



Newsletter Goes Bi-monthly

We're stepping up the frequency of our newsletter to provide more frequent communication as we prepare to launch services in 2016. Stay tuned for updates every other month, and check our [website](#) for news between issues!

Housing Options As We Age

How is Bellingham At Home transforming the way we age? To find out, join us Friday, February 12, 9am-4pm, at the Bellingham Senior Activity Center. Members of our Leadership Council (LC) will participate in the Senior Center's annual event showcasing housing options. We will join a panel discussion of what's available for area adults. Afterward, we will lead a breakout session with specifics about our virtual village, including our plan to launch services.

Pre-launch Volunteers Sign Up to Build a Village in Bellingham



Above: LC member Marci Haskell (right) congratulates volunteer Jan Hamilton (left) on winning the door prize at the January meeting with pre-launch volunteers.

There are many tasks to be done before Bellingham At Home can offer services to village members. Some 30 volunteers, representing many talents and lots of experience, have joined with the Bellingham At Home Leadership Council to develop the organization and get the word out to our community. Ten task forces will do everything from designing our membership system and programs to building our website. These groups are coordinating their efforts to flesh out the details of our virtual village.

At an introductory meeting in December, people interested in helping to launch the village in Bellingham met our LC members and signed up for one of the task forces. This month, Steve Morris of the LC engaged the group with icebreaker activities and followed with a presentation of the core beliefs and direction of the organization developed by

the LC, laying the groundwork for volunteers to gain a common language as we talk about Bellingham At Home to the greater community. A PDF of the [slide presentation](#) can be downloaded from the Bellingham At Home website. Each task force met with the LC member who is leading it, asked questions, and began to plan their work. Some volunteers are ready to jump in and get started. Others want to know more, particularly if they are charged with going to the community, explaining what Bellingham At Home is about, and answering questions about how the village will operate. Close communication between the LC and task forces will be critical to pre-launch decision making.

Task forces (and their leaders) are: Finance and Administration (Richard Abbott), Fund Raising (Marci Haskell), Social and Educational (Nanette Davis), Service Providers and Strategic Partnerships (Steve Morris), Program Development (Elaine Cress), Membership Development (Elaine Cress), Volunteers (Barb Evans), Outreach (Allen Johnson), Technology (Bob Baker), and Publicity (Kate Birr).

Volunteer-powered, Member-driven

Our organization will depend on volunteers to provide essential services to our members and on members to determine what services are needed. Until we begin offering services, Bellingham At Home will take its cues from established villages and offer the types of service that are popular with members elsewhere after we are launched. Member feedback will guide the LC in programs and services as we move ahead.

An Umbrella, Not a Safety Net

As Steve Morris pointed out in the Q & A, Bellingham at Home represents an umbrella of services rather than a safety net. Tax-subsidized services to help disabled or low-income individuals that provide a social safety net are currently available as administered through [Northwest Regional Council](#). However, services are lacking for those who don't qualify for the safety net but can't afford the high cost of living in a retirement community. While many who qualify for the safety-net services are isolated, transportation to social events and other aspects of social engagement are not provided. Using the village "umbrella" requires joining and paying an annual membership fee. Once a person or household becomes a member, they are able to enjoy services provided by screened volunteers and discounted services by vetted local businesses. Of the benefits offered by existing villages, village-sponsored social events are the most popular with members.

Service Volunteer Opportunities—You Can Help!

Are you interested in delivering services as a Bellingham At Home volunteer? Watch for an announcement of an informational meeting in February. You'll meet our village leaders, learn about the services we plan to deliver, and have a chance to sign up to provide day-to-day support to help others remain independent. ***If you would like to offer your services, please let us know by emailing or calling our volunteer coordinator, Barb Evans (barbandhoward@comcast.net, (360) 650-9724).***

FAQ #4 (...the 4th in our series)

Is Bellingham At Home a duplication of other services available in our area?

Our mission is to provide services where they are not available. Bellingham At Home will not duplicate Whatcom Volunteer Services, which are part of the "safety net" (see discussion above). In addition, other organizations do not vet and screen for-profit businesses specifically with the needs of seniors in mind. Bellingham At Home is unique because, when services are launched, one call will provide an array of services including screened volunteers who are willing to go to members' homes to assist with small or large tasks. Our village will have a very special, personable relationship with all its members.

Remembering Helen Solomons (1938-2015)

A founding member of our organization, Helen was instrumental in organizing our virtual village. She was an active member of our steering committee and helped us gain valuable experience in grant applications writing.

For more about us...

Come and visit the Bellingham At Home [website](#). Stop by often, and keep up with our activities and progress!

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](#).