



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT

JOSEPH A. CURTATONE
MAYOR

DOUGLAS S. KRESS
DIRECTOR



MAY 7, 2020

Dear President McLaughlin and Distinguished Members of the City Council,

In response to your thoughtful request for updates and ways to help the seniors of our Somerville community, the Council on Aging would like to submit the following response:

Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic in mid-March 2020 the Council on Aging has remained committed to provide a width breath of programming focused on the social, mental and physical well-being of older adults. The staff of the COA have been quick to mobilize changes in service modalities to meet the ever-increasing needs of our seniors.

We have maintained close communication with older adults through an expansion of our Friendly Phone-Caller program. The program now consists of over 20 community volunteers in addition to our staff who are reaching out to members of our community to provide vital connections in an effort to combat isolation. We have expanded our social media platform and are posting daily health and wellness tips, virtual resources and daily challenges to boost mood and well-being. For those without access we have increased publications of our newsletters and direct mailings of our Living Your Life Well, a publication focused on one's health and well-being.

Our social workers remain committed to assisting residents in their full breadth of services. They continue to counsel clients on an individual basis and perform all case management duties. They have built a virtual program focused on resiliency and dealing better with difficult times and are routinely in communication with their caregiver's groups. The social workers remain committed to those with cognitive decline and have worked in partnership with Steve Gintz, music therapist, to bring one of our Memory Café's most beloved programs to them virtually.

Our physical fitness program has also turned virtual. In partnership with our cable access station we now offer, Music and Movement, Fit-4-Life, and Yoga among others on public television, YouTube and Zoom.

Additionally, we have expanded our food access, Brown Bag, program. We have successfully turned a monthly food pick-up center into a fully home delivered program reaching close to 200 homes this month alone. We thank you for your vital assistance, along with partnerships with Green Cab and SCM, in making these home deliveries a possibility.

In an effort to maintain elder's physical health and compliance with regulations, we have mobilized a drive that delivered over 4,000 protective masks, to all seniors living in an elderly buildings. Our plan is to distribute over 30,000 by the completion of the project. In addition, we have been able to provide assistance with obtaining prescriptions and supplies to meet resident's hygienic needs and are working in close contact with other city services to meet the unique needs of those under quarantine.

Using these varying outreach techniques, we have seen an expansion of our client base and have begun revamping and reorganization of our client data base.

As the pandemic progresses, we continue to face each new challenge with a pragmatic and empathetic approach. For instance, just today, we are in the process of determining if we can partner with local restaurants to provide nutritious meals to our senior buildings under quarantine. While we are evolving and learning every day, we remain focused on our original goal; to provide a safe, social and educational space for all older adults in Somerville.

Sincerely,

Cindy L Hickey

Cindy L. Hickey, Executive Director
Somerville Council on Aging