

Moving Forward

Activities and Services for Residents 60+



August 2026

INSIDE ...

COA News – Page 2

Smoky Skies and Health Risks – Page 3

Library News – Page 4

In the Hilltowns – Page 5

Important News about this Newsletter – Back Cover

Do not miss:

Upcoming Programs

Regional News/Trips

COA Newsletter News

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

Join the email reminder list!

Did you know that if you get your newsletter electronically, it will be in full color?

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

**Christine Blakesley,
Coordinator**

413-203-9808

coa@westhamptonma.gov

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
3 Knitting Group 6 pm Library Yoga 6pm, Library	4 Fitness w/Friends Town Hall 11:30 – 12:30 Games 1:45–3 pm, WW Scrabble 2 pm	5 Wellness Clinic Public Health Nurse 10:30 am, Library Coffee and Chat 10-12, Library Mahjong WW, 1:30 – 3 pm	6 Chair Yoga WW 10-11 am *Art Opening 5:30 – 7:30 Library	7
10 Knitting Group 6 pm Library Yoga 6pm, Library	11 Fitness w/Friends Town Hall 11:30 – 12:30 Games 1:45–3 pm, WW Scrabble 2 pm, Library	12 Coffee and Chat 10-12, Library Mahjong WW, 1:30 – 3 pm	13 No Lunch Program Chair Yoga WW 10-11 am	14 *Field of Dreams With the O-Tones
17 Knitting Group 6 pm Library Yoga 6pm, Library	18 Fitness w/Friends Town Hall 11:30 – 12:30 Games 1:45–3 pm, WW Scrabble 2 pm, Library	19 Wellness Clinic Public Health Nurse 10:30 am, Library Coffee and Chat 10-12, Library Mahjong WW, 1:30 – 3 pm	20 Chair Yoga Church Dining Room 10-11 am HVES Hot Meal Pickup WW Noon *Wingmasters Birds of Prey Town Hall at 5:30	21
24 Knitting Group 6 pm Library Yoga 6pm, Library	25 Fitness w/Friends Town Hall 11:30 – 12:30 Games 1:45–3 pm, WW Scrabble 2 pm, Library Book Club – Library	26 Coffee and Chat 10-12, Library Mahjong WW, 1:30 – 3 pm	27 Chair Yoga WW 10-11 am TechConnect 2-4 pm (Call ahead)	28 *Field of Dreams With the Gaslight Tinkers *Saturday – Clothes Swap at Library
31 Knitting Group 6 pm Library Yoga 6pm, Library	September 1 Fitness w/Friends Town Hall 11:30 – 12:30 Games 1:45–3 pm, WW Scrabble 2 pm, Library	2 Coffee and Chat 10-12, Library Mahjong WW, 1:30 – 3 pm	3 Chair Yoga WW 10-11 am	4 Library Closed Monday 9/7 for Labor Day

* See more Information inside in the Newsletter.

COA Coordinator Christine Blakesley to Begin a New Chapter

The Town of Westhampton will soon bid a heartfelt farewell to Council on Aging (COA) Coordinator Christine Blakesley, whose last day with the town will be at the end of August. Christine has accepted a new position as Transportation Coordinator for the Hampshire Regional School District.

A lifelong connection to Westhampton and a passion for serving others made Christine a natural fit for the COA coordinator role. Since her appointment, she has worked tirelessly to support the town's older adults, organizing programs, coordinating services, and helping residents remain connected to their community. Town officials have praised her commitment, empathy, and dedication to the people she serves.

Whether planning activities, assisting seniors with transportation and resources, or simply taking the time to listen, Christine has made a lasting impact on countless residents. Her warm personality and willingness to go above and beyond have earned her the respect and appreciation of colleagues, volunteers, and the community alike.

While Westhampton is saddened to see her leave, friends and coworkers are excited for her as she begins this new opportunity with Hampshire Regional. Her experience in coordinating services and helping people navigate transportation needs makes her well suited for the role.

"Christine has been an incredible asset to our community," many who have worked with her would agree. "She will be greatly missed, but we wish her every success in this exciting new chapter."

The Westhampton community extends its sincere thanks to Christine Blakesley for her service and dedication to the Council on Aging. As she embarks on her new career, she leaves behind a legacy of kindness, compassion, and commitment that will not be forgotten.

Everyone at the Council on Aging and throughout Westhampton wishes Christine the very best in her new position and hopes she knows how much she will be missed.

COA Coordinator Position Posted

The Town of Westhampton is seeking qualified applicants for a part time Council on Aging ("COA") Coordinator.

Using their own initiative and independent judgment, the COA Coordinator works to achieve the goals of the Westhampton COA.

The Coordinator is responsible for

- preparing and overseeing the departmental budget;
- overseeing all activities and programs offered by the COA;

- coordinate with other Town departments and staff, volunteers and members;
- engage and collaborate with regional partners and community leaders;
- develop positive and productive relationships with residents, members and clients;
- be an active participant in the activities of the organization.

The successful candidate will have

- a polite and positive communication style
- familiarity with grant application and management
- strong skills in modern business software (Outlook, MS Word, Excel)
- familiarity with social media and website management
- a strong desire to support and encourage Westhampton's senior residents wherever and whenever necessary

The COA Coordinator works under the general supervision of the Westhampton Council on Aging. Work schedule is flexible, and some remote work is possible, but regular on-site hours, and participation at regularly scheduled COA events are expected.

Note that the COA Coordinator need not be 60 or older. We welcome all applicants. Compensation is \$25/hour for 8-10 hours a week.

More information here: <https://westhamptonma.gov/opportunities/#1784158408930-37e4156b-582d>

Friends of the COA Needing Friends

The Westhampton COA board would like to thank **Deb Barthelette** for her many years as president of Friends of the Westhampton Council on Aging. Deb has served as president of the Friends for 10 years and is leaving to pursue other interests. We will miss Deb's smile, optimism and her creative ideas for entertaining us.

The Friends is the fund-raising arm of the Council on Aging. If you have enjoyed a piece of pie at the Fall Festival, that was due to the hard work of the Friends. The Friends board is a small group of easy-going people dedicated to the elder population of Westhampton. If you are interested in joining our board, contact Colleen Basile at 413-237-9162 or cb1211@verizon.net.

ICYMI – Wound Care Program

In case you missed the August Lunch program, here is some information about the guest speaker – New England Wound Care (NewCare).

New England Wound Care is a specialized wound and ostomy care clinic with offices in Easthampton, Florence, Amherst, Westfield and Greenfield. We treat a variety of

wounds including diabetic wounds, pressure wounds, venous wounds, surgical wounds, and more. We are also one of the only places in Western Massachusetts which specializes in ostomy care. This year marks our ten-year business anniversary.

What we learned is that they will take patients with or without referrals. They specialize in patients with hard-to-heal wounds – be they from diabetic neuropathy, surgery, accidents, burns, or other situations. It is important to know there is this resource available. NEWCare can be reached at 413-475-3233. Their most convenient locations are in Florence and Easthampton in the Valley Medical buildings.

Website: <https://newenglandwoundcare.com/>

No Lunch Program In August

Newsletters Mailed to Your House ...

Starting with the November newsletters, the COA will reduce the number of households receiving this newsletter via the Postal Service. Please look at the back cover and decide if you want to continue receiving it by mail.

The Sky is Yellow! Stay Indoors!

As we write the newsletter (mid-July) AIRNOW has the following for today's AQI:

Primary Pollutant
This pollutant currently has the highest AQI in the area.

▼

PM2.5

106

Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups

People with heart or lung disease, older adults, children and teens – take any of these steps to reduce your exposure:

- Choose less strenuous activities (like walking instead of running) so you don't breathe as hard.
- Shorten the amount of time you are active outdoors.
- Be active outdoors when air quality is better.

Everyone else: Enjoy your outdoor activities.

Why is this important – isn't this just haze from wildfires? The key information here is that the pollutant is PM2.5.

PM2.5 refers to microscopic solid or liquid particles in the air that are 2.5 micrometers or less in width—about 30 times thinner than a human hair. Because of their tiny size, these fine particles can bypass the body's natural defenses, lodge deep in the lungs, and pass directly into the bloodstream!

Prolonged or high exposure to PM2.5 is widely considered the most dangerous form of air pollution. It is linked to a variety of severe health problems, including respiratory issues, heart attacks, stroke, and cardiovascular disease.

<https://www.airnow.gov/?city=Westhampton&state=MA&country=USA>

Air Quality Index (AQI) Basics

What is the U.S. Air Quality Index (AQI)?

The U.S. AQI is EPA's index for reporting air quality.

How does the AQI work?

The U.S. Air Quality Index (AQI) is EPA's tool for communicating about outdoor air quality and health. The AQI includes six color-coded categories, each corresponding to a range of index values. The higher the AQI value, the greater the level of air pollution and the greater the health concern. For example, an AQI value of 50 or below represents good air quality, while an AQI value over 300 represents hazardous air quality.

For each pollutant an AQI value of 100 generally corresponds to an ambient air concentration that equals the level of the short-term national ambient air quality standard for protection of public health. AQI values at or below 100 are generally thought of as satisfactory. When AQI values are above 100, air quality is unhealthy: at first for certain sensitive groups of people, then for everyone as AQI values get higher.

The AQI is divided into six categories. Each category corresponds to a different level of health concern. Each category also has a specific color. The color makes it easy for people to quickly determine whether air quality is reaching unhealthy levels in their communities.

AQI Basics for Ozone and Particle Pollution			
Daily AQI Color	Levels of Concern	Values of Index	Description of Air Quality
Green	Good	0 - 50	Air quality is satisfactory, and air pollution poses little or no risk.
Yellow	Moderate	51 - 100	Air quality is acceptable. However, there may be a risk for some people, particularly those who are unusually sensitive to air pollution.
Orange	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	101 - 150	Members of sensitive groups may experience health effects. The general public is less likely to be affected.
Red	Unhealthy	151 - 200	Some members of the general public may experience health effects; members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects.
Purple	Very Unhealthy	201 - 300	Health alert: The risk of health effects is increased for everyone.
Maroon	Hazardous	301 and higher	Health warning of emergency conditions: everyone is more likely to be affected.

File of Life

The Westhampton Fire Department is distributing **File of Life** components to anyone and everyone! The File of Life can help you receive prompt, quality medical care, especially when it matters most – in an emergency. Our product is designed to make the difference between life and death by providing absolutely vital information to first responders.

Fill out your File of Life and place it on your refrigerator. Many people stick their MOLST form behind so first responders have everything they need.

What is a File of Life?

The File of Life provides a card so you can specify:

1. Your doctor and preferred hospital
2. Emergency Contacts
3. Medical Data including special conditions and medications
4. Where your Health Care Proxy and Living Will can be found
5. If you have a DNR
6. Any medical conditions or allergies you have
7. Insurance information.

Contact Information

Westhampton Fire Department

48 Stage Road

413-529-7181

fire@westhamptonma.gov

Library News

August 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@cwmar.org or call 413-527-5386.

Recurring Programs (Holidays may impact schedule)

Computer Help – Summer recess

Knitting Group - Mondays at 6pm

Yoga - Mondays at 6pm

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

Tech Connect drop-in tech help - from 2pm to 4pm – August 27th *Please call ahead to ensure that Tech Connect is meeting.

Field of Dreams Concerts - Fridays at 6pm

The library's Concert Planning Committee is excited to announce our lineup of local bands for the 2026 Field of Dreams concert series. Concerts take place in the backyard of the library. Please bring a lawn chair or blanket. In the case of inclement weather, concerts will be held at Town Hall.

August 7th – The O-Tones

August 21st – The Gaslight Tinkers

Sponsored by: Friends of Westhampton Library
Westhampton Cultural Council
Easthampton Savings Bank

Greenfield Cooperative Bank

Florence Savings Bank

Marek Builders, Inc.

August/September Exhibit – Hilltown Plein Air Painters

Art Reception August 6 at the Library – 5:30 - 7:30 pm

The Hilltown Plein Air Painters have been painting together since 2003, exploring the Hilltowns and beyond. The group has had several group shows, including their Tenth Anniversary Show at the Hosmer Gallery in Northampton: “ Road Trip Route 66 ” and the inaugural art show at the Westhampton Library in 2011. The group enjoys painting scenes that have local interest, that make our area unique and celebrates the beauty and history of New England. Members also exhibit individually and have their own studios.

Weekly outings are planned for morning paint-outs with helpful support, critiques, and friendship. Through working with different mediums and painting styles, the artists strive to capture the setting, light, and mood of the day. This can lead to a finished painting or a “good start” to complete in the studio from sketches or reference photos.



Painting from nature immerses the artist where details of form, light, and color can be observed accurately. Plein air painting in a natural setting captures the

beauty of this area that continues to inspire our work.

Wingmasters – Birds of Prey

WINGMASTERS is a partnership of two people dedicated to increasing public understanding and appreciation of North American birds of prey. Julie Anne Collier and Jim Parks are both licensed raptor rehabilitators based in Massachusetts. Together they care for injured birds of prey. Most of the birds they rehabilitate can ultimately be released back into the wild, but in some cases the birds are left permanently handicapped. Julie and Jim are further licensed to provide a home for these non-releasable raptors, and to use them for educational programs. Since 1994, WINGMASTERS has presented over 5000 programs at schools, libraries and museums throughout New England.

Wingmasters will be presenting an educational program at the Westhampton Town Hall on August 20, 2026, starting at 5:30 PM. This program is strongly recommended for

Ages 6 and up and is free of charge. Capacity of Town Hall is 150 people and this program is first-come, first-served.

This program is sponsored by the Westhampton Public Library. Special thanks to the Friends of Westhampton Public Library and the Lyn Keating Programming Fund for sponsoring this event.



Clothing Swap

The Library is excited to share that local teens from our teen-led book group are organizing the 2nd annual clothing swap in the library community room! Stop by anytime between 10:30am-12:30pm on 8/29 and find new to you garments. Donations will be accepted from 8/24 to 8/27 during library open hours. Please do not donate: used bathing suits, undergarments, socks, or non-apparel items Clothing for all ages and sizes welcome! And you don't need to donate to participate in the swap. All clothing left at the

end of the swap will be donated to local thrift shops.

Out and about in the Hilltowns

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
- mail: 11 Stage Rd. Williamsburg, MA 01096

Day Trip September 28, Monday. The Big E. an annual favorite, with free entertainment at The Court of Honor Stage. Frankie Avalon performs his hits. Cost \$18 for Northampton Seniors, all other seniors \$20. Make your check payable to Francine Frenier and mail to the address above. Due Now. NO REFUNDS due to bargain price. The bus leaves from Sheldon Field.'

NEW Day Trip Monday October 12th Worthington COA Fall Foliage Bus Trip. Hudson River Narrated Cruise aboard the Rip Van Winkle II, choice of gourmet boxed lunch on board, and Market stop. Discounted price for Worthington Seniors over 60 and \$140 for other seniors. Call Phyllis 413-238-5962 or email coa@worthington-ma.us for details & to reserve a seat by September 1st .

Day Trip December 8th Merry Christmazz Holiday Variety Show. Jimmy Mazz performs seasonal traditional and contemporary tunes from various artists. Yankee Pot Roast lunch and show at Storowton's Carriage House, W. Springfield. A drive through Bright Nights follows. Make

an \$80 check payable to Francine Frenier and mail to address above by October 6, 2026. A few seats left (Westhampton Friends roster is full. Check with Francine on the waitlist.)

Trips in 2027

Watch for upcoming details on a 3-day/2 nights trip to Baltimore to see the Red Sox play a game against the Baltimore Orioles along with some sightseeing. Waiting for the 2027 MLB schedule to come out in December to determine dates.

TechConnect Help for August

Tech Support home visit is available by appointment
Call or message 413-296-5080 to arrange a home visit.

Devices for you: Refurbished PC laptops and iPads
If you are looking for a free refurbished laptop or iPad, please call 413-296-5080 and leave us a message. We will offer free devices while our supply lasts. If you have received a device and are not using it, please call our number to arrange a return so someone else can use it.

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, 3rd Thursday, 8/20
- Westhampton Library Drop-In tech support, from 2:00 to 4:00, 4th Thursday 8/27 (call ahead to check)
- Williamsburg
 - Meekins Library Drop-In tech support (call library for latest information)
 - Nash Hill Place Resident Drop-In tech support from 10:00 to Noon, 2nd Tuesday, 6/11
- Worthington tech support - contact Eileen Daneri eadaneri@gmail.com.

Help Wanted – The Connector

For the past several years the Northern Hilltown Consortium of COAs has been able to offer a resource called the Connector. This is funded through a grant from Highland Valley Elder Services and is designed to help residents in the seven hill towns connect with the services they need. The Connector helps determine eligibility for benefits like SNAP, fuel assistance, subsidized housing, home care services, Circuit Breaker, and was created to help us understand how systems work, what benefits are available, and how to apply for them.

This is a Part Time position, with flexible hours, averaging about 25 hours x month. Basic computer skills, a knowledge of benefit programs and experience working with seniors on “late life” issues is helpful.

For more information, you can contact Jess Humphries at the Chesterfield COA 400 Main Road, P.O. Box 7 Chesterfield, MA 01012.....or email coa.townofchesterfield.com

Seniors Aware of Fire Education

Summer heat can be dangerous, especially for older adults. Heat related illnesses can develop quickly and become life threatening if not recognized and treated early.

Heat exhaustion occurs when the body loses too much water and salt through sweating. Signs may include heavy sweating, weakness, dizziness, headache, nausea, muscle cramps, and cool, clammy skin. If someone is experiencing heat exhaustion, move them to a cool place,



offer water or a sports drink, loosen clothing, and apply cool wet cloths to help lower body temperature.

Heat stroke is a medical emergency. Signs include confusion, slurred speech, hot dry skin, seizures, or loss of consciousness. Call 911 immediately and begin cooling the person while waiting for help.

During hot weather:

- Drink plenty of water.
- Avoid strenuous activity during the hottest part of the day.
- Wear lightweight clothing.

- Stay in air conditioned spaces when possible.
- Check on neighbors, friends, and family members.

Stay cool, stay hydrated, and stay S.A.F.E. this summer!

Capt. Steve Estelle, SAFE Educator
Goshen Fire Department

Understanding the Medicare Savings Program (MSP)

Many people have questions about the Medicare Savings Program (MSP), so here's a simple explanation of how it works and why you may have received letters or cards from different agencies.

What's Changed?

Two years ago, Massachusetts made an important change to the Medicare Savings Program by eliminating the asset limit. Today, eligibility is based on **income only**, making it easier for many people to qualify. Massachusetts is one of only 12 states that have removed the asset requirement.

What Does the Medicare Savings Program Do?

The Medicare Savings Program is a **federal program** that helps people with Medicare by:

- Paying your Medicare Part B premium.
- Automatically enrolling you in the **Extra Help** program, which lowers the cost of your prescription drug plan premiums and copays.
- Automatically making you eligible for the **Health Safety Net**, which helps cover care at federally funded clinics and hospitals.
- Although MSP is administered by **MassHealth**, it is **not** a MassHealth insurance program.

Why Do I Have a MassHealth ID Number?

This is one of the most common sources of confusion.

If you're approved for MSP, MassHealth will send you an approval letter and assign you a **MassHealth ID number**. Each year, you'll also receive a renewal application (like the original two-page MSP application you completed). To keep your benefits, be sure to complete and return this renewal form each year.

Having a MassHealth ID number **does not mean you have MassHealth health insurance**. It simply means MassHealth administers the Medicare Savings Program in Massachusetts.

If a medical provider says, “I see you have MassHealth,” you can explain:

“I don't have MassHealth insurance. I have the Medicare Savings Program, a federal program that helps pay my Medicare costs.”

Many healthcare providers are unfamiliar with the difference, so don't be surprised if you need to explain it.

When you're approved for MSP, you're automatically enrolled in the **Extra Help** program, which is administered by the Social Security Administration.

- Enrolls you automatically in a Medicare Part D prescription drug plan.
- Pays your Part D plan premium.
- Greatly reduces your prescription copays—generic medications usually have very low copays, and brand-name medications cost no more than **\$12.50** per prescription.

Unlike MSP, Extra Help does **not** require annual recertification. As long as you continue to qualify for MSP, you'll continue receiving Extra Help.

If you don't like the Medicare Part D plan you were assigned, you can switch to another plan. A SHINE counselor can help you compare your options.

Some people who qualify for MSP also qualify for **Qualified Medicare Beneficiary (QMB)** benefits because of their income.

If you qualify for QMB, you'll receive a **MassHealth** card in the mail.

QMB provides an additional benefit by paying Medicare deductibles, coinsurance, and copays that you would otherwise owe for covered medical services. Be sure to show your MassHealth card to your healthcare providers and ask them to add it to your medical record.

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/get-help-paying-medicare-costs#what-are-medicare-savings-programs-msps> provides more information.

If you have questions about the Medicare Savings Program, Extra Help, or QMB, contact your local senior center or your SHINE counselor.

Caroline Soland
(413) 586-2000

***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 Council on Aging
3 South Road
Westhampton, MA 01027



Prsrt Std
US Postage
PAID
Permit 183
Greenfield MA

Westhampton COA

Christine Blakesley,
Coordinator

Julia Lennen, Chair

Colleen Basile, Secretary

Ray Fontaine,

Lorraine Galica

Dave Goddard

Chuck Horn

Lillian Baxter,
HEN Representative

Need a ride?

Contact **Whitney Chicoiné**

413-539-0559

whitneybchicoine@gmail.com

Newsletter mailings will be reduced starting with the November Issue

Due to the significant reduction in the COA budget, print newsletters will no longer be automatically mailed to every household with a resident aged 60+. This change will take place starting with the November 2026 issue.

We are moving to an "opt-in" model. Please note that all issues are available on the town website. We can also email you a link each month to the latest copy.

Starting with the November newsletter:

- Residents born in 1943 or earlier will continue to receive print newsletters through the mail with the option to opt-out.
- Residents born after 1943 who *need to continue* receiving the print issue through the mail, should let us know and we will continue mailing your newsletter.

Changes can be made at any time. Please note we will be assembling mailings mid-month prior to the issue date.

Contact Christine Blakelsey, COA Coordinator by email at

coa@wasthamponma.gov or call 413-203-9808 to discuss your options.