



MERA

HOMETOWN NEWS

AND CALENDAR OF EVENTS
Items of interest to MERA Members
June 2026

Want to know more?
Check us out at
merasite.org

A Note from MERA's President

Everyone will agree we had a real crazy Spring! Looking forward to a June that gives some warm days, especially for our picnic at Dietrich's Park. We look forward to a good attendance. We take a break in July & August for family vacations or just time to relax. Do keep in mind the Chicken Bake in September where we share our summer adventures. ENJOY the coming months!! Jim

MERA Calendar of Events

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

- **Happy Hour, June 17. (Please note date change due to MERA bus trip on June 24)** No hikes planned for the summer. Happy Hour at 4pm at the Valley Bar and Grill, 4741 Penn Ave, Sinking Spring (formerly the Bar-B-Q Pitt)
- **MERA Annual Picnic June 18, 11:00am** at Jim Dietrich Park. \$12 per person. **Deadline to register is June 10.** Questions? Reach out to **Rob Kehr**, 540 N 6th St., Hamburg, PA 19526. 484-388-0024
- **MERA Bus Trip, St Michael's, Maryland. June 24.** The day includes lunch at the Crab Claw Restaurant, free time to stroll through this quaint little town and a cruise taking in the beauty of the Chesapeake landscape. Transportation, lunch and cruise included in the price of \$174/person. **Registration is closed.** If you have questions, reach out to **Barb Seidel** at 484-794-0857 or baseidel3523@gmail.com.
- **Game on! at the Reading Fightin Phils July 28 @ 12 noon.** Buffet & entrance ticket included in \$41 cost. If you have questions, reach out to **Barb Seidel** at 484-794-0857 or baseidel3523@gmail.com.
- **Happy Hour, July 29.** 4 pm at Ozgood's Neighborhood Bar and Grill, 4 Lincoln Rd, Kutztown
- **Happy Hour, August 26.** 4 pm at Trooper Thorn's Irish Beef House, 451 Morgantown Rd, Reading
- **MERA Annual Chicken Bake, September 17, 11:00 am** at Jim Dietrich Park. Just \$5/person! Includes Kauffman Chicken Barbeque lunch plus ice cream! **Deadline to register is September 7.** Reach out to **Rob Kehr**, 540 N 6th St., Hamburg, PA 19526. 484-388-0024

Member Profile

Kathy Heffner

Kathy started her career in GPU's Information Services Department in 1977 as a COBOL programmer. After the TMI accident in 1979, she began working on the Radiation Exposure Monitoring (REM) System – the first 24x7 computer system of the GPU companies. (Well, almost 24x7.....the system had to come down each night for 30 minutes for 'backups'....but don't tell anyone!) A few years later, the opportunity arose to move to the "Information Center" – kind of a forerunner to the Help Desk. Finally, Kathy moved to the technical side as a Database Administrator (DBA) and, eventually, an SAP DBA until leaving in 2003. After FE, Kathy spent 2.5 years in Albright College's IT department and 10 years as a Systems Analyst at United Health Care working on a DB2/COBOL mainframe system for Medicare, right back where she started from technology-wise!

While at GPU and First Energy, Kathy volunteered her time for the United Way campaign and as a UW allocations volunteer – helping to determine how the funds raised each year are distributed to the member agencies. Kathy was also a member of the GPU Toastmasters Club – a public speaking and communication club. Outside of work, Kathy has always enjoyed sports of all kinds. She coached girls volleyball, taught swimming lessons, went skiing, and played racquetball. Now, going to Body Zone and playing pickleball keeps her out of trouble. In addition to serving as the Webmaster for the MERA website, Kathy is a member of a local investment club that meets monthly to learn about investing while purchasing stocks as a group.

After raising three kids - and coaching many of their teams along the way, Kathy loves spending time with her family especially her four grandchildren – the latest, a granddaughter born a month ago. They love reading books, making muffins, swimming, and just playing outside. She also loves to read and sew (especially Halloween costumes) and now the grandkids bring her any 'stuffies' (stuffed animals) that need repair. Trips to Knoebels Amusement Park are an annual tradition that everyone in the family enjoys!

Kathy encourages everyone to find time each day to do something that makes YOU happy – read a book, play with a grandchild, talk with an old friend, enjoy the outdoors with a walk, or just take a nap!

Bits & Pieces

MERA members are always up to something: traveling, volunteering, creating, being with their families, expanding their minds, exercising their bodies. I don't know anyone who does ALL those things, but some of you come pretty close! Like **Walt LaSota**. Walt, Maryellen and members of their extended family went to Hawaii in April. And yes, they played in the water, visited a pineapple plantation and watched the sunrise from a tall peak. But the real high point was visiting the Pearl Harbor National Memorial one year to the day Walt's late father visited. Walt's father (also Walter) passed away in January at the age of 99. He was a decorated member of the US Marine Corp during World War II, twice receiving the Purple Heart in recognition of his service and bravery. You can see a video of Walter's (the elder) visit to Pearl Harbor posted by the Pearl Harbor National Memorial at <https://www.facebook.com/reel/4019203471739564> and the full interview at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DiEjLQ_qkM

Kathy & Lin Seyler are proud to announce their oldest granddaughter just received her nursing pin. She is now a registered nurse. She'll begin working at Lehigh Valley Hospital in July. **Gene Spolski** enjoyed a lovely winter getaway on a cruise to the Dominican Republic and the Bahamas. And **Cindy**

and Jeff Thomas report they will soon be moving to the Highlands, happily leaving lawn work behind them!

If you have news for Bits & Pieces, let Karen know at kbaxter@ptd.net.

Join the Team to Stand Together Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault!

Sandy Myskowski plans to walk in Safe Berks's annual Walk for NO MORE on Saturday, June 20 in West Reading. The Walk for NO MORE kicks off West Reading's Art on the Avenue festival. Sandy invites other MERA members to join her to create a MERA team! Participation is fun and free, though donations are encouraged to support the lifesaving services Safe Berks provides to survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault throughout Berks County. If you are interested in participating contact **Karen Baxter**, kbaxter@ptd.net or 610-207-4231. More information about the walk can be found here:

<https://www.bctv.org/2026/05/21/safe-berks-invites-community-to-walk-for-no-more/>

Utility Scams Are on the Rise – Know How to Protect Yourself

Scammers continue to target Met-Ed customers by pretending to be utility company employees. Their goal is to steal money or personal information by using a variety of deceptive tactics. Knowing the warning signs can help you, your family and friends stay safe.

Don't Be Fooled: Common Scams to Watch For

Utility scams are designed to be convincing. Knowing what to look for can help you spot a fake and stay in control:

- **Urgent Payment Demands:** Scammers may call or come to your home or business claiming your service will be shut off immediately unless you make a payment.
- **Unusual Payment Methods:** Payment is requested through cryptocurrency or prepaid debit cards or gift cards.
- **Caller ID Spoofing:** Scammers can manipulate caller ID information, so it looks like the call is coming from your utility company.
- **Door-to-Door Scams:** Someone comes to your home or business posing as a utility worker and claiming they need to work on equipment or can offer lower rates.
- **Fake Discounts:** You may be told you are eligible for a discount and asked to provide personal or banking information.
- **Phishing and Smishing:** Fake emails or text messages may appear to be from your utility company, often including links or attachments that ask you to make a payment or claim a rebate.

How to Protect Yourself from Scams

Keep these tips and reminders in mind to avoid becoming a scam victim:

- **We don't shut off service without notice.** Disconnections do not happen outside normal business hours or without advanced notice.
- **We never ask for sensitive information.** This includes bank account details and passwords.
- **We don't request unusual payments.** We never accept prepaid debit cards, gift cards or cryptocurrency. Approved payment methods are listed at firstenergycorp.com/paymentoptions.

- **Our workers carry identification** and provide advance notice for visits. We do not contact you or visit to offer special deals or request to see a copy of your bill.
- **Avoid suspicious links or attachments.** Visit our website directly to confirm information.
- **Create a unique password for each of your online accounts.** Do not reuse or share passwords.
- **If you're unsure, contact us directly.** Call us at the phone number on your bill or our website to verify any message or visit.

Sunshine Remembrances

MERA sent condolences to **Manice Peace** wife of member **Bob Peace**, who recently passed away. They were married nearly 60 years ago.

MERA Member Milestones Happy June Anniversary!

Mario & Norma Andrie
Kathy & Dean Baim
Ronald & Janet Bortz
Denis & Kathy Dorward
Thomas & Gail Edelman
David & Judy Fair
Ralph & Estelle Fehr
Ronald & Patti Furman
Robert & Charlotte Galgon
Guy & Patricia Gockley

Jeff & Susan Hite
Ronald & Sharon Hrabak
Fred & Mary Janosky
John & Beverly Levengood
Roxann Luckenbill & Jeff Sterner
Donald & Lynn Miller
Sandy & Bill Myskowski
Ralph & Bonnie Paparella
Rory & Josephine Pfeifer

Patricia & Michael Phile
Jane & Verlin Renner
Ralph & Marva Rhode
Ron & Joy Sands
William & Linda Schlegel
Bruce & Maria Stempo
Ray & Faye Warmkessel
Kevin & Terri Wickman

Happy June Milestone* Birthday!

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

Tassy DeAngelo
Ronald Epting
Debi Hartz
Kent Hatt
Tino Imbesi
Rob Kehr

Larry Lenhart
Bonnie Shiner
Rick Shiner
Bernie Whitmoyer
Suzanne Zitrick
Kristin Zulkosky

*"It's a cruel season that makes
you get ready for bed
while it is light out."
-Bill Watterson*

