INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS OPENS SADDLE RIVER VALLEY LIONS’ 62ND YEAR

The Saddle River Valley Lions recently began another chapter in its long and storied history as the club celebrated the start of its sixty-second year with the installation of the club’s 2019-2020 officers.

Chartered by Lions Clubs International on December 3, 1957, the club serves the people of the Saddle River Valley, which includes the communities of Allendale, Mahwah, Ramsey, Saddle River, Upper Saddle River, and the surrounding area. In addition to its many service projects in these communities, the club supports the international organization’s primary focus of serving the blind and visually impaired. To this end, the Club has to date raised and given away over two and a half million dollars to its supported charities. This figure represents 100% of the net proceeds of their fundraising efforts as the local Lions pay their own administrative expenses. These funds raised help to support a wide variety of local social service organizations and youth groups as well as scholarships given annually to local students.

Prior to the actual swearing in of the Lions’ new officers, its outgoing president, Dr. David C. Verducci of Upper Saddle River, himself visually impaired, reflected on his experience as he prepared to complete his second consecutive term leading the club.

“What I discovered over the past few years was that the surgical restoration of a significant part of my vision wasn’t the only thing that changed me,” Verducci said. “Turns out that when combined with the experience of becoming a Lion, my post-retirement life has been given renewed purpose, and with it a whole new depth of meaning and perspective. I will always be grateful to my fellow Lions for the opportunities they’ve given me and for the personal insights that I’ve gained from the experience.”

Celebrating Our 62nd Year of Service to the Communities of the Saddle River Valley
After presenting several club awards, the outgoing president introduced New Jersey State Council Advisor, Lion John “Jack” Romano who conducted the new officer installation in accordance with the traditional ceremonial service used by the club. Now having taken their oaths of office, Romano offered the new officers his own congratulations, a gesture which was accompanied by a warm round of applause from the members and guests in the audience.

After accepting the presidential gavel from Verducci, now the club’s Immediate Past President, new Lions’ President Eugene Baskayan said he is “honored to have been elected as the local leader of this well-known and well-respected service organization.” Baskayan then continued club tradition by presenting Verducci the past president plaque and thanking him for what he termed Verducci’s “outstanding service to Lionism at the local, district, and international levels.”

After being congratulated by his wife, Ardis, and his sons, Eric and Lucas, both of whom are also Lions, the newly minted president made his initial remarks to the membership. The long time Upper Saddle River resident expressed his “deep appreciation for the confidence the membership has shown in me,” and pledged to “do all that I can to help the club continue to succeed in its traditional mission of service.” He finished his message by encouraging the club’s members “to continue to work together to discover new and better ways to expand upon the Saddle River Valley Lions’ proud legacy.”

Joining Baskayan and Verducci as club officers for the 2019-2020 year are Lions Mark Stephan (1st Vice President), George Lesnik (2nd Vice President), Rick Jorge (3rd Vice President), Bob May (Secretary), Jeff Smyrchynski (Charities Treasurer), Andy Calcara (Club Treasurer), Christopher Reichert (Membership Chairman), and Directors Frank DiPierro, Vic Heineman, Jim Murphy, and Paula Turrin.

Lions International was founded in 1917 and is currently the world’s largest service club organization with over 1.4 million members. Although best known for fighting blindness, the club also performs volunteer work for many different kinds of community projects, including caring for the environment, feeding the hungry, and aiding seniors and the disabled.

For details about membership opportunities in the Saddle River Valley Lions Club, more information about its many activities, or to see a video-slideshow describing its six decade history, visit the club’s Facebook page or its website, www.SRVLions.org.
Installation of Officers Opens Saddle River Valley Lions’ 62nd Year
June 20, 2019
Page 3

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**N.B. The photos below are shown solely for identification purposes. High resolution JPEG are attached to the email that included this press release.**

**PHOTO #1**

Caption:
Shown here is John Romano (l.) the Lions State Advisor who conducted the installation ceremony with Lion Gene Baskayan (r.), the newly installed 53rd president of the Saddle River Valley Lions Club.

**PHOTO #2**

Caption:
Newly installed Saddle River Valley Lions Club President, Gene Baskayan (4th from left), standing with his fellow 2019-2020 club officers.