



# The **FEBRUARY** Yorktown Assisted Living Newsletter

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## **The Yorktown Management Team:**

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**Administrator**

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**Director of Resident Relations**

**Nelly Squicciarini, RN**  
**Director of Clinical Services**

**Amanda Grieve**  
**Director of Recreation**

**Sandra Merchan, MSW**  
**Resident Relations Associate**

**Pat Gribbin**  
**Director of Maintenance and  
Housekeeping**

**Thomas Pepe**  
**Dining Service Director**

Dear Residents, Families and Friends:

2024 was off to a roaring start with a fabulous New Year's Day party featuring entertainer Linda Miller. On Jan. 9, residents gave tributes to our local police department in honor of National Law Enforcement Appreciation Day and on the 19<sup>th</sup>, residents celebrated a January birthday party, especially for John Weir who turned 101! And, on January 22, in memoriam of Barbara Woodard, residents enjoyed a Bingo for Barbara afternoon complete with Barbara's hot chocolate and bings. Stay tuned for the Recycled Snowman competition in February.

Our February poem:

I'm not just February  
With winds that blow  
All day, and piled-up snow;  
I'm Washington and Lincoln, too,  
Who kept our country's flag for you!  
I'm Valentine of airy grace—  
With golden hearts and hearts of lace  
And pretty cards that people send,  
Quite as a secret, to a friend.  
Though I am short of days and small,  
I'm quite a big month, after all!-Annette Wynne

All the best to you and yours,

Joan Marie Whalen, Editor



## *Veux tu être mon Valentin? (Will You Be My Valentine?)*

Where did Valentine's Day originate from? The history of the holiday – and the story of its patron saint – is shrouded in mystery, reports the editors of History.com (2/14/23.)

We do know that February has long been celebrated as a month of romance, and that St. Valentine's Day, as we know it today, contains vestiges of both Christian and ancient Roman tradition. But who was Saint Valentine, and how did he become associated with this ancient rite?

The Catholic Church recognizes at least three different saints named Valentine or Valentinus, all of whom were martyred. One legend contends that Valentine was a priest who served during the third century in Rome. When Emperor Claudius II decided that single men made better soldiers than those with wives and families, he outlawed marriage for young men. Valentine, realizing the injustice of the decree, defied Claudius and continued to perform marriages for young lovers in secret. When Valentine's actions were discovered, Claudius ordered that he be put to death. Still others insist that it was Saint Valentine of Terni, a bishop, who was the true namesake of the holiday. He, too, was beheaded by Claudius II outside Rome.

Other stories suggest that Valentine may have been killed for attempting to help Christians escape harsh Roman prisons, where they were often beaten and tortured. According to one legend, an imprisoned Valentine actually sent the first "valentine" greeting himself after he fell in love with a young girl – possibly his jailor's daughter – who visited him during his confinement. Before his death, it is alleged that he wrote her a letter signed "From your Valentine," an expression that is still in use today.

Although the truth behind the Valentine legends is murky, the stories all emphasize his appeal as a sympathetic, heroic and – most importantly – romantic figure. By the Middle Ages, perhaps thanks to this reputation, Valentine would become one of the most popular saints in England and France.

According to the Greeting Card Association and Hallmark, roughly 145 million Valentine's Day cards are exchanged each year. This makes it the year's second-largest card-sending holiday.

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## *Is Diet Soda - Aspartame Safe?*

The World Health Organization's (WHO) cancer research group said (7/13/23) that it was categorizing the common artificial sweetener found in Diet Coke and other sugar-free foods and drinks as a possible carcinogen, but the agency's food safety group said that the evidence wasn't convincing and that the compound could still be consumed safely in fairly high amounts, reports *NBC News*' Berkeley Lovelace, Jr.

The seemingly conflicting statements from the WHO came from two separate groups within the organization. One group, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), focuses on identifying cancer-causing agents. The other, the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives, looks at the safety of food additives and whether they pose a risk to consumers....

The IARC said that it was classifying aspartame as possibly carcinogenic, but that the evidence is far from conclusive, according to Mary Schubauer-Berigan, the acting head of the IARC Monographs program. (Exposure to a carcinogen does not mean a person will get cancer)....

The U.S. Food and Drug administration (FDA) said: "Aspartame is one of the most studied food additives in the human food supply. FDA scientists do not have safety concerns when aspartame is used under approved conditions."

The American Cancer Society said the science whether aspartame causes cancer is still evolving. "We recommend people use the IARC report to reflect on their use of aspartame but also an opportunity to review their overall dietary intake, including processed meat and alcohol, known carcinogens."

There's a big difference between a person consuming 15 Diet Cokes a day versus the average consumer that drinks one diet coke with a meal or has a couple of Equals with coffee, said Ohio State's George Kyriazis.

"We're just advising for a bid of moderation," said WHO's Dr. Francesco Branca. "If consumers are faced with the decision of whether to take cola with sweeteners or one with sugar, there should be a third option considered – drink water instead."

The primary exposure to aspartame in the United States are diet sodas, Equal, Nutrasweet, Canderel, Splenda and countless other products.

# January Memories . . .



## January 1, 2024 New Year's Day Party



**Entertainer Linda Miller**



**Grace Colesanti &  
Debbie Coccoro**



**Vivian Yaker and Simone**



**Meta Walter**



**Sandra Merchan, Sharon Haugh, Amanda Grieve, Vivian Yaker, Frank, Joan Whalen and Sheila Kozara give our tributes to the Yorktown police department to celebrate National Law Enforcement Appreciation Day.**



**Here is a sample of YAL's new Walking Art Galley.**



## *From the Desk of Director of Recreation Amanda Grieve*

February 2024 is the shortest month in our Gregorian calendar but it doesn't affect our exciting list of February activities:

- February 5, 1:00PM      Black History Documentary – Mini Bios—1<sup>st</sup> Floor
- February 6, 12:45PM      Confession Fitness Center; 1:00PM – Mass – 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor
- February 7, 1:00 PM      Valentine's Candy Dice Game -- Art Studio
- February 8, 10:00AM      Brunch at 202 Diner – please sign up
- February 9, 2:30PM      Super Bowl Tailgate Party – Great Room
- February 11, 6:30PM      Super Bowl Sunday – 1<sup>st</sup> Floor
- February 13, 2:30PM      Fat Tuesday (Mardi Gras) Ice Cream Bar Great Room  
3:00PM      Entertainer Linda Miller – Great Room
- February 14, 1:30PM      Valentine's Day Tea Party – 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor
- February 19, 1:00PM      Presidents Day Documentary: Every U.S. Presidents Biggest Accomplishment - 1 Floor
- February 22, 2:00PM      Residents' February Birthday Party 1<sup>st</sup> Floor
- February 23, 1:30PM      Resident Council Meeting – Dining Hall
- February 29, 2:00PM      Leap Year Games – 1<sup>st</sup> Floor

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### Resident Birthdays:

- February 4 - Leslee
- February 12 – Ursula
- February 23 – Bonnie
- February 23 – Connie

### Staff Birthdays:

- February 1 - Sandra M
- February 1 - Sheila
- February 7 – Aline
- February 8 – Yenny
- February 28 - Tamara



## *Do We Need To Worry About The New Covid-19?*

It's winter, that cozy season that brings crackling fireplaces, indoor gatherings – and a wave of respiratory illness. Nearly four years since the pandemic emerged, people are growing weary of dealing with it, but the virus is not done with us, reports KFF Health News (Kaiser Family Foundation) in partnership with NPR (National Public Radio) – 1/15/24.

Nationally, a sharp uptick in emergency room visits and hospitalizations for Covid-19, influenza and respiratory syncytial virus, or RSV, began in mid-December. Here are a few things to know this time around:

The Covid virus is continually changing, and a recent version is rapidly climbing the charts. Even though it appeared only in September, the variant known as JN.1, a descendant of omicron, is spreading, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Lab data indicates that the updated vaccines, as well as existing Covid rapid tests and medical treatments, are effective with this latest iteration. More good news is that it “does not appear to pose additional risks to public health beyond that of other recent variants,” according to the CDC. Even so, new Covid hospitalizations – 34,798 for the week that ended December 30 – are trending upward, although rates are still substantially lower than last December's tally.

It's early in the season, though. Levels of virus in wastewater – one indicator of how infections are spreading – are “very high,” exceeding the levels seen this time last year.... The numbers so far are definitely going in the not-so-good direction,” said Ziyad Al-Aly, the chief of research and development at the Veterans Affairs St. Louis Healthcare System....

## *The New Covid-19 (Continued)*

While some patients may have no more than the sniffles, others experiencing “mild” Covid can be miserable for three to five days,” said Vanderbilt University’s School of Medicine William Schaffner. “Am I going to be really sick? Do I have to mask up again?” It is important to know the basics.

At the same time, repeat infections are common. Fifteen percent of respondents to a recent YahooNews/YouGov poll said they had Covid two or three times. Research efforts suggest repeat infections may increase a person’s chances of developing serious illness or even long Covid – which is defined as having one or more effects that linger for a month or longer.

Dust off those at home Covid tests and throw away the ones that have aged out. Free test kits are still available through a federal program at Covid.gov.... While mask-wearing has dropped in most places, you may start to see more people wearing them in public spaces, including stores, public transit or entertainment venues.

**Although a federal mask mandate is unlikely, health officials and hospitals in at least four states – California, Illinois, Massachusetts and New York – have again told staff and patients to don masks. Such requirements were loosened last year when the public health emergency officially ended.**

We are not going to see widespread mask mandates as our population will not find that acceptable,” Schaffner noted. “That said, on an individual basis, mask-wearing is a very intelligent and reasonable thing to do as an additional layer of protection. The N95, KN95 and KF94 masks are the most protective. Cloth and paper are not as effective.

And finally, if you haven’t yet been vaccinated with an updated Covid vaccine, it’s not too late.”Even if in a prior infection you dodged the bullet of long Covid,” Al-Aly said, “it doesn’t mean you will dodge the bullet every single time.”

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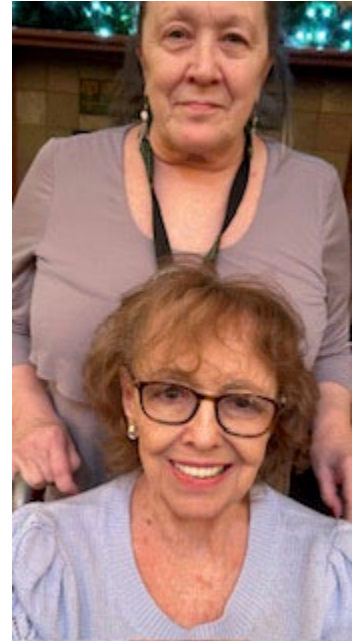
YAL's Birthday Party  
for January Residents –  
January 19



Deuces Wild's Gigi and Lou



Happy Birthday to John Weir – 101 years old!



Birthday girls Sarah Falkins & Dorothy Tocco

In memoriam of Barbara Woodard, a Bingo for Barbara party January 22



H Barbara's Hot Chocolate & Bings

