

# Newsletter

## October Issue

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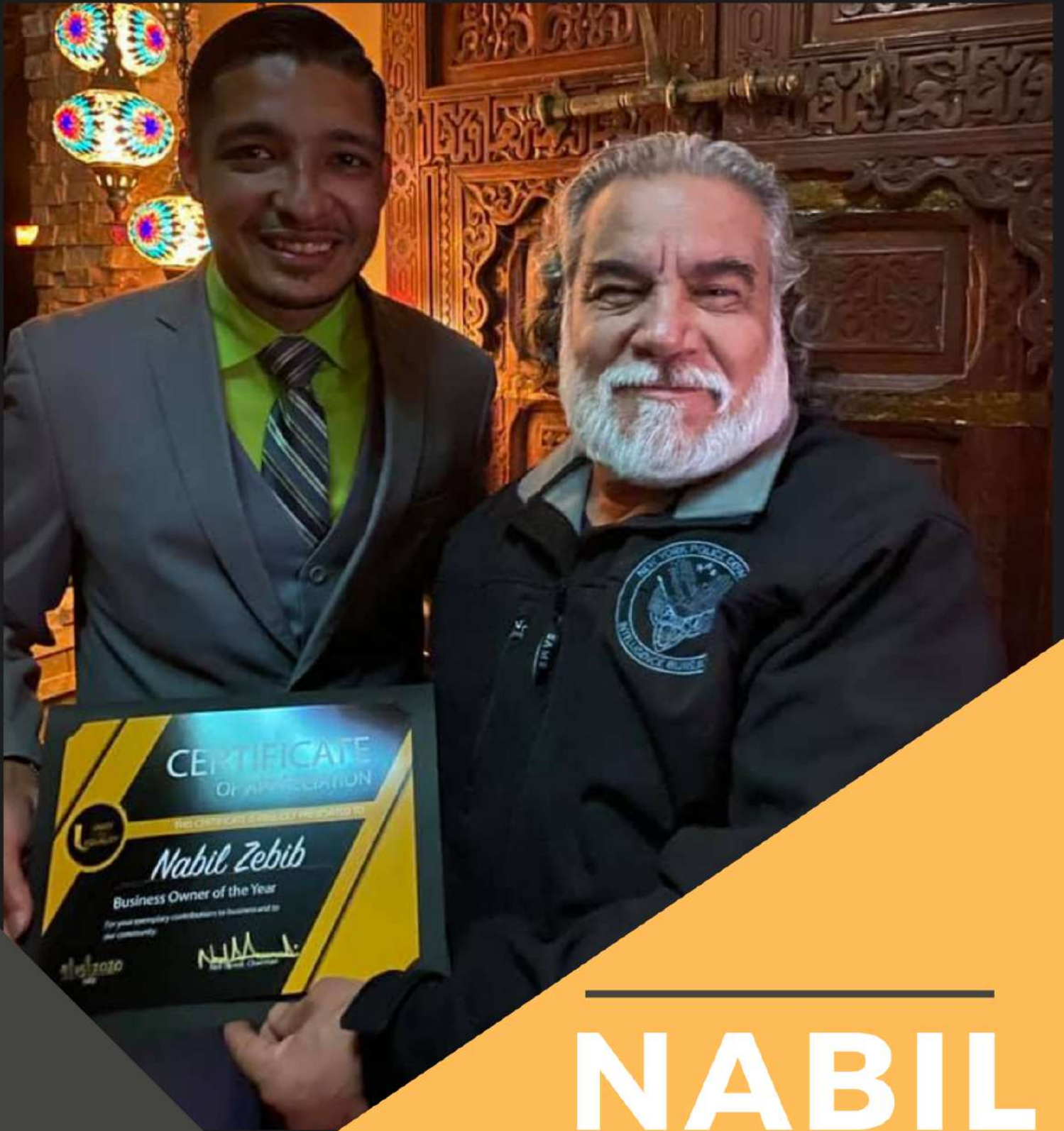
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# BUSINESS OWNER OF THE YEAR



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# NABIL ZEBIB

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OCTOBER • 2020





## LATE SUPREME COURT JUSTICE RBG

Federica Soccal

**Ruth Bader Ginsburg (RBG), was a trailblazing legal giant, and a tireless champion of justice. She served as associate justice of the Supreme Court of the United States from 1993 until her recent death, last month. She fought for equal rights, abortion rights, bodily autonomy, feminism, immigration and same-sex marriage, and her passing is a deep loss for many. As a result, in honor of her great achievements, let's take a look through, and celebrate, her truly remarkable life.**

**Ginsberg's passion for feminism began at home; her mother was the brightest student in her class, but had to drop out of high school, as her family used their savings to put her brother through college, instead of her. Seeing a less qualified male favored over a deserving woman was something that marked Ginsburg from a young age. Therefore, when her mother died, Ginsburg was determined to accomplish the incredible things that her mother was unable to do.**

**Nonetheless, even after excelling at Cornell, Harvard and Columbia, Ginsberg still found it difficult to find a job. She stated that she had three strikes against her: she was Jewish, she was a woman, and she was, by then, a mother. However, from 1961 to 1963, when she started a legal study in Sweden about feminism, she observed the changes in Sweden, where women didn't have to choose between raising a family and having a career. This in turn, inspired her radical project to erase the functional difference between men and women in society, and in 1972, Ginsburg co-founded the Women's Rights Project at the ACLU. She went in front of the supreme court to fight for 6 gender discrimination cases, and won 5 of them.**

**Ginsburg was appointed to the supreme court by Clinton in 1993, and in 1996 she wrote the majority opinion that would serve as a milestone moment for women's rights and university admission policies. The case challenged a policy by the Virginia Military Institute that barred women from being admitted to the institution. Ginsberg argued that barring women was a constitutional violation, and her work on this case increased the level of scrutiny that courts in the future have to give to sex discrimination. More recently, in 2015, Ginsberg's vote helped with the outcome of Obergefell vs. Hodges case. In the case, a number of same-sex couples sued their respective states over bans against same-sex marriages. This was a major moment for the rights of LGBTQ+ Americans; Ginsberg's vote helped overturn marriage bans. This in turn helped to legalize same-sex marriage in every U.S. state. Ginsburg was a soft-spoken but unstoppable force that transformed the law, and defied social conventions. She taught us that having opinions and voicing them, even if they aren't shared by the majority, is vital. But above all, she taught us not to settle; to be warriors for justice and equality every single day. So, in the face of uncertainty and a new election, we should all get to work honoring her legacy.**



# • How Businesses Are Doing During COVID-19

Nathan Godderis



"My motivation in life are my goals, and being able to serve others to the best of my ability," Zebib says. "When I see others struggling it hurts me dearly, and I get pulled to help them immediately, which is how we all should be as human beings."

Unity for Equality awarded Nabil with this award, due to his selfless actions; helping out those who need it most, and choosing unity and compassion over financial incentive. Therefore, I hope you'll join us in congratulating him, as he truly deserves this accolade.

Due to social media's rise in recent years, people are struggling, more than ever, to connect on a face-to-face level with their communities. Yet a collective struggle like COVID-19 has meant that, for the first time in a long time, people are relying on each other again, rather than taking each other for granted.

However, some of our communities who are struggling to economically cope in the midst of the pandemic are small, local businesses. These stores still dealt with taxes and regulations, yet in the early days of lockdown, when they were forced to shut down, their main source of income diminished. As a result, collectively, we have been working to help those around us, by staying home, and shopping locally, so we can get through this incredibly stressful time.

Nonetheless, at Unity for Equality, we are committed to giving thanks to those who are going above and beyond their call of duty, in this time of crisis. Nabil Zebib, Unity for Equality's Business Owner of the Year Awardee, is one of them. He has demonstrated what it means to help out other local businesses, and claims that witnessing the crises in Lebanon over the years have inspired him to help out those in need.

In other news, another example of communities coming together can be seen in my San Francisco Bay Area hometown. An organization called the Bay Area Enterprises (BAE) Initiative has been made to support local businesses through a variety of methods using local communities. Online events and competitions, arts-related fundraisers, interviews, and public service announcements are just some of the methods used. BAE aims to keep people informed about businesses in need, dispel myths about the cleanliness of stores, and the hope to keep these businesses afloat in the long term, rather than the short term.

However, apart from businesses, we are also working together as a nation, in order to flatten the curve of Coronavirus. What has helped in doing so has been the social media posts we've been sharing, the front lawn "quarantine art" we've been creating, and the support we have been showing to organizations which bring food and essentials to vulnerable and elderly people. Now more than ever, we have a larger gratitude for well-being of our communities. I can only hope that we will always work this hard to support each other, and will keep on building each other up, even when this crisis subsides.





# Top Issues In The Commonwealth State of Virginia

Jennifer Brooks

## The Appointment of our New Chapter President for the State of Virginia

Many states, throughout the US, are fighting for equality. Virginia is no different. As the 38th state to approve the Equal Rights Amendment, a gender equality measure, the state has joined in the fight to give equal rights to everyone, no matter their gender. Nonetheless, even though Virginia approved the ERA in the 2020 legislative session, there may be practical problems that might prevent this from being carried out. Even though State Democrats are pushing forward to make this happen, Conservatives are concerned that the window to ratify the ERA has already expired. Nevertheless, activists and politicians are still persisting, to ensure it becomes a reality.

Other issues that impact the state, are problems with gun crime. Activists have long been fighting for changes in laws regarding gun safety. This includes Lisette Johnson, who became an activist after being shot by her estranged husband. However, it appears that people, like Johnson, are finally being listened to. In January, Democrats promised new restrictions. This includes implementing new laws, such as banning assault weapons and passing a "red flag" law that will allow guns to be confiscated from those deemed by courts to be dangerous. Whilst the fight is far from over, as gun right activists are angry about these new regulations, it appears that change is finally happening.

In other news, Virginia is also fighting to increase the minimum wage from \$7.25 an hour to \$15 so that those working in essential jobs, such as carers and supermarket employees, can earn more for their vital services. Climate change is another major concern we should be fighting against, especially in Virginia, as countless habitats are being lost, due to the advancements of residential and commercial properties.

At Unity for Equality, we are aware that fighting for these changes will take time to carry through, and it is going to take a lot of effort and perseverance. But this isn't going to stop us from standing with Virginia, and doing our part. This is why we have appointed our new Chapter President for the State of Virginia, Bianca Robinson, to help us do just that. Bianca, we are delighted to have you on board, and we are excited to see what we can do to implement real change together.





## What Fall Means to Me

Abheek Singh

It is that time of year again: summer is ending, and fall is upon us. You may be wondering what's so special about fall? After all, it is one of the most overlooked seasons. Well, in this article, we are going to tell you why you should be excited.

Firstly, one of the big perks of fall is... it's Halloween season! We all know Halloween is an exciting time, even though it might be slightly harder to celebrate this year, due to the pandemic. But that shouldn't stop you from enjoying yourself, as long as you remain cautious. So, decorate your house or apartment with some cobwebs, watch a scary movie, and eat some pumpkin pie to get yourself in the spirit!

Speaking of pumpkins, you could always pick up a pumpkin at your local farm; just make sure it's in a good condition because you don't want a rotten pumpkin in your house. If the weather's nice, you could even try going on a nature walk. Many trails are open this time of year, and the weather is perfect, unlike the summer, when it's too hot, and the winter, when it's too cold.

There are also so many amazing things to make and eat this season. I've already mentioned pumpkin pie, but pumpkin seeds can also be tasty, as you can roast them for a snack. You could try some toffee apples if you haven't already; they are a great traditional dessert. And finally, cinnamon goes with everything, so be sure to add it to all of your sweet, or even savoury, dishes, for a great autumnal treat.

Fall is one of the greatest times of the year; make sure not to waste it. There are so many things to do and try, so have fun and enjoy the season!



October 10th

# WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY

Federica Soccia

World Mental Health Day, on the 10th of October, is a day dedicated to global mental health awareness, education, and advocacy against stigma. The day is meant to bring awareness to the importance of mental health and combat the misconception that mental illness, unlike physical illness, is associated with moral failing. Mental illnesses are not something to be ashamed of, something to snap out of, or something to power through. They are serious, debilitating, and potentially deadly medical conditions like any other. Mental illness should be treated like other illnesses, and when suffering from it, one should seek professional help without shame.

The societal response to mental illness has, for a long time, been disturbing and unhelpful. In ancient Greece and Rome, mental illnesses were considered supernatural and treated with brutal exorcisms. In medieval times asylums and sanatoriums were instituted around Europe, to be used as custodial institutions without any type of treatment. Later in the 17th and 18th century these sanatoriums became exhibitions. The Bethlehem Hospital in London encouraged visitors; it was treated like a zoo, and if the patients weren't agitated enough for a spectacle, they would be triggered. The 20th century made significant steps toward a greater understanding of these illnesses, but this was at the same time as the backdrop of many of these cruel psychological experiments.

People with mental health problems are statistically less likely to find work, be in a steady, long-term relationship, live in decent housing, and be socially included in mainstream society. Still today people with mental illnesses are discriminated against in the workplace. The stigma around mental health prevents employment since people with mental health conditions are often blamed for their behavior and symptoms, which frequently leads to people trying to conceal their diagnosis.

A major hurtful myth regarding this matter is the idea that people who have mental illnesses are dangerous. Even though many studies have discredited this, media and public perception continue to perpetuate this myth. For example, in the US, when there's news regarding mass shootings, or other terrible violent events, if the perpetrator has a mental illness, that aspect is repeated endlessly and blamed for the event. This reinforces stigma and diverts the conversation from the obvious gun problem that exists in this country.

Furthermore, in most recent years, there's been a divide in social discourse, especially online, between different types of mental health issues, which have been unjustly sorted into a hierarchy. The more severe illnesses (like schizophrenia, borderline personality disorder and dissociative identity disorder) are being vilified and stigmatized, and the more common (like anxiety, OCD, social anxiety disorder and depression) are being normalized or even romanticized. Normalization could be interpreted as a positive thing, but lately, there's a phenomenon of people who don't actually suffer from these illnesses, who use them as a joke, or a punchline to explain their quirky behavior. For example, someone who cleans often may say they are "so OCD", when they have no idea what the reality of living with that issue entails. This is a slap in the face for people who actually have the condition, who feel that their problems are being invalidated and trivialized.

In honor of mental health day, we should all continue to educate ourselves on this matter, ask questions and be openminded, as the general notions people have of mental illnesses are often morphed by misconceptions, poor representation and fear.







Jennifer Brooks

# World Food Day

## October 16th

On October 16th World Food Day will be upon us again, and after the year we've all had, it is more important than ever. After the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, we have all realized how much we take for granted, including our access to food. This being said, there are still plenty of people throughout the world who struggle to get supplies, and we should all be doing our part to help them get the necessities they need to live a healthy life. This is what annual events, like World Food Day, aim to do: to act for those living in famine, and to ensure that everyone has access to a healthy diet.

According to the Food and Agriculture organization of the United Nations, one of the key issues surrounding food is how dependent it is on the natural environment, and our environment is vulnerable. It doesn't take much to send the food industry into chaos. Crops are largely dependent on the weather, meaning that something as simple as a drought, or excessive rainfall, could compromise an entire maize field. However, issues like this are minute in comparison to more

like this are minute in comparison to more wide-ranging, systemic issues, affecting the food production industry, such as climate change. As a result, if we do nothing, we could see an increasing number of catastrophes that affect access to food, particularly in developing countries. For this reason, it's vital for us to work together so we can make food systems more resilient, so they can withstand our changing environment.

The pandemic itself has also meant that people living in poverty are struggling more than ever to put food on their tables. This is even the case in relatively wealthy countries, such as the UK. According to The Food Foundation, "More than 1.5 million adults in Britain say they cannot obtain enough food." Also, countless families who ordinarily would have had access to free school meals, haven't been provided with the food vouchers or parcels that the government had promised in place of them. This means that 830,000 children have been left without sustenance.

Nonetheless, there are plenty of things we can do to help. Luckily for us, the Food and Agriculture organization of the United Nations, have given us tips. These include simple things, such as growing our own fruit and vegetables, so we don't waste as much plastic packaging that comes with shop-bought ones. You should also choose seasonal foods whenever you can, as if they aren't, it costs a lot of money for them to be imported.

Also, if you're not self-isolating, why don't you volunteer at your local food bank? It's a great way to give something back to your community, and would be a massive help for families who desperately need resources. However, if this isn't possible for you, you could always follow #WorldFoodDay on social media, and share their posts. It might seem small, but the more awareness we can spread, the better. It's easy to forget there are people going hungry, especially if we're not struggling ourselves. But people are, and the least we can do for them is to do our bit. It's everyone's responsibility.





# New Merch!

Check out the new merch we just dropped!



## CLOTHING

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Every purchase goes towards efforts to address the challenges we face today, from climate change to extreme inequality. When you purchase Unity For Equality's merch, you will turn your action into a real, lasting impact.

If you want to help, check out our merch website at:  
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