

Cummington Council on Aging

October 2021 Newsletter



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

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Weekly Programs And Activities

Healthy Bones and Balance

This exercise class (led by Anne Parsons) is being held on Mondays and Thursdays from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m.

Coffee hour

Join us after exercise or come just for coffee on Mondays from 10:45 to 11:45 a.m.

Needlework group

This is being held on Mondays from 1 to 4 p.m.

Living Fully, Aging Gracefully

The next Zoom meeting for this group is Tuesday, October 12. For more information, please contact Wynne or Lucy at 634-5576 or wynlucy@gmail.com; or Annie at annieb@crocker.com.

Cider and Donuts

Please join us on **Saturday, October 9 from 10-11:30 a.m.** at the pavilion at Pettengill Park for cider and cider donuts. This will likely be the last outdoor social gathering for the year. It will be a lovely opportunity to visit with friends and neighbors, while enjoying a tasty treat. For those of you who have not yet met the COA board or coordinator, this will be a great chance to do so. Bring any questions, information or ideas that you would like to share! It's also our plan to bring the remaining yarn from our spring yarn give-away, for those of you looking for some yarn for winter projects. We look forward to seeing you there!



Art Class with Jeanne Johns

A few of you have already signed up for Jeanne

Johns' art class. There is still room for a few more people! As of now, the plan is to start the class on **October 19**. It will run on Tuesdays from 9:30 to 11:30 at the Community House. It is still our plan to fund the supplies, while you pay for the instruction, which will be about \$10 for each weekly two-hour class. The class will be limited to eight participants. Covid safety precautions will be taken – masks will be required, and participants will be seated six feet from one another. If you are interested, leave a message at the COA office at 634-2262.

Monthly meals prepared by HVES

Starting in November, we will be providing monthly boxed meals, prepared by Highland Valley Elder Services. The meals will be available for pick-up on the third Tuesday of each month. There is no cost, but a donation is suggested. Stay tuned for additional details in the next newsletter.

Listen to John Bye's podcast "In These Hills"

Check out John Bye's podcast "In These Hills" and hear fellow Cummington residents share their thoughts about living in our town. Each episode is an interview with someone who lives here: maybe a friend, a neighbor, or someone you've seen around town but have never met. The aim is to find common ground in our divided time, through this place where we all live. "No soapbox, no speeches, just conversation about living... In These Hills." To listen, go to newruraladvocate.org, click on Podcasts in the menu, then click on "In These Hills". Eight episodes so far - more on the way. If you like what you hear, spread the word.

Medical Equipment – in need of wheelchairs and rollator walkers with seats

We are in need of wheelchairs and rollator walkers with seats. If you have any in good, clean condition and would like to donate to our collection,

call the COA office. Also, if you would like to borrow any of our available medical equipment -- including walkers, crutches, shower seats and tub transfer seats, toilet seat risers, and more -- call the COA office.

2021 Elder Law Education Guide

We have paper copies of the 2021 Elder Law Education Guide, which is the Massachusetts Bar Association's 12th Annual resource guide on a wide range of legal issues affecting the lives of older adults. We also have this guide in pdf form. In addition, the Mass. Bar Association's Elder Law Advisory Committee created three podcasts. The topics are: Reverse Mortgages as a Retirement Tool; Older Adults and Driving; and Medicare Explained. If you would like the guide emailed to you, or would like to receive a paper copy, or you would like the links to the podcasts, please leave a message at 634-2262.

Looking for board members

We are looking for additional board members. Please consider joining us! Our meetings are on the first Thursday of the month and last for about 1 ½ hours. Additional time commitments vary according to our scheduled programs and activities. The only requirements are that you be a resident of Cummington and that you are interested in serving the needs and interests of our town's older residents. If you are interested, leave a message at the COA office at 634-2262.

Hilltown Mobile Market in Cummington

The Hilltown Mobile Market will continue to be at the Kingman Tavern (41 Main Street) on Thursdays from 4:30-6 p.m. until October 7. Many forms of payment are accepted, including cash, credit, debit, SNAP, HIP, WIC and Senior FMNP Coupons.



Vaccine appointments at HCHC

Free Covid-19 vaccinations are being offered to Cummington residents ages 18 and older by the Hilltown Community Health Center at its Huntington vaccination clinic. To schedule an appointment, or for more information, call 413-667-3009 ext. 261.

Chromebooks and Pedal Exercisers

If you are interested in borrowing a Chromebook or a pedal exerciser, leave a message at the COA office at 413-634-2262 with your name and phone number or email: croumeliotis@cummington-ma.gov

Happy Birthday in October!



Mildred Stevens, Wilma Hatch, Ronald Wolf, Walter Korzac, Carolann Skaling, Judith Suriner, Ronald Woodland, Harriette Laurent, Diane Harris, Jeffrey Matuewezski, Audrey Marcoux, David Wilcox, John Earls, Howard Meister, Marguerite Yamilkoski, Stephen Yoshen, Mark Malinak, Patricia Keith, James Messineo, Jerome Dwight, Jane Crosby, Robert Taylor

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

October is "Fire Safety Month." Many fire departments have teams that go onto the schools and present a fire safety program with the students. This year the theme for this program is smoke alarms -- The Sound You Can Live With. Here are a few reminders about the important life saving alarms:



- ⇒ When fire strikes, you may have less than a minute to get out. So working smoke alarms will save your life and the lives of those who live with you.
- ⇒ Check your smoke alarms regularly to make sure they are working.
- ⇒ Smoke alarms wear out over time; most of them are good for about ten years. On the back of the detector is the date it was made. If it is ten years old it needs to be replaced; if there is no date on the back, it is way too old to be working properly. Replace it immediately.
- ⇒ Replace them with new 10-year, sealed batteries, smoke alarms.
- ⇒ When the alarm sounds:
 - + Leave the building immediately.
 - + GET OUT and STAY OUT!
 - + Go to a family meeting place.
 - + Call 911 from outdoors or from a neighbor's phone.

Have a SAFE fall,
 --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!

Spam Texts!

Well, this was not going to be the topic for this month, but I got a spam text on my phone on Sep 5. First one, and I am not happy! So I assume you may have or will get one or more and will also not be happy. Why is this so bad? In addition to interrupting your day, the sender may try to install malware on your phone, will likely try to get personal information to steal your identity, and may sell your number to some other sleaze so you get even more texts!

What to do? I know you guessed the first step – don't let the sender know they reached a valid number, so don't open the message. On my phone, there is a blue dot by a text if it is unread. To keep it that way, click on the right hand menu and find an option for Delete, Mark as Unread, something like that. You may have to do an internet search to learn how to do this on your phone or call your provider.

Next, follow the suggestions from a Norton antivirus page: **us.norton.com/internetsecurity-how-to-deal-with-spam-text-messages.html** Don't click on any links in the text since you really do not know where you are going when you do that. Check your cell phone bill to make sure all charges are valid. Your phone itself may have some settings that will block these texts; check your user manual or an online source for your kind of phone. Your phone carrier may have a blocker service. If anyone is using blocker software they like, please let me know.

PS – I have learned that five others got the same spam text I did. That shows that computers are sending these things, and we are up against a powerful spam opponent!

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

October's Good News

By Deborah Hollingworth



For all of us on Medicare, it's annual Open Enrollment again. October through the first week in December, we get to go shopping for our health care coverage. If you don't want to "shop" for different coverage, you don't have to, but might there be a better deal, that has better coverage for less money? And we all love to bargain hunt. Maybe not so much with health insurance? If I've heard it once, I've heard it dozens of times that folks just wish their coverage was **simple**. And perhaps in my lifetime, it might be. Maybe we will look back on these days of chaos when health insurance companies bombarded us with their advertising as "back in the dark ages".

But in the meantime, our mailbox (and TV) is full of advertisements for health insurance because this is the season to switch if you want to.

What is all the advertising about?

When we turn 65, if we've paid into social security, or our spouse has paid into social security, we get Medicare: original Medicare A & B. Then we can sign up for a Medicare D plan to cover our Rx, or enroll in a Medicare Advantage plan that covers Rx. Each year in the fall, during Open Enrollment, we get to change our mind and select different coverage if we wish. Many Medicare beneficiaries will decide to change their Rx coverage (their Medicare D plans). This happens a lot because the D plans change their prices, change their deductibles...even change their formularies which is the list of Rx they cover. So what was a "good" plan for you last year may not be a good plan for you next year.

An example that kept us SHINE counselors busy last year was a Humana Walmart's switch. Their \$32/month D plan that covered a lot of Rx, changed to a \$62/month plan for the same coverage. If folks read their mail, they were pretty upset. If they knew to call a SHINE counselor, they could "shop" the plans for the upcoming year and discover that Humana had another plan, in the \$30/month range, which covered almost the same Rx. But you had to know this and switch.

How does the switch work?

During Open Enrollment, you get to sign up for a new plan if you want. The new plan takes effect January 1st and cancels out your old plan. To see if you should switch, you might contact your SHINE counselor who can do a Plan search/analysis for you and give you the contact information you need to call and enroll in a new Plan. You can call your senior center to schedule an appointment with a SHINE counselor. 'tis the season to be shoppers, if we want.

Private Questions: Public Answers

By Jan Gibeau

After being part of the professional world of gerontology for 60+ years, I've learned that one question always comes up: Is this normal aging—or is this some kind of dementia, like Alzheimer's? It's a question asked by many older adults, and by their friends

and family members. It's been asked of professionals in PCP offices, in community health clinics, and in outpatient and inpatient hospital settings. It's something we ask each other all the time.

I've had to face this question myself. After I had heart bypass surgery around twenty years ago, I began to notice after a few years that my memory didn't seem to be quite the same. I knew that I shouldn't ignore my concerns; it was time to face my fears and get a comprehensive neurological evaluation. I was lucky—I was already a patient in the NYU healthcare system, and I was covered by a robust health insurance plan that would cover the costs. I knew where to go and how to arrange what was needed. When you open the door to our healthcare system all of these factors make it easier. For many people, depending on what kind of insurance they have and where they live, getting an evaluation can be difficult. In rural areas especially there is a shortage of the medical professionals needed to make such an evaluation: neurologists, geriatricians, geriatric psychiatrists, nurses, social workers.

I also knew that a comprehensive neuropsychiatric evaluation can sometimes conclude there is nothing going on but normal aging. Some evaluations identify the presence of several types of dementia, including Alzheimer's Disease. My results determined that I had mild cognitive impairment (MCI), a condition that is technically on a spectrum that includes many different types and levels of dementia. At the time I was horrified, worried that I was on a path that would lead directly to Alzheimer's. This was not the case. I was assured by my specialists that my level of functioning was still fine, and might very well remain that way. Even so, ever since the diagnosis was made I have been vigilant in looking for any and all changes, worrying that my condition might have progressed. I feared that the MCI would convert to dementia of the Alzheimer's Type which has a course lasting on average about seven years. Thus far that hasn't happened but the cognitive changes have slowly continued. Sometimes, for example, I can't find the right word. I was at a performance not long ago when the speaker stopped in mid sentence - he couldn't find the word he wanted to use. There was a long, heavy pause as the audience waited. Finally, he moved on and everyone breathed a sigh of relief. I thought to myself, I hope that never happens to me. Now every so often, it does.

For me, each year has brought small changes, usually not noticeable to others, but I have been painfully aware of every one of them. And each step of the way I've learned how to adapt—writing things down, saving information on the computer, saving phone messages, making "to do lists" etc. These are ways to cope that are always helpful, but my need for them has grown. Recently the changes have started becoming more noticeable, happening more and more often, but I'm adapting. I dread the progression of deficits that could erode my independence.

Nevertheless, here I am, still enjoying my work, my family and my friends. I'm surrounded by support by many in this wonderful small town. I'm still able to work and do the things I have always loved doing in the field of aging. For me, facing my fears wasn't, in fact, the beginning of the end. (*Cont. on next page*)

On the Road Again..



Here is a brief outline of up-coming bus trips being offered by Chesterfield and Southampton (marked with *) COAs.

If you would like to share your email address with Francine so we can keep in touch, please send a short message to francine.frenier@gmail.com or call **413-296-4291**. Please make your interest known 4-6 weeks prior to the trips so plans can be confirmed. **Vaccinations are strongly recommended on all trips.**

Chesterfield COA is offering a \$20 refund on any non-sponsored Chesterfield trips listed here, marked with an * to Chesterfield folks 60 years of age and older.

- ⇒ **October 6.** Spend a day at **Mystic Seaport**. \$15 for Chesterfield seniors age 60 and older. \$25 for other adults from Chesterfield and any other community. Lunch on your own at onsite cafeteria. Fee for guided tour or boat rides not included. Payment due **now**.
- ⇒ **October 8-18.** 11 day bus trip to **Colorado Springs**. Sit back, relax and enjoy the beautiful scenery. Activities almost every day. Many meals included. \$1,190 due **now**. Only 2 seats left.*
- ⇒ **November 4.** **Plymouth 400th Anniversary** program & Thanksgiving buffet luncheon \$143 due **now**. *Seating is limited.**
- ⇒ **December 7.** **Nashville Christmas Show & luncheon** at the Log Cabin. Country Jamboree performs. **Self-drive**. \$25 for Chesterfield seniors age 60 and older. \$59 for other adults from Chesterfield and any other community. Payment due by November 1st.
- ⇒ **December 9.** Pizza & Salad early dinner prior to tour of **Bright Nights**, Springfield, MA. Cost to be determined.*

(cont. from pg 6) It was the beginning of a long road that many have walked before. I plan to learn as much as I can along the way and throw the door wide open so we can all reduce the stigma of living with neurological impairments. Regardless of how mild the MCI situation was at the beginning of my journey, I know that there is a long road ahead. Many of us may walk in this area--somewhere beyond "normal aging", experiencing some cognitive deficits on the spectrum of dementia-related symptoms. And some of us will progress to dementia.

I share this, feeling a little naked, but I'm opening up about my experiences in hope that it starts a long and public conversation, out in the open so we can all learn from and help each other live as long and independently as possible.

To be Continued...



Laura Wetzler

Hilltown Singer Songwriter Guitarist

"One of the very best" Pete Seeger

Sunday, Oct. 10 at 2pm

Songs for a Sunday afternoon

Featuring Wes Brown on Bass

Outdoors:

Under the Tent

Chesterfield Town Hall Tent

(Behind the PO)

403 Main Rd. Chesterfield 01012

Rain Venue:

Chesterfield Community Center

400 Main Rd. Chesterfield 01012

This is a free COA Event and we'd love to see our neighbors!

Everyone attending should be vaccinated and wearing a mask at all times.

*Sponsored by a grant from
Highland Valley Elder Services.*



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HRMC ANNOUNCES ANNUAL HHW COLLECTION EVENT
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2021

PROTECT YOUR HOME AND THE ENVIRONMENT:
PROPER HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE (HHW) DISPOSAL

The Hilltown Resource Management Cooperative (HRMC) announces their annual Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Collection Event for residents of the ten HRMC member communities of: Ashfield, Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Huntington, Middlefield, Plainfield, Westhampton, Williamsburg, and Worthington.

Saturday, October 23, 2021 from 9 a.m. to Noon at the Westhampton Highway Department
PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED (from October 1 - October 17)

Protect your home and our environment by properly disposing of old or unwanted household chemicals. Products containing lead, petroleum products, pesticides, herbicides, and acids should NOT be poured on the ground, down the drain, or placed in household trash. The HRMC Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) collection program accepts a wide range of unwanted household products with labels that indicate that special handling is required. Examples of common warnings include "caustic, toxic, corrosive, poison, flammable, warning, danger, caution and keep out of reach of children and pets." NO LATEX PAINT will be taken at this event - Latex paint should be solidified and disposed of in your trash.

The program is free to HRMC member-town residents, however, Pre-Registration is required. Please email your name, street and mailing address (including Town and Zip Code), and phone number to hrmc@hrmc-ma.org. Or you may phone HRMC with the above information including an email address at **413-685-5498**. HRMC will confirm your registration and send a confirmation letter to bring with you to the event. Note that Huntington residents are asked to provide their transfer station sticker number at the time of registration.