

**Alzheimer's and dementia
support group meets at
the Care Center**

Caring for a loved one can be daunting, presenting a maze of problems to solve including helping a loved one with daily tasks, communicating effectively, making financial decisions, managing changes in behavior, and more. Southington Care Center offers a free Alzheimer's and dementia support group on the second Wednesday of the month (upcoming: March 14 and April 11), 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., in the Anna Fanelli Room.

This group is an affiliated support group of the Alzheimer's Association Connecticut Chapter, and is hosted by Southington Care Center and Hartford HealthCare Center for Healthy Aging. Facilitators are Patty O'Brian, CDP, patient/family engagement coordinator and Alzheimer's/dementia specialist, Hartford HealthCare Center for Healthy Aging, and Robin Segal, therapeutic recreation director/dementia recreation.

Spaces are limited. To register, call O'Brian at Hartford HealthCare Center for Healthy Aging, 860.628.3833.

Communication tip:

When speaking to someone with dementia, thinking is slower so understanding takes longer; speak more slowly; wait for answers.



**Southington
Care Center** **News**

A newsletter for Southington Care Center residents and family members.

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**Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
provides food safety guidelines**

Dear Southington Care Center family member or resident friend,

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services recently updated the regulations for long-term care/skilled nursing facilities. One of the new requirements is regarding food brought in for residents from outside the facility.

CMS states that residents have the right to eat favorite foods brought to them by family members and friends. However, we as care providers must offer education on safe food preparation, handling, transport and service – in order to prevent food-borne illness and maintain residents' health.

Below are some tips on food safety if you wish to bring food to a Care Center resident. If you would like the full food safety handout, ask Jennifer Petrucci, Director of Food and **See Food Safety on page 2**

Snow? No problem!



During winter's numerous snowstorms, staffers put Southington Care Center first. Among them are, from left, Vinnie DiSanti, Sarah Ruggiero and Chris Johnson.

**LPN's efforts result in official state
recognition, again**

Lisa Pinter, LPN, has cared for others at Southington Care Center for more than 12 years. However, after she developed neuromyelitis optica - a relatively unknown chronic neurological disease that can cause blindness and even paralysis - she has extended her concern beyond to those who have the same condition, seeking to educate others to improve patient outcomes and advocate for a cure.

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Left: Lisa Pinter, LPN, left, displays the Connecticut Official Statement designating March as Neuromyelitis Optica Awareness Month, with William Kowalewski, Southington Care Center executive director.



For more information on how GoodLife Fitness can enhance your health, stop by the center in the Rehab Pavilion or call 860.378.1234.

Care Center charge nurse begins as Manager of Transitions

Debra Benson, RN, BSN, who joined the Southington Care Center healthcare staff in 2000, was named Manager of Transitions on Jan. 15.

In this role, she is responsible for leading the transition team which consists of two social workers and two nurses. The transition team helps ensure a smooth and safe transition of all patients at the time of discharge.

The transition process begins on the day of admission, meeting with patients and their families to identify the patient's needs and any potential discharge challenges. The transition team helps the patient and families identify and obtain the needed resources at the time of discharge, which may include home care services, assisted living or long-term care services.

The transition team also follows-up with patients after discharge to assess the patients' discharge situation and connects them, if necessary, to any additional services including

home care, Hartford HealthCare Center for Healthy Aging, or Hartford HealthCare Senior Services senior living communities.

Prior to taking this position, Debra was a charge nurse, nurse manager and supervisor at the Care Center as a member of the interdisciplinary care team, for both long-term and short-term patients.

She previously was a senior pharmacovigilance scientist at Bristol-Myers Squibb, monitoring the safety of research drugs and collaboratively authoring FDA safety reports. She has also worked as a charge nurse, nursing supervisor, and Minimum Data Set coordinator at several area medical facilities. She holds a Bachelor's of Science Degree from Southern Connecticut State College.

Congratulations, Deb, on your new position!



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Nutrition, who would be happy to answer questions. We will work closely with you to ensure the safety and satisfaction of your loved one.

Thank you, William Kowalewski, *Southington Care Center Executive Director*

Food safety tips

As people age, their bodies are less able to combat bacteria. Knowledge of safe food handling is key to helping our residents and guests stay healthy.

Before coming to the community

Do not prepare food or serve others if you have any type of illness and please do not visit the Care Center while you are sick. General safe food practices include: keep cold foods at 41 degrees or lower and hot foods hot above 135 degrees; prepare as close to serving time as possible; and discard foods that have been at

room temperature for more than four hours.

Wash your hands

Always wash your hands: before preparing and/or serving foods; using the bathroom; handling cleaning chemicals or garbage; smoking; or touching an open sore.

Wet your hands with warm running water, apply soap and later well, rubbing your entire hands for at least 20 seconds. Rinse well and dry with a disposable towel or air dryer.

Serving food

Never touch food with bare hands. Instead use a utensil, napkin or disposable gloves, which dining services can provide. If food must be reheated in a microwave, rotate and cover foods while heating and serve immediately. To prevent burns, do not overheat.

Miscellaneous information

Be aware of allergies or diet restrictions. If unsure, consult with nursing or the dietitian.

Care Center's continuum of care gets beloved volunteer back on track

It was wintry outside but Bartolomeo "Benny" Cammuso brought his sunny attitude inside as he diligently worked out on a cross-trainer in the Care Center's GoodLife Fitness Center. Mark Colello, exercise physiologist, stood by his side monitoring the 80-year-old's progress throughout his 15-minute "ride."

Six months ago, Cammuso couldn't have pedaled at all. In February 2017, he had a serious stroke which brought his life to an abrupt halt. For many townspeople, the news about this avid community volunteer was hard to believe – just the week before, Cammuso had received the Southington-Cheshire YMCA Person of the Year Award at the annual gala.

After several hospital stays and rehabilitation that had inadequate results, his recovery began looking better in March after he transferred to Southington Care Center, where he had volunteered for years. His three-month stay included physical, occupational and speech therapy. His family began to see progress in his abilities – he was finally walking.

"The Care Center is a great rehab facility and it was great for his morale," said his daughter, Lisa Cammuso.



Photos by Rusty Kimball
Above: Mark Colello, exercise physiologist, right, guides Benny Cammuso at GoodLife Fitness.



Above: Many Care Center therapists, including Kerri McQuillan, left, and Sally Brennan, right, worked with Benny Cammuso during his extensive rehabilitation.

Now that he has increased strength and mobility, Cammuso is eager to return to volunteering, previously active in Knights of Columbus, UNICO, AARP, American Red Cross and much more. However, his family reminds him that his health comes first. He is now exercising twice each week at the Care Center's GoodLife Fitness Center. "He's doing much better, even walking without his cane at home," said Elena, his wife of 60 years.

Slowly, he is getting back to a little volunteering, ringing the bell for the Salvation Army and working at Bread for Life. "Southington Care Center is very good at what they do – they were the deciding factor in him getting back his health," his daughter said.

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An estimated 4,000 people in the United States have NMO, according to the Multiple Sclerosis Society. The cause of NMO is unknown. Pinter was diagnosed in 2015.

Pinter's persistent advocacy resulted in Gov. Dannel P. Malloy designating March 2018 as Neuromyelitis Optica Awareness Month. Her efforts resulted in the same in April 2017. "We

need more awareness in the medical community to improve patient care and and save lives," said Pinter, who is involved in several medical studies, has attended conferences, form a support group and is trying to locate others with NMO.

"We are quite proud of Lisa – her persistence is bettering the lives of people with NMO," said Bill Kowalewski, Care Center executive director.