

Annual Report for 2019-

Rahway Arts + Business Partnership
Annual Report on Programs and Activities for calendar year 2019
Revisions completed 4/27/2020



Mission

The mission of the Rahway Arts + Business Partnership (RABP) is to facilitate the ongoing growth of Rahway as a diverse, vibrant, economically, and socially sound community. The RABP develops and promotes activities and programs that encourage the long-term success of Rahway's Special Improvement District (SID), which is the civic, cultural, and commercial center of the entire City. The Rahway Arts + Business Partnership is the District Management Corporation for Rahway's SID.

Activities and Programs

The activities facilitated by the RA+BP are of several types. Some are Special Events which occur once a year, and some are recurring Ongoing Programs. Special Events include the Rahway Taste of Spring, an annual event held since 2000. And Culture Crawl, which has been held every year since 2012. Ongoing programs include activities that occur throughout the year, such as the Rahway's Own campaign, which involves gatherings, programs, and displays. In addition, over the past several years, the RA+BP has launched several City Beautification initiatives whose goal is to improve the visual and experiential quality of civic space in Rahway.

Management Structure

The RA+BP is a non-profit corporation governed by a Board of Trustees. A representative of the Rahway City Council attends RA+BP Board meetings as the Council's liaison.

In November 2019, the operational management of the RA+BP was restructured. Cindy Solomon, the City of Rahway Director of Planning, was appointed the Executive Director of the

RA+BP. As Executive Director, Cindy's responsibilities will include larger capital improvement projects and planning initiatives. Amy Garcia Phillips, who has previously been Executive Director, and Ann Marie Williams, the Managing Director, will both have the position of co-Managing Directors. In their positions as Managing Directors, Amy and Ann Marie will continue to focus on business and arts development, event coordination, and marketing.

The RA+BP offices are located in City Hall, where they have been since 2017. This facilitates the efficient operation of the RA+BP, and enhances communication between the City Administration and the RA+BP.

Activities and Programs During 2019

Creative Rahway for Education (*Ongoing Prog*)

Since 2014, the RA+BP has been an active participant in the monthly meetings of the Creative Rahway for Education Committee (CRE), a coalition of educators, school administrators, City administrators, local artists and businesses seeking to create opportunities for Rahway Public Schools students' to connect with the downtown business and arts community, in order to enhance their educational experience, as well as to encourage pride in their City. The CRE group emerged from the City-wide Creative Rahway Convening held in January 2013 at the Hamilton Stage. The goal of the 2013 Convening was to inspire connections and collaborations and generate new ideas, by bringing together stakeholders from many different parts of the Rahway community. Rahway Public Schools student groups participate regularly in City and RA+BP events such as Taste of Spring and Winter Wonderland.

Restaurant Week (*Special Event*)

Rahway's 2019 Restaurant Week was held from January 21 through January 25, 2019. Participating restaurants offered specials to their patrons, and businesses in the district also offered discounts and specials to those patrons that brought receipts from participating restaurants.

Fourteen Rahway restaurants participated with prix fixe menus or specials that showcased their unique cuisines: Beanas Para Siempre, Meatballs & Brew, The World Famous Waiting Room, Cubanu Latin Fusion, Hugos Restaurant, Il Forno A Legna, Luciano's Ristorante, Nancy's Towne House, Rahway Grill, The Irving Inn Social, Sabor Peruano, Just Plain Daves, Rahway Sushi, and La Malinche. Restaurant Week was identified and branded by use in print media and social media of the logo and advertising campaign created in 2016 by Rahway's Wizdom Media. RA+BP Board Trustee Patricia Kozlowski donated her design skills to assist the restaurants in the creation of menus that were easy to read and provided consistency among all the participating establishments.

Unique to Restaurant Week 2019 was the collaboration of the restaurants with the local businesses. Diners were able to use their restaurant receipts to receive special "deals" in addition to their meals. UCPAC provided two complimentary tickets to the Classic Film Series, *The Breakfast Club*. Rahway's cat cafe, Rahway's Kitty Hall gave a 50% discount. The Gateway Family YMCA offered childcare on the Thursday night of Restaurant Week. The Watt Hotel Bar

offered a 10% discount. The recently opened, Melao Cafe & Creamery gave a 15% discount on Homemade Rolled Ice Cream. Sticks Cigars offered a complimentary cigar with the purchase of three cigars.



Lending Library (New Program)

After a few years of discussing the idea the RA+BP, the Friends of the Public Library and the Rahway Chamber of Commerce collaborated to create Little Lending Libraries around the City. Little Lending Libraries are small attractive miniature wooden houses that display books for sharing on a, “Take a book, leave a book” basis. The “houses” are being painted by local artists and will be put in place in 2020 by Rahway’s Department of Public Works.

Sign and Awning Grant (New Program)

This year the RA+BP introduced the Business Signage & Awning Grant Program for businesses in the Special Improvement District. The program offers grant assistance up to \$2,000 per applicant or 50% of eligible expenses, whichever is less, for eligible projects that comply with the guidelines. Grants were provided on a reimbursement basis. Many new and existing businesses took advantage of the grant. With the success of the program, the RA+BP will continue it for 2020.

Cherry Street Soirée en Blanc (New Program)

Inspired by an event he hosts in Plainfield, Jeff Spellman from The Coffee Box, initiated the idea for this event. Several of the businesses on Cherry Street partnered with the City and the RA+BP to create the first “Cherry Street Soirée en Blanc”, a pop up dinner in which diners wear all white and decorate their tables in all white. Restaurants in the immediate vicinity offered take-out options, and some guests also brought their own food and drink. There was a dessert table that everyone could bring something to share. The night was a great success, with dining and dancing and a generally delightful time!



Cherry St. Soirée en Blanc table decoration winners

Downtown Walking Map (New Program)

A downtown walking map was created by two local artists, Andrew Garcia Phillips and Patricia Kozlowski, listing and locating all the businesses in the downtown. This map was sent to businesses and apartment communities in Rahway. Additional copies of the map were placed under the clocktower at the Train Station Plaza. The map can be found at the Rahwayishappening.com website. The map will be updated on an ongoing basis. The RA+BP is grateful to Andrew and Patricia for donating their time and talents to this project.

Placemaking Panel in New Brunswick (Special Events)

In December, the RA+BP was invited to speak on a Placemaking Panel hosted by Downtown NJ, NJ Transit and the NJ Department of Transportation. Representatives of the RA+BP gave a brief history of Rahway's revitalization, starting with the new train station and plaza as well as the rehabilitation of the UCPAC. They also illustrated many of the endeavours, especially the RA+BP arts and music events, created to encourage people to come downtown and make connections with each other and the businesses in town. The presentation also highlighted The Paseo, as an example of a successful effort by the RA+BP to transform an existing, under-utilized pedestrian passage into inviting public space used for music performance, art display, and informal outdoor dining.

New Jersey Public Art Digital Magazine (Publicity)

In the fall of 2019, the RA+BP was contacted by Amanda Strahan, from the Union County Office of Cultural and Heritage for Union County, New Jersey, to assist in a project in which they were collaborating with New Jersey State Council on the Arts to showcase all the artwork throughout Union County. We provided them with photos and information about many of the public art pieces in Rahway.

The Rahway Taste of Spring (Special Event)

The 19th annual Rahway Taste of Spring was held on April 12, 2019. The Taste 2019 attracted a sold out crowd of over 1,500 people to the Rahway Recreation Center, and raised over \$15,000 for the RA+BP. This event, directed by RA+BP Board Member Matt Dobrowolski, is the major fundraising event held each year by the Rahway Arts + Business Partnership to raise funds for the RA+BP's programs.

The Rahway Recreation Center was transformed into one of, the largest tasting events--if not the largest! in the state. Tickets to Rahway's Taste 2019 sold out a week in advance, and became a "hot commodity". The Taste is co-produced by Rahway Arts + Business Partnership, Witty's Fine Wines and Liquors, Wizdom Media and Northfield Bank. Those who bought early on Eventbrite or managed to score a ticket from Witty's, Beana's Para Siempre, Pinho's Bakery or from the Rec Center, were treated to an evening of "flavor explosions" for their palate and lively music to tap their toes. The main gym, plus two side tents, were filled with over 70 vendors of wine, beer, food and aperitif tastings from proprietors from all over Union and Middlesex Counties, who served over 1,500 people. "People are drawn together over food. Breaking bread with your neighbor is a practice across all cultures. I love this event because it shows the rich cultural tapestry of New Jersey with both the cuisine presented and the patrons who attend. Everyone comes together to enjoy each other and some delicious food." said Mayor Ray Giacobbe.

Early in the evening, judges had the difficult task of choosing the "best of" in many categories, including the coveted "Tasters Choice", (best overall). Music by two great bands, High Strung and Karickter, created what was called a "music concert feel" in each of the side tents, while *DJ On Fire* lit up the main gym. Vendors and artisans sold their wares to guests who thoroughly enjoyed themselves throughout the night.

New for The Taste 2019 was an environmentally friendly "multitensil"--combination fork, spoon, and knife in a single unit--which was given to each patron who brought a ticket. The "multitensil" was made possible by support from the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders. Patrons were encouraged to reuse the "multitensil" throughout the night, reducing the waste of consuming a new utensil for each vendor. Liquor and wine ambassadors also were encouraged to serve their samples in paper cups, instead of the traditional plastic. The RA+BP hopes to incorporate more of these sustainable in the coming years.

Taste Of Spring Competition Winners 2019

Taster's Choice & Best Gourmet Pasta

Dominic's
Avenel

Best Restaurant Dessert

Bahama Breeze
Woodbridge

Best Side Dish

Chevys Fresh Mex
Linden

Best Metro Bakery

D'Orsi's Bakery
Port Reading

Best Bakery Table Display

Gold Leaf Pastry Shop & Cafe
Linden

Best Gourmet Entrée
Havana Central
Edison

Best Entree & Best Pasta
Il Forno A Legna
Rahway

Best Salad
Meatballs & Brews
Rahway

Best Seafood
Mulberry Street Restaurant
Woodbridge

Best Metro Ribs
Red Knot Restaurant
Kenilworth

Best Restaurant Table Display & Best Appetizer
Seasons 52
Edison

Best Gourmet Dessert
Sisterly Sweets
Rahway

Best International Dish
Warinanco Cafe
Roselle

New for this year
Best Liquor/Wine Table Display
Hennessy



Matt Dobrowolski, chefs from Dominic's in Avenel, showing off their Best Gourmet Pasta and Taster's Choice awards, Mayor Giacobbe, Rahway City Council Person Joe Gibilisco
Photo credit; Derron Palmer



Volunteers ready to give out the Multi-tensils when the doors open
Photo credit: Derron Palmer



Official Taste of Spring Judges making the difficult choices
Photo credit: Derron Palmer



Vendors enjoying the event

Photo Credit: Joe Brown

Photo Credit: Derron Palmer

Thank you to our 2019 Sponsors:



Caption: We thank our sponsors

Culture Crawl Arts and Music Festival (Special Event)

Culture Crawl 2019 was an event you did not want to miss! As you strolled around the heart of Rahway on this gorgeous September day, there was something for everyone at this arts and music festival! Artists, dancers, impersonators, musicians, magicians and more, tantalized festival goers with their talents!

Culture Crawl is an annual one day explosion of arts, culture, dance and music – taking place in downtown Rahway. The streets are lined with musicians, visual artists, performing artists, film makers and craft artisans that are stationed in, or in front of, our restaurants, salons, retail shops and theatres. This rain or shine festival is free to attend and free to participate. It encourages art enthusiasts to explore the expansive central business district.

“This is a great event because it uses art to showcase the businesses of Rahway’s downtown.” said Rahway’s Mayor, Raymond Giacobbe.

The Queer Space, sponsored by the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders and the Office of LGBTQ Affairs, hosted a repeat visit of Harmonica Sunbeam’s *Drag Queen Story Hour* as well as art activities and a special project, *Youth Out Loud*, where LGBTQ share their coming out experiences through art.

The Latin Party at Cubanu and the Litehouse’s *Four Elements of Hip Hop* energized and filled Main Street with music, dance and live art! Cherry Street’s businesses displayed their passion for their craft. Framing shop and art gallery, Atelier Rosal hosted a curated conglomerate of artisans while The Wannabes illustrated the high quality of Hip Hop dance instruction that will be taught at The Hive Studio opening soon in the Gramercy building.

More shopping was available to the crowds at the Vendor Village, while one great band after another played throughout the day on the Wizdom Media Main Stage of Music at the Rahway Train Station Plaza.

Sponsored by Northfield Bank and hosted in it’s parking lot, ACP Arts brought ideas, thoughts and feelings to life through music, dance and spoken word. Featured performing artists, included, -RADI, Letitia, Rob Hylton, John Burke, Myster E, James Ellerbe and Etcetera. They drew audiences from all over to hear what they had to say at *What’s the Word at Culture Crawl*.

Ladies were asked to sit down and relax at the *OMG Pop Up Lounge for Women and Girls*. Transforming the Arts District Park with whimsical decoration, guests were invited to take in dance performances by Amber Sol Bellydance and Rangamandala, or engage with illustrator Nina Mata or Shakira Johnson, founder of *The OMG Tea Party*.

As in past years, Culture Crawl 2019 was friendly towards four legged friends, too! Witty's Fine Wines and Liquors sponsored the *Pints and Paws Beer & Wine Garden and Pop Up Dog Park*. We hope to make this a repeat performance!

The Hamilton Stage hosted *Jersey Fresh!!*, the Rahway Reel Short Film Festival, a bushel-basket assortment of tasty flicks from New Jersey filmmakers! Curated by Lisa Vandever, these short films played every hour with a Q&A with the directors at the end of the day.

Bellydance, Contemporary, Step, Afro-Fusion, Kuchipudi (a traditional Indian dance), and Hip Hop performances showcased the cultural tapestry surrounding Rahway. Workshops by selected groups encouraged festival attendees to take part in the art! Young percussionist, PJ Pagan, illustrated how he got his name, “*Little Mr. Rhythm*” by playing solo in addition to partnering with dancers Amber Sol Bellydance and Rahway Dance Theater’s adult dance group.

This year dance could not be contained in just one space and the movers were set free throughout the downtown and encouraged to improve or freestyle with festival musicians. Performing for the first time at Culture Crawl, ReFrame Dance Theatre created a custom, rain or shine, choreography on and in the natural performance space formed by the train trestles at the corner of Irving Street and Cherry Street.

At the corner of Irving and Seminary Streets, Earl’s Cuts and Curls entertained audiences with the *Earl’s Girls Vaudeville Spectacular* which included Rahway’s resident magician, The Great Carlini. Curators, Dana Holland and Tajiana Spann transformed this area around The Gallery Space with food trucks, music and art into something truly spectacular!

“This is the third year in a row that the Culture Crawl Festival has been on a Saturday, and with longer hours. As curators and event organizers, looking at the entire downtown, Rahway Arts + Business Partnership created something really special this year. We were able to expand the range of cultural offerings this year and we hope to do so even.”, said Ann Marie Williams, Managing Director of the RABP.



ReFrame Dance Theater created a site specific piece.



Harmonica Sunbeam returned to Rahway for Drag Queen Story Hour at part of the activities at the Queer Space. Photo credit: Joe Brown



4 Elements of Hip Hop section at the Paseo



Vendor Village at the Train Station Plaza. Photo credit Joe Brown



Wizdom Medias Main Stage at the Train Station Plaza. Photo credit Joe Brown



ACP Arts What's the Word at Northfield Bank. Photo credit Joe Brown



The Hive Studio at Cherry Street. Photo credit Joe Brown



Pints and Paws Beer & Wine Garden and Pop Up Dog Park. Photo credit Joe Brown

Culture Crawl Pop up Events *(Expansion of Special Event)*

This year the RABP expanded the Culture Crawl festival concept to include the Culture Crawl Pop Up Music Series, the Culture Crawl Pop Up Film and the Culture Crawl Pop Up Dance Concert. Culture Crawl is already a robust festival with multiple venues and simultaneous programming. By adding “Pop Up” portions of the festival throughout the year, -- not just on the single day of the main Culture Crawl event -- the RA+BP is able to give artists multiple opportunities to share their craft, and audiences to enjoy them, as well as providing repeated brand placement and advertising throughout the year.

Culture Crawl Summer Music Series (CCSMS) *(Special Event)*

During the months of June, July and August, musicians performed in the Paseo (the pedestrian passageway off Main Street) on Friday evenings (weather permitting) from 6–9pm. Once again, with the assistance of Nick Rosal, a musician and the proprietor of Atelier Rosal, the RABP was able to program musical performers, ranging from full bands to single buskers, to bring life and music to Main Street. This year, vendors were added to the CCSMS nights, adding to the festive feel. Passers-by enjoyed the lively music and enthusiastic crowds as they went about their Friday night activities, while others purchased refreshments from the local eateries and enjoyed alfresco meals and live music.



Caption: Summer Music Series in the Paseo

Culture Crawl Summer Dance Concert (Special Event)

Nikola Palivoda, a talented dancer, choreographer and producer, who participated in Culture Crawl 2016, 2017, and 2019, partnered with the RA+BP again, to create the Second Annual Culture Crawl Summer Dance Concert on June 28, 29 and 30. The weekend consisted of performances by a variety of local amateur groups and a core ensemble performing set pieces each show. The weekend included workshops in multiple genres for the dancers performing in the show. The weekend showcased diverse expressions of dance genres including, Contemporary, Bollywood, Belly Dance, Hip Hop and Step- Contemporary Fusion. This event attracted attention to Rahway and it's downtown, the beautiful Hamilton Stage and the larger Culture Crawl 2019 event in September.



Caption: Culture Crawl Summer Dance Concert

Culture Crawl Music in the Arts Park (New Program)

Building on the success of the Music Series in the Paseo, the RABP partnered again with Nick Rosal to host live music on three separate Friday nights in the fall, in the Arts District Park. The “Arts Park” as it is commonly referred to, is across the street from the UCPAC at the corner of Central Avenue and Irving Street. Recently renovated, it is the perfect venue for live music and added to the ambiance and excitement of the activities in the UCPAC. This year’s music series was successful, and the RABP has plans to expand the music offerings during the summer of 2020.



Caption: Music in the Arts Park

Culture Crawl Pop Up Film (*New Program*)

During Culture Crawl 2018, a film component of the larger festival was organized by Lisa Vandever, curator and founder of the kinky film fest, Cine-Kink. During the fall festival, each hour of the *Reel Short Film Festival* had a unique theme: Kids Kartoons; True Stories; Imaginings; Jersey Fresh; and Risque Biz, for festival-goers 18 years and older. The RABP popped up two nights of films. The first in January, the RABP partnered with Lisa to show Jersey Fresh, (films by NJ artists). The second night, in February, Risque Biz was shown. Both nights were hosted at Atelier Rosal Framing Shop.

Rahway's Own (*Ongoing Program*)

In 2013, Rachael Faillace, then the Executive Director of the RA+BP, met with Rahway School District teachers Patricia Volino-Reinos and Daniel Garay and talked about ways by which the image and perception of Rahway could be enhanced, celebrated and re-branded.. With the encouragement from City Administration, the Rahway's Own Campaign was born.

This celebration of community pride highlights the successful native sons and daughters of Rahway whose talents, skills and hard work have made our City, our nation and our world a better place. The first Honorees of the Rahway's Own Class of 2014 included Nikola Tesla, Carl Sagan, Daphne Lee, Antonio Garay, Ike Igbinosun and Manny Yarborough.

In 2019, the RABP and Rahway School District celebrated five Rahway natives who have made a special impact in their field: Marine Corps General Al Gray; Democratic Strategist and Political Commentator Joel Payne; Club Development Manager for US Soccer, Marguerite Ferrel; Chef and *Chopped* champion, Gary Gonzalez; and NFL Giants Defensive Tackle Olsen Pierre. Each of the five honorees was the subject of a beautiful poster, created to celebrate their achievements. The posters were unveiled at an assembly and press event in October 2019 at Rahway High School.

Rahway's Own is becoming better known with each passing year. The Rahway's Own Class of 2019 was nominated by Rahway residents and chosen by a committee comprised of past Rahway's Own winners, community leaders and the RABP.

The Rahway's Own campaign has grown. The Rahway School District (RSD) continues to use the Rahway's Own concept to inspire students of all ages. Every year, as part of the district's National Council of Teachers of English National Day of Writing, kindergarten students create an individual "Rahway's Littlest Own" poster—inspiring them to dream about their futures and how they might someday become one of Rahway's Own. Seventh graders and ninth graders in the RSD also take part in Future Rahway's Own projects. In seventh grade, students research the career paths that interest them and in ninth grade, they set goals to make those dreams come to fruition.

OLSEN PIERRE
A HOMETOWN
GIANT ★

Back in 2009, before an impressive college career with the Miami Hurricanes and before joining the NFL, Rahway standout football player Duell Piere and his Rahway parents are interviewed, first meeting the guy who got the ball. Piere, an All-Orange County and Second Team All-State selection in high school, went on to start 26 games during his four years at "The U," capturing six tackles. He signed with the Chicago Bears as an undrafted free agent following the 2011 NFL Draft and later that year signed with the Arizona Cardinals where he played until 2013. On March 16, 2014, the "hard-nosed, hard-working" player came home to sign with the New York Giants.

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JOEL PAYNE
THE MAN
BEHIND THE
MESSAGE

JOEL PAYNE, a graduate of Rahway High School and Brown University, currently works as an advisor on crisis communications and public affairs strategy. Among his many notable positions in the political arena, Mr. Payne served as Deputy Press Secretary for former-Senate Majority Leader William Roth, where he helped lead messaging efforts to pass Obamacare, and as Director of African-American Advancing for Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign. Joel frequently appears on television and radio as a political analyst on MSNBC, CNN, Bloomberg, FOX News, FOX Business, TV One, NewsRadio, and The Drew Radio Show among other outlets.

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[illegible]

Photo: Chris Williams

GARY GONZALEZ FIRES IT UP IN THE KITCHEN*

For Gary Gonzalez, creator of Channel 5's "Cooking With a Gun" episode cooking has been a lifelong passion inspired by his father, who was also a cook. Gary began his culinary path at the iconic Quince Restaurant/Bar/Club in Queens, participating in the Quince Culinary Arts program, after graduating from Rahway High School in 2003. Gonzalez entered the Quince family when Quince opened its new restaurant in 2004 and worked until his honorable discharge in 2006. Gary joined his first kitchen experience at Quince's 10th anniversary event and he went to home restaurants as both New Jersey and Manhattan. The salad chef attended the Institute of Culinary Education in Manhattan, receiving culinary gifts and parties and having met Gary's daughter, who loves that her daddy is a chef, wants his biggest inspiration. He brought his parents back to see and work at Quince, working at Rahway's own being met.

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**MARGUERITE
FERRELL
SETS BIG
GOALS★**

Marguerite Ferrell, a former French team World-cup-winning Conference player at Toronto's York University (University Network), conducted her Burlington college career with two degrees and a doctoral research project in the United States of America. Marguerite spent seven years as a Senior Manager of Recruitment and Education at the New York Red Bulls team, then as a Senior Coach and as a full-time coach of the youth Training Program. She is currently the Club Development Manager for US Soccer, overseeing 12 Soccer Clubs in the New York City area and is an expert coach of youth national development players, having coached the national youth teams of the United States of Soccer Administration program. On October 1, 2016, Marguerite was selected into the Olympic Coaching program (Olympic staff of France) and was named coach of the Youth Canada Academy Group to build a team of coaches from youth to identify their talents, to prepare for their national and to represent youth coaches as a member of the Academy Council.

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Caption: Rahway's Own Posters, Class of 2019



Caption: Rahway's Own Celebration: From left to right: Marguerite Ferrell, Joel Payne, General Gray, Gary Gonzalez, Mayor Giacobbe.

Photo Credit: Joe Brown

Rahway's Own Rising Stars (Ongoing Program)

In May 2017, we launched a new category: Rahway's Own Rising Stars. These are elementary, middle school and high school students that are selected by their school administrations for their outstanding achievements. A poster honoring the eight Class of 2019 Rising Stars was created by Wizdom Media and unveiled at a celebration in June 2019. This year we celebrated these Rising Stars:

Matt Milligan, a senior at Rahway High School, who has already started his own company, *Matt Q. Productions*, displayed his tech and production expertise by creating the digital content, sound accompaniment and stage lighting for the entire celebration. This entrepreneur has singing, dancing and theatrical skills, making him a triple threat and illustrating why he was chosen as one of Rahway's Rising Stars.

Alejandro Vargas from APA (Union County Magnet School), is a scholar and accomplished dancer, soaring high across the stage and in his studies.

Kyle Hall, a student at Rahway's 7th & 8th Grade Academy, is a basketball competitor and high achieving scholar who shares his knowledge by tutoring new citizens in his school.

Alexis Cutignola, a student at St. John Vianney School, is an athlete, activist and school leader, dedicated to water conservation and giving back to her community.

Ada Nunez from Grover Cleveland Elementary School is a stellar student, musician and athlete who is inspired by history with bright dreams for her future.

Franco Reinoso from Madison Elementary School is a leader on and off the field, this multifaceted student who excels as a scholar, musician, and athlete -- a true Renaissance Man.

Jamie Lugos-Ortiz from Franklin Elementary School is a big-hearted scholar, and academic leader. She is devoted to uplifting her school and community and is making her mark on those around her -- a genuine influencer.

Matt Eger from Roosevelt Elementary School is an elite soccer player scoring goals at home, abroad and in the classroom.

The Rahway's Own and Rising Star poster can be viewed on the walls of Rahway High School, under the clocktower at our own Train Station Plaza and in the windows of Cherry Pit Building, on Cherry Street. A mobile version of the exhibit that is on display at the Cherry Pit Building, is presented at school concerts, at the Taste of Spring and anywhere the RA+BP is able to display Rahway's rich history, and the City's success as a launching pad for creativity and innovation.



Caption: Rahway's Own Rising 2019 Star Artwork

Get Out For Lunch Rahway (GOFLR) (New Initiatives)

As a way to inspire more people to get out and about in our City during the daytime hours, the RABP, with the design help of Wizdom Media, created the “*Get Out For Lunch Rahway*” campaign. This initiative focuses on people who work from home, or work in, or close to the Rahway downtown. The campaign, provides a “cheat sheet” guide to Rahway eateries, highlighting criteria including: Gluten Free Options; Good For a Client Lunch; Have a Meal in 45 Minutes; Bring Your Laptop to Lunch (also known as free wifi), Vegetarian Options; and more. The guide provides quick information for the weekday eater, and has been distributed to the Rahway School District, to businesses in the area and to the leasing offices of the apartment communities. It was also placed on the Rahwayishappening.com website in a download-able format. The RABP will continue to update the GOFLR Guide throughout the year. So get out for lunch, Rahway!

CHECK OUT THE LOCAL LUNCH SPOTS

GET OUT FOR LUNCH RAHWAY

11AM-3PM DOWNTOWN

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WITH MANY

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VEGETARIAN OPTIONS

UBER EATS

GLUTEN-FREE OPTIONS

ONLINE ORDERING

FREE WI-FI

TABLE SERVICE

DOOR DASH

ENTRÉES UNDER \$15

A.Y.O.B.

CLIENT FRIENDLY

CASUAL DRESS

GRAB HUB

IN-OUT 10 MINS

BAR SERVICE

NAME AND LOCATION

OFFERINGS AND DETAILS

LUNCH DAYS

LUNCH HOURS

#1 Chinese Kitchen 1607 Main Street	N A	M F	T F
Rianca's Deli 1561 Irving Street	N A	M F	T F
Cabana 1467 Main Street	W T F R S A M	M F	T F
O'Don 77 East Milton Avenue	W T F R S A M	T F	T F
Fresh Fish Market 1510 Main Street	A	T F	T F
Hugo's 1505 Main Street	W T F R S A M	M F	T F
Forno e Legna 1464 Main Street	W T F R S A M	M F	T F
Jersey Chicken Fusion 227 West Main Street	W T F R S A M	M W F	T F
Juice Hub 1555 Main Street	W T F R S A M	M F	T F
Just Plain Donuts 79 East Cherry Street	W T F R S A M	T F	T F
La Malinche 1588 Irving Street	W T F R S A M	M W F	T F
Laurina's 1579 Main Street	W T F R S A M	T F	T F
Meathalls and Brews 1402 Main Street	W T F R S A M	F	11:30
Melco Cafe & Creamery 1425 Irving Street	W T F R S A M	M F	T F
Michelle's Pizzeria 79 East Milton Avenue	N	M F	T F
Nancy's Townhouse 1453 Main Street	W T F R S A M	T F	T F
New Dragon Palace 47 East Main Street	N	M F	T F
New Fan Garden 1540 Irving Street	N	T F	T F
Onion's Catering Dining 85 East Cherry Street	W T F R S A M	M F	T F
Rahway Fried Chicken 1500 Main Street	W T F R S A M	M F	T F
Rahway Grill 47 East Cherry Street	W T F R S A M	T F	T F
Rahway Sushi 79 East Main Street	W T F R S A M	T F	T F
Sabor Peruano 1578 Irving Street	W T F R S A M	M W F	T F
Small Bakery 1579 Irving Street	N	M F	T F
The Coffee Box 1405 Irving Street	W T F R S A M	M F	T F
The Irving Inn 1443-49 Irving Street	W T F R S A M	F	11:30
The Irving Inn Social 1443-49 Irving Street	W T F R S A M	F	11:30
The Walling Room 66 East Cherry Street	W T F R S A M	T F	T F
Whispered Good Pierogi 1380 Irving Street	N	M F	T F

AS OF JANUARY 2020

Story Time on the Go! (*Ongoing Program*)

Story Time on the Go, a weekly story time for young children and their parents, was First “brainstormed” by the RABP executive staff while attending a conference in late 2016. It was conceived as a way to simultaneously accomplish three worthwhile goals,

and have fun at the same time: to attract attention to the Farmers Market at the Train Station Plaza, to facilitate the Rahway Public Library (RPL) reaching outside it's building and into the community, and to make the Special Improvement District more inviting for families. The City and the Rahway Recreation Center were also important partners in this program. The City provided space and insurance; and the Rec Center provided foam cushions for the children and parents to sit on and brought a petting zoo to an early story time in June 2019.

Each Thursday, weather permitting, children, parents and a volunteer storyteller gathered at the Farmers Market, for a story read aloud by local business owners and community members including Mayor Giacobbe and his wife, Laura Giacobbe; and by students from the TeenWorks organization (a work -training program for Rahway students), lead by Ms. Quanae Palmer. Music was played before and after story times, and the children were encouraged to decorate the plaza with chalk art – and they did! Story Time ended just as the farmers market vendors were setting up shop. This gave the parents the opportunity to shop for fresh produce with their kids, before heading home, and provided the farmers market with additional customers.

The RA+BP collaborated with the Rahway Parking Utility to provide free parking passes for parents staying for Story Time.

A banner was hung on the side of the Train Station Plaza Stage and served to advertise the weekly event.

Story Time was also held on Presidents Day in the lobby of the Watt Hotel, adding to the programming and encouraging families to visit the downtown.



Caption: Story Time On the Go banner on display at the Train Station Plaza



Caption: TeamWorks kids reading at Story Time On the Go

The Paseo (City Beautification)

The Paseo is the “working title” for ongoing improvement to the pedestrian walkway between Main Street and the Rahway Parking Department -parking lot adjacent to River Place. In January 2017, the RABP Executive Staff and the RABP Board President Joel Schwartz met with the business and property owners whose buildings adjoin either side of the walkway to discuss the possibility of making the space more inviting by adding some elements of interest that would create a welcoming space for public use.

Phase 1 of the project was to care for the three cherry trees in the space and to add colorful tables and chairs to encourage dining alfresco in the shade of the cherry trees.

Phase 2 also included the Culture Crawl Pop Up Summer Music Series. Partnering with Atelier Rosal, , the RA+BP created the Culture Crawl Pop Up Music Series on Friday evenings from 6pm to 9pm. Musical acts of various types and sizes perform for evening strollers and al fresco diners during the months of June, July and August.

Phase 3 includes adding lighting, to make the Paseo more inviting. The RABP commissioned Yarn artist, Linda Grant, to creatively cover the poles. More murals are also planned.



Yarn Art by Linda Grant adorn the poles used to hold the lighting



“Wings” mural

Train Station Plaza (City Beautification)

In an effort to make Rahway’s Train Station Plaza more inviting, the RA+BP has added colorful chairs and tables, similar to the ones we installed in the Paseo. Throughout the summer, the tables and chairs were used for al fresco dining, leisurely reading, card games, and people-watching. Melao Café and Creamery, located across Irving Street, kept an eye on the tables and chairs for the RA+BP.

Winter Holiday Seasonal Decorations (City Beautification)

Winter Wonderland, an annual winter festival and tree lighting event on Cherry Street, had a slightly different format this year. Winter Wonderland 2019 began the use of larger, more commercial holiday-themed street decorations. The RA+BP purchased three large red ornaments and five large lit stars to add to the downtown’s winter scene. With the help of the Department of Public Works, the ornaments were placed on Cherry Street and the stars were placed at the Train Station Plaza and also at City Hall Plaza. These new items added to the festive feel of the downtown and were well-received. The RA+BP plans to expand on this for the 2020 holiday season.

Small Business Saturday SBS (Special Event)

For the third year, the RABP worked together with the Rahway Chamber of Commerce (RCC) to promote Small Business Saturday 2019 -- a marketing initiative started by American Express, all across the US, which encourages holiday shoppers to patronize brick-and-mortar businesses which are small and local – as opposed to big box is owned by national chains. It is a “Shop Local” initiative, and a counterpoint to Black Friday – a shopping holiday held on the Saturday following Thanksgiving.

The RABP and RCC delivered Small Business Saturday bags to various businesses that wanted to be a pick-up location. The RABP created special “gift guide” advertisements for social media that categorized the businesses in the downtown by items they offered and for whom one might purchase the item. For example, “Gifts for Your Four-legged Friend” listed the businesses that cater to pets.



Holiday Shopping Guides were created and shared on social media for Small Business Saturday

Photo Shoot with the Holiday Elf (Special Event)

In the week leading up to the Holidays, the RABP partnered with photographer Joe Brown and “Elf”, Serena Ramos, and visited various downtown establishments and took photos of the Elf getting involved with the business in different ways. These photos were subsequently posted on social media.



The Holiday Elf got loose downtown!

Business is our Middle Name (Ongoing Event)

The RA+BP promotes the vitality of the Special Improvement District by supporting the District's businesses in many ways. The RA+BP helps to make the opening of every new business in the downtown an event, with celebratory Ribbon-Cuttings coordinated with the City Administration, so that as many people as possible in Rahway and the surrounding area know about the launch of a new business in our community.

The RA+BP continues to facilitate relationships among businesses in the District, the Rahway Public Schools, the Union County Freeholders and the City Administration.

One of the benefits of the RABP “sharing” with the City the Shared Service position of Managing Director Ann Marie Williams, is our shared ability to support new businesses from the beginning of their journey. As Economic Development Specialist for the City, Ann Marie meets potential business owners early in their process of conceiving their new business. She is therefore able to advise them on “How to Set up a Small Business” —which is also the name of a pamphlet developed jointly with the City to assist new businesses. Ann Marie guides new business owners through the permitting process until they are ready to open. This facilitates our ability to keep better track of businesses in the District.



Mayor Giacobbe celebrates new businesses

Photo Credit: Joe Brown

Restaurant Meetings (Ongoing Event)

In 2015, the RABP initiated a monthly gathering of restaurant owners in the District, to increase their awareness of City policies, initiatives and activities, including temporary street closures, as well as to address any concerns or needs of Rahway’s restaurants. This has been a

productive and cohesive working group, with all of our table service eateries participating, in person or via email, each month.

Leasing Office Meetings *(Ongoing Event)*

Following the success of the Restaurant Meetings, the RABP initiated monthly meetings with the Management Companies and Leasing Offices of the various apartment communities within the District. This facilitates the sharing of information regarding upcoming events and initiatives for their residents, as well as awareness of the new and existing businesses in the District. It has also helped facilitate a valuable relationship with the City Administration.

Connecting with Other Special Improvement Districts *(Ongoing Event)*

Beginning in fall of 2017, the RA+BP began to meet regularly with the leadership of other Special Improvement Districts in the area, and especially in Union County. This has proven to be a very productive sharing of best practices and “lesson learned” with our peer organizations.

Programs in Which the RA+BP Provided Support

Poetry at the Pit

During 2019, the RA+BP continued to provide support to ACP Arts and also to the Rahway Prevention Coalition, a City organization that works with the youth of Rahway to prevent gang violence and drug use, during their “Poetry at the Pit” Open Mic and Spoken Word events.

What’s the Word Rahway?

This year, the RABP partnered with Atelier Rosal and Mike Bertram of ACP Arts (an organization that promotes poetry and spoken word) on a monthly adult spoken word and poetry slam, called “What’s the Word Rahway?”. Presented at Atelier Rosal on Cherry Street, Mike Bertram is the host and organizer. This event has been well received and brings in spectators and performers from all over NJ, bringing more people and awareness to Rahway and its businesses and local eateries, before and after each show.

Yarn Art! *(Ongoing Event)*

Rahway’s 2017 Artist of the Year, Linda Grant, created vignettes and colorful decorations, made of yarn, in 2017 that adorned City Hall Plaza and the Train Station Plaza. In 2018, Linda created two masterpieces: a Matisse style “Goldfish”, and a portrait of Frida Kahlo. In various locations in the District, Ms. Grant created art in “found” locations which served as her “canvas”. Her beautiful pieces on Cherry Street, became a highlight for passers-by, adding color and visual interest to the streetscape. In 2019, Ms. Grant created a set of wings which encouraged pedestrians to stop and take a photo. The RABP created a banner above to encourage a feeling of inclusion.



Caption: Lida Grant's "Wings"

Restaurant List for the UCC Graduation

Union County College hosted their 2019 Winter graduation at the UCPAC. The RABP collaborated with the Union County Freeholders to provide each ticket holder with a list and description of all the downtown restaurants.

Financial Report

Funding for the Rahway Arts and Business Partnership comes from two sources

- 1) A special assessment on properties within the Special Improvement District, and
- 2) fundraising and sponsored events undertaken by the RABP which promote the District and its goals.

In 2019, the City of Rahway provided \$195,000 to the RA+BP. This was a combination of the \$130,000 annual budget and \$65,000 previously held in escrow from the 2015 SID budget, pending the outcome of the SID expansion. Through sponsored events and our Taste of Spring fundraiser the RABP had an additional income of \$23,000.00. These monies are used to encourage public participation in the downtown through increased programming and business development Rahway within the District.

Press:

Culture Crawl Pop Ups

Comedy:

<https://www.newjerseystage.com/articles/2019/03/07/kate-wolff-hosts-a-night-of-comedy-at-melao-cafe-and-creamery-in-rahway/>

Restaurants/ Food Businesses:

Story we pitched to Mycentralnj.com , picked up by Home News and Courier News: (Rahway Grill)

<https://www.mycentraljersey.com/story/entertainment/dining/2019/04/02/rahway-grill-mexican/3292182002/>

Mother's Day

<https://www.mycentraljersey.com/story/entertainment/dining/2019/04/29/mothers-day-nj-where-take-mom-big-day/3484112002/>

Cheap eats: Beanitos

<https://www.mycentraljersey.com/story/entertainment/dining/2019/06/27/best-value-restaurants-new-jersey/1356072001/>

Wet Ticket

<https://www.mycentraljersey.com/story/entertainment/dining/2019/05/29/fathers-day-new-jersey-activities/1222481001/>

Chefs with interesting Tattoos: Gary Gonzalez, one of 2019's Rahway's Own

- <https://www.mycentraljersey.com/story/life/2019/06/18/salt-and-fire-and-ink-central-jersey-chefs-talk-tattoos/1352229001/>

Coffee Lovers: Top 5

<https://dailyvoice.com/new-jersey/union/lifestyle/coffee-lovers-top-5-spots-to-get-your-caffeine-fix-in-union-county/772634/>

Taste of Spring

Union Local Source

<https://unionnewsdaily.com/media/45054>

<https://unionnewsdaily.com/?s=Taste+of+Spring>

From Jersey bites blog

<https://jerseybites.com/2019/04/hundreds-gather-for-rahways-taste-of-spring/>

Renna Media

https://rennamedia.com/all-galleries-2019/#gg_cg_64366/Rahway's%20Taste%20of%20Spring%202019

Amy Garcia Phillips, Managing Director

Date signed: _____

Ann Marie Williams, Managing Director

Date signed: _____

rahway arts
+ business
PARTNERSHIP

