

THE NORTHERN HILLTOWN COAs CONSORTIUM REGIONAL NEWS

DECEMBER, 2015

The Northern Hilltowns Councils on Aging Consortium met on October 19th. In attendance were Council on Aging directors from the participating towns as well as Peg Whalen (regional COA coordinator), Sherry Loomis (newsletter designer), and Marcia Klaus, visiting from Highland Valley Elder Services. Marcia from Highland Valley reported on the Money Management Program funded by AARP. This program provides services to seniors who need assistance with budgeting, banking, and bill paying.

The Consortium discussed the grant of \$5550 from Highland Valley Elder Services for outreach services and agreed that the funds would go in large part for a program coordinator and secondarily to support the Williamsburg COA Companion Program. Peg reported on the transportation survey that was recently completed and will be mailed to area seniors as well as be made available at events and at COA offices. The purpose of the survey is to assess the needs of each town's seniors in regards to transportation. To ensure that the survey results reflect the true needs of each town, every area senior is encouraged to participate. Please be on the lookout for a survey in your mailbox in the coming months. Sherry Loomis, newsletter designer for the area town COAs, was commended for her high quality work on the newsletters.

The Northern Hilltowns COA Consortium has received a grant from Highland Valley Elder Services (HVES). This grant is in addition to the state grant that provides my outreach to your town. Administered by the Chesterfield COA, it supports a new regional Community Connections Program (CCP) across our seven hilltowns. The CCP addresses isolation among seniors. Each town will develop its own version of Community Connections to identify seniors who are shut-in, isolated or alone more often than they want; the second is to identify residents willing to volunteer to make a connection with a town senior who is isolated or alone. I will give updates on the regional program steps as we take them. In the meantime please consider being part of CCP.

HVES has also awarded a grant to the Chesterfield COA, as reported in the November Chesterfield COA newsletter, which will partner with 4 other Northern Hilltown COAs to provide regional opportunities for social contact and isolation relief by offering regular programs for fitness, well-being, socializing, and enrichment programs in Cummington, Goshen, Chesterfield, Westhampton, and Worthington. These towns each have ongoing COA activities and events that are open to senior residents of other towns. In the past, different towns have offered dance lessons, osteoarthritis exercise, Tai Chi, square dancing, men's breakfasts, computer classes, origami, hiking, and museum trips. The grant will help underwrite these activities and more throughout the next two years.

~Peg Whalen, Regional Outreach Coordinator

TRIAD

It is the season...

Here come the charities! All right, I do favor some charities, but when they get too aggressive in their fund-raising, I get upset. A couple of years ago a friend bemoaned the fact that she HAD to donate to one of our nations' top animal charities. Turns out they sent her a coffee cup with her name on it, unrequested. She couldn't send it back of course, so was fretting about it when she got a call. The organization tried to make her feel obligated to send them money. Bad bad bad. The deal is, if someone sends you something you have not asked for, like a cup or tote bag or stationery, you do not have to send them money. You can, if you choose, but it is your call.

A reminder for the giving season. An option exists for seeing if a charity is legitimate, effective, and efficient. Some charities spend a large percent of their income on marketing and items not directly related to the topic of the charity, and you have the right to not reward them for their bad habits.

A comprehensive web site I like is Charity Navigator, at <http://www.charitynavigator.org>. They investigate various charities by category on a regular basis and provide a rating with a lot of information. The ratings and scores are in two categories. One is financial, things like fundraising expenses and efficiency. The second is accountability and transparency, e.g., have an independent Board, audited financial condition, and documentation. Additional information spotlights their revenue and expenses. You can compare the ratings of multiple charities.

Please stay safe...

Jean O'Neil, TRIAD committee membe

DO YOU NEED HOME REPAIRS? CALL US!

Hilltown CDC received funding for the FY15 Housing Rehab Program for the towns of Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Peru, Plainfield, Williamsburg and Worthington. Funding is limited so please apply today to get on our waiting list. Call Paul Bilodeau, Program Manager, at (413) 296-4536, ext 123 for an application for more information.

Eligible Improvements May Include:

- Roof and foundation repairs
- Sewer tie in and septic repairs
- Heating systems; oil tank removal
- Handicap accessibility work
- Plumbing and electrical repairs
- New wells drilled; pump repairs

Program Benefits Include:

- No interest, no monthly payments
- Loans may be entirely forgiven
- Detailed work specifications
- Project oversight
- Contractor selection assistance

Eligible Homeowners Should:

- Live in a single-family, owner -occupied housing unit
- (condos are not eligible for this program)
- Be current with property taxes and mortgage payments
- Fall within the income guidelines (*see next column*)

Program eligibility will be determined on an individual basis. Other restrictions or requirements may apply

depending on a household's current situation and circumstances.

Note: the Hilltown Community Development Corporation's Housing Rehab Program provides services to Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Peru, Plainfield, Westhampton, Williamsburg, and Worthington. Funding is not available in all eight towns at all times. If you live in a town not listed above, the housing Rehab Program for your area may be administered by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission at 413-781-6045.

HOUSEHOLD INCOME GUIDELINES/LIMITS:

Household Size	Maximum Gross Annual Income
1	\$46,100
2	\$52,650
3	\$59,250
4	\$65,800
5	\$71,100
6	\$76,350
7	\$81,600
8	\$86,900

Seniors Aware of Fire Education:

Senior SAFE addresses not only fire safety problems for older adults, but also other life safety issues. Our Senior SAFE question of the month is: **How can we keep the holiday tree safe?** A few things that can help you have a safe holiday: **Keep trees and greens away from heat sources; Water a cut tree DAILY; Never leave a lit tree unattended; Switch to cooler LED lights; Dispose of a cut tree before needles dry out!** The Senior SAFE program is sponsored by the Massachusetts Department of Fire Services and some of our local fire departments. Have S.A.F.E. holidays!

—Worth
Noyes, S.A.F.E. Educator,
Cummington & Williamsburg Fire Departments

Hilltown Elder Network (HEN)

provides eligible seniors with up to two hours of housework/shopping/etc. per week. HEN is run by the Hilltown Community Development Corp (HCDC). If you could use a little help around the house, call your Coordinator, **Helen Pelletier at 413-238-4418** or Charlie Hayes at 413-296-4536, Ext. 120.

Note: Our Resources Directory and our List of Regional Events will now be coming out quarterly. You can clip and save them for use between issues. Look for the Clip & Save dotted lines.

This Newsletter is sponsored in part by a grant from
The Executive Office of Elder Affairs.

BY REQUEST by Peg Whalen

During a recent discussion, a woman I visited she said she got her pet because she "needed someone to love. Everyone needs someone to love". Others have told me their animal friend gives them a reason to go on. Do you have an animal companion? Do you have animal visitors on a regular basis. Would you like to get a pet but have concerns about caring for a cat, dog, bird? One of my dearest wishes is to create a way for seniors to have pets knowing that, when you are unable to care for your companion, there is someone or someplace prepared to love

and care for them.

As for myself, I am a human companion to Jill, a 10 year old Pembroke Welsh Corgi. Jill has her own issues with aging, weak hips, recurrent bladder stones and urinary infections, arthritis in her joints. Jill lost her 86 year old companion less than a year ago, resulting in needing to move from her home. In a way, she is living with me in senior assisted living, canine style!

I have a request to make of you. If you often are alone I want to hear from you. How many days in a week are you alone? (Meaning, you see no one else face-to-face [phone calls do not count]) Are you a people person? Or do you relish your solitude and peace? Please share your thoughts or story with me. That is why I am here. Touching base would be very nice.

Please note that I have a new local number, email address and postal address listed at the bottom of the page. So, when you have a request about a topic you would like me to discuss in the newsletters, just let me know.

Outreach Report by Peg Whalen

The past two months of outreach have been exciting and varied. In addition to attending regular luncheons, I also was invited to two Veteran Celebrations and Recognition breakfast in Westhampton and lunch in Worthington. It was good to meet the many northern hilltown residents who have served for our freedom. I was reminded not only of the ongoing sacrifices made by active duty military and veterans from our area but also the sacrifices and challenges faced bravely by military families. The costs of war and freedom are enormous and often suffered silently. Please keep our hilltown military families in your thoughts and throughout the year honor the military families and veterans you know.

In addition to general events, I have been involved in two activities I am eager to share with you. After our November newsletter went to press, I attended the Massachusetts Association of Councils on Aging (MCOA). The conference was three days of workshops and presentations to benefit the participating aging services professionals, COA coordinators and the citizens we serve – that's you. Among the dozens of ideas I came back with are 1) the importance of teamwork with fire and emergency personnel, 2) organizing presentations about older adult collecting versus hoarding, 3) developing a regional, mobile LGBT senior center, and 4) offering AARP sponsored Life Reimagined Checkups in several locations [more about these ideas in future issues].

The second activity has been very exciting. In September I was approached by Ann Irvine from Plainfield. Ann talked to me about a book she had read, *Being Mortal*, by Atul Gawande [available in your town library, area bookstores, online, and in Kindle and Nook editions]. Over four weeks the group met on Thursday afternoon's from 3:00 – 5:00 in a community room in Plainfield. Attendance and interest was high with twenty-one people at the first meeting! So here's the regional plan. After the holidays I will be scheduling *Being Mortal* discussion groups from January through June. Each town will have one or more discussion groups scheduled. Most will meet during daylight hours, but I will hold a couple groups at night so that those who work during the day have the ability to participate. I also am interested in offering an LGBT focused group if interest is sufficient to form a discussion group. So please watch for a forthcoming newsletter issue for a community discussion group coming to your town.

In the meantime, if you have not read the book *Being Mortal* by Atul Gawande please do so. I think you will find it thought provoking and helpful in thinking about the rest of your life. Let me know what you think of the book, the groups, the LGBT focused discussion, or anything at all. I

do mean it when I say I want to hear from you!

Well that's the update for now. Please be in touch. I do mean it when I say I want to hear from you!

I can be reached by phone, text message, letter, or voice mail. I have a new, local number, (413) 404-4566. Give me a call, leave a message or email me at pwhalen@hchcweb.org. Or you can write me at Chesterfield Senior Center, P.O. Box 7, Chesterfield, MA 01012.

The Northern Hilltown COA Consortium is Hiring! The Community Connections Program Coordinator will provide vital outreach to the Hilltowns' rural senior community. See ad below:

Northern Hilltowns Councils on

Aging Consortium seeks a part-time Community Connections Program Coordinator to implement a 2-year grant funded program to reduce isolation of rural seniors. The Program Coordinator will support 7 COAs in Chesterfield, Westhampton, Worthington, Plainfield, Cummington, Goshen, and Williamsburg. Responsibilities include: initiate program start up activities; assist COAs in developing outreach strategies and teams; work as a team member with regional outreach coordinator; identify isolated elders to receive volunteer contacts; document measurable objectives and outcomes. 5 hr/week, 10 month/year over a 2-year period. Work collaboratively, make your own schedule, mileage reimbursed, - work with seniors - make a difference! Must have reliable vehicle, phone, computer. Send letter of interest and resume to Chesterfield COA, P.O. Box 7, Chesterfield MA 01012 or send email to coa@townofchesterfieldma.com.

Celebrate the Spirit of the Season with Hanukkah and Christmas Stories at Meekins Library

Join friends and neighbors for a community reading of
"True Gift" *by* Patricia MacLauchlan
"One Yellow Daffodil" *by* David Adler

Date: Sunday, December 13, 2016

Time: 4:00 to 6:00 pm

Place: Meekins Library, Williamsburg

Everyone is welcome. Come read or listen
and enjoy holiday treats and warm drinks.

Please bring food for the COA Pantry, a warm coat
for the survival Center, or something for our
animal friends at the Dakin Shelter

For more information, Call Daria at 413-268-7472 or 413-538-6489, email ddariento@me.com,
or visit Meekins on-line at www.meekins-library.org/

Transportation is available for local residents

Regional Activities: Other area Senior Centers offer activities that all are welcome to attend! (All activities may not be listed. Call for additional information.)

Chesterfield: (296-4007)

Smith Vocational Meals Wednesdays 10:00 am
Advanced Tai Chi Mondays, 9:30 am
Beginner's Tai Chi, Thursdays, 6:30 pm
Feldenkrais, Mondays, 7 pm
Chair Yoga, Tuesdays, 10 am
Mat yoga, Fridays, 8 am
Mah-Jongg, Wednesdays 1-4
Chair Massage first Monday 9-10:30
Foot Clinic second Wednesday bi-monthly 10-12
Men's Breakfast first Thursday of each month, 9:00 am
Brown Bag second Thursday of each month, 10:00

Cummington: (634-2262)

COA Potluck Luncheons,
Osteoporosis Exercise, Mondays, 9:30 am
Chair Yoga, Wednesdays, noon
Movie Matinee, 1st & 3rd Thursdays, 1:30 pm

Goshen: (268-8236)

COA Potluck Luncheons (call for info)
Foot Care Clinic, Kip Moeller

Plainfield: (634-5703)

Bi-monthly COA Potluck Luncheons

Westhampton: (527-2404)

Knitting Group, Library, Mondays, 6:30 pm
Coffee & Social Time, Library, W'days, 10 am
Computer Classes, Mondays, 10-Noon
Art Classes, W'days, 9:30-11:30
Monthly Movie at Library 2nd Thursday (call for info)
Chair Yoga, Thursdays, 9 am
Breakfast 3rd Friday, 8-9:30 am

Williamsburg: (268-8407)

Monday Meals, weekly 11:45
Highland Valley Congregate Meals, Tues-Thurs. 11:45
Tai Chi Classes, Thursdays 9:30-10:30
Gentle Yoga, Thursdays, 3-4
Healthy Bones & Balance Thursdays 4-5
Brown Bag, 2nd Thurs 9:30-1 & BP Clinic, 11:30
Podiatry every other month (usually 2nd Wed)
Foot Nurse 4th Tuesdays

Worthington: (238-5584 for locations & info)

Monthly Potluck Luncheon
Knitting group - Tuesday 3-5
Coffee and Caring - 1st Thursday 10:30
Osteoporosis Exercise Class Mon. & Friday 10:30-11:30
Veteran's Agent 2 & 4 Monday 9-11