



Bellingham
At Home

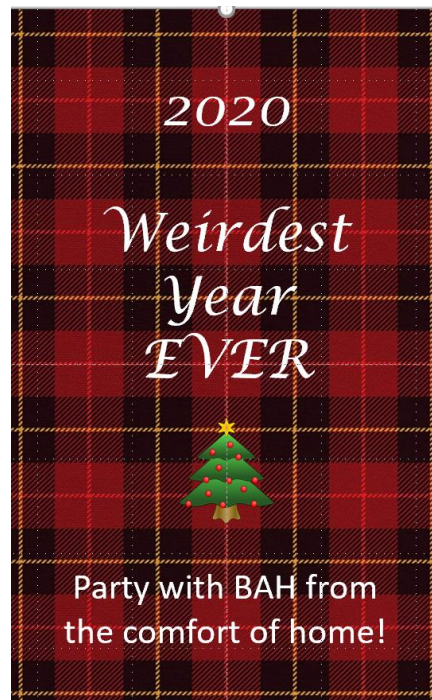
Your Village Voice – December 2020

*You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, smarter than you think,
and loved more than you'll ever know. – A.A. Milne*

Home for the Holidays

Join us for Bellingham At Home's **Share the Holidays** Zoom event on Tuesday, December 22 at 4:00 p.m., for all members and volunteers. Wear holiday clothes or an Ugly Sweater (optional). Bring your drink of choice, a favorite holiday food to show or describe, and a holiday memory to share! We're hoping to have a bit of musical entertainment.

See you on Zoom! (Watch for reminders. A Zoom invitation will be in a future Update, or call the Office for details.)



Creating a Safe and Comfortable Home For People of All Ages and Abilities

Everyone wants their home to be safe and comfortable for them and their loved ones. The most frequently named desire of seniors is to continue living in their homes for as long as possible. What can we do now to make sure our homes will accommodate our changing needs and abilities as we age? AARP has created HomeFit, a program aimed at achieving just this goal.

BAH has invited the AARP Associate State Director, Karen Kafantaris, to walk us through the HomeFit guidance, designed to help people create 'lifelong homes.' Come and hear room-by-room suggestions that are doable regardless of housing type (single-family house, apartment, mobile home, etc.) or ownership status (owner, renter).

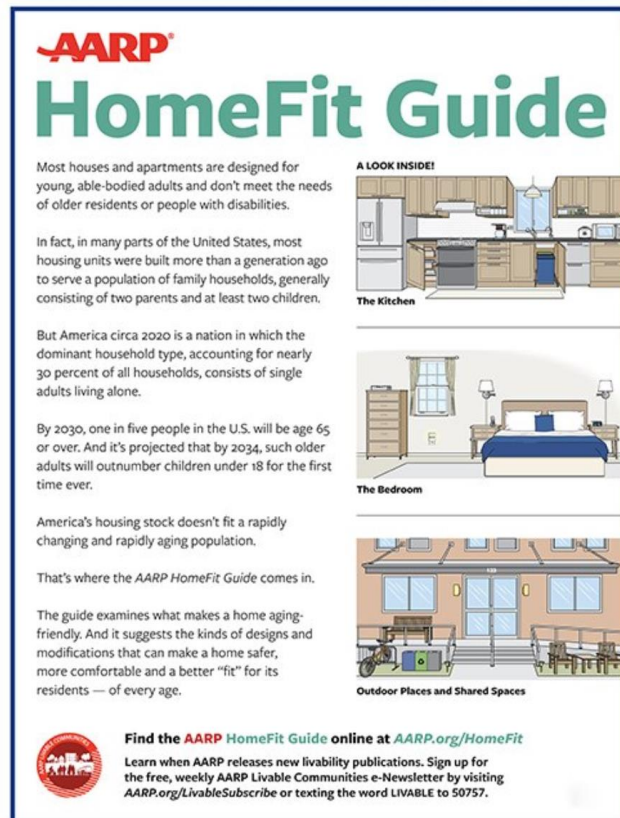
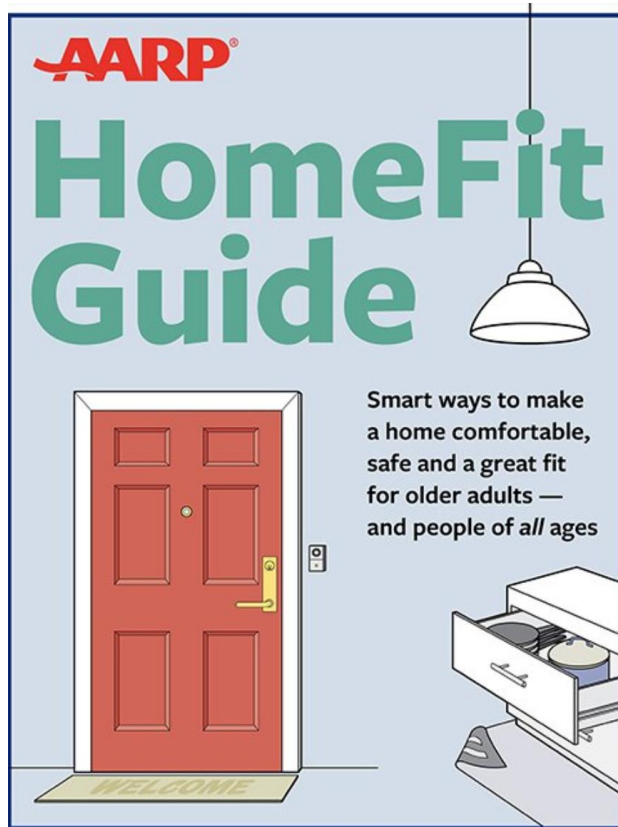
If you are a volunteer, member, or friend of BAH or BSAC, please plan to join us on Wednesday, December 16, at 10 a.m. for a 90-minute Zoom presentation. There will be time for questions and answers.

Here is the weblink to register for this event:

<https://aarp.cvent.com/AARPHomeFitprogram>

In addition, you can download the 2020 HomeFit Guide from AARP at:

<https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/housing/info-2020/homefit-guide.html>



Meet Our New Nominees for the Leadership Council

We look forward to welcoming Cat and Iris to the LC once they have been approved by our parent organization, WCOA.



Cat McIntyre

I have lived in Bellingham since 1994. Prior to that I worked overseas for 13 years with the Peace Corps and the U.S. Agency for International Development in Haïti, Le-sotho, and Mali. In Bellingham, I worked for WWU helping a professor organize his office, then at the Opportunity Council in the housing office working with low-income adults and writing grant applications. Later I worked for Peace Health St. Joseph Medical Center, evaluating preventative health programs and writing grant applications for Whatcom Hospice and other health programs. For seven years I worked as a medical social worker at Whatcom Hospice.

Since retirement in 2011, I have traveled extensively and volunteered with the Whatcom Literacy Council, Pickford Film Center, and Bellingham At Home. I am a member of the Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship, where I co-facilitate Black Lives Matter and teach high school religious education. I am

a senior living alone and wish to stay independent and at home as long as possible—and I want to support others who feel that way, too. I expect to continue my BAH office shift to stay on top of what we do and how we do it. I look forward to being able to give back in a new way, to offer those energetic BAH pioneer leaders a break they deserve, and to better understand "how the sausage is made."



Iris Parker

After living in the Philadelphia, PA area for all of our lives, my husband, Kevin and I decided to start our next phase of life in Bellingham, joining our son, daughter-in-law, and grandsons. We have two daughters who live with their families in Houston and Maryland. My career spanned 40 years in the field of education. I taught full day kindergarten and, following the birth of our son, I trained adults to use new data base systems in the 1980s. Then I earned a master's degree in Educational Leadership and spent the next 25 years in public education as a middle school teacher and then as a principal at a middle school and a high school, giving me a deep understanding of how people learn, no matter their age.

I have always enjoyed my work with people, especially when the overarching goal was to help make their lives better. Having an elderly mother, I understand the needs of older folks and how to effectively communicate with them. Over the past three years, I've become involved in a number of community organizations such as Bellingham Public Schools, BSAC, Congregation Beth Israel, and the YMCA in addition to BAH. With the COVID-19 quarantine, I have much more time to give to the LC and anticipate that to continue for the foreseeable future.

Support Buddies Are Ready and Waiting for Your Call

We have a new batch of volunteers ready to bring cheer and support your way!

If you'd like a bit more regular contact with someone during the dreary winter, just let the office or your cluster contact know. Maybe you just want a more frequent phone check-in, or maybe you'd like someone to help you plan or think through something. Maybe you'd even like someone to have an outside 'porch' visit with (if/when that is safe again). Having more contact with others is important in these wet, inside days. Maybe there's something you're worrying about and you just want a good listener.

Don't be shy about asking..... Like wearing a mask, even a simple phone call helps both you *and* the caller.

Do You Need Ideas for Celebrating the Holidays Alone? Of Course You Do!

By Lauren Phillips

Planning to gather with family or friends on Zoom this holiday season? Great – but you can't Zoom all day, right? Here are some ideas to mull over, borrowed (read stolen) from a variety of sources...

Your menu, your rules. Nobody will know if you skip the turkey this year in favor of a plethora of your favorite side dishes. Or try out a totally new recipe; if it flops, who cares? Or, if cooking is your joy, go all out and make yourself a five-course dinner with petite portions.

Have a holiday film festival. You know all those holiday movies only you love? No need to choose, watch'em all—or just watch *Love Actually* or *A Wonderful Life* all day long.

Dedicate the day to self-care. If you're in the mood for a mani-pedi or face mask, there's never been a better time. Or a bubble bath! Think sleeping in, ordering in, and taking a nap! Think firing up some cinnamon spice potpourri and reading the day away.



[Pinterest.com](https://www.pinterest.com)

Treat yourself to a festive drink. Check out recipes for holiday cocktails (or mocktails). Maybe make up a batch of your own homemade warm hard (or soft) cider.

Decorate! Put a few decorations on a plant instead of getting a tree. Put out some festive-smelling candles. Make a "house of cards." Wrap yourself in tinsel. Put on your favorite holiday music – you won't be out and about enough this season to get sick of The Little Drummer Boy.

Make Holiday Calls. Not everyone likes Zoom but you can be pretty sure that anyone and everyone will be glad to get your call—they're lonely, too, right? Or facetime with a friend on your cell phones; it's much warmer and more personal than Zoom.

Go for a long walk. Unless it's freezing or pouring, this can be a great way to stimulate your senses and come home with an appetite and an appreciation of

everything flannel.

Make a list of everything you're grateful for. Check it twice, put it up on the fridge or tuck it into a frame or use it as a bookmark—you'll probably find yourself adding to it during the day.

And if you do Zoom with loved ones and find things a little stiff or sad or awkward or boring, try doing something rather than just talking: play charades, or bingo, or have a singing or story contest, or hold a fashion show. Make a good joke the price for joining.

Whatever you do, stay warm, stay safe, remind yourself that next year will be better, and make the most of this one!

Dear Gabby: Pandemic Etiquette

By Elaine Cress

How should one behave during a pandemic? Last month, Dear Gabby, BAH's self-styled Emily Post, invited readers to submit questions.



Dear Gabby,

What's the proper etiquette for approaching someone on the bus who is wearing their mask UNDER their nose (for heaven's sake!)?

--Incensed but Timid

Dear Incensed but Timid,

Looking on the bright side, the bus rider was wearing a mask. Perhaps wearing it under the nose to clear the fog from their glasses, which happens when wearing the mask properly. While you are understandably incensed, approaching the "under-the-nose" mask wearer could potentially expose you to more virus. Caution may be the safer approach as you

look for a seat safely *behind* this person and if possible, in an isolated area. A cheery “good morning” or a friendly wave will help reduce that feeling of separation that we get from wearing a mask.

We are all in this together. Good luck and stay safe.

Have questions about how to deal with holiday family gatherings? Send Dear Gabby your questions at deargabby98225@gmail.com.

Festival of Trees Moves Online

BSAC’s largest fundraising event to support Senior Center programs is moving online this year. The Festival of Trees will feature a live auction of beautifully decorated Christmas trees and a silent auction filled with gift certificates, hand-made holiday items, dinners at local restaurants, and more! This is a fun way to virtually get together with community supporters and bid on trees to take home or to donate to another organization.

Another way to help with Festival of Trees is to donate an item or a basket for the silent auction. If you have something to donate for this cause, contact Eric Pierson at epierson@whatcomcoa.org.



To register to bid on trees or other items, starting on November 27, visit <http://charityauction.bid/BellinghamFestivalOfTrees>, which will send you instructions. And don’t forget to “attend” – it’s coming up soon: Friday, December 4, at 6 p.m.

Talking about the “D” Word

By Angela Mercy & Nancy Simmers

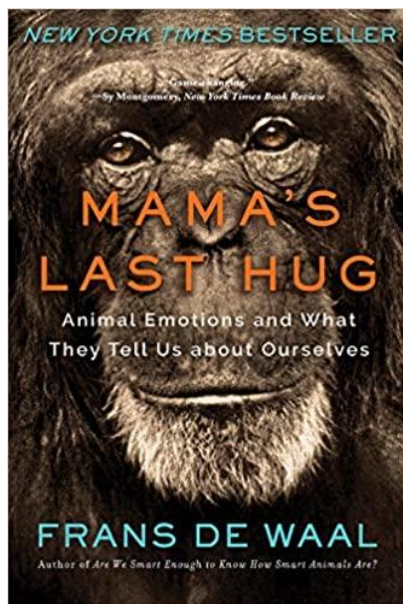
Just as our generation reclaimed authority over giving birth, many of us want the same opportunity around planning and preparing for death. Beyond the basic legal document known as the Advanced Directive, there are detailed questionnaires to help us consider the way we want to be treated and cared for in our dying time. There are opportunities to influence how and when we die, like Voluntary Stopping Eating and Drinking (VSED) and Death with Dignity acts currently in effect in nine states, including Washington. There are new options for disposition of our bodies such as green burial and recompose. We have the option of taking care of our own dead through home funerals, wakes and vigils.

We will co-facilitate a discussion group around these topics. We have both have been part of end-of-life care teams for loved ones and others; have washed, bathed, and dressed bodies; have created sacred spaces, planned wakes and vigils, participated in interments, witnessed cremations, and designed and officiated at graveside services and celebrations of life. Nancy, a retired nurse, is currently a volunteer with End-of-Life-Washington and the coordinator for VSED Resources NW. Angela is a former hospice volunteer who has been deeply informed by her experiences with deaths of loved ones.

The shape and direction of the group will be determined by its members. We'll begin wherever the interest is and then follow the curiosity of the group. While between us we have a wealth of practical experience, we may well bring in various experts when appropriate. We're doing this because we love thinking and talking about this fascinating topic—and because we know from experience that life is better when it unabashedly embraces all our moments, including death.

Our organizing meeting will be December 9 at 1 p.m. on Zoom. Among other things we'll decide when and how often to meet. Please email angela.mercy@bellinghamathome.org with questions or to register.

A Book Club Selection with Wide Appeal



Rats' faces express joy when the animals are tickled.

Fairness matters to monkeys.

Pigs experience hope.

These and other fascinating facts are explored in lively prose by primate behavior researcher and best-selling author Frans de Waal in his new book, *Mama's Last Hug: Animal Emotions and What They Tell Us about Ourselves*, which puts to rest the notion that humans alone experience a broad range of emotions.

In her review on NPR (<https://www.npr.org/2019/03/01/698902400/mamas-last-hug-makes-case-that-humans-are-not-alone-in-experiencing-emotions>) author and anthropology professor emerita Barbara J. King explains that Mama, the animal of the book's title, was the matriarch of the chimpanzee colony at Burgers Zoo in Arnhem, the Netherlands.

“A skilled negotiator who exerted immense influence over the other chimpanzees in her group, Mama was an individual for whom de Waal felt enormous respect and affection: ‘I had never sensed such wisdom and poise in any species other than my own.’

“Mama is the hook for de Waal's broader argument, in which he chips away, example by example, at any notion of human exceptionalism in the emotional realm.... De Waal has no patience for accusations of anthropomorphism, the idea that we merely project our emotions onto other species; it's anthropodenial that worries him, the refusal to recognize the similarity between ourselves and other animals.”

King concludes that, in *Mama's Last Hug*, de Waal contributes immensely to an ethical sea change for animals.

The BAH Book Club will delve into this provocative and riveting book at 2 p.m. on December 23. Call the office to register and we'll send you the Zoom link to join us.

Staying Connected Through a COVID-19 Winter

By Angela Mercy

After five-plus years on the BAH Volunteer Committee, I'm changing hats. While Iris Parker takes over Volunteers, I will reactivate the Activities Committee and hope to populate BAH's calendar with events and activities to help keep us engaged, entertained, and connected through the long COVID winter.

An Activities Committee needs folks with varied interests to come up with a well-rounded events calendar. For example, if I'm the only one working on this, there will be no sports events on the calendar!

While there's no lack of things to do virtually, you may be missing the pleasure of sharing these activities with other people. We might be able to generate more excitement (subdued, of course) by sharing links, attending activities together (virtually, that is) and getting together to talk about our experience. This is easy to do.

Once you identify an online event you'd like to share with other BAH members, here's how to proceed:

- Request that BAH set up a Zoom meeting for the 'after party.'
- Write up an invitation for others to join you in both the event and the 'after party' (including links to both).
- Send the invitation to kate.birr@bellinghamathome.org by the Saturday before the event, and it will be in BAH's weekly Update.

Or you maybe you'd like to create an on-going virtual interest group. For example:

- stitch and b____ group
- watercolor hour
- classical music listening group
- movie discussion group
- civic engagement or current events group

Another way to participate is simply to identify unusual or interesting online activities you think other members might want to pursue. Email the details to Kate Birr at kate.birr@bellinghamathome.org, and she'll put them in the BAH weekly Update on a space-available basis. For example, the most unusual online event I've encountered will take you birdwatching virtually in a Hawaiian wildlife refuge. (Still available at <https://birdfesthawaii.org>.)

Whatever your idea, BAH's Activities Committee is here to help. Email me at angela.mercy@bellinghamathome.org.

Seeing each other on a screen isn't the same as being together, but it's what we have right now. Let's make the best of it!

Nature & Joy

By Richard Abbott (BAH member) and Jessica Abbott Williams (his daughter)

After reading the excellent November issue of Your Village Voice, I was inspired to share it with my daughter Jessica, who lives in California. There was much to like in it; I knew she would especially enjoy the poem I Want to Age Like Sea Glass, and the book review of The Enchanted Life. Jessie and I agreed that reflection on our connection to the world around us seems an appropriate response to the isolation and separation we are all subject to these days. In that vein, she offered a suggestion for a book she had just read and loved. She wrote:



Jessica Abbott Williams

I am a painter and potter and since I spent a lot of time in the studio, I am also an avid consumer of podcasts. I was listening to On Being with Krista Tippet a few weeks back and she was interviewing Michael McCarthy, author of a book entitled *The Moth Snowstorm: On Nature and Joy*. Nature and joy! That's my wheelhouse. I ordered the book post-haste and got right to work reading it. I savored the last 100 pages while away in the country, curling up with the book as the night stars faded into morning light and an owl flew overhead, fixing me in his moon-faced gaze.

The central theme of the book is that our bond to the natural world is what makes us truly human and that our love of it is the best hope for its preservation. I highly recommend the book, as does the *New York Review of Books*: 'McCarthy asks us to consider nature as an intrinsic good and an emotional and spiritual resource, capable of inspiring joy, wonder, and even love.... but at the deepest psychological level it remains our home, with all the feelings of belonging, of yearning, and of love.'

My dad ordered a copy and we shared our thoughts. We both feel that population growth is one of the biggest causes of environmental degradation. As an engineer who spent his career working in international food and agriculture development, he felt that poverty alleviation was the key and while I agree with him, I also feel, as the author does, that we need to foster ways for people to feel love for our planet home, to feel that deep connection to the world around us, a feeling that we are a part of nature and nature is in us. Of course, in practical terms, the hope is that the joy one feels in viewing a beautiful scene in nature will evoke a desire to, perhaps, help restore an animal habitat, or pick up trash on the beach or in a local park, or contribute to a conservation organization.

I miss my parents and we're all growing tired of not being able to see each other. Richard and Marijke live in Bellingham and my husband, our two sons, and I live in Berkeley, California (the town of my father's birth). I just can't wrap my mind around a safe way to be together right now so I'm trying to dig a little deeper to find ways to connect in ways that might not satisfy like a snuggle on the sofa would, but could feel meaningful nonetheless. Reading and sharing this book with my parents was my way of doing that.

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



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

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.