



JANUARY 2017

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Greetings from Peg Molina:

A Few Things I'm Certain of in Uncertain Times

As we move into 2017, we face a year of great transition. Many people look forward to this, feeling it will be GREAT in the positive sense. We will have a president who is not bound by Washington politics and "business as usual"; who has laid out promises he will set out to keep.

Truth be told, I am far less optimistic and am fairly worried about the months and years ahead. I fear for the unraveling of programs and institutions (like health insurance and public education, to name but two) that seem targeted for major change, not to mention national security. But my purpose is not to depress or debate. In challenging times like these, whether they are societal or personal, there are a few things we can do.

First of all, pay attention. While it might be tempting to settle down for a long winter's nap, we can do more from a position of intelligence than a position of ignorance. It is important to be aware of what is happening, to think about it and formulate our own views. Second, at the risk of contradicting myself, I also find it helpful, if not crucial, to take in news, commentary, etc. in measured doses. That means, feeling free to turn OFF the running narrative that can be disturbing and energy-draining. There is SO MUCH news and continual buzz; some days are properly spent as "ostrich days"! Hiding ones head in the sand may be in order to re-gain perspective, focus on important matters in our lives or maintain a positive outlook.

Third, I find it useful to fall back upon the things that have lifted me and kept me going throughout my life, and so can you. For me, it's staying active in some form, having time outside and being consciously grateful every day. Doing the things that maintain our inner-strength and health are of critical importance in challenging times! I am also fortified by doing what I am capable of within my own small sphere of New Milford such as listening, lending a helping hand or the resources of this office, standing up for someone who needs it. We all have special capabilities that we can employ in our lives; using those makes us feel stronger and strengthens our community as a whole.

Finally, continuing to reach for positive change in whatever form it takes will send energy in the right direction. Ivana and I were "Community Organization" majors in our social work graduate school program and we're happy to use that knowledge to benefit this town. In fact, community organizing tactics played a part in starting our homeless shelter, overturning a personnel cut to this department and helping to open the Community Culinary School ten years ago. In each case, gathering a base of community support was crucial to the positive outcome. Things like this remind me that we all have a role to play and can find strength and support in community. Together, we can and must work toward positive change and fight injustice.

So, Happy New Year after all! I will try to be hopeful, and we'll see what the future brings. *Peg* 

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The mission of New Milford Social Services is to help residents meet basic needs of food, housing, clothing maintenance of health and wellbeing, and to help provide various seasonal goods and programs for residents experiencing financial hardship.



Financial Tip of the Month:

Helpful excerpts from a New Year's piece on **"Simple and Minimal":** After the excitement and excess of the festive season, the arrival of the New Year conveys a sense of moderation and reflection amongst many. The promise of new beginnings and fresh starts provides the impetus to reflect and ask how can we be happier, freer, more fulfilled. The achievement of these and more are usually not done through being and having more, but rather with less. As we strip away the excess and clutter, we have more space, mentally, emotionally and physically, to live the life we are meant to live. Simple living is a set of habits and hoping to do it all at once in all areas of one's life is admirable, but more likely to set oneself up for failure.

...Continued Page 3.

Cheers to a New Year and another chance for us to get it right!
 --Oprah Winfrey



PROGRAM UPDATES:



ENERGY ASSISTANCE:

Social Services is taking applications for all forms of heat. Fuel deliveries can be covered if approved before March 15th, and those with electric heat must apply before April 30th to maintain the Matching Payment Program.

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
33,880.	44,305.	54,730.	65,155	75,580.	86,004.

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!

Clean, Tune and Test: Upon request, funds will be provided to eligible households to cover the cost of a clean, tune and test of their household’s deliverable fuel heating system. Renters must receive written landlord permission and funds will not be taken from the fuel benefit. This is a great way to increase the efficiency of your fuel use!

NEW EVERSOURCE POLICY: Eversource has started to provide monthly reports of bill payments to Experian, a credit bureau. This means that **how you handle this bill will impact your credit score, good or bad.** People on budget plans, paid on time will be reported as “paid as agreed”. If the bill becomes 93 days in arrears, the account will be reported as delinquent and could damage your credit score.

Eversource hopes this will encourage timely payment of utility bills. We know that some financially stressed households have to choose which bills they can afford to pay. If you find yourself in this situation please contact our office so that we can help you get onto a payment plan with Eversource. We also want to document all such cases as they will be evaluating this new practice after one year.



FORECLOSURE PREVENTION CLINICS:

get free legal advice and guidance from the CT Fair Housing Center. Next clinic is on January 17, 5:30 p.m. in Hartford at University High School, 351 Mark Twain Drive. More info: 860-263-0731.



VILLAGE CENTER FOR THE ARTS:

scholarships available for kids of all ages in need of help with school assigned art projects! Youths can go to VCA, get some guidance and complete their project, using materials supplied by VCA. Parents are involved for young children, or may leave their older child there and pick them up once the masterpiece is complete. (sounds like a dream come true!) In addition, Family Art is a wonderful multi-visit opportunity for the family to have some electronics-free quality time together creating art work. Call our office for a referral, then contact Javson at javson@villagecenterarts.com or call 860-354-4318.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING UPDATE!:



Barton Commons is a 38 unit apartment complex renting units next to CVS on East Street. Hallkeen Property Management is leasing up this project featuring studio, one and two bedroom units at varying income levels. For more info and to receive an application contact Adam Goldberg at 203-546-7342 or visit the property. There is a \$100 refundable application fee (bank check or money order).



IMPORTANT INFO FOR TAX FILERS:

a new law requires the IRS to hold refunds until mid-February in 2017 for people claiming the Earned Income Tax Credit or the Additional Child Tax Credit. In addition, new identity theft and refund fraud safeguards put in place by the IRS and the states may mean some tax returns and refunds face additional review. Taxpayers should file as usual. Even though the IRS cannot issue refunds for some early filers until at least Feb. 15, the IRS reminds taxpayers that most refunds will be issued within the normal timeframe: less than 21 days, after being accepted for processing by the IRS. The [Where's My Refund?](#) tool on IRS.gov and the [IRS2Go](#) phone app remains the best way to get this status of a refund.



ACCESS HEALTH

CT: Is holding open enrollment through January 31st enroll by January 15th to have your insurance begin by Feb 1st). You can apply for health insurance any time during the year if your circumstances change (i.e. loss of job, loss of insurance) or if your income is within HUSKY levels.

To apply on-line, visit www.AccessHealthCT.com, or call 1-855-805-4325 to apply or learn more. It can be hard to get through on the phone line, so allow extra time.



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 **Thursday, January 12th @ 5:30p.m. to 7p.m.** at The Maxx. Dinner and child care are included. Come for informal conversation and resources for those in this unique situation. RSVP to Amy Bondeson at Social Services 860-355-6079 x4. ****NOTE NEW DAY!****



SNAP OUTREACH THIS MONTH:

CT Institute for Families SNAP (formerly Food Stamps) Outreach Worker, Sara Arroyo, will be here on Wednesdays, January 11th and February 8th from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. to help people apply for SNAP online. To make an appointment with Sara (who is bi-lingual) and learn what to bring, please call our office. There are currently openings for November; call us! This is a quick and easy way to apply for SNAP.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES:



Family and Children



CT CHILDREN'S LAW LINE: The [CT Children's Law Line](#) helps callers understand the legal processes involving children, including custody, visitation, guardianship, abuse, and neglect. The Law Line can also refer callers to other agencies for help. You can call this free service as many times as you need. Click [here](#) for more information. **Where:** 1-888-LAW-DOOR (529-3667)



NEW MILFORD YOUTH AGENCY NEWS:

Homework club is available for more children at this time. NMHS mentors will work with your child on math, reading, studying, organizing, and more! Both work and play on Saturday mornings. The program is open to area 3rd-7th graders, FREE. For more information, please call the Youth Agency at 860-210-2030 or email Jason at Jason@youthagency.org.



HEAD START currently has openings for children ages 3 and 4 for their **pre-school programs** held at Northville and Hill and Plain Schools. Please contact Rebecca Litz to discuss income eligibility and for other info on this great early education program. [860-304-4648](tel:860-304-4648) ; litz@educationconnection.org



FINANCIAL HELP FOR COLLEGE BOUND STUDENTS:

Did you know that students who qualify for free or reduced lunch can have SAT/ACT fees as well as some college application fees waived? Contact your guidance counselor for the details! www.collegereadiness.collegeboard.org



PARKS & REC SUMMER JOBS:

NM P&R is accepting summer job applications as of 1/3/17. Camp counselors and lifeguards must be age 16 and up, lifeguards certified; great summer jobs for teens! Applications are available online (www.newmilford.org) or at Parks & Rec office. Act now!

Counseling Resources



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 yours. Start by calling them at 860-567-4437; you'll be given a timely appt!

THE WOMEN'S CENTER OF GREATER DANBURY:

offers free, confidential counseling and 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 203-731-5200.

NEW MILFORD HOSPITAL BEHAVIORAL HEALTH:

Located at 23 Poplar St., NMHBH provides mental health services for adults, including psychiatric assessment, med. management, individual and group therapy. Groups offered focus on women's support, anxiety and depression, pain management and DBT (dialectical behavioral therapy). Those interested need to have an assessment prior to joining a group. Call 860-210-5350 for more information or for an appointment.

FAMILY & CHILDREN'S AID:

NM office offers many services for parents & children: groups, counseling, home visits & more; free or insurance-based. For info or an appointment call 860-354-8556.

INTERFACE is a private practice located in the annex of the First Congregational Church. In addition there are other private practitioners who accept HUSKY and Medicare. Call one of our social workers to discuss these options.



Financial Tip of the Month...continued...

So it might be more effective and successful to start small; focus on a few things and make them into habits.

Live with only what adds joy or value: Before buying anything, ask if it adds joy and or value to your life and if you really need it? Ask the same question of the things you own and the relationships and activities that you have in your life. Questioning our purchases and possessions will make us more mindful and conscious of our consumption, reducing our clutter and saving us money in the process. Evaluating our relationships and commitments will help us invest our time and resources on people and activities that inspire, energize and contribute to our growth and happiness.

Make time for yourself: You are the most important person in your life. This is not ego-talk. If you are not happy or well, you can't offer anyone else the happiness and care they deserve. So prioritize your own well-being. Make time to be on your own and find space for some peace, quiet and activities that fill you.

Clear some space: This could be your mental, emotional or physical space or all three. Clearing space provides peace and calmness. It also clears away the 'clutter' that has been inhibiting and holding back your life. Is your schedule packed and leaving you with little time for yourself and loved ones? Start clearing away a few non-essential commitments. Busyness is overrated. Is there someone in your life that drains your energy and tends to put you down? Is it helpful to have this person in your life? Probably not; so surround yourself with people who encourage and empower you. Does a kitchen table or worktop or your study desk cause you stress and effort with the amount of stuff on them? Try decluttering and tidying one space at a time and keep it clear.

Take it one step at a time but start with something.

Learn to say 'No': We hate to be left out and we hate to disappoint, so we say 'yes' to the latest models of consumables, we say 'yes' to commitments not because we enjoy them but because we are obliged to. But if we want to reclaim our time, our resources and our life for what really matters to us, we have to learn to say 'no', and say it often. It might be awkward and difficult at first, but then it becomes liberating. And that is a good and unforgettable feeling!

...If you missed any of our previous tips, link in to social services/financial fitness on our town's website at www.newmilford.org.



FOOD BANK HOURS:



JANUARY 2017

S	M	T	W	TH	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

Every **THURSDAY** from 9am-4pm.

[This is a residency-income eligible registered program]

Please bring in your own reusable bags!!



NEW MILFORD FOOD BANK RECIPES OF THE MONTH:

The New Year can bring a need of a fresh outlook and a desire to make plans to improve one's life, one's health. Some tap into "lucky" traditions to help them on their way to move forward with positive change. The first few things that are eaten in the New Year are believed to bring on those changes and wishes for better health, prosperity, abundance of the positive. Black-eye peas, lentils, & other beans resemble coins; noodles for long life and other grains (rice, quinoa) for abundance, greens (collard, kale) and pork also for prosperity. The list goes on. Here are two recipes that include such "lucky" foods. Change them to your liking and "make your own luck"!

Lucky Confetti Soup (6 servings)

- 2 teaspoons **canola oil**
- ¾ cup **onions**, peeled, diced
- ¾ cup **celery**, diced
- ¾ cup **carrots**, peeled, diced
- ½ teaspoon **salt**
- ½ teaspoon ground **black pepper**
- ¼ teaspoon whole **fennel seed**
- ⅛ teaspoon crushed **red pepper** (optional)
- 1½ cups canned low-sodium **black-eyed peas**, drained, rinsed
- 3½ cups **water**
- 1 cup **extra-lean turkey ham**, diced ¼"
- ⅓ cup fresh **kale**, coarsely chopped
- 1½ tablespoons fresh **parsley**, chopped



Directions: In a large pot, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add onions and celery. Cook for 2-3 minutes or until tender. Add carrots, salt, pepper, fennel seed, and optional crushed red pepper. Cook for an additional 2-3 minutes. Add black-eyed peas and water. Cook uncovered for 25 minutes over medium heat. Add turkey ham and kale. Cook covered for an additional 10 minutes over medium heat until kale is tender. Add parsley right before serving. Serve hot.
[Source: Recipe for Healthy Kids Cookbook for Homes]



Happy New Year!



Chicken and Vegetable Soup with Kale (3 servings)

- 2 teaspoons **vegetable oil**
- ½ cup **onion** (chopped)
- ½ cup **carrot** (chopped)
- 1 teaspoon **thyme** (ground)
- 2 garlic **clove** (minced)
- 2 cups **water** (or chicken broth)
- ¾ cups **tomatoes** (diced)
- 1 cup **chicken, cooked, skinned and cubed**
- ½ cup **brown rice**, cooked (or white rice)
- 1 cup **kale** (chopped, about one large leaf)

Directions: Heat oil in a medium sauce pan. Add onion and carrot. Saute until vegetables are tender, about 5-8 minutes. Add thyme and garlic. Saute for one more minute. Add water or broth, tomatoes, cooked rice, chicken and kale. Simmer for 5-10 minutes.

Cost: Per recipe: \$3.33/Per serving: \$1.1 Source: Washington State University Photo source: cookingmatters.org

Our office will be CLOSED in observance of the following holidays:

Monday, January 2, 2017 for New Year's Day

Monday, January 16, 2017 for Martin Luther King Jr Day

PERMIT NO. 10

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