Heather’s Highlights

November’s Forum featured our Annual Legislative Roundtable. We were very grateful to be visited by Senator Comerford, Representative Whipps, and Nyanna Slaughter, Western MA Regional Director from Senator Warren’s Office. Although Senator Gobi was not able to attend due to a committee conflict, she asked that all folks be reminded that her office is open and willing to help whenever possible.

We were able to have a rich discussion of the local concerns, support for what matters most to the North Quabbin and advocacy for the continued highlighting of the differences between urban and rural communities when shaping policies, budget, and addressing needs across the Commonwealth. Please feel free at ANYTIME to reach out to our delegation. We are lucky to have such knowledgeable representation at this time!

See you all in December. Happy Thanksgiving to you and yours!

Heather Bialecki-Canning
Executive Director
Our FY20 Donor/Members

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- Pioneer Junior Women’s Club
- David Runyan
- Jesse Sawin
- SMallet Photography
- Brent Walker
Midnight Madness!

Shop Local Sales
Live Entertainment
Holiday Cheer & More!

Saturday, December 14
6PM - Midnight
Athol and Orange MA

Sign up as a Business at NorthQuabbinChamber.com
Open Enrollment for the Health Connector

Open Enrollment for the Health Connector is now until January 23, 2020. This means that if you do not currently have health insurance, this is the only time during the year you can enroll for a Health Connector insurance plan, with a few exceptions. You may enroll in a Health Connector plan any time during the year if you have a qualifying life event such as adding or losing a tax dependent, new to MA, losing job-related health insurance, turning 26 and losing parents’ insurance or possibly a change in income.

At the Community Health Center of Franklin County (CHCFC), their Health Connector Navigator, Wendy Gaida, will help you enroll in a plan, explain how the plan works, and how to make payments. She has offices at their Orange facility at 450 West River Street and in Greenfield at 102 Main Street. She is also available at the North Quabbin Patch office located at 109 Lumber Street in Athol on Monday mornings. You do need to make an appointment by calling Wendy at 413-325-8500 x146. Please note that if you leave a message for her to call you back, make sure that your phone supports voicemail or that your mailbox is set up. Health Connector insurance plans are made affordable through subsidized tax credits and are based on family size and income. You will need to bring all income supporting documents to your appointment. These need to show the gross income which is the amount earned before any deductions. You may also need to bring a photo ID, proof of residency, and other information. When Wendy speaks to you before your appointment, she’ll let you know specifically what you need to bring.

ConnectorCare plans are available from the Health Connector if your gross income is less than 300% of the Federal Poverty Level. These could cost as little as $0 to $130. The ConnectorCare plans also include dental if you are a dental patient at the CHCFC in either Orange or Greenfield. Call Wendy today to find out what health insurance you may be eligible for. She can also help you with MassHealth issues and lapses or enrolling at any time during the year.
Athol Bird & Nature Club Events
Events take place at the Millers River Environmental Center, 100 Main Street, Athol, unless otherwise noted. www.atholbirdclub.org.

2020 Calendars Now Available—A great seasonal gift at only $10.00 that supports your local nature club. It is chock full of nature notes, trivia questions, and, of course, some amazing photos of local birds, animals, and plants. You can purchase them online or at local retailers listed here at https://atholbirdclub.org/abnc-calendar.

Dec. 11, 7:00 pm: ABNC Member Night—Bring up to 15 images from some of your favorite adventures to share. Bring in PowerPoint format or in a file folder on a stick drive to share. Everyone is welcome to participate.

Dec. 14, All Day: Annual Athol Christmas Bird Count—Contact Dave Small at dave@atholbirdclub.org to participate.

Youth Outdoor Experiences Writing Contest—To encourage budding young writers to share their outdoor experiences, the New England Outdoor Writers Association (NEOWA) is sponsoring a writing contest for youths in grades 6-12. The deadline for submittal is February 15, 2020. For full info, visit http://www.neowa.org/youthwritingcontest.html.
**Expecting Holiday Discussions About Vaping Tobacco and Nicotine?**

When you get together with family and friends for a holiday party or dinner, do you expect the subject of vaping and vaping illnesses to come up? Do you worry that you don’t know how to respond because you want to share accurate and helpful information? Here are a few suggestions to help you respond about vaping tobacco and nicotine from the Tobacco-Free Community Partnerships in Massachusetts along with links you can follow to learn more.

**Q: I hear there is a ban on vaping and e-cigarette products in Massachusetts? What is that all about?**

**A:** Governor Charlie Baker declared a public health emergency in response to the outbreak of severe lung illnesses associated with e-cigarettes and vaping. To protect the health of Massachusetts residents, the Commissioner of the Department of Public Health ordered a temporary ban on the sale of all vape and e-cigarette products in Massachusetts so that federal agencies have time to investigate the cause of the illnesses, which is still unknown. The ban will end December 24, 2019.

**Q: People say only off-the-street and homemade products are making people sick--so why was there a ban on everything?**

**A:** All products are banned temporarily because it’s not clear which products or substances are making people sick. The common factor linking all cases is a history of e-cigarette use and vaping. It’s important to know that while the federal government is regulating certain aspects of e-cigarettes, this DOES NOT currently include the manufacturing of e-cigarettes and vaping products. What that means, is that no e-cigarette or vaping product sold in local convenience stores, vape shops, online, or on the street has been tested and approved as safe to use. In addition, ingredients for e-juices are not regulated and therefore we can’t really be sure what is in them or that they are safe, and flavors have not been approved to heat up and inhale.

**Q: What is in e-cigarettes? I hear that it is just flavored water. What is so bad about them?**

**A:** Users may be inhaling harmful and potentially harmful substances. E-cigarettes contain pre-filled pods or e-liquids/e-juices that the user adds to the device. E-liquids generally consist of propylene glycol, glycerin, water, nicotine, and flavorings. E-cigarettes produce an aerosol, commonly called vapor, which users inhale from the device and exhale.

**Q: What can I do to prevent my child or loved ones from vaping?**

**A:** Simply talking with your child about these products can help protect them. Let them know that you care about them and that vaping is not safe. Tell them the facts that e-cigarettes contain nicotine and that nicotine is a highly addictive substance. The smoke from vapes is an aerosol, not water vapor. The aerosol can contain harmful and potentially harmful substances, including nicotine, ultrafine particles that can be inhaled deep into the lungs, flavoring such as diacetyl (a chemical linked to a serious lung disease), volatile organic compounds, cancer-causing chemicals, and heavy metals such as nickel, tin, and lead. Nicotine can damage a teenager’s brain and lead to addiction.

Continued...
Q: Now that these products are not available for purchase in Massachusetts, how can I encourage youth and young adults to quit vaping?

A: There are currently two programs available to help youth and young adults quit vaping, smoking, or using other tobacco products.

This is Quitting powered by truth® is a texting program for young people who want to quit vaping. It is a free, confidential 30-day program during which youth receive texts with information, tips, and support. They receive daily text messages to help them prepare to quit and supportive texts from young people who have been through the program. To enroll in the program, youth text “VapeFreeMass” to 88709. Youth can also connect with their school nurse, counselor, or coach to help get them started.

My Life, My QuitTM is a specially designed program to help young people quit vaping or other tobacco products. My Life, My QuitTM provides five free and confidential coaching sessions by phone, live texting, or chat with specially-trained youth coach specialists. Youth can text "Start My Quit" to 855-891-9989 or call toll-free 1-855-891-9989 for real-time coaching. They can also visit mylifemyquit.com to sign up online, chat with a live coach, get information about vaping and tobacco, and find activities to help them quit.

Q: How can I help adults who are trying to quit vaping, smoking or using other tobacco products?

A: Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW to connect with the Massachusetts Smokers’ Helpline. The Helpline is a free and confidential service for Massachusetts residents who want help to end their nicotine and tobacco use. If you are looking to quit tobacco, you can now get help from a quit coach over the phone; or use online tools and resources; or a combination of these online features and telephone coaching. You can also enroll online using a computer or smartphone at https://ma.quitlogix.org/en-US/Enroll-Now.

Q: How can I learn more information and stay up-to-date?


Basic facts for youth and a list of quitting resources for youth: https://www.mass.gov/vaping

Weekly updated information about vaping-related illnesses from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/severe-lung-disease.html#latest-outbreak-information

Information about the emergency vaping regulation in Massachusetts: https://www.mass.gov/guides/vapingemergency

To contact the Tobacco-Free Community Partnership in your region: http://makesmokinghistory.org/my-community/community-partnerships/

The Central MA Tobacco-Free Community Partnership (TFCP) supports communities’ efforts to lower smoking prevalence and exposure to secondhand smoke; and enhances state and local tobacco control efforts by exposing tobacco industry tactics, mobilizing the community to support and adopt evidence-based policies, and changing social norms. Funded by the Massachusetts Tobacco Cessation and Prevention Program, the Community Partnership serves as a resource for local coalitions, health and human service agencies, municipalities, and workplaces on tobacco intervention efforts.
**PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN**

A Child Safety and Crime Prevention Program

With Cory Jewell Jensen, M.S.

April 9, 2020

Terrazza Restaurant at Greenfield Country Club

8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.

(Registration at 7:45 a.m.)

$40 registration fee includes lunch

Social work continuing education credits available

Cory Jewell Jensen, M.S. is the senior trainer of CBI Consulting. In addition to providing sex offender evaluation and treatment services for 24 years, she has also served as a trainer for The National Center for the Prosecution of Child Abuse, The National Child Advocacy Center, The United States Navy, The National Crime Victims Association, The Mark O’Many Foundation for Children, the US Marshal’s Office, NYS Special Victims Unit and a number of other law enforcement, child advocacy and faith-based organizations. She has been a frequent speaker on issues related to sex offender treatment, risk management and child abuse prevention, and testified as an expert witness in local and federal courts.

7:45-8:30 Registration and coffee

8:30-noon Sex Offenders: What Judges, Lawyers, Investigators & Child Advocates Should Know

10:1 Lunch Provided

1:5 Selection, Engagement and Seduction of Children and Adults by Child Maltsters

Protecting Our Children: What Sex Offenders Can Teach Us About Interviewing

For more information and to register: https://cochrankins.org/

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**December Happenings**

**Valuing Our Children**

- **Family Center**
  - 213 Walnut St. Athol
  - 978-249-8467

- **North Quabbin Patch & Family Resource Center**
  - 109 Lisbon St. Unit 5 Athol
  - 978-248-5070

**Parent-Child Activities**
- Evening StoryWalks: Tuesdays 4 - 7pm at the Athol Public Library
- Playgroup at Valuing Our Children: Thursdays 10 - 11:30am
- Morning StoryWalks: Fridays 9:30 - 12pm at the Athol Public Library

**Contact Nicole:** 978-249-8467

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**North Quabbin Chamber of Commerce Super Raffle**

Tickets are $100 each & only 400 are available.

- 1st prize is $10,000.
- 2nd prize is $1,000.
- 3rd prize is $750.
- 4th prize is $500.
- 5th, 6th, 7th prizes are $250.

Drawing is on 12/5.

Call 978-249-3849 for tickets
Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act Youth Program

Enrolling youth ages 17-24 from Hampshire County, Franklin County, and the North Quabbin

The Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA), an intensive workforce development program, gives youth and young adults individualized, long-term support in working toward their educational and occupational goals. In addition to working one-on-one with a Workforce Development Specialist, participants have the opportunity to participate in job readiness training, paid internships, and professional training programs. Participants also receive support in overcoming barriers to work and school, including financial assistance, referral to community resources, and advocacy in accessing those resources. Some eligibility restrictions apply. Visit https://www.communityaction.us/wioa for a short video and a form to see if WIOA is right for you!

Opioid Task Force Happenings

Dec. 2, 1:00 pm: Public Safety and Justice Committee Meeting—Franklin County Justice Center, 43 Hope Street, Greenfield

Dec. 6, 10:00 am: Treatment and Recovery Committee Meeting—Greenfield Community College Downtown Campus, 270 Main Street, Greenfield

Dec. 13, 10:00 am: 2nd Annual Sober Housing Summit—Sponsored by the Housing and Workforce Development Committee Meeting, Olver Transit Center, 12 Olive Street, Greenfield

Jan. 3, 10:00 am: Treatment and Recovery Committee Meeting—Greenfield Community College Downtown Campus, 270 Main Street, Greenfield

Jan. 14, 9:30 am: Education and Prevention Committee Meeting—NWDA's Office, 56 Bank Row, Greenfield

Jan. 24, 10:00 am: Healthcare Solutions Committee Meeting—Baystate-Franklin Medical Center, Conference Room A, 164 High Street, Greenfield

More information can be found at www.opioidtaskforce.org.
Coalition Regular Happenings

North Quabbin Recovery Center Hours
The North Quabbin Recovery Center at 416 Main Street, Athol, provides a compassionate, safe space to offer peer support to allow multiple paths of recovery for all. Open Tuesdays 10:00 am to 1:00 pm, Wednesdays & Thursdays 10:00 am to 2:00 pm, with All Recovery Meetings from 11:00 to 11:45 am and an All Recovery Meeting Fridays at 7:30 pm. 978-249-4989. All welcome.

Me FIRST (Finding Inspiration, Respect, Self-Love, and Tools)
Have you been considering putting yourself FIRST? Please join us as we develop a confidential group that offers support around balance, health, nutrition, self-care, fitness, and keeping a sense of humor through it all. Second and fourth Thursdays, 6:00 to 8:00 pm, at the North Quabbin Recovery Center, 416 Main Street, Athol. 978-249-3703. All welcome.

Legislator Happenings

Congressman James P. McGovern’s Athol Office Hours
Congressman McGovern has local office hours at the NQCC, 251 Exchange Street, Athol, on the third Friday of every month from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm to meet with constituents. To schedule an appointment or for more information, please contact Eladia Romero, Regional Manager at 978-466-3552.

Senator Jo Comerford’s Local Events
The People’s Office Library Tour in Royalston: December 7, 11:00 am to 12:00 pm at the Phinehas S. Newton Library, 19 On The Common in Royalston. Join Jo for an informal gathering at your local library (follow the link below for more info). For the most up-to-date list of events, including bill hearings, please visit www.SenatorJoComerford.org/events.