

MERA HOMETOWN NEWS

A compilation of items of interest to MERA Members May 2022

A Note from MERA President

Bring On the Fresh Air in the Great Outdoors! Come and join your MERA buddies at these events, with lots of laughter and fun and comradery and good eats in the Great Outdoors!

- May 16 at 1:00: Muhlenberg High School Jazz Band, Jim Dietrich Park
- May 31 at 3:00: Hike at Exeter Scenic River Trail followed by Happy Hour at Liberty Tap Room
- June 9: Baltimore Dine-around Trip, lots of great eats, fun and Cruise
- June 16 at 11:00: Annual Picnic, Jim Dietrich Park, food, fun and ice cream
- June 28 at 3:00: Hike at John Bartram Trail followed by Happy Hour at Westy Bar and Grill
- July 27: Mystery Trip????
- July and August Hikes and Happy Hours
- September 13: Annapolis, Maryland, Cruise, food and fun
- September 15 at 11:00: Chicken Bake, Jim Dietrich Park

Look forward to seeing you in the Great Outdoors. Remember your spouse or friend is always welcome.

We are MERA Family!

Sandy | 610 698 7056 sandbille7@gmail.com

Let FirstEnergy Take You Out to the Ballgame!

FirstEnergy has FREE Fightin' Phils baseball tickets for MERA Members and family for home games at the FirstEnergy stadium. If you are interested, just send a note to Sandy at sandbille7@gmail.com.

MERA Member Profile

The arc of Mohamed Sillah's life may be unique among MERA members starting as it does in the West African nation of Sierra Leone and currently entailing the raising of a 5-year old daughter.

Mohamed immigrated to the United States in 1989 arriving in New York City where he became a cab driver. In 1994, he decided the murder rate for NYC cabbies was just too high and he followed friends to Reading. "It was so quiet here," says Mohamed who quickly fell in love with the area. While the work at Threshold Rehabilitation Services was rewarding, he knew it wasn't what he wanted to do for the rest of his career. An associate degree from RACC and a special FirstEnergy program looking for minority talent propelled him to the IT department at Met-Ed/FirstEnergy. Mohamed worked for the company for 21 years retiring on December 31, 2018 as an Advanced Desktop Analyst. "Everyone was so appreciative of the work we did. It was easy to be motivated and work hard."

While working for Met-Ed/FirstEnergy, Mohamed went on to earn a Bachelor's Degree in business from Alvernia. Education has been an important part of his life. One of 12 children in a family that did not value Western/English education, Mohamed ran away from home at the age of 17 so he could enroll in school. He has four children of his own: the oldest is 24 and he and his wife Afaf are kept busy with the youngest at 5. Over the years he has volunteered for the United Way, Meals on Wheels, and the Islamic Center of Reading. Mohamed is a founding member of the Islamic Society of Berks County, as well as the United Africans Association of Reading. Mohamed proudly became a US citizen in 2001.

What surprised him most about retiring? "How quickly I got bored!" After three months he was already trying on new jobs with the US Post Office, US Census Bureau, even Walmart. But, he hit his stride and is now working fulltime (again!) for the Information Systems department of the County of Berks.

Mohamed's advice to fellow retirees is to read. "Like the body, the mind will deteriorate if you deprive it of activity." He recommends three of his favorite books: 'The Quran,' 'The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential People in History' by Michael H. Hart, and 'The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People' by Franklin Covey.

Company News

FirstEnergy Foundation Awards \$250,000 Grant to Alvernia University for Engineering Lab

The FirstEnergy Foundation has donated \$250,000 to Alvernia University to help fund its new engineering program at Reading CollegeTowne, a major economic development initiative to help revitalize the Penn Street Corridor in the City of Reading. Through the grant, the FirstEnergy Foundation will help fund the University's Engineering Program, which offers tracks in electrical, mechanical and industrial engineering. The grant also will help equip the new FirstEnergy Foundation Engineering Lab for students to design, develop and test electric motors, communication systems and power generation machinery.

Reading CollegeTowne encompasses a renovated 260,000-square-foot building at 401 Penn Street. In addition to the engineering programs, the facility provides student housing, classrooms and a communal workspace for start-up businesses. The FirstEnergy Foundation Engineering Lab is expected to be completed in time for the 2022 fall semester.

"We're proud to join other community partners in supporting this transformational \$20 million initiative that will allow 1,000 students to live and learn downtown," said Lorna Wisham, president of the FirstEnergy Foundation. "In addition to bringing more than 300 permanent jobs and resources downtown, Reading CollegeTowne will create a perpetual pipeline of college graduates with STEM-related skills to help meet the workforce needs of area businesses."

Welcome New Members!

Welcome new retiree **Charlie Glantz!** And another warm welcome to new member **Andy Hunter** recruited by **Carol Lied** and **Walt LaSota!**

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. If you know someone who should be a MERA member, please, invite them to join! It will be a win/win/win! The new member form can be found on merasite.org or send an email to KBaxter@ptd.net.

May MERA Member Milestones Happy May Anniversary!

Robert & Linda Bannon - 32
William & Patricia Barrick - 61
Mike & Marianne Benioff - 32
Randolph & Jane Blatt - 51
Joseph & Lesley Bruce - 52
MaryBeth & Dan Clark - 46
Gerry & Keith Day - 32
Dale & Sheila Faust - 46
Janet & David Feathers - 46
Karen & Ron Fisher - 36
Dave & Chris Forrer - 46

Brian & Suzette Frantz - 44
Julia & Walter Frith - 11
Tim & Donna Goughnour - 42
David & Nola Henry - 63
Dean & Monie Hollenbacher - 48
James & Robin Kelly - 3
Walt & Maryellen LaSota - 43
Kim & Tom Leibensperger - 48
Sharon & William Marshall-Davis - 14
Francis & Jackie Martino - 51
Joel & Jean Miller - 5

Dave & Sharon Murphy - 51
Jeff & Marlene Rathman - 33
Mary Jo & George Rhoads - 18
Art & Dee Salyards - 52
Judy & Jack Seidel - 44
Jonathan & Barbara Silver - 27
Rob & Lois Stilwell - 42
Harold & SueAnn Webber - 56
George & Martha Weida - 52
Ann & Douglas White - 29

Happy May Milestone Birthday!

A milestone birthday is one that ends in a "0" or a "5."
We don't have this data for every member,
so feel free to let us know if we missed you.

William L. Schlegel
Nancy Nagle
Geri Seidel

Patricia Christ
Denis Dorward
Pragna Doshi

"The bad news is time flies...
the good news is, you're the pilot."

- Michael Altshuler

