

# Flemington *Life*

April/May 2023

FREE



**DAVID JOHNSTON**

*Pays it Forward*

**A Farm Romance**

**Women Who  
Dared**

**SPRING FUN!**

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PHOTO BY DAVE NORTON

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PHOTO BY DON LEYPOLDT

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Cover photo of David Johnston by Dave Norton



PHOTO BY DAVE NORTON

# PAYING IT FORWARD

What do being a nonprofit leader, a Revolutionary War reenactor, a sports coach and wealth manager have in common? Ask David Johnston.

BY KAREN SANGILLO

**D**avid Johnston loves being a community leader, a true “go-to-guy” people naturally turn to when they need something done.

“I joke that I have a sign on my back that says ‘I’ll do it’ because I do end up getting asked to do things, but I enjoy it,” says Johnston, the board president of the Flemington Community Partnership (FCP), the organization charged with attracting new businesses to the borough and customers to all of the businesses.

Now in his third year serving on the FCP’s board, Johnston often finds himself meeting with borough officials and business owners to learn how to make economic development efforts more successful. While he doesn’t get paid for the work, he understands its importance and takes his responsibility seriously. He says that even amenities such as neat sidewalks, beautiful flowers, or artwork on public display along Main Street can help make the business district a vibrant destination.



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Johnston says his parents, retired teachers, have inspired his commitment to community service. Now in their 70s, they often hear from former students about the difference they made in their lives. He’s trying to build the same legacy, which is expressed in many ways—with the FCP, as a coach for his kids’ sports teams, and as a devoted Revolutionary War reenactor. Johnston also spent eight years on the board of directors for Prevention Resources, a Raritan Township-based nonprofit that promotes the health and wellness of individuals, families, and the community.

“That’s what it’s all about,” he says of his commitments. “You don’t know the impact you have until later, or sometimes you never know that you made an impact.”

As board president, Johnston has his hands in most aspects of the FCP’s mission to foster economic development in the borough, from retaining and recruiting businesses to dealing with parking and signage. Special events and festivals are another part of the FCP’s mission. “I don’t do it to help my own business,” he says. “I’m active in this because I want to have a vibrant downtown. I enjoy being able to walk around and grab dinner or a drink in the area.”

Professionally, Johnston leads Amwell Ridge Wealth Management, a firm that specializes in working with people aged 55 and older seeking planning and guidance to ensure a smooth transition into and through retirement.

Over the last five or so Christmas seasons, Johnston could be found on the Delaware River, participating in the annual reenactments of General Washington’s historic river crossing. He plays a member of the 14th Continental Regiment, the soldier-mariners from Massachusetts who took Washington across the river. His first reenactment, the Battle of Princeton, afforded him the opportunity to shoot a musket, and he was hooked.

For Johnston, the real benefit of donning the revolutionary garb and braving icy temperatures is the chance to provide a living history lesson. “It’s a great education for kids, and for their parents, about what happened when our country was being born,” he says.

Johnston lives in Raritan Township with his wife Jennifer and three children: Colin, a sophomore at Penn State majoring in finance; Abbey, a senior at Hunterdon Central High School; and Erin, a sophomore at Hunterdon Central. When they were younger, he coached “every sport imaginable. I feel as though that’s also a service to the community, and it was a lot of fun.”

A member of the River Dell Regional High School Athletics Hall of Fame for his soccer accomplishments, Johnston went on to earn All-American honors as a placekicker for the College of New Jersey football team. He is an active alumnus, currently a board member of the

football alumni association and a former board member of the school’s alumni association.

And this fall, he will become an adjunct professor at the TCNJ School of Business, teaching classes in the wealth and financial planning minor program he helped launch last fall. He hopes that interest will continue to grow enough that it becomes a major program of study.

“It’s a growing area of finance, and like other businesses and industries, the baby boomers are retiring and the financial planning wealth management field isn’t exempt from that,” he says. “People are leaving the field, and we don’t have as many coming in to fill it, so there’s a lot of opportunity here.”

“I got into my career because my football coach had a friend in this career. He asked my coach to give him half an hour in a room with the [team] captains and the type ‘A’ personalities,” he said. “I was one of the guys who was in the room, and it sounded like a good opportunity for me. Here I am, 27 years later, and I want to pay it forward.” □

*Karen Sangillo is a regular contributor to the Bucks County Herald.*



PHOTO COURTESY OF AMWELL RIDGE WEALTH MANAGEMENT

*Johnston is a devoted Revolutionary War reenactor. Here, he is pictured with his brother, Adam Johnston, who also works at Amwell Ridge Wealth Management.*