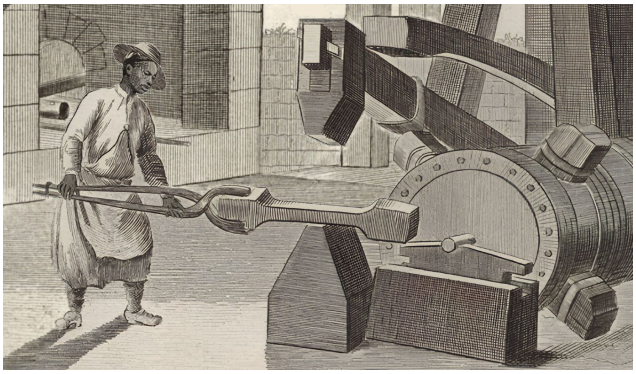


Branch Newsletter

October, 2026

Membership meeting 7 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 22, Ricketts Center

Justin Clement, historic site supervisor at Pottsgrove Manor, will present an update on their ongoing genealogical research into Black ironworkers in the Potts-run iron industry. That includes locating living descendants of Pottstown's Black Founders, who were part of a thriving community—including landowners. He'll outline the archival research and historical detective work that goes into writing biographies of these individuals. He'll also talk about the 1812 African American burial ground in Pottstown as well as Pottstown's station on the Underground Railroad.



Adapted image of a Black ironworker

For those who can't make it in person, the Zoom link is https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84995648174?wd=QlAyaHZkWlJXZWk1T3FWcHNFVnJOQT09 Meeting ID:849 9564 8174 Passcode: 937480

A week in the life….

Ever wonder what the branch president does? The week starting Sunday, Oct. 11, may or may not be typical, but here's what Johnny Corson had on his calendar:

Sunday: Attending Mt. Olive Baptist Church with Pottstown School Superintendent Stephen Rodriguez.

Monday: Borough Council meeting;

Tuesday: Event at The Vibe to chat with State Rep. Napoleon Nelson.

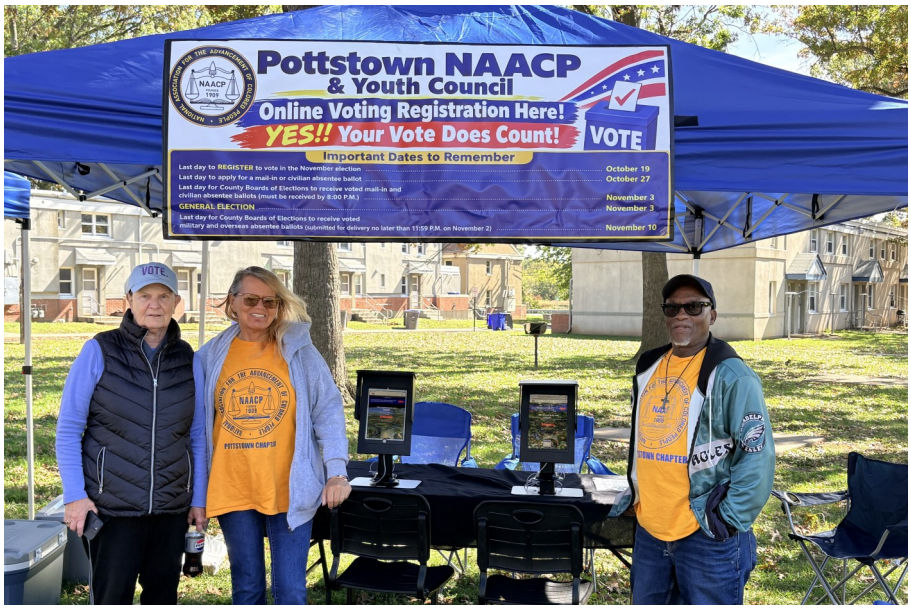
Wednesday: Guest speaker at the Rotary Club.

Thursday: Guest speaker at a fundraiser for The Cluster.

Saturday: India culture event at the high school.

Sunday: Attending the Willow Grove Chapter's Freedom Banquet, an annual fundraiser. That branch's president, Tony Davis, often supports our branch.

Political Action Committee has voter registration bllitz



Marlene Armato, Charlotte Charles and Julius Flynn at Bright Hope



Willow Grove branch president Tony Davis, Pottstown president Johnny Corson, Ricketts Center manager Randy Hawkins and Justin Anthony at the Ricketts

As the clock ticked down toward Oct. 19 – the last day to register to vote in Pennsylvania for the Nov. 4 election – the branch's Political Action Committee, led by Keith Stevens, set up a blitz of on-the-spot voter registration events.

It started Oct. 3 at the Ricketts Center, with free food and community information booths. Then it was on to Bright Hope, Pine Forge Academy, Rolling Hills and a mock voting event with KenCrest.

Over the week, dozens of people registered to vote, checked their registration, updated their address, changed their party affiliation or confirmed their polling place.

This required a huge amount of work by Stevens and his crew – Marlene Hedgepeth, Charlotte Charles and Julius Flynn, aided by numerous branch members. To Stevens, it was all worth it. "There has been a disturbing lack of civic engagement. People have become disenchanted with the political system, or they just don't think it works for them."

But voting, he pointed out, is one way to engage, to make your voice be heard.



Charlotte Charles, Keith Stevens and Marlene Hedgepeth with Pine Forge students.



Marlene Hedgepeth, Keith Stevens and Charlotte Charles — voter enthusiasts!



Annette Kobb stirs the pasta at July's dinner.

Another WIN-ner of a dinner

The WIN Committee fed 120 people at Mission First on Sept. 30. On the menu: fried chicken, roasted broccoli (with special seasoning by Joanne Washington), baked beans and two kinds of sheet cake.

They also gave out about 20-30 coats, which were such a popular item that people came in the next Wednesday, asking for more.

These dinners, for the less fortunate, are a regular goal for the WIN committee. In July, they cooked and served a spaghetti dinner.

"The people are so appreciative. I totally enjoy it," said WIN chair Annette Kobb, who volunteers at the Mission First dinners every Wednesday. "I love the camaraderie. I tell them, 'Enjoy your meal, and be safe out there,' because we don't know where they are or what's going on with them."

Health and Wellness Committee continues its classes to engage families and teach nutrition to youths

Every fourth Thursday — this month, Oct. 22— Health and Wellness Committee chair Joanne Washington offers "Cooking With Love" at the Ricketts Center. She invites youths to come in from 5 to 6 p.m. and learn about nutrition. She also offers food samples to "expand their palates."

Every first Friday — Nov. 6 is next — is First Friday Family Focus Day from 4 to 7 p.m. at Mission First. The idea is for families to learn and play together, building strong bonds and strengthening the family unit.

Book club to discuss little-known heroines of the nation

The branch's book club has chosen *We the Women: The Hidden Heroes who Shaped America*, by Norah O'Donnell as it's November selection. In it, O'Donnell profiles women who are unsung heroines who nevertheless helped shape the nation and changed the course of history.

Among dozens of women profiled are prominent Black Americans, including: Phillis Wheatley, the first published Black woman poet in America; Elizabeth Freeman, an enslaved woman who sued for and won her freedom in Massachusetts; Constance Baker Motley, a pioneering civil rights lawyer and the first Black woman federal judge; and the Forten family, prominent Philadelphia women who were active in the abolitionist and suffrage movements.

We'll meet at 6 p.m. Nov. 9 at the Pottstown library, which is reserving copies for us. All are welcome … even if you haven't read the book!

