

Plainfield Council on Aging

December 2021 Newsletter



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

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

SAVE THE DATE!

Roast Beef Dinner



When: **December 8, 2021**
(unless otherwise restricted by the Board of Health)

Time: **12 noon**
Where: Plainfield Town Hall

The COA luncheons continue to be a success. We would love to have you join us for our holiday dinner. If possible, bring a side dish to go with our roast beef dinner. This will be a perfect opportunity to catch up with one another, enjoy the holiday festivities as we enjoy a wonderful meal together.

Remember we still require proof of vaccination to attend these luncheons as our way of insuring everyone present is protected and comfortable meeting together in the dining hall.

Music and Merriment:

An afternoon of Songs and Connection with the Hampshire Regional High School Chorus

Dec. 15th at 12:30

Join the Hampshire Regional High School Chorus and their director Aidan Linden via Zoom for an afternoon performance of songs ranging from holiday songs, to pop music, oldies and more! Solo and small group songs will be mixed with full group chorus songs. There will be an opportunity for Q&A with the students after the performance as well. Email COA Coordinator, Sue, for the Zoom link: shonneus@town.plainfield.ma.us

Suggestions for COA Day Trips

We are still looking for suggestions for day trips. If there is something you would like to do, please place it in the suggestion box provided in the kiosk at the Town Hall. All requests will be considered.

Plainfield Walkability

Along with Joan Griswold, several members in Plainfield are looking into the feasibility of creating walking routes in Plainfield. Anyone interested in joining this group is more than welcome. Please contact Sue Honneus for more information at shonneus@town.plainfield.ma.us.

Medical Equipment Swap

Remember, the Plainfield COA has medical equipment available. The inventory includes wheelchairs, walkers, crutches and canes, shower chairs, raised toilet seats and free-standing commodes plus assorted splints and braces, pedal exercisers, bed guards, sox assists and trekking poles. **Call Susan Pearson at 634-0025** for further information or to borrow some equipment. If there is something we do not have, Ashfield has additional equipment. Call Deb Scott at 413-628-4547 or email her at cbuilders95@yahoo.com

CDC Guidance For The Upcoming Holidays

On October 15, 2021, the CDC released its guidelines for celebrating the holidays. It advised getting vaccinated is the best way to minimize the risk to all, but especially those people ineligible for vaccines like children under the age of five. If you are not fully vaccinated, the CDC recommends wearing a well-fitting mask indoors. Additionally, masks are recommended for fully vaccinated people in communities with substantial to high transmission rates. If you feel you are sick or have symptoms, get a COVID-19 test and do not host or attend gatherings. If you are traveling, wear a mask on any public transportation and consider delaying your trip if not vaccinated.

Medicare Open Enrollment Is Here!

There are changes to some Medicare plans for 2022!

Medicare Advantage Plans: Aetna Explorer Premier Plan (PPO) plan and Harvard Pilgrim Stride plans in Massachusetts will be discontinued as of January 1, 2022. If enrollees in either of these plans take no action, they will be returned to Original Medicare and will therefore have no prescription drug coverage. Enrollees have a Special Enrollment Period through the end of February 2022 to select a new plan for 2022



Prescription Drug Plans:

Wellcare and Express Scripts are discontinuing some of their stand-alone prescription drug plans and are moving enrollees into an alternate Wellcare plan for 2022. Premiums may be significantly higher in these new plans.

Medigap plans: These are continuously open for enrollment in Massachusetts.

Medicare beneficiaries should review changes to their plans and may select a different plan during Medicare Open Enrollment which ends 12/7. For information and assistance with enrolling in a Medicare Advantage, Medigap, or Prescription Drug plan, contact SHINE at 1-800-243-4636 or the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services at 1-800-633-4227.



An Alzheimer's Request

Do not ask me to remember,
Don't try to make me understand
Let me rest and know you're with me
Kiss my cheek and hold my hand.
I am confused beyond your concept,
I am sad and sick and lost.
All I know is that I need you
To be with me at all costs.
Please do not lose your patience with me,
Do not scold me or curse or cry.
I can't help the way I am acting.
I can't be different though I try.
Just remember that I need you
And that the best of me is gone.
Please don't fail to stand beside me
And love me til my life is gone.

By Owen Darnell



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 holiday season is almost here and everyone is busy getting ready to celebrate them with family and friends. It is time to get all those outside lights in place. Here are some tips on how to use them safely:

Senior 
SAFE

- Be sure to use only lights rated for outdoor use.
- Consider replacing older lights with new LED lights that are cooler and use less electricity.
- Anchor securely outdoor lights and decorations against storms and wind with insulated hooks or holders.
- Do NOT overload circuits.
 - 15 amp circuits support 1,800 watts.
 - 20 amp circuits support 2,400 watts.
- Do NOT drive nails, staples or tacks through wiring insulation.
- Use electrical connection protectors to keep water out.
- Outdoor electrical decorations should be plugged into a ground-fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) -- either portable or permanently installed by an electrician.
- Store the electric displays inside after the holidays to prevent hazards and to extend their life.

Celebrate the holidays SAFELY!

--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!

ROBO CALLS!!! Note 2 and last for now

I really need to find topics that are easier to write about. Frustration – it is not clear that we can do much to stop these dratted calls without making more issues. I contacted the DA's office to see if there is a review of the many listed options, e.g., commercial programs or apps. Their advice, other than not answering the phone, is to contact your phone carrier and see what they might offer. I'm on AT&T, so I started there and looked at the top three in our area, which are AT&T, Verizon, and T-Mobile.

All three have gone to bat to combat text and phone spams. Each has a collection of tools, many free to subscribers but not all, that let you block callers. Reviews of those apps are mixed: mostly positive but the negatives include sometimes blocking calls you want. Some require you to report each individual unwanted call or text.

Commercial programs such as RoboKiller, Nomorobo, and Hiya, are available to anyone though there are often costs. These links are a good resource for comparing programs including those from the carriers: www.pcmag.com/how-to/how-to-block-robocalls-and-spam-calls and www.cnet.com/tech/mobile/how-to-stop-spam-calls/

Actions –

- ⇒ Check your Do Not Call status if you didn't after Note 1, or if you get a new number.
- ⇒ Make sure your password(s) – notice the plural there? – are strong.
- ⇒ Get used to checking for voicemail after you don't answer a call you don't recognize.
- ⇒ Do check out your carrier's offerings – go to their main website and search for "spam blockers" or call your carrier.
- ⇒ Tell me if you find the magic bullet somewhere.

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

December's Good News

By Deborah Hollingworth

A couple decades ago, my parents and I decided to sell our homes and buy a house big enough to live together. Dad had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's several years prior and Mom was having more difficulty taking care of him. Too many weepy long distance phone calls where she was having a bad day. It was an hour and a half drive to get to her and I was working full time. We had to have a better plan. Sometimes miracles happen. We found our new home and, despite a depressed housing market, both their condo in Vermont and my home in Chester sold in a matter of weeks. Mom and Pop moved into our new home while construction was underway, making it into a space that would work for both of us. The Chester house had sold, but I was clearing out 25 years worth of accumulated stuff. Three dumpsters later, I was able to joint them. The contractor was a saint. And with the exception of a wayward electrician who held up the sheet rocking, we kept to schedule on renovations.

For my Dad, moving back to Williamsburg worked like a time machine. This had been his home for 50 years before moving to Vermont. His short term memory was sketchy at best, but his long term memory recognized all the landmarks. It was familiar. He felt at home.

Dad had been taking Aricept which was the only Rx on the market for Alzheimer's back then. It was remarkably effective. His conversation improved, he remembered his grandchildren's names again, and better still, he remembered the punch lines for a number of jokes. But Aricept had side effects which he couldn't tolerate. He had to discontinue it and the result was profound and discouraging. He said he felt his mind slipping away. I found a Rx trial program at Southern Vermont Medical Center in Bennington. He was accepted and once a month for a year and a half we went to Bennington where he got to work with a neurologist, Dr. William Pendlebury (who became Medical Director for the University of Vermont's Memory Center) and he got to take a new Rx, not yet FDA approved, called Galantamine. While the results were not as dramatic as Aricept, it did seem to help. He was not oriented to time, but he still knew where he was (because this was his home for many years) and the greatest gift....he remained oriented to person.

I need to emphasize that every Alzheimer's journey is unique to the individual. While there are common factors, each person's experience can be different.

The Good News this month is that we are plan-

ning a series of articles for upcoming newsletters that will give suggestions, information and resources for families dealing with dementia care issues.

My Dad died of end stage Alzheimer's in 2001. Until almost the end, we were able to keep him home with support services that included a Day Program with Hawthorne Services and some home care help through Highland Valley. We were lucky. My job as a social worker meant I was familiar with a lot of the resources available for Alzheimer's patients and their family caregivers. Still....if I knew then (25 years ago) what I've learned since then....it could have been a great deal less stressful. It's not an easy journey, but it can be made less difficult if you know what help is available. Next month we'll talk about where the journey starts: getting an accurate, thorough diagnosis.

Peg Whalen presents:

Free Android Smartphone Workshop

Mon. December 13th, 2:30-5:00

Want to catch up with your grandchildren who tell you using a smartphone is simple and easy? The fact is, figuring how to use all of the features of an Android smartphone is often not obvious at all. Join us at the workshop, hang out with friends and have fun "learning the ropes".



- Understand some basics of getting your phone to do what you want it to do.
- Do things you have been told it can do but you have not figured out how.
- Understand your phone enough to feel comfortable with using it for new tasks and activities
- Understand what you should be wary of.
- Identify ways to find out more about your phone.

Some of the issues to be covered include how to:

- Get your pictures off your phone and onto your computer
- Find and install apps
- Determine whether you can use it for banking, bill paying, accessing medical records and reaching your doctor's office or pharmacy.

Interested in coming? Please call the workshop facilitator, Peg Whalen, at **413-404-4566** or email **pegwhalenworkshops@gmail.com** to register by December 10, 2021. It would be helpful to know your cell/smartphone number and your email address. You will receive a short set of questions that help the organizer prepare to make the workshop most useful for your skills and interested. * Please note: this workshop will not cover how to troubleshoot an ongoing problem with your phone or how to fix broken parts of your phone.

On the Road Again..



2022 Trip Lineup

These are some of the bus trip destinations in different stages of planning with various travel groups. Most trips are limited to 36 passengers. Contact Francine Frenier if interested or want more information by calling 413-296-4291 or emailing francine.frenier@gmail.com. More information to come in future newsletters.

⇒ *Day Trip Jan/Feb. Ice Castles* is an award-winning frozen attraction in Lincoln, NH. The attractions are built using hundreds of thousands of icicles hand-placed by professional ice artists. The castles include breathtaking LED-lit sculptures, frozen thrones, ice-carved tunnels, fountains and much more. Warm clothing and good footwear recommended. We make a stop for a bite to eat along the way. Date and cost to be determined. Anticipated date is a Thursday in late January/early February when the weather conditions are cold enough. Approx. cost \$110, \$10 discount if paid early. Lunch is on your own. Taking interest list NOW.

⇒ *Multi Day Oct 14-23. Nashville, Memphis & Rock & Roll Hall of Fame—10 days.* \$1,205, \$25 discount if paid early. Flyer available. Taking interest list NOW.

Day Trip Feb/Mar. Everett, MA. Encore Boston Harbor Casino.

Multi Day April 24-30. Myrtle Beach Show Trip.

Day Trip May. Country Shopping in Southern Vermont Trip.

Day Trip May 18: Dancing Dream Abba Tribute Band at Aqua Turf in Plantsville, CT.

Multi Day May 23-27. Lancaster, PA. Sight & Sound Theater presents David.

The Road to Evaluating Dementia: What does having an evaluation involve?

By Jan Gibeau

When I wrote about my journey in living with MCI (mild cognitive impairment) in October, I mentioned that once I was worried about the changes in my memory, I arranged to have a complete evaluation to find out "What's going on". It's the first step to take to avoid living with fear and anxiety about the unknown. I thought it might be helpful to share more information about what a

thorough evaluation entails.

To begin the evaluation, your PCP (primary care provider) will take your complete medical history. It's important to bring someone with you, preferably someone who knows you well, so that all of the information is as detailed as possible and you have someone to take notes for you. It also makes it easier to focus solely on your interactions and asking questions without trying to write things down at the same time. Lastly, having a family member or someone close to you there helps to fill in the gaps and ask questions they may have, especially if they will be the ones helping you as you cope with changes as they come up. This is not the time to "go it alone" or "tough it out". It's been said that accepting help is harder than helping others but it's important to remember that the person(s) helping you needs a lot of information and support.

Tests that follow a physical exam usually include neurological tests that evaluate your balance, sensory responses, reflexes, memory and thinking skills. Based on those findings, the PCP may order brain scans, blood tests, genetic tests, and a mental health evaluation to help determine a diagnosis. There are a number of different types of dementia but it isn't easy to determine which type you have because the symptoms are often similar across the spectrum of cognitive impairments. To learn more, you may be referred to other specialists such as a neurologist, or to someone who can evaluate and treat symptoms of depression, which can also present itself at the same time. The symptoms can be very similar which makes the identification of which type of dementia is present difficult. Depression is not uncommon but often overlooked. It's important that it be considered.



Successful treatment of depression can help a great deal in reducing symptoms and improving daily life. Once treated, there is a clearer picture of who are and what other steps need to be considered. Completing all of the tests can take a few weeks depending on the results that emerge. However, it also gives you time to think about questions you may have during this period. A thorough report should be shared with you and other family or friends you want to include.

Personally, I found that the results of the evaluation answered most of my questions and it was helpful to review the probabilities of what I would face in the future. It's been over 22 years and I'm slower... but still headed in the right direction. Next month we'll provide more information about options in our region for getting an evaluation, the impact of having cognitive deficits, how it progresses and what resources are available for managing the changes that begin to unfold.

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.

Music and Merriment

**An Afternoon of Songs and Connection
with the Hampshire Regional
High School Chorus**

Weds. December 15th at 12:30pm



Join the Hampshire Regional High School Chorus and their director Aidan Linden via Zoom for an afternoon performance of songs ranging from holiday songs, to pop music, oldies and more! Solo and small group songs will be mixed with full group chorus songs. There will be an opportunity for Q&A with the students after the performance as well. Participants are encouraged to join the Zoom session early (by 12:25pm). **For the Zoom link, please contact your COA Director or Coordinator.**

The Cummington Fair 150 year History Book
is now for sale!



It can be purchased online
at www.cummingtonfair.com
under online merchandise on the homepage.

The cost is \$20 plus \$5 shipping and handling.

Any questions? Email April Judd at
it.cummingtonfair@gmail.com

Need a haircut? Manicure? Facial?

Smith Voc. Cosmetology Program returns
December 10th Reserve your spot today!

Cosmetology Training Center
80 Locust St. Northampton, MA
01060-2094

Offering facials, lip waxing, make up
applications, and beard trims at this
time. Call (413)-587-1414 ext. 3531.

