



Bellingham  
At Home

## Your Village Voice – October 2019

*Think where man's glory most begins and ends, and say my glory was I had such friends. –W.B. Yeats*

### Web of Caring

*By Angela Mercy*

Villages used to be places where everyone was known, everyone was needed, and everyone was valued. Because of the proximity of living spaces and the small number of people, it was easy to know what was going on in each other's lives—easy to know when someone was ill, or grieving, or could just use a bit of company. Bellingham At Home would like to be that kind of village.

Sometimes members and volunteers think of our village primarily as a vehicle for the strongest among us to help out the ones experiencing the greatest limitations. While it is wonderful to know that a member can call the office and request assistance in moving something that is too heavy, you don't have to be particularly strong or even mobile to pick up the phone and offer a friendly conversation to a member who isn't able to get out and socialize as much as they would like. Ideally we would like to encourage reciprocity so that all of us have the opportunity to both give and receive.



Because we are a virtual village and, for the most part, don't live in close geographic proximity to more than a handful of other members, it's harder to keep up with each other. I know it really saddens me when I call a member for something only to find out that they've just come through a difficult time in their lives. I would like to have known so I could have sent a card, made a phone call, dropped by with flowers, or offered an hour of companionship. I know I'm not alone in feeling this way.

This is why some members and volunteers have come together to form what we are calling a *Web of Caring*. The idea is to create a communication network that will help us to know what is going on in members' lives, to the extent each member wishes. Our goals are (1) to identify members who are facing a life challenge that might make them less willing or able to reach out and ask for assistance, and (2) to generally keep in touch in a neighborly way. Toward these ends, we have divided the membership into groups of 6–12 people who live in the same section of Bellingham and will identify a communicator for each group. The communicator will, at a minimum, call all the members of their group to check in with them approximately every four to six weeks. We will also be encouraging the groups to consider getting together to learn a little more about each other.

In addition to creating the Web of Caring described above, we will look at other opportunities to offer the kind of help neighbors may have given in simpler times. For instance, if you are going in for surgery and wonder if you have thought of all the things you need to do before and after, you can call the office and arrange for a volunteer to brainstorm with you and help you line up any assistance you anticipate needing. If you know you'll be home bound for some time, you might want to arrange for a regular friendly visitor or weekly errand runner before your procedure. We have health partner volunteers who have expressed the desire to give just this kind of assistance.

No matter how hard we try to be proactive and show up for you in times of need without your having to call in for help, it will not always work. Please know that you are an important member of our village and that there are other BAH

people who care and want to be there for you when you are feeling challenged. If you are feeling too low to ask, perhaps you could have a friend or family member make the call for you.

If you'd like to be part of the Web of Caring team, please call Joan Dow at 360-592-4345.

### **Volunteer Help Wanted:**

\*Office volunteers

\*Friendly visitor volunteers

## **Do You Belong to Nextdoor? If So, We'd Like to Ask a Favor**



If you use the Nextdoor social platform to stay in touch with your neighborhood, we'd appreciate it if you would post BAH outreach events as soon as you hear of them and invite everyone to come by and learn about the organization. Keep in mind, we offer volunteer opportunities as well as membership; either might be of interest to younger or middle-aged people with older parents. Please watch for an e-blast with details about the October outreach and let your neighbors on Nextdoor know about it. You'll be doing us—and your neighbors—a favor. Thanks!

## **Here's What You Missed at the Potluck**

This year our annual picnic was truly potluck. No assignments were made. And we didn't end up with all desserts, just a nice balance of chicken, salads, side dishes, beverages, *and* desserts. BAH provided coffee and tea.



Burl Harmon, Marijka Abbott, Susan Vaughan and Nanette Davis enjoy a good chat at the potluck.



The board is spread in the Cedar Grove clubhouse.

Thank you to everyone who made the potluck such a fun event. The food was fabulous, the conversation stimulating, and the view was beautiful! Special thanks to: Sue Moyer for offering the clubhouse, Janet Simpson for providing the chicken and bringing all the little beautifying touches, to Susan Vaughan and Angela Mercy for coming early to set-up, to

everyone who pitched in to clean up and put the furniture back where it belonged, and finally to Bob Baker for coming back to empty the dishwasher after it finished.

And here's what's in that great casserole that Janet brought:



### Janet Simpson's Golden Potato Casserole

6 medium potatoes (cook in skins, cool, peel, coarsely shred)  
2 cups shredded cheddar cheese  
¼ cup butter  
2 cups sour cream (room temperature)  
½ cup green onions (optional)  
1 tsp salt; ¼ tsp white pepper  
2 tbsp butter

Over low heat, combine cheese and butter, stirring occasionally until almost melted. Remove from heat, blend in sour cream, onions, salt & pepper. Add shredded potatoes, stirring lightly. Put into a buttered 2-quart casserole dish, dot with butter, and bake at 350 for 25 minutes. *Serves 8 hungry people or 16 polite party-goers who just take a good spoonful each.*

## Are You Fully Prepared for an Emergency? Many Older Adults Aren't

By Lauren Phillips

Whether you found it thrilling, alarming, annoying, or just surprising, the massive thunder storm on September 9 may have caused you to think about the state of your household's disaster preparedness—if only to wonder if your flashlight batteries still have power. No? Then take some time now and ask yourself, Am I prepared to survive an unexpected emergency? It seems lots of us aren't.

A new national poll of more than 2,200 adults aged 50 to 80 found that less than a third have put together an emergency kit with essential supplies and medicines, less than half have signed up for emergency warning systems offered by their community, and only a quarter of those who rely on electric power to run health-related equipment have a backup power supply.

Older adults do better when it comes to having a week's supply of medications and other health supplies on hand, although not necessarily food and water. Fewer than half had cell phone chargers and radios that didn't require electrical power. And as for financial readiness, one in four would find it a serious challenge to pay for somewhere to stay for a week.



According to the Red Cross, every household should have these 15 items, at a minimum, in a survival kit:

1. Water: one gallon per person, per day (3-day supply for evacuation, 2-week supply for home)
2. Food: non-perishable, easy-to-prepare items (3-day supply for evacuation, 2-week supply for home)
3. Flashlight
4. Battery-powered or hand-crank radio (NOAA Weather Radio, if possible)
5. Extra batteries
6. Deluxe family first aid kit
7. Medications (7-day supply) and medical items
8. Multi-purpose tool
9. Sanitation and personal hygiene items
10. Copies of personal documents (medication list and pertinent medical information, proof of address, deed/lease to home, passports, birth certificates, insurance policies)
11. Cell phone with chargers
12. Family and emergency contact information
13. Extra cash
14. Emergency blanket
15. Map(s) of the area

To which the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention would add contact lens solution and extra batteries for hearing aids; an ID band with full name, contact number for family member/caregiver, and allergies; information about medical devices such as wheelchairs, walkers, and oxygen, including model numbers and vendor; a list of all medications, including exact name, dosage, and prescriber/pharmacy information; and copies of a photo ID and medical insurance cards.

I personally would throw in a whistle, some waterproof matches, and a deck of cards.

Finally, choose a contact person who will check on you during a disaster and decide how you will communicate with each other. Perhaps a fellow BAH member?

*Sources: 1. Michigan Medicine - University of Michigan. (2019, September 4). Many older adults aren't fully prepared for emergency situations, poll finds. ScienceDaily. Retrieved September 16, 2019 from [www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/09/190904081313.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/09/190904081313.htm). 2. American Red Cross. Survival Kit Supplies. <https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/survival-kit-supplies.html> 3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Emergency Preparedness for Older Adults. <https://www.cdc.gov/features/older-adult-emergency/index.html>*

## Next Stop on the Slow-Mo Brewery Crawl:



Chuckanut Brewery & Kitchen, 601 W. Holly St., 4-6 pm, Monday October 14. Just a reminder—you don't have to drink alcohol to have fun! (Several of our regulars favor ginger beer or root beer.)

## From the LC

By Janet Simpson

**Successes:** We have a new member and have been talking to some likely prospects. We have some great new volunteers. We've had a couple of fun social events (Potluck, Brewery Crawl). We're reaching out to more home-bound members. All of this has us feeling very optimistic!

**A Heads Up:** We will soon be changing our banking to Peoples Bank to more smoothly coordinate with our sister programs at WCOA. If you're having checks sent to us, nothing changes. If you're using direct deposits, debit, or credit payments, we'll be calling to let you know what you need to change. Until then, just keep doing what you're doing.

**Administrative Assistant:** Darcie Romero is working with us five hours a week, usually on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday for an hour or 90 minutes. She sends out invoices, helps vet volunteers and collects volunteer hours, makes the BAH monthly status reports, and handles other things related to Club Express, our social media, and our interface with WCOA. Because of her limited time, the best way for you to get information is still to call the office or send an email to [info@bellinghamathome.org](mailto:info@bellinghamathome.org).

**Challenges:** We still need office volunteers and committee volunteers to help share the load. Remember that volunteering is a great way to have purpose, connect with others, and support Bellingham At Home. Putting up a few posters for our outreach, calling to set up a presentation, making some phone calls to other members, talking to friends about membership or volunteering, or inviting others to an event are all excellent ways to help us grow and prosper.

## Membership Matters

### *Spotlight on Iris and Kevin Parker*

By Lauren Phillips



After retiring to Bellingham two years ago from careers as an attorney and a school administrator, respectively, Kevin and Iris Parker found that “when you’re used to getting up and out every day and doing many purposeful things, you start to look for those things in retirement. We’re happy that we can do volunteer work in our new community.”

Luckily for us, Bellingham At Home is one of the organizations they volunteer for. Iris became interested in BAH because she likes the whole idea of a virtual village.

“Believe it or not, at our age we’re still the sandwich generation. Kevin’s mother is in assisted living, mine is still living independently, both in Philadelphia where Kevin and I lived for

64 years. We understand the needs of the elderly. In fact, part of the reason we chose our condo when we moved to Bellingham was because of the access; if either or both our mothers needed to come live with us, we could accommodate them. But my mother doesn’t want to move; when you’re 92, you don’t want to change. So I really believe in the mission of BAH.”

Iris works with the volunteer committee, interviewing and training new volunteers, while Kevin helps people with handyman chores. They also volunteer with the school district.

“I do a writing workshop with third graders at Alderwood School and we both help ESL students with reading at Bellingham High School. Kevin is really good at drawing out the young men, who may be reluctant to acknowledge their

learning needs; he helps them figure out how to navigate the language and the country—the way you treat teachers, for example, or speak to other people may be different in the US and their country of origin.”

One day a week, Kevin volunteers at the Fragrance Garden at Hovander Park, helping the one county employee who maintains the garden with planting and trimming, work that he loved doing in their own garden back in Philadelphia.

Like many BAH members, Iris and Kevin Parker like to travel. They especially like to strike out on their own, going off script and doing their own planning when possible, walking new cities and soaking up the culture and history of a place. Now that they’re retired they can do longer trips, so last spring they went to Israel, Jordan, and Turkey for a month.

“These are places where history is so integrated, you can see how and why things evolved the way they did. You go to Wadi Rum in Jordan and you can see the hill that Lawrence of Arabia came over; you hike in Israel and you realize that the current political situation is so dependent on what happened hundreds and even thousands of years ago.”

They also appreciate the freedom to pick up and go at a moment’s notice when something is happening with a member of their family, which is pretty much all the time. While their son and his family live in Bellingham—that’s why Iris and Kevin moved here—they have a daughter in Houston and one in Baltimore. Last year when the daughter in Houston had a baby, the Parkers drove there for three weeks, then drove to Philadelphia where their younger daughter was getting married and spent a couple of weeks there.

“We went to places—in Texas and New Mexico and Iowa and South Dakota—that we otherwise would not have traveled to. It was really a great way to see the country. This month I flew to Washington DC to take care of the baby while our daughter was at a conference and then drove to Philadelphia to celebrate my mother’s birthday. Before long we’ll head back to Baltimore for the birth of our youngest daughter’s first baby.”

For the moment, though, the couple are walking and hiking around Bellingham, still learning about their new home, meeting new people—and loving the moderate weather.

“This is the first time in our lives we don’t have air conditioning!”

*Here’s a shout-out to our members celebrating a birthday in...*



**Janet Simpson**  
**Francine Kitchen**  
**Jean Gross**  
**Joseph Hashmall**  
**Elka Fink**  
**Angela Mercy**  
**Betsy Wilson**  
**Allen Johnson**

*And...*



**To our newest member  
Judy Brightman**

## **Want to Start an Interest Group? We're Happy to Help**

What are you interested in? BAH has a music group, a book group, a writing group, a lunch group. We've got a brewery group. But what about a games group? A dinner group? A movie group?

Getting a regular interest group off the ground is so much easier than you might think. Whatever you enjoy doing—Poker? Baking cookies? Photography? Geocaching? Bowling? Going to trivia nights?—there's a reasonable chance that at least a few other people in BAH enjoy it, too. Wouldn't it be more fun to do it together?

Here's a great example.

### **RON MCGEE, A BAH VOLUNTEER, WANTS TO START A GROUP TO WATCH NBA BASKETBALL STARTING IN MID-OCTOBER**

He's looking for about five basketball fans who would like to come to his house most Tuesdays around 5 or 6 pm, eat some dinner, watch games he's recorded on his big screen, and talk basketball. Ron says he could give a couple of people a ride—both ways!

**Two items of information: Ron lives behind Squalicum High School and there are stairs into his den.**

**Interested? You can contact Ron at 1-907-229-2994.**



And just like that, we've got a new interest group—easy-peasy!

You don't have to wait for the Leadership Council to come up with an activity, people—this is not a top-down organization. Call the office and let us know what you have in mind. We'll give you a jumpstart with a notice in the newsletter and/or an e-blast. OK? OK!

**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.