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Honoree Victor M. Ruiz



Victor M. Ruiz, also known as PapaVic, is a proud Long Island native and graduate of Patchogue-Medford High School, Class of 1984.

Victor began his career at what was then Brookhaven Memorial Hospital, now NYU Langone Health - Suffolk, where he has dedicated 41 years of service as a Respiratory Therapist.

Throughout his career, he has remained committed to helping others and serving his community, including participating in the response and recovery efforts following 9/11.

Today, Victor is the Founder and President of TAINO JEEP CLUB Long Island, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to bringing people together while giving back to the local community. Through the club, Victor and its members support families, children, veterans, and community causes through charitable events, donations, food drives, and other outreach efforts.

Victor believes in service, unity, and giving back-a commitment that continues to guide both his professional life and his work in the community.

Honoree Samantha Wood



She has served as the Executive Director of Patchogue-Medford Youth & Community Services (PMYCS) since 2023 and has worked in social services supporting youth and families for the past eight years. Coming from a military family, she developed a deep commitment to service and community from an early age.

She earned her Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice before obtaining her Master's in Social Work, combining her passion for advocacy, social services, and community impact. She is deeply dedicated to creating opportunities for youth, connecting families with essential resources, working with vulnerable populations, and ensuring that everyone in the community feels welcomed, supported, and valued. Through her work at MYCS, she has worked to ensure that language barriers never prevent families from accessing the help and resources they need. She is honored to serve Patchogue's Hispanic community, working alongside families to help ensure everyone has access to the support and opportunities they deserve.

She considers it a privilege to serve a community that is such an important and vibrant part of Patchogue and is grateful for the relationships she has built with Hispanic families throughout the community and for the trust they place in PMYCS.

Honoree
Father James Reiss



The Rev. James E. Reiss has been the priest in charge of Saint Paul's since April 2023. After graduating from SUNY Old Westbury with a degree in Religious Studies and Psychology, he went to Austin, Texas for his Master in Divinity degree from the Episcopal Seminary of the Southwest. There, he focused his studies on Latinx Ministry and received a concentration in Military Chaplaincy.

Before Saint Paul's, Father James served as the Curate at San Francisco, the Spanish-speaking mission in Riverhead, and Saint John's, Huntington. He facilitates Saint Paul's outreach ministry through a weekly soup kitchen, twice a week food pantry feeding two hundred families, and a thrift shop that is open three days a week. He also celebrates mass in Spanish every Sunday at 11:00am, in addition to the 9:00am in English.

Father James has a passion for working alongside those who identify in Latino and Hispanic families. He feels beyond moved and very grateful that the LLC committee would honor him in this way.

Honoree MaryAnn Rivera-Nugent



MaryAnn Rivera-Nugent is a lifelong Patchogue resident and proud 1979 graduate of Patchogue-Medford High School who affectionately calls herself a "PatchoRican." Her Puerto Rican heritage and commitment to service were deeply influenced by her grandmother, Isabel Rodriguez, one of Patchogue's early Hispanic residents and founder of the Spanish Society of Suffolk County, Inc.

MaryAnn has dedicated more than four decades to public service.

Beginning with the Town of Brookhaven in 1983, she later joined Suffolk County, where her work has focused on assisting families, unemployed residents, displaced homemakers, and individuals seeking greater stability and selt-sufficiency.

Her community involvement has included serving on the Suffolk County Executive Hispanic Advisory Board and the Patchogue-Medford Youth and Community Service Board. As a charter member of the Great South Bay Lions Club, Suffolk County's first all-women Lions Club, she has supported numerous initiatives benefiting local families, veterans, individuals with disabilities, and children.

For MaryAnn, service is more than a commitment-it is the legacy passed down by her grandmother and the purpose that continues To guide her life.

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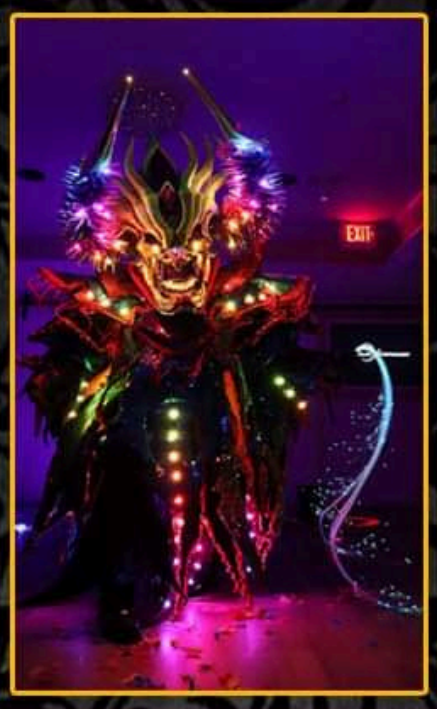
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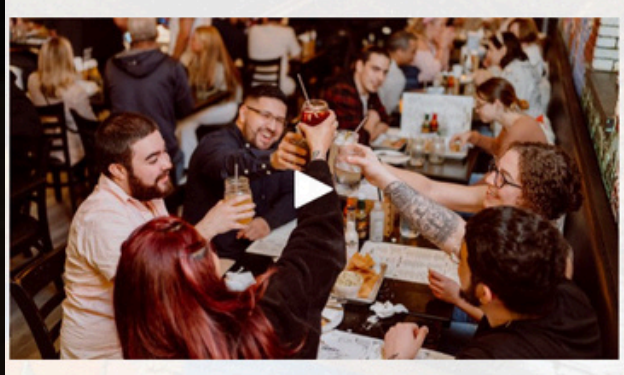
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