

Conococheague Pioneer Times

The Newsletter of the Conococheague Institute for the Study of Cultural Heritage

Volume 32 Issue 2



CONOCOCHEAQUE
INSTITUTE

2nd Quarter 2026

Good Day to you...From the Executive Director



It's been a while, and I hope this newsletter finds you in good health and happiness.

It's been a busy few months, with over 2,500 students visiting the Conococheague Institute, two major 1776 events, new exhibits, animal additions, garden growth, and as I'm writing this we've onboarded new summer interns and are preparing for two weeks of YMCA summer camps! Spring may be winding down, but we're keeping the pace going here on the frontier.

One special note (and apology) is that if you noticed your membership or donation acknowledgements have been late! It's because at the end of this busy spring I took a two week vacation to visit family in Britain and Sicily. CI shirts visited Mount Etna, Norman castles and Greek ruins. I'm grateful for the amazing team (and community supporters like you) that kept the site running in my absence.



One of my major goals this summer, as we hit the midpoint of the fiscal year will be to **ensure membership retention, and expand our community donors.** For our regular supporters, your membership card notes when your 12 month membership is due. If you have questions you can reach out to me directly.

Everything we do at the Conococheague Institute, through preservation, education, and stewardship, all the activities you'll read over the next 8 pages are made possible thanks to your donations and our generous members.



One new initiative we've taken this spring is a job shadowing program. Following in the footsteps of our popular and expanding paid internships, job shadowing allows local high school students a chance to assist with 1-2 days of our work. So far, we're working with the **Chambersburg Area School District, Mercersburg Academy, and the Arc of Washington County,** but if you know a student interested, have them reach out to us.



The **Wetlands Restoration Project** is well underway. Funded by the **Thomas & Nancy Burkey Fund,** this work includes a solar aerator, native seeds, 600 live fish, and ongoing cleaning efforts in our pond. Birders have recently reported increased sightings of herons, so the fish are doing a great job of attracting wildlife.



Funded projects like this allow us to grow in new directions. We've recently submitted grants for foundational repairs for Rock Hill Farm, snake and fish exhibits for the visitor center, beer-brewing equipment, and more. **If you have a passion project that you can help launch, we'd love to discuss how a tax-deductible contribution can make a difference at the Conococheague Institute.**

AND DON'T FORGET TO VISIT! We offer tours throughout the week and have free programming, exhibits, and talks EVERY Saturday and Sunday this summer, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Cheers! Matthew Wedd
Executive Director

mwedd@cimlg.org 717-328-2800

2026 Spring Contributions

Our annual budget is \$320,000 and we are deeply grateful to everyone who contributes, who continue to support our programs, educational visits, and preservation work. Every gift truly makes a lasting impact.

Proud CI Contributors

Ruth Hamill, Chris Husson, Tom Riford, Richard Johnson, Community State Bank, Vince Newell, Oliver Goetz, Renewal By Andersen, Lee Davis, Bell Insurance, Mary Ann Ashcraft, Joanne Thomas, Ed Leisinger, Middletown Valley Bank, F&M Trust, Phyllis C. Wertime, David Emerick, Eric Ardjewski, Derek Nesbitt, Richard and Rebecca Johnson, Kathleen Stanczyk, Kayla Kampen, George McClellan, Cindy Fair, Callie Avery-Jarrett, Dr. John C. Stauffer, Peter Blakney, Richard and Susan Bell, Richard Sturtz, Jack Demuth, Dennis Warrenfeltz, Teri Bisceglia, Brad and Jill Fulton, Ira Beckerman

...Thank you for your support! Every contribution is stewarded to ensure our organization is a success



In-Kind Donations

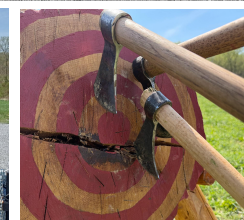
We received a wonderful donation from the **Tuscarora Longbeards Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation!** This incredible contribution includes a custom CI trailer, 18th-century camp equipment, tents, stoves, canvas, tables, a tomahawk range, and much more.

How did it come about? Dan Akers of the Tuscarora Longbeards noticed our staff at various outreach events (schools, career fairs, Fort Loudoun & Frederick Market Fairs), lugging boxes in our personal vehicles. He later visited our site to speak with us and happened to arrive during a large field trip with 200 students. After seeing the impact CI has in engaging local youth and inspiring a love of history, he approached his group about making this monumental donation.

An effort like this takes many kind hearts and generous hands. Huge thanks go to **Mark Helman, Dan Akers, Brechbill & Helman Construction Co., Inc., Pat Parsons** and the **Franklin County Vo-Tech Auto Body students**, the **Franklin County Vo-Tech Graphics Art Department, Brechbill Trailer Sales**, and of course every member of the **Tuscarora Longbeards Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation** for amassing this collection through decades of reenacting and events.

A special thank-you to the **Vo-Tech students** for volunteering their time to restore the trailer and for the beautiful work on our logo!

Other incredible in-kind donations include a reproduction rotisserie oven from **Lee Davis** for the cabin hearth, leather working tools, garden equipment and more. **If you have an antique, reproduction item, even vehicles that you think would aid our mission, contact us about making an in-kind contribution.**



The Legacy and Impact of the R.Kurtz Endowment for Early American History

In memory of **Bob Kurtz**, this spring we hosted the **Mercersburg Academy Class of '29** for one of our most intensive, and most rewarding, educational traditions. It's a full Conococheague Institute field trip, but the programs are taught by graduating students who have been in our programs in the past!

Anezka and **Reese** (presenting on gardens and medicine), **Caroline, Kate,** and **Meaghan** (showcasing our animals), **Lilly** (leading English Country Dance), and **Gaven** and **Noah** (instructing in archery) all stepped up to take on leadership roles. They demonstrated not only their commitment to the Conococheague Institute, but also inspired the 9th graders to see how they, too, can be active members of their community.

It was a fun-filled morning, with some special activities in the afternoon. The 12th graders have since graduated, and we extend our appreciation for these students, who gave back by sharing their knowledge and experiences in an unfamiliar setting. We also extend our thanks to all the adults (CI volunteers, our staff, MA faculty, and the many logistics planners) who made the day possible. And the Class of 29' for being such an energetic, friendly, and engaged audience!

Endowment contribution have a lasting impact

You can give by donating cash, stocks & securities directly.

Just use this information:

DTC Number: 2116

F/F/C Account Name: Farmers and Merchants Trust Company of Chambersburg

FBO: Conococheague Institute Acct # 30150000

EIN: 25-1763245

Contact us for more details and notify us of your planned gift.

Spring Activities: A Snapshot

Education Bookings

From **Washington County Public Schools** to **Gettysburg Montessori** and beyond, our education bookings are thriving. Each Spring and Fall every day is filled with students taking part in hands-on frontier history experiences at the Conococheague Institute. This spring alone, we welcomed 2,500 students from across the tri-state region, serving learners from kindergarten through high school in immersive, on-site programming. These visits continue to grow thanks to returning teachers, engaged students, and the volunteers who help make large group programming possible.



We are especially grateful for the support of **Patriot Federal Credit Union** and the **M&T Bank Charitable Trust**, whose generosity allows us to offer reduced rates to our largest school groups and expand access to educational programming. *We also extend our thanks to every teacher, chaperone, volunteer, and parent who helps make each visit a success.*



Student Volunteering and Community Service

Spring means students, but also student volunteers, and we've recently had **Mercersburg Academy** students join us for community engagement that combines hard work, environmental stewardship, and plenty of time with the animals. The **Lacrosse team**, **Stony Batter players**, **Environmental studies**, **student activities interns**, and more have helped tackle major site projects, including a full cleanout of the animal pens, wetlands restoration work, seeding the area with native pollinator mix, plantings, creating brick borders for our gardens, and lots of animal snuggles.



Businesses also show their support with organized volunteer days, and business member and CI supporter **Hope Bigler** brought her team from **Undone Kombucha** for a full day of pasture painting. We have more group days planned this summer, and would love to have some of our members bring their own communities out to volunteer. Contact Kori at visit@cimlg.org or 717-328-2800 to organize a day.

Earth Day & Park Day

We are grateful to **Middletown Valley Bank** for sponsoring our **Earth Day** plantings and volunteering their time to remove invasive species, establish pollinator habitats, maintain trails and gardens, and support our animals, while also helping make our "1776" programs possible through their generous sponsorship.



Finally, in partnership with **Americana Corner** and the **American Battlefield Trust**, at the end of April we took part in the national initiative **Park Day**. Thanks to the hard work of volunteers from **Mercersburg Academy**, **Scout Troop 199**, and many other community partners, our 30-acre site received much-needed care through gardening, habitat restoration, trail and wetland maintenance, stream cleanup, and animal care projects.

Animal Husbandry on the Frontier - Summer Update

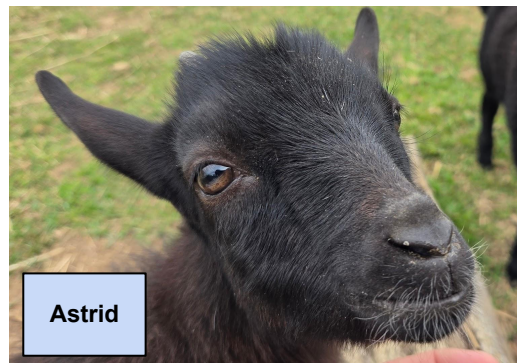
This spring brought an exciting season of growth at the Conococheague Institute homestead, with new arrivals, expanded programming, and continued hands-on learning with our heritage animals.

Our herd grew with the addition of a 1-year-old doe and her two daughters, now named by your votes as **Juniper, Astrid, and Nova**, adding new energy and educational opportunities to daily programming. Alongside them, we welcomed a young Black Welsh Mountain ewe, **Grace**, already halter trained and experienced in outreach, and a lively ram lamb who was later named **Gethin**, meaning “dark” or “swarthy one” in Welsh. Grace and Gethin have quickly become favorites in interpretation and visitor engagement.

The new additions have formed a wonderful herd bond with **Carmella, Hawthorne, Deuce, Hannah, and Harleah**, and these close-up encounters continue to make the homestead a dynamic outdoor classroom for students and families alike.

The animals are always a requested part of our education bookings, students love learning about early American farming practices, animal care, and the daily work that sustained historic households. The new kids and lamb have taken some of Hawthorne’s popularity, but he’ll always remain the GOAT.

Our animals also traveled into the community as part of our outreach programming. Hawthorne has visited **Mennohaven**, the **Pennsylvania Senate’s “Bring Your Kid to Work Day,”** while **Gethin and Nova** joined **Mercersburg Academy** alumni weekend, sharing a bit of the homestead beyond our grounds. **Hawthorne and Nova** also took a special trip to **Fort Loudoun’s Across the Centuries** showing that goats fit in every time period.



Astrid



Nova



Gethin



Hawthorne



We are also honored that the **Conococheague Institute** was awarded a **PA Museums Institutional Achievement Award** for the **Animal Husbandry on the Frontier** program. This recognition reflects the dedication of staff, volunteers, partner farms, and supporters who make this work possible. Special thanks go to the **Americana Corner Preserving America Partners** program, **Lappans Springs Farm**, and **Wilde Thistle Farm** for their continued support and collaboration.

As we move into summer, the homestead continues to thrive as a living classroom, where animals are not just cared for, but actively used to teach, connect, and inspire. We are deeply grateful to our goat givers, sheep supporters, volunteers, and visitors who make this work possible every day. **Consider making a donation towards the animals, or purchasing new goat giver and sheep supporter merchandise at <https://www.bonfire.com/store/conococheague-institute/>**



Are you a goat giver or sheep supporter?

Contact us to find out more about donations towards our Animal Husbandry program, ensuring their care and community impact. Or note ANIMALS on any donation!



1776: Hearth, Home, and Springtime and Music of the Revolution - May & June Event Highlights

On May 9th, our **1776: Hearth, Home, and Springtime** celebration brought together a full day of living history, hands-on demonstrations, and community participation at the Conococheague Institute.

After a rainy start, the afternoon broke into clear skies and a strong turnout for a day that showcased the skills, sounds, and daily life of the 18th century. Visitors experienced sheep shearing and fleece processing, horsemanship demonstrations, historic brewing, blacksmithing, and traditional music, all woven into a working picture of frontier life.

Blacksmithing demonstrations by **P.C. Janusz** highlighted the essential role of ironwork in early American communities, producing and repairing tools, farm equipment, and household necessities at a time when skilled metalwork was critical to daily survival.

At the homestead, visitors observed traditional sheep shearing as **Jess Valenza** worked through our herd using hand shears. This was an incredible show of this ancient skill, and we will use the wool to demonstrate the full production cycle, from fleece to finished cloth, through skirting, cleaning, carding, and spinning.

Brewing demonstrations with **Oakgrove Farm** explored historic ales and spruce beer, showing how ingredients from the landscape were transformed into essential household staples. Visitors also learned that even George Washington recorded recipes for "small beer," reflecting its importance in 18th-century life.

Horsemanship demonstrations by **Kaitlyn Fergeson** and visits from **Stouffer's Fowl Pole Farm** added another dimension to the day, while the ongoing Animal Husbandry on the Frontier initiative helped connect historic interpretation with living heritage practices.

Music filled the tavern with performances by **Forbes Road Frolic**, including reflections on the role of 18th-century musicians and their continued influence today. Additional performances featured **Robert Moulard**, whose hurdy gurdy demonstrations brought attention to the instrument's medieval origins and evolving role in folk and court traditions.

The event was made possible through the support of many partners, including **Americana Corner, F&M Trust, Middletown Valley Bank, Renewal by Andersen, Shady Spring Farm, Franklin County Visitors Bureau, and Alera Group.**



Then in June, we hosted **1776: Music of the Revolution**, a lively and well-attended celebration of historic sound and summer gathering at the homestead. Performances throughout the day by the **Uxbridge Fife and Drum** and **Forbes Road Frolic** brought the music of the 18th century to life, with spectacular energy and skill that filled the grounds with sound and atmosphere. Visitors also enjoyed ice cream, treats, and drinks from **Antietam Dairy**, making it a perfect seasonal complement to the programming.

We look forward to sharing more of this event through upcoming video features as we continue celebrating this milestone 250th year, highlighting the music, performers, and moments that made the day so memorable.

This program was made possible thanks to the support of community sponsors **F&M Trust, Middletown Valley Bank, and the Franklin County Visitors Bureau.**

2026 Internships at the Conococheague Institute

The Conococheague Institute is excited to welcome four new paid interns (plus one special micro-internship) for the 2026 summer: **Allister Caretti, Trey McCarty, Jacob Shaffer, Ellie Stine,** and **Seren Gibbs**. Each brings unique interests and experience as they join our environmental and public history teams for a summer of hands-on learning and community engagement.

Allister Caretti, incoming student at **Loyola University Maryland**, joins us as an environmental intern with career goals in conservation science and natural resources. She will be working in the field on wetlands restoration, native plantings, and invasive species management. Alli hopes to pursue a future as a National Park Ranger, preserving and interpreting America's natural landscapes, and has already been taken under **Mikaela's** wing with forestry renovations.

Trey McCarty of **Towson University** joins our Environmental and Conservation team, where he will help lead wetlands restoration efforts while supporting prairie, native garden, and woodlot management projects. He is focused on gaining broad, practical experience in environmental stewardship and land management, and already brings many farming and animal skill sets to CI.

Jacob Shaffer, Greencastle homeschooler, is a familiar face to many CI visitors, transitions from long-time volunteer to Public History intern. He will support weekend programming and summer camps while contributing to our expanding educational and animal husbandry initiatives, building professional skills in historic interpretation and public engagement.

Ellie Stine, from **Mercersburg Academy** also joins the Public History team, bringing experience in regional volunteering, leadership work, gardening, and textile-related skills. She looks forward to helping connect visitors with the history and natural environment of the region, continuing her interest in community-based education and heritage.

We are grateful to welcome this new cohort and look forward to a season of learning, growth, and shared work at the homestead. Be sure to show your support to this next generation of historians and naturalists whenever you visit.



And finally, **Seren Gibbs**, also from **Mercersburg Academy** will be joining us for a one-week micro internship to help with our summer camps and programs. Seren tells us she chose Mercersburg as her school due to its proximity to a living history site like CI! She used to volunteer at the **Frontier Culture Museum** in Virginia, we look forward to guiding her career growth, and she has already volunteered for many outreach programs.



Alli



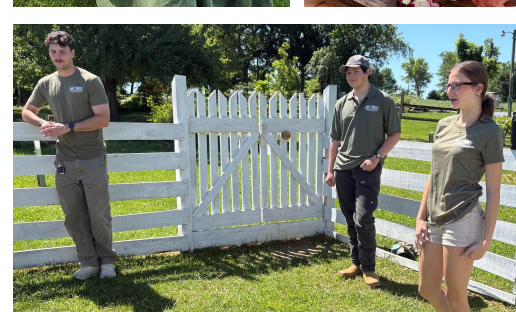
Trey



Jacob



Ellie



Seren

Lucas Lapole Memorial Intern Fund: Goal = \$32,000

Since 2022, CI internships have been fully paid thanks to the support of the **PHMC Cultural and Historical Support Grant, Lee Davis, the Stauffer family,** and our dedicated community. These contributions make it possible to provide meaningful, career-building opportunities for young people while strengthening our programs across the site. We're always accepting rolling applications too!

Donations to our intern fund ensure students have the opportunity to make real career progress, while benefiting our site and mission goals. **Just note 'Intern' on any donation to become a supporter!**



The Welsh Barrens Visitor Center: Open every Saturday (and Sunday June-Sept) 10am to 5pm

Whenever you begin your visit, we encourage you to stop by the Visitor Center first. Greet our team, learn about the history of Rock Hill Farm, explore the exhibits, and make a purchase in the gift shop (or become a member to support our mission). We're always updating the exhibits, and there really is something for everyone.

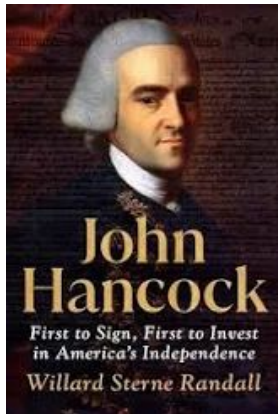
Throughout the week, our staff are always on-site working, so give us a call or knock when you visit.

Conococheague Book Club: 1pm at the Visitor Center

June 18th: *John Hancock: First to Sign, First to Invest in America's Independence (2025)* by Willard Sterne Randall.

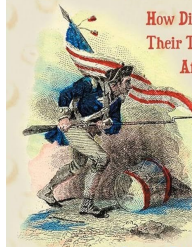
August 20th: *Medicine, and the American Revolution: How Diseases and Their Treatments Affected the Colonial Army (1998)* by Oscar Reiss, M.D.

All are welcome, join us for invigorating conversation on key historic topics.



MEDICINE AND THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

How Diseases and Their Treatments Affected the Colonial Army



Oscar Reiss, M.D.



You're Invited



1776: Harvest on the Homestead

Saturday, October 10th, 12 p.m. to 8 p.m.

You're Invited



Special historical presentations including:

- Hearth cooking and outdoor bake oven demonstrations
- Brewing demonstrations with Oakgrove Farm
- Garden and historic house tours
- 18th-century children's games and hands-on activities
- Animal encounters, including sheep, goats, and special guest ambassadors
- Interactive group Country Dances
- Cider Pressing and Grape Stomping
- Algonkian Traditions with Drew Shuptar-Rayvis
- Civilian and Militia life with the German Regiment
- Period string music featuring lively jigs, laments, and ballads with Forbes Road Frolic and Robert Moulant
- Evening Bonfire

1pm Authors Talk with Tom Hand founder of Americana Corner



2pm 2026 Annual Members Meeting



The Conococheague Institute
12995 Bain Road,
Mercersburg, PA 17236
www.cimlg.org (717) 328-2800
visit@cimlg.org

*This is a free event thanks to our sponsors!
Consider making a donation too!*



You're Invited

You're Invited

Our premier event, 1776: Harvest on the Homestead, will be combined this year with our Annual Members Meeting on Saturday, October 10th

Please RSVP to attend the 1:00 p.m. author talk with Tom Hand, and the 2:00 p.m. Members Meeting.

We are also accepting nominations for our Board of Directors. Request more details if you are interested in the opportunity to join our leadership.



12 MONTH MEMBERSHIP

**PRESERVING OUR
CULTURAL AND
NATURAL RESOURCES**

Board of Directors

Elizabeth Lillard (*President*), Sam Cathey (*Vice-President*), Bob Schwartz (*Secretary*), Selena Feng (*Treasurer*), Ellen Kinzer, Will Sheppard, Matt South, Will Slater, Derek Furry, David Ditto, Barbara Onorato

Advisory Board

Dr. John C. Stauffer (*Founder & President Emeritus*), Avery Cook, Tom Finucane, Dr. Doris Armstrong-Goldman, Gay Buchanan, Martha E. Stauffer, Roger Swartz, David Stauffer, Chuck Holland, Carol Zehosky

Staff and Team

Matthew Wedd, *Executive Director*, mwedd@cimlg.org
Kori Taber, *Programs & Farmstead Manager*, visit@cimlg.org
Mikaela Mummert, *Visitor Experience Team Member*
Tom McQuaid, *Historic Site Grounds & Maintenance Technician*
Alli Caretti, Trey McCarty, Jacob Shaffer, Ellie Stine, Seren Gibbs 2026 Summer Interns,

Contact us

The Conococheague Institute, 12995 Bain Road, Mercersburg, PA, 17236

Phone: 717 328 2800 Email: info@cimlg.org

Website: www.cimlg.org

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/conococheagueinstitute/>

Instagram: [@conococheague_institute](https://www.instagram.com/conococheague_institute)

Youtube: [@colonialivingattheconococheagueinstitute](https://www.youtube.com/@colonialivingattheconococheagueinstitute)

Did you Know?

Our memberships are valid for 12 months from the time of purchase, and we just have NEW cards. **Check your expiration date to find out when you are due.** Our membership remains strong, with 200 families from across the country (and a few overseas). Without your dedication, we wouldn't be able to do the important work we do. **Thank you for your support!**



**Be a part of our history: Your Membership support allows us to continue in our mission!
 CI Membership runs on a 'Valid through 12 month cycle', so whenever you renew you will receive a full year of benefits**

Annual Membership/Donation Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone No: _____ Email: _____

Newsletter Format Preference, Email or Printed: _____

Student: \$10

Individual: \$25

Family: \$35

Patron: \$125

Corporate: \$200

Sustaining: \$300

Life: \$1000

Membership Level: _____

Additional Donation: _____

Make Checks Payable to The Conococheague Institute, 12995 Bain Road, Mercersburg, PA, 17236

Thank you!

I support the Conococheague Institute because: _____

I would like a copy of the 2026-2029 Strategic Plan mailed

I would like to RSVP for the October 10th Author Talk and Members Meeting

I would like more information about legacy giving and bequests

I have included CI in my Estate Plans