



# New Milford Social Services



*"To Listen, To Advocate, To Empower"*

**FEB 2020**

## Greetings from Social Services:

**Issue 2-2020**


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Did you know, or remember, that February is *American Hearth Health Month*? It's a time to bring attention to your physical health, a jolt to get you to pick up your activity and reset your eating habits after the indulgence of the holiday season. Someone once told me that they feel like a bear in February- all they want to do is hibernate. And why not, it's usually very cold, snowy, the days are still short and most likely on February 2, our groundhog friend will remind us Winter is not over and more is yet to come. So February seems like a perfect time to encourage each other to move more, eat less, and strive for a better you. But this got me thinking about another definition of "heart": our spirit of the heart. -the heart we use to feel love, kindness, compassion, and gratitude. How are we doing with that heart? When we exercise, we work the heart muscle and the outcome is a stronger heart that is able to aid our body in functioning better. But how do we exercise our spirit heart? What can we do to strengthen that heart? Challenges spring up this time of year... jump rope for heart, running/walking events, and other heart healthy activities, but recently I found out that *February 17th is National Random Acts of Kindness day* and realized YES! a challenge to exercise our spirit heart. Maybe as we are counting our steps, we can also count how many times we look up as we are taking those steps to say hello to a stranger or take the time to listen more attentively to someone who really needs to be heard. Maybe, send a kind note to someone who helped you or to an old friend you haven't see in a while. Telling someone you appreciate or care about them, or doing a kind deed for someone you don't know, goes a long way in nourishing the spirit heart and filling that heart can be just as empowering as the 30 minutes of daily exercises you're doing. Acts of kindness are stress reducing, energy increasing, and life-enhancing. Sharing sincere acts of kindness can be so powerful and whether you are the giver or receiver they are extremely uplifting. And remember, if you take the challenge to rejuvenate your spirit heart, don't forget to include acts of kindness towards yourself. The kindness you show yourself is just as valuable as the gifts of kindness you share with those around you.

~Ivana 

*"Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring all of which have the potential to turn a life around"*

- Leo Buscaglia

*The mission of New Milford Social Services is to help residents meet basic needs of food, housing, clothing, maintenance of health & well-being, and to help provide various seasonal goods & programs for residents experiencing financial hardship.*



*We support our community through empowerment, advocacy, connection to resources & opportunities to increase the welfare of our residents in need.*



### **Financial Tip of the Month:**

#### **Important information to consider before filing your tax return:**

We are all getting ready to file our tax returns. W-2's and 1099's are coming in the mail and we gather the rest of our forms to take to a tax preparer or prepare to do it ourselves. There can be a lot of anxiousness around filing and we all would like to get it done sooner than later- not just to remove that cloud over our head but because we're hoping to get that tax refund. Most of us already have some idea of what to do with our tax refunds- home improvement project, put it towards a car, catch up on bills, or hopefully save some or most for a "rainy day". Whatever you decide- the money is yours to do with it what you want or need. And, that is key! This is YOUR refund – so before you decide how to prepare your tax return think about your choices: There are many options to choose so make your decision an informed one. Many people with moderate incomes can get their tax returns done with the help of a VITA preparer. VITA stands for Volunteer Income Tax Assistance. These preparers help you for **FREE** and...

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 New Milford Social Services



### **DO YOU KNOW? ... that Operation**

**Fuel** has increased its income eligibility guidelines. Operation Fuel provides one-time emergency assistance for deliverable fuel or electric bills. This state-wide program has made it possible for people with higher incomes to receive help. For example, a household of four with before tax (gross) income up to \$86,949.00 is eligible for up to \$500 in assistance. This could be in the form of oil or other deliverable fuel or go toward the electric bill. As a partner agency we help all NM households under age 60 to apply. The process is quick and easy! Call Monika for an appointment, and please spread the word to local family and friends! **Funds are limited.**

# PROGRAM UPDATES:



**ENERGY ASSISTANCE:** We are taking applications for the winter season 2019-2020. If you heat with oil, propane, kerosene, wood or electric please call the office to make an appointment.

**The last day to apply and ask for a delivery (if you have been approved) for fuel (oil, propane, kerosene, wood) is March 16<sup>th</sup>.** The last day to apply for electric heat is May 1<sup>st</sup>. If you are a renter with heat-included, you may be eligible to apply for a one-time small grant and that deadline is May 1<sup>st</sup>.


All **electric heated households** who completed the Matching Payment program last year will be automatically re-enrolled onto Eversource's MPP. **Remember that you still need to re-apply for Energy Assistance through our office every year!** You should have received a letter stating what your monthly budget payment was in November. All payments need to be in by the end of each month, and *all* six payments must be received by April 30<sup>th</sup> in order to get a "match". If Eversource raises your budget, pay the new amount if you can. If you cannot, pay the old amount and be sure to discuss this with us at the time of your application. Income guidelines are listed below. If your household income is below the following amounts, you may qualify for energy assistance:

Family size					
1	2	3	4	5	6
\$36,171	\$47,300	\$58,430	\$69,559	\$80,688	\$91,818

Visit our department on the [www.newmilford.org](http://www.newmilford.org) website, or call Monika at the office for the list of documents needed to apply. All applicants need to bring a current electric bill even if you do not heat with electric and even if it is not in your name.

**Please have ALL paperwork at the time of your appointment.** This includes pay stubs even if your employer has gone "paperless". They can help you to get these. Likewise, with Direct Express cards and bank statements: you can print full statements online as they must have both your name and your bank's name. You cannot be approved without all needed documents!

**Clean, Tune and Test:** Upon request and approval of application, funds will be provided to eligible households to cover the cost of a clean, tune and test of their household's deliverable fuel heating system. Renters must receive written landlord permission and funds will not be taken from the fuel benefit. This is a great way to increase the efficiency of your fuel use!



**Tax time is approaching!**  
Do you know that it is possible to get your tax return done for **FREE** for **eligible households** through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program (VITA)? **Danbury VITA will be in New Milford on Fridays at JPCC, in our program room #36** until April 3<sup>rd</sup> from 9am- 1pm. They do take walk-ins but recommend an appointment which you can schedule through their website: [www.danbury-vita.org](http://www.danbury-vita.org) or by calling 203-826-9517. They also take day and evening appointments at their Danbury office. There are two other agencies that have VITA appointments: Community Action Agency of Western CT at 203-744-4700 or at Western CT State University at 203-797-4511. You can also do them online at [www.myfreetaxes.com](http://www.myfreetaxes.com). *With electronic filing and depositing, you will not wait longer for your return through one of these agencies, and ALL the money is yours!*



### **Financial Tip... (continued from page 1):**

...there are many local sites, even right here in New Milford! And, they e-file too! Here on page 2 of this newsletter is a list. There are also several software packages and websites that can help, but some may not be for free so do your research. We reference one free source also on this page. Other options include going to commercial tax preparation firms, accountants or tax preparers who charge a fee. They may offer options to delay your payment to them (RAC) or options that can get you money early (RAL) even before the IRS reviews your return. A RAC is a refund anticipation check. It lets you delay the cost of preparing the tax return plus a fee (typically \$30-\$50) by deducting it from your tax refund. A RAL is a refund advance loan. It is basically a loan based off a portion of the full amount of your refund minus the cost of them preparing yours taxes. Some may even charge interest and loan fees. There are many opportunities out there so get informed, ask a few questions and make the best decision for you and your money.

***\*And don't forget to ask your tax preparer about the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) on your tax return. This is a credit for those not receiving a lot of income that can help increase your tax refund, and not just on your Federal return but on CT's also!***

### **"When You're Parent...Again"**



An information and support group for **GRANDPARENTS & OTHER RELATIVES RAISING CHILDREN:**

Next meeting will be on Thursday, *February 6th, 2020* at JPCC @ 5:30pm until 7:00pm. Dinner and childcare are included. Come for informal conversation and resources for those in this unique situation. ***New families are always welcomed.*** Please RSVP to social worker, Sarah Geary at Social Services, 860-355-6079 x3.

### **February is National Savings Month!**

This is a great time to start saving, even the smallest amounts add up over time. Starting an emergency fund for those unexpected expenses or a saving plan for a short term or long term financial goal can begin as simple as taking \$1, \$5, or \$10 and putting it away. Auto transfers or deposits into your savings account are really helpful! If you don't have a savings account think about opening one up (or linking an existing account) to the **SaverLife program** from United Way of Western CT. Linking your bank account up to SaverLife can help you earn a \$60 cash reward for every \$20 each month for six months. You start to save \$20 x 6 + \$60 = \$180! It might not seem like a lot but if you aren't saving at all then it is a lot better than \$0 x 6 + \$0 = \$0. You can get more info at <https://www.uwwesternct.org/alicesaves> or ask one of us at Social Services to help get you started.



**Community Culinary School**  
of Northwestern Connecticut

**JOB TRAINING PROGRAM** offering a **NEW SESSION** beginning **April 20, 2020.**

- 12 weeks of culinary arts training
- ServSafe Certification
- Uniforms, Books & Materials
- Certificate of Completion
- Internships
- 96% Job Placement Rate

FREE Tuition to those who qualify with funding available through WIOA and SNAP Employment Training Provider. For more information and application process call 203-512-5791; [communityculinaryschool.org](http://communityculinaryschool.org). Applications are also available at NMSS.

# COMMUNITY RESOURCES:



## Family and Children



### New Milford Youth Agency News:



\* **FREE, Homework Club**, Saturdays 9am-11am at the Youth Agency. 3<sup>rd</sup> -8<sup>th</sup> grade students will receive help with homework, math, reading, studying, organization, and much more.

\***FREE HOOPS!** Basketball at JPCC for grades 9-12, 3pm-5pm, every Wednesday beginning October 2<sup>nd</sup>. One-time registration at myyouthagency.com. Drop in when you can! Contact Stacey for more info at 860-210-2030 or [skabasakalian@newmilford.org](mailto:skabasakalian@newmilford.org).

\***Mindful Mondays:** FIRST MONDAYS of every month for grades 6-8 beginning February 3<sup>rd</sup> -June 1<sup>st</sup>; 2:45-4pm at JPCC. NMYA and NM Public Library present this new program: relax with friends, learn relaxing techniques, work on breathing exercises and stretches, mindful crafts, find your happy place. FREE

\***Custom Made Wood Making Class-** Valentine's Day Theme-Tuesday, February 11<sup>th</sup> 3:30-5:30pm for Grades 3-5 at JPCC. Cost \$35

Registration for all programs can be done by calling the Youth Agency at 860-210-2030 or by visiting myyouthagency.com.

New Milford Parks and Rec has many programs for children Kindergarten and older with possible **scholarships available** through our office. Please contact us for more information on financial assistance.



**EXCEL PROGRAM:** The EXCEL program is an inclusive preschool that provides services for children with special needs and their typical peers together within one setting. Applications are being accepted until March 1<sup>st</sup> for children interested in a "community friend" slot. Go to the New Milford Public Schools website, <http://www.newmilfordps.org> or contact the Board of Ed, Office of Student Affairs at 860-354-2654 for more details and an application.



### JOB SEARCHING?

\* **AMERICAN JOB CENTER** - need help with a job search or training? Want to brush up on your resume? Looking for information about what career paths are in demand? **American Job Centers will be on site at New Milford High School the last Wednesday of the month from 4:00pm – 6:30pm starting again in February.** This service is provided by New Milford Adult Education. Register at <https://newmilford.coursestorm.com/> and search American Job Center. It is FREE! They have many programs to enrich your learning and increase your employment skills including completing a High School Equivalency. For more information: 860-350-6647 x1170

\*Are you receiving SNAP? **SNAP Employment and Training program** is a work program that offers many training opportunities at NO COST TO YOU. There are courses through in Danbury through Naugatuck Valley Community College, 203-575-8029, as well as in New Milford through the Community Culinary School, 203-512-5791. For more info, contact the schools or go to [www.ct.gov/dss](http://www.ct.gov/dss).

\* **JOBNOW** – At the NEW MILFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY:  
Online set of tools to support your job search with live interactive support from a Job coach to help you build your resume, prepare for an interview and get support on your job search. **NEW SECTION: For Adult Learners**, you can use this service to help with High School Equivalency, Citizenship Tests, Microsoft Office Products and other academic skills.



**Help for Veterans on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of every month (except July):** Meet with the Service Officer at the *Roger Sherman Town Hall, 10 Main St. New Milford from 9am-11:30 am.* In case of inclement weather, please call to verify meeting is still on. State Service Officer is Peter DiMaria, 203-805-6340. Town Service Officer is Jim Delancy, 203-770-3665.

### SIGN UP!

## for year-round WEEKEND LUNCH or SCHOOL BREAK LUNCH BAGS FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN



Sometimes we all need a little help. If your family is struggling to provide food for your children, Camella's Cupboard can help! Need is self-identified and there is NO verifying paperwork required. Qualifying for free or reduced lunch IS NOT required to participate.

**Signups are now open for weekend and break bags. This is a pick-up program!**

Camella's Cupboard also stocks in-school food pantries at SMS & NMHS that any student may access by going to their counselor.

To sign up to participate, visit their website at [www.camellascupboard.com](http://www.camellascupboard.com).

## We all can benefit from support- Counseling Resource:



### THE WOMEN'S CENTER OF GREATER DANBURY:

offers free, confidential counseling and several support groups including divorce, abusive relationships and past trauma, and surviving sexual assault for women and men. Weekly groups are offered in their Danbury office. For more info, call 203-731-5200 and their website [www.wcogd.org](http://www.wcogd.org).

### NEW MILFORD HOSPITAL BEHAVIORAL HEALTH:

Located at 23 Poplar St., NMHBH provides mental health services for adults, including psychiatric assessment, med. management, individual and group therapy. Groups offered focus on women's support, anxiety and depression, pain management and DBT (dialectical behavioral therapy). Those interested need to have an assessment prior to joining a group. Call 860-210-5350 for more information or for an appointment.

### GREENWOOD COUNSELING REFERRAL:

Free clinical assessment and list of 3 local therapists to help you. 860-567-4437.

**INTERFACE CENTER** is a private not-for-profit practice located in New Milford; experienced staff with many sub-specialties for adults and children. Call 860-354-5116; 46 Danbury Rd, New Milford

### FAMILY & CHILDREN'S AID:

NM office offers many services for parents & children: groups, counseling, home visits & more; free or insurance based. For info or an appointment call 860-354-8556; 325 Danbury Rd, New Milford

**FORTITUDE CENTER:** Offers mental health and addiction counseling to people of all ages. Call 860-700-5750; 30 Bridge St, New Milford.

In addition, there are other private practitioners who accept HUSKY and Medicare, like our former social worker **Amy Bondeson** (860-799-1631—HUSKY only).

For further resources as one of social workers.

# FOOD BANK:

**THURSDAYS**  
**from 9am-4pm.**



Feb 2020						
S	M	T	W	TH	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29

***Please bring your own reusable bags!!***

**SPECIAL NOTE:**

**FOOD BANK CLOSES WHEN NEW MILFORD SCHOOLS**  
**CLOSE DUE TO SEVERE WEATHER**

*"This institution is an equal opportunity provider"*

**NEW MILFORD FOOD BANK**  
**RECIPES OF THE MONTH:**

## **Fajita Chicken Bake**

### Ingredients

- 1 ½ lb of **chicken breast**, boneless and skinless
- 1 medium **red onion**, sliced thinly
- 2 large **bell peppers**, seeded and sliced thinly
- ½ cup shredded low fat **cheddar cheese, or Mexican blend**
- 2 Tbs low sodium **taco seasoning** or homemade [Fajita Seasoning](#)
- 1 Tbs **olive oil** or vegetable oil of choice

### Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F.
2. Lay chicken breasts flat on the bottom of a 13x9 inch pan or casserole dish. Sprinkle taco seasoning over the top of the chicken.
3. Add onions and peppers and drizzle olive oil over the top.
4. Sprinkle with cheese and place in the oven. Cook for 35-40 minutes or until the juice of the chicken runs clear.
5. Serve over brown rice, quinoa, or fill a tortilla with this blend!

Recipe provide by SNAP4CT.org

## **February is American Heart Month**

Here are some friendly tips on maintaining a healthy lifestyle:

- Know what your body needs based on your level of activity, gender, age, height and weight.
- Keep track. Journaling on what you eat and drink throughout each day to monitor your food habits.
- Eat regular well balanced meals and healthy snacks. Our bodies are not meant to go without food for too long. Meals should be consumed every 4-6 hours. Small snacks every 2 hours.
- Fill up on fiber and lean protein. Fruits, vegetables, whole grains and beans all contain fiber. These items also help to fuel our bodies and keep us from getting hungry, quickly.
- Snack healthy. Again, fruit, nuts, vegetables are all good options.
- Drink water. Aim for 6-10 cups each day.
- Move more. Moving as much as you can not only burns calories, but helps to build muscle. Play with your kids, go for a walk or just find a workout routine that works for your body. Consult with a physician on how to best start a routine based on your needs.

Information provided by SNAP4CT.org

***Holiday Closings: We will be closed on Monday, February 17<sup>th</sup> in honor of President's Day***



### **MOBILE FOOD PANTRY: [sponsored by CT Food Bank]**

***\* Weds. Feb 5<sup>th</sup> and Weds. Mar 4<sup>th</sup>; 5:15pm-6:30pm at parking lot of Faith Church [Weather Permitting]***  
***Call hotline to check schedule and possible cancellations: 203-741-9751***

PERMIT NO. 10  
NEW MILFORD CT 06776  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
PRESORT STANDARD



NEW MILFORD SOCIAL SERVICES  
2 PICKETT DISTRICT RD  
NEW MILFORD CT, 06776  
860-355-6079  
CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED