



*Living in Harmony with Nature*

# Harmony

Penn Estates Property Owners Association

February/March 2025



## Penn Estates 2025 New Years Eve Party

photos by David Montalvo



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# Out&About

## Things to Do and See in the Poconos

by Sharon Kennedy, Communications Committee

I hope that you enjoyed your holiday season for whatever holiday you celebrate. My family had an extra reason to celebrate. My grandnephew made it home from the air force to be with his twin sister and the rest of the clan. I think this was the first time that they have been apart for any period of time since they left the womb. (Come to think of it, they were together before they left the womb.) It can be a time of joyous gatherings or a time of sad memories. I hope you had moments of joy and a peaceful heart.

So, we are going into the post-holiday season when there are fewer events than any other time of year in the Poconos. Thus, this article may be shorter than usual.

Have you toured around town to see the snowmen on display? They are fun to see every year but I think the snowmen this year were especially fun and creative and varied. They go into hibernation soon so go enjoy them and take some selfies with them while they still inhabit Stroudsburg.

There are some places that offer seasonally appropriate events throughout the year. The Pocono Environmental Education Center (PEEC) has their usual full calendar. You can see the dates and whether there is a cost or requirement to register if you go on to their website.

Some of the upcoming events are winter survival, wacky science adventures, and a frozen waterfall tour, just to mention a few. The scenic train excursions also run all year. I specially enjoy the Lehigh Gorge excursion out of Jim Thorpe. There is Trivia Tuesdays at Blue Mountain Resort, Cornhole Wednesdays at Slopeside Pub and Grill, and weekly zoom meditations on Wednesdays from 11 to 11:30 am (\$20/mo.).

There are some festivals and other special events, though fewer than in other seasons. Skirmish Paintball hosts a Valentine's Scavenger Hunt on February 14<sup>th</sup>. Find the hidden hearts for a prize. Jim Thorpe hosts their Annual Winterfest on February 15 and 16. Attendance is free though some activities have a fee.

Winterfest in Downtown Stroudsburg is on February 15 from 11 to 4. That includes over 50 ice sculptures, a scavenger search and story time. There will be a Chili and Wing Cookoff at Silver Birches in Hawley on March 2<sup>nd</sup> from noon to 4. Skytop Lodge hosts a Food and Wine Festival on March 8<sup>th</sup>. There will be samples of wine, cheese, and other food from local business, as well as live entertainment.

Camelback will host a Soups, Stews and Sips event at their conference center on March 9<sup>th</sup>. Country Junction hosts a Brew and Chili Fest on March 15<sup>th</sup> from noon to 2 pm. On April 13<sup>th</sup>, Kalahari hosts their Food and Not Just Wine Festival from noon to 4pm. The price varies by type of ticket and how early you register.

Mountain View Winery hosts their Annual Adult Easter Cork Hunt on April 19. There are three sessions: 10am, noon and 2pm. The entrance fees vary across the above events so check the websites ahead of time. And keep an eye out for the Easter events for children, which are not listed as yet.

Have fun!



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# Recent Board Motions

submitted by Phyllis Haase, Community Manager

## November 1, 2024

- 2024-054 Motion to adopt the 2025 Operating and Capital Budget. Morton/Fariello 6/2. Motion passed. Ms. Bruno and Ms. Elliott opposed.
- 2024-055 Motion to adopt the 2024-2025 Fee Schedule. Tabled.
- 2024-056 Motion to approve Paula Hampton to the Recreation Committee. Bruno/Kone 8/0. Motion passed.
- 2024-057 Motion to record open meetings and executive sessions of the Board. The recording is to be held in the office for transcribing the minutes for accuracy. The recording to be destroyed once the minutes are approved. To be amended if Hybrid meeting start. Morton/Kone 8/0. Ratified motion passed.
- 2024-058 Motion to approve the 2024-2025 Fee Schedule, amend as submitted to include Seasonal Amenity Pass from \$50 to \$150. Hoffman/Kone 8/0; Ratified motion passed.
- 2024-059 Motion to approve Directors Electronic Communication Usage Policy, amend Section D, Part 1 to the President (in their absence, an Executive Board member) or Community Manager. Kone/Hoffman 6/0, Directors Bruno and Elliott opposed. Ratified motion passed.
- 2024-060 Motion to hire Collie Holdings, Public Relations Firm, for a three-month trial basis, up to \$2500 per month. Kone/Morton 5/2. Directors Rivera and Elliott opposed. Ratified motion passed.

## November 15, 2024

- 2024-061 Motion made by Montalvo/Hoffman - The decision to adopt Motion 2024-052 to hire an independent forensic accountant to check our finances has been rescinded, and the Motion has no further effect. Motion passed 6/1. Mr. Kone opposed.

## November 18, 2024

- 2024-062 Motion that the Association shall seek to contract with a CPA for consulting services to help the Board determine whether a forensic audit is advisable and, if so, its objectives and scope. Further, that:

- Director Christine Morton is authorized to contact three (3) CPA's and schedule interviews with the Board;
- No other person is authorized to contact prospective CPA consulting candidates on behalf of the Association;
- The consulting CPA shall not be either the CPA who performed the Association's most recent audit nor the CPA who will perform any forensic audit;
- Within one week of the adoption of this motion, Directors shall provide Director Christine Morton with their specific written concerns about the Association's financial records and any suspected fraud, embezzlement or misappropriation of funds;
- This information will then be provided to the prospective CPA consulting candidates prior to any engagement;
- Costs of the consulting services shall not exceed \$15,000 without the Board's additional approval;
- The Board shall select the consulting CPA at its next regular Board meeting or at a Special Board meeting called for that purpose.

Montalvo/Hoffman 6/0. Motion passed.



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# Penn Estates Reports Strong Financial Position as 2024 Ends

by Christine Morton, Treasurer

Penn Estates Property Owners Association is pleased to share an update on its financial position as we enter the new year. We had a busy year in 2024. We reinvested in our community from our Capital Reserve accounts through our ongoing road repair and repaving projects totaling \$ 585,394.84 for 2024.

We had some unexpected expenditures with the back gate and the repair needed, but we still managed to finish the year strong.

As of December 31, 2024, the Capital Reserve account stood at an impressive \$1,902,163.21, with the majority of this amount strategically invested in certificates of deposit (CDs) at rates of 4.5% and 5%, set to mature in February.

Including both the Operating and Reserve accounts, the total funds as of January 2, 2025, amount to \$3,808,090.94.

The association is currently undergoing its annual audit, an essential process to ensure transparency and maintain sound financial practices. The audit is progressing smoothly, and the board is confident in the continued financial stability of the community.

The finance committee hosted a question-and-answer event in November. We hope to have more of these informative sessions in the new year.

I am pleased to report that the financial health of our association remains strong and stable. I would like to thank all members who have fulfilled their responsibilities by paying their dues on time. Your dedication enables us to sustain and enhance the quality of life in our community.

As the POA looks ahead to 2025, its focus remains on maintaining fiscal responsibility and fostering a thriving environment for all residents.

Wishing everyone a happy and prosperous new year!



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## Harmony

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## Did You Know?

by Phyllis's Haase, Community Manager

### Adhering to Governing Documents

Penn Estates Property Owners Association (PEPOA) is a vibrant community governed by a comprehensive set of documents designed to promote harmony, protect property values, and ensure equitable treatment of all residents. These governing documents—including the Declaration of Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions (CC&Rs), Bylaws, and Rules and Regulations—serve as the foundation for community management. Understanding and respecting these documents is essential for the effective operation of the association and the preservation of our community's integrity.

It is important to clarify that the Penn Estates Board of Directors is solely responsible for reviewing, approving, and amending the Rules and Regulations that govern our community. While staff play a critical role in implementing and enforcing these rules, they do not create them. This distinction is often misunderstood, leading to misplaced criticism directed at staff for regulations established by the Board.

The Board is composed of elected volunteers who represent the interests of the entire community. Through careful deliberation, consultation with legal counsel, and from residents, the Board ensures that the Rules and Regulations align with the association's governing documents, township ordinances, and the community's overall vision. These rules are not arbitrary but are thoughtfully designed to balance the diverse needs and expectations of Penn Estates' residents.

The governing documents provide a standardized framework for addressing various issues within the community. This ensures that all residents are treated equitably, reducing the potential for favoritism or inconsistent enforcement. Adherence to these documents fosters trust and confidence in the association's management.

Rules and Regulations help maintain the aesthetic and functional standards of Penn Estates. By ensuring compliance with these standards, the association protects property values, benefiting all residents.

Clear and consistent rules help mitigate conflicts among residents by setting expectations for behavior and property use. When everyone understands and follows the same guidelines, disputes are less likely to arise.

The governing documents are legally binding agreements. Ignoring or selectively enforcing these rules can expose the association to legal challenges, financial penalties, and reputational damage.

The staff of Penn Estates plays an essential role in day-to-day operations, including the enforcement of the Board-approved Rules and Regulations. However, it is critical to recognize that staff do not have the authority to create or modify these rules. Blaming staff for regulations they are tasked with enforcing undermines their efforts and detracts from the collaborative spirit needed to manage a community effectively.

The staff's responsibility is to ensure that all residents adhere to the established guidelines, acting as impartial enforcers of the Board's decisions. This enforcement ensures consistency and fairness, which are cornerstones of effective community management.

Residents also have a vital role to play in upholding Penn Estates' governing documents. By staying informed, participating in Board meetings, and providing constructive feedback, community members can contribute to the development of rules that reflect the collective interests of the association. Board meetings are held at the convenience of the members, who may attend from anywhere in the country or from the comfort of their living room via Zoom. Open communication between residents, staff, and the Board is key to fostering a cooperative and transparent environment. Please email the community manager with your concerns or suggestions at [phyllishaase@pepoa.org](mailto:phyllishaase@pepoa.org).

Penn Estates thrives as a community when all stakeholders—the Board, staff, and residents—respect and adhere to the governing documents. These documents are the blueprint for maintaining order, protecting property values, and ensuring the community's long-term success. By understanding the distinct roles and responsibilities of the Board and staff, residents can direct their feedback appropriately and support the collaborative efforts needed to sustain the community's vibrancy and harmony.

# From Phyllis's Desk

by Phyllis Haase, Community Manager

## *The Importance of Accurate Answers: Understanding Your Property Owners Association*

In any community, particularly one governed by a Property Owners Association, accurate information is essential for making informed decisions and fostering a harmonious environment. While social media platforms like Facebook are convenient tools for quick communication, they are not reliable sources for interpreting complex governing documents or resolving specific questions related to the association's policies.

As members of a POA, it is crucial to understand that the governing documents—such as the Declaration of Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions (CC&Rs), Bylaws, and Rules and Regulations—serve as the foundation of how the community operates. These documents are carefully crafted to ensure clarity, fairness, and legal compliance, but they can also be intricate and nuanced. Misinterpreting these documents can lead to confusion, frustration, and even conflict among members.

### Recent Example: Misinterpretation of the Bylaws

A recent situation highlights why relying on accurate information is so important. Some members misinterpreted the POA's bylaws regarding special meetings of the board. The bylaws state that five board members may call a special meeting, and the remaining board members must be informed at least 24 hours in advance or agree to a waiver of notice.

However, some individuals mistakenly interpreted this provision as applying to an association-wide meeting, incorrectly assuming that *all* members of the association needed to be informed 24 hours in advance.

This misunderstanding caused unnecessary confusion and debate, illustrating the risks of relying on second-hand or incomplete interpretations of the governing documents.

### Why Accuracy Matters

Relying on inaccurate information can result in misunderstandings that ripple through the community, affecting relationships and trust. Social media postings, while often well-intentioned, are not always fact-checked or informed by a full understanding of the POA's rules. It is not uncommon for opinions shared online to contradict the actual provisions of the governing documents, creating further misinformation or promoting personal agendas.

When questions arise about the POA, whether regarding financial policies, enforcement of rules, or property use restrictions, it is essential to seek answers from the right source. It's best to contact the administration office or email me directly at [phyllishaase@pepoa.org](mailto:phyllishaase@pepoa.org) to discuss your concerns. I am happy to assist with your questions and to explain the association's governing documents. I can provide clear and accurate explanations and ensure everyone operates with the same facts.

### The Role of the Community Manager

As your community manager, I can provide a vital resource for interpreting and applying the governing documents to real situations. If you have questions about financial reports, I can offer guidance rooted in the association's legal framework. They can also provide additional context or historical insight that is not readily available in public discussions.

By contacting me directly, you are ensured that your questions are answered accurately and consistently. This approach eliminates the risks associated with relying on second-hand or misinterpreted information.

### Steps to Get Accurate Answers

1. Contact the Community Manager: Reach out directly to your community manager with your questions. They are there to help and will provide you with fact-based answers.

2. Attend Official Meetings: Board and committee meetings are excellent opportunities to gain firsthand knowledge and ask questions about the association's policies and operations.
3. Review the Governing Documents: Take time to familiarize yourself with the POA's CC&Rs, Bylaws, and Rules and Regulations. If you find any section unclear, ask the community manager for clarification.
4. Refer to Official Communications: Newsletters, emails, and updates from the board or management office are the most reliable sources of current and accurate information.
5. Avoid Relying on Social Media: While social media can be a helpful tool for community engagement, it is not a substitute for official information channels. Always verify claims made online with the community manager or through the governing documents.

### Building a Stronger Community

A well-informed membership is the cornerstone of a successful POA. By prioritizing accuracy and utilizing the resources available through the community manager and official channels, members can avoid misunderstandings, reduce conflicts, and build a stronger, more cohesive community.

When in doubt, don't guess or rely on hearsay. Accurate answers empower all members to participate fully and confidently in the community.

### Statement from the Community Manager

Over the past month, I have had the opportunity to meet with numerous members to address their concerns regarding information they encountered on social media platforms. During these meetings, I provided clear answers to their questions and shared copies of relevant documents, reports, and contracts to ensure that the facts were fully understood.

These discussions underscore the importance of seeking accurate information from official sources rather than relying on potentially misleading or incomplete posts online. I encourage all members to contact the management office directly on any issues affecting our community. Together, we can ensure transparency, accuracy, and a stronger understanding of the matters that shape our association.

## Poetry Corner

submitted by James Ruffini, Communications Committee Member

### For The Lyric Theatre

(On its 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary)

by Nikki Giovanni

To the mirror that is the story  
 To the makeup that brings us in  
 To the staging that points the time  
 To the lights that bring the magic  
 To the drama that makes us cry  
 To the mysteries that take our breath  
 To the smiles that bring forth laughter  
 To the glamour that is opening night  
 To the sadness of the last day  
 To the reality that without theater  
 To the reality that without movies  
 To the reality that without another way of learning  
 We would all be the poorer  
 Let us raise a glass to all theaters  
 To the understanding that without fantasy  
 We would not understand reality

### Is It A Month

by J.M. Synge

Is it a month since I and you  
 In the starlight of Glen Dubh  
 Stretched beneath a hazel bough  
 Kissed from ear and throat to brow,  
 Since your fingers, neck, and chin  
 Made the bars that fenced me in,  
 Till Paradise seemed but a wreck  
 Near your bosom, brow, and neck  
 And stars grew wilder, growing wise,  
 In the splendour of your eyes!  
 Since the weasel wandered near  
 Whilst we kissed from ear to ear  
 And the wet and withered leaves  
 Blew about your cap and sleeves,  
 Till the moon sank tired through the ledge  
 Of the wet and windy hedge?  
 And we took the starry lane  
 Back to Dublin town again.



## Eats Around Town

by Sharon Kennedy, Communications Committee

I, for one, am sick and tired of hearing about the price of eggs! (Though the recent spike in prices due to shortages related to bird flu may merit discussion). As you may be aware from recent columns, I am on the hunt for low cost, great tasting, healthy meals.

In recent months we have included a number of restaurants with bargain menus at lunch time, such as Longhorn's lunch specials, Olive Garden's soup and salad lunch special, and the lunch buffets at Spice Kitchen and Spice route.

I recently learned of an option for seniors at a price below the cost of the ingredients. Of course, seniors can benefit from senior specials at various restaurants and diners, sometime requiring an AARP membership.

This relatively new option for seniors is an even better deal than eating less than healthy combos on the five-dollar menu at Burger King, Wendy's or MacDonald's.

St. Luke's offers healthy meals for seniors at a cost of \$3.99 (\$4.23 including tax). I believe this deal is at all St. Luke's cafeterias, though I am not sure about that. The meal includes an entrée, soup or salad, a roll and a drink or a dessert.

I went to the St. Luke's Monroe Campus last week for the first time. I had intended on eating alone but ran into a friend as soon as I walked in the door (an added bonus). I enjoyed beef stroganoff with noodles, asparagus, chicken noodle soup and lemonade.

You can choose one of two soups of the day. You have the choice of their main entrée of that day or a vegetarian option. I enjoyed the soup for lunch and took the rest for dinner, thus two meals for \$4.23.

The menus for the week are posted online, so you can plan ahead as to when you want to go. The lunch senior meals are served from 11 to 2. According to the web site, there is the same offering at dinner time, from 4 to 6.

The offerings are quite varied. For example, tomorrow there is a choice of chicken parmesan or brick oven caprese stuffed shells, Italian wedding soup or minestrone soup (or salad). The next day is a choice of Thai chicken and coconut bowl or tofu pho noodle bowl and a choice of buffalo chicken chowder or Thai tofu noodle soup.

Last Friday was salmon with a mango sauce as the main entrée, which I heard was yummy. This Friday is shrimp creole or creole style tofu. The soups are cream of mushroom or Manhattan clam chowder. This gives you an idea of the variety of meals that are offered.

Here are some things that might make your first time easier. The cafeteria is at the back of the new addition of St. Luke's Hospital on 611 at the end of Wigwam Park Road, a nine-minute drive from Penn Estates. There is a parking area very close to the cafeteria and the cafeteria has its own outside entrance. Thus, you do not need to walk through the hospital.

The room is light and clean and open, with an outside eating area for warmer weather. The staff are helpful and welcoming. They only accept one form of payment, a credit (or debit) card. They do not take cash. There is an age criterion for the senior menu but no one checks an ID for birthdate.

If you are a senior, give it a try! And please let me know of any gems you have found.

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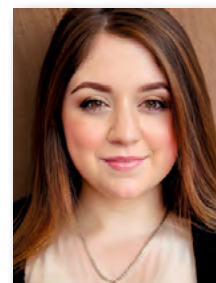
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**Our Friendsgiving Dinner at Penn Estates raised \$832 for The Olsen Christmas Wish. Pictured is Cpl Fenner receiving the check from Board President David Montalvo and Community Manager Phyllis Haase.**

## HEALTH & FITNESS

by Yolanda Sarrabo, CPT, BCS NASM, Contributor

### Recovery Snacks on the Go

Now that 2025 has made its entrance, many want to know the latest and best options when incorporating exercise. Whether your goals set are short or long term, remember to keep in mind all tools to make this a successful experience.



#### Right Intention - Wrong Foods

You may have the best intentions when setting up those New Year wellness and fitness goals; However, bypassing other areas of improvement makes the whole experience null. What I mean is - spending valuable time working out (whether 30 minutes or an hour), only to come home and grab a bag of chips is counterproductive.

#### Snacks Don't Mean...

Many of us may like a bag of chips and cookies every now and again; however, when changing diet or meeting specific fitness goals, you have to be intentional throughout. The reason the New Year resolution and fitness fizzles within 2-3 weeks, is because many don't incorporate the full picture.

It's fair to say that diet plays a big role in weight lost as well as exercise. We can't expect one thing to happen without the other, and for it to result in the best outcome. If you're goals are specific to limiting certain foods- then you know what you have to do.

#### Intentional Snacks

Here are two possible snack choices with intention in mind. Let's go: You've just completed a decent workout with an elevated heart rate with some sweat. It's now time to give the body what has been depleted. Do you go for a cup of coffee and a Danish or an intentional snack?

- **Intentional Snack option 1:** Loaded Fruit bowl - Try 4 fruits of choice (blueberries, kiwi, apple slices, strawberries, etc.), ¼ cup granola, dollop of plain Greek yogurt, splash of lemon juice (boosts flavor). Benefits: Fruit helps with muscle recovery, which helps replenish glycogen as well as restore muscle repair.
- **Intentional Snack option 2:** Avopincho CF Skewers - Use 1 ripened avocado, apple, cheese, grapes (cut all in quarter-sized cubes, cut grapes in half); layer on a skewer. Benefits: Avocado helps reduce inflammation that occurs with a workout. Cheese helps with muscle repair.

*Yolanda Sarrabo is principal at Chronic Fitness Personal Training Boutique Service and a regular contributor. www.chronicfitnessinc.com*

# February is Black History Month

## Unsung Black Heroes

by Sandy Black, Contributor

In researching to write the article for Black History Month I decided that it would be most appropriate to “salute” the unsung black heroes which we rarely hear about. February marks “Black History Month”, a federally recognized, nationwide celebration that calls on all Americans to reflect on the significant roles that African-Americans have played in shaping US history. But how did this celebration come to be – and why does it happen in February?

Carter G. Woodson, considered a pioneer in the study of African-American history, is given much of the credit for Black History Month. The son of former slaves, Woodson spent his childhood working in coal mines and quarries. He received his education during the four-month term that was customary for black schools at the time.

At 19, having taught himself English fundamentals and arithmetic, Woodson entered high school, where he completed a four-year curriculum in two years. He graduated from Berea College in 1903 and went on to earn his master's degree in history from the University of Chicago. He later earned a doctorate from Harvard.

Disturbed that history textbooks largely ignored America's black population, Woodson took on the challenge of writing black Americans into the nation's history. To do this, he established the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. He also founded the group's widely respected publication, the Journal of Negro History.

In 1926, Woodson developed Negro History Week. He believed “the achievements of the Negro properly set forth will crown him as a factor in early human progress and a maker of modern civilization.” In 1976, Negro History Week expanded into Black History Month.

Woodson chose the second week of February for his celebration because it marks the birthdays of two men who greatly influenced the black American population: Frederick Douglass, who escaped slavery and became an abolitionist and civil rights leader; though his birthdate isn't known, he celebrated it on February 14. President Abraham Lincoln, who signed the Emancipation Proclamation, which abolished slavery in America's confederate states; he was born on February 12.

For his work, Woodson has been called the Father of Black History.

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# Breakfast with Santa

photos by Mildred Rivera

by Mildred Rivera, Recreation Committee

Our favorite event of the year for our little neighbors, Breakfast with Santa, was a great success. Everyone arrived at the Oak Room very happy with their families to enjoy a delicious breakfast served by our Recreation Committee. Thanks to Maria, Eileen, Lenny, Bob, Angela, Paula, Lisa Ortiz, and Debbie, who were in charge of decorating and preparing breakfast for everyone to enjoy.

After our breakfast, the most anticipated guest, Santa, arrived and was received by our children. Santa then distributed his gifts to the children who received them with joy and could not miss the famous photos with our special guest. The truth is it was a magical morning full of much fun and excitement just like Christmas. Thanks to everyone who attended.



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# Breakfast with Santa



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# How St. Partick's Day Came to be a Shamrock-Shaking Good Time in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York

by Sandy Bonet, Contributor

Every year, on March 17, a curious phenomenon sweeps through the streets of Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York. Rivers turn green, bagpipes fill the air, and everyone—from the die-hard Irish to those who can't distinguish between a leprechaun and Lucky Charms—suddenly discovers their Celtic roots.

Yes, it's St. Patrick's Day, the one day a year where it's socially acceptable to drink beer for breakfast, wear questionable amounts of green, and boast about that one time your great-great-great-grandmother's cousin's dog's owner was Irish.

But how did this spirited holiday come to dominate the social calendars of places like Stroudsburg, Philadelphia, Hoboken, and Manhattan? Let's take a meandering stroll—preferably with a pint in hand—through the history and hilarity of St. Patrick's Day in the tri-state area.

## The Historical Roots: A Brief “Draught” of Irish Heritage

St. Patrick himself was a 5th-century Briton who, after being kidnapped by Irish raiders, escaped and later returned to Ireland as a missionary. While there's no evidence that he drove out actual snakes, he did manage to convert a fair portion of the population to Christianity.

Fast forward a millennium or so, and Irish immigrants fleeing famine and hardship brought their traditions to America's shores, including the celebration of their patron saint.

Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York have long been hubs for Irish immigrants because sailing to New York or Philadelphia was cheaper than going to Boston. By the late 19th century, these cities boasted significant Irish populations who brought not only their skills and labor but also their love of a good party.

In fact, New York City holds the honor of hosting the oldest and largest St. Patrick's Day parade in the world. First held in 1762, this parade was originally a modest affair but has since grown into a shamrock-studded extravaganza featuring marching bands, Irish dancers, and a sea of green-clad revelers.

## St. Paddy's in Pennsylvania: A Keystone of Festivities

In Pennsylvania, St. Patrick's Day celebrations range from family-friendly parades to raucous pub crawls. Philadelphia's parade, which dates to 1771, is one of the oldest in the country. It's a spectacle that brings together everyone from kilted bagpipers to Irish wolfhounds.

Fun fact: Philadelphia's love affair with St. Patrick's Day extends to its beer scene. Local breweries often concoct special “green” ales or Irish stouts to mark the occasion.

Further west, Pittsburgh's St. Patrick's Day parade is a lively affair, boasting one of the largest parades per capita in the nation. With its strong Irish community, the city goes all out, even dyeing the Allegheny River green some years—because why not add a splash of shamrock spirit to your waterways?



## New Jersey: A Garden State of Green Shenanigans

While New Jersey might be better known for its diners and boardwalks, it also knows how to throw a killer St. Patrick's Day celebration. Hoboken's annual parade, for instance, is a must-see—or at least a must-survive—event. It's not unusual to see revelers start their day with green bagels and coffee before moving on to Guinness and whiskey flights.

Just remember: Hoboken's unofficial motto for the day is, “Pace yourself, or face yourself.”

Further south, Morristown's St. Patrick's Day parade is a family-friendly affair featuring floats, music, and Irish step dancers. Even if you don't have a drop of Irish blood, you'll find it hard not to tap your feet along with the fiddlers and drummers.

## New York: The Emerald Crown Jewel of St. Patrick's Day

New York City takes St. Patrick's Day to a whole new level. The aforementioned parade up Fifth Avenue is a grand affair, featuring over 150,000 participants and drawing more than 2 million spectators. It's a marvel of coordination and sheer enthusiasm—not to mention a logistical nightmare for anyone hoping to cross the street.

Beyond the parade, NYC offers countless ways to celebrate. Irish pubs like McSorley's Old Ale House, which has been serving pints since 1854, become ground zero for revelry. Live music, hearty Irish stews, and plenty of “Erin go Bagh” chants make for an unforgettable experience. And let's not forget the Empire State Building, which lights up in green to mark the occasion, standing tall like a skyscraper-sized leprechaun hat.

## A Few Rules of St. Patrick's Day Etiquette

While the holiday is a blast, there are a few unspoken rules:

- **It's Paddy, not patty:** If you want to avoid the wrath of Irish purists, remember that “Paddy” is the correct shorthand for Patrick. “Patty” is best left for hamburgers.
- **Wear green, but not too much green:** There's a fine line between festive and fashion felony. Accessorize wisely.
- **Respect the parade's legacy:** Whether you're in Philly, Hoboken, or NYC, remember that these parades are steeped in history and community pride. Maybe hold off on climbing that lamppost.

## A Toast to Tradition

As St. Patrick's Day winds down, it's customary to raise a glass (or several) to Irish heritage. Whether you're sipping a dark and creamy stout, a crisp cider, or—heaven help you—a shot of green-tinted whiskey, take a moment to reflect on the rich history and vibrant spirit of the Irish in America.

And if you happen to be in Pennsylvania, New Jersey or New York, you're in one of the best places to soak up that spirit—both figuratively and literally.

So, throw on some green, join the nearest parade, and let your inner leprechaun run wild. Just be sure to leave the river-dyeing to the professionals.

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# Holiday Senior Lunch

by Michael Tyrrell, Communications Committee Chair & Harmony Editor

On December 11, 2024, the Senior Lunch group met for their holiday lunch in the Oak Room. It was, as usual, hosted by the Community Manager Phyllis Haase and Sue, the Community Relations Manager. Phyllis did all the cooking and the food was on point as expected.

We feasted on Roasted Chicken and Peaches, Sausage and Peppers, Tortelli and Pesto, Green Beans, Salad, an Antipasto Platter, Rolls and Butter. The finishing touch was an assortment of pies and mini cupcakes.



There was a big turnout, about 45 people. These lunches occur every second Wednesday and the cost is usually five bucks. There is no charge for the December lunch. YAY!

The group of people that attend regularly are very welcoming so don't be shy about being a newcomer. Check out the group shot of this past lunch. Good looking gang of oldsters I say!

Please consider joining us next time. You need to purchase a ticket a few days prior. Happy New Year to all!







by **Michael J. Tyrrell,**  
**Communications**  
**Committee Member**

### *Game On!*

Whether it's the Superbowl or other weekend sports events, snacking in front of the TV need not be total diet/sodium

disasters. Here are some of my more healthful recipes that you should consider letting your "team" try. They may just become family favorites.

### **Cheesy Crab Dip**

(makes 12 servings)

- 8 ounces reduced-fat cream cheese
- ½ cup light mayonnaise
- ½ cup fat-free milk
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill, plus more sprigs to garnish
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- ¼ teaspoon garlic salt
- ¾ pound imitation crabmeat (surimi), coarsely chopped
- 6 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
- Sliced carrot, celery, cucumber and radishes, for dipping

1. Heat oven to 350°. Coat a 9-inch pie plate with nonstick cooking spray.
2. In a large bowl, combine cream cheese, mayonnaise, milk, dill, Worcestershire sauce and garlic salt. Fold in imitation crabmeat. Spoon mixture evenly into prepared pie plate. Sprinkle Parmesan cheese evenly over the top.
3. Bake at 350° for 25 to 30 minutes until lightly browned. Cool slightly.
4. Garnish with dill sprigs and serve with sliced vegetables.

### **Two-Way Nachos**

(makes 6 servings)

- 6 ounces baked tortilla chips
- 2 cups (8 ounces) cooked shredded chicken
- 1 can (15 ounces) black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 cup jarred salsa
- 1 cup shredded reduced-fat Mexican cheese blend
- 4 scallions, trimmed and thinly sliced

1. Heat oven to 350°. Line bottom and sides of a 13 X 9 X 2-inch baking dish with tortilla chips. Scatter chicken and beans over chips. Spoon salsa over the beans and top with cheese and scallions.
2. Bake at 350° for 15 minutes until heated through and cheese is melted. Serve immediately.

Variation: Replace chicken with ½ pound coarsely chopped cooked shrimp and 1 can (8 ounces) drained crushed pineapple.

### **Chicken Sausage & Pepper Heros**

(makes 8 servings)

- 1 pound all-purpose potatoes, peeled and cut into ½-inch cubes
- 2 large green bell peppers, cored, seeds removed and cut into 1-inch slices
- 2 large onions, peeled and cut into ½-inch slices
- 1 package (12 ounces) fully cooked Italian-flavored chicken sausage, cut into coins
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- ½ teaspoon salt

### **Chicken Sausage & Pepper Heros cont.**

- ½ teaspoon dried Italian seasoning
- ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1 package (12 ounces) Arnold whole wheat Fill'ems Sandwich Thins

1. Heat oven to 450°
2. In a large bowl, toss together potatoes, sausage and olive oil. Season with salt, Italian seasoning, and red pepper. Evenly distribute between 2 rimmed baking sheets.
3. Bake at 450° for 45 to 50 minutes or until vegetables are tender. Stir sausage and vegetables and rotate pans after 25 minutes.
4. Spoon sausage and peppers mixture into the sandwich thins and serve.

### **Mini Stuffed Potatoes**

(makes 12 potatoes)

- 12 small potatoes, about 2 inches in diameter (1 ½ pounds total)
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- ¼ plus 1/8 teaspoons salt
- 6 tablespoons reduced-fat sour cream
- 2 ounces crumbled Gorgonzola cheese
- 1 bunch chives, snipped
- 4 slices turkey bacon, cooked and finely chopped

1. Heat oven to 400°.
2. Trim a small amount off one side of each potato so they lie flat. Toss potatoes with oil and place on a baking sheet, cut side down. Sprinkle with ¼ teaspoon of the salt. Bake at 400\* for 25 to 30 minutes or until tender. Cool slightly.
3. In a small bowl, blend the remaining 1/8 teaspoon salt, sour cream, Gorgonzola and half the chives.
4. Slice off top of each potato and scoop out about 1 tablespoon of the flesh, reserving for another use. Stuff each potato with a generous tablespoon of the sour cream mixture. Sprinkle bacon pieces and remaining chives over the top. Serve slightly warm or at room temperature.

### **Butternut Squash Cincinnati-Style Chili**

(makes 8 servings)

- ½ of a large butternut squash, seeds removed, cut into ½-inch cubes
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- 2 large onions, peeled and chopped
- 2 large green bell peppers, cored, seeds removed and chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, chopped
- 2 cans (14 ½ ounces each) no-salt added diced tomatoes
- ¼ cup chili powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- ½ teaspoon ground allspice
- 2 cans (15 ½ ounces each) pinto beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 box (14 ounces) whole-wheat spaghetti, cooked following package directions
- 1 cup shredded reduced-fat cheddar cheese
- 1 cup reduced-sodium oyster crackers
- 4 large scallions, trimmed and thinly sliced

1. Heat oven to 400°. Place squash in a large rimmed baking pan and toss with 1 tablespoon of the oil and ¼ teaspoon of the salt. Bake at 400° for 30 minutes. Set aside.
2. In a large pot, heat remaining tablespoon oil over medium-high heat. Add onions, peppers and garlic. Cook 8 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add tomatoes, chili powder, cinnamon, sugar, allspice and remaining ½ teaspoon salt. Simmer 15 minutes over medium-high heat with lid ajar. Stir occasionally.
3. Stir in cooked squash and beans. Simmer 5 minutes.
4. Serve chili over cooked spaghetti. Scatter cheese, oyster crackers and scallions over the top.



# Become a Productive Member of a POA

by Phyllis Haase, Community Manager

Property Owners Associations (POAs) play a crucial role in maintaining the quality, safety, and aesthetic appeal of communities. Becoming a productive member of Penn Estates not only benefits you as a property owner but also contributes to the well-being of your neighborhood. Here are some steps to help you make a meaningful impact:

- 1. Understand the POA's Structure and Rules** - The first step to becoming a productive member is to familiarize yourself with the association's governing documents. These typically include:
  - Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions (CC&Rs): These outline the rules and regulations for the community.
  - Bylaws: These detail the operational structure of the association.
  - Policies and Procedures: These explain how the board enforces rules and handles community issues.

Understanding these documents ensures you're informed about your rights, responsibilities, and the scope of the POA's authority.
- 2. Volunteer for Committees or Projects** - Our committees are focused on specific areas like finance, communications, or events. Volunteering for a committee is a great way to contribute your skills and help the association achieve its goals. If you have limited time, consider assisting with one-time projects like neighborhood cleanups or holiday events.
- 3. Communicate Constructively** - Productive members communicate effectively and respectfully. When raising concerns or offering suggestions:
  - Be specific and provide context.
  - Focus on solutions rather than just identifying problems.
  - Stay positive and professional, even when addressing contentious issues.
  - Voicing your concerns on FaceBook is not the avenue to take
- 4. Pay Dues on Time** - One of the simplest ways to support your POA is by paying your dues promptly. These funds are essential for maintaining common areas, funding community events, and addressing necessary repairs.
- 5. Abide by the Rules** - Following the community's rules and regulations sets a positive example for others and helps maintain harmony. If you disagree with a rule, work through the appropriate channels to propose changes.
- 6. Stay Informed About Local Issues** - As with many associations, matters are influenced by local government policies, such as zoning laws or infrastructure projects. Staying informed about these issues and participating in local government meetings can help you advocate for the community's best interests.
- 7. Support the Board** - Board members are volunteers who dedicate significant time and effort to managing the community. Supporting them by:
  - Offering constructive feedback.
  - Volunteering your expertise.
  - Avoiding gossip or undermining their efforts.
- 8. Engage with Your Neighbors** - Strong communities are built on good relationships among residents. Take time to get to know your neighbors, attend social events, and foster a sense of camaraderie. A united community is more effective in addressing challenges and achieving goals.
- 9. Run for the Board** - If you're passionate about making a difference, consider running for a position on the board. Serving as a board member allows you to:
  - Shape policies and decisions that affect the community.
  - Advocate for initiatives that align with residents' needs.
  - Gain a deeper understanding of the association's operations.

**Conclusion** - Becoming a productive member of Penn Estates requires a combination of knowledge, participation, and a willingness to contribute. By taking these steps, you can help create a thriving, well-managed community that benefits all residents. Remember, our association's success depends on its members' active involvement and collaboration.

# Celebrate Valentine's Day

by Sandy Black, Contributor

How are you going to celebrate Valentine's 2025 Day? Do you know that there are several unique ways of celebrating this day other than purchasing flowers and candies.



Whether you have been together three months or three decades, it is no secret that coming up with some great Valentine's Day ideas can be very stressful. We can even go as far as to say it causes more anxiety than figuring out how to "plan the perfect day."

If food is the way to your significant other's heart, skip that "fancy-schman-cy" dinner and take a virtual cooking class together or treat her/him to a sweet breakfast in bed. Perhaps you could learn how to do the salsa or a different dance – there are online classes for that too or paint a "museum-worthy" still life, or "make a vision board."

Not to mention other things that you can do when celebrating Valentine's Day while on a low budget such as a scenic hike, a competitive game night with wine or even a mind-blowing at-home massage (send the children to their grandparents for the night for this one).

How about a weekend getaway such as a backyard camping trip or a romantic movie marathon? Pop some popcorn, make some cheesy snacks, light a mood-setting candle and pop open a bottle of wine and cozy up and watch a Valentine's Day movie. Snuggling under the blanket in the comfort of your home is just so so sexy. Decorate your space with a paper heart wreath or an origami bouquet and either purchase a love letter banner or make one yourself.



So, the only thing you have to do is pick out a sultry outfit, queue up a playlist of mood-setting tunes and purchase the perfect gift but don't forget to include a very thoughtful love note with it!



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## WHAT WE'RE STREAMING

### Guilty Pleasures or Hidden Treasures?

#### Black Doves

(streaming on Netflix)

by Sharon Kennedy, Communications Committee Member

Whether you stream through Prime or access Netflix through some other streaming platform you no doubt have seen repeated advertisements for Black Doves. It is rated on Prime as a 7.2, a very respectable rating.

Some critics provide great reviews, others suggest that is a great ride that is immediately forgettable after watching it. Some cite the main actors as the best part of the show (with which I agree) but others note that there isn't much character development. Some say the plot is weak. Others say it isn't as witty as some other current spy series (such as Slow Horses).

I think I agree with all of them, despite them conflicting with each other. (You may understand in a moment.) Jeanine Abraham on Rotten Tomatoes says that "... Black Doves is an addictive spy/revenge thriller, a tale of friendship and sacrifice brilliantly placed inside a murder mystery." Adam Sweeting says "it's possibly best to give up on the plot all together and just enjoy some of the passing scenery." So, let me help you unpack all of that without giving you a spoiler.

The main character begins the story as a young woman who suddenly and mysteriously disappeared from England for 10 years after her stepfather was murdered and her step sister was incarcerated for his murder. She applies for a job as a translator and is turned down for that job due to that unsavory family connection.

Instead, she is offered an opportunity to become a spy for a company (Black Doves) that caters to the highest bidder. This is the beginning of layers of deception and of question marks about who each character truly is and of intricate relationships that intertwine in unexpected ways.

As a spy, she marries the next in line to the prime minister and has two children. The story moves back and forth between the early days and the "present" through flashbacks and memories from different characters that gradually weave

together information and motives in unexpected ways.

Throughout all the action are stories of love and loyalty and friendship. There are funny moments and strange characters. There is incredible life-threatening loyalty and equally life-threatening betrayals. There is blood and guts and shoot outs and intimacy and sex. In the end, you may find that you love the bad guys and have trouble finding good guys.

Have I confused and intrigued you thus far? Good. That parallels the series. Like the critic who said "to just enjoy the passing scenery", I think you might be very pulled in to Black Doves. But, I am going to add some cautionary comments.

First, suspend logic. For example, the characters are involved in a bunch of violent events but are never identified by the police despite the gore left behind. You have to forget that London probably cameras on most every corner. Second, you may want to close your eyes (as did I) when the scenes involve too much blood and pain. Third, you have to not mind explicit sex scenes. (Or you can go pop your microwave popcorn during those three minutes each time.) Put on your seat belt and enjoy the six episodes.

#### The Marlow Murder Club

(streaming on PBS, YouTube, Amazon and Fandango)

by Paul R, Quillin, Contributor

My latest recommendation: *The Marlow Murder Club*. The title hinted to me that this was going to be on the light side, a kind of respite from some of the dark material I'd been watching. I was right. It's available on PBS, YouTube, Amazon Prime and Fandango, all for a small fee. When I started watching this series it appeared to be only one season of four episodes, each one running about 45 minutes.

If you've read my reviews you must know by now that I lean toward British whodunits. My take is that they usually have high production values and the quality of the acting is the best. As I've said, my most important ingredient is the script, which even the most talented actors cannot save. Here it's fine and the acting is stellar.

The first episode sets the tone with, guess what, a murder which happens to

(continued on next page)

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## WHAT WE'RE STREAMING CONT.

the lead character's neighbor. The terrific actress, Samantha Bond plays this lead, Judith Potts, a retired archaeologist living alone in Marlow with her cat Jasper.

She writes crossword puzzles for national newspapers, but she's not just an "innocent old lady" solving puzzles — she has a dark secret lurking in her past.

Judith hears a gunshot coming from the home of her neighbor and believing he's been killed, begins her own investigation and enlists the aid of Becks, the Vicar's wife, played by Cara Horgan and a local dog-walker, Suzie, played by Jo Martin. Just as Judith is energized by her involvement, so is the Vicar's wife Becks, who feels somewhat unappreciated at home.

Suzie's job as the dog walker/sitter in Marlow gives her an intimate look at the lives and secrets of the people around town, so with a personal connection to the murder, she is determined to help Judith bring the killer to justice, and isn't afraid to break a few rules along the way.

In the second episode, having been met with less enthusiasm than expected from Detective Sargeant Tanika Malik when she reported her observations, Judith, Becks and Suzie form a cozy sisterhood and continue to investigate, following a trail of clues left by the murder weapon.

Detective Sargeant Tanika, crisply played by Natalie Dew, realizing that this formidable threesome is not going away decides to bring Judith, Becks and Suzie into the investigation as civilian advisors. Things get hot and heavy in the final episode.

As I write this it appears a second season is definitely scheduled and I am looking forward to it. If cozy whodunits with great acting are your cup of tea (yup) then you should give *The Marlow Murders* a look. Enjoy!

## Matlock (2024)

by Sandy Bonet, Contributor

The new *Matlock* on CBS is a courtroom dramedy with a wrinkle of wisdom. Sure, it's nostalgic, but this time, it's more than just a murder-mystery-of-the-week. It tackles ageism head-on, proving you're never too old to argue with a judge—or a

millennial paralegal.

Andy Griffith's folksy charm from the older version has been passed to Kathy Bates, who plays Madeline Matlock, a sharp-as-a-tack attorney with decades of experience and zero tolerance for being underestimated. Bates, known for her near perfect comedic timing, brings a no-nonsense attitude that blends perfectly with her character's wry humor. She doesn't just solve cases; she delivers a weekly seminar on why dismissing the wisdom of age is a rookie mistake.

The series highlights the absurdities of age-based prejudice. In one scene, Matlock schools a smug junior lawyer who assumes her familiarity with legal tech ends at the typewriter. Spoiler alert: Matlock not only knows her way around legal software but also uses it to outmaneuver the prosecution. Watching her drop legal knowledge bombs on her younger colleagues feels like witnessing your grandma casually beat you at Fortnite—equal parts humbling and hilarious.

There's also a subtle but biting critique of how society marginalizes older professionals. Whether it's dealing with clients who question her stamina or courtroom rivals who mistake her wisdom for weakness, Matlock handles every patronizing encounter with a well-timed zinger and a victorious verdict.

In one of the early episodes, Matty notes, "There's this funny thing that happens when women age: We become damn near invisible." Rather than viewing this as a disadvantage, Matty leverages it to her benefit, using others' underestimations to outmaneuver opponents both in and out of the courtroom. This strategic use of perceived invisibility not only aids her legal victories but also serves as a narrative device to challenge viewers' preconceived notions about aging.

Yet, the show doesn't get preachy. It balances its message with lighthearted moments, like Matlock trying to understand the appeal of TikTok or hilariously misusing modern slang in front of her bewildered team.

Ultimately, the new *Matlock* is a charming reminder that experience—and a good pair of orthopedic shoes—still win the day. It's a witty, feel-good series that champions the value of life's later chapters, making it a courtroom drama with plenty of heart and humor.

For this octogenarian, it is a breath of fresh air to see a septuagenarian win the day with humor and wisdom.



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