



Center Connections

SAVE THE DATES

**Brookline Senior Center
Fall Fundraiser:
Stay Tuned**

Craft Fair/Boutique Sale
Thurs., Oct. 28th 2021, 1-6 pm
at the Senior Center

**"All the Lonely People"
Screening at Coolidge
Corner Theatre:**
Thurs., Dec. 9th, 2021

President's Letter

What a year it's been. We are so grateful to all of the wonderful people in our community who helped our older adults in so many ways. Thanks to our volunteers, donors and sponsors for supporting our essential staff.

As we have all learned, COVID-19 was especially devastating for many vulnerable older adults.

As we shift to a new stage, the work continues. We especially need financial support of Project Senior Connect (see p. 3) and of our transportation programs, whose funding was cut dramatically (see p. 3).

Your generosity will help isolated and lonely older adults.

Warmly, Betsy Pollock

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Due to the Public Health mandate, from March 13, 2020 through May 2021 our building was closed for public gatherings.



COVID-19 offered so many challenges – especially to older adults, and those living alone. During the "lock-down", so many of our older adults were isolated. This was even harder for those without internet access.

Our wonderful staff, all designated as "essential workers" – worked harder than usual, reaching out to all older adults throughout Brookline, delivering meals, providing Grab 'n Go lunches, offering counseling and support. The Senior Center continued to offer medical transportation, equipment loans, income tax appointments, fuel assistance, and Medicare counseling, while physically distancing and following proper sanitation guidelines.

Our staff also helped older residents with scheduling COVID testing and vaccination appointments and with arranging transportation to the vaccine sites.

Almost all of our programs pivoted from in-person to online through Zoom and other virtual platforms. All of our standard services continued to take place and we added new services: food delivery, delivery of crafting kits and wellness checks. But we so missed seeing people in person!

A possible "silver lining"? People of all ages learned what it was like to feel isolated and in need of help to receive groceries and other basic needs and services. Many suffered from the lack of in-person human contact. Perhaps this will lead to a better understanding of some of the challenges that vulnerable and homebound older adults face. More than ever, a top priority: our dedication to overcoming elder loneliness and isolation.

We are so excited to be open again. However, we're not free and clear yet. As we go to press, the more dangerous Delta variant is gaining ground throughout the U.S. Please encourage all of your friends and family members to get vaccinated – if they haven't done so already – as soon as possible!

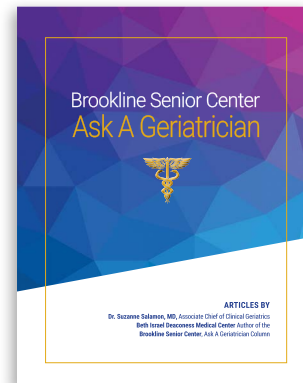
ADDING LIFE TO THE YEARS

Senior Center Publishes "Ask a Geriatrician"

by Dr. Suzanne Salamon

This spring, the Senior Center published "Ask a Geriatrician," featuring a compilation of health articles by Dr. Suzanne Salamon, Associate Chief of Clinical Geriatrics at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, and author of the Senior Center's Senior News & Events "Ask a Geriatrician" column.

In appreciation of our Autumn Benefit No Gala sponsors, all "jewel" sponsors (Diamond, Ruby, Sapphire, etc.) received ads in the publication.



This useful guide is available for free to all at the Senior Center. Stop by for your copy.

"A society that does not value its older people denies its roots and endangers its future. Let's strive to enhance their capacity to support themselves for as long as possible, and when they cannot do so anymore, to care for them." – Nelson Mandela

Students Interviewing Older Adults

For some great YouTube stories of Step to Success students interviewing older adults and immigrants, Google "https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=opr_JGaFzhQ." This program teaches students videography and interviewing techniques, and documents our older adults' history.

Volunteers

Beyond the Call of Duty

Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor COVID-19 kept our intrepid volunteers from the swift completion of their many community commitments. Throughout the pandemic, our volunteers kept riding to the rescue: Here are some of the ways volunteers stepped up:

- 240 AARP Tax-Aide appointments – the first in the building during our initial gradual reopening
- Delivering 55 - 65 Grab 'n Go meals each day – in PPE – before the vaccine was available
- Distributing food through our monthly commodity program
- Wellness checks to our 60+ population
- Training older adults to use ZOOM
- Writing and producing Senior News & Events
- Distributing a Thanksgiving meal
- Providing physically distanced and safe transportation
- Leading programs such as book discussions, art classes, storytelling and current events groups and more
- Working with our many wonderful community partners
- Serving on our Boards

Our heartfelt appreciation goes out to all of you – too many to mention here. You helped keep our seniors safe, informed and nourished. **THANK YOU!!!**

To become a volunteer with the Senior Center, please write to info@brooklineseniorcenter.org

“Even the most privileged of humans in the Western world will join a tragically disfavored caste if they live long enough. They will belong to the last caste of the human cycle, that of old age, people who are among the most demeaned of all citizens in the Western world, where youth is worshipped to forestall thoughts of death. A caste system spares no one.”

– From “Caste” by Isabel Wilkerson, author and Pulitzer Prize winning journalist



Senator Creem to the RESCUE:

BROOKLINE RESTAURANTS were heroes during COVID-19!

“A little ray of sunshine” is how one homebound older adult phrased it. Thanks to an earmark arranged by State Senator Cynthia Stone Creem, hundreds of vulnerable, homebound older adults received free restaurant meals. This helped some of our excellent Brookline restaurants survive the pandemic - and provided the surprise of generous and tasty restaurant meals to older adults in need. A 96-year-old woman who had been alone except for a couple of hospital stays said that the Senior Center lunches have been a big help. But the restaurant lunch “was a very happy surprise. It almost made me feel like I was going out to dinner again.” She expressed many thanks to all involved. Another person proclaimed “LOVED IT, LOVED IT, LOVED IT!” Another: the delivery was “delicious and generous – enough for two meals. Can you imagine what I would have paid for that if I went in and bought it?”



The restaurant meals were a joint program with The Brookline Chamber of Commerce and the Brookline Food Pantry.

A “second helping” took place during the summer of 2021. We hope that this program will be ongoing. [To help support it, please contribute to the Brookline Food Pantry restaurant program, Google “Brookline Food Pantry Restaurants Fundraiser”.](#)

Shouting Down Ageism!

In our society, older adults are living longer and healthier lives. 85+ is the fastest growing population. Older adults want to share wisdom and be open to new experiences.

And then we encounter ageism: a form of discrimination woven into our culture. Defined by stereotypes of older adults, bias against them and often outright scorn.

Unfortunately, in our youth-oriented culture, the vast majority of people over 50 have experienced some form of age discrimination. **Sadly, the negative consequences of ageism can be profound, impacting the economic, physical and mental health of our elders.** Being a victim of ageism or believing the stereotypes that accompany ageism can quite literally shorten a person's life.

The Brookline Senior Center is doing its part to help overcome ageism and age discrimination. **Board President Betsy Pollock** has been giving presentations “**Shouting Down Ageism: Finding your Voice**”, which includes how to recognize ageism and what to do about it.

Betsy says you can identify aging discrimination if you feel or see older people being: marginalized, discounted, ridiculed, disregarded, disdained, dismissed, overlooked, infantilized, or ignored. Beware of implicit bias in our conversations.

Some solutions: Use terminology of inclusivity. “Use new nomenclature: ‘healthy aging’, ‘reframing aging’.” Engage older adults to **provide help** as well as to **need and accept help**. **Advocate for programs that invest in the future of our older adults.** Participate in intergenerational programs.

RESOURCES

[MassHealthyAging.com](https://www.masshealthyaging.com)
[Reframingaging.org](https://www.reframingaging.org)

Discrimination in the workplace often starts in peoples' 40s and 50s as this article from AARP points out: [aarp.org/work/working-at-50-plus/info-2019/age-discrimination-in-america](https://www.aarp.org/work/working-at-50-plus/info-2019/age-discrimination-in-america).

AARP Age Discrimination Fact Sheet: [aarp.org/work/employee-rights/info-02-2009/age-discrimination-fact-sheet](https://www.aarp.org/work/employee-rights/info-02-2009/age-discrimination-fact-sheet).

For more about ageism and age discrimination and some legal rights, go to [florinroebig.com/age-discrimination/](https://www.florinroebig.com/age-discrimination/)

Food Safety Net Programs

Food insecurity remains a critical issue in Brookline. **Thanks to the Brookline Community Foundation's Safety Net Grants**, the Senior Center was able to continue to provide weekly and monthly distribution of food to needy individuals throughout the pandemic. This grant allowed us to provide grocery shopping and delivery of restaurant meals. **If you know someone who would benefit from our food services**, please contact info@brooklineseniorcenter.org or call 617-730-2770.





Frank Caro (1936-2020)

Sadly, this past fall, we lost a champion of older adults, a friend of the Brookline Senior Center and an outstanding citizen. Frank Caro, aging champion extraordinaire, died unexpectedly on October 2, 2020.

Frank's life was dedicated to aging policy, research, education and advocacy to make the world a better place for older adults as well as people of all ages.

Frank had a long and distinguished career as a pioneering gerontologist and professor at UMass Boston. After retiring, Frank continued his commitment to Brookline through his many and significant volunteer commitments.

Frank co-founded Brookline Community Aging Network (BrooklineCAN) and found numerous ways to advocate for older adults. Frank and Senior Center Director Ruthann Dobek spearheaded Brookline's Age-Friendly efforts. This resulted in Brookline becoming the first New England town to receive the World Health Organization's Age-Friendly designation. Shortly before his passing, Frank completed a concept paper about COVID-19 and Social Isolation of Older Adults.

We send our condolences to Frank's wonderful wife Carol, who is continuing many of Frank's activities and dedicating some of her volunteer time to Frank's projects.

Frank cared deeply about the Brookline Senior Center and its mission. Frank's family asked that contributions in his memory be made to the Brookline Senior Center.

STAY TUNED: The new documentary "All the Lonely People" from The Clowder Group is coming to Coolidge Corner Theatre Thurs., Dec. 9th, 2021

Acclaimed filmmaker Stu Maddux will be premiering his new and timely film on social isolation. **It's the first ever documentary about the epidemic of social isolation and chronic loneliness.** The film features ordinary people who are profoundly lonely – and helps provide solutions.

Stu's earlier work includes "Gen Silent" and "Reel in the Closet". The Brookline Senior Center, Goddard House Assisted Living and Memory Support and Center Communities of Brookline, FriendshipWorks, and other partners are teaming up to produce this special community screening.

To watch the trailer, visit: allthelonelypeoplefilm.com/

OLDER WOMEN Worse Off Economically Than Men

According to UMass Boston's Gerontology Institute, there is an increasing disparity in economics between women and men as they age. **"Older women living alone face greater levels of economic insecurity than men in every state in the country." This is true for Whites, Blacks, Hispanics and Asians, and the disparity increases with age.**

"The gender gap in economic security is especially high in the Northeast and parts of the Midwest. The relative disadvantage of living alone compared to living in a coupled household is higher for women than men. Women who are age 85 or older and women of color are at especially high risk of economic insecurity. These findings highlight the sizable impact of gender inequality throughout the life course on retirement security."

scholarworks.umb.edu/demographyofaging/52/

In Norfolk County, the cost of living is 25% to 50% more than the national average. To calculate your Elder index, go to elderindex.org/

If you know someone experiencing economic insecurity or distress, contact our Social Work referral line at 617-730-2777.



Photo by Anna Sheets from Pewak

Our Urgent Fundraising Needs

Transportation: Some of our transportation services are supported by a state tax on Uber and Lyft rides. Since these rides decreased dramatically during the pandemic, so did our funding – from over \$200,000 to \$80,000 – even as our community's transportation needs increased.

"Technology for a 'New Normal': As we return to in-person programming, there's a demand for us to continue to offer many programs virtually. This combination of in-person and virtual requires new types of cameras and technology to simulcast programs to those at home.

Project Senior Connect – see below

Letter from the Director

Throughout the long, dark days of the pandemic, I was given a boost by the many examples of the Senior Center staff and volunteers' response to the needs of our older adults living in Brookline, whether it was providing a nutritious meal, a ride to dialysis, emotional support when someone was feeling anxious, or a friendly chat.

However, I was surprised by my emotional response at the Tommy Bahama dance event held in June. This event was the first time in 16 months that a group gathered together for a purely social event. The energy in the room was electric as people greeted each other (including hugs), danced, sang, and talked with their friends and neighbors. As tears welled in my eyes, I saw first-hand how important social interactions are, and just how much we had all missed being together.

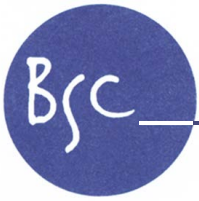
Regards, Ruthann

ZOOM, Zumba and Video, Oh My!

Imagine how your life would have been during the pandemic if you didn't have an internet connection. Unfortunately, that's still the situation for some of our most vulnerable older adults. **This puts them at higher risk for social isolation and loneliness, as well as inability to access important and essential services.**

This spring, the Senior Center launched **"Project Senior Connect,"** a pilot program to loan tablets and provide Verizon internet to older adults. We hope to expand the program and give thanks to all of those who have donated to this critical need.

What's Happening? You can find the Center's monthly **Senior News & Events** on our home page at www.brooklineseniorcenter.org



ADDING LIFE TO THE YEARS
BROOKLINE SENIOR CENTER

93 Winchester Street, Brookline, MA 02446
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**You Came Through for
Brookline's Older Adults**



Thank you to all of our many donors and sponsors who helped make up for our \$94,300 deficit from our Town budget. Look for your name in print in the insert.

See inside: **The new documentary "All the Lonely People"**



Center Connections

AN OCCASIONAL NEWSLETTER FOR OUR SPECIAL SUPPORTERS

Etsy



Did you know that you can support the Brookline Senior Center and our local artists at the same time? Just go to **Etsy.com** and search for **"BrooklineBazaar"** or use this link: etsy.com/shop/BrooklineBazaar You'll find some wonderful curated treasures and collectibles for a cause.



"2020 Autumn Benefit No Gala"

a success!

October 2020
Brookline Senior Center

Autumn Benefit
(without the Gala)
Support Brookline's Older Adults

COVID-19 stopped the gathering
But not the Senior Center's work.
(In fact, the needs are even greater.)
Please help now!

**What if you
throw a party
and no one shows up?**

That's what happened with our 2020 Autumn Benefit. And it was intentional! Due to COVID, we couldn't meet in person. So instead, we held a "NO-GALA" Autumn Benefit.

The response was overwhelming and heartwarming! Our many wonderful donors and sponsors came through and we netted even more than what we had budgeted.

We depend on this money for our transportation services, fitness center and other crucial ongoing programs. This money was especially needed since the Town of Brookline had cut our budget by 10% - a whopping \$94,300!!!

Thanks especially to our Diamond sponsors, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, The Chobee Hoy Group at Compass, and Michael Merrill. For a full list of the sponsors, see our website as well as p. 72 in "Ask a Geriatrician" (see article on page 1).

AGING? Facing age discrimination?

Did you know that AGEISM can shorten your life?! See inside for the facts and what you can do about it!