

Welcome  
2026!  
Happy  
SemiQuincentennial  
To  
America!



# MERA

## HOMETOWN NEWS

### AND CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Items of interest to MERA Members  
January 2026

Want to know more?  
Check us out at  
[merasite.org](http://merasite.org)

### President's Note

2025 was filled with exciting events and we already have many activities planned for 2026. YOU are the reason that MERA can continue to grow! Please join us for the picnics, hikes, happy hours, and most importantly our monthly meetings. A light lunch is provided at these meetings; time to visit with old friends, and some great programs. Look forward to seeing you!! Happy New Year to you and your family.

Jim

### MERA Calendar of Events

*You won't want to miss any of these great MERA events!*

- **NOTE: THERE WILL NOT BE A General Membership Meeting IN JANUARY.**

- **Happy Hour Wednesday January 28, 4:00 pm** Mimmos, 290 Morgantown Rd, Reading
- **MERA General Meeting February 16, 1:00** at Muhlenberg Rec Center  
Program TBD. Lunch provided.
- **Happy Hour Wednesday February 25, 4:00 pm** Pour House 3341 Pricetown Rd, Fleetwood  
**NOTE:** No hike planned unless the snow geese arrive at Middle Creek this month in which case Happy Hour will change to K-Ville Tavern
- **MERA General Meeting March 16, 1:00** at Muhlenberg Rec Center  
Program TBD. Lunch provided.
- **Anniversary Luncheon, April 23, 11:00 am** More details soon!

### MERA Members Ring the Bell

Eight MERA members came out to ring the bell for the Salvation Army's Red Kettle Campaign at Boscov's - Berkshire Mall on Tuesday, December 16 from 10:00 - 6:00. Thank you to our wonderful volunteers: **Donna Goughnour, Tim Goughnour, Larry Lenhart, Terry Norman, Rich Piergrossi, Barb Seidel, Kathy Seyler and Cindy Thomas**. The Salvation Army provided candy canes and Hershey kisses to give to contributors. The Salvation Army reported that we raised \$280.13. Check the MERA website for pictures.

### Renewing Old Connections...That's What MERA Does

A couple years ago, at the MERA Christmas party a retired lineman from Hamburg introduced himself to **Stu Degler**. Stu, a former board member, had given a report to the group, and the lineman had recognized Stu's name. Turns out the lineman is the brother of the Flower Girl in Stu and Nancy's

1966 wedding! The Flower Girl is the niece of Stu's sister-in-law. Stu and Nancy had lost contact with her because the family grew apart. "To this day," says Stu, "I don't know what caused the break in the family. All I know is it is sad to let your family be torn apart this way." The same lineman was at the Christmas party this year and asked Stu if his sister (the Flower Girl) could come down to The Wherehouse, the site of the MERA party, and reconnect with Stu. Stu was thrilled with the idea. "Because of a difference between two sisters, I had not seen the girl for over fifty years! We had a great chat and renewed our friendship!" She described at length the gold dress she wore for the wedding. Turns out the Flower Girl had been following Stu and his wife online for years while never being in personal touch. Stu says, "I think everyone had a great day at the Christmas Party but not as great as mine!"

## MERA Member Profile

### Mary Beth Mancias

**Mary Beth Mancias** approached her interview for the Hometown News profile in the same way she approaches life: gentle, positive, self-effacing, intelligent, committed to the truth and with some humor thrown in for leavening.

She started her career at Met-Ed while still a student at Penn State. She completed a summer internship in 1982 and then went right to work upon her graduation in 1984 with a bachelor's degree in engineering. After two years, her husband Mark's (another Met-Ed retiree) military career took them to Virginia and then Florida. During those years, Mary Beth took time away from her career to be with her young children. She came back to Met-Ed in 1991 as a contractor and the company quickly brought her on fulltime. She served as a distribution engineer, worked with energy efficiency programs and helped to implement tariff changes. Eventually, she came into her own as a reliability engineer for Reading and Lebanon and then was promoted to Reliability Engineering Supervisor; the job she held when she retired in 2022. "I loved working in reliability engineering. It was my passion," says Mary Beth. "I found it so rewarding to work with a team whose goal was to improve our system for customers and the community." Nevertheless, Mary Beth's pleasant surprise upon retiring: no longer worrying about storms!

While at Met-Ed she accepted every invitation - from the Chamber, Jr. Achievement, Penn State and others - to speak to girls to open their minds to the idea of a career in engineering. Mary Beth received the STEP award from The Manufacturing Institute. This is a national award recognizing women who support and foster manufacturing and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) driving impact in their companies and communities.

In her last year or so before retiring, Mary Beth helped to establish a southeast PA chapter of FirstEnergy's Women in Leadership. The purpose of the organization is to promote growth and leadership. "It was very rewarding to get this up and running before I retired. I wanted to 'give back' and help others as my career with FE was coming to a close."

Mary Beth and Mark met through mutual friends and have been married nearly 40 years. (They will hit the milestone in February 2026.) They have a son and a daughter and two grandchildren. She grew up in Shillington and attended Holy Name High School before attending Penn State.

Mary Beth volunteered as a reading tutor for second graders as part of the United Way's *Ready. Set. READ!* program for 13 years. She recently took a break from that to serve as the religious educator for third graders at Sacred Heart Church in West Reading. "It's been fun to basically create my own lesson plan and I enjoy the kids!" She also volunteers at the IM Able Foundation (provides physical fitness opportunities for people with physical disabilities) and also for the Kennedy Soup Kitchen in

Reading. She spends a lot of time with her Mom (turning 90 in February) and her family. She loves to bake and currently, because this interview took place just before Christmas, she said her kitchen was a mess! "My grandkids, daughter and I created some really awesome cutout cookies!" Her favorite hobby is golfing and she is vice president of the Met-Ed golf league.

She and Mark are up most mornings at 5:30 to hit the gym. "It's the perfect time to exercise. It never gets bumped by some other event as nothing else is ever happening at 5:30 in the morning and it sets you up for success for the rest of the day." Mary Beth believes in moving. Her advice to fellow retirees is to do whatever exercise your aging body allows you to do! She also recommends hooking up with an exercise buddy as it makes the experience more fun and you are more likely to show up!

Finally, Mary Beth says "I am thankful for each day and for the past – despite the hard work and sacrifices – that brought me here."

## **Christmas in Bethlehem**

**Met-Ed Retiree Trip - December 4, 2025**

**By Denis Dorward**

The destination for our annual Christmas trip this year was Bethlehem, PA, or "Christmas City, USA." Bethlehem is known for its extensive holiday celebrations. And it didn't disappoint.

Upon arrival, we exited the bus at the Moravian Book Store, the oldest bookstore in America. We took advantage of our free time to stroll Main Street and experience the many shops and enjoy lunch at the multitude of restaurants. A few of the popular lunch spots were the Hotel Bethlehem, McCarthy's Red Stag Irish Pub, and Fegley's Bethlehem Brew Works.

Our next stop was a Christmas themed market called the Christkindlmarkt, featuring hundreds of vendors showcasing unique handcrafted goods. The German inspired holiday market is in the historic SteelStacks campus.

Before departing for home, a tour guide boarded our bus and described the early Bethlehem settlement by the Moravian church and its cultural ties to the community, dating back to its founding in 1741. Our guide was excellent, decked out in Moravian attire of the 1700s. She has been doing various tours of the city for 39 years. Bethlehem also has a rich industrial past. Bethlehem Steel was a major center for heavy industry and trade for decades, as evidenced by the SteelStacks arts and cultural campus, built on the former steel mill site. We toured the area of decorated trees and lights and even got a closeup of the huge Moravian Star located atop the mountain overlooking the city before heading home.

## **MERA 2026 Membership Dues**

The holidays are over. Time to reorganize, recoup, reconsider, recharge and most importantly RENEW! If you haven't already (and most of you have), the window to renew your MERA membership is closing. Anyone who has not paid their dues by March 1 will no longer receive MERA mailings – including Hometown News. If you've read this far, then Hometown News and MERA must be important to you! So don't miss out! Renew today! The 2026 renewal form can be found on the MERA website: [merasite.org](http://merasite.org).

## MERA Member Milestones

### Happy January Anniversary!

Martin & Sandra Christman  
Randy & Michelle Collins  
Robert & Sandra Eidle  
Terrilyn & Marcus Flasdick  
Michael & Suzanne Knarr  
Gene & Christine Lesher

William & Suellen Maurer  
Richard & Carol Morganti  
Gary & Lisa Pleiss  
Ronald & Linda Reddy  
Bob & Judy Stump

### Happy January Milestone\* Birthday!

\*A milestone birthday is one that ends in "0" or "5."

Kathy Campbell	Carol Morganti
MaryBeth Clark	Joseph Sutton
Dan Clark	David Topper
Patti Furman	

*People are usually shocked  
when they find out I'm not a  
very good electrician.*

