

Don't Forget!
MERA Christmas Luncheon
@ The Doubletree
December 15
Good Food! Live Music!

NERA HOMETOWN NEWS

Items of interest to MERA Members
December 2022



A Note from MERA President

🌲🌲 Merry Christmas, Happy All Holidays and Happy New Year! 🎉
What an honor to be your MERA President for the last four years. And my most favorite experiences are with all of the wonderful people in the MERA!

A great group of people on the MERA Board and Leadership Team: so smart, creative, determined and definitely interested in doing great stuff for you, the MERA Members! We have a tremendous group of people on the MERA Board and Leadership Team to lead us in 2023.

And you, the amazing MERA Members, to see your beautiful, smiling faces, to have fun together, to share memories and to make a lot of new friends.
Thank you for this opportunity.

Our MERA is a Bright and Shining Light!

Wishing you and your loved ones many hugs and kisses and much Love, Joy and Peace at Christmas, throughout all the Holidays and the New Year,

God's blessings,
Sandy

MERA Communications Move to Email Delivery

It may seem like "old news" to some, but MERA moving our member communications to email delivery is a very big deal. **Walt LaSota, Kathy Seyler** and their team have been working tirelessly to bring about this transition for well over a year. With the help of the Muhlenberg Township IT director, MERA can now send regular email communications to our members. About 80% of our members open MERA emails regularly. That's pretty good, but we will keep working until it is 100%!

Question: Is the Hometown News online longer than the print version we used to get?

Answer: Maybe a little. After all, we don't have to worry about spilling onto an extra page triggering higher postage. Mostly though, it only looks longer as we have restored one inch margins and increased spacing between the lines for better readability.

If you have any suggestions or concerns about MERA email communications, please let us know at kbaxter@ptd.net.

Please don't let this relationship end.... It's Time to Renew your MERA Membership!

Renewing your membership is simple and inexpensive! *NERA dues are still just \$5.00!*
Just follow these easy steps:

- Complete the renewal membership form. To find the form, just click on the image included in this email or you can find it on the website under "printable forms." If you don't have a printer, simply write down the information requested on the form on a piece of paper and send it in!
- Make a check out to NERA for \$5.
- Send the form and the check by December 31, 2022 to Karen Baxter,
2 Belgian Lane, Wernersville, PA 19565

THANK YOU for being with us for another year!

NERA Member Profile

Face life with good humor, confidence and optimism...and somehow, it will all work out. In reality, it hasn't always been that easy, but that's how **Stu Degler** lives his life.

He graduated Hamburg High School in 1960 and studied accounting at McCann's Business School in Reading. He started with Met-Ed in 1962 in stores accounting with a real ink pen and a year later he was encouraged to apply for a computer operator job. By the time he retired (the first time), Stu was in charge of the company's computer network and had the responsibility for the business computer infrastructure from the mainframes to the desktops. Ironically, Stu earned a BA in Business Management and Administration from Alvernia University just a couple years before retiring. After a stint working on a company project in England (The Midland Electric Board), Stu and his wife Nancy traveled through Europe for a month. No prior reservations during the trip except the plane ticket home. At the request of a former colleague, Stu was *unretired* to work on the Y2K Project and in January 2000 retired again, for good.

He met Nancy through a mutual friend in the Met-Ed payroll department and they married in 1966. Stu has three sons and eight grandchildren ages 18 to 26. "Nancy had the adventure travel bug and it turns out it was contagious!" There were many trips to the Jersey Shore with the kids as well as driving trips throughout the US and Canada including a six week tour of the western national parks in 1980. After retirement the couple took at least one month-long trip a year and many smaller ones. Nancy and Stu rode approximately 2000 miles per year on their tandem bike.

Stu has been to Europe 20 times; to South America twice; to Africa four times; and New Zealand and Tahiti once. He's been through the Panama Canal on a catamaran, bicycled through Europe (four times), and driven his convertible five days straight to Jasper, Alberta for a tour of the Canadian Rockies. He brought home a \$1,000,000 dollar bill (Zimbabwean dollars, mind you!) for each of his grandkids as souvenirs. He's visited 60 countries....most recently as a group leader but his preferred method of travel

is to drive, without reservations or detailed plans, spontaneously changing direction based on weather or new discoveries.

Over the years, Stu has done a lot of volunteer work including Leadership Berks, Literacy Council, CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates for children in foster care), Neighborcare, his church council, sports coaching and boy scout leadership for his sons, and, of course, the Met-Ed Retirees Association. He is currently volunteering on a Trash and Recycling committee for his retirement community. Stu will retire (AGAIN) from the MERA board at the end of this year after 13 years of dedicated service. He's been a pillar of the organization serving as president, program chair and heading up by-laws and nominating. His humor and wisdom will be greatly missed!

His advice to fellow retirees: If you are thinking of moving to a retirement community start your research and planning early as there is often a 3-5 year waiting list. Stu loves his retirement community in Lititz. "I had one of my landscape bushes die. I called; they replaced it. That's how I garden, these days." And, of course, don't be afraid to travel outside your comfort zone!

Winter Brings Out the Worst of the Utility Scammers!

While electric utility scammers work year-round, they are more active during colder months because they know customers rely on electricity to stay safe and warm and are more likely to comply due to fear of disconnection. Scammers often prey on the fears of vulnerable customers to steal their personal information and trick them into paying "unpaid bills" to avoid service disconnection.

"While we take significant measures to ensure the safety and security of customer account information, scammers can be very convincing to unsuspecting utility customers," said Michelle Henry, senior vice president of Customer Experience at FirstEnergy. "We urge customers to be on guard against impostors who claim to be associated with our company." To date in 2022, FirstEnergy has received more than 3,500 reports of scams from customers. The actual number of scam attempts is even higher since many go unreported to the company or law enforcement officials.

Here are some tips to help avoid utility imposters and their sophisticated scamming tactics:

- Well in advance of the disconnection date, FirstEnergy utility customers who are behind on their accounts will be sent written notice of their account status with instructions on how to avoid disconnection of service.
- Utility impostors often require that you use unusual payment methods like digital payment apps, cryptocurrencies or money transfers. Only send payments to your FirstEnergy operating company using established payment methods.
- Some scammers go door-to-door posing as affiliates of FirstEnergy and offer "special deals" to customers who provide their personal information. FirstEnergy employees and authorized contractors do not solicit door-to-door and will never ask you to provide a copy of your electric bill.

- Scammers often use Caller ID spoofing software to misrepresent the source of a phone call to further mislead and confuse their targets. When in doubt, hang up and dial the phone number on your FirstEnergy bill. Never dial the phone number provided by the scammer or the Caller ID.
- Bad actors frequently pretend to offer bill assistance through programs that do not exist in order to steal sensitive customer information. Customers in need of assistance should view our list of authorized bill assistance programs found on the FirstEnergy website at https://www.firstenergycorp.com/help/billingpayments/assistance_serviceprogram.html
- Cyber criminals may also try to steal your private information using malware delivered through texts and emails. Avoid clicking on any links or downloading attachments from suspicious emails or texts.

For more information about how to stop scams, check the FirstEnergy scam information page, which is updated periodically to include emerging scam activity:

<https://firstenergycorp.com/help/safety/scam-info.html>

Please share this information with friends and family to continue raising awareness of these crimes!

Welcome New Members!

We welcome four new members **Dennis Yerger**, **Kim Krotulski**, **Lucy Torres** (referred by **Gloria Diaz**), and **Kathy Heffner** (referred by **Fran Kopala**). We are so very happy to have you with us! Remember, anyone who recruits a new member any time during the year will be entered into a drawing for gift certificates at the Holiday Luncheon on December 15. The new member registration form can be found on merasite.org.

December MERA Member Milestones Happy Anniversary!

Debbie & Tom Calvaresi
Tassy & Joe DeAngelo
Bob & Elizabeth Fields
Ronald E. & Deloris Frederick
Craig L. & Robin Fries

Clayton H. & Alice Heiser
Donald D. & Patricia McKinney
Kenneth & Karen Michalski
Kevin T. & Donna Wright

Happy Milestone Birthday!

Stephen Bauer
Dolores Carter
Sharon Henry
Edwin M. Ogden
Linda Rathman
Susan Rimmel
Ron Sands
Leonard M. Schlegel
Catherine Wentzel

I was going to quit all my bad habits for the New Year, but then I remembered that nobody likes a quitter.

