



The Centerpiece

For Active Senior Living

Serving the Community since 1974

The Center-Merrimac Living Well

December 2023
Newsletter Volume 43 Issue 12

100 East Main Street
Merrimac, MA 01860

Tel: 978-346-9549 Fax: 978-346-0528
Hours M-TH 8:30-4pm, F 8:30-1pm

Web: www.townofmerrimac.com/council-on-aging

Executive Director: Brienne R. Walsh:
bwalsh@townofmerrimac.com

Facebook: Merrimac Council on Aging &
Senior Center

Find our Newsletter Online:
[Senior Center/ Council on Aging - Town of Merrimac, MA](#)

Director's Corner



Dear Friends:

Seasons Greetings! It is hard to believe that another year is almost over! The holiday season is my favorite time of year and I enjoy gift giving, holiday lights, hot cocoa, trimming the tree and all the fun things that make this time of year so special! One of my other favorite things here at the Center is our Annual Mystery Holiday Raffle! Many of you have been participants in our raffle in past years and we can't wait to show you all the things we have in store for this year's raffle! Be sure to check out Page 9 for all the details! Don't miss out!

We also have lots of other fun holiday events this month, with a little something for everyone! I hope to see you all!

On another note, as we enter December and colder weather, I have a few housekeeping items to mention this month. As a reminder, during inclement weather, we follow the local school district, Pentucket Regional, for whether or not we will have snow days, delayed openings or early closings. Please also be sure to keep your walkways and stairs shoveled and clear so that our drivers can deliver your lunches safely!

Wishing you all a wonderful holiday season and a very Happy New Year! Stay well!

-Brienne

Reminders:

**** Advanced Registration is required for all activities, classes and events ****

**** No OUTSIDE food is permitted in the building, beverages are allowed. Thank you for respecting our community!**

Inside this Issue

Director's Corner.....Pg 1
LGBTQ+, Center ClosuresPg.3
Lunch Ordering& SNAP.....Pg 4
Bingo, Active Events, Bill DukePg.5
Program Updates & Class Info.....Pg 6
Trips & Travel Info.....Pg 7
MLD Presentation, Caroling , Cookies,Pg.8
Movie/Mystery Holiday Raffle.....Pg.9
Community OutreachPg. 10
Health & Wellness News.....Pg 11
BP Clinics & Thank You.....Pg 12
Dec. Awareness & ActivitiesPg 13
Greetings & ContactPg 14&16
Inserts: Monthly Menu , Daily Calendar, Holiday Tea, ,Sheryl Faye Presents Nurses W/a Mission, , Pizza& Poetry, New Year's Party, Mini Tree Craft





LGBTQ+ Social Connection

Evening

Join us for a meal and conversation!

Please register in advance

Hot meal provided free of charge



Thursday December 21, 2023

5:30pm-8pm

New members welcome, feel free to join us!

Are You Looking for Event Space?

Our rooms are available for rental on most evenings and weekends.

Join us to host baby showers, bridal showers, birthday parties, holiday events and more!

Call Brienne at 978 346 9549



Health Advisory:

Please remember to stay home if you are ill or unwell. This is for the safety of all of our community members as well as staff and volunteers.

Thank you!



The Senior Center will be closed on Friday 12/22/23, Monday 12/25/23 and Tuesday 12/26/23..

We will be open on Wednesday 12/27/23 and Thursday 12/28/23.

We will also be closed on Friday 12/29/23 and Monday 1/1/24

No meals from 12/22-12/26/23 and No Meals on 12/29/23 and 1/1/24

Continuing Changes in Senior Center Operations:

Van and NEET Transportation:

8 clients per ride will be allowed on the van to go on van trips. NEET rides are 1 per car.

- 1. Client encouraged to wear a mask**
- 2. Client must use Sanitizer Gel before boarding the van.**
- 3. The Driver cannot assist the client boarding or de-boarding the van/car.**
- 4. Donation for ride should be place in envelope and placed in basket driver will have place on seat behind him/her for your convenience.**
- 5. The van will be sanitized after each ride and before another passenger embarks.**
- 6. Call well in advance (at least 4 business days) for a ride as we are limited in our ability to offer rides.**

A. Eligibility requirement:

- a) Clients must be able to self-transport from their home to the vehicle, enter and exit the back seat. Walkers and Wheelchairs must be done by client only, not the driver.**
- b) Clients must be able to buckle their own seat belt.**
- c) Clients must return signed NEET registration/guidelines form prior to transportation.**

B. Prescreening:

COA scheduler must ask pre-screening COVID-19 questions prior to appointment.

Ordering Meals:

To order a meal, call the Senior Center at 978-346-9549 by Thursday at 11 for meals the following week or order by the month. You can also now order by email! Send your name, phone number, address, dates and meals to be ordered at emurray@townofmerrimac.com

Delivery: Meals will be delivered to your door between 12 and 1 (Merrimac only) with minimal contact. Please mail in your payment by check or leave envelope taped to your door. Food will be left at the door if no one is at home. Meals are \$5.00 per meal, \$25/ per week (as of 5/2/22).

Order food delivered, **for in house dining on Mon-Thurs** or pickup!

Give the Gift of a Lift



**Assist older adults with transportation
to medical appointments.**

Volunteer to drive when and where you want.

**Learn more at www.driveforneet.org/volunteer
or call 978-388-7474.**





Merrimac Senior Center
The Centerpiece for Active Senior Living

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

☐ Please mail my newsletter (\$8.00 for the year)

☐ Please email my newsletter to my email address above (No charge)

Newsletter is available at: <http://townofmerrimac.com/184/Senior-Center>

Please return this form to:

Merrimac Senior Center
100 East Main Street
Merrimac, MA 01860

If paying by check, please make out to: Merrimac COA

BINGO

Bingo is in Session!

Mondays

December 4 ,11, 18

Upstairs Activity Room

Beverages Welcome, Snack Provided

Limited to 20 Players.



Watercolor Class w/Bill Duke

Monday 12/04/2023

1-4pm

Limited to 10 participants

\$20/per person payable on class day.
Sign up is first come, first serve and will be lottery based if the list is long.

See the Calendar insert for Games schedule!

Legal Clinic Jason Ebacher, Esq

Thursday 12/14/23 10am-11am

By Appointment , Call Ahead!



Active Events to Keep your Mind and Body Engaged

Monthly Craft Class with Denise

Mini Christmas Tree Making with Country Gardens of Rowley -

\$12 cash

Wednesday 12/12/23 at 1:30pm

Advance Registration Requested!
Space is limited! See the Insert for more!

Holiday Trivia Thurs. 12/21/23 2pm

Join us for question and answer fun!

Pizza & Poetry

Free Pizza!

Join us to hear poems, discuss your favorites and learn new things!

Tuesday 12/19/23 at 1:30pm

Advanced Registration Needed!

Upcoming Special Events-See Inserts for more details!

Sheryl Faye Presents Queen Elizabeth -A One Woman Show

Thursday 12/7/23 at 1:30pm -Drinks & Snacks Provided!

Women's Discussion Group Wed 12/20/23 at 1:30pm

Holiday Tea Party-Thurs.12/14 at 2pm-Tea & Holiday Snacks!

December Foot Clinic with Barbara Ullman, RN

Tuesday Dec.5th, 2023, 9-12pm

By Appointment Only \$30/per visit/cash only-Limited Slots!

Santa Parade Sun. 12/3/23 at 10:30am-Join us on the van! Call for a seat!



Exercise Classes

Advanced Sign Up Required!

Mondays:

Exercise w/Pam at 9:30am \$5

**EVENING YOGA WITH JANE HAS BEEN
PERMANENTLY CANCELED BY THE INSTRUCTOR.**

Check out our other yoga classes instead!

Tuesdays: Meditation & Yoga w/Bianca \$7/class

Wednesdays:

Chair Yoga w/Mary at 1pm; \$5

Thursdays:

Exercise w/Pam at 9:30am \$5

Fridays: No Classes on Friday



MERRIMAC SENIOR CENTER ADVENTURES TRIPS & TRAVEL

For full event details request a flyer or call the center!

Our Boston Pops Trips is full!

Wentworth by the Sea Holiday Illumination w/-Late Lunch on Your Own

Tuesday December 5, 2023 Van leaves at 2:30pm See the Insert for more details!

Must Register in Advance, Van \$7, returns at 8pm ! Dress for outside!

Dining Out Bells & Romeos –

Join us for lunch –December Mystery Holiday Excursion

Leaves from COA 11:00 AM Thursday 12/21/23

A different excursion each month! Our group will embark on a restaurant adventure to remember! Bus cost is just \$5 and the cost of lunch is on your own!



An Announcement from the Friends of MCOA:

* Happy Holidays from the Friends of the Merrimac COA! We are always looking for ways to raise for the Center, please join us! Our next meeting is on Tuesday 1/9/23 at 1p

*Merrimac Light
Department Rate
Review
Presentation

Monday
12/11/23

11am

At the COA*

**Cookies, Hot Cocoa
and Caroling**

***Wed. 12/13/23
at 11am***



***Join us for a cup of
holiday cheer and
wonderful music of the
season!***

***Featuring a holiday
performance by the
Donaghue School 5th and
6th Grade Chorus***

***Wear Your Holiday Sweat-
ers!***

***Advanced Registration Re-
quired,***

Limited Seating!

G PUZZLES OR BOOKS AT THIS TIME AS WE REORGANIZE OUR LIBRARY.

looking for new members to help fund-
m

Please Note: We are only accepting food pantry donations and Medical Equipment at this time!

4th Annual Mystery Holiday Raffle

Free Holiday Raffle Registration is open from 12/1 to 12/20 **only**



Call the Center at (978) 346-9549

to register, 1 entry per person.

Merrimac Residents only please!

Raffle drawing and delivery on Thurs 12/21/23.

Phone calls will be made in the morning and delivery/pick up arrangements will be for that afternoon.

Monthly Movie!

Best.Christmas.Ever

Starring Brandy Norwood and Heather Graham

Tues. 12/05/23 at 1:30pm

Popcorn and Snacks Provided





***Outreach & Human Services
Bridget Batcheller, MSW***



. Welcome to December! A word that has marked the end of the year and the coming of winter since ancient times. I know it can be cold, and winter seems to drag, but I like to use this time of year as an opportunity to slow down and reflect on the past year and the year to come. I know you may be thinking - ‘slow down?! This is one of the busiest times of the year!’. Yes, that is true but this time of year is meant to be for hibernation and rest, to hunker down and allow our bodies rest so that we can conserve energy. It’s a necessary reminder of how important rest is, something we often forget.

The winter solstice occurs during December and is a great time for self-reflection and new beginnings. I love to use the winter solstice as a way to set new goals and intentions for myself. Since the winter solstice marks the reversal of the sun’s ebbing in the sky, it can be thought of as symbolic of death or rebirth - a perfect time to rethink your current goals or intentions and make them anew.

Every year on the solstice, my family and I would write our goals/intentions for the year and place it in an envelope for us to read the following year. It was always one of my favorite traditions growing up. It’s exciting to look back and see which goals you accomplished or are still working toward, or even how things have changed! It’s a reminder that life is not stagnant



. During the winter solstice, you can also create affirmations, a positive statement that resonates with you and that you want to feel in your daily life. To have your affirmation come to fruition, people say you should write it in the present tense, as if it’s already happened and speak it out loud. Affirmations are a great way to visualize the life you want and how you can achieve that.

Some of my favorite affirmations are:

- I am enough.
- I matter.
- I can do hard things.
- I will get through this.

I hope you take the time during the solstice to think about some of your goals and intentions you want to create for yourself going into the new year, and take some time to rest!

Happy Holidays to all who celebrate! It is fascinating to know that there are so many different holidays that occur in December with different religious and cultural backgrounds.



Greeting from your Public Health Nurse!

Happy December! I hope you all have a happy and healthy holiday season! We are deep into respiratory virus season now and I'd like to once again review commonly circulating viruses at this time.

COVID – 19 -Where are we now? A lot has changed since 2020 when the pandemic occurred. At the time it was a new disease with no pre-existing immunity. There were no specific prevention methods or treatments. The spectrum of the disease was unknown as was the specific transmission. There was extremely limited testing capacity and no vaccine available. Now that we are in 2023 (almost 2024!) we are in a much better place with regard to COVID. We know that we are going to be living with COVID for the foreseeable future. Vaccines and antivirals are widely available. Though there is a risk of evolving variants, the vaccine has been updated (and will likely be updated again at some point in the future) to protect against commonly circulating variants. There is widespread testing with an abundance of in-home testing options. Remember, every U.S. household can place an order to receive four free COVID rapid tests delivered directly to their home. Order online at www.COVIDTests.gov or call 1-800-232-0233. We know that there are people that are at higher risk, including the elderly and those who are immunocompromised and/or with pre-existing chronic health conditions. Transmission occurs through droplets, aerosol and close contact settings increase the spread of the disease. Please feel free to wear a mask to protect yourself and others, especially if you are at high risk, or visiting others who may be. We have masks available at the Senior Center and at the Merrimac Board of Health at Town Hall.

Despite all the progress we have made in regards to COVID infections, older adults continue to make up the most COVID hospitalizations which poses a continued public health threat. From January – August 2023, adults age 65 and older accounted for 63% of all COVID hospitalizations, 61% of intensive care admissions and 88% of in hospital deaths associated with COVID. Most of these older adults had underlying health conditions and only 23% of them had received the bivalent COVID vaccine that was recommended at the time. As of late October 2023, COVID cases remain stable however, COVID remains the cause of most new respiratory virus hospitalizations and deaths.

For up to date reporting of cases in Massachusetts visit:
<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-reporting>



Influenza (Flu) is detected year round but typically circulates in the fall and winter months. Official flu season is October through May, typically peaking between December and February. Symptoms are very similar to COVID symptoms and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills, running nose and feeling very tired. People with flu are most contagious 1 day before symptoms start until about 3-4 days after. Though there is no quarantine for flu, people who are sick should stay home until they are fever free (without the use of fever reducing medication) for 24 hours. There are flu antiviral drugs to treat flu illness and of course, the most important way to prevent the flu is to get vaccinated. The CDC tracks flu cases weekly which can be found on Fluview at: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/index.htm>.

As always, vaccination is the single best way to prevent influenza and its complications. Though September and October are the best times to be vaccinated for flu, if you have not yet been vaccinated, you should get the vaccine now because as long as flu is circulating you can gain protection from the vaccine. The CDC has recently implemented a “Wild to Mild” campaign regarding the flu vaccine. This campaign is to share important information with the public about how getting a flu vaccine can reduce your risk of flu and its potentially serious outcomes. The intent of the Wild to Mild campaign is to reset common public misconception around what a flu vaccine can do in the event that it does not completely prevent illness. The Wild to Mild campaign is based on research showing that many people believe flu vaccination doesn't work because the vaccination may not have prevented illness. The CDC has shifted its work to look at how well flu vaccine works at preventing serious outcomes, like emergency department visits and hospitalizations. This work has contributed to a strong and growing body of evidence that flu vaccination reduces the risk of serious outcomes in people who get vaccinated but still get sick.

Be Well!

Information From: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/index.htm#ILIMap>



Blood Pressure Clinics-Dec.2023

Wednesday Dec. 6th

Wednesday Dec.20th

9am-10am

Please note the change in day!

SHARPS Disposal Drop Off Site

New Containers Available for \$ 10



Public Health Nurse

Office Hours:

Tuesdays 8:30am-2:45pm

Wednesdays 8:30am-10:30am

Thursdays 8:30am-2:45pm

Please feel free to call and leave a message for Danielle at any time!

Many Thanks to All, for the Donations to the Senior Center, Food Pantry and Programming Initiatives

Oct.16th-Nov.15th

(Supporting Nutrition Program & Food Pantry)

Friends of the Merrimac COA

DAVID HEATING AND

COOLING, INC.

Betty Emery

Joe Fantini and Fantini Baking Co.

Amesbury TOPS

Anonymous Donors



This Month's Important Events

AIDS Awareness Month



National Handwashing Awareness



Universal Human Rights Month



The Pool Room is OPEN!

The Pool Room is open! Join us!

Tues & Thurs 9am-12pm or reservation

Do you knit or crotchet?

Would you like to learn?

Join us for Knitting Group

Tuesdays at 1:00pm



Van Trip Transportation

If you would like to go shopping, please call to book a trip in advance. We will do our best to accommodate requests. A minimum of 4

business days is required to book. Thank you.

Veterans Services

Vet Crisis: 1-800-273-8255, press 1

Kevin Hunt, Veterans Services

KHunt@CityofNewburyport.com

Office: 978-462-2201

Fax: 978-462-2275

Newburyport Office: 331 High Street,
Newburyport, MA 01950



Jeremiah Murphy, Veterans Services

Amesbury Office: 978-388-8136

Fax: 978-388-8127/68

68 Elm Street, Amesbury, MA 01913

Feel free to contact either office! Senior citizen veterans or widow(er) of a veteran may be eligible for monthly financial assistance & reimbursement of medical expenses if your income is within certain guidelines. Note: house of residence & vehicles are not counted as assets.



Senator Barry Finegold



Dear Neighbors,

My District Legislative Director, Janice Phillips will have office hours at the Merrimac Senior Center each month.

December Office hours will be on Thursday 12/7/23 from 10am-11am.

We loved seeing everyone at the November Office Hours as well as the Annual Veteran's Lunch! I enjoyed having a chance to speak at the lunch and meet many of Merrimac's veterans and their families. My staff and I wish you a happy and health holiday season! As always, please reach out if I can be of assistance. You can reach me directly at barry.finegold@masenate.gov or contact my office at 617-722-1612.

Yours in Service,
Barry



Hello Fellow Veterans:

MeVa Transit along with the local

Veteran's Agents are thrilled to

announce the January launch of our FREE VA Bedford Medi MeVa van

service to the VA Bedford Healthcare Systems. This new door to door shared-ride service will be available on Wednesdays and Fridays to Veterans and their families seeking transportation to the VA Bedford location. The VA Bedford Medi MeVa service will make its inaugural journey in January 2024. We are thankful to our partners at the Merrimack Valley Veterans Collaborative, Agespan, and the VA Bedford Healthcare Systems for working with us to create this service plan. Please call us or your local COA to find out more information about this new and exciting program for 2024!

In the meantime, feel free to contact the Veteran Services Offices in Amesbury 978-388-8136 or Newburyport 978-462-2201 if you need assistance.

Happy Holidays!
Jeremiah Murphy
Veterans Agent





SENIOR CENTER STAFF

Exec. Director: Brienne R. Walsh

Program Coordinator: Denise Gilman

Public Health Nurse: Danielle Cataldo, RN, MSN

Kitchen Chef: Judy Kimber Morrill

Outreach/ Human Services Coordinator: Bridget Batcheller, MSW, LC

Volunteer Coordinator: Sandra Blanchet

Transportation Coordinator, Van Driver:

Senior Aide & Van Driver :

Custodian/Van Driver: Wayne Jones

Food & Nutrition Director: Eileen Murray, CDM, CFPP

Food Pantry Coordinator (Volunteer): Candie Benjamin

Trips: Denise Gilman

COUNCIL ON AGING BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Colleen Ranshaw-Fiorello, Chairwoman, Dave Vance, Vice Chairman, Candie Benjamin, Secretary, Maryann Mikson, Clerk MEMBERS: Betty Elliott, Kathy Devaney, Donna Doherty (Mtgs. On 4th Friday of month, 11am no meeting in Nov., Dec., July, & August, unless needed)

THE CENTERPIECE VOLUNTEERS

COLLATING & MAILING: Bill Gaylardo, Maryann

Mikson, Nancy Lind, Betty Elliott, Barbara Sheehan, Toni Quimby

FRIENDS of the Merrimac COA Officers: President: Ann Murphy Vice President: Joann Crenshaw Treasurer: Richard Fournier, Secretary: Pat Lundin Members: Any and all who have paid their dues and are welcome to attend meetings! (Generally the 1st Tuesday of the month, Please join us!)

**To find our newsletter online,
The Centerpiece for Senior Living, go to:**
<https://mycommunityonline.com/organization/merrimac-senior-center>



Massachusetts
Councils On Aging

Non-Profit Org
**U.S. POST-
AGE
PAID**
**PERMIT NO.
3**

Happy
Holidays

Staff EMAILS:

If you have any questions, concerns, or need help, please call the senior center or email any of the following:

The COA Director, Brienne Walsh
bwalsh@townofmerrimac.com

Program Coordinator: Denise Gilman
dgilman@townofmerrimac.com

Outreach & Human Services Bridget Batcheller
bbatcheller@townofmerrimac.com

Food & Nutrition Director: Eileen Murray
emurray@townofmerrimac.com

Nursing Services: nurse@townofmerrimac.com

***We have free COVID tests and masks
for anyone that needs these items!***