

Mt. Gretna Campmeeting News

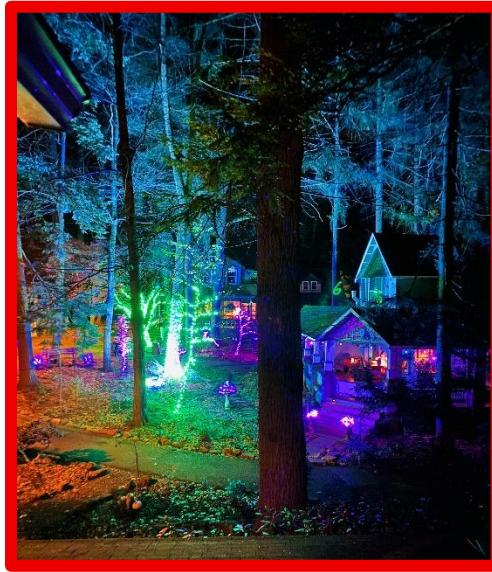


Photo Credit: Pat Brosious

With Heartfelt Thanks

Members of the MGCA community and the Board of Managers extend a warm and heartfelt thank-you to Board Member George Leyh. George concludes his three-year term on the MGCA Board of Managers on December 31, and he will be greatly missed. George, we appreciate all you have done for our community over the past three years. Your perspective, experience and wisdom have been invaluable to our Board, and we are grateful that you chose to volunteer your time and energy to the Campmeeting.

The Origins of the Annual Buzzard Drop

By Kevin C. Wells

This year marks the 13th anniversary of the annual Buzzard Drop. It is a tradition that was originated by Tom & Kay Heberling and their friends, former Campmeeting residents, Darlene Eckert and her late husband, Dave.

The couples had been unable to celebrate the new year together until Tom retired. Once he retired, the couples brainstormed ways that they could facilitate “some sort of drop”. Tom and Kay referenced the ball drop in New York City and the Hershey Kiss Raise celebration in downtown Hershey. It did not take long for the couples to decide on a buzzard. The presence of real buzzards was a significant concern for the community at that time.



Between 2013 and 2020, the tradition was rather informal. The couples hung a notice at the Post Office about the first Buzzard Drop in front of Tom & Kay's cottage. Approximately 50 people attended the first Drop. At the Drop's second year, approximately 75 people were in attendance. The crowd has grown year after year. MGCA approved the use of the Tabernacle for the Buzzard Drop in 2020.

We hope to see everyone at this year's Buzzard Drop. Thirteen years is a big deal! The buzzard will spend New Year's Eve above the stage at the Tabernacle beginning around 3 pm. Tom sets up the buzzard early so that those that cannot attend the late celebration can see the buzzard and take selfies with him.

This year, there is a good chance we'll be hearing a live band play that Scottish favorite *Auld Lang Syne* and a few other tunes during the festivities.

If you find yourself awake on New Year's Eve around 11:30 p.m., please come on over. Tom and Kay also provide a small supply of antique rattles for attendees to ring at midnight when the buzzard drops. The rattles are used year after year. So if you use a rattle at this year's event, please be sure to return it prior to departing from the festivities.

Santa's On His Way...



Enjoy cookies with Santa and visit a very special Santa Shop.

At the Mt. Gretna Fire Department Social Hall, Boulevard St, Mt Gretna.

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.

This month, we are delighted to introduce you to Jean Healy, whose artistic spirit, love for her corner of Batdorf, and dedication to the Campmeeting reflect what makes Gretna so special.

Jean Healy & the Warmest House on a Winter Street

By Kevin C. Wells

A Lifetime Threaded with Gretna

Jean Healy's connection to Mount Gretna began long before she ever owned a house here. As a child, her family rented a cottage for a year; years later, when she and her husband were dating in the early 1960s, they would visit Gretna and imagine a life woven into its paths and porches.

After returning from overseas in 1967, the couple settled in Harrisburg. However, Gretna never stopped calling. One day they spotted a modest log cabin for sale at 4th & Birch and purchased it in July of 1968, planting roots that would never quite let go. In 2000, Jean moved into Gretna full-time, and when the home she had always admired on Batdorf finally became available, she was through the door within minutes. She has now been part of the Batdorf family for 22 years.

A Heart Shaped by Community

Jean's life in Gretna has been inseparable from the community that fills it with warmth. She remembers helping with refreshments and ticket-taking at the Playhouse in the 70s, 80s, and early 90s. She lugged out long tables, poured sun tea, and offered homemade baked goods before state regulations changed the experience. Rain or shine, neighbors gathered, held umbrellas for one another, and shared the simple joy of theatre.

Jean fondly recalls the days of the Winterites Club, the Fire Hall Women's Auxiliary, and the past bustle near the Carousel. Newspapers, penny candy, milk, gasoline, and the friendly faces defined everyday life. But above all, she cherishes the people. "The community," she says simply, "that's what I love most."

Life on Batdorf: Quiet Magic

Batdorf Avenue holds its own special kind of magic. It is quieter and more tucked away than the busier loops, but no less filled with love. Jean describes it perfectly, "Calm, serene, neighborly. If we walk and someone's in their yard, it's always friendly. Sometimes spontaneous invitations for tea. We used to have parties on the street. We're not historical – we're hysterical!"

Batdorf homes are not the traditional Campmeeting cottages – they are houses built in the 1970s, each with its own charm. And while their architecture differs from the classic Victorian gingerbread

found throughout the rest of the Campmeeting, the heart of the street remains unmistakably and joyfully Gretna.

Neighbors help each other. They check in. They laugh. They share the seasons together. It is exactly the kind of street where Christmas feels like Christmas.

Everyday Gretna Joys

Jean loves the frog pond (even if it once attracted a mischievous, wet, and very smelly dog), and she has always adored long walks that wind past the Fire Hall, the Post Office, the Jigger Shop, and back again. She remembers the old “funny steps” in the Heights, now mostly filled in, and the way the rhythms of life here have gently shifted with the decades.

She does not seek inspiration. “I like myself,” she says with a smile. “I’m never bored.” Instead, her life is enriched by being present in a place that feels right.

Home for All Seasons

Jean hopes to live out the rest of her life here on her beloved Batdorf, surrounded by the neighbors who have become family. If mobility ever becomes a challenge, she already has a plan for a small elevator to keep her in her home. And if she ever stops driving? “Everything is deliverable,” she laughs. Because the beauty of Gretna is its charm and its people make staying rooted not only possible, but joyful.

This winter, as wreaths hang on porches and the air fills with the scent of pine, Jean reminds us what truly gives Mount Gretna its glow: the enduring ties of neighborly love. The spontaneous porch conversations. The shared memories. Kindness passed from one house to the next.

In a season centered on togetherness, Jean’s story is a gentle reminder that the greatest gift of Mount Gretna is the community we build with one another.



Photo Credit: Pat Wilmsen

Watch for Black Ice



Black ice is a thin, nearly invisible layer of ice that forms when temperatures drop quickly. Black ice often develops during early morning or evening. It blends into the road, making it dangerous on bridges, overpasses, shaded roads, and areas near water.

How to spot black ice

- Road looks wet but produces no water spray
- Cars ahead brake, skid, or slide
- Tire tracks in the ditch
- Road surface appears patchy; shiny and dull areas mixed

If you hit black ice

- Stay calm and lift your foot off the gas
- Steer straight; avoid sudden movements
- Shift to a lower gear if possible
- Brake gently (or firmly if you have anti-lock braking system)
- Look and steer toward your intended direction

Winter driving reminders

- Slow down and increase braking distance
- Avoid cruise control on wet or icy roads

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.

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.

The MGCA office will be closed on:

- Monday, December 8
- Wednesday, December 24
- Thursday, December 25
- Thursday, January 1

A Heartfelt Winter Thank You

We extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who helped bring the magic of the holidays to life in the Campmeeting this year. Decorating our community is no small task. It takes a village. And, once again, our village shines brightly!

A special note of appreciation goes to Peggy Lichty, whose creative vision shaped the look and feel of our holiday decor. From her eye for detail to her imaginative designs, Peggy set the tone for a festive season.

To every neighbor who hung wreaths, wrapped garland, fluffed bows, strung lights, or lent a hand (or a ladder!), thank you. May the glow of our decorations reflect the glow of community. The kind that keeps Campmeeting bright long after the holidays fade.



Photo Credit: Pat Wilmsen

Snow Plan and Christmas Tree “Retirement”

Although we hope this “snow plan” information won't be needed until 2026, winter does officially arrive in December. So under the guise of being safe rather than sorry, Members are reminded that MGCA and the Mt. Gretna Borough provide snow removal services on Campmeeting streets and some walking paths. To see the snow removal map, click on this link:

<https://www.mtgretnacampmeeting.com/Files/pdfs/MGCASnowRemovalMap2023.12.pdf>.



The map is also available on the MGCA website (under “Local Services>Snow Removal>Snow Removal Map”).

In the event of snow, please ensure your vehicle is not blocking any of the streets that will be plowed. Members will be notified via email if cars need to be removed from the Church Parking Lot to allow for plowing.

During the month of January 2026, and after the ornaments, tinsel and lights have been removed, previously “live” Christmas trees may be placed on MGCA driving streets for pickup by our Superintendent. Pickups will end on Thursday, January 29, so please have your tree outside by then if you would like MGCA to dispose of it for you.



Photo Credit: Pat Wilmsen

Ready to get into the holiday spirit through singing? If your answer is “YES”, join the Mt. Gretna Community Music Collective as they spread holiday cheer.



MOUNT GRETNA COMMUNITY MUSIC COLLECTIVE

Sunday, Dec 14th, @NOON

gather in front of Porch & Pantry



Holiday Wassail & Wander

Wassailing — Gretna-style!

Join us for a festive afternoon ramble through the Chautauqua and Campmeeting — all at Gretna Time. We'll make four merry stops, singing as we wander between them. If you step out onto your porch, we'll happily pause for a tune or two, and you're welcome to fall in with us as we continue along our route. Enjoy a mix of voices, a brass-backed carol or two, and the warmth of neighbors sharing music together.

We'll kick things off in front of the Porch & Pantry, then make our way to the corner of Lehigh & Lancaster, continue on to the corner of Lebanon & Old Mountain, head down Batdorf, then wander to the Tabernacle, and finally wind our way to the Mount Gretna Mercantile.

We'll be strolling at Gretna Time — so the only exact moment is our noon meet-up to begin the journey.

Join our merry caravan and help spread a little holiday cheer!



We're beginning with two neighborhoods this year. As this tradition takes root, we'll wander new routes each season.

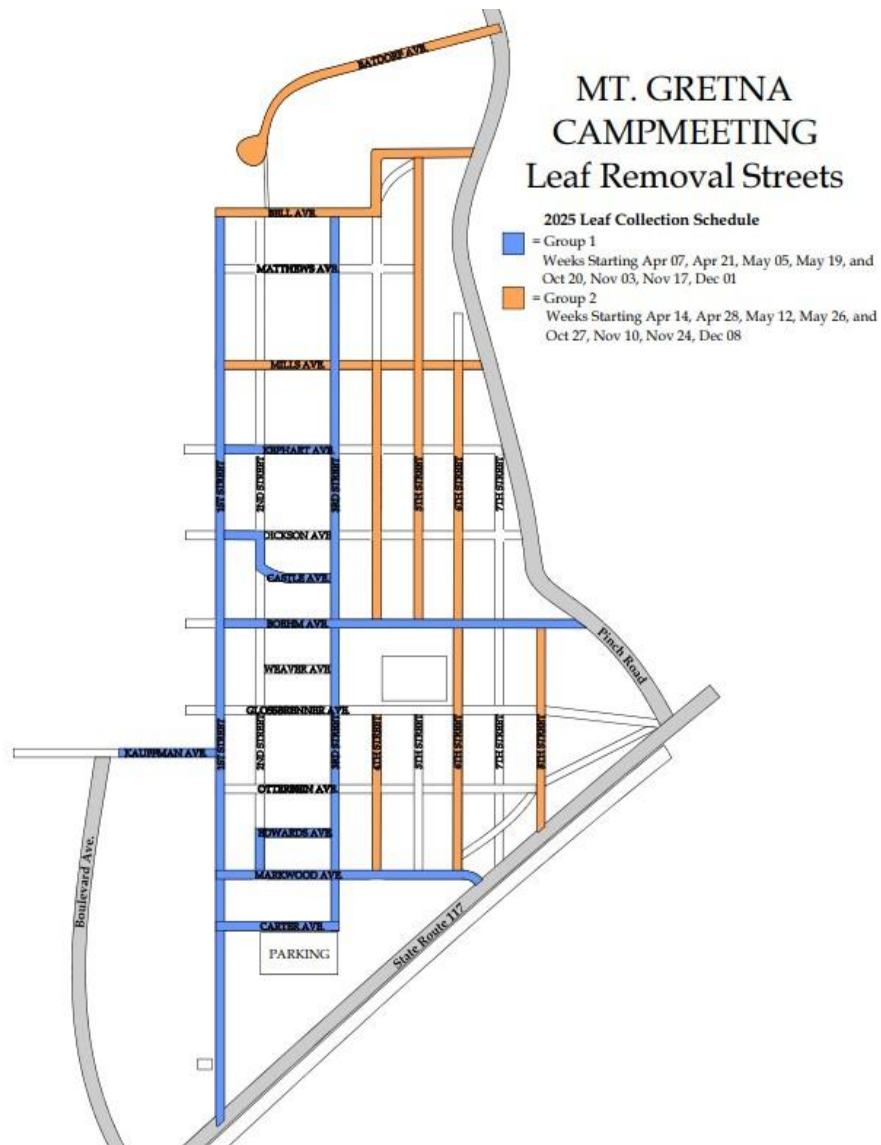
Last Call for Leaf Collection

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

It's been a "bountiful" autumn as far as leaves are concerned in Mt. Gretna. But as you work to remove excess leaves from your property, please be mindful that MGCA's collection of leaf piles will be ending soon. Collection for Group 1 will end the week of December 1, and Group 2 collection will end the week of December 8. See the map below.

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.

As noted in our November Newsletter, Members are asked to "leave some leaves" wherever possible, especially around trees, to provide nourishment for our trees and natural habitats for beneficial insects.



MAKE THE SEASON BRIGHTER
SHARE THE HOLIDAY SPIRIT



***Mount Gretna United
Methodist Church
Collects Food and
Hygiene Donations
Monthly for Lebanon
County Christian
Ministries.***

***Next Delivery is
Monday, December 8.***

**Drop Off Boxes or Bags
Weekdays From 9 AM to
12 PM. After Those
Hours, Leave Donations
by MGUMC's Front Door.**

**Countless Families Depend on the Food Bank for a Simple Holiday
Meal**

Rice (All Varieties, 1 lb. Bags or Boxes)
Whole Grain Pasta (All Varieties, 1 lb. Boxes Preferred)
Flour and Sugar (1 or 2 lb. Bags or Boxes)
Canned Fruit (15-Ounce Cans in Fruit Juice)
Canned Tuna, Chicken, Salmon (Approx. 9-Ounce Cans Preferred)
Chicken Salad and Tuna Salad Kits
Spaghetti Sauce (24-Ounce Cans)
Diced Tomatoes (24-Ounce Cans)
Boxed Cereal (Healthy Varieties with <6g of Sugar Per Serving)
Oatmeal (All Sizes and Varieties with <6g of Sugar Per Serving)
Ground Coffee (10-12 Ounce Bags or Tubs)
Tea Bags (All Varieties, Small Boxes Containing Approx. 20 Bags)
Assorted Seasonings
Salad Dressing
Olive Oil
Ketchup and Mustard
Mayonnaise
Soups (Low Sodium Preferred)

Toilet Paper
2-in-1 Shampoo/Conditioner
Men's & Women's Deodorant
Toothpaste (5-Ounce Tubes and Larger)
Children's Toothpaste
Children's Toothbrushes (No Adult Toothbrushes Please)
Pads & Tampons
Hand Soap
Dish Sponges
Dish Soap
Laundry Detergent

Monetary Donations Accepted
Checks Made Payable to LCCM or to MGUMC (note "LCCM Food
Bank" - Church combines all gifts into one check to LCCM).
Donate Through Mt. Gretna United Methodist Church or Drop Off
Directly at LCCM. For Hours, Visit www.lccm.us.

Tips to Prevent Frozen Pipes

Frozen pipes can burst and cause major water damage.

If you're away from home

- Keep your home at 55 degrees Fahrenheit or warmer.
- Ask a neighbor to check your house daily.
- Consider shutting off and draining the water system (unless you have a fire-sprinkler system).

If pipes freeze

- Call a plumber.
- Never use an open flame to thaw pipes.
- A hair dryer may help; use it carefully and keep away from water.
- If a pipe bursts, shut off the main water valve immediately.

Wood Stove & Space Heater Safety

Supplemental heat sources can warm a room. But they also increase fire risk. Space heaters account for 1/3 of home heating fires and most heating-related deaths (NFPA).

Wood stove safety

- Choose units tested by UL or another certified lab.
- Follow all manufacturer clearance requirements (or keep 36 inches from anything combustible).
- Use an approved floor protector extending 18 inches around the stove.
- Burn only seasoned hardwood or pellets.
- Have the chimney/stovepipe cleaned yearly.
- Remove cooled ashes using a metal container, placed 10+ feet from the home.

Electric space heater safety

- Use only UL-listed models with tip-over shutoff.
- Keep 3 feet from bedding, curtains, and furniture.
- Place on a flat, sturdy surface.
- Plug directly into a wall outlet (no extension cords).
- Keep away from children and pets.
- Never use it for drying clothes.
- Turn off when sleeping or leaving the room.

December Trash and 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 pickup may be delayed when roads become slick or snow-covered. If winter weather impacts collection, updates will be posted on the TNT Sanitation website to keep everyone informed. Please visit www.TNTSanitation.com anytime.

There are no holidays in December impacting trash and recycling collection.

Are You Connected to News & Info in Campmeeting?

 On Facebook	 Mount Gretna Campmeeting – Click on Subscribe
Community Calendar https://www.mtgretna.org/home	
 Send your email address updates to: Office@MtGretnaCampmeeting.org	 Please visit and bookmark: mtgretnacampmeeting.com

Mt. Gretna Campmeeting Association
P.O. Box 428
Mt. Gretna, PA 17064-0428
717-964-3040

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



Mt. Gretna Campmeeting
LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES