

Worthington Corners

November 2020 COA Newsletter



Worthington Council on Aging
2 Packard Common
Worthington, MA 01098

Shelley Modestow Rice, COA Coordinator
Phone: 413-238-4294
coa@worthington-ma.us

As we enter the holiday season, I'd like to wish each and every one of you a very happy and blessed Thanksgiving! We know this year has been rough; take time to enjoy the warmth of family and friends this season as best you can. With time, we will get back to more activities and gatherings, but until then, stay safe and healthy!

Needing a ride to the grocery store? Hilltown Easy Ride Van provides trips to the Big Y in Northampton on Tuesdays & Thursdays at 9am. Call 296-4232; leave a message for Ed Pelletier.

Need a ride to your medical appointment? Call 24-36 hours in advance to 296-4232, leave a message for Ed Pelletier.

*Rides are available for seniors over the age of 60 and Veterans.

Ways to Deal with the Pandemic & Winter Depression

- **Have a morning routine-** this will set the tone for your day and keep you consistent with good healthy habits.
- **Get showered and dressed even if you have no place to go.** This will keep you feeling put together and set a positive tone for the day.
- **Choose when to watch the news;** don't keep it on in the background all day! This will induce stress and anxiety.
- **Honor your body's need for sleep;** most adults need 7 -9 hours a night.
- **Take care of your nutrition needs.**
- **Exercise daily; it boosts serotonin.** Just 10 minutes of exercise a day can reverse the trend of fragility that comes with age (say scientists in the Journal of Gerontology). Activities like



walking, yoga or Tai Chi are great options. Dance as a therapeutic modality in addition to other types of therapy are helpful. To start, dance in your living room to your favorite song.

- **Get outside, spend some time in nature.** We shouldn't underestimate the benefits of a brisk walk, getting fresh air, and being in nature because they are therapeutic. Natural light resets your mood, circadian rhythm, and work capacity.



- **Take time to journal,** a way to capture your thoughts and feelings at the moment. Writing out your feelings can help you gain control over them and organize your thoughts.
- **Make relaxation a priority;** you'll feel rejuvenated and refreshed.
- **Practice gratitude.** The benefits of practicing gratitude are nearly endless. People who regularly practice gratitude by taking time to notice and reflect upon the things they're thankful for experience more positive emotions, feel more alive, sleep better, express more compassion and kindness, and even have stronger immune systems. ("The Science behind Gratitude".)
- **Limit screen-time before bed,** this will allow the brain and body to slowly shut-down.
- **Schedule in time for self-care.**
- **Make time for meaningful social interaction.** Stay connected whether it be digital gatherings, good conversations, and/or playing a game. Human contact is critical to our mental health. Stress can be a heavy load to bear alone. When you reach out to people you trust

and express your vulnerabilities, it can bring you a sense of relief and rejuvenation.

- **Have fun.** Reconnect with things that you enjoy! Art is where people find fun and creativity. Reconnect with things that make you smile.

Some symptoms of depression are sleeping too much or too little, changes in appetite (overeating or eating very little), lethargy, mood swings, loss of interest in activities that used to bring pleasure, feeling of sadness and hopelessness, trouble thinking and concentrating and thoughts of suicide. The spiral into depression doesn't mean you should feel ashamed or defeated. Needing help is not the problem; not seeking help when you need it is.

The pandemic is taking an emotional toll on all of us and the upcoming winter season may hit even harder. It's critical that we create a plan now to proactively combat winter depression, rather than wait to see if we hit rock bottom. By taking care of our own mental health, we are better partners and family members, and we will feel better too.

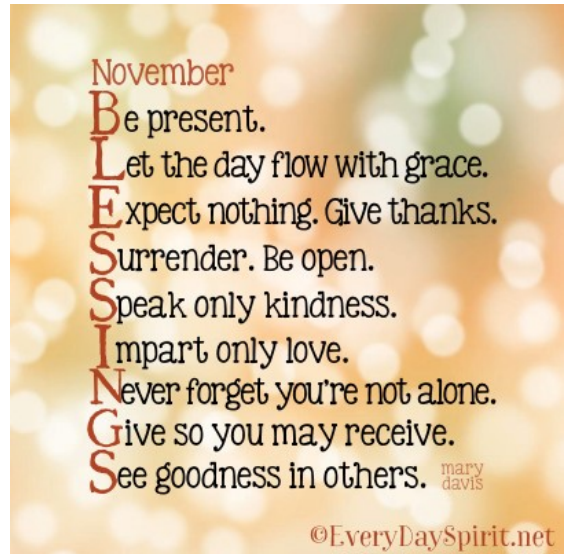
- Dr. Sanam Hafeez, Neuropsychologist, Columbia University
- Rachel Garlinghouse, "How to Get Ahead of Pandemic Winter Depression Right Now"
- Emma Mcadam, Licenced Marriage and Family Therapist

"As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them."

-JFK

Women and Muscle Loss

Did you know that women have 86% less testosterone at age 60 than at 20? Low levels of the hormone raise the risk of age-related progressive muscle loss (sarcopenia) by 35% (research in Geriatrics & Gerontology International). Low testosterone results in a marked decline in muscle mass that can make you feel weak and sluggish. Fortunately, there's a natural way to restore levels for just 50 cents a day: Sprinkle 2 Tbs. of wheat germ in smoothies, yogurt or oatmeal. It's loaded with zinc and magnesium, nutrients that scientists at Baylor University in Texas say increase testosterone production and block the creation of an enzyme that deactivates the hormone—raising testosterone levels by 33%.



The Worthington Council on Aging counts on YOUR support to help build important programming for local seniors!

I would like to contribute to the Worthington Council on Aging. My contribution of \$_____ is attached.

Please write your check to The Town of Worthington and send to Worthington COA, PO Box 7, Worthington, MA 01098.

Name _____

Address _____

Thank You for Helping to Support Your Neighbors!

Worthington Council on Aging

Seniors Aware of Fire Education



The focus of Fire Safety Month was how to prevent cooking fires. The theme was chosen with a few facts in mind.

1. The leading cause of house fires has been kitchen fires.
 2. The leading cause of kitchen fires is unattended cooking.
 3. Most cooking fires in the home involve the kitchen stove. Here are a few ways by which you can prevent fires in your kitchen:
- ⇒ If you are sleepy or have consumed a bit too much alcohol, do not use the stove.
 - ⇒ Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, boiling, broiling or grilling food.
 - ⇒ Stay in your home when food is cooking.
 - ⇒ Use a timer to remind you that you are cooking.
 - ⇒ Keep anything that can catch fire away from your stove top.
 - ⇒ One extra idea -- don't let pan and pot handles overhang the stove top edge where they can be bumped into and pour scalding liquid on you.

Have a safe Thanksgiving!

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

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



Would you like to receive your newsletter, in color, by email instead of snail mail?

If so, please email Kristen at regionalcoanews@gmail.com to be put on the email list. Include your address so I will know which mailing list to take you off of. Thanks!

Phone scams, Medicare style

So my latest irritation is those calls telling me I am eligible for Medicare supplies and they will be HAPPY to send me a back brace, knee brace, or Medical Item of the Day. The source of the calls will be some town in Massachusetts, or most recently a Williamsburg number. So far they haven't sent me anything... what if they do?

From the FTC: "Don't accept medical equipment you get in the mail — unless you or your doctor ordered it. If it comes to your door and you didn't order it, you can keep it as a gift. You don't have to pay for things you didn't order... if you give them your information, they'll use it to fraudulently bill Medicare. This uses up your medical benefits, which means you might not be able to get the right brace later, if your doctor prescribes one."

How do you tell if the scammers have been successful? Every now and again you will get a letter from Medicare in the mail, a Medicare Summary Notice, that says "This is not a bill" and it will show charges that Medicare paid. If you do not recognize a charge, or know it is one of those braces, call the phone number on the letter and report the blinking buggers.

The same rule holds if the mail brings you other merchandise with a bill, but you didn't order it. You can keep it, try to send it back at their expense, give it away, or use it to line a trash can.

Stay safe,
Jean O'Neil, TRIAD committee member
413-268-2228, jeanoneilmass@gmail.com

Good News!

By Deborah Hollingworth

As I sit down to write, we are about three weeks away from the Presidential election, so it's difficult to think about anything else these days. But we are also in the midst of Open Enrollment for Medicare beneficiaries who might like to look over their coverage and compare plans for this coming year, especially if you've received a letter from your Medicare Rx plan saying coverage is changing and cost is increasing. And if that's not good news...our mailboxes are filled with advertising from other insurance plans saying they can do a better job for us. Can all that go straight to the recycling bin? Or do we need to do something?

There are 1,326,207 Medicare beneficiaries in Massachusetts. Many of us can ignore all this advertising, and ignore the fact that it's Open Enrollment season, because we get our health insurance coverage through our retirement/pension plans, or through the VA. And those who have MassHealth or X-tra help (also called the Low Income Subsidy), do not have to make any changes to their coverage. They can ignore and recycle all the advertising in their mailbox.

For the rest of us, we might do well to check out our coverage. Typically the letter from our insurance plan says they have changed their Formulary, switching some of the generics we take into "another tier", which is another way to say they are going to charge us more for our generic Rx than they did last year. You may have received a letter from your Rx Plan that said they were increasing your monthly premium? We expect shrinking coverage and increasing costs as a way of life. But here's a new wrinkle. It has become more important to know where to shop, and which pharmacy to use. Pharmacy chains, pharmaceutical companies and health insurance plans are connected in ways that are not apparent to us, meaning they often own, or are in business with each other. So picking up your medications at Stop and Shop might be a different price than shopping at CVS.

We are in luck because the **Medicare.gov** website can sort this all out for us. By typing in your list of Rx, and the zip code where you live, the website program can sort through the details of all 27 Medicare Rx plans in our area and rank them in order of least cost for best coverage! You can try using the website yourself, or call your senior center for a SHINE appointment.

One more piece of good news is the **Massachusetts Pharmacy Outreach Program**. This is especially helpful for situations where your Rx is expensive, or is not something you've taken before

and you'd like to know more about the drug. The Pharmacy Outreach Program is a free service provided by the University of Massachusetts and Executive Office of Elder Affairs. It's your reference librarian, available by phone, Monday through Friday from 8:30am - 5pm: **1-866-633-1617**. They look for affordable solutions for you, and can help submit Patient Assistance applications if you qualify to get your Rx free or greatly reduced from the pharmaceutical manufacturer. One of my favorite stories is about my Mom calling them to find out if it might be safe to double the dose of her particular Rx and cut the pill in half. That way she'd save almost \$300 for the year. They said it should be OK, and to ask her doctor. She did. And saved enough money to get her chair reupholstered.

Open Enrollment runs from October 15th-December 7th each year. Call your senior center for a SHINE appointment if you need help sorting it all out.



"You get a call from this number about a busted oven, you're busy. Understand?"

Joan Griswold's Zoom Exercise Classes

Thank you to all who join Joan Griswold's zoom exercise classes! We are very thankful that she does such a great job keeping our muscle strengthening class going and that she is interested in continuing this through the winter months.



Most of our COAs receive grants from Highland Valley Elder Services that partially fund many of our classes. We also use donations to keep paying teachers like Joan. Your donations make her classes possible.

In order to continue, we need donations from each of the seven Hilltowns.

Joan works for each town in six-week sessions. When we were meeting in person, we had a donation jar in which we asked everyone to put in a donation that they could afford. We are very thankful for the donations that have been sent in, but we still need your support. Otherwise, we will not have the funds to keep Joan's classes on Zoom.

When sending in a donation, please send it to the town you would like to support. Joan lists them on her email that she sends out every week. If you would like to join Joan's classes, send her an email: joan@bybhealth.com

careconsultationmanh@alz.org to schedule a Care Consultation today.

We know this is an unprecedented time, and no one should be doing this alone. The Alzheimer's Association staff are still operational and continue to help families each day living with dementia. Our 24/7 Helpline is available at 1-800-272-3900 to anyone who needs to talk about the challenges of dementia during this time. Our Helpline staff are available around the clock for any questions or concerns you might have. They can help address feelings of isolation, and link you to other resources.

Additionally, we are now offering all of our educational programs and support groups via video conference or over the phone. We also offer Meet Ups for those living with dementia. Virtual Alz Meet Ups are a fun, social hour that provide an opportunity to connect with others living through a similar experience.



Free Resources from the Alzheimer's Association

Did you or someone in your family recently receive a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia? Would you like some help navigating decisions after a diagnosis? Are you worried about how to provide the best care for a loved one? Are you concerned about your own memory?



The Alzheimer's Association provides free Care Consultations that are confidential and personalized to the needs of individuals and families. Consultations can be provided by phone or video conference and can include family members in separate locations. Call 617-393-2100 or email

Diane Meehan retires from the Hilltown Food Pantry after 30 Years

A familiar face to many, Diane Meehan recently retired from her position as Director of the Hilltown Food Pantry in Goshen. She started as a volunteer coordinator of the Pantry which has been in numerous locations (Cummington, Chesterfield, Haydenville and finally, in Goshen).

Thank you, Diane, for your many years of dedication and hard work. As the Goshen select board wrote in their letter to you, "You truly embody the popular phrase, 'Think Globally, Act Locally'. The many volunteers and people whom you have touched have enjoyed working with you and wish you all the best as you retire."

Worthington Council on Aging
Attn: Shelley Rice
PO Box 7
Worthington, MA 01098

PRSR STD
US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT 183
Greenfield MA

Worthington COA

Shelley Rice, Coordinator
coa@worthington-ma.us

Camille Smith, Chair

Helyn Myrick, Co-Chair

Laurie McAnulty

Helen Pelletier

Pat Kennedy

Susan VanBuren

LeAnn Mason

Phyllis Dassatti, Secretary


Newsletter Designer:
Kristen Estelle
regionalcoanews@gmail.com

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This is going to be the
first year our family
won't be going to Hawaii
because of the virus.

Usually it's because
we can't afford it.



COFFEE AND JELLY BEANS