

March 2026

March in Maine

March arrives in Maine with a bit of mystery. One day brings a fresh snowfall, the next hints at spring sunshine. While winter hasn't quite packed its bags, there's a gentle shift in the air, a promise that brighter days are on the way.

For many of us, March is a month of noticing the small things. The days grow longer, giving us a little extra light in the morning and evening. Chickadees and cardinals become more active at the feeders, and on warmer afternoons, the snow begins to soften and retreat. These simple signs of change can lift the spirit and remind us that seasons, like life, are always moving forward.

This is a wonderful time to enjoy cozy routines while welcoming something new. A cup of tea by the window, a good book, or a favorite puzzle pairs perfectly with the lingering chill. On milder days, even a short walk around the house, down the driveway, or through the neighborhood can feel refreshing

after a long winter indoors.

March also brings St. Patrick's Day, a cheerful excuse to wear a touch of green, share a laugh, or enjoy a favorite comfort meal. It's less about the holiday itself and more about taking a moment to celebrate togetherness and tradition.

As spring slowly approaches, many seniors find joy in planning ahead. Thinking about a small garden, a spring outing, or reconnecting with friends and family can be energizing. There's no rush, just the comfort of knowing that warmer, brighter days are coming.

Wherever this March finds you, may it bring moments of peace, gentle hope, and the reassurance that every season has something special to offer, especially here in Maine.



Ways to Give

1. Make a Financial Donation

- You can make a one-time gift or a recurring donation to help cover operating costs — everything from transportation services to senior activities.

- Donations can be given online through their website or mailed to their office (P.O. Box 1446, Ellsworth, ME 04605).

2. Join the "Friends Forever" Planned Giving Society

- This is a way to support Friends in Action long-term through legacy giving like bequests, trusts, or retirement account gifts — ensuring support for future generations.

3. Volunteer Your Time

- Friend in Action relies heavily on volunteers to support key services, especially volunteer drivers who provide free rides to medical appointments, errands, food shopping, and social visits.

- You can also volunteer to help with senior center programs like friendly visits, phone calls, social events, classes, or administrative needs.

4. Support at Events & Fundraisers

- Participate or sponsor community events, like their Walk/Run or other fundraisers, which help raise funds and community awareness.

5. Buy a Punch Card or Program Pass

- Purchasing fitness or class punch cards supports ongoing programming at the senior center (like line dancing or fitness classes).

6. Spread the Word

- Help friends, family, and community members learn about Friends in Action's services — referrals can mean more people accessing transportation, meals, classes, social opportunities, and more.

7. In-Honor or In-Memory Gifts

- Donate in honor of someone special or in memory of a loved one — a meaningful tribute that also supports community care.

- Contact info if people want to give or learn more:

Address: 5 General Moore Way, Ellsworth, ME 04605
Phone: (207) 664-6016

Website: friendsinactionellsworth.org

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They say March is a month of transitions, here at the Community Center, that feeling of connection and possibility is present every day, thanks to all of you.

Our building continues to be a busy and welcoming place. Each week, neighbors gather for exercise classes that keep us strong and moving, shared meals that nourish both body and spirit, and coffee hours filled with conversation and laughter. Programs like line dancing and tai chi bring joy, balance, and a chance



to try something new, while our art activities offer a creative outlet and a place to relax and express ourselves. Do you or a loved one or someone you know need some Parkinson's support? We have special exercise classes that help those with Parkinson's and we would love to help support you or your loved one.

These programs are more than just activities, they are opportunities to stay connected, maintain independence, and build friendships that make our community stronger. Whether you come once a week or every day, you are an important part of what makes our center feel like home.

This is also an important time to enhance our Volunteer Driving Program and recruit new volunteers. As many of our regular volunteer drivers head south for the winter or travel this time of year, the need for drivers here at home increases. This program is a lifeline for many seniors who rely on rides to medical appointments, grocery stores, and essential errands. We also need

volunteers who may not be up to driving, that will help out during our coffee hour and lunches on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

If you have some time to give and are able to drive, even occasionally, you can make a real difference in someone's day, and often, in their independence. We provide guidance and support, and the gratitude from those you help is truly heartwarming. If driving isn't an option for you, spreading the word to friends, family, or neighbors is another wonderful way to help. As a non-profit we rely on contributions and donations and we truly appreciate your continued support.

Thank you for being part of our Community Center, whether as a participant, volunteer, or supporter. As we move toward spring, we look forward to continuing to learn, laugh, move, and care for one another.

*With gratitude and
warm regards,
McKayla Peers
Executive Director*

March 2026 - Participant of the Month



Irene Whitney is a dedicated participant in the Zumba classes at the Senior Center. She has been enjoying the chance to exercise to music for about ten years. Irene often arrives early to class to chat with the friendly people who like to do the same. Once in a while she'll step off the dance floor to catch her breath but even then, you'll see her tapping her feet to the beat while sitting off to the side.

Away from class, whenever the right song comes on the radio, Irene can't resist doing a few Zumba moves sometimes even in a parking lot beside her car! Her love of music is clear, but her story shows that music has always been a big part of her life.

While attending school in Brockton, Massachusetts, Irene studied music. A friend convinced her to move to Boston, where she worked a variety of small jobs before finding her way to Kingston. Eventually, she joined an orchestra in Farmington, playing her favorite instrument the French horn. In the same town, she also became a member of both a woodwind and a brass quartet.

Irene never gave up on her dream of becoming a professional musician. Over the years, she played with the Bangor Symphony Orchestra and at both Colby College and the Universi-

ty of Maine in Orono. To supplement her musical career, Irene pursued another lifelong ambition becoming a librarian. She worked at the University of Maine at Orono and later at the Jackson Laboratory.

It's clear Irene has lived a life filled with energy, ambition, and creativity. Yet another passion stands out her love for wildlife. A lifelong animal lover, Irene has always had cats as pets and has worked as a pet and house sitter for many families. She has embraced this lifestyle for years while living in Surry and Ellsworth. Her incredible enthusiasm for animals has inspired her to travel widely to Alaska, Canada, Greenland, and Iceland, among other destinations. Her apartment holds a fascinating collection of wildlife photographs (many taken by Irene herself), along with greeting cards and figurines especially those featuring her favorite subjects, polar bears and Lassie dogs.

While on vacation and visiting a school, Irene was once invited to teach a dance class. In true Irene fashion, she got the kids doing Zumba! She chose "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" as their song and you might say it's her song too. Everyone in Europa's class knows it. When the music starts, we all look for Irene and smile as she moves joyfully to every beat.

Musician, animal lover, and enthusiastic Zumba participant all these words describe this unique and inspiring woman.

Here at Friends in Action, we know that every participant and volunteer has a story to share. Though we may slow down a bit as we age, our pasts are rich with experiences worth telling. Come to the Senior Center and make a new friend, someone who wants to know your story. Start a conversation about what you're doing now, and you might find shared interests and surprises along the way.

March Volunteer of the Month

Pat Berard

If you visit the FIA Café during Coffee Hour or a noon meal, you'll likely see Pat Berard cheerfully setting up tables, serving food, or sweeping the floor. She begins her day around 8:45 a.m., transporting a cartload of food from the second-floor kitchen downstairs by elevator, often on her own. From there, she helps set up for lunch, serves with the team, clears tables, restocks, and makes sure everything is returned to its proper place. Pat's energy and positive attitude never go unnoticed.

Her commitment to volunteering began long before Friends in Action. After moving to Ellsworth just over a year ago, she helped prepare 125 meals each week at the Congregational Church. As a single mother in Massachusetts, she balanced several jobs while raising two children, volunteering as a Den Leader and coach, and supporting her children's many activities.

An avid gardener, Pat has al-

ways created gardens wherever she lived, even raising goats, rabbits, and ducks at one point. In Spencer, Massachusetts, she shared her abundant vegetable and flower gardens with neighbors and a local senior center. Later, at Howe Village Senior Living Community, she started a BINGO night, delivered Meals on Wheels, and provided transportation for friends and neighbors.

After losing her second husband in 2012, Pat embraced new beginnings, relocating several times and building friendships along the way. Now living in Hancock with her daughter and visiting her son in Vermont, she felt right at home moving to Maine. When she read in Connections that Friends in Action needed volunteers, she was thrilled.

Pat says she likes waking up each day with a purpose. At the Senior Center, she has found that, and a family as well. We are proud to recognize Pat Berard as our March Volunteer of the Month.

St. Patrick's Day: A Tradition That Traveled Across the Sea

Every year on March 17, people around the world celebrate St. Patrick's Day with touches of green, cheerful gatherings, and fond traditions. But the story behind this holiday begins long ago, far from parades and shamrocks.

St. Patrick was a real person who lived in the 400s. He was born in Britain, not Ireland, and as a teenager he was captured and taken to Ireland as a slave. After several difficult years, he escaped and returned home. Later in life, Patrick chose to go back to Ireland, not out of duty, but out of faith and forgiveness to share his beliefs

and help build communities.

Over time, stories grew about how Patrick taught the Irish people. One of the most well-known legends says he used the three-leaf shamrock to explain the idea of the Holy Trinity. Because of this, the shamrock became a lasting symbol of Ireland and of St. Patrick's Day.

March 17 marks the day St. Patrick is believed to have died. For many centuries, this date was observed as a quiet religious holiday in Ireland. Families attended church and shared simple meals

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March Volunteers



St. Patrick’s Day continued:

together. There were no big celebrations at first, just reflection, prayer, and gratitude.

The lively traditions we recognize today actually took shape after Irish immigrants came to America. Wanting to honor their

heritage and feel connected to home, they began holding parades and public celebrations. Over time, St. Patrick’s Day grew into a joyful occasion celebrated by people of many backgrounds, not just those of Irish descent.

Today, the holiday is a blend of history, legend, and community spirit. Wearing green, enjoying Irish music, or sharing a favorite meal are simple ways to join in. More than anything, St. Patrick’s Day reminds us of resilience, faith,

and the importance of remembering where we come from.

Whether you celebrate quietly or with a bit of fun, the spirit of St. Patrick’s Day continues to bring people together, just as it has for generations.

The Long Shadow of Bullying

Bullying is often spoken about as a childhood problem, something that happens on playgrounds, in hallways, or on school buses. But for many people, it does not stay there. The words spoken in childhood can echo for decades.

A child who is teased for their appearance may grow into an adult who avoids mirrors.

A child mocked for being “too quiet” may spend a lifetime believing their voice does not matter.

A child excluded from friendships may carry a quiet fear of not belonging, even in rooms filled with kind people.

Children’s brains are still forming when bullying happens. They are learning who they are. When cruelty enters during those years, it can shape confidence, trust, and self-worth long into adulthood. Many seniors today grew up in times when bullying wasn’t recognized, discussed, or addressed. They were often told to “toughen up,” “ignore it,” or “stop being sensitive.”

So they did. They carried it quietly. For some, bullying contributed

to anxiety, depression, or difficulty forming close relationships. For others, it created a lifelong drive to prove themselves. Some became fiercely compassionate adults, determined that no one else would feel what they felt. And sometimes, the experience comes full circle.

As a parent of a child who is currently experiencing bullying at a local elementary school, I can say it is heartbreaking to watch. It is hard to understand how someone could target a child who is such a sweet soul who is empathetic, gentle, and kind to others. He feels deeply. He cares deeply. And yet, those very qualities sometimes seem to make him vulnerable.

There is a particular kind of helplessness in seeing your child come home quieter than usual. In hearing the pause before they answer, “How was your day?” In wondering how something said at recess might shape how they see themselves years from now. And yet, there is hope.

I have seen that hope in the friendships he has formed while helping me at the senior center. Among

older adults, he has found something beautiful, patience, encouragement, genuine conversation. The seniors see him. They appreciate his kindness. They value his empathy. In that space, he is not “too sensitive.” He is thoughtful. He is helpful. He belongs.

It reminds me that environments matter. Community matters. Bullying does not only exist in childhood. It can reappear in later life as well. In senior communities, assisted living facilities, or even among long-standing social circles, bullying can take subtle forms:

- Excluding someone from activities
- Mocking physical changes, hearing loss, or memory lapses
- Gossiping
- Patronizing speech
- Intimidation over shared spaces
- Financial manipulation

For older adults, especially those already navigating loss, health challenges, or major life transitions, these

experiences can reopen old wounds or create new ones. No one outgrows the need for dignity and belonging.

But here is what both children and seniors teach us:

Kindness is powerful.

A warm invitation to sit at a table.

A sincere compliment.

A refusal to participate in gossip.

An adult who listens.

A community that protects the vulnerable.

These small actions ripple across generations.

Bullying may cast a long shadow. It may follow people from playgrounds into retirement years. But compassion can stretch just as far.

And sometimes, healing happens in the most unexpected places like a senior center, where an empathetic young boy and a room full of elders remind each other what kindness truly looks like. I see so much kindness and goodness here in our Senior Center it does my heart good. Feel free to join us in a space where you will always fit in.

Volunteer Appreciation Event

In January, we gathered at the Moore Center for a lovely Volunteer Appreciation event honoring our incredible Friends In Action volunteers. It was a special evening filled with

meaningful connections, delicious appetizers, and the rare gift of simply slowing down together. Amid everyone’s busy schedules and countless acts of service, the night offered a

well-deserved pause to recognize the people who make our work possible. From our dedicated volunteer drivers to our caring senior center volunteers, this evening was all about

celebrating the compassion, time, and heart they share so generously. We are deeply grateful for each and every volunteer who helps turn our mission into reality.

MENU

March 2026

Tuesday, March 3rd Chicken Pot Pie (Chicken, Peas, Corn, Mashed Potatoes), Biscuit, Mashed Potatoes, Green Beans, Pineapple	Tuesday, March 10th Sloppy Joe, Salad, Tater Tots, Mandarin Oranges	Tuesday, March 17th Hamburger Steak, Mashed Potatoes w/gravy, Green Beans, Pears	Tuesday, March 24th Pork Chops, Brussel Sprouts, Dinner Roll, Cauliflower, Kiwi Tuesday, March 31st Chicken Sandwich, Tater Tots, Peas, Cinnamon Pears
Thursday, March 5th Beef Stew, Sliced Carrots, Dinner Roll, Melon	Thursday, March 12th Chicken and Rice, Broccoli, Pears	Thursday, March 19th Loaded Baked Potatoes, Tomato and Cucumber Salad, Corn Bread, Applesauce	Thursday, March 26th Chicken Cordon Bleu, Salad, Green Beans, Pineapple



Desserts To Be Announced Daily! Subject To Change

Please call 664-6016 before 4:30 on Monday & Wednesday to reserve lunch for Tuesday & Thursday.

