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Highlighting Neighborhood News & Events

Volume 2, Edition 12, December 2025



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2025 FUNDRAISER SETS NEW RECORD AS VOLUNTEERS THANK THE COMMUNITY



The 2025 Toys for Tots Fundraiser held at the Freeland VFW Post 5010 has officially broken another record with a total of \$17,803 dollars raised. This marks a major increase from last year and the volunteers say the success belongs entirely to the community.

Thanks to the generosity of everyone who attended, donated and supported the event a total of 1,981 toys were delivered to the local Toys for Tots

warehouse. These toys will bring joy to children throughout the greater Hazleton area during the upcoming holiday season.

Volunteers stress that none of this would be possible without the people who purchase tickets, enter tricky trays, take part in the 50-50 drawings, donate products or provide sponsorship support. They extend their sincere thanks to every individual business and family who helped make the event another record breaker.

This year's entertainment included The Legends Oldies Band, Six Shots and Kartune who kept the crowd energized throughout the evening.

Volunteers say they are humbled by the continued support and look forward to next year's event on November 21st 2026.

They add that the community has once again made Christmas brighter for many local children and they could not be more grateful.

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The Anthracite Post

Highlighting Neighborhood News & Events

Letter from the Editors

Hello everyone! Where did the year go? I can't believe it is Christmas already. It seems like the years go by faster and faster.

It's beginning to look mighty festive driving around the local towns with all the nice Christmas trees, lights and decorations. This past Saturday I drove thru Shickshinny and was happy to see an outdoor winter festival going on.

There's no tree for me this year. I'm not so sure it would work out well with Merlin, my 8 month old kitten. I never had a cat and he is making me brand new. As I write this, he is peeking over the laptop and swatting his paw around the side to try and get at me. I suppose my little man wants to play (as usual).

I don't know about you, but this cold weather makes me feel like baking. I'm trying to cut back on the junk but I'll probably end up making my favorites - chocolate chip walnut cookies and snickerdoodles.

As always, if you have any ideas, stories, recipes, photos, etc., that you would like to submit for **The Anthracite Post**, send us an email, text or give us a call.

Lee Ann & Shari

WRITTEN BY SHARI

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DECEMBER 2025

BIZARRE & UNIQUE HOLIDAYS

- 1 Eat a Red Apple Day
National Cookie Cutter Day
- 2 National Fritters Day
- 3 Make a Gift Day
National Roof over Your Head Day
- 4 National Cookie Day
Santa's' List Day
Wear Brown Shoes Day
- 5 Bathtub Party Day
Repeal Day
- 6 Bartender Appreciation Day
St. Nicholas Day
- 7 International Civil Aviation Day
Pearl Harbor Day
- 8 National Lard Day
- 9 Christmas Card Day
National Llama Day
- 10 Human Rights Day
Nobel Prize Day
- 11 National App Day
- 12 Gingerbread House Day
Poinsettia Day
- 13 National Cocoa Day
Violin Day
- 14 Hanukah begins
Roast Chestnuts Day
- 15 Bill of Rights Day
National Lemon Cupcake Day
- 16 Pizzelle Day
- 17 National Maple Syrup Day
- 18 Bake Cookies Day
National Regifting Day
- 19 Look for an Evergreen Day
Ugly Sweater Day
- 20 Go Caroling Day
- 21 Don't Make Your Bed Day
Forefather's Day
Humbug Day
Winter Solstice
- 22 National Date Nut Bread Day
- 23 Festivus – for the rest of us
- 24 National Chocolate Day
National Egg Nog Day
- 25 Christmas Day
- 26 Boxing Day
Kwanzaa
National Candy Cane Day
- 27 Make Cut Out Snowflakes Day
National Fruitcake Day
- 28 Card Playing Day
- 29 Pepper Pot Day
- 30 Bacon Day
- 31 New Year's Eve

Freeland Community Choir Presents Christmas Musical



The Freeland Community Choir will present its Christmas Musical Sunday, December 14, at 3 p.m. at Faith UCC, 21 Faith Drive, Hazle Township. Bobby Maso and Millini Skuba will narrate the performance.

This year's cantata, "Night of the Father's Love," was written by Pepper Choplin. All of the mystery, the awe, and the palpable excitement of the night of Jesus's birth are imaginatively captured in a Christmas mosaic that combines fragments of the familiar with a unique perspective in word and music.

The cantata opens with "The Coming of the Lord," followed by "Waiting," "Angels Are Making

Their Rounds," "Night of the Father's Love," "The Shepherds' Song," and "Seeking the King" featuring Joe Racho as soloist. The cantata continues with "Fall on Your Knees," and concludes with "Christ Is Born, Nowell!"

During the offertory, trumpeter Frank Balon will play "What Child Is This?" accompanied by Elwood Zimmerman on the piano.

The quartet of Maria Lutz, Louise Tomtishen, Brian Hart, and Dick Drukker will sing Michael John Trotta's "Gloria" featuring guest performer Joe Rosato on flute. The program will end with the choir singing a beautiful, unique arrangement from

composer Dan Forrest of the beloved Christmas carol, "O Little Town of Bethlehem," featuring Joe Rosato on clarinet.

The choir is under the direction of Sheila Butkiewicz and is accompanied by Taylor Stair.

Members of the choir include:

Soprano – Mary Beth Billig, Barbara Deaton, Yvonne Gahres-Diehl, Maryann Hines, Jennifer Hollinger, Jeanette Irwin, Maria Lutz, Karen Prussock, Kate Rusnock, Elaine Szymczak, Louise Tomtishen, Robyn Trexler, Darlene Trovitch, Denise Wetzell, Darlene Wolfe.

Alto – Roseanne Denion, Carol Jones, Mary Lou Keck, Karen Lingenfelter, Marie Marencin, Carol McShaw, Kim Manning, Sandra Meier, Camille Reilly, Georgia Rusnock, Marla Sardo, Linda Tier, Brenda Zimmerman.

Tenor – Frank Balon, Jackie Berger, Brian Hart, Bruce Pedriani, Marilyn Stanton.

Bass – Dick Drukker, David Mumaw, Joe Racho, Robert Rushalk, Les Shupp, Elwood Zimmerman.

The program is open to the public. A free-will offering will be taken for the purchase of music for future programs by the choir.



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2025 PARDEESVILLE CRUISE NIGHT PROCEEDS TOTAL \$24,962



Domestic Violence Service Center Front Row L to R: Susan Wilkinson, Kenny Wilkinson, Danielle O. Keith - Alexandre (Domestic Violence Service Center), Trevor Wilkinson, Eden Triano (Secretary) Back Row L to R: Bob Boretsky, Kevin Zilker, Gary Wilson, Joe Mope, Ron Semon (President), Joyce Semon, Dave Digon, Cindy Digon, Dolores Clatch, Matt Manganelli (Vice President), Joe Clatch, Chris Digon (Treasurer), Frank Bogacik.

The committee members of Pardeesville Cruise Night have been busy recently, distributing proceeds from the two events they hosted earlier this year. First was their main event at the Pardeesville Playground back in August, which supports Cancer Patient Assistance Programs / Research and Suicide Awareness / Prevention Programs, then in

late September they hosted their second annual Spinoff Cruise, which proceeds go towards Domestic Violence Awareness / Prevention Programs. In late October they had their annual banquet, where they invite representatives from the causes that they support and give them a "year in review" summary of the events they hosted, improvements

made, along with releasing the total proceed numbers to each of them, prior to going public. The annual event has grown in size each year, along with proceeds raised, which go back to the community since the group started back in 2022.

Once again, this year's proceeds benefited four area agencies:

Greater Hazleton American Cancer Society	\$ 8,761.80
LVHN Hazleton Topper Cancer Institute	\$ 2,500.00
HASD Friends of Rachel Club	\$11,261.81
Domestic Violence Service Center	\$ 2,438.40

The group would like to note that none of this would be possible without the tremendous support from their sponsors, which include both area businesses and individuals, along with the monetary donations they receive, tricky tray raffle basket donors, vehicle participants who bring out their beautiful rides, along with all the spectators who come out and support the event. President Ron Semon noted "we put everything together, but all the people that support us financially are the ones who make this possible, without them, we would never be able to put on such an event each year". Pardeesville Cruise Night 2026 is scheduled for Saturday August 15th.



American Legion Post #473

523 CENTRE STREET • FREELAND, PENNSYLVANIA 18224



Merry Christmas
& Happy New Year!



Celebrating Joy of Christmas in Freeland

By Bobby Maso

The joyous Christmas season is now upon us, and you might be surprised to learn that there may not be a better time to show off your love for Freeland than during this merry and bright time of year.

With that in mind, the Freeland 150th Celebration Committee is announcing its Decorate the Halls Christmas Contest - our latest event aimed at bringing the entire community together.

We are calling on all residents, as well as businesses in town, to enter our contest and decorate your property for the Christmas holiday. Each category will have its own separate winner. The contest officially begins on December 1 and will conclude on December 20.

What we are looking for is special attention paid to detail - creativity in lights, design, decoration, and overall festive presentation. For homes, this can be your roof, porch, and yard (if applicable). For businesses, you can go all out by decorating the outside as well as the inside of your establishment- unique window displays, door designs and interior merriment.

Maybe you're a regular Clark Griswold and love making your home the statement piece of the block. Or perhaps you are the creative, holiday-loving employee at work who loves to spruce up the restaurant or office. No matter what, your Christmas decorating skills can be on full display!

A special tip to keep in mind both for practicality as well as affordability is that emphasis does not necessarily have to be on quantity, but mainly on quality.

We all love our special town and excitedly await its 150th birthday next September. But it's never too early to begin celebrating such a grand occasion. Many of us are old enough to remember, and many more have grown up hearing the stories about how much pride was taken in decorating Freeland at Christmastime over the generations. Homes and businesses have always enjoyed celebrating the beauty of both the season and Freeland itself. This contest is a great throwback to those simpler times and an extension of modern holiday pride.

If you would like to enter your residence in the contest, simply go to the 150th Committee Facebook page at Freeland PA 150th Celebration, find our post about the contest, and leave a comment with your home address. You may also call or text 570-401-9423 or 570-233-0204. Businesses can do the same- either by commenting with the name of the business on our Facebook post, or by texting or calling the above numbers. However, members of the 150th Committee will also be reaching out to you in person for direct registration.

From all of us in the Freeland 150th Celebration Committee, we wish you and your loved ones a blessed, joyous and merry Christmas, and we look so forward to seeing your personal holiday celebrations.



Senator Dave Argall 29th District Pennsylvania Senate

Toll Free Number: 877-327-4255
dargall@pasen.gov
Schuylkill, Carbon and Luzerne counties



State Budget Provides Significant Funding Increase for Childcare Workforce Development

By State Sen. Dave Argall (R-Schuylkill/Carbon/Luzerne)

As part of the bipartisan state budget, we secured major investments in childcare and early education. These resources will strengthen Pennsylvania's workforce, expand opportunities for local families, and support the dedicated professionals who make high-quality care possible.

The 2025-26 Pennsylvania State Budget includes:

- \$25 million in additional funding to recruit and retain much-needed childcare professionals.
- \$9.5 million in new support for the Pre-K Counts program.
- Level funding for the Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program.
- \$13.2 million in additional funding for Early Intervention Part C (infant and toddler) services, including \$10 million specifically for a rate increase for childcare providers.
- \$28.5 million in additional funding for Early Intervention Part B (ages 3-5).

Quality childcare is essential for families across Pennsylvania and critical to our state's economic future. These investments will help more children access early education, enable more parents to stay in the workforce, and ensure providers have the support they need to continue their important work.

This new funding is a win for families, educators, and communities across the Commonwealth.

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Cash Must Now Be Accepted at School Events

By State Rep. Jamie Walsh (R-Luzerne)

Great news! A new state law makes cash an acceptable form of payment for admission to school-sponsored events in Pennsylvania.

That's right. Many schools across the Commonwealth have stopped accepting cash as a form of payment for school-sponsored events and activities, instead requiring spectators to use credit or debit cards, or order tickets online or through an app. This doesn't work for people who, for various reasons, may not have credit cards or smart phones, or the technical capabilities to access the internet to purchase tickets.

Ticket purchases through the internet or apps also require buyers to surrender a lot of personal information, which is particularly troublesome for senior citizens, a group often targeted by scams.

For many who simply want to see their child, grandchild or friends play ball, the new law will permit them to purchase tickets with cash – the legal currency of the United States.



Trooper Anthony Petroski III

Public Information Officer

Community Service Officer

Pennsylvania State Police

Troop N - Hazleton



Holiday shopping season is upon us, and with that, are some concerns we should address. When shopping at brick-and-mortar stores, do not leave packages within your vehicle and out in the open, please secure them in a trunk / cargo area or cover them with a blanket. You do not want to advertise your expensive gifts. Also, sounds obvious, but always lock your vehicle doors. Unfortunately, people will try opening vehicle doors in parking lots around the holidays, so be sure to lock your vehicle doors at all times. When you are expecting expensive package deliveries to your home, try to plan when they arrive that a friend and/or neighbor either secures them in your house or their house until you get home. It is not ideal to have packages sitting outside your front door while no one is home. A good early Christmas present would be home security cameras. These cameras are easy to install and have no required monthly fee. They are great for monitoring your home. From all of us here at Troop N, have a safe and Merry Christmas!



Merry Christmas

from Our Families to Yours

The Anthracite Post

Lee Ann Davidovich & Shari Roberts



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Beware 'Veteran Savings Program' Scam

By State Rep. Dane Watro (R-Luzerne/Schuylkill)

The Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) is alerting veterans to a scam now circulating that involves a direct-mail postcard claiming to offer eligible veterans an additional \$160 per month through something called the "PA Veteran Savings Program 2025."

The postcard appears official at first glance, using formal language and referencing programs such as CHAMPVA and TRICARE for Life. It urges recipients to call within five days to "help manage call volume," a tactic often used to pressure veterans into responding quickly. However, the postcard contains several red flags. It does not include a return address, and it lists a bogus phone number (855-600-2411) designed to lure callers into sharing personal information.

If you or someone you know receives suspicious mail, emails or phone calls promising new benefits, financial increases or requests for personal information, it's important not to respond directly. Instead, seek verification from trusted sources.

Pennsylvania veterans and family members who are uncertain about any solicitation are encouraged to contact the DMVA at 800-547-2838.

Improving Guardianship Law

A new state law aims to protect incapacitated Pennsylvanians by requiring courts to promptly conduct a hearing on any petition to modify or terminate guardianship.

This change recognizes the unfortunate truth that there are times when an individual's appointed guardian exploits, neglects, abuses or otherwise fails to act in their best interests, and the family of that individual is compelled to petition the courts to modify or terminate the guardianship. To ensure timely and just outcomes for the individual and their family, the law requires such petitions to be heard within 30 days.

New Law to Help Veterans, Students

Pennsylvania schools need teachers, and Pennsylvania veterans will soon be able to put their education and experience to work in the classroom under a new state law.

Act 41 of 2025 makes it easier for veterans to obtain a teaching certificate related to their direct experience in various career and technical education (CTE) fields. Specifically, the law requires the Department of Education to issue a CTE Intern or CTE Instructional I Certificate to a veteran who has served in the United States Armed Forces for a minimum of 8,000 hours in the occupational area to be taught.

This will open new pathways for veterans to become educators and share their valuable hands-on skills and expertise with our students. It's a win for all involved!

The law will take effect this month.

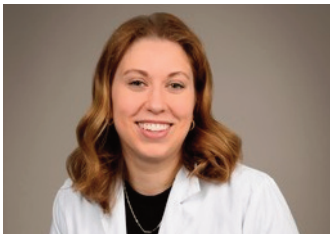
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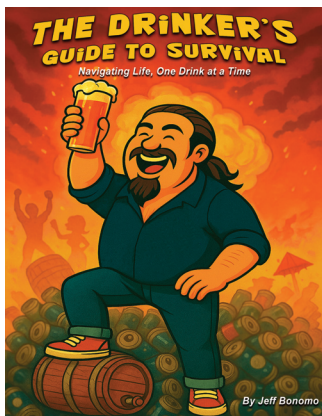


Kenneth Cross, DMD

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Raising the Bar Local Author Jeff Bonomo Uncorks His Second Book



Author, social media influencer, beer expert and television host Jeff Bonomo has released his second book, 'The Drinker's Guide to Survival', Navigating Life One Drink at a Time now available in paperback or Kindle or Amazon. Fans of his show Wine Hops and Road Stops will recognize his trademark humor and relaxed style on every page.

The Drinker's Guide to Survival serves up playful wisdom from years spent exploring what Bonomo describes as the world of the alcohol enthusiast. Readers will enjoy funny stories from the road, friendly advice for nights that go a little sideways and clever bits of drink knowledge

perfect for any bar stool conversation.

Jeff Bonomo has built a strong following through his honest approach to beer culture and his talent for connecting with everyday drinkers. This new book highlights that blend of experience and personality with stories that feel fun, relatable and full of heart.

Arriving just as the holiday season begins The Drinker's Guide to Survival is set to become a favorite for anyone who appreciates a good laugh and a well poured glass.

For more information or to purchase a copy visit Amazon and search for The Drinker's Guide to Survival.

<https://a.co/d/7jehwc5>

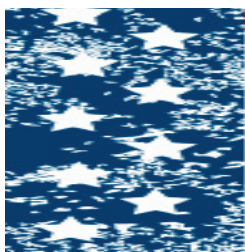


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Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!



A Thousand Times a Day (Part 6)

Submitted by Kenny Wenner. If you have any information about people in this article, please call Ken at 570-401-4564 or email kenwennersr@gmail.com.



SSgt Steven F. Spetz

We will continue with our local soldiers that went MIA during war. Too often history repeats itself as is the case of **SSgt Steven F. Spetz of WWII** and **Cpl Richard Evancho of the Vietnam War**.

SSgt Steven F. Spetz : of Highland (1166 Schwabe St?) as 27 years old when his plane disappeared and he was listed MIA. Spetz was with the 2nd Div which landed in France on D-Day on the left flank of the American beachheads. His unit took part in heavy fighting and by June 16th it was engaged with the 101st Airborne in holding Carentan against repeated German counter attacks. Steven was wounded in France on June 26th. He was being flown stateside, to Mitchell Field on Long Island, NY. when his C-54 transport went down between Iceland and Newfoundland. There were 26 people on board. 15 Army, 3 Navy, 5 were civilian crew members and 2 were Army medical staff. All were MIA.

Spetz entered the service in Dec of 1940, and went overseas on Oct 8, 1943, first to North Ireland,

then England to prepare for D-Day.

His brothers are **Marine Pfc Thomas Spetz** serves aboard the USS Nevada, a battleship, present on D-Day, and **Pvt George Spetz** who was in basic Marine training in 1944 at Parris Island, S. Carolina. They all graduated Foster High school and attended St. Johns church.

Vietnam Era **Lance Cpl Richard Evancho USMC**: was 20 years old when the medevac helicopter that he and six others were being transported in, plunged into the South China Sea. With a crew of four and three wounded Marines aboard, the Sikorsky UH-34D "Choctaw" was enroute from Hue-Phu Bai to Da Nang in poor weather when they lost sight of their buddy chopper. They went to instrument controls and the chopper plunged into the sea. The pilot did put out a mayday and rescue was almost immediate but only the pilot and co-pilot were rescued. The Choctaw was 3 miles short of Da Nang.

Evancho served with Marine Squadron 36, Marine Air Group 36, 1st Marine Wing. His name is inscribed with his fallen comrades on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington, DC.

Pfc Joseph Egger: Was 33 years old when he went MIA in Italy on Jan 22, 1944. He is presumed dead. Egger was an Army medic with the 36th "Texas" Div. His unit attacked across the Rapido River near Teo Dice and San Angelo. Their attack was repulsed and US troops withdrew across the river. Egger hadn't been seen since then. He served in Africa in April of 43, then to Sicily, and took part in the invasion of Italy at Salerno in 1943.

S 1st CI Charles Mula: "Reds" Mula (Molli) from MIA to KIA. Served aboard the USS Mount Hood. He was killed in a ship explosion on Nov 10, ?? All hands perished.

Pfc William F. Nowak Jr: Of 421 Alvin St, FHS graduate 1942. Was 19 years of age when he went MIA in Germany on Dec. 19, 1944. Later changed to KIA. He was in combat less than three weeks with the 106th Inf Div. He had just arrived in England in

November and Belgium in December. At home he played in the St Ann's band.

S Sgt Albert N. Kushmeider: Of 1230 Walnut St, FHS graduate 1939. Joined service Nov 12th, 1943 and was assigned Army Air Corp. He completed 160 combat missions in the Mediterranean theater from bases in Italy as a nose gunner on a B24 Liberator with the 15th AAF. Albert was MIA over Hungary from Dec 18th, 1944 but rejoined his unit on Dec 28th after being rescued by Russians heading for Berlin. That mission was to Blechammer to bomb German aircraft factories. After being hit by flak his plane lost one engine, dropped its bombs on target, then lost a second engine. The plane fell from formation, fell behind, and went down over Yugoslavia. The entire crew bailed out and landed in Partisan Territory where they were collected by Marshal Tito's guerrilla forces, and hospitalized. They returned to Italy on Dec 28th, 10 days after being shot down. His brother, **Pvt Joseph Kushmeider** is serving in the Army Infantry in France.

Pfc Steven Sohorsky: Joined the service in Sept 1942 and went to England in April 1944. He was wounded on July 6th at Normandy, and again Dec. 5th, 1944. Steven was listed as MIA in Germany Dec 15th. Two brothers in law **Cpl Thomas Griffin** is serving in New Guinea, and **Cpl George Reynolds** is an M.P. serving in England.

Gunnersmate 1st CI William Scharer: Reported as MIA (later KIA) Easter Monday, April 2nd, 1945 aboard the USS Dickerson when it was hit and sunk by two kamikaze suicide planes and bombs. Also aboard was **Sea 1st CI Henry Eroh of Weatherly**. The Dickerson was covering the troop landings on Okinawa and nearby islands of the Ryu Kyu group. Scharer served 3 ½ years in Europe, Mediterranean, and Asiatic campaigns with 9 Battle Stars. He had served at Tulaga, Tarawa, Saipan, Iwo Jima, as well as other islands in the Pacific.

We will continue with the MIA list next month.

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MMI Preparatory School Students Lead Holiday Service Drives to Support Local Families and Children

(Freeland, PA – November 13, 2025) – As the season of giving begins, MMI Preparatory School students are demonstrating the School's deep commitment to service through two meaningful projects running from Tuesday, November 11, through Tuesday, November 25. Both drives are student-led and will directly benefit children and families in the Greater Hazleton communities.

The first, a food drive organized by Caleb Skuba '26 and members of MMI's National Honor Society, will support The Willow Foundation's Heartwood Center in Hazleton and the Brueningsen Memorial Mobile Food Pantry at St. Michael's Recreation Center in Freeland. Requested donations include sugar, coffee creamer, condiments, spices, cooking oils, sauces, canned fruits and vegetables, and boxed dinners.

The drive will also include a friendly grade-level competition. Collection boxes have been placed in one advisory per grade, and the grade contributing the most items will earn a dress-down day on Thursday, December 4.



Above: Caleb Skuba '26 and Stella Horvath '29

The second project, the Supplies for Santa Toy Drive, is led by Stella Horvath '29 and supports the 12th Annual Supplies for Santa initiative, which benefits children spending the holidays at Geisinger's Janet Weis Children's Hospital. Requested items include coloring books for kids and teens, crayons, markers, colored pencils, Hot Wheels/Matchbox cars, card games, bubbles, small LEGO kits, and new books for all ages. A collection box is located in the Coxe Commons for donated items.

"We are so proud of Caleb and Stella for their initiative and compassion," said Mrs. Theresa Long, Head of School at MMI Preparatory School. "Service is one of MMI's foundational pillars, and we believe that when students learn to serve others, they discover the true meaning of leadership, empathy, and community. These projects remind us that even small acts of kindness can have a big impact."

MMI encourages families, students, and community members to participate in both drives as the School embraces this season of generosity and gratitude.

Stir, Simmer, Sip: Celebrating Boilo Across the Anthracite Region

By William M. Dempsey

Let's step inside from the outdoors for this month's article and warm up a bit. In Pennsylvania's Anthracite Coal Region, winter holidays have a flavor all their own. For a few, it's eggnog, which originated in medieval Britain, or mulled wine, which can trace its roots back to Germany and the Nordic countries— for most, it's boilo. This citrus-and-spice drink has outlasted big mining companies, long winters, and the slow fading of coal patch towns themselves. Suppose you grew up anywhere between Shenandoah, Hazleton, and Tamaqua, and when you walk into a home. In that case, you can probably smell it before you even see the pot on the stove: orange, honey, cinnamon, a variety of specific spices, and that unmistakable Four Queens whiskey vapor rising like a cloud from a warm weather front.

Boilo isn't a simple amalgamation that your local bartender can throw together. More than a cocktail, it's a tradition brought here by European immigrant miners, particularly Lithuanian, Polish, and Slovak communities—who carved out these mountains more than a century ago. According to regional folklorists who study the Coal Region's cultural history, many families trace the drink back to Lithuanian *krupnikas*—a honey-based liqueur flavored with similar spices. When miners from these regions settled here, they adapted their old-world recipes to what was available locally. Over time, the drink became distinctly Pennsylvanian: stronger, sweeter, more celebratory, and deeply tied to Christmas and New Year's gatherings, treating the common cold, and warming up when coming inside from the freezing weather.

Every family has its own version, and most

would sooner hand over their Social Security number than their exact ingredients. Some people use ginger ale, while others insist on canned citrus soda. Some toss in cloves and anise to add a sweet, licorice-like flavor; others lean heavily on locally sourced honey. Arguments over which brand of whiskey to use could fill a whole issue of this paper. But the unwritten rule remains: you never rush boilo. You take your time, and you take pride in your personal ingredients and process, honoring family traditions passed down through generations.

I was aware of boilo growing up, to the extent that it was only mentioned in my Irish American household; no one made it. My introduction to the tradition came through my father-in-law, Jim Zubris of New Philadelphia, who has been making boilo longer than I've been alive. J.S., as he is known, doesn't measure a thing—he "knows" when it's right, the way an old-school cook can pinch salt and somehow land on perfection. Needless to say, I've acquired a liking for the festive drink. Watching him craft a batch is watching the Coal Region cultural virtues themselves play out: patient, unpretentious, and built on pride and tradition.

Despite the modern variations, the heart of boilo remains remarkably consistent. Ask any longtime boilo cook throughout Schuylkill, Luzerne, Lackawanna, and Carbon counties, and they will tell you the essentials haven't changed in generations: citrus, honey, spices, and a warming spirit. The drink was never intended to be fancy. It was meant to be shared—something to take the sting out of a brutal winter or to welcome neighbors stopping by to visit you. For many families, preparing and sharing boilo during Christmas, New Year's, or winter gatherings

is a cherished custom that preserves our regional identity.

If you want to try making it yourself, here's a basic, traditional boilo ingredient list; other spices can be added for the desired flavor. Think of it as a starting point rather than an exact map—no two Coal Region kitchens follow the same route. A final tip: The best way to learn is to talk to someone who has been at it for years.

Traditional Boilo (Basic Ingredients)

- 1 bottle of blended whiskey (often Four Queens, but choose your favorite)
- 4–6 oranges, sliced
- 2 lemons, sliced
- 1 cup honey
- 1–2 cups sugar (to taste)
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon or 3–4 whole sticks
- A small handful of raisins (optional but old-school)
- A splash of citrus soda or ginger ale (optional, depending on family tradition)

Simmer the citrus, honey, sugar, and spices until the kitchen smells like the holidays. Add the whiskey at the very end—just warm it, never boil it—and adjust sweetness as you go. You'll know it's right when the steam rising from the pot feels like a homecoming.

Boilo may have come from Europe, but it belongs to this region now. It's a reminder of coal shanties in the local patch towns lit by kerosene lamps, of immigrant families finding warmth where they could, and of the stubborn, generous spirit that still defines the Anthracite towns today. And in a place where winter can feel endless, a cup of boilo remains the Coal Region's most enduring cure.



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St. Ann's Band Christmas Concert



Freeland St. Ann's Band Christmas Concert to be held on Saturday Dec 13 at 1 PM at MMI Preparatory School on 154 Centre St Freeland. Under Director Joseph Rosato the band has put together an enjoyable set list of holiday pop and traditional favorites including "Home for the Holidays", "Merry Christmas Darling", "A Wonderful Christmas Time", "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas", "O Christmas Tree", "Christmas Baby Please Come Home", "All I Want for Christmas is You", "Bobsled Run", "A Festival Christmas", "Christmas Sing-Along" and "The Hallelujah Chorus". The concert is free.



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Stitches of Love Donates Hats to Local Cancer Patients



Anne Amerise, a member of the Stitches of Love group from Good Shepherd Church, Drums who stitched 90 hats for local cancer patients to help keep them warm and toasty in the winter, presents them to Jane Dougherty, Chair, ACS-Greater Hazleton.

Area cancer patients can pick up a hat at Lehigh Topper Cancer Institute, 772 E. Broad St., Hazleton or Geisinger Cancer Center, 1740 E. Broad Street, Hazleton.

Merry Christmas

from

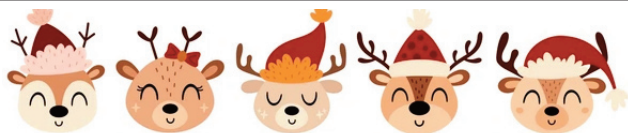


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A Veterans Journal #106

By Joseph Barna • Freeland
USMC, Korea 1952-1953



Christmas in Korea

I would like to tell you about one particular Christmas that I spent in Korea in 1952. There were no Christmas trees decorated with balls, lights, or an angel on top. There were no toys or presents around the tree and no one was singing Christmas carols. There was only the cold and blood-stained dirt. In the quiet, all there was, were the memories of Christmas before. It was a time of loneliness one finds hard to describe. In combat, each day is just another day. The soldier or Marine prays it won't be worse than the day before and that he will live to see another. As far as I could tell, none of us forgot Christmas because we all had our memories and the hope that we would see another Christmas with our families.

While growing up, the most loved and important person in my teenage years was my grandmother. We all called her "Baba". On Christmas Eve, Baba was the head chef at our traditional Holy Supper. With over 25 family members coming to her house, she had a big job getting that long table in the dining room and a smaller table in the kitchen all set up and covered with special ethnic foods. Baba barely stood 5 ft. tall, but she was the boss and all the cooking was done by her. She was a Slovak immigrant and spoke broken English, but everyone knew what she meant when she talked. My favorite recipe that Baba made was her sour mushroom soup. The soup was made from the mushrooms picked by my uncles in the months before and boy, was it in a big pot! I always had 2 or 3 big bowls of it. While I was in Korea

with the Marines, Baba put some of the soup away for me in the cellar freezer. She said "Joe will have his soup when he comes home again."

The year before, in 1951, I also spent Christmas away from home. I was in boot camp at Paris Island in South Carolina. Even though I was far away, I had a warm bunk and a Christmas meal in the mess hall. But Santa was a tough Drill Sergeant. Now, in 1952, on a bombed and burned mountain in Korea, it was Christmas Eve. It started as a quiet night. But then over loudspeakers, we heard our North Korean and Chinese enemies make the announcement "Tonight is Christmas and we have a present for all you Americans." A second later, the shells started falling, the sky was lit with flares and the bullets started flying. After hours of battle and blood, the propaganda loudspeaker sounded once more, with a sarcastic "Merry Christmas."

When I returned home in the late summer of 1953, I visited Baba. She said to me "Joseph, you wait." She went downstairs to her basement and returned with a container of the soup, stored away for me in the freezer. She heated it up on the stove and I enjoyed the best soup I ever tasted.

Mr. Barna fought with the Marine Corps in Korea in 1952 and 1953. He is the Author of "God Makes Angels and Navy Corpsman: A Korean War Veteran's Memories of the War and Life". The book is a great Christmas gift and is available from Amazon. You can get a signed copy directly by contacting him.

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Junior Leadership Hazleton Is Introduced to Business and Economic Development

Submitted by: Pat Korb



Junior Leadership Hazleton (JLH) held its fourth session, "Business & Economic Development" on Tuesday, November 18 at MUZO, Valmont Industrial Park, West Hazleton.

Jordan Darosh, Facilities Manager, welcomed everyone to the furniture company which produces flexible classroom learning and office solution furniture for the twenty-first century. The business is originally from the United Kingdom, but its global headquarters is now located in Valmont.

Jordan and co-worker J.T., gave students an extensive tour of the 74,000 square foot facility which currently distributes to forty-one countries. He said "MUZO combines the best in British Design with the best in American engineering and manufacturing. Quality and sustainability are our favorite words."

Joe Clifford, CAN DO Director at Large, talked to the group about the challenges in pushing business expansion projects forward and all the related infrastructure impact. Students engaged in an informative and lively discussion on data centers with Mr. Clifford telling them "It's OK to have concerns about things like this, but also it's important to know your subject matter and know what you are talking about. Be prepared to come up with solutions for those concerns." He cautioned them that if they want to be a leader, they must do their homework, be prepared, and LISTEN. He told them they need to have a vision, be inspiring, and be sincere.

Representatives from CAN DO, Inc. spoke about that organization's important role in promoting business opportunities, its history, its expansive reach, its operations, and their individual roles in the non-profit. They talked about what training they did for their jobs and encouraged students to explore all their opportunities for job placement and growth. The students were fortunate to hear directly from an enthusiastic team of young professionals: Nico Makuta, Business Financing Specialist; Miguel Polanco, Marketing Communications Specialist and Ana Perez, Economic Development Assistant.

Mary Malone, President of the Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce, handed out Chamber Directories, talked to students about the information that can be found at the Chamber and their community activities like networking mixers. She told them chamber membership is like belonging to a club and her main role is "connecting" and helping those in the community touch base and learn more about each other. In closing, she had them participate in a mock "ribbon cutting," a popular Chamber activity for a new business, which has been in focus for many years.

"MUZO offered all of us the unique opportunity of touring a local business and learning how it works, and it provided a very wonderful opportunity for our students to be inside a working facility. We are very grateful to its Founder and CEO Darren Buttle for giving us all this the rare look inside a Hazleton business." said Mike Dougherty, JLH Program Coordinator. "We also feel it's important that teens be aware of organizations, like CAN DO and The Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce, which help to propel the city and local job opportunities."

The next session of Junior Leadership Hazleton is Tuesday, December 9th at the Butler Township Municipal Building, Drums.

Junior Leadership Hazleton is dedicated to Dr. L. Edgar Dessen, founder of CAN DO. It is a program administered by Leadership Hazleton, an affiliate of the Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce. Funding for the program is provided, in part, by the CAN DO Community Foundation.



Sports Trivia Treats

By Ron Marchetti

Hazleton/ West Hazleton Thanksgiving Day Game History

Can you believe the last Thanksgiving Day football game between the Hazleton Mountaineers and West Hazleton Wildcats was played on November 27, 1975. That was 50 years ago! The question usually pops up during Turkey Day week. When was the last annual Thanksgiving Day game played? Answer: The Blue and Gold Wildcats defeated the Blue and White Mountaineers 12 - 7 at Harman Geist Memorial Field. The final Thanksgiving Day game should have been in 1971, however, an 18-inch snowfall changed that. The game was postponed to the following Saturday between the snow banks that surrounded the field. Jeff Jones scored only two touchdowns in his high school career along with his senior quarterback Joey Maddon. Hazleton 14 - 0. After that game, the school board voted that the season finale for both teams should be the first game so this weather problem would never be a problem again. There will be no more Thanksgiving Day games at Harman Geist. So, in 1972 the Wildcat's opened their season with a 7- 6 win over the Mounts on September 9th. In 1972, 73 and 74 both teams opened their season against each other, but in 1975 due to a teacher strike in early September, the game was postponed back to Thanksgiving Day just for that season (November 27th). Retired coach Tony Scarcella was acting coach for Hazleton's first three games. Hazleton in West Hazleton were both winless going into their final game (0-10). The Wildcats won 12 -7, finishing their worst season in school history at 1 -10. The Mountaineers of Hazleton ended their worst season in school history at 0 -11. After 1975 Hazleton and West Hazleton clashed in week 2 for the next 16 seasons, (1976 through 1991). Before the Hazleton Area Cougars jointure was born. On Thanksgiving Day 43 games have been played. Hazleton won 32, West Hazleton won 9. There were two ties (0- 0 in 1930 and 6 - 6 in 1974). Overall, Hazleton won 44, West Hazleton won13 with 2 ties. The highest scoring game in Thanksgiving Day games was 1968. On a gorgeous day at kickoff the sun was glowing at full strength. At the second half kickoff, it was cloudy. The game ended during heavy snowfall. The Mountaineers won 55 - 33. Quarterback Tony Manfredi threw 423 yards including 7 touchdown passes, 5 of them to the receiver Joe Ferdinand (all of those 3 numbers are school records). I was at every Thanksgiving Day game from 1948 through 1970 (except 1961, 62 during the Berlin and Cuban crisis) and for that last one in 1975. I still miss them on turkey day. Thanks for reading! Till next time, be a good sport and Stay Loose.

Wine HOPS & Road Stops



A Brief History of Christmas Beers

Back in the day, early Europeans brewed up stronger, richer ales specifically for the winter solstice. Why? Well, higher alcohol content meant the beer lasted longer and it packed a nice caloric punch. This made surviving the winter a little less... miserable.

Fast forward to the Middle Ages, and things got real fancy like. Brewers started lacing these winter warmers with all sorts of pricey spices like cinnamon, clove, nutmeg and ginger. Essentially, they were brewing liquid spice cakes to celebrate the holidays.

Modern Christmas beers are still big, bold, and often amusingly over-the-top. Think gingerbread porters, peppermint stouts, cookie-inspired ales, and barrel-aged winter warmers. These beers are perfect for wrapping gifts at midnight or dealing with any holiday gatherings that may suddenly turn awkward.

-Jeff & Desiree Bonomo

Watch Jeff & Desiree talk about all things in the craft beverage world on Wine Hops and Road Stops on Service Electric Cable and Blue Ridge Cable or online at www.youtube.com/@winehopsroadstops and facebook.com/winehopsandroadstops



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