

Cummington Council on Aging

February 2021 Newsletter



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

Chrisoula Roumeliotis
413-634-2262
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We have been working on developing some activities and programs for you that can be done from the comfort and safety of your home. **This month, Laura Wetzler will perform for us on Friday, February 19 at noon.** The announcement is below. On March 16, Steve Henderson will offer his short play called "Mabel and Jerry." We will continue to offer programs in the following months if there is interest.

Laura Wetzler performs on February 19



Please join us on Friday, February 19 at noon for a performance by singer, songwriter, and guitarist Laura Wetzler, who will be sharing "The American Songbook & Hilltown Originals."

This performance will be via Zoom. If you are interested in joining this event, you will need to provide me your email address so that I can send you the Zoom link and meeting number.

Please contact me via email at croumeliotis@cummington-ma.gov or phone at 413-320-0663, letting me know that you would like the link for this performance. I will then send you an email with that link.

So, prepare your lunch, make yourself comfortable, and enjoy Laura's concert on the 19th. I look forward to seeing you then.

Pedal Exercisers to be Available Shortly

If you are interested in borrowing a pedal exercise machine, leave a message at the COA office at 413-634-2262 with your name and phone number. Thanks to a grant from Highland Valley Elder Services, we have five of these portable exercise bikes that will soon be ready for you to borrow. A pedal exerciser is also called a floor exercise bike or a pedal machine and is essentially a portable exercise bike that is placed on the floor and engages your lower body, while you sit in your own chair.

Medical Equipment for Borrowing

Many pieces of medical equipment are available for your use. There is no charge; we only request that you return the item when you no longer need it.

We have the following available: walkers (with two wheels and with four wheels), wheelchairs, shower seats and tub transfer seats, toilet seat risers (with and without handles), and other items. If you need to borrow an item, please call Chrisoula at 413-320-0663. If you have any equipment of this nature (in good, clean condition) that you would like to donate to our collection, call me as well. We will arrange a meeting outside of the Community House (in the side parking lot) to pick up or drop off equipment.

Living Fully, Aging Gracefully

The next Zoom meeting for this group is **Tuesday, February 9.**

For more information, please contact Wynne or Lucy at 634-5576 or wynlucy@gmail.com or annieb@crocker.com.



Foot Care Clinic

The foot care clinic with Piper Sagan at the Hadley Senior Center remains available to non-Hadley residents if appointments are available. Priority is given to residents of Hadley. The fee is \$45. For more information and to make an appointment, call the Hadley Senior Center at 413-586-4023, ext. 6.

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.

Hilltown 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 homebound. 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.

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)

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.

Important Contacts:

- **Cummington Emergency Response Team**
CummingtonCERTCVHelp@gmail.com or 634-5452.
- **Non-emergency police matters:** 634-0056
- **COA:** 413-320-0663 or croumeliotis@cummington-ma.gov

Happy Birthday in February!



Carol Piacentini, Carolyn Wolf, Bernie Forgea,
Joan Strong, Roger Gunn, Barbara Sprague,
Ernest Strong, Christine Brandon, Bill Adams,
Donn Boulanger, Geraldine Wilcox,
Patricia Corley, Judith Pasko, Beth Eisenberg,
Ken Howes, Annete Rubino-Buckley,
Debra Howes, Ed Konieczny, Richard Frary,
Rox-Anne Kellogg, Michael Kolodny, Christopher
Bagg, Frank Noel, Michael Tattan

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

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

Name _____

Address _____

Thank you for helping to Support Your Neighbors!

The Cummington Council on Aging

Seniors Aware of Fire Education

Senior  SAFE

Here we are, almost 11 months struggling with COVID-19. It has been a long haul, but there is light at the end of this dark tunnel. There are now vaccines that can make us immune to the COVID virus. We will all be informed about when and how we can be vaccinated. This is all very good news. With all the different things being said and posted by people who fear and deride vaccination, here are a few things for everyone to consider:

- ⇒ The vaccine will help our bodies develop immunity to the virus that causes COVID-19 without us getting the illness.
- ⇒ The vaccine does not cause COVID-19; it fights against it.
- ⇒ It takes the body about a week to convince itself that it is immune to the virus; so keep up the good work of social distancing, mask wearing and staying safe.
- ⇒ Sometimes, the process of building immunity can cause symptoms like a fever. These are signs that your body is at work building immunity.
- ⇒ Pay attention to what the real health officials are saying. They are trying to save lives.

Be SAFE and stay strong.

--Worth Noyes, SAFE Educator
Williamsburg & Cummington 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!

Big Five plus Letter of Instruction

Last month I added a Letter of Instruction to the tasks of keeping up with your financial and administrative life. Sorry to do that... Now, I guess I better explain.

Your will is a legally binding document but may be more helpful if accompanied by a Letter of Instruction which is not legally binding. The Letter is a document you prepare to help guide your Executor and others in following your wishes. It is not a substitute for a will nor should it set up any conflict with a will. It can be quite informal, even handwritten, (legibly, please), but needs to be readily available upon your death.

What goes in the Letter? Anything you think would be helpful. Think about a list with your banker, insurance agent, lawyer, and phone and account numbers. Write down where things are like tax files, real estate papers, social security documents, passwords, keys to a safety deposit box.

You might want to account for how pets will be cared for. You could specify how your funeral will go, e.g., musical selections. Sentimental items can be included, for instance I use several kitchen utensils that my Grandmother used and they still have life, so I would like them to go to a family member but am certainly not going to clutter my will with them.

The Letter of Instruction is a way for you to express your preferences and to make things easier on others. Just think about what someone would need to know to be able to easily close out your life. Then keep on living!

Jean O'Neil, TRIAD committee member
413-268-2228, jeanoneilmass@gmail.com

Good News!

By Deborah Hollingworth

"Do you know what that's going to cost?" the pharmacist asks me when I went to pick up a new Rx the month before last. "No", I said, "my doctor just prescribed it for me." "That will be \$600" she said and waited to see if I still wanted the prescription. Nationwide, 50% of older adults do not take their prescribed Rx: 30% never even go to pick up the script. Because they can't afford to.

These statistics have remained consistent, even when we have Medicare D plans, or health insurance through our pension benefits to subsidize the cost of our drugs. Some co-pays are unaffordable.

So what's the Good News? Who can help?

There are programs that help with medication costs. Let's start with the **Manufacturer Patient Assistance Programs** which give you your Rx free or at greatly reduced cost. Pharmaceutical companies are required by Federal regulation to offer patient assistance programs. Many will offer this assistance to those who have a Medicare D plan, but have high co-pays which represent a financial hardship. After you determine who manufactures your Rx, you can go to their website, see what the eligibility requirements are, download an application, have your doctor complete their portion and submit. Eligibility guidelines vary, typically you will qualify if your income is less than 250% of Federal Poverty Level which is \$31,900 for an individual, \$43,100 for a married couple.

Next, **Manufacturer Free Trial offer**. This also requires that you figure out who manufactures your Rx and go to their website to see if they offer free samples. Your doctor may also be able to give you free samples, but this is a short term solution. You shouldn't count on it for months at a time.

Co-payment Foundations are non-profit charitable organizations set up to help patients with specific medical conditions. You must be covered, have health insurance that covers your Rx, but this is to help for exorbitant co-pays for certain medications. To see if you might benefit, you can call the **Pharmacy Outreach Program** that we talked about in the November Good News article. This program is a free service provided by the University of Massachusetts and the Executive Office of Elder Affairs: 866-633-1617. The feedback I've gotten from those of you who have contacted them has been excellent. They are experts in sorting out all these options and determining what might be the best approach to lowering your Rx costs.

Low Cost Generic Medications. While these Rx might not have high co-pays, if you are taking 8-12 different Rx monthly, the cost can add up. Remember that Walmart, Stop & Shop and Price Chopper have their "400 list". This is a listing of over 400 medications you can purchase for \$4 a month, or \$9 for a 90 day supply. Their websites have a listing of medications covered.

Discount Rx cards, like Good Rx. There are many available. Ask your pharmacist for suggestions as to which might be helpful. Usually these cards are for people who do not have any Rx coverage, or...and this is important...if your insurance plan's formulary does not include the Rx you need to take.

Prescription Advantage, which we talked about in the March Good News last year, subsidizes the cost of your Rx when you reach annual out of pocket spending limits which are determined by your income.

And, finally, **Health Safety Net**, which we talked about just last month, covers Rx for those who qualify. Your income needs to be less than \$3,190 for an individual, \$4,320 for a married couple.

NOTE: eligibility for all these resources is *income based*, and does not count assets.

Who can help sort all this out for you?

Needy Meds, a national non-profit resource dedicated to helping people locate assistance programs. Check out their website for more information.

Remember both **The Pharmacy Outreach Program**, and your **SHINE** counselor can also help search for resources.



When can I get the vaccine?

Printing a timely update in a monthly newsletter is a challenge, but especially now in trying to keep up with vaccination updates.

The Baker-Polito Administration and the Department of Public Health developed a vaccine distribution timeline. The timeline reflects several priorities: protecting the commonwealth's most vulnerable including the commonwealth's 1.7 million older adults, maintaining the health care system capacity, and addressing inequities in health care access and COVID-19 burden.

For general overall information on the vaccine program, go to:

www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-vaccination-program#weekly-covid-19-vaccination-report

This report is updated every Thursday by 5pm.

Aging, COVID and Crisis Competence: Another check on Anti-Ageism

I continue to be struck by a paradox in the views people hold about older adults in our country. We're often defined as frail but also resilient, needing caregivers but often the ones providing care to grandchildren, spouses, siblings and friends; sick but living for 90-100 years. Yes, we are vulnerable to the spread of COVID, but the most concentrated risks can be found in long term enclosed settings. No, we do not make up the largest number of victims found on national charts. Let's face it: we are both strong and at risk; reasonably anxious, but usually careful about exposure and have picked up experiences over

the years that have prepared us to be able to cope. Mark Brennan-Ing, PhD., Hunter College Brookdale Center for Healthy Aging calls this crisis competence, "As we get older, we get the sense that we're going to be able to handle it, because we've been able to handle challenges in the past. You know you get past it. These things happen, but there's an end to it, and there's a life after that." The elderly have in many cases defied expectations even as the virus has decimated their ranks. "There are some older adults who are doing quite well during the pandemic and have actually expanded their social networks and activities... but you don't hear about them because the pandemic narrative reinforces stereotypes of older adults as frail, disabled, and dependent." says Brian Car-

penter, PhD, Washington University.

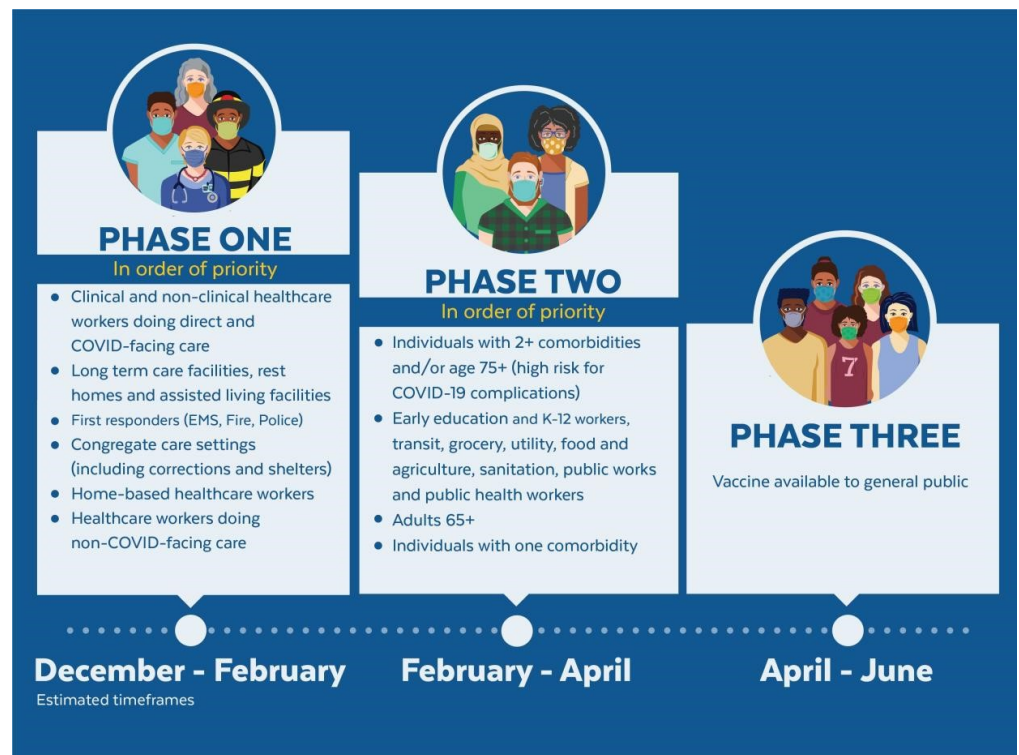
In a publication entitled "Pumping Irony" Craig Cox reports a number of research findings on how older adults have managed to cope as well as it has with the psychological challenges the pandemic presents. Excerpts below:

Older folks take the virus seriously. "The vast majority of respondents changed their behavior in response to public-health warnings, limiting their exposure by declining invitations to family gatherings and public events, reducing their shopping trips, and even canceling doctor appointments".

We've discovered new sources of joy and comfort. A University of Michigan-Dearborn survey conducted with people 60 years and older during the early weeks of the pandemic found that older people were more resourceful than expected when faced with long periods of sequestration. About a third of those polled said they'd enjoyed connecting with friends and family via digital platforms, while about 20 percent reported leaning on hobbies, pets, spouses, and religious faith to ease their anxiety.

The older you are, the less stress you feel. When researchers asked nearly 7,000 people 55 and older how they were coping with the novel coronavirus, they found most (64 percent) were concerned. Almost a third of respondents (31 percent) noted depressive symptoms while 29 percent reported serious anxiety. But those numbers fell by about half among those 75 and older.

It's time to push the anti-ageism envelope and remind people that, as the saying goes, "We don't get to be old by being sissies." Crisis Competence rules. ~ Jan Gibeau



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

COVID Vaccine Scams!

Federal and state organizations are advising everyone to stay vigilant about COVID-19 scams related to vaccines, treatments, test kits and clinical trials.

Here are five key points that state and federal officials want the public to understand.

1. Initially, the vaccine will be available in limited quantities, so people should turn to trusted resources — their doctor or local health department — for guidance.
2. People should not buy any kind of coronavirus vaccine or treatment on the internet or from an online pharmacy.
3. Doses of vaccine that were purchased with U.S. taxpayer dollars will be provided to patients at no cost. Providers, though, may charge an administration fee and have that fee reimbursed by private and public insurance companies. There's also a means of reimbursement for uninsured patients.
4. Consumers should not respond to any solicitations about the vaccine. "Fraudsters are using telemarketing calls, text messages, social media platforms and door-to-door visits to perpetrate COVID-19-related scams," HHS officials said in the Dec. 3 fraud advisory.
5. People should not give cash or any other form of payment to suspicious callers, nor should they divulge personal, medical or financial information, which criminals can use to fraudulently bill federal health care programs and to commit medical identity theft.

There will be strict protocols for the order in which certain groups of people, such as nursing home residents and health care workers, will be inoculated. Watch for announcements from federal and state governments. For more information, consult online resources like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention webpages and the FDA's vaccine webpages.

