

HEALTH HAPPENINGS

A quarterly newsletter brought to you by Nashoba Associated Boards of Health

Serving the public health needs of Ashburnham, Ashby, Ayer, Berlin, Bolton, Boxborough, Devens, Dunstable, Groton, Harvard, Lancaster, Littleton, Lunenburg, Pepperell, Shirley, Stow, Townsend, and the community of Devens

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Issue: Winter (February) 2024

Winter 2024

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Above photo: Snow covered New England road by Bridgette Braley, RS- Nashoba Assoc. Boards of Health Sanitarian & Food Inspector

Greetings, Nashoba region residents! Can you believe it's already February? In the year 2024?? I can barely keep up! I LOVE the beautiful photo above! It evokes the calm and quiet of a New England snow storm– so peaceful. However, it's important to remember that as beautiful as it is, this kind of weather can also be dangerous; especially when you are driving! Avoid driving in winter weather if possible; but if you must, check out page 7 for some information on navigating winter storms safely. February is also American Heart month, where we celebrate this miraculous organ and all of the things we can do to keep it healthy– test your knowledge of the human heart on page 6. Visit page 5 for the latest on our grief and bereavement support program, which has been funded through August 2024 by several generous supporting organizations. We're in the thick of respiratory illness season and "germ season" in general. Remember to protect yourself against illness according to your "personal risk profile"- read more on page 3. In summary, we have a whole bunch of great stuff in this issue of Health Happenings, so read on to get all the juicy deets!

*-Jenna Montgomery, LICSW
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Agency Updates- Environmental Division:

The Nashoba Associated Boards of Health Environmental Division continues to work directly with the local elected Boards of Health and residents in our towns, enforcing State Sanitary and Environmental Codes, Massachusetts General Laws, and local regulations. NABH Sanitarians/health agents are available in member communities to collaborate with other town boards and meet with the public and respond to citizens' public health related concerns and complaints. The Environmental Division is also happy to announce the newest member of the team, Health Agent In-Training Kolby Beauvais! Welcome, Kolby!



Environmental Corner– Recreational Camps for Children

As parents start planning summer programming for their children, many will send their children to a summer camp program for fun and enrichment.

In Massachusetts, recreational camps for children are required to comply with the regulations from the Department of Public Health (DPH), [105CMR430.00, Minimum Standards for Recreational Camps for Children](#) and obtain a permit from the local board of health of the community in which the camp is located. In addition, camp programs are inspected annually to ensure compliance with the above mentioned regulations.

The State regulations address such matters as training and background checks for staff, minimum staffing and qualification for swimming, boating, archery, and other such high-risk activities. The regulations also require health supervision, first aid training and numerous policies and procedures to ensure camp programs operate safely. The camp permitting process is designed to ensure camp operators following the minimum standards.

Summer camp programs can provide a lifetime of wonderful experiences, friendships, and skills. If you have questions regarding recreational camps for children you can visit the DPH website <https://www.mass.gov/doc/information-about-recreational-camps-for-children-in-massachusetts-questions-and-answers-for-download>.

If you have questions regarding camps in the Nashoba communities, you can contact our office at (978) 772-3335 X305.



Time to Talk About Ticks: It's ALWAYS time to talk about ticks! Ticks bite and can spread disease. These tiny bloodsuckers are out year 'round, and active anytime the temperature is above freezing (which is becoming more common with the impact of climate change.) Pro tip: Check yourself, kids, and pets for ticks once a day! BONUS: see page 6 for a brain TICKler.

Learn more from MA DPH: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/tick-borne-disease-prevention>



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Agency Updates— Public Health Nursing Division:



Our public health nurses Tamara Bedard, RN, Maureen Scott, LPN, and Alicia Lepardo, RN have been hard at work keeping our communities healthy. They have continued to conduct communicable disease case investigation and follow up (including but not limited to foodborne illnesses,) home visits, collaboration with community colleagues, monthly well adult clinics throughout the region, community programming such as First Aid Basics and Heart Health, and appearing at local events to educate the community about health, factors that influence it, and how to improve it. See February's Well Adult Clinic calendar on page 8, and check our website <https://www.nashoba.org/calendar> for the latest schedule!

Did you know you that if you live in a town in Nashoba's region, you can call to consult with our Public Health nurses regarding health-related concerns and resources during our business hours? Or, that if you reside in our region and you test positive for a communicable disease that's reportable under Massachusetts State law, one of our nurses may call you to conduct a case investigation? Visit the Public Health Nursing page on our website <https://www.nashoba.org/public-health> to learn more about all of the services offered by the "Town Nurses."

Seasonal Illness Updates: We're in the middle of respiratory illness season. Make decisions to protect yourself and your loved ones based on your "personal risk profile"-based on demographics, age, health status, etc. Talk to your doctor to know your risks and make informed choices.



Some "tools in our toolbox" for fighting germs:

- Stay up-to-date on vaccines
- Practice hand hygiene frequently with soap and water or hand sanitizer (NOTE: hand sanitizer is not effective against norovirus!)
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue, or if a tissue is not available, cover them with an elbow, NOT a hand.
- Clean high-touch surfaces in your home frequently with household disinfectants.
- Avoid social gatherings if you or your children are ill.
- Consider wearing a mask based on your individual circumstances
- Know if you are a candidate for treatment in case of illness (talk to your doc)
- Keep COVID tests on hand and use them if needed!

MDPH Respiratory Illness Dashboard

This dashboard provides data on hospital admission and emergency department (ED) visits related to acute respiratory diseases, including COVID-19, influenza (the flu), and RSV.

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/respiratory-illness-reporting>

PET RABIES CLINIC



Our pet rabies immunization clinics are just around the corner— we are currently finalizing the schedule with our partners, so stay tuned for dates and times! We offer these clinics in partnership with our local Boards of Health and participating veterinary practices in the region.

The schedule will be posted on our website Calendar page and flyers will be available soon, too!

<https://www.nashoba.org/calendar>

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Agency Updates– Grief Support Program

The NABH Grief Counselor, Karen Campbell, MSMHC, continues to offer FREE, public drop-in grief support groups throughout the NABH region. She also provides programs and workshops by request of our municipal partners. Karen's philosophy honors ALL types of grief- due to loss, change, or transitions. Visit the last page of this newsletter for the current grief support group schedule; the latest version of the schedule is always on our agency's Calendar page, where you can also see Karen's scheduled workshops throughout the region. This program is currently funded through **August, 2024** by generous grants from CHNA9, the Emerson Community Benefits program, the Haley Cremer Foundation, and a Nashoba Valley Healthcare grant through the Health Foundation of North Central MA. We believe that in a primarily rural region where accessible behavioral health supports are lacking, grief and bereavement support IS a critical public health service, and continue to seek avenues to sustain this program longer-term.



Karen's Thoughts: What is Grief?

The standard response to "what is grief" is "grief is a reaction to loss". The standard response does not capture the all-encompassing impact that grief has on an individual. The response does not capture the multiple levels and types of loss that we experience. The standard response is limited and deceiving. Grief has great potential on a broad spectrum, it can be devastating or life enhancing.



Grief is how we react, respond, resist, and adjust to loss. It is an evolving journey that involves suffering, learning, discovering, and deciding. Grief is complex, multilayered, multidimensional, and challenging. It can be frightening and exhausting. Grief can also be misidentified, especially when losses are not identified. Grief's impact upon the individual is physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual. It is an experience that challenges one's belief system.

Grief evolves as we adjust to our losses, it does not disappear. Grief returns to remind us of the losses that have been previously experienced, inviting us to process past losses from a new perspective. New losses often serve as triggers to remind us of past losses.

Grief refuses to be ignored. When grief is **not** acknowledged, it will insert itself into one's life under assumed identities. It will appear as anger, illness, fear, intolerance, mania, depression, and other pathologies.

To promote healing, it is necessary to expand one's view of grief & loss.

Grief is the reaction, resistance, and adjustment to loss experienced on the physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual levels of one's being. We grieve what we have lost. Loss includes: that which we once had but have no more *and* that which we could reasonably expect to have had but did not.

Grief challenges us to consider our life, our beliefs, our relationships, our goals, our accomplishments, our hopes, our fears, and our regrets. Grief challenges us to view not only the losses but the possibilities and potentiality in the future.

Grief is an evolving process. Similar to a rollercoaster, the experience is varied, shifting in intensity and momentum. Grief impacts all aspects of daily life as one's thought processing, perceptions, and energy levels are impacted.

Grief is a teacher for those who are willing to acknowledge the invitation and experience the journey of suffering to healing. If the invitation is accepted, the journey of grief leads one through a powerful experience of exploration, learning, meaning and personal growth. Grief brings us close to our loss, to feel the impact of the loss. Grief invites us to recognize the significance of the loss in our lives. We have the potential to learn more about ourselves through grief.

Why should communities offer grief support?
Grief education and support provides community members with the tools to properly manage their grief. Proper management of grief, with education and support, is preventative care for mental health and quite often, physical health. Unmanaged grief potentially increases the occurrences of isolation, depression, antisocial behavior, neglect of physical health, unhealthy practices such as alcohol and substance abuses, domestic violence, and relapses in previous successful management of psychopathologies. Grief education and grief support promotes healthy living in communities.

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Community Partnership:



We continue to engage with our communities to both lead and support efforts to keep our residents healthy! Since our last newsletter, we have participated in a number of events throughout the region- read on for the highlights.

November 2023: Maureen presented Dementia 101 at the Ashby Council on Aging and spoke about Brain Health & Stroke at the Groton Center. Alicia offered a Wellness Meditation at the Lancaster Community Center and a Fall Prevention presentation at Bolton Country Manor. Jim, Tamara and Jenna met with the CHNA9 team to discuss the challenges and opportunities for public health in Central MA.

December 2023: We worked on developing a grant proposal to fund our grief and bereavement program and started seeking funding. We continued to deepen our partnership with Community Health Connections, our region's primary federally qualified community health center. We had our quarterly agency all-staff meeting. We consulted with the Academic Public Health Corps (APHC) and recruited them to develop some communications on navigating the healthcare system for emergency shelter residents, in multiple languages. CHNA9 awarded us a mini-grant for our grief support program!

January 2024: Jenna took a course to become a Mental Health First Aid Instructor. Tamara attended the Groton COA's Gala in celebration of their National Accreditation. Maureen presented a workshop on First Aid Basics at Stone Soup Kitchen in Ayer, with a special guest from the Ayer Fire Department. NABH Grief Counselor Karen presented "Life After Loss" at the Harvard COA. The Haley Cremer Foundation and Emerson Health provided us with some additional funding for our grief support program!

February 2024: Alicia offered "Coffee with the Town Nurse" at the Lancaster Community Center, and also presented on Heart Health at the Stow COA for American Heart Month. Jenna and Tamara went to tour Community Health Connections' new Leominster site to learn more about the services our residents can access there, including urgent care. They also met with CHNA9, MAHB, OLRH, and MPHA to plan a spring public health event. Karen offered a Grief & Healing presentation at the Massachusetts Women of Color Coalition (MAWOCC)'s North Central Chapter Regional Meeting. We were awarded a Nashoba Valley Healthcare grant for our grief and bereavement program, through the Community Foundation of North Central MA!

Upcoming Events:

Children's Storytime/ Teddy Bear Clinics- These are happening at the Ashburnham Library on Feb. 20th, and at the Ayer Library on Feb. 22nd!

Diabetes 101- Maureen will be presenting about diabetes at the Ashby COA on Feb 27th.

Grief Presentation at Bolton Country Manor- March 4th, presented by Karen Campbell, the NABH Grief Counselor

Memory and Aging- Alicia will be presenting this topic at Bolton Country Manor on March 19th

"Life After Loss" at the Lancaster Community Center- March 21st, offered by the NABH Grief Counselor

Lancaster Health & Wellness Fair- April 19th at the Lancaster Community Center

Townsend Earth Day at North Middlesex Regional High school- visit our booth on April 20th to learn about ticks!

Bolton's 25th Annual Children's Day Fair- May 4th

For an up-to-date list of where we've been and will be in the region, please visit our News & Events page on the web at <https://www.nashoba.org/news-events>. You can also view archived versions of our newsletter while you're there!



Pictures top to bottom: Jenna and Tamara pose with Ayer town social worker Brittany Beaudry and Kim Votruba-Matook, CHC VP of External Relations, during a tour of CHC's new Leominster facility. Alicia presents "Heart Health" at the Stow COA (with Jenna modeling as the human heart.) Maureen and Alicia take questions from residents at the "First Aid Basics" Workshop at Stone Soup Kitchen.

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-  **Kid's Corner– Heart Health Trivia**
- The body has many cavities which house and protect its organs. The heart is in which cavity?**
A. The pelvis B. the abdomen C. the chest D. the skull
 - What is the average size of your heart?**
A. the size of a pea B. the size of your clenched fist C. the size of a watermelon D. the size of a beach ball
 - The human heart is divided into sections called chambers. How many chambers does a human heart have?**
A. 3 B. 2 C. 5 D. 4
 - Between upper and lower chambers of the heart are some leaf-like structures which help blood flow in one direction. These structures are called valves.**
True or False
 - The number of times the heart beats per minute is called heart rate. All of the following activities would likely increase the heart rate except one. Which one?**
A. Watching a scary movie B. Running C. Sleeping D. Fighting
 - The right side of the heart pumps blood to the lungs. What happens in the lungs?**
A. It has a rest B. The blood turns from red to green C. Nobody knows for sure D. The blood loses carbon dioxide and picks up oxygen

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States.

But you can do a lot to protect your heart. Learn more about heart-healthy living: <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/education/heart-truth/lets-work-together-prevent-heart-disease>



Answer key: 1=C; 2=B; 3=D; 4=True; 5=C; 6=D



Heart Trivia

February is American Heart Month!
What do YOU know about the human heart? Test your knowledge here!
This activity is fun for kids and adults alike.

Kids Corner—Brain TICKLER:

Let's practice checking for ticks! We have hidden FIVE ticks in this newsletter! Try to find them all. HINT: the easiest one to find is on page 2. Happy hunting!! Remember— where we live, it's important to check for ticks once a day, especially if you or your pets spend time outdoors. Ticks can bite whenever the temperature is above freezing!



This one doesn't count, silly... but nice try!

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Winter Weather Safety– Road Considerations: Is your vehicle ready for safe winter driving? Have a winter emergency car kit in the trunk and make sure all parts of your vehicle are ready for winter (wipers, tires, etc.) Learn more: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/prepare-your-vehicle-for-winter-driving>

Safe Winter Driving Tips from the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA)

Avoid driving during winter storms unless it is absolutely necessary. If you must travel, here are driving tips to keep you safe.

- Avoid driving during the worst part of the storm. If possible, only travel during daylight hours, don't travel alone, and stay on main roads instead of taking shortcuts.
- Clear snow and ice from windows, lights, the hood, and the roof before driving.
- Leave plenty of room for stopping.
- Don't try to out drive the conditions. Remember the posted speed limits are for dry pavement.
- Know the current road conditions. Call 511 from your cell phone or any of the following from either your cell phone or landline phone: Metro Boston: (617) 986-5511, Central Mass: (508) 499-5511, Western Mass: (413) 754-5511
- Brake early and correctly. It takes more time and distance to stop in adverse conditions.
- Be wary of bridge decks. They freeze first, making them more dangerous than the approach road.
- Exit ramps sometimes have less anti-icing material than the main line. Be aware of this when exiting the highway.
- Don't use "cruise control" driving in wintry conditions. Even roads that look clear can have sudden slippery spots. Using your brake on these spots will deactivate cruise control, possibly causing you to lose control of your vehicle.
- Many 4x4 vehicles are heavier than passenger vehicles. This means it takes longer to stop than passenger vehicles. Don't get overconfident in your 4x4 vehicle. Be wary of your 4x4 vehicle's traction.
- Look further ahead in traffic than normal.
- Trucks are heavier than cars, making their brake time slower. Avoid cutting quickly in front of them.
- Don't crowd the plow. Leave room for maintenance vehicles and plows. Stay back at least 200 feet and don't pass on the right.
- Remember to slow down and always wear your seat belt.
- Let others know your destination, route, and expected travel times.
- Allow for extra travel time.
- Drive with your headlights on at all times to see and be seen.

Winter Emergency Car Kit

70% of winter deaths related to snow and ice occur in cars. Assemble an emergency car kit to stay safe during the winter season.

Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency
#ReadyMA

Learn more about staying safe in winter weather: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/winter-storm-safety-tips>



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Grief & Healing Support Group Schedule



Nashoba Associated Boards of Health welcomes adults who are experiencing grief to participate in monthly, drop-in Grief & Healing Support Groups throughout the region. These groups are an opportunity to learn more about the grief process and strategies for managing grief. These Grief & Healing Support Groups honor all types of grief, including grief due to loss, change and transitions.

1st Tuesday of each month:

Ashburnham- 10:30 AM @ Stevens Memorial Library: 20 Memorial Dr, Ashburnham, MA 01430
Bolton- 1 PM @ Bolton Country Manor: 600 Main St, Bolton, MA 01740
Dunstable- 3:30 PM @ Dunstable Library: 588 Main St, Dunstable, MA 01827

2nd Monday of each month:

Shirley COA- 10 AM @ Shirley Council on Aging: 9 Parker Rd, Shirley, MA 01464
Shirley Library- 12 PM @ Hazen Memorial Library: 3 Keady Way, Shirley, MA 01464
Harvard- 2 PM @ Harvard Senior Center: 16 Lancaster County Rd, Harvard, MA 01451
Lunenburg- 4 PM @ Lunenburg Adult Activity Center: 25 Memorial Dr, Lunenburg, MA
Pepperell Library- 6 PM @ The Lawrence Library: 15 Main St, Pepperell, MA 01463

2nd Thursday of each month:

Littleton- 12 PM @ Reuben Hoar Library: 35 Shattuck St, Littleton, MA 01460
Boxborough- 2 PM @ Sargent Memorial Library: 427 Mass Ave, Boxborough, MA 01719
Berlin Community Center- 4 PM @ 19 Carter Community Center: 19 Carter St, Berlin, MA 01503

3rd Tuesday of each month:

Ashby- 12 PM @ Ashby Free Public Library: 812 Main St, Ashby, MA 01431
Groton- 2 PM @ Groton Senior Center: 163 West Main Street, Groton, MA 01450
Ayer- 4 PM @ The Ayer Library: 26 E Main St, Ayer, MA 01432

4th Monday of each month:

Pepperell COA- 10 AM @ The Albert Harris Center: 37 Nashua Rd, Pepperell, MA 01463
Lancaster- 12:30 PM @ The Lancaster Community Center: 39 Harvard Rd, Lancaster, MA 01523
Townsend- 2:30 PM @ Townsend Senior Center: 16 Dudley Road, Townsend, MA 01469
Berlin Town Hall- 12 PM @ Berlin Town Hall Rm 227:23 Linden St, Berlin, MA 01503

Please visit <https://www.nashoba.org/calendar> for the latest grief support schedule. Visit <https://www.nashoba.org/grief-support> to learn more about this program.

February Well Adult Clinic Schedule

Well Adult Clinics are held monthly throughout the NABH region. Well Adult Clinics are an opportunity for adult residents to have a basic health screening and talk with their town's public health nurse for health tips and resources to promote their wellness!

Town	Clinic Location	Address	Day	Time
Ashburnham	Town Hall	32 Main St.	*Cancelled for Feb 2024	*Resuming in March 2024
Ashby	Town Hall, Land Use Room	895 Main St.	4 th Tues	11-12* after 10am educational program
Ayer	Senior Center	18 Pond St.	2 nd Thurs	12:30-1:30
Bolton	Bolton COA	600 Main St.	3 rd Thurs	10-11
Boxborough	Community Center	30 Middle Rd.	2 nd Wed	11:15-12:15
Dunstable	Library	588 Main St.	4 th Wed	11-12
Groton	Senior Center	163 West Main St.	4 th Wed	1:30-2:30
Harvard	Senior Center (COA)	16 Lancaster County Rd.	3 rd Tues	12:30-1:30
Lunenburg	Lunenburg Adult Activity Center	25 Memorial Dr.	4 th Thurs	9-11
Pepperell	Senior Center	37 Nashua Rd.	3 rd Wed	10-12
Shirley	Senior Center	9 Parker Rd.	2 nd Thurs	9:30-10:30
Stow	Senior Center	509 Great Rd.	1 st Wed	10-12
Townsend	Senior Center	16 Dudley Rd.	3 rd Wed	12:30-2:30

Please see our calendar at <https://www.nashoba.org/calendar> for the most up-to-date clinic schedule.

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