



Massachusetts PATRIOT

Massachusetts Life Care Residents Association (MLCRA) JANUARY – MARCH 2024

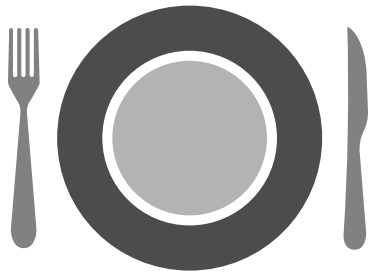
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Community Conversations: Dining Services

By Caroline Jacobs, The Commons in Lincoln and Cynthia Childs, The Overlook

Our most recent Community Conversation was held on January 18, 2024, on the topic of Dining Services. Twelve representatives attended as well as two RAC presidents and three guests who belong to Dining Services committees in their communities. One hour wasn't long enough to share all the relevant information and so we had a follow-up survey to capture answers to two of the seven questions which were presented.

The questions covered whether or not there is a Dining Services Committee, types of food designations — e.g. VF(Vegan) or GF (Gluten

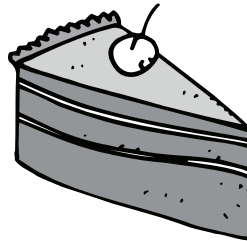


Graphic courtesy of vecteezy.com

Free), doggie bags, pick-up options, number of dining locations, buffet vs. waiter service, staffing issues, meal plans, guest meal policy and meal credit

policies.

Other than the question about Dining Services Committees (most communities



had a committee), there was a wide range of answers. To facilitate analysis and comparison, Cynthia Childs graciously volunteered to take the time to create a

spreadsheet with detailed answers to all the questions from each community. The detailed spreadsheet has been sent to all the participants and any representatives who were not present. They have been encouraged to share the data with relevant management. Any MLCRA member who would be interested in the topic is invited to contact their representative.

The date and topic for the next Conversation have not yet been finalized. Due to our upcoming annual meeting, the next Conversation will likely be in the fall. Please let Caroline or Cynthia know (contact information on p.10 of this issue) if you have a topic to suggest. ♦

“Dining with one’s friends and beloved family is certainly one of life’s primal and most innocent delights. One that is both soul-satisfying and eternal.”

— Julia Child

President's Message

By Jean Stringham, Lasell Village

As I write this message it's still winter and there is a light lovely blanket of snow on the ground outside my window. Perhaps when you read this, spring will be around the corner. The word spring reminds me of the line from the E.E. Cummings poem "It's just spring and the world is mud luscious." Do you know that E.E. Cummings is buried at Forest Hills Cemetery in Jamaica Plain, Boston? But I digress. Let's get back to MLCRA.

We are delighted with the success of our Community Conversations. Caroline Jacobs and Cynthia Childs again hosted one of our most engaging Community Conversations. The MLCRA representatives from each of our member communities are invited to participate by Zoom. The recent topic was Dining, with lots of information regarding the variations in dining experience across MLCRA communities. You can read more about this topic on our cover page. Past Community Conversations can also be seen on our website at mlcra.org

Our Board nominating committee has been formed and has begun talking to potentially

interested parties.

I recently sent a letter to council presidents and MLCRA representative of communities who do not have residents on our board of directors. If you or someone



you know would be good for our board, please let your council president or MLCRA representative know before the end of April. Our Annual Meeting will probably be in mid-May and we need time to finalize our slate of officers. They are encouraged to contact nominating committee member Caroline Jacobs at c.jacobs57@gmail.com.

In this issue of the Patriot you'll also see fun and interesting articles about activities at other communities and about our legislative efforts. Thank you for being a MLCRA member and supporting our efforts of communication, education and advocacy. ♦

Get involved! Volunteers are being sought for:

- The Board
- Community Conversations Committee
- Patriot Editor
- Website content review

If interested, contact Jean Stringham or Caroline Jacobs.

MLCRA Annual Membership Drive

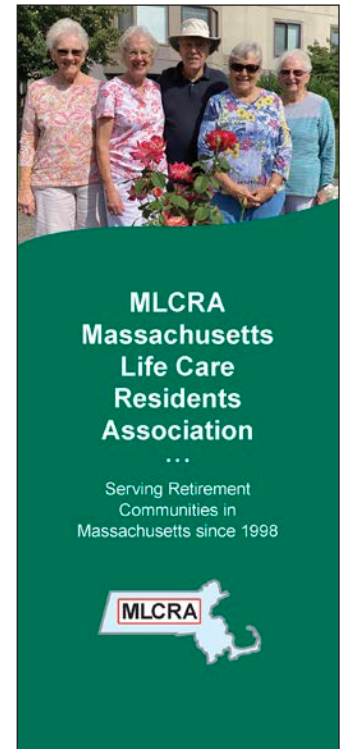
By Caroline Jacobs, The Commons in Lincoln

The membership drive for 2024 draws to a close at the end of March. As of February, we have almost 1,000 members, of whom 42% are LIFE or multi-year (two or more years) members, as well as a handful of centenarians. A special note of appreciation is due to all the MLCRA representatives who work so hard to maintain membership levels. Thank you also to all those who have already renewed, or who already have multi-year or lifetime memberships.

If you're not sure when your membership expires, check the renewal date next to your name on the address label on the back page of this issue. If the date is Dec. 31, 2023, then this is your last issue of the Patriot. In order to receive the April - June and future issues, please renew by May 31 by completing the membership form on page 11 and sending it with your check to MLCRA's Treasurer at the address shown or giving your

form and payment to your MLCRA representative. If you are not sure who is your representative, they are listed under Member Communities on the MLCRA website (www.mlcr.org). We look forward to hearing from you!

Our membership trifold brochure describes the goals and benefits of membership and also has a membership application. It is a useful tool to attract new members. Please let me know if you would like more copies.◆



Did You Know...

- The AADA recommends Vaseline as a first line of defense for dry skin. Vaseline is an **ointment**, meaning it is about 80% oil. **Creams** are about half water and half oil. **Lotions** contain more water than creams. Common skin irritants include fragrances and alcohol (e.g. as in hand sanitizers).
- Fragrance-free means that fragrance materials or masking scents are not used in the product. Unscented generally means that the product may contain chemicals that neutralize or mask the odors of other ingredients. Products labeled unscented can be very irritating to the skin.
- If you have time for only one exercise, you'll get the most bang for your buck by doing squats — the classic move in which you slowly lower your bottom to seated level, then stand back up.
- Longer stays in the emergency department can often result in delirium (a sudden change in mental function). Swift transfer to inpatient beds reduces the risk of delirium.

Update on Assisted Living Legislation

By Lauren Hale, Southgate

As we have previously reported in the Patriot, current Massachusetts law does not permit Assisted Living facilities to provide medical services. A 2020 COVID waiver has allowed Assisted Living to offer limited skilled nursing care, but that waiver is set to expire at the end of March 2024.

MLCRA has advocated for a bill (S374/H650) that would allow common sense health services in assisted living. That bill was recently combined with two other bills into a new bill: **S2527, An Act Relative to Assisted Living and Basic Health Services**.

The new bill would grant Assisted Living facilities the option to provide the following health services: injections, the application or replacement of non-sterile dressings, management of oxygen, assistance with sample collection and the completion of home diagnostic tests, and the application of ointments or drops. The Executive Office of Elder Affairs, in consultation with the Department of Public Health, would issue regulations for these services.

The new bill has additional policy proposals that would update the Assisted Living Law (MGL Chapter 19D). Some changes involve certification requirements. There are

additional transparency and accountability requirements. There is also new language prohibiting retaliation against an employee or resident who, in good faith, files a complaint with the Executive Office of Elder Affairs.

The Joint Committee on Elder Affairs issued a favorable report about S2527 on December 21 and the bill was referred to the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing. No further action had been taken as of mid-February.

If you support this bill, you are encouraged to contact your State Senator and State Representative, referencing **S2527, An Act Related to Assisted Living and Basic Health Services**. ♦



Photo by Jean Stringham

At the national level: Last fall the Biden administration unveiled proposed staffing standards for US nursing homes. Each nursing home will be required to provide every resident with at least 0.55 hours of care from a registered nurse, plus 2.45 hours of care from a nurse aide, each day. The new rules also call for all nursing homes to have a registered nurse on staff around the clock and to complete “robust” assessments of residents’ staffing needs.

Approximately three-quarters of nursing homes would have to strengthen staffing to meet the proposed minimums, CMS estimates. For-profit companies own 70% of nursing homes.

Happy Hour Sing-Along

By Sue Newbury, Newbury Court

In early August of 2023 at a Program committee meeting the idea of a Happy Hour sing-along was mentioned. As a new resident and new to the committee and a lover of music and song I jumped on the idea. It

appealed to me since I was looking for ways to meet people and make new friends. I have found in the past that music and song is a wonderful way to do this.

The idea was then presented at the weekly residents' meetings in late August and early September. After telling everyone about our idea, we asked people to list song suggestions: songs they sang as children with their families, camp songs, school songs, favorite songs with their own children, their grandchildren, favorite show tunes and so on. During the next two to three weeks, we received more and more suggestions and fun ideas.

We had the first sing-along in late September, again in October, and a holiday sing-along in December. There were those who were hesitant to come because they wouldn't know all or any of the words or thought they couldn't



Photo by Joseph Lam

sing. I asked them if they had sung Happy Birthday in the last five years. Almost every one said yes. Then I told them it would be like singing Happy Birthday with a larger group and with music.

At each sing-

along, a sheet of new songs was given out based on the ones that had been sent to the Committee. Some favorites included "Take me out to the ball game", "Charlie and the MTA", "Edelweiss" and "He's got the whole world in his hands". We also hired a popular professional singer who had entertained here in the past and she brought her piano accompanist. With each song residents would remember stories about the time, place, or event where that song was special.

Wine, word sheets, leadership and the piano = success! We had large groups with a great hour of memories, laughter and song. The best part was we all met and made more new friends and had fun with those we already knew. Music and song make coming together very easy! We are all looking forward to future gatherings of sing-alongs in 2024. ♦

“If I were not a physicist, I would probably be a musician. I often think in music. I live my daydreams in music. I see my life in terms of music.”

— Albert Einstein

Valentine's Day Workshop

By Florence Richards, The Willows at Westborough



The invitation was irresistible — in a soft, warm red and a flowing script, it invited residents to a Valentine workshop, creating greeting cards to send to their closest Willows friends.

The instructions were simple: “Sign

up beforehand in The Studio. Come to The Studio on Wednesday, February 7th, between 2 and 4 pm. Craft a Valentine’s card. Pick a resident friend to be your Valentine. On Valentine’s Day we will deliver it for you with a flower. Watch the **LOVE** spread throughout the community.”



The sign-up sheet began to fill up that same day. As it turned out, offering the two-hour



time frame was key. There were meetings and classes already scheduled for that afternoon, but residents could stop in either before or after their other commitments and still have enough time to create a masterpiece.

The Studio table was covered with supplies of all kinds — from white card stock to glitter paper with scalloped edges, heart-shaped cutouts, stickers of all shapes and sizes, ribbon in an assortment of colors, and even heart-shaped lollipops. To add to the mood a Valentine’s playlist filled the air.

While residents worked on their own projects, the fitness director and her assistant crafted their own creations to be sold at the General Store. They were pleased to hear that every card had been sold by Saturday morning. ♦

Photos by Courtney Prescott

Steve Straus’ band, The Riverboat Stompers, had a Valentine’s Day gig at Orchard Cove!



Unity in the Community

By Allison Dolan, Brooksby Village

Brooksby Village, like many CCRCs, celebrates and encourages diversity. We have a Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging RAC sub-committee, as well as a resident-run Diversity committee. Those groups host various activities during the year. However, some residents felt that the entire community (about 2500 residents and staff) should be explored for their diversity.

So, in 2022, they submitted a grant proposal, and received a \$2500 grant to support diversity and inclusion, resulting in a day that would shine a spotlight on all the different parts that form a rich and unified whole.



Held in the relatively slow month of August, the result was the most popular event Brooksby has ever had.

Leading up to Unity day, the word was put out to all the different groups on campus. Some had an ethnic or religious orientation (e.g., the Italian Club, the Jewish Council), some focused on specific health related issues (e.g., the Parkinson's Support Group). New groups such as the Asian Coalition formed to participate and are now very active. Representatives from the painters, quilters, potters, and crafters groups were invited to share examples of their works. Musicians,

singers, actors and dance groups were given a chance to perform. Since this was intended to embrace the entire community, the outreach included staff.



The event was kicked off with a short parade from the gazebo to the clubhouse. Dozens of people, including veterans, people with electric mobility devices, staff, and residents along with anyone else who wanted to join made the trek, waving to bystanders. The chapel offered a range of performances (including residents, local performers, and staff) for over 3 hours, while dozens of tables in the catering room highlighted the diversity of the myriad of groups at Brooksby. There were T-shirts, and big buttons. Dining Services literally cooked up an international array of appetizers that were quickly and deliciously devoured. Over 500 residents and staff either participated or attended. Needless to say, the event was such a success that it was repeated in 2023 and planning for 2024 has begun. ♦

Food Composting

The prior issue of the Patriot had a story about how a resident at The Willows at Westborough had introduced food composting to their Dining Services team. We subsequently heard from a couple of communities where residents had arranged for composting of their apartment food waste.

At Lasell Village, it started with a resident who had been using Black Earth at their home. When they moved into Lasell, they were delighted to find that they could continue to get the service. A couple of neighbors learned of the service, and asked if they could join. Then an invitation was extended to others in the building. It didn't take long for twenty-five neighbors to contribute to the 2 bins that are located in the trash rooms. The bins are picked up every Monday by Black Earth. A contract with Black Earth for a 6-month period costs them \$60. There is a starter kit that includes a green bin and compostable bags for \$39.95. The compostable bags can be purchased at supermarkets or from Black Earth; additional bins can also be purchased. The contract holder gets an annual credit for a bag of compost. Other buildings at Lasell

have been following a similar process — one resident signs up on behalf of their neighbors, and they share the responsibility of getting the bin out on Sunday night. Given the modest cost, donations to cover expenses have been voluntary. Lasell now has 14 bins in use at the Village and over 100 residents participating.

The Commons in Lincoln used the same vendor as Lasell, however structured the relationship somewhat differently. More than 50 residents (roughly 22%) in Independent Living, have signed up for their food waste to be collected every other week by Black Earth. Residents contract for four to six month phases and divide the cost between the number of participants (usually around \$20). Residents provide their own compostable bags and deposit them in Black Earth barrels strategically placed outside around the campus. The Commons Dining Services are exploring compostable containers for take out, and they are knowledgeable about and supportive of the benefits of composting kitchen and dining room waste. The community is hopeful that kitchen composting will happen by summer. ♦

The Lasell Village report is based on information provided by Roslin Moore and an article written by Bonnie Norton.

The information about The Commons in Lincoln was provided by Caroline Jacobs.

Black Earth Compost is the leading full service compost company in New England. They collect food scraps from residents, schools, supermarkets, colleges, and more, all across eastern MA and RI, and composts the material returning it to customers and selling it in garden centers across Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire. See blackearthcompost.com for more details.

“Kings and cabbages go back to compost, but good deeds stay green forever.”

— Rick DeMarinis

Cognitive Concepts

By Allison Dolan, Brooksby Village

These days cognitive issues are making the headlines!. Here's some information you may find useful.

Yes, an aging brain has glitches from time to time. You may be slower to retrieve information, or forget why you came into a room, or set your driving on 'auto pilot', and belatedly realize you aren't where you expected to be. There is little cause for alarm if you subsequently remember the info, or you know how to get yourself back on track. What is key is whether the changes represent a significant change from your past behavior and/or whether you can self-correct. There is a popular adage that dementia isn't about forgetting where you left your keys but not knowing what the keys are for.

Effective in 2024, Medicare now covers an annual cognitive assessment to complement the annual wellness visit (AWV). Although detecting cognitive impairment (e.g., trouble remembering, learning new things, concentrating, or making decisions) has been a required element of the AWV, the AWV didn't allow enough time to perform a more detailed cognitive assessment and develop a care plan. This additional evaluation will be helpful to diagnose and to identify treatable causes.

"Dementia" is an overarching term. There are neurological diseases such as Alzheimer's Disease and others. You can also have more than one kind of dementia at the same time. Dementia or dementia-like symptoms can also

be caused by insufficient vitamin B-12, UTIs, surgery or other correctable issues. That is why a thorough cognitive assessment may include a number of tests.

A common 'mini-cog' assessment has several questions or tasks such as identifying pictures of animals or remembering words. Each question is looking at a different aspect of cognition. The maximum score may be 30, with a score of 27-30 being normal, 27-24 reflecting cognitive impairment, and a score of 23 or below in the dementia range.

There are many different research studies suggesting ways to reduce the risks of dementia. including managing chronic issues such as diabetes, eating a healthy diet, getting quality sleep, and staying physically active — from exercise to walking or even housework. Socialization is also important.

Along with eating the 'right' things, there is more evidence of the deleterious effects of eating the 'wrong' things, with highly processed foods showing up at the top of the list. Too much added sugar can be a problem, and artificial sweeteners are starting to show a dark side.

Dr. Andrew E. Budson, author of "Why We Forget and How to Remember Better", recently spoke to a packed house at Brooksby Village. When asked by a resident about Prevagen, he responded that there is no research showing that any over-the-counter memory aides work. However, he did recommend taking a daily multivitamin. ♦

Information pulled from various sources including Mind, Mood, and Memory; Consumer Reports on Health; Medicare; AARP.

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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Sweetwood of Williamstown

The Briarwood Community,
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The Commons in Lincoln

The Overlook, Charlton

**The Willows at
Westborough**

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 letters or articles to: Allison Dolan, Patriot Interim Editor, allisondolan77@gmail.com or 978-587-2955

Massachusetts Life Care Residents Association
MLCRA Membership Application/Renewal Form for 2024

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 12/31/2024) Individual: \$15 **or** household: \$25

5 year (expires 12/31/2028) \$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
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Massachusetts Life Care Residents Association

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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>What is the Massachusetts Life Care Residents Association? <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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