



Q2-Q4 2025 Apr.-Dec.
 "Seven point four" is the newsletter of the Friends of the Stewartstown Railroad, Inc.. A Pennsylvania non-stock, not for profit organization, tax exempt under section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code.

President's Report

Hello again from your volunteers of the Stewartstown Railroad!

There has been a lot of work going on around the railroad. Track work, as always. We have been replacing ties at the west end of the class I track, and past Five Forks Road up towards the auto repair shop. Lots of ties have been replaced by the volunteers on the existing Class I track, and as well as on the rest of the line headed towards New Freedom.

Locomotives numbers 9 and 10 continue to work well for us, after some needed maintenance over the winter. Locomotive number 12 is getting closer, but we still get its wheels profiled to get blue carded. We hope to do this in the spring of 2026. This will be an expensive process but will provide us with years of service.

We are currently using two coaches for the majority of our cold-weather rides: 1341 and 1158. 1341 is going through a sort of rolling restoration, where we can still use it in revenue service. It still needs painting, but it is mechanically sound. We

are hoping that a doubling of our seating capacity will allow for an increase in the number of riders, but with the way the economy is going, who can tell?

If you have a chance to come by the railroad, please come in and check out the giftshop—we have loads of new tee shirts, and we have Lego kits of our trains – Both locomotives, passenger coach, open air car, and blue caboose. It's a great kit – come and get one before they disappear. We are having a Volunteer Appreciation party just after the new year, we'll announce the date on Facebook and the website. All volunteers and their families are invited!

And one last thing – it looks like we will get an historical plaque put up at our Hungerford Station, similar to the one we have at our Stewartstown Station. We will keep you up to date on information regarding installation and dedication.

Thanks again for your support and encouragement, and your help in all the ways that you do. We have seen some new volunteers this year, and we are very happy and grateful to have them – but we can always use more help!

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Train Schedule 2026

Easter Egg Hunt	March 21,22 & April 4
Timonium Train Show	April 11,12
Western Train Robbery	April 25
National Train Day/Caboose Day	May 9
Royal Island Luau w/Island Princess & Water Princess	June 20
Celebrate America 250 w/Uncle Sam & Capt. America	July 11

Dedicated to preserving the Stewartstown Railroad—An Authentic American Antiquity

VISIT US ON THE WEB AT: stewarttownfriends.org

2024-2025 Friends Officers

President - Mike Ruane

Vice President - Dave Watson

Treasurer - Donna Kuhlman

Secretary - open

Assistant Secretary - open

Director-At-Large - Larry Morgan

Director-At-Large - Jim Kuhlman

Director-At-Large - Miles Weaver

Director-At-Large - Jim Whipple

Director-At-Large - Ken Bitten

Newsletter Editor - Joe Krepps

(President's Message, cont. from page 1)

So if you would like to come out to the railroad and help with these trains, or at the gift shop, or man the Toy Train layout or if you would just like to come out and ride, please do!

Hope to see you soon!

Mike Ruane

Mike Ruane interview - by Bill Histed

7.4 is interviewing Mike Ruane who by now well known and a veteran around the railroad in many capacities. Mike, when did you first learn about the Stewartstown Railroad?

Mike: I first heard about the Stewartstown on a Railroad Preservation website in early 2013. The Stewartstown railroad was looking for individuals to loan the railroad money as it was in negotiations with the George Hart estate to repay what the Railroad had been told was a gift, but that the estate contended was a loan. I contacted the railroad and drove the 214 miles from my house and was given a tour of the railroad by Don Matthews, a longtime Railroad volunteer. After the tour, and thinking about it for a bit, I decided that I'd give a lien for the remaining outstanding amount, and the railroad as still in business, and not torn up for a Rail Trail.

7.4 Mike, what attracted you to volunteer for the railroad that you and yours have done so much

for?

Mike: I've volunteered on other railroads and at other organizations. At many of them, when I first showed up, I was asked something along the lines of 'Can you Sweep' or 'Can you Shovel' ? I'd say yes, and start out helping at that level, but the organizations seemed clique-ish. I'd find out that after a few years of sweeping I could advance to brass polishing or some such, and I didn't like that situation. When I came out to my first work weekend at Stewartstown, I was asked if I could sweep or shovel, and I said yes and did some. I was then asked if I could repair a plug on a bench tool, and then something else, and by the end of the day I was driving one of the motorcars. I like the attitude of the volunteers here a lot. So, I've been coming back nearly every month for the past twelve years.

7.4 We see in photos over the years your sons volunteered on the railroad. What were some of their duties?

Mike: Before my sons Timothy and Jeremy got married and had children, they'd often volunteer on the railroad and come out for the work weekends. They were over eighteen at the time, so were not considered what we call Junior Railroaders. They did track work with the crew - replacing ties, working on the Mann&Parker washout, running trains - they did everything the crew did on whatever weekend they were working. At one point I brought them out, and a handful of their friends, and spent two days replacing ties in a cut on the tracks.

7.4 Tell us some of the duties you have had with the Stewartstown Railroad, the diverse jobs that you have done?

Mike: It seems like I've done a lot of different things on the railroad. As mentioned above, I can sweep, and shovel. I'm a member of the Board of Directors, but I'm not an officer. I've run a lot of the Maintenance of Way (MOW) machinery- tie crane, scarifier, tie inserter, tamper, spiker, burro crane. I've run most of the motor cars. I own a bunch of equipment kept at the railroad- Locomotive number 12, the Burro Crane, Tamper, Spiker, Scarifier, Lehigh Valley Caboose, a few

motorcars, so I've operated or restored all of them.

7.4 What do you think makes The Stewartstown Railroad special, even unique?

Mike: I think that the Stewartstown has a lot of things that make it special. First of all, the people. We have a great, all-volunteer crew who really go out of their way to make sure that our passengers have a fun, safe, experience. I like the fact that the volunteers aren't too cliquish. I think that our ride is pretty unique - lots of twists and turns through a lot of landscape that can't be seen unless you are on our trains.

7.4 Can you name some of the dedicated people you admired over the years on the railroad who are no longer with us? That is a dangerous question, of course because any of us could leave names out that we would think about later.

Mike: There are a lot of people who've been at the railroad, and have either moved on or passed away, but who made a large impact on the Railroad. Some of the names that come to mind from the 7.4 is interviewing Mike Ruane who by now well known and a veteran around the railroad in many capacities. Mike, when did you first learn about the Stewartstown Railroad?

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(Continued from page 3)

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Mike: There are a lot of people who've been at the railroad, and have either moved on or passed away, but who made a large impact on the Railroad. Some of the names that come to mind from the Friends are Dave Bauer, Ray Rater, John Watson. The folks from the Railroad that are still with us, but don't some around much any more are John Van Briesen, Don Matthews, so many others. Each brought something different to the Stewartstown Railroad, but it all had one thing in common - trying to make the Railroad a fun, safe, growing concern.

Mike, 7.4 has asked this question before to others. If a wonderful benefactor gave or left in a will \$1 million to the Stewartstown Railroad to be spent in any way, what spending targets would you recommend?

Mike: That's a tough one, with so many areas that could use support. I think I'd fix bridge 5, first, and then bridge one and the track in the New Freedom area up to the Hungerford station. I'd like to replace the sidewalks at the station and put in a fourth storage track there. Finally, I'd like to start a shop building, somewhere. I'd also love to have a section house out past the engine house, where we could put off some of the smaller motorcars.

7.4 You work many departments. You seem to like the mechanical side among them. What are your favorite jobs that you do on the railroad.

Mike: I definitely work mostly on the track crew, because without good tracks we have nothing to run the trains on! I've been Santa a few times, and I really enjoyed that. I love it when someone new comes to the railroad and starts asking questions. Being of Irish descent, there is nothing more pleasant to me than the sound of my own voice, so I'm more than happy to provide answers. I get a lot of satisfaction from fixing something that needs fixing, and fixing it correctly, whether it be the track, our passenger equipment, or our MOW equipment.

7.4 You have an entrepreneurial slant. Can you tell us about some of your personal business history?

Mike: It seems like I've always been looking for ways to make money. I started out as a paperboy, delivering about 200 papers a day before school. I worked as a carpenter - both union and not - before, during, and after college, and had my own company doing construction, repairs and maintenance. After college I worked for a computer consulting company and then started my own in 1996. A few years later I bought another company, and I've been running the two of them since.

7.4 What has helped to shape Mike Ruane over the years? People, teachers, books, philosophies, being a Dad, faith?

Mike: I, like everyone else, am shaped by all of our life experiences. I had grandfathers that to my young eyes could do anything - fix cars, build houses, make things, and they had a terrific impact on me and my attitudes towards doing things. I worked for people that had what I was told was a solid Protestant work Ethic - the more you work, the better you do. Also, the more you practice, the luckier you get. My parents divorced when I was fairly young, and my mom raised us mostly, so I have a lot of respect for women, and how strong and smart they are. I also have a lot of confidence in myself but try not to be cocky. I just want to be a good guy, and don't need too much attention.

7.4 You are also well involved in the separate, independent Friends Of The Stewartstown Railroad. Can you tell us how one may join, what the Friend's group does to preserve history and anything you would like to add? What are some of the things that The Friends group has accomplished?

Mike: I am the current President of the Friends of the Stewartstown Railroad, an all-volunteer organization which is dedicated to the preservation of the Stewartstown Railroad. We've done projects like restoring coach 1158, we provide the Railroad with ties, spikes, and other track material. We run the gift shop. We've accepted donations of equipment and material that are used to keep the railroad going. Long before I was involved with them, the Friends, under Ray Reter were the driving force in helping find friendly lien holders to bail out the railroad from the Hart Estate. We're currently working on restoring Coach 1341, and MA & PA locomotive 84. We're always looking for, and quite frankly need, new volunteers. One can sign up for the Friends at our website: <https://stewartstownfriends.org/>

7.4: Mike, do you have any positive "shout outs" concerning the Stewartstown Railroad? You have been all of management, investor and track work volunteer and jack of all trades on the railroad. Any things you feel need more attention?

Mike: I'd give a shout-out to EVERY volunteer on the railroad. There are volunteers and jobs that get noticed pretty easily and often: Train crews, station staff, even track crew to an extent, if you see us out on the line. But the volunteers who clean the cars, or mow the lawns at the station, or get water for the track and train crews often get overlooked. Same for the folks that plan our train schedule, take out the garbage, plan our events, work on getting grants, or liaise with other railroads: there are people doing a lot of hard and critical and they are the unsung heroes of the Railroad. I won't name names for fear of leaving someone out, but I know who they are, and they know who that are, and they are greatly appreciated.

7.4 Mike, after this interview we're sure there will be some areas important to you on the railroad that we missed. what would you like to add. Mike: The railroad to me has become less about the steel and rust and paint and buildings, and more about the people. I live 214 miles from the railroad and spend at least three days a month out there. I don't do it just because of the work that needs to be done, but because I enjoy working in an environment where my fellow volunteers are all pulling for the same thing in the same direction - keeping the Stewartstown Railroad going, and introducing new generations of fans and riders and volunteers to it. It's one of the best volunteer groups I've ever been involved with.

7.4 Years ago, something Director Ken Bitten remembers, The Stewartstown Railroad kept the old North Central line operating. Their York County government owned track connects with ours. Do you ever see a time when The Stewartstown Railroad operates that line again? Do you see an overlapping of efforts and resources?

Mike: I think we're pretty busy with keeping Stewartstown going right now, so I'm not sure if we operate there again. If we have a surplus of volunteers and they have a deficit, I can see it happening, but probably not in the near future. I would like to see it happen, though.

7.4 A final question, Mike. Where would you like to see The Stewartstown Railroad in 10 years, 20 years? And a second final question if you permit, LOL, do you see the railroad eventually igniting an expanded tourist center for Stewartstown?

Mike: I hope that in the next few decades the Stewartstown railroad is running large trains to New freedom again. I'd like to see us as a tourist destination, with new shops, more storage tracks and historic displays, and a thriving volunteer force taking care of large crowds of passengers. I would love to make the railroad a destination for visitors to southern York County. And I want it to be fun.

7.4 Thank you, Mike for your time and your many years of dedication to the region!

Easter Trains





(Continued on page 8)

Dedicated to Preserving the Stewartstown Railroad—An Authentic American Antiquity
VISIT US ON THE WEB AT: stewartstownfriends.org

Western Train Robbery





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HOTT Experience! Hands On The Throttle





Songs and stories, by Matthew Dodd



Super Heros - Spider Style





(Continued on page 14)

Mermaids & Pirates Express



*Thank you,
Volunteers &
Supporters!*

Motorcar rides



THANKS TO THE VOLUNTEERS WHO DO THIS ...AND SO MUCH MORE!!



MA and PA 84 Update

Work continues steadily on historic Locomotive No. 84 as we move closer to our goal of returning her to service and blue-carding her for operation in 2026.

Over the past several months, more mechanical progress has been made. All four drop-truck hoses have been replaced, improving the reliability of the air brake system, and a main trainline air hose has been renewed—an important step toward a fully compliant air system. On the safety and cosmetic front, one of the three broken rear cab windows has been replaced, beginning the restoration of the cab to a safe, functional, and presentable condition for crews and future guests.

A major focus of recent work has been the locomotive's fuel system. Six stuck injectors have prevented the prime mover from operating properly, but steady progress is being made to free them. Volunteer and supporter Jack Sanford made two trips to assist with this effort and played a key role in advancing the project. Sadly, Jack fell ill with pneumonia shortly afterward. He is now recovering, and we extend our heartfelt wishes for a full and speedy recovery. His dedication underscores how deeply this restoration depends on the time, skill, and passion of our volunteers and supporters. The existing batteries are no longer serviceable, and without replacement, the locomotive cannot be started or tested. We have received a donation of a used set of functional locomotive batteries, and in the spring we will remove the old batteries, clean out the battery boxes and install the "new" ones.



However, there are still a number of items needed to make 84 fully operable. They include:

- 3 new windows
- Initial partial tank of diesel fuel
- New oil, fuel and air filters
- Recalibration of gages in cab
- Water treatment
- Windshield wiper blades
- Possible new injectors
- Packing cups and cylinder gaskets
- Journal oil

Our immediate funding need totals approximately \$7,000. This is where we need your help.

To return Ma & Pa 84 to service in 2026, we are seeking donations to close this funding gap. Once restored, Locomotive 84 will play an exciting and community-focused role in our operations, including:

- Hands-on-the-throttle experiences for rail enthusiasts who have always dreamed of running a locomotive
- Special operating days in cooperation with partner railroads to showcase No. 84 and celebrate regional rail history. 84 will be used on specially designated days to pull trains on the Northern Central Railroad.
- A special charter event near the end of 2026 to mark her official return to service, planned in conjunction with the national conference of the Heritage Rail Alliance.

Every contribution brings us closer to seeing No. 84 come back to life and feeling her move under her own power once again. If you would like to support the 84 Restoration Fund, please send your donation to:

Friends of the Stewartstown Railroad, Inc.

Memo: 84 Restoration Fund

PO Box 456

Stewartstown, PA 17363

Thank you for helping us preserve and operate this important piece of Ma & Pa and Stewartstown Railroad history.

Coach 1341 Fundraiser

Your Friends have begun fundraising for the restoration of the Railroad's Reading coach 1341. When the railroad began running big train operations back in 2015, coach 1341 was put into service in 2016 to carry our passengers. The windows were repaired, the seats were being reupholstered, the floor was patched with new concrete and painted, and we were up and running with a rolling restoration – a situation where the coach was good enough to be used but still needed more work.

Now that coach 1158 is restored, we need to give 1341 some much needed attention. The roof needs welding, patching, and painting. So do the sides and ends of the car. Some of the windows, which were 'good enough' ten years ago, now need replacement. Finally, we need to build, from scratch, vestibule and platform doors that were lost to the elements years ago. We're trying to raise \$15,000 for this restoration.

Our fundraiser is being run through GLY365, which is an extension of Give Local York, a signature program of the White Rose Leadership Institute that aims to connect local people with local causes and foster our community's philanthropic spirit.

If you can donate, and any amount will help, please follow the link below. Thanks!

<https://www.gly365.org/story/126qm>



Trackwork wrapup for 2025

The Stewartstown Railroad Track Crew finished up its scheduled work for the year this past weekend! Frozen ground precluded tie work.

The track crew traveled to Hungerford Station and removed the switch points, frog and associated hardware remains from the switch that went into the old Chase Wire Cloth building, loaded them up and brought them back to town for reuse.



The crew cut two rails to length to fill in the holes created by the removed switch components, bolted them together and set a few spikes to hold the gauge, keeping the main track complete and usable for motorcar runs, inspections and track maintenance equipment.



This was a job that needed doing for some time!! Tie conditions there are poor, we will schedule a day for next year to put some ties in, from the station East.

The crew then returned to Stewartstown and replaced some loose and worn frog bolts in the frog of the lower wye switch in front of the enginehouse.

We also installed the rebuilt arm extension cylinder on the tie crane and removed a bad starter from the Plasser Tamper as well as doing a thorough Friday afternoon track inspection.



We will take a break over the holidays and start the new year with our first January work weekend on January 16, 17 and 18. What we do depends on the ground conditions and weather in the winter months. We will have inside and outside work planned so be ready to come out and help get us started in 2026!

Thanks to everyone who came out this year and helped maintain and improve our railroad! Our best wishes to everyone for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!!!

Regards,

Dave Williamson





Friends of the Stewartstown Railroad, Inc.
P.O. Box 456
Stewartstown, Pa. 17363-0456

Address service requested

Place
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TIME VALUE MATERIAL
PLEASE DELIVER BY: Month Day, Year

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail address: _____

Phone number: _____

Membership Classifications & Dues (Full year, Jan.-Dec.)

<input type="checkbox"/> Individual Membership.....	\$20.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Family Membership (all members at same address).....	\$100.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Membership (business/organizational)	\$300.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Optional: General Fund donation	\$_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Optional: Endowment Fund donation.....	\$_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Optional: Equipment Fund donation	\$_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Optional: Right of Way/Track Fund donation	\$_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Optional: Other donation, please specify	\$_____

(You may specify a specific project on the line above for your optional donation, if you wish.)

Total enclosed: \$_____



The Friends of the Stewartstown Railroad, Inc. invites all who are interested in preserving the Stewartstown Railroad to join the Friends organization. The railroad was founded in 1884 and opened in 1885.

One of the goals of the organization is to support our members as they perform their volunteer work on the railroad upgrading and maintaining the railroad's properties. Our volunteer's efforts help the railroad continue its operations over its 7.4 miles of track between Stewartstown and New Freedom, Pa., via the Deer Creek Valley. The Friends organization is a Pennsylvania non-stock, not-for-profit organization. The Friends organization is tax-exempt under section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code. The Friends organization owns a minority equity interest in the Stewartstown Railroad Company.

Please send completed form and check to:

Friends of the Stewartstown Railroad,
Inc.
P.O. Box 456
Stewartstown, Pa. 17363-0456

We're on the web at:
www.stewartstownfriends.org
You can join online too!
www.stewartstownfriends.org/join/