



COMMUNITY CONNECTION

A PUBLICATION OF MONADNOCK UNITED WAY

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Here's what you'll find inside:

- Partner updates and news
- Upcoming Events
- Partner wish lists and community resources
- Employment Opportunities



Partner Updates

MCELC Uses Covid-19 Relief Funding To Invest in Staff

The [Monadnock Community Early Learning Center](#) (MCELC) teachers gave it their all this year. Six teachers worked to earn a certificate for completing the CDA preparation program. Judy Watkins, Executive Director of MCELC, says, "I am very proud of each and everyone of them and know that each of them have become highly competent teachers. Their dedication to the field of Early Childhood Education is impressive. I am blessed to have been a part of this journey with them. They will all receive 6 credits at NHTI who have agreed to form an agreement with us in order that they all are able to continue this journey. I would also like to thank Monadnock United Way and New Hampshire Charitable Foundation for their support."



Pictured left to right are: Marie Kelly, Ava Whicker, Judy Watkins (Facilitator of CDA prep Program and Executive Director), Julie Ayala, Kim Caron, Judy Ayala, and Ethan Jennings.



The Castle Center is Open!



The Castle Center for Life Enrichment, a service of [Home Healthcare Hospice & Community Services](#), has reopened its doors! The Castle Center is a licensed, medical adult day program offering a little help during the day for folks with medical needs or who need memory care, providing an opportunity for respite for family caregivers. Socializing, music, art, gardening, crafts, exercise, and time for peace and quiet are just some of the wide variety of activities available at the Castle Center. Healthy meals and snacks are provided

each day. Our fully vaccinated team of nurses, licensed nurse assistants and volunteers are on hand to assist with medication monitoring and personal care. Participants are welcome from throughout the area; participants must be fully vaccinated to enroll.

Click [here](#) for hours, additional information, or to schedule a tour!



Solar Project Underway at The Community Kitchen



The Main Entrance



The Kitchen



Behind the Serving Line

In 2017 [The Community Kitchen](#) (TCK) received a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for some much needed upgrades and renovations to their Mechanic Street building. Those monies enabled TCK to completely renovate their kitchen, install two new walk-in freezers and a walk-in cooler, install a new conveyor belt, and make the second floor of the building structurally secure.

Those improvements were amazing and went a long way to ensuring the building could withstand another 20 years of service for the organization; the utility bills, however, were still coming in at \$3,500 plus per month for electricity. The City of Keene has an ambitious renewable energy plan. When TCK approached the City of Keene to support another CDBG application for a solar array the city was on board and enthusiastic. TCK is also using this opportunity to overhaul the HVAC in the building, giving the staff more zones, more control, and (hopefully) more savings.

The project was delayed by pandemic-related issues, but with much excitement the work started in July. One of the contractors had said this project would be even more intrusive and disruptive than the last and, two months in, everyone at the Kitchen would agree! The Hot Meals Program was displaced completely, but the Salvation Army agreed to partner for the 6-8 weeks the evening dinner and Sunday lunch couldn't be served at Mechanic Street. This has been a great collaboration and The Community Kitchen is indebted to the Salvation Army Keene Corps. Lieutenants David and Emma LaBossiere could not have been more welcoming or helpful.

Both the Pantry Program and Hot Meals Program will continue to be served as the Kitchen's version of "drive-through" until at least early into 2022. This might be seen as an overabundance of caution but we are committed to keeping our guests, clients, volunteers and staff as safe as possible. The board and staff of the Kitchen are continuously appraising the situation but feel that staying "remote" is the best for now.



Lots Happening at The Keene Senior Center!

- [The Senior Center](#) reopened on August 2nd after being closed since March of 2020. Members are coming in for classes such as yoga and Age in Motion, quilters are meeting to work on projects, and an active card making group is creating amazing designs. These and other programs and projects are underway - you can find out more [here!](#)
- The Senior Center took advantage of the shutdown to renovate the interior. By adding a new hallway, we were able to improve the flow of traffic and improve overall space use. An external ramp has been delayed until the Spring due to high material costs and busy contractors. In the meantime, we've heard plenty of compliments about the new design, and lovely comments about the openness and feeling of space in the rooms. The Senior Center is safer, more functional, and very attractive.
- We've also had help from community partners. Volunteers from [Honda of Keene](#) helped manage the Japanese knotweed infestation. We moved over nine yards of mulch, and that was after cutting down the knotweed and covering the area with plastic! Lots of thanks to the [Fenton Family Dealership](#) for encouraging their employees to volunteer in the community!
- A large group of [Upward Bound](#) students help reorganize the Bargain Box Thrift Store which reopened in June. They also dug out the front gardens in preparation for a new look. It was a hot day and a massive undertaking, but they were a smiling and helpful group. We couldn't have done it without them.
- We recently received a grant from the [Monadnock United Way](#) to do a needs assessment on digital literacy and access for seniors in the Monadnock Region. This is a collaborative effort with the Monadnock Social Services Collective. The SWRPC will be conducting the assessment.
- We just completed our successful first [Golf Tournament](#) fundraiser! Next up is the [DeMar Marathon](#) and the [Walk for Alzheimer's](#). We are the November Hannaford Book Sale recipients and our Holiday Faire is in December, with awesome gift baskets, quilts, cookies and greens for sales. There is always something fun going on at the Senior Center – come join us!



Monadnock Alliance for Families Strives to Provide Family Supports Through Covid-19

Thanks to Monadnock United Way, the [Monadnock Alliance for Families](#) (MAF) will be able to provide more help to local families in the coming months as they navigate ongoing COVID-related financial and emotional challenges.

Together, the five Alliance organizations provide support for both parents and children through home visits, resource assistance, educational programs, and specialized services for children with confirmed or suspected developmental delays and disabilities. For many families who were already struggling, whether emotionally, financially, or in terms of their child's development, the impacts of COVID have been huge.

Those impacts continue as COVID continues to impact all our lives. Rising rents and limited housing availability, together with rising prices for all kinds of things, are stretching budgets to the max. Rapidly changing work and school situations are causing plenty of anxiety. As a result, many families need help now as much as earlier in the pandemic.

Thanks to a special \$15,000 COVID recovery grant from MUW, the Alliance organizations will be able to provide additional support to families: help connecting with available local resources (including food, fuel, and housing assistance programs) and direct support in emergency situations. That means more help for families trying to understand what local programs they qualify for and the steps to completing an application. It also means gift cards for gas and food for families with immediate and urgent needs.

For example, The River Center was recently able to help a struggling mom who was reuniting with her young children, currently living away from her, for a birthday visit. Thanks to gift cards the organization had set aside, this mom was able to take her children out for a special family dinner. This

gift meant so much!

The five Monadnock Alliance for Families organizations are: [The Grapevine Family and Community Resource Center](#); [Healthy Starts at HCS](#); [Monadnock Family Services](#); [Rise for baby and family](#); and [The River Center, a Family and Community Resource Center](#). To learn more about the programs available from each, please visit us on [Facebook](#).



City Express Updates Schedule

The City Express, a service of Home Healthcare, Hospice and Community Services (HCS) and Keene's bus for everyone, is now running two buses throughout the City on an updated schedule. The two bus routes are operating Monday through Friday and are open to the public; no reservations are required.

Route changes made over the summer in response to changing rider needs due to the pandemic include more frequent service to grocery stores, including Market Basket, Riverside and West Street Plazas, and Monadnock Marketplace.



Bus service runs from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, with service at many stops, particularly residential areas downtown, receiving service every thirty minutes.

For more information on safety protocols, fares, and scheduling, click [here](#) or call 352-8494.



Staffing Updates

The Keene Senior Center Welcomes New Staff

Mary Jensen joined the Senior Center as the new Executive Director. Formerly a volunteer, she started full time in June. Prior to this she served as the project manager for the Jonathan Daniels Center for Social Responsibility, the Director of Sustainability at Keene State College, at the Keene Recycling Center, and at the Keene Sentinel. Mary researched innovative food programs at nursing homes for her PhD.

Leah Garrapy has been hired as the new Administrative Coordinator for the Senior Center. A NH native, Leah has lived in other parts of the country but came back here to raise her family. She manages our membership database, organizes and promotes our programs, works with volunteers, and lots more!

Casper Bemis joined Cheshire Village at Home in August. He is a long-time resident of Keene and CV@H volunteer for the past three years. Casper worked for Sterling Cleaners for 32 years before retiring as General Manager in 2017. He is known for his sincere and friendly assistance by our members.

Debbie Tawse has recently joined our team as Marketing Coordinator, tasked with designing our monthly newsletter and other marketing projects. In addition to her part-time work with the Center, Debbie does graphic design, creates art kits, and teaches art classes using repurposed materials. A few years ago she launched the Big Ideas Warehouse - a creative reuse center in Keene. Previously located in Austin, TX, where she raised her 2 children and 5 dogs, she is very happy living here where she can enjoy all four seasons.

Events

Monadnock Developmental Services Run~Walk~Smile 5K/10K/1-Mi Road Race

The 7th Annual Run~Walk~Smile 5K & 10K Chapman Challenge or 1-Mile Fun

Run is open for registration! MDS is raising funds for dental care for adults with developmental disabilities.

- Saturday, October 30, starting at 10 a.m. at Railroad Street and Community Way in Keene
- \$25 for 5K/10K, \$15 for 1-mile or kids under 12, free under 3 - family discount available.
- [Register](#)
- [Directions](#)



Family Support Programs at The River Center

[The River Center](#) is offering a strong line-up of family support programs this fall. We are bringing back our regulars such as Baby and Me, Mini Explorers, See the ABLE not the LABEL support group, Safe@Home, and more. We are also adding new programs including Your Pregnancy for first time and repeat parents, Parenting Your Teens with Bonnie Harris and Parenting Your Tweens with Shannon McNamara. Bonnie Harris is offering When Your Kids Push Your Buttons for the last time with The River Center. Class is full, but there is a waitlist available. Parenting and youth expert Joshua Wayne will be speaking about Risky Behaviors and How to Stay Connected with Your Teen on October 14 at 7 pm on Zoom.

Being offered on a regular basis as well, on Wednesdays or by other arrangement, is Money Coaching where volunteers will you make sense of your finances, no matter your age or income level. For more information on these and other programs and to register, visit our [website](#) or call us at 924-6800.

HCS Offers Poinsettias to Support Care in Our Region

The 26th Annual Poinsettia Sale to benefit [Home Healthcare, Hospice and Community Services](#) (HCS) will be gearing up with order forms available starting on October 1st! Plants will be available by pre-order at the HCS offices in Keene and Peterborough. Proceeds from the sale benefit HCS home care and hospice services provided in southwestern New Hampshire communities. The poinsettias are local – grown right here in New Hampshire! These beautiful plants arrive just in time for the holidays and make great gifts and decorations!



For more information or to request an order form be mailed to you, call 352-2253 x4291 or [email](#).



Wish Lists and Resources

[Southwestern Community Resources Provides Many Services](#)

[Energy Assistance](#)

The Fuel Assistance Program is now scheduling phone interviews for the upcoming heating season! Please feel free to call the Keene (603-352-7512) or Claremont (603-542-9528) offices to get these interviews set up. The team has 1950 applications in process so far and will continue taking applications through April 2022.

[Summer Foods Program](#)

SCS is happy to report that 26,396 meals were served for the Summer Foods Program! This total comes from both breakfasts and lunches served to area children and included curbside pick-up at Keene Middle School as well as distribution to area camps, including City of Keene Parks and Rec, Keene Family YMCA, Swanzey Day Camp, and the Keene Public Library.

[New Hampshire Rental Assistance Program \(NHERAP\)](#)

Renters are encouraged to apply for rental assistance if needed at: www.scsHELPS.org
SCS has paid out over \$3.5 million dollars in rental assistance through this program, in addition to

over \$2 million dollars paid out with the previous Housing Relief Program, for a total of more than \$5.5 million dollars paid out to third party vendors between the two programs!

[Head Start](#)

Head Start is now in session! Head Start Centers are located in Ashuelot, Swanzey, Jaffrey, Keene, Claremont, and Newport

[Introducing the New Memory Care at Home from HCS](#)

[Home Healthcare, Hospice and Community Services](#) (HCS) is now offering a respite program to support families who are caring for a family member with dementia at home. HCS Memory Care at Home is offering respite services provided by LNAs (Licensed Nurse Assistants) with experience and training in caring for those with Alzheimer's Disease. The program will provide three-hour blocks of respite time weekly and will include personal care and activities for those who have Alzheimer's Disease or a related dementia, giving the caregiver time for themselves. To learn more, click [here](#).

[Hand Sanitizer Available from UNFI](#)

United Natural Foods Inc. has a surplus of hand sanitizer available in large and small quantities to local nonprofit organizations. If your facility could use any hand sanitizer, know a facility also in need, or have any general questions about the sanitizer/donation please reach out to [Abigail Moran](#).

[Office Furniture Available from EIM](#)

Electronic Imaging Materials has a variety of office furniture available to area nonprofits including cubicle spaces, desks, chairs, and shelving. Contact [Angeleena Davis](#) for more information!



Employment Opportunities

[Monadnock Region Afterschool Collective Hiring Afterschool Aides](#)

Do you like to help kids discover, explore, experiment and play? Would you like to provide positive, enriching activities that expand kids minds and support their academic growth? If this excites you, consider joining one of our regional afterschool programs as a staff member or volunteer. We are looking for energetic, responsible people of any age to join our afterschool programs. Program sites include Keene, Fitzwilliam, Hinsdale, Hillsboro, Swanzey, Troy and Winchester. Contact [Lauren Bressett](#) for more information.

Remember, it only takes one to believe in a child to make a difference in their life.

