



FIRST NIGHT MORRIS 2012

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Twenty Years of Success: The Tradition Continues for First Night Morris County 2012

Throughout the Dot.com bubble and Great Recession, “The Harvard of First Nights,” as First Night Morris is commonly referred to, has been a staple of the community. The popular New Year’s event now enters its twentieth year, and, while many other First Nights have gone by the way side, First Night Morris is going stronger than ever.

In 1992, the now largest First Night® in New Jersey introduced a non-alcoholic celebration of the arts and culture that currently draws over 5,000 participants, drawing families, seniors, and singles, all of whom are able to enjoy an inexpensive yet fun way to bring in the New Year. Over 75 performances, ranging from traditional acts to interactive entertainment, are within walking distance of the Morristown Green. The event culminates with two amazing fireworks displays at 9:30 PM and midnight to start the New Year in style.

First Night Morris requires three key elements for success: loyal sponsors, over 100 community-minded volunteers who annually donate their time each New Year’s Eve, and a Board of Trustees. Each of these three elements is integral to the operation of the event. This year, First Night Morris’s volunteer Board of Trustees brings new talent and a solid core of returning veterans to drive the future growth of the organization.

The Executive Board starts with Michael Schmidt, graduate of Morristown High School and finance professional at Quest Diagnostics, serving as the new Chairman of First Night Morris. Schmidt is tasked with overseeing the nearly \$200,000 budget required to successfully run the event each year. He is no stranger to the event, having served on the Executive Board for last year’s First Night Morris as Treasurer. Schmidt’s outstanding leadership and analytical abilities as Treasurer led to his appointment as Chairman.

“It is a great honor to have the opportunity to lead an event that means so much to so many. We have a duty and responsibility to ensure that we continue to drive the positive growth of the event and the organization,” stated Schmidt. He will be joined by veteran Vice Chair Warrie Howell and Secretary Denise Schmidt, who has served with various community organizations, completing the talented Executive Board.

The Board is adding new talent in 2012 with the additions of Joseph Miles, a veteran marketing executive of Patch who will lead the Marketing Committee, and Lisa Konefal of Network Management. Konefal, with over 18 years of operations experience, will be charged with managing over 100 volunteers. A new addition to the core support team is Director of Community Relations Craig Schlosser. Schlosser initially served during the summer of 2010, assisting the Board with various community and marketing-based initiatives for last year's event as a Community Relations Manager. This year, he and his team return to help First Night Morris more effectively engage the communities it serves through new programs, including the creation of an Advisory Board.

Long-time non-profit executive and community leader Robert J. Peluso will return for his sophomore year with First Night Morris as the Co-Chair of the newly formed Advisory Board. Peluso is well-seasoned with almost two decades of community service and the successful creator of an over eight organization partnership, which he developed as President of the Parsippany Area Chamber of Commerce.

Rounding out the returning Board Members are Peggy Adams and Doal Sanderson. These veterans bring an invaluable amount of experience and knowledge not only from the event but from other organizations as well, ranging from the American Red Cross to various township positions/boards and historical societies. The remaining part of the support team is comprised of returning Event Managers Brandi Marks and Amberle Gilroy, along with the invaluable services of Dr. Lynn Siebert, who also serves as the Director of Arts Participation & Communications for the Arts Council of the Morris Area.

"Our Board Members and volunteers are committed and talented individuals, and this event would not exist without them. First Night Morris has always been known for providing a fun and well-run New Year's celebration, which I experienced as a child growing up in the area. I am confident and excited that the fantastic team we have involved in this year's event will repeat our tradition of excellence," stated First Night's Chairman Michael Schmidt. To learn more about First Night Morris or get involved, please visit firstnightmorris.com.