

Plainfield Council on Aging

July 2023 Newsletter



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

Polly Ryan, Coordinator
413-212-1581
pryan@town.plainfield.ma.us

Dine out at

Spruce Corner Restaurant

Friday, July 14th at 11am

And then visit the

Three Sisters Sanctuary
at 1pm

In lieu of the COA Luncheon, we will be dining out at Spruce Corner Restaurant on Friday, July 14th at 11am and visiting the Three Sisters Sanctuary in Goshen afterward. The Hilltown CDC Van will transport up to 12 residents to and from Town Hall for this excursion leaving at 10:30am and returning at 3pm. Please RSVP with Polly by July 10th: pryan@town.plainfield.ma.us or 413-212-1581. Due to the restaurant's spatial constraints, reservations are limited to 18, however, there are no constraints to the number of people that may visit the Sanctuary where we will meet at 1pm. The tab is being picked up by COA, but donations are always welcome.

Join us for the eighth annual Community Reading for Independence Day on Tuesday, July 4th at 10am in the Alden Pavilion behind the Shaw Memorial Library in Plainfield (312 Main Street). Together,

we will read the Declaration of Independence and Frederick Douglass' 1852 Fourth of July Address. After the reading, we will discuss the readings and issues in small, moderated, groups.

Free and open to all over 12. This year, we will be joined by Martha Burns who will sing songs of freedom. Rain or shine, bring a chair if you want space beyond the pavilion. Learn more: bit.ly/HilltownReading23 or 413-262-1587. The event will also be live-streamed on face-



book: facebook.com/swiftriverpress. Hosted by Plainfield Reads. Co-Hosted by Earthdance, the Plainfield Historical Society, the Plainfield COA, the West Cummington Congregational Church, the Cummington Village Church, and the Cummington Historical Commission.

The next **Foot Care Clinic** at the Community House in Cummington is scheduled for **July 11th**. Please call Piper Sagan at 413-522-8432 to arrange an appointment (\$50) or home visit (\$80 a session).

Grab and go hot meals are available for Plainfield's 60 and over residents at the Cummington Community House. They are ready for pick up every 2nd and 4th Tuesdays each month between noon and 12:30 but must be ordered one week in advance (in July, pick up is the 11th and 25th, please order by July 4th).

To order meals, call **Chrisoula** at 634-2262 or croumeliotis@cummington-ma.gov Suggested donation is \$3 per meal for Highland Valley Elder Services who prepare them.

Would a Senior Tax Work Off program be of interest to anyone in Plainfield? On July 19th at 10:30am, please join Polly at Town Hall to listen to a recording by Kevin Rudden, Principal Assessor in Holliston, who will discuss MA General Law regarding the Senior Real Estate Tax Work-off program and various aspects of it, including the Authorized Representative clause, how Assessors can fund this great program and the benefits it can reap for our community. Our Town Assessor, Gina Papineau, will join us and discuss senior tax exemptions and give us more insight on this work program as well.

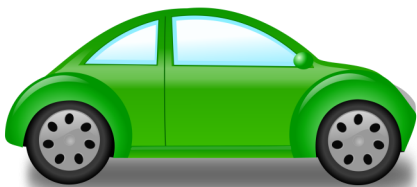
Our monthly support group for those impacted by memory loss and their caregivers will be on Wednesday, July 19th in Town Hall at

9am (I can no longer meet on Saturdays). If you're interested in learning or sharing how we might care for our neighbors struggling with this, please join us. Polly will share what she learned from the Memory Conference held at the Chesterfield Community Center in June. Together we will decide what to explore further.

Dancing with Polly continues on Wednesday, July 26th at 10am in the Plainfield Town Hall. Enjoy dancing at your own pace to some of the participants' favorite music (send Polly songs you like, and she'll get them on the playlist). This has become a popular dance exercise event. RSVP with Polly would be much appreciated at 413-212-1581 or pryan@town.plainfield.ma.us

The monthly technical support with Peg Whalen will be on a hiatus for the months of July and August. In the meantime, you can still call or text Peg at 413-404-4566 or send her an email at pegwhalenworkshops@gmail.com to schedule a time for help with your specific needs.

A proposal to MCOA for transportation funding is being submitted on behalf of our Plainfield COA for residents over 60. Should we get awarded these funds in July, you may schedule rides to get to doctor's appointments or to anywhere a health service is provided (including exercise), and shopping. Please let Polly know if you would have an interest in this service and for how often at 413-212-1581 or pryan@town.plainfield.ma.us



Hopeful news about the future of our COA Newsletter! Senator Paul Mark came through for us with a \$25,000.00 line item in the State budget for the newsletter. It still needs to go through the Conference Committee and have the Governor's approval. This is just funding for the coming year, but it gives us time to figure out future funding. Please call Senator Mark at 413-464-5635 to thank him. Did you know you can get a color digital copy (PDF) of the newsletter? This may be an alternate way of getting COA news to you. To subscribe, email: regionalcoanews@gmail.com



Happy Birthday!

Frank Kosior, Patricia Lachance, Joseph Cliché, Daniel Lachance, Gale Bulissa, Stephen Elmstrom, Dale Beals, Nancy Borey, Linda Melle, Donald Kelly, Bonnie Phillips, Lewis Robbins, Jeanne Sargent Laurie Israel, Judith Gyovai, Anthony Provenzano, Edward Stockman, Judith Williams



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

LIES MY MOTHER TOLD ME

By I Might Be Funny

1. "It's illegal to drive with the overhead light on."
2. "If you swallow your gum, it will stay in your stomach for 7 years."
3. "Keep making that face & it'll freeze like that."
4. "I have eyes in the back of my head."
5. "You can't swim for 30 minutes after eating."
6. "Don't sit so close to the TV, you'll go blind."
7. "The dog went to live on a big farm."
8. "I'm just running into the store for *one* thing."
9. "A watermelon will grow in your stomach if you swallow the seeds." © I Might Be Funny
10. "Maybe...I'll think about it."

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!

Your State Representatives

State Senator Paul Mark

Email: paul.mark@masenate.gov

Phone: 413-464-5635

Mail: 773 Tyler Street
Pittsfield, MA 01201

Nearby local office hours:

Williamsburg Town Hall
2nd and 4th Tuesdays from 1-3pm

State Representative Lindsay Sabadosa

Email: Lindsay.Sabadosa@mahouse.gov

Phone: 413-270-1166.

Mail: 76 Gothic Street
Northampton, MA 01060

Scams and Our Brains

We read a lot about the different scams and the scammers that are out to get us (no, it is not paranoia if they really are, goes the old joke), but what about our role in scams? I got to thinking about the "How" part of our avoiding scams. Perhaps it comes down to how we think about them. Our mental state may direct how we respond to a potential threat.

So, we get an offer, a message, some communication, and wonder if it could be a scam. Are there hard and fast rules to help you to decide? Not always but there are three that should tickle your brain.

- ⇒ If the person asks you for something related to crypto currency, It Is A Scam.
- ⇒ If the person says they are calling from Medicare, Social Security, the IRS, or the FBI, It Is A Scam.
- ⇒ If they are calling from your bank and asking for personal information like your account number, debit card number or pin, account log-in credentials, Social Security Number, or account balance, It Is A Scam.

Other rules are fuzzier, but consider:

- ⇒ Was it an unsolicited phone call?
- ⇒ Was it an unsolicited and maybe poorly worded email?
- ⇒ Was it an unsolicited door visitor?
- ⇒ Does it sound too good to be true?
- ⇒ Do they say there is great benefit but no risk?
- ⇒ Is the speaker or writer pressuring me to hurry, act fast, keep this secret?
- ⇒ Have any friends or family warned me about responding to calls and emails?
- ⇒ Do I think I'm too smart or well-informed to fall for a scam?
- ⇒ What does my instinct say? Or if you prefer, what is my gut reaction?

Probably our best defense against the scams is our brain!

Thoughtfully,

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

July's Good News

By Deb Hollingworth

There are 2.4 million Massachusetts residents who are enrolled in MassHealth's programs. Usually we have to re-certify every year, that is, fill out what looks like an application every year to let MassHealth know about any changes in our circumstances. Did we get married, did our spouse die, did our financial situation change? Is our address the same? In March 2020, when Covid put us in a "public health emergency", re-certification stopped because our MassHealth coverage was frozen in place.

Now that the Covid public health emergency has ended, MassHealth has to start the re-certification process again. For all 2.4 million of us. The good news is that more folks have been hired to help us do this. Highland Valley and LifePath (in Greenfield) have received money to hire a Benefits counselor to help with the re-certification application. So here are some numbers to call if you have questions about the Big Blue envelope.

You can call MassHealth's customer service line at **800-841-2900** or Highland Valley at **413-586-2000** and ask for their Benefits counselor, or LifePath at **413-773-5555** to ask for their Resource Consultant. Closer to home you can contact your Senior Center to speak with your SHINE counselor.

Saving the Written Word: Councils on Aging Newsletters at Risk

Funding from the Executive Office of Elder Affairs for the monthly newsletter ended on June 30th. The Northern Hilltowns Consortium of Councils on Aging has been working diligently to find a way to save it. It's the major way we reach out to 2,326 households with people 60 years or older. It's important. Better communication was one of the priorities people cited in our Age Friendly survey as a priority in making our towns more livable.

What does the newsletter do to make communication stronger? We've focused more and more on getting the word out about:

- Town and regional events that help people feel less isolated and more connected to their communities and each other.
- Access to food, exercise classes, health insurance plans and benefits
- Use of broadband and internet resources, learning how to use iPhones, computers and other equipment needed to enter the digital world

- Learning about scams and how to reduce vulnerability.
- Groups in each town that meet regularly meet to work on arts and craft projects, puzzles, playing cards, etc.
- Educational programs about major issues affecting us as we age, such as memory problems, loneliness, financial problems, access to medical services, long term care and end of life issues.

Losing the newsletter puts all of this in limbo. The Consortium has applied for a number of grants but the process itself is very competitive. We will not know the results until after the final state budget is signed by Governor Healy. Representative Lindsay Sabadosa and Senator Paul Mark have been working hard to support our efforts by filing bills in both the House and Senate. At the time of this writing the request did not make it out of the House budget committee, but the Senate voted to fund \$25,000. We appreciate their work on our behalf. Unfortunately, we need close to \$42,000 each year to keep the newsletter alive.

We have applied for a major grant from EOEA to increase digital equity in rural communities. The hope is to expand electronic access for people who want to switch over to digital copies but also make it available on the Consortium website: **northernhilltownscoas.org**, the town websites, Facebook, and a range of related internet access points. We recently learned that applications that have been submitted resulted in a total of \$3 million dollars, twice the \$1.5 million of the funds available.

The Consortium is still committed to keeping the newsletter going as long as we can. In our June monthly meeting the group voted to use funds from our membership dues to cover the August edition.

Let's hope that we are fortunate enough to get the help we need, but June and possibly July are cliff-hangers for now.

Respectfully,
Jan Gibeau
Chair, Northern Hilltown Consortium of
Councils on Aging



On the Road Again... 2023 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 August 10. Garden in the Woods- This trip includes a walking guided tour of the Garden in the Woods in Framingham followed by a luncheon at the Longfellow's Wayside Inn. Entrée choices are Breast of chicken, Baked Salmon, or Yankee Pot Roast. Two floors of historical exhibits to explore at the inn. A stop at Hebert Candy Mansion. Make payment to Landmark Tours for \$122 due **NOW**. Mail to the address above. **WAIT LIST ONLY.**

Day Trip August 24. Saratoga Racetrack, Saratoga Springs, NY. This trip includes lunch at the Inn at Saratoga. Entrée choices are Chicken Normandy or Pasta a la Saratoga. After lunch, spend time at the racetrack in our reserved grandstand seats. Over 60 concession stands on the grounds. Make payment to Landmark Tours for \$130 due **NOW**. Mail to the address above. **NOTE DATE CORRECTION.**

Multi Day Trip September 10-12. Nantucket Island. Three days to two nights. Includes ferry to and from the island, guided tour of the island and all access pass to historical sites. Make payment to First Choice for \$748 p/p double occupancy due **NOW**. Mail to the address above. Limited seats.

Day Trip September 14. Lake Sunapee Luncheon Cruise- Vermont Country Store. A two hour luncheon cruise on Lake Sunapee in New Hampshire. This trip includes Luncheon buffet and a stop at the Vermont Country Store. Make payment to Landmark Tours for \$111 due **NOW**. Mail to the address above. **WAIT LIST ONLY.**

Multi Day Trip September 29-October 9, 2023. Mt. Rushmore, Crazy Horse - S. Dakota & Devils Tower - Wyoming. 11 days. Stops at Corn Palace, Wall Drug, National Museum of Great Lakes, Iowa Museum of Natural History, Des Moines Art Center, and Eck Visitors Center at Univ. of Notre Dame. Cost \$1,178. Due **NOW**. Contact Francine to reserve your seat.

Day Trip November 4. Elvis- A Musical Revolution- North Shore Theater. An exciting musical in Beverly, MA where you will hear 40 of Elvis' hits. Lunch at Danversport Yacht Club included. Make \$259 payment to First Choice **NOW**. Mail to the address above. A few seats remain.

Multi Day Trip May 2024. Nova Scotia, Prince

Edward Island & New Brunswick. Passport required. Cost TBD per person dbl. occupancy. This 9 day trip includes 8 nights lodging including 5 nights in Canada, one night stay in Maine coming and going. 14 meals including: 8 breakfasts and 6 dinners. Guided Tour of Acadia National Park, Guided Tour of Halifax, Peggy's Cove & Lunenburg.

Aging and Technology Survey Results

We are grateful to everyone who contributed their experiences with technology by participating in the Aging and Technology survey and offer thanks to even more people expressing interest in the results. We mailed over 3,516 questionnaires to everyone 60 and older in Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Plainfield, Westhampton, Williamsburg, Haydenville, and Worthington. The response was overwhelming, with over 1,225 returns, a response of 35%.

Here's what we learned:

Our results show 85% of older adults in the Hilltowns use technology daily, 10% use it never, rarely or once in a while, and 5% use it monthly or weekly. The top three reasons for none or infrequent technology use are knowing little to nothing (44%); having no interest (35%); and over one-quarter have concerns about stolen identity, theft, or home break-ins. Of the small number of people never or infrequently using technology, 15% said they cannot afford internet service and computers.

Of those responding to the survey 91% said that they have a computer, laptop, or tablet and are able to access the internet. Almost one in ten (8%) have no technology of any type. About 3/4 report having printers The types of phones people use varied; 59% still have a landline, 90% have cellular phones, and 90% of these are smartphones. Three quarters have Broadband internet service from either Comcast, Dish, Direct TV, Satellite or Whip City fiber network.

People said that they make use of technology in a variety of ways. Most people use email (93%). Other ways include: searches on the internet, order prescriptions online, make telehealth appointments, use medical/health care portals. Over half of people (52%) use social media of some type to access retirement accounts or online Social Security accounts. Slightly over a third have an online Medicare account.

Who helps with technology?

The major source of help comes from adults: adult or child/teen family members (74.2%) or friends (24.2%). *Continued on next page.*

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

PRSR STD
US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT 183
Greenfield MA

Plainfield COA

Polly Ryan, Coordinator
413-212-1581
pryan@town.plainfield.ma.us

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

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

Susan Honneus
413-743-5345
stormpetrel22@gmail.com

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

Mary Potter
413-734-5430
mary@potterhomebuilders.com

Bonnie Phillips
413-634-2290
bfillups21@icloud.com

Newsletter Designer
Kristen Estelle

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

continued from page 5)

What are the concerns about “going online”?

Safety was a concern and one-third of people indicated that they have been or may have been a victim of computer or internet scams. Among these scam victims, 6% lost money, 11% report viruses, 3% lost information, and/or 2% had damage to equipment. Very few reported financial loss or damage to authorities, with less than 5% alerting police, DA, or government entities, banks or credit card companies.

The questionnaire includes a section about older adults' interests in learning more and how they want to get technical support and training.

Almost half of those responding expressed definite or possible interest in learning more. The most requested ways of learning include having someone to call when they have a problem or question and scheduling one-on-one help (40.8%). Workshops (34.5%) and drop-in locations (29.9%) were also identified as ways to learn more. Over 1 in 4 said that being told about helpful websites, watching online videos, and ongoing technology classes were good ways to help them learn more. That's good to know because all these services currently are available across our seven northern hilltowns

or online.

Of the nearly half interested in learning more, the devices they most want to learn to use/use better are smartphones and computers/laptops. Over 70% of people identified technology uses they most wanted to learn, including taking, managing, saving, or sending photos, streaming to TV, scanning documents, and attaching documents.

This survey has been very helpful in charting the course to making life on the internet easier, but we could use more help to get there. If you are among the advanced/expert users and are willing to share a small amount of your time to help other older adults please let us know at **nhillcoastech@gmail.com**

What's ahead?

The Consortium has applied for a major grant from the Executive Office of Elder Affairs that could be a strong way to move us forward. In addition to the needed services identified in the grant, it may also provide a way to help more people get Broadband, have access to hotspots and use laptops at identified computer sites in the Hilltowns.

Your voices have been heard and we await decisions when Governor Healy signs the new budget.