

Agging Well Whatcom Steering Committee

Friday, February 5, 2021

By Zoom call

MINUTES

Attending:

Adrienne Solenberger, Opportunity Council
Becky Kirkland, PeaceHealth Center for Senior Health
Carol Nicolay, Community Member, affiliation with Health Ministries Network
Chris Orr, Whatcom Council on Aging
Dr. Chao-ying Wu, Chuckanut Health Foundation Board/Family Care Network
Heather Flaherty, Chuckanut Health Foundation
Janet Malley, Whatcom Transportation Authority
Lindsey Karas, Mercy Housing
Marie Eaton, Palliative Care Institute, WWU
Mary Anderson, Whatcom Transportation Authority
Melinda Herrera, Rosewood Villa
Sarah Lane, Health Ministries Network
Tammy Bennett, YMCA
Tessa Whitlock, Chuckanut Health Foundation
Tonja Myers, Christian Health Care Center
Vinson Latimore, Gibraltar Senior Living

Regrets:

Amy Hockenberry, Whatcom County Health Department
Dr. Dave Lynch, Chuckanut Health Foundation Board/Family Care Network (retired)
Heidi Bugbee, Generations Early Learning & Family Center
Janet Malley, Whatcom Transportation Authority
Ryan Blackwell, Northwest Regional Council

Welcome and Introductions

Steering Committee members introduced themselves. Lara welcomed returning and new members Sarah Lane and Adrienne Solenberger. Sarah was previously on the committee representing the YMCA, and is re-joining in her new role as Health Ministries Network's executive director. Adrienne Solenberger, with the Opportunity Council's housing programs, will be filling the Opportunity Council's spot previously held by Wendy Lawrence.

Carol announced that she plans to resign from the steering committee to focus on other activities. Committee members expressed their appreciation for Carol and all she has brought to Agging Well Whatcom. "Thanks for all the help over these three years! We will miss your voice!" and "Carol, I will miss you! Hope to stay connected!" Carol stated she would be available for consultation and would be happy to share her perspectives as an older adult living in Whatcom County.

Review and Approve Minutes

Minutes from the 12/4/20 Steering Committee meeting were approved as written.

Project and Partner Updates

Portraits Projects

Marie reported that seven interviews/conversations and portraits have been completed, and the committee saw and listened to the portrait of Danny. Marie, Sarah Lane and Richard Scholtz are the project team conducting the interviews over Zoom; Richard edits an hour of conversation down to short audio pieces, and Sarah paints the person's portrait

from sketches and screen shots. In addition to individuals' stories and reflections, they are also listening for common themes across all the interviews.

They are still looking for a few more elders, especially people portraying diversity – if you have an idea or recommendation, please share it directly with Marie. The grant is for 20 portraits, so they are selecting people intentionally to ensure a broad range of people and experiences.

Comments and ideas from steering committee members (shared via chat):

- Marie and Sarah, this is absolutely wonderful.
- Wow, that was so powerful and beautiful. Thank you so much for sharing.
- That was incredibly moving. Well done!
- That was fantastic.
- Stories matter so much. I know the indigenous peoples of this continent are so concerned about losing so many of their elders and the cultural knowledge they hold on behalf of the community and the ecosystem...
- Truly touching, elucidating, and inspiring. Thank you for your beautiful work on this project.
- Amazing work and would love to share these stories.

Ideas for sharing and expanding (some shared via chat):

- Could start posting the portraits now on Chuckanut Health Foundation's website, and send out announcement as new portraits get added.
- The project could have its own website – a simple one, about \$200 per year.
- Use BTV, local radio
- Could all of our organizations share? Peacehealth Caregivers newsletter. YMCA could share on the Y's website.
- Social media
- Interest in sharing with Whatcom Council on Aging team and hearing their thoughts on ways to share.
- When the Sylvia Center is able to open again, we [Janet] would love to host a gallery showing. Sylvia Center is named for Richard Scholtz's mother so it seems like a lovely place to host
- Could it be a fundraising opportunity – “support a portrait”?
- Perhaps future intergenerational opportunity? Connect young artists to create portraits and learn stories?

Sarah and Marie noted similar projects from other communities that capture portraits and stories: [Faces of Santa Ana](#) and Faces of Riverside projects focus on people living with homelessness, and NPR's Death, Sex and Money has a podcast series [Stories about Life After 60](#).

Dear Friend Pen Pal Project

Tessa reported that letters and cards continue to arrive consistently from a wide variety of ages and locations (even from other states). About 600 cards and letters have been distributed so far. Jyoti, a CHF intern, is helping with the coordination.

Christian Health Care Center recently gave some helpful feedback, which Tonja elaborated on: Most residents have some level of dementia and unexpectedly getting letters from unknown people can be confusing. They don't know who it's from or why they are getting it, and staff spend time explaining or orienting them. Letters that are long, involved, or ask “get to know you” questions are especially challenging. Tonja notes that many people and groups want to write letters to CHCC residents, so they get a lot of letters. It might work better to identify a few residents who would want to engage at more of a pen pal level.

Heather noted that there seem to be many opportunities to evolve the project, including more focus on one-on-one connections. We are thinking about asking facilities for feedback and how to better cater to their residents. Would like to re-engage the intergenerational committee and get their perspective and involvement in this project.

Health Ministries Network

Sarah stated that HMN has been clearly seeing the needs of older adults in regards to technology, and how lack of technology or related skills impacts a variety of connections. People without access to technology have fewer

opportunities for social connections and are more isolated during the pandemic. Access to health care more limited, e.g., virtual appointments, or using patient portals to see medical records. HMN isn't sure exactly how to address this, but is definitely seeing it as a need.

WTA is in a long-range planning process, and Mary would like to share a short presentation after this meeting for those who are interested. Since WTA isn't able to have open-houses or attend in-person meetings like they usually would as part of this process, they are seeking other ways to share information

➔ **ACTION:** Mary will send the presentation to the group, as she wasn't able to present, due to time constraints.

YMCA-Rosewood Pilot

Tammy reported the YMCA, with Vinson's help, is piloting bringing virtual programming to Rosewood Villa residents. The YMCA is seeing many older adults participating in their virtual programs, or participating with greater frequency, so it seems that virtual programming makes access easier for many.

Ying mentioned the risk of virtual programs going away when in-person activities are possible again, and that this may leave people feeling like a connection was broken. Tammy stated that the YMCA has already decided to continue virtual options because the high level of participation is indicating that this format works well for many people.

Tax filing assistance

Chris stated that this is an important and immediate need for Whatcom County's older adults, as the AARP Foundation Tax-Aide program is not operating this year. Chris can share the few resources he is aware of, and requests that others contact him if they know of options.

AWW priorities for 2021

A subgroup of the AWW Steering Committee met on 1/27 to develop a proposal for AWW 2021 priorities. The group (Marie, Heather, Ryan, Ying, Chris, Carol and Heidi) reviewed the steering committee discussion from Dec 4 regarding last year's priorities and accomplishments, and considered what has shifted since then or what might be new opportunities for AWW.

The group's reflection and discussion identified several general considerations for AWW in 2021:

- Action is important to ensure AWW is "not just talk." Though small, the Dear Friend Pen Pal project has been a good example of action.
- Steering Committee member organizations are weary and stretched thin.
 - Would be helpful to "spread the load"
 - Need to focus on realistic, feasible and actionable work
 - Reduce the frequency of steering committee meetings?
- Equity, diversity and inclusion should be incorporated into every aspect of AWW.
- Re-engaging and expanding the broader AWW coalition feels important.

Recommendations	Details re: subgroup's thinking	2/5/21 Steering Committee decisions/ next steps
<p>1. Clarify and develop grantmaking process for projects aligned with the AWW Blueprint.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We said at the Summit that a funding mechanism was coming; haven't done it yet Would raise visibility of and engage more people in AWW Would catalyze others' projects and activities that align with the Blueprint, expanding the work and helping to "spread the load" A joint CHF-AWW committee would design the process and determine grant recipients 	<p>Agreement on developing and implementing grantmaking process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marie: Grantmaking is great outreach – it's exciting, compelling, and creates a "hook." Heather: Would suggest an open grant round to the CHF Board, with April 1 deadline. CHF Grants Committee meets next week and can discuss the \$ amount that could be allocated. The review and decision-making committee would include both CHF and AWW members. Sarah: Perhaps an elder from the community could be asked to participate in the process. Interested in working on this: Mary, Marie, Sarah, Tammy, Adrienne
<p>2. Survey AWW members (people who were at Summit, plus additions since then)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Announce RFP Ask people to review top 5 priorities from the Summit and how they would rank them now. Invite suggestions for other/new areas to focus on for grantmaking 	<p>This is a part of the grant-making work, above.</p>
<p>3. Feasible, actionable projects – things that address immediate needs, can be easily executed, and show action ("not just talk")</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Amplify the Portraits Project by showing/sharing this work, possibly branching into social media or related projects. Cultural shift is the underlying goal. Pursue AARP Livable Cities designation (continuation from 2020). Continue Dear Friend pen pal project (could another organization coordinate?) Facilitate COVID vaccination information and access for older adults. 	<p>Agreement to amplify the Portraits Project and advance Dear Friend Pen Pal project.</p> <p>Agreement to NOT pursue AARP Livable Cities designation at this time. It's important but not as important as other items. Could add to the "Radar List" below and take advantage of opportunities that may arise.</p> <p>Agreement to focus on COVID vaccination information and access. See comments below.</p>
<p>4. "Keep on radar" – track other work in the community, and be attentive to opportunities for advocacy/collaboration</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Housing for older adults (Opportunity Council and other) Resource RoundTable (continue from 2020) 	<p>Add AARP Livable Cities designation</p> <p>Another area is homelessness and advocacy around housing. Some of those living without housing are older adults. The Portrait Project will be including an older adult living with homelessness.</p>
<p>5. Shift to quarterly steering committee meetings, and do more work in smaller groups.</p>		<p>Agreement to hold full Steering Committee meetings once a quarter, with small group or project work in between.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don't want to lose momentum; meetings create a sort of deadline, which is helpful. Could we create some other prompt or reminder mechanism? Everyone could hold the first Friday meeting time on their calendars and use this time for small groups or other AWW work. Beneficial to stay connected with partners and activities in between quarterly meetings. People working on projects could send short updates and/or Lara could compile brief monthly updates and send to all.

COVID-19 vaccine comments—needs and ideas

- Vaccine roll-out and difficulty with getting vaccine is causing a lot of confusion, disappointment and anger.
- Most information and appointment scheduling is computer based, so those without computers or computer skills fall through the cracks -- need other options.
- It's not just getting info and appointments – it's also how older adults will actually get to vaccine appointments, or how to get vaccine to them.
- Reach out TO people.
- Information management is needed. More communication by paper and radio.
- Existing inequities are being exacerbated.
- The intense pursuit of vaccine that's happening right now has an adverse effect on health. The communication channels are getting overloaded, so people who need care have less access to their providers. Also, the stress and time of "vaccine hunting" is not healthy.
- Need a clear way to "get in line," even if it's a wait list.
- Lack of vaccine supply is currently an issue, but will increase eventually.
- AWW could call out inequities, acknowledge emotional needs, and that vaccine scarcity is causing high anxiety.
- Possibly issue a jointly signed letter to the governor OR ... open letter about this
- A lot of people are just so worried they're going to miss their chance to get vaccinated.
- Part of the desire to be vaccinated as soon as possible is deep weariness with the isolation from our loved ones and community.

Other Comments (from chat):

- Sharing information and acknowledging voices is very important, whether it's vaccine, tax or other information. Radio is one possibility that reaches people. How about an aging well radio hour?
- Finding ways to keep the broader coalition connected and engaged
 - Possible virtual summit this year
 - Perhaps interim short meetings--check ins.
 - Could also utilize breakout rooms

Members' interest areas (from chat):

- Ying: Happy to work wherever I can be most useful
- Becky: I'm happy to help with anything further re: COVID vaccine or letter project
- Tammy: Happy to help with portrait project and/or pen pals.
- Melinda: I'm happy to help with COVID vaccine stuff
- Tessa: Pen Pal project and grant process, and vaccine if I have capacity!
- Sarah: HMN can help with vaccination information. I'll keep working on portraits. Faith communities may be able to help with letter writing and management as well.
- Chris: COVID communication work; share the Portraits program with my team for ways to help promote it!
- Vinson: COVID for me.

Wrap Up and Next Steps

- ➔ Lara will draft an action plan from the committee's discussion, and send to all for review and comment.
- ➔ The next "work time" will be Friday, March 5.
- ➔ The next full Steering Committee meeting will be Friday, May 7.

2021 Meeting Line-Up for the Rest of 2021:

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| ▪ March 5 – Subgroup or project work | ▪ August 6 – Full AWW Steering Committee |
| ▪ April 2 – Subgroup or project work | ▪ September 3 – Subgroup or project work |
| ▪ May 7 – Full AWW Steering Committee | ▪ October 1 - Subgroup or project work |
| ▪ June 4 – Subgroup or project work | ▪ November 4 – Full AWW Steering Committee |
| ▪ July 2 – Subgroup or project work | ▪ December 3 - TBD |