

# Moving Forward

## Activities and Services for Residents 60+



# March 2026

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**Do not miss:**

**CPR Class**

**4<sup>th</sup> Grade Talent Show**

**Events at Westhampton Elementary School**

**Ideas for Articles?  
Recipes to Share?  
Let us know!**

**Westhampton COA  
3 South Road  
Westhampton, MA  
01027**

**Christine Blakesley,  
Coordinator**

**413-203-9808**

**coa@westhamptonma.gov**

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<b>2</b> <b>Knitting Group</b> 6 pm Library *Yoga 6pm, Library	<b>3</b> <b>Fitness w/Friends Town Hall</b> 11:30 – 12:30 <b>Games</b> 1:45–3 pm, WW <b>Scrabble</b> 2 pm, Library	<b>4</b> <b>Wellness Clinic Public Health Nurse</b> 10:30 am, Library <b>Coffee and Chat</b> 10-12, Library <b>Mahjong</b> WW, 1:30 – 3 pm	<b>5</b> <b>Chair Yoga</b> WW 10-11 am *Author Visit – <b>Maureen Groden</b> Library 6 pm	<b>6</b> *Read Across America Day At WES
<b>9</b> <b>Computer Help</b> Library 10-12 <b>Knitting Group</b> 6 pm Library *Yoga 6pm, Library	<b>10</b> <b>Fitness w/Friends Town Hall</b> 11:30 – 12:30 <b>Games</b> 1:45–3 pm, WW <b>Scrabble</b> 2 pm, Library	<b>11</b> <b>Coffee and Chat</b> 10-12, Library <b>Mahjong</b> WW, 1:30 – 3 pm	<b>12</b> <b>Chair Yoga</b> WW 10-11 am <b>COA Luncheon</b> Noon, Church * Visual Mending Circle Library 6-8	<b>13</b> <b>NOTE: Thursday Lunch is the Fourth Grade Talent Show. Prepare to be amazed!</b>
<b>16</b> <b>Knitting Group</b> 6 pm Library *Yoga 6pm, Library	<b>17</b> <b>Fitness w/Friends Town Hall</b> 11:30 – 12:30 <b>Games</b> 1:45–3 pm, WW <b>Scrabble</b> 2 pm, Library	<b>18</b> <b>Wellness Clinic Public Health Nurse</b> 10:30 am, Library <b>Coffee and Chat</b> 10-12, Library <b>Mahjong</b> WW, 1:30 – 3 pm <b>Energy Advocate Office Hours 1-2</b>	<b>19</b> <b>Chair Yoga</b> *Church Dining Room 10-11 am <b>HVES Hot Meal Pickup WW Noon</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>23</b> <b>Computer Help</b> Library 10-12 <b>Knitting Group</b> 6 pm Library *Yoga 6pm, Library	<b>24</b> <b>Fitness w/Friends Town Hall</b> 11:30 – 12:30 <b>Games</b> 1:45–3 pm, WW <b>Scrabble</b> 2 pm, Library <b>Book Club – Library 7</b>	<b>25</b> <b>Wellness Clinic Public Health Nurse</b> 10:30 am, Library <b>Coffee and Chat</b> 10-12, Library <b>Mahjong</b> WW, 1:30 – 3 pm	<b>26</b> <b>Chair Yoga</b> WW 10-11 am <b>TechConnect</b> Library 2-4 pm	<b>27</b>
<b>30</b> <b>Knitting Group</b> 6 pm Library *Yoga 6pm, Library	<b>31</b> <b>Fitness w/Friends Town Hall</b> 11:30 – 12:30 <b>Games</b> 1:45–3 pm, WW <b>Scrabble</b> 2 pm, Library	<b>March 24, 2026 Time: 6:00–7:30 PM</b> <b>Location: Westhampton Town Hall, 1 South Road, Westhampton, MA 01027</b> The Westhampton Recreation Committee is pleased to offer a <b>FREE Community CPR and First Aid class</b> at Westhampton Town Hall on March 24 from 6:00–7:30 PM. All are welcome! <b>Details Inside!</b>		

\* See more Information inside in the Newsletter.

## March Lunch Program Fourth Grade Talent Show

It's that time of year again! Westhampton Elementary School Teacher Sarah Overstreet brings her talented fourth grade class to us. Enjoy a pizza lunch and meet students and their grand-families.



After lunch, sit back and relax while the students present a dazzling performance showcasing jokes, stories, music and videos and other entertainment.

## Hiking News

Message from the Westhampton COA Hikers for March:

### Looking forward to Spring



It's been a long, long cold winter, the freezing weather starting in late November and lasting well into February. As I write this with a foot or so of snow on the ground there's not a lot of hiking to do - unless you're on skis or snowshoes. Nonetheless the weather forecast is for warming over the next few weeks - and possibly for a glimpse of spring. I'm looking forward to hiking when the woods open up.

I'm hoping that we can keep the hiking group going for another season. If you enjoy hiking with a great group of people, come join us on our hikes in and around Westhampton. You can subscribe to our group email list at [westhamptoncoahikers@comcast.net](mailto:westhamptoncoahikers@comcast.net). Please note that all group e-mails are sent as blind copies (BCC) for your safety and privacy.

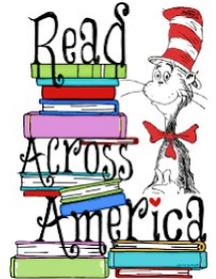
And PLEASE let me know if you have any suggestions for a hike, if you would like to lead a hike, or help out exploring new hikes.



-- Ray Fontaine

## Calling All Grandfriends: Read Across America Day at WES!

Westhampton Elementary School is rolling out the red carpet for our amazing **grandparents, grandfriends, and senior community members** to help us celebrate Read Across America Day in honor of Dr. Seuss's birthday on Friday, March 6, 2026!



We invite you to step into our classrooms and share the joy of reading with students in **PreK-4**. Guest readers will read to small groups or one-on-one, creating special moments that our students will remember long after the last page is turned. Fifth and sixth grade students will enjoy their own reading activities throughout the day.

Books will be provided by classroom teachers, but if you have a beloved story you'd like to bring along, we'd love for you to share it. If possible, we kindly ask for one reader per family so that as many children as possible can enjoy a visit from a guest reader.

Come spend part of your day spreading smiles, stories, and a lifelong love of reading—we can't wait to welcome you to WES!

To sign up please contact Ashley Fickett at [afickett@hrk12.org](mailto:afickett@hrk12.org) or (413) 527-0561 Ext 2

## Community CPR / FIRST AID

Sponsored by the Westhampton Recreation Committee

Date: March 24, 2026 Time: 6:00–7:30 PM

Location: Westhampton Town Hall, 1 South Road, Westhampton, MA 01027

The Westhampton Recreation Committee is pleased to offer a FREE Community CPR and First Aid class at Westhampton Town Hall on March 24 from 6:00–7:30 PM. All are welcome!

This program will include:

- A **basic First Aid** instructional session covering the most common injuries and illnesses
- An **Adult/ Child/ Infant CPR** instructional session

The CPR portion will be **hands-only (no rescue breathing)**. While there is no age requirement to participate, attendees should be able to perform chest compressions on training dummies provided by the instructors. Instruction will also include:

- CPR fundamentals
- Use of the community AED
- Narcan administration
- Proper use of EpiPens

Time will be reserved at the end of the session for participant questions. There is no cost to attend; however, **registration is required** so instructors can plan the most effective program and ensure participants leave with these crucial, potentially life-saving skills.

**Please register by March 14** to take advantage of this valuable program and help make our community a safer place. **(NOTE: this is NOT a certification class)**

Register here:

[tinyurl.com/westhamptoncpr](http://tinyurl.com/westhamptoncpr)

Questions? John Shaw, instructor-- jfshaw1@com-cast.net

## Read-a-thon and Game Night at WES

The Westhampton Elementary School PTO has invited COA folks to volunteer at an upcoming Game Night on Friday, March 13<sup>th</sup> from 6:00 to 7:30. Volunteers can help 6<sup>th</sup> graders run the bake sale, read with kids, play games, or help with the Book Fair. If you are interested, please drop a line to Julia and we will be in touch. Sounds like fun.

## Save the Date: Hilltown Resource and Job Fair

*Rooted in the Hilltowns. Guided by Care.*

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

This fair brings 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.

In addition to employment and volunteer opportunities, the 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. Whether you are a senior seeking assistance, a caregiver looking for guidance, or someone hoping to give back, there will be valuable information available.

At the Council on Aging, we believe every older adult deserves access to support, respect, and compassionate care. 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. When you work or volunteer in elder services, you are not just filling a position—you are becoming a trusted presence in someone's daily life.

### 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.

## Join the Email Reminder List

Our newsletter goes out once a month and our deadlines are in the middle of each month. Sometimes this means we miss telling you about an upcoming event!

Sign up to get emails from the Council on Aging with updates and reminders by contacting Christine Blakesley at [coa@westhamptonma.gov](mailto:coa@westhamptonma.gov).



## Veterans' Corner



### From Tom Geryk our Veteran's Agent ...

Our free veterans' luncheon for January will be on March 4th at the Easthampton Congregational Church (ECC) at noon.

Veterans' coffee hours at ECC will be 9:00-11:00 every Wednesday following the luncheon.

*\*Veterans are always welcome to bring a guest to the luncheons and coffee hours.\**

Reach Tom at: [tgeryk@easthamptonma.gov](mailto:tgeryk@easthamptonma.gov) or 413-529-4599; 413-270-2254

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# Library News

## March Library Programs

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

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

### Recurring Programs (Holidays may impact schedule)

Computer Help w/ Bob Miller - second and fourth Mondays from 10am to 12pm

Knitting Group - Mondays at 6pm

Yoga - Mondays at 6pm

**\*Deborah will be filling in for Teri and leading Slow Yoga classes in March.**

Scrabble Group - Tuesdays at 2pm

Book Group - 4th Tuesdays at 7pm

Walk-in Wellness Clinics w/ Westhampton's Public Health Nurse - 1st and 3rd Wednesdays at 10am - 11:30am

Coffee & Chat - Wednesdays from 10am - 12pm

Energy Advocate Office Hours - Wednesday, March 25th at 1pm

Tech Connect drop-in tech help - Thursday, March 26th from 2pm to 4pm

### Tech Connect Devices Available for Checkout!

Thanks to a grant from the Northern Hilltown COAs and Tech Connect: Success for Older Adults, the following devices are now available for a 3-week loan: Android Galaxy Tablet, Casio Keyboard, Kindle Paperwhite EReader, HP Chromebook Laptops. For more information, please visit:

<https://tinyurl.com/439y6p3d>

### Author Visit - Maureen Groden

Thursday, March 5th at 6pm

Meet local author and hospice nurse Maureen Groden, RN and hear about her new book "When a Loved One is Dying: Conversations About Care, Connection and Coping". When faced with a loved one's serious illness, many families find themselves overwhelmed, uncertain, and afraid. In this compassionate guide, hospice nurse and educator Maureen Groden, RN, offers a

sympathetic and deeply human glimpse into one of life's most challenging passages. Copies of the book will be available for purchase at the event. Stop by the library and receive a 30% coupon code for the book if you wish to purchase it ahead of time. Special thanks to the Friends of Westhampton Public Library and the Lyn Keating Programming Fund for sponsoring this event.

### Visual Mending Circle

Thursday, March 12th from 6pm - 8pm

Don't fret about that hole in your favorite sweater – turn it into visual art! Join library staff to explore the exciting and creative world of visual mending. Using the book "Mending Life: A Handbook for Repairing Clothes and Hearts" as a reference guide, we'll practice sashiko mending and plain weave darning together. Special thanks to the authors of "Mending Life" Nina and Sonya Montenegro for providing instructions for this program. And, special thanks to the Friends of Westhampton Public Library and the Lyn Keating Programming Fund for sponsoring this event.

All materials will be provided and registration is required. To register, please email [westhampton@cwmares.org](mailto:westhampton@cwmares.org) or call 413-527-5386.



Although we were unable to arrange a dress rehearsal performance for the COA, we hope everyone will be able to attend **Oliver!** and support HRHS.

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# Out and about in the Hilltowns

## TechConnect Technology Help for March



Best new 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
- April 1 Cloud Basics
- May 15 MS Excel
- May 29 Windows OS 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](mailto: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

(no appointment needed)

- Chesterfield Community Center 400 Main Rd. Chesterfield
- Weekly on all Tuesdays from 11:00 to 2:00
- Goshen Library, Drop-In tech support from 12:00 to 2:00
- 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, 3/12
  - Nash Hill Place Resident Drop-In tech support from 10:00 to Noon, 2nd Tuesday, 3/12
- Worthington tech support - contact Eileen Daneri [eadaneri@gmail.com](mailto: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 has ended in February. Call 413-296-5080 for help on finding the right low-cost internet plan for you.

### Update from the TechConnect Folks

Tech Connect 2.0 has been 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 for older adults in the hill towns. We seem to grow more popular as word of mouth spreads that we are a source of refurbished devices and free tech support.

We have been exploring state and community grants and it's been rough going in the current funding climate. We are funded through the spring and 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 the drop-in sessions, and launching a fundraising drive in April. Stay tuned for specific changes and announcements in the next COA newsletter.

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## Tech Talk from Peg Whalen

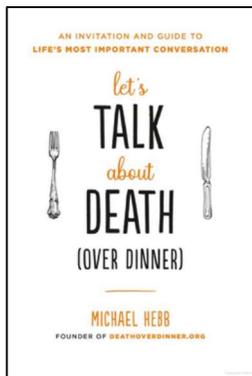
I want to share once again an experience I had a while ago so that others can benefit from my mistake. On a trip to Philadelphia by train I brought two carry-on bags with me and my laptop. To keep the laptop safe when I briefly left my seat I tucked it overhead between my carry-on bags. Later, when I 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 1 Cloud Basics workshop offered by TechHub. Make an informed decision about trusting Clouds. I wish I had had my head in the Clouds!

## Let's Talk about Death

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](mailto: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*

## Circuit Breaker Tax Credit

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

Are you:

MA resident that was 65 and 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

[communityconnectjo@gmail.com](mailto:communityconnectjo@gmail.com)

You can receive up to three prior years worth of tax credit refunds!

## Seniors Aware of Fire Education

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

1. First of all, remove the 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 the boiling fluid under the skin.
4. Do NOT put butter, grease or ointment on the burn.
5. Flush a chemical burn continuously with cool water.
6. Remove watches and jewelry from the burn area.
7. If possible, remove clothing from the burn area.
8. If clothing is stuck to the burn, leave it in place and cut away the clothing around the burn.
9. Again, do not hesitate to call 911 and 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.*

## Hit the Road - Roadtrips

Contact Francine Frenier to reserve your seat **BEFORE** mailing payments. For more information:

- call 413-296-4291 or
- email: [francine.frenier@gmail.com](mailto:francine.frenier@gmail.com)
- mail: 11 Stage Rd. Williamsburg, MA 01096

### Multi Day Trips

**April 17-2, 2026 Washington DC** 5 days, 4 nights. Visit or tour 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. No money is due until early January.

**Day Trip May 3rd, 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 a check payable to Landmark Tours and mail to the address above NOW. A few seats are still available.

**Day Trip June 11<sup>th</sup>, 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)

**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 Holiday trip TBD

## Good News for March

Good News March 2026

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.

-- Deb Hollingworth

***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 \_\_\_\_\_



**Westhampton COA**

Christine Blakesley,  
Coordinator

Julia Lennen, Chair

Colleen Basile, Secretary

Ray Fontaine,

Lorraine Galica

Dave Goddard

Lillian Baxter,  
HEN Representative

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Need a ride?

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

**Corrected recipe for Date-Nut Bars**

**Date-Nut Bars**

1 cup sugar

1 tbsp. butter

3 eggs, separated and beaten separately

1 lb. cut-up dates

1 cup chopped walnuts

1 cup flour

1 tsp. baking powder

½ tsp. salt

Mix in order given, adding egg whites last. Spread in a well-buttered shallow pan 8" x 10".

Bake about 30 min. at 325 degrees until brown all over.

Cut in strips and roll in powdered sugar, if desired, when cool.

Makes 3-4 dozen.

Lilly's own tips: "I use Medjool dates rather than regular ones. It makes them more moist and flavorful. I cook the cut-up dates with a little water for a minute or two before adding them to the mixture. You can adjust the amount of dates to your taste."