

Community Day - August 2025

by Michael J. Tyrrell, Communications Committee Chair

Another Community Day here at Penn Estates is in the books. We had a healthy turn-out with in excess of 350 people attending. The weather was perfect. Plenty for the kids' amusement including bouncy houses, games, face painting, and sack races. For the adults there was live music, Zumba and a huge Tricky Tray.

Of course there was an abundance of food: hot dogs, burgers, chips, cookies and soft drinks. All members in good standing were welcome with no registration or cost involved.

Thanks to our Recreation Committee for another fun day! We always enjoy stopping by and saying hello to neighbors that we don't see often and well as the "usual suspects."

More photos on page 14...



Photos by David Montalvo



Day Trip to La Festa in Scranton

by Sharon Kennedy, Communications Committee

In September each year, Scranton hosts a four-day Italian festival called “La Festa.” This was the 49th year of the event, but my first time experiencing it.

The event took over the center of Scranton. There were food vendors offering a wide range of yummy foods: lots of pizza, fried pizza dough, sausage, antipasto salad, Italian cookies, French fries, shrimp, etc. Live music was going on all day at several locations around the square. There was a car show of

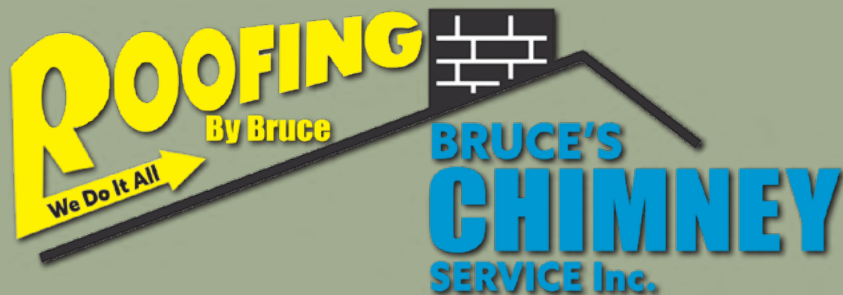


mostly classic Italian cars.

The weather was perfect for this event and the turn out was great. According to a news article, over 150,000 people attended. (There were also a lot of dogs). Based upon the short time that I was there, I totally believe that number.

Despite the crowds, people seemed happy and considerate. There was no pushing or shoving or harsh words. And there were tables and benches set up on the greens space, with much appreciated shade.

If you enjoy festivals, you might want to go next year. It will be the 50th celebration so it should be even more of an event.



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Out&About

Things to Do and See in the Poconos

by Sharon Kennedy, Communications Committee

What a lovely summer we have had! The Farmer's Almanac for summer of 2025 was for scorching temperatures and near normal precipitation. Personally, I believe that we have had the perfect weather, with cool nights and warm days and just enough rain to keep fire danger at bay.

USA Today reported that the almanac predicts winter of 2025 should be "mostly mild with pockets of wild." Fall should be cool and dry with lovely foliage. Winter is predicted to be somewhat colder than usual, with below usual snowfall. We shall see. It is almost time to button up.

It is almost time to drive around to enjoy the changing foliage. I was away for a couple of days and in just those few days, the trees went from green to gold. If you don't want to drive, you can do some of the fall foliage train rides either in Jim Thorpe or with the Stourbridge lines out of Honesdale. Or you can ride the chair lift at Blue Mountain Resort. They offer a chair lift for \$15 on Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays through October 31st. Blue Mountain Resort's Fall Foliage festival offers music and fun for the whole family on weekends through October 26th. Enjoy music, face painting, pumpkin carving and other activities or roast your own s'mores.

There are varieties of festivals. The Pocono Food Truck Festival is on 10/4 and 10/5 from 11:30 to 5:30 is at Shawnee Mountain with activities for the whole family including music, crafters, activities for the kids, etc. There is an entrance fee of \$8. The PickleMe Poconos Festival is on 10/4 from 12-5 on Crystal Street in East Stroudsburg. The Pocono ULLR Fest will be at Camelback on 11/8. There will be fire dancers, contests (ex. beard, mustache etc) bonfire, etc.

The Black Bear Film Festival in Milford runs on 10/17 to 10/19. Have you witnessed the Snowmen of Stroudsburg annual display? Well, Milford does a similar art event but the figures are Bears instead of Snowmen. And, on that note, the Snowmen of Stroudsburg reappear on 11/18.

Country Junction offers seasonal events throughout the year. Their Great Pumpkin Festival runs through runs until October 26. Admission is \$15, \$7 for seniors and free under age 2. Quiet Valley Living Historical Farm in Stroudsburg also has seasonal events throughout the year. Their Fall Harvest Festival runs from 10-5 on October 11th and 12th. Their Spooky Day on the farm is on 10/24 and 10/25. From 5-8 you can take part in their murder mystery, with clues provided by a guide through the farm.

There are events for everyone, including our canine companions. Camelback hosts Howl o'ween on 10/18 with a parade and dog contests. Do you have the cutest? Or do you and your dog resemble each other the most? Mountain Valley Winery host their Halloween Pet Costume Contest on 11/26 from 2-4.

Downtown Stroudsburg is the location for Spooky Stroudsburg on 10/25. There will be decorations, a scavenger hunt, trick or treat, a cornpit etc. Also in Stroudsburg, the Veterans Day Parade starts at 1pm on 11/2.

Halloween is a time for costumes and horror shows. The Hotel of Horrors and Altered States runs on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays

through 11/1. It is at the Lake House Hotel in Saylorsburg. The Waldorf Estate of Fear is also through 11/1. That is at Country Junction on Fridays and Saturdays. If you want to celebrate Fall in a less frightening way, there is always Mazilla on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays through 11/2. The corn maze is free but there are some activities that have a fee.

If you want to celebrate without being scared, you could enjoy "three days of nonstop laughter" at the NEPA Comedy Festival. There will be 16 shows and over 70 comedians. That is in Stroudsburg on October 3-5. Or you can go see The Happy Medium, Kim Russo, at Mt. Airy on 10/11 at 8pm. The cost is \$25.

The Pocono Mountain Marathon Race Festival is on 10/11. There are events for all levels. The main event is a full marathon that is a Boston Marathon qualifier.

Apparently, there is a nationwide event to celebrate the 250th anniversary of America. There will be bells throughout the country, and 108 of those will be in Pennsylvania. The unveiling of the Monroe County bell will be on 10/3.

On October 1st (for one day only) coats for kids can be donated at the Pocono Television Network at 1004 West Main Street, Stroudsburg, PA. The coats will then be distributed locally by the Salvation Army.

Have fun!

BUDGET PRESENTATION

The 2026 Budget Presentation to the membership has been scheduled for the following dates. We encourage all members to attend one of these sessions to learn more about the proposed budget, ask questions, and gain a clear understanding of how association funds are allocated for the upcoming year.

> Saturday, October 18, at 9:00 a.m.

> Tuesday, October 26, at 7:00 p.m.



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Board Motions

submitted by Phyllis Haase, Community Manager

July 11, 2025

Motion: Appoint the following Chairpersons:

- Recreation – Maria Montalvo
- Communications – Michael Tyrell
- Appeals – Mary Alexander

Fariello/Hoffman - Motion passed 8/0

Motion: Purchase TEM Kiosk Mini PC’s with funding from Capital Account.

Nash/Fariello - Motion passed 8/0

July 31, 2025

Motion: Enter into agreement with Enumerate Financial Software

Nash/Fariello - Motion passed 7/0

Motion: Authorize the Community Manager to implement “Swim at your Own Risk” protocols at her discretion, as needed.

Ortiz/River - Motion passed 7/0

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- Email:** *Harmony Editor* > pepoaharmony@gmail.com
Board of Directors > board@pepoa.org
Community Manager > Phyllishaase@pepoa.org

REMINDER: The speed limit on ALL Penn Estates roads is 25 MPH, except where otherwise posted. Thank you!



Harmony

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From Phyllis’s Desk

by Phyllis’s Haase, Community Manager

2026 Community Improvements: Courts and Roads

Your Board of Directors is pleased to announce several important improvement projects scheduled for 2026 that will enhance both the enjoyment and safety of our community.

Basketball and Tennis Courts

Next year, our basketball and tennis courts will undergo a full renovation. The project will include new drainage systems to prevent water pooling and extend the life of the courts, as well as the installation of a brand-new playing surface. These upgrades will provide residents with safer, more durable, and more enjoyable spaces for recreation.

Roadway Improvements

In addition to recreational facilities, roadwork is a major focus for 2026. The following roads are scheduled to be paved:

- Brentwood Terrace
- Summit Terrace
- Fernwood Drive
- Edgeview Drive
- Cedar Crest Court
- Wales Court
- Sycamore Lane
- Riverbend Terrace
- Harmony Drive
- Berwood Drive
- Foxdale Terrace

The final selection of roads will take place after the spring thaw. These road improvements will provide smoother travel throughout the community and continue our long-term investment in maintaining infrastructure. The Association is dedicated to implementing thoughtful improvements that benefit all its members. We thank you for your continued support and look forward to completing these projects in 2026.

Thank You to Our Summer Team, Committees, and Volunteers

As we move through the year, the Board of Directors and I would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the many individuals who help make community life at Penn Estates enjoyable, safe, and full of activity.

Lifeguards and Badge Monitors - Our lifeguards and badge monitors have done an outstanding job this season. Their dedication and attentiveness ensure that our pools remain safe and welcoming for all members and their guests. We are grateful for the professionalism and commitment they bring each day, and we look forward to seeing everyone again in 2026.

Recreation Committee - We would also like to recognize the Recreation Committee for their continued efforts in assisting with so many exciting events this year. Their creativity and hard work help bring our community together and provide opportunities for fun and connection.

Recreation Manager - A special thank you goes to our Recreation Manager, whose leadership and enthusiasm have kept our membership active and entertained. From planning to execution, the energy and thoughtfulness put into each event have truly made a difference.

Volunteers and Committees - And finally, we extend our gratitude to all of our volunteers. Whether serving on the Finance Committee, Communications Committee, Election Committee, Architectural Review Committee, or the Appeals Committee, each has contributed their time and expertise for the benefit and smooth function of our community. Your dedication is deeply appreciated.

We look forward to more exciting events in the months ahead and to seeing our members enjoy all that our community has to offer. Thank you to everyone who helps make Penn Estates a vibrant place to live!

Estimated COLA for Social Security Beneficiaries in 2026

by Stephanie Joy, Contributor

Note: This article is for general information only and is not legal or tax advice to any reader or individual. For legal or tax advice, you must specifically retain a lawyer or tax professional who evaluates your specific situation. For Free Social Security Disability, Retirement and SSI Daily Tips and News, visit the YouTube Channel, "All Things Social Security" at <https://www.youtube.com/@AllThingsSocialSecurity>.



Hey there, Penn Estates neighbors. It's beginning to smell a lot like COLA; and I don't mean the bubbly beverage.

2026 Estimated COLA for Social Security Benefits

I wanted to share some expectation regarding Social Security benefits and the upcoming "Cost-of-Living Adjustment" (COLA) for 2026. The official announcement is expected in mid-October 2025, but early estimates suggest the COLA will be around 2.7%. As you may recall, this is based on recent inflation data and the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W). (It is far from accurate of living realities for disabled and retired folks, oftentimes, but it is apparently the best they have.)

The Senior Citizens League and AARP both estimate this increase, reflecting ongoing inflation trends. When inflation is not raging, like it was a few years ago, COLA likewise remains modest. AARP suggests a range of 2.6% to 2.7%, and recognizes that as often is, this COLA may not fully keep pace with rising costs.

Another source, Investopedia also aligns with the 2.7%. It also agrees that many seniors feel their benefits do not adequately cover basic needs.

However, I should point out that, an unpleasant reality is that Social Security was never designed as a tax and benefit to cover all retirement needs, but merely to add to what we have saved and prepared for during or working lives while we were able. (Perhaps one day our high schools will teach their soon-to-be adult seniors, some of the basic principles and needs of saving. I am pretty sure I was unaware for a very long time, until I was not.)

Another financial source, Kiplinger, points out what we know: that while a higher COLA could be beneficial, it may also indicate rising inflation, which could offset the advantages of the increase. IN any event, overall, the estimates suggest that while a 2.7% COLA is a positive development, it may not significantly alleviate the financial strain many Social Security recipients face.

Impact on Benefits: If the COLA is confirmed at 2.7%, it would translate to an increase of approximately \$54 for the average monthly benefit, which was about \$2,006.69 in July 2025.

However, rising Medicare premiums could significantly reduce the net benefit increase. Fortunately, we have the Medicare "Hold Harmless Rule." This rule, which is a blessing for beneficiaries, and protects Social Security recipients from having their benefits reduced due to increases in Medicare Part B premiums is not a cure for inflationary cost entirely. It limits the premium increase to the amount of the COLA for Social Security, ensuring that beneficiaries' monthly payments do not decrease from one year to the next. Of course, that still means there is no COLA available then for those actual other costs of living that increase year to year.

Historical Context: The COLA was first introduced in 1975 to help Social Security benefits keep pace with inflation. Since then, it has been adjusted annually based on the CPI-W.

Some advocates argue that the CPI-W does not accurately reflect the expenses of seniors, particularly in healthcare. There have been discussions about using alternative measures, such as the Consumer Price Index for the Elderly (CPI-E), which may provide a more accurate reflection of the cost increases faced by older adults. You think? Any changes to the COLA calculation process would, of course, require future legislative action, (i.e. Congress) which of course can be influenced by economic conditions and political considerations.

The official announcement from the SSA will provide more clarity, but the current estimates suggest a somewhat modest adjustment given our more modest inflation at this time, in the prices of the items in the basket of goods used to determine COLA.

Sources:

<https://www.fool.com/retirement/2025/08/20/social-securitys-2026-cola-forecast-was-just-updat/>

<https://www.investopedia.com/2026-social-security-cola-predicted-to-exceed-2025-what-this-means-for-your-benefits-11808318>

<https://www.aarp.org/social-security/early-look-cola-increase-2026.html>

Stephanie O. Joy is a Social Security Disability Lawyer and founder of Monroe County based SSD Practice, Joy Disability Law, 2005-2025. For free consultation to review whether you can and should file for SSDI (or SSI) you are invited to fill out the Free Evaluation form found at <http://joydisability.com>; Other contact: stephaniejoy@joydisability.com; Ph: 201-317-0610

Neighbor-to-Neighbor: Practicing Kindness and Communication

by Phyllis Haase, Community Manager

Living in a community means more than sharing streets, amenities, and beautiful surroundings—it also means being neighbors. One of the most valuable parts of community life is the relationships we build with those who live nearby. A little kindness, patience, and understanding can go a long way in keeping our neighborhood a welcoming and peaceful place.

From time to time, disagreements may arise. Perhaps it's about noise, pets, parking, or property boundaries. When these situations occur, the best first step is to speak directly with your neighbor. A respectful, face-to-face conversation often clears up misunderstandings and helps both parties find a fair solution. Approaching your neighbor with kindness instead of frustration not only helps resolve the matter but also strengthens the sense of community we all enjoy.

It's important to remember that neighbor-to-neighbor disputes are not handled by the Association. The Association's role is to manage common property,



uphold community standards, and support the well-being of the entire neighborhood—not to mediate personal conflicts between residents.

We encourage everyone to practice patience, empathy, and open communication. Being considerate of each other fosters goodwill, prevents issues from escalating, and makes our community stronger. At the end of the day, we are all neighbors, and a simple act of kindness can make a big difference.

Penn Estates Softball

by Leonardo Chamorro, contributor and avid softball player

Well neighbors, I'm happy to say it was another amazing Saturday here in Penn Estates. Many neighbors have been getting together to play softball thanks to Eudys Martinez (a PE resident and neighbor) for taking this initiative to organize these practices in the field.

The amount of participation has increased since he started it in May. We hope that it continues to draw new players throughout our community. Practice and games are on Saturdays. Practice starting at about 10:00am and games 10:30am to 12:30pm. We hope you can join us for some good ol' fun.



Christopher Columbus – The Famous Explorer

by Sandy Black, Contributor

On October 13, 2025, Christopher Columbus, the famous Italian explorer, will be celebrated. In 1977, a certain number of states voted to change the holiday referred as "Columbus Day" to "Indigenous Peoples' Day."

Whether you call it Columbus Day or Indigenous Peoples' Day, this for sure is the holiday which has stirred up a multitude of debates which could capsize even the "Santa Maria." In many textbooks used in schools, Christopher Columbus is referred to as the famous explorer who discovered America.

But was the man who lived in Genoa a brave explorer or a greedy invader? Was he a gifted navigator or a reckless adventurer? Here are some facts to consider that I researched on the man that will have you thinking the next time you hear some-

one recite, "In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue..."

First of all, there is the fact that millions of people were already living in America in 1492 and Columbus never set foot on the shores of North America. On October 12th he actually arrived in the Bahamas. He did reach the coasts of what is today named Cuba, Haiti and the Dominican Republic and he also explored the Central and South America coastline.

In reality, the person who placed the Spanish flag in North America was Leif Eriksson. Eriksson was the first European who is believed to have sailed to North America having landed in Canada 500 years before Columbus even set sail.

Columbus never arrived in Asia because of the horrendous sailing conditions on an uncharted ocean in wooden sailing ships. Wooden ships were just not designed to take on the punishing waters of the Atlantic. In 1492 most educated Europeans believed that the earth was round. Columbus actually did not set out to prove that the world was round but that it was possible to sail around it. This was a mission the explorer drastically underestimated.

Columbus - due to the terms he had negotiated with King Ferdinand II and Queen Isabella of Spain - stood to gain significant wealth and power from his voyage. He could keep 10% of any merchandise (whether pearls, precious stones, gold, silver, spices and other objects) that he acquired in the new territory. Making this deal with Spain suggested that his intentions were more selfish than anything.

First arriving in Hispaniola (now called Haiti and the Dominican Republic), he encountered indigenous people called the "Taino." These people were willing to trade with Columbus, who later forced them into slavery. Because of the Europeans' brutal treatment, the Taino population was soon decimated.

There is so much more that I discovered in my research of Christopher Columbus. But, I will leave this article at the mistreatment of kind people who cheerfully welcomed this man onto their island to later be mistreated and abused.



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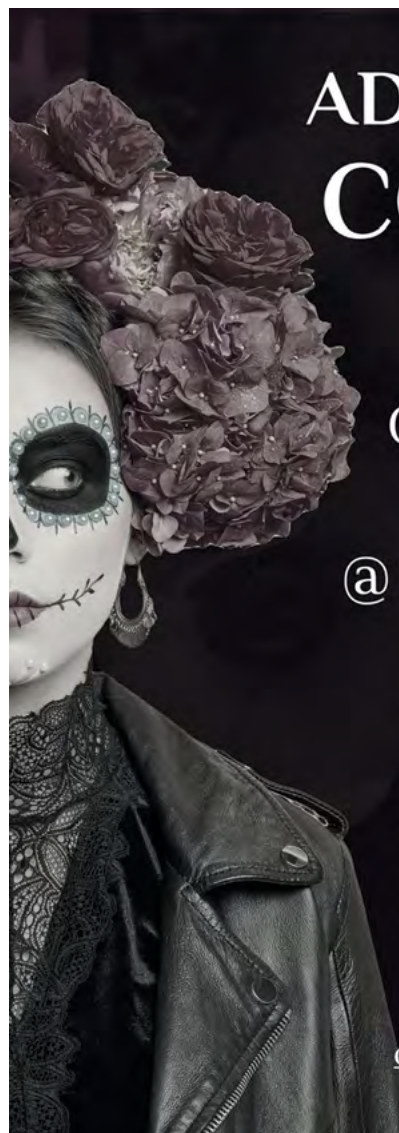
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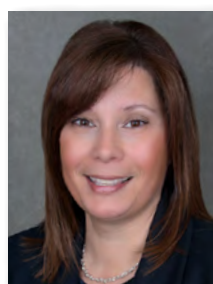
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Penn Estates - Listings & Sales as of 10/1/2025

Active Listings: 24 Pending Listings: 17

Sales Closed Year to Date: 44

Speakeasy Train New Hope, PA

by Evelyn Infante, Contributor

Recently, my husband and I embarked on a trip to New Hope, Pennsylvania, to experience the Speakeasy Train. We were seated in an authentic early 20th-century parlor car, where we were entertained by banjo music and stories about the speakeasy era. Some women wore flapper dresses, beaded bags, and necklaces, while men donned fedoras, vests, and wide-legged pants.

There were many toasts and cheers, encouraged by our hosts. Cocktails, popular during the 1920s, and canapes were served while enjoying the ambiance. The hour and a half train ride was over too soon, as we were having a great time.

Nestled adjacent to the Delaware River, New Hope boasts riverside restaurants, shopping, and cultural attractions, making it an ideal getaway. We opted to stay overnight and, before returning home, had lunch at Havana Restaurant & Bar. Despite its name, the restaurant offers very little Cuban food, but has a diverse menu of delectable entrees served in generous portions. However, indoor seating was closed, forcing every-



one to dine outdoors. The only downside was the buzzing of bees, which seemed to be everywhere in town.

After lunch, we strolled along the length of the town's main street, stopping at various shops before heading back home. On our scenic return journey, we passed one of the 50 covered bridges in Bucks County. That was cool! Overall, it was a very enjoyable weekend.



Senior Moments

by Sandy Bonet, Communications Committee

The Long Goodbye: Coping with the Slow Vanishing Act of Friends and Family in Our Later Years

Growing old is often described as “golden.” And it can be—sunsets look lovelier, naps are sweeter, and you finally have the time to learn Italian or crochet sweaters for your dog. But there’s another side to aging that is not golden: the steady trickle of loss. Friends move away, siblings and cousins depart this world, neighbors you waved to for decades suddenly aren’t at the mailbox anymore.

For many older adults, the ongoing disappearance of loved ones can feel like attending a never-ending going-away party without cake.

Yet while the sadness is real, it doesn’t have to steal all the sparkle from later life. With humor, creativity, and openness, elders can continue to thrive—even while saying too many goodbyes.

Why It Feels Like the World is Shrinking

Imagine your social circle as a large, lively pizza. In youth, it’s loaded with toppings: friends from school, colleagues, neighbors, teammates, cousins, book-club pals. As the years roll on, slices start disappearing. Retirement takes away the workplace crowd. Moves and health concerns whittle down neighborly chats. And sadly, illness and age remove even more toppings.

The result? A pizza that’s still nourishing but undeniably smaller. For many seniors, that shrinking pie translates into loneliness and grief. Humans are wired for connection, so when the cast of characters dwindles, it’s natural to feel unmoored.

Finding Humor in the Heartache

Loss is serious business, but sometimes the best way to face it is with a wry smile. Some older folks joke about attending more funerals than birthday parties. “At least I don’t have to buy as many gifts!” quipped a friend of mine after his fifth memorial service of the season.

Humor doesn’t erase grief, but it softens the edges. Laughing at life’s absurdities—misplaced hearing aids, mixed-up medications, or the way your bridge club seems permanently down a player—acts like an umbrella in a rainstorm.

Coping Strategies That Work

So how do seniors keep living fully while coping with continuous loss? A few approaches blend practicality with positivity:

1. Adopt “Friendship 2.0” - Just because friends are gone doesn’t mean new ones aren’t waiting. Senior centers, lifelong-learning classes, and online groups (yes, Grandma can join a Zoom knitting circle!) offer opportunities. AARP’s Virtual Community Center hosts cooking classes and trivia nights, while Pennsylvania’s Monroe County Area Agency on Aging and New Jersey’s Statewide Senior Citizen Council connect elders with fresh circles of companionship.
2. Celebrate the Living - Instead of focusing on who’s missing, lean into who’s still here. A weekly walk with a fellow widower or coffee with a neighbor can anchor the week. Here in Penn Estates, we are lucky to have our monthly Senior Luncheon, which is lovingly prepared by Phyllis and the Administrative Staff, provides a fun way to strengthen connections with your neighbors. Also, local hubs like the Pocono Township Senior Center have calendars filled with social clubs, tai chi, art classes, daytrips and other events. Writing, recording stories, or scrapbooking keeps loved ones alive in spirit. One group of widows in Pennsylvania hosts a monthly “memory potluck,” each bringing a dish her spouse loved and sharing a story. For those who enjoy writing, Northampton Community College’s LifeLearn program offers memoir workshops.
3. Find Purpose Beyond People - Purpose fills the spaces left behind. Volunteering, mentoring, or adopting a pet brings joy. Senior Planet teaches tech skills, while

Pennsylvania’s RSVP of the Poconos matches volunteers with schools and nonprofits. Volunteering for one of our HOA’s various committees provides a great way to connect with people while contributing to the community.

4. Lean Into Ritual - Marking loss through small rituals transforms grief into comfort. Lighting a candle, planting a flower or tree in someone’s honor or baking Aunt Martha’s lemon bars each spring can be soothing. Many hospice organizations in the Lehigh Valley and Northern New Jersey offer bereavement groups and remembrance events.

The Bright Side of a Smaller Circle

Odd as it sounds, a reduced social circle can bring benefits. Fewer people mean less drama, fewer obligations, and more time for naps and hobbies. Instead of juggling dozens of acquaintances, seniors can savor a handful of meaningful relationships—a carefully chosen bouquet instead of a tangled wildflower field.

Community as Medicine

No matter how independent someone is, the truth remains: we heal together. Communities—whether church congregations, senior yoga classes, or neighborhood walking groups—become the scaffolding that supports elders as they navigate loss. Programs like SilverSneakers blend fitness and socialization, while Meetup.com offers groups for everything from birdwatching to senior hiking. Locally, East Stroudsburg Senior Circle in Pennsylvania hosts luncheons and talks, while Lifelong Montclair in New Jersey keeps seniors engaged through art, culture, and walking clubs. These communities remind people they are still needed, still valuable, and still woven into the fabric of life.

A Final Word (and a Wink)

The elderly often joke that life feels like one long game of musical chairs, with fewer seats each year. But perhaps the trick is to keep dancing, even when the music slows, and to laugh when you end up plopping into the last available chair.

Continuous loss is undeniably painful. Yet with humor, purpose, creativity, and community, it doesn’t have to define the later chapters of life. Instead, those chapters can sparkle with resilience, warmth, and even mischief.

As my grandmother said after losing her last sibling: “I’m the only one left, so I get the final word in all family arguments.” Finally, some perks to being the survivor! Maybe that’s the lesson: while loss narrows the circle, it also sharpens our appreciation for life, love, and laughter.

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Eats Around Town

by Michael J. Tyrrell, Communications Committee Member

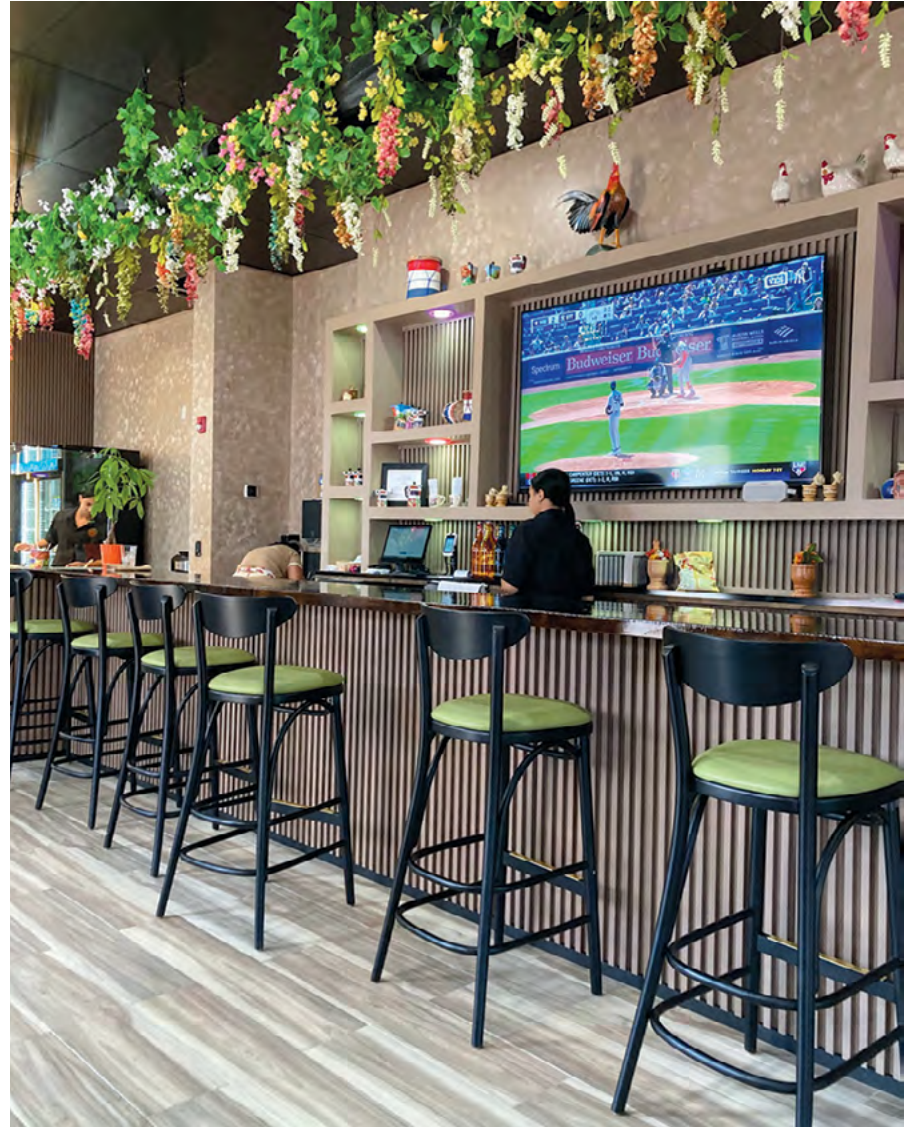
There is a new Dominican restaurant in town and I cannot recommend it strongly enough. We recently tried **Que Lo Que** in East Stroudsburg for Sunday lunch. There were three of us and we ordered three different dishes off the menu.

I had Lomo Saltado (which actually has Peruvian roots). I have had this before and the version here is quite good. It consists of strips of tender beef cooked in a soy, oyster sauce, cilantro base. It's kind of soupy and just delicious. The flavors just pop. It was served with rice and French fries which is traditional I also asked for some black beans which they gladly provided.

Paul had Arroz Estilo Samana, a wonderful rice dish loaded with shrimp, mussels and squid. It was like a risotto. Large portion and very fresh tasting.

Our friend Sharon ordered Pechuga Al Grill, nicely cooked boneless chicken breasts served with an epic creamy mushroom sauce and fries. The sauce looked like cream of mushroom soup. Don't be fooled. It was the most delicious item on our table. I will be tempted to order this for myself next time. Oh, and there will be a next time - real soon!

Que Lo Que is family owned and it seemed that the husband was in the front of the house running that part and the wife was the chef. We spoke to them on the way out and they seemed very nice and accommodating. I am not a Dominican food expert, but this seems like the real thing. It is relatively new so please give them a try. Location: 93 Crystal Street in East Stroudsburg.



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HEALTH & FITNESS

by Yolanda Sarrabo, CPT, BCS NASM, Contributor

ABC's to Fitness

School is now back in session after a very hot yet short summer. I thought a refresher on the main structure considerations when working movement to your day to day. Though many jump right in there is a process for a balanced, and more important consistency for a successful go of it. Let us begin...

A is for Apple - and Alignment

Most times when people start with any form of exercise, they tend to skip the initials just to be done with it (blink). I would say making sure you stay close to form is one of those important steps that shouldn't be skipped to ensure safety. It's important to keep proper form and alignment when doing certain exercises, especially when using any equipment. Example: Use of a chest press/row machine requires a straight back and upper body strength to pull apparatus, while aligning suitable weight.

B is for Backpack - and Balance

Here's that word balance again. Well, without proper stance then reaching the goal is waste of time, and in some cases leaves room for injuries. There are exercises that can help strengthen balance when challenged. Example: sit to stand requires a bench or chair and practice just that straight back and mindful bending motions to sit - pull in your gluteal muscle as you slowly stand, and stick out when sitting - 10 Reps / 3 Sets.

C is for Crayon - and Consistency

There has to be a plan in whatever you're trying to reach, and that includes consistency. If there's no plan, the probability of you discontinuing the effort is likely. If you can commit to a small goal of twice a week for 15 minutes, then do so. Let's not make it more difficult to stay challenged in the beginning. As you complete a few weeks at 15 minutes, up the ante - now 30 minutes / 3x week.

D is for Desk - and Duration

Finally, let's talk more on how long. We delved a bit in the latter; however, let's touch on the importance of length so as not to undertrain or overtrain. Though short time is a start is it really enough to meet training and building muscle? What is your goal? It may take more time and days based on that answer. 15 minutes may work initially but eventually more time, added weight, and effort is needed for the best results.

So how did you do? Are you ready for your session and what is needed for a successful fitness school term? Happy workout!
Cheers!

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



It's Halloween!

by Sandy Black, Contributor

Halloween is around the corner. So, in addition to trying to decide what costumes to wear for that day and where to go trick or treating, here are some other fun things to do:

Indoor Activities

- Halloween Crafts: Start some creative DIY projects by making spooky decorations, no-carve pumpkin designs, or how about Halloween-themed tie-dye t-shirts.
- Scary Movie Marathon: Gather your friends or family members for a night of horror films. Create a cozy atmosphere with popcorn and themed snacks to "enhance" the experience.
- Halloween Games: Play games with a spooky twist such as bobbing for apples, pin the spider on the web or Halloween trivia night.
- Haunted House at Home: Transform your living space into a haunted house with decorations, eerie music and spooky lighting.

Outdoor Activities

- Trick-or-Treating: This is a classic Halloween tradition. Trick-or-Treating allows children (and adults) to dress up in costumes and collect candy from their neighbors. It is a fun way to engage with your community.
- Pumpkin Patch: Spend a day at a pumpkin patch picking pumpkins, enjoying hayrides, and participating in fall activities. This is just such a great way to enjoy the autumn season.
- Visit a Haunted House: This is for those who enjoy a thrill, visiting a haunted house can be an exciting experience. Research local options to find the one which will suit your scare tolerance.
- Corn Maze: Navigate through a corn maze for a fun outdoor challenge. Many farms offer nighttime mazes for an extra spooky experience.



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Michael's Kitchen

Easy Thanksgiving Bring-a-Side-Dishes

by Michael J. Tyrrell, Communications Committee Member

Create a new, no-stress tradition this year: Guests bring assigned side dishes while you cook up the turkey and trimmings. This menu shows you how simple it can be.

Cranberry-Glazed Ham (8 servings)

- 1 can (16 ounces) whole berry cranberry sauce
- 2 tbsp Dijon mustard
- 2 tbsp packed dark brown sugar
- 1 tbsp grated orange zest
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 small boneless fully cooked smoked ham (about 2 ½ lbs.)

1. In a small saucepan, stir together cranberry sauce, mustard, brown sugar, orange zest and cinnamon stick. Bring to a simmer, cook over medium heat stirring occasionally for 5 minutes. Remove cinnamon stick before using.
2. Heat oven to 350°. Place ham on rack in roasting pan. Cover with foil and and bake for 30 minutes.
3. Remove foil and brush with some of the cranberry glaze. Bake 15 minutes. Brush again with glaze and bake an additional 15 minutes or until heated through. Slice and serve with remaining glaze.

Glazed Sweet Potatoes (8 servings)

- 2 tbsp vegetable oil
- 3 lbs. sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch chunks
- ¾ tsp salt
- 6 tbsp unsalted butter
- 2/3 cup packed dark brown sugar
- ½ tsp pumpkin pie spice
- ½ cup toasted pecans, coarsely chopped

1. Heat oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add sweet potatoes and stir fry for 10 minutes stirring frequently. Stir in ¾ cup water and ¼ tsp of the salt. Cover and reduce heat to medium. Cook for and additional 8 to 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.
2. In a small skillet, melt butter over medium heat. Stir in brown sugar, pumpkin pie spice and remaining ½ tsp of the salt. Cook for 1 minute; stir until sauce is smooth.
3. Transfer sweet potatoes to an oven-proof baking dish; spoon glaze on top and stir to combine. Sprinkle top evenly with chopped pecans.

Colorful Squash Casserole (8 servings)

- 2 lbs. yellow and green zucchini, trimmed and cut into ¾-inch half-moons
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 4 cloves garlic, smashed
- 1 container (10 ounces) grape or cherry tomatoes
- 1 tsp chopped fresh oregano
- 1 tsp fresh thyme or ¼ tsp dried
- ½ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp black pepper

1. Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Lightly salt and add the squash. Cover and bring back to a boil. Cook for 4 or 5 minutes more. Drain.
2. Heat oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add garlic and cook 1 minute, stirring so garlic doesn't burn. Add squash, tomatoes, oregano, thyme, salt and pepper. Cook, stirring occasionally, for 4 to 5 minutes, until squash is tender and tomatoes have just started to collapse.

Mushroom Stuffing (8 servings)

- 6 slices bacon, chopped
- 2 large onions, chopped
- 3 large ribs of celery, thinly sliced
- 2 large carrots, peeled and finely diced
- 1 container (10 ounces) sliced white mushrooms
- 2 tbsp chopped fresh sage or 1½ tsp dried
- ½ tsp dried thyme
- ½ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp ground nutmeg
- ¼ tsp black pepper
- ¾ cup dry white wine
- 2 cups chicken broth
- ½ lb stale or toasted pumpernickel bread, cut into ½-inch cubes
- ½ lb stale or toasted French bread cut into ½-inch cubes

1. In a large saucepan, cook bacon until crisp. Remove all but 2 tbsp of fat. Add onion, celery and carrots. Cook over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes. Add mushrooms and cook 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.
2. Add sage, thyme, salt, nutmeg and pepper. Stir in wine; simmer for a minute or two. Add broth and bring to a simmer for another minute or two.
3. Stir in bread cubes and stir into a greased casserole. Cover and allow to stand for 10 minutes before serving.

Warm Cheese Dip (makes 4 cups)

- 8 ounces trimmed brie cheese
- 8 ounces sharp cheddar cheese, cut up
- 8 ounces light cream cheese
- ¾ cup light mayonnaise
- 8 sun-dried tomatoes packed in oil
- 2 tsp Dijon mustard
- ¼ tsp garlic salt

1. Heat oven to 375°. Coat a small ovenproof baking dish with nonstick cooking spray. Pulse brie, cheddar, cream cheese, mayonnaise, tomatoes, mustard and salt in food processor until smooth.
2. Bake in prepared baking dish for 20 minutes. Cool at least 10 minutes.

Harvest Pie (12 servings)

- 1 package (15 ounces) ready-to-roll piecrusts or homemade piecrust for 9-inch double crust pie
- 1½ lbs. Granny Smith apples
- 1lb pears, peeled, cored and sliced (about 3 cups)
- ½ cup dried cherries
- 2/3 cup sugar plus 1 tbsp
- ½ cup sliced natural almonds
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- ¼ tsp ground cloves
- ¼ tsp salt
- 1 egg beaten with 1 tbsp water

1. Heat oven to 400°. Fit one piecrust into a 9-inch pie plate and refrigerate until ready to use.
2. In a large bowl, gently mix together apples, pears, cherries, 2/3 cup of sugar, the almonds, flour, cinnamon, nutmeg and salt. Pour into prepared pie crust.
3. Roll out the second crust and cut out 6 evenly spaced circles with a 1-inch cookie cutter, reserving cut-outs.
4. Place piecrust over filling and pinch top and bottom edges together. Brush lightly with egg wash and place cutouts randomly over crust; Brush cut-outs with egg wash. Sprinkle remaining 1 tbsp sugar over pie.
5. Bake for 20 minutes. Cover edges with foil and reduce heat to 350°. Bake for an additional 35 minutes or until nicely browned and bubbly. Cool completely on a wire rack.

WHAT WE'RE STREAMING

Guilty Pleasures or Hidden Treasures?

The Last Days of Ptolemy Grey

Streaming on Apple

reviewed by Sharon Kennedy, Communications Committee Member

So, this past week Blue Ridge Communications had a major glitch. Most streaming services either did not work at all or the shows were in Swedish (including the closed captions)! Even the apps on my phone located me as if in Sweden or Denmark. Fortunately, Apple + was the exception.

As a (delightful) result, I came across a series that I probably would never have happened upon otherwise. The Last Days of Ptolemy Grey is a six-episode series that came out in 2022. I was drawn in to the story from the first few minutes and remained captivated for all six episodes. I am not the only one. I looked up the reviews afterwards and found that most all critics agreed.

It is difficult to describe exactly what sort of story it is. There is a bit of murder mystery. There is a bit of fantasy. There is a portrayal of racism in this country, past and present. It is a commentary on how the most marginalized among us are made invisible or are poorly treated, whether due to racism, ageism or poverty. It is about family and about relationships. But it mostly is a darn good drama and character study.

Ptolemy Grey is an elderly man living in squalor, mostly forgotten by all others, including family. He has dementia. The only family member that visits him and cares for him is his nephew, Reggie, a kind man who is murdered early in the show. Ptolemy is brought to "see" Reggie by a young family member, only to find Reggie in a casket. The family gathering was for Reggie's funeral.

A 17-year-old girl, Robyn, had been staying at Ptolemy's niece's home after she lost her mother. She could not continue to stay there due to an attempted sexual assault by the niece's son. Robyn reluctantly goes to stay with Ptolemy. She takes charge of cleaning up the squalor and becomes attached to Ptolemy. The relationship between Ptolemy and Robyn is beautifully and poignantly portrayed. The acting is superb by both of these actors (Samuel Jackson and Dominique Fishback). Ptolemy is taken to a doctor who is conducting research on a drug for individuals who have dementia. It is a deal with the devil. Taking the drug suddenly brings back ALL memories, including the most traumatic. And it is temporary, resulting in dementia symptoms even worse than before. Ptolemy dubs the doctor "Satan."

As Ptolemy regains his memories, we learn of his past loves, the past acts that he regrets, his past joys and his past sorrows, as well as the current ones. We meet him as an 8-year-old boy, witnessing the hanging and burning of his primary caregiver (his uncle). We learn of the promise he made to his uncle that he has yet to fulfill. We watch him search for the answers as to who murdered his nephew, Reggie. We experience every human emotion and witness his choices to either take revenge or to grant forgiveness. We become aware of his wisdom, and of the loss of himself when his mind rapidly deteriorates again. We see him face all that life gives him (and takes from him) with acceptance and grace. And we witness fierce Robyn learn about love and trust.

I highly recommend this series. It is not dark. But be prepared to experience a full range of human emotions and to be invited to think more deeply about many life and societal issues.

The Thursday Murder Club

118 minutes • PG-13 • 2025 Available on Netflix

reviewed by Paul R. Quillin, Contributor

Retirement homes never looked so good. The elderly members of the "Thursday Murder Club" reside in Cooper's Chase, a luxurious retirement community situated in a former convent, surrounded by lush green fields. There is a whirlwind of activities. The apartments are palatial. The decor is beautiful, and one can assume the food is delicious. Yes, there is also a hospice wing (people whisper when they mention it), but in the meantime, Cooper's Chase is as good as it gets, until people start getting murdered.

The main cast members are:

Elizabeth Best played by Helen Mirren

Ron Ritchie played by Pierce Brosnan

Ibrahim Arif played by Ben Kingsley

Joyce Meadowcroft played by Celia Imrie

Tony Curran played by Geoff Bell

Ian Ventham played by David Tennant

Donna De Freitas played by Naomi Ackie

Helen Mirren, Pierce Brosnan, Ben Kingsley, and Celia Imrie play the quartet of amateur sleuths. These actors are heavy-hitters, and they give this rather light caper some real weight. Four pensioners gather together every Thursday in the "jigsaw puzzle room" to investigate cold cases, with Elizabeth, played by Helen Mirren, as their ring leader. She drops hints suggesting that she was probably pretty high up in MI6 and now that she's a "little old lady", this gives her a great cover.

Elizabeth is driven and steely-eyed, and comes up with the club's plan of attack. She's also taken charge of handing out assignments. Her instinct tells her how useful it is to be underestimated.

Ron (Brosnan) is a former trade unionist, a rabble-rousing and energetic figure, and Ibrahim (Kingsley), a former psychiatrist, adds psychological nuance to their investigations. Joyce (Imrie) is a newcomer to the club, eager to help out and make some new friends.

In an early scene in the movie, Joyce is visited by her daughter who wants her to take a "flat" near her home so she could be closer, but Joyce is eager to be among those her age. We first see them investigating a head-scratcher of a cold case from 1973, but this is derailed by the real-life murder of Tony Curran (Geoff Bell), the rough-around-the-edges owner of Cooper's Chase. Curran's co-owner is the unethical Ian Ventham (Tennant), in the throes of a contentious divorce and hard up for cash, who is moving quickly with his plan to evict the residents of Cooper's Chase so he can turn the historic building into a pricey apartment complex. This causes an uproar among the residents.

A police inspector new to the force, one Donna De Freitas (Ackie), comes to Cooper's Chase to give a presentation on home security, and Elizabeth senses, correctly, that Donna is bored out of her mind and hungry to do some real police work. The Murder Club needs a woman on the inside, and Donna is happy to get on board.

The tone of the film is a little soft, but there's a very welcome absence of condescension and sentimentality that is often used in the portrayal of elderly people on film, particularly when they engage in activities not typically associated with their age. It's not presented as amusingly ironic that old people are running around solving crimes. Elizabeth, Ron, Ibrahim, and Joyce are all intelligent and lively, dogged in their pursuit of the truth. They don't "fall for" anything, and they will stop at nothing. You don't suddenly turn into a sweet old stereotype after a certain age, especially not if you've been an agent with MI6!

The Thursday Murder Club is engaging and often amusing. The plot contains enough surprises to generate real suspense. While the characters aren't particularly well-defined, it looks like their development could be a feature in upcoming episodes. Yes, the film feels more like a television pilot than a stand-alone film, which seems to be exactly what Netflix planned, as it's been reported that all the principals are committed, and the next installment in the Thursday Murder Club series appears to have been scheduled for release later this year. Looking forward to it and I invite you to share in the fun.

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Community Day - August 2025



Photos by David Montalvo



Poetry Corner

submitted by James Ruffini, Communications Committee

Autumn

by John Clare

I love the fitful gust that shakes
The casement all the day,
And from the glossy elm tree takes
The faded leaves away,
Twirling them by the window pane
With thousand others down the lane.

I love to see the shaking twig
Dance till shut of eve,
The sparrow on the cottage rig,
Whose chirp would make believe
That Spring was just now flirting by
In Summer's lap with flowers to lie.

I love to see the cottage smoke
Curl upwards through the trees;
The pigeons nestled round the cote
On November days like these;
The cock upon the dunghill crowing,
The mill sails on the heath a-going.



September 2025 Senior Lunch

by Michael J. Tyrrell, Communications Committee Chair

Our recent senior lunch was a record breaker. 50 in attendance. When this was initiated a few years ago, the attendance was capped at 20 people.

Phyllis and her staff did a wonderful job as usual! The eats consisted of a humongous tossed green salad, two varieties of kielbasa - one plain and one BBQ, sauerkraut, green beans, rosemary roasted tiny potatoes, rolls for the sausage, rye bread and cold cuts and cheese and two varieties of Phyllis's famous pasta salads. It was served buffet-style. For dessert there was a selection of hand-held desserts.

The atmosphere was upbeat; everyone seemed very happy with the menu and enjoyed the event as usual.



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