



Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success. --Henry Ford

Should Bellingham Become an Age-Friendly Community? (And What Does That Mean, Anyway?)

By Lauren Phillips

In 2016, Puyallup became the first city in the state of Washington to receive an AARP/World Health Organization “Age-Friendly City” designation, followed in short order by Seattle. This does not mean that either community is, currently, age-friendly or a great place to retire. What it does mean is that elected leaders in Puyallup and Seattle have committed to actively work toward making their cities a great place for people of *all* ages, a place in which people can grow up and grow old with ease.

Could Bellingham become the third age-friendly city in Washington? At the moment, no one at city hall is working on it, so the impetus would most likely need to come from outside groups.

To determine if a community is eligible to begin the process of joining the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities (an affiliate of WHO’s Age-Friendly Cities and Communities Program), AARP considers a variety of factors related to community leadership and overall readiness, including the presence of non-governmental or grassroots organizations championing the cause. Could Bellingham At Home be one of those champions? Given that AARP’s participation in the program advances efforts to help people live comfortably in their homes and communities as they age, to take a more active role in their communities and have their voices heard, it seems like it might be a natural fit.

The World Health Organization has identified 8 domains that cities and communities can address to better adapt their structures and services to the needs of older people. Again, when you look at the list, many of them line up beautifully with BAH values, aims, and programs:



Should we devote some of our time and energy to pursuing the age-friendly city designation for Bellingham? Benefits include access to a global network of participating communities, as well as aging and civil society experts; access to the latest news and information about best practices, events, results, challenges, and new initiatives; mentoring and peer-review evaluation by member cities; and public recognition.

Please let us know what you think by calling or emailing Leslie, who will pass along all comments to the Leadership Council.

We Have a New Fee Structure—Here's What You Need to Know

“Support what you love” was the Valentine’s Day theme as a new membership fee structure was announced at the BAH Town Hall meeting. Part of the love goes to members in the form of a price break as BAH begins its third year of operation. New and continuing members can knock \$50 per year off the going rate, which means they’ll pay \$400 instead of \$450—if (here’s where members show the love) they agree to belong for three years. With this offer, we hope to be able to add 50 new members by July.

To encourage members to bring in new members, a \$25 gift card prize is available when you refer someone who becomes a member.

The Leadership Council announced new membership levels. Here’s the new annual fee structure for 7/1/2018-6/30/2019:

Social Member	\$225
Full Member	\$450
Sustaining Member	\$1000
Benefactor	\$2000.

(Fees indicated are amounts for the primary member. Add \$50 for each additional member in that same household. BSAC membership continues to be included at all levels.)

More love came from the Leadership Council in the form of a challenge grant.

The LC pledged \$3000, and regular members, as a group, are challenged to match this amount. Our fundraising goal for the year is to raise \$15,000.

We’ll be getting help with fundraising from our WWU student volunteer, Leah Olver, who’s helping us scope out online donations, put on a spring fundraising event, and build a kit for canvassing.



Your Membership Committee at Work

By Elaine Cress

“We are member driven and volunteer powered.” The membership task force takes BAH’s motto seriously.

In the beginning, while trying to figure out what future members would want, we looked at other villages for guidance and at Bellingham community support systems to avoid duplicating services that were already available. The 2015-2016 task force established the Bellingham At Home geographic boundaries, developed the member handbook, and designed the introductory home visit for getting acquainted with the members.

Once a member has applied and paid the membership fee, two task force volunteers set up a time to personally welcome that person into the community. This home visit gives us the opportunity to introduce the handbook and answer any questions about the organization. More importantly, we get to know the member: The volunteers may suggest how BAH can help meet their individual needs and desires and how we can fit into their lifestyle.

One of the primary risk factors for people as they get older is loneliness and isolation—a lack of community. Bellingham At Home is all about building community: maintaining and supporting networks and developing a sense of a shared purpose. Having identified six unique neighborhoods, BAH now is developing Neighborhood Clusters to enable “neighbors helping neighbors,” our members’ top program request.

The current membership task force consists of Lorraine Barnes (member-volunteer), Karen Lauckhardt (volunteer), Catherine Huhndorf (member-volunteer), Edie Norton (member-volunteer), Janet Simpson (member-volunteer), Lynn DeFehr (volunteer), Joan Dow (volunteer), and me. I also serve on the Leadership Council, liaising between the two groups. Earlier

members who provided critical energy and effort during our formation include Maxine Reid, who worked tirelessly to provide logistical support for the task force, and interviewers Richard Abbott and Julee Johnson.

Upcoming Membership Projects

- The Member Handbook is being updated, and our task force is looking for someone with Microsoft Word skills who can put in the edits and who can link the Table of Contents to Sections of a document.
- Volunteers on the membership task force are getting ready to call all our member households to ask for feedback on Bellingham At Home. We look forward to your honest assessment of how we are doing.

Leslie Checks in

By Leslie Jackson, Program Manager

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As I write this, I am watching snow fall. Spring hardly seems around the corner, but when you read this it will be a few short weeks away. And with it comes... spring cleaning! This includes things we like to do, like getting the garden ready for planting, and things we may find ourselves postponing indefinitely, like cleaning the cupboards and hauling stuff to the dump.

One of the things Bellingham At Home is best known for is our wonderful volunteers and their generosity in helping our members with just such tasks. I'd like to suggest three ways you can make it easier for BAH to help fill your service requests during this busy time:

- Make precise, realistic lists of what you want to get done: "Clean out the guest room closet and take any items we haven't used in two years to Goodwill" rather than "get rid of all the junk in our closets."
- Prioritize. That way, if you run out of steam before you finish sorting through all your old pictures and putting the ones you really want in albums (and believe me, you will), you've still done the important tasks like shampooing the carpets or rewrapping your pipes.
- Request early so we can schedule volunteers appropriately and not overwhelm them—and please be patient.

I would like to give a heartfelt thank you to our long-time office volunteer Joanne Kurtz. Since I have been here, she has faithfully and cheerfully made Monday mornings better for me and everyone else at BAH. Joanne will be no longer volunteering with us, but her daughter, Maria Thurston, has generously agreed to take her spot! It has been lovely to see mother and daughter work together during the transition. Maria is a perfect fit for our team and we are lucky to have her. Welcome Maria—and thank you Joanne for all the time and energy you gave Bellingham At Home since its beginning.

March forth!

Book Report

Happiness is a Choice You Make

By Angela Mercy

In his new book, award-winning *New York Times* reporter John Leland chronicles his year spent with six individuals in the category of the "oldest old"—those above 85 years of age. He was surprised to find a high level of light heartedness and contentment accompanied by relatively low levels of stress and worry among his subjects. It turns out that the reality of old age looks quite different when seen from within the older person's experience than when merely measured against external standards.

Leland's subjects show through the stories they share that even the last years of a long life have much more to offer than just loss and diminishment. These six octogenarians each practice happiness differently but all spend their time and energy on things they can still enjoy, rather than focusing on the things they can no longer do: Ping has her daily mah-jongg games with Cantonese friends, Helen the "second love of her life," Ruth the joy of keeping her children and extended family together.

Even John, who said “I’m not sad about anything, but I’ve had enough,” finds contentment in reliving his memories of a happy life.

This is referred to by researchers as “selective optimization with compensation.” Leland’s very readable narrative also demonstrates the value of “selective memory.” Most of his subjects tend to remember and retell the stories of the best times of their lives rather than the most difficult.

During the course of the year, Leland is in a vulnerable time in his own life. As a recently divorced man caring for his 86-year-old mother, he is particularly open to the lessons he receives from these remarkable and diverse seniors.

While the book tends to focus on the positive, it does not shy away from the very real challenges of old age, including depression, isolation, illness, and cognitive decline. Still, its overriding and completely believable message is that old age is also a unique and precious life stage worthy of being embraced and celebrated.

A Special Opportunity **Let Me Be Myself: The Life Story of Anne Frank**

Seattle’s Henry and Sandra Friedman Holocaust Center for Humanity will host a limited engagement this spring of Let Me Be Myself: The Life Story of Anne Frank, which premiered in Australia in 2015. BSAC is sponsoring a special trip to the exhibit on March 23.



Large panels featuring images and text tell the story of Anne from her birth in 1929 to her death in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in 1945 and also the world around her: the rise of Hitler, the persecution of the Jews, and WWII. One third of the exhibition is dedicated to stories of young people today that illustrate the role of prejudice, exclusion, and discrimination. Artifacts on display include a replica of Anne’s diary and a scale model of her hiding place.

The trip includes roundtrip transportation, admission to the Center, a special guide through the exhibit, and a self-hosted lunch at the Cheesecake Factory and costs \$95. The bus will depart BSAC at 9 am and return at 5 pm. Plan to reserve your place by mid-March.

*From the exhibit: Anne Frank,
10 years old, May 1940*

March Birthdays

Barbara Lancaster
Karen Kaufmann
Ann Moon
Howard Evans

Janice Claussen
Karen Loomer
Michael Jones



Members: If you’d rather this newsletter didn’t show your name when it’s your birthday month, please let the office know.

Membership Matters

Spotlight on Jim & Sandy Stanton

The Stantons look like they're settling nicely into their 100-year-old house on Orleans St., but you wouldn't want to place a ton of money on that. You get the feeling that, arthritis (and a brand-new knee for Sandy) notwithstanding, the couple could decide to pick up and hit the road next Thursday.



By the time they met in Los Angeles as college kids in 1957, Jim and Sandy were both world travelers: he had served in the Army Security Agency as a Russian translator in Kyoto, Japan; and she had graduated from the American School in Manila and traveled on a freighter to Europe.

“And then I just kept on traveling around the globe,” she says, “until I got back to Los Angeles, where I was born, and enrolled in Scripps College.”

Jim proposed in front of Notre Dame while visiting Sandy, who was studying in Paris for her junior year abroad. After marrying, she joined him at UCLA, where they studied French (Sandy) and political science (Jim). They had two kids, who were just 3 and 5 when they hit the road again.

Jim was recruited into the CIA, and the family moved to D.C., where he was soon doing the banking for the agency, seeing deposits safely to the bank in an armor-plated vehicle every day. His first overseas post was in Vietnam, initially in the agency's finance department in Saigon and then, after the Tet offensive, as chief of administration for the Mekong Delta.

“We hired Special Forces, Navy SEALs and South Vietnam forces and I paid them in cash that came in on these huge transport planes from Hong Kong.” (Hmm, moving cash about seems to be a theme.)

Sandy stayed home with the kids, but after Vietnam, they were with Jim for all his posts: Madrid, Monrovia, Liberia, back to D.C., and, his last assignment, Mexico City.

“The kids were grateful for getting to grow up in all these different places,” Sandy says. “We spent three years in Madrid. The country was impoverished but that meant we could live high on the hog.”

They fondly remember their first New Year's Eve in Spain, which they spent at the Parador de Avila, an ancient, Roman walled castle, now a beautiful hotel in this charming town. At midnight, they tried to follow tradition by eating 12 grapes, “one at each stroke of the clock,” Jim explains.

In 1979, Jim retired and they finally settled down, in San Diego, for the next 34 years. Sandy was a writer and editor with Sociological Abstracts (she's still writing today as an independent contractor) and Jim got involved in a variety of activities. The most exciting was Formula One motor racing; he didn't race himself, but he managed race teams for some big companies. This took the couple back on the road again in the US and Europe (think Le Mans).

When San Diego living became too expensive, they tried Phoenix (*too hot!*), then Bend, OR (*great, but too cold*), and finally, at the urging of their daughter and son-in-law, who live here, Bellingham (*nice, but dark and damp*). They spent the first year and a half at the Parkway Chateau (now Solstice) and then, last October, they moved into the house—and into Bellingham At Home.

“Jim and I are so grateful for all the help we've received from BAH, before and after my surgery. We hope to begin our own volunteer work very soon,” says Sandy. Jim's mulling over the idea of starting a current events group. Give him a call if you're interested—they'll probably be here for a while, anyway.

Bellingham At Home Contact Information

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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.