



# The Centerpiece

For Active Senior Living

Serving the Community since 1974

January 2024

Newsletter Volume 44 Issue 01

The Center-Merrimac Living Well

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](http://www.townofmerrimac.com/council-on-aging)

Executive Director: Brienne R. Walsh:  
[bwalsh@townofmerrimac.com](mailto: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:*

*Happy New Year !*

*I hope all of you had a wonderful holiday season!*

*2024 promises to be an exciting year here!*

*The Merrimac COA is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year! We are excited to have reached this milestone and will be having wonderful events and adventures each month to honor, commemorate and celebrate all of you and our community!*

*The first of these events will be the Snowflake Winter Mixer! This event is a luncheon designed to meet old and new friends at the Merrimac COA! We hope you will join us and bring a friend or two! We will have entertainment, food and ice breaker activities to get to know each other better ! Don't miss out on this fun and exciting event!*

*More details inside and in the insert section!*

*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 Closures

.....Pg.3

Lunch Ordering& New Staff.....Pg 4

Bingo, Active Events, Bill Duke .....Pg.5

Program Updates & Class Info.....Pg 6

Trips & Travel Info.....Pg 7

Breakfast with the Chiefs.Pg.8

Monthly Movie and More.....Pg.9

Community Outreach .....Pg. 10

Health & Wellness News.....Pg 11

BP Clinics & Thank You.....Pg 12

Jan. Awareness & Activities ... ..Pg 13

Greetings & Contact .....Pg 14&16

Inserts: Monthly Menu , Daily Calendar, Pizza & Poetry, Monthly Craft, Snowflake Winter Mixer, New Transportation Option and much more!

**HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

**2024**





## LGBTQ+ Social Connection

### Evening

Join us for a meal and conversation!

Please register in advance

Hot meal provided free of charge



Thursday

5:30pm-8pm January 18th, 2024

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!

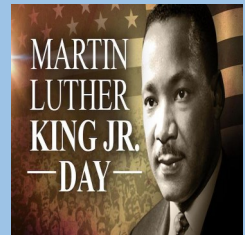
Call Brienne at 978 346 9549



### 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 Monday January 1 in**

**Observance of**

**New Year's Day**

**The Senior Center will also be closed on Monday January 15th in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day**

## Van/NEET Rides-Ordering Meals-Welcome New Staff Members

### 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](mailto: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!

### Welcome New Staff Members!

**Unique Kendrick, COA Senior Aide**

**Kristen Mangrum, Transportation Coordinator**

**Unique joined us in mid December and lives in Haverhill. She has been learning the delivery routes, be sure to say hello if you see her!**

**Kristen began working with us on January 2nd. She also lives in Haverhill and has worked in transportation for many years.**

**Welcome Unique and Kristen!**



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

## Watercolor Class w/Bill Duke

Monday 01/08/2024

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 01/11/24 10am-11am

By Appointment , Call Ahead!



## Active Events to Keep your Mind and Body Engaged

### Monthly Craft Class with Denise

Free Craft Class

Wednesday 01/09/24 at 1:30pm

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

### Pizza & Poetry

Free Pizza! Civil War theme!

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

Tuesday 01/23/2024 at 1:30pm

Advanced Registration Please!

## BINGO

Bingo is in Session!

Mondays

January 8,22,29

Upstairs Activity Room

Beverages Welcome, Snack Provided

Limited to 20 Players.



*Upcoming Special Events-See Inserts for more details!*

January Snowflake Winter Mixer-

Join us for fun, friendship and food!

Thursday 1/25/24 at 12pm -Dine in only!

Women's Discussion Group Wed 01/18/24 at 1:30pm



February Foot Clinic with Barbara Ullman, RN

**Tuesday Feb 6th 2024, 9-12:30pm**

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

**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!**

**Stay tuned for Winter and Spring Excursions!**

**Dining Out Bells & Romeos –**

**Join us for lunch –At the Whittier Buffet!**

**Leaves from COA 11:00 AM Thursday 01/04/24**

*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!*

*Enjoy time with old and new friends! If the bus is full, you can always join us in your own car!*

*Call Denise with questions or for additional info. Sign up today !*

**An Announcement from the Friends of MCOA:**

- \* **Happy New Year from the Friends of the MCOA! Join us at our monthly m**

*Friends of the  
Merrimac COA  
Monthly Meeting  
Tuesday 1/9/23  
At 1pm  
All are Welcome!*

**Breakfast with the  
Chiefs**

***Thurs 1/11/24 at 9am***

***Join us for a hot breakfast,  
juice, coffee and tea and  
find out what is going on in  
Merrimac!***

***Advanced Registration  
Required,  
Limited Seating!***





NO PUZZLES OR BOOKS AT THIS TIME AS WE REORGANIZE OUR LIBRARY.

meetings!

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

## Big News!

We received a grant to finish refurbishing our library!

Stay tuned for our new look!

## Monthly Movie!

### LIFT

Starring Kevin Hart & Sam Worthington

**Tues. 01/16/23 at 1:30pm**

**Popcorn and Snacks Provided**





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



.Happy New Year!

I can't believe it's already 2024... here's to a new and fresh start!

During these winter months, it is not unusual to feel a bit down. The changes in the seasons, such as shorter and darker days, can have an impact on our bodies and may lead to Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), a type of depression typically occurring during the fall and winter. SAD can impact our internal clock, serotonin levels, melatonin levels – all which can take a toll on our sleep and mood. Some of the symptoms you may experience from SAD are oversleeping, craving carbs, weight gain, low energy, loss of interest in activities once enjoyed, difficulty concentrating or a sense of hopelessness. You should talk to your doctor if you experience any of these symptoms, as they can be attributed to other disorders or illnesses.

Some people become immediately affected by these seasonal changes while others do not. You are more likely to experience SAD if there is a family history of the disorder, already have major depression or bipolar disorder, live far from the equator (since they typically have longer days without sunlight) or have low vitamin D levels. Seasonal Affective Disorder is also more often diagnosed in women than men. There are different ways you can treat Seasonal Affective Disorder, including light therapy, talk therapy, and medication, as well as adjusting your lifestyle to keep yourself active and help ease the symptoms of SAD. Without treatment, SAD could lead to social withdrawal, problems at work/school/home, , such as anxiety or eating disorders.



substance abuse, suicidal thoughts/behaviors, or other mental health problems, such as anxiety or eating disorders. Please be mindful that if you have bipolar disorder, light therapy or anti-depressant medication may trigger a manic episode, so it is best to speak with your primary care doctor.

Prepare yourself with knowing these feelings might be coming and have activities or meals planned that make you feel good and keep your energy levels up. Have low task activities planned for those days that you don't have any energy but may need to get stuff done. Start thinking about it now before you start to experience lethargy or low interest.

“There's no known way to prevent the development of seasonal affective disorder. However, if you take steps early on to manage symptoms, you may be able to prevent them from getting worse over time. You may be able to head off serious changes in mood, appetite, and energy levels, as you can predict the time of the year in which these symptoms may start.”

If you start to experience any of these symptoms and have a hard time during these winter months, please reach out to your doctor or a trusted professional, including the Merrimac Senior Center.

We are here for you!



### Greeting from your Public Health Nurse!

Happy New Year!! I hope you all had a wonderful holiday season and are looking forward to a fresh start in this new year.

With much of viral respiratory season still ahead of us, it is the perfect time to discuss the risks associated with mistakenly taking too much over the counter (OTC) medications. I would like to focus especially on acetaminophen—the pain and fever reliever in Tylenol and many other OTC medications. Though people take billions of doses of acetaminophen safely every year, thousands of people end up in the emergency room and deaths still occur from accidental overdoses. More than 600 products contain acetaminophen, and accidentally combining them can put you into the danger zone.

Acetaminophen controls fever and pain but does not decrease inflammation, as does aspirin and the other nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) like ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, generics) and naproxen (Aleve, generics). However, unlike NSAIDs, acetaminophen does not irritate the stomach. Because of that, someone who is unable to tolerate NSAIDs due to stomach upset can likely still take acetaminophen without issue. It's an important drug for controlling chronic pain in older adults.

The danger comes into play because acetaminophen has a more narrow safety window compared to NSAIDs. Although too much NSAIDs can also make you sick, it takes a larger amount to reach a dangerous level. Acetaminophen is broken down in the body and eliminated in the urine. However, some of the drug is converted into a byproduct that is toxic to the liver. If too much is taken, more toxin can build up than the body can handle, leading to liver damage which can result in needing a liver transplant or even death.

Here are some general guidelines/precautions you should stick to in order to avoid an accidental overdose of acetaminophen. It is most important to read the labels and stick to the guidelines for a safe dose. Medications for cold and flu count. When you take an OTC medication for cough, cold, or flu make sure to look at the label. Does it contain acetaminophen? If so, keep that in mind if you take Tylenol daily for pain. Make sure you know the milligrams (mg) in your pills. In acetaminophen products available OTC, each pill may contain 325, 500, or 650 milligrams of the drug

(Regular, Extra Strength and Extended Release). Be extra careful when taking 500 or 650 milligram pills.

Always read the label and stick to the recommended dose. Typically, it is recommended to stay on the low end of the recommended dose range (3,000 mg)/day. However, you should always check with your doctor first to discuss how much acetaminophen you should take based on your age, body size, and health status. Also, for some people, taking the maximum daily dose for extended periods can cause harm to the liver. If you feel that you need to take high doses of acetaminophen for chronic pain, make sure to speak with your doctor. Also, be mindful of your alcohol intake. Alcohol causes the liver to convert more of the acetaminophen you take into toxic byproducts. Lastly, speak with your doctor or pharmacist to determine if any of your prescription medications could interact negatively with acetaminophen.



### **A quick and important reminder from the Fire Dept Chief.**

Keep a list of your current medications and doses on your refrigerator. If there is an emergency, it is critical for the first responders to know what your current medications are so that they can understand what your current status is and best determine your plan of care.

**IMMUNIZATION UPDATE:** Per the CDC - As of December 2, 2023, 40.8% of adults and 41.6% of children have received the annual flu shot. Comparatively, 17.2% of adults and 7.7% of children have received the updated COVID-19 vaccine and just 15.9% of adults aged 60 and older have received the new RSV vaccine. Stay safe, get vaccinated to protect yourself and others.

**REMINDER:** Get free at-home COVID-19 tests this fall on [COVIDTests.gov](https://www.covidtests.gov). Every home in the U.S. is eligible to order an additional 4 free at-home tests. If you did not order tests this fall, you may place two orders for a total of 8 tests. Your order of COVID tests is completely free – you won't even pay for shipping. Need help placing an order for your at-home tests? Call 1-800-232-0233 (TTY 1-888-720-7489).

Be Well!



**Blood Pressure Clinics-Jan.2024**

**Wednesday January 3rd**

**Wednesday January 17th**

**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

Nov.16th-Dec.15th

**(Supporting Nutrition Program & Food Pantry)**

Friends of the Merrimac COA

DAVID HEATING AND COOLING, INC.

Betty Emery

Joe Fantini and Fantini Baking Co.

The Estate of Mr. Robert Whitcomb

Marie Clair Nicol

Cindy Estella

Pilgrim Church



**This Month's Important Events**

**National Poverty Awareness Month**



**Glaucoma Awareness Month**

You could have **GLAUCOMA** and not know it.

Make a resolution to find out. Schedule a dilated eye exam.

50% KNOW 50% DON'T KNOW

National Eye Health Education Program  
**NEHEP**  
A program of the National Institutes of Health

[www.nei.nih.gov/glaucoma](http://www.nei.nih.gov/glaucoma)

**Thyroid Disease Awareness Month**

— JANUARY —  
**THYROID DISEASE**  
AWARENESS MONTH

**Cervical Cancer Awareness Month**

January is  
**Cervical Cancer**  
Awareness  
Month

Fight, Support & Hope

**The Pool Room is OPEN!**

The Pool Room is open! Join us!

**Tues & Thurs 9am-12pm or reservation**

**Do you knit or crochet?**

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](mailto: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.

This fall was eventful both on Beacon Hill and around the district.

In the State House, I have been hosting hearings, delivering testimony, and debating on the Senate floor.

I am grateful to have testified in favor of several impactful bills this fall. Notably, I joined Merrimac Selectman Chris Manni and Representative Dawne Shand in delivering favorable testimony for a home rule petition that would change Merrimac's select board from three to five members. Additionally, I spoke in favor of strong data privacy legislation, the SAVE Students Act, and a bill requiring rear-facing car seats for children under two.

This fall, the Senate passed the supplemental budget, a sweeping tax relief package, and reformed prescription medication through the PACT Act 3.0. I am so proud that my team secured \$15 million of flood relief money for municipalities affected by this summer's flooding in this year's supplemental budget and look forward to seeing that money help the families and businesses that are still recovering from this summer's extreme weather events.

As always, please don't hesitate to reach out if my team can ever be helpful. Connect with me by emailing me at [barry.finegold@masenate.gov](mailto:barry.finegold@masenate.gov) or by calling my office at 617-722-1612!"

While this has been happening in the State House, I have remained focused on addressing constituent needs by hosting community conversations, office hours, and attending local events.

As always, please don't hesitate to reach out if my team can ever be helpful. Connect with me by emailing me at [barry.finegold@masenate.gov](mailto:barry.finegold@masenate.gov) or by calling my office at 617-722-1612!



The New Year is upon us and here in the Veteran Services office this begins one of our busiest seasons with the start of the renewal process for the Massachusetts Chapter 115 program. The Chapter 115 program provides a monthly financial benefit to Veterans and their dependents, including widows and widowers of veterans who have a monthly income of less than \$2,430.00 for an individual or \$3,287 for a married couple. All program participants are required annually to submit verification of their income, housing costs, medical premiums and bank statements showing their assets.

In December the Social Security Administration and the U.S. Veterans Administration mailed out benefit letters stating your 2024 monthly benefit amount, these are important documents, all recipients should always retain a copy of these important documents. This year the COLA increase for Social Security and the U.S. Veterans Administration is a 3.2% increase in your benefit amount. The monthly Medicare Part B premium will increase to \$174.20.

Also in December, you should have received notice from your Medex plan provider stating what the monthly premium amount in 2024, these premium notices will also need to be submitted as part of the Chapter 115 renewal process.

If you need assistance with obtaining these documents or would like more information on the Chapter 115 program, please call the Veteran Services office at 978-388-8136.

The Merrimack Valley Transit Authority (MEVA) has announced they will be starting a twice weekly, Wednesday and Friday, shuttle in January 2024 for Veterans going to the VA Bedford medical facility. Veterans may sign up for this service and reserve a ride by calling the MEVA office @ 978-469-6878 and pressing option 3.

**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:** Kristen Mangrum

**Senior Aide & Van Driver :** Unique Kendrick

**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 Gaylaro, 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**



**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](mailto:bwalsh@townofmerrimac.com)

**Program Coordinator: Denise Gilman**  
[dgilman@townofmerrimac.com](mailto:dgilman@townofmerrimac.com)

**Outreach & Human Services Bridget Batcheller**  
[bbatcheller@townofmerrimac.com](mailto:bbatcheller@townofmerrimac.com)

**Food & Nutrition Director: Eileen Murray**  
[emurray@townofmerrimac.com](mailto:emurray@townofmerrimac.com)

**Danielle Cataldo, RN, MSN**

**Nursing Services: [nurse@townofmerrimac.com](mailto:nurse@townofmerrimac.com)**

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