

# CHAPTER FOUR

## PUBLIC SERVICE

Reports of the Council on Aging,  
Public Library, Veterans Services,  
Planning & Sealer of W&M



## **ATHOL COUNCIL ON AGING**

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ATHOL, MASSACHUSETTS 01331  
TEL: (978) 249-8986 \* FAX: (978) 575-0277

*Cathy A. Savoy*  
Executive Director

*Margaret L. Young*  
Chairman

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**July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015**

To: The Honorable Board of Selectpersons

The Citizens of Athol

### **Mission Statement**

Councils on Aging are the principal agencies of local government that serve older adults. First authorized by special legislation in 1956, there are now over 347 Councils in the Commonwealth. The three core responsibilities of the Councils on Aging are but not limited to:

- To identify the needs of senior citizens along with the available resources within the community.
- To educate the community at large in the challenges of aging and advocate for the needs of its senior citizens.
- To design, promote and put in place services that are needed and to coordinate the efforts of agencies which serve older people.

The Athol Council on Aging office and Senior Center is located at 82 Freedom Street in Lord Pond Plaza. The COA office hours are: Mon. Wed. & Thurs. 8:00-5:00, Tues. 8:00-8:00 and closed Fridays. The Senior Center is open 8:00-3:30 Monday through Thursday with occasional night and weekend activities. Hours are flexible and can accommodate special programs.

Over the past year approximately 2,383 community seniors were served in various capacities by the Council on Aging and Senior Center by the numerous programs provided through funding from the Town of Athol, the Executive Office of Elder Affairs Formula Grant, Frank S. Parmenter Trust Fund, LifePaths, Inc. (formerly known as Franklin County Home Care Corporation), EOE Title IIIB, Friends of the Athol Council on Aging and individual contributors.

The Senior Center dining program, sponsored by LifePaths, Inc, provided 1,840 nutritionally balanced congregate dinner meals served at 12 noon Tuesday through Thursday. Additional meals were offered outside of the established congregate program.

Activities at the Senior Center include health and wellness related activities and screenings including, hearing tests, foot screening, blood pressure clinics, flu clinics, preventive dental

services, senior fitness, yoga, congregate meals, home safety seminars and educational forums. Social activities include bingo, red aces, senior arts classes, painting, quilting, card making, movies, meetings, a lending library and other special events. Social services include food stamp applications, food security counseling, fuel assistance, benefits counseling, tax preparation, SHINE, a program of LifePaths, Inc., (serving health insurance needs of everyone) and information and referral services.

Through a Title III D Grant administered through LifePaths Inc. and the Executive Office of Elder Affairs the Council was able to offer a “Wellness for Life” program “Yoga for Every Body” facilitated by Pat Roix. Our innovative Birthday Card Outreach Program continues and is funded through donations.

Through Formula Grant funding, the Council was able to continue the well attended “Senior Fitness” program, instructed by certified staff of the Athol area YMCA two mornings a week. The fitness program served 36 seniors for 98 sessions. The fitness and wellness classes are year round.

The Brown Bag distribution continues with approximately 135 elders receiving surplus food each month. Approximately 75 of the brown bags are delivered by volunteer drivers. The program is supervised and led by the COA staff and 25 volunteers, who unload the truck, package the brown bags and distribute at the center site or deliver to homebound seniors and the disabled.

115 seniors received assistance in the preparation of their state and federal income taxes through AARP and the Council on Aging. Through outreach efforts the tax preparation program has shown a significant increase in demand over the past several years. Twelve seniors were assisted with filing the “Circuit Breaker” a State Tax Rebate program.

The Council has maintained their blood pressure clinics with 337 pressures taken at 48 clinics. There were 10 doctor’s referrals.

The “Shine” program assisted 544 area seniors with health insurance issues and assisted with the Prescription Advantage program and the changes in the H.M.O. programs. Three volunteer SHINE counselors trained through the State and LifePaths, Inc and continue to participate in monthly trainings to keep up with the changing health care systems. Support for program is provided by the Council on Aging.

The Council has maintained the foot-screening clinic available to seniors twice a month. 257 screenings were performed during the 22 sessions.

Fuel assistance – Over 50 elders were assisted with Fuel Assistance applications to

Through the generosity of the North Worcester County Board of Realtors and their “Adopt an Elder” Christmas program, the Council was able to identify and deliver 50 Christmas gifts to isolated and less fortunate elders.

The Council on Aging provided assistance and referral services 20 seniors to free legal assistance offered through North Central Legal assistance and the Franklin County Bar Association.

On Christmas Day, 250 homebound elders and disabled were delivered a complete ham dinner. With the assistance of the COA Board and the *MANY* volunteers, the dinners were cooked, packed & delivered. The Christmas dinner program is a three day project.

The Council on Aging provided assistance with the Wm. J. O'Brien Thanksgiving community dinner where over 100 community residents were served a sit down meal on Thanksgiving Day that is annually held at the Athol American Legion.

Throughout the year the Council on Aging Director contributed time to the Friends of the Athol Council on Aging board, Community Transportation, AARP, the Golden Ages Club and the Athol Housing Authority.

The Director and Board members participated in the Mass. Council on Aging, Western Mass. Council on Aging, Mass. Public Health Assoc., local school programs, (Inter-generational) and numerous other senior and municipal connected classes and seminars.

The Council on Aging applied for and received four grants to support various programming for the Fiscal Year 2014.

In June, a Volunteer Recognition luncheon was held for at the Athol Senior Center with 90 volunteers present. State and municipal representatives were among those who honored the volunteers for their commitment in assisting the COA with the many programs it offers to elder and disabled community residents. Guest Speaker Rebecca Bialecki representing Heywood/Athol Hospitals facilitated a power point presentation on the Athol Hospital expansion project and the North Quabbin Retreat facility to be constructed in Petersham, MA serving the local region.

During the recent year the Friends of the Athol Council on Aging (a non-profit 501c3 organization) applied for and received \$40,000. (over a two-year period) from the John W.Boynton Trust Fund to complete the interior build out of the health and outreach room within the Senior Center facility. The organization also conducted their annual membership drive, raffle fundraisers and the Fall Frolic event with proceeds to benefit programming and other educational and social events for seniors at the Center.

In June the following slate of officers were elected for the coming year:

Margaret Young, Chairperson

Stephen Larry, Vice-Chairperson

Kathy Cygan, Secretary

Other board members

Jean Ryder

Walter Lehman

Lillian Batchelder

Ruth Black

Linda Grenier

The Board would like to thank the 180 volunteers that make the many Council on Aging programs possible. We are indebted to the Executive Office of Elder Affairs, the Massachusetts Councils on Aging, LifePaths Inc., the Friends of the Athol Council on Aging, the Frank S. Parmenter Trust Fund, Athol Memorial Hospital, the local Cultural Council grantors, Senior Dining Center Mgr., meal site volunteers, AARP tax assistants, Western Mass Food Bank, the Athol Public Library, the North Central County Board of Realtors, and many other clubs, organizations and individuals.

In conclusion, the Council on Aging wishes to thank the Town Manager, Board of Selectmen and the citizens of Athol for their support and assistance throughout the year. If any citizen has questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact our Council office at (978) 249-8986.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Cathy A. Savoy*

*Judy Thayer*

*Executive Director*

*Program Coordinator*

**Athol Public Library**  
**2014-2015 Annual Report**

***To: The Honorable Board of Selectmen and the Citizens of Athol***

“Libraries will get you through times of no money better than money will get you through times of no libraries.”—Anne Herbert

The library customers and staff enjoyed their second year in the new building. Having so much more space has allowed for more programming and activities. Those exciting events will be detailed by library staff further into the report. Suffice to say it's still an adjustment period and we remain busier than ever with an increase of 20% in circulation our first year and this year another 13%. We issued over 1,000 new borrowers cards this year. We hit a landmark 800 people visiting in one day while the average is between 500 and 600. People are using the services of the public library more than ever.

An Art Exhibition policy was approved by the Trustees this year with thanks to Susan Paju for sharing the Acton Library's policy and working with our Director Deb Blanchard to formulate one for our own library. Susan and Heidi Kleiner donated an art hanging system and assisted Deb Blanchard in installing this in the conference room. An Art Exhibition Committee was then formed with the following members: Carol Ambrozy, Deb Blanchard, Susie Feldman, Heidi Kleiner, Susan Paju, and Shelley Small. The library webmaster Kelsey Matthews did an excellent job designing a page on the library website for information about this new committee. Artists who displayed their art during the year, July 2014-June 2015, were: David Brothers, KC Pearson and Joe Smith. There are exhibitions already lined up through the next year. Please be sure to stop by and see them. Some of the artists held receptions with refreshments and were in attendance to answer questions. Special thanks to Susan and Heidi for their donation and helping to get this off the ground.

The new spaces were also attractive to many outside groups for meetings and events. We were very pleased that for the first time in the library's history the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners held two events here. On November 20<sup>th</sup> they held one of their annual board meetings here. Deb led a tour for the Commissioners prior to the meeting and it was a wonderful opportunity to showcase how their \$5 million dollar grant was spent. A workshop for the next construction grant round in two years was held on April 23<sup>rd</sup> with over 40 people in attendance, hoping to get a grant to improve their libraries. Again Deb led a tour and answered the many questions posed by the participants. Finally a Library Legislative Day was held on February 27<sup>th</sup> with Senator Anne Gobi, Representatives Susannah Whipps Lee and Todd Smola listening to their constituents talking about the importance of libraries in their lives and communities. Thanks to our Friends group for providing the refreshments for these events.

Another new service was implemented thanks to former local resident Susan Chaisson Schueller and her late husband Richard's generous donation of an Orion tabletop telescope for loan. The Library Telescope Program is facilitated by the New Hampshire Astronomical Society. Richard, before his death, and other members of the society came out to conduct a training for the library

staff at Skyfields. The Aldrich Astronomical Society later led a star-gazing program for patrons out in the library park. The library thanks the Schuellers for their contribution. Thanks are also due to David Small and the Athol Bird and Nature Club for 'babysitting' our telescope during our building renovations.

Appreciation is also owed to the Athol Orange Area Rotary Club for sponsoring five evening story times. This cooperative project called "Rotary Reads" featured members of the club selecting a book related to their field of work or expertise, and coming to the library to read to families. They also purchased copies so that every family got to take the book home to add to their personal collection.

### Building News

See also the Library Trustees Report.

Even though we moved back into the building in December 2013, there was still plenty of work going on. The PARC (Parklands Acquisitions and Renovation for Communities) program grant schedules required us to put off landscaping until 2014 summer/fall. Thanks to the many contractors for their patience while trying to do parking lot improvements and landscaping while hundreds of customers were trying to use the library. After the final inspections were done by the landscape architects of Devellis Zrein, Inc. and Melissa Cryan from the state PARC office, a ribbon cutting was held which also included the Watershed Park on Canal Street (which was created under a different state program). Quite a number of programs have been enjoyed in the new library park from storybook walks to concerts. Many people simply enjoy walking in the park or eating their lunch there.

The Shade Tree Commission purchased a Liberty Elm for the park for which we extend sincere thanks. A plaque with all the information about the elm tree project is located in the library lobby.

There were several other final walkthrough inspections to close out the project. Michealle Larkins, representing the Parmenter Fund and the John Boynton Fund, came out to see the large print shelving and the archives modular shelving both of which were purchased with grants from these funds. DOER (Department of Energy Resources) came out to see the electric car chargers purchased through their grant program and also the light fixtures and other energy saving devices through another of their grants. Dennis Sullivan of D.A. Sullivan and Sons, the general contractor, went through with the architect and project manager. Several punch list items are open and the library continues to hold significant retainage. Greenwood Roofing came out periodically to inspect that the solar installation on the roof was in keeping with the roof warranty.

The solar panel roof project was finally completed this year and lit up. This was an extremely lengthy and overdue project due to many factors on the vendor side. Thanks to the Town of Athol electrical inspector Gary Terroy for insisting that it be done right and to the state electrical inspector Louis Messier for getting the company to make those changes. Also kudos to town

manager Shaun Suhoski for keeping on top of this project and finally pushing it through. This installation is already showing a huge electrical savings for the library.

A water pressure problem was discussed between the Trustees, Selectmen and DPW for possible solutions. The Trustees paid to have a check valve put into the system and the DPW paid to have a pressure recorder installed. The library staff read the recorder each week so the DPW could monitor the situation. Happily there have been no further incidents. Thanks to the Selectmen and DPW for assisting in resolving the issue.

Absolutely beautiful photographs of the library and park were taken by several very talented photographers this year. Go to the library website to view the works of local residents Mitchell Grosky, David Brothers, and Mike Phillips. David also did a four piece photo montage of each stage of construction which is now hanging in the historic Carnegie section. Former resident Dennis Washburn, who works for Google, came out to do a 'virtual tour' which is also on the website. Our architectural firm, Tappe Associates, hired Ed Wonsek to come for a full day shoot for publicity purposes.

Sammis Woodworking installed a new Giving Tree in the lobby when the first one was full. Jon Sammis also built a beautiful greeter's desk and book store display showcase for the Friends. He refinished much of our old maple furniture, restoring it to its original brilliance. Several new pieces were also custom made for the staff as all the public furniture was completed in the previous year. The new circulation desks in adults and children's that Jon created are works of art. All of this was accomplished through the Friends fundraising.

Finally a very heartfelt thanks to Ken Vaidulas. Ken served as a Construction Committee member who attended all weekly job meetings. When asked by the director to continue to serve to complete the park and landscaping work, he readily agreed. In going above and beyond he also came each week to mow the lawns, weed and generally do anything asked of him as a volunteer. Much gratitude, Ken!

## STAFF

There were a number of staff changes this year, chief among them the announcement that the Library Director Deb Blanchard would be retiring in the next fiscal year and the town manager and Trustees' unanimous decision that long time Children's Librarian Jean Shaughnessy would be taking over the reins as the new Director. Both Jean and Deb were employed as high school library pages and have held a variety of positions over the years at the library. Deb leaves after 43 years at the library and is pleased to know that it is good hands.

The Trustees also saw a change after many years with the same board when Carol Ambrozy decided not to run for another term after serving for nine years. Carol also served as the Building/Construction Committee Chair. Many thanks to Carol for her dedication to the library building project, her grant writing and the countless hours spent to help bring the project to a successful conclusion. Christine Miranda ran successfully for the position at the annual town election. She has served on the Friends of the Library Board of Directors and the members of the trustees look forward to working with her.

In other staff changes, Tom Deam resigned for health reasons and Rheba Gagne was promoted to his part time position. Long time pages Krystal Kilhart left to attend college and Samantha Skinner left for a full-time job. All were friendly, helpful members of our staff and everyone will miss them. Emily Boughton and Olivia Skinner were hired as the new pages.

#### Adult Services from Robin Shtulman, Kelsey Matthews and Anne Cutler-Russo

This was a great year for science and creativity here at the Athol Public Library. We celebrated science with the "Literary Elements" Summer Reading Program. Forty-three adults completed 73 periodic table BINGO cards to earn 73 raffle tickets. A "fireman of 1899" visited the library in August with a fascinating look at the history of this occupation. Rory Raven conducted a séance just before Halloween. Ginger Burr transformed 38 women from "Frumpy to Fabulous". A 3-D printing demonstration and Fishing with Allan Butler attracted slightly different audiences of men and young adults. February also featured "A Look at the Oscars". We hosted a Legislative Breakfast here in February, giving area libraries and communities a chance to hear from and speak to our government representatives while enjoying good food, good company, and positive library messages. We offered several well-received programs of timely interest: the green burial movement, women in the Arab world, education tax credits, and ADHD coping mechanisms. In March, attendees learned how to make healthy "Green Smoothies". Friends and guests had a chance to dress up like it was the 1920's at the Friends of the Library Annual Meeting and program on the "Roaring Twenties". In April, the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners held a "Planning and Design Workshop" here for other libraries. In June, the Delvena Theatre Company filled the audience with laughter as they brought Julia Child to life in their show "Meet Julia Child".

There were a variety and abundance of book discussion groups to join during the year. George Roix led a meditation book discussion and organized a Buddhism discussion, there was a "Cabin Fever" book discussion, and the Noon Time Book Group and Mystery Book Discussion Group met monthly. The library was very happy to partner with other organizations, such as Mt. Wachusett Community College, to offer an evening of poetry centering on the Quabbin, and the Aldrich Astronomical Society to launch our new telescope lending program with the telescope made possible by the late Richard Schueller and Susan Chaisson-Schueller.

Our knitting group, the Knit-Wits, (headed up by volunteer Jean White), continues to grow in number and spirit, welcoming anyone who would like to learn.

The APL provided delivery service to more than a dozen home-bound readers, thanks to our senior tax abatement volunteers Jeanne Forand and Mike Cygan. Our new private study rooms continue to be very useful and popular.

#### Young Adult Department from Anne Cutler-Russo

The summer of 2014 featured the theme "Spark a Reaction" which allowed students in grades 5-12 to attend weekly science programs in July, learn how to machine sew with Jean White using sewing machines borrowed from the middle school, play chess with the Wild Knights Chess

Club under the direction of David Price, make “butt pillows” out of old jeans, play on the Wii with Rheba Gagne, and participate in a multicultural cooking session.

The Wild Knights Chess Club continued to meet every week during the 2014-2015 school year and the Knit-Wits resumed their weekly meetings with Jean White in September. ATAC, the teen advisory group, met monthly throughout the academic year enjoying conversations about books, eating pizza provided by the Friends of the Library, choosing books for a Book Buy at Bruce’s Browser, celebrating Banned Books Week, making scarecrows, playing mystery games, planning the Boston Bruins PJ Drive at the library, watching a film about cyberbullying, creating poems for National Poetry Month in April, and updating the ATAC scrapbook.

Teen Time Tuesdays featured a variety of weekly craft programs and the Anime Club met monthly with Rheba Gagne to watch anime films and discuss manga. Student Loren Bennington started the Pokemon Club which met Wednesdays and attracted a group of enthusiastic teens and preteens.

Anne Cutler-Russo and Robin Shtulman worked together to stage a Volunteer Fair. Representatives from organizations which accept teen volunteers set up displays in the program room and students and their parents were able to talk to them and pick up printed materials. A notebook of possible jobs was created and is available in the teen area at the library.

Jean Shaughnessy, Karen McNiff, and Anne Cutler-Russo worked with school administrators and staff to bring Community Reading Day to students in the elementary schools in the Athol-Royalston Regional School District and the students at the middle school. Our many wonderful volunteers read selected books in all the elementary classrooms and in the English classes at the middle school.

Anne Cutler-Russo visited the middle school and high school in the spring to promote books and reading and, together with Rheba Gagne and the members of the Anime Club, created a display on Japan, anime, and manga for the Multicultural Fair at the middle school.

### Children’s Department from Jean Shaughnessy

#### Annual Report – July 2014-June 2015 – Children’s Room

The first Summer Reading Program held in the newly renovated library, “Fizz, Boom, Read”, featured many story times and special programs with science and nature themes. Children had a great time making wind-powered vehicles with Paul McNiff, science teacher. Tazer, the listening therapy dog, visited the library to listen to children read. Title I provided two teachers to spend time at the library encouraging children to read. McDonald’s presented “Reading is WOW” and Valuing Our Children/Community Partnership with Children hosted a Kindergarten Readiness program well attended by teachers and incoming students. The Summer Reading Program showed a significant increase, almost double, over last year’s program at the Senior Center with children reading 4,730 books or 94,600 pages.

In September, LEGO Club continued, Story Times resumed and Jeanette Robichaud, YMCA Director, presented a “Rotary Reads” evening program featuring ‘Wally Exercises’. The Rotary Read programs, sponsored by the Athol-Orange Rotary Club, feature a book reading, related activity, and a book for each family to keep. The Halloween Stroll in October saw over 300 children coming to the library for candy.

Community Reading Days in the Athol-Royalston Elementary and Middle Schools were the major library events in November. The book “Chomp” by Carl Hiaasen was enjoyed by students and readers at ARMS while crocodile and alligator themed books and activities were also

enjoyed at all the elementary schools in Athol and Royalston. Cloth book bags to decorate were offered at The Big Read held at the Elks Club. A very, very cold evening of training on the library's new telescope at Skyfields completed the month.

Lyndale Spencer presented the final Rotary Reads program, reading "How to Lose a Lemur" and sharing pictures, stories, and foods from her trip to Madagascar. February Vacation Week programs included celebrations of National Pancake Day and Chinese New Year. Candy Bingo and the movie, Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible ... Day" each entertained 30-40 children. In March, children attending the afterschool science activities and stories programs learned about different potato varieties and their preparations by making and eating them. They also dissected owl pellets, had an up-close look at a Barn Owl on loan from the Millers River Environmental Center, and listened to stories about owls.

The library participated in a Kindergarten Fair at the Elks Club sponsored by Valuing Our Children. During vacation week, National Picnic Day was celebrated with a picnic in the new Millers River Park behind the library. Nine hearty people braved high winds and frigid temperatures to eat cookies and drink lemonade in the park before hurrying back inside to warm up. The regular school year programs, Story Times, Afterschool stories and crafts, LEGO club, and class visits wrapped up before the end of school. We participated in the Community Partnerships for Children's Family Fun Day held at the Elks Club.

In June, visits were made to each classroom in the elementary schools of Athol and Royalston to promote this year's summer reading program – "Every Hero Has a Story". Valuing Our Children set up a Story Walk in the park every Friday morning during the summer accompanied by a craft inside the library. Two Day Cares held their very elaborate graduations in our Program Room. Ed the Wizard performed "Reading is Magic". The first in a series of family gardening programs was held and five families helped plant vegetables in the raised beds in the park. More than 125 people attended "Super Hero Night", making a variety of crafts – capes, masks, slap bracelets, flying hero planes, and puppets, having pictures taken with the props, and enjoying hot dogs, drinks, and Ninja Turtle pizza. Fireman Adam Mitchell brought a fire truck and Officer Greg Fortes arrived in a police cruiser to represent "Community Heroes" and give children a close up look at their vehicles and equipment. Sarah Mildren of North Quabbin Wildlife Rehabilitation brought two small snapping turtles, Michelangelo and Leonardo from the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. Matt Talbot and Sean Tomlinson from the Y organized a popular obstacle course. Emily Boughton repainted a photo opportunity board that was a popular attraction in the lobby of the library for most of the summer.

## **MEMORIAL DONATIONS**

*Materials were purchased in memory of:* Mary Lou Schwab, Conway Miller, Edna Haven, Richard F. Crosby, Jr., Virginia Jerris, Robert Fisette, and Evelyn "Babe" Blanchard.

*In honor of:* Elizabeth Scully on her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, and Seth & Stephanie Spaulding.

## ***YOUR LIBRARY STAFF***

### **ADULT DEPARTMENT**

Debra A. Blanchard, *Director (retired)*

Jean Shaughnessy, *Director (appointed June)*

Robin Shtulman, *Assistant Director*  
Marie Lehmann, Anne Cutler-Russo, Kelsey Matthews, *Senior Library Technicians*  
Robin Brzozowski, Carol Fisk, *Part Time Library Technicians*  
Tom Deam, *Computer Aide resigned, replaced by Rheba Gagne*  
Rheba Gagne, *Page*  
William Adams, *Part Time Custodian*  
Brenda Buck, Sharman Prouty, Sean Tomlinson *Substitutes*

### **CHILDREN'S DEPARTMENT**

Jean Shaughnessy, *Children's Librarian (appointed Director, search underway for new children's librarian)*  
Karen McNiff, *Children's Assistant*  
Samantha Skinner, Krystal Kilhart, *Pages resigned*  
Emily Boughton, Olivia Skinner *Pages*

### **FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY**

Lil Bachelder retired from the Treasurer's job this year and what a wonderful job she has done for so many years. There is no way to adequately thank her for all she has done to further the mission of the library. Luckily she will continue on the board. Our secretary Jean White will take over for her as treasurer in the coming year. Thanks for all the many events the Friends sponsor and the support they give the library!

### **FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY BOARD**

Treasurer: Lil Bachelder  
Secretary: Jean White  
Trustee Rep: Margaret Young  
Directors: Nancy Griffin, Rita Grimes, Karen McNiff, Julianne Matthews, Christine Miranda, Patricia Ray, Mary Roberts, Barbara Robichaud, and Jean White.  
*Join the Friends Today!*

### **FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY VOLUNTEER GREETERS**

Ellenmarie Babin, Sandi Bachelder, Jude Geikie, Nancy Griffin, Bonnie Hodgdon, Muriel Holden, Florence Pelletier, Joyce Phinney, Patricia Ray, Barbara Robichaud, Margaret Robinson, Patricia Tedford, Patricia Vandenberg. Jessica Mann worked as a greeter during the summer, under the sponsorship of Franklin/Hampshire Regional Youth Employment.

### **SENIOR TAX ABATEMENT VOLUNTEERS 2014 and 2015**

Michael Cygan, Jeanne Forand, Bruce Fowler, Randy Mitchell, George Roix, Pat Spaulding, Jean White.

*Respectfully submitted,*  
*Debra A. Blanchard, Library Director (Retired)*  
*Jean E. Shaughnessy, Library Director*

STATISTICS

CIRCULATION FY15

Adult	75,794
Young Adult	5,836
Children's	<u>32,581</u>
TOTAL	114,211

Interlibrary Loan

Received from other libraries	16,033
Provided to other libraries	11,465
Nonresident circulations	20,080

Programs

Adult	42
Adult attendance	1,131
Young adult	180
Young adult attendance	1,778
Children	175
Children's attendance	3,687

Registered borrowers 5,219

Volunteers

Number	100
Approximate hours worked	7,200

Website hits 25,341

Computer Use 14,315

Library Space/Room Use for library programs and by outside groups – 1,439



## **NORTHEAST QUABBIN VETERANS' SERVICES DISTRICT**

584 MAIN STREET, ATHOL, MASSACHUSETTS 01331

PHONE: 978/249-6935 FAX: 978/575-0269

email: [vetagnt@townofathol.org](mailto:vetagnt@townofathol.org)

*Serving the Towns of Athol, Orange, Petersham, Phillipston and Royalston*

***"To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan." – A Lincoln***

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### **FY15 ANNUAL REPORT**

To the citizens of the Northeast Quabbin Veterans' Services District:

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts began providing for its needy veterans immediately following the Revolutionary War. At the start of the Civil War in 1861, the state legislature formalized the assistance by establishing Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 115 and Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services. State and local government leaders wanted to provide benefits to men and women, both living and deceased, who had borne the burden of military duty—and to their families. Chapter 115 enables every eligible Massachusetts veteran to receive certain financial, medical, educational, employment, and other benefits earned by military service.

#### **MASSACHUSETTS VETERANS' BENEFITS, PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

1. Provides a "needs based means-tested" program of financial and medical assistance to eligible veterans.
2. Eligible veterans can be buried at no cost and a nominal fee for spouses in one of two Massachusetts Veterans' Memorial Cemeteries.
3. Women Veterans' Network – Provides women veterans with information on benefits; expand awareness of the needs; and identify health and human resources to meet those needs.
4. Homeless prevention – Provides outreach services through a network of assistance to at-risk veterans and/or their families.
5. Transitional Housing – Provides safe housing, a variety of services, and counseling for up to 24 months to eligible veterans.
6. Wartime Bonuses – Provides bonuses to eligible wartime veterans.
7. Annuities – Provides \$2,000 annually to 100% service-connected disabled veterans, Gold Star parents, and un-remarried spouses of deceased veterans whose death was service connected.
8. Access to federal, state and nonprofit programs and services.
9. And more...

#### **DISTRICT ACTIVATION & REACTIVATION**

Effective April 1, 2015, the District welcomed the Town of Orange as a member. With expansion, the board had to re-apply to the Secretary, Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services, for authorization to continue formal district operations. On March 9, 2015, the Secretary authorized the district to continue operations through June 30, 2017. District reapplication is mandatory every two years.

As of June 30, 2015, there were 24 Veterans' Services Districts operating throughout the commonwealth, serving 132 communities, and a population approaching 1.3 million residents.

**DISTRICT GOVERNANCE & ADMINISTRATION**

For every district established pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 115, there shall be a Board of Directors consisting of a representative of each member community as appointed by the board of selectmen.

The Board established By-Laws dated January 11, 2006 define district operations and have updated the By-laws with amendments. The most recent amendment was on February 12, 2015 adding the Town of Orange as a member of the District.

Pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 115: Section 11 & NQD By-Laws:

1. At the November Board meeting, Director of Veterans' Services presents the next fiscal year's Administrative Budget to the Board recommending the funds required for district operations
2. The Board reviews, discusses and votes to certify the Administrative Budget. It includes each member community's assessment of the total budget.

**M.G.L. CHAPTER 115 – VETERANS' BENEFITS**

Veterans' benefits are monies paid by towns to eligible recipients. The Commonwealth reimburses a community at least 75% of dollars paid in benefits. See chart:

**FINALIZED FY15 VETERANS' BENEFITS DATA**

<b>Town</b>	<b>Benefits Expended</b>	<b>State Reimbursement</b>	<b>% Reimbursed</b>
Athol	\$162,537.66	\$122,340.78	75%
Orange	\$218,625.14	\$163,982.36	75%
Petersham	\$3,109.71	\$2,332.28	75%
Phillipston	\$10,637.29	\$7,977.99	75%
Royalston	\$2,000.00	\$1,500.00	75%

**UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT**

Assistance was provided to veterans with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); U.S. Department of Defense (DoD); U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA); U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), and other U.S. Departments and Agencies.

The office continued to work with veterans diagnosed with presumptive Agent Orange illnesses, Mesothelioma, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury, Military Sexual Trauma, etc.

VA applications were processed for service-connected disabilities; increasing existing service-connected disabilities; Dependency & Indemnity Claims; pensions; burial expense assistance; Healthcare; Veterans Grave Markers, etc.

The district acquired military personnel records; medical records; medals, decorations and awards not previously issued to the veteran. Veterans have received assistance with DoD applications to correct Military Records and formal requests to review and upgrade type of discharge.

I look forward to serving veterans, spouses, dependents, and surviving spouses of deceased veterans, who formally reside in the District.

Respectfully submitted,

*Neil P. McGuirk*

Neil P. McGuirk, Director of Veterans' Services

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Following are some key projects advanced in 2015:

**Mount Grace Land Trust, Quabbin Heritage Landscape Project**

Worked closely with Sarah Wells of Mount Grace Land Trust to secure grant funds and Board of Selectmen approval to develop conservation restriction agreements on four properties in Athol and Phillipston as part of the Quabbin Heritage Landscape Project. The properties are privately owned by the Feldman, Stoddard, LeBlanc and Blakel families and in total will add 1,426 new acres of conservation land.

**CDBG 2015 Application**

The Board of Selectmen hosted a public hearing and approved the proposal from CDBG Consultant Linda Overing and Planning Director Andrea Buglione to apply for FY15 CDBG funds up to \$454,467 (maximum available) for the reconstruction of Highland Street (Phase II) as well as the continuation of the Housing Rehabilitation Program.

**Grove Street Project (CDBG 2014)**

Highland Street (mid-point to Glen), Grove Street (Main Street to retaining walls) to Main Street Extension project advanced to substantial completion in 2015 with water, sewer, drainage, retaining wall, sidewalk and resurfacing completed through a mix of CDBG and Town Chapter 90 allocation as supported by the Dept. of Public Works.

**PATH (Planning Assistance Toward Housing) Grant application.**

MRPC Director Glenn Eaton presented a proposal to the Board on behalf of the Dept. of Planning and Development that would help removed obstacles to creation certain multi-family housing units in appropriate zoned locations. Town owned vacant elementary schools will be targeted buildings. The proposal is for up to \$25,000 to hire MRPC to administer the grant. This grant was not successful.

**North Quabbin Commons and MassWorks Grant**

Work funded through the District Improvement Finance (DIF) program and a \$1,000,000 MassWorks grant to extend water infrastructure to the North Quabbin Commons reached substantial completion. The nearly \$3 million project also included construction of a 225,000 gallon water tower and helped attract the new 80,000 sf Market Basket supermarket, a Marshall's department store and Maurice's clothing outlet in 2015. A shoe store and new construction of a multi-tenant building anchored by a coffee shop is expected in 2016.

**Downtown Revitalization Committee – UMass Studio Downtown Plan contract**

Andrea Buglione coordinated a joint planning effort with the Downtown Revitalization Committee and graduate students from UMass-Amherst Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning school which resulted in a report issued in early 2015 listing a series of potential improvements.

Note: Ms. Andrea Buglione served as Director of Planning and Development through September 2015 before moving on to taller mountains in Colorado. The Town wishes to thank her for her years of service to the community.

*Respectfully submitted,*  
Shaun A. Suhoski  
Town Manager

## Sealer of Weights & Measures 2014 - 15 Annual Report

To the Board of Selectmen, Town Manager, and Citizens of Athol:

Devices tested	Sealed	Adjusted	Not Sealed	Condemned
Weights & Scales	160	2	2	0
Gas Pumps	88	0	0	0
Fuel Trucks	4	0	0	0
Other	95	0	0	0

Commodities tested and found correct: 10

Fees collected amounted to \$4,280.00, which has been deposited with the town treasurer, whose receipts I hold.

The Sealer's office is in the basement of the Memorial Building. In closing, I would like to thank all businesses for their cooperation, and note that there were no major problems during the past fiscal year.

J.R. Greene  
Sealer