



## Branch Newsletter

# February-March, 2026

### Membership meeting 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 26, Ricketts Center

A representative from NAMI (the National Alliance on Mental Illness) Montgomery County will speak. The organization provides free mental health support, online groups, resources and education.

The speaker for our March 26 meeting is civil rights activist Laura English. She'll have many personal stories! As young as fifth grade, she proved wrong a teacher who, after integration, told the child she would fail. Among other civil rights icons, she met Thurgood Marshall, who came to her aunt's when he was in town because he liked her cooking. Currently a self-employed social work consultant, she has had a long and varied career — always helping others — a teacher, parenting instructor, motivator, mediator, and more.



The public is invited. The Zoom link is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84995648174?wd=QIAyaHZkWIJXZWk1T3FWcHNFVnJQQT09> Meeting ID:849 9564 8174 Passcode: 937480



### MLK Art Competition

The sixth annual MLK art competition, hosted by the Religious Affairs Committee, is under way. Students in three age groups — elementary, middle school and high school/college — are invited to create a 22-by-28-inch poster reflecting this year's theme: *MLKJ believed that The Constitution was a promise. He worked to make it come true for everyone because America was more than just a place to him. It was home. How can you, too, change America for good?* Art should be submitted by April 15. To request art supplies or for more information, contact our partner, Pottstown Community Arts, [topottstownarts@gmail.com](mailto:topottstownarts@gmail.com). Winners will be announced at Arts in the Park on May 9.



### Pennsylvania NAACP quarterly meeting

The branch was well-represented at the recent NAACP state quarterly meeting. Shown here with our president, Johnny Corson, are (from left) Sherly Meck, Director of the State Human Relations Civil Rights Outreach, Chad Dion Lassiter, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission; Catherine Hicks, President of the Philadelphia NAACP; and Tony Davis, President of the Willow Grove NAACP.



### NAACP youths at Pottstown High have a busy Black History Month

Each week in February, speakers have talked to the NAACP youth group, sharing their experiences and wisdom about what it took for them to achieve their success.

Above, Upper Pottsgrove Township Commissioner Tyrone Robinson (center), is flanked by the branch's

Johnny Corson and Annette Kobb. To their right is Pottstown Police Officer Steve Dise, who also spoke.

Other speakers include David Charles, co-founder of the STRIVE Initiative; John Gibson, investigator for the U.S. Air Force Police, State Police Capt. William Slaton, commander of the



Heritage Affairs Section, and LaTanya White-Springfield, Pottstown School District's director of student services. Pictured at left are recent speakers (from left) West Chester Mayor Lillian DeBaptiste; Tash Butts, owner of The Divine Place Hair by Tasha in Pottstown; the Rev. Vernon Ross, Pastor of Bethel Community Church of Pottstown, and Montgomery County Judge Lauren A. Hughes.

## Health and Wellness Committee events

The Health and Wellness Committee, chaired by Joanne Washington, held several events recently.

About a dozen people came to health Insurance information sessions at the Ricketts Center and Mission First. Independent insurance specialist Karene Johnson explained the different kinds of insurance and broke down the difference, according to the age of the person and what kind of insurance they might need. Several people were able to sign up on the spot.

Pictured at right at the event are (from left) Joanne Washington, the Ricketts Center's Hettie Webb, Karene Johnson, Johnny Corson, State Police Capt. William Slaton and (kneeling) Ricketts Center trainer Paul Winterbottom.

On Feb. 12, in collaboration with Joanne Washington Inc., the committee hosted a "Love Me Some Me" event that drew more than 50 youths to the Ricketts Center.

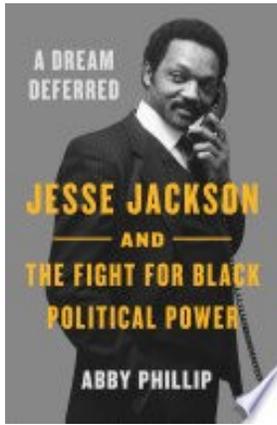
Washington created the day in 2025, with a goal of making it "a day of self love, self care, a day to try to eat healthier, take care of yourself, do something good for yourself."

A highlight was a soul food taste-test, and it turns out they liked pretty much everything – enoki fried chicken, mac 'n' cheese, broccoli, sweet potatoes, collard greens and more. For dessert – fruit, which they could dip into plant-based chocolate, plus cookie dough made with chick peas.

The youths also were able to make their own body sprays and fragrances from essential oils. Pottstown barber Erik Reyes cut ten children's hair. Food was provided by the Transformation Chamber, an online food business. The desserts were provided by New Creations Bakery, an online bakery.

Also helping were: Pastor Robin Barrow, Annette Kobb, WIN Legacies CEO Tonika Winchester, Vernessa and Brenda Kirkland, and Ronnie and Carol Hampton.

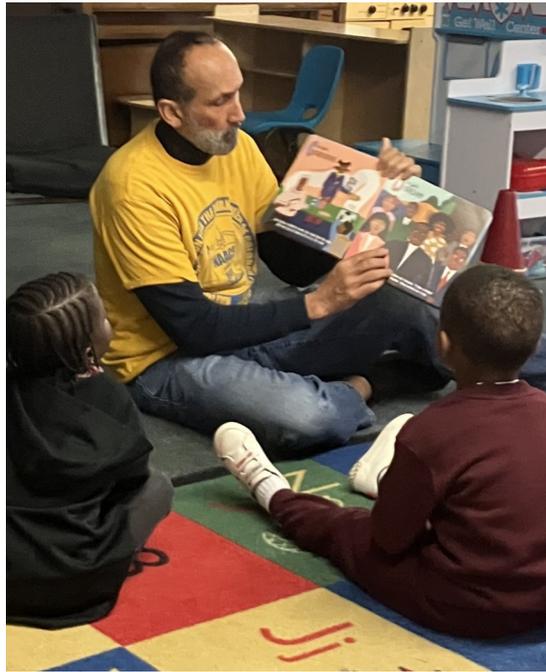
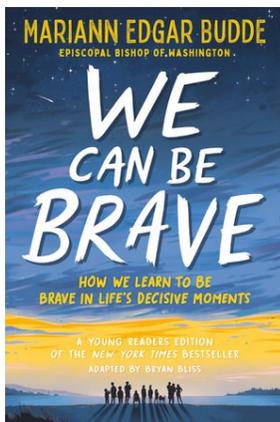




### March, April Book Club picks

The branch's book club has selected *A Dream Deferred: Jesse Jackson and the Fight for Black Political Power*, as its March selection. Written by CNN's Abby Phillip, it looks at the civil rights leader's presidential campaigns of the 1980s and explores how they showed that Black political power could be consolidated.

The April selection is *We Can Be Brave: How We Learn to Be Brave in Life's Decisive Moments*. The author, Bishop Mariann Edgar Budde, looks at pivot points when we're called on to push past our fears and act courageously in the face of injustice and bullying. We'll meet Mondays, March 9 and April 13, at 6 p.m. at the Pottstown Library. As always, the library is reserving copies or us.



### Never too young to learn

In Honor of Black History Month, Branch President Johnny Corson recently read to children at the Wee Care Child Development Center. The book was *ABC: Black History and Me*, by Queen-be Monyei.

### Road To Reading update

Our Road to Reading program wrapped up 2025 having given out 10,132 new books, for a total of 26,738 distributed since its inception in October 2023.

We achieved a new and good focus on our target audience – disadvantaged children of Pottstown Borough, ages 0 to 8 -- by setting up monthly deliveries of 290 books to borough kids in HeadStart, Early HeadStart and Pre-K Counts classes.

Recently, we gratefully accepted a donation of 122 excellent children's books from First Presbyterian Pastor Roberta Kearney, shown with Sandy Bauers. Sandy and Bob Bauers, co-managers of the program, used the books to stock Little Free Libraries at The Cluster and outside



the YWCA and to supply our super RTR partner, school bus driver Gail Beasley. We would love additional donations of children's books in good condition. Email Bob at [bobbauers28@gmail.com](mailto:bobbauers28@gmail.com)