

Plainfield Council on Aging



March 2026 Newsletter

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

Polly Ryan, Coordinator
413-212-1581

pryan@town.plainfield.ma.us



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

Let's celebrate St. Patrick's Day with a vegetarian and meat version of corned beef and cabbage on Wednesday March 11th at noon in Town Hall.

Donations and desserts are welcomed.

The Northampton Health Department will present on "Tick Borne Illness Prevention" in preparation for our early spring outdoor adventures. Kelly Hughes will also be on hand to take blood pressure readings.



Join us for a March movie matinee on Saturday the 21st in Town Hall at 3pm to view "Fisherman's Friends".

The film was inspired by a true story. It's a 2019 British comedy-drama in which a fast living, cynical London music executive heads to a remote Cornish village where he's pranked by his boss into trying to sign a group of shanty singing fishermen. He struggles to gain the respect or enthusiasm of the unlikely boy band and their families. Soon he's forced to re-evaluate his own integrity and ultimately question what success really means.

It's a very heart-warming movie full of laughs and wonderful carpele sea Chante songs.
Snacks, popcorn and drinks included.



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.



Tech Connect provides one-on-one training in your home or free equipment like iPads, Chromebooks, PC laptops, desktop computers. 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.

A special workshop will be offered by the proprietor of Sweet Birch Herbals (a local business in Ashfield MA), Hannah Morano, entitled “Gentle Herbal Support for Common Ailments” in Town Hall on March 26th from 3-4 pm

This educational workshop is designed especially for seniors. Join us for an engaging and practical class that explores safe, simple herbal remedies to support common concerns such as sleep challenges, joint stiffness & inflammation, digestion, circulation & heart health, memory & mood.

Participants will learn how to safely use teas, infusions, and topical preparations, with special attention to herbal-medication considerations and gentle approaches for aging bodies.

This class is interactive, easy to follow, and welcoming to beginners. Samples, demonstrations, and handouts included.



**No prior herbal experience needed
Safety-focused & evidence-informed
Rooted in traditional plant wisdom**

Looking Ahead

A COA Consortium Resource, Job & Volunteer Fair is planned for April 25th at the New Hingham Elementary School in Chesterfield from 10am to 2pm.

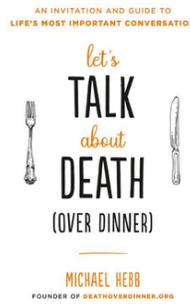
Many local institutions will be on hand to inform attendees of the services they provide in our community. In addition, job and volunteer opportunities with COA's in our hill towns and the service organizations present will be advertised.

Please see the regional section of this newsletter for more details.



A free guided tour of Arrowhead, Herman Melville's historic home and farm is planned for Friday April 17th from 11am to noon. It is located at 780 Holmes Road in Pittsfield, Massachusetts.

At least 12 participants are needed for this event. Please RSVP with Polly at 413-212-1581 or pryan@town.plainfield.ma.us



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. *An additional Foot Care Clinic is now available at the Chesterfield Community Center every second Wednesday of each Month beginning on March 11th.*

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

Andrea Lynes, Jane Lewandowski, Richard Phelps, Beverly Major, David Filkins, Meredith Howard, Joan Timberlake, Betsey Howes, Robert Kasper, Judith Gowdy, Michael Brigley, James Markham, Kay Gilbert, Sarah Stull, Kathryn Jensen, John Westwood, Robert Silberberg.





Regional News

SENIORS AWARE OF FIRE EDUCATION

This month our focus is what to do and not to do treating burns and scalds.

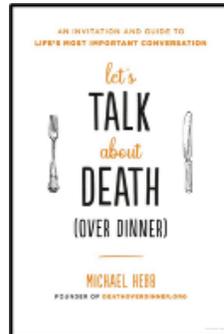


1. First, remove patient from the source of the burn.
2. Call 911 if the burn is deep and/or covering a large area.
3. Run COOL (not cold) water over the burn. This will cool down and stop any boiling fluid under the skin.
4. Do NOT put butter, grease or ointment on the burn. Flush chemical burns continuously with cool water.
5. Remove watches and jewelry from the burn area.
6. If possible, remove clothing from the burned area.
7. If clothing is stuck to the burn, leave it in place and cut away the clothing around the burn.
8. Again, do not hesitate to call 911.
9. Seek medical attention for serious, deep, large area burn treatment.

Have a burn-free and sweet sugar season!

--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.



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

HILLTOWN RESOURCE AND VOLUNTEER/JOB FAIR

ROOTED IN THE HILLTOWNS. GUIDED BY CARE.

The Northern Hilltowns Consortium is proud to sponsor the upcoming Hilltown Resource, Volunteer & Job Fair, an event designed to connect community members to available resources, and to meaningful work and volunteer opportunities that directly support adults across our Hilltowns and western Massachusetts.

Whether you are a senior seeking assistance, a caregiver looking for guidance, or someone hoping to give back, there will be valuable information available. This fair will highlight a wide range of resources available to seniors and their families. Attendees can learn more about services including Veteran Affairs benefits, in-home support, help with housekeeping and daily tasks, transportation assistance, nutrition programs, and other community-based supports designed to make daily life safer and more manageable for older adults.

In addition to providing information about resources available to Hilltown seniors and their families, this fair will bring together local organizations and service providers who are actively seeking compassionate, dependable employees and volunteers. Opportunities range from caregiving, transportation, and nutrition services to outreach, social support, and community engagement. These roles play a vital part in helping seniors remain safe, connected, and able to age with dignity in their own homes. The need is real—and the impact of showing up is profound.

At the Council on Aging, we believe every older adult deserves access to support, respect, and compassionate care. By empowering you with information about what resources are available, we aim to increase your independence. By strengthening community partnerships and empowering people to share their time and talents, we reinforce the networks that serve our elders and enrich the fabric of our small towns. Please join us!

Event Details

 **Saturday, April 25, 2026**

 **10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.**

 **New Hingham Regional Elementary School, Chesterfield, MA**

All community members are encouraged to attend. Come explore opportunities, connect with local organizations, and help strengthen the care and compassion that define our Hilltowns.

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 and is due NOW. Make the check payable to Diamond Tours and mail to the address above. A few seats are still available.

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 NOW.

Day Trip June 11th, Million Dollar Quartet play.

New London Barn Playhouse presents a jukebox musical that dramatizes a real and remarkable moment in music history. Four future legends, Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Carl Perkins, Jerry Lee Lewis happened to gather in the same studio. Includes a buffet luncheon at Colby-Sawyer College. Price \$177. Make a check payable to Landmark Tours and mail to the address above by April 6, 2026.

Day Trip June 23rd, Portsmouth Harbor Cruise and Fosters' Lobster/Clambake.

Before the Portsmouth Harbor cruise, enjoy lunch at Fosters in York Maine offering a choice of **lobster or BBQ chicken or vegetarian option.** Price \$160. Make a payable to Landmark Tours and mail to the address above by April 16, 2026. (replaces the Isles of Shoals trip)

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 it to the address above by May 6, 2026. Wait list only.

Day Trip July 12, 13, 14 or 15 Tall Ships in Boston

Contact The Travel Group 1-888-320-8687 for more info.

Day Trip August 3rd Encore Casino.

\$50 Cost Includes: round trip bus transportation, driver gratuity & \$20 in free slot play. Meals on your own. Make check payable to Francine Frenier and mail to address above by June 6, 2026. 35 passengers are needed for this trip to go.

Day Trip September TBD Big E.

Day Trip Nov/Dec, TBD Holiday trip

STATE CIRCUIT BREAKER TAX CREDIT

Receive up to \$2820 with the Circuit Breaker Tax Credit refund!

Are you: A Massachusetts resident that was 65 or older before 12/31/25

Do you have a yearly income:

Under \$75k for single person, not head of household

Under \$94k for head of household

Under \$112k for married couples filing joint return

If you meet these guidelines, please call or email Jennifer O'Connell, the Community Connector, for assistance. 413-296-4536 ext 110, or email communityconnectjo@gmail.com You can receive up to three prior years worth of tax credit refunds This tax credit also applies to individuals who do not owe taxes but you do have to file a state tax return to get it.

GOOD NEWS FOR MARCH 2026

By Deb Hollingworth

Yipe! This is the time of year when I sometimes hear from folks that the health care plan changes they made last Fall during Open Enrollment....are not working out.

Usually this happens when they go to pick up a prescription and discover that this year's co-pay is significantly more than they had to pay last year. Or, if they had a United Health Care (AARP) plan and didn't change it, they might be told that their medical provider can't bill their United plan any more.

WHY are all these changes happening?

Because they can. And health insurers are always trying to improve their bottom line ... and they are allowed to charge more for Rx co-pays, drop medical providers from their network and increase co-pays for medical services if it improves their profit margins.

The **Good News** is that if you are currently enrolled in a Medicare Advantage plan.... you are allowed to switch to another Advantage plan or opt out altogether and return to original Medicare and enroll in a Medicare D plan for Rx coverage. You have until March 31st to make any changes. After that, you are locked into your plan's coverage until January next year.

You can ignore all this if you have an Advantage plan that is through your retirement/pension. It is usually unwise to opt out of health coverage provided through your pension....because if you do make a change, you will not be able to get that pension benefit back.

Best strategy is to check with a SHINE counselor to see if you can make changes, and see if there are better options.

Our SHINE counselor for the hill towns is **Caroline Solan** at Highland Valley 413-586-2000 or you can call the Regional SHINE office at Lifepath in Greenfield, 413-773-5555.



An UPDATE on YOUR Tech Services

TECH CONNECT 2.0 has continued operating on funds from the original Tech Connect program since March of 2025. With the support of Northampton Open Media, the Alliance for Digital Equity, our COA directors, volunteers and librarians, we have supported over 350 technology calls from older adults in the hilltowns. We grow more popular as word of mouth spreads that we are a source of refurbished devices, free tech support and training.

We are exploring state and community grants. It has been rough going in the current funding climate. We are funded through the spring / early summer but then must rely on ourselves and the community to support the service if we are to continue.

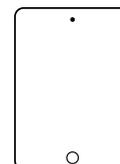
We are considering asking for donations for home visits, placing a donation box at drop-in sessions, and launching a fundraising drive in April. Stay tuned for specific changes and announcements in the next COA newsletter.

Lizzy Canady

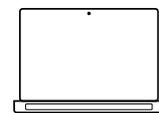
Nancy Brown



Smartphone



Tablet



Laptop



Desktop

TECHNOLOGY HELP FOR MARCH



NEW Best Ever! TechHub is returning on alternate Fridays to present workshops. Workshops are one hour beginning at 10:30 am. A 2 hour drop in session will follow. All sessions will be held at 400 Main St., Chesterfield, downstairs. No need to register

March 6	Zoom Basics
March 20	Social Media Basics
April 3	Online Safety Basics
April 17	Avoiding Misinformation
May 1	Cloud Basics
May 15	MS Excel
May 29	Windows Operating System Basics
June 5	Designing with Canva

Tech Support home visit is available by appointment. Call or message 413-296-5080 to arrange a home visit or email coaTechHelp@gmail.com for help.

Devices for you: Refurbished PC laptops 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. Leave a message at 413-296-5080.

Drop-in Centers schedules (no appointment needed)

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, 3/19

Westhampton Library Drop-In tech support, from

2:00 to 4:00, 4th Thursday 3/26

Williamsburg

Meekins Library Drop-In tech support from 10 :30 to

12:30, 2nd Tuesday, 3/10

Nash Hill Place Resident Drop-In tech support from

10:00 to Noon, 2nd Tuesday, 3/10

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 site.

Internet Hotspots

Funding for hotspots data ended in February. Call 413-296-5080 for help on finding the right low- cost internet plan for you.

TECH TALK

from Peg Whalen

I want to share once again an experience I had a while ago so that others can benefit from my mistake. On a trip to Philadelphia by train I brought two carry-on bags with me and my laptop. To keep the laptop safe when I briefly left my seat I tucked it overhead between my carry-on bags. Later, when I was exiting the train, I got distracted. I grabbed both carry-on bags and, yup, you guessed it, I left the laptop behind. Losing the laptop itself was frustrating but could be replaced at some expense. The information loss was a tragedy. Before leaving, I had not backed up the files, photos, and programs on the laptop. **I knew better!** It happened anyway.

Backup your information in case of device loss, viruses, scams, equipment failure. If you do not know how to protect electronic information, find assistance with ways to stay safe.

What should I have done? I could have used one of the "clouds", like Microsoft OneDrive, Google Drive, Apple iCloud, or my external hard drive at home.

I urge you to consider attending the May 1st Cloud Basics workshop offered by TechHub. Make an informed decision about trusting Clouds. I wish I had had my head in the Clouds!

#SlamTheScam 2026



National "Slam the Scam" Day is designated by Social Security's Office of the Inspector General to raise awareness of government imposter scams, which continue to spread across the United States. Slam the Scam Day is Thursday, March 5, 2026, as part of National Consumer Protection Week, which takes place this year from March 1-7.

Watch for more info at

<https://youtu.be/c6svESSADHM>

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

PLAINFIELD COA

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

Shirley Todd, Chair
ginger237ma@yahoo.com
413-446-9608

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

Susan Honneus
stormpetrel22@gmail.com
413-570-5544

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

The Goshen COA presents:

Live Well, Age Well Informational Series

March 10-
Age in Place Specialist
Erin Curtain,
Occupational Therapist

March 17-
Learning about Brain
Health with Dr Joo from
MGH/Harvard via zoom

March 24-
Funeral Alliance of
Western MA
Planning memorial services

March 31-
End of Life Doula
Stacey Mackowiak
Legacy projects & vigil planning

Join us on Tuesday afternoons in March from
4:30-6pm at the John James Memorial Hall in
Goshen! Light dinner included each week.

Register by March 2nd for one or all weeks:
email coa@goshen-ma.us or
call Kerry Normandin at 413-268-9354.
Older adults from all towns welcome!



Massachusetts
Councils On Aging

Funded by a grant awarded to the Massachusetts Association of
Councils on Aging by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs

SCAM ALERT!

Fraudsters build trust by posing as romantic partners they meet online, often through unsolicited messages or apps. Once trust is gained, they push **fake investment opportunities** with promised high returns, using false reports to encourage more investment. After taking the money, they shut down accounts and disappear.

Protect Yourself:

- Be cautious about what you share online—scammers use social media and dating details to target victims.
- Never invest based on advice from someone you've only met online.
- Research investments at www.investor.gov.
- If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

**Northwestern
District Attorney's
Consumer Protection Unit**

Northampton
(413) 586-9225

Greenfield
(413) 774-3186

Working in cooperation with the Office of
the Massachusetts Attorney General

