



Aging Matters

New Hampshire State Commission on Aging

2023 Older Adult Volunteer Award Winners



HONORING OLDER ADULT VOLUNTEERS Back row (left to right) Laurie Harding, Lebanon/Grafton County; Judy Wilson, Newport/Sullivan County; Allen Mendelson, Keene/Cheshire County; Molly and Rick Notkin, Gilford/Belknap County; Susan Ruka, Chair, NH State Commission on Aging; Rebecca Sky, Executive Director, NH State Commission on Aging. Front row (left to right) Phyllis Sherman, Center Conway/Carroll County; Susan Gaudiello, Barrington/Strafford County; Jean Haight-Dunstable, MA/Hillsborough County. Not pictured: Father Tim Brooks, Lancaster/Coos County; Wendy Hawkes, Concord/Merrimack County; Jeanne Kydd, Raymond/Rockingham County

NHCOA Announces 2023 Older Adult Volunteer Awards

Citing their numerous contributions to their local communities, the NH State Commission on Aging (NHCOA) is excited to recognize outstanding older adult volunteers across the Granite State.

“Older Adults volunteers play a critical role in local towns across New Hampshire,” said **Rebecca Sky**, Executive Director, NHCOA. “We’re pleased to honor people from each NH County who, through their volunteer service, have made an enduring impact on those around them.”

The honorees were recognized at a special ceremony on Wednesday, May 24th at the NH

Statehouse. Sky explained that 2023 is the 61st anniversary of the Older Adult Volunteer Awards (OAVA) in NH, which recognize adult volunteers 60 years of age and older. 2023 marks the 4th year for these awards to be administered by the Commission on Aging. In 1962, NH introduced the Joseph D. Vaughan Award to recognize the contributions of older adults through volunteerism.

The criteria included a provision of “seniors volunteering” on behalf of seniors and it served us well for many years. But today’s older adults are

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New Hampshire Commission on Aging

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Rebecca Sky, Executive Director of the New Hampshire State Commission on Aging (left) joined Commission Chair Sue Ruka (center) and BEAS' Wendi Aultman (right) in recognizing the 2023 Older Adult Volunteer award winners.

contributing in a variety of meaningful and valuable ways that may not exclusively benefit older adults. For example, someone might be volunteering for a food bank, at a library, in an elementary school, community board or mentoring.

May is also National Older Americans Month. "The theme for 2023 is Aging Unbound," Sky noted. "Our volunteers are shining examples of service above self. The people honored this year for their service through this award have demonstrated that any one of us can make a difference at any point in our lives. They have shown outstanding leadership or demonstrated meritorious achievement as volunteers in New Hampshire. Through their engagement, they have woven connections that make our communities better and stronger."

Sue Ruka, NH State Commission on Aging Chair served as MC for the event. **Wendi Aultman**, Chief of the Bureau of Elderly and Adult Services brought greetings from Governor Chris Sununu and shared the proclamation he issued for Older Americans Month with attendees.

"We were thrilled to have received numerous nominations from through the state," said **Beth Quarm Todgham**, Commission Member and Chair of the 2023 OAVA Selection Committee. "To choose one honoree per county was a difficult process which only underscores the critical role that older adult volunteers play in NH on a daily basis."

A brief overview of the contributions each award winner has made to in community begins on Page 9. More detailed profiles of this year's honorees will appear in future editions of Aging Matters

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May NHCOA Meeting Includes NH State Plan on Aging Update, NH Volunteer Resources

At the forefront of the May Commission was an excellent presentation and overview of the NH State Plan on Aging. Meeting attendees heard from **Thom O'Connor**, DHHS; **Jennifer Rabalais**, NH Alliance For Healthy Aging and **Alison Rataj**, NH Alliance for Healthy Aging, who shared information gleaned from surveys and focus groups to help produce the 2024-2027 State Plan on Aging (SPOA).

As the designated State Unit on Aging, DHHS is required to create a SPOA by the federal Administration for Community Living (ACL). The purpose of a SPOA is to outline how the state will implement programs and services funded through the federal Older American's Act. ACL's plan priorities include advancing equity; building a caregiver infrastructure; expanding access to home and community-based services supporting recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic; and supporting Older Americans Act Core Programs. A draft is due to ACL on July 1 with the final product due by October 1, 2023.

The speakers shared highlights from the activities over the winter that gathered information from older adults and caregivers. Several listening sessions (in person and virtual) were held. A short survey was also widely distributed and completed by 755 people.

The Commission also received an overview from **Volunteer NH** which included presentations from **Gretchen Stallings**, Executive Director of Volunteer NH; **Kaitlyn Norden**, Acting Deputy Administrator for the Northeast Region of AmeriCorps; and **Anne Ostberg**, Senior Portfolio Manager at AmeriCorps.

Volunteer NH seeks to connect volunteers to service opportunities and as a result, approximately 2,200 volunteers in New Hampshire worked in some 300 service locations through those programs. The vast majority of those volunteers were older adults serving through the Foster Grandparent Program, Senior Companion, and RSVP.

Primarily funded by AmeriCorps, Volunteer NH has seven senior programs grantees in NH—five RSVP grantees and one each for Senior Companion and the Foster Grandparent program. Volunteers through those programs provide transportation, falls prevention classes, food services, and more. Volunteer NH also operates the NH Volunteer Engagement Network for nonprofit agencies and an online resource center. In addition, Volunteer NH recognizes volunteerism through the Spirit of NH Awards and the Governor's Volunteer Manager of the

Year award.

Volunteer NH also announced that the 2023 Governor's Conference on Volunteerism will be held on June 14 and 15 (in person and virtual options). To learn more or register, please visit: <https://volunteernh.org/>

Following the presentation Commission members and presenters discussed the challenges of recruiting and retaining volunteers. The pandemic and current economy affected volunteer recruitment and retention, particularly in the volunteer driver programs. Opportunities to make volunteering easier were discussed.

Commission member **Polly Campion** presented the Commission's policy group Legislative report. She explained that HB 1 (the House budget) and HB 2 (the House budget trailer) are now with the Senate Finance Committee before going on to the full Senate. Once the Senate has reviewed the budget bills and synced them with its own budget bills, it will return them to the House for concurrence or a committee of conference process.

Also of note, Commission member and NH State Representative Lucy Weber briefly discussed the Senate and House's review of Permanent Medicaid Expansion (**Senate Bill 263**). This is of interest to the Commission because of its effect on older workers and on low-paid caregivers and other service workers. The Senate passed SB263 (Medicaid Expansion) unanimously; the House is considering amending the bill by offering time-limited extensions. Final resolution will likely happen in budget conversations.

The next Commission Meeting will be held on Monday, June 19, 2023 from 10:00 AM – Noon. The community is welcome to attend in person or via ZOOM. For details please visit: <https://www.nhcoa.nh.gov/>

Contact the NHCOA

Rebecca Sky, Executive Director

Rebecca.L.Sky@nhcoa.nh.gov

Susan Ruka, Chair

Susan.Ruka@mainehealth.org

Carol Stamatakis, Vice Chair

carol@justicenh.org

Roberta Berner, Clerk

bernerabel@aol.com

Beth Todgham, Aging Matters Editor

NHCOAnews@gmail.com

Surgeon General Advisory Raises Alarm About the Impact of Loneliness and Isolation

United States Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy recently released a new Surgeon General Advisory calling attention to the public health crisis of loneliness, isolation, and lack of connection in our country. Even before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, approximately half of U.S. adults reported experiencing measurable levels of loneliness. Disconnection fundamentally affects our mental, physical, and societal health. In fact, loneliness and isolation increase the risk for individuals to develop mental health challenges in their lives, and lacking connection can increase the risk for premature death to levels comparable to smoking daily.

The **Surgeon General's Advisory on Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation** lays out a framework for a National Strategy to Advance Social Connection, which has never been implemented before in the United States. It details recommendations that individuals, governments, workplaces, health systems, and community organizations can take to increase connection in their lives, communities, and across the country and improve their health.

"Our epidemic of loneliness and isolation has been an underappreciated public health crisis that has harmed individual and societal health. Our relationships are a source of healing and well-being hiding in plain sight – one that can help us live healthier, more fulfilled, and more productive lives," said Dr. Murthy. *"Given the significant health consequences of loneliness and isolation, we must prioritize building social connections the same way we have prioritized other critical public health issues such as tobacco, obesity, and substance use disorders. Together, we can build a country that's healthier, more resilient, less lonely, and more connected."*

The physical health consequences of poor or insufficient connection include a 29% increased risk of heart disease, a 32% increased risk of stroke, and a 50% increased risk of developing dementia for older adults. Additionally, lacking social connection increases risk of premature death by more than 60%.

In addition to our physical health, loneliness and isolation contribute substantially to mental health challenges. In adults, the risk of developing depression among people who report feeling lonely often is more than double that of people who rarely or never feel lonely. Loneliness and social isolation in childhood increase the risk of depression and anxiety both immediately and well into the future. And with more than one in five adults and more than one in three young adults living with a mental illness in the U.S., addressing loneliness and isolation is critical in order to fully address the mental health crisis in America.

While the epidemic of loneliness and isolation is widespread and has profound consequences for our individual and collective health and well-being, there is a medicine hiding in plain sight: social connection.

Social connection is beneficial for individual health and also improves the resilience of our communities. Evidence shows that increased connection can help reduce the risk of serious health conditions such as heart disease, stroke, dementia, and depression. Communities where

Surgeon General, con't next page

How Ableism and Ageism Affect Older Adults

Next Avenue has published an article authored by Terry Fulmer, PhD, RN, FAAN, president of The John A. Hartford Foundation and Grace Morton, "How Ableism and Ageism Affect Older Adults."

In this article, Dr. Fulmer and Morton describe what ageism is and the impact that age-related discrimination has in the health care settings. They highlight how ageism is exacerbated when an older person has a disability and experiences ableism, or discrimination against people with disabilities. The article notes that the combination of ableism and ageism can have serious effects on the livelihood and health of older adults with disabilities, including depression, obesity, smoking, heart disease and more.

The article gives suggestions that we can take to eradicate ageism and ableism and change the narrative to ensure that older adults with disabilities are treated the way they deserve.

The article can be found at <https://www.nextavenue.org/how-ableism-and-ageism-affect-older-adults/>

This article is part of *Next Avenue* special series, **Aging with Disabilities in America**, sponsored by JAHF.

RAISE YOUR VOICE!

Let us know what's on your
mind and what's
important to you. Email us
today!

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residents are more connected with one another fare better on several measures of population health, community safety, community resilience when natural disasters strike, prosperity, and civic engagement.

This Surgeon General's Advisory lays out a framework for the United States to establish a National Strategy to Advance Social Connection based on six foundational pillars:

- 1. Strengthen Social Infrastructure:** Connections are not just influenced by individual interactions, but by the physical elements of a community (parks, libraries, playgrounds) and the programs and policies in place. To strengthen social infrastructure, communities must design environments that promote connection, establish and scale community connection programs, and invest in institutions that bring people together.
- 2. Enact Pro-Connection Public Policies:** National, state, local, and tribal governments play a role in establishing policies like accessible public transportation or paid family leave that can support and enable more connection among a community or a family.
- 3. Mobilize the Health Sector:** Because loneliness and isolation are risk factors for several major health conditions (including heart disease, dementia, depression) as well as for premature death, health care providers are well-positioned to assess patients for risk of loneliness and intervene.
- 4. Reform Digital Environments:** We must critically evaluate our relationship with technology and ensure that how we interact digitally does not detract from meaningful and healing connection with others.
- 5. Deepen Our Knowledge:** A more robust research agenda, beyond the evidence outlined in the advisory, must be established to further our understanding of the causes and consequences of social disconnection, populations at risk, and the effectiveness of efforts to boost connection.
- 6. Cultivate a Culture of Connection:** The informal practices of everyday life (the norms and culture of how we engage one another) significantly influence the relationships we have in our lives. We cannot be successful in the other pillars without a culture of connection.

You can read the full Advisory at <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf>

It's Time to Enjoy NH Farmers Markets

When you're looking for the freshest ingredients cultivated and created in New Hampshire, there's no better place to browse than the local farmers markets. With live music, baked goods, gourmet delights, and home-grown fruits and vegetables at every turn, a day at the farmers market will entertain your entire family during the warmer months. Whether you're taking a leisurely stroll or looking to shop artisanal products, you'll find all of your favorite locally made granite state goods. When the temperatures drop, you'll find winter farmers markets pop up throughout New Hampshire, keeping fresh food on plates and the celebration of abundance and local flavor alive in every season.

A list of farmers markets can be found at: <https://www.visitnh.gov/things-to-do/food-drink/farmers-markets#>

Other Farmers Market listings are available at:

- New Hampshire Magazine: <https://www.nhmagazine.com/nhmarkets/>
- New Hampshire Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food: [farmers-market-directory.pdf](https://www.nh.gov/farmers-market-directory.pdf) (nh.gov)

Your Health New Hampshire Radio

You're invited to join **Sandra Osorio**, **Nitanga Jean de Dieu**, and **Jodi Harper** as they lead *Your Health New Hampshire*. Sponsored by Southern NH Area Health Education Center (SNHAHEC), *Your Health New Hampshire* is a bi-weekly show that explores the many services available through SNHAHEC and their partner networks. SNHAHEC recognizes that where you play, work, stay, and pray has a big impact on your ability to be healthy, and this show will look at classes and services available to help you be well and live your most healthy life.

The show gives the community tools to find the right education, incentives, social support, motivation, and strategies to adopt and maintain healthy behaviors and help people to manage their chronic disease. It is broadcast on the NH Talk Show Radio website: https://www.nhtalkradio.com/?page_id=18912. New episodes air every other Monday at 9:00am. New June episodes are scheduled for June 12 and June 26.

Have medical debt?

Anything already paid or under \$500 should no longer be on your credit report

Nearly 1-in-5 households in the United States has reported having some form of overdue **medical debt**. Patients and their families are contacted by debt collectors about medical bills more than any other type of debt, and it commonly results in negative information appearing on credit records. In fact, in 2021, 43 million people had allegedly unpaid medical bills on their credit reports.

Congress, federal agencies, and others have taken steps to respond to the medical debt crisis confronting millions of families. Congress passed the **No Surprises Act to help protect Americans from certain unexpected medical bills**, including surprise medical bills for emergency services from out-of-network providers. In addition, the CFPB told debt collectors and consumer credit reporting companies that they can't collect, furnish, or report any invalid medical debt.

The three nationwide credit reporting companies – Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion – also removed all paid medical debts from consumer credit reports and those less than a year old. They have also taken steps to remove all medical collections under \$500. This last step went into effect on April 11, 2023, and with this change, it's estimated that roughly half of those with medical debt on their reports will have it removed from their credit history.

If you're one of the millions of Americans with overdue medical bills, you may be able to take steps to ensure this information no longer affects your credit, including your access to employment and housing.

Check your credit report. The changes recently introduced by the nationwide credit reporting companies cover all medical bills reported to them by debt collectors, also known as medical collections. One of the first steps you can take is to check your credit reports for any outstanding medical bills. Currently, Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion are **offering free online credit reports through AnnualCreditReport.com**.

If you previously had a medical collection under \$500, a paid medical collection, or a collection less than a year old on your credit report, check to make sure they no longer appear on your reports. Be

aware, however, that this doesn't include credit card collections, even if you used your credit card to pay for a medical expense under \$500.

Also, while you're looking at your reports, check for any other information that might be inaccurate.

If you find a medical collection under \$500, a paid medical collection, a collection less than a year old, or errors on your report, you can **dispute that information with the credit reporting company**.

In addition, the nationwide credit reporting companies have announced that they're extending the amount of time you have to dispute, negotiate, or pay for any outstanding bills before they can be reported. Previously, unpaid medical bills were generally furnished to credit reporting companies after 60 to 120 days, but the nationwide credit reporting companies are now waiting one year from the time you saw a doctor before they're allowing medical debt to appear on your credit report. If you're unable to pay your medical bills, you may **qualify for financial assistance programs**, often called "charity care." (see below)

Can't resolve medical debt concerns? Submit a complaint. We expect that the No Surprises Act, the recent actions by credit reporting companies, and the CFPB's own actions and guidance will reduce the challenges many families face after they receive medical care. The CFPB also wants to ensure that the credit reporting companies are doing their jobs to investigate any information that people dispute.

If you find invalid medical bills on your credit report or if you're having issues disputing other medical bill errors with the credit reporting companies, **submit a complaint to the CFPB**.

Source: <https://www.consumerfinance.gov/about-us/blog/medical-debt-anything-already-paid-or-under-500-should-no-longer-be-on-your-credit-report/>

Editor's Note: *Charity Care was a topic discussed on a recent "An Arm and A Leg" podcast by Dan Weissman. The podcast addresses the high cost of healthcare. We are grateful that Dan has given us permission to reprint this article to provide more information about charity care and resources people can use to see if they qualify. It begins on the next page.*

Help Us Spread the Word!

If you like this newsletter, please share it with your family, neighbors, friends, and colleagues. They can sign up to receive their own copy at nhcoanews@gmail.com

First, See if You Can Get Your Medical Bill Forgiven

Lots of people qualify— but providers won't always tell you or make it easy. Luckily, you can get help

By **DAN WEISSMANN**

An Arm and a Leg Podcast / First Aid Kit Newsletter

Hey there—

What follows may be the single most-useful thing I've learned from making *An Arm and a Leg*, and if you listen to the show, you're likely familiar with the idea.

If you're facing a medical bill, you may qualify to get it written off entirely.

Charity care policies make that possible. The majority of U.S. hospitals are non-profits, and they're legally required to have charity care policies, sometimes they're called financial assistance policies. These policies mean that if your income falls below a certain level, the hospital has to forgive your bill.

This is even more powerful than it might seem, for three reasons:

First, you don't necessarily have to be dirt poor to qualify for help: Many hospitals give financial assistance to people with incomes at multiples of the federal poverty level.

Second, for-profits often have charity-care policies too — and studies show they're at least as generous as nonprofits, on the whole.

Third, charity care isn't limited to hospitals. A lot of places you may go for medical care are owned by hospital *systems*, which have been gobbling up medical practices for years and years.

So the door — and bill — for your local doctor's office or medical clinic may feature the logo for a hospital system. This means that the hospital's financial-assistance policy probably applies.

But don't expect the hospital to tell you or encourage you to apply. Hospitals have admitted to billing patients for **\$2.7 billion that could have been forgiven with charity care**, in a single year. And that's just what they admit to. Some actively try to minimize the aid they give.

Luckily, there's help available. Like a lot of people, I learned about the power of financial assistance from Jared Walker, who laid it out in a **60-second TikTok** (which we fact-checked — and **wow did it check out**).

Since making that video in early 2021, Jared's organization **Dollar For** has built a system for helping people access charity care.

Take advantage of their amazing resources. Those include:

- A tool to quickly **see if you qualify for financial assistance** at the place where you got care.
- A step-by-step **guide to applying**. User-friendly, super-clear, and way more detailed than we can be here.
- Volunteers and staff members who can **help you with your application**. They are literally standing by, and they are super-experts.

All of this is free.

Jared says they've wiped out \$20 million in medical bills so far. You need help now? Go there directly.

Meanwhile, here are five things to know about charity care, adapted and updated from a 2021 post by *An Arm and a Leg's* Emily Pisacreta:

You Can Apply Before You Get a Bill

Jared says you may be able to apply before you're even seen. Once the hospital recognizes your eligibility for financial assistance, your medically-necessary care — as determined by the hospital — should be covered.

Jared says most hospitals require you to renew an application periodically — generally every four or six months.

How to Apply

In addition to a form, hospitals often ask for documentation, which Jared says could include recent pay stubs, proof of unemployment, social security award letters and/or tax returns.

Exactly which documents the hospital may ask for can vary and could add up to dozens of pages.

But the process isn't *always* complex. A listener wrote to us once to say that our episodes about Jared's work made applying sound too hard. At her local hospital, she found it easy and straightforward.

Not Sure You Qualify? Write a Letter

If you don't qualify based on income alone, but your financial situation means you still can't afford your medical bills, don't rule yourself out. The same applies if the hospital's financial aid policy specifies that only uninsured people qualify, but even with insurance you're looking at giant bills.

Jared says a letter of financial hardship attached to an application can strengthen your case. In fact, he encourages each patient to attach a letter, even if you think you have a good shot.

"These are real people reading these and the letters

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go a long way," he says.

Yes, You May Need to Fax It In

While many hospitals have digital portals to enable online bill paying, there's usually no equivalent for a financial assistance application.

Many applications offer only a mailing address. But Jared and company have found that applications by mail have a tendency to get lost.

To avoid that, they recommend hand-delivering the app — or faxing it. Public libraries, packaging stores like FedEx, and certain online services make faxing possible even if, like most people, you don't have a fax machine at home.

In Collections? You May Still Have Time to Apply

The IRS requires nonprofit hospitals to give patients a grace period of 240 days (about eight months) from the initial billing date to apply for financial assistance. But hospitals are allowed to send bills to collection agencies much earlier than that — often after only 120 days.

Even if you're already being hounded by collection agencies, you may still have months to apply for financial assistance.

And alerting the collection agents that an application with the hospital is pending can sometimes stop the letters.

"The hospital can take you out of collections just as easily as they put you there," Jared says.

In some cases, hospitals will forgive bills that are much older than 240 days. Applying may be worth it even for bills that are several years old, Jared says. Overall, it does not hurt to ask for help.

Dan Weissmann produces An Arm and a Leg, a podcast about the high costs of health care, and First Aid Kit, a newsletter about how to fight those costs, where this material first appeared. You can hear An Arm and a Leg at <https://armandalegshow.com/>, or anywhere you get podcasts, and you can read every installment of First Aid Kit, and sign up to subscribe, at <https://firstaidkit.substack.com/>

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NH AG, 25 Other Attorneys General Urge Administration to Provide Medicare Coverage for Alzheimer's Treatment

New Hampshire Attorney General John M. Formella is calling on the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to provide coverage for a drug approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) that has been proven to delay the progression of Alzheimer's Disease.

In the letter, AG Formella and 25 other Attorneys General asked CMS to provide full and unrestricted Medicare coverage for FDA-approved Alzheimer's treatments, consistent with its decades-long practice of covering FDA-approved prescription drugs for Medicare beneficiaries.

"I am proud to be part of this bipartisan group of Attorneys General calling on Medicare to provide unrestricted coverage of antibody treatments for Alzheimer's disease," said Formella. "We must ensure that the 6 million Americans living with Alzheimer's can receive the treatments being recommended by

their doctors. Right now, many older Americans living in rural areas are at a disadvantage and take on the enormous financial burden of traveling to the few research institutions that host trials. All Americans should have the same opportunity for access to treatment, no matter where they live."

The treatment specified by attorneys general is FDA-approved monoclonal antibodies (mAbs) directed against amyloid to help Alzheimer's patients. Currently, CMS will only cover mAbs when it is administered through clinical trials or other studies.

"This decision creates a barrier to care for older Americans, especially individuals living in rural and underserved areas that are unlikely to be served by institutions administering clinical trials," states the letter.

The letter can be found at <https://www.doj.nh.gov/news/2023/documents/20230503-alzheimers-letter.pdf>

Prefer a Printed Copy of AgingMatters?

The Commission on Aging has a limited ability to provide printed copies of AgingMatters to individuals who are unable to connect to the Internet to read a copy online or download it from the Commission's website. Email your request to NHCOAnews@gmail.com or send it to NHCOA Newsletter, NH Commission on Aging, 117 Pleasant St., Dolloff Building, 4th Floor, Concord, NH 03301.



2023 Older Adult Volunteer Program

Award Winners by County

Belknap County:

Molly and Rick Notkin of Gilford

Molly and Rick volunteer to create a sense of “home” and “caring community” for many. Molly spearheaded the development of Gilford Community Church’s “Senior Resource Team”, a volunteer group seeking to support local partnerships to encourage social connectedness, transportation opportunities, and resource connection for older people in Gilford. This has led to the establishment of Helping Hands of the Lakes Region where Molly continues to play a leadership role. Rick as a retired nurse serves on the Winnepesaukee Public Health Network Medical Reserve Corp providing flu and COVID vaccinations at community vaccination clinics. Rick also teaches First Aid and CPR. Together he and Molly volunteer at Isaiah 61 café, Laconia’s drop in homeless shelter, where they help plan, organize, and serve meals. They truly embody the spirit of giving and volunteerism.

Carroll County:

Phyllis Sherman of Center Conway

At 85 years of age, Phyllis drove over 283 hours in last year delivering more than 1,750 meals for Meals on Wheels, totaling over 1,788 miles up and down highways and by-ways of Northern Carroll County. Phyllis is a reliable driver whose regular route is one of the longest covering more than 70 miles through rutted, pot-holed dirt roads. Phyllis also gives selflessly from her family farm, where she has lived for 58 years with her children and grandchildren who also work the farm. The farm donates fresh veggies weekly during the growing season. This bounty is used to make home-cooked meals for recipients of Meals on Wheels and congregate/ takeout meals. Phyllis is beloved by those who work with her and those who count on her.

Cheshire County:

Allen Mendelson of Keene

Allen is a long-time advocate for services for older adults in the Monadnock Region. He has served on the Board of Directors for Home

Healthcare, Hospice and Community Services. He navigated the organization through a leadership transition and relaunched philanthropy efforts during his term as Board President. A sampling of his creative fundraising initiatives includes the “March for Meals” campaign and a “Mittens for Meals” campaign he promoted as a Bernie Sanders “look alike” - both for the Meals on Wheels program. A “Raise the Roof” campaign raised funds for a sorely needed new roof for the building that houses the Castle Center Adult Day Program, Meals on Wheels, and the visiting nurses and hospice. Allen also assists in planning and launching educational programs on financial, funeral and estate planning for the community.

Coos County:

Father Tim Brooks of Lancaster

Father Tim Brooks is a staple in Coos County, serving as an Episcopal minister for Saint Paul’s Episcopal Church in Lancaster. Known for his wonderful sense of humor and his kindness, Father Tim started volunteering for the Home Health and Hospice Agency several years ago. He serves as an outlet for patients to express their concerns about the dying process, speak their fears out loud, and feel protected. He travels far and wide throughout Coos County making house calls to patients and their loved ones, giving those who are struggling support and comfort. Father Tim has also stood up several bereavement groups within his church to support those who are grieving the loss of loved ones. The world is a better place with Father Tim!

Grafton County:

Laurie Harding of Lebanon

Laurie Harding, MS, RN, has demonstrated her deep commitment as a volunteer for decades. She is a tireless advocate and trusted mentor to the Community Nurse Connection, which she co-founded in 2011 as the Upper Valley Community Nursing Project. She delivers Meals on Wheels through the Upper Valley Senior Center with a caring sensitivity. She initiated and continues to

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be the key organizer of a monthly opportunity for shared learning and connection for providers of aging services in the Upper Valley. Laurie's hands-on and public policy-oriented volunteering has made an enormous difference to the quality (and quantity) of care available to older adults in the Upper Valley's most rural areas. Her caring nature is evident in all she does, and her willingness to help and mentor the next generation of caregivers seems boundless.

Hillsborough County:

Jean Haight of Dunstable, MA

Part of the team at St. Joseph Hospital Oncology Center for 7 years, Jean is a staple for staff and patients. In 2022 alone, she provided over 190 hours of service bringing her total hours to over 1,065 hours. She supports so many people who are going through the hardest time in their lives. Everyone looks forward to seeing Jean with her kindness, caring, and compassion. Through her own walk through life, Jean understands the impact of serious illness and how it affects families. Jean takes her experiences and showers patients with a tender ear and a kind heart. When it comes to Jean's commitment and dedication to the St. Joseph Hospital Oncology Center, she puts her heart and soul into everything she does and brings joy to everyone she encounters.

Merrimack County:

Wendy Hawkes of Concord

During the past eight years Wendy has served her community as a volunteer for Granite VNA in many roles. Over the years she has provided impactful companionship and caregiver respite to hospice patients and their families. During 2022, Wendy generously gave more than 100 hours of volunteer support to programs including Flu Clinics, the Memory Café, Hospice House as a gardener, Clinical Mask Kit Assembly and Distribution, Hospice Awareness Campaign, and Sending Cards to Long-term Care Facility patients for support and encouragement. Wendy has a true enthusiasm for serving others and is a gentle and intuitive soul with a welcoming smile and kind concern for all she meets.

Rockingham County:

Jeanne Kydd of Raymond

Jeanne recently celebrated her 20th anniversary as a Foster Grandparent volunteer. Over that time, she has spent an incredible 17,000 hours inside

the classroom, making a significant impact on the lives of thousands of students. She provides much needed support to countless children and school staff. She splits her time between five classrooms ranging from first to fifth grade bringing an air of determination to each one of them. Jeanne is persistent in her hopes that her enthusiasm for education will wear off on the students. In particular, she is determined to help young girls develop the confidence to succeed in math.

Jeanne's dedication to creating positive futures for new generations is a tale of inspiration we all can learn from.

Strafford County:

Susan Gaudiello of Barrington

Susan has been a board member at Cornerstone VNA since 2013 and is a valuable member of the Circle of Caring volunteer program. As a champion of the organization, she provides leadership, motivation, and vision that inspires and propels people into action. She has recruited and mentored many board members. She has also held the position of vice chair and chair and has been active on many committees including the executive, finance, fund development, and building expansion committees, and served as chair of the strategic planning committee. Susan also plays a key role in the Town of Barrington through her service as selectman, and her very active role in the town library. Strafford County is very fortunate to have a knowledgeable, passionate, and caring person like Susan.

Sullivan County:

Judy Wilson of Newport

With a soft voice, gentle hand and warm smile, Judith "Judy" Wilson started her next mission in life as a volunteer in 2016. Judy's work involves recognizing and addressing challenges as adults age. Over the past seven years, she has spent numerous hours writing annual appeal letters, sending membership reminders, and preparing food for dinner and breakfast fundraisers that help to keep the lights on at the Newport Senior Center. As a board member she has also helped enhance programming and been instrumental in ensuring older adults have a place where they can build human connections and emotional support systems that are vital for mental and physical health and thriving independently.

2023 Older Adult Volunteer Program Honorable Mention

The New Hampshire State Commission on Aging was pleased to receive nominations from across the state. The following are New Hampshire Older Adults who continue to serve their communities as active and engaged volunteers.

Gerry Coutu, for his volunteer efforts in art class at the Mount Washington Valley Senior Center

Linda Fisher, who helps organize the food pantry at the Pope Memorial SPCA

Charles Franks, for his work as a board member for the Humane Society of Greater Nashua

Susan and James Gore, for their help with games and activities at the Mt. Washington Valley Adult Day Center

Kathleen Christo, who works in the food pantry and community assistance center with the Society for St. Vincent DePaul in Exeter

Wilma Clough, who does a number of projects for congregate meals at the Mountain View Senior Center in Ossipee.

Charlotte Mandell, who provides education and guidance about

insurance on behalf of Service Link of Rockingham County.

Bob McSweeney, who packs meals and is a delivery driver for Meals on Wheels of Hillsborough County.

Jim Neidert, who organizes and promotes programs at the Acworth Church and Fall Mountain Food Pantry

Pat Parent, for her work at the front desk and for organizing sports programs at the Ingram Senior Center in Salem

Sandra Plessner, for her work in Tilton with the Senior Bus transportation program

Sheila Robinson, for her volunteer efforts with the Conway Area Humane Society

Steve Simons, who educates visitors at the Great Bay National Reserve in Stratham

Lisa Stith, who celebrates Earth Day every day by picking up trash in Danville

Nick Wallner, who mans the information desk at Manchester/Boston Regional Airport on behalf of the Granite State Ambassadors

Diane Wells, who volunteers as a foster grandparent in kindergarten classes for the Friends Program

Elizabeth Whitman, for her volunteer fund raising efforts on behalf of the New Boston Historical Society,

Brenda Williams, who helps prepare meals and pack food for the Meals on Wheels program of Rockingham County

Janine Woodworth, who helps keep Manchester clean by picking up trash

Take the Granite State 90-Day Summer Challenge

The Granite State 90-Day Summer Challenge runs from June 1 to August 31, 2023. The challenge is to be physically active for 30 minutes or more every day in the months of June, July and August. Hike, bike, swim, jump-rope, walk, dance or garden – move however you like for 30 minutes each day.

Register at <https://nhmoves.org/90-day-summer-challenge/>

Keeping Track

Download the Activity Calendars on the NH Moves webpage to check-off each day you exercise for at least 30 minutes. This calendar is for your own personal fitness tracking.

Seeing Adventure

Check out your town or city's website for local parks & trails. Did you know NH has 93 state parks available? Visit nhstateparks.org for access information and fees.

Share What you Discover

Post what you find during your activity on our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/nhgcpah>. Share a great spot you never knew was so close or a positive experience you had during your activity.

Did You Know?

New Hampshire now has Mobility Managers in each area of the state to assist with transportation options.

Each town is represented by a regional mobility manager, and there is a Statewide Mobility Manager to assist as well.

What is a Mobility Manager?

A mobility manager helps connect people to the transportation options that are the most responsive to your needs.

More information about the Mobility Manager network will be included in future editions of Aging Matters.

If you would like more information, contact Teri Palmer tpalmer@rlsandassoc.com.

Why Friendships Among Men Are So Important

Men have fewer friends these days, which can hurt their well-being. Here are expert tips for fostering those relationships.

By JILL SUTTIE, Greater Good Magazine

When we got married, my husband had a “bachelor party” that consisted of five guys going out to dinner together. There was no heavy drinking or roasting the groom or naked women jumping out of a cake. Just guys sitting around talking about life.

This group has been meeting regularly ever since, taking turns hosting brunch so they can chat for hours, sharing the joys and struggles of their lives. They call themselves the “Men of Merit” or “MOMs”—and they have been there for each other, through thick and thin, for over 30 years now.

Having an intimate group of friends like that seems to be a rare thing for men these days. In fact, according to a [recent American Survey report](#), men have fewer social ties overall than they used to, with only 27% of men in 2021 saying they had at least six close friends compared to 55% in 1990. This suggests men may be suffering a “[friendship recession](#)” that is likely affecting their health and happiness.

The reasons for this are complex. But it’s worth it for men to forge friendships with other men. Research suggests that having men friends in early adulthood is important to men and [can help](#) buffer them against stress. Intimate friendships with men, sometimes called “bromances,” can be [even more fulfilling](#) than romantic relationships with women, perhaps because men feel more understood by other men and assume men friends will be [more loyal and willing to help](#) in time of need.

How can you make that kind of friendship happen? The key, say experts, is to find the right activity with other men—and then to be brave in opening up. “[Men] start off talking about their cars first, and then the conversation goes into their relationships,” says Daniel Ellenberg, a relationship expert and leadership trainer. “Finding common interests is a good jumping-off point for men.”

The Roots of Male Isolation

Why do men have fewer friends these days? Declining involvement in civic or religious organizations, lower marriage rates, and changes in the workplace—such as remote work opportunities and longer commutes—are likely contributing to missed opportunities for men to develop friendships with other men. No doubt the pandemic didn’t help, as so many men (and women) found themselves isolated.

But men also have fewer close male friends for

other reasons, too. Societal pressures to conform to a particular model of masculinity can hamper the development of intimacy with others. This starts at a young age, when boys are given the message they should not express their emotions or seek emotional comfort from other boys lest they be condemned for being too “soft,” “feminine,” or “gay.”

As developmental psychologist Niobe Way’s [research](#) articulates, boys want and need to have intimacy, but feel pressured to withhold the vulnerability or affection that helps foster friendship. This means boy friendships often fade by late adolescence, increasing their risk for suffering [mental health problems](#) and [poorer physical health](#).

Fred Rabinowitz is a psychologist at the University of the Redlands who studies men and runs therapy groups to help men connect. He believes that much of what hampers male friendships stems from male socialization.

“Boys, when they’re young, are capable of having all kinds of fun with each other and enjoy hanging out, being physical, and all that stuff,” he says. “Then, something happens. We put them in school, where it’s OK to play and be aggressive, but where there’s something taboo about being too friendly.”

He recalls his own lesson around this at the age of seven. After putting his arm around a best buddy on the playground at school, somebody suggested it meant he was gay. He quickly changed tack. “That’s enough to just shut down boys,” he says.

With girls and women, there is less of this association between physical affection and sexuality, he says. They are more open and receptive to interpersonal interactions involving intimacy, where they share secrets and seek each other out for advice or comfort.

But, for guys, it can feel weird or awkward to be intimate with another guy, because it goes against cultural norms and doesn’t jive with male mythology. Men are admired for being “the strong, silent type” or the lone hero in our society, with emotional control and self-reliance valued above all else. This stereotype can keep men from recognizing their social and emotional needs, making it harder to do the work of making close friends.

“Part of our tradition has been to appear to be strong—or at least give the impression of strength—which makes you feel a little bit more secure, but lonely,” says Rabinowitz.

Friendships, con’t next page

Friendships, con't

Men Need Friendships with Other Men

In his work with men's groups, Daniel Ellenberg has seen how deeply men want to have more intimacy, but face not only social taboos, but a biologically driven vigilance against showing their "softer" side.

"The male operating system is learning that vulnerability is a bad thing, that you're leaving yourself open to attack," he says. "There's a kind of wariness, based on the need to always be oriented toward threat.

We're much more likely to mistake a stick for a snake than a snake for a stick." That hurts a man's ability to foster intimacy through vulnerable self-disclosure—something **key to fostering closeness** in friendships.

That's why many men tend to look more to women for emotional support than to seek it with other men, says Ellenberg. Unfortunately, this not only lessens their options, but could place an undue burden upon women to be their confidants and supports.

"Men put too many of their (shall we say) 'emotional eggs' in a woman's basket," says Ellenberg. "But relationships are complex, and the more you're able to embrace different contexts, the more you bring out different sides of yourself."

It wasn't always the case that men feared intimacy with other men, writes Marisa Franco in *Platonic* (her book outlining the history of friendship and its benefits). Men used to be quite close to other men, she writes, even sharing romantic feelings for one another—not in the sexual sense, but in the sense of deep caring, longing to be together, and feeling most yourself when in that person's presence.

"Romantic love in friendship isn't radical. It's traditional if you peer back far enough into our history," she writes. "Even now, it is normal for close friends to feel the heady passion and idealization that we typically deem appropriate only for spouses."

To have that kind of closeness feels foreign to many men, though. That's why both Rabinowitz and Ellenberg have their work cut out for them.

What Men Can do to Build Friendships

While there isn't much research on what men can do to build male friendships, specifically, Rabinowitz's and Ellenberg's decades of experience give them a vantage point for offering some advice.

Rather than engaging in deep, revealing conversations the way women might, boys and men tend to engage in "side-by-side play," Rabinowitz says—doing an activity they both enjoy that doesn't involve face-to-face interactions. Sometimes intimacy can grow from there, he adds, because if you do these activities regularly, opportunities to share personal issues can arise.

"If you're playing golf with someone, you can focus

on golf. But then if someone says, 'I had a rough morning, you know, my wife's in cancer treatment,' it's a way of opening up the door to have a conversation about that in a safe way," he says.

Outside of sports, Ellenberg says that one thing men can do is to find or form groups that share a common interest. A therapy group like he runs is one option; but a men's group can be centered around anything—like movies or vintage cars—likely to allow for some conversation.

Modeling openness yourself, as a man, can make it easier for other men to open up to you, says Rabinowitz. You can always start with something fairly low-risk and work your way up, as you see that it has a good response.

"Maybe tell a story that is not that personal and or tell a joke or talk about some external activity," he says. "Those are the ways that men break the ice when they've been socialized the way we have been."

If it seems risky to look among your own men acquaintances, Ellenberg recommends a men's support group or other organizations devoted to helping men build self-awareness and connection with other men, like the **Mankind Project**. These programs can help men realize they're not alone in their desire to have authentic connection with other men.

"It's a great way to find out that there's power and potential safety in just being real with people," says Ellenberg. "The benefit of seeing thousands of men reveal so-called 'deep dark secrets' about themselves—and not only not being shamed for it, but actually encouraged, supported, and admired for it—is something that most guys just don't get normally."

The **keys to friendship**, as outlined in Franco's book, may also help men build closer connections with other men. After initiating contact with another guy, whether it's getting a beer after work or meeting for a walk, you can go from there. Broaching more personal topics, expressing appreciation, or showing affection are all good ways to let someone know you're interested in a deeper friendship, if they are interested, too.

Though that may feel risky for some men, often their fears of a negative reaction are just that—fears. Most people respond more positively than you might think to someone reaching out to them.

"If you want a closer friendship, you have to pay the price, which is to reveal more about yourself," says Ellenberg. "As Gandhi said, 'Be the change you want to see in the world.' If you want more openness in a friendship, the best thing to do is to be more open yourself. Don't wait."

Source: https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why_friendships_among_men_are_so_important?

Watch for Notices that Medicare Advantage and Part D Plans Must Send if They Make Changes During The Year

Medicare Advantage (MA) Plans and Medicare prescription drug plans (Part D) must notify you of any changes they make during the plan year. Typical reasons for sending a notice include changes made to your provider network or formulary.

Network changes:

A network is a group of doctors, hospitals, and medical facilities that contract with a plan to provide services. If you are enrolled in an MA Plan, you typically pay less when seeing in-network providers.

In-network providers can leave a plan at any time. When a provider leaves a plan's network, the plan should send all members who see that provider a written notice at least 30 days before the provider leaves the network.

Mid-year formulary changes:

You may receive drug coverage through your MA Plan or through a stand-alone Part D plan. If your drug plan makes formulary changes during the year, you have certain rights depending on why the plan made the change.

Specifically, if your plan is making maintenance changes, they must give you 60 days notice or provide you with a 60 day **transition refill**.

Maintenance changes include:

- Covering a generic drug instead of a brand-name drug, or changing the tier of a brand-name drug after introducing a generic option
- Adding coverage restrictions to a drug
- Removing a non-Part D drug that had been unintentionally included on the formulary
- Making formulary changes based on new clinical guidelines or Food and Drug Administration (FDA) safety concerns

Note: If a drug is declared unsafe by the FDA and withdrawn from the market, a plan can remove the drug from their formulary at any time. Plans should notify affected individuals, but they are not required to give you 60 days notice.

Plans may make other changes that are not considered maintenance changes. If your plan makes other formulary changes, and you are taking an affected drug, your plan must allow you to continue taking that drug for the rest of the year as long as it is medically necessary. Your plan should send you a notice explaining that you are exempt from the change for the rest of the year.

Plans should send you an updated copy of the formulary in the mail if you are affected by any changes. They should also update accessible formulary information online and in print.

Source: Medicare Interactive: <https://www.medicareinteractive.org/get-answers/medicare-health-coverage-options/medicare-advantage-plan-overview/notices-that-medicare-advantage-and-part-d-plans-must-send-if-they-make-changes-during-the-year>

'Act on RAISE' Campaign Started

The National Alliance for Caregiving, in solidarity with the aging, disability rights and patient advocacy communities, has launched a new campaign, "**Act on RAISE**," that brings together stakeholders across the caregiving continuum to strengthen the nation's first-ever National Strategy to support America's 53 million family caregivers.

The **2022 National Strategy to Support Family Caregivers** was created to support family caregivers of all ages, from youth to grandparents, and regardless of where they live or what caregiving looks like for them and their loved ones. The strategy was developed jointly by the advisory councils created by the Recognize, Assist, Include, Support, and Engage (RAISE) Family Caregiving Act and the Supporting Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Act, with extensive input from the public, including family caregivers and the people they support.

Act on RAISE comes on the heels of an **executive action** taken by the White House to support family caregivers and direct care workers in an initial step toward implementation of the National Strategy.

The campaign is focused on the following pillars:

Mobilize and align stakeholders across the caregiving continuum around priorities and advocacy opportunities in support of the National Strategy.

Educate policymakers about the actions outlined in the National Strategy and opportunities for implementation.

Raise awareness of the far-reaching impacts of caregiving on families, communities, and the economy.

SCAM of the Month Alert

NH AG Office Issues Consumer Alert About Scammers Sending Fraudulent Letters from the Attorney General's Office

The fraudulent letter appears to be issued on Attorney General's Office official letterhead and falsely purports to be signed by a former New Hampshire Deputy Attorney General. The recipient of the letter lives out-of-state. The letter falsely claims that the recipient's identity has been used in connection with a purchase through an online retailer. The letter falsely claims that the Attorney General's Office is investigating the "unsanctioned transaction" and seeks the recipient's cooperation. The letter warns that any of the recipient's accounts (financial and non-financial) linked with the recipient's social security number will be shut down. The letter also provides contact information that is not legitimately associated with the Attorney General's Office or with any other law enforcement agency.

Attorney General Formella offers the following tips to avoid falling victim to this scam:

- Know that the New Hampshire Attorney General's Office will never send correspondence to anyone threatening to shut down or seize their personal accounts;
- Be wary of any unexpected correspondence purporting to be from any law enforcement agency, including the New Hampshire Attorney

General's Office, threatening to shut down or seize financial accounts, or seeking personal identifying information, including information related to your financial accounts and social security number;

- Always verify contact information provided in correspondence purporting to be sent from a law enforcement agency, including the Attorney General's Office, through a known and trusted source, such as an official government website. Never assume that the contact information (e-mail, telephone, etc.) provided in correspondence sent to you is legitimate, especially if the correspondence requests personal identifying information or payment. The Attorney General's Office official contact information can be found at www.doj.nh.gov.

If you or someone you know receives this scam letter or has fallen victim to this or another scam, report it to your local police department and the Consumer Protection and Antitrust Bureau of the Attorney General's Office. Complaints can be filed at: <https://www.doj.nh.gov/consumer/complaints/index.htm> or by calling the Consumer Hotline at (603) 271-3641.

Everyone Can Prevent Medicare Fraud

Medicare Fraud Prevention Week Starts 6/5

Fraud costs Medicare an estimated \$60 billion per year. It costs Medicare beneficiaries in time, stress, their medical identities, and even their health. It costs families, friends, and caregivers in worry and lost work when helping their loved ones recover from falling victim to Medicare fraud.

"Medicare fraud has a devastating impact on both beneficiaries and the Medicare program," said **Terri Vineyard**, NH Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) Director.

"We teach people how to avoid experiencing Medicare fraud. By preventing fraud from happening, this program helps individuals and protects the Medicare program for generations to come."

Learn how to protect yourself and your loved ones by joining the Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) and their partners for Medicare Fraud Prevention Week, held June 5-11, 2023. The start date is June 5, or "6-5,"

because most people become eligible for Medicare when they turn 65 years old.

Learn more about Medicare Fraud Prevention Week at www.smpresource.org.

SMPs help educate and empower Medicare beneficiaries in the fight against health care fraud. Your SMP, located in New Hampshire at your local ServiceLink, can help you with your questions, concerns, or complaints about potential fraud and abuse issues. It also provides information and educational presentations.



Introducing Poison Perils with Frank & Louise

Editor's Note: *The Northern New England Poison Center is working to expand their outreach to older adults in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont. To illustrate some situations in which older adults might benefit from a call to the poison center, a series of stories featuring a senior couple, Frank and Louise Wilmot, and their dog Bailey. A fresh story is planned every other month.*

Louise woke to the sound of Bailey, her wheaten terrier, whining to go outside, so she stepped into slippers and a robe and headed to the kitchen.

She let Bailey out into the backyard, then reached into the cabinet for a glass and her thyroid pills. "Only four left," she noted as she swallowed the blue pill with a sip of water, "I'll have to call for a refill."

Suddenly an eruption of barking came from the backyard: her neighbor Angela's cat had Bailey cornered against the hedge separating the yards again. "Grand," thought Louise as she placed her glass in the sink and hurried out to rescue Bailey, "he'll wake the entire neighborhood."

"Satan, you leave him alone and go back to your own yard!" Louise stage whispered, flapping her bathrobe at the fat feline.

"Her name is Satin, not Satan," snapped Angela, responding to the racket from her own back door, "I don't know why your dog can't leave her be!"

The cat waddled victoriously home through the hedge. Louise retrieved her dog, not bothering to point out who had been the instigator.

Once back in the kitchen she reached into the cabinet for a glass and her thyroid pills. She swallowed the blue pill with a sip of water and as she placed the glass in the sink, she noticed another glass there. With a sinking feeling, she looked at the two glasses and realized her mistake. A quick recount of the pills in the bottle confirmed it: she had taken her medicine twice.

"Frank!"

"Just toast and coffee for me" her husband replied from the bedroom.

"No, Frank, come here, I think I've got a problem!"

"Knew that when I married you" he muttered, entering the kitchen. "What's up?"

"I think I took my thyroid pill twice. I got distracted by the chaos outside, and I took it twice!"

"All right, let's not panic. We can call the pharmacy. How do you feel?"

"I feel fine right now, but the pharmacy isn't open yet," she replied.

"Where's that magnet from the poison center? Don't they handle these types of things?" Frank said,

POISON PERILS

With Frank & Louise



Meet Frank and Louise Wilmot

Frank, 72, is a retired engineer who enjoys gardening, fishing, and shouting at the television. Louise, 68, is a retired middle school teacher who likes to travel, read, and ignore Frank's shouting at the television. They share their New England home with a happy little wheaten terrier named Bailey.

looking among the photos and notes on the fridge. "Here it is!"

A quick call to the Northern New England Poison Center allayed their fears. The poison specialist reviewed the medication and dosage, asked whether Louise usually had any side effects from the medication, went over Louise's medication list, and reassured her that it was not an emergency. She even offered to send them a pair of pill minders to sort medications for each day.

"Crisis averted," Frank said, "how's about that coffee?"

Medication errors happen! If you think you've taken too much or the wrong medication, you can call the Northern New England Poison Center 24/7 at 1-800-222-1222 for free, confidential advice.

TAKE THE
ANTI-AGEISM
PLEDGE



Go to <https://agefriendly.community/anti-ageism-pledge/> to add your name.

"I stand for a world without ageism, where all people of all ages are valued and respected. I acknowledge that ageism is harmful to me and others around me, and to our workforce, communities, and economy. I know that the struggle to eliminate ageism will not end with a pledge, and that I must act to transform my own bias, and the bias in our institutions and systems.

I will speak out against the age injustices I see, call attention to ageist language and stereotypes, and educate myself, my family, friends, co-workers and peers about the importance of being actively anti-ageist and promoting age equity in all aspects of life."

Update from the NH Department of Military Affairs and Veterans Services

The NH Department of Military Affairs and Veterans Services would like to recognize and thank our Service members, Veterans and their families for their service to our state and nation by sharing wellness opportunities and other resources:

Resource Guides Available for NH Service Members, Veterans and Their Families

The **Fort NH Military and Veterans Resource Guide** Framework of Veteran-Friendly services provides support as you “Live, Serve, Work and Play in New Hampshire”

This 94-page online resource guide offers resources, supports and opportunities available to military and veteran families in New Hampshire. It is divided into three separate sections: Section One is for military and veteran family resources; Section Two is academic or recreational resources for children of military families; Section Three is comprised of available resources for all NH residents.

Other available resource guides include:

- **NH State Veteran Benefits** New Hampshire property tax credits and NH Military and Veterans education benefits
- **NHs Commitment to Serving Veterans Brochure** List of Federal and State Departments that benefit the Veteran community
- **NH North Country Veterans Committee Resource Guide** Veterans and providers local guide to community resources in the North Country
- **NH Veterans Resource Directory** Covering employment and training, life insurance, health care, housing, legal assistance and additional resources

Direct links to all of these resources, along with others of interest can be found at <https://www.dmavs.nh.gov/veterans-services/helpful-veteran-information>

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Events:

Guided iRest Mediation for Sleep and Relaxation (phone-based class)

A weekly phone-based class by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the Guided iRest Mediation for Sleep and Relaxation. “Integrative Restoration™ (iRest) is an evidence-based, mind-body approach that offers tools to help you relax deeply, release stress, increase resiliency, improve

your interpersonal relationships and empower you to practice self-regulation and self-care to support your health and wellness.” This mediation session is held every Thursday evening 8:00-9:00pm ET.

This class is phone based and is available to all veterans. No registration is required. <https://www.va.gov/outreach-and-events/events/52258/>

Virtual LGBTQ+ Veteran Outreach Symposium (on-line event)

Thursday, June 8, 2023 / 1:00-3:00pm / Free

“In recognition of Pride Month, this symposium will celebrate LGBTQ+ service in military, as well as Veteran contributions to our Nation. Guest speakers will educate and empower attendees about the benefits and services available to them and highlight VA outreach efforts to bridge the gap between the VA and LGBTQ+ Veterans, service members, family members, caregivers, and survivors. The symposium will also provide information on VA benefits, to include filing a VA disability claim online, and the Sergeant First Class (SFC) Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act.”

Link to join: <https://veteransaffairs.webex.com/veteransaffairs/j.php?MTID=m6243ba290b4098a143f13fdb134acf7>

The NH Department of Military Affairs and Veterans Services works in close partnership with the NH National Guard to serve NH Service Members, Veterans, their families and local communities across the state. It is comprised of the Division of Veterans Services, Division of Community Based Military Programs, Business Administration Office and the NH State Veterans Cemetery. Go to their website and social media channels to learn more:

Website: <https://www.dmavs.nh.gov/>

Social Media: Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/NHDMAVS>; LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/company/nhdmavs/>; YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/@nhdmavs>

Let's Get Social!

The NH State Commission on Aging is now on **Facebook** (<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100086639930636>) and **Twitter** (<https://twitter.com/AgingInNH>).

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter to stay up-to-date on the latest Commission news as well as insights from across the field of aging.

State Budget Update: What's In It For Us?

By **MARTHA McLEOD**

NHAHA Community Engagement Coordinator

The House passed their version of the 2024-2025 NH State Budget on a bipartisan voice vote in early April. This was accomplished by a last-minute compromise reached between Republican and Democratic leadership. The process of passing the budget in the House was packed with floor amendments but in the end, all 192 Democrats present voted for the compromise amendment, while 68 percent of Republicans present did the same. The vote sets the House position, and they will now use that position to negotiate with the Senate when they pass their version of the budget.

The Senate Finance Committee has been working hard to craft their version of the budget. They retained many of their bills with fiscal notes and have been working through those issues during the month of May.

What's In It for Older Adults?

The House budget **contains raises for Medicaid rates of \$132 million over two years**, which will benefit older adults who get care at home or in long-term settings, helping to ensure that the workforce is available.

Senate Bill (SB) 36, the System of Care for Health Aging is one of those bills that the Senate retained, and the Senate Finance Committee has included the bill's language in their budget draft.

SB 234, which directs the Department of Health and Human Services to develop a **public awareness campaign on Alzheimer's disease** and related dementias, is another bill that was retained by the Senate and has been included in the Senate version of the budget.

SB 263, the reauthorization of Medicaid Expansion (MedEx), covers medical services for about 13,000 older adults. The House version of the budget included a two-year reauthorization for MedEx. The Senate passed SB 263 with a permanent reauthorization of MedEx. Things got a little messy when the full House passed SB 263 and sent it to the House Finance Committee which seems poised to recommend retaining the bill and holding it until next year's session. If SB 263 dies in the House, the primary legislative vehicle will be HB 2 which contains a two-year reauthorization. That would most likely be amended by the Senate to either permanent reauthorization or a compromise term deemed more palatable by House Republicans. This is one item to watch if a Committee of Conference forms on the

budget. Will MedEx be reauthorized and if so, for how long?

How Does This End?

The Senate must act on all House bills, including HB1 and HB2 by June 8th. Following the full Senate vote on their budget, the bill will go back to the House of Representatives. The House and Senate must agree on the final budget version that they will present to the Governor for his consideration and signature. This negotiation process is called the **Committee of Conference**.

To summarize, if the House does not agree with the Senate version of the budget, they will ask for a Committee of Conference. In the Committee of Conference process, House and Senate budget writers meet in conference committee to forge a compromise version of the House and Senate budgets. A selection of House of Representatives members and Senate members will hash out what they think the budget should be. That final document, the conference committee budget, will once again get an up or down vote from the full House and the full Senate. The final version of the state budget, agreed to by both chambers, is presented to the Governor for consideration. He can sign it, veto it, or let it become law without his signature.

As June begins, we are awaiting the Senate's final version and the vote that will send HB1 and HB2 back to the House for consideration. We are keeping track of the budget items that support older adults such as the language in SB 36 and MedEx and will let advocates know of opportunities to advocate for older adults.

As always, if you have any questions or want to receive our action alerts, let us know at mmcleod@new-futures.org

This column is a regular feature of Aging Matters. We thank the [New Hampshire Alliance for Healthy Aging](#) and [New Futures](#) for the information they provide to keep readers informed on activities with the NH State Legislature.

Who is My Elected Official?

Senator Jeanne Shaheen / www.shaheen.senate.gov

Senator Maggie Hassan / www.hassan.senate.gov

Rep. Chris Pappas, 1st Congressional Dist
<https://pappas.house.gov>

Rep. Annie Kuster, 2nd Congressional Dist
<https://kuster.house.gov/>

Use this link to find and contact your New Hampshire State Senator or Representative: <https://www.gencourt.state.nh.us>

Visit your town or city's website to find information on your local elected officials.

Links to Learn More

The following is a sample of information regarding older adults that came across our desk this month. We thought our readers might find this information interesting. Please follow the links or type the URL address into your browser for the complete story.

HHS Launches New Website: Supporting Populations With Mental Health, Drugs, or Alcohol Issues

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recently launched a website (<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-support>) to help the general public identify available mental health resources, explore unbiased information about treatment options, and learn how to get the support needed for issues related to mental health, drugs, and alcohol.

Transportation Barriers Causing Adults to Forgo Healthcare

A new analysis from the Urban Institute shows more than 21% of U.S. adults without access to a vehicle or public transit went without needed medical care last year. These individuals were significantly more likely to skip care than those who reported neighborhood access to public transit services (9%). Find the analysis at <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/more-one-five-adults-limited-public-transit-access-forgo-health-care-because-transportation-barriers>

'Becoming a Grandfamily' Resource Pages

A new two-pager from the Grandfamilies and Kinship Support Network provides information for kin/grandfamily caregivers who are not involved with the child welfare system, covering initial steps to take when children come into their care. It is full of vetted links to information, all conveniently collected in one short resource. We are grateful to our partners at **ZERO TO THREE** for their leadership in producing these monthly resources and to Network Subject Matter Expert and Management Committee Member **Gail Engel**, a Generations United GRAND Voice, for her invaluable review and feedback. Find the resource at <https://www.gksnetwork.org/resources/first-steps/>

New Hampshire Senior Games

Registration for the 2023 NH Senior Games is now open! Now celebrating its 36th year, the games offer a broad range of sports for older adults, 50 years of age and over. The games are also seeking volunteers to help out at various venues this summer.

To learn more, or sign up, please visit: <https://nhseniorgames.org/>

'Supporting Diverse Family Caregivers' Guidebook Released

The National Alliance for Caregiving (NAC) has released a new guidebook, *Supporting Diverse Family Caregivers: A Guide for Patient Advocacy Groups*. It includes fact sheets from the Diverse Elders Coalition - to assist patient advocacy groups in their efforts to support diverse family caregivers. Get the guide here: <https://www.caregiving.org/guidebook-supporting-diverse-caregivers/thinking-differently-about-the-value-of-older-workers>

A new guide from the Encore Network summarizes the policies and practices that age-friendly employers are implementing and the resulting benefits. The guide – *Age is Now a Strategic Imperative: An Employers Guide to Engaging Older Workers* – says, “Age diversity contributes to productivity, improved morale, innovation, workforce stability, and profitability.

Information about the guide was published in an article by Laura Aka on WorkingNation.com (<https://workingnation.com/thinking-differently-about-the-value-of-older-workers/>). The guide itself is available at <https://encorenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/edd/2023/05/Age-Friendly-Employers-Guide-final.pdf>

June Medicare Minute

“Medicare Minutes” are short, engaging presentations on current Medicare topics hosted by the Medicare Rights Center. The presentation is streamed live using a Medicare Interactive profile.

June Topic:

How to Lower Your Prescription Drug Costs

• Thursday, June 15, 2023 • 3:00 - 3:30 PM (EST)

The stress of affording your medication is a familiar feeling for too many people. In this Medicare Minute, we'll review ways to make your prescription drugs more affordable—including cost assistance programs, helpful strategies to discuss with your doctor, and legislation that should lower everyone's drug costs in the near future.

REGISTER: <https://www.medicareinteractive.org/medicare-minute-login>

866-452-1693

Protect Your Health with One Call

WellnessLink provides anyone in New Hampshire aged 60 and older with easy to understand, accurate, no-cost-to-you coordination and information for COVID-19 testing, vaccination and follow up care.



HOW IT WORKS

- Call 866-452-1693 to speak directly with a WellnessLink expert in New Hampshire
 - Ask your questions about COVID-19
 - Can I get vaccinated at home?
 - Do test kits expire?
 - Can I get my flu shot at the same time?
 - A WellnessLink expert will explain your local options and help you choose what works best for you.
 - Receive support to access services
 - Getting tested
 - Booking a vaccination appointment
 - Transportation assistance
 - WellnessLink offers follow up to confirm that your needs have been met.
- Translation and TTY services are available.

Protect Your Health with One Call



In partnership with ServiceLink Resource Centers, NH's Public Health Networks and the NH Department of Health and Human Services