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A publication of

**LifePath**  
options for independence

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# THE GOOD LIFE

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## The Better Breathers Support Group at Baystate Franklin Medical Center

By Bonnie Robert, RRT, Manager of Respiratory & Patient Transport Services at Baystate Franklin Medical Center



**Pictured L-R: Bonnie Robert, RRT Manager, and Cheryl Ruf, RRT, accepting the recent PHIL (Pulmonary Health and Illnesses of the Lung) Award recognizing Cheryl as an Outstanding Respiratory Therapist.**

Are you suffering from lung disease, or know someone who is? Baystate Franklin now hosts a monthly Better Breathers Meeting in person.

The American Lung Association's Better Breathers Club programs have connected people living with lung disease to educate, support, and help each other in communities around the country for over 50 years.

Better Breathers Club members learn better ways to cope with lung conditions such as Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease (COPD), pulmonary fibrosis, and asthma, while getting the support of others in similar situations. Better Breathers Club meetings offer a fun and stimulating combination of guest speakers, problem-solving discussions, and social activities. Led by trained facilitators, these in-person adult support groups give you the tools you need to stay active and healthy, living the best quality of life you can.

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Led by an American Lung Association trained facilitator, Better Breathers Clubs feature educational presentations on a wide range of relevant topics, including:

- How lung disease affects your overall health as well as your lungs
- Breathing techniques
- Chronic lung disease triggers
- Exercise and healthy eating
- Medications and other treatment options
- Medical tests and procedures
- Supplemental oxygen
- Navigating the healthcare system
- Community resources
- Emotional health and well-being

We are hoping our meetings can help those in our community come together and learn more about their disease and how to treat it. We share stories and ideas, while learning from educated speakers, including dietitians, physicians, physical therapists, respiratory therapists, and home care specialists, to name a few. We also have refreshments at every meeting and social time at the end of every meeting.

Before COVID, Better Breathers Clubs were held throughout Massachusetts. Now, Franklin County is one of only a handful of meetings. All the rest are on the east coast.

Cheryl Ruf, a Baystate Franklin Medical Center Respiratory Therapist, was trained by the American Lung Association to run our meetings. She coordinates all the monthly meetings, sends out reminder emails to past participants, and puts up flyers throughout the surrounding communities. We have connected with several senior centers and local physician's offices to help start spreading the word.

Some of our participants have said:  
*"Finally, something in person to come and*

*learn about chronic lung disease."*

*"A place I can go with my dad to learn how to care for him better at home. We are new to oxygen, and everything is so overwhelming."*

*"The camaraderie is wonderful, and the snacks are good too."*

*"It's on my calendar every month. I never miss it!"*

### Interested in joining a meeting?

Contact Bonnie Robert, Manager of the Respiratory Department at Baystate Franklin Medical Center, at [bonnie.robert@baystatehealth.org](mailto:bonnie.robert@baystatehealth.org) or 413-773-2429.

Our meetings are held on the third Thursday of every month, 3:30-4:30 PM, at Baystate Franklin Medical Center, 164 High Street, Greenfield, MA. Enter through the main entrance and turn right to Conference Room A.

We look forward to seeing you there!

## Tips from the Money Management Program: How To Spot A Scam

Did it sound too good to be true? Did it scare you? Did someone text, email, or call you with good news or bad? Unfortunately, you probably didn't win the lottery. Fortunately, it is unlikely anyone in your family is in trouble. Most likely it was a scammer.

Scammers have become very creative. They have a never-ending array of disguises to get your attention and your money. Scammers pose as IRS agents, law enforcement, utility company representatives, bank employees, charity organizers, lottery officials, and even Medicare personnel. Scammers want you to send them gift cards, or give them your bank information. The schemes are endless but you have nothing to fear. You have the power to beat them.

**Scammers pose as IRS agents, law enforcement, utility company representatives, bank employees, charity organizers, lottery officials, and even Medicare personnel.**

By following a few guidelines, scammers will not get the best of you. The Northwestern District Attorney's Office Consumer Protection Unit website offers some practical advice:

- Screen phone calls.
- Don't give out personal or financial information over the phone, through email, or via text message.
- Don't open attachments or click on links in emails or messages.
- Resist pressure to act quickly. Talk it over with a friend or family member.
- Verify any information you are given by looking up the information and contacting the company directly.
- If someone asks for payment by wiring money, gift card, or cyber currency, it's a scam.
- If it sounds too good to be true, it is.

And if you think you have been a victim of fraud, make sure to call the District Attorney's Consumer Protection Unit at 413-774-3186.

Local Franklin County bank websites offer some very good advice on how to protect yourself from all types of scams. The websites state the banks will never ask you for personal information in an email or text, or over the phone.

So if someone you don't know tells you your grandchild has been in an accident, or your Social Security number has been compromised, or that you need to buy a gift card to solve some urgent matter: STOP, don't panic, and don't react. Take a moment and make a few phone calls of your own to verify that everything is really okay.