

Beachwood Buzz

July 2017

Every Real Business. Every Month.

MAGAZINE

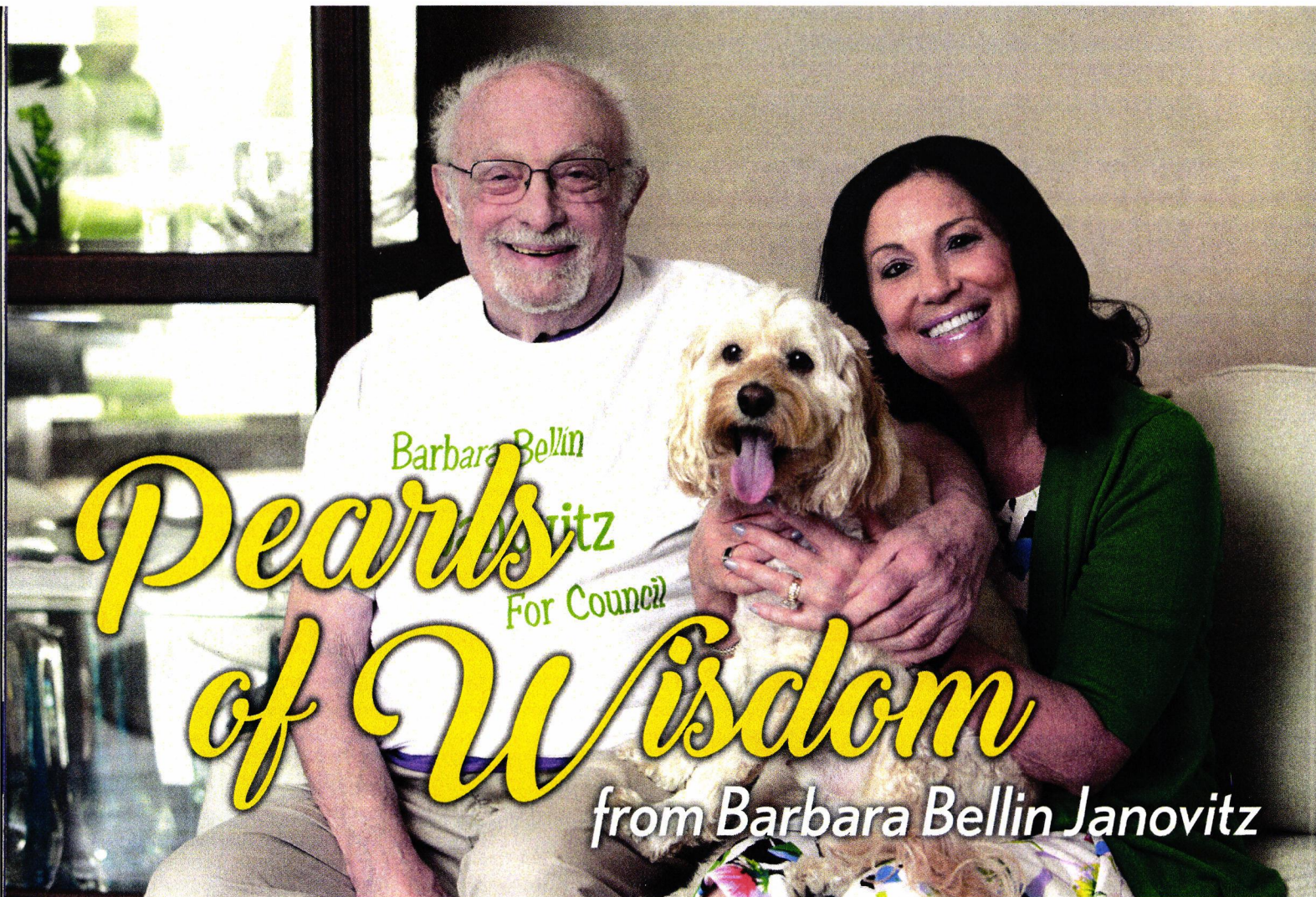
Pearls of Wisdom

from Barbara Bellin Janovitz

B. BELLIN JANOVITZ

Also Inside:

City Council Update
Congratulations BHS Class of '17 –
Special Senior Section
Beachwood Medical Academy
Jacob's Journey
Who's Buzzin' in Beachwood
... and much more!



The Beachwood Chamber of Commerce recently formed the Beachwood Women's Connection, a women's networking group. Their first speaker, Barbara Bellin Janovitz, discussed how she became involved in Beachwood politics, who inspires her, and what motivates her.

Although she has always had an interest in politics, Janovitz had never been politically active. After graduating from Beachwood High School, she attended Georgetown University, in part because she wanted to work on Capitol Hill. She was employed as an intern in Congressman Charles Vanik's office and also became involved in campus life by running for Georgetown's business school academic council. At that time, 40 years ago, just as in her campaign for Beachwood City Council two years ago, Janovitz was the only woman running for the office. She ran against six men and received the most votes by a large margin.

Prior to running for City Council, Janovitz was happy and fulfilled with her successful legal career, chairing the estate planning group at Reminger Co., LPA and serving on many non-profit boards, including The Benjamin Rose Institute, the Montefiore Foundation, and the Center for Community Solutions. She had not thought about contending until she was approached by former Cleveland Heights councilperson Bonnie Caplan, who now lives in Beachwood. Caplan was shocked to learn that there were 13 men governing the city of Beachwood – seven on council, five on school board and the male mayor. There had not been a woman on Beachwood City Council for 15 years. Caplan started talking to people in the city, to see who could run and win. Janovitz's name kept coming up.

"I did not immediately say yes," Janovitz told us. "I initially said there must be someone else who will run, who has more time than I have. But Bonnie persisted and other women started calling me, and I realized that while I thought I had done well helping others in my career and in raising my family - with support from my super-supportive husband – and I thought I had done well helping others through my work on non-profit boards, I had never really given back to Beachwood."

"I agreed to run, partly because I didn't want to be a woman who sat on the sidelines and said, 'there really should be a woman on council,' but not be willing to step up to the plate and be that woman. I saw this as a challenge and believe that it is important to challenge yourself and step outside of your comfort zone."

Once Janovitz decided to run, she threw herself into it and went door-to-door to talk to as many residents as possible. She felt it was even more important that she spent countless hours listening to residents. When asked if she played the "woman card," said, "I was given advice by many people not to; advice that I ignored because I felt strongly that one of the reasons people should vote for me WAS because I was a woman – an extremely QUALIFIED woman – with personal and professional skills that would benefit council and the residents of the community she loved. Janovitz believed council needed diversity in membership, ideas and approaches.

Not only is Janovitz the first woman in 15 years to serve on council (the last woman serving was Alice Jacobs), but she was also the first woman in the Cleveland office of her law firm to be on its executive committee and the first woman to become a partner while working part-time. Being the only councilwoman does not pose a challenge



Here are some *"pearls of wisdom"* that have resonated with me:

- If possible, find work that you love so that it doesn't seem like work, but is, rather, just a positive part of your life.
- Don't let others define success for you; define success for yourself. It varies for different people and the journey, however you define it, takes time and hard work.
- Seek out leadership roles early.
- Be a mentor to other women when you're in a position to do so.
- Set a vision early and prioritize what you care most about. Periodically, reevaluate where you are and where you want to be, and then make any changes necessary to achieve your goal.
- Reach high, but bring others up with you.

to Janovitz; being the only NEW councilperson does. "I am used to being the only woman in a sea of men, which has put my husband, Lee, in situations where he was the only man in a sea of women," she said with a smile.

Janovitz went on to explain that, at a partners' meeting in the Bahamas many years ago, she spent mornings with her (then-all male) partners inside the hotel. While she discussed firm business with the men, Lee was spending his mornings poolside with the (then-all female) spouses, happily offering to get them drinks. Since that time, Lee has been referred to by Janovitz's partners as "cabana boy."

When asked about something distinctive about being on council, Janovitz smiled and said, "As trite as it seems, I may be more aware of my physical appearance than my counterparts are at council meetings because several people – not the men on council – make suggestions about what I should wear to the meetings or how I should style my hair so that I'll photograph well. I get a kick out of hearing others say that I am the 'prettiest' council member, especially since I think that Alec Isaacson is pretty good looking!" She paused, then added, "I've become good friends with my fellow council members, and I really respect and like all of them. The city is in good hands."

In her capacity as the council's communications chairperson, Janovitz was one of the councilpersons instrumental in having the meetings broadcast via a livestream feed, something that was activated in March. She's also eager to establish a program where seniors can sign up for assistance with transporting their trash to their tree lawn.

Through her role on council, she says she's learned a lot about zoning issues and, as a byproduct, she now views commercial development in the city differently. "I think of the Container Store (recently opened at

LaPlace) not only as a shopping destination, but also as a source of revenue for Beachwood."

Further illumination has been spread on the inner workings of the city services department, something for which she has gained a greater appreciation. "We have extremely talented, motivated and dedicated employees working in all departments for our city. When the streets are always plowed, it takes a lot of planning, and costs a lot of money."

Many residents have asked if she has any plans to run for mayor one day. "I have no political ambitions other than to be a productive council member who helps to bring positive changes to the city," she states. And that process can be stressful. When she votes on matters, she says she considers all the angles. But afterwards, she sometimes second guesses herself. "You can't always be certain you're making the right decision."

Who inspires her? Janovitz revealed that her longstanding role model has been her father, Al Bellin, who modeled for her and her sisters "to be kind and honest, and to help others through volunteer work." As her staunch advocate, she reports that he wore a "Barbara Bellin Janovitz for Council" t-shirt daily for five months, even to a Shiva," in advance of the election. She added, "I have always been motivated to be a positive role model for my daughter and sons, not only by talking to them about what I think is important, but also leading by example. I wanted to show them that it's possible to balance a home life with a professional life, and to also find time to give back to the community."

Janovitz wants to be able to look back on her life and say she made a difference - not only for her family and clients, but also for others. And, by being involved with policy-related matters, she believes she can achieve her goals.