



The Centerpiece

For Active Senior Living

Serving the Community since 1974

Feb. 2025

Newsletter Volume 45 Issue 02

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

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:

February can be bitterly cold! But, we have lots of great happenings going on to keep you warm and interested!

Join us this month for Trivia, our Annual Valentine's Luncheon, 2 Movies, Bard Owl Café, and our Popular Soup Sampler!

If you haven't already applied for Fuel Assistance, please call and schedule an appointment with us. If you are unsure if you qualify, please call and we can help figure that out with you.

In other news, Poker is now on Tuesdays and Bianca has returned for Meditative Yoga also on Tuesdays!

New FREE Class Alert: Vinyasa Flow Yoga w/Lynne on Wednesday afternoons beginning on 02/05/25!

Be sure to read all the pages thoroughly and check out the inserts for all the details on this month's programs!

Stay well!

-Brienne

Reminders:

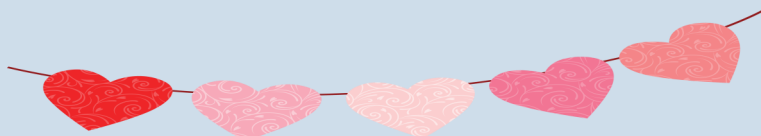
***** Advanced Registration is required for all activities, classes and events *****

***** No OUTSIDE food is permitted in the building (unless it is allergy related), beverages are allowed. Thank you for respecting our community!***

Inside this Issue

Director's Corner.....	Pg 1
LGBTQ+ , Holiday Closure.....	Pg.3
Lunch Ordering& EV van.....	Pg.4
Bingo, Active Events, Legal info	Pg.5
Program Updates & Class Info.....	Pg 6
Trips & Travel Info.....	Pg 7
,Soup Sampler, Trivia,.....	Pg.8
No Breakfast This Month.....	Pg.8
Monthly Movies.....	Pg.9
Community Outreach	Pg. 10
Health & Wellness News.....	Pg 11
BP Clinics & Thank You.....	Pg 12
Feb.. Awareness & Activities	Pg 13
Senator & Veterans Columns.....	Pg.14
Beat the Flu & Contact	Pg 15

Inserts: Monthly Menu , Daily Calendar,
Bard Owl Café, Annual Soup Sampler, and
New FREE Yoga Class, Memoir Writing





LGBTQ+ Social Connection

Evening

Join us for a meal and conversation!

Please register in advance

Hot meal provided free of charge



Thursday 02/20/25

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, graduation parties, celebrations of life 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 Merrimac COA will be closed in observance of Presidents Day on Mon.02/17/25.

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!

Have you seen our New EV Van???

**We were awarded a grant through
A collaboration with MEVA &
MA DOT to bring this new energy
efficient vehicle to Merrimac!**

Take a peek the next time you are here!





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

February Craft

Wed 02/19/25

1:30pm

FREE!



Join Denise for a free fun craft!

Limited Space!

Signup required!

All materials provided!

Active Events to Keep your Mind Engaged !

Learn about Closed Caption Phones!

Get a Closed Caption Phone for FREE!

Monday. 02/24/25 12-1pm

Stop by the table at lunch!

Legal Clinic Jason Ebacher, Esq

Thurs. 2/13/25 10-11am

by Appt only!

See the Calendar insert for Games schedule!

Poker is now on Tuesdays!!

BINGO

Bingo is in Session!

Mondays

February 3, 10, 24

No Bingo on 02/17/25

Upstairs Activity Room

Beverages Welcome, Snack Provided

Limited to 20 Players.



Upcoming Special Events-See Inserts for more details!

Valentine's Luncheon & Floor Show Featuring

Local Comedian/Magician Phil Volonino

Thursday 02/13/25 Lunch at 12pm, Show to follow!

\$5/ticket in advance, must register by 02/10/25 at 4pm

See Flyer for More Details! Dine In Only, NO Delivery/Pickup!



Foot Clinic –Every other month, Appt. Required!

Tuesday 03/11/25 9-3pm

Marie Anderson NP of Jolie Pieds Call Danielle to Sign up!



Exercise & Wellness Classes

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

Tuesdays: Meditation & Yoga w/Bianca \$7–IN Session!

Wednesdays: Meditation w/Nancy at 10am \$5

Wednesdays at 1:30pm

NEW FREE CLASS ALERT!

Vinyasa Flow Yoga with Lynn Wholley!

Join Lynne for this great new offering!

Thursdays:

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

Fridays: The 3B's with Brian! \$5/class!

Advanced Registration Preferred!



MERRIMAC SENIOR CENTER ADVENTURES

Stay tuned for upcoming trips in 2025!

VAN TRIP to Calef's Country Store in Barrington NH
Tues.02/25/25 Bus Departs at 11am
Lunch on your own in their Sandwich Shoppe!

Dining Out Bells & Romeos –February

Tues. February 19,2025 at

11:30am-

Hungry Traveler of Salisbury

Bus Leaves from COA promptly at 11am

Our group will embark on a restaurant adventure to remember!

Bus cost is just \$5 and the cost of lunch is on your own!

If the bus is full, you can always join us in your own car!



An Announcement from the Friends of MCOA:

- * **No scheduled winter Friends Meeting.**
- * **Look for some great events sponsored by the Friends in 2025!**

**NO Breakfast
this month!**

**Stay Tuned for
Future Breakfast
Programming**



Tuesday 02/11/25

1:30pm

**Join us for trivia!
Fun categories,& lots
of laughs!**

**No experience
necessary, you know
much more than you
think!**

Soup Sampler

Thursday

02/26/2025

12pm

**Free for Dine In
Only!**

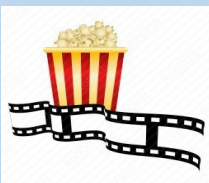
**Enjoy soups and
stews, crackers,
cheeses, breads
and more! Vote
for you favorite!**



**Registration
Required by
02/19/25!**

WHEELCHAIRS, TRANSFER CHAIRS, KNEE SCOOTERS AND ROLLATORS UNTIL NOTICE WHILE WE INVENTORY OUR MEDICAL EQUIPMENT SHED!

Please Note: We are accepting food pantry donations! Please call if it is a large dropoff!



Monthly Movies

Intergenerational Vacation Movie

Thursday 02/20/25 at 1:30pm

“Orion & The Dark”

Grandkids welcome!

Comfy Attire Encouraged!

Registration Encouraged!

Tues. 02/25/25 at 1:30pm

“La Dolce Villa” Starring Scott Foley

Complimentary Popcorn, Treats & Beverages Served!



Community Outreach Column



Outreach & Human Services
Daniel Domings, LSWA



History has shown us that courage can be contagious, and hope can take on a life of its own.” —Michelle Obama

February is Black History Month and is rightfully themed as African Americans and Labor. Asa Phillip Randolph is a pioneer for equal wages, creating the first predominantly black labor union in the country, help to end discrimination in the military, and a major organizer of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963 of over 250,000 protesters. "Freedom is never granted: It is won. Justice is never given: It is exacted. Freedom and justice must be struggled for by the oppressed of all lands and races."

National Freedom Day recognizes Abraham Lincoln's creation of the 13th Amendment and abolishment of slavery. More recently, our world is combating the effects of human trafficking which in 2021 the US Secretary of State, Anthony J. Blinken, stated there is an estimated 24.9 million people in the world who are exploited by human trafficking.

A Buddhist holiday, Parinirvana Day celebrates the life of Buddha and reaching Nirvana on his 80th birthday. By reaching Nirvana, a person understands the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path which include meditation and mindfulness.

February 19th, 1942: Day of Remembrance of Japanese American Incarceration During World War II recounts Executive Order 9066 signed by President Roosevelt which forced any Americans of Japanese heritage on the west coast into concentration camps within the United States.

Please feel free to seek support through the Merrimac Council on Aging including but not limited to resources and information for: financial hardship, caregiver support, housing, medical and behavioral health, transportation, or just to speak with someone.

February Remembrances and Awareness:

Black History Month

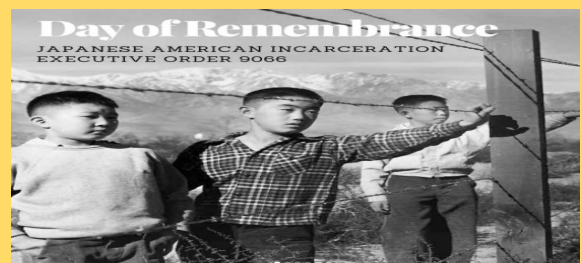
National Freedom Day – February 1st

Parinirvana Day – February 15th

Day of Remembrance of Japanese American Incarceration During World War II – February 19th

Maha Shivarati – February 26th

First Day of Ramadan/ The Nineteen Day Fast – February 28th



Greeting from your Public Health Nurse!

Happy February! This month's newsletter is part 2 to my newsletter last month which focused on a brief history of vaccines. This month I will dive into the science behind vaccination.

We are nearly 5 years out from the Covid-19 pandemic. Spring of 2020 was a time during which our lives were turned upside down. Businesses and schools were closed and people were in quarantine. In a matter of weeks, this virus spread around the world and was able to infect and kill millions of people. After such high infection and death rates due to covid-19, as well as a complete disruption of our lives, we should all have a lot more respect for the power of infectious diseases.

Vaccination prevents death and/or serious illness from various bacterial and viral infections. Vaccines work by giving our immune system a head start resulting in an advantage over the infection. Our immune system is our body's defense against germs. Vaccines teach our immune system to produce antibodies and memory cells that will fight off those germs. When our immune system learns all of this from a vaccine, it is ready to jump into action when exposed to germs that cause disease.

As soon as the germ (the bacteria or virus that someone has been vaccinated against) enters the body, a vaccine can help the immune system recognize it and fight it. Even if we still get the disease, we likely won't get very sick thanks to vaccines. Vaccinated people are less likely to get hospitalized or die from the disease.

Some people wonder if it would be better to get the disease the "natural way" versus getting the immunization. The answer is simple - No. The diseases that vaccines protect against are serious diseases with serious health risks. Getting the disease as opposed to getting the vaccination does not provide any benefit to your immune system and can leave you with greater pain and possibly serious injury/death as a result.

The irony is that the success of vaccines has proved to be its greatest enemy. Most of our society does not remember a time of children with brain damage due to encephalitis following a bad case of chicken pox or children who lost their hearing due to measles. Many of us do not know a time of people suffering with the devastation that most of the vaccine preventable diseases can bring. However, the bacteria and viruses that cause these illnesses still exist in the world.

If immunization rates fall, epidemics will and have occurred.

Many vaccines work best when everyone in a community who can be vaccinated is vaccinated. High vaccination rates protect the entire community. This is known as herd immunity. Herd immunity happens when enough people are vaccinated that it slows down the spread of contagious germs. This protects people who can not be directly protected by vaccines (because they are too young to be vaccinated or have an underlying health issue) because they are less likely to be exposed to the disease.

The idea of herd immunity doesn't work for every disease. Herd immunity may not be possible with a virus that mutates (changes) a lot in a short time (like with Covid-19 or flu). With these viruses, reaching herd immunity is even more difficult because the virus can be spread by people who are infected with it, but do not have symptoms. Also, protection from having and recovering from the illness or getting the vaccine doesn't last a long time. This is different from the measles virus, which is a stable virus and does not mutate over time. With illnesses that mutate frequently (Covid-19 and flu), the goal is to control and limit the spread of the virus. Vaccination is the best strategy to ideally prevent getting the virus and to lower the risk of getting very sick/hospitalized or worse. Testing when you have symptoms to know when you need to avoid others also helps to prevent spreading a virus. Of course, other common public health measures like hand washing, avoiding crowds, covering coughs/sneezes with a tissue or your elbow will reduce the spread.

Remember, if you have questions regarding vaccines, talk to your healthcare provider. The politicalization of vaccine science has caused a flood of misinformation. Let's take politics out of the vaccine discussion and let's talk science.

Be Well!

Information From:

Department of Health and Human Services and the CDC





Blood Pressure Clinics

Feb. 2025

Wednesday 02/05/25

Wednesday 02/19/25

9am-10am



SHARPS Disposal Drop Off Site

New Containers Available for \$ 10

Disposal is free!

Public Health Nurse

Office Hours:

Tuesdays 8:30am-2:30pm

Wednesday 8:30am-10:45am

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

Dec.16-Jan.15

Supporting Nutrition Program

Food Pantry & Programming

Friends of the Merrimac COA

DAVID HEATING AND
COOLING, INC.

Joe Fantini and Fantini Baking Co.

Betty Emery

Steven Emery

Patty & Ron Ramsden

Cindy Estella

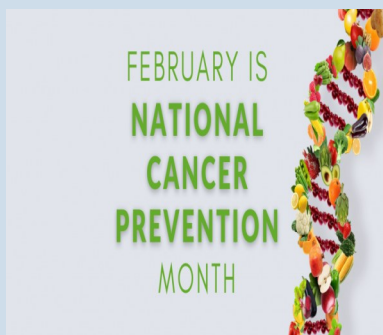


This Month's Important Events

Heart Disease Awareness Month



National Cancer Prevention Month



Rare Disease Awareness Month



Black History Month



The Pool Room is OPEN!

The Pool Room is open! Join us!

Tues & Thurs 9am-12pm or reservation

Do you knit or crouch?

Would you like to learn?

Join us for Knitting Group

Tuesdays at 1:00pm



Van Trip Transportation

If you need transportation, please call to book a trip in advance. A minimum of 4 business days is required to book. Monthly Grocery Shop trip for February is Tues 02/11/25 at 10am. Call to Register! Limited!

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



Hi Everyone:

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

February Office Hours are on Tuesday 02/18/25. at 10am

I hope you all enjoyed the festive holiday season! Is it just me or are there more lights and decorations than ever before?

My favorite part of the holidays is having our whole family under one roof during college vacations. We've all been very busy so it's a real treat to be together, making new memories.

Just before Thanksgiving, the Massachusetts legislature passed the 2024 economic development bill and Governor Healey has signed it into law. As Chair of the Economic Development Committee, I am pleased to say this comprehensive jobs bill will invest in life sciences, climate tech, small businesses, and more. It capitalizes on our state's unmatched educational advantages and spirit of innovation to ensure Massachusetts' economic strength.

This legislation invests in the MassWorks infrastructure program, public library construction, and resilience in agriculture and fishing. It funds a food science hub at UMass, and consolidates two state agencies to avoid redundancies. Another provision of the bill is the environmental cleanup that will allow the city of Everett to build a new soccer stadium which will be privately financed.

This bill also includes reforms to help municipalities hire more first responders and to streamline hospitals hiring more doctors and nurses. These provisions will make for safer streets and more affordable healthcare.

I am confident that each element of this legislation will grow jobs and opportunity for Massachusetts employers and employees alike.

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

Wishing you all a happy holiday season!

Yours in Service,

Barry



The Veteran Services office is a municipal department of your local government. Massachusetts is one of the few states that requires every city and town to have a Veteran Services Officer on staff to assist Veterans and their dependents to obtain their local, state, and federal benefits. While we frequently assist Veterans and their dependents with enrolling in VA Healthcare and applying for VA Disability Compensation and/or Pensions we are not the VA and work solely on the Veterans behalf.

Are you a Veteran or the unmarried widow/widower of a Veteran? If yes, have you checked into what benefits you may be entitled to receive. One of the most common remarks we hear from Veterans and their Dependents is we did not know these benefits were available or we did not know you folks existed. Usually in one phone call we can review the Veterans time in service and what benefits he or she may be entitled to receive. If you want to have this discussion, please call the Amesbury Veteran Services Office @ 978-388-8136 or the Newburyport office @ 978-462-2201.

The PACT ACT was signed into law in August 2022 creating many more presumptive conditions and locations that are related to toxic exposures in the military. There are many toxic substances that a Veteran may have been exposed to during their time in service. These toxic exposures include Asbestos, Burn Pits, Herbicides (also known as Agent Orange), Jet Fuels and others. There are now 55 Presumptive Diseases related to exposure to Herbicides during the Vietnam war. If you were exposed to toxic substances and you are diagnosed with a presumptive disease, you may be entitled to benefits including VA Healthcare and/or Disability Compensation. If you are the widow/widower of a Veteran who passed away due to a presumptive disease there may also be compensation available. Our staff is happy to assist you in determining if you have a valid claim and we will assist you with completing the necessary forms.

In Massachusetts, the HERO ACT which was signed into law last August has expanded the eligibility of state benefits to more Veterans who served in the National Guard, Reserves or had a less than honorable discharge. This affects the programs implemented by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Veteran Services (EOVS) including the Annuity program, Chapter 115 financial assistance program, access to the State Veteran Homes and other EOVS benefits. The HERO Act did not affect the definition of a Veteran for Housing preference or RMV programs.

A shout out to the Amesbury Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 2016 who during the holidays delivered meals to veterans and seniors living here in Amesbury. The Post continues to be an active part of the community and looks forward to welcoming new members. If interested in joining the Post, send an email to yfw-post2016@gmail.com and a post member will provide you with the membership application.



SENIOR CENTER STAFF

Exec. Director: Brienne R. Walsh

Program Coordinator & Trips: Denise Gilman

Public Health Nurse: Danielle Cataldo, RN, MSN

Kitchen Chef: Judy Kimber Morrill

Outreach/ Human Services Coordinator: Daniel Domings, LSWA

Social Work & Outreach Intern: Eliza Taylor

Volunteer Coordinator: Sandra Blanchet

Transportation Coordinator, Van Driver: Jon Behrens

Senior Aide & Van Driver : Vacancy

Custodian/Van Driver: Wayne Jones

Food & Nutrition Director: Eileen Murray, CDM, CFPP

Food Pantry Coordinator (Volunteer): Candie Benjamin

Volunteer Receptionists: Kathy Egmont, Bill Gaylardo, Julie Gilchrist,

COUNCIL ON AGING BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Colleen Ranshaw-Fiorello, Chairwoman, Dave Vance, Vice Chairman, Candie Benjamin, Secretary, Clerk vacancy 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

**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**

Together We Can Beat the Flu

6 Tips to Stay Healthy this Flu Season

Get the
Flu Vaccine

The flu vaccine
is the first step
in protecting
yourself

Avoid
touching
eyes,
nose
mouth



Cover your
sneeze/cough



Wash your
hands



Stay home
if you're
sick



Avoid contact
with sick
people



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
ddomings@townofmerrimac.com

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

Transportation Jon Behrens
jbehrens@townofmerrimac.com

Danielle Cataldo, RN, MSN

Nursing Services: nurse@townofmerrimac.com

***SNAP Services are available by
appointment! Call (978) 346-9549!***