

# THE COLUMNS

VASSAR-WARNER HOME'S MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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## GIVING THANKS

### A LETTER FROM ERICKA VON SALEWS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As Halloween wraps up and the holiday decor seemingly springs up on store shelves overnight, one could say it is \*officially\* the holiday season! We have plenty of exciting programming planned for the next several weeks, with the star of the show being our annual Adopt-a-Senior fundraiser. For more information, please see the next page of the newsletter to find out how you can donate to treat a Vassar-Warner resident to a special holiday gift.

But before the menorahs and Christmas trees, the Thanksgiving holiday gives us the opportunity to reflect on the year we've had and the year ahead, and give thanks for the family, friends, experiences and memories we've made along the way. While this time of year can be joyful for many, the emphasis on togetherness can actually bring melancholy feelings to the forefront for some, especially the elderly. It's easy to get caught up in establishing your own holiday plans or traditions, but it's important to pay special attention and give extra support to your senior loved ones during this time of year.

There are several easy ways in which you can help assuage some of the loneliness that sometimes arises during the holiday season. Make it a point to be an active listener when spending time or catching up with your senior loved one, even if the conversation is difficult or negative. Feeling heard and understood can lift spirits in a tangible way. Coordinate virtual visits for family members that live far away or otherwise cannot travel to be in person. Bring them familiar holiday treats or bake together, if possible.

Remember: the COVID pandemic is an ongoing and serious risk for the elderly, so be sure to take the necessary safety precautions when planning that extra special holiday time with your loved ones. Here's to a happy and healthy holiday season!

Hugs and best wishes,

*Ericka Von Salews*



Looking for a simple way to give back this holiday season?

## VASSAR-WARNER HOME'S



# ADOPT-A-SENIOR 2022

Give the gift of compassion by donating to Vassar-Warner Home's annual Adopt-a-Senior Gift Giving Event.

Deadline is December 15!

### How It Works

There is a **\$50 minimum** to adopt a senior. Upon hearing from you, we will match you with a resident and provide a wishlist. Monetary donations are also accepted.

All donations go toward purchasing our seniors personalized holiday gifts.

### How To Participate

**Step 1:** Let us know you'd like to participate by emailing [publicrelations@vassarwarner.org](mailto:publicrelations@vassarwarner.org)

**Step 2:** Get matched with a resident.

**Step 3:** Deliver or ship gifts to VWH by **December 15. No wrapping required.**

# MENTAL HEALTH MEMO: SEASONAL DEPRESSION

There are plenty of joys this time of year: Thanksgiving dinners, time spent with friends and family, warm fireplaces, hot apple cider, the leaves changing. But for more than 16 million Americans each year, the fall can signal a significant mental health change known as seasonal depression, or seasonal affective disorder (SAD). Although commonly referred to as the "winter blues," SAD is a condition that should be taken seriously and can be treated by mental health professionals.

According to Mental Health America, the prevalence of seasonal depression is anywhere from 0-10 percent of the population, depending on the geographic region. Typically, the further one lives from the equator, the more likely they are to feel the effects. The onset of symptoms commonly occurs between 20 and 30 years of age, and is more common in women. In any given year, approximately 5% of the U.S. population experiences seasonal depression, though it often goes undiagnosed due to its fleeting nature--those who suffer from seasonal depression often report symptoms subsiding for the rest of the year.

One of the most common causes of seasonal depression is the lack of sunlight that we experience in the fall and winter months. Studies have shown that this lack of sunlight can affect our ability to produce serotonin, a neurotransmitter that affects mood. The mental toll of shorter, darker days have in recent years been compounded by the threat of COVID-19 and other dangerous illnesses that spread more rapidly in the fall and winter, leading to isolation for many seniors. Symptoms of seasonal depression may include: carbohydrate craving, increased appetite, excessive sleepiness, weight gain, lethargy, anxiety, and mood changes.

There are many steps you can take to alleviate symptoms of seasonal depression, but the first and most important step is talking to your doctor or mental health professional. There is no need to suffer through the holidays and cold months waiting for spring--ask for resources on how to brighten your winter season.



## NOVEMBER ACTIVITY LINEUP

November 14:  
PJ Party

November 17:  
Birthday Party

November 30:  
Resident Council

**If you are planning on  
taking a resident home  
for the holiday, please  
contact us ASAP at  
[kcase@vassarwarner.org](mailto:kcase@vassarwarner.org)**

# A SEASON OF GRATITUDE

## *How Giving Thanks Can Improve Your Health*

Thanksgiving inspires us to spend a little extra time thinking about what we're thankful for. But did you know that regularly practicing gratitude is beneficial for your physical and mental health? Practicing gratitude can:

- Help strengthen your relationships.
- Promote empathy and patience.
- Boost your immune system.
- Relieve stress.
- Decrease feelings of anxiety and depression.
- Boost personal satisfaction.

Read on to learn how to incorporate acts of gratitude into your daily life.

### **Keep a gratitude journal**

Each day, take a few minutes to write down what you're grateful for. Think of something beautiful that you saw during your day, a happy memory, or a person that is important to you. This could be as simple as taking a moment to think of your favorite song or TV show, writing down what you did that day or thinking about something that always brings a smile to your face.

### **Think of Three**

Take a few minutes to think of three things that brought you joy throughout the day. If you are having difficulty thinking of three things from the day, consider identifying your three happiest days, your three favorite people, three things you enjoy about the current season or three things that you are looking forward to.

### **Compliment or Thank Others Daily**

We encounter several people in our everyday lives—family, friends, colleagues, neighbors, coworkers, strangers—and oftentimes, we become so accustomed to these people in our lives that they blend into our everyday routines.

Take for example your mailman. You see him every morning, but when was the last time you thanked him, or asked how he was doing? Making a conscious effort to compliment others, or thank those that help you, is a great way to infuse your everyday routine with gratitude. Making others feel good about themselves tends to have a domino effect, and by aiming to hand out one compliment or genuine thanks per day, you can start a ripple effect of positivity.



### **Use Gratitude in Tough Times**

Gratitude often comes easier when things are going well—but finding things you are grateful for in tough times has an even more powerful effect. Practicing gratitude in difficult situations can actually reverse negative feelings because it provides a new perspective, helping us to see opportunities that we didn't see before. When things get tough, take a moment to find the positives in the situation. A health setback can be deeply upsetting, but the great nurses can be a blessing. A family conflict can cause stress, but a neighborly friendship can alleviate it. People who experience gratitude are able to cope more effectively with everyday stress, may show increased resilience in the face of trauma-induced stress, and may recover more quickly from illness and benefit from greater physical health.

# TELEMEDICINE & SENIOR CITIZENS

## NEW STUDY SHOWS TELEMEDICINE'S POPULARITY WITH THE ELDERLY

According to a new report from the National Center for Health Statistics, more than 1 in 3 adults used telemedicine in 2021, and the trend seems to be holding steady as we near the end of 2022. The method was most popular amongst women and older adults, as 43.3% of adults aged 65+ took advantage of telemedicine compared with only 29.4% of those between 18 and 29.

There are several benefits to telemedicine specific to the senior population, especially during the colder months when winter weather and flu viruses can make a trip to the doctor's office rather hazardous. Telemedicine allows seniors the comfort and convenience of remaining in their homes while still receiving the care and attention of a medical professional. As experts are anticipating another wave of COVID and flu cases this winter, there could be safety benefits to scheduling all appointments virtually unless absolutely necessary to be in person.

Telemedicine also allows seniors to loop in family members or other caretakers virtually for appointments, no matter their location or distance. It's often beneficial to have a family member who is aware of your current medical situation so they can help provide information, ask questions, and take note of your doctor's answers. By using virtual appointments, it's more likely that your family member will be able to be present for you and your doctor.

It's always best to consult with your doctor about whether or not telemedicine is a viable option for your current medical needs. Telemedicine is not limited to just your physical health--there are also several mental health practitioners that offer virtual consultations. For more information, contact your medical professional and ask for virtual options.



## NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

### Residents

November 5:  
Doris Dunnigan

November 12:  
Frances "Jane" Sincerbeaux

### Staff

November 1  
Patsy Hunter, HHA

November 3  
Rose Belton, PCA



## RESIDENT SPOTLIGHT: DOROTHY "DOTTIE" PITTI



Born and raised in the Bronx, Dottie is known as a talkative, charismatic friend with a love of singing and dancing. As a former wedding singer and roller skate dancer, and as a current member of the singing club, Dottie loves music of all kinds and enjoys being around people. She was married at the age of 19 and is mother to four children, whom she raised to be hard workers like herself. In her free time, Dottie enjoys going for walks and dancing, and even used to fly planes! She is an avid animal lover who loves her furry companions and has lots of pets of her own: a Shepard, three tanks of fish, and two birds.

## STAFF SPOTLIGHT: VIVIAN TOWNSEND, HHA



Vivian "Tulip" Townsend always dreamed of helping people, which is precisely what she does in her role as a home health aid at Vassar-Warner Home. Tulip was born in New York City and grew up in the Bronx with her brother and two sisters. Her greatest joy in life is her family— she has two daughters, six grandchildren, and one great-granddaughter! An optimistic, friendly woman, Tulip loves to put a smile on people's faces. In her free time, Tulip enjoys going to the gym, watching movies, and going out for dinner – her favorite restaurant is Texas Roadhouse. Tulip's faith is extremely important to her and she strives to put God first in all that she does. Her favorite animals are cats and dogs, especially her own dog, Chewy.

### COLUMNS CORNER: WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND TOWN

**November 4: KINKY BOOTS** at the Center for Performing Arts at Rhinebeck

**November 18: Hudson Valley Go Red for Women** at the Culinary Institute





# 2021–2022 Vassar-Warner Home Board of Trustees

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## Vassar-Warner Home Committees of the Board

Effective October 2022

<u>Executive Committee</u>	<u>Foundation Board</u>
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Gary Grandstaff	Bill Francis
Alice Dickey	Kim Ryder
Shari Hubner	Greg White
Ericka Von Salews	Brian Robinson

## Vassar-Warner Home Committees of the Board

Effective October 2022

<u>Board Development</u>	<u>Finance</u>	<u>Fund Development</u>	<u>Quality of Resident Life</u>
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	+Cora Motts	Jill Karn	Ellen Smyth
		+Cheryl Holt	John Beale
<u>Property</u>	<u>Personnel</u>	<u>Strategic &amp; Long-</u>	Rosemary Butts
Gary Grandstaff – Chair	Alice Dickey – Chair	<u>Range Planning</u>	+Kalin Perez
Laurie Cohn	Susan Sullivan	Rena Hill	+Luann Zadora
+Pete Molino	Bisceglia	Ellen Smyth	+Christina DeSouza, RN

### KEY:

\* = Community Member + = Staff Member

Ex Officio, all committees: Ericka Von Salews and Ellen Smyth