

Mark your calendars!  
Your monthly MERA  
newsletter should hit your  
inbox on the first Friday of  
every month.  
Keep an eye out for it!

# MERA HOMETOWN NEWS

Items of interest to MERA Members  
April 2023



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

## A Note from MERA President

Spring has sprung! What an unusual winter. We look forward to the arrival of flowers, shrubs, yard work, bus trips, picnics, etc.! Take advantage of all MERA offers to make the most of the warmer weather. Enjoy your friends and family and be thankful for another Spring. Much more to come!

Jim

## Much MERA Merriment in May. Don't Miss It!

Get your calendar out!

### May Monthly Program: Berks County Seeing Eye Puppy Raisers

Join us on May 15<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 pm at Jim Dietrich Park (top pavilion) for a fascinating program about training seeing eye dogs for disabled people. Our speakers are from the Berks County Seeing Eye Puppy Raisers. Barbara Dietrich and her husband will bring along "Puppy Fiona" for the presentation. If you prefer, bring your own lawn chair.

### May Hike and Happy Hour: Blue Marsh Connector Trail and Austin's

Please join us Tuesday, May 30<sup>th</sup> at 3pm, at the Blue Marsh Connector Trail. Park at Swiftwater Lane parking lot on Palisades Road, heading toward Reber's Bridge Road. Our happy hour will be at Austin's, 1101 Snyder Road, West Lawn starting around 4pm. For more information, contact Bonnie Paparella at [bonniepaparella@yahoo.com](mailto:bonniepaparella@yahoo.com), or 610-207-0258.

### Don't forget our April Hike: Reading Museum Arboretum & Liberty Ale House

Take a pleasant spring stroll through the Reading Museum Arboretum on Tuesday, April 25 at 3:00 pm. Park in the Museum parking lot reached by either Museum Road or Parkside Drive South in West Reading. **Gail Landis** and **Donna Goughnour** will guide us through the garden to enjoy spring flowers in bloom. We will then reconvene around 4pm at the Liberty Ale House, 1501 Lancaster Ave, Shillington for our Happy Hour. Hope to see you all there!

## Too Soon to Talk About Christmas?

Never! Get your calendar out and make sure you note the **new date** for MERA's annual Christmas luncheon. The new date is December 14. More details later!

## Announcing: The Winners!

Who demonstrated superior knowledge (or possibly just really good guessing) during this year's Super Bowl Contest?

1<sup>st</sup> Place: **Larry Lenhart** (\$25 Gift Card)

2<sup>nd</sup> Place (five-way tie - \$10 Gift Card each):

**Carol Chew**

**Stu Degler**

**Terry Norman**

**Bill Pammer**

**Jim Zeiber**

Who rustled up the best gosh-darn chili this side of the Rio Grande?

1<sup>st</sup> Place: **Terry Norman** (\$20 cash prize)

2<sup>nd</sup> Place Tied (\$10 cash prize each):

**Kathy Seyler**

**Marianne Kline**

3<sup>rd</sup> Place: **Lisa Pleiss** (\$5 cash prize)

And, who baked the most mouthwateringly delicious pie?

1<sup>st</sup> Place: **Bonnie Paparella's wet bottom shoefly** (\$20 cash prize)

2<sup>nd</sup> Place: **Marianne Kline's lemon sponge** (\$10 cash prize)

3<sup>rd</sup> Place: **Pat McKinney's apple** (\$5 cash prize)

The *real winners* were all of us who attended the February General Meeting and got to taste the entries in The MERA Chili Cookoff and Pie Baking contest. YUM! Thanks to everyone who entered and shared their cooking and baking skills!

## MERA Member Profile

According to the American Red Cross of Berks County, we have a hero among us. And when you hear his story, I don't think any of us will disagree.

**Irv Godboldt** grew up with his mother and two older brothers in Reading. Life was a struggle, but the family had a strong belief in God and they kept marching forward. Irv graduated from high school and was working at the local YMCA when a counselor there asked him what he planned to do next? Irv had no idea. He couldn't afford the fee required to submit a college application. Right there, the guy wrote him a check to cover the cost to submit an application to Albright College. Four years later Irv graduated with a degree in physics and enlisted in the U.S. Army. The year was 1964. Irv completed basic training and officer training school. He was commissioned as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant and was assigned to the position of platoon leader in the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division. In very short order, the Division sailed to Vietnam.

The American Red Cross Berks County Heroes Breakfast honors heroes in our community from all different walks of life. Irv was nominated by another Vietnam vet for the Military Hero Award. The event, where Irv was given a standing ovation by the attendees, featured a video produced by WFMZ that described Irv's wartime experiences. His own son did not know details of his father's time in Vietnam. There were "many close calls," says Irv. There was the booby trap that resulted in an injury to his throat. Irv refused treatment until his men had been seen to by medics. There was

another incident when a truck carrying Irv and about 24 of his men was hit by a bomb. Medical personnel were not available so, ignoring his own injuries, he loaded the wounded onto a waiting helicopter. Irv refused to leave until all his men were onboard. VA records show that Irv had to be ordered onto the last chopper by his superiors. Many of those men did not survive. Both times, after being injured, Irv returned to the front lines. Eventually, Irv went to work in division headquarters and then returned to Vietnam as a civilian working for the federal government.

For his service, Irv received the Bronze Star for Valor, two Purple Hearts and the Army Commendation Medal. Like a lot of veterans, regardless of where they served, Irv did not share his wartime experiences. "I rarely talk about my service in Vietnam. My best friend was killed," says Irv. "It just didn't seem appropriate, and I didn't see how people could relate." The Red Cross recognition "...was emotional. I felt very proud. I'm glad I did what I did."

In 1970, Irv came to work for FirstEnergy and forged a successful if unusual career path. He started as an engineering assistant in generation, then a shift supervisor at Eyler Station and subsequently a station engineer at Titus. In 1975, he moved into Human Resources where he stayed for 14 years. Then he joined the rates department at JCP&L. "It was exciting to learn something brand new." When Irv retired from FirstEnergy in 1997, he was a manager in JCP&L's customer operations.

Next, Irv went back to school and learned computer programming. He went to work as a consultant for a company called Computer Aid for nine years. He retired from that position in 2007. He retired, yet again, in 2009 from the Reading Hospital where he'd started in housekeeping and ended up as a Pharmacy Technician.

Throughout his career, Irv made time for his community. He's been on the board of Camp Conrad Weiser and the YMCA. (Both institutions figured large in his childhood.) He served with the National Council on Alcoholism, Literacy Council, Human Relations Council and the NAACP. He was one of the first volunteers at Berks Talkline, coached football and worked with the Learning Center (providing assistance to students) at Washington Presbyterian Church. During his time with the Reading Hospital, Irv was a Loaned Campaign Specialist for the United Way. Before COVID, Irv was driving fellow veterans from Berks County to the VA hospital in Lebanon.

Irv has two children and four grandchildren. Irv has a computer but rarely uses it, "makes me feel trapped." And he doesn't have a favorite restaurant, "I cook!" When asked if he had any advice for fellow retirees, Irv chuckled and said, "Everyone should try retiring as least once!" Noting with a laugh that he has retired three times!

*Link to the WFMZ Channel 69 story about Lt. Irv Godboldte, recipient of the Berks County American Red Cross Military Hero Award:*

[https://www.wfmz.com/community/berks-heroes/american-red-cross-hero-lt-irv-godboldte/article\\_bad35e3c-bf55-11ed-9f8e-075ebbe46c87.html](https://www.wfmz.com/community/berks-heroes/american-red-cross-hero-lt-irv-godboldte/article_bad35e3c-bf55-11ed-9f8e-075ebbe46c87.html)

## Thinking about an Electric Vehicle?

The FirstEnergy website is a great place to start your research. You can discover how electric vehicles work, get information about different models, calculate savings and charging time, and learn about incentives and rebates. Even see a map of charging stations! Go to: <https://meted.chooseev.com/ev/about/>

## The Sunshine Report

MERA's own Sunshine Chair, **Cindy Doaty**, sends cards and notes to members who need a kind word. If you know of a MERA member that needs some sunshine, please let Karen Baxter know at kbaxter@ptd.net.

## Welcome New Members!

A very warm MERA welcome to new retiree **Ted Seaman**. Congratulations! 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!

## April MERA Member Milestones

### Happy Anniversary!

Curtis & Arlene Bonanni  
Donald Fix & Nancy Rapak  
Roy & Barbara Gehris  
Kathy & Rick Heffner  
George & Marianne Kline  
Stewart & Tina McDonough  
Steve & Barbara Modrick  
Nelson & Betty Moeller

Dennis & Morena O'Brien  
Earl & Terry Suchomelly  
Cathy & Michael Thomas  
John & Jean Walter  
Richard & Catherine Wentzel  
Barbara J. & Mike Witman  
Jim & Joyce Zeiber

### Happy Milestone Birthday!

Lee C. Bricker, Jr.  
Richard W. Harper  
Catherine Kessler

Do you have any comments  
or recommendations for  
MERA? A program?  
Newsletter article? Please  
email MERA at  
[meraberks@gmail.com](mailto:meraberks@gmail.com).

April 10 is **National Siblings Day** to remind us to reach out to our brothers and sisters. Let's be honest, though, they can be both a blessing and a curse!  
If you never had to worry about that, then April 12, **National Only Child Day** is for you!

