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From the Director: Denise Klein

I've been thinking about some of the questions and concerns members expressed at last August's small group discussions and wanted to address two of them in this column. **First, how do I go about getting help from *Wider Horizons Village* when I need it?**

We have a "no wrong door" policy. This means you can phone, email, or otherwise contact anyone in the village you trust (including me) and say what you would like to know or what kind of assistance you need. The result is that your request gets filled at the level closest to where you make it. So, if the person to whom you are speaking can take care of the request, that's what happens.

If the person you've spoken with is uncertain about how to help, they will let me know and I'll contact you and tell you how and when your request can be met. Here are examples of requests I or another villager have gotten in the past few months:

- ✦ I have several heavy boxes I need to move
- ✦ I need to have a new light installed in my bedroom
- ✦ I'd like a ride to the doctor and someone to accompany me
- ✦ I want to talk to someone who has put in a stairlift
- ✦ I'd like help with my website and blog
- ✦ I need a health care advocate

All these requests were met quite promptly, some by other villagers and some by non-member volunteers. Often, I heard back that the recipient was satisfied, grateful, etc., and in a few cases, I didn't but checked in to see. And not all of the requests went through me, but, rather, were taken care of by a member directly.

A second concern expressed by several who attended the small group discussions was: **I'd like to make my financial resources go further.** That led to the excellent suggestion that we include a tip in each *Newsletter* relevant to our financial well-being. **The tip this month is about Medical Alert Devices.**

Many are on the market, with more problems than you might imagine. I can send you an article from a reliable source. The bottom line: **GreatCall Lively Mobile** is top-rated: <https://www.greatcall.com/devices/lively-mobile-medical-alert-system> -- Check it out.

Sustenance of Food and Stories: The Mid-Winter Party

by Denise Klein

The idea of a blow-out party to brighten our dull mid-winter horizons came from the *Wider Horizons* Social Activities Affinity Group. Members **Julie Anderson, Ellen Berg, Deirdre Cochran, Eleanor Dills, Liz Ohlson** and **Donna Sunkel** pulled off an amazing event on Tuesday, January 29. Fifty members and their friends, as well as guests, attended the lively social.



Helen Cobb Jones helps herself

A multi-course buffet of dishes representing members' family traditions (think everything from kugel to peas and from meat loaf to gefilte fish—and, of course, apple and cherry pie) and music from Deirdre on her dulcimer enhanced a warm and welcoming setting at the Central Area Senior Center. Touches of glamour came from Ellen and Eleanor's lovely folk art centerpieces and the gold placemats and napkins placed at every seat.



from left, Guest Kathleen Marsh, Dolores Browne, John Berber, Eleanor Dills, Kate Barber, Scott Dills

Imaginative discussion questions at each table enabled all to share their own family story.



from left, members Charles and Sandra Wheeler, Cleo Corcoran, Julie Anderson, Ellen Berg

The high point of the evening (besides abundant and robust socializing) was the after-dinner program. Julie was a warm and able MC as members told family stories (**Sharon Sobers-Outlaw, Paul Beck, Dave Darragh,**



Paul Beck tells his story

Cleo Corcoran, Bob Anderson, Michael Kischner, Charles Wheeler). Themes included making a perilous journey from foreign lands or from one part of the country to another, overcoming other hardships and succeeding through hard work—but, above all, the blessings and support of family and community. **Dolores Browne** read a beautiful poem by Harlem Renaissance Poet Countee Cullen: "To John Keats, Poet, at Spring Time."



Dolores Browne

Events like these both create and affirm the warmth of our community. Thanks to all who made the event such a resounding success, including **Wren Campbell**, who designed the colorful invitation, **Bob Anderson** for great photos and members who brought delicious food!



**Wider Horizons Board Locked Out!
Debbie Facilitates Rescue!
Retreat a Success**
by Michael Kischner

When **Debbie Ward** signed on to facilitate the last Wider Horizons Board retreat, she didn't know she would be hosting it as well. It began with everybody shivering outside the locked doors of the Central Area Senior Center. There had been a snafu. Debbie lives about a mile away, and soon everybody was trooping into her house and arranging themselves in her cozy living room while Debbie and Denise Klein prepared coffee and snacks.



from left, Sue Lerner, Sharon Sobers-Outlaw, Debbie Ward, Liz Ohlson, Charles Wheeler

Debbie's spur-of-the-moment hospitality added much to the success of the retreat. We sat close and comfortable together, no conference table separating us. The casual setting made back-and-forth easy. With Debbie facilitating from the entrance to her kitchen, we spent four hours looking at Wider Horizons today and discussing its future.



from left, Michael Kischner, Charles Heaney, Ann Lawrence

Board members had been well prepared by information and ideas sent out by Denise and Debbie, as well as by **Ellen Berg's** report on the small group discussions she conducted with the membership last fall. Debbie led us expertly through prioritizing areas for the Board to consider for the future.

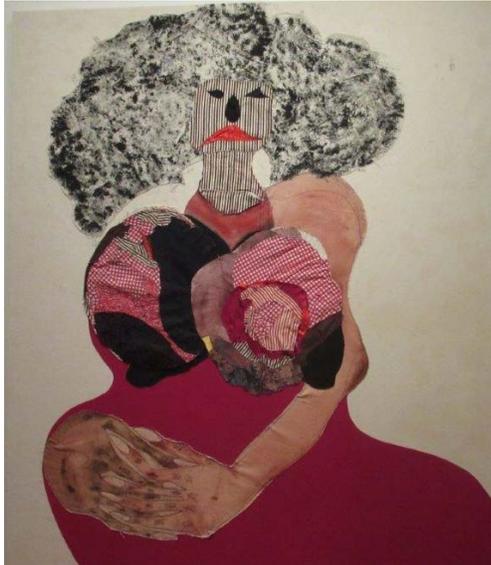
Some of the highest priority areas centered on member needs. We discussed ways to build trust within Wider Horizons to help members share needs. We will look into establishing a process to take actions when needs are identified. We shared concerns about member isolation and about helping members facing the "next phase" of not living independently. Also high on the list was providing assistance with practical matters as tax preparation and legal documents. Expect to hear more on these and other important subjects.

Doing the Frye with Liz
by Michael Kischner

Liz Ohlson listens more than she talks. This makes her a great gallery guide. Wider Horizons found that out again on January 31, when a dozen of us came together to take in four different exhibits. For each one, Liz supplied a little helpful

framing and then invited us to talk about what we saw and felt. Twelve heads are better than one, and we all helped each other see much more than we might have on our own.

Tschabalala Self's large, exuberant collages (and one wonderful animated video) focus on the black female body and its significance in contemporary culture.



Quenton Baker's "Ballast" presents his own redaction of an 1841 government report on a slave mutiny; an accompanying screen displays lines of Baker's own poetry, some of it stunning ("blood don't run to freedom. . . it just run").

In "The Rain Doesn't Know Friends From Foes," three Iranian artists now exiled in Dubai animate and enhance clips from news videos to make powerful statements. Many are of North African migrants arriving (or failing to arrive) on the shores of southern Europe.

With Cherdonna Shinatra's "DITCH" we returned to fun and bright colors on the set created for her local company of lesbian dancers. The company does scheduled 45-minute performances, which, going by the set, should be lively indeed!



These exhibits will be at the Frye through April 28. The Frye has tours every day at 1 PM and on Saturday, Sunday, Tuesday, and Wednesday at 11:30. Best of all, Liz is willing to do another special one for Wider Horizons folks. Let Denise know if you are interested.



The Wheelers (Sandra and Charles), Julie Anderson, Carolyn Allen, Bob Anderson, Joe Garcia, Karen Hendrickson and Kathleen O'Connor



End of the tour, tired but paying rapt attention to Liz

Member Profile: Allison Katzman

by Michael Kischner



A doll named Blythe is a contemporary global phenomenon. You can go online and learn a lot about her. But it's more fun to hear it from **Allison Katzman** who created Blythe almost fifty years ago.

Blythe was one product of a long creative career that began in 1943, when Allison grad-

uated from Roosevelt High School and went on to earn a B.A. in Fine Arts from Chicago's Art Institute. She stayed in Chicago for 62 years, marrying fellow-artist Bob Katzman and raising three children.

Professionally, Allison began as a potter and went on to design 3-D installations for businesses and conferences. One Chicago bank chose Allison to create figures for an annual Christmas display titled "Traditions of the Seasons," which ran for twenty-one years. This work led to a job offer from Marvin Glass and Associates, then America's premier toy design company. It was here that Allison created Blythe – and a lot more. She has thirty-five patents in her name.

Toys usually needed some gimmick to succeed commercially. Blythe's gimmick were big eyes that moved and changed color with the pull of a string, an idea Allison got from her teen-aged daughter Melissa, who had discovered she could get contact lenses in different colors.

Manufactured by Kenner Products in 1972, Blythe had only an average run of about three years before being retired to what the design company called its "morgue." Nobody guessed what a future still lay ahead of her.

In the early 2000s, Blythe came back to life in Japan, thanks in part to Junko Wong, a Japanese-American marketing director who placed Blythe's



image in advertising for Seibu Department Stores in Tokyo. A Christmas sale brought in swarms of customers looking to buy a Blythe doll. There weren't any; they hadn't been manufactured for a quarter of a century!

This was soon remedied, and the phenomenon was launched. Thousands of new Blythes were sold, mainly to adult women in Japan. Original Kenner dolls sold for four-figure prices. Blythe events were held to which dolls and their owners came in matching outfits. Contests were held. Catalogs appeared.

The craze spread to other countries. BlytheCons in the UK, Portugal, Canada, and several U.S. cities have attracted Blythe enthusiasts with their dolls from all over.

Allison appeared at BlytheCon Seattle in 2014, and on a large screen at BlytheCon Los Angeles last September. She went to Tokyo to help judge a costume contest to which 12 semifinalists were flown from all over the world. The winner was a woman from Australia.

Like Blythe, Alison is going strong today at 93. Bob Katzman died in 1985. In 2007, Allison moved back to Seattle to be near her daughter Abby. She lives in a basement unit of Abby's Capitol Hill house with excellent care, lots of light, and a beautiful view of the Cascades. Mobility and vision issues prevent her from coming to as many Wider Horizons events as she would like. She enjoys walks and audio books.

Modesty and humor are part of Allison's charm, and she talks about Blythe's celebrity with the amused wonder of a bystander. Artists learn about perspective, and Allison seems to have kept hers.

Sweet Treats at Pod 7

by Chris Morris

Sweet treats welcomed POD #7 members to their January meeting at **Beret and Michael Kischner's** Capitol Hill home. Two sets of 7 steps with stable banisters led to a spacious front hall featuring a pleasing spindled staircase of rich polished oak. The hallway's leaded windows appear to hang from the ceiling giving the foyer extra height, as well as, an elegant appeal. The leaded windows continued into the equally spacious living room and adjacent music/entertainment parlor. A third room completing the expanse of more than half of the first floor was the dining room of this 1904 beautifully maintained house.

Members gathered for beverages in the kitchen area where the bar offered red, white and a sweet rosé, along with tea and coffee. In the dining room a large oval table displayed a bounty of cheeses and crackers and bowls of fruit. Completing the inviting array of delicacies were two large cakes, one a sumptuous creamy-colored butter cake, the other a tart-like ginger one.



from left, Denise Lishner, Valerie Yockey, Julie Anderson, Scott Dills, Beret Kischner

The agenda for the meeting was to plan future meetings. Agreed: we like meeting in homes, someone other than hosts should plan the program, and we'll try more substantive themed events. Three of the exciting gatherings will address these topics: March: celebrate the spring equinox with poems or literature; July: Americana

(perhaps immigration), and November: a "Haggadah-like" event that binds us together.



Chris moved to Seattle from Manhasset, Long Island, where she wrote for three lifestyle magazines (House, North Shore and The Boulevard) read by residents of Long Island's Gold Coast.

Magazine Group

by Michael Kischner

The Magazine Group is meeting this week, on Wednesday, Feb. 6, at 6 pm at the Dills! Here's a report on the last meeting.

At the last meeting, the table groaned as usual under the weight of the delectable potluck offerings. Later, we groaned as usual under the weight of **Bruce Davis's** questions as he waved dollar bills at us. Bruce, always the skilled educator, never makes you feel stupid for not knowing important things like who played Crazy Guggenheim on the Jackie Gleason show? (Hello? Frank Fontaine!) In between, there was the usual stimulation, moderated by that most genial of hosts, **Scott Dill**.

Michael Kischner brought up Atul Gawande's latest New Yorker article about how computers are both reviled and praised by today's doctors as well as their patients. **Nancy Robb** brought several articles on current criminal justice reform proposals that bear watching even though they are being seen as a potentially positive bi-partisan initiative. Principal Bruce read to us from "Education Week" about the unreal expectations laid on school principals tasked with conducting complex and bureaucratic teacher evaluations. **Ellen Berg** shared her pleasure in the book *Our Towns: A 100,000-Mile Journey Into the Heart of America* by James Fallows and Deborah Fallows.

Devotees of the Tonight Show got home in good time to catch Jimmy Fallon and reflect on how



Scott Dills, Joan Bergman, Eleanor Dills

different he is from the show's first host. That would be Steve Allen. Bruce paid somebody about \$3.00 for knowing that. But it had been a profitable evening for everybody.

Days for Girls: Connecting with the Seattle-Limbe Sewing Circle

by Beret Kischner

If you are looking for a way to connect with communities beyond Wider Horizons, you might want to consider helping with the Seattle Limbe Sewing Circle, a chapter of the Days for Girls project. Volunteers meet once a month to construct re-usable feminine care products, quite ingeniously designed, for girls in places where lack of these supplies makes attending school and community activities impossible for days every month. This chapter delivers thousands of packets to communities in Cameroon every year so that girls can attend schools regularly and make better lives for themselves and their communities.

On the 4th Saturday of every month, from 8:30-2 pm, a large work party of volunteers, mostly women but some men, comes together in a hall at the First African Methodist Episcopal Church at 1522 14th Ave and sets to work on the complicated tasks to construct packets. (Temple Beth Am in Seattle and the Monroe Mosque also have monthly work parties for this chapter.) People bring their deft hands, sewing machines, ironing boards, scissors, and cutting tools for various tasks needed to complete the projects. These might include

cutting fabric, sewing, putting in snaps, or packing boxes of completed packets.



While everyone is focused on the work at hand, they also get acquainted with those working nearby, which might include three generations from one family, church members from First AME, or some students from Meany Middle School, Garfield, or Holy Names. It's a very welcoming group of people from our diverse community. Check it out some 4th of the month Saturday morning. The next session will be on February 23. For more information, see the website, www.seattlelimbe.org.



Beret has been attending the Seattle-Limbe Sewing Circle for two years. She learned about it in these pages.

Two Guest Writers:
Sara Glerum and Marcia Barton

For the first time, we welcome guest writers to these pages. Each is a friend and writing group companion of a Wider Horizons member. When their pieces below came to our attention, we begged to publish them. We're grateful they said yes!



Sara J. Glerum is in a writing group with WH member **Ginny NiCarthy**. After fifty-two years of marriage, she is reinventing herself as a widow. To keep in contact with her far-flung offspring and families, she writes a blog, *Beats Talking To Myself*. She has received recognition in several writing contests, and dozens of her of personal essays have been published. “Not the Merry Widow” below, is an excerpt from a longer essay. The full essay, as well as the poem “Need for Comfort,” will appear in the forthcoming *Grief Dialogues: The Book*, edited by Elizabeth Coplan and published by the People's Memorial Association and Funeral Consumers Alliance.

From “Not the Merry Widow”

Adjusting to the death of a spouse is a huge deal; no one argues that. Thousands of day-to-day events have to be re-thought, re-orchestrated and rehashed. Adjustments are rampant; everywhere I turn, something is missing or needs to be done differently—from the way I do the laundry and set the table, to the size of the table itself and how much coffee I brew every morning.

I have learned where the air intake is for my car, to reset the wireless router, pay bills on a different online setup, and diagnose what’s wrong with the furnace thermostat. I, alone, go to the cleaners, fill the gas tank, make oil change appointments, and renew the license tabs. Even the things I used to do happily seem daunting because ‘I’m it’ forever. Trash hauling, shredder emptying, light bulb changing, clock winding, and smoke-alarm battery changes are all mine.

Many friends have expressed willingness to help with projects requiring ladders and electrical know-how; projects requiring tool savvy and technical expertise. I’m lucky—people are wanting to help me, hoping to make themselves feel better, too, because their friend is gone, while they’re still here. Most routine chores don’t require assistance—just time, and doing everything absorbs so much of each day, like a giant sponge wiping away leisure time. Why does this simple stuff seem so overwhelming!

To be fair, let me mention that not everything is bad. I have more closet space and will never need to iron hankies or prepare *runny* scrambled eggs again. I can eat dinner whenever *I’m* hungry and go to bed when I finish my book without keeping my husband awake. I’m making my way in a world I’ve not inhabited for more than fifty years—the world where every decision I make only involves me because I’m single. I can leave cupboard doors open, make eggplant my entire dinner, crank the volume on Bach till the rafters rock, and sleep in the middle of the bed. For a short while those ‘me things’ lift my grief like a hot air balloon. I am making progress on this long journey of grief.

Need for Comfort

After reading Patty Donovan's Obituary in the Seattle Times (2011)

After a short battle with cancer at age 59.

At her request, there will be no service.

That's all the notice says. In the flick of a page,
the slam of a book cover, her chapter is over.

In the same way cops get immune to the ravages of crime,
I'm building up my own immunity to the effects
of death. Why then, does this morning's obituary
for a woman I just slightly knew make me so sad?

Without a service, I don't know how to grieve.

Without heirs remaining, I don't know whom to console.

Without a god who listens to the least little detail
of my prayers, I have no way to purge my sorrow.

I need my own wagging tongue, my own adjectives
and anecdotes to hold on to recollection—
hold off her disappearance. When I console another,
I am tamping down bumps of fear along my path.



Marcia Barton's prose and poetry have appeared in many publications. She and Michael Kischner were longtime colleagues in the Seattle Community Colleges. A national award-winning leader in writing pedagogy, she taught that writing teachers must write, and twenty years after retirement she hasn't stopped. Today, Marcia and Michael are in a writing group together.

All That Is Mortal

Isn't it odd, I think to myself, how I never
even consider my skeleton? And yet here
it sits, perched on my shower chair, bending
me forward under warm, soapy water, leaning
happily back, obeying nerve orders, pulled
this way and that by the muscled engineering crew.

And the scariest piece of all, my skull,
the brainbox, is right here holding my gray-pink,
folded thoughts, remembering how I would run
terrified by the sight of the Jolly Roger. It holds
my childhood nightmares, replays the Wicked Queen's
dungeon, the cell bars, that bony arm outstretched
toward the cobwebbed pitcher that lay empty,
overturned, more ominous than the old witch's
cackling over her poisoned apple.

I think about my organs. Is my heart up to something?
Are my lungs at last toxically dirty? I have dialogs
with my joints – please don't betray me here before
all these people, I beg; don't let the children notice.
I am on perfectly intimate terms with wrinkled

skin and underlying flab. With a little effort,
I can picture how neatly all the parts are packed,
kidneys and gall bladder, liver and folded guts.

What a piece of work it is, mostly minding
its business, secreting and peristalting,
and how it wails when something goes wrong!
I do think about it, a few bones at a time; I am
utterly grateful that my fingers still move,
with only a little ache at the base of my thumbs.
The skill that sawed away the eroded end
of my femur and oh, so delicately tapped
a sleek piece of titanium into position –
that dazzles me, that was miraculous!

I had thought I would never stand straight
again, or put both feet on the floor, and so
I can't blame my sacrum for becoming barnacled,
now in its ninth decade. No wonder it hurts. And yet,
I can't seem to imagine the whole as it walks me
to the elevator, signs out and climbs into the car,
the way the whole frame is always inside
here with me, organized, holding me together.