



*Stop whining about getting old. It's a privilege! – Amy Poehler, Yes Please*

### Meet Colleen Harper, Our New Program Manager—and a Creative Whirlwind

By Lauren Phillips



In Colleen Harper, Bellingham At Home has tapped a creative wellspring—and someone who knows how to bring people together to build community in creative ways.

For example, she had her own business in Bellingham for five years, a vintage clothing store called the Black Market Boutique.

“We were unique in that we had a sewing studio inside the shop where we did repairs and alterations. And I did costuming for the Theatre Guild, for burlesque troupes and circus performers, and just got to be involved in different aspects of the Bellingham

community. It was so much fun.”

Then came the night when the plumbing in the upstairs apartment went berserk and poured hundreds of gallons of water through the ceiling. It was a little traumatic, said Colleen, but she had insurance for her loss. Unfortunately, the owner didn’t, so Colleen moved on.

“That redirected me onto my next path, which was really positive. My husband and I decided to buy a house in Ferndale and since then I’ve been working on community development as a volunteer. I work for the Ferndale Arts Commission and I’m on the board of Allied Arts of Whatcom County.”

A multimedia artist herself, Colleen shares a studio with a painter named Karen Theusen, whom she met last summer when they painted a 120-foot long mural of the Ferndale parks.

“The City Council said it’s the first time they didn’t receive a single complaint on a piece of public art,” said Colleen, laughing. “It’s kind of a big deal in small government.”

She and Karen hold themed art shows at their studio. Recently they did an all-dog theme and Colleen made a “sculptural dog poem—I sculpted dog faces, mounted them on plaques, and incorporated words.”

I asked her about some of her other community volunteer projects.

“Mostly I’ve done event organizing. For five years I organized the local Tweed Bicycle Ride (a global phenomenon where people get dressed up in fancy turn-of-the-century clothing and take leisurely rides through the city on vintage bikes). That got me connected with Everybody Bikes and Smart Trips; I helped them with a series of community rides that targeted people who otherwise might not feel comfortable or safe on their bikes—like people learning to ride as adults. I helped get the first Commercial Street Night Market in Bellingham off the ground.

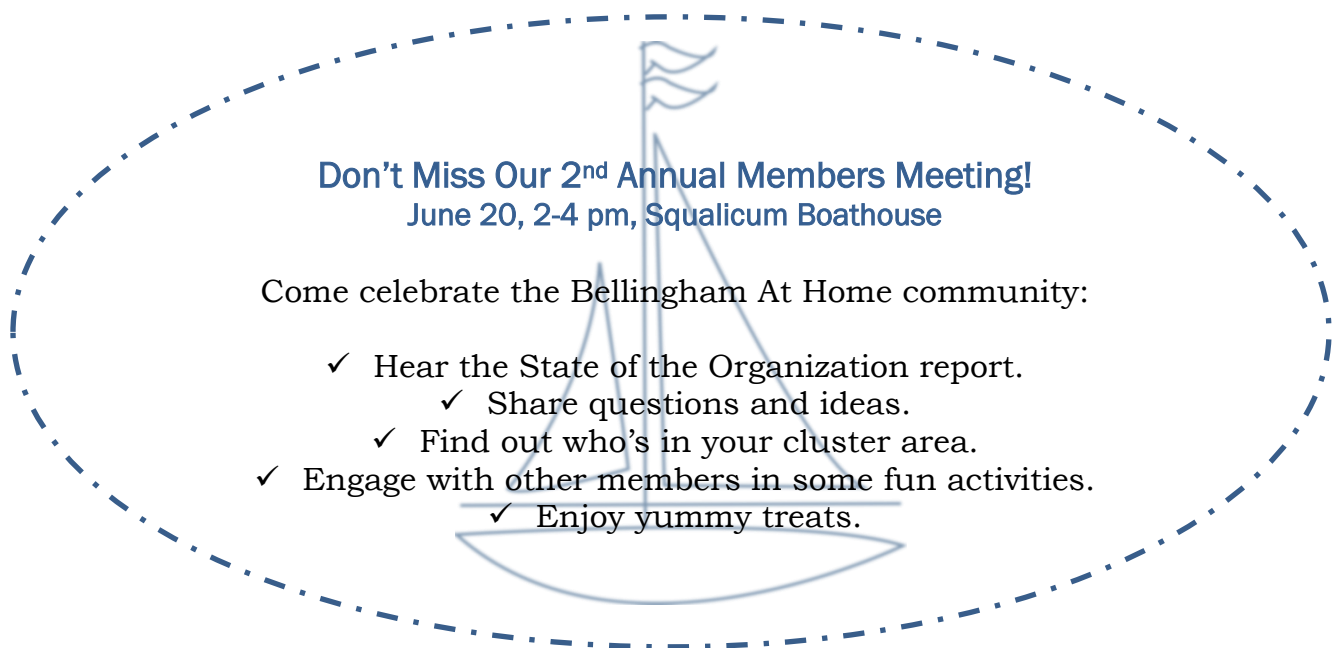
"I bounce around but I've learned it's way easier to do things with agencies. Last month I organized a community swing dance in Ferndale for the Arts Commission—more than 100 people came."

And what does she see as her role at BAH?

"My philosophy for involving people in volunteer work has always been 'validate and appreciate.' I think that when you ask members of a community to come together, it's essential that you really listen to people, recognize what they bring to the situation, and place them in situations where they're going to thrive. Of course, there's a lot of office work, but at the core, I think this position needs to be a coherent center—and to constantly remind people of how grateful we are to them for the important work they're doing.

"I'm so excited to be here."

Colleen will be in the center of the office from 9 to 4, Monday through Friday. Stop by and say hello.



## **Is There a Leadership Council Position in Your Future?**

*By Janet Simpson*

The Leadership Council (LC) is the working heart of Bellingham At Home. This group of nine dedicated volunteers is responsible for guiding the organization, each bringing his or her creative and administrative skills to bear: They have the discussions and make the decisions that move us forward; they also do a lot of the work that makes events, communication, and activities happen. In addition to a two-hour monthly meeting, many chair one of the working committees such as Outreach, Finances, Volunteers, or Membership. A smaller group of three from the LC comprises the Executive Committee (ExCo), the final decision makers and core leadership team.

In the beginning, these volunteers worked tirelessly to plan, create, and run this organization. If you know them, you know that they've truly dedicated their lives to this work for several years—and all of us have benefited. Some of the LC members are now stepping aside and new members are stepping up. With the help of our paid program manager, there is now more support for the LC, but still much to do. If you're interested in sharing your skills in a leadership role, think about joining the LC in the future, and maybe honing those skills as a committee member in the meantime. Terms are three years, which gives you the opportunity to have a real impact and help us all carry this wonderful vision forward.

## Make Your Wishes Known: The Realities of Advanced Medical Interventions

Western Washington University and the Palliative Care Institute will hold three presentations on the realities of advanced medical interventions. Rebecca Rech Cutler, a former hospice nurse, will discuss the meaning of such interventions in frank terms, focusing on patient outcomes and what the interventions mean to average people and their families, so that you can make informed decisions about your care. This interactive session will allow for questions and dialogue, and some equipment used in the ICU will be available for viewing. Advance care planning, advance directives, and the importance of community-based palliative care will be discussed. For more information contact Micki Jackson, MICKI98226@AOL.COM or 360.201.7840

June 6, 6-7:30 pm; October 3, 6-7:30 pm; December 5, 10-11:30 am  
St. Luke's Health Education Center, Room A  
3333 Squalicum Parkway

## Little-known Tax Feature Sweetens Your Donation to BAH

By Kate Birr

BAH Member, Publicity Committee Chair

There's a tax break waiting for some prospective BAH donors, even if they don't itemize on their tax return. As one who has taken advantage of this under-advertised IRS feature for a couple of years, I'm here to tell you how it works.\*

With the new tax law, more people are expected to forego itemizing because the standard deduction is increasing and itemizing won't be worthwhile. I, for one, don't have enough deductions to itemize, but if I make a donation to a qualified charitable organization (like BAH), I can still get a tax break.

Starting at the magic age of 70 ½, retirees with IRAs have to withdraw a minimum amount from these accounts every year—and pay tax on it. That's the part you probably know about. What many people don't know is that they can designate money from this withdrawal to go to one or more non-profit 501(c)(3) organizations. And here's the sweet spot: They don't have to pay tax on these "qualified charitable distributions," which count toward their required minimum but *don't* count toward their adjusted gross income.

The image shows a portion of an IRS Form 1040, specifically the 'Income' section. The form is filled out with example data. Line 7 is 'Wages, salaries, tips, etc. Attach Form(s) W-2'. Line 8a is 'Taxable interest. Attach Schedule B if required'. Line 8b is 'Tax-exempt interest. Do not include on line 8a'. Line 9a is 'Ordinary dividends. Attach Schedule B if required'. Line 9b is 'Qualified dividends'. Line 10 is 'Taxable refunds, credits, or offsets of state and local income taxes'. Line 11 is 'Alimony received'. Line 12 is 'Business income or (loss). Attach Schedule C or C-EZ'. Line 13 is 'Capital gain or (loss). Attach Schedule D if required. If not required, check here'. Line 14 is 'Other gains or (losses). Attach Form 4797'. Line 15a is 'IRA distributions' with a value of 20,000. Line 15b is 'Taxable amount' with a value of 15,000. The difference between 15a and 15b is 5,000, which is labeled 'QCD' (Qualified Charitable Distribution). Line 16 is 'Rental real estate, royalties, partnerships, S corporations, trusts, etc. Attach Schedule E'. Line 17 is 'Farm income or (loss). Attach Schedule F'. Line 18 is 'Unemployment compensation'. Line 19 is 'Social security benefits'. Line 20a is 'Social security benefits' with a value of 20a. Line 20b is 'Taxable amount'. Line 21 is 'Other income. List type and amount'. Line 22 is 'Combine the amounts in the far right column for lines 7 through 21. This is your total income'.

Tax return example shows the IRA distribution amount in 15a and the distribution minus qualified donation(s) in 15b. "QCD" indicates why there is a difference between 15a and 15b: this taxpayer made a Qualified Charitable Distribution.

So I ask my IRA administrator to write a check from my account to Bellingham At Home; they send the check to my address and I pass it along to Whatcom Council on Aging. Your IRA administrator may handle this transaction a bit differently. (IRS Publication 590-B makes for good bedtime reading, but it does give you the details.)

Now for the kicker: If you donate to BAH by July, your donation will be matched by generous members of the BAH Leadership Council! Since our May report, members have contributed an additional \$900 toward the LC Challenge. Join them and give yourself a (tax) break.

*\*Disclaimer: You should always discuss tax matters with your tax accountant. See IRS Publication 590-B for more information.*

## A Night at the Theatre: BSAC Benefit Offers Guaranteed Belly Laughs



The Bellingham Senior Activity Center, in partnership with the Bellingham Theatre Guild, is proud to present a “Night at the Theatre” featuring *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*—surely one of the funniest musicals ever on Broadway—on Thursday, June 7th. Join us at 6:30 for wine and appetizers; the play begins at 7:30 with an intermission to enjoy dessert and draw raffle tickets.

Tickets for this evening of fun and laughter are \$25 and are available for purchase at Village Books in Fairhaven, the Food Co-ops, the BSAC, or online at [brownpapertickets.com](http://brownpapertickets.com). All proceeds will benefit BSAC programs.

Please note that the Guild, at 1600 H Street, has recently undergone renovations to make it more accessible to patrons, including the addition of an elevator to the upper levels of the auditorium.

*Left: Zero Mostel winning a Tony in the Tony-award winning 1962 musical by Stephen Sondheim.*

### June Birthdays

Erik Halldorson  
Carl McGrath  
Elaine Cress  
Nanette Davis  
Ann Therkelsen  
Judy Krieger  
Barry Mason



**Welcome to new members Luanne and Paul Chapman and Karin Clumpner!**

## Health Advocacy Committee Launches New Phase: Assisting Members through Surgery, Hospitalization, and Rehabilitation

*By Nanette Davis  
BAH, LC Member*

As you know, earlier this year BAH launched its new volunteer health advocacy program, with note-taking in the doctor’s office. This gives members who request it to have an extra pair of ears and eyes during medical appointments. Members who have used our assistance report positive outcomes.



"I found that a knowledgeable note taker freed me of having to remember what the doctor said," said Burl Harmon about his note taker, Nancy Simmers. "I felt relieved to have Nancy go over the purpose of the appointment beforehand and make a written record of the doctor's recommendations."

### ***So What's New?***

We're launching an exciting new phase of the advocacy program June 15, offering members extended assistance with pre- and post- surgical experiences, hospital stays, rehabilitation and care centers. Notably, this will include long-term and palliative care.

### ***What Can Health Advocates Do for You?***

Keeping in mind that BAH seeks to enable members to remain independent as long as possible, health advocate volunteers will work to connect them with supportive community health resources. They can be especially helpful during transitions, when a person leaves the hospital or rehabilitation center; this is a critical time in the recovery phase, particularly for people who live alone. Health advocates can pave the way for the person to have home-based health services or draw on other BAH volunteers for home assistance such as picking up medications from the pharmacy and helping with grocery shopping or a home cooked meal.



*BAH member, Burl Harmon, talks with note taker Nancy Simmers, prior to his medical appointment.*

### ***What kind of training do the health advocates have for assisting members beyond note taking?***

The six volunteer members of the Health Advocacy Committee have recently completed an eight-week class offered by the Health Ministries Network, an international group of community volunteer nurses. The health advocates include Sharon Morris, Susan Vaughan, Judy Perry, Lynn Fehr, Nancy Simmers, and Nanette Davis.

The course provided an in-depth perspective of a community-based holistic health program, which involves assisting members from the beginning of their medical crisis throughout their various contacts with medical providers. The focus of the HMN course includes enhanced communication, a mind-body-spirit approach to healing, listening skills, and self-care for health advocates. One outstanding result of the course is our expanded awareness of how to help our members, who may be experiencing fear, dislocation, and isolation as a result of their medical condition.

### ***How can I get this service?***

Follow the same procedure you use for any other volunteer assistance:

1. Call the office and request a Volunteer Health Advocate.
2. The office will contact our coordinator, who will then assign two advocates to assist you for a three-month period. If, after three months, you still require help, the advocate may choose to continue; if not, another advocate will be assigned to help you.

## **Volunteer to the Rescue, in Time for Iced-Tea Season**

*By Lelia Coyne, BAH Member*

My ice maker crumped out at the first of the year. I realized I had not been replacing water filters, so I invested a bundle in three years' worth to compensate for the three years of neglect. I put just one in and it still hasn't worked, for the last 5 months.

I tried to troubleshoot alone and with the phone tech from the distributor, but still no ice.

There were problems with lights that don't indicate on/off in understandable fashion, diagrams I couldn't understand, unreferenced to the location of the item of concern, access to water trays that I could not reach, nor open the compartment from the prone position I had to lie in to reach them, etc., etc. - issues challenging my aging competence/confidence to fend for myself.

I called BAH, and Rick DeFehr came to the rescue, walking me through the manual, and getting into the extended owner's manual from my computer. He got it to the point where it wasn't clear to him what the status was either, and told me to wait for 24 hours for it to settle itself in to see what happened before calling a service tech.

24 hours later, it started making ice, and now is pumping it out faster than I can use ice, which is why it got turned off in the first place.

Thanks BAH! That was worth at least a third of my annual fee right there.

Do you have a volunteer-appreciation story for the newsletter? Please contact Kate Birr, [kate.birr@bellinghamathome.org](mailto:kate.birr@bellinghamathome.org).

## **Repeat after Me: Always Book Volunteer Assignments Through the Office (Even After the Fact)**

So you're a BAH volunteer (thank you!) and you've been driving Mr. X, a member, to various appointments for a good while now. He calls the office to request a ride and whenever you can you accept the assignment. So far, so good.

And then you walk into the library one day and see Mr. X reading a magazine. Being a friendly sort, you greet him and find out his daughter has driven him downtown but can't pick him up for several more hours, even though Mr. X has finished with his errands.

"Hey, I'm going right by your neighborhood as soon as I check out these books," you say. "I'd be happy to give you a ride."

"Excellent," says Mr. X; "I'd appreciate that." And off you go, hand in hand, into the sunset. Roll credits.

What's wrong with this picture? It's the credits part: If BAH doesn't know you drove Mr. X home, you don't get any credit—and neither does BAH. Bellingham At Home is a program of the Whatcom Council on Aging (WCOA), which is a 501(3)(c) organization and receives funding from the county and from grants, along with dues, program fees, and donations—but only if it can document its value to the community. Volunteer support is a critical component of its value.

That's why we ask volunteers to report their hours every month—so we can report to WCOA and WCOA can report to its supporters (and we can report to ours ☺) that BAH has this many volunteers contributing this many hours of help to this many members of the community. So please:

- (1) Let the office know any time you perform a volunteer service for a member, *even if that person didn't call the office to request assistance.*
- (2) Encourage members to ask for assistance by calling the office.

Got it? OK! So there you are, dropping Mr. X off, and you notice that his front step is listing to the left a little. Concerned, you say to him: "Hey, it looks like your front step could use some help. I could swing by tomorrow morning and check it out for you..."

STOP! WRONG! Let's try again.

You say "Hey, it looks like you could use some help with that front step. You should call the BAH office tomorrow morning and ask for assistance."

Fade out, cue music.

**Do you have something you'd like to post on the BAH Facebook page? Please contact Colleen Harper, our new program manager, who will be managing the page, with the information and a picture if you have one.**

## ***Book Report*** ***Autumn, by Ali Smith***

*By Marilyn Burlingame*  
*BAH Member*

Elisabeth Demand is a 32-year old "casual contract junior lecturer" at a London university and Daniel Gluck is a 101-year old songwriter and art lover, now at the Maltings Care Providers place. Elisabeth first meets Daniel, her then-neighbor, when she is 8 and assigned to write a "portrait in words of a neighbour."

Painting a portrait in words is what Daniel does best. When Elisabeth is 11, he describes a collage to her and asks her to tell him what she thinks.

"Without actually seeing it?"

"By seeing it in the imagination, as far as you're concerned, and in the memory, as far as I'm concerned."

And he tells the story of the picture until she can see it, its colors and cut-outs, real hair, real lace.

When she is 18, in an art shop on Charing Cross Road, Elisabeth discovers an old art catalog in the reduced books bin: a catalog of an exhibition of a 1960s Pop Art painter, Pauline Boty. Elisabeth had been studying art history at college and arguing with her tutor, who had told her there were no women Pop Art painters. In the catalog, Elizabeth recognizes one of the paintings that Daniel had (word) painted for her.

This discovery of Boty, her work, her life, hits hard, and Elisabeth challenges her tutor, who is also her dissertation supervisor; he forbids her to write about the Pop Artist. She gets herself a new supervisor and writes a new dissertation.

When Elisabeth is 13, she and Daniel are discussing time travel: "Time travel is real, Daniel said. We do it all the time. Moment to moment, minute to minute." And that is what this book does, move back and forth through time, through history, through dreams, moment to moment.

In some 250 pages, Ali Smith swirls us through today and yesterday, pasting into her collage the Brexit vote, Nazis in Nice in 1943, Christine Keeler in 1963. The book is filled with color, the color of the seasons, the color of paintings that Daniel remembers.

This story is gentle and funny and moving. You will learn to care for the characters as they care for each other.

"Always be reading something, [Daniel] said. Even when you're not physically reading. How else will we read the world?"

**Do you have a book you'd like to share in the newsletter? Please call Lauren Phillips, 360-714-0054**



**Heads up!**  
**The next volunteer training will be Wednesday, June 13.**  
**Watch for an e-blast with details.**

**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](mailto: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.