

The Village Times

Evergreen Village Cooperative

March 2026

From the Editor

Board of Directors Update

At the February 23, 2026 Board of Directors Meeting, the Board approved a reassignment of officer roles to better support the community's needs. Due to time and availability constraints, Michelle Dinnen has stepped into the role of President, and Maureen Shindle will now serve as Vice-President.

Both changes take effect immediately. We appreciate their willingness to serve and look forward to their continued leadership.

Contributors and Staff

Rich DeLeo

Barabra Massarano

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Presidents Message

Greetings Members,

I would like to thank you in advance for your patience as I transition into my new role as President.

For those I may not have had the pleasure of meeting during my time serving on the Board, my name is Michelle Dinnen. I have been connected to Evergreen Village since 1992, when my parents first moved here. In 2014, I became a resident myself and now proudly call EVC home with my husband, our son, and our Goldendoodle.

Over the past three years, I have had the privilege of mentoring under two former Presidents and working alongside a dedicated group of Board members who volunteer

countless hours to ensure that our property, maintenance, financial, administrative, and community engagement needs are met to the best of their ability. I look forward to continuing to work closely with them as we serve you and our community.

Please watch for weekly updates on our Facebook groups and website, as well as a monthly message in the newsletter. You may also reach me directly at evegreenvillagecoop@gmail.com, or by placing correspondence in the mail slot located on the office door. Thank you for your continued support. I look forward to serving our community.

Warmly,
Michelle Dinnen

Spring In the Village

By Rich DeLeo

Well March is here and although it doesn't mean winter is over, it sure gets you thinking the worst of it is gone. At least we hope it is. Once those 50 and 55 degree days' start arriving you can start turning your outdoor projects from planning stage to doing stage. So what's on your "Things To Do list" for this year? Plan-

ning a big project like a shed update or new deck? Or maybe it's some different landscaping, new shrubs or garden flowers. Whatever you decide, making Evergreen brighter, colorful and a happier place to live is a great idea.

Thinking of this brings me to an idea in that same area. Sometime back there was discussion about what to do with

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Spring in the Village

the tennis court area. I never heard if there was a decision made. Well, would you all consider a community vegetable & flower garden?

Just by driving around you can see that there are some green thumbs living here. But our spaces limit us to either very small gardens or none at all. Eating fresh produce is a great idea for us seniors. And wouldn't you enjoy fresh flowers on your dinner or patio tables this summer. Could we start a volunteer garden club? Let's not let these green thumbs go to waste. On top of all which might grow in the garden, it would encourage us to be outside, mingle with each other and at a later time could even include a garden meeting spot with a table

and chairs to just sit and enjoy the color.

There is no need to demolish the existing tennis area, just add above ground raised boxes right on the court itself. Those handy with hammer and saw could make the boxes. Fill with dirt, a few packs of seeds and let Mother Nature do her thing. Maybe the tennis area already has a plan. That's OK, lots of other areas could use some flowers.

Now I know there will be a few whose first concern would be money. Who pays for this? We don't need to worry them about the community budget and no one wants a lot rent raise. I would suggest that those interested in participating, those liking the idea, and maybe some help from Mt. Bethel busi-

nesses, could give us a beginning. It can start as small as those funds that are available and grow from year to year. Once a crop is produced it might be self-funding, selling produce and flowers to the community without the markup of the stores for all of us interested in this.

You may think there are a lot of questions as to how this would work. There might be, but it's a simple enough task to take the first steps, and no good idea is without its effort. I think the result would be worth it.

What do you think? Let's get some board approval, form a startup group and make this spring and summer a colorful one. It's up to us to make this happen!.

By Rich DeLeo

Take a chance now and then. Even a turtle has to stick his head out to move forward

Around the Town

Meetings at the Upper Mount Bethel Township Building

March 4th at 7pm - Environmental Advisory Committee Meeting

March 9th at 7pm - The Board of Supervisors Meeting

March 10th at 7pm - Transportation Advisory Committee Meeting

March 12th at 7pm - Park and Recreation Committee Meeting

March 17th at 7pm - Solar Ad Hoc Committee Meeting

March 18th at 7pm - Planning Commission Meeting

March 23rd at 7pm - The Board of Supervisors Meeting

March 24th at 7pm - The Zoning Hearing Board Meeting

March 25th at 7pm - Open Space Advisory Board Meeting

March 26th 7pm - Economic Development Committee Meeting

Additionally, In March/April bids will go out for the Emergency Shelter

that will be built in the Mount Bethel Firehouse. The Emergency Shelter should be completed before the end of the year.

If you have any questions about Township business, feel free to call

Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, **John Bermingham at (602) 703-3717.**



March 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2 <i>Bingo 1:00</i>	3	4 <i>Stretch 10:00</i> <i>Camera</i> <i>Club 6:30</i>	5	6 <i>Stretch 10:00</i>	7 10:00 & 3:00 <i>Website</i> <i>Coaching</i>
8 4:00 <i>Website</i> <i>Coaching</i>	9 <i>Bingo 1:00</i>	10 <i>Stretch 10:00</i>	11 10:00 <i>Prayer, Share</i> <i>& Fellowship</i>	12	13 <i>Stretch 10:00</i>	14
15	16 <i>Bingo 1:00</i>	17	18 <i>Stretch 10:00</i> <i>Camera</i> <i>Club 6:30</i>	19 <i>Social/</i> <i>Wellness Com-</i> <i>mittee 6:00</i>	20 <i>Stretch 10:00</i>	21
22	23 <i>Bingo 1:00</i> <i>BOD Meeting</i> <i>6:00</i>	24 <i>Stretch 10:00</i>	25 10:00 <i>Prayer, Share</i> <i>& Fellowship</i>	26	27 <i>Stretch 10:00</i>	28
29	30 <i>Bingo 1:00</i>	31				

Veterans Corner

by Barabra Massarona

Call it kismet, destiny or guardian angels, John Pelligra, at 92, believes that his love of weight lifting was the force that guided him through all the ups and downs of his life; a life well loved.

A veteran's story.....

In the two years John Pelligra served in the Army he never tossed a grenade or heard enemy fire. His time in the service was short and "sweet". As a cook in post WWII Germany, the only weapons he brandished was an array of kitchen utensils. But as destiny would have it, John had an unconventional "weapon" the Army could use in the cold war.

John grew up in a pleasant area of Patterson, New Jersey in an Italian family with his brother, Phil and his sister, Loraine. He was a chubby red-headed, freckle faced kid who was often teased and given the nickname "Red". He describes his childhood as normal and fun.

John was exposed to physical fitness by his mother and her brother at an early age. His mother lifted kettle bells for strength and his uncle did a form of gymnastics known as hand balancing. By age 10, he was following in their footsteps doing push-ups and running up and down the hills of Patterson. His dad's support extended to tolerating his tinkering and changes he made to their house.

John rummaged through the neighborhood junk yard for parts to build his "gym". He found a set of large springs with loops on the ends, added some makeshift handles and secured them to a wall to use for resistance training. (He still has that contraption in his shed, 80 years later.)

After hundreds of "reps" he saw his pectoral muscles begin to develop. For dumbbells he returned to the junk yard and found long pipes. He rode his bike across town to Tirozzi's hardware store for a few bags of cement. (Fun fact: Tirozzi's still in business today.) To assemble his project he got two empty 2 1/2 lb. tomato cans from his mother's kitchen, carefully centered a pole in a can full of mixed cement and waited days for it to dry. He repeated the process for the second can. Voila! Dumbbells!

By age 13 he was curling, shoulder lifting, pressing, doing push-ups and still running up and down hills. As he improved his endurance, biceps, pecks, and stomach muscles he still had red hair and freckles but no one could call him chubby anymore!

By age 15 he began hanging out with a group of guys who'd been getting into trouble regularly. His mother decided it would be better if, after school, John were to take the bus across town to the YMCA. That's where he heard a loud "Hey Red"! A neighbor recognized him and noticed this 135 lb. 15 year old was lifting his own weight; a feat supposedly only one in one-thousand could do. The neighbor introduced John to a real gym, a club where serious lifters gathered. Every day after school he could be coached by the best.

John graduated High School, attended trade school, learned carpentry skills and began working for a company that built custom homes. He spent all his spare time with a group of guys at the gym who became his extended family. A few of them went on to compete in the Olympics, like Joe DePetro, an Olympic champion. He credits his mother for inspiring him and promised her

he'd eventually lift 200 lbs. He told her he wanted to become the "Champion of the World".

Once John turned 18 he was eligible to compete against lifters from other clubs. He entered his first New Jersey State competition at 18, where he placed 3rd in the middle weight category. It was the first time his father saw him compete. At age 19, weighing 181 lbs. he won the New Jersey middleweight Championship. At age 20, weighing 198 lbs. he won the New Jersey State Middle/Heavyweight Championship.

Then came the detour every young man dreaded, the **LETTER**:

Greetings: It was not meant as a warm welcome, but rather a formal summons from the government ordering the recipient to report for induction into the Armed Forces of the United States Army. John's letter arrived in July, 1954. He had until August to appear, but bit the bullet and enlisted on July 22nd and was sent to Ft. Dix, New Jersey for 8 weeks of basic training.

Two days into basic training his grandmother died and he was granted time off for the funeral. Two weeks later he started again with a new group of guys from the Bronx and Brooklyn, a tough bunch, he recalls. After basic training he went to Fort Meade in Elkton, Maryland for 8 weeks "cooks" training. He was headed to Washington DC. when at the last minute his orders changed again. He found himself on the USS Langfit headed to Brehemerhaven, Germany.

Apparently the Army needed a new mess cook for the 95th AAA Gun Battalion in Mannheim, Germany. John's first stop was the PX for gray sweats that he'd need for workouts after a long

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Pondering

By Sam Brockman

Note: “*My Pondering is simply that, a personal reflection. It isn’t meant to be taken as fact, instruction, or official guidance, and it certainly isn’t fiction. It’s just one person’s perspective, offered in the spirit of sharing and conversation.*”

Understanding the Generations Among Us and the Challenges We Share

Our community includes people whose lives have been shaped by very different moments in history. While generational labels are never perfect, they can help explain why today’s challenges especially housing, healthcare, and community life are felt and understood in different ways.

The Silent Generation (Born roughly 1928–1945)

Members of the Silent Generation learned early how fragile security can be. Many grew up in crowded homes, rented longer, or lived with extended family because owning a home was not always possible. That experience often shaped a deep appreciation for stability and careful planning.

In healthcare, this generation remembers a time before modern medicine as we know it before widespread insurance, advanced treatments, or long life

expectancy. As a result, access, continuity of care, and dignity in aging are often central concerns. In community life, the Silent Generation tends to value consistency, neighborly responsibility, and institutions that can be relied upon over time.

Baby Boomers (Born 1946–1964)

Baby Boomers came of age during an expansion of opportunity. For many, homeownership once felt achievable through steady work, though rising costs and changing markets have altered that expectation later in life. Today, many Boomers are navigating fixed incomes while trying to remain independent in homes they worked hard to secure.

In healthcare, Boomers have lived through dramatic advances, but also rising costs and complex systems. Many now find themselves balancing their own health needs while also supporting spouses, siblings, or adult children. In community life, Boomers often bring a strong desire to stay engaged, informed, and involved, seeking not just services, but a sense of purpose and connection.

Generation X (Born roughly 1965–1980), grew up during

economic shifts that made housing less predictable. Many face high rents, delayed homeownership, or the challenge of caring for aging parents while still supporting children.

In healthcare, Gen Xers often act as coordinators, managing appointments, insurance paperwork, and decisions for more than one generation at a time. In community life, they tend to value flexibility, practicality, and solutions that work within limited time and resources.

Moving Forward Together

Though shaped by different eras, all three generations are now facing the same reality: rising costs, strained systems, and the need for communities that are both compassionate and sustainable. What differs is not concern, but perspective.

When we listen across generations, we gain insight. When we plan together, we create stronger solutions. And when we remember that no generation reached this point alone, we make room for patience, respect, and cooperation. Every generation has carried the weight of its time; today, we carry it together. By honoring the experiences that shaped us and remaining open to one another, we strengthen not just our community, but the sense of belonging that makes it home.

Social and Wellness Committee Update:

Michelle Dinnen

Hello neighbors. I am honored to serve as your new Chair of the Social and Wellness Committee. I’m excited to step into this role and work alongside the many wonderful volunteers who help make our community so special. I look forward to

connecting with familiar faces and meeting those I haven’t yet had the pleasure of knowing. I hope you’ll join us for our first meeting of the year on March 19 at 6:00 PM in the clubhouse. Please bring your ideas and suggestions. Your input and involvement are essential to making this committee successful and meaningful for our community. Let’s welcome a new year filled with fresh ideas and collaboration together.

THE QUIET RHYTHM OF PENNSYLVANIA'S BLACK BEARS

A gentle look at the seasons of the American black bear in Pennsylvania

Across our wooded hills and peaceful countryside, a quiet and steady life unfolds each year — the life of the black bear. Though we may only glimpse one crossing a road at dusk or wandering near a tree line, their lives follow a dependable seasonal rhythm that has guided them for generations.

Winter: A Season of Stillness

As autumn fades and cold settles in, bears prepare carefully. Throughout the fall, they eat almost constantly, building the fat reserves they will depend upon for months ahead.

By late November or December, most retreat to dens — hollow trees, rocky crevices, or sheltered brush piles. Their breathing slows, their bodies conserve energy, and the forest grows still.

In January, something remarkable happens. Mother bears give birth to tiny cubs, often two or three, each no bigger than a pound. Blind and fragile, the cubs nurse and grow while their mother rests, living entirely on the strength she stored during autumn.

Winter, for bears, is a season of trust, patience, and quiet resilience.

Spring: New Beginnings

When March sunshine softens the landscape, mothers carefully emerge from their dens, cubs wobbling behind them.

Spring is a time of learning. The cubs stay close, watching their mother's every move. She teaches them what plants to eat, how to climb trees, and how to sense danger. The lessons are gentle but constant.

There is tenderness in this season — and purpose.

Like many seasons in life, spring is both delicate and demanding.

Summer: Growing Strong

By summer, the cubs are playful, energetic, and confident climbers. Food becomes more plentiful —

berries, insects, and green vegetation — and they grow quickly.

They remain with their mother through their first full year. Her guidance shapes their survival, balancing protection with preparation.

The Second Spring: Letting Go

When the young bears are about a year and a half old, their mother begins to send them off on their own.

It may look firm, even abrupt — but it is necessary. Young males often travel many miles to find territory of their own. Young females may settle closer to home.

There is wisdom in knowing when to hold close — and when to let go.

Autumn: Preparing Again

Fall returns with urgency. Bears feed heavily on acorns and other rich foods, sometimes eating nearly all day. Their winter survival depends on these weeks of abundance.

It is a reminder of the value of preparation — of using seasons of plenty to sustain us through quieter months.

Black bears typically live 10 to 20 years in the wild. They are intelligent and adaptable animals who generally prefer to avoid people. Though powerful, they are not naturally aggressive and usually retreat when given space.

Observing nature reminds us that every season has its purpose

by Staff Writers

LIVING SAFELY ALONGSIDE BLACK BEARS

Practical Guidance for Peaceful Coexistence

Black bears are a valued part of Pennsylvania's natural landscape. Most encounters are brief and uneventful. When bears enter neighborhoods, they are usually searching for food — not causing harm.

A few consistent habits make all the difference.

Secure Garbage

Garbage is the number one attractant.

- Store trash in sturdy containers with tight-fitting lids
- Keep bins inside a garage or shed when possible
- Put trash out the morning of pickup — not the night before

Once a bear finds an easy meal, it is likely to return.

Remove Outdoor Food Sources

- Take bird feeders down during warmer months
- Clean grills after each use
- Bring pet food indoors
- Harvest ripe garden produce promptly

Bears have an extraordinary sense of smell and will investigate food odors from surprising distances.

If You Encounter a Bear

Remain calm.

- Do not run
- Speak in a firm voice
- Slowly back away while facing the bear

- Make yourself appear larger if necessary

In nearly all cases, the bear will leave.

Bears are powerful animals — but they are not looking for conflict.

Teach Children Awareness

Encourage children to:

- Observe wildlife from a distance
- Never approach cubs
- Tell an adult if they see a bear nearby

Mother bears are especially protective of their young

Working Together

The Pennsylvania Game Commission provides on-going guidance and management to help reduce human–bear conflicts across the state.

By removing food temptations and responding calmly during encounters, communities can protect both residents and wildlife

Respect their space. Secure your space. Coexist peacefully

By Staff Writers



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day of 'potato peeling'. It was at the Mannheim gym that two similarly clad servicemen struck up a conversation and began exchanging weight lifting stories.

Geopolitically the world was sorting itself out. We were still in the cold war and trying to manage our "occupation" of Germany under President Eisenhower and in his own words, "exploring every possible peaceful means of settling differences".

A day after meeting the guys at the gym John was summoned by his Commanding Officer, Colonel Mattaches, well respected for his valor in the Normandy invasion. John arrived with some trepidation and wondered what he could've possibly done wrong so soon after his arrival. The Colonel assured John he wasn't in any trouble. He was formulating a plan to beat the Germans.

The Colonel explained that on Armed Forces Day, in May, servicemen of all stripes would be competing against Germans in various sports including boxing, Jujitsu and weight lifting. He asked John if he would be interested in representing the USA in the heavyweight lifting competition. Of course John jumped at the chance!

John was given carte blanche to procure whatever equipment was needed for the weight lifting team to win. In February the Army sent a request to the founders of the US Weight Lifting Club in York, PA, (still in existence today). Within weeks four wooden crates including plates weighing 500 lbs. arrived at the Barnes weight lifting facility in Germany.

By Armed Forces Day, May, 1955 the American team was ready. You could say it was the Colonel's peace time "D-Day", only this time we had the advantage.

Unlike normal back and forth progressive weight lifting competition, this competition would simply be the best of two lifts. In the heavyweight category the German lifter's best was 260 lbs., practically his own weight. The crowd went wild and the Germans could taste victory! Emboldened by the crowd's reaction, the Germans began taunting the American team and daring them to "bring it on"! We can only imagine a slight smile on Colonel Mattaches' face as the coach sent his "secret weapon" onto the stage. That day John pressed his personal best of 300 lbs....twice! As over 1,000 of our US servicemen and women comprising 5 branches of the 95th AAA, wildly cheered and celebrated, the German could be seen and heard screaming expletives.

For John, it was keeping his word to his mother to lift 200 lbs. and in his mind and for that moment in time, he felt like "Champion of the World." As a reward, for the rest of his deployment he only had to go to the mess hall to eat.....whatever his heart desired.

On completion of his military service John returned to Patterson, where he met and married an Italian girl but the marriage was short-lived. In 1961 he married again and initially settled in Fairfield, New Jersey, with his wife, Deanna, and her 4 month old son, Bruce. He adopted Bruce and they had two daughters; Michelle and Sherry. He is grandpa to Michelle's sons, Ben and Sam and to Sherry's son, Liam. He and his wife purchased a franchise that took them out of state and after 20 years together, they divorced.

John returned to New Jersey to begin the next chapter of his

life that included both passions; custom carpentry and weight lifting. In the basement gym of his brother, Phil Pelligra's house in Budd Lake, he met a nice guy named Charlie Kranz who was also lifting weights. As they became friendly Charlie introduced John to his sister, Carol who ironically lived 1/2 mile from Phil in Budd Lake. John was mesmerized. "She is so beautiful, inside and out and has the best sense of humor of anyone I've ever met." It's been 45 years since their first date.

They purchased a home in Panther Valley, Allamuchy, then 36 years ago decided to purchase one in Evergreen Village where her brother, Bobbi Kranz, lived. Over the years other family members moved to the village. Carol's brother, Charlie Kranz lived opposite the Club House, now Wayne and Jane's place. Thirteen years ago Carol's cousin, Barbara moved to Independence Way. John's brother, Phil Pelligra and his wife Cathy placed their brand new home at the entrance to the village.

John used his carpentry skills at Duckloe's in Mt. Bethel before they closed. Some of you may remember John as the friendly toll taker at the Portland bridge. He is known for chatting with anyone and everyone. You could tell which lane was his by the number of cars in the que as he was busy making new friends. He's still recognized by random strangers at the Trolley or the Mt. Bethel Diner.

Perfectly timed, people and events directing and re-directing his life in ways he says he could never have planned for himself. Destiny, Karma or very strong guardian angels? Whatever it is he thanks God for all the blessings in his life.

Thank you for your service!