

# THE COLUMNS



VASSAR-WARNER HOME'S MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



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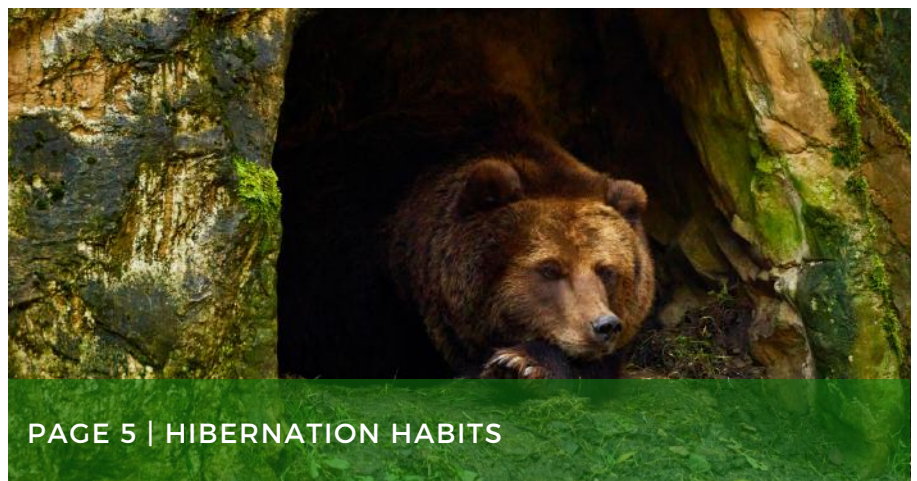
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## A HAPPY, HEALTHY AND SAFE 2024

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

Happy New Year, Vassar-Warner Home! To ensure that we all have a happy, healthy, and safe year ahead of us, I would like to highlight a few important tips to remember during these colder months. As we age, we can easily become more affected by cold weather. Whether it's a medical condition such as Diabetes or a medication that impacts the body's ability to maintain its temperature, it can be difficult to stay warm. Given the winter weather we've been experiencing lately, we all must know how to take care of ourselves (and each other!).

#### **Check the weather forecast.**

When checking the weather, pay special attention to windy, cold, or damp days. A brisk wind can quickly lower your body temperature! Though we encourage everyone to stay inside when the weather is bad if you must go outside, remember to bundle up with a hat, scarf, and gloves.

#### **Stay hydrated.**

Many people believe that dehydration is only a risk during warmer months, but this is not the case. The cooler temperatures outside, combined with warmer inside temperatures, cause moisture to leave the body quickly. Because of this, it is important to drink plenty of water throughout the day.

#### **Protect your skin.**

The cold weather can take a toll on your skin – if your skin begins to crack or bleed it can lead to an infection. To avoid this, in addition to staying hydrated, you should use moisturizing cream regularly. Moisturizer is particularly effective after bathing when the skin is most absorbent.

#### **Wear layers.**

Even if you plan to stay inside, you should dress warmly on colder days. Surprisingly, 20% of exposure-related injuries occur in the home. It is beneficial to wear multiple, lightweight layers, as these can easily be removed if you are too warm or added to if you're feeling cold. Also, remember to wear socks and slippers and to make use of extra blankets.

By following these 4 simple tips, we can all ensure a happy, healthy, and safe beginning to 2024.

Hugs,

*Ericka Von Salews*



## MENTAL HEALTH MEMO: THE BENEFITS OF PLAYING GAMES

As we age, many of us may experience declines in our cognitive functioning; for example, it can be difficult to remember things, perform simple tasks, or pay attention during a conversation. It turns out, however, that playing games is a fun and effective way to improve brain health and, therefore, your overall well-being.



Different games stimulate the brain in varying ways – some require concentration and critical thinking; others call for focus or friendly competition. No matter the game, it exercises your brain the way physical activity would exercise your body.

You can, of course, play a board game like Scrabble or Monopoly, a card game, chess, checkers, a dice game...the list goes on and on. It is also beneficial to construct puzzles, complete crosswords or word searches, or play a solo game like Solitaire.



If you're looking to try something new, however, consider one of these:

- Using the letter "S", name 6 or more things you can wear on your feet.



- Observe the objects around you for 2 to 5 minutes, then try to find 5 red items that would fit in your pocket and 5 blue items that are too big to fit. (You can change the colors based on your surroundings.)



- Name an object that starts with the same letter as your first name. When playing with friends, you can take turns to see who can name more items!

Betty



# HOW TO ACTUALLY STICK TO YOUR NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

When January comes around, many become optimistic about starting a new lifestyle; goals of eating healthier, getting more sleep, losing weight, and more fill the minds of millions around the world. However, once the year begins, are we holding ourselves accountable? It turns out that only 9% of Americans follow through on their resolutions. Want to know how to become a part of this 9%? Use these tips to help you define and stick to your resolutions:

## Set a Specific Goal

Rather than creating a vague goal, for instance, wanting to read more, set a more defined goal. Ask yourself clarifying questions to help you shape your resolution:  
*How many books do you want to read? Are there specific books that you have in mind?*  
 These types of questions can be asked when setting any goals or resolutions.

## Be Realistic

It's difficult to hold yourself accountable for unrealistic goals. Don't overextend yourself; you can start with a smaller goal, accomplish it, and then set a new goal, allowing yourself to improve over time. For example, you may not be able to exercise every day, but you could try to exercise 1 or 2 days a week. After some time, you may choose to challenge yourself further by exercising 3 days a week. Remember: you shouldn't compare your goals to anyone else's, everyone's journey is different!

## Track Your Progress

This idea can work with any goal. You can take pictures, journal, or use an app to track your progress, share how you're feeling or reflect on any struggles you have encountered while trying to reach your goal. A prominent ideology in psychology is that measurements can be used as a way to track your progress and inspire you; this allows you to see where you first began and how you have improved.

## Stay Patient

Depending on your goals, results may take time. It is vital that you continue to track your progress, even if you aren't seeing results right away. Try to stay positive; your hard work will pay off!

## Be Accountable

Whether you're holding yourself accountable, or a friend is, being held accountable will help you commit to your resolutions. Talk to your friends about their goals - perhaps you can create a plan to accomplish your resolutions together.

Although New Year's resolutions can be challenging, don't be discouraged. These 5 tips will help you refine your goals, allowing you to fulfill them by the end of the year so you can confidently say, "New Year, New Me."

## JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

### Residents:

1/1 Nancy O'Rourke

1/8 Bessie Popp

1/8 Hannelore Seehase

1/26 Nettie Sommerville

### Staff:

1/1 Ruma Wadhwa

1/2 Joyce Djaine

1/6 Ericka Von Salews

1/23 Amanda Torres

1/25 Kalin Perez

1/29 Lawrence Johnson



## HIBERNATION HABITS

As temperatures drop in the northeast, animals must adapt to survive the snowy season. They do this through hibernation. However, not all animals hibernate the same way or to the same extent. Some, like raccoons and black bears, find cozy shelters and slow down their body functions significantly, causing them to enter a deep sleep. Others, such as certain birds and reptiles, stay active but adjust their behaviors to cope with the cold. It's a fascinating spectrum of strategies that highlight the incredible diversity of wildlife survival techniques.



Many mammals - such as bears, skunks, and raccoons - are not true hibernators. To enter hibernation, an animal releases heat from its body to lower its temperature. For larger animals like bears, expelling this heat takes a longer time. To end hibernation, an animal's body temperature needs to rise, which, for bears, is a gradual process that lasts several hours. Instead of a *true hibernation*, bears experience a form of dormancy where their metabolism and body temperature decrease. If you encounter a bear in dormancy, it can awaken and defend its den without any issues. Unlike an animal in true hibernation, a bear in dormancy may react to sounds or disturbances, prompting it to wake up from its dormant state.

An example of a true hibernator would be the bat. While in hibernation, bats slow their heart rate to about 10 beats per minute; their body temperature can drop to almost freezing. Because of this, they seek spaces with temperatures ranging from 30 – 40° F. Bats select locations such as caves, mines, rock crevices, and other structures that provide the optimal conditions for hibernation. Unfortunately, bats exclusively relying on caves and mines for hibernation face severe threats from white-nose syndrome, a lethal fungal disease. This disease can disrupt their hibernation, causing them to lose crucial fat reserves during the winter.



While reptiles don't hibernate, they still have their way of handling the winter season. Reptiles, being cold-blooded, depend on their environment to regulate body temperature since they can't generate heat. As temperatures drop, reptiles become less active, lower their metabolic rate, and enter a dormant period called brumation. During brumation, reptiles can go without eating for extended periods but still require water to avoid dehydration. On milder winter days, they may venture out to find water sources or even enjoy some sunbathing.

From bears taking a cozy nap to reptiles chilling out during the cold, each creature has its way of dealing with winter. This season might be cold, but thanks to dormancy, hibernation, and brumation, our northeastern friends not only make it through but also show us the different ways they thrive in the face of winter.

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

Sunday, January 28, 2 - 3 PM | Shanghai Sonatas - A Musical Performance | FREE  
Vassar Alumnae House, Vassar College, 161 College Ave.



## RESIDENT SPOTLIGHT: RICHARD WILSON



A New York native, Richard, Rick, Wilson, was born and raised in Poughkeepsie alongside his two brothers.

Though Rick went to college and served in the U.S. Army, his greatest accomplishment was his career in hotel management.

A friendly man who enjoys good company, Rick has two sons. He has also had many dogs throughout his life, including "Snowy", one of his personal favorites.

Rick likes to play golf, spend time with friends and travel in his free time - he dreams of visiting Europe. His favorite restaurant is Joe's Steak House!

## STAFF SPOTLIGHT: ANGELA GONZALEZ



Angela, Angie, Gonzalez was born and raised in the Bronx. She currently serves as the activities supervisor at Vassar-Warner Home, though she has previously worked as an assisted living administrator and a caseworker.

When Angie isn't working, you can find her spending time with her family - she has two children - or her dogs, Russ and Peewee. An avid beachgoer, Angie has traveled to Puerto Rico, the Bahamas, Cuba, Bermuda and more, though she dreams of visiting Santorini, Greece.

A strong, outgoing and friendly person, Angie has a knack for interior decorating. She loves all music and has a particular liking for Italian food, specifically from Giovanni's.

### JANUARY ACTIVITIES



1/28, 6 PM Movie in the Parlor



1/30, 4:15 PM Body Mechanics



1/31, 10 AM Pet Therapy with Oliver





# 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*  
 Elizabeth Corcoran - *Member*  
 Rosemary Butts - *Member*

## Vassar-Warner Home Committees of the Board

Effective October 2023

### Executive Committee

Ellen Smyth  
 Rena Hill  
 Michael A. Craven, Ph. D.  
 +Ericka Von Salews

### Foundation Board

Wayne Quint - Chair  
 Bill Francis  
 Greg White  
 Brian Robinson

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Ellen Smyth  
 Rosemary Butts  
 +Kalin Perez  
 +Luann Zadora

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Laurie Cohn – Chair

### Fund Development & Marketing

Rena Hill - Chair  
 Jill Karn  
 +Cheryl Holt

### Finance

Michael A. Craven, Ph. D. – Chair  
 Laurie Cohn  
 +Cheryl Holt  
 +Cora Motts

### Property

Gary Grandstaff – Chair  
 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.

