

RSVP Knit-It-Alls: The gift of warmth

By Peter Langmaid

This year, the RSVP Knit-It-Alls (KIA) program will distribute over 1,600 hand knit and crocheted hats, scarves, baby blankets, afghans, sweaters and mittens to needy men, women, and children throughout King County.

Though the KIA process culminates in December, the knitting and crocheting work is a year-round effort. One lively and energetic group of volunteer contributors is the Northhaven Handcrafters, who meet weekly to knit, crochet, chat, and gossip. Together, they will produce over 300 pieces of brightly colored, imaginatively designed, and expertly crafted items this year.

The group—all women, so they can talk about the men—all live at Northhaven, a retirement community “designed especially to meet the needs of people older in age, but young in spirit.”

The first thing lifelong crocheter Evelyn Leckron showed me when I arrived to sit in on one of their sessions was the wall where they proudly display their multiple RSVP Certificates of Appreciation. But the rewards they receive go far beyond certificates. For Margaret McGreevy, the knitting helps her overcome feelings of worthlessness that sometimes slip into her consciousness if she doesn't stay busy. Nancy



Caption: Northhaven Handcrafters: (L-R) Marine Galdon, Ingeborg Bower, Nancy Evans, Evelyn Leckron, Margaret McGreevy, Betty Weed & Margery Olson (Photo by Peter Langmaid.)

Evans has seen people wearing her work, and it makes her feel wonderful.

Watching them work, I was immediately impressed by how expert they all are at their craft. No one seemed to be paying attention to their work, but the needles were clicking away like an old-fashioned typing pool. Asked when they learned their craft, Evelyn said she started at age 3 or 4 by cutting up old clothes and crocheting them into rugs. Ingeborg Bower said her grandmother taught her, and that they scavenged their yarn by unraveling old sweaters and knitting them into new ones. Nancy thought for a moment, shrugged, and said, “since forever.” Margaret also pointed out that their work keeps their fingers nimble and staves off arthritis.

For these women, the most important benefits of all are the love of their craft and the feeling of ‘family’ that the group gives them. They find the work relaxing, creative, and intrinsically rewarding. Each member has her own ideas about design and color, but they all “put a lot of love into what they’re making.” Someone mentioned that they all get along and have fun, too. This idea was punctuated by the statement, “If you can’t get along [with the group], you can just leave!”

One recurring topic of conversation was how lucky they all feel to live at Northhaven. They feel “treated with respect” by a staff that is always

courteous and helpful. And the activities are endless. There are exercise classes every day, movies, special outings, food drives, foot massage, acupuncture, birthday parties, game nights, educational opportunities, and on and on. (The list was coming so fast I couldn't write them all down.) Nancy summarized Northhaven by saying, “If you can't find something to do here, you don't want to do anything!”

As the knitted and crocheted goods pile up, they are bagged and sent to the RSVP office for volunteers Shirley White and Margaret Orazem to sort and tag. Shirley found her way to the KIA program in 1998 through a flyer at the Greenlake library. She called the office and said, “I can knit anything.” Since joining the program she has knitted over 1,000 pairs of mittens. Helping the homeless motivates her, and people who are inspired by her work donate most of her yarn. Shirley knits while watching TV and keeping her hands busy helps ease her arthritis. Shirley recruited Margaret into the tagging and sorting, and Margaret's reward is helping children. Margaret loves the positive atmosphere at RSVP and enjoys seeing all the beautiful items.

As the inventory builds and the December distribution date nears, RSVP work-study student Janae Detwiler contacts the 18 agencies that receive the items for their ‘wish’ lists. Janae then matches requests to inventory.

Continued on page 3

Solid Ground
RSVP (Retired & Senior Volunteer Program)
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EiA Inside this Issue...

Things we may not notice

- Warmth..... p. 1
- Chickens?!..... p. 2
- Listening..... p. 4
- Beauty..... p. 6



Speaking Directly

by Sonya Couch, RSVP Director

Blessings of the season & looking ahead

2009 has been a very eventful year, both professionally and personally for me. The most exciting part of it however has been the arrival of our daughter, Olivia Joy. She was born on September 17th with a full head of dark hair. I mention this because this seems to be the feature that draws the most attention—strangers in the grocery store say, “My, look at all that hair!” And with all that hair and her big eyes, I must say, she is the most beautiful child I’ve ever seen. Am I partial? Absolutely. But that is the way that it goes, right? The complete

adoration of your child is what gets you through the pain of childbirth and all the sleepless nights that follow. So, I’ve been home enjoying this little bundle for the past three months and am now transitioning back into work as we end the year.

Speaking of the past three months, I’d like to take this opportunity to thank Jen Gahagan and Robin Knudson, our fabulous RSVP Program Coordinators who covered for me while I was away on maternity leave. I’m continually amazed at the quality and consistency of both of their work. They

really care about the mission of this program and it shows. Olivia and I are excited to get back into the swing of things and see more of the RSVP staff and some of you too! And since I plan to bring Olivia with me to work for the next few months, her first words just might be “RSVP”!

As we look forward to the New Year there are many exciting challenges ahead. Thank you to all of you who contributed financially to RSVP in 2009. We will be putting your faith in the program to good use as we tackle the next year. I am happy to say that we are ending the year with more volunteers and more hours than the previous year. This trend continues to be an encouragement to us despite



Olivia Joy Couch (Photo by Caleb Couch)

the gloomy economic conditions. During hard times Americans really do step forward and help each other out. You are all proof of this! We will need all of you to continue your good work in 2010 as the need for your service grows. And RSVP will be here to support you. Just call or write if you’d like some personalized service. Either myself, Robin, Jen, or Olivia will answer!

Happy Holidays from the staff at RSVP! ●

Happy New Year!

Alert: Wild chickens on the Burke-Gilman!

by Roger Urbaniak

During one of my hikes along the Burke Gilman Trail I heard a rumor from a passing jogger about wild chickens living and prospering along the trail. I found this tip to be intriguing and planned a late summer hike to begin near downtown Bothell where I was told they resided.

After taking the SR-522 cutoff from I-405 to Bothell I found a city-sponsored parking lot south of Bothell Landing near the Senior Center on NE 180th. Next I followed a short path towards the Sammamish Slough where I spotted an old wooden bridge and pedestrian walkway adjacent to the center. After a quick stroll across the bridge and a left turn on the asphalt trail, I almost immediately began noticing wild chickens.

Despite being armed with my rumor, I was still surprised by the scores of wild chickens feeding openly along the trail. The bantam breed of chicken closely resembled jungle fowl that I had seen in Kauai. My comparison was enforced when a few of the birds flew up to low tree branches as I had seen jungle fowl do.

Each bird was also unique in its coloration as were the jungle fowl. Some roosters were golden while others were stunningly colored similar to Chinese ring-necked pheasants. Several hens were nearly all black, others were spotted and one a pure white. No two birds seemed to be the same as if an artist resided in the bushes, granting them personalized identification. Moments later, recently hatched chicks emerged from blackberry bush hideouts to begin pecking away at a fresh trail of breadcrumbs.

Locals claim a few birds were dropped off here a few years ago and they have rapidly increased their numbers. Numerous blackberry patches in the area help the birds elude coyotes or other predators.

These chickens are hearty breeds, surviving winters here outdoors. Two Guinea fowl recently joined Bothell’s panhandling chickens. They, too, were aggressive feeders chasing away ducks from the breadcrumbs.

The sun was warm and inviting, so after satisfying my initial curiosity, I continued my walk along this portion of the trail. I had previously hiked or biked several sections of the Burke Gilman Trail starting near Marymoor Park in Redmond. On my last trip I had entertained myself by watching some college-age athletes compete in an organized game of Ultimate Frisbee at a playing field near the Chateau Ste. Michelle Winery. Today I was looking for new sights to join with my travels of yesterday. A few wild mallards effortlessly landed in the Sammamish Slough near resident domestic water birds but quickly departed when hikers intruded into their comfort zone. Later I spotted a mink frolicking, and then hunting, among some large boulders which had been placed along the bank of the slough for erosion control. This was exciting to me, as wild mink are rare in such an urban setting.



Typical female bantam chickens

Other features of this section of trail are the periodic exercise stations dotting the route. Each little area has been designed with a different workout in mind. Informative instructive signs detail exercises to be performed here and are usually accompanied by metal bars or wood structures to fit and assist the workout. These exercise stations allow the hikers and joggers to work on achieving overall fitness while on their stroll.

Once I felt I had gone far enough, I turned around and returned to the car. I had spotted a Baskin & Robbins ice cream shop on my walk and it wasn’t all that far away. After all, I had been good by taking my hike and deserved some type of reward, right? ●



Wit & Wisdom

by author Henry Wiener

Hidden worlds

Note to readers: Our dear Henry is now residing at the Kline Galland home and would welcome any thoughts or good wishes.

It wasn't until I was well on the road to becoming a senior that I became aware of the hidden worlds that come to life in the evening and hang around the whole night.

When I was younger, all I needed to do was close my eyes and think a few good thoughts to fall fast asleep. That luxury is gone and the output from the late night radio has become the sedative for reaching that old dream state.

In the last two decades, sleepily wandering through the Sandman's domain, I have been forced to traverse terrain set with seductive thirty-minute programmatic minefields.

The cornucopia of subjects and hawked products that clutter the landscape, especially on weekends, are bizarre, fanciful, visionary and incredible. They touch the whole gamut of our basic needs and intimate yearnings.

During the week, from early evening to 3 a.m., you can find many startling appetizers to the main weekend fare. Appearing before my ears are a host of unusual beings: ghosts, witches, UFO denizens, mediums, apparitions and a variety of angels.

In one of the talk show

segments was an author reporting on his contact with a Messiah-like Master working toward bringing all nations together in cosmic harmony. In order to meet with him, the writer reportedly had to be taken out of his body. It was great to learn that all of us can attain those spiritual heights, live forever and accomplish miracles with the "energy of life" component of such cosmic attainment.

Another unusual story was the experience of a group of tourists busy taking pictures of the scenery. Suddenly one finds a UFO in the camera's sights. A Chaplinesque sequence ensues in which the tourists pursue the flying object, snapping away. Without warning the UFO plays turnabout, changes its course and follows the human voyeurs home. Having satisfied their curiosity about earthlings, the aliens zoom away to their own world, much to the vacationers' relief.

But on Fridays and Saturdays much of the night air is filled with cleverly constructed commercials in which a variety of medications and treatments are offered, all with the guarantee, "your money back" and enticing inducements for quick response.

One of these is the promise of bio-magnetic therapy. The power of magnetic fields flowing

the receiving agencies.

Distribution day was more of a celebration of all the yearlong work and organizing than a chore. Tables around the room at the RSVP office were stacked high with colorful hats, mittens, sweaters, blankets, and baby booties, all neatly sorted by category. Ten RSVP volunteers filled orders and marveled at the quality of the craftsmanship and creativity. The weather outside was dreary, but the mood of the volunteers inside was cheerful, amazed,

from pads in mattresses, pillows and insoles, apparently does wonders in relieving pain where other attempts have failed.

There was much to-do about HGH, the Human Growth Hormone, which presumably can keep the body young and virile. It nudges the aging pituitary gland to increase production and turn back to its previous youth and health-promoting level.

Another member of this cadre of health enhancers is bee pollen, which, like the others advertised, was touted as an ingredient guaranteed to keep oldsters feeling young again. For those fighting the battle of the bulge, there was a substance described as a "fat blaster" which is designed to make the blubber disappear without dieting, convert glucose into energy and curtail the fat-producing process.

One of the unexpected wonders was wild oregano, a favorite of the ancient Greeks and Romans. This herb is considered an enthusiastic fighter of colds, flu and other infections. Included in this healing community is HA, Hyaluronic Acid, present in the traditional Japanese diet, a key factor in resisting life-threatening disease.

My hidden world is filled with a myriad of messages of available counter-aging magic. Unfortunately, the stress of deciding which of these panaceas to consider has accelerated the aging process.

I now get up each day with my body feeling much older than the one I put to bed the night before. ●

Henry Wiener is author of the book 'Wit and Wisdom.'

and grateful for the chance to participate.

To judge the impact of the KIA program, I spoke with K.C. Young, director of Sojourner Place, a home for women in transition and an RSVP site partner. K.C. pointed out that there's an emotional component to the program that goes beyond the obvious utility of the items. "[These items] are knitted in love. And it's important for women in our shelter to know that people care." The hats, scarves, gloves, and blankets warm the body and the heart. ●

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 is dedicated to achieving a just and caring community free from poverty, prejudice and neglect. Our 30 programs give nearly 33,000 families a year the services, resources and support they need to overcome homelessness, hunger, 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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The gift of warmth

Continued from page 1

Janae's only lament is that "there's a greater need than we can supply." "There's a huge amount of talent out there, and it's always fun to unpack the boxes and see all the beautiful, well-made treasures." When the entire KIA cycle is complete, Janae coordinates the "thank you's" to all the 50 contributing knitters and crocheters on behalf of both RSVP and



Janae Detwiler, RSVP Work Study Student



Aging with Wisdom

by Carol Scott-Kassner

Really noticing

One of the joys of getting older is that we can slow down. In fact, our bodies sometimes mandate that we stop moving so quickly. We can give ourselves permission to simply “be” rather than “doing” all of the time. It is amazing what happens when we slow down. We really start to notice things. The process of noticing can be to move inside of ourselves or to attend to things, people, and events around us.

Every major spiritual tradition emphasizes the importance of slowing down, listening, and paying attention. People raised in the Christian tradition are familiar with the short passage, “Be still and know that I am God,” from Psalm 46:10. You can use that passage in meditation. Sit comfortably, close your eyes and say to yourself, “Be still and know that I am God. Be still and know that I am. Be still and know. Be still. Be.”

That series can be repeated as you move into centeredness with Divine energy—simply being present to your breath and a sense of quiet. As we sit in quiet our body rhythms slow, our breathing slows, and our blood pressure drops. We move to a place of healthy equilibrium. We can use this quiet time to offer any challenges we are facing as a prayer, releasing them into the universe, holding them lightly. Often during this process of stillness, things that have been confusing or troubling to us come into the light. We notice them in new ways.

The Buddhist tradition invites us to notice things by really paying attention.

A wonderful Zen story goes like this:

One day a man approached Ikkyu and asked: “Master, will you please write for me some maxims of the highest wisdom?” Ikkyu took his brush and wrote, “Attention.” “Is that all?” asked the man. Ikkyu then wrote, “Attention, Attention.” “Well,” said the man. “I really don’t see much depth in what you have written.” Then Ikkyu wrote the same word three times: “Attention, Attention,

Attention.” Half angered, the man demanded: “What does the word ‘Attention’ mean anyway?” Ikkyu gently responded, “Attention means attention.”

This story can be frustrating until we enter it deeply and realize what Ikkyu is trying to transmit to the seeker. When we pay attention, we need to pay attention with our whole selves—our eyes, our ears, and our senses of smell and touch as well as taste. We also need to attend with our minds and spirits. We need to fully enter the moment that we are in and truly notice what we are experiencing. This spiritual practice can be particularly rewarding in listening to the needs of people we love or in meeting a stranger. It can be helpful when we eat, really savoring our food. It can enhance our experience of being in nature, truly noticing the shape, color, scent, and texture of a tree or flower. When we pay attention in this way, we are truly alive in all of our senses. To be fully alive is to be fully present. Surprisingly, we can often use this technique of deeply noticing when we are in pain from a headache or injury. Really notice the pain, entering it fully. It will often go away. Here are some techniques you can use to slow down and take the time to “really notice.” If you commit to practicing them over time, you should discover a qualitative change in your life. You should feel more alive and more connected.

- Find a place in nature to sit. Stay there for a minimum of 30 minutes. Notice everything that you can – the sounds, the sights, the smells, the feeling of the air and the sun on your skin. Record what you notice in your mind or in a journal, describing sensations, colors, textures and how they impact you. If you want, draw a picture of what you noticed. Over time, extend this practice to an hour or longer. Write a poem using some of the words you’ve used to describe your experience of noticing. Read some of the poetry of Mary Oliver to experience her deep connection with nature. Enter those images

deeply, imagining yourself connected to that time and place.

- Find a recipe that you haven’t tried before that sounds appealing to you. Prepare the food, noticing the smells, textures, and colors of the ingredients. Set the table with fresh flowers and lovely place settings. Sit at the table, saying thanks for this abundance. Slowly eat what you have prepared, savoring each bite. Notice the tastes and textures. Chew each bite slowly, enjoying what you eat. If you enjoy a good glass of wine, have it as an accompaniment to dinner. As you drink it, enjoy the flavors of the various grapes that have contributed to this wine as well as the barrels in which it was aged.

- Sit with a close friend or family member who wants to share something important with you. Simply listen to the story without interrupting, judging them, or giving feedback. Try to remain still as you take in what is said, being fully present. When the story is finished, reflect back what you noticed about feelings, saying things such as, “That seemed painful to you,” or “I heard you saying, . . .” Above all, don’t give advice or tell a story of a similar experience that you’ve had. Simply be a container for the story. Listen, really listen.

- Attend a silent retreat at a spiritual retreat center. As you sit in silence, notice what thoughts and emotions are moving through you. Journal, reflecting on where you are at this time of your life. During some of your retreat, spend time in nature, deeply noticing as in the earlier exercise. During meals, truly savor your food. Listen to music that is calming for you, fully entering the sounds, letting them fill you. Move to the music with your whole body or simply one hand. Feel the flow of your body in response to the music. At some point, see if you can simply be, free of thoughts and worries. Be present to your breathing. Let any thoughts simply move through your mind and out. Return to your breathing.

May you take the time to listen, really listen to yourself, to nature, and to others. May the practice of noticing bring you to a deeper appreciation of your connection to all of life. May the practice of noticing bring you peace. ●

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.

Fall EIA corrections

We at RSVP do our best to be as accurate as possible in our reporting, but we have found that in the Fall issue we made 2 mistakes that need addressing.

The first, and worst, is that in the article about the Citywide Concierge and Visitor Center we identified Charla Sullivan as the person in the photo and it isn’t her! Here is the real, and very delightful, Charla Sullivan.



The real Charla Sullivan!
(Photo by Doug Howard)

The second error was in the article about Communities in Schools. We misspelled the name of our volunteer Mary Ellen Flanagan.

We extend our apologies to both of these great volunteers.

What is hidden away at the Puget Sound archives?

Featured Site: Puget Sound Regional Archives by Linda Urbaniak

The records of a civilization add up, and they need to be stored, recorded and available for research. Here in the Puget Sound area, those records of local government are kept at the Puget Sound Regional Archives located on the Bellevue Community College campus. It is one of five regional branches of the Washington State Archives.

The regional archives were established about 40 years ago to spread the work of the Washington State Archives. They are located in Bellevue, for the Puget Sound region, Bellingham for the Northwest Region, Cheney for the East Region, Ellensburg for the Central Region and Olympia for the Southwest region and State Government.

The mandate for the PSRA, according to Midori Okazaki, the Assistant Regional Archivist Volunteer Coordinator is "to collect and maintain local government records, those from cities, counties, school districts, etc., below the state level in King, Snohomish and Pierce counties." She stressed "It is also an important aspect of open government. The ability to read the records of government, to guarantee that information is full, accurate and timely in its disclosure and to be sure that those in power are accountable provide governmental transparency. This is important in a democracy."

Right now there are three RSVP volunteers working at the PSRA. Helen Lewis is the most senior volunteer in the archive system and was recognized by the Secretary of State for her dedicated work. Martha Richardson and Trudy Dasovick also devote long hours to the Archives. Volunteers have opportunities to work with archival research, to assist research clients, to develop outreach products and events and to process archival collections.



Trudy Dasovick at work at the Puget Sound Regional Archives
(Photo by Midori Okazaki)

A volunteer at the Archives needs to have an interest in records, and it also helps to have some office skills. Computer skills are helpful now and will become even more so in the future. An ability that might not be thought of as useful is the ability to read cursive writing. That skill is beginning to become obsolete. "Senior volunteers show pride in their work. They will go the extra mile and are dedicated to go beyond the surface. They bring to their job a love of history and important local knowledge," said Okazaki.

Coming across old marriage records of famous people or finding pictures of houses they lived in as a child that no longer exist are some of the unexpected rewards for volunteers. The records of King County contain the pictures of every house on the assessor's records that existed from 1937 through the present time. Until 1972 the records were updated with each change in structures. There is a reward also in being able to dig and dig and dig to find something needed for a researcher.

Because of the risk of natural disasters, the age of some of the documents that may deteriorate, and the huge volumes of data, Washington State has implemented a centralized digital repository for state and local information and

records. By preserving marriage, death and other vital records, digital records can be stored more easily and information recovered more quickly than original documents. This massive project will preserve documents that protect personal rights, ensure government transparency and accountability and make available to everyone the history of people and institutions.

If you are interested in this fascinating work, call Jennifer Gahagan at RSVP: 206-957-4779 x 122. ●

Howard Hanson Dam flood risk

Featured Site: Red Cross Reserve Corps

Red Cross Press Release

While almost all parts of the Greater Seattle area are susceptible to floods or flash floods, residents and businesses below Howard Hanson Dam in the Green River Valley are at higher risk than previous years. Water is seeping more rapidly through an earthen bank next to the dam. Until the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers can make repairs, it must limit the amount of flood water it stores behind the dam. If heavy and prolonged rain occurs this winter, many homes and businesses in the valley that don't typically see

flood water—including parts of Auburn, Kent, Renton, South Seattle and Tukwila - could flood.

Your local American Red Cross needs volunteers to help prepare communities for floods and to provide disaster relief such as shelter, food and clean-up kits. We also have volunteers that give free community disaster preparedness presentations to community groups, businesses, and schools around King County. Get trained now, so you're ready when the time comes. All training is free.

This year there is the

potential for significant flooding in the Green River Valley so the American Red Cross Serving King & Kitsap Counties is looking for individuals to train now as ReserveCorps shelter volunteers, so they will be ready to respond during flood season.

"We are looking for volunteer shelter workers for larger scale disaster responses because we know that there is a higher risk for flooding in the Green River Valley this year," said Ivy Davis

Zolle, Volunteer Manager of American Red Cross Serving King & Kitsap Counties. "The Red Cross ReserveCorps is a great way to help your neighbors and really make a difference in our community. Taking steps to be trained before flood season will help our area be better prepared to respond."

For more information about ReserveCorps, please contact Jennifer Gahagan at 206-957-4779 x 122. ●





The Garden Lady

by Linda Urbaniak

Trees are rarely really seen

Trees are rarely really seen. Mostly they are just part of the background. We notice trees leafing out in the spring; in the fall we notice the beautiful colors of their leaves; when they are in bloom, but rarely do we notice them in winter. This is, however, when we can best observe their striking barks, in all their variations.

Some trees provide flowers in winter although they are usually, though not always, small. During the dark months their lovely scent, needed to attract pollinators, fills the winter air. Others provide interest through their reproductive forms, from cones to dangling racemes. Tall firs show off their rugged bark and western red cedars reveal their striated bark that looks as if it has been scratched by enormous bears.

The maples give us the most variety in their bark as well as in their form. The paper-bark maple sloughs off its rough, curling outer bark to display



Paperbark maple
(Photo by Robin Knudson)

shiny, cinnamon brown inner bark. There are several “snake-bark” or “tiger-bark” maples that have whitish or greenish stripes on darker green-brown bark that really stands out during winter months. Usually this striping occurs only on the younger trees, giving way to different bark with only tracings of the younger coloration as the tree fully matures. The coral-bark maple has bright reddish-orange twigs and branches that develop their color only after the leaves fall, and only on the younger branches. These trees can be pruned to maintain the coloration.

Aspen will create large stands of the tree (every trunk is from the same tree) that will show off their, trunks, ghostly white, splotted with black. The trunks become especially noticeable as the leaves turn bright sunshine yellow and then fall all at once to reveal the white trees, barren of their leaves. If an increasing stand of trees is unwanted in your small yard,

a similar effect can be achieved with a few paper birch trees. These native, eastern US trees have attractively peeling white outer bark, that reveal, with maturity, the orange-brown inner bark. This was the bark once used for canoes by eastern Native Americans.

Camellias are familiar bushes that can grow into 25-foot trees. One species, the *Camellia sasanqua* is covered with blossoms from November through February. In addition to their large blossoms in white, pink and red, some are



Coral-bark maple
(Photo by Jen Gabagan)

beautifully scented, something like jasmine tea. Witch hazel is another dramatically scented, winter blooming tree. The tiny feather duster flowers, pale yellow to bright yellow through to russet orange, appear long before any leaves.

Certainly one of the more dramatic native American trees is the shellbark hickory. This large eastern native develops huge, curving, peeling plates of bark up to three feet long. With a second hickory for pollination nearby you also may benefit from a few edible nuts. The similar, slightly

smaller, shagbark hickory is also available with smaller plates peeling back.

For pure bark drama the sycamore, or plane tree has few rivals. This large tree has flaking bark with gray, charcoal, cream and brown, all showing at the same time. The color is noticeable, although not very advanced, even on young trees. Although usually thought of as a bush, the crepe myrtle can develop into a 40-foot tree. The peeling bark reveals lovely striation with contrasting brown and

cream coloring.

A walk through your neighborhood, the Washington Park Arboretum or the Bellevue Botanical Garden will reveal these and many other dramatic trees that show off their easily concealed treasures during winter. Take some time to really look at trees. You'll be surprised by what you discover. ●

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

Post Office scoundrels? A little holiday humor...

“Dear God,

I am an 87-year-old widow living on Social Security and while at the grocery store, I lost my purse. I don't have any ID, so I know it won't be returned, and it wasn't turned in to the store. It had almost my last \$100 in it. I had been planning on using it to fix a holiday dinner for my friends Harry and Alice. Now I can't. Can you help me?

Thank you, God. Elsie”

Joe was deeply touched and went around the Post Office telling the story and most of the workers pitched a few dollars in. He sealed an envelope with the money in it and sent it off to Elsie at the address on her envelope.

A couple of days later another letter appeared addressed to “God”. Again Joe opened the letter and was warmed by the first sentence.

“Dear God,

Thank you for bearing my prayer. Harry and Alice and I had a wonderful dinner and it was so nice to sit with friends. But God, I have to tell you something. There was only \$96 dollars in the envelope. I think those scoundrels at the Post Office stole the other \$4.

Thank you, God. Elsie” ●

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 Robin Knudson, 206-957-4779 x116 or robink@solid-ground.org.

Exercise better than angioplasty?

by Jim Evans, Senior Fitness Examiner

DEAR JIM: My doctor says the arteries to my heart are all clogged up and that I need an angioplasty. I've been really been dragging for the past couple of years with absolutely no energy, so I'm thinking maybe this is the best way to go. I'm not very active, and I'm a bit overweight at 70, but my wife says she likes my "love handles" – otherwise I have no major medical issues. What do you think? **CONSIDERING SURGERY IN COLUMBUS**

DEAR CONSIDERING: What do I think? I think you should get off your butt, start exercising, and lose those so-called "love handles" whether your wife likes them or not. What do I think about an angioplasty? I will leave that choice to you and your physician, but there may be a better choice.

With an angioplasty the doctor typically inserts a balloon-tipped catheter (sometimes they use a laser instead) into one of your blood vessels and maneuvers it around to one of your clogged arteries where it is inflated to compress the plaque against the arterial walls. A stainless steel mesh or "stent" is then inserted in the now-open artery to hold the plaque in place and keep things clear so that the blood can circulate through it again (a laser would vaporize the plaque instead).

Angioplasties are the most common treatment for your condition, but a recent study showed that 90 percent of patients had no further heart problems just one year after riding a bike regularly while corresponding patients who had an angioplasty instead were just 70 percent problem-free. In other words, exercise may work better for you than an angioplasty.

At a recent meeting of the European Society of Cardiology in Barcelona, (<http://www.escardio.org/Pages/index.aspx>) reported by Maria Cheng of the Associated Press, several experts said doctors should focus more on persuading their patients to exercise rather than simply doing angioplasties. Now, whether or not your doctor would go along with this thinking is another story. More to the point, however, is whether or not you would be willing to start exercising to alleviate your condition.

"It's difficult to convince people to exercise instead of having an angioplasty, but it works," said Rainer Hambrecht of Klinikum Links der Weser in Bremen, Germany. Moreover, according to Dr. Christopher Cannon, associate professor of medicine at Harvard University and spokesman for the American College of Cardiology, an angioplasty "only opens up one vessel blockage. Exercise does a lot more than fixing one little problem."

Other benefits of exercise that we have talked about frequently in this column:

- Exercise lowers bad cholesterol while raising good cholesterol
- Exercise helps the body process sugar better
- Exercise improves the lining of the blood vessels and gets rid of waste material faster
- Exercise lowers blood pressure and prevents plaque buildup in the arteries.

Previous research has estimated one third of heart disease and stroke could be prevented if patients did two-and-a-half hours of brisk walking every week. In the U.S., that would mean 280,000 fewer heart-related deaths every year. That could also be you.

Joep Perk, a professor of health sciences at Sweden's Kalmar University and spokesman for the European Society of Cardiology, said two thirds of heart patients in line for an angioplasty could probably get better benefits by regularly working up a sweat. Further, he said doctors who performed angioplasties on their patients without asking them to change their lifestyles were ignoring the fundamental problem.

There may be other underlying medical factors that you or your doctor have not revealed about your condition that would mandate an angioplasty in your circumstances, but I urge you to at least consider this information as a possible alternative. Otherwise, I think you already know where I stand. ●



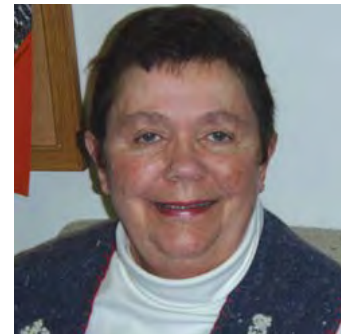
Senior on the Street

by Peter Langmaid

What is your favorite volunteer activity?

"Working booths at senior fairs, because I meet so many nice people."

-Loretta Pearson



"Helping people with their food trays during lunch at the Kent Senior Center's Mill Creek Café."

-Cheryl Larson



"Knitting!"

-Robert McMurry



"Teaching seniors arts and crafts."

-Jacquie Myers



"RSVP. I ran the Federal Way Senior Center as a volunteer for 11 years."

-Harry Schreiber



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

AARP Fraud Fighter Call Center: Con artists bilk American consumers out of more than \$40 billion dollars every year. According to AARP research, people over age 50 account for over half of all victims. AARP has teamed up with the Washington State Attorney General's Office to create a program whose mission is to provide consumers with information about the latest in consumer scams and schemes. If you would like to help keep our community safe, come join our great team of volunteers.

The Power of One: Our senior volunteer program is recruiting people 55 and older to volunteer in Shoreline public schools. Reading and math tutors, mentors, and classroom and library helpers are some of the needs. Ages range from preschool to high school.

Apple Corps: A program of Solid Ground. Volunteers present or assist with nutrition and cooking lessons for groups of children at Seattle elementary schools and community centers during the school day and at after-school programs. Volunteers support staff with hands-on education as well as set-up, food preparation, and clean-up. Volunteers may also assist with developing lesson plans or resource development.

United Way of King County: United Way is recruiting 100 volunteers to read aloud to pre-school aged children (ages 3 to 5), one-on-one or in very small groups, in 20 select child care programs throughout King County. You can choose the time and facility.

Brighton Elementary School: Volunteer positions include one-on-one tutors, math coaches, classroom assistants, library aides and more. The HOSTS reading intervention program seeks volunteers for Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, or Friday afternoons between 12:30 and 3 pm who are willing to make a commitment of at least 1 hour/week for 3 months. Students and volunteers will be paired 1 to 1. The ARC before- and after-school program also needs volunteers for the rest of the school year and in the summer.

Humane Society for Seattle/King County: (Bellevue). We need volunteers we can count on to help us in the event of a local disaster (such as last year's snow storm) – volunteers who can come to our campus to help us care for our animals and any community animals that are brought to us for refuge. You can also help out by assisting our Operations Dept. to prep and handle animals for the filming of our Comcast On Demand Adopt-A-Pet program, every other Thursday from 9:00 to 1:00.

Partners in Caring: A program of Solid Ground. We are in need of people to help deliver groceries to our elderly and low-income housing community. Volunteers will meet at Solid Ground in the Wallingford area to load groceries and then go out in teams to deliver to Seattle Housing Authority buildings.

Southeast Seattle Senior Center: Volunteers are needed to help teach classes or work in reception, the kitchen, or the computer lab. Visit our senior center to experience the rich diversity of the Rainier Valley. We welcome you at the Southeast Seattle Senior Center where active older adults gather for Fun, Fitness, Friendship, and Learning.

In Our Community

All City Tutor Training:

Saturday, February 6, 2010

9:00am-1:05pm

Feel free to come 15 minutes early to sign up for workshops and get refreshments.

Aki Kurose Middle School

3928 S. Graham St.

Seattle 98118

This free training is open to tutors, parents, grandparents or anyone with an interest in helping students academically.

The variety of workshops cover everything from basic orientation for new tutors and elementary reading to math games and student motivation

For more information or to sign up call 253-815-3066 or email STC@worldvision.org

FIUTS - Foundation for International Understanding through Students:

Take the World to Work program is a unique opportunity for international students and returned study abroad students to explore their future careers from a global perspective. Local hosts, representing fields ranging from science and engineering to business, design, and management, invite students to spend the day in their workplaces or welcome them on tours or group visits. This year's Take the World to Work program will be held from February 16-22, 2010.

Learn more about Take the World to Work at a special reception on Thursday, January 14, from 5:30-7:30 PM at the UW Tower (4333 Brooklyn Avenue N.) The Take the World to Work Reception is a networking opportunity for local professionals and graduate and undergraduate students and scholars from around the world. Call (206)685-1548 for more information.

Garfield Community Center RecTech Program:

We offer free technology classes for adults and seniors. The following are course offerings for the 2010 Winter Quarter (Jan.-Mar.): MicroSoft word; Internet, email and websites; Digital photography. Space is limited and preregistration is required. For more information call Brooke Kempner at 206-684-4788 or email brooke.kempner@seattle.gov.

Senior Citizens Lobby Day:

Tuesday, February 18, 2010.

United Churches, 110 11th Ave. SE, Olympia, WA

Call (360)754-0207, email info@waseniorlobby.org or go to waseniorlobby.org on the Web.

- 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, 464 12th Avenue, Seattle, WA 98112