

**WINDSOR COA NEWS**  
**December 2020/January 2021**

*Our mission is to serve older Windsor adults by providing opportunities and resources that advance the quality of life in a rural community.*

The Executive Office of Elder Affairs provides financial support for this COA publication.

With Thanksgiving under our belts (literally!), the calendar is moving steadily toward the end of 2020. We have heard from so many that they are ready to see the end of this year, and look forward to better days in 2021. Stay well and be safe over the winter months, and please remember we are available to help with information and assistance for our older residents.

Please read on for articles written by two of your COA board members with information gleaned from workshops they attended “virtually” during a recent conference.

**BOOSTING YOUR NATURAL IMMUNE SYSTEM**

What is your immune system?

The immune system is our body’s way of fighting off illness and infection. When your immune system is working properly, it can tell which cells are yours and which substances are foreign to your body. Your entire body is involved in this process and it is always at work to protect us. For those of us with autoimmune disorders, it is very important to take measures to protect ourselves. People of all ages need to be aware of how important our immune system is, but as we age and while there is the increased chance of infection through the seasonal flu and the COVID virus, it is vital.

How can we protect ourselves and boost our immune system?

1. Eat a healthy and balanced variety of foods; foods to consider include vegetables, fruits, fish, beans, whole grains.
2. Include healthy protein in your diet.
3. Limit alcohol.
4. Get adequate sleep by practicing good sleep hygiene.
5. Move your body: get outdoors, walk, do yoga, balance training, tai chi.
6. Wash your hands frequently.
7. Wear a mask.
8. Don’t smoke.
9. Avoid “ Frankenfoods.” Examples are: foods with artificial colors, flavorings, sugar additives and preservatives, pesticides and GMOs.
10. Have a positive attitude.
11. Stay connected and engaged in purposeful activities.
12. Maintain a healthy weight.

*(Diane Pennetti attended this workshop during the statewide MCOA Conference in October)*

## **SIMPLER FUNERALS**

Did you know that Massachusetts doesn't require you to use a funeral home? Did you know that embalming is not required by law? That a casket is not a requirement for a burial? Or, for a body donated to a medical school, that the school must pay for cremation? That you can choose a burial at sea? The Funeral Consumers Alliance (FCA) of Western MA is a non-profit, non-sectarian volunteer organization that provides resources for these issues. And, the FCA enforces funeral rules, including laws, our rights and pricing. Their representative, Jim Couchon, can be reached by phone at 413-376-4747 or by e-mail: [fcawmass@gmail.com](mailto:fcawmass@gmail.com).

More information is at: [www.funeralsma.org](http://www.funeralsma.org) for a price list of funeral homes in your area and other resources; Do It Yourself Deathcare, Heather Massey 508-540-4975 for a most personal event and/or green (biodegradable urn, seedling urn, memorial wreath, ash scattering, etc.); Memorial and Commemorative Options, Jasmine Tanguay 781-436-0196 or [jasmine@sustainablelegacy.org](mailto:jasmine@sustainablelegacy.org) for personal art on burial containers, scrapbooks, community events in-person or virtual, etc.; and lastly, Green Burial, a statewide, non-profit volunteer agency with education, advocacy and technical assistance, Joan Pillsbury, representative at 617-393-5011 or [www.greenburialma.org](http://www.greenburialma.org) for a connection to nature and lower costs.

## **HOARDING**

Clutter isn't hoarding. Hoarding Disorder is a mental diagnosis that falls into the obsessive spectrum, described by persistent difficulty discarding personal possessions. Symptoms cause clinically significant distress. There is no link from material deprivation to hoarding, but some link to genetics (first degree relatives). Hoarding Disorder is triggered by a traumatic event and tends to affect people (1 in every 20 in the US!) with a higher IQ, education and creativity.

Hoarding is not a temporary situation that can be resolved in 6 months or less. It's maintained by depression, social phobia, general anxiety, a specific phobia like PTSD, bipolar disorder, panic disorder, eating disorder and so on. Further complicating matters is the patient refusing help. But, there is help for COA members who care. Training resources and guidance is found on the Massachusetts Councils on Aging (MCOA) website. Additionally, the Massachusetts Housing website has a hoarding resources page. Also, Eileen Dacey of North Shore Elder Services [edacey@nselder.org](mailto:edacey@nselder.org) is available with help. So, don't despair; reach out to a reputable resource to find out what you can do to provide support and services to a friend or loved one who suffers with this disorder. And, **never** use the word "hoarder" as it's demeaning, stigmatizing and implies an addict. Never!

*(Sandie Zink attended these workshops during the statewide MCOA Conference in October)*

## **WEATHERIZATION INFORMATION FROM BCAC**

Do you need insulation in your home? Are you also eligible for fuel assistance? Not sure? BCAC (Berkshire Community Action Council) in Pittsfield offers an impressive number of programs for which you may be eligible. To learn more, go to the BCAC web site at [bcacinc.org](http://bcacinc.org) and check out what they offer. No computer? Call Jessica Buoymaster or Sue Jacobs for help.