



Age Friendly Millinocket

Age-Friendly Committee meeting
November 15, 2022
4:00pm/ Millinocket Memorial Library

Purpose Statement: *The Millinocket Age-Friendly Committee advocates for services, supports and infrastructure that meets the needs of our residents in all stages of life. (Adopted 3.16.22)*

Meeting Attendees: Jane Danforth, Age-Friendly Committee Chair; Louis Pelletier, Town Councilor; Barbara Riddle- Dvorak, Age-Friendly AmeriCorps member; Sarah Jandreau, Age-Friendly AmeriCorps member; Robin Stevens, Age-Friendly Committee; Nicole Brennan, Partnerships & Programs Coordinator; Amber Wheaton, Community Initiatives Director for Town of Millinocket; Brittany Grutter, Grants Coordinator, Thrive Penobscot; Peter Jamieson, Town Manager, Town of Millinocket; Diana Furukawa, Director, Millinocket Memorial Library; Lynn Lugdon, Program Manager, Penquis

Welcome and Introductions—Jane Danforth, Chair, Age-Friendly Millinocket

Approval of meeting minutes from 9/18-No adjustments

Special Presentation—Lynn Lugdon presenting on programs available to community members

- **Who is eligible?**
 - Those who are 60+ and those who have children (72 months and younger) in their home are priority in completing application. (received 5500 applications last year) This year applications were accepted starting in July for this winter season. So far, over 2000 applications have been taken.
 - Hopefully, next year the applications will be accepted starting in July as well—the earlier the better.
 - Penquis is available to do home visits for those who need one in order to qualify for specific programs.
 - Current programming is based off of one-months income (previous month) unless they are self employed when they will take one-year taxes and divide by 12.
 - For those who do not qualify from the current one-month amount, Penquis is able to go back 12 months to get the dollar amount they need to help with eligibility. (This is new this year to help make it easier to qualify)

- Any community member who pays for their own heat are served first, second includes people who have heat included in their rent (including those who live in a hotel but must show 60+ days of residency), and subsidized housing community members with a utility allowance qualify for a lower amount.
- **How to begin process?**
 - You must set up an appointment with Penquis to complete the intake process. This process is over the phone.
 - For an appointment call: 973-3500 or 973-3630
 - Current appointments are several months out. Booking into January, now.
 - After receiving an appointment, the client will complete intake, receive and return the application, complete the certification process (30 days), then payment will be sent out. There is a 15-business day hold period if paperwork is missing from the client and a reminder will be sent. After certified Penquis will send money directly to the energy company, to the client if it is included in their rent, or to the electric company if the heat is electric.
- **Questions**
 - Barbara—If heat is included in rent how does the money received go toward the heat?
 - A check will be sent to the client who would put the check towards rent (i.e.—heat).
 - Diana—What is the process of going back 12 months?
 - If someone is over income this allows for medical deductions to be used to help qualify the client. This is helpful for clients who have differing expenses each month, specifically medical,-- anything paid in the last 12 months that insurance companies do not cover (out of pocket costs such as prescriptions, eyecare, dental, health, co-pays) including the monthly cost of health insurance can be deducted out of the reported income to qualify clients. Also, if the client receives Social Security and they have Part B taken out of their check, that can also be counted as a deduction.
 - This is new this year and is much better ! Last year could only look at the month they were working with and if people got denied, we couldn't do anything about it other than tell them to re-apply.
 - Clients may continue to reapply until they are found to be eligible.
 - If still over income there is the Good Neighbor Fund—if they are still over income, they will pay for a 100 gallon fill up out of a private donor fund to assist the client.
 - Jane—What does Penquis give- what is the check amount for fuel assistance?
 - This year \$975 has been the average benefit for each client. The range is from \$2200 to \$250. This is determined by income and what the

living situation is – subsidized, rental, or if you own. It's per calendar year. Oct 1 from Sept 30 is the fuel assistance season. The more we can do in the summer, the earlier the money can get out to the clients to start the winter heating season.

- Jane—Do you have any data on how many households in Millinocket/Katahdin region use this resource?
 - Yes, can be made available to the committee.
 - Lynn will contact Maine Housing and get that info for us.
- Jane—What other programs are there?
 - There is fuel assistance, which after you qualify for you then are eligible for emergency funds which is called ECIP (energy crisis intervention program) which is an \$800 benefit beyond the regular benefit that can be used for heating fuel or system repairs. (This program runs Nov. 1 – April 30).
 - If you are at or below a $\frac{1}{4}$ tank of fuel/propane, broken payment arrangement, have a disconnect notice from the electric company, 7 days or less worth of wood/pellets/coal, etc. then you can apply for emergency before your intake appointment.
 - For the emergency program you call the same Penquis #, M-F business hours 8-4:30pm. Emergency situations are taken first, they work directly with the local fuel vendors. (973-3500 or 973-3630).
 - Low-income assistance program (LIAP)—Electricity discount program for household members with the account in their name. Assistance ranges from \$53 up to \$900.
 - Central Heating Intervention Program (CHIP) – Funding to work on or repair the heating system.
 - Weatherization - do not replace windows, door or roofs but will help with repairs and insulate where cold air is leaking into the house.
 - Heat pump program—must own your home, have no heat pump, and qualify for fuel assistance. Client will receive a heat pump free of charge.
 - Management Program (AMP)—Program through Versant for clients who are \$500+ in debt to the electric company where they may sign up. As client pays for regular electric bill moving forward a portion of that amount will go towards to debt balance to pay it off. May earn up to \$1200 in a 12-month period. Client must apply every year. If a payment is missed in this program it will mark against them, two strikes are allowed per client after which they are banned from the program.
 - Case management-- For clients who need assistance with budgeting and work with clients to assist in paying bills on time.

- Jane—What are the barriers for getting community members to apply? What can organizations do locally to ensure people are aware of and connected to these resources?
 - Return postage is included in the application that is sent to the client. People do need help with photocopying documents or scanning documents into a digital form to complete applications. Nicole shares that the Library does scan documents for free and already assists community members with this specific application. To use these services the client does not have to have a library card, but they must be a Maine resident.
 - Peter shares that if requested, the town office would be willing to help scan/fax documents for an application.
- How do we get those who need it but are not applying to apply?
 - Sharing flyers in public places and the income threshold. Many assume the income must be much lower than what it is.
 - Jane—Is there an opportunity for someone to be in person helping fill out the forms and sign people up? Is not being in person a barrier?
 - Penquis used to send people but stopped when COVID started. Plans for the spring for in person to start again. Will keep Millinocket/ the library in mind.
- Jane—Will Penquis/Maine State Housing Authority (MSHA) run out of money for these types of programs?
 - Program has never run out of funding. Can always request additional funding from the state to continue the program and meet the demand. The one barrier for Penquis is the time constraint.
- Louis—For the HEAP program is there an asset verification?
 - No, there is only a one-month verification for fuel assistance. The only program that has asset verification is the CHIP assistance if a client needed a new boiler, oil tank, etc. To apply you do not have to be behind, you only must show the one-month income.
- Barbara—What is the process for requesting/receiving a heat pump?
 - When the client is completing their intake process for fuel assistance the client must let the processor know and own their home. Must show property tax to show ownership.
 - Cost is fully covered, equipment and installation. There is a waiting period for the installation vendors, but the process has become streamlined.
- Jane—Are there materials that can be shared via social media, etc to share these programs?
 - Yes, can send those along!

Lifelong Maine AmeriCorps Program (LMAP) Project Organizers:

- Barbara Riddle- Dvorak, Age-Friendly AmeriCorps Member
 - Content for resource magnet
 - AARP funding for 100 resource magnets for the community. First draft available, look to verify that phone numbers are correct. Includes emergency numbers such as Fire/EMS, police, and poison control. Other numbers to include things such as wellness and community contacts, as well as Mobilize Katahdin, medical facilities, and the Town of Millinocket.
 - Diana is willing to look at the formatting once the content is set for finalization, will be finalized at next AF Committee meeting.
 - AARP Grant awarded to use to update signage along Michaud Trail
 - \$550 towards improving signage.
 - Wanting to include additional icons such as wheelchairs, strollers, etc. There are also signs missing that could be replaced.
 - Other improvements include things such as benches, crossings, etc.
 - Will connect with the regional Wayfinding project coordinated by the Northern Forest Center to see if their signage could coincide with this update.
- Sarah Jandreau, Age-Friendly AmeriCorps Member
 - Revamping the Caregiver Support group—No participants in previous meeting. Weather could have impacted but reaching out to participants to see what barriers exist to attend.
 - Loved one that is brought to the space seems to be uneasy and is causing attendees to not attend.
 - Could make the meetings hybrid or zoom only, especially through the winter months when traveling is more of a challenge.
 - Marti Stevens Improv Group performed at the Boreal Theater on October 11th
 - Good attendance and discussion with participants.
 - Feedback was collected from the attendees to gather information regarding how they felt the performance was helpful, etc.
 - Main takeaway was overwhelmingly that people were unaware of challenges people face as they age. Participants also want to know how to get additional information on resources that will help.
 - One of the top needs identified was creating a program that is like handy helpers for assistance with doing things around the house that include repairs to allow older adults to age in their homes.

- Increased conversation surrounding respite care for caregivers who need a break from caregiving for a few hours.
- Follow-up programs have been a result in which those who shared their contact information were invited. One has already taken place at the library—"Continuing to live well with Chronic Pain" which was limited in attendance, but community members have asked to be notified if the course is offered again.
- Next program is Wednesday 30th 10-11am which is a zoom/hybrid meeting led by Disabilities Rights of Maine surrounding information and resources for individuals with hearing impairment.
- Finishing up Food Preservation Series with UMaine extension coming to library on December 9th to test community members pressure gauges for their canners.
- Future programming could be events such as Dementia 101, seed starting, or handy helper volunteer event.

Other Updates

- Maine State Housing Authority grant that was shared in a M-DASH meeting
 - Maine Housing Home Repair and Accessibility grant—available to homeowners and distributed through Penquis.
 - Potential to set up a workgroup surrounding this type of project and information sharing.
 - Reaching out to M-DASH participant to share information about the community grant that was discussed.
- Reminder to complete the LMAP surveys regarding AmeriCorps partnership with Age-Friendly Millinocket.
- Open Enrollment information session at the library led by KVHC. Flyers can be shared with the group and posted on social media.
- Penquis has expended the transportation funds for the time being. Data is available and will be shared with the group and used for future grant requests.
- Amber—Solar lighting grant request is a potential ask for the AARP challenge grant. Rough estimate is \$1000 per light/unit. Goal would be 14 units along the stretch of trail behind the school. More likely that this grant award would be closer to \$5000. Grant application is due in February.
- Katahdin Snowdown will be in the planning phase soon.

Next Meetings:

- M-DASH- Thursday December 1st
 - Will then present data dashboard to the town council December 8th
- Age-Friendly Committee- December 20th at 3 pm at the Library