

Cummington Council on Aging

April 2022 Newsletter



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

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Newsletters: some housekeeping is needed

As you will read in the regional section on page 5, we are facing a funding absence or shortage for the continued publication of this newsletter. We are working – both with the other COAs in our consortium and as an individual COA – to secure funding to ensure that this newsletter continues without disruption. We recognize that the newsletter is a vital resource to our community and are committed to its continuation.

We would like to ensure that the newsletter is being distributed as efficiently as possible. There are two things that you can do to help. As you may know, our monthly newsletter is offered in two formats– a paper copy and pdf sent via email. If you receive a paper copy and would instead prefer to receive it in pdf form, please contact our newsletter designer, Kristen Estelle, at regionalcoanews@gmail.com with your name and email address.

Also, we realize that some of you may receive more than one paper copy at your address. While we try to make sure that does not happen, sometimes it still does! If your address receives more than one copy and you only need one copy of the newsletter, please contact Kristen so we can remedy that duplication:
regionalcoanews@gmail.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. 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

Brown bag: Food for Elders program

We are considering starting this program and are trying to gauge your interest. Some of you have

already expressed interest and we thank you for your patience as we continue to work on the details of this program. If you are interested (and meet the qualifications described below), please contact the COA at 634-2262 or croumeliotis@cummington-ma.gov. Distribution of the groceries would be on the second Thursday of the month at the Community House and at Hillside Terrace (for the residents of Hillside).

The Brown Bag: Food for Elders program is offered by the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts. According to the Food Bank, this program "provides a free bag of healthy groceries to eligible seniors once a month. The food items are specifically selected to meet seniors' special dietary requirements to help them stay healthy and active."

To be eligible, you must be at least 55 years old or have a documented disability for which you receive SSDI. The income qualification for a household of 1 is \$23,828/year and for a household of 2 is \$32,227/year. Households that participate in the following means tested programs also meet the income requirement for the Brown Bag: SNAP, AFDC, WIC, Medicaid (MassHealth), SSI, Fuel Assistance or Veteran's Aid.

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

The next meal will be distributed on **Tuesday, April 19th** from noon to 12:30 at the Community House. If you are interested, leave your name and phone number with the COA at 634-2262 or croumeliotis@cummington-ma.gov by April 12th. 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.

Foot clinic

The next foot clinic is scheduled for May (exact date to be determined) with Piper Sagan at the Community House. The cost is \$50 per session. If you are interested or have any questions, contact croumeliotis@cummington-ma.gov or 634-2262.

Masks

We have KN95 masks available. Please contact the COA if you would like one or two.

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.

Needlework Group

Thursdays from 1 to 4 p.m.

Boxed Lunches

Third Tuesday of each month.

Living Fully, Aging Gracefully

The next Zoom meeting for this group is **Tuesday, April 12th**. 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- take one, leave one

Next to the COA office door at the Community House, there is a box of puzzles available for you

to take, use and return when done. You are welcome to pick one up whenever the Community House is open. We are also still collecting puzzles (preferably 500 pieces or less) and games -- must be in good condition, all pieces and necessary instructions. You can drop a donation off in that same box.

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.



Happy Birthday in April!



- Pearl Lynds, William Carver, Kenneth Price,
- Michael Falcone, Dorset Anderson, Susan Riley,
- Nancy Noyes, Karen Westergaard,
- Hilarione Sydney O'Leary, Randall Fisher,
- Robert Quigley, Jeanne Mangan, Jay Brumberg,
- Richard LaFrancis, Joyce Dempsey,
- Karen Barker, Judith Slezak, Margaret Parker,
- Luahn Page, Betty Tessier, Peggy Thorn,
- Diane Bevan, Greta Redzko, Matthew Gallert,
- David Bowman

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

Senior SAFE

There is a common misconception that falling is an expected part of the experience of getting older. This is not true. Falls are preventable. Here are some things you can do or be mindful of that reduce the risk of falling:

- ⇒ Stay active. Regular exercise improves leg muscle and balance. Ask your health care provider which type of exercise is the best for you. Check in with your local COA to find what programs are available.
- ⇒ Make your home safer. Get rid of clutter on the floor. Improve lighting in places like stairs and hallways. Get rid of scatter rugs or secure them with double sided-tape. Have handrails on all staircases. Install grab irons in the bathroom and use non-slip mats in your tub and shower.
- ⇒ Have your vision, hearing and feet checked yearly and be aware of what medications make you feel sleepy or dizzy. Wear shoes with non-skid soles and don't shuffle but pick up your feet when walking.

Have a fall free spring!

--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.



So I lay them and you get all the credit?

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!

It shouldn't be so hard...

I got a note the other day about a reader's experience in dealing with Medicaid as her mother was ill and, as it turns out, dying. It was a mess! So I don't know the solutions but decided to pass on the cautions she sent me. We will call her Sal and give an abbreviated version of what happened.

Sal's mother was in rehab and Sal was trying to get her into a long-term care bed and approved for Medicaid. Her mother was finally approved but died the next day. No Medicaid card or number ever arrived. The program has a burial fund, see: **www.mass.gov/service-details/who-can-apply-for-funeral-and-burial-payment-assistance** for information. In Sal's case, the fund was set up at a bank with only the mother's name and no beneficiary. There was a paperwork issue that took coordination between the state and the bank. The bank did not share with Sal some of the requirements for using the account. Between these matters and all the other items you can imagine (the rest home, medical bills, insurance, never mind her mother's well-being), things were very hard.

Lessons learned:

- do everything you can ahead of time (my favorite Big Five and related documents),
- check that real estate and bank accounts are in the ownership that you want,
- remember that even people in official positions can make mistakes,
- make written notes after a conversation with the bank, insurance, funeral home, attorney, Medicare/Medicaid, including the date and person talked to,
- think about what you heard and if there is an inconsistency or something just feels "off", follow up on it,
- AND at the end of each conversation, ask "What else should I know or ask you?"

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

April's Good News

By Deb Hollingworth

Maybe you remember years past when we were encouraged to collect our "emergency information" and fill out a "File of Life" card which came with a magnetized pocket so it could be hung on your refrigerator?

You might ask at your Senior Center to see if they have any of these File of Life pockets available, but even if they don't, you can make your own.

Here's why it's important: when we are in a stressful situation, like a health emergency, some of us get that shot of adrenalin and become amazing at getting 911 resources in place, and dealing with ER admissions information, but most of us are not amazing.... we get a "stress dementia" where we can't recall our health insurance numbers, sometimes our phone information, or list of Rx or medical conditions.

You don't have to worry about remembering important information like Rx allergies, or various doctor's names and phone contact information if you write it all down on an Emergency Information Sheet.

It should list: your name, date of birth, your health insurance numbers, your primary doctor's name and address. Then a list of your medical conditions and Rx that you take (which would include any allergies). Your emergency sheet should also include your Health Care Proxy, and family member's contact information.

Several years ago, I was the chauffeur for my sister who had a detached retina and needed several appointments in Burlington, MA for surgery. Each time we went to check in, the receptionist asked her the same questions: name, address, phone and health insurance information. As my sister became more distressed about her loss of vision, she had more difficulty answering what appeared to be simple questions. So we wrote down all the answers to questions ahead of time, and just gave the card to the receptionist. Whew....sigh of relief. Another time my Mom fell and set off her Lifeline. I got the call at work from the Lifeline folks, met the ambulance at the ER, and there was my Mom, on the stretcher with her File of Life information clutched in her hands. I just handed it off to the admission folks and was able to stay with her as she got processed in the ER for admission. She didn't have to wait alone, waiting for me to get admission because all the necessary information was on the File of Life card.

You can make your own Emergency Sheet of In-

formation. And you can carry it in your wallet. Might save you considerable stress when you need it?



POLKA PALOOZA

IN HONOR OF

**RUSS
RICHARDSON**



FEATURING

THE EDDIE FORMAN BAND

SATURDAY APRIL 2, 2022
4:00 PM- 7:00 PM

POLKA DANCING, FOOD & FUN

CASH BAR, DONATIONS AT THE DOOR WELCOME

American Legion Post 236
5 Bridge Street
Haydenville, MA 01039

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.



Updates on the following:

Multi Day May 2-5 Lancaster, PA Sight & Sound Theater presents David. 4 days. \$485, due by **April 4, 2022.** Flyer available. Dates and price change.

Taking interest lists on the following:

Day Trip May 18: Dancing Dream Abba Tribute Band at AquaTurf in Plantsville, CT. Includes chicken & salmon lunch. Cost \$113, **due by 4/18/22.** Flyer available.

Day Trip. Encore Boston Harbor Casino. Postponed until June 2022.

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. A few seats remain.

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

Day Trip September 9. Thomaston, Connecticut. Naugy Scenic Train Ride.

Day Trip Sept. The Big E

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

Day Trip Oct 4. Octoberfest! The Schnitnel Brothers perform. Self Drive to the Log Cabin. Meal choice and Cost to be determined.

What's in a word?

Every month over 2000 COA newsletters go out to the households of older adults in the seven northern hilltowns. Each town receives both local and regional sections that include news, trips, events, health information, access to benefits, tips from Jean O'Neil on how to protect yourself from scams and other risky shenanigans, fire safety facts from Worth Noyes, Good News from Deb Hollingworth about how to get what you want when you need it and a host of other important topics that help people stay in their own homes and live as independently as possible.



A grant from the Executive Office of Elder Affairs has made all of this possible. It's been a vital and concrete way to help those living in small, rural towns. It's helped us join the national AARP Age Friendly Communities.

This grant has enabled us to keep the written word alive and provide the kind of critical communication that is of such high priority to everyone; and, it actually comes to your doorstep or post office. **This grant is set to end on June 30th. At that time the written word in the newsletter will stop coming.**

It seems ironic to be talking about loss of the written word as everything shifts toward living in the digital age. I can see why some of our local and national newspapers are struggling. Oddly, they are struggling because people have moved to the virtual world; we're struggling because so many people in our rural communities have limited access to the virtual world. Many don't have broadband, some can't afford the costs of having broadband connections and many simply cannot afford to buy a computer.

To make the severity of the problem even worse, our newsletter has provided the major tool we have had to reduce isolation, connect people to the information they want and need and build regional networks that allow us to stretch and share our resources.

We are working hard to develop options that will support the survival of this service. **If you would miss this newsletter, please help by telling us how the newsletter fits into your life and why you would hate to lose it. We're planning to prevent this, down to the last word.**

Please contact your COA NOW!

Cummington Council on Aging
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US POSTAGE
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Greenfield MA

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CHARITY SCAM

You get a call from a charity looking for donations. Scammers try to fool you into giving money using these tactics:

- They rush you into making a donation;
- They use names that sound like a real charity;
- They change the caller ID to make you think it's a local caller.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO MAKE SURE THE MONEY IS GOING TO A GOOD CAUSE?

- Research the charity before donating;
- Verify that the organization is registered with the MA Attorney General's Office;
- Look up the charity online & read what others are saying about it.



If you have a consumer problem or question, contact the Northwestern District Attorney's Consumer Protection Unit:

Greenfield (413) 774-3186
Northampton (413) 586-9225



Working in cooperation with the Office of the MA Attorney General