

NEXT MEETING

Jan. 13, 2018 5:30PM
Focus: **2018 RP Biz Growth**

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2017 FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

**Dec. 16th @ Town Center
Noon-8PM**

Festival of Lights Vendors

- A Little Pottery
- Denise Marie Painting
- Delia Michajluk Painting
- Godet Woodworking
- While Waiting Jewelry
- Glass by Dave
- Pat Doyen Photography
- Mystic Water Soap
- Profusions of Glass
- Becky Williams Knit goods
- Stone Hearth Bakery
- Zeke's Coffee of DC
- Major Flavor Seasonings
- Dimitri Olive Oil
- El Taco Loco
- Bramble Baking Co.
- Roy's & RT's Kitchen & Garden
- Christmas Tree Village
- Twin Valley Distillers
- Afghan Imports
- Aunt Emily's Doll House
- Robert Harper Books

FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS: HOW IT STARTED



RPBA Archive

Riverdale Park Business Association debuted the Festival of Lights in 2003. The 16th annual Festival of Lights will be held in Town Center, Saturday, noon to 8 pm.

The Riverdale Park Business Association debuted the Festival of Lights in 2003 and the annual event has grown dramatically in the past decade and a half. The 16th annual Festival of Lights will be held in Town Center **this Saturday, Dec. 16, noon to 8 pm**. The festival will feature eight hours of live music beginning at noon (see Page 2 for performance schedule) along with activities for children and a slew of farmers market vendors and other artisans offering unique gifts for sale. Santa visits with kids in the Riverdale MARC station house from 2 to 5 pm. Beginning at 5:40 and running until 8 pm, you can enjoy caroling trolley rides through historic Riverdale Park to Riversdale House Museum. The event is free to the public.

Are you in the market for a Christmas tree? You'll be able to find one in Town Center from Christmas Tree Village. Other vendors include A Little Pottery, Pat Doyen Photography, Mystic Water Soap, Profusions of Glass, Stone Hearth Bakery, Zeke's Coffee of DC, Dimitri Olive Oil, El Taco Loco, Roy's & RT's Kitchen & Garden and Rockville-based Twin Valley Distillers, specializing in Maryland-made bourbon, rye and whiskey. **Robert Harper Books**, an RPBA member, will be open all festival long with a special holiday sale on used books.

The Festival of Lights is managed by Riverdale Park Farmers Market Manager Jim Coleman. RPBA member **Ernie's Lock Company, Inc.**, 4500 Queensbury Rd. (301-277-1126), and RPBA are major sponsors of this year's festival.

How It All Began

On Dec. 19, 2003, RPBA debuted the first *Festival of Lights*, a three-hour celebration of the town's multicultural fabric that combined a handful of international seasonal events including an homage to Norway's Queen of Lights, Santa Lucia; Diwali, India's five days of illumination at the last month of the lunar calendar; Hanukkah, the eight-day Jewish holiday, celebrated by lighting candles

Festival Activities

Time	Band
12:00-8:00	Market Hours
2:00-5:00	Meet Santa
5:40-8:00	Caroling & Trolley Rides

Festival Music Schedule

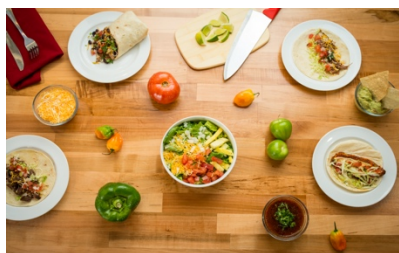
Time	Band
12:00-12:45	Jess & Jim
1:00-1:45	Jambassadors
2:00-2:45	Rhex Jazz
3:00-3:45	Janine Wilson
4:00-4:45	Elena Lacayo
5:00-5:45	Wild Anacostias
6:00-6:45	Miles Spicer
7:00-7:45	Moosejaw

Volunteers Needed:

Festival of Lights

The Festival of Lights could still use volunteers to help out this Saturday, Dec. 16, noon to 8. Please reach out to festival manager [Jim Coleman](mailto:jimcoleman@rpkfarmmkt.com), 301-586-5973, rpkfarmmkt@gmail.com.

District Taco Opens At RPS



on a menorah; and Candlemas, observed on Feb. 1 and originally a Celtic festival know as “Bridget’s Day,” when bonfires were lit. Similar festivals of lights are held this time of year in North America including in Niagara Falls, Canada, San Diego, CA, Fort Myers, FL, Battle Creek, MI and Fairfax, VA.

RPBA Flashback

This time of year, thoughts are given to reflection on the past and optimism about the future. It’s a time for conceiving and re-igniting hopes, dreams and plans. Some of the younger and newer members wonder how the group came together and why.

During a recent chat with **Pete Spiropoulos**, a partner with his sons in Town Center Market who begins his 30th year in business in Riverdale Park on Dec. 28, the senior Spiropoulos said the **Riverdale Park Business Association** got its start purely by necessity. He recalled that in 1992, railroad operator CSX announced plans to close the Queensbury Road rail crossing to vehicular traffic. The thought of blocking off the crossing drew the ire of all local business operators. While it would mean a longer, tougher reroute for the commuters, closing the crossover would likely mean a death knell for small businesses near Town Center. Spiropoulos and other local business operators, 10 in all including the late Robert Smith, then owner-operator of Ernie’s Lock Co.; Ruth Cook of the now defunct Dorsey Plumbing; Gordon Wells, then owner of the Wells Building, (now the Arnold and Arnold Building); and others came together to create RPBA to protect their interests. Their appeal was compelling, and RPBA convinced CSX to keep the crossing open. In the years since, the railroad and the Town of Riverdale Park have worked with federal and state transportation officials to upgrade the crossing, making it safer and quieter.

RPBA has continued to work for small business and the community through a series of events crafted to bring positive attention to Riverdale Park and boost foot traffic to businesses by creating the Festival of Lights and participating in Christmas in April projects, and by supporting cultural and arts efforts throughout the area including the Riverdale Park Arts Council.

MEMBERS, LEADERS WANTED

The Riverdale Park Business Association invites talented and insightful persons from the Riverdale Park and Riverdale communities interested in economic development to join us and fill executive positions. If you want to promote business in your community and have a few hours a month to rub elbows with the town’s best-and-brightest, please drop in at the next meeting at Riverdale Park Town Hall, Wednesday, Jan. 10, 2018 at 5:30 pm. Or, reach out to Ernie’s Lock Co. owner **Eric Peratino** at ericperatino@gmail.com, or Yorke Partners’ **Jeffrey Yorke**, Yorkedial@gmail.com or 301-502-1243.

DISTRICT TACO: A HOT OPENING IN RPMD

“We like being somewhere hot! Somewhere where it’s happening! And it’s happening here in Riverdale Park,” Osiris Hoil said without a second thought when *The Biz* asked why he chose to open his 12th District Taco store in this community. The DC-based, privately held Mexican restaurant chain opened on Dec. 11 in Riversdale Park Station at 6710 45th St.

Hoil, 35, co-founder of the eight-year-old chain, stood at the front door of his 60-seat operation greeting excited guests and handing out company swag to the first 100 people to walk into the store and gobble tacos gratis. There were

DT fans lined up Dec. 11



Hoil greets Glaros



“Open Sésame!”



another hundred food fans behind them and even more later who streamed into the contemporary wooden furniture dining room into the evening, each one excited to enjoy the Yucatan-style food. The company’s motto is “Always Fresh! Always Mexican!”

District Taco’s story is truly an American success story. In 2009 as the Great Recession mashed the U.S. economy, Hoil lost his job at a construction company. Over the following months, he and his Arlington, VA. neighbor, Marc Wallace, now a co-founder and investor, conceived a plan over homemade chips, salsa and guacamole. They decided Hoil would sell tacos, burritos and quesadillas based on his mother’s family recipes from a food truck in the District. But permitting a truck became too difficult and too expensive in the District so he and Wallace opted to launch the business from a \$25,000 food cart at a Northern Virginia Metro station. Since then District Taco has grown rapidly with four stores in the District, six in Virginia, another one that opened after Thanksgiving in King of Prussia, PA., and now Riverdale Park. (In a bit of irony, Hoil has hired his old construction company to build out most of the new stores.)

The local store is open 8 am to 10 pm daily and has three shifts, employing 40 staff, most of whom live “five-to-ten minutes away and commute here via public transportation,” Regional Manager Steven Lalka said. The company’s goal is to add “four-to-five stores in 2018,” Lalka said.

Besides the sizable condiment bar offering endless fresh salsas and dips, there are a number of cool things the new store offers including free WiFi. In addition, every seat in the house is within reach of an electrical outlet and USB plugs to keep devices charged while diners enjoy their meals. And, all signs in the restaurant are in both English and Spanish. In warmer weather, another 16 outdoor seats will be added to the patio and there is plenty of free parking in the adjacent garage. A beer license may be in the offing.

Among the first in line to see Hoil was Riverdale Park resident and newly elected Prince George’s County Council Chairman **Dannielle Glaros**. It wasn’t their first meeting, she noted, Hoil has attended some of her political events in the past.

THE DENTAL GROUP GOES WIDE, AND DEEP!

The new ad on westbound billboard next to the East-West Highway bridge popped up over the Thanksgiving weekend and the message is clear: **The Dental Group** is open for business. The multi-specialty practice of 14 dental professionals includes a periodontist, orthodontist, endodontist, pediatric surgeon, an oral surgeon and a handful of general practitioners, according to The Dental Group’s Danielle Dailey. She tells *The Biz* that the 35-year-old group was originally located in Prince George’s Plaza but moved to 6200 Baltimore Ave. in Riverdale Park in October 1998. So, if you need to say “Ahhhh...”? Call before you can’t: 301-864-5200. The practice, a member of the RPBA, accepts insurance including an assortment of PPOs. Dailey said the billboard will remain in place “indefinitely.”

GET THE WORD OUT!

Want shoppers in Riverdale Park and neighboring communities to know about your services? If you are a member of the RPBA, we’ll publish a 300-word feature on your business. Email riverdaleparkbiz@aol.com And please visit shoplocalriverdalepark.com

AROUND TOWN ...

Free Daily Shuttle

Riverdale Park Station features a FREE daily shuttle from 6:30 am to 9 am and 4:30 pm to 7 pm. It runs every 15 minutes between Riverdale Park Station, College Park Metro Station and Prince George's Plaza Metro Station. The shuttle stop is located near the main entrance to the Whole Foods Market. Use it for quick and easy access to work, shopping, recreation and regional transit. Visit www.rpstransit.com/shutte for more details.

Sugar Express Now Open!



Mike Arnold of the Arnold and Arnold Building in Town Center tells *The Biz* “we’re fortunate that we have signed a new retailer to lease the former **Shine Massage and Wellness Studio** space taking occupancy in January. Anita Woll and her partner will be opening **Pish Posh!**, a vintage and reconditioned furnishing and clothing store aimed at the student and youthful homeowner/renter market with all of the new housing around the Metro in mind.” Arnold said a hard date for the opening has not been set, adding “but I’m sure they are eager to open as early as possible in the new year ...” Riverdale Park resident **Dannielle Glaros**, who represents District 3 on the Prince George’s County Council, was elected by fellow council members to serve as council chairman on Dec. 5. “I’m humbled and grateful that my colleagues elected me to serve as Chair for the 2018 Legislative Year.” Glaros noted it has been more than 20 years since a council member from District 3 served as Chairman. With all the new authority, perhaps the new chairman can re-address the county’s food truck hub problem and help build a larger food fleet!

NEW BUSINESSES IN RPMD

After more than a year in the making – permitting hurdles caused the company to stumble – **Dunkin’ Donuts** and its co-owned and operated business, **Baskin & Robbins** ice cream shop, has opened in a new structure at 5603 Kenilworth Ave. in Riverdale Plaza in Riverdale Park. (Until three years ago, an International House of Pancakes or IHOP, operated on the same site for nearly four decades.) Founded in 1950, Dunkin’ Brands Group is a franchise business based in Canton, MA. and has more than 12,000 stores globally. Last May, the company said that during 2016, it increased revenue to \$828.9 million, a 2.2% increase from fiscal 2015. It also had expanded its global presence by opening 508 new donut shops and 215 ice cream stores by the end of 2016. Company shares trade on the NASDAQ Exchange under the symbol DNKN at about \$61 a share... Word is that **Burtons Grill & Bar** could be opening in Riverdale Park Station much earlier than the original spring target date. The 12-year-old operation has a half-dozen locations in its home state of Massachusetts, three in Virginia and other dining spots in Connecticut, Florida, New Hampshire, North Carolina, and South Carolina. The restaurant specializes in a variety of diet styles including gluten sensitive, vegetarian, Paleo, a chef’s sampling menu and a children’s menu. The newest location will likely have seating for nearly 250, about 173 in the dining room and another 30 around the center bar. It’s unclear if there will be additional patio seating. Burtons serves beer, wine and spirits at lunch and dinner daily. Generally, Burtons hours are Monday through Thursday, from 11 am to 10 pm; Friday and Saturday, from 1 am to 11 pm and Sunday, from 11 am to 9 pm. For additional information, visit www.burtonsgrill.com

Editor’s Note: Special thanks to graphic artist Ashley Ebbeler for designing and laying out this third issue of *The Biz*.