

Cummington Council on Aging December 2020 Newsletter



Cummington Council on Aging
P.O. Box 95, 33 Main St.
Cummington, MA 01026

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Holiday greetings to all!

As the year comes to a close, I hope you continue to keep safe and healthy and find meaningful opportunities to safely celebrate the holidays. This has been a long and challenging year for all of us and, unfortunately, the news looks dim as Covid-19 cases are on the rise. Please look after yourselves and your neighbors and please do not hesitate to reach out if you or someone you know is in need. The COA is open for you. Please call me at 413-320-0663 if we can assist you in any way.



Foot Care Clinic

Piper Sagan is running a foot care clinic at the Hadley Senior Center. Although priority is given to residents of Hadley, it is open to out-of-town seniors if there are available appointments. The fee is \$45. For more information and to make an appointment, call the Hadley Senior Center at 413-586-4023, ext. 6.

Flu Shots

Although we were not able to coordinate a flu clinic this year, the Worthington Health Center has flu vaccinations available to its patients and others. Even if you are not a patient of the health center, you can still get your flu shot there. Contact Nurse Mary Kane at 238-4131 for more information and to make an appointment. Leave a message for her if she does not answer; she will return your call.

Easy Ride Van

The Hilltown Easy Ride van continues to provide trips for shopping to Northampton on Tuesdays and to Pittsfield on Thursdays. Rides to medical appointments are available on Mondays and Wednesdays. Contact Ed Pelletier at 296-4232 for more information and to arrange a ride.

Masks

As you likely know, the state order requiring the wearing of masks has expanded. As of November 6, you are required to wear masks in all public places, even if you can maintain 6 feet of distance from others. The COA has some extra masks, kindly given to us by Highland Valley Elder Services. If you need a mask, please call me at 413-320-0663.

Living Fully, Aging Gracefully

The next Zoom meeting is **Tues. December 8.**

Hilltown Food Pantry

The Goshen Food Pantry is open for curbside pickup on Wednesdays from 1-3 p.m. No reservation is needed. It is located at 40 Main St., in the lower level of Goshen's town offices. Home delivery is possible if you are home bound. You may also designate someone to pick up for you.

Groceries & Prescription pick-up/delivery

Call 634-5452 or email cummingtoncertcvhelp@gmail.com to arrange for prescription pick-up and delivery as needed, as well as grocery deliveries from the Creamery and Sawyer Farm on Tuesdays and Fridays. Orders must be in by Mondays and Thursdays at 2 p.m.

Emergency food

If you find yourself in need of food and cannot wait until your next grocery trip or next pick up from the food pantry, CERT can help you. Please call 634-5452.



Library curbside pickup

The Bryant Free Library is open on Saturday mornings from 8:30-12:30 for curbside pickup of books, magazines, and DVDs. Items can be ordered by calling the library and leaving a message at 634-0109.

Your COA board members are:
Elliot Ring, Chairman (634-5666)
Gail Roberge (512-0660),
Worth Noyes (634-8003)
Kathy Knox (634-8041)
Ann Eisenhour, Foot Care Coordinator (634-2243)
Anne Parsons, Recording Secretary (634-5707)

continues to recommend that people do their socializing outside, where the risk of disease spread is far lower. Virus particles disperse more easily, experts note, and it's easier to maintain social distancing. The CDC this month updated its guidance to warn of airborne virus particles that can be transmitted from more than six feet away — but it notes that such infections usually have happened in enclosed, poorly ventilated spaces...

"We have an old saying in Sweden: "There is no such thing as bad or cold weather, only bad clothing," says Tindre. They use the three-layer rule: a first layer usually of merino wool that's worn close to your body; a second layer of a fleece or a down jacket; and a thin shell protecting against wind and rain."

Excerpt from "How to safely and graciously host friends and family as the weather gets colder," by Emily Heil and Jura Koncius, published in the Washington Post on October 15, 2020.

Happy Birthday in December!

Peter Lang, Lawrence Slezak, David Robb,
Steven Emerson, Michele Marcoux,
Anne Parsons, Martin Dempsey, Nancy Gokey,
Peter Tessier, Bona Kidston, Marc Hoehstetter,
Louise Dynok, Madelaine Zadik, Brenda Arbib,
Mary Perry, JoDee Simard, Daniel Dashnaw,
Holly Anderson, John Goehring,
Loredana Holmes, Theodore Lynds,
Kevin Boissonnault, Ann-Marie Baronas,
Paul Gariepy, Lorin Delisle, Antoni Sakowicz,
Dale Griffith

Important Contacts:

- **Cumington Emergency Response Team**
CumingtonCERTCVHelp@gmail.com or
634-5452.
- **Non-emergency police matters:** 634-0056
- **COA:** 413-320-0663 or
coa@cumington-ma.gov

I recently came across this article in the Washington Post that I found interesting and thought I would share some excerpts from that article here for you to read:

Many of us were just getting the hang of pandemic-era socializing. In backyards and patios, stoops and parks, people have gathered at a distance with small numbers of friends and family for the human connections we so badly need. There was always a risk. But just when standing six feet apart and forgoing hugs (and cheese boards!) had started to feel almost normal, things shifted again.

This time, that darn change of seasons threatens to upend our pandemic routines...

For inspiration, we might look to Nordic countries, where the combination of cold temperatures and shorter days is part of the circle of life. In Stockholm, friends still meet often to take brisk walks in the woods in January, when the sun sets before 3 p.m. "Meeting outdoors, even when it's cold, is something embedded in our culture," says Lars-Erik Tindre, public diplomacy counselor at the Swedish Embassy in Washington. "It comes from a very long tradition." The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

The Cumington Council on Aging counts on YOUR support to continue our important programs for local seniors!

I would like to contribute to the Cumington COA. My contribution of \$_____ is attached.
(Please write your check to the Cumington Council on Aging, and mail to Cumington COA, PO Box 95, Cumington, MA 01026)

Name _____

Address _____

Thank you for helping to Support Your Neighbors!

The Cumington Council on Aging

Seniors Aware of Fire Education



This year's holiday season will be very different for many people because of COVID; one of the things many people will do is decorate their homes with bright lights to shine during this dark time. Here are a few suggestions on how to brighten your corner of the world safely:

- ⇒ Buy lights and electric decorations that are listed by an approved testing agency.
- ⇒ Replace old lighting that has frayed wires, broken plugs, sockets or switches.
- ⇒ Never overload outlets.
- ⇒ Use no more than 3 strands of lights on a single extension cord.
- ⇒ Consider using energy efficient LED lights that stay cool.

For outdoor lights consider:

- ⇒ Using only lights rated for outdoor use.
- ⇒ Plug outdoor decorations into a ground-fault circuit interrupter.
- ⇒ Anchor outdoor lights and decorations with insulated holders or hooks.

Have a SAFE and happy holiday season.

--Worth Noyes, SAFE Educator
Williamsburg & Cumington Fire Departments

The Senior SAFE program is sponsored by many of your fire departments and the Massachusetts Department of Fire Services.



Would you like to receive your newsletter, in color, by email instead of snail mail?

If so, please email Kristen at **regionalcoanews@gmail.com** to be put on the email list. Include your address so I will know which mailing list to take you off of. Thanks!

Charity – where does it begin?

Everyone has a favorite cause to support. This time of year, we are inundated with requests to part with our money for a really good organization! So, how to tell if this is a good idea or not? How to tell how much is enough?

First, can you afford it? Your budgetary "needs" should be considered first, like rent or mortgage, heat, and groceries. After that, we have "wants", savings, and discretionary spending. Charity contributions are considered discretionary – I cannot think of an exception to this.

Second, which cause do you like? As an ecologist and farmer's daughter, I lean toward environmental, conservation, and agricultural / food issues. We may support medical research, literacy, veteran's programs, animal welfare – the list goes on. We may support local fundraisers or children's programs or the library.

Third, is the cause being considered a valid one, a good one? Valid means not a scam! A good one means considerations such as how much money is spent on management, i.e., does a large percentage of income go to the actual cause. I still like Charity Navigator (**www.charitynavigator.org**) for analysis of many causes, though they will not feature our local scene. One benefit of this resource is that they now show Advisories: charities "that raise concerns". A second benefit is that you can donate anonymously to a listed organization! That means fewer mailings coming in the mail! Less inundation!

With charity in my heart,
Jean O'Neil, TRIAD committee member
413-268-2228, jeanoneilmass@gmail.com

Experts say they're usually fine — but here's what to consider when choosing your specs

by Sarah Elizabeth Adler, AARP
September 24, 2020



Who needs reading glasses? All of us do, eventually, thanks to a condition called presbyopia — a gradual loss of the ability to clearly see things up close — that becomes noticeable for most people beginning in their 40s. Because presbyopia is caused by age-related changes to the lens of the eye, it isn't preventable or reversible. But experts say that the right pair of reading glasses, including those readily available at retailers like a dollar store or pharmacy, can help bring small print and other objects, like your smartphone screen, back into focus.

Here's how to find your perfect pair.

Over-the-counter reading glasses

"Reading glasses from a drugstore are, in fact, perfectly safe," says ophthalmologist Michelle Andreoli, M.D., a clinical spokesperson for the American Academy of Ophthalmology, who notes that over-the-counter reading glasses, including low-cost dollar store options, can help you focus up close and will not damage your eyesight. But, she adds, once your up-close vision starts changing, you can expect it to continue to worsen into your mid-60s. That means the reading-glass strength you start out with will need to increase as the years go by. "A good rule of thumb is that any strength of [reading glasses] will last someone between 45 and 65 about two years," Andreoli says.

Experts say the best way to determine what strength you need in the first place is with a yearly eye exam, which can tell you what power (notated with a number like +1.00 or +2.50) you need. The higher the number is, the stronger the glasses are. If you haven't been to the eye doctor or want a way to double-check in the store, Andreoli recommends grabbing a greeting card from the stationery aisle to carry out a DIY test: Hold the card at a comfortable reading distance and try on several pairs until you find the ones that work best.

If you're stuck between two pairs? "In most cases, when two reading-glass powers seem equally suitable, choose the glasses with the lower power," says optometrist William Reynolds, president of

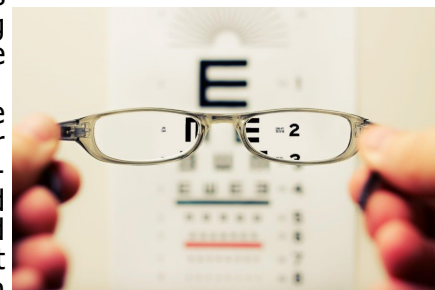
the American Optometric Association. "Picking reading glasses that are too strong typically will cause more discomfort problems than reading glasses that are a little too weak."

Another thing to keep in mind is the activity you'll be using the reading glasses for. Working on the computer, for example, typically takes place at a greater distance than reading a book, and thus requires a lower strength.

Prescription reading glasses

The over-the-counter route isn't right for everyone, Reynolds says, including people who have astigmatism

(meaning the eye's cornea or lens isn't perfectly round) and those who need a different strength for each



eye. In those cases, prescription reading glasses from the eye doctor are a better option. The most popular choice of prescription reading glasses are progressive lenses, Reynolds says. They combine multiple prescriptions in one lens, with a gradual top-to-bottom change, allowing someone to wear just one pair of glasses to correct far-away, middle-distance and up-close vision.

For people who otherwise have no vision problems, Andreoli says that reading-glass lenses that are clear (non-prescription) on top are another popular option available from the eye doctor. They can be worn continuously and eliminate the need to take your reading glasses on and off throughout the day.

Fredric Grethel, a board member of The Vision Council, a nonprofit optical industry trade association, notes that prescription reading glasses might also be a better choice for someone who wants more options, such as blue-light blocking lenses or an antireflective coating — not to mention a greater selection of fashionable frame choices. "The world has really changed from some years ago," Grethel says of the numerous reading-glass options — both over-the-counter and prescription — available today. "Now they're fashionable, they're fun, and they can give you personality."



How to Strengthen Your Lungs to Fight COVID-19

by Michelle Crouch, AARP
July 31, 2020



As you know, COVID-19 is a respiratory disease that can cause serious lung damage and breathing problems — along with a host of other health issues. And as the virus continues to spread, you may be wondering if strengthening your lungs will help you fight it off if you are infected.

"One of the first things that happens with COVID is that you get short of breath and your oxygen saturation begins to fall," says Raymond Casciari, a pulmonologist at St. Joseph Hospital in Orange, California. "The better condition your lungs are in, the better off you will be."

To get your lungs into better shape, the top critical-care pulmonologists we interviewed all agreed that the best option — hands down — is regular old physical activity, the kind that gets your heart rate up. "Anything that makes you breathe faster is basically a breathing exercise," says Joshua Denson, a pulmonary and critical care specialist and assistant professor of medicine at Tulane University School of Medicine. "My first advice would not be, 'Go sit in a chair and breathe deeply.' I'd say, 'Get on a bike and ride 20 minutes a day,' or 'Go for a brisk walk.'" Aim for activity that ramps up your breathing.

Staying active is especially important for older Americans, because lung function decreases as you age. Over time, the muscles that support your breathing become weaker, lung tissue loses elasticity and the air sacs inside your lungs become baggier. Studies show exercise can slow that decline and boost lung function.

Aerobic activity also helps air get into the deepest parts of your lungs that you don't use when you are sedentary, says Bruce Levy, chief of the Division of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston.

"If there are any secretions or pollutants you've breathed in, aerobic activity helps you clear them out of your lung and decreases your risk of infection or pneumonia," he says. "Aerobic fitness also helps your body obtain oxygen from the environment and use it in the most efficient manner," he says. "If you happen to get COVID, if you've been doing cardio, that's going to help you."

What's important for lung health, Levy and others say, is to exercise at an intensity that quickens your breathing rate and leaves you feeling breathless, whether it's swimming, biking or walking briskly.

"Some older adults are deathly afraid of feeling 'short of breath,'" Casciari says. "I have to convince them that it's a good thing."

How breathing exercises can help: Deep breathing exercises are another way to get air deep into your lungs and clear secretions. Although they're not as effective as physical activity, they are better than doing nothing for people who are sedentary, pulmonologists say, and they can be particularly helpful for people who have mobility issues.

"If you're bedridden, or caring for someone who's bedridden, doing some controlled breathing can be very useful because there is no other way to train," Levy says. "If you are not exercising, the base of your lungs can partially collapse, which increases the risk for infection if you breathe in a virus."

Levy notes that if you already exercise regularly (and don't have a chronic lung condition), breathing exercises may not confer any additional respiratory benefit, but they certainly won't cause any harm. Besides, you may reap other benefits: Research shows slow, controlled breathing can help lower your heart rate, stabilize your blood pressure and ease anxiety.

Good News!

By Deborah Hollingworth

Already December! The Good News is that the deep frost arrived late and with the last spurt of warm weather there was still time to plant more tulips. There's hopeful news about a Covid vaccine, and the election is behind us. Perhaps there is reason to believe that the next few months will not be so stressful.

Dealing with Covid may mean not seeing the whole family for holidays, but senior centers are coming up with new ideas to celebrate. Whether it's a drive by and pick up Turkey dinner, or holiday gift cards that may arrive in your mail box, we are inventing new ways to reach out to family and friends. The theme song for the long winter that lies ahead is....don't hibernate....keep in touch.

Zoom meetings for coffee and chat, book clubs, writing groups, puzzle exchanges, cooking classes and/or recipe exchanges and exercise classes are still happening.

Senior centers are also making calls to "phone buddies", so if you'd like a phone call, for no reason other than to chat, let them know. As the days get shorter and colder, it's important to keep in touch.

Times like these, we need to be inventive, thoughtful and on the look out for ways to help.



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This Newsletter is sponsored in part by a grant from The Executive Office of Elder Affairs.

'Mass Appeal': *Special Senior Edition!*

Council On Aging Directors from throughout Western Mass have been working with Mass Appeal co-host Patrick Berry on a special edition of the show that will focus on older adults. What began as a collaboration to highlight area Senior Center holiday performers, morphed into an entire show dedicated to the topic of aging adults in our area.



Tune in to WWLP Channel 22 for Mass Appeal on Tuesday, December 8th at 11am for an hour filled with information and local entertainers performing both original holiday pieces as well as traditional favorites. Topics that co-hosts Alanna Flood and Patrick Berry will delve into the physical, psychological and emotional well-being of older adults, caregiver stress, nutrition, and fitness. When a group of dedicated, compassionate, committed Senior Center Directors teams up with a talented television duo, the results are definitely worth watching!