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Highlighting Neighborhood News & Events

Volume 3, Edition 7, July 2026



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“Big Boy” Makes Historic Trip from Cheyenne, Wyoming to Steamtown National Historic Site in Scranton to Celebrate America’s 250th Birthday!

The Anthracite Post visited Steamtown National Historic Site in Scranton to see the Big Boy frenzy firsthand. We enjoyed a beautiful day viewing the locomotive and spoke with Ranger Megan Stevens, who shared a detailed background on Big Boy and explained the logistics behind bringing the engine to Steamtown, as well as the large turnout of visitors eager to experience what the Anthracite Coal Region offers.

This was the first time since the 1950’s that two Big Boy locomotives were displayed side by side. Big Boy 4012, a permanent exhibit at Steamtown, has been cosmetically restored but cannot operate under its own power. Ranger Stevens noted that the National Park Service anticipated the once-in-a-lifetime draw of Big Boy 4014, and the park’s usual annual attendance of 60,000 was eclipsed by surpassing 90,000 visitors during the two-week layover. Guests described the atmosphere as “pure excitement.”

Coordinating Big Boy’s stay required extensive behind-the-scenes work and close cooperation among gateway community partners, including the City of Scranton, the Scranton Chamber of Commerce, the Delaware Lackawanna Railroad, the Pennsylvania Northeast Regional Railroad Authority, County of Lackawanna Transit, Steamtown, Union Pacific, and others.

Ranger Stevens reminded visitors that Steamtown offers year-round attractions



Big Boy 4014 heading north near White Haven.

beyond static displays, including train rides, guided tours, and educational programs. There’s plenty to explore, and we encourage you to visit in person. For our exclusive video interview from Steamtown, see our website or Facebook page.

The Story of Big Boy Locomotives

In 1940 Union Pacific needed a locomotive bigger than the Challenger to haul much heavier trains over the Wasatch Mountains. Engineers calculated that more traction and weight on the driving wheels were required, so they built a much longer engine with two sets of eight driving wheels and four-wheel pilot and trailing trucks which became the famous 4-8-8-4 Big Boy, the largest steam locomotive in the world.

While 20 Big Boys were being built at ALCO in Schenectady, crews upgraded the Ogden–Green River line in 1941: curves were eased, heavier rails were laid, and

extra ballast was added to support the 1.2-million-pound machines. Five more were ordered in 1944. After decades of service most were retired and eight went to museums; nobody expected one to run again.

Rumors of a restoration grew ahead of the Golden Spike 150th anniversary. Against the odds, Big Boy No. 4014 was restored and returned from Pomona, CA, to help celebrate in 2019. After pandemic delays, 4014 toured the West and plans were formed to bring it east for America’s 250th. That set up a rare reunion with No. 4012, which has been at Steamtown since 1984. Because of their enormous size and weight, Big Boys can’t easily be moved onto new tracks for photo ops, so 4012 remains the only Big Boy on display that’s rail-accessible.

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The Anthracite Post

Highlighting Neighborhood News & Events

Letter from the Editors

Happy Summer everyone!!! I'm here working at our office on Centre Street with the door open, the sun is bright and its almost 90°. What a beautiful afternoon! It's may hit a balmy 100° this week. I'm not going to complain because our winters are so long, we'll be wishing for days like these when its cold and the electric bills are thru the roof.

I am happy to say I finally booked a "Girls Only" camping trip. The bad part is that it isn't until the first weekend in October. It will be awesome with the October weather, but I can't wait!!!!!! I am trying to find something in August and I want to book a cabin for my birthday again this year at the end of November. Camping is great no matter when you go and cold weather gives me a chance to make some soup on the fire in my Dutch oven.

I hope you all are enjoying your summer. Be sure to get outside and enjoy the beautiful weather and all the local summer events.

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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Hazle Township Rec Board to unveil Liberty Bell

The Hazle Township Rec Committee is continuing the America 250 celebration with a special event happening on August 15th from Noon until 4 pm at Community Park on Pecora Boulevard.

The Hazle Township Liberty Bell will be unveiled at 1 p.m. as part of the America250PA Bells Across PA project. 3 local students Victoria Lashock, Josephine Quinn, and Jayce Chicaless contributed the artwork which was painted onto the bell by local art teacher Charles DeAngelo.

The public is invited to attend the unveiling and help continue the America 250 celebration. Local food trucks will be present and Blue Mountain Soul will be performing in the park from 1:30 to 4 PM.

For more information contact
hazle.township.rec@gmail.com.

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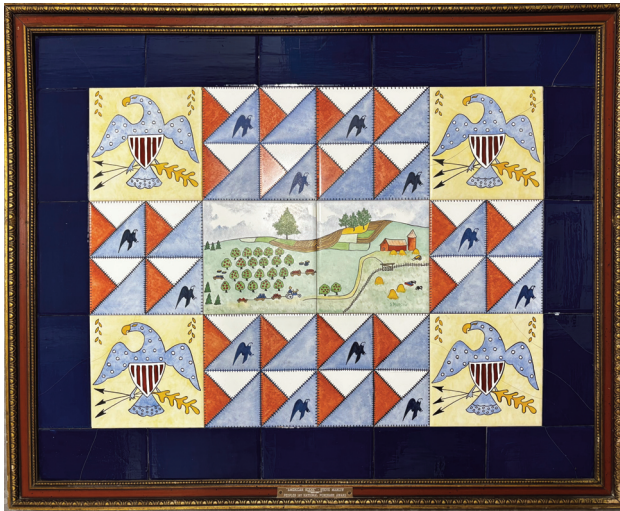
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Drums (Hazleton) Pottsville Pine Grove

Hazleton Art League Celebrates America Through Art



The Hazleton Art League will celebrate America's semiquincentennial with Red, White and YOU!, a group exhibition featuring artists from throughout the Greater Hazleton area. Each work explores a unique aspect of the American experience, reflecting themes of history, community, heritage, innovation, and civic life.

The exhibition opens Friday, June 26, from 5 to 8 p.m. at the Hayden Family Center for the Arts. Visitors will have an opportunity to win a floral arrangement created by Hazleton Area Garden Club member Molly Zorn, with proceeds benefiting the Hazleton Art League. An artists' talk will take place on Sunday, June 28, from 1 to 3 p.m.

Also on display will be Legacies for Success: Luzerne County Women of Impact, a collection of period-style clothing presented by Dress for Success Luzerne County honoring influential women from the region's history.

The Art League's Summer Art Camp for children ages 6 to 14 is currently underway, and sponsorship opportunities remain available for the 4th Annual Color the Course Golf Tournament on September 25.

The Art League will be closed from June 29 through July 4 in observance of the Independence Day Celebration. For more information, call 570-455-3333, visit hazletonartleague.org, or stop by the Hayden Family Center for the Arts, 31 W. Broad St., Hazleton.



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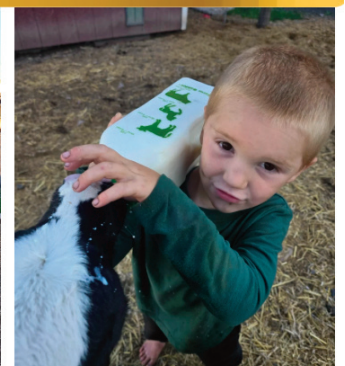
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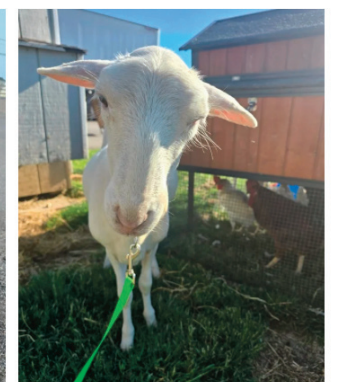
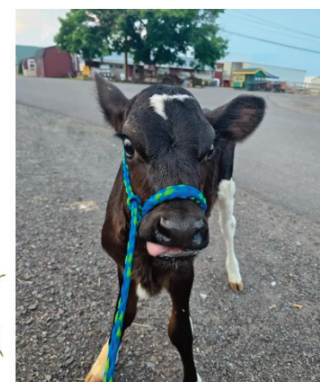
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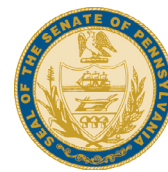
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Meeting with Luzerne County Leaders in Hazleton

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



Rep. Dane Watro and I recently met with Hazleton Mayor Jeff Cusat, Hazleton Area Superintendent Dr. Brian Uplinger, Luzerne County Manager Romilda Crocamo, and other local leaders from across Luzerne County in Hazleton. We reviewed the ongoing efforts to breathe new life into downtown Hazleton and White Haven, new jobs coming to the area, the continued growth of the Hazleton Area School District, and the success of Luzerne County Community College's Teach in NEPA program, a partnership with the Hazleton Area

School District designed to combat the teacher shortage by offering an affordable, local pathway to a four-year education degree and guaranteed employment.

I appreciated the very informative discussion!

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Update on Data Center Legislation

By State Rep. Jamie Walsh (R-Luzerne)

As most of you know, the rapid growth of data centers around the country and in Pennsylvania is presenting serious challenges for the Commonwealth and for our communities. While these projects can create jobs and attract investment, we have a responsibility to ensure they are developed in a way that protects taxpayers, preserves farmland and respects local residents.

Gov. Josh Shapiro previously highlighted his desire to attract more data center development to Pennsylvania. However, many areas of the Commonwealth have not yet established the policies needed to manage this growth responsibly.

That is why I supported House Bill 2650, which would establish standards related to energy costs, environmental safeguards, transparency and community involvement. The House also unanimously passed my amendment to Rep. Paul Friel's data center moratorium bill, House Bill 2496. The amendment strengthens protections for local communities by making it clear that municipalities can use the curative amendment process before, during or after the moratorium. This ensures local governments have a full year of uninterrupted protection as they address the challenges created by the recent surge in data center development applications.

In addition, I supported House Bill 2198, which would eliminate a tax exemption originally enacted to encourage development in 2021, long before anyone understood the challenges data centers would bring. Data center corporations should compete on the same footing as other businesses in Pennsylvania.

House Bills 2650, 2496 and 2198 are in the Senate awaiting action.

Jack James will be Performing at the Freeland Park Pavilion Aug. 28

Jack James will be performing at the Freeland Public Park Pavilion on Friday, August 28th with special guest, Frank Balon, Trumpeter.

A few fan favorites include: Wake Up Little Susie, Everly Brothers; I Gotta Know, Elvis; Only the Lonely, Roy Orbison; Knock Three Times, Tony Orlando; I Want to Hold Your Hand, The Beatles, and That'll Be the Day, Buddy Holly.

The music show begins at 6 p.m. Pre-show 50s - 60s pop instrumentals starts at 5 p.m.

The concession stand will be open for refreshments.

The show is held inside the pavilion which is unaffected by the weather.



Trooper Anthony Petroski III

Public Information Officer

Community Service Officer

Pennsylvania State Police

Troop N - Hazleton



Summer is in full swing and the Pennsylvania State Police - Troop N would like to remind the public to drive safe, allow extra time to travel, and obey all laws of the Commonwealth.

With more vehicles traveling on the road, Trooper's will be vigilantly patrolling for all traffic violations to ensure safe travel for everyone. When approaching an emergency vehicle on the side of the road, remember to always move over to the adjacent lane and slow down. This is a state law and referred to as the "Steer Clear" Law.

When driving, maintain eyes on the road and avoid distractions – including cell phones, since in Pennsylvania it is illegal to be holding your cell phone while operating a motor vehicle.

Texting while driving is illegal and a distraction. Please pull over and put your vehicle in park if you need to utilize the phone. Remember – It Can Wait!

From all of Troop N, have a great and Safe Summer!

Master Portrait Artist Gavin Glakas to Lead Two-Day Workshop at Hazleton Art League



The Hazleton Art League will host a special two-day workshop with nationally recognized portrait artist Gavin Glakas on Saturday, Aug. 8, and Sunday, Aug. 9, at the Hayden Family Center for the Arts.

Designed for artists ages 18 and older, the workshop will feature a live model and is open to participants working in any medium. The event is the second in a series of special workshops organized by

Hazleton Art League board member and instructor Jane Butkovsky.

Glakas is an acclaimed portrait painter whose work is included in the permanent collections of the U.S. Congress, the Virginia State Capitol, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), universities, museums, and numerous public and private collections. He teaches at Georgetown University School of Medicine and conducts workshops throughout the United States and internationally.

The registration fee is \$350. Space is limited.

To register or obtain more information, call the Hazleton Art League at 570-455-3333 or visit hazletonartleague.org.

The Hayden Family Center for the Arts is located at 31 W. Broad St., Hazleton.

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Happy 250th Birthday America!

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

Two hundred and fifty years ago, our founders declared their independence with a single sheet of parchment and a big dream.

This year on the Fourth of July, as we celebrate America's 250th birthday, I urge you to take a moment to reflect on the enduring promise of liberty, self-government and opportunity that began with our founders' bold declaration in 1776, and which has been carried forward by generations of Americans ever since.

As an Army veteran, I know our freedom has never been guaranteed. It has been protected by the courage and sacrifice of those who wore the uniform, strengthened by the families who supported them, and renewed by citizens who continue to serve their communities in countless ways. On this Independence Day, we honor all who helped build, defend and preserve this great nation.

Pennsylvania played a central role in America's founding, and 250 years later, we still have an important role to play in shaping the future. Here in Luzerne and Schuylkill counties, we see the values that make America strong: faith, family, hard work, service, resilience and neighbors helping neighbors. Those values are worth celebrating, and they are also worth passing on to the next generation.

As we enjoy the parades, fireworks, picnics and time with loved ones, let us also take a moment to reflect on the blessings of living in the greatest nation on Earth. May this semiquincentennial year inspire all of us to give back, stand together and keep working toward a stronger future for our children and grandchildren.

From my family to yours, I wish you a safe, meaningful and happy Fourth of July.

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Fresh From the Garden: How Summer Fruits and Vegetables Help Protect Your Vision

By: Donna Thornton

As summer settles into Northeastern Pennsylvania, gardens are flourishing, roadside produce stands are opening, and local farmers markets are filled with colorful fruits and vegetables. It's one of the best times of the year to enjoy fresh, locally grown foods—and your eyes may benefit just as much as your taste buds!

Many people know that fruits and vegetables are important for overall health, but fewer realize the significant role they play in maintaining healthy vision and potentially slowing the progression of certain eye diseases.

The eyes, like the rest of the body, depend on proper nutrition to function at their best. Research has shown that diets rich in fruits and vegetables provide important vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants that help protect the delicate structures of the eye from damage caused by aging and environmental factors.

One of the most common age-related eye conditions is macular degeneration, a disease that affects central vision and can make activities such as reading, driving, and recognizing faces more difficult. While there is currently no cure for age-related macular degeneration, studies have shown that certain nutrients may help slow its progression in some patients.

Dark leafy greens such as spinach, kale, collard greens, and Swiss chard contain lutein and zeaxanthin—powerful antioxidants that accumulate in the retina and help filter harmful blue light. These nutrients act almost like a natural pair of sunglasses for the eyes, helping protect retinal tissue from damage over time.

Brightly colored fruits and vegetables also offer important benefits. Orange vegetables such as carrots, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, and butternut squash are

rich in beta-carotene, which the body converts into vitamin A. Vitamin A is essential for maintaining healthy vision, particularly in low-light conditions.

Red fruits and vegetables such as tomatoes, red peppers, and watermelon contain lycopene, another antioxidant that may help protect eye tissues. Berries, including blueberries, strawberries, blackberries, and raspberries, provide vitamin C and other nutrients that support healthy blood vessels throughout the body, including those that nourish the eyes. Even common summer favorites like corn, peas, broccoli, and green beans are loaded with nutrients that support long-term eye health.

Beyond macular degeneration, a diet rich in fruits and vegetables may also help reduce the risk of cataracts and support overall retinal health. For individuals living with diabetes, maintaining a healthy diet can also play an important role in managing blood sugar levels and reducing the risk of diabetic eye disease.

The good news is that improving your eye health doesn't require expensive supplements or complicated meal plans. Simply incorporating more colorful fruits and vegetables into your daily meals can make a meaningful difference over time.

Summer offers a perfect opportunity to start. Whether you're picking vegetables from your backyard garden, visiting a local farm stand, or browsing a weekend farmers market, fresh produce is abundant throughout our region right now.

When filling your plate, think about color. The more variety of colors you include, the wider range of nutrients you're providing for your eyes and overall health. Of course, good nutrition is only one part of protecting your vision. Regular comprehensive eye examinations remain essential for detecting eye diseases early, often before symptoms develop. Many eye conditions can be managed more effectively when caught in their earliest stages.

This summer, as you enjoy the season's harvest, remember that those fresh fruits and vegetables are doing more than adding flavor to your meals—they may also help to preserve your sight for years to come.

For more information about protecting your vision or to schedule an evaluation, contact your eye care professional.

Donna Thornton is a physician liaison with a local ophthalmology group (Eye Care Specialists & Northeastern Eye Institute) serving Northeastern Pennsylvania.

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A Thousand Times a Day (Part 11)

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.

Pfc George Kushner Jr: MMI grad. Listed as WIA Nov. 9th 44, near Metz. KIA in Germany. Rejoined his unit Dec 14th and went into combat Dec 19th when his unit was called by Patten to help with break thru to Bastogne. His unit approached from the south west as the 80th and 4th Armored Divisions came from the south. He wrote home that it was "20 days and 20 nights from hell". George was hospitalized 3 times. His last letter home in March was from a hospital. Reportedly he died in March.

T-5 John F. McCloskey: age 25, and a member of St Anns Band. John was listed KIA on Luzon, Philippines on Jan 25th, ?? He worked Ordnance with a tank company in the 25th "Tropic Lightning" Inf Div. He had served in Guadalcanal, Vella La Vella Island, and in the Russel Islands. He was killed during the retaking of Manila serving on the mountainous left flank of the attack. John served with John Kitlan of Alvin St and **Anthony Figueido** of Jeddo. His brother **Sn 2nd Cl Ed McCluskey** is serving in the USNR in the Pacific. Other relatives are MRS Joseph Malloy of Drifton and **1st Lt. Thomas** serving in Germany.

T Sgt Joseph M Popson: of Highland, served in both radio and gunner positions on a B-17 over Germany when he was reported KIA on March 31st, 1945. AAF planes mission that day was to bomb railway yards and industry in Brunswick and Brandenburg, Germany. His unit was the 100th Bombardment group the "Bloody Hundreth" as featured in the Masters of the Air series.

Pfc George Evancho: attended St. Michaels church in Freeland. He was a battalion electrician with Co. A of the combat engineers 186th Eng Batt of the 25th Inf Div "Tropic Lightning and took part in the invasion on January 7th. He died August 7th,

1945 on Luzon from a heart attack. George died at 5am near Rosales, Province of Pangasinan, Luzon, south of the Lingayen Gulf. He is buried in a Santa Barbara cemetery at race #5339.

Radioman 1st Cl Earle Kessel: AGE 23, of Ingham St, MMI graduate. Earle served aboard the U.S.S. Maury Destroyer for 32 months of battle duty in the Gilberts, the Marshal Islands, and Marianas. He was in 17 engagements with the enemy. His ship sank 3 light cruisers, 10 destroyers, and a patrol vessel. They scored 10 enemy aircraft and various shore battery targets. They assisted rescuing survivors of the U.S.S. Helena which was sunk in a night battle in the Solomons. He enlisted in November 1940 and was stationed at Pearl Harbor in March 1941. The Maury was underway the day of the attack on Pearl. His brothers **James Kessel** is in the Army in North Africa, **Gordon Jr Kessel** is in the Navy at Martha's Vineyard, and **Raymond Kessel** is in the Navy in Bermuda.

Sgt Joseph Banyas: 424 Kalmia St. Survived 2 mortar shells that landed less than 10 feet away from him and two buddies. But they failed to explode. He had landed on D Day + 1 with the 29th Division when the shells landed and he escaped death. He was however wounded on June 18th during hedgerow fighting in France. Joseph was wounded near St LO. Near Lison, France they found 2 boxcars of meat, cheese, eggs, champagne and beer. "We had eggs for a week". There is a good read about this incident if anyone wants more info.

T/Sgt John W. Sabo: 936 Pine St. Served as a Radio Operator Gunner with the 15th AAF in the Mediterrean. On April 2nd, 1944 he saw two aircraft collide in mid air during a mission. The pilot and navigator 2nd Lt Joseph J Repko of 607 Cedar St

were killed. Only 3 men parachuted from the 2 aircraft. They were rescued. Their B 24 mission was over Yugoslavia. There is a good read on this incident if anyone wants more info. John completed 51 missions in 108 days ending July 19th, 194? Aboard the "Upstairs Maid". In Rome he saw the Pope.

2nd Lt Joseph Repko: age 23, of 607 Cedar St, graduate Foster Twp 1939. Was KIA in action on Palm Sunday April 2nd 1943, while on a bombing mission over Yugoslavia hitting Balkan railway centers. Joseph was the navigator on a B 24 in the 15th AF which collided with another airplane during the mission. He was first reported MIA May 13th, 1943. Josephenlisted April 18, 1942, was commissioned in September 1942 and went overseas in January 1943 arriving in Africa in February, and then to Italy in March. His brother Sgt John F Repko is stationed in England and is an MMI graduate.

T Sgt Anthony F. Cherone: age 27, served with the 8th AF and received the Distinguished Flying Cross with three Oak leaf Clusters. He was a top turret gunner on a B17. In his words "Berlin was the worst, going thru walls of flak to bomb an areo-engine works. We hit Hanover, Politz, Hamburg, Magdebourg, but they were nothing compared to Berlin". Cherone's group was a unit of the 3rd Bombardment Division. In August 1943 they bombed the Messerschmitt Plants at Regensburg. They flew several other missions over factory targets, and then flew 2 missions in support of ground troops on D Day. Anthony 99flew half his missions on B 17s and half on B 24s. He liked the B 17 better. In England, he met **Joe Kanyak** of Highland, **Billy Zedalis** and **Rupert "Dusty" Sweet** of Freeland. His brother **Cpl Raymond Cherone** is in an anti-aircraft unit in California.

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5th Annual Pardeesville Cruise Night Scheduled August 15th



Front row kneeling (L to R): Susan Wilkinson, Matt Manganelli (Vice President), Ron Semon (President), Kenny Wilkinson and Eden Triano (Secretary).
Rear standing (L to R): Kevin Zilker, Janine Malloy, Dolores Clatch, Joe Clatch, Gary Wilson, Cindy Digon, Dave Digon, Bob Boretski

Committee Members are busy finalizing plans for this year's annual event, which once again will use all proceeds for Cancer Patience Assistance Programs / Research and also Suicide Awareness / Prevention Programs in the Greater Hazleton Area. Features of the event will include live music by Them Dirty Birds, Richie Green Entertainment, a 16-mile rolling cruise in memory of former Pardeesville businessman and resident Sal Merola who supported the group since its inception back in 2022, custom homemade steel art trophies for the second year in a row, made by committee member Gary Wilson of Freeland. The trophies were so popular last year, that Wilson made even more for this year's event said President Ron Semon. The event will once again feature three \$50 cash drawings during the day for the first 150 registered vehicles which was also a new feature last year.

As in previous years, there will be dash plaques

given to the first 100 registered vehicles, the groups exclusive "Memory Lane" feature, which was designated for vehicles whose owners or builders have since passed away. This designated area honors those individuals who once considered these vehicles as their pride & joy and can now be owned by a family member, friend or even a new owner since their passing. The event will include food vendors, event shirts, tricky tray raffle baskets, bake sale, 50-50 raffle drawing, face painting, tinsel hair and playground for kiddos.

Attendees are asked to bring their loose change for the groups "Steve Clarks Pennies from Heaven" campaign, which collects coins of any denomination and are placed in a bottle, all proceeds are then added to the group's overall total raised from the event. Pre-registration is \$15 per vehicle and available until August 1st. afterwards increasing to \$20 up to the day of the event. Spectator admission

is a \$3 donation per person and kids 12 and under are free. Vehicles participating in the rolling cruise portion of the event must have a current state inspection, registration and insurance. This is a non-alcohol event.

As always, the group would like to thank all of their sponsors, raffle basket donors and all other individuals who have supported this event in any way. To date, the group has raised and given over \$75,000 back to the community in their first four years combined and their goal this year is over \$25,000 to reach a \$100,000 milestone. The group will also host their 3rd annual "Spinoff Cruise" which supports Domestic Violence Prevention / Assistance Programs on Saturday October 3rd. Facebook users can follow the group for updated information throughout the year. You can also text or call Ron with any questions (570) 956-6367



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Hazleton Rotary Installs New Officers and Board Members

By: Pat Korb



Paul Oswald was Installed as the 106th President of Hazleton Rotary.



Hazleton Rotary Officers and Board of Directors 2026-2027 were also installed at the Hazleton Rotary President's Party.

The Presidents' Party, held at the Valley Country Club welcomed Paul Oswald as the 106th President of Hazleton Rotary and thanked Joan Buffington who served as 2025-2026 President, for all of her hard work.

President-Elect Stephen Seach called the meeting to order followed by the Pledge of Allegiance by all attendees and the invocation offered by Pat Ward, Past President who also provided the Welcome and Introductions.

He asked those present to remember Club Members Mary Pat Stroia and Rabbi Lewis "Buz" Bogage who passed away in the 105th Rotary Year.

Joan Buffington remarked on her presidency and thanked the membership and the Board of Directors and Officers for collaborating with her to keep Hazleton Rotary moving along in achieving its goals in 2025-26. Rossanna Gabriel, Neal DeAngelo, III, Joe Cammisa and Nina Bonus were recognized for their service as Board Members.

In addition to Paul, the following Rotarians were sworn into office: President Elect-Stephen Seach, Vice-President-Anne Frey, Secretary-Lani Drobnock, Treasurer-Pat Owens, Sergeant-at-Arms-Pat Ward, and Immediate Past President-Joan Buffington.

Members of the Board are Danielle Matarella, Jessica Spare, Michele Genetti, Amy Machita, Anna Gharghoury, Jim Kelshaw, Alan Whitaker, Jace Whitaker and Mark Ondishin.

Paul Harris fellowships were presented to Terry Jones, receiving his 6th; Paul Oswald, Amy Roslevege-her 3rd and to Mary Parrell in Memory of her daughter Mary Pat Stroia.

Sincerest appreciation to the Dinner & Program Sponsor, the Luzerne Foundation and to Cocktails & Hors d'oeuvres Sponsors: Pecora Realtor, P.C.; Meter Energy Technologies; Tim & Michelle Genetti; CAM Collaborative Autism Movement; and M&T Bank.



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HAZLETON AREA
SPORTS HALL OF FAME

The Hazleton Area Sports Hall of Fame announces the Hall of Fame Class of 2026

Dennis Buchman - 3-year All-State Football player for Hazleton Area High School in the 2000s. Also went on to become Head Coach of the Hazleton Area Cougars Football Team becoming only the second coach in school history to finish with a winning overall record

Carla Edwards - 3-sports star at Hazleton Area High School in the late 1990s to early 2000s (Cross Country, Swimming, and Track and Field). She earned 8 varsity letters in high school and set many school running records. She later went on to excel at Widner University in her athletic career.

George Evancho - Basketball star for Hazleton Area High School in the early 2000s. He is still the school's all-time leading rebounder. He was the 2003 Wyoming Valley Conference Most Valuable Player. Went on to continue his basketball career at King's College.

Shawn Gallagher - One of MMI Prep's most prolific scorers ever, scoring over 1,000 points in his career in the 1980s. He also had a stellar career at the University of Scranton still ranking as one of their top scorers ever

Jessica Herring - Dominant softball player from Bishop Hafey High School in the 2000s. She was selected to the PIAA All-State Team and later continued to play at Penn State-Hazleton

Chris Jais - Football great from Bishop Hafey High School during the 1990s. He set school rushing records at Bishop Hafey and led the Vikings to some of their most successful seasons. He earned All-Conference honors several times in his career.

Hazleton Area Sports Hall of Fame Class of 2026



HAZLETON AREA
SPORTS HALL OF FAME

Allison (Sampson) McElroy - Multi-sport star for Hazleton Area High School during the 2000s. She excelled in both swimming and field hockey. She won district championships and set school records in swimming. Later went on to excel in swimming at the University of Scranton.

Mark Otterbine - Current Hazleton Area High School Girls' Track and Field Head Coach. He is the longest active head coach in the Wyoming Valley Conference. His teams have won multiple district and conference championships. He has coached multiple state champions and state medalists.

John "Pilsey" Petrilyak, Jr. - Standout baseball star for West Hazleton High School in the 1980s-1990s. Threw multiple no hitters in high school as well as being excellent at the plate. Continued his baseball career at Luzerne County Community College and Lock Haven University. He is the current Head Baseball Coach for Marian Catholic High School.

Adam Sieminski - Posthumous inductee. Former Head Football Coach at Hazleton High School and Freeland High School. He had an illustrious athletic career in his own right at Swoyersville High School and later Michigan State University. He also coached at Coal Township High School, Berwick High School, and Jim Thorpe High School. Long time educator in the Hazleton Area School District and PIAA Track and Field official.

Steve Stallone - Will be the first recipient of the Ron Marchetti Civic Award. Award-winning writer and assistant editor for the Standard-Speaker for nearly 30 years.

Nate Staruch - One of Hazleton Area High School's most exciting football players of the 2000s. Was the 2005 Wyoming Valley Conference Most Valuable Player and 2006 winner of the prestigious Scotty Roman Award. Later continued his football career at Cornell University.

Mackenzie Yori - One of the best female athletes ever in the region. Basketball and softball star from the 2010s for Hazleton Area High School. She was the 1st Team All Wyoming Valley Conference all four years in both Basketball and Softball. In Basketball, she won Wyoming Valley Conference Most Valuable Player in 2015 and 2016. She scored over 1,000 points for HAHS. She won the Scotty Roman Award in 2016. She continued her athletic career at King's College playing both Basketball and Softball earning All-conference honors in both sports at the collegiate level.

BANQUET INFORMATION

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Check out the Hazleton Area Sports Hall of Fame's Facebook Page!
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A Veterans Journal #112

By Joseph Barna • Freeland
USMC, Korea 1952-1953

Author's Note: The following story was submitted to www.legiontown.org in April 2013, where it first appeared in the National "American Legion Magazine".



I am a Marine Corps Combat Veteran of the Korean War. I served in Korea from June 1952 thru July 1953. I served with Weapons Company, Anti-Tank Assault Platoon, 1st Bn, 1st Regt. For over 5 months I carried a 70 lb. flame thrower. This is one of the most devastating weapons of war ever conceived. I stood 5 foot 8 inches tall and weighed 158 lbs. I could not have accomplished this if I was not in the perfect physical shape that the Marine Corps molded me into. After the flame-thrower, I moved to a 3.5 rocket launcher, called a bazooka for several months. Finally, I ended my tour in Korea operating a 30 caliber and 50 caliber machine guns. My 1st Marine Division sustained almost 5,800 Killed-In-Action and thousands more wounded in 3 years.

I landed in Korea in 1952 along with 6000 other Marines. I never realized what my next year would be like. I was one scared kid. It was like jumping into a hole where you couldn't see the bottom. My only

thought was "Would I ever see my family again?" I could not possibly expect what I would do and see in the year to come.

Korea was a country of mountains and rice paddies. The mountains were thousands of feet high. This would be my home until I returned to the States or was carried home in a body bag. I knew then, I would never let my family be ashamed of me. For over one year, I would be facing death, see so many of my buddies die or lose parts of their bodies and minds. And yes, I would kill.

When the Chinese entered the Korean War, we were out-numbered 8 to 1. My Marine training helped me to understand what you needed to do to survive. You must get used to an attack just about every day or night. Fighting against those odds, you never knew if you would ever see tomorrow. You found out what it meant to pray, and how to cry from the inside.

I would like to describe a typical night in Korea, a night like hundreds: It was dark and cold. With my brother Marines, we settled down in a fox hole or bunker, machine gun in our arms. Trying to keep warm, you would be jolted by the sound of hundreds of bugles. They were not playing any song you could know, but it was a sound I will never forget.



After minutes that would seem like hours, the bugles would stop. Then the sky was lit up by flares. As these flares would fall to earth, you would see and hear hundreds of screaming North Koreans and Chinese troops coming at us. We would call for artillery and mortars. We would hear what sounded like freight trains going over our heads. When this finally let up, you found yourself facing hundreds of enemy soldiers whose only thought was to kill Americans. I remember smelling the garlic on their breaths as they were upon us. Minutes of battle turned to hours, and when it was over, you could see the dead and hear the cries of the wounded. Such combat was repeated almost every day and night. After one of these battles, a sergeant and I came upon one of our wounded. The face of this dying 21 year old Marine is forever cemented in my mind. As breath and blood were leaving his body, he spoke his final words. I will never forget them: "Why is God taking me when I'm so young and have so much to live for? What did I do wrong?" I held his hand as he died and whispered "Nothing." I thought to myself "Why him and not me." The enemy, it seemed, had so many more than us to sacrifice. There was always tomorrow to come at us again. Of the 6000 Marines that I landed with, only 750 returned home. But we were never beaten. And yet, some historians never called this a war.

To be able to cry is one of the most beautiful things in life I believe. When I was born, I must have been issued a certain amount of tears to use up in my lifetime. In Korea, I thought I had used all of them up. I cried every time I saw a brother die or be wounded. The tears might have been hard to see, but they

were there. I also cried whenever I saw the South Korean civilians, children, mothers, fathers, and grandparents. During a battle these angels, would go among the dead and wounded and carry them down the mountain, away from the ongoing battle. I would see these same people going thru garbage piles looking for something to eat. How lucky are we to have never been forced to live this way. I came home and for a long time found that I could not cry anymore. Did I use up all my tears in the war? Thru the years, I went to my father's, brother's, mother's and daughter's funerals and not one tear would roll off my cheek. This would tear me apart. I now belong to my town's VFW and American Legion Honor Guard. We attend all veteran's funerals when asked to do so. Finally, after many long months of attending military services, I began to believe that I could cry once more. Being part of the VFW and American Legion Honor Guards, we help lay to rest all our comrades. I began to think back and finally, the tears began to flow once more.

My Local American Legion Post 473 and Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 5010, both of Freeland, Pa. provide many services to the local community. In addition to sponsoring local scholarships and youth sports, we also provide charitable donations and support to local requests for help. I also belong to the Order of the Purple Heart and Disabled American Veterans.

I am one of 5 brothers, all of whom served in the military. My Brothers John and Thomas served in the Army. My brother Edward served in the Navy and my brother George served in the Air Force.



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If you haven't visited Ferrwood recently, you'll notice—and appreciate—the many positive improvements, with more on the way.

About Ferrwood: Ferrwood, located in Drums, PA, has been home to the Ferrwood Music Camp since the 1960s. Originally built as a fresh-air camp for children predisposed to tuberculosis, the property was abandoned after the disease was eradicated. It was later rediscovered by Father Joe Ferrara, who transformed it into a music camp for children.

Under the stewardship of the CAN DO Community Foundation, Ferrwood has since been listed on the National Register of Historic Places, undergone extensive preservation and restoration, and expanded its programs to promote health, wellness, education, and inclusiveness, while continuing its music and art programs.

One of the most exciting additions—the Inclusive Wellness Trail—is now underway. This multi-generational trail will welcome community members of all abilities, offering opportunities to enjoy nature, sensory experiences, and outdoor activities together.

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Is it traditional? Absolutely not! But we say live dangerously and try it out... You may enjoy it!

-Jeff & Desiree Bonomo

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