

Plainfield Council on Aging

February 2026 Newsletter



Polly Ryan, Coordinator
413-212-1581

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

pryan@town.plainfield.ma.us



Please know that our COA board members welcome guests and grandchildren to attend the COA luncheons!

**Got snow?
Well we've got food to accompany it!
At our February 11th luncheon
in Town Hall at noon**

Join us for vegetarian butternut squash soup, pork roast, noodles, green beans, applesauce and dessert. Other desserts are welcome.

We will have a very special guest, Anita Wilson, present for us on SCAMS! She is the Director of the Consumer Protection Unit at the Northwestern District Attorney's Office. And Kelly Hughes we be available for blood pressure readings.

Please consider doing home kit Covid testing before attending COA events to curb any spread.



**Soup & Game Night
last month was well received!**

Some of us learned how to play Mahjong. We will have another late afternoon event for fun and comfort food on

**Thursday, February 19th,
from 3 pm to 5 pm.**

Join us for a movie matinee in February on Saturday the 21st in Town Hall at 3pm to view "Maria".

The film is a 2024 biographical psychological drama directed by Pablo Larraín and written by Steven Knight. It is an international co-production between Italy, Chile, Germany and the United States. The film stars Angelina Jolie as opera singer Maria Callas and follows the week before her death in 1977 Paris, as she reflects on her life and career. Her artistic achievements were such that Leonard Bernstein called her "the Bible of opera", and her influence so enduring that, in 2006, Opera News wrote of her: "Nearly thirty years after her death, she's still the definition of the diva as artist—and still one of classical music's best-selling vocalists."



**Snacks, popcorn
and drinks included.**



Tech Connect continues until the remaining funds are exhausted.

Whether you want to learn a new skill or need a hardware upgrade, you can still get in home one-on-one support, or free equipment like iPads, Chromebooks, PC laptops, and even a desktop computer.

**Email Nancy Brown at
coatechtrainer@gmail.com
or call 413-296-5080 to make a request.**

**Or go to
<https://northernhilltownscoas.org/>
and submit your request through a form.**

Wishing you good health, warmth, kindness and safety in 2026

Looking Ahead



The Clark Art Museum
has free admission
from January to March.

On March 12th, the COA
will be hosted by docent
Rebecca Coletta, who will honor us
with an 11 am grand tour of the exhibits.

At least 6 people will need to sign up for
this so please RSVP with Polly by calling
413-212-1581 or email
pryan@town.plainfield.ma.us

Lunch will be included, gratis the COA.
. Please RSVP with Polly by calling
413-212-1581 or email her at
pryan@town.plainfield.ma.us

During the free admission season, visitors
will have the opportunity to tour the
Clark's noted permanent collection and to
see two ongoing special exhibitions,
[Raffaella della Olga: Typescripts](#) (open
through May 31, 2026) and [Shadow
Visionaries: French Artists Against the
Current, 1840-70](#) (open through March 8,
2026). In addition, the Clark presents three
special installations during this period.
[Mariel Capanna: Giornata](#) (open through
January 25, 2026) and [Sónia Almeida:
Stages](#) (opens February 14, 2026) are
featured as part of the Clark's ongoing
series of contemporary art in its public
spaces. The Clark library's series of year-
round public installations, [Paginations](#),
presents [Gridlocked: The Geometry of
Weaving](#) (open through May 17, 2026) in
conjunction with Raffaella della Olga:
Typescripts.



**Hilltown Easy Ride is a Hilltown
Community Development Corp. program
that provides transportation for seniors living
in the Hilltowns.**

HCDC can transport you to medical
appointments and shopping centers.
Call Ed, the Easy Ride Program Coordinator
to arrange a door to door pick up. He can be
reached at
(413) 296-4232 or by email:
ride@hilltowncdc.org

If you have interest in being a paid driver,
they are hiring. This is an on-call position
that pays \$20 per hour
and reimburses for mileage.



A discussion series around the book
"Let's Talk about Death over Dinner,"
by Michael Hebb,
will be offered at the
Cummington Community House
in April and May.

"Given the right framing, a "difficult"
conversation does not need to be difficult.
It can be liberating. It can even be
transformative," Michael Hebb.

Death Doula Stacey Mackowiak will lead us
through a "guided conversation that
transforms a seemingly difficult
conversation into one of deep engagement,
insight, and empowerment."

**Michael's book will be provided at an
introductory session on Thursday April
16th from 4-5pm.
On Thursdays May 7th and 14th
dinners will be held from
4:30-6:30pm to share our thoughts on
questions posed in the book.**

**Participation is limited to 15 individuals.
Please RSVP with Polly at
pryan@town.plainfield.ma.us
or call 413-212-1581.**

All individuals in the 7 COA consortium
Hilltowns are welcome to participate.
(Williamsburg, Goshen, Cummington,
Plainfield, Worthington, Chesterfield, and
Westhampton).

**This is an event funded
by a grant from the
Massachusetts
Council on Aging**



Massachusetts
Councils On Aging



The next Foot Care Clinic at the Cummington Community House is scheduled for Tuesday March 3rd.

Please call Piper Sagan at 413-522-8432 to schedule an appointment (\$50) or a home visit (\$80/session).

REACH OUT TO OUR COMMUNITY CONNECTOR!



Do you need help finding resources in the area? Please reach out to our Community Connector, Jen O'Connell.

Jen can help with many issues, including: obtaining benefits such as Fuel Assistance, SNAP, Social Security. Finding resources so you can continue to live independently at home. Programs for home repairs & transportation assistance. Plus more....

**Jen can be reached at
413-296-4536 ext. 110
or communityconnectjo@gmail.com**

Funded by a grant from HVES through funding under the Federal Older Americans Act



Got Food?

There are several programs for receiving food and/or prepared meals delivered to your home regardless of your income. Check in with Polly to find one that fits your needs.

Or go to www.plainfield-ma.us/council-aging/page/food-meal-programs

And, if you wish to help a neighbor by volunteering to pick up food for them, please let Polly know.

Grab and go hot meals are available for Plainfield's 60 and over residents at the Cummington Community House.

They can be picked up every Tuesday between noon and 12:30. To register or order for the first time, call Chrisoula at 413-634-2262 or email her at croumeliotis@cummington-ma.gov.

A suggested donation of \$4 per meal supports Highland Valley Elder Services who prepare them.

The Plainfield Mutual Support Network (PMSN) has a list of volunteers willing to provide rides to local vendors and medical appointments.

Please call 413-634-0170 a few days ahead to schedule something. Leave a message with your contact information and details of your transportation needs.

Healthy Bones and Balance class with Polly are on Tuesdays from 4-4:50pm at the Cummington Community House.

You are welcome to join at any time. The classes are free and ongoing. Classes with Jill are scheduled at the same location on Mondays and Thursday at 9:30 and all are welcome to join her as well.

Caroline Solan is our new SHINE Coordinator and can answer all your Medicare/Advantage plan health insurance questions.

She is available in person on Wednesdays at Highland Valley Elder Services (HVES, 320 Riverside Drive in Florence). You can also call HVES at 413-586-2000 and leave her a message or book an appointment. The most expedited way to reach her would be to send her an email at csolan@lifepathma.org.



If you have questions about MassHealth

call Buliah Mae Thomas at the Hilltown Community Health Center 413-238-5511 or email her at bthomas@hchcweb.org

Ongoing Programs, Activities & Resources on the Plainfield Town Website

Need a friend or support?

Join Polly and/or a nurse for a coffee hour. Schedule a time convenient for you by calling 413-212-1581 or email pryan@town.plainfield.ma.us.



February's Happy Birthdays

Linda Mason, Daniel Hoch, Virginia Ansbergs, Gail Fusco, Patricia Marotte, Kenneth Magdycz, Barbara Skelly, Liebe Coolidge, Sebern Fisher, Ursula Burnham, Cathy Tobin, Susan Honneus, France Vilbon, Rema Loeb, James Pugliese, Rebecca Coletta, Anna Hanchett, Denese Mead..



Regional News

SENIORS AWARE OF FIRE EDUCATION

Open Burning Season began in January and will end on May 1st. You will need a permit from your town's Fire Department, which are given on days when it is safe to burn. It is not safe to burn on windy days or on "red flag" days. The Department of Fire Services recommends the following safe open burning practices:



- The fire area should be at least 75 feet from any dwelling.
- You can only burn from 10am until 4pm.
- You can burn brush, cane, forest debris, and pruning.
- You cannot burn grass, hay, leaves, stumps, tires or construction material and debris.
- An adult should always be present during burns.
- Keep children and pets a safe distance from the fire.
- Start the fire with paper and kindling. Never use gasoline or any other flammable liquid.
- Build one small fire at a time adding to it slowly.
- Have fire control tools at hand — shovels, rakes and a pretested water supply.
- Be prepared to extinguish the fire if the wind picks up or the fire weather changes, before the town calls you to put it out.
- The safest time of the year is when the ground is wet, frozen or snowy. There are a whole lot of Red Flag days in April during which open burning is not allowed.
- Be aware that the fire towers are staffed during open burning season and they are quick to identify and call in unsafe burns.
- If the fire begins to get out of hand, immediately call 911 and have the Fire Department handle it before it gets to any buildings or woods.

--Worth Noyes, SAFE Educator,
Williamsburg & Cummington Fire Departments

The Senior SAFE program is sponsored by many of your fire departments and the MA Dept. of Fire Services.

ALL THOSE PAPERS!

So you know how you throw something out and the next day wish you had it? Sadly, that can happen with papers! You ask, Do I HAVE to keep them ALL?? The good news is short, No!. The bad news, you have to figure out which to keep. Some of these decisions are personal, some are not. Personal – should you keep old love letters? First car registration? You decide. Not personal – here I'll explain taxes, or rather, the IRS explains succinctly. I used this link - www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/how-long-should-i-keep-records

Taxes: Keep tax returns and associated documents, like 1099s, or other documents filed with returns or that could effect your future returns. "The length of time you should keep a document depends on the action, expense, or event which the document records. Generally, you must keep your records that support an item of income, deduction or credit shown on your tax return until . . . you can amend your tax return to claim a credit or refund, or the IRS can assess additional tax." In short, the IRS explains that you should keep records:

- 3 years if the last two bullets below do not apply to you.
- 3 years from the original filing date or 2 years from your tax payment date, whichever is later, if you later refile a claim for credit or refund.
- 7 years if you file a claim for worthless securities or bad debt deduction.
- 6 years if you do not report income that you should, and it is more than 25% of the gross income shown.
- Indefinitely if you do not file a return.

Whew!

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

ARE YOU TURNING 65 THIS YEAR?

By Melissa Wilson, Director,
Williamsburg Senior Center

If so, do you know you are eligible and should sign up for Medicare 3 months before your 65th birthday?

Most people become eligible for Medicare when they turn 65. Your Medicare enrollment steps will differ depending on whether or not you are collecting retirement benefits when you enter your Initial Enrollment Period (IEP).

If you are receiving Social Security retirement benefits or Railroad Retirement benefits, you should be automatically enrolled in both Medicare Part A and Part B. Here is a link for more information: [Medicare How to enroll in Medicare if you are turning 65](#)

For example, if you turn 65 on July 4, 2026, the enrollment window is open from April 1 to October 30. If you miss this deadline, you may have to pay higher premiums for Medicare Part B, which covers doctor bills, outpatient fees and other medical expenses: [AARP-65-this-year-When-should-I-apply-Medicare](#)

Although there is a 7-month window to sign up for Medicare (3 months before your birthday, your birthday month, and 3 months after your birthday)...if you wait and sign up in those 3 months after your birthday, there is a delay in when your coverage will start. If you sign up before your birthday, your coverage will start the first day of your birthday month.

You do not have to worry about incurring a penalty for late sign up if you are still working and covered by your employer's health insurance, or if you are married and covered under your spouse's work insurance.

GOOD NEWS FOR FEBRUARY 2026

By Deb Hollingworth

This is just a reminder for folks who have a Medicare Advantage plan...if you don't like your plan, or you received a termination notice that your plan was ending, you have until March 31st to switch.

Anyone who has a Medicare Advantage plan during this "disenrollment" period (January 1st - March 31st) can switch to another Advantage plan, or disenroll and go back to original Medicare A & B and pick up a Medicare D plan for Rx coverage. You can check with your SHINE counselor to determine the best option. So...after Open Enrollment...October through December 7th each year when you can review your Medicare options and change coverage...there's a "disenrollment period" where you can dump or change your Advantage plan.

For the curious or those looking for a challenge...

Our annual SHINE training is this April. We are always looking for volunteers who would like to learn about and help others understand more about their health insurance. I have to say that SHINE training was the most important information I received over the past 30 years. If you're looking for a volunteer opportunity where you can really make a difference, you should consider becoming a SHINE counselor.

We really need a couple counselors for the hill-towns. If you tried to schedule an appointment to go over your options during Open Enrollment this year, you know the problem. Too many folks need help, not enough counselors to meet the need. "I could never do that" you say? "Too complicated for me to understand? Not so!

You don't have to know everything.

There are between 40-45 SHINE counselors who cover Hampshire/Franklin County. And fortunately we work together and help each other, operating kind of like a "hive" mind. So if you get a call, or meet with someone needing help, and you're not sure of the information, help is just an email away. You don't need to know absolutely everything, you just need to know where to get answers.

If you want to know more...feel free to get in touch. Contact coa.volunteer@Burgy.org or call the Williamsburg Senior Center Monday or Thursday mornings 268-8407

On the Road Again...

TRIPS IN 2026



**Contact Francine Frenier to reserve your seat
BEFORE mailing payments.**

For more info call **413-296-4291**

Email: **francine.frenier@gmail.com**

Mail: **11 Stage Rd. Williamsburg, MA 01096**

Multi Day Trip April 17-21, Washington DC 5

days, 4 nights Admission to the George Washington Mount Vernon Estate, Garden & Memorial, Arlington National Cemetery, Smithsonian Institution, Capitol Building, World War II Memorial and more. Price \$790. Take a \$25 discount if paid in full by January 26, 2026. Make the check payable to Diamond Tours and mail to the address above.

Day Trip May 3, 2026, Sunday A Grand Night for Singing at the Seven Angels Theater in Waterbury, CT. Pre-show lunch at San Marino's Restaurant. Price \$132. Make check payable to Landmark Tours and mail to the address above by March 6, 2026

Day Trip June TBD, Cruise and Lobster Lunch

Enjoy a cruise TBD. Before the cruise, enjoy lunch at Fosters in York Maine. Choice of lobster, BBQ chicken or vegetarian option. Price TBD. Make a check payable to Landmark Tours and mail to the address above by April 6, 2026.

Day Trip June TBD, Million Dollar Quartet play. In the planning stages. Theater is in New London, NH. Includes luncheon. Price \$TBD. Make a check payable to Landmark Tours and mail to the address above by April 6, 2026.

Day Trip July 1st, FDR Homestead & Library and Hudson River Cruise. Take a scenic cruise on the Hudson River. Enjoy a boxed lunch of gourmet sandwiches on board. Tour the home of Franklin D. Roosevelt & the first Presidential Library. Price \$140. Make check payable to Landmark Tours and mail to the address above by May 6, 2026. Wait list only.

Day Trip August and September Encore Casino and Big E.

Multi Day Trip September 27- October 3, Mackinac Island, the quaint Michigan island where no vehicles are allowed. Trip is for 7 days, 6 nights. Tour the island by horse & carriage, cruise the Soo Locks, visit Bronner's Christmas Wonderland, Frankenmuth Bavarian Village and much more, not to mention the plentiful fudge shops. Price \$959. Take a \$25 discount if paid in full by June 27, 2026. Make the check payable to Diamond Tours and mail to the address above.

No money is due until next year. This trip has quickly filled up. Please email to be added to the wait list.

Your Community Connector

Jennifer O'Connell is working for the Hilltown COAs as the Community Connector. She is available to help Hilltown residents that are experiencing challenges, hardship and/or need assistance. Jennifer can help you meet a variety of your needs to make life easier.

Some examples are assistance with:

- Benefits such as Fuel Assistance, SNAP, Social Security, etc.
- Living independently at home
- Arranging for repairs
- Connecting to local groups / activities to have fun with others
- Transportation
- Discussing what you may need

Any and all inquiries are welcome.

Call Jennifer at 413-296-4536 ext.110 or email communityconnectjo@gmail.com

TECHNOLOGY HELP FOR FEBRUARY



Tech Support home visits are available by appt.

Call or message 413-296-5080 to arrange a home visit or email coaTechHelp@gmail.com for help.

Devices for you: Refurbished PC laptops, desktops, Chromebooks, and iPads

If you need a device to connect to the internet or have something so old it is not working effectively, please contact us. We have received a new shipment and have plenty of inventory. Leave a message at 413-296-5080

Drop-in Centers (no appointment needed)

Chesterfield

Chesterfield Community Center 400 Main Rd.

Weekly on all Tuesdays from 11:00 to 2:00

Goshen Library, Drop-In tech support from 12:00 to 2:00, 3rd Thursday, 2/19

Westhampton Library Drop-In tech support, from 2:00 to 4:00, 4th Thursday 2/26

Williamsburg

Meekins Library Drop-In tech support from 10 :30 to 12:30 2nd Tuesday, 2/10

Nash Hill Place Resident Drop-In tech support from 10:00 to Noon, 2nd Tuesday, 2/10

Worthington tech support - contact Eileen Daneri eadaneri@gmail.com.

NOTE: *Plainfield and Cummington residents should call 413-296-5080 for an appointment or use the Chesterfield Community Center drop-in site.*

Internet Hotspots

Funding for hotspots data will end this month. Call 413-296-5080 for help on finding the right low-cost internet plan for you.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT MEDICARE

By Deb Hollingworth

Who is eligible for Medicare?

- You become eligible for Medicare when you turn 65 and have paid into social security for 40 quarters or 10 years.
- You become eligible at any age.... if you have ALS/Lou Gerich's disease or End Stage Renal Disease
- You also become eligible if you have been disabled for 2 years, collecting social security disability.

What does Medicare cost?

- Medicare A is free.
- Medicare B has a monthly premium which this year (2026) is \$202 / month. If you are collecting social security benefits this is usually deducted from your monthly benefit.
- If you are 65, but not collecting your retirement benefit yet...you can be billed for the Part B premium.

Do I have to enroll when I turn 65?

- Most folks enroll in Medicare A when they become eligible, because it's free.
- You can delay enrolling in Medicare B if you are still working, and covered under your employer's insurance or your spouse's employer's insurance.
- There is a penalty for late sign up.

What if I have MassHealth, or a Connector Plan...do I need to get Medicare?

- Yes, you do. Because the State mandates you sign up for Federal (Medicare) coverage when you become eligible.
- MassHealth has a team that helps you expedite this.

Contact your SHINE counselor for details.

**PLAINFIELD COUNCIL ON AGING
304 MAIN ST.
PLAINFIELD, MA 01070**

**PLAINFIELD COA
POLLY RYAN, COORDINATOR
413-212-1581
PRYAN@TOWN.PLAINFIELD.MA.US
SHIRLEY TODD, CHAIR
GINGER237MA@YAHOO.COM
413-634-2134
MARY POTTER, SECRETARY
MARY@POTTERHOMEBUILDERS.COM
413-734-5430
SUSAN HONNEUS 413-743-5345
STORMPETREL22@GMAIL.COM
BONNIE PHILLIPS 413-634-2290
BFILLUPS21@ICLOUD.COM**

SCAM ALERT!



A caller says your Social Security number has been linked to a crime.

They might tell you to:

- Move your money to a safe account to protect it.
- Withdraw cash and deposit it into a "government ATM."
- Withdraw cash or buy gold bars. A courier who will come to your home to pick it up.

What should you do?

- Hang up! It's a scam.
- Do not give out or confirm your Social Security number to anyone who calls.
- Do not make payments or move money to protect it.

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.**