



# THE HATFIELD Connection

A Publication of the Hatfield Township Board of Commissioners | Fall/Winter 2023

## Celebrating 40 Years on Forty Foot Road

Hague's Christmas Trees is a  
Hatfield holiday tradition

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

Answering the Call

Igniting Change

The Boys of Summer



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## Hatfield Township Offices

1950 School Road  
Hatfield, PA 19440-1992

Telephone: 215-855-0900

Fax: 215-855-0243

Website: [www.hatfield.org](http://www.hatfield.org)

**Township Manager:** Aaron Bibro

### Office Hours

M, T, Wed, and Th: 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Fri: 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

### Township Municipal Schedules

Please visit [hatfield.org](http://hatfield.org) for location details.

#### Board of Commissioners

7:30 p.m. | 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesdays of each month

#### Planning Commission

7:30 p.m. | 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month

#### Zoning Hearing Board

7:00 p.m. | 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of each month

### Stay Connected



Twitter: @HatfieldPA



YouTube: HatfieldTownship



Facebook: HatfieldTownship



Email: Sign up for the Hatfield Township email newsletters at [hatfield.org](http://hatfield.org)

## Remember to Vote

• General Election on 11/7



## Hatfield Board of Commissioners



From left to right: Gerald Andris (Ward V), Bob Rodgers (Ward II, Vice President), Deborah Zimmerman (Ward III), Greg Lees (Ward I), Tom Zipfel (Ward IV, President)

Hatfield residents elect five Commissioners to four-year terms of office. Each Commissioner represents a geographical "Ward" of the township. The Commissioners are part-time volunteers who make decisions on behalf of the 18,000+ residents of Hatfield Township. The Board of Commissioners meets twice a month to discuss and adopt policies for Hatfield's local government services. These policy decisions include items such as land development applications, road improvements, public safety matters, capital improvement projects, and open space preservation. While each year may bring different projects and policies, the overarching goal of the Board of Commissioners is always to promote the health, safety, and welfare of the community.

To find out which ward you live in and which commissioner represents you, please refer to the township map at [www.hatfield.org/your\\_government/board\\_of\\_commissioners](http://www.hatfield.org/your_government/board_of_commissioners).

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Cover photo taken at Hague's Christmas Trees, courtesy of Desiree Hoelzle Photography.

# From Pandemic to Progress

The Covid-19 pandemic began soon after Deb Zimmerman's term as Commissioner, but she persevered to make valuable contributions to Hatfield residents.



*Drive-thru graduation in 2020*

For the past two years, the Hatfield Township Board of Commissioners have celebrated the achievements and contributions of women to the township as part of Women's History Month and International Women's Day. The inspiring stories of these women—members of the military, law enforcement, business owners, volunteers, teachers and other professionals—have been gathered and presented by Ward 3 Commissioner Deb Zimmerman.

Zimmerman intended to initiate the celebration of women soon after she was sworn in as Commissioner in January 2020, but the Covid-19 pandemic put a halt to public meetings, and created a host of other disruptions and delays. It is because of Zimmerman's passion and perseverance that these meaningful cele-

brations could finally come to fruition.

"I wanted to honor and bring focus to a diverse group of women, from different backgrounds, with different roles in the community," she says. "That's important work for the township to do, and I hope it will continue."

The Women's History Month recognition was not the only way Zimmerman was undeterred by pandemic precautions. The impact on high school seniors also caught her attention. In response, she and her fellow Commissioners organized a drive-thru graduation event for students, replacing the traditional ceremony that was another pandemic casualty. She also took note of the yard signs celebrating graduates. Whenever she saw one of the signs in her ward, she would send a personal



*Zimmerman (3rd from left) was the spark to honor the civic contributions of Hatfield women.*



“Deb has been a great addition to the Hatfield Board of Commissioners. I have enjoyed working with her these past four years and we hope Deb will remain involved with the Township as a volunteer for many more years to come. We are grateful for her efforts, in particular the work she did to recognize the great women in Hatfield and also helping our community mural become a reality.”

— Tom Zipfel, Board President,  
Hatfield Commissioner, Ward IV



*Zimmerman and resident Tina Sowicz cut the ribbon on Hatfield's community mural.*

note of congratulations to that address.

Zimmerman was also committed to supporting the 2020 census—a massive undertaking that was also hampered by the pandemic. She made countless phone calls to seniors in the Hatfield area to make sure they were accurately represented in the census, but her service went beyond the census count. She used those interactions to provide support for seniors during the loneliness of the pandemic, and also raised awareness about civic issues like the census and voter registration.

#### **A wonderful place**

Zimmerman has been a resident of Hat-

field for more than four decades, and she and her husband raised their children here. Prior to her role as a township Commissioner, she dedicated herself to her family and career. With a master's degree in history and museum studies from the University of Delaware and a teacher's certificate, she spent many years as an educator. While her children were growing up, she actively supported their soccer and baseball teams and volunteered in their classrooms.

What does she love about Hatfield? “The people, the location, the school district, the abundance of things to do—all of those things make Hatfield a wonderful

place to live,” she says.

Following the 2016 presidential election, Zimmerman felt compelled to become more involved in politics. With a strong passion and a wealth of ideas, she was sworn in as Commissioner in January 2020. A month later, the pandemic would shape the first part of her term—but wouldn't keep her from serving well.

Now that the pandemic is behind us, Zimmerman has been able to focus on projects that positively impact day-to-day life in Hatfield. In her time on the Board of Commissioners, Deb has been influential in completing many projects that have



“ Deb has been a tremendous Commissioner for Hatfield Township. She has brought many new ideas to the board and is a staple at all Township events throughout the year. I have enjoyed working for her and will miss her being on the board.”

— Aaron Bibro,  
Hatfield  
Township  
Manager



*Zimmerman (center) helps break ground on the Garden of Health's farm at Clemens Park.*

benefited township residents. She is a big supporter of the Garden of Health in Clemens Park, played an integral role in facilitating the community mural at the Hatfield Aquatic Center, highlighted Pride Month on township signs, and worked on the Habitat for Humanity building projects. She finds accomplishment in representing her constituents, hearing what people have to say, and making decisions that make life better for the residents of Hatfield.

As Deb's term as commissioner nears its end, she remains hopeful that Hatfield citizens will continue to be represented by diverse commissioners who genuinely reflect the community they serve. Her dedication to service and commitment to representing all people have been the hallmarks of her tenure. Deb appreciates her positive working relationships with her fellow commissioners and cherishes the opportunity

to serve the Hatfield community.

When asked what advice she would offer those interested in becoming a commissioner or getting involved with Hatfield's government, Deb enthusiastically responded, "Go for it! It's a rewarding experience, and we need diverse voices on the board."

Looking ahead, Deb plans to focus on her family and community matters even after her commissioner role concludes. She intends to continue volunteering for various causes, including Parks and Rec events and the Hatfield 250 committee. She also looks forward to spending time with her family and helping care for her senior parents. Zimmerman will also find more time for walking, hiking, reading, traveling, and tending to her garden. But, as she did while she was Commissioner, she will remain actively engaged in Hatfield.



*Celebrating 101 years for resident Anna Feingold*



*Handing out medals at a Parks & Rec race*



*Welcoming residents to the Liberty Bell Trail townhall meeting.*



# 2023 Parks and Recreation Programs

## Fall Trail Cleanup



September 25 | 5:30 - 6:30 p.m.

Looking for volunteer hours or a way to get involved with your Hatfield community? Join us for our fall cleanup event at School Road Park. After the cleanup, all volunteers are invited to join us for a pizza party at 6:30 pm! Email [hatfield@hatfield.org](mailto:hatfield@hatfield.org) to sign up!

## Get Fit Series



Zumba – Sundays | 9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.  
Remix – Mondays | 7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.  
Pound – Tuesdays | 6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.  
Yoga – Thursdays | 7:00 p.m. – 7:45 p.m.

Register for sessions of these classes and meet weekly with trained instructors to improve fitness and unwind. Classes are geared towards all levels. Full list of classes available on the township website.

## Pickleball



Hatfield Township partners with XL Sports to bring you indoor pickleball (September – May). There are multiple sessions offered at different costs depending on the session length. *\*Pre-registration required.*

## Seminar Series



Hatfield Township offers a variety of educational seminars. Join us and receive information and training from seminars such as

- “Ready, Set, Medicare”
- American Red Cross Babysitting courses
- Pruning Workshops
- And more!

Details for different seminars provided on the Hatfield Township website.

**Pre-registration is required for all programs. All programs are tentative and subject to change or cancellation. Please check the Hatfield Township website for details and up to date information throughout the year. Register at [www.hatfieldrec.com](http://www.hatfieldrec.com).**

## GIVING TREE

Help local families in need  
this holiday season!

Hatfield Parks and Recreation and the North Penn School District are partnering again for our 6th Annual Giving Tree! The tree is filled with requests from local families in need this holiday season. Take a gift tag from the tree and exchange it with the corresponding gift\*.

**Location:** Administration Building  
1950 School Rd  
**When:** November 8 - December 15

\* All gifts should be new and unwrapped



**Hatfield Township residents can receive discounts on tickets to Wells Fargo Center events like:**

**Philadelphia Flyers**  
**Disney on Ice**

**Harlem Globetrotters**  
**And much more!**

Links to upcoming event registration will be posted on the Hatfield Township website and on the Hatfield Township Facebook page. Be sure to follow both and sign up for our ENews to get the latest event options and registration links!

When registering, use code: HATFIELD



# ROCKTOBER

## October 7

11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.  
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YARD GAMES AND MORE!

 Hatfield's  
**Rocktoberfest**



# ROCKTOBERFEST 5K



Saturday, Oct. 7

Race Start: 10:30am

Race starts at the Hatfield Township Administration Building and finishes down the road at School Road Park just in time to kick off our Rocktoberfest fall festival! Run with family and friends and finish at the park with live music, food and food trucks, vendors, family games, a photo booth, and more! **All participants receive a Rocktoberfest 5k coffee mug, a finisher's medal, and free hot chocolate at Rocktoberfest!**

Register at: [www.runtheday.com](http://www.runtheday.com)



## MINI MONSTER HALLOWEEN PARTY



Friday, Oct. 20 | 6pm - 8pm | School Road Park\*

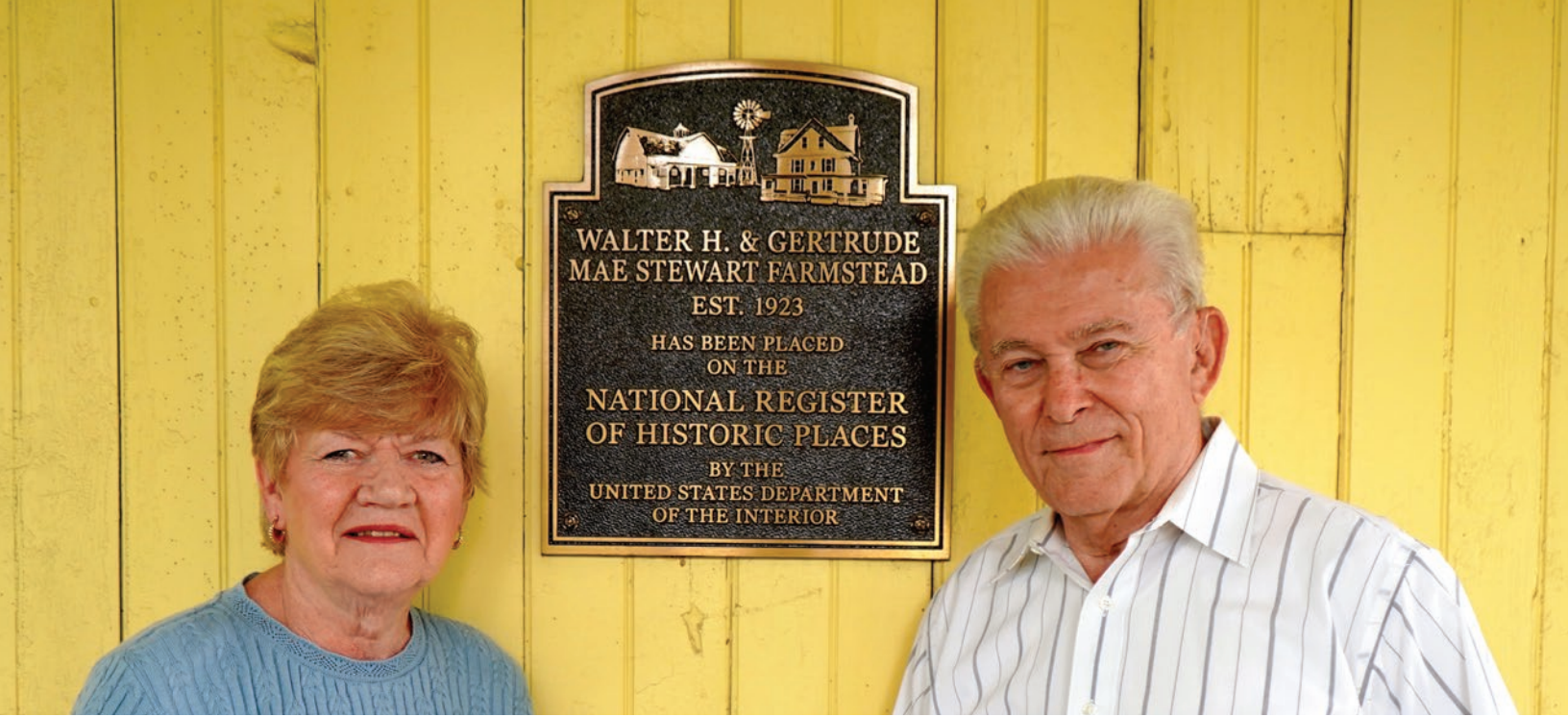
### Movie in the Park: Hotel Transylvania

Enjoy snacks and refreshments, games, music, crafts, pumpkin decorating and Trick or Treat with local businesses and organizations.

**Wear your favorite Halloween costume!**



\*Rain Location: Admin Building, 1950 School Rd. Indoor space is limited



*Peg & Ralph Harvey in front of the plaque marking their family farmstead on the National Register of Historic Places*

# Preserving History

## The Stewart Farmstead on Line Lexington Road Added to the National Register of Historic Places

Many of us have fond memories of our childhood homes, but few can say that their childhood home has historical significance. Hatfield resident Peg Stewart Harvey happily recalls the farm she's spent her whole life on and hopes future generations remember the farm's history. Because of the efforts of Peg and her husband Ralph, the property has recently been added to the National Register of Historic Places. The Stewart Farmstead on Line Lexington Road has been in Peg's family for 100 years and is the most complete example of an early 1900s farm in Hatfield, with the original corncrib and windmill still standing.

In 1923, Peg's grandparents, Walter and Gertrude Stewart, purchased the 48-acre farmstead. It took them four days to move their belongings, making trips back and forth from Warminster in a horse-drawn wagon. The acreage, house, and outbuildings cost them \$8,200.00. According to the farm's harvest documentation, in 1924 the Stewarts had 15 acres of hay, 15 apple trees, 12 peach trees, two horses, three dairy cattle, 52 chickens—and one car.

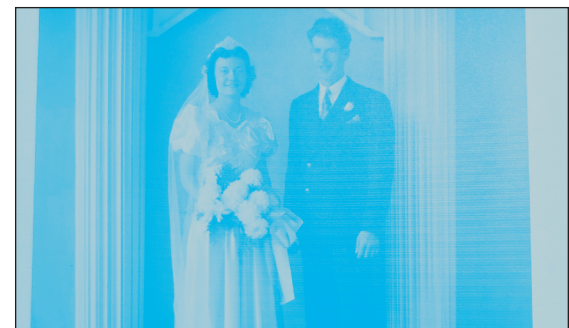
Farming was an integral part of life in 1920s Hatfield. Montgomery County census data shows that in 1927 there were 71 farms in Hatfield Township (with 66 different owners). Furthermore, the census shows that between these 71 farms, there was a total of 3,029 acres of wheat, oats, and rye, 136 horses, 399 cows, 275 pigs, 18,000 hens, and 6,615 chickens. At the time of the census, the Stewart farm did not have a tractor, a truck, a milking machine, a silo, or electricity. They did have running water in the bathroom but not in the kitchen. They had a furnace, a car, a gas engine, and a telephone.

Peg's father, Melvin, grew up on the farm. He did construction work in Philadelphia and would come home to milk the cows in the evening. Melvin eventually became a building inspector for Hatfield Township until he retired in 1979. The farm passed to Melvin and his wife Margaret in 1967. Peg happily remembers her time on the farm with her mother and father.

Shortly after Melvin and Margaret were married, he asked her if she would like to raise a



*Walter H. and Gertrude Mae Stewart purchased the Farmstead in 1923*



*Melvin & Margaret Stewart on their wedding day in 1940*



few chickens. She replied, "Sure." He surprised her with a purchase of 3,000 chickens. While Peg did not have to collect eggs from 3,000 chickens, she still grew to dislike that particular chore. Hens frequently pecked her to defend their eggs—just one reason she and Ralph never raised chickens once they took over the farm.

Working on the farm was rewarding, but it wasn't easy, with fields to plant and harvest, cows to milk, and eggs to collect. Peg helped her father milk twice a day. They strained the milk, delivered two quarts to her grandmother's house, and took the rest home. She remembers planting corn with her father, riding on the back of his Allis Chalmers tractor, raising and lowering the planter arm as they started and finished each row. One day while planting, storm clouds began to gather. Her dad put the tractor into high gear, forgetting that Peg was on the back. Peg was tossed from the planter as they rounded a corner. She ran to catch up, and as he stopped, he said, in a voice full of his characteristic humor, "What are you falling off for?" They resumed planting and finished before the storm hit.

Peg grew up riding horses. She would ride the property for hours, never coming out on the road. Her family used the horses to ride around the farm and check on the other animals. It snowed so much in the winter of 1958 that the horses could not make the trip to the barn. With three feet of snow on the ground and more falling hard, it was difficult to see. To move safely between the outbuildings, her father tied a rope around his waist with the other end around hers. They walked that path in the snow for three days before the horses could move about the farm again.

One perk of growing up on a farm was an abundance of fresh fruit and produce. Peg remembers summer picnics being a big deal on the farm. Her father would wrap an entire watermelon in burlap and lower it into the well. In no time, the watermelon was chilled and ready to enjoy. Peg's mom learned how to can from her grandmother. After working all day, her mother often spent evenings canning tomatoes, peaches, berries, and corn. Because of their hard work in the summer, they could enjoy the taste of homegrown fruits and veggies all year.

Records containing the daily activities on the farm create a window to the past. Peg's grandfather kept journals and started each day's entry with a summary of the day's weather. Peg continues the tradition. She keeps journals about farm life so that her children and grandchildren will have an image of the past and how life on the farm has changed over time. Ten original buildings, built in 1909, are still on the property, making this farm one of the best examples of an early 1900s farm in Pennsylvania.

When Peg married Ralph in 1970, they moved to Lansdale for a few months. When an apartment on the farm became available, they jumped at the opportunity to live on the farm. And Peg's dad was thrilled to have an extra set of hands to help on projects that Ralph recalls hearing "will only take 10 minutes" (regardless of how long the job would take). Ralph and Peg raised their family on the farm and helped her dad work the land until Melvin passed in 1991.

In 1992 the property was transferred to Ralph and Peg. This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Stewart Family owning the property. Both Ralph and Peg strive to maintain the property's original integrity for years to come.

The farm has grown and changed, but has remained the same in many ways, too. It is a piece of the past preserved for future generations to experience and enjoy.

*Special thanks to Dave Kimmerle, who researched the property to have it designated as a historic site. This registry is the official list of the nation's historic places worthy of preservation. A Hatfield Museum & History Society presentation about the property is available to view on YouTube.*



*Melvin in front of the wagon that brought the Stewart family from Warminster to Hatfield in 1923*



*The main house, windmill, milk house, and garage seen here are all original*

## Stewart Farmstead Timeline

**1682** - William Penn granted a tract of 5000 acres to Thomas Harley of London

While the 5,000 acres were divided and sold to many people over the years, the property known today as the Stewart Homestead changed hands approximately 25 times from 1682 - 1923.

**1740** - The property was sold to Jacob Shooter, including a tract between Trewigtown Road and Line Lexington Road, roughly from Frick's Burial Ground to William Kerr's residence. Mr. Shooter may have been one of the first residents of Hatfield! (Shooter Tract - 250 acres)

**1909** - Gertrude May Zane purchased the property. She replaced the old buildings with the present buildings, including the 3-story house, wood shed, well house, windmill, milk house, chicken house, garage, corn crib, barn, and equipment shed. All still stand today.

**1911** - The Zane's went bankrupt, and Sheriff C.J. Buckley seized the property and sold it to Amos Allebach for \$75.00

**1923** - Fritz Schallbruch sold the land, now 48 acres, to Walter Stewart and his wife, Gertrude Mae Stewart, for \$8,200.

# Answering the Call:

## The Dedicated Firefighters of the Hatfield Volunteer Fire Company

Fred Rogers had a famous quote, “When I was a boy, and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, ‘Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.’” We recently spoke with some of those helpers at the Hatfield Volunteer Fire Company (HVFC). The pride in the community they serve and the high standards they maintain to keep us safe are evident.

Training stands as a cornerstone of the HVFC experience. Members have the opportunity to train twice a week. Staying up-to-date and incorporating new training methods such as storm and flood responses, car electrical systems, and solar panels on structures is essential. Besides the regular Monday and Tuesday night training, some volunteers even travel to Indianapolis for hands-on live fire training.

In a testament to the power of perseverance, Dean Mininger, President of HVFC, recently realized a long-term goal when the department built a training facility in Clemens Park. The three-story facility is constructed of shipping containers and was designed with flexible space to simulate various emergency scenarios. From a conventional household setup to configurations resembling apartments or stores, this facility provides a controlled yet lifelike environment for honing real-world firefighting skills. Here, volunteers engage in critical training for search and rescue operations, forceful entry

techniques, ladder usage, structural cutting, and fundamental rescue procedures.

Volunteering, like any worthy endeavor, demands dedication. The HVFC acknowledges this commitment and strives to enhance the volunteer experience. Renovations of the main firehouse and the establishment of a well-equipped gym reflect their investment in the well-being of their volunteers. While these perks add a layer of appreciation, the driving force behind each volunteer’s sustained commitment comes from within.

A strong sense of brotherhood develops among volunteers. Friendships are forged through shared experiences, and trust is established during emergencies and daily life. “At the end of the day, you can have a group of guys that you call up and say, ‘Hey, I need to talk, or I need help.’ They’re always going to be there. These guys—they’re my brothers,” says HVFC Lieutenant Scott Miller.

Numerous volunteers become part of the HVFC through the Cadet program, tailored for kids aged 14-15. This opportunity offers young people an active role within the community and lays the groundwork for potential career paths. Young people aspiring to EMS, firefighting, or police work can begin their journey by enlisting as cadets. Once they reach 16, cadets are eligible for membership as junior firefighters. This stage involves additional specialized training and participation in

select activities. Those aged 18 and above can be voted in as full members.

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“It was just a great group of guys. They are mentors in different ways, and not just firefighting. I learned a lot of everyday life skills at the firehouse.”

Alex Borglum  
Hatfield Volunteer Firefighter

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The mentorship between older and younger members extends beyond firefighting, encompassing all facets of life. Assistant Chief Andrew Lersch stressed the profound significance of this youthful initiation: “Joining at a young age - you’re joining an organization you can be a part of for your whole life...it’s also a great opportunity to form lifelong friendships with people you trust in all aspects of your life.”

Within the ranks of HVFC volunteers, we find modern heroes who embody the spirit of Fred Rogers’ cherished words. Their unwavering commitment and selfless service are a window into the potential within us all to be those sought-after helpers.

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*If you have questions or are ready to answer the call and interested in joining Hatfield’s Volunteer Fire Company, visit [hatfieldfire.com](http://hatfieldfire.com) or stop by 75 N Market St, Hatfield.*







Alex Borglum

## Mentors in firefighting—and in life

Alex Borglum was 14, and a neighbor kept asking him to join the fire company. He finally decided to give it a try when he was 16—and hasn't looked back. What got him hooked?

"It was just a great group of guys," he says. "You can call them about anything. You always learn from them. They are mentors in many different ways, and not just in firefighting. I also learned a lot of everyday life skills at the firehouse."

Borglum graduated from the company's cadet program, which involved training one night a week. He has made two trips to Indianapolis, IN, for some live fire training—"probably the best training we do," he says—and now, at age 22, was recently promoted to lieutenant.

His message to someone considering volunteering? "Come down and try it out," he says. "You learn pretty quick whether you like it or not. Some people come to a few trainings and drop out, but others come out and realize they can do it, that they want to do it. Then they're hooked."



The stories we've collected paint a vivid picture of modern heroes, ordinary individuals who rise to extraordinary challenges, driven by an unwavering commitment to their communities. We invite you to visit [hatfield.org](http://hatfield.org) to read more and to view segments of these interviews in the digital version of this newsletter.

## A win-win: Public Works pitches in to assist Hatfield firefighters

Back in the spring of 2023, visitors to School Road Park found a large chunk of the parking area blocked off for a driver training course. But these weren't 15-year-olds practicing for their permit in Dad's sedan. These were Hatfield Township Public Works employees completing their emergency vehicle driver training competency certification. The goal: to allow public works employees to assist the township's firefighter volunteers when they're short-handed by helping out with the driving and truck operations—allowing firefighters to focus on fighting fires.

The partnership between the fire company and the township's Public Works department represents more than a year of planning and preparation. "Our Public Works employees all have CDLs (commercial driver's licenses), they are experienced in driving large vehicles, and they're located less than half a mile from the firehouse," says Hatfield Township Manager Aaron Bibro.

"We are proud to support our volunteer firefighters by having our public works employees complete their driver training," said Board of Commissioners President Tom Zipfel. "Congratulations to all our employees who received their certification and to the firefighters who trained them."

When spring turned to summer, the public works employees happened to be doing some additional training at the Hatfield firehouse when a call came in for a fire on School Road. "One of the guys said to me, 'Do you want us to drive?'" says Hatfield Volunteer Fire Company President Dean Mininger. "We said 'Sure!'"

Hatfield Borough and other nearby municipalities have been allowing their public works employees to drive for some time now, so the Hatfield Volunteer Fire Company went to the township and asked if they could pursue it, too. "They [Public Works drivers] have come a long way, and they're really into it. It's a plus for the township and for us," says Mininger. "We are grateful to have municipalities that support us as we continue to improve the level of emergency response for the community."



# Igniting Change:

## The Power of Volunteerism in Colmar's Firefighting Heroes

“One of my first goals as a Commissioner was to make sure both fire companies knew that I was here to support them and ensure they had adequate funding. The Commissioners have been excited to support our recent partnership with the fire companies by encouraging our public works team to become volunteer members of both companies and allowing them to respond to calls during their work day.”

— Tom Zipfel, Board President, Hatfield Commissioner, Ward IV



*Doug Cervi, President and Chief Engineer of the Colmar Volunteer Fire Company*

In our search for helpers that answer the call in our community, our journey didn't require us to look very far. We spoke with Doug Cervi, President and Chief Engineer of the Colmar Volunteer Fire Company. He offers an inspiring glimpse into the world of volunteer firefighting and its profound impact on individuals and communities.

Cervi's commitment to the Fire Company runs deep. The legacy of volunteer firefighting runs in his veins, tracing back to his grandfather and uncle. With a service record spanning two decades, Cervi's dedication embodies the service mindset.

Acknowledging the importance of volunteer firefighting, Cervi emphasizes the demands and exceptional level of commitment necessary. Volunteers must undergo extensive training, investing hundreds of hours to prepare for various challenges. This rigorous training equips them with essential skills and forges an unbreakable camaraderie, fostering trust among the firefighting family. In addition, they gain the ability to collaborate seamlessly with other emergency response units so they can focus on their shared mission.

The department meets weekly for training sessions that span a series of topics. Beyond combatting fires, they must be prepared to respond to a wide range of emergencies, from water rescues to vehicle extrication. Every piece of their training is

necessary, and proof of their commitment to excellence.

Cervi's motivation for embracing the role of a firefighter is selfless: "To serve the community and be there when someone needs you, having the ability to impact positively on someone's traumatic experience or emergency, and just seeing their feeling of 'you just helped me in a way that you could never describe.' It means so much," he says. "That's what community is about—helping one another." This attitude is woven into the very fabric of the Colmar Volunteer Fire Company.

Colmar's fire company embraces members that reflect the rich tapestry of our community. Individuals from varied ethnic backgrounds, genders, and walks of life join the department, demonstrating a spirit of inclusivity. This diversity becomes important in emergencies, where the ability to offer comfort and communicate effectively within our diverse community becomes a vital asset.

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"Being a volunteer puts you in the center of your community."

Robert Hassett  
Colmar Volunteer Firefighter

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The department's growth owes much to the power of word-of-mouth recommendations and an active Explorer Program.



"When I was a boy, and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.'"

Fred Rogers

This program, catering to children aged 14 to 18, teaches life skills and instills values of community-driven responsibility. The Explorer Program aims to nurture character and foster a commitment to community service.

Volunteer fire departments are on call 24/7, they don't close on holidays, and the members don't get paid for their time. Ultimately, volunteers stay because they care about the community. Whether seeing kids wowed by a truck at an event or shaking the hand of someone thankful for what the department has done, there are priceless rewards for being a volunteer firefighter.

Like many volunteer-based organizations, the department is always looking for recruits to continue its mission. The Colmar Volunteer Fire Department extends an invitation to all who share the desire to make a difference.

It takes a lot to run a fire department. In addition to a constant need for volunteer firefighters, plenty of options are available to those who would prefer to avoid ac-

tively fighting fires but would still like to get involved. As Doug reminds us, "Time is the most valuable thing we have, and your time is the most valuable thing you can give, whether an hour or five hours." It takes a variety of skill sets to make a volunteer fire company successful. Those skilled in accounting, marketing, fundraising, event planning, cleaning, and more are welcome to volunteer.

In Doug Cervi and the other volunteers at Colmar Fire Company, we encounter fellow community members who epitomize the meaning of a hero. Their steadfast dedication and selfless actions serve as a portal, revealing the hidden ability within each of us to become much-needed helpers.

*If you have questions or are ready for the challenge and interested in joining the Colmar Volunteer Fire Company, visit [colmarfire.com](http://colmarfire.com), or stop by the station at 2700 Walnut Street, in Colmar, on Mondays between 7- 9:30 pm.*



Robert Hassett

### The center of your community

Robert Hassett grew up in a family of firefighters and knew he wanted to be one from the moment he first set foot in a fire station as a child in Bethpage, NY. After moving to Colmar, he joined the Boy Scouts, and one of his pack leaders was a Colmar fireman. The day he turned 14—the minimum age to join—he jumped on his bike and rode to the Colmar firehouse to apply.

That was 23 years ago, and Hassett hasn't regretted it a moment. "There's never a dull moment in the fire service," he says. "You never know what's next—you could be saving someone's life, or property, or you could be out in the community making new friends." In fact, that is what he likes best about serving in the fire company.

"You're not just a firefighter," he says. "You and your family become part of a team, part of a family. Being a volunteer puts you in the center of your community. Whether it's an emergency, a community event where you're demonstrating fire equipment, or educating residents on fire safety, we get to meet our neighbors and create lasting friendships. I've gained so much more in my life than just being a firefighter. I've gained family, friends, and knowledge I would not have otherwise."



“The taxpayers of Hatfield are lucky to have two active and thriving volunteer fire companies serving this community. In addition to saving lives and property, the volunteers in Hatfield save the taxpayers millions of dollars each year.”

— Aaron Bibro, Hatfield Township Manager



The stories we've collected paint a vivid picture of modern heroes, ordinary individuals who rise to extraordinary challenges, driven by an unwavering commitment to their communities. We invite you to visit [hatfield.org](http://hatfield.org) to read more and to view segments of these interviews in the digital version of this newsletter.



# Celebrating 40 years on Forty Foot Road

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Profile: Hague's Christmas Trees



*Aerial view of Hague's Christmas Trees near the end of the Christmas season. All of the red in the field are winterberry plants.*



“ I have been a customer and friend of the Hagues since I moved to Hatfield over 25 years ago. Some of my favorite memories of living in Hatfield have been when my family goes to Hague’s to pick a Christmas tree. Even with kids away for school, we arrange our schedule so that we can all be together to choose a tree and visit with Gary and Janet Hague. They are extraordinary and thoughtful people. The Hague family and their tree farm are both so special to the Hatfield community.”

– Tom Zipfel, Board President, Hatfield Commissioner, Ward IV

Most people aren’t thinking much about Christmas trees at this time of year. But for Gary and Janet Hague, thinking about and growing Christmas trees is a year-long undertaking. For nearly 40 years, Hague’s Christmas Trees has served Hatfield Township and beyond.

Gary grew up around his father’s flower shop and greenhouse but didn’t aspire to work for the family business. In 1972 he earned his Bachelor of Science in Industrial Arts Education from Millersville State College (where he met Janet) and later earned a master’s. With his first job after graduation as an Industrial Arts teacher in the Hatboro-Horsham School District, Gary and Janet settled down in Hatfield, PA. Soon after they married, Gary inherited 99 acres of farm and woodland in northeastern Pennsylvania from his uncle.

While there were trees on the land in 1973, they were far from being market ready. The land was overgrown with weeds that were shoulder high in places. However, when Gary discovered some baby trees among the overgrowth, he decided to try and “rescue them.”

The Hagues sold their first Christmas trees to friends and family who ordered them. As their Christmas tree business expanded, so did their retail needs. They purchased the property at 755 Forty Foot Road in 1984 and began planting trees and winterberry. After selling trees and wreaths out of their front yard for several years, they purchased the property next to their original location to expand their display and parking areas. Hague’s Christmas Trees has continued to grow over the years, adding a sales building in 1994, and a “wreath barn” in 1996.

In addition to growing Christmas trees and winterberry, the Hagues create and sell award-winning wreaths. Gary has been competing in wreath contests for many years using skills he picked up at his family’s flower shop. He has won first place in decorated and undecorated wreaths 13 times at the state level and has also won first place at the national level four times. Some of Hague’s award-winning wreaths have even hung on the Pennsylvania Governor’s Residence in Harrisburg.

Through the North Penn Community



*Hanging wreaths on the Governor’s Residence*



*First place winners at the 2019 PA Farm Show contest in decorated wreath, undecorated wreath, and creative unconventional category with their Horse Head “Wreath.”*

Education Program, Gary runs evergreen wreath-making classes in their wreath barn every year. He offers “private” classes to other groups upon request.

In addition to their time on the farms, as proud members of the Pennsylvania Christmas Tree Growers Association, they attend meetings throughout the year to stay up to date with changes in the industry and share what they have learned with other growers. They are also closely involved with the PA Farm Show, where Gary is a committee member.

The Hague family has made a wonder-

ful home here in Hatfield. Outside of the business, they are both active members of the community and with their church, Emmanuel Evangelical Congregational Church on Main Street, where Janet is currently director of the Emmanuel Food Cupboard. When asked what they like most about living in Hatfield, they said, “The people. There’s a great community spirit here.” Gary and Janet love how supportive, giving, and welcoming the Hatfield community is. They especially see that generosity from residents and businesses at the Food Cupboard with all the donations of groceries and gift cards.

In their 40 years on Forty Foot Road, they have shared many lovely memories with local families. Customers who started coming as children with their parents now come as adults with their own children. Young couples have become engaged, and families have Christmas card photos taken amongst the trees planted on Forty Foot Road. Hague’s Christmas Trees is a Hatfield icon, and Gary and Janet look forward to sharing many more memories on the farm.

The Hague’s work hard all year so that customers can enjoy beautiful trees, winterberry, and wreaths during the holiday season. Different varieties of trees require varied growing conditions and care. Clearing ground, prepping soil, fertilizing, and pest control are all vital to the growth of trees and shrubs. In addition, they use a process of shearing to help the trees maintain the perfect “Christmas Tree” shape. After the customer selects a tree, Hague’s staff will provide a fresh cut, shake the tree to remove loose needles and other debris, bale the tree for easier handling, and assist in getting it into or on their vehicle.



*Janet & Gary typically measure and tag trees on the farm during the summer in preparation for the coming Christmas season.*



*Dog “wreath,” which won first place in 2022 PA Farm Show in “Creative Unconventional” class of the wreath competition.*



*Tabletop boxwood at the 2023 PA Farm Show*



# What's Happening

## Frick's Trail is now paved

Mom, Dad, and Grandparents using a stroller: We heard you.

Cyclists: We heard you.

Rollerbladers: We heard you.

Scooter riders: We heard you.

Wheelchair users: We heard you.

The Hatfield Township Board of Commissioners have heard you, and **Frick's Trail** is now completely paved, increasing accessibility to one of the township's best-loved trails. We are grateful to everyone who helped make it happen! *Trek the trail from start to finish in a video posted to our Facebook page.*



## Veterans Memorial to be dedicated October 7

President Harry Truman said that "our debt to the heroic men and valiant women in the service of our country can never be repaid." That is true, but we can remember and honor their service, and so the Hatfield Township Board of Commissioners are pleased to be able to unveil a new **Veteran's Memorial** at School Road Park with a ceremony that will take place on **Saturday, October 7, 2023 at 12 noon**, as part of Hatfield's day-long Rocktoberfest activities at the park. Hope to see you there!



## HAC named one of the Top 10 Public Pools in PA

We all know the **Hatfield Aquatic Center** is the greatest place in the world to cool off, but now everyone in Pennsylvania knows it too! The HAC was named one of the top 10 public pools in PA by Best Things Pennsylvania (bestthingspa.com). Here's what they said: "Come to Hatfield Aquatic Center for the perfect swimming escape! Unwind and chill out while jumping into the refreshing pool or challenge yourself with an exciting dive off the diving boards! Enjoy some well-deserved 'me' time while beating the heat in style." Be sure to get your membership next season!





# THE BOYS OF SUMMER

School Road Park is home to one of the great success stories of senior living in Montgomery County.

Back in the 1970's, a Chicago sports journalist wrote a successful book about America's favorite pastime. His enduring title will forever define what we call America's ballplayers: The Boys of Summer.

It wasn't all that long ago that the men of the Montgomery County Senior Softball League were just that—boys. Most of them nowadays answer to one of the endearing names for grandfather.

They will all tell you just how quickly those carefree days of their youth have passed. They are grown up men now, who by circumstances and good fortune have come together again years later to share a love they all once had

in common so very long ago. They have become ballplayers again. But probably more important, in their hearts and minds they have all become boys again.

Whether their love of this game is deeply rooted in pure baseball or in the variation of the game we know today as softball, the men who belong to this organization all agree about one thing: Since reaching the grand old age of 60, it is one of the best things they have done with their lives. The senior softballers of this league wholeheartedly participate in one of the great success stories of senior living in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania.

— George F. Schreader, MCSSL historian







It's almost noon on a hot July Saturday, and Gordy Detweiler's purple uniform shirt is soaked through. He is surrounded by a group of jubilant Philadelphia Phillies Ballgirls, who are celebrating their double-header sweep against a group of MCSSL players. As he has done for the nine years since the Ballgirls began traveling to Hatfield to play against men old enough to be their grandfather, Detweiler pitched for the Ballgirls, and this day he won both games—all to raise money for the Phillies' charities. He is their player of the game; they interview him for their Instagram page.



Less than six weeks prior to the Ballgirls double-header, Detweiler celebrated his 83rd birthday. He pitched that day too, and got a hit in his first at-bat; players on both teams spontaneously sang "Happy Birthday" to him. He joined the

league in 2001, in just its third year.

"This is my 23rd year," he says. "I'm gettin' near the end." Another player chips in: "Yeah, we're washed up but we don't know it yet." Everyone has a good laugh.

That may be a pretty accurate description for the 200 or so players who come out to School Road Park twice a week from April to October to play a game they grew up playing, and loving. Nearly everyone has lost a step or two; some even need designated runners. Bending over to field a slow roller is all but impossible. Pop-ups that used to be easy outs now require Herculean effort. Players forget where they put their glove at the end of the last inning.

No one will deny that their best playing days are behind them. But don't think for a minute that these guys (and an occasional girl) don't have some extremely good playing days *in front of them*. Watch them play and you quickly

realize: a lot of these players have serious game. At the same time, they don't sweat it when they drop a fly ball, boot a grounder, or get thrown out at first base by an outfielder. More often than not, they get a good chuckle out of their foibles. The league's motto is on display, figuratively, at every single game: *If you had fun, you won*. In this league, every player, every day, walks away a winner.



Some may perceive that this is just a bunch of guys trying to relive their glory days on the diamond, and there is some truth to that. But the MCSSL is so much more than that. The league helps older guys stay active, and provides an important social network at a time when many are feeling the need for one.

"Here I am at my age, and a lot of the friends I had are either gone or can't play," says Ray Forlano, who is the league's elder statesman at age 85.



Gordy Detweiler



Ray Forlano

## Meet Hatfield's Boys of Summer

Learn more about Hatfield's Boys of Summer in the player profiles contained in our digital edition, which you can access at [hatfield.org](http://hatfield.org). You can also come watch the games Monday to Thursday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at School Road Park.



## Team names: The Mystery, and Magic, of the letter “M”

Marvels, Mystics, Monarchs, Mavericks, Masters, Mustangs, Maniacs—notice a pattern in the MCSSL team names? It should surprise no one that there’s a story behind it. Check out the digital newsletter at [hatfield.org](http://hatfield.org) to listen to the league’s elder statesman, Ray Forlano, as he shares the classic story about why all team names begin with the letter “M.”



## The Boys of Winter, too

The softball doesn't stop when the weather turns colder—it just moves inside. The Boys of Summer become the Boys of Winter during the MCSSL's winter league, which plays indoors at another Hatfield location, XL Sports.



“Now I’m making friends of guys that I could be a father to. In fact, one of the guys on my team last year, I played with his father 20 years before. Where else could that happen for somebody like me?”

In addition to the Phillies Ballgirls charity games, the league holds picnics in the spring, summer and fall, a golf outing in the summer, a one-pitch tournament in the fall, and a holiday party in the winter. MCSSL events have already raised over \$20,000 for charity, both local and regional. Players don’t just play ball together, either: As many as 40 players get together every Friday to

play golf, too.

“The camaraderie that you find here is probably the best thing about this league,” says league historian George Schreader. “Aside from having fun playing softball, you make so many friends out here. It’s a wonderful time in your life. I can’t think of a senior activity that I could participate in that would be better than this, more fun than this. I don’t think there’s a single guy out here who wouldn’t tell you the same thing.”

### Want in on the fun?

Visit the MCSSL online at [mcssl.org](http://mcssl.org) or call 267-644-5343

## The Vision of Vic Zoldy

In the winter of 1999, a retired gentleman from Philadelphia, Vic Zoldy, relocated to the Lansdale area. Vic loved softball, and played in some senior leagues in the city. He committed to continue playing for a time, but the drive got to be too much. He began thinking about starting a league closer to his new home.

“He said, ‘Let’s start a league where we’re not that concerned about the score and who’s winning. In fact, he said, we’re not even going to have playoffs,’” remembers Ray Forlano. “A lot of people didn’t like that idea, but when they saw that, as they got older, they still had a place here, and it doesn’t make any difference if you’re not running fast, or you miss a ball. How many leagues have this much fun playing ball? It just hadn’t happened before. Vic had a great vision.”

Zoldy assembled a dozen guys who shared the vision, and the first organizational meeting was held at the Montgomery Mall food court. That spring, the league played its first games at a field in Montgomery Township that everyone remembers as a cow pasture. Zoldy was already on the lookout for a better playing field, and began talking to some connections he had in Hatfield about playing at School Road Park. By spring of 2000, he had an agreement to make Hatfield the official home of the Montgomery County Senior Softball League, and the first games were played there in June.



# Let's Go to the Fair

## Remembering the Montgomery County Fair

By Larry Stevens, President of the Hatfield Museum & History Society

In September 1925, the Montgomery County Farm Bureau organized the first Montgomery County Fair on the site of the Hatfield racetrack, and it was a big success. There were bands to entertain the crowds, and prize ribbons were awarded in the many livestock and agricultural categories. Horse harness racing was also held during the week with automobile racing topping off the fair's final evening, along with a large firework display.

Over the years, the fair continued to grow and people always looked forward to the arrival of fair week each year. Fair organizers went all out in 1940 when they arranged to have famous movie cowboy, Tom Mix, as the fair's main attraction. A record breaking 25,000 fair-goers showed up on opening day. Roads were jammed for more than a mile at both entrances to the fairgrounds to watch cowboy superstar Mix demonstrate his horse riding and trick shooting skills.

But there was much more to the 1940 Montgomery County Fair than Tom Mix and his Wild West Show. Hundreds of ribbons were awarded in various livestock, agriculture, and home economics contests. There were also farm tractor exhibitions which drew great interest since, at that time, Montgomery County was still mostly farm land. There was musical entertainment throughout the day, midway rides such as the Ferris Wheel, Merry-Go-Round, Bumper Cars, and Tilt-O-Whirl, and some exotic attractions including Dr. Bernard's elephants, and Smith's diving ponies which made fifty-foot plunges into tanks of water.

And then there were the daredevil thrill shows with motorcycles jumping over barrels and through walls of fire. The Hollywood Stunt Aces and Lucky Teter's World Champion Hell Drivers were also there to perform dramatic death-defying rollovers, crash through brick walls, and perform the Flaming Wall of Death stunt where a man laid on the hood of a speeding car as it crashed through a fiery wall. Fair week was brought to a close with a full program of auto racing.

The September 1941 Montgomery County Fair was another big success, with folks enjoying life, unaware that their lives soon would be dramatically altered. Just a few short months later, the U.S. entered World

War II, and lifestyles changed. The Montgomery County Fair was suspended as people focused on the war effort. After the war was over, lives returned to normal, but the Montgomery County Fair, held for 17 years at the Hatfield Speedway, was not resumed.

In 1961, Hatfield Speedway track owner, George Marshman, made an attempt to revive the Montgomery County Fair of old. Opening day was "Kiddies Day", when the 60 rides along the midway were reduced for children, and popular kid's television idols Sally Starr, Bertie the Bunyip, and Howdy Doody, made an appearance. There were over 40 agricultural, military, and commercial exhibits as well as grandstand performances and auto races. The Hurricane Hell Drivers also returned to thrill the spectators. Even though there were agricultural exhibits, they fell far short of the 4-H exhibits that had attracted the public mainstream to the old Montgomery County Fair. And a new addition to the 1961 fair midway, a "girlie show", turned off most fair-goers. The public just wasn't willing to substitute burlesque for family entertainment like the Tom Mix show, which drew young and old spectators by the ten-thou-

sands. All in all, the 1961 attempt to revive the Montgomery County Fair was a miserable failure, and was never attempted again.

The last race at the Hatfield Speedway was held on September 24, 1966, and the grounds where the Montgomery County Fair was held sat vacant for many years. Eventually, the property was sold to a developer and in the late 1980s, houses were built on the land - the Fairfield housing community, named to honor the memory of the old Montgomery County Fair in Hatfield.

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*To learn more of Hatfield's fascinating history, schedule a visit to the Hatfield History Museum at [www.hatfieldhistory.org](http://www.hatfieldhistory.org), or call 215-362-0428.*

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*Bicycle races were held around the dirt racetrack during the 1940 fair.*

# HOLIDAY CONCERT

## FEATURING: SANTA'S VISIT

**December 9 • 4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.**  
**School Road Park - 1619 School Road**

The Hatfield Police Benevolent Association, Parks and Recreation Department, and the North Pole are partnering to bring you an evening of holiday fun!

Live music, seasonal snacks, roasting marshmallows and s'mores, crafts, balloons, face painting, and of course, photos with Santa!





# National Parks & Recreation Month

July was National Parks and Recreation Month, and “Where Community Grows” was this year’s theme! Throughout July, we celebrated with various programs, events, and social media fun!

Whether it’s our Throwback Thursday posts that looked at parks and recreation in Hatfield from years past or Salsa and Churro’s Tour and Explore Series that showcased all of the awesome parks and trails in Hatfield, the month was full of fun highlights!

We hosted a series of pop-up fitness classes with our amazing instructors! Residents joined us in the park to try Zumba, POUND, and Yoga for FREE!

On July 19, we had a pop-up event celebrating parks and recreation in the Hatfield community! Our Parks and

Recreation Department threw a party in the park with something for everyone! Our Parks and Rec Department grilled some tasty hot dogs and, with help from Commissioner Deb Zimmerman, served food, drinks, and popsicles. Thanks to all Commissioners for their support! Our excellent Hatfield Police Department helped us celebrate with a water balloon toss, games, and giveaways! Our resident arts and crafts guru Brianna volunteered to help families decorate flower pots. Our Shade Tree Commission member Joan helped them plant the flowers! Jeff, George, Deb, and Kim: members of our Parks and Recreation Board helped families decorate our community bench! Nacho the Moose was out taking pictures and signing autographs! We had face painting, playground activities, and the band Nite Flyte kept us dancing to great music throughout the event! This year’s National Parks and Recreation Month theme was “Where Community Grows,” and we had a blast celebrating with the Hatfield community!

Congratulations to our Hatfield Township Parks & Recreation Department: Runner up for the Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society 2023 Good Job Award! This award recognizes parks and recreation professionals who show outstanding dedication to the field and have made a direct impact on the community.





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