Virtual Programs Become Key to Connection and Community During COVID

Each year, the Lawrence W. Gross Spirit of SMAA award is presented to a staff member who provides encouragement and support to other SMAA staff, helps others overcome obstacles to successfully accomplish goals; is an honest and dependable team player who contributes to group collaboration and shows empathy and respect for others, and who builds and maintains good working relationships.

This year’s recipient, Ashley Perrone, embodies all of the characteristics of the award—and then some! Ashley began her career at SMAA as a resource specialist working in the Community Services department. Three years ago, she made the move to nutrition, becoming the Meals on Wheels site coordinator in Biddeford. Renee Longarini, SMAA’s Nutrition Director said, “Ashley consistently goes above and beyond when it comes to managing her site, her volunteers, her clients and supporting her peers. Her background in community services gives her a great understanding of SMAA’s “bigger picture”. She shares her knowledge with her peers and always does it with a smile.”

Ashley’s passion for helping older adults live to their full potential is palpable when she talks about her work at SMAA and the vital role that nutrition plays in keeping our clients healthy and safe. “She is a vital part of our team and I am so happy that she has been recognized this year as the 2020 recipient of the Spirit of SMAA award,” said Longarini.

From Megan’s Desk

Happy Holidays!

As I write this column, we have just turned our clocks back an hour and the first snowfall of the year is being predicted. Winter is on its way and with only a couple of months left in 2020, I am more than ready to welcome a new year that will hopefully bring a peaceful return to some semblance of normal life for all of us.

November is Family Caregiver Month. Caregiving for an older family member can be challenging on most days and simply overwhelming on other. SMAA’s team of family caregiver specialists provide information, education and support for family caregivers to help reduce stress and make caregiving easier. And the Sam L. Cohen Adult Day Center offers respite for caregivers by offering programs and care during the day.

By the time this issue of the Senior News is published, the fall election will be over. I hope you were able to evaluate the issues and candidates and exercise your right to vote. Maine has the oldest population in the country and older adults can and should have a significant impact on present and future legislation—especially on issues that directly affect the quality of life in our State. As we approach a new state legislative session in January, I urge you to stay informed and engaged in the discussions with your local legislators regarding the growing need for affordable senior housing and long term care, aging in place opportunities, transportation, and other gaps that directly affect Mainer.

Spirit of SMAAA Award Winner – Ashley Perrone

Classes like Laughter Yoga, taught entirely remotely have helped participants in many ways. “You’ve helped me keep my sanity, and my hope for the future, alive through the connections I’ve made through the zoom sessions.”

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November–December 2020
Medicare Plan Finder

Medicare Open Enrollment is Here! October 15-December 7

Medicare has a plan finder that allows you to see your account and what plans will cover your prescriptions. Learn more about how to use the plan finder by watching this video at https://youtu.be/QgXmY8-gEHk

If you have any questions about using the Plan Finder, please call 1-800-Medicare. For more information and resources on Medicare, please see SMAA’s website.

Are you Considering Senior Living?

The Park Danforth has been providing quality senior housing since 1881. Situated in the lively community of Portland, The Park Danforth offers active seniors the choices and options that they deserve. Life at The Park Danforth includes attractive apartments and flexible meal plans. Independent Living Residents are not committed to three meals each day. Also included is an engaging wellness program, theater, bistro, pub, auditorium, salon, market and 24-hour emergency staff. Call for more info.

See why The Park Danforth is The Right Place. The Right Choice. 207.797.7710 www.parkdanforth.com

Virtual Programs Key to Connection and Community During COVID

continued from page 1

ance, Yoga for Healthy Aging, Laughter Yoga, Qigong, Guided Relaxation, and social Coffee Talks. Agewell has also partnered with groups like the Maine Humanities Council to offer a Discussion Project exploring Aging Issues through shared readings, American Bone Health to offer a series of presentations, and the Maine Falls Prevention Coalition for the Walk Across Maine Challenge.

While virtual classes weren’t offered at SMAA before COVID, we’re seeing how they can overcome some barriers to participation like transportation, rural living, and even weather. And participants, like this Tai Chi student, have shared how valuable they have been during COVID, “I’ve enjoyed the Tai Chi Deepening classes in Zoom. I appreciated the fact that [SMAA] has offered this to us. I think it is really important, in these strange times, for us to have some semblance of normality. Social interaction is really important, and I hope eventually we will be able to meet in person once again.”

Offering programming virtually has taken lots of planning, practice and adaptation. Agewell volunteers have shown their incredible dedication in new ways by learning Zoom skills, adapting teaching methods for virtual presentation, and figuring out how to set up their home workspaces so that they can lead successful classes. Tai Chi Instructor Kathy Ross shares “the isolation and restrictive life since COVID has been difficult for me. I love sharing Tai Chi with others and enjoy the people I meet. So I tried Zoom Tai Chi teaching. Of course not the same as in person but I am again meeting new people, sharing Tai Chi, and having fun. I was surprised how uplifting it is to see others and share with them on Zoom. Gives me something to look forward to when I need it.”

We’re living through unprecedented times that are challenging us in many different ways, but with the Agewell programs people are invited to join a community, build connections with others, and find strategies for nurturing their wellness.

To learn more about the Agewell Programs visit https://www.smaaa.org/wellness/falls.html or visit our calendar at https://www.smaaa.org/wellness/agewell-calendar.html for our most current listing of classes.
Utility Scams

Some scams never go away regardless of the season. Utility scams are a perfect example. If it’s hot or cold out, scammers will call, email and even knock at your door demanding immediate payment for overdue bills or they’ll shut off your service. When it’s storm season and the power goes out, these crooks show up offering to restore service for a payment.

Whatever the season, the goal of these crooks is the same—to create a sense of panic in their targets in hopes they will act hastily and pay up. If you get a surprise visit or call from the “utility company,” ask questions like what your bill history is or what the individual’s employee ID number is, and then follow up to confirm before taking any action.

Real Estate Rental Scams — COVID

These days, because of COVID-19, lots of financial transactions that used to take place in person now happen virtually. This creates an opportunity for scammers to pose as legitimate operators and steal people’s money. One place this is happening more often is in real estate—specifically fake home rentals.

Scammers take pictures from legitimate home rental offers and create their own fake rental listings. The rentals are offered for well below market price and the crooks use the coronavirus as a reason why a tour and in-person meeting aren’t possible. Only after the victim sends their deposit and shows up at someone else’s home, do they find out it is a scam.

Be suspicious of any rental where you can’t physically visit the space and make sure you’re using secure and trusted websites when looking for a home rental.

Work at Home Scams That Cost You

Criminals are looking to take advantage of people who may have lost income during the pandemic. They post legitimate sounding work at home opportunities on trusted job boards. The offer is typically for some basic accounting work. Once the target is “hired,” the “boss” sends money to their banking account. The boss explains that, once the check clears, the new hire needs to send that money using Venmo or CashApp to pay vendors. The new hire does as directed, and learns some days or weeks later that the check the “boss” sent was fake. The money sent to “vendors” was the target’s own money, and the “boss” disappears.

Look at all online employment opportunities with a healthy dose of skepticism. Find out all you can about the “employer.” If it doesn’t add up, move on to real opportunities.

Visit the AARP Fraud Watch Network at www.aarp.org/fraudwatchnetwork or call the AARP Fraud Watch Network Helpline at 1-877-908-3360 to report a scam or get help if you’ve fallen victim.
How to Enjoy the Holiday Season with Health in Mind

The days are increasingly shorter and cooler here in Maine, and that means we are getting closer to the holidays. The holiday season can often be a mix of excitement and stress, and one topic that can bring about both these emotions in nutrition world is how to celebrate the season while also supporting our health and wellbeing.

As a dietitian, the last thing I want is for individuals to feel anxious about food or pressure to eat “perfectly”. Good nutrition includes foods that are both nourishing to our bodies and pleasurable to eat! Mindful eating, consistency, and balance can be a recipe—hardon the pun—for a happy and healthful holiday season!

Mindful eating is the practice of tuning into your body and listening to its cues like hunger and fullness. It can also involve noticing what foods you’re craving, savoring those foods, and aiming to enjoy your meal without a side of guilt or judgement! This may look like perusing a recipe book, reading the ingredients, and planning your meal around ingredients you are excited to try.

Our bodies also like consistency! It’s important to note that making thoughtful food choices can be very difficult to do when our routines are off or we’re not eating regular meals. As much as possible, keep to eating regular meals and snacks throughout the day instead of “saving up” for the big meal. Consistency, as well as eating foods that are nutritionally dense, such as whole grains, produce, heart healthy fats, and lean protein, will help fuel us through a busy holiday season.

Finding balance is something that is important all year round, but it can be exceptionally important during the holiday season when we can feel pulled in many different directions. We can aim to balance our plate, just like we do with our time and energy during this busy period of the year. When we balance our time and energy between social engagements, rest, and our normal routine activities, we can help us from feeling overwhelmed. Similarly, we can aim to balance our eating by consuming foods and drinks that might feel a bit more indulgent as well as foods that support steady energy, healthy digestion, and meet our macro- and micro-nutrient needs.

Here are three tips to support steady energy and digestion throughout the day:

1. Aim for a combination of the three macronutrients, protein, fat and carbohydrates at each meal and protein and carbohydrates at snacks.
2. Eat something at least every four hours and try not to go more than six hours without eating. This is especially important if you are trying to maintain steady blood glucose levels, such as the case if you have prediabetes and diabetes.
3. Include fiber-and probiotic-containing foods on a daily basis. Fiber-rich foods include whole grains, vegetables and fruit. Probiotics can be found in foods such as yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut and kombucha.

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The Southern Maine Agency on Aging’s mission is to improve the quality of life for older adults, adults with disabilities, and the people who care for them.

Mission Statement
The Southern Maine Agency on Aging is a non-profit, charitable organization. Services of SMAA are supported in part by state and federal funds provided through the Office of Aging and Disability Services of the Maine Department of Human Services. Learn more at www.smaaa.org and see Senior News on home page.

Northern Maine Agency on Aging
Creating Better Days

Toll-free: 1-800-427-7411

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Marketing options include, full color ads, advertorial columns and inserting pre-printed materials into the newspaper. Reach your potential customers with Maine’s only newspaper specifically for people age 50 and older!

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The Southern Maine Agency on Aging is committed to providing a safe and welcoming space for everyone regardless of his/her race, ethnic identity, gender, sexual orientation, ability, age, economic status, faith tradition, veteran status or life situation.

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Advertise with us!
Your ad will reach 10,000+ active and engaged seniors in Cumberland and York Counties. Call or email for more information.

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How to Enjoy the Holiday Season with Health in Mind

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From Jo Dill’s Notebook

News from Maine Senior Games

A special thanks to all of you who donated to the Maine Senior Games Keep the Flame Burning fundraiser. Our goal was to raise $10,000 by the end of the year and that goal was met mid-October. We cannot thank you enough. We are still, of course, accepting donations so we can be up and running for the 2021 season. Our website is under construction but should be ready soon. Look for us at www.mainseniorgames.org.

Our new mailing address is: MSG, PO Box 513, Scarborough, ME 04074.

Maine Senior Games is moving forward with becoming its own nonprofit. We are fortunate that our board all decided to stay with us and have been hard at work filling out forms, making decisions and raising funds. Kudos to them! Our executive board members are: Deb Smith, Chair, Kim Koehler, Vice Chair, Pam Dutremble, Treasurer, Jess LeBlanc, Secretary. Other board members include, Cyndi Bona, Miranda Dopps, Robin Kessler, Ginny Ketch, Jerry LeVasseur and Noelle St. Hilaire.

Our goal is to start planning for the 2021 Maine Senior Games events all the while watching where Covid takes us and following the State of Maine protocols and mandates. We have developed Covid guidelines for each event and hope that together we can make each event safe for everyone.

Thanks to the following sponsors who stayed with us during the pandemic:

- Martin’s Point
- Bangor Savings Bank
- Humana
- Senior Planning Center

Don’t delay care. We’re here to help you live life to the fullest.

The MMC Geriatric Center offers outpatient consultative care for older adults. We have a team approach to identify and safely care for age-related memory disorders, including Alzheimer’s. We focus on helping older adults optimize health and day-to-day functioning.

Due to the growing number of COVID-19 cases in Maine and across the country this holiday season, SMAA will continue to deliver many of our services via telephone and Zoom. A limited number of in-person appointments will be made available. For the most up-to-date information about SMAA’s current offerings, please visit our website at www.smaaa.org. Our healthy aging classes, including tai chi and others, are a great way to relieve stress and stay fit during these cold winter days. There are also many volunteer positions open for those who would like to get involved and give back to the community.

I wish you all a very joyous holiday season.

Megan Walton
Chief Executive Officer

SMAA is participating in #Giving Tuesday—a global day dedicated to helping others through the gift of a donation to their favorite nonprofit organizations in honor of the good work they do in the community. I encourage you to add SMAA to your holiday “shopping list” this year and help us provide critical services for those who desperately need our support—not just at the holidays but throughout the year. You may contribute on our website at www.smaaa.org or by sending a contribution to SMAA, 136 US Route One, Scarborough, ME 04074.

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No referrals are necessary. Call 207-662-2847 for an appointment or learn more at mmc.org/geriatriccare.

Convenient access with parking and wheelchair ramp.
Heat and AC at the Push of a Button

Heat pumps are the most popular heating system across all of Efficiency Maine’s rebates. They’re popular because they offer highly efficient:

- heating
- air conditioning
- dehumidification

No more window AC units or fans.

Many contractors are providing estimates by phone and taking reservations to install. Learn more about heat pumps and find a vendor. Visit efficiencymaine.com or call 866-376-2463.

Upcoming SAGE Maine Virtual Programming

SAGE Speaker Series: Mental Health through the Holidays November 13, 1PM

Any older adult from across the state is invited to join this speaker series. Christopher McLaughlin, an LCSW and Associate Vice President of Community and Pediatrics Services at Northern Light Acadia Hospital, will present on mental health might be impacted this holiday season.

SAGE Virtual Thanksgiving November 19, 6PM

Cooking with SAGE Bangor – Hosted the first Saturday each month at noon.

To join in these events, please message SAGE Maine on Facebook or email sage@equalitymaine.org for the Zoom links.

SAGE Maine is a program of Equality Maine and is dedicated to providing advocacy, support, and services to the LGBTQ+ elder community. Learn more about their work at https://www.sagemaine.org
For more information on the Alzheimer’s Association, Maine Chapter’s programs and services visit alz.org/maine or call the toll-free 24/7 Helpline 800.272.3900

SUPPORT GROUPS:

Virtual Caregiver Support Group: York County, Monday, November 9, 3-4:30 PM

Virtual Caregiver Support Group: Androscoggin, Oxford, and Franklin Counties, Monday, November 9, 3-4:30 PM

Virtual Caregiver Support Group: Cumberland County, Tuesday, November 10, 6:30-7:30 PM

Virtual Caregiver Support Group: Greater Portland Area, Tuesday, November 10, 6:30-7:30 PM

Virtual Caregiver Support Group: Knox and Waldo Counties, Tuesday, November 17, 3-4:30 PM

Virtual Caregiver Support Group: Frontotemporal Dementia (FTD), Wednesday, November 18, 2-4 PM

Virtual Support Group: Grief, Loss, and Life After Dementia, Second and Fourth Wednesdays, 6:30-7:30 PM, Contact alirussell@alz.org to learn more

VIRTUAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS:

Conquering Caregiver Overload: November 18, 3-4 PM

COVID-19 and Caregiving: Friday, November 13, 11 AM, 12:30 PM; Monday, November 16, 6-7:30 PM

Coping With the Holidays: Tuesday, November 17, 11 AM-12:30 PM

Dementia Conversations: Thursday, November 12, 12-1:30 PM

Legal and Financial Planning: Wednesday, November 18, 5-7 PM

Effective Communication Strategies: Wednesday, November 18, 1:30-3 PM

Healthy Living for Your Brain and Body: Tips from the Latest Research: Tuesday, November 10, 3-4:30 PM; Monday, November 23, 12-1 PM

Safety and Memory Challenges: Tuesday, November 10, 3:30-5 PM

10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer’s: Wednesday, November 11, 1-3:30 PM

Understanding and Responding to Dementia-Related Behavior: Tuesday, November 17, 3-3:50 PM; Tuesday, November 24, 12-1:30 PM

COVID-19 / Como reducir el estrés durante el día (Holiday): November 9, 10-11:00 AM

Información básica sobre el Alzheimer: November 18, 6-8 PM

COVID-19 / Plan de emergencia: November 23, 10-11 AM

EARLY-STAGE SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS:

ALZ Meet Ups Literature: Thursday, November 12, 11 AM - 12 PM

Museum of Fine Arts Virtual Tour Artful Feasts: The Artist as Chef and Host Featuring Paul Cezanne: Wednesday, November 18, 1 PM

Gratitude: Thursday, November 19, 11 AM - 12 PM

Cooking with Kristen: Cranberry Bars and No Bake Pumpkin Cookies, November 17 Contact: Carolyn DeRocco to receive the link to join at 203-623-5407 or cderocco@alz.org. Participants will receive the recipe and a gift card to purchase the ingredients.

Shared Voices Intergenerational Choir: Fridays, 2-3:40 PM

Shared Voices is an intergenerational chorus (non-skill based) that gives persons living with dementia and their families a chance to do something fun, socialize, and make music together! Contact Heather Doebert at 860-819-1528 or heatherdoebert@gmail.com.

Virtual Music Bingo First Friday Monthly, 10:30 AM - 12 PM

Join us for a fun, musical game of BINGO from the comfort of your own home! This is a fun way to connect through music and go back in time to enjoy popular tunes. Contact Pam at pamatwood@gmail.com or call 860-798-0369 to register and receive your BINGO card.

Nearly 1,000 Mainer die of lung cancer each year—more than any other cancer. As one of Maine’s leading specialists in treating lung cancer, Dr. Haney is passionate about encouraging the two most important actions to reduce lung cancer’s toll on Maine lives:

One: quit smoking now! Smoking is the leading cause of lung cancer by far. The sooner you quit, the better your chance of not getting lung cancer. Every year and every month helps. Get tips on quitting smoking at MaineQuitLink.com.

Two: get screened for lung cancer now! If you’ve been a heavy smoker for any significant time in your life, early detection could save your life. Low-dose Computed Tomography, or LDCT, can detect early-stage lung cancer, which is often treatable. And it’s covered by insurance for qualifying patients.

Call us at (207) 303-3300 to learn more about lung cancer screening and prevention.

“Quitting smoking and getting screened early for lung cancer could save your life.”

—DR. BRIAN HANEY, LUNG CANCER SPECIALIST
Holiday Celebrations and COVID

As many people in the United States begin to plan for fall and winter holiday celebrations, the CDC offers the following considerations to help protect individuals and their families, friends, and communities from COVID-19. These considerations are meant to supplement—not replace—any state, local, territorial, or tribal health and safety laws, rules, and regulations with which holiday gatherings must comply. When planning to host a holiday celebration, you should assess current COVID-19 levels in your community to determine whether to postpone, cancel, or limit the number of attendees.

In order to increase safety at your holiday gatherings, consider:

- Hosting outdoor activities rather than indoor activities as much as possible. If hosting an outdoor event is not possible, and you choose to host an indoor event, avoid crowded, poorly ventilated, or fully enclosed indoor spaces.
- Increasing ventilation by opening windows and doors to the extent that is safe and feasible based on the weather.
- Hosting activities with only people from your local area as much as possible.
- Limiting numbers of attendees as much as possible.
- Providing updated information to your guests about any COVID-19 safety guidelines and steps in place to prevent the spread of the virus.
- Providing or encouraging attendees to bring supplies to help you and others stay healthy. For example, extra masks (do not share or swap with others), hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, and tissues.

If you are planning in-person holiday gatherings with people outside of your household, consider asking all guests to strictly avoid contact with people outside of their households for 14 days before the gathering.

Follow these tips to reduce your risk of being exposed to, getting, or spreading COVID-19 during the celebration:

- Social distance and limit close contact
- Maintain a distance of at least 6 feet or more from people you don't live with. Be particularly mindful in areas where it may be harder to keep this distance, such as restrooms and eating areas.
- Avoid using restroom facilities at high traffic times, such as at the end of a public event.
- Avoid busy eating areas, such as restaurants during high volume mealtimes, if you plan to eat out at a restaurant.
- Minimize gestures that promote close contact. For example, do not shake hands, bump elbows, or give hugs. Instead wave and verbally greet others.
- Wear a mask at all times when around people who don't live in your household to reduce the risk of spreading the virus.
- Avoid singing, chanting, or shouting, especially when not wearing a mask and within 6 feet of others.
- Limit contact with commonly touched surfaces or shared items.
- Wash your hands often.

If you develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19, such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath, or if you test positive for COVID-19, immediately contact the host and others that attended the event or celebration that you attended. They may need to inform other attendees about their possible exposure to the virus. Contact your health care provider and follow the CDC-recommended steps for what to do if you become sick, and follow the public health recommendations for community-related exposure.

Join the Agewell Community

As the weather grows colder, the days shorter, and holiday traditions are impacted by physical distancing, please consider joining Agewell for a variety of wellness classes to support physical, mental and social health. Become a part of this warm and welcoming community as we support each other in navigating these different times. All Agewell programs will be offered via Zoom. Registration is required. Please view our most current schedule and register at https://www.smaaa.org/events.html. We can also be reached at 386-6578.

Our virtual Agewell programs are generously sponsored by the Harvard Pilgrim Healthcare Foundation, and are offered at no cost to participants.

Harvard Pilgrim Healthcare Foundation

Drop In Classes –
Registration required, and join us any time as your schedule allows.

Gentle Exercise –
Thursdays 10:15-11:15
This guided exercise program includes a full body routine of movements to gently warm-up your joints, stretch and strengthen your muscles, and practice your balance. The program includes both seated and standing exercises, but a seated option will be demonstrated for all exercises.

Qigong – Thursdays 2:00-3:00
Qigong, based on the wisdom of traditional Chinese medicine, helps you feel clear, relaxed, and energized through gentle movement, conscious breathing, and meditative visualization. No experience needed.

Coffee Talk – A Toolkit for These Different Times –
Fridays 10:30-11:45
Join us for a morning of connection, humor, and reflection. Each session will focus on a topic to spark conversation and discussion. This warm and welcoming group is a wonderful opportunity to meet new people, learn from others, share laughs, and gather strategies for navigating these different times.

Scheduled Programs –
Registration required. Programs have a specific start and end date, and it’s recommended that you attend as many sessions as possible.

Seated Tai Chi –
November 16-December 16
(no class Thanksgiving week)
Mondays & Wednesdays 1:00-1:45
This modified seated version of our Tai Chi for Health and Balance program can be enjoyed by anyone wishing to practice Tai Chi sitting down. People with almost any chronic condition can learn to improve their health and mobility. This program includes an introduction to tai chi warm-ups, cool downs, and teaches a sequence of several forms, demonstrating each movement step-by-step. This slow, gentle, and smooth practice is a wonderful addition to your wellness routine.

Special Events

Eating for Healthy Bones presented by American Bone Health – November 17 2:00-3:00
Are you one of the 75% of Americans who don’t get enough calcium every day? Learn the best sources of dietary calcium, vitamin D, magnesium, protein and other important nutrients and how to make bone-healthy food choices for you and your family.

Healthy Body, Healthy Brain – November 2 2:00-3:00
A healthy brain is vital to our daily activities, and as we strive to keep our bodies healthy and fit, we often forget to attend to our brain health. Join us a virtual presentation where we’ll explore the main functions of the brain, changes that can occur as we age, and learn about ways we can increase and maintain the health of our brains.

Balance and Fall Prevention Clinics – Tuesday November 17 10:30-11:30 and Tuesday December 15 10:30-11:30
Our sense of balance is like a muscle that needs to be exercised to stay fit. Join us for an introduction to Balancing Act, a self-paced program developed by the University of New England you can practice at home. The program has many physical and mental benefits, and is designed for anyone who would like to improve balance and reduce the risk of falls. Each clinic will provide:
• An introduction to the program
• Tips for beginning the program safely from your home
• Instructions for accessing manual and videos
• Information about resources, other Agewell programs, and more

Please visit our online calendar for the most up to date listing of workshops! www.smaaa.org/events.html

Southern Maine Agency on Aging
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Senior News 9

November-December 2020

SOUTHERN MAINE AGENCY ON AGING

Please visit our online calendar for the most up to
date listing of workshops!

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Please visit our online calendar for the most up to
date listing of workshops!
Vet to Vet Maine: Growing and Thriving Despite the Pandemic

Originally conceived as “Vet to Vet” at SMAA in 2014 by RSVP Director Carol Rancourt and VISTA Volunteer Susan Gold, this organization is committed to supporting veterans by matching them to fellow veteran friends based on branch of service, shared interests, work/volunteer history, and other considerations. The two veterans visit (or talk on the phone) on a regular basis, sharing stories, enjoying activities (or discussions) together, and developing a friendship that can last a lifetime. The volunteers also guide their veteran friends in applying for needed services and benefits. In 2018, Vet to Vet transitioned away from SMAA and became the non-profit organization Vet to Vet, Maine. Led by Executive Director Gold, the organization has since added new staff members Judie O’Malley (Program Director) and Kate Spanier (Outreach Director and Volunteer Coordinator). They also remain affiliated with SMAA as a much valued RSVP station, with current veteran volunteers (age 55+) contributing service hours to SMAA’s volunteer network.

As Vet to Vet Maine, the organization has continued to positively impact veterans in southern Maine and beyond. They currently have 71 matched veterans, with 14 waiting to be matched. They have also expanded their volunteer total to 124 individuals, including those who assist with social media, administrative work, fundraising, and serving as Board Members. Perhaps the most eye opening statistic is that since becoming Vet to Vet Maine, the organization’s volunteers have logged more than 10,000 hours with 82 new veteran friends served.

Like many organizations, Vet to Vet Maine has also been impacted by COVID-19. Almost immediately, veteran visits were severely restricted—with only phone calls, texts, and emails allowed. At time has passed, volunteer/friend interaction has slowly expanded to include outside visits (6 feet apart with masks), window visits, and snack deliveries, all while adhering to CDC guidelines. Case Reviews and trainings have fully transitioned to the Zoom format as well. While there is a general sadness about not being able to visit in person, many veteran volunteers and friends have maintained an upbeat attitude, and willingness to adapt in order to support each other.

So what does the future hold for Vet to Vet Maine? With veterans needing more support than ever, the Vet to Vet Maine Board is committed to expanding further, and becoming a statewide program within two to four years. Veterans will continue to receive help from their veteran visitors for referrals and assistance in applying for other services from the VA in addition to companionship. Vet to Vet Maine also provides support by offering emergency funds for groceries and other needs, and a commitment to online training/case review options. There is no doubt, that despite the circumstances, Vet to Vet Maine is well positioned to grow and thrive while improving the lives of veterans in Maine.

If you are interested in volunteering with or supporting Vet to Vet Maine, please visit www.vet2vetmaine.org or contact Judie O’Malley by calling 207-579-4024 or emailing her at director@vet2vetmaine.org. You can also contact Judie to refer a veteran who would benefit from having a veteran visitor. The next volunteer training takes place in February 2021.

The author wishes to thank Vet to Vet Maine Program Director Judie O’Malley for providing the information/resources for this article.

Face Masks Available

SMAA is pleased to announce that cloth masks are available for individuals who need them. A “mask distribution” team of volunteers has been trained to process, package, and send out the masks. Mask options include elastic or tied. Please contact referrals@smaa.org if you or someone you know could benefit from a cloth mask.

AFTER a successful response to Meals on Wheels needs during the pandemic in March/April, SMAA Volunteer Services is once again looking for individuals to join a Volunteer Emergency Response Team (A VERT). This group of volunteers will be trained and ready to assist deliver, package and set-up meals as part of our emergency preparedness plan. New volunteers will be required to attend a virtual training, and pass a background check. Want to join the team, but not sure if your schedule will allow it? Not a problem—we still want to hear from you! This is a constantly changing situation, and the goal is to have a large number of people to reach out to, should the circumstances warrant it. Please contact us at 207-396-6525 or volunteer@smaa.org if you want to join or support the A VERT team. We are all in this together!
M
any of us cherish the holiday season. It is an opportunity to visit friends and family, a time for reflection, gratitude, community, and giving. The holidays traditionally bring people together. BUT, this year has been anything but traditional. As we continue to struggle with the uncertainty of the pandemic, the holidays will look very different for most of us. Many families are forgoing travel, and there will be fewer group gatherings and celebrations. Sadly, isolated older adults will experience even greater loneliness over the next few months as they spend the holiday and winter season alone.

The Southern Maine Agency on Aging (SMAA) is doing everything we can to help older adults stay connected and cared for by their community. You can do your part by making a donation and sending a message of appreciation today.

This year SMAA has adapted to expand critical programs like Meals on Wheels, providing more than 1,000 clients a week with friendly check-ins and hearty meals, offering virtual one-on-one meetings with compassionate social workers, and introducing new services, like Phone Pals and Tech Pals, to better meet the needs of isolated older adults.

Your donation will help support thousands of older adults this year who are struggling with isolation and uncertainty. Older adults like Susan and David (names have been changed to respect their privacy).

Susan called SMAA to enroll in Meals on Wheels. Her husband passed away just a few days before, and he had been the one to do all of the cooking. She was overwhelmed by grief and anxiety around going to the store and inexperience with preparing her own meals. Susan began receiving Meals on Wheels and was connected to the Phone Pal program—a service that pairs volunteers with isolated seniors to increase connectedness and decrease isolation. The two share multiple calls a week, and the Phone Pal will provide extra check-ins during what will be an especially difficult holiday season for Susan.

David went more than two years without a working hot water heater. He heated up water on the stove for dishes, baths, and other tasks. Eventually his entire plumbing and hot water system failed. A SMAA Resource Specialist worked tirelessly on David’s behalf to identify community partners and resources that would help pay for and organize the home improvements he needed. David now has a safe and effective plumbing and hot water system, receives weekly Meals on Wheels deliveries and checks in with a Phone Pal to stay connected to SMAA and his community.

Make a gift today by visiting www.smaaa.org. Every dollar and every kind message will improve the lives of our older friends, family, and neighbors this holiday season.

**Help Older Adults Feel Remembered and Appreciated this Holiday Season**

**Step 1:** Make a donation to SMAA today by visiting www.smaaa.org, or use the form below to mail your donation.

**Step 2:** Write a holiday card with a caring message to an older adult. Let them know you are thinking of them. These are especially difficult times to be alone.

**Step 3:** Return your completed holiday card to: Southern Maine Agency on Aging, Attn: Development Office 136 US Route, OneScarborough, ME 04074

SMAA will deliver your card to an isolated older adult over the holiday season.

**Step 4:** Enjoy the spirit of the holidays knowing you have brought joy to the life of a senior in need.

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**Here’s What You Can Do To Help Vulnerable Older Adults:**

**Step 1:** Make a donation to SMAA today by visiting www.smaaa.org, or use the form below to mail your donation.

**Step 2:** Write a holiday card with a caring message to an older adult. Let them know you are thinking of them. These are especially difficult times to be alone.

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**Planning for Elder Care**

Tuesday, November 10th, 2020 1-2pm via Zoom

Where do you begin the process of helping an older family member plan for the future? What concerns need to be addressed? How do you find out what resources are available when help is needed? All of these questions will be discussed in this one-hour class.

Please call 396-6541 and leave your name and email address, or go to www.smaaa.org by 11/9/20 to preregister. You will then receive an email with the Zoom log-in information.

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