

**Williamstown
Council on
Aging**

Harper Center Bulletin

**Harper Center
Bulletin # 108**

March 1st, 2012

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March 2012 Newsletter

So where was the snow all winter? And really, who heard of forty to fifty degree temperatures in the month of February as a matter of normal? Not normal people, not normal! The experts are saying that this is one of the three least snowy winters in history. OK, I'll bite; when were the other two? I don't remember anything this bad at any time recently. And I haven't been on skis all winter. Not once. I should have gone with my friends when they went back in October when we had the Halloween storm.

Well, lets look at the bright side. There are a lot of people who didn't suffer as much in the cold this season, and I know that we had some frigid days but really, not that bad. I didn't even seem to feel that damp out there. Down the street from Harper, there were people playing tennis on the college courts last week. And one of our regular friends here says that she has had a Robin in the backyard recently. And we have all seen the Bluebirds outside the windows here. And who knows, maybe the golf courses will open earlier than usual this season. That would be a good thing!

But I just hope that the absence of snow does not mean that we'll pay for it in a too dry summer with water restrictions. Oh, and sick trees, bad fruit or perhaps overcompensate for no snow with too much rain. I wonder if the Mayans predicted this too...

It will officially be spring very soon, actually on March 20, so we'll definitely have a "Welcome Spring" luncheon that day. Watch-it will snow!



March Friendship helps the...

The charity for March is a simple one; a skein of yarn, worsted weight. Any kind of skein will do, a half skein, a quarter used, a new fresh from the store bought one, all gifts will be accepted! And any color will do.

The yarn is needed to create knitted squares which will ultimately be turned into lap robes. The finished products will be donated to Hospice, local nursing homes and to several former spruces residents who are recovering from Irene. It's a gift from the heart, nobody is asking for labor from you though volunteers to help will be welcome. And we all know that lap robes won't happen without yarn so please help!

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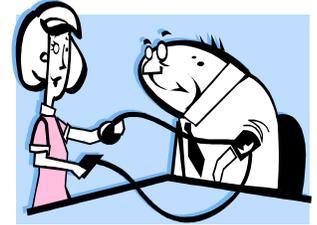
HOURS OF OPERA-
TION; MONDAY
THROUGH FRIDAY,
8:00 A.M. TO 4:00 P.M.
AND AT 11:00 ON SUN-
DAY FOR LUNCH!!!

PROVIDING SERVICE
TO WILLIAMSTOWN
ELDERS SINCE 1966!

Healthy screening...cholesterol, glucose and blood pressure

Cholesterol is a substance made in our livers, is found in the foods we eat and are substances which a body needs to function properly. For example the creation of hormones and vitamin D depend upon cholesterol. So, despite what we think when we hear the word "cholesterol", it's not all bad. It's just when there's too much that we could develop problems...

Glucose screenings measure the amount of glucose, or blood sugar if you will, in the body. Glucose itself is good, it's a major source of energy and is stored in the liver, fat and muscle. Again, it's when we have too much glucose that we can develop issues. One of those is diabetes and all the side complications it brings.



A blood pressure screening? I can hear you now, we do that every month! Yup, we do. Blood pressure is the force of blood against the arteries. Did you know that high blood pressure is the most common primary diagnosis in the US and one out of three Americans has high blood pressure? That's why we check it regularly!

All that aside, our friends at REACH are offering a free cholesterol, glucose and blood pressure screening here at Harper on Tuesday March 6. And you'll have a few minutes to speak with a nurse if there are any concerns. Remember, this is just a screening, just a way to check on "things" you might wish to discuss with your doctor. Sign ups for 15 minute sessions are required as slots are limited so sign up now! Call 458-8250 for further information.

Taxes

It's interesting from a Harper historical perspective that when I came here we had one certified AARP tax aide and he helped a relatively small number of people every year. Today we have four tax aides and the number of people we help here in Williamstown has grown immensely. Hey-provide a good product and people will come! And that is exactly what our friend Pim Goodbody and his band of volunteer tax aides do all over Northern Berkshire County. Of course, we're only concerned with what happens here in Williamstown. So here goes: Free assistance to complete your 2011 state and federal income taxes is available every Saturday morning from 9:00 until noon and Tuesday evening from 6:00-9:00 until April 14th. The program is open to individuals of any age who have low to moderate income however we'll pay special attention to seniors. Appointments are required for each session, individuals should bring all pertinent 2011 tax documentation, their 2010 return and be prepared to spend an hour. In and out, no problem. Call us at 458-8250 to reserve your spot- it's not too late yet but we're filling up fast...



Respite Care at Sweetbrook...

Caregivers wear many hats and are frequently forced to juggle them as they surf between job and family and caregiving responsibilities. Trust me, I know this, I wore these shoes as a caregiver for my parents several years ago and it can be unbelievably stressful. There are relief options out there in the community and one is available right here in Williamstown-respite care at Sweetbrook. Respite care provides relief to caregivers in a very supportive environment. It can provide peace of mind while attending to personal business, heading out on vacation or as a means of simply relieving stress from the demands of caregiving. Interested? On Thursday afternoon, March 8th at 1:00 our friends from Sweetbrook will be here to talk about this great care option and they'll bring their world famous cookies!



Why can't I take my pills with me?

So you go to the emergency room and then you find yourself in a hospital bed attended to by a host of hospital type people, nurses, orderlies, physician and so on. You stay all night being monitored, blood pressure, blood draws, the whole banana. During the course of the process, you are given different medications you already take because, as we all know, you cannot bring your meds into the hospital with you. And, think about it, hospitals do need to know what is coming in to their realm, they do administer medications which might cause a negative reaction if they prescribe something which doesn't work well with another pill you already take. [Why do you think we stress file of life...but that's another story] The following morning you are discharged home and shortly after you get a bill for the medications you took at the hospital, even though you already have those same pills, because Medicare won't pay if you are an "observation patient" versus "inpatient".

You spent all night at the hospital and you weren't admitted? Really? What goes on here?



On Tuesday afternoon, March 20th, Cindy Rennell, Stacia Gentile and Laurie Therrien from the NARH will be here to talk about this issue and explain the inpatient versus observation patient distinction and Medicare regulations governing the issue. They'll also talk about what the hospital is doing to address the issue. Of course we'll provide lunch first, stay tuned for the menu-there will be pasta involved-and the sign up

The Nursing Home code

And now another informative session regarding another of those annoying groups of alphabet and word concoctions Marion and I have been asked to decipher here and there. It's almost as if we work in a secret environment where the operations of the enterprise are clouded in alphabets and phrases designed to mean nothing at all to the regular Joe on the street. Gobbledygook for the masses, meaningful to the elite few pulling the strings. Actually, it's the governments way to simplify processes by assigning codes and abbreviations to enable efficient processing and unfortunately we have become so accustomed to using them that we blabber them at you without thinking. You've heard them-short stay, skilled versus unskilled services, PT, OT, Speech, rehab, the first 100 days, Medicare versus Masshealth, spend down assets, blah, blah, blah. That's what it sounds like eh?

Anyway, on Thursday March 29th at 12:30, Colleen Nurney, Social Work Director at Williamstown Commons will talk with us about this subject and when you leave here, you too will be a code breaker. Of course there will be refreshments to follow!



Women's health issues...

On Thursday afternoon, March 22nd at 1:00 our "Here's to Your Health" series with Interim Health Care continues with a discussion of women's health issues. Our presenters will be our friends Kira and Darlene. Topics to be covered will include the major health issues women typically face throughout life. They'll touch on responses to health issues which may arise, discuss various options including how women can educate themselves and empower themselves to take charge of their health. Some of our friends here at Harper have had unfortunate issues in life and many of us know people who have or have been thru significant health issues. Last month we had a great conversation about managing medications-let's have another one! Refreshments will be served!





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**WILLIAMSTOWN
COUNCIL ON AGING**



This is a good spot to put out some other house notes I couldn't fit into the rest of the paper. Maybe I need to add a page eh?

St. Patty's Day is Saturday March 17 but we'll start early so on Friday the 16th we'll be hosting our annual "Green" bingo with special prizes for the winners. It's an annual tradition going back to 2001 and now in it's 12th year. It will be the last St Pat's of 2012 so we'll have end of St Pat's special snacks too. Bet the Mayans didn't anticipate this...

On March 27th we be hosting our second Hot Dog Extravaganza at noon immediately before the Friendship Club bingo session. Once more we'll be offering gourmet hot dogs and appropriate salads and beverages. It was quite popular when we did it in December and this second offering, the 'Great hot Dog reprise' is by popular demand. I guess people really like hot dogs!



Page four news and notes

Our foot care magician, Serena Merrill, will be in the house on Tuesday March 20th to work wonders on your feet, clipping nails, reducing calluses and massaging the soreness out. As this is written, there is one open slot for March and she's booked for April, sign up for May now!

For those of you who have found yourselves to be challenged by the very technical stuff which comprises our health care insurance paperwork system, our health care insurance guru, SHINE Counselor Peg Jenks, will be in the house on Wednesday March 21 at 10:30 to help. Appointments are not necessary but appreciated; Peg is also available for individual consultation outside of normal hours by contacting us in the COA office at 458-8250.

Now some good and some sad news. For the last two years our monthly Blood Pressure Clinic has been facilitated by Interim Health Care. They're not able to come up from Pittsfield and help us with this any longer- we will continue to see Kira in our monthly "health" series so they'll still be hanging out with us monthly and we thank you so much for supporting the Williamstown Council on Aging!

We had to find a new BP clinic sponsor and our good friends and neighbors from Sweetbrook have graciously agreed to help! YIPPEE!!! So, the monthly Blood Pressure Clinic, now officially sponsored by our friends from Sweetbrook, will take place on Tuesday March 13th, at noon immediately preceding the Friendship Club meeting and every second Tuesday ongoing. Good deal, right?

Finally, the monthly Brown Bag, sponsored by the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts will be at Harper for pick up or delivery on Friday March 30th. Brown Bag is literally a brown paper sack filled with shelf stable foods and fresh fruits and veggies in season. Interested? Contact us here at Harper at 458-8250, and we'll help you thru the minimal applications process!