

Mt. Gretna Campmeeting News



At the start of the Annual Meeting in October, Ted Martin chose to read the first verse of Blest Be the Tie that Binds. This verse mirrors the heart of the Campmeeting community. The Campmeeting was founded on the spirit of fellowship, shared faith, and close-knit community life, with people coming together as neighbors and as “kindred minds” united in purpose and stewardship.

At its core, the Campmeeting is not just a collection of cottages in the woods. Today we are a community of diverse people from many different faiths. But despite, or maybe because of, our different backgrounds and experiences, we have become a fellowship where people support one another, share traditions, and work together for the common good. The “tie that binds” reflects the unique connection and the intergenerational commitment to preserve and nurture this cherished space.

November Property Ownership Committee Update

Submitted by Kevin Burd, Committee Chair

New Campmeeting Members

Please join us in welcoming new Members to the Campmeeting. Please introduce yourselves and share what you love about our community with the new owners of the following cottages:

- 207 Weaver Avenue
- 206 Otterbein Avenue

Short-Term Rental Permits

Regarding short-term rental permits, of the 72 short-term rental permits available, as outlined in Rule 20 and the associated policy, 43 permits are currently granted in the community.

Short-term rental permit holders are reminded that West Cornwall Township (WCT) has created zoning ordinances regarding short-term rental units. It is your responsibility to comply with WCT permit requirements.

Cottage Resale Certificate

A Resale Certificate is required for all cottage sales/transfers. This ensures that the Bylaws and Rules & Regulations are given to the buyer, and that the buyer agrees that they are reviewed. This removes the risk from the Campmeeting and its volunteers. New Member Orientation meetings will be encouraged but no longer required.

Please contact us at homerentals@mtgretnacampmeeting.org if you have any questions.



Photo Credit: Nate Godfrey

Board of Managers Election Results

In October 2025, the following individuals were elected to the MGCA Board of Managers for a three-year term beginning January 1, 2026:

- Stephanie Bost
- Kevin Wells (incumbent)
- Pat Wilmsen (incumbent)

We look forward to the enthusiasm and leadership you will bring to the Board in the coming years.

Thanks to Election Inspectors, Kristi Donahue and Kay Heberling, as well as Judge of Elections, Esther Mefferd, for their work in ensuring the votes were counted accurately and the results delivered to the community in a timely fashion. The community also thanks Dermot Somers for his willingness to serve the community by volunteering to run for the Board.

Interested in serving on the Board of Managers? Look for information related to the 2027-2029 open terms to be reported in this newsletter in August 2026.



Photo Credit: Joyce Ruhl

Our Trees Are Starving!!!

Submitted by Pat Wilmsen, MGCA Tree Committee Chair

Members of the MGCA Tree Committee recently met with Bartlett Tree Experts, the company that regularly inspects and treats our trees. They informed us our trees are in great decline because **we are not feeding them.**

One of the best ways to feed your trees is to leave the leaves on the ground around them. If for some reason you can't leave the leaves around your trees, please mulch around them. To ensure the tree benefits from the mulch, leave a gap of a few inches between the mulch and the trunk to ensure the root flare is exposed. This "tree well" allows the bark to stay dry and breathe.

In addition to providing food for our trees, the leaf ground cover offers a habitat for insects that will hatch in the spring and become food for our birds. The birds need these insects for protein, so leaving leaves on the ground provides nourishment for both the trees and the birds.

The following is information gathered from the Internet that describes the benefits of "leaving leaves" on the ground in Pennsylvania:

Leaving leaves on the ground in Pennsylvania provides **soil enrichment**, **habitat for wildlife**, and **natural mulch** for gardens. They decompose to provide vital nutrients like carbon and nitrogen for healthy soil and plants, and act as a natural, free mulch to suppress weeds and retain moisture. Leaving them also creates essential overwintering habitat for pollinators and other insects that are vital for the ecosystem.

Reasons to leave leaves on the ground:

- **Soil enrichment:** Decomposing leaves return essential nutrients like carbon, nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium to the soil, improving its health and supporting plant growth in the spring.
- **Natural mulch:** Leaves act as a free, natural mulch that can be raked into garden beds to insulate plant roots from winter cold and suppress weeds, saving you time and effort.
- **Habitat for wildlife:** A layer of leaves provides crucial overwintering habitat for many native bees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects. It also shelters lizards, turtles, frogs, and other small animals.
- **Promotes pollinators:** Leaving leaves on the ground helps support pollinators and the insects that rely on them, creating a healthier ecosystem in your yard.
- **Improves water retention:** As they decompose, leaves help soil retain moisture and can reduce runoff, which can improve water quality.

Best practices for leaving leaves:

- **Avoid excessive amounts on lawns:** A thick, heavy layer of leaves on a lawn can smother grass and prevent sunlight and oxygen from reaching it.
- **Rake leaves into garden beds:** If you have too many leaves, rake the excess into your garden beds to act as mulch.
- **Leave stems on perennials:** Don't cut back all your perennial plants; leave the stems and seed heads to provide food and shelter for birds and insects.
- **Don't shred them first:** Shredding leaves can destroy the structure needed for overwintering habitats.

Nature's Retreat

Written by Kevin C. Wells, MGCA Communications Committee Chair

When the dawn of November arrives in Mount Gretna, the pace of life begins to soften, almost without notice. The last few crimson and gold leaves spiral to the ground, cottages stand a little quieter beneath bare branches, and the air carries the scent of pine and wood smoke. It's during these quieter months that I feel most connected to this place, and the sense of peace that first drew me to the Campmeeting. Fall and winter in Gretna bring a peace and serenity unlike any other season. There is a kind of stillness here that invites reflection and gratitude. As a year-round resident, I count it among my greatest blessings to witness all four seasons here, but the quiet beauty of fall and winter remain my favorites.

With fewer sounds of conversation and laughter drifting through the Campmeeting, I find myself slowing down too as I soak in the stillness, notice the smallest details, and spend more time putting my observations and thoughts on paper. There's something grounding about being here in the off-season, when the world seems to exhale and invites me to listen.

As I wander the paths through the Campmeeting and into the Heights toward Chautauqua Trail, I notice the rustle of movement just beyond the trees. White-tailed deer step lightly through the fallen leaves, their winter coats thickening as they browse for acorns and fallen vegetation. Squirrels hurry between trunks, cheeks puffed with treasures to stash before the cold deepens. Chipmunks, too, scurry along walkways, gathering one last meal before retreating to their burrows.

Above it all, the birds carry on their routines. They dart from branch to branch, moving down the tree trunks. I hear a woodpecker making gentle tapping sounds that carry through the stillness. On milder mornings, a flash of red catches my eye. It's a cardinal perched like a spark against the gray of late autumn. As dusk settles, I hear the faint sound of an owl drifting over cottages. The world feels pared down to its simplest elements: earth, air, water, and the pulse of life that carries on beyond the season of music, art, and visitors.

For those who return to their homes elsewhere, it can be comforting to imagine this quieter Gretna, with deer grazing between the trees and the heartbeat of the woods in repose. Gretna at this time of year reminds me that even in stillness, life continues all around me. It remains unseen yet ever present, patient and persistent beneath the canopy of trees.



Photo Credit: Leeshaun Musick

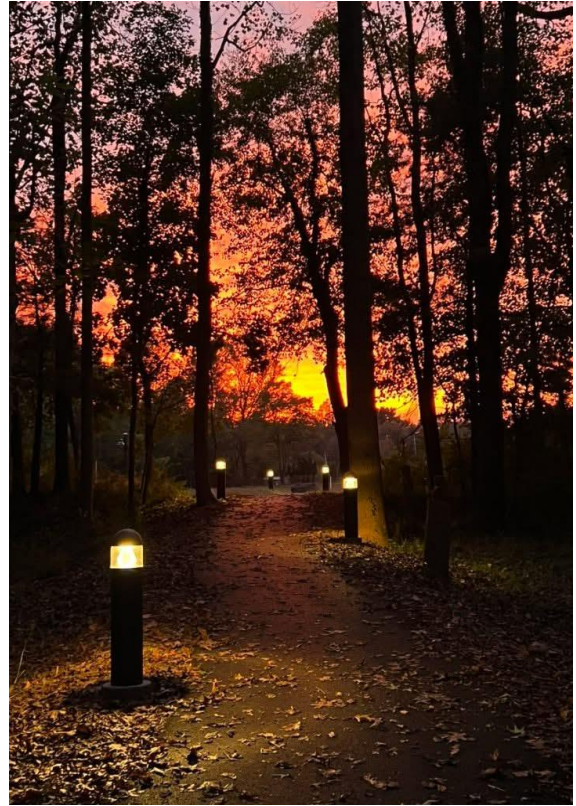


Photo Credit: Bob Harding

Member Spotlight: Celebrating Our Neighbors

The heart of Mt. Gretna beats through its people. Behind every cottage, concert, and community gathering are neighbors whose stories add depth to the character of this special place. The Member Spotlight is our way of shining a light on those individuals – celebrating their journeys, their passions, and the unique ways they contribute to the tapestry of Gretna life. We hope you'll look forward to these next several installments in the Campmeeting newsletter – and take the opportunity to get to know more of our neighbors and discover the many threads that make our community so vibrant.

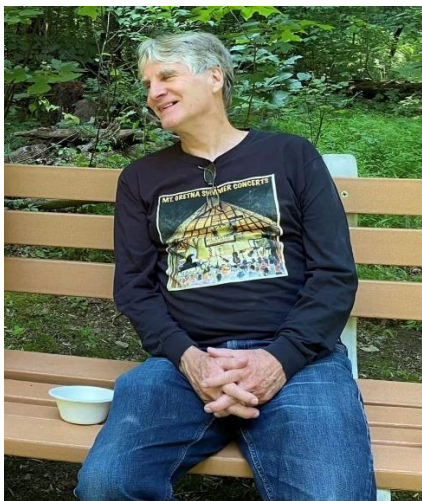


Photo Credit: Erin McKenna

This month, we are delighted to introduce you to Larry McKenna. His love of Gretna, passion for music, and dedication to bringing people together through live performance embody the heart and harmony of the Campmeeting.

Seasons, Song, and Community

Written by Kevin C. Wells

For most people, Mount Gretna is a treasured summer getaway. For Larry McKenna, it has been a constant presence in his life, shaping his happiest memories, inspiring his creative work, and giving him a sense of belonging. “I’ve been coming to Gretna for 74 years,” Larry says with a smile. “My parents started vacationing here in 1944, and I was born in 1951. We rented a cottage for two weeks every summer, and I’ve spent every summer of my life here.”

Now a year-round cottage owner for the past 10 years, Larry and his wife, who fell in love with Gretna back in 1972, cherish the community and the porch culture that define the Campmeeting. “It’s my favorite place in the world,” he says. “It’s like going back in time. The camaraderie, the friendships, and the sense of community just grow stronger every year.”

A retired high school teacher of 34 years, Larry taught special education and later English in the Philadelphia suburbs. He and his wife live in Wayne, Pennsylvania, but spend nearly every weekend in Gretna. Their four children and ten grandchildren share the same affection for the area, gathering each July for a weeklong family reunion that brings relatives from Maine, North Carolina, Texas, California, and beyond.

Music has always been a central thread in Larry’s life. A pianist and banjo player, he also sings backup vocals and harmonies. “No one should ever have to hear me sing a ballad,” he laughs, “but I’ll sing a joke song anytime.” His love of performance and showmanship led him to found Mount Gretna Summer Concerts, soon approaching its tenth season! The concert series, which operates as a nonprofit, grew out of years of experience producing Heritage Festival shows and his earlier work on the musical comedy *Burt and Me*, performed at the Playhouse in 2012 and again in 2024.

Larry’s most recent creation, *Simply Platonic*, is a romantic comedy that has played in Gretna. “I like writing things that make people feel good,” he said. “Fun, lighthearted summer fare with heart.” Beyond his own productions Larry remains passionate about curating live performances that bring joy to others. “I love live music because it’s perfectly imperfect,” he said. “Sometimes things go wrong – a fire alarm goes off or someone faints – but those moments remind you that live performance is real. It connects people.”

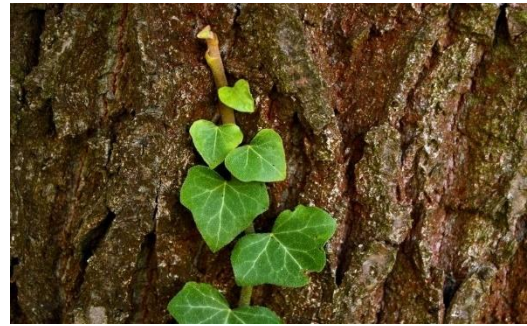
Outside of Gretna, Larry also runs A-1 Entertainment, an entertainment business that has taken him across the country. In addition to Mt. Gretna Summer Concerts, he runs a concert series at Newtown Theatre in Bucks County and brings shows to the Ocean City Music Pier in New Jersey.

When it comes to booking performers for the summer concert season, Larry relies on decades of experience, and a keen sense of what audiences love most. “I try to assess what kind of music people want to hear,” he explained. “The older classics tend to go over well with our audience and have become our bread and butter.”

Larry ran New Voices Cabaret in Philadelphia for nine years, a showcase that attracted some of the region’s top vocalists. He said, “We became a high profile cabaret and a great venue for newcomers, which helped provide us with a great talent pool to draw from in subsequent years.”

More than anything, Larry wants the Mount Gretna Summer Concerts to continue long after he steps aside. “I don’t think of it as a legacy,” he reflects. “It’s a present. A gift to the community. All our shows are pay-what-you-want, so no one is left out. That’s what makes Mount Gretna so special.”

Cutting Back on the “Green” – English Ivy



It makes our trees look so green, adds a certain “quaintness” to our neighborhoods, and trees covered in ivy bring a cozy feeling to our walking paths. **But the reality is, English Ivy is very hazardous and invasive to our trees!**

Ivy siphons resources from our trees and compromises their health. If left unchecked, English Ivy can weaken our trees to the point they are susceptible to insect pests, diseases and breakage. Most of us in Campmeeting are familiar with how much damage can be caused by falling branches during storms.

If a tree on or near your property has English Ivy growing on it, instead of pulling down ivy and potentially damaging the bark, **sever all the ivy stems growing up the tree at the tree’s base**. Once severed, the ivy stems on the tree will die. Let them wither and allow the stems and anchoring roots to decay. You can leave the dead ivy attached to the tree; it won’t harm the trunk, and the dead leaves will eventually fall.

For an in-depth look at the issues caused by English Ivy, please see [Will Ivy Harm My Trees](#).

MGCA Office Hours & Holiday Schedule

Regular MGCA office hours are:

- Monday through Friday – 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM

When the office is closed, phone messages and emails will still be checked. If you need assistance, please don’t hesitate to reach out.

The MGCA office will be closed on:

- Monday, November 3
- Wednesday, November 12
- Thursday, November 13
- Friday, November 14
- Friday, November 21
- Thursday, November 27
- Friday, November 28

If you’re planning a special trip to stop by during regular office hours, it’s always a good idea to call ahead (717-964-3040) to be sure someone is available to meet you.

November Trash & Recycling Pick-Up

When snow and ice arrive in our corner of the woods, they can slow down more than just our morning walks. Trash pick-up may be delayed when roads become slick or snow-covered. If winter weather impacts collection, updates will be posted to the TNT Sanitation website to keep everyone informed. Please visit www.TNTSanitation.com anytime. Thank you for your patience and understanding.



There are no holidays in November impacting trash and recycling collection in the Campmeeting.

Leaf Collection Procedure

Information can also be found at: [Leaf Collection Services](#).

It wouldn't be autumn in Mt. Gretna without the leaves! Members are reminded that leaves, pine needles, and pine cones must be separated from sticks, in accordance with the Leaf Collection Procedure. **Any piles containing mulch, stones, sticks, etc. will not be collected.**

Please review the Leaf Collection Procedure, Leaf Removal Street Map, and the 2025 Leaf Collection Schedule (below). Leaf collection began the week of October 20 and will end the week of December 8.



Mt. Gretna Campmeeting Association Leaf Collection Procedure

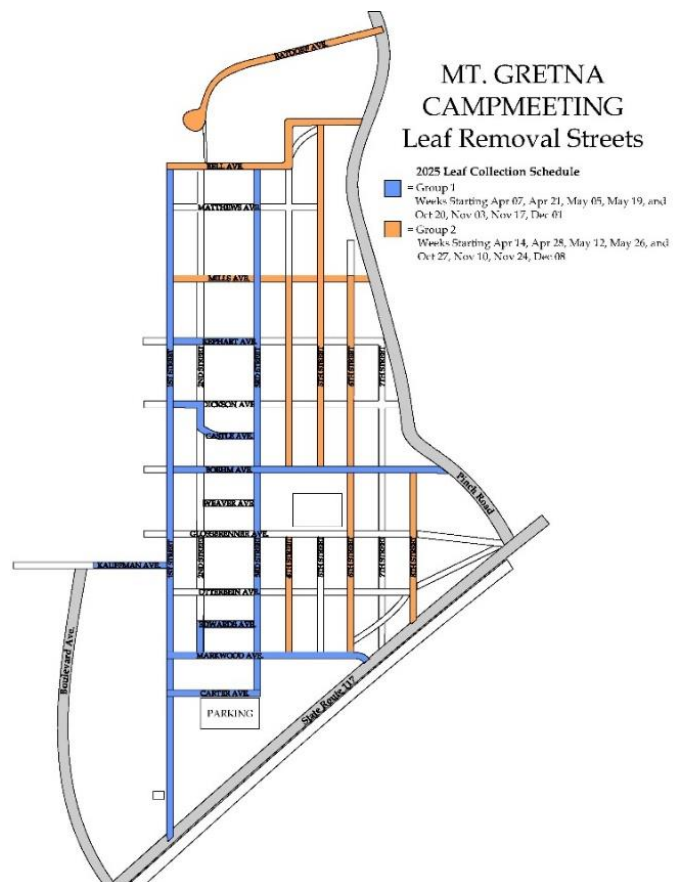
Purpose: To provide guidelines to the Membership for collection of leaves.

Procedure Detail:

- Members are encouraged to leave leaves on the ground around the trees as much as possible. These leaves degrade to soil over time, providing much needed nutrients for the trees and groundcover to replace eroded soil.
- Understanding that not all leaves can be left on the ground, the Mt. Gretna Campmeeting (MGCA) will provide the following leaf collection services:
 - The MGCA will collect loose leaf piles in the Spring that are placed on the street from the second Monday in April through the weekend after Memorial Day and piles placed on the street from the 3rd Monday in October until the end of the second weekend in December. Leaves will be collected from the indicated driving streets every other week in rotation according to the published schedule. A current year's map and schedule will be posted on the Campmeeting website, published in the Newsletter, and available from the office upon request. NOTE: Leaf piles must contain leaves, pine needles and pine cones only, **no sticks or other debris**.
 - Members are always welcome and encouraged to take their leaves to the storage location behind the garages on the east side of 1st Street. These leaves may not be bagged, must be placed in the designated leaf stall, and may not contain anything but leaves, pine needles, and pine cones.

Discretionary Power: Buildings & Grounds Committee Chair

Dates: Adoption: September 06, 2022
Revision: September 30, 2024
Rescission:





Oktemberfest

Let's raise a glass and celebrate life
in an atmosphere of togetherness full of joy.



Family Friendly | Polka Music | Games | German Costumes Encouraged

Bratwurts | Sauerkraut | Pretzels

Bring your favorite German beverages, stein & food to share

Suggested \$5 Donation/Person | Please RSUP to Office



And the final photograph for our November photo album...



Photo Credit: Kevin C. Wells

Are You Connected to News & Info in Campmeeting?

 MT. GRETTA NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION	On Facebook  YouTube Mount Gretna Campmeeting – Click on Subscribe
<u>Community Calendar</u>	
 Send your email address updates to: Office@MtGretnaCampmeeting.org	 Please visit and bookmark: mtgretnacampmeeting.com

Mt. Gretna Campmeeting Association

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Mt. Gretna Campmeeting

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