

THE SENIOR STARTER

February 2024



THE PLACE TO START FOR SERVICES
BY THE
TOWN OF COLONIE
SENIOR RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

Greetings!

During the month of February, we recognize Heart Health Awareness and National Cancer Prevention. The number one, and number two leading causes of death in the United States. It's likely that you, or someone in your life have been affected by either, or both of these diseases. The financial and emotional tolls they place on the individual and their families can be insurmountable.

What can you do to protect yourself?

- **Heart Health** - Ask your doctor about your blood pressure, cholesterol and A1C levels. Be sure to mention your family history, as it may present as a risk factor. Take action to protect yourself by being more active, maintaining a healthy weight, eating a heart-healthy diet, managing stress, getting quality sleep, managing your diabetes and stopping smoking.
- **Cancer Prevention** - Some cancers can be found early through screening tests. Vaccines have been developed to prevent infections with hepatitis B virus and the virus that causes cervical cancer. Genetic counseling and testing are available for high-risk individuals based on family history. Overall, the biggest risk reduction you can take is to maintain a healthy lifestyle. This includes: maintaining a healthy body weight, not smoking, being physically active, limiting alcohol consumption, limiting excessive exposure to the sun and wearing sunscreen, eating a healthy diet, and limiting your exposure to environmental chemicals linked to some cancers.

Now is a good time to consider ways you can become more physically active and/or begin eating a healthy diet to help improve your overall well-being. If the thought of doing so overwhelms you, reach out to your primary care physician or call and seek direction from one or our caseworkers.

In this month's newsletter you'll find important information regarding the Humana Medicare Advantage plans, as well an excellent article on Mindfulness.

Stay well and Happy Valentine's Day!

Sincerely,
Angelina

Angelina J. Searles
Director



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12 Metro Park Road, Suite 103
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(518) 459-5051

Newsletter Editor
Carrie Blanchard

Colonie Library Classes & Events

Thursday, February 8 • 12-3 pm
AND

Friday, February 9 • 12-3 pm
AARP Smart Driver
(Must attend both. \$25 fee.)

Saturday, February 10 • 10 am-12 pm
Puzzle Swap

Sunday, February 11 • 2-4 pm
Lucia and Levi Music Performance

Monday, February 12 • 10:30am-12pm
Mystery Book Club

Wednesday, February 14 • 3-4pm
Make Your Presentations Sizzle

Thursday, February 15 • 7-8 pm
Laugh Out Loud Book Club

Sunday, February 18 • 1:30-4 pm
Schenectady Art Society Exhibit Reception

Sunday, February 18 • 1:30-3:30 pm
Let's Go Back to Big Bands

Tuesday, February 20 • 6-7:45 pm
Social Security Benefits

Monday, February 26 • 2-4:30 pm
Free Movie Monday: "Barbie"

**Registration is required! Visit here
to register:**



COLONIE
LIBRARY



COLONIE
LIBRARY

Monthly Veteran's Assistance

A representative from the NYS Department of Veterans' Services is available to assist veterans and family members with any questions or issues concerning eligibility for benefits, VA health care or any other veteran related concerns.

When: The 2nd Monday of each month

Time: 12-2pm

Location: Our office - 12 Metro Park Rd. Ste.#103,
Albany, NY 12205

Appointments Required!

Call our office 518-459-5051, ext. 2 to schedule



StateWide's Medicare Corner

Genetic Testing Fraud

Genetic testing scams are currently a widespread issue throughout the country. Beneficiaries are solicited in person, through phone calls, via email and from online ads. There are several ways that Genetic Testing is advertised including screenings for all cancers, and a variety of other genetic diseases. Scammers offer "free" genetic testing or cheek swabs to obtain beneficiaries' personal information.

An example of a Genetic Testing Scam is:

- **The Recruiter** targets the beneficiary to take a genetic test in person or by mail.
- **The Doctor** orders a test for the beneficiary even if it's not medically necessary. The doctor gets a kickback from the recruiter for ordering the test.
- **The Lab** runs the test and receives reimbursement payment from Medicare. The lab shares the proceeds of that payment with the recruiter.

Protect Yourself

- ⇒ **If a genetic testing kit is mailed to you, don't accept it unless it was ordered by your physician.** Refuse the delivery or return it to the sender. Keep a record of the sender's name and the date you returned the items.
- ⇒ **Be suspicious of anyone who offers you "FREE" genetic testing and then requests your Medicare number.** If your personal information is compromised, it may be used in other fraud schemes.

The NYS SMP program educates Medicare beneficiaries on how to protect themselves from fraud and abuse and is the go-to resource when people suspect they've been victim to a scam. **For more information, call the NYS SMP Helpline at 800-333-4374.** Our certified counselors can assist with Medicare questions, appeals and billing issues, Medicare Fraud, and Patient's Rights.



JOIN OUR EMAIL LIST BY
EMAILING CARRIE AT
BLANCHARDC@COLONIE.ORG



STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

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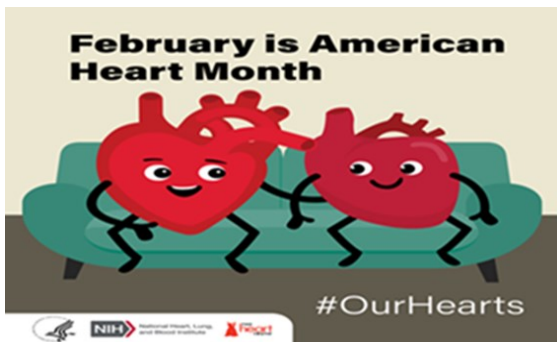
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Caregivers' Corner

It's Time for a heart-to-heart about the health of your heart, courtesy of the American Heart Association (AHA) and the National Family Caregivers Association.

1. Take charge of your life. Don't let your loved one's condition always take center stage.
2. Love, honor and value yourself. You're doing a very hard job; you deserve quality time just for you.
3. Watch for signs of depression; get professional help sooner rather than later. When people offer to help, say yes! Prioritize and delegate when people ask what they can do.
4. Educate yourself about your loved one's condition. Being prepared for unexpected situations is empowering.
5. Be open to new technologies and ideas that promote your loved one's independence and help you do your job more easily.
6. Trust your instincts. Most of the time they'll lead you in the right direction.
7. If you feel close to losing your temper or lashing out, take a moment to slow down and breathe. Walk away, even if only for 5 minutes, to regain your composure and cool down.
8. Live in the moment. Embrace the good days and let go of the bad ones.
9. Connect with people who share similar struggles. There is great strength in knowing you are not alone.

<https://www.vitas.com/family-and-caregiver-support/caregiving/caregiver-life-balance/caregiver-stress-and-heart-disease-risk>



Low Income Tax Exemption Renewals

Senior, veteran, disability & other property exemption applications may be obtained at the Assessor's Office at Town Hall, weekdays between 8:30am - 4:30pm or on the NYS Dept of Tax website:

<https://www.tax.ny.gov/pit/property/exemption/index.htm>

Reminder: The Low-Income Senior Citizen Exemption Renewal Application is due to the Town of Colonie Assessor's office **NO LATER THAN MARCH 1, 2024!** Please contact our office if you need assistance completing this form.



HEAP - Home Energy Assistance Program

2023-2024 Income Guidelines:

Household Size	Gross Monthly Income
1	\$3,035
2	\$3,970
3	\$4,904
4	\$5,838

Application Assistance Dates for all HEAP Benefits:

**February 14, 2024,
March 13, 2024
10am -12pm**

APPOINTMENTS NECESSARY - PLEASE CALL TO SCHEDULE: 518-459-5051, ext. 2

HEAP Benefits Available for Application include:

- Regular Benefit •Emergency Benefit
- Heating Equipment Repair/Replacement
- Clean & Tune

FREE TAX PREPARATION

The CASH Coalition of the **United Way** has partnered with local agencies and community services to create a network of VITA volunteers (Volunteer Income Tax Assistant) to offer **FREE** Federal and NYS income tax preparation for families and individuals with an income of about \$60,000 or less. All volunteers are IRS certified. You can make an appointment online at

<https://www.unitedwaygcr.org/cash/free-tax-prep>

The website will list qualifications for using VITA, and what tax paperwork to bring in. Also, if you made less than \$73,000 in 2023 and are comfortable using a computer, the United Way offers a self-file system for free along with a chat function to get online help when needed. <https://myfreetaxes.com/form/by-myself>



The **AARP Foundation Tax-Aide** provides tax assistance to anyone, free of charge, with a special focus on taxpayers who are over 50 or have low to moderate income. Appointments are required. Here are a few local sites to call and leave your information with for a call back for an appointment:

Colonie site: Call 518-218-6740

Cohoes site: Call 518-235-2420

Guilderland site: Call 518-313-6324

For more AARP Tax-Aide locations call:

1-888-227-7669 or visit their website:

https://www.aarp.org/money/taxes/aarp_taxaide/locations/

Medicare Advantage HUMANA Plan Enrollees

If you are enrolled in the HUMANA Medicare Advantage plans, please be advised that effective 3/1/24, Community Care Physicians will discontinue their participation with Humana.

Also, effective 7/1/24, Albany Medical Center will no longer participate with Humana.

If you are enrolled in a Humana Medicare Advantage plan and have providers who will no longer participate and would like to make a plan switch, you may do so through the **Medicare Advantage Open Enrollment period which runs through March 31, 2024.**

Please contact our office to schedule a time to meet with one of our health insurance counselors.

Mindfulness

Many health care providers have been recommending mindfulness practices to their patients to help reduce stress and improve well-being. Many clients confide to me in the therapy session that they do not know what to do. Did you know that mindfulness became popular in the 1990s?

Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn, based at the UMass Medical School, developed an 8-week program inviting patients to take time for self-care and to live in the moment. Now mindfulness is taught and recommended the world over. Many of my clients, especially over age 65 are eager to learn how to practice mindfulness. They ask: "do I have to sit on the floor crossed legged and chant ohm? I'll never be able to get back up!"

Mindfulness is simple, but takes practice. Here are some basic tenets:

1. Pay attention and be in the moment.

When you are washing dishes, focus on the soap bubbles going down the drain, feel the temperature of the water, watch the bubbles go down the drain. Most of the time when we are washing dishes, we are thinking of what to do tomorrow or thinking of some event in the past. Just be in the moment. Another example is when you are brushing your teeth, try to just focus on brushing your teeth as you look in the mirror. If you totally focus on the present moment, you are practicing mindfulness.

2. Focus on your breathing.

Sit down in a comfortable chair, take a deep breath and close your eyes. Focus on your breath as it moves in and out of your nose. Sitting and breathing for even a few minutes can help.

A 90-year-old yoga master based in Montreal once told me that connecting with your breath is like connecting with your own medicine cabinet. He took minimal medications and was still practicing yoga at an advanced age. He practiced what he preached.

For more information on mindfulness, read Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn's "Wherever You Go, There You Are."



Carole B. Okun, LCSW-R
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Black History Month

February marks Black History Month, a tradition that got its start in the Jim Crow era and was officially recognized in 1976 as part of the nation's bicentennial celebrations. It aims to honor the contributions that Black Americans have made and to recognize their sacrifices.

In 1926, Carter G. Woodson, the scholar often referred to as the "father of Black history," established Negro History Week to focus attention on Black contributions to civilization.

Woodson chose a week in February because of Abraham Lincoln, whose birthday was February 12, and Frederick Douglass, who was born enslaved and did not know his actual birth date, but chose to celebrate it on February 14.

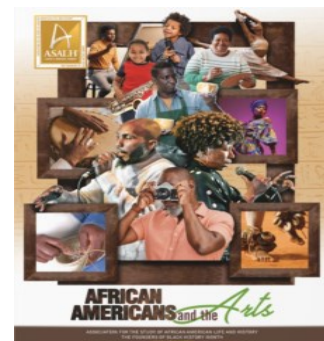
The Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) has made each February extra significant during Black History Month by choosing a different theme for every single year. So, starting with 1928, they have all the Black History Month themes to look back on.

This year's theme, "*African Americans and the Arts*" explores the key influence African Americans have had in the fields of "visual and performing arts, literature, fashion, folklore, language, film, music, architecture, culinary and other forms of cultural expression."

To view a full history of each year's theme since 1928, go to: <https://asalh.org/black-history-themes/>



ASALH



Senior Clubs of Colonie

Christ Our Light Seniors

Pres. Karen Coyne, 518-366-6536

Business Meeting: First Monday @ 12pm

Colonie Senior Citizens Club

Pres. Kathy Ingalls, 518-482-5049

Business Meeting: First Wednesday @ 10am

Lisha Kill Seniors Citizens Club

Pres. Shirley Hamm, 518-869-3020

Business Meeting: Second Tuesday @ 9:30am

Menands Senior Citizens Club

Pres. Diane Leonard, 518-465-3771

Business Meeting: Fourth Thursday @ 10:30am

Towers of Colonie Silver Streakers

Pres. Ralph Della Rocca, 518-542-1807

Business Meeting: First Monday @ 1pm

Thunder Road Seniors

Pres. Esther Cioffi, 518-314-9385

Business Meeting: Second Wednesday @ 10am



TOWN OF COLONIE

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Equal Opportunity Employer



Peter G. Crummey
Town Supervisor

Supervisor Crummey's Colonie Connection

While February is the shortest month, this year we enjoy an additional day as this is a leap year. I hope everyone has a chance for relaxation and time spent with loved ones. Remember, Valentine's Day is February 14th. Recently, I delivered my annual State of the Town Address, highlighting our progress and achievements from the past year and outlining goals for our future. If you are interested in watching my remarks, you can visit <https://www.colonie.org/departments/supervisor/state-of-the-town>. By the way, have you signed up for Stay Connected to receive other notices of activities in our Town?

Please visit <https://www.colonie.org/stayconnected/>.

I would like to congratulate our *Celebrate a Senior* Honoree Bill Fahy. After moving to Colonie in 1987, Bill has played a vital role in our community! From holding computer classes at the Thunder Road Senior Club to crafting benches for the Village Fire Department, Bill has shown us the importance of helping others.

Don't forget to submit nominations, including a photograph, to blanchardc@colonie.org for our next Town of Colonie *Celebrate a Senior* segment.

As always, I am here if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call my office.



Celebrate a Senior Spotlight

This month's Senior Spotlight is nominated for being a mentor, a comedian, a pillar of strength for others, an artist, a lifelong student, a volunteer, a family man, and an all-around great guy - meet Bill Fahy!

After serving in the Army for two years overseas, Bill began a career in the insurance field. Bill held different positions and managed to work additional part-time jobs as he continued his education in the insurance business. Bill's wife, Roberta, was a Registered Nurse and together they raised their three children, Shawn, Sharon and Michael, primarily in New Hartford, NY.

When Bill was still a child, he worked with his woodworking mentor, Mr. Nolan, to learn the trade of woodworking. As a young adult, he began to take up painting and furthered his talents through courses at Utica College. Bill and his family maintained an active and fun social life among their daily demands. Bill continued to nurture his artistic talents by making gifts for loved ones, and during retirement years, for consumers at craft shows.

Bill's career with Metropolitan Insurance brought him and his family from New Hartford to Colonie in 1987. After 23 years of service for the company, Bill retired in 1994 and couldn't slow down. He decided to further his education in computers at HVCC, obtained his Certificate in Technology in Computers and offered his knowledge to the senior citizens of Colonie!

Bill applied his woodworking skills to serving the Thunder Road Senior Club (TRSC) by making a room full of computer desks! He then taught computer classes to senior citizens at these desks. These classes were so popular that Bill recruited volunteers to assist him. Bill showed his appreciation to his volunteers by holding picnics for all of them at Cook Park. In the first two years, 97 seniors utilized these classes! Over 300 senior citizens had been served over the course of nine years!

Bill shares that volunteering runs in his bloodline. As a young adult, he was a member and later, President of the JayCees of Hartford, NY. He also served on the Senior Advisory Committee, representing TRSC and both beginning and ending each meeting with a joke. Those beautiful, mahogany benches you may have seen at the Village Fire Department when viewing the antique fire engine, were crafted by Bill too!

While Bill was an active member of TRSC, he was also volunteering for the Alzheimer's Association by teaching classes and facilitating support groups for caregivers. Bill had first-hand knowledge of the challenges involved in caregiving for a loved one with Alzheimer's. Bill was Roberta's caregiver at home for two years before she needed a higher level of care in a nursing home, and where he visited her daily. Roberta passed away in 2016. They were married for 53 years and the proud grandparents to seven grandchildren.

Bill reminds us:

- ◆ loneliness can hurt our health and it is important to remain socially active
- ◆ don't isolate yourself
- ◆ keep your mind, as well as your body, active
- ◆ humor is a great thing, as it can lead you a long way

There's truly something special about people with funny bones. They not only make a room full of people feel better about themselves, but they can also help bring people closer. Bill has done that and so much more for many people over the years and continues to this day.

"Everybody has a story to tell. The minute you're born, your chapter begins."—Bill Fahy



Bill and Janice Wall have shared seven exuberant years together!

