

Next General Meeting is
May 15 at 1:00pm
at Jim Dietrich Park.
Get up close to Seeing Eye
Puppies!
(Awww...)
Rain date May 22.



MERA HOMETOWN NEWS

Items of interest to MERA Members
May 2023

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

A Note from MERA President

I can't believe May is here!

Our Anniversary Luncheon was Thursday, April 27th at Victor Emmanuel II. Our General Meetings will be held at Dietrich's Park starting in May and through the summer season. Please join us for a great time! Time flies so make plans to take advantage of the upcoming events!

Enjoy your Spring!

Jim

MERA Sponsors a Bluebird Trail

The Met-Ed Retirees Association is always up to something – from cooking contests to picnics to hikes to fascinating speakers but, did you know we also have a Bluebird Trail at Jim Dietrich Park? The brainchild of MERA member and past board president **Henry Robidoux**, the trail features 10 special bluebird boxes all built and donated by Henry.

The pretty little Eastern Bluebird is predominantly blue with a reddish-brown breast. They are much admired for their lovely coloring and for a distinctive song that many hear as "chur-lee, chur-lee." Bluebirds are considered fairly common, but their numbers have declined substantially during the last century. Populations have been given a boost by the birdhouse boxes that have become popular in many parks and backyards.

All MERA members are invited to assist with monitoring the health of the local bluebird population by checking our bluebird houses and submitting your observations to Henry.

"You'll want to check to see if the box has a nest in it and what the nest is made of. Also, what kind of bird is using the box and if there are eggs," said Henry.

For more information on how to properly monitor the boxes and to report your findings, contact Henry at robidoux4@gmail.com or call 610-914-6791. And go to <https://www.thebsp.org/how-to-monitor-your-nestboxes.html>

The map of the MERA Bluebird Trail at Jim Dietrich Park is posted on our website www.merasite.org.

MERA Member Profile

“So much joy!” says **Colleen Makowiecki**. As she reflects on her life, past, present and future; it wasn’t perfect, but the overall feeling is joy. Colleen loves her life.

The youngest of five sisters, she grew up happily on Front Street in the City of Reading and attended Holy Name High School. “We loved growing up in the city. We walked everywhere. Dad used the family car for work so our mom didn’t even have a car. Can you imagine?”

She started her 40-year journey at Met-Ed in 1978. She began in Generation, moved on to Procurement then Credit and Collections. Moved again to Communications and then Conditioned Power Services. Her last position was with Energy Conservation and Energy Efficiency programs. “Met-Ed provided me with a great career, wonderful people to work with, opportunities for growth and stability for me and my family.” In all this time with Met-Ed she only had one “bad year” when she didn’t enjoy her job. Pretty good record!

In 2019, the company offered her a retirement package. “My identity was so wrapped up in my job, I struggled with the notion of retiring. What was I to do with that void?” It was not an easy decision and Colleen worked with a counselor to come to terms with retirement and to help her embrace this next chapter in her life. She adapted marvelously and celebrated with chocolate and champagne in her pjs!

Colleen has three adult daughters and five grandchildren all of whom provide her with “endless joy.” “Being a mom just makes my heart sing!” Her retirement is, as you might imagine, busy, but she makes time to babysit her five-year old granddaughter two days a week. (Although the little girl protests: “Why is it called babysitting? I am NOT a baby!”)

Colleen’s energy might be attributed to her love of exercise (Zumba and walking the Wyomissing Trails), cooking (she might be 100% Scotch/Irish but she loves anything made with red sauce), gardening, community service and her deep faith. She has served on the board and coached for Girls on The Run. She is currently being trained by Safe Berks to be an advocate for survivors of domestic violence and, with friends, cooks dinner for the 35-50 residents of the safe house once a month. She helps Gary, her boyfriend of almost ten years, fundraise for various charitable projects. “Gary can seat about 28 for dinner in his home. But it would need to be twice that size to accommodate our combined families!” The two have traveled widely throughout the U.S. (in 2022 California and Colorado) and also enjoyed a European/Mediterranean cruise. They are currently enrolled in ballroom dance lessons.

She implores her fellow retirees to “find your passion...and find ways to incorporate it into your life.” Colleen then turns uncharacteristically serious. In 2022 she was diagnosed with both skin cancer and breast cancer. Fortunately, both conditions were found early and successfully treated. She reminds all of us to get our annual cancer screenings (for women, most especially annual mammograms). “Last year was

tough but I was blessed with so much love and support from my boyfriend, my family, my friends and my faith that it brings tears of joy to my eyes.”

Met-Ed Retirees Bus Trip Camden Aquarium and Spirit of Philadelphia Lunch Cruise

Wednesday April 5, 2023
by **Denis and Kathy Dorward**

The Camden Adventure Aquarium had unique exhibits with over 15,000 aquatic animals, including the largest collection of sharks in the Northeast. The aquarium is located on the Camden Waterfront, a short ride through downtown Philadelphia and crossing the Delaware River on the Ben Franklin Bridge.

The aquarium also is the only one in the world to exhibit hippos, and one of only six facilities in the U.S. to have Little Blue penguins. We got to see the two female hippos, Genny and Button, up close as they swam effortlessly in the 60,000-gallon glass lined pool directly in front of us. The shark exhibit was viewed in two unique ways, over the top on Shark Bridge and underneath when you walk through the Shark Tunnel. The penguins were entertaining, along with viewing some of the most diverse aquatic animals in the world.

After a short drive back across the Ben Franklin Bridge to the Philadelphia side of the Delaware River, we pulled into Penn’s Landing for the second part of our trip. The “Spirit of Philadelphia” was waiting to be boarded for a two-hour lunch cruise on the Delaware River. The lunch buffet was delicious, featuring a choice of all you can eat salmon, chicken, and pork, along with all the trimmings. We viewed the Philadelphia skyline and waterfront areas from either the enclosed deck where we dined or the outdoor top observation deck. We enjoyed the gorgeous weather as we cruised south to the Walt Whitman bridge and returned to Penn’s Landing where our bus was waiting to take us back home.

See some great trip pics at <https://www.merasite.org/news-1>

FirstEnergy Names President and CEO

FirstEnergy has announced that the board of directors has unanimously agreed to appoint Brian X. Tierney president and chief executive officer, effective June 1, 2023. Mr. Tierney, 55, joins FirstEnergy from Blackstone, where he serves as the global head of Portfolio Operations and Asset Management for the Infrastructure group.

With a career spanning 28 years in the industry, Mr. Tierney has developed extensive leadership, operational and commercial experience. Moreover, he brings to FirstEnergy strong financial acumen – across capital allocation, accounting, investor relations, planning and strategy, and risk management – and a demonstrated ability to advance business strategies and drive value creation.

Mr. Tierney said, "I have dedicated my career to the energy industry, and leading FirstEnergy is a privilege that I am humbled by and a responsibility that I take seriously. I believe strongly in the steps the company's board and management have taken to position the business for long-term stability and success, and I look forward to working with them to execute this strategy and build on FirstEnergy's strong operational momentum. I appreciate the board's confidence in me and will do everything I can to serve our customers and communities, keep our employees safe and move FirstEnergy into the future."

Brian Tierney Biography

Prior to Blackstone, Mr. Tierney spent more than two decades at AEP, where he most recently served as executive vice president of Strategy. He served more than 11 years as its chief financial officer, where he led corporate accounting, finance, investor relations, financial planning, strategy, risk management, procurement, supply chain and fleet services for the organization. Brian was a key architect of AEP's positioning as a premier electric utility and consistently delivered superior financial results during his tenure as CFO.

Brian served as a United States Peace Corps volunteer in the Republic of the Philippines and earned his bachelor's degree from Boston College and an MBA from the University of Chicago.

The Sunshine Report

MERA's own Sunshine Chair, **Cindy Doaty**, sends cards and notes to members who need a kind word. Recently, MERA has sent sympathy cards to

The family of Steve Beck
The family of Nina Beverly

The family of Avalion Bossler
The family of Dick Wentzel
Mark & MaryBeth Mancias [father/father-in-law passed]

If you know of a MERA member who needs some sunshine, please let Karen Baxter know at kbaxter@ptd.net.

Welcome New Members!

A very warm MERA welcome to new retiree **Tom Lee**. Congratulations! **Michelle Yergler** also joined MERA last month. Welcome!

Remember, anyone who brings a new member to MERA during the year will be eligible to win a gift card drawing held during the annual Christmas luncheon. Help us grow by bringing new members to the fold!

May MERA Member Milestones

Happy Anniversary!

Robert & Linda Bannon
William & Patricia Barrick
Mike & Marianne Benioff
Jane & Randolph Blatt
Joseph & Lesley Bruce
MaryBeth & Dan Clark
Gerry & Keith Day
Pankaj & Pragna Doshi
Dale & Sheila Faust
Janet & David Feathers
Karen & Ron Fisher
Dave & Chris Forrer
Brian & Suzette Frantz
Julia & Walter Frith
Donna & Tim Goughnour
David & Nola Henry
Dean & Monie Hollenbacher

Robert & Corie Kehr
James & Robin Kelly
Walt & Maryellen LaSota
Sharon & William Marshall-Davis
Francis & Jackie Martino
Joel & Jean Miller
Dave & Sharon Murphy
Jeff & Marlene Rathman
Joseph & Lynne Ravert
Jack & Judy Seidel
Rob & Lois Stilwell
Harold & SueAnn Webber
George & Martha Weida
Ann & Douglas White
Oliver & Diana Wilson
Clarence & Lucille Yenser

Happy Milestone Birthday!

Bruce Balthaser
Richard Faust
Barbara Harris
Sylvia Heckman
Ann Jones
Felix Rivera
James Thomas

Do you have any comments
or recommendations for
MERA? A program?
Newsletter article? Please
email MERA at
meraberks@gmail.com.

The Kentucky Derby is always held on
the first Saturday in May.
The Mint Julep is the official drink on racing day.
Churchill Downs, the racetrack that hosts the Derby,
uses more than 1000 pounds of fresh mint to meet
the demand of the julep-sipping race fans.
Here's a link to a Mint Julep recipe in case you feel
the need for some warm weather refreshment:
<https://www.bhg.com/recipe/drinks/mint-julep/>

