ever win by being timid," he said, adding, "You've got grab them by the lapels and give them a reason to vote for you."

Despite the lopsided voter registration numbers, Christie believes Republicans can bring home a win in New Jersey. "I'm not pessimistic about the party. It's a challenge. You've got to be

tough; you've got to be bold. That's what New Jersey is."

He would advise the GOP to run on a platform of tax cuts. Christie was flabbergasted by the \$9 billion surplus in Murphy's budget. "That should be going back to everybody. But who is saying that?" the former governor asked. "You have to draw a distinction between you and the person you're trying to beat."

Christie built his career on a tough-talking, in-your-face style and personality. When he was sizing up the current likely candidates in the Republican presidential field, he discounted Mike Pence, Nikki Haley and Mike Pompeo as contenders to unseat Donald Trump as the party's front-runner because they were part of the former president's administration. But when Anthony Russo asked if Christie would be better taking on Trump, the former governor's one word reply of "maybe" elicited an uproar from the audience.

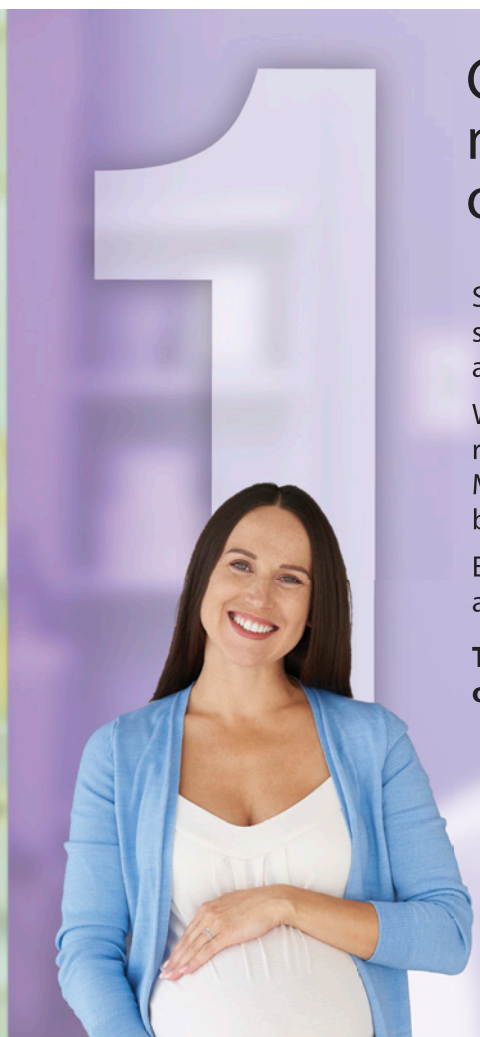
Christie's first presidential campaign in 2016 was brief lived. Ultimately, he endorsed Trump and even coached him in debate preparations. But since the Jan. 6 riot on Capitol Hill, Christie has denounced Trump. At the CIANJ event the ex-governor shared his view of the national political scene. From his perspective, independent voters feel "shafted" by President Joseph Biden because he campaigned as a moderate, only to govern as a liberal in the model of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Independent voter support

is key to success. But Christie said Trump's approval rating among independents is in the basement. The dilemma is that Trump's poor standing makes him a loser in a national election, despite being a front runner for the GOP nomination. "If the primary were held today, he would be the nominee," Christie lamented.

In 2016, Christie dropped out after a poor showing in the New Hampshire primary. He gave the CIANJ audience a taste of his campaign days, recalling "waking up for the 48th morning at the Hilton Garden Inn in Manchester and realizing it's 18 degrees and you're going to the same 10 places." To build support, he explained, candidates are expected to go to "house parties," where there might be only 25 people and the hosts expect you to come to their homes multiple times before giving an endorsement.

On the flip side, Christie said there were "magical moments." One poignant memory was when he stood among a room full of supporters holding "Christie for President" placards, while they all recited the Pledge of Allegiance in a New Hampshire town hall built in the 18th Century.

All this factors into Christie's decision-making. Along with "the singular delight of running against Donald Trump," he said. The former governor knows it would be a slugfest. "I honestly believe there is only one way to win. You have to kill him because he continues to come back, because he is a vampire." 🦋



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Cannabis Industry Marks Its First Year

By Larry Feld

Contributing editor, COMMERCE

With the stroke of the governor's pen, recreational cannabis became New Jersey's newest industry on April 21, 2022. "It's been an exciting year," according to Samuel Delgado, vice chair of the New Jersey Cannabis Regulatory Commission. With guarded optimism, the vice chair provides a pragmatic response regarding the commission's satisfaction with progress to date.

"Like anything else, building the recreational cannabis industry is a process. When we (the Commission) came on board, the recreational cannabis business was totally new to the state. It's like trying to build a car while it is driving," Delgado says.

The NJCRC was established on February 22, 2021, when Gov. Phil Murphy signed the New Jersey Cannabis Regulatory, Enforcement Assistance, and Marketplace Modernization Act (CREAMMA) establishing rules and regulations for recreational sales and consumption.

With recreational sales of about \$196 million from April 2022 to the end of September 2022 (the last sales period published) national statistics suggest that New Jersey is off to a conservative, but promising start. Compared to places like Colorado, where in 2014, its inaugural year, earned \$700 million, New Jersey

has a way to go. Progress, while slow, is about to happen.

New Jersey currently has 38 dispensary locations, including 13 medicinal-only dispensaries and another 25 selling both medicinal and recreational products. However, expansion is on its way. According to the commission, more than 1,800 licenses have been reviewed as of mid-April. In addition, 61 annual licenses as well as 1,097 conditional licenses have been awarded.

"New Jersey has been very realistic in its view as to how this industry can work," notes Todd Polyniak, CPA, partner with SAX LLP and leader of the firm's cannabis services team. However, Todd notes that early sales are still being dominated by Multi-State Operators (MSOs) who were in place serving the medicinal market. The real New Jersey entrepreneurs are only now earning their conditional licenses. "We have several clients with conditional licenses who are almost ready to open," Todd says.

A great effort is being taken by the state to deliver on social justice promises made during legalization.

The CREAMMA Act dedicates considerable attention to helping those who were negatively impacted by the war on drugs to become business owners in this new industry. To that end, the Commission created Priority Applications to increase opportunities for people from designated target communities. Priority is also given

to those who had cannabis convictions, as well as minorities, women, and disabled veterans.

To help these entrepreneurs, the New Jersey Business Action Center (NJBAC) has been designated by the NJCRC to provide no-cost technical assistance, training and mentorship, particularly to those eligible for priority application status.

"It's like setting up a university from the ground up," explains Melanie Willoughby, executive director of the state business action center. "Many applicants who are in the social equity and disadvantaged communities do not have the resources to put together the application for a cannabis license for a business."

Starting in the Fall of this year, the NJBAC will be assisting applicants to complete their applications and provide mentoring support through the entire start-up process. The program includes extensive remote training, available online 24/7 to accommodate individuals who have time constraints, as well as offering mentors/advisors with a wide range of experience and business disciplines.

"Unlike a typical start-up, the state wants applicants to present everything (from their business plan to their standard operating procedures) all up-front," notes Jessica F. Gonzalez, Esq., consultant for the NJBAC's Cannabis Training Academy.

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Samuel Delgado, vice chair of the New Jersey Cannabis Regulatory Commission



Jessica F. Gonzalez, Esq., consultant to state business action center



Melanie Willoughby, executive director of the state business action center

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"We are trying to walk applicants through timelines and strategies. We want to empower people with enough knowledge so that they can make good business decisions," she explains.

"They are doing a fantastic job," Sam Delgado says of the NJBAC team.

New Jersey Economic Development Grants

To help address the capital needs of startups, the State has also made progress. In April, the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) announced Phase I of its \$10 million Cannabis Equity Grant Program. The Joint Ventures Grant supports businesses and startups in the recreational cannabis industry and ensures communities that were adversely impacted by the war on drugs to have equitable access to the industry by providing eligible startups with a grant of \$250,000.

"Cannabis entrepreneurship opportunities can play a crucial role in returning wealth to individuals and communities that have unfairly suffered as a result of the criminalization of cannabis," said NJEDA Chief Community Development Officer Tai Cooper in a recent press statement. "A primary focus of the Cannabis Equity Grant Program is to help address this inequity by supporting entrepreneurs and small businesses."

Coming Soon: Cannabis Consumption Areas

The NJCRC is also developing updates to regulations to include rules for cannabis consumption areas. Consumption areas will be connected to a licensed dispensary. Details are still in the works. According to Sam Delgado, "It's going to happen. We have established the rules, but it is not happening right now."

More work needs to be done, but we will be opening these licenses in the near future."

Challenges Ahead

According to Todd Polyniak, applicants face three significant challenges: Real estate, capital, and experience. "Even though you may have a conditional license, you still need to find a suitable location and acquire the right expertise. It will take savvy business skills to survive. You can't just rely on supply and demand. At some point, municipalities will see that they are missing out on revenue and will allow multiple outlets. Competition will begin to drive the market."

CRC's Delgado agrees. "As with any marketplace, as we grow, things will come up and policies will probably need to be updated and changed. The competition will drive the markets, however, not us. Our role is to regulate the industry to ensure that businesses follow the law and maintain a stable, robust marketplace so that everybody wins, including the communities, the taxpayers, and of course those individuals who

were incarcerated under the old laws. We want to create opportunities." Delgado concludes. 🍀



Todd Polyniak, CPA, partner with SAX LLP and leader of the firm's cannabis services team

Photo: Getty Images/Stockphoto/Wirestock

LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP

A Matter of Trust



By Steve Aduato, PhD
Freelance Contributor

Trust is a very complex thing. It's so hard to achieve but so easy to lose, and once you lose it, it seems so hard to get back. Following are some of the keys to building trust

– a virtue that should never be taken for granted:

Put others first – Not just as a leader but as a person.

During tough economic times for an organization, a CEO may take a pay cut in order to ensure that people's jobs will be saved, or other worthy employees will get well-deserved raises.

Listen to other points of view.

Want to lose the trust of your people? Then insist that you are right all of the time. Some of the worst leaders confuse stubbornness with

being principled. Instead, let those on your team know you want to hear their perspectives.

Do the right thing.

Doing the right thing, even when the easier option is obvious, often involves difficult choices. These choices may be unpopular with the people who are affected, but those closest to the situation will know that the leader did what had to be done to maintain the integrity of the organization.

Take the blame.

When something goes wrong in an organization, the best leaders never throw a team member under the bus. Instead, great leaders step up and take responsibility.

Share the credit. The opposite of throwing someone under the bus is taking all the credit for oneself. One of the fastest ways to lose trust is to not spread credit around. Great leaders share the credit so that others can succeed.

Be up front. Because circumstances can change so rapidly, an important lesson in leadership is to confront these difficult conversations

directly. Avoiding them only guarantees a buildup of distrust and resentment. 🍀



A work culture of trust fosters teamwork.

Steve Aduato, PhD, is the author of five books including, *"Lessons in Leadership."* His sixth book, *"Lessons in Leadership 2.0: The Tough Stuff,"* will be released in summer 2023. He is an Emmy® Award-winning anchor with programs airing on Thirteen/WNET (PBS) and NJ PBS. He has also appeared on CNN, NPR and NBC's *Today Show*. Steve Aduato's *"Lessons in Leadership"* video podcast with co-host Mary Gamba airs **Sundays at 10:00 a.m. on News 12+.** For more information visit www.Stand-Deliver.com

Photo: Getty Images/Stockphoto/Chay_Tee

CEO Ralph Thomas Retires, Elevated Profession's Status

By Diane C. Walsh
Editor, COMMERCE

Ralph Albert Thomas, CPA (DC), CGMA, is a few weeks from retiring as CEO and executive director of the New Jersey Society of CPAs (NJCPA), but he has not stopped thinking about more ways to help the profession.

His 23-year tenure at the 13,000-member society ends in June. And already he is exploring a new role as “executive in residence” at area colleges and universities to encourage students – especially ones of color – to choose careers as certified public accountants. It would leverage his extensive background and business network to tackle one of the profession’s most pressing challenges – declining enrollments.

“It’s a great profession. But we don’t do a good job of promoting it,” Thomas said in recent interview with *COMMERCE* Magazine. Nevertheless, the retiring CEO is proud of his strides in elevating the profession’s status. “We got people to think of us as more than just tax and audit folks,” he said. CPAs are now perceived as trusted advisors with their fingers on the community’s pulse.

“If you really want to know what’s going on in New Jersey, who better to ask than a CPA? They touch every business, every constituency. And we don’t have a hidden agenda,” Thomas said. He remembers shocking state Sen. President Steve Sweeney years ago when he revealed accountants had to counsel clients to consider leaving the Garden State because of the tax burden and bleak financial outlook.

Thomas’ candor with the legislative leader and other elected officials led them to rely on the NJCPA’s input in drafting policies and legislation and enacting reforms. Kathleen Alexander, a partner at Sax LLP who also serves as treasurer of the Commerce and Industry Association of NJ (CIANJ), praised Thomas as a fierce advocate in the successful repeal of New Jersey’s estate tax.

He strenuously lobbied officials and brought the issue to the public. Thomas even interviewed Alexander and a client about the tax’s adverse effects on the society’s YouTube channel. Together, their efforts convinced

lawmakers and former Gov. Chris Christie that the onerous tax was causing an exodus that could also deprive the state of tremendous charitable donations and talent for its non-profit boards.

Steven Schinella, the office managing partner for CohnReznick in New Jersey and another CIANJ board member, was equally complimentary. “For more than two decades, Ralph Thomas has been instrumental in advancing innovative programming and education to meet the evolving needs of NJCPA and its membership. It has been an absolute privilege to work alongside such a dynamic and forward-thinking leader for so many years.”

When Thomas took the society’s helm, he was the first person of color to head a state CPA so-

“If you really want to know what’s going on in New Jersey, who better to ask than a CPA? They touch every business, every constituency. And we don’t have a hidden agenda.”

ciety in the nation. Over the years, the accounting organizations in Illinois and New York also selected people with diverse backgrounds to fill leadership roles. Thomas helped mentor these colleagues and he said their presence make it easier for him to retire now.

In 1985 Thomas had joined the New Jersey society and he was the treasurer when Don Richards, a former president, encouraged him to apply for executive director. The position intrigued Thomas because he always wanted to run an organization. But he wanted an assurance from Richards that the board was ready for an African American executive director.


His talents and experience impressed the board. Thomas holds a master’s degree in



Ralph Albert Thomas, CPA (DC), CGMA

finance from Lehigh University, where he also did his undergraduate studies. During his career he had a stint at Price Waterhouse, and later worked at American Bell and AT&T during the break-up. Thomas was vice president and region audit head for Citibank’s mergers and acquisitions and structured finance group when he was approached by the society president. While Citibank tried to convince him to extend his 13-year investment there, the opportunities at NJCPA were too alluring.

Andrew Silverstein, a former CIANJ chairman, who is a partner at Dorfman, Abrams, Music LLC, described Thomas as one of the profession’s most outstanding members. “He led the NJCPA with skill and the ability to have it proactively adapt to the ever-changing professional landscape.”

Thomas looks back over his tenure with pride. He said he is especially pleased to have had the opportunity to “encourage more folks of color to come into the profession.” The retiring CEO predicts there will be growth among minority and women-owned small businesses. “They are really going to want people who look like them to help guide them,” said Thomas who hopes his success will be model for others. 

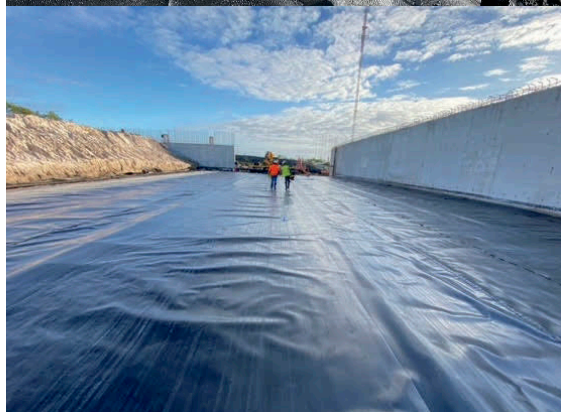




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