

To the Hingham Community,

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Connection Matters - Especially This Time of Year

The holiday season is quickly approaching, and with it comes a greater risk of social isolation for many older adults.

National studies show that feelings of loneliness increase significantly between November and January for older adults, driven by reduced daylight, less mobility, and fewer routine social interactions. For individuals who live alone or lack nearby family, the absence of regular, meaningful contact can heighten stress, anxiety, and depression. Consistent engagement with a community space, like the Hingham Center for Active Living (HCAL), helps counter these seasonal shifts by providing structured opportunities for connection, conversation, and shared experience.

For many older residents in Hingham, the Center for Active Living plays the role of a daily or weekly anchor providing structured activities, social routines, and a safe place to connect with others. During the holidays, when emotional wellbeing can fluctuate, those small points of contact become especially important.

The Current Facility in Town Hall Cannot Meet Demand

HCAL's existing rooms and shared spaces are limited in both size and availability.

- Small rooms prevent multiple programs from running simultaneously.
- Peak-season classes routinely hit maximum attendance.
- Certain spaces are difficult to access for individuals with mobility aids.
- Registration demand increases sharply during winter months, aligning with periods of higher isolation risk.

These constraints make a direct impact on the consistency of social engagement—one of the most effective tools for reducing isolation-related health risks.

This past Tuesday (November 18), the Center held its annual Thanksgiving Lunch, a tradition that continues to bring people together in a thoughtful and meaningful way. Each seat was filled, and many more expressed interest, resulting in a waitlist. That level of participation speaks to the value people place on gathering, especially during this time of year.

Because our onsite parking can't support events of this size, attendees will park at a nearby lot and be shuttled in. While it works, it's a reminder that interest in these types of community programs has outgrown the space and resources currently available.

DID YOU KNOW...

Loneliness and social isolation are increasing public-health issues nationwide, particularly for older adults. National research from the CDC and the National Institute on Aging shows that prolonged social isolation is associated with a 29% increase in the risk of heart disease, a 32% increase in stroke, and a significantly higher likelihood of depression and cognitive decline. These impacts intensify in winter, when mobility challenges and reduced daylight limit opportunities for social engagement.





What a Purpose-Built Center Would Support

A modern HCAL facility will provide the space and flexibility needed to meet the documented social, emotional, and health needs of older adults in Hingham. Larger program areas, flexible multipurpose rooms, and accessible social spaces will make it possible to:

- Reduce waitlists and increase participation in high-demand programs.
- Run concurrent activities, accommodating a wider range of interests and schedules.
- Offer seasonal supports such as caregiver groups, grief programs, and communal meals services that research shows improve emotional resilience during winter and the holidays.
- Maintain consistent opportunities for social interaction, which directly correlate with stronger health outcomes and reduced isolation-related risks.

A Community Resource With Measurable Impact

As we enter the holiday season, a time when feelings of isolation can intensify, the importance of reliable, accessible community space becomes even more necessary for the health of our neighbors. **Understanding the relationship between program demand, building capacity, and resident wellbeing helps the community see how critical HCAL's role is in supporting healthy aging.**

Please Join the Conversation

The CAL project is the product of thoughtful community conversations and shared goals. As we move forward, your voice matters. We will be engaging you throughout the process and look forward to your questions and feedback. Visit the project website for up-to-date information—and sign up below to get these newsletters sent to your inbox.

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[CAL Building Project Website](#)

Center for Active Living Building Committee: Tom Carey (Chair), Beth Rouleau (Vice-Chair), Vicki Donlan, Joseph Kelly, Sally O'Hare, Jean Silverio, Steve Young, Jennifer Young (CAL Director, ex officio, non-voting member)

Council on Aging (COA): Joe Nevins (Chair), Sara Smithson (Vice-Chair), Rory Earley, Ethel Franks, Karen Johnson, Lucinda King-Frode, Leon Merian, Joshua Ross, Jean Silverio, Elaine Ward

Friends of the Center for Active Living (FOCAL): John Slater (President), Nick Amdur, David Anderson, Betty Foley, Dorothy Galo, Yvette Kanter, Donna Linskey, Eileen McCracken