



Accepting help is its own kind of strength. – Kiera Cass

## Scheduled for Surgery? We've Got Your Back

As you know, BAH is not licensed to provide home healthcare services. But we do provide a lot of other services for members recovering from medical procedures and surgeries, making it easier for you to do your job: rest and recuperate. If you are planning for surgery, call the office and schedule the volunteer help you need, including any or all of these services:

### Driving & transportation

- To/from hospital or surgery center
- Pre/post-surgery physician office visits
- Post rehab or physical therapy visits
- Pharmacy and medical supply pickup and delivery

### Meals and food preparation

- Post-procedure meals
- Home-cooked frozen entrees
- Grocery shopping

### In-home assistance

- Pet care
- Lawn care
- Laundry
- Garbage/recycling
- Plant care
- Light house cleaning

### Advocacy services (watch for more information)

## Mark Your Calendars for our Holiday Party

Come One, Come All. Our BAH party of the holiday season is coming up on **Thursday, December 7, 6 p.m.** at the Bellingham Golf and Country Club. It promises to be a gala affair with fabulous food and entertainment. We have a three course meal—salad, entrée and dessert. For your entrée, there's a choice of salmon, chicken or vegetarian. Lou Lippmann on the keyboard and his mighty trio will belt out your favorite songs. And we have a special treat: jazz vocalist Pamela Grace from Seattle, will lend her remarkable vocal talent. **Plan to reserve your special holiday dinner by November 20.** Price will be announced later. Watch for an e-blast with details.



## Leslie Checks in

By Leslie Jackson, Program Coordinator

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Fall has fallen upon us, with the holiday season close behind—a busy and, for some people, a very trying time of year. Some of us need extra help and support during the holidays, especially those who are alone.

Bellingham At Home is a community. We take pride in supporting each other and will be making a special effort to reach out to those members of our community who may find November and December a little difficult to deal with at times. I encourage you to do the same. If you know someone who may be alone for the holidays, think about including them in your celebrations.

Here are some other ways to express your generosity during the holidays:

- Treat someone to a home-cooked meal.
- Pay it forward, by paying for someone's meal anonymously in a restaurant.
- Write letters of appreciation to people who have gone out of their way to make life better for you this year. (Your favorite barista? Your building's maintenance crew?)
- Visit a nursing home and spend a little time with someone who would love some conversation.
- Give blood.
- Babysit for free.
- Send gifts to the troops.
- Serve food to the homeless.
- Listen—not advising or giving your opinion, just listening, is one of the greatest gifts we can give to a friend, colleague, family member, or even a complete stranger.

And, of course, there's never been a better time to volunteer!

## BSAC Benefits for BAH Members

### Happy Feet

BSAC is now offering foot care to members, of which you are one. Foot and toenail disorders affect more than 80% of Americans and are very common among seniors and people with diabetes, arthritis, strokes, and limited vision. Keeping your feet healthy increases comfort, maintains mobility, and can prevent complications.

Suzanne Shrock, RN, Certified Foot Care Specialist, will be on site the third Wednesday of every month to trim and file nails; reduce thick nail, calluses, and corns; and remove ingrown toenails. Every treatment ends with a gentle, relaxing foot massage. Stop by the front desk or call for an appointment. (\$35)

### Artistic Opportunities

Is your inner artist yearning for expression? Take advantage of weekly classes offered at BSAC. No need to sign up first, just come on down:

- Watercolor painting, Fridays 9 am-12 pm, Room 1 (free)
- Portrait drawing, Thursdays 10 am-12 pm, Room 1 (\$5)
- Oil painting, Thursdays 1-4 pm, Room 2 (\$5)
- Woodcarving, Thursdays 1:30-11 am, Room 9 (free)

## Deeper Connections: Inside BAH's First Annual Village Gathering

One of the highlights of our First Annual Village Gathering was the "World Café" – a structured conversational process in which people rotate from table to table to discuss a set of topics. In this case, it was used to engage members in exploring the

future of Bellingham At Home: Where do we want to go, what will it take to get there, and what are individual members willing and able to do?

Comments fell into four broad categories, including resources, organization, and volunteers. People talked about the need for more funding: pursuing grant writing and perhaps becoming our own nonprofit organization with our own space... about being better organized with support for leadership development... about recruiting more young (and strong) volunteers... about increasing the number of services we offer, maybe providing respite care. There were lots of good ideas for us to work on in the coming year.

But by far the subject that generated the most interest and passion was making deeper connections among members, especially within neighborhoods. There are so many neighborhoods in Bellingham, 27 of them, from Alabama Hill to York, and we have members in most of them. Clearly, people are very attached to their home turf: We identify with our immediate environment, are interested in issues of local concern, and may feel more open to our neighbors than to other Bellinghamsters.

So how, exactly, can BAH capitalize on this desire to strengthen connections among members who are also neighbors? How can we encourage and support people who want to move ahead on this front? We reported last summer on Kate Birr and John Lawler's coffee for the Columbia neighborhood; has anyone else followed suit yet?

Please let us know what your thoughts are and what actions you and your neighbors are taking so we can report them out to the village as a whole and inspire others!

## **Pssst! Know Any Good Service Providers?**

It's been quite a while since we nudged you about sharing contact information for the people you love doing business with—your never-fail carpenter, hairdresser, plumber, pet sitter, lawn service, dentist etc. etc. etc. But members call us for referrals all the time (it's one of our most popular services) so we're always looking for recommendations to pass along.

Consider yourself nudged.

## **Membership Matters**

### ***Spotlight on Rena Blauner***

Rena Blauner grew up in New York and spent most of her adult life in Berkeley, where she raised her children. But for the last 27 years she has lived in small towns, most recently Mendocino, CA.



Ready to move on but not sure where, Rena planned to come up to Bellingham this October and check the town out at the suggestion of close friends here—a methodical, sensible approach. Instead, by the time October rolled around, she had already moved here—sight unseen. She really had no choice, she explains.

“I looked online just to get a sense of the rental market and I saw this house on South Hill, and I immediately knew that it was my house. Despite the cautions of my friends, I knew my inner voice never fails to guide me where I need to be.”

It's hard to disagree when you hear the whole story: The property agent said they were sorry but they never rent to people who haven't seen the property—never have, never will—and furthermore it was already spoken for. But remember, Rena knew this was supposed to be her house. So she called a realtor, just picking one at random, and the realtor turned out to know the property agent and the property, and the people who wanted to rent the place suddenly didn't. A few phone calls later, the house was Rena's. It's a short walk to the Fairhaven Library and Village Books—Rena's a reader—and the views of the bay are spectacular.

But even more wonderful, she says, are the people in Bellingham—so friendly! So helpful! Particularly the BAH volunteers! Because she is sensible as well as instinctive, Rena joined BAH *before* she made the move.

“The volunteers have been beyond wonderful: helping me unpack, reconfiguring clothes rods in my closet, giving me rides, doing my laundry in the basement because I injured my knee in the move and can’t manage the stairs. One of them, Joanne Knittel, even cleaned up the flooded basement when the washer hose broke—and then took my laundry home and did it for me at her house!”

Rena was a psychotherapist until seven years ago. Asked what kind, she says, laughing, “a good one.” Early in her career she was able to lift a number of autistic children out of their isolation and despair; some of them still keep in touch. But she is proudest of her work with HIV-AIDS patients in the 1990s in Provincetown, MA, which she has chronicled in a book with the working title, Letters to the Dead.

“Their journeys, their stories have relevance for all of us—the profound healing and transformation possible when a physical cure is not, their embrace of life and radiant spirit as death approached. I don’t need to be famous but I want this book to do really well so their spirits can shine in the world.”

The creativity and generous spirit that clearly marked Rena’s practice is evident everywhere. Look around her Craftsman house and you see lovely baskets and wall hangings that she has woven. (There’s one behind her on the wall in the picture.) She also loves to bake and to knit for friends—lots of baby blankets for people’s grandkids recently.

In between settling in to her new home, exploring her new city, and, she hopes, making new friends, Rena is writing “85 at 85,” a memoir in snippets that she will need to finish within five years or else change the title. But will 85 snippets be enough?

## Sign up for a weekly call or visit

At the annual Village to Village Conference being held in Baltimore, November 8-11, Roger Anunsen—science writer, consultant, educator, and speaker on the aging brain—will challenge every village to “end loneliness.” Loneliness has been called a medical epidemic and labeled an “adverse signal” alongside hunger, thirst, and pain. In fact, a growing mountain of research inks loneliness to physical illness as well as to functional and cognitive decline—not just unpleasant but literally harmful.



One of the ways BAH is meeting Anunsen’s challenge already is by hooking up volunteers with members who would like a friendly phone call or visit on a regular basis—just to check in and chat a bit. This is actually one of the most popular volunteer assignments. So if you’d enjoy the regular contact, please call the office and sign up.

## Flu Season: Take Care of Yourself, and Please Be Thoughtful of Others

It’s that time of year. Already folks are coming down with the flu. As we’re all reminded, flu is particularly dangerous in older adults. If you get sick, please stay home and don’t expose others. Have you had your flu shot? Vaccinations are available in many local pharmacies. Don’t wait!

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*Note: Bellingham At Home is sending Janet Simpson and Angela Mercy to the conference to represent us and bring home program and operational ideas that have worked well for other villages.*  
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### Bellingham At Home Contact Information

Location: Bellingham Senior Activity Center, Room 14, 315 Halleck Street, Bellingham, WA 98225

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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.