



Massachusetts PATRIOT

Massachusetts Life Care Residents Association (MLCRA) JULY – SEPTEMBER 2026

The Residents' Advocate – Management's Friend • *Serving our community for 28 years* • www.mlcra.org

What Can We Learn From One Another? MLCRA Talks Dining

What's working in your community's dining program? What isn't? And could another MLCRA community already have found a solution worth trying?

Those questions were at the heart of MLCRA's recent **Community Conversation on Dining**, which brought together representatives from 12 member communities to compare experiences, discuss resident survey results, and share practical ideas that are making a difference.

Not surprisingly, residents across communities raised many of the same issues: food quality and consistency, communication with dining leadership, nutrition information, special dietary needs, menu accessibility, and having meaningful ways to provide feedback.

But the conversation wasn't just about problems — it was about solutions.

Participants shared practices that are working in their communities, including open dining committee meetings, regular meetings with dining leadership, comment cards and QR-code feedback systems, community-wide dining forums, and prompt follow-up when residents raise concerns.

There were also some creative ideas worth considering: partnerships between Dining and Health and Wellness Committees to provide

nutrition education; kitchen tours or videos showing how meals are prepared; resident dining ambassadors; and dining committee subcommittees focused on nutrition, menu variety, resident education, and staff training.

The discussion also highlighted ways communities are addressing food allergies and special diets, from individualized assistance and dietary tracking systems to specialized menus and greater access to chefs for questions about ingredients. Participants agreed that clearer identification of gluten-free and other special-diet choices remains an important goal.

Perhaps the biggest takeaway was simple: **our communities have a lot to learn from one another.** A challenge in one community may already have an innovative solution in another.

That is exactly what MLCRA's Community Conversations are designed to do — bring residents together to exchange ideas, learn what is working elsewhere, and take useful information back to their own communities.

More Community Conversations are coming. We hope you'll join us, share what's working in your community, and bring home a few new ideas of your own.



“Food can bring people together in a way nothing else could.”

— Yotam Ottolenghi

President's Message

By Caroline Jacobs, The Commons in Lincoln



By the time you read this, we will be in full swing with fall activities and some cooler weather. I hope you have all had a good summer and found time to visit with family and friends and have some

fun. Although MLCRA doesn't organize any special events in the summer, life has been going on behind the scenes.

As reported in last year's July-September issue of the Patriot, the Special Commission on Continuing Care Retirement Communities recommended that the Consumer Guide for CCRCs should be updated in collaboration with several interested parties, including MLCRA and Leading Age MA. To that end, MLCRA members who were on the Commission and Elissa Sherman, President of Leading Age MA, have looked at the existing guide and will be making recommendations to AGE (the Executive Office of Aging & Independence). If you would

like to see the current Consumer Guide to CCRCs, there is a link to it on the MLCRA website (mlcra.org) under Resources.

Elsewhere in this issue, you will find a report from Lauren Hale on the passage of legislation covering private health-care agencies. This is very welcome as many CCRC residents are choosing to hire their own aides rather than move to Assisted Living.

You will also find information on the upcoming opportunity to opt-out of receiving a printed version of the Patriot and instead receive an email with a link to an online version.

Looking ahead, our Nominating Committee will be searching for nominees for the three vacancies on our Board next summer, namely VP for Education & Advocacy, Treasurer and President. Although the Board has expanded to twelve, we are always looking for new members. If you have already had a leadership role in your community and would like to be involved at a statewide level, please let me know. ♦

Medicare Open Enrollment

Medicare Open Enrollment runs October 15 thru December 7, 2026 with changes going into effect on January 1, 2027. During this period, you can switch from Original Medicare to a Medicare Advantage plan (Part C) or vice versa, or change Advantage plans or make changes in your Part D drug plan. Free, unbiased assistance with Medicare plan decisions is provided by the state's SHINE Program (Serving the Health Insurance Needs of Everyone). You can reach SHINE by calling MassOptions at 1-800-243-4636 (select prompt for SHINE) or visiting Mass.gov SHINE Program.

Membership Update

By Christine Griffin, Vice President for Membership

MLCRA currently has over 820 member households, representing over 1,020 individual members. I am very grateful to our community representatives for their continued enthusiasm and hard work in keeping our membership strong.

We experienced a significant number of non-renewals in 2026. This year, we will need to pay particular attention to membership expiration dates and follow up with potential renewals, while also focusing on recruiting new members.

Our annual recruitment season begins in October. By working together, we can welcome new members and encourage as many renewals as possible before the end of the year. Your personal outreach truly makes a difference.

I am happy to help representatives in any way I can, including creating recruitment emails and PowerPoint presentations for your community. If you would like that level of assistance, please email me at cmg195566@gmail.com. ♦

Interested in Going Paperless?

By Allison Dolan, Patriot Editor

At the suggestion of several members, MLCRA is now offering an “opt-out” of receiving a printed copy of the Patriot and instead reading the Patriot online. Those who enjoy the printed version do not need to do anything — there are no plans to stop sending the Patriot, except to those who opt-out.

If you don't want a paper copy, then send an

email to AllisonDolan77@gmail.com, ideally with the subject line “MLCRA Opt-Out”. When the next Patriot is available, you'll receive an email with a link. We recommend reading the online version on a computer or tablet.

If you have any questions on how opt-out will work, please feel free to contact Allison Dolan at the above email address. ♦

Did You Know...

In late July, Temporary Protected Status was ended for thousands of Haitians, and thus they could no longer legally work in the US. CCRCs have been impacted as they lost many healthcare aides as well as culinary staff and housekeepers. Hebrew Senior Life (HSL) CEO Adam Scott told the Boston Globe that HSL communities had lost many loyal and productive Haitian employees. Senior leadership, residents, and patients contributed to an assistance fund for the departing employees. Two MLCRA board members, Steve Straus, Orchard Cove, and Paul Blass, NewBridge on the Charles, live at HSL communities.

Regulatory and Legislative Updates

By Lauren Hale, Southgate at Shrewsbury



Photo: Jean Stringham

New Assisted Living Regulations Announced

This summer Massachusetts announced major changes to Assisted Living regulations. Since most MLCRA communities offer Assisted Living, the changes could affect many of our members. The new regulations strengthen safety standards and increase other protections for residents. The regulations also allow Assisted Living Residences (ALRs) the option of offering Basic Health Services.

Governor Maura Healey announced the new ALR regulations on July 10. The regulations were finalized by the Executive Office of Aging and Independence following passage of long-term care legislation in 2024 and the subsequent recommendations of an Assisted Living Commission (see January-March 2026 Patriot). Most of the regulations were scheduled to take effect on July 31.

News media coverage about the regulations has concentrated on safety requirements that were put into place because of the fire in 2025 at Gabriel House in Fall River. They include annual inspections by local fire departments, annual fire safety instruction for staff, and enhanced emergency preparedness plans.

In addition, ALRs will be required to install automated external defibrillators (AEDs) if they do not already have them. As of January 1, 2027, ALRs must always have a CPR/AED certified staff member on duty. ALRs will also be required to have unexpired naloxone (Narcan) and epinephrine centrally located and accessible to staff.

Basic Health Services: The regulations establish how Basic Health Services (BHS), which were authorized by the 2024 legislation, will be implemented. If providers decide to offer BHS, they must offer *all* the services specified in the law: injections, simple non-sterile dressings, ongoing oxygen management, ointments or drops, specimen collection and FDA-approved home diagnostic tests. *If facilities do not offer all these services, they cannot offer any of them.* Many advocates would have preferred more flexibility.

Residents who choose to receive health services must have medical orders from a licensed independent provider. A Registered Nurse must update the service plan to include the order and review it with the resident or the resident's representative. There are also many other new certification requirements for facilities that offer BHS.

Assisted Living Consumer Protections:

On June 22, Attorney General Andrea Campbell issued a separate set of consumer protection regulations that were scheduled to go into effect on July 17. The regulations prohibit “unfair or deceptive” practices, including misleading promises about services

and fees. ALRs must have clear service agreements that spell out what services cost, when prices can go up, and what happens if a resident can no longer afford to stay or needs advanced care. The ALR must also give clear information about the availability of nursing care on site. ♦

New Law to License Home Care Agencies

Some MLCRA members hire home care aides to help with non-medical services such as bathing, other personal care, laundry, and transportation. They may not be aware that Massachusetts has been one of a handful of states that do not license home care agencies.

That changed this summer. On July 31, the Massachusetts legislature passed a bill that requires licensing of home care agencies and establishes protections for both clients and workers. Governor Healey signed the bill into law on August 7. Senator Patricia Jehlen, who sponsored the bill in the Senate, noted that aides paid by the state must be screened, trained, and supervised. If you pay privately, there have been no similar requirements.

The new law calls for the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), in collaboration with the Executive Office of Aging and Independence and the Department of Public Health, to establish a statewide licensing system. EOHHS will inspect and investigate agencies. It will post an online list of licensed providers.

Licensed agencies will be required to do background checks on employees. Driving records will be checked if employees provide transportation. The agencies must train staff in areas such as privacy rights of home care consumers, the handling of emergencies, identifying and reporting suspected abuse, understanding dementia, and worker safety.

The law establishes procedures to ensure that home care workers have safe working conditions, adequate training, and a way to submit complaints. It requires licensed home care agencies to maintain workers’ compensation and liability insurance.

The law also creates a Long-Term Services and Supports Commission to consider the idea of a state program into which people would pay and from which older adults could receive long-term services or supports.

The state must now develop and finalize regulations for the licensure program. Home care agencies will be required to obtain licenses not later than one year after the regulations are finalized. See more at <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2026/Chapter180>. ♦

Reminder

November 3 is Election Day! In addition to various local and state elections, there will be 9 ballot questions, the most since 1994. They include a repeal of the recreational marijuana law, a firearms question, and revenue and spending limits.

Southgate 4th of July Songs of the Revolution



Photo by Peter Cotton, Southgate

The Concord Fife and Drum Corps brought the sounds and songs of the American Revolution alive at Southgate. They also played music from the Civil War and other patriotic songs. The Fife and Drum Corps appeared as part of Southgate's summer outdoor concert series. They were followed by Dan Gabel and the Abletones, an 18-piece Big Band, which played music of the 1930s and 1940s. ♦

Celebrating America's 250th Anniversary 1776-2026!



Brooksby Village 4th of July

The weather was perfect as Brooksby Village held its annual 4th of July Parade on the Friday before the 4th. Peabody fire and police were represented along with local elected officials. Resident groups and staff departments also participated in the parade. The parade route was lined with supporters (residents and families) waving flags. As the end of the parade passed, the line formed to get a hot dog, chips and ice cream ♦



NewBridge 4th of July



The Black Eagle Jazz Band

NewBridge on the Charles celebrated the 4th with 3 different events — a BBQ lunch, an all Residents' reading of the Declaration and a Black Eagle Jazz Band Performance with refreshments. ♦

“Scarves from the Heart” It's Worcester • It's Winter • It's Cold

By Martha Kreisel, The Willows at Worcester



Warm, colorful scarves

Over the past two winters talented knitters and crocheters at The Willows at Worcester made close to 150 scarves and hats to be donated to those in need in Worcester. This coming winter will be our third year of The Willows Scarves From The Heart in collaboration with the Unitarian Universalist Church of Worcester



Hat & scarf left for person in need

and the youth members of the Creative Hub Worcester. In the Fall, representatives from the Church deliver the scarves and hats to



Scarf tags

the young people of the Creative Hub Worcester for placement in a Main South park for those in need. More knitters and crocheters

are always welcomed, as well as any donations of skeins or partial skeins of yarn. Unfortunately the need for scarves and hats is never ending. Scarves are of any pattern or color and only need to be approximately 5" wide by 55" long. ♦

Briarwood's Pillowcase Dress Project

By Jan Slaughter, The Briarwood Community, Worcester



Dress workshop

What would you do with 3,500 pillowcases and 7,000 yards of ribbon? If you are one of the Old “Sew ‘n’ Sews” of the Briarwood Community, you would turn them into 3,500 unique and colorful dresses to donate to girls in need around the world.

Briarwood's Pillowcase Dress Project was started by mother/daughter residents Jeanne Gaumond and Jan Slaughter, who had seen the dresses at a quilting show-and-tell in 2012. Jeanne moved to Briarwood in 2013 and the pair introduced the idea to other residents with whom it was an immediate hit! Jan and her husband Ken moved into Briarwood a few years later and, except for the COVID lockdown, Jan, Ken, and Jeanne have been setting up their “sweatshop” assembly line every month since.

Attendance ranges from 3-18, produces 10-30 dresses per session, and involves Assisted Living residents inserting the ribbons. Jan buys most of the pillowcases at thrift stores

and buys 50-yard spools of ribbon on eBay. Some pillowcases and a few sewing machines have been donated along with several gifts of cash. The workshops have always been fun, but getting the dresses to where they are needed has been challenging. The first boxful was shipped to the Philippines, was lost, then was mysteriously returned! The trio pivoted and started looking for people going on mission trips who were willing to take these special dresses with them. But tracking down

these options took time.

Then a new resident, who had been making dresses



Pretty new dresses

on her own, connected the group with a local church which supports La Romana mission in the Dominican Republic (DR), which cares for “people of no standing,” the Haitian refugees who work in the sugar cane fields, and they have carried hundreds of dresses to DR. The girls then pose with big smiles in their new dresses!

The Old “Sew ‘n’ Sews” have hundreds of pillowcases each waiting to be transformed into a young girl's first new dress, and we have no plans to slow down anytime soon. ♦

“I needed clothes and you clothed me.”

— Matthew 25:26

Maintain Strength for Lifelong Independence

By guest author Lauren Albert, Physical Therapist/DPT (www.themovementexpertspt.com)

“Muscle is the key to longevity,” per Dr. Gabrielle Lyon. Muscle strength is what helps you rise from your dining room chair, and take a quick, powerful step to catch yourself if you lose your balance. Muscle mass peaks around age 30 and then gradually declines by 3-8% every decade until age 60 when this rate of loss accelerates. Research shows, however, that older adults can significantly increase strength and build muscle within just a few months of regular resistance training.

Resistance training also has the following benefits:

- Support weight management by increasing metabolism
- Improve blood sugar control to lower the risk of diabetes
- Lower stress by reducing cortisol levels
- Decrease resting blood pressure
- Reduce fat stores which can lower the risk of arterial disease
- Stimulate bone growth to combat osteoporosis
- Decrease the risk of falls and associated injury

Resistance training combined with adequate protein intake is the most effective way to preserve and build muscle as we age. Our bodies become less efficient at using protein over time, therefore there are now recommendations that healthy older adults consume 75-90 grams of protein per day, with

high-quality protein at every meal. Pairing adequate protein with regular resistance training provides the strongest stimulus for maintaining muscle mass and strength.

Here are a few simple, daily tips to build strength and balance at home:

- **Prioritize protein:** Build your meals around a high-quality protein source.
- **Sit-to-stands:** Stand up and sit down 10 times in a row without using your hands if possible. (To increase the challenge: hold a dumbbell or household object)
- **Overhead Lift:** Lift a dumbbell, canned good, or other household item from your waist level to overhead 10 times.
- **Balance:** Stand with your feet together while brushing your teeth. (To increase the challenge: place 1 foot slightly ahead of the other)
- **Walk backward:** In a safe area, while holding onto or staying nearby a sturdy countertop or railing, practice walking backward to improve balance and coordination.

The strongest predictor of whether you can continue doing the things you love isn't your age. It is your strength, and it is never too late to make that a priority. If you are new to resistance training, please seek further guidance from a professional to receive an individualized exercise program tailored to your specific needs and goals. ♦

MLCRA Board and Resident Associations

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

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The Overlook, Charlton

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The Willows at Worcester

The Massachusetts Patriot

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 2026-2027

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 12/31/2027) \$15 (individual/household)

5 year (expires 12/31/2031) \$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

Alternatively, go to mlcra.org/join-mlcra to pay by credit card.

☐ Check here to opt-out of receiving printed Patriots and instead get notification when available online.



Celebrating America's 250th Anniversary 1776-2026!



Massachusetts Life Care Residents Association

Allison Dolan, Editor
Brooksby Village
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NOTE: The date next to your name on the mailing label above indicates when your membership expires.

Join MLCRA now to maintain your quality of life!	What is the Massachusetts Life Care Residents Association? <i>The voice of residents of Continuing Care Retirement Communities</i> 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 known 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. 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). 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.
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