

# Upper Makefield

MARCH 2026

**HISTORY  
COMES ALIVE**  
AT GATHER  
PLACE MUSEUM

**CELEBRATING  
IRISH DANCE**  
AMELIA HARTMAN

## Porcelain Perfection

ANN MARIE MURRAY





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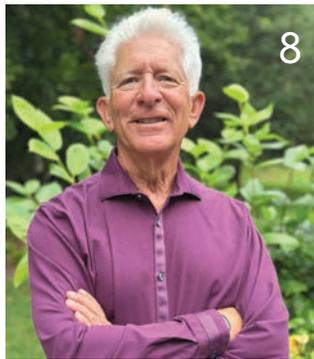
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MARCH 2026



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Ann Marie Murray, owner of Ann Marie Murray LLC

Photograph by Jennifer Janikic Photography

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## HONORING OUR WOMEN

**IS IT POSSIBLE** that February and March got mixed up this year? February came in like a lion, and we'll see how March decides to play her hand. Either way, I think we all hope that March is kind and ushers in a beautiful spring season.

I'm honored to share our feature stories this month—they represent unique achievements from remarkable community members during Women's History Month. From women who are making history, to those who are celebrating history and creating a place for themselves, each of these women is chasing her passion. Their stories offer a peek into the dreams and dedication that drive them every day.

Ann Marie Murray may be small in stature, but she is mighty in achievement. A trailblazer in the painted porcelain industry, her story began when she launched her business in 1986. Since then, Ann Marie Murray LLC has become one of the most highly regarded hand-painted porcelain companies

in the nation. Ann Marie also has lovingly restored her historic residence with the precision that mirrors her company's stellar work. Enjoying afternoon tea in her beautiful home was truly the icing on the Women's History Month cake.

Shirley Lee Corsey is another extraordinary woman whose vision has created something lasting. Through Gather Place Museum, she brings history to life in one of the communities where it unfolded. Her reenactments and programs illuminate the stories of figures such as Harriet Tubman, allowing history to be experienced in a powerful way. Shirley recently received an America250PA Semiquincentennial Grant—a well-deserved honor. Our community is richer for having Gather Place as a resource.

Local artistry continues on the dance floor, where the rhythm of Irish dance captivates both heart and spirit. Nicholl Irish Dancers is owned by Amelia Hartman, who has a lifelong passion for this expressive tradition. Through her leadership, young dancers are discovering discipline, confidence, and cultural pride, ensuring this art form continues to thrive for generations.

March also welcomes the first hints of spring and the lightness we are yearning for. Whether it's exploring a new book or sampling a fresh, seasonal treat, this issue offers inspiration for embracing the gentler days ahead. It's time to trade heavy coats for light layers and welcome the return of the outdoor moments we've been missing.

I wish everyone a beautiful start to spring and look forward to seeing you out and about.

Warmly,

**Laura Lazar**  
Publisher

[www.uppermakefieldmag.com](http://www.uppermakefieldmag.com)  
[@uppermakefieldmag](mailto:@uppermakefieldmag)

*P.S. Be sure to check out our new website, featuring current and past articles in one place, and please reach out with any story ideas for a future issue.*

# Upper Makefield

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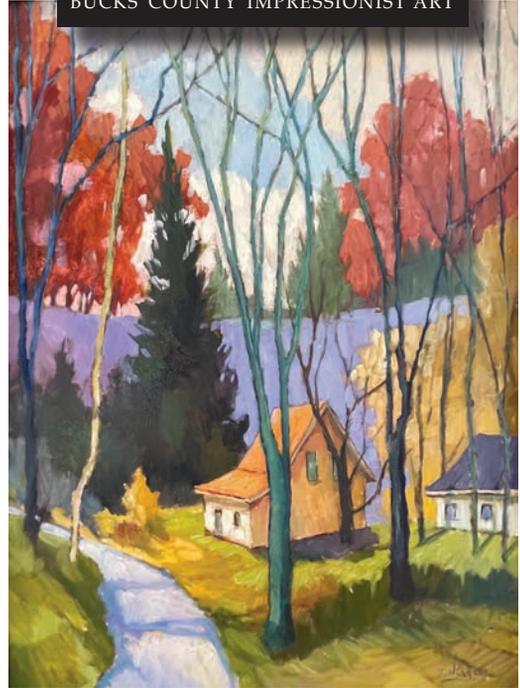
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## DONATION DROP-OFF

Members of Upper Makefield Fire Company delivered all of the donations it received during the holiday season as part of the Betsy's Basket Food Drive to support the PennDel Food Pantry. Due to the generosity of the residents of Upper Makefield and surrounding areas, 2,300 pounds of nonperishable food was donated and \$1,361 was collected.



**Above:** Former Pennsylvania Governor Mark Schweiker, Bucks County Commissioner Bob Harvie, Pennsylvania State Sen. Steve Santarsiero, America250PA Executive Director Cassandra Coleman, and Pennsylvania State Rep. Tim Brennan

**Right:** America250PA Executive Director Cassandra Coleman with Shirley Lee Corsey, founder of Gather Place Museum

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF AMERICA250PA



**Left:** Among the Upper Makefield Township Supervisors are Tom Cino, Yvette Taylor, Ben Weldon (chair), Braun Taylor (vice-chair), and Elizabeth Thompson (treasurer).

**Below:** Newly appointed Supervisor Elizabeth Thompson was sworn in by Judge Michael Petrucci, with her family by her side.

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF UPPER MAKEFIELD TOWNSHIP

## AMERICA250PA BUCKS COUNTY KICKOFF

On Jan. 16, America250PA closed out a day of kickoff events for American's 250th anniversary in Southeast Pennsylvania with a rally at the County Administration Building in Doylestown. America250PA Executive Director Cassandra Coleman joined local leaders to recognize Bucks County's history and the partnerships powering this once-in-a-lifetime milestone.

## REORGANIZATION MEETING

The 2026 Board of Supervisors' reorganization meeting was held on Jan. 5. Ben Weldon was elected as chair, Braun Taylor as vice-chair, and Elizabeth Thompson as treasurer.



## AN AFTERNOON WITH MARTHA

Celebrate Women's History Month at Washington Crossing Historic Park with "An Afternoon with Martha Washington," as portrayed by Alisa Dupuy of The Ladies of History. The event takes place on March 15 from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. Registration is required. For more details, visit [www.washingtoncrossingpark.org](http://www.washingtoncrossingpark.org).



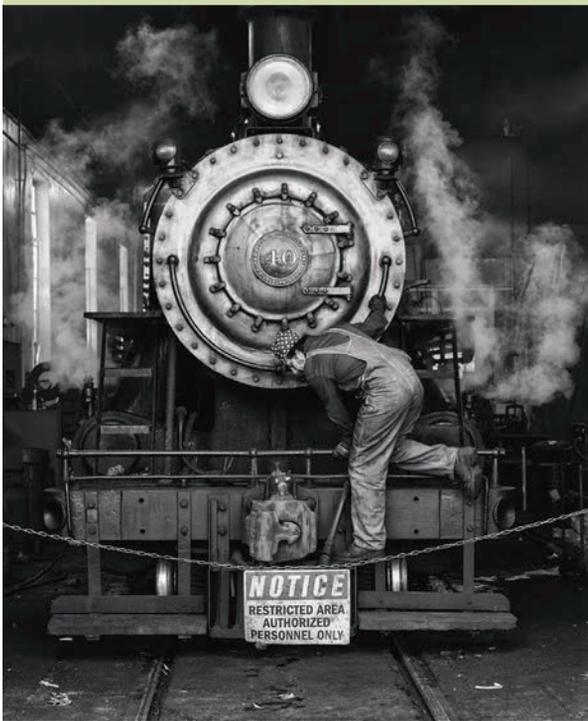
## IT'S GIRL SCOUT COOKIE TIME

Sol Feinstone Elementary School Girl Scout Troop 2151 recently weathered the cold temperatures to sell Girl Scout Cookies. These fifth-grade girls—along with many other school troops—have been running cookie booths throughout Upper Makefield Township and surrounding areas. Cookie sales continue through March 22.



## ANNUAL EASTER EGG HUNT

Kiwanis Washington Crossing-Yardley is holding its annual easter egg hunt on March 21 at Washington Crossing Park, across from the visitor center starting at 10 a.m. The free event will be divided into age groups, and the Easter Bunny will be on-site for pictures.



The 2025 Best in Show image, 'Number 40,' by Harold Stetson

## PICTURE PERFECT

The Phillips' Mill Photographic Exhibition is part of a monthlong celebration of the fine art of photography. The Photography Program at Phillips' Mill centers around the exhibition and includes workshops, lectures, and roundtable discussions. The exhibition is widely regarded as the premier juried photography exhibition in Bucks County and runs from March 29 through April 17.



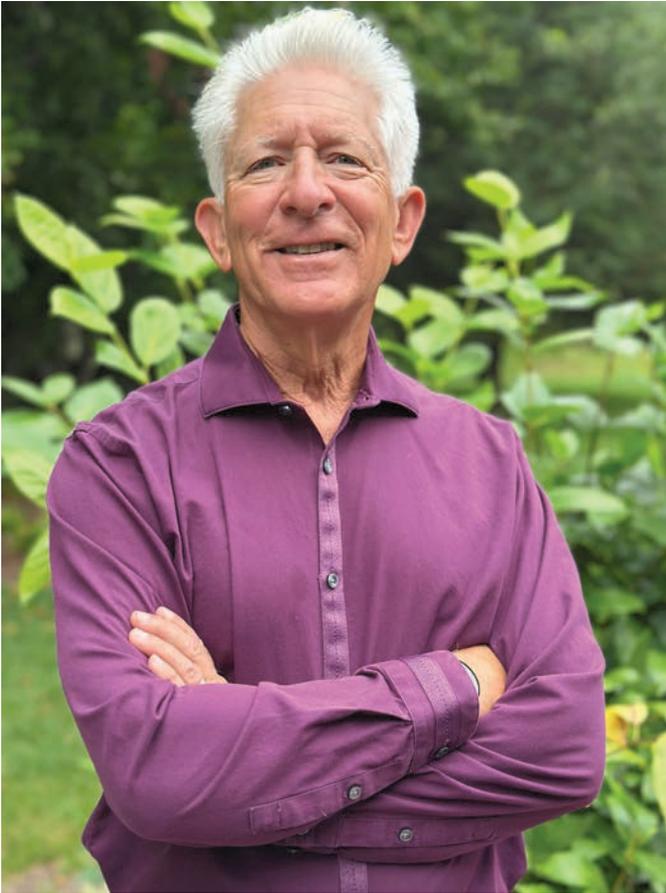
## AMERICAN CIVICS SERIES

Bucks County Community College (BCCC) is hosting the American Civics Series for community members and students as part of the national America250 celebration. The program reflects BCCC's commitment to education, dialogue, and civic leadership. Running from March 25 to May 13, "Civics Education: So You Think You Know Your Government" is an eight-week community education program. For event details and registration information, visit [www.bucks.edu/america-250](http://www.bucks.edu/america-250).

# A Bright IDEA

College Match Guru helps local families navigate the complicated world of college applications.

BY STAFF WRITER



INTERVIEW WITH  
**JEFF SIBNER**

**JEFF SIBNER GRADUATED** from Penn State University with a degree in economics and trained at the University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine. He opened a dental practice in Bucks County in 1988, where he worked until his retirement in 2023. In addition, Sibner was an educator for more than 40 years and developed education programs for high-school-aged students. He founded College Match Guru in 2014. Here, he discusses how his education consulting business can help local teens and their families.

## **Why did you start College Match Guru?**

I never intended to be an education consultant; it just turned out to be the best fit of several ideas I had after going through the college process with two very different kids of my own. I thought that I could use my experience to help people with the confusing process of how to finance college, but it can be tough to run a business when clients are reluctant to share financial information with someone local. I realized rather than trying to work with neighbors on financial aid forms, I could work with teenagers, which allowed me to draw from my 45 years of teaching experience at Penn Dental. It's so fun to work with students as they mature from teenage children into college students.

## **What are the benefits of using an independent education consultant?**

My slogan says it pretty concisely: Less Stress, Less Time, Better Choices.

Most of my clients enroll in a comprehensive program that allows me to help students and their families in all aspects of the college process: selecting a major, interview coaching, summer programs, applications and essays, financial aid education—anything the student needs to find the best school for them.

Some families come into the process late or only want help in certain areas. For them, I offer a range of shorter programs that are less expensive. These run from five- and 10-hour blocks of time to college-list creation and transfer programs. I also offer a stand-alone, 90-minute seminar on how to successfully find and apply for scholarships. I've also helped families with complicated financial situations figure out the best way to allocate their resources to maximize financial aid.



### **When should high-school families contact you?**

Most families need to contact me when their child is a high-school junior. The earlier in the year, the better, especially if they want to fund IRAs, 529 savings accounts, or other qualified retirement programs. FAFSA [the Free Application for Federal Student Aid] works on prior-year tax data, so the year it targets starts in January of their child's junior year. Also, I have time to help students choose their junior and senior year class schedules and summer programs if I start working with them early enough. I know what school districts in Bucks County offer academically, such as AP and honors courses, and which clubs or sports are the best in each district.

### **What should families expect throughout the process?**

College Match Guru crafts school lists that are ideally matched to each student, and there are several components to finding the right matches. In some ways, building a list like building a three-legged stool, with each leg essential for proper balance and comfort. The first leg is academics: We



want students to be challenged and able to perform to the best of their abilities. The second leg is location and the social environment. Affordability is the final leg.

College Match Guru builds lists of value schools—schools that offer great educational opportunities at reasonable prices. This process doesn't just consider the published cost of attendance but focuses on the net price, after grants and aid, that a student will pay to attend each school.

At the same time, I help students find and apply for outside scholarships, teaching them what scholarship committees are looking for as they review their applications. Most of the scholarships on my list are local and much easier to win than the big, nationally run ones.

### **How important is a college essay?**

The personal statement is one of the major components of College Match Guru's comprehensive plan, and it's so important that some families hire College Match Guru just for the college essay. My goal is to help students write the best, most compelling essay they are capable of writing. It's hard work, and I'm thrilled when I read the final draft of an essay and feel the student has expressed themselves well.

### **How does it make you feel when a client receives their college acceptance?**

While it's super exciting to hear from students who get into the top school on their list, I get the most satisfaction hearing from students who tell me just how great their college is after they've been there for a few months, and from students who can't wait to tell me about their first job after college and how their college prepared them for that job.

### **What is your favorite thing to do in Upper Makefield Township?**

I love Upper Makefield's open spaces. I hike (often with my beagle, Ginger), ride my bike along the tow path, or canoe on the Delaware River with friends. My wife and I enjoy dining at restaurants from New Hope to Washington Crossing.



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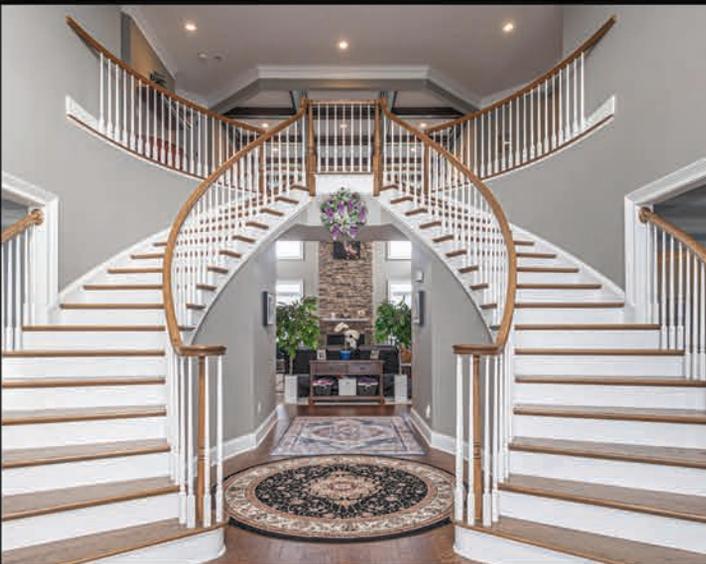
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# Mix It Up

With spring on the horizon, trade in your comfort food for a refreshing, nutrient-packed smoothie.

BY BRITTANY YASSIN

**AS WINTER BEGINS** to loosen its grip and the promise of warmer days approaches, many of us naturally start craving foods that feel lighter, fresher, and more energizing. Smoothies fit that seasonal shift perfectly. They're refreshing without being empty, nourishing without being heavy, and easy to enjoy as days get busier and routines start to change.

At their core, smoothies work because they deliver a high concentration of



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF SOULBERRY MARKET

nutrients in a form that's both approachable and enjoyable. When done well, a smoothie isn't a wellness shortcut or a passing trend; it's simply an efficient, nutrient-dense meal.

### THE PERFECT BLEND

One of the biggest strengths of smoothies is their ability to bring together a wide range of nutrients in a single serving. Fruits and vegetables provide essential vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and fiber, while healthy fats and protein help support satiety, balanced energy, and blood-sugar stability. Blending these components allows them to work together rather than compete for space on your plate.

Because everything is combined into one cohesive meal, smoothies also make it easier to include functional ingredients that support specific wellness goals. Superfoods and supplements, such as greens, seeds, bee pollen, and goji berries, can be incorporated seamlessly without requiring multiple pills or powders throughout the day.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF SOULBERRY MARKET

## Soulberry Bliss

### INGREDIENTS

- 4 oz. coconut milk
- 4 oz. organic orange juice
- ½ oz. organic ginger (juiced)
- 2 pitted dates
- 1 tsp. E3Live's Blue Majik powder
- 5 oz. pineapple
- 5 oz. peaches

### DIRECTIONS

Blend all ingredients together.

**Pro Tip:** Freeze your fruit instead of using ice to thicken your smoothie and make it colder.

### FRESH AND FLAVORFUL

Quality ingredients are what allow smoothies to live up to their nutritional potential. Look for recipes that use 100% organic produce, organic milk, and carefully sourced ingredients. Vegan and whey protein options can help support different dietary needs. It's important to focus on ingredients that serve a clear purpose.

Of course, nutrition only works when it's sustainable, and flavor plays a critical role in that. A smoothie that tastes good is one you'll return to. Some blends lean toward the comforting and familiar, like the PB&J smoothie at Soulberry Market in New Hope, which offers a nostalgic, dessert-like flavor while still delivering nourishment. Others feel brighter and more invigorating, like the shop's Turmeric Sunrise, a customer favorite that pairs tropical fruit with warming spices, vitamin C, and collagen to support digestion and overall wellness.

As smoothies have grown in popularity, they've become associated with luxury wellness. But the goal for a quality smoothie is to be thoughtfully blended, nutrient-dense, and genuinely delicious without the barrier of high cost.

With spring on the horizon and a shift toward lighter meals, smoothies are ready to fuel you as one of the simplest, most effective, and most delicious ways to nourish your body.

*Brittany Yassin and her husband, Ameer, have worked in the health-food industry since 2013. They opened Soulberry Market in New Hope in 2021 and have two additional locations in New Jersey.*



# *Porcelain* PERFECTION

Ann Marie  
Murray, owner  
of Ann Marie  
Murray LLC

**Upper Makefield resident Ann Marie Murray is known for the high-end porcelain products she has created for 40 years.**

BY DARI KOTZKER

**THERE'S AN IMMEDIATE** feeling of timeless elegance when looking at hand-painted porcelain. Whether dishes set for a dinner party, gorgeous trays used to display food or drinks, a teacup for toasting at high tea, or a gift for a special occasion, these durable pieces not only have modern beauty but a nostalgic charm to them.

Upper Makefield Township resident Ann Marie Murray is a master at creating these beautiful works. Forty years since founding her own porcelain business, Ann Marie Murray LLC, she continues to produce high-quality ceramics with a sense of grace.

**ARTISTRY DEFINED**

Born in Brooklyn, Murray attended Hunter College and completed her graduate work in political science. After marrying a man from Trenton, they settled in Bucks County, where



she started her career as a teacher. She had a daughter and was a stay-at-home mom for a few years, but when she wanted to return to teaching, there were no full-time jobs available in her district. She decided to try a different career path—in the porcelain industry.

“My mother had been an antique dealer, and I sat at auctions when I was a little girl,” Murray says. “I loved antiques and I liked porcelain a lot; that’s what drew me to it.”

She first worked in sales at a porcelain manufacturing company



in Trenton called Edward Marshall Boehm. Shortly after, she took a different job running the gift and china department at Philadelphia’s high-end jewelry and gift store J.E. Caldwell & Co. Murray worked there for 10 years.

“I always had a good eye and enjoyed interacting and selling to people,” she says. “Then, someone who worked with me said their family, who were prosperous in the Trenton ball-bearing industry, wanted to invest in small businesses, and thought I could be successful running a porcelain company. I did a six-month sweat equity, where they put the money up and I went to France to visit the factories in Limoges, found the porcelain blanks, hired a local china painter, and made six dinner plate samples to sell to clients.”

One of Murray’s first in-person sales calls was to Tiffany & Co. in New York





**Top left:** Ann Marie Murray LLC has made ornaments for U.S. Congress.

**Top right:** Nadiya Gavrish, a china painter for Ann Marie Murray LLC, is based out of Newtown. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF ANN MARIE MURRAY LLC

**Bottom:** Ann Marie Murray wraps and packages all of her orders from her home.

City, where she shared her samples. The buyers were very impressed with the porcelain designs and quality to the point that they wanted to buy the whole business. Once they discovered she didn't have a large-scale factory yet, they connected her with industry people to help grow her business. Another recommendation was to set up a booth at a New York City trade show, and that first year, Murray sold her entire \$6,000 worth of inventory.

#### **A DURABLE BUSINESS**

When Murray's trial period was over, her investors ended the partnership. In 1986, she decided to continue in the industry on her own by starting Ann Marie Murray LLC. She grew her client base and sales by going to four trade shows a year and hiring additional china artists. Today, she employs local china painters who have their own kilns at home.

Although trends in china have changed over the years, Murray's company continues to thrive. It specializes in producing bespoke

porcelain pieces. She works closely with clients on their vision and conceives many of the designs herself.

"I have a list of a thousand or so customers, including many high-end gift stores, in addition to online orders," she says. "We're not entertaining at home like we used to, so my business stopped making dinnerware a few years ago. We now do a lot of giftware for milestone occasions like weddings, babies, and religious celebrations, to name a few. People like to order small, round, pierced items or rectangular trays."

The company has created some standout pieces, including ornaments for U.S. Congress and items for The Garden Club of America. Some of the most popular designs feature butterflies, ladybugs, and bees.

Murray says creating each handcrafted piece is an intricate process. "Porcelain is a finer grain and fired at higher temperatures than faience, which is what you see in pottery places," she explains. "When painting on porcelain, you're painting over a clear glaze and with natural elements that have been



**Top:** Ann Marie Murray lives and works out of her Upper Makefield home.

**Bottom:** The main living area of Ann Marie Murray's historic home is anchored by the original fireplace.

ground up and mixed with oils. My painters use fine brushes that have as little as three or four boar's hair bristles. It's painstaking to do, but I have great people who work for me."

### A DREAM COME TRUE

When walking through Murray's Upper Makefield home, hundreds of her porcelain pieces are on display as well as her mother's antique collections. But what makes her 250-year-old home even more unique is its fascinating history.

According to Murray's research, the land was purchased by the London Company in 1699 and then owned by the Smith Family. It was recorded that Mahlon Doan of the notorious Loyalist Doan family had a one-room stone-and-log house on this site around 1794.

After changing hands a few times, the structure was expanded into a two- or three-room tavern to serve stagecoach riders on Riverside Road



(now River Road) in 1820. Then in 1827, entrepreneur Stacy Brown purchased the structure and much of the surrounding area and ran the property as the Brownsburg Tavern.

When Murray bought the home 25 years ago, it took her a year to restore and renovate it to its historic splendor. "It was exactly what I wanted in an old house," she says. "It has a great slate roof, five original fireplaces, and most of the floors are all hundreds of years old. Living here in Upper Makefield Township is so pretty, and you're near

the river. I can't think of a better place to live. And I have some of the nicest people who live around me. This is a dream come true. It's such a fun house to entertain in. I'm so lucky."

Murray wraps and packages all her porcelain orders from a workspace addition she added onto her home. Some of her best accounts are high-end gift stores like F. Gerald New in Morristown, New Jersey; Hoagland's in Greenwich, Connecticut; and A Mano in Washington, D.C. Locally, she plans to hold her annual sample sale at her home on April 17 and 18.

Murray says she's been very lucky with her business. "I have lovely customers, and I deal with gifts for lovely occasions," she says. "A woman called me recently and wanted an engagement ring design in a small, round, pierced bonbon dish. I told her which store she could buy from closest to her home, and she said, 'I've bought your things for years. Everybody who gets engaged in my family gets one of your engagement ring pieces.' It makes me happy that we are able to still do that and be a part of someone's tradition."

*Dari Kotzker resides in Bucks County with her husband and four kids. She has worked as a reporter in television news and print media since 2001.*





This article is part of a series that celebrates America's 250th anniversary this year and our local heritage.



**Yardley Borough, Bucks County & Beyond!**  
**Justice ~ Equality ~ Victory!**



"God's time is always near. He gave me my strength and he set the North Star in the heavens. He meant I should be free."  
Harriet Tubman



*"We Bring History To Life!"*



**Yardley Borough, Bucks County & Beyond!**  
**Justice ~ Equality ~ Victory!**



*"We Bring History To Life!"*



# History Comes Alive

**Gather Place Museum celebrates America during Women's History Month and all year long.**

BY DARI KOTZKER



**Above Left:** Shirley Lee Corsey says this photo of the African Methodist Episcopal Church of Yardley in the 1950s was the inspiration for the name Gather Place Museum.

**Above Right:** Shirley Lee Corsey as a child (back row, middle) with her siblings in Yardley

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF SHIRLEY LEE CORSEY

**FROM THE MOMENT** one meets Shirley Lee Corsey, executive director of Gather Place Museum, their life is forever altered for the better. Her mother nicknamed her “Sunshine,” and she is a person who exudes positivity, ambition, and creativity with her presence and conversation. Corsey is a third-generation African American resident of Yardley who continues to enrich the community, county, and state she grew up in.

“My mission for Gather Place Museum is to preserve history, architecturally and orally; celebrate culture, women, African Americans, Quakers, and our community; and foster community engagement,” Corsey says. “We bring history to life.”

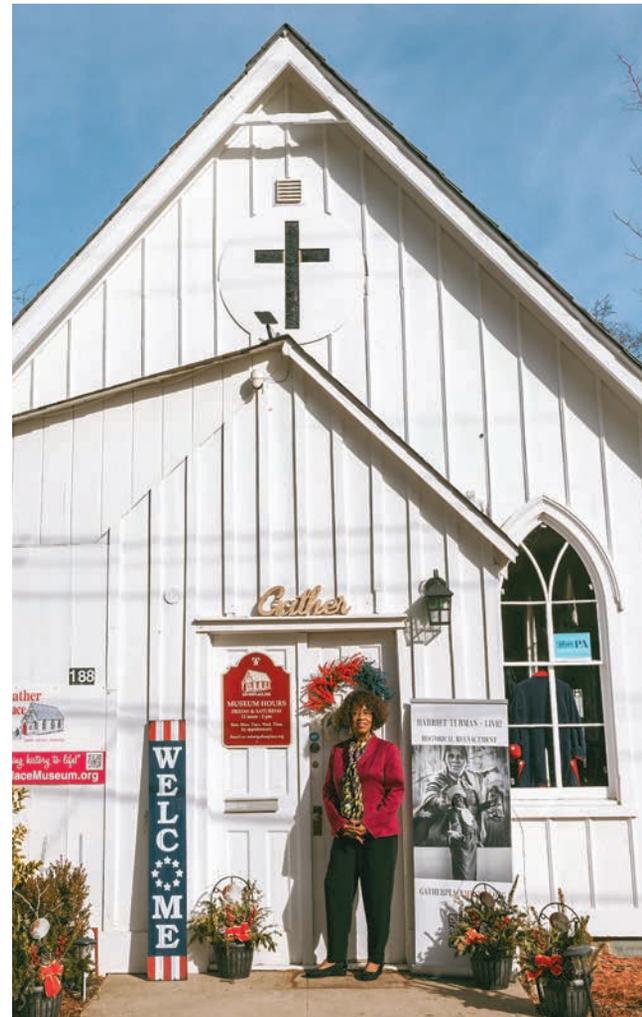
## **GROWN FROM LOCAL ROOTS**

Corsey’s maternal grandmother and first husband (her second husband is Corsey’s grandfather) settled on South Canal Street in

Yardley in the early 1900s during the Great Migration because there was a reputation of racial tolerance in the area. It was also a place with lots of work available at nearby farms and waterways. South Canal Street and across the bridge to the “flats” (Pennsylvania and Reading avenues) was considered the black community. In 1956, Corsey’s parents bought a house across the street from where her grandmother lived, and that’s where she was raised.

“I had a happy childhood,” she says. “Although I lived in the black community, I went to school with all types of people. Even though I was a so-called minority, it didn’t bother me because I had pride in myself and knew it was okay to be different.”

Corsey eventually earned a degree in computer science and had a successful career working as an electronic medical records analyst. She settled with her



**Opposite page:** Gather Place Museum Executive Director Shirley Lee Corsey dresses as Harriet Tubman for a lecture at the museum.

**Right:** Shirley Lee Corsey stands outside Gather Place Museum.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JENNIFER JANIK PHOTOGRAPHY



husband and children in South Jersey.

After both of Corsey's parents passed away, her childhood home was left as an estate and stayed within the family. Around six years ago, with her family's blessing, she bought the Lee family home and renovated it. This decision would become an unexpected and joyous turning point in her life.

**UNCOVERING THE PAST**

Corsey has always been the family historian and entrepreneur. When fixing her family home, she noticed that the African Methodist Episcopal Church of Yardley across the street was falling into disrepair after being abandoned for about 40 years. She was never a member of the church growing up, but the establishment was always a part of her childhood, and she had the foresight to save it.

"Growing up, we were outside playing all the time," she says. "I can remember hearing my mom's voice when we were kids saying, 'Don't go past the church, and come back home when the church lights go on.' The

building was an integral part of the community."

Corsey did her due diligence and learned that if you live within several feet of a blighted property, you can file to be a conservator. She found that the deed on the property still belonged to the church, dating back to 1877. After lots of legwork with her brother's help, she hired an attorney, petitioned the court, and became the conservator in July 2022.

"I was so honored to be named conservator after so much support from family and neighbors," she

says. "My purpose was not for personal profit but to preserve it because I knew how important its history is to Yardley and the African American community. With my same attorney, I founded the nonprofit Gather Place Museum so I could fulfill my goals of architectural preservation, historic programming, and a walk-through museum."

Along with private donations, Corsey received a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Economic Development to restore the exterior of the building, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. With the renovation

**Above:** Shirley Lee Corsey gives a lecture about Harriet Tubman to a visiting organization.

**Right:** Shirley Lee Corsey receives an America250PA Semiquincentennial Grant. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF GATHER PLACE MUSEUM



complete, she started offering programs in 2023; those now include lectures, first-person reenactments, and an interactive history hunt for children.

Corsey's first reenactment was Harriet Tubman, whom she learned all about by researching historical, first-person, primary-source documents. She says she connects with Tubman on a human level and continues to present the story of this brave historical figure to groups.

"Shirley has given us so much information about Harriet Tubman that we did not know," says Evelyn Randolph, an audience member at a recent presentation. "She's perfect in this role. She's lively, interesting, relaxed, and has so much knowledge to share with everyone. She's fabulous."

#### AMERICA'S 250TH CELEBRATION

Networking and collaborating with other museums and nonprofits have become important factors in growing Gather Place Museum's notability. As America's 250th anniversary approaches, Corsey, on behalf of Gather Place Museum, became a nonprofit affiliate of America250PA in 2024 and subsequently a nonprofit affiliate Bucks250PA. Then in September 2025, she was appointed to the Bucks250PA Commission Board. She has contributed her time and energy at both the county and state levels, supporting commemorative initiatives and sharing Gather Place Museum programming with communities near and far.

To add to her list of successes, Corsey's nonprofit received an America250PA Semiquincentennial Grant, Bucks County Tourism Grant, and Bucks250 grant among others, to support her creative vision for this special commemoration.

"Abigail Adams wrote to her husband, John Adams, when he was in Philadelphia writing the Constitution, to 'Remember the Ladies,' so that was my mindset with the grants," she says. "We are celebrating 250 years, and it's important that we celebrate women who are associated within the ark of 250 years. My goal is to tell untold



stories with the told stories."

As part of celebrating Women's History Month this March, Corsey has added more reenactors to portray journalist Ida B. Well-Barnett; abolitionist Lucretia Mott; William Penn's wife, Hannah Penn; and William Penn's slave, Susanna Warder. She also curates a unique presentation told from the viewpoint of Michelle Obama (Corsey dressed as her), covering 12 influential first ladies starting with Martha Washington.

"I believe history should be told 12 months, 24/7," she says. "However, when we focus on certain months like Women's History Month in March, it helps to connect the dots to get the whole story. The feedback I get when I present women's history programs is 'I didn't know that, thank you, we all learned something new.' That's what my programs do. They provoke people to think."

#### A LIVING LEGACY

As the 250th anniversary celebrations continue at Gather Place Museum, Corsey says she'll keep on collaborating with various organizations to create more historical opportunities for people

who live in Bucks County and beyond.

"I've met so many people through Bucks250PA, like the Friends of Washington Crossing Park," Corsey says. "We learn from each other. It's good for everyone in Bucks County to connect. Gather Place Museum is just 15 minutes down the road from where Washington crossed the Delaware, so we need to celebrate our whole county and state because we're all connected."

Corsey says she is constantly coming up with new ideas for more programming and topics to tell America's history. She says she feels blessed her life has come full circle.

"If you live long enough, you think of your life as a circle," she says. "I started my circle here as a child, and I'm not surprised I'm back because my heart has always been in Yardley. My goal is to leave a legacy. When I'm gone, I want someone to pick it up and keep it going and improve on it. That's my hope. It's called a generational blessing."

*Dari Kotzker resides in Bucks County with her husband and four kids. She has worked as a reporter in television news and print media since 2001.*

# Celebrating Irish Dance

A Washington Crossing resident continues the tradition of teaching Irish dance to students from Upper Makefield Township and surrounding areas.

BY DARI KOTZKER



PHOTOGRAPHS BY JUAN VIDAL PHOTOGRAPHY

**EXHILARATING**, awe-inspiring, and wow factor are just some words to describe an Irish dance performance. Whether it's a solo or group dance, the intricacies of the steps and the movements are astonishing to watch. With limited upper body movement and fast footwork, the "modern" Irish dancing we see nowadays is steeped in tradition dating back hundreds of years.

Washington Crossing resident Amelia Hartman fell in love with this type of dance when she started at Nicholl Irish Dancers at age 8. She's still a part of the studio as an adult, heading its operations and guiding young dancers through some of the same experiences she remembers fondly.

"Being on stage is such an exhilarating experience," Hartman says. "When you're performing, it takes so much to execute a step flawlessly—remembering the footwork and choreography and maintaining proper technique, all while remembering to breathe, keep your head up, and smile like it's not hard at all. The enthusiasm you get from a crowd will always give you the best boost of motivation to dance your strongest."

#### HONORING TRADITION

Samantha Nicholl Fleming, the original owner and founder of Nicholl Irish Dancers, was born in Ireland and moved to Holland, Pennsylvania, when she was 13. She founded the school in 1993 with recreational classes to promote Irish culture, music, and dancing skills. She eventually added competition



### Nicholl School Irish Dance



**Opposite page:** Nicholl Irish Dancers owner Amelia Hartman with some of her students

**Above:** Nicholl Irish Dancers founder and former owner Samantha Nicholl Fleming with current owner Amelia Hartman



**Left:** Amelia Hartman as a child marching in a St. Patrick's Day parade  
 PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF NICHOLL IRISH DANCERS

opportunities, which have continued to grow. When Fleming decided to retire, she asked Hartman to take over.

"Amelia is so talented, so patient, and has such a love for Irish dance," Fleming says. "She had been with the school for so many years and taught by my side for a long time. She knew the school's mission and the philosophy I had for the students. I had no doubt when I handed the school over that she would be phenomenal as its leader."

Hartman didn't hesitate when asked if she wanted to take over ownership of the school.

"As the owner, I love that I'm able to carry on the traditions and experiences I had as a dancer," she says. "I see current dancers having so much fun doing the same local parades and performances I did when I was their age. It's so rewarding that I can give them those experiences."

#### FALLING INTO A RHYTHM

The school accepts students from age 5 until high school. Hartman emphasizes that a dancer does not have to be Irish to be a part of the studio. All dancers begin with soft-shoe, learning the basic Irish dance techniques, skills, and steps. Dancers can start learning hard-shoe once they've been dancing soft-shoe for at

least three years, as it's much more difficult to learn and execute. Each year, there is more training involved, and there are more milestones to meet to advance to the next level.

"The dances are very rhythmic; it's not a flowy form of dance," Hartman says. "It's a hard eight-count, and you're

hitting every beat of it. It's interesting seeing the difference between the two types. Even though you can't hear the soft-shoe, you can see when you're watching it that they're hitting every beat of the music. And with hard-shoe, you have to look and sound good when dancing."

Sarah Awadalla is a high-school senior who has been dancing since she was 3 years old. When she goes to college next fall, she plans to join an Irish dance club.

"I love the atmosphere at school and dancing in competitions," she says. "I'm more of a hard-shoe person—I really like the sounds—and that is my specialty when it comes to dancing. When we are all dancing in sync, it shows that hard work pays off."

In addition to its signature dance moves, another familiar site in Irish dance is the costumes. Hartman says the color choices are based on the school's colors, which are green



dresses with gold details for Nicholl's dancers. Performers get to create their own blinged-out dresses to wear at competitions.

### TIME TO SHINE

St. Patrick's Day is synonymous with celebrating Irish culture, and Irish dancing epitomizes this festive holiday. Hartman nicknames it "March Madness" because her dancers are extremely busy with Bucks County parades, the Philadelphia St. Patrick's Day parade, dancing at Peddler's Village, and performing at assisted living and nursing homes. Some of the dances are choreographed by the teachers, but many are traditional.

"A lot of times, you'll see more traditional group dances," Hartman says. "There are historic books that have all the steps written out, so they're done the same way everywhere. One of the most popular dances is called "The Walls of Limerick," which is a dance for any even number of couples and is usually the first céilí (group dance) that Irish dancers learn."

Grace Heitzman, a 14-year-old dancer who has been with the studio since first grade, loves to perform. "Around St. Patrick's is our busy time, with lots of performances and parades," she says. "It's really fun to connect with your friends when dancing, and it's exciting to be in shows where people are cheering you on and celebrating the holiday."

### A CLOSE-KNIT COMMUNITY

Hartman is a lifelong Washington Crossing resident. She attended Crossing Cooperative Nursery School as a preschooler, graduated from Council Rock School District, and remained in town as she taught and took over ownership of the dance studio.

"Every time I have someone come visit me, they say Upper Makefield Township is the coolest place in the world, and I agree, it's truly the most beautiful area," she says. "I have always lived right by the



canal path, so that was always a staple every weekend growing up—either walking or biking along the canal—and that continues today."

Although the dance school is located in Yardley, it has many students from surrounding towns, especially Upper Makefield Township. What has always stood out to Hartman since she started as a dancer at Nicholl's Irish Dancers is the strong community of support between all the families.

Washington Crossing resident Grace Ciccimaro, whose daughter Lydia has danced at the studio for three years, says that the school goes beyond dance instruction and provides a true sense of community. "The dancers form close bonds by supporting one another at competitions, recitals, and in class," Ciccimaro says. "By parade season, that connection is unmistakable as you see them holding hands, laughing together, and genuinely enjoying being part of something special."

Hartman says it's heartwarming when graduates of the school and their parents come back to watch performances. She strives to maintain a tight-knit community and hopes for that to continue for years to come.

"Looking to the future, I want to have a good balance of expansion and newness but maintain the heart of our school," she says. "I want to continue all the experiences that have become traditions for us, but I want to find new performance opportunities and local community events we can be a part of. That's the goal."

*Dari Kotzker resides in Bucks County with her husband and four kids. She has worked as a reporter in television news and print media since 2001.*



**Right:** Washington Crossing resident Lydia Ciccimaro wears a costume to represent her age group. As dancers move up levels, the costumes change.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF NICHOLL IRISH DANCERS

# REAL ESTATE REPORT

## JANUARY HOME SALES

Upper Makefield (UM), Lower Makefield (LM), Newtown (NT), Doylestown (DO), Solebury (SO)

Address	Area	Bed	Bath	List Price	Sale Price	Sale Price % of List Price	DOM
509 Wheatfield Ln	Timber Rg. (UM)	5	5.1	\$2,895,000	\$2,750,000	94%	182
2035 Silverwood Dr	Dol. Ests. (LM)	5	3.1	\$1,350,000	\$1,360,000	101%	44
1839 Wildflower Ln	Flowersfield (LM)	5	4.1	\$1,250,000	\$1,185,000	95%	24
1089 Eagle Rd	Newtown (NT)	5	4.1	\$2,099,900	\$1,800,000	86%	416
277 Willow Dr	Villas (NT)	3	3	\$979,000	\$979,000	100%	10
9 Pickering Dr	Pickering Ch. (NT)	5	5.1	\$1,995,000	\$1,995,000	100%	8
52 Tradesville Dr	DoyWalk (DO)	3	3.1	\$1,275,000	\$1,275,000	100%	34
1101 Deerfield Ln	Deerfield (DO)	4	3.1	\$1,650,000	\$1,420,000	86%	83
103 Arboresque Dr	Arboresque (SO)	5	4.2	\$2,295,000	\$1,700,000	75%	76
5957 Shetland Dr	Solebury Fms. (SO)	5	4.1	\$2,195,000	\$1,900,000	86%	2

Brought to you by The Colleen Evanchik Team, Royale Homes of Washington Crossing, PA

The accuracy of the statistical data in this table is not guaranteed by Upper Makefield magazine. All information is deemed accurate, but is subject to errors and omissions. The listings broadly represent the local real estate market rather than the listings of any single agent or agency. MLSP in condo and single-family sales in Bucks County from 1/1/2026 – 1/31/2026



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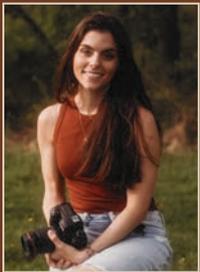
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# Jennifer Janikic

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Jenny is a Bucks County-based photographer known for her evocative golden-hour imagery and refined storytelling. A devoted wife and mother of two spirited boys, she finds inspiration in love at its most natural — unguarded laughter, quiet embraces, fleeting sunset light. Her work blends authenticity with elegance, creating timeless, intimate imagery that preserves connection, warmth, and beautifully lived moments for generations.

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# Literary Love

It's the perfect time to honor National Reading Month with a new story.

BY LIZ YOUNG



## YOUNG READERS

### LITTLE BEAR'S FRIEND

By Else Holmelund Minarik and Maurice Sendak

An endearing favorite for many decades now—for excellent reason—this is an engaging and heartwarming first read for both children and parents.

### AMELIA BEDELIA 4 MIXED-UP STORIES

By Peggy Parish

Kids love to laugh at comedic high jinks, especially when the joke is on an adult in the story. Enjoy taking turns reading aloud to each other, as this book includes four different stories.

## MIDDLE-GRADE READERS

### A WRINKLE IN TIME

By Madeleine L'Engle

This is a classic middle-grade reader's adventure in time and fantasy and

a great mind stretcher. It's also a winner for enjoyable family-time reading.

### PERCY JACKSON AND THE OLYMPIANS: THE LIGHTNING THIEF

By Rick Riordan

Middle-grade readers will continue to read this adventure classic for years. It may also encourage them to read other adventure fiction, myths and legends, and fables.

## ADULT READERS

### LEAGUE OF THE LEXICON: THE QUIZ GAME ABOUT WORDS & LANGUAGE

By Two Brothers Games

This word-focused card game offers fun for the literary and linguistic crowd. There are lots of categories, words, and challenges all wrapped up in a fun way to learn.

### BABEL

By R.F. Kuang

This new bestseller is written by an award-winning and razor-sharp author. It will appeal to historical fantasy readers who appreciate the stretching of the universe that holds us here on Earth.

### THE BEST AMERICAN SHORT STORIES 2025

Edited by Celeste Ng

This formidable collection of short stories is a great way to engage a book club or small group. Choose a few selections, and then debate their meaning, impact, and language to more fully appreciate the quality and richness of the short-story form.

### HAMNET

By Maggie O'Farrell

This Commonplace Reader top seller, on which the 2025 movie of the same name is based, is a great book that offers an appreciation for the life, language, and richness of the Shakespearean era.

### PEOPLE WATCHING

By Hannah Bonam-Young

This book is perfect for someone looking for a contemporary romance novel. It celebrates the joy, energy, and positive life force of warm hugs and more.

*Liz Young is the owner of Commonplace Reader, located on Main Street in Yardley. The bookshop hosts monthly adult book clubs along with weekly kids' activities. For more information, visit [www.commonplace-reader.com](http://www.commonplace-reader.com).*

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# OPEN A NEW DOOR

Spring is the perfect time to boost your home's curb appeal.

BY SARAH JAMMER



**AS Milder breezes** sweep through our neighborhoods, early spring brings a natural urge to refresh and renew, especially when it comes to your home's exterior. If you're looking to elevate your curb appeal, there's no better time to consider a stunning new front entrance door, garage door, or windows that reflect your style, enhance your home's value, and welcome guests with distinction.

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*Sarah Jammer is the legal and compliance director at Jammer Doors, where she keeps the family business running seamlessly behind the scenes. She is a mother to twin daughters and enjoys balancing the pace of business ownership with the joy of family life.*

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# A GLOWING SUNSET

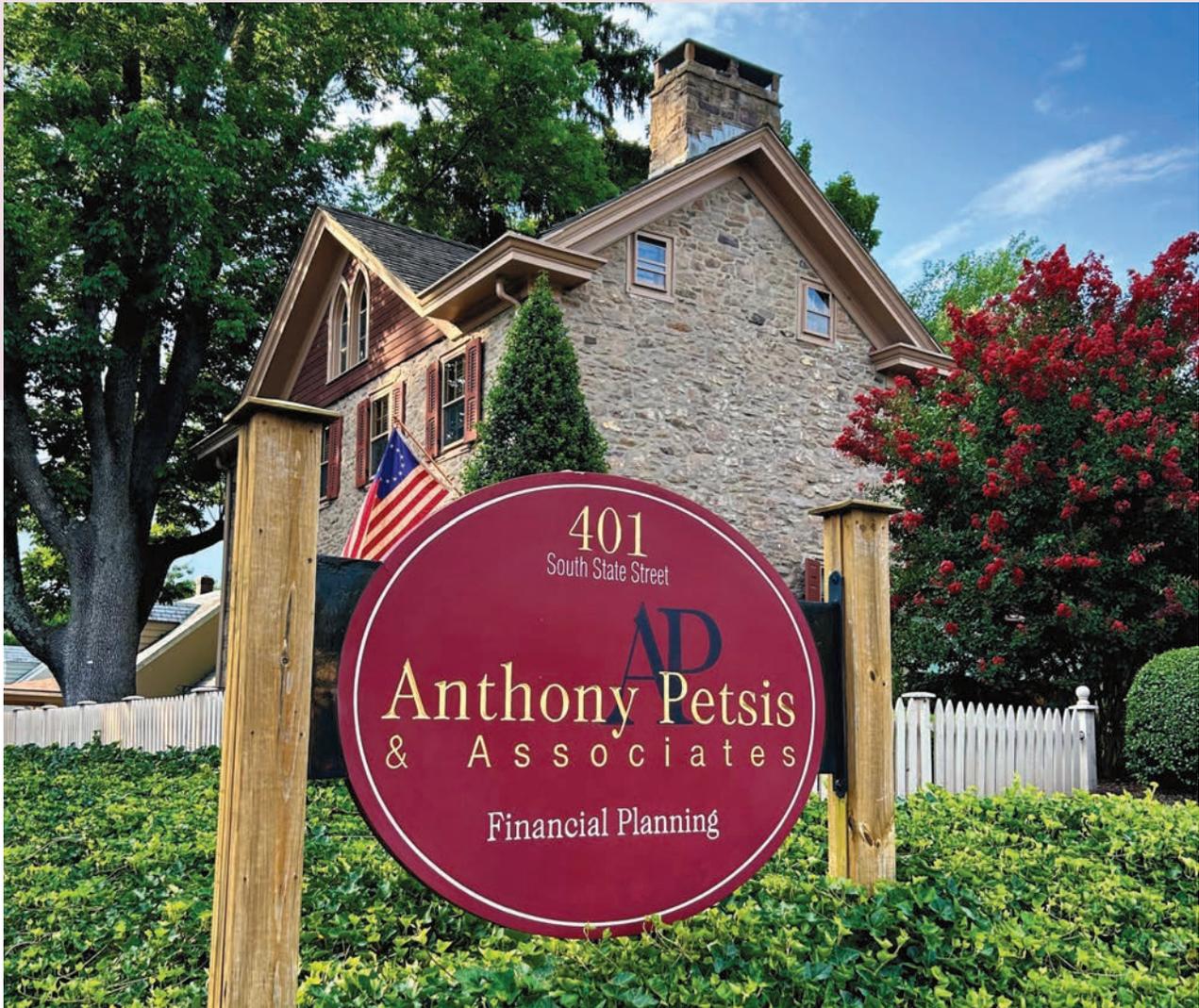
**WHILE LIVING ON** the Delaware River in New Hope, photographer Dennis Szul documented the changing seasons with his photography. “The sky worked in tandem with the river to create an endless canvas of possibilities each day,” he says. For more of Szul’s photos, visit [www.szulart.com](http://www.szulart.com).



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