



# AGE-FRIENDLY

Franklin County & North Quabbin

What is Age & Dementia Friendly Franklin County & North Quabbin?

*We make it easier for older adults to stay connected, active, and supported.*

*[The Regional Action Plan](#), developed by local partners & residents, offers a roadmap for making our community an even better place to grow older.*

## Rethinking the Senior Center: Age & Dementia Friendly South County



When people hear “senior center,” they usually picture a place older adults gather for programs and activities. But what if a senior center became something more—a place that leads its community in asking bigger questions: What kind of community are we for older adults and people living with dementia? What kind of community do we want to be? And how do we get there?

These are the questions at the heart of the [South County Senior Center’s](#) Age & Dementia Friendly work. Serving the communities of Whately, Deerfield and

Sunderland under Director and LifePath board member Jennifer Ferrara (pictured), the center is more than just a gathering space for regulars. It’s a hub—visible, welcoming, and deeply rooted in the communities it serves. “We want people to see the senior center as a place they can turn to,” Jennifer said. “Somewhere to connect, to ask questions, and to find support.”

South County’s approach follows the framework developed by [AARP](#) and [Dementia Friendly America](#), with funding from a [MCOA Service Incentive Grant through AGE](#) and in partnership with Center for Demography on Aging at UMass Boston. The process begins with listening—through a community needs assessment that includes not just older adults, but first responders, human services professionals, and other

community partners. The idea is simple: bring people together, hear what's working and what's not, and build shared goals for making towns more inclusive to people of all ages and abilities. As Jennifer puts it, "By engaging the entire community... someone who needs help is more likely to get the right support."

[Click to Read More](#)

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## Comerford Secures \$110K for Local Villages

Senator Jo Comerford has secured a one-time \$110,000 earmark to support ten Village organizations across Hampshire, Franklin, and Worcester counties, recognizing their essential role in helping older adults remain in their homes and communities.

Included in the [Massachusetts Senate's Fiscal Year 2026 budget](#), the funding reflects a broader commitment to community-based aging support and follows sustained advocacy from the Villages themselves, LifePath, and other local partners.

Villages are grassroots, membership-based organizations that coordinate volunteer efforts to support older neighbors with transportation, home repairs, errands, and social connection. They've become a vital part of the regional network supporting older adults and caregivers—especially in rural areas where services can be limited.

"The Villages are an integral component in the complex web of community-based support for older adults and caregivers, which is itself an already stressed system," said Gary Yuhas, Executive Director of LifePath. "We are thankful for the Villages and partner with them to help to fill gaps in essential needs like transportation and home repair, allowing individuals to remain in their homes and communities. This earmark is an acknowledgement of their important work and an investment in the future of the Villages and the communities they serve, and its impact will be felt for years to come."

This funding is a meaningful endorsement of local innovation and partnership. LifePath and the Age & Dementia Friendly initiative thank Senator Comerford and her team—and celebrate this milestone alongside the Villages and the neighbors they support.

To share your appreciation, you can contact Senator Comerford's aide Katelyn Billings at [katelyn.billings@masenate.gov](mailto:katelyn.billings@masenate.gov).

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# TRAINING



## Understanding Dementia: Practical Tools for Professionals



### If you work in...

Human Services	Housing
Libraries	Retail
Food Service	Trades
Non-profits	Villages
Senior Centers	Government

### You know that...

Without effective communication, clients may not feel heard—and their needs may go unmet. Working with people living with dementia requires skills that aren't always intuitive. This free program is for professionals and volunteers who may encounter people living with dementia and their caregivers but lack training in dementia awareness and communication.

Friday, June 20<sup>th</sup>, 10:30-12:00  
Allen Room, John Olver Transit Center  
12 Olive St., Greenfield  
Questions: [jmolony@lifepathma.org](mailto:jmolony@lifepathma.org)  
413 829 9198  
Refreshments & Snacks Served

[Click Here to Register](#)



**Dementia  
Friends  
Massachusetts**

A Dementia Friendly America initiative



## Become a Dementia Friend or Champion

Dementia Friends Massachusetts offers free, one-hour sessions to help people understand how dementia affects individuals and what small actions can make a big difference. Find a local or virtual session:

[dementiafriendsma.org/find-a-session](https://dementiafriendsma.org/find-a-session)

Want to do more? Attend a Dementia Friends Champion training to lead sessions in your own community. Upcoming virtual trainings (free, 3 hours):

- May 6, 9:30 AM–12:30 PM: [Register](#)
- July 16, 1:00–4:00 PM: [Register](#)

Join just the first 75 minutes to become a Dementia Friend. Champions get access to materials in 9 languages.

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## FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

### Municipal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Improvement Grant Program

Massachusetts Office on Disability (FY26 grant cycle 5/1-6/13)

The Municipal ADA Improvement Grant provides funding to Massachusetts cities and towns to improve accessibility for people with disabilities.

Funding supports updating a municipality's ADA Self Evaluation and Transition plans and making capital improvements that improve access or remove barriers in municipal programs, services, and facilities.

More information, including the application, is [available here](#).

### Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Grant Program

US Dept. of Transportation (applications due 6/28)

Funds for the fiscal year (FY) 2025 SS4A grant program are to be awarded on a competitive basis to support planning, infrastructural, behavioral, and operational initiatives to prevent death and serious injury on roads and streets.

This round of funding will provide a total of \$982 million, with \$580 million for capital implementation grants and \$402 million for planning grants.

The grant notice makes several noteworthy changes from previous rounds. The maximum award amount has been changed from \$10 million to \$5 million. This may make grants more accessible for some smaller communities. More information is [available here](#).

### MassVets Benefit Estimator Launched to Help Veterans Access Financial Aid

The MassVets Benefit Estimator helps veterans and families quickly determine eligibility for Chapter 115 financial assistance.

Chapter 115 provides state-funded aid for daily living expenses, medical



costs, rent, and more. The 2024 HERO Act expanded benefits, preventing eligibility loss due to cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) and enabling direct deposit for faster payments.

Veterans can use the estimator at [vets.mass.gov](https://vets.mass.gov) and apply through their local Veterans' Service Officer (VSO). For assistance, call (617) 210-5480.

## Funding for Community Transportation

Looking for funding for a community transportation service or coordination effort? [Check out these federal, state, foundation, and other funding opportunities.](#)

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Always wanted to start your own  
Memory Cafe?  
MCA just made it easy.

**NEW**

Free Online Training Modules at  
[MemoryCafeDirectory.com](https://MemoryCafeDirectory.com)

memory cafe  
alliance™

The graphic is a promotional poster for the Memory Cafe Alliance. It features a white background with a blue border. At the top, the text 'Always wanted to start your own Memory Cafe? MCA just made it easy.' is displayed in black and blue. A yellow starburst with the word 'NEW' is on the left. Below this, a blue banner contains the text 'Free Online Training Modules at MemoryCafeDirectory.com'. At the bottom is the Memory Cafe Alliance logo, which consists of three overlapping circles in blue, purple, and orange, with the text 'memory cafe alliance™' below them.

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### Our thanks to the Age & Dementia Friendly Franklin County & North Quabbin Steering Committee members:

- Michael Archbald - Foothills Health District
- Jean Dodge - LifePath's Rainbow Elders
- Lynne Feldman - LifePath
- Mary Giannetti - Heywood Healthcare
- Cathy Savoy - Athol Council on Aging
- Denise Schwartz - OASIS Council at Greenfield Community College
- Meg Ryan - FRCOG
- Rachel Stoler - FRCOG

- Phoebe Walker - FRCOG



LifePath, Inc. | 101 Munson Street Suite 201 | Greenfield, MA 01301 US

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