Pets can greatly increase quality of life for older people, providing companionship and improved levels of health and well-being. They help seniors maintain a regular daily routine by giving the pet owner reason and motivation to get out and interact with others. For those who have lost close family and friends, the companionship of a pet can reduce loneliness, depression, and stress. A pet can help the senior focus on something other than physical problems and negative preoccupations about loss or aging. Pets benefit also, often by being released from the pound to the loving home of a retired person who has more time to devote to them.

However, the important relationship between pets and elders can be disrupted by disability, housing instability, or financial challenges. Fortunately, pet care assistance programs available in Berkshire County recognize the value that animals can bring to elders lives, and understand how elders can help animals in need of good homes.

Pet assistance programs
- **Spaying and Neutering:** Animal welfare organizations throughout Massachusetts offer free or low cost spaying and neutering services to help reduce the number of unwanted and abandoned animals in the state.
- **Pet Food Pantries:** Many food pantries and animal welfare groups offer free pet food to pet owners. In general, food pantries are established to help those in extreme financial hardship, and are not meant to be used as a regular source of food for ones pets. Most food pantries do not have pet food except when it is donated to them; you can contact your local food pantry to offer donations. The Berkshire Humane Society (BHS) coordinates a county-wide effort with social agencies, local businesses, and individuals to collect and distribute pet food. Contact them or visit their website for a list of drop-off and distribution locations.
- **Veterinary Care:** When a companion animal requires basic veterinary care, including vaccinations, financial aid may be possible. This type of assistance is often available from the Berkshire Humane Society (BHS) or local animal welfare organizations.

Information just released by the Statewide SHINE (Serving the Health Insurance Needs of Everyone) Coordinator Cindy Phillips at the MA Executive Office of Elder Affairs illustrates the substantial health cost savings experienced by Berkshire County residents on Medicare who receive SHINE Counseling.

In fiscal year 2014, Elder Services of Berkshire County’s SHINE counselors saved Berkshire County residents over $3,198,090. This means each Berkshire resident who received SHINE counseling saved an average of $1,032, which represents the amount of money the person counseled would have had to pay for their health insurance coverage had they not signed up for the plans discussed with the SHINE counselor. Many, if not most, Medicare beneficiaries are confused by the details and intricacies of the options available to them. The SHINE program, established in 1985, assists older adults, their spouses, and Medicare beneficiaries of all ages to better understand their health care coverage and thus make well-informed decisions to gain substantial savings for seniors.
Elder Services Update

April is National Volunteer month
By John Lutz

Elder Services of Berkshire County could not, does not, and cannot have the positive impact it does on elders’ lives without the integral contributions of volunteers. Seniors benefit in many ways, big and small, from the selfless contribution that our volunteers make. Each Elder Services’ volunteer has a meaningful impact on elders’ lives.

Money Management volunteers assist seniors in managing their check books and help them continue to live independently in their homes. Meals on Wheels drivers offer healthy hot meals and well-being checks to home-bound seniors each weekday. Volunteer drivers take seniors to and from medical appointments and help with grocery shopping. SHINE counselors provide peace of mind and save Berkshire seniors an average of $1,000 annually on the cost of their health insurance and prescriptions. Ombudsman volunteers offer advocacy for elders in long term care facilities, often at the most vulnerable time of their lives, to ensure that they receive the treatment, services and supports they need. Healthy Aging volunteers teach evidence-based workshops for seniors wanting to better their health.

Our volunteers give freely of their own time, talent and resources as-sistors of our community to live more active, independent lives in the homes of their own choosing.

Berkshire Senior

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Editorial Board: Cassie Carmon, Bea Cowlin, Bonny DiTomasso, Laura Peakes, John Lutz, and Assistant Editor Louisa Weeden

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Signed columns are the opinion of the writers and not necessarily the opinion of Elder Services. For medical, financial or other advice, seek a qualified professional in the appropriate field.

Elder Services and its programs are funded, in part, by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs.

State and federal funds provided to Elder Services are limited. Elder Services welcomes charitable donations to help meet the growing needs of Berkshire seniors, and gratefully acknowledges all donations.

Berkshire County State Legislators

If you have questions or comments that you want to share with your Berkshire representatives, you can contact them using the information below:

- Senator Benjamin Downing: 1-617-722-1625 & 442-4008 benjamin.downing@masenate.gov

Age Friendly Community Survey

Are you over age 50 and living in Berkshire County? We want your opinion!

An Age-Friendly Community is a way to help older adults remain healthy, active, and engaged in their community for as long as possible. The results of this Age-Friendly survey will help inform planning efforts to make Berkshire County a better place for older adults and all Berkshire residents.

Berkshire County is aging faster than most of Massachusetts and our nation. Nearly every two baby boomers will retire in Berkshire County over the next 10-20 years. This change in our population requires that we all rethink what it means to get older here in the Berkshires, and that we begin to take steps to prepare for this change across every sector of community life.

Pick up a copy of the anonymous survey at your local Council on Aging, library, or town hall. Or go to www.surveymonkey.com/s/BerkshireAgeFriendly to take the survey online. Or use the QR code below to go directly to the on-line survey. Your answers will help us to begin planning and prioritizing local efforts to address the growing needs and desires of older adults. It should take about 15 minutes. Please ask your spouse, friends and neighbors to complete a separate survey, in every opinion matters.

Elder Services greatly appreciates all the wonderful volunteers who assist us in our efforts to serve each Berkshire community’s seniors in the best possible way. Each volunteer brings unique skills and capabilities to his or her service and plays a special role in helping seniors who face challenging circumstances. Many of our volunteers are seniors themselves. Sitting with a SHINE counselor who is also a senior can be comforting and make sharing personal health information a little easier. A Money Management volunteer who also lives on a fixed income can better empathize with another senior struggling to maintain his or her financial and social independence.

All Berkshire County volunteers, including those at Elder Services, make invaluable and immeasurable selfless contributions to assist others. During National Volunteer month, and all year long, we thank you all for your efforts and appreciate your generosity. If you are helped by a volunteer, please thank them. If you would like to volunteer in a meaningful way, please call Elder Services at 499-0524 or 1-800-544-5242.

John Lutz is the Executive Director of Elder Services.
Advocacy key to maintaining senior independence and programs

By State Representative Tricia Farley-Bouvier

After eight years of a governor who not only knew his way to the Berkshires, but was a part-time resident, it is now time to welcome Governor Charlie Baker. Governor Baker, who has held high-level administrative positions for the Commonwealth (most notably as Secretary of Health and Human Services and then Secretary of Administration and Finance), knows the needs of seniors and understands the budget process extremely well. As with all change, working with a new administration can be unsettling as we wait to see how he will set his priorities around legislation and budget.

Our first piece of good news is that in January, Governor Baker spared Elder Affairs programs from another round of cuts to cover a $768 million state budget deficit. This was a relief after last fall’s $2.37 million in 9c cuts to Elder Affairs line items, including $1.52 million to home care services. While this was good news for elders, as we begin the 2016 budget season with competing interests all around, it is essential for everyone to keep an eye on the process. Awareness and advocacy is especially important for seniors, whose daily lives may be directly affected by the decisions we make in Boston.

Looking forward to the FY 2016 budget, I will be working with my colleagues advocating that we raise the income eligibility limits for the state home care program, offered locally by Elder Services of Berkshire County. Raising the annual income limit to 300% of the federal poverty level, which equates to $35,000, would: increase the number of elders eligible for the program; allow it to mesh perfectly with MassHealth; and provide a seamless path for eligible seniors without a gap in services. Without this change, too many seniors are just out of range for the current income guidelines, thereby increasing their chances of institutional placement.

It is abundantly clear that seniors prefer to be cared for in their homes whenever and for as long as possible. It is equally clear that the home care model saves tax dollars.

Another way to provide care and save tax dollars is to invest in methods that reduce emergency room visits and hospital readmissions. A method that shows promise is Care Coaches, a program in which professionals are assigned to seniors who are high users of the medical system to help with transitions between hospital stays and home. Coaching has proven very effective in helping individuals manage chronic conditions such as diabetes and heart disease. Reminders to take medicines, consistent monitoring of such things as weight, blood pressure, and blood sugar, along with assisting individuals with healthy eating and exercise, can greatly reduce seniors’ prescription drug intake and slow the physical deterioration that can lead to emergency room visits.

As we go through the budget process over the next few months, I ask that seniors advocate for the things they feel are important. Please continue to be in touch with my office or get involved in statewide advocacy. Hearing from our constituents helps form our budget priorities. Your voice is critical as we move through the budget process.

Tricia Farley-Bouvier is State Representative for the Third Berkshire District. To contact her, call 442-4300, 1-617-722-2240 or email Tricia.Farley-Bouvier@mahouse.gov.
Ten most overlooked tax deductions

Lori Johnston

Before filing your taxes, don’t miss out on deductions related to medi-
cal expenses and other costs that come out of your wallet as you care for
a family member throughout the year. An estimated one-third of U.S.
taxpayers, or about 45 million people, itemize their taxes instead of taking
IRS standard deduction. An estimated $1.26 trillion worth of deductions
are claimed annually, according to experts with TurboTax. See if you can
get a break on your taxes with these 10 tax deductions.

Medical expenses

Nearly 100 medical costs can be deducted related to the diagnosis,
treatment, cure or prevention of disease, or costs for treating any part of
the body. Those include equipment, services, and supplies, ranging from
glasses to eye surgery to acupuncture to prescriptions.

“Lots of adults are paying for prescriptions for their elderly parents,”
says Melissa Labant, a CPA and technical manager for the American
Institute of CPAs.

Even artificial limbs, bandages, hearing aids, and wigs are accepted
medical expenses (for others, see IRS Publication 502). The medical and
dental costs must total more than 10 percent of your adjusted gross income
to be deducted (7.5 percent if either you or your spouse was 65 or older
at some point in 2014).

Long-term health care costs

An often-missed expense is the amount paid for long-term care services
and long-term care insurance (that’s a more limited deduction, depending on age).
Rehabilitation, therapeutic, preventative, and personal
care services are among those that qualify as long-term care services if
your family member is chronically ill and if they are part of a plan set by
a health care practitioner. Someone is considered chronically ill if they
can’t perform at least two activities of daily living (such as eating, toileting,
bathing, and dressing) without substantial assistance from someone else.

Mileage

From weekly doctor’s appointments to out-of-town visits with a spe-
cialist or for a procedure, the miles you log for your parents’ medical needs
can be deducted. “You can take that if they qualify as your dependent.
Keep a log of gas you’re running around,” says Mary Beth Saylor, a CPA and
tax principal with Windham Brannon, an Atlanta-based accounting firm.

You can take 23.5 cents a mile for 2014, for medical mileage. If you’re
staying overnight for a medical purpose, deduct $50 per night, for each
person, for lodging.

Dental expenses

Go ahead and smile — dental expenses are among the costs that some
people ignore, including dentures and artificial teeth.

Home improvements for aging adults

Investing in ramps for a wheelchair-bound parent, handrails, and grab
bars in the bathroom or a step-free shower can be part of a deduction.
It doesn’t matter if the improvements are in your home or your parents’
home, as long as it doesn’t add value to the house, Saylor says.

The IRS says that the cost of the improvement is reduced by the in-
crease in your property value. Other changes, such as widening doorways
and hallways, lowering kitchen cabinets, and installing lifts, also typically
do not add value to houses.

Energy-saving home improvements

Whether or not you did this in the course of being a caregiver, any
energy-saving changes are eligible for a credit. For more traditional items
such as insulation and windows, it’s 10 percent of the cost (a maximum of
$500). For alternative energy equipment, like a solar hot water heater, the
credit is up to 30 percent of the cost. Find more details from the federal
Energy Star program (www.energystar.gov)

Mortgage interest

If you are paying interest on your or your parents’ home loans,
construction loans, or home equity lines of credit, it’s deductible. There
are some limitations so you need to discuss with your accountant.

State and local sales tax

This is an excellent idea if you live in a state that doesn’t have income
tax. If you do, you’ll need to make a choice. Deduct state and local sales
taxes, or state and local income taxes. You may find that the best financial
benefit, in that case, is to stick with the income tax deduction, according
to experts with TurboTax.

Elder Services’ offers AARP financial literacy seminars

Sponsored by a grant from Guardian Life Insurance, Elder Ser-
vices’ Money Management Program will host a free financial literacy
seminar, AARP Finances 50+.

The seminar, which consists of four 90 minute sessions, will be conducted
on May 4, 11, 18, and 25, with the final session on June 4. All sessions will be
at the Harper Center in Williamstown from 2:30 to 4 p.m. Participants must
attend all 4 sessions.

The AARP Foundation Finances 50+ financial literacy program is
designed to motivate and empower participants to take charge of their fi-
nancial futures. The workshops assist those 50 and older to make objective
assessments, set appropriate goals, and establish habits and behaviors
that will help them thrive financially.

Attending these workshops will pro-
vide individuals with greater oppor-
tunity to enter their 60s and beyond
with a more solid financial base.

The workshop consists of four
mandatory 90-minute classroom
sessions on the basics of finances:
good and budget-planning; debt reduction and credit repair; asset
building and protection. The workshop and accompanying work-
books are provided free of charge.

The workshop and classroom ses-
sions will be led by trained volunteer facilitators. Participants
who attended these workshops last year found them very helpful.

Pre-registration is required. Call Elder Services’ SHINE (Serving the
Health Insurance Needs of Everyone) and Money Management Coordina-
tor Bonny DiTomasso at 499-0524 or 1-800-54-524.

Free tax prep assistance

Free tax preparation assistance for all middle and low-income taxpayers,
with special attention to those ages 60 and older continues until April 15
through the AARP Foundation’s Tax-Aide Program. Volunteers trained in
cooperation with the IRS will assist in filling out federal and Massachu-
setts tax returns and file them electronically.

You do not need to be a member of AARP or a relative to use this free
service. Below are the eight Berkshire County sites offering this service, their
schedules, and telephone numbers for making appointments:

- Adams — COA, Visitors Center, 3 Hoosac Street (743-8333)
  Noon – 3:30 p.m. on Wednesdays
- Dalton – Dalton Senior Center, 40 Field Street Ext. (684-2000)
  9 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays
- Gt Barrington – Teague Senior Center, 909 South Main Street (528-1881)
  9 a.m. - noon on Wednesdays
- Lee – COA Senior Center, 21 Crossway Street (243-5545)
  9 a.m. - noon on alternate Thursdays
- Lenox – Community Center, 65 Walker Street (637-5535)
  9 a.m. - noon on alternate Thursdays
- North Adams – Spitzer Senior Center, 116 Ashland Street (662-3125)
  9 a.m. - 1 p.m. on Wednesdays
- Pittsfield – Froio Senior Center, 330 North Street (499-9346)
  9 a.m. - Noon. on Tuesdays & Thursdays
- Williamstown – Harper Center, 138 Church Street (458-8250)
  6 - 9 p.m. on Tuesdays

For additional information, please contact the Information and Referral
Department of Elder Services at 499-0524 or toll free at 1-800-544-5242.

Estate tax on an inherited IRA

This is not as easy as deducting medical expenses or charitable contribu-
tions, but is worth checking out. If you inherited an IRA from your parents,
you could take a deduction for the federal estate tax paid on IRA income.

Charitable contributions

Of course, you may know to estimate the value of items you or your
parents donate to charity. But you also can include other out-of-pocket
related to volunteering. If you or your parents bought ingredients to make
meals for the homeless or elderly, or if you drove a personal vehicle while
volunteering or assisting a charity, those and other costs can be deducted.

SHINE (Serving Health Insurance Needs of Everyone)

Where Can I Meet With a SHINE Counselor?

Elder Services’ SHINE program provides free, unbiased health insurance information and counseling to seniors and Medicare beneficiaries of all ages. Call Elder Services at 499-0524 or 1-800-544-5242 for an appointment at 877 South Street in Pittsfield, or you can schedule appointments with SHINE counselors at the following Council on Aging locations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City/Town/Phone</th>
<th>Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adams</td>
<td>Visitors Center 3 Hoosac Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becket/Ots/Sandisfield</td>
<td>Ots Town Hall One North Main Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheshire</td>
<td>COA 119 School Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dalton</td>
<td>Senior Center 684-2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Barrington</td>
<td>Claire Teague Senior Center 909 South Main Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinsdale</td>
<td>Hinsdale Town Hall 695-2130 or 665-2629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lanesborough</td>
<td>Lanesborough COA 83 North Main Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Adams</td>
<td>Spitzer Senior Center 116 Ashland Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pittsfield</td>
<td>Ralph J. Froio Senior Center 320 North Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheffield</td>
<td>Senior Center 229-7037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stockbridge</td>
<td>Senior Center 238-4170 x203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williamstown</td>
<td>Harper Center 458-5250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Citizens’ main priority at Rosewood is making sure the transition from independent living to assisted living gives you and your family “peace-of-mind.” If you are considering assisted living for your loved one, please give us a call to schedule a tour. Our staff will be happy to assist you and will answer any questions you may have. All staff is bonded, insured, and CORI/criminal checked.

Pittsfield’s First-Certified in Assisted Living Rosewood prides itself as the first-certified assisted living facility in Berkshire County (established in 1984) who offers the following services: GAFC and Medicaid Approved; Nurse on Staff; Exercise and Wellness Programs; Private Rooms; Security Systems; 24-hr. Awake Staff; Transportation; Medication Monitoring; Hospice Care and more.

“the one-on-one approach at Rosewood is truly impressive, setting them apart from all other assisted living facilities.”

Elder Services Speaks 200 Languages!

Beginning English speaker? Did you know that Elder Services has the ability to communicate with individuals speaking over 200 different languages? Don’t let language be a barrier to getting services for you, your aging parents or grandparents.

Call us today at 499-0524 or 1-800-544-5242 for more information.
Elder Services

We Remember
January Memorial Donations

Helen Donahue
Richard C. Donati Memorial Fund

Eleanor Peltier
Mr. David Doherty
Ms. Margaret A. Ross
Mr. Charles Taey

Wanda & Fred Dubis
Ms. Elaine Dubis Kittler

Mr. William Gillett
Ms. Jeana Bachetti

Robert W. Lee
Mrs. Doris Lee

Editor’s Note:
Unless requested otherwise, each month Berkshire Senior publishes the names of donors to Elder Services and those honored by the donations. These funds help Elder Services provide Berkshire seniors with programs and services to help them remain independent. Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent of the law.

New Benefits Counseling Program Needs Volunteers & Seniors

Elder Services will be offering an exciting new service this May, Benefits Counseling, which is designed to help people age 60 and older who live on a fixed and limited income apply for programs and benefits to help reduce the costs of housing, food, energy, and home maintenance and repairs.

Elder Services is seeking:
Volunteers who are available to be trained to offer this service to seniors &
Seniors who would like to see what benefits they might be eligible for, and have assistance applying for them.

Please call Elder Services’ Volunteer Coordinator Ann Rocchi at 499-0524 or 1-800-544-5242 for more information.

In Honor of Tony Dango's 100th Birthday

Ms. Barbara Milensky

Elder Independence Appeal

Ms. Theresa Ahern
Mr. James F. Amaral
Mr. Donald L. Amstaud, Jr.
Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Aranuitti
Mr. & Mrs. James Barbieri
Ms. Marilyn K. Barnes
Mr. Ronald P. Barron
Mr. Thomas R. Berkel
Mr. & Mrs. James Bettin

You Can Donate to Elder Services Online!

JUST GO TO WWW.ESBCI.ORG & CLICK ON “DONATE NOW!”

At the bottom of the page, you’ll be given a number of options for supporting Berkshire seniors, and can use your PayPal account or your debit or credit card to donate to the Elder Independence Appeal, Meals on Wheels, the Elder Care Fund, or to make a Memorial Donation.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP!

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP!
Elder Services' volunteers go the extra mile

By Louisa Weeden

Volunteers are an integral part of Elder Services, and volunteer opportu-
nities abound for those who would like to share their time and talents to help meet the needs of Berkshire seniors. Following is an overview of Elder Services’ volunteer programs and opportunities.

Community Services volunteers transport, shop for, and visit frail se-
neniors.

Volunteer drivers bring seniors to and from medical appointments. Berk-
shire seniors who no longer drive are always grateful when a friendly vol-
unteer comes to their door to take them to their medical appointments.

Volunteer shoppers either shop for groceries with a list prepared by a se-
nior or transport the senior to the store and support him or her throughout the shopping process.

Companion volunteers visit those who are homebound to socialize, read aloud, or engage in other activities such as crafts, playing cards, or working on puzzles.

Elder Nutrition/Meals on Wheels program volunteers help provide healthy meals and a friendly connection and are crucial to the program, which prepares over 900 meals each weekday and serves them to Berkshire seniors. Many dedicated volunteers pitch in to prepare, pack, serve, and deliver these meals. Meals on Wheels drivers, many of whom are volunteers, deliver meals to homebound seniors. Nutrition volunteers help prepare and pack the meals at the kitchen, and serve noontime meals at Elder Services’ 14 Senior Group Lunch Sites throughout Berkshire County. Seniors who receive Meals on Wheels enjoy hot, nutritious meals, well-being checks, and friendly smiles and greetings from the drivers who deliver their meals. At Senior Group Lunch sites, volunteers and staff members help seniors feel comfortable and welcome as they enjoy both the meal and the social connection with one another.

Money Management volunteers help seniors budget expenses and pay bills. The goal of Elder Services’ Money Management program is to assist seniors who are at risk of losing their independence due to difficulties managing their household finances. Since the program’s beginning in 1994, Elder Services’ Money Management volunteers have assisted hundreds of Berkshire County residents with sorting mail, paying bills, budgeting, bank statement reconciliation and much more.

Ombudsman Program volunteers make a difference for seniors in nurs-
ing homes. The Long-Term Care Ombudsman program was established by the federal government in 1973. Elder Services currently has 12 state-
certified Ombudsman volunteers who visit the 15 nursing and rest homes in Berkshire County at least once, and in some cases, twice a week. These trained volunteers help residents resolve problems, ensure residents’ rights are being upheld, and monitor the general conditions of the facility. In addition, the Ombudsman page on Elder Services’ website, www.eshci.org, provides information about all the long-term care facilities in Berkshire County.

SHINE (Serving the Health Insurance Needs of Everyone) volunteers help seniors make sound health insurance decisions. Elder Services’ SHINE program provides counseling for Medicare beneficiaries. Volunteers explain the basics of the Medicare health insurance program, coverage gaps, supplemental insurance, and prescription drug coverage options, and help people make informed choices. In addition, SHINE volunteers assist seniors in accessing such public benefits as MassHealth, low-income prescription drug subsidies, and programs that help pay for Medicare Part B premiums.

“Berkshire Senior TV” volunteers help produce monthly television shows on local cable access TV.

Healthy Aging Workshops trained volunteer leaders conduct My Life, My Health, Healthy Eating, A Matter of Balance and Chronic Pain Self-Management workshops for seniors.

Volunteer Benefit Plus volunteer counselors help individuals ages 60 and older who live on fixed and limited incomes to apply for programs and benefits to help reduce the costs of housing, food, energy, and home maintenance and repairs.

If you would like to share your time and talents to make a difference in the lives of Berkshire seniors, call Elder Services’ Volunteer Coordinator Ann Rocchi at 1-800-544-5242 or 499-0524. We are always looking for volunteers to bring seniors to medical appointments, help them with grocery shopping, provide companionship, deliver Meals on Wheels, help prepare and pack meals in our Lanesboro kitchen, or serve meals at group lunch sites. Training is available for those who would like to serve as Long-term Care Ombudsman, Money Management volunteers, Healthy Aging workshop leaders, Benefits Counselors, or SHINE volunteers.

Our volunteers say they receive more than they give, and feel touched and enriched by those they serve.

Louisa Weeden is Elder Services’ Planning and Development Specialist.

Every April, Elder Services celebrates the service of its many volunteers with a special volunteer appreciation event.

Elder Services’ volunteers help provide healthy meals and a friendly connection and are crucial to the program, which prepares over 900 meals each weekday and serves them to Berkshire seniors.

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Thank You Elder Services' Volunteers…

Elder Services is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors. (Left to right) Former Board member Edward Perlak, and current members Kathleen Luczynski, Hilary Green, Dawn Delea, David Magnun, Diane Sheridan, Deb Kushnet, Mary K. O’Brien, Van Ellet, and Sully Garofano.

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Mary McGinnis of Pittsfield is the Clerk of Elder Services’ Advisory Council, a group of volunteers that meets six times a year to help oversee Elder Services’ federally-funded programs.

Program Volunteers (from 3/1/14 to 2/28/15)
Ron Aasen
Sandra Aasen
Barbara Adams
Paula Albro
Jill Allen
Norman L. Antonio
Lucy Auksi
Florence Avery
Yvette Bastow
Karen Baumbach
Anna Beining
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Harold French

Balance Rock Investment Group
Balance Rock Investment Group provides elder services in Berkshire County, Massachusetts.

Berkshire Life, a Guardian Company
Berkshire Life, a Guardian Company provides elder services in Berkshire County, Massachusetts.

Center for Development
Center for Development provides elder services in Berkshire County, Massachusetts.

Crossroads
Crossroads provides elder services in Berkshire County, Massachusetts.

Social Development Center
Social Development Center provides elder services in Berkshire County, Massachusetts.

Transitions
Transitions provides elder services in Berkshire County, Massachusetts.

MISSION STATEMENT
The mission of Elder Services of Berkshire County, Inc. is to provide Berkshire elders, caregivers, and individuals with disabilities the opportunity to live with dignity, independence, and self-determination, and to achieve the highest possible quality of life.

STATEMENT OF INCLUSIVITY
Elder Services practices non-discrimination in employment practices and service delivery. Embracing diversity, our in-home and community-based services are available to all without regard to race, ethnicity, language, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or lifestyle.
…We Could Not Do It Without You!

Lynn Lampiasi and Norman Antonio are two of the meal site packing volunteers at the North Adams Council on Aging. Nutrition volunteers work in Elder Services’ Meals on Wheels kitchen, at 14 senior meal sites, as volunteer drivers, and in the two regional meal packing sites. They provide over 15,000 hours of service a year.

Judith Hyde
Margaret Lenks
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Anne Jones
Thomas J. Joseph
Ruthie Karrel
Howard Kaufman
Charis Keeker
Jennifer Kimball
Butch King
Gladyss King
Pat King
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Elaine Shindler
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Marion Smith
Floyd Tyler
Jeff Turner
Sarah Tyler
Shirley Unsworth
Joan Ury
Winnie Veretto
Autumn Vigliard
Marilyn Vinc
Samuel Vinc
MaryAnn Vreeland
Jean Wade
Rich Wallach
Mary Washburn
Trudy Weaver-Miller
Charles Webster
Lorraine Wechter
Gertrude Willey
Kim Winter
Richard (Rich) Wolfe
Lou Yarter
Teresa Zaccaria

Money Management Program volunteers like Bev Clarke help seniors to write checks, balance their checkbooks, and live within a workable budget.

Virginia Niewinski
Helen Nolan
Harold Novick
Nancy ’Brien
“Cristina” Roberts
Wenren Robertson
Alice Rodriguez
Gail Rothewell
Jane Rozak
Richard Rozak
Rita Rusden
Kate Ryan
Virginia Niewinski
Helen Nolan
Harold Novick
Nancy ’Brien
“Cristina” Roberts
Wenren Robertson
Alice Rodriguez
Gail Rothewell
Jane Rozak
Richard Rozak
Rita Rusden
Kate Ryan

Money Management Program volunteers like Bev Clarke help seniors to write checks, balance their checkbooks, and live within a workable budget.

Elder Services’ SHINE (Serving the Health Insurance Needs of Everyone) program provides free, unbiased and up-to-date health insurance information, counseling, and assistance to Medicare beneficiaries of all ages and their caregivers, helping them understand and make informed choices regarding their Medicare benefits and other health insurance options.

Erica Girgenti
Jennifer Glass
Jean Goodnort
Elaine Green
Eric Paul Greenberg
William Greilich
Mazie Grull
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Nadine Hasver
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Elder Services’ Berkshire Senior

Elder Services’ Berkshire Senior

April 2015

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With severe balance problems and tremor, Meals on Wheels helps me stay in my own house with my walker. An Elder Services’ Meals on Wheels client

“With severe balance problems and tremor, Meals on Wheels helps me stay in my own house with my walker.”

-Jacqueline Abbott, Lee, MA

Jacqueline Abbott and her family have operated their family business, Abbott Limousine & Livery in Lee, for decades. Throughout the years, Porchlight has provided the exceptional care to enhance their quality of life.

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CORRECTION: CHP Family Dental Center in Great Barrington was listed inaccurately as providing free care. In fact, CHP Family Dental Center does not provide free care. CHP works with a wide variety of dental insurance plans and can help individuals sign up for the MassHealth dental plan. They do offer a sliding fee-scale for those who qualify.

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service is usually offered on a case-by-case basis depending on the applicant’s circumstances, the type of treatment needed, and any medications or procedures involved.

- **Pet Foster Care**: If you are temporarily unable to care for your pet due to, for example, hospitalization, first ask family, friends, and neighbors if they can assume your pet’s care and feeding. Berkshire Humane Society may be able to provide short-term foster care for animals in need through its SafePet program. To be eligible for the program, you must be a client of one of its partnering agencies in Berkshire County. These include Berkshire Medical Center, the Brien Center, the Elizabeth Freeman Center, and Elder Services. Contact the social service or health agency you are involved with to see if they participate in the SafePet program.

For more information on locally-available assistance to pet owners need help, contact the non-profit organizations listed below. Note that some pets are the Berkshire’s most personalized hospice, to Berkshire County for more than 30 years. We From set-up of in-home care to emotional support and pain management, we’ve been providing care to Berkshire County for more than 30 years. We are the Berkshire’s most personalized hospice, with neighbors caring for neighbors. The difference is in our care.

- **HospiceCare in The Berkshires**: From in-home care to emotional support and pain management, we’ve been providing care to Berkshire County for more than 30 years. We are the Berkshire’s most personalized hospice, with neighbors caring for neighbors. The difference is in our care.

Laura Feakes is one of Elder Services’ Information & Referral Specialists.
Elder Services’ Alzheimer’s Care Partners Education Series

Elder Services will be hosting six stand-alone, two-hour long education/training sessions for family caregivers and others seeking information about Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias. All sessions will be 2-4 p.m. at Elder Services, 877 South St., Suite 4E, Pittsfield. Trainers from the MA Chapter of the Alzheimer’s Association will present workshop sessions on the dates below:

1. May 12 • Basics of Dementia
   - Normal aging vs. dementia
   - Related disorders
   - How to obtain a diagnosis
   - How to talk to your doctor

2. May 19 • Behavior and Communication
   - Communication
   - Common behaviors associated with Alzheimer’s
   - How to prevent wandering and restlessness

3. May 26 • When it’s Time to Ask for Help
   - When is it time to ask for help?
   - Local resources
   - How to select appropriate care services

4. June 2 • Caregiving at Home
   - How to structure the day
   - How to help with personal care
   - Safety issues: in the home & driving

5. June 9 • Legal and Financial Issues
   - Legal & financial Matters
   - Advanced care planning

6. June 16 • Care For the Caregiver
   - Warning signs of caregiver stress
   - Respite
   - Coping strategies

To register, please call Elder Services Caregiver Coordinator John Arthur Miller at 499-0524 or 1-800-544-5242 extension 117. This program is funded in part by the Executive Office of Elder Affairs.

To learn more, call 637-7037 or email info@bapartners.org.

Alzheimer’s Education Series returns to Elder Services

By Bea Cowlin, LSW

Elder Services, in collaboration with the Alzheimer’s Association, will present a six-part caregiver education series on Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias on: May 12, 19, and 26, and June 2, 9, and 16, all from 2 to 4 p.m.

Sessions 1, 2, 4 and 6 will be facilitated by Marcia McKenzie, M. Ed., Manager, Western Massachusetts Alzheimer’s Association, and Roberta “Bobbie” Orsi, MS, RN, CCP. Topics will include: 1. "The Basics of Dementia," addressing normal aging vs. dementia, related disorders, how to obtain a diagnosis and how to talk to your doctor; 2. "Behavior and Communication," addressing different ways to approach and speak to an individual with Alzheimer’s disease, common behaviors associated with Alzheimer’s and how to prevent wandering and restlessness; 4. "Caregiving at Home," addressing how to structure the day, how to help with personal care, and safety issues in the home and concerning driving; 6. "Care for the Caregiver," addressing the warning signs of caregiver stress, respite and coping strategies.

Session 3. “Asking for Help,” presented by Caregiver Coordinator Bea Cowlin, LSW, will address the best time to ask for help, local resources, and how to select appropriate care services, and Attorney Pamela Greene will present Session 5 on “Legal and Financial Issues,” addressing legal and financial matters and advance care planning.

As more family members become caregivers to loved ones, we know they have unique needs that if not addressed can lead to caregiver burnout. This series offers important information on Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias, and allows for discussion on what caregivers need and how they can better cope with the increased stress that comes with caregiving.

Caregivers are encouraged to attend all of the sessions, but may attend only those that interest them. To register the Alzheimer’s Care Partners Education Series, call Elder Services at 499-0524 or 1-800-544-5242. Bea Cowlin, LSW, is one of Elder Services’ Caregiver Coordinators.

Evening Caregiver Expo set for caregivers

The Berkshire Alzheimer’s Partnership, in conjunction with the Alzheimer’s Association, will host the Eighth Caregiver Expo on Thursday, April 16, from 4 to 7 p.m., at the Crowne Plaza in Pittsfield. The Expo is designed as an evening of information and relaxation for those caring for an elder. Resources for elders in general, as well as those with dementia issues, and tips for meeting the needs of the caregiver are the focus of the event. (See ad top right page 13)

The Expo will feature representatives from a vast array of service organizations such as home health care, adult day programs, assisted living and long-term care organizations. Geriatric care managers and consultants, diagnostic & clinical trial specialists, elder law attorneys, and other providers will be on hand to answer general questions and to address individual situations. The evening includes dinner, for a suggested donation of $5 to pre-registered caregivers.

Keynote speaker will be Elizabeth “Beth” Smith-Boivin, Executive Director of the Alzheimer’s Association, Northeastern New York Chapter. She has over 30 years of service to the geriatric community, working with individuals with age-related dementias, including over 20 years of service to the Alzheimer’s Association.

To register for the event, or for more information, call 637-7037 or email info@bapartners.org.

Contact Elder Services today to learn more about how we can help.
1-800-544-5242

Elder Services of Berkshire County, Inc.
Providing personal care to those with Alzheimer’s

Giving daily care and assistance to a person with Alzheimer’s or another dementia can be challenging for a number of reasons. As the disease progresses and symptoms change, you will need to take on more responsibilities for hands-on care. The person may become more confused, need more time to do things, and may even be resistant to help. Understandably, this can be frustrating for the caregiver and the person with dementia. At some point, the person will require 24-hour supervision and assistance with all care tasks. The following section provides guidance for how to best approach daily care to lessen disagreements and to support the person to participate as much as he can with daily activities.

Bathing
Bathing can be one of the most difficult tasks for a caregiver to accomplish. Many persons with Alzheimer’s disease have a fear of water. A bath can be scary and confusing for a person who does not fully comprehend what is happening.

- Make bathing less stressful for you both:
  - Think about the best time and routine for bathing. It may reduce anxiety if you follow the same routine each time.
  - Avoid discussion of the need for a bath or shower. Take a matter of fact approach: “It is time to take a bath now.”
  - Do not schedule a bath or shower at times that are already stressful for you or the person. If possible, when you have an appointment together, try to take care of showering the day before or earlier in the day. That way you will not be rushing her to get ready.
  - Pick a time when you are least likely to be interrupted. Leaving a confused or frail person alone in the tub or shower can be frightening and dangerous.
  - Organize all the bath items you need (in order of use) before starting the bath or shower.
  - Allow the person to do as much for himself as possible.
  - If he becomes frightened, distract him with conversation.
  - Make bathing safer by using:
    - Rubber bath mat and grab bars in the tub. Make sure the bars are installed properly.
    - Plastic containers rather than glass
    - Bath chairs are available from drug stores and other suppliers of durable medical equipment.
    - Hand-held showerhead which can be easier for you and less threatening to the person.

Grooming
Good grooming helps to maintain the person’s sense of self-esteem. Encourage the person with Alzheimer’s to groom himself for as long as he can. Be prepared to guide and assist him as needed. Give step-by-step instructions, allowing him to finish one step at a time.

- Keep fingernails and toenails clean and cut short. Hand massage and manicures may be good grooming treats and very relaxing to the person.
- For men, encourage daily shaving with an electric razor. Use a pre-shave softener to help reduce pulling and razor burn.
- For women, continue a normal or modified makeup routine if practical.
- Short hair is usually easier to manage than long hair. Continue to visit the barber shop/beauty salon regularly. Some hairdressers will make home visits. To reduce waiting and confusion, ask for the first or last appointment of the day.

Dressing
With increased memory loss, the steps involved in getting dressed become more difficult for the person to handle by herself. Allow the person to dress herself as long as she is able to do so, regardless of how long the process takes. Give step-by-step instructions, allowing her to finish one step before continuing on to the next.

- Lay out clothes in the order they will be put on. If necessary, hang each item of clothing one at a time to the person.
- Describe what you are doing as you do it. For instance, tell the person, “It’s time to get dressed. Here is your shirt.”
- Provide comfortable and loose fitting clothing.
- Involve the person by encouraging her to make clothing choices, but limit choices to two things.
- Keep only seasonal clothes in the closet or keep the closet locked and put out one outfit at a time.
- If the person insists on wearing the same clothing day after day, try buying several duplicate sets of the same clothes and rotating them.
- If shoelaces, zippers, buttons, and buckles are difficult, instead consider using:
  - Elastic shoelaces
  - Sneakers with Velcro® closings
  - Pants with elastic waist bands
  - Clothing that closes in the front (bras with front closure, etc.)
  - Velcro® tape or large zipper pulls.

This material was reprinted with permission from the Alzheimer’s Association from “Family Care Guide - A Guide for Families Caring for Someone With Alzheimer’s Disease or a Related Dementia,” created and distributed by the Alzheimer’s Association. This continues our series reprinting these articles in order to bring our readers new and up-to-date information about Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias.
To gluten or not to gluten

By Marilyn Wiley

Gluten has been recognized for many years as a problem for people with celiac disease, an auto-immune digestive disorder in which gluten causes possible life-threatening intestinal damage. Gluten is a protein found in wheat, barley, and rye. Some people also suffer from gluten sensitivity. There is no scientific evidence that having a gluten free diet will help in other disorders.

The treatment for celiac and gluten sensitivity is a gluten free diet, easy to prescribe and difficult to follow. There are several varieties of wheat to be avoided: spelt, serola, durum, farina, kamut and faro as well as triticale, a cross between wheat and rye. Other common forms of wheat are bulgur, dextrin, and graham flour. Oats are often processed in the same facilities as wheat so should be avoided unless labeled gluten-free. Foods that contain barley are malt flavoring, malt vinegar and most beers. Other products to avoid unless labeled “gluten free” include beer, breads, cakes, pies, candies, cereals, cookies, crackers, croutons, French fries, matzo, pasta, luncheon meats, salad dressings, sauces, including soy sauce, seasoned rice mixes, snack foods such as potato chips and some tortilla chips, self-basting poultry, soups, and soup bases, vegetables in sauce and gravies. Many of these have gluten because flour is often used as a thickener in many products.

Vitamins and medications may use wheat as a binding agent. Generally most processed foods contain gluten unless labeled gluten free. If you are avoiding gluten for health reasons and are not sure if a product contains gluten, don’t eat it.

Foods that can be eaten include fruit and vegetables, beans, seeds, nuts in their natural form, fresh eggs, fresh meats, fish, and poultry (not breaded, batter-coated or marinated) and most dairy products. Rather than wheat, some other grains can be used such as amaranth, arrowroot, buckwheat, corn, and flax. As well as gluten free flours such as rice, almond, potato, bean, millet, quinoa, sorghum, soy, tapioca and teff. If you cut out gluten completely and you have neither of the above-mentioned conditions, you may be depriving yourself of grains that provide you with key nutrients such as B vitamins, iron, and fiber. Most gluten free foods are not enriched with nutrients such as B vitamins and iron.

Some people believe that eliminating gluten results in weight loss; however, some studies have found that people often gain weight because of the extra sugars and fat that may be added to gluten free products to improve flavor. If people lose weight on a gluten free diet, they are probably choosing more nutritious lower calorie foods such as substituting fruit and vegetables for pasta or baked products. Some gluten free products contain rice flour or rice and thus usually contain some arsenic, a carcinogen. The Environmental Protection Agency estimated that 17% of the average person's dietary exposure to arsenic is from rice so when people choose rice-based gluten-free products their intake of arsenic is increased. Gluten free products are also in most cases more expensive, sometimes twice as expensive as a gluten product. One pound loaves of bread may cost $7.

In August of 2013, the FDA issued a regulation that defines the term “gluten-free” for food labeling. Similar terms such as free of gluten, no gluten, and without gluten mean the same. Manufacturers brought their labels into compliance last August.

Avoiding gluten can be tricky. People can now look for gluten free labels as an assurance that the product is nearly free of gluten.

Marilyn Wiley is Elder Services’ Registered Dietitian.
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Elder Services' Nutrition Program

Elder Services offers hot, nutritious noontime meals at senior lunch sites located throughout Berkshire County. Anyone 60 or over can reserve a meal at any of the sites by calling the site they would like to attend by 11:30 a.m. the previous day. There is a suggested donation of $2.00 per meal.

**April**

Menu subject to change without notice.

* Modifications for sugar-restricted diets

** High sodium foods

Suggested donation $2.

All contributions help defray the cost of Elder Services' Nutrition/Meals on Wheels programs.

### FOR ELDER SERVICES' NUTRITION PROGRAM

**City/Town/Phone**
**Address**
**Meal Times**
**Days Meals Served**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Using oils such as olive, canola, safflower, and/or sunflower in place of butter may decrease your risk for chronic disease such as heart disease. Higher dietary intake of butter and other saturated fatty acids is associated with higher levels of blood total cholesterol and low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, which are risk factors in heart disease.</strong></td>
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If You Receive Meals on Wheels & Are Not Going to Be Home

Please call 1-800-981-5201.

Drivers cannot leave meals if you are not at home.

If you do not contact Elder Services' Nutrition Department to let them know you will not be home to accept your meal, your driver will be concerned about your well-being, and the staff will need to make several phone calls to be sure you are all right.

If you don't come to the door, your driver will contact the nutrition office to do a well-being check on you, which may include contact with your local police department.

Please keep us informed, and we will be better able to serve you.

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### Using oils such as olive, canola, safflower, and/or sunflower in place of butter may decrease your risk for chronic disease such as heart disease. Higher dietary intake of butter and other saturated fatty acids is associated with higher levels of blood total cholesterol and low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, which are risk factors in heart disease.