

THE COLUMNS

VASSAR-WARNER HOME'S MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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HAPPY HOLIDAYS

A LETTER FROM ERICKA VON SALEWS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As 2024 approaches, it is a wonderful time to reflect on the previous year, as well as the year ahead. 2023 was a lovely year for Vassar-Warner Home. Most recently, we celebrated the holiday season with our residents. Thank you to those of you who generously donated to Adopt-A-Senior, you were the reason for the ear-to-ear smiles on our residents' faces!

This is a very busy time of year for all, so I will keep my note short. Everyone at Vassar-Warner Home wishes you and your loved ones a very happy and healthy holiday season. We look forward to continuing to care for you and your families in 2024!

Hugs,

Erica Von Salews

MENTAL HEALTH MEMO: PRACTICING SELF-CARE

Chances are, you've heard of the term self-care. The idea of self-care has become more prominent in recent years as society places a greater emphasis on mental health and overall well-being. Generally speaking, self-care consists of activities to care for our mental, emotional, and physical health. While you may picture a steamy bubble bath or a lonesome walk in the woods when you hear "self-care", there are a wide variety of activities that you can engage in to improve your overall health, increase your satisfaction with life, and enhance your relationships.



If you aren't sure where to begin your self-care journey, read the tips below to help guide you.

Connect with friends and family. Whether it's a letter, phone call, video chat through Zoom, email, or an in-person visit, reaching out to friends and family members will surely lift your spirits.

Have a warm beverage. When it's cold outside, there's nothing better than feeling warm inside. Treat yourself to a cup of coffee, tea, or hot chocolate – let yourself enjoy every sip!

Exercise. Go for a short walk down the hall (bonus points if you say hello to a neighbor!). If you want to try something new, consider attending a virtual yoga or chair exercise class. Both of these classes are offered for free through the Pinehill Community Center; contact Sue Wixon at **914-523-8400** or **swixon@pinehillcommunitycenter.org** for a Zoom meeting invitation.

Pick up a book. Reading is a great way to stimulate your mind and engage with new ideas. If reading isn't your thing, consider trying audiobooks!

Write down 3 things that bring you joy. Reflect on fond memories or consider the things that you are grateful for. The act of writing a few positive things each day is an easy way to channel happiness.

Get adequate sleep. While it may be obvious, sleep is an essential part of our overall health. To ensure that you're well-rested, turn off any screens (TVs, phones, etc.) at least two hours before sleeping.

Stay hydrated. Hydration is another key component to maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Try to drink enough water each day – roughly 6 glasses. If you are taking medication, talk to your doctor to ensure your fluid intake is appropriate.

Most importantly, make an effort to do something you enjoy every day. Whether it's listening to music, reading a book, watching a favorite TV show, or completing a puzzle, think about the activities that you enjoy and find time to practice them.



CONVENIENCE OR TRADITION? REAL VS. ARTIFICIAL CHRISTMAS TREES

As Christmas approaches, you may see more articles debating the positives and negatives of a real tree as opposed to an artificial tree. The Internet is flooded with videos and pictures of holiday-themed decor, making it difficult to choose the best option for you. While aesthetically pleasing decorations may pique your interest, [the National Christmas Tree Association](#) has estimated a 10% increase in the price of trees this season; on average, real Christmas trees will cost between \$80 and \$100.

Whether you are in search of some holiday spirit for your room or are hoping to give advice to a family member, these pros and cons will help you find the tree that is right for you.



Real Christmas Trees

Pro: Picking out a tree creates family traditions.

Making a day out of this event can result in memories that will last you a lifetime and create a tradition that will be passed down for generations.

Do you remember picking out a tree with your family?

Pro: They can give your home a more authentic feel.

A real tree can add a rustic and woodsy feel to your decor. Plus, nothing makes a room smell better than the scent of pine, one of the most popular winter scents.

Con: Trees require maintenance.

From sweeping up pine needles to watering the stump, caring for a pine tree can become a chore.

Con: Real trees can be a fire hazard.

When your Christmas tree gets dry, it becomes extremely flammable. It is important to check the cords of the lights wrapped around the tree to ensure they aren't chewed or cracked to expose the wires underneath.

Keep your tree away from fireplaces and candles, too!



Artificial Christmas Trees

Pro: Artificial trees will save you money over time.

A high-quality artificial tree will last you a lifetime, saving you the cost of buying a new tree each year.

Pro: There are more options!

A real tree only comes in one color: green; artificial trees, however, come in a variety of colors, shapes, sizes, and styles.

You can customize a tree to fit any decorating needs.

Con: They are not the most environmentally friendly.

Most artificial trees are made with a variety of plastics, meaning that once they are disposed of, they will not decompose like a traditional tree. Many artificial trees are made overseas, resulting in high carbon emissions and some trees are made with potentially dangerous materials like metal.

Con: Buying online doesn't support local businesses.

Purchasing a tree from a local business or tree farm helps support your local economy, and keeps these stores in business. As with all shopping, staying local is more beneficial than purchasing from larger organizations.

UNIQUE HOLIDAY TRADITIONS AROUND THE GLOBE

As the year comes to a close, the world lights up with holiday traditions that bring joy and warmth to families everywhere. Together, let's explore the unique customs of Christmas, Hanukkah, and Kwanzaa from different corners of the globe.



In Japan, although Christmas isn't an official national holiday, (about one percent of the population identifies as Christian (according to Smithsonian Magazine)) a unique and delicious celebration has taken root. Instead of the traditional turkey dinner, families opt for a different festive treat – heading to their local Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC). This unusual practice traces its origins back to 1974 when a highly successful marketing campaign dubbed "Kurisumasu ni wa kentakkii!" or "Kentucky for Christmas!" captured the public's eye. KFC has maintained its holiday popularity, prompting some to place orders months in advance or wait several hours for their KFC Christmas feast.

In Norway, the festive Christmas season, known as "julebord," kicks off on December 3, transforming local bars and restaurants into lively hubs of celebration throughout the entire month. Families celebrate Little Christmas on December 23, each with their unique traditions for the day. This may involve decorating a tree, crafting gingerbread houses, or savoring the warmth of risengrynsgrøt, a hot rice pudding.



In Romania, Austria, and several other European countries, Hanukkah's traditional menorah candelabra takes a unique form — it was historically crafted from potatoes by hollowing out a space and adding oil and a wick. Now, the practice often involves inserting wax candles into potatoes to uphold this distinctive tradition.



In the Avignon region of France, renowned for its vineyards, families have a unique tradition during Hanukkah. To conclude Shabbat, they open a new cask or bottle of wine. Following this ritual, they make visits to nearby homes, sampling the selected wines and raising toasts in celebration of the holiday together.



UNIQUE HOLIDAY TRADITIONS AROUND THE GLOBE CONTINUED

Kwanzaa, which is mainly observed in the United States, is a week-long celebration (from December 26 to January 1) honoring African heritage that emphasizes seven core principles known as the Nguzo Saba. These principles are Umoja (Unity), Kujichagulia (Self-Determination), Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility), Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics), Nia (Purpose), Kuumba (Creativity), and Imani (Faith). Kwanzaa involves lighting a kinara (candleholder) with seven candles; each candle represents one of the principles. Families also exchange handmade gifts, host communal feasts, and participate in various cultural activities to promote unity, heritage, and community building.



This winter, whether you find yourself gathered around a Christmas tree, lighting a menorah, or celebrating Kwanzaa, may the traditions you hold dear bring you comfort and joy. Vassar-Warner Home wishes you all a season filled with warmth, connection, and the joyous spirit of togetherness.

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Residents:

12/7 Rose "Betty" Allen-Clark

12/11 Elizabeth "Betty" Mazzuca

12/13 Guillermo Orejuela

Staff:

12/20 Karlie Scaglione

12/24 Maurice Whitted

12/25 Sandra O-Connell



DECEMBER ACTIVITIES



12/23, 3PM Holiday Movie

12/25, 10AM Sing Along
(Christmas Edition!)

12/26, 9:30AM Coffee Klatch



12/29, 3PM Nails in the Parlor

12/30, 3PM A Historical Mystery

12/31, 2:45PM Happy Hour



2023-2024 Vassar-Warner Home Board of Trustees

Officers

Ellen C. Smyth – *President*
 Rena Hill – *Vice President*
 Laurie Cohn - *Past President*
 Elizabeth Corcoran - *Secretary*
 Rosemary Butts - *Member*

Vassar-Warner Home Committees of the Board

Effective October 2023

Executive Committee

Ellen Smyth
 Rena Hill
 +Ericka Von Salews

Foundation Board

Wayne Quint - Chair
 Bill Francis
 Greg White
 Brian Robinson

Quality of Resident Life

Ellen Smyth
 Rosemary Butts
 +Kalin Perez
 +Luann Zadora

Board Development

Laurie Cohn – Chair

Fund Development & Marketing

Rena Hill - Chair
 Jill Karn
 +Cheryl Holt

Finance

Laurie Cohn
 +Cheryl Holt
 +Cora Motts

Property

Laurie Cohn
 +Pete Molino

Strategic & Long-Range Planning

Rena Hill
 Ellen Smyth

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.

