

Joe Pizik Electric setting a gold standard in the service industry

By Joey Yashinsky

For MediaNews Group

To do anything successfully for a quarter of a century requires not just hard work, but more importantly, quality work. Joe Pizik Electric has been the definition of that quality for more than three decades now and has been justly honored as “Best Electrician” in Oakland County.

In the latter part of the 1970’s, Pizik had tired of the inconsistent nature of his work as a machine tool electrician for Detroit Mold Engineering. So he did what any natural-born entrepreneur would do: he branched out on his own. By the early 1980’s, Joe Pizik Electric was born.

“It started small back then,” said Maria Handlen, a vice president with the company going on 25 years. “Then we began growing into what we are today; a service company that does commercial, industrial and residential jobs. And of course we were also a dealer of Generac generators.”

Those generators, a critical household item when taking into account the unpredictability of weather in Michigan, represent a big part of Joe Pizik Electric’s business.

“Last year, more than half of our business was generators,” Handlen said. “We’ve been a Generac dealer for the last 15 years. We thought it was the perfect opportunity when Generac approached us. Not as many people knew about generators then as they do now, with so many power outages and grid issues that occur in Michigan.”

“And still, 70 percent of homes don’t have generators, so it’s a great market to be a part of. Last year, we doubled



our sales from the previous year.”

Joe Pizik Electric won’t just install your generator, but also help maintain it with a yearly service call to ensure everything is in proper working order.

Of course, there are countless other jobs for which Joe Pizik Electric excels.

“We do a lot of residential jobs,” Handlen said. “Everything from minor repairs to rewiring everything after a kitchen remodel. We’ll do light fixtures, ceiling fans, garage doors. We do it all.”

Visit the company’s website and you’ll be blown away by the amount of residential and industrial services that Joe Pizik Electric offers.

It could be industrial or commercial or residential. It could be installation, maintenance, service or repair. They do generators, basement wiring, power distribution, phone and cable wiring. Outside lighting, breaker panels, electrical

outlets, UPS wiring, power upgrades, flood lights, surge protectors; nothing is beyond their reach.

It’s a strong likelihood that if there is something electrical in your home that needs repair or installation, the folks at Joe Pizik won’t be able to handle the job. There’s not much they haven’t done in over 40 years of service.

“I have been here 25 years,” Handlen said. “It’s a family-owned business and I feel like part of that family. Everybody here is really close. As our employees grow and have children, we always celebrate that and make sure to get a great gift. We want to take care of our employees and make them feel special, too.”

So often in the service industry, you’ll make an appointment for a certain time of day, only for the waiting game to begin.

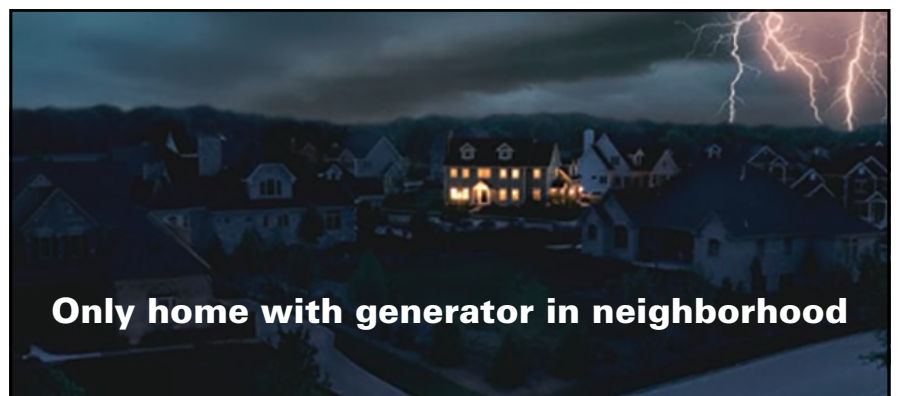
A designated four-hour window in the morning bleeds into the afternoon and before you know it, dinner is



on the table and said service person is nowhere to be found. Cable companies have practically become famous (or infamous) for this cat-and-mouse affair.

Joe Pizik Electric has set a standard for doing the polar opposite. Set an appointment time with these electricians and then turn your worry machine off. Multiple reviews online attest to this fact, marveling at the punctuality of this award-winning group.

It’s that level of care and effort that Joe Pizik Electric has provided in his 40 years of service.



Licensed & Insured

JOE PIZIK ELECTRIC, INC.
375 Oliver, Troy, Michigan 48084
Service (248) 362-3608 • www.joepizikelectric.com



SPONSORED CONTENT

Hard work continues to pay off for family behind Neiman's Market

By Terry Jacoby
For MediaNews Group

Neiman's Family Market — the fact that the word “family” is in the name isn't just intentional, it's with purpose, substance and by design to send a message that their family will take care of your family.

Nate Neiman, who runs the popular market on Dixie Highway in Clarkston, is a big believer in family and community. It was the way he was raised and lives his life today and his goal every day is to try and provide fresh, quality and affordable products for his neighbors.

Let's take a walk down aisle one and start at the beginning of this amazing family business that continues to thrive through even the most challenging of times.

In 1983, Hal and Jean Neiman moved the family from Ann Arbor to Alpena to open his first grocery store. First called the Alpena IGA, the store would soon change names to Neiman's Family Market.

A second location in Tawas opened in 2006, followed by a store in St. Clair in 2008. In 2013, Neiman's Family Market opened at 7121 Dixie Hwy in Clarkston.

And while Hal Neiman opened that first store, the roots of the business began even before 1983. “My mom's father, John Schmidt, was a butcher,” says Nate Neiman. “He learned his trade in the Navy and came back home and opened a butcher's shop. He turned that into IGA stores and at one point was a partial owner of seven IGA stores including the Alpena store.”

Nate's grandfather Neiman was a dairy farmer.

“We were always around food and sourcing from local farmers has always been near and dear to us because of my grandfather,” Nate said. “We got to know both sides of the business and I have great memories and lessons learned from my grandfathers that I cherish to this day.”



PHOTOS COURTESY OF NEIMAN'S FAMILY MARKET

Neiman's Family Market offers a wide variety of fresh meats and produce in addition to store-made products like bagels, soups and sandwiches.



Neiman's Family Market has three locations, in Clarkston, Tawas and St. Clair.

Those lessons centered around the prime cut of hard work.

“We were raised that a half day's work meant you worked 12 hours,” Nate said. “They really instilled a great work ethic in us. Grandpa Schmidt taught us the nuts and bolts of the grocery business and the importance of customer service.”

Nate says that food and markets and meet and produce is “all we know.”

“It's how we grew up,” he says.

“It's been the main conversation at the dinner table our whole life. My parents and grandparents taught us everything we know.”

The three kids, Nate, Bryan and Amy, all tried different things before ending up in the family business and each brought their outside experiences to the dinner table. Amy, who is the oldest, runs the human resources department and Bryan is president of the company.

Nate says the family dynamic



Neiman's offers a wide-variety of specialty desserts and cakes in addition to taking custom dessert orders.



has always been one of support and love.

“We have a personal side and our business side and keep them separate,” he says. “The good thing is that since there are three of us, there can't be a tie.”

Neiman also is very proud and supportive of his “extended” family. “We live in the communities of our stores and we support the community and they support us,” says Neiman, who has eight kids ranging in age from 9 weeks to 19 years.

“We really love being a part of the Clarkston community. We have a sense of Main Street and that small town feel with a great downtown. I really like that I know my customers by name and they know me. We are fortunate to be able to live here and have a successful business

here.” Neiman's Family Market has not only been able to survive but to grow and expand and bring quality food, services and products to the table. Some of those changes include bringing in a new Sushi chef and buying even more local produce from suppliers such as Lucido & Sons out of Detroit. “We are always changing and always evolving,” Nate says. “We do it because we have to. We are coming out of COVID and now face some economic challenges and we are doing everything we can to help bring that cost down at the register without sacrificing the quality.”

Just like a good neighbor.

For more information about Neiman's Family Market, visit neimansfamilymarket.com.



THE PLACE WHERE FOOD AND COMMUNITY COME TOGETHER TO IMPROVE LIVES.

GREAT PRODUCTS & SERVICES!

**FRESH PRODUCE | HOMEMADE BAGELS
GOOD TO GO ONLINE SHOPPING
QUALITY MEAT | DELI & MORE!**



121 DIXIE HWY, CLARKSTON, MI | (248) 625-6460
VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT: NEIMANSFAMILYMARKET.COM

Mario's

Midtown Detroit Restaurant...Since 1948

Detroit's oldest Italian restaurant serving up elegance, fun and award-winning food

By Terry Jacoby
For MediaNews Group

There are a few items on the menu at Marš's Restaurant that are becoming harder to find these days, such as elegance, style, tradition with a dash of old-school cool. Detroit's elegant supper club is a throwback to the way restaurants used to be where first-rate service, a fun and exciting atmosphere and award-winning food is the standard, and not the exception.

Owner – and your host – Vince Passalacqua takes great pride in the fact that Marš's still does things the right way – the same way they have been doing things since they first opened in 1948.

"We believe in the art of cooking, family traditions and good times," says Passalacqua. "Service is very important to us and our staff is amazing. We have employees that have been here with us for over 50 years. Our chef has been in the kitchen for over 40 years."

Passalacqua was 12 years old when his parents bought the legendary restaurant in 1980 and worked in the kitchen for 15 years. He moved to the front of the house and then helped run Detroit's Carl's House for a few years while still working at Marš's. He's been "your host" at Marš's since 1994.

Detroit's oldest Italian Restaurant, located at 4222 2nd Ave. in Midtown, Marš's isn't retro – it's quite real.

And even more amazing.

"There aren't many restaurants with this kind of character and ambiance," says Passalacqua. "One step inside and you'll see that this is a place that time doesn't touch. We like to keep it that way. From our service to our cuisine, you'll feel right at home in our warm, elegant and traditional atmosphere."

And if you like the atmosphere and ambiance, wait until you taste the food. Marš's, one of the last existing supper clubs of its era, provides a truly unique dining experience with table-side cooking, astounding service and valet parking. They also feature outstanding live entertainment Thursday through Saturday, including popular local musicians Herbie Russ, Jennifer Christiansen and Dominic Lombardi.

"It's an unpretentious, old-school kind of cool," says Passalacqua. "The type of Italian joint where you're served a vegetable and relish tray as soon as you sit down. We believe that a restaurant has a personality, a flavor all its own – a character, created by its people. We believe in the ritual of dining and that the enjoyment of food is one of life's great pleasures. And that the true measure of success of a restaurant is the degree of esteem and pride gained in the guest's mind and heart."

And the guests have spoken – not only with their minds and hearts, but also with their reviews.

Marš's Restaurant has always received rave reviews, plenty of local awards and countless happy customers. A quick look online shows over 1,300 reviews with a 4.2 star rating out of 5 – and as we know, most people do reviews to complain about something, not compliment the food or the service or the ambiance. Here is a recent review from a customer who served up what they liked about Marš's: "Great food. Awesome experience. Went for a 40th surprise party and rented one of the rooms that holds up to 30 people. So intimate and warm. Had a great hostess. Get the chicken piccata!"

One of the reasons for Marš's continued success is while they celebrate the past and honor tradition, they also look to the future by creating new experiences for their guests. One of the new and exciting projects already under way is the remodeling of the upstairs "prohibition" bar.

"We are creating a prohibition-era style bar upstairs that will be very high end," Passalacqua says. "It will be invitation-only from the dining room. Our guests will be taken through the kitchen and a hidden door into this amazing space where they can have a drink and enjoy their dessert."

Marš's legendary house specialties are served tableside and include such popular dishes as the Steak Diane; Veal Olympic and Veal Piccante;

and the Tournedos Royal, Tournedos Anglais and Tournedos Maison. Their award-winning wine list offers plenty of excellent options. "Our menu offers dishes created in our kitchen," says Passalacqua. "Some of our specialties are based on recipes of the great restaurants of the world – recipes that are at times changed or improved upon." Marš's provides complimentary shuttle service to all downtown venues, including the popular Detroit theaters. Why spend \$50 for parking when you can park for free at Marš's, have an amazing meal and then take a complimentary shuttle to and from the show. They are now open at 1 p.m. on Saturdays & Sundays for Broadway matinees. Call 313-832-1616 for more information on dinner-theater packages.

Marš's also offers dinner and luncheon banquet options for special occasions from 10 to 175 people and specializes in baby showers, rehearsal dinners and graduation parties.

"We are expanding one of the rooms to better accommodate weddings for up to 250 people," Passalacqua said. "We hope to start booking larger weddings in the near future."

Passalacqua and Marš's Restaurant have always been big supporters of the community and work with local organizations and churches, including nearby Basilica of Ste. Anne de Detroit. Passalacqua was awarded a 2021 Kern Foundation Community Service Award for the restaurant's longtime work with local foster kids and serving free meals every year on Christmas.

Get a \$60.00 Gift Certificate for only \$40.00!*



*The certificates will be mailed to you upon order payment. Limit of 3 gift certificates redeemed per table of 6. Tax and gratuity not included. Entire value must be used in a single visit towards food purchases only. Not valid on Sweetest Day and any other holidays. Dine in only! BUY ONLINE NOW!

Offer available while supplies last! Promotional Value valid through 10/31/22.



Prime Rib Wednesdays At Mario's (while supplies last)

Back By Popular Demand!

1 lb. cut, Salad, Antipasto, Potato Vegetable

\$32.00

BOOK YOUR PRIVATE EVENT AT MARIO'S!

Marš's in Detroit specializes in baby showers, rehearsal dinners & graduation parties. We have private rooms available that accommodate from 10 to 120 people. Please call Justin at 313-832-1616 after 4pm or fill out the Contact Form on our website for more information.

NEW HOURS

LATEST HOURS:
TUE-THU 4-9:30PM | FRI 4-10:30PM
SAT 4-10:30PM | SUN 1-9:30PM
FOR DINE-IN & CARRYOUT
(CLOSED ON MONDAYS)

4222 Second Ave | Detroit, MI 48201 | 313-832-1616

www.Mario'sDetroit.com

SPONSORED CONTENT

Generations serving generations: Ventimiglia Italian Foods carries on delicious traditions

By Susan Thwing
For MediaNews Group

Once upon a time people would say “That’s like my momma makes it.”

But as families became busier over the last decades — children’s athletic activities and events, work obligations, the convenience of dining out — those home-cooked meals are fewer and farther between.

However, that doesn’t mean you can’t have a delicious made-with-love taste of yesterday’s family dinners, says Tony Ventimiglia, third generation owner of Ventimiglia Italian Foods, located at 35197 Dodge Park in Sterling Heights.

“We make everything from scratch with fresh ingredients, no preservatives, and from generations of tried-and-true recipes — just like Grandma used to,” Ventimiglia says. That includes freshly made soups, sauces, pasta and gelato. Other menu items include breaded chicken cutlets, salads, fresh pasta lasagna or radiatori alfredo, sausage with peppers & onions, roasted potatoes, and more.

Not to mention the sub sandwiches, for which Ventimiglia is renowned.

As Ventimiglia explains, “the best subs in Michigan have been made by hand every day since the 1960s. It began when Grandpa Vic would bring sandwiches to all his friends down at Tiger Stadium to watch the Lions games. Since then, generations of our family have continued to serve Ventimiglia subs to generations of your families, using fresh bread, Italian meats and cheeses.”

Today, Ventimiglia offers a variety of sub ingredients, and sizes from individual to 3- and 4-foot party subs.

The Ventimiglia family has been in the food business for four generations and more than 100 years. Antonio Ventimiglia arrived in the United States in the early 1920s with his brothers. Starting with a fruit cart, Anto-



PHOTO COURTESY OF TONY VENTIMIGLIA

The Ventimiglia family has been in the food business for four generations and more than 100 years.

nio eventually opened his own store in Cagalupo in Detroit. His son, and four grandsons—Tony, Sam, Vic, and Ronnie—spent a majority of their time working at the store. For example, on the last day of each school year, says Tony, he and his brothers would go straight to the store, working all summer, and only going home on the weekends to cut the grass. Tony learned all the family secrets — from curing olives to making pasta, and all about cheeses, meats, and old school Italian foods — and even delivered groceries to customers’ houses, learning that great customer service is the only kind.

Eventually Victor decided to open Ventimiglia’s on Eight Mile Road in Detroit, while keeping alive the same traditions his father taught him. The family then opened the current location in Sterling Heights in 1981. Today, Tony’s son, Vic, and his children, continue the tradition started nearly 100 years ago with



Everything at Ventimiglia Italian Foods is made from scratch with fresh ingredients, no preservatives, and from generations of tried-and-true recipes.

a fruit cart in Detroit—serving up some of the best subs, pastas, prepared food, imported groceries, and more.

This summer — as soon as

school’s out — Tony says Ventimiglia’s will be serving fresh gelato outside as a special treat.

“It’s something we do every year,” he says, adding that he ex-



Freshly made pasta, soups, sauces and gelato are staples at Ventimiglia Italian Foods.



Ventimiglia is well-known for their sub sandwiches, made the same way generation after generation with fresh bread, Italian meats and cheeses.

pects to see many familiar faces. “Our saying is that we are generations serving generations, and it is true. I have served cookies to the grandchildren of customers from years ago. It’s a very rewarding, community-oriented experience.”

In addition to takeout orders, Ventimiglia’s provides catering services. From small family dinners to large scale events, they have fresh, scratch made food for all to enjoy.

For more information, visit ventimigliafoods.com.

Willkommen to Michigan’s Little Bavaria!

Where Family Traditions Start!
Creating Enjoyable Experiences since 1888!

BAVARIAN INN LODGE

2 Restaurants • 2 Lounges • 4 Indoor Pools
3 Whirlpools • 2 Water Slides • 18-Hole Indoor
Mini Golf Course • 160+ Video/Redemption Games
Live Nightly Entertainment & more!

989-652-7200
One Covered Bridge Lane
Frankenmuth, MI 48734



BAVARIAN INN RESTAURANT

Frankenmuth® Family Style Chicken Dinner
Glockenspiel Tower • Michigan on Main Bar & Grill
Castle Shops and Much More!

989-652-9941
713 S. Main St.
Frankenmuth, MI 48734



#BavarianInn



www.bavarianinn.com



Local attorneys dedicate their careers to securing justice for victims of asbestos exposure

By Terry Jacoby

Michael Serling, the founder of the Law Offices of Serling & Abramson PC, was in the early years of his career when a young widow contacted him regarding the death of her 52-year-old husband and father of her two young children. "She told me that he had died of this very rare disease called mesothelioma," Serling remembers. "I soon discovered that no one had ever dealt with this type of case in Michigan. I took this case because I wanted to help this woman who was trying to raise her kids on a \$4 per hour job. Serling experienced an "extremely gratifying feeling of success" in prosecuting that case and securing a sizable settlement for the widow and her children. That was in 1975. It was that case that inspired Serling to dedicate his career to securing justice for all victims affected by asbestos exposure. As a highly successful

trial lawyer, Serling and his firm have earned a reputation for taking large corporations to trial and holding them accountable for their actions. "After that case, many, many victims came forward after learning they had redress and had access to the justice system for the devastating effects of Asbestos Exposure," Serling said. "The rights of American workers have been trampled upon," he says. "Nowhere is that more glaring than in the tragedy that has befallen the victims of asbestos-related mesothelioma and lung cancer. Each year thousands of men and women die of these dreaded diseases. These deaths could have been avoided if Asbestos manufacturers and suppliers had looked out for and protected the men and women who built our country through their hard work. It has been my mission for the past 45 years to fight for the rights of those

men and women and their families victimized by the tragedy of asbestos disease and death." Today, over 46 years later, Serling and Abramson are still representing victims of asbestos-related diseases, such as mesothelioma, lung cancer, and asbestosis. Eric B. Abramson, a proud shareholder of Serling and Abramson PC, has worked for the firm since 1989 and has investigated, litigated, and successfully resolved thousands of asbestos cases around the world. His work has brought compensation to those who suffer from lung cancer and mesothelioma along with justice for a multitude of victims and their families. "Even though we cannot restore our clients' health or their lives, we can bring some measure of comfort and justice to them and their families," says Abramson, who has testified before the Michigan House of

Representatives and the Michigan Senate on issues relating to asbestos litigation. While they remain the first and finest in asbestos litigation, Serling and Abramson have also expanded to help many clients in other personal injury and wrongful death cases. The firm has grown dramatically over the years and have branched out to represent victims of personal injury and wrongful death in a variety of other litigation. "We are proud to fight for the rights of victims of auto accidents, on the job injuries, defective medical devices, property damage, and unsafe prescription drugs," Serling says. "We have also partnered with law firms across the country and overseas, who specialize in cases of sexual abuse, roundup weed killer, and environmental contamination." The firm is committed to seeing that justice is served on behalf of their clients.

The Law Offices of Serling & Abramson PC are located in Birmingham and Allen Park. If you have been diagnosed with mesothelioma or lung cancer contact Serling & Abramson PC for a free consultation at (248) 647-6966 or visit serlinglawpc.com



SPONSORED CONTENT

Family-owned Italia Gardens keeping tradition alive with every meal served

By Terry Jacoby
For MediaNews Group

Albert and Josephine Barone came to America from Sicily and opened the first Italia Gardens restaurant in Flint in 1931 during the early years of the Great Depression. Homemade Italian food and great service brought people in the door and word quickly spread to local families and nearby Buick office workers who would come in to feast on heaps of spaghetti and meatballs.

Fast forward seven decades later when Ed and Monica Klimek opened Italia Gardens in Oxford in 2008. The couple picked the right restaurant and the right location — even if it might not have been at the right time. “The original restaurant opened in 1931 during the Great Depression, we opened in 2008 here in Oxford right when the recession hit and the newest Grand Blanc location opened in 2020 right when COVID hit so we find out right away if we can make it,” says Ed Klimek.

They certainly have made it — those original recipes and commitment to first-rate service still bring folks in the door, regardless of the date on the calendar. Italia Gardens has been named Best Italian in Oakland County by the Oakland Press for six consecutive years.

“We maintain a lot of the traditions of that first restaurant and a lot of the sauces we use today are the recipes the original owners brought with them from Sicily,” says Klimek. “We make a lot of our food from scratch, including the bread, pizza



IMAGES COURTESY OF ITALIA GARDENS

Italia Gardens has been named Best Italian in Oakland County by the Oakland Press for six consecutive years.



dough, croutons, sauces, dressings, meatballs and even the mints on the counter we make. We put our time and hearts into our food.” Klimek, who along with Monica has a combined 60 years of experience in the restaurant business, says they picked the perfect location in the perfect community for their family-owned Italia Gardens.

“We were looking for years to find that perfect location and once we got to Oxford, everything just seemed right,” he says. “It’s a small community where so many of our guests have become family. They come in and we talk about how things are going with our family and their family and it’s just a friendly, welcoming

feeling here. I’ve never experienced that anywhere before. It’s truly special.”

Klimek helped the original owners open the second location in Davison in 1994, ran the kitchen and then became a managing partner. Opening and now owning his own location has brought many challenges but far more rewards, new friends and great memories.

“It’s not an easy job, but the community has really supported us especially during COVID when many restaurants didn’t make it,” he said.

Italia Gardens is located at 1076 S Lapeer Rd., Oxford. For more information or to make a reservation, call (248) 628-4112 or visit italiagardensoxford.com.

Summer Graduation Party? Let Us Do the Catering!

Pasta	Serves 8	Serves 15	Serves 30
Mostaccioli with...			
Tomato Sauce	25.00	36.00	54.00
Meat Sauce	34.00	46.00	62.00
Marinara	34.00	46.00	62.00
Add Oven-Baked Mozzarella Cheese for an additional \$5 per small pan and \$8 per Medium/Large Pan			
Alfredo	34.00	46.00	62.00
Chicken Tetrazzini	48.00	66.00	88.00
Chicken Alfredo	45.00	61.00	84.00
Chicken Marsala	48.00	71.00	94.00
Sausage Arrabbiata	45.00	61.00	82.00
Penne Mac-N-Cheese	45.00	61.00	82.00
Sausage Mac-N-Cheese	49.00	71.00	94.00
Lasagna	41.00	63.00	88.00
Fresh Salads			
	Serves 8-10	Serves 15-20	Serves 30-40
House Garden Salad	18.00	29.00	40.00
Antipasto Salad	27.00	40.00	56.00
Caesar Salad	23.00	36.00	46.00
Chicken Caesar Salad	36.00	52.00	63.00
Sides			
	Serves 10-15	Serves 20-30	Serves 40-50
Roasted Redskins	33.00	43.00	58.00
Sauteed Broccoli w/Roasted Garlic	33.00	43.00	58.00
Sausage (Spicy or Sweet) with Roasted Peppers, Onions and Redskins(48 hr notice)			88.00
Homemade Breads			
Braided Italian Bread	2.50		
Braided Bread with Butter	3.00		
Sliced Italian Bread (20 pcs)	7.00		
Sliced Bread with Butter (20 pcs)	8.50		
Garlic Toast (36 pcs)	9.50		
Hand-Breaded Chicken Breast			
Minimum order of 10 required			
Chicken Breast Marsala	4.00		
Chicken Breast Piccata	4.00		
Chicken Breast Parmesan	4.00		
Extras & Sides			
Golden Baked Chicken (8 pcs)			14.00 (Min. 48 hr. notice)
Barbecued Chicken (8 pcs)			16.00 (Min. 48 hr. notice)
St. Louis Style Ribs (Rack)			20.00
Italian Meatballs (each)			1.25
Grated Parmesan Cheese (Qt)			9.50
Salad Dressing (Pt/Qt)			4.00/7.00
Place Settings (Fork, Knife, Napkin, Plates)			50

Prices do not include Sales Tax
Prices subject to change without notice
Party Pans are A la carte and do not include serving utensils or paper goods.
All major credit cards accepted. No checks please.
Delivery charges start at \$25



Spaghetti and meatballs

Rib Fest Every Thursday! Brick Oven Pizza Every Day!



WE ARE HIRING

Cooks

Apply in person
1076 S. Lapeer Rd
Oxford, MI 48371

Italia Gardens has been family owned and operated since 1931.

1076 S Lapeer Rd Oxford, MI 48371
248-628-4112 • www.italiagardensoxford.com
Wednesday-Sunday 12pm-9pm

SPONSORED CONTENT

‘Seeds’ planted in Royal Oak grow into thriving family business with new roots in Clawson

By Terry Jacoby
For MediaNews Group

When Henry Johnson opened his business in downtown Royal Oak in 1949 the “seeds” were planted for not only his own family, but his future family. Billings Lawn Equipment has grown, changed and moved locations since those early years but the Johnson family is still planting those seeds — just in a different way.

“My grandfather (Henry) was an employee of the Billings family for a few years and ended up buying the business in 1949,” says Scott Johnson, the third-generation owner. “It was a feed store in the 1940s. We were at Lincoln and Main Street in Royal Oak and we provided a lot of the food for the animals at the zoo. Think like monkey chow and food for the camels and elephants.”

Henry Johnson began adding some power equipment merchandise to the store in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In 2000, the family split the businesses and bought the old Lincoln-Mercury dealership on Main Street in Royal Oak for the power equipment side of the business. The feed store closed in 2004.

In 2018, Billings Lawn Equipment moved to its current location on 14 Mile in Clawson. The 14,500-square-foot building is the showroom for everything from lawn mowers to snow blowers to chain saws to pressure washers to concrete cutters and so much more. The original location in Royal Oak is now home to the Billings Place Apartments, named after the longtime local business.

Scott says he learned the value of hard work from his grandfather.

“He taught me that a family-run business is all about customer service,” he said. “You have to cater to your end user if you want to be successful.”



PHOTO COURTESY OF BILLINGS LAWN EQUIPMENT

Billings Lawn Equipment moved to its current location on 14 Mile in Clawson in 2018.

He learned similar lessons from his father. “He showed me that an owner of a family-run business needs to not only work hard but to do everything that needs to be done,” he said. “He always put in the hours and even though you are the owner, you are also the janitor. You are whatever needs to get done.”

Scott’s dad, Richard “Rick” Johnson, took over the store when his dad, Henry Johnson, retired. Scott took over the business in 2018 when his dad passed away after a battle with cancer.

Scott, 50, was a teaching golf pro in Arizona in 1996 when he decided to move to Michigan and work in the family business. “I was very close with my grandfather but my dad and I had kind of drifted apart and I wanted to rekindle that relationship and learn the family business,” he said. “I’m just really proud of our history and proud to be representing our family and carrying on this great tradition.”

Johnson says the Clawson

community has been very welcoming and supportive.

“They opened their arms to us and we are thankful for that,” he said. “We have great parking here and have great neighbors. It’s been an awesome move. And business has been very good so we couldn’t be happier.” Johnson says his two sons are both in college earning business degrees and hopes at least one of them will step in as fourth-generation owners.

Billings Lawn Equipment serves both residential and commercial customers and are proud of their outstanding and knowledgeable parts and service department staff.

“We take pride in our ability to serve our customers and stand behind our products with responsive repair services to get them up and running as quickly as possible when the expected happens,” Johnson said. “We also provide maintenance services to ensure your equipment runs smoothly all season long.” And the reviews have been extremely positive.



The 14,500-square-foot showroom features everything from lawn mowers and snow blowers to chain saws, pressure washers, concrete cutters and so much more.



The staff at Billings Lawn Equipment provide maintenance services to ensure your equipment runs smoothly all season long.

“I’ve been a satisfied patron at Billings for decades, ever since they were located on Main Street north of Lincoln in Royal Oak,” says James of Royal Oak on Google Reviews, where Billings scored a 4.2 rating.

“Most recently, I purchased a Toro lawn mower last summer and a Toro snow blower last month. They have a large selection of yard equipment and

their prices are comparable with similar businesses. I have not yet needed service on the aforementioned power equipment, but I’ve been very satisfied with giving Billings my business throughout the years.”

Billings Lawn Equipment is located at 1241 W 14 Mile Rd., Clawson. For more information, call (248) 541-0138 or visit billingslawn.com.

SPONSORED CONTENT

Professional Movers.com team take pride in serving community with top-rate service

By Jenny Sherman

jsherman@medianewsgroup.com

Andrew Androff, co-owner of Professional Movers.com along with his brother Patrick Crowley, has a message from a fortune cookie taped to his computer monitor that reads: "When two people in business always agree, one of them is unnecessary." It's a friendly reminder that even though Professional Movers.com is a family-owned and operated business with a long and proud history, there are days where you aren't always going to agree with everyone — even if they are family. And there is nothing wrong with disagreements or other sides to an issue if at the end of the day you come up with the best solution.

"We all grew up in the business so we are used to working closely with each other and we all have thick skin," says Androff, when asked about the family dynamic at Professional Movers.com. "Sure, there are days we get frustrated and disagree on things but at the end of the day we figure things out and we all understand that everyone's heart is in the right place. We challenge each other and work well together and we all want to make the company better and stronger. Every decision we make is based on making our customers happy."

The company was founded in 1978 by Androff's parents, Chris and Hannah Androff, as a home-delivery company. Through the years the company began to diversify services adding residential and commercial moving, packing, and storage services. Then in 2017 they launched Rental Crates.com, which allows customers to rent reusable plastic moving boxes to help pack and move their home or office.

"Everyone has pretty defined roles and responsibilities and an opportunity to make a direct positive impact on the success of the company," Androff says. "I run the residential and com-



PHOTO COURTESY OF PROFESSIONAL MOVERS.COM

Professional Movers.com creates a culture of appreciation and respect among its staff to give their customers the best possible moving experience.

mercial moving division while Pat runs the freight and delivery division. Our other brother, Don Crowley, runs our office in Rochester at Oakland University, and our sister, Sabrina Firth, is our bookkeeper and accountant manager."

Pat's oldest son, James Crowley, is the manager of Rental Crates.com and his younger brother John Crowley is the warehouse manager. Andrew's cousin Mike Bailey manages all of the large corporate accounts and commercial projects. Kris Bergstrom, who is like family, has been an instrumental part of the business and is the Operations Manager of the Walled Lake office.

"Everyone in the family has at some point worked in the business and it has now branched out now to the 3rd generation taking on important leadership roles," says Androff. "There remains a good level of family involvement throughout the business, but we promote non-family as well. Most recently, our top mover, Jim Turner, was promoted to a management role as a Moving Consultant."

Professional Movers.com

moves more than furniture, boxes and refrigerators — they also move dreams, hopes, and new beginnings for their team members. Everyone starts as moving apprentice but they have built a career ladder that helps promote team members from apprentice, to mover, to team leader, to CDL-A driver, and eventually to management role if they desire.

"Everyone at Professional Movers.com began their career here as a moving apprentice, even our bookkeeper, Sabrina. It's important to know every facet of our business to be successful," says Androff.

Professional Movers.com creates a culture of appreciation and respect and give their customers the best moving experience by providing background checked movers who take pride in delivering quality service. They specialize in providing local packing, moving and storage services for families and businesses. And their customers have spoken. The company has an amazing 4.9 out of 5 rating on Google reviews — where most people usually go to complain and give negative re-

views. The company also has been voted Best Moving Service 10 times by readers of the Oakland Press and Detroit Free Press.

Professional Movers.com has offices in Detroit, Rochester and Walled Lake and they always give back to the communities they serve — in ways both big and small. Since 2017, they have supported the Royal Oak Public Piano Project by sourcing unwanted pianos and delivering them to the community spaces. In 2016 when the City of Flint experienced their water crisis, Professional Movers.com converted their Walled Lake warehouse to a community donation center to help accept bottled water donations. They delivered 22 pallets of water totaling 49,126 pounds to the Flint community. In 2011, Professional Movers.com pioneered the Detroit Moving Incentives Program, a company-wide initiative to help encourage more people and businesses to consider moving to Detroit. The company has come a long way since Chris and Hannah Androff founded the company in 1978.

"We are proud of what they did because they created a re-



The company was founded in 1978 by Androff's parents, Chris and Hannah Androff, as a home-delivery company.



Brothers Patrick Crowley and Andrew Androff are co-owners of Professional Movers.com.

ally unique business," says Andrew. "And where we are now is a completely different business and it's grown so much. It goes both ways, we are proud of what they started and they are proud of where we have taken it."

Visit professionalmovers.com for more information and a free quote.

RECRUITING TEAM LEADERS & MOVERS



TOP HOURLY PAY \$16 - \$20 | GROSS \$640 - \$1100
PAID WEEKLY via Direct Deposit | Between 40 - 50 Hours a Week



Generous Tips Averaging \$20 - \$50 Per Move



Monthly Bonuses Paid For Happy Customers Averaging \$50 - \$100 Every Month



Healthcare & Dental Available



TEXT 248-926-9999 or VISIT ProfessionalMovers.com/Careers



Professional Movers.com provides equal employment opportunities (EEO) to all employees and applicants for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability or genetics. In addition to federal law requirements, Professional Movers.com complies with applicable state and local laws governing nondiscrimination in employment in every location in which the company has facilities. This policy applies to all terms and conditions of employment, including recruiting, hiring, placement, promotion, termination, layoff, recall, transfer, leaves of absence, compensation and training. Professional Movers.com expressly prohibits any form of workplace harassment based on race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, genetic information, disability, or veteran status. Improper interference with the ability of Professional Movers.com's employees to perform their job duties may result in discipline up to and including discharge.

SPONSORED CONTENT

Family behind Cruz Hearing is ‘all about helping people’

Staying proactive, annual ear exams are key to maintaining hearing health

By Terry Jacoby
For MediaNews Group

After 35 years of helping people “hear” the world, Felix Cruz is often asked about when he plans to retire. He always replies with a question: “Why would I retire from something I love doing?”

Cruz, BC-HIS, is the founder and director of Cruz Hearing Aid Service where he has helped countless people not only hear better but give people the tools and guidance to help them hear better in the future. Cruz not only takes joy and pride in what he’s doing to work every day, but he also takes his family. And that’s another reason why his retirement isn’t on the calendar, let alone on his mind.

“We love what we do and our patients know that we will take care of them,” says Cruz. “We’re all about helping people.” Cruz’s wife, Kathryn, along with their two sons and a daughter-in-law are all part of the family business.

“My wife is the boss,” Cruz says. “She handles all of the insurance work, all of the paper work, financials and takes care of everything behind the scenes. She is amazing.”

Both of their sons also hold important positions within the company. Joshua is the president and Austin is a hearing instrument specialist.

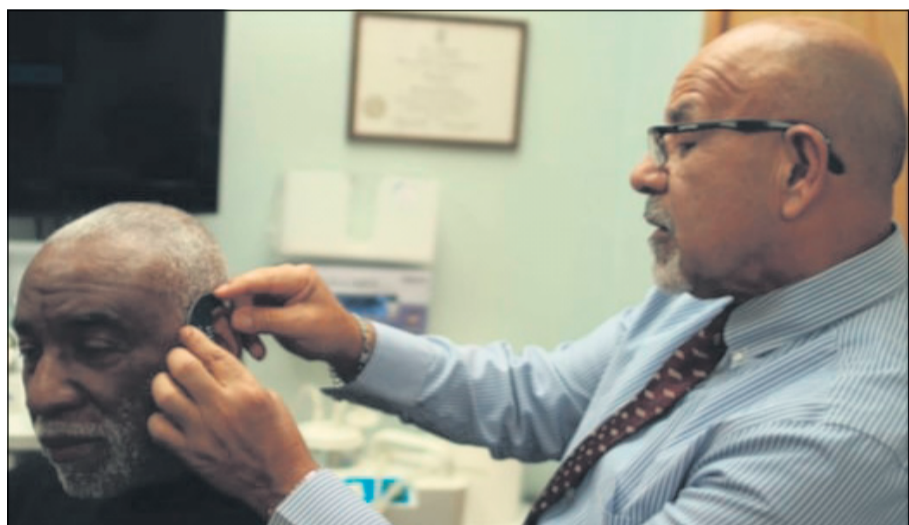
“It’s very gratifying to have your family come to work with you every day and be a part of what you love doing,” Cruz says. “And what’s really gratifying is that they aren’t doing this because it’s a job, but because they love what they do. We make a difference in people’s lives.”

Cruz began his career as a salesman in his early 20s for a hearing aid company and after a few years started his own business. He’s seen — and experienced — many incredible changes over the years especially when it comes to hearing aids.

“They are exceptionally better than when I first started in the business,” says Cruz, who has been wearing a hearing aid for more than 25 years. “I’ve not only seen



PHOTOS COURTESY OF FELIX CRUZ
Left: Felix Cruz, BC-HIS, founder/director, Cruz Hearing Aid Service Right: Joshua M. Cruz, MBA, president, Cruz Hearing Aid Services



Board certified in hearing instrument sciences, Felix Cruz has been working in the hearing healthcare industry for more than 30 years.

the changes in the hearing aids, but I’ve experienced them as well. People always ask me about the advancements in hearing aids over the last 10 to 20 years and because of new technology, it really is phenomenal the differences.”

While hearing aids have improved and will continue to improve, humans break down and will continue to break down as

they get older. It’s a battle between technology and Father Time.

“The brain’s ability to process what it is hearing slows down as we age,” Cruz says. “The biggest issue we have when it comes to hearing deficiency is that I can hear but I don’t understand what they are saying. The hearing aid will help you hear but how you understand is a brain function, and

how our brain can interpret what we hear gets slower and slower over the years.”

Cruz says people need to be proactive when it comes to their hearing. Cruz Hearing Aid Service recently introduced Sound Shields, a custom-made ear mold with filters that can protect a person’s hearing by helping to reduce the damage of potentially harmful sounds. When a sudden loud sound is detected, the filter captures and compresses it, reducing its decibels to more acceptable levels. Cruz takes a silicone impression of the ear and the ear canal — the same way the dentist does for dentures. He passes that impression on to his son Austin who then makes a custom-made ear mold. The process only takes a few days to complete.

Cruz recommends annual ear exams to check and measure a person’s hearing because it really is what he calls “an invisible disability.”

“When you start losing your hearing it’s such a gradual process that you don’t even realize you are experiencing it,” he says. “Everyone else around you will notice. The TV gets louder, they see you leaning in to hear them better or are asking more often to repeat things. There isn’t any pain associated with hearing loss so it’s very difficult to notice.” Cruz says when he first started his business the average age of his patients was around 70 years old — today, it’s more around 50.

“We live in a very noisy world,” Cruz says. “There is loud music, concerts, road construction and other noise pollution that can really deteriorate the hearing.” Cruz Hearing Aid Service has expanded over the past three decades to three locations (Waterford, Taylor and Farmington Hills) in southeast Michigan and will celebrate 30 years in business this January. In 2020, they were named “Best of the Best” in the Oakland Press Readers Choice Awards. And don’t plan on any retirement party anytime soon for Felix Cruz.

“Retirement, what’s that?” he says. “This is a passion I have, it’s not a job.”

To learn more about Cruz Hearing Aid Services, visit cruzhearing.com or call the Taylor office at (734) 245-2361, the Farmington Hills location at (248) 671-6310 or the Waterford office at (248) 243-4830.

Hearing Loss: A Serious Health Issue! Take Action NOW!

Southeast Michigan's Premier Hearing Clinic for Over 25 Years!

Discover the Cruz Difference!

Enhance Your Hearing, Improve Your Life!



Hearing Aids Starting at \$1495/pair



Felix Cruz, BC-HIS

www.cruzhearing.com

Farmington Hills
25882 Orchard Lk Rd #103, MI 48336
248-474-8161

Taylor
12213 Telegraph Rd., MI 48180
734-287-6935

Waterford
6650 Highland Rd #110, MI 48327
248-861-2789