#RECREATE RESPONSIBLY
A staycation summer P.08

SPRING FLING
Shelter in place with FishBoy P.09

AVANT GARDENING
Food Not Lawns P.15

ACTION ALERT
Save Our Stages! P.10
**MAIL**

TOC » LETTERS » STAFF

**MAIL**

TO MASK... OR NOT TO MASK...

THAT'S EVEN A QUESTION??

**STAFF**

**Contact**
Cascadia Weekly: 360.647.8200

**Advertising**
Sales Manager: Stephanie Young
sales@cascadiaweekly.com

**Editorial**
Editor & Publisher: Tim Johnson
timj@cascadiaweekly.com

**Music**
Music Editor: Casey Ross
music@cascadiaweekly.com

**Production**
Art Director: Jesse Kinsman
jesse@kinsmancreative.com

**Distribution**
Distribution Manager: Erik Burge
distribution@cascadiaweekly.com

**Letters**
Letters: Send Letters to Letters@cascadiaweekly.com

**Cover**
Photo courtesy of Anacortes Kayak Tours.

---

**NASA ASTRONAUTS**
Bob Behnken and Doug Hurley are more than just space friends—they’re also best friends, and when they loaded into SpaceX’s Dragon spacecraft on Weds., May 27, they unlocked another friendship achievement as the first American astronauts to launch into space from American soil in almost a decade. "I think there’s a lot of people that wish they could [fly with their best friend], and we’re lucky enough to do it," Hurley said as part of a NASA promotional video. He then confessed that one of the things the pair is looking forward to is the "celebratory" vomiting at the end of their journey. It wouldn’t be a bumpy trip without it.

---

**BOUNCED CHECK**
Last week’s Postal Service mail brought me an Economic Impact Payment check from the U.S. Treasury. This check resulted from the CARES Act, passed in March by a rare unanimous vote. The check conspicuously displayed Trump’s name, as though he were the source of such beneficence.

"It is also worth noting that Trump attempted to make the Postal Service swallow a poison pill in return for a $10 billion line of credit related to coronavirus costs."

---

**NO ONE MESSES WITH MOTHER NATURE**
I am not a scientist or profess to be. I have lived long enough to see what is happening in this world and I think Mother Nature is pissed off at what the human beings have done to her planet. All of us, of the world, have been spinning ideas for so long with no regard to Mother Nature.

"Where is the country that has the most pollution? Of course, China. They have opened up the whole country with manufacturies, and have no regard as to what impact they have had on their land and air and rivers. So Mother Nature got angry and lashed out to the biggest destroyers. I believe she inputted the coronavirus in China knowing they could easily spread it through the world through the Chinese people. They got on planes and spread it through the airplanes and beyond."

"No one (especially Donald Trump) recognized it as a threat. Then people started dying and Trump took back his “fake news” reports. But still sat on his McDonald’s ass. Finally faced with the fact that this is real, he backpedaled to make him seem like he discovered it and now knows how to fix it. Such B.S. He kept the country fighting a political war to divert our attention with his name-calling and his great way to always blame someone else. How many people were “fired” or quit because of him? He has the morals of a snail."

"It all started with the Democrats who ran for office. Trump thought he could bully his way through all the candidates. As the pandemic started rising I hope people finally saw Trump for what he truly is: an arrogant, narcissistic, mentally ill man who only thinks about his needs and wants. The man has no class and no morals."

"This next election will prove the point that there is pollution, climate change, racism and many more important issues facing the world and our country. So in case you want to piss off Mother Nature, vote for Trump. I’m sure he has more up his sleeve."

Or if you want to please Mother Nature and..."
repair this country and the world to what it used to be, vote Joe Biden or all Democrats.

—Patty Hutchins, Lynden

**ORCHESTRATED GENOCIDE?**

In 2016 Trump campaigned against immigration and particularly Latin American immigrants. Despite his countless lies disparaging the value of Hispanic Americans, it is a fact that the incidence of crime in Hispanic communities is less than that in the average population. Since his election he has done everything he can to stop Hispanic migration into this country.

To enhance his selfish goals he has worked to build his wall and has commandeered (stolen) monies that were meant to be used for better housing and safety for our military personnel and their families.

His recent executive order to put packing plants back to work is nothing short of orchestrated genocide.

He has once again conspired with his corporate friends to enhance his immigration, and political goals. This order subjects the most vulnerable, susceptible and poor people in our society to being exposed to a deadly virus with little or no protection and no recourse.

These poor people have to go back to work knowing they are not going to have safe and secure working conditions. Regardless how sick they may be or how afraid they are to bring a virus home to their family they will have to work because they will have no alternative. There will be no further assistance or unemployment monies.

The Trump edict lets the corporations (such as Tyson and Smithfield) reopen with no real rules or oversight for employee protection (by the way, Smithfield Foods is owned by a Chinese conglomerate). In the process he is relieving them of any liability or accountability for employees that become sick as a result of the virus.

So he is going to force the poorest, hard working people to go back to work for those in power even though it puts them and their families in grave danger.

You think this might be bit like 300 years ago? This is as close to genocide as America has ever experienced. This is beyond disgraceful!

As long as Ruth Bader Ginsburg can hold on for another nine months (pray for her) we may be able to salvage our democracy. If Trump is elected for another term our democracy is finished and you will be bowing to the emperor.

—Gene Bogner, Bellingham

**ON MEDS**

Contrary to the plentiful platitudes, Canada’s supposedly universal healthcare system has much room for improvement. I—one who champions truly comprehensive health-services coverage—had tried accessing one-on-one therapy in our “universal” system; within, however, were/are crucial health treatments that are either universally non-existent or, much more likely, universally inaccessible, except to those with the extra dough to blow.

Canada is the only universal health-care country that doesn’t also cover medication. The bitter irony is, many low-income outpatients cannot afford to fill their prescriptions and as a result end up back in the hospital system—thus burdening the system far more than if the outpatients’ generic-brand medication was also covered.

This lesson was learned and implemented by enlightened European nations with genuinely universal all-inclusive health care systems that also cover necessary medication.

Why Canada has to date steadfastly refused to similarly do so, I know not. But I do know that the only two health professions’ appointments for which I’m fully covered by the public health plan are the pharmaceutically prescribed psychiatry and general practitioner health professions. Health specialists such as dentists, counselors, therapists and paraprofessions are not covered.

—Frank Sterle Jr. White Rock, B.C.

**SEND YOUR LETTERS**

Got something on your mind? Share how you feel. Send us letters and please keep them short and concise (300 words or fewer). Send to letters@cascadialaweekly.com

---

**BIZ BRIEFS 05.27.20**

**HIT THE JACKPOT**

**SILVER REEF CASINO RESORT**

After revamping their physical space and processes, the Silver Reef has reopened. They’re operating at 50 percent capacity with socially distant machines and tables. Along with the gaming floor, the casino’s eateries—Red River Cafe, Pizzanini, and Portage Bay Bar—are open. For info about the safety measures and the revised gaming experience, see www.silverreefcasino.com.

**FOOD FOR YOU**

**1-UP LOUNGE**

Among the hard-hustling business owners navigating COVID-19 shutdowns are Alex and Hugh Newmark, owners of 1-Up Lounge. From alcohol delivery, to incentivizing sales with the promise of free stuff on Sundays, they’ll do just about anything to keep the lights on. Now they’ve gotten clearance to sell food along with their boozy wares. Find out what they’re cooking up at www.1updelivery.com.

**A COVID CRISIS**

**QUICKSILVER PHOTO LAB**

Cate Lawson-Reed, owner of Quicksilver Photo Lab, has spent her quarantine preserving people’s precious memories at her Cornwall Avenue shop via curbside pickup and drop-off. However, her COVID-crippled business took another hit when she suffered a major equipment failure. She’s raising money via GoFundMe for new equipment to keep the local mainstay going. For more info: www.facebook.com/QuicksilverPhoto

---

**RESTAURANTS REOPEN**

A whole host of restaurants have revamped, retooled and readied themselves to reopen for takeout service for your dining pleasure.

**ROCK AND RYE OYSTER HOUSE:** www.rockrye.com, Food, cocktails, takeout

**LETTED STREETS COFFEE-HOUSE:** (360) 933-4689, Coffee, tea, takeout

**KEENAN’S AT THE PIER:** (360) 756-1005, Food, family meals, cocktails, curbside pickup

**DANIELLE’S BACK EAST BBQ:** (360) 746-8700, Food, family meals, takeout

**D’ANNA’S CAFE ITALIANO:** (360) 714-0188, Food, family meals, cocktails, cocktail kits, curbside pickup

**THE CORNER PUB:** (360) 757-6113, Food, cocktails, takeout

**SEAVIEW CAFE AND GENERAL STORE:** www.semiahmoo.com, Food, cocktails, takeout

**GALLOWAY’S COCKTAIL BAR:** (360) 756-2795, Food, cocktails, takeout

**BROTHERS BUS BISTRO:** (360) 224-2755, Food, takeout

**SUPER MARIO’S TACO TRUCK:** (360) 920-4330, Food, takeout

---

**GET YOUR BEER HERE**

**ASLAN ANNIVERSARY**

Normally Aslan Brewing Co. celebrates its birthdays by throwing a huge all-day birthday party where both beer and community goodwill flow freely. This year, that’s not a possibility, so they marked the occasion with the release of their fourth organic flagship beer. Joining Batch 15, Dawn Patrol, and Classic is Cosmic Dreams, now available at the brewpub and taproom.

---

**BREAK OUT THE TAKEOUT**

---

**SEND YOUR LETTERS**

Got something on your mind? Share how you feel. Send us letters and please keep them short and concise (300 words or fewer). Send to letters@cascadialaweekly.com

---

**Investing with Impact**

Creating Economic, Social and Environmental Value

Susan Rice
Financial Planning Specialist
Financial Advisor
2200 Rimland Drive, Suite 105
Bellingham, WA 98226
360-788-7005 800-247-2884
susan.a.rice@morganstanley.com
NMLS # 1290656

Morgan Stanley
© 2019 Morgan Stanley Smith Barney LLC Member SIPC.
THE GRISTLE

NAPOLEONS IN EXILE: In a vote split along familiar 4-3 lines, Whatcom County Council reluctantly extended their interim moratorium on the acceptance of applications and permits for major unrefined fossil fuel export projects at Cherry Point for the eighth time. They could hardly have decided otherwise—the public process for considering these amendments to the county’s Comprehensive Plan is all but in a coma as council meetings are telecast amid the COVID-19 pandemic, and even the fossil fuel industry itself is coughing and sputtering in economic collapse. Nevertheless, the delay plays into a misleading narrative that County Council does not support heavy industry and job growth at Cherry Point.

Council member Kathy Kershner objected to the extension even being introduced—“during this time of absolute uncertainty with businesses, with the loss of a renewable fuels project [at Cherry Point], with the notification that Alcoa is going to be discontinuing their business in Whatcom County,” Kershner reasoned. “I don’t think that the County Council should be taking any action that would encourage our industries at Cherry Point to consider this as an unfriendly business environment.”

Yet, inaction is itself action. Without consideration and vote the moratorium would simply expire without extension, sweeping four years of legislative process and volumes of public comment into the dustbin. The Whatcom County Planning Commission has not completed their own extensive review on the Comprehensive Plan amendments for Cherry Point.

“We have a situation where something that has been in existence for a long time, that was put in place to allow the Council to come up with new regulations, is on the verge of expiring,” Council’s legal advisor Karen Frakes explained.

Council’s Terrible Trio objected to the introduction of the item on grounds of procedure and public process, then immediately pivoted to a procedural and public process violation of their own—introducing a matter that was not even on the published agenda at all. This is a trio that grouses without end about surprise introductions of proposals and lack of transparency in legislative decisions.

As their meeting concluded last week, Elenbaas proposed sending a letter to the governor, demanding more local control on the reopening of Whatcom County’s businesses amid the COVID-19 pandemic, a proposal that would essentially neuter the governor’s authority over public health initiatives related to coronavirus.

“We would like you to consider modifying your order to allow county governments which have well established health departments, administrations and functional legislative bodies to be more in control of their own futures as we reopen,” Elenbaas wrote in his proposed letter to the governor.

Comically citing the state’s Growth Management Act as a model (a law the county refused to comply with for more than 20 years), Elenbaas noted “local control and planning is very beneficial as each county has its own strengths and unique challenges. We believe these challenges can be best met by granting local governments more leeway in determining their future. Please consider an option for counties to deviate from your

Corona Days, Corona Daze

MR. CRANKY SHELTERS IN PLACE

I work from home (if you can call what I do work), sheltering in place is not a problem. My only contact with outsiders is a trip to the grocery store, which I call my hour of living dangerously.

There’s a lot of routine to my life these days. Every morning I turn on my flashlight and shove it as far down my throat as I can get it. The president suggested that ultraviolet light might cure COVID-19, so I’m giving it a try. I’m not sure if my flashlight is an ultraviolet model, but this must be working because I feel fine. Except that my throat really hurts all the time. If I actually do get the virus, I’ll follow each flashlight treatment with a glass of Clorox.

Following the flashlight regimen, it’s breakfast time. Since I limit my grocery store exposure to twice a month, if I run out of something I just make do. We were out of milk this morning so I had Hawaiian Punch on my Rice Krispies. The only other options were Coke Zero and Worcestershire sauce. The Hawaiian Punch wasn’t great, but I certainly wasn’t going to eat dry Rice Krispies. I’m not an animal.

After breakfast I do my chores. Being home all the time I get a lot accomplished. For example, I recently alphabetized our canned vegetables. We didn’t have a full 26-letter assortment of veggies, and I hate unfinished projects, so I went online and ordered the missing varieties. Now we’ve got the works, from artichokes to zucchini. I hate canned zucchini.

A couple of days ago, as I was lining up my shoes in the closet by date of purchase, I started worrying that I might run out of projects. Fortunately, at that moment I spotted on a top closet shelf my old Dymo Label Maker that I bought in 1973.

Nothing in this house is labeled, I thought. Let’s get to work!

This will come in handy if I ever slip into dementia and can’t remember what things are. My wife suggested that the fact that I’m labeling chairs, lamps and appliances might be a sign I’m already there. I thought this was a very bad attitude. I put the labels in inconspicuous places, of course. The label that says “Refrigerator” is on the inside of the refrigerator and not on the door. I’m not an idiot.

My chores take me to lunchtime. We were out of mustard but it turns out that lemon curd isn’t all that bad on hotdogs, and at least the color is sort of right.

For my postprandial activity I work on my book. I’m putting together an anthology of the stupidest things people have said during this pandemic. There is tough competition from such luminaries as Donald Trump, Rudy Giuliani, and Tim Eyman, but Whatcom’s own state senator Doug Ericksen was not about to be left out. Medical experts say that in order to get a handle on this virus we need widespread testing followed by contact tracing to locate those who might have been infected. Doug, sensing something sinister was afoot, saw right through this nefarious scheme and sounded the alert: “Now the deep state is proposing Communist Chinese style, freedom destroying, liberty crushing techniques to fight the Communist China Virus.” Wow! You’ve outdone yourself again, Dougie Boy. You never disappoint.

During the day I set my television to record news programs and presidential “briefings.” After dinner I get out my Winky Dink screen for my evening entertainment. If you’re too young to remember Winky Dink, he was a 1950s TV cartoon character. You could send away for a piece of clear vinyl that stuck to your TV screen and some special crayons. If Winky Dink got into a bind and needed, say, a ladle, you could draw it for him. I wisely held onto my Winky Dink screen. Now I freeze-frame shots of Donald Trump on my television and add my own embellishments, such as Mike Pence moaning the president, or Dr. Fauci hurling a scalpel at his head. Recently I captured a good side view of Trump and I drew a hose connecting his ass to his brain. I think this is where he gets all his ideas.

Even though I’ve kept busy during this partial lockdown, I’ll be glad when things get back to normal. I really miss my croquet league and playing music with my amplified ocarina quintet.

Alan Rhodes can be reached at mr_cranky@cascadiaweekly.com

 Views expressed are not necessarily those of Cascadia Weekly
THE GRISTLE

reopening phases without a burdensome ‘ask permission step’ as long as we can document a thoughtful process and appropriate mitigation factors that pertain to the COVID-19 emergency.”

“That is a meaningless low bar, that every county in Washington would clear at any time,” Council member Todd Donovan noted in dissent to the letter, and would allow counties to reopen their economies without regard to data related to infection rates, hospital capacity and related outbreak concerns.

“My understanding was that Mr. Elenbaas was going to work with the Prosecuting Attorney’s Office and Ms. Frakes” to prepare a more cogent letter to the governor for introduction at a later date, Donovan observed.

Elenbaas objected to the letter being reviewed by the county’s legal counsel. Elenbaas sent the letter to Council members mere hours before insisting on a vote on it. Council spent considerable time massaging the proposed text—mostly in deletions of its truculent and confrontational language—despite the inconvenience of not having the text actually available to them for discussion.

“I wrote it with a theme in mind,” Elenbaas admitted.

“Fortunately, Council did remove from the letter references to conspiracy theories about reopening being linked to approval of the Green New Deal,” Donovan observed dryly. “But that remains the context from which this letter was approved.”

“I think Mr. Elenbaas’ concerns have largely been addressed,” Browne observed, “that if the county achieves a goal of lowering new cases, then we do get more latitude in our decision-making—and it is set by an objective measure.

The measure is $R_n$, a mathematical term that indicates how contagious an infectious disease is—and Whatcom County is meeting its goals of lowering that value below $R_n$.

“The letter is not specific in what it is asking the governor to allow us to approve,” Browne noted.

It’s a wonder Council approved the letter at all, given the unorthodox manner in which it was introduced and the lack of coordinated thought that went into its contents.

Napoleons-in-exile, the Corona Council is beholden only to their fiefdoms and the interest groups that are communicating privately with them. The absence of a public meeting space exacerbates their isolation and their scattershot approach to open meetings. It’s no substitute for government.

Bellingham/Whatcom Co. Professional Firefighters
IAFF Local 106

Your union firefighters appreciate ALL workers keeping our community going.

SUPPORTING INTALCO MACHINISTS!

REMEMBER

Dollars spent locally STAY locally...consider buying HERE.

STAY SAFE

Let’s look out for each another, especially our vulnerable.

YOUR LIBRARY IS OPEN ONLINE

We hope to resume additional services in the weeks ahead. Check wcls.org/info for updates or call us 1:00-5:00 p.m. daily, (360) 305-3600.
Impostors have used the stolen information of tens of thousands of people in Washington to fraudulently receive hundreds of millions of dollars in unemployment benefits. “This is happening because bad actors have acquired people’s personal information through other data breaches outside of the agency,” Employment Security Commissioner Suzi LeVine said. “Criminals then use this information to fraudulently apply for unemployment benefits in someone else’s name. There has been no data breach from ESD’s system.” The state is working with federal law enforcement, financial institutions and the U.S. Department of Labor to investigate the fraud and try to recover the money paid out during the huge spike in joblessness during the coronavirus crisis. [ESD]

Republican legislative leaders call on Gov. Inslee to convene a special legislative session to work on budget and other coronavirus-related issues. The announcement comes as GOP lawmakers grow increasingly critical of Inslee’s steps to gradually restart the economy amid a massive spike in unemployment and preliminary projections showing a $7 billion state budget shortfall over the next three years. “The Legislature has been kept on the sidelines for more than two months while the governor exercised emergency powers long past the time when his original goal of ‘flattening the curve’ was realized and hospital resources were not overwhelmed,” Senate GOP Leader Mark Schoesler said in a statement. [Seattle Times]

A judge throws out a lawsuit from a coalition of states, environmental groups and tribal leaders that sought to revive an Obama-era moratorium against U.S. government coal sales on public lands in the West. The U.S. District Court said the Trump administration had fixed its initial failure to consider the environmental impacts of ending the moratorium. The mining industry and two coal states, Wyoming and Montana, joined the case on the side of the federal government. Opponents of the coal-leasing program included the Democratic attorneys general of California, New York, New Mexico, and Washington. [Billings Gazette]

Bodies were still buried beneath the mud of the Oso hillside in May 2014 when pastor Gary Ray funneled $30,000 in cash—donations meant for grieving families of the 43 killed—into a church bank account where only he had access. “People were still searching for the dead,” said deputy prosecutor Michael Safstrom in court. “So this is the most glaring contradiction between public words and private deeds.” Ray is sentenced to 18 months in prison for a series of swindles that went on for years, totaling more than $152,000 stolen from Oso families, collection plates and his own church congregations in Snohomish and Island counties. [Everett Herald]

Governor Jay Inslee requests an extension of authority and additional funding for the Washington National Guard in support of COVID-19 pandemic emergency response operations through July 31, 2020. “This nationally declared emergency is causing second and third order effects that will last long beyond the immediate threat of the COVID-19 pandemic,” Inslee said. “National Guard response missions are absolutely critical to the state’s efforts to sustain a safe and responsible opening of our economy.” [Office of Governor]

A judge throws out a lawsuit from a coalition of states, environmental groups and tribal leaders that sought to revive an Obama-era moratorium against U.S. government coal sales on public lands in the West. The U.S. District Court said the Trump administration had fixed its initial failure to consider the environmental impacts of ending the moratorium. The mining industry and two coal states, Wyoming and Montana, joined the case on the side of the federal government. Opponents of the coal-leasing program included the Democratic attorneys general of California, New York, New Mexico, and Washington. [Billings Gazette]

Bodies were still buried beneath the mud of the Oso hillside in May 2014 when pastor Gary Ray funneled $30,000 in cash—donations meant for grieving families of the 43 killed—into a church bank account where only he had access. “People were still searching for the dead,” said deputy prosecutor Michael Safstrom in court. “So this is the most glaring contradiction between public words and private deeds.” Ray is sentenced to 18 months in prison for a series of swindles that went on for years, totaling more than $152,000 stolen from Oso families, collection plates and his own church congregations in Snohomish and Island counties. [Everett Herald]
the persons involved and determined no crime was committed and no one wished to pursue a complaint. The combatants agreed to stop yelling at each other and go their own separate ways.

On May 10, Blaine Police learned a man had walked into a home without permission and began yelling at children inside. Officers learned the man was upset about the behavior of the children. Police advised the man to seek out an adult to address the children’s behavior.

On May 19, Bellingham Police checked on a report of a missing child. The child was quickly located in another room of the residence.

MORE ZERO THAN ZORRO
On May 10, Anacortes Police learned of a shirtless man who was swinging a sword. “An officer contacted the swordsman who had since robed and said he was just playing around,” police reported.

GOOD FENCES MAKE GOOD NEIGHBORS
On May 9, a woman crashed her white Chevrolet pickup through a fence in Blaine and left the scene. The driver was eventually located and arrested for hit and run and driving under the influence.

On May 16, Anacortes Police tried to make contact with a woman seen in a construction zone. They were unable to locate her, but did make note of the derogatory messages she had written in lipstick on heavy equipment parked in the area.

PET POLICE
On April 25, “two small socialites showed up on the back doorstep of a Kingsway residence,” Anacortes Police reported. “The responding officer took custody of the well-adorned K9s—one was wearing a pink sweater, the other had a harness with hearts on it—and took them to the pound after attempts to reach the owner were unsuccessful.”

On April 27, an Anacortes man wanted police to know about a coyote that had taken up residence in the greenbelt behind his home.

On April 20, an Anacortes resident wanted to report her neighbor’s neglected cat. The Animal Control Officer learned that the neighbor was willing to rehome the cat so she could get the care she needed. The ACO took custody of the feline and brought her to the Cat’s Meow so she could be cared for and put up for adoption.

MAKE OFFER, GET RESULTS
On May 23, a man attempted to bribe a Bellingham Police officer. The 36-year-old was arrested.
The Washington Recreate Responsibly Coalition didn’t exist at this time last year. It didn’t need to.

It wasn’t until a global pandemic stopped the world in its tracks that the coalition of more than 50 Washington state organizations banded together in order to formulate a solid game plan about how to make recreating responsibly easier to remember, follow and share.

The newly formed group was brought together under the leadership of the Washington Trails Association, outdoor retailer REI, and state land managers. Included in the conversation were various government agencies, nonprofits and outdoor businesses that, according to a recent press release, are “inspired by the love of the outdoors and a desire to help people safely experience the benefits of nature while ensuring that our public lands stay open.”

Based on recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, public health guidelines and recreation experts, the tips the Washington Recreate Responsibly Coalition is hoping to incorporate into the statewide and even national lexicon are focused on common-sense directives such as planning ahead, staying close to home, practicing physical distancing and playing it safe as Governor Jay Inslee reopens state lands and waters (see the full list of tips in the sidebar).

Eric Artz, REI’s president and CEO, thinks the Recreate Responsibly Coalition could have a reach far beyond the boundaries of Washington state.

Expansion is already in the works. Just before Memorial Day weekend and the unofficial kickoff to summer, REI, the Outdoor Alliance, and the Outdoor Industry Association convened a group of partners who are interested in ensuring the conversation continues at the national level.

At press time, the number of members was 18 and growing.

As the weather gets warmer and more people venture outside to ride bikes, hike trails, run, kayak in various bodies of water, fish, ride horses, golf or camp, COVID-19 policies might need to be updated, and other activities such as climbing, off-roading, trail maintenance and restoration may require additional protocols.

And, since one of the main directives to #RecreateResponsibly focuses on not traveling far from home, stayscations are likely to be on the rise this summer.

Since May 14, when Governor Inslee issued a memorandum that outdoor recreation tours and guide operations would begin to open in segments—offering guidelines for staffed outdoor tennis facilities, guided ATV, paddle sports, horseback riding, guided fishing, go-kart tracks, motocross facilities, and participant-only motorsports—organizations such as the Washington Outdoor Business Alliance are encouraging people to seek out professional tour guides and outfitters close to their own zip codes.

“It really is important for people not to overload those smaller communities in their restaurants or otherwise,” Inslee says. “It’s really a time to remain close to home. And we know some of these smaller communities have tried to reiterate that with us so that they are not overwhelmed.”

For those living in or near Skagit County, for example, Anacortes Kayak Tours is a good example of a business that already specializes in small group excursions where personal space is built into the activity, and safety and stewardship are top priorities.

Being in a kayak naturally provides more than double the recommended social distancing space recommended by experts, the tour company’s Erik Schorr points out.

“There is no need to take a plane, a bus, a boat or a ferry,” he says. “You can drive directly to Anacortes on lovely Fidalgo Island and experience the fresh, healthy air of the San Juan Islands from the comfort of a stable sea kayak.”

For more details, go to www.recreateresponsibly.org
By Amy Kepferle

**Spring Show**

**VISITING FISHBOY’S** home studio is akin to entering a circus funhouse. Located in the heart of Bellingham’s Sunnyland neighborhood, the spot on the corner of Virginia and Iron streets reveals a series of structures and outdoor spaces designed to show off the contemporary folk art of Randy Clark, the longtime artist and retired WTA driver whose nickname points in part to his practice of “fishing” for found objects such as recycled wood and paint to bring his joyful work to life.

Although those eager to get a peek at FishBoy’s creative process during his annual spring open house won’t be able to tour the funhouse just yet, an online “Shelter-in-Place Spring Show” running “from now until the end” offers a look at what he’s been up to, with new pieces added regularly.

**Cascadia Weekly:** Are you getting more online sales than you were before the shelter-in-place order took effect?

**FishBoy:** I’ve never sold online before. For 20 years while I was working, I depended on three or four one-day, seven-hour shows in my gallery—which is also my home—to sell my work. It was clear by the end of March that we weren’t going to be able to have an on-site spring show. We’d been posting a piece of art on Facebook every day for a couple of weeks by that time, prompted by a friend who said it made him happy to see my work every day.

People started messaging and asking if certain pieces were available, and we started selling. So we thought, OK, if art lovers can’t come here for a show, what if we take the show to them instead? The Shelter-in-Place Spring Show has been successful beyond our wildest imaginings.

**CW:** You’ve already got such a fantastic setup for waiting out a pandemic. What are you glad you already have on-site, and what are you lacking?

**FB:** I pretty much have everything I need here. I figure it’s my own fault if I don’t succeed in making do with what I have. I live with art on my walls every day, I have the companionship of my girlfriend (children’s author Barbara Jean Hicks), who has been sheltering in place with me since the beginning of lockdown, I have enough to eat and drink, and I have satisfying work to do. In addition, I get to see what’s going on in my garden every day; I notice when a plant grows an inch and when flowers bloom. And I’ve made friends with a Stellar jay, Blu-Blu, and a black squirrel, Pewee, who both come into my studio for peanuts while I’m working—not at the same time, though.

**CW:** What else are you doing to keep yourself sane during these trying times?

**FB:** Taking naps whenever I want to, binging on Netflix and Amazon Prime, going for neighborhood walks and meeting new friends and neighbors over fences. Exploring and discovering new artists and rediscovering local artists online. So many locals—Lorna Liebert in Bellingham, Ria Harboe on Lummi Island, Todd Horton in Skagit Valley, Steve Jensen in Seattle, to name a few—are doing what I’ve been doing, posting work on Facebook every day.

**CW:** Your new wheeled tower/rolling liquor cabinet that has 20 paintings all in one seems like it was built for people who might be stocking up on spirits for the apocalypse. What was the inspiration?

**FB:** We started it last fall when my brother Doug had a lot of scrap wood left over from a construction project. It wasn’t planned to be a liquor cabinet—it was meant to be a rocket. It turned out much larger than the structure I envisioned. Instead of a rocket to take us to outer space, it’s a storage port for the fuel that takes us to inner space. Either way, it’s about escape, isn’t it?

**CW:** A lot of your work is focused on structures—shacks, corner stores, big-city scenes, etc. Why do you think that is?

**FB:** I’ve been interested in architecture since I was 5 years old, when I requested a dollhouse for Christmas—much to my dad’s chagrin. (I was interested in the structure, didn’t care about the dolls.) Now part of my interest in painting structures is just architecture for architecture’s sake—a celebration of the amazing shelters we build to keep the rain off our heads. On another level, these paintings are about heart and home. My buildings are symbols of home, wherever that might be.

**CW:** How has the coronavirus changed your outlook on art?

**FB:** It’s made me think more about my own mortality, which leads me to two things: I’d better be doing exactly what I want to do with my art, and I’d better make sure that what I’m doing is my best work.

**CW:** The “Some of My Friends” piece is fascinating, as it shows that your acquaintances go beyond the typical human ones. What’s the story?

**FB:** The painting is a composite of drawings from many different sketchbooks over many years. It was painted before the pandemic, but now when I look at it I see all these people, animals and plants in various stages of development, some confusion, some loss, some “I don’t quite know where I fit anymore,” and I sense a lot of that happening right now. But, as the painting conveys, everyone and everything is still growing, and most important, we are still a community. We are all in this together, and this too shall pass.

Check www.fishboygallery.com to preview current works for sale.
Save Our Stages

HOW YOU CAN HELP

"WOW, EVERYONE, this thing is hard to write."

So began a Sat., May 23 missive from the owners of the Firefly Lounge. It went on to say, "We love you. We love every one of you who believed in us, who loved our beers, our whiskies and cocktails, our staff and our dreams. We love you, and wish to raise a glass to you. To Bellingham, and beyond."

"It’s been a long, beautiful road. As much as we want to continue to walk it, unfortunately, the soles of our shoes have worn thin. COVID-19 has impacted so many industries, and performance venues have been hit particularly hard. We optimistically closed our doors in March, but now, facing an uncertain future…the time has come to close our doors for good."

And just like that, in four short paragraphs, Bellingham suffered the first permanent loss of one of its prized music venues. If ever there was an object lesson in the potential reckoning facing our music scene, this is it. However, we don’t have to sit back and watch them fall, one by one. Bellingham is not just a town with a rich musical history, it is also a community built on a foundation of fierce activism. We are who we are and this place is what it is because we have fought to make it so.

For those of us who have spent our lives in dark rooms, fists thrust in the air as the music washes over us, this is our time. COVID brought the fight to us, and we have no choice but to come out swinging.

So, then, what do we do?

Locally, we can provide direct support with our dollars to our beloved live-music spots. Hanging on to a ticket for a now-cancelled show? Consider calling it a donation instead of asking for a refund. Buy a gift certificate for when your favorite venue reopens—and then wait to use it until they’ve got their feet back under them financially before flooding them with gift cards that don’t put an immediate influx of cash in their tills. If places where you like to see live music are currently sling ing food or drinks—Boundary Bay Brewery, Greene’s Corner, Kulshan Brewery, Hotel Bellwether, Old World Deli, Stones Throw Brewery, and the Shakedown (pop-ups only) all come to mind—purchase their wares. And if your preferred venue happens to be all-ages—Make.Shift, the Bellingham Alternative Library—hit them with a donation.

But wait, there’s more.

All of those efforts are well and good, but the plain fact is none of us is sitting on a coff er of cash large enough to keep our venues solvent as COVID closures drag on. But you know who is? The government, at both the state and federal levels.

This is where organizations such as the Washington Nightlife Music Association and the National Independent Venue Association come in. Both are comprised of independent music venues that have joined together to leverage their collective power to call upon government bodies to carve out venue-specific funding to, as the NIVA tagline says, “Save Our Stages.”

And they need our help. Both organizations are crystal clear that one of the strongest arrows in their quiver is, to put it simply, us. They ask, urge, implore and, if they could, command us to reach out early, late and often to our legislators to ask that dedicated funding be set aside for those places whose only revenue stream comes from ticket sales and the gathering of people. Lucky for us, they’ve made doing so easy, with clear suggestions and email templates on their websites (www.wanna.info and www.nivassoc.org). Many of us are operating with a lot more free time than normal, a heightened level of boredom and anxiety, and a lack of funds with which to remedy our personal situations. You know what is a great time-filler and anxiety-killer that also happens to be free? Political action reading in our inboxes every week as the author of the venue’s enthusiastic, highly personable newsletter that he always concluded with “be excellent to each other.” As he said in his final newsletter, he was the first and last customer at the Green Frog before signing on to the Firefly, and his love and institutional knowledge of that stage run deep.

Erin was a more recent transplant. We got her from Olympia, but about five seconds after she showed up, it seemed she’d always been here, had always been part of our tight-knit music scene. She was the voice and face of the Firefly, and a more fun-loving, good-natured, big-hearted steward of that space you’d never find anywhere. They made a good team in terms of running their venue, but even better, their partnership benefitted the community as a whole. The lifespan of the Firefly was marked by vibrant energy, radical inclusiveness and a seemingly endless supply of goodwill toward the public. Their stage was open to one and all, and they used it to host music from Americana to metal, as well as drag and burlesque shows, open mics and karaoke, and the fundraisers and benefits that shore up this town. They gave the warmest of welcomes to everyone who came through their doors—while exhibiting zero tolerance for people who were hurtful or exclusionary.

If doing a good thing the right way ensured success, the Firefly Lounge would be with us forever. It goes without saying that it will be missed.

RUMOR HAS IT

ALONG WITH CRAZY pandemic dreams—like the one I had recently about being attacked by a giant hermit crab—the thing we all have in common right now is worry.

I live and die by to-do lists and I feel like I have a checklist of worry and I tick off each item without fail every day.

One of those items: How long can our venues remain closed in the absence of government relief and still expect to survive?

An unwelcome answer came, in part, Sat., May 23 when the Firefly Lounge announced its permanent closure on Facebook, attributing the decision directly to the prolonged COVID-19 shutdown.

The loss of one of Bellingham’s precious stages is one that will reverberate throughout our music scene. But to me, the loss of owners Erin Gill and Justin Smith as two of the voices of our music community is the one that will be more keenly felt. Justin came to us via the Green Frog, which was what the Firefly was before it became the Firefly. He was the guy who showed up in our inboxes every week as the author of the venue’s enthusiastic, highly personable newsletter that he always concluded with "be excellent to each other." As he said in his final newsletter, he was the first and last customer at the Green Frog before signing on to the Firefly, and his love and institutional knowledge of that stage run deep.

Erin was a more recent transplant. We got her from Olympia, but about five seconds after she showed up, it seemed she’d always been here, had always been part of our tight-knit music scene. She was the voice and face of the Firefly, and a more fun-loving, good-natured, big-hearted steward of that space you’d never find anywhere. They made a good team in terms of running their venue, but even better, their partnership benefitted the community as a whole. The lifespan of the Firefly was marked by vibrant energy, radical inclusiveness and a seemingly endless supply of goodwill toward the public. Their stage was open to one and all, and they used it to host music from Americana to metal, as well as drag and burlesque shows, open mics and karaoke, and the fundraisers and benefits that shore up this town. They gave the warmest of welcomes to everyone who came through their doors—while exhibiting zero tolerance for people who were hurtful or exclusionary.

If doing a good thing the right way ensured success, the Firefly Lounge would be with us forever. It goes without saying that it will be missed.
We’re OPEN!
Reach out today to schedule an appointment.

VillageBooks.com
for author events & store updates

VILLAGE BOOKS
AND PAPER DREAMS
Fairhaven: 360-671-2626

Support Your Local Farmers
Organic produce from Skagit farms since 1973.

Share Your Story with Us!
Participate in the Whatcom Museum’s digital Story Dome project and record a short story, song, or poem inspired by your experiences during quarantine.
whatcommuseum.org/story-dome-project/

DOWNTOWN MT. VERNON | EXIT 226
(360) 336-9777  SKAGITFOODCOOP.COM

EVERYBODY
DESERVES
EXPERT CARE
Transgender Hormone Therapy
1.800.230.PLAN | mbpp.org
Bellingham • Mount Vernon • Friday Harbor

Generous support for Story Dome is provided by Art Bridges.

Thank you for your support!

VILLAGE BOOKS
Celebrating 40 Years!

DIRECT-TO-HOME Shipping! Only 99¢
Curbside Pick-up
Available at our Fairhaven location daily.

Don’t Miss Out!
Ted O’Connell
Noe Alvarez
Kristen Millares Young
Abbe Rolnick
Sean Dwyer

Shop 24/7 for DADS and GRADS

FAIRHAVEN, WA 6/27/20
**SUDOKU**

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Arrange the digits 1-9 so that each digit occurs once in each row, once in each column, and once in each box.

```
  2  3  9
  4  8
  9
  6  5
  2
  3  9  1
  7  8
  9  5  2
  3  9  6
  2  3  9
  4  5  3
  1  4  7
  2
```

Visit Homes For Sale in Whatcom County

**JUST SOLD**

We're here to help you reach your real estate goals!

Call Jerry Swann For Details

360.319.7776
Broker# 100688

---

**rearEnd >> COMIX + SUDOKU**

---

**Pepper Sisters**
Flavors of New Mexico

**WE'RE OPEN!**
Take out or FREE delivery
Order online at pizzatime.com or call (360) 650-0555 505 32nd St, Ste 106

**PIZZA TiME®**

**We can still eat dessert!** LIMITED HOURS: 12P-7P, MON-SAT
1. Grab & Go curbside pickup - limited dessert menu
2. Delivery to your door: www.OrderVikingFood.com
3. Pre-order your favorite cakes & other desserts online: www.pureblissdesserts.com

360.739.1612 📲 Follow our social @pureblissdesserts 📲

---

**Visit Homes For Sale in Whatcom County**

**JUST SOLD**

We're here to help you reach your real estate goals!

Call Jerry Swann For Details

360.319.7776
Broker# 100688

---

**Great Harvest Bread Co.**

Milling our own fresh WHOLE GRAIN FLOUR!
BellinghamBread.com

305 E Magnolia St.
Bellingham, WA
360.671.0873

---

**Visit Homes For Sale in Whatcom County**

**JUST SOLD**

We're here to help you reach your real estate goals!

Call Jerry Swann For Details

360.319.7776
Broker# 100688

---

**Visit Homes For Sale in Whatcom County**

**JUST SOLD**

We're here to help you reach your real estate goals!

Call Jerry Swann For Details

360.319.7776
Broker# 100688

---

**Visit Homes For Sale in Whatcom County**

**JUST SOLD**

We're here to help you reach your real estate goals!

Call Jerry Swann For Details

360.319.7776
Broker# 100688

---

**Visit Homes For Sale in Whatcom County**

**JUST SOLD**

We're here to help you reach your real estate goals!

Call Jerry Swann For Details

360.319.7776
Broker# 100688
ACROSS
1 Raised-eyebrow remarks
4 From Bangkok
8 Loud two-year-old, maybe
14 Kabuki relative
15 Fair share, between two
16 Baltimore player
17 Start of a best-selling 2003 Mark Haddon title
20 Remote button
21 Meas. for really fast rotations
22 Band supposedly doing their final concert in 2021
23 Pellets found in some old pocket puzzles
24 Catches
26 100 centesimi, once
29 Sargasso, for one
30 Scandinavian native properly called S
33 Start of a time-traveling Mark Twain title
38 Like the Beatles
39 Some time ___
40 Colin, to Tom Hanks
41 Wildebeest
42 Start of a Fannie Flagg title (the movie title being shorter than the book)
46 New Age vocalist from County Donegal
47 Chicago trains
48 Closed facilities (work out at home!)
49 Run off to get married (wait, how would that work these days?)
51 "On the Road" narrator Paradise
53 See 12-Down
56 Aries symbol
57 December garnish
61 Start of a classic 1972 Judith Viorst kids' book title
64 1998 Olympics city in Japan
65 Japanese seaweed
66 Metal container?
67 Wallace's canine sidekick
68 Big thick book
69 It gets caked on

DOWN
1 Where "I'm not a doctor" spokespeople usually "play one"
2 Hostess snack cake
3 "Falling Up" poet Silverstein
4 Part of a "hang loose" sign
5 Long-eared hoppers
7 Befuddled comment
8 ___ nova
9 "Entourage" agent Gold
10 Shares a secret with, maybe
11 Focal points
12 53-Across students
13 Tasting party options
18 Like the mojito's origin
19 Lifts
25 Actress Emily
26 "___-A-Lympics" (1970s Hanna-Barbera cartoon)
27 Words of support
28 One of the Bee Gees
29 Paper packaged with a board game, perhaps
31 Variety of owl, hippo, or seahorse
32 Airline that went bankrupt in 1991
34 Winner of the most French Open singles titles
35 Pad see ew ingredient
36 Opposing argument
37 "May contain ___"
38 Procedure where you may be asked to select numbers
44 Terbium or erbium, e.g.
45 Looked the wrong way?
49 "Ready ___ ..."
51 Band of murder hornets, e.g.
52 The Governor, familiarly
53 Candidate who dropped out in February
54 Fruit spray banned by the EPA
55 Blocks that inspired an animated Batman movie
58 Chemistry 101 model
59 Drive-___ window
60 Pay attention to
62 "Fuel" singer DiFranco
63 Kangas kid
64 Canadian hockey player
65 "Start of a time-traveling Mark Twain title"
66 "Amber"
67 "Dian" Berger
68 "Fascinating"
69 "Fair share, between two"
70 "Miri" Eilenader
71 "Edna"
72 "Aunties Antiques"
73 "Pigeonseposing"
74 "Lest"
75 "Austen"
76 "Tao"
77 "Opt"
78 "Aah"
79 "Ite"
80 "Striperspritzer"
81 "Alone"
82 "Ace"
83 "Guess"
84 "Ocean"
85 "Sis"
86 "Hint"

Books I Didn’t Finish
It’s OK, you get the idea

WE MISSED YOU!
We are back with takeout food and cocktails.
Details at rockrye.com and on social media.
Phone in & online ordering available.

YOUR FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOOD BREWERY
IN THE HEART OF BELLINGHAM’S HISTORIC FOUNTAIN DISTRICT

MENACE BREWING CO.
TO-GO GROWLERS, BOTTLES AND RETAIL KEGS
DELIVERY WITHIN 5 MILES
CALL (360) 602-1641
MON-FRI 3-9PM, SAT-SUN 12-9PM

"Your Friendly Neighborhood Brewery"
Rock and Rye
1145 North State Street
In the Historic Herald Building
ARIES (March 21-April 19): “The best of my nature reveals itself in play, and play is sacred,” wrote the feisty Aries author Karen Blixen, who sometimes used the pen name Isak Dinesen. The attitude described in that statement helps illuminate the meaning of another one of her famous quotations: “I do not think that I could ever really love a woman who had not, at one time or another, been up on a broomstick.” In my interpretation of this humorous remark, Blixen referred to the fact that she had a strong preference for witchy women with rascally magical ways. I bring this to your attention, Aries, because I’m inviting you to cultivate a Blixen-like streak of sacred play and sly magic in the coming days.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Taurus music legend Willie Nelson has played the same guitar since 1969. He calls it “my horse,” and named it after Trigger, a famous horse in Hollywood. Although Nelson still loves the tones that come from his instrument, it’s neither sleek nor elegant. It’s bruised with multiple stains and has a jagged gash near its sound hole. Some Tauruses want their useful things to be fine and beautiful, but not Willie. Having said that, I wonder if maybe he will finally change guitars sometime soon. For you Bulls, the coming months will be time to consider trading in an old horse for a new one.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): I’ve got a message for you, courtesy of poet Lisel Mueller. I think her wisdom can help you thrive in the coming weeks. She writes, “The past pushed away, the future left unimagined, for the sake of the glorious, difficult, passionate present.” Of course, it’s always helpful for us to liberate ourselves from the oppressive thoughts of what once was in the past and what might be in the future. But it will be especially valuable for you to claim that superpower in the coming weeks. To the degree that you do, the present will be more glorious and passionate and not so difficult.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): I’ve got a message for you, courtesy of poet Lisel Mueller. I think her wisdom can help you thrive in the coming weeks. She writes, “The less you fear, the more confident you are. The more confident you are, the more powerful you are.” I agree with him. If you can dissolve even, minute parts of your fear, my answer to that question would require far more room than I have in this horoscope. But here’s the really good news, Leo: In the coming weeks, you will naturally have an abundance of good insights about to dissolve your own fear. Trust your intuition tells you. And be receptive to clues that serendipity brings you.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): For his film Parasite, Viola filmmaker Bong Joon-ho received Academy Awards for Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Original Screenplay. In his natal horoscope, Joon-ho has Pluto conjunct his sun in Virgo, and during the time Parasite began to score major success, Saturn and Pluto were making a favorable transit to that powerful point in his chart. I’m expecting the next six months to be a time when you can make significant progress toward your version of a Joon-ho style achievement. In what part of your life is that most likely to happen? Focus on it. Feed it. Love it.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): According to my analysis of the astrological omens, the coming weeks will be a favorable time for you to seek out, seduce, and attract—luck. To inspire you in this holy task, I’ll provide a prayer written by Hoodoo conjurer Stephanie Rose Bird: “O sweet luck, I call your name. Luck with force and power to make change, walk with me and talk through me. With your help, all that can and should be will be!” If there are further invitations you’d like to add to hers, Libra, please do. The best way to ensure that good fortune will stream into your life is to have fun as you draw it to you.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Scorpio comedian John Cleeese does solo work, but many of his successful films, albums, stage shows, and TV programs have arisen from joining forces with other comedians. “When you collaborate with someone else on something creative,” he testifies, “you get to places that you would never get to on your own.” I propose you make this your temporary motto, Scorpio. Whatever line of work or play you’re in, the coming weeks will offer opportunities to start getting involved in sterling synergies and symbioses. To overcome the potential limitations of social distancing, make creative use of Zoom and other online video conferencing.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Writing some Chinese characters can be quite demanding. To make “biang,” for example, which is used in the name for a certain kind of noodle, you must draw 58 separate strokes. This is a good metaphor for exactly what you should avoid in the coming weeks: spending too much time and devoting too much thought and getting wrapped up in too much complexity about trivial matters. Your focus should instead be on simple, bold approaches that encourage you to be crisp and decisive.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Singer-songwriter Jill Scott is strongly committed to her creative process. She tells us, “I was once making a burger for myself at my boyfriend’s house and a lyric started pouring out and I had to catch it, so I ran to another room to write it down, but then the kitchen caught fire. His cabinets were charred, and he was furious. But it was worth it for a song.” My perspective: Scott’s level of devotion to the muse is too intense for my tastes. Personally, I would have taken the burger off the stove before fleeing the scene to record my good idea. What about you, Aquarius? According to my analysis, you’re in a phase when creative ideas should flow even better than usual. Pay close attention. Be prepared to capture as much of that potentially life-altering stuff as possible.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): To protect ourselves and others from the pandemic, most of us have been spending more time than usual at home—often engaged in what amounts to enforced relaxation. For some of us, that has been a problem. But I’m going to propose that it will be the opposite of a problem for you in the next three weeks. In my astrological opinion, your words to live by will be this counsel from author and philosopher Mike Dooley: “What if it was your downtime, your lazing-in-bed-too-long time, that made possible your greatest achievements? Would they still make you feel guilty? Or would you allow yourself to enjoy them?”
Avant Gardening
BELLINGHAM FOOD NOT LAWNS

I FIRST became aware of Bellingham Food Not Lawns in mid-April, when I glanced across the street and spied a few hardy individuals digging up my neighbor Gabe’s front yard.

Since anything out of the norm seems interesting when sheltering in place, I spent more time than usual pondering what was going on. Why were the shovel-wielding workers replacing the lawn with garden beds—and for what reason were branches, twigs, dried leaves and upturned grass being layered at the bottom of them? Also: Who in the heck were these people?

Not long after, I found out the latest iteration of Bellingham Food Not Lawns was behind the agrarian action, and those who’d toiled the soil in the rain that day were volunteers interested in the idea of building community resilience via mutual aid.

“While we can’t fix our entire country and all its interdependent systems, we can work locally and help ourselves and our neighbors adapt to forthcoming change by supporting each other,” project leader Meg Duke explains. “If the grocery stores were empty and the food supply stopped, what good would my garden do me if everyone else in the neighborhood decided to take food from it? Mutual aid understands that your problems aren’t just yours. Locally, we can create solutions that address the needs of each neighbor in our community, and by doing so build a network of trust and resilience.”

Duke says for the past year she and her housemates—some of whom help run the Alternative Library—had been pondering offering free labor to motivate folks to grow some of their own food, but it took the pandemic for the idea to become action. With a number of friends out of work and eager to help, it wasn’t long before the York neighborhood had been pasted with posters advertising free garden consultation and construction, and also calling out for additional volunteers to assist in turning underutilized lawn spaces into productive edible gardens.

So far, Duke reports, 10 yards have been transformed into gardens, made possible by 15 work parties (some yards take multiple days), coordinated by 14 consultations. From smaller jobs like Gabe’s—which featured hugelkultur-style garden beds that include layers of wood debris and other compostable plant materials to improve soil fertility—to an entire front yard in the Sunnyland neighborhood that was transformed into raised beds, BFNL is keeping busy.

“Folks are super-jazzed about growing food, have a lot of free time due to the virus, and have no/little/some idea of where to start but want to brainstorm with someone,” Duke says. “By hearing their vision for their yard and by checking their household’s capacity, we can tailor a garden that will suit them and their situation. Plus, we can reduce a week’s worth of work into a day.”

The crews involved in the “avant gardening” use as many materials as possible that are already on site (yard waste, woody debris, pallets, etc.) or advise homeowners and renters where they can find, collect or buy what else they need, so by the time the project begins there’s usually a vision for how it will end. Social distancing is enforced, volunteers are encouraged to take the space and breaks they need, and although they share the tools they bring to get the job done, they all wear work gloves for safety.

As queries continue to come in, Duke says they’d love to involve more volunteers for work parties, and are also hoping to grow the project into decentralized, neighborhood-based teams that are able to build beds for those who live nearby. Although they won’t be around to enjoy the fruits (or veggies) of their labor, Duke says each of the 20-plus volunteers who’ve gotten involved thus far aren’t in it for free lettuce.

“So many love giving to and creating their community, some love manual labor, some love learning about building different types of beds, and some love socializing with new folks who are also down to manifest growth,” she says. “We’re all getting a more resilient, cooperative community.”

Approximately six weeks after their first project at my neighbor’s place, his beds are filling in nicely with a variety of salad greens, tomatoes and a variety of other vegetables. Some crops are ready to harvest, but others are waiting for the summer heat to come into their own.

When asked what she hopes others who get involved with Bellingham Food Not Lawns take away from the experience, Duke says a fat harvest.

“And perhaps, if they have extra, they can share with their neighbors or donate to the Food Bank and pass along the spirit of mutual aid to their communities.”

Contact gardens@altlib.org to arrange a consultation or to get involved building garden beds for neighbors.
One From The Heart.

hy’shqe

We want to thank the Frontline Workers and All of Our Friends & Relatives during this time.

You can find us LIVE on FaceBook & YouTube | @ChildrenSSP