

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: Fall (November) 2023

Fall 2023

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Above photo: October sky by Bridgette Braley, RS- Nashoba Assoc. Boards of Health Sanitarian & Food Inspector

Hello, Nashoba region residents! We hope you've been staying happy and healthy! It feels like just yesterday we were putting out our August newsletter. Time flies when you're having fun- and we definitely have been! Flip to page 6 to hear about our recent activities across the region. The air is cold and crisp, I woke to a dusting of snow this morning, and we're headed into the holidays! We recognize that what is often a joyous time can also be a difficult time for many. Visit page 5 to learn about our timely pilot grief and bereavement support program. Winter is around the corner, which means respiratory illness season is upon us once again. Remember to protect yourself against illness according to your "personal risk profile"- read more on page 2. Many of you took advantage of Nashoba's annual flu vaccine clinics September to October! Thank you to our residents, community partners and volunteers for a highly successful flu clinic season. If you or someone you know wants a flu vaccine but is unable to leave home to get it, please call us to schedule an appointment- our public health nurses will come to you. BE WELL!

*-Jenna Montgomery, LICSW
Communications Specialist @ Nashoba Associated Boards of Health*

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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.



Environmental Corner: Holiday Food Safety— Source: <https://www.foodsafety.gov/sites/default/files/2019-05/winter-holiday-food-safety-infographic.jpg>

YOUR MAP TO A FOOD-SAFE HOLIDAY

Follow some simple food safety advice to keep you and your guests feeling festive this winter.

HITTING THE ROAD

If you're bringing a dish to a get-together with coworkers, family or friends this holiday season, make sure you are transporting food safely.

DANGER ZONE

Perishable food kept in the Danger Zone (between 40 - 140 °F) for longer than 2 hours should be thrown out.

40 °F

140 °F

2 hours

Continued on next page... don't miss out on more helpful tips and tricks to have a food-safe holiday!

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Just as you have a procedure for storing your holiday gifts when you get home, you should have a **system for storing your food.**



Make sure your fridge is set at or below **40 °F**
Chill perishable groceries within two hours of shopping



Wash your hands for **20 SECONDS**
with warm water and soap!



Don't forget:
You need two thermometers.



One for the fridge to ensure food is stored at **40 °F**.



One for food, particularly meat, to ensure it's cooked to the right temperature.



Be sure to separate raw meat from ready-to-eat foods and dishes.



Store raw meats in a container or dish to prevent juices from leaking and set below ready-to-eat foods.



Always use a food thermometer to check that different holiday meats have been cooked to the right internal temperature.



GROUND BEEF 160 °F
DUCK 165 °F
TURKEY 165 °F
GOOSE 165 °F
VEAL* 145 °F
PORK* 145 °F
LAMB* 145 °F
STEAK* 145 °F



***Don't forget resting time!**
Beef, veal, lamb, and pork should rest for **3 MINUTES** before carving or consuming.



KEEP COLD FOOD COLD
When transporting cold dishes, place items in a cooler with ice or gel packs to keep food at or below **40 °F**



KEEP HOT FOOD HOT
Keep hot foods at or above **140 °F** by wrapping dishes in insulation bags or towels and newspaper.

EXCEPTIONS
to Danger Zone include ready-to-eat items like    



For more food safety tips, go to **FoodSafety.gov**

USDA IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PROVIDER AND EMPLOYER

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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 tick and mosquito-borne illnesses), home visits, collaboration with community colleagues, monthly well adult clinics in all of our communities, community programming such as Wellness Meditations and Children's Storytime Teddy Bear Clinics, and appearing at local events to educate the community about health, factors that influence it, and how to improve it. See November's Well Adult Clinic calendar on page 9, 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 currently seeing the usual cold-weather uptick in flu, COVID, and RSV along with cases of the common cold.



"Stomach bugs" such as norovirus are also not uncommon this time of year! 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 doctor)
- Keep COVID tests on hand and use them if needed!

Flu Clinic Debrief

Thank you to our volunteers- Cindy, Leanna, Renee, Jean, Rosemary, Joan, Peter, and Nathan, as well as our community partners, for making this year's flu clinic season a success!

This year, our team gave 1,531 flu vaccines during 17 flu clinics across the region. This is not counting flu vaccines provided to homebound folks in our communities! We're always happy to greet you at our flu clinics, whether you're a first timer or a "returning customer!" We find that many families with kiddos return to us year after year to get flu vaccines taken care of in one fell swoop, and we love seeing how much our youngest residents have grown year after year! Check out page 8 of this newsletter for a "Kid's Corner" article about how shots help us to be germ-fighting superheroes!



NEW— 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>

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Agency Updates– Meet Karen Campbell, MSMHC– Grief Counselor with Nashoba Associated Boards of Health



NABH is piloting the continuation of grief and bereavement support services previously provided by the late NNS&H branch of our agency. We have hired Karen Campbell, MSMHC, to run this program in our communities. Read on to learn more about Karen and her programming!

Grief Counselor Karen Campbell served as the Bereavement Coordinator for Nashoba Nursing Service & Hospice from 2010-2018. During the last few years of service, she was also the Spiritual Care Counselor for many hospice families. Prior to joining the hospice team, she studied and trained as a mental health counselor to provide care for those experiencing death and loss. She obtained her master's degree in mental health counseling from Fitchburg State University in 2009. While completing her degree, Karen was also a hospice volunteer, raising her children and volunteering with her children's activities. She completed her two-semester internship at Care Dimension's Bertolon Center for Grief & Healing as a bereavement counselor intern.

In addition to her master's degree, Karen has obtained a certificate in Thanatology, Spiritual Counseling and several energy healing modalities. Since 1999, she has been a volunteer foster parent for rescue animal groups. Since 2018, she has maintained a private practice, teaching energy healing and facilitating workshops. Committed to learning, Karen continues to take classes related to death, loss and spirituality. She shares her life with her husband, adult children, many pets and loved ones. Having experienced many losses her own life, Karen respects the power of grief and is dedicated to companioning those who grieve.

As a former hospice spiritual and bereavement counselor, Karen has worked with many patients and families experiencing changes, transitions, loss and grief of all types. As a support group leader in community settings, she has worked with many bereaved individuals experiencing various losses, including pet loss. She considers it a privilege to be present for those experiencing their grief & healing journey. Karen believes that the lessons of loss provide us with opportunities for healing and growth.

Karen is committed to serving the community by offering support to those experiencing loss. Karen shares: ***"We grieve what we once had but have no more. We grieve what we could reasonably expect to have had but did not have. We grieve what others might not understand. We grieve even though we were told time was supposed to heal the wounds. We grieve our losses even as we enjoy other aspects of our lives. Our losses are important, they matter, we matter. Each one of us needs to be recognized and supported. Our world is a better place when we care for each other and respect the inherent worth & dignity of each person. When people come together and share their stories, there is connection, there is hope."***

It is Karen's sincere hope that the NABH pilot program will become permanent to serve the community. In her prior experience with bereaved individuals and grief groups, 2010-2018, she experienced the reality that grief exists in many forms for all of us. Fortunately, she has also witnessed the hope and healing that is possible through grief support.

Karen is currently facilitating grief support groups in each of the 16 NABH towns. She is also available to meet with community members on an individual basis. Learn more about the program at <https://www.nashoba.org/bereavement-support>, and visit the last page of this newsletter for the November-December grief support group schedule.

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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.

August 2023: Our team met Ayer's new town social worker, Brittany Beaudry. We started spreading the word about the MDPH Community Health Equity Survey (CHES) to ensure our residents perspectives were represented in the data. Jenna met with Townsend's Community Services Coordinator, Becky Morse, to introduce the NABH agency and discuss resources available to underserved Townsend residents.

September 2023: We started planning our pilot grief and bereavement program. We had our quarterly all-staff meeting. We hosted our Councils on Aging and Outreach workers for an appreciation and networking luncheon to share updates, ideas and information with one another. Jenna presented "Public Health 101" during a Groton COA "Lunch & Learn" event. We kicked off flu clinic season with a clinic at the Ashby Public Safety complex. We hosted our Boards of Health for an informal networking gathering.

October 2023: Jenna met with Carlene Phillips of the Harvard Press for an interview discussing the role of local public health. She also tabled at the Harvard COA Open House with general agency information as well as educational materials on stroke and emergency preparedness for seniors. We attended the Lunenburg Adult Activity Center Pavilion Ribbon Cutting to celebrate this exciting addition to the center. Jenna recorded a "health update" segment with Lunenburg media. We attended the Boxborough Wellbeing and Littleton Wellness Committee meetings. We had an introductory meeting with the team at Community Health Connections, one of the federally qualified community health centers serving our area. We met with staff at the EA shelter in Ayer to introduce ourselves and learn how we can support their efforts. We kicked off regular monthly update meetings with our region's school nurses. Jenna testified at the Leominster Healey-Driscoll listening session regarding essential services access in North Central MA. Maureen provided flu shots and well adult checks to the guests at Stone Soup Kitchen in Ayer. Lastly, our flu clinics across the region kept us VERY busy through the month of October!

November 2023: Tamara represented NABH as a panelist at the Prescott Center's "Caring for Older Adults" seminar in Groton. Maureen, Alicia and Jenna put on a "Teddy Bear Clinic" Children's Storytime at the Townsend Public Library. Alicia presented on Fall Prevention considerations for seniors at Bolton Country Manor.

Upcoming Events:

Dementia 101- Maureen is offering this presentation at the Ashby COA on Nov. 16th

Wellness Meditation- Alicia is providing this program at the Lancaster Community Center on Nov. 28th

Brain Health & Stroke- Maureen will be speaking on this topic at the Groton Center on Nov. 30th

Children's Storytime at the Stevens Memorial Library- our team will be running a "Teddy Bear Clinic" for kids on Feb. 20th 2024 in Ashburnham

Children's Storytime at the Ayer Library- our team will be running a "Teddy Bear Clinic" for kids on Feb. 22nd 2024

Monthly Well Adult Clinics- Well Adult Clinics are held monthly throughout Nashoba's service region. Well Adult Clinics are an opportunity for adult residents to have a basic health screening and talk with their town nurse! See November's schedule on page 9.

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: Community Health Manager Tamara Bedard, RN, with Brittany Beaudry, Ayer's new town social worker, and Deputy Fire Chief Jeremy Januskiewicz; Public Health Nurse Maureen assists some young medical providers with their patients at our Townsend Library Teddy Bear Clinic.

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Kid's Corner– Shots Help Us to be Germ-Fighting Superheroes!

Shots are important because they help our bodies fight germs. You might also hear them called “vaccines” or “immunizations”. Shots are given by a healthcare professional like a doctor or nurse. A shot contains a little bit of liquid that is usually put into your arm with a needle. Within this liquid is a tiny piece of a germ, or a whole germ that is dead or very weak. If you got the living germ, it would give you the disease- but instead, your body takes the tiny pieces or the dead/weakened germ and learns how to make “antibodies,” which are part of your immune system. Then, your body recognizes the icky “bad guy” germ and can fight it!



Per Nemour's KidsHealth, “...when almost all kids have had their shots, it means that these illnesses won't have as much of a chance to make anyone else sick. Because most kids in the United States get all their shots, you rarely meet anyone who has had diseases like measles or mumps. Your mom or dad has probably had to show your school that you've had all your shots. Schools and camps do this because they don't want the kids spreading or catching serious illnesses.” -<https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/guide-shots.html> * In other words, just like our favorite superheroes, we can team up to be stronger and fight the bad guys TOGETHER!

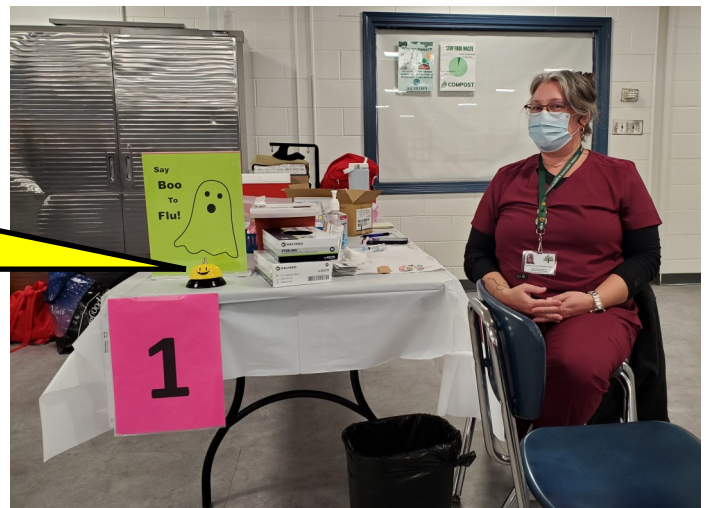
Most people don't enjoy getting shots, but we do it anyways because being sick with a serious illness would be WAY worse than the QUICK little pinchy feeling. If you cry, that's OK- it's very normal and can help us get big emotions out of our bodies. Parents and caregivers can watch <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4wuOfbvic0E> to learn about ways to make getting shots easier for kids.

Most kids should get a **flu vaccine**, or flu shot, every year. Did you come to one of our flu clinics to get your flu shot this year? If you did, you probably saw our Halloween-themed “Say BOO to Flu!” signs, and you might've been able to ring the special yellow bell after you got your shot! When the bell goes “DING” we CLAP for you, because you did a great thing to stay well and help others around you to stay well, too! Hooray!!!

*Information provided by Nemours Children's Health through its award-winning website. For more on this topic, visit KidsHealth.org.



Did you get to ring the bell at our flu clinics this year?



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Winter Weather Safety— To minimize the dangers associated with winter storms, take the proper safety precautions to protect yourself and your family.

We live in New England, so it's a given that the weather in the winter can be a little hairy! We're certainly used to it— but it never hurts to brush up on steps you can take to stay safe and comfortable this season. There's power in community, so be a good neighbor by checking on your fellow residents and loved ones before, during, and after winter weather events, particularly those who live alone or are frail or disabled!

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.

Ashburnham: 1st Tuesday of each month

10:30 AM @ Stevens Memorial Library, 20 Memorial Dr, Ashburnham

Bolton: 1st Tuesday of each month

1 PM @ Bolton Country Manor, 600 Main St, Bolton

Dunstable: 1st Tuesday of each month

3:30 PM @ Dunstable Library, 588 Main St, Dunstable

Shirley COA: 2nd Monday of each month

10 AM @ Shirley Council on Aging, 9 Parker Rd, Shirley

-Shirley Library: 2nd Monday of each month

12 PM @ Hazen Memorial Library, 3 Keady Way, Shirley

Harvard: 2nd Monday of each month

2 PM @ Harvard Senior Center, 16 Lancaster County Rd, Harvard

Lunenburg: 2nd Monday of each month

4 PM @ Lunenburg Adult Activity Center, 25 Memorial Dr., Lunenburg

Littleton: 2nd Thursday of each month

12 PM @ Reuben Hoar Library, 35 Shattuck St, Littleton

Boxborough: 2nd Thursday of each month

2 PM @ Sargent Memorial Library, 427 Mass Ave, Boxborough

Ashby: 3rd Tuesday of each month

12 PM @ Ashby Free Public Library, 812 Main St, Ashby

Groton: 3rd Tuesday of each month

2 PM @ Groton Senior Center, 163 West Main Street, Groton

Ayer: 3rd Tuesday of each month

4 PM @ The Ayer Library, 26 E Main St, Ayer

Pepperell: 4th Monday of each month *Wed. 12/27 for December ONLY

10 AM @ The Albert Harris Center, 37 Nashua Rd, Pepperell

Lancaster: 4th Monday of each month *Wed. 12/27 for December ONLY

12:30 PM @ The Lancaster Community Ctr., 39 Harvard Rd, Lancaster

Townsend: 4th Monday of each month *Wed. 12/27 for December ONLY

2:30 PM @ Townsend Senior Center, 16 Dudley Road, Townsend

Berlin: 4th Thursday of each month, *5TH THURS. for November ONLY

12 PM @ Berlin Town Hall Rm 227, 23 Linden St, Berlin

Stow: 4th Thursday of each month, *5TH THURS. FOR November ONLY

2 PM @ The Pompo Community Center, 509 Great Rd, Stow

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

November 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.	1 st Thurs	10-11
Ashby	Town Hall, Land Use Room	895 Main St.	4 th Tues	10-11
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	1-2* for Nov. ONLY
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 *cancelled for Nov. d/t holiday	9-11 *cancelled for Nov. d/t holiday
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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