

Institute for Lifelong Learning Comes to Priestley House

Bucknell University's Bucknell Institute for Lifelong Learning (BILL) made its appearance at Joseph Priestley House this Fall. For fifteen years BILL has been engaging "adult learners from a wide range of educational backgrounds in creative and intellectual activities that expand their horizons, invigorate the minds, stimulate curiosity and the joy of learning, and provide opportunities for social interaction" through courses "that reflect Bucknell University's commitment to liberal education." This year "Dr. Joseph Priestley: Theologian, Natural Philosopher (Scientist), Educator and Radical Thinker" joined the list of twenty-four courses being offered to local retirees during its Fall Session.

Meeting Tuesdays for an hour and a half from September 10th through October 15th, participants, through a series of six different presenters, were introduced to the multi-faceted life of Dr. Joseph Priestley, whose final decade was spent in the small Central Pennsylvania Community of Northumberland. The course included a tour of Priestley's Northumberland home, a visit to the Priestley Chapel, an introduction to Priestley's science experiments (including the advent of fizzy water), an introduction to Priestley's theology, as well as his political philosophies, and the legacy of his residence in Northumberland.

Upgrades at the Priestley House Museum

The Priestley House Museum is getting a facelift during the off-season. The state has scheduled portions of the museum to be professionally painted and restored prior to its reopening for the 2025 Season. At present the state has slated the upstairs bedroom, the front room, Joseph Priestley's library, the dining room, as well as the upstairs hallway, downstairs hallway, and main staircase walls for refurbishing. All of the furniture and items currently on display in these rooms are being professionally packed and removed from the work areas, after which the walls will be prepped and painted.

Visitors to the museum following its reopening will be able to enjoy the benefits of the maintenance work completed within the museum. The original timeline suggested that the work would be completed and the rooms refurbished prior to the opening of the 2025 Season on March 9th, but, at present, the completion date has yet to be confirmed. The museum will be unable to open for regular tours until all of the work has been completed.



JOSEPH PRIESTLEY HOUSE
P.O. Box 226
NORTHUMBERLAND, PA. 17857

PENNSYLVANIA
THE GREAT AMERICAN GETAWAY



Postings from Priestley House

NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF JOSEPH PRIESTLEY HOUSE

Number 85, Winter 2025

www.joseph-priestley-house.org

570-473-9474

SPECIAL DATES

2025 SEASON

February 16

Priestley Tea Fundraiser
Tickets Required
\$40 for Adults,
\$10 for Children under 12
Albright Center
450 Chestnut Street, Sunbury
1-3 pm

March

Season Opening
This year's opening date could change because of current museum updates being conducted by the state
Check the website closer to March to verify the date.
Priestley House Museum
1-4 pm
FREE Admission

April

Earth Day at the Museum
Priestley House Museum Grounds
TBA

May 17

Herb & Native Plant Faire
Joseph Priestley Museum Grounds
9-4 pm

House Tours also available on the day of the event 1-4 pm

Check local papers, Facebook, or joseph-priestley-house.org for additional details as event days draw closer.



In addition to our webpage you can Like us on Facebook (Joseph Priestley House Museum) to keep abreast of special Joseph Priestley House Museum events or follow us on Instagram (jphmuseum). Also, you can donate to the Priestley House via Amazon Smile! Go to www.smile.amazon.com and select "Friends of Joseph Priestley" as your charity. Everytime you shop at Amazon Smile, a portion of the purchase will be donated to the Priestley House!

CANDLELIGHT AND PINE BOUGHS AT PRIESTLEY HOUSE

Lanterns lined the walkways, candles lit the windows, and pine boughs donated by Kohl's Stony Hill Tree Farm decorated the mantles and the banister rail leading to the second floor. Music filled the house and docents costumed in late 17th century garb welcomed visitors to a Priestley House celebration of Twelfth Night on January 5th.



Twelfth Night
King and Jester

The first museum event open to the public in 2025, Twelfth Night evoked a taste of the English tradition celebrating the last night of the 12 Days of Christmas, marking the coming of Epiphany. More than 90 visitors, many of them children, gathered at Priestley House between 4-7 pm on January 5th to enjoy the ambiance of the museum in candlelight, to listen to the music provided by Beverley Conrad and Coy Arnold, to enjoy King's Cake and cider in the Visitors Center, and to attend Dr. Priestley's Science Demonstrations in the Pond Building, which drew a standing room only crowd at 4:30 pm.



Twelfth Night
Decor

Throughout the evening the Visitors Center also drew crowds, as visitors stopped by for refreshments, while joining in the fun of looking for a bean in their piece of cake, hoping to win a crown, but enjoying the jester's hat just as much, if a clove rather than a bean appeared in their treat. Priestley House offered a white sheet cake with decorative icing rather than the traditional fruit cake containing brandy, covered in a layer of rock-hard royal icing. And instead of limiting the evening to one king, our Priestley House baker incorporated multiple beans and a few cloves to share the excitement of discovery and expand the fun to multiple kings and an equal number of jesters!

Twelfth Night is one of several FREE events hosted by the Friends of the Joseph Priestley House Museum to offer visitors a taste of local history. The next FREE event will be Opening Day in March, when the museum returns to its regular weekend tours schedule.



Twelfth Night Docents

2nd Annual Afternoon English Tea Party Fundraiser

Sponsored by the Friends of Joseph Priestley House Museum

February 16th 1~3pm at the Albright Center
450 Chestnut Street, Sunbury, PA 17801

Come and enjoy music, a silent auction, photo opportunities & delicacies prepared by Gable Bakery. Proceeds support the Friends of Joseph Priestley House Museum and its many community programs and events, often offered at no charge to the public.

Adults \$40, Children 12 and under accompanied by an adult \$10
Tickets available at <https://joseph-priestley-house.org/events/list/>
or contact jphopsmanager@gmail.com

Changes to the Friends of Joseph Priestley House Board

The Annual Friends of Joseph Priestley House Volunteer and Members Meeting on November 13th was also an election night. The membership elected three new board members.

With Colleen Epler Ruths reaching the end of her six years on the board, four of which she spent as President, it was time for the Board to elect a new Executive Committee. Beginning on January 1, 2025, Dee Casteel is returning to the Friends Board and will, at that time, assume the role of Board President, a position she held previously from 2015-2017. Dee is currently an Associate Professor of Chemistry, Emerita of Bucknell, having joined the ranks of the retired at the close of the 2023-2024 academic year. She has been an active volunteer at Priestley House since 2014, serving in a variety of capacities, including previously serving on the Friends of Joseph Priestley House Board (FJPH).

Serving with her on the Friends of

Joseph Priestley House Board are Lisa Mertz, who will serve as Board Vice-president, Phil Brogdan, who will continue in his role as Board Secretary, and George Godlewski and Tim Botts, who will continue as Board Co-Treasurers.

The newly elected Friends Board members in addition to Dee Casteel include Craig Specht and Lindsay Reed. Craig is a lifelong resident of Northumberland and a graduate of Shikellamy High School, Susquehanna University, and Bloomsburg University. He currently teaches 8th Grade American History at the Shikellamy Middle School as well as owns and operates W&S Beer Distributors located along Susquehanna Trail in Northumberland. Lindsay, also a lifelong resident of Northumberland, is the co-owner of On A Roll located on Orange Street in Northumberland. Lindsay has been active in supporting community partnerships as well as sponsoring several Joseph Priestley House events and programs.

2024 Friends of Joseph Priestley House Awards

The Friends of Joseph Priestley House Board presented the following awards during its Annual Members and Volunteers Dinner. The awards were initiated in 2023 and expanded in 2024 to recognize the work of volunteers and local community partners and businesses for their unselfish contributions of time, money, and goods to the life of the museum. The Friends Board recognized multiple businesses in 2024 for their unwavering support to Priestley House Museum during the 250th Anniversary of Joseph Priestley's Discovery of Oxygen Celebration.

Tom Bresenham Award

Deborah Bernhisel

Friend of Joseph Priestley House Award

Sam Geise

Preservation and Restoration Award

Hope W. Kopf

Joseph Priestley House Spirit Award

Laurie McCants

Rookie of the Year Award

Laura McWilliams

Community Partner Award

Shared Support Inc.

Businesses of the Year Award

*W&S Beer Distributors,
PineknottBrewing Company, Belle Vue
Studios, Something Special Flower Shop,
and On A Roll*

FRIENDS OF JOSEPH PRIESTLEY HOUSE

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dee Casteel, President
Lisa Mertz, Vice-President
Philip Brogdan, Secretary
Tim Botts & George Godlewski,
Co-Treasurers
Ginger Aurand
Jon Bixler
Steve Klinger
Lindsay Reed
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JOSEPH PRIESTLEY HOUSE 473 PRIESTLEY AVENUE NORTHUMBERLAND, PA 17857

Walk-in Visitors or visitors with reservations are welcome during museum hours. For tour reservations go to our web site <https://joseph-priestley-house.org>

The reservations link is available on both the home page and tour page. Reservations will be confirmed by e-mail.

Tours will begin at 1pm, 2pm, 3pm.

Admission prices are listed on the tour page.

Special Assistance

Individuals who need special assistance or accommodation to visit The Joseph Priestley House should contact us in advance to discuss their needs.

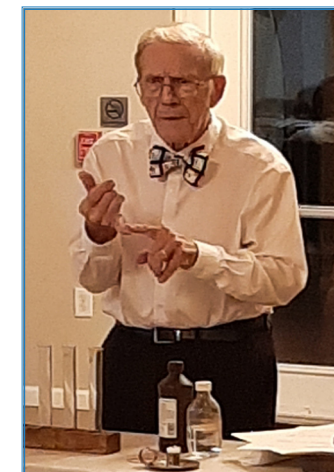
To join the Friends of Priestley House call 570-473-9497 or visit www.joseph-priestley-house.org

Annual Friends of Joseph Priestley House Members Dinner and Awards

The Friends Board hosted its Annual Members and Volunteers Dinner on November 13th, a recurring annual event but hosted this year at a new venue, Whispering Oaks Vineyard off Route 61 near Sunbury. The setting was perfect for the 40 plus attendees, composed of Friends Board Members, Friends Members, and Priestley House Volunteers.

Following a long established tradition, the evening opened with remarks from the Board President followed by a devotional song sung by Dee Casteel. The annual meeting marked the end of current president Colleen Epler-Ruths's tenure both as current president and board member. This year's election ushered in three new board members: Craig Specht, Lindsay Reed, and Dee Casteel.

Continuing a practice initiated by Operations Manager Murrie Zlotziver, the Board presented a series of awards to volunteers and community partners and businesses for exceptional service in 2024. Given the scope of the programs and events offered during 2024 in honor of the 250th Anniversary of Joseph Priestley's Discovery of Oxygen Celebration, the list of award recipients was longer than in 2023.



Ron Blatchley

Murrie and Volunteer Coordinator Jo Ann Long presented the following awards: Tom Bresenham Award, Friend of the Joseph Priestley House Award, Joseph Priestley House Spirit Award, Rookie Volunteer of the Year Award, Community Partner Award, and Business of the Year Award. Five businesses were included under the heading of Business of the Year Award, recognizing the exceptional support offered by local businesses to make the museum's 250th anniversary year-long celebration and Gala Weekend possible.

This year's program was provided by Joseph Priestley re-enactor and museum docent Ron Blatchley. Ron's program offered attendees a brief history of his journey as Dr. Priestley, as well as highlighting some of the experiments he performs during special weekends at the Priestley House Museum. "I always enjoy doing the Priestley demos," said Ron, about his 42 years of playing the role of Dr. Priestley. "I have been doing the demos since 1983 and answering visitors' questions. Mostly I get the same questions again and again, but that's fine; I know the answer. Then there is that rare event when someone asks something I have never even thought about. I give it my best shot but sometimes have to admit that I really don't know. And I am okay with admitting I don't know."

Joseph Priestley Limerick

Composed by Ron Blatchley

Joe Priestley, the cleric and sage,
Helped found a new chemical age
With air that he rated
Deflogisticated
When it caused glowing embers to rage.

Said Joe to the Earl of Shelburne,
"In this air lots of stuff will pell-mell burn.
A taper that's lame
Will burst into flame,
And a lump of brimstone will like Hell burn.

He tried his new air on two mice,
Seeking their rodent advice.
When it didn't cause death.
He himself took a breath
And thought that it felt really nice.

His breast felt peculiarly light
And he thought maybe someday folks might
Under medical care
Take a whiff of his air
And today we all know he was right.

Ron originally composed this limerick about 20 years ago over a short period of time. He first shared his composition with the British Joseph Priestley Society, now disbanded, which published it in their newsletter.