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The Latest

Connie's Corner

February 2021



Hello Everyone!

Spring is **almost** here! A sure sign of it, is Daylight Saving Time begins!

When you go to bed Saturday night, March 13th, don't forget to set your clocks ahead one hour.

Spring forward, Fall back. That's an easy way to remember it.

Believe it or not, Daylight Saving Time has been around since 1895. George Hudson, an entomologist from New Zealand, came up with the concept, so he would have more sunlight in the summer, for his bug hunting!

While many countries do use it, the vast majority of countries do not. The United States first started using it in 1918, and today all of the states use it except for Arizona and Hawaii.

March is also the month that Club 50 generally starts to travel. We usually start the Day Trips with some kind of Irish celebration. So on March 17th, I hope you will all raise a glass, think about each other, and pray that we will all be together again, soon.

The vaccinations are starting to roll out. Massachusetts has not done the best job yet, but things are definitely getting better. I hope that those of you who are eligible, have received your shot(s) or been able to schedule an appointment. If you have not been successful scheduling your appointment, keep trying!

The vaccines reach full efficacy in about 42 days. (e.g., 14 days after your second vaccination, which typically occurs 28 days after your first vaccination.)

The Mass.gov website has a lot of information on Covid-19, including the vaccine, and the locations. The state also has a 211 call line set up, which offers a call back option, so you are not holding for hours, on the phone.

The big question still remains...WHEN WILL WE BE ABLE TO TRAVEL TOGETHER???

We still don't have an answer. It all depends on how quickly we ALL get vaccinated.

So again, I am asking you to hang in there! Call each other. As the weather gets nicer, have safe driveway visits with each other. The only way we get through this is by staying diligent. Continue wearing your mask, and practicing social distancing. Schedule your vaccinations as soon as you can.

As always, if you need anything, please call me!

We WILL get through this, and until we can be "On The Road Again," stay well!

Connie



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Watertown Business Coalition - Coffee Connect ONLINE!



WHEN: Wednesday, March 17th from 8:30am-9:30am

The Watertown Business Coalition (WBC) hosts an online forum every month for Watertown's business community to discuss the challenges of our COVID altered reality and a path back to some level of economic normalcy.

The online forum is free to Watertown residents and the Watertown Business Community!

Format will include:

- find a comfortable place in your home with a cup of coffee or tea!
- Networking breakout rooms

Let's get through these times together, Watertown!

This is a Zoom Virtual meeting, RSVP online at watertownbusinesscoalition.com, and head to events to check out more ways to connect.

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Virtual Spring Fashion Show

The Chic Boutique Virtual Show!



WHEN: Monday, March 8th from 7:00pm-8:00pm.

Contact: Amber Smith at 920-390-2022 with any questions or fashion inquiries.

The Chic Boutique will be hosting a virtual Spring Fashion Show on Monday, March 8th at 7pm CST. They will be giving away prizes during the event and you will be able to shop after the event right from their website!

To learn more, connect with the Chic Boutique Watertown on Facebook.

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March + Maple



Check out these fun, family-friendly activities during the maple sugar season in Massachusetts!

List compiled by Alice Coyle, for *Wicked Local*
Published March 1, 2021

Maple Days at Old Sturbridge Village

WHEN: Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays in March, 9:30 a.m.– 4 p.m.

Old Sturbridge Village, Sturbridge

Included with standard daytime admission or Village membership

Step back in time see how maple sugaring was done in early 19th century New England. Watch the Village's working sugar camp demonstrate the entire sugar-making process, from tapping the trees to "sugaring off," and learn why maple sugar was more commonly used than maple syrup in early New England. Costumed historians will also cook period foods made with maple products and the potter and cooper will make maple related items. For more information visit osv.org.

Maple Happenings at Appleton Farms

WHEN: Saturday and Sundays in March, 12-4 p.m.

Appleton Farms, Hamilton & Ipswich

Weekend maple-flavored fun at Appleton Farms continues through the end of March. Try sugar on ice, see demonstrations of maple sugaring in the Sugar Shack, sample food trucks and local craft beer vendors on site, from 12 to 4 p.m. every Saturday and Sunday. Take home homemade maple-filled food items, right from the farmstead kitchen. Fire Pit Picnics will also continue through maple season. Tickets for hikes, walks, guided tours and fire pits must be purchased separately. Parking fee at Appleton Farms is \$10 on weekends for nonmembers. All visitors will be required to follow Covid-19 guidelines, including wearing face coverings, maintaining social distance, and not visiting the property if you are experiencing symptoms. For more information visit thetrustees.org

Maple Sugaring Saturdays

WHEN: Saturdays, March 6, 13 and 20. Hour-long tours at 1, 1:15, 1:30, and 1:45 p.m.

Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary, Topsfield

Member Adult: \$11; Member Child: \$9; Nonmember Adult: \$12; Nonmember Child: \$10

Learn the age-old tradition of maple sugaring during a guided tour through the sanctuary's sugar maple woodland. On our naturalist-guided tours, learn how to identify a sugar maple, observe tapping and sap collection methods, watch the sap being boiled down in the sugarhouse, and get a sweet taste of the final product. Bottles of freshly made maple syrup will be available for purchase. Tours last about an hour and run in all weather. Warm clothing including waterproof boots are recommended as the trails may be wet, muddy or snow covered. Following Covid-19 protocols are limited to 11 preregistered participants. Children under age 3 cannot be admitted. Participants are required to wear a face covering and follow social distancing guidelines. For more information visit massaudubon.org



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Massachusetts Volunteer Group Helping Residents Book Coronavirus Vaccine Appointments

From the Boston Herald

by Rick Sobey

Published: March 1, 2021 | Updated March 2, 2021



A group of volunteers is helping frustrated residents snag vaccine appointments by directly booking them on behalf of strangers who have been striking out during the state's chaotic vax rollout.

The growing volunteer army — formed by a 32-year-old Somerville woman on maternity leave — has led to 450 eligible vax residents scoring appointments since last Monday. They've received about 1,400 requests for help after a week.

"A couple hundred volunteers is nothing in the grand scheme of things and it won't solve the system, but the individual impact is tremendous," said Diana Rastegayeva, who launched the helpful website called "Massachusetts COVID Vaccination Help."

The responses from grateful people after volunteers helped them land a vaccination slot have been "powerful" and "so heartening," she said.

A resident said they had given up on trying to get through the state website maze until the volunteers "did the impossible," Rastegayeva said. A person called the volunteers their "guardian angel."

"I've had countless people cry to me on the phone," she said. "They've talked about their frustrations and their anxiety. One person talked about not sleeping for three days trying to get an appointment for their husband who has a severe respiratory condition."

Rastegayeva, the mother of a 4-year-old and 3-month-old, started this effort after she helped her grandfather book a vaccination appointment in Florida in January. She also secured appointments through the complicated process for other family and friends who are not very tech savvy.

Rastegayeva looked into what the process was like in Massachusetts, and "realized it was even worse here."

"How is it even possible that our rollout is worse than Florida's?" she said. "It's so needlessly complicated."

Rastegayeva as a result started an email list for friends and family to give them tips and tricks on how to score an appointment. She realized that was "small potatoes" and the need was so much greater across the state. She connected with other moms in a local Facebook group who were interested in volunteering to help people get appointments, and the website was born.

"It's truly an incredible volunteer effort," she said. "Volunteers are working on this for dozens of hours a week, staying up late until 2 in the morning."

The volunteer group uses a combination of automated alerts, manual refreshing, autofill apps, and "sheer persistence" to find and book vaccination appointments.

Rastegayeva has started a GoFundMe page to cover costs, such as web hosting and the automated alert services they use. The page has already raised nearly \$3,000 as of Monday afternoon.

No one on the volunteer team will be making money from the effort, she said. All funds not used for direct support of the website will be donated to the Greater Boston Food Bank or similar organizations.

To get help with booking an appointment or to become a volunteer, visit www.macovidvaxhelp.com.

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Massachusetts House approves extending COVID mail-in voting law through June

MSN News
 by Steph Solis, for masslive.com
 Published March 1, 2021



Massachusetts House lawmakers approved a bill extending the COVID-19 mail-in voting law through June, giving Beacon Hill more time to review more permanent election reforms.

The House voted on Monday to approve the bill, H. 73, extending the mail-in voting law through June 30. The proposal heads to the Senate for review.

The temporary mail-in voting law, which took effect in July, was supposed to expire at the end of 2020 but was extended until March 31, 2021 to account for upcoming special elections.

Prior to the temporary mail-in voting law, only voters who were out of town or hospitalized could vote by mail by using an absentee ballot.

House Speaker Ron Mariano issued a statement late Wednesday after debate of House rules saying he backs extending the temporary voting law.

“Since we first enacted vote by mail, it has proven to be secure and even increased voter turnout in many places,” Mariano said. “The House looks forward to making vote by mail a permanent way for residents to exercise their right to vote during and beyond the pandemic.”

The bill originated from legislation proposed by House Minority Leader Bradley Jones, a North Reading Republican, and Sen. Jason Lewis, a Winchester Democrat.

The 2020 state primary and general elections broke voter turnout records despite the COVID-19 pandemic in large part due to the law allowing voting by mail.

The state primary drew more than 1.7 million voters, breaking the 1990 record of 1.4 million. More than 3.65 million people voted in the Nov. 3 election, exceeding the record 3.3 million votes in 2016.

Several voting proposals are on the table. Rep. John Lawn and Sen. Cynthia Stone Creem proposed a bill that make mail-in voting a permanent option, as well as same-day voter registration. Sen. Becca Rausch filed a series of proposals that would make mail-in voting a permanent option, move up the state primary to June and require the state to maintain a central registry of voters.

Another bill filed by Reps. Frank Moran and Chynah Tyler would require the state to offer free bus and train rides to and from the polls on the day of a state primary or state election.



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