



President's Message

Hi Neighbors,

I hope this message finds you well.

Welcome to the first edition of the *Groton Neighbors Newsletter*. If you find it useful, we will plan to publish it on a quarterly basis. This quarterly newsletter format allows us to provide more detail and background on topics of interest. It also allows us to tell you more about some of our current members and past and future events.

The Groton Neighbors Board of Directors is working continuously to provide the types of services you need during the pandemic. We are also reviewing the steps necessary to resume other services and events as the conditions allow. As we consider resuming services, our primary concerns are the safety and well-being of our volunteers and members. Because the health situation changes so rapidly, we will update you on these types of changes via update letters as needed.

Please remember that we are here for you and available via phone or email whenever you need a Groton Neighbors service.

Stay well,
Mike Manugian, President

“Who is that Masked Woman?”

Terri Ragot

One Sunday morning in March my stepson, who lives in China, called offering to send masks for Covid-19 protection as he had heard there was a shortage in the US. Pieter has long worn masks in public, a common Chinese practice, even when visiting in the US.



Terri busy at work (Photo T. Ragot)

I politely declined while thinking the US would be slow adopters and also knowing I could make them if needed. We weren't wearing masks in the US yet, but I decided to make some for friends and family anticipating that I, at least, would be wearing one when out in public. Infections were rising steadily throughout the US in March although not yet declared a pandemic.

In April I received a call to ask if I would consider making masks for members of Groton Neighbors. I was happily on board. After making a number of masks using a pattern published in the New York Times, I switched to a different pattern found by a member of the Mask Team. This new

pattern accommodates different face sizes and includes a wire to conform the mask over the bridge of the nose, improving fit and reducing fogging of eyeglasses.

I have a considerable supply of fabric from years of various projects and also received generous donations from friends. Elastic to secure them on the wearer has been in short supply. That problem has since been resolved. An old friend from my former Boston neighborhood contributed to our effort by visiting Freddy Farkle, the iconic textile store in Allston, and sending much needed elastic and yet more fabric.



Word has spread about the value of masks in preventing the spread of the coronavirus. So far every Groton Neighbors member who wanted a mask has received one. We still have an inventory of masks available for a member who may need another. Member feedback has been very positive. They have not only expressed their appreciation for our work but also find the fabrics pretty. The response has been gratifying for me personally as well as everyone on our team.



Donna Nowak busy working on one of the more than 60 masks she made for Groton Neighbors (Photo R. Nowak)

Donna Nowak, a charter member of the Mask Team who made over 60 masks says, *"I always knew my stash of quality cotton fabric would come in handy one day. But, I never dreamed that it would be needed for such an important issue as making face masks to protect people from COVID-19. It has been my pleasure to do my part to help fight this terrible virus."*

Kay Deck, a former nurse, evaluated several mask designs before settling on one she felt gave excellent coverage, allowed for different sizes, and accepted a wire to prevent the wearer's glasses

from fogging up. Kay said, *"Before volunteering for this project, I hadn't sewn in 40 years. I borrowed my neighbor's 80 year old sewing machine to make masks for my family and Groton Neighbors."*

Safety and common sense will likely dictate wearing masks in public for months to come. Remember, a mask is intended to protect others as well as yourself. It may be helpful to share a few best mask practices.

- Hand Wash and Air Dry
- Remove wire if possible when washing
- Ironing will help dry and sanitize a mask
- Keep your hands away from your face whether wearing a mask or not

The efforts of all who helped sew masks for Groton Neighbors is summed up in the words from a few members. **Ellen Brandt** says, *"The masks are perfect!!"* She thanks those who made them and delivered them. **Louise Gaskins** asks that we *"Please tell the makers of the face masks that I am grateful for their work and the masks are pretty too!"*

Wear your mask. Stay well. 

Snake Oil Salesmen

William Knuff

Global threats bring out the best in most people. During this pandemic most of us are committed to keeping one another safe while a vaccine is developed. However, there are always some who will try to take unfair advantage during a bad situation.

Scam artists have long inflicted pain and suffering on the unsuspecting and vulnerable. A global pandemic is just another opportunity for someone without a moral compass. We have seen warnings from CDC, WHO, AARP, FBI, SEC, as well as State and Local governments chronicled wherever you get your newsfeed.



Scams impersonating legitimate organizations run the gamut from offers of miracle cures, access to items in short supply, stock investment frauds, and appeals from fake charities, to bogus government schemes designed to part you from Social Security benefits or stimulus check.

Here are a few tips to protect yourself from scammers:

- **JUST SAY NO** to unsolicited email, phone, or text asking for personal information.
- **DON'T CLICK** on unexpected links, downloads or emails even if they appear legitimate.
- **TRUST YOUR GUT** and walk away from offers that feel shady.
- **SEPARATE WORK & PERSONAL** technology if working from home

In times of stress it is worth remembering that “*if it sounds too good to be true, it usually is.*” 

Call Me...Irresistible!

Lois Young

With the start of the Covid-19 Pandemic Groton Neighbors was forced to limit services, programs and contact with members. Knowing that isolation can be depressing, MMO assembled a team of volunteers to call every member. Our objective was simply to “check in” with every member to see how they were doing under Governor Baker’s stay-at-home order. We also took the opportunity to let them know we were able to grocery shop or pick-up prescriptions or other items from the pharmacy.

Several members were making reusable face masks which we were able to offer to anyone who wanted one. I found reaching out to our members by



MMO Team Member Lois Young on one of many phone calls
with one of her Groton Neighbors
(Photo W. Knuff)

making calls to be as enjoyable for me as it seemed to be for those receiving the call. I was so impressed with the resilience of everyone with whom I spoke. I think being long lived gives us perspective on this kind of crisis. Folks were eager to reminisce about family members who experienced the Flu Epidemic of 1918, or the Polio Epidemic in the 1960s, and other similar traumatic events in their lives. To a person, they

were coping well with groceries and meals, and most people had an adequate supply of masks. If they didn’t, they appreciated knowing they could order one from Groton Neighbors.

We were also able to offer Zoom classes so members could become familiar with the technology that permitted them to actually see relatives and friends...or attend a virtual exercise or Yoga session. Even if they were exclusively staying home, members seemed to be coping well. It was as if they knew how to prepare for this virus much the same way they prepared for a hurricane or power outage. Hunker down and have an adequate supply of food and essentials. Everyone felt fortunate to be living in a beautiful, rural

area and commented on how happy they were that the virus hadn't hit Groton in the fall with the holidays looming. As winter turned to spring they were looking forward to getting outside in warmer weather with longer days and more sunshine.

Everyone I called was "making the best of a very difficult situation" and this cheered me up. It was a wonderful way to get to know my neighbors a little better. That is what Groton Neighbors is all about. 

Poetry Corner

The Chairs That No One Sits In BY BILLY COLLINS

You see them on porches and on lawns down by the lakeside,
usually arranged in pairs implying a couple
who might sit there and look out
at the water or the big shade trees.
The trouble is you never see anyone
sitting in these forlorn chairs
though at one time it must have seemed
a good place to stop and do nothing for a while.

Sometimes there is a little table
between the chairs where no one
is resting a glass or placing a book facedown.
It might be none of my business,
but it might be a good idea one day
for everyone who placed those vacant chairs
on a veranda or a dock to sit down in them
for the sake of remembering
whatever it was they thought deserved
to be viewed from two chairs
side by side with a table in between.
The clouds are high and massive that day.

The woman looks up from her book.
The man takes a sip of his drink.
Then there is nothing but the sound of their
looking,
the lapping of lake water, and a call of one bird
then another, cries of joy or warning—
it passes the time to wonder which.



Groton Mural Nashua River Rail Trail (Photo K. Riggert)



Linda Jordan has a leg up on Martha McLure!
(Photo R. Lotz)

Meet Your Groton Neighbor

Diane Hewitt

Afternoon Tea & Conversation With Mary Athey Jennings

*Pull up a chair, pour yourself a cup of tea
and get to know one of your Groton
Neighbors through the art of good old
fashioned conversation...Zoom style!*

Recorded on June 8, 2020

Click **HERE** to watch video



Bio

Dr. Mary Athey Jennings, former Superintendent of Schools of Groton Dunstable and a founder of Friends of Prescott, has lived in Groton for twenty-five years. Her career in education has spanned five states, nine school districts, and countless curriculum trends. Through it all, she has kept her love of reading, watching good films, travelling, volunteering and talking with friends. Her two daughters, the pride of her life, graduated from GDRSD. They live nearby and keep her busy as a Grandma and constant supporter. Mary and her partner Jim Simko live on Blossom Lane with their dog Henry.

Early in June, over a dozen Groton Neighbor members assembled virtually to participate in our very first **Meet Your Neighbor** event, based on the simple idea that we have much to learn from the lives of our neighbors.

Susan Randazzo, Groton Neighbors member and former Executive Director of Indian Hill Music, skillfully led a conversation with visionary educational leader and member of Groton Neighbors, Dr. Mary Athey Jennings. Their discussion ranged from Mary's early years in S. Dakota serving as the foundation for her educational career, becoming a leader in creating democratic learning environments, the challenges of being the only woman senior administrator at the table, to her current role spearheading the Prescott School Community Center. We also learned about Mary's lifelong interest in film (quirky films are a favorite), her recent travels to China, and her great joy in becoming a grandparent. An unexpected and delightful aspect of our session was an opportunity to expand the conversation amongst each other. We enjoyed sharing

our own stories—particularly in relation to our often bumpy and unexpected journey into retirement. As **Barbara Rich** remarked, “*Not only are we all in this together but we need to know each other's language, values, perspectives, and strengths in order to be in this together mindfully and collaboratively.*”

It is our hope and intention to continue this program and develop it into a series of member conversations that will enable us to learn, to share and to strengthen our connections with one another. 

What's Cookin'

In other years the Kentucky Derby, Preakness and Belmont Stakes races would have given us another Triple Crown winner...or not!. On that first Saturday in May void of pomp and circumstance, ladies in big hats, and the ubiquitous mint julep, a field of all Triple Crown winners in history ran a virtual Kentucky Derby. Secretariat won top honors as best of the best.

This recipe from *Vintage Spirits & Forgotten Cocktails* is worthy of its name. Think of the Derby as a summertime Manhattan – cool and refreshing with a bite.

The Derby

1 oz. Bourbon Whiskey
½ oz. Sweet Vermouth
½ oz. Orange Curacao
¾ oz. Fresh Lime Juice

Combine ingredients in cocktail shaker with ice. Shake well and strain into cocktail glass. Garnish with mint leaf.



Alcohol-Free Mint Julep

¼ Cup Water
¼ Cup Sugar
2 Mint Leaves (chopped)
¾ Cup Lemonade

In saucepan combine water, sugar and chopped mint. Stir. Bring to a boil. Set aside to cool. Add Splash of Simple Syrup to Lemonade in cocktail shaker with ice. Shake well and strain into cocktail glass filled with crushed ice. Garnish with mint leaf.

If you have a recipe you would like to share...Aunt Beanie's Oatmeal Cookies, Mom's Potato Salad...any recipe...please send it to us. 

Quarantine Goslings

Martha McLure

Back in December at a cookie making party, a friend in Amherst told me about his newly formed 4-H club. I asked if he was interested in incubating any eggs with the kids. Last year my Sebastopol goose, Nosey, hatched fertile eggs, but she did not know how to take care of the babies, so they perished. This time, I was determined to let someone try to incubate some of the eggs. We agreed that this new 4-H Club would do it.



We had a very limited window of viability for hatching fertile eggs, especially since we had just lost our gander, Surprise, to a predator. So, there were only six that were possibly fertile. I made plans to deliver the eggs to Amherst in early March. Then the lockdown happened! What to do?



New arrivals (Photo M. McLure)

The eggs had to be incubated immediately. Fortunately, years ago I was given a new incubator to replace one I had used in the classroom for years. A change in health regulations put an end to hatching eggs in the classroom. I then remembered the gift incubator squirreled away in some corner of our barn. After a successful search I located the never opened box, out came the incubator and I set about getting it ready. As soon as the proper

temperature was reached we gently placed the eggs in what would be their “shelter-in-place” home for the next month.

Incubating eggs is not without its demands. The eggs had to be turned on a regular schedule. We kept the incubator in our downstairs bathroom so we would not forget to turn them. It gave my husband, Rick, and me a sense of purpose and a schedule to follow during that first month of our own quarantine. We turned the eggs three times a day - early morning, afternoon, and just before bedtime.

We tried to “candle” the eggs to see if there was any development inside but the shells were too thick to see through. So, we decided that we would just go on with the process and see if anything would happen.

There were times when we were sure nothing was occurring. Then on the twenty-eighth day one of the eggs started to move and peep. The next day a slight crack appeared in the egg. Finally on day thirty, a chick started to push itself out of the shell.

The timing could not have been more perfect! Our granddaughters, Nelle (6) and Daisy (3), arrived just in time to see the chick hatch. The next day, they watched as two more chicks emerged. After a day of stabilizing, the goslings were ready to be transferred to a nursery in the mudroom area of our kitchen. The first gosling immediately imprinted on Nelle. The two were inseparable, often sitting together on the kitchen couch the gosling wrapped in a towel. The other two goslings imprinted on Daisy and the rest of us. At the end of the week our daughter Marcie and the kids headed back to Amherst with two of the goslings. We had arranged for my friend in Amherst to adopt them. They were handed off enroute - with safe distancing - in the Athol shopping center parking lot.

The adoptive parents were delighted with their new baby geese, even carrying them around in apron pockets.

We kept the other gosling to give Nosey a friend. Our gosling, TutuTwo, (named after our first goose, Tutu) is still smitten with humans. Mother Nosey is not sure what to make of the little gosling, so TutuTwo has taken up residence with three young chickens. The goslings seem to double in size every day. Maybe we should have named her Covid...I think Nosey will have a friend soon. 

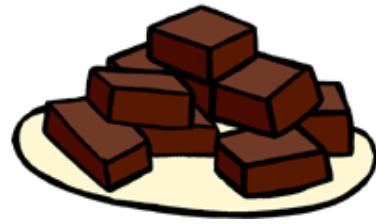


TutuTwo and new best friend Nelle
(Photo M. McLure)

Book Group Goes B.Y.O.B.

David Smith

Folks join book groups for three reasons: good reading, social interaction, the host's fresh-baked brownies. Well, two out of three ain't bad. In this age of online meetings, it's strictly B.Y.O. Brownies"

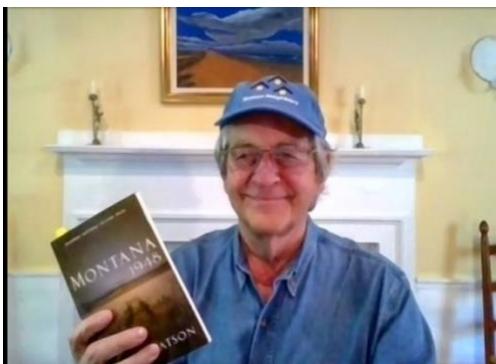


On Thursday, May 21, nine Groton neighbors met to enjoy virtual companionship and to share thoughts and feelings about the novel *Montana: 1948* by Larry Watson. Told by middle-aged David Hayden recalling his twelfth summer, the story focuses on the struggle of David's father, a small-town sheriff, who must investigate egregious criminal charges against his older brother, a decorated war hero and charismatic local doctor.



A Zoom gathering of members Bob Lotz, Richard & Diane Hewitt, Sally Russell, Pat Hartvigsen & Chuck VanderLinden, Barbara Rich, and Bob Anderson joined in an animated discussion of *Montana 1948* led by David Smith. (Photo R. Lotz)

At 169 pages and written in plain language, *Montana: 1948* reads quickly, but it's artfully composed and anything but simple. The characters must confront complex dilemmas of morality, justice and loyalty with no clear answers and their courage challenged. Our meeting was filled with non-stop opinion, critical comment and a good sprinkling of humor. Many said they were "hooked" from the start and some intended to read the story again.



In these days of ample time to read and minimal social interaction, our book group is a natural way for Groton Neighbors to maintain connection. We'll offer them four times a year, so watch for announcements of the next one in August and consider joining the fun. 

Photo R. Lotz

Volunteers Wanted

Groton Neighbors is an all-volunteer organization. We welcome your help in whatever way you are able. If your interests and skill set might be a fit for one of the positions below, please give us a call (978) 272-0123 or email us at service@grotonneighbors.org and we would be happy to explore that with you.

Communications Coordinator:

This person will work closely with the MMO Team and Administration to develop and implement a communications plan and supporting materials to create visibility and awareness among our members and in the larger Groton community. This position requires an individual who can learn the basics of the Groton Neighbors website and is comfortable organizing and delivering attractive and professional content through multiple social media channels, our website as well as snail mail.

Office Staff:

As part of the Ops Team this person will cover a virtual office shift two days each month. The position requires good communication and listening skills, dependability, and a willingness learn the web-based technology that enables a virtual office. In addition to the ongoing support of the entire Office Staff team, training and mentoring will be provided as long as necessary. This role offers a regular schedule with freedom and flexibility to integrate with your daily life.

Website Administrator:

Working with ClubExpress, Groton Neighbors leadership, and members this person is responsible for managing the Groton Neighbors website and database. Familiarity with ClubExpress or similar web-based database management system is required. This may be satisfied by prior experience or a willingness to learn.

Orientation in the Time of COVID

Susan Shay

The great pleasure of conducting a Groton Neighbors orientation session is meeting our new members in person. While a phone call to arrange a meeting gives us a sense of who's on the other end of the line, nothing really compares to an in-person meeting. It's a wonderful opportunity to get to know our new members and discuss our services and policies again.



scheduling conflicts, and I was really looking forward to meeting with Marie, as our phone conversations had been quite delightful. Unfortunately, before we could meet, her building became closed to all outside visitors. We were able to process her application and move forward so that she could become a full member and take advantage of our grocery shopping service and receiving masks, but I wish we had been able to meet in person. I still look forward to that day!

Orientations have been conducted by several methods – phone calls, emails (with attachments and without) and snail mail. Some were initiated before the Zoom craze, and some after. I have not yet conducted a Zoom orientation but will do so when appropriate. We have been able to successfully “orient” all new members during this period.



One positive outcome of the change that has been necessary during this time is that I realized it makes much more sense for new members to receive the Member Handbook before we conduct an orientation session, so that they have a chance to review the material before we meet and be ready with any questions they might have. Going forward, I intend to make this a regular part of the process.

While it isn't possible to meet in person with new members, it is still very gratifying to welcome them to our wonderful organization and we all look forward to the time when we can gather together in friendship. 



Liz Strachan and Bill Knuff when in-person orientation was still safe. (L.Turner Boston Globe)

Heroes Among Us

William Knuff



Greeted by new rules for navigating the grocery store reminding shoppers of social distancing through the aisles and at the checkout counter. (Photo W. Knuff)

Imagine entering a big city for the first time...at rush hour...in search of a street address...without GPS! That is what it can feel like grocery shopping for someone else. Even if the store is familiar, items on someone else's grocery list may not be. Throw a global pandemic into the mix... *What have I gotten myself into?* Masks or wipes do only so much to quell concern.

In early March Groton Neighbors transitioned from providing members with rides to the grocery store to do their own shopping to a new protocol consistent with safe practices outlined by the CDC and Governor Baker. Many of our members are in high risk categories. So, we created a Designated Shopper process to enable a select group of volunteers to shop for other members while avoiding direct contact. This was a team effort involving every member of Groton Neighbors



The Office Staff quickly learned a new procedure for capturing shopping lists and a protocol ensuring no direct contact for the safety of all. A team of Designated Shoppers was assembled from both members and non-members to fill the breach. All Members received a notice of explanation with assurance that Groton Neighbors was doing all we could for one another during this most unsettling time.



Shirley Man retrieves her groceries from the entryway of her building. (Photo W. Knuff)

Designated Shoppers are bringing their “A” game to this new service paradigm frequently accepting an assignment the same day the request is received. Member **Grace Coolidge** says “*I am so grateful for your service. These are challenging times, and Groton Neighbors saved the day for me again.*”

In an example of how we are all working together, **Sue Nordberg** reports speaking with the requesting member “*before I came to do the shopping and we went over her list and our plans for pick up and drop off. She was flexible as to which day I shopped, so we decided I would call her the day before.*”

Whether a shopping list is received by email or phone call, the Office Staff reconfigures each list to make shopping easier for the volunteer. Designate Shopper **Doris Saoud** sent the following feedback: “*The list that you shared tremendously helped in terms of details on aisle and alternate item if possible. Mention of brand was of importance as well.*”

Susan Hughes says it all in this brief note to the Office after a recent shopping trip for a Groton Neighbor... “*All went well! She is a delight to help.*”

As of this writing, Designated Shoppers have completed over 30 trips to the grocery store on behalf of our members. While it may seem like a small thing, every trip to a busy store presents a risk of infection. These volunteers are no less heroes than grocery employees stocking shelves or manning check-out counters. All deserve our deepest appreciation and thank you. 

“A Penny for Your Thoughts”

This is the first of what we hope will become a quarterly Groton Neighbors Newsletter. We hope you enjoyed reading it as much as we enjoyed creating it for you. As with everything we do at Groton Neighbors, we are constantly looking for feedback and ideas to improve. This applies to our Newsletter as well. We would appreciate hearing from you and ask that you [Click Here](#) and take sixty seconds to answer two questions.

We look forward to hearing from you.

William Knuff
Editor

David Smith
Associate Editor



Photos: R Lotz, L Young, S Lieman