



COA Mission

Our mission is to enhance the quality of life of seniors in the community by providing services, which include nutrition, health screening, education, and other programs to meet their needs.

COA Board Meetings

Board meetings are held on the last Tuesday of the month at 4 p.m., January 26 and February 23.

Office Location

The Council on Aging office is located at the Town Offices, 23 Linden St., bottom floor, Room 118.

COA Members

Bob Blair, *Co-Chair*
Pat Wheeler, *Co-Chair*
Kate Bliss
Rachel Boyer
Wes Durant
Lori Fearebay
Karen Schultz

Phone

978-838-2750

Medical Equipment

The COA has a supply of medical equipment available. We accept donations of thoroughly clean equipment in good condition. Please consider donating your clean, used equipment so we can pass it on to someone in need. Contact Lori Fearebay at 978-804-8487, jfearebay@msn.com, or the COA phone 978-838-2750.

Transportation Services

Transportation is available Monday through Friday. Rider information forms are available on the Berlin town website under Boards & Committees / Council on Aging / Bus Services. Call 978-838-2750 for assistance.

Self Care During Difficult Times

Hello Everyone. We hope that you had a great holiday season. We know that 2020 has shaped up to be a different and tumultuous year. With this in mind, we want to make sure that you are able to continue to take care of yourself, physically-as well as emotionally and mentally. Here are some small tips or tricks to help yourself practice self-care without it taking up too much time.

Many may be wondering what self-care actually is?? Self-care is taking time to be mindful of how you are feeling and doing actions (both big and small) to help you feel refreshed and recharged. Self-care does not need to take a lot of time and does not need to cost anything. Self-care can be done at any time and should include skills or activities that you enjoy. There are several kinds of self-care out there. Some people enjoy being active, whether it is exercising or cleaning. Others may enjoy independent activities like reading, knitting or crocheting. Some people get self-care by reaching out to friends and family to check in and see how they are doing.

There is no wrong way to do self-care. The important thing is we are hoping that you will set aside some time for yourself to take care of yourself. The COA has some donated items that we can offer to people for starting a self-care kit. If you are interested in learning more or you have any questions, please email us at coa@townofberlin.com or call us at 978-838-2750.

What to Do When a Fire Alarm Sounds

Public Safety Message from Fire Chief Ken Clark

- When a neighbor's fire alarm sounds be a good neighbor and immediately call 911 to report the fire alarm system activation.
- If you are sleeping, roll out of bed to the floor and if smoke is present, stay low below the smoke. Crawl to the door.
- Check the door for heat with the back of your hand. If the door feels cool, open it slowly. If the coast is clear of fire, crawl to escape.
- Do not open a hot door. Place a towel or blanket at the base of the door to keep smoke out. Crawl to a window and open it. Turn on a light, if you can safely reach the ground, exit. Otherwise, shout and signal for help. Don't jump, a Firefighters first priority is to rescue people.
- Signal others by calling or banging on walls.
- Leave the building.
- Get out and stay out!
- Go to the family meeting place.
- Dial 911 from a neighbor's house. Wait at the meeting place for the Fire Department to arrive. Let them know if everyone is safe.



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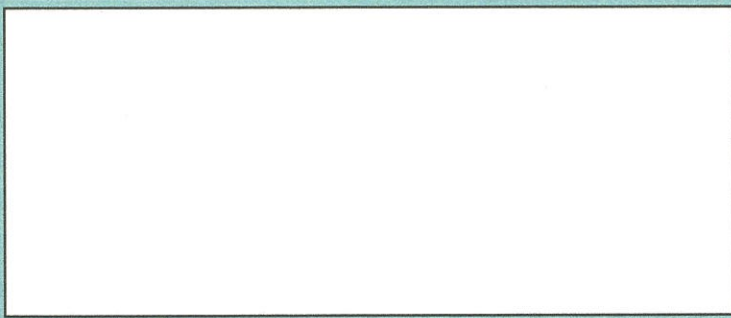
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Senior Numbers to Call for Services

- 1) **All Emergencies** (health, fire, accident) **Dial 911**. This reaches a dispatcher who will connect you to Berlin Police, Fire Department or Emergency Medical Services, as needed.
- 2) **Nashoba Associated Boards of Health**, fact-and-science-based information on health issues, including Corona virus. **Dial (978) 772-3338**. Berlin's public health nurse, Tammy Bedard, can be reached at ext. 340.
- 3) **Help Getting to Medical Appointments** — Berlin's Council on Aging van is available, by appointment, for a ride to and from medical appointments. **Dial (978) 838-2750**.
- 4) **Help Getting Groceries or Prescriptions**, for those who can't drive themselves. Council on Aging Van Transportation: **Dial (978) 838-2750**.
- 5) **Berlin Food Pantry** — If financial hardship keeps you from buying adequate amounts of food, call Berlin Food Pantry's Mary Mikelk at **(774) 245-8320**.
- 6) For inclusion in the **Meals On Wheels** program, which delivers packaged meals twice weekly to residents who need help with preparing regular meals, **call the Council on Aging at (978) 838-2750**.
- 7) Contact **The Commonwealth of Massachusetts** for help with food, housing, workman's comp., family counseling or other personal worries. **Dial 211**.

What if I missed the Medicare Open Enrollment Period? Can I still make a change to my 2021 coverage?

People who are currently enrolled in a Medicare Advantage (MA) plan have until March 31 to switch to another MA plan or to Original Medicare with or without a stand-alone prescription drug plan (Part D) during the Medicare Advantage Open Enrollment Period (MA OEP).

The MA OEP occurs each year from January 1 through March 31, and it is only available to people who have a Medicare Advantage plan. One change can be made during this period, which will take effect the first of the month following the month you enroll. For example, if you switch to a new Medicare Advantage Plan in February, your new coverage begins March 1.

Changes that can be made during this period include switching to:

- a different MA plan with drug coverage;
- a different MA plan without drug coverage;
- Original Medicare and a Part D plan; or
- Original Medicare without a Part D plan.

This is an opportunity to make a change if you find your coverage is not working for you; for example, one of your doctors no longer accepts your plan.

Other News:

- For those with Prescription Advantage or "Extra Help"; these programs help with paying for your prescription drugs. They also offer a Special Enrollment Period allowing you to change your prescription drug plan if needed outside of Open Enrollment.
 - Those with Prescription Advantage can do this only once each year.
 - Those with "Extra Help" can change once each quarter.
- The Massachusetts Medicare Savings Program pays your monthly Part B Premium that is deducted from your Social Security income. The 2021 monthly Part B premium will be \$148.50 in 2021. You will also be eligible for Extra Help from Social Security to help pay your prescription drug costs. You may be eligible if your income and assets are at or below these values.
 - Individual Gross Income: \$1,755/month Assets: \$15,720
 - Couple Gross Income: \$2,371/month Assets: \$23,600

If you want to take advantage of any of these opportunities to change your plans or be screened for assistance call your local Senior Center or the Regional SHINE Office and a SHINE Counselor can talk you through the process and any consequences of changing plans.

The SHINE Program (Serving Health Insurance Needs of Everyone), is federally funded and state administered through the Executive Office of Elder Affairs. The Program annually certifies over 700 counselors statewide, that provide, unbiased, confidential counseling on all aspects Medicare, related private insurance products and financial assistance programs

The Central Mass SHINE Program office 508-422-9931

You can also call 1-800-AGE-INFO (1-800-243-4636), then press or say 3. Visit us at our Central Mass Website www.shinema.org for useful information and applications for various programs.

Meet Your Town Movers

We continue our introductions of the folks whose energies and inspirations help propel and steer the Good Ship Berlin on its voyage through the waters of life. In this

edition of *The Powderhouse News*, meet Rachel Boyer, the newest member of the Council on Aging; and Bob Blair, COA Co-Chair.

Meet Rachel Boyer, Berlin Council on Aging



I just recently moved to Berlin earlier this year and live with my husband, mother-in-law, and son. We moved from a town closer to Boston. I am happy to volunteer on the Council of Aging as it will give me the opportunity to get to be a part of and give back to the community. I have a background in counseling and work for a health insurance company, and have always enjoyed helping others. I love being active, running, reading, and spending time with my family and two cats (Lilly and Oreo). I'm really looking forward to getting to know Berlin!

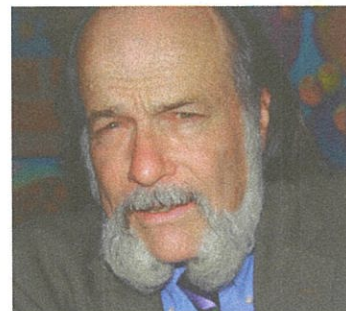
Meet Bob Blair, COA Co-Chair

I've lived in Berlin since 1986 with my wife, Su. Henry, a retired elementary school teacher and then an educational consultant and now Vice Chair of the Berlin-Boylston Regional School Committee, and our daughter Morgan, a working contemporary abstract artist and muralist living in Ridgewood, a borough of New York City.

Now retired, my career involved 40-plus years of service as the Building Manager at Worcester's historic Mechanics Hall. That span of time began with the Hall's major restoration in 1977 and my work involved maintaining and improving the building while setting up more than 10,000 events, large and small.

In Berlin, I have served on the Building Needs Study Committee, am on the Board at Northbrook Village I, on the Board of the Berlin Senior Citizens' Association and of the new seniors support non-profit Nashoba Neighbors, and am currently Co-Chair of the Council on Aging.

My lifelong goal has been to contribute to the sustenance and improvement of my community, family and planet. To that end, I have devoted a fair amount of time to various kinds of social, environmental and political service work, and see my current work with and for my fellow Berlin seniors as a continuation of that commitment. I enjoy working with many others of a like mind in our welcoming town.



Holiday Greens Fundraiser

Thank you to all who helped make our Holiday Greens Sale a success. We raised \$507 for programs at the library, in spite of terrible and ill-timed weather.

Thank you to the creators of the centerpieces: Ann Ribbens, Pat Roberts, Pat Renzoni and Pat Smith.

Thank you to the Library, 19 Carter, and Holiday Farm who hosted the sales.

And thank you to those who bought these creations for themselves and others...It takes a village.

Stay well and keep safe. Pat Smith

Gone But Not Forgotten

Virginia Keleher.....	October 2
Steen Bentzen.....	October 21
Paul Germain.....	November 6
Judy (Sawyer) Wilson.....	November 20
Kenneth Stahl.....	November 21
Kathleen MacDonald.....	December 3
Wilfred Beaugard.....	December 4
Amerigo Texeira.....	December 9
Jean Guild.....	December 19

The Five W's

The five W's — who, what, where, when and why — are the questions all reporters seek to answer in the articles they write for the enlightenment of their readers. In this new column in the *Powderhouse News*, we've asked writers — mostly Berlin residents — to answer the five W's in shedding light on some of the people, organizations and places that have come to make Berlin the unique and interesting place we call home. We hope you find these articles interesting and we welcome your suggestions for new topics to explore.

In this issue of the PHN, **June Miller**, a Director of the Berlin Art and Historical Society and Clerk of the Berlin

Historical Commission, discusses the mission and current doings of the Art and Historical Society and notes the availability, for viewing, of its many collections of ephemera, or items relating to the lives of Berlin residents in an earlier time.

Dave Westerling is a Berlin resident and former professor of civil and mechanical engineering at Merrimack College. He writes of his role, as a young civil engineer, in work that was undertaken to control storm-caused downstream flooding in the Assabet River Basin and which led to the construction of Berlin's Lester G. Ross dam.

Read on and enjoy.

New Year Greetings from the Berlin Art and Historical Society by June Miller

The Berlin Art and Historical Society, as is the case with other community organizations during the ongoing pandemic, has been limited in its opportunities to provide programming in 2020. We had planned to feature a presentation by folklorist and historian Jill Linzee this past spring and host our annual meeting in June. Unfortunately, neither could take place. Ms Linzee, however, is eager to reschedule when it is safe to do so, and, at this writing, we are hoping that an annual meeting via ZOOM will be held to elect officers and directors for the remainder of the 2020-2021 membership year.

Among the Society's purposes is "to aid and sustain the Historical Commission in collecting and preserving everything relating to the history, topography and family genealogy of the Town of Berlin, and in the performance of its duties under the Massachusetts General Laws." Since 1973 when the Historical Commission was first established, our membership has worked hard to maintain this relationship, offering skills and expertise in various fields of work and study and raising funds for building renovations, collection supplies and programming.

The major portion of the Town Historical Collection has been housed in Room 113 at the Town Offices since the demolition of our previous curatorial building (famously known to us as the garage). In its place a new storage building was erected in the same location adjacent to the Berlin Town Hall and the Bullard House. Its superstructure was built by students from Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School. (And what a fine job they did!) Our mini-split heating system is scheduled to be installed on December 10th by Northboro Oil after which we can move in stages to the new building. In the meantime, we have been securing donated items that lacked documentation and have moved much of the clothing collection which does not require climate control.



An interior scene at the Tyler Farm (originally Job Spofford) printed on a postcard circa 1900-1905. Grace's handwriting on the reverse side identifies those in front of the fireplace. Left to right: Danny Tyler, Eva Reed, Addie (Reed?), Maude the dog, Grace Tyler and Constance, Eva's niece. (The Reeds were Danny and Grace's cousins.)

See summary at end of article of one of the accessioning projects completed this summer.*

Acting on the recommendation of the Select Board and the Building Inspector, the Commission asked for approval of a Structural Integrity Survey for the Bullard House to be paid for with Highland Commons mitigation funds awarded for renovations in 2016. Squaw Hollow's Preservation Carpenter, Timothy Wohlheuter, accepted a contract to perform this work and will submit a written report to the Commission and the Select Board by December 6th. This report will inform any future work to be undertaken. The Bullard House tells many stories that detail early village life. We are anxious to move ahead with our vision to complete a local history museum in this building.

(continued on next page)

Our history is all around us and belongs to us. Preservation of our unique buildings and artifacts are powerful connectors to our past and help to ground us in the present, providing tangible and often beautiful reminders to help us understand our rural heritage and explain what happened to shape the character of this country town.

Membership in the Society is open to all with “an interest in the History of Berlin and/or the pursuance or further appreciation of the Arts.” The Society is a 501c 3 corporation and, as such, enjoys the tax benefits of that designation. Go to www.townofberlin.com to view the Historical Commission’s web page and click on the community link to view the Society’s website.

**Emily Grace Tyler, ephemera from her lap desk in The Town Historical Collection*

From donations of ephemera (papers and other collectibles not intended to have lasting value) gifted by Walter

Bickford and Mildred and Jarvis Ewing, a window has opened onto the life of (Emily) Grace Tyler. Grace (b. December 23, 1889), the daughter of James Danford Tyler and Anna S. Bassett, grew up at the Job Spofford Farm on 100 River Road West along with her brother Danny (Danford Bassett Tyler). Grace left behind a collection of personal reflections and copies of letters that reached out to relatives and friends, giving us a picture of an intelligent and thoughtful young woman. Known as a reclusive figure, Grace’s deafness is documented by one of the more important papers found in the collection, a warrant for her education at Boston’s Horace Mann School for the Deaf. Her ephemera have now been listed and filed in protective sleeves either as individual papers or in folders grouped by category. They await more in-depth study to retell the story of a young deaf woman living in South Berlin in the early twentieth century.

Berlin’s Silent Angels (Part One) by Dave Westerling

One of my first jobs as a civil engineer was working at the Watershed Planning Party of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service (now the Natural Resource Conservation Service) in Amherst Massachusetts. Part of the work was the planning and evaluation of flood control dam sites on the Upper Assabet River. And later assisting on the layout and field construction of earth dams in Berlin and surrounding towns along the Upper Assabet River.

So “Upper” is the key word here. In river terms, upper is at the upstream areas of a watershed where the falling rain starts collecting in small streams which combine to form large streams. This continues downstream to where large rivers flow into the sea.

Most of Berlin lies in the Upper area of the Assabet River Basin. Just downstream of Berlin is Hudson MA and then down to Maynard and then down to West Concord. In Concord the Assabet meets with the Sudbury River to form the Concord River, which flows to Lowell where it meets the mighty Merrimack River and eventually to Newburyport and the Atlantic Ocean.

So next time you are in Newburyport, say hello to the water, some of which was flowing in North Brook, here in Berlin, a few months earlier.

A Better Look at Maynard

Let’s go back to Maynard for a better look. Maynard had lots of mill buildings which housed very large textile manufacturing plant powered by the flowing water of

the Assabet River. The plant was built originally in 1847 but by 1860 it was owned by the American Woolen Company and was making uniforms for the Union Army in the Civil War.

The large mill in Maynard was converted to steam and electric power to supplement the water power. But water is like fire, you need some of it for life but too much of it!?

The 1938 Hurricane that devastated most of New England’s industrial cities with severe flooding pretty much ended Maynard’s glory days. Maynard suffered terrible flooding and destruction and so did Hudson, West Concord and Lowell.

After the Great Depression and World War II, America rebounds!

Besides the fall of the stock market, one other true cause of the Depression was the failure of crops in the mid-west U.S.A. Soil erosion led to dust bowl conditions and American farmers could not meet the demand for food. Some methods for controlling flooding and subsequent soil erosion were needed. And after WWII, Americans were very confident of their government and asked for solutions to flooding across the country and even on the Assabet River. President Eisenhower (R) and President Kennedy (D) personified the “Can-Do” American spirit. What would happen to Maynard and other “downstream” cities and towns if we built small flood control structures in the “upper reaches”? WHAT IF?

Part II next time — The Silent Angels of Berlin Save the Day!

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Powder House News

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Vision Awareness and Carroll Center for the Blind

The COA spoke with Dina Rosenbaum to get some additional information regarding the importance of eye exams and what services the Carroll Center for the Blind can do.

Many people may experience vision changes as they age. It is important for your eye doctor or eye care practitioner to assess how your vision is. If someone's vision is 20/200 or worse, their eye care practitioner is supposed to report to Massachusetts Commission of the Blind. Any traumatic event that could impact vision would also qualify as well. Once someone is deemed legally blind, a report would prevent them from legally operating a motor vehicle. However, a state ID could be issued for identification purposes.

Once someone has been deemed legally blind by the Massachusetts

Commission for the Blind, they may be eligible for some tax credits as well as additional services. Potential tax credits can include a federal tax benefit, a real estate benefit and an excise tax benefit. The City of Boston, offers discounts for the subway and paratransit systems. The Carroll Center for the Blind can work with individuals to assess what they may need to provide visual assistance.

Dina reported that many seniors tend to order handheld magnifiers and other low vision assistance devices. The key with these tools is that bigger magnification may not be best, it is important to learn how to use these devices correctly. Carroll Center for the Blind has their own physicians and social workers that will help individuals make sure their needs are being met.

Some of these services may be

covered by insurance but many needs for visual assistance are not covered by insurance. The New England College of Optometry can be a great resource for people to start getting a quick vision exam. The Veterans Administration (VA) does cover some eye care providers and materials, please check with your provider regarding this.

If you have any additional questions or comments, please reach out to the COA at coa@townofberlin.com or you can search carroll.org as well for specific information.

Greetings from 19 Carter

We wish you and yours the very best as we come to the end of 2020 and look forward to connecting with you more fully in 2021!