

# Plainfield Council on Aging

## August 2020 Newsletter



Plainfield Council on Aging  
Town Offices, 304 Main St.  
Plainfield, MA 01070

Susan Metcalfe LaRock, COA Coordinator  
Phone: 413-743-5345  
slarock@town.plainfield.ma.us

### August Notes and Tips during Covid-19

#### **Plainfield Mutual Support Network Still Available**

The Plainfield Mutual Support Network (PMSN) in coordination with the Plainfield Police Department, Board of Health and the Council on Aging is still going strong and ever present in town. We have approximately 17 members who oversee the group of volunteers who are willing to help with grocery shopping, pharmacy needs as well as just reaching out to individuals who would like a friendly smile or visit on the telephone. We still continue in an environment of social distancing and quarantine requirements and are required to wear masks when out in public. Governor Charlie Baker is slowly opening up the Commonwealth with safe health guidelines (See below).

There are homemade masks available. You may contact either Erin Kelly-Dill at 413-336-0123 or Marissa Valenza at 413-634-5703. Thanks, gals, for your efforts!

Again, for your information, the PMSN web page is [plainfield-ma.us/supportnetwork](http://plainfield-ma.us/supportnetwork). One can also check out our Facebook page, "Plainfield mutual aid and support" for additional information. Remember that you can also call (413) 634-1030 for requests or more information. Please leave a voice mail and we will get back to you as soon as possible. We have also added the HCDC COVID-19 Hilltown Response to our web page ([hilltowncdc.org/covid19](http://hilltowncdc.org/covid19)) for further information and as a valuable resource.

#### **Commonwealth Of Massachusetts Entering Phase III Covid-19 Reopening**

Key public health data, such as new cases and hospitalizations, have been closely monitored and has seen a decline allowing for Phase III to begin on July 6th.

The following businesses will be eligible to reopen in Step One of Phase III, subject to industry-specific rules concerning capacity and operations:

- ⇒ Movie theaters and outdoor performance venues;
- ⇒ Museums, cultural and historical sites;
- ⇒ Fitness centers and health clubs;
- ⇒ Certain indoor recreational activities with low potential for contact;
- ⇒ Professional sports teams, under the authority of league-wide rules, may hold games without spectators

Full guidance and list of businesses eligible to reopen in Step One of Phase III can be found at [www.mass.gov/reopening](http://www.mass.gov/reopening). Businesses and sectors set to begin opening in Phase III are subject to compliance with all mandatory safety standards.

Revised Gatherings Order: Under the updated gatherings order, indoor gatherings are limited to eight people per 1,000 square feet but should not exceed 25 people in a single enclosed, indoor space.

Outdoor gatherings in enclosed spaces are limited to 25 percent of the facility's maximum permitted occupancy, with a maximum of 100 people in a single enclosed outdoor space. This includes community events, civic events, sporting events, concerts, conventions and more. This order does not apply to outdoor, unenclosed gatherings if proper social distancing measures are possible.

#### **Register To Vote By August 12, 2020**

The last day to register to vote / make changes to voter registration for the Tuesday, September 1, 2020 primary is Wednesday, August 12, 2020. Someone will be in the Town Office from 9 to Noon on that day for anyone wishing to register to vote or change party affiliation.



## Zoom Training

Using Zoom is a great way to reach out virtually and stay connected – especially as you are staying home during the coronavirus outbreak.

Here are the easy steps to join a Zoom call for the first time:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=9isp3qPeQ0E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9isp3qPeQ0E)

## Seafood promotes a longer, disease-free life

A team of U.S. researchers followed 2,622 older adults over the course of 22 years and found that those who had higher cumulative levels of omega-3 fatty acids (found in seafood) showed a 24% lower risk of developing cancer, lung and cardiovascular diseases or brain dysfunction. Researchers credit omega-3's ability to support healthy blood pressure and heart rate, reduce inflammation and heal oxidative damage.

"Optimism is the one quality more associated with success and happiness than any other."  
-Brian Tracy



I find it helps to  
organize chores into categories:  
Things I won't do now; Things I  
won't do later; Things I'll  
Never Do...



## Stay Connected & Keep Holding Hands

What are the important things in life? We know that diet and exercise matter for living a healthier and most likely, longer life. But to boost the mind-body benefits that drive health, start connecting. Keep or establish a strong network of family and friends you can count on and who can count on you. Volunteer in your community. And do not forget to hold your spouse's or significant other's hand (boosts oxytocin). According to some studies, a committed romantic relationship can lower your mortality risk by a staggering 49 percent.

-Science journalist, Marta Zaraska, author of the new research-driven book *Growing Young: How Friendship, Optimism, and Kindness Can Help You Live to 100*

## Thank You for Your Donations!

We are very grateful to everyone who has donated/contributed to the COA these past several months. You allowed us to flourish in the challenge to better serve the folks in Plainfield. The COA relies on the support of friends like you so we continue that conversation and understanding. Thank You!

### ***The Plainfield Council on Aging counts on YOUR support to help build important programming for local seniors!***

I would like to contribute to the Plainfield Council on Aging. My contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ is attached.  
(Please write your check to The Town of Plainfield and mail to Plainfield COA, 304 Main St. Plainfield, MA 01070)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

*Thank You for Helping to Support Your Neighbors!*

**Plainfield Council on Aging**

## Preventing Heat Stress

People who are most at risk for health effects because of extreme heat events can take steps to protect themselves by staying in air conditioned or cooler locations during heat waves, or indoors when air quality is poor. To find a facility to get cool during extreme heat in your area, check out information on Cooling Centers. Other steps to prevent heat related illness are listed below.

- ⇒ If there is no air conditioning in the home, open windows and shades on the shady side and close them on the sunny side to try to cool it down.
- ⇒ Drink plenty of fluids but avoid alcohol, caffeine and sugary drinks.
- ⇒ Beat the heat with cool showers and baths.
- ⇒ Take regular breaks from physical activity, and avoid strenuous activity during the hottest part of the day (between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m.).
- ⇒ Wear loose, lightweight, light-colored clothing to help keep cool.
- ⇒ Stay out of the sun as much as possible, and try to stay in an air conditioned location if possible.
- ⇒ Wear sunscreen and a ventilated hat (e.g., straw or mesh) when in the sun, even if it is cloudy.
- ⇒ Never leave children, pets or those with special needs in a parked car, even briefly. Temperatures in the car can become dangerous within a few minutes.
- ⇒ Check on neighbors, family and friends, especially those who are elderly or have special needs.
- ⇒ Conserve water and power during heat waves by turning off lights and non-essential appliances, and reducing non-essential use of water.



**Would you like to receive your newsletter by email instead of snail mail?**

If so, please email Kristen at [regionalcoanews@gmail.com](mailto: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!

## Eternal Electronic Life - Killing Accounts

Last month I wrote about social media platforms and dealing with them after a person dies. That led to more reading and thinking, and I ended up with an Everplans note about online accounts. I read through it with astonishment – I did not realize how many online things there are to join!

Just a few common accounts many of us have – Amazon, Ancestry, Apple, AT&T, Barnes & Noble, Comcast, ebay, Facebook, FedEx ... Yahoo, Yelp and many in between. Here is where you can go to find a link to closing all these accounts – over 230 entities:

[www.everplans.com/articles/how-to-close-online-accounts-and-services-when-someone-dies](http://www.everplans.com/articles/how-to-close-online-accounts-and-services-when-someone-dies)

This information could be quite useful if you are an Executor / Personal Representative for someone's estate. Seems like scrolling through these names could be helpful in cleaning up our own digital lives, e.g., managing passwords, scrapping old accounts that may not be useful anymore but that are hanging around.

Everplans is a business that charges for services, not a government or educational institution site which I usually prefer to give you. But it seems to have some good stuff. The main page is [www.everplans.com](http://www.everplans.com), then look at Resources & Guides, Planning Categories, and Digital Estate for more information than I've written.

Yes, life is still more complicated!  
 Jean O'Neil, TRIAD committee member  
 413-268-2228, [jeanoneilmass@gmail.com](mailto:jeanoneilmass@gmail.com)

## Good News!

By Deborah Hollingworth

It's the time of year when the zucchini are beginning to be big enough to eat, and you have to be up early if you're going to stay ahead of the weeds which thrive in this weather. Hot weather hasn't done away with Covid-19. It looks like we will need to be cautious for the foreseeable future. Dealing with the unknown and keeping positive as we ride out this pandemic, is the challenge.

Lately I've had an uptick in calls from folks thinking about retiring. Those of us who worked past our 65th birthday are asking if this is a good time to give up the paycheck. Some have been furloughed because of Covid, and lost their health insurance. People in that circumstance may want to enroll in Medicare.

Social Security administers Medicare and their offices are closed but the good news is that Social Security has made signing up for Medicare a little easier during this public health emergency.

Applying online is an excellent way to start. Social Security's website has a reputation for being user friendly. To give it a try, go to [www.ssa.gov/benefits/medicare](http://www.ssa.gov/benefits/medicare). If you are losing your employer's health insurance because you've been furloughed, or because you've decided to quit working, you can check the website for information on the process of signing up, but you will need to call Social Security. Our local office is in Holyoke: 877-480-4989.

If you lost your health insurance because of Covid, or because you decide to quit work, Medicare allows you to enroll now with coverage starting the first day of the next month. You will need to verify your last day of health insurance coverage. You can do this with a copy of your pay stub showing health benefits being deducted, or a statement showing health insurance premiums being paid, or a CMS L564 form which you can download from the social security website. Paperwork gets mailed (Certified mail is recommended) to the Holyoke social security office. The mailing address is 200 High Street, Holyoke MA 01040.

For questions about what Medicare costs, or to enroll in supplemental Medicare plans, or to get Rx coverage, give your senior center a call to make an appointment with a SHINE counselor.



## COVID-19 Face Covering Decision Guide



### **Are you leaving home?**

Face covering is required to be worn when you cannot maintain six feet of social distance to another person who does not live in your household. A person who cannot wear a face covering for medical reasons is not required to provide documentation.

### **Are you outdoors less than 6 feet away from someone who doesn't live with you?**

Face covering is required to be worn.

### **Are you an employee or customer of grocery, pharmacy, retail, or shared transit, even if you will be more than 6 feet away from others?**

Face covering is required to be worn. A business may deny service to a person who refuses to wear a mask for nonmedical reasons.

### **Are you at any indoor business or organization, less than 6 feet away from someone who doesn't live with you?**

Face covering is required to be worn.

### **Minimize the use of confined spaces, elevators, control rooms, and vehicles, by more than one individual at a time.**

All workers in such spaces at that same time are required to wear face coverings.

### **Are you alone in an elevator, inside an indoor shared common area, or other indoor enclosed area?**

Face covering is recommended.

### **Questions?**

Email: [safepublicworkplacemailbox@mass.gov](mailto:safepublicworkplacemailbox@mass.gov)  
or visit: [mass.gov/dols](http://mass.gov/dols)

## COVID-19 and the price of AGEISM

Ageism is one of the social problems made worse during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our ageist views of older or some might say mature adults as frail or irrelevant creates a distorted picture of how communities successfully get through crises. Using age alone to identify people as frail, thus automatically needing protection, distorts the fact that the pillars of support we rely on in our towns during this pandemic are often older.

More than ever we are learning that getting through this crisis requires building intergenerational solidarity. It's not that age is irrelevant but being compromised by chronic illnesses and comorbidities are stronger risk factors for all age groups, as are race and poverty. It flies in the face of reality to ignore the fact that many older adults in our communities are playing crucial roles in protecting others who are struggling. They are also practicing social distancing, keeping their hands clean, and wearing masks as they do so.

In many Hilltowns, those 60 and over constitute a third of the taxpayers and the bulk of the volunteers who keep town operations going. Take a look at your town committees and volunteers. How many of them continue to work to make the community safer? Do you automatically see them as frail? What a misleading image. For example, the Chesterfield Community Cupboard support team includes a range of ages, from people in their 50s to 80+. They shop, sort and store food, and keep everything clean and sanitized.

What's emerging as a major COVID-19 threat is the risks to all age groups of not taking the simple but necessary precautions: washing hands, social distancing and wearing masks. People 60 and older are not the ones driving the surges in infection rates that we are seeing. Because of their perception of risk, older people are more likely to limit their time in public and take the precautions that limit the risk of infection for everyone. Yet Dan Patrick, the lieutenant governor of Texas, suggested those over 70 "sacrifice" themselves for the good of the economy by accepting and participating in re-opening activities. It should be noted that Dr. Anthony Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and recognized as a tireless leader in getting us all through the pandemic, is not publicly referred to as the "old and frail" Dr. Fauci.

What difference does ageism make when we are all in crisis mode? Here are some thoughts from gerontological experts.

⇒ The World Health Organization identifies ageism as the last socially accepted form of prejudice... perceptions of older adults as frail and weak impacts the kind of care they receive and the health care outcomes they experience... In the U.S these perceptions are reinforced in medical training; geriatric care doesn't even appear on the list of required

training for doctors. (Nash & Schnarss, *The Conversation*, June 15, 2020).

⇒ Kate de Medeiros notes that "of all the isms, ageism is arguably the hardest to address because old age is neither a valued stage of life nor an identity many claim. The pandemic is making it worse (Aging: Covid-19. Hastings Bioethics Forum. May 14, 2020)

⇒ "In addition to the misrepresentation of COVID-19 as an 'older adult' problem, many countries have chosen to impose stricter restrictions on older adults, ordering them to remain inside during the pandemic. These restrictions exacerbate the longstanding problems of older adults' isolation and the health consequences of social disconnectedness that existed long before the pandemic. While restrictions may aim to be protective, such policies have often translated into patronizing public communications depicting all older adults as 'vulnerable members of society.'" (Age and Ageing)

Now is the time to put a new face on aging. While you're at it, put a fresh mask on. We are all in this together.

Jan Gibeau, Director  
Chesterfield council on Aging

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The logo for the United States Census 2020. It features the words "United States" in a small, sans-serif font above the word "Census" in a large, bold, black font. Below "Census" is the year "2020" in a large, bold, black font.

**The 2020 Census is underway!** It counts every living person in the USA. From August 11 to October 31, Census takers will interview homes that haven't responded to the 2020 Census.

If you have not responded, you can do so by returning the mailings you should have received from the U.S. Census Bureau.

If you didn't receive your mailings, no problem! You can fill out your information over the phone with a verified Census Bureau representative at 844-330-2020. If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to the Secretary of the Commonwealth's staff to have a conversation about Census operations at 833-621-2020.

Your community depends on your Census response for funding and representation for the next decade to come. The impact on your community include: school lunches, plans for highways, support for firefighters and families in need. Census results affect your community every day. Please respond if you haven't already done so.

**Plainfield Council on Aging**  
**Attn: Susan Metcalf LaRock**  
**Plainfield Town Offices**  
**304 Main St.**  
**Plainfield, MA 01070**

PRSR STD  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
PERMIT 183  
Greenfield MA

**Plainfield COA**

**Susan LaRock, Coordinator**  
slarock@town.plainfield.ma.us

**Shirley Todd, Chair**  
Ginger237ma@yahoo.com  
413-634-2134

**Susan Pearson, Secretary**  
spearsonbooks@gmail.com  
413-634-0025

**Lina Bernstein**  
lbernte@fandm.edu

**Linda Carver**  
lindacarver17@yahoo.com

**Ann Irvine**  
irvinea@verizon.net  
413-634-5698

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**Contract Tracing Calls—5 Things to Know**

A contact tracer from your state health department might call if you've been exposed to COVID-19. But scammers are pretending to be contact tracers, too. Here's how you can spot the scam.

1. **Real contact tracers won't ask for money.** Only scammers insist on payment by gift card, money transfer or cryptocurrency.
2. **Contact tracing doesn't require your bank account or credit card number.** Never share account information with anybody who contacts you asking for it.
3. **Legitimate contact tracers will never ask for your Social Security number.** Never give any part of your Social Security number to anyone who contacts you.
4. **Your immigration status doesn't matter for contact tracing, so real tracers won't ask.** If they do, you can bet it's a scam.
5. **Do not click on a link in a text or email.** Doing so can download malware onto your device.

Talking to a real contact tracer helps stop the spread of COVID-19. Reporting scammers helps stop them, too. Report fake contact tracers to your state and at [ftc.gov/complaint](https://ftc.gov/complaint).

For more information about contact tracing visit your state health department's website and [ftc.gov/coronavirus/scams](https://ftc.gov/coronavirus/scams)