

Aging Well Whatcom Steering Committee

Friday, December 4, 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
Heather Flaherty, Chuckanut Health Foundation, and Margot
Heidi Bugbee, Generations Early Learning & Family Center
Janet Malley, Whatcom Transportation Authority
Lindsey Karas, Mercy Housing
Marie Eaton, Palliative Care Institute, WWU
Mary Anderson, Whatcom Transportation Authority
Ryan Blackwell, Northwest Regional Council
Tessa Whitlock, Chuckanut Health Foundation
Tonja Myers, Christian Health Care Center

Regrets:

Amy Hockenberry, Whatcom County Health Department
Dr. Dave Lynch, Chuckanut Health Foundation Board/Family Care Network (retired)
Melinda Herrera, Rosewood Villa
Tammy Bennett, YMCA
Wendy Lawrence, Opportunity Council
Vinson Latimore, Gibraltar Senior Living

Welcome, Partner & Program Updates

Marie: The Portraits Projects has been launched, with three interviews completed and a fourth happening today. Marie will be having surgery for a total hip replacement next week, so send her healing thoughts!

Tonja: The pandemic continues to place a strain on Christian Health Care Center. Currently all staff and residents are required to be COVID tested twice a week.

Chris: Whatcom County on Aging is holding its annual Festival of Tree fundraiser in a virtual format this year. *Addendum from Chris via email: This year WCOA shared information about Aging Well Whatcom with 1,500 Whatcom area seniors as part of the Picnic with a Purpose event! Heather, thank you again for CHF underwriting that program.*

Tessa: Another batch of letters and cards were distributed by the Dear Friend Pen Pal project last week. and they “keep rolling in.” Tessa picked up an additional 92 at WECU yesterday.

Heidi: The Mt Baker Care Center/Summit Place campus is creating a “Walk of Lights” to celebrate the holidays in place of their usual intergenerational programming. Enrollment in Generations Early Learning Center has declined since the tightened COVID restrictions, and the Whatcom ReStart grants have been critical to the center’s continued operation.

Heather: There is still time to send in a video clip, and a few more would be appreciated to help complete the video that's part of the AWW community update.

Becky: The Center for Senior Health has shifted back to more virtual visits due to recently tightened restrictions. Virtual visits often require tech support for the patients, who are frustrated and, in some cases, choosing to deny or delay care. Becky is also noticing declined staff engagement and morale, and not being able to celebrate the holiday season in the usual ways is a challenge. They are starting to gear up for COVID vaccination for patients and staff.

Mary: WTA will be piloting an on-demand van service within the City of Lynden in March. This will be an Uber-like service with wheelchair accessible WTA vans and drivers. Unlike paratransit services, there are no eligibility criteria other than the service area boundaries and hours of operation, which will likely be 7:00AM-7:00 PM. WTA is seeking input from Lynden residents on the proposed service boundary and schedule.

➔ **ACTION: Mary** will send an email to all with the survey – please forward to any colleagues, family and friends who live in Lynden.

Lindsay: Mercy properties in the NW region (WA and Idaho) have seen an enormous increase in some types of resident services this year, demonstrating how staff have stepped up to help residents during the pandemic. In 2019 there were 13,000 “food efforts” that assisted residents with food security. So far in 2020 there have been 74,000 food efforts. In 2019, there were 600 well-being checks; this year there have been 30,000 so far. Group activities to engage residents and reduce social isolation have been harder to provide given the pandemic. On a personal note, Lindsay and her husband have just been approved to become foster parents.

Ryan: COVID hasn't been an issue for most in-home long-term care services, though there have been a few challenges with some clients and caregivers not using masks. The most recent state revenue forecasts are better now than several months ago budget, and it appears there will not need to be significant cuts for the next biennium. The WA [Long Term Care Coalition](#) has done a lot of advocacy work to protect funding for long-term care.

Janet: Paratransit ridership has slowed since the tightened restrictions. WTA has selected a new general manager who will start in January.

Carol: Health Ministries Network hired Sarah Lane (previously presenting the YMCA on the AWW Steering Committee) as their new executive director. Carol has been engaged with the Whatcom Intergenerational Highschool's Intergenerational Learning Alliance, and suggests sending out information through the AWW membership.

➔ **Lara** to work with Tessa to send out info re WIHS program to the full AWW coalition

Ying noted that Heather was one of seven nominees for the [Top 7 Under 40 awards](#) through the Whatcom Chamber of Commerce, AND selected as the final winner! In addition, Marie and Lara are both recipients of [Ken Gass Community Builder Awards](#) through the Whatcom Family and Community Network.

Review and Approve Minutes

Minutes from the 11/6/20 Steering Committee meeting were approved as written.

Priorities – Review 2020, Discuss 2021

The group reviewed AWW work from 2020, reflecting both on accomplishments and projects that were altered or not completed. Several members voiced appreciation that the AWW steering committee has continued to convene, adapt, and move some efforts forward in spite of the challenges of this year.

2020 Strategies to Facilitate/Empower Community Implementation of Blueprint	
Planned	Completed **Blue=comments from the meeting discussion
1) Design and create information/resource repository.	<p>✓ Participated in Resource Roundtable community-wide planning committee.</p> <p>Chris is seeing that the RR process will be long and complex due to technical issues, the many partners, and the volume of information. A San Diego consultant advised the committee to start by focusing on developing collaboration and interest, rather than the technology. Chris noted that there is a lot of important information to share, would like to work on ways to get more information out using the existing tools and channels (e.g., senior center newsletters). We can make some immediate improvements in information sharing, in addition to longer term endeavors.</p>
2) Create an intergenerational community action plan or recommendations.	<p>✓ Implemented Dear Friend Pen Pal Project, added intergenerational resources page to website.</p> <p>Carol: AWW is a sponsor of the WIHS Intergenerational Learning Alliance.</p> <p>Tonja: A large group of people met in early 2020 to begin intergenerational discussion and planning, and there was a lot of energy. This is interrupted by COVID, but that work still needs to be done. She hopes it can be picked up next year, with the recognition that it may have shifted due to COVID. We may need to consider new perspectives and approaches.</p>
3) Design and implement awareness campaign related to ageism and aging well.	<p>Marie: Launched Portraits of Aging Project, which explicitly speaks to this.</p> <p>Heather: Would like to refocus on the ageism awareness campaign in the coming year.</p>
4) Clarify and develop funding for projects aligned with Blueprint.	<p>Heather: This is still a priority, and be picked up in 2021.</p>
5) Investigate AARP Livable Cities Designation/ Network or other designation.	<p>✓ Convened initial round of meetings with County Council members.</p>

Additional Comments:

- Heather: OppCo is moving forward with large affordable housing for seniors, with lo-located childcare. We can hear more about this at the Feb meeting.

- Would like to see AWW steering committee partners share out their organizational/program priorities and see where there is overlap. CHF could pay for facilitation of a planning meeting or retreat if that would be useful.
- Thinks about Council member Browne’s call to “solve a problem” and the implication that doing so would generate engagement from County Council.
- Ryan: We will still be dealing with COVID in 2021, so it’s important to consider what is realistic and feasible in terms of workload.

Other ideas based on some of what has “bubbled up” this year:

- Develop AWW Coalition membership.
Return to the conversation of clarifying what joining the Coalition means/what are we asking from members? We had discussed using the AWW logo on websites, window stickers, as a symbol of AWW membership. Business pledge?
- Equity, diversity and inclusion.
Thread the [CHF commitment to health equity](#) through all AWW projects, intentionally diversify steering committee membership, possible grant round for projects supporting diverse groups of older adults (age, income level, race, culture, language, LGBTQ, other...)?

Action Items:

- ➔ **Heather, Marie, Carol, Ying, Ryan, Chris, Heidi and Janet** will meet with more time to discuss priorities
 - Revisit the blueprint and dot priorities from the summit, consider what may have shifted with COVID
 - Could survey broader AWW Coalition to get input on current needs, opportunities and priorities
 - Hear steering committee members’ “unfiltered” ideas
- ➔ **Steering committee members** to send brainstormed, unfiltered thoughts and ideas to Lara
- ➔ **Ying and Lara** will formulate a couple of questions to jump start the thinking

Dear Friend Pen Pal Project:

- It would be helpful to get an article in the Herald, and more press in general (perhaps including Whatcom Talk which is “pay to play”)
- Graphic designer is developing simplified materials
- Becky is working on a piece for the PeaceHealth newsletter, and is talking with her child’s school

- ➔ **Action: Heather and Tonja** will connect regarding working with CHCC’s public relations consultant

Wrap Up and Next Steps

- ➔ Lara will arrange a planning subgroup meeting for early January
- ➔ The next AWW Steering Committee meeting will be Friday, February 5.