

VIEWPOINT FROM THE COMMONWEALTH

Making life better for people with dementia and their care partners

by Alice Bonner, Ph.D., RN, FAAN, Secretary, Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs



A top priority for the Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA) is promoting the best possible quality of life for individuals living with dementia and their care partners.

An estimated 5.3 million people age 65 and older in the United States suffer from Alzheimer's disease or related dementias, including an estimated 130,000 right here in Massachusetts. The number of Massachusetts residents with Alzheimer's

is expected to rise to 150,000 by the year 2025, and continue to grow in the decades that follow. Because of this, we must prepare for many more people in our families and our Commonwealth living with some form of dementia.

Our ability to make those preparations got a big boost late last month when Governor Baker signed a new law that will make Massachusetts a national leader in addressing the impacts of Alzheimer's disease and dementia.

The law, *An Act relative to Alzheimer's and related dementias*, will strengthen the Commonwealth's Age and Dementia Friendly movements by:

- Creating an advisory council and integrated state plan to effectively address Alzheimer's disease
- Requiring content about Alzheimer's and related dementias be incorporated into continuing education requirements for physicians, physician assistants, and nurses in order renew their licenses
- Allowing doctors to share an Alzheimer's diagnosis and treatment plan with a family member or legal representative within existing state and federal privacy laws
- Requiring hospitals that serve adults to have a plan in place to assist in the recognition and management of patients with dementia within three years of the law's enactment

- Requiring elder protective services caseworkers to be trained on Alzheimer's

This new law will help ensure that we are doing our best to improve the quality of care and quality of life of hundreds of thousands of families impacted by dementia.

During the ceremonial bill signing with legislative leaders and advocates, Governor Baker said, "Raising awareness about Alzheimer's and dementia is key to supporting the Massachusetts families who are impacted by this horrible disease. This legislation will enhance efforts to train frontline caregivers on recognizing and treating dementia more effectively, and work with families of loved ones to prepare for and manage the effects of Alzheimer's."

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Like many of you, I know about this issue all too well because, in addition to leading EOEA, I'm also a care partner for my mother, who is 88 years old and has Alzheimer's. I've seen firsthand the challenges and stress that dementia can bring – both for the person with the condition and for those of us caring for them. However, being a care partner for someone with Alzheimer's also brings opportunities and rewards.

I'm so proud to live and serve in a state that is such a leader in the Age and Dementia Friendly movements. Where our elected leaders and residents alike seize the many opportunities to support and enrich the lives of older people – recognizing how much they continue to contribute to our own lives and communities.

Want to get involved in making your community more welcoming to people with dementia?

Dementia Friends Massachusetts offers a one-hour information session on what dementia is and the simple things that you can do to support people living with the disease in your community. To find out more about attending a Dementia Friends information session, visit www.DementiaFriendsMA.org.

POPULAR CAREGIVER TRAINING FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF THOSE WITH DEMENTIA RETURNS IN OCTOBER

Are you the caregiver of a loved one living with dementia? The Savvy Caregiver Program is a popular and free six-session training for family and friends who are active caregivers for those living with Alzheimer's or related dementias.

The next workshop series will take place on Tuesdays, October 2, 9, 16, 23, and 30, and November 6, 2018, from 2 to 4 p.m., and will be held at LifePath, located on the second floor of the Greenfield Corporate Center: 101 Munson Street, Greenfield, MA 01301.

To register by September 26, email info@LifePathMA.org or leave your contact information at 413-773-5555 x1190 or 978-544-2259 x1190. You can also learn more and connect with the program at LifePathMA.org/services/services-for-caregivers/the-savvy-caregiver-program.

Savvy Caregiver will help you:

- Understand the impact of dementia on both you and the person in your care
- Learn the skills you need to manage daily life
- Take control and set goals



Taking care of a person living with Alzheimer's or related dementia is specialized work. To do this work successfully, caregivers need special skills, knowledge, and a positive attitude that helps them to care for themselves.

- Communicate more effectively
- Strengthen family resources
- Feel better about your caregiving
- Take care of you!

Karen recently completed The Savvy Caregiver Program course. "I came into Savvy not knowing anything about dementia," says Karen, whose mother has dementia. "When I finished the course, I felt pretty confident that I had a very good understanding of what was going on, and I feel like I am a lot more helpful to my mother now. I'm a lot more empathetic toward my mother. I'm a lot more patient with her."

Funding for this program was provided by a grant from the Administration for Community Living in collaboration with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs and the Healthy Living Center of Excellence.

These workshops require pre-registration and are not open to professional caregivers.

LifePath offers many support options for caregivers. Call 413-773-5555 or 978-544-2259 to speak with a resource specialist or learn more online at LifePathMA.org.

SOLAR ACCESS: AFFORDABLE HOME HEATING & COOLING

by Ed Rutledge, Outreach Specialist, Center for EcoTechnology

The non-profit Center for EcoTechnology (CET) is offering affordable, renewable energy for middle-income homeowners in Massachusetts. Funded by the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (Mass CEC) and the Department of Energy Resources (DOER), Solar Access adds a special subsidy to the existing combination of electric utility, state, and federal incentives for renewable energy. Working with an energy expert, participants are guided through the program every step of the way and will own their solar panels and super-efficient heat pump heating and cooling systems. Enrolling in a no-interest loan, they will pay less than they spend now for heating with savings guaranteed by the program.

“This year the incentive programs are coming together in a unique way that won’t last long,” says Mark Newey, a building science specialist at the Center for EcoTechnology. “As a non-profit, we’re excited to be able to assist people through this process that will not only save them money, but also be more comfortable at home. For us there is a huge environmental benefit.”

Other program benefits include:

- 10+ year equipment and labor warranties
- One monthly payment covered by their current heating costs
- Increased home value
- First six monthly payments covered

“While Solar Access is designed for middle-income homeowners, there are also a number of great programs and services available for homeowners (and renters) who earn less than 60% of the state median income.”

Why solar panels? Photovoltaic solar panels convert sunlight into electricity to power your house without any pollution or carbon emissions. Today the cost of solar panels plus Massachusetts incentives make it a great time to own your solar panels and pay less to the electric utility company.

Why heat pumps? Air-to-air heat pumps use electricity to very efficiently heat and cool your home. Rather than burning fossil fuels to create heat, heat pumps move heat from one place to another – bringing heat into your home in the winter and removing heat in the summer. Heat pump technology advancements now allow for excellent performance even on the coldest winter days.

While Solar Access is designed for middle-income homeowners, there are also a number of great programs and services available for homeowners (and renters) who earn less than 60% of the state median income. Weatherization

assistance, heating system repair or replacement, efficiency lighting and appliances, fuel assistance and renewable energy technology are some of the options you may be eligible for. Contact your local Community Action agency for more information. Franklin, Hampshire and North Quabbin residents can contact Community Action Pioneer Valley at (413) 774-2318. For fuel assistance, contact the Low Income Heating Assistance Program (LIHEAP) at (800) 632-8175.

For more information or to find out if you can benefit from Solar Access, visit www.cetonline.org/solaraccess, call or text (413) 341-0418, or email solaraccess@cetonline.org.

UPCOMING FRANKLIN COUNTY FLU CLINICS - 2018 SEASON

by Lisa White, Public Health Nurse, Franklin Regional Council of Governments, Cooperative Public Health Service

The following influenza clinics taking place this fall are brought to you by the Cooperative Public Health Service (CPHS) of the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG).

Tuesday, September 18, 9 to 11 a.m.
 South County Senior Center

Friday, October 5, 9 to 11 a.m.
 Conway Town Hall/Council on Aging

Tuesday, October 9, 9:30 to 11:30 a.m.
 Charlemont and Hawley Councils on Aging at Charlemont Federated Church

Friday, October 12, 9 to 11 a.m.
 Stoughton Place Apartments, Gill

Saturday, October 13, 10 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
 Deerfield Elementary School, South Deerfield

Wednesday, October 17, 3:30 to 5:30 p.m.
 Gill Elementary School

Tuesday, October 23, 8:30 to 10:30 a.m.
 The Senior Center, Shelburne Falls

Tuesday, October 23, 1 to 2 p.m.
 Highland Village Apartments, Shelburne Falls



In addition to getting your flu shot, there are other steps you can take to reduce your risk of getting sick or passing germs onto someone else. Washing your hands is the best way to prevent the spread of germs.

Wednesday October 24, 5 to 7 p.m.
 Heath school building, 18 Jacobs Road

Monday, October 29, 6 to 8 p.m.
 Mohawk Regional School, 26 Ashfield Road, Buckland

Tuesday, November 6, at polls: 7 to 9:30 a.m. and 5 to 7 p.m.
 Leyden Town Hall

Wednesday, November 7, 3:15 to 5:30 p.m.
 Conway Grammar School

Bring your insurance cards – most forms of insurance are accepted – or, if you do not have a billable insurance, bring \$20 for the fee for

adults and \$10 for kids. Both injectable and flu mist formulas for kids will be available this year. Regular or Senior High-Dose formulas are available for those over age 65.

Contact Lisa White, RN, regional public health nurse of FRCOG, at 413-665-1400 x114 for updated schedule and more information or visit www.frcog.org.

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