

**COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT
DIRECTOR'S REPORT
SEPTEMBER, 2025**

SUBMITTED TO: Jill Goldsmith, Town Manager
SUBMITTED BY: Leah LaCross, Director of Community Services

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES:

It is with pride and excitement that I report that the Town of Chatham's very first Municipal Academy launched on Wednesday, September 3rd at 6:00 p.m. at the Community Center. This long-planned endeavor kicked off with the "Town Overview and Governance" session; led by Town Manager Jill Goldsmith. Also presenting was Town Clerk, Julie Smith. Three more sessions followed in September, including Finance, Department of Public Works (DPW), and Community Services. Our first cohort of 14 individuals are all full-time Chatham residents (some long-time, some new) and are highly engaged.

The Chatham Municipal Academy was started in order to educate residents, build positive, collaborative relationships within our community, foster understanding about municipal procedures, and to increase communication between Town of Chatham leaders and residents. Ultimately, municipal academies serve as pivotal platforms for civic empowerment, aligning with broader goals such as fostering transparency, accountability, education, and civic engagement at the grassroots level. By equipping individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate the intricacies of local government, these academies play a crucial role in sharing knowledge with individuals that actively and responsibly contribute to the betterment of their community through informed and thoughtful participation.

On September 9th, I attended "A Roadmap to Community Engagement" webinar through the Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA), which presented creative ideas for engaging with local residents in our own community.

On September 19th, Jo Fennell and I met with the staff from the Recreation and Beaches Division of Community Services and provided the team with our "Dealing with Those with Dementia" training. This presentation was well-received and was the first of its' kind for most of the staff.

The Employee Engagement Committee met on Thursday, September 18th at 2:00 p.m. to discuss and plan for the Second Annual Team Chatham Chili Challenge, to be held in November. I am grateful that this group of 11 continues to be highly engaged and enthusiastic at planning exciting events that appeal to all members of Team Chatham.

On Tuesday, September 30th, the CFAL staff welcomed Cyndi Kreisher, our newest Council on Aging Board of Directors' Board member, to our 8:00 a.m. morning huddle. Cyndi had the chance to meet with all CFAL team members, and to introduce herself and share why she was interested in joining the COA Board.

This month we had plenty to celebrate. Anna Milan, Programs and Communications Coordinator, celebrated her 2-year anniversary on September 11th, Josephine "Jo" Fennell, Director of the Ryder's Cove Respite Program, celebrated her 1-year anniversary on September 23rd, and Maddie Ittner, the Center for Active Living Department Assistant, got married on September 20th in her hometown of San Diego, California, and returned as Mrs. Maddie Vokey.

COA DIVISION:

Outreach:

For the month of September, Outreach had 230 interactions for 116 individuals!

Outreach had 2 individual referrals from Chatham Police Department (CPD), Chatham Fire Department (CFD), and Emergency Medical Services (EMS), leading 3 consultations, and follow up.

The Outreach Coordinator made 6 home visits for 4 separate individuals. We had 7 safety checks on 3 individual members. There were also 39 continued follow-up consultations on 23 individuals, from previous months.

Outreach had 116 phone interactions, serving 59 individuals. We had 70 in-person office consultations at CFAL for 62 members. September saw an increase in community members concerned about their neighbor's safety and wellbeing. With 7 individuals with confusion leading to 30 interactions. 22 members looking for support for family members leading to 40 calls. We referred 24 individuals to 8 different Community partners for support this month.

Healthy Meals in Motion served 39 families this month.

This month 20 durable medical equipment pieces were lent to 17 individuals. Currently, our inventory of wheelchairs has been low, and this is one of our biggest requests. We did have 3 new donations of multiple DME items.

September 4th saw Outreach wrap up its 2-year grant for the Chatham LGBTQ+ Older Adults group. At our final event we took our group of 24 members on a Cape Cod Railroad excursion, that provided a tour of Cape Cod and provided a boxed lunch. We provided transportation for 6 members leaving from the CFAL building to the railroad and back. Since it was the last event everyone received a tote bag commemorating the years' events. The feedback was very favorable; all had a great time.

On September 19th we accompanied the Chatham Better Together group to a show at the Harwich Junior Theater. We saw a presentation of "*The Marvelous Wonderettes*"; a musical

centered around 1950's and 1960's music. Afterwards we went to the Red Nun for lunch. Participants had a great time, and enjoyed the music and the food.

Transportation:

As the seasons change and fall settles in, the Center for Active Living (CFAL) continues to see steady growth in Transportation services. In September, CFAL provided rides to 33 more participants than in August, demonstrating increased awareness and utilization of our programs. These rides supported a wide range of activities, including:

Orleans Supportive Day Program

- 4 participants
- 34 round trips

Ryders Cove Respite Program

- 2 participants
- 18 round trips

Medical Appointments

- 31 round trips

Grocery Access

- 9 pantry deliveries
- 26 resident trips to Stop & Shop (Thursdays)
- 18 deliveries from The Chatham Village Market

Pharmacy Support

- 8 prescription deliveries

Council on Aging (COA) Program Participation

A total of 35 participants received transportation to a variety of COA programs, including:

- COA Cinema
- Bingo
- Birthday Party
- Book Club
- Busy Fingers
- Chatham Better Together
- Chair Yoga

- SHINE
- Footcare
- Reiki
- Performance of The Rise of the Sing Songwriter
- Nantucket Historical Association on the Road

Additional Transportation Services Provided

We were able to accommodate more personal transportation requests, including trips to:

- Banking
- Chatham Village Market
- Law Offices
- Library
- Town Hall
- Post Office
- Ocean State Job Lot
- Personal errands

While we strive to accommodate these requests whenever possible, medical appointments remain our top priority. In the event of a scheduling conflict, personal trips may be rescheduled to ensure timely access to essential medical care.

Program Highlights & Updates

In September, CFAL continued to expand and enhance our Transportation services, supporting a growing number of participants and deepening our impact within the community.

- **LGBTQ+ Group Excursion:**
CFAL provided transportation for 7 participants from the LGBTQ+ group to attend a scenic Cape Cod Railroad excursion, which included lunch. The group reported on a positive and enjoyable experience.
- **Chatham Better Together Outing:**
Transportation was provided for 12 participants to attend an outing with the *Chatham Better Together* group, which is an essential opportunity for many who otherwise face social isolation. The group attended a performance of *The Marvelous Wonderettes* at the Harwich Junior Theatre, followed by lunch at The Red Nun. These outings continue to offer vital connection and engagement for participants.
- **Grocery Trips:**
Our weekly *Stop & Shop* trips on Thursdays remain consistent, with 6 regular riders making use of this essential service.
- **Chatham Village Market Delivery:**
Interest in our Village Market delivery service continues to grow steadily. We receive

new inquiries almost every week for deliveries on Mondays and Thursdays, indicating strong word-of-mouth and community need.

- **New Rider Assessments:**

We are currently processing an average of 3 new transportation assessment forms each week. Compared to August, we served 33 more individual riders in September.

Operationally, this is reflected in the need for 3 drivers, at least three times per week.

- **Improved Capacity:**

With the addition of an extra driver, we are successfully reducing the number of ride denials and accommodating more participant needs.

- **Errand Assistance for Homebound Older Adults:**

We are receiving increased requests from older adults who are homebound and unable to complete basic errands, despite being otherwise independent. On less busy days (while medical appointments remain our top priority) drivers have agreed to allocate up to one hour for these participants to complete essential tasks such as visits to the post office, Town Hall, or local bank.

Looking Ahead

On **October 17, 2025**, CFAL will be providing transportation for the *Chatham Better Together* group. The day will begin with brunch, followed by a guided tour of the Chatham Coast Guard Station. This is a great opportunity for education, socialization, and community connection.

Programming:

This monthly report outlines the activities and achievements of the Chatham Council on Aging Program Coordinator for the month of September in the year 2025.

In September, 337 members of the Chatham older adult community patroned the Center for Active Living (CFAL) for a program, service, or other offering. Events like the *Relocation Lunch and Learn*, *Bingo*, or the *Nantucket Historical Association on the Road* presentation, drew crowds of 20 or more, while programs such as *Book Club*, *Sound Meditation*, and our *Cooking Class* allowed for more intimate groups of 10 or less to gather. Our dynamic offerings continue to allow members of our community to try something new, engage with local happenings, and prioritize their health and wellness.

A new offering this month, *“Balance Training”*, facilitated by Dr. Maggie Curtis of Harbor Health Physical Therapy was the most popular program in September by far. With registration being limited to 12 per session, it was no surprise the class was full in a matter of days. However, it was unexpected that the waitlist grew to over 25 community members. Such interest in an offering is excellent information, as it provides a look into what the older adults in Chatham are looking for. The Program Coordinator is hopeful the program will be offered in the new year, on a more regular basis. Members on the waitlist will be prioritized if *“Balance Training”* is offered in future.

September was a busy month for the CFAL volunteers. There were 18 opportunities for volunteers to get involved this month: covering the Front Desk during a staff vacation, providing support in our Adult Supportive Day program, distributing groceries to participants of the Healthy Meals in Motion program, among other things. In September, volunteers contributed 202.5 hours of service. In 2024, it was estimated that the value of a volunteer hour in Massachusetts was \$42.00 by the Independent Sector (https://independentsector.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/is-vovt-report-2024_v2.pdf). The contribution of time would be equivalent to \$8,505 in wages. Beyond the monetary value, these hours represent meaningful support that strengthens programs, expands staff capacity, and enhances the bond the Center for Active Living has with the community.

Ryder's Cove Respite Program:

Program Overview

I'm pleased to share the latest updates from Ryder's Cove Adult Supportive Day Program. September was a month of meaningful engagement, continued growth, and new beginnings.

We were delighted to welcome a new participant—a lovely woman who has called Cape Cod home for over 30 years. Her presence has already added warmth and vitality to the group.

Another participant, who joined us through our summer respite program in late June, has recently returned to New Jersey for the winter period. She brought joy and positivity to the group during her time here, and we look forward to welcoming her back in the new year.

New Participant Transition

Our newest participant, a woman in her early 90s diagnosed with moderate dementia, officially joined the program this month. She completed two abbreviated trial days: the first attended with her daughter, and the second independently, while her daughter remained nearby for support if needed.

During her visits, she presented as quiet, friendly, well-dressed, and polite. She engaged positively in music therapy—singing, tapping, and clapping—and appeared comfortable throughout the day. She also enjoyed her lunch and our special dessert.

Her second trial visit, held on September 23, 2025, aimed to assess her comfort and adjustment without her primary caregiver present. Although initially apprehensive, she gradually engaged more with the group and ended the day laughing while playing catch/kickball with her new friends.

Based on these observations, it was agreed she would be a great addition to our program

Communication Books

Our communication books continue to serve as a meaningful bridge between participants and their families. In addition to therapy updates, we have started including mood snapshots and participant quotes, offering families a more personal insight into their loved one's daily experience.

Health & Fitness

Physical engagement remains a cornerstone of our program. Participants have begun self-initiating additional repetitions and are confidently opting for slightly heavier weights—an encouraging reflection of their increasing strength and motivation.

As mentioned in last month's report, we introduced gentle chair yoga and seated Tai Chi. Both practices have been met with enthusiasm and are supporting improved mobility, mindfulness, and overall well-being.

Popular activities such as the "Newspaper Foot Challenge" and seated basketball have continued to generate high levels of laughter, friendly competition, and daily engagement.

Therapeutic Programming

- **Music Therapy:** The continued use of percussion instruments has elevated group participation. Rhythmic drumming and spontaneous jam sessions have brought visible joy and enhanced engagement. One of our gentlemen has bought in his own percussion instrument and plays along with each of our music entertainers which brings smiles to all in the program.
- **Pet Therapy:** Brewster and Fiona, our certified therapy dogs, continue their twice-monthly visits. Their presence offers comfort and joy, fostering affectionate interaction and lively conversation.

Social & Emotional Well-Being

The addition of new members has contributed to deeper social bonds and more vibrant peer interactions. Our community continues to flourish as we uphold our commitment to fostering connection, inclusion, and a true sense of belonging.

Staffing & Professional Development

Our program remains fully staffed with a dedicated and highly skilled team. We remain committed to ongoing learning and providing informed, person-centered care.

Attendance & Participation

We maintained a strong average attendance rate of 85% throughout September. The consistent presence and active involvement of our participants reflect the value and comfort they find in

Please note: One of our participants will be formally discharged from the program as of October 2, 2025. She has not attended for the past two months. Initially, we were informed that a family emergency required her to leave the Cape. However, since their return, there has been no further communication from the caregiver. Despite multiple outreach attempts by Director to check in and offer support, we have not received a response. This outcome is unfortunate, as the participant had made meaningful progress in the program and had formed strong, supportive relationships with fellow attendees.

Facility Update: Temporary Relocation

The planned temporary relocation of the Adult Supportive Day Program originally scheduled for the week of October 6th, 2025, to accommodate upcoming building renovations, has been postponed. Families and guardians were informed well in advance and will continue to receive timely updates as new information becomes available

Looking Ahead:

We're excited to explore autumn-inspired activities that bring joy, spark memories, and nurture a sense of belonging. As always, our focus remains on creating a safe, supportive, and enriching environment for all.

Council on Aging Board of Directors:

The Council on Aging Board of Directors met on Monday, September 15th. Gloria McPherson, Housing and Sustainability Director, gave a presentation on the state of affordable housing in the Town of Chatham, and Leah LaCross announced that the temporary move to the Community Center is delayed at this time.

The Human Services Committee:

The Human Services Committee met on Monday, September 22nd and reviewed five grant requests from local non-profit organizations that serve Chatham residents. Applications reviewed were:

1. The Chatham Ecumenical Council
2. Salty Paws Therapy Dogs
3. Elder Services of Cape Cod (Meals on Wheels Program)
4. Behavioral Health Innovators
5. Visiting Nurses Association (VNA) of Cape Cod

RECREATION AND BEACHES DIVISION

The Recreation & Beaches Division is committed to enhancing the quality of life for all Chatham Residents, by striving to provide the best recreational programming and park facilities possible.

PARK Program

The PARK Afterschool Program is for students in grades 3-7 to have a safe, fun, and engaging afterschool experience. It is also the intent of the program to foster a sense of community and to forge new and lasting friendships among the students attending the program.

PARK Special Events September- Welcome Back pizza Party 9/10, Scavenger Hunt 9/24

	September	October	November	December
MONTHLY ATTENDANCE	846			
MONEY COLLECTED	\$10,580			
AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE	40			

Programming

Adults:

- Fall Tuesday Night Pickleball- 55 participants
- Fall Thursday Night Pickleball-57 participants
- Fall Saturday Night Pickleball- 28 Participants
- Chatham Pickleball Members- 386 Members
- Fall Pickleball Lessons- 12 Participants
- Fall Adult Basketball- 14 participants
- Yoga with Jackie! (Hatha Mondays)- 17 participants
- Yoga with Jackie! (Restorative Thursdays)- 16 participants
- Functional Strength Training (Fridays)- 16 Participants
- Functional Strength Training (Saturdays)-9 Participants

Youth

- September Family Karate-8 participants

September Family Tai Chi- 4 Participants

Fall Youth Tennis- 8 participants

Grades 1-2 Youth Soccer- 12 participants

Grades 3&4 Boys- Combined with Harwich Rec for 1 Team

Grades 3&4 Girls- Combined with Harwich Rec for 1 Team

Kindergarten Soccer- 22 participants

Pre-School Soccer-10 Participants

Special Events

On Friday September 19th, we held our *Annual Family Dodgeball Night*. We had over 50 participants participate in this fun family event with pizza and snacks offered after dodgeball.

Employee Development/Enrichment/Other

Cleat swap- we held another successful cleat swap in the vestibule at the Community Center. It started on Aug 11th and ran through September 22nd. It allows parents to donate gently used cleats and/or take gently used cleats for their children.

On Friday September 19th, the whole division participated in Dealing with those with Dementia Training. The training was facilitated by Community Services Director Leah LaCoss.

Wednesday September 24th, Aime Howell (Deputy Director Community Services, Sharon Stark (Recreation Supervisor) and Sue Frederick (Recreation Coordinator) participated in the towns Municipal Academy presenting on the Divisions work and responsibilities.

On September 25th, Aime Howell (Deputy Director Community Services, Sharon Stark (Recreation Supervisor) and Sue Frederick (Recreation Coordinator) attended the Cape & Islands Regional MRPA meeting. Topic discussions included recapping of each departments summer staffing, programming, and Fall plans.

Community Center Use

Aerobics Room – 77 Reservations

Full body circuit with Rachel, Lite Fitness with Susan Hunter, Heisig Belly Dance, CFAL Strong at Heart, CFAL Yoga, Restorative Yoga, Functional Strength Training, Friday Family Karate, Friday Family Tai Chi, Hatha Yoga, CFAL Full body Fitness, Chatham Tai Chi

Club Room – 21 Reservations

Chatham Fiber Arts, Municipal Academy, Men’s weekly discussion group, Women’s Club of Chatham Board meeting, Women’s Club of Chatham knitting group, Friends of Chatham Waterways, Behavioral Health Innovators, Chatham Waterways working Committee, Mary Byrne/What Now?, Chatham Chamber of Commerce, Women’s Club of Chatham Literature Group, Chatham Democratic Town Committee.

Conference Room – 21 Reservations

Chatham/Harwich Fiber Arts, Chatham Bikeways Committee, Friends of Trees, Chatham Orpheum Board meeting, Chatham Golf Advisory Committee, Chatham Cemetery Committee, Chatham Platform Tennis, Art Journaling Group, Chatham Parks & Recreation Committee, Chatham Ecumenical Council for the Homeless, Chatham Independence Day Committee, Chatham Garden Club, Men’s Club Program Committee, Friends of Chatham Pickleball, Friends of Chatham COA.

Gymnasium – 28 Reservations

CFAL Indoor Walking Group, Fall Pick-up basketball, Studio 878 Dance Competition, Tuesday Night Pickleball, Thursday Night Pickleball, Family Dodge ball & Pizza night, Pre-school soccer Program, Saturday Night Pickleball.

Large Meeting Room – 8 Reservations

Chatham Conservation Foundation, Women’s Club of Chatham, Chatham Garden Club, Garden Club special presentation - Audubon, US Coast Guard Auxiliary, Munson Meeting Way Condo Association, Climate Action Committee, Chatham Harwich Nauset Lions Club.

Serving Room – 11 Reservations

Community Mahjong, Chatham Republican Committee, Women’s Club of Chatham, Chatham Garden Club, Class of 1974 class reunion, Jennifer Kangas/Academy Playhouse, Chatham Climate Action Committee, Women’s Art Therapy Group.

Fitness Room Access Scans

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Total
June	23	242	146	154	96	145	130	936
July	CLOSED	197	209	205	224	117	156	1,108
August	CLOSED	175	132	152	149	175	153	936
September	37	139	136	138	123	116	75	764

Active Fitness Room Memberships: Family Members- 538 Individual Members- 192

Parks & Recreation Commission

The Parks and Recreation Commission meeting was held on Monday September 15th. There were no permission to use requests this month.

The Commission reviewed their recent site visit to the pickleball courts and discussed the proposed plan to add arborvitae plants along the perimeter. The purpose of the plantings is to serve as a natural sound barrier and to provide shade for the courts. The Commission voted unanimously to move forward with the project.

The Commission also heard requests from two fitness instructors seeking a waiver of the new Facility Use fees that the town implemented in June. After discussion, the Commission voted unanimously to recommend to the Selectboard that all current instructors remain on the previous fee schedule, while any new instructors or user requests be subject to the new fee structure.

The commission heard an update on fall Recreation programs and events that the division is offering.

Golf Advisory Committee

The Golf Advisory Committee meeting was held on Thursday September 18th. The meeting started off with discussion on the Invasives removal quote. Town staff are currently seeking 2 other quotes to satisfy procurement laws and will bring an update back to the next meeting.

The committee discussed the plan for updating the new sign at Seaside links. The plan includes removing all plants currently there and replacing them with other plants that will help highlight the sign.

The committee discussed plans to add a small netting to an abutting property to help curb errant golf balls.

Respectfully submitted,

Leah LaCross

Leah LaCross, MPA
Director of Community Services