

Greene Scene

COMMUNITY MAGAZINE

A DIRECT RESULTS COMPANY



HOLIDAY II 2025

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FRONT COVER PHOTO:
Live Nativity Scene at Unity Presbyterian
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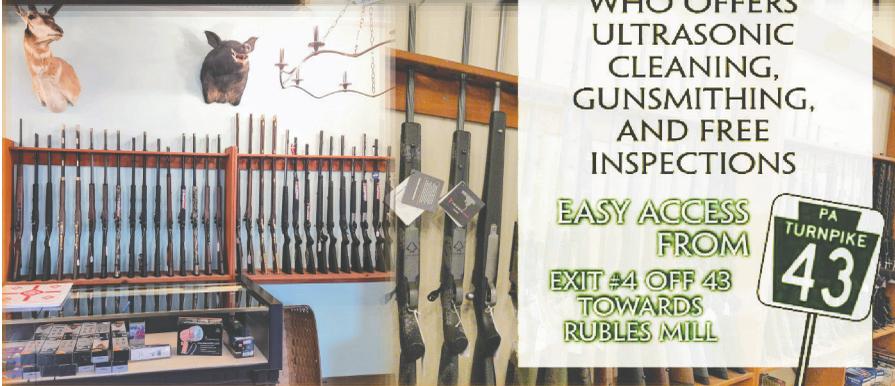
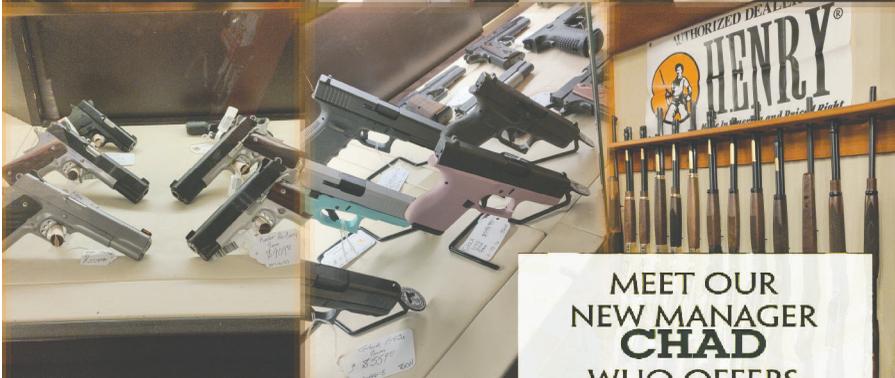
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TOWNE SQUARE



VISION FOR GREEN IN GREENE

Part II – We the People Problem

The last article I wrote was based on the concept that we as a community have not planned for our success. Despite our leader's mostly-positive (and of course some not) actions to better our community, we have been reluctant to change.

As humans, we are torn between our basic nature and that which we were given by Divine Providence. It is the eternal tear between the two characters, one on each shoulder. The horned, fork-tail figure which whispers "don't trust them" into one's ear, that is really fear manifesting a basic, animal defensive mechanism. Isolationism is born from being afraid of outsiders. That is the death of rural America, and we must defeat that fear.

We the People have a people problem; there are not enough of us in Greene County to sustain our basic industries and commerce. Having more people is the solution to the problem. We need to fix that problem, but in fixing that, we must confront within ourselves the reluctance to grow our numbers.

Population growth has always been the strength of a society. The task is to determine how to invite, encourage and support new people moving into Greene County. The years of having large families in the agricultural community are now gone. But what we still have remaining, the character of that agricultural community, is the selling-part of the solution.

People love farms. It is an unspoken, instinctively-American value. And while most people realize they cannot live on a farm, they want to live by one. You don't believe me? Try to get into Trax Farms on a Saturday in October. Good luck parking, as the lot is full of people from Peter's Township

spending their white-collar earnings on fresh produce, plants and \$10.99 for a dozen cookies. Duda's Farm no longer has a stand in our town, while Trax is awash in cash. Why? Trax has customers. I want to see customers shopping at a market like Trax somewhere along Route 21. But it is not just the physical farm which people crave. It is the idea of being part of a genuine, small-town feel America. We can sell that.

My second duty station with the Air Force was just south of Omaha, Nebraska. With the large volume of people moving into the Greater-Omaha area, Papillion, Nebraska, shot-up like a rocket in population. When I purchased my home in 2005, Papillion was listed by CNN-Money Magazine in Top-10 best cities to live in the United States. In 2015, it was #2 nationwide. How does a 248sq mile county in Nebraska (less than half of our size), with two small cities about the same physical size of Waynesburg and Carmichaels achieve this? People.

People moved south out of Omaha, seeking newer homes and friendlier neighborhoods. For comparison, in 1960, rural Sarpy County, Nebraska had a population of 31,000. By 2000, it was 123,000 and is estimated to be 200,000 today.

Conversely, Greene had 40,000 people in 1960, the same number in 2000, down to 34,000 today. Two rural counties, both south of roughly similar-sized cities, similar climate, except one main difference: the people in Sarpy County did not close their doors to newcomers but welcomed them. How? They gave them a place to live. Homes. Single family homes: affordable, attainable, and accessible.

About a decade ago, Morris Township had a plan to build a new community to the west of Nineveh on land granted from an energy company. While a noble plan, and still so, new real estate in Greene has an insurmountable obstacle: tax millage rates. We will never get people to move into Greene County until we have competitive millage rates.

Property tax burden is taken by multiplying millage rates by assessed values. Keep assessments too low, and millage rates will increase. Trying to build a new home, with a new assessment and high millage rates make your tax burden 300% more than a similar-sized twenty-year-old home.

Let us compare again. The property I owned in Nebraska had an assessed value at \$146,000 in 2010, and an annual tax amount of \$2,881, or 19.7 mills. Today it is valued at \$263,500, with an annual tax amount of \$3,842, or 14.6 mills. The valuation increased 81%, but the tax amount only increased 34%, which is less than inflation (49% 2010-2025, per U.S. CPI data). Conversely, if I moved that same 1680ft² "starter" house to Franklin Township, the annual tax bill would be \$10,385.

The home in Nebraska is correctly assessed; ours are not. We have a millage rate of 39.4 mills in Franklin Twp to counter these under-assessments. That has the effect of stopping all new construction, which then drives population decline. We must decrease the rate to 15 mills and then assess the properties correctly. That will bring in new homes and business. Our sell must be that moving to Greene County will have a lower tax burden versus living in Washington, Allegheny or Monongalia counties. But the millage rate is the obstacle which keeps people at bay. My concern is that this was done intentionally, to keep people away, and I see that as the problem.

This article is about how people are the solution, and to persuade locals to accept those whom they do not know as friends. I say the latter is the harder side of the ask, as it is the one where people need to look into the mirror and be comfortable enough with themselves to trust others. The stubborn part inside each of us is the greatest threat to our success.

Do not be that person. Welcoming and accepting is a big ask, and it takes moral courage to assuage the fear that new people are different. Yet it is also the traditional-Christian trait which will endear our community to others, bringing our County towards the Vision for its future.



GreeneScene by Norb Rebholz

The GreeneScene welcomes its readers to share their opinions on civic, economic, or cultural issues in Town Square Thoughts. All submissions must be respectful and constructive points of view aimed at improving our area. Please send Thoughts to bret@directresults.us We reserve the right to edit submissions for grammar, length and clarity.

Thank you for the privilege
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HIGHLIGHTED PROJECTS

Having been elected to Leadership by the Republican Caucus, Senator Bartolotta's advocacy has led to the following funding:

- Iron Senergy Methane Abatement Project \$2M
- East Dunkard Water Authority - \$1.9 M
- The Way Community Center - \$773,300
- WHS Greene Ambulance Entrance - \$345,000
- Carmichaels Senior Center - \$113,428

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THE RED KETTLE THAT RINGS THROUGH TIME

Holiday 1 Person Place or Thing Answer

Every holiday season, long before the first dash for a toy aisle bargain, a familiar sight appears on sidewalks and storefronts across America: a simple red kettle, a volunteer bundled against the cold, and a bell whose cheerful chime has become as much a seasonal soundtrack as carols. The Salvation Army holiday kettle is one of the most enduring and endearing traditions of the Christmas season. It's an unassuming symbol with a surprisingly rich history and an outsized impact.

In 1891, Salvation Army Captain Joseph McFee of San Francisco was troubled by the number of hungry people in the city and decided to provide a Christmas dinner for the needy. He set up a crab pot near the Oakland ferry landing with a sign that read, "Keep the Pot Boiling." The idea was simple, visible, and immediately successful.

From that single pot sprang a nationwide campaign that would grow into one of the most recognized charitable traditions of the season. By the early 1900s, red kettles appeared in major cities across the United States. By mid-century, they were as familiar as department-store Santas and window displays. Today, the kettle campaign operates in thousands of locations and raises tens of millions annually,



all funneled directly into community programs that provide food, shelter, disaster relief, counseling, and holiday assistance.

In an age when charitable giving can be online or automated, the pot on the corner offers something refreshingly personal. Whether you drop in a handful of change or a folded bill, you're participating in a ritual that has connected strangers for more than a century. The bright red kettle is a reminder that giving need not be complicated, and that kindness can be as simple as pausing for a moment on a cold December sidewalk.

Equally vital are the volunteers who ring the bell. Some are retirees donating time, others are families making a tradition of it, and some are people who once benefited from Salvation Army services themselves. In a season when bustle often overshadows meaning, the bell serves as a nudge back toward the heart of the holidays.

More than a fundraiser, the Salvation Army kettle is a cultural emblem. It endures because its purpose is timeless: to bring hope where it's needed most. As long as a kettle stands on a street corner and a bell rings into the winter air, the message of giving remains clear.

PERSON PLACE OR THING

SCAN TO ENTER!



Hint:

*When winter's hush sets softly o'er the land,
There comes a mirthful rover through the night;
With twinkling eye and pack in steady hand,
He steers his star-touched course by moon's pale light.*

*His footsteps fall like whispers on the snow,
No mortal hears the tread of boot or beast;
Yet hearths grow bright wherever he doth go,
As if the world awakes to secret feast.*

*His laughter, like a distant chimney's cheer,
Rolls warm against the cold and silent air;
And though his visits fade when dawn draws near,
He leaves behind a trace of magic rare.*

*Behold the kindly sprite of Christmas Eve -
Known not just by name, but by the dreams we weave.*

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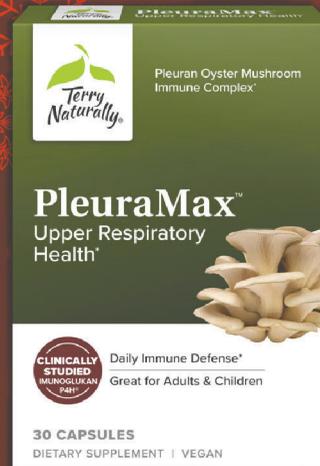
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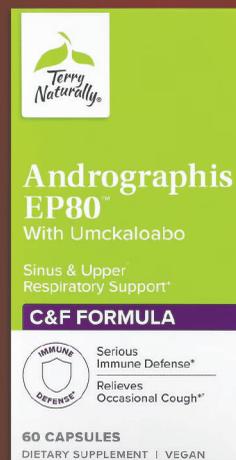
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Good NEWS

In Greene County



West Greene Area Lions Club

Honors Outstanding Pioneer Students.



Brooklyn Burns is the daughter of Nyle and Scarlett Burns of Graysville. She belongs to the National Honor Society, Science Club, Calculus Club, Student Government, Ski Club, and Future Farmers of America.

Brooklyn is the treasurer of her senior class and is the captain of the WG Cheerleaders. She was also the WG Coal Queen Representative and was the First Runner-up.

Her academic awards include: The Challenge Program Award, AP Capstone Certificate, Greenhand and Chapter Degrees in FFA, GreeneScene girl of the month, Scholar Athlete Award.

Some of her many dance accolades include: 2021 FLD Junior Dancer of the Year, 2024 FLD Senior Dancer of the Year Award, Crown and Title at Fly and Divacoms Dance Competitions, All-Star Top-scoring 2025 Showstopper solo, Emotional Execution Award, and the Super Power Award.

Brooklyn's service projects included volunteering at Respi Nursing Home, St. Ann's Day Camp, Greene County Early Intervention and Greene County United Way, Veterans' organizations, Center Township Fire Department, the Jacktown Fairgrounds, Harvey's-Aleppo Grange, Graysville Firehall, and For the Love of Dance Studio.

She plans to attend a four-year college to obtain a degree in Elementary Education with a minor in Dance.



Eryka Hackney is the daughter of Eric and Jessica Hackney of Wind Ridge. She was the 2024 Greene County Fair Queen and participated in over 70 events.

She is a four-year letterwinner in cross-country, track and field, basketball, and cheer. Eryka is a three-year captain of the cross-country team, captain of the track team, and an alternate captain of the cheerleading squad.

In school, she is also president of her class and the FFA Chapter. She is a member of Student Government, NHS, Hope Squad, Science Club, Peer Mentoring, Prom Planning Committee, and Students Against Destructive Decisions.

Eryka has completed over 100 hours of community service in her high school career. Her numerous awards include: the American Citizenship Award, Highest Honors Award, Most Valuable Athlete (Track), Most Valuable Runner (Cross Country), Extemporaneous Public Speaking Award, Prepared Public Speaking Award and others.

She plans to attend a four-year college to pursue Nursing and achieve her BSN.



Matthew Wassil is the son of Michael and Jessica Wassil of Nineveh. Matthew participates in the Science Club, Calculus Club, NHS (President), Football Team (Captain), and Basketball Team (Captain).

He has received numerous awards, which include Academic Excellence Awards in 9th, 10th, and 11th Grade, Academic Achievement Award 9th, 10th, and 11th Grade, American Citizenship Award in 9th grade, AP Capstone Certificate of Recognition.

Matthew is a three-time letterman in basketball (2X GCADA Team) and a two-time letterman in football. He was also the Greene Scene Athlete of the Month in 9th Grade.

His Community Service includes: CCD Aode at St/ Ann's Catholic Church, an NHS Project for 2nd Sam 9, Cemetery cleanings with Zach Patton, Battle Axe 5K Volunteer, St. Ann's Fish Fry, and little league football camp coach.

Matthew plans to attend a university to major in Mechanical Engineering with a Minor in Finance.

WCHS Lions Club Students

November



Mason Schroyer is the son of Joel and Courtney Schroyer of Waynesburg. He has a 4.0 GPA. Mason is a member of the Envirothon team, Engineering club, Spanish club, National Honors Society, Leo Club, Encore, Science Olympiad, Student Council, and Ski Club. He has earned classroom awards in calculus, FST and chemistry.

Mason loves sports. He has been a letterman of on the Track & Field, Cross Country, Soccer, Rifle, and Golf teams. He is a Cross Country MVP and two-time Track and Field MVP. Mason's specialty is the pole vault. In the pole vault, he has been a two-time section champ, three-time GCADA honoree, three-time WPIAL qualifier, PIAA qualifier, and second team all-state honoree.

Outside of school Mason has worked for Greene County summer camps and for the EQT Rec Center.

In his free time, Mason has worked for local charity events, such as Stuff the Bus, Sounds of Summer, the Hope Maley scholarship golf outing, and the Greene County food bank. He also enjoys lifting weights and hanging out with friends.

Mason's future plans are to attend the University of Pittsburgh and major in chemical engineering.



Jared Zhu is the son of Chenping Yuan and Youyi Zhu of Waynesburg. Jared has maintained straight 'A's through high school. He is a member of the Spanish Club, the National Honor Society and is the treasurer of the Engineering Club. Through his training Jared has earned certificates for the CS50x and CS50p computer programming courses.

Outside of school, Jared competes at the Tiger Fencing Club in Eighty Four PA. He earned 5th place epee in The Sledgehammer regional fencing tournament.

Jared works at his parent's restaurant, New Lamb's Garden, taking orders, waiting on tables, and packaging. He also volunteers weekly at the Corner Cupboard Food Bank.

Jared and his family attend the Morgantown Chinese C&MA Church, and Faith Baptist Church of Waynesburg.

In his free time Jared enjoys reading, especially about history and innovation.

Jared's plans are to earn a degree in mechanical engineering and a minor in either business or computer science.

December



Madison Loughner is the daughter of Brian and Cathy Loughner of Spraggs. She has earned a 4.0 GPA through high school. She has been a member of the Alpha Beta Club, Prom Committee, Youth Alive, National Honor Society, Spanish Club, Leo Club, and Raider Rose Floral Club.

This past year she served as the captain of the girls' soccer team, where she is a four-time letterman.

Outside of school, Madison is a member of the First Baptist Church of Waynesburg and participates in their Youth Group, Praise Team and Mission Team. She has spent a lot of time and energy giving back to her community. Madison and volunteered with the Corner Cupboard Food Bank, Bartlett House, The Way Community Center, Stuff The Bus, Touch A Truck, Room At The Table, Operation Christmas Child and her church's nursery.

In the summers she works as a day camp counselor with the Greene County Department of Recreation and as a soccer referee for Greene County United Soccer Club.

Madison's plans are to attend college and major in psychology.



Mac Renner is the son of Alan and Julia Renner of Waynesburg. He has earned straight 'A's throughout high school. Mac has been a member of the WCHS Marching Band, Concert Band, Jazz Band, Pep Band, National Honor Society, and Envirothon Team. He is the Senior Class President.

He has been honored as a member of the All-County Band and has earned classroom math awards for the past two years. Mac was on the court for the 2025 Cinderella Ball.

Outside of school, Mac has volunteered with the Greene County Humane Society and the Social Service League. In the summers, Mac has worked as a counselor at the Lions Club day camp. He has also worked as an apprentice for Renner Custom Kitchens.

Mac loves the outdoors. He spends his free time hunting and fishing or playing his guitar and banjo.

Mr. Renner plans to pursue a bachelor's degree in aerospace or mechanical engineering

New Market Opens at the Fairgrounds

Greene County Parks & Recreation is launching a brand-new monthly event, the **Made + Grown Market at the Greene County Fairgrounds**, beginning in **January 2026**. **The first market will be taking place on January 13th.**

It is an indoor market and will take place on the **second Tuesday of every month from 5–8 PM** in Building #8 at the fairgrounds.

The Made + Grown Market will showcase **local and regional makers, growers, artisans, and small businesses**, offering a unique shopping experience focused on handmade, homegrown, and hometown goods. **Admission is free**, and the event will also feature a rotating lineup of food trucks.

Vendor spaces begin at **\$30**, and applications are now being accepted.

For more information or to register as a vendor, contact the **Greene County Department of Recreation at 724-852-5323**, or email chursey@greencountypa.gov.

LOCAL. LIBRARY. LOVE

If you have been to Eva K. Bowlby Public Library this past year, you may have noticed a new donation wall. The library board and staff thought this would be a great way to honor those who financially support the library.

According to 2024 statistics, Bowlby Library's budget is divided as follows: PA State funding accounts for 23%; Greene County Millage is 15%; Mrs. Bowlby's Endowment is 57%; and fundraising accounts for only 5% of our library budget. With PA State funding unsettled, and the library's endowment being used for annual shortfalls, our local fundraising efforts have become very important.

The Library's income last year was a total of \$443,683; expenses were \$465,602. That's a deficit of \$21,919, which came out of the library's endowment, and no one likes to see deficit spending!

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NATIONAL CUDDLE UP DAY – On January 6t bring your Blankie or stuffie and watch a movie, a movie will be playing all day in the Children's Department, you can come any time.

NATIONAL STICKER DAY – On January 13 children 5 years and under are welcome to come from 11:00-11:30 to make a sticker craft/sticker vision board. Teens/Tweens are welcome to come from 5:00-6:00 PM to make a sticker vision board for the New Year.

NATIONAL SQUIRREL APPRECIATION DAY – January 21 | Watch Miss Gayle work her magic and feed the squirrels.

MOMMIE & ME BLONDIE BROWNIE BAKING DAY – January 22, 4:30 – 5:30 PM: Children 3 and up are welcome to come bake brownies with their mom or dad in the Children's Department.

HOT TEA WEEK – Starting January 12th join us for a week of tea and cookies while you read in the library.

MOVIE NIGHT – Enjoy movie night here at the library Friday, January 9, beginning promptly at 7:00 PM. In the Library's Community Room. This Month's Movie is The Smurfs. FREE snack and beverage. Doors open at 6:45 PM. Call the library to RSVP your seat(s)

PUZZLE CHALLENGE – Saturday, January 10 from 9:30 AM – 12:30 PM. Do you trust your puzzle skills enough to compete against other puzzle lovers??? The library is looking for 10 teams of two to compete in putting together a 500-piece puzzle in three hours or less. Contact the library to register. Prize is awarded to the fastest team.

THREADHEAD MEETUP – Monday, January 12th from 5:00 – 6:30 PM, Come join us and bring your WiP to our Threadhead Meetup. Open to all crafters and experience levels. Snacks, tunes, and laughter provided. Call 724-627-9776 to RSVP but walk-ins are welcome.

SILENT BOOK HOUR – Join us every other week in the Library's Young Adult Room starting January 20 for a silent hour of reading.

BOOK CLUB – Wednesday, January 14 from 5:00 – 6:30 PM. This month's book discussion is on Charles Martin's "When Crickets Cry", There are several physical copies available at the front desk. New members are always welcome to join!

LEGO BUILD-A-BAG – Saturday, January 24 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM | Participants, alone or in groups, can build anything they can imagine out of a bag of random LEGOs within the allotted time and can keep their creations as well as the bag of LEGOs that they used. Please call 724-627-9776 to sign-up, but walk-ins are welcome!

COSMIC BINGO – Join us at the library on Friday, January 30 at 7:00 PM for a fun night of Glow in the Dark "COSMIC" Bingo! The Library will supply all needed items including prizes. Join us for a COSMIC fun time! Call 724-627-9776 to let us know you're coming.

MAHJONG CLUB – Meets every Wednesday, 1:00 – 4:00 PM. Mahjong is a tile-based game that's been played in Asia for over 300 years and is gaining global popularity. It's fairly easy to learn the basics. Walk-ins are welcome.

WEIGHT LOSS SUPPORT GROUP – Is a weight management support group that meets every Friday, 10:00 – 11:00AM.

TECH TUTORING – Need help with one of your devices?? We want to help! Call the library to reserve a time-slot. Bring your electronic device, account passwords, any devices you use (and charging cords if needed), and your library card. One of our tech savvy librarians will help you with a variety of technology services.

Call or stop in at Eva K. Bowlby Public Library for more info or to register for any of the above events. 724-627-9776 • 311 N. West St., Waynesburg, PA 15370 • www.evakbowlby.org

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Cool at School:

THEATER PROGRAM RETURNS TO WEST GREENE

By Aubrey Lesnett



The holiday season at West Greene High School was filled with laughter, heart, and hard work as the drama club presented its Christmas play. The production not only entertained audiences but also showcased the dedication of students and the strong support system behind the school's growing theater program.

According to co-director Ms. Jessica Jacobs, collaboration among cast members, crew, and leadership was essential to the show's success. Students took responsibility both on and off the stage, contributing wherever they were needed.

"I'm so lucky because the kids I work with are hardworking and really care about the shows they are cast in," Jacobs said. The technical crew played a major role as well, with students volunteering to handle makeup, wigs, props, lighting, and sound. When unexpected challenges arose, students showed impressive flexibility.

"In one of those instances, a student got sick the day of the performance, so another student had to learn her lines only three hours before the show. But we made it happen," Jacobs said. "I'm so proud of each of them."

Support from the school community also helped bring the production to life. Teachers from various departments contributed their time and expertise, reinforcing the value of the arts at West Greene. Jacobs shared that the district as a whole is excited to see theater return. "Any time I need any help, they are onboard." Art, agriculture, and video production teachers all assisted with sets, repairs, and technical guidance, creating a true team effort beyond the drama club itself.

For Jacobs, directing at West Greene carries personal meaning. A graduate of the school, she performed in productions throughout her high school years and later earned a college degree in theater. "Directing at West Greene feels like coming home to me," she said. Being able to guide students through a Christmas play that blended humor with a heartfelt message made the experience even more special.

While rewarding, the rehearsal process was far from easy. Due to a late start and the interruption of Thanksgiving break, the cast and crew faced long hours and added pressure. Despite the

exhaustion, students remained committed and worked through the challenges together to ensure the show's success.

The production also played a crucial role in helping students develop confidence and new skills. With the drama program recently restarting, many participants were stepping on stage for the first time. Jacobs explained that students learned how to manage nerves, understand their characters' goals, and improvise when mistakes happened.

As performances continued, their growth became clear. "The confidence they had in the character they built and knowing what that character would do" stood out to Jacobs as one of the most rewarding parts of the show. Overall, the Christmas play was more than a performance—it was a celebration of teamwork, perseverance, and the growing strength of West Greene's theater community.



Cool at School:

MERRY AND BRIGHT

By Emma Bates



Miss Merry Christmas 2025 represents Carmichaels at the county seat before returning home in her "sleigh".

The Mikes are brimming with holiday cheer as the days get shorter and the lights get brighter. Extra bright, in fact, at Carmichaels' annual Light Up Night in town square Saturday, December 6.

As many locals have remarked over the years, having a town square is a special asset to a community these days where a central town location is a thing of the past in many communities. This thriving pocket of Carmichaels is famous for its quaint, small-time vibe especially at Christmas time when restaurants, coffee shops, and novelty stores are decked out in full festivity.

Carmichaels faculty and staff note that, unlike many other communities, the school and town are integral parts of each other's existence. Carmichaels Area School District and the surrounding community are synonymous, so it's no surprise that events like Light Up Night are equally intertwined.

Students from Carmichaels Area Middle/High School represented their respective clubs and organizations through their demonstrations of Christmas traditions around the world. The Senior Class and other clubs entertained young guests with activities like creating DIY reindeer food as the marching band set the mood with their festive arrangement of Christmas marches and tunes. Tubas and all traded in their blue and gold for flashing shades of red and green.

Other local businesses contributed to the merriment, too. Employees of First Federal Savings and Loan were found on their corner handing out hot chocolate to Carmichaels residents and visitors on a chilly, winter evening. The Carmichaels Borough contributed hot dogs to the evening, while the Nemaocolin Firehall represented with coloring for children. Press-On Bakes and Brews held extended hours for the event.

Members of the Carmichaels Activity Center presented line dancing at intervals during the event, and DJ Dave Plavi underscored the rest with festive tunes.

Miss Merry Christmas Olivia Mata proudly represented Carmichaels in the Waynesburg Christmas Parade earlier in the day, then headed back to her hometown to make an appearance at Light Up Night.

CASD is also proud to announce a successful "round two" of the Tales on the Trail story walk, this time in a Christmas edition. Middle and High School students dressed as timeless Christmas characters from beloved books, movies, and cartoons to make the elementary walking track come alive with the magic of reading to kick off the season.

Cool at School:

McGUFFEY YEAR IN REVIEW

By Dan Gottron, ED • Director of Curriculum and Instruction

As we close out 2025 and look ahead to 2026, McGuffey School District has had much to celebrate during this past year. We have been very fortunate to have much to take pride in as a school community, certainly more than could be captured in a single article. But in the spirit of reflecting back on 2025, we'd like to share just a few of the many McGuffey School District highlights from this past year.

At a Bots IQ competition, the McGuffey team placed 17th out of 67 teams. This achievement was made all the more impressive by the fact that 2025 was only the second year McGuffey participated in the Bots IQ program. Along with this impressive overall placement, the McGuffey team also received 1st place recognition in the category of Best Sportsmanship.

Our students in grades 8, 11, and 12 had the opportunity to participate in a Financial Reality fair hosted by Chrome and Washington Area Federal Credit Unions. This allowed students to get a realistic glimpse of real world realities such as the cost of housing, food, transportation, and other life expenses.

McGuffey continued a longstanding tradition of hosting an annual McOlympics, which as always was a day filled with encouragement, laughter, and unforgettable moments for incredible student athletes with disabilities.

The year also saw forward-looking planning, with the district charting a path forward by developing and approving a Future Ready Comprehensive Plan (FRCP) for 2025-2028.

And of course, we had the privilege of watching 140 graduates from the class of 2025 leave our halls and embark on their next steps.

All in all, 2025 brought many good things for our school community, and we are confident that 2026 will continue to see us advancing in our endeavors. We will look forward to sharing much more in the year ahead, and until then we'd like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



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Lisa Moore's three year old grandson, Cayson Faddis, enjoying his first snowball battle on December 2, 2025 in Lippincott.



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Intentional Walks

By Bret Moore

THE TAX WRITE-OFF BOWL, LIVE ON ESPN 47

Bret Moore is the Director of Recreation for Greene County. He taught English and coached multiple sports at McGuffey High School for thirty years. He is also the author of Rough and Ungentlemanly Tactics, a two-volume history of sports in Greene County, available at Direct Results and McCracken Pharmacy.



College football bowl games began as a civic-minded business idea. The idea was to attract tourists during the quiet winter months.

The "Granddaddy of them all," the Rose Bowl, was first played on January 1, 1902, in Pasadena as part of the city's annual Tournament of Roses festivities. Organizers hoped to draw national attention and bolster the local economy by staging a football game between two of the nation's best college teams — Michigan and Stanford.

The game was so one-sided, with Michigan winning 49-0, that the football experiment was shelved for over a decade. But in 1916, the Rose Bowl returned for good, and its success inspired a century-long evolution of postseason college football.

For many years, the Rose Bowl stood alone as the only postseason contest, serving as a prestigious matchup between champions from the East and West. But as football grew in popularity throughout the 1930s, other regions sought their own winter showcases.

The Orange Bowl in Miami (first played in 1935), the Sugar Bowl in New Orleans (1935), and the Cotton Bowl in Dallas (1937) followed, each designed to promote tourism in their respective cities. These "New Year's Day Classics" became powerful regional institutions, blending sports, civic pride, and holiday celebration.

By the 1950s, bowl games had become a defining feature of college football. Television helped expand their reach. The 1952 Sugar Bowl was the first to be broadcast nationally. Bowl invitations soon became badges of honor for successful teams,

while fans across the country embraced the tradition of tuning in to multiple games on New Year's Day.

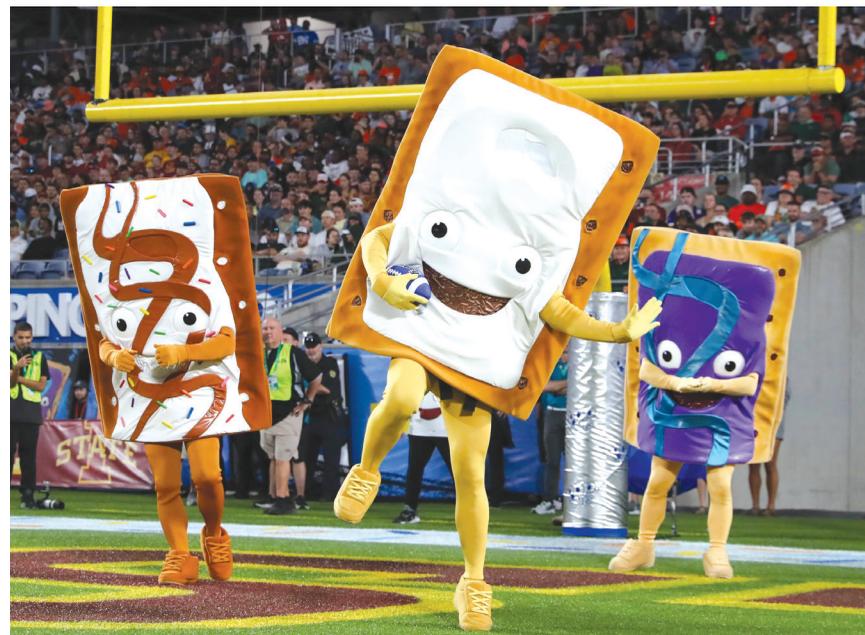
The four major bowls formed the core of what would be known as the "New Year's Day lineup," synonymous with college football's biggest stage.

In the 1960s, the Peach, Sun, Tangerine, Citrus, and Fiesta Bowls joined the party. While usually lacking the true blue bloods of college football, the participating teams were usually schools that posted impressive records or featured a star player the country wanted to see.

Unfortunately, the explosion of bowl games came later. As cable television and corporate sponsorships expanded in the 1980s and 1990s, new bowl games emerged across the nation. Smaller cities realized that hosting a bowl could generate tourism dollars and national exposure.

Today, more than 40 bowl games are held annually, stretching from mid-December through early January. This is the part of the column where I thought I would make up funny fake bowl names. However, after looking up the list of REAL bowl names and realized I couldn't make up anything dumber.

We are currently subjected to the Pop-Tarts Bowl, The Tony the Tiger Sun Bowl, the Duke's Mayo Bowl, the Wasabi Fenway Bowl, and the Snoop Dogg Arizona Bowl



Presented by Gin and Juice.

These enthralling matchups feature teams who scheduled just enough cupcake schools to struggle to a 6-6 record. Who needs to watch the best teams battling in primetime at top-tier idyllic locales when you can watch Southwest Billybob State take on Valparaiso University on a Tuesday night in Shreveport in the Mildly Adequate Bowl?

In this era of corporate creativity, someone decided fans needed the TaxSlayer Gator Bowl, as if nothing screams "tradition" like aggressive financial planning. Today, bowl eligibility is basically the participation trophy of college football.

As much as we rail against this absurdity, it's our own fault. Just like the people who still pay their hard-earned money to watch the Pittsburgh Pirates, we enable this morass of mediocrity by watching it. It's a hopeless addiction we support by our unwavering devotion and love of a nostalgic ideal from our past.

Bowl season may be absurd, overgrown, and shamelessly commercial, but we tune in. We watch because it's cold outside, because most of the teams we root for around here are in those bowls, and because any football is better than watching the NBA.

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Chase Ankrom is the son of Jason and Angie Ankrom of Rices Landing. He is a multi-sport letterman in basketball, baseball, and golf. Last year as a sophomore, he was selected for the 2024 Lions Club Christmas Basketball All-Tournament Team.

In school, he is an honor roll student, a member of the chess club, and participates in esports. Outside of school, Chase is an avid hunter and fisherman, a member of the Greene County Ghost baseball team, and works as a Day Camp Counselor for Greene County Parks & Recreation.



Addyson Teagarden is the daughter of James and Robin Teagarden. She plays softball for the Rockets. In school, she is a member of the National Honor Society, Penn State 4.0 Club, and Leo Club. She plans to attend Indiana University of Pennsylvania to study Diagnostic Medical Imaging and specialize in Echocardiography



Ke'Lani Chun is the daughter of Fabian and Sherri Chun. She is a sophomore and maintains a 4.0 GPA. Ke'Lani is a member of the National Honor Society and Student Council.

She is a member of the cheerleading squad and plays basketball, softball, and volleyball for the Mikes. As a freshman, she lettered in basketball and softball and was selected for the All-County Softball Team. She also plays for a Showcase Travel Softball Team.

Her goal is to go to school for Sports Medicine and play softball at the collegiate level.



Liam Rogers is the son of B.J. and Jen Rogers. He plays football, baseball, and wrestles for the Rockets. His possible post-graduate plans include both the military and college.



Zachery Jiblits is the son of Bill and Lindsay Jiblits of Waynesburg. He is a four-time letterman in football and two-time letterman in baseball for the Raiders. He is also a two-time letterman in hockey for Trinity, where he is the alternate captain.

In football, he was twice selected to the All-GCADA Team. He was also second team All-Conference as both a running back and defensive back.

In school, he is a member of the National Honor Society. He plans to attend college and major in criminal justice to pursue a career in law enforcement.



Kendall Barner is the daughter of Joe and Angela Barner of Holbrook. She is a freshman and participates in volleyball, basketball and plans to run track & field in the spring. Kendall helps with aquaponics and the STEM unit in the school's maker space. She enjoys participating in club volleyball in Morgantown and spending time with her family.



Rylei Rastoka is the daughter of Travis and Lindsey Rastoka of Waynesburg. She plays soccer for the Raiders and is a four-time GCADA All-County selection. The past two seasons, she was named All-Section and served as team captain. This year, she was also named to the All-WPIAL Team.

Off the pitch, she is a member of the National Honor Society. In her spare time, she plays for the Mountaineer United Soccer Club and works as a seasonal lifeguard for the Greene County Department of Recreation. She plans to attend college and major in Pre-Med/Biology.



Charlie Stoneking is the son of Chuckie and Alice Stoneking of Holbrook. He is a senior and participates in varsity wrestling. Charlie is also a member of the West Greene FFA program and aquaponics. He enjoys helping his father with the family business.



Ashton Walker is a junior and has lettered in football and baseball. He is currently playing his first season of basketball. Ashton was recently named to the All-County and All-Conference teams in football. He maintains a 3.6 GPA. Outside of school, he is a lifeguard at the Greensboro pool, works construction, and mows lawns. Ashton is studying the electrical trade at GCCTC and plans to work construction after school and start his own company doing electrical work.



Willow Rudman is the daughter of John and Gail Rudman of Greensboro. She is a freshman, who is active in varsity basketball, volleyball and softball, as well as cheerleading. Willow is involved with many clubs throughout the school year. Her interests outside of school include hobbyist beekeeping, hiking, swimming, and spending time with her friends and family.

WCHS Fall All-County Athletes



FOOTBALL - Jeffrey Blair, Zach Jiblits, Teagen Crouse, Jack Ricciuti, Caden Fowler, Ross Tennant, Andy Mahle, Taylor Sproat

GOLF - Jarett Tretinik, Austin Surber, Lucas Slifko, Matt Eisiminger

CROSS COUNTRY - Will Maxwell, Reiley Shultz

VOLLEYBALL - Ani Cree, Gina Tedrow, Railey Bochna, Lelia McCollum, Chatham Knight, Emily Rafferty, Harper Grimes, Emma Blair

BOYS' SOCCER - Brendan Cole, Blake Tennant, Dominic George, Duncan Barto

GIRLS' SOCCER - Rylei Rastoka, Kolbi Rastoka, Emily Rafferty, Peyton Cowell, Kaylee McLaughlin

WAYNESBURG UNIVERSITY'S 2025 REPRESENTATIVE IN THE GREENE COUNTY SPORTS HALL OF FAME - TIM MCCONNELL

By Bret Moore

Any sports fans in the county who were around in the 1980s remember the pandemonium associated with Waynesburg College basketball and the multitude of great names associated with the Marisa Era and the trips to Kansas City.

At the center of all those teams and great athletes there was always a tough as nails point guard acting as a floor general. Such weighty responsibilities would require fortitude and an uncanny understanding of the game.

That was obviously the case with Tim McConnell, this year's Waynesburg College representative to the Greene County Hall of Fame.

McConnell attended Seton-La Salle High School, where as a senior in 1982 he was team captain for a WPIAL championship team and helped lead them to a PIAA State Championship runner-up finish.

He came to the Jackets at the height of their glory days and became the starting point guard through the mid-eighties. During those years, he became a fan favorite with his intense defense and an uncanny ability to start the fast break and distribute the ball.

He still holds the school record for both single game (23) and single season (365) assists during the 1985-86 season. During his senior season, he led the team to a 27-2 record, the best single-season winning percentage in school history.

McConnell credits his Waynesburg College years with shaping his understanding of teamwork and unselfish play —

lessons that would define his coaching style.

After his playing days, McConnell spent time as a graduate assistant at Canisius College, then returned to Waynesburg as an assistant coach for four years. In 1993, he accepted the head-coach position at Chartiers Valley High School, despite advice from a friend who considered it a “dead end job.”

He spent the next 29 years with the Colts and became a coaching legend. He built perennial contenders, became the fastest coach in WPIAL history to reach 500 wins, and finished his tenure with an impressive career record (662-153) that cemented his status among the area's coaching icons. His programs were known not only for wins but also for producing players who succeeded at the next level.

After 25 years of leading Chartiers Valley's boys' team (1993-2018) and later coaching the girls' program for four seasons (2018-2022), McConnell finished his three-decade career at Bishop Canevin High School.

Under his guidance, the CV boys won six WPIAL titles, earned 16 section championships, and twice reached the state finals (PIAA runner-up) in more than 20 state tournament appearances. His overall record was 552-146.

Over four seasons coaching the girls, he built an even more impressive record: 110-7. Under his leadership, the girls' teams reached four district finals, won three WPIAL titles, made three state championship appearances, and captured one state title. His squads also set a state-record with 64 consecutive wins.

His family is deeply woven into Western Pennsylvania bas-

ketball across generations. His son T.J. McConnell is CV's all-time leading scorer with over 2,400 career points, went on to play Division I at Duquesne and Arizona, and is enjoying a very successful career in the NBA.

Another son, Matty also starred at Chartiers Valley and went on to play at Robert Morris. His daughter, Megan led the girls to WPIAL & PIAA championships and played at Duquesne.

His sister Suzie McConnell-Serio was a Penn State All-American, WNBA player, Olympic gold medalist, and Women's Basketball Hall of Fame inductee. Another sister, Kathy McConnell-Miller played at the University of Virginia, was a head coach at the NCAA DI level and an assistant coach in the WNBA.

Beyond wins and records, McConnell's legacy is measured in program stability and mentorship. Former players and fellow coaches note his emphasis on preparation, life lessons delivered from the sideline, and an old-school work ethic that translated into consistent success over decades.

McConnell will join Tammy McIntire-Mandich, Kristen Polosky, Bobby Hathaway, Rodney Wilson, and Frank Vukmanic in this year's class.



SPORTS SHORTS

Teagan Crouse, Caden Fowler, Jack Ricciuti, and Ross Tennant of Waynesburg were named to the All-District Football Team. Ricciuti was selected to the Terrific 22 Squad.

Two former Raider wrestlers are nationally ranked. Rocco Welsh is 5-0 on the season and ranked #4 at 184 pounds for Penn State. Lucca Augustine is ranked # 15 for the Pitt Panthers.

Other WCHS alumni wrestling at Division I programs this year include: Wyatt Henson, (141, Lock Haven), Mac Church (165, Virginia Tech), Brody Evans {Mapletown} (197, Edinboro), and Eli Makel (285, Edinboro).

Jefferson-Morgan 2025 Fall GCADA All-County Teams.



FOOTBALL

- John Woodward
- Deakyn DeHoet
- Landon Heath
- Levi Heath
- Eli Hill
- Jeremiah Robertson
- Triton Farabee
- Remington Broadwater
- Seth Fox
- Liam Rogers

VOLLEYBALL

- Beautiful Medlen
- Ava Wood
- Emilee Bazzoli
- Kelsey Vessels

GOLF

- Urijah Teasdale
- Miles Sowden
- Brayden Ellsworth

GIRLS SOCCER

- Carrie Corbett



For the first time in their lives, twins **Kaylin and Emily Venick** of Rices Landing are playing for different teams. The dynamic duo graduated after stellar careers at Slippery Rock University. They are pursuing graduate degrees with their remaining eligibility. Kaylin is averaging 8 points and 5 rebounds a game for the Regis University Rangers in Denver, Colorado. Emily is showcasing her ball handling and distribution skills as the starting point guard at Chatham University in Pittsburgh.

Ani Cree, Railey Bochna, and Lelia McCollum of Waynesburg Central were selected to play in the Queens of the Burgh Volleyball Tournament in Pittsburgh.

In the Out-Door

By T.R. Mahle

VISITING A MASTER WILDLIFE ARTIST

As an avid collector and admirer of wildlife art, I was intrigued by the thought of attending a gathering of friends where an artist was commissioned to create an original piece of work as a surprise for her husband's birthday. The painting, (depicting wolves) was unveiled at the party, and I was completely taken back by the absolute breathtaking masterpiece that was standing before me. You could still smell the aroma of linseed oil and fresh paint and the image was simply magnificent. I had to know more.

As it turns out, the artist is a friend of theirs from Montana, and I was going to have an opportunity to meet him at a future event. When that meeting took place, we became instant friends with a lot in common such as wildlife, painting, and Montana. He was just an all-around great guy.

His name is **Kyle Sims**, and he is one of North America's leading contemporary wildlife artists. Kyle resides in Bozeman Montana...which is where I fly into on my yearly hunting trip to Montana. Luckily, our schedules afforded me the opportunity to visit him at his home and tour his studio on our way home from this year's hunt.

Touring Kyle's studio offered me a vivid look into the creative process and the environment that supports it. The space was bright and welcoming, illuminated by large windows that overlooked the majestic **Bridger and Gallatin Range** mountains that provided soft, consistent light across the room. Canvases in various stages of completion lined the walls, allowing me to see how each piece evolved from photos and loose sketches to richly layered compositions.

Throughout the tour, the scent of linseed oil and fresh paint again added to the immersive atmosphere. Kyle spoke openly about sources of inspiration, noting how everyday scenes and natural textures often sparked new ideas. Explaining a few techniques, he emphasized the importance of experimentation, showing how adjustments in brushstroke, color temperature, or layering could dramatically shift a painting's mood.

Kyle was born in 1980 and raised at his family's home just

outside Cheyenne, Wyoming. He has developed a distinguished career over the past two decades, attaining recognition for his vivid, realistic, and often emotionally powerful depictions of wild animals in their natural settings.

As a child, with the vast amount of wildlife and natural landscapes at his family's home in Cheyenne, he was fascinated by animals and often drew birds and small mammals. By the age of 13, Kyle had already developed a passion for wildlife art.

During his teen years, He was encouraged by his parents and early teachers who recognized his talent and supported his interest. He began enrolling in art workshops with established wildlife-artists (like Terry Isaac, Daniel Smith, and Paco Young), and transitioned from gouache (water color) and acrylic to oil painting, a medium that better allowed him to capture softness, realism, and natural light.

After high school, Kyle studied art at Rocky Mountain College and earned his BFA. The surrounding Montana landscape, with its mountains, plains, and wildlife, provided fertile ground for honing his observational skills, a practice he continues to this day.

Kyle's work is often described as "**painterly realism.**" He aims not just to produce photographic likenesses of animals, but to evoke "the wonder, beauty and excitement of the natural world." A distinguishing characteristic of his method is his commitment to field studies. He frequently spends time in natural settings to observe wildlife firsthand, sketch, photograph, and soak in light, color, and atmosphere. These studies inform his studio work, where he translates those observations into large-scale oil paintings. He explains painting from life "trains you to see and interpret how life really looks to the eye, rather than the camera."

Kyle often uses a palette knife in addition to traditional brushes. This technique allows a more textured, sculptural application of paint, especially around focal points, while leaving backgrounds more impressionistic and loosely rendered. This technique helps balance realism with painterly expression.



Kyle's canvases often feature the great mammals of North America. Bison, elk, deer, moose, bighorn sheep, pronghorn, and mountain goats make up the majority of his painting. However, he also enjoys painting predators and more elusive animals like mountain lions, cougars, bobcats, otters, wolves, and big cats.

Kyle's talents have not gone unnoticed. Before turning 30, he had already received significant acclaim:

- In 2004, he was honored by Society of Animal Artists with its Distinguished Young Artist Award.
- In 2009, he not only exhibited at the renowned Prix de West Invitational Art Exhibition & Sale, but also won its top wildlife award. That same year, he earned "Best of Show" at the Buffalo Bill Art Show and Sale in Cody, Wyoming.
- Over the years, he has maintained a strong presence in major exhibitions. In addition to Prix de West, he has exhibited in the Masters of the American West Sale (at the Autry National Center), among others.

His career is marked by sustained productivity and evolution. In his early years he was capable of producing 30-40 paintings per year, today his output is somewhat lower. However, this lower output is compensated with deeper thought, richer technique, and greater artistic ambition per painting.

As recently as 2025, his work was featured in a piece titled "Tales of the Backcountry" in a leading art magazine, describing new paintings that capture both the calm and chaos of the wild. His most recent works...*Children of the Water (2025)*, *Twilight Serenade (2023)*, and *Contentment (2023)*, reflect his continued commitment to pushing the boundaries of wildlife art, with large canvases, refined technique, and emotionally resonant subjects.

Drawing from his commitment to both realism and expressive painting, he creates works that are visually breathtaking and emotionally evocative. Through his canvases, viewers are invited not just to observe wildlife, but to feel it. As long as wild animals roam the landscapes he loves, Sims's artistry will continue to bring their worlds to life.

To view more of Kyle's work go to www.kylesims.com

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GREENE COUNTY FRIENDS FISHING IN NEW YORK

By T.R. Mahle

Recently, a group of local anglers from Greene County embarked on an exciting four-day fishing trip to New York, combining our shared passion for the outdoors with a sense of camaraderie and adventure. It's an annual trip that brings together friends for a few days of good eating, adult beverages, and of course fishing. Most of us are seasoned fishermen, and we manage to catch our fair share of fish.

Our destination was the *Burk Dame (18 Mile Creek)* and *Oak Orchard* for some outstanding tributary fishing. We were in search of the elusive Brown Trout...migrating upstream to spawn and feast on the eggs of the now dwindling salmon run. The streams are well known in fishing circles and are renowned for their abundant fish populations, scenic beauty, and welcoming small-town atmosphere.



Bob Simpson with a beautiful brown trout.

Upon arrival, we were greeted by crisp autumn air and glistening waters—a perfect setting for a few days on the trout stream. After buying a seven-day license, stopping at a local bait-and-tackle shop, and checking into our lodge near Waterport, we headed to the stream. Our group generally practices a catch-and-release policy that reflects on our commitment to conservation and sustainable recreation for future generations.

Beyond the fishing itself, the trip offered time for relaxation and camaraderie. Evenings were spent at fine restaurants/pubs, watching hunting shows, and reflecting on the day's successes...the sense of fellowship was just as rewarding as the fishing.

Navigating these two streams requires a blend of observation, strategy, and adaptability. The streams present constantly changing conditions...currents, depths, and obstructions. We have fished these streams many times and we are good at "reading the water". We look for riffles, pools, and runs...the fish often hold in slower water just beyond faster currents. Understanding

these things enables us to know where to cast for the best results.

Wading is another part of stream fishing and perhaps the most challenging for me. Unseen objects, slippery rocks, deep holes and fast water...I always carry a change of clothing as I have gotten wet many times. Another essential is wearing polarized sunglasses...it helps reduce glare and reveal underwater structures such as rocks, ledges, and enables you to see the fish better. I'm not as stable on my feet as I used to be so I try to never wade deeper than knee height in swift water.

No matter how many times I take this trip, I learn something new. I enjoy meeting and talking to fellow anglers on the stream...always seeking information on their bait or their techniques (especially the ones catching fish). Fishing these streams successfully requires experience and most importantly patience. Many things factor into catching fish consistently...water temperature, weather, and time of day can greatly influence fish activity.

By the time we returned to Greene County, the trip was unanimously declared a success. The combination of great weather, productive fishing, and shared experiences created memories that will last for years, and plans are already underway for next year's excursion. Trips like this remind us that fishing isn't just about the catch...it's about the connection, the respect for nature, and the joy of just being together outdoors."

6-ON-6 MONTANA STATE FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

By T.R. Mahle



Hunting from daylight to dark for 10 days straight is hard...no matter how much you like it. Halfway through my recent trip to Montana, we had an opportunity to take a break to see something that hasn't happened in 100 years.

The small towns of *Grass Range and Winnett*, Montana (total population 289) qualified for the Montana 6-on-6 State Championship in football. Grass Range has 32 students (K-12) and Winnett has 55 students (K-12) for a total of 87 kids. They combined schools to field a championship caliber team, going undefeated (10-0) for the regular season and qualifying for the Montana State 6-on-6 Championship. Their opponent was the *Chester-Joplin-Inverness* team with a total enrollment of 62 students.

Needing a break from the hunting and being extremely curious, we purchased our tickets and settled in to watch the *Grass Range-Winnett Rangers* (10-0) play the *Chester-Joplin-Inverness Hawks* (9-1). Surprisingly enough, for schools with a combined student body of just 149 students, the crowd was estimated to be around 1,500 spectators.

The appeal of Montana's six-man football goes beyond the scoreboard. Games draw enthusiastic community support, often involving local fans who may never have had ties to the team. For many small towns, Friday-night 6-man football embodies a sense of identity and belonging, with families, neighbors, and longtime residents turning out to cheer.

The place was electric with all the thrills of a championship game. Cow bells, air horns, music, food, and lots of supportive signs were scattered throughout the crowd. The local Air National Guard had already committed its jets to the Montana vs. Montana State game so a local rancher volunteered to fly his crop-dusting plane over the field (very low) as 3 lovely ladies sang the national anthem.

The setting was very nostalgic, with brown grass and a small scoreboard with several burned-out lights...I didn't see a play clock so I'm guessing it didn't exist. The bleachers were small with seating for just about 100 people. There were no locker rooms, no bands, and each team just went to the nearest endzone for final game preparation (and halftime).

I was able to get some answers to my very confused questions from a local rancher. The field is only 80 yds X 40 yds, first downs are every 15 yards, and touchdowns are 6 points. However, running for the extra point is worth 1 point and kicking it is worth 2. All players are eligible to catch a pass...however the player who receives the ball from the center is not eligible to run with it.

It was almost like watching a pick-up game, only with really, nice uniforms (You only have to buy 10-12 of them). However, the play was just as intense as any 11-on-11 games I have ever watched...lots of hard hitting and tackling.

In Montana, "six-man" high school football is a thriving tradition. The sport is governed by the Montana High School Association, which offers a Class C classification specifically for schools whose small enrollments make full 11-man teams impractical. These games are often the social and athletic centerpiece of rural towns.

Because there are fewer players on the field, the game tends to be fast-paced and high-scoring. This championship would be no different and the teams were tied at 30 at the end of regulation. After two OT periods, the Rangers, unfortunately, lost their first game of the season (46-38) and the *Chester-Joplin-Inverness Hawks* were crowned the champions of the 6-on-6 state tournament.

Hopefully, for the hometown Rangers team, it will not take another 100 years to reach the championship game again.



THE CHRISTMAS STORY COMES TO LIFE

By Aubrey Lesnett

The Christmas season is made more meaningful each year through a live Nativity scene hosted at Graysville Unity Presbyterian Church. Now in its third year, the event has become a cherished tradition that brings together families, children, and church members to celebrate the true meaning of Christmas.

According to Pastor David Lowe, the Nativity has grown steadily since its beginning. While the first two years featured adults portraying Mary and Joseph, this year's presentation took a different approach. "This year all kids participated, and a young child even played baby Jesus." He added, "The youth-led cast added a special sense of sincerity and joy, making the story of Christ's birth feel especially heartfelt.

Putting together a live Nativity requires time, planning, and dedication, but the process has become more efficient as the years have gone on. "The first year took more time because we had to get everything," Lowe explained. "Now that we already have the equipment and costumes, it's easier."

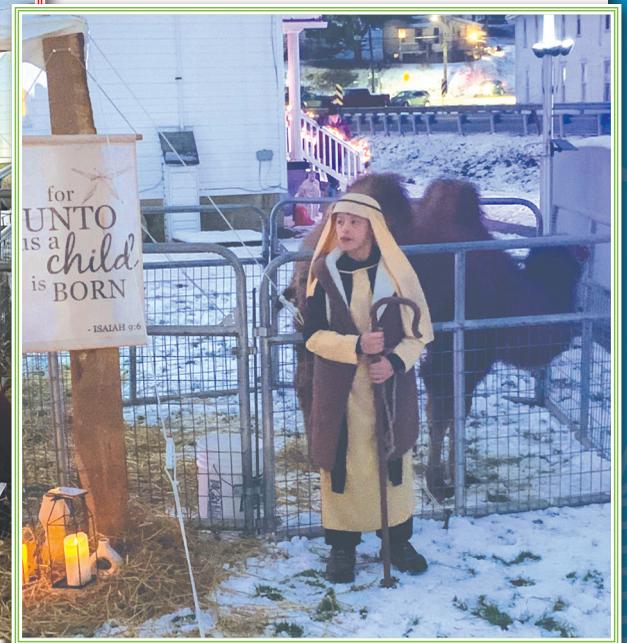
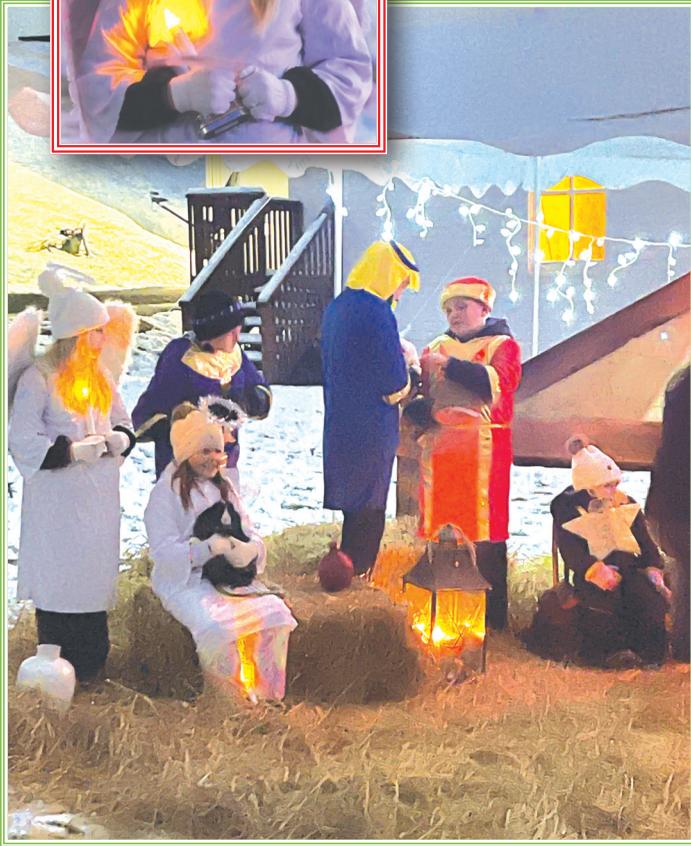
Preparation begins early, with church members staying after Sunday services to decorate and organize materials. During the week,

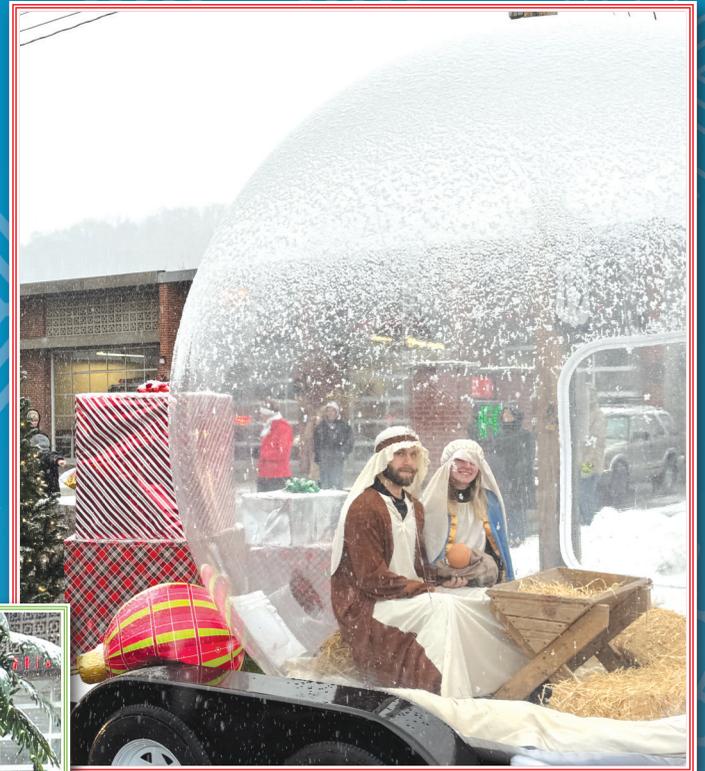
volunteers set up the tent and backdrop. On the day of the event, live animals are brought in to complete the scene. Before the program begins, participants gather for prayer, keeping the focus on worship and reflection.

The Nativity scene is truly a full church effort. Lowe praised the leadership of Hayley and Jess Bissett, along with help from Peggy Bissett and many other volunteers, for organizing and guiding the production. "They really took the lead and made sure everything was put together and well done," he said. Watching children take part in the Nativity has been especially rewarding. "It's a blessing to see the kids enjoying being a part of this and learning about the gospel," Lowe added.

Pastor Lowe emphasized that the Nativity scene is more than just a performance. It is an opportunity for outreach and unity. "It's telling the story of the birth of Christ, which is important," he said. He also noted that the event allows children in the community to participate in something meaningful while giving families a chance to come together. "It provides entertainment with a purpose."

Community members are encouraged to attend and support the event. Lowe hopes people see the Nativity as a chance to gather, reflect, and celebrate together.





ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS IS... A SEPARATE BIRTHDAY

By Bret Moore

Being born on Christmas Day sounds magical. Twinkling lights, carols in the air, goodwill to others all sound great. But ask anyone who actually celebrates their birthday on December 25, and you'll probably get a very different story.

Christmas is statistically the least likely day of the year to be born (except February 29 of course). However, everyone knows at least a couple of people who share their birthdays with a certain famous Galilean.

I know a handful of people who have that distinction and have listened with interest at how different families have approached this issue. The “accommodations” as you might expect vary according to the age of the person. One of my family members from the generation before me recounts how he was given one extra present on the dual celebration day – that’s it.

Of course, that kind of austerity would never fly today. Parents usually make every effort to find a way to delineate the celebrations.

However, I’m sure every year some poor child wakes to the same cheerful chorus from relatives. “Merry Christmas! Oh—and happy birthday, too!” The “too” hangs there like a sad ornament nobody wanted to put on the tree.

Birthday gifts are often handed over in suspiciously red-and-green wrapping paper, with candy-cane stickers that definitely didn’t come from the birthday aisle. Forget about childhood birthday parties with friends. Even if your child has tons of friends, no other kid is leaving their family (and toys) on Christmas to celebrate Little Billy’s special day.

However, Christmas birthday folks develop a certain resilience—part survival tactic, part festive humor. Many of them learn to negotiate early. “Separate presents,” is a common household treaty.

Some families get wonderfully creative in making the day feel special. Some opt for breakfast birthdays, opening birthday gifts *before* the Christmas chaos begins. Others choose a two-hour stretch *after* dinner when all holiday activities cease, and the focus shifts to the honored guest. A few even lean into the absurdity, going full-throttle with “Christmas Birthday Mash-Up Parties.”

Then there are the holiday-born who simply adopt a different birthday altogether. A surprising number of kids pick an honorary celebration date—usually in the calm, quiet tundra of mid-January or the sunlit cheer of June 25 (the famous “half-birthday”).

On those days, they get the attention, gifts, and the non-holiday-themed napkins they deserve. One note on the June 25 “half-birthday.” I have a friend whose son renegotiated the celebration date once he reached elementary school and realized that date fell outside the school year.

The ultimate goal is to avoid the dreaded “combo gifts.” My poor dad’s birthday always fell around Father’s Day, and we inevitably short-changed him. It’s one thing for an adult, but quite another for a child’s Christmas.

Regardless of the redress chosen, Christmas babies are a hearty bunch who make it work. In fact, many strong-willed famous people were born on Christmas. I started wondering how these individuals may have celebrated their special days.

I’m sure **Sir Isaac Newton** understood the gravity of the situation. I’m sure **Clara Barton** deftly tended to the wounded feelings of being left out of the celebrations. **Humphrey Bogart** must have faced the slight with his famous stoic countenance.

Fellow sports outlaws **Kenny Stabler** and **Ricky Henderson** could easily slide their celebrations to another date. The trio of **Jimmy Buffett**, **Annie Lennox**, and **Barbara Mandrel** might have caroled the day away with a “Jingle Bells/Happy Birthday” mashup. **Justin Trudeau** and his girlfriend Katie Perry could have sung along.

Rod Serling and **Sissy Spacek** could have added a haunting ethereal narration to the day. Believe it or not, even **Robert Ripley** was a Christmas baby.

I guess, in a season built on joy, maybe the greatest gift is simply having one more reason to celebrate. However, that’s a perspective that comes with age - just don’t try to sell that to a 10-year-old.

“Merry Christmas! Oh—
and Happy Birthday, too!”



WHERE THE DANCE CLUB BECAME THE COMMUNITY HUB

By Bret Moore



Front Row: (L-R) Robert Fuller, Theresa Walters, Frances Pratt, Chuck Wilkins. Second Row: L-R) Tracy Zalar, Barb Walters, Sherry Rotach. Third Row: (L-R) Shelbee McCann, Linda Vinch, Beverly DeMasse: Back Middle: Chuck Davis

People of a certain age (mine), remember a hot spot in Carmichaels called Kesocks. The unassuming building pulsed with thumping bass, flashing lights, and teenagers perfecting their best awkward dance moves. Along with the bowling alley in Waynesburg, it was the hub of teen life in the county. It was a place way before social media where kids from different schools could go to expand their social circle and make new friends.

A half century later, the building is still providing the same much needed venue for people to connect with each other - it turns out a great hangout is timeless.

The Carmichaels Activity Center stands as a lively axis of community life in the heart of this tight-knit community. More than just a gathering place, it serves as a social anchor where residents of all ages come together for dances with live bands every Friday night, fitness and yoga classes, holiday parties, game nights, public awareness meetings, line dance classes and even a murder mystery dinner.

Although it was previously known as a senior citizens center, it is presently full of incredible energy. Younger people come for a variety of programs, and adults of all ages drop in for events.

The center fosters an atmosphere that encourages connection, wellness, and volunteer spirit. In addition to the aforementioned activities, its multipurpose space hosts reunions, weddings and important fundraisers such as Toys For Tots® that draw the whole community. In a town where shared traditions matter, the Carmichaels Activity Center helps keep neighbors engaged, active, and united.

In reality the center has become the town's all ages clubhouse - where everyone is welcome. Be sure to follow them on the GreeneScene Magazine calendar and their own Facebook page for new, exciting events happening every week!



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A GREAT CHRISTMAS MEMORY

Many readers will remember **The Willow Inn in Oak Forest**. I chose to write about that spot this month because holidays there were beyond special to me.

I was in middle-school when I first started going there. I was so intrigued by this beautiful inn, I still think about it on a regular basis.

I deeply miss going there. I miss the ambience, the food, the attention to detail, the uniqueness, and the delightful owners who made it so incredibly special. I have traveled extensively, yet I have never enjoyed a dining experience as much as I did at The Willow Inn.

I don't think it could ever be duplicated. Too many wonderful people, recipes, and objects collided to make an unforgettable experience. **The property was purchased by Pat Varner and Ralph Wilson in 1974. The brick farmhouse dated to 1790 and needed many repairs.**

Pat was quoted in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* saying, "it took three years to refurbish the home, and eight years to turn a profit." Ralph was not a trained chef. But after leaving his teaching position, he taught himself the art to fulfill a life-long dream. We are so fortunate they both took the chance in Greene County.

I got the privilege of knowing both gentlemen professionally when we allowed them to have free reign in our produce and meat departments at Giant Eagle, so they could handpick for their menu. Managers enjoyed bringing them into walk-in coolers and prep areas, and friendships developed over the years.

They were excellent and exceedingly kind customers. They brought the term "shop local" to a whole new level.

The restaurant was open year-round, but the holidays there were magical. I remember stepping up onto that creaking, sloping front porch with the candlelight flickering through the frosty windows.

As you stepped into the foyer, you were greeted by Ralph with a glass of wine. It was rather dark as only candlelight was used, but the soft glow was so inviting and warm you felt as if you had stepped into a Christmas story from years ago.

The scent of pine and the delicious smells from the kitchen flooded your senses. Guests could mingle with anticipation in the dining areas. The interior floors and steps were also sloped and slanted, but it only added to the charm. Pat's "primitive style" paintings adorned the walls.

Another cheeky feature was the inn's "Blacklist." It enumerated the unfortunate souls who were no-shows and therefore banned from returning. That simple binder played no favorites. Readers saw the names of their favorite "Steelers" or other local and regional celebrities who dared commit the ultimate social faux pas.

For you see, the dinner was prepared for a specific number of guests. One did not just "show up" for dinner. Reservations were made well in advance, and the menu was planned with the utmost artistry and thought. Prospective guests were made aware, so the thought of just not showing up when a reservation had been made, was downright preposterous.

Guests mingled until Pat announced everyone could be

seated. Tables were assigned ahead of time naturally. Different sized tables to accommodate various-sized parties were thoughtfully set and adorned. Candles burned endlessly on the tables, mantles, windows, and in sconces.

Worried about seeing the menu? Not need, there wasn't one. Pat would tell you about each course as it was presented. Meals were elegantly paired and curated by Ralph, and guests ate what they were served: family style, of course.

First, soup arrived, then salad, as the conversations flowed easily from every table. Guests oohed and aahed over every course, and Pat and an assistant or two kept the courses coming, perfectly timed. There was time to savor each course, allowing that perfect bit of rest between each dish.

Empty plates seemed to float away seamlessly and quietly. There was no clamoring or clattering of china. That was no small feat because pieces were mismatched and eclectic - but oh so beautiful.

As the evening wore on and the candles tapered, dessert was served. Final dishes were removed, and the kind and quiet chef finally emerged from the kitchen to say goodnight to guests: the perfect ending to an unforgettable evening. I am sure we applauded, or I could just be dreaming.

As guests said goodnights and headed to their cars, all were amazed that 3-4 hours had passed. It wasn't just dinner. It was fine dining in a 200-year-old remote inn with family

and friends creating a core memory.

I am teary-eyed just writing this as I can still see the gentlemen's smiling faces, the mild exhaustion on Ralph's face as he emerged from the kitchen, the delighted guests, the flickering of the candles, and the pine placed artfully over mantles. I can still taste, hear and feel every sensory aspect of those evenings.

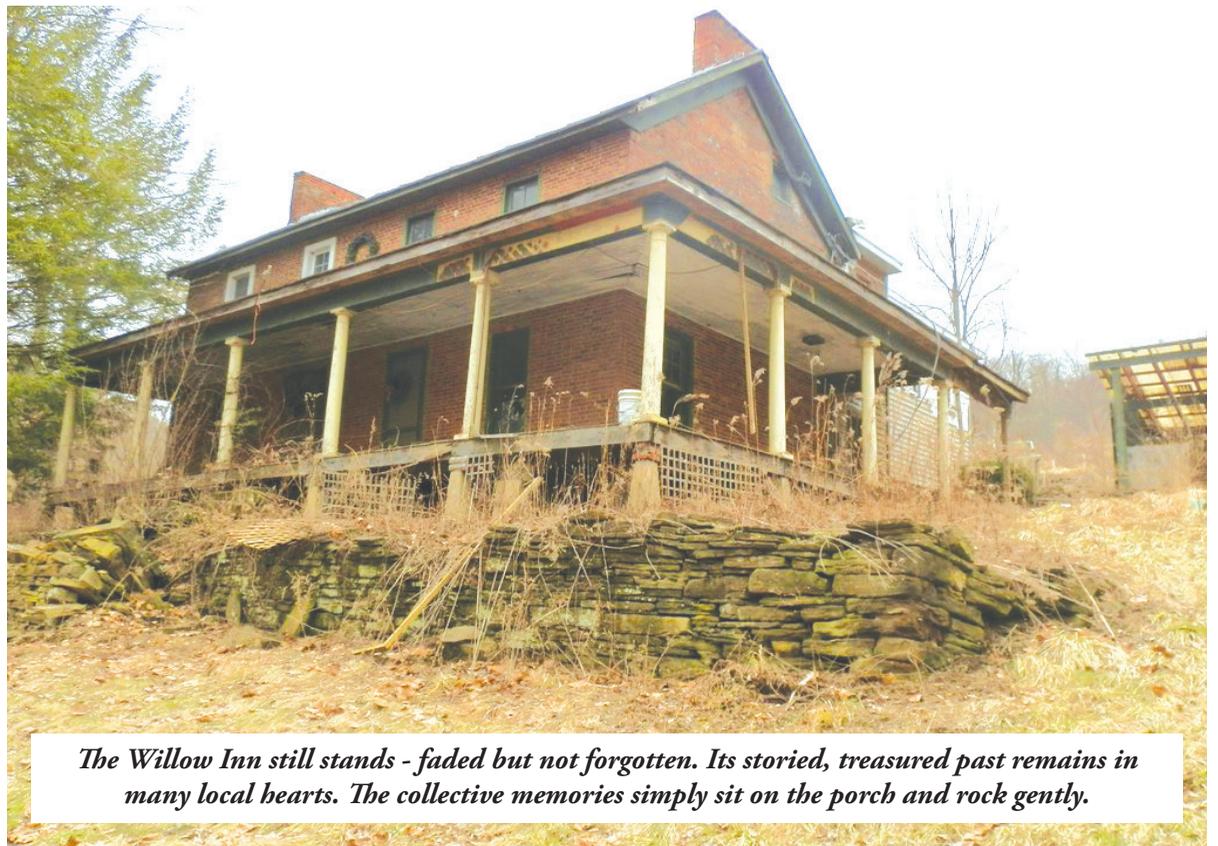
I long to see my parents' faces in that candlelight, enjoying and savoring every bite. I can picture the holiday attire as guests dressed in red, green, plaid, velvet, and gold. I can feel the rush of the warmth from inside as I step out of the cold from the porch.

And, I can feel the excitement of sitting down at the table, and the anticipation of returning as I leave.

I know many readers have stories, experiences, and favorite memories from The Willow Inn. There are recipes floating around the county, and hopefully some of you will share them in our Crowded Kitchen section.

This month, I am sharing one of my absolute favorite soups served at The Inn. It was even published in *Bon Appetit* magazine. (I want to thank Lisa Hillsman for writing it out for me many years ago.)

I may not be able to dine in The Willow Inn anymore, but I will always cherish the times I did and hold on to those memories as tightly as I can.



The Willow Inn still stands - faded but not forgotten. Its storied, treasured past remains in many local hearts. The collective memories simply sit on the porch and rock gently.



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The Curious Life of New Year's Resolutions

Every year on January 1, millions of people wake up with a headache, a vague sense of optimism, and an unshakable belief that this will be the year they finally become the person they've been pretending to be on social media. Thus begins the grand tradition of the New Year's resolution, a custom so widespread it may be the only thing Americans agree on besides complaining about the weather.

The prevalence of New Year's resolutions is staggering. Surveys routinely show that nearly half of adults make at least one resolution, and the other half lie about not making one while quietly thinking they should probably eat more vegetables. The most popular resolutions are remarkably consistent year after year: lose weight, exercise more, save money, quit a bad habit, and "be better," (a resolution so vague it can't technically fail).

Collectively, these promises produce a yearly chorus of self-improvement, sung loudly at first, fading to a mumble by the end of the month.

Gyms, of course, are the most reliable witnesses to the resolution phenomenon. In early January, fitness centers resemble concert venues: packed, loud, and filled with people wearing brand-new outfits. By February, attendance drops off dramatically, and by March, the regulars once again have their favorite treadmill back.

This cycle repeats annually, providing gym owners with a dependable business model and long-time members with a quiet sense of superiority.

So how effective are New Year's resolutions, really? The short answer: not very. Studies suggest that only a small percentage of people actually keep their resolutions for an entire year. Many abandon them within weeks, often around the time the salads get boring, and the couch starts whispering sweet nothings. This has led some experts to declare resolutions "doomed," though this conveniently ignores the fact that humans are generally doomed at sticking to anything that requires effort.

Still, it's not all bad news. Resolutions do have a strange, fleeting power. They create a moment, however brief, when people reflect on their lives and imagine improvement. For a few glorious days, credit cards are paid down, jogging shoes are worn unironically, and vegetables are consumed without complaint. That initial burst of motivation, while temporary, proves that people genuinely want change, even if they don't want it badly enough to skip dessert.

The problem may not be the idea of resolutions, but their execution. Many are wildly unrealistic. Someone who hasn't exercised since mullets were "cool" the first time suddenly vows to work out seven days a week. A person with no savings plans to become "financially responsible," a phrase so intimidating it practically demands failure. These resolutions collapse under their own ambition, leaving their makers discouraged and oddly defensive when asked about them in April.

Ironically, the most effective resolutions tend to be the least exciting. Small, specific goals such as walking a few times a week, saving a little money, drinking one less soda a day have a better chance of surviving the year. Unfortunately, no one wants to announce, "My New Year's resolution is to be marginally better," even though it's the most honest and achievable option.

In the end, New Year's resolutions persist not because they work, but because they symbolize hope. They are annual reminders that reinvention feels possible, at least for a moment. Even if most resolutions fail, the tradition endures. And come next January, people will once again raise a glass, make a promise, and truly believe (if only briefly) that this year will be different.



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THE EVOLUTION OF THE NEW YEAR'S CELEBRATION

By T.R. Mahle

The New Year's Eve celebration in New York City is one of the most famous and widely broadcast events in the world. Each year, hundreds of thousands of people gather in the heart of Manhattan to welcome the new year with music, performances, and the iconic ball drop. The event takes place in Times Square, where the sparkling Waterford Crystal Ball drops as the final seconds of the year count down. Over time, the ball itself has ballooned from a 700-pound iron-and-wood orb to a brightly patterned sphere 12 feet in diameter and weighing in at nearly 12,000 pounds.

The tradition began in 1907 and typically features live performances by major artists, confetti showers, fireworks, and the singing of "Auld Lang Syne" at midnight. The Times Square New Year's Eve celebration marks the passage of time and shares the optimism for the year ahead.

The first country to celebrate New Year's every year is the Oceanic country Kiribati because they are in the world's earliest time zone. For comparison, that makes it 5:00am, December 31 in NYC.

Most modern cultures recognize January 1 as the start of the new year. However, ancient cultures also celebrated with festivals that rang in the new year. The earliest known record of a New Year festival dates from about 2000 BCE in Mesopotamia, where Babylonians celebrated the *Akitu festival*, which began with the new moon...usually around mid-September.

For the Egyptians and Phoenicians, the new year began on September 21. For ancient Persians it began on March 21, and for the early Greeks it began with the winter solstice on December 21. However, the early Romans were the first to recognize January 1 as the beginning of the new year in 153 BCE. The date was chosen in honor of Janus, the Roman god of beginnings. Romans celebrated this day with sacrifices, feasting, and exchanging gifts.

Today, other cultures' celebrations vary widely, incorporating unique customs and rituals. In **Spain** for example, it is customary to eat twelve grapes at midnight, one for each stroke of the

clock. In **Italy**, eating lentils and black-eyed peas is believed to bring financial prosperity. **China** celebrates with a Spring Festival, which includes family reunions, feasting, and fireworks.

Because pigs represent progress and prosperity in some cultures, pork appears on the New Year's Eve table in **Cuba, Austria, Hungary, Portugal** and other countries. In **Sweden** and **Norway**, meanwhile, rice pudding with an almond hidden inside is served on New Year's Eve. It is said that whoever finds the nut can expect 12 months of good fortune.

Regardless of the traditions, New Year's Eve celebrations bring people together. The shared joy of new beginnings fosters a hope for a brighter future.

The graphic features the 'GreeneScene COMMUNITY MAGAZINE' logo in green and white. Below it, the text 'CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2025' is written in large, bold, white letters. Underneath, it says 'Go to: www.greenescenemagazine.com or scan the QR code' in yellow and white. To the right is a yellow calendar with a grid of dates from 01 to 31. A red box highlights a QR code with the 'Gs' logo, which is intended to be scanned to access the calendar. There are also decorative elements like a leafy branch and a clock icon.



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CBM: A GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING

By Emma Bates



Camp Cornerstone in Jefferson has been the home of Children's Bible Ministries (CBM) since 2008. CBM offers faith-based summer camps to area children and teens with varying focuses like Adventure Camp that features a host of outdoor pursuits and regular week-long camps for elementary, middle, and high school students that consist of chapel meetings, crafts, games, music, and traditional fire-side fun. Campers also enjoy the woodland zipline course and indoor rock wall during their stay. Additionally, Christian schools utilize the gymnasium for athletic practices outside of camp season.

But the facility doesn't just serve the young people in our area. Cornerstone is a hub for retreats, celebrations, and organizational gatherings. All kinds of groups utilize the camp, from retired teachers to the participants of Kyros Prison Ministry.

But this vibrant, Greene County ministry center didn't start out as warm and colorful as it is today. In fact, CBM's Camp Cornerstone site was originally a cast-off portal belonging to Dilworth Mine's CONSOL Coal Company, now Core Natural Resources.

Children's Bible Ministries chapters have existed within the country since 1935, beginning as a way to teach Bible lessons to school-aged children. CBM entered southwestern Pennsylvania in 1970, when Bible Release Time first became available to students. These hour-long weekly classes and later summer camps would be held at various rented facilities across the region, as CBM had not yet been able to secure a home of its own.

All that changed in 2007, however, when lifelong CBM missionary Judy Virgili recognized an opportunity amidst the

soot and old rusty pipes. Along her frequent walks down a side road near her home, Virgili was always drawn to the gated entrance of the mine portal site, and soon recognized that it could, with the right attention and support, become a beautiful campsite for local students.

Virgili and thousands of prayer warriors were overjoyed when CONSOL Energy decided to donate that very site to CBM of Southwestern PA. "It could have gone to someone else, but God had it for us," Virgili remarks gratefully.

The following year, renovations were underway to convert the dank and dusty buildings into a thriving Christian campus. On top of the gift of the building and grounds, more miraculous donations kept making their way into the CBM fund as the once-daunting renovation project grew nearer to the finish line.

Forty churches contributed to the transformation by adopting rooms inside and taking ownership of the renovation and furnishings within.

Virgili calls the 18,000 square foot building and other adjacent structures on the 27-acre property a "gift that has kept on giving." "Physical things are great," she says, "but the lives of the children that are changed is the biggest blessing."

Today, CBM's Cornerstone Ministry Center serves around 800 children every month from 28 schools in 14 districts.

And the impacts of the camp are far reaching. A number of former CBM students now serve in missionary capacities



around the world, located in Africa, Thailand, and beyond.

Just this month, Virgili invited land agents from CONSOL Energy to witness the transformation at Camp Cornerstone for themselves and say a proper "thank you" for that gift given 17 years ago. On that tour was the original agent, who still remembered Judy. The reunion was an exciting one, with new goals for the growth of the camp and staff housing needs being discussed.

If you feel led to share God's word, engage with campers during summer programming, or offer prayer or financial support, the CBM team invites you to connect with them at 724-966-9157 or office@cbmswpa.org. For more information, visit www.campcornerstone.org.

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BIG JOY IN A SMALL BOX

By Emma Bates



Students of the Merciful Mikes Christian Club assembled 60 shoeboxes at Carmichaels Middle/High School during their student-led packing party. (Gracie Pratt and Ella Groves in the foreground).

What all fits inside a plain, four-sided cardboard container? A lot more than one might think. Ask the nearly 520,000 **Operation Christmas Child** volunteers worldwide who know that big miracles often come in small packages.

Operation Christmas Child is an annual initiative sponsored by **Samaritan's Purse**. This internationally recognized humanitarian organization spends each holiday season looking out for others by collecting shoeboxes packed by generous donors. Boxes are stuffed full of colorful toys, engaging games, up-to-date school supplies, and necessary hygiene items for children near and far at Christmas time.

Many recipients have never received a gift before. Some live in war-torn or otherwise impoverished areas of the world without access to even the smallest luxuries. Operation Christmas Child aims to give every child the opportunity to receive a tangible reminder that they are seen and loved— by God, and by a complete stranger across the ocean.

Along with every shoebox delivered to a child in need comes the message of hope at Christmas. Missionaries who take part in the final steps of box delivery let children and their families know that Jesus cares for them and is the true provider of the gift.

Shoebbox packing is a tradition for the whole family to practice doing exactly what Christmas is all about— spreading joy to the world. Many American families have made shoebox packing a Christmas tradition since the initiative's inception in 1993.

Some box-packers head straight to local stores to handpick items that will make it into the gift. Others attend church-hosted packing parties to assemble boxes in community with others. Here, assembly-line selections are made to ensure every box is overflowing with both practical and delightful goodies. Project leaders and participants know the impact this program has on not only those receiving, but on the givers, too.

Packers can further personalize their boxes by selecting the age range and gender of the child they are shopping for, with categories for toddlers, young children, and older kids and teens.

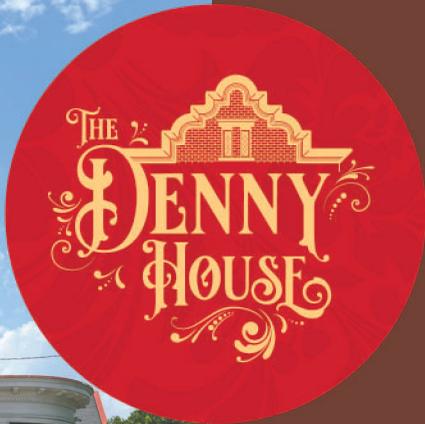
Samaritan's Purse partners with thousands of churches and individuals across the country in order to collect these tangible tokens of peace on Earth.

This year, Samaritan's Purse outlined a goal of sending 12 million shoebox gifts in 2025. Greene county residents contributed greatly to this effort, with approximately 2,700 boxes donated during National Collection Week, held from November 17-23.

Various churches of all denominations have brought this initiative to their congregations year after year, with some even serving as collection points as well. The Way Community Center in Waynesburg, in partnership with First Baptist Church of Waynesburg, also opened its doors as a drop-off location this year.

By filling small boxes, Greene County residents have brought a little more joy to the world this Christmas season for children in the greatest need.

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The Willow Inn Tomato Dumpling Soup

Cook 2 medium, chopped onions in a large stock pot with ½ stick of margarine. (Cook until onions are clear.)

Add:

2-28 oz cans of whole tomatoes that have been pureed in a blender.

2 cups chicken stock; ½ cup sugar; ½ tsp salt; ¼ tsp pepper; 1 ½ tsps. Cinnamon
Simmer for 10-15 minutes and prepare

The Dumplings:

1 ½ cups flour; 1 tsp baking powder; ½ tsp salt; 3 eggs; 2 Tbs. Vegetable oil

Mix all ingredients above together. Dough will be very sticky. Make very, very small dumplings (about the size of chickpea or so) and drop into the soup one at a time.

Cook another 10-15 minutes and serve.



BAKING SPIRITS BRIGHT

Traditional Raspberry Linzer Cookies (Sara Popson)

Ingredients: 2/3 c. whole almonds or 1 cup almond flour; 1/2 c. brown sugar; packed 2 1/2 c. all-purpose flour; 1/2 tsp. baking powder; 1/2 tsp. salt; 1/4 tsp. ground cinnamon; 1 c. unsalted butter (room temperature); 1 large egg; 1 tsp. vanilla extract; 2 tbs. powdered sugar (for dusting). 1- 12-oz jar of seedless raspberry preserves.

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Spread almonds on a rimmed baking sheet and toast until lightly browned and fragrant (6-10 minutes).
3. Let almonds cool and whisk together flour, baking powder, salt, and cinnamon in a med. bowl.
4. Process the almonds and 1/4 cup of the brown sugar in the food processor until finely ground. Pulse! Do not continuously process or you will make almond butter.
5. In a large bowl beat together remaining brown sugar and butter until fluffy. Add egg and vanilla.
6. With mixer on low gradually add in the almonds then the flour mixture until completely incorporated. Do not over mix!
7. Separate the dough into two disks and refrigerate for 2 hours until firm.
8. On lightly floured surface, roll out dough to 1/8 inch thickness. Cut out equal amount of top (shape with cutout) and bottoms.
9. Bake the tops and bottoms on separate parchment lined cookie sheets for 8-10 minutes rotating halfway through.
10. Dust tops with powdered sugar after cooling.
11. Spread raspberry preserves on each bottom cookie leaving small border and match with tops.

Baklava Cookies (Carolyn Morris) (Makes Two Dozen) (Freezes well)

Ingredients: 1c. White Sugar; ½ c. Butter; 2 Eggs; 1 tsp. each: Almond & Vanilla; 2 ¼ c. Flour; 1 tsp. Baking Powder; ½ tsp. Salt. **Filling:** (½ c. honey and ¾ c. finely chopped walnuts)

Mix together, then refrigerate for 30 minutes. Shape into 1-inch balls

Bake 8 Minutes. Remove from oven and make indent in each one.

Fill indent with honey and chopped walnuts. Sprinkle with 3 tbs. sugar & 2 tsp. cinnamon

Return to the oven and bake an additional 7-9 minutes

Shirley's Cookies (Mary McCollum) (Makes about five dozen cookies)

Ingredients: 1 c. soft shortening; 1 c. brown sugar; 1 c. white sugar; 2 eggs; 1 c. sour or buttermilk; 2 tsp. vanilla; (Add) 4 c. flour; 1 tsp. soda; 2 tsp. baking powder; 1 tsp. salt.

Beat with mixer.

Add chocolate chips, nuts or raisins.

Drop by spoon on cookie sheet. Bake 375 degrees F (10-12 minutes)

English Cookies (Mary McCollum) (Makes about 80 cookies)

Ingredients: 1 c. shortening (softened); 1 c. brown sugar; 1 c. white sugar; 1 c. cold coffee; 2 eggs; 2 c. (stewed raisins or chocolate chips or even nuts); 1 tsp. baking powder; 1 tsp. soda; ½ tsp. nutmeg; ½ tsp. cinnamon.

Add enough flour to stiffen to drop by spoon on cookie sheet.

Bake until brown.

Peanut Butter Blossoms (from the late Raymond Rankin of Carmichaels, PA)

Ingredients:

1 C. of Shortening (Crisco) ;1 C. of Creamy Peanut Butter
1 C. of Sugar (plus extra for rolling); 1 C. of Brown Sugar
2 Eggs; 4 Tbs of Milk; 2 Tsp. of Vanilla Extract; 1 Tsp. of Salt; 3.5 C. of All-Purpose Flour;
1 Pound of Classic Hershey's Kisses

Instructions:

- Mix cream together with shortening, peanut butter, sugar, and brown sugar for at least 2 minutes.
- After, add eggs, milk, and vanilla.
- Once wet ingredients are thoroughly mixed, add dry ingredients and mix for at least 2 more minutes.
- Meanwhile, remove Kisses from foil wrappers and set aside in a separate bowl. Pour extra sugar into a bowl for rolling.
- Using a 1 Tablespoon sized cookie scoop, mold dough into small balls and roll them in the sugar. Place on parchment paper lined cookie sheet at least an inch apart.
- Bake for 8 minutes at 350 degrees.
- Once the initial 8 minutes is over, remove from the oven and add Kisses to the middle of the cookies. Replace it in oven for another 2 minutes.
- Once finished, remove cookies from the oven and put them onto the cooling area (rack or parchment paper-lined surface). Cool for at least half an hour before storing.
- Can be stored at room temperature for up to a week and for up to 3 months if frozen.



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Halie Gallagher submitted this shot of her sons Landry and Bodee with Luna at the L&B Almosta Farm in Waynesburg.

Season's Greetings



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THE MANY FACES OF CHRISTMAS

By Bret Moore

Though most of us picture Christmas as a December 25 celebration filled with decorated trees, midnight services, and cheerful songs, the reality is far richer and more varied. The holiday that honors the birth of Jesus takes on distinct forms across continents and faith traditions, shaped by history, culture, and even the calendar. From candlelit Western services to the fasting and feasting of Orthodox traditions, Christmas is a season that reveals the diversity of global Christianity while uniting people in themes of hope.

In Western Christianity (Roman Catholic, Anglican and Protestant), Christmas is celebrated on **December 25**. This date, established by the Roman Church in the fourth century, likely aligned with existing winter festivals that celebrated light in the darkness. The symbolism fit perfectly: Christ as the Light of the World.

The four weeks before Christmas, known as Advent, are a time of anticipation. Each Sunday, candles are lit on Advent wreaths, and hymns echo with the promise of peace and salvation. The culmination comes on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, when churches fill for midnight Masses or candlelight services and families gather for festive meals.

Over time, Western culture layered new traditions onto the sacred. The Christmas tree, first popularized in Germany, became a universal symbol of life and endurance. St. Nicholas, the generous bishop of Myra, evolved into Santa Claus, the embodiment of giving. In places like the United States and Britain, these customs blend with faith to create a celebration that is as cultural as it is spiritual.

Many Orthodox Christians (Russian, Greek, Serbian, and Ethiopian) observe Christmas on **January 7**. The date difference is due to separate calendars. The Western world adopted the Gregorian calendar in 1582, while most Orthodox churches continued following the older Julian calendar, which lags 13 days behind.

For Orthodox believers, Christmas is preceded by the Nativity Fast, a 40-day period of prayer, reflection, and abstention from meat and dairy. On Christmas Eve, families share a simple meal, often without animal products. In Ukraine, this includes kutia, a sweet grain pudding symbolizing unity and eternal life.

As midnight approaches, the faithful gather for the Divine Liturgy. The service is filled with incense, chanting, and candlelight. In Russia, worshippers brave the cold to attend all-night vigils, while in Ethiopia's Tewahedo Church, congregations dressed in white celebrate the feast of Ganna at dawn. In every case, Orthodox Christmas is less about glitter and more about the religious elements.

The Armenian Apostolic Church, one of the oldest Christian communities, celebrates Christmas on **January 6**. Unlike other traditions that separate Christmas and Epiphany, Armenians observe both on the same day, honoring both Christ's birth and baptism. Churches bless water with holy oil, symbolizing the River Jordan where Jesus was baptized, and families share meals featuring fish and rice. This ancient observance preserves what may be the earliest Christian tradition, predating the Western shift to December 25.



Traditional Armenian Christmas Meal.

In Egypt, members of the **Coptic Orthodox Church** also celebrate Christmas on **January 7**. Their 43-day Advent fast ends with a joyful midnight Mass, followed by a feast. Coptic Christians have endured centuries of political and cultural pressures. However, across Cairo and Alexandria lanterns glow and prayers fill the air as believers celebrate their faith.



Orthodox Christian Service.

In the Philippines, where Catholicism is strong, Christmas is the longest season of the year, **beginning in September**. Lanterns called "parols" decorate homes and streets, symbolizing the star of Bethlehem, and families gather for nightly novena services leading up to Christmas Eve. In **Mexico and much of Latin America**, communities celebrate **Las Posadas**, a nine-day reenactment of Mary and Joseph's search for shelter.



Christmas in the Philippines.

Despite different calendars, customs, and cuisines, the heart of Christmas remains the same. It is a celebration of love, hope, and renewal. Whether it's a Western family gathering around a tree, an Orthodox congregation standing through a candlelit vigil, or Armenian worshippers blessing water, the many Christmases of the world remind us that the season speaks a universal language.

LORING NAMED 2026 PENNSYLVANIA TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Madeline Loring has been named the 2026 Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year. Governor Josh Shapiro and Secretary of Education Dr. Carrie Rowe made the announcement December 8, at the Pennsylvania Department of Education's annual professional development conference, in Hershey.

Loring was one of 12 finalists and is the second Waynesburg University alumnus to be selected as Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year.

Loring has been an educator for 13 years and currently teaches fourth grade at Jefferson-Morgan Elementary School. She has previously taught fourth grade mathematics, kindergarten, high school learning support and life skills support. Loring received her Bachelor of Arts in elementary and special education from Waynesburg and went on to earn a master's degree in administrative leadership as well as a library science certification from California University of Pennsylvania.

Rowe stated, "Madeline Loring, exemplifies exceptional dedication, service, and passion, and stands as a role model to her students and peers. The Shapiro Administration commends her on this outstanding achievement and looks forward to her future success."

"I am truly humbled and honored to even be considered for such a wonderful recognition," said Loring in a recent interview. "As teachers, we normally don't go into this profession to be recognized. We do it because we care about the kids that we proudly serve in our communities. I feel



grateful to be part of such a prestigious group of teachers."

"I loved my time at Waynesburg University as a student," said Loring. "The biggest thing about Waynesburg is that you are not just a number – you are a name."

According to the Department of Education, "Loring creates a classroom environment with high expectations for students who are encouraged to take intellectual risks."

She demonstrates genuine warmth and care with each of her students, while simultaneously growing their academic excitement and success. Her dedication to her school and community goes beyond the classroom through her roles as the Drama Club Director, a member of the local Lion's Club, and an active member and leader at St. Marcellus Church."

"Loring is an advocate for the teaching profession while serving as a Student Teacher Facilitator/Mentor through Penn West University and Waynesburg University. She is a district leader at Jefferson-Morgan, providing professional development opportunities with other math department members and intermediate unit specialists. Loring's dedication and passion for her students and school led her to being named the Innovator of the Year at Jefferson-Morgan during the 2023-2024 school year."

Through the National Teacher of the Year Program, the PDE identifies and honors exemplary teaching and classroom practices across the Commonwealth. The program annually recognizes a professional who inspires students of all backgrounds and abilities to learn; who has the respect and admiration of students, parents, and colleagues; and who plays an active and useful role in both school and community.

As Pennsylvania's Teacher of the Year, Loring will travel the state, meet and collaborate with other educators, and represent the Commonwealth in the 2027 National Teacher of the Year competition.

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A PIECE OF MY MIND

Random Thoughts, Reflections & Memories That Occupy Space in My Mind by Vicky Hughes



In the late 19th century, a simple question from an eight-year-old girl inspired one of the most beloved editorials ever written. In 1897, Virginia O'Hanlon of New York City wrote a letter to *The Sun*, a prominent newspaper of the time. Her question was short but profound: "Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus. Papa says, 'If you see it in *The Sun*, it's so.' Please tell me the truth—is there a Santa Claus?"

The response, published anonymously on September 21, 1897, was penned by veteran newsman Francis Church. His editorial, titled "Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus," became a timeless reflection on faith, wonder, and the unseen truths that shape human life.

Church's answer was not a simple "yes." Instead, he used Virginia's question to explore deeper ideas about belief and the human spirit. "Yes, Virginia," he wrote, "there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist." In those few words, Church reframed Santa Claus not as a literal figure who travels the world in one night, but as a symbol of the enduring goodness and hope that live within the human heart.

The power of the editorial lies in its message that some of the most important things in life cannot be seen or measured.

Love, faith, joy, and kindness, like Santa Claus, exist because we choose to believe in them and nurture them through our actions. Church argued that skepticism and cynicism, while common in adulthood, rob the world of its magic. "The most real things in the world," he wrote, "are those that neither children nor men can see."

In my memories, one Christmas that stands out as significant was the year that my dad was laid off from his job at the steel mill. Times were tough, and my parents were taking on part-time jobs to try to make ends meet for our family of six. I don't clearly remember the specific details, but I know it was a cold Christmas Eve and snow was falling. We heard a car out in front of our house and looked out to see Santa in his full suit in the passenger seat of a sedan. He jumped out and immediately began carrying boxes filled with food and wrapped Christmas gifts for me and my siblings to our front porch. I was probably around the same age as young Virginia and probably had much of the same curiosity. In my young eyes, that old sedan was equivalent to Santa's sleigh, and the gifts delivered that night were more precious than gold.

Over the decades, "Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus" has been reprinted countless times, translated into multiple

languages, and adapted into radio plays, television specials, and books. It remains one of the most reprinted editorials in newspaper history. Each holiday season, it resurfaces as a reminder that belief is not naive, it is necessary.

In a modern world often defined by uncertainty and information overload, the message still resonates. Santa Claus represents the spirit of giving and the invisible threads that connect humanity through compassion and imagination. To believe in Santa Claus is to believe in the goodness that people can create for one another.

So, here's a piece of my mind... Believing in Santa isn't just about a man in a red suit, it's about holding on to the magic, wonder, and kindness that make the holiday season so special. When we believe, we open our hearts to joy, generosity, and imagination, reminding ourselves that some of the best things in life can't be seen, only felt. And keeping that belief alive helps make the world a little brighter, one Christmas at a time. More than a century later, Church's words still ring true: "Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus." It is not merely a statement about a holiday legend, but a testament to the power of faith, hope, and love, the very qualities that make life worth believing in.

MATCH THE CLASSIC CHRISTMAS SONG TO ITS MOVIE

Lights, camera, listen! Some of our most unforgettable Christmas songs first stole the show on the silver screen. From heart-pounding montages to tear-jerking finales, movies have a way of launching songs straight into pop-culture immortality. This quiz celebrates those iconic tunes that were written for films (or are forever linked to them). Test how well you can match the melody to the movie moment. Grab your imaginary popcorn, cue the soundtrack in your head, and see how you do. Ready to press play?

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1. "White Christmas" <input type="checkbox"/> 2. "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" <input type="checkbox"/> 3. "Believe" <input type="checkbox"/> 4. "A Holly Jolly Christmas" <input type="checkbox"/> 5. "Silver Bells" <input type="checkbox"/> 6. "Snow/Heat Miser Song" <input type="checkbox"/> 7. "We Need a Little Christmas" <input type="checkbox"/> 8. "Where are You Now?" <input type="checkbox"/> 9. "Christmas is All Around" <input type="checkbox"/> 10. "Christmas Time is Here" 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Meet Me in St. Louis (1944) B. Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer (1962) C. A Year Without a Santa Claus (1974) D. How the Grinch Stole Christmas (2000) E. A Charlie Brown Christmas (1965) F. Holiday Inn (1954) G. Polar Express (2004) H. The Lemon Drop Kid (1951) I. Mame (1974) J. Love Actually (2003)
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WIN \$50

Holiday I Contest Winners

Winners Not Pictured

Where is this, Contest Winner!

Laura Katchmark

Christmas Cookie Contest Winner!

Sara Popson

Top 10 Christmas Movies Contest Winner!

Rocky King

Person Place or Thing Contest Winner!

Sarah Wheeler



Count the Turkeys Contest Winner!

Melanie Rice

RESULTS OF HOLIDAY I READERS' POLL

The Top 10 results of our Favorite Holiday Movie poll unsurprisingly leaned to lighthearted comedies and nostalgic memories of simpler times. We here at the GreeneScene hope you get a chance to enjoy your favorites this year and maybe check out a classic you may have missed.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Elf 2. Miracle on 34th Street 3. The Grinch 4. A Christmas Story 5. A Charlie Brown Christmas | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer 7. A Muppets Christmas Carol 8. Mickey's Christmas Carol 9. White Christmas 10. It's a Wonderful Life |
|--|---|



SCAN TO ENTER! ONLINE OR BY MAIL

Name: _____

Email: _____

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Mail to: GreeneScene Contest, 185 Wade St, Waynesburg, PA 15370. One Entry per person per category. Drawing on 01-13-26. Winner must respond within 24 hours of notification to receive prize.



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WHY WE ALL SING THIS SONG

(Even If We Don't Know the Words)

As the final seconds of the year tick away, voices rise (some confident, most off-key) in a familiar, sentimental chorus. Glasses are raised, arms are linked, and **Auld Lang Syne** does what it has done for generations: it turns a roomful of individuals into a brief, shared community. Few songs are as instantly recognizable and widely sung, yet so often misunderstood. Its title alone sounds like a linguistic dare, yet its meaning and history are surprisingly simple—and deeply human.

Auld Lang Syne is Scots, roughly translating to “old long since,” or more loosely, “times gone by.” At its heart, the song asks a gentle question: should old friendships be forgotten? The answer, of course, is no. We should remember them, drink to them, and carry them with us into whatever comes next. That sentiment, equal parts nostalgia and hope, helps explain why the song has become inseparable from moments of transition.

The version most people know today was popularized in 1788 by Scotland's national poet, **Robert Burns**. As a former teacher of British Literature, I loved the day I got to tell my students they had all quoted Burns without knowing it. Almost every student immediately recognized the tune, if not the words.

Burns claimed he collected the song from an old man who sang him a traditional folk tune, and scholars believe earlier versions of the lyrics existed as far back as the 16th century. Burns refined and preserved it, giving the song literary permanence while keeping its plainspoken warmth. True to folk tradition,

the melody and lyrics evolved over time, shaped as much by communal memory as by any single author.

Originally, Auld Lang Syne was not tied specifically to New Year's Eve. In Scotland, it was sung at farewells, funerals, and social gatherings—any occasion that marked parting or reflection. The association with the New Year developed gradually, particularly in the 19th century, as Hogmanay (the Scottish New Year celebration) grew in cultural prominence. The song's themes made it a natural fit for the moment when one year is released and another welcomed.

Its leap from **Scotland** to the rest of the world followed familiar paths of migration and empire. Scottish immigrants carried the song to North America, Australia, and beyond, where it took root in local traditions. In the United States, its New Year's dominance was cemented in the early 20th century, thanks in part to radio broadcasts. **Guy Lombardo and His Royal Canadians** famously played Auld Lang Syne at midnight on New Year's Eve for decades, making it an auditory marker of the holiday for millions of listeners.

Despite its ubiquity, few people can confidently sing all the lyrics—and that may be part of its charm. The melody is simple, the chorus forgiving, and the meaning resilient even when words are muddled. You don't need perfect Scots pronunciation to grasp the song's emotional core. Whether sung loudly, quietly, or hummed while waiting for fireworks, it conveys the



same message: the past matters, but so does the future.

Auld Lang Syne has been translated into dozens of languages and adapted across cultures, yet it retains its identity. Few songs can claim that kind of universality without losing their soul.

In an age of playlists and fleeting trends, Auld Lang Syne endures because it is not about novelty. It is about continuity. Each time it is sung, the present briefly shakes hands with the past. As the year turns and voices waver through its familiar strains, the song reminds us that while time moves on, memory can move with it.

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Merry Christmas!

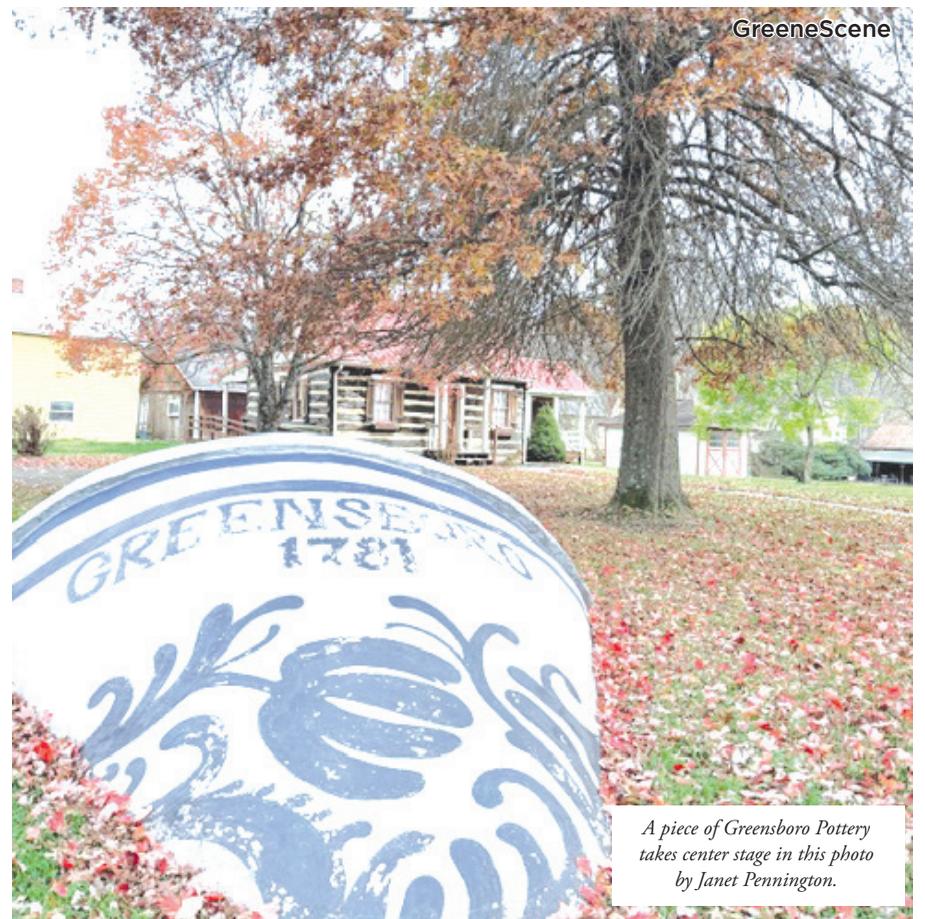
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A piece of Greensboro Pottery takes center stage in this photo by Janet Pennington.

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