



Age is something that doesn't matter, unless you are a cheese. –Luis Buñuel

Just around the Corner: A Paid Program Coordinator

By Linda Knudsen McAusland, Leadership Council

Volunteers are the best. Nobody knows that better than Bellingham At Home. But there comes a time when paid help is the only way forward. The time is now. (The sound you hear is all the Leadership Council, Task Force, and Office volunteers breathing a ragged sigh of relief.)

The BAH Program Coordinator will be a half-time position charged with carrying out the strategic objectives of the organization: to engage new and maintain current membership, to communicate Bellingham At Home's story, and to ensure smooth and efficient organizational functioning. He/she will have administrative, fiscal, programmatic, supervisory, and media responsibilities.



Kate Birr posts tasks on the Leadership Council task collage as Linda Knudsen McAusland leads the exercise on March 11.

The demi-god we're looking for is a creative, high-energy problem-solver able to embrace and support the organization as it moves into its second year of operation: someone who is flexible, customer service oriented, organized, and a good communicator with proficient computer skills with Windows, Microsoft applications, social media, and the Internet.

Over the past few weeks, the Leadership Council, in concert with the Task Forces, has been working hard to develop the Program Coordinator work plan and training schedule. We hope to have the new person on board around the beginning of June. Please spread the word!

You can see the program coordinator position description on the [website](#).

Goodbye & Hello

Bellingham At Home says a fond farewell to Marie Mellinger, our very first volunteer and the person who has managed our contact list since 2014! Marie, thank you so much—enjoy your much-deserved retirement! And hello to whatever stalwart volunteer steps up to take over the mailing project. Could that be you?

Sick Call

If you know a member who's ailing—sick or injured—please contact the office (360 746-3462) or email info@bellinghamathome.org and let us know so we can show that person some love.



So You Don't Need Help. But Could You Use It?

By Elaine Cress, Leadership Council, Chair Membership Task Force

I have never participated in an old-fashioned barn-raising, but in my romantic notion, it is about community coming together to help a member of the community. That is how I see Bellingham At Home. It is a community of people coming together to build community connection and remain independent.

Frequently, we hear from our members that they haven't asked for help because they don't need it. When I ask, "When will you 'need' help?" the response is frequently, "I'm still able to do my own housework, drive, and get around just fine. I have my membership in Bellingham At Home to ensure that it will be there when I 'need' it."

But the family in need of a barn is usually not frail or incapable of building one, they just understand that it's easier, quicker, and more fun if everyone lends a hand, whether they're hammering or sawing or cooking or watching the kids as the barn goes up. So it is with BAH. No one is going to ask why you don't do it yourself if you ask for help—even if you work alongside the volunteer to get the job done faster. Allow me to illustrate with a personal example.

In February, I thought, wow, I could use some help getting my flower beds ready for spring. I am a member of Bellingham At Home, so why haven't I asked for it? This was not heavy gardening. It involved cutting back dead growth, light weeding, carrying the clippings to the clean-green bin, and sweeping up. I could do it myself, but it requires a lot of bending and stooping. So in February I called the office and requested a volunteer. But when the date arrived, I felt the strangest feeling come over me. Would the volunteer judge me if I was able to do the yardwork myself? Would I need to remain in the house and act frail? Neither, as it turned out. At the appointed time, the volunteer and his wife showed up, ready to go to work. Both my husband and I helped. Instead of 7 hours, it took just 2½. My back was a bit tired and so was I, and my husband had some sore muscles, but we both recovered quickly. And we had a (metaphorical) barn!

Aging independently doesn't mean always going it alone—and "need" means whatever *you* decide it is. I invite you to think of Bellingham At Home as a community coming together to make light work of whatever the project is. Whether gardening or sewing or hanging a picture, you don't have to be incapable of doing it to ask for help. (Now if you actually need a barn raised, we will likely have to provide you with our list of recommended commercial service providers.)



Volunteers Bob and Betsey Marshall help with spring cleanup at Elaine's home.



How many volunteers does it take to change a lightbulb? Apparently two.

Introducing Member Notices

Requested by several members, Member Notices are a way for us to communicate with each other about personal items of interest. We hope to make the feature available with the newsletter (scroll to the end to see our first one) until members become familiar with using the more flexible and expansive Forums on our website. Member postings will be seen by the 400+ people who receive the newsletter, not only members.

To help with the transition from newsletter notices to the Bellingham At Home website Forums, we will post your notice in the forum "Member Notices." To post your own, you can go to <http://bellinghamathome.org>, log in to your account, click Membership Services and then click Forums. You'll find Member Notices under "General (all members)."

Guidelines for posting a member notice:

- Share non-political news and items of interest to you: ask questions, start a conversation, see if someone wants to join you on that upcoming trip to Seattle. Promoting events is OK, selling goods or services is not. (Use the BAH Member Forums on the website if you have something to sell.)
- No more than 100 words per posting. Include a brief subject at the beginning, any dates or contact information, and your name.
- Limit one posting per month per member. We will publish up to 6 postings per month.
- Send posting via email to info@bellinghamathome.org with "Member Notice" in the subject. Or mail your posting to Bellingham At Home, 315 Halleck St., Bellingham 98225.
- Deadline for submitting a posting is the 15th of the month preceding publication of the newsletter. We will accept the first six notices that meet these criteria. If your submission doesn't make the next edition, you may re-submit for the following month.
- BAH reserves the right to refuse postings. We will contact you if we think your posting isn't appropriate or if it needs to be modified.

BSAC Chocolate Candy Workshop. No, Really.



Sign up at the front desk for a hands-on class featuring instruction from forty-year chocolatier Randy Sager, previously owner of the Anacortes Chocolate Factory and Boehm's Candy chocolate maker. Leave with one pound of your personal chocolate creations! April 5 at BSAC, 2 p.m., \$25. Space is limited, so sign up now.

That's Randy on the left.

Using the BAH Website: Start by Logging in

By Marilyn Burlingame

The Bellingham At Home website is a good way to connect with other members. It can help answer questions you may have, such as when is my renewal due? Or when is the next Lunch Bunch? Or what's going on with the interest group I joined?

In late April, Bellingham at Home will be offering classes to help you get started using the website. If you are interested, please call the office (360-746-3462) to sign up. We'll be in touch with more details.

Meanwhile, here's how to log in:

- Click the [link to our website](#). Or, in your computer's browser, in the address bar at the top, type bellinghamathome.org.
- Hit the Enter/Return key, and the computer will display our home page.
- Click on Member Login in the upper right hand corner; this will bring up the Login window.
- Enter the user name and password you were given. (If you can't remember, call the office for help.)
- Click the Login button. Does your name appear in the upper right hand corner?

Bravo! You're logged in.

Stats! Hot Stats! Get Your Stats Right Here!

113	Number of individual members
89	Number of households, including 1 new household in February (welcome!)
2	Number of associate members
195	Service requests since July, including 30 in February

Membership Matters

Spotlight on Phyllis Shacter

In the way that sometimes happens when the stars align, the skills Phyllis Shacter mastered in her three previous careers—teaching math and music, doing consultative selling, and, with her late husband Alan, providing computer and technology consulting for the legal profession—prepared her perfectly for her current career, “the most meaningful in my life.”



Phyllis is a leader of the movement to empower people to expand their choices about how and when they die. She was Alan's advocate so he could voluntarily stop eating and drinking (VSED) rather than live into the late stages of Alzheimer's disease. This is the subject of her TEDx Talk, her public speaking, her website (www.PhyllisShacter.com), and the first national VSED conference, which she helped to organize. And it is the subject of her book, “Choosing to Die,” available on Amazon April 1.

As she catches her breath from writing the book nonstop for the past four months and gets ready for her book tour, she draws energy from the same foundation she put down almost 30 years ago. “I do yoga every day, I meditate every day, and I have a walk in nature every day, no matter how busy I am.”

Bellingham is the biggest place “country girl” Phyllis has lived, having arrived here from tiny Placerville, CA, and it “feels more like home than any place I've ever lived.” She has no biological family here and that's just fine, she says.

“No matter how loving a family is, it can never replace the energy and gestalt that exists in a community,” she says, refreshingly turning the usual wisdom on its head. “Being part of a community is very important to me. I found the most

meaningful community in Bellingham in the Center for Spiritual Living—that’s where I had the most support in the difficult years with my husband.”

Now BAH has become another community, one that she supported with seed money. “At first I didn’t want to join what I thought of as a bunch of old people. I’m blessed with very good health and energy, everything’s working and I’m very active—I do improvisational dance, drumming. At the same time, I’m very aware of our vulnerability as we age and how things can change very quickly. I want to know that I have someone at my back.”

She’s called for volunteer help with “seemingly little things that eat up a lot of psychic and emotional energy,” like changing out her shower cartridge and replacing her emergency water containers.

“Every time I’ve needed assistance, I’ve called the office and it’s arrived in a timely fashion. This is a tangible benefit. The intangible benefit is knowing that the help is always available. This is priceless.”

Come Join BAH before the Membership Fee goes up

Come this July, Bellingham At Home will celebrate its first birthday. We have 113 members in 89 households right now, 65 volunteers who have so far met more than 195 service requests, and scores of happy memories—like lunches and potlucks, holiday celebrations, book group meetings and meditation meetings, classes in weight training and classes in getting organized, and the odd talent show (just slightly odd ☺).

By July, those numbers will have grown and so will our membership fee, from the Charter Year price of \$350/yr. to \$450/yr. This will help pay for a part-time coordinator and the development of more services and events tailored to our members’ specific wants and needs. So join us now, before July 1, and get a full year of membership for \$350 for the first member of your household, plus \$50 for each additional household member. If you know people who are teetering on the edge of joining, a gentle push might be in order.

BAH Charter Members, those who joined before July 2016, are sitting pretty now, with the same fee for their first three consecutive years of membership.

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.



We are introducing Bellingham At Home Member Notices in our April newsletter. The first Member Notice appears below.

Please follow these guidelines when submitting a notice:

- Share non-political news and items of interest to you: ask questions, start a conversation, see if someone wants to join you on that upcoming trip to Seattle. Promoting events is OK, selling goods or services is not. (Use the BAH Member Forums on the website if you have something to sell);
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Book Release Celebration

You’re invited to the April 9 book release celebration for “Choosing to Die” (Amazon), a memoir and guidebook, and the first personal story ever written about Voluntarily Stopping Eating & Drinking (VSED). The book follows the courageous journey author Phyllis Shacter took with her late husband once he decided not to live into the late stages of Alzheimer’s Disease. Phyllis is an advocate for expanding choices about how and when we die. Bring your friends!

April 9, 6 pm at the Center for Spiritual Living, 2224 Yew Street Rd., www.PhyllisShacter.com.