Mount Airy Museum of Regional History's fall fundraising gala has a new take on what's "in" and what's "out."

Out — masks and casino gambling.

In — the first of two 25th birthdays along with an inter-generational take on the fall harvest.

The museum has tried for the past few years to find the perfect replacement for its popular Casino Royale gala which was discontinued in 2016 when state authorities called museum director Matt Edwards days before the event to tell him the long-running event violated state law.

That year, the event proceeded without gaming. In 2017, the event was replaced by a masquerade ball.

"This year," said Edwards, "we're not so close to Halloween, so the board chose a Fall Harvest Gala as the theme for the fall fundraiser, which will also mark the museum's first 25th anniversary.

The museum was established 25 years ago: in 1993, but the doors did not open to the public until 1995, thereby setting up 2025 for another silver anniversary.

Edwards said people have been inquiring what the dress code is going to be, to which he has been replying, "The word 'gala' in the name implies you should put a little effort into getting dressed up. I think it's appropriate to do that."

Unlike most area non-profits, the museum operates on a calendar fiscal year, according to Edwards, and this event is make or break to keep the museum's finances on the black side of

the ledger as the year ends, shoring up funds for operating expenses.

Two new things for 2018 will be Interlam taking on the mantle of title sponsor, and the day of the gala, which has been moved to Saturday from Friday.

“We constantly butt up with high school football on Friday. But on Saturday, there’s college football. We’re going with Saturday this year, so everybody doesn’t have to rush around after work on Friday, get here, have a cocktail, eat dinner, and rush home. We’re hoping Saturday will accommodate the schedules of some folks who might not have made it on Friday. And we hope they’ll relax and stay and dance and enjoy themselves after dinner.”

The music and dancing part of the equation has been successfully resolved. The band Continental Divide will return after a successful engagement in 2017.

“Everyone liked them so much, we brought them back,” said Edwards.

The band’s lead singer, Gene Pharr, was inducted into the Carolina Beach Music Hall of Fame in 2016. But the band ventures out past beach music. According to Edwards, they play a balanced set that includes several genres, including covers of recent hits.

“They play a little jazz early in the evening, but as the night gets going, they play whatever makes the crowd get involved.”

Though Edwards freely concedes the Fall Harvest Gala doesn’t have much in the way of a gimmick — “It’s a dinner-dance; There’s nothing groundbreaking there” — he is counting on the museum’s inter-generational appeal to make it work.

“Our events are unique in the diversity in ages we get to them. We have been trying to attract a younger clientele. It’s part of our bigger program here at the museum. We want to capture kids’ attention when they’re about this big,” said Edwards, gesturing at a height somewhere waist and

knee high.

“All of the programs we aim at children are focused on getting children accustomed to being museum patrons at a young age. Getting kids affiliated when they’re young will set them up to be comfortable in museums as they get older. And with kids, you get their parents, which are usually younger.”

Edwards said it’s sometimes challenging for folks on a budget — and younger people often have less disposable income — to get them to a charity fundraiser.

“But for folks who see the value of investing in the museum, it will work,” he said.

Event tickets are $65 and drawdown tickets are $100. A couples special is $200 and includes two event tickets and one drawdown tickets, a savings of $30.

The drawdown has a cash prize of $6,000 plus a few $100 prizes along the way. Drawdown ticket holders do not have to be present to win, but to split a ticket, the physical ticket must be present.

Mount Airy Museum of Regional History’s Fall Harvest Gala will be Saturday, Sept. 15, from 6:30 to 11 p.m. Dinner at 7:30, music and dancing at 8, and final drawdown drawing from 10:30 until 11. Tickets must be purchased in advance and are available at the museum. Call 336-786-4478.