



# BERKSHIRE SENIOR



**Elder Services  
Marks 50 Years  
of Service to  
Aging Population**

**Keep Warm,  
Keep Safe  
Winter Safety &  
Emergency  
Preparedness**



AD

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.



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Berkshire Senior

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Winter Weather and Meals on Wheels



By Christopher McLaughlin, Executive Director of Elder Services



Hoping all is well with you and yours heading into the holiday season.

As I am writing this in mid-November, we have yet to see any significant winter weather. In fact, it has been unseasonably warm and sunny. However, this seems like a good time to talk about the realities of inclement weather on our Meals on Wheels Program. December, January, February, and March bring the winter’s coldest weather and

worst snow and ice storms.

The Elder Services’ Nutrition Department receives phone calls on days when weather forecasts predict harsh conditions that do not hit full force and on days when the weather takes an unexpected turn for the worse. Sometimes predicted severe weather does not materialize causing our clients to wonder why we are not delivering their meals when the skies and the roads are clear. Conversely, our clients sometimes call wondering why our drivers are out delivering meals when winter weather makes driving (and walking) conditions dangerous.

The “disconnect” between weather realities and the decision to deliver (or not deliver) meals is better understood when you know what must happen to produce and deliver 975 meals to all corners of our exceptionally large county. Our kitchen, located just before the Dollar General on Route 7 in Lanesborough, produces the meals we deliver to all thirty-two cities and towns in Berkshire County. With a county covering 950 square miles, the meals must be ready early each weekday so we can deliver them to places like Florida and Clarksburg in the North, Sandisfield and Sheffield in South County and everywhere in between.

A typical weekday starts with cooks and kitchen staff arriving in Lanesborough at 5:00 a.m. to begin cooking and preparing the ingredients for the day’s meals. From 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., meals are plated and secured with plastic using a sealing machine in an “assembly line” like process. Meals on Wheels drivers and transporters begin to arrive around 9:00. The transporters deliver large quantities of food and meals to the Spitzer Center in North Adams, Crossway Village in Lee, and the Claire Teague Senior Center in Great Barrington while drivers with routes in Pittsfield and Central County depart the kitchen to begin making their deliveries.

On days when severe weather is predicted, representatives

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# Being Alone Doesn't Mean You Have to Feel Alone

By Peter Olsen

The holiday season can be a time of joy and unity. However, the emphasis on togetherness can also make the holidays a real challenge for those living alone. This article addresses the fact that being alone does not mean having to feel alone. Some quotes to get us started:

- *"I think there must be something wrong with me. Christmas is coming, and I am not happy. I don't feel the way I'm supposed to feel."* (Charlie Brown – Peanuts)
- *"I am never alone because I always have myself to laugh with."* (Anonymous).
- *"I'm not sure I like Christmas anymore. In practice, it's wonderful, but in reality, it feels like acid to my skin."* (Anonymous).

So...what are we supposed to do? You may want to consider lifting that weight off your shoulders and exploring ways to navigate the holidays. Let's start with some ideas which you can do to make the holidays less stressful.

• **Reframe your expectations:** Look at the holidays from a different perspective. Reassess how the holidays "will go" instead of how they "should go." Think of it as a "me-day," a day that is all about you and the things that bring you joy and fulfillment. Consider the holidays as a time to take care of yourself and heal. Small, mindful acts that prioritize no one but ourselves keep us feeling mentally and physically well. It's okay to love yourself once in a while.

• **Stay with your routines:** Remember, the holiday you are alone is only one day. Following your usual routine can help eliminate fatigue and stress. Choose to eliminate jingle bells

and go about your daily routine as usual – clean the house, watch a movie, make a meal, or do the laundry. The next day, it will be over.

• **Give thanks:** Expressing gratitude can help you appreciate what you have, focus on the positives, and see the good in others. A gratitude journal keeps you attentive to what you must do and say to your friends about what they have done for you. Write down all the things for which you are grateful. You will be surprised and pleased that there is so much to acknowledge.

• **Step outside:** Being outside as an alternative to being cooped up inside during the holidays helps those alone experience nature's curative power. Go

outside, take a deep breath, and then take another deep breath. Try walking, even if on the sidewalk nearby, bringing a relaxed focus with you. This time might also be an excellent time to plan that big excursion, review the brochures, and imagine what that trip might be like. Planning with a sense of purpose allows you to imagine what the trip might be like, which can help alleviate the boredom and tedium of being alone.

• **Set Goals:** Sometimes, we need a little focus to make it through the holidays. Create a plan, work out a schedule, set goals, and think less about being alone and more about how to be you. Accomplish your goals step by step, and keep moving

forward.

Finally, some things to think about doing during the holidays when you are alone.

1. Write end-of-year gratitude letters to people who helped you through 2024.
2. Begin to write your Legacy Letter (Look this up on an internet search.)
3. Dress up in your fanciest looks.
4. Make your own festive cocktails with all the trimmings.
5. Volunteer. Helping others gives you a good feeling about yourself.

The holidays are a time to do whatever you want as long as you practice self-kindness while doing so. Happy Holidays.

## Winter Weather and Meals on Wheels

*continued from page 3*

from the kitchen, Nutrition Department and Elder Services' senior leadership team hold a conference call at 4:30 a.m. to make the decision regarding whether to cancel meals. Sometimes when a storm starts late the previous night or earlier that morning, the harsh weather is in full force and the decision to cancel meals is an easy one. At other times, the storm may have not started but radio and TV weather forecasts predict that significant winter weather will arrive before or during the time when our drivers will be delivering meals.

The reality is that a lot can and does happen between the time we speak at 4:30 a.m. and the time our drivers start delivering the meals beginning at 10:00. Sometimes we cancel meals on days when conditions

are bad and the weather is predicted to worsen only to find that by late morning, the worst of the storm has passed, and roads and sidewalks are clear. Other times, we make the decision not to cancel meals and end up regretting it when the weather takes a turn for the worse, and we fear for our staff members' safety driving (and walking) in dangerous conditions. We go to great lengths to ensure the safety of our kitchen staff, drivers, and other staff.

When we make the decision about whether to cancel meals, we monitor the weather forecasts and consider many factors. However, the five and a half hours between when we make the decision and when deliveries start means that, despite going to great lengths

to ensure our clients receive meals and prioritizing the safety of our drivers and staff, we will continue to get it wrong now and then.

Elder Services' website lists meal cancellations and the following radio stations make announcements when meals are cancelled due to inclement weather: WBEC 1420 AM, 95.9 FM, WUPE 1110 AM, 100.1 FM, WNAW 1230 AM, WBRK 1340 AM, 101.7 FM and WSBS 860 AM. In addition, meal cancellations appear on the ribbon at the bottom of your TV screen on channels 6, 10 and 13.

Best wishes to you and yours for a healthy, happy holiday season.

Until next time be good, be kind and be careful.



# Winter Safety & Emergency Preparedness

By Laura Feakes

The winter season can be a beautiful time of year with snow and lights. But winter storms can range from wet snow, sleet or freezing rain that builds up on trees and power lines to a Nor'easter, bringing blizzard conditions that last several days. People can become stranded in their automobiles or trapped at home, without utilities or other services. Older adults run a higher risk of health problems and injuries related to weather, including hypothermia, frostbite, and falls in ice and snow. It is better to be prepared ahead of time – here are some basic precautions everyone should take, especially older adults:

- to decrease the likelihood of falling while walking to a car or to check the mail, make sure that walkways are sanded, salted and/or shoveled. Carry a small bag of lightweight cat litter in your pocket and throw it out ahead of yourself as you walk on slick surfaces. Use an old ski pole or walking stick with a pointed tip and wear traction cleats on your shoes or boots for extra stability on ice and snow. Ice gripper cane tips are available online or at stores such as Walmart. Make sure there are non-slip mats inside doors to prevent falls caused by wet or snowy shoes. Ask your healthcare provider whether shoveling or other work in the snow is safe for you.

- have a well-stocked Winter Home Emergency Supply Kit that includes flashlights, portable radio, extra batteries, a first aid kit, bottled water and non-perishable food. Those with disabilities may want to consider adding to the kit: extra medical supplies, copies of medical information (insurance cards, physician contacts, list of allergies and medical history, prescriptions list), written descriptions of your support needs, in case you are unable to describe the situation in an emergency, and supplies for a service animal.

- make sure your car is properly

winterized, keep the gas tank at least half-full and carry a Winter Survival Kit in the trunk including blankets, extra clothing, boot cleats, flashlight with spare batteries, a can & waterproof matches (to melt snow for drinking water), non-perishable foods, windshields scraper, shovel, sand, towrope and jumper cables.

Here are tips for dealing with a possible power outage:

## Before an Outage

- Check battery operated supplies to ensure they are working, have extra batteries and fully charge your phone, laptop, and any other devices as a storm approaches. Buy a solar-powered or hand crank charger to keep small electronics working and a car phone charger so you can charge your phone if you lose power at home.

- If you have a water supply (such as a well-water pump system) that could be affected, fill your bathtub and spare containers with water. Pouring a pail of water from the tub directly into the bowl can flush a toilet.

- If possible have a safe backup heating option such as fireplace or woodstove (and sufficient fuel) so you can keep at least one room livable. Be sure the room is well ventilated and has a carbon monoxide detector.

- Know how to shut off water valves. If pipes freeze, remove insulation, completely open all faucets and pour hot water over the pipes, starting where they are most exposed to the cold. A hand-held hair dryer, used with caution, also works well. Do not use torches or other flame sources to thaw pipes as this causes fires.

- If you have medication that requires refrigeration, check with your pharmacist for guidance on proper storage during an extended outage.

- If you use medical equipment that requires electricity, talk to your doctor about how you can prepare for its use during a power outage. If you have life-support devices that depend on electricity, contact your local electric

company about your power needs for life-support devices (home dialysis, breathing machines, etc.) in advance of an emergency. Some utility companies will put you on a “priority reconnection service” list. Talk to your equipment suppliers about your power options and also let the fire department know that you are dependent on life-support devices.

- Know how to operate the manual release lever of your electric garage door opener. Garage doors can be heavy, so know that you may need help to lift it.

- Find out what assistance may be available in your community if you need it. Register in advance with the local emergency management agency, fire department, senior center, or non-profit groups. Tell them of your individual needs or those of a family member and find out what assistance, help or services can be provided.

## During an Outage

- Use 9-1-1 only for emergencies. Call your utility company to report the outage and get restoration information. Call 2-1-1 to obtain shelter locations if necessary.

- Check in on friends, family, and neighbors, particularly those most susceptible to extreme temperatures and power outages such as seniors and those with access and functional needs.

- If the power is out, use battery-powered lights if possible, instead of candles. If you must use them, place candles in safe holders away from anything that could catch fire. Never leave a burning candle unattended.

- Ensure that your smoke and Carbon Monoxide (CO) detectors are working correctly and have fresh batteries. Check your outside fuel exhaust vents, making sure that they are not obstructed by snow or ice. Never use cooking equipment intended for outside use indoors as a heat source or cooking device.

- Dress in several layers of loose fitting, lightweight, warm clothing, rather than one layer of heavy clothing. Wear hats, mittens, scarves and other

clothing to keep your entire body warm. See if your community has “warming centers” or shelters open.

- Watch for signs of frostbite: loss of feeling and white or pale appearance in the extremities such as fingers, toes, or the tip of the nose. Watch for signs of hypothermia: uncontrollable shivering, memory loss, disorientation, incoherence, slurred speech, and drowsiness. If symptoms are detected, get the victim to a warm location, remove any wet clothing, warm the center of the body first and give warm, non-alcoholic beverages, if the victim is conscious. Get medical help as soon as possible.

- To protect against voltage irregularities when power is restored, unplug all sensitive electronic equipment. Leave on one light so that you'll know when your power returns.

## After an Outage

- Be extra cautious if you go outside to inspect for damage after a storm. Downed or hanging electrical wires can be hidden by snowdrifts, trees or debris, and could be live. Never attempt to touch or move downed lines. Keep children and pets away. Call your utility company to report any outage-related problem such as downed wires.

- Clear exhaust vents from Direct Vent Gas Furnace Systems to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning. Make sure backup generators are well ventilated. Never run an automobile until the exhaust pipe has been cleared of snow.

- Take your time shoveling and avoid overexertion.

For more emergency information go to the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) website [www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-emergency-management-agency](http://www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-emergency-management-agency)

# The Massachusetts Senior Medicare Patrol Program

The Massachusetts Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) Program is part of a national initiative with a mission to reach, educate, and counsel Medicare beneficiaries, family members, and caregivers on preventing, detecting, and reporting Medicare fraud. There are 54 SMP Programs, one in each state and one in the U.S. of territories, Guam, U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and Washington D.C. The SMP Program is funded by the Administration for Community Living, U. S. Department of Health and Human Services.

In Massachusetts the SMP Program mission is accomplished by promoting consumer engagement in their healthcare and activating Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries, family members, caregivers, and professionals on the critical role they can each have in preventing, detecting, and reporting healthcare errors, fraud, and abuse. Healthcare fraud costs American taxpayers approximately \$60 billion annually and may have devastating health-related outcomes. The program works in collaboration with governmental, non-governmental, community-based, faith-based, and other grassroot organizations across the Commonwealth to reach and educate beneficiaries, with a particular focus on the underserved, unserved, limited English proficient, and other vulnerable and marginalized communities.

The SMP Program offers free educational sessions to empower and activate beneficiaries; we provide them with information and tools to better protect themselves from becoming victims of healthcare errors, fraud, and abuse. We encourage all healthcare consumers to utilize a personal healthcare journal, ***My Health Care Tracker***, to record all their healthcare interactions, such as doctors' appointments, hospitalizations, vaccinations, care plans, diagnosis or diagnoses, medications, and much more. By keeping a personal health care journal,

beneficiaries can compare their entries against their Medicare Summary Notices (MSN), Explanation of Benefits (EOB), and other billing statements. The Massachusetts SMP Program empowers Medicare beneficiaries to prevent, detect, and report healthcare errors, fraud, and abuse.

It's important for Medicare beneficiaries to understand that Medicare does not call to offer you a new and different Medicare card or products. If someone calls you claiming to be from Medicare, it is probably a scam. *Do not confirm any of your personal information, such as your name, address, doctors' names, Medicare number, Social Security number, etc. Just Hang Up!*

Be careful! Don't answer "Yes" to any of the callers' questions. Some callers are using artificial intelligence to record your "Yes" response as your consent and misrepresenting you and possibly ordering all sorts of durable medical equipment against your Medicare number. These callers are not legitimate providers. **Remember:** If you need a medical procedure, durable medical equipment, or tests, your doctor should have

discussed it with you and written an order, prescription, or made a formal referral. Beware of the deceptive callers who are scamming you and Medicare.

## Reminders:

- Don't share your Medicare number and/or Social Security Number with anyone you do not know and trust;
- Do not make copies of your Medicare and/or Social Security Card, and don't let anyone else make a copy;
- Keep a record of all your medical visits and procedures. The MA SMP Program has free personal healthcare journals "My Health Care Trackers." Please visit [www.masmp.org](http://www.masmp.org) or call 800-892-0890 to request a copy;
- Review your MSN and/or EOBs regularly! And always compare them to entries in your Personal Health are Journal, "My Health Care Tracker";
- Report any suspicious charges to the Massachusetts SMP Program, 800-892-0890;
- Beware of email or text messages asking you to click on links; DO NOT CLICK ON LINKS if you are not sure.

Trust your instincts and report any suspected fraud to the

Massachusetts SMP Program. We have trained volunteer team members that help their peer Medicare beneficiaries, family members, and caregivers in the fight against fraud. We can help you with your questions, concerns, and file formal complaints related to healthcare errors, fraud, and abuse. We can also provide your community with an educational presentation. For more information, please call the Massachusetts SMP Program at 1-800-892-0890 or visit [www.masmp.org](http://www.masmp.org).

We invite you to visit [www.masmp.org](http://www.masmp.org) for volunteer opportunities.

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*This article is provided by Lucia Prates-Ramos- State Director of the Massachusetts Medicare Patrol Program*

## Thank You To Our Donors:

The following donations were received between September 1, 2024 and October 31, 2024. Donations received on or after October 31, 2024 will appear in the next issue of Berkshire Senior.

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Karen Gold

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# Keep Warm, Keep Safe

## When Heating your Home this Winter

Heating causes thousands of residential fires each year. Heating equipment is the #2 cause of home fires in Massachusetts and the #1 source of carbon monoxide (CO).

### Smoke and CO Alarms

- Make sure there are working smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms on every level, including outside the bedrooms.
- Test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms monthly and change batteries twice a year, when you change the clocks.
- Check the manufacturing date on the back of the alarm. Replace smoke alarms after 10 years. Replace CO alarms after 5-7 years (depending on the model).

### Be Careful When Using Fireplaces and Solid Fuel Stoves

If you heat your home by burning solid fuels (coal, firewood, pellets), be careful before, during and after using these kinds of fuels.

- Have the chimney and flue professionally inspected and cleaned every year.
- Make sure the stove is approved by a national testing agency such as Underwriters Laboratory (UL).
- Get a building permit before installing a stove.

- Keep anything that can burn at least three feet away.
- Dispose of the ashes in a metal container, with a lid, away from the house, garage, and porch.
- Sparks and embers from a fireplace or woodstove can ignite household materials. Use a screen in front of a fireplace. Keep the door to a woodstove closed when in use.

### Space Heaters Need Space

If you must use a space heater, do so safely.

- Do not use space heaters as your #1 heating source.
- Keep anything that can burn at least three feet away on all sides.
- Plug a space heater directly into a wall outlet, not an extension cord or power strip.
- Always turn off when going to bed or leaving the room.
- Portable kerosene and propane heaters are illegal in Massachusetts for home use.

### Maintain Gas and Oil Equipment

Well-maintained furnaces and water heaters are safer and more efficient.

- Have your furnace and hot water heater professionally checked every year.
- Do not use or store gasoline or painting supplies inside

where they can be ignited by the pilot light.

### If you Use Gas Heating Equipment

Gas leaks can be dangerous – if you smell something like rotten eggs or you think there might be a leak,

- Move outdoors.
- Do not smoke or turn on or off electrical switches - sparks can cause an explosion.
- Dial 911 immediately.

### If You Use Oil Heating Equipment

- Don't let the tank get completely empty.
- Call for service if the oil burner releases smoke or soot in the house.

### Carbon Monoxide: the Silent Killer

Heating equipment is the leading source of carbon monoxide (CO) in the home.

- Install carbon monoxide alarms on every level of your home.



- Don't use the gas stove or oven for heat.
- Keep appliance vents and exhaust pipes clear of drifting snow and bushes.

### Fuel Assistance

For information on fuel assistance, please call the HEATLINE at 1-800-632-8175 (or for Boston only 617-357-6012) or visit [www.mass.gov/dhcd](http://www.mass.gov/dhcd).



Department of  
Fire Services  
[www.mass.gov/dfs](http://www.mass.gov/dfs)  
(978) 567-3100





## KEEP WARM KEEP SAFE

### Winter Home Heating Safety

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Chris McLaughlin with Lauren Norcross, daughter of ESBCI's founder, Fred Whitman.

# Elder Services Marks 50 Years of Service to Aging Population

By Brittany Polito,  
*iBerkshires.com*

Elder Service of Berkshire County has assisted the aging population in Berkshire County for 50 years, growing exponentially from its roots with three employees on Wendell Avenue.

Hundreds gathered at the Country Club of Pittsfield on Friday, October 11, 2024 for the agency's 50th Anniversary Annual meeting.

"We have been very busy since the last time we got together and have a lot to celebrate. ..For 50 Years, Elder services has been providing services to seniors, individuals with disabilities and caretakers throughout Berkshire County," Executive Director Chris Mc Laughlin said.

"Today we are a \$28 million

organization supported by 140 employees and 260 active volunteers, working with community partners and our home care providers to provide support and services to the residents of the cities and towns throughout Berkshire County."

Over the summer the agency moved into a modern, more accessible office at 73 South Church Street in Pittsfield, (the Clock Tower building). The two-story workplace offers a street-level entrance for those with mobility issues—compared to the fourth floor office at 877 South Street.

Mayor Peter Marchetti noted that he is glad to see Elder Services downtown. "The downtown not only hosts a variety of places to eat, shop and play but it also is the heart of human and social services

agencies to prioritize meeting people where they are at," he said. "As many of you know, Elder Services recently moved into the Clock Tower building. I applaud Chris and entire team for a space that will be more accessible to the people you serve. It is vital that our residents have access to social service agencies and organizations so they can access the services and programs that impact daily life. Thank you for choosing downtown as your home and we are happy to welcome you there."

Since a commercial kitchen was established in 1994, the agency has served more than 7 million meals to isolated or homebound Berkshire County residents. "We are proud of being one of only three organizations like ours throughout the entire commonwealth that operates

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ESBCI Board President Jeff Menkes and Executive Director Chris McLaughlin with keynote speakers from the Memory Clinic in Bennington, Dr. Cynthia Murphy and Dr. Diana Michalczuk.

our own commercial kitchen,” McLaughlin said.

Peter Mirante, Vice President of Business Development at Adams Community Bank addressed meeting participants and reported that the Meals on Wheels Program provided much needed peace of mind when his parents could no longer prepare food for themselves.

“My mother and father, in their late 80’s, battled dementia and the Meals on Wheels Program was the perfect option for my family to keep my parents home during the day while we all went to work,” he said. “In life we never know where the next helping hand will come from but in my case, Elder Services came through for our family when we needed a helping hand.” Mirante said “that a reaching a half century is no small feat and speaks volumes to the agency’s strength, mission and resilience within our community.” Adams Community Bank sponsored the event.

“Today, we celebrate not just the past but the future ahead, confident that the next 50 years will be just as impactful, elevating the lives of our elders even more and ensuring they continue to receive the care, respect and support they deserve,” he said.

McLaughlin said that Elder



Board President Jeff Menkes and ESBCI Executive Director Chris McLaughlin recognize Representative Smitty Pignatelli for his 22 years of service to Berkshire County.

Services is a resource for older adults and their caregivers, supporting their desire to remain safely at home. “Whether it’s a referral to one of our many programs or a referral to a community resources it is our

job to meet people where they are and help them create a path forward,” he said.

Citations were issued from State Representative Tricia Farley-Bouvier and the office of State Senator Paul Mark. “When we celebrate something like a 50th anniversary, we not only celebrate the people in the room today and the work that goes on every day in Berkshire County, we have to acknowledge the true 50 years of services, the founders of this, and the work that’s been done each and every day.” she said. “We stand on the shoulders of others, and this is a time to really acknowledge the work that’s been done over that amount of time and the changes that have happened in the Berkshires to people who are aging.”

State Representative William “Smitty” Pignatelli was recognized for service as a member of the Berkshire Delegation for 22 years. He explained that his father died of vascular dementia five years ago. This gave the representative a new found appreciation for Elder Services which he always loved and respected. “My mom was legally blind so she couldn’t cook and my father never knew how to cook so we brought Meals On Wheels in and after a few times my dad said” Why are using taxpayer dollars to deliver meal to older folk? “ I said, “Dad you started the program,” Pignatelli explained. “He worked as a county commissioner. He started the Meals on Wheels Program and he would be so proud today. As mentioned, 7 million meals have been delivered to people at home. I think that speaks volumes but that was a sign that my father was having some Alzheimer’s issues.” I said, “Dad you started the program and he said oh I did? Must be a pretty good program.”

Service awards were given out during the event. Michelle Daly, Susan Hanson, Victoria Linscott and Jill Lebar were recognized for five years with Elder Services. Kathleen Eddy was recognized for 10 years with Elder Services and Steve Shallies was recognized as the longest tenured Meals On Wheels kitchen employee with 30 years of service.

Dr. Cynthia Murphy and



Maureen Tuggey ESBCI Client Services Director with former ESBCI Board President Steve Long

Dr. Diana Michalczuk of the Memory Clinic in Bennington, Vermont were the event’s keynote speakers. They discussed memory health in the aging process and early signs of Alzheimer’s

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# Elder Services Celebrates 50th Anniversary Annual Meeting









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## Berkshire Senior Television



**Isaac Share, Home & Community Based Programs Supervisor  
discusses Caregiving with Kathleen Phillips.**

**Currently airing on PCTV, Channel 1301 Access Pittsfield**

**Broadcast schedule:**

Mondays at 5:00 p.m. • Wednesday at 8:30 a.m.

Thursdays at 11:30 a.m. • Saturdays at Noon



**Or watch online, ON DEMAND on  
[pittsfieldtv.org](http://pittsfieldtv.org).**

*Thank you to our friends at PCTV for all  
their help in making Berkshire Senior  
TV accessible to our community.*



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73 South Church Street  
Pittsfield, MA 01201  
Telephone (413) 499-0524  
or 1-800-544-5242  
Fax (413) 442-6443  
E-Mail [esbc@esbci.org](mailto:esbc@esbci.org)

Dear Friend of Elder Services:

Elder Services celebrated 50 years of supporting seniors, individuals with disabilities and caregivers at our October 11th annual meeting celebration at the Country Club of Pittsfield.

We looked back to our founding as the Berkshire Home Care Corporation in June of 1974 with three employees in an office on Wendell Avenue, celebrated the Agency's growth and achievements during the last fifty years and looked forward to a bright future. We thanked our board members and community partners for their support and encouragement during the past year and for helping us relocate the Agency's administrative offices to the first and second floors of the Clock Tower building in downtown Pittsfield. The new space at 73 South Church Street not only provides easy ground level access for our clients, but it also offers bright, contemporary space for our growing workforce. Six years ago, sixty-two people worked in our administrative offices. Today, eighty individuals work in our administrative offices, and we have space and cubicles to accommodate even more.

The larger space and capacity to house even more staff reflect significant growth in our core programs as well as the introduction of new programs.

A recent story told by one of our Options Counselors illustrates how Elder Services impacts people every day. "Steve and Mary" received an eviction notice in April. They attended a mediation session and, based on poor advice, agreed to vacate their apartment within 90 days. As Elder Services and other community agencies worked to find Steve and Mary a place to live, the judge granted them three more weeks after the Sheriff's Office went to court to advocate for them. Our Options Counselor found a few apartments but unfortunately each had stairs, which Mary is unable to navigate. The Options Counselor finally found a subsidized studio apartment with no stairs. She submitted all the required documentation and told the landlord the prospective tenants needed the unit within a week. She also applied for RAFT (Residential Assistance for Families in Transition) assistance to help with the move. Knowing this was an impossible task given the timing, she stayed in close contact with RAFT and the landlord. Steve and Mary were able to move into their new apartment with financial assistance from RAFT the day before their eviction. Elder Services provided gift cards to help with food and necessities until Steve and Mary received their next monthly social security payments. The couple expressed their thanks to the Options Counselor multiple times for the assistance they received from her and Elder Services.



The shortage of affordable housing is a real challenge in Berkshire County and unfortunately, Steve and Mary's story is not unique. Seniors in our community face issues that Elder Services continues to address but we need your help to provide services to even more seniors. As demand for our services continues to accelerate, your financial support is crucial to our mission to support seniors in Berkshire County to continue living independently in the home of their choice. If you can, we would appreciate your donation in any amount to ensure more Berkshire seniors continue to have access to the programs and services that enable them to live the most fulfilling lives possible.

Thank you in advance for your gift in support of the many valuable programs offered by Elder Services.

Here are ways to donate:

1. Visit [www.esbci.org](http://www.esbci.org) for an online donation form
2. Send your check in the enclosed envelope
3. Call Elder Services' Fiscal Department at (413) 499-0524

Please call us any time if you are interested in serving as a volunteer. Your assistance will be both rewarding and much appreciated.

Thank you again.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeffrey Menkes'.

Jeffrey Menkes, President  
Board of Directors

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. McLaughlin'.

Christopher McLaughlin  
Executive Director



AD

AD



# The Home Modification Loan Program

The Home Modification Loan Program (HMLP) is a state-funded loan program that provides financing to homeowners and small landlords for accessibility renovations to keep a household member with a disability or an older adult in their own home and community. HMLP is not a home repair program. Project funding by HMLP includes ramps and lifts, bathroom and kitchen adaptations, sensory integration spaces, fencing as well as accessory dwelling units.

Loans can range from \$1,000 to \$50,000 with 0% interest and no monthly payment. Repayment is required when the property is sold or transferred. Landlords with fewer than 10 units may be eligible for a 3% loan for a tenant.

The loan program has, for the most part, been an untapped resource partially because of

the lack of knowledge about the Program.

Eligibility includes homeowners, if someone in a household is an older adult or a person with a disability. Funding is needed for accessibility related to this household member's ability to function in the home on a day-to-day basis. A big benefit of the Program is its high-income limits so many household meet the income eligibility. The Program is flexible though the application process itself is fairly rigorous. Berkshire Regional Planning Commission provides technical assistance for those interested in applying. Visit [cedac.org/hmlp](http://cedac.org/hmlp) to learn more about the eligibility requirements.

The provider agency of Berkshire County is Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (413) 442-1521 ext. 23.



## Winter

Find and circle all of the Winter words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a Japanese proverb.

L S O S E K A L F W O N S E L C I C I N  
L E Y C E K R A I M N D D R A Z Z I L B  
A S C A W V K A I O E C I K C A L B R D  
B W A R D R O T E S N O W S H O V E L C  
W E R F A I T L C W A F I R E P L A C E  
O A N P I E L I G E R N H E A D B A N D  
N T I S N C P O L S Y E S E T A K S S W  
S S V S N M E T H K E A D N D F R N E M  
T H A M Y O S F S C K T N N O L O H A R  
Y I L L R A W E I O C W O E U W O G S W  
E R O S C O R S W S O I I B B G M C O I  
S T E W A I T S H L H V T O O S N A N N  
N K O P T M O S P O G I A S T G O O N D  
D N I W P L T W T O E R N C O E G U L C  
S E O I S I O S N W D S R G A R E A P H  
E N L T N N L G I F R E E Z E T F L N I  
S R I S S G G S M R O N B O O D I K S L  
T C F I R E W O O D H A I L S T O O B L  
E H S S T N A P I K S C H P A C T I N K

- |           |                |             |            |
|-----------|----------------|-------------|------------|
| BLACK ICE | HAIL           | SEASON      | SNOWBOARD  |
| BLIZZARD  | HEADBAND       | SKATES      | SNOWFLAKE  |
| BOOTS     | HIBERNATION    | SKI DOO     | SNOWMAN    |
| CARNIVAL  | HOCKEY         | SKI PANTS   | SNOWSHOES  |
| CHRISTMAS | HOLIDAYS       | SKIING      | SOLSTICE   |
| COLD      | ICE FISHING    | SLED        | SOUP       |
| EGG NOG   | ICICLES        | SLEET       | STEW       |
| FIREPLACE | KNIT CAP       | SLIPPERY    | STORM      |
| FIREWOOD  | LONG UNDERWEAR | SNOW CASTLE | SWEATSHIRT |
| FOG       | MITTENS        | SNOW PLOW   | TOBOGGAN   |
| FREEZE    | OLYMPICS       | SNOW SHOVEL | VACATION   |
| FROST     | PARKA          | SNOW TIRES  | WIND CHILL |
| GLOVES    | SCARF          | SNOWBALL    | WOOL SOCKS |



Elder Services of Berkshire County, Inc.

## NUTRITION PROGRAM SENIOR COMMUNITY DINING CENTERS

The status and offerings of the Senior Community Dining Centers are likely to evolve. Please call for the latest update.

CITY/TOWN PHONE	ADDRESS	MEAL TIMES	DAYS MEALS SERVED
ADAMS 743-8333	ADAMS VISITOR CENTER 3 Hoosac Street	11:30 am	Mon thru Fri
BECKET 623-8934	TOWN HALL Route 8	11:00 am	Tue, Thu
CHESHIRE 743-9719	SENIOR CENTER 119 School Street	11:30 am	Mon thru Fri
DALTON 684-2000	SENIOR CENTER 40 Field Street. Ext.	12:00 pm	Mon, Thu
GT. BARRINGTON 528-4118	CLAIRE TEAGUE SENIOR CTR. 909 South Main Street	11:30 am	Mon thru Fri
LANESBORO 448-2862	TOWN HALL 83 North Main Street	11:30 am	Tues, Thu
LEE 394-4160	SENIOR CENTER 21 Crossway Village	11:45 am	Mon thru Fri
LENOX 637-5535	COMMUNITY CENTER 65 Walker Street	12:00 pm	Mon thru Fri
NORTH ADAMS 662-3125	SPITZER CENTER 116 Ashland Street	11:45 am	Mon thru Fri
PITTSFIELD 499-9346	RALPH J. FROIO SENIOR CTR. 330 North Street	11:30 am	Mon thru Fri
PITTSFIELD- KOSHER* 442-2200	CONG. KNESSET ISRAEL 16 Colt Road	12:00 pm	Mon, Tue, Thu
SHEFFIELD 229-7037	SENIOR CENTER 25 Cook Road	12:00 pm	Wed & Fri
STOCKBRIDGE 298-4170 x263	SENIOR CENTER 50 Main Street	11:30 am	Tues, Wed
STOCKBRIDGE 298-3222	HEATON COURT 5 Pine Street	11:30 am	Thu
WILLIAMSTOWN 458-8350	HARPER CENTER 118 Church Street	11:30 am	Mon, Wed, Fri

Eligible seniors 60 years or older are welcome to attend any Senior Meal Site. Reservations are requested 24 hours in advance. The suggested donation is \$3.00 per meal. All contributions are returned to the community toward the cost of the Senior Nutrition Program. Those 59 or under are welcome at the required fee of \$8.00 per meal.

### MEDICALLY TAILORED MEALS

Elder Services now provides medically tailored meals (MTMs). MTMs help meet the nutritional needs of seniors with health conditions that require specific diets such as diabetes and heart or kidney disease.

MTMs can be delivered to individuals at their home five days a week. Menus are developed by our registered dietician and trained staff.

Call Elder Services at (413) 499-0524 to request a special meal such as pureed, cardiac, diabetic, renal and vegetarian.



# Holiday Gift Ideas for Teens

## A Guide for Grandparents and Elders

By Perry Burdick

Shopping for teenagers can be a challenge, especially when you're trying to find a thoughtful, meaningful gift that they'll actually appreciate. As a grandparent or elderly relative, you may feel out of touch with the latest trends, but with a little thought and communication, you can easily find gifts that will light up their holiday season. In this guide, I'll focus less on techy stuff and more on the age-old question: What do teenagers really want for Christmas?

Whether your teen is into technology, fashion, hobbies, or experiences, there's something special out there for everyone. Here's a helpful breakdown of some great gift ideas to consider when shopping for the teen in your life.

### 1. Tech Gadgets and Accessories

Let's start with tech gadgets, a category near and dear to my heart. These days, most teens are constantly connected, often glued to their phones or other devices. A gift that enhances their tech experience is a safe bet. While these gifts can be on the pricier side, it's always a good idea to check in with them first to understand what they need or want. Start by asking about the devices they use most often—chances are it's not a desktop or laptop, but rather a smartphone. From there, it's helpful to know whether they have an iPhone or Android, as certain accessories only work with one or the other. Once you have that figured out, here are some gift ideas to consider:

- **Wireless Earbuds:** Teens love to listen to music, take calls, or game with wireless earbuds. A quality set makes a practical, yet trendy, gift. Brands like Apple AirPods, Jabra, or Sony offer excellent options that are popular with teens.



- **Phone Accessories:** Personalize their phone experience with a stylish case, portable charger, or pop socket. These small, functional items can make a big difference. Look for accessories that match their personality or style, like their favorite color or a design featuring their current interests.

- **Bluetooth Speakers:** If your teen loves to share music with friends, a portable Bluetooth speaker is a great gift. Compact and easy to carry around, it's perfect for parties, outdoor adventures, or just playing music around the house.

- **Smartwatch or Fitness Tracker:** If they're into fitness or just want a stylish accessory, consider a smartwatch or fitness tracker like the Apple Watch or Fitbit. These devices help track daily activities, monitor health, and keep them connected.

### 2. Gift Cards for Their Favorite Stores

If you're unsure of exactly

what they like, a gift card is always a safe bet. Teens often have their own distinct tastes in clothing, music, or entertainment, and a gift card gives them the freedom to choose something they truly want. Name-brand clothing can be expensive, and a gift card helps alleviate some of the financial burden on their parents. In fact, a gift card to a clothing store can be a gift for both the teen and their parents. Popular choices include stores like H&M, Urban Outfitters, or American Eagle. For a more personalized touch, ask them about their favorite clothing brands beforehand.

Many teens also love cosmetics, skincare products, or the latest fashion. Sephora, Ulta, or beauty subscription services like Ipsy can provide them with trendy beauty buys.

If you're unsure about a particular store, consider a gift card to Amazon, iTunes, or Google Play, where teens can choose anything from music and apps to books and gaming items.

### 3. Books and Journals

For teens who love to read or write, books and journals are excellent gifts. You can select a popular new release in their favorite genre or a book that could inspire them. Authors like John Green, Angie Thomas, and Sarah J. Maas are popular among teens. J.K. Rowling, best known for the Harry Potter series, is still very popular. Consider books with themes that resonate with their interests, like adventure, fantasy, or contemporary issues.

If the teen enjoys graphic novels, consider series like Percy Jackson, The Witcher, or a manga series like Naruto. Or, encourage teens to express themselves with beautiful journals, planners, or creative notebooks. Consider adding fun pens, stickers, or other stationery items to enhance the gift.

In either of these areas, communication is the key.

### 4. Fashionable and Trendy Apparel

Teens express their style through their clothing, so gifting them a cool hoodie, T-shirt, or even some shoes could hit the mark. Pay attention to their style—whether they're into streetwear, vintage fashion, or something else entirely. Look for items with their favorite bands, movies, or hobbies printed on them. Customizable options from websites like Etsy allow you to find or create something uniquely them.

A trendy pair of sneakers, whether it's the latest Nike or Adidas style, will likely make their day. Sneakers can be both stylish and practical. Hats, scarves, or jewelry are also great ways to complement their style. Popular options include beanies, chunky chains, or personalized bracelets.

*continued on page 18*



## Christmas Gift Ideas for Teens

*continued from page 17*

### 5. Hobby-Related Gifts

Consider the teen's hobbies or activities when selecting a gift. For a teen who's passionate about video games, you can look for new gaming headsets, controller accessories, or in-game gift cards for platforms like Xbox, PlayStation, or Steam. Make sure you ask them which platform they use.

If they enjoy making things, a DIY kit or craft set could be a hit. Whether it's crocheting, painting, or jewelry-making, creativity can provide hours of fun. The Woobles is a popular crochet kit for kids. A Woobles kit provides all the necessary yarn, instructions, and crochet hooks to make an adorable, stuffed animal.

### 6. Experiential Gifts

This category is something you should seriously consider. Teens often have too much stuff and storage is always in short supply. Sometimes, the best gift isn't something you can wrap up but rather an experience that the teen can enjoy. These gifts often create lasting memories and can be customized based on their interests.

If the teen loves a certain band, artist, or celebrity, concert or event tickets could be the perfect gift. Check out their favorite venue or band's tour dates and surprise them with tickets. You can also give them gift cards for experiences such as a day at an amusement park, a trampoline park, or a spa. Platforms like Groupon or Viator offer a variety of local experiences they can enjoy. Escape rooms are a fun and exciting option where your teen and their friends can work together to solve the mystery of how to escape the room. The activity is timed, and its suspenseful nature makes it both fun and intellectually challenging.

### 7. Subscription Services

In a world of streaming, many teens are subscribed to services that provide them with entertainment, education,



or even online communities. You can contribute to their subscriptions, or even add a new service they might not yet have. A subscription to Netflix, Spotify, Disney+, or Hulu can provide them with endless entertainment.

If the teen is into developing new skills, consider a subscription to platforms like MasterClass, Skillshare, or Duolingo, where they can explore everything from photography to foreign languages.

### Final Thoughts

When selecting the perfect Christmas gift for a teen, it's important to keep in mind their individual tastes, interests, and personalities. A thoughtful gift doesn't have to be expensive or trendy—it just needs to show that you care and understand what will make them happy. Whether it's tech, fashion, a hobby, or an experience, there are plenty of options that will make their holiday season—and your gift—unforgettable.

The key to a successful gift is not hesitating to ask the teen or their parents for hints or wish lists. Teens often love the opportunity to pick out something themselves, and it ensures your gift will be something they'll genuinely enjoy. Happy holidays, and see you next time with more tech thoughts!

# What Seniors Want for the Holidays

By Susan Guerrero

The kinds of holiday gifts people want in childhood often differ greatly from those desired at a later age in life. Gifts loved and received as kids can actually stay in memory indefinitely.

For a little girl, it could be a fancy doll with curly hair and pursed lips. A young boy, on the other hand, might yearn for a bright red fire engine that makes the sound of a real siren. Or, in this day and age, a video game might be the coveted holiday gift as well as anything that reminds a young person of an extremely popular figure among kids of all ages, namely, Taylor Swift. A tiny tea set, a toy dinosaur, plastic soldiers, and a cherished tin dollhouse have all been wished for, at one time or another. Even after six or seven decades or more of life, those wishes, especially if they came true, remain in memories.

However, as the years tick by, children grow up. Many become parents with kids of their own. Then their gift focus is on becoming household Santas and picking out presents for their own children instead of asking for things for themselves.

By the time grandkids come along, most grandparents think only of gifts they can buy for the little ones rather than for themselves. There is usually already too much stuff that is jammed into garages, attics, and cellars of grandmas and grandpas. Most seniors start to give things to charity once the adult kids turn down offers of heirloom sets of bone china, silverware, or other household treasures.





So what, indeed, do older people want to receive as gifts for themselves during the upcoming holidays?

Albert Adams, a retired chef, who still makes fabulous meals, breads, and jams at home, agrees wholeheartedly that what was wanted as kids, changes a lot when people become older adults. The native of Pittsfield said, “I would love for Christmas to spend time together with my family. We always do good food of course. Thoughts of our past family members who have gone. I really don’t want a specific product. I usually send out a few Christmas cards but, as the world has changed, that’s considered old-fashioned.” “I always wish for a little snow, too,” Albert added. “And, of course, prayers to God for His greatness. Happy Birthday to Jesus.”

When asked what she’d like as a holiday gift, Sarah Masiero, a Pittsfield resident, said, “I don’t know. I haven’t even wrapped my chops around that yet.” She thought for a few moments, then added, “I would like a gift certificate for traveling on a

cruise to the Bahamas. Yes, I’d love that.” Diane Brown, retired, and a Pittsfield resident, said, “I’d like to go with my sons to a nice place for the weekend and somewhere near the ocean. “We could do some walking along the beach and go out to eat,” Diane said.

As for what her special holiday meal might be, as part of her wished-for gift, she said, “anything lobster.”

Billy Bartini, of Lee, while working on a residential door installation in a Pittsfield home, knows exactly what he’d like for the holiday season. “I want health and happiness for my entire family,” he said.

Barb Kochapski, a Dalton resident, lives at home with one of her daughters, son-in-law, and grandchildren. A long-time music teacher in local public and private schools, Barb said she’d like “peace on earth and peace in my family. I really don’t want too many things,” she added. “I don’t need things.”

“Having my car detailed would be a nice present,” she said

Marilyn DeSoe, retired, and a

Dalton resident, said, “I want no gifts wrapped in paper as their joy is short-lived. However, the gift of year-round true family means love surrounds us and encompasses our hearts forever.” JoAnn Stechmann, a retired Lenox resident, knew right away what she wants for a holiday gift.

“What I would like is a ticket to see John Pizzarelli at the Mahaiwe in Great Barrington.” He is a well-known jazz guitarist and singer.” The concert is on Dec. 21 at 8 p.m. “He is going to be saluting Frank Sinatra,” JoAnn said. Pizzarelli is coming to the Berkshires with a 17-piece big band that will “kick off with a Count Basie-like exuberance,” it has been noted in announcements about the concert. Count Basie was “one of the greatest bandleaders of all times,” according to Internet sources and also played American jazz music. JoAnn is a faithful follower of Pizzarelli and often listens to him on National Public Radio (NPR) out of Albany. The jazz guitarist and singer has more than 20 solo albums as well as more than 40 albums recorded

with other artists including Paul McCartney, James Taylor, and Rosemary Clooney. She also loves listening to Pizzarelli’s wife, Jessica Molaskey, a singer. JoAnn has a card that contains all of the information on the concert she would love to see. As an extra step to let her holiday gift wish be known to one of her sons, she said. “I’m leaving a little card right here on the kitchen counter for my son to see.”

As the years tick by, big material gifts seem to lose their appeal among senior citizens.

However, some possibilities that most seniors would appreciate and be happy with are gift cards to their favorite stores and supermarkets, restaurants, or gas stations; breakfast or lunch invitations with a friend; tickets to movies and theater productions; hardware store gift cards; bird seed, dog and kitty food for pet owners, and maybe a nice bottle of wine or a favorite beer.

Happy Holidays to All!

AD

**AD**