

Plainfield Council on Aging

March 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

March 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 For Phase 2 Recipients (February – March 2021)

Phase 2 is underway for the following recipients.

- **Individuals with 2+ comorbidities (high risk for COVID-19 complications), individuals age 75+, and residents and staff of public and private low income and affordable senior housing.**
- **Website For More Information:**
Maimmunizations.org
www.mass.gov/covidvaccinelocations
- **If you do not have computer access and need help booking an appointment, etc. you can also contact Highland Valley Elder Services in Florence.** Their Information & Referral department will provide vaccination information and scheduling assistance to callers through the mass.gov website. In addition, they are working with individuals who need transportation resources to get their vaccination. Call HVES I&R department at 413-586-2000 x2, if you need transportation information.
- The 211 phone line now has a hotline available for individuals 75+ in MA, to assist in scheduling COVID-vaccinations. Folks can access this by simply dialing 211 and listening for the prompt for vaccination scheduling assistance.

Steps needed to reserve an appointment online:

- Pick an appointment location at either www.mass.gov/covidvaccinelocations or www.maimmunizations.org/
- Pick a date in the near future. The further away from your present date, the more likely you will find an open appointment time. Due to the high demand and limited supply of vaccine, consumers may need to wait and try the process several times to schedule a vaccination appointment.
- Collecting Consumer Information: Most appointment scheduling platforms will require the following information:

Personal Information: First and last name, home address, date of birth, telephone number, email address if relevant.

Health Insurance Information: Insurance provider, plan information, member identification (note that individuals without insurance and undocumented individuals are still eligible to receive the vaccine and can make an appointment).

Consent or Attestation: Most online scheduling platforms will require consent using a check box function or digital signature to affirm that the consumer meets the eligibility criteria to receive the COVID-19 vaccine and is aware of certain information related to the vaccine (e.g., potential allergic reactions and side-effects, personal information use).

Screening Questions: Most online platforms require the consumer to answer a series of screening questions to better understand their

health history prior to coming to the vaccination location.

- Once your appointment is confirmed, bring the required documentation with you, wear a short sleeve loose fitting shirt, and remember your mask.

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 Honneus at 743-5345. 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 voicemail several times a day. You can also contact her via email: shonneus@town.plainfield.ma.org.

The Plainfield Mutual Support Network

The Plainfield Mutual Support Network (PMSN) is ever present during the pandemic. Again, for your information, the PMSN web page is (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 webpage (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 8 am to 7 pm.

Just a reminder, The Hilltown Food Pantry in Go-

shen is open on Wednesdays from 1-3pm and every third Wednesday from 1-6pm. It offers food at no cost for everyone. It is located in Goshen on Route 9, in the Town Office Building. The entrance is in the rear left of the building. The Town Office Building is white with a large steeple.

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. Classes are held on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday each week. 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.

Clarification On Medical Equipment

If you need medical equipment such as walkers, commodes, bed pads, shower chairs, etc., they are free to borrow and can be picked up at Hathaway Hall (prior fire station). Please call Susan Pearson at 634-0025 for more information.



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



The State Fire Marshall tells us that electrical fires are the second leading cause of fire deaths in the Commonwealth. Here are some ways to avoid an electrical fire:

- Plug major appliances like space heaters and air conditioners directly into wall outlets. Do not use extension cords or power strips.
- Charge laptops and cell phones on hard surfaces, not on soft surfaces like beds or upholstered furniture.
- Unplug any device powered by lithium-ion batteries when charged. Do not over charge them or leave them charging unattended or over night.
- Turn heating pads, electric blankets and space heaters off before sleeping.
- Learn how to deal with a fire in your microwave oven -- hint: keep the microwave door closed, turn off and unplug it if you can do so safely.
- Store batteries the way they come -- not loosely in a baggie.

Have a sweet Sugar Season and stay SAFE!

--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.

Regional News



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!

Big Five plus Relevant Information

Assuming you have done a Letter of Instruction following last month's suggestion, you have quite a jump on this month's item. Good on you!

I can think of three categories of Relevant Information to keep and file. One is related to taxes, you know, "keep tax records for 3 years unless something else pops up to bite you in the ahem." We go to the horse's mouth for that guidance and type in a search question, e.g., at IRS.gov, "how long do I keep tax records". I find the major tax preparing firms such as TurboTax and H & R Block have still accurate but even more useful information.

The second category of information comes from making a good bet that files related to the contents of that Letter of Instruction will be needed. This means current insurance policies, real estate deeds, bank statements, vehicle titles, tax files, warranties, contracts, and, I'm afraid, more and more. There are lots of suggestions online for organizing these, such as files for employment, financial, health, identity, insurance, real estate, and vehicle. Let me know if you want some suggestions.

The third category is personal. Family marriage, birth, and death certificates will be useful in genealogy. Some medical records could be very helpful. Records of a significant achievement may get passed on in the family. Embarrassing photos of babies will want to be available for embarrassing those adults. Well, I did say personal. You have to figure out what this means to you.

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

Good News!

By Deborah Hollingworth



Spring officially starts, March 22nd! And the operative word, as the vaccine roll-out continues, is **patience**.

The online sign up for appointments continues to improve. There are a number of ways you can get assistance to sign up online at the state website, www.Mass.gov. Volunteers are being recruited to help, there are promises of making the website easier to navigate, and more vaccination sites continue to be opened in our area. Best way to get current information is to call your senior center where we are attempting to stay on top of developments as they happen.

The Massachusetts Scheduling Resource Line 877-211-6277 opened last month and is able to book an appointment for you. You can call and speak to a person. They are aware of availability for all sites statewide. Patience and perseverance are recommended in order to get through. All calls are free and confidential. The TTY number is 508-370-4890. Thanks to all those who helped get this much needed resource in place for those of us with limited, or no internet access.

NOTE: if you receive a phone call about the Covid-19 vaccine, know that the Board of Health, Council on Aging and others who might be volunteering to assist you **will never ask for your social security number, your credit card or bank information**. We will ask only for your name, date of birth, address, and Medicare insurance card number. There are some scammers who are using vaccine registration to get your information. **The Covid-19 vaccine is free**. If you have any concerns about the legitimacy of a phone call you receive, please hang up and call your local Board of Health or Council on Aging.

In other good news, the freeze on MassHealth benefits continues through April 24th, when the Governor will review it again. MassHealth benefits have been "frozen" since March last year. This means if you have had MassHealth, you haven't lost it, even though you may no longer be eligible. Coverage has not ended, and will remain in place until the Governor makes the decision to resume normal MassHealth processing.

Other not so good news...some of you may have received letters from MassHealth saying they will no longer be paying your Medicare B premium. You are not



alone, 1800 Massachusetts residents received this (Federal) subsidy which will end February 28th. If this has happened to you, or someone you know, you can contact your SHINE counselor for details. You will not lose your other MassHealth benefits, just the Part B subsidy. If you have questions about medical insurance, you can always contact your senior center for a SHINE appointment anytime.

Tax Assistance

Hilltown Community Development unfortunately will not be offering community tax prep assistance this year due to ongoing safety concerns for our volunteers, staff and clients.

However, Community Action Pioneer Valley is providing FREE tax assistance to clients who live in Hampshire or Franklin counties with incomes of \$31,900 or less (for a single filer). Clients will need to be able to scan and email their documents to participate this year. Those who do not have that ability are encouraged to wait until after March 1st, since Community Action is working on a possibility of a "drive through" scanning of documents. For additional information and to schedule an appointment please visit Community Action at www.communityaction.us/freetaxassistance or call 413-376-1136.

An additional resource is AARP's free online tax assistance website. There is no income limits or other restrictions for people to utilize the AARP self-prepared service.

Please note that the IRS is not accepting 2020 tax returns until February 12th this year.

AARP recently put out the following article "**Ten things to know about your 2020 tax returns**" that discusses some tax changes for 2020, what to do if you haven't received the stimulus checks, and other relevant topics:

www.aarp.org/money/taxes/info-2021/getting-ready-to-file-2020-taxes.html

Cummington Fair photos



April Judd is working on a Cummington Fair history book and is looking for photos. If you have any that you would like to include in the book, contact April: 413-268-7109, cummingtonfair@gmail.com. You can email the photos to April or she can borrow them, scan them and return them to you.



On the Go!

A hearty hello from your trip leaders, Lorraine, Barbara, Betty, Karen and Francine.



With the vaccine in view, the Friends of Northampton Seniors travel group would like to give you a brief outline of future bus trips that are being contemplated for late summer and fall of 2021. Please know nothing is written in stone and things can change.

If you'd like to share your email address with Francine so we can keep in touch, please send a short message to:

francine.frenier@gmail.com

Watch for more details in upcoming newsletters.

- ⇒ August MGM Casino
- ⇒ September Big E
- ⇒ Late September Niagara Falls, if border is open, 5 days
- ⇒ October 8-18 Colorado, 11 Days
- ⇒ Late Oct/Nov Plymouth, 400th Anniver. Program
- ⇒ December Bright Nights & Red Rose



The time is approaching and we couldn't be more excited!



Smith Vocational Culinary students and the chefs are firing it up in the kitchen. Check out the school website for the menu:

www.smithtec.org/culinary-arts

and look for them on Facebook and Instagram. Each post will have more details. This will be a safe, fun and delicious experience for everyone!

The Oliver Smith Restaurant drive-thru!

FIRST LETS GO OVER A FEW DETAILS TO START:

1. VERY IMPORTANT, CALL FIRST to make sure the restaurant is open that day. Our menu & schedule may vary week to week.
2. The daily menu can be found on our school website, and I will post it on Facebook & Insta, SO FOLLOW US!
3. All orders MUST be in by 10a.m!



OPENING DAY: 2 / 8 / 21
TO PLACE ORDERS CALL:
413-587-1414 x3522
KEEP AN EYE out for the rest of the IMPORTANT DETAILS!
THANK YOU FOR YOUR PATRONAGE!

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

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Money Wiring



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



Money wiring scams come in many variations. Scammers like to get paid using wire transfer services because it's fast, the money is often available within minutes, not leaving the consumer time to cancel the transaction once they realize it is a scam. The money is usually picked up in cash and in person making it hard to recover.

Remember...

- **Never wire money to claim a prize**
- **Never wire money to someone you don't know**

Watch out for these MONEY WIRING SCAMS

- Lottery & sweepstakes scams
- Overpayment scams
- Relationship scams
- Mystery shopper scams
- Online purchase scams
- Apartment rental scams
- Advance fee loan scams
- Family emergency or friend-in-need scams
- IRS scams