

Cummington Council on Aging

March 2022 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

Mondays and Thursdays from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m.

Coffee Hour

Mondays and Thursdays from 10:45 to 11:45 a.m.
(Coffee hour was temporarily suspended in January; please check in to be sure it is happening before you attend.)

Needlework Group

Thursdays from 1 to 4 p.m.

Boxed Lunches

Third Tuesday of each month. (See details below.)

Living Fully, Aging Gracefully

The next Zoom meeting for this group is **Tuesday, March 8th**. For more information, please contact Wynne or Lucy at 634-5576 or wynlucy@gmail.com; or Annie at annieb@crocker.com.

Medical Equipment

Walkers, crutches, shower seats and tub transfer seats, toilet seat risers, and more are available for your use. We also accept donations of equipment.

Exercise Equipment

Pedal exercisers and sets of hand weights (1, 3 and 5 pounds) are available for you to borrow.

Chromebooks

We have a few available for you to borrow.

Puzzles and Games

We are collecting puzzles (preferably 500 pieces or less) and games -- must be in good condition,

all pieces and necessary instructions. If you have any to donate, contact the COA at 634-2262 or croumeliotis@cummington-ma.gov to arrange a drop off.

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.

Easy Ride Van

The Hilltown Easy Ride van provides 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.

Art Show



Since October 2021, a small group of mostly seniors has gathered at the Community House learning how to draw and paint with acrylic paint under the sponsorship of the COA. Jeanne Johns, who has been giving art lessons for more than 55 years, is the teacher. The work has progressed to the point of exhibition level. There is great individuality and creativity.

Everyone is welcome to come to the reception on **March 4th from 5-7 p.m.** at the Cummington Community House. The art will remain on display in the Community House until the end of March.

Foot clinic

The next foot clinic is scheduled for **Tuesday, March 8** with Piper Sagan at the Community House. We have time slots available from 11 a.m.

through the afternoon. 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.

Living Fully, Aging Gracefully, and Befriending Death discussion group

Aging Gracefully in the Hilltowns via ZOOM

A Community discussion group, sponsored by the COA, focusing on Living Fully, Aging Gracefully, and Befriending Death, open to all residents of the Hilltowns and beyond.

We talk about it all here, the good, the bad and the ugly! It's a chance to share challenges and solutions, hopes and fears about aging well and living fully. Practical or philosophical, funny or sad - often both at the same time. Come join us!

The group now meets via zoom at the usual time: the second Tuesday of each month from 1-3. If you would like to join us online, please send an email beforehand to Annie or Lucy. For further information please contact: Wynne or Lucy: 634-5576 wynlucy@gmail.com or Annie: annieb@crocker.com

Testimonials on what this newsletter means to you

We are looking for a few people to write testimonials on the importance of this newsletter to you. Look for more details about this in the regional section. If you would be willing to write a brief testimonial on the newsletter's significance, please contact the COA at 634-2262 or croumeliotis@cummington-ma.gov.

Sign up for Monthly meals prepared by HVES -- always the third Tuesday of the month

The next meal will be distributed on Tuesday, **March 15th** from noon to 12:30 at the Commu-

nity House. You must wear a mask. If you are interested, leave your name and phone number with the COA at 634-2262 or croumeliotis@cummington-ma.gov by **March 7th**. We will be in touch shortly thereafter to confirm and to give you the menu options. You will make your choice at that time. There is a suggested donation of \$3 per meal.

Robo calls

Would you like to receive robo calls with town-related information and news? If so, give your full name, street address and the method you would like to be contacted (land line phone number, cell number and/or email address) to the town clerk at 413-200-5011 or clerk@cummington-ma.gov. She will forward that information to Bernie Forgea, who will use it only to share town-specific news and information.



Happy Birthday in March!



- June Ferrin, Charles Stickney, Bruce Larkin,
- Jim Martin, Jeanne Johns, Judy Bogart,
- Joyce Morin, Eli Schotz, Joyce Wiernasz,
- Alan Weisman, Thomas Dyer, Paul Sonerson,
- Jane Dyer, Cynthia Fournier, Charlene Madison,
- Lawrence Remby, David Owen, Murray Solomon,
- Linda Edwards, David Clark, Scott Keith,
- John Bye, Donna Gibson, Leslie Ferrin,
- Susan Mikula, Christine Knox, Carla Ness,
- Rebecca Kravetz, Jane Harris-Toomey,
- Russell Mader, Valerie Talbot, Peter Feitner,
- Marie Wolf, Lonelle Stevens, Earl Suriner,
- Mark Williams

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



This month's fire safety tips have to do with our state's open burning season, which began January 15 and ends May 1. I am sharing this information here in March, so you might do your outdoor burning this month rather than wait until April. April is usually the worst month for brush fires, because last year's dead grass, leaves and wood are dangerous tinder and the April winds are strong and unpredictable. To burn brush safely.

- Your brush pile must be at least 75 feet from dwellings.
- Burning is permitted between 10am and 4pm.
- Get or call in for a burning permit from your Fire Department or town office.
- Use paper and kindling to start the fire and add larger pieces of wood.
- Do not use gasoline or kerosene to start a fire because of the risk of injury.
- Have fire control tools at hand, shovels, rakes, water supply.
- An adult must attend the fire until it is totally out.
- Watch the wind, if it picks up enough to move a flag, extinguish the fire.
- If the fire gets out of control, immediately call the fire department (911).

Have a SAFE burning season!

--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!

Wills, two questions

QUESTION. Do I really have to do a will?

Answer 1. No, you do not have to do a will if you are okay with the state distributing your assets for you, and if you don't care that you potentially leave a gigantic headache for others.

Answer 2. Yes, if you do care how your assets are divided up, if you want a relative or friend taken care of, if you would like a favorite charity to benefit from your hard work, if you want to be kind to those who must finish up your life's matters.

QUESTION. Won't this cost me an arm and a leg?

Answer 1. If you have a simple estate, you may be fine doing a will using pre-prepared forms. They can be done carefully and correctly (i.e., make sure you follow the directions) and in our state be accepted by the court. "Simple" means few investments or real estate, and uncomplicated family lines. Check out **Nolo.com** (the Quicken WillMaker) and **Legalzoom.com**, two of the longer-standing sources.

Answer 2. There are some sources available to us to get low-cost attorney help. Contact the places below and inquire about income thresholds.

- Community Legal Aid in Hampshire County, **(413) 584-4034**
- Hampshire County Bar Association Lawyer Referral Service, **(413) 586-8729**
- MA Legal Resource Finder, **masslrf.org/en/home**
- National Association of Elder Care Attorneys, **www.naela.org/**

PS Remember we have until April 20 to recheck our credit reports for totally free!

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

March's Good News

By Deb Hollingworth

The Massachusetts Circuit Breaker tax credit has been around for a couple decades now, but I still think it's one of the best kept secrets.

It was designed to give low income homeowners a break on their property taxes.....up to \$1,170 this year. (And you can file for this benefit even if you are renting!)

My frustration is that you have to file a Massachusetts income tax return in order to apply for this benefit. The folks this benefit was meant to help often don't have taxable income, meaning their incomes are too low, so they don't have to file an income tax.

For the first decade or so this benefit was available, very few people applied, even though thousands were eligible! It's because they didn't file an income tax...they didn't need to, so they never applied for the benefit.

Question: Can you file an income tax return if you don't have taxable income? Sure, but why would you?

Here's the reason to file: if your income is less than \$62,000 (single) or less than \$93,000 (married) and your property taxes and half of your water/sewer bill add up to more than 10% of your income, then you are eligible.

At last, some relief from rising property taxes: as long as your home is assessed at less than \$848,000. When you file a Massachusetts income tax return, you include a schedule CB which captures information on your property taxes and water/sewer costs.

You might Google "Mass.gov circuit breaker" for a complete description of the program. They have an excellent video that goes through the process step by step. Imagine getting up to a \$1,071 rebate on your taxes...and if you haven't filed before, but think you might have been eligible in previous years...you can get Massachusetts income tax return forms online for 2020, 2019, 2018 and file for those years too!

If you do this before April 15th this year, you could be eligible for 4 years worth of rebates!



For those who are caregivers and those who care about how we treat each other...

Some very good tips for caregivers can be found in a free booklet by Jennifer Ghent-Fuller called *The Dementia Experience* (www.smashwords.com/books/view/210580) It's worth the read.

As I read it, I began to wonder if some of the tips could just as well apply to how we generally treat each other everyday. Some tips are thoughtful reminders for all of us. Some could be good for avoiding arguments in the home, especially with teenagers, for instance. Certainly these are good tips if you are trying to take care of someone who needs your help. Given limitations on space, I've included only a partial list, but as you look them over why not pick out the ones that you think would make anyone's day easier?

The "Dont's"

- Do not demand that they reason or problem-solve
- Do not demand that they remember
- Do not demand that they get their facts straight
- Do not correct their ideas or scold them
- Do not think that they really do remember, but are pretending not to
- Do not use a "bossy" dictatorial attitude in care

The "Do's"

- Enter into their frame of reality, or their 'world'
- Be aware of their mood or state of mind
- Use few words and simple phrases
- OR use no words, just friendly gestures and simple motions
- Constantly reassure them that everything is 'OK'
- Maximize use of remaining abilities
- Provide a safe physical environment

Language Needs

- Use clear and simple sentences
- Speak slowly and calmly
- Wait patiently for a response
- Speak softly, soothingly and gently
- Reassure with your tone and manner
- Do one thing at a time
- Be aware of your body language and use it to communicate relaxation and reassurance
- Use a soft, soothing touch
- Be aware of the individual's unique triggers
- If they become distressed, stop immediately and allow them time to calm down – don't try to restart the activity right away

Having taught this material for years, I still marvel at how much it hones our abilities to be sensitive human beings. ~Jan Gibeau

On the Road Again...



2022 Trip Lineup

Listed are the bus trip destinations with various travel groups. Most trips are limited to 36 passengers. Chesterfield COA and *Friends of Northampton Senior Center* are helping with the cost of some trips. Contact Francine Frenier if interested or want more information by calling 413-296-4291 or emailing francine.frenier@gmail.com.

Day Trip. Encore Boston Harbor Casino. Postponed till May/June 2022.

Day Trip May 5. Country Shopping in Southern Vermont Trip. Includes visit to Grafton Village Cheese, lunch at The Marina, and stops at the Vermont Country Store & Allen Brother's Farm Market. Cost \$103, \$10 discount if paid by 3/24/22. Vaccination proof requirement by the restaurant. Flyer available.

Taking interest lists on the following:

Day Trip May 18: Dancing Dream Abba Tribute Band at Aqua Turf in Plantsville, CT. Includes chicken & salmon lunch. Cost \$113, \$10 discount if paid by 3/31/22. Flyer available.

Day Trip June 9. Corvettes Doo Wop Revue. Whole New England steamed Lobster and all you can eat chicken & ribs with all the fixings. Self-Drive to the Log Cabin. Cost \$68. Half price for Chesterfield seniors age 60 and over. Due by May 9. Flyer available.

Day Trip Aug 10. The Jersey Tenors, a musical tribute to Frankie Valli & the Four Seasons at Aqua Turf in Plantsville, CT. Includes lunch. Cost \$114, \$10 discount if paid by 6/30/22. Flyer Available.

Multi Day Aug 15-17. Kennebunkport & Portland Maine Coastal Tour. 3 days. Cost \$359, \$25 discount if paid by 5/8/2022. Flyer available.

Multi Day Oct 14-23. Nashville, Memphis & Rock & Roll Hall of Fame—10 days. \$1,205, \$25 discount if paid by 7/2/22. Flyer available.

Day Trip July. Thomaston, Connecticut. Naugy Scenic Train Ride.

Day Trip July/August. Worcester, MA Red Sox Triple A affiliate team, Woo Sox game.

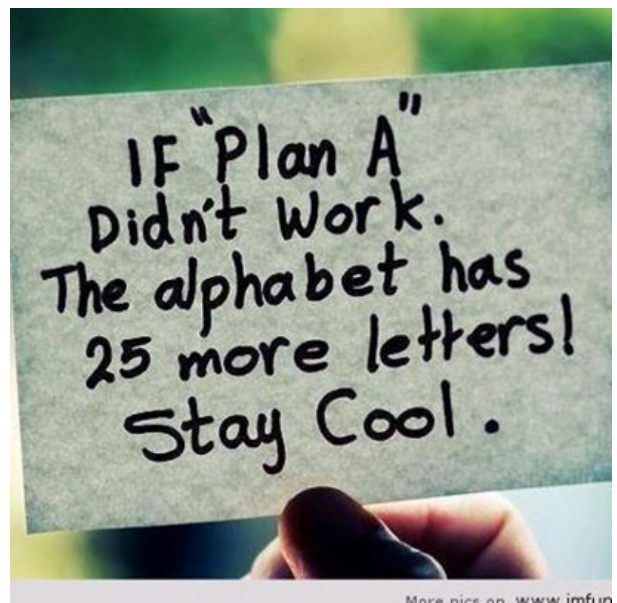
Day Trip Sept. The Big E

Day Trip Late Sept/Early Oct. Wareham, MA. Cranberry Bog Tour.

Is the COA Newsletter Important to You? Let us know!

The newsletter is funded by the Service Incentive Grant (SIG) from Massachusetts and managed by the Northern Hilltowns Consortium of COAs. SIG has funded the newsletter for over six years and the Consortium has managed its logistics for all seven Northern Hilltowns—designing, printing and mailing it to your home complete with a regional section linking each of our towns.

As each fiscal year comes to an end, we need to continue to communicate the value of the newsletter to our funders. And you are the most uniquely positioned to express that. Has the newsletter been important to you over the years -- particularly during the isolation and stress of the pandemic? Would you be willing to write a brief testimonial on its significance? If so, please contact your town's COA Director/Coordinator.



More pics on www.imfun

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

**Haircuts are being offered at
Smith Vocational School
Cosmetology Department!**

Cuts starting at \$6.00

To make an appointment
call (413) 587-1414 ext. 3531

Dates are Fridays:
March 18th, April 15th and
May 20th.



Community Action is pleased to announce our **Older Adult Home Modification Program (OAHMP)**, a new initiative designed for eligible lower-income homeowners, age 62 and older, living in Franklin and Hampshire Counties and looking to maintain independence and lead safe and productive lives in their homes.

Through this program, lower-income older adults can improve general home safety through no-cost modifications that reduce the risk of falling, increase accessibility, and improve the home's functional abilities.

If you currently receive Fuel Assistance and could benefit from the installation of grab bars, railings, temporary ramps, tub/shower transfer benches, raised toilet seats with hand rails, and stair steps, please contact us!

For income eligibility and more info visit: www.communityaction.us/homerepair
Contact Community Action: 413-774-2310 option 4, homerepairs@communityaction.us



**COMMUNITY ACTION
PIONEER VALLEY**
Access • Opportunity • Community