



*One of the most important things you can do on this earth is to let people know they are not alone. –Shannon L. Alder*

### Neighborhood Connections: Staying in Touch with a Friendly Phone Call

BAH's new Neighborhood Connections calling program is an easy, low-key way for us to keep in touch with each other. It's a simple concept: for every 6-8 members in a geographic area, we've designated one contact person, who has volunteered to reach out to the other neighbors in the group every four to six weeks with a friendly phone call. That's it—no hassle, no meddlesome monitoring, no requirements to do anything other than answer the phone!

There's an important distinction here: we're not checking up on you, we're just checking in with you—briefly, occasionally. We won't be asking any intrusive questions or trying to get you to do anything, honest. If it's not a good time or you don't feel like chatting, you'll say so, no hurt feelings. If you don't want any calls ever, say that.



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Our goal is to create more connections among our members, more of a community feeling. Ideally, regular contact will help us know if a member needs help and make it more comfortable for members to ask for help in times of need. Just as important, it will help us get to know you a bit better—what your interests and concerns are and what ideas you may have for BAH activities or programs. Your caller may not become a close friend, but he or she is there for you—a familiar voice that links you to the larger BAH community.

If we have another spell of icy weather, your caller will check in and see how you're doing; if BAH needs to cancel something at the last minute, your caller will let you know. And if you have a question about your membership or anything else involving Bellingham At Home, you can get in touch with your caller any time.

Let's give it a try, shall we?

### The Departure Lounge: Are You Ready for the Journey? (lol)

Nick Waslenko & Angela Mercy invite you to join them for an event sponsored by the Palliative Care Institute at the Sylvia Center for the Arts in Bellingham, 207 Prospect Street, Saturday, April 4, 7-9 pm. It's an evening of improv theater with the theme "The Departure Lounge." Some of Bellingham's most talented improv artists will play with common fears, myths, and denials of death, giving us a chance to laugh at some of our anxieties about dying. If we can joke about death, we can perhaps take some of the mystery out of it and begin to get the upper hand on our fears.

Palliative Care Institute events routinely sell out, so we recommend that you get your tickets (\$10 in advance, \$15 at the door) soon. For details and to purchase tickets go to <https://mailchi.mp/8acedff624a9/wwu-pci-winter-newsletter-4322435?e=cf1811d70e>. Call us at 360-603-0064 to let us know you'll be joining us and we'll try to save seats so we can sit together.

## Volunteer Fair – Soup Sampling/Recipe Exchange

By Angela Mercy

BAH has lots of stimulating and fun volunteer activities over and above everyone's favorite – assisting members. We're sponsoring a Volunteer Fair to showcase volunteer opportunities:

Thursday, April 2, 2020

12:00 pm

BSAC, Room 16

LC members, committee chairs, and committee members will fill you in on what they are up to and describe the available volunteer opportunities. We promise to find a fun and engaging volunteer position for anyone who wants to get more involved.



Source: Shutterstock

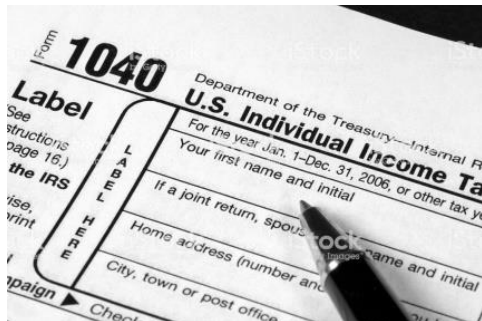
But that's not all...the Volunteer Committee and friends will prepare a variety of tasty soups for you to sample, and we'll share the recipes with you! If you love making soup, we invite you be one of those friends.

This is also a great chance to socialize. We promise there will be plenty of time to enjoy your soup and talk to your fellow volunteers. Please invite friends who might be interested in joining our ranks.

Soup makers, please bring your already warm soup in a crock pot. We'll have power strips for you to plug in to. Bowls and utensils will be provided. Please email me at [angela.mercy@bellinghamathome.org](mailto:angela.mercy@bellinghamathome.org) telling me what kind of soup you're bringing.

## Free Tax Filing Help from AARP Available Through April 15th

Tax-Aide appointments at the Senior Center are all filled and are no longer available at the library, but the AARP program offers free, first-come, first-served tax filing assistance by IRS-certified volunteers at the First Congregational Church at 2401 Cornwall Ave.



Source: iStockphoto.com

Help is available from 3:30-6:30 pm Monday-Thursday and from 12:30-4 pm on Saturday; doors open at 2:45 weekdays and 11:45 Saturday and the line starts forming earlier than that—so get there early! Once you get your name on the day's roster, you can wait onsite or, if you're way down the list, you can leave and come back.

There is free parking in the church parking lot off Logan Street, plus free on-street parking.

A few pointers:

- There is no limit on age or income
- Tax-Aide volunteers cannot prepare returns with rental or farm income or small business returns with employees, depreciation or expenses over \$25,000.
- If you're married and filing jointly, both of you should be there (with photo ID); if not, you'll have to take the forms home to be signed and then wait in line again
- Bring proof of social security number (card or form SSA-1099), last year's tax return, proof of all income and expenses, and a sample check for a fast refund.
- Save time by completing and bringing with you the Interview/Intake form, which you can find at <https://www.bellinghampubliclibrary.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Tax-Aide-Intake-Interview-Booklet-fillable-2019.pdf>.

Questions? Please call 360-474-7066, NOT the church.

## Open Volunteer Assignments

We're currently looking for volunteers to fill the following positions:

- People to sit at the BAH table at the BSAC Housing Options event on March 4 and answer questions (2-hour shifts)
- An Office Volunteer for the Wednesday afternoon shift, 1-4 pm.
- A Lunch Bunch Coordinator
- A scribe to take notes at Leadership Council meetings, 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month, 1-2 p.m.

Please call the office if you can help out in one of these spots.

## Irish Dinner & Silent Auction--Let's Sit Together!

The 5<sup>th</sup> annual benefit for Meals on Wheels & More, featuring a traditional Irish dinner and silent auction in celebration of St. Patrick's Day, will be held Saturday, March 7 at the Bellingham Ferry Terminal from 5-9 pm. We know, we know, that's 10 days early, but corned beef and cabbage (there will be a vegetarian option), live music, a variety of local brews plus the auction should make you forget all about that.

Elaine Cress invites BAH members and volunteers to join her at this worthy event for our sister WCOA program. Tickets are \$50 and available now at the BSAC front desk or online at or [whatcomcoa.org](http://whatcomcoa.org). Let Elaine know as soon as you've purchased yours and she'll reserve a table for Bellingham At Home. ([elainecress@gmail.com](mailto:elainecress@gmail.com) or 706-769-3400)

## Notes From the LC:

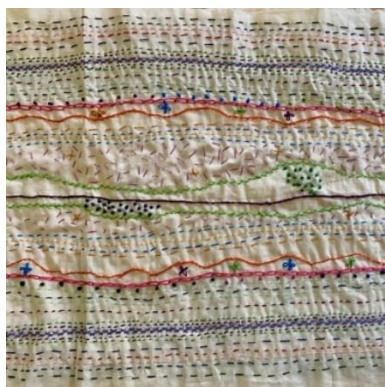
*By Janet Simpson*

**Sudden Valley** We recently had a meeting of about 15 people in Sudden Valley to discuss the possibility of creating a "spoke" in that area, to our Bellingham At Home "hub". There was some interest in membership and volunteering. This was a first step as we consider the interest and feasibility of expanding our organization. We'll be having another meeting sometime in April. If you're interested in being part of this let us know. Contact John Schene or leave a message with the office.

**LC Retreat** On March 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Leadership Council is having a facilitated retreat to build our team, focus our vision, and set some priorities for the coming year.

**Village to Village Gathering** Every year the Village to Village Network sponsors a National Village conference. It's a wonderful opportunity to see the scope of this movement, share and learn ideas for our organization, and become energized and excited about what we're doing. This year the conference is in Charlotte, NC, Monday through Wednesday, October 5-7. The title is "20/20, Clear Vision for the Future." Most of the Leadership members have attended a conference at some time, and we hope to send a few people this year. It's a wonderful investment in the energy of our organization.

## 25 Million Stitches—One for Each of the World's Refugees



The world is in flight: 25 million people across the globe have been forced to flee their homelands as a consequence of genocide, war, poverty, natural disasters, targeted violence, and other grave threats. To raise awareness of this crisis, and to visually represent its sheer volume, the Refuge Sewing Circle in Sacramento, CA, is asking volunteers across the country and around the world to participate in a community art installation that will be displayed first in Sacramento this summer: a collection of fabric panels with 25,000,000 stitches, one for each unwilling member of this desperate dispersal.

BAH member Rena Blauner is making it easy for members and volunteers to contribute to this tapestry of community support by holding two stitching sessions at her house. The first one was in February and the second will take place Monday, March 16, from 2-4 pm. You are welcome to bring your own materials but she will have fabric, needles, and thread on hand for anyone who would like to stitch; embroidery thread and some hoops are available if you need them.

"You can stitch anything you want," Rena said, "from lines of running stitches to more elaborate patterns. All stitches, including crooked ones, are welcome."

If you would like to participate in the March session, please contact Rena at 360-922-0062 or [rena@mcn.org](mailto:rena@mcn.org) so she can plan accordingly and provide directions to her house.

## Hey, Do I Need to Worry about This?

*By Marilyn Burlingame*



Throughout my life, I've been a person who never paid much attention to the vagaries of my body. I've always assumed that various aches, pains, and itches would do their thing and eventually fade away. I saw my doctor rarely between regular yearly check-ups. Even 15 years ago, when it turned out I had cancer, I assumed the hints of trouble were merely signs of normal aging. Fortunately, in spite of my inattention, my doctor discovered the cancer in one of those regular check-ups.

Now that I am truly on the aging spectrum, I still assume that as different symptoms arise, they will go away by themselves. I never know which to worry about, let alone report. I suspect this could get me in trouble, but I still don't want to bother my doctor with every little change.

Recently, I was with a group of Bellingham At Home people and mentioned a new symptom, wondering if anyone else had encountered it and whether it warranted a call to my doctor. And I was fortunate to receive a gift from one of them—not Aunt Marsha’s secret cure but, even better, a suggestion to call my Medicare Advantage (MA) plan’s Consulting Nurse.

I did call, and the result was just what I wanted. The nurse asked a lot of questions and told me what she knew and what she didn’t. I didn’t feel I had wasted anyone’s time—that’s her job, right? And I knew what to do next and what not to do. If you have an MA—or any health plan—I recommend finding out if they offer this feature; some don’t, many do. The phone number for your own Consulting Nurse may be on the back of your plan’s card; I actually have an app for that, plus there’s an online “Care Chat” option as well, if you don’t like talking to people.

As we navigate this latter part of our journey, I say let’s try to use all the tools available to ease our way.

## **In Memory...**

### **Jerry Lawson**

Jerry Lawson died in February 2019 in Bellingham, at age 86. Jerry and his wife Merrily joined BAH in May 2016 as charter members. Jerry grew up in Bellingham, in Fairhaven. He served in the Army during the Korean War and returned to attend WWU and UW, graduating with a degree in cartography. Jerry and Merrily married in 1962 and lived in Billings, MT, Cheyenne, WY, and Arvada, CO, before coming back to Bellingham with their three children. A devoted father and grandfather, he coached soccer and attended all his grandchildren’s games. He also enjoyed making music and singing in a barbershop chorus. Jerry loved fishing, camping, road trips, and planting trees. He planted more than 200 evergreens in his beloved “5-Acre Woods” off Kelly Road.

## **Oh, the Hats You Can Wear!**

*By Kate Birr*

Most readers of this newsletter wear some kind of hat for BAH—a member hat, a volunteer hat, or simply an “interested friend” hat. Having recently taken on a couple more hats, I’ve found that each one changes your perspective, and the more hats you try on, the more interesting it gets.

### **Founder Hat**

As a BAH founder, I think I wore a beanie. I did some of the geeky, technical stuff during our start-up. Thank goodness I had lots of help! It was inspiring to be in from the beginning, striving together to achieve something none of us had ever done.



### **Task Force Volunteer Hat**

Founders morphed into task force volunteers, with each task force taking on some aspect of village development, in my case publicity. As chair of what is now the publicity committee, I rarely give orders because I’m fortunate to work with a crew of talented self-starters, with lots of good ideas.



### Office Volunteer Hat

When BAH reverted to all-volunteer operations last fall, I decided it was time to take a turn in the office. That's where the magic happens. I hadn't appreciated how much we depend on the office to keep things running smoothly or how challenging the work is. Not only do office volunteers take calls and line up assistance volunteers, they themselves frequently provide the assistance too. And they keep the place organized. And they answer lots of questions and figure out lots of problems. It's a great group of folks to work with. (And if you can manage 4 hours a week, we'd be much obliged to have you join us!)



### Assistance Volunteer Hat

I said the magic happens in the office, but I'm in awe of all the volunteers who work directly with members. I finally got the training so I could help members too. I'm not a handyperson, and I don't want to drive, but I've found my niche for now as a pet caregiver, and I'm keeping my eye on the office job board for other tasks. Wearing this hat has given me a chance to get to know other members—and some sweet pets.



### Member Hat

This is my personal favorite. I wear it to our potlucks, our conversation groups, our famous Slo-mo Brewery Crawl. Belonging is the real reward. It's reassuring to know I can get help when I need it, and I do need it from time to time, particularly with my computer and with handyman chores. It's even better to enjoy the friends I've made, no matter what hat I've got on. There are so many ways to be part of BAH. I do recommend trying on different hats to gain insight into just what we're about, to see how the different groups work within BAH and how we fill a real need in the community.



## Low Vision? Support Is Close at Hand

Vision loss among the elderly is a major health problem. According to the National Federation of the Blind (NFB), about one person in three has some form of vision-reducing eye disease by the age of 65, commonly age-related macular degeneration, glaucoma, cataract, and diabetic retinopathy. Some of these conditions can be held at bay or reversed with proper medical care. This is why it's so important to see your eye doctor regularly.

If you are struggling to adjust to life with less acute vision, please know that the United Blind of Whatcom County holds a Low Vision Support group meeting at BSAC the first Wednesday of every month from 1-2:30 pm in Room 9. No need to call before showing up. If you need a ride, call the BAH office the week before and we'll find a volunteer to pick you up.

## There's a Senior Discount for That

*By Lauren Phillips*

Many retailers will offer a small discount to seniors who ask for it—a big help with big ticket items like hearing aids and furniture especially. Individual locations may differ in their senior discount policies and those policies may change, so you may want to call first—but if you don't ask you'll never know!

I took some of this information from the very helpful Seniorliving.org (<https://www.seniorliving.org/finance/senior-discounts/>), but similar information is available from a lot of different sites as well as individual chain and store sites.



- Kohl's: Kohl's offers senior discounts—up to 15% off—every Wednesday.
- Ross Stores: Seniors can get 10 percent off on Tuesdays.
- Walgreens: Using your Balance Rewards, you can save 20% off one time a month.
- Rite Aid: Seniors can get a 10% discount on Tuesdays—plus 10% off on prescriptions.
- Banana Republic: Seniors can get up to 10% off.
- Home Depot: Home Depot does not offer specific senior discounts. However, it does price match the discounts that other retailers may offer for the same product in their location.
- Big Lots: Some locations offer discount savings cards good for 10% off.
- Goodwill: One of the best known locations for savings—seniors get 20% off on Wednesdays in Bellingham.
- Ross Dress for Less: Seniors get 10% off on Tuesdays in Bellingham.
- Amazon: If you are an AARP member you can save 50% on certain Kindle e-books, 10 percent on Kindle e-readers, and 10% on audio and print books.
- Lowe's: Senior veterans can receive 10% off of eligible purchases.

## SENIOR CITIZEN DISCOUNTS



Source: Pinterest.co.uk

locations.

- Outback Steakhouse: Get 10% off your entire meal with your AARP membership card.
- Chili's: Seniors over 55 are eligible to receive 10% off of their bill.

### **Restaurant Discounts**

Chain restaurants often offer senior discounts across the board, independents rarely. Again, asking is the best policy.

- iHop: Senior discounts, up to 10% off, apply to meal prices and drinks.
- Golden Corral: Discounts vary from one location to the next.
- Denny's: Many locations offer up to 15% off; AARP members could get a significantly lower price.
- Taco Bell: Most locations provide individuals with a discount of 5% off your meal as well as free beverages when requested.
- Subway: Senior discounts of 10% are available in some

## ALL Launches Spring Term



Western Washington University's Academy for Lifelong Learning launches its spring term in March, featuring 24 courses; some are single sessions, some spread out over a number of weeks.

First up is Six Plays by Aristophanes starting March 4th; the last courses, The Golden Age of Islam and The Turbulent 1960s and Their Aftermath, both start on June 4th. In between, there's a truly wide range, including Overview of Washington's Geologic Landscape, Japanese Aesthetics for Your Home, Palynology: Some Pollen Is Not to Be Sneezed at, The Library of Congress—More Than You Ever Imagined, and Salmon in the Salish Sea/Salmon Recovery in Whatcom County.

BAH member John Lawler, professor emeritus of linguistics at the University of Michigan, is teaching What Kinds of Language Are There? (April 21,28 and May 5, 1-3 pm, at the Bellingham Cruise Terminal)

Visit [https://oce.wvu.edu/files/all/pdf/ALL\\_Spring20\\_Catalog\\_Final2.pdf](https://oce.wvu.edu/files/all/pdf/ALL_Spring20_Catalog_Final2.pdf) for detailed information on all courses and instructors and instructions on how to register.

## Next Step on the Slo-Mo Brewery Crawl...



...is the Stone's Throw Brewing Co. at 1009 Larabee in Fairhaven. Come join us around the cozy fire pit on Monday, March 9th from 4-6 pm.

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

**MARCH**



***Barbara Lancaster  
Karen Kaufmann  
Brenda Karasik***

***Colleen Hyde  
Howard Evans  
Janice Claussen***

And a warm

**WELCOME**

to our newest member,

***Beverly Blair***

### **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.