


Moving Forward

Activities and Services for Resident 60+



April Calendar of Events

<u>Monday</u>	<u>Tuesday</u>	<u>Wednesday</u>	<u>Thursday</u>	<u>Friday</u>
	1 Fitness with Friends Town Hall, 11:30-12:30pm Games 1:45-3pm, WW Scrabble 2pm, Library	2 Wellness Clinic w/ Public Health Nurse 10-11:30am, Library Coffee & Chat 10-12, Library Mahjong WW, 1:30-3pm	3 Chair Yoga WW, 10-11am Valerie McQuillan Opening Reception 5:30-7:30, Library	4 4/5 Rabies Clinic 10am-12pm Chesterfield Fire Dept.
7 Knitting Group 6pm, Library	8 Fitness with Friends Town Hall, 11:30-12:30pm Games 1:45-3pm, WW Scrabble 2pm, Library	9 Coffee & Chat 10-12, Library Mahjong WW, 1:30-3pm	10 Chair Yoga WW, 10-11am Potluck & Nutrition Talk 12pm, church	11 4/12 Film Screening 10:30am-11:30am Library
14 Computer Class 10-12, Library Town Caucus 6pm, Town Hall Knitting Group 6pm, Library	15 Fitness with Friends Town Hall, 11:30-12:30pm Games 1:45-3pm, WW Scrabble 2pm, Library	16 Wellness Clinic w/ Public Health Nurse 10-11:30am, Library Coffee & Chat 10-12, Library Mahjong WW, 1:30-3pm	17 Chair Yoga TOWN HALL, 10-11am	18 4/19 Spring Ramble at Lynes Woods 10am-11:30am Library
21 Library closed (Patriot's Day)	22 Fitness with Friends Town Hall, 11:30-12:30pm Games 1:45-3pm, WW Scrabble 2pm, Library	23 Coffee & Chat 10-12, Library Mahjong WW, 1:30-3pm	24 Chair Yoga WW, 10-11am	25
28 Computer Class 10-12, Library Knitting Group 6pm, Library	29 Fitness with Friends Town Hall, 11:30-12:30pm Games 1:45-3pm, WW Scrabble 2pm, Library	30 Coffee & Chat 10-12, Library Mahjong WW, 1:30-3pm		

Westhampton COA ♦ 3 South Road ♦ Westhampton, MA 01027 ♦ Seniors Helping Seniors
 Coordinator: Christine Blakesley ♦ 13-203-9809 ♦ coa@westhamptonma.gov

New COA Coordinator Appointed

On February 24, 2025, the Westhampton Select Board gave their unanimous consent to the appointment of **Christine Blakesley** as the new COA Coordinator. Christine comes to this role with the enthusiastic support of the COA Board. During the interview process and her attendance at the February Board meeting, we were all impressed with her positive energy and the groundswell of ideas to improve services for our older adults as well as inclusive programming designed to benefit the whole community.

Please join us in welcoming Christine!

Christine Blakesley

My Name is Christine Blakesley. I am excited to step into the role of Council on Aging Coordinator and look forward to serving and advocating for our senior community. With a deep commitment to improving the quality of life for older adults, I am dedicated to addressing the unique challenges they face, ensuring they have access to vital resources, and fostering an environment where they can age with dignity and independence. My approach will focus on collaboration, community engagement, and developing programs that empower seniors to thrive. I'm eager to work alongside partners and local organizations to make a meaningful impact in the lives of those we serve.



I was born and raised here in Westhampton and like many of us, have found my way back "home." My wife and I moved back into town a few months ago with our 11-year-old son, Nate, who is fitting in wonderfully at the elementary school. Our 22-year-old daughter Maddie lives in an apartment in Northampton and is fostering her own professional career in Mental Health.

I look forward to meeting new faces and reconnecting with ones I haven't seen in many years. Please feel free to reach out to me at any time whether it be to ask questions, bring new ideas or concerns to the table or just get to know each other.

Hilltown Elder Network (HEN)

The Hilltown Elder Network (HEN) provides eligible rural elders with in-home services, such as home chores or transportation assistance, to help ensure safe conditions for independent living. To receive HEN assistance, elders must be at least 62 years old, meet household income criteria, and have depleted or become ineligible for other forms

of assistance, such as State Home Care. HEN assistance is not always available in every town.

Eligible elder participants receive assistance with cleaning, laundry, food shopping and meal preparation, and escorted transportation at no charge. A participant's eligibility is determined during the intake process. Additionally, some over-income applicants have used HEN to locate a screened, experienced local caregiver who will provide services for private payment. HEN Caregivers are trained local residents who are paid for their services. Each caregiver is reference-screened and CORI-checked. HEN services do not include personal care. About 45 HEN Caregivers work regularly. Regional coordination and supervision is accomplished through Town Coordinators. HEN services are available during off hours, on weekends, and during bad weather when most for-profit providers cannot be consistently reliable. HEN coordinates fully with other provider agencies, such as Area Agencies on Aging and Visiting Nurse Associations, so as to limit duplication and maximize the impact of services.

To connect to HEN services in town, please contact our town's HEN Coordinator: Lilly Baxter at **(413) 527-1532** or **lillianbaxter12@yahoo.com**. Donations can be made by going to **www.hilltowncdc.org/hen**

Potluck Luncheon & Nutrition Talk

Westhampton Congregational Church
Thursday, April 10th at 12PM

Brandon Walton from the Highland Valley CDC will speak on Nutrition. Join us for an informative talk about ways to improve our overall health. Feel free to ask questions or just take in the information.

Upcoming Westhampton Town Business

- **Town Caucus***: April 14th (second Monday in April), likely starting at 6 PM, at the Town Hall.
- **Town Meeting**: May 10th (second Saturday in May), likely starting at 9 AM, at the Town Hall.
- **Town Election**: June 7th (first Saturday in June), usually goes from 8 AM to 12 Noon.

***Calling all candidates:** If you are new to town government, the Town Caucus is where residents are nominated (or nominate themselves) for a vacant town position or one where the incumbent's term is up (even if the incumbent is running again).

Message for the Westhampton COA Hikers for April 2025



*Westhampton COA Hikers at Look Park on
February 26th (Chuck Horn photo).*

Spring! It was a long, cold and windy winter, and as I write this, the last of the concrete-like snow from the previous storm seems to be melting. Nonetheless we've managed to hike every month throughout the past winter, even if we had to stay out of the woods. But now we can return our focus and explore old and new woodland trails. So stay tuned!

If you enjoy hiking with a great group of people, come join us on our hikes in and around Westhampton by subscribing to our group email list at westhamptoncoahikers@comcast.net. Please note that all group emails are sent as blind copies (BCC) for your safety and privacy.

Happy Trails, Chuck & Ray

Green Eggs and Ham!

The students at Westhampton Elementary School were treated to a Dr. Seuss themed lunch on Friday March 7th. Cherie Fickett went above and beyond her role as the school's Cafeteria Manager. Miss Cherie, as the students call her, prepared a full Dr. Seuss lunch: decorated cheese sticks, Jello cups and prepared fresh green eggs and ham. This meal honored and celebrated the iconic storyteller Dr. Seuss. It is this type of extra effort that helps make our small town so special. We would like to give a shout out to Miss Cherie from the Westhampton COA. Your thoughtful lunch brightened each student's day!



Senior Spotlight: Westhampton Edition

In the upcoming editions of our newsletter, we would like to shine the spotlight on our incredible seniors. Each month, we will highlight a senior who has made a significant impact in our community, sharing their stories, achievements, and the wisdom they've gained over the years. It's a way to honor their contributions and celebrate the experiences that shape them. Stay tuned to learn more about the amazing individuals who make our community so special! If you would like to nominate someone, please send an email to coa@westhamptonma.gov or call Christine Blakesley: (413) 203-9809. I can't wait to hear all your incredible stories.

New England's (unofficial) Fifth Season

Sugar season, a season of its own here in New England. As the days become warm and the nights remain cool, the sap flows freely, and sugar-houses across the town come alive with the sweet aroma of boiling sap. It's a time of tradition, where families and communities gather to tap trees, boil sap, and celebrate the arrival of spring with fresh syrup drizzled on pancakes, waffles, and more. The season is short but oh so sweet.



*Pictured left to right:
Tim Florek, Charlie Florek,
Leo Florek*

Family owned and operated, the Florek Sugar Shack sits tucked in the side hill off of Southampton Rd. Together, 19-year-old Charlie Florek, 18 year old Tim Florek and 15 year old Leo Florek, tap the trees, collect the sap and boil the sugary water into the sweet, delicious amber gold we all know and love. The young men have been boiling for over six years together. Starting in the driveway with the help of their Dziadziu (Charlie Florek) they boiled in small batches learning the tricks of the trade.

In 2022 they built their very own sugar shack with supervision from Josh Hickey. Today the operation runs with 300 taps. They hope to boil about 45 gallons this season with dreams of more each year. Leo's favorite part of the season is the comradery of being together in the shack for long hours. Tim enjoys the early stages of tapping and collecting the sap. Charlie appreciates being in the woods in general.

If you would like to purchase their syrup you can do so by calling Tim Florek at (413) 270-0224.

Rabies Clinic

On Saturday, April 5th, from 10am to noon, there will be a Rabies Clinic at the Chesterfield Fire Department, 5 North Road. Cats and dogs from all towns are welcome! Rabies vaccination will be \$25. Microchip & Lifetime membership is \$68. Contact Kelli Wainscott, Animal Control Officer for Chesterfield and Westhampton with questions via email: aco@chesterfieldma.com or by phone at (413) 586-1508.

**Library Hours: Mon & Thu 2pm - 8pm;
Tue & Wed 9am - 12pm & 1pm - 5pm;
Sat 10am - 1pm**

Library closed Mon. 4/21 (Patriot's Day)

Please check the town website or Facebook or Instagram @WesthamptonPublicLibrary for library updates. To place a request for curbside pickup, please call (413) 527-5386 or email westhampton@cwmares.org

April/May Artist - Valerie McQuillan Opening Reception

Thursday, April 3rd from 5pm - 7:30pm



Pursuing my interest in art making for over 50 years, I have mostly done various printmaking and painting techniques, including painted enamels on copper. My subject matter is mostly realistic scenes, both landscapes and seascapes, and following my interests in the natural world, especially birds and flowers. - Valerie McQuillan

All Hamptons Read

**"Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude" by Ross Gay
Virtual Author's Talk**

Monday, April 14th from 7pm - 8pm

For this year's All Hamptons Read event we will be reading poet Ross Gay's Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude as part of the NEA Big Read with the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association. Montague Public Library is a partner of the Pocumtuck Valley

Memorial Association. Copies of the "Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude" are available to pick up at Westhampton Public Library. Register for a virtual author's talk with Ross Gay on Monday, April 14th at 7pm here:

<https://bit.ly/BigRead-RossGay> And, check out a full listing of All Hamptons Read events here: <https://forbeslibrary.org/events/all-hamptons-read/>

Collage on Canvas Workshop with Mary Cleary

Thursday, April 10th from 6pm - 8pm

Led by local artist Mary Cleary, participants will create a collage on canvas on the theme of "where we live" in conjunction with our All Hamptons Read title "Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude" by poet Ross Gay. You'll go home with a wall-ready original artwork.

**Supplies are limited and registration is required: call (413) 527-5386 or email westhampton@cwmares.org to sign up. Special thanks to the Friends of Westhampton Library and the Lyn Keating Program Fund for sponsoring this event.

Hampshire County Center Film Screening

Brought to you by

The Westhampton Historic Commission

Saturday, April 12th from 10:30am - 11:30am

"The Westhampton Movie", as it's known to some in Town, was a film made to showcase the experimental Hampshire County Center. In 1950 a non-profit organization called the Rural Research Institute Inc. piloted their rural community education program "to meet the educational, artistic, and cultural needs of rural communities." The town of Westhampton, Massachusetts was chosen as the location of the pilot, and the Hampshire County Center was born.

Some of the classes, clinics and clubs held at the center and featured in the film included woodworking, sewing and sewing machine repair, rug braiding, copper enameling, painting, as well as leadership training for adults and teens, a kindergarten, and even a class in parliamentary law. Viewers from Westhampton will see many familiar faces in this movie, and get a very special glimpse into the lives of town residents in the 1950s.

The Westhampton Council on Aging benefits from your support for our programs for local seniors!

I would like to contribute to the Westhampton COA. My contribution of \$_____ is attached.

(Please make out your check to The Friends of the Westhampton COA and write "Program Support Fund" in the memo line; mail to Charlotte Wood, 14 Perry Hill Rd., Westhampton, MA 01027).

Name _____ Telephone _____

Address _____

Email _____



Seniors Aware of Fire Education

Preventing Electrical Fires

Here are some things you should look for and do to prevent electrical fires.



Call 911 if you experience any of these warning signs:

- arcs, sparks, or short circuits
- sizzling or buzzing sounds
- odor like a vague smell of something burning

Call a licensed electrician if you experience these warning signs:

- frequent tripped circuit breakers or blown fuses
- dimming or flickering lights, light bulbs that pop or wear out too fast
- overheated plugs, cords or outlets
- shock or mild tingling
- loose plugs
- damaged wires or faulty outlets

Some things you can check on your own are:

- overloaded outlets - only one appliance on an outlet
- electric cords behind furniture, couches, and bureaus
- overloaded power strips, most are for low current devices
- frayed wires, cracked insulation or any damage
- extension cords not properly rated for appliances
- cord or wire nailed into place can short out or arc
- do not use indoor rated cords outdoors.

Be charged up for a SAFE spring!

--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.

Social Security Safety, part 1

Assuming you have been following the news, you could - should? be aware of the safety of your Social Security information. I have recently learned that we can block access to our Social Security account from someone who has a nefarious intent. Because I have online access to my account, I proceeded to check this out.

So I tried to set a block. And failed. I could not get into my account using ID.me which is what I signed for a couple of years ago. I did get into my account using what I thought was an old user name and password. But then there was no option to block anyone else.

Stay tuned – I Will make this work!

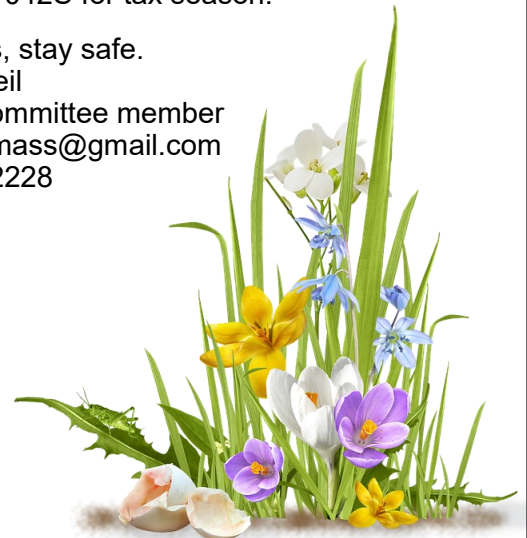
In the meantime, remember the old safety warnings. Don't carry your card with you. Don't share your number over the phone, EVER. Don't give out your number unless it really is necessary; when someone asks for your number, push back nicely. Ask why they need it, what is the consequence of them not having it.

It is a good idea to create your own online account, at **www.ssa.gov/myaccount** That way even if someone gets your number they can't adopt your account for their own. With an online account, you can:

- Get your benefit verification letter
- Check your benefit and payment information and your earnings record
- Change your address and phone number
- Start or change direct deposit of your benefit payment
- Get a replacement Medicare card
- Get a replacement SSA-1099 or SSA-1042S for tax season.

As always, stay safe.

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



Tech. Help and Training for April



GREAT NEWS!

TechConnect will continue providing services through a partnership with Northampton Open Media. Although we have fewer trainings going forward, drop-ins and tech support will continue. Please take advantage of ongoing service.

DELIVERING NOW AND ACCEPTING NEW REQUESTS: Internet Hotspots

It's not too late if you need affordable internet access! We have a solution that may work for you. Hotspots are small cellular devices you can use to access the internet, and they work in most areas in the hilltowns. If you are interested in learning more, please contact us by phone or email. Call **413-296-5080** or email **coatechdevices@gmail.com**.

Tech Support Available by appointment

Receive technology help by email, phone, drop-in, or by appointment: **coaTechHelp@gmail.com**, phone or text msg **413-296-5080** or check the website, **www.northernhilltownscoas.org**, for locations and time. You can attend drop-in at all locations, except Nash Hill.

Devices for you: PC laptops, refurbished Chromebooks, iPads and Android tablets

Please remind us if you requested one and are still waiting. There is still time to join the Digital World. We have ordered more PC laptops/ computers, refurbished Chromebooks, iPads and Android tablets. If you need or are waiting for a device to connect to the internet, have something so old it is not working effectively, or need a different type of device please contact us. Email **coatechdevices@gmail.com**, leave message at **413-296-5080**, or use online request form on our website, **www.northernhilltownscoas.org**

Drop in Centers: All are Welcome at Any Location! (no appointment needed)

- Chesterfield Community Center, 400 Main Rd. Weekly on all Tuesdays from 11:00 to 2:00
Two Fridays, 11:30-1:30 (4/4 and 4/18)
- Cummington Community House, 33 Main St. Drop-In tech support, 2nd Weds. 10-12 (4/9)
- Goshen Free Public Library, 42 Main St. Drop-in tech support, 3rd Thurs. 12pm-2pm (4/17)

- Plainfield Shaw Memorial Library, 312 Main St. Drop-In tech support, 3rd Thurs. 5:30-7:30pm (4/17)
- Westhampton Library, 1 North Rd. Drop-in tech support, 4th Thurs. 2-4pm (4/24)
- Williamsburg Meekins Library Drop-In tech support
2nd Tuesday 4/8 from 10:30-12:30
Nash Hill Place Resident Drop-In tech support
2nd Tuesday 4/8 from 10 to Noon

Tech Training:

MUST pre-register for training no later than one week before the scheduled training date. All classes held at the Chesterfield Community Center, 400 Main Rd, lower level. To register, email **coaTechTrainer@gmail.com**, call or text **413-296-5080**, or sign up through the website **www.northernhilltownscoas.org**

Tech Workshops, April into August:

*On Fridays twice a month from **10:30–11:30** at
Chesterfield Community Center*

- 4/4 - Social Media
- 4/18 - Cloud Basics
- 5/2 - Intro to Google Suite
- 5/16- Microsoft Word
- 6/6 - Microsoft Excel
- 6/20 - Canva
- 7/18 - Windows Basics
- 8/1 - Google Drive

Computer Classes:

No ongoing computer classes are scheduled. An alternate online resource for basic training can be accessed, with help from us, at **www.digitalliteracyassessment.org/login/?location=17640-MG8N-techconnect**

We can set up your access to this website and help you begin to train yourself for very basic to more advanced beginner digital literacy.



On the Road Again... 2025 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 May 6. One day at **Encore Casino in Everett, MA.** \$20 in Free Slot play. Lunch on your own. Restaurants on site. Cost \$40. Make check payable to Francine Frenier and mail to the address **NOW. A few seats open.**

Day Trip May 8. Titanic: The Artifact Exhibition at Saunders Castle at Park Plaza Boston, MA. Lunch at Venezia. Cost \$144.00. Make check payable to Landmark Tours and mail to the address above by April 8.

Day Trip May 19. Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum & Maggiano's Little Italy. Enjoy a delicious family-style lunch at Maggiano's. Tour three floors of galleries at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum on your own. Price \$144. Make check payable to Landmark Tours and mail to the address **NOW. Waitlist only.**

Day Trip June 17 Isles of Shoals Cruise in Portsmouth, NH. Lunch at Foster's Clambake in York, Maine. Cost \$154. Make check payable to Landmark Tours and mail to the address above by May 17.

Multi Day Trip June 22-26. Montreal & Ottawa. Passports required. Visit the Biodome, Notre Dame Basilica, Montreal's Underground City, Parliament Hill, Cruise on the St. Lawrence River. Payment of \$1,052 due **NOW.** Make the check payable to Diamond Tours and mail to the address above. **Waitlist only.**

Day Trip July 16. FDR Homestead & Library and Hudson River Cruise. Take a scenic cruise on the Hudson River. Enjoy a boxed lunch on board. Tour the home of Franklin D. Roosevelt and the first Presidential Library. Price \$140. Make check payable to Landmark Tours and mail to the address above by May 28. **Waitlist only.**

Day Trip August 3. Triple A affiliates, **Boston Red Sox Woo Sox vs Philadelphia Phillies Lehigh Valley IronPigs** at Polar Park, Worcester, MA. A pre-game tour of Polar Park and a ballpark-fare buffet are included. Cost \$90.00. Make check payable to Francine Frenier and mail to address above by June 1.

Day Trip Sept. TBD. The BIG E, an annual favorite, with free entertainment at The Court of Honor Stage.

Day Trip Oct. 9. A Chorus Line. Center orchestra seating for the 50th Anniversary Production on stage at the Goodspeed Opera House in East Haddam, CT. Center Orchestra seating. Lunch at The Gelston House. Price \$177. Make a check payable to Landmark Tours and mail to the address above by August 1.

Multi Day Trip October 12-18. Biltmore Estate & Smoky Mountains, Asheville, NC. Seven days, six nights. Visit the Biltmore Estate, the St. Lawrence Basilica, historic Gatlinburg, TN & Asheville, NC. Guided tour of the Smoky Mountains National Park. Price \$1,099. Discount of \$25 if paid in full by July 18. Make

the check payable to Diamond Tours and mail to the address above. **As of April, Diamond Tours is expecting this trip to go, despite the hurricane damage around the area. Please stay tuned. A 2nd bus has a few open seats.**

Day Trip Sunday, December 7. A Holiday Event in Waltham, MA. Reagle Music Theater Players beloved Christmas extravaganza--100 performers, live orchestra, dancers, living nativity, and yuletide tunes. Pre-show lunch at The Chateau Restaurant. Price \$160 (approx.) Make a check payable to Landmark Tours and mail to the address above by August 1.

Good News for April 2025

Let's talk about the "Windfall Elimination Provision and Government Pension Offset", what many of us called the offset rule that affected our social security benefits (reducing them).

On January 6th, President Biden signed into law the Social Security Fairness Act that **ENDS** the offset! The American Federation of Teachers estimates this will effect more than 100,000 Massachusetts teachers. Municipal workers and Federal employees will be affected too. All this means your social security retirement benefit is going to increase starting April 1st! But it gets better. Your increased benefit actually started January 2024....which means you will get a lump sum amount to catch up. After that you should see an increased monthly social security benefit which the Biden administration estimates at about \$350/month for over 2.8 million Americans. That first "catch up" amount is supposed to happen April 1st, so check your bank statement for an additional U.S. Treasury deposit.

This Good news may have some drawbacks. The first is: don't try to contact the social security office now since they are flooded with folks calling asking for help calculating their new benefit. Wait times on phone calls can be up to 3 hours.

But more concerning is this new income may impact your public benefits like MassHealth, SNAP, and the Medicare Savings Program. MassHealth has decided not to count windfall income for the next 6 months. So we have until October before this new income will be counted.

If you think you might be at risk of losing benefits because your income and assets have increased, you should contact your senior center for a SHINE appointment for questions about the Medicare Savings Program and check to see if you can have a conversation with the Connector program for other benefits.

Westhampton Council on Aging
3 South Road
Westhampton, MA 01027

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Need a ride?
Contact Danielle Buzzee at:
(413) 246-0278 or by email:
danielle.buzzee@icloud.com

Spring/ Summer Clothing Exchange

Saturday, April 26th, 9am-3pm

Goshen Congregational Church
45 Main St. Goshen



Get a new spring wardrobe for your family without spending a cent! Drop off your washed, gently-used men's, women's and children's spring/summer clothing and accessories at the church on Wednesday 4/23 from 6-8pm or Friday 4/25 from 9am-3pm (you can also call Laura at 268-7005 to arrange a different time), then come back to shop on Sat. the 26th from 9am-3pm! All are invited to participate whether you donate clothes or not.

Let's Keep Talking About Death- Part 2

May 20, May 27 and June 3rd
4:00-5:30pm

John James Memorial Hall
42 Main St. Goshen

We are continuing our series of conversations based on *Let's Talk About Death Over Dinner* by Michael Hebb. Sessions will be led by End of Life Doula Stacey Mackowiak and take place over three sessions-May 20, May 27, and June 3 from 4:00-5:30pm.

More info to come in the May newsletter.
All are welcome!

