

# Aging Well Whatcom Steering Committee

Friday, September 4, 2020

By Zoom call

## MINUTES

### Attending:

Carol Nicolay, Health Ministries Network  
Chris Orr, Whatcom Council on Aging  
Dr. Chao-ying Wu, Chuckanut Health Foundation Board/Family Care Network  
Dr. Dave Lynch, Chuckanut Health Foundation Board/Family Care Network (retired)  
Heather Flaherty, Chuckanut Health Foundation, and Margot  
Janet Malley, Whatcom Transportation Authority  
Lindsey Karas, Mercy Housing  
Marie Eaton, Palliative Care Institute, WWU  
Mary Anderson, Whatcom Transportation Authority  
Tessa Whitlock, Chuckanut Health Foundation  
Tonja Myers, Christian Health Care Center  
Vinson Latimore, Gibraltar Senior Living

### Regrets:

Amy Hockenberry, Whatcom County Health Department  
Becky Kirkland, PeaceHealth Center for Senior Health  
Heidi Bugbee, Generations Early Learning & Family Center  
Melinda Herrera, Rosewood Villa  
Ryan Blackwell, Northwest Regional Council  
Wendy Lawrence, Opportunity Council

## Welcome & Updates

Steering Committee members reflected on aspects of Zoom that they appreciate:

- Hiding my own face, so others can see it but I am not looking at myself
- Sharing documents via screenshare
- Automatic interpreting feature
- “Share something within reach” activity – fun and meaningful
- Easier to hear participants
- I can listen while driving
- Use the alphabetized participant list rather than random sequence of photo boxes
- When people acknowledge at the beginning that we may see pets, kids, partners...and that’s OK
- Polling feature
- Break out rooms
- Bringing people together who wouldn’t otherwise meet in person, e.g. colleagues in statewide program

### Members’ organizational/program updates:

Carol reported that the Health Ministries Network recently lost its communication coordinator. That, plus faith community nurses not being able to see congregants in-person, is putting a strain on HMN.

Chris shared that the Whatcom Council on Aging’s Picnic with a Purpose distributed meals and resource bags to 855 people (about 500 people usually attend Senior Day in the Park). It was good to connect with Senior Center members who they haven’t seen since March. They have received a lot of positive feedback and appreciation for reaching out. Chris thanked Heather, Tessa, Mary, Janet, Vinson, and Tonja for their organizations’ partnership and contributions.

Ying reflected on childcare with schools opening remotely, and the challenges of providers and staff taking care of patients when they also need to be taking care of their children. He expressed concern about the risk of “enormous consolidation” in health care delivery as a possible long-term change resulting from COVID. While virtual care is helpful

and has its uses, he worries that the economics will drive an extreme shift to virtual care, and that the model of in-person care will become under-resourced and weakened. Lack of in-person interactions would be especially impactful for older adults, and he says advocates for older adults should be keeping an eye on these trends.

Dave said he has been providing childcare for their two four-year-old grandchildren, which is “fun, rewarding and exhausting.” The fact that their family has the resources to provide childcare and preschool has caused him to reflect on equity and the many families who are struggling with childcare. He commended the CHF for their recently released statement on health equity. Dave is also working with local businesses on a direct care model of health care with the intent of increasing access to and decreasing cost of care locally.

Heather, back from maternity leave, described building CHF’s advocacy work and its [Commitment to Health Equity](#). This includes applying the equity lens to CHF’s strategic priorities of aging, childcare, and youth mental health. They are developing guidelines regarding advocacy that is appropriate and effective. One goal is to promote Board members (and AWW members) giving consistent messages in all the groups and places they’re a part of. Tessa will share these guidelines with the AWW steering committee.



From Janet Malley to Everyone:  
love seeing Margot

From Tammy Bennett to Everyone:  
Agree. What a treat!

Lindsey shared that Mercy Housing is striving to “bring back some normalcy” to supportive services within Mercy’s properties. Many programs were put on hold while Mercy focused on food distribution and supporting youth when COVID first hit. Now they’re working on developing new models for their programs, including those for older adults.

Marie stated that the Palliative Care Institute is sponsoring a webinar series in November to promote aligning advance care planning documents used by legal and medical professionals ([Advance Care Planning in Legal and Medical Care](#)). PCI will also host webinars to replace the cancelled Care Across Cultures spring conference. Marie will send information to the group as it becomes available. She shared that personally she has been writing a lot of songs and poetry.

Mary reported that, similar to Ying’s comment regarding healthcare, she’s concerned about possible de-funding of public transportation systems and infrastructure. Whatcom Transportation Authority has several services changes coming up in response to community requests and needs. She requested that members complete the [WTA 2040 Survey](#) that is part of WTAs process of planning for the next 20 years. WTA continues to use its paratransit vehicles and operators to deliver food and other supplies.

Janet shared that she was on her way to load vans for food bank deliveries, which makes the issues of equity feel especially poignant. She commented [equity issues] “feel new, but they are so old.”

Tammy reported that the YMCA continues to use its vans to deliver food and masks (mask delivery includes places like group family homes and recovery centers). Revamping the Y’s childcare program has been a very labor-intensive process, as well as moving other programs online. Diabetes prevention and weight loss classes will be offered virtually in the fall and the pool reopens on the 28th. Insurance companies are no longer paying for exercise classes delivered virtually, so the Y needs to start charging \$25 per month. They have started a “Y-Fi” program, where families can reserve socially distanced spaces at the downtown Y for schoolwork and have access to the building’s Wi-Fi.

Vinson, who is a YMCA board member, added that the Y recently formed a diversity and inclusion team of staff and members. They will be looking at race and inclusion, and he reflected that this work is a long haul. His business Choices has been receiving donations of wheelchairs, walkers, and similar equipment, and has numerous free blood glucose monitors to give away. [Contact him directly for more information at [vinson@gibraltarbg.com](mailto:vinson@gibraltarbg.com).]

Tonja reported that Christian Health Care Center started doing supervised, outdoor visits with residents this week. The parameters are very strict, but residents and their families are grateful to be in each other’s physical presence again. A new regulation requires COVID testing for 100% of staff, to be continued monthly (if less than 5% test positive) or twice a month (if more than 5% test positive). This involves significant cost, time and energy. She hopes that resuming some

small group activities and modified communal dining with residents will help with the loneliness she's seeing. Tonja said she's also thinking a lot about the childcare crisis and considering how she could help address it.

## **Review and Approve Minutes**

Minutes from the 8/7/20 Steering Committee meeting were approved as written.

## **AWW Project Updates and Discussion**

### **AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities**

Ying reported that he has emailed council members inviting them to one-on-one meetings about the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Network, and how it would benefit Whatcom County. This outreach was suggested by Councilmember Carol Frazey when Ying and Lara talked with her last month.

Committee members shared the following comments and suggestions:

- County Council may be occupied with the recent resolution regarding equity, and have less time to consider aging issues.
- Council appreciates seeing and hearing from unusual voices and faces, not just the same people who comment on everything. The CHF Board has developed an advocacy agenda and an advocacy guide, which can be shared with steering committee members.
- Aging is an element of equity and age is an axis of diversity, so it all fits together. We are still working to articulate in writing the relationships and connections.
- Highlight that COVID-19 is affecting older adults disproportionately.
- Budget issues are critical right now, and this is a low-risk, low-cost ask.

### **Information & Navigation/Resource Roundtable**

Chris attended the Resource Roundtable planning committee meeting on August 21. The Opportunity Council is providing staff support to coordinate and keep the process moving. There are three interrelated goals: a comprehensive database, leadership engagement and commitment, and securing funding. The meeting included an exercise regarding the pros and cons of the [North Sound 211 system](#). Chris's "gut" assessment is that there is not a lot of energy about using 211, or confidence that it would meet the local needs.

Heather asked about a similar effort led by health department and early childhood advocates. Lara believes that work has merged into the Resource Roundtable, but will check on that.

Chris is representing AWW on the Resource Roundtable committee, as well as wearing his Whatcom Council on Aging hat. Having a second AWW rep would be ideal. Janet stated she would like to be second AWW rep (in addition to WTA).

**ACTION** → Lara will reconnect with Lisa Sohni about Janet joining the Resource Roundtable committee.

Ying observed that the information may exist in a fragmented way on the web and what's needed is to "compile" it. He asked if there someone with information science expertise in on the committee; Chris said that the committee is primarily social service providers and doesn't include an information scientist.

Lara stated it will be interesting to watch the effort as it moves forward, given that this community has grappled with how to create this kind of comprehensive resource data base for some time. The AWW steering committee will be relying on Chris (and now Janet) to assess whether or not the Resource Roundtable will be able to meet the AWW information and navigation goal, or if the steering committee needs to consider a different approach.

### **Intergenerational Community – Letter Writing Project**

Lara described the development of an intergenerational letter writing project, which facilitates younger people (letter writers) making cards and letters for elders (letter receivers). Christian Health Care (SNF), Summit Place (assisted living), Mt Baker Care Center (SNF), Rosewood Villa (assisted living), and Bellingham Senior Activity Center/Meals on Wheels are

all eager to receive letters. Recreation therapists, activities coordinators, and other staff at the facilities will help with distribution and identify residents who are more isolated and would especially benefit from receiving a letter.

The task now is to involve younger groups to write letters. Mindport and YMCA have already committed to letter writing, and conversations are underway with others groups including scouts, Communities in Schools, and library clubs.

All the letters will go through the CHF in order to keep track of the numbers, where they are coming from and going to, etc. Tessa will be talking with WECU about serving as community drop-off sites. Tammy stated that the Y would be happy to be a drop-off location as well.

## Aging Well Communications

### Fall Newsletter

Tessa is coordinating a fall AWW newsletter (the last one went out in May). She invited Steering Committee members to submit updates they would like to have included.

Action → Steering committee members should submit updates to Tessa by Friday, Sept 11 (tessawhitlock@chuckanuthealthfoundation.org).

### Annual Community Update

The steering committee is committed to having an annual event or other focused communication with the community each fall, continuing the momentum of last September's summit. This fall this community connection will happen through a brief (1-page) progress report and a short, conversational video.

For the video, steering committee members are asked to record themselves responding to some or all of the following questions:

- How are you seeing COVID-19 impact older adults?
- What do you wish the community knew about older adults?
- What aspect of AWW have you been working on in the last year and/or what aspects of this work do you think are the most significant or exciting? Why?
- What can community members do to support older adults and/or AWW projects?
- **An addition question was suggested:** Why is AWW work meaningful? Why are you involved with it?

Heather emphasized that this will be a "DIY and authentic" video. She will be editing and creating the video and promises to make everyone look good. 😊 Recording a Zoom conversation is another option.

Steering Committee members who agreed to review written report: Ying, Carol, Marie, Tessa, Tammy, Tonja, Ryan. Members who agreed to record and send a video: Ying, Marie, Chris, Tammy, Tonja, Ryan.

#### ***Update/Addendum from Lara:***

If you wish to help with the report and/or video, and aren't listed above, please let me know! Some members weren't at the meeting, or I may have missed you since I neglected to copy the chat where attendees "signed up" during the meeting.

**ACTION** → Send your recordings to Heather by September 30 via email, text, Google share, or Dropbox.

**ACTION** → Lara will draft the written report.

## Wrap Up and Next Steps

The next AWW Steering Committee meeting is scheduled for Friday, October 2.