



NEW MILFORD SOCIAL SERVICES FEBRUARY 2016 NEWSLETTER

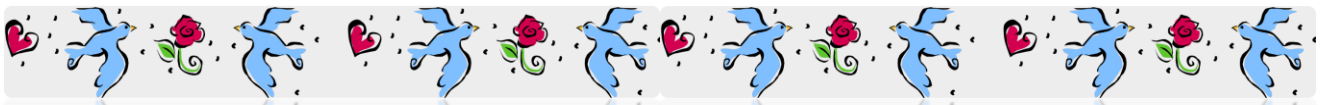
PHONE: 860-355-6079 FAX: 860-355-6019
E-MAIL ADDRESS: socialservices@newmilford.org
Website: www.newmilford.org/socialservices



GREETINGS FROM PEG MOLINA:

It's February. We have hunkered down, weathered a bit of what winter has to offer (well, sort of!) and adjusted to indoor living. Although it's the shortest month, I find February very challenging. The distractions and festivities of earlier winter are over. I hope for signs that the cold will let up, and am often less excited when the snow falls, destroying my fantasy of an early spring. I go home in the dark each day. It's a time of year when we just don't get that wonderful, regular dose of sunshine and warmth so helpful to our psyche. For some, this can be truly debilitating. So, how to cope? Sometimes I need to turn something on its head and look at it from another perspective to re-work my attitude. For instance, read the following quote: "What good is the warmth of summer, without the cold of winter to give it sweetness." — John Steinbeck, *Travels with Charley: In Search of America*

While a more temperate climate is appealing, I know that the surge of energy, appreciation and joy I feel when spring arrives is a direct result of its contrast to winter. I try to cherish and undertake certain activities that are unique to winter, or better to do in winter. Doesn't homemade bread taste better in winter? It's a great time to watch movies, do puzzles or write letters—I mean *real* letters with paper and pen! I walk outside and find things to marvel, like the ice formations along the edges and rocks of our nearby brook, or spying nine male cardinals against the snow—wow! If you are feeling brave, winter presents a special opportunity for inner work too. The separation from being outside and longer periods of darkness are conducive to sitting with our thoughts and feelings and trying to heal some past wounds. Sometimes this is best done with professional guidance, and other times we can tackle it by journaling, reading and talking with a loved one, all good winter acts. Like the earth that sheds its outer glory, getting quiet for a while, we have an opportunity to contemplate, cast off behaviors and attitudes that don't serve us well, mend, forgive perhaps, let go . . . and come back with renewed vitality, strength and color come spring! So, Happy February everyone!



February begins the time to file for tax returns! **PLEASE be wise and use a VITA site to file your taxes for FREE this year!** The Senior Center will have limited appointments for households under age 60 and three sites in Danbury offer day and evening appointments: Community Action Agency of Western CT, 203-744-4700; Western CT State University, 203-797-4500; and Danbury VITA, 203-826-9517. With electronic filing and depositing, you will not wait longer for a return through one of these agencies, and ALL of the money is yours! Call soon!!

PROGRAM UPDATES:



FOOD BANK SCHEDULE FOR FEBRUARY IS Thursdays, February 4, 11, 18 and 25, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. **Please bring in your own reusable bags!!** **New recipes on the back!**
IMPORANT: The Food Bank is closed when schools are closed due to bad weather. Please check by watching local TV stations for their cancellations.

"SNAP" OUTREACH THIS MONTH: CT Institute for Families SNAP (formerly Food Stamps) Outreach Worker, Sara Arroyo, will be here on Wednesday, February 10th from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. to help people apply for SNAP. To make an appointment with Sara (who is bi-lingual) and learn what to bring, please call our office. (schedule is currently full, but you can be put on our "cancellation list".)

GRANDPARENTS AND OTHER RELATIVES RAISING CHILDREN: The next meeting of New Milford's "When You're a Parent . . . Again" info and support group will be on **Monday, February 8th** from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at The Maxx, 94 Railroad St. in New Milford. Dinner and child care are included. Come for informal conversation and resources for those in this unique situation. Please RSVP to Leo Ghio at the Senior Center (860)-355-6075 or to Social Services at 860-355-6079 x1.



ENERGY ASSISTANCE: Social Services is taking applications for the CT Energy Assistance Program for all forms of heat now. **Approved deliverable fuel participants may call the CAAWC to ask for a delivery any time there is under ¼ tank of fuel by calling 203-744-4700 x122. If you are told that your benefits are exhausted, contact our office to see if other programs are available!**

All **electric heated households** who completed the Matching Payment program last year were automatically re-enrolled onto Eversource's MPP. **Remember that you need to re-apply for Energy Assistance through our office every year!** All budget payments need to be in by the end of each month, and *all* required payments must be received by April 30th in order to get a "match". If Eversource raises your budget, pay the new amount if you can. If you cannot, pay the old amount and be sure to discuss this with us at the time of your application. Income guidelines

are listed below:

If your household income is below the following amounts, you may qualify for energy assistance:

<u>Family size:</u>					
1	2	3	4	5	6
33,132.	43,326.	52,523.	63,715	73,910	84,104.

Visit our department on the www.newmilford.org website, or come to the office for the list of documents needed to apply. All applicants are asked to bring a current electric bill.

Please have ALL paperwork at the time of your appointment. This includes pay stubs even if your employer has gone "paperless". They can help you to get these. Likewise with Direct Express cards and bank statements: you can print full statements online as they must have both your name and your bank's name. You cannot be approved without all needed documents!

If you receive an Energy Assistance DENIAL letter: After you meet with a New Milford Social Services social worker for an initial appointment, CAAWC reviews all applications for approval or denial. *If they need any information from you*, CAAWC sends a letter stating that the application has been denied. However, it also states exactly what is needed to complete the application. Do not give up! In almost all cases, these denials are overturned by providing the requested info **within the specified time**. Please call us if you are confused or need help. Paperwork can be delivered to CAAWC via our office. Keep original documents; copies for the application can be made here.



UPDATE FROM THE CT. DEPT. OF SOCIAL SERVICES: The DSS reports that their on-line application process for applying for SNAP is very quick now. This is the best way to apply for and update benefits. Users create a MyAccount and access the process through www.connect.ct.gov.

SNAP UPDATE: Federal regulations limit the receipt of SNAP benefits to 3 months in a 36-month period for able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) who are not working at least 80 hours per month, participating in qualifying education and training activities at least 80 hours per month, or complying with a workfare program. Individuals are exempt from the time limit if they are:

- Under 18 or 50 years of age or older,
- Responsible for the care of a child or incapacitated household member,
- Medically certified as physically or mentally unfit for employment, pregnant, or
- Already exempt from the general SNAP work requirements.

CT had been able to waive these regulations up until January 2016, but now it has gone into effect. Thus, SNAP recipients between the ages of 18 and 49 who do not meet the above exemptions will only receive SNAP for THREE months in a three year period. After that time, they have exhausted this benefit and cannot re-apply unless their circumstances change or the time period passes.

NEW FOR TAX TIME!: For all participants in any HUSKY program, you will receive a Form 1095B (people in an Access health plan will receive 1095A's). This will have individualized information about your health coverage that is needed if you file income taxes. **DO NOT THROW THIS FORM AWAY!** DSS is also required to submit this information to the IRS.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES:



FROM THE NEW MILFORD VISITING NURSE ASSOC.: A free four week program on **Managing Your Diabetes** (Learn how to control your blood sugar levels and avoid or delay serious complications) will take place during the month of March, from 4-6 pm at the Richmond Center. Seven sessions on Mondays and Wednesdays. To register, call the Senior Center at 860-355-6075. Light refreshments will be served.

HELP FOR FAMILIES OF THOSE DEALING WITH ADDICTION; **Attend the C.A.R.E.S. Group:** Weekly hope and support group for parents, relatives, caregivers, or loved ones of those affected by substance abuse or addiction. Meetings are located Thursdays, 7:00-9:00 PM at the First Congregational Church, 36 Main St. For more information, contact info@thecaresgroup.org or [1-855-406-0246](tel:1-855-406-0246)

COMMUNITY CULINARY SCHOOL: is currently registering for its **next session beginning April 25th, 2016**. If you or someone you know is out of work, not getting enough hours at work, or ready for a change, and enjoys cooking, this may be the perfect opportunity! Classes run Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. for twelve weeks. The program then assists you with finding a job in the food industry. Scholarships (up to 100%) available. Call Dawn Hammacott at 203-512-5791 for more information. Applications are available in our office or at www.communityculinaryschool.org.

NEWS FROM 2-1-1-INFOLINE: 2-1-1 Connecticut recently launched a brand new website that works on any device, features a powerful new search engine that makes it easier than ever for users to find what they need. The new website includes several new features, such as location-aware search, full text translation into 30 languages (powered by Google Translate), and user-friendly search results that make it easy to quickly connect to services and programs in the 2-1-1 database. There is more to the new 2-1-1 website than can be covered in this newsletter, so we have [posted a summary of the new features at this link](#). (or look up at www.211ct.org)

THE VILLAGE CENTER FOR THE ARTS: has been awarded a special grant for a program called “Family Art!” This is an opportunity to go to VCA and create a free-build sculpture *as a family*. Families can go once or repeatedly over a period of weeks. For more information and to be referred, contact a member of the Social Services Department.

NEW MILFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY: Here’s a great resource to know about--**The Learning Express Library**. This is a wonderfully comprehensive collection of resources for everyone from elementary school through adulthood. There are a total of seven (7) centers for learning: School Center, College Prep Center, College Center, Career Center, Adult Learning Center, High School Equivalency Center and a Spanish language Center. Each center provides tutorials in various subjects and includes practice exams to allow you to prepare to take these exams for real! Ask the reference librarian about using these great tools.

ON-LINE LEGAL ASSISTANCE: CTLawHelp has created on-line classrooms to help people who cannot afford to hire an attorney for certain legal issues. Each on-line classroom will walk you through a legal process by breaking down the things you need to do into steps. Topics covered include: asking for special education services for your child, collecting unpaid wages, taking an employer to small claims court, and appealing an unemployment decision. Go to <http://ctlawhelp.org/classroom>. Videos explain workers’ rights, applying for SSDI, your rights to Family Medical Leave, getting divorced, rules about disciplining special education students and more. Go to <http://www.youtube.com/ctlawhelp>.



TBICO: a Danbury community-based agency, provides a range of employment-related services, business training and financial education for individuals seeking to become economically stable and self-sufficient. TBICO provides advocacy, ongoing support and learning opportunities which help students achieve job readiness, personal and career growth, and ultimately independence. TBICO is unique in that it offers all of its services free of charge to low-income adults. For more information contact TBICO at 203-743-6695 or go to www.tbico4women.org.

NEW MILFORD YOUTH AGENCY NEWS:

The NYC Street Corner Gourmet project!: The YA asks for help in dropping off packages of hard boiled eggs on Feb. 8th and 9th by 3:30 pm and invites kids, grades 3- 12 to help decorate eggs on Feb. 9th from 5:30- pm. Registration to decorate is required; call Jason at 860-210-2030.

Valentine’s Day Party!: for kids and teen with special needs, on Sunday February 14th, 1-3 pm at the Maxx. Call or email Jason to register!

Homework Club: Saturday mornings 9-11, start date TBD. If you have a 3-6 grade child who needs some tutoring/mentoring OR a high school student who wants to be a volunteer tutor, contact Jason@youthagency.org for more info.

THE WOMEN’S CENTER OF GREATER DANBURY: offers a number of support groups including “Women Thriving” to help women focus on sustaining positive changes after leaving unhealthy relationships. Weekly groups are offered in their Danbury office. For more info call Karen at 203-731-5200 x 235.

GREENWOODS COUNSELING REFERRALS: If you would like to enter into counseling for a problem, life transition or other issue in your life, Greenwoods is a great place to start. They offer a free clinical assessment (which can take place in New Milford) and then you will be provided with three local therapists qualified to help you. If you lack insurance, Greenwoods can help cover the fees. If you have insurance, Greenwoods will find a therapist who accepts your insurance. Start by calling them at 860-567-4437; you will be given a timely appointment!



STATE DEPT OF SOCIAL SERVICES ASSISTS LOW-INCOME FAMILIES SPAY/

NEUTER PETS: The Department of Social Services is partnering with the Department of Agriculture to help low-income households afford the cost of spaying/ neutering and vaccinating. The Department of Agriculture’s **Animal Population Control Program** can provide up to **two spay/ neuter vouchers for your pet(s)** per eligible household. The vet may require additional services which the pet owner will be responsible to pay for. To qualify you must currently receive assistance from one of the following DSS programs: Food Stamps, TFA, SAGA, Medicaid, Husky A, or State Supplement for the Aged, Blind or Disabled or Care4Kids. Applications are available at New Milford Social Services or at www.ct.gov/dss/cwp/view.

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY OFFERS “A BRUSH WITH KINDNESS”: If you are a homeowner in need of some minor home repairs or improvements, Habitat may have a great deal to offer you. The program is focused on providing select repair services to qualified, low income, home owners. The types of services would be minor remodeling, painting, and weatherization; any project would need to be evaluated and approved before it is accepted. The services are not free, but in keeping with the Habitat model are at very reasonable costs - well below commercial rates. For more info, contact Kent Rohrer at kent@housatonichabitat.org or call (203) 744-1340.

NEW MILFORD FOOD BANK RECIPES OF THE MONTH:
 Feed your heart well with healthy food choices and daily exercise.

February is Heart Health Month!



Chicken Picatta with Orzo (or Wild Rice)

- 1 cup uncooked orzo
- 2 teaspoons grated lemon rind
- 4 (4-ounce) chicken cutlets
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1/4 cup white wine
- 1/2 cup fat-free, lower-sodium chicken broth
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon chilled butter, cut into small pieces
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- 1 tablespoon capers



Directions:

1. Cook orzo or wild rice according to package directions. Drain. Stir in lemon rind.
2. While orzo cooks, heat a large skillet over medium-high heat. Sprinkle chicken with salt and pepper. Add oil to pan; swirl to coat. Add chicken; cook 3 minutes on each side or until done. Remove from pan; keep warm. Add wine; cook 1 minute or until liquid almost evaporates, scraping pan to loosen browned bits. Add broth and lemon juice; bring to a boil. Cook 2 minutes or until reduced to 1/2 cup. Remove from heat; add butter, stirring until butter melts. Stir in parsley and capers. Serve over orzo.

(from myrecipes.com)

Lunch Shake

- 1 cup fresh or frozen raspberries or other favorite berry
- 1 cup shredded kale
- 1 cup ice
- 3/4 cup fat-free plain yogurt
- 1/2 banana
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1 tablespoon natural almond butter or peanut butter
- (or add no nut butter at all)*
- 1 tablespoon wheat germ



1. Combine all ingredients in a blender, and blend until smooth. Serve immediately. *(from myrecipes.com)*



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