

HR CONNECT

EMPLOYEE NEWSLETTER

QUARTER 01 YEAR 2025

Banner Photo: Farlow Park
Location: 129 Church Street

Newsletter Highlights

HR IN ACTION!

LIFE AS A SCHOOL NURSE

GROW YOUR OWN GARDEN!

KNOW YOUR LADDER!

EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT TRAINING SERIES

Your feedback is important to us. For questions, comments and concerns, please share your thoughts anonymously [using this form](#).

BUILDING A STRONGER WORKFORCE: INVESTING IN EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING

In 2025, our municipal workforce continues to evolve and respond to the needs of our community.

As we step into Year 2 of *HR Connect*, we are focusing on a key priority: employee well-being.

This quarter, and into the calendar year, we're introducing new wellness initiatives, including expanded Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services, wellness workshops, and mental health resources tailored to the unique demands of municipal work.

Additionally, we're launching development programs to help employees grow within their careers.

Your dedication keeps our community running, and we want to support you every step of the way. Look out for upcoming HR-sponsored events and take advantage of the tools available to help you thrive.

Stay tuned for more updates, and thank you for all you do to make our city a wonderful place to live, visit and work!

— Your HR Team

STAY IN THE LOOP!

If you have a city email address, you will always have access to this newsletter and receive it regularly. Do you want to receive this newsletter to another email address as well? If so, please subscribe to our Constant Contact list and be the first to know about exciting updates, City news, and exclusive content. Scan the QR code or use [this link](#) to subscribe today.



Follow 'City of Newton, MA' on LinkedIn to stay updated on the latest news, events, and exciting happenings within our **#TeamNewtonMA** network. By joining our LinkedIn community, you'll gain access to the latest job openings, professional development opportunities, and other engaging content. Let's build a stronger network together – click 'Follow' on our LinkedIn page and be part of our online team.

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

MORE THAN BAND-AIDS: HOW SCHOOL NURSES CHAMPION WELLNESS



School nurses do so much more than hand out ice packs and band-aids—they are a crucial part of keeping our students healthy, safe, and ready to learn. This quarter, we're shining a spotlight on three incredible nurses, (pictured from left to right) Julia Zaino, Lynn Renninger, and Laura Murphy, who bring care, compassion, and expertise to their schools every day. From managing chronic conditions to providing emotional support, they share what it's really like to be on the front lines of student well-being.

- **How long have you been with the City?**

Laura has served as a school nurse for 26 years at Countryside Elementary, Julia is in her fifth year at Franklin Elementary, and this is Lynn's first year with the City of Newton.

- **What is something people might not realize about your job?**

School nurses do much more than administer first aid. They manage chronic health conditions, provide mental health support, and foster a safe, trusting environment for students. "It's not just Band-Aids and ice packs," Laura explains. "I build relationships with students so they feel comfortable coming to me with any concerns—big or small." Lynn adds, "We are often the first line of defense for a child's physical and emotional well-being."

- **How has your role changed over time?**

Laura and Julia note that the pandemic highlighted the importance of school nurses. "COVID reinforced how vital we are in maintaining public health—not just in our schools but citywide," Julia shared. Lynn emphasizes how much she's learned about integrating health advocacy into the school environment.

- **What is your favorite part of working for the Department of Health and Human Services?**

For all three, it's the sense of purpose and teamwork. "We're a big team and family," Laura says. Julia values the support from both HHS and school staff, while Lynn loves knowing that her work directly improves students' well-being.

From daily care to long-term wellness, these nurses make a lasting difference—because a healthy student is a student ready and eager to learn.

HR IN ACTION: CONNECTING WITH FUTURE TALENT

Our HR Department participated in Minuteman High School's Career Fair on Friday, January 31, 2025. HR staff met with many high school students to discuss municipal employment opportunities with the City, highlighting positions in DPW, Parks, Recreation and Culture – including seasonal employment opportunities this summer – and provided information on how to become a Police Officer and/or Firefighter with the City of Newton.

In addition to career fairs, our HR team is committed to building a pipeline of talent for all departments by attending various community events.

If you know of any upcoming community events or career fairs where HR can participate, please let us know! Email hr@newtonma.gov with the details.





LOTS TO CELEBRATE THIS QUARTER

- Black History Month, February
- Heart Health Month, February
- World Cancer Day, February 2nd
- Lunar New Year, February 10th
- International Women’s Month, March
- Employee Appreciation Day, March 1st
- International Women’s Day, March 8th
- International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, March 21st

Each quarter, we will feature an event for City employees to work on a project together with the goal of enjoying a fun and rewarding activity.

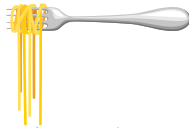
CONTAINER GARDENING WORKSHOP – MARCH 31ST AT 1:00 PM

Spring is the perfect time to start a garden—no backyard required! Join us on March 31st at 1:00 p.m. in the War Memorial at City Hall for an engaging Container Gardening workshop led by Kathi Gariepy, a lifetime Master Gardener with the Massachusetts Master Gardeners Association.

Learn how to grow flowers, herbs, and vegetables in containers, making gardening accessible even in small spaces. This interactive session will feature expert tips, a live demonstration, and resources to help you get started. Plus, attendees will walk away with materials to begin their own container garden!

[Register here by March 21st](#) to confirm your attendance and for a chance to win a City Picker Raised Bed Grow Box, and take the first step toward a greener, more sustainable lifestyle. Questions? Please email hr@newtonma.gov

RECIPE CORNER



Kelly’s Lemon Herb Pasta

A light, refreshing pasta dish perfect for a quick and flavorful meal

Ingredients

- 8 oz spaghetti or pasta of choice
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- Zest and juice of 1 lemon
- 1/2 tsp dried oregano (or thyme)
- 1/4 tsp red pepper flakes (optional)
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 tbsp chopped fresh parsley (optional)
- Salt & pepper to taste

Instructions:

1. Cook pasta according to package instructions. Reserve 1/2 cup of pasta water before draining.
2. In a pan, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add garlic and sauté until fragrant (about 1 minute).
3. Stir in lemon zest, juice, oregano, and red pepper flakes.
4. Add cooked pasta to the pan, tossing to coat. Use reserved pasta water as needed for a light sauce.
5. Remove from heat, stir in Parmesan and parsley. Season with salt and pepper.
6. Serve warm and enjoy!

Have a favorite recipe? Share it with your colleagues and be featured in our next newsletter! Click below.

SUBMIT YOUR RECIPE IDEAS!

TAX FORMS

Tax season is here! Your W-2 forms for 2024 are now available for download on **Employee Self-Service (ESS)**.

Additionally, 1099–HC forms for health insurance can be accessed by contacting Blue Cross Blue Shield (using the number on the back of your insurance card) or via the MyBlue app/website. Please note, 1095–C forms are available upon request.

If you have any questions please don’t hesitate to reach out to the HR Department at hr@newtonma.gov.

HOT JOBS

Looking for a new opportunity or know someone who is? The City of Newton has several exciting openings!

Building Inspector – Help enforce state and local building codes and zoning ordinances. Join our Inspectional Services Department and make an impact! [Apply here.](#)

Museum Assistant (Part-Time) – Work on special projects and engage visitors with museum educational content at Historic Newton. [Apply here.](#)

Transportation Engineer – Support the Department of Public Works Transportation Division in shaping Newton’s infrastructure. [Apply here.](#)

For a complete list of job opportunities, visit [Newtonma.gov/jobs](https://newtonma.gov/jobs) today!

HEALTH & WELLNESS

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Our [Citywide Wellness Survey](#) is going live on March 4, 2025, and we want to hear from you! We're asking for feedback to help us understand your needs and ensure our wellness programs are tailored to you. Whether it's mental health resources, physical well-being, or work-life balance, your input matters. The survey will be open from **Tuesday, March 4th through Tuesday, March 18th**, and each completed entry (one per person) qualifies for a chance to win one of **3 raffle prizes** each week!

This is your opportunity to share what matters most to you and help us create future wellness programs that truly make a difference. Take the survey today by [clicking here](#) or scanning the QR code below.

Don't miss out on making your voice heard!

For more information or any questions, please contact the HR Department at hr@newtonma.gov.



JOIN THE EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT TRAINING SERIES!

Our Employee Empowerment Training Series is here! Join us for these monthly virtual training sessions, designed to support your growth:

- **March: Leveraging Emotional Intelligence**
- **April: Extinguishing Burnout**
- **May: Embracing and Moving Through Change**
- **June: Setting Boundaries with Our Work**

Spots are still available, but they're filling up quickly! Don't miss out—register now to secure your spot.

For more details and to sign up, click the link for each topic above or email hr@newtonma.gov.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP)

Did you know EAP can ...

- provide free counseling for family and relationship challenges?
- assist with personal legal matters like wills and estate planning?
- help with childcare and eldercare resources?
- help you plan for a secure retirement?

City of Newton employees may reach CMG Associates to speak with a clinician 24/7 by calling **833-549-3277**.

To learn more please visit the CMG Associates official website: [Employee Assistance Program - CMG Associates](#)
EAP Password: **Newton**



FSA 2024 EXPIRATION REMINDER: USE THEM BEFORE THEY EXPIRE!

Attention Team Newton! Don't forget to maximize the benefits of your Flexible Spending Accounts (FSAs). As we are in a new plan year, this is a friendly reminder that the grace period for spending down your 2024 FSA funds ends on March 15, 2025.

For more details on eligible expenses, contact Cafeteria Plan Advisors by calling (781)848-9848, or visit cpa125.com.

FITNESS REIMBURSEMENT

Don't forget about your 2024 Fitness and Weight Loss Reimbursement through BCBS – covered members have until March 31st to submit for the previous calendar year and receive reimbursement up to \$150.

Members can submit for reimbursement online at bluecrossma.org if they have a registered account for a seamless process or can complete and mail in a reimbursement form.

- [Fitness Reimbursement Form](#)
- [Weight loss Reimbursement Form](#)

DIABETES CARE WITH GOODHEALTH GATEWAY

Did you know that the Good Health Gateway Program is available to support your diabetes management? This valuable benefit offers resources such as personalized care plans, educational materials, and rewards for achieving your health goals. Take advantage of this program to enhance your diabetes care and earn rewards. For more details or to get started, please visit the Good Health Gateway portal or call **800-643-8028**.



800.643.8028
Hablamos español.



GoodHealthGateway.com

The Diabetes Program is available to our health plan members living with any type of diabetes. **Participation is voluntary and confidential.**

THE WELLNESS ROOM IS HERE FOR YOU

Since it's opening last May, our Employee Wellness Room has been available to all employees as a dedicated space to support employee health and wellbeing. Whether you need a quiet moment for meditation, a virtual doctor's office visit, or a break to tend to other personal and medical needs, this calming environment is here to support your well-being.

The Wellness Room is located at the first floor main entrance at City Hall and is available for use during business hours. Take advantage of this peaceful space to prioritize your mental and physical health.

For more details or to reserve the room, please contact the HR Department at hr@newtonma.gov.



HR TEAM

MARCH IS NATIONAL LADDER SAFETY MONTH: THINK BEFORE YOU ACT!

EMPLOYEE SAFETY TIPS FROM KELLY BROWN

When working with ladders, always think before you act. Make sure you have the right ladder, tools, and gear. Don't rush or attempt to do it alone. Having a spotter is always a smart idea!

Choosing the right ladder is crucial for your safety. Select one based on the expected load capacity (duty rating), the type of work, and the correct height.



- Maintain a 3-point contact (two hands and a foot, or two feet and a hand) while climbing or descending.
- Face the ladder at all times.
- Carry tools in a tool belt or raise them using a hand line. Never climb with tools in hand.
- Keep the ladder free of slippery materials and have someone hold the base

There are five categories of ladder duty ratings:

- IA: Special Duty Rugged, 375 lbs.
- IA: Extra Duty Industrial, 300 lbs.
- I: Heavy Duty Industrial, 250 lbs.
- II: Medium Duty Commercial, 225 lbs.
- III: Light Duty Household, 200 lbs.



- Never place a ladder on unstable surfaces or exceed its load limit.
- Don't ignore overhead power lines or try to shift a ladder with a person or equipment on it.
- Never lean out too far or use an extension ladder horizontally as a platform.

MPO'S MANAGEMENT MINUTE



SUPPORTING THE "SANDWICH GENERATION"

The sandwich generation are people who are balancing both care for their children and aging parents. This is a growing population that is driven by factors such as increasing life expectancy, people having children later in life, and the rising cost of living. As this demographic continues to expand, the need for workplace support and understanding will only intensify.

These individuals often experience high levels of stress, emotional strain, and financial pressure due to their dual caregiving roles. By providing support, we can, as supervisors and as an employer, help reduce burnout, increase productivity, and foster loyalty among this vital segment of the workforce.

To support these employees:

- Where possible, consider offering flexible work arrangements like adjusted hours or remote work, to help manage family needs while staying productive.
- Promote the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), which offers resources tailored to caregivers, including counseling and referrals to local eldercare and childcare services.
- Encourage access and participation in HR provided training, such as our upcoming *Employee Empowerment Series*, which can help equip your team with essential skills such as stress management and managing through change.
- Advise employees on Family and Medical Leave options.

By considering these supportive measures, we can, as supervisors, help to alleviate the stress faced by sandwich generation employees, enhancing their well-being, productivity, and loyalty, creating a win-win for both the City and our valued workforce.