



Branch Newsletter

August 2023

By the Communication, Press & Publicity Committee

NEXT MEMBERSHIP MEETING:

Our membership meeting will be Thursday, Aug. 24, 7 p.m. at the Ricketts Center, 658 Beech St.. Ashlee Clarke will talk about Love Your Block, a mini-grant program for neighborhood projects that remove blight, improve quality of life and foster community engagement. For those who can't make it, here's a Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84995648174?pwd=QlAyaHZkWIJXZWk1T3FWcHNfVnJlOQQT09>
Meeting ID:849 9564 8174 Passcode: 937480

WIN COMMITTEE COOKS MEAL

Among the WIN community's many activities, they fed more than 100 people in need earlier this summer at Mission First. Everyone enjoyed it so much, they plan to be back in September. The committee also headed up the branch's ticket sales for the Rotary Club's Duck Race on July 4. They sold 160 tickets, which brought in \$549 – half for the branch and half for the WIN Committee. They use the money, in part, to help out the Salvation Army and its family homeless shelter.





A DAY ON THE SCHUYLKILL RIVER

The branch and the Delaware Riverkeeper Network, an environmental advocacy group, teamed up to host a kayak trip on the Schuylkill River on Aug. 5.

Take it Outdoors took about three dozen paddlers upstream of Pottstown on a beautiful, sunny AND MOSTLY COOL morning. They cruised back downstream and, midway, stopped at Ganshaw Park for hoagies from Yohn's Deli.

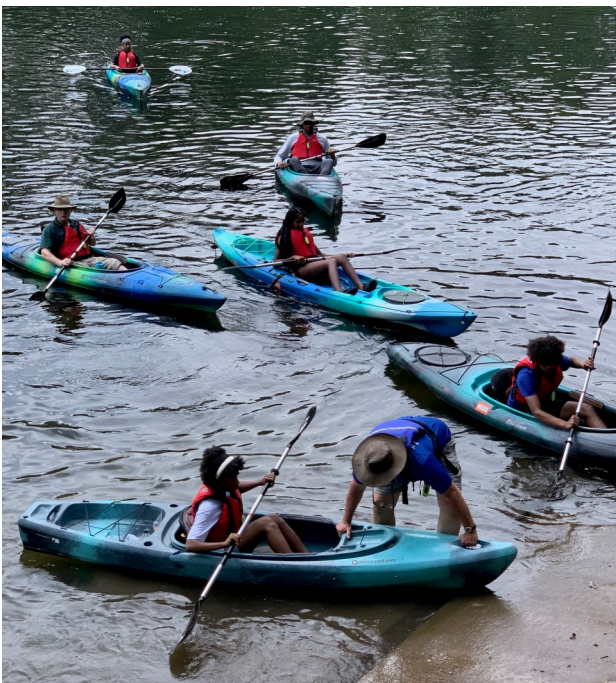
"I enjoyed the unity and learning the history." – Desiree Harris

"It got me out of my comfort zone. Along with the beauty, I enjoyed having conversations with different people." – Stacey Johnson

At lunch, Justin Clement, historic site supervisor at Pottsgrove Manor, talked about the lives and livelihoods of Black people who lived and worked along the river in the 1700s. He spoke of wagoners and haymakers, blacksmiths and farmers. He told about ways the Underground Railroad crossed the Schuylkill, and recounted a somber funeral procession -- by boat -- from Valley Forge to Pottstown, to bury a Black man named Cudjo.

The event was funded, in part, by a grant the Riverkeeper received from the Community Conservation Partnerships Program under the administration of the PA DCNR, Bureau of Recreation, in support of the Schuylkill Highlands Mini-Grant Program administered by Natural Lands.

"This is a perfect way to connect with nature and to learn the history of this wonderful place." – Mandel Smith



The branch's book club returns!

After a summer hiatus, the book club is back. We'll meet at the Pottstown Free Library on Monday, Sept. 11, at 6 p.m. to discuss "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass," by himself. The book, first published in 1845, is part memoir by the former slave and famous orator, part a treatise on abolition.

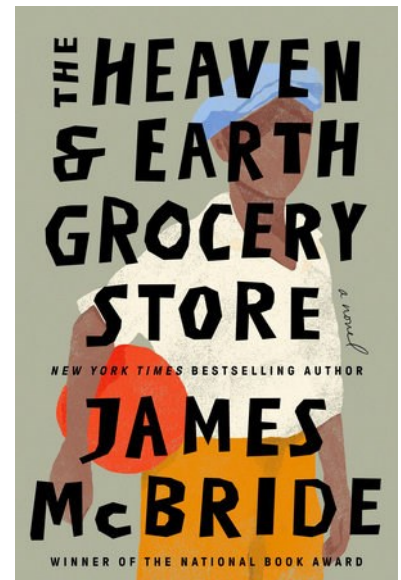
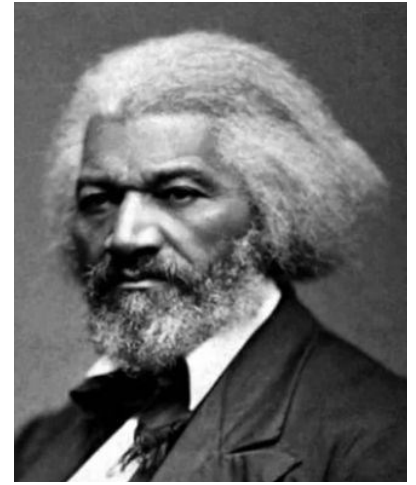
Meanwhile, we know Pottstown readers are clamoring for the new James McBride novel, "The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store," set in Pottstown. We like to choose books that people can borrow from the library, and last we checked, there were more than 200 holds on the title. But we'll get to it! Meanwhile, you can read some great stories about it in the Mercury.

Evan Brandt wrote an [intro to the book and interview](#) with McBride.

Perhaps one of Evan's [best pieces was his own reaction](#) after he read the novel.. "Certainly, part of that enjoyment is reading about a place you know with a satisfying sense of familiarity-become-celebrity."

Brandt also [talked to Chicken Hill residents](#), including our vice president, Larry Cohen. They still remember the Chicken Hill community's history and what made it so great.

The Mercury also ran Ann Levin's [Associated Press book review](#) , calling the novel a "mesmerizing, moving, almost magical tale."



NATIONAL NIGHT OUT

Did everyone have fun? Was that YOU we saw dancing in the street? If you missed it this year, mark your calendar for Aug. 6, 2024.





Getting ready to go
back to school



Dozens of kids came out for a giveaway of backpacks and school supplies Aug. 5 at the Bright Hope community. The event was put on by Women on the Move Ministries, led by NAACP member Regina Astheimer. Branch members Annette Kobb and Bobby Watson also came out to support the event. There was food, face-painting, a bounce house and more. Perhaps best of all, Mark Gibson got to show off a fire engine from the Pottstown Fire Department. Study hard, kids! Enjoy the new school year!