

MESSAGE from the BOARD

Dear Neighbor,

What an odd year! We can't gather with friends and family, a loss magnified in the holiday season. We've changed the way we do so many things, hoping the virus won't find us. Groton Neighbors can't even help people in all the ways we want.

Sometimes I wonder how we will look back on this time.

My family connects on Zoom more frequently than we did in person or by telephone, enjoying games played together from afar. My company's Zoom meetings are filled with more personal talk than happened in our pre-COVID office. Will those connections have grown stronger when constraints are lifted?

I see more people walking and hiking. I see extra cars parked at trailheads at our conservation lands. Will our connections to nature be stronger too?

I find myself slowing down more often to look around, appreciate and think about what surrounds me. Will I remember to keep that slower pace?

It is our nature to adapt, compensate and grow in difficult times. It is my hope that some of the good things we have learned will remain to make our lives better when COVID constraints are finally gone. As this New Year arrives, I wish everyone health, safety, connection and a wonderful year. 🏡



Bob Pine, Vice President



A Logistics Nightmare

By Bill Knuff

Let's set the mood with this passage from the Economist:

"Deliverance, when it arrives, will come in a small glass vial. First there will be a cool sensation on the upper arm as an alcohol wipe is rubbed across the skin. Then there will be a sharp prick from a needle. Twenty-one days later, the same again. As the nurse drops the used syringe into the bin with a clatter, it will be hard not to wonder how something so small can solve a problem so large."



As the promise of adding a vaccine to the arsenal of weapons against COVID-19 grows closer to a reality in record time, the complexity of production and distribution present one of the greatest logistical problems the world has ever undertaken. While masks, social distancing, and hand washing have come with their own unique set of challenges, they pale in comparison to the development and distribution of a vaccine to the nearly 8 billion people inhabiting planet earth. There is no silver bullet but the combination of an

effective vaccine along with masks, distancing, and sanitizing mark the beginning of a return to the semblance of normalcy that was life before COVID.

We remember all too well the problems created by panic demands for alcohol, toilet paper and everything in between. The supply chain was simply not capable of reacting quickly enough to keep the shelves filled. Vaccines typically take years to develop, test, and distribute. The global carnage being caused by this virus made business as usual a price too steep to pay.

Local leadership and leaders from nations around the world have joined together in support of big pharma and all the ancillary industries required to take on the logistical tasks to safely compress the development and testing of a vaccine while literally preparing for the *"planes, trains, and automobiles"* undertaking required to immunize planet earth. The small world in which we live truly makes this a matter of global importance. This battle is not over until all mankind has been immunized.

If you ever wondered what it takes to make this happen, *Morning Brew*, one of my daily news feeds, prepared this special report which you may find eye opening. [CLICK HERE](#) to read more. 🏠

TIPPING POINTS

By Steve Lieman



Afternoon Tea with Barbara Rich and Owen Shuman

On a recent Friday afternoon more than a dozen Groton Neighbors grabbed their beverage of choice and met their neighbor Barbara Rich via Zoom to learn a bit more about her amazing and original life. Owen Shuman, former Director of the Groton Public Library, Yoga student, and friend of Barbara Rich since 1993, facilitated the conversation which focused on tipping points in Barbara's life.

A major tipping point was when she and her husband rose to John F. Kennedy's "ask what can you do for your country" challenge. They joined the Peace Corps and lived 3 years in the Philippines with their four young children.

Another tipping point occurred when Barbara returned home from the Peace Corps to work in a reading lab in a Newton elementary school. The kids in the lab had all sorts of learning difficulties. Working with them, Barbara felt her heart open. She fell in love with the complexities of helping children with learning disabilities.

Getting her M.Ed. at Boston College and becoming Director of Special Ed in Tyngsborough was a natural next step. In that job she met with parents trying to get the best services for their children. Barbara eventually concluded that she might be even more helpful by advocating directly on behalf of the youngsters with learning needs. She left the safety of her steady job and launched herself as a self-employed advocate for children. She has been doing this work of the heart as a solo practitioner ever since 2001.

In 1970 Barbara heard mention of a Yoga class being offered nearby. She knew nothing about Yoga but took the class anyway. Fifty years later she is going strong teaching stress reduction, Yoga, and mindfulness. In these uncertain and challenging times, she offers Yoga classes (currently via Zoom) designed to provide participants with sustainable, functional, and spiritual approaches to staying grounded and stable.

She also offers a Yoga approach to one-to-one coaching to explore alternatives to such things as over-checking the news and forgetting to breathe.

Owen asked Barbara about her work as an advocate in this time of COVID. Barbara shared that everyone is anxious. Kids who learn differently are having a hard time learning on Zoom. And parents are not feeling confident about being homeschoolers.

Barbara loves her life each single moment at a time. Her spiritual practice is to pull herself back to the present a million times a day. She believes Yoga is meditation-in-movement. You want to have something to take off the mat when you finish a class. She feels that Yoga contributes to her good health. She also doesn't pay attention to society's rhetoric about age having published her first book of poetry *Sez Who?* at age 85. A second volume is in the works for her 87th birthday early in 2021. Barbara continues to work full time happily involved with special education, Yoga, and her dearly beloved children and grandchildren.

To wrap things up Barbara shared some Buddhist teachings.

This Moment: Even the Zoom conversation we were having could itself be considered a Yoga process. Our feet on the floor. Our back against the chair. That's Yoga! That's mindfulness. This moment is the only moment.

On Forgiveness: We don't forgive others because they deserve forgiveness. We forgive others because we deserve the peace.

On the Beauty of "Not Yet." When we say "Not Yet" that opens up possibilities. "Never" – "always" – "should" muddy the path and harden the jaw.

Sufi advice for evaluating a new ideas. Ask yourself three questions: Is it true? Is it useful? Is it kind?

For info on Barbara's group Yoga sessions and on her one on one meditation, mindfulness, stress reduction services you can contact her at 508-397-6505 or by email at barbara.rich0@gmail.com 🏡



Sharing a laugh on Zoom with Barbara
Photo: S. Lieman



Bates Trail Holiday Decorations

Photo S. Lieman

Now What?



Groton Neighbors on deck to discuss what retirement means to them.

Photo: R. Lotz

On a beautiful September afternoon on **Sue Lotz's** spacious deck, Sue and **Krys Salon** co-hosted a small, socially-distanced group -- **Becky Pine, Beverly Smith, Susan Shay** and **Lois Young** – to discuss their journeys in retirement. “All are vital, active, intelligent women who were leading full lives,” writes Sue. “There were no couch potatoes! We started by going around the circle and each sharing her experience, telling her story of retirement. Then we had open discussion.” Krys writes that “members shared varied experiences as long-time Groton residents, retirees new to Groton, newly retired, and long-time retired. The discussion included ways to enhance personal contribution to our community, create long-term plans for staying in our homes, and staying physically active.”

Beverly recalls that “Sue and Krys made it easy to participate and share thoughts. The agenda was thinking about what's next in our lives. This could cause one to feel anxious, but that's not what happened for me. I enjoyed hearing about everyone's perspective of what it's like for women of a certain age.” It seems that everyone shared the sentiment expressed by Susan Shay, that “the pandemic has put a damper on a lot of the things we were looking forward to doing with our new freedom,” those living alone finding it especially isolating. To move forward in this difficult time, Lois Young has made it her priority “to stay involved with things that give me meaning. I have participated in hikes and bird watching through Prescott School Community Center, and while the weather

was warm, I hiked on Groton trails almost daily with a friend or by myself.” Lois has also found ways to volunteer with various town organizations.

Becky Pine summed up the afternoon this way. “Some of us still miss aspects of our professional work and are exploring new ways to feel useful and fulfilled. Some stopped working suddenly, while others transitioned to retirement in gradual steps. Some moved to a new home; others are actively looking for a home better suited to aging in place. Some are single; others are adjusting as couples to both being at home all the time. Most agreed that making plans and setting a basic schedule are helpful in adjusting to the change from full-time work to total ‘free time’. All were grateful that Groton Neighbors brought us together and provides a supportive community of fellow seniors.” 🏡

What's Cookin'

Cranberry Orange Holiday Bread



This recipe has long been a favorite at this time of year. Fresh orange juice is the secret. Try it with your morning cuppa. 🏡



2 Cups Flour*
1 Cup Sugar*
1-1/2 t Baking Powder*
1/2 t Baking Soda*
1 t Salt*
Zest from Large Orange**
3/4 Cup Fresh Orange Juice**
1 Egg well beaten**
4T Butter (softened)
2 Cups Cranberries

Mix Dry* ingredients and set aside
Mix Wet** ingredients and set aside
Add Butter to Dry ingredient mix.
Do not overwork. Coarse is best
Add Wet mixture to Coarse mixture
Fold in Cranberries

Butter a loaf pan (9"x5"x3")
Bake for 50-60 minutes @ 350°F
Check doneness w/wooden toothpick

What Would I Tell My Younger Self?

By Krys Salon



On December 8, seven Groton Neighbors gathered via Zoom to discuss the documentary movie *Tea with the Dames*. The movie focuses on the relationships between Joan Plowright, Judy Dench, Maggie Smith, and Eileen Atkins, all accomplished actresses whose careers and personal lives have intersected over 70 years. Our group reflected on the staying power and longevity of these accomplished women.

The group also reflected on many of the questions tackled in the documentary from our own perspective. It turns out that these experienced women would give their younger selves similar advice to those of us born and raised here in New England and living quieter lives. The lessons learned by these iconic women over the years were remarkably human: Don't pay attention to negative feedback. Rely on your friends. Be open to love.

Many members remarked that it was interesting to have this intimate view of four dynamic women interacting with their friends as they interacted not only with each other but also with the film crew around them.

For those of you unable to join us, this film is an interesting look into the human side of film and theater and the lives of the people whose talents make those experiences rewarding for the rest of us.

The film is available through the [Groton Public Library](#) Verizon On Demand, and on [Amazon Prime](#), [Hulu](#) for a small fee. 🏡

Finding New Ways of Reaching Out

By Alice Cary

This article recently appeared in the Groton Herald



When the global pandemic struck, Groton Neighbors—an all-volunteer, non-profit group that began in 2017—had to quickly adapt. With a goal of helping older people remain in their homes and maintain community connections, its services became more vital than ever.

“In the perilous times, I have found that belonging to Groton Neighbors has given me a sense of community and connectedness that has been sorely needed,” notes

member Sally Russell.

With most, if not all, of its members at increased risk to the effects of COVID-19, creative thinking was essential as the organization adjusted to its new normal. Luckily, the volunteer office staff already worked virtually, so that wasn't an issue. Although the team has been forced to limit contact between members along with certain programs and services—such as driving members to grocery stores or medical appointments—imaginative new initiatives have sprung up in their place. For instance, a “Designated Shopper” process enables select volunteers to shop for other members while avoiding direct contact. “This was a team effort involving every member of Groton Neighbors,” explains member Diane Hewitt.

Another group began sewing reusable face masks, offering them to any member who wanted one. Former nurse Kay Deck evaluated several mask designs before settling on one. “Before volunteering for this project,” she says, “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.”

Early on, during Governor Baker's stay-at-home order, a squad of Groton Neighbor volunteers called each and every member to see how they were doing. “I found reaching out to our members by making calls to be as enjoyable for me as it seemed to be for those receiving the call,” Lois Young says. “I was so impressed with the resilience of everyone with whom I spoke. 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.” “It was as if everyone knew how to prepare for this virus much the same way they prepared for a hurricane or power outage,” Young added. “Hunker down and have an adequate supply of food and essentials. Everyone felt fortunate to be living in this beautiful, rural area.”



Groton Neighbors also offered classes on Zoom so members could become familiar with the technology that permitted them to actually see relatives and friends or attend a virtual exercise session. A series of virtual book group meetings has also been popular. “We all learned so much from what others had to share that many wanted to read the story a second time,” notes leader David Smith of the August discussion of *A Place for Us*, by Fatima Farheen Mirza.



Zoom also allowed members to begin a virtual “Meet Your Neighbor” series, based on the idea that we have much to learn from the lives of our neighbors. The first featured a conversation between Susan Randazzo

Schulman, former Executive Director of Indian Hill Music, and Dr. Mary Athey Jennings, retired superintendent of the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District.

As pandemic restrictions eased, many of Groton Neighbors’ typical social gatherings—such as restaurant trips, movie showings, and lunch concerts—still remained out of the question. Instead, outdoor, socially-distanced events have helped members connect, such as a meditation and movement session led by Barbara Rich in Betty Ireland’s field overlooking Gibbet Hill.

Bob and Becky Pine offered a tour of their gardens to three different masked groups. “We strolled through our gardens discussing the different plants and paused to look at frogs, turtles and water lilies in our pond,” Bob recalls. “We talked about nature and agreed in our good fortune to live in such a lovely town. Although the day was hot, no one complained, and we all were able to enjoy not only the gardens but each other as we caught up with friends, got to know new people and regained some of the connection we had put on hold.”



To help provide additional relief from the boredom and loneliness that comes with prolonged isolation, Groton Neighbors has also initiated a new, one-on-one visiting program called “Front Porch Chats.” Since its launch in early September, twenty members have been visiting regularly with each other on their front porches or in their back yards. Some are old friends. Others are becoming acquainted for the first time.



Groton Neighbors continues to welcome new members. Member Susan Shay, who helps with orientation, says, “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.” For more information, go to www.GrotonNeighbors.org. Annual membership costs \$120 per person, although board members advise that financial concerns never pose an obstacle to membership. 🏡

Connecting with Our Grandchildren

By Krys Salon

As winter approaches and COVID-19 has reemerged, we find ourselves connecting with our families digitally once again. This is part two of a series of ideas for staying in touch



with our grandchildren using Zoom, Google, or your favorite online video chat service. Although these ideas are suggested for different ages of children, most can be adapted for broader range of youngster

Ages 4 to 6 “Top-It”

Growing up you knew this card game as “War,” but now many kids know it as “Top-It”. The object of the game is to have the most cards at the end of the round. To play on Zoom, each of you will need a deck of cards. Remove all face cards then shuffle the deck and place it face down in front of you. Each player turns over the top card in their pile at the same time. The player with the higher card puts their card to the side in their “win” pile. The player with the lower card places their card back under their deck. When both players have gone through the deck, each player counts the cards in their “win” pile. The player with the most cards wins. If your young player has stamina, the game can be played until one player has no cards left and wins the round. To shorten the game each player deals themselves 25 random cards. Adaptation for older children: Turn over two cards at the same time. Player with the highest total wins the hand.

Ages 4 to 8 Cartoon Drawing

Using the share screen feature on Zoom is a great way to interact with your grandchild. Zoom also has a white board feature if you are feeling very adventurous! However, you only need paper and pencil, crayons, or markers for you and your grandchild to enjoy creating simple cartoon figures together. These drawings do not require any expertise because they are based on simple geometric figures. The links below take you to various sites: You Tube instructional videos, instruction sheets, and drawing guides. There is something for everyone. Enjoy!

[Christmas Cartoons](#)

[Animal Cartoons](#) [Drawings & Doodles](#)

Ages 6 to 11 Zoom Libs

Remember Mad Libs? This silly word game adapts very well to the digital environment. Once you get good at creating these, you can do this on the spot or make up your own sentences. Initially, it works best if you use stories from books or pre-made Mad Lib books. The steps are: 1) Choose a favorite book your grandchild enjoys. 2) Get a copy of the book or have the child's parent send you a selection of pages with 3-4 sentences. Or, go to You Tube and search for "Children's Books with Text" for sentences. 3) Select words that are nouns, verbs, adjectives, or numbers and when replaced will make the sentences silly. Choose one or two per sentence. Here is the first few sentences from the Gingerbread Man: "The old man and the old woman lived in an old house at the edge



of the woods. They were very lonely. They felt sad most of the time." 4) Ask your grandchild to brainstorm random words with you based on the category of words. For our example: adjective (describing word), place, feeling. 5) Substitute the brainstormed words back into the original sentence. Read the new silly sentence! The *blue* man and the *frozen* woman lived in an old *ocean* at the edge of the woods. They were very *frustrated*. They felt silly most of the time.

Suggested adaptations: Try an original sentence about your grandchild.

The following resources have Mad Libs ready to get you started!

[Mad Libs](#) [Mad Lib Vacation](#) [Mad Lib Piggie & Elephant](#)
[Mad Lib Christmas](#) [Mad Lib Minecraft](#)

Ages 10 and Up

Connect to your grandchild through Zoom and share your screen to try your hand at an Escape Room experience. Escape Rooms were enjoyed by teams of people on site before COVID but are now being enjoyed online. An Escape Room is an experience game in which a team works together to find clues, solve puzzles, and complete tasks in rooms to accomplish a goal. Escape rooms are frequently organized around a theme. The cooperative nature of these activities lends to enjoyable interaction between generations.

So, get online and share your screen! The following is a list of Digital Escape Rooms you can enjoy with your 'Tween.

[Escape Rooms](#) [More Escape Rooms](#)

Finally, however you connect with your grandchildren we hope you enjoy sharing time with them. If you have any interesting and successful digital experiences to share with us, we'd love to hear from you. Email us at ksalon1953@gmail.com 📧

Front Porch Chat

By Bill Knuff

Several Groton Neighbors have been meeting regularly for Front Porch Chats for the last six months. The Front Porch Chat is an idea born of a pandemic but has taken on a life of its own helping to loosen the grip of isolation created by social distancing. We asked three of our members to share their experience with us.

Dick and Karen Bettencourt are early adopters having joined Groton Neighbors a month after we opened for business in January 2017. From the outset they both have generously offered their time providing rides and other services to fellow members. Dick is one of those friendly voices answering the phone when you call the Groton Neighbors office. Marie Melican joined our growing community in early 2020 just as the pandemic was forcing us to reinvent member services for the wellbeing of our members as well as the broader Groton community.

Dick, Karen, and Marie have been meeting almost weekly for Front Porch Chats since August. Living in West Groton and near Groton Center, they were not exactly next-door-neighbors. In fact, they barely knew one another. Karen says, “Marie M? If that’s the lady I think, we’ve got it made! So off we went for our first Porch Chat.”

Of that first visit Marie says, “I knew their names but I never had conversations with them. I enjoy meeting new people and discovering common values or different opinions...I enjoy listening to different points of view.” She goes on to say, “I discovered that we had many similar experiences. Karen and I had been teachers and had both met our husbands while they were in the service. Our discussions have covered a diverse range of subjects – our early lives, children, religious views, hobbies, and interests.”



Marie and Karen solving the world's problems during a Front Porch Chat at the Groton Center before it temporarily closed.
Photo: Dick Bettencourt

Karen was effusive in talking about their visits. “What a joy our Front Porch Chats have been. Marie is an inspiration to us. She is always cheerful, positive, and genuinely a fun person. We have enjoyed discussions about how the world has changed during our

lifetime. Not that “the world is all wrong these days” but rather as a point of interest and a shared experience.

Winter weather has not slowed this trio down a bit. They are able to drive themselves and continued meeting at the Groton Center, until it temporarily closed, feeling very comfortable chatting away while wearing masks and practicing safe distancing. Marie’s husband “died at an early age...when our daughters were teenagers. I was fortunate to have friends and family for support. When I moved to Groton to be closer to my married daughters, I made new friends here. I consider Karen and Dick to be my friends.”

If you would like to help bring this sense of community to life, please let us know and we will pair you with a member to begin your own journey to friendship. 🏡



Groton Neighbors

*Helping each other
live independently
at home*

BOARD MEMBERS:

Mike Manugian
President

Bob Pine
Vice President

Bob Anderson
Treasurer

Diane Hewitt
Secretary

Pat Hartvigsen

Betty Irelan

Bill Knuff

Bob Lotz

Krys Salon

David Smith

Lois Young

*Contact us to learn
about joining our
growing community*

Help Wanted

Groton Neighbors is an all-volunteer organization. We welcome your help in whatever way you are able. To learn more about volunteering for one of the position listings, please give us a call (978) 272-0123 or email us at service@grotonneighbors.org and we will be happy to help you explore these or other way you might help. 🏡

Communications Coordinator:

Working closely with the MMO Team and Administration to develop and implement a communications plan and supporting materials creating 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 social media channels, our website as well as snail mail.

Office Staff:

Join a team of volunteers who cover a virtual office two days each month. The position requires good communication skills, dependability, and internet access. Training and support of the entire Office Staff team will be provided. This role offers the opportunity to volunteer on your schedule with complete freedom and flexibility to easily integrate with your daily life.

Website Administrator:

Working with Groton Neighbors leadership and our web provider, this position is responsible for administrative oversight of the Groton Neighbors website and database. Familiarity with web-based database management is helpful but willingness to learn is more important.

Poetry Corner

Former professor at Lehman College and U.S. Poet Laureate in 2002 and 2003, Collins describes himself as reader conscious: *"I have one reader in mind, someone who is in the room with me, and who I'm talking to, and I want to make sure I don't talk too fast, or too glibly. Usually I try to create a hospitable tone at the beginning of a poem. Stepping from the title to the first lines is like stepping into a canoe. A lot of things can go wrong."* Collins further related: *"I think my work has to do with a sense that we are attempting, all the time, to create a logical, rational path through the day. To the left and right there are an amazing set of distractions that we usually can't afford to follow. But the poet is willing to stop anywhere."* Introduction to Poetry is one of those stops. 🏠



Introduction to Poetry

BY BILLY COLLINS

I ask them to take a poem
and hold it up to the light
like a color slide
or press an ear against its hive.
I say drop a mouse into a poem
and watch him probe his way out,
or walk inside the poem's room
and feel the walls for a light switch.
I want them to waterski
across the surface of a poem
waving at the author's name on the
shore.
But all they want to do
is tie the poem to a chair with rope
and torture a confession out of it.
They begin beating it with a hose
to find out what it really means.

The Apple that Astonished Paris (University of Arkansas Press, 1996)

[Click Here to listen to Billy Collins speak about poetry](#)

Braiding Wisdom

By David Smith

On November 12, a group of Neighbors met to share their impressions of the book *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer. A Ph.D. botany professor and member of the Potawatomi Nation, Kimmerer weaves scientific knowledge with Native American wisdom to unfold inspired metaphors for a healthier relationship with the natural world. Her theme is reciprocity. We cannot feed off the earth's bounty and expect that bounty to last. Instead, we must nurture the earth as we benefit from it. After seven years in print, the book is finding its audience. During the week we met, *Braiding Sweetgrass* made its way to #1 on *Boston Globe's* best seller list for paperback nonfiction.



David Smith leads discussion with Martha McClure, Bob, Lotz, Bob Anderson, Lois Young, and Bill Knuff
Photo: R. Anderson

Bob Anderson writes that it's "rare to find someone with such depth of knowledge of both science and indigenous wisdom and who can write so beautifully about the linkages between them. **Martha McClure** found the book profound, "meant to be savored, pondered and discussed. It is a magical read that is urgently relevant to our current need for transformation."

Thinking of one particular essay about strawberries, **Bill Knuff** writes: "The idea of becoming richer by the gift of giving reminds us of the real meaning of the word "Commonwealth". **Lois Young** found the reading "eye opening" as the author contrasts the indigenous world view of not owning the land with the European settlers' goal of ownership and dominance. And **Bob Lotz** suggests listening to the audio version of the book as you walk in the woods. "The author's evocative reading paired with the natural surroundings magically enhances both the message and the walk." He suggests you register for the free "Hoopla" account through the library and download the Hoopla app to your smartphone, select the audio version of *Braiding Sweetgrass* and head out on Groton's wonderful network of trails. 🏡

Join us in bringing Groton Neighbors to life.



Photos: S.Lieman, R. Lotz