



The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members. – Coretta Scott King

The First Neighborhood Cluster is Off and Running

By Sue Moyer, Lorraine Barnes, and Lauren Phillips

The Samish/South neighborhood cluster, which includes about 20 BAH members, was selected to pilot BAH's new community-building initiative. About 10 people showed up for the first meeting on March 2nd and wasted no time in deciding to move forward as a group.

To start off, Linda Knudsen McAusland and Lorraine Barnes, who are both on the Cluster Committee, reported on their research into cluster programs started by other villages. Among their findings: The point of a cluster is to encourage members who live close together to bond by building friendships, discovering common interests, and sharing social activities. Clusters also make it easier for members to ask for help when they need it.



Bob Baker, Sue Moyer, Don Phillips (background), Lorraine Barnes, Lauren Phillips, Lynn DeFehr, and Steve Morris at the first cluster meeting. (Betty Strand and Lisa Schork had to leave before the picture taking but are very much there in spirit;-) The photo thanks to Cluster Committee member Linda Knudsen-McAusland.

And right off the bat, Lorraine connected with a member she had never met before—Betty Strand—and found out that Betty had never requested any services since joining BAH (which, interestingly, was true of the majority of the group). As it turned out, however, she acknowledged that she could use some help cleaning up her garden. And just like that, Lorraine set up a time to help her.

The group discussed the possibility of pursuing some sort of service project together and decided to explore that at a later meeting. Someone pitched the idea of a pinochle game. They'll need to gather again to make some organizing decisions.

Lauren and Don Phillips invited everyone to a movie they were sponsoring at the Pickford in a few weeks, and the group decided to make that their first outing. Those who were able to make it met in the lobby and seemed delighted to find each other, schmoozing away like old friends.

What's next? No one knows exactly but it's a lively group—stay tuned.

The LC Fundraising Challenge: Give Now and We'll Double Your Money!

The Leadership Council has issued a challenge for all of us: Between now and July 1, 2018, the LC will match all donations dollar for dollar! Thanks to money generously put up by the individual LC members, when you give \$100, BAH gets \$200! You give \$500, BAH gets \$1000! The LC has already contributed \$3,000 towards the matching fund and we don't want to leave a dime of it on the table.

Our 2018 fundraising goal is \$15,000 to help grow our BAH community—to offset administrative costs, stabilize our membership dues, and create more opportunities and activities for our members. The LC's challenge is a great start. Here's how to double your donation:

Just follow this link to donate online: <http://wccoa.org/index.php/Donate/button>. It will take you to the Whatcom Council on Aging's website, where you can contribute using their secure link. Please be sure to select Bellingham At Home from the "Donate to" list. (The WCOA is a 501(c)(3), non-profit organization and BAH is one of its programs.) You can also drop your check off at the office or send it via snail mail.

Thank you—and thanks to our LC!

Coming Soon to Your Senior Center: It's Not *The* Antiques Roadshow, But It's Pretty Darn Close

Your folks always said that enamel spoon rest was from the Civil War and worth a fortune. Is it? Is it even a spoon rest? Find out on April 14, 11 am-3 pm, when the Whatcom Senior Tour Program hosts the Antique and Collectibles Evaluation Event at BSAC.

Trading cards, books, antiques, sports collectibles, whatchamacallits... Bring them in and let the experts give you the straight scoop on their value. Bring your friends and enjoy live music and food! Tickets are \$15 for three items. No furniture please, items must be small enough to carry.

(Did they even have spoon rests in the Civil War?)

Neighbor Helping Neighbor



Wayne Deming, seen here with his good friend Marilyn Gran, a BAH member, is approaching his 100th birthday in July. He hasn't been driving for the last couple of years and Marilyn has been giving him rides. But at the moment, Marilyn herself can't drive, so she persuaded Wayne to join BAH so some of our great volunteer drivers could step into the gap. In fact, she received the first \$25 gift card for referring a new member. Welcome Wayne!

Your Volunteer Committee at Work

By Angela Mercy

BAH Member, LC Member

Volunteers provide the power that makes Bellingham at Home work—and the Volunteer Committee takes care of all things volunteer.

Our first task back in 2016 was to have trained volunteers ready to serve our members on our July 1 launch date. I can't tell you how thankful we were to other members of the Village to Village Network; we built on the success of other villages who generously shared their volunteer handbooks and training guides with us. We held several volunteer training sessions prior to launch, learning what we needed to teach just ahead of the curve.

We started with 41 volunteers on July 1, 2016; today we have 70, including 37 direct service volunteers, 7 office volunteers, and 26 administrative volunteers in our Leadership Council and various committees. So far in 2018, we've trained eight new volunteers, several of whom will be part of the new Health Advocacy program. We plan to offer a volunteer training every other month for the rest of this year.

The greatest joy of our committee, you will not be surprised to learn, is getting to know the amazing people who volunteer for BAH. They are energetic, enthusiastic, generous, and just plain fun. Many of our volunteers are also members—about 65 percent. We truly are neighbors helping neighbors.

Besides interviewing, training, and communicating with volunteers, we also get to thank them on behalf of our entire village. We had our first Volunteer Appreciation Party on January 31, 2018. It was a great celebration, starting off with a fast-paced and fun get-to-know-you game. We celebrated our successes, shared good food, handed out fabulous prizes, but my favorite part was sharing and hearing each other's experiences as volunteers—thought-provoking experiences, funny experiences, heartening experiences.

The current task force consists of Barb Evans (member-volunteer), Lynn DeFehr (volunteer), and me (member-volunteer). Earlier committee members who helped get us where we are today included Joanne Kurtz, Carol Dukes, and Gayle Stebbings. We would love to welcome one or two new members to our committee. In particular, we are looking for someone with MS Office skills to contribute their time and creativity to our upcoming projects, including:

- Updating and professionalizing the Volunteer Handbook.
- Creating a professional quality power point presentation for our volunteer training.

This Is What Community Looks Like

By Elaine Cress

BAH Member, LC Member

Saturday night, March 10th, Meals on Wheels & More held their annual St Patrick's Day fundraiser at the Bellingham Ferry Terminal. I went alone and ran into Janice Claussen [BAH member and volunteer], who also was there alone. Jan shared that Joanne Knittel [BAH member and volunteer], who lives on Chuckanut Drive, had driven all the way to the Barkley neighborhood to pick Jan up and give her a ride to the terminal and was planning to return at 8 pm to take her home. Jan and I were able to sit together and I called Joanne to let her know that I that I would happily take Jan home, as I was going in that direction anyway.

It was an unexpected joy to spend the evening with Jan, thanks to Joanne. This is what the BAH community looks like at its best.

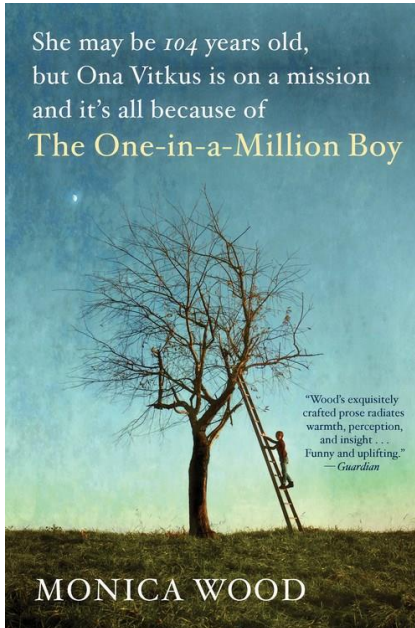
Book Report

The One-in-a-Million Boy

By Kay Mason

BAH Member

Despite the title, Monica Wood's award-winning book is very much the story of 104-year-old Ona Vistus, a Lithuanian immigrant, who lives alone—quite capably—in her own home in Portland, Maine. She occasionally needs a little assistance, but as a very independent soul, she is more apt to decline help than accept it. (Does this resonate with those of us in Bellingham at Home?)



The strange, sweet boy of the title is an 11-year-old Boy Scout obsessed with Guinness World Records. Ona is his project for his community service merit badge. For months he has been doing chores for her on Saturdays. No other scout had lasted more than one visit (did I mention that Ona is feisty and more than slightly off-putting?), but this one is determined.

Through the successive Saturdays, a friendship develops between the two, his curiosity overcoming her cynicism. When asked to interview an older person for a school assignment, the boy methodically lists 50 questions and tape records Ona's answers, each opening up the world for the other over animal crackers and card tricks. (*Fifty, yes. Fine. I'm just saying, you don't have to ask them in order... Because the story of your life never starts at the beginning. Don't they teach you anything at school?*) The boy persuades Ona to go after the record for the world's oldest licensed driver; he'll help her train. Two lonely people are a bit less lonely.

But that all ends when the boy doesn't show up one Saturday, then two. He is not a quitter, as Ona bitterly assumes; he is dead. Finally, the boy's father, Quinn, shows up to complete his son's good deed as an act of atonement; he has been a largely absentee father and is now searching for what he has lost, the son he hardly knew. He is amazed that his son could admire this extremely prickly old woman. But like his son, he is drawn in to Ona's story and, with the help of his former wife, another person unmoored by the boy's death, he is drawn into the search for Ona's birth certificate, which she needs to take her rightful place in Guinness. The reader is happy to accompany the three adults on their journey, both literal and metaphorical, each looking for direction, for meaning, and for love in the midst of loss.

This book could have been depressing, or worse yet, saccharine; it is neither. Instead, it is a story of how ordinary people of any age can change others' lives in unexpected but wonderful ways.

Is there a book you'd like to report on? Call Lauren Phillips at 360-714-0054.

Next BAH Volunteer Training is Wednesday, April 11 – Join us!



Watch for details about the next opportunity to train as a BAH volunteer. The training application is available online, or you can request one from the office (360 746-3462). After you complete and submit an application, a member of the Volunteer Task Force will contact you to discuss vetting and training requirements. Members are encouraged to become volunteers, but we rely on non-members as well. Do you have a relative or neighbor who might like to help?

A Friendly Reminder...

Taxes are due this year on April 17, not April 15.

Yay—two more days to procrastinate.

Letters to the Editor

Clueless about Local Politics

I've lived in Bellingham for ten years now and still find it difficult to know what's going on in town. I'm afraid the *Herald* and the *Weekly* don't provide enough information. When election time comes, for instance, it's hard to tell the conservatives from the liberals (let alone the Republicans from the Democrats). I attribute my cluelessness in part to my own laziness and social ineptness, but also in part to the rapidly changing nature of news media. The online social revolution hasn't done very much for local dialogue.

As a retired academic, I'm allergic to spending endless hours at endless meetings to get information. What do other BAH members do? Who are the local columnists I should check out? Other print sources on local political issues? Informal discussion groups? What role, if any, might BAH play in keeping its members in the know?

John Lawler

BAH Member

We encourage members to weigh in on this or any topic of general interest. Please send letters, via email to kate.birr@bellinghamathome.org or by regular mail to Your Village Voice, Room 14, 315 Halleck St., Bellingham, WA 98225.

April Birthdays

Don Phillips
Maxine Reid
Phyllis Shacter
Joan Strangeland



Members: If you'd rather this newsletter didn't show your name when it's your birthday month, please let the office know.

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.