

Cummington Council on Aging

July 2023 Newsletter



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

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Funding for this Newsletter

The current funding for this newsletter (a Service Incentive Grant through the state's Executive Office of Elder Affairs) ends on June 30, 2023. As a result, the continuation of this newsletter is in jeopardy. As you know, we have been working for some time to secure future funding, including through the state legislature and a new SIG grant. At this point, it is unknown if these efforts will be successful.

This newsletter is our primary means of outreach and communication. It brings us together, helps us feel less isolated and gives us information about important developments that may impact us.

We should know more about possible funding at some point in July. We will let you know where things stand in the next issue. As always, please reach out if you have any questions.



Farmers' Market Coupons

Farmers' Market Coupons are available. Each booklet contains \$50 worth of coupons that can be used at various local farmers' markets, including the Hilltown Mobile Market, for fresh locally grown produce and honey.

The eligibility criteria:

- at least 60 years old
- household income at or below 185% of the federal poverty level (see below)
- disabled, under the age of 60, living in elder housing

To be eligible, your gross household income must be no more than \$26,973 for a household of one, and \$36,482 for a household of two. If you are

interested, please call the COA office by **July 15th** at 634-2262 with your name and phone number.

Technology support

Need help using your smartphone, mobile phone, iPad, tablet, ePhoto frame, smart TV, laptop? Or, do you need help using the internet, an app, other software or even with printing?

In-person technology support at the Community House is **on hold for July and August**; it will resume in September. If you have a technical question, you can still email or call / text Peg Whalen (email is preferred) at 413-404-4566 or pegwhalenworkshops@gmail.com

Save the Dates!

On Friday, August 11th from 5:30 to 8:30, we will be hosting a **dance** at the pavilion at Pettingill Park with DJ Bobby C. All ages are invited!

On Saturday, September 9th at 3 p.m., **Roger Tincknell** will be joining us for a fun interactive musical performance at the Community House. Open to all ages.

Community Notices

Open House Birthday Gathering for Jeanette Horton

Jeanette's family invites you to an open house to celebrate her 80th birthday on **August 5th** from Noon to 6pm at the Deer Hill Rod & Gun Club on Porter Hill Road. Rain or shine. If you plan to stay to eat, please bring a small dish to contribute to the potluck. The cake will be cut at 3 pm.

Celebration of Life of Mary Esther Streeter

Saturday, August 19th at 11am
Village Church on Main Street

It Takes a Village Home Visit Volunteer Program

ITAV provides home visit volunteers to any family in the Hilltowns with a child under the age of one year, regardless of income. A volunteer will assist the family for 2 hours per week, for up to 12 weeks. Services may include light cleaning, companionship, holding a baby, grocery shopping, meal preparation, etc. If you are interested in volunteering or know someone who can use this service, please call **413-650-3640** or visit **www.hilltownvillage.org/homevisit** for more information and to sign up.



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.

Weekly Grab and Go Hot Meal– Every Tuesday

The next meals will be distributed on July 11, 18 and 25 (there is no meal on July 4th) between noon and 12:30 at the Community House. Leave your name and phone number with the COA by July 3rd to reserve your meal. Suggested donation of \$3 per meal goes to HVES.

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– Wednesdays, 1-4pm.

Foot Clinic

The next foot clinic will be on **Tuesday, July 11th** with Piper Sagan at the Community House. The

cost is \$40 for Cummington residents and \$50 for non-residents. Contact the COA to make an appointment.

Living Fully, Aging Gracefully

The next Zoom meeting for this group is **Tuesday, July 11th**. For more information on this program, contact directly Wynne or Lucy at **634-5576** or **wynlucy@gmail.com**; or Annie at **annieb@crocker.com**.

Resource Cart

Located across from the Community House kitchen and to the left of the COA office. Currently, it is stocked with Covid test kits, hand sanitizer, personal health care journals, file of life forms, walking maps, games & puzzles, greeting cards for various occasions, the current Elder Law education guide, and more. Anytime the building is open, you can come by to take what you need from this cart.

Happy Birthday in July!

Arnold Simmel, Patricia Lorda, Ruth Dexheimer, Allan Douglas, Richard Wolf, Worth Noyes, Russell Clark, Richard Gooding, Jean Schreier, Thomas Jay, Janice Loux, Sandra Shapiro, Gerald Howes, Joseph Pagano, Richard Fournier, Kristin Jay, Delia Nash, William Hoehne, William Dynok, Heather Allan, Edward Stempniewicz, Michael Holden, Peter Sloan, James Wettereau, Dennis Carr, Althea Frary, Laura Wetzler, Christopher Mesmer, Steven Schiff, Shaun Hebert, Mark Yamilkoski, Roger Huebner, Bryna Greenspan, Laurel Greenberg, Delbert Robbins, Pamela McLean, Wayne Higgins, James Toomey, Martin Pixley, Deborah Jordan, John Taylor, John Burns, Hannah Abdelhalim, Marilyn Ridel



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

LIES MY MOTHER TOLD ME

By I Might Be Funny

1. "It's illegal to drive with the overhead light on."
2. "If you swallow your gum, it will stay in your stomach for 7 years."
3. "Keep making that face & it'll freeze like that."
4. "I have eyes in the back of my head."
5. "You can't swim for 30 minutes after eating."
6. "Don't sit so close to the TV, you'll go blind."
7. "The dog went to live on a big farm."
8. "I'm just running into the store for *one* thing."
9. "A watermelon will grow in your stomach if you swallow the seeds." © I Might Be Funny
10. "Maybe...I'll think about it."

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!

Your State Representatives

State Senator Paul Mark

Email: paul.mark@masenate.gov

Phone: 413-464-5635

Mail: 773 Tyler Street
Pittsfield, MA 01201

Nearby local office hours:

Williamsburg Town Hall
2nd and 4th Tuesdays from 1-3pm

State Representative Lindsay Sabadosa

Email: Lindsay.Sabadosa@mahouse.gov

Phone: 413-270-1166.

Mail: 76 Gothic Street
Northampton, MA 01060

Scams and Our Brains

We read a lot about the different scams and the scammers that are out to get us (no, it is not paranoia if they really are, goes the old joke), but what about our role in scams? I got to thinking about the "How" part of our avoiding scams. Perhaps it comes down to how we think about them. Our mental state may direct how we respond to a potential threat.

So, we get an offer, a message, some communication, and wonder if it could be a scam. Are there hard and fast rules to help you to decide? Not always but there are three that should tickle your brain.

- ⇒ If the person asks you for something related to crypto currency, It Is A Scam.
- ⇒ If the person says they are calling from Medicare, Social Security, the IRS, or the FBI, It Is A Scam.
- ⇒ If they are calling from your bank and asking for personal information like your account number, debit card number or pin, account log-in credentials, Social Security Number, or account balance, It Is A Scam.

Other rules are fuzzier, but consider:

- ⇒ Was it an unsolicited phone call?
- ⇒ Was it an unsolicited and maybe poorly worded email?
- ⇒ Was it an unsolicited door visitor?
- ⇒ Does it sound too good to be true?
- ⇒ Do they say there is great benefit but no risk?
- ⇒ Is the speaker or writer pressuring me to hurry, act fast, keep this secret?
- ⇒ Have any friends or family warned me about responding to calls and emails?
- ⇒ Do I think I'm too smart or well-informed to fall for a scam?
- ⇒ What does my instinct say? Or if you prefer, what is my gut reaction?

Probably our best defense against the scams is our brain!

Thoughtfully,

Jean O'Neil
TRIAD Committee member
jeanoneilmass@gmail.com; 413-268-2228

July's Good News

By Deb Hollingworth

There are 2.4 million Massachusetts residents who are enrolled in MassHealth's programs. Usually we have to re-certify every year, that is, fill out what looks like an application every year to let MassHealth know about any changes in our circumstances. Did we get married, did our spouse die, did our financial situation change? Is our address the same? In March 2020, when Covid put us in a "public health emergency", re-certification stopped because our MassHealth coverage was frozen in place.

Now that the Covid public health emergency has ended, MassHealth has to start the re-certification process again. For all 2.4 million of us. The good news is that more folks have been hired to help us do this. Highland Valley and LifePath (in Greenfield) have received money to hire a Benefits counselor to help with the re-certification application. So here are some numbers to call if you have questions about the Big Blue envelope.

You can call MassHealth's customer service line at **800-841-2900** or Highland Valley at **413-586-2000** and ask for their Benefits counselor, or LifePath at **413-773-5555** to ask for their Resource Consultant. Closer to home you can contact your Senior Center to speak with your SHINE counselor.

Saving the Written Word: Councils on Aging Newsletters at Risk

Funding from the Executive Office of Elder Affairs for the monthly newsletter ended on June 30th. The Northern Hilltowns Consortium of Councils on Aging has been working diligently to find a way to save it. It's the major way we reach out to 2,326 households with people 60 years or older. It's important. Better communication was one of the priorities people cited in our Age Friendly survey as a priority in making our towns more livable.

What does the newsletter do to make communication stronger? We've focused more and more on getting the word out about:

- Town and regional events that help people feel less isolated and more connected to their communities and each other.
- Access to food, exercise classes, health insurance plans and benefits
- Use of broadband and internet resources, learning how to use iPhones, computers and other equipment needed to enter the digital world

- Learning about scams and how to reduce vulnerability.
- Groups in each town that meet regularly meet to work on arts and craft projects, puzzles, playing cards, etc.
- Educational programs about major issues affecting us as we age, such as memory problems, loneliness, financial problems, access to medical services, long term care and end of life issues.

Losing the newsletter puts all of this in limbo. The Consortium has applied for a number of grants but the process itself is very competitive. We will not know the results until after the final state budget is signed by Governor Healy. Representative Lindsay Sabadosa and Senator Paul Mark have been working hard to support our efforts by filing bills in both the House and Senate. At the time of this writing the request did not make it out of the House budget committee, but the Senate voted to fund \$25,000. We appreciate their work on our behalf. Unfortunately, we need close to \$42,000 each year to keep the newsletter alive.

We have applied for a major grant from EOEA to increase digital equity in rural communities. The hope is to expand electronic access for people who want to switch over to digital copies but also make it available on the Consortium website: **northernhilltownscoas.org**, the town websites, Facebook, and a range of related internet access points. We recently learned that applications that have been submitted resulted in a total of \$3 million dollars, twice the \$1.5 million of the funds available.

The Consortium is still committed to keeping the newsletter going as long as we can. In our June monthly meeting the group voted to use funds from our membership dues to cover the August edition.

Let's hope that we are fortunate enough to get the help we need, but June and possibly July are cliffhangers for now.

Respectfully,
Jan Gibeau
Chair, Northern Hilltown Consortium of
Councils on Aging



On the Road Again... 2023 Trips



Contact Francine Frenier to reserve your seat **before** mailing any payments to determine availability: 413-296-4291, francine.frenier@gmail.com. Mailing address: 11 Stage Rd., Williamsburg, MA 01096.

Day Trip August 10. Garden in the Woods- This trip includes a walking guided tour of the Garden in the Woods in Framingham followed by a luncheon at the Longfellow's Wayside Inn. Entrée choices are Breast of chicken, Baked Salmon, or Yankee Pot Roast. Two floors of historical exhibits to explore at the inn. A stop at Hebert Candy Mansion. Make payment to Landmark Tours for \$122 due **NOW**. Mail to the address above. **WAIT LIST ONLY.**

Day Trip August 24. Saratoga Racetrack, Saratoga Springs, NY. This trip includes lunch at the Inn at Saratoga. Entrée choices are Chicken Normandy or Pasta a la Saratoga. After lunch, spend time at the racetrack in our reserved grandstand seats. Over 60 concession stands on the grounds. Make payment to Landmark Tours for \$130 due **NOW**. Mail to the address above. **NOTE DATE CORRECTION.**

Multi Day Trip September 10-12. Nantucket Island. Three days to two nights. Includes ferry to and from the island, guided tour of the island and all access pass to historical sites. Make payment to First Choice for \$748 p/p double occupancy due **NOW**. Mail to the address above. Limited seats.

Day Trip September 14. Lake Sunapee Luncheon Cruise- Vermont Country Store. A two hour luncheon cruise on Lake Sunapee in New Hampshire. This trip includes Luncheon buffet and a stop at the Vermont Country Store. Make payment to Landmark Tours for \$111 due **NOW**. Mail to the address above. **WAIT LIST ONLY.**

Multi Day Trip September 29-October 9, 2023. Mt. Rushmore, Crazy Horse - S. Dakota & Devils Tower - Wyoming. 11 days. Stops at Corn Palace, Wall Drug, National Museum of Great Lakes, Iowa Museum of Natural History, Des Moines Art Center, and Eck Visitors Center at Univ. of Notre Dame. Cost \$1,178. Due **NOW**. Contact Francine to reserve your seat.

Day Trip November 4. Elvis- A Musical Revolution- North Shore Theater. An exciting musical in Beverly, MA where you will hear 40 of Elvis' hits. Lunch at Danversport Yacht Club included. Make \$259 payment to First Choice **NOW**. Mail to the address above. A few seats remain.

Multi Day Trip May 2024. Nova Scotia, Prince

Edward Island & New Brunswick. Passport required. Cost TBD per person dbl. occupancy. This 9 day trip includes 8 nights lodging including 5 nights in Canada, one night stay in Maine coming and going. 14 meals including: 8 breakfasts and 6 dinners. Guided Tour of Acadia National Park, Guided Tour of Halifax, Peggy's Cove & Lunenburg.

Aging and Technology Survey Results

We are grateful to everyone who contributed their experiences with technology by participating in the Aging and Technology survey and offer thanks to even more people expressing interest in the results. We mailed over 3,516 questionnaires to everyone 60 and older in Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Plainfield, Westhampton, Williamsburg, Haydenville, and Worthington. The response was overwhelming, with over 1,225 returns, a response of 35%.

Here's what we learned:

Our results show 85% of older adults in the Hilltowns use technology daily, 10% use it never, rarely or once in a while, and 5% use it monthly or weekly. The top three reasons for none or infrequent technology use are knowing little to nothing (44%); having no interest (35%); and over one-quarter have concerns about stolen identity, theft, or home break-ins. Of the small number of people never or infrequently using technology, 15% said they cannot afford internet service and computers.

Of those responding to the survey 91% said that they have a computer, laptop, or tablet and are able to access the internet. Almost one in ten (8%) have no technology of any type. About 3/4 report having printers. The types of phones people use varied; 59% still have a landline, 90% have cellular phones, and 90% of these are smartphones. Three quarters have Broadband internet service from either Comcast, Dish, Direct TV, Satellite or Whip City fiber network.

People said that they make use of technology in a variety of ways. Most people use email (93%). Other ways include: searches on the internet, order prescriptions online, make telehealth appointments, use medical/health care portals. Over half of people (52%) use social media of some type to access retirement accounts or online Social Security accounts. Slightly over a third have an online Medicare account.

Who helps with technology?

The major source of help comes from adults: adult or child/teen family members (74.2%) or friends (24.2%). Continued on next page.

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What are the concerns about “going online”?

Safety was a concern and one-third of people indicated that they have been or may have been a victim of computer or internet scams. Among these scam victims, 6% lost money, 11% report viruses, 3% lost information, and/or 2% had damage to equipment. Very few reported financial loss or damage to authorities, with less than 5% alerting police, DA, or government entities, banks or credit card companies.

The questionnaire includes a section about older adults' interests in learning more and how they want to get technical support and training.

Almost half of those responding expressed definite or possible interest in learning more. The most requested ways of learning include having someone to call when they have a problem or question and scheduling one-on-one help (40.8%). Workshops (34.5%) and drop-in locations (29.9%) were also identified as ways to learn more. Over 1 in 4 said that being told about helpful websites, watching online videos, and ongoing technology classes were good ways to help them learn more. That's good to know because all these services currently are available across our seven northern hilltowns or online.

Of the nearly half interested in learning more, the devices they most want to learn to use/use better are smartphones and computers/laptops. Over 70% of people identified technology uses they most wanted to learn, including taking, managing, saving, or sending photos, streaming to TV, scanning documents, and attaching documents.

This survey has been very helpful in charting the course to making life on the internet easier, but we could use more help to get there. If you are among the advanced/expert users and are willing to share a small amount of your time to help other older adults please let us know at nhillcoastech@gmail.com

What's ahead?

The Consortium has applied for a major grant from the Executive Office of Elder Affairs that could be a strong way to move us forward. In addition to the needed services identified in the grant, it may also provide a way to help more people get Broadband, have access to hotspots and use laptops at identified computer sites in the Hilltowns.

Your voices have been heard and we await decisions when Governor Healy signs the new budget.