

Summary Report – Innovative Practices Discussion Series

During the MCOA conference in October 2020, eight sessions were presented that were designed to be focused on the top issues and challenges facing senior center professionals during the pandemic and their innovative responses. 343 participants attended the workshops. Topics included highlighting effective programming; brainstorming on ways to engage older adults during the winter; solving for the digital divide, engaging volunteers and stepping up to ensure continued nutrition delivery and getting the word out about the great things that were happening at the center.

Not surprisingly Senior Center professionals generously supported their colleagues. They came prepared to share a plethora of ideas, tips, strategies, examples, and even shared their google drives. Along with all the creative ideas and resources there were some important reflections that remind everyone that these are extremely challenging times and to forge on.

Presenters acknowledged how difficult the pivot during COVID has been, with the lack of older adults entering their buildings, it has left many professionals wondering, what have I accomplished? But one presenter set them straight with the following comment, "You are doing something, and something in these times is extraordinary." We all know that is true.

It has been an unprecedented journey as we all move forward. But Josie Dutil aptly encapsulated how others felt when she said, "We all know that the eventual goal for each of us is to reopen our centers for seniors. But unlike most goals in life the steps aren't built yet. We continue to build one step at a time in the hopes that when we take that step it doesn't break, and then we will build it and take the next step."

As you are building your next step please review the following report from the innovative practices' discussion series. In the summary you'll find main themes, promising practices, and links to the Appendix that includes more detailed notes, additional ideas, resource links and sometimes audio transcriptions.

There are multiple ways to use this report. For a brief overview read the summary report and follow links to additional notes and resources. Or peruse the appendix for program ideas or issues that are most relevant to your current needs and follow those links. Of course, if you are in-between novels and have plenty of spare time, read the entire report, notes and transcripts. I'm sure you will find it interesting!

It was easy to see during the conference that in these challenging times you could not find yourself paired with a more creative, generous, supportive, can-do cadre of individuals as you all build the next steps to the future of senior centers.

And remember, you are all extraordinary!

Sincerely, Maureen O'Leary

*Maureen O'Leary is the former NCOA National Institute of Senior Center's Program Manager, where she led a national network of senior center professionals. In October 2020, MCOA hired Maureen as a consultant to coordinate and deliver an innovative workshop track at the MCOA Conference. This summary report shares the creativity, strategies and resources found in those workshop sessions.*

## Programming

Four of the workshops related directly to programming. These workshops covered mainly delivery of virtual programming with some small group gatherings. The four areas covered include: delivering through Grab and Go, planning for the Winter, bridging the digital divide and engaging at-risk populations to maintain mental wellness.

Dracut Council on Aging presented [Programming on the Go!](#) This workshop focused on two types of “on the go” or “at home programming” that you can replicate at your center. The first type was reimagining your annual events and creating new special events by pairing a grab n go meal/dessert with entertainment shown on local cable. The second programming shared was a guide for delivering art and craft activity kits. Both programs included partnering with others to expand a center’s offerings.

A few takeaways from this comprehensive look at virtual Programming on the Go:

- The Programs on the Go format is a great way to reimagine an annual event and create a new event. Check out the Health Fair idea and S’mores dessert and singalong. (Another presenter who did not have luck with Grab and Go in her community framed it as a way for older adults to volunteer by picking up a meal for someone and checking in with them. )
- Always say “[yes](#)”! One yes turned into 150 Picnic kits with a garden club tour.
- [Talent](#) can come from anywhere. Expand your search for entertainment.
- Bethany shared fun craft [ideas](#), along with, where to get [supplies](#), how to [record](#) the video and how to [pay for it all](#).
- See the [google drive](#) for more great examples

The session [What’s Next? Strategies for Surviving Winter](#) highlighted the programming plans that five sites have developed for this Winter. The group acknowledged the difficulties they face as they all innovate to build a new infrastructure, under tight constraints, while making decisions in the moment, trying, and testing to find what works and what does not.

There are so many great ideas presented by these sites. It is worth taking a few minutes to [read the transcript](#) to discover a program that might work for you.

A few important themes emerged:

- **The need for upgraded hardware and training.** Weston recently upgraded their technology and found that instructors need the resources to present virtual programming because either they had a lack of hardware or technical knowledge or that their home space was not conducive to the program, for example the line dancing teacher didn’t have space to easily show the steps.
- **Many sites talked about strengthened and expanded relationships.** Both internally within their own municipal departments where other staff now have a greater

understanding of the work of their center. And externally were collaborations with other senior centers, once a nice thing to do, is now needed to provide the quantity of needed services and to share resources.

- **Creative winter programming was shared by all.** Duxbury shared a Pea Pod program, where a small group of attendees come regularly to the center and fun ideas for outdoor programming like inviting the South Shore Astronomical Society for folks to view the telescopes in waves.
- **Innovative strategies for reopening your center** . Plymouth's advice includes create a Reopening Task Force and a reopening video (to easily train participants); distribute lanyards for use during mask breaks (masks aren't placed on surfaces); and assign bathroom stall numbers to facilitate even use of stalls and safe cleaning.
- **Hybrid is Next – In-person and on Zoom:** What's next for Plymouth, integration of current in-person programming with zoom participants in real time to increase capacity and social interactions. if we have 12 people in our building, we want 50 more online.
- **Partner with Your School System:** Include virtual programming that involves intergenerational partnerships. We're partnering with our school system to have third graders doing our yoga with our zoom participants.
- **New Year's Party Collaboration – an emerging idea:** A possible collaboration might be formed between Duxbury and Plymouth. They are considering having a New Year's Eve party together. Could this work with your neighboring communities? Imagine multiple towns of seniors blowing on their streamers and being able to meet.
- **If your building isn't open yet, focus on practice and training.** Northbridge shared this positive, encouraging sentiment that "When we are given the okay to go back. We will be refreshed and rejuvenated. We are going to have this brand-new facility (they recently renamed their building), so to speak with a new name, refreshed staff, new ideas and new ways of doing things."

During the [Bridging the Digital Divide](#) session three professionals discussed their remote and virtual programming. The presenters reaching out through phone calls, texts, emails, newsletters, community partners. Educating and connecting those not online has been goal at each of the centers. Bridgewater keeps a copy of *Tablets for Dummies* in their library and they've started a student/older adult one-on-one tutoring program. Baltimore and Worcester have had success with phone connection for those not tech savvy.

- **Hold a class zero.** Baltimore starts with a class zero. This is a class where participants can call in or come in virtually by computer and they walk them through all the aspects that they're going to need to participate in the class. They learn how to log onto zoom, set up their camera, download documents, use chat and more.
- **Train for an online emergency.** A best practice was shared from the Kansas City area. They have a virtual class spotter role that is ready to respond in an emergency. If they are holding a class and it looks like an individual is having difficulty, they have developed

an emergency response checklist. They get all contact information for everybody who comes on their programs prior to the class so that they are ready to assist if needed.

- **Consider Tower hotspots.** In Bridgewater they are installing towers at the center and at the library. They are buying three towers to try to develop three hotspots in town. The hotspot is created through Cable WIFI internet access through their liaison at the Cable Access Commission MA.
- **Review the list shared of innovative programming.** Worcester realized impressive results with a Mahjong 2020 Card Instructional session. Every year they come out with a new card and this year the card was quite different. Some of the Mahjong players had never seen some of the hands that were on this card. They had 85 seniors on this call.

During [Beating the Blues and Promoting Mental Wellness during COVID](#) three professionals shared their engagement and outreach methods. The outreach varied with use of volunteers, iPads, municipal collaborations, cultural specific programming and an award-winning program that includes counseling and group support.

- **Expand your staff resources.** Wenham took advantage of the [Academic Public Health Volunteer Corps](#) (APHVC) to make calls and complete a survey. APHVC volunteers are 1,900 public health students and professionals volunteered with the APHVC's that are available when you partner with local health departments across Massachusetts. [See the wellness call script they used.](#)
- **Use iPads to creatively engage those home alone.** Wenham's local Rotary Club has sponsored a program to buy iPads to engage those who are home alone. Currently we provide distribution, training and follow-up. Ideas for use of iPads include: Creating a personalized music playlist; Adding meaningful photos and videos; Reminiscing with YouTube videos. Be inspired by "[Alive Inside](#)" – a movie about music's capacity to reawaken our souls and combat memory loss.
- **Identify at-risk individuals.** Worcester shared how they get a lot of that information from the police departments 911 call list. We are able to identify those seniors who are at risk and we focus a lot on falls, but also those seniors who have called 911 frequently. [See the language that allows COAs to be in the loop.](#)
- **Enlist a social worker.** An award-winning program from Tallahassee Florida called UPSLIDE (Utilizing and Promoting Social engagement in Loneliness, Isolation, and Depression in the Elderly). At this time, UPSLIDE offers individual counseling by phone and video conferencing; virtual *Friends Connection* meetings allow social connection and support for participants; and a private Facebook page so that UPSLIDERS can stay in touch with each other. [Learn more about this program.](#)
- **Create a Support Group.** At Plymouth they will be creating a *Social Isolation While Living in a COVID Society Support Group*. Participants didn't want to call it a COVID support group. No one wanted to use that language. They want to talk about what this looks like long term.

### **Innovative Series Continues**

The next four workshops covered a range of topics including employing community resources, utilizing volunteers, developing a nutrition program, and getting the word out.

Norwell COA shared how they have tapped into a variety of community resources, organizations and businesses to provide more resources for supportive services and programming initiatives during COVID-19.

The session: **Innovative Practices: Finding Community Resources to Support Senior Centers Initiatives** provides a comprehensive list of who you could educate in the community and how you could partner with them to expand your resources. Check out the detailed list in the appendix to see the opportunities you might find in your community.

A few examples include:

#### **Hairdressers**

- We previously did dementia training for their staff after they had an issue with a client. During COVID, they provided dry shampoo & shampoo caps for a senior unable to get their hair washed while salons were closed. Hairdressers are also a good referral source too, since many women discuss concerns with their hairdresser

#### **Realtors**

- Assistance with grocery shopping, food donations and referrals to other service businesses like tree removal and junk removal.
- Realtors are a great resource to refer individuals to COAs, as families are considering both buying and selling homes.
- One realtor was closing a storage unit and approached us about donating items that were used for staging homes.

#### **Senior Housing Communities**

- Partnered to run pop-up masks distribution for residents or supplied masks to site managers to distribute.
- Residents in one community ran a food pantry collection.
- Another took over prepping our newsletter mailings.

Norwell also shared some of their best practices when working with the community. Remember to: educate the public, understand their mission, consider the impact of the ask on their business or organization and say thank you. [Read best practices to keep in mind.](#)

Presenters shared many ideas and **Strategies for Utilizing Volunteers** during this workshop. Read these workshop notes to find new opportunities to engage volunteers, , maximize their potential, and add value to their Council on Aging and community. Then share your strategies!

Andover COA shared many opportunities for engaging volunteers. A few of those included:

- **English Listening Skills for Chinese Speakers**. Andover has a large population of Chinese Americans. Two volunteers wanted to help them understand what is going on in the world around them. This sort of platform could be replicated for any language.
- **Outdoor Adventure Group**. A lot of volunteer planning goes into each outdoor adventure. Volunteers pick a hike, test it, research and find out historic facts and make sure that there are at least 12 parking spots. Add this to your Spring planning.
- **MySeniorCenter remote volunteers** Some volunteers can help us with some data entry from home on their home computers which has been very helpful.
- **Group leaders Become Wellness Connectors** Since we cannot hold group activities, like bridge, the leaders of those groups have taken on a new role. Those volunteers reach out to their groups to make sure every single participant is doing okay. An informal wellness check in. We also offer use our zoom platform to meet online.
- **Volunteers Training Others to Use Zoom** Both Sudbury and Framingham have volunteers training people to use zoom. They have a regular group of tech volunteers each month. They help people with their computers by solving problems with them. In some cases, they train by phone.
- **Intergenerational Shoveling Opportunity** This is a snow shoveling program where students and their families buddy up with a senior in their neighborhood to help shovel.

**An unsolved Issue: Finding a way to use senior tax workout hours.** They have increased hours, but we are only able to use a portion. Many do not have computer skills and it is difficult to include these volunteers with staff and maintain social distancing.

We also heard about **Self-Directed Volunteer Teams**, which is a way to develop an effective team format. "A Self-Directed Volunteer Team (SDV) is an intentionally formed multi-skilled group of volunteers who share responsibilities for addressing a community problem or need. Through time and with organizational support, the team is trained and empowered to take full responsibility for its own functioning and for achieving its planned outcomes." Their website is [www.sdvnetwork.com](http://www.sdvnetwork.com) Success steps include:

- **Readiness Assessment**; takes a realistic look at how well your agency will accommodate SDVTs in the form of a 5-7-minute survey to your stakeholders with a follow-up report.
- **Issue Brief**; provides information and actions taken on the community problem or need, and explains its impact and importance
- **Project Plan**; a team generated plan that details what they will do to address the issue
- **The Charter**; an agreement between the volunteer team and the organization that identifies their working relationships

- **The Team**; targeted recruitment strategies of people who are interested and bring skills to the issue. Intergenerational, high-skilled, working at their own direction.
- **Implementation**; team exercises and training which explore the issue, group processes and enhance team cohesion.
- **Evaluation**; check points and discussion which measure the team's progress, seek additional expertise and monitor the project plan.
- **Recognition and Celebration**; ALWAYS and in new ways; news releases on team and project success, press conferences, gas, gift or restaurant cards.

In an impressive act of responding to the greatest need, the Chicopee COA stepped up to provide meals. The workshop [Providing Nutrition During COVID](#) highlights this journey. They made sure that older adults received nutritious meals while staying out of the supermarket. Through grants and city funds, and SERV Safe trainings and an all-hands-on-deck mentality, the COA is now serving more than 1,000 meals a week via curbside pick-up.

Read the notes section if you'd like to see how they started and went from serving two dozen meals to capping a day at 250. Chicopee includes ideas to get the word out, funding, storage issues and menu planning and ordering.

And if you aren't starting from scratch these tips will be helpful:

#### **Making it Fun**

- While providing nutrition and keeping older adults out of the supermarkets is the focus of the curbside meal program, the two hours spent "serving" the meals gives the COA staff and the older adults a chance to see each other. We miss them, and they miss us. It's become a social time for all of us.
  - Music, special theme days, sponsorship days w/ special guests

#### **Transitioning into Winter**

- The COA is preparing for winter and what that will mean for staff and older adults. On snowy days, meals will be canceled, and older adults have been advised to watch the news and check out the COA website and Facebook pages for cancellations.
- Outdoor heaters are being ordered to keep staff warm. A heated tent is being considered.
- Soups will be featured more often on the menu, which is handed out each Monday, and is posted on our website and Facebook pages.

Westfield COA shared ["Who Knew?!" Getting the COA Message Out There](#) and their method of proactively spelling out to the community the specifics of their pandemic efforts, accomplishments, and challenges. It is key to creating a supportive environment for both your staff and your seniors. The COA notes that being proactive and sharing in an easily digestible format, sharing bullets along with the newsletter will keep the public informed.

Here are the abbreviated notes:

### **Be Proactive!**

- It's up to **you** to let your community know about your COA's services and programs
- Don't wait for people, especially your local legislators, to ask

### **Methods of Relaying Information include emails, newsletter and outreach to the local newspaper.**

- **E-Mail** - The greatest advantage is that you can reach many people at once. (Include the monthly newsletter as an attachment)
- In the body of the e-mail, send a bulleted list of COA updates. ([see an example](#))  
Include:
  - Alternative programming and services during the pandemic
  - Obstacles you're encountering (limited staffing because of furloughs or layoffs, impending inclement weather for curbside meals, not tech savvy clients...)
  - Areas of concern (older adults with dementia – isolation, caregiver burnout; those in danger of eviction; those with mental health challenges)
  - Successful special events – attach a few photos if you took some. Thank those who made the event possible – other City or Town departments, volunteers, local organizations... and include those individuals in your e-mail.
    - Local officials love partnerships and collaborations
    - It shows that you're stretching available resources
- **Local newspaper** is an excellent resource for helping you to get your message across. Older adults still read the newspaper. Include the editor in your monthly newsletter e-mail updates (with your newsletter as an attachment) and send photos.

### **Miscellaneous (But Important) Thoughts:**

- When you're getting the word out to the community, put a human face on your COA clients and the services that you provide. It makes what you're doing relatable.
- Curbside lunches offer a wonderful opportunity to pass out flyers of all kinds. When you hand out your newsletters, ask your lunch participants if they would like extras for friends, neighbors, and relatives.
- Ask your local legislators to help with special events
  - Curbside meals, parades, home delivered meals, Brown Bag
  - They'll gain a greater appreciation for what you do and who you serve.  
They'll also have a greater respect for you and your staff.
- When your participants compliment the job that you and your staff are doing, refer them to the Mayor's office. Most will gladly make a phone call or send an e-mail.



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The **Programming on the Go!** Workshop focused on two types of “on the go” or “at home programming” that you can replicate in your center. First, they discussed and then brainstormed on Pandemic friendly special events with an emphasis on pairing a grab n go meal/dessert with entertainment shown on local cable. Secondly, they reviewed best practices for art and craft activity kit hand out and shared ideas on partnering with others to expand center’s offerings and work smarter, not harder.

## Pandemic Friendly Special Events

We have been offering events that are a re-imagining of our regular, annual events (the stuff we are known for) as well as sprinkling in new offerings by capitalizing on opportunities that present themselves.

- Leveraging partnerships and sponsorships, they provide a grab n go dessert or full meal
- Food items are handed out curbside for 1.5 to 2-hour window
- There is a prerecorded concert that somehow matches the food and airs on local cable that airs about 30 minutes after curbside hand out has ended

Examples:

- S’mores dessert then campfire sign along
- Picnic kits then garden tours by the garden club
- Hotdog lunch then baseball themed concert

## Reimagined Annual Events

### Oktoberfest

- Meal provided by our ASAP’s MOW caterer
- Root bear & Plastic “bear glass” provided by a sponsor
- Ompa concert pre-recorded for cable

### Health Fair

- Vendors given appointment times to record “elevator speech” at cable studio
- Vendors provide 150 of whatever they would have handed out at the fair (flyers, chips clips etc.)
- Volunteers to pre-stuff 150 “swag bags” for grab n go

## Capitalizing on Opportunities

- Say “YES” – Even if you do not have a plan yet!
- Opportunity: ham and cheese boxes from our ASAP
  - Consisted of: - 10 lbs. of frozen ham slices & 10 lbs. of Frozen Cheese slices
- Said YES and asked for 60 boxes before we had a plan.
- Public School kept them in their walk-in freezer for us while we came up with a plan.

### **Result: 120 Picnic Kits – Offered 1 per household**

- Split the boxes into 5 lbs. of each (ham & cheese)
- Secured an in-kind sponsorship from a nursing facility who provided: Re-usable shopping bags; Sub rolls, Condiment packets, Chips, Cookies



- Paired the Picnic Kit with the Garden Club's recorded tours of local and private gardens

Know what to ask for if someone offers.

- COA Director: "That's a great idea. I think we can..."
- Or, "I love that idea, I think we can tweak it a little and it will be great"
- Have ideas ready to go.
- EX: Rotary reached out to see what they could do for the seniors. Turned into grab n go sandwich lunch with juggling show on cable

### Get the Credit & the Stats

- Advertise the event with RSVP information and deadline
- We use MySeniorCenter(MSC) Groups function for our all our event and kit RSVPs
  - If MSC were teaching this class they might say to use My Active Center
- By using Groups we:
  - Make auto reminder calls for event or kit pick up times
  - Export to excel to create an easy check off list of names for during hand out
- We have an event template called "curb side hand out"
  - Mass enter everyone from that group into curbside hand out event on the correct day
  - Also consider entering those who "participated" in a meal and entertainment event template as well.

### Sourcing the Talent

In Dracut we typically shy away from those acts that play the "old folks circuit", the ones who hound you each year to do a Cultural Council Grant with them. Rather:

- <https://www.gigsalad.com/>
- <https://www.thebash.com/> (formally gigmasters)

COVID Upside: You no longer are bound to entertainers/speakers who can drive to your Center!

## At home programming - arts and craft kits

- a. This is when we provide them all the supplies to complete art projects or craft projects via curb side hand out
- b. Kit includes airing times for people to paint or craft with us on local cable (prerecorded)

### Leveraging Kit Partnerships

Art Kits through our regular art teacher (independent contractor). Think of a sip and paint but not in person:

- Art teacher picks the projects
- She records the how to or a “paint with me” session
- 1<sup>st</sup> round of kits she sources the materials and we reimbursed her, now COA staff does it
- COA handles registration, kit assembly, hand-out / delivery, and printed materials such as viewing information
- We offer these kits at no charge

### COA Originated Kits

#### **1 off kits = kit centered around 1 project or one type of project**

EX: Coloring Kit Consisting of:

- Set of Gel Pens
- Photo copied pages from adult coloring books
- Currently offering a “refresher” of additional coloring pages for those who need them
- No video goes with it

2<sup>nd</sup> EX: Diamond Painting Trees

- Excitement of a smaller diamond painting project included in a larger kit lead to this spin off kit of 4 projects that use the same skill and supplies
- 4 trees – each a different season
- We did record a video for this



### Larger, Multi Project Craft Kits



- Kits contain 3 to 5 individual projects
  - Each with supplies (both separate and shared among projects)
  - Viewing information to “do the projects with us”
  - Each project has multiple parts, or the supplies to complete it more than once, so it takes the seniors a decent amount of time to complete it

- Work smarter not harder. Going through all the effort for registration, supply prep, hand out / delivery = Make it last for weeks' worth of programming.

### Activity Kits – The Nuts & Bolts

- RSVPs logged using MSC groups
- Set day/time for kit hand out
- Kit delivery also offered
- Enter all who received a kit into the “Curb Side Hand Out” event
- Enter all who received a kit into an event each time a new “How To” video airs on cable

Below kits require advanced registration.

Call 978-957-2611 x1304 to reserve a kit.

These kits will be handed out Friday,  
October 9<sup>th</sup> from the Center parking lot  
from  
11:30 AM to 1:30 PM.

**- Newsletter Language**

### Activity Kits – The BIG Nuts & Bolts

#### Coming up with the Craft Ideas

- Projects you and your staff have done in the past
  - EX: Beaded Wind Chimes
- Projects or Class Packs available from on-line suppliers
  - EX: Paper Quilling Project from S&S Worldwide
- Brick and mortar stores – Michaels or Joanne's
  - Day of the Dead LED Box
- Pinterest or other internet searches
  - EX: Mason Jar Lid Sun catchers



#### Sourcing the Supplies

- Take advantage of sales
- Speak with a customer service rep. for bulk discounting
- Plan ahead
- Buy in bulk

#### Supplies – Places we have Purchased From






- Brick and Mortar Stores (or through their websites)
  - Joanne's Fabrics, Michael's, Staples, Walmart, etc.
- School / Camp / Daycare Suppliers
  - Discount School Supply
  - S&S Worldwide (located in CT = quick delivery)
  - Oriental Trading Co.
- Amazon
- Your COA's Office Product Supplier
- Uline (different size plastic bags to package the kits)
- Alibaba.com (plan and buy in bulk)



## Recording the Videos

- Videos - 40% teaching viewers how to do the projects
  - 60% is the seniors seeing us interact with each other
- We prerecord doing a project together (2 to 4 people total)
  - Use Zoom
  - We are in separate rooms – even separate towns sometimes
  - Upload the videos to Google Drive
- Viewing days and times are pre-arranged with local cable
  - Cable has access to the Google Drive to retrieve the recordings
- Schedule of viewing days and times included in the activity kit

## Example of purchase order and breakdown:

Product name	Quantity	Unit	Unit price	Total
 Wholesale 4 season tree special shaped Diamonds Painting Canva Color:A,Size:24*24	440.00	Set(s)	USD 0.9000	USD 396.00
 Amazon Hot Sale Full Range of Embroidery Starter Kit with Pattern Color:15,Size:20*20cm	35.00	Set(s)	USD 1.8000	USD 63.00
 DIY Embroidery kit Flower Handwork Needlework cross stitch embri Color:18,Size:20*20	35.00	Set(s)	USD 1.8000	USD 63.00
 Embroidery Starter Kit with Pattern and Instructions Cross Stitch S Color:14,Size:20*20cm	35.00	Set(s)	USD 1.8000	USD 63.00
 2020 new arrivals 5d Diamond painting christmas cards diy Greeti	105.00	Set(s)	USD 3.2000	USD 336.00
Total Product Price				USD 921.00

\$921 for products + \$340 for shipping = \$1,261  
divided by 650 products totals = average cost of \$1.94 per item

## Paying for it all

- Friends Group / Revolving Accounts / Gift Accounts
- COVID Grants (is there an area community foundation near you?)
  - Greater Lowell Community Foundation(Grant found in the share drive)
  - Greater Worcester Community Foundation
  - Community Foundation of North Central MA
- Local Cultural Grants (not a high level of difficulty)
  - <https://massculturalcouncil.org/communities/local-cultural-council-program/>



## Paying for it through sponsorships

Win Win: Vendors want to reach our Members and we have programs we want to put on that take \$ or other resources (like food) – so say “YES”

- Bottom 1/3 of the viewing information put into the October Craft Kits

### Thank you to our Craft Kits Sponsor - Lowell Five

This kit was made possible through the efforts of The Dracut Senior Center and DATV. Financial support for the supplies in this kit comes from The Friends of the Dracut Elderly, The Helen Connorton Trust, and sponsorship from The Lowell Five.



*Donations to the Friends of the Dracut Elderly are welcome.*

Checks payable to: Friends of the Dracut Elderly - 951 Mammoth Road, Dracut MA, 01826

Our letters / language for soliciting sponsorship is in the shared drive.

Exposure you can provide the sponsor:

- logo in newsletter by kit description
- logo on kit's viewing schedule
- logo on recording opening & closing
- Co.'s flyers/brochures in the kits
- help to hand them out



A kit with a large variety of different "adult coloring" sheets as well as a set of gel pens. Thanks to Element Care and The Arbors at Dracut, coloring kits are now complementary.

Element Care

THE Arbors  
Senior Living at Dracut

## Always Available - Shopping Carts for Yarn, Puzzle & Book Swapping



- Dracut Videos and Grab and Go Craft Kit Resources:

**Upcoming Events**

**Picnic Kits**  
Friday, September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020  
Outside the Senior Center 10 AM to 11:30 AM

Get your very own Picnic kit. Kit includes all the ingredients to make a ham and cheese sandwich, along with a few goodies. You'll also have extra ham and cheese to save for another time. Then take a virtual tour of some of our very own Dracut Garden Club members gardens as well as some of the Town Gardens that the Garden Club maintains. Tune to DATV, Channel 8 at 12:00 PM.

Call Debbie at 978-957-2611 x 1304 to reserve your picnic kit. Reservations must be received by Wednesday, September 16<sup>th</sup> at 3 PM.

Thank you to our Picnic Kit sponsor: CedarView

**Fire Fighter's Ice Cream Social**  
Friday, September 25<sup>th</sup>  
Ice Cream 12 to 2 PM, Outside Senior Center  
Folk Song Concert on DATV at 2:30 PM

We could not wrap up the summer without a visit from our beloved Dracut Fire Fighters. Better yet, they bring us ice cream. Like all our events recently, we are hosting this annual sundae celebration drive up style. Following the Sundae, tune into DATV, Channel 8 at 2:30 PM for a fun, folk song concert by Cindy Mapes and Jim Frances of Newton, MA.

Call Debbie at 978-957-2611 x 1304 by Wednesday Sept 23<sup>rd</sup> to reserve your Ice cream.

Attachments and links:

- Here is the link to cable. You can put art in the search bar to find paint n fun, rock painting and other things.

<https://dracut.vod.castus.tv/vod/?live=ch1>

- Facebook post was a good example of the types of supplies in the kits and how they are packaged <https://www.facebook.com/Dracut-Council-On-Aging-100122463658628/photos/pcb.1175637426107121/1175622349441962>
- Google drive with a lot of the informational sheets we include in the kits, cable slides, newsletters, etc: [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1MI9sjRs-mJFYBM8\\_CcYt\\_PrXrtltCRsm?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1MI9sjRs-mJFYBM8_CcYt_PrXrtltCRsm?usp=sharing)
- Google drive with some of the videos we have done as the how to do the project. Point is we are not experts at doing these things. The seniors just want to see us and have commented that they like our banter back and forth. <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1uITMK37vkDbtQi1dwHKdkV0zH6lpY-YT?usp=sharing>

## What's Next? Strategies for Surviving Winter.

Five COA sites share where they are now and their plans for the Winter. This virtual support group acknowledges the difficulties they face as they all innovate to build a new infrastructure under tight constraints, while making decisions in the moment, trying and testing to find what works and what does not. Here are five plans for winter survival.

Held on Thursday, Oct. 22, 2020

### **Presenters:**

1. Josie Dutil, Director, Bellingham Senior Center
2. Kelly Bol, Director, Northbridge Senior Center
3. Mignonne Murray, Executive Director, Weston Senior Center
4. Joanne Moore, Executive Director, Duxbury Senior Center  
Angela Sinnot, Program Manager, Duxbury Senior Center
5. Michelle Bratti, Director of Elder Affairs, Town of Plymouth, Plymouth Senior Center

### **Presenters and conversation from meeting:**

Bellingham Senior Center , Josie Dutil, Director

I'm the director of the Bellingham Council on Aging. We are a small town of about 17,000 residents, 3,400 seniors; We have 13 van drivers, 6 office employees – 2 full time.

Let me begin by saying that any of us could have been on this panel discussing all of the things we've done since our doors closed on March Monday, March 15th

- On Wednesday, March 11 we had 70 people attending bingo and then on Tuesday, March 15th, the phone calls were coming to coming to the senior center were forwarded to my cell phone and nobody reported to the building that week. All of us worked from home and responded to individual needs as best we could. Transportation closed the following week, which meant we had 13 drivers file for unemployment.
- Then full-time staff returned to the building. We split the data, answered phones and responded to needs. The remainder of the staff continued to work from home, making phone calls and fulfilling any needs we had from assisting with fuel assistance applications to dropping groceries off for the homebound.
- That first week our local town officials began daily 9am zoom calls with all of the leadership staff in town. I had an opportunity on a daily basis to express what we needed in order to best serve our seniors. Our fire chief at one point was delivering masks to seniors who called us early on, looking for masks. I will never forget, and always be grateful to our town for how much concern, they expressed for the people we serve at the senior center.

- In late March the local YMCA invited us to participate in a program they started that involved us picking up 30 bags of groceries weekly and delivering them to frail elders in town, the same elders we used to transport to the food pantry on a weekly basis. We reached out to our local ASAP to let them know about this program and they helped us identify more seniors that we could add to that list, we continue to do this weekly.
- Like all of you, we began offering all kinds of zoom programs with our most popular being our weekly happy hour which we did until early July we replaced it with a weekly coffee hour after that.
- We finally reopened transportation in June, initially for medical appointments only and then within a few weeks, realize that we can handle any and all rides.
- On June 26<sup>th</sup> we hosted a drive in June 26 we hosted a driving dinner at the local high school parking lot and had 136 attendees, a local restaurant provided the food people brought their own chairs and we provided entertainment. In the evening was one of the most memorable. We saw people for the first time in over two months.
- In late June the Y reached out to us again to see if they can use our parking lot as summer lunch program pick up site for the elementary aged children and we said yes because the thought of having activity in our parking lot was so exciting to me.
- On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. The Y volunteers and staff distributed 80 to 110 meals each day. Watching this made me start thinking about how we can do somehow figure out a senior, a senior lunch program, more, more about that later.
- On July 9 we started our weekly drive by cookouts every Thursday from four to 6pm our friends group put burgers and hot dogs and grill. That was purchased with state formula grant funds.  
Although I've helped them weekly. There are six dedicated volunteers that were thrilled to finally have purpose serving seniors with this program. That we have 63 people attending Thursday will be our last for the season they plan to continue doing this weekly event at noon on Thursdays through the wintertime, or until mother nature as they can.

Ideas that will continue into Winter:

- **Restaurant Grant:** In August, I applied for and received an \$8,820 grant for a senior lunch program we partnered with to local restaurants to put together a senior friendly menu. Monday through Friday for the month of September and October, our budget was \$8 a meal and the restaurants have provided amazing meals for that price. It ran Monday thru Friday in Sept and October and is continuing because of additional donations and support from the Bellingham Business Association. It will be held three days a week in November and December.
- **Outdoor Programming:** In September we held a variety of outdoor programming including chair exercise, chair yoga, line dancing motion and music and dance exercise,



and we even had some quilters choose to quilt outdoors as well. This will continue as long as possible.

- **Flu Clinics:** We also have hosted a flu clinic and three blood drives over the past few months, hoping to be in any way be part of solutions in these difficult times and trusting that these entities have had a good handle on all the safety protocols that needed to be taken.
- **Spiritual Book Club:** This past Monday we started a spiritual book club via zoom where we all dive into some spiritual books with the hope that folks can look inward during the winter months for joy and happiness.
- **Childhood Memories:** We've also applied for a local cultural council grant in partnership with a local author, journalist who is willing to put into writing stories that some of our elders might have from their youth. In hopes that these individuals will avoid the ill effects of social isolation that the colder darker weather will bring.
- **Thanksgiving Delivered:** Our local Lions Club reached out to us to partner and providing 100 Thanksgiving meals, delivered in a drive by fashion on the Saturday after Thanksgiving. The Turkey meal will be prepared by one of our local restaurants and for those without transportation, meals will be delivered.
- **IPAD Instructional:** We purchased eight iPads with the hopes of bringing people together in our dining room because according to state guidelines that room can safely accommodate 8 people. They would have viewed zoom programs with our help and supervision, but cases in Bellingham are on the rise right now, so we continue to kick the can down the road with regards to reopening.
- **Practice Policies and Procedures:** We met with our local health department to review what we need to have in place to open, our COA Board voted on policies and procedures. We practice the policies and procedures with staff and with one-on-one meetings.
- We all know that the eventual goal for each of us is to reopen our centers for seniors. But unlike most goals in life the steps aren't built yet. We continue to build one step at a time in the hopes that when we take that step it doesn't break, and then we will build it and take the next step.

Northbridge Senior Center - Kellie Bol, Director

Our center is based in central MA, and has about 16,000 residents, with 3,000 seniors. Staff of 5 (1 full time staff person).

Kellie asked why she was selected to present in this group and a colleague told her "because you are doing something, and something in these times is extraordinary."

Kellie reflected on where they have been and where they are going.

- Initially when they had to work remotely, no technical devices were provided by town.
- **Outreach Calls and Parades:** They did outreach calls, put care packages together, had parades and outdoor concerts during distribution to remind participants they care.
- In June, staff was back. July transportation started. Staff has been meticulous with cleaning.
- **Building Strong Relationships:** Relationships have been strengthened with town department staff and housing authority staff.
- **Build a Patio:** In August a beautiful red brick patio was installed to allow activities outside.
- **Focus on Training:** They have a new outreach worker and director had the luxury of time to focus on providing a comprehensive orientation and training experience.
- **Cable Access Opportunities:** They are in the discussion process of possibly taking over the underutilized school cable access channel.
- **Open Small Group:** Our next plan is to open to some small groups.
- **Rename Your Building:** We named our building. Our building is a former school and was named the Plumber School, after a gentleman, Israel Plumber, who was a very prestigious businessman in our community. So, we have renamed our building Plumber Place, home of the Northbridge Senior Center.
- When we are given the okay to go back. We will be refreshed and rejuvenated. We are going to have this brand-new facility so to speak with a new name, refreshed staff, new ideas and new ways of doing things.

Weston Senior Center - Mignonne Murray, Director

Our town has about 12,000 residents, 3000 who are seniors. We have tried a variety of things, but our prep for winter includes:

- This fall, reopening plans were passed by the emergency management team that would be in place.
- **Upgraded Technology:** One thing that I like is that we took our space, we're in a community center, that we share with recreation. The Recreation Department is upstairs, and we occupy some of the ground floor. The rooms that we do have were just upgraded with technology before COVID happened. We barely learned how to use it, but it was there. What we're doing is we're doing all programs on zoom. We're allowing people to sign up to come in and lead their program on zoom that we're already running from the COA. This gives a couple of opportunities for folks. One, for those people we know who need to interact with people it gives them that opportunity. But also, some people don't have room in their homes to record the programs. For example, we have a line dancing program and it was very difficult for him to lead it at home. And then there are those who are not tech savvy aren't able to do it, but now they can come in for the program. They had dropped off when we were only doing zoom.

- **Volunteer while you Grab and Go:** Another thing we've really been talking about in our region is the holidays. We all usually deliver such wonderful celebrations. And we know this is a difficult time for so many people. And because of COVID they may not even be able to see family. So, we're doing several things to try to just create volunteer opportunities as well and reach out in a different way. At Weston, the Grab and Go method that a lot of centers have been doing hasn't really worked for us. We tried it with some lunch programs and our residence just didn't react to it. So instead, for Thanksgiving, we're doing a change in messaging for our Grab and Go. It is a cider and bunt cake and we're encouraging people to come and get one for a neighbor or for a loved one. They don't have to feel like they're taking it only for themselves, they can take one for themselves and make someone else's day or check in with someone, in a good safe, socially distanced way by leaving it for their friend.
- **Connect with a friend for the Holiday:** We're also going to do at Thanksgiving Day meal delivery. We've never done it before. We don't usually do things for Thanksgiving but so many people are going to be alone this holiday for a variety of reasons. We've just launched it, so people are just starting to sign up. What we're finding so far is that it's often couples, and they want to deliver a couple of meals to others. So, we are offering for them to come and get a couple of meals. We are also going to deliver. I feel that the lack of volunteering we have at the moment since we've scaled back on so many things is difficult. Volunteering is a service that we offer. It's such an important part of how we interact with a lot of people. We are expanding volunteer opportunities more in this simple way.
- **Collection Drive:** We also do a collection drive every year for different organizations. And we usually just leave it up throughout November and December. People bring in for a certain cause. This year we're doing three different organizations for two weeks. It is a way of giving back. People sometimes have a hard time taking something for free or asking for help, so this is a way they can give back. They can pick the collection drive they want to do.

Rose's Place is collecting kits of, coloring books and colored pencils and toiletries, and things like that. It gives someone a way to give back and a chance to come and drop it off at the center. So that we can hopefully see them.

So that's, that's what we're trying to go into the winter and I'm hoping that we can move up the numbers that we have doing our zoom rooms and our movies. We also have a group of artists who are coming in because it'll still be within the limits we have accepted and as long as our rate stays okay, we can continue.

Duxbury Senior Center: Joanne Moore shared the background of where they started. Like everyone we closed on March 12th. And, I was kind of looking forward to a long weekend. But

by Sunday, Angela. and I had been on the phone. And we said, I think we could buy zoom and try things virtually. By Thursday we had outgrown our user membership and had to buy a bigger one for the town. So, we now have 25 Users on our zoom programming. Right away, like everyone we were delivering meals and doing grocery shopping and the basic needs. Provided limited transportation really to medical appointments during the that early time. Little by little, we started adding things including outside programming. information and referral, as everyone Shine is booming and busy at this point. Lots of telephone calls, mailbox visit, anything to stay connected to our older adults.

- **Start a Social Day Program:** I'm pleased to stay say we started our social day program in September, and that's going well. So we're helping both the caregiver and those living with Alzheimer's disease and we started a Pea Pod program just three weeks ago and I'll share a little bit more about that later, but I'll let Angela tell you about What we're going to do for the winter.

Angela Sinnott: I do want to talk about the winter, and I feel like we're fast forwarding. I would love to be Pollyanna and say I think every day is going to be as beautiful as today for the next six months, and we'll be able to continue to do things outside but obviously, we know that's not going to happen. And as I've been thinking about winter, I really feel that we are going to need to provide more program opportunities for our seniors. We're going to need to reach more people, more often, in more ways to really be sure that our programs are engaging and enriching and certainly, reducing isolation. That's the most important! And sometimes this feels like a lot of pressure, but I think we've come up with a pretty good formula to ease this pressure, at least for ourselves. And I do like to see it as an opportunity to expand our reach and our partnerships and even expand our capabilities.

- **Collaborate Regionally:** We are going to continue to work to expand our programming. Through our partnerships we have developed a wonderful collaboration with our local COAs. We are lucky to be in a regional area with Plymouth Pembroke and Kingston, and we have been collaborating with them. We've always had a good connection with these senior centers, but now it truly is more of a collaboration. And I'll talk a little bit more about that in a minute. We've also and again with our community's senior centers been trying to collaborate more with Old Colony Elder Services they had provided us with a catalog of healthy living programs, and we've been taking advantage of more of their programs.
- **Get the numbers by collaborating with another center:** And partnering with another senior center, in my case with Plymouth, because there are sometimes programs that we can't necessarily get the numbers ourselves to have a program. But now if Plymouth gets 10 and I get 10 we get a full class and everyone is happy, and it provides additional socialization.
- **Promote Community Partners:** Also, really looking to leverage our many our community partner. Everybody is out there doing something. Our historical society is

doing [virtual tours of our Powder Point Bridge](#) and of neighborhoods in town. So instead of recreating the wheel, we can partner with them to help share and promote their activities, their virtual and get more people to engage in that way.

We continue to partner with our local library. We have a very robust author program. The library is a wonderful community partner.

- **Partner with Astronomical Society:** We also have a new community partner, which I'm very excited about because I think this will carry us through the winter weather permitting. We have partnered with the South Shore Astronomical Society and tomorrow we have our first astronomical event. In the evening, we will have telescopes placed throughout our parking lot. We have over 50 people registered to come in waves to enjoy seeing Mars and Jupiter and possibly some meteor showers. So, thank goodness for these beautiful days and tomorrow looks like it's going to be a perfect evening for stargazing
- **Winter Outdoor Activities:** So that's how we're going to continue to expand the programming through our partnerships. This winter, we are also going to continue to try to do a few more things indoors, because it's going to be cold outside. As Joanne mentioned our social day program is back in the building and she's going to talk a little bit more about our Pea Pod program in a minute.
- **Outdoor Seating:** We are doing a Grab and Go meals. We have a sort of a newly created outdoor seating area that we are inviting people now if they come and grab a meal, to grab that meal with a friend and go sit outside and enjoy the meal in our backyard. We're trying to upscale those meals a little bit by recognizing some of the national food holidays, like national Vanilla Cupcake Day is coming up. On that day our grab and go meals will include a vanilla cupcake.
- **Grab and Go for Veterans:** Will be celebrating our veterans in November by inviting them to partake in a free Grab and Go meal. Since we can't have our in-person, big veterans' programs even, we are going to spread small treats like that throughout the whole month.
- **Small Group Programming:** We are going to bring in some small group programs. And when we say small group, we're talking like 5,6 or 7 people. We're hoping that the people that come in, and they will self-select, and they may be the people that aren't doing the virtual programming. We are trying to provide programming that we think will appeal to them, like the armchair travel type programs, maybe some technology programs, and our art workshops. They will be very small groups. The first programs we are offering are in November.
- **Spring Lifelong Learning Semester:** We have a lifelong learning program that has two semesters. So, we're looking at our winter semester and where instead of starting in February, we've decided to start it in March. So maybe it will be sort of a spring

semester. We will try to offer some classes, very small groups in person and then the rest will stay virtual. An in-person class from our lifelong learning class maybe something where it just hasn't lent itself nicely to the virtual world, like where they like to sit and listen to classical music together and that is nicer to do together.

- **Snowshoe Walking and Cross-Country Skiing:** We will, as I said, continue to do some outdoor activities and hopefully we will get some new winter activities with volunteers leading them. If we can find some snowshoe walkers or cross-country skiers that want to take small groups over to the golf course to do some outdoor activities.

Most of our programming, like many of you will be kept virtual. Our exercise classes will stay virtual and our educational lectures will be held on zoom. Our lifelong learning program will be partly on zoom. We will be doing more evidence-based programs. Joanne and I are doing our second memory training program virtually and we'll be doing our first Matter of Balance program virtually.

- **Dreaming of Travel:** We're going to continue to have travel programs because since we can't go anywhere. At least we can dream, and we can enjoy somebody else's stories of their travel. We have some other good things for winter that we think will be well received.
- **Genealogy and Memoir Writing:** There will be some genealogy programs and memoir writing. Those are things that we find that people during this time, maybe they've taken advantage of the additional time that they have, and these are the activities that they've been enjoying.
- **Shared Public Access Programming:** Just real quickly about our collaboration with our senior centers in our area, and I think somebody else mentioned this, but we have worked closely with Plymouth, Kingston, Pembroke and Duxbury, we are all in a community that share the Community Channel with our public access TV. Instead of us all doing our own things, we realized that we're stronger together. We put our heads together and created a very diverse program lineup for that community channel that will be continuing maybe forever.

And we have made sure that there is exercise, entertainment, education, health and wellness and senior safety programs on that lineup. Our public access group has been incredibly receptive and helpful to having this collaboration come to fruition. We are very grateful for that.

And I really like I just want to finish by saying I love what Josie said that the steps aren't built yet because that's exactly how I feel. Many days that I'm on that step and I'm not sure where the next one's going but we take that leap of faith and we go.

Joanne Moore:

- **Pea Pod Program:** I want to give a quick overview of the Pea Pod program. Three weeks ago, like all of you, you probably have noticed people saying, I'm lonely and isolated, everything you read in the paper and you go to the MCO meetings and programs and that's what we're all concerned about, so we asked, what can we do about this?

We are bringing a small group of older adults together one day a week for four hours programming. Right now, we're offering the program Tuesday and Thursdays. Each group has six people in it. They self-identified or outreach suggested that they might be a good candidate. They completed an application and they are now with us. This is our third week and the people are loving the group.

They start off their day with a little socialization. Then they might do some zoom programming that we're offering. We have an exercise class, a bag lunch and there's always a theme for the day.

Last week's theme was gratitude. If you haven't seen the Louie Schwartzberg video on gratitude, take a few minutes and watch it, it will make your day. People said, from that they're living more mindfully.

The thing that was the best and is the best takeaway is they have something to look forward to every week. They love the socialization and they're not feeling alone.

We have gotten some grant funding to offer this and we're hoping to offer it all the way through April, and then we'll reassess after that.

Plymouth COA - Michelle Bratti - There is truly strength in numbers, and I think if we've learned nothing else as directors and people associated with helping elders is, we really need each other during this difficult time for support.

So, I'll fast forward. I went through the same thing all of you did, there were dark days, there were difficult days and there were "are you kidding me days". And it doesn't matter what you did. It's how you said, oh my gosh, what am I going to do? and stepped forward to help elders. That's what it's all about. That's what we're here for.

So where are we now, Plymouth is a large town, very large town. We have over 66,000 in our town, if the census holds correct, it will be approximately 25,000 seniors in our town. We're big and we know we are, and we're proud of that. But certainly, when a pandemic hits there are a lot of people to serve. So, we really needed to kind of to move forward in a proactive way. Our center is technically open. We are currently running nine indoor programs, two outdoor programs, ending November 1<sup>st</sup> and 10 to 12 zoom programs, six to seven senior learning network virtual programs, senior college in conjunction with Bridgewater State University. This is what we had to do. We had to just kind of fly by the seat of our pants.

We're up and running. We're not technically open, the entire building, but we are open, there's a portion of our building. We're a very large building. We're on the same campus as our one of our high schools. We do a grab and go lunch program. We do a Meals on Wheels program and we deliver approximately 4000 meals a month. Again, we're very large. We do a telephone outreach program where we service 800 patrons, a month, a live daily birthday call program with calls to approximately 650 seniors, a month, even on weekends. The difference it makes to get a live phone call on their birthday.

- **Everybody's Birthday Matters:** We have over 10,000 members of our center and each and every one of them will get a birthday call and I think it's noteworthy and you stop in your tracks when you call somebody and they say I didn't remember it was my birthday until you called. And that's when you know and that's when you say yep you keep going. Everybody's birthday matters! So those are the little things become the big things right.
- **Collaborate with other centers for more virtual programming:** We also are doing as Joanne and Angela indicated. We're so grateful to be part of a community effort with Duxbury and Kingston and Pembroke in terms of our Cable TV programming for those that maybe don't have computer access. We're all about the zoom but we know that people there are many seniors in our community that don't do virtual programming. We need to be able to reach them and give them what they need. So, all of those things are happening.
- **Form a Reopening Task Force:** We had to formulate being open, if you will. So, what does that mean? I highly recommend you form a Reopening Task Force committee for those that haven't opened yet. We had our Board of Health join and "strength in numbers" people in your community really are wanting to help seniors and it just helps drive.

Think of all the restaurants that have opened in your community and businesses and you sit, maybe outdoors this summer, and say wow what they've had to come up with. Well, we are the in the same boat. This is what we've had to come up with. Everything from a side entrance, to bathrooms to screening processes.

- **Screening Process:** Your screening process is extremely important. We do have a COVID checklist. We have a temperature check, we have sanitization, we have stall assignments, literally bathroom stall assignment numbers. We have a dirty pen bin and we have paperwork bins. You just continue to perfect things.
- **Increased Space for Risky Population:** You know what your standards are in your community. I don't like the standards for seniors, our population is more at risk. So, I don't do six feet apart. I have a 2500 square foot building. I could have 25 people in it. I don't want 25 people. I want a 15 by 11-foot area where seniors can come and I have 12 seniors in my building. That's it per program.
- **Practice and Tweak till you open:** So, what did we learn through this opening? We learned to predict the unpredictable and have many contingency plans. But remember,



even if your plan is not executed, even if you don't open today, tomorrow, next month. None of this is in vain. Practice! You are simply perfecting what will eventually be implemented. It is time well spent, practicing and tweaking for when the day comes when your center opens.

- **Don't deviate from your own safety standards.** As a matter of fact, be ridiculously overcautious and hold your staff to the same standard. They are modeling behavior for every single senior that walks into your center. Hold them accountable. Hold yourself accountable.

Remember that there will be resistant seniors and instructors. I had a gentleman come to my door, who, one of the COVID questions on the checklist three questions – are you experiencing symptoms. Have you been around anybody that's had symptoms? and Have you traveled to the at-risk states designated by Governor Baker? Well, the gentleman said “yes, my wife and I spent the weekend in Rhode Island.” Rhode Island's is an at-risk state. “No, it's not”. Oh, it is. He was very angry, but you know what, it's okay. We're all in this together. But I held firm, you have to hold up your safety standards. I feel bad, but not bad enough to put every other senior in your building at risk. That's what you need to do.

- **Create a Reopening Video:** There are a couple things we did when we were looking to reopen. We knew we looked so different than what our seniors understood us to be the last time they were in our building. So, we said, how can we express to our senior population that we look different? It's not what they are used to. It's awesome that they will be coming back and we're going to smile with our eyes when they come to the door, but how can we express this change. So, our [staff created a video](#). A little video simulating what you would experience if you were a patron coming to our Center for the first time.

And we had a ball doing it. Our staff really needed that that lift, to be honest with you, but we pretended, we showed them the physical and literal protocol, what it looked like, where they entered our building, how they entered our building, what they would have to be screened; What it looked like to walk through what our area look like, and how they would physically be standing, and what the room look like. We did it to music, our seniors loved it. So, they had a good concept of what it looked like coming into our building. I highly recommend it. We did it on a cell phone. There's no great technology that's needed.

- **Mask Breaks and Lanyards:** We also understand we require masks. That's just the bottom line. We also understand that that can be difficult for seniors. So, we built into our program mask breaks. A couple times depending on the length of the class, I cannot take credit for this idea, this is from Nancy from Bridgewater. We purchased with Cares Act hanging lanyards, that go around the senior's neck and have a clip on each end and they clip their masks to it when they have a mask break. So simple, but you don't want to put your mask down and get contaminated germs on it. When we have a

mask break, we gave them lanyards. Seniors love gifts. We know this. So, they loved them.

- **Bathroom Stall Assignments:** If I'm being brutally frank when any one of us, I'll speak for myself, is in a public place we may gravitate towards if there's four stalls in a public restroom, you may gravitate towards one stall of your own choice. We wanted to make sure that our bathroom was cleansed in a way that seemed consistent and not overused. We have six stalls total in our area of use. We assigned stall numbers when our seniors come in the center, one through six. And that's the stall that they use. It disperses the usage of each stall, very simple but very effective.

We have a custodian and part time matron and have a rigid cleansing schedule for rest room cleaning. We have a big, ghost buster looking, COVID related cleaning spray machine to clean the rest rooms.

I can tell you from experience the joy of seeing your patrons in person and interacting will move you in ways that you didn't expect. It will feel like its fuel for your tank. Their resiliency and tenacity to get to your center will speak volumes about the importance of combating social isolation.

Because that's really at the end of the day what we're all worried about. We're worried about our seniors out there that we don't see anymore.

- **Scaling Back when in the Red:** So where are we at now, well, we were moving to two programs a day we were full speed ahead systematically and slowly and guess what with programs running Plymouth went into the red, this week, literally, today we are officially red. What does that mean? We don't know, like everyone else. This is what we must contend with. For me, I'd like to maintain control in some semblance of order, and we were doing to up to two, two programs in person. Now we've scaled back to one - one a day. That's it, we're back to basics and that's okay. We understand that we're going to eb and flow. Don't worry about that. Just do the best you can with what you have.

We've decided to scale back to one program a day, with nine running on a rotating weekly basis. It's difficult, our instructors are not necessarily happy that they must alternate every week, but we want our seniors at the end of the day to get the experiences that they need.

- **Hybrid is Next – In-person and on Zoom:** What's next for Plymouth, integration of current in-person programming with zoom participants in real time to increase capacity and social interactions. What does that mean, for our programs that can run right now in-person, because we are open, we need to add the virtual people. So, if we have 12 people in our building, I want 50 more 100 more virtually joining the same program that's where we're going, we're working on the hybrid.

- **Partner with Your School System:** Also, what we're working on is virtual programming that involves intergenerational partnerships. We're partnering with our school system right now who feels as low as we do in so many ways. We're going to have our third graders in Mrs. Smith's class be doing our yoga with our zoom participants, because the schools need structure and programs and so do we. Our seniors want to see the faces of first, third, fifth graders, high schoolers. It doesn't take much. It doesn't take anything. We know what a zoom link is so when we have Mrs. Smith's class join us for mindful meditation or yoga for everybody, we're going to have our senior smiling, looking at little ones and little ones looking at Nana's and grandpas, in a way that feels very intergenerational connected.
- **New Year's Party Collaboration with another center idea:** Also, what we're going to do, and we can't put this in stone. I don't want to speak for Joanne and Angela in terms of Duxbury, but we have talked about the holidays so difficult. What are we going to do? how can we engage seniors? What we're going to do is, and this was Duxbury idea, have a New Year's Eve party instead of one town, how about four towns? How about four towns of seniors blowing on their streamers, and being able to meet new people that they've never met before. If that doesn't combat social isolation, I don't know what does.
- **Seniors at Panel Guests on Zoom:** Also, what we're looking to do is we are filming on cable TV and inviting various seniors as panel guests. They don't have to leave their homes. Pick a topic. If you have a good relationship with your cable network, you can right like we're doing now, you can record, your senior can call in, you can say

We're going to talk about what's good for you, you have a panel of seniors. They laugh, they joke recorded playing on cable TV. Seniors feel like they've given back to the community right from their own home.

- **Social Isolation Living in a COVID Society Support Group:** We're going to create, as silly and as common sense as it sounds, people were sick about calling it a COVID support group. No one wanted to use that language. I get it. I didn't either. But you know what people are asking for now in Plymouth, a social isolation living in a COVID society support group. They want to talk about what this looks like long term because we're in it. We don't want to be in it. But here we are.
- **Documentary on Hope, Resiliency and Isolation:** We're working on a documentary to talk about hope, resiliency and isolation and we are getting seniors involved. We're doing a PSA campaign in our town right now to get people to wear masks, because we're in the red. I want our seniors to speak to our town, get your seniors involved. That's what they care about. That's how they stay connected.

That's Plymouth and that's where we are.

## **Bridging the Digital Divide Discussion**

(presented at 2020 MCOA Conference on Thursday, October 22)

During this session three professionals discussed their remote and virtual community programming. Read this edited transcript (with links and resources )to find ways to engage and educate your patrons.

### **Presenters:**

Emily Williams, Director, Bridgewater Council on Aging

Suki Lapin, Program Coordinator, City of Worcester

Jill Hall, Division Chief & Acting Nutrition Program Manager, Baltimore County Department of Aging, MD

### **How are you marketing your online programs? What are your techniques and strategies for educating your participants about online programming?**

**(Worcester)** After a quick survey. We found that only 10 seniors knew how to zoom. With the assistance of Clark University, we are now in the process of creating our own zoom tutorial. There is also a zoom tutorial on the MCOA website. We have carved out five hours of programming a day on the government channel. We started to create videos, first by filling time slots with the most popular and most needed exercise programs from our exercise instructors.

Seniors were so excited to see familiar faces and routines that they remembered. Then a variety of programming was added, to date over 100 original videos have been put in the library.

First programs are publicized in our newsletter the Senior Scoop. We provide very elaborate monthly newsletters. Most programs are virtual and are highlighted in the month they will air. Also, cable services have created a program guide.

A Worcester Senior Center volunteer collected the emails of all local activity directors and administrators from nursing homes, assisted livings and resident housing facilities. Activity directors then share the programming guide weekly with their residents.

The program guide is also sent to seniors by E blast and the MySeniorCenter Robo-call service. Cable service staff created a YouTube link for each video, and it is posted on the Worcester Senior Center Facebook page and website. If a senior cannot watch the program at the time slot allotted on the government channel, they have endless opportunities to watch the programming on their smart TV or right from their computers.

**(Bridgewater)** We are working very hard and staff is essentially job sharing and do a lot of the same things. That's a key piece to all of this, when you have a small staff and a lot of seniors who need help.

We go out into the community. We have a newsletter. When COVID hit it was produced monthly, then we went to seasonally. The newsletter was full of resources and tips and we focused on mental health awareness. We shared articles on how to identify grief because a lot of folks were grieving the loss of the building their families and one another.

We tapped into the cable access network and developed a tri-town approach because to programming because it's better to not duplicate services and it saves a lot of time.

We collaborate with our library because they have an email network of over 12,000 people and we only have 300 emails (but it's growing). We connect anytime they are offering online programming or book club through zoom or whatever. It's a great and easy approach to sharing. You know what's offered as a community through the municipal government instead of just the senior center or just the library. So, we broke down a lot of silos and that respect because they weren't working together previously. And with a less frequent newsletter, which was our main mode of getting the word out.

We've increased our email blasts. That's a great way to advertise in new programs or if there's nothing going on, you can find a program and send a quick email blast. And the seniors check it out on their smartphone. We encourage participants instead of telling them Senior Planet is a great service, we identify certain programs that they're offering and highlight them in our eblasts. It's been fun.

**(Baltimore):** We use a lot of the same techniques that Suki and Emily have mentioned, we started originally doing phone calls, sending out texts, emails and letters. So far, since March have had over a million contacts with our members in various ways. But because we have so many senior centers (20) and everybody was trying to do their own thing we really found that that was resulting in a lot of duplication of effort.

Often centers were showing the same programs, so we decided very quickly to consolidate into one virtual senior center. Staff created a Google Doc where each center puts info and links to all their programs. For security reasons, centers advertise the programs but do not include the link. Participants contact the center for the link. Each center has a Facebook account and staff can now see and work out of the same document to find and post opportunities. That was helpful to us. We can get information out quickly to everybody and it's all current.

We also do monthly flyers that show all the programs that we're offering. We offer about 100 every month that we offer so we do a consolidated flyer and a consolidated newsletter. This is important for messaging. With questions like, when are we going to open again? Are we going to open again? What happened to the money we paid for trips? We wanted to have a consistent message.

We survey people on a regular basis to find out what their interests are and if our programs are meeting their interests. We also want to know if they have issues with technology.

We cooperate with the surrounding counties. We are doing a virtual Expo with a couple of other counties. Now instead of us trying to do our own we have broadened the audience.

### How are you trying to get people online?

**(Bridgewater)** We started out with a need's assessment. We conducted a survey and found out that a lot of folks do have a computer, only because they replied to our survey. But typically, only 25% of a community has access to the internet, never mind, a device. So, we went to the town and said the COA and Library) can tap into the Cares Act funding to purchase tablets. We received tablets that we loan.

We have a liaison to the Cares Act through Plymouth County. The tablets were funded through Title III Funding of the Cares Act. Tablets directly reduce social isolation. (A participant mentioned that there might be some carryover funding and it wouldn't hurt to ask your AAA or ASAP.)

We have a university in town, and are in the process of starting a one-on-one student/older adult tutoring program. We have a social work intern who will identify students who are learning remotely that will be matched with a senior. We've got a list of about a dozen people right now who have shown interest. One of the key pieces is you must have the right message.

We have identified need through wellness check initiatives or one on one meetings at shine or fuel assistance and found that, for example, Mary could benefit from using a tablet, now we could give her a tablet, and invite her into the building or meet virtually and teach her how to use it.

Previously we were not tech savvy or experts on how to use iPads, but we learning as we go. We bought the *iPad for Dummies* book for seniors and that's been a very helpful resource guide. It is on loan at our library. It takes an individualized approach to get seniors to learn to use the tablet. We must embrace technology right now, whether we like it or not and we've created that messaging all along.

Through our intern, who is open to one on one or virtual tutoring, a senior will be given an iPad. We deliver it to them and give them an overview of how to turn it on, swipe and delete and then they attend a structured class every Wednesday at 10am. It is going well because it's on a small scale.

**(Baltimore)** We found, like Emily, that there's a lot of people who weren't connected, either through the fact that they didn't have the resources that they didn't know how to use them. Anytime anybody registers for a class we give them a how-to guide resource page to start.

Another thing we do is start with a class zero. This is a class where they can call in or come in virtually by computer and we walk through all the aspects that they're going to need to participate in the class. They learn how to log onto zoom, set up their camera, download documents, use chat and make sure their microphones work, and their internet is strong enough. You don't want to be dealing with those things during the class.

We also encourage all our instructors and participants to log on about half an hour before the class. This way, instructors can answer any questions and participants can have time to chat.

We really try and encourage phone participation as well for many of our classes.

We also refer people to YouTube. A lot of people have smart TVs and they may not know how to use their computer, but they know how to use their TV. We tell them how to get connected with YouTube. There's even a lot of videos on YouTube about how to set up your computer.

And we refer to programming like Senior Vitality out of the Curry Senior Center in California. This site has a whole bunch of tutorials both in in English, Russian, Cantonese and other languages. We try and refer people out to things that already exist, instead of us spending time trying to recreate those sessions.

We also discuss the security features with participants, making sure they understand the privacy settings and what they should be clicking and not clicking on in terms of zoom and Facebook Live. We never give out our links on any public source, you must call the staff to get the link information.

We held mock practice sessions with our instructors as well because often they are not very familiar with the technology. Instructors could test sharing the screen or test where they should stand in terms of the exercise class.

When we first went virtual, we were [linking to prerecorded videos](#) that had already been done by others because our instructors were fearful about teaching on zoom. It took us awhile to get them up and running. Now we think it's important to have support staff at any time.

With support staff watching the chat box or to help people with tech problems allows the instructor to teach.

There is a best practice from the Kansas City area, they have a virtual class spotter role that includes a crisis plan. If they are holding a class with somebody and it looks like they're having difficulty, they have developed a whole emergency response checklist. They get all contact information for everybody who comes on their programs so that they are ready to assist if needed.

Like Emily, we're starting to grant out tablets to low income individuals who want to take classes. We've got about 100 tablets coming to us. We are just looking at how to come up with a best practice to determine who will get the tablets.

**(Worcester)** We're at the very beginning stages of trying to assist individuals to get online. We are working with the Cares Act and we're working with Worcester State University and trying to figure out which seniors we think would be interested in learning the technology. We have a large senior population. I think one of our biggest challenges right now is Wi Fi hotspot availability. There are some computers that have embedded Wi Fi. As I said, we are just in the very beginning stages.

**(Baltimore)** One best practice we found is getting tablets that are run off a phone data plan as opposed to the internet because if an individual can't get the internet, they can get Verizon or T-Mobile or a similar connection. We set up our tablets with the phone data plans.

**(Bridgewater)** We're in the process of installing towers here at the center and at the library. We're buying three towers to try to develop three hotspots in town. The hotspot is created through Cable WIFI internet access through our liaison at the Cable Access Commission MA. There are all kinds of ideas floating around. But you really must go in with a plan.

One thing I've learned is you must work backwards. You have an idea, you have a goal, and you know your result. So, we wanted tablets (the result), we didn't have a budget for that kind of a situation, so you could ask your supervisor. Mine is the town manager and he said, there's some money through the Cares Act to reduce social isolation. Great! I consulted at our weekly directors' meetings and we decided to build it and they will come.

**How do you engage those not interested in technology? folks that say, "I don't want to try technology, I never had it and don't want it!"**

**(Baltimore)** In our county, we started with a lot of phone calls, trying to engage them. We sent art materials, games and activities. We started doing an awful lot of drive-byes, now drive throughs. Each center will have one at least one a month or sometimes every other week. This is an opportunity for people to just drive through, talk to the center staff and say hello and that allows us to see people to make sure that they're doing okay.

We've noticed a few people that are suffering, they may have lost weight and these informal check-ins allows us to check and follow-up with afterwards.

If we asked the survey question, “how often do you want to be called by staff?” Most people would say that they don't want a call, but they want an email or text and to give them information, but they don't need a call.

**Tell us about your cable TV programming and telephone programming (for connecting to those without a computer.)**

**(Worcester)** Our best marketing tool is the reputation of the senior center and the love of our senior center. It's just such a welcoming atmosphere and everybody recognizes the importance of the senior center. It's been a little easier transition to go virtual.

One of our best tools is our newsletter. It's just very elaborate ([go to webpage](#)). The seniors call it their Bible. It is a hardcopy that is sent out snail mail to over 3,000 seniors. If they do receive it in the mail, they pay a nominal fee of \$15 to the Friends of the Worcester Senior Center. It is also posted on our Facebook page and website.

Regarding marketing our virtual senior center, we immediately named it “Stay Connected” programming on cable services. We then created book ends that included music to professionally start and end the end each video.

The cable services also suggested that staff introduced the videos. That was a challenge. At the beginning the seniors loved to see the staff, but as you probably are all aware of, during that time we could not get our hair done. I think my hair was half gray, half blonde and half brown and I was wearing hats for those later intros. But we made it happen!

We've had staff do intros in Spanish and I've done many of the intros in new locations, with different backgrounds to make them interesting.

We've all been thrown into this “new normal” and we're just running with it. Our videos are an important marketing tool. We embed the link in some of our [letters that we send out to collaborators](#) and sponsors, so they can see all or part of the video. We include logos in the videos of sponsors, our collaborators and whoever takes part. The videos are posted on the Senior Center website page.

**(Baltimore)** Unfortunately our cable TV was slow in connecting with us. We have been given five hours to do exercise classes on our cable TV. We are just starting.

We have switched over some of our conferences and things like that to virtual programming. We are putting our toe in the water for the some of those big events.

**(Bridgewater)** We do it with the tri town and we have a dozen programs. It does take a lot to put it all together. You need buy in from the cable companies because they're the ones doing all the work. It's another collaborative approach and it's working very well.

Messaging is key because not everyone speaks primarily English. There's a small Portuguese population in Bridgewater. The families are the ones getting involved providing translation, because no one has called us who doesn't speak English. Which means we're not reaching them, and we could be improving on that service.



## How are you reaching out to non-English speaking individuals? **Are you doing any non-English speaking programming?**

**(Worcester)** We work closely with Mass College of Pharmacy; they are creating a video in Spanish.

We are at the beginning stages of this with Zoom. We do staff Zoom shout outs in all different languages to say hello to the seniors, but it is a work in progress with using different languages.

**(Baltimore)** Our county unfortunately is not very multicultural and since English is the predominant language here, we haven't really done anything other than create some printed material. Important information about food distributions or other SNAP benefits and things like that have been translated into Spanish.

At the very beginning we created a list of a couple [hundred different links](#) that people could go to get resources and connections.

I'm getting approached by startup companies that have programs that they want to send to our members that are subscription based but there are some free things out there.

### Share some of your innovative programming:

**(Baltimore)** Some of the fun ones that the staff have come up with include:

- Around the Farm: One of our employees' children has a farm, so she's been doing these weekly podcasts of video tours of the farm to show how a real farm works.
- Quail Egg Watch – One of our staff got all these quail eggs and we are watching them hatch.
- December Talent show - Everybody has talents, we are asking that the videos are sent to us and then we're going to have a virtual evening of performances and rate the acts.
- Creative Arts Contest – where contestants had to send everything in digitally.
- Farm to Table Cooking – Where our nutritionist went out and followed food from the farm, all the way through the steps to her cooking demonstration at the end.
- Trivia and Treats - whoever wins the trivia contest gets an Amazon \$25 gift card sent to them.
- Coffee and COVID discussion groups.
- Guitar classes and things like that. They'll jam which gives anybody with a guitar the ability to meet online and play along.
- Educational sessions, dancing and our social hours for caregivers
- AMP playbook as a book club - that's been successful.

**(Worcester)**

- Exercise programs are huge!
- Volunteer recognition and celebration of the Worcester Center's 20th Anniversary. We use post photos and volunteers and previous photos from years past. City officials were part of the video, creating messages and thank you to the volunteers.
- Another big hit are staff on these videos saying hello in many different languages.
- To kick off our walking club, we had a podiatrist come and speak. And then we added our walking club manager at the end of the video, who demonstrated stretching exercises.
- Walk Music Therapy program.

- Worcester has a rich history. On Father's Day we had eight antique cars show up at a remote park and Worcester Cable services filmed them and we were able to do a virtual car show.
- Summer concert series was held virtually
- We've done programs on voting, flu, prescription advantage and the US Census. We also were able to create a diversity campaign to advertise our channel.
- We reached out to assisted living centers and their residents and did a shout out to the residents of Worcester in honor of our 20th anniversary.
- Virtual cooking classes
- Two successful Zoominars: We had an instructor come in and talk about tips and tricks for the Mahjong, 2020 Card. Every year they come out with a new card and this year the card was quite different. Some of the Mahjong players had never seen some of the hands that were on this card. We had 85 seniors on this call. And we had a learn how to play Canasta in three different sessions.
- We are doing a Valentine's day program with an Elvis who will be zooming to seniors. He is an Elvis authority and he will serenade them at the end.
- Drive by flu clinic, which we were able to vaccinate over 200 seniors with the flu shot and many others with the pneumonia shot and shingles shot and this drive by clinic will be an excellent model to when we hopefully receive the COVID vaccine.

**(Bridgewater)** I think what's innovative at Bridgewater is that the senior center is now the hub for community capacity building and is innovating through technology. It's innovating by providing a lot of intergenerational activities and programs, whether it be with the school or the university. I think every city in town can do this, you don't have to be a college town, because right now everybody's virtual so you can have an intern virtually or you can have a volunteer through a local college or university virtually. It's a Community approach, which I think is innovative

We will be developing a Memory Cafe. It will be named after a woman with dementia who was prematurely moved to a nursing home because of the senior center closing during the pandemic. We will call it Alice's Cafe.

A lot of the colleges right now are offering senior college through the older adult lifelong learning program. If they can utilize their local senior center to get a tablet and learn how to use the tablet, then they can have access to that workshop.

Right now, the sandwich generation are relying on older adults to provide their child's caregiving. That is giving older adults that sense of purpose.

There's been recognition about the effect of the pandemic on older adults, the town manager wrote a little blurb about how the seniors have probably the most affected.

**Who are you collaborating with?**

**(Worcester)** I want to start by saying who aren't we collaborating with. We welcome anyone who has appropriate content for our government station.

- A letter was developed ([see Amy Vogel Waters letter example](#)) highlighting the importance of videos for homebound seniors. I use this letter to encourage collaborators, sponsors, and instructors to work with us.
- Because of that letter we have worked with the Worcester Art Museum. They had a master lecture series that was videotaped by WGBH channel two. This partnership went through our legal department and because that letter showed the importance of these videos to seniors, we are now able to air their master series on our station.
- The letter also went out to the curator of the Boston Red Sox, so they were in.
- We collaborated with all the city departments to show the Botanical Gardens for our Mother's Day video program.
- We've collaborated with the cultural department and their Poet and Junior Poet Laureate program at the Worcester Public Library
- We're working with Veterans Affairs
- We are working with the medical director for a *Stay Connected with Your Health* video section.
- We've worked with countless performers and instructors. Student organizations created art, poetry, and performances. We also work with our own Worcester Senior Center participant artists; we've created virtual art galleries and videos for them Preservation Worcester is taking their holiday stroll virtual and we're also going to do a tour of City Hall.

**(Bridgewater)**

- Our strategy is to target densely populated areas of seniors to bring programming to them and convince them to use a tablet. We have 255 plus communities in town, and we have our housing authority. That's about 1000 people in total and it's three different locations in town. So our work is bringing the programming to them and all that it entails.
- A simple wellness drive by - We go around and wave
- There is the [Not Knitters](#), they are a group of people that are not knitting. They used to knit, but they're not knitting anymore, they gather because they just want to see each other.

**(Baltimore)** I think one of the things that came out of COVID is our coordination with all the other county agencies. One of the things that happened when they found out that our senior centers were closed, we became a free building for them to hold their programs. We hosted the fire department when they had to close their fire station; we hosted police active shooter training. We are being looked at right now as a cold/hot weather homeless shelter. We are also being looked at as a location for foster care visits.

We've had a lot of conversation about best practices. We are trying to figure out, when we do get to reopen, should we be using our lending libraries and things that we have. We called the library and they gave us their best practices. And for our medical loan closet, we called, and they gave us best practices from the Health Department on durable medical equipment and how they should be cleaned and sanitized. I think our number one surprise was that all these other agencies in our county didn't really know what we did.

We also have collaborated with everybody for food delivery and partnerships, we're working with the restaurants in our community and our catering vendors and trying to get food out to people who are underserved right now in that area. That is a huge collaboration.

### Additional Digital Resources and Examples

1. "Videos for homebound seniors" letter from Amy Vogel Waters, Director Worcester Senior Center to explain the importance of programs for home bound seniors sent to collaborators and sponsors.
2. Worcester Government TV Program Guide
3. Worcester Senior Center Stay Connected 75 Episodes
4. Worcester Senior Center Collaborators and Sponsors
5. Sample letter sent to collaborators and sponsors - Worcester Senior Center
6. Link to Worcester Senior Center newsletter, Senior Scoop:  
<http://www.worcesterma.gov/senior-center/senior-scoop>
7. Key Takeaways from Bridgewater COA
8. Links to Virtual Resources from Baltimore County Department of Aging

## Example of Thank You Letter to collaborators and sponsors of videos from the Director, Amy Vogel Waters.



CITY OF WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
*Elder Affairs Division*  
Edward M. Augustus, Jr., City Manager  
Dr. Matilde Castiel, Commissioner, Health & Human Services  
Amy Vogel Waters, Director, Elder Affairs



June 1, 2020

Thank you for providing videos to supplement the remote programming developed by the Worcester Senior Center.

During the pandemic, we have been challenged to find new ways to connect with Worcester's home-bound seniors, and to help them thrive during this difficult time. To this end, we are working with the City's videographers to produce an array of health, fitness and entertainment videos as well as curating other content to uplift and educate our viewers.

The videos are aired on the City's Government Channel Spectrum 192, as well as posted for viewing on the Senior Center Facebook Page and YouTube. All sources are acknowledged in the presentations.

It is possible that once we are able to return safely to the Senior Center building, we will retain this new approach to reach seniors who are not well enough to return and participate with us.

Feel free to contact me at [watersa@worcesterma.gov](mailto:watersa@worcesterma.gov) for further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Amy Vogel Waters".

Amy Vogel Waters  
Director

*Taking You in New Directions*

128 Providence Street, Worcester, MA 01604 Phone: (508) 799-1232 Fax: (508) 799-1743  
<http://www.worcesterma.gov/senior-center>  
*An equal opportunity, affirmative action employer.*

## Government Television Program Guide Example



### Worcester Government Television

#### Programming Guide

July 12, 2020 – July 19, 2020

*Subject to change without notice*

#### Sunday, July 12, 2020

9:00 AM	WSC Stay Connected - Aerobics with Nancy Cimato
10:00 AM	WSC Stay Connected - Senior Challenge, Exercise with Joe Fish
11:00 AM	WSC Stay Connected - Rhonda Hamer Exercise: Cardio, Muscular Endurance and Range of Motion
12:00 PM	WSC Stay Connected - Memory Lane Show: Frank Sinatra
1:00 PM	WSC Stay Connected - Concert Series: Cole Porter
2:30 PM	WSC Stay Connected - Mindfully Together: Meditation for July, with Robert Harrington CCH
3:00 PM	WSC Stay Connected - Tai Chi with Master Dansereau
6:00 PM	WSC Stay Connected - Memory Lane Show: 1954

#### Monday, July 13, 2020

9:00 AM	WSC Stay Connected - Meditation and Chair Yoga, with Fern Lee (a)
10:00 AM	WSC Stay Connected - Stay Active and Independent for Life (SAIL), Exercise with Joe Fish
11:00 AM	WSC Stay Connected - Rhonda Hamer Exercise: Seated Strength, Core and Stretch

THE FIRST 75 WORCESTER SENIOR CENTER "STAY CONNECTED" VIDEOS  
CREATED DURING THE 2020 PANDEMIC

View on Government Channel 192, <http://www.worcesterma.gov/senior-center/videos>,

Facebook and YouTube.

SCSC Ep 1	Exercise Joe Fish 1 [SAIL]	
SCSC Ep 2	Staff Hellos	
SCSC Ep 3	Meditation: Harrington 1	
SCSC Ep 4	Exercise Rhonda Hamer 1 [Card/End/ROM]	
SCSC Ep 5	Exercise Rhonda Hamer 2 [Seated St/Core/Str]	
SCSC Ep 6	Author Talk with Gary Gemme	
SCSC Ep 7	Fall Prevention and Joy for All	
SCSC Ep 8	Archie Richards and Fredda Levine	SCSC13 Music Therapy with Cara Brindisi
SCSC Ep 9	Volunteer Recognition 4/29/2020	
SCSC Ep 10	Exercise Nancy Cimato 1 [Aerobics]	
SCSC Ep 11	Mother's Day	
SCSC Ep 12A	Walking Club Kickoff	
SCSC Ep 12B	Walking Club TreadMill Trail	
SCSC Ep 13	Music Therapy	
SCSC Ep 14	Squam Lake	
SCSC15	Yoga with Nancy Cimato	
SCSC16	Memorial Day Tribute	
SCSC17	Senior Challenge, Exercise with Joe Fish	
SCSC18	Meditation and Chair Yoga, with Fern Lee (a)	
SCSC19	Meditation and Chair Yoga, with Fern Lee (b)	
SCSC20	Tai Chi with Master Dansereau	
SCSC21-22	The Memory Lane	
SCSC23-25	The Memory Lane	
SCSC26	A Tribute to Cole Porter	

## Innovative Practices' Discussion Series

SCSC27	Worcester Senior Center's 20th Anniversary
SCSC28-30	The Memory Lane
SCSC31	Medication Safety
SCSC32	Father's Day
SCSC33-34	The Memory Lane
SCSC35	Senior Strength and Balance with Joe Fish
SCSC36-38	The Memory Lane
SCSC39	Mindfully Together for July
SCSC40-45	The Memory Lane
SCSC46	Distinguished Speakers: Worcester Poet Laureates/Summer Concert: Chloe Belsito
SCSC47-49	The Memory Lane
SCSC50	Summer Concert Series: Stomp N Holler
SCSC51	Elio Sonsini, Shirley MaCafe, The Singing Nurse and Care Couriers
SCSC52-53	The Memory Lane
SCSC54	Wild About Wildlife
SCSC55	More Music Therapy with Cara Brindisi (Beaches)
SCSC56	Voting in the 2020 Elections
SCSC57	SHINE
SCSC58	The Boston Red Sox
SCSC59	Cooking with Quinsigamond Community College
SCSC60	Distinguished Speaker Series: Worcester Art Museum presents "The Ten: American Painters of the Gilded Age"
SCSC61	Summer Concert Series: Carlos Odria Trio
SCSC62	Summer Concert Series: Wormtown Mugwumps/Fredda Levine's Art and Poetry
SCSC63	Eisenberg Assisted Living Summer Concert
SCSC64	Music Therapy with Cara Brindisi (Birds & Flowers)
SCSC65	Protecting the Vulnerable Senior from Financial Exploitation
SCSC66	Worcester Art Museum Master Classes: Master Vases of Greece



## Innovative Practices' Discussion Series

SCSC67 Worcester Art Museum Master Classes: Exploring the Spanish Colonial Art of Gaspar Miguel de Berrio

SCSC68 The History of Union Hill

SCSC69 Grandparents Day

SCSC70 WSC Stay Connected: Virtual Cooking Class with Chef Kim: Cooking Myths

SCSC71 WSC Stay Connected: Eat Great, Feel Great!

SCSC72 WSC Stay Connected: Virtual Nutrition Class with Judy Palken, MNS, RD, LDN: The Art of Fruit

SCSC73 "WSC Stay Connected: Billie, Bessie, and the Blues

SCSC74 WSC Stay Connected: Together in Yoga with Fern Lee

SCSC75 WSC Stay Connected: NCOA Presents "Falls Prevention Strategies"

Collaborating Organizations and Sponsors who offered or supported free programming  
with Worcester COA

**We also want to highlight all the collaborations and sponsors who offered FREE PROGRAMMING to  
our seniors:**

**(Over 30)**

1. Worcester Art Museum
2. Boston Red Sox
3. AAA
4. Sheriff Lew Evangelidis Office-Pet Safety
5. RSVP Volunteer
6. District Attorney Early's office-SCAMS
7. Vibra Hospital
8. Tower Hill Botanical Gardens
9. Eisenberg Assisted Living
10. Worcester JCC
11. Ecotarium
12. Worcester Animal Rescue League
13. MCPHS
14. Former Police Chief Gary Gemme-Author Talk
15. EVOLVE Spiritual Center
16. Care Courier
17. Quinsigamond Community College-Hospitality and Recreation Management School
18. A Visit to Squam Lake Video Donation
19. Generation Law Group
20. Artist Elio Sonsini
21. Artist Peg Martin
22. Poet Fredda Levine
23. SHINE
24. Worcester Academy
25. Dr. Donald Pelto
26. Frank Callahan-Worcester Academy Retired Development officer-3 talks Cole Porter, History of  
Union Hill and upcoming WW1 Monuments
27. Mass Council on Aging
28. National Organization on Aging- Falls video
29. Lutheran Rehabilitation and Health Care Center
30. Cartoonist, Brian Guagnini

**Upcoming Collaborations**

1. Preservation Worcester
2. MCPHS Forsyth School of Dental Hygiene
3. WISE
4. Dr. Satra Mitra
5. Christopher House
6. Rockland Trust Bank
7. Orchard Grove

8. American Antiquarian Society

**PSA's**

1. US CENSUS
2. Prescription Advantage
3. Flu – upcoming this month

**City Departments**

1. Mayor's Office
2. City Manager's Office
3. Dept. Public Health
4. Health and Human Services
5. Worcester Public Library
6. Cultural Poets
7. Veterans Affairs-Alex Arriaga
8. City Clerk Office-Voting video
9. WSC Staff videos-WELCOME and more..

**Upcoming**

WPD

**Special Programming**

WSC Volunteer Recognition

1. Mother's Day
2. Father's Day
3. July 4<sup>th</sup>
4. Grandparents Day

Summer Concert Series with NEW JAZZ Enrichment Foundation-7 concerts plus a 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Concert, St. Patrick's Day concert, Eisenberg Assisted Living

**9 concerts to date-upcoming Thanksgiving concert with Quadrivium, Cara Brindisi, Holidays concerts, NY Celebration**

5. Herbert Berg Flower Arranging
6. Memory Lane Videos

**Upcoming**

1. World Smile Day upcoming
2. 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment Program-Jewish Women's Archives
3. Supreme Court Case updates
4. Photographer, Ron Rosenstock Travelogue
5. Betty Hauck-Musician with Hearing Loss
6. Thanksgiving
7. Holiday Party
8. Wear Your favorite Sweater Party
9. Veterans Day
10. NY Celebration
11. The Honorable Martha Grace

12. Ret. Atty. Jack Ross

**Numerous Exercise/Health/WELLNESS**

1. Mindful Meditation
2. Joe Fish Fitness
3. Rhonda Hamer-Certified Personal Trainer
4. Fern Lee
5. Cara Brindisi Music therapy programs
6. John Dansereau-Tai Chi
7. Nancy Cimato
8. Exercises with Kathy from Shrewsbury
9. Upcoming exercise videos with members of the Worcester Bravehearts

***THANK YOU TO CABLE SERVICES FOR YOUR TIME AND TALENT!***

Example of letter to Introduce new collaborators with the senior centers virtual programming TV channel

Dear James,

All of us at the Worcester Senior Center are thrilled at the potential of collaborating with **THE AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY!** An idea we discussed would be to air an introduction video tour and then hopefully tape additional videos of your society. What perfect timing as you welcome your new president! The president could tape the introduction to the video, introduce himself to Worcester residents and encourage the community to visit, soon...

The Worcester Senior Center has created virtual programming titled **Worcester Senior Center Stay Connected**. Programs air daily on **Channel 192**, the Worcester Cable station, also known as the Government Station. Programming includes exercise, meditation, health and wellness, author talks, special day programming, entertainment and much, much more! We are working closely with the City of Worcester Cable Service team to bring these high quality programs to seniors.

For seniors who have computers, programs are also posted on the Senior Center webpage under stay connected videos. To view our programs, check this link and see Stay Connected videos: <http://www.worcesterma.gov/senior-center/videos>. If you have a smart TV, go to Worcester Senior Center Stay Connected Programs. Programs are also posted on the Worcester Senior Center Facebook page.

[Senior Center Videos | City of Worcester, MA](#)

[www.worcesterma.gov](http://www.worcesterma.gov)

Welcome to the official governmental website for the City of Worcester, MA. Here you will find all city administration, services and information related to Worcester.

Attached, please find:

1. A note from Amy Vogel Waters, Director Worcester Senior Center
2. Worcester Senior Center September, October & November Newsletters" The Senior Scoop". Please note a few of the collaborators and sponsors who are excited to work with us: Worcester Art Museum, WISE and the Boston Red Sox.

3. WSC Programming Guide is sent each week via email blast and posted on the WSC Facebook page and WSC website. This guide is also sent to Worcester Nursing Homes, Assisted Living and Residence housing Facilities in Worcester with the hope that our programming reaches all 37,000 Worcester seniors.

Sample videos links:

1. Worcester Art Museum "The Ten. American Paintings of the Gilded Age with an introduction by Aileen Novick, Director  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sHFCZnHl-kY&list=PL3TD3ySXewEzK\\_oNWiAVSO9JYwV9SeMRx&index=23](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sHFCZnHl-kY&list=PL3TD3ySXewEzK_oNWiAVSO9JYwV9SeMRx&index=23)
2. Cara Brindisi, Music Therapist link - see sponsorship logo - VIBRA HOSPITAL, we would add The Antiquarian Society logo to your video  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6TpoFjNSTSo&list=PL3TD3ySXewEzK\\_oNWiAVSO9JYwV9SeMRx&index=18](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6TpoFjNSTSo&list=PL3TD3ySXewEzK_oNWiAVSO9JYwV9SeMRx&index=18)
3. Tribute to Cole Porter  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lslo54U0ILU&list=PL3TD3ySXewEzK\\_oNWiAVSO9JYwV9SeMRx&index=8&t=0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lslo54U0ILU&list=PL3TD3ySXewEzK_oNWiAVSO9JYwV9SeMRx&index=8&t=0)

We are thinking out of the box at the WSC and would be honored to have The American Antiquarian Society be part of our playlist!

Have a nice week!

**Suki Lapin**  
**Program Coordinator**  
**Worcester Senior Center**  
**508-713-3488**

## Key Points of Bridgewater COA during COVID

# Bridging the Digital Divide



Work Backwards - what do you want to achieve?



"Not Knitters" Groups - pair activities w/ individuals, make connections for them



Location is key for hybrid programming



Messaging, Email Marketing, Staff/Volunteer Buy-In & Social Media Communications are KEY



Silver Linings Bell - celebrate your successes!

## Links to Virtual Programming

Collected from Baltimore County Department of Aging, MD

Feeling isolated and lonely! Missing your exercise or continuing education classes? Check out some great online resources to help you stay active while at home during the COVID-19 Outbreak.

### Links to Arts

[Google Arts & Culture: +2000 partners from +80 countries](#)  
[Heritage on the Edge: A project of Google Arts & Culture](#)  
[Europeana: 50,000,000 European works of art, books, music, and more](#)  
[Smithsonian Open Access: Search 2.8 million images and 3D Models](#)  
[ArtUK: Art collections from 3,200 UK organizations](#)  
[Mexican Ministry of Culture: Short films, books, radio, paintings, from all cultural orgs](#)  
[Memorica: Open access Mexican culture content portal](#)  
[China's National Cultural Heritage Administration: Virtual portal of 100 institutions](#)  
[OpenGLAM: Aggregates 88 unique open collections](#)  
[NASA Image & Video Library: All NASA content is in the public domain](#)  
[DPLA: Digital Public Library of America](#)  
[MIMO: Musical Instrument Museums Online \(64,000+ instruments\)](#)  
[BioExplora: Natural science open collections portal \(3D images, bio diversity\)](#)  
[Science Museum Group: Collections from five UK science museums \(325,000+ objects\)](#)  
[York Museums Trust: Collections from various museums in Yorkshire, UK](#)  
[Archaeological Analytics: Archaeological Open Access Collections](#)  
[Digital Agnes: Canadian portal for curatorial research and online exhibitions](#)  
[English Heritage: Variety of mediums of British content \(Podcasts, videos, etc.\)](#)  
[Creative Commons: Aggregates all CC-licensed content and collections globally](#)  
[Wikimedia Commons: Over 20,000,000 open images](#)  
[Wikidata: "The Sum of all Paintings" metadata initiative via Wikimedia](#)  
[Open Culture Coloring Pages: 113 museum coloring books](#)  
[Global Museum: Portal for museum news, jobs, and resources](#)  
[V21ArtSpace: Over 100 exhibit virtual tours](#)  
[Arte.tv: Cultural documentaries, films, and more.](#)

### Links to Caregiver Activities

<https://ageofcentraltx.org/index.php/activities-caregivers-and-care-recipients-can-share-at-home/>

### Links to Connecting With Others

YouTube - <https://www.youtube.com/>  
Instagram – <https://www.instagram.com/>  
Facebook – [www.facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com)  
Pinterest - <https://www.pinterest.com/>  
Tik Tok - <https://www.tiktok.com/>  
Twitter - <https://twitter.com/>



### **Links to Continuing Education**

Ted Talks - <https://www.ted.com/talks>

Talks at Google - <https://www.youtube.com/user/AtGoogleTalks>

BigThink - <https://bigthink.com/videos/>

Luminosity - <https://www.lumosity.com/en/>

LearningRX - <https://www.learningrx.com/what-is-brain-training-/>

[https://freedomhomeschooling.com/virtual-field-](https://freedomhomeschooling.com/virtual-field-trips/?fbclid=IwAR15udnKNR_znJoO2VHF6Ry5YII8Wciqj0lcPtkILqLLanLOycr00BL-aA)

[trips/?fbclid=IwAR15udnKNR\\_znJoO2VHF6Ry5YII8Wciqj0lcPtkILqLLanLOycr00BL-aA](https://freedomhomeschooling.com/virtual-field-trips/?fbclid=IwAR15udnKNR_znJoO2VHF6Ry5YII8Wciqj0lcPtkILqLLanLOycr00BL-aA)

### **Links to Exercise Classes**

Link- <https://forms.gle/5qVScXzKHWw41c176> - BCDA Stepping Challenge

<https://youtu.be/qXlrMY-rUJ8> Teresa Reed Aerobic Video

<https://go4life.nia.nih.gov/>

### **Links to Food Services**

Grub Hub: <https://www.grubhub.com/>

Door Dash: <https://www.doordash.com/>

Postmates: <https://postmates.com/>

Food Pickup Locations in Baltimore County: [https://bc-](https://bc-gis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Nearby/index.html?appid=2f9aa91a53c34f26afda8798024bfa75)

[gis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Nearby/index.html?appid=2f9aa91a53c34f26afda8798024bfa75](https://bc-gis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Nearby/index.html?appid=2f9aa91a53c34f26afda8798024bfa75)

Food to go Locator in Baltimore County: [https://bc-](https://bc-gis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Nearby/index.html?appid=9f204a7f67cd433f9e38c67ba402757e)

[gis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Nearby/index.html?appid=9f204a7f67cd433f9e38c67ba402757e](https://bc-gis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Nearby/index.html?appid=9f204a7f67cd433f9e38c67ba402757e)

Amazon - <https://www.amazon.com/>

Target - <https://www.target.com/>

Walmart - <https://www.walmart.com/>

### **Links to Libraries**

[US National Archives Catalog](#)

[Library of Congress](#)

[The National Archives, UK](#)

[Trove: National Library of Australia images, books, newspapers, maps, etc.](#)

[Biodiversity Heritage Library](#)

[Endangered Archives, British Library](#)

[Cambridge Digital Library](#)

[National Archives of Japan](#)

[Amsterdam City Archive](#)

[Louisiana Digital Library: 400,000+ digital items from archives, libraries, museums](#)

[Internet Archive: The Wayback Machine, digitized film, books, music, etc.](#)

[American Literature Portal, WikiSource](#)

[English Literature Portal, WikiSource](#)

[New York Public Library: 880,000+ digitized prints, manuscripts, videos, etc.](#)

[Villanova Digital Library](#)

[British Library of Illuminated Manuscripts](#)

[Arctos Database: Access to 3 million specimens and observations in 210 collections](#)

<https://maryland.overdrive.com/>

<https://www.bcpl.info/books-and-more/downloadables.html>

### **Links to Mental Health Resources**

- [Mental Health Association of Maryland - https://www.mhamd.org/](https://www.mhamd.org/)
- [https://www.smartrecovery.org/community/calendar.php?styleid=29&fbclid=IwAR2ftJ4LtDqrJ1e6Ar8Vh9RhMz-B4\\_InLyKthwWjMHLb8rlsNHp9391ITBE](https://www.smartrecovery.org/community/calendar.php?styleid=29&fbclid=IwAR2ftJ4LtDqrJ1e6Ar8Vh9RhMz-B4_InLyKthwWjMHLb8rlsNHp9391ITBE)
- <https://unityrecovery.org/digital-recovery-meetings?fbclid=IwAR3HYrbh3zRSmu20D7NUsjIDjtUakD-SS50XpvsoYjLosMXdaRQLc1FoXUw>
- [http://www.cprna.org/our-areas/meetings/rock-creek-area/?fbclid=IwAR04UZNbAvHgHCqhH3OrEErXsHPQkWK-OHZmuscdGe9U\\_6AIZV4f9rYLCGU](http://www.cprna.org/our-areas/meetings/rock-creek-area/?fbclid=IwAR04UZNbAvHgHCqhH3OrEErXsHPQkWK-OHZmuscdGe9U_6AIZV4f9rYLCGU)

### **Links to Music**

iHeartRadio - <https://www.iheart.com/playlist/>

SoundCloud - <https://soundcloud.com/>

Radio.net - <https://www.radio.net/>

Mashable - <https://mashable.com/2007/07/06/online-music/>

Music on YouTube - <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-9-kyTW8ZkZNDHQJ6FgpwQ>

Spotify - <https://open.spotify.com/>

### **Links to Online Museum Exhibits**

[Girl Museum: Online Exhibits](#)

[Virtual Migration Museum: Interactive Online Experience / App](#)

[JFK Library: "Moonshot" App and Online Interactive](#)

[Virtual Museum of Canada: Virtual Exhibits and Cultural Content](#)

[Museum of Ontario Archaeology: "History of Ste. Marie II" Online Exhibit](#)

[Monterey Bay Aquarium: Animal Live Cams](#)

[Canadian Museum of History: Online Exhibitions](#)

[Remembering Lincoln, Ford's Theatre: Interactive online exhibit](#)

[M Woods, Beijing, China: Experimental Online Exhibition](#)

[Second Canvas Apps: 30 Museum Apps \(Google Sheet\)](#)

[Reina Sofía Museum Radio: Audiovisual resources; an acoustic museum experience](#)

[Smithsonian Latino Virtual Museum](#)

[National Museum of the U.S. Navy](#)

[National Women's History Museum](#)

[Smithsonian Learning Lab](#)

[MoMA Learning](#)

[Speed Art Museum: At-home art-making videos](#)

[The Field Museum: The Brain Scoop \(YouTube\)](#)

[North Carolina Museum of Art: Learn, \(collections, videos, curriculum\)](#)

[Sketchfab: 3D Models \(link goes to cultural-specific search\)](#)

[The Hammer: Contemporary Art programs, \(YouTube\)](#)

[Royal Albert Memorial Museum: Exeter Time Trail \(Interactive timeline\)](#)

[Les Fruits de Mer: Activities, books, films about Caribbean wildlife](#)

[Museum of Early Trade and Crafts: Recipes, Games, Coloring Pages, etc.](#)

[Museum Strathroy-Cardoc: Sydenham River Discovery online exhibit \(Flash\)](#)

[Denver Art Museum: Artist videos](#)

[Thomas Cole National Historic Site: Videos](#)

[Virginia Museum of History & Culture: Lecture series videos](#)

[Better World Museum: Draw Together in VR, Bob Ross-style videos](#)

[Discover XR: The Future of Social Media & Online Learning \(YouTube\)](#)  
[KaiXR: Free Museum VR Field Trips \(no VR gear needed\)](#)  
[HistoryView.org: Virtual Reality Tours](#)  
[Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum: Activities, Coloring Pages](#)  
[Paleontological Research Institution: Resources for Families, K-12 Students, College Students](#)  
[Tate: Tate Kids \(Games and quizzes, videos, kids' art, etc.\)](#)  
[Metropolitan Museum of Art: MetKids](#)  
[Exploratorium: Science Experiment "Snacks"](#)  
[American Museum of Natural History: Ology science website for kids](#)  
[Shedd Aquarium: Sea Curious- Kid Questions, Animal Answers \(YouTube\)](#)  
[Glazer Children's Museum: Online Activities](#)  
[Children's Museum of South Dakota: Recipes for Play](#)  
[Suzhou Museum: Online Mini-Games](#)  
[Pittsburgh Children's Museum: The MAKESHOP Show \(Makerspace Blog\)](#)  
[The Children's Museum of Indianapolis: Museum at Home](#)  
[Long Island Children's Museum: Play Outside Ideas](#)  
[Norton Simon Museum: Art Projects for Kids \(scroll to section\)](#)  
[The Kennedy Center: ArtsEdge, art education resources](#)  
[Canadian Museum of Nature: Coloring Pages, Arctic, Garden, Dinosaurs](#)  
[MCA Chicago: "Art Like Me" Culturally-Relevant Art Workbook for Kids](#)  
[National Museum of Australia: "Fun at Home" DIY activities](#)  
[Smarthistory: Source of history content for Khan Academy](#)  
[Frist Kids: Art activities and videos](#)  
[iCivics: Virtual games \(free beginning with Covid-19\)](#)  
[International Association of Children in Museums: Coronavirus Guide](#)  
[Rijksstudio: Remix collections from Rijksmuseum](#)  
[Naturalis: 40,000,000 natural science collections objects](#)  
[SMK Open: National Gallery of Denmark Collections](#)  
[The Belvedere, Vienna, Austria](#)  
[Canadian Museum of History](#)  
[UK Postal Museum](#)  
[South West Collections, England](#)  
[Brooklands Museum, Surrey, UK \(cars, motorcycles, aircraft\)](#)  
[Birmingham Museums Trust, Birmingham, UK \(art and history\)](#)  
[Paris Museums: Over 300,000 works](#)  
[Kunstmuseum Basel, Switzerland](#)  
[Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam](#)  
[Kröller-Müller Museum, The Netherlands](#)  
[Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, Madrid, Spain](#)  
[Munch Museum, Oslo, Norway \(art by Edvard Munch\)](#)  
[Mori Art Museum, Tokyo](#)  
[Museum of New Zealand](#)  
[Open Access at the Met](#)  
[New York Archaeological Repository: Nearly 1,000,000 objects](#)

### **Links to Online Museum Exhibits (Con't)**

[Cooper Hewitt, New York \(historical and contemporary design\)](#)  
[Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio](#)  
[Albright-Knox, New York](#)  
[The Barnes Collection, Philadelphia](#)  
[The Westmoreland Museum of American Art, Pennsylvania](#)  
[Corning Museum of Glass, New York](#)  
[The Guggenheim, New York](#)  
[Delaware Art Museum](#)  
[McMaster Museum of Art, Canada](#)  
[Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Arts, Arizona](#)  
[The Henry Ford, Michigan](#)  
[Eskenazi Museum of Art, Indiana University](#)  
[Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library & Museum, Virginia](#)  
[Akron Art Museum, Ohio](#)  
[Oakland Museum of California](#)  
[National Museum of African American History & Culture](#)  
[Chicago History Museum, Illinois](#)  
[Walker Art Center, Minneapolis \(visual, performing, media arts\)](#)  
[The Hammer, LA \(contemporary art\)](#)  
[Los Angeles County Museum of Art \(LACMA\)](#)  
[Crocker Art Museum, California](#)  
[The Walters, Baltimore](#)  
[Davison Art Center, Wesleyan University](#)  
[Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois](#)  
[The Khalili Collections: 35,000 works of art](#)  
[M+ Collections: 5,000+ Cultural Objects](#)  
[Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History & Culture](#)  
[Latino Cultural Arts Center, Denver](#)  
[Digital Cleveland History](#)  
[New Museum Digital Archive](#)  
[Royal Armouries Collections](#)  
[The Latin American Art Museum of Buenos Aires \(MALBA\)](#)  
[Xul Solar Museum, Argentina](#)  
[National Museum of Fine Arts, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil](#)  
[Chilean National Museum of Fine Arts](#)

### **Spiritual Resources**

[www.churchnativity.com](#)  
[www.gfc.org](#)

### **State of Maryland Information**

[https://governor.maryland.gov/marylandunites/](#)

### **Links to Virtual Tours**

[Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford: Virtual Tour](#)  
[Dalí Theatre-Museum, Catalonia: Virtual Tour](#)  
[The Vatican: 360-degree Museum Tours](#)  
[The Palace Museum: The Forbidden City, China, 360-degree Virtual Tour](#)  
[Hallwyl Museum, Stockholm: VR Tour](#)  
[Byzantine and Christian Virtual Museum: Virtual Tour](#)  
[The Louvre, Paris: Virtual Tour](#)  
[Vatican Museums: Virtual Tours](#)  
[The Hermitage, Russia: Virtual Tour \(YouTube\)](#)  
[Westminster Abbey, London: Virtual Tour](#)  
[Canadian Museum of History: Virtual Tour](#)  
[The Science Museum, London: Shipping Galleries Virtual Tour](#)  
[Museum of Flight: Virtual Tour](#)  
[Florence as it Was: 3D models of Florentine buildings, artworks, and squares](#)  
[The Kremer Museum: VR Tour](#)  
[Mexican National Institute of Anthropology & History: Virtual Tours \(Flash\)](#)  
[National Museum of Natural History, US: Virtual Tour](#)  
[National Archaeological Museum, Spain: Virtual Museum](#)  
[São Paulo Museum of Art: Virtual Tour](#)  
[The Frick, Pittsburgh: Virtual tours, online collections, activities](#)  
[Cranbrook Art Museum, Michigan: Exhibit Virtual Tours](#)  
[American Battlefield Trust: 360-degree Battlefield Tours](#)  
[National Museum of the Great Lakes: Virtual Tour](#)  
[Thomas Jefferson's Monticello: Virtual Tour](#)  
[George Washington's Mount Vernon: Virtual Tours, timelines, etc.](#)  
[Yellowstone National Park, US: Virtual Tours](#)  
[Yosemite National Park, US: Virtual Tour](#)  
[Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum: Virtual Tour](#)  
[Cliffe Castle Museum: Virtual Tour](#)  
[National Museum of the U.S. Air Force: Virtual Tour](#)  
[Arizona State Museum: Virtual Tour](#)  
[Vizcaya Museum and Gardens: Virtual Tour](#)  
<https://www.inaturalist.org>

### **Virtual Volunteering**

[Idealist - www.idealists.org](http://www.idealists.org)  
[Catchafire - www.catchafire.org](http://www.catchafire.org)  
[Book Share - https://www.bookshare.org/cms/](https://www.bookshare.org/cms/)  
[Zooniverse - https://www.zooniverse.org/](https://www.zooniverse.org/)  
[Smithsonian Institute - https://transcription.si.edu/](https://transcription.si.edu/)  
<https://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/agencies/animalservices/foster.html>  
<https://bmorehumane.org/>

## Beating the Blues and Promoting Mental Wellness during COVID notes

Held Tuesday, October 20, 2020

### Presenters:

- Jim Reynolds, Director Wenham Council on Aging & ADA Outreach Coordinator
- Linda Wincek Moore, Manager, Senior Services & Education, City of Worcester;
- Melanie Lachman, LCSW, UPSLIDE Program Coordinator, Tallahassee Senior Center and Foundation, FL Beating the Blues

### Use of Academic Public Health Volunteer Corp.

#### - Wenham Council on Aging – Jim Reynolds, Director

Wenham took advantage of the Academic Public Health Volunteer Corps (APHVC). More than 1,900 public health students and professionals volunteered with the APHVC's to help "flatten the curve" by partnering with local health departments across Massachusetts.

Wenham had begun an age friendly initiative in the town and had planned to do a survey with calls made from our own volunteers but instead enlisted the help of the APHVC volunteers.

They ended up contacting 664 individuals out of a list of 1200. 23% requested follow-up calls. They adapt the questions as the situation changed, improved monitoring and evaluation of calls and provided support to volunteers making the calls to protect their mental health.

See description by Ilana Cliffer a doctoral student at Tufts about the program.

### VOLUNTEER SCRIPT FOR CHECKING IN ON WENHAM RESIDENTS

Hi, this is \_\_\_\_ a volunteer for the Board of Health in Wenham, through the Council on Aging. We just wanted to reach out to see how \_\_\_\_\_ is doing. (Collect open response)

We are checking in on the health & wellbeing of our older residents and have 9 questions.

1. How are you doing in general?
2. Do you have relatives/friends/etc. who are checking in with you? (Collect yes/no response)
3. Do you have the groceries you need? (Collect yes/no response) if YES ask if you are not able to go out how will you get them?
4. Do you have sufficient medications or a way to access them? (Collect yes/no response)
5. How are you feeling physically? How are you feeling emotionally? (Collect open response)

6. Is there anyone at home or in your neighborhood, who you have concerns about and would like us to check in on? (Collect open response)

7. Do you have a thermometer at home if you need to check your temperature? (Collect yes/no response}

8. Would you like to be added to the Town of Wenham robocall (name, number, email) (Collect yes/no response)

9. Would you like a follow up call?

10. Lastly, I wanted to inquire to see if you have any questions about COVID-19 that I can answer

**Leave a message if the contact does not pick up the phone:**

- Hi \_\_\_\_\_, my name is \_\_\_\_ and I am calling on behalf of the Council on Aging to check on the health & well-being of our older residents in Wenham during COVID-19.
- We are trying to gather information to better serve our community and make sure that all our residents are doing ok. If you would like to participate, or if you have any questions or concerns, please call back [NAME OF COA DIRECTOR] at XXX-XXX-XXXX. Again, that's XXX-XXX-XXXX.
- Thanks, and hope you are able to stay safe and healthy.

**If someone has symptoms:**

- One more very important thing to add - if someone reports symptoms during your calls, please call [NAME OF TEAM LEAD] at XXX-XXX-XXXX
- [TEAM LEAD] will call the LBOH nurse in Wenham.

Use of iPads to creatively engage those home alone.

**- Wenham Council on Aging – Jim Reynolds, Director**

Wenham's local Rotary Club has sponsored a program to buy iPads to engage those who are home alone. This program came from Jim's graduate studies that involved creative engagement for those with dementia and their care givers to address communication challenges. Currently we provide distribution, training and follow-up.

Ideas for use of iPads include:

- Creating a personalized music playlist
- Adding meaningful photos and videos
- Reminiscing with YouTube videos

Be inspired by "[Alive Inside](#)" – a movie about music's capacity to reawaken our souls and combat memory loss.

Linda Wincek Moore, Manager, Senior Services & Education, City of Worcester;  
We are still reaching out to those people in need and to those who are very isolated as Jim does. We also have made over 22,000 calls to seniors in the City. We are accomplishing this with a staff of eight.

Some of their current programming includes:

- Virtual Memory Café - Once a month
- Respite Day Program –half-day on Tuesdays
- There is specific multicultural outreach:
  - o The Vietnamese elder group – meets weekly by zoom
  - o Chinese elder group – meets weekly and continues ESL classes every night for a half an hour.
  - o Latino elder group – weekly teleconference call.
  - o African American elder group
  - o Arabic elder group – uses the app What's Up
  - o Albanian elder group
- Worcester Senior Center Stay Connected: programs run, seven days a week on there, whether it be exercise programs, our educational programs, entertainment, we've done over 75 videos.

Information on COA's and sharing of information:

We are still running is our senior support team, which is a team made up of the senior center other city departments, the police, the fire and some community agencies where we stay in contact with each other to discuss seniors who are at risk and we get a lot of that information from the police departments 911 call list. We are able to identify those seniors who are at risk and we focus a lot on falls, but also those seniors who have called 911 frequently.

MA Language allowing police, fire and rescue to communicate with COA

Covered Entities that are subject to HIPPA Mandates Worcester Emergency Medical Services and Elder Services of Worcester Area Inc.

Not a Covered Entity; **not** subject to HIPPA Mandates

- The Worcester Police Department and The Division of Elder Affairs (Council on Aging) and its contracted Outreach Programs.
- The Division of Elder Affairs notes however it is governed by the Council on Aging Privacy Law, M.G. L.c. 40,s8B(St2002, c41). It is noted that, **“there is nothing in the COA Privacy Law that prevents anyone or any municipal authority including police, fire and rescue/EMT personnel from communicating to the COA”**.



**A conversation with Melanie Lachman, LCSW, UPSLIDE Program Coordinator, Tallahassee Senior Center and Foundation, FL Beating the Blues** During pre-pandemic times, we had over 180 programs and activities and about 500 individuals visit daily. And we have 13 outreach sites because it gets rural really, fast.

**UPSLIDE (Utilizing and Promoting Social Engagement for Loneliness, Isolation and Depression in the Elderly) Program** - UPSLIDE serves people age 50 and older. At this time, UPSLIDE offers individual counseling by phone and video conferencing; virtual Friends Connection meetings allow social connection and support for participants; and a private Facebook page so that UPSLIDers can stay in touch with each other. Services are provided at no cost to participants, but donations accepted. UPSLIDE is sponsored by the Florida Blue Foundation and the Tallahassee Senior Center Foundation.

Prior to COVID, loneliness and isolation had been identified as a public health crisis. Individuals had approached staff saying that what was being offered is helpful, but they were still lonely, they asked "What can you do?" And so, the UPSLIDE program was developed from a three-year grant from the Florida Blue Foundation.

We are currently in the third year, but due to COVID, we've gotten an extension. We've also gotten some money from the FSU College of Medicine and some payroll protection money and all of this together has allowed us to extend through September of next year. And then, of course, we're going to start thinking about ways to keep this going. We also have backup support from the Tallahassee senior center and foundation

**In pre-COVID times**, one of the things we were able to do is assessment visits, to pair folks with activities and get them socially engaged. Going to people's homes also allowed me to hook people up with other resources, they might need. It's kind of difficult to Get more socially engaged if you can't pay your rent or you don't have a primary care physician or something like that. Providing people with resources and transportation is a big part of what we do as well.

**Now technology is the barrier.** We have volunteer and he will work with folks to help them get hooked up with zoom.

**We provide individual counseling.** It is me and a mental health counselor who do the bulk of the work. We have individual counseling at no cost which is an amazing thing to be able to offer. We work with folks who manage symptoms of depression to manage symptoms of anxiety to work with them if they're having any suicidal thoughts or thinking about harming themselves in any way. We've found many with histories of childhood trauma, so we also do a lot of trauma education.

We provide them with hope that things can get better and that their lives can change. We provide help so that they can find their purpose and their identity because, as you know, oftentimes that's something that folks have difficulty with.

The main thing that brings people to the UPSLIDE program is through our Friends Connection groups. We had six people that first day and within a month, we had to move to a bigger room within another month we had to split it into two groups. We've had to pivot to a virtual format. We don't have the same participation we used to, but we have gotten more new participants.

The Friends Connection is an instant community of support and it's wonderfully diverse, we'll have in the same room, someone in their 50s and someone in her 90s, some with intellectual disabilities and retired college professors, along with people from India, Spain, Egypt and Colombia, and it all works.

The first half of the Friends Connection meeting is a check in. That often takes half of the session. How's everybody doing? what's going on? good things and bad things, we celebrate, we hug, and then we transition into an activity.

Some of the activities we've done include a three-part social skills series, we play games, we had pet therapy via zoom with a pet therapy chicken. It's really anything that we think will get people talking and get people sharing and we include therapeutic stuff. Like the blob tree where there are these little figures, very amorphous figures in various emotional states and we ask, which one are you? and which one would you like to be?

We envisioned they would fall in love with the senior center and graduate out and start participating in center activities and programs, but they fell in love with each other and this became their community so we started UPSLIDE only trips and outings which we hope to resume.

Two good things that have happened since COVID was that we have seen a boost to our participation in the virtual Friends Connection groups, which was not expected. This summer, participation doubled during our monthly drive through lunches.

**Nursing Buddy Program** - The other good thing that's occurred is we've partnered with the FSU College of Nursing to start a Buddy Program. We are pairing our participants who are 50 and older with nursing students, hopefully for the entire two years of their nursing education. The nurses are going to learn bedside manner, they're going to learn the needs of older folks, and learn how to do medication reviews and medical histories and all those nursing things. Our participants will get regular contact with someone and hopefully develop meaningful intergenerational experiences and relationships.

And since technology is a barrier, either because people don't have devices or live in rural areas with no service or landlines. We've been able to get some loaner tablets. We're going to start trying to connect with some of the folks who used to be regular attendees.

**Brainstorming Session - Other creative ways to promote engagement:**

**Neighborly Notes (Wenham):**

People send notes to each other. They share fun stories, haikus or poetry or artwork. All ages participate. We try and pair them up. The idea of receiving something in the mail is just another avenue to connect to those who are isolated.

Elder Services of Worcester has a program that has worked to include letters with their home delivered meals. Older adults have appreciated the nice, friendly notes, and writers did not have to pay for postage.

**Sports Fanatics (Framingham)** We have a group called sports fanatics. They get together every Monday morning and talk about whatever sports are in season. It's been a little interesting this year with all the changes, but they are still talking about all the things that are going on sports related. It gets a good mix of both male and female in it. They also play some videos that includes highlights of the games. It's a good way for them to connect with each other. They are comfortable connecting with each other, despite maybe having different teams.

**Pen Pals from Ohio – try this idea in a large city –** One COA in the western part of Massachusetts was contacted by a Council on Aging from Ohio who wanted to start a pen pal program. They both loved the idea but couldn't get participants in their small towns.

**Small group dessert gatherings –** People are allowed in our center in groups of eight or nine and everyone must wear a mask. They come into the space one at a time for dessert and coffee. They are seated at least six feet apart with their own individual little snack tray. They have to keep their mask on except when they're eating and then they were escorted out one at a time. And of course, before and after the tables are all sterilized and cleaned. They love it. Another is planned in October.

**Programming transitioning from Zoom to Cable TV.** Norwell COA talked about using cable TV from the beginning of the pandemic. They had a chair yoga class that tried to use zoom, without success, so they reached out to their local cable company and taped three of our classes and have been having those broadcasts on TV. They have a set schedule of when programs will air. Cable access has been successful for many communities, but it really depends on how willing your local cable station is to work with you. Another session at the conference focused on this topic.

## Innovative Practices: Finding Community Resources to Support Senior Centers Initiatives

Here are a few of the creative community resources, organizations and businesses that the Norwell Council on Aging collaborated with during COVID-19.

### Local Businesses

- Hairdressers
  - Ambrosia Salon – we previously did dementia training for their staff after they had an issue with a client. During COVID, they provided dry shampoo & shampoo caps for a senior unable to get their hair washed while salons were closed. Hairdressers are also a good referral source too, since many women discuss family concerns with their hairdresser
- Restaurants/Breweries/Farms
- Burke's Alewerks - Local brewery that donated hand sanitizer to us to distribute to seniors in the community.
- Hornstra Farms - Donated perishable items nearing expiration, to distribute to those in need. Donated ice cream for grab & go lunches. Educated owners about COAs and how milkmen can help make referrals based on daily client contact.
- Kiss Flower Farms - Donated soups and jams
- Lobster Express - Donated chowder and lobster rolls for "Grab & Go." It was a way to support seniors, but also the local fisherman.
- Trattoria San Pietro - Donated 800 meals (100 for 8 weeks) for "Grab & Go" and food pantry families. Also donated packaging supplies for meals.
- Partnered with several other **local restaurants** to offer small group, on-site boxed lunches and periodic "Grab & Go" lunches. Helps us provide a meal program and also supports local businesses.

### Realtors

- Assistance with grocery shopping, food donations and referrals to other service businesses like tree removal and junk removal.
- Realtors are a great resource to refer individuals to COAs, as families are considering both buying and selling homes.
- One realtor was closing a storage unit and approached us about donating items that were used for staging homes.

### Car Repair Shops

- Joseph's Garage – Donated small spray bottles to distribute hand sanitizer. Also donated postage for card mailings. Owner runs the CERT team, so he is very familiar with COAs.
- Good referral for us especially if they are seeing patterns in accidents or concern about older drivers.

## Other Businesses

- Norwell Package & General Store - Donated 500 paper bags for packaging "Grab & Go" lunches, as well as cases of soda and water bottles.
- North River Party Rental - Donated folding chairs and other supplies for outdoor programming. Offered a deep discount on the purchased of a 20' x 30' tent.
- Curry Hardware - Donated 100 rolls of toilet paper and paper towels that were purchased anonymously by another small business owner. We shared with the Hanover and Weymouth COAs who were running food pantries. We distributed these items during mask pop-ups, food pantry and meals on wheels.
- Signet Electronics – Co-sponsoring our Veteran's Recognition Lunch. Historically, their staff volunteered to prepare and serve a meal at the center.
- Lunn Electric - Donated \$1,900 in grocery gift cards to support seniors in need.

## Civic Organizations

- Friends group
  - Purchased gift certificates to grocery stores
  - Paid postage for card mailings
  - Assisted with sponsoring some grab & go lunches
- Norwell Men's Club
  - Donated 1,000 surgical masks and held a pop-up mask distribution day at the senior center. Masks were distributed to 175 people that day and 400 people overall.
  - Assisted with grocery shopping, errands and trash removal.
- Norwell Women's Club
  - Coordinated sign up genius to collect and deliver snacks and fruit to supplement HDM and grab & go lunches for 3 months.
  - Made a donation to use as needed.
- Chamber of Commerce
  - Made a donation to use as needed.
- Garden Club
  - Helped with spring clean-up at the center and also updated seasonal flower boxes in our outdoor programming space.
- Faith Communities
  - Many have outreach or mission teams. Contacted us to donate masks, assist with shopping and any other needs.
- Civilian Emergency Response Team (CERT)
  - Assisted with weekly "Grab & Go" distribution and delivery for 16 weeks. Also helped with mini food pantry distribution at the senior center.
  - Filmed and/or edited fitness classes to air on cable TV and online

- Seniors Celebrating Seniors” Partnered to create the “video tribute to the Class of 2020
- Aired periodic video updates on the senior center.
- Norwell Emergency Management
  - Included regular updates from the senior center as part of daily reverse 9-1-1 calls.

## Schools

- Norwell Public Schools
- Food Services - provided fresh produce to distribute early on in COVID to seniors in need. Assisted with preparing 50 “Grab & Go” meals weekly, for 10 weeks. Purchased supplies to help us supplement Meals on Wheels, from March 23 to June 20.
- High School Volunteer Corp. - assisted with creating 600 greeting cards for a National Good Neighbor Day mailing.
- Administration - loaned us a fogger for our vehicles until they became available for purchase.
- Jazz Combo – students played an outdoor concert for senior housing.

## South Shore Vo Tech

The Culinary Arts Department donated 100 pounds of chicken and 30 dozen eggs upon closing the school. Items were distributed to seniors and Food Pantry families. They will be assisting with holiday “Grab & Go” lunch if restrictions permit.

## Senior Housing Communities

- Partnered to run pop-up masks distribution for residents or supplied masks to site managers to distribute.
- Residents in one community ran a food pantry collection.
- Another took over prepping our newsletter mailings.
- **Other Community Support**
- Families/individuals wrote notes or painted inspirational rocks to distribute to seniors.
- Received \$4,000 in gift cards donations to grocery stores, pharmacies, Amazon and other retailers. These were used to support seniors and families in need and supplement out meal programs
- Received \$7,000 in monetary donations to support seniors in need or assist where needed. This will also help with holiday lunches and support.
- Donated non-perishable and paper goods for food pantry
- Donated PPE supplies including masks, wipes and hand sanitizer.
- Assisted with food shopping and errands for homebound seniors
- Assisted with meal delivery
- Made and donated 900 fabric masks. One resident is a seamstress and made 500 by herself.

- “Seniors Celebrating Seniors” video tribute by older residents to the Class of 2020. This was done in partnership with local cable TV.

#### Best Practices to Keep in Mind

- Take the time to educate the public about what you do. Use as many outlets as you can; newsletters, social media, email, newspapers, local cable access, public meetings, face to face meetings, social gatherings, community events, etc. Social media has been a fantastic tool for us!
- Meet with different groups to better understand their mission. Find a common connection and brainstorm ways to create partnership opportunities to support the center in ways that are beneficial for you both.
- Be thoughtful about your “ask” and how it may impact the business or organization. For example, we partnered with local restaurants to offer “Grab & Go” Meals. We didn’t ask for donations, but in some cases they did donate or offer a discount. It was a win for everyone.
- Try to reciprocate. For example, participate in their events, have the Friends group make a small donation, help publicize events in your center, newsletter or social media.
- Thank you, thank you, thank you! Thank you and public recognition go a long way! We send handwritten thank you notes to everyone who has made a monetary or in-kind donation. For especially large donors, we send a follow up note to share how we’ve used a donation. We also use social media a lot. We make it a habit to thank and tag the business, person or organization, unless they prefer to be anonymous.

## **Strategies for Utilizing Volunteers**

(Held Monday, October 19, 2020)

Presenters: Kelly Mackay, Program Coordinator, Andover Council on Aging  
Ashley English, Volunteer Coordinator, Andover Council on Aging  
Christine Beatty, Beatty Endeavors, Madison Wisconsin, Self-Directed Teams

Andover Council on Aging Staff works together to ensure that there is plenty of opportunity for our volunteers to feel useful empowered and engaged with volunteering.

**English listening skills for Chinese speakers** is a popular program. It is run completely by two volunteers. We have a very large population of Chinese Americans, a lot of seniors that do not speak much English. Chinese is their first language and for many of them, their only language.

Two volunteers said, "We really want to do something about this so that they're able to understand. They may not be able to speak perfect English after this class, but we want them to be able to understand what's going on in the world around them."

The point of the class is for them to have a better grasp on understanding English. This sort of platform could be replicated for any language.

The program format includes:

- One volunteer is a Chinese native speaker and the other volunteers in English native speaker.
- The first class was focused on how get everyone on zoom.
- During the class, the English native speaker picks out short stories or short blurbs and says them very slowly and clearly and repeat themselves over and over again.
- And then the native Chinese speaker volunteer bridges the gap and then asks the participants what they were able to understand and what things they were not able to understand and try to figure out the gap.
- Words were able to be translated and what words were not able to be translated.
- COA staff run the zoom class and can watch the participants learn and witness those understanding something that they have been struggling with for so long.
- The volunteers make a slideshow for every class they take attendance for every class. Staff starts the zoom call.

The bi-weekly class is free and it has been a very successful class. They started with about 20 participants and now they are up to over 40 people.

## **Outdoor Adventure Groups**

Outdoor Adventure Group is run by volunteers. A lot of hours go into planning each hike.

The volunteer's roles include:



- The volunteers pick the hike, and then they test the hike by doing a pre-hike.
- The pre-hike is to ensure that the paths are well maintained and safe and that there are no obstructions.
- They also need to research the land and learn historical facts. During the hike they share that historical information.
- They also need to make sure that any hike they pick has enough parking spots for all the participants, because we cannot allow carpooling right now. (it is hard to find parking for 12 spaces)
- The volunteers also enforce that everyone wears their masks the entire time through the whole hike.

We started doing the outdoor adventure groups in August and those have been extremely successful. The hikes will continue until November, and then we will pause in December and wait till the spring.

### **Volunteer Attendance Takers**

While holding outdoor fitness classes it was a huge burden to go out to all the outdoor fitness classes and take attendance. We have volunteers going out and taking attendance for us. And that has been extremely helpful.

That volunteer also becomes a spokesperson for that fitness class communicating needs or issues to staff.

### **Group leaders Become Wellness Connectors**

Since we cannot hold group activities, like bridge, the leaders of those groups have taken on a new role. Those volunteers have been reaching out to their groups to make sure every single participant is doing okay. An informal wellness check in.

We also offer use our zoom platform if they would like to meet online.

### **Merrimack College Student Volunteers**

This group of student volunteers previously came to the center but now have switched gears. We worked closely with them to try to find creative ways to make the students still feel like they're giving the senior something and also trying to educate them along the way of what senior centers normally are and what they look like today.

During COVID they have been:

- making YouTube videos for us on different arts and crafts cooking. Like, How to Tie dye,
- helping to proofread the newsletters,
- helping to make flyers and
- helped by assisting on zoom calls.

### **Regular Volunteers**

We are slowly starting to incorporate volunteers back into our daily schedule. Many of our volunteers are in the higher risk category since they are over the age of 60. It has been beneficial to get them back into their volunteer roles for socialization. It is just as important for them to get back as it is for us to have the help.

### **Meals on Wheels Drivers**

This volunteer role has continued straight through the stay at home order. Meals on Wheels drivers were out there in March and April and are still out there, delivering meals.

Drivers are not able to go inside the home. They are just passing off the meal. They wear gloves and a mask.

### **Medical Transportation**

We've been able to also welcome back some of our medical transportation drivers their volunteers that use their own vehicles to take folks to and from their medical appointments, a curb to curb service that we've set up with added precautions.

Safety procedures include:

- The client who needs the transportation is required to remain in the backseat of the car, the volunteers use their own vehicles.
- They are both required to wear their mask for the duration of the ride. We do provide kits of PPE supplies. At this point, most people come prepared.
- we also provide hand sanitizer.
- The afternoon before the ride is to take place, we reach out to both the driver and the passenger to go through a health screening. It includes questions like, in the last 24 hours have you had a temperature? Have you experienced any new symptoms that can be related? Have you traveled? Have you been in close contact with anyone who has been ill?

### **Remote Volunteer Opportunities**

Here in Andover we use the MySeniorCenter database which is cloud based. Some volunteers can help us with some data entry from home on their home computers which has been very helpful.

### **Friendly Informational Calls**

Some of our volunteers make friendly calls, they can reach out to the community to share information on flu clinics or just regular check-ins with some people that might be higher risk or more isolated.

### **Stuffing Envelopes at Home**

We do have some short-term projects like stuffing envelopes and little things they can help with at home. It makes a big difference to us.

### **Front Desk Volunteers**

We have just welcomed back some of our front desk volunteers to answer the phones, which has been huge help for us.

### **Intergenerational Opportunities.**

### **Shoveling Program**

We do have a snow shoveling program where students and their families buddy up with a senior in their neighborhood to help shovel pathways and things, make sure they have a safe way in and out so that they can safely allow their meals on wheels driver or home health aide to get to the door.

### **High School Pen Pal Program**

Ashley English: And then the health and humanity club at the local high school has started a pen pal program with our social day program senior connections. They use different prompts like, what was your favorite childhood memory? What brought you to this city? and over time, through these letters they really get to know each other. Eventually when possible, we plan to have an event so they could meet in person.

### **Discovery Center for Civic Engagement**

It is an opportunity for newly retired folks to engage in interactive workshops to help bridge the gap between working life and retirement. To learn about volunteer opportunities in their community and find a good match for them.

### **SELF DIRECTED VOLUNTEER TEAMS**

**Presenter: Christine Beatty, Beatty Endeavors, Madison Wisconsin**

This “transformative” MODEL, SYSTEM and PROCESS is designed to take your organization’s performance to a new level. The SDV Network is a resource to YOU to find information on this model. Our website is [www.sdvnetwork.com](http://www.sdvnetwork.com).

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### **WHAT IS A SDV TEAM?**

*“A Self-Directed Volunteer Team (SDV) is an intentionally formed multi-skilled group of volunteers who share responsibilities for addressing a community problem or need. Through time and with organizational support, the team is trained and empowered to take full responsibility for its own functioning and for achieving its planned outcomes.”*

### **REVIEW THE CURRENT SITUATION**

- Nonprofits facing a shortage of resources and capacity
- Mismatch between engagement of volunteers and the motivation of experienced, skilled folks who wish to serve in meaningful ways
- Issues and challenges within agencies and communities remain unaddressed
- Potential volunteers are not utilized effectively

### **SDVT SUCCESS FACTORS**

**Readiness Assessment;** takes a realistic look at how well your agency will accommodate SDVTs in the form of a 5-7-minute survey to your stakeholders with a follow-up report.

**Issue Brief;** provides information and actions taken on the community problem or need, and explains its impact and importance

**Project Plan;** a team generated plan that details what they will do to address the issue

**The Charter;** an agreement between the volunteer team and the organization that identifies their working relationships

**The Team;** targeted recruitment strategies of people who are interested (passionate?) and bring skills to the issue. Intergenerational, high-skilled, working at their own direction.

**Implementation;** team exercises and training which explore the issue, group processes and enhance team cohesion.

**Evaluation;** check points and discussion which measure the team's progress, seek additional expertise and monitor the project plan.

**Recognition and Celebration;** ALWAYS and in new ways; news releases on team and project success, press conferences, gas, gift or restaurant cards,

### **REWARDS**

Trained and satisfied volunteers want to do MORE; many ask for another project or other leadership roles. RETENTION of quality and trained individuals

Volunteers monitor their own functioning; less scrambling for substitutes of continuous staff supervision over time.

Organizations are enabled to solve community and agency issues without additional demands upon staff.

Volunteers appreciate a limited commitment (6-9 months) and one that meets their schedules (ie, evening, weekends) and enjoy meeting those who share their interests.

Agency becomes known for innovation and is a leader in civic engagement.

Establishes a new way of working collaboratively with the human capital within our communities and agencies.

Important work once left on the sidelines can be accomplished.

Can increase community partners, volunteers and resources

### **SDV RESOURCES**

Visit [www.sdvnetwork.com](http://www.sdvnetwork.com) for a free introductory tutorial on Self Directed Volunteer Teams. See the website for case studies, blog, and additional information.

**Contact:** Christine Beatty, Self-Directed Volunteer Network, [christinesdvnetwork.com](http://christinesdvnetwork.com), 608-273-9492

## **Discussion**

### **Volunteer Shoppers**

You might consider going outside your existing pool of volunteers and doing some targeted recruitment. Hand out a handbill or approach individuals at the grocery store who can carry groceries and ask individuals if they would like to be involved and volunteer. And include a screening process.

Also reach out to the families of the people you serve.

### **Volunteer Liability Waivers**

Are you having volunteers sign a liability waiver do their risk of exposure to COVID? Most thought that a standard liability waiver would be appropriate, but you could ask your governance if anything additional is needed.

**Unsolved Issue: Finding a way to use senior tax workout hours.** They have increased hours, but we are only able to use a portion. Many do not have computer skills and it is difficult to include these volunteers with staff and maintain social distancing.

### **Volunteers Training Others to Use Zoom**

Both Sudbury and Framingham have volunteers training people to use zoom. They have a regular group of tech volunteers each month. They help people with their computers by solving problems with them. In some cases, they train by phone. They'll walk a person through or the volunteer will have zoom open on their screen and they'll take the person through it, explaining as they go along, (ex. so you should be seeing this now and you want to click on this icon) They review step by step.

### **Technology Survey**

Westport COA received a Title III grant to do a technology survey of the folks 60 to 80-year-old in town to see what they needed. We did not know what people had or did not have. The survey was completed on September 30, 2020. We sent out 3153 surveys to households, we got back almost 800.

One of the reasons for our great response rate is that we added a little red note on the back of the envelope that said if you return this by September 15th you'll be put in for a drawing for \$100 gift card at the local grocery store. That really work because we had people dropping them off and mailing them in.

We ended up getting 17 people who said they wanted to volunteer and in different capacities. Some knew banking, some with medical expertise, some could help with shopping or knew how to use zoom. Some just offered to help.

We now are working on the task of getting in touch with all of the volunteers. One project might be using the phone to train individuals on how to use zoom meetings. Or even include one on one training at our site. We are currently offering one-on-one services. We offered tax aid through July and we have held three flu clinics where 60 people attended. We have individual appointments, and we make sure that we sanitize in between appointments.

See friendly connections volunteer program held on Thursday during the conference.

On site share this closing note: I think what I'd like to do is pair what was said initially - And that's really ***focusing on retention by utilizing the expertise of the volunteers, that's what's really helped us!***

## **Providing Nutrition During COVID**

How the Chicopee Council on Aging Switched Gears to Meet the Nutrition & Safety Needs of Their Older Adults During a Pandemic through the RiverMills Center.

### **A Small Start**

- Chicopee COA's RiverMills Center closed its doors due to COVID-19 on March 16<sup>th</sup>. On April 13<sup>th</sup>, the COA began offering curbside meal pickups on Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays.
- Our goal was to offer a hot meal that complemented the Meals on Wheels program but didn't interfere with the Meals on Wheels delivery schedule. Our first dinner featuring Salisbury steak lured in 24 customers. A milk, fruit and dessert were included. We priced the meals at \$2 and allotted a pickup time of between 1:30 and 3:30 p.m.
- Previous to COVID-19, the COA was a congregate meal site through WestMass Elder Care, serving 65-110 meals daily. The COA's café was also serving about 30 meals daily.

### **All Hands-on Deck**

- At this point, the COA was still operating with a reduced staff working staggered days. Full staffing wouldn't return until June 1<sup>st</sup>. This meant all hands-on deck.
- Anyone who didn't have ServSafe training took the Food Handler course or the abbreviated COVID-19 Food Safety program. The focus was now on cooking. The executive director, assistant director, program coordinator, café assistants, custodians, etc. all pitched in.

### **Word Gets Out**

- Soon enough, we weren't just cooking two dozen meals. The numbers started creeping up to 50 per day, then 100, then 150. Eventually we start capping at 250. On October 2<sup>nd</sup> we had to cap a turkey dinner at 300. Each week we offer a free weekend meal on Friday of hot dogs & beans.
- When we find out the School Department's Tuesday/Thursday Senior Lunch Program is ending, we expand our meal offerings to 5 days a week on August 24<sup>th</sup> and increase our price from \$2 to \$3. The pickup time is changed to 1-3 because people started lining up at noon.
- We create a weekly meal spreadsheet with regular customers and room to add new meal participants that makes it easy to keep track of meal numbers and orders.

### **Funding Considerations**

- Early in May, the Chicopee Community Development Department (CDD) becomes aware of the COA's meal program and gives the COA \$25,000 in Community Development Block Grant funds toward the program. At the end of September, the CDD checks in on how we're doing and grants us \$5,500 a month through June 2021.

- In July, the COA, through its non-profit Friends' group, applies for a \$25,000 Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts COVID-19 Stabilization Grant and is awarded the full amount. The grant must be spent by the end of September. No problem there!

#### **Storage Issues**

- Ordering large quantities of food, both frozen and fresh, creates a storage problem. The COA is not equipped with enough refrigerator or freezer space. Finding refrigeration for 35 cases of milk weekly is proving to be a challenge.
- The COA applies for a FY21 Food Security Infrastructure Grant through the state asking for funding to purchase a freezer, refrigerator and a meat slicer. We're still waiting to hear back. In the meantime, the COA is able to purchase a chest freezer through the city with federal CARES Act funds.

#### **Menu Planning/Ordering/Inventory**

- The COA Assistant Director, formerly the café supervisor, takes over menu planning, ordering and inventory. The Executive Director prices out food items based on ounces and cost, etc. to try and get spending down. The COA gets deliveries from Performance Food Group every Tuesday, with a Thursday back-up delivery option.
- The biggest challenge – figuring out over time how much to order so we're not way over or under on product. Six months in, and it's still a learning curve. Still have to run out to Stop & Shop at the last minute, but there's now an acceptance that that will happen. Go with the flow and don't get stressed! (Repeat after me!)

#### **Making it Fun**

- While providing nutrition and keeping older adults out of the supermarkets is the focus of the curbside meal program, the two hours spent "serving" the meals gives the COA staff and the older adults a chance to see each other. We miss them, and they miss us. It's become a social time for all of us.
- Music, special theme days, sponsorship days w/ special guests

#### **Transitioning into Winter**

- The COA is preparing for winter and what that will mean for staff and older adults. On snowy days, meals will be canceled, and older adults have been advised to watch the news and check out the COA website and Facebook pages for cancellations.
- Outdoor heaters are being ordered to keep staff warm. A heated tent is also being considered.
- Soups will be featured more often on the menu, which is handed out each Monday, and is posted on our website and Facebook pages.

#### **Looking Toward 2021**

- No one knows what the timeline for this virus is. The COA will continue to serve curbside meals until the congregate meal site reopens at RiverMills Center.
- Switching gears wasn't easy, but the Chicopee COA is blessed with a staff that came together, changed its focus, and is making the best of a challenging situation. We won't be caterers forever!



## **Who Knew?! Getting the COA Message Out There**

MCOA Annual Conference

October 21, 2020

**Facilitator:** Tina Gorman, Executive Director, Westfield Council On Aging  
45 Noble Street, Westfield, MA 01085  
(413) 562-6435 [t.gorman@cityofwestfield.org](mailto:t.gorman@cityofwestfield.org)

### **Be Proactive!**

- It's up to **you** to let your community know about your COA's services and programs
- Don't wait for people, especially your local legislators, to ask

Keeping your local officials informed

- First and Foremost: Understand your local government and how it works
  - o Mayor
  - o City or Town Council
  - o Town Manager or Administrator
  - o Board of Selectmen
  - o Key Department Heads

Keeping your Boards informed

- COA Board, Friends Board

### **Methods of Relaying Information**

#### **E-Mail**

- The greatest advantage is that you can reach a large number of people at once
- Monthly newsletter as an attachment
- In the body of the e-mail, send a bulleted list of COA updates
- Include:
  - o Alternative programming and services during the pandemic
  - o Obstacles you're encountering (limited staffing because of furloughs or layoffs, impending inclement weather for curbside meals, clients who are not tech savvy...)
  - o Areas of concern (older adults with dementia – isolation, caregiver burnout; those in danger of eviction; those with mental health challenges)
  - o Successful special events – attach a few photos if you took some. Thank those who made the event possible – other City or Town departments, volunteers, local organizations... and include those individuals in your e-mail.
    - Local officials love partnerships and collaborations
    - It shows that you're stretching available resources
- Even if your local officials don't read every word of the e-mail, they have it to refer to if they receive a call from a constituent

- Let them know that you're sending updates so that they are up to speed on the services and programs available to their older constituents

#### Local newspaper

- An excellent resource for helping you to get your message across
  - o Older adults still read the newspaper
- It may be a daily paper or a weekly town paper
- Get to know the owner, editor, reporters
  - o Include the editor in your monthly newsletter e-mail updates (with your newsletter as an attachment)
    - That will help to generate story ideas for the editor/reporter
  - o Send photos – don't wait for a photographer
  - o Send ideas for stories: feel good story that can be used as a filler or time-sensitive story
- Respond to requests for information as soon as possible
  - o Reporters have deadlines
- You want to become a reliable and trusted resource
  - o You want them to think of you whenever anything comes up in your town that involves older adults
- When interacting with a reporter, utilize e-mail whenever possible
  - o Your quotes will be accurate
  - o If you're a strong writer, the editor will seek you out for stories
- Compliment the media when they do an accurate, thorough story or positive editorial about a priority issue of yours or a service that you're providing
  - Send a quick thank you e-mail or call the reporter

**\*\* All forms of media are looking for 'feel good' stories. You probably have an endless supply. It's up to you to get the word out. Don't wait for the powers that be to ask.**

**\*\* Remember that media often requires immediate action**

#### **Miscellaneous (But Important) Thoughts:**

- When you're getting the word out to the community, put a human face on your COA clients and the services that you provide. It makes what you're doing relatable.
- Curbside lunches offer a wonderful opportunity to pass out flyers of all kinds. When you hand out your newsletters, ask you lunch participants if they would like extras for friends, neighbors, and relatives. You might be surprised at the number who will want them for distribution.
- Ask your local legislators to help with special events
  - o Curbside meals, parades, home delivered meals, Brown Bag

- They'll gain a greater appreciation for what you do and who you serve. They'll also have a greater respect for you and your staff.
- When your participants compliment the job that you and your staff are doing, refer them to the Mayor's office. Most will gladly make a phone call or send an e-mail.

#### **Local cable television**

- Some COAs are broadcasting their own local cable shows
  - Fitness, educational
  - Announcements

#### **Website, Facebook**

- These methods will reach some of your seniors as well as their family members

#### **Example of Bulleted email from Westfield COA/Senior Center that highlights the main items found in the accompanying newsletter:**

Attached please find a copy of the Westfield Council On Aging/Senior Center **September Voice of Experience** newsletter and a corresponding crossword puzzle. Below is a brief update.

- We continue to offer at least one special curbside meal event each month. On August 27, we held our *Wacky, Tacky Curbside Summertime Smash*. The hit of the day was dessert... we provided a small can of root beer, a straw, and a cup with lid of vanilla ice cream for a 'make-it-at-home-yourself root beer float. One of the seniors confided, "I really shouldn't have the ice cream, but I've been looking forward to this root beer float for a week!" A 'feel good' and 'have fun' event during COVID. VOE, photos, pages 4 & 5

- In September, we'll be partnering with the **Westfield Police Department** and **Westfield Police Association** for our second annual '**Cops for a Cause**' **Chili Luncheon**. This is a fundraiser to benefit our local Alzheimer's Association. Of course this year we'll be doing it curbside. Last year's event was such a smashing success that the police, COA staff, and seniors decided to hold it annually. Chief Valliere, Captain McCabe, Captain Pitoniak, Kevin Bard, and Mark Carboneau have enthusiastically supported this event. I think that it is especially important during these turbulent times so shine a positive light on our dedicated police officers. With Mark Carboneau cooking up the chili and Joann Boucher, our Food Services Coordinator, preparing the side dishes and dessert, we are going all out for this event and capping it at 200 participants. That's 50 people more than our largest number to date. We anticipate a sellout crowd. VOE page 1

- This month's ***Council On Aging Presents*** series, hosted by **Harry Rock** on WSKB and cable Channel 15 will coincide with our *Cops for a Cause* luncheon. **Beth Cardillo**, Executive Director of Armbrook Village, will discuss dementia, Alzheimer's disease, and the normal aging process. VOE page 3
- We are partnering with the **Health Department** to do this year's **Flu Clinic** at the Senior Center as a drive-through. Thanks to Deb Mulvenna and Joe Rouse for working closely on this important service for Westfield's older adults. The clinic will take place in early October, but signups and registration must be done in September. VOE page 1
- **Media Systems Specialist, Pete Cowles**, continues to go above and beyond in assisting with programming for our seniors. For those who are computer savvy and have internet access, Pete has bundled all of our cable Channel 15 educational and fitness programming in one place on **YouTube**. VOE page 3
- Our **Senior Benefits Coordinator, Karen Noblit**, is preparing for this year's Medicare open enrollment, which begins on October 15 and runs through early December. She has developed a detailed process for telephone consultations. With the help of the **City Clerk's office**, we are researching putting a drop box near the front door so that seniors can safely and conveniently get medical and financial documents to Karen. VOE page 7
- The COA staff has now done more than 1,300 telephone reassurance calls. We have refined the recording process in order to track those about whom we are most concerned. We have also established a list of those who are called weekly. That list continues to grow. Referrals are made from a variety of sources including COA staff, family members, friends and neighbors, social service agencies, and Westfield Veterans Services.

Thank you all for your continued support as we alter services and programs to meet the diverse needs of the City's older adults during these unprecedented times.

\*\*Enjoy the attached crossword puzzle. I made one for the seniors for the June edition and they thoroughly enjoyed reading the newsletter to solve the clues.

Stay physically distant, but socially connected!

Tina