

'Lifelong' volunteer Betsie Walton

by Peter Langmaid

The first case of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) in the U.S. was identified in 1981 and quickly ignited a furor that dominated the headlines. But as the years have passed, the AIDS epidemic has slipped from front-page headlines and out of the national consciousness.

Despite the lack of media attention, however, the disease rages on. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 1.2 million people in the U.S. are living with Human Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV), the virus that causes AIDS.

Who takes care of these people?

In the Seattle area, it's the Lifelong AIDS Alliance (Lifelong), an organization determined "to make sure we never forget that HIV/AIDS still exists." Lifelong was formed in 2001 as a merger between the Chicken Soup Brigade and the NW AIDS Alliance.

Lifelong works in three dimensions: case services (which includes case management, nutrition (i.e., Chicken Soup Brigade)), health insurance and housing), prevention/education, and advocacy. Lifelong's work is funded by donations, the



Betsie Walton, Chicken Soup Brigade volunteer (Photo by Peter Langmaid)

Lifelong Thrift Store, and several special events. Such events include the annual Seattle AIDS Walk and 5k Run, Care to Shop events at local grocery stores, and the annual Dining Out For Life night where over 150 local restaurants and diners pledge up to 30% of their meal cost to the cause.

Like many social service organizations, Lifelong relies heavily on its 1,300 tireless volunteers to accomplish its work. RSVP member Betsie Walton is a Lifelong volunteer, delivering food and meals as a member of the Chicken Soup Brigade.

Betsie moved to Seattle two years ago after 25 years of Intensive Care nursing in Montana. Her interest in HIV began when she attended a retreat for women with HIV. Ashamed of themselves, many of the women hadn't even told anyone they were infected! The retreat allowed them an opportunity to share their stories with others and it motivated Betsie to become involved in HIV/AIDS support.

Volunteering and helping others is an integral part of Betsie's DNA. Her mother volunteered wherever she was needed, including teaching English to non-native speakers. Betsie has housed foster children and opened the door of her home to exchange students from Portugal, Norway and Mozambique. And, she went to

Africa with the Peace Corps to help with community healthcare. Betsie also passed the volunteer gene to her daughter who became a Peace Corps volunteer after college.

More than simply delivering groceries and meals as a Chicken Soup Brigade volunteer, Betsie also provides another kind of sustenance to her clients: her time and interest in them. For some, Betsie is their lone human contact with the outside world, and she routinely takes whatever time is necessary to visit with them. Like many volunteers, Betsie's motivation is simple but deep: "I like to help other people."

In addition to her work with Lifelong, Betsie is also in training with Solid Ground's Long Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP). The mission of LTCOP is to improve the quality of life for people living in assisted-living facilities. After four rigorous days of training, Betsie will work with facility staff and local and state agencies to ensure that resident complaints and concerns are heard and addressed. Betsie looks forward to this work because, she says, "It's gratifying to see someone doing better because of something I've done."

In addition to her volunteering, Betsie's looking for a job and, she said in an email following our interview, a boyfriend! Any volunteers? ●

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HAPPY NEW YEAR!



Speaking Directly

by Sonya Couch, RSVP Director

Changes ahead for RSVP!

Greek philosopher Heraclitus wrote, "The only constant is change." Although most of us inwardly groan at this word, we also understand its necessity. And on that note, we have some announcements to make!

In December, long-time RSVP Coordinator Robin Knudson will be leaving RSVP for a position with AARP. Although I know volunteers and staff alike will miss Robin's presence, we wish her well with this great new opportunity.

In January, I (Sonya) too will be moving on. This is a hard transition for me, as I have spent the past nine years with RSVP and the past 14 with Solid Ground! I started with Solid Ground as a work study student in the Partners in Caring program back in 1996. I then became Program Coordinator with the SPICE Program in 2000 and spent three years with

a wonderful group of senior volunteers who I will never forget. Then in 2003 when SPICE lost its funding, I was fortunate enough to get a job as RSVP Coordinator and then became the Director in 2005.

I have learned so much from all of you. I feel incredibly fortunate to have spent so much time with people who are aging in active, healthy, graceful ways—who are themselves transforming the way society views seniors and aging.

I am equally ready and excited to be able to spend more time on my private practice as a counselor as well as with my 2-year-old daughter! It's been a year of transition, and I am ready to focus in and slow down—just a little.

Although the staffing changes of Robin and I leaving have nothing to do with budgets, they both come at a time when

the program has had to make cuts. The fact that the cuts are necessary is very unfortunate, but no one needed to be laid off, so that is a blessing. With a 20% cut in federal funds in 2011 and 2012, as well as cuts to other local funding sources, we need to scale back significantly. This means that we are going from 2.5 staff to 1.5 staff by not refilling Robin's position.

Volunteers will be most affected by our having to cut all volunteer travel reimbursements as of January 1. We tried very hard to save this benefit, because we know many of you rely on the reimbursements to be able to get to and from your volunteer assignments. Please contact RSVP if you find you need to change the place where you volunteer. We'll do our best to help you find something that will work for you.

As hard as these cuts are, we are grateful that the program is staying afloat during difficult financial times. Jennifer Gahagan, RSVP Program Coordinator, will remain with the program and do her usual wonderful job to see us through these transitions.

I wish you all Happy Holidays and a great New Year.

From Robin:

Yes, change is hard, but it has given me a chance to look back and count all of the good things I have learned and, most of all, the many wonderful people I have come to know and work with. I send special good wishes to the RSVP Ambassadors group we started more than six years ago. Many of you have become good friends, and all of you are amazing people. Thank you for your support and friendship, and all of the wonderful work you do.

A subset of that group is the *Experience in Action* crew who do most all of the reporting and article writing of this newsletter. Thank you all for helping as we learned how to put together a newsletter that is relevant and helpful to our volunteers. Special thanks to Peter Langmaid, Linda Urbaniak, Anita Warmflash, Nora Tabler and Sandy Howard.

I know Jen Gahagan will do her best to see RSVP through the changes ahead—you're in good hands!

I send you all the best wishes of the holiday season. ●



Robin Knudson

Budget cuts facing senior services

by Anita Warmflash

These days, it is hard to avoid the subject of impending budget cuts as a remedy for the state's deficit. These cuts are brought to our attention daily on radio and TV. Newspapers, public officials and civic organizations also constantly present this news. In the next few months, decisions will be finalized that are likely to affect many seniors, especially those living on low incomes. Of course, the expected cutbacks will also affect other vulnerable groups such as children, the disabled, the mentally ill, families suffering unemployment, etc; the list is long. We can only hope that those who represent these groups will be able to persuade our legislators to look very hard for ways to mitigate the state budget deficit other than by cutting essential services.

At a time when the financial need is great, and when economists don't foresee an end to the crisis for at least several years, charitable donations have fallen off. The middle class, traditionally known to have contributed considerable amounts to support basic needs, have been hit so hard by the recession that they have had to cut back on charitable giving. Many of those who have customarily donated now seek assistance for themselves and their families.

The financial difficulties of our state have been several years in the making. It is a consequence of falling tax revenues amidst rising expenditures, going back to the budget years of 2007-2009. It is estimated that to bring spending in line with revenues and to reduce the deficit, it is necessary to cut back on state spending by almost \$2 billion. It would be the equivalent of reducing the level of spending back to the budget years of 2005-2007.

Possible budget cuts to programs of importance to seniors include:

- **Long-term care services for both seniors and people living with disabilities:** This could occur by tightening eligibility requirements for assistance with daily living whether in the home or in an assisted living facility, boarding home, or adult family home. It is anticipated that about 5,000 seniors could be denied services.
- **Adult day care programs:** These programs have provided socialization and rehabilitation services for seniors, in addition to respite for family caregivers.
- **Basic Health Plan:** Many could fail to qualify because of a new system of determining eligibility for persons over age 50.
- **Elimination of routine dental care services for seniors in institutional care**

These may be only some of the cutbacks facing seniors and their families, but they indicate how their wellbeing and quality of life may be severely impacted. Fortunately, there are civic organizations actively communicating with state legislators about alternate ways to address the issue of state deficits in order to protect necessary services for seniors. We will keep you informed of the progress of these efforts and their impact on seniors. ●



It Seems to Me...

by Peter Langmaid

Memories

I am a lucky man. My family has owned a remote summer cabin on a small lake for almost 45 years. Outhouse, no electricity. Stove, refrigerator, lights and hot water heater all run off a torpedo-shaped propane tank next to the dwelling. Water is pumped from a well up into a holding tank and then conveyed inside the cabin by gravity. Located at 7,000' altitude, the access road and the cabin are closed against the winter snow. I have spent many of the most memorable days of my life there, and I have watched my children grow up there. It's as sacred a place as I know, and I look forward to being there each summer with the growing anxious anticipation of a child approaching a birthday.

Without electricity, daily activities include board games, card games, reading, swimming, boating (muscle or wind-powered craft only), trout fishing, group cooking, communal eating (and overeating), sleeping outside on the deck in sleeping bags, and hanging out with family and friends (a new set of friends arriving each weekend). The pace of life is slow and human interactions are less rushed and



more intimate.

The centerpiece of each day is hiking in the vast wilderness area that we border. I can think of 12 terrific hikes (both on and off trails) right out the back door. Most hikes start in the forest and work their way up to alpine lakes nestled into the bottom of gigantic granite bowls with towering cliffs and peaks. Average hiking time, with lunch, is 4-5 hours.

The daily hike begins with deciding where we're going, who's going, and what time we're leaving. Then all the sandwich ingredients come out for custom sandwich making, followed by gathering of chips, veggies, cookies, dog treats, water, and hard candy to savor during the strenuous uphill sections. After a final check to make certain everyone has applied sunscreen,

off we'd go.

This year, due to a health problem, I couldn't go on the daily hikes. And, each day someone from the hiking group would ask me if I missed the hiking. It took me a day or two to figure out I both did and did not miss it. I missed the huffing and puffing, the sweating, the comradeship, and all the special spots where we ate lunch.

But much of the sensory experience could be had from the deck of the cabin: the warm, clean air; the blue sky; the smell of flowers and trees; the quiet; the tranquility; and the ever-changing meadow ringed with tall evergreen trees and backed by granite peaks.

And I was able to recreate and enjoy the hikes themselves through remembering them in detail and imagining where the group was at any given time.

I discovered that remembering past experiences could be vivid, exciting, fun, entertaining and enormously satisfying. Rather than pouting and aching for the old days, I enjoyed recounting each hike in my mind and then sharing in the joyous excitement of the weary hikers as they returned to the cabin. Memories can sustain you, so go out and make some! ●

Peter Langmaid is a semi-retired businessman, an RSVP Ambassador, and a longtime contributor to the EIA.



Partners in Caring (PIC)

by Linda Urbaniak

Homebound residents of three Seattle Housing Authority buildings (Bell Tower, Olive Ridge and Harvard Court) have access to Partners in Caring's Grocery Delivery Project. A program of Solid Ground, it provides home delivery of fresh fruits, vegetables, meat and dairy to those who qualify. The groceries are delivered with no cost to the recipients.

Though PIC has been around for many years, Program Supervisor Mary Fogh says, "The Grocery Delivery Project evolved through a need to provide fresh food to those who are unable to access food banks on their own."

Retired carpenter Gary

Carlson is an enthusiastic volunteer van driver. "We have taken some people to cooking class and even some to the grocery store. I think one of the most important things we do, however, is just interact with these people. Loneliness is hard on many who are homebound," he explains.

On Wednesdays and Thursdays, Carlson picks up food at the Chicken Soup Brigade for delivery. Partners in Caring picks up the cost of the food and provides the van. He is assisted by Emily Law, serving the agency through AmeriCorps.

"I am totally committed to this program. It is so rewarding



Gary Carlson, PIC volunteer

getting to know the people," says Carlson. "I just wish we could expand the program as there is such a great need."

Qualification to receive PIC services is income- and disability-based, and for the present time, only available in the SHA buildings mentioned.

If you are interested in learning more about PIC or volunteering, contact RSVP at 206-957-4779 x122. ●

RSVP



The Retired & Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) is a nonprofit National Senior Corps program sponsored locally by Solid Ground. RSVP encourages and supports volunteerism in King County for people 55 and older.



Solid Ground works to end poverty by providing services in response to community needs, and by advocating for public policies that address racism and other oppressions that are root causes of poverty. Our 35 programs and services give over 64,000 families a year the resources and support they need to overcome homelessness, hunger, racism, domestic violence and other poverty-related traumas.

EIA

Experience in Action! (EIA) is published quarterly by King County RSVP and distributed to 4,000 RSVP volunteers and friends. EIA is dedicated to providing news and information to RSVP volunteers. Articles express writers' opinions which are not necessarily the views of RSVP or EIA. We reserve the right to refuse any material deemed unsuitable. Articles may be edited in accordance with technical and editorial policy guidelines.

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Aging with Wisdom

by Carol Scott-Kassner

Holding on and letting go

The invitation to write this article came with some sad news attached. As with much of what is happening in our society, RSVP has been forced to downsize because of decreased funding. That kind of news is always shocking because it means less support for volunteers and a smaller staff to accomplish the many important tasks of this organization. And, at the same time, Sonya and Robin are both going off to new ventures.

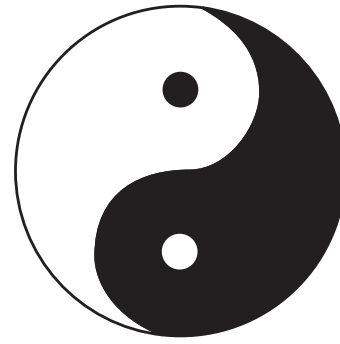
In facing any loss, we are asked to enter the space of holding on and letting go. Much of life involves living in what feels like opposites or dualities: doing/being, striving/relaxing, weeping/laughing, intimacy/autonomy, living/dying, etc.

At times, we feel as if these cannot be resolved or that it is impossible to hold both at the same time. This is particularly common in the Western world where we frequently engage in dualistic thinking—posing ideas in an either/or fashion. This kind of thinking can be a trap that

leads to frustration. We become impatient with where we are on a particular spectrum and want to get on with life, quickly moving to the opposite pole of that spectrum.

Most of us are familiar with the yin/yang symbol in which the black and white sides of the symbol are separated by a curved line creating the shape of two fish. There is a black dot on the white side and a white dot on the black side. There are many meanings inherent in this symbol.

At its heart, yin yang does not represent opposing forces (dualities) but complementary opposites that interact within a greater whole, as part of a dynamic system. For example, male and female energies are part of a larger whole in which both are essential for the creation of life. I love the invitation to look at what feels like opposites as part of a larger whole—a whole that we cannot always see immediately but is there nevertheless.



A poem by Shih-Tou, a Chinese poet/philosopher, tries to explain how to hold these opposites:

*Within light there is darkness,
but do not try to understand
that darkness.*

*Within darkness there is light,
but do not look for that light.*

*Light and darkness are a pair,
like the foot before and the foot
behind in walking.*

*Each thing has its own
intrinsic value
and is related to everything else
in function and position.*

*Ordinary life fits the absolute
as a box and its lid.*

*The absolute works together
with the relative,
like two arrows meeting
in mid-air.*

So, what might be the invitation for us in the midst of any of the losses in our lives, including the changes at RSVP?

How can we both hold on and let go at the same time? How can we move to a place where we see the larger whole?

We can look at this particular change as a part of the inevitable changes in life. Everything is in constant flux. We must let go of Sonya and Robin, but we can hold onto our memories of working with them and of the gifts that they brought RSVP. We can remember and honor their legacies while helping to build a new future. We can continue to contribute to the work of the organization they've so ably served, creating even more light in the places that we volunteer.

Out of that, we are helping to envision and to realize greater connectedness and healing in our world. That is the larger container for what each of us is doing.

So, we thank Robin and Sonya for their work for RSVP and wish the very best for them. ●

Carol Scott-Kassner is co-founder with Pat Lewis of 'Aging with Wisdom.' Pat and Carol are available to do workshops on various aspects of the spiritual journey of aging. They can be contacted at: www.agingwithwisdom.com or agingwithwisdom@msn.com.

A story of an old dog

by Asuman Kiyak, PhD, Former Director,
University of Washington, Institute on Aging

A wealthy old gentleman decides to go on a hunting safari in Africa, taking his faithful, elderly dog named Killer along for the company. One day the old dog starts chasing rabbits and before long, discovers that he's lost. Wandering about, he notices a leopard heading rapidly in his direction with the intention of having lunch.

The old dog thinks, "Oh, no! I'm in deep doo-doo now!"

Noticing some bones on the ground close by, he immediately settles down to chew on the bones with his back to the approaching cat. Just as the leopard is about to leap, the old dog exclaims loudly, "Boy, that was one delicious leopard! I wonder if there are any more around here?"

Hearing this, the young leopard halts his attack in mid-strike, a look of terror comes over him, and he slinks

away into the trees. "Whew," says the leopard, "That was close! That old dog nearly had me!"

Meanwhile a monkey, who had been watching the whole scene from a nearby tree, figures he can put this knowledge to good use and trade it for protection from the leopard. So, off he goes, but the old dog sees him heading after the leopard with great speed, and figures that something must be up.

The monkey soon catches up with the leopard, spills the beans and strikes a deal for himself with the leopard.

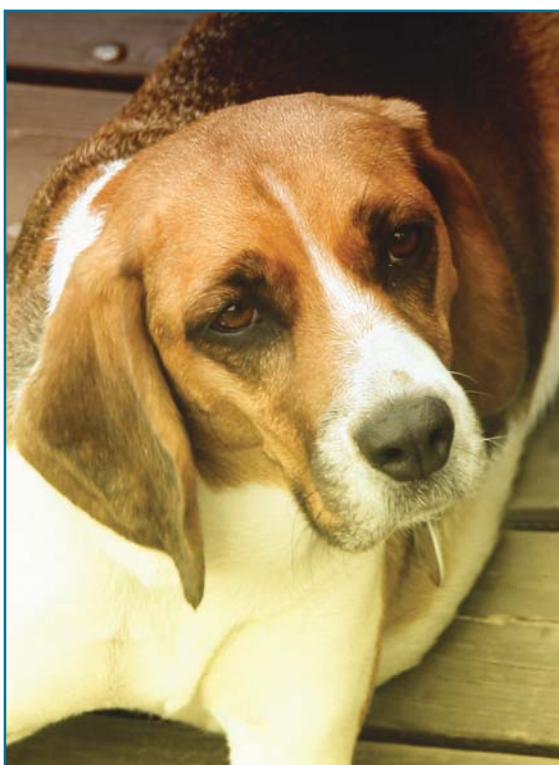
The young leopard is furious at being made a fool of and says, "Here, monkey, hop on my back and see what's going to happen to that conniving canine?"

Now, the old dog sees the leopard coming with the monkey on his back and thinks, "What am I going to do now?" but instead of running, the dog sits down with his back to his attackers, pretending he hasn't seen them yet, and just when they get close enough to hear, the old dog says...

"Where's that monkey? I sent him off an hour ago to bring me another leopard!"

Moral of this story...

Don't mess with the old dogs... age and skill always overcome youth and treachery! BS and brilliance only come with age and experience. ●



Linking children and families—a true holiday blessing

by Nora Tabler

In 1976, the Washington Association for Children and Parents (WACAP) was created when a group of parents noticed a tremendous need for orphaned and vulnerable children to have the opportunity to be adopted. “We knew that every child deserves a family, and we wanted to be sure that they had that chance,” says current President & CEO Lillian Thorgersen, who was part of that founding group of parents. Thorgersen received the Angels in Adoption Award from the U.S. Congress in 2004 and is herself the mother of nine children, eight of whom are adopted. This woman walks her talk!

WACAP has developed into one of the nation's leading adoption and child welfare agencies providing adoption services for parents, orphans and children who need families.

I met with Lisa Yeager, WACAP Manager of Volunteers & Events, who gave me a tour of their headquarters in Renton, WA. She shared that WACAP's reach extends beyond U.S. borders to orphanages in China, Bulgaria, Ethiopia, Korea, India, Russia, Taiwan and Thailand. As we walked around, I could feel the energy from the staff and volunteers.

Lisa oversees 50 volunteers who assist with many tasks in the adoption process, one of which is to help process paperwork. For example, after the WACAP staff returns from a trip to China where they identify children in need of homes, they bring back information to share with families. Volunteers help sort and copy photos of the children and also help share the photos with prospective families. When a successful adoption occurs, the volunteers cheer along with the staff.

Lisa also recruits volunteers from WACAP adoptees. Two teenage girls from China, who were adopted by families in King County, became volunteers. These girls organized a booth at the Bellevue Arts Fair to sell homemade cards and knick knacks. Not only did they generate \$600, but also they were able to share the good work of WACAP with their patrons. At the end of the weekend, they proudly donated their earnings to WACAP.

I asked Lisa if she could share one of WACAP's adoption stories

with me. Here is one from the organization's Impact Blog:

“Adopted through WACAP, Colin celebrated his birthday this past August, but he embraced something beyond his 14th year: the family he would have never met if he'd turned even one year older.

WACAP supported Tom and Angie with an expedited adoption, which was necessary in Colin's case because in China, age 14 marks the cutoff for a child to be adopted. Recognizing the stakes for Colin, who had only four months

before he turned 14, WACAP worked diligently with Chinese and U.S. officials to accelerate the paperwork process, which takes many families close to 12 months. With Colin's birthday on the horizon, Angie and Tom waited patiently but anxiously for travel notification. They received it within a week of Colin's birthday and—with a wave of relief and joy—on August 12, they also received a letter from China in Colin's own hand:

‘Dear Mother and Father, I like the name ... you gave me. ... I read that my grandfather is an American hero. ... When I'm able to understand English, you can tell me more stories about Grandpa. I also saw my house. ... I am very excited. ... I also read that I have a brother Tommy. I saw Tommy's pictures and want to be his best friend.’

With his family now beside him, Colin recalls, ‘When I first saw mom, dad, and Tommy ... I can tell they love me very much.’ ”

This holiday season, WACAP is celebrating that they have brought over 10,000 children “home to their families.” William H. Gates of the Gates Foundation summed it up best: “WACAP has been a shining light in the lives of thousands of children. We are pleased to support WACAP's efforts to provide all children with a healthy, happy childhood.” ●

To learn more about WACAP, or to learn more about their programs, call RSVP at 206-957-4779 x122.



Lisa Yeager, WACAP Manager of Volunteers & Events

Exercise consistency is the key to good results

by Jim Evan, Senior Fitness Examiner

DEAR JIM:

At 67, I am thinking about starting an exercise program after many years of sitting on my duff, but I am not sure where to start. My friends all seem to have different opinions. One friend is insistent that I try yoga. Another says Pilates is the best thing since sliced bread. Still another says I should just join a local gym and take advantage of the variety of activities that they offer. My wife says I should just swim. I've never really been a very physical person, so this is new territory

for me. What do you suggest for a senior neophyte?

~ *Confused in Chicago*

DEAR CONFUSED:

Congratulations on making the decision to become more physically active! A regular exercise program can be invigorating and significantly improve your quality of life.

All of the suggestions made by your family and friends are good ones, but most experts will agree that there is no one “perfect” exercise or physical

activity—they all have their pluses and minuses. You should probably check with your physician first to see if you have any physical limitations that might automatically preclude certain activities and then go from there.

The suggestion of a local gym or health club or similar facility might be a good place to start if only because of the variety of activities that they typically offer. Many of these facilities will include all of the activities that you mention such as yoga, Pilates, and swimming—and usually much more—so you will have a virtual smorgasbord of choices.

The most important thing with any exercise program is



consistency. Whatever choice you make—and you may experiment with many forms of exercise before you decide on the one that works best for you—do it on a consistent basis. Make it a habit just like eating and sleeping. This should be a lifestyle change and not just something to try out to see whether or not you like it. You may not ever “like” exercise, but you will “love” the way you feel from making it an integral part of your everyday life. ●



The Garden Lady

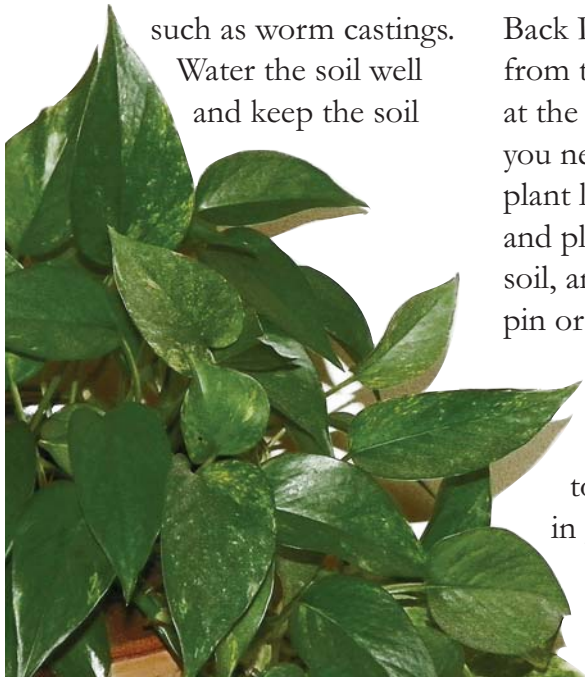
by Linda Urbaniak

Indoor plant propagation

January is a great time to consider propagating new plants from our houseplants. By the end of January, many of them are beginning to put out new growth. At the same time, many have become too big for their pots. Others are so beautiful that we wish we could have more than one, or perhaps we would like to give one to a friend.

There are many ways to propagate new plants. Probably the easiest is to simply cut off a stem, place it in water and wait for roots to form. Philodendron, and Wandering Jew all do well with this method. Herbs like mint or vines like Hoya strike roots easily in water. As soon as the roots are about an inch to an inch and a half, plant in a pot no larger than four inches wide at the top. Plant in good potting soil that has had good natural

fertilizer added to it such as worm castings. Water the soil well and keep the soil



moist for a couple of weeks, then let the plant adjust to normal watering.

Many plants will need to be divided. Snake Plant grows slowly, but eventually it will fill the pot—you may need a pruning saw and a pair of pruning shears to get it out! When you take the plant out of the pot, remove as much soil as possible from the roots, first by crumbling the soil and shaking and then running under water. Straighten out as many roots as possible, cutting with the shears, or use the saw on those that are really tough or tightly bound. Now you are ready to cut the plant into two or three plants, making sure each part has at least three strong upright leaves. Plant each section into a six- to eight-inch pot as above. It can also be started from leaf cuttings.

The Spider Plant or the Piggy Back Plant can grow new plants from the small plantlets growing at the leaf joints of the plant. All you need do is cut them from the plant leaving a bit of the stem and place them on top of the soil, anchoring them with a hair pin or toothpick. Keep the soil moist. They will soon put down roots. Start them in a pot no bigger than three to four inches across the top in good potting soil.

One of the most fun ways to start a new plant is through a leaf cutting. You can create a plant identical to the one it came from, insuring the beauty of the mother plant. African Violets, Peperonia, Hoya, and Episcia (Flame Violet) are some of the plants you can start this way.

First, remove a well developed leaf, in good condition. Cut it in half along the center vein or in half from side to side. Place the cut touching the soil and anchor in place with a couple of toothpicks placed to keep the leaf upright and in constant contact with the soil. If you have cut the leaf in half, stick the part with the stem into the soil

and support so that it is upright. Keep the soil moist and within a couple of weeks you will see tiny plants forming along the cut side or at the leaf where it joins the stem. When the tiny plants have three or four leaves, remove them from the “mother” leaf and plant in two-inch pots.

Enjoy starting your new plants. You will soon have enough to create your own indoor flower bed—or plenty to give away. ●

Linda Urbaniak is a docent at the Bellevue Botanical Garden and an RSVP Ambassador. She will gladly take your gardening questions at lindagardenlady@speakeasy.net.



A day in the life of an Ombudsman

by Juanita Beale, Volunteer Coordinator, King County Long Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP)

Long Term Care Ombudsman volunteers are a diverse group of individuals coming from all walks of life who want to protect the rights of the elderly and people living with disabilities in licensed care facilities.

Often a new trainee will ask, “Just what does an Ombudsman do—in a nutshell?”

An Ombudsman is the “voice” of a resident who asks for help resolving a problem. An Ombudsman is a volunteer who helps to seek a fair and reasonable solution to a resident’s concern quickly and efficiently. The Ombudsman’s concern is “resident driven.” The Ombudsman advocates for the resident’s long-term care rights.

Ombudsman trainees are well educated during an intense training class offered by LTCOP to be confident, strong advocates

for the residents they serve. 25% of complaints are resolved by Ombudsmen the same day they are received. This invaluable service is free to long-term care residents in 1,300 facilities in King County.

In a time of layoffs and budget cuts over the summer of May-August 2011, while most of us were on vacation having fun in the sun, 57 volunteer Certified Ombudsmen responded to over 537 complaints, opened 230 cases, and spent a total of over 4,000 hours advocating for residents’ rights and solving problems for very frail and vulnerable adults.

For more information about volunteering with the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP), please call RSVP at 206-957-4779 x122. ●

WHAT IS AN RSVP AMBASSADOR?

An RSVP Ambassador is an RSVP Volunteer who is willing to help us spread the word about the benefits of volunteering. Because of our small staff, we have assembled a wonderful group of volunteers who help us share the mission of RSVP with other seniors. If you would be willing to represent RSVP at events around King County, we would like to talk to you.

We do not ask for a specific time commitment, only that you occasionally share your enthusiasm for volunteering and help us encourage others by relating your own experiences and telling about RSVP. We provide a fun, interactive training and give you the opportunity to meet another group of active, enthusiastic people.

To sign up or ask more questions: Contact Jennifer Gahagan, 206-957-4779 x122 or jeng@solid-ground.org.

Benefits of green exercise

by Jim Evan, Senior Fitness Examiner

DEAR JIM:

Some of my buddies are members of a local gym and often invite me to join them, but I usually decline. Maybe I'm just old fashioned, but I have never been fond of exercising indoors and prefer to do something outdoors like walking or biking—where I can breathe the fresh air and enjoy nature. Still, I wonder whether my preference for doing something outdoors is really providing me with enough exercise, because my friends seem to be in much better shape than I am. Is it possible to stay physically fit without joining a gym?

~ Old Fashioned in Ojai

DEAR OLD FASHIONED:

Of course, you can stay in shape without joining a gym, but it isn't as easy as it used to be. Walking, jogging, biking and other physical activities have always been excellent ways to get in shape outdoors, but traffic, air pollution and land use, among other things, have made it infinitely less convenient (and less safe) to exercise outdoors and more difficult to experience the benefits of nature.

Even finding "green space" like a park or a decent-sized backyard is hard enough to find in some urban areas. Some communities have had the foresight to include par course exercise in their planning—perhaps the ultimate "green" exercise.



However, a new study in the American Chemical Society's (<http://portal.acs.org/>) semi-monthly journal, Environmental Science & Technology, reveals that just five minutes of exercise in a park, backyard, nature trail, or other green space benefits your mental health, so maybe your opinion isn't so old fashioned after all.

Researchers Jules Pretty and Jo Barton found that "green exercise"—physical activity in the presence of nature—decreases the risk of mental illness and improves the sense of well-being.

"For the first time in the scientific literature, we have been able to show dose-response relationships for the positive effects of nature on human mental health," Pretty said.

The two analyzed activities such as walking, gardening, cycling, fishing, boating, horseback riding and farming. The greatest health changes occurred in the young and the mentally ill, although people of all ages and social groups benefited. All natural environments were beneficial, including parks in urban settings. Green areas with water added something extra. A blue and green environment seems even better for health.

From a health policy perspective, the largest positive effect on self-esteem came from a five-minute dose.

"We know from the literature that short-term mental health improvements are protective of long-term health benefits," Pretty said. "So we believe that there would be a large potential benefit to individuals, society and to the costs of the health service if all groups of people were to self-medicate more with green exercise," added Barton.

I can't say that exercising outdoors is necessarily going to make you as physically fit as your friends who work out in the gym, because the equipment and amenities at most gyms are specifically designed to facilitate fitness.

But, perhaps you can compromise with your friends by going to the gym with them once in a while and inviting them to "go green" with you by taking a walk in the park together on opposite days. Why exclude one or the other when there are benefits to both? ●



Senior on the Street

by Robin Knudson

What do you do to cheer up after a setback?

"I listen to Beethoven really loudly!"

~Ann Farr



"I craft things with fabric or go for a long walk."

~Nelle Alexander



"I read funny junk fiction."

~Margie VanDuzer



"I call a friend."

~Mary Kay Olson



"I call my sisters."

~Diane Thompson



"I listen to jazz."

~Dale Munari



"I go out to lunch at a fun place with good atmosphere."

~Laura Webb



Volunteer & Community Opportunities through RSVP

The following are just a few of the volunteer and community opportunities RSVP has to offer. To talk to a real person about opportunities that are just right for you, call Jennifer Gahagan at 206-957-4779 x122—or visit our website at www.solid-ground.org/GetInvolved/Volunteer/RSVP for regional volunteer opportunity listings.

Volunteering

Technology Access Foundation (New Site): Volunteers needed for free after-school program that provides science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) enrichment to underserved children of color. Volunteers are needed to greet parents and students, monitor sign-in and sign-out sheets, and monitor and supervise after-school students (Columbia City).

Seattle Parks and Recreation (New Site): Seeks a wide variety of volunteers in different locations throughout the city. Opportunities include art instructors, bicycle helmet fitters, Enhanced Fitness assistants, event helpers, theater assistants, front desk helpers and more.

Atlantic Street Center (ASC): ASC is a nonprofit child and family service agency whose mission is to help families and communities raise healthy, successful children. Volunteers are needed to work directly with children, youth, and/or adults as tutors, teachers' aides, project leaders, field trip chaperones, field trip drivers, or behind the scenes with special events or office work. No matter your interests, there is likely to be a volunteer position just right for you. Volunteer opportunities are located in the Rainier Valley, Central District, Beacon Hill and New Holly.

FareStart: This wonderful organization helps train low-income people to be capable chefs and wait staff. Volunteers are needed to accompany a chef to deliver food to 13 shelters from 3:00-7:00 pm, prepare food Saturdays, Sundays and holidays, provide one-on-one résumé and job search assistance to participants, and help with events. FareStart also runs a great restaurant—try it!

Greenwood Senior Center (GSC): Help the GSC record our memorable events with your digital camera. We're looking for an experienced event photographer able to capture the essence of our members and their experiences. You must be willing and able to transfer photos to the GSC. Ability to edit photos a plus. Must own and have working knowledge of a digital camera.

Volunteers of America, Greenwood Food Bank: Volunteers of America is a Christian human service organization dedicated to reaching, serving and empowering diverse individuals, families and communities. Volunteers are needed for the following positions at the food bank: clerical/receptionist, home delivery assistant, lead food bank volunteer, food bank advisory council, special events, and truck driver assistant. Orientations are held 2nd Tuesdays and 4th Thursdays.

Society of St. Vincent de Paul is an international organization with strong, local grassroots outreach to the poor. Locally they receive more referrals from King County 2-1-1 (Community Information Line) to help more people than any other agency in Seattle/King County. Volunteers are needed to answer and manage phone calls for people who need help. Training is provided. Other volunteer jobs include helping at the food bank or in the stores.

Seattle Audubon Society: If you like birds, want to learn more about them, and like to volunteer in a hub of activity, consider signing up for 3.5-hour slots in Seattle Audubon's fine Nature Shop. Other volunteer opportunities include bird watching, building maintenance, education programs, events and online order fulfillment.

In Our Community

Puget Sound Energy's HELP assists with heating bills:

Electricity and natural gas customers of Puget Sound Energy (PSE) may be able to receive significant help paying their utility bills. Through the program HELP, more assistance now is available for eligible working families, seniors, people living with disabilities, single parents, and others living on limited incomes. In addition, the new HELP program has higher income limits for eligibility than the long-standing federal energy-assistance program—LIHEAP.

HELP offers eligible customers up to \$1,000 per year in utility-bill relief. The amount of aid depends on household income and the size of a customer's electricity or natural gas bills. PSE residential customers with household incomes below 150% of the federal poverty standard may be eligible for HELP assistance.

In King County, call 800-348-7144 to make an appointment. If you live in Seattle, your appointment will be at Central Area Motivation Program (CAMP). If you live in South King County, your appointment will be at one of the Multi-Service Center locations, and if you live in East or North King County, your appointment will be at one of the Hopelink branches.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration: Seattle Center Productions will host a free holiday program celebration in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on Monday, January 16 from 12:00 to 5:00 pm in the Center House. The celebration will also honor citizens who are energizing the MLK dream in their communities. Visit www.seattlecenter.com for a complete schedule.

27th Annual Alzheimer's Regional Conference:

"Brainstorming" is the theme for this conference to be held Friday, April 20, 2012 from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm. The conference will bring together the best of national, regional, and local professionals in Alzheimer's care. To receive conference mailings or for more information, call Julie Shatzer at 800-848-7097 x254, email julie.shatzer@alz.org.

Puget Sound Maritime Historical Society: Spend an "Afternoon at MOHAI (Museum of History and Industry)" with a program about Patrol and Rescue Boats on Puget Sound—a pictorial history book. Contact Karen Marshall at 206-324-1126 x41 for the date (which will be in January 2012) and information.

SeniorNet of Puget Sound: Join seniors teaching seniors to teach or learn more about computers. SeniorNet is a volunteer, nonprofit organization dedicated to enhancing computer literacy for seniors. Call 206-232-5892 or visit senior@seniornetps.org for more information, or to see the Winter/Spring 2012 course catalog and information.

- Please call to help me find a volunteer opportunity suited just for me.
- Please send information about RSVP.
- Please note my new address.

Name: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____

Please mail this form to: RSVP, 1501 N 45th Street, Seattle, WA 98103