

Cummington Council on Aging December 2021 Newsletter



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

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Ongoing Programs, Activities & Resources

For more information on any of these programs, activities and resources, contact the COA at croumeliotis@cummington-ma.gov or 634-2262.

Healthy Bones and Balance

This exercise class 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 and Thursdays from 10:45 to 11:45 a.m.



Needlework Group

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

Boxed Lunches

Boxed lunches will be distributed on the third Tuesday of the month. (See details below.)

Living Fully, Aging Gracefully

The next Zoom meeting for this group is **Tuesday, December 14th**. For more information, please contact Wynne or Lucy at 634-5576 or wynlucy@gmail.com; or Annie at annieb@crocker.com.

Medical Equipment

Many types of medical equipment are available for your use, including walkers, crutches, shower seats and tub transfer seats, toilet seat risers, and more. We also accept donations of equipment and are in particular need of wheelchairs and rolator walkers with seats.

Exercise Equipment

We have pedal exercisers available for you to borrow. A pedal exerciser is essentially a portable exercise bike that you place on the floor and pedal with your legs or set on a table and pedal with your arms. We also have hand-weight sets available. Each set includes 1-pound, 3-pound and 5-

pound hand weights that sit in a rack stand when not in use.

Chromebooks

Chromebooks are small computers most commonly used to browse the internet, read/write email, read e-books, watch movies/videos, and use Skype or Zoom to communicate with others. We have a few available for you to borrow.

2021 Elder Law Education Guide

This guide covers a wide range of legal issues affecting the lives of older adults. We have it in pdf format, as well as in paper copy.

Sign up for Monthly meals prepared by HVES

Thank you to all of you who signed up for our first meal from Highland Valley Elder Services. We are happy to receive your feedback! Our second monthly meal is coming up. It will be distributed on **Tuesday, December 21st from Noon to 12:30 at the Community House**. Please note that you must wear a mask when picking up your meal. The menu that is currently planned (there is a small chance that it will change a bit) is: salmon with dill sauce or Salisbury steak, lemon zest broccoli, steamed carrots, and fruit crunch bar. Again, please remember that you will need to take the meal home with you.

If you are interested, call **634-2262**, or email croumeliotis@cummingtonma.gov by **December 14th** with the following information: your name and phone number AND your choice of salmon or steak (the side dishes are the same for both). We will call you back to confirm. There is a suggested donation of \$3 per meal.



Music and Merriment with the Hampshire Regional High School Chorus – Dec. 15th at 12:30

Join the Hampshire Regional High School Chorus and their director Aidan Linden via Zoom for a special live performance ranging from holiday tunes, to pop music, oldies and more. For more information, please see the Regional Section. Contact the Cummington COA at **croumeliotis@cummington-ma.gov** or **634-2262** for the Zoom link.

Art class with Jeanne Johns

The art class has been underway for several weeks at this point and is proceeding very nicely. There is room for one more participant. If you are interested, leave a message at the COA office at **634-2262**. The class runs on **Tuesdays from 9:30 to 11:30** at the Community House. The COA has purchased the supplies. You pay for the instruction, which is \$10 for each weekly two-hour class. If many of you are interested, we will keep a waiting list for future openings.

Foot clinic

We are looking into the possibility of resuming the foot clinic that occurred regularly prior to Covid shutdowns. We would like to know how many of you are interested. It would be every other month at the Community House with Piper Sagan, likely starting in January. The cost is \$50 per session. If you are interested or have any questions, contact the COA at **croumeliotis@cummington-ma.gov** or **634-2262**.

Virtual tours

Perhaps some of you have taken advantage of virtual tours offered through various museums, historical sites, aquariums, etc. I have compiled a

list of a few that look interesting.

New York City’s Metropolitan Museum of Art offers an immersive menu of interactive offerings at **www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions**

The Louvre offers virtual tours at **www.louvre.fr/en/online-tours**

Visit the Great Wall of China from your living room: **www.thechinaguide.com/destination/great-wall-of-china**

Looking for board members

Please consider joining the COA’s board of directors. The meetings are on the first Thursday of the month and last for about 1.5 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.

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 Owens 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

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

The holiday season is almost here and everyone is busy getting ready to celebrate them with family and friends. It is time to get all those outside lights in place. Here are some tips on how to use them safely:

Senior 
SAFE

- Be sure to use only lights rated for outdoor use.
- Consider replacing older lights with new LED lights that are cooler and use less electricity.
- Anchor securely outdoor lights and decorations against storms and wind with insulated hooks or holders.
- Do NOT overload circuits.
 - 15 amp circuits support 1,800 watts.
 - 20 amp circuits support 2,400 watts.
- Do NOT drive nails, staples or tacks through wiring insulation.
- Use electrical connection protectors to keep water out.
- Outdoor electrical decorations should be plugged into a ground-fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) -- either portable or permanently installed by an electrician.
- Store the electric displays inside after the holidays to prevent hazards and to extend their life.

Celebrate the holidays SAFELY!

--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.

Regional News



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!

ROBO CALLS!!! Note 2 and last for now

I really need to find topics that are easier to write about. Frustration – it is not clear that we can do much to stop these dratted calls without making more issues. I contacted the DA's office to see if there is a review of the many listed options, e.g., commercial programs or apps. Their advice, other than not answering the phone, is to contact your phone carrier and see what they might offer. I'm on AT&T, so I started there and looked at the top three in our area, which are AT&T, Verizon, and T-Mobile.

All three have gone to bat to combat text and phone spams. Each has a collection of tools, many free to subscribers but not all, that let you block callers. Reviews of those apps are mixed: mostly positive but the negatives include sometimes blocking calls you want. Some require you to report each individual unwanted call or text.

Commercial programs such as RoboKiller, Nomorobo, and Hiya, are available to anyone though there are often costs. These links are a good resource for comparing programs including those from the carriers: www.pcmag.com/how-to/how-to-block-robocalls-and-spam-calls and www.cnet.com/tech/mobile/how-to-stop-spam-calls/

Actions –

- ⇒ Check your Do Not Call status if you didn't after Note 1, or if you get a new number.
- ⇒ Make sure your password(s) – notice the plural there? – are strong.
- ⇒ Get used to checking for voicemail after you don't answer a call you don't recognize.
- ⇒ Do check out your carrier's offerings – go to their main website and search for "spam blockers" or call your carrier.
- ⇒ Tell me if you find the magic bullet somewhere.

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

December's Good News

By Deborah Hollingworth

A couple decades ago, my parents and I decided to sell our homes and buy a house big enough to live together. Dad had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's several years prior and Mom was having more difficulty taking care of him. Too many weepy long distance phone calls where she was having a bad day. It was an hour and a half drive to get to her and I was working full time. We had to have a better plan. Sometimes miracles happen. We found our new home and, despite a depressed housing market, both their condo in Vermont and my home in Chester sold in a matter of weeks. Mom and Pop moved into our new home while construction was underway, making it into a space that would work for both of us. The Chester house had sold, but I was clearing out 25 years worth of accumulated stuff. Three dumpsters later, I was able to joint them. The contractor was a saint. And with the exception of a wayward electrician who held up the sheet rocking, we kept to schedule on renovations.

For my Dad, moving back to Williamsburg worked like a time machine. This had been his home for 50 years before moving to Vermont. His short term memory was sketchy at best, but his long term memory recognized all the landmarks. It was familiar. He felt at home.

Dad had been taking Aricept which was the only Rx on the market for Alzheimer's back then. It was remarkably effective. His conversation improved, he remembered his grandchildren's names again, and better still, he remembered the punch lines for a number of jokes. But Aricept had side effects which he couldn't tolerate. He had to discontinue it and the result was profound and discouraging. He said he felt his mind slipping away. I found a Rx trial program at Southern Vermont Medical Center in Bennington. He was accepted and once a month for a year and a half we went to Bennington where he got to work with a neurologist, Dr. William Pendlebury (who became Medical Director for the University of Vermont's Memory Center) and he got to take a new Rx, not yet FDA approved, called Galantamine. While the results were not as dramatic as Aricept, it did seem to help. He was not oriented to time, but he still knew where he was (because this was his home for many years) and the greatest gift....he remained oriented to person.

I need to emphasize that every Alzheimer's journey is unique to the individual. While there are common factors, each person's experience can be different.

The Good News this month is that we are plan-

ning a series of articles for upcoming newsletters that will give suggestions, information and resources for families dealing with dementia care issues.

My Dad died of end stage Alzheimer's in 2001. Until almost the end, we were able to keep him home with support services that included a Day Program with Hawthorne Services and some home care help through Highland Valley. We were lucky. My job as a social worker meant I was familiar with a lot of the resources available for Alzheimer's patients and their family caregivers. Still....if I knew then (25 years ago) what I've learned since then....it could have been a great deal less stressful. It's not an easy journey, but it can be made less difficult if you know what help is available. Next month we'll talk about where the journey starts: getting an accurate, thorough diagnosis.

Peg Whalen presents:

Free Android Smartphone Workshop

Mon. December 13th, 2:30-5:00

Want to catch up with your grandchildren who tell you using a smartphone is simple and easy? The fact is, figuring how to use all of the features of an Android smartphone is often not obvious at all. Join us at the workshop, hang out with friends and have fun "learning the ropes".



- Understand some basics of getting your phone to do what you want it to do.
- Do things you have been told it can do but you have not figured out how.
- Understand your phone enough to feel comfortable with using it for new tasks and activities
- Understand what you should be wary of.
- Identify ways to find out more about your phone.

Some of the issues to be covered include how to:

- Get your pictures off your phone and onto your computer
- Find and install apps
- Determine whether you can use it for banking, bill paying, accessing medical records and reaching your doctor's office or pharmacy.

Interested in coming? Please call the workshop facilitator, Peg Whalen, at **413-404-4566** or email **pegwhalenworkshops@gmail.com** to register by December 10, 2021. It would be helpful to know your cell/smartphone number and your email address. You will receive a short set of questions that help the organizer prepare to make the workshop most useful for your skills and interested. * Please note: this workshop will not cover how to troubleshoot an ongoing problem with your phone or how to fix broken parts of your phone.

On the Road Again..



2022 Trip Lineup

These are some of the bus trip destinations in different stages of planning with various travel groups. Most trips are limited to 36 passengers. Contact Francine Frenier if interested or want more information by calling 413-296-4291 or emailing francine.frenier@gmail.com. More information to come in future newsletters.

⇒ *Day Trip Jan/Feb. Ice Castles* is an award-winning frozen attraction in Lincoln, NH. The attractions are built using hundreds of thousands of icicles hand-placed by professional ice artists. The castles include breathtaking LED-lit sculptures, frozen thrones, ice-carved tunnels, fountains and much more. Warm clothing and good footwear recommended. We make a stop for a bite to eat along the way. Date and cost to be determined. Anticipated date is a Thursday in late January/early February when the weather conditions are cold enough. Approx. cost \$110, \$10 discount if paid early. Lunch is on your own. Taking interest list NOW.

⇒ *Multi Day Oct 14-23. Nashville, Memphis & Rock & Roll Hall of Fame—10 days.* \$1,205, \$25 discount if paid early. Flyer available. Taking interest list NOW.

Day Trip Feb/Mar. Everett, MA. Encore Boston Harbor Casino.

Multi Day April 24-30. Myrtle Beach Show Trip.

Day Trip May. Country Shopping in Southern Vermont Trip.

Day Trip May 18: Dancing Dream Abba Tribute Band at Aqua Turf in Plantsville, CT.

Multi Day May 23-27. Lancaster, PA. Sight & Sound Theater presents David.

The Road to Evaluating Dementia: What does having an evaluation involve?

By Jan Gibeau

When I wrote about my journey in living with MCI (mild cognitive impairment) in October, I mentioned that once I was worried about the changes in my memory, I arranged to have a complete evaluation to find out "What's going on". It's the first step to take to avoid living with fear and anxiety about the unknown. I thought it might be helpful to share more information about what a

thorough evaluation entails.

To begin the evaluation, your PCP (primary care provider) will take your complete medical history. It's important to bring someone with you, preferably someone who knows you well, so that all of the information is as detailed as possible and you have someone to take notes for you. It also makes it easier to focus solely on your interactions and asking questions without trying to write things down at the same time. Lastly, having a family member or someone close to you there helps to fill in the gaps and ask questions they may have, especially if they will be the ones helping you as you cope with changes as they come up. This is not the time to "go it alone" or "tough it out". It's been said that accepting help is harder than helping others but it's important to remember that the person(s) helping you needs a lot of information and support.

Tests that follow a physical exam usually include neurological tests that evaluate your balance, sensory responses, reflexes, memory and thinking skills. Based on those findings, the PCP may order brain scans, blood tests, genetic tests, and a mental health evaluation to help determine a diagnosis. There are a number of different types of dementia but it isn't easy to determine which type you have because the symptoms are often similar across the spectrum of cognitive impairments. To learn more, you may be referred to other specialists such as a neurologist, or to someone who can evaluate and treat symptoms of depression, which can also present itself at the same time. The symptoms can be very similar which makes the identification of which type of dementia is present difficult. Depression is not uncommon but often overlooked. It's important that it be considered.



Successful treatment of depression can help a great deal in reducing symptoms and improving daily life. Once treated, there is a clearer picture of who are and what other steps need to be considered. Completing all of the tests can take a few weeks depending on the results that emerge. However, it also gives you time to think about questions you may have during this period. A thorough report should be shared with you and other family or friends you want to include.

Personally, I found that the results of the evaluation answered most of my questions and it was helpful to review the probabilities of what I would face in the future. It's been over 22 years and I'm slower... but still headed in the right direction. Next month we'll provide more information about options in our region for getting an evaluation, the impact of having cognitive deficits, how it progresses and what resources are available for managing the changes that begin to unfold.

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

Music and Merriment

**An Afternoon of Songs and Connection
with the Hampshire Regional
High School Chorus**

Weds. December 15th at 12:30pm



Join the Hampshire Regional High School Chorus and their director Aidan Linden via Zoom for an afternoon performance of songs ranging from holiday songs, to pop music, oldies and more! Solo and small group songs will be mixed with full group chorus songs. There will be an opportunity for Q&A with the students after the performance as well. Participants are encouraged to join the Zoom session early (by 12:25pm). **For the Zoom link, please contact your COA Director or Coordinator.**

The Cummington Fair 150 year History Book
is now for sale!



It can be purchased online
at www.cummingtonfair.com
under online merchandise on the homepage.

The cost is \$20 plus \$5 shipping and handling.

Any questions? Email April Judd at
it.cummingtonfair@gmail.com

Need a haircut? Manicure? Facial?

Smith Voc. Cosmetology Program returns
December 10th Reserve your spot today!

Cosmetology Training Center
80 Locust St. Northampton, MA
01060-2094

Offering facials, lip waxing, make up
applications, and beard trims at this
time. Call (413)-587-1414 ext. 3531.

