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September 19, 2024

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Vol. 52, No. 09



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Friday the 13th, A Bloody Good Time in Blairstown, NJ



No one celebrates Friday the 13th quite like Blairstown, NJ, which was the setting for the original film. Horror lovers flock to the area to celebrate in spooky fashion, by dressing up, and talking with some of the original film actors! Don't miss out on the next Friday the 13th event. Photo by Bob Halberstadt/The Free Weekly Press

Pen Argyl Field Hockey Wins Over Moravian Academy with a 3-0 Shut Out



Pen Argyl took on Moravian Academy in field hockey on September 13th. Pen Argyl won with a 3 to 0, shut out. Photo by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press

North Warren Wins Over Hopatcong in Youth Appreciation Game



North Warren went head to head against Hopatcong High School in their Youth Appreciation Night Football game on September 13th. North Warren won, 34 to 26. Photo by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press

Day of Service Honors Lifelong Friends Volunteer Opportunities in Sussex County, NJ, and Port Jervis, NY

The lives of longtime friends Richard "Dick" Kowal and Michael "Mickey" Hunt will be honored with a Day of Service at varied locations in Sussex County, New Jersey, and Port Jervis, New York, on Friday, September 27th, 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. The pair died tragically in a boating accident in 2021. Both men lived exemplary lives of service to their community, mentoring students and offering advice to young and old. Hunt was a self-employed mason contractor who became a general contractor and partnered with Kowal on numerous projects for decades. Kowal served as construction super-



visor in the building of non-profit organization Project Self-Sufficiency's four-building Newton campus, eventually taking on the role of Facilities Manager. He oversaw the agency's building and grounds

while mentoring hundreds of teens and young adults through the New Jersey Youth Corps program for high school dropouts.

"We are honored to continue the tradition of an *FRIENDS cont'd on pg 2*



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FRIENDS

Continued from page 1

annual Day of Service in honor of Dick Kowal and Mickey Hunt whose legendary work ethic helped so many people," stated Project Self-Sufficiency Executive Director Deborah Berry-Toon. "Volunteering, mentoring, and helping those in need was second nature to both men. While we grieve their loss, we celebrate their impact on our community, and we are privileged to exemplify their selflessness with this annual event."

For those who would like to commemorate the pair by giving back to the community, service opportunities will be available in a variety of locations in northern New Jersey and the Port Jervis, New York areas. Projects are available at the Blue Mountain Day Camp, Project Self-Sufficiency, the Ridge & Valley Conservancy, and the Salvation Army Thrift Shop in Port Jer-

vis. The \$25 registration fee will fund a scholarship for New Jersey Youth Corps graduates who exemplify the life of service displayed by Kowal and Hunt. Interested volunteers are invited to register online at www.projectsselfsufficiency.org.

Project Self-Sufficiency has assisted low-income individuals and families in northwestern New Jersey since 1986. Services offered at Project Self-Sufficiency include high school equivalency education, computer courses, employment skills training, job placement services, support groups, parenting classes, child-care and preschool, legal assistance and education, counseling and advocacy, referrals, and help with emergency basic needs, like food and clothing. For more information about the programs and services offered by Project Self-Sufficiency, visit www.projectsselfsufficiency.org or call 973-940-3500.

Donations As Sweet As Lemonade, NJ Elementary Schooler Raises Money for Homeless in Lehigh Valley



Brixton Pinelli, a third grader at Holland Township Elementary School in Milford, N.J., dedicated the proceeds of his summertime lemonade stand to the Allentown Rescue Mission. The eight-year-old raised nearly \$800 to help men experiencing homelessness in the Greater Lehigh Valley. The Pinelli family sets

summer goals every year. This year, Brixton decided to adopt an organization that he believed in and make a difference for it. The family researched different charities online and he selected the Allentown Rescue Mission. Brixton devoted a weekend in July and one in August to running his lemonade stand. He cre-

ated signs, advertised on Facebook, and made a lot of lemonade. With the community's support, the endeavor exceeded his expectations. Brixton shared that in addition to feeling good about raising the money, "I liked sitting outside, near the fire station, and meeting all the people." He also added a special touch by handing

out lollipops to anyone who bought lemonade or made a flat donation. The Allentown Rescue Mission thanks Brixton and the Pinelli family for having a heart to help others and taking action on behalf of the Mission so it can continue to Rescue, Rehabilitate, and Restore men experiencing homelessness.

It's Almost Deer Season, In Pennsylvania



It's probably safe to say that most people, given the chance to trade their cellphone for a landline, swap out their vehicle for a horse and buggy, or replace their washing machine with a bucket, a bar of rough homemade soap and a 100-yard walk to the nearest river, would opt to keep their modern conveniences. Tools offering efficiency, ease and comfort are hard to forgo. There are exceptions, though. Bowhunters — who represent one of every two deer hunters in Pennsylvania overall — each year willingly go afield with stick and string, albeit often mod-

ernized, finding attraction in the challenge and intimacy of close-range encounters. More than 350,000 bowhunters will pursue white-tails across Pennsylvania this fall, starting soon. Archery season begins in Wildlife Management Units (WMUs) 2B, 5C and 5D — those are the ones surrounding Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, respectively — on Sept. 21 and runs through Nov. 29, including two Sundays, Nov. 17 and 24, then comes back in from Dec. 26-Jan. 25. The statewide archery season kicks off on Oct. 5 and includes one Sunday, Nov. 17, before ending on Nov. 22. It reopens Dec. 26-Jan. 20. "No other state has as many bowhunters as Pennsylvania," said Game Commission Executive Director Steve Smith. "And it's not hard to see why so many love the season. It's a special time, with the chance to hunt in mild weather against a backdrop of amazing fall color early on and the promise of the whitetail rut later. "Hunters appreciate

what's available and take advantage of it." They take deer, too. Last year, in the 2023-24 seasons, archers harvested an estimated 154,850 white-tails (83,370 bucks and 71,480 antlerless deer). That was about 36% of the overall harvest. That matched the most recent five-year average and is in line with what's occurring on a larger scale. According to the National Deer Association's 2024 "Deer Report," in the three seasons from 2020 to 2022, archers took, on average, about 34% of all deer harvested across what's considered the Northeast region, a 13-state area stretching from Maine to Virginia. Hunters who want the opportunity to fill a tag during archery season should hunt where deer want to be, said David Stainbrook, the Game Commission's Deer and Elk Section Supervisor. That's typically around food and cover. He recommends hunters scout for fresh deer sign around places rich in green browse and, later, hard and soft mast, which in-

cludes everything from apples and agricultural crops to acorns. If those places are close to thick escape and bedding cover, all the better, he said. Often, though, the real key is just being out there. Deer have large home ranges, Stainbrook said, taking in hundreds of acres. "So if I could give hunters one piece of advice, it would be to just hunt as much as possible," Stainbrook said. "Putting more time in the woods is going to increase your odds of harvesting a deer." That's true throughout the season. Every week of the 2023-24 archery season contributed at least 10% to the overall harvest, with some weeks accounting for as much as 25%. Smith, for one, will be out there, enjoying the season for all sorts of reasons, just like so many others. "Pennsylvania's archery deer season is big on opportunity, and I wouldn't miss it," Smith said. For More Tips on having a safe and effective hunting season visit: www.media.pa.gov/Pages/game-commission-details.aspx?newsid=675

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BANGOR (0) VS PALMERTON (1) YOUTH NIGHT BOYS SOCCER



Photos by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press



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BANGOR (5) VS SALISBURY (0) GIRLS TENNIS SENIOR NIGHT



Athena Frangos with her parents, Kathryn & Peter Frangos



Athena Frangos and Leyna Krazter with their coach, Steve Speshok



Leyna Krazter with her parents, Noel & Chris Krazter



Photos by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press

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PEN ARGYL (3) VS MORAVIAN ACADEMY (0) FIELD HOCKEY



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Assembly Republicans Pledge Support to Ban Smoking in Atlantic City Casinos

New Jersey Assembly Republican leadership announced Tuesday that if the Democratic majority cannot gather enough votes to ban smoking in Atlantic City casinos, Republicans will provide the needed support.

Last year, Assembly and Senate committees held passionate hearings on the issue, but the bill never made it to a floor vote. The legislation currently has 42 sponsors in the Assembly, including 13 Republicans.

Republican Leader John DiMaio, joined by Deputy Leader Antwan McClellan, Conference Leader Christopher DePhillips, Whip Brian Bergen, Budget Officer Nancy Munoz and Parliamentarian Brian Rumpf, stressed that it's time act.

"If Democrats are serious about protecting workers, Republicans are ready to help pass the bill," said DiMaio (R- Hunterdon, Somerset & Warren). "We need legislative action, not

excuses."

New Jersey's 2006 smoking ban in most workplaces excluded casinos. Smoking is allowed on 25% of casino floors and designated areas.

Casino workers, led by groups like Casino Employees Against Smoking Effects and the United Auto Workers, which represents workers at three Atlantic City casinos, have pushed for years to close this loophole. After legislative efforts stalled, they filed an unsuccessful lawsuit to push for change. Now it is up to the Legislature.

"This isn't about politics, it's about doing what's right for workers and their families," DiMaio added. "With significant bipartisan support, there's no reason not to get this done."

Republicans are calling for a vote as soon as possible and are prepared to work with Democrats to finally ban smoking in Atlantic City casinos.

High School Equivalency Training Program for Teens and Young Adults Starts In October



Enrollment for the next session of the New Jersey Youth Corps program at Project Self-Sufficiency is underway. The sixteen-week program launches in October and gives those who have not completed high school the opportunity to boost their literacy skills, prepare for the high school equivalency exam, obtain on-the-job work experience, and transition into a career, college, or

the military. As part of the course, three college credits can be obtained at Sussex County Community College. Interested participants are invited to attend an Open House hosted by Project Self-Sufficiency to learn more about the New Jersey Youth Corps and to complete an application. Open Houses will be held on Tuesdays at noon, September 17th and 24th, and October

1st, 8th, and 15th, and on Thursdays at 4:30 p.m., September 19th, 26th, and October 3rd, 10th, and 17th.

Project Self-Sufficiency is offering a \$100 gift card to those who refer a young adult, ages 16 - 25, to the New Jersey Youth Corps training and education program. To receive the gift card, referred individuals must enroll in the program, complete the two-week orientation, and be inducted into the program.

Participants in the New Jersey Youth Corps must be Sussex or Warren County residents, aged 16 - 25, who have not completed high school. The program includes assessments, testing, employability skills training, life skills workshops, academic instruction, community service projects, field

trips, and counseling services. Program participants will prepare for the high school equivalency examination and have the opportunity to receive a weekly stipend based on attendance for the full week. Free transportation is provided.

The New Jersey Youth Corps, which is funded by the New Jersey Department of Labor & Workforce Development, is also in operation at sites around the state, including Camden, Elizabeth, Jersey City, New Brunswick, Newark, Paterson, Phillipsburg, Pleasantville, Trenton, and Vineland. Those who are interested in learning more about the New Jersey Youth Corps at Project Self-Sufficiency are encouraged to enroll online or by calling 973-940-3500.



The GFWC Women's Club of Pen Argyl met on Tuesday, September 10, 2024 at Weona Park Pavilion, Pen Argyl for their fall meeting. A bake sale will be held at Ace Hardware Saturday, October 5, 2024 from 9am to 2 pm. Take home delicious homemade desserts or eat on the go. Look for our many other fundraising events throughout the Slate Belt. Interested in joining the club? The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 8, 2024 at 1 p.m. at the Phoebe Home on Alpha Road, Wind Gap, Pennsylvania. Drop by, we would love to see you.

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NORTH WARREN (34) VS HOPATCONG (26) FOOTBALL YOUTH APPRECIATION NIGHT



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Integra-Clean & Dry Launches Fall Fundraiser for Veterans: Essential Clothing Drive for Paul's House Valor Clinic Program

This fall, Integra-Clean & Dry is taking a firm stand to support homeless Veterans in our community. From now through October 31, 2024, we will be hosting a unique fundraiser to collect socks, bras, and underwear for the men and women Veterans of Paul's House in Kunkletown, PA, a part of the Valor Clinic program for veterans.

Donations will be collected in designated bins placed at several locations. These include NBT Bank in Newfoundland and Hamlin, PA; Mountainhouse Tavern in Greentown and Honesdale, PA; Hamlin Library; Smaack Attack Foods in 1564 PA-507, Dutch's parking lot, Greentown, PA; Not Your Mama's Farmhouse in Milford, PA; and our own premises at Integra-Clean & Dry, Newfoundland, PA.

This initiative aims to provide essential clothing items to our noble

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Donations will be collected until **October 31, 2024** and can be dropped off at **NBT Bank**, both Newfoundland and Hamlin branches; **Smaack Attack Foods**, 1564 PA-507, Greentown; **Mountainhouse Tavern**, Greentown and Honesdale; **Integra-Clean & Dry**, 269 Butternut Road, Newfoundland; **Hamlin Library**; and **Not Your Mama's Farmhouse** in Milford, PA.

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VALOR Clinic Foundation is a 501(c)(3) Non-Profit Organization committed to improving access to quality of healthcare and shelter of Veterans.

VALOR Clinic Foundation (VCF) provides assistance accessing benefits, and shelter to Veterans with limited or no access to care. Helps find shelter for Veterans who, due to health or means, are unable to find or keep shelter of their own, and Post Traumatic Stress responses to Veterans through their Veterans Unstoppable program.

Veterans who have limited or no access to care and are unable to find or keep shelter due to health or means. The Valor Clinic Foundation (VCF) has been dedicated to offering assistance

to such Veterans, providing them with access to benefits and shelter, and resources for Post Traumatic Stress through their Veterans Unstoppable program.

We invite businesses

and organizations who would like to house a collection bin or those seeking more information to contact us at 570-676-8862 or via email at integracleanmarketing@gmail.com. We also encourage everyone in our community to contribute to this worthy cause.

Whether it's a pair of socks, a bra, or underwear, your donation can make a real difference in the lives of those who have served our country. This fall, let's come together to show our gratitude and support for our Veterans, making a meaningful impact in their lives.

Remember, your kind support and donations are not just items; they represent warmth, dignity, and a beacon of hope for our Veterans in need. Let's join hands with the Valor Clinic, Paul's House, and Integra-Clean & Dry to make this fundraiser a success. Together, we can make a difference.

Birth Announcement



Margaret "Maggie" Loren
 August 30th, 2024



Slate Belt natives Kevin and Sarah Loren, Jr., of North Carolina, are excited to announce the birth of their daughter, Margaret "Maggie" Melody Diana. Maggie was born on August 30th at 12:35am. She weighed 6 lb., 5 oz. and was 19" long.

In addition to her parents, Maggie was welcomed by her siblings, Sebastian, Noah, and Avery. Proud grandparents are James and Peggy Impeciati, and Kevin Loren, Sr., all of NC. Great grandparents are Rick and Doris Miller of North Bangor, and Clara Loren of NC.

Is not this a true autumn day? Just the still melancholy that I love — that makes life and nature harmonize. The birds are consulting about their migrations, the trees are putting on the hectic or the pallid hues of decay, and begin to strew the ground, that one's very footsteps may not disturb the repose of earth and air, while they give us a scent that is a perfect anodyne to the restless spirit. Delicious autumn! My very soul is wedded to it, and if I were a bird I would fly about the earth seeking the successive autumns. ~George Eliot, letter to Miss Lewis,

The Overlook

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Blairstown, NJ, Celebrates Friday the 13th



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Background Checks Now Required For Growing Health Care Fields in NJ

Applied behavioral analysts, art therapists, dietitians and nutritionists requesting a professional license through the state are now required to undergo a criminal background check.

Assembly Republican Leader John DiMaio and Assemblywoman Michele Matsikoudis sponsored the bill (A1128/S2311) updating the background check requirements for three newly created boards overseeing

the licensure of those health care practitioners. It was signed into law on Thursday and is effective immediately.

“As demand for certain specialized services and treatments increase, New Jersey is obliged to provide patients and families the peace of mind that comes from knowing a health care professional is licensed and regulated. Prioritizing the safety and wellbeing of our most vulnerable populations,

including those living in long-term care facilities and children with autism, means performing a thorough criminal background check on practitioners,” DiMaio (R-Warren) said.

The law allows the state board of Applied Behavior Analyst Examiners, Creative Arts and Activities Therapies, and Dietetics and Nutrition to access the FBI database to perform the statutory background checks on applicants seeking to obtain

a license.

“This new law is a reflection of our state’s commitment to the health and safety of New Jersey residents. Protecting patients by ensuring they are treated by competent and qualified clinicians builds confidence in our healthcare systems and practitioners, gives caregivers greater peace of mind, and ensures that residents receive the quality care they deserve,” Matsikoudis (R-Union) said.



Community members are invited to fine tune their parenting skills by attending a “Hassle-Free Mealtimes with Children” workshop hosted by the Project Sussex Kids General Council, Wednesday, September 18th, 11:00 a.m., at Project Self-Sufficiency. The discussion will highlight strategies from the Triple P Positive Parenting Program and is particularly designed for parents and those who work with parents of young children. Project Self-Sufficiency staff will also provide an update on Project Sussex Kids activities in the community. The meeting is free and open to the public; advance registration is encouraged. Interested participants are invited to call Project Self-Sufficiency at 973-940-3500 to register.

Bangor Church of the Nazarene Addresses Period Poverty with New Initiative Called “Sweet & Discreet”

The Bangor Church of the Nazarene is launching a new initiative called “Sweet and Discreet,” aimed at addressing period poverty among women and teenagers in our community. In Pennsylvania, the welfare system does not cover feminine hygiene products, leaving many women and their daughters without essential supplies. Sweet & Discreet Ministry offers free feminine hygiene products to women and teenagers in need within our community.

Those in need are welcome to stop by and have a small snack provided by our dedicated volunteers while collecting a



discreet bag containing a monthly supply of products. We are fortunate to receive generous monthly donations of feminine hygiene products from our partners at Shape of Justice. Additional items are graciously provided through individual donations from members of our church community.

In addition to these donations, a generous grant for this outreach was received from the USA Canada region of The Church Of The Nazarene as a part of their Blessing Our Community initiative. Kristi Senica, a representative of the church’s USA Canada region, included this

note in the grant approval “Way to go on meeting a need that many overlook AND finding a way to build relationships with the women you will engage with.” We are here to support and uplift, ensuring that every woman and teen who visits feels valued and cared for.

Sweet and Discreet Outreach Facility will be open on September 28, 2024 from 9am-11am and is located at the Bangor Church of the Nazarene on 150 Bunny Trail Road in Bangor, PA. Additional dates and times of operation can be found at the church website at www.bangor-nazch.org.

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Slate Belt Heritage Center Announces Their Annual Haunted Heritage Program

The Slate Belt Heritage Center will hold their annual haunted heritage program on Thursday, October 10 @ 7:00 PM. The theme this year is: "The National Red, White and Boo Haunted Heritage Ghost Convention." Ghost visitors for the evening will be:

George Taylor (1716-1781)- Signer of the Declaration of Independence, early Northampton County landowner, immigrant who came from Ulster, Ireland as an indentured servant and worked his way up to run Durham Iron Works and who became a delegate to the Continental Congress. He will be played by Perry Morris.

Leila Flory (1897-1988)- The Milton Flory



Mansion, at 207 Market Street, recently suffered a devastating fire. Leila lived on that corner for 60 years and can talk about the house and life of her industrialist father. A tuberculosis survivor, who was a civic leader, musician and Aunt to



many Slate Belt people. She will be played by Melissa Hough.

Glenwood "Pappy" Lewis (1901-1976) Long-time and much loved Chief of Police, son of Tommy Lewis, Chief of Police, whose family came from Llanduniolen, Wales. Besi-

des hunting down local bad guys and handling emergencies for many years, "Pappy" was the friendly crossing officer for the schools at 4th & Market. He will be played by Marc Blau.

Everett Kent- (1888-1963) (or his wife Daisy) was a member of



the US House of Representatives, an eloquent local lawyer and delegate to every presidential convention from 1923-1963. He met celebrities like Charles Lindbergh (who gave his daughters a plane ride) and started the local law firm Kent, Turtzo, Spry.

Benjamin Franklin Miller (1858-1942)- Started as a farmer in Lower Mt. Bethel, ran a flour mill in Richmond, became Washington Township School Director, Bangor's Chief Burgess, State Representative in the Pennsylvania House and finally Pennsylvania State Senator for the 18th District. He retired out of politics in 1910 to become president of the Merchants National Bank.

Tickets for the program are \$10.00 and will be available at Bray's News Stand and the Heritage Center on the night of the event. The Center is located at 30 North 1st Street, Bangor, PA For additional information please call: Karen Brewer at 484-894-5661.

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Hello, fellow readers,
Many of you know I record a podcast version of our weekly chats from the screen porch. Last week, I recorded the episode on 9-11. The sky was bright blue and the air crisp—much like that day our world changed. Now, there's less media attention to the anniversary of the tragedy, which reminds me of when I registered for a fiction workshop at Warren County Community College.
It felt nostalgic going back to school, with familiar butterflies in my

stomach. There's a process for obtaining a student ID I had to ask an eighteen-year-old classmate about. The desk person at the library, also a student, handed me the paperwork date-stamped 9-11.

"Do you recall that day?" I asked the young man.

"No, other than people crying." He revealed he was four at the time.

We chatted about how it brought a wave of patriotism and acceptance of each other, no matter our cultural differences.

"It's sad that much of the comradery is lost today." He nodded in agreement, such a kind young man of mixed descent.

I look forward to the day we look upon each other as One. One with nature. One with the world. Maybe it sounds cliché. Perhaps it's wishful thinking. I think of it as Hope.

What does this have to do with gardening or nature? The garden of life? There are two beautiful plants we see along



the road in September.

There's Orange Jewelweed, also known as Spotted Jewelweed. *Impatiens capensis* is an annual plant native to North America that thrives along streams, creeks, and in trenches roadside. They grow three to five feet tall and have almost see-through succulent-like stems. The flower's shape reminds me of foxgloves, though they dance on the tips rather than ride all along the stems. Hummingbirds, butterflies, and other insects feed on the nectar.

Then there's Knotweed, *Fallopia japonica*, an invasive plant from Asia. Yet, the showy, lacey white flowers covering the colonizing plants are magnets for pollinators

when not much else is blooming. Beekeepers make the best use of the invader by cutting the hollow stems and bundling them as a habitat for solitary tunnel-nesting native bees.

Perhaps it's a far-reaching wish that plants that found their way here from other countries become integrated into our environment as the balance of nature adapts. Maybe their "invasive" status becomes no longer so, as hopefully, wildlife learns to use the imported plant for sustenance so that native plants are no longer squelched. Maybe a dream, but let's not forget our roots; for most of us, we are imports, too.

A few years ago, I had the joy of meeting Cheryl Wood-

ruff-Brooks at an event hosted by Hippocampus Magazine. Cheryl authored *Chicken Bone Beach, A Pictorial History of Atlantic City's Missouri Avenue Beach*. She came upon the idea when she marveled over a photo exhibit from the Chicken Bone Beach Collection by a self-taught photographer.

In her book, Cheryl explained, "While so many images of the publicly accepted African American history have shown struggle, pain, humiliation, and dismay, John W. Mosley's photographs depicted joy, laughter, family, fun, community, and love."

During our chat, she asked what I do for a living.

"Get out. You make a living designing gar-

den?" Cheryl whips out her phone and scrolls for photos. "I love to garden."

She shared the creative layout of her plot in a community garden, explaining how she plants something new each year. One year, she had sunflowers in the middle of the garden, which the birds loved.

"I gave you the seeds; the least you can do is not poop on my vegetables," she joked. "So, this year, I didn't put the sunflowers in the middle and tried beets."

Gardening like life is evolutionary. May we always remember the past, learn and grow from it, and do so with love.

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Shapiro Administration Secures Nearly \$2 Million for Renewable Energy Planning for Pennsylvania

DEP will expand outreach and education for local governments looking to add wind, solar, and other renewable energy assets to their communities

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has secured a \$1.96 million grant from the U.S. Department of Energy to develop Pennsylvania-specific outreach and education materials to help communities build out clean, renewable energy projects.

The Renewable Energy Siting through Technical Engagement and Planning program (R-STEP) will help communities plan renewable energy projects that can lower utility costs and fight climate change. “Pennsylvania has always been an energy leader and with outreach and education through this grant, we can help local governments find the right places and right kind of renewable energy for their communities,” said DEP Acting Secretary Jessica Shirley. “Through the R-STEP program, DEP

can help local communities identify the best places for wind and solar and engage with residents about possible projects.”

The R-STEP program aims to increase renewable energy development with more community buy-in and science-based siting for proposed projects. As the grant recipient, DEP along with a project team from the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors (PSATS), Penn State Extension Energy Team, and Penn State Center for Energy Law and Policy will develop materials that help guide local governments — covering topics like state and federal permitting, community engagement, and local zoning.

“Fighting climate change and lowering energy costs with renewable energy takes leadership from

every level of government — from the federal government to Commonwealth government down to county and municipal governments. We all have a role to play,” said Acting Secretary Shirley. “DEP and the project team have been working with local governments and will continue with this R-STEP grant.”

Since 2021, DEP has collaborated with the Pennsylvania R-STEP team, investing \$270,000 from the State Energy Program (SEP) to provide training and technical assistance to local government officials on planning, siting, and permitting large-scale renewable energy projects. DEP has conducted 26 listening sessions, reaching over 650 officials across all regions of the Commonwealth. These county-level sessions have offered local government practitioners

to the opportunity to ask questions about the development of large-scale solar projects and understand the necessary steps to ensure responsible and sustainable implementation.

Topics covered in these sessions include land use and zoning ordinances, site engineering and development, and decommissioning requirements, aiming to balance the concerns of landowners, neighboring property owners, and developers. This initiative also led to the development of the Municipal Officials’ Guide to Grid-Scale Solar Development in Pennsylvania. With the R-STEP award, DEP will be able to expand this effort to reach more Pennsylvania communities and residents.

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