



Branch Newsletter

September 2022

By the
Communication, Press & Publicity Committee

NEXT MEMBERSHIP MEETING: We're in person again! We'll meet at the Ricketts Center at 7 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 22. (The first day of Autumn, by the way.) For those who can't make it, we'll also have a Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84995648174?pwd=QlAyaHZkWIJXZWk1T3FWcHNFVnJOQT09>

Meeting ID: 849 9564 8174 Passcode: 937480

COMMUNITY MEETING ABOUT THE HALE STREET EXPLOSION

President Johnny Corson worked to set up a meeting so people affected by the Hale Street explosion could learn more about the investigation and have access to resources so they could deal with their trauma. It was Sept. 8 and was co-sponsored by Creative Health Services, Access Services Mobile Crisis Team, and the Montgomery County Office of Mental Health.

President Corson, who lives near the explosion site, said nearly 40 people attended the event, led by the Keystone Crisis Intervention Team. Many of them had kept their emotions inside, and the meeting gave them a chance to air their frustration, anger and feelings of helplessness. "As I sat there and listened to them, it made me feel that I wasn't alone," he said. "It was good. It was very therapeutic. Everyone got something out of it."

Meanwhile, President Corson, along with Pastor Josh Park of Branch Life Church and Judith Memberg of Genesis Housing met with some of the families who were displaced when their houses were damaged in the explosion. All have a place to stay for now.

BOYERTOWN FLAG INCIDENT

Branch investigators Sandy and Bob Bauers and President Johnny Corson met with Boyertown school officials in connection with a complaint filed by a parent over the display of Confederate flags and other belligerent symbols at the High School's Spirit Day this past spring. The officials said they had dealt with the offending students, but offered no details. A new policy this year bans the display of flags of any sort in Boyertown schools. We also asked why, according to the Anti-Defamation League, the high school had let its No Place For Hate status lapse. We will be following up with the district

CITATIONS AGAINST CHURCHES WITHDRAWN

The Borough of Pottstown has denied the Branch's Freedom of Information Act request to find out more about the citations issued against Christ Episcopal Church and Mission First Church, both on High Street. Among other things, the Branch was seeking to find out who initially complained about the churches and why the Borough responded the way it did. The Borough cited zoning violations related to the churches' work helping the needy, including providing meals.

But now, Evan Brandt reports in The Mercury, the borough has withdrawn the citations. Christ Episcopal, in response to a request for a statement from the paper, said that the citations caused "unnecessary concern and hardship to Christ Episcopal Church, in terms of human and financial resources. It caused unnecessary anxiety to those we serve, for fear that we would not be able to continue serving them as we have in the past." [Read Brandt's story here.](#)

SAVE A LIFE; GIVE BLOOD

Many of you know about Sickle Cell Disease. It affects primarily African Americans. There is no cure, but to treat it, many need blood transfusions throughout their lives. The blood needs to be as close a match as possible, so the blood from other African Americans is best. That's just one of many reasons the branch, in partnership with the American Red Cross and the Ricketts Center, is holding blood drives from 2 to 7 p.m. on Oct. 13 and Dec. 6 at the Center. To make an appointment, go to: www.redcrossblood.org and follow the prompts to find our drive, or call 1-800-RED CROSS.

GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION

The branch is working with the Pottstown YMCA to have a meeting with Community Leaders on Gun Violence Prevention to be held at the Pottstown Complex (The YMCA) at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 21. More details to come.

FRIENDS HELPING FRIENDS

The branch's WIN (Women in the NAACP) Committee is participating in the annual fundraiser hosted by Boscov's, reports committee chair Annette Kobb. Tickets are \$5, and 100% of it goes to the nonprofit that sells them. If you have a ticket, you get a 25 percent discount at Boscov's from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m on Oct 19.

One of WIN's main, regular activities is to make monthly donations of various necessities to the Salvation Army.

IN OTHER NEWS

- President Corson is working with Congresswoman Madeleine Dean to set up a town hall meeting to update Pottstown residents on the investigation into the cause of the fatal Hale St. explosion.
- President Corson said he's trying to persuade Pottstown police officers to do some physical training under the guidance of Paul Winterbottom at the Ricketts Center.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

On Tuesday, Sept 20, President Johnny Corson will be speaking to the **Phoenixville Diversity in Action** committee. The meeting, which begins at 7 p.m., will be via Zoom. We don't have a link yet, so keep an eye on their site: <https://diaphoenixville.org>

On Saturday, Sept. 17, the **CCLU (Centro Cultural Latinos Unidos) Latin Festival** will be held from 2 to 6 p.m. at Riverfront Park. Expect Latin dancing, Latin food and more. The branch will have a table there.