

## Former Mount Joy Couple Honored At Sweetheart Ball

By Rick Hiduk

Manheim Township High School Student Council members conducted a Sweetheart Ball at Brethren Village in advance of Valentine's Day that provided an enjoyable social setting for the residents and made more than a few couples feel young again.

"It appears that all of the residents are having a good time tonight," MTHS Student Council vice president Amanda Steinke observed about an hour into the affair. She credited fellow senior and student council president Susanna Shuman for coming up with the idea for the event. Although the Student Council officers admitted that they did not know what to expect when the plan was first proposed, they found Brethren Village administrators to be very cooperative.

"This is our first time having a Sweetheart Ball, and it's very exciting," said Brethren Village therapeutic recreation supervisor Crystal Good, who estimated that at least 25 couples were in attendance. "It's been such a blessing. The student council members did all of the planning and all of the work, so all I had to do was provide the room and the residents." The people who responded to Good's invitation to the party, including at least one MTHS alumnus, were very enthusiastic.

Steinke noted that working with senior citizens tops the priority list among many student council members, so it was easy to gain their support as well. "It had a great appeal to everyone from the beginning," added Student Council treasurer Nick DeMasters. "I think it's going to be the best thing we've done



Former Mount Joy residents Miriam (left) and Musser Heisey were honored as "Mr. and Mrs. Sweetheart" at a recent dance party held at Brethren Village in Neffsville.

all year."

"They really went all out," said Student Council faculty advisor Ellen Fritz, who related that she only gets involved with the students' projects when she feels that her assistance is necessary. "They made all of the arrangements," she added.

To the uninformed, the party may have resembled a high school prom. The retirement community's Assembly Hall was lavishly decorated by the MTHS students, and the buffet included fresh fruits, vegetables, and a wide array of colorful baked goods and sweets. As the couples entered, they received a Valentine's Day card from the student greeters and were presented with a Polaroid photo of themselves.

"Everyone pitched in with making food and decorations," Susanna stated.

Party-goers sipped lemonade and fruit punch as they swayed to big band tunes played by the MTHS Jazz Band, under the direction of Ted Luckenbaugh.

Many of the senior citizens had not "cut a rug" in years initially declined invitations to dance, but most of them found the lively rhythms of the band to be irresistible.

"When the band started playing, their eyes lit up. They were so excited," Susanna related. "We asked them to dance, but they said they wanted to sit and listen to it." The Student Council members were persistent, however, and managed to get a number of the residents onto the dance floor.

"It's so nice to see young people do something like this," three-year Brethren Village resident Arlene Stauffer remarked as she watched the activity on the dance floor. She cited a recent knee replacement as her reason for not dancing, but the former Conestoga resident had to admit, "The band is very good."

A highlight of the evening was the acknowledgment of the couple who had been married the longest as "Mr. and Mrs. Sweetheart." Susanna asked all of the participat-

ing residents to stand and to remain standing if they had been wed for more than 40 years. After a few couples sat down, she asked those who had been married for 50 years to remain standing and so on. When she reached 65 years or more, only two couples remained standing: Musser and Miriam Heisey, formerly of Mount Joy, nudged out Harold and Laverne Bealer by ten months when they revealed that Feb. 14 marked their 70th anniversary. Students presented the couple with sashes and placed a tier-ra on Miriam's head.

"It almost made me cry," Good stated. "It was so precious to see the students interacting that way with the residents."

Miriam was thoroughly impressed by the students' efforts and hopes that more people will attend the next time such a function is conducted. She spoke for many of her fellow residents who shared similar positive comments with Good afterward.

"We hope to pass it on and see it become an annual event," said Susanna, who was assisted by MTHS Student Council secretary Brianna Blesko and public relations officer Erin Bair, in addition to the aforementioned officers.

As the party wore down, the participants returned to their cottages and apartments with smiles on their faces and, perhaps, the lyrics of an old Frank Sinatra tune running through their heads.

"And if you should survive to 105, look at all you'll derive out of being alive. Then here is the best part; you have a head start, if you are among the very young at heart."