

Gill Montague Council on Aging Annual Report 2022

The Gill Montague Council on Aging serves residents of Montague and Gill who are 60 years of age and older. The two towns fund the Council on Aging and Senior Center proportionately and the Council on Aging receives and administers annual formula grant funds from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs for both towns. Ongoing services focus on fitness and health, assistance with personal needs, and the provision of social events and programs all with a focus on helping seniors live their best and most independent lives.

This year the COA partnered with LifePath and the Greenfield YMCA respectively to provide evidence based Healthy Living classes and exercise programs. The Senior Center offered nine hours of regular fitness classes per week including aerobics, chair exercise, yoga, and tai chi. The COA also held a ten week intensive mindful meditation program with local instructor Jean Erlbaum, shared a six week "Walk with Ease" fitness program with the Greenfield YMCA, and held a "Hip Hop Chair Dance" program with funds from the Gill Cultural Council. The Turners Falls Fire Department taught a two session CPR training and presented a one hour general home safety workshop.

In partnership with the Food Bank of Western Mass, the COA provided monthly Brown Bag grocery distributions for low income seniors and sponsored a monthly public mobile food bank in the Senior Center parking lot. The COA also offered a ten week summer farm share program for low income seniors in partnership with CISA and Red Fire Farm. The COA distributed weekly food donations from TRIAD, annual Thanksgiving baskets and Easter hams. The COA also administered applications to the Montague Wood Bank and processed applications for fuel assistance (LIHEAP) through Community Action Pioneer Valley. Our local SHINE agency held an annual Medicare / insurance information session at the Senior Center in preparation for the Medicare Open Enrollment Period and our area SHINE advisor held office appointments at the Senior Center for private consultations. The COA made individual grant funds available to low to moderate income seniors to make safety modifications to their homes, processed SNAP applications, and provided emergency direct aid to individuals when no other services were available. The COA held monthly foot care clinics with services provided by "Foot Care by Nurses" and provided free tax return preparation for 42 seniors with AARP Tax Aid volunteers. Information and referrals were made to other agencies, particularly for matters involving legal aid, housing issues, home health care, and transportation. Over 400 home Covid test kits and more than 800 KN95 masks were sourced and distributed. Regular information was distributed about Covid case counts, community risk levels, and vaccine access. Seniors without internet access or digital ability were regularly assisted with on line searches, forms, appointments, and applications.

Social programs included three music revues, monthly pot luck lunches, monthly pizza parties and movies, weekly bingo, card games, knitting groups, and daily open drop-in hours.