



Organization's 50th year Anniversary

I don't know why, but lately I've struggled each month with what I'm going to write for my article. However, this month is a little different because GARMA has big news to celebrate.

This year is our 50th anniversary! Started in 1972 as the Retail Merchants Association, GARMA (now known as the Gettysburg Area Retail Merchants Association) has grown in not only membership, but in our presence with what we do in our community.

Being born and raised here in Gettysburg, I become a little nostalgic when I look over the names of businesses that have come and gone as members. I remember where businesses used to be, and what is there now. I think about how much this town has grown and how diverse it has become. It's refreshing to have such an eclectic array of shops, museums and restaurants that are locally owned and operated versus a town full of national chains. This is part of Gettysburg's charm.

So what are we going to do for our anniversary year? For starters, our [First Friday](#) Committee is looking to do some fun quarterly events that will help make Gettysburg's First Friday a destination event. February's First Friday will be our traditional [Chocolate Walk](#), but elevated. Prizes will be awarded to those who turn in their First Friday Chocolate Walk maps with the most shops and restaurants visited. More information will be available on our Facebook page and our website, www.gettysburgretailmerchants.com.

While going through the GARMA archives, we have found out that this will be the 60th anniversary of the [Gettysburg Outdoor Antique Show](#). The show has actually been in operation since 1962 (if I am wrong, I do apologize, but I am reading from a letter included with the original constitution of the RMA in 1972 stating that "this will be the 10th year for the show"). Our biannual shows will be held Saturday, May 21 and Saturday, September 24. New for this year, we will be introducing arts and artists. As always, a vetting process will occur when accepting new dealers for our show. It's time to grow and change things up a bit.

As I talk about great things for the anniversary year to come, I also want to talk about this past holiday season. This year, in lieu of the one-winner shopping spree we used to promote, GARMA handed out \$1000 worth of gift certificates to random shoppers, within a 3 week time frame, to promote shopping in our member businesses. When I was walking through town handing out gift certificates, I felt such an enormous wealth of Christmas Spirit. I felt like the



Grinch whose heart grew 3 times that day. The reception from the recipients ranged from “I can use this for my purchase now?!” to “I read about this in the paper and can’t believe I got picked”. I want to thank my team of Elves (Board Members) who volunteered their time to also give out gift certificates. The positive feedback from the shops and restaurants was tremendous. My hope is that next year we may be able exceed that \$1000.

There are many other thanks to give, which are acknowledged on our website. Personally, I want to thank my GARMA team of Board Members whom I would be lost without. And from our Board Members, we want to thank our members for their continued support of this organization. It’s a choice to be a member, not an obligation. We thank them for continuously choosing GARMA. If you are interested in becoming a GARMA member, visit our website for details.

Thank you to Gettysburg. You came out in great support this year to shop local. You kept us going and we are ever so grateful to you all.

Jennie Dillon is the President of GARMA and owner of [Artworks](#) on York St.

. For more information on GARMA activities go to <https://www.gettysburgretailmerchants.com/>.