



Massachusetts PATRIOT

Massachusetts Life Care Residents Association (MLCRA) OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2021

The Residents' Advocate—Management's Friend www.mlcra.org

A Workforce in Crisis

by Elissa Sherman, President of LeadingAge Massachusetts

Recently I tried to bring my car in for service and was shocked to find I would need to wait three weeks to get an appointment due to a shortage of available mechanics. From restaurants to retail to professional services, it seems that every business is struggling to find needed help. Workforce shortages in some sectors lead to inconveniences such as reduced hours or longer wait times to receive goods and services. Unfortunately, the workforce shortage in long term care and aging services is at a crisis level that could threaten the health and wellbeing of older adults in need of critical care and services.

Even prior to the pandemic, long term care providers including nursing homes, assisted living and home health agencies were challenged with recruiting and retaining staff, most especially Certified Nursing Assistants and home health aides who provide the bulk of the hands-on care needed by many older adults. These jobs, which are relatively low- paid, are demanding, even in the best of times.

Unfortunately, COVID has significantly exacerbated the workforce challenges faced by organizations which provide aging services.

During the first few months of the pandemic, long term care and senior living organizations saw workers resign for fear of bringing the virus home to family members, or to be home with kids who were now attending school remotely. Almost two years later, many of these individuals have not returned. However, many more employees worked heroically, enduring intense COVID waves alongside the older adults they care for. Many employers offered bonuses and premium pay to recognize their employees' resilience and commitment to keeping those in their communities safe and well cared for during these unprecedented times.

More than 20 months into the pandemic, with no clear end in sight, employee burnout in aging services remains high. With most sectors in our economy facing (*cont'd on p. 2*)

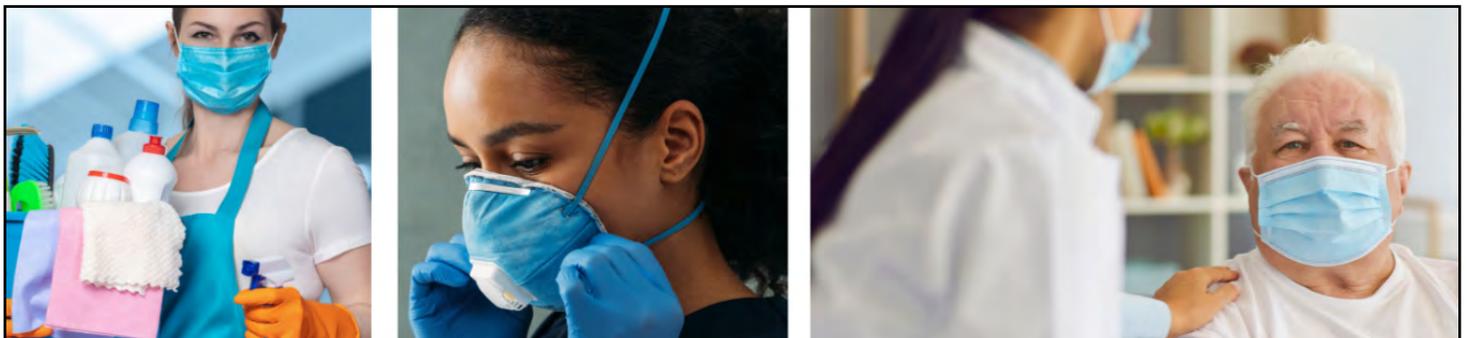


Photo collage created in Canva, courtesy of LeadingAge MA

(Cont'd from p. 1)

shortages, the competition for labor is stiff. Aging services providers are not just competing with hospitals and other health care employers who are able to pay higher wages, they are also competing with companies such as Amazon that advertise better wages and flexible hours. Positions in many other industries do not require staff members to wear PPE and submit to weekly testing, requirements that are necessary for those working in long term care. In addition to shortages of CNAs and nurses, many CCRCs report difficulties hiring dining staff, as high school and college students, the traditional pool for such staff members, have their pick of job opportunities in other sectors.

The impact of the worker shortage in long term care has been significant. Some nursing facilities have had to halt admissions as they do not have enough CNAs and nurses to provide safe care. Similarly, there are lengthy waiting lists for individuals in need of home care as home health agencies struggle to hire nurses and home health aides. As a result, individuals are forced to endure longer than needed hospital stays or to go without necessary assistance at home.

What will it take to turn the tide on this workforce crisis? It will take a combination of private and public efforts, both in the short and long term. First, we need to increase the supply of available workers. We can expand the caregiver pipeline by targeting recruitment efforts to nontraditional workers like students and displaced workers, while demonstrating the impact that can be made by working in aging services. We can also expand the labor pool through changes in

immigration policy. We need to provide compensation and benefits that both recognize the value of caregiving work and also provide a living wage so that individuals do not need to work multiple jobs to support themselves and their families. We must provide education and training on the most important competencies needed by our aging services workforce. We need to professionalize aging services work by creating career ladders and opportunities for advancement and specialization

The pandemic revealed both the importance of our aging services workforce and the gaps that have led to the current workforce crisis. By taking the necessary steps we can elevate the work of aging services providers, showing the value of the crucial roles they play, while creating fulfilling, gainful career opportunities that will withstand even the most competitive markets.●

Elissa Sherman is the president of LeadingAge Massachusetts, a trade association dedicated to supporting the work of not-for-profit aging service providers. Members of LeadingAge Massachusetts provide health care, housing and other services for seniors.



President's Message

by Jean Stringham, Lasell Village

Happy Holidays and Happy New Year to all our readers. The year 2021 went by both slowly and quickly, with the COVID-19 pandemic continuing to challenge us for a full twelve months. Those of us living in retirement communities can especially appreciate the advantages during a pandemic--- socializing, meals, conveniences and a variety of activities that enrich our lives together. May the New Year bring healthier times to all of us.

December marks the end of a successful “grace membership year” that the MLCRA board of directors initiated because of the pandemic shutdown. We are pleased to report that during the 2021 grace year about 250 new members signed up for MLCRA. This brought our total

membership to an impressive new high of over 1100 members. Of those 1100 members, about 200 are life and multiyear members. Our challenge for 2022 is to have at least 900 people sign up or renew their membership. We hope all our communities are up to the challenge! Will you help?



Enjoy reading, and please let me know if you have ideas or suggestions about how to make our association even more effective for you. ●

MLCRA Membership *By Caroline Jacobs* *The Commons in Lincoln, MLCRA VP Membership*

We are excited about our growing membership and the new initiatives to share information between our member communities - one of the main objectives of MLCRA.

By the time you receive this Patriot, we will have had two Community Conversations (see report on p.4). There is a long list of issues which have been suggested and we hope to cover most of them during 2022. We will continue to meet with representatives on Zoom and rely on them to share the summaries of our discussions.

We have also introduced occasional short online surveys to collect and share information about other topics. Thanks again to the representatives for their participation. Please let your representative know if you have any topics to suggest.

As Jean Stringham has mentioned, our challenge in the New Year will be to ensure that at least 900 people will sign up or renew their memberships for 2022 (dues remain at pre-pandemic levels). You can renew your membership today by completing the form on the inside back cover of this issue and returning it to your representative or Allison Dolan.

In the meantime, we wish you all a happy, healthy and rewarding New Year! ●

MLCRA Community Conversations Bring Representatives Together

by Caroline Jacobs, The Commons in Lincoln; and Cynthia Childs, The Overlook

The first Community Conversation was held on Zoom on October 21, 2021 and twelve of our seventeen member communities were represented. It had been a long time since representatives had had a chance to share information and Covid has prevented meetings in person. It was a wonderful opportunity to greet old friends and meet some new ones, and meeting on Zoom meant nobody had to travel to another location.

The first half of the meeting was spent introducing ourselves and giving a brief description of each community's location and size. The second half of the meeting each attendee described three or four ways in which new residents are welcomed. Most communities have a resident-run Welcoming Committee and appoint a "buddy" to guide residents for the first few weeks, arranging for dinners and explaining the basics, such as recycling, mailboxes, dining, etc. In some communities the buddy calls the new resident two weeks before the move-in date to answer any

questions. There were many other suggestions, including special receptions, introduction at the resident monthly meeting, a special table for newcomers in the dining room and a book of bios and photos in the library.



<https://pixabay.com/illustrations/video-conference-online-home-office-5167472/>

After positive feedback on the first meeting, the second Community Conversation was held on December 2 with thirteen communities represented. The topic was community response to

current labor shortages, particularly in Dining and Housekeeping. There were some innovative ideas on recruiting and keeping staff, as well as specific actions taken to maintain services. There was also a brief discussion on the upcoming membership drive.

Summaries of both meetings have been sent to all attendees and representatives, with a request to share the information in their communities. ●

LEGISLATION UPDATE

By Joan Kerzner, Edgewood

On October 25, 2021, **H746/S417 - An Act relative to disclosing continuing care retirement community entrance fees** was reported out favorably by the Massachusetts legislature's Joint Committee on Elder Affairs and sent to the Health Care Financing Committee (HCFC). This is one of two bills filed on behalf of MLCRA this legislative session and was presented by Senator Joan B. Lovely (Beverly, Peabody, Salem, Danvers and Topsfield). MLCRA provided written testimony on June 14, 2021 and is pleased that this bill has advanced to the HCFC.

As reported previously, this bill would require that every resident entering a Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC) receive a separate document that discloses the "terms, conditions and explanation of the process by which the provider shall make such a refund (of the entrance fee) to the resident after the resident leaves the facility or dies." Although at least a portion of the Entrance Fee is usually returned to the resident or the resident's estate, the transparency of this transaction varies greatly among the CCRCs and this bill would translate into law the requirements regarding this transaction and require disclosure of that information to the resident at the outset.

It is good news that the bill has advanced to the HCFC, but it is no assurance it will advance any further, or actually become law, unless there is considerable support for this legislation. This is where our member CCRC residents can make a difference. Senator Lovely, the sponsor of the bill, and the members of the HCFC are key to its advancement. Legislators respond and act when they hear from constituents. After all, you are the ones that vote to keep them in office! It is basically, a "squeaky wheel gets the oil" system.



MA State House Photo: David Mark Pixabay

Therefore, if MLCRA members and others in their CCRCs are willing to call and/or send emails to their own Senators and Representatives, our chances of seeing **H746/S417** pass and become law will increase. If you do not know who your legislators are, please look on the legislation page of the MLCRA website - www.mlcr.org/legislation and click on the first link, "How to Contact Your Massachusetts State Legislators."

Please contact any member of the HCFC who represents the area in which your CCRC is located. It's easy to do – whoever answers the phone in the legislative office will usually ask for your name and where you live (to determine if you are a constituent). Then you can say that you are very supportive of **H746/S417** and hope that Senator or Representative (Name) will work to get it out of Committee and to the floor for a vote. Say that it makes a huge difference to the seniors who live there to have this assurance.

The Senate and House Chairs of HCFC are, respectively, Senator Cindy Friedman (4th Middlesex) and Representative John Lawn (10th Middlesex). For a list of all HCFC committee members, go to www.mlcr.org/legislation and click on the link called "The Joint Committee on Health Care Financing of the Massachusetts Legislature." ●

2021 Scarecrow Race at The Commons in Lincoln

by Judi Foster. The Commons

The Lincoln Land Conservation Trust has sponsored a Scarecrow Classic 5K road race for the last nine years with the proceeds helping the Trust manage more than 2,500 acres of land and nearly 80 miles of public trails as a regional recreational resource for the Greater Boston Area. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, a virtual edition of the race was held at The Commons in 2020. Since last year's race was a success, we again held a 5K version of the Scarecrow race spanning the grounds and neighborhood roads. Some participants also chose shorter routes circling just The Commons or whatever distance they felt comfortable in covering.

Race day was a huge success.

Forty one residents, ages 73 to 97 years old, participated in the race. Eight resident volunteers acted as traffic monitors, water dispensers and

photographers. As the participants crossed the finish line under a decorative balloon arch, a crowd of residents, family and staff cheered their efforts. No one left the area until all had crossed the finish line and received the applause they

earned for all their training efforts.

Each participant was given a commemorative scarecrow and an invitation for a special meal celebrating their accomplishment.

Race participants, volunteers and staff members gathered in the Gala Dining Room after the race to enjoy a buffet prepared by the kitchen chefs and served by associates and kitchen staff.

Special awards were given out to age bracket winners and others for

special feats.

We are already talking about next year's race and how we might encourage even more residents to participate! ●



Photo: Judi Foster



Stretching at the Start Line. Photo :Karla O'Brien, The Commons

TOYS FOR NEEDY CHILDREN

by Bruce Wedlock, Brooksby Village



Making a toy. Photo: Bruce Wedlock

Hal Liberty, a retired IBM engineer and woodworking hobbyist from New Hampshire, started making wood toys 30 years ago. With help from groups coming to his production shop, he has distributed 30,000 free toys to various organizations that service needy children. At 89, this will be his last year of production.

Three years ago, Hal Liberty gave a presentation at a meeting of the Guild of New Hampshire Woodworkers on building simple toys for needy children. It was immediately apparent that this would be a great project for the Brooksby Woodshop. Hal provided several patterns for his toys and a source for free mahogany to build them.

The 15 year old, 1500-sq ft Brooksby woodshop has 63 members and is fully equipped with professional-level hand and power tools and lockers for members to store personal hand tools and projects. A toy production system was established such that any woodshop member could spend some time drilling, band sawing, shaping, sanding, and varnishing. Each production step was independent, so one could drill several cars and then leave them for the next person to rough saw them to shape. Sawn cars were then sanded to final shape and varnished. No one was responsible for making a complete toy; rather many members could contribute an hour or two to the project. This provided the opportunity for members who had some woodworking skill but no longer the time for an involved project to come down to the shop, do some productive work and socialize.

This year, about ten elves made about 200 toys, an increase over last year's total. Some will be going to Nigeria via a missionary in Florida, some to several churches to distribute to needy kids, and a bunch to Massachusetts Department of Children and Families. ●



Above: Nigerian children playing with toys.

Right: Some of 2021 Brooksby elves. Photo: Bruce Wedlock



Brewing Up Fun at The Overlook

by Sue Siopes and Sue B Hagberg (“the two Sues”) at The Overlook

For 110 years, The Overlook has been a place of support and caring. It began as a rest home for Masons in need and their spouses. From these roots, it expanded to become what we are today, a vibrant living community that offers the full spectrum of health care. Here in Independent Living, our days are filled with a rich variety of activities. We can not only expand our minds, strengthen our bodies and occupy our hands with various activities, but we also do something that is unique to The Overlook: brew craft beer!

This would never have happened if management had not given a “yes” to a couple who wanted to move into a community that would allow them to continue their 35-year long passion of home beer brewing. After Steve Dragon and Dolores Socha settled in, they hosted a beer tasting event under the auspices of our Life Enrichment program. People were excited to learn about different beer styles and became interested in starting a beer brewing group under Brewmaster Steve’s tutelage.

We christened ourselves “The Brew Crew,” produced our first delicious brew in 2017, and have since produced 38 different styles of beer! With tongue in cheek, we named our product “Senior Moment.” A resident retired graphic artist, Rich Wilson, produces unique and beautiful labels for each style, and we make this beer from scratch. We grind the grains, we cook the mash, we ferment it, bottle it, label it and – most fun of all – we drink it!



Tasting the Brew. Photo by Danyel Darger

Besides our forty Brew Crew members, our greater community gets to enjoy our creations at some of our fun celebrations like Oktoberfest, St. Patrick’s Day, Cinco de Mayo, and mid-summer cookouts. Our brewery began as a modest endeavor, but the quality of our brews convinced management to provide us with a larger brewing area along with the best of needed equipment. Several Brew Crew members take the spent grains from the brewing process and turn them into tasty dog treats to give as gifts, sell at our store

(Cont’d on p. 9)



TRANSITIONS

THANK YOU!



DESIGN AND LAYOUT EDITOR

Patricia Walsh of Sophia Snow Place is stepping down after nine years as the Patriot's design and layout editor. Pat is the creative force behind the appearance of the Patriot. Since 2013, she has collaborated with MLCRA editors to format and arrange our articles and photos for publication. This issue of the Patriot is Pat's last. She will hand over the reins to a new design editor in January. We thank Pat for her many contributions to the Patriot! ●

MANAGING EDITOR OF PATRIOT NEWSLETTER IN 2022

Working with the Patriot Editorial Committee, the Patriot managing editor will:

- **Lead the Editorial Committee Zoom Meetings
- **Write and help others with articles
- **Be the collection point for articles and photos
- **Submit final copy and photos to our layout designer
- **Proof the Patriot before the designer sends it to the printer.

Please contact Jean Stringham at jean.stringham@gmail.com or 617-244-2492 for questions or more information. ●



(Continuation of Overlook story)

and at the Fall Festival.

Our fame grew, reaching Ted Reinstein of "Chronicle" on Boston's Channel 5 TV. He brought his crew to The Overlook and filmed a segment here highlighting the brewing process and our Brew Crew. "I just had a Senior Moment, and I enjoyed it!" stated Ted at the end of the segment.

We all love dabbling in the art of making delicious styles of our craft home brews; however, we know that, without Steve's

continuing knowledge, experience, and his insistence on excellence, we would have to settle for making regular visits to our local package store. Since we are home brewers, we can only make a limited amount of beer, which translates to three or four bottles for each member from each time we brew. We cannot sell it, no matter how good it is. So the consequences are that we have FUN sharing and consuming it amongst ourselves. "Life is good at The Overlook." ●

MLCRA Board and Resident Associations

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

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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

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 by email to:

Lauren Hale, Patriot Editor
LHale20003@aol.com or 508-842-0515

Massachusetts Life Care Residents Association

MLCRA Membership Application/Renewal Form for **2022**

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; print 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 _____

Phone _____ (for MLCRA purposes only)

Email _____ (for MLCRA purposes only)

Your Retirement Community _____

Dues for New Members and Renewals - Circle your choice

1 year (expires 12/31/2022) individual: \$15 or household: \$25

5 year (expires 12/31/2026) \$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

Lauren Hale, Editor
Southgate
35 Julio Drive- Apt 208
Shrewsbury, MA 01545

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?

The voice of residents of Continuing Care Retirement Communities

The Massachusetts Life Care Residents Association (MLCRA), founded in 1998, is a state-wide non-profit volunteer organization. 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.