

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: Spring (May) 2022

Spring 2022

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MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH



Hello again, friends! Spring has officially sprung in our region and this time of year always feels so full of promise and hope. May is Mental Health Awareness Month, and a great opportunity to celebrate the things we are each already doing to support our mental wellbeing as well as evaluating what we could be doing better. That said- got Spring Fever? Get OUTDOORS! With the warmer weather, make some time to get OUTDOORS and take advantage of nature's health benefits! Research says that being outside for as little as five minutes can lower your heart rate, blood pressure and cortisol (the stress hormone) production. Natural sunlight provides a free dose of Vitamin D which is essential for overall healthy body functioning. Taking a short walk OUTDOORS can improve your concentration, reduce stress and boost your mood. Remember to stop and smell the flowers as nature's 'aromatherapy' can help you feel calm and relaxed. Being out in the fresh air and sunshine can promote better sleep by reminding your body of its natural rhythms and sleep/wake cycles. So, find yourself a walking partner and establish a routine. Motivate each other to get OUTDOORS and keep building fit, healthy bodies AND minds! Without further ado, Nashoba Associated Boards of Health is excited to share the latest news from our agency and the community and some tips to promote your wellness and live your best life this summer- read on to learn more.

<https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/90720.html> (The NY Department of Environmental Conservation)

<https://www.nwf.org/en/Kids-and-Family/Connecting-Kids-and-Nature/Health-Benefits-and-Tips> (The National Wildlife Federation)

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4204431/> (National Center for Biotechnology/National Libraries of Medicine/National Institute for 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.



Environmental Corner: Camps, Beaches and Pools

As summer approaches, the Health Agents from Nashoba's Environmental Division are working with your local Boards of Health to permit and provide guidance and inspections for public and semi-public bathing beaches and swimming pools, recreational camps for children, and developed family-type camp grounds which may operate in your communities.

Public and semi-public bathing beaches (condominium, lake association etc.) are required to obtain a permit from your local Board of Health and to have the bathing waters tested prior to opening for the swimming season, and weekly during the swimming season. This office collects and reviews the water samples and consults with the Board and local recreational officials on the results and concerns which may affect the public health of the individuals using those facilities.

Public and semi-public swimming pools must be permitted by the Board of Health on an annual basis and this office reviews the pool operations to ensure they are in compliance with the Department of Public Health regulations.

The Department of Public Health has regulations for the operation of Recreational Camps of Children, and camps operating in your community need a permit from your local Board of Health. These regulations address public health and safety concerns, staffing (including background checks), program safety, sanitary facilities and other requirements to ensure the camp operators are providing a safe program for children. If you have any questions regarding a program or whether it is permitted, please contact our office.

Developed family-type camp grounds (think RV parks) are required to comply with the Department of Public Health regulations and obtain a permit from the local Board of Health. This office works with operators to ensure these facilities comply with these regulations.

We hope everyone has a safe summer and if you would like additional information regarding these facilities or have concerns about their operation, please don't hesitate to contact the office at (978) 772-3335.



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Agency Updates— Public Health Nursing Division:

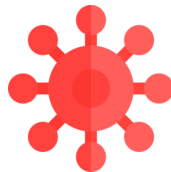


Our public health nurses Tamara, Maureen, Susan and Megan have been hard at work keeping our communities healthy! They continued COVID vaccination clinics through early spring and have continued to conduct communicable disease case investigation and follow up, COVID case investigation and contact tracing, home visits, collaboration with community colleagues, monthly well adult clinics in all of our communities (see May's calendar on page 8, and check our website <https://www.nashoba.org/calendar> for the latest schedule), community programming such as "Tick Talks", appearing at local events to educate the community about health, factors that influence it, and how to improve it.

Our Public Health Educator/ Communications Specialist Jenna has been meeting with outreach workers, Councils on Aging and Public Safety personnel in our member towns to learn about each town's unique strengths and challenges, and to evaluate what educational topics could benefit the community from their valuable and unique perspectives. She has been representing Nashoba at events like Townsend Earth Day and organizing an Ayer/Shirley Wellness Festival! Jenna has been promoting wellness and educational opportunities in the community including film screenings and presentations, as well as maintaining the Nashoba website and social media page with relevant and timely public health information.

COVID-19 Update:

We are unsurprised to see COVID numbers rising in our region on the other side of April vacation and Easter. Fortunately, we all now have a good arsenal of tools at our disposal to protect ourselves and those we love! Here's a quick refresher on seven simple steps you can take to help slow the spread and keep your community healthy.



- Stay up-to-date on COVID-19 vaccines: mass.gov/covidvaccine
- Get tested if you have symptoms: mass.gov/GetTested
- Get treatment if needed: mass.gov/CovidTreatments
- Stay home when sick: mass.gov/isol8
- Mask up if you need to: mass.gov/MaskUpMA
- Enable MassNotify on your smartphone: mass.gov/MassNotify
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and warm water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer: <https://www.mass.gov/handwashing>

News You Can Use: It's Skin Cancer Awareness Month!

With over 5 million cases diagnosed in the U.S. each year, skin cancer is America's most common cancer.

Here are some tips to help reduce your risk:

Practice Sun Safety

- Stay in the shade.
- Wear clothing that covers your arms and legs.
- Wear a hat with a wide brim to shade your face, head, ears, and neck.
- Wear sunglasses that wrap around and block both UVA and UVB rays.
- Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher.
- Avoid indoor tanning.



https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin/basic_info/prevention.htm (Center for Disease Control and Prevention)

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Agency Updates– Nashoba Nursing Service & Hospice:



Nashoba's Home Health division continues to offer high quality in-home care to help patients heal and regain their independence. The Home Health division is currently onboarding two new staff members: an RN Case Manager, and a Per Diem RN. They have also hired a new part-time Occupational Therapist to balance staffing with an increased need for therapy cases. Thanks to generous donations from the Friends of Nashoba Nursing Service & Hospice non-profit and others, the Home Health division has been able to obtain new occupational therapy equipment and wound care supplies to increase patient comfort and safety.

Nashoba's Hospice division continues to provide comprehensive, compassionate care for people with a life-limiting illness as well as their family and caregivers. We are proud members of the Pet Peace of Mind Program, which offers resources and supports that enable people to keep their pets at home with them during their end-of-life journey, and assists with re-homing a pet after a patient passes away. Did you know that our Hospice division offers regular grief support groups and grief socials for our patients and the community? Contact us at (978) 425-6675 to learn more.

Get Ready to Grill Safely

Cook

Use a food thermometer to ensure meat is cooked hot enough to kill harmful germs. When smoking, keep temperature inside the smoker at **225°F** to **300°F** to keep meat at a safe temperature while it cooks.

145°F beef, pork, lamb, veal
(then let rest 3 minutes
before serving)

145°F fish

160°F hamburgers and
other ground meat

165°F poultry



www.cdc.gov/foodsafety

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Community Partnership:



We joined Loaves & Fishes in Devens for their “Spring into Action” 5K Fundraiser on May 1st, 2022, supporting their mission of providing nutritious food, in an atmosphere of kindness and respect, to individuals in need who reside in Ayer, Devens, Dunstable, Groton, Harvard, Littleton and Shirley.



We hosted an appreciation luncheon for our regional Councils on Aging and town Outreach Workers to continue our strong working relationship with these important community partners. We were happy to see so many familiar and smiling faces, and it was great to catch up and share resources and ideas with one another to best serve our communities!

Our Public Health Team tabled at Townsend Earth Day on April 23rd, Groton Town Employee Benefits Fair on May 2nd, and at Bolton Children’s Festival May 7th.



Mental Health Film Screenings: We worked with the Gardner Board of Health and Gardner Community Action Team (GCAT) to promote regional screenings and a week-long streaming opportunity of “Angst,” a film that raises awareness about anxiety. The film will no longer be available for streaming after 5/19 , but you will be able to indefinitely access a dashboard of resources and links as well as a recorded panel discussion here: <https://watch.eventive.org/indieflix/play/627baa1842a6930085fcd922>



Pictures top to bottom: the crew at the Loaves & Fishes 5K, Jenna tabling at Townsend Earth Day, Megan and Susan tabling at Bolton Children’s Fest

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Upcoming Events:

- ◆ Catch us at the Bolton Senior Appreciation Fair on Tuesday May 17th and the Lancaster Employee Health Fair on May 18th!
- ◆ Our Public Health Nurses will be giving "Tick Talks" throughout the region to educate folks on ticks and how to protect yourself from tickborne illness. Upcoming "Tick Talks" will be Mon. May 23rd in Littleton, and Wed. June 8th at the Ayer Library. 
- ◆ We will be at the Mass Association Public Health Nursing conference on May 19th. This is an annual event where public health nurses from across the state come together for networking, learning and resource sharing. This year, attendees will be provided with a set of epinephrine auto-injectors, a valuable and potentially life-saving on-the-job tool for our nurses.
- ◆ We will also be at the MDPH virtual "Moving Forward Together" 21st annual Suicide Prevention Conference on May 18th and 19th.
- ◆ To continue the working relationship w childcare providers throughout the district, we will be hosting a daycare appreciation luncheon on June 9th.
- ◆ We have been trying something new at a local community dinner: on Friday May 20th, we will have our 2nd Well adult clinic at Stone Soup Kitchen in Ayer, MA.
- ◆ We are hosting a Wellness Festival at Ayer/Shirley Regional Middle School on May 21st from 10 AM to 2 PM! Come join us for fun, food, music, and all things wellness! This family-friendly event highlights local resources and agencies available to people of all ages, with an emphasis on mental health and substance use disorders in recognition of mental health awareness month. "Stop the Stigma- Start a Conversation."



AYER/SHIRLEY
SPRING WELLNESS FESTIVAL

COME JOIN US FOR FUN,
FOOD, MUSIC, AND
ALL THINGS WELLNESS!

**Saturday May 21st,
2022— Ayer
Shirley Regional
Middle School**
(1 Hospital Rd. Shirley, MA)
10 AM to 2 PM
rain or shine!
Outdoors if sunny, in the
gym in case of rain!

- CRAFTS
- GAMES
- ACTIVITIES
- VENDORS
- DEMONSTRATIONS
- MUSIC
- THERAPY ANIMALS
- FREE SNACKS
- FOOD TRUCKS

Theme: May is Mental Health Awareness Month! "Stop the Stigma. Start a Conversation."

Promoted by:



Special thanks to:



For an up-to-date list of where we'll 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!

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In honor of May being Mental Health Awareness month, here are some of the general mental health and substance use disorder related resources available to people living in Nashoba's service area. The most up-to-date version of this list is on our website.



Mass 2-1-1:

Mass 2-1-1 is an easy to remember telephone number that connects callers to information about critical health and human services available in their community, including mental health and substance use disorder services. Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, Mass 2-1-1 is an easy way to find or give help in your community. Dial 2-1-1, or 1-877-211-MASS (6277). There are also resources available on their website at <https://mass211.org/>

William James College INTERFACE Referral Service- (10 of our 16 towns subscribe to these services- Ayer/Shirley, Boxborough, Groton/Dunstable, Littleton, Lunenburg, Ashby, Pepperell, Townsend): The William James INTERFACE Referral Service, offered through the Freedman Center, is a mental health and wellness referral Helpline available Monday through Friday, 9 am- 5 pm, at 888-244-6843 (toll free). This is a free, confidential referral service for residents of participating communities. Each referral best meets the location, insurance, and specialty needs of the caller. <https://interface.williamjames.edu/community/ayer-shirley>

NAMI Massachusetts Compass Helpline: The Compass Helpline at NAMI Massachusetts provides information and resources to help people navigate the mental health system and related systems of care, and problem solve in difficult circumstances. Compass is staffed by people with experience navigating the system for themselves or a family member. The Compass Helpline is available Monday through Friday, 9 am- 5 pm, excluding holidays. You can call at 617-704-6264 or 1-800-370-9085, or email compass@namimass.org; <https://namimass.org/nami-mass-compass-helpline/>

NAMI Affiliate Groups: Use your local NAMI affiliate to find peer and family support, educational programs, and local mental health resources.

-NAMI North Central MA (Affiliate for Ashburnham, Ashby, Ayer, Berlin, Bolton, Groton, Harvard, Lancaster, Lunenburg, Pepperell, Shirley, and Townsend): <https://www.naminorthcentralma.org/>

-NAMI Central Middlesex (Affiliate for Boxborough, Littleton, and Stow): <https://www.namcentralmiddlesex.org/>

-NAMI Greater Lowell (Affiliate for Dunstable): namigreaterlowell@gmail.com, (617) 580-8541

Network of Care Massachusetts:

Let Network of Care Massachusetts help you take the first step in locating mental health, substance use, and related social services in your community to support good health and recovery.

<https://massachusetts.networkofcare.org/mh/index.aspx>

Massachusetts Behavioral Health Access (MABHA):

The Massachusetts Behavioral Health Access (MABHA) website helps both providers and individuals locate openings in mental health and substance use disorder services. We welcome everyone to search for services that they can access directly from their community. <https://www.mabhaccess.com/>

Psychology Today Search Tool:

You can use this tool to customize a search to find a therapist/psychiatrist/support group etc. near you. Can filter by distance, gender, ages treated, insurances accepted, offers telehealth, clinical specialty, etc. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists>

PPAL (Parent/Professional Advocacy League):

Parent/Professional Advocacy League is a statewide, grassroots family organization that advocates for improved access to mental health services for children, youth and their families. PPAL's goals are to support families, nurture parent leaders and work for systems change. <https://ppal.net/>

ClearPath Hoarding with Metro Community Development Corp:

ClearPath provides education, peer support, and sorting and discarding services for hoarders, their families/supports and professionals who work with people with hoarding disorder. A task force representing about fifteen agencies and practitioners developed ClearPath's programming for those with hoarding disorder, their families, and the public. Programming is offered in various towns in MetroWest Boston in cooperation with town departments and other agencies. To join a group, request coaching or a home assessment, or if you have questions, please contact ClearPath@strongcommunity.org or call 508-658-2880. <https://strongcommunity.org/clearpath-hoarding/peer-support-groups/>



"What mental health needs is more sunlight, more candor, more unashamed conversation."
-Glenn Close

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Preventing Environmental Allergy Symptoms

After the cold, dark winter, we are more than ready for the warm fresh air, sunshine and new life spring brings. However, this time of year can present real challenges for those suffering with seasonal allergies. If you or your family members suffer from environmental allergies, here are some helpful tips to help decrease allergy symptoms:

- ◆ Keep windows closed inside your home and car
- ◆ Keep pets out of the bedroom
- ◆ Shower and wash your hair before going to bed
- ◆ Change your clothes soon after coming inside
- ◆ Wash bedding in hot water
- ◆ Use dust mite covers on all bedding
- ◆ Wash hands frequently with soap and water
- ◆ Avoid touching your eyes
- ◆ Monitor daily pollen counts and avoid going outdoors during high pollen times
- ◆ Always consult your health care provider before taking medications; if you take over the counter allergy medication such as Claritin or Zyrtec, take the medication daily and follow directions carefully to be effective against allergies
- ◆ Speak with your health care provider if symptoms persist

<https://acaai.org/allergies/seasonal-allergies>
<https://www.aafa.org/rhinitis-nasal-allergy-hayfever/>



May Well Adult Clinic Schedule

Town	Clinic Location	Address	Day	Time
Ashburnham	Town Hall	32 Main St.	1 st Tuesday	10:30-11:30
Ashby	Library *(new venue)	812 Main St.	2 nd Wednesday	10-11
Ayer	Senior Center	18 Pond St.	2 nd Thursday *(new day)	11-12
Berlin	Town Office Building-COA office, RM 118	23 Linden St.	1 st Thurs	10-11
Bolton	Bolton COA	600 Main St.	3 rd Thurs	10-11
Boxborough	Community Center	30 Middle Rd.	2 nd Tues	12-1
Devens	Clear Path	84 Antietam St.	4 th Thurs	12:30-1:30
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	Hildreth House (COA)	13 Ayer Rd.	3 rd Tues	12:30-1:30
Lancaster	Community Center	695 Main St.	1 st Tues	8-10
Littleton	COA Room 230	33 Shattuck St.	2 nd Tues	10-11
Lunenburg	Eagle House	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.	2 nd Wed	12-2

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