



HURA news

NOVEMBER 2020-JANUARY 2021
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Most people viewed our challenge to tell us how they are coping in a difficult time as a good opportunity to describe their creative, contemplative, and healthful activities to get them through.

Some turn to prayer, meditation, and reflection when times seem difficult.

Rita Schneider sees it as “a time to be with (not by) myself...”

Many people reported that just getting out of the house was good therapy—taking long walks, meeting with friends and neighbors at a safe distance, but worry about how the coming cold weather will impact these activities.

Some find comfort in listening to

or playing music. Some read works that inspire them. **Marilyn Goodrich** especially mentioned Shakespeare and Plato and poetry. “I also make time to pray each day—nothing elaborate; just setting aside a little time to be still and read a bit of scripture or say a simple prayer.” Some have recorded their reflections, feelings, and observations in their own poems.

Raymond Comeau sent this.

POEM FOR A PANDEMIC

I can't sleep
Complain my friends.
Often myself
Being fearful within four walls
Now that people
May take me away.

And what confusion to think about,
But I manage when I can
A poem into bed
Repeating
Words of beauty
Like a lullaby.

Coping During the Pandemic

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Seeking inspiration

Many turned to the great philosophers. **Sonia Wallenberg** chose one of her favorites: Piglet.



"Today was a Difficult Day," said Pooh.

There was a pause.

"Do you want to talk about it?" asked Piglet.

"No," said Pooh after a bit. "No, I don't think I do."

"That's okay," said Piglet, and he came and sat beside his friend.

"What are you doing?" asked Pooh.

"Nothing, really," said Piglet. "Only, I know what Difficult Days are like. I quite often don't feel like talking about it on my Difficult Days either. But goodness," continued Piglet, "Difficult Days are so much easier when you know you've got someone there for you. And I'll always be here for you, Pooh."

And as Pooh sat there, working through in his head his Difficult Day, while the solid, reliable Piglet sat next to him quietly, swinging his little legs...he thought that his best friend had never been more right.

A.A. Milne

We hope you have your own Piglet to sit beside you.

Being creative

Susan Grosdov says that for a long time she has saved online pictures that fall into three categories: wise, motivational sayings; beautiful landscapes, buildings, food displays; and kitties. The first thing each morning she posts one of them on Facebook, one each day, with no explanation. She told her FB friends that she was going to be doing this. It puts out a positive vibe in the world. "It makes me happy, and sometimes stimulates a little conversation."

Linda Doyle has a hobby making papier mâché Santas (at right). "Stuck in the house, with traveling on hold, I've been busy with making a sleigh full of them. Thirty so far! Who can feel down in the dumps with these guys looking back at me? It doesn't hurt that I've started giving them away, and they cheer the recipients as well."

JoAnn Haas sent several of her poems. Here's one.

COUNTERCLOCKWISE

There's no time
and yet there's too much.

It passes by
and then it lingers on.

It never ends,
and then it seems to stop.

It fast forwards,
then it rolls back.

It's the invisible metronome
tapping out an erratic beat
to an unfinished symphony.

Professor David McCann—who once offered HURA a program on Korean poetry—says, "My wife and I did a series of haiku Zoom workshops with our daughter and granddaughters. They were a great way to be out and around."

He's even willing to expand that audience to include HURA members. [Let us know.]

Ellen Isenstein takes advantage of technology to make music. "One of the things I most miss these days is the chance to play my flute in the band I've belonged to for several years. But thanks to a group of creative and energetic band directors, I have a full schedule of attending virtual rehearsals, preparing virtual performances, and practicing with the help of virtual teachers who use an online music platform that records and evaluates my playing."



Getting out

Gari Gatwood and his wife have found contentment and happiness through a weekly divergence from being alone. "Each Friday or Saturday late afternoon our backyard neighbors join us for a safe attitude adjustment period on our deck. We each bring our own drinks, glasses, ice cubes, and snacks and distance our chairs by seven to eight feet. We discuss family, health (of course at this age), the neighborhood, and politics. We all have nice smiles on our faces at the end and are ready for the next week."

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Coping During the Pandemic

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Malcolm, Ann Walter, and Ann Flentje have taken their HURA editing tasks to Ann W's covered, outdoor patio—where a glass of wine helps move the commas along.



Linda Olsen finds that “reminding myself of all the good things in my life, including the simple things like the sun is shining, helps. I also make time to pray each day—nothing elaborate; just setting aside a little time to be still and read a bit of scripture or say a simple prayer. Also, getting out for a walk frequently and taking in the beauty around me. Most importantly, limiting my TV time and listening to music instead.”

One writer says that she has been taking three walks every day, for a total of over four miles. “It keeps me sane.” Another reports that over the summer she’s been coping by spending a lot of time outside. “Walking and swimming at Walden Pond almost every day has uplifted my spirits and enlivened my body.”

Staying in

Zoom has changed everything, and many HURA members use the technology as a way to stay connected with friends and family. Some take exercise—Yoga, Tai Chi and Qigong classes; cooking classes are popping up, and nothing is more stimulating

than learning a new language by Zoom.

Zoom is the new normal. **Malcolm** looks forward each Friday evening to Cocktails with a Curator at the Frick Collection in New York, attended by several thousand viewers from around the world—including a number of HURA members.

Before that, he usually joins an interesting discussion with staff and patrons at his hometown library in Bath, Maine. The Harvard Art Museums offer coffee with a curator on Thursdays, and twice a month on Thursday evenings he visits with 10-12 seniors in his building for real drinks and virtual chat.

Ruiko Connor says that her current daily schedule evolved gradually. With morning coffee, she spends time looking at or listening to a music or art site. In the beginning she became preoccupied with miscellaneous activities and worried



about keeping busy. She was overly dependent on electronics, using them as a distraction, which became exhausting mentally and bad for the eyesight. Now she has weaned herself away from sitting all day at the computer or watching movies too much.

Ellen Isenstein says, “Savoring small pleasures, like sitting on my balcony sipping a cup of home brewed coffee, watching the clouds, and listening to the birds. When I



do this, I am reminded that many of the good things in life are still here to enjoy.”

Elgie Ginsburgh is grateful to be still upright and have the luck to be in a helpful religious congregation that delivers groceries. “So I cook for myself. And my elderly, but affectionate, cat keeps me company. I guarantee that a cat sleeping in your lap, totally relaxed as if boneless, will lower any stress-related pressure.

“Recently, I sent my best friend a birthday card which read ‘I always wanted to be normal’, but today I think this is the best it’s going to get.”

Reaching out

Marilyn Goodrich tries to keep in touch with friends and with grandchildren via video.

Kevin Gallagher’s access to the outside world (with exception of medical appointments) is by phone. He says, “So far doing ok.” 🙌

Cynthia Toomer recommends having coffee with a friend even if it’s the two of you on the phone with your cups at home.

Susan Grosdov uses email to say hello to one person daily. “Between my former colleagues at Harvard and my social circles, there are plenty of people to connect with. And if I ever get through the list, I’ll just start again at the beginning! It’s a wonderful way to stay connected.”

Another respondent says she also

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Coping During the Pandemic

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finds that speaking with friends, or even emailing, on a regular basis has been important to share both the times we feel down and the positive feelings and breakthroughs we have.

While they also use video technology to communicate with children and grandchildren scattered across the west coast, **Arthur and Judy McCaffrey** say, “We made a major decision several years ago to get rid of our TV, and we do not miss it.”

And many others report that they have forced themselves to limit TV time.

Giving back

Nancy Juskin volunteers at a Saint Vincent de Paul food pantry, at least, twice a month. “Since the pandemic, we have had an increase in requests for food and other assistance. Our client list has tripled during the pandemic, and families are added every day. I am grateful that we are there to help them.”

Another writer says, “A way I try to be productive, especially in these difficult times, is to donate even more generously to organizations that are



helping people who are struggling to have enough to eat by providing them with food on a regular basis.”

Planning the days

Nancy believes every day is a gift and has been trying to make each day count during the pandemic. “I cope by planning a daily schedule of what I want to accomplish at home.”

Ann Flentje plans each day but says “the schedule is varied by the books I read, music I learn, meals I prepare, magical sights of nature I may see on an early morning walk, and many cherished phone conversations. My life is incredibly rich and fulfilling, and the days seem to fly by.”

Cynthia Toomer says, “I’ve tried to continue learning and developing

new skills. More cooking at home, so I bought an Instant Pot and tried new foods.” She also advises us to laugh and fight with people on Twitter. Eat chocolate. Moisturize.

The McCaffreys write that their recipe for coping involves both the normal and the new. “We continue to lead lives of structure and routine to keep our days humming along, but we also add the new to keep us on our toes. My wife [like many who responded] is learning a foreign language, while I am practicing being a journalist, writing and sending out articles to newspapers.”

Summing up

Cynthia says it’s important to always have something to look forward to—something you will buy, eat, learn—no matter how simple.

Al Powers says he is dealing quite nicely. “Like all good Irish from Meffa, all I need is a six-pack and a bag of chips.”

Nancy expresses the feelings of many of us, that hopefully this will end soon, and we can once again attend HURA events. “I miss everyone.”

Medicare Care-Compare Combined

Medicare has combined its eight original “provider-compare” sites, giving the user one place to start finding any type of care that’s needed. New features include updated maps, new filters that help one identify the right providers, and a clean, consistent design that makes it easier to compare providers and find the most information.

Looking for the original compare tools?

You’ll find all the same measures and quality information here, but if you’re looking for the original

individual compare tools, you can still find them on Medicare.gov. A description of the original services covered can be found in *HURA’s Resources for Harvard Retirees, 2021-2023*, pages 57-58.

What can this tool do for you? For those with Medicare or their caregivers who want to choose a Medicare provider (like physicians, hospitals, nursing homes, and others).

This tool provides a single source

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New Year's Day Around the World

Everyone knows that **January 1 is New Year's Day**. But that was not always so. Depending upon your origins or where you live in the world today—it still may not be so.

The **Early Romans** held that March 1 was the day when the New Year began. In 46 B.C., Julius Caesar introduced a new solar-based calendar to correct the inaccuracies in the ancient Roman and earlier lunar calendars. And he decreed that the New Year would begin on January 1.

[B.C. used to mean “Before Christ,” but to be more inclusive of other beliefs, it now means “Before the Common Era” and is sometimes abbreviated “BCE”.]

In 1582, **Pope Gregory XIII** reformed the Julian calendar using a solar dating system. By the Julian reckoning, the solar year comprised 365 1/4 days; the intercalation of a “leap day” every four years was intended to maintain correspondence between the calendar and the seasons. A slight inaccuracy in the measurement (the solar year comprising more precisely 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes, 46 seconds) caused the calendar dates of the seasons to regress almost one day per century.

This regression had amounted to 14 days by Pope Gregory's time. He based his reform on restoration of the vernal equinox, then falling on March 11, to March 21. The change was effected by advancing the calendar 10 days after Oct. 4, 1582,

the day following being reckoned as October 15. Trivia fans will be pleased to learn that October 5-14, 1582 are dates that never occurred.

January 1 on the Julian calendar currently corresponds to January 14 on the older Gregorian calendar. It is on this date that followers of some Eastern Orthodox churches celebrate the New Year today, mainly in the countries of Belarus, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Georgia, Greece, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Russia, Serbia, and Ukraine.

Most countries in Western Europe officially adopted January 1 as New Year's Day shortly after 1582. Scotland delayed the move of the first day of the New Year to January 1 until 1600, by decree of King James VI.

In England, the **Feast of the Annunciation** on March 25 was the first day of the New Year until 1752. Consequently, a child born in Britain between January 1 and March 24 before 1752, say, on January 15, 1623, would have been given what we now consider the previous year as the birth year because this child's new year wouldn't have begun until the end of the following March. To bring the birth date into conformity with later standards, it is now customary, especially in genealogies, to give both the previous year and the next year as the date in this form: January 15, 1622/23, indicating that in his own time, this person would have been said to be born in 1622. Whereas we would now say that he was born in 1623.



The next **Jewish New Year**, 5782, known as Rosh Hashanah, will be celebrated from sundown on Monday September 6 through nightfall on September 8, 2021. Rosh Hashanah occurs 163 days after the first day of Passover. It literally means “head of the year” and is observed on the first two days of the Hebrew month of Tishrei, traditionally held to be the anniversary of the creation of Adam and Eve.

In the ancient Celtic tradition, Samhain, the **Celtic New Year**, marks the end of the harvest. It was celebrated on the night of October 31 and the day of November 1. In recent times it has become associated with Halloween.

The determination of the beginning of the **Chinese New Year** is based on a lunar calendar, with each month beginning on the darkest night. New Year usually falls between January 20 and February 20. One scheme of figuring out the date (there are several) places the beginning of the year 4718 on February 12, 2021, beginning the year of the ox. In China, people may take weeks of holiday from work to prepare for and celebrate the New Year.

The **Hindi New Year** falls at the

2021

HAPPY NEW YEAR

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New Year's Day Around the World

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time and date when the Sun enters Aries on the Hindu calendar. In 2021, it will be April 12.

The **Islamic New Year** (also known as Hijri New Year and Arabic New Year) moves from year to year because it is based on a lunar calendar. The first day in the calendar always begins at the first sighting of the lunar crescent after the new moon in the month of Muharram. In 2021 in the U.S., the New Year begins at sundown on August 8 and ends August 9.

The **Western calendar** now in general use worldwide had its origin in the desire for a solar calendar that kept in step with the seasons and possessed fixed rules of intercalation. Because it developed in Western Christendom, it had also to provide a method for dating movable religious feasts, the timing of which had been based on a lunar reckoning. To reconcile the lunar and solar schemes, features of the Roman republican calendar and the much earlier Egyptian calendar were combined.

The **U.S. federal government's new year** for fiscal purposes begins on October 1, and ends on September 30, the following year.

The **fiscal year at Harvard** and most academic institutions begins on July 1, and ends on June 30, the following year. Fiscal years are named for the calendar year (Jan-Dec.) in which they end. Thus, fiscal year FY 2021 is the period from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021. These are sometimes also referred to as "Academic Years".

At some point in the coming year, we wish everyone a Happy New Year, but maybe not on January 1 for all persons and all purposes!

New Words and Phrases

Reading newspapers or listening to news programs, we constantly come across new words and phrases that may not yet have made it into your Merriam-Webster.

Climate Migration: The forced movement or relocation of people because of climate change.

Disaster Fatigue: 2020 is an American nightmare that's wearing us out: COVID, hurricanes, wildfires, politics, racial unrest, police brutality, death of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, questionable information from the White House, and constant exposure to the suffering of others.

Food Insecurity: The state of being without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food. More than 800 million people in the world live every day with hunger or food insecurity as their constant companion.

Infodemic: Falsehoods involving the pandemic. [First used in a massive Cornell University study that identified their sources.]

NextGen: Among other uses of the term, Next Generation is a diverse coalition of young people, organized to take power by winning elections for progressive candidates.

Trumpster: A person who supports Donald Trump, often young ones.

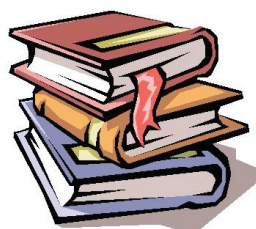
Twindemic: COVID-19 and seasonal flu may be a deadly combo this fall and winter. Doctors fear that a combination of factors will result in a deadly time when we will see cases that are maybe-influenza, maybe-COVID, maybe

some of the other respiratory viruses—and because rapid testing is not available on a widespread basis, they may not know what they are dealing with.

Webinar: A seminar over the Internet; a live online educational presentation during which participating viewers can submit questions and comments—usually by chat, rather than live voice.

Zillennials: A gray area of young people who fall between Gen Z (7-22 year olds) and Millennials (23-38 year olds). [These must be 22 and a half year olds.]

Zoomester: What Harvard students are calling the semester of remote learning.



IN BRIEF

HUHS Closes Two Sites

Harvard University Health Services closes the **HUHS Pharmacy** at the Smith Campus Center, 75 Mt. Auburn St., and the **Harvard Dental Service** at 114 Mt. Auburn St. This change does not affect the services at the Harvard Dental Center in the School of Dental Medicine.

According to Dr. Giang T. Nguyen, executive director, Harvard University Health Services, "This was a difficult decision. We do have a communication plan to notify patients who have received care from the dental practice and the pharmacy. We also plan to post the information on our website. <https://huhs.harvard.edu/> The closure of any longstanding service can be disruptive, and we are hopeful that a three-month lead time (October-December) will give patients the time they need to establish new care." <https://huhs.harvard.edu/services/harvard-dental-service>

<https://huhs.harvard.edu/services/harvard-university-health-services-pharmacy>

2020/2021 Term Bill in FAS

Without knowing the aid profile of those in residence, those enrolled but not in residence, and those not enrolled, one cannot make an accurate estimate of FAS revenue from the Harvard term bill—but the arithmetic is daunting no matter the measure.

The 2020-2021 term bill is \$72,357, consisting of the following:

- \$49,653 for tuition
- \$ 4,315 for fees
- \$11,364 for room
- \$ 7,025 for board.

Social Security sets COLA for 2021 at 1.3 %

Inflation has been on a roller coaster in 2020. First, COVID-19 disruptions cratered prices for gasoline, travel, even car insurance. Summer rebounds in those commodities, as well as increases for in-demand items like used cars, meat, and haircuts, have put the consumer price index back on a more normal trajectory.

The 1.3% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) will begin with benefits payable to more than 70 million Social Security beneficiaries in January 2021.

SS COLA history for the past 12 years

2020: 1.6%	2014: 1.5%
2019: 2.8%	2013: 1.7%
2018: 2.0%	2012: 3.6%
2017: 0.3%	2011: 0%
2016: 0%	2010: 0%
2015: 1.7%	2009: 5.8%

Open Enrollment 2021 Reminder

The annual open enrollment period for Harvard health plans in 2021 ends Thursday, November 19, 2020. This is the only time you can make changes to your plan during the year without a qualifying life event. An information package was sent to retirees' home addresses in late October. There are no plan design changes, but there were rate changes, so retirees should be sure to review their Open Enrollment information.

There is still no news about the proposed merger of Harvard Pilgrim (HPHC) and Tufts medical plans to inform your selection decision.

COVID-19 Updates and Information

Find everything you need to know about COVID-19 in Massachusetts at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-updates-and-information>.

Flowers of the Forest

The Battle of Flodden Field took place in Scotland in 1513. It was a disaster for the Scots, with estimates of Scottish losses to the English numbering as high as ten thousand. Numerous nobles were killed in the battle, including Scottish King James IV. In lament for the lost souls, at the time, the song *Flowers of the Forest* was played on a single bagpipe and has since come to be used to commemorate lost loved ones.

*Dool and wae for the order sent
oor lads tae the Border!
The English for ance, by guile
wan the day,
The Flooers o' the Forest,
that fought aye the foremost,
The pride o' oor land lie
cauld in the clay.*

IN MEMORIAM

Deceased HURA Members

We regret to report that Harvard HR Benefits has informed us that the following HURA members have died over the past year.

Mary C. Altenhofen, Ofer Bar-yosef, Julia M. Blackburn, Annie C. Bombard, Bella J. Burns, John H. Davis, Gloria S. Gerrig, Madeleine J. Harvey, Harley Holden, Edith G. Hollender, Alice Graham McCabe, William G. Minty, Roland Raymond (spouse), Dr. Howard S. Rubenstein, Hagop Sarkissian, Teresa F. Shannon, and John Torrence Tate.

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HURA E-LIST

Members receive up-to-date news and information
mailed directly to their home computers.

HURA WEBSITE

A source of information and news at
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Medicare Care-Compare Combined

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search-and-compare experience, to

- Find information about providers and facilities based on individual needs
- Get helpful resources to choose health care providers
- Make more informed decisions about where you obtain health care.

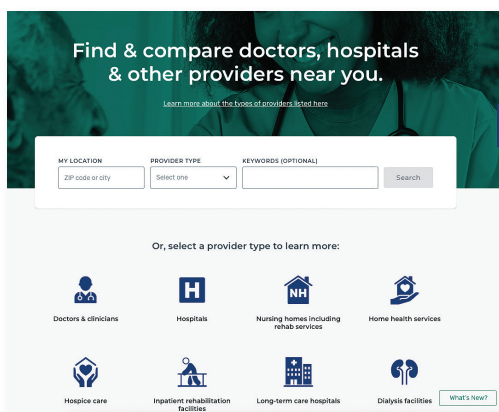
The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), the federal agency that runs the Medicare program, created this tool in collaboration with organizations representing people with Medicare, hospice organizations, other stakeholders, and other federal agencies.

Although the tool was created for people with Medicare in mind, many of the measures will be useful to people who may not have Medicare.

Information on this site isn't an endorsement or

advertisement for any provider or facility type. If information for a provider or facility isn't provided, it doesn't mean they provide low quality of care or are non-compliant with the Medicare program. It may mean that CMS doesn't have data for that specific provider or provider type.

<https://www.medicare.gov/care-compare/>



HURA is a tax-exempt 501 (c) 7 all-volunteer organization. Membership is open to benefits-eligible retirees of Harvard University and is complimentary until the renewal period the following June 30. Thereafter dues are \$20 annually. Visit HURA on Facebook at www.facebook.com/HUretirees or at www.HURA.harvard.edu.