

THE COLUMNS

VASSAR-WARNER HOME'S MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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THE IMPORTANCE OF CONNECTION: COMBATting SOCIAL ISOLATION

A LETTER FROM ERICKA VON SALEWS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

A serious, yet understated, health risk, social isolation, or the lack of social connections, can lead to mental and physical health complications. The CDC has linked social isolation to increased risk for heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, depression and anxiety, dementia, and more. These conditions can greatly impact your well-being, resulting in anything from headaches to trouble sleeping to reduced cognitive abilities.

While anyone can experience loneliness or social isolation, older adults are often at a greater risk as they navigate life's changes - whether that be the death of a loved one, hearing or vision loss, or moving to a new space.

In fact, nearly one in four adults aged 65 or older are considered socially isolated.

Fortunately, there are many ways to combat social isolation. A simple way to stay connected to those around you is to find time each day to get in touch with family and friends, whether that be in person, by email, or over the phone. If you're not sure where to start, introduce yourself to your neighbor or start a conversation with someone new. You can also attend one of Vassar-Warner Home's many group events to make new friends, connect with familiar faces, and practice a hobby or skill! If you aren't feeling up to an in-person event, you can explore the AARP's online offerings, which include educational lectures, topical tips and tricks, guided fitness classes, and more.

Most importantly, if you are feeling alone, reach out to a staff member or a trusted family member. We are here for you!

Hugs,

Ericka Von Salews

This letter is based on an article that Ericka recently authored for *Westfair Business Journal*. Read her full story [here](#).

Are you looking for a simple, yet meaningful, way to give back this holiday season?

Consider Vassar-Warner Home's Annual Adopt-A-Senior!



How It Works:

During the holiday season, we like to ensure that all of our residents receive something special. Adopt-A-Senior helps us make this happen!

Upon hearing from you, we will match you with a resident and provide a wishlist. You will then deliver or ship the gift(s) to Vassar-Warner Home and we'll take it from there.

Monetary donations are also accepted; all donations go toward purchasing personalized holiday gifts for our seniors.

Please note, there is a **\$50 minimum** to adopt a senior.

How To Participate:

1. Send an email to
info@vassarwarner.org
2. Get matched with a resident.
3. Deliver or ship gifts to Vassar-Warner Home by December 1, 2023.

No wrapping is required.



MENTAL HEALTH MEMO: DEPRESSION AWARENESS MONTH

Did you know that October is National Depression Awareness Month? Depression is a serious mood disorder that can impact the way you feel, think, and behave; we must bring awareness to the prevalence of depression and the need for mental health screening as a part of routine health care.



According to a [Gallup report](#) released earlier this year, **1/3 of adults in the U.S. have experienced symptoms of depression during their lifetime.** While there are many types of depression, common symptoms include persistent feelings of hopelessness, the inability to enjoy activities that previously brought you joy, and difficulty sleeping. Anyone can experience these symptoms, though several [risk factors](#) have been associated with the condition, including pre-existing medical conditions (i.e., heart disease, cancer, previous stroke), social isolation or loneliness, functional limitations or immobility, and major life events, such as losing a loved one.



Far too often, people ignore the symptoms of depression. However, **depression is not a normal part of life, it is a treatable medical condition.** Like health screenings that you may have taken for heart disease or diabetes, depression screenings are a quick and easy way to identify signs of this serious illness.

If you are concerned that you or a loved one is experiencing symptoms of depression, **you can complete an anonymous online screening for free.** A screening is not a professional diagnosis, but it can alert you to seek treatment when necessary.

The most important thing to know is that if you are experiencing symptoms of depression, **you are not alone. We, your Vassar-Warner Home family, are here to support you.**

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

Residents:

10/11 Patricia Glass

10/22 Mary Lou Chippari



10/29 Stella Anstett

10/31 Maureen Kelly

Staff:

10/19 Andrea Hardy

10/22 Cora Motts



SUPERFOODS: HOW THESE 3 HEROIC FOODS CAN TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE

When we were children, our parents told us how important it was to eat our fruits and vegetables so we could grow “big and strong.” What no one realizes, however, is that this knowledge can translate to adults to keep them “big and strong”, or, in the case of superfoods, promote adults’ overall health.



Superfoods are a category of foods that are generally rich in antioxidants, minerals, vitamins, fiber, and healthy fats. These foods are associated with stronger immunity, reduced inflammation, lower cholesterol, and increased heart health. By including superfoods in your diet, you can maintain a healthy mind and body.

To enhance your diet with superfoods, you may consider trying:

Berries

Berries are packed with antioxidants, vitamins, and more that help to reduce the risk of inflammatory diseases and promote brain health. These fruits increase plasticity in your brain, resulting in strengthened memory and learning abilities.

Nuts & Seeds

Not only do nuts and seeds help reduce the chances of heart disease and other inflammatory diseases, they contribute to better brain function! In fact, sunflower seeds, hazelnuts, and almonds are filled with vitamin E, which has been found to improve cognitive function and decrease the possibility of Alzheimer’s Disease.

Eggs

The versatility of eggs makes this superfood an easy option! Eggs are a great source of vitamin B, vitamin A, iron, phosphorus, and more, which help reduce the risk of cognitive delay or brain shrinkage.

Eggs also preserve eye health due to the antioxidants, zeaxanthin and lutein, found in them.

OCTOBER ACTIVITY LINEUP

10/22, 6PM

Movie in the Parlor



10/24, 9:30AM

Coffee Klatch



10/26, 2PM

Family and Friends
Halloween Party



10/28, 2:45PM

Happy Hour



10/29, 3:30PM

Funny Cat Videos for
National Cat Day



10/31, 3:30PM

Candy Corn Button Art



THE HISTORY OF HALLOWEEN

Halloween, a beloved holiday celebrated annually on October 31st, has a rich and intriguing history that spans centuries.

While today's Halloween is associated with costumes, candy, and spooky decorations, its origins can be traced back to ancient Celtic traditions, with influences from various cultures and beliefs over the years. Let's take a journey through time to explore the fascinating history of Halloween.



Ancient Beginnings

Halloween can be traced back to the Celtic festival of Samhain (pronounced sah-win), which marked the end of the harvest season and the beginning of winter in what is now Ireland, the United Kingdom, and parts of France. Samhain, celebrated from October 31st to November 1st, was a time when people believed that the boundary between the living and the dead was at its thinnest, allowing spirits to cross over into the mortal realm.

During Samhain, Celts lit bonfires and wore costumes made of animal heads and skins to ward off evil spirits. They also left food and offerings outside their homes to appease these otherworldly entities. This early connection to spirits and the supernatural would lay the foundation for many Halloween traditions to come.

Christian Influence

In the 8th century, the Christian church attempted to Christianize Samhain by introducing All Saints' Day, also known as All Hallows' Day, on November 1st. All Saints' Day honored all the saints and martyrs, and the night before, October 31st, became known as All Hallows' Eve, eventually evolving into Halloween.



The merging of Samhain and Christian traditions led to a variety of customs, such as "souling" and "guising."

During "souling," people would go door-to-door, offering prayers for the dead in exchange for food. "Guising" involved dressing up in costumes and performing tricks or songs in exchange for treats - a practice that has unmistakable parallels with modern trick-or-treating.

THE HISTORY OF HALLOWEEN CONTINUED



Pumpkin Carving and Jack-O'-Lanterns

The iconic jack-o'-lantern, a carved pumpkin with a candle inside, has become synonymous with Halloween.

Its origin traces back to an Irish folktale about a man named Stingy Jack. According to legend, Jack was a trickster who managed to outwit the Devil on multiple occasions. When Jack died, neither Heaven nor Hell would accept him, so he was forced to wander the Earth as a hollowed-out turnip with only a burning coal inside to light his way.



When Irish immigrants brought this legend to America, they discovered that pumpkins were more abundant and easier to carve than turnips. Thus, the tradition of carving jack-o'-lanterns from pumpkins was born.

Halloween in America

Halloween continued to evolve in the United States during the 19th century. As Irish and Scottish immigrants contributed to its popularity, the holiday began to take on a more community-oriented and playful tone. Activities like bobbing for apples and fortune-telling games became staples at Halloween parties.



In the early 20th century, Halloween began to lose some of its more superstitious and religious undertones, becoming a holiday focused on community, fun, and, of course, candy.

Trick-or-treating became widespread in the 1920s and 1930s, offering children a chance to dress up in costumes and gather sweets from their neighbors.

Modern Halloween

Today, Halloween is a global phenomenon, with many people embracing the holiday's historical connections to the spirit world.

Haunted attractions, horror movies, and ghost tours have become popular ways to celebrate the holiday with a nod to its eerie origins.



RESIDENT SPOTLIGHT: ELLEN O'HARA



Ellen O'Hara was born and raised in Manhattan, New York.

Ellen's greatest achievement is becoming an Episcopal Priest, though she worked in a variety of careers throughout her lifetime including teaching and editing. She attended graduate school at Fordham University and completed Seminary School, her Ordination being one of her life's most significant milestones.

An outgoing and adventurous woman, Ellen has traveled to London, England and Paris, France in addition to Rome and Florence, Italy. In her free time, Ellen enjoys reading (she is a fan of 19th-century poetry), completing crossword puzzles, and listening to music, whether it's classical, opera, country, or rock & roll!

STAFF SPOTLIGHT: MAVIS KPENTY



Mavis Kpenty was born and raised in Ghana, West Africa. Mavis currently works as a home health aide at Vassar-Warner Home, though she previously worked as a teacher while in Ghana; one of her greatest achievements is imparting lasting knowledge to her students.

A hardworking, loving, and compassionate woman, Mavis believes in doing to others what you want done to you. She always delivers her best self, wherever life leads her. Mavis is a Christian, greatly enjoys Gospel music, and dreams of traveling to Hawaii.

In her free time, Mavis enjoys watching movies, singing, and playing volleyball. Her favorite food is jollof rice, a rice dish cooked in a tomato stew.

COLUMNS CORNER: WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND TOWN

Wednesday, October 25, 5 - 6:30 PM | VIRTUAL Meditation

To register contact, Sue Wixon at 914-523-8400
or email swixon@pinehillcommunitycenter.org.

Friday, October 27, 4 - 5 PM | Community Nature Walk

The Preserve at Vassar, 50 Vassar Farm Lane, Poughkeepsie
[Click here to RSVP.](#)



2023-2024 Vassar-Warner Home Board of Trustees

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Ellen C. Smyth – *President*
Rena Hill – *Vice President*
Michael A. Craven, Ph. D. – *Treasurer*
Laurie Cohn - *Past President*

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Effective October 2023

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Michael A. Craven, Ph. D.
+Ericka Von Salews

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KEY:

* = Community Member
+ = Staff Member
Ex Officio, all committees:
Ericka Von Salews and Ellen Smyth

For 152 years, Vassar-Warner Home has served the Hudson Valley community, providing a welcoming and caring environment for more than 2,000 seniors.

We treat everyone who walks through our doors with compassion. Thanks to the ongoing support of the Vassar-Warner Home Foundation, an independent private foundation, and you, the Vassar-Warner family, we are able to offer services to all, even when an individual's income no longer covers the cost of their care. This dedication to service has led to us being recognized as the Best Assisted Living Service in the Hudson Valley.



We continue to see an increase in demand for our services as our constituency of long-term supporters dwindles. **We need your support now more than ever.**

Please share this message with your family and friends. Together, we can ensure that Vassar-Warner Home continues to thrive.

