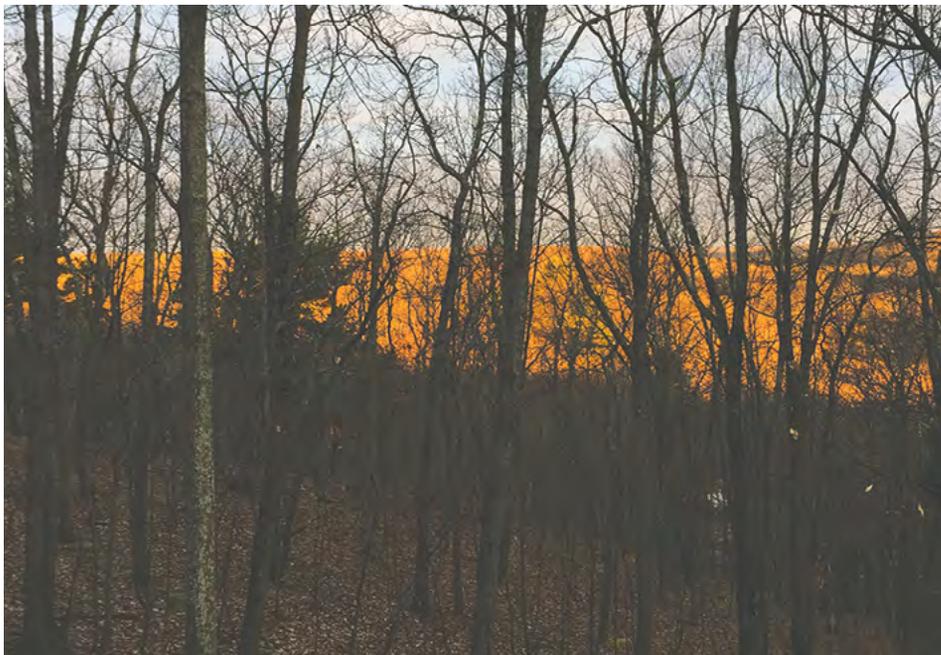




# Harmony



## Picture This: Penn Estates on Instagram!

By Katherine Hernandez, Communications Committee Member

The Communications Committee has initiated a “Beautiful Penn Estates” campaign on the social network “Instagram.” Instagram allows us to display beautiful images of our cherished natural landscape and wildlife. The pictures are the main focus of this campaign, but people can leave comments of appreciation, too.

The Committee wants to share with all community members this ongoing visual display of our stunning environment, so we invite you to “follow” our Instagram account.

### For members who have the Instagram app on their smartphones

1. Open your Instagram application
2. Click the search icon (magnifying glass symbol) at the bottom of your screen
3. Type “penn\_estates\_wildlife” into the search box at the top of the screen
4. Tap name when it appears in the list below the search box (It will say “The Communications Committee” beneath “penn\_estates\_wildlife”)
5. Tap the “Follow” button and wait for approval
6. Enjoy our photos!

### For members who do not have Instagram on their smartphones

1. Go to the “App Store” in your phone
2. Search for “Instagram”
3. Select and download Instagram for free
4. Set up your unique Instagram account (follow instructions on screen)
5. Follow instructions above “For members who have the Instagram app”

We hope you enjoy this new way to share the beauty of Penn Estates within the community and look forward to welcoming you to the “penn\_estates\_wildlife” group.

Want to contribute photos to our Instagram account? You can email them to any of the following: Michael Tyrrell, pepoharmony@gmail.com; Katherine Hernandez, kmillshernandez@gmail.com; Robin Nicholson, nicholsonvasquez@gmail.com; Jennifer Nicholson, pinkpradabag@yahoo.com.

## CORRECTION - Leaders Wanted Timeline

In the last issue of Harmony, the article titled “Leaders Wanted” contains an error. On page 3, 2016 Board of Directors Election Timeline; the deadline date for candidates applying by petition was listed as April 2, 2016. The actual deadline date of six weeks prior to the Annual Election is March 26, 2016.

All candidates applying via the petition process must submit their application with the required 50 signatures of deeded Members in Good Standing no later than 4pm on Saturday, March 26, 2016.

## Leaders Wanted Board of Directors Election Approaching

By the PEPOA Board of Directors

The Penn Estates Property Owners Association (PEPOA) is a non-profit corporation governed by a nine-person Board of Directors. The Board is elected by PEPOA Members (the deeded property owners in Penn Estates) who are in Good Standing.

In this year’s election on May 7, 2016 there will be three Director positions to fill; three positions will serve for three-year terms. Candidates for the Board must be at least 21 years of age, a deeded property owner in Good Standing, and able to carry out the duties of a Director.

What is the mission of the Board? As stated in PEPOA’s Bylaws, “The Board of Directors shall determine all matters of Association policy, shall develop the vision and strategic plan for the organization, shall oversee the management and control of the business and property of the Association, and shall exercise all powers of the Association (except for any powers specifically reserved to the Members in the Declaration, the Articles of Incorporation or the Bylaws)”.

What are the Board’s responsibilities? The Board of Directors is responsible for governance of PEPOA. Directors have the duty to: (1) act in good faith, in a manner they reasonably believe to be in the best interests of the Association; (2) act in accordance with PEPOA’s Articles of Incorporation, Declaration of Covenants, and Bylaws; and (3) act in conformance with the Pennsylvania Community Association and Non-Profit Corporation laws.

A partial list of specific Board responsibilities:

- Enforce PEPOA’s Declaration of Covenants, Bylaws, Rules/Regulations, and Policies
- Approve additions and revisions to PEPOA’s Rules/Regulations and Policies
- Approve the annual operating and capital budgets
- Levy the annual maintenance fee and other fees, and collect all monies owed to PEPOA
- Maintain an adequate capital reserve fund
- Enter into contracts on PEPOA’s behalf
- Maintain and improve PEPOA’s buildings, roads, and other property
- Hire and provide oversight of the Community Manager
- Appoint and remove members of PEPOA committees
- Issue final rulings on Members’ appeals of decisions made by the Appeals Committee and the Architectural Review Board

### What qualifications and abilities should a Director have?

In order to perform their duties, Directors need to be familiar with, and understand, the various laws and legal documents that apply to community associations in general and to PEPOA in particular.

Directors need to devote substantial time to their duties... anywhere from 10 to 30 hours a month, and possibly more if serving as an Officer. Attending monthly Board meetings is only the tip of the iceberg. Time will also be spent attending Board workshop meetings as needed; acting as a liaison to several committees; responding to Board and committee emails and phone calls on a daily basis; preparing and presenting resolutions and reports; and attending Annual and Special Association meetings, community forums/workshops, and other community events.

Directors must keep certain information confidential, including from spouses, until such time as the Board takes formal action.

(continued on page 2)



Penn Estates Property Owners Association  
304 Cricket Drive  
East Stroudsburg PA 18301

## Leaders Wanted

(continued from page 1)

Abilities that a Director should possess include: the ability to commit to projects and see them through, start to finish; the ability to listen, keep an open mind, and not rush to judgment; the ability to put your personal agenda aside and work only in the best interests of the Association; the ability to articulate your viewpoint and respectfully disagree with other viewpoints; and the ability to always support majority decisions of the Board, even in those situations where you voted in the minority.

Prior participation on one or more of PEPOA's committees is very helpful for Directors but it is not a requirement to serve on the Board.

Directors do not receive any compensation.

### How do I get on the Board?

If you are interested in running for the Board you may apply in one of two ways:

- Fill out an application obtained from the Administration Office. Completed applications must be submitted to the Administration Office no later than Friday, February 12, 2016. The Nominating and Steering Committee will then contact qualified applicants and invite them to an interview with the committee.
- The other way is to obtain a Nominating Petition from the Administration Office and get the signature of fifty Members in good standing. Only one signature per lot is permitted pursuant to the Bylaws. Once the requisite number of signatures has been collected the petition must be submitted to the Administration Office, no later than Saturday, March 26, 2016.

Whether applying by application or petition, all candidates shall prepare a biography of 1200 words or less and provide a wallet-sized photo in .jpeg format for publication in Harmony. The biography and photo must be emailed to pepoharmony@gmail.com and be received no later than Saturday, February 27, 2016.

Candidates will have the opportunity to deliver a five-minute speech and answer questions at the Meet the Candidates Forum on Saturday, April 30, 2016. The only other opportunity for delivering campaign speeches will be at the PEPOA Annual Meeting on Saturday, May 7, 2016.

### Election of the Board

PEPOA Members in good standing may cast votes for Directors in one of two ways:

- Directed Proxy ballots will be included in the Notice and Call to Annual meeting package that will be mailed to each Member on April 7, 2016. You may complete the Directed Proxy ballot and mail it in the enclosed envelope to the Association's CPA. Directed Proxy ballots must be received by the CPA no later than 10:00AM on May 5, 2016.
- The other way to vote is to attend the PEPOA Annual Meeting on May 7, 2016 and cast your ballot in person.

**Are you interested in running?** Serving as an effective Director can be challenging, and it requires a lot of time and work. It can be a thankless job at times. However, being part of the PEPOA leadership team and working to improve Penn Estates and keep it one of the best communities in the Poconos is its own reward. You will derive satisfaction and pride from contributing your talents and leadership skills to your community.

(continued on page 3)



The official publication of the Penn Estates Property Owners Association  
304 Cricket Drive, East Stroudsburg PA 18301

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## Manager's Message

By Laura Jones, Community Manager

### Solving Neighbor Disputes

Bruised by a dispute with your neighbor? The occasional conflict is a natural byproduct of living very close to one another. It's possible to get your disagreement resolved before it escalates and certainly before you end up in court.

You should consider first having an open discussion with your neighbor on what's bothering you. If that does not resolve the issue; try contacting the Administration Office or the Board of Directors to see if they can assist you with the problem. Maybe a letter or phone call from the Association on quieting down a barking dog or a loud party or cleaning up the yard will do the trick. This process can save you money and aggravation and lead to more peaceful community environment.

The Community Manager and the Board of Directors can assist you with mediation. They can act as a neutral third party that meets with you and your neighbor, often in an informal setting, to keep everyone focused on solving the problem. Mediation works particularly well by managing expectations; and, generally, the dispute is resolved within a day.

Going to court creates a winner and a loser but moreover it creates tension and animosity. No one wants to come home to that environment. So hopefully this information and this process is not needed; however, it is the pleasure of the Board and Management to assist our residents towards the quiet peaceful enjoyment of their homes in the community if needed.

## A Closer Look at Our Board of Directors

By Michael Tyrrell, Communications Committee Chair  
and Harmony Editor and Oleg Gorshkov, Board Liaison

Most Penn Estates residents are not familiar with our board members. They are often unable or unwilling to attend board meetings, community forums and other board events. The "board" seems an abstract entity to them even though the board members are our neighbors, often friends and are all volunteers. They all bring to the table many skill sets that are not always obvious and currently include the following partial list.

*Construction & Project Mgmt.*

*Engineering*

*Community Management*

*Mortgage/Banking/Finance Mgmt.*

*Not-For-Profit Management*

*Road Inspection*

*Home Inspection and Renovation*

*Real Estate Brokering*

*Accounting*

In addition, our board includes PTA and Education Volunteers. Many perform charitable work in the area, possess excellent public speaking skills and some are active politically.

We are very lucky to have such dedicated people who volunteer their services and we shouldn't take them for granted.

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## Leaders Wanted

(continued from page 2)

### 2016 Board of Directors Election Timeline

#### February 12, 2016 > Application deadline

All candidate applications must be submitted to Administration.

#### February 23, 2016 > Interviews completed

All candidates must be interviewed by Nominating & Steering by this date.

#### February 25, 2016 > Recommendations to Board

Nominating & Steering to submit slate of candidates to the Board for approval.

#### February 27, 2016 > Harmony article deadline

Candidate bios to Harmony. All candidates, including those using the petition process, should submit bios and photos to pepoharmony@gmail.com.

#### March 4, 2016 > Board approves candidates

Board approves candidates recommended by Nominating & Steering Committee. Bylaws require approval at least 60 days prior to election.

#### March 18, 2016 > Harmony to be delivered to PE by publisher

#### March 26, 2016 > Deadline for candidates applying via petition

(Per bylaws, 6 weeks prior to the Annual Meeting). Candidates will be required to submit a bio including a photograph with petition.

#### March 21, 2016 > Insert any missing bios in paper

\*at candidate's time/expense. Candidate to make arrangements with Admin.

#### April 7, 2016 > Mailing of election materials per bylaws

\*Harmony does not get mailed. This should also be the date of record for members in good standing. Board resolution required to establish this date.

#### April 30, 2016 > "Meet the Candidates" event

The Nominating & Steering committee is recommending that this be the only venue for candidate speeches prior to the election, thereby eliminating candidate speeches from the Volunteer Dinner.

### Board Adopts CAI Code of Ethics

At its January 4, 2013 meeting, the Board adopted a Code of Ethics for the PEPOA Board of Directors. It is based on the Community Associations Institute (CAI) Model Code of Ethics for Community Association Board Members. The Code formalizes our existing guidelines for Board conduct and incorporates them into one document. It will be provided to all candidates for Board seats as part of the application package.

Code of Ethics for PEPOA Board of Directors - This Code of Ethics for the PEPOA Board of Directors was adopted on January 4, 2013 under Board resolution BD2013-04

### Board members should:

- Strive at all times to serve the best interests of the association as a whole regardless of their personal interests.
- Use sound judgment to make the best possible business decisions for the association, taking into consideration all available information, circumstances and resources.
- Act within the boundaries of their authority as defined by law and the governing documents of the association.
- Provide opportunities for residents to comment on decisions facing the association.
- Perform their duties without bias for or against any individual or group of owners or non-owner residents.
- Disclose personal or professional relationships with any company or individual who has or is seeking to have a business relationship with the association.
- Conduct open, fair and well-publicized elections.
- Always speak with one voice, supporting all duly-adopted board decisions even if the board member was in the minority regarding actions that may not have obtained unanimous consent.

### Board members should NOT:

- Reveal confidential information provided by contractors or share information with those bidding for association contracts unless specifically authorized by the board.
- Make unauthorized promises to a contractor or bidder.
- Advocate or support any action or activity that violates a law or regulatory requirement.
- Use their positions or decision-making authority for personal gain or to seek advantage over another owner or non-owner resident.
- Spend unauthorized association funds for their own personal use or benefit.
- Accept any gifts—directly or indirectly—from owners, residents, contractors or suppliers.
- Misrepresent known facts in any issue involving association business.
- Divulge personal information about any association owner, resident or employee that was obtained in the performance of board duties.
- Make personal attacks on colleagues, staff or residents.
- Harass, threaten or attempt through any means to control or instill fear in any board member, owner, resident, employee or contractor.
- Reveal to any owner, resident or other third party the discussions, decisions and comments made at any meeting of the board properly closed or held in executive session.

By following the Code of Ethics, PEPOA's current and future Boards will conform to the highest standards of conduct consistent with Penn Estate's status as a CAI Gold Star Community.

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## Your Board of Directors at Work

By Laura Jones, Community Manager  
and Michael Tyrrell, Communications Committee Chair

What's the difference in a board meeting and a special meeting, or an annual meeting and a town meeting? Confused? Here's some clarification.

**Annual Meetings** - Annual meetings, or annual membership meetings, are required by our governing documents, which specify when they're to be conducted and how and when members are to be notified about the meeting. This is the main meeting of the year when members receive the new budget, elect a board, hear committee reports and discuss items of common interest.

**Special Meetings** - Special meetings are limited to a particular topic. The board can call a special meeting at any time, and they must notify all members in advance. The notice will specify the topic so interested members can attend. Special meetings give the board an opportunity to explore sensitive or controversial for example an assessment increase (take a deep breath this is just an example). Members do not participate in the meeting, unless asked directly by a board member, but they have a right to listen to the board discussion.

**Community Forums** - Community Forums are like town meetings; informal gatherings intended to promote two-way communication; full member participation is essential to success. The board may want to present a controversial issue or explore an important question like amending the bylaws. The board may want to get a sense of members' priorities, garner support for a large project or clarify a misunderstood decision.

**Board Meetings** - Most of the business of the association is conducted at regular board meetings. Board members set policy, oversee the manager's work, review operations, resolve disputes, talk to residents and plan for the future. Often the health and harmony of an entire community is directly linked to how constructive these meetings are.

**Executive Session** - The governing documents require the association to notify you in advance of all meetings, and you're welcome—in fact, encouraged—to attend and listen. The only time you can't listen is when the board goes into executive session. Topics that the board can discuss in executive session are limited by law to a narrow range of sensitive topics. Executive sessions keep only the discussion private; no votes can be taken. The board must adjourn the executive session and resume the open session before voting on the issue. In this way, members may hear the outcome, but not the private details.

**Parties** - Occasionally the association notifies all residents of a meeting at which absolutely no business is to be conducted. Generally these meetings include food and music, and they tend to be the best attended meetings the association has. Oh, wait! That's a party, not a meeting. Well, it depends on your definition of meeting.

## Giant Pillows At Highland Lake

By Sean Reilly, Treasurer

Have you seen the giant black pillows lying on the side of the road across from the Hyland Beach parking lot? They are part of our beach and swimming area renovation project planned by the Buildings, Grounds and Roadways Committee.

Inside the two nylon pillow sacks, is 35 years of fine rich organic soil which was pumped out of the lake cove area. This silt was beginning to fill in and cover the swimming/wading area. Although this is natural silt and fine for fish and lake critters, it will crowd out the swimming area.

This rich soil is comprised mostly of hundreds of cubic yards of decomposing leaves which have blown into the swimming cove. The Lake was built in the 1980's .

The Association hired a lake management company, Ecological Solutions, to use its small floating vacuum barge to grind

up and vacuum the mud and leaves and pump it across the road and into the large porous nylon pillows. The mud and vacuumed water goes in and the super fine mesh bag only lets the water leak out. The water soaks into the rocky forested gully behind the lot, leaving behind the slowly drying pillows of pure, rich, odor-free, organic soil.

In the spring, our grounds staff will cut open the bags and haul the soil away and save it for some future use. Perhaps we'll sell it on the Internet as 35 year old pure organic gold potting soil! Any ideas ?

Finally, while the soil pillows are drying, we may have to lower the lake a little over the winter to expose and clean the beach area's shallow shoreline where the barge could not go. Don't worry, the lake has many deep areas for our fish to keep swimming while we do this work. See you on the summer sand.



## Safety Tips for Winter Driving

Submitted by Laura Jones, Community Manager

Preparedness is paramount when it comes to road trips year-round, and hitting the road for a long drive during winter months is no exception. With an increased risk of potential driving hazards like sleet, snow, strong winds and frigid temperatures, it's a good idea to think about ways to ensure you'll travel safely.

Consider the following tips when preparing for your winter road trip:

- Invest in an emergency kit for your vehicle. Available at most major retailers, these kits are relatively inexpensive and contain items like flares, booster cables, flashlights, ponchos and first aid supplies for minor injuries.
- Develop a contingency plan. Create a strategy for dealing with a flat tire, vehicle accident, dead battery or other potential travel delays. Keep a hard-copy list of people or businesses to contact for help should you need it.
- Stay in touch. Check in with a designated contact during your journey with updates on your location, delays encountered or unexpected situations that require longer travel time. When driving, remember always to pull off the road before using your cell phone.
- Check the local weather report before heading out. Winter weather can be tricky and forecasts aren't always accurate. You can double-check your destination's weather history on a variety of websites to determine typical conditions to expect in that area during your travels.
- Store warm clothes and blankets in your vehicle. Be prepared to stay warm if you're stuck for extended periods by keeping a blanket or two in your car. Also, pack a small travel case with snow boots, socks, gloves, a scarf, hat and heavy sweater in case you need to leave your vehicle.
- Review your travel route without GPS. Read through detailed driving directions, including alternate routes, so you know your options. Also consider keeping a map handy in case your navigation system is compromised during your trip.

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# Kitchen Science

By Jen Nicholson, Communications Committee Member

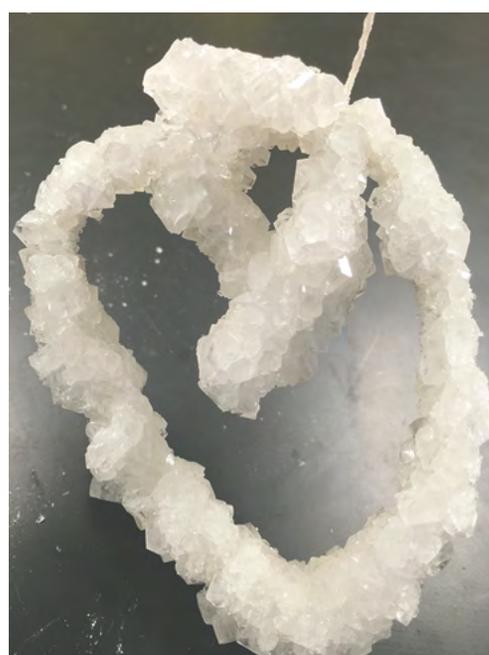
Is it too cold to venture out? Are you bleary eyed from watching Netflix marathons? Are the kids getting antsy? The cure for winter boredom lies in your kitchen. And no... we won't be eating. I am talking about easy and quick science experiments that are fun for adults and children. While you could find endless experiments online that can be completed with everyday items in your kitchen, I have picked out a few of my tried and true favorites. I like the following experiments for their simplicity and enjoyment. No crazy ingredients needed. No exhaustive directions. And I will even explain the science behind the fun.

**1. Oobleck** - I will start with my favorite just in case you don't read the whole article. If you do any experiment from this list...do this one. Oobleck got its name from the Dr. Seuss book titled Bartholomew and the Oobleck. In short, this book is about a boy who must rescue his kingdom from a sticky substance called Oobleck which was made by some magicians on order of the King. A great integration of reading and science would be to order this book, read it together with your kids and then make the Oobleck. I know that my boys (and myself) have had hours of fun playing with Oobleck.

**What you will need:** Cornstarch, water and food coloring (optional)

In a bowl, mix 2 parts cornstarch into 1 part water. Add a drop of food coloring to the water before mixing if you want colored Oobleck. That's it. You now have what is called a Non-Newtonian fluid. This means that Oobleck acts like both a liquid and a solid. Punch it and it feels solid. Gently sink your fingers into it and it feels like a liquid. Firmly grab a handful and it feel like a solid ball, relax your hand and it will ooze through your fingers like a liquid. Type in "Ellen Oobleck" on youtube to see people running across a big tub of Oobleck on the Ellen DeGeneres show.

**The Science:** Non-Newtonian fluids like Oobleck and quicksand change their viscosity under different force or pressure. When you apply a quick force, the cornstarch molecules pack together making it feel solid. When you touch it gently, you are giving the cornstarch molecules time to move around in the water and it flows like a liquid. Make a mess and have fun.



## 2. Borax Snowflakes

- O.K., so you may not have Borax in your Kitchen...or maybe not even in your Laundry room. But add it to your shopping list and pick it up the next time you are at the grocery store. 20 Mule Team borax is a laundry detergent booster and I have found it in all of our area grocery stores, Walmart etc. I like this type of crystal growing because they grow very fast and the result is big, chunky and beautiful crystals.

**What you will need:** Borax, water, pipe cleaners, string, pen/pencil, food coloring (optional)

I recommend making your snowflake (or whatever design you like) out of your pipe cleaners first. This will help in selecting the correct size jar and amount of liquid that you will need. Bend your pipe cleaners into the desired shape. Tie a string around the pipe cleaner shape you made. You will be suspending the pipe cleaner shape in a jar. So find a glass jar or container that the shape can fit in without

touching the sides of the container. You will need 3 tablespoons of Borax per cup of boiling water. You will need enough water to submerge your pipe cleaner shape, so the amount of borax/water will depend on the size of your container. Bring the water to a boil. Add and dissolve the borax. Add food coloring at this stage if you want colored crystals. Pour the water/borax solution into the jar you have selected. Suspend you pipe cleaner shape by wrapping the loose end of string around a pen or pencil and laying it across the top of the jar. Make sure the pipe cleaner is not touching the sides or bottom of the container and that it is fully submerged. Now just set it aside somewhere to cool undisturbed. Within a few hours you should see crystals forming. Take your snowflake (or whatever you have made) out of the solution when you have the desired size crystals. I usually let mine sit overnight and get nice and big.

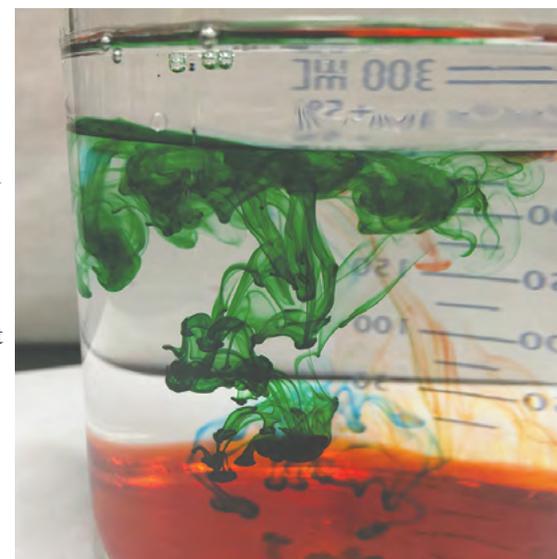
**The Science:** Hotter water molecules are farther away from each other. Cooler water molecules are slower and closer together. When you boil the water, the water molecules move farther apart making room for more Borax to dissolve then normally could if the water was cooler. This is a supersaturated solution. When the solution cools, the water molecules move closer together which forces the borax out of solution and back into its crystal form. The fuzzy hairs on the pipe cleaners acts as the perfect substrate for the crystals to form on and grow nice and big.

**3. Underwater fireworks** - Underwater fireworks is super easy to set up and fascinating to watch.

**What you will need:** Food coloring, water, oil (any transparent oil like corn, vegetable, olive or mineral oil), a glass

Fill up the glass about  $\frac{3}{4}$  full with water. Add a layer of oil to the top of the water. You can try different amounts of oil but make it a least a centimeter thick layer of oil on top of the water. Drop a few scattered drops of food coloring gently onto the oil (you can use one color or a variety). Sit back and watch.

**The Science:** Oil is less dense than water. This is why the oil floats on top of the water. Food coloring is water based. So the drops of denser food coloring will gradually fall through the oil layer. Oil and water do not mix (because water is polar and oil is non-polar) so the food coloring drops do not spread out and mix with the oil as it falls through. When the food coloring (water based) hits the water layer it mixes. And, through the random motion of molecules and their tendency to spread out (diffusion) the food coloring diffuses through the water in a pretty little burst of color.



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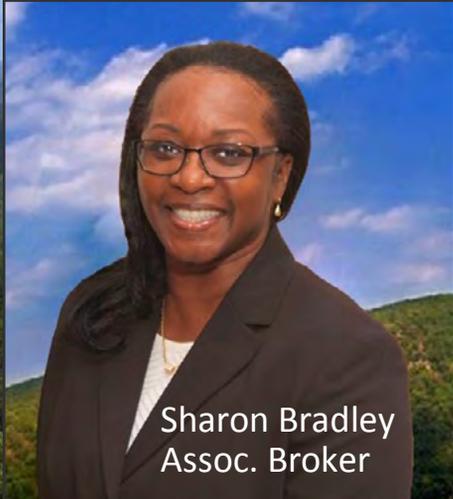
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## Young Voices in Harmony

By Katherine Hernandez, Communications Committee Member

We are pleased to include another young writer's contribution in this issue. "Being a Boy Scout" was written by ten-year old Andrew Mui. Though Andrew did not consider himself a writer, he attended our free Writing Workshop and discovered that he had something to share with the Penn Estates audience.

While every young writer who's been published in this section have attended the workshop, the Communications Committee is eager to hear from many young Penn Estates residents.

Writing workshops will continue to be offered when possible. However, we encourage our younger residents to submit essays, poems, articles, and other written works at any time. We believe it is important for young voices to be heard.

If you write about what matters to you, what inspires you, what moves you, then we will want to read it! Write, revise, edit and send along your publish-ready work to one of the following contacts. We'll be glad to consider your work for publication.

Send submissions to: Michael Tyrrell, editor, pepoharmony@gmail.com or to Katherine Hernandez, staff member, kmillshernandez@gmail.com.

## Being A Boy Scout

By Andrew Mui

I have been a boy scout for only a short time, but I have learned that it changes you. I learned how to camp, fish, knit, and survive in the wilderness.

There are many people in my troop and I've enjoyed learning with all of them.

With my troop, I have seen black bears. One had three cubs and another had two cubs. The one with two cubs came to the side of my tent and the other walked up to our campsite.

Learning survival skills is very important, but the funniest thing we learned was what to do in a swimming pool.

This was funny because it was skit showing us what *not* to do, like a guy who wore a red cap running when he wasn't supposed to run and the other swimmers holding too many life jackets. Another one tried climbing up the slide and someone else brought a shoe into the pool. During the skit the swimmers splashed water on us, making us laugh even more.

The skit was fun and taught us a lot, but my favorite part about being a boy scout was the campfires.



## Jumping Jacks + Text Books = Smarter Study Session

By Katherine Hernandez, Communications Committee Member

*"As far as our brains are concerned, if we're not moving there's no real need to learn anything."* Dr. John Ratey, author of *Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain*

By now, it's no secret that aerobic exercise boosts brain power. Neuroscientists have mapped out exactly how this works, but the bottom-line question for us brain users is this: Exactly how can exercise make me (or my child) a more effective learner?

Here's how: exercise vigorously BEFORE studying. This is key, because *during* exercise, the brain is not able to attend to complex intellectual challenges and *without* exercise it has to work extra hard to engage and stay focused. However, directly after exercise, the brain is primed for this work. Whether in middle school, graduate school, or somewhere in between, students do well to utilize this proven method to manage their brain power and increase their capacity to learn.

Essentially, the experts tell us that aerobic exercise puts in place all the brain components we need to make a study session effective and successful. Without getting into a highly detailed scientific explanation, rife with myriad acronyms and names that will mean little to us, I'll simply offer my understanding after years of following the research and putting it into practice for myself, in my classroom with hundreds of students, and at home with my own children.

When a body engages in aerobic activity, the brain responds by spawning new neurons in the hippocampus (which is largely responsible for working and long term memory creation) and by activating the prefrontal cortex, which manages executive function (related to planning, time management, focus, and problem-solving, among other things necessary for effective studying).

How much exercise is enough? On this point, the experts are uncertain. There are a lot of variables to consider and research is still being conducted. Of what's been published so far, it seems that 30 minutes or more will achieve the effects students desire.

Evidence also indicates that regular exercise contributes to "fitter" brains. In his book on the subject, Dr. Ratey states that "one small but scientifically sound study from Japan found that jogging thirty minutes just two or three times a week improved executive function." However, another study showed improvement right away, indicating that "runners improved their processing speed and cognitive flexibility after just one workout."

That said, my own research, albeit more anecdotal than scientific, shows that anywhere from 3 to 10 minutes creates enough of a response in learners to yield higher focus and

quicker response to intellectual challenges than they demonstrate without aerobic activity.

This means that, when we (or our kids) want to learn something new, preparing to study for an upcoming exam, or are about to engage in other demanding intellectual work, we benefit enormously from taking 10 minutes or so to get physical.

There are lots of ways to do this, so each person can choose an activity that makes him or her feel best—or create a fun combination of activities. The key is *that* the body moves rigorously, not necessarily *how* the body moves rigorously (although I'm not sure if lying on one's back and waving arms and legs in the air counts as effective aerobic exercise).

Here are some ideas to start with:

- dance to a few favorite songs
- do jumping jacks mixed with jogging in place with high knee lifts
- go out (or onto the treadmill) for a brisk walk or run
- use an elliptical machine or other workout equipment
- hop around the house with feet together, then apart

Maintaining the mental readiness for learning (or otherwise grappling with intellectually challenging work) is important. If a study session is going to

(continued on page 9)

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# BREAKFAST WITH SANTA

Photos by  
Lisa Ortiz



## Reading Corner

By Evelyn Infante, Contributor

In 1982 a sixteen-year-old girl named Marina Nemat was arrested in Tehran where she lived. She, along with other students was placed on a list for speaking out against the study of the Koran and political propaganda that had replaced math and history. When Marina protested, her teacher told her if she didn't like it, she could leave. Marina left the classroom and other students followed her. Along with many of her fellow classmates, Marina was arrested and sent to a prison no one dared to speak about. At Evin Prison she was tortured and sentenced to death for refusing to give out the names of her friends. Her whole world had come down on her but all she could think of was protecting her friends, her family who she loved very much, and the crush she had on a young boy named Andre.

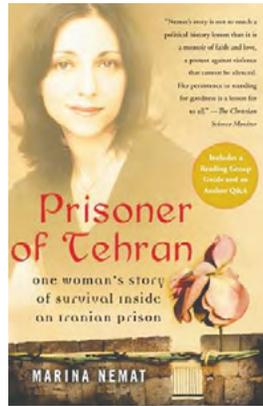
This was a time when the Ayatollah Khomeini and the propaganda of "Death to America" was center stage on the evening news. We were not aware nor gave any thought to what was happening to the regular people living in Iran, people like us with families they love, going to school, parties, working, all the things people around the world do. All we saw were crowds chanting hatred toward the USA. A foreign government and its people were humiliating America. We thought every one in Iran hated us.

Marina's story is true. She shares her experiences in her book, *The Prisoner of Tehran*. In today's political climate where hate and fear are constantly beaten into our collective psyche, it is important that we read such books by real people who live and suffer under restrictive regimes.

Marina was a normal teenager, doing things all teens do around the world; not thinking that the horrible things she saw around her could touch her, until the arrest. In prison she was raped and tortured. One of her interrogators, who fell in love with Marina, intervened on her behalf, going to the Ayatollah himself seeking a pardon for Marina, just when Marina was facing a firing squad. He got the pardon. But Ali had conditions. She had to convert to Islam and marry him. If she did not agree, her family and Andre would be jailed or killed. In Iran there is a small Christian minority and Marina was a dedicated Catholic. She had no choice but to accept.

Her new husband, Ali, is a complex character with parents who welcomed Marina with open arms as her own father turned a cold shoulder toward her. Ali knew full well Marina did not love him but he showed her a kindness he could not openly exhibit while she was a prisoner under his watchful eye, even though he tried to protect her as best he could from the other sadistic guard. Eventually, Ali met an unfortunate end and Marina's life took another turn, but this time for the better.

The *Prisoner of Tehran* emphasizes "The more we are different; the more we are the same." It is people like Marina Nemat who cannot help but protest the wrongs placed on humanity, no matter what the cost to their personal liberty. People like her are born to educate the world that we all want the same things: freedom to think, freedom to love, freedom to choose, happiness. This is a book worth reading.



## Hiking Promised Land State Park

By Michele Valerio, Contributing Writer

Promised Land State Park is really a lovely park. There are about 50 miles of hiking trails in Promised Land State Park and the surrounding Delaware State Forest as well as a large lake with beaches and campgrounds.

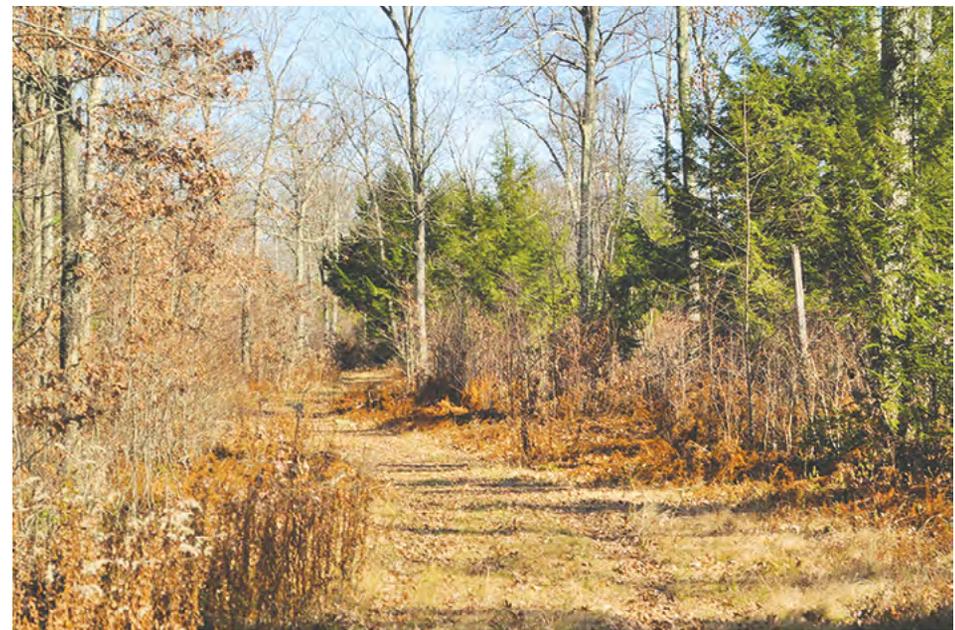
One small little gem is a hiking loop around Conservation Island. There is a self-guided nature trail map for Conservation Island that can be obtained at the park office.



Promised Land Lake has beaches off Pickerel Point and the main picnic area. You can also see a wonderful little waterfall on Little Falls Trail.

From the Wildlife Observation Station you might be able to spot the pair of nesting eagles using binoculars that have been residents of the park since 1995.

Just north of the park, Bruce Lake Natural Area has two lakes and miles of hiking trails. Bruce Lake is a must-see since isolated, undeveloped, natural lakes are so rare.



Even though it is only 45 minutes away from Penn Estates you could plan a nice weekend stay at one of the many campgrounds or cabins located throughout the park. Pickerel Point Campground is on a peninsula on the southern end of the park.

Directions: Rt. 447 North to 390 North. The park entrance is on North Shore Lake Rd.

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# Out & About

## Things to Do and See in the Poconos

By Sharon Kennedy, Communications Committee

Many of our neighbors fly off to sunny Florida about this time of year. Who needs to go to Florida when we have our own spring in December? I wonder what the next few months will have in store for us. I keep hearing from people that “we are going to pay in February and March with snow storms then”. Hmmmm. Only time will tell. Actually, the answer will be apparent to everyone by the time this issue is printed and distributed. By the way, have you been following the beautiful Penn Estates pictures on Facebook and Instagram? I am totally taken by the nature scenes, especially the birds! That is entertainment at its best!

Here are some of the other upcoming events around the area. As always, I take my information from Internet sites. Please call to confirm dates and times and costs. The costs of some events depend on how early you register, especially the sporting events. So, plan early. Of course, there is a delay between writing this article and the publication of the Harmony. You may want to check the newspapers, and Internet for other events. I like 800poconos.com and njskylands.com for upcoming events

As always, there are numerous live music opportunities throughout our area, but too many to list. Check 800poconos website and the Pocono Record for up to date listings. Sherman Theater continues to host open mic on Sundays in the Sherman Theater Living Room. Call 420-2808 for information. Sherman Theater also hosts the Pocono Winterfest Beerfest on January 30<sup>th</sup>.

Jim Thorpe seems to be active throughout the year. Their Winterfest on 2/13 and 2/14 includes civil war reenactment, music, ice carving and more. Call 325-5810 for information. Their St. Patrick's Day Parade is on 3/13. Stroudsburg's St. Patrick's Day Parade is on 3/20.

Do you love the cold? How about a polar plunge? There are several throughout the region, mostly fund raisers. For example, the Paupack Plunge (Lake Wallenpaupack in Greentown) benefits dive and rescue. They suggest a \$25 donation. Costumes are welcome. Call 857-0220 for information. Or you could play in the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Golf Tournament at Lake Wallenpaupack on January 31<sup>st</sup>. Call 226-3191 for information. Or you could go to the Sculpted Ice Works in Lakeville daily from 2/5 to 2/25. The cost is \$15 for adults and \$10 for children over three. You can slide down an ice slide, see ice carvings and wood carvings. Call 226-6246 for information. Or you could make your own sled out of boxes and join the Camelback Cardboard Box Derby on 3/20. Call 629-1661 for information.

The Blue Mountain Festival on January 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> will include fireworks, music, ice sculpture and more call 484-225-8983.

Of course, PEEC has events for every season. Their offerings are many so you may want to just check their website. This is the season for Eagle Watching and snow shoeing and more.

Have fun! Please let me know of your favorite events so that I can include them in the future.

## Home Heating Safety

Submitted by John Baraniuk, Community Safety Committee Chair

The region has been enjoying mild December weather, but as we approach the official start of Winter, the American Red Cross urges families to be cautious when using space heaters and other heating sources when the temperatures begin to dip.

The American Red Cross responds to nearly 70,000 disasters a year -- one every eight minutes -- and most are home fires. Heating sources are a leading cause of home fire deaths, and fatal home fires increase during the winter months.

Heat sources such as space heaters, fireplaces or wood and coal stoves can pose a fire hazard, and many fatal fires occur in the early morning hours when most people are sleeping. To reduce the risk of heating related fires, the Red Cross recommends the following:

- All heaters need space. Keep children, pets and items that can burn (paper, matches, bedding, furniture, clothing, carpets, and rugs) at least three feet away from heating equipment.
- Never leave a fire in the fireplace unattended, and use a glass or metal fire screen to keep fire and embers in the fireplace.
- Never use a cooking range or oven to heat your home.
- Turn off portable space heaters every time you leave the room or go to sleep.
- Have wood and coal stoves, fireplaces, and chimneys inspected annually by a professional, and cleaned if necessary.
- If you must use a space heater, place it on a level, hard, nonflammable surface (such as ceramic tile floor), not on rugs, or carpets or near bedding or drapes. Plug power cords directly into outlets and never into an extension cord.

For more information visit [redcross.org/firesafety](http://redcross.org/firesafety).

## Jumping Jacks *(cont. from page 6)*

be long, take a break every 20 - 30 minutes (60 at the most) for a quick aerobic boost. Aim to spend at least 3 minutes moving intensely for these breaks.

Think of exercise as the warm-up for the brain's real work out—the studying/reading/writing/problem-solving session. Once the brain is ready, managing the components of the academic work wisely will maximize the benefits of exercise. This is where other forms of brain research, namely that which focuses on effective learning practices, come in handy.

Other effective non-aerobic study habits include:

- read small sections of text, then speak aloud what you've understood before reading on
- stop occasionally to write what you're learning in your own words
- aim to study between the hours of 2 and 6pm for optimal brain attentiveness (according to Ayurvedic cycles)
- keep the body fed and hydrated with light healthy snacks and water
- aim to study for 1-2 hours each day, rather than cramming it all into one overburdened session (the time in between sessions allows the brain to process what's been studied)
- ask someone to 'test' you in between study sessions (this will cause you to recall the information and thereby strengthen the connection your brain made to the information when it was learned; the more you recall it, the stronger the connection, the more likely the information will be stored in long-term memory, rather than the much shorter-lived 'working memory.')

For more information, consider the following sources: *Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain*, by Dr. Ratey (quoted above); *Brain Rules: Twelve Principles for Surviving and Thriving at Work, Home, and School*, by Dr. John Medina; *The Teenage Brain: A Neuroscientist's Survival Guide to Raising Adolescents and Young Adults*. \*Note: All of these books are now available at Monroe Public Library.

## Stroudsburg School Music Fest

By Robin Nicholson, Communications Committee Member

Stroudsburg School District serves most of our Penn Estates community. Many know the district has outstanding music and performance art programs with shows offered to the general public. Music Fest is a wonderful showcase of these programs.

Stroudsburg High School, located at 1100 West Main Street, hosted the district's 39th annual Music Fest this December. Stroudsburg High School also hosts a large Craft Fair (dubbed Craft Fest) annually on the same day as Music Fest so the community can visit and enjoy both events on the same day.

Stroudsburg is the only district in Monroe County with a strings/orchestra program. Students can choose to begin lessons on a stringed instrument in the 4th grade and woodwind, brass or percussion in the 5th grade.

The district's annual Music Fest invites the community to experience the hard work of the districts music program students and teachers all day with over 10 hours of amazing performances. Community favorites are the performances by the High School Show Choir and the Chamber Orchestra and Concert Band.

In addition to Music Fest, the district offers performances throughout the school year with outstanding shows from the theatre/drama department. Attend these performances and experience wonderful local talent! Keep up with events in the district on Facebook in this group I started and maintain with others: "Stroudsburg Area Schools & Community."

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# Michael's Kitchen

By Michael J. Tyrrell, Communications Committee

Mexican food is a usually a real crowd pleaser and relatively easy to prepare. Here are some fave recipes of mine that are done in the slow cooker. What could be easier than that? If you or the family don't like things too hot and spicy, substitute milder jalapenos for the habaneros and reduce the number of chipotles and/or remove the seeds. All of these recipes freeze well in case you are concerned about too many leftovers.

## Slow Cooker Beef Tacos and Guacamole (makes 12 tacos)

Per Taco: Calories 386 Fat 24g Sodium 517mg

- |                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| 1 beef chuck roast (about 3 ½ lbs) | ½ tsp cayenne                           |
| 1 tsp salt                         | 1 onion, chopped                        |
| ½ tsp black pepper                 | 1 sweet red pepper, seeded and diced    |
| 2 tbsp vegetable oil               | 4 cloves garlic, sliced                 |
| 2 tsp chili powder                 | 1 cup beef broth                        |
| 1 tsp cumin                        | 12 fajita-size tortillas, heated gently |
| Guacamole (recipe follows)         |   |

Season roast with salt and pepper. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat; add roast and brown on all sides about 12 minutes total.

Coat slow cooker bowl with cooking spray. Place roast in slow cooker and season with

chili powder, cumin and cayenne. Top with onion, sweet pepper and garlic. Pour broth over top. Cook on HIGH for 6 hours or LOW for 8 hours.

Remove roast to a cutting board and shred with 2 forks. Stir meat back into liquid in slow cooker. Wrap ¼ cup beef mixture in each tortilla and top with guacamole.

**Guacamole:** Coarsely mash 4 ripe avocados in a medium bowl. Stir in ½ cup chopped red onion, ½ cup quartered grape tomatoes, 1 seeded and chopped jalapeno, 2 tbsp lime juice, 2 tbsp chopped cilantro, 1 tbsp olive oil and ¼ tsp salt. (this is my take on the famous guac that is prepared table-side in Rosa Mexicano in NYC)

## Pork and Black Bean Tostados (makes 10 tostados)

Per Tostado: Calories 255 Fat 24g Sodium 312mg

- |                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| 3½ lb boneless pork shoulder | 4 cloves garlic, chopped                  |
| 1 tsp salt                   | 8 plum tomatoes, seeded and chopped       |
| ½ tsp black pepper           | 1 cup chicken broth                       |
| 2 tsp ancho chile powder     | 1 can (15 oz) black beans, drained/rinsed |
| 1 tsp ground cumin           | 2 cups vegetable oil                      |
| 1 tsp dried oregano          | 10 corn tortillas                         |
| ¼ tsp cinnamon               | 3 cups shredded iceberg lettuce           |
| 1 onion, chopped             | Pineapple Habanero Salsa (recipe follows) |

Coat slow cooker bowl with cooking spray. Season pork with salt and pepper. Place in slow cooker and sprinkle with ancho chile powder, cumin, oregano and cinnamon. Place onion, garlic and tomatoes around pork; pour broth down sides of bowl. Cover and cook on HIGH for 6 hours or LOW for 8 hours.

Remove to a cutting board and shred with 2 forks. Return to slow cooker and stir in beans. Heat through.

Heat oil in a skillet to 375 degrees. Cook tortillas in batches, 1 minute per side or until crisp. Place on a paper towel lined baking sheet. Top each tortilla with ½ cup of the pork, some shredded lettuce and Pineapple Habanero Salsa.

**Pineapple Habanero Salsa:** Combine 2 ½ cups diced fresh pineapple, ¼ cup finely chopped sweet red pepper, 1 habanero pepper, seeded and chopped, 2 tbsp chopped cilantro and 1 tbsp each lime juice and olive oil. Season with 1/8 tsp salt. Note- if habanero is too spicy for your crew, jalapeno works well.

## Meatballs in Chipotle Sauce (makes 24 meatballs)

Per Meatball: Calories 88 Fat 4g Sodium 265mg

- |                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1½ lbs ground beef/pork/veal mixture | 1 tsp ground cumin                          |
| 1 cup bread crumbs                   | 1 can (28 oz) fire roasted crushed tomatoes |
| ¼ cup milk                           | ½ cup chicken broth                         |
| 2 eggs, lightly beaten               | 3 cloves garlic, chopped                    |
| 2 tsp chili powder                   | 1 tsp dried oregano                         |
| 1 tsp garlic powder                  | 3 chipotles in adobo, chopped               |
| 1 tsp salt                           | 2 tsp chopped cilantro                      |

In a large bowl, combine ground meat, bread crumbs, milk, eggs, chili powder, garlic powder, ½ tsp each of the salt and cumin. Form into 24 meatballs, about 1 tbsp each.

Coat slow cooker bowl with cooking spray. Stir in tomatoes, broth, garlic, oregano, chipotle and remaining ½ tsp each of salt and cumin. Add meatballs.

Cook on HIGH for 3 hours. Stir in cilantro before serving.

## Butternut Squash Chili (makes 8 servings)

Per serving: Calories 209 Fat:5g Sodium 977mg

- 2 large onions, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 butternut squash, seeded, peeled and cut into 1 ½ - inch pieces
- 1 large green bell pepper, seeded and chopped
- 1 large jalapeno, seeded and chopped
- 2 cans (14 ½ oz each) stewed tomatoes
- 4 tsp ancho chile powder
- 2 tsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 cans (15 oz) black beans, drained and rinsed
- 2 sweet red peppers, seeded and cut into 1-inch dice
- ¼ cup cilantro, chopped
- 1 cup shredded taco cheese
- 2 scallions, thinly sliced

Coat slow cooker bowl with cooking spray. Add onions, garlic, squash, green pepper and jalapeno. Combine tomatoes, chili powder, cumin and salt. Pour over squash and peppers. Cover and cook on HIGH for 6 hours or LOW for 8 hours. Add beans and sweet red peppers during last 30 minutes.

To serve, stir in cilantro. Top with cheese and scallions. Serve with cooked rice.

# Real Estate Update

By Maureen Shindle, Contributor

I am happy present you with the Real Estate statistics pertaining to PEPOA properties. The statistics below refer to the activity in 2015 and current Active Listings. The good news is that 107 properties were sold in 2015 with another 26 sales pending. This represents a notable turn around for the community. The not-so-good news is that 59% of these sales were foreclosures, which continue to depress market prices.

Taking a glass half-full viewpoint, the buyers of these foreclosures are making significant improvements to these properties and are paying dues that were not previously collected. The result is a win/win for the community that should reap benefits for anyone looking to sell their house in the future. Additional good news is that Penn Estates location and amenities make it very attractive to buyers. Improvements to the guest registry, community center and the planned reconstruction of Penn Estates Drive will further add to the appeal of our community.

Information has been gathered from the Pocono Mountains Association of REALTORS' Multiple Listing Service on January 4, 2016.

Category	Active Listings	Pending Sales	2015 Total Sales
Total	54	26	107
Foreclosures	12	12	55
Short Sales	3	5	2
Low List/Sold Price	\$24,000	\$22,000	\$20,500
High List/Sold Price	\$259,000	\$169,000	\$280,000
Avg. List/Sold Price	\$110,416	\$84,899	\$78,464

2015 Sales to Date include sales from 1/1/2015 to 12/31/2015. Average Sale Price is \$78,464 (96% of the Average List Price). Of the 54 Active Listings, 12 are foreclosures and 3 are short sales. Foreclosures represent 58.8 % of the sales for Penn Estates.

On average, nine properties were sold per month. Based on this rate, there is currently a six-month supply of active listings. This is typical for this time of year when many sellers take their houses off the market until spring. This means fewer choices for buyers. Despite conventional wisdom, people do buy homes in the winter. And with such a low inventory, the properties currently on the market stand a better chance of being sold. If you are waiting until spring to list your house, you may want to think again.

\*Pending Sale information reflects only list prices as sold information is not available until the sale is final.

**DISTRESS SALES:** Sales of properties that are bank-owned (foreclosure), or short sales (where sellers sell for less than what they owe their mortgage lenders), distress sales made up 59% of the transactions for 2015 year to date. This number has a huge impact on our market because of the drastically reduced prices they allow.

*About the Author: Maureen Shindle is a 14 year resident of Penn Estates and Past President of PEPOA Board of Directors and a REALTOR® with Keller Williams Real Estate in Stroudsburg. Comments and questions welcome at [mpshindle@kw.com](mailto:mpshindle@kw.com) or [mpebalancedliving@kwrealty.com](http://mpebalancedliving@kwrealty.com).*

## Eats Around Town

By Julie Harter, Communications Committee

I love Mediterranean food so I was excited to try Stephanikos on Route 611 in Stroudsburg. When I first walked in I felt very warm and inviting by the family owners. My friend and I started out with the flaming Saganaki Cheese which is a sharp Greek cheese that

is floured, dipped in egg and flambéed with brandy table-side and extinguished with lemon. It is served with warm crusty bread. A schmear of this will have you cheering Opa immediately.

We were then served a traditional Greek salad; it was very fresh and delicious. Spanakopita, which is a favorite of mine, was excellent. Between the fresh spinach, feta, and phyllo dough cooked to perfection, this was definitely a home run.

We split a pastitsio for the entrée. This is the epitome of Greek comfort food. It is a layered dish consisting of pasta, ground beef in tomato sauce, and three cheese béchamel.



Even though we completely full we could not resist finishing the whole portion, but we still got dessert, TO GO.

I ordered a Galaktoboureko which is my favorite of all Greek treats. I have only every had it made with farina. Stephanikos makes theirs with semolina so I was very curious about tasting it. I recommend this dessert 100%.

Be the loving wife that I am, I also brought home a slice of Baklava Cheesecake because Baklava is his all-time favorite. There were no complaints.

So, if you are looking for some delicious, local Greek cuisine, I highly recommend stopping in at Stephanikos.

## HOLIDAY PARTIES

By Matthew Jacobsen, Cub Reporter

By the time you read this it will be 2016. Another year has come and gone and we've all made our new year's resolutions. Let's take a look back at the parties that ended 2015.

"Breakfast With Santa" took place on December 12 in the newly-renovated Oak Room, starting at 10AM. It started with breakfast consisting of pancakes and sausage and included cupcakes and sugar-frosted cookies. Coffee, milk and juice was also available. An arts & crafts table was set up to help keep the kids occupied while awaiting Santa.

Santa rolled into the parking lot in one of our security cars at 10:25AM and began by handing out candy canes to all the kids. Waiting outside with the kids gave me a chance to talk with them. They all were very excited to see Santa and tell him what they wanted for Christmas.

Once inside, Santa then made a round of all the tables to talk with each and every person there. While Santa was busy I chatted with some of the adults about the event and asked what they thought of the Oak Room's new renovation. Just about everyone told me how impressed they were with the outcome. One gentleman named Mark told me: "This event is very special to me and my family. With two small children it's the perfect event for us to attend."

When Santa had finished talking with everyone it was then time for picture taking, and for this, special thanks go to Lisa Ortiz and her family. This is always one of our best-attended events and this year was no exception, with a turnout of over 80 people.

The "New Year's Eve Party" had one of the best attendances we've ever seen. The Oak Room was filled to the brim with 130 people. Food was catered by Pipolos and everyone I spoke to thought it was delicious. Music was provided by The Franklin Experience.

Before the ball dropped I had a chance to talk to a few party goers to ask them if they had made any resolutions for the new year. Henry told me one of his was to "Go to the gym and attempt to lose at least 20 pounds." Amy stated she wanted to try to talk to and see more of her friends, making 2016 more enjoyable. She said: "I want to get out more and experience as much as I can."

With this year there will surely be challenges. Let's all make a resolution to be more involved with this community that offers us so much. Whether it's attending events or volunteering, let's make 2016 the year you get out and get involved. I hope you all had a safe and happy New Year and may 2016 bring joy and happiness into your life. Now get out and get involved!

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# Christmas Bird Count

Story and photos by Melissa Penta, Contributor

On December 20th, Pocono Mountain held their annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC). The CBC is a bird census, sponsored by the National Audubon Society, where birders across the Western Hemisphere count birds over a 24-hour period within 15-mile diameter circles. Penn Estates happens to be right in the middle of one of the areas for this count that is not usually accessible. My friend and I volunteered to count within the gates so that our community was not left out.

Penn Estates gets a nice variety of wildlife including over one hundred species of birds that I have found so far in two years. Our count was a little slow, likely due to the nicer weather that is keeping the winter birds north, at 22 species. Our highlights included a calling Eastern-Screech Owl, a nice flyover Red-tailed Hawk and two Ravens at the end of the count. Birds that we likely should have seen that we missed included a resident Great Blue Heron, Pileated Woodpeckers, Brown Creepers, White-throated Sparrows, Purple Finches, Pine Siskins, Red-shouldered Hawks and Turkey Vultures. We also could have tried harder to call out a Barred Owl who I have previously heard calling on Woodland Drive, which is not far from the Tannersville Cranberry Bog.

Many of the birds we found were hanging around the three small lakes within the community. We had a surprisingly small amount of luck at bird feeders, which probably means that the natural food is keeping the birds satisfied.

I will most likely do the same next year so that Penn Estates is no longer left out of the CBC due to restricted access. Even with the low number of birds, it was a fun morning!



The following summarizes our counts:

Canada Goose .....	1
Mallard .....	21
Red-tailed Hawk .....	1
Mourning Dove .....	16
Eastern Screech-Owl .....	1
Red-bellied Woodpecker .....	6
Northern Flicker .....	1
Downy Woodpecker .....	6
Hairy Woodpecker .....	1
Blue Jay .....	7
American Crow .....	8
Common Raven .....	2
Tufted Titmouse .....	87
Black-capped Chickadee .....	69
White-breasted Nuthatch .....	31
Carolina Wren .....	4
Eastern Bluebird .....	3
Northern Cardinal .....	3
Song Sparrow .....	2
Dark-eyed Junco .....	87
American Goldfinch .....	4
House Finch .....	1



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- The highest-priced home sold for \$322,000 in 2015.  
(Information provided through Pocono Mountain Assoc. of Realtors MLS Service)
- 90% of buyers start their search on the Internet.
- The average age of today's buyer is 25 years old.



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