



The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart.

-- Helen Keller

Showstoppers Will Put a Song in Your Heart at BAH's 3rd Annual Holiday Party

Back by popular demand, the award-winning Bellingham High Showstoppers will bring the gift of song for all to celebrate at BAH's 3rd Annual Holiday Party on December 5 at 5:30 p.m. in the Admiral room at the Bellwether Hotel.



Bellingham High School Showstoppers

A 20-member high school vocal group with an impressive record and a stellar sound, the Showstoppers have taken 1st place at the Regional Solo/Ensemble Contest for the past 16 years, winning and placing once at the state contest and being named the Top Academic Choir in 2016. But the key thing to know about the Showstoppers is that they're a lot of fun. Come and have some yourself!

The cost is \$30 per person. Call the office to reserve your space by December 4 and tell us which of three entrees you prefer, and if you need a ride, just ask!



Health Partners: Sharpening Our Vision

By Nanette J. Davis, Committee Chair

Your Bellingham At Home Health Partners Committee is working diligently to create an updated manual on note taking in a health provider's office, using what we've learned already to refine protocols and procedures. Let's look at some of the changes.

First, we've renamed our committee, from Health Advocates to Health Partners. This is more than a name change. We want to emphasize that our volunteers are entering into an equal relationship; rather than advocating *for* a member, we are partnering *with* the member. Our job is to assist, support, and sustain you in your interactions with your health provider, including documenting information and recommendations.

Second, we've added to and clarified protections for members in the BAH privacy document and the Member Waiver Form, providing more information about the member's specific concerns.

Third, we've focused our health partner activity on note-taking in a health provider's office, plus pre- and post-appointment visits or phone calls, curtailing for now any involvement in hospital or rehabilitation centers. This means we can fully support our trained note takers as they support you, acting as an extra pair of ears and eyes.

And let's remember, Bellingham At Home is there for you in any emergency, including illness, surgery, family crisis, and so forth. So if you're planning to have surgery in the future, call on us for assistance before and after. Volunteers can provide home assistance: bring meals, clean your house, or pick up your pet from the vet. Just call our friendly office staff for note taking and other assistance at 360-746-3462.

Things to be Thankful For – and Ways to Give Back

By Colleen Harper

So far in the first 10 months of 2018 Bellingham At Home volunteers have fulfilled 503 requests for assistance from members. That is more than the *total* requests filled in 2017, putting us on track to be 25% more effective at filling our members' requests this year.

Our volunteers have collectively spent 1078 hours working directly with members: assisting with grocery shopping, providing respite care for family caregivers, helping with household chores, transporting to appointments, and changing furnace filters and smoke detector batteries. These small tasks add up to a huge difference in our members' lives.

Our newest program development is Health Partners, as reported above by Nanette Davis. They are invaluable to the members who are using their services. Health Partners help members compose their questions before an appointment, take detailed notes of what happens during the appointment, and follow up with members after treatment.

In November we added five new volunteers to our team, all talented, dedicated people who are choosing Bellingham At Home as a great organization to work with. There's something to be thankful for!

We are looking forward to growing our program in 2019 by adding both members and volunteers.

Now, a few ideas for giving back. Does one of these fit your skillset?

- Talk to your friends, family, neighbors, and community about Bellingham At Home. This is one of the most effective ways you can help. Bring a friend and join us on December 12th at 1:00 p.m. in room 16 for light refreshments and an informal introduction to BAH.
- Do you have blank greeting cards at home in a drawer? The Bellingham At Home office is always looking for cards: Birthday, Get Well, Thank You. We would gladly accept your donation of cards at the office!
- Could you be an Event Ambassador? We are looking for members and volunteers that want to attend community events with Bellingham At Home members. As an Event Ambassador, you confirm dates, times, cost, and other details of the community event and communicate to the office. The office will collect RSVP's through email and phone and arrange rides for members who need transportation. The ambassador will follow up with attendees in the days before the planned event to communicate specifics and attend the event along with the members. It could be a trip to the museum, a shopping trip to a craft festival, a movie, an educational event, or just a walk in the park. Build community and have fun doing it!

More about the Event Ambassador program next month.



Your Outreach Update

We're combining our last Outreach Information Session of the year with an informal holiday get-together on December 12 at 1 p.m. in room 16, BSAC. This means refreshments, people! So bring a friend who might be interested in BAH, or call another member from your neighborhood (even if you don't know them) and plan to come together. Or just come yourself and help us meet and greet potential members.

Many thanks to Bob Hendricks and helpers Brenda Lawrence, Judy Perry, and Janet Simpson for staffing the BAH outreach table at the Downtown Food Coop on November 7th and at the Cordata Coop on the 13th. We'll be there each month on two different Fridays, so if you're shopping then, stop by and say Hey.



Sikhism: A Relative Newcomer among Religions is Firmly Established in Whatcom County

By John Lawler

Who knew? Sikhism is the world's fifth largest organized religion. Satpal Sidhu, a Sikh who happens to be a [Whatcom County Council member](#), spoke to a large group at BSAC on November 13. Like Hinduism and Buddhism, we learn, Sikhism began in India, but unlike these religions, the Sikh religion was founded less than 500 years ago, at a time of conflict among Muslims and Hindus.



Satpal Sidhu

Suiting the date—close to Armistice/Remembrance/Veterans Day—the talk was accompanied by a movie about Sikh volunteers in the British forces. From the start, Sidhu tells us, Sikhs have faced repression, which has led them to approach the world as soldiers, defending not only their own but others whose cause they support, including the British in both World Wars. Sikh soldiers, in various armies, are usually distinguished by their turbans. In Whatcom County, we often identify Sikh men by the turban they wear, but as Sidhu, who does not wear one, points out, that's not a definitive marker.

Sikhs live all over the world – there are over a million in North America, including more than 7,000 in Whatcom County alone, where Sikh farmers are responsible for over half of the blueberry and raspberry production – but they are concentrated in India, particularly in the Punjab region of northern India and Pakistan, where the religion was founded. To this day, the Sikh Holy book, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, is written in Punjabi characters, though there are many different languages represented in it.

At the Sikh Gurdwara, or temple (there's one in Lynden), worship consists of readings from the holy book (everyone is encouraged to read to those present), followed by a vegetarian feast, where anyone is welcome to cook and to eat. This follows a long tradition of hospitality to all races, sexes, classes, castes, and religions, which has been a basic part of Sikhism since its beginning.

If you would like to visit a Gurdwara in Whatcom County, you can call 360 398-1184 for more information.

Membership Matters

Spotlight on Vickie Knechtel

By Lauren Phillips

After four years of moving around—including three moves in just the last year since she moved to Bellingham!—Vickie Knechtel is home for good, snug in her own little house. As an independent person who lives alone, she is happy to have Bellingham At Home “as a backup.” For one thing, if her torn meniscus needs surgery (it’s been acting up lately), she may need some help walking her dog. As a reader, Vickie is also looking forward to joining the BAH book club and doing some volunteering of her own now that she’s settled.

“I don’t live far from the Senior Center. I could actually walk there once my knee gets better.”

When we talked, she had just come from seeing *Exhibition on Screen: Degas: Passion for Perfection* at the Limelight, and I asked her if she was a movie person or an art person. Both, it turns out.

“I love movies and I’m kind of an amateur artist. Late in life, I have decided to explore art, something I always wanted to do. I had always dreamed of moving to New Mexico, as well, and after my husband died, I actually did it. I stayed for three years, taking art classes and learning silversmithing to do jewelry art. I’ve given that up now, at 77 I just don’t want

to deal with a torch anymore. I do drawing and painting instead and I’m taking art classes at Whatcom Community College.”



Vickie with Lily in New Mexico

She is also a knitter. In fact, she’s part of a knitting group that’s been meeting once a month for more than 30 years. And she gets together regularly with several old single friends that are very active. She may be new to Bellingham, but she’s no stranger to Whatcom County. Vickie and her husband raised their son and daughter on a cattle ranch in Maple Falls. She ran the ranch while her husband, a gifted studio musician who fled Hollywood for the great outdoors, continued touring and flying out to LA to do albums.

Larry Knechtel was a Grammy award-winning bassist and keyboard artist, part of the legendary Wrecking Crew of session musicians who played on thousands of studio recordings and were featured in a terrific documentary of the same name. (You can grab it at the library or Film Is Truth video store.) He was also part of the band Bread and toured with Elvis Costello and later the Dixie Chicks.

Vickie worked for the Upward Bound program at WWU for a while but “during the years when I would probably have had a career, I was actually quite ill. They didn’t really know what was going on for quite a long time. It turned out that it was an immune system disorder. I get infusions now to help my immune system and that solved everything.”

A happy immune system, her own home, an active life, old friends and new... Maybe traveling in the future, something she has enjoyed in the past. Vickie Knechtel considers herself a lucky person. And BAH is lucky to have her as a new member.

She’ll be at our holiday party December 5th, so be sure to look for her and say welcome; she’ll be the one limping. That darn torn meniscus.

Welcome, Welcome to our Newest Member!

Please say hello to Barbara Barnes Plourde

A Free-for-All Fixit Outfit

Kitchen mixers, bicycles, paper shredders, vacuums, circular saws, record turntables, picture frames, space heaters... Pretty much anything you can break, North West Free Repairs can fix. (If not, they'll help you recycle.) Your role: supplying any unique parts—they've got the basics—and participating in the work. (Don't worry, they'll show you how.)



North West Free Repairs, which sets up shop from 5 to 7:30 pm at the downtown Bellingham Library on the first and second Tuesdays on each month, is a group of volunteers “dedicated to conserving the earth’s resources and decreasing the burden on our overtaxed landfill areas by repairing and rehabilitating broken household items that would otherwise be discarded.” (Note that, like BAH, they are always happy to welcome new volunteers.)

The one thing they are likely to NOT be able to fix is technology-loaded equipment like computers and cell phones, because they have only one person interested in working on these items.

The next sessions: December 4 and 11, starting up again in the new year on January 8. For more information, visit their website at <https://nwfreerepairs.wordpress.com/>.

Aging in Place Solutions

By Judy Perry

As one of BAH’s representatives to the recent Village to Village Network National Gathering, I attended an interesting session entitled “The Sharing Economy: Changing the Space of Aging.”

We seniors are living in a time much different from the one we grew up in. Many services are offered online or through apps on our phones that we barely understand but that are already making our lives easier; things like UBER, AirBnB, and Etsy. They are all part of the Sharing Economy, an umbrella term often used to describe any economic activity involving online transactions. In this context, it means bringing together resources in transportation, hospitality, housing, and dining to deliver benefits to people who want to stay in their own homes as they get older.

The benefits of sharing include:

- Affordability (pooling resources)
- Social Cohesion (combating loneliness)
- Sustainability (increasing efficiency, reducing waste)
- Security (close-knit communities tend to be safe)
- Independence (managing your own housing and community needs)

In short, becoming members of the shared economy is one strategy to navigate our senior years economically, especially when it comes to staying out of nursing homes and assisted living. Many of us are looking for ways to stay put and have it be a positive experience rather than overwhelming us.

One online service, Silvernest (www.silvernest.com), offers to match people as roommates, using a model based in the founder's own experiences with her family. It creates a profile, searches for a match, and then performs background checks. And after a match is made, they provide ongoing support, including mediation.

There were many gadgets and gizmos being shown at the convention to help with communication and safety—but another real live person in the house? That could work!!

Many Happy Returns of the Day

Here's a shout-out to our members celebrating a birthday in December:

Jerry Lawson

Roy Potter

Richard Abbott

Marijke Abbott

Marilyn Burlingame

Bob Baker



And Now, a Few Words from Your Friendly Neighborhood Cluster Program

Help. (Sob) I'm languishing. I'm lonely. Nobody talks to me. (Sniff) Everyone said they wanted to get to know the members who live in their own neighborhoods but they're not! (Sound of heels kicking the floor) Won't somebody come and dust me off and give me another try? (Sigh)

Ok, that's all I have to say. If you ARE interested in trying a cluster in your neighborhood, call or email Lorraine Barnes (lorraineowenbarnes@icloud.com, 360-746-9943), OK? I hope you all have a very happy new year. (Sob)

One more way to give back:

Please donate to Bellingham At Home during the giving season!

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.