

# Plainfield Council on Aging

## February 2021 Newsletter



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

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

### February Notes and Tips during Covid-19

We have survived many challenges with all the personal losses, drastic changes to our lifestyle and lack of fellowship with friends and family due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Plainfield COA is hopeful that we will see a far better new year with new purpose. Vaccinations are starting to be scheduled beginning with assisted living residents and health care personnel. Check with your primary care provider as to when your turn is scheduled.



We are repeating much of the information from last month as it is still relative.

#### **Snow Removal**

If you need someone to shovel your walk or driveway, contact the Plainfield Mutual Support Network as they have a few names available to assist you.

#### **Zoom Lessons**

For any of you who would like to learn how to contact family and friends via the Zoom program, Zoom is offering free classes on the many aspects of connecting and holding get-togethers. Check out this web page: <http://zoom.us/events>

#### **Highland Valley Elder Services Masks**

The Plainfield COA still has cloth masks kindly donated by the Highland Valley Elder Services. These masks are free and are made of a soft black cloth with the HVES logo. If you need masks, please call Susan (LaRock) Honneus at 743-5345. Please leave a voice message with your name and phone number indicating the number of masks you require. Sue will get back to you shortly as she checks her voice mail several times a day.



#### **The Plainfield Mutual Support Network**

The Plainfield Mutual Support Network (PMSN) is ever present during the pandemic. Our group of volunteers can help with grocery shopping, pharmacy needs, as well as heating supplies. We can also reach out to individuals who might like a friendly smile or visit on the telephone. We continue in a safe environment of social distancing and quarantine requirements and wearing a mask when out in public is a must.

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. You can also call **(413)634-1030** for requests or more information. Please leave a voicemail 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.

#### **Grocery Sources**

For those in need, a food account has been set up at the Old Creamery in Cummington through the PMSN. Their winter hours are Monday through Sunday from 7 am to 8 pm.

Just a reminder, the Hilltown Food Pantry in Goshen is open on Wednesdays from 1-3pm and every third Wednesday from 1-6pm. It offers food at no cost for everyone.

#### **Easy Ride Options**

Transportation by Easy Ride can take FRTA registered riders to pharmacies. They can also make pickup and deliveries as long as the medicine is paid for. Riders can call us to make an appointment and for more information: (413) 296-4232



## Exercise Classes

For all us stay-at-homers, Joan Griswold is continuing to offer her exercise classes via Zoom in the new year. Classes are held on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday each week. If you are registered for one of her classes, you may attend all of the weekly classes. We are truly fortunate she has been willing to invest her time and knowledge so we can stay active and healthy. Any donation is graciously appreciated. If you can, send your donation to the Plainfield COA Exercise Class, 818 West Main Street, Plainfield, MA 01070. For those of you who have donated, we continue to offer a hearty thank you for your continued support.

## In-Home Services

In addition to the services offered by either the PMSN or the COA, additional information can be had through State Home Care (SHC) cost-sharing breakdown at: [www.mass.gov](http://www.mass.gov).

Through the SHC programs, folks can access in-home foot care services along with a variety of other services. Some relatively new additions to our SHC service offerings include:

- Laundry services- pick-up and delivery to the home, contact free.
- Transportation services- 1:1 rides can be accompanied by one other person such as a caregiver. These will accommodate medical and social rides. Unfortunately, this service is unable to accommodate those who are wheelchair bound or unable to transfer independently.
- Durable medical equipment- access to items like rollator walkers, raised toilet seats, incontinence products, lift chairs, among many other items that individuals need, when not covered by insurance. Delivered right to the home with assembly assistance provided for most items. The Plainfield COA also has medical equipment available right here in town.

Call Susan Pearson at 634-0025 for more details.

- Nutritional supplements such as Ensure and Boost.

The Information & Referral Department can be reached at (413) 586-2000. If you are not exactly sure what you need or have an interest in, please speak with one of the Options Counselors.

## February 14th- Valentine's Day



*Happy Valentine's Day*

I thought I won the argument with my wife as to how to arrange the dining room furniture. But when I got home the tables were turned.

What did the stamp say to the envelope on Valentine's Day?  
I'm stuck on you.

What do you call a Valentine's Day gift that didn't arrive on time?  
Chocolate

Knock, knock  
Who's there?  
Disguise.  
Disguise who?  
Disguise is your boyfriend!

What did the calculator say to the pencil on Valentine's Day?  
You can always count on me.

### ***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**

Seniors Aware of Fire Education

Senior  SAFE

Here we are, almost 11 months struggling with COVID-19. It has been a long haul, but there is light at the end of this dark tunnel. There are now vaccines that can make us immune to the COVID virus. We will all be informed about when and how we can be vaccinated. This is all very good news. With all the different things being said and posted by people who fear and deride vaccination, here are a few things for everyone to consider:

- ⇒ The vaccine will help our bodies develop immunity to the virus that causes COVID-19 without us getting the illness.
- ⇒ The vaccine does not cause COVID-19; it fights against it.
- ⇒ It takes the body about a week to convince itself that it is immune to the virus; so keep up the good work of social distancing, mask wearing and staying safe.
- ⇒ Sometimes, the process of building immunity can cause symptoms like a fever. These are signs that your body is at work building immunity.
- ⇒ Pay attention to what the real health officials are saying. They are trying to save lives.

Be SAFE and stay strong.

--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](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!

**Big Five plus Letter of Instruction**

Last month I added a Letter of Instruction to the tasks of keeping up with your financial and administrative life. Sorry to do that... Now, I guess I better explain.

Your will is a legally binding document but may be more helpful if accompanied by a Letter of Instruction which is not legally binding. The Letter is a document you prepare to help guide your Executor and others in following your wishes. It is not a substitute for a will nor should it set up any conflict with a will. It can be quite informal, even handwritten, (legibly, please), but needs to be readily available upon your death.

What goes in the Letter? Anything you think would be helpful. Think about a list with your banker, insurance agent, lawyer, and phone and account numbers. Write down where things are like tax files, real estate papers, social security documents, passwords, keys to a safety deposit box.

You might want to account for how pets will be cared for. You could specify how your funeral will go, e.g., musical selections. Sentimental items can be included, for instance I use several kitchen utensils that my Grandmother used and they still have life, so I would like them to go to a family member but am certainly not going to clutter my will with them.

The Letter of Instruction is a way for you to express your preferences and to make things easier on others. Just think about what someone would need to know to be able to easily close out your life. Then keep on living!

Jean O'Neil, TRIAD committee member  
413-268-2228, [jeanoneilmass@gmail.com](mailto:jeanoneilmass@gmail.com)

## Good News!

By Deborah Hollingworth

"Do you know what that's going to cost?" the pharmacist asks me when I went to pick up a new Rx the month before last. "No", I said, "my doctor just prescribed it for me." "That will be \$600" she said and waited to see if I still wanted the prescription. Nationwide, 50% of older adults do not take their prescribed Rx: 30% never even go to pick up the script. Because they can't afford to.

These statistics have remained consistent, even when we have Medicare D plans, or health insurance through our pension benefits to subsidize the cost of our drugs. Some co-pays are unaffordable.

So what's the Good News? Who can help?

There are programs that help with medication costs. Let's start with the **Manufacturer Patient Assistance Programs** which give you your Rx free or at greatly reduced cost. Pharmaceutical companies are required by Federal regulation to offer patient assistance programs. Many will offer this assistance to those who have a Medicare D plan, but have high co-pays which represent a financial hardship. After you determine who manufactures your Rx, you can go to their website, see what the eligibility requirements are, download an application, have your doctor complete their portion and submit. Eligibility guidelines vary, typically you will qualify if your income is less than 250% of Federal Poverty Level which is \$31,900 for an individual, \$43,100 for a married couple.

Next, **Manufacturer Free Trial offer**. This also requires that you figure out who manufactures your Rx and go to their website to see if they offer free samples. Your doctor may also be able to give you free samples, but this is a short term solution. You shouldn't count on it for months at a time.

**Co-payment Foundations** are non-profit charitable organizations set up to help patients with specific medical conditions. You must be covered, have health insurance that covers your Rx, but this is to help for exorbitant co-pays for certain medications. To see if you might benefit, you can call the **Pharmacy Outreach Program** that we talked about in the November Good News article. This program is a free service provided by the University of Massachusetts and the Executive Office of Elder Affairs: 866-633-1617. The feedback I've gotten from those of you who have contacted them has been excellent. They are experts in sorting out all these options and determining what might be the best approach to lowering your Rx costs.

**Low Cost Generic Medications.** While these Rx might not have high co-pays, if you are taking 8-12 different Rx monthly, the cost can add up. Remember that Walmart, Stop & Shop and Price Chopper have their "400 list". This is a listing of over 400 medications you can purchase for \$4 a month, or \$9 for a 90 day supply. Their websites have a listing of medications covered.

**Discount Rx cards**, like Good Rx. There are many available. Ask your pharmacist for suggestions as to which might be helpful. Usually these cards are for people who do not have any Rx coverage, or...and this is important...if your insurance plan's formulary does not include the Rx you need to take.

**Prescription Advantage**, which we talked about in the March Good News last year, subsidizes the cost of your Rx when you reach annual out of pocket spending limits which are determined by your income.

And, finally, **Health Safety Net**, which we talked about just last month, covers Rx for those who qualify. Your income needs to be less than \$3,190 for an individual, \$4,320 for a married couple.

NOTE: eligibility for all these resources is *income based*, and does not count assets.

### Who can help sort all this out for you?

**Needy Meds**, a national non-profit resource dedicated to helping people locate assistance programs. Check out their website for more information.

Remember both **The Pharmacy Outreach Program**, and your **SHINE** counselor can also help search for resources.



## When can I get the vaccine?

Printing a timely update in a monthly newsletter is a challenge, but especially now in trying to keep up with vaccination updates.

The Baker-Polito Administration and the Department of Public Health developed a vaccine distribution timeline. The timeline reflects several priorities: protecting the commonwealth's most vulnerable including the commonwealth's 1.7 million older adults, maintaining the health care system capacity, and addressing inequities in health care access and COVID-19 burden.

For general overall information on the vaccine program, go to:

[www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-vaccination-program#weekly-covid-19-vaccination-report](http://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-vaccination-program#weekly-covid-19-vaccination-report)

This report is updated every Thursday by 5pm.

## Aging, COVID and Crisis Competence: Another check on Anti-Ageism

I continue to be struck by a paradox in the views people hold about older adults in our country. We're often defined as frail but also resilient, needing caregivers but often the ones providing care to grandchildren, spouses, siblings and friends; sick but living for 90-100 years. Yes, we are vulnerable to the spread of COVID, but the most concentrated risks can be found in long term enclosed settings. No, we do not make up the largest number of victims found on national charts. Let's face it: we are both strong and at risk; reasonably anxious, but usually careful about exposure and have picked up experiences over

the years that have prepared us to be able to cope. Mark Brennan-Ing, PhD., Hunter College Brookdale Center for Healthy Aging calls this crisis competence, "As we get older, we get the sense that we're going to be able to handle it, because we've been able to handle challenges in the past. You know you get past it. These things happen, but there's an end to it, and there's a life after that." The elderly have in many cases defied expectations even as the virus has decimated their ranks. "There are some older adults who are doing quite well during the pandemic and have actually expanded their social networks and activities... but you don't hear about them because the pandemic narrative reinforces stereotypes of older adults as frail, disabled, and dependent." says Brian Car-

penter, PhD, Washington University.

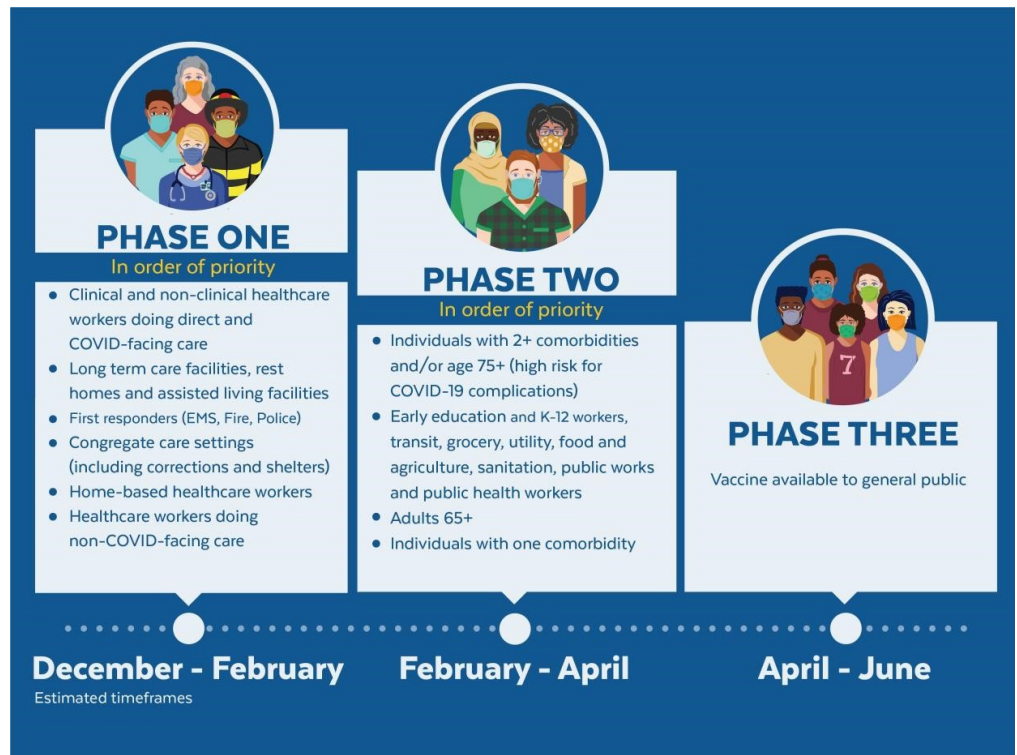
In a publication entitled "Pumping Irony" Craig Cox reports a number of research findings on how older adults have managed to cope as well as it has with the psychological challenges the pandemic presents. Excerpts below:

Older folks take the virus seriously. "The vast majority of respondents changed their behavior in response to public-health warnings, limiting their exposure by declining invitations to family gatherings and public events, reducing their shopping trips, and even canceling doctor appointments".

We've discovered new sources of joy and comfort. A University of Michigan-Dearborn survey conducted with people 60 years and older during the early weeks of the pandemic found that older people were more resourceful than expected when faced with long periods of sequestration. About a third of those polled said they'd enjoyed connecting with friends and family via digital platforms, while about 20 percent reported leaning on hobbies, pets, spouses, and religious faith to ease their anxiety.

The older you are, the less stress you feel. When researchers asked nearly 7,000 people 55 and older how they were coping with the novel coronavirus, they found most (64 percent) were concerned. Almost a third of respondents (31 percent) noted depressive symptoms while 29 percent reported serious anxiety. But those numbers fell by about half among those 75 and older.

It's time to push the anti-ageism envelope and remind people that, as the saying goes, "We don't get to be old by being sissies." Crisis Competence rules. ~ Jan Gibeau



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

PRSR STD  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
PERMIT 183  
Greenfield MA

**Plainfield COA**

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

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

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

**Linda Carver**  
lindacarver17@yahoo.com

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

**This Newsletter is sponsored in part by a grant from The Executive Office of Elder Affairs.**

## **COVID Vaccine Scams!**

Federal and state organizations are advising everyone to stay vigilant about COVID-19 scams related to vaccines, treatments, test kits and clinical trials.

Here are five key points that state and federal officials want the public to understand.

1. Initially, the vaccine will be available in limited quantities, so people should turn to trusted resources — their doctor or local health department — for guidance.
2. People should not buy any kind of coronavirus vaccine or treatment on the internet or from an online pharmacy.
3. Doses of vaccine that were purchased with U.S. taxpayer dollars will be provided to patients at no cost. Providers, though, may charge an administration fee and have that fee reimbursed by private and public insurance companies. There's also a means of reimbursement for uninsured patients.
4. Consumers should not respond to any solicitations about the vaccine. "Fraudsters are using telemarketing calls, text messages, social media platforms and door-to-door visits to perpetrate COVID-19-related scams," HHS officials said in the Dec. 3 fraud advisory.
5. People should not give cash or any other form of payment to suspicious callers, nor should they divulge personal, medical or financial information, which criminals can use to fraudulently bill federal health care programs and to commit medical identity theft.

There will be strict protocols for the order in which certain groups of people, such as nursing home residents and health care workers, will be inoculated. Watch for announcements from federal and state governments. For more information, consult online resources like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention webpages and the FDA's vaccine webpages.

