

# *Shutesbury Geezette*

*The Newsletter of the Shutesbury Council on Aging*

*Winter 2023*

## ***A remarkable career path to Police Chief***

*by Sally Fairfield*

Kristin Burgess took an uncharted path to becoming Shutesbury's police chief. She had an "idea" about police work when she was younger, and had friends who chose that path.

She knew she wanted to be in a helping profession. She worked as an Emergency Medical Technician and a Medical Assistant. Then she married and had two children, a boy and a girl. The relationship with her spouse didn't last, and Kristen and her children ended up back with her family and friends in the Berkshires. Meanwhile, the "idea" was taking root, perhaps nurtured by friends who

***Police Chief, cont. on pg. 2***

## ***Fire Chief's roots go deep in town***

*by Martha Favre*

Lenny Czerwonka, son of Karen and Bill Czerwonka, has been a lifelong resident of the Shutesbury community for 42 years. After high school, he graduated in 1998 from Franklin County Technical School, where he studied Auto Mechanics.

He later enrolled in the Army National Guard. He served as a light wheel mechanic, and upon leaving the Guard in 2005, he decided to pursue a career as a firefighter and joined the Shutesbury Fire Department that same year. Lenny has been the department mechanic, servicing the trucks and equipment. Major repairs that exceed his capabil-

***Fire Chief, cont. on pg. 2***

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## ***You have spoken — and the results are in!***

*by Janis Gray*

Many thanks to all who took part in last year's survey by the Franklin County & North Quabbin Age-Friendly Communities Project, of which Shutesbury is a part.

The survey received nearly 2000

responses, including 130 from our town. They're now being analyzed to identify ways our region and sub-regions can improve our ability to age successfully in place.

Meg Ryan, Public Health Nurse with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, notes that the U.S. population is aging rapidly. In 2030, one in 5 people

***Survey, cont. on pg. 4***

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To receive email updates from your COA, please send your email address to [coa@shutesbury.org](mailto:coa@shutesbury.org). Also, let us know if you would like to receive your *Geezette* by email instead of a paper copy. Thanks!

This newsletter is produced with funding from the Mass. Executive Office of Elder Affairs.

***Police Chief, cont. from pg. 1***

were now “peace officers.”

Kristen became a massage therapist and from there, a Yoga instructor.



*Chief Kristin Burgess*

Then a fitness trainer. The “idea” must have been beginning to show, because the police chief from a nearby town noticed her with her friends. He asked which town she served in. He said he

would sponsor her if she wanted to give police work a try.

It took a year for her to make the decision. After going to the Police Academy and getting her certification, she joined the police department in the community of Hinsdale, MA, which has about the same population as Shutesbury. She spent three and a half years there.

Then it was time to be transplanted from the Berkshires to the Pioneer Valley. Her kids had fledged. She was ready for a new place to blossom. In January 2020, Dan Fernandez, then chief here in Shutesbury, hired her. When Dan left in March 2021, the Select Board appointed Kristin Acting Police Chief and in July 2022, permanent Police Chief.

Kristin brings her whole background to the job. She is friendly, confident and fully engaged. She leads with care and safety, serving and protecting. Among other activities as chief, she has her Monday Club: at-risk residents whom she visits on a

regular basis. She’s also reaching out to high school kids, inviting them to a program on Graffiti. Working with two Shutesbury artists, the class will teach the history and art of Graffiti and they will get to make art of their own (on canvas with water-based spray paint). A show of their work is promised.

Kristin’s training and experience lead her to seek peace. Of course, she can be an enforcer if needed. Her motto is, “Follow up and follow through.”

It’s a good one for all of us. And don’t forget to tell the truth, too.

***Fire Chief, cont. from pg. 1***

bility are sent to a local mechanic.

When Chief Walter Tibbetts announced that he planned to retire in June of 2022, Lenny, who had achieved the rank of lieutenant (second in command), was encouraged to apply for the position.



*Chief Lenny Czweronka*

He was appointed Acting Fire Chief by the Select Board on July 21, 2022, and on August 16, 2022, he was promoted to the role of Fire Chief.

When asked about the structure of the department, Chief Lenny explained that Shutesbury has a “call department” versus a “volunteer

***Fire Chief, cont. on pg. 3***

***Fire Chief, cont. from pg. 2*** department.” In a volunteer department, the staff is paid a stipend no matter how many calls they attend, and in a call department structure, the members are paid by the hour.

According to the Chief, most small towns operate with call departments. His department responds to between 120 and 160 calls a year and the majority of these are medical calls. Actual fires are very few.

Adequately staffing the department can be a challenge, as there are fewer young people volunteering to join the fire department. All members are required to live in Shutesbury and there are fewer available to respond to emergencies during the day, but the number increases as people return home in the evening. The members respond to calls as they are able, but family commitments or illness may limit their availability.

Training for the firefighters is an ongoing process and is held every Thursday from 7-10 pm. All are expected to attend, and there is a yearlong curriculum covering all the state-mandated topics. At the present time, there are no planned community outreach programs.

When asked what advice Chief Lenny had for the older members of Shutesbury’s community, he encouraged people experiencing a significant change in their medical condition to call the Fire Department at 911 for medical assistance.

He explained that people have chosen to delay seeking care, not wanting to “be a bother,” or hoping the symptoms will improve with a

good night’s sleep. ***The Fire Department would much prefer that people seek help and receive the medical care they need promptly than have people not seek care in a timely manner.*** Unfortunate circumstances can be avoided by calling for help. The Fire Department is trained to respond to medical emergencies and concerns.

A call placed to 911 is received by the State Police Dispatcher in Shelburne Falls, and it will contact the Shutesbury Fire Department.

Chief Lenny also recommends a cell phone for all households. People should carry their cell phones when they walk in the woods or are outside working in their yards. If they fall and injure themselves, they should call 911. Cell phones can also assist the police to locate people lost in the woods and hasten their safe return home.

If you encounter an auto accident or have been involved in one, having a cell phone with you allows you to call 911, expediting the arrival of the police and an ambulance, and improving the chances of survival for the victims. The risk of death from trauma increases if care is not instituted within the first hour after injury.

Another recommendation from Chief Lenny is to replace the batteries of smoke and carbon monoxide alarms yearly. and purchase new detectors every 10 years.

Chief Lenny and the members of the Shutesbury Fire Department are committed to keeping our community safe.

*Survey, cont. from pg. 1*

will be 65 or older.

This change is happening especially fast in Franklin County: By 2030, 34%, or one in 3 of us, will be over age 65.

Independent of the survey, the Shutesbury Council on Aging’s learned from the most recent Federal Census that **our town’s population of people over age 60 doubled between 2010 and 2020, from 312 to an estimated 624.**

Ryan acknowledged in her November remarks that nationally, this “silver tsunami” is sometimes presented as a problem. But, she added, “these demographic changes mean we are living longer and healthier lives, which is always to be celebrated.”

**The goal of the survey was to learn what people think about growing older in Franklin County and the North Quabbin.**

“The questions about where people reside, and their housing, show how deeply rooted many people are in their communities here in Franklin County,” said Ryan. **“The vast majority – over 90% – want to stay in their current residence and town.”**

Indeed, more than 75% of Shutesbury’s survey respondents reported having lived here for more than 15 years – with 46.92% of *all* respondents in town agreeing it was “extremely important” to stay.

Compared to their often more-isolated counterparts in northern Franklin County and the western hill towns, Shutesburians tended to report greater satisfaction with regional access to social and cultural activities for older

Which of these describe your current living situation? Check all that apply.	
127 answers from Shutesbury.	
I live alone	30
I live with a spouse/partner	84
I live with family or friends	16
I rent my home	1
I own my home	65
I live in assisted living facility	0

people, to health and wellness programs and services, and to healthcare providers (the region’s shortage of affordable, certified home health aides, however, was a shared concern).

Despite the advantages of living here, none of the 116 responses from Shutesbury rated the town “excellent” when asked if it was a good place to be as we age: 40.52% called it “Good,” 45.69% ranked it “Fair,” and 13.79% declared it “Poor.”

In Shutesbury, as across Franklin County and the North Quabbin, respondents identified cost, the scarcity of different kinds of housing – such as more accessible dwellings or assisted living – and the need for better transportation as reasons why some older residents might consider a move.

Half of Shutesbury’s respondents named the **expense of maintaining their current residence** as a factor which would make them consider changing their living situation.

Another was the apparent **lack of**  
*Survey, cont. on pg. 5*

**Survey, cont. from pg. 5**  
**public transit** to and from town (cited by 44.4%). “There is none in Shutesbury, period,” wrote one, an observation echoed by many. Wrote another: “We have fallen through the cracks.”

96.69% of Shutesbury’s respondents said they drive themselves to stores, medical appointments, social events, and other things.  
*“Still dependent on my car. I would use a senior surrey if available.”*

[Editor’s note: Shutesbury is **not** part of the Fixed Route or curb-to-curb Demand Response programs of the Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA). **FRTA will, however, provide Shutesbury residents with rides to medical appointments outside of Franklin County – see pg. 6.]**

How old are you?  
 130 answers from Shutesbury.  
 Skipped: 0

50 to 59	14.62%
60 to 69	39.23%
70 to 79	34.62%
80 to 89	11.54%
90 or more	0%

Editor’s note: As of June 30, 2022, the Town knew of 8 residents who were 90 or more.

When asked if **financial insecurity was a concern** now or might be as they got older, 37.72% of Shutesbury

respondents said they were currently OK, but worried about the future; 7.02% said finances were their biggest worry; and 2.6% said they had trouble getting by each month. All told, **nearly half (47.34%) of respondents reported feeling financially vulnerable.**

And they were not alone. As Ryan observed, some older adults in our region “already need to make hard decisions between housing, food and other essentials.”

The next step is for four workgroups to assess the survey’s data in the areas of Housing and Outdoor Spaces; Transportation; Communication/Information/Social and Civic Participation; and Health Services/Community Support. Their recommendations will guide the Age-Friendly Franklin County and North Quabbin steering committee as it moves forward.

To read all the survey responses — both region-wide and town-by-town — visit LifePath at [lifepathma.org](http://lifepathma.org), click the “Resources” tab at the top of the home screen, and scroll down to “Age- and Dementia-Friendly Program.”

What is your gender?  
 117 answers from Shutesbury.  
 Skipped: 13

Male	37
Female	72
Gender Nonbinary	1
Transgender Male	0
Transgender Female	0
Prefer not to say	7

**The survey tells us 19% of Shutesbury respondents do not know about Village Neighbors! Learn more about this local resource on page 8 of this newsletter.**





Graphic by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

In 2022, members of the Shutesbury Council on Aging attended a number of trainings on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. The Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs, the Massachusetts Councils on Aging, and the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities present these trainings to more fairly serve all residents — especially those that are older — by eliminating disparities.

### ***Free sand for seniors!***

The Shutesbury Police Department, in cooperation with the Shutesbury Council on Aging, has begun the second winter of its Sand for Seniors program.

If you are a Shutesbury resident in need of sand for your slippery steps or walkway, simply call the department at 413-259-1279 to schedule the doorstep delivery of a bucket filled with sand. Our police will also happily refill it for you!

### ***Med-Ride programs***

During the COVID-19 period, the Shutesbury COA’s free transportation program to medical and dental appointments remains suspended.

**Village Neighbors** (see page 8) has an active transportation program.

Another program, by **Franklin Regional Transit Authority**, is limited to medical rides outside Franklin County. Volunteers who have completed a vetting process with the FRTA provide transportation using their own vehicles.

To schedule a ride with the FRTA,

contact its customer call center during regular business hours at 413-774-2262, or 888-301-2262, and dial 0 for a representative.

### ***Put your best foot forward***

Appointments *in your home* with a registered Foot Care Specialist can be scheduled by leaving a message with the Shutesbury Council on Aging (COA) at 413-259-3796 or by emailing [coa@shutesbury.org](mailto:coa@shutesbury.org).

We suggest clients donate toward the visit’s cost; the COA will cover the balance with state grant funds. This service is provided through FootCare By Nurses, LLC. To learn more about them, call them at 413-367-8369.

### ***Free learning and fitness opportunities***

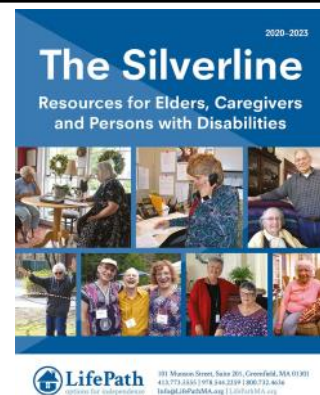
Visit the M. N. Spear Library website, [mnspear.org](http://mnspear.org), email [spearlibrary@shutesbury.org](mailto:spearlibrary@shutesbury.org), or call 413-259-1213 for information about classes and fitness programs (virtual and in-person) funded by the library, the Friends of the Library, and the Shutesbury Council on Aging.

## LifePath is Shutesbury's Agency on Aging.

Its website, [lifepathma.org](http://lifepathma.org), is full of great information. Sign up there to have LifePath's weekly e-newsletter, *The Good Life*, delivered to your inbox.

You can also access *The Silverline*, LifePath's local resource directory, on

the website to read or to download as a PDF. To request a printed copy, call LifePath's Information and Caregiver Resource Center, 413-773-5555.



## Need heating assistance?

You may qualify for Massachusetts' Home Energy Assistance Program — even if heat's included in your rent! Call Community Action Pioneer Valley, the agency for our area, at 413-774-2318 for info or to make an appointment to apply in person. Or, apply online: <https://www.toapply.org/CA>

## SNAP Emergency

### Allotments to end March 2

At the start of the pandemic, households receiving SNAP were issued extra funds known as Emergency Allotments. On March 2, the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) will issue the last extra payment. **More than 240,000 older adults in Massachusetts will then see benefits decrease by at least \$95 month.** They may be able to maximize SNAP benefits by calling the DTA Assistance Line, 877-382-2363, *if*:

- medical costs are over \$35 a month for anyone 60 or older, or who has a disability
- rent/mortgage has gone up
- one is working, looking for work, or in school; tell DTA about any child or disabled adult care costs.

## Here's more help with finances

LifePath's FREE Money Management Program assists elders who have difficulty writing checks or managing living expenses for many reasons, including problems with vision and memory. Trained volunteers help with writing checks, balancing checkbooks, sorting bills, developing budgets, and more. Contact LifePath at 800-732-4636 or TDD 413-772-6566, Monday - Friday, 9am - 5pm.



Some scammers try to trick you by pretending to be someone in **Law Enforcement.**

They tell you:

- A family member has been arrested or in an accident. They need money to pay bail, attorney fees, or medical costs.
- There is an outstanding warrant for your arrest.
- Your Social Security number has been compromised.
- They are raising money for a local law enforcement agency.

**If you get a call from someone claiming to be a law enforcement official:**

**HANG UP!**

Verify the information with your local police department.

Don't send cash.

Don't pay with gift cards, wire transfers, or cryptocurrency.

Research charities before you give.

*From the Northwestern District  
Attorney's Consumer Protection Unit*



Shutesbury Council on Aging  
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### ***Check out Village Neighbors!***

Village Neighbors is a volunteer-run nonprofit helping people over age 60 have high-quality, independent lives in Shutesbury and adjacent towns. Membership is free.

Village Neighbors offers rides to medical appointments, grocery stores or meal sites; makes simple home repairs; and provides other free services and activities. Village Neighbors invites you to become a member or a volunteer!

Call 413-345-6894. Or e-mail:  
[membership@villageneighbors.org](mailto:membership@villageneighbors.org)  
or  
[volunteers@villageneighbors.org](mailto:volunteers@villageneighbors.org)

### **The Shutesbury Council on Aging**

**Linda Avis Scott and  
JoAnn Bernhard, Co-Chairs;  
Susan Millinger, Secretary;  
Susan Gomberg  
Janis Gray  
Martha Favre  
Jeannette Stockton**

Meetings are the second Wednesday  
of the month at 5:30pm on Zoom.

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