



Around the Village, Around the Square

Roslindale Village Main Street's Quarterly Business Newsletter
February 2010

Dear Roslindale Village Merchant,

2010 is a big year for Roslindale Village Main Street: we're turning 25!

Founded in 1985 by a group of business owners and residents who saw a better future for their neighborhood, RVMS was a pioneer in urban revitalization, the first Main Street program in Boston and among the first in the country.

25 years later, Roslindale's business district is thriving, with 95% of businesses independently owned and vacancy rates among the lowest in the city. Working together, RVMS has helped business and property owners leverage public funding for storefront improvements (directly benefiting more than 70 businesses in the last 15 years alone). We have sponsored promotional events that attract thousands to the neighborhood each year. This year we brought holiday lights to the district for the first time in 14 years, thanks to the combined effort of 84 businesses and countless volunteers at our Taste of Roslindale fundraiser.

Roslindale has come a long way over the last quarter century, and it's a testimonial to what a community can achieve working together.

RVMS is made of the Roslindale community. We are you – business owners, property owners, residents, who are invested in this neighborhood and want to see it thrive. We welcome your ideas and participation. Read on to find out how to get involved.

Jody Burr
Executive Director

Ten Questions: A Business to Business Interview with Harrison Refrigeration

Vernee Wilkinson is the owner of one of Roslindale Village's newest businesses, a baby/toddler gift and clothing shop on Washington Street called Colorwheel Collection, which opened in September. Here, Vernee sits down with her neighbor Peter Pappas, owner of Harrison Refrigeration, which has been in business nearly 50 years.



How long have you been in business?

The store started in 1963, so that's 47 years!

How long has the business been in Roslindale?

Since 1978. I've been running the business since 1997.

What brought you to Roslindale?

My father Nicholas started the business on Harrison Ave. in Roxbury, and he started with all used appliances down there. At the time, back in 1978, the Boston Redevelopment Authority was planning on making an inner belt highway down there. They actually scrapped the plan so they helped my father relocate to Roslindale in '78.

Did you always think you would be working in the family business?

Yes, when I was really little I was always in the store helping out my father and learning the business. My father really worked hard to build the business, he brought up our family with it and I have a lot of respect for him.

What do you like best as a business owner about being in Roslindale?

What I like best about it is the fact that the families and people can shop locally. It's a nice community, everyone helps each other out and we get a lot of local people coming in the store.

What's your best selling item?

We sell and service all sorts of appliances, but if I had to pick one item that is our best seller, it would probably be our refrigerators. We can turn them over really quick to our customers with emergency deliveries and we offer almost every brand and style.

What areas do you serve in addition to Roslindale?

We like to advertise locally; Roslindale, West Roxbury and Hyde Park. As the years go by and business grows, word of mouth spreads and we get customers from all over the place.

How has the growth and development of stores like Lowes and Home Depot impacted your business?

It's certainly had an impact on business, but the competition keeps you on your toes trying to improve, and in a way your business grows with them. We focus on the things that set us apart, like personalized customer service and our reputation for servicing appliances, which is something the big stores don't do. You have your core customers that keep coming back to you, and if you keep doing a good job their repeat business helps. *(Interview continued on back)*



Roslindale Village Shines for the Holidays

Last November, Roslindale Village Main Street installed 92 LED-lit decorations on lamp posts around the district - making the district sparkle for the holidays for the first time in over a decade.

The cost of decorating Roslindale Village was nearly \$20,000 - about half of that to purchase the decorations up front, and half for installation, takedown and storage. All of these funds were raised through RVMS' annual *Taste of Roslindale* fundraiser, with the support of the local business community. Last year 84 business and property owners

contributed to the *Taste* through sponsorships or in-kind donations. Many more volunteers worked to help plan and coordinate the lighting effort, with additional support from Mayor Menino, Councilor Consalvo, Boston Public Works, and the IBEW Local 103, who donated the installation of outlets on 35 lampposts. Additionally, more than 35 businesses lined their windows in lights to enhance the streetscape effort.

When businesses work together to make the district shine, everyone benefits. Please consider sponsoring the *Taste of Roslindale* this year to help keep Roslindale Village bright every holiday season.

Upcoming Events and Opportunities

Sat & Sun, March 6-7 - **Bay State Model Railroad Museum Open House**, 11am-4pm

Over 600 railroad enthusiasts of all ages (and from all over) flock to this annual event in the heart of Roslindale Square. If you're open on Saturdays and Sundays, participate in RVMS' **First Class Pass** promotion to help draw the hordes to your business. Contact Jody for more information.

Wednesday, March 24 - **RVMS Annual Members' Meeting**, 6-7:30 pm, Roslindale Public Library

All business owners are invited to attend this meeting to network with local residents and fellow merchants, and hear RVMS' reports on 2009 and plans for the coming year. Refreshments will be served.

Saturday, April 3 - **15th Annual Egg Hunt in Adams Park**, 10am-noon

Hundreds of families will come to Roslindale Village for this annual community event sponsored by RVMS and featuring an egg toss, arts and crafts (provided by the Roslindale Arts Alliance) and of course, the arrival of Mr. Bunny himself. A great opportunity for an in-store promotion.

Save the date!

Saturday, June 5 - **Roslindale Farmers' Market Opening Day**, 9am-1:30 pm, Adams Park

RVMS' summer Farmers' Market attracted 1500-2000 visitors to Roslindale Village each week in 2009. 83% of visitors shop other businesses around the Square when they leave the market. We encourage local businesses to participate in the market as vendors, with special events, or in other ways. We welcome your ideas and input. The 2010 Farmers' Market will run every Saturday from 9-1:30 through October 30.



It's that time of year - let's all do our part to keep sidewalks and curbs clear for pedestrians. Sidewalks and ramps, including bus stops, are the responsibility of the abutting occupant according to municipal law. Report uncleared sidewalks at 617-635-4500.

Ten Questions continued...

What advice do you have to new small business owners in Roslindale like me?

Definitely watch your expenses! Be very disciplined in running your business, and treat your customers well. Expect to learn something new everyday; you can train yourself during the day by looking into manufacturer's websites and seeing what is current.

Looking at the vintage items in the window, the mural in the store [a timeline of the history of appliances that goes around the entire showroom] and your new website [www.harrisonrefrigeration.com] there seems to be a retro theme with your branding. What attracts you to that retro look or where did the inspiration come from?

That's a very good question. My father has always liked old things, whether it was the old pickup truck that we used to do deliver our appliances or the value he saw in the construction of an old refrigerator. Let's face it, old things are just built better. That's part of my father's character as an immigrant who started with nothing - he built his business on hard work and good quality. That still defines how we operate today.

So what's your own dream appliance that you'd like to have at home for yourself?

It would definitely be a big stove where you can grill and griddle, with high power burners and a convection oven. Yes, one of those big commercial stoves with an exhaust hood to take the smoke out when you're cooking. It has to have a grill, to be able to grill indoors all year.

If you'd like to interview a local business - one you know well, or one you'd like to get to know better - and share your conversation through this newsletter, please let us know!

BUSINESS NEWS & UPDATES

Openings, Closings, Etc.

After 58 years, **Boschetto Bakery** closed its doors in late October. Owner Joe Murphy has been working to sell the building and find a viable new occupant to fill the anchor space on Washington Street. Also closed this fall was **A-1 Auto Insurance** on Corinth Street.

Jerusalem Trading Co., a furniture outlet with branches in Hyde Park and Dorchester, opened on Poplar Street in December. **Jazz Cafe and Bar**, a Haitian-American cafe, also opened in December on Washington St. **Colorwheel Collection**, a baby/toddler clothing and gift shop, opened in late September on Washington Street. **Matimba Gallery**, a collection of Colombian art, and **Platt & Anderson Architects** recently took up residence on Birch Street. **Roxy Nails** opened in January on Corinth Street, and **Cafe Rialto**, an Italian restaurant, will open this month on Washington Street.

Demolition began in December on the **vacant gas station** across from Adams Park. The developer plans to complete construction this year on a two-story building that will house the Social Security office, with retail spaces on the ground floor.

Eight brightly colored **gateway signs** were installed at the 4 main entrances to Roslindale Village last month. The signs are part of a project sponsored by RVMS, to enhance the district through signage and public art.

Business Resources

The **Roslindale Board of Trade** meets on the first Tuesday of every month at 6 pm. Next meeting is Tuesday March 2. www.roslindaleboardoftrade.com for more info.

Boston Buying Power Small businesses are saving up to 25% on utility bills through a citywide group purchasing program. www.bostonbuyingpower.com or 888.317-3923.

Many other small business assistance resources are available to you via RVMS. Please contact us or visit our website to learn more.



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The mission of RVMS is to promote Roslindale Village as an appealing destination and the dynamic center of our community. As a nonprofit organization, we bring together local volunteers, businesses and public agencies to strengthen the Village's economic vitality, physical appearance and unique local character.