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Paul Tuliano, left, died this week at age 93. He was a longtime resident of Pemberton Township and Pemberton Borough, and served during World War II, Korea and Vietnam before becoming one of Burlington County's most devoted veterans' advocates. [ARCHIVE PHOTO]

'A veteran's veteran'

Veterans and community members mourn death of longtime advocate Paul Tuliano Sr.

By David Levinsky
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Paul Tuliano Sr.'s military career may have spanned three wars, but his service to his country, community and fellow veterans lasted a lifetime.

Tuliano died this week at age 93. He was longtime resident of Pemberton Township and Pemberton Borough and served during World War II, Korea and Vietnam before becoming one of Burlington County's most devoted veterans' advocates,

"He never stopped serving," Walt Tafe, Burlington County's recently retired director of Military and Veterans Services, said Friday. "He was an absolute pit bull going after veterans issues."

A native of Massachusetts, Tuliano's military service began in 1943 when he entered the Army two weeks

See VETERAN, A2

'Dine al fresco'



A view of the outdoor seating area at Robin's Nest, which sits along a branch of the Rancocas Creek in Mount Holly. [NANCY ROKOS / STAFF PHOTOJOURNALIST]



Ernestine Williams, owner of Mama's Homemade Cookies in Palmyra, prepares a package for a customer with the help of employee Tiffany Farr. Williams hopes her business will benefit from outdoor seating. [KELLY KULTYS / STAFF PHOTOJOURNALIST]

"This outdoor ordinance that they just passed is great because my attorney has to work on the outdoor variance if they didn't pass it, so then it would cost me a lot more to (do it) and it would take a lot longer for me,"

Ernestine Williams, owner of Mama's Homemade Cookies

Palmyra joins other towns in the outdoor dining scene

By Kelly Kultys
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PALMYRA — Ernestine Williams has watched mothers bring their children into her sweet shop in recent months, but with little room to sit inside her "Mama's Homemade Cookies."

"They come and they're out for a walk with the children and some of them have two, three and they're out with the baby carriages and all," she said, showing the inside of her store on Cinnaminson Avenue, which seats only up to four people.

But now Williams and other

local business owners in the borough will have the opportunity to provide more options to customers, thanks to new outdoor seating ordinances recently adopted by Borough Council.

"Outside, that gives us four more spaces," Williams said. "You can get two more on each side of the table, so that gives them more room to stretch out."

The ordinance comes at a perfect time for Kaffir Thai on Broad owner Samantha Kham, who now can avoid seeking outdoor seating variances for a property she recently purchased next door.

See OUTDOOR, A6

ONLINE

NOT TOO LATE TO VOTE

The third voting round for Ask the BCT is open until 11:59 p.m. Monday. To participate in the community-driven reporting project, visit burlingtoncountytimes.com/askthebct.



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OUTDOOR

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“This outdoor ordinance that they just passed is great because my attorney has to work on the outdoor variance if they didn’t pass it, so then it would cost me a lot more to (do it) and it would take a lot longer for me,” she said.

Before the ordinances passed, Kham was going to have to pay hundreds of dollars more to have professionals and attorneys study the property and effectively present a case to the borough’s Land Use Board on why her property should receive a use variance for outdoor seating. It also would require her, as an applicant, to appear before the board with her representation to ask for the variance. With the passage of the ordinance, Kham said that saves her money, time and effort.

That’s the exact intention of the two new, related laws, Councilman Lewis Yetter said during the October meeting when the ordinances related to outdoor seating were adopted.

“The idea is to save these businesses a couple dollars, to streamline the process and make it easier,” he said. “Even if it’s \$200 to go before the Land Use Board, who wants to put that money up, when you’re running a small business? That’s a little bite out of your profits. Every little thing we can do to help is going to make it better.”

One ordinance allows for “outdoor cafes and seating areas” for outdoor dining between 8 a.m. and 10 p.m. Sunday through Thursday, or no later than 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday from April 1 to Nov. 30. The seating areas must only contain furniture that cannot be fixed to the ground, according to the ordinance.

“The Borough has determined that outdoor cafe seating areas will promote the public interest by adding to the active and attractive pedestrian environment created by them and provide the opportunity for creative, colorful, pedestrian-focused commercial activities on a day, night and seasonal basis, which activities are aesthetically pleasing and will add to the excitement, charm, vitality and diversity of the Borough,” the ordinance reads.

The companion ordinance allows sidewalk furniture for outdoor dining in the borough’s town center and neighborhood commercial zones, which includes most of Broad and Market streets and a few small sections of side streets, like Cinnaminson Avenue, and specifies what types of furniture are allowed as well as regulations on making sure there’s still room for people to walk on the sidewalks.

Local business owners, like Williams, said they’re grateful for the ordinances because they will help business and enhance the borough.

“I think it will make the town look a little bit friendlier,” she said. “It’s just something about the outside, especially if it’s bright and sunny, that I feel like lifts people’s spirits.”

Revitalization

Council members said the idea to allow for outdoor cafes came about as a way to revitalize the downtown business district.

“There’s language in every master plan ... that speaks to the decline of the downtown business district,” Councilwoman Mindie Weiner said. “The reexamination of the master plan for many years observed that



Soon certain sidewalks in front of businesses in Palmyra could be open to outdoor seating. [KELLY KULTYS / STAFF PHOTOJOURNALIST]



Ya Charatsil, head chef at Kaffir Thai in Palmyra, looks over the menu for the evening. Kaffi Thai is one of the Palmyra businesses hoping to benefit from outdoor seating. [KELLY KULTYS / STAFF PHOTOJOURNALIST]



Robin Winzinger, owner of the Robin's Nest, talks about the advantages of having outdoor seating at her restaurant. [NANCY ROKOS / STAFF PHOTOJOURNALIST]



ABOVE: A view of Mount Holly from the outdoor seating area at Ott's Downtown Pub & Grille. BELOW: Alberto Rosado, manager at Ott's Downtown Pub and Grille, in Mount Holly, on Oct. 8, rearranges the chairs inside the outdoor dining area. [NANCY ROKOS / STAFF PHOTOJOURNALIST]



the revitalization of the business district is necessary. One way to revitalize is to do the things that we’re suggesting in these ordinances. Many towns adopted similar ordinances to do just that, to revitalize their downtown districts.”

One of those towns was Mount Holly in 2003. Years later, businesses like the Robin’s Nest and Ott’s Downtown Pub & Grille are seeing the gains.

“It’s helped benefit the business because outdoor dining itself brings in more people,”

said Robin Winzinger, owner of the Robin’s Nest. “It’s definitely increased our business during the summer time, and spring and the fall, too. We try to keep the patio opened as long as possible.”

In particular, it’s allowed them to host outdoor events, such as weddings, showers, comedy nights and fundraisers, that wouldn’t be possible inside, said Doreen Vittese, manager of the Robin’s Nest.

“A lot of girls that are looking for somewhere to host the shower or outdoor weddings, this is the perfect quaint spot right on the Rancocas Creek,” she said.

Alberto Rosado, manager of Ott’s Downtown Pub & Grille, said he’s seen an uptick in business since they opened an outdoor upstairs area earlier this year.

“It also brings out people from the crowd – they’ll hear music or something going on outside so it does bring people in,” he said.

One of the biggest draws to the outdoor cafe is Eagles games on Sundays. Oftentimes people on the street are attracted to join the fun when cheers from the game get loud, Rosado said.

Palmyra business owners like Ross Scofield, who recently opened The Pharmacy on Broad Street, said they believe having sidewalk seating will bring similar foot traffic.

“What’s missing from this neighborhood is a bustling downtown business district,” he told the Borough Council during a recent meeting. “I don’t understand why we don’t have that going on right now. I fully support (the outdoor seating). Let’s try to do something about

that. It’s only going to make the town look nicer; it’s only going to draw revenue here.”

That’s why Moorestown officials gave in to public outcry in 2008 and approved outdoor seating on Main Street as a part of the town’s revitalization efforts.

Palmyra resident Deb Vanneman said she wants her town to do the same.

“We are supposed to be a place to grow, so it seems kind of self-evident that we should be growing and showing people what a grand time we’re having dining at our establishments in outdoor seating,” Vanneman said. “When I am looking for a cool place to hang out, I am just drawn to that outdoor seating.”

Outdoor, without an ordinance

While some towns, like Medford, don’t have a specific ordinance permitting outdoor dining, business owners such as Lucy Illiano, of Illiano Cucina, said the extra business generated by outdoor seating made going through the variance process worth it.

“We wanted to take advantage of the scenic view we have,” she said, referring to the restaurant’s outdoor patio that overlooks a fountain and a pond at the Taunton Forge shopping center.

Despite taking extra time because the restaurant’s landlord sought addition variances for the property, Illiano Cucina gleefully opened its outdoor arrangement on Aug. 15.

“I know it’s one of the ‘trendy’ things to do – dine al fresco,” Illiano said. “I always thought it would be a good idea to potentially put something out there.”

A neighboring restaurant in the shopping center, Tacos El Tio, also got approval to have outdoor seating when it opened earlier this year.

While Palmyra’s ordinances don’t allow every type of outdoor seating, as they specifically relate to sidewalk dining and temporary furniture, local business owners and officials hope they will attract new establishments to the borough and make it seem more “business-friendly.”

Johanna Green, of Cinnaminson, owner of Mayfair Travel in Palmyra, said the outdoor dining trend allows businesses to help each other succeed.

“I feel like the businesses and the people are totally in sync and I really sense that we want this outdoor seating,” Green said. “We want the town to improve. My business is not on Broad Street, but if Broad Street thrives, so does my business. So do the businesses around me.”

Winzingersaid outdoor dining has improved Mount Holly.

“I think downtown Mount Holly is definitely on an upswing and I think that the Robin’s Nest and the outside dining are a big plus,” she said. “It’s a destination.”

Business owners in Palmyra, like Kham, are ready to use their outdoor plans to do the same for the borough.

“We’re thinking about putting a patio out and probably having little umbrellas,” she said.

Williams said people should get prepared to enjoy their cookies, ice cream and milkshakes outdoors next spring.

“You can come back and enjoy a big ice cream sandwich on a four-ounce cookie with a big scoop of ice cream,” she said. “Or just buy a bag of cookies and sit out there enjoying your cookies, like you’re in the park, but instead of going to the park, you’re right out here.”

George Hill, and his wife, Helene, of Baltimore, enjoy their lunch outside the Robin's Nest in Mount Holly. [NANCY ROKOS / STAFF PHOTOJOURNALIST]



Exterior of Illiano Cucina, at the Village of Tauton Forge in Medford. [NANCY ROKOS / STAFF PHOTOJOURNALIST]