

DAILY LOCAL NEWS

LATEST HEADLINES APRIL 24, 2024

Chester County poised to celebrate America's 250th Anniversary

CC250 Commission hoping to enlist the community in preparations

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WEST CHESTER — Nationwide and locally, plans are underway to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the founding of the United States of America. The American colonies declared Independence from King George in 1776. And 250 years later, throughout 2026, commemorative events by the people, for the people, are being planned.

Locally, the America 250 PA Chester County Commission has extended a star-spangled invitation, encouraging all to inspire and engage everyone to connect Chester County's stories to the nation's past, present and future. Having clarified Chester County-specific heritage themes, the CC250 Commission is working to provide resources to help heritage centers cater to more visitors, aiming for interactive kiosks, enhanced family-friendly signage, and a regional heritage app to help visitors discover history and explore what interests them.

Heritage themes specific to Chester County include The Philadelphia Campaign, Iron and Steel Trail, and the Pathway to Freedom.



Karen Simmons is the 250 Project Coordinator and CEO of the Chester County Community Foundation. She and her team are helping the CC250 Commission to enhance regional awareness that 250 is coming, and helping organizations and individuals figure out how they want to be involved. Simmons talked recently in her office about the heritage and history of Chester County and Pennsylvania.

“There is so much history surrounding the American Revolution and the founding of our country here in Chester County,” she said. “We’ve got this incredible democracy. After 250 years, we need to keep it strong.”

Simmons noted that 2026 will be an all-year-long celebration and commemoration of independence, along with unfinished business. And in 2027, Chester County will commemorate

the Battle of Brandywine, the Battle of the Clouds, and the Paoli Massacre. Leading into 2028, when some soldiers survived a tough winter at Valley Forge National Historic Park.



“We lost the Chester County battles in 1777, but overall, we won the war,” Simmons said. “There are so many lessons to be learned about passion, resilience, humility, organizing resources, and forging partnerships.”

“Chester County has so much sacred ground, where blood was shed so that we can be free. People died so we could have freedom.”

CC250 aims to promote interactive, inclusive and compelling experiences to mark the milestone. Throughout 2026, community groups are urged to offer programs that commemorate, celebrate, examine and/or foster fundamental ideals such as equality, liberty, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of assembly and due process of

law. Heritage sites will host tours, programs and events.

“We will celebrate and learn about our heritage and history,” she said, “and how our past influences the present and shapes the future.”



The website is up and running at America250chesco.org. Personal input is desired and people are invited to tell their stories and share the hope for a more equitable nation.

To share what America means to you, click on “Your Story, Our History, Share Your Story.” You will be prompted to answer questions, “Are you proud to be an American?” “Why or why not?” “What does democracy mean to you?” And, “Do you believe that every person’s vote makes a difference?”

“Onward, to 2026, with liberty and justice for all!” Simmons said.

Darby Spackman, left, Randell Spackman, Kent Snell and Noah Lewis prepare for 2026, with Tailor Made Video crew in downtown West Chester. (SUBMITTED PHOTO/CC250 COMMISSION)

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