



North Quabbin Health Collaborative

Public Health Newsletter
COVERING: April 28th – May 3rd, 2026
PUBLISHED May 8, 2026



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Upcoming Events:

Next Collaborative Meeting

Monday June 8th at 6pm

Location: OIC, 131 West Main St, Orange

In this issue:

- Calendar of Events (pg 2)
- Community Food Access Resource List (pg 3)
- Senior Dining Community Resource List (pg 4)
- Stats for Influenza and Respiratory Diseases (pg 5-6)
- Nurse Update (pg 7)
- New Salem and Orange Social Worker drop in hours (pg 8)
- Little Bookworkms Story Time (pg 9)
- Wheeler Family Movie Night (pg 10)
- Wheeler Lego Club (pg 11)
- Baby & Toddler Storytime and Playgroup (pg 12)
- New Salem Tea and Topics (pg 13)
- Intro to Healthy Living (pg 14)
- New Salem Crafternoons Beeswax Candles (pg 15)
- Nicotine Future for Youth (pg 16)
- Healthy Alternatives to Tech (pg 17)
- Healthy Screen Habits (pg 18)
- Healthy Phone Habits (pg 19)



Visit the North Quabbin Health Collaborative website to download materials and see additional information at: <https://www.northquabbinhc.org/>

UPDATES:

ORANGE SCHOLARSHIP FOUNDATION APPLICATIONS AVAIABLE

The Orange Scholarship Foundation, celebrating its 65th anniversary this year, has announced that scholarship applications are available and due by May 30th.

Orange Scholarship Foundation has awarded over \$1 million in scholarships to graduates of Ralph C. Mahar Regional School in Orange. Graduates of Mahar, as well students from Orange, Wendell, New Salem and Petersham attending Franklin County Technical School or Montachusets Regional Vocational School are eligible along with post graduates.

OSF is able to award scholarships from investments made by the L. S. Starrett Company, the Rodney Hunt Company, Orange Business Association, the Mahar 50+ Club, as well as several private investments. OSF welcomes donations and can be mailed to Orange Scholarship Foundation, P.O. Box 298, Orange, MA 01364.

Applications are available at the Mahar Student Services, the porch at Witty's Funeral Home or from Kathy Kilhart.

Don't forget to send your area news and activities to cpage@townoforange.org to be included in the next newsletter.

Calendar of Events

NEW SALEM LIBRARY "Crafternoons: Making Beeswax Flower Candles", Saturday, May 9, 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Jennifer LeVangie (Free Spirit Farm, Wendell) will be demonstrating the process for making candles. Participants will be able to make their own unique flower candles to take home. [Registration required: call 978-544-6334].

WARWICK May 9 10am-1pm Plant Swap at Warwick Library - Join us on the front lawn to swap plants!

WARWICK Library "Humanism" discussion group - 2nd & 4th Tuesdays, May 12th/26th @ 7 pm: Discussion facilitated by Jesse Lopes of Warwick, who teaches Philosophy at Boston College. Readings may be suggested but are not required.

WARWICK Library Non-Fiction discussion group - Thursday, May 21st @ 7 pm: This discussion group is wide open: Could be something you're reading or listening to: science, history, memoirs, biographies; articles, books, newsletters, journals. It's all up for discussion at the new non-fiction discussion group. Come to share/discuss or just to listen and build your reading list.

WARWICK TCC Movie Night: Wednesday, May 27th at 7:00 p.m. Popcorn served, all are welcome! Life Is Beautiful (1997) is an Italian film directed by and starring Roberto Benigni, about a Jewish-Italian waiter who uses humor and imagination to shield his young son from the horrors of a Nazi concentration camp by pretending it's an elaborate game. The film, which won multiple Academy Awards, including Best Actor for Benigni and Best Foreign Language Film, is known for its blend of comedy and tragedy, telling a story of love, family, and sacrifice during the Holocaust.

WARWICK Library Monthly Short Story Hour - Harper Lee, May 28th @ 7:30 pm: We'll read a selection from The Land of Sweet Forever: Stories and Essays, a 2025 collection of eight previously unpublished early short stories by Harper Lee, author of "To Kill a Mockingbird" (1960). Found in her New York apartment, these "apprentice" stories were written in the 1950s and explore themes of southern life, childhood, and young adulthood in Alabama and New York. Come to read or just to listen.

WARWICK Saturday May 30th at 2pm at the Town Hall - Live Solo Piano Performance by Dan Becker. An afternoon of original neo-classical piano - intimate, cinematic, and deeply moving. Featuring music from the EP "Echoes of Silence"

NEW SALEM Old Home Day September 12 is looking to be better than ever this year. Music! Food cooked by firefighters! Crafts! A town-wide tag sale on the Common -- declutter your house or find a treasure! Win a cash prize for your excellent cake, or maybe even better, win a cake! March in a parade, play minigolf, volleyball, or kickball, take a tree tour. The focus this year is history -- learn about New Salem at the time of the Declaration of Independence, and learn about the people who lived here a thousand years ago. You can help organize any of these events -- sign up at Jeanneclayton27@gmail.com -- but whatever you do, open up your calendar now to September and mark Old Home Day September 12.

Community Food Access Resource List

Resource Name	Location	Days/Times	Contact
CommunityAction Center for Self Reliance Food Pantry	156 Main Street, Greenfield	Monday, Thursday, Friday: 11am-4pm (closed between 1-1:30pm each of these days), Tuesday: 11am-6pm (closed between 1-1:30pm), Closed on Wednesdays	413-773-5029
Good Neighbor Food Pantry	Old Town HallWendell, 6 Center St, Wendell	Sundays 11am-noon, Last Name A-K 1st and 3rd Sunday, Last Name L-Z 2nd and 4th Sunday	978-544-3775
The Salvation Army	107 Ridge Ave, Athol	Tuesday9am-noon, Everyother Tuesday delivery	978-249-8111
The Salvation Army	72 Chapman St, Greenfield	Monday9am-11am, Closed on Holidays	413-773-3154
Our LadyImmaculate Church	192 SchoolSt, Athol	Tuesdays 10am-1:30pm	978-249-6790
Greenfield Pop Pantry	2nd Congregation Church, 16 Court Sq, Greenfield	Tuesdays 4:30pm-5:30pm	413-774-4355
CommunityFood Pantryat AtholHigh School	2363 Main St, Athol(Located in the back of AHS)	Wednesdays, Summer hours 11am-1pm, Schoolyear hours 3pm-5pm	978-249-2435 ext 314
AtholSenior Center	82 Freedom St, Athol	Wednesdays 11am-11:45am	978-249-8986
Orange Council on Aging	St Mary's, 20 West Myrtle St, Orange	Wednesdays 10am-11am	978-544-3481
Turners Falls Mobile Food Bank	62 5th St, Turners Falls	3rd Wednesdayof Month 1:30pm-2:30pm	413-419-0079
Orange Food Pantry	81 East River St, Orange	Thursdays 10am-3pm (If it's a holidaythen it will be open on Wednesday. Deliveries on Fridayfor Athol/Orange)	978-544-2149 (call for deliveries)
St Vincent De Paul/St Mary's Food Pantry	19 Congress St, Orange	Open by appointment only	978-544-6814
Marion's Food Pantry	On the Royalston Common	Open by appointment only	978-895-7887
The Salvation Army	72 Chapman St, Greenfield	Monday-Friday8:30am-9:30am (Breakfast) 11am-12:30pm (Lunch)	413-773-3154
Our Lady of Peace Church	90 7th St, Turners Falls	Mondays 4pm-5:30pm (Distributing hot meals and gorcerybags to go from the sidewalk in front of the church)	413-863-2585
The Salvation Army	107 Ridge Ave, Athol	Tuesdays 4:30pm-5:30pm (Dine in/Delivery)	978-249-8111
Second Congregational Church	16 Court Square, Greenfield	Tuesdays and Wednesdays 4:45pm-5:45pm, hot meals to go Tuesdays and Wednesdays on the side driveway	413-774-4355
AtholSenior Center	82 Freedom St, Athol	Tuesdays and Wednesdays at noon (Must RSVP the daybefore). For individuals 60 and over and/or disabled. Senior Dining at Lynn's Luncheonette. Enjoylunch with others. A \$3.50 donation is welcome	978-249-8986 Reserve your mealby9am the daybefore you dine
St Frances Church Hall	101 Main St, Athol	Wednesdays (September-May) doors open at 5pm	978-249-7304
Orange United Methodist Church	104 S Main St, Orange	Thursdays 4:30pm-5:15pm (Distributing ready-made meals to heat up at home. We offer deliveries for meals and pantrybags by applications)	413-772-1033 https://www.fc cmp.org/comm unity-meals/orange/
Trinitarian Congregational Church	147 Main St, Northfield	Fourth Thursday4:30pm (Take out meals only. You must RSVP)	413-498-5839
AtholCongregational Church	1225 Chestnut St, Athol	First Fridayof the Month, doors open at 5pm, dinner at 5:30pm (Must RSVP byTuesdayfor a meal on Friday)	978-249-6202
Meals on Wheels	AtholSenior Center & Orange Council on Aging	LifePath Inc of Greenfield provides home delivered (noontime) meals to homebound seniors, age 60 and older and/or disabled, who are not able to prepare nutritious and balanced meals for themselves.	1-800-732-4636 (call to see if eligible)

Senior Dining Community Resource List

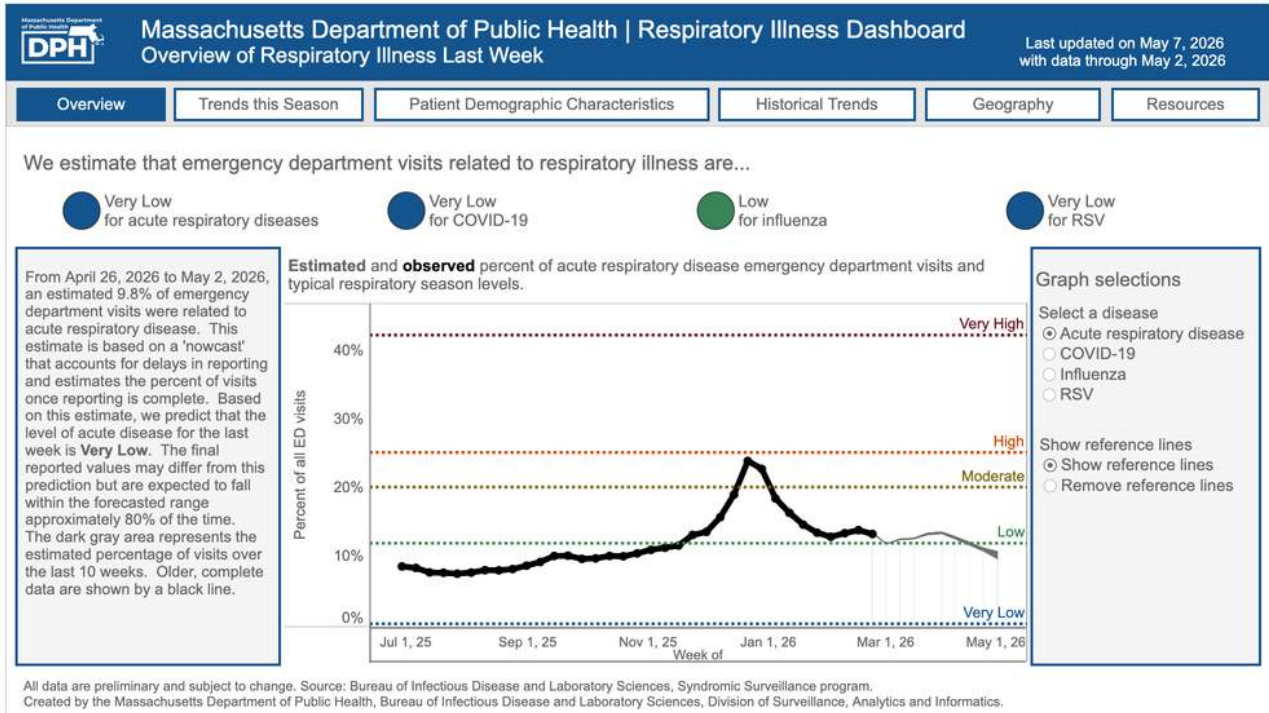
Location	Schedule	Contact
<p>Athol Senior Center 82 Freedom St Athol, MA 01331</p>	<p>Tuesday and Wednesday Congregate</p>	<p>(978) 249-9001</p>
<p>New Salem Luncheon Club Central Congregational Church 22 South Main St New Salem, MA 01355</p>	<p>2nd & 4th Friday of the month Congregate Dine-in</p>	<p>(413) 687-8089</p>
<p>Petersham Luncheon Club Town Hall Petersham, MA 01366</p>	<p>Wednesday Congregate <i>and</i> Grab and Go</p>	<p>(978) 821-5549</p>
<p>Phillipston Luncheon Club 1st Congregational Church The Common Phillipston, MA 01331</p>	<p>1st & 3rd Tuesday of the month Congregate Dine-in Closed December to March</p>	<p>(978) 407-9504</p>
<p>Royalston Luncheon Club Town Hall Royalston, MA 01368</p>	<p>Wednesday Congregate Dine-in</p>	<p>(978) 249-8957</p>

NQHC COVID-19 and Other Reportable Diseases

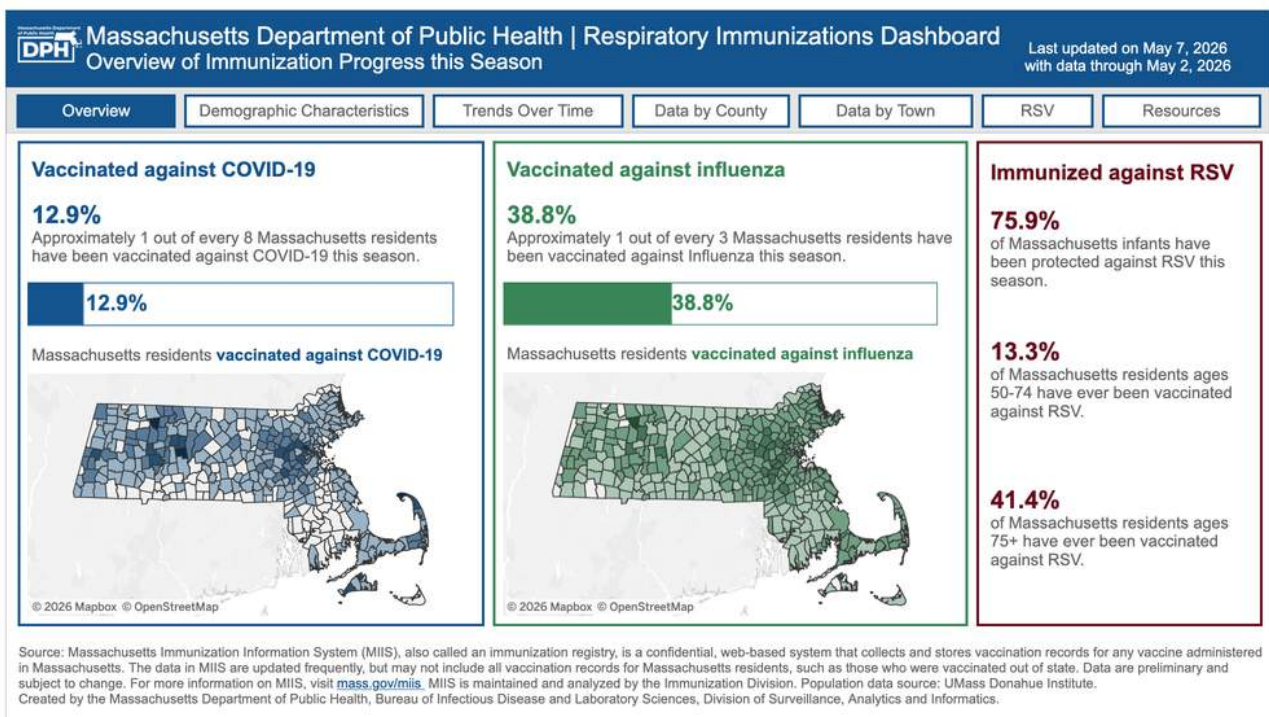
In the the one-week period of April 28th through May 3rd, 2026:

- 0 official cases of COVID-19 within the district
- 0 cases of influenza

Respiratory Illness Reporting

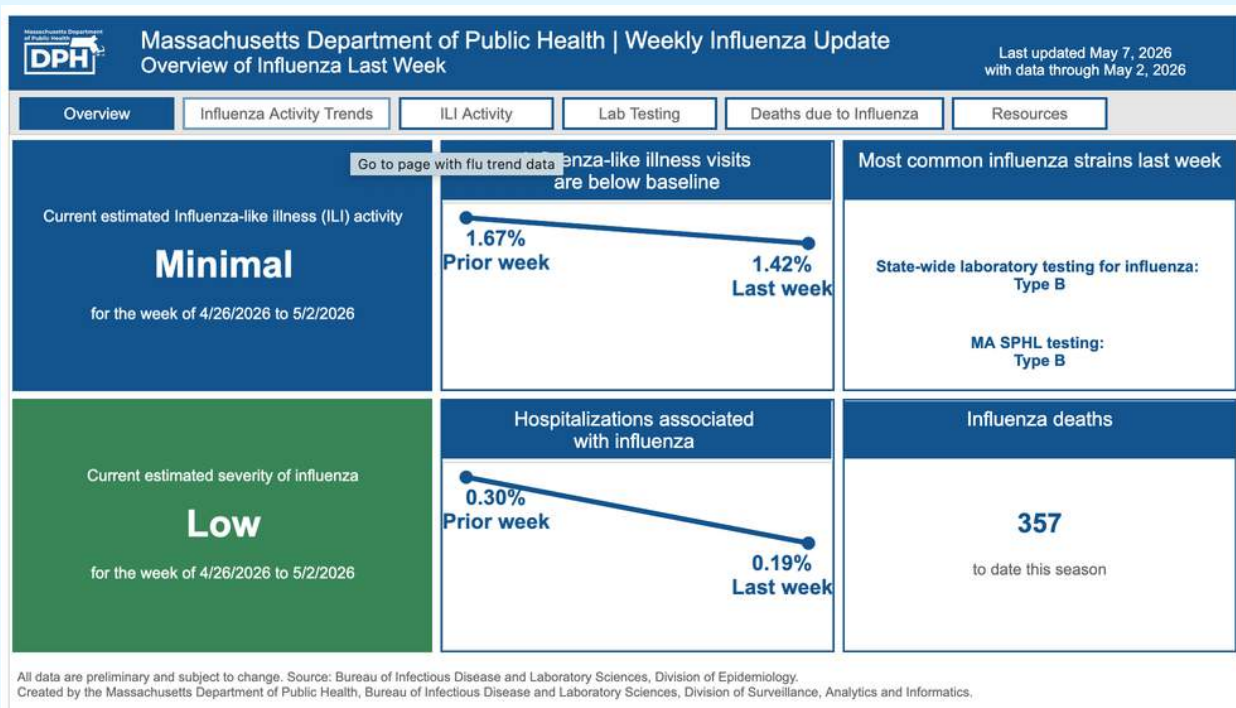


Here is the overall percentages if individuals in Massachusetts immunized against Covid-19 and Influenza

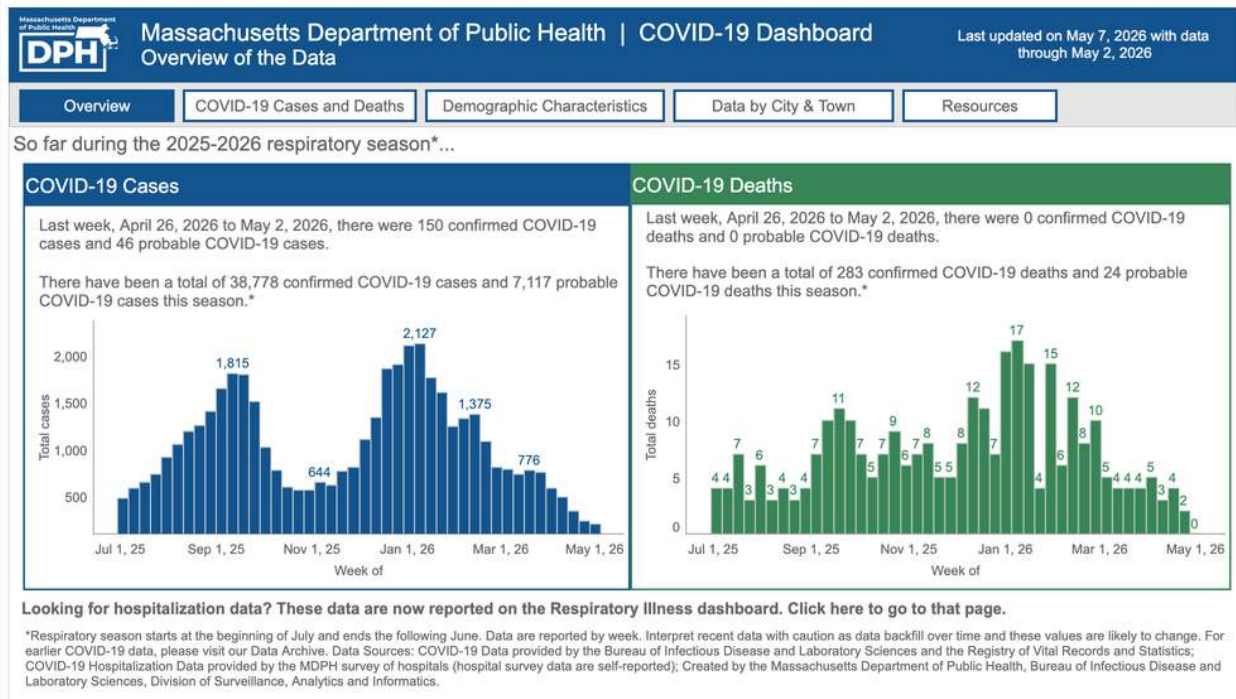


The Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Influenza Reporting – Influenza rate is at Minimal and Severity is at Low



COVID-19 Reporting – Number of cases are fluctuating



At this point in time there have been no additional updates to the Massachusetts Covid guidelines. The latest version can be seen at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/staying-home-to-prevent-the-spread-of-respiratory-viruses>

Report created by Christy Page: cpage@townoforange.org
Next newsletter will be Friday May 15th, 2026



NQHC Nurse Update



Post Partum Support

Our **FREE** Postpartum Visiting Program provides personalized care, whether you are adjusting to a new baby, coping with infant loss, or in recovery from substance use. **We connect you with local resources for ongoing support.**

What We Provide

- Prenatal and postpartum support and visits
- Education on health, safety, and wellness for you and your baby.
- Demonstrations and guidance from professionals.
- A free gift bag with essentials, educational resources, and helpful freebies.

Harm Reduction

Services/Program Includes:

- Naloxone and Overdose Response Trainings
- Free Naloxone and Fentanyl Test strip kits
- Syringe Exchange
- Connection to resources for treatment options and recovery

Upcoming events:

5/12/26 - 11:30-1pm Blood Pressure and Wellness Clinic at Warwick Town Hall

5/20/26 - 1-4pm - Tea and Topics in New Salem

5/21/26 - Recovery Cafe at MWCC Presentation

5/28/26 - 10am-2pm - Blood Pressure and Wellness clinic at Orange Food Pantry

Coming Soon:

We are going to be offering the following AHA CPR trainings. Dates will be scheduled with interest.

BLS \$80 cost

BLS Renewal \$70 cost

Heartcode: combines online eLearning with a required in-person, hands-on skills session (so we do the skills review and practice in person for certification)

Heartsaver with Narcan Training \$90 cost

CALL US: 413-500-6414

EMAIL: SPIRAGIS@TOWNOFORANGE.ORG

VISIT US AT: [HTTPS://WWW.NORTHQUABBINHC.ORG/NQHCPVP](https://www.northquabbinhc.org/nqhcpvp)



SERVING ORANGE, NEW SALEM, WENDELL, WARWICK, & PETERSHAM

Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.



MEET YOUR COMMUNITY SOCIAL WORKER

DURING DROP-IN HOURS AT:

**WHEELER MEMORIAL
LIBRARY, ORANGE**

**NEW SALEM PUBLIC
LIBRARY**

**EVERY SECOND TUESDAY
OF THE MONTH FROM
2:30-4:30PM**

**EVERY FOURTH TUESDAY
OF THE MONTH FROM
3:00-5:00PM**

DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS AROUND ACCESSING HELP?

NORTH QUABBIN HEALTH COLLABORATIVE'S SOCIAL WORKER CAN ANSWER QUESTIONS AND CONNECT YOU TO AVAILABLE RESOURCES & BENEFITS TO MEET YOUR NEEDS INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO:

- FOOD
- HOUSING & HOME REPAIR
- TRANSPORTATION
- HEALTHCARE & MENTAL HEALTH
- SUPPORT FOR ELDERS OR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN
- SUPPORT GROUPS
- & MUCH MORE

FREE &
CONFIDENTIAL
SUPPORT

RACHEL PURINTON, MSW

413-500-6414

RPURINTON@TOWNOFORANGE.ORG

LITTLE BOOKWORMS STORYTIME

JOIN MS. APRIL FOR
A FUN-FILLED STORYTIME!
BEST FOR AGES 3-5

Wheeler Memorial Library: Community Room
49 East Main St. Orange MA
10:30 am – 11:15 am
EVERY WEDNESDAY!

Questions?

email: aviolette@orangelib.org

Phone: 978-544-2495 x104



FAMILY MOVIE NIGHT: STAR WARS

EPISODE IV: A NEW HOPE

Wheeler Memorial Library,
Community Room.

Thursday, May 21st

5:00–7:30pm

Registration not required.

Everyone welcome!





LEGO CLUB



Wednesdays, 4:00-5:00pm
Wheeler Memorial Library
49 East Main St. Orange, MA



Questions??
Please call (978)-544-2495 X104
email aviolette@orangelib.org



BABY & TODDLER STORYTIME AND PLAYGROUP

AT WHEELER MEMORIAL LIBRARY:

49 EAST MAIN ST. ORANGE, MA 01364

COMMUNITY ROOM



10:30 AM - 1:15 AM EVERY TUESDAY!

**JOIN MS. APRIL FOR A GROUP
BOARD BOOK READING, SONGS,
MOVEMENT, AND PLAYTIME!
BEST FOR AGES 0-3**

QUESTIONS?

EMAIL: AVIOLETTE@ORANGELIB.ORG

PHONE: 978-544-2495 X104



New Salem Public Library
New Salem Council on Aging

Senior Drop-In Hours

Wednesdays, 1:00 - 4:00 pm

Tea & Topics:

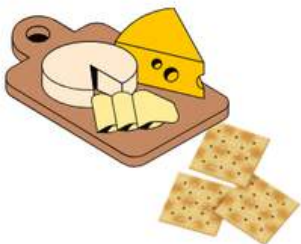
“Social Connection & Mental Health”

May 20, 2:00-3:00 pm

**For this program, Rachel Purinton
(Community Social Worker) will be joining us.**

“Tea & Topics” is a special program series during “Senior Drop-In Hours” on Wednesdays. Once a month, Samantha Piragis (Public Health Nurse for the North Quabbin Health Collaborative) will be joining us to share some health information in an informal setting with light refreshments.

Seniors are still welcome to spend time working on the ongoing jigsaw puzzle, looking for books, using the computers and printers, or just visiting with friends in the YA area of the library



New Salem Public Library
23 S. Main St., New Salem, MA 01355
978-544-6334 /n_salem@cw mars.org





Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

INTRO TO HEALTHY LIVING

Date: May 21, 2026

Time: 3:00 pm - 4:00 pm

**Location: Wheeler Memorial Library
49 E Main St. Orange, MA**

Join the North Quabbin Health Collaborative's Public Health Nurse for a free workshop and presentation.

An introduction to healthy living where topics will include stress management, importance of sleep, impacts of social connection, and cognitive health.

**The Orange
Public
Libraries** 



New Salem Public Library



Crafternoons

Making beeswax flower candles

Saturday, May 9, 1:00-3:00 pm

Presented by Jennifer LeVangie

Free Spirit Farm, Wendell



We will be making our own flower candles using eco-friendly colored beeswax (a variety of colors will be available), flower molds, and wicks. The process involves heating and cooling phases and can also be done at home.

Jennifer is the owner and creator of Free Spirit Farm, and she has been making candles for more than 20 years

Jennifer will also have a variety of her handcrafted beeswax candles and goat milk soap products for sale.

This program is geared for adults and teens.

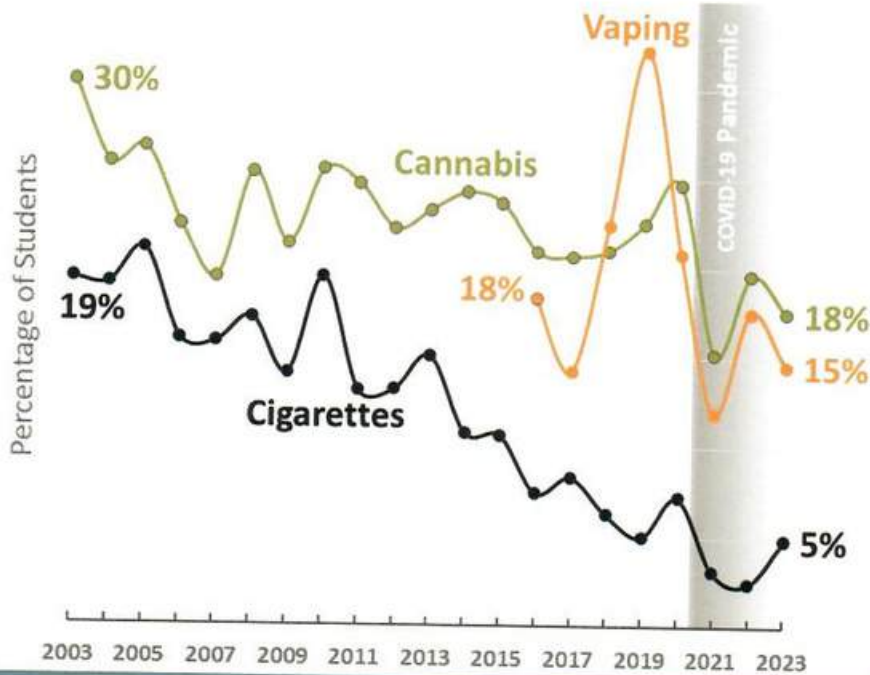
**Space is limited - registration required:
sign up at the library or call 978-544-6334**



New Salem Public Library
23 S. Main St., New Salem, MA 01355
978-544-6334 /n_salem@cwmar.org

Towns' Role in Building a Nicotine-Free Future for Local Youth

RECENT USE OF CIGARETTE, VAPING, AND CANNABIS BY LOCAL 8TH-12TH GRADERS



Prevention is working.

Over the past 20 years, public health policies and education efforts have been successful. You can see the overall decrease in youth cigarette smoking in this chart.

But with a recent increase in smoking, along with concerns about youth vaping and cannabis use, it is vital to maintain strong prevention policies.

That's where you come in, by supporting policies that promote youth health.

Teen Brain: Under Construction



Young people's brains are primed for learning and are more sensitive to drugs and alcohol. Research shows that almost 90% of adult daily smokers started before age 18. www.cdc.gov/tobacco: Youth and Tobacco Use

The longer a young person waits to use substances, including nicotine, the lower their chances of developing a substance use disorder/addiction in general. nida.nih.gov: Understanding Drug Use and Addiction DrugFacts

New tobacco policies also help prevent youth vaping & cannabis use.



Vaping, cigarette smoking, and cannabis use are connected health issues for young people. Teens who vape are almost 4 times more likely to start smoking cigarettes or using cannabis within the next few years. Policies that reduce vaping help with other prevention.

store.samhsa.gov: Reducing Vaping Among Youth and Young Adults

Thank you for making a difference!



By passing updated tobacco policies that reduce youth access to nicotine, you are making a difference for local youth. You are helping to make their future brighter and create a healthier community for everyone.

Learn more about local youth health data: communitiesthatcarecoalition.com/surveys

Access Health Agent and Boards of Health training: frcog.org/franklin-hampshire-field-training-hub-resource-library

For more about local policy for youth health, email Ilana Gerjuoy, Prevention Strategies Coordinator: ilana@frcog.org

RESOURCES, TIPS & WAYS TO GET INVOLVED WITH ADVOCACY FOR HEALTHY ALTERNATIVES TO TECH

There are a lot of organizations out there! Here are some to explore, with a variety of options for learning and involvement.

ORGANIZATIONS WITH TIPS, GUIDES, OR WEBINARS

Becca Schmill Foundation beccaschmillfdn.org

Fairplay fairplayforkids.org

Institute for Families and Technology www.instituteforfamiliesandtechnology.org

Phone-Free Schools Movement www.phonefreeschoolsmovement.org

Children & Screens www.childrenandscreens.org

Your Brain on Social Media www.yourbrainonsocialmedia.org

Time to Log Off www.itstimetologoff.com

On media literacy and digital literacy: **Media Literacy Now** medialiteracynow.org and the **News Literacy Project** newslit.org



NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS WITH MEETINGS YOU CAN JOIN

Distraction-Free Schools Policy Project (DFSPP) - If you would like to work with and learn from others who support the idea of phone-free schools, you can join their weekly "Community of Practice" calls - email phonefreeschools@bsfyouth.org with a request to be added to the list.

Smartphone Free Childhood U.S - They host monthly action and learning calls for parents that you can register for on their website under "events." Visit smartphonefreechildhoodus.com.

Four Norms, a national organization that has a listing of events for parents and other advocates working on healthy tech boundaries for kids. Visit www.fournorms.com/events.

LOCAL/REGIONAL ORGS BASED IN MA THAT WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Communities That Care Coalition (CTC), Franklin County & the North Quabbin Region, communitiesthatcarecoalition.com. CTC is a youth health coalition that works on a variety of issues related to youth health and well-being.

Reconnect Malden, Malden, MA

Sociedad Latina, Boston, MA

Sudbury for Digital Balance, Sudbury, MA

Reconnect Nashoba Valley

Arlington Parents - Smartphone Sense

Lex Kids Be Kids, Lexington, MA

Turning Life On, started in **Concord, MA** with connections across the state

Unite for Safe Social Media - Go to the "get involved" tab to connect with the MA Chapter.

You can find these groups online!



Franklin Regional
Council of Governments

Communities that Care
COALITION

SCREENS & KIDS: HOW TO BUILD HEALTHY HABITS

Phones and screens are part of daily life in most households, but there is a lot that parents and caregivers can do to support kids in our screen-filled world!

Research shows that children do best with more time for play, sleep, and in-person connection, and less time on screens.

The goal isn't perfection - it's balance and healthy habits early on.

WHY IT MATTERS

When kids spend less time on screens, they are more likely to:

- Get enough sleep (screens can make it harder to fall asleep)
- Build attention and learning skills
- Develop social and emotional skills
- Use their imagination through play and creativity
- Stay physically active



WHAT HELPS

Start with simple, clear routines

- Set daily screen-free times (like before school or during meals)
- Be off screens a minimum amount of time before bed (e.g. 1 hour)

Create screen-free spaces

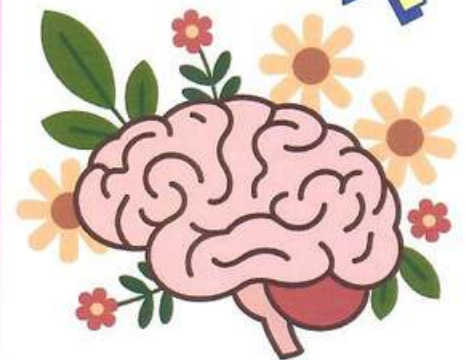
- Bedrooms are a great place to be screen-free
- Try mealtimes as phone-free family time

Delay personal devices when possible

- Shared family devices are easier to monitor

Be a role model

- Kids notice when adults put their phones away to connect



WHAT TO DO INSTEAD

Kids are more likely to move away from screens when there are other options:

- Outdoor play (even short bursts help)
- Reading or being read to
- Playdates or time with other kids
- Arts, crafts, building, or imaginative play
- Family time (meals, games, conversations)

A supportive approach

- Keep expectations simple and consistent
- Give advance notice for time off screens
- Expect some resistance - it's normal
- Focus on connection and routines, not punishment

The bottom line

Less screen time + more play, sleep, and connection = healthier development.

Small, consistent routines can make a big difference.



Franklin Regional
Council of Governments

Communities that Care
COALITION

WORKING WITH TEENS TO BUILD HEALTHY PHONE HABITS

Phones are a part of life for most youth for socializing, entertainment, and navigating the world. But research shows that too much screen time - especially social media - can affect sleep, mood, focus, and well-being.

Parents and caregivers can help teens build balance and real-world connection.

WHY IT MATTERS

Teens who spend less time on screens and more time offline are more likely to:

- Get enough sleep (late-night phone use is a major disruptor)
- Have better mental health and mood
- Stay more focused in school
- Build stronger in-person relationships
- Feel more connected and less isolated



WHAT HELPS

Set realistic boundaries - together, if possible

- Agree on phone-free times (e.g. meals, family time, before bed)
- Charge phones outside the bedroom at night

Focus on sleep

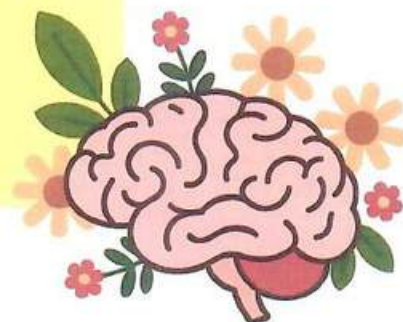
- Aim for a screen-free wind-down time (e.g. 30–60 minutes before bed)

Keep communication open

- Ask what they enjoy about their phone use
- Talk about how it affects sleep, stress, or mood

Model balance

- Young people notice and learn from adult habits



WHAT TO DO INSTEAD

Teens are more likely to unplug when it doesn't mean "nothing to do."

Encourage:

- Time with friends in person
- Sports, jobs, volunteering, or clubs
- Low-pressure family time (meals, drives, shared activities)
- Creative outlets (music, art, writing, etc.)
- Time outside or being active

A supportive approach

- Give advance notice for time off screens
- Keep expectations simple and consistent
- Expect pushback - it's normal
- Focus on health, sleep & connection, not just rules

Even small changes (like 30–60 minutes less screen time a day) can help.

The bottom line

Less screen time + more sleep and in-person connection = healthier, happier teens.

Small, consistent routines and alternatives can make a big difference.

As teens develop, keep communication open and consider what rules will work well as they grow.