



Center Connections

SAVE THE DATE

Thursday, Sept. 7
BrooklineCAN Annual Meeting
at Brookline Senior Center

**Autumn Benefit
Plans for 2023**

Stay Tuned

Letter from the Director

I've been reflecting on the COVID-19 pandemic, and its overarching impact these last years. From pivoting to online offerings, telehealth appointments, and remote work, some of the innovative concepts were positive, and hopefully will remain in our lives. On the other hand, the ongoing trauma, devastating financial concerns, and sustained stress, anxiety, and fear all continue today, with special challenges for older adults.

The Senior Center and our staff and volunteers provide support, resources, and an empathetic ear. I have never been prouder to be part of this amazing community that cares so deeply about vulnerable older adults. If you know of someone who would benefit from the many opportunities at the Senior Center, please encourage them to visit.

This issue highlights some of our successes and tribulations. Please feel free to give feedback.

Warmly, Ruthann

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Overcoming Challenges

The Senior Center
helps people age well!

Even though the pandemic is officially behind us, older adults still face many challenges. "It's hard to grow old without much money. The urban landscape, with its cracked sidewalks [and] patchy transit is a daily challenge. So is the lingering threat of COVID..." That edited quote from journalist Robert Weisman's front-page article in the Boston Globe on March 25, 2023 referred to Boston, but some of it applies to Brookline, too.

According to UMASS Boston's Gerontology Institute, "Findings in a new report, **Living Below the Line: Economic Insecurity and Older Americans, 2022**, show that half of older adults living alone in the United States, and one out of five older couples lack the financial resources to cover their basic needs." **In Massachusetts, the most expensive state in the country, it's worse! And Brookline is one of the most expensive towns in the Commonwealth!**

And then there's the lingering effects of COVID. Many older adults, especially with compromised immune systems, are still scared to go out, exacerbating three years of social isolation. As The Atlantic magazine pointed out in "Life Is Worse for Older People Now," older adults still can't escape the threat of COVID. According to the article, "Americans 65+ make up only 17% of the population, but two-thirds of the deaths from COVID happened to older adults."

Many institutions are now open for business as usual, but older adults still need to be careful and that contributes to social isolation and loneliness!

According to Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, "we have become a lonely nation. It's time to fix that." Writing in the NY Times (4/30/2023), he warned "**Loneliness is more than just a bad feeling. When people are socially disconnected,**

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KEEP ON Truckin'

For the last year, the Senior Center was open full-time, continuing to provide a mix of online and in-person programming. COVID continued, but that didn't stop us. The public expressed a desire to maintain a hybrid model for multiple reasons: safety, increased access, and ability to attend more programs and events.

We served over 3100 residents, offering dozens of services and programs in-person and virtually. We added pickleball, mental health and spirituality workshops, talks on "Dignity for Deeply Forgetful People" and "Sex after Sixty," and much more.

Once again, we had a successful Autumn Benefit "No-Gala." We also published the 2023 Edition of *Ask a Geriatrician*, the popular compilation of essential up-to-date health advice and wisdom from Dr. Suzanne Salamon. Come to the Senior Center for your copy.

Last year, the Town of Brookline only funded 57% of our operating budget. Luckily, we received the following funds through ARPA, the American Recovery Program Act. Food Insecurity: \$100,000, Transportation Access: \$359,824, Technology: \$57,968. These funds were designed to provide short-term relief related to the pandemic.

Some ARPA funds will continue into 2026, but not enough to cover our community's ever-growing needs and expenses. Sadly, food insecurity, transportation needs, and technology support continue to outpace our available funding.

Your support will make a difference.

Please consider donating at

brooklineseniorcenter.org/how-to-help/

Brookline is "FORTUNE-ate" Fortune magazine recently highlighted Brookline as one of the 25 best communities in the country for families to live (the only one in Massachusetts). Fortune particularly mentioned services for older adults and credited much of this to the Brookline Senior Center. Our success is due to the dedication of staff, volunteers, and our board. We are grateful to everyone who helps us make Brookline a desirable place to live. Thank you for making this possible. We invite you to get involved as donors and volunteers, to further enrich our services and community.



Volunteers of the Year



John and Molly Dolan Award winners:
Lyudmila Lugovyer and Dick Morse

On April 19th, the Brookline Senior Center celebrated our annual Volunteer Appreciation Event. Following several welcomes by COA Chair Yolanda Rodriguez, Senior Center Director Ruthann Dobek, and Volunteer Coordinator Valerie Graf, nominees for Volunteer of the Year Award were recognized. These volunteers, reflecting the wide spectrum of services and contributions to the Senior Center, included Dale Butler, Judy Chasin, Marcia Goldstein, Ann Harshman, Pam Hitchmoth, Mary Kuchinsky, Lyudmila Lugovyer, Dr. Guotong Man, Dick Morse, John Seay, and Lucia Soare.

Ruthann announced the two recipients of the **2023 John & Molly Dolan Volunteer of the Year Award: Lyudmila Lugovyer and Dick Morse.** Both Lyudmila and Dick have taught English as a Second Language (ESL) classes weekly for over 20 years at the Senior Center. Ruthann thanked them for their dedication, and the thousands of volunteer hours they have given to folks since the Senior Center opened in 2001. Dick and Lyudmila each shared their individual experiences as longtime volunteers, noting that they “receive far more than they give.”

For the **2023 Community Service Award, Ruthann gave special recognition to the Senior Center Etsy shop, Brookline Bazaar,** thanking all those in the Senior Center community who have donated to and purchased from the shop. Brookline Bazaar sales help subsidize programming and entertainment at the Senior Center. Since its inception in September 2021, the shop has sold over 176 items with a revenue over \$8,500. And the site gets 5 star reviews! **Wanted:** Buyers and people with items to donate! Check it out: [etsy.com/shop/brooklinebazaar](https://www.etsy.com/shop/brooklinebazaar)

Select Board representative to the Council on Aging John VanScoyoc also shared words of appreciation and recognized the large in-person attendance at the event, relating that the “best cure” for some of the loneliness or isolation that many older adults experience is “to reach out and connect, and to show up.” John led the room in a round of congratulatory applause, recognizing the dedication and volunteerism of all those in attendance.

“If you want to know how to do community engagement, look to the Council on Aging.”
– John VanScoyoc, Brookline Select Board



bcf BROOKLINE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

THANK YOU to our community partners

Ten older adults received tablets and training through the Tech Buddies Program, allowing them to access programs and services.

- One of our participants was able to use his tablet to find a new job!
- A senior, age 89, was gifted an Android phone from her granddaughter – and learned to answer and make What’s App calls to her brother in St. Lucia whom she could not talk with on her old flip phone. What a look of joy and mastery on her face as she connected with him via WhatsApp!
- A tablet recipient uses her tablet for movies and music. She puts the tablet on a shelf near her bed to listen to music to help her fall asleep. The tablet provides great comfort to her sense of peace and well-being.
- Overcoming the digital divide: Two seniors, one 70 and one 80+, had tried to apply to the phone company via mail for low-income access to the Internet. The company received the paperwork, but never processed it as it was reportedly

‘lost in the building.’ A Senior Center staff person worked with both individuals on a simpler digital application. Within five minutes, the applications were accepted. One of the seniors jumped up and did a happy dance, and both showered the staff member with blessings as they gained free Internet via the program.

Thank you, Brookline Community Foundation!

BrooklineBank

Recently our warming oven, now more than a dozen years old, became inoperable. When **Brookline Bank’s Charitable Foundation** heard that our warming oven was beyond repair, they stepped up and paid for a new one. “We know how important the daily lunch and meal program is to the community” noted Peter Roveto, Senior Vice President, Director of Marketing of Brookline Bank. “We wanted to make sure that our older residents have access to hot nourishing meals and the opportunity to socialize with others. We are grateful for the work of the Brookline Senior Center and are proud to make a positive difference.”

Thank you, Brookline Bank!

Behind the Scenes:

Wonder What Social Workers Do?

Just about everything when it comes to helping our residents with a variety of needs: access to community and state resources such as SNAP, fuel assistance, emergency aid, food, transportation, caregiving advice, offering a sympathetic ear, checking on residents’ safety, supporting older adults in their isolation or loss of a loved one, and much more.

In the past couple of years, because of the pandemic, mental health issues such as depression, anxiety and stress have escalated in urgency for many older adults. The Senior Center is fortunate to have dedicated, trained social work professionals who are available to help our residents.

Do you know someone who could use a friendly ear or has a specific concern?
Please contact **617-730-2777** and ask for the Social Worker of the Day.

THE LEGENDARY *Agnes Rogers*

Our legendary and beloved Agnes Rogers passed away peacefully on July 29, 2022, in her 103rd year. A lifelong Brookline resident, Agnes was an advocate for tenants’ rights at public housing, and a champion for older adults. One of her greatest successes was fighting for the creation of the Senior Center. Agnes was cherished for her political skill, ability to read a room, and respond with vigor. She will be fondly remembered for her high heels and dancing at any opportunity.



Did you know?

The 300+ page **Brookline Senior Center Resource Guide** gets updated regularly. You can access it here: bit.ly/442Yn95 or come into the Senior Center for a printed copy. It's FREE! Or call **617-730-2777** for individual help.

Dedicated Social Worker Retires

After more than 24 years at the Senior Center, Freddi Langenthal has retired. So much could be said about Freddi. She is especially known for the caring support and inspiration she provided to her clients.

Here are two testimonials that sum up some of what she's meant to her clients and the Senior Center:

Freddi's social work colleague Olga Sliwa writes: "When I think of Freddie's work I am struck by her devotion to her clients. She has always gone above and beyond in her advocacy for them. She worked with one client who was homeless and got him into subsidized housing but also helped him furnish and decorate the space.

"She advocated for a client who was in a skilled nursing facility (SNF) to be able to go to an assisted living closer to her nephew, her only local relative, when the SNF wanted to keep the client there.

"She is willing to share information and recommendations with her colleagues

and is supportive of her colleagues, clients, and senior center participants. I will miss her."



Frima Ioselivich, 97, notes that over a 10-year period, Freddi helped her and her late husband in the "difficult moments of our life. She was always very kind and highly professional. I am very grateful to her and your agency for always being there when we needed something. We will miss her. Wishing good and healthy retirement to our beloved Freddi."

Thank you, Freddi, for your years of wonderful service.

Donations in Freddi's honor will go to the Social Work Emergency Fund.

Past expenditures have included a new mattress, emergency food, groceries, a new cell phone, and much more. To contribute, go to brooklineseniorcenter.org/how-to-help.

The Herbert and Vivian Freeman Charitable Fund

The Gift that Keeps on Giving

For many years, **Vivian Freeman** contributed to the Brookline Senior Center. In addition to her staff position as Volunteer Coordinator, she made the Senior Center a priority for her charitable giving.

Though Vivian died in 2017, her philanthropy continues via The Herbert and Vivian Freeman Charitable Fund. **The Fund supports the Senior Center's annual volunteer appreciation luncheon and covers the Senior Center's monthly birthday celebrations** — to honor her husband Herb's love of socializing and parties.

In the April newsletter of CJP (Combined Jewish Philanthropies), Ruthann Dobek was quoted: "As a small nonprofit, we would not be able to function without the generosity of donors like the Freemans. Year in and year out, we depend on support from endowments to plan special events that celebrate our senior community without taking away from other budgetary needs."

If you would like to contribute to our endowment, please contact Ruthann at rdobek@brooklinema.gov or **617-730-2756**.

For more on Vivian and Herbert Freeman, see bit.ly/30WUDle

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Overcoming Challenges The Senior Center *helps people age well!*

their risk of anxiety and depression increases. So does their risk of heart disease (29 percent), dementia (50 percent), and stroke (32 percent). The increased risk of premature death associated with social disconnection is comparable to smoking daily — and may be even greater than the risk associated with obesity. **Our need for human connection is like our need for food and water: essential for our survival.**

You can get that connection at the Brookline Senior Center! We offer programs, volunteer opportunities, and professional social work staff to help older adults thrive as they age.

Do you or a friend/loved one need help overcoming isolation or loneliness? Check out our Social Isolation and Loneliness Resource Guide online at bit.ly/3NslemS or come to the Senior Center for a printed version and to make new friends.

Over 3100 Brookline residents already utilize the Senior Center's many programs and services. If you know of someone who would benefit, please encourage them to come in for a tour.

Letter from the President

How exciting to see the Senior Center bustling and active again. In just one week in April, we hosted our annual Volunteer Appreciation Event, a Candidates' Forum, and a Saturday evening Rock Voices concert. WOW!

We are almost back to our pre-COVID levels, which means we're bursting at the seams, and once again need to revisit options for expansion and growth.

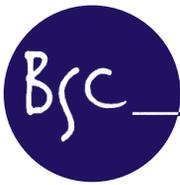
Thanks to your generosity, we are able to offer many of our programs and services both in-person and virtually — with most at no cost to participants.

Please remind your friends and neighbors that the Senior Center provides many opportunities for vitality, enrichment, social services, and ways to give back to the community.

Looking forward to seeing you at the Senior Center!

Warm regards,
Betsy Pollock
President

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



ADDING LIFE TO THE YEARS
Brookline Senior Center

93 Winchester Street, Brookline, MA 02446
 617.730.2770 • brooklineseniorcenter.org



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 list of Distinguished Supporters** ➔

**Center
 Connectins** AN OCCASIONAL NEWSLETTER FOR OUR SPECIAL SUPPORTERS



**The Senior Center is a multilingual environment!
 Spend a day at the Senior Center, and you will
 hear multiple languages.**

WEBSITE UPDATE

**Have you seen our redesigned website at
brooklineseniorcenter.org?**

This was a long-time goal, and a multi-year project. It started with a Simmons College student group who took on our website as a class project. They studied other senior center websites, interviewed staff, and met with participants. They then gave us a draft of ideas. Next step was to involve our web designer Scott Poulin for design and layout. Community members and staff gave further input before final implementation and testing. The redesigned site went live in the fall of 2022. Thank you to everyone who helped make our revised site a reality. **Check out our webpage and let us know what else you'd like to see.**



It's FRIGId in Here!

How many refrigerators does the Senior Center have? If you guessed 7, you guessed right. Why so many? We need to store a lot of food: food for our daily lunches and our restaurant meals, plus food for special events, grocery deliveries, and produce for our monthly food commodity program.

We are dedicated to helping overcome food insecurity among older adults in Brookline. If you know someone who would benefit from one of our food programs, please ask them to call **617-730-2770** for more information.

If you've seen appeals from us to help us buy a new refrigerator, now you know why. Every so often, one needs a repair or replacement. Thank you for your donations!