



One of the marvelous things about community is that it enables us to welcome and help people in a way we couldn't as individuals. —Jean Vanier

One Last New Year's Resolution: Learn How to Ask for Help

By Janet Simpson, Outreach Task Force

We're quickly coming to the end of the season of giving and receiving. Many of us have learned that the two almost always go together: By receiving, we let others give—which is itself a gift—and become more able to give ourselves. Both are important for our well-being and connection with our community.

Bellingham At Home is based on the idea of helping each other in order to create a strong, healthy community. That means people need to ask for what they need. But it's not always easy to do that, especially when you're used to being independent; asking, like other skills, takes practice.

So here's a great New Year's resolution: Practice receiving.

Everyone can use help at times. Members seem most at ease asking for help with transportation, especially to an appointment or to the airport. But what about getting out to a concert, a party, a movie, a store, or a haircut? What about a visit to a friend? How many things can you think of that you might do if you had a way to get there? Pick one—and ask for a ride.

Now look around your home and think of the things you could use a little help with. Of course you could live without changing that lightbulb in the coat closet or fixing that squeaky door, but wouldn't you be happier if someone put in a new bulb and oiled that hinge? Are you willing to receive that help? Try it once: Call the office and ask for a volunteer.



Maybe there are things you'd like to do—but not alone. Now we're getting to more advanced asking. You've probably asked a friend, colleague or family member to go with you to an event, but maybe you're not working anymore and don't get out to see people as regularly. Family can be busy. Yes, it can be a little awkward to reach out at first. So practice: Pick one thing you'd like to do with another person—it could be a BAH event or something completely different. Call in and ask for a volunteer to join you.

Promise yourself to give the gift of asking once in January. It's always OK to ask. If no one's available, then you'll try again the next time. Remember, we have volunteers who want to be active. So let them give; you do the asking.

First Annual Holiday Party is a Hit

As the cold and dark season set in, some 50 BAH members, volunteers and friends gathered at the Bellingham Country Club to enjoy warmth, lights, feasting—and music! The collage that follows is a sampling of event photos. You can view more on our [website](#).



Smiles and song: BAH members welcomed the holidays together at the Country Club, with a spirited performance from Bellingham High's Showstoppers chorus, who are taking their stellar act to Disneyland next. (If you'd like to make a donation to help them get there, send a check to: Bellingham High School Showstoppers, c/o Linda Short, 2020 Cornwall Ave., Bellingham, WA 98225. Checks should be made out to "BHS Choir".)

Come Celebrate with Us in February

Mark your calendar for these two special events next month:

The BAH Valentine's Talent Show & Potluck

The entertainment will be entirely home-grown at our Valentine's Potluck, February 17, 6 p.m., at the Holly Street WECU Education Building (across from the main Holly St. WECU). Come share your talent—Singing? Juggling? Comedy? Making bird noises? Playing the ukulele? (we're looking at you, Burl)—with your fellow members and friends. Heaven knows you'll never find a more appreciative or forgiving audience.

Anniversary Webinar with Atul Gawande

Boston's Beacon Hill Village, the original village of the Village Movement, is celebrating 15 years of operation in February, and has landed celebrated author and physician Atul Gawande (*Being Mortal*) as keynote speaker. He will talk about the value of community and opportunities that open up as we age. BHV and the Village to Village Network decided to share this event through a live webinar from 2-3 p.m. on February 13 and invited all villages to host watch parties. Bellingham At Home was happy to accept. Keep the date open and watch this space for location.

Stats! Hot Stats! Get Your Stats Right Here!

2	number of new households in November
40	number of service requests fulfilled in November
124	number of service requests fulfilled year to date
105	total participants in BAH November events

Membership Matters

Spotlight on Bob Baker

Bob is almost certainly the only person who was working to make Bellingham At Home happen before he became a Bellinghamster in 2015.



Bob Baker

A born-and-bred Midwesterner, Bob worked at Argonne National Laboratory outside Chicago for 36 years. “I like to say I had one job and six careers, because I worked sequentially on completely different projects: I headed up a group that was bringing graphics to the Pentagon, I helped develop the first DOE website. At the end, I was doing quality assurance, checking on computer programs that were written by government contractors involved in international arms control treaties to make sure they were doing what they said they would do—we found some 11K treaty violations.”

Once he retired in 2006, Bob started coming out to Bellingham—where his sister, Kate Birr, had moved in 1989—to house-sit for a friend every year. During his 2014 visit, he ran across a survey from a developing organization (not yet called Bellingham At Home) and indicated that he’d be interested in volunteering. A very surprised Kate, already involved (as she still is) as head of publicity, was the one

who read his response—and drafted him to work on BAH’s website. Which he did, from Chicago, for a year and half before making the move to the Northwest and onto BAH’s Operations task force as our computer guy. Yes, he does the website, but he is also on the Leadership Council as well as a service volunteer extraordinaire, often pinch hitting when no one else is available.

Bob moved into Cedar Grove, a 55-plus modular home community nestled in the woods, where a pileated woodpecker family, among other wildlife, visits daily to delight him. When we asked him what he did for fun and relaxation, he laughed for a long time. “Honestly, BAH has been absorbing all my time. I’m not complaining, I just think it’s time I moved on and let somebody else take over. Then I’ll figure it out. But what I enjoy doing most right now is cooking. I’m proud of my casseroles, which are different every time; I don’t follow recipes, I just make it up as I go along.”

Bob has also taken courses from WWU’s Academy of Lifelong Learning, which he loves—one on forests of the Northwest, another on alternative energy sources—and will probably take more once he has more time. He’ll see more movies, he says. And he’d like to do some different volunteer work, “even have people over. In fact, my neighbor and I want to invite a BAH member over to have dinner, someone who lives alone. I thought that would be nice.”

Sounds nice to us.

Commercial Service Providers: Still Playing Catch-up

There’s no getting around it: Bellingham At Home’s list of vetted commercial service providers is having a hard time getting off the ground. Not because Bellingham doesn’t have first-rate plumbers and contractors and pest controllers, but because BAH members have been slow to recommend them and because many service providers aren’t really interested in participating. We get it—the best professionals are crazy busy and can’t necessarily take on new customers; current customers may be reluctant to share.

But this is a valued benefit of virtual villages that our members deserve and we want to provide. Do you have any ideas for how we can build our list? If so, please let us know. And in the meantime, do call if you’re looking for professional help; we have people to recommend in some categories and are happy to do a little research for you when we don’t.

BSAC Event: What's Next: Housing Options

We're very proud that Bellingham At Home is helping us stay in our own homes with social, educational, transportation, and other kinds of support. We're also proud to be living in a community that provides so many other forms of support and housing options as we age. Come learn about them on Friday, January 27, at BSAC's annual Housing Options event from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.



Following a welcome address, there will be a panel discussion with five experts (one from BAH) and then individual sessions on in-home care, home modifications, family caregiver programs, subsidized housing, market rate housing for seniors, assisted living, and skilled nursing homes. Members of the BAH leadership council will be on hand. Find out what resources are available to you and your family and get your questions answered.

The program is free and open to the public. Sign up for lunch at the front desk and make a donation for a meal token.

Thanks to Our Founders Club

At the end of the year, as at the beginning, we are so grateful to the members of our Founders Club, each of whom donated at least \$1000 to help launch Bellingham At Home. A special thank you to:

Richard and Marijke Abbott

Bob Baker

Kate Birr and John Lawler

Mary Carlson

Elaine Cress and Carl McGrath

Nanette Davis and Burl Harmon

Ali Erickson

Barb and Howard Evans

Heidi Hanson

Marci and Fred Haskell

Allen and Marguerite Johnson

Barbara Machtay and Joseph Hashmall

Bob McDonnell

Inge Paulus and Roy Potter

Sarah Rothenbuhler

Janet Simpson

To add your name to the list, or to contribute a smaller amount (just as welcome), please send a check to Bellingham At Home, 315 Halleck Street, Room 14, Bellingham WA 98225, or call the BAH office at any time. Thanks!



Donations help us build the program, furnish the office, pay utilities, and—one day—hire staff to help us run our village without walls.

Bellingham At Home Contact Information

Location: Bellingham Senior Activity Center, Room 14, 315 Halleck Street, Bellingham, WA 98225

Phone: 360 746-3462 E-mail: info@bellinghamathome.org

Website: <http://BellinghamAtHome.org>

Bellingham At Home is a program of the Whatcom Council on Aging, which is a 501(c)(3) organization, and a member of the Village to Village Network.