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# CHICQUITITA OFFERS A PLACE FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS



RICHARD HORNER PHOTOS, CULPEPER STAR-EXPONENT

Owner Susanne Mesa, also known as Suzycuban, opened CHICquitita as a place by women and for women.

**RICHARD HORNER**  
Culpeper Star-Exponent

CHICquitita, a women's gifts and accessories store with a family connection, held a soft opening Oct. 23 at its location on South East Street.

According to owner Susanna Mesa, the store was established in order to provide a place for women and girls. Inside the doors of CHICquitita, customers can shop for a number of items designed for women of all ages including clothing, jewelry, cosmetics and other accessories such as bags and backpacks.

"Girls like to be around makeup and stuff like that and we only see it in big stores," she said. "I always had a passion for makeup and girly stuff."

Mesa, also known as Susycuban, opened her store in a suite within the same building right next to the Collector's Den which is owned by her children Deneck and Richard Ubario. Mesa said that the location provides some women who may not be interested in joining their male counterpart at Collector's Den an option that may interest them.

She expressed how she felt having her own store right next to her children's business, "I love it, I love it. I love to go through that door and see their faces all the time."

Mesa's daughter and owner of Collector's Den Deneck Ubario also expressed how she felt having her mother's store

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CHICquitita opened its doors on Oct. 23 and offers women a place to shop for gifts, accessories and other items geared towards their interests.

## SUPPORT GROUP

# Being well prepared for Parkinson's

Powell Wellness Center hosts growing outreach, education, exercise

**ALLISON BROPHY CHAMPION**  
Culpeper Star-Exponent

"Baywatch" star Michael Newman died Oct. 20 at age 68 following a diagnosis of Parkinson's, the fastest growing neurological disease in the world.

Locally, a tight-knit group of people living with Parkinson's and other "movement disorders," from all walks of life, gathers monthly to share new advances in Parkinson's research, to talk and support each other.

Dr. Yasar Torres-Yaghi, attending physician in movement disorders at Georgetown University Medical Center as well as assistant professor in the Department of Neurology, was a featured speaker at the support group held at Powell Wellness Center in Culpeper back in August.

In a virtual program, the doctor talked about the injectable medication Levodopa, the most common for treating Parkinson's and how it can be used throughout a day to treat symptoms such as body tremors, muscle stiffness or impaired balance. He also spoke about a medication, Apokyn, used for freezing episodes.

"It took me 34 years to become a movement disorder specialist," said Torres-Yaghi. "I'm 41."

For people living with Parkinson's, he added, it's about "getting to more green lights," fewer physical roadblocks of the disease. Exercise and a diet of fresh fruits and vegetables are incredibly important to achieving green lights, Torres-Yaghi said, as well as proper combination of medicines.

"Lifestyle modifications can be so important," he stated, promoting a good bedtime routine and connecting socially in the community, like the group gathered in August in Culpeper.

"What happens when we feel stuck?" Torres-Yaghi asked.

"Freeze. Balance. Achy legs. I stop thinking," attendees responded.

Access to Parkinson's drugs is a major challenge in medical care, the doctor said, also warning of medicine side effects related to impulse control — for shopping, gambling, eating, even sex.

"Parkinson's is very unpredictable. Some days are worse than others. You have to take your medication on time ... the idea is to be well-prepared and well-equipped if you run into any red lights."

Parkinson's is one disease of multiple conditions, Torres-Yaghi said. As people age, their risk for getting Parkinson's increases.

Please see **PARKINSONS**, Page A2

Nenyuk, Wykle stand out as this week's Academic Spotlight students. **PAGE A3**

**Weather**  
Partly sunny and pleasant  
**High 71 • Low 47**  
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# CHICquitita

From A1

next door, “Honestly, I think it’s a good yin to our yang especially with the kinds of things she has in here. If you’re shopping for a girlfriend or a wife and you’re getting Magic cards you can always stop by here too and grab a couple of things that she’s going to like.”

Ubario also said that the two stores being located next to each other was a way to help each other out and allow both businesses to grow.

Mesa’s ambitions for entering the business world started with

the idea of a bakery that would have operated out of the Lord Culpeper Hotel on South Main Street. However, she felt that the space that she had rented wouldn’t be suitable for such an endeavor and decided to go in a different direction. That space would eventually become the first storefront for Collector’s Den.

Since then, Mesa and her family have attended several events in the Culpeper area offering many of the same products that are now in stock at CHICquitita. In the last year, Mesa and her family spent a lot of time renovating the space to get it ready for the store’s public debut.

In addition to the products on sale, CHICquitita also has a space set up in the back of the store that can be used for public and private events. In keeping with the more feminine decor, the backroom is decorated like an old-style salon with tables, chairs and a sofa where women can relax and engage with each other.

“I feel like there’s more adult-oriented things and night-life popping up in Culpeper, but as far as more mommy and me and even dad and me activities there’s not too much that is in an intimate setting,” said Ubario. “I know my mom has been wanting to bring that with CHICquitita.”

Another aspect of CHICquitita’s location that mother and daughter are proud of is its place among a burgeoning Hispanic-American business community in downtown Culpeper. Including the new store and the Collector’s Den, South East Street is also home to two Hispanic markets, El Ricon Hispano on South East Street and La Lomita Store on East Culpeper Street behind the Throwbacks arcade.

In addition La Princesa, another Hispanic-owned business specializing in event planning, is further up South East Street while the Wisteria clothing boutique is in the other direction on

East Davis Street.

“We’re right in the middle of where a big Hispanic community of Culpeper is,” said Ubario. Not only her business, but our business has a fully bilingual staff and we want to make sure that the Hispanic community knows that there are small business owners and entrepreneurs that are in the community that are catering and also available to the community as well.”

CHICquitita is located at 205 S. East St., suite 102, in downtown Culpeper.

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# Parkinsons

From A1

Madison County resident Rose Jacobs, attending the support group, said she’s probably had Parkinson’s for 15 years, but didn’t really start seeing symptoms until during the pandemic. She got the official diagnosis about a year ago.

“Tripping, can’t lift my feet.”

Her original episode was in a public place — she started running and couldn’t stop, Jacobs described.

In 2019, Georgetown University estimated the number of Parkinson’s disease patients was expected to grow to 1.2 million by 2030. A 2022 Parkinson’s Foundation-backed study revealed that nearly 90,000 people are diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease in the U.S. each year — a 50% increase from the previously estimated rate of 60,000 diagnoses annually.

Local support group member John Giannico of Madison said his father had Parkinson’s, suggesting a genetic link. Environmental factors are also thought to play a part.

He described his dad in the 1960s having a tremor and balance issues.

“He had to retire at age 52. Lived to 77, it really didn’t shorten his life. He was bad the last five years, in a wheelchair. He was a healthy man before.”

Giannico, a retired forester who enjoys writing poetry and music, takes numerous medicines for his Parkinson’s.

“Dragging my leg, tremors, stiffness, rigidity,” he said of his symptoms. “I went for years without it hindering my ability.”

Support group member Elizabeth Arndt of Lake of the Woods has been a patient of Dr. Torres-Yaghi for past the six years. She invited him for the recent talk at Powell Wellness Center.

“When I first was diagnosed, I felt terrible, I didn’t know anything about Parkinson’s, I was worried about everything,” said Arndt. (Torres-Yaghi) is so positive, always had good things to say.”

She mentioned Giannico was a really good poet.

“We have a lot to talk about.”

Arndt excused herself from a standing position.

“I am going to sit down because my legs hurt,” she said. “Nobody has what I have, I have achy legs.



ALLISON BROPHY CHAMPION, CULPEPER STAR-EXPONENT

Dr. Yasar Torres-Yaghi, attending physician in movement disorders at Georgetown University Medical Center, on the TV screen, speaks during an Aug. 14 Parkinson’s disease support group meeting at Powell Wellness Center in Culpeper.

My doctor said I am the only one that has that Parkinson’s effect where my legs ache really bad.”

It’s not all the time, Arndt added, saying when her medicine is working, it works well in treating symptoms. She said she’s had to be careful with certain drugs due to uncontrollable urges as a side effect.

Giannico has been coming to the monthly support group for over 10 years, three years at Powell, and previously in Orange County.

“It’s education, talking about your particular case. Usually a speaker and talking amongst us, a song or a poem,” he said. “I’m a harmonica player.”

Is there a connection between Parkinson’s and the arts?

“I think it has spurred a creative period in my life,” Giannico said. “When I retired, I did woodworking for nine years, had a little business.”

Anybody can come to the Parkinson’s Support Group and does not need to be a member of the center. The group meets at 12:15 p.m. the second Wednesday of each month.

“There are 32 individual symptoms of Parkinson’s,” said Giannico. “I take pills every three

hours.”

Coming to the support group allows attendees to see each other during the different stages of the disease, he said.

“Not everybody is exposed to what everyone is dealing with,” Giannico said. “It’s a comparison and time to see what other people with Parkinson’s are dealing with mentally and emotionally and personally, too. Things that are happening to their body they don’t understand.”

There’s tons of information online, he noted, saying he favors in-person interactions, smaller groups, counseling.

“Go in a circle a few minutes to talk.”

The group was 24-strong last time for the hour meeting. At the August meeting, attendees openly discussed very personal matters without judgment. Support flowed and encouragement.

“John is truly an inspiration and he does all kinds of things. He’s had this disease forever,” Arndt said. “I was diagnosed six and a half years ago, but I’m 71, you’re older it goes faster usually. I don’t have tremors — everyone’s so different.”

She added she related with another lady there, during off

times, it’s very similar to hers: “Feel shaky, feel tired, don’t want to move, can’t read very well, my arms get weak feeling, my hands don’t want to do stuff.”

Arndt likes coming to the meetings to get to know more people since she doesn’t have many relatives anywhere near and her husband has passed.

Group coordinator Ginny Stanley, who was away for the recent meeting, has been amazing, said Arndt.

Arndt does aerobics and strength training daily for her health.

“People with PD and their care partners, family, and friends and anyone wanting to know about the disease are welcome to come,” said Stanley in an earlier email to the Star-Exponent.

On July 2, President Biden signed the National Parkinson’s Project S.1064/H.R. 8585 into law, federal legislation dedicated to ending Parkinson’s.

Also at Powell Wellness Center, certified personal trainer Bobby Zajkowski teaches a popular, doctors’ referral-required class, Rock Steady Boxing. The class that has attracted Parkinson’s individuals addresses agility and movement through

exercises — including boxing — to combat deterioration in motor skills, balance, speech and sensory function.

Rose Jacobs took her first class earlier this spring.

“You get a T-shirt, a pair of boxing gloves, a pair of knuckle protection gloves. Ready, Set, GO! The class consists of learning how to move certain body parts — make large motions, big steps. Shuffling is a problem with Parkinson’s. You have to consciously lift your feet or you end up tripping and falling”

Jacobs’ falls have taken her to the ER more than once.

At Rock Steady, free-standing bags are commonly used for practicing punches, kicks, and combination strikes.

“They provide a stable target for training. Lots of work in front of mirrors. Great music — it was all early Beatles the day I was there.”

There are volunteers at each class to help out and they are always looking for more volunteers so they can expand the program. Parkinson’s is on the rise in America, said Jacobs, suggesting particularly in this area.

“Though there is no definitive reason why. While some cases are genetic, these days it is more likely environmental exposure,” she said.

Zajkowski said the class has grown significantly in the past three years.

“I started with one class growing from five to about 10. I needed volunteers as well and they make the class possible! My class size kept growing so I had to open up another class to separate days Tuesday/Thursday and Monday/Wednesday,” he said in correspondence with the Star-Exponent.

Milestones look different for every participant, Zajkowski said.

Goals range from becoming self-sufficient, to building confidence, reducing medication, and getting back into shape. While the instructor said he does not have personal experience with Parkinson’s, he suffered a Traumatic Brain Injury when he was 19.

“I understand from time to time how they feel mentally with achieving certain activities, movements and confidence in everyday life activities that we all take for granted!”

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# STAR-EXPONENT

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