

Aging Well Whatcom Steering Committee

Friday, December 2, 2022

Chuckanut Health Foundation + Zoom

MINUTES

Attending:

Bethany Chamberlin, Northwest Regional Council
Chao-ying Wu, Chuckanut Health Foundation Board/Family Care Network
Chris Orr, Whatcom Council on Aging
Heidi Bugbee, Generations Early Learning & Family Center
Jake Brandvold, Whatcom County Health Department
Janet Malley, Whatcom Transportation Authority
Marie Eaton, Palliative Care Institute, WWU
Mary Anderson, Whatcom Transportation Authority
Ryan Blackwell, Northwest Regional Council
Sarah Lane, Health Ministries Network
Tammy Bennett, YMCA
Tessa Whitlock, Chuckanut Health Foundation
Tonja Myers, Christian Health Care Center

Regrets:

Amy Hockenberry, Whatcom County Health Department
Barbara Juarez, NW Indian Health Board
Becky Kirkland, PeaceHealth Center for Senior Health
Heather Flaherty, Chuckanut Health Foundation
Kenzie Nelson, VibrantUSA
Kristin Hill, Opportunity Council
Melinda Herrera, Rosewood Villa

Welcome and Introductions

Lara welcomed committee members attending both in person and via Zoom.

- Bethany Chamberlin is taking Ryan's seat on the Steering Committee. Steering Committee members welcomed Bethany and expressed their gratitude and appreciation to Ryan and all he's contributed to Aging Well.
- Jake Brandvold is the new epidemiologist at the Health Department, and is leading work on the population health indicators platform that the AWW data committee will be contributing to. Amy will continue as the Health Department representative on the Steering Committee.

Members reflected on AWW in 2022, considering aspects that have been exciting and satisfying, as well as those that feel challenging or discouraging.

Exciting, satisfying/gratifying:

- AWW is still active in spite of the challenges of the last couple of years.
- Positive approach and attitude.
- Art of Aging (mentioned by numerous people) and its continually broadening exposure and impact.
- Growth and forward movement of programs and services for older adults: Ask A Nurse, YMCA in-person and Zoom classes, expanded WTA services, new senior/community center (long term), etc.
- Prop 5 passage and opportunities for intergenerational work.
- Updated Blueprint.

Challenging or discouraging:

- Hard to participate in AWW as fully due to other demands on time and energy.
- Economic insecurity for many, with its known impacts on wellness and quality of life.
- Ongoing risk of COVID, flu, RSV and effects on in-person interactions, including intergenerational opportunities.
- Our society's declining ability to engage in rationale discourse.
- Intergenerational work seems more important than ever.

Marie shared her poem [This Body of Mine](#), which appears in the recent American Society on Aging publication.

In regards to civil discourse, Mary recommended Mónica Guzmán's book: [I Never Thought Of It That Way: A Guide to Building Bridges in Dangerously Divided Times](#) and the TEDx Seattle talk: [How Curiosity Will Save Us | Mónica Guzmán | TEDxSeattle](#).

Review and Approve Minutes

Minutes from the 11/4/22 Steering Committee meeting were approved as written.

Landscape Scan

The group reviewed a summary of current issues and opportunities related to older adults, summarized from discussion at the last few meetings, and identified additional items (noted in green).

National – upcoming legislation

- Food as Medicine
- Hospital at Home CMS waiver

WA State

- Legislative session promising for aging and older adults – budget looks strong
- WA Dept of Health exploring WA Age-Friendly designation
- WA Cares fund
- Death With Dignity – expansion of prescriptive authority to ARNPs, DOs, PA-Cs which would expand access

Whatcom Issues

- Staff shortages: esp early learning/childcare, long term care, health care. High staff turnover interferes with maintaining strong partnerships and providing quality services
- Health care provider shortage, decreased access
- COVID-flu-RSV, strained health system capacity
- Concern re public safety (harassment, violence), esp downtown Bellingham
- Intergenerational opportunities still limited in early learning & long term care
- Lack of affordable housing
- Effects of inflation, impacts on housing, wages, staffing, etc. – financial insecurity in general

Whatcom – Programs, Services, Activity (new in the last year or emerging)

- NW Indian Health Board Age-Friendly work

- New WTA paratransit service in Blaine-Birch Bay **starting June 2023**
- Eleanor Apartments – Ask-a-Nurse, resident CHW program
- Art of Aging showing locally + American Society on Aging
- NWRC in-home substance use disorder program for older adults
- New NWRC position – in-home caregiver recruitment
- PeaceHealth increasing behavioral health services, including CSH
- Health Dept population health indicator platform being developed
- Whatcom Resource Information Collaborative
- Rosewood Villa accepting Medicaid with no wait period
- Council on Aging – new B’ham Sr Center (*co-location opportunities?*)
- WTA – revamped downtown station (*co-location opportunities?*)
- Laurel-Forest Sr Housing – 56 units + childcare. Start Spring 2023, complete Spring 2024
- OppCo New Housing Navigator (“lite”)
- League of Women Voters housing focus 2023; want to collaborate w AWW
- Racial Equity Commission established
- Children’s Fund approved
- Family Care Network’s new non-profit “arm” – **still in the idea stage**
- Council on Aging – expanding Meals on Wheels, possible central kitchen
- **WWU starting Masters in Nursing Program with palliative care thread (2024?)**
- **NWRC Dementia Resource Specialists**
- **Dementia Support NW starting an adult day program, located at Christ the King in Bellingham and seeking a county site. Payment will be by membership, and additional funding will be needed.**

AGING WELL WHATCOM

Underway/ongoing

- Participate in Whatcom Housing Alliance
- Elevate voices of older adults
- Data – Health Dept Health Indicators Platform, define Blueprint progress indicators
- Contribute to Whatcom Resource Information Collaborative – **NWRC, Bethany is participating in development**

Not done (yet) and emerging ideas

- Implement AWW member/supporter
- Address loneliness and isolation
- Asset framing/reframing aging
- Engage with Public Health Advisory Board (PHAB)
- Recruit older adults into early learning workforce
- **Whatcom County Age-Friendly designation – Bethany interested in resuming this discussion**

Whatcom – People (Steering Committee?)

- Devin Connolly, new Interfaith Coalition ED
- County Councilmember Kathy Kershner – interest in older adult issues

HOW Aging Well is getting the work done

- Steering Committee (meetings 1 hours/month)
- Ad hoc sub committees

- CHF sponsorship
- Partnerships
- Coordinator (contract, part-time)

Bethany asked about AWW's implementation process, i.e., how a project moves from an idea to action. Committee members reflected that it tends to depend largely on where there is interest and energy (Ryan recalled ying's early description of "organic and messy.")

Lara noted that for the last several years the Steering Committee has laid out priorities for the year; some are accomplished and others aren't. If the committee deems a specific project especially high priority, then her time can be focused on that.

Wrap Up and Next Steps

At the next meeting, we'll prioritize work for 2023 and discuss how to best implement it.

For 2023 Steering Committee meetings, the group agreed to:

- Hold hybrid meetings, based on today's experience (thanks to Tessa for making the technology work!)
- Increase duration to 1.5 hours – one hour per month doesn't feel like enough time together.
- Meet **9:00-10:30** on first Friday of the month.

➔ **ACTION:** Lara will send 2023 meeting series out with the Zoom link.

➔ **ACTION:** Tessa will book the CHF meeting room.