

WESTFORD COUNCIL ON AGING NEWSLETTER APRIL 2020

OUR MISSION: The Council on Aging promotes the physical, emotional, and economic well-being of aging adults and their engagement in all realms of community life.

Hours : Monday – Friday 8am – 4pm

20 Pleasant St., Westford, MA 978 - 692 - 5523 www.westfordma.gov/coa

To stay connected with updated COVID-19 information, please check www.westfordma.gov/coa and www.westfordma.gov/covid-19

Dear Friends,

As you all are aware, the Cameron is closed to the public due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but your staff is working in two teams to make sure the center is covered Monday-Friday from 8AM-4PM. We are working alternating days at the center and remotely from home. This schedule certainly isn't our preference but is necessary to ensure the continuity of crucial service delivery and programs.

Please know a decision to close the Cameron is not taken lightly, and we understand its importance to all our center friends who attend daily for activities, enrichment programs and the opportunity to socialize with friends.

We are thankful for the Town's decision to allow us to continue vital services and programs during this time. Currently, we do not have a date to re-open, but we are excited to offer some programming with our partnership with Westford Cable Access Television (WCAT), with financial support from the Friends of the Cameron. So, please read your newsletter to learn more about how your center staff is here to help you navigate during these trying and perhaps lonely times.

Remember this is a great time to check in with friends, neighbors, get outside and enjoy the air, research, walk a Westford trail that perhaps you have not tried before, or simply plant seeds in a windowsill garden (perhaps coleus, cress seeds, or even fresh herbs).

We miss and think of you all each day,

Jennifer



Cameron rolls out Virtual Fitness Classes

A special thanks to the **Friends of the Cameron, WCAT** and **Katie Russell** for helping provide the below exercise class schedule:

Zumba with Carol Wing on Mondays at 9AM

Chair Movement with Carol Wing Wednesday 9AM

Tai Chi with Leslie Matthews on Friday 9AM

Please note that you are exercising of your own freewill and assume all risks associated with participating in classes. To participate in above listed classes please go to Comcast-Channel 8 or Verizon-Channel 35 at listed times above. For more information on channel programming go to Westford programming at westfordcat.org.

Photo: Katie bringing this new programming option to the Center.



We Are Here For YOU!

Please know that although the Westford Senior Center is closed to the public to support “social distancing”, our staff is still available daily to help.



We have the following **ESSENTIAL** services in place:

Social Services by phone, emails and only critical home visits.

Grocery shopping and non controlled prescription delivery are available for seniors or people with health conditions that make shopping more risky. This service is provided by the Cameron and Merrimack Valley Reserve Corps volunteers. For more info. please call Alison Christopher, Town Social Worker at 978-399-2325 or Annette Cerullo, Outreach Coordinator at 978-399-2326.

SHINE – Health Insurance Assistance (phone consultation).

Meals on Wheels Deliveries available, call ESMV to set up service at 1-800-892-0890.

Transportation to medical appointments, grocery shopping, pharmacy and other essential needs. Vans are limited to 2 riders at a time to ensure social distancing. Dispatcher is screening out riders for COVID-19 symptoms.

Weekly “friendly checkins” by phone. If interested in receiving this service, please call the number below to sign up.

Medical Equipment Loaning: equipment will be left outdoors for pickup.

Westford Food Pantry – prebagged food will be given at the Cameron entry door Wednesdays 6:00-8:00 pm and Fridays 9:00-11:00 am. Please check the Westford Food Pantry website for updates. www.westfordfoodpantry.org For a prepacked delivered bag please contact Social Services at the number below.

Simply call the Cameron at 978-692-5523 or check our website for updates. www.westfordma.gov/coa

Social Service Resources Financial Relief During COVID-19

For additional information on COVID-19, including town news and other resources to support residents, visit www.westfordma.gov

Also please be aware that this is a quickly evolving situation and you are encouraged to visit companies' and agencies' websites or contact them directly with specific questions.

Due to high call volumes and demand, it is recommended that you visit websites for information prior to emailing or calling.

Comprehensive Resources

Call 211 for statewide information and resources related to Covid-19, including accessing flexible funds through United Way Covid-19 Family Support Fund.

Community Teamwork, Inc.-currently on Email/Phone service only-8:30-5 Monday through Friday-call 978-654-5607 for the Resource Center

Utilities (gas, electric, phone, cable, internet, etc.):

Currently the Department of Public Utilities has prohibited electric and gas companies from making shut-off determinations until the state of emergency is lifted or until further notice from DPU. This seems to apply even to customers who were not previously identified as low income. Please call or visit your providers' websites to stay informed. If questions arise call Alison Christopher at 978-399-2325 and she will reach out to the Utility Advocacy Group.

Fuel Assistance is accepting applications for low-income households through at least April 30. Please call Alison or Annette if you need to apply and we will inform of when applications may be taken at Community Teamwork (978-459-6161) or in our offices.

Food:

Maintain social distancing by exploring grocery and prescription delivery options. Note that many local businesses are reducing or eliminating fees during this time. The Senior Center is offering to take shopping lists and forward lists to Merrimack Valley Reserve Corps volunteers to shop for seniors or people with health conditions that make shopping more risky.

Homebound seniors (60+) can temporarily request Meals on Wheels. If you are interested in this, please call 800-892-0890 to inquire with Elder Services of Merrimack Valley or call Alison or Annette. These meals are billed monthly and are very inexpensive/free to those who can't pay.

Westford Food Pantry is open Wednesdays from 6-8 pm and Fridays from 9-11 am, passing out pre-made bags outside the building. Please visit their website at westfordfoodpantry.org for updates.

Seoul Kitchen has offered to deliver food free of charge to seniors or residents in need.

For those in need, including those who may have changes in eligibility due to lost wages, consider applying for:

Food Stamps/SNAP-application and eligibility guidelines can be found on the Massachusetts DTA website. If you have questions call Alison or Annette at 978-399-2325 or 978-399-2326.

Women, Infants and Children (WIC)-Call Community Teamwork. They are currently working by phone and email only. They are striving to return voicemails within 2 hours. For WIC, call 978-454-6397.

Call Project Bread Food Source Hotline re: other local food resources and pantries or for questions about SNAP-800-645-8333.

Time Out of Work: This is a constantly evolving situation. Keep informed of state and federal guidelines and legislative changes.

If you need to be out of work due to illness, risk of illness to yourself or family, etc., consider the following:

Talk to your employer about using paid time off

Talk to your employer about other creative approaches, such as working remotely or adapting approach to job responsibility if applicable

Understand your short-term disability policy

Ask your employer about other supports available

If your job offers it, consult the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for free confidential supports, including but not limited to counseling, legal advice and other resources.

For seniors or low-income individuals with questions about legal rights, Northeast Legal Aid is providing service by pre-arranged appointment only. To apply for assistance please call Monday through Friday 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at 978-458-1465.

Visit the Department of Labor website for information on your rights and on the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

For information on Federal changes to employment insurance coverage during COVID-19, visit the Department of Labor website and also the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development for the impact of federal changes on state law.

Assistance Paying Bills:

St. Vincent de Paul is a Catholic organization that supports people in need of emergency financial support, regardless of their religious beliefs. They are currently only meeting with emergency cases to protect their volunteers, but they can speak with you by phone to determine your level of need and create a plan on when they can meet with you/interim assistance they can provide. Call and leave your name and number at 978-692-6353 x134.

Community Teamwork in Lowell has limited funding to help prevent housing loss during times of financial crisis, including RAFT funding. Their Housing Consumer Education Center can also answer questions about housing concerns. Currently Community Teamwork is working by phone and email only. They have set up a call system for each department and are striving to return messages within 2 hours. For the Housing or Resource Center call 978-654-5607.

Seniors may call Alison or Annette and inquire about applying for assistance through the Friends Emergency Fund.

IF YOU JUST NEED TO BRAINSTORM OR NEED OTHER ASSISTANCE OR SUPPORT, PLEASE CALL ALISON CHRISTOPHER, LICSW AT 978-399-2325 OR ANNETTE CERULLO, LSW AT 978-399-2326.



Seeking Stitchers to Sew Face Masks

There currently exists a severe shortage of PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), especially N95 and surgical masks. Many of you might have seen the story about volunteers who recently made over 2000 cloth masks for health professionals in Georgia. Let's do this in Westford for our medical personnel also!

There are multiple tutorial videos available; simply search "how to sew face mask" in Google or on YouTube. Please use 100% cotton because flannel is too warm. Once masks are made, MRC volunteers will pick them up and deliver them to local facilities. There will be no physical contact in the exchange.

This message is coming to you on behalf of Sandy Collins RN, who was both Director of our Merrimack Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) unit and of the Westford Health Department for many years. She is working in collaboration with Nancy Burns, the current director of the local MRC unit.

VERY IMPORTANT: If you are interested in sewing, email Sandy at scollinsphn01@gmail.com and put **MASK** in the SUBJECT LINE. Thank you for your willingness to help during this pandemic.

Here is a link for instructions:

<https://psjh.blob.core.windows.net/covid/Instructions%20Community%20Mask.pdf>

Update: W.A Track is open!

Please Practice Social Distancing! Fields closed to organized activities. Please observe social distancing practices while in use. Walking the track is fine. No pick-up football games, soccer games, ultimate frisbee etc.

Thank you, Paul Fox, Facilities Director



Covid-19 and Mental Health Resources

In any life-threatening emergency, call 911.

The Town Social Worker, Alison Christopher LICSW, is available M-F 8-4 for non-emergency phone consultation. 978399-2325

For an urgent mental health issue, you may also call the Area Behavioral Health Mobile Crisis Team 24/7 at 877-382-1609.

Mass 211-Call2Talk-24/7 helpline-508-532-2255

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)-Disaster Distress Helpline 24/7-800-985-5990

Samaritans-24/7 Helpline-877-870-4673

National Domestic Violence Hotline-24/7 crisis hotline-800-799-7233

Massachusetts Safelink Domestic Violence Hotline 24/7 crisis hotline-877-785-2020

William James Interface-M-F 9-5-Referral/connection to mental health professionals for Westford residents-888-244-6843



Recipes

White Bean & Pumpkin Soup provided by Chris Kuntz, Friends Board Member

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 Tbs olive oil | |
| 1 onion, chopped | |
| 1 can pumpkin (<u>not</u> pie filling) | ¼ teas oregano |
| 1 can white beans, rinsed & drained | 2-3 cups chicken broth (or vegetable stock) |
| | salt, pepper (optional) |
| | grated cheese (optional) |

Heat olive oil in pot over medium heat. Add onion and cook until tender, about 5 mins. Add pumpkin, beans, oregano and broth. Cover and simmer 15 mins. Mash soup; or process in small batches in a blender or food processor. Add blended soup back to pot and reheat. Season, to taste, with salt & pepper (optional). Serve with grated cheese (if desired) sprinkled on top.

Vegetarian Chili Mac provided by Susanne Duato, THRIVE7 Instructor

This One Pot Vegetarian Chili Mac is a family-friendly dinner that you can have on your table with very little time and effort! You will love this cheesy, spicy skillet meal!

Prep Time:10 mins Cook time:20 mins Total Time:30 mins Calories:497kca

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 1 small onion chopped | 14.5 ounce can Hunt's diced tomatoes |
| 1 bell pepper any color chopped | 10 ounce can RO*TEL diced tomatoes & green chilies* |
| 2 medium carrots sliced | 8 ounces elbow pasta - I used whole wheat |
| 1 tablespoon olive oil | 15 ounce can black beans rinsed and drained |
| 3 cloves garlic sliced or diced | 15 ounce can kidney beans rinsed and drained |
| 1 tablespoon chili powder | 2 cups water |
| 2 teaspoons cumin | 2 cups grated cheddar and/or Monterey jack cheese |
| ½ teaspoon salt | 3 green onions chopped |

Heat olive oil in pot over medium heat. Add onion, pepper, carrots, and garlic and cook until tender, about 5 mins. Add spices, tomatoes, pasta and water. Cover and simmer 10 mins. Check pasta for doneness. Add beans and simmer until warmed (5 minutes). Add cheese, and season, to taste, with salt & pepper (optional). Top with green onions.

While Away From the Cameron To Do List Ideas: (optional)

Cleaning and organization:

Reorganize your cabinets to make them more accessible
Clean out your closets and dressers—donate anything you haven't worn in a year
On a nice sunny, warm day, open your windows to “clean” your home with fresh air!
If you can, clean indoor and outdoor windows
Clean the refrigerator and freezer—you might find some ingredients for a nice meal!
Go through your old photographs—make albums for each child/grandchild.

Indoor/Outdoor activities:

Explore the town by viewing a trail listing with details about each including distance found at <https://westfordconservationtrust.org/> under Trails and Land-scroll down to Properties and view trail listings—**maintain social distancing guidelines**—if a trail appears to be crowded, try another
Use your mind by doing a Sudoku, jigsaw puzzle (we can deliver), start a new drawing or painting or simply relax your mind with a coloring book (we'd love to share drawings and paintings in our next newsletter)
Read that book! Reading can provide a much-needed escape from the news!
Low impact chair exercises using canned goods or bottles of water
Walk a little extra each day—again, **maintain social distancing guidelines**.
Put on some music and dance!

Stay Connected:

Write a card or letter to a friend or family member
Get started early on writing those important summer camp letters/care packages to your grandchildren
Check on a Cameron friend, neighbor and loved ones since this is such an isolating time
Call your friends, family, neighbors! We all need to hear a friendly voice. Use FaceTime, Skype, or Zoom so you can have video chats. (If you don't know what this means, ask your children or grandchildren to set it up for you on your computer, tablet, or smart phone!)

Overall, taking this unexpected time to keep our bodies and minds active and healthy is important. There is a lot of anxiety-producing news and unknowns as we grapple with this virus.

Above all, stay home, stay safe, and stay healthy!

Just think, when this is all over you'll feel more organized, stronger, healthier and getting back into your wonderful routine you will be ready and feeling an even more improved you!



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Friends Corner

FRIENDS ANNUAL MEETING

Thursday, May 14, at 10 am, Computer Room
TENTATIVE BASED ON GROUP RESTRICTIONS

All Friends members are invited to attend the 2020 Annual Meeting of the Friends, Thursday, May 14, at 10 a.m., to help shape the future directions for the organization. We encourage everyone to come, ask questions, and share your input and views. We'll elect new board members and discuss plans for the coming year.

Any Friends member may run for office...why not you? Or volunteer to be on a committee. We can use your talents, knowledge and skills! The Friends Need You!

SAVE THE DATE – FUN AUCTION & CASUAL DINNER

Tuesday, May 26, at 5:30 pm
TENTATIVE BASED ON GROUP RESTRICTIONS

Come join us for a fun-filled evening of laughs, along with dinner. Sit with your pals, bid low, bid high – you, too, could come away with some real treasures. Come share your skills and try-out as auctioneer for an item or two! Bring cash (in case you win!). Bound to be a fun evening! Cost: \$4, includes light dinner.

WANTED!

VOLUNTEERS IN SEVERAL AREAS

- Participate in planning new fun social activities
- Help us start an eBay store
- Handymen or women willing to start-up a “fix-it” service for easy repairs
- Sort clothing & merchandise for Trudy's
- Help recruit corporate sponsorships or donations from local businesses
- New ideas welcomed – YOU can make a difference!

Trudy's cannot accept donations at this time—when the Center is open, we'll be up and running! Thanks for your generosity and understanding.



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Wonder How to Get Your Cameron News?

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- If you prefer receiving a newsletter via email, please go to town website and click on "Notify Me" and type in your email to sign in. Under "Agenda Center" Click on Council on Aging
- If you would like to be mailed a monthly newsletter for an annual cost of \$12 please send a check made out to the Town of Westford and mail to: Cameron Senior Center- 20 Pleasant, Westford, MA., 01886 or stop in at the center.
- Find our Facebook Page at facebook.com/CameronSeniorCenter/

Westford Food Pantry

If you are interested in helping 2-3 hours per month, please contact Lynn Roderick, Volunteer Coordinator for further information
lynnmroderick@aol.com

Hours

Westford Community Food Pantry, located on the first floor at Cameron, is staffed by volunteers.

APRILFOOD PANTRY HOURS:

- Wednesdays: April 1, 8, 15, 22, 29** from 6—8 pm
• **Fridays: April 3, 10, 17, 24** from 9:00 - 11:00 am

ALL BOARD MEETINGS POSTPONED

COUNCIL ON AGING STAFF

Jennifer Claro, Director of Elder Services
Alison Christopher, LICSW / Social Worker
Annette Cerullo, LSW /Outreach Coordinator
Claire France, Records Supervisor
Charles Dutton, Transportation Dispatch
Christopher Mitchell, Maintenance Supervisor
Katherine Russell, Senior Assistant
Martha Brockway, Senior Assistant
Edna MacNeil, Front Desk
John Wilson, Maintenance
Robert Rafferty, Night Supervisor

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