



*Oh the wonderful way you'll feel, you hear?  
If you just go out and volunteer... – Dr. Seuss*

## Oh, the Wonderful Things Our Volunteers Can Do

By Angela Mercy

Chair, Volunteer Committee

You all know that BAH volunteers offer many types of assistance to members—rides, help with chores, simple home maintenance, etc. In addition to those services, we have volunteers who have some specialized skills they'd like to share.

*Ann Gunderson* loves to help folks design efficient and enjoyable workspaces and storage options. In a goal-oriented process, she'll help you think through ways you can organize things to make your life just a little bit easier. When downsizing or getting rid of unwanted/unneeded items, she'll help with decision-making and provide recycling and donation options. It's likely you'll both have fun in the process. Ann recently moved to Bellingham from the SF Bay area where she was a self-employed organizer and a member of the National Association of Professional Organizers.



*Katie Denson* is a new volunteer who works a 40-hour week and still has the energy and heart to offer assistance and company to our members evenings and weekends. Would you like a friendly visit, a simple home repair, pet care or errand run during non-business hours? Katie is the volunteer for you.

*Jan Claussen* and *Lauren Phillips* like reading out loud. If you have low vision or other issues that make it difficult to read materials not available in audio form—magazines, newspapers, books—or if you just like to be read to, help is at hand. You can request any of these volunteers by calling the office at 360-746-3462.

Are there volunteers reading this article and asking, “Why isn’t my special skill being spotlighted?” The answer is, we probably don’t know about it. Please let me know what you’d like to offer, and as long as it’s within the scope of assistance we are permitted to offer, we’ll spread the word. Email [angela.mercy@bellinghamathome.org](mailto:angela.mercy@bellinghamathome.org) or call 360-603-0064.

**A love note to our members who don’t request assistance because they don’t ‘need’ help.** Our volunteers can only give their gifts if there are people willing to receive them. A daunting task can be made manageable with a little help from a friendly volunteer. A lonely evening can be transformed by a friendly visit. It’s much easier for most of us to give than to receive. Consider challenging yourself to accept our offer of assistance. It’s through these exchanges that we create community.

Keep an eye open for the Volunteer Committee’s terrific newsletter, *Volunteer Vibes*, which members and volunteers will find in their email once a month; it’s a great way to keep tabs on what our volunteers are doing!



# The Men's Shed Movement Comes to Bellingham

By John Lawler

Bellingham At Home welcomes Men's Shed of Bellingham (MSOB), a new program of the Whatcom Council on Aging. Starting last July, Men's Shed of Bellingham was organized by Gary Lazarus and Marshall Gartenlaub. The group formed a steering committee in October and signed a memorandum of understanding with WCOA in December. Meetings have included BAH members, who report an enthusiastic group they hope to continue in. Richard Abbott is helping to advise the Board of the MSOB. Bob Baker has offered to get the group started with software to run their operation, just as he did for BAH.



The term "Men's Sheds" originated in Australia, a country famous for its Do It Yourself culture, where many homes include a "men's shed" with tools; it's often where the men get together.



"Men's Sheds" also refers to an international movement intended to combat social isolation. Begun as a positive reaction to a health conference, it has grown and spread rapidly, with over 1800 groups worldwide. In Australia, Men's Sheds are supported by the federal government.

One of the big issues for retired men turns out to be social isolation; retirement removes an immense amount of important social infrastructure. People who don't see their usual colleagues frequently -- or ever, if they move away -- lose the benefits such social interactions provide, unless some replacement venue is provided. This is the mission of Men's Sheds: to provide a safe and friendly environment where members can participate in a variety of projects.

Each Men's Shed group offers a gathering space where men can work, together or alone; projects are often oriented towards community needs. Skills and hands-on activities are emphasized. Still at the beginning stage, Men's Shed of Bellingham is looking for a place to locate their shed and tools, said Gary Lazarus.

This link will take you to a video on the Men's Shed movement from the NBC Today Show:

<https://www.today.com/video/how-one-man-is-trying-to-foster-friendships-among-retired-men-1380575299819> .

You can also read this Washington Post article: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/what-to-do-about-lonely-older-men-put-them-to-work/2018/06/22/0c07efc8-53ab-11e8-a551-5b648abe29ef\\_story.html?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.3d14c2467bcf](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/what-to-do-about-lonely-older-men-put-them-to-work/2018/06/22/0c07efc8-53ab-11e8-a551-5b648abe29ef_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.3d14c2467bcf)

Contact information for Men's Shed Bellingham :

**Gary Lazarus** phone: (360) 319-5754, email: [garylazarus@comcast.net](mailto:garylazarus@comcast.net)

**Marshall Gartenlaub** phone: (951) 345-8003, email: [heypop@hotmail.com](mailto:heypop@hotmail.com)

## The New ALL Catalog is out—What Looks Good to You?

Western Washington University's Academy for Lifelong Learning is out with its 2019 catalog. Whether you're an ALL member or not, you are welcome to sign up for any (or all!) of their course offerings (although members get 20% off course fees).

With 24 courses, from Local Government Planning to Roman Lyric: Catullus and Horace to Speaking of Death, there really is something for just about everyone.

For example:

- When Women Didn't Count, March 12, Bellingham Cruise Terminal. Class discussion centers on the chronic mismeasurement and marginalization of American women in federal statistics and how this distortion has affected the lives of women.
- From Travel to Memoir, March 19 & 26, Bellingham Cruise Terminal. Explore popular travel writers like Bill Bryson and Paul Theroux to identify the elements that make this genre engaging, then create stories and anecdotes from your own travel experiences.
- Suds in the City: Beer Tasting 101, May 3, 10 & 17, Kulshan Brewing. Enough said!
- The Grand, but Unlikely, Alliance: Roosevelt and Churchill, May 14 & 21, Bellingham Cruise Terminal. Two powerful and often testy leaders put aside their ideological differences to wage war against a common enemy, Germany.  
**Note:** This class will be led by BAH member Dr. June Hopkins, professor emerita Georgia Southern University.

ALL also offers Interest Groups that can be lively and eye-opening; they're facilitated but very much group-directed. All are free and open to the public, registration not required. This spring they include:

- World Affairs Discussion Group. First Tuesday of February, March, April, May, and June; 9:30 am-12:30 pm; the Connections Room in the Community Food Co-op, 405 E. Holly Street.
- Contemporary Readings Discussion Group. First Monday of March, April, May, and June; 10 am-12 pm; Christ the Servant Lutheran Church, 2600 Lakeway.
- History Discussion Group. First Monday of March, April, May, and June, 1-3 pm; Christ the Servant Lutheran Church.

To sign up for an ALL course, become an ALL member, get on their mailing list for a catalog, or ask a question, contact ALL at AcadLL@wwu.edu or 360-650-4970.

Don't want to go alone? How about inviting another BAH member to go with you? (If you need a ride, call the BAH office in advance to set up a ride.)

## ***BAH People on the Go***

### **Karen Lauckhardt, Membership Committee Volunteer, Is Dancing Her Way to San Francisco This Spring**



**Karen Lauckhardt and her dancing instructor/partner, Nathan Simler.**

If ballroom dancing didn't exist, Karen Lauckhardt would, as they say, have had to invent it. This was not entirely clear when she lived in Connecticut and first started taking occasional lessons with her husband.

"When my husband got too busy at work, I continued on my own, but it was hit and miss and summers off and that kind of thing. But when we moved to Bellingham in 2009, we retired. Suddenly I had more time. So I looked around to see if anybody here was doing ballroom dancing and I discovered Nathan Simler Ballroom & Latin Dance Instruction. In addition to being my instructor, Nathan is now my partner when we do competitions. He's been great in giving me a chance to improve and constantly seek a higher level. When I don't have lessons, I go into withdrawal."

What is it she loves about ballroom dancing? Everything.

"It suits all of my needs. As a former physical therapist, I am very in tune with my body and the need for consistent physical activity and ballroom dancing definitely does that; at this level it's very aerobic. I need to stay flexible and be

strong, both of which are necessary for ballroom dancing and necessary for this stage of life. It also totally occupies my mind; when I'm concentrating on my dancing, I can think of nothing else and when I'm learning new choreography, it really is a mental challenge as well as a physical challenge. And then there's the balance issue, which at my age (70) becomes more and more important. Plus I absolutely adore it."

Karen grew up loving Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers and when she was working in New York, she was the physical therapist for the American Ballet Theater—in love with the beauty, the movement and the music. Ballroom dancing offers all that.

Karen is one of four people over 65 in what they call Nathan's harem, which makes for a nice camaraderie. When they go to a competition, they room together and it's fun.

"That's the other thing about ballroom dancing: it's fun. Challenging but fun. And it's a sport you can do right through your 90s—it's for life."

Understand, Karen does not just love to do this. She's very good at it. She usually takes first place in her age division. She won the last competition she appeared in, the Portland Open. And she has high hopes for the San Francisco Open Dancesport Championship, where she will compete in April.

You go, girl!

## ***My Volunteer Hero*** **Janet Simpson, Snow Angel**

*By Lauren Phillips*



It was February 13, our 756th straight day of being shut in by the snow, feeling just a little... trapped. Suffocated. Buried alive. You know the feeling. I had shoveled our driveway from the carport to the cul de sac we live in several days before, which got me exactly nowhere, because the cul de sac was still covered with snow and despite having lived in Chicago for 50 years, I am a complete wimp about driving in the snow. And then, of course, it snowed a bunch more. And then Janet called.

In a perfect example of BAH's got-your-back attitude, organization leaders had been calling members all week to see if they needed a hand getting out or staying in. My

husband, a lovely man who is no longer in the snow removal business for any number of good reasons, took Janet's call and said nah, we were OK—didn't mention it to me. Janet being Janet, she thought she would just pop around anyway. When she pulled up in front of the house, I was confused, embarrassed, and then delighted. "I can shovel," I insisted, pointing out that I had done so earlier in the week. "I know," she said, "I'll just help." And boy, did she. Together we got the job done so much faster!

Is there anything else I can do, she asked? I thought fast. We'd run out of bananas two days before, which definitely constitutes an emergency in our house. Plus lettuce and milk... "Could you take me over to Hagggen?" And off we went, in her magic chariot. As I unpacked my two bags of groceries a short while later, I said thank you—to Janet, to BAH, to the occasional kindness of the universe. And then I ate a banana.



## Membership Matters

### *Spotlight on Angela Mercy*

When Angela Mercy went back to school to get a bachelor's degree at age 25, she did not choose to follow her passion for psychology. Psychology requires multiple degrees to make a good living and Angela didn't have the time: She had been a single mom and never again wanted to find herself unable to support her family. Instead, she chose accounting and began her career as a staff accountant at Price Waterhouse. It wasn't ideal; the big overtime demands weren't necessarily a great fit for the mother of a nine- and two-year-old.

"But I loved loved loved double-entry bookkeeping. Here's the thing about it: If you do things right, it will balance, guaranteed. If you make a mistake, you can find it and fix it, guaranteed. That's how I wanted life to work. Auditing for a major international accounting firm actually has very little to do with double-entry bookkeeping, but that's what started me down that path."

In 1992, everything changed.

"My oldest son was killed in a car accident and for a while I didn't care very much about anything. I spent a couple of years not working, living on the insurance money, but then I had to work again. I found myself really attracted to people who were dying and looked for a job that met that need. So I went from being a CPA to a CNA (certified nurse assistant)."

Things didn't go exactly the way she planned because, after some stumbling around, she ended up working in an adult family home for people with AIDS, who were now actually living quite a long time—many of them with multiple diagnoses, usually including substance abuse and/or mental illness. It was fascinating but often heavy lifting, "physically but metaphorically even more so."

"By now I'm middle-aged and I'm working with all these 20-year-olds and I'm in the minority as a straight person. And I've also gone from being a manager to being an entry level person. You have the same ideas and the same intelligence but when you make suggestions, they're met completely differently. I was there about three years and while I loved all that I learned and the people I cared for, I woke up one day and thought OK, I'm done with this now. I went back to working as a CPA because you can make so much more money in so much less time."



**Angela and Buddha:** "When we can't be in the mountains, we walk five miles in Whatcom Falls Park almost every day."

In her mid-50s, Angela inherited some money following another tragic death in the family and decided to stop working for income, to get by on less money rather than go on making it in a way that wasn't rewarding. And now, she had the freedom to follow more spiritual pursuits. She became a hospice volunteer. She did a two-year experiential program called Anamcara (soul friend), which focused primarily on end of life.

These days, she is on Bellingham At Home's Leadership Council and is the chair of the Volunteer Committee. She also started and hosts a conversation group on The Gifts of Age, where they are busy debunking the idea that being older is only and always decline. She's always on the lookout for more connections within BAH and doing what she can to change how older adults are perceived by the larger community.

And then a couple of years ago, there was another life-changing event—this one all good. Her son and his wife had a son of their own, her grandson Anthony, now two-and-a-half.

"I had no idea how profound this experience would be. From the outside, things look much the same, but it's like a kaleidoscope, where you make just that tiny turn and the entire image is

different. One of the things that it's changed is my relationship with God; I feel that presence as more grandmotherly. My husband, Nick Waslenko, is right there at the center of my universe, but the kind of love I have for Anthony is new and these days, I look at Nick—and everything else—through the adoring eyes of that child.”

## BAH UPDATES

Watch your inbox for changes and reminders from the BAH office.

### Outreach

Public meetings are scheduled for Tuesday, March 5, from 11-12 and Thursday, April 4, from 1-2. Both meetings will be held at BSAC in room 16. Volunteers are needed to place flyers in public places. You can get them in the office; we'll tell you where to post them.

### Volunteers

The Volunteer Social has been rescheduled for Thursday, March 21, from 1-2:30 in BSAC room 16. Please join us!

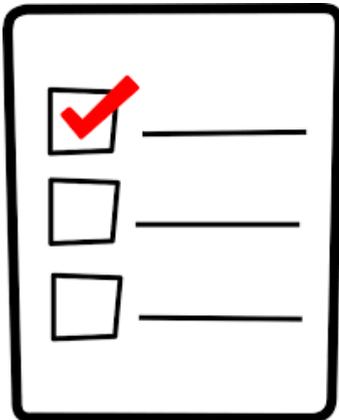
### Closings

As we come off a series of closings for snow, we are developing a BAH procedure for continuing to operate when BSAC has to be closed. Details to be announced.

## Chore Lists: We'll Help You Draw up a List—and Then Complete It!

*By Elaine Cress*

Bellingham At Home membership has many perks, one of which is assistance with home chores. I have started keeping a seasonal to-do list of things I might want to ask for help with. When the right time of year rolls around, I call the BAH office a few days ahead of time and have them line up some volunteers.



For example, our yard needed a spring clean-up. My husband and I were trying to carve out a couple of afternoons to get it done, knowing it would be exhausting. Instead, we called BAH, which sent over a husband/wife volunteer team to pitch in. In just two hours, the four of us got eight person-hours of work done. We had enough energy and free time to go to the movies!

In addition to yard clean-up, my list includes window washing (volunteers do the outside while I do the inside), installing the screens on my windows, and sorting and categorizing storage shelves in the garden shed. What's on your list?

Don't have a list? Call the office and one of the membership committee volunteers will be happy to drop by your home and brainstorm with you to create one.

# What Aging Parents Want from Their Kids

By Lauren Phillips

In a thought-provoking article in *The Atlantic* that hits close to home for the BAH age group, author Claire Berman writes about how different the issue of parent care looks to her now that she's becoming an aging parent. She finds herself nodding in agreement when the son of a friend expresses concern about his dad driving after dark, but she also understands when her friend, his father, complains about "being badgered by my kids about my driving."

As parents get older, Berman writes, "attempts to hold on to our independence can be at odds with even the most well-intentioned 'suggestions' from our children. We want to be cared about, but fear being cared for. Hence the push and pull when a well-meaning offspring steps onto our turf."

She relates how she and her husband have taken to checking the due dates of groceries prior to a visit from any of their three sons. Friends talk about feeling like they're constantly being assessed by their kids and how they look for excuses to see them less often. These are children they love and enjoy, mind you.

So what are older parents looking for in relationships with their adult children? Berman cites a 2004 study that explored the issue in interviews with focus groups of older adults, who expressed a "strong desire for both autonomy and connection in relations with their adult children, leading to ambivalence about receiving assistance from them. They are annoyed by children's overprotectiveness but appreciate their concern and they use a variety of strategies to deal with their ambivalent feelings, such as minimizing the help they receive, ignoring or resisting children's attempts [at] control..."

Berman believes that, too often, parents engage in magical thinking: They won't say what they need or want from their children but are then disappointed when the kids don't come through. Research says that kids actually do have a pretty good idea of their parents' needs—and older parents should try to understand and address their legitimate concerns. The fact is that even as parents are annoyed by their offspring's worrying, it makes them feel more loved.

It seems to me that BAH has a real role to play in resolving the discord you may have with your own children over these issues. First, your membership says to your family that you get it—you understand that total independence is probably not realistic as you age. Second, your willingness to ask for volunteer assistance should reassure them that you have resources to draw on outside the family to put together your own safety network. You are not alone—and neither are they.

Read the full article, which contains links to the research studies, at <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2016/03/when-youre-the-aging-parent/472290/>.

**Welcome, Welcome to our  
Newest Members!**



Please say hello to the  
members who joined us  
in February:

**Francine Kitchen**

**Ann Nugent**

**Many Happy Returns of the Day**

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

**Barbara Lancaster**

**Karen Kaufmann**

**Howard Evans**

**Janice Claussen**



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**BAH's Totally Frivolous Memory Sparkler Trivia Quiz #3: The '70s**

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Joan Dow

1. The first pocket calculator was released in 1971 by what company?
2. What was the name of the first "test tube" baby, born in 1978?
3. What did scientists name the nearly complete three million year old skeleton found in Ethiopia in 1974?
4. What was the name of the Mars planetary probe launched by NASA in 1975?
5. What European country granted women the right to vote in 1971?

Answers: 1. Texas Instruments, 2. Louise Brown, 3. Lucy, 4. Viking I, 5. Switzerland

**Bellingham At Home Contact Information**

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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.