

## 2018 June Health Notes by Evelyn Ames

### *Bellingham At Home's New Advocacy Program and Other local Older Adult Sources*

One of the most important parts of life for older adults is the ability to stay in their homes rather than moving to an assisted living facility or living with a family. **Bellingham At Home**, a non-profit membership organization modeled on The Village program, was started in Boston 17 years ago. There are now over 250 Villages across the country. The idea of neighbors helping neighbors empowers older adults to stay active and engaged while living in their own homes and neighborhoods. The Bellingham At Home is a program of the Whatcom Council on Aging. Its office is located at the Bellingham Senior Center on Halleck Street.

The new advocacy program is available for those who are members of Bellingham At Home. The program's purpose is to support patient and doctor/medical provider relationships. The chosen health advocates are trained (including vetting) to use a medical note taking form developed by BAH for BAH members with physicians and other health and medical personnel. Member disclosures are held in the strictest of confidence. Individuals requesting an advocate must give their full consent to allow a Bellingham At Home Health Advocate to take medical notes during appointments and with the physician's approval. The advocate does not give medical advice or treatment. The volunteer health advocacy handbook includes these sections: Volunteer Information Form; Confidentiality Form; Monthly Health Advocate Check-in Form; Issues for discussion; Code of Ethics; Neglect; Health Advocacy; Communication; Boundaries; Resistance; Health Issues; Self-Determination; Self-Care Solutions for the Health Advocate; Understanding Conflicts; Working with Third Parties; Losses for the Elderly; and Termination. Bellingham At Home is using, with permission from the Northwest Neighbors Village, a 2017 manual for medical note taking. This information is available at the BAH web site:

[http://bellinghamathome.clubexpress.com/content.aspx?page\\_id=22&club\\_id=41544&module\\_id=28778](http://bellinghamathome.clubexpress.com/content.aspx?page_id=22&club_id=41544&module_id=28778)

Additionally, there are other agencies that provide information about health services and housing in Whatcom County. A short listing includes:

1. Vibrant Senior Options Resource Guide – Health, Housing, and Happenings is available (free) at local libraries, senior citizens centers in Whatcom, Skagit, and North Snohomish <https://vibrantsenioroptions.com/> Vibrant Senior Options provides Advisory and research services for Housing and Care Options. Also, we provide a Resource Guide with articles and senior directories. See more About Us below. Vibrant Senior Options is a locally-owned business! Secondly, we dedicate our business to serving seniors who live in or would like to relocate to Northwest Washington.
2. Whatcom Health (published by The Bellingham Herald. <http://www.bellinghamherald.com/living/health-fitness/>) Is a compilation of health and medical providers advertising their agencies and programs as well as several articles about health issues (e.g., shingles, exercise, COPD). It appears to be once a year publication.
3. Prime Time (The Bellingham Herald) is published six times a year by The Bellingham Herald. The focus is on assistance and resources for Whatcom County senior citizens. Web site: [www.bhamherald.com/seniors-aging](http://www.bhamherald.com/seniors-aging).