

# Julio DiGiando, father, teacher, and civic leader

By Sam Bari

Julio J. DiGiando has lived in Jamestown for more than three decades. He bought property, built a house with his father, and raised a family here. He has played an important role in community affairs, sitting on various committees, commissions and boards since the early 1990s and last year was voted Town Council president.

Besides being a responsible, civic-minded citizen, DiGiando has dedicated his life to education. He has been a teacher since graduating from Bates College in 1970.

"I do it for our children," DiGiando said. "I think it's important to assure them a better life in a better world when we're gone." He has stood behind his convictions all his life by always finding time for his children and by his involvement with the community on every level. In addition to volunteering for public office and teaching, he was past president of the soccer association, and spent two years as commodore of the Jamestown Yacht Club.

"If nothing else, I taught my son, Nick, how to play soccer and ski, and my daughter, Dana, how to sail," he said.

Nick, 30, now owns his own company, Atlantic Landscaping, and Dana, 27, a Portsmouth Abby graduate, attended college in Europe, and works for Harken Yacht Fittings in Newport.

"My father came to the United States from Italy when he was 6 years old," DiGiando said. "I think it was in 1925. He probably came through Ellis Island. He built airplanes during W.W. II, then moved to West Virginia where he met my mother working on a farm. They married and moved to Wellesley, Mass. in 1946, where I was born and raised with a younger sister and brother," DiGiando said.

His father worked in the construction business with his brother and cousin, and started his own construction company in 1960 while DiGiando was in school.

A high school and college friend introduced DiGiando to one of his favorite pastimes—sailing. "On my first voyage we sailed from Plymouth to Provincetown and from P-town to Falmouth," DiGiando said. "That hooked me. I've been sailing ever since."

He still owns the first boat he ever bought, a 14-foot Sturdy Skiff that sits in his driveway. He also owns a 28-foot Sabre sailboat that he races on Tuesday nights.

After earning degrees in history and social studies from Bates College in Maine in 1970, DiGiando got a Rhode Island special education certificate and taught for 30 years in Warwick. He earned a masters degree in special education in 1975 from Rhode Island College.

DiGiando bought a double lot in Jamestown in 1975. He and his father built a house on one of the lots and DiGiando has lived there since. He married and raised his family in the house, adding rooms as each



Julio J. DiGiando

child was born. A few years ago, he bought the adjacent lot at the back of his property. "I'll leave it all to my kids," he said.

He served on the school committee starting in the early 90s, followed by a stint with the harbor commission for two years. DiGiando was elected to the Town Council in 2002 and served as a councilman for three terms. He was then elected president of the council in 2007, a post he will hold for two years.

DiGiando retired from full-time teaching in 2001, but he still works part time as an algebra and trigonometry teacher at New England Tech. When he isn't teaching, serving the town, or sailing, he spends time with his girlfriend, Jan DeMeo,

a librarian in Wayland, Mass. They met in college, lost touch over the years, and reconnected at a 1999 class reunion.

As if he wasn't busy enough with civic duties and meeting the demands of an otherwise full schedule, DiGiando finds time to raise a garden. In addition to vegetables, his fig and pear tree manage to produce an abundant annual yield. Sometimes he sits on his back porch where he strums his guitar, and encourages the tomatoes and eggplants to grow.

DiGiando always has time to lend a helping hand.

He lives with his cats, Zoe and Legend, on Clarke Street, in the house he built with his father.

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