

What are you doing  
June 4?  
See you in Wilmington  
visiting a stunning  
mansion, beautiful  
gardens, an historic inn,  
exotic animals & eating  
ice cream.  
See the bus trip flyer and  
sign up by May 1.



# MERA HOMETOWN NEWS

AND CALENDAR OF EVENTS  
Items of interest to MERA Members  
March 2025

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

## A Note from MERA's President

March is here, and that means spring is fast approaching. The anniversary luncheon is April 24. Bus trips are starting in April. Please join us at these events, they are planned for your enjoyment!

Jim

## MERA Calendar of Events

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

- **March General Membership Meeting Monday, March 17 at 1 p.m. at the Muhlenberg Rec Center.** Sue Moyer, Associate Professor of Nursing, Millersville University; Self-care for physical and mental health.
- **Hike & Happy Hour, Wednesday, March 26 2 p.m. Hike on Muhlenberg Rail Trail.** Meet at the Laureldale trail end parking lot between Gethsemane Cemetery and Montrose Ave. Join us as well for our **4 p.m. Happy Hour at Joe's Place**, 5 Spring Valley Road, Laureldale.
- **Trip to Toby's Dinner Theatre Wednesday, April 16.** Enjoy the great All-American musical, "The Music Man!" performed in the round at Toby's Dinner Theatre Columbia, MD. The trip includes motor coach transportation, live show and buffet lunch inclusive of taxes and gratuity. Cost is \$166 per person. **Registration is closed.** For questions, reach out to **Barb Seidel** at 484-794-0857 or [bseidel3523@comcast.net](mailto:bseidel3523@comcast.net).
- **Anniversary Luncheon Thursday, April 24 at 11:00 a.m.** Victor Emmanuel 311 Hazel St. Reading. Hot buffet and good fun. Just \$15 per person. Bring a dessert to share! **Deadline for reservations is April 17.** Send reservations and payment to **Gary Pleiss**, 41 Fieldstone Lane, Fleetwood, PA 19522 or call (610) 927-7590 with any questions.
- **Hike & Happy Hour, Wednesday, April 30 at 2 p.m. Hike at Union Meadows East Park, Birdsboro**, 100 Campbell Ford Rd, Douglassville. Join us for this pleasant walk in a beautiful setting as well as at our **4pm Happy Hour at Island Pizza** 3060 Limekiln Rd.
- **May General Membership Meeting Monday May 19 at 1 p.m. outside at beautiful Jim Dietrich Park.** Musical Bingo with Rich Weilacher of TGE Entertainment. Prizes and snacks! Test your knowledge of the golden oldies (or if you don't know anything about music – try your luck!).

- **Hike & Happy Hour, Wednesday May 28. Meet at 2pm to Hike at Berks Leisure Area**, 1901 Tulpehocken Rd, Wyomissing. We will walk along the Union Canal Trail towards Grings Mill, and back again. (Sorry, no pets allowed in Berks County Parks). We will then retire at **4pm to PJ Whelihan's Restaurant**, 1101 Rocky Dr, West Lawn for Happy Hour.
- **Trip to Wonders of Wilmington Wednesday, June 4, 2025.** Join us as we travel to Wilmington, Delaware, for a wonderful day of exploring two of Delaware's gems! First, we visit Winterthur, a stunning mansion surrounded by a world-class naturalistic garden set within 1000 acres of rolling hills, streams, meadows, and forests. Lunch is at Buckley's Tavern, built in 1817 as a private residence and a stagecoach stop. Then, we visit the Brandywine Zoo. Last stop, Maggie Moo's Creamery, the perfect way to end your day! Package includes everything: Transportation, admission to attractions, lunch, ice cream, taxes, fees and driver gratuity. Cost is \$153 per person. **Deadline for registration is May 1.** For questions contact: **Barb Seidel** at 484-794-0857 or [bseidel3523@comcast.net](mailto:bseidel3523@comcast.net)
- **Hike & Happy Hour Wednesday June 25. Meet at 2pm at the Reading Public Museum Arboretum** for a guided walk among the gardens, led by Master Gardener Donna Goughnour. We will then relax at **4pm** with some brews and chews at **Sly Fox Wyomissing Tap House** at the Knitting Mills, 820 Knitting Mills Way, Wyomissing.

## Bits & Pieces

**Terrilyn Flasdick** and husband Markus had a great time in New Orleans even if they left before the Super Bowl. Highlights included an airboat ride, voodoo tour and feeding marshmallows to alligators. (Can't be good for their teeth, do you think?) **Lori Lobb** was recently inducted into the Berks County Basketball Hall of Fame Class of 2025 during halftime of the BCIAA girls basketball championship in front of a crowd of 1800. Lori played for Kutztown High School and later at Elizabethtown College where she was a Regional All American Division III national champion and scored 1199 points in her career. Congratulations, Lori! At the February General Meeting, **Erma Miller** won the rare and highly prized Met-Ed 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Mug donated by **Curt Bonanni**. **The Zeibers** hit the slot machines in Atlantic City. No word on their winnings...but they did come back home. **Stu Degler** strapped on his snowshoes and hit the trails several times this winter. He says, "Thank you, Father Winter!" Stu may have a point. You know what they say: if you choose not to take joy in the snow, you have the same amount of snow in your life, but less joy!

*One thing we know, MERA members are busy people. This column is all about keeping us connected by reporting quick snapshots of MERA member activities. [We'd love to hear from you. Submit your items by emailing meraberks@gmail.com.](#)*

## MERA Member Profile Brian Lowe

*The following profile was published on the FirstEnergy Retirees website in August 2023 as Brian Lowe prepared for retirement. When asked for an interview for Hometown News, he said "Check out the website, your work is already done!"*

Few of us can claim to have worked at a company for more than 50 years – But **Brian Lowe**, general manager, Reading Customer Contact Center can. He came to work for The Illuminating Company (CEI) right out of high school.

“When I was a high school senior in Cleveland, CEI participated in a career day,” he said. “I had the opportunity to complete an application and was subsequently interviewed and hired.” As a result, Brian began his career with the company in 1970 as a meter reader. Since then, he has learned all about the electric utility industry.

“Brian is beloved and highly respected by the Customer Experience organization, especially the Care Center team in Reading. The well-being of his employees is Brian’s focus and drives his day-to-day interactions with them,” said Matt Green, director, Customer Contact Centers. “It’s the interpersonal connections he has with others, including myself, that have left an impression on anyone who has worked with him. It’s been an honor working with Brian and I wish him continued health, happiness and friendship in retirement.”

Brian says working at FirstEnergy allowed him to grow in both his career and personal life. “All of my work experiences at FirstEnergy have been special and memorable. In addition to being a meter reader in Cleveland, I’ve also served in several supervisory, management and director positions at CEI and then Met-Ed,” said Brian, whose been in his current role since 2018. “I also continued my education using FirstEnergy’s tuition reimbursement program. I earned associate, bachelor’s and master’s degrees in business management.”

Brian also holds memberships in two of our Employee Business Resource Groups: MOSaic Reading Chapter and he’s a sponsor of the Reading Chapter Helping Women Grow.

In his time away from work, Brian is an avid community volunteer. “Over the years, I’ve enjoyed giving back to the community. And, since moving to Reading, I’ve had the opportunity to serve on the boards of The Olivet Boys and Girls Club and on the Greater Reading Food Bank, which is now known as Helping Harvest.”

As for his retirement, Brian hopes to take it slow for a while. “My plans are to relax from the stress of work life, do some traveling and occasionally play golf,” he said. “I also enjoy working in my yard and taking walks. After Sept. 1, I’ll have plenty of time to do so.”

As Brian concludes his 53½ years of employment with FirstEnergy, he wants to share advice with employees: “Life is too short and if you have a dream, pursue it. You have to believe in yourself to make your dreams come true.”

## Checking Up on Us

MERA is so lucky to have someone with the experience and expertise to volunteer his time to audit our books. He keeps us on the straight and narrow and advises us on best practices. He has performed this service for 4 years. Who is he? **Vince Schimoler**. You know, the guy who also helps set up for every meeting and sells raffle tickets. Now, that’s a multi-talented individual! Thank you, Vince!

## Got Milk? If the Answer is No, FirstEnergy Foundation Would Like to Help

A tall, cold glass of milk: a simple pleasure many of us take for granted. Yet one in six children and one in eight adults facing hunger in Pennsylvania may not have access to this nutritious beverage. That’s why the FirstEnergy Foundation has stepped up again this year to donate \$25,000 to support Fill a Glass with Hope®, the first statewide charitable fresh milk program in the nation. The

FirstEnergy Foundation has provided financial support to this Pennsylvania program for nearly a decade with grants totaling \$200,000. Since its inception in 2015, Fill a Glass with Hope has helped Pennsylvania's food banks provide more than 40 million servings of milk to families in need across the state. According to Feeding Pennsylvania, milk is one of the most requested items at Pennsylvania food banks, but people tend to donate non-perishable items instead. To learn more about this program or provide support, please visit <http://www.feedingpa.org/support-our-mission>.

## Sunshine Report

Sadly, MERA recently bid fond farewells to **John Walter**, **Joe Ross** and MERA Board Member **Clair Kramer**. Sympathy cards were sent to their families. We will miss them all.

## NERA Member Milestones

### Happy March Anniversary!

Walter & Wilfriede Axsmith  
Thomas & Deborah Fegley  
Lowell & Catherine Kessler

Tom & Shirley Krick  
Shirley & Bill McClure  
David & Debra Rutter

Ted & Cindy Seaman  
Rick & Bonnie Shiner  
Delbert & Laurie Somerville

### Happy March Milestone\* Birthday!

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

Richard D'Angelo  
Robert Eidle  
Jean Fick  
Guy Gockley  
Theresa Hilbert  
Sarah Johnson  
Lowell Kessler  
MaryEllen LaSota  
Willard Lutz

*May your troubles be less,  
and your blessings be  
more, and nothing but  
happiness come through  
your door.  
– Irish Blessing*

