

Essex Senior Echo

DECEMBER 2023

Season's Greetings!

I hope you are enjoying the holiday season and have the chance to do the things you love with the people you love. I think it is important to remember that this season of joy is often times a season of sorrow for many and we should endeavor to be kind and generous in our actions and words. It is also a very busy time of year for people, including here at the Senior Center.

I am sure most of you know that our longtime Director, Kristin Crockett, has left Essex for the same position in Georgetown. As a result, I have been named Interim Director and will be in this role until a new Director is appointed. I will work hard to continue to provide the support and services you have come to expect and offer programs I hope you'll enjoy. We have several opportunities to get you in the holiday spirit so please consider joining us and sharing some holiday cheer!

Best wishes for a joyous and safe holiday season! ~ Tess

Essex Senior Center
17 Pickering St.
Essex MA 01929

978-768-7932

Hours of Operation:

Monday thru
Thursday

9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Fridays

9:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Board Officers:

Chairman -

Kay L. Joseph

Vice Chairman -

Diane Polley

Treasurer - Open

Secretary - Ann Buckley

Board Members at Large

Nancy Frieden

Ralph Hawley

Sue Lufkin

Susan Parady

Curt Siebert

Mary Wilhelm

Council on Aging Staff:

Interim Director:

Tess Leary

tleary@essexma.org

Follow us on Facebook!

COMMUNITY SUPPORT:

Senior Care, Inc: 978-281-1750 seniorcareinc.org
Offers Information and referral services, Meals on Wheels, Home-based Services, Money Management, and other services designed to help people stay in their home.

Essex Housing Authority: 978-768-6821

Veteran's Services: 978-356-6699

Protective Services: 800-922-2275 Call 24 Hours/day to report abuse or neglect

Energy Assistance: 978-282-1000

Used Medical Equipment: Masonic Hall, Ipswich 978-356-9716
Essex COA 978-768-7932

Essex Police (non-emergency) 978-768-6200

Essex Fire (non-emergency) 978-768-6363

Activities and Special Events

Computer & Technology Assistance

Do you have questions about your computer, tablet, phone, etc? We have opportunities to get help!

Drop-in with Curt Wednesdays 1:00-3:00pm

Games

Wednesdays 1:00 p.m.

Scrabble, Boggle, Cribbage, Backgammon,
Board Games and More!



Join us, or make plans with a friend and come play ANY TIME!

CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP

**DECEMBER 18
10:30 A.M.**



**ESSEX SENIOR
CENTER**

Are you caring for a loved one with a chronic medical condition or dementia?

LICSW Jessie Perrigo Palm will be hosting a monthly support group at the Senior Center.

Please take care of yourself and join us.



Guest Chef



**Tuesday, December 5
12:00-2:00 PM**

Gil and Nancy Frieden will be cooking up some traditional Jewish holiday delights - join us!

Free ~ advance registration is required.

NEW

Fitness Fun with Gil Wednesdays, 10:00 a.m

What better way to start your day than with Gil! Focus will be on building strength and stamina, along with stretching... energize yourself and leave feeling good and ready to face the day!

\$5 DONATION SUGGESTED



**The COA's Cape Ann
Cinema and Pizza
program will return in
January!**

You can get your movie fix at Cape Ann Community Cinema's **\$7 Senior Monday Matinees** for the month of December!

For more information, please contact Cape Ann Community Cinema at 978-286-3800

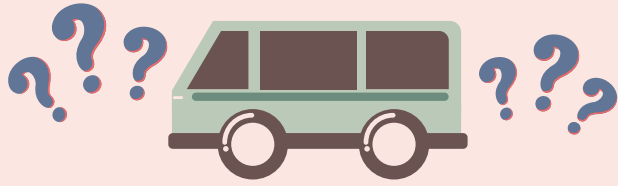


MONTHLY BOOK CLUB



**Tuesday, December 19 at 1:00 PM
Holiday Book Swap**

Gift a book, get a book! Bring a new book to gift and socialize, enjoy holiday goodies and offer your suggestions for next year's selections. Leave with a great new read to enjoy over the holidays!



\$5.00 MYSTERY RIDE

**JOIN US FOR AN ADVENTURE,
A SCENIC RIDE, AND A STOP FOR A SWEET TREAT!**

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 1

**PLEASE ARRIVE AT MEMORIAL PARK AT 1:15 PM
THE VAN LEAVES AT 1:30 PM**

**TRANSPORTATION IS PROVIDED BUT SEATS ARE
LIMITED**

**PLEASE CALL THE SENIOR CENTER TO REGISTER
978-768-7932**

UGLY SWEATER party

Thursday, December 14th

1:00 p.m.

Wear your favorite UGLY holiday sweater and join us to decorate “ugly sweater” cookies, perhaps to match your own! Prize awarded for best holiday outfit!

Free ~ Registration is required.



CULTURAL COOKIE CELEBRATION & SING-ALONG WITH FRAN PIERCE

Thursday, December 21 at 1:00 P.M.

Sing-along to all your holiday favorites!

Enjoy the company of friends sharing songs and a buffet of around the world cookies and cocoa. Please register.



Essex Eats

**WILL RETURN IN
MARCH 2024**



Holiday Lights Tour Wednesday, December 20

Depart from Memorial Park at 3:30 PM/Expected Return by 8:00 PM

There is nothing like driving around and seeing all the festive lights and decorations to get you in the holiday mood ~ join us for an evening of fun and good cheer as we tour the Merrimack Celebration of Lights!

Cost is \$10 ~ Seating is limited ~ Registration is required.

A Sandwich Meal can be ordered or you can bring your own.

Nutrition

Breakfast/Brunch

Ladies Brunch:

3rd Tuesday of the Month
December 12* 11:00AM

*earlier in month just for December



Sponsored by FECOA

Men's Coffee and Donuts:

2nd Wednesday of the Month
December 13 9:30 AM



Grab and Go

Mondays and Thursdays at 12 Noon, and must be picked up by 12:30.

Free but registration is required.

Please register 2 business days in advance.

Mondays

Thursdays

Provided by Open Door

Provided by SeniorCare

Mobile Market at the Essex Senior Center

1st and 3rd Fridays of each month

10:30 AM

December 1 (Acord) and 15 (The Open Door)

Available FREE to all Seniors

ACORD FOOD PANTRY

69 WILLOW STREET
S HAMILTON

Wed. 9:30AM – 11:00AM

Thu. 10:00AM – 11:00AM

(Seniors 60+)*

Thu. 6:30PM – 7:30PM

Sat. 9:00AM – 11:00AM

THE OPEN DOOR

28 EMERSON AVENUE-
GLOUCESTER

Order Groceries by phone
(978-283-6776) OR

Order Groceries On-line:
<https://foodpantry.org>

Pick-up available Mon-Fri



Did you know?
Seniors 60 and older may be eligible for special SNAP benefits? Please contact Tess to see if you qualify and we can submit the application.

Ongoing Activities and Programs

COA FITNESS PROGRAMS

BALANCE IN MOTION: \$5 Donation Requested **MONDAY GROOVE (Video)**
Tuesdays 10:00 AM Mondays 9:30 AM Get your dancing shoes on and
Fridays 10:00 AM join this fun, energetic dance class! No Instructor.

FITNESS FUN WITH GIL \$5 Donation Requested **CAPE ANN VIRTUAL SENIOR CENTER**
Wednesdays 10:00 AM Tune into Channel 67 for a number of fitness
programs sponsored by the Cape Ann Councils on Aging and the Friends of the ECOA.



COA ACTIVITIES

Afternoon Games Wednesdays 1:00 - 3:00 PM

Arts & Crafts Tuesdays 1:00 - 3:00 PM

Book Club Tuesday ~ December 19 1:00 PM

Guest Chef ~ December 5 12:00 PM - Gil and Nancy Frieden will make Latkes and tell the Hanukkah Story

Computer Help ~ Wednesdays, 1:00-3:00 PM
Curt will help solve your tech problems!

Grab & Go Meals Mondays & Thursdays NOON

Mobile Market Friday, December 1, 15 10:30AM

COA Board Mtg Tuesday, December 5 6:00 PM

Friends Mtg Tuesday, December 12 3:00 PM

Ladies Brunch Tuesday, December 12 11:00AM

Men's Coffee/Donuts Wednesday, Dec 13 9:30AM

Monthly Cookie Delivery

Call to sign up for a monthly cookie delivery, sponsored by the Friends of the Essex COA.

COA SERVICES

INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SERVICES

Individual assistance with a variety of topics, including, but not limited to SNAP benefits, Caregiver Support, Transportation, Housing, Social Security, etc.

SHINE/Medicare Counseling Individual counseling about Medicare, prescription coverage, supplemental and Medicare Advantage plans, etc.

RMV and Me: The Essex COA is partnered with the RMV to assist Essex residents with various online transactions such as license and registration renewals.

SHREDDING: Stop by to use the Essex COA shredder, an individual machine which shreds 10 pages at a time.

MEDICAL EQUIPMENT LOANS Mon–Fri 9-1 The Senior Center has a variety of medical equipment available at no cost. Please remember to complete the Release Form before taking any equipment.

CONSTITUENT SERVICES: 3rd Thursday, 10:30 Ms. MaryAnn Nay, Assistant to Senator Bruce Tarr, comes to the Senior Center to address any issues you may have. No appointment needed.

VETS SERVICE OFFICE HOURS: Postponed until further notice.

SNAP APPLICATIONS: The Essex COA can provide assistance with applying for SNAP/food stamp benefits.

Medicare Open Enrollment

Medicare health and drug plans can make changes each year—things like cost, coverage, and which providers and pharmacies are in their networks.

October 15 to December 7 is when all people with Medicare can change their Medicare health plans and prescription drug coverage for the following year, to better meet their needs. **Please make an appointment to review your plans with Tess.**

OPEN ENROLLMENT FAQs:

What is Open Enrollment?

Open enrollment is the one time of year in which you can change your Medicare Advantage Plans and/or your Part D Prescription Drug Coverage.

I am happy with my coverage, do I really need to do anything during the Open Enrollment Period? If you do nothing, and your plan will continue to be offered next year, your plan will carry over. However, Medicare Advantage Plans and Prescription Drug Plans do make changes each year - and due to the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 we expect to see some changes for folks with high prescription costs! You should still compare plans to see if better coverage is available.

Can choosing a new drug plan really make a difference? Can switching plans make a difference in out-of-pocket costs? In 2024, several plans have increases of more than 100%! Do you know if your plan is included? Some plans have been discontinued and members will be automatically enrolled into another plan by the same company. This may not be your best option.

Are there programs to help with prescription costs? There are a number of programs to help reduce medical and prescription costs. Please make an appointment with a SHINE Counselor to learn more about reducing your Medicare Premiums, Drug Costs, and more.

What about the savings I heard about on the news about spending caps and for medications like Entresto, Xarelto, Eliquis, Jardiance, and more?

It is true that there has been federal legislation passed that will result in savings for prescription medications for Medicare beneficiaries and we are excited to see these changes take effect.

Here are the changes taking effect in 2024:

- Elimination of the 5% copay for catastrophic coverage
- Expansion of the Full Extra Help Program:
- Part D Premium increase restrictions

Changes for 2025:

- \$2,000 Out of Pocket Maximum for Part D prescription drugs

Changes for 2026-2030

- Negotiations for specific high cost prescriptions implemented

It's important to
check your coverage
EVERY YEAR!



IMPORTANT UPDATES FOR SPECIFIC MEDICARE PLANS

ELIXIR prescription drugs plans will not be renewed for 2024. If you have one of their plans for 2023, you will NOT be automatically enrolled into another plan!!

Clear Spring Health Premier Rx Plan will not be offered in 2024. If you are on this plan you will be automatically enrolled into another Clear Spring plan. Due to sanctions by Medicare, if you would like to enroll into a continuing Clear Spring plan, you will need to contact the plan directly at 800-317-6082.

TUFTS MEDICARE PREFERRED members should know that Medicare.gov was incorrectly indicating that CVS is a non-preferred pharmacy and therefore pricing estimates obtained during October are likely incorrect. CVS will still be a preferred pharmacy. Please be sure to double check your prescription cost estimates prior to December 7.

2024 Medicare Premiums

	2023	2024
Part A		
Hospital Deductible	\$1,600	\$1,632
Days 1-60		
Daily Co-insurance	\$400	\$408
Day 61-90		
Daily Co-Insurance	\$800	\$816
Day 91-150 (<i>Lifetime Reserve Days</i>)		
.....		
	2023	2024
Part B Medical	\$164.90	\$174.70
Monthly Premium*		
Part B Deductible	\$226	\$240

* Individuals with a modified adjusted gross income (MAGI) of more than \$10,,000 per year, or couples with a MAGI of more than \$206,000 will have increased premiums. Contact us for more information *

What's New with Medicare Advantage Plans?

Medicare Advantage plans are continuing to enhance benefits. In 2024 several plans have expanded dental coverage, added over the counter spending options, and increased health incentives.

Medicare Advantage plans provide "all-in-one shopping" for medical and prescription coverage.

December 7 is the final day of Medicare Open Enrollment - make an appointment today!

On September 12, 2023, the CDC recommended a COVID-19 vaccine updated for 2023-2024 for everyone aged 6 months and older to protect against serious illness. Call your doctor or pharmacist to schedule a vaccine appointment.

Reminder

Please RSVP for events early and ALWAYS include your phone number - even if we already have it!! Often times programs are limited in space, but also, it helps us with planning and budgeting. Please note that we reserve the right to cancel events if a minimum number of participants are not registered.

DECLUTTERING TIPS OF THE MONTH: December

Evaluate Holiday Décor: As you're putting out and packing away your holiday decorations and décor, make sure you love everything you're keeping. Many times, we keep things out of habit. We don't even look at an item to make sure we still get joy from it. Keep what you love, let go of the rest. **Clean Out Wrapping Supplies:** As with the holiday décor, go through the wrapping paper that hasn't been touched in a year. Make sure the paper is in good shape and you like the pattern. Toss any smashed bows or sticky labels that have lost their stick. Many churches, schools, and charitable organizations will take paper donations!

Tackle The Squeaky Wheel: You know the saying "The squeaky wheel gets the grease"? Identify the squeaky wheel that's adding to your stress and tackle it. Maybe it's the utensil drawer you've opened 7 times today and keeps jamming? How about tidying up that pile of shoes in front of the door? Take a minute and fix those spaces. There's no time for in-depth organizing, but taking care of little spots that frustrate you will help.

SOCIAL SERVICE OFFICE

HOURS:

Jessie Palm, Regional Social Worker

Eastern Essex Regional Public Health Coalition

Mondays 9:30 AM at the Essex COA

Wednesdays 9 AM - 1 PM T.O.H.P

Library



or by appointment

Brian DesRosiers, Esq. LL.M

Attorney DesRosiers is an Elder Law Specialist who will be at the Essex Senior Center every 3rd Wednesday of the month, from 9:30AM - 10:30AM, to answer your questions. Appointments are preferred; drop-ins are welcome.

FUEL ASSISTANCE



Winter is upon us and this means heating season and high energy costs. As many as 1 in 3 Essex households may be eligible for Fuel Assistance. This is a free program for those who qualify! Please take advantage and stay warm this winter!

For more information, contact:
Action, Inc.
180 Main Street
Gloucester
978-281-3900

ACTION INC.
Helping People. Changing Lives.

Around Town

Winter weather is now upon us. Please note that the Senior Center is closed when the Manchester-Essex Schools are closed. Individual events may be cancelled due to inclement weather.

Please be sure to RSVP with your phone number for all events!

Every year from December 1 to April 1, no parking is allowed from midnight until dawn on any street in Essex except: all night parking is allowed year round on the 'odd' numbered (easterly) side of Pickering Street.



Holiday Market in the Shipyard

Saturday, December 2

11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

The Friends are selling Essex items!

Community Breakfast - FREE

Saturday, December 9

9:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

Congregational Church

Solstice Celebration Hike

Thursday, December 21

3:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Winter Lights on Cape Ann

NOW thru January 1

Transportation

CATA: Transportation for Essex seniors is provided for \$2.00 fare. Call CATA to schedule your ride by 1:00 pm at least 2 BUSINESS days before you need your ride.

You can also request a ride to go shopping, to the hairdresser, meet a friend, or go to a restaurant in any of these communities! Take advantage!!

Transportation is available Monday - Friday, to and from the following communities:

*Rockport *Gloucester *Manchester *Essex *Ipswich *Hamilton
*Wenham *Beverly *Peabody *Salem *Danvers *Rowley

Monday appointment, call by 1pm Thursday

Tuesday appointment, call by 1 pm Friday

Wednesday appointment, call by 1 pm Monday

Thursday appointment, call by 1 pm Tuesday

Friday appointment, call by 1pm Wednesday

Participation requires a one time registration; for more info call CATA: 978-283-7916.

Transportation to Medical appointments is also provided by volunteers through Senior Care's Medical Transportation Program. To request a ride, call 978-281-1750.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED! Would you be willing to volunteer to drive people to medical appointments? If so, please call Senior Care at 978-281-1750.

Friends of the Essex Council on Aging

The Friends of the Essex Council on Aging is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization whose purpose is to financially assist the Essex Council on Aging in providing social services to residents over the age of 60 in Essex, and to do other things that necessarily render a service for the elderly residents of Essex. Please consider joining the Friends or making a donation!

Essex Trash Bags

**Tuesday, December 5
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM**

**Discounted Trash Bags are available to Essex Residents age 60 and older. Limit of one roll per household per month. Bags are sold on a first come, first serve basis.
\$7.00 Small bags
\$15.00 Large bags**

Holiday Market in the Shipyard

**Saturday, December 2
11:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.**

The Friends will be selling Essex items

Friends of ECOA

Officers

Dawn Burnham, President
Gil Frieden, Vice President
Ellen Hull, Secretary
Kay Joseph, Treasurer

Board Members:

Priscilla Doucette
Susanne Morrow
Ruth Hughes
Joyce Woodman
Alice Gray

Meetings are held monthly on the 2nd Tuesday at 3pm.

Celebrate the Holidays with these festive events, sponsored by the Friends of the Essex Council on Aging!

*Annual Holiday Luncheon
Wednesday, December 13*

*1640 Hart House, Ipswich
11:30 AM*

*\$20 per person payable to :
Friends of the Essex Council on Aging
RSVP and Payment due by 12/1*

Choice of Entrée:

**Baked Haddock, Chicken Picatta, or
Vegetarian Pasta**

**All meals include: Caesar Salad,
Seasonal Vegetables, Blueberry
Cobbler, Tea/Coffee**

*Grab & Go Holiday Meal
Wednesday, December 6*

**4:30 Pick up for last names A-M
5:00 Pick up for last names N-Z**

**\$10 per person payable to:
Friends of the Essex Council on Aging**

RSVP and Payment Due 12/1

Choice of Entrée :

**Baked Haddock or Steak Tips
Meals include: Seasonal Vegetables,
Clam Chowder, and Apple Crisp**

**Participating Restaurants: The Blue Marlin,
The Farm, The Mill, Woodman's**



Throughout the world, December is full of celebrations. Below is a list of the 21 most popular global traditions. Find the underlined words in the word search.

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

North American and African Celebrations

When thinking about December holidays, most of us think of these holidays celebrated worldwide - HANUKKAH (12/18-26), CHRISTMAS (12/25), BOXING DAY (12/26) and NEW YEARS EVE (12/31). If you are a Seinfeld fan, FESTIVUS and the "Airing of Grievances" (12/23) probably comes to mind. A celebration of African American Culture called KWANZAA is based on harvest festival traditions from throughout Africa. (12/26 - 1/1), such as FARMERS Day, celebrated in Ghana on 12/4 and the South African Day of RECONCILIATION (12/16).

In Mexico, the Day of the Virgin of GUADALUPE is celebrated on 12/12.

European

In Scandinavia and Italy people celebrate SANTA LUCIA as a symbol of light on Dec 13. YULE, also known as Yuletide, is a Germanic celebration that traces its roots back to the Norse God Odin. (Dec 21 - Jan 1).

Several European countries celebrate their independence:

12/6 Finland INDEPENDENCE Day 12/6 Spain CONSTITUTION Day
 12/13 Malta REPUBLIC Day 12/26 Slovenia INDEPENDENCE and UNITY Day

Asia

In Thailand there are multiple celebrations - King BHUMIBOL's Birthday falls on 12/7 and on 12/10 the Thai people celebrate their Independence. VICTORY Day (12/16) celebrates the surrender of the Pakistani army in Bangladesh. Full moons are celebrated in Buddhist culture. UNDUVAP POYA, or SANGHAMITTA Day, is a Sri Lankan celebration held on the full moon of December (12/8). (Hint - Unduvap and Poya are found separately!). Finally, on 12/30 Filipinos celebrate the life of their National hero - Jose RIZAL.

Council on Aging Essex

17 Pickering St
Essex MA 01929

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Essex Council on Aging and
Friends of the Essex Council on
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Mass. Executive Office of Elder
Affairs.



Veteran's Gallery Last Day
Thursday, November 30
Open 9:00 AM - 6:30 PM



Hot Cocoa from 5:30 PM - 6:30 PM

The Veterans Gallery was a great success!
**On your way to the Memory Tree
Celebration, please stop by the Senior
Center for a cup of hot cocoa and take a look
at our many local heroes!**

We enjoyed meeting so many community
members, seeing all the remarkable photos,
and most of all having the opportunity to
hear stories from our veterans.

Thank you to all who participated, who
visited, and who helped with the project. A
special THANK YOU goes to COA Board
member Susan Parady, for her talent and
tireless efforts to make this project a reality!

Look Inside for....

- Many Medicare Updates!
- Holiday Party and Grab and Go information
- Exciting Seasonal Events and more . .