

Cummington Council on Aging

April 2025 Newsletter



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

Coordinator: Chrisoula Roumeliotis
COA Office Phone: 413-634-2262, menu option 8
COA Email: croumeliotis@cummington-ma.gov

Save the Dates!

- Wednesday, May 21st
COA Potluck & HVES Program
- Wednesday, June 25th
COA Picnic at Pettingill Park

Drop in Technology Support

We offer drop-in technology support on the second Wednesday of every month (**coming up on April 9th**), from 10 a.m. to noon in the library of the Community House. No appointment needed. Bring your device(s) and your questions! This is a great way to get assistance with using your cell phone, laptop, tablet, etc.

What's new and ongoing on the Resource Cart?

- scarves, neck warmers
- bib/clothing protectors
- books



- surgical masks
- Covid test kits
- incontinence briefs
- games & puzzles
- walking maps
- file of life forms
- personal health care journals
- greeting cards
- and much, much more!



The resource cart is located to the left of the COA office.

Everything on the cart is FREE and available whenever the Community House is open!

Donations – please reach out before dropping off

Thank you to all who have donated various items to the COA. Going forward, we ask that you reach out before dropping off any items. Our storage space is limited, and we may have enough of a certain item at any given time. We appreciate your understanding.

Help with health insurance and other resources – who to call?

If you are looking for help with Medicare and Medicare-related insurance issues, call SHINE. Our local SHINE counselor is Caroline Solan. You can reach her at Highland Valley Elder Services: **413-586-2000** or email her: csolan@lifepathma.org.

If you have questions about Medicaid/MassHealth, call Buliah Mae Thomas at the Hilltown Community Health Center at **413-238-5511** or email her at bthomas@hchcweb.org.

The Community Connector Program is run through the Northern Hilltowns Consortium of COAs. This program helps guide people in finding services beyond health insurance, such as Fuel Assistance, SNAP benefits, Circuit Breaker Credit, and much more. If you are looking for this type of assistance, contact Jennifer O'Connell at **296-4536 ext. 110** or communityconnectjo@gmail.com

Are you REAL ID ready?

On May 7, 2025, U.S. travelers must be REAL ID compliant to board domestic flights and access certain federal buildings. The RMV has a dedicated phone line for folks aged 65+ and people with disabilities to call for appointments and to get your questions answered, such as what you need for identification. Call **857-368-8005**. You can also make an appointment or find more information online at www.mass.gov/real-id

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**. Unless otherwise indicated, these programs take place in the dining room area of the Community House.*

Weekly Grab and Go Hot Meal– every Tuesday

Leave your name and phone number with the COA to reserve your meal. Suggested donation of \$4 per meal goes to HVES. **Interested in getting a meal, but can't pick it up? Let us know.**

Healthy Bones and Balance– 4 TIMES A WEEK! Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m.; Tuesdays from 3 to 4 pm.

Coffee Hour

Mondays and Thursdays from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.

Needlework Group

Thursdays, 1-4pm.

Sand deliveries

Please let us know if you need a 5-gallon bucket of sand.

Exercise Equipment

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

Drop in Tech support

Second Wednesday of every month, 10 a.m. to noon. For more information, contact TechConnect at **413-296-5080**.

Shine counselor

Caroline Solan can be reached at **413-586-2000** or **csolan@lifepathma.org**

Foot Clinic

The next foot clinic will be on **Tuesday, May 6th** 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, April 8th**. For more information on this program, contact **annieb@crocker.com** or **fandellaf@gmail.com** or call Lucy at **634-5576**.

Medical Equipment

Walkers, crutches, shower seats and tub transfer seats, toilet seat risers, and more are available for your use.

Easy Ride Van and Driver Pool Program

The Hilltown Easy Ride van and the Driver Pool program provide rides for medical appointments, medical errands and shopping to Northampton and Pittsfield. Contact Ed Pelletier of the Hilltown CDC Transportation program at **296-4232** for more information and to arrange a ride.

Happy Birthday in April!

William Carver, Kenneth Price, Michael Falcone, Dorset Anderson, Susan Riley, Nancy Noyes, Karen Westergaard, Hilarione O'Leary, Randall Fisher, Jay Brumberg, Richard LaFrancis, Joyce Dempsey, Karen Barker, Judith Slezak, Margaret Parker, Luahn Page, Betty Tessier, James Ridel, Peggy Thorn, Diane Bevan, Greta Redzko, Matthew Grallert, David Bowman, Laura Sullivan, Robert Goff



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 make out your check to Cummington Council of Aging and mail to Cummington COA, PO Box 95 Cummington, MA 01026.)

Name _____ Telephone _____

Address _____

Email _____



Seniors Aware of Fire Education

Preventing Electrical Fires

Here are some things you should look for and do to prevent electrical fires.



Call 911 if you experience any of these warning signs:

- arcs, sparks, or short circuits
- sizzling or buzzing sounds
- odor like a vague smell of something burning

Call a licensed electrician if you experience these warning signs:

- frequent tripped circuit breakers or blow fuses
- dimming or flickering lights, light bulbs that pop or wear out too fast
- overheated plugs, cords or outlets
- shock or mild tingling
- loose plugs
- damaged wires or faulty outlets

Some things you can check on your own are:

- overloaded outlets - only one appliance on an outlet
- electric cords behind furniture, couches, and bureaus
- overloaded power strips, most are for low current devices
- frayed wires, cracked insulation or any damage
- extension cords not properly rated for appliances
- cord or wire nailed into place can short out or arc
- do not use indoor rated cords outdoors.

Be charged up for a SAFE spring!

--Worth Noyes, SAFE Educator
Williamsburg & Cummington Fire Departments

The Senior SAFE program is sponsored by many of your fire departments and the MA Dept. of Fire Services.

Social Security Safety, part 1

Assuming you have been following the news, you could - should? be aware of the safety of your Social Security information. I have recently learned that we can block access to our Social Security account from someone who has a nefarious intent. Because I have online access to my account, I proceeded to check this out.

So I tried to set a block. And failed. I could not get into my account using ID.me which is what I signed for a couple of years ago. I did get into my account using what I thought was an old user name and password. But then there was no option to block anyone else.

Stay tuned – I Will make this work!

In the meantime, remember the old safety warnings. Don't carry your card with you. Don't share your number over the phone, EVER. Don't give out your number unless it really is necessary; when someone asks for your number, push back nicely. Ask why they need it, what is the consequence of them not having it.

It is a good idea to create your own online account, at **www.ssa.gov/myaccount** That way even if someone gets your number they can't adopt your account for their own. With an online account, you can:

- Get your benefit verification letter
- Check your benefit and payment information and your earnings record
- Change your address and phone number
- Start or change direct deposit of your benefit payment
- Get a replacement Medicare card
- Get a replacement SSA-1099 or SSA-1042S for tax season.

As always, stay safe.

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



Tech. Help and Training for April



GREAT NEWS!

TechConnect will continue providing services through a partnership with Northampton Open Media. Although we have fewer trainings going forward, drop-ins and tech support will continue. Please take advantage of ongoing service.

DELIVERING NOW AND ACCEPTING NEW REQUESTS: Internet Hotspots

It's not too late if you need affordable internet access! We have a solution that may work for you. Hotspots are small cellular devices you can use to access the internet, and they work in most areas in the hilltowns. If you are interested in learning more, please contact us by phone or email. Call **413-296-5080** or email **coatechdevices@gmail.com**.

Tech Support Available by appointment

Receive technology help by email, phone, drop-in, or by appointment: **coaTechHelp@gmail.com**, phone or text msg **413-296-5080** or check the website, **www.northernhilltownscoas.org**, for locations and time. You can attend drop-in at all locations, except Nash Hill.

Devices for you: PC laptops, refurbished Chromebooks, iPads and Android tablets

Please remind us if you requested one and are still waiting. There is still time to join the Digital World. We have ordered more PC laptops/ computers, refurbished Chromebooks, iPads and Android tablets. If you need or are waiting for a device to connect to the internet, have something so old it is not working effectively, or need a different type of device please contact us. Email **coatechdevices@gmail.com**, leave message at **413-296-5080**, or use online request form on our website, **www.northernhilltownscoas.org**

Drop in Centers: All are Welcome at Any Location! (no appointment needed)

- Chesterfield Community Center, 400 Main Rd. Weekly on all Tuesdays from 11:00 to 2:00
Two Fridays, 11:30-1:30 (4/4 and 4/18)
- Cummington Community House, 33 Main St. Drop-In tech support, 2nd Weds. 10-12 (4/9)
- Goshen Free Public Library, 42 Main St. Drop-in tech support, 3rd Thurs. 12pm-2pm (4/17)

- Plainfield Shaw Memorial Library, 312 Main St. Drop-In tech support, 3rd Thurs. 5:30-7:30pm (4/17)
- Westhampton Library, 1 North Rd. Drop-in tech support, 4th Thurs. 2-4pm (4/24)
- Williamsburg Meekins Library Drop-In tech support
2nd Tuesday 4/8 from 10:30-12:30
Nash Hill Place Resident Drop-In tech support
2nd Tuesday 4/8 from 10 to Noon

Tech Training:

MUST pre-register for training no later than one week before the scheduled training date. All classes held at the Chesterfield Community Center, 400 Main Rd, lower level. To register, email **coaTechTrainer@gmail.com**, call or text **413-296-5080**, or sign up through the website **www.northernhilltownscoas.org**

Tech Workshops, April into August:

*On Fridays twice a month from **10:30–11:30** at
Chesterfield Community Center*

- 4/4 - Social Media
- 4/18 - Cloud Basics
- 5/2 - Intro to Google Suite
- 5/16- Microsoft Word
- 6/6 - Microsoft Excel
- 6/20 - Canva
- 7/18 - Windows Basics
- 8/1 - Google Drive

Computer Classes:

No ongoing computer classes are scheduled. An alternate online resource for basic training can be accessed, with help from us, at **www.digitalliteracyassessment.org/login/?location=17640-MG8N-techconnect**

We can set up your access to this website and help you begin to train yourself for very basic to more advanced beginner digital literacy.



On the Road Again...

2025 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 May 6. One day at **Encore Casino in Everett, MA.** \$20 in Free Slot play. Lunch on your own. Restaurants on site. Cost \$40. Make check payable to Francine Frenier and mail to the address **NOW. A few seats open.**

Day Trip May 8. Titanic: The Artifact Exhibition at Saunders Castle at Park Plaza Boston, MA. Lunch at Venezia. Cost \$144.00. Make check payable to Landmark Tours and mail to the address above by April 8.

Day Trip May 19. Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum & Maggiano's Little Italy. Enjoy a delicious family-style lunch at Maggiano's. Tour three floors of galleries at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum on your own. Price \$144. Make check payable to Landmark Tours and mail to the address **NOW. Waitlist only.**

Day Trip June 17 Isles of Shoals Cruise in Portsmouth, NH. Lunch at Foster's Clambake in York, Maine. Cost \$154. Make check payable to Landmark Tours and mail to the address above by May 17.

Multi Day Trip June 22-26. Montreal & Ottawa. Passports required. Visit the Biodome, Notre Dame Basilica, Montreal's Underground City, Parliament Hill, Cruise on the St. Lawrence River. Payment of \$1,052 due **NOW.** Make the check payable to Diamond Tours and mail to the address above. **Waitlist only.**

Day Trip July 16. FDR Homestead & Library and Hudson River Cruise. Take a scenic cruise on the Hudson River. Enjoy a boxed lunch on board. Tour the home of Franklin D. Roosevelt and the first Presidential Library. Price \$140. Make check payable to Landmark Tours and mail to the address above by May 28. **Waitlist only.**

Day Trip August 3. Triple A affiliates, **Boston Red Sox Woo Sox vs Philadelphia Phillies Lehigh Valley IronPigs** at Polar Park, Worcester, MA. A pre-game tour of Polar Park and a ballpark-fare buffet are included. Cost \$90.00. Make check payable to Francine Frenier and mail to address above by June 1.

Day Trip Sept. TBD. The BIG E, an annual favorite, with free entertainment at The Court of Honor Stage.

Day Trip Oct. 9. A Chorus Line. Center orchestra seating for the 50th Anniversary Production on stage at the Goodspeed Opera House in East Haddam, CT. Center Orchestra seating. Lunch at The Gelston House. Price \$177. Make a check payable to Landmark Tours and mail to the address above by August 1.

Multi Day Trip October 12-18. Biltmore Estate & Smoky Mountains, Asheville, NC. Seven days, six nights. Visit the Biltmore Estate, the St. Lawrence Basilica, historic Gatlinburg, TN & Asheville, NC. Guided tour of the Smoky Mountains National Park. Price \$1,099. Discount of \$25 if paid in full by July 18. Make

the check payable to Diamond Tours and mail to the address above. **As of April, Diamond Tours is expecting this trip to go, despite the hurricane damage around the area. Please stay tuned. A 2nd bus has a few open seats.**

Day Trip Sunday, December 7. A Holiday Event in Waltham, MA. Reagle Music Theater Players beloved Christmas extravaganza--100 performers, live orchestra, dancers, living nativity, and yuletide tunes. Pre-show lunch at The Chateau Restaurant. Price \$160 (approx.) Make a check payable to Landmark Tours and mail to the address above by August 1.

Good News for April 2025

Let's talk about the "Windfall Elimination Provision and Government Pension Offset", what many of us called the offset rule that effected our social security benefits (reducing them).

On January 6th, President Biden signed into law the Social Security Fairness Act that **ENDS** the offset! The American Federation of Teachers estimates this will effect more than 100,000 Massachusetts teachers. Municipal workers and Federal employees will be affected too. All this means your social security retirement benefit is going to increase starting April 1st! But it gets better. Your increased benefit actually started January 2024....which means you will get a lump sum amount to catch up. After that you should see an increased monthly social security benefit which the Biden administration estimates at about \$350/month for over 2.8 million Americans. That first "catch up" amount is supposed to happen April 1st, so check your bank statement for an additional U.S. Treasury deposit.

This Good news may have some drawbacks. The first is: don't try to contact the social security office now since they are flooded with folks calling asking for help calculating their new benefit. Wait times on phone calls can be up to 3 hours.

But more concerning is this new income may impact your public benefits like MassHealth, SNAP, and the Medicare Savings Program. MassHealth has decided not to count windfall income for the next 6 months. So we have until October before this new income will be counted.

If you think you might be at risk of losing benefits because your income and assets have increased, you should contact your senior center for a SHINE appointment for questions about the Medicare Savings Program and check to see if you can have a conversation with the Connector program for other benefits.

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**Cummington
Council on Aging**

Chrisoula Roumeliotis,
Coordinator
634-2262

Worth Noyes, Chairperson
634-8003

Ann Eisenhour,
Recording Secretary,
634-2243

JoDee Simard, Treasurer

June Lynds, 695-4893

Brenda Emerson-Camp

Kristen Estelle,
Newsletter Designer
regionalcoanews@gmail.com

**Spring/ Summer Clothing
Exchange**

Saturday, April 26th, 9am-3pm

Goshen Congregational Church
45 Main St. Goshen



Get a new spring wardrobe for your family without spending a cent! Drop off your washed, gently-used men's, women's and children's spring/summer clothing and accessories at the church on Wednesday 4/23 from 6-8pm or Friday 4/25 from 9am-3pm (you can also call Laura at 268-7005 to arrange a different time), then come back to shop on Sat. the 26th from 9am-3pm! All are invited to participate whether you donate clothes or not.

**Let's Keep Talking About Death-
Part 2**

**May 20, May 27 and June 3rd
4:00-5:30pm**

**John James Memorial Hall
42 Main St. Goshen**

We are continuing our series of conversations based on *Let's Talk About Death Over Dinner* by Michael Hebb. Sessions will be led by End of Life Doula Stacey Mackowiak and take place over three sessions- May 20, May 27, and June 3 from 4:00-5:30pm.

More info to come in the May newsletter.
All are welcome!

