



Bellingham
At Home

Your Village Voice – December 2019

To keep a lamp burning we have to keep putting oil in it. – Mother Teresa

There's Never Been a Better Time to Give to BAH

The holidays are a time for giving and there's never been a better time to give to Bellingham At Home. If you donate by the end of the year, you can, of course, declare those funds as charitable contributions on your tax return, because BAH, as a part of WCOA, is a 501(c)(3) organization.



But there's a much better reason: Every penny we get goes to support you in your determination to stay active, stay engaged, stay connected—and stay in your own home, if that is what you want. Yes, we are currently run entirely by volunteers, but that does not mean the programs and social activities and assistance we provide are free. Membership dues are the foundation of our finances, but right now that's not enough. We ask you to dig into your reserves a bit to bolster ours, so we can all head into the new year with hope and confidence.

A great way to give: Become a member if you are not one—or give a membership to a friend for the holiday.



2 Holiday Reminders

Don't forget about **BAH's holiday party** on December 5 at the Bellwether Hotel! If you have signed up but haven't paid up yet, please do so right away. And have a wonderful time.

Also, the **BAH Writers Group Open House** is on December 6 from 1-3 pm in Room 9 at BSAC. You don't have to sign up but do remember to come if you're interested!



A Day in the Life of a Bellingham At Home Office Volunteer

By Cat McIntyre

My Office Volunteer experience began in 2016, in a small BAH office near the back of the Senior Center. Without the Club Express computer system we acquired later, there was an awful lot of paper involved! Later the office moved to Room 14, a big room with a sunny window right next to the volunteer desk, where Club Express software makes

everything smooth and paper-free. We set up white boards to make it easy to see at a glance the status of current member requests--which were filled, and which still need a volunteer.



Ever since, you can find me in the office Friday mornings, from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. First thing, I carry out the Bellingham At Home sandwich board, which sits near the Center's front door. Then, I check the phone to see if the message light is blinking. If it is, I deal with the saved messages right away. I also check the volunteer desk to see if there are any urgent notes, and read the written log entries since my last shift to bring me up to date on what's been happening in the last week and what actions I might need to follow up today.

When I have opened up Club Express and checked the email, I have a pretty good idea of my priorities. Maybe there is an email requesting assistance, like a ride to a doctor's appointment next week, so I send the new request to our volunteers via email or, for those who don't use the computer, the phone, and ask if they can help. Frequently, I find an email from a volunteer who has completed a request; that info goes right into the Club Express program to keep track of all the good work BAH is doing. Often, there are questions about upcoming

BAH events or the office volunteer schedule for the coming week.

Phone calls and walk-in visitors bring new opportunities to help. Someone may have questions about what we do. A member might request service or ask about an event, or give us a check for membership or an event. Most things I recognize and can deal with easily; for more unusual situations, I can call or email one of the lead volunteers for help. There are also reference manuals for all the tasks that come up, so I can find clearly written how-to guidance for nearly everything.

There is always plenty to do when the phone isn't ringing or emails aren't popping up. I can put together training manuals for new volunteers, sign birthday cards for members, read the Village Voice and BAH Calendar to keep informed so I can answer questions. Some days there's time to get a cup of Senior Center coffee and read a book or the newspaper.

I get a solid sense of satisfaction from the work I do. I also get the opportunity to know our members and volunteers, as we work together to create an active and engaged community for seniors who want to live in their own homes.

***Does this sound like a job you'd enjoy? If so, please give us a call;
we definitely need a few more office volunteers to join Cat and her colleagues!***

Next Stop on the Slow-Mo Brewery Crawl...



...is Menace Brewing at 2529 Meridian Street in the Fountain District, Monday, December 9, 4-6 pm. In addition to lots of good reviews for their brews, they have access to tasty Mediterranean-style take-out from the Kebab Casual food truck across the street. Y'all come!

Is It Time to Stop Driving?

By Ron McGee

There are so many signs: Getting lost on familiar routes... Near-misses... A ticket for a driving violation or for impaired driving... Poking along on the highway or speeding on city streets... Road signs and markings that seem overwhelming... New dents or scratches...

We all know someone who needs to stop driving: our dad, our neighbor, our sister... ourselves? And we all know this is a really tough decision to make, a tough conversation to have. There's pride involved, and independence, loss of confidence and fear of the future.



That's why the Center for Disease Control and Prevention developed MyMobility Plan, a tool to help older adults take action *now* to prepare for potential mobility changes in much the same way they might plan financially for retirement. (https://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/pdf/older_adult_drivers/CDC-AdultMobilityTool-9.27.pdf)

You can download and work through the tool's three sections by yourself or with friends or family members to create your own mobility plan.

1. Myself: How to stay independent – tips to manage your health to maintain mobility.
2. MyHome: How to stay safe at home – A home safety checklist to help prevent falls.
3. MyNeighborhood: How to stay mobile – a plan to get around in your community.

It helps you think about how you might get to all the places you want to get without a car—e.g., rides from friends, public transportation, paratransit, Uber, ridesharing, walking if it's in your immediate neighborhood—so when the time comes, you're prepared.

Making the Decision

But how do you actually know when it's time? Ask yourself:

- Do other drivers often honk at me?
- Have I had some accidents, even if they were only fender benders?
- Do I get lost, even on roads I know?
- Do cars or people walking seem to appear out of nowhere?
- Do I get distracted while driving?
- Have family, friends, or my doctor said they're worried about my driving?
- Am I driving less these days because I'm not as sure about my driving as I used to be?
- Do I have trouble staying in my lane?
- Do I have trouble moving my foot between the gas and the brake pedals, or do I sometimes confuse the two?
- Have I been pulled over by a police officer about my driving?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions on behalf of yourself or a loved one, it may be time to talk with a doctor about stopping driving or have a driving assessment.

Life Changing, Not Life Ending

Will stopping change your life? Absolutely. But it's not the end of your life and it doesn't have to be the end of your independence. It doesn't mean you have to become a burden to your family or give up all the things that make life meaningful and pleasurable.

Fortunately, the Bellingham community offers plenty of opportunities for anyone who can't drive, said Shelly Davis, the manager of the Paratransit Program for the Whatcom County Transportation Authority.

"The city offers free bus rides for anyone 75 years or older and the Paratransit Program offers individual rides for people with verified disabilities." (You don't need to be helpless or have a doctor's note to qualify; if you have a hard time walking to or boarding a regular bus, if you use a cane or walker, you're probably eligible.) You can sign up for the program online or by calling (360)733-1144.

And, of course, BAH allows members to request up to four rides a week, if you book in advance.

Making the Move to Windows 10 (Part 2 of 3)

By Kate Birr



This month we'll look at what's involved with getting off your old Windows 7 computer and onto one with Windows 10. *Skip this if you're a Windows user who has already made the move.* Our wish for you is to avoid the risks of using Windows 7 after Microsoft ends support for the product on January 14, 2020. Also, we would like you to be able to continue to read our newsletter and e-blasts!

First, you'll need to make a copy of the files you want to save, which for most of us means photos and documents. You can use Windows 7's built-in Backup and Restore for this, putting your backup on an external hard drive. If you prefer you can upload it to the internet "cloud," using one of the cloud storage services available on the internet (examples: Dropbox, Google Drive, OneDrive).

We're not providing detailed instructions here. You can find directions in Windows 7, or you can have someone make the backup for you. Before you make the backup, we recommend doing some housekeeping, and deleting files you don't need or use.

Once you have a backup, on an external hard drive or somewhere on the internet, you're ready to move your files to your new Windows 10 machine. With your external hard drive attached to your Windows 10 PC, you can copy over files from the backup. If your backup is in the cloud, download the files using the storage service you used to store them. Your backup won't copy software from the old computer. You'll have to download those programs from wherever you got them and install on the new PC. Any settings will need to be made again on your new PC.

If the prospect of getting off the old computer is too daunting, you can get support from the merchant if you bought it locally. If you don't mind a bit of DIY, you can get some assistance from BSAC's Tech Help volunteers.

Next month: Getting started with Windows 10

Ambassador Event Ideas – Who's Interested?

Last year, BAH announced a program to encourage member-led activities for our village. We call these Ambassador Events. When you as a member want to do something that might be of interest to others (e.g., attend a concert, go out for dinner, see a museum exhibit) and want some company, you announce your intentions to other BAH members and organize the event. The BAH office and the publicity committee can help with coordination. Here are several suggestions for the coming months. Anyone care to take the lead on one of these?



Twin Sisters Creamery tour

Free group tours of the creamery are available by arrangement. The hour-long tours can be set up for Tuesday through Saturday. The facilities are wheelchair accessible, and there's a large parking lot. They have a selection of cheese samples and a complimentary beverage station on the tour.

Mount Baker Theatre tour

Group tours of this Bellingham landmark are available, Monday through Friday during business hours as long as there's no event happening in the theater. There's no charge for these tours. Here's your opportunity to learn more about the history of our theater and the renovation and improvement work that's being planned.

Tour of Trees: A Free Community Event

You may already know that the annual Festival of Trees Gala & Auction, a benefit for BSAC, will take place at 5:30 pm on December 7 at the senior center, where you can bid on the beautifully decorated Christmas trees and enjoy drinks, hors d'oeuvres, and a silent auction. Tickets are \$50, available at the front desk.

But did you know that the display is available for free that morning, from 9 am-1 pm, when all Bellinghamsters are welcome to see the trees and vote on a favorite? The winning tree will be labeled the "People's Choice" at the auction later. The morning Tour of Trees will also feature hummable music and munchable cookies, so plan to swing by!

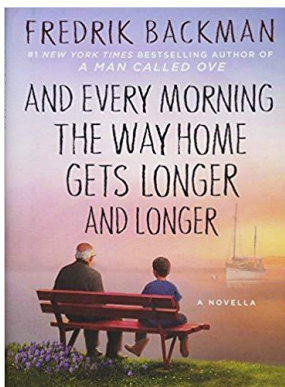
(Not that we want to influence your vote in any way, but new BAH Leadership Council member Marilyn Glenn is planning to decorate a tree for the festival.)



Book Review

And Every Morning the Way Home Gets Longer and Longer

By Sandra Stanton



In a note to Dear Reader, author Fredrik Backman writes, "Humans are a strange breed in the way our fear of getting old seems to be even greater than our fear of dying." He's right. However, some people associate the fear of getting older with the aging body, while others think in terms of the mind. If a superannuated mind were to deny me the utility and pleasure of my memory, would I want to keep living?

This tiny book gives the reader much to think about, from the perspective of both the elderly and those who love them. Backman's protagonist, Grandpa, ponders his memory loss, aided by the poignant wisdom of his beloved and loving grandson, Noah.

This is not a chronological story. Just read each page for what it says; the pieces will fall into place. Nor is it a story I would presume to critique or summarize. I think it best to let Noah and

Grandpa tell you a little about it.

When we meet Noah, he is just a boy, his legs dangling as he sits beside Grandpa on a bench in a square of their town. Grandpa is whistling, but pauses to whisper, "The square got smaller overnight again." Then, "Sorry, Noahnoah, I forgot that thoughts aren't silent here." Noah smells the hyacinths blooming beneath the bench—like Grandma's.

Grandpa smells them too, except that the smell comes from a girl standing in front of him, the girl who became Grandma. Grandpa remembers when he told Grandma, "My brain is shrinking now." She strokes his temples. She kisses him. She says, "I know that the way home is getting longer and longer every morning. But I loved you because your brain, your world, was always bigger than everyone else's. There's still a lot of it left." He holds her hard as he can.

Noah whispers, "Why are you holding my hand so tight, Grandpa?"

"Because all of this is disappearing, Noahnoah. And I want to keep hold of you longest of all." The boy nods.

The boy and his dad walk down a hospital corridor. Noah asks, "What can we do to help Grandpa?"

His father tells him, "We can walk down the road with him. We can keep him company."

As the story comes to an end, Backman writes, "There's a hospital room at the end of a life where someone...has pitched a green tent. A person wakes up inside it...afraid. A young man sitting next to him whispers, 'Don't be scared...We're inside the tent we used to sleep in by the lake, Grandpa'...Ted plays guitar...Grandpa hums along...Noah strokes his daughter's hair...the tent smells like hyacinths...and there's nothing to be afraid of."

Every life is worth living to the end.

A Report from the BAH Book Group

By Nanette Davis

BAH Book Group is moving ahead with more recent editions from Washington authors and New York Times Bestsellers.

December. **The Scent Keeper** by Erica Bauermeister, who teaches at University of Washington and is a founding member of the Seattle7Writers, explores the evocative beauty of smells that can reveal hidden truths through the story of Emmaline, who lives an enchanted childhood on a remote island with her father. While her dad teaches her about the natural world through her senses, he keeps quiet about the mysterious scents stored in the drawers that line the walls of their cabin or the machine that creates them. When Emmaline is vaulted out into the real world, she must unlock the clues to her identity. Join us December 4 at 2 p.m. at Nanette's home. Call her at 360-671-1686 or email drnanettej@gmail for directions.

January. Alice Hoffman's **The Rules of Magic** is a spellbinding read about family secrets among three siblings that runs the gamut from real to fantastical but ultimately is a story about the power of love. We will meet at the new home of Jan Claussen. Please email Jan for directions: Janice@janice32.com.

February. Bestselling author Kristin Hannah, another Pacific Northwest writer, has written **True Colors**, in which she weaves a tale of a woman at the crossroads of her life against the background of the tumult and energy of the 70s and 80s. True Colors offers penetratingly emotional insight about women's friendships and also explores the dark side of the criminal justice system.

Watch the BAH calendar and weekly e-blasts for January and February meeting details.

We are currently exploring a non-fiction selection for our March offering.

Join the Health Partner Committee and Assist Members with Care Needs

By Nanette Davis

The Health Partner Committee (HP) has an exciting and dynamic mandate: to assist members by driving them to doctor appointments, taking medical notes during the appointment and following up with phone calls or visits, as needed by the member.

Here are the functions our volunteers carry out:

Driving. Transportation to medical appointments remains high on the list of member requests for assistance. In many instances, the member can no longer drive, and this service allows HP volunteers to support him or her from door to door.

Taking notes. Research shows that over 50 percent of patients remember little or nothing of the doctor's information! Even if you've never taken a note in your life, we can train you to assist members by listening carefully and documenting accurately what the medical provider is saying and recommending.

Follow-Up. Members appreciate when a volunteer follows up after the appointment to make sure that he or she understands the medical recommendations and is following through on directives and medication.

Extra assistance. Members with chronic illness or frailty may request regular weekly contact to assist in a wider range of tasks. This may include driving them to social events, helping them in the house or garden, or just spending time chatting over coffee. This is an opportunity for member and volunteer to develop a solid relationship, a plus for both parties.

Of course, not every HP volunteer chooses to work with members who need extra help; some prefer to limit their assistance to medical note taking and follow-up. The choice is yours!

Join us now. We are a warm, cohesive committee that needs dedicated volunteers. The joy will be all yours when you can reach out to our members in need.

To get started as an HP volunteer, contact Nancy Simmers at nancysimmers@bellcoho.com or Nanette Davis at drnanettej@gmail.com.



And now, *a very Happy Birthday* to our members celebrating a birthday in...

DECEMBER



**Roy Potter
Richard Abbott
Marijke Abbott
Kathleen Hicks
Marilyn Burlingame
Bob Baker**



And...



To our newest members

**Marilyn Glenn
Steve Tatham
Colleen Hyde**

Bellingham At Home Contact Information

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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.