

# Agging Well Whatcom Steering Committee

Friday, August 7, 2020

By Zoom call

## MINUTES

### Attending:

Becky Kirkland, PeaceHealth Center for Senior Health  
Carol Nicolay, Health Ministries Network  
Chris Orr, Whatcom Council on Aging  
Dr. Chao-ying Wu, Chuckanut Health Foundation Board/Family Care Network  
Janet Malley, Whatcom Transportation Authority  
Lindsey Karas, Mercy Housing  
Marie Eaton, Palliative Care Institute, WWU  
Mary Anderson, Whatcom Transportation Authority  
Melinda Herrera, Rosewood Villa  
Ryan Blackwell, Northwest Regional Council  
Tessa Whitlock, Chuckanut Health Foundation  
Tonja Myers, Christian Health Care Center  
Vinson Latimore, Gibraltar Senior Living

### Regrets:

Amy Hockenberry, Whatcom County Health Department  
Heather Flaherty, Chuckanut Health Foundation  
Wendy Lawrence, Opportunity Council  
Dr. Dave Lynch, Chuckanut Health Foundation Board/Family Care Network (retired)  
Heidi Bugbee, Generations Early Learning & Family Center

## Welcome & Check-in

Steering Committee members shared how they and/or their workplaces are doing. Fatigue was a common theme, described in a variety of ways:

- I'm tired and staff are tired
- "Worry fatigue" among patients and staff
- "COVID fatigue"
- We're in the 2-25 mile phase of a marathon
- Realizing it's going to be a long haul, especially for seniors
- Working from home much longer than had hoped for
- Roller coaster; maybe it's interval training rather than a marathon
- A general, low level depression
- Seeing we can't just be in survival mode
- Worry about long term financial impacts
- Working to find the balance between safety and productivity

### Organizational/program updates:

- WTA continues to use its paratransit vehicles and operators to deliver food and other supplies.
- Mercy Housing just received a shipment of tablets that will be distributed to residents in their senior housing properties.
- The Palliative Care Institute is planning a set of webinars this fall to replace the cancelled Care Across Cultures spring conference. The webinars will incorporate issues of systemic racism and health disparities, including those more clearly revealed by COVID-19. PCI is also working on a three-part series to encourage alignment between the legal and medical professions around advance care planning conversations and documents.

- The NW Regional Council has distributed Older American Act funds (*and/or CARES Act funding??*) to numerous agencies in Whatcom County, including the Whatcom Council on Aging and the Opportunity Council. NWRC has also added more behavioral health professionals to its staff.
- Health Ministries Network completed its annual training in an online format; for some of the ten participants, this was also an introduction to using this kind of technology.
- The Center for Senior Health clinic is busy again. Some patients' dissatisfaction about required masking is adding additional stress to staff, and the recent announcement that Bellingham Schools will start the school year online means that some staff need to figure out childcare arrangements.
- Rosewood Villa residents can now have more visitors, with certain restrictions [*Inslee announced [guidance for long term care facilities](#) on 8/6/20*]. While this is a positive change, it also increases anxiety about possible exposure.

## Approve Minutes

Minutes from the 6/7/20 Steering Committee meeting were approved as written.

## Project Updates and Discussion

### Information & Navigation/Resource Roundtable

Chris reported that he attended the first meeting of the Resource Roundtable planning committee in July. This has been a stop-and-start effort for over a year, so having a working committee with a commitment to regular meetings is a good step. The Opportunity Council is now also providing staff support to coordinate and keep the process moving, and Chris is optimistic about the group's ability to make progress in developing a community-wide information database and website. The committee decided to work on creating an outward-facing resource for public access. Past discussions have tried to address both public access and use by social service providers, and the combination of audiences and functions caused the effort to become unwieldy and bogged down.

The committee will assess the [North Sound 211 system](#) and determine if it would meet the local needs. The committee's focus, partly due to its membership, is on information access for under-resourced community members, so representing AWW and older adults brings a different perspective.

### AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities

Ying reported that he and Lara had a Zoom meeting with Councilmember Carol Frazey as a first step in approaching the County Council regarding seeking the Age Friendly designation for Whatcom County. She was very receptive to the idea, and provided some good tactical suggestions for next steps. She recommended having (or at least offering) one-on-one conversations with each council member to explain what the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Network is, and how it would benefit Whatcom County.

Mary suggested contacting the directors of county departments to let them know about the process, since they would likely be key in implementing the commitments of being an Age Friendly community; she thought the Planning Department and Health Department would be especially important. She shared language from the professional planners' code of conduct that aligned with the age-friendly lens, and suggested using the terminology county departments are familiar with (for example: "disadvantaged").

Ying said that he alluded to the issue of diversity and equity in talking with Carol, but he is still grappling with the best way to articulate it. He also mentioned concern about how to add this aspect without diluting the focus on aging. Lara stated she sees the connection in two ways 1) There is diversity among the aging population (racial/ethnic, income, geography, etc.) and 2) Age is an axis of diversity, and older adults as a group are marginalized.

Ying and Lara will continue to refine the language and messaging and contact additional council members. Carol would also like to join the outreach around the Age Friendly designation.

## **Intergenerational Community**

Tonja reported that a core intergenerational community group met in May, and agreed it was important learn more about what is already happening to build intergenerational community, in order to support and build on that. Lara sent out a very simple survey to the "AWW Intergenerational Community" list, about 85 people who indicated interest in this focus area at last September's Summit. Only ten people responded, but we learned a bit about what's already happening and ideas for doing more. Some common themes were: faith communities "inreach" to older adults within congregations; neighborhood associations and neighbor-to-neighbor outreach; online programming, concerts; writing cards and letters; reading and storytelling.

Last week the committee met again and decided we need to just **do something**, starting with something easy or "low hanging fruit." The committee decided to launch a simple letter writing project starting with general letters, not written to a specific person. Two basic approaches were considered: general letters and one-to-one pen pals, which would be more personal, but seems much more complex to coordinate. If the project with general letters goes well, we can work later on figuring out a mechanism for one-to-one pen pals.

The goal will be to create 4-5 pairings of **groups** of elders (letter receivers) and younger people (letter writers). Several groups of elders are already identified: Christian Health Care (SNF), Summit Place (Assisted Living), Mt Baker Care Center (SNF), Bellingham Senior Activity Center/Meals on Wheels, and Rosewood Villa (Assisted Living). Younger groups need to be identified and contacted; they could be scouts, schools, library teen clubs, Boys and Girls Club, and possibly YMCA childcare programs for school-aged kids.

Youth groups will mail a batch of letters directly to the location of elders, or to CHF if needed. Recreation therapy and other staff at facilities will help distribute letters and identify who is more isolated and would especially benefit from receiving a letter. [Mindport](#) has an established "correspondence club" and is also interested in participating in some way.

## **Picnic with a Purpose**

Chris shared that plans are coming along well for Picnic with a Purpose, which will take the place (at least this year) of the annual Senior Day in the Park at Hovander. He shared that the WCOA did not receive the AARP grant, but expressed his appreciation for the support in applying and Tessa's writing and editing assistance. Luckily, Picnic with a Purpose has received a lot of support from local community organizations and businesses. Usually about 500 people attend Senior Day in the Park, and they are planning for 1,000 participants this year.

Starting the week of August 24<sup>th</sup> Whatcom Senior Centers will have scheduled drive-through cookouts. Since many seniors arrive early for the usual food pick up, there will be "parking lot bingo." Resource bags will be distributed in lieu of the usual tabling by community partners. WCOA is still looking for meaningful swag for the cloth resource bags, and would welcome contributions of puzzle books, note cards or stationery, tissue, or other practical items. They are assembling 1,000 bags; any leftovers will be distributed to Meals on Wheels participants.

Another aspect of Picnic with a Purpose is a month-long program of virtual (Zoom) informational and entertainment sessions, the calendar for which will be included in the resource bags. They are designed to align with the AWW blueprint, so fall into the categories of Health and Wellness, Transportation, Culture Shift, Housing, and Intergenerational Opportunities. Health and wellness activities have been the easiest to come up with, and they are still looking for additions to the other areas. He would especially like to add intergenerational- and housing-related sessions. Chris asked Aging Well members to share their ideas and

expertise, or suggest others who could do so. They need to finalize the schedule by the end of next week [Aug 14] so the programs can be included in the resource bags.

## Aging Well Whatcom Fall Update

At the last Steering Committee meeting there was agreement to create a report or other communication to the community sharing what AWW has accomplished in the last year since the Summit.

Comments and discussion regarding what to highlight in the report and the best way to present the information:

- Sharing AWW project reports similar to those shared in today's meeting would show forward movement.
- Re-making Senior Day in the Park into Picnic with a Purpose also deserves to be highlighted.
- A written report could be formatted in the same style as the Blueprint, for a branding of sorts.
- A video format would be another option; short form video apps Vine and TikTok were referenced.
- A video could include interviews, and clips related to the projects and blueprint areas.
- Would Marie be able to write and perform a song? Marie said she's "up to the challenge."
- Scheduling a Zoom discussion after the report and/or video are distributed would add an interactive element.

**ACTION** → Lara will outline the content to start getting something in writing; creating a video could follow.

## Wrap Up and Next Steps

Committee members expressed appreciation for seeing each other again, even if it's just on the Zoom screen. The next AWW Steering Committee meeting is scheduled for Friday, September 4.