



*Year's end is neither an end nor a beginning but a going on,  
with all the wisdom that experience can instill in us. --Hal Borland*

## A Tale of Three Winners: Two Volunteers and the BAH Christmas Tree

Lynn and Rick DeFehr, two of BAH's volunteer stalwarts, would like you to know two things about decorating a tree for The Leopold's Festival of Trees, sponsored for the first time in 2017 by BSAC.

- #1: Do not, repeat *not*, buy an artificial tree with lights already attached to it.
- #2: Do not bid for a Christmas tree during the auction if you do not actually want to buy it.



Winning tree with Rick and Lynn DeFehr

And how did they come to be in charge of decorating BAH's entry in the first place? "I blame Leslie 100%," said Lynn, pointing the finger at our Program Manager Leslie Jackson. "She said 'Lynn has a whole shed full of Christmas decorations, let's get her to do it!'"

Little did any of them know that the DeFehrs, helped by two of their grown children, Cat MacIntyre, Elaine Cress, and (to make up for her sins) Leslie, would end up working *really* hard from 11 am to 7:30 pm to produce what turned out to be the Festival's "Best Overall" tree out of 13. And that was sort of Lynn's fault, for buying the artificial tree. Because by noon, the first lights on the tree were already failing.

The rules make it very clear that the lights on a tree have to be in good working order when the buyer gets it home.

"So we started removing the lights," Lynn said, "but they had all been double-twisted around the branches. We'd spent hours ripping them off when Molly [Molly Simon, BSAC's manager] came by and said 'I have an extra live tree if you want it.'" They wanted it.

"We ran out and got new lights. I had champagne-colored balls and we had decided on a Champagne New Year's Eve theme. We had bottles of champagne for the bottom of the tree and some plastic champagne flutes that we tied to the branches. Elaine went out to find a miniature bottle for the angel at the top of the tree—we swapped it with her wand." And voila!

When it came time to auction the trees off, Lynn explained, she was just trying to boost the bidding on the BAH tree by raising her hand. It turned out that was the winning bid—but not the end of the tree's journey. Elaine bought it from the DeFehrs and then sold it to Salon Bellissima, where it

spent a very happy holiday. All told, BSAC made about \$10,000 from ticket and tree sales.

So what happened to the artificial tree? It went home with the DeFehrs, of course.

## Cheers for the Holiday Party!

Some 40 members and guests braved the December darkness and drizzle and an I-5 traffic jam to attend the second annual BAH holiday party at the Bellingham Country Club. They were rewarded with excellent entertainment and opportunities to schmooze with old friends and make new ones. Music by Seattle jazz singer Pamela Grace accompanied by The Prawns sparkled with standards sprinkled with a few Christmastime favorites. When dinner finally arrived, the food was excellent, but we'll be considering other options for next year.

Thanks to Nanette Davis and her team of entertainment specialists (all BAH volunteers) for pulling it together.



## Meeting Alert: Come Learn about Our New Volunteer Advocacy Program, January 17

There will be an informational meeting this month to introduce our newest service offering, volunteer health advocacy, which offers support to members undergoing medical care or a medical crisis. As we wrote in December's newsletter, this program consists of multiple levels, which will be rolled out sequentially as they are ready during 2018:

- Note-taking in the doctor's office
- Pre- and post-surgery
- Hospital stay
- Rehabilitation
- Long-term care
- Palliative care
- Hospice and bereavement.

First up is Note-taking in the doctor's office, scheduled to launch in February.

Find out all about it on Wednesday, January 17, from 1-3 pm in Room 16 at BSAC. You'll learn why you should consider this kind of support and how to access the service, and you'll also have the opportunity to meet the hard-working committee members who have made the program possible.

Advocacy volunteers will receive special training for note-taking on January 24 from 2-4 pm in Room 16, including role playing, a manual, a PowerPoint display, a video on potential challenges, and the correct protocols for:

- Connecting with the member
- Preparing for the doctor's appointment
- Conducting oneself appropriately during the appointment
- Managing the medical notes following the appointment.

Note that all advocacy volunteers must be vetted by the BAH volunteer program prior to becoming a health advocate.

### ***Health Advocacy Is a Hot Trend***

Bellingham At Home is following in the footsteps of several other villages that have health advocacy programs, including Penn's Village in Philadelphia. Their Health Pals program has eight volunteers with two more in training. Marianne Waller is one of the Health Pals. After meeting her first client, she went back to the neighbor who had convinced her to volunteer and said, "I have to tell you how filled with gratitude I am that you got me into this. It's just a great way to help people."

Brooke Salzman, MD, medical director of Jefferson Geriatrics, is on the advisory board of Penn's Village. Her practice has suggested health pals to several patients, she said. "Not everyone is open to the idea of a stranger sitting in on their visits," she said, but others like it when someone else takes notes, helps them navigate the health system, and reminds them that they planned to ask certain questions. "They're making sure that the doctor communicates well with the patient, that the patient understands what the plan is," she said. "I think it's really helpful."

Source: *The Inquirer*, April 27, 2017. <http://www.philly.com/philly/health/Volunteer-health-pals-help-senior-citizens-navigate-medical-care-doctors-Penns-Village-Jefferson.html>

## **Time to Renew Your BSAC Membership**



BSAC's new gym is open to those who have taken the Intro to Strength Training Class and the Update Class.

Of course, as a member of BAH, you already are a paid-up member of the Bellingham Senior Activity Center, but as the year turns over, you need to stop at the front desk and fill out a new membership card; in return, you'll get a 2018 sticker for your car.

If you don't use the center now, plan on doing so this year. The multipurpose facility is one of the great benefits of BAH membership. So come down and work out in the new gym, grab some lunch, play ping-pong or pool, meet up with friends to play cards, take up a new skill or hobby—maybe line-dancing or oil painting! (And don't forget to stop in at the BAH office and say Hey.)

Speaking of the new *total* gym, BSAC invites you to attend an open house celebration on Wednesday, January 31 (3-5 p.m., room 8), where you'll learn how to get started with this great new facility.

## Leslie Checks in

By Leslie Jackson, Program Manager

[Leslie.jackson@bellinghamathome.org](mailto:Leslie.jackson@bellinghamathome.org)

Happy New Year to the whole BAH family!

The New Year brings in exciting new developments at Bellingham At Home, starting with the fact that you will now have a full-time administrator working to strengthen and grow the organization: I have gone from part-time program coordinator to full-time program manager. It is an honor and a thrill for me to have gained your trust and been given this opportunity.

I will continue to collaborate with the Leadership Council and the BAH Task Forces, but the new position will allow me to pay more attention to administrative tasks and to provide more continuity and consistency to the operations of the organization. I will continue to manage our vitally important office volunteers, who are responsible for the smooth processing of member service requests. I will also become more engaged with membership sustainability and growth as well as focusing more on funding opportunities. Finally, marketing is on my new agenda and I look forward to getting out into the public more to tell BAH's story.

I hope to meet every one of you in 2018 and hear *your* stories!

## Volunteers Matter

### *Spotlight on Lynn & Rick DeFehr*

See **A Tale of 3 Winners for the story of the DeFehrs in action**

Originally from Vancouver, BC, the DeFehrs spent 30 years in California, but they never grew to like it. When Rick sold his software business and took an early retirement in 2007, they headed right back north.



"We wanted to get as close to Vancouver as we could without putting our toes over the line." Now they're 20 minutes from their Canadian family. Their two unmarried kids live right next door on the second of two lots Rick bought close to Lake Padden, and their married son is in Portland. They have everything they need to enjoy life—including a 40-ft., twin-diesel trawler.

It goes slow," said Lynn, "but the jet skis go fast! They're like motorcycles on ice—minus the fear." Rick and Lynn are both on the board of a boating club of about 100 families and they focus on the San Juans in their travels.

One of the things they love most about Bellingham, said Lynn, is Bellinghamsters. "The people here just seem to have good morals and high standards, and they're uniformly friendly."

When they're not decorating Christmas trees for BAH, Lynn volunteers in the office, sits on the new Neighborhood Cluster Council, and interviews prospective volunteers and new members. (She also volunteers at BSAC's coffee bar.) Rick does "maintenance type stuff" for members and helps them with their computers. Recently he sanded someone's porch for them to paint—and then went ahead and painted it for them.

"I've volunteered in many places," said Lynn, "but BAH is unique. The value the organization places on everyone regardless of their attributes, the way they treat everyone the same, with no one looking down on anyone else... It's so refreshing—and so valuable for a volunteer organization."

The way the DeFehrs see it, they get as much if not more benefit than the people they're helping.

"Recipients are so appreciative," Lynn marveled. "It makes me feel like a real hero."

## **Stats! Hot Stats! Get Your Year-end Stats Right Here!**

### **Membership**

Number of households	48 (including 24 couples)
Number of individual members	47
Number of associate members	1
Total memberships	96

### **Volunteers**

Number of task force volunteers (including Leadership Council)	25
Number of service volunteers	44
Total volunteers (groups overlap)	55

### **Office Operations**

Service requests handled (through November)	433
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## **Wait, Wait, Don't Throw out that Hairdryer**

Remember when, instead of automatically throwing things out, you could take them to be repaired and give them new life? Happily, those good old days are back, at least on the first Sunday of every month from 3-5 pm. That's when Roderick Kimball, a mechanical engineering student at WCC, and his cohorts Josh Shupack and John Schneider set up the Bellingham Repair Café in the Bellingham Foundry, 1000 F Street.

If you can carry it in, they can probably fix it. They do electronics, electrical work, furniture repair, even mending of fabrics. They get hairdryers, paper shredders, toasters... and lots and lots of lamps. In fact, Roderick said they're thinking about holding an extra event every month just for lamps. The most problematic items are printers. "They're often a lost cause because of their built-in obsolescence. Still, they have a lot of fun parts inside."

The coolest thing about the Repair Café is that the fixers are all volunteers and they don't charge anything for their work, although they do take donations.

People can get as involved as they like, according to Roderick. "Some just come in to use tools they don't have at home and maybe consult with the resident fixers. On the other end of the scale, lots of people just say 'fix this for me' and that's fine."

In the last year, there were only about 5-10 customers every month. Thanks to some recent publicity arranged by a new volunteer, Judith Brightman, about 15 people showed up in December—and even better, so did some new fixers, including some computer guys.

If you'd like to be a volunteer fixer, email Roderick at [info@bellinghamrepaircafe.org](mailto:info@bellinghamrepaircafe.org). See more information at [www.bellinghamrepaircafe.org](http://www.bellinghamrepaircafe.org).

## **A Big Shout-out to a Big-hearted Local Business**

Many thanks to Judy Sterkel at Blackburn Office Interiors who gave BAH a major discount on our new office chair. "Their customer service was superb," said Leslie Jackson, our grateful program manager. "And Judy went the extra distance to help us out at Christmas."

## **Mark Your Calendars for Volunteer Appreciation Day, January 31**

BAH volunteers are invited to join us for a special volunteer appreciation event on Wednesday, January 31, from 2-4 p.m. in room 16 at BSAC. We'll be celebrating service, task-force and leadership folks. All our volunteers, member and non-member, are welcome.

## **Thanks, BAH Donors!**

At the beginning of December, letters went out to all our members and to former donors, asking for contributions to help with our efforts to make BAH better and extend our reach farther into the community. As we explained, membership fees do not cover all our expenses. The response so far has been heartening. As we go to publication, more than \$500 has been received following the mailing.

It's not too late to make a gift to support Your Village. Our heartfelt thanks to those who already have!

### **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.