



Branch Newsletter

August, 2026

Membership meeting 7 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 27, Ricketts Center

We'll be discussing the election of branch officers and initiating the process.

The current officers are: President, Johnny Corson; Vice President, Larry Cohen; Secretary, Craig Way; Treasurer, Heather Anderson; Assistant Treasurer, Annette Kobb.

For those who can't make it in person, the Zoom link is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84995648174?wd=QIAyaHZkWIJXZWk1T3FWcHNFVnJOQT09> Meeting ID:849 9564 8174 Passcode: 937480



Hot dog!

Branch President Johnny Corson and Political Action Committee chair Keith Stevens recently had lunch with U.S. Rep. Madeleine Dean.

Among the issues they discussed were the situation with Pottstown Hospital, which has reduced services in the borough, and Pottstown's Hometown Heroes program, which so far has posted banners honoring only white veterans.

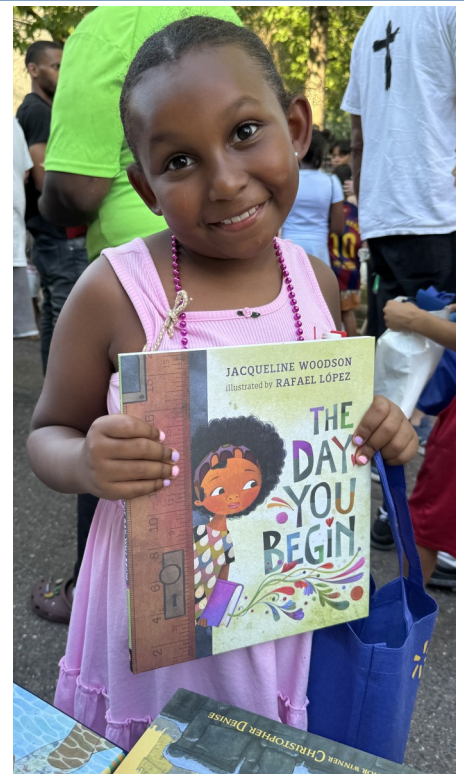
Both issues are sure to come up at our general membership meeting.



Anyone hungry?

Members of the branch's WIN Committee and friends recently cooked dinner for about 110 people in need. They took over the kitchen at Mission First and stirred up spaghetti with meat sauce, cut chunks of garlic bread and scooped out salad. When the call went out for donations of cookies or other desserts, so many people responded — including kids at the Ricketts Center summer camp — that they could give super-generous portions of sweets to everyone.





National Night Out becomes a book fest for the branch

National Night Out is always a fun event. At this year's recent event, members — and a few old and new friends — gave out 99 books from our Road to Reading program. Plus cookies! And membership forms! All we can add to that is, "See you next year!"





Honoring a local legend

It was so long ago that Charles Harris can't really remember the date.

But, like his two cousins, he began cutting men's hair in Pottstown. "I guess it runs in the family," he said, noting that two female relatives became hairdressers.

Time passed. Eventually – two or more decades ago – Harris opened his own shop at 600 King Street. Charles's Barbershop is now regarded as the oldest Black-owned business in the borough.

"He always did a good job," said NAACP Executive Committee member Bobby Watson, who was the emcee at a recent event at Second Baptist Church to honor Harris.

More than doing a good job with men's hair, customers liked the atmosphere, the camaraderie. "I like people," Harris said. Or, as Watson put it, "He enjoys guys coming in and telling their whopping lies."

Or, as Mayor Stephanie Henrick put it in a formal proclamation, "through his craft, kindness and wisdom, Charles Harris has created far more than a barber shop. He has built a trusted gathering place for mentorship, conversation and connection."

He mentored numerous other barbers, bringing them into his stop to get experience, then cheering them on their way as they opened their own shops. Never mind that they might wind up being competitors! One was Tony Betts of Blade's Edge, who spoke of Harris's generosity of spirit.

And so it went, through the years, through the styles.

In fact, Harris liked it so much he never quit. At 81, he's still cutting hair in his shop.

Special thanks to others who participated: Pastor Roland Anderson of Second Baptist, Ashley Faison from the Montgomery County Office of DEI who delivered a citation from Commissioner Jamila Winder, Montgomery County Court of Common Pleas Judge Lauren Hughes, and Quanzella Butler Jones.

Health and wellness for kids

Health and Wellness Committee Chair Joanne Washington is launching a kids' wellness initiative. The fourth Thursday of every month, at 4 p.m., starting in September, she will be at the Ricketts Center. Kids are welcome to come learn about healthy lifestyles and do a taste-test.

Friends Helping Friends

The WIN Committee's annual Friends Helping Friends fundraiser is a shopping event at Boscov's on Wednesday, Oct. 21. Coupons for 25% off that day, in-store and online, cost \$5. Purchasers will be entered into a drawing for a \$100 Boscov's Gift Card. WIN chair Annette Kobb has coupons and is willing to deliver them to anyone who lives in Pottstown. Contact her at: annettek53@gmail.com This fundraiser will help the WIN Committee to continue to provide monthly support for places such as the Salvation Army.

Out and about



NAACP state quarterly meeting

Part of the duties of branch officers is to attend state meetings so we can how to do our jobs better. Attending a recent meeting are (from left) president Johnny Corson, executive committee member Joanne Washington, secretary Craig Way, and executive committee members Annette Kobb and Keith Stevens.



Community partners

Pine Forge Academy principal Principal Addriene Rhodes, Ian Matlack from Peoples Security Bank and President Corson recently met to discuss more opportunities for the Academy, one of only four historically all-Black boarding schools in the U.S. The school was a stop on the Underground Railroad.

Honoring a community leader

Branch president Johnny Corson recently presented member Marlene Hedgepeth with an award, part of Rhema Church's honoring of her community service.

Pictured (from left) are Minister Allison Beasley; Chris Jackson; Marlene's husband, Rich; Marlene Hedgepeth; Corson; Ted Josey and Tyrone Robinson.



Snakes!

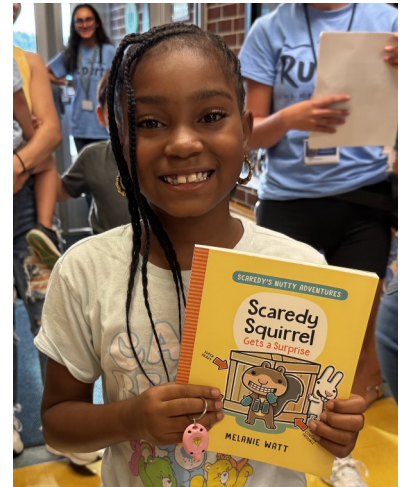
Lifetime member Marie Haigh taught art lessons at the Ricketts Center's summer camp. One of the projects involved kids painting tires, which were then arranged to look like a snake. Marie is pictured here with branch president Johnny Corson and Ricketts Center trainer Paul Winterbottom.



At Rupert are (from left) Superintendent Stephen Rodriguez, Bob Bauers,

The books start here

The branch's Road to Reading program provided 400 new books to all four elementary schools' Back-to-School nights. Thank you to Bob Bauers, Sandy Bauers, Rev. Robin Bearden-Reed, Larry Cohen, Johnny Corson, Paula Corson, Ted Josey, Tyrone Robinson, his granddaughter Jazara Robinson, Suzanne Spaulding, Keith Stevens, and Joanne Washington.



At Lincoln are (from left) Suzanne Spaulding, Sandy Bauers, principal Calista Boyer and students.



At Franklin are (from left) principal James Dargan, Rev. Robin Bearden-Reed, Larry Cohen and Joanne Washington.