



# Massachusetts PATRIOT

Massachusetts Life Care Residents Association (MLCRA) APRIL – JUNE 2024

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## Decoding Dementia: Science, Medicine, and the Pursuit of Brain Fitness

By Judith Ann Foster, PhD, Emeritus Professor of Biochemistry at Boston University Medical School, and Keith Collins, MD, Board Certified Internist at Beth Israel Lahey Health System.

(Notes from their presentation at the MLCRA 2024 annual meeting)



Drs. Keith Collins and Judi Foster gave an informative and practical overview of age-related brain dysfunction — what causes it, how to diagnose it, and ways to prevent it.

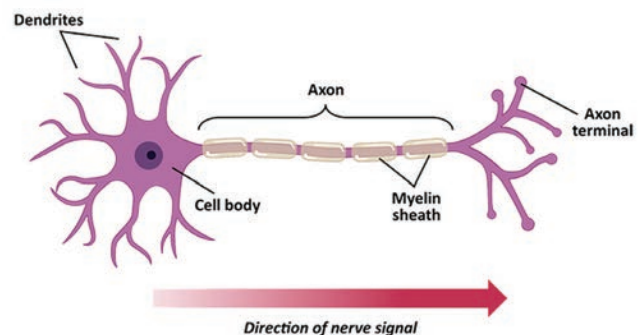
They took a multidisciplinary approach, with Keith providing the physician's clinical perspective and Judi explaining the underlying biochemistry from the scientist's view. Their tag-team presentation format allowed for back-and-forth exchanges as they complemented each other's expertise.

Keith opened by defining dementia as an age-related cognitive impairment severe enough to interfere with independent functioning. He reviewed the different types, with Alzheimer's disease representing about 70% of cases and vascular dementia about 10%. Not every memory lapse indicates dementia — Keith clarified the kinds of memory issues, difficulties with tasks like finances, and visuospatial problems that raise concerns.

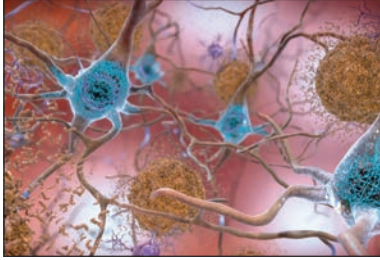
He then walked through the diagnostic process, starting with brief cognitive screeners like the Mini-Cog. Abnormal

results prompt referral to a neurologist for comprehensive testing and brain imaging to detect patterns characteristic of Alzheimer's, vascular dementia or other causes. Knowing the underlying pathology guides management.

Judi then took over to describe what biochemists have uncovered about Alzheimer's pathology. She recounted how Dr. Alois Alzheimer first identified the pathological hallmarks of amyloid plaques outside neurons and tau protein tangles inside neurons in the early 1900s. She detailed how decades of research have revealed that these abnormal structures arise from misfolding of normally occurring brain proteins.



Judi vividly illustrated, using graphics, how the amyloid and tau proteins become misshapen, bind together and form toxic masses that



ultimately damage neurons and lead to brain atrophy. She discussed potential triggers like inflammation,

oxidative stress, vascular issues and genetic risk factors that may initiate this pathological cascade.

Both Keith and Judi conveyed optimism about continued research advances, particularly applying AI to massive datasets integrating clinical, biochemical and digital biomarkers. This could enable earlier diagnosis and intervention to combat these devastating neurodegenerative conditions.

Their complementary perspectives provided a rich, multilayered understanding accessible to any audience member. Knowing the diagnosis can allow the patient and the family time to plan for the future. Until recently, medications for Alzheimer's Disease could slow, but not reverse decline. While awaiting better treatments, lifestyle factors like exercise, social engagement, cognitive stimulation, stress reduction, and cardiovascular health may help delay or prevent dementia onset.

### About the Speakers



Judith Ann Foster received her BA degree in chemistry from Newton College of the Sacred Heart and her doctorate in Biochemistry from the Division of Medical Sciences at

Boston University School of Medicine. She has held faculty positions in a number of

universities, including serving as Chair of the Biology Department at Syracuse University and Assistant Chair of the Biochemistry Department at Boston University School of Medicine. She is the past President of the Resident Council at The Commons and is very involved in the instruction and implementation of technology in the community.

Keith Collins went to MIT thinking he would become a physicist, but discovered he was more interested in people than in particles, and so became a physician instead. He was Chief Information Officer for the UMass Chan Medical School, then CEO of several health care companies, and now is happily working at his "retirement job" as a Board-Certified Internist and primary care physician for the Beth Israel Lahey Health System.

Judi and Keith are residents of The Commons in Lincoln. They became friends years ago, when they realized they shared common interests in the fitness, nutrition and diseases applicable to seniors. Both recognize that they are seniors themselves and are experiencing the consequences of age. They began publishing a fitness newsletter that combined their clinical and scientific viewpoints on a number of medically pertinent topics. These articles have led to giving lectures on these topics and sharing this information with other senior communities. They recently have formed an Artificial Intelligence Group at The Commons and are preparing their first lecture on "What Is Artificial Intelligence And How Can It Help Us As Seniors."

Both Keith and Judi enjoy sharing what they know with their fellow seniors; if anyone is interested in having them speak to their community email them: [judithfoster13@icloud.com](mailto:judithfoster13@icloud.com). ♦

## President's Message

*By Jean Stringham, Lasell Village*

While serving on a board years ago, I learned that Benjamin Franklin said in 1790, "If you fail to plan, you plan to fail." We've been talking about that phrase and also the idea of "Succession Planning" on the MLCRA Board. Recently, I brought it up at the end of the Annual Meeting when I announced that this will be my last year as President of the MLCRA Board. I'm enjoying the role and am grateful that members trust me with this position of leadership to a vital 1000 member organization. I've always believed in new leadership, and although we have no term limits, after 7 years serving on the board in various roles, I know it is time for me to turn the position of president over to a new person next May. According to the by-laws, then I can stay on the board for an additional year. Unlike some Boards, MLCRA's President doesn't have a defined successor — any Board member can be considered.

This is where you, the reader, come into focus. We need new folks to step up and join committees and/or join the Board.

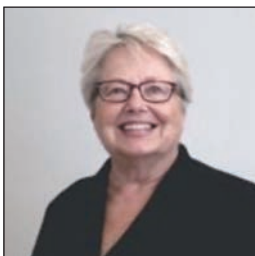
As part of the annual meeting, we welcomed Cy Hopkins as a new Board member. (You can read more about him on page 6.) However, according to our by-laws, the current Board can appoint others as needed during the year. Please contact me if you would like to discuss ways to get more involved in MLCRA's activities and efforts.

Thanks to all of you and here's to a productive 2024! ♦




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## MLCRA 2023 Annual Meeting Honoree: Rep. Kay Khan



Earlier this year, Kay Khan, State House representative for the 11th District of Middlesex announced her decision to step down at the end of 2024, after serving for 29 years. Representative Khan brought her nursing and mental health background to the legislature, where, among other roles, she chaired the Joint Committee on Children, Families, and Persons with Disabilities,

and she was behind the 2021 legislation that allows all Advanced Practice Nurses to practice independently. She has also been an advocate for issues related to senior living, including sponsorship of the Disclosure Bill that MLCRA supports. Topics regarding the environment, sustainability and how they link to health care have been of growing interest for her.

The Board thanked Rep. Khan for her years of effort, noting we are grateful for her energy and her kindness. ♦

## MLCRA Business Meeting 5/16/2024 - Summary

The following are brief summaries of the various committee reports given at the annual meeting. They give some insight into what goes on behind the scenes to keep MLCRA running.

**The Patriot:** Allison Dolan, Patriot Editor, reported that our quarterly newsletter supports the goals of MLCRA — education, sharing of information, and advocacy. Over 1,000 copies are mailed to members in 17 communities and shared with community management, legislators and others. We always make room for articles submitted by members from different communities. Allison can help with editing.

**MLCRA Website ([mlcra.org](http://mlcra.org)):** Allen Broughton, our Digital Consultant, reviewed key areas of the website which also supports education, advocacy and networking. From the main page, site visitors can link to information about member communities, legislative topics, external resources, as well as past Patriots, and Community Conversations. There are also many pictures provided by members!

**Financial Report:** Allison Dolan, Treasurer, reported that MLCRA is in good shape: our 2023 expenses were \$12,919, with the primary expense continuing to be the layout, printing and distribution of the Patriot (66%). Administrative expenses, including technology costs (e.g., Zoom contract), filing fees, and marketing were 24%. Allen is compensated for his time. The Board continues to be all volunteer. Our revenue covered current year expenses as well as contributions to the future years' expenses for those who signed up with multi-year memberships.

**Membership:** Caroline Jacobs, VP for Membership, reported that MLCRA currently has around 1,000 members from 17 communities. We have 422 LIFE and unexpired multi-year members, and 110 new members. She noted the \$15 annual dues have not gone up for years. Earlier this year, we introduced free LIFE memberships for centenarians interested in being MLCRA members and we now have 6 centenarians. As of May 7, we have recruited more new members than those who have not yet renewed; our membership is 90% paid up. She briefly reviewed the tri-fold marketing brochure that explains the benefits of MLCRA and includes a signup card. Caroline thanked the MLCRA reps for all their hard work to recruit new members and encourage existing members to renew.

**Advocacy:** Dave VanArsdale, Vice-President for Advocacy and Education, reviewed the status of legislation that MLCRA is following. For several years, Representative Kay Khan has sponsored the **Act relative to disclosing continuing care retirement community entrance fees** (aka Disclosure Bill). The goal of this bill is to ensure those moving into a CCRC have clear documentation regarding what happens to their entrance fee when they move out or die. The **Act relative to assisted living and basic health services** evolved out of the pandemic, when the state issued a variance to allow licensed nurses to provide 'basic health services' in Assisted Living Residences. The bill specifies services including injections, completion of home diagnostics, such as glucose testing, application of ointments or drops, application or replacement of non-sterile dressings, and other similar services. Since the legislature could



not finalize the details this spring, Gov. Maura Healey extended the COVID-19 related variance until March 31, 2025. MLCRA is also supporting a **Resolve relative to a community care retirement communities special Commission**. The Commission would look at various aspects of CCRCs, such as contracts, financial viability, handling entrance fees, etc. There would be a number of people appointed to the commission, including a representative from MLCRA.

**Community Conversations:** Cynthia Childs, Board Member-at-Large, and co-chair of Community Conversations, noted that since 2021, MLCRA has held 7 conversations on Zoom on a variety of topics. Typically, there are about 15 MLCRA representatives attending each Conversation. The most recent topic was probably the most talked about topic in CCRCs — Dining Services. These conversations have allowed us to connect with other communities who may have similar issues, concerns, and solutions. Topics and summaries of these conversations are available on the MLCRA website (*mlcra.org*) under Community Conversations. Representatives received copies of the more detailed minutes of these conversations to share with other MLCRA members and, if appropriate, with their Management. MLCRA plans to have our next conversation this fall. If you have a suggestion of a topic for a future Community Conversation, **please send your idea(s)** to Caroline Jacobs or Cynthia Childs; their emails are listed in the Patriot and on the MLCRA website.



**Election:** Before the election, we thanked outgoing Board member Eunice White, Orchard Cove, for serving as Recording Secretary.

**Steve Straus, Board Member-at-large, presented the Election Slate:**

**President:** Jean Stringham, Lasell Village

**Vice President for Membership:** Caroline Jacobs, The Commons in Lincoln

**Vice President, Advocacy & Education:** David VanArsdale, Edgewood

**Treasurer:** Allison Dolan, Brooksby Village

**Recording Secretary:** Cynthia Childs, The Overlook

**Corresponding Secretary:** Mary-Louise Eggiman, Southgate at Shrewsbury

**At-large members:** Cyrus Hopkins (new), Brookhaven at Lexington; Marguerite Horn, Loomis Lakeside at Reeds Landing; Steve Straus, Orchard Cove

The Election Slate was voted on via Zoom poll, and was approved as presented.

There was a period of Q&A following the election before the meeting was adjourned. ◆

## MLCRA Board Changes



**Cyrus Hopkins:** Cy has been a resident at Brookhaven at Lexington for seven years, moving there three years after retirement from a career in medicine at the Massachusetts General

Hospital. He spent his entire professional life there, beginning as a clinical infectious disease physician, heading the new Infection Control Unit, and finally culminating in 15 years in Patient Safety. In that role he was an enthusiastic champion of the patient safety culture. It was that experience that led him to increased engagement in patient advocacy, where he learned the need to hear the voice of the patient in all levels of medical decision making.

It is that perspective which informs and motivates him to work with more ways to engage fellow residents in trying to improve the course of their stay, life, and care in their respective systems. When Cy was President of Brookhaven's Resident's Association three years ago, he became more aware of the complexity of the problems, and the usefulness of hearing from others in similar situations, which is what drew him to MLCRA. He hopes to encourage and support more ways to have our different institutions talk among themselves, and find areas of common ground and interest.



**Cynthia Childs:** Cynthia Childs and her husband moved to The Overlook in June 2020 having lived 20 years in Rindge, NH and 20 years in Sterling, MA. She spent her career

in health care service and management. Her community service included: Rindge Zoning Board member, Church Moderator, Chairman of the Rindge Food Pantry and co-chair of a "Got Lunch Program". Her hobbies include knitting, quilting and card making. Cynthia joined the MLCRA board in 2021 as an at-large member, and has now accepted the role of Recording Secretary.

### FAREWELL AND THANK YOU:



**Eunice White:** Eunice White, Orchard Cove, stepped down after five years on the MLCRA Board, including three years as Recording Secretary. Eunice also served several times on the Nominating

Committee and wrote for the Patriot. The Board thanked Eunice for her many contributions. ♦

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In the last issue, the Valentine photo was miscaptioned — Steve Straus' band played at Orchard Cove — should have been The Overlook.

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**“Isn't it nice to think that tomorrow is a new day with no mistakes in it yet?”**

— L.M. Montgomery

## Residents at MLCRA Communities Really Show They Care

*In response to an invitation to MLCRA member communities to share the charitable efforts that residents engage in, Paul Blass, NewBridge on the Charles, submitted the following:*

It is very difficult to put in a few sentences what the residents of NewBridge do in the area of charitable activities. Most are generated by the Volunteer Outreach Committee, Scholarship Committee for NewBridge employees, and the Multigenerational Program through Hebrew Senior Life. Ongoing programs include:

- Birthday in a Box: We supply gifted wrapped boxes filled with items for children in homeless shelters through Birthday Wishes.
- We collect eyeglasses and donate them to local optometrists who send them out to be repurposed.
- We collect toiletries and donate them to the Women's Lunch Place.
- We collect household items (except furniture) which is donated to an organization called Welcome Home. Homeless people or refugees moving into apartments may visit their facility and select items they need.
- We collect kosher food items for Family Table three times a year.
- We donate financially in November to the Dedham Food Bank.
- We provide scholarships to employees so they can take college courses, and other programs that fit their interests. Over \$140,000 has been donated by residents.
- A number of residents donate time to help children of many ages through Multigenerational Programs in the area schools.
- We have collected hats, gloves, sox, scarves, hand/foot warmers, and coats for the Women's Lunch Place and for the refugee families in the area.
- We have purchased book bags and filled them with supplies for children of refugee families living in the area.
- Several residents volunteered at Cradles to Crayons.

I am proud of the residents at NewBridge who go out of their way to give back to people less fortunate through both their time and their generous donations. ♦

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*At The Commons in Lincoln, residents run a book drive to donate used books to "More Than Words," a nonprofit organization which empowers teenagers in foster care, homeless or out of school to learn how to run a business. Another group knits hats, scarves and other items which are donated through a temple to shelters and other places that need them.*

*At Brooksby Village, the Student Scholarship Fund, and the Resident Care Fund top the list. There is a group of knitters and crocheters who make afghans that are donated to shelters. The Pet Lover's group collected food and other pet needs. And the Interfaith Council recently completed a children's diaper drive.*

*This is certainly not a complete list! If you have items to add for your community, send them to Allison Dolan for inclusion in a future article.*

# Addressing Hearing Challenges

*By Karl Bottigheimer and Burt Jaffe, Lasell Village*

Studies have shown that 80% of individuals over age 80 have some degree of hearing loss. And hearing loss has been associated with other health issues, such as cognitive decline and balance.

At Lasell Village earlier this year, Jean Stringham called together a group of about twenty residents interested in the topic of hearing loss and ways that Lasell Village could better respond to the needs of this community. The result was a new advocacy and support group called HIP, or Hearing Impaired People. Karl Bottigheimer stepped forward to chair the group. It is modeled after another successful support group at Lasell Village — the VIP, or Visually Impaired People. We are working with our management to advocate for improvements in our current facility as well as in plans for a new building.

Hearing impairments can be stressful for people in meetings, classrooms and lectures. One classroom has been fitted with microphones on the tables that service two people each. This classroom has become very popular and it is hoped that other classrooms will also have this system. Our auditorium and other classrooms have a hearing loop system.

We are also aware that some residents have trouble hearing in the dining room due to background noise. Some residents wear hearing aids, and some also have a device to place on a table to increase the speech-to-noise level. Our dining room has carpets and walls to absorb some of the sound, but this is not effective enough for some hearing

impaired. We believe the noise level may cause some people to avoid the dining room and other social settings; they may choose to eat in their rooms, adding to their isolation. One resident is experimenting with sound absorbing materials to reduce background noises in the dining room.

Recently our group helped organize two programs with speakers to come to talk to the entire community. The first talk was by resident Burt Jaffe, who is a retired ENT medical doctor and now a consultant to HIP. The second talk will be by an audiologist who will speak about the various new equipment available to people.

We believe that residents working with management can work to craft community spaces that are more congenial and inclusive for our hearing impaired.

We also wonder what other communities are doing to help the hearing impaired. Do they have support groups? Do they have similar hearing issues particularly in the dining room? Do they have closed captioned TV service on their internal channel? What other steps and technology have they taken to help the hearing impaired? Have they done any surveys of hearing loss, and related issues like how it affects social behavior?

*If you are interested in sharing your thoughts with Burt and Karl, please email Allison Dolan [allisondolan77@gmail.com](mailto:allisondolan77@gmail.com) who will forward them on. Depending on the responses, this may be a topic for a future issue of the Patriot and/or a Community Conversation. ♦*



## Putting on a Show

*By Berthe Nathanson, The Willows at Westborough*

In late 2023, Ellen Zipkin and I decided to put on a variety show here at The Willows at Westborough. Ellen is a former music teacher who put on many school shows. I am a former English teacher, with a lot of experience in community theater and writing plays.

In early December, we distributed a flyer inviting interested Willows residents to come to a meeting. Close to 30 people showed up! We described our idea for a variety show, including the proposed rehearsal schedule, with a

goal of having the performance in early April. We already had approval from our activities director and had also contacted an accompanist/musical director to be sure he was available.

We met on a weekly basis with the full cast, including a couple of staff members, practicing the opening and closing numbers every other week, and those who volunteered to sing solos, duets, or a trio met after the full cast rehearsals. In addition, Ellen and I met



with some of these singers individually to help them prepare the songs that in most cases they themselves had selected.

Since this was a variety show we had no scenery. However, one of our maintenance employees volunteered to make a stunning sign to hang on the curtain at the back of the stage. I prepared a playbill. We contacted the local TV



station to tape the show and present it on the local station for about a week; they also offered to post it on YouTube.

We had two performances — the first for the residents, and the second for friends and family. When the evening of the show arrived, we had a full house and the show went off splendidly. The second show also went very well. The audience again loved it, and the person from Westborough TV was here to film it. We are now recorded for posterity — check us out at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sweygbe3ebc>. ♦

## MLCRA Board and Resident Associations

*MLCRA represents about 1,000 older residents throughout Massachusetts. Its membership includes individual resident members and 17 Resident Associations*

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

#### President

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Lasell Village

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*jean.stringham@gmail.com*

#### Vice-President for Membership

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**Maggie Horn**

Loomis Lakeside at Reeds

Landing

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**Allison Dolan**, Editor

**Suzette Barbier**, Design and  
Layout

**Elizabeth Losa**, Copy Editor

#### MLCRA COMMUNITY MEMBERS

**Brookhaven at Lexington**

**Brooksby Village**, Peabody

**Edgewood**, North Andover

**Lasell Village**, Newton

**Loomis Lakeside at Reeds  
Landing**, Springfield

**NewBridge on the Charles**,  
Dedham

**Newbury Court**, Concord

**Orchard Cove**, Canton

**Sophia Snow Place**,  
West Roxbury

**Southgate at Shrewsbury**

**Springhouse**, Jamaica Plain

**Sweetwood of Williamstown**

**The Briarwood Community**,  
Worcester

**The Commons in Lincoln**

**The Overlook**, Charlton

**The Willows at  
Westborough**

**The Willows at Worcester**

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### The Massachusetts Patriot

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The Massachusetts Patriot is the quarterly newsletter of the Massachusetts Life Care Residents Association (MLCRA). As the residents' voice, the Patriot covers news about Massachusetts retirement communities, monitors laws and regulations that affect residents of retirement communities, and serves as an advocate for residents' rights.

**Readers are encouraged to send articles, topics of interest, comments and questions to:**  
Allison Dolan, Patriot Editor, *allisondolan77@gmail.com* or 978-587-2955

## Massachusetts Life Care Residents Association

### MLCRA Membership Application/Renewal Form for 2024-2025

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) of member(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Check here if this is a renewal. (The date on mailing label is when your current membership expires.)

**IF YOU ARE A NEW MEMBER: fill in information below; or attach a personal address label. If you are an existing member: fill in **only** if you are making changes.**

Street: \_\_\_\_\_ Apt. # \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip code: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ (for MLCRA purposes only)

Your Retirement Community: \_\_\_\_\_

**Dues for New Members and Renewals - Circle your choice.**

1 year (expires 12/31/2025)      Individual: \$15 **or** household: \$25

5 year (expires 12/31/2029)      \$75 (individual/household)

Lifetime Membership      \$150 (individual/household)

**Please make checks payable to MLCRA.**

*If your community is having a membership drive, please give this form with your check to your MLCRA representative; otherwise mail form and check to:*

Allison Dolan, Treasurer  
104 Brooksby Village Drive, Unit 405  
Peabody, MA 01960



## Massachusetts Life Care Residents Association

Allison Dolan, Editor  
Brooksby Village  
104 Brooksby Village Drive, Unit 405  
Peabody, MA 01960

**NOTE: The date next to your name on the mailing label above indicates when your membership expires.**

<p>Join MLCRA now to maintain your quality of life!</p>	<p><b>What is the Massachusetts Life Care Residents Association?</b> <i>The voice of residents of Continuing Care Retirement Communities</i></p> <p>The Massachusetts Life Care Residents Association (MLCRA) was founded in 1998. MLCRA is a state-wide non-profit volunteer organization with 501(c)(3) status. It represents individual members and resident associations located in non-profit and for-profit retirement communities know as Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRCs) or Life Care Communities. These communities are also sometimes referred to as Life Plan Communities. They provide facilities and services for independent living and assisted living/skilled nursing care or both.</p> <p>The general purposes of MLCRA are communication, education, advocacy, and collaboration with members, resident associations and other organizations to support the well-being of seniors living in retirement communities. MLCRA is the Massachusetts Chapter of the National Continuing Care Residents Association (NaCCRA).</p> <p>MLCRA recognizes and respects the common interests of residents and management. It supports efforts to promote a mutually beneficial relationship. When the interests of management and residents occasionally diverge, MLCRA serves as the residents' advocate.</p>
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