



VOLUN-PEER NEWSLETTER

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PNA Increase Now a Reality!

After many years of surveys, multiple letters to legislators, and exhaustive work by PEERs, other residents, local Ombudsmen and those who Volunteer with the Ombudsman Program, nursing home residents will see an increase to their Personal Needs Allowance from \$45 to \$60!

Medicaid's Personal Needs Allowance (PNA) is the amount of monthly income a Medicaid-funded nursing home resident can keep of their personal income. Since room, board, and medical care are covered by Medicaid, the majority of a resident's income must go towards the cost of nursing home care as a Share of

Cost. The PNA is intended to cover the nursing home resident's personal expenses, which are



not covered by Medicaid. This may include, but is not limited to haircuts, clothing, magazines, newspaper subscriptions, postage stamps, snacks, outings, etc.

Federal law requires that a Medicaid-funded nursing home resident receive a Personal Needs Allowance. Authorized by the Supplemental Security Act Amendments of 1972, and enacted in 1974, the federally mandated PNA was originally set at \$25.00 per month. The 1987 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act, effective in 1988, increased it to \$30.00 per month, where it still remains. Each state, however, can allow for a higher Personal Needs Allowance.

Congratulations to the PEERs, and to all residents, on this victory!



Training Calendar

Volunteers are invited and encouraged to participate in online training modules offered by the PA Department of Aging, Consumer Voice, and the Learning Management System (LMS) as well as in-person Network Meetings.

All certified Ombudsmen (Staff and Volunteer) are required to log 18 hours of continuing education for each federal fiscal year (October 1 through September 30).

The next **Network Meeting** will

be held virtually on **January 9, 2025** beginning at 10 am. Details and link will be made available prior to the meeting.

PEER Meetings are done in individual homes until we can meet safely as a large group.



Did you know?

- *The first artificial Christmas Tree was made in Germany using dyed goose feathers*
- *Christmas Trees take up to 15 years to grow*
- *"Jingle Bells" was originally a Thanksgiving song*
- *Approximately 1.3 BILLION Christmas Cards are sent each year*



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Sugar Cookie Cheesecake Bars

In this recipe from “Delish”, a delightful sugar cookie base serves as the crust topped with a creamy cheesecake layer.

INGREDIENTS:

- Cooking Spray
- 1 (16.5 oz.) tube Pillsbury Ready to Bake Sugar Cookie Dough
- 5 tbsp. sprinkles, divided
- 2 (8 oz.) package cream cheese, slightly softened
- 6 tbsp. sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
- 1/2 tsp. kosher salt

DIRECTIONS:

1. Arrange a rack in center of oven; preheat to 375 degrees. In a 9x9 baking pan, overlap 2 perpendicular (12”) sheets of parchment, leaving an overhang on all sides. Grease with cooking spray.
2. Crumble dough into small pieces and spread in bottom of prepared pan in an even layer. Sprinkle 2 Tbsp. sprinkles over dough, gently pressing to adhere.
3. Bake crust until lightly browned, about 20 minutes. Let cool. Reduce oven temp to 325 degrees.
4. In a food processor, pulse cream

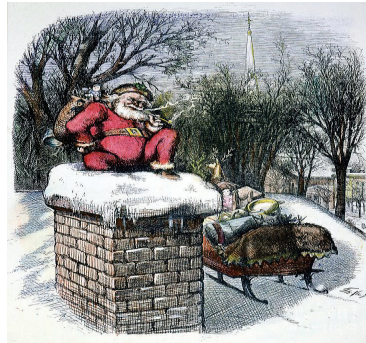


cheese and sugar, scraping down sides of bowl, until smooth, about 1 minute. With the motor running, add eggs, one at a time, pulsing to blend after each addition. Add vanilla and salt and process until combined. Scrape cream cheese mixture onto crust.

5. Bake bar until center slightly jiggles and edges are set, 35 to 40 minutes. Let cool.
6. Cover pan and refrigerate bar until cold, at least 3 hours and up to 2 days.
7. Using parchment overhang, lift out bar. Top with whipped cream and remaining sprinkles. Cut into bars.

Why Does Santa Wear **RED**?

Santa is the most recognized figure of the Christmas Season, but the color of his clothing has come into question. Santa is based on the historic figure, Saint Nicholas. Nicholas was a Bishop in Myra (Turkey) in the 4th Century. The color of the Bishop’s robes are traditionally “red”. When his parents died, they left him a sizable



fortune, which used to help the poor in his community. He would also leave gifts for children. His generosity led to his being named a Saint.

In the 16th Century, Thomas Nash, a cartoonist at Harper’s Weekly, drew a picture in 1862 which has become the figure we recognize today.



Congratulations, Melinda!

Congratulations and best wishes go out to Melinda Boyer, a PEER at Ridgeview Healthcare and Rehab Center, on her successful transition back to the community.

Melinda graduated from PEER Training in September, 2024.

A vocal and engaged advocate for the rights of herself and the residents at her home, Melinda has worked for several years to make this move possible.

We are grateful to Melinda for her tireless advocacy and wish her all the best in her new home!







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Office of Senior Services.
The program is monitored by the
Pennsylvania Department of Aging.***



25 Years

It dawned on me recently that it will be 25 years since we entered in to the "Millennium" or the year 2000. Who remembers all the problems we thought would occur as the clock struck midnight? Would our computers still work or revert back to 1900? How would we get money from the ATM? How would we LIVE? Would the world simply come to an end? I remember doing dishes at my kitchen sink that New Year's Eve night and watching Peter Jennings on World News Tonight as he welcomed in the New Year, a new century, in Paris. My Dad's words continue to ring in my ears - "How lucky are we to be able to witness all this." At the end of the day, it was a smooth transition.

Everything happened the way we'd hoped and all the panic was for nothing. We were prepared, and by doing so, we averted potential problems. The transition into a long-term care setting is never an easy one. Our residents get used to existing in a certain way. Some of the same questions come to mind: How will things work? How will I get money? How do I live now? In essence, they may even feel like their world has come to an end. This is why our volunteers and PEERs are so vital to the Ombudsman Program. Each and every one of these trusted individuals undergo intensive training to be able to answer questions such as these, and more! They are prepared to avert potential problems. They advo-

cate, making the admission to this setting easier. They help prevent panic and educate the residents on their rights and how to feel part of this new world. Over the years, we have been blessed with amazing volunteers and PEERs who have made great differences in the lives of those living in the long-term care community. How lucky are we to be able to witness all this?!? To the entire Ombudsman Team, both volunteer and PEER, a very Merry Christmas and a Happy, Healthy, and Prosperous 2025!

Eileen