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October 2020

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From the Director: Denise Klein

This has been a year of so much wasteful, wasteful pain! A year of hardship, chaos and loss. And one where most of us feel we are the lucky ones and shouldn't complain. There is truth in that, but there are other truths as well.

Author Olivia Waite, recently quoted in the *New Yorker*: "We've reached the point in the quarantine experience where casually sharing space and food with loved ones feels like unattainable hedonism; the palpable warmth of community and care...seems as luxurious and aspirational as any silk gown or starched cravat ever could." Sound familiar? I know I've had that same thought.

My message to you is two-fold:

1. It is unhealthy and unwise not to notice or allow to surface (however briefly) your sadness, loneliness, despair, depression, and sense of loss of life as we have known it (not to mention our worry about our children and grandchildren). See or talk to at least one other person every day. Exercise as much as you can, preferably daily, outdoors.
2. It is much clearer than "in the before" how much *Wider Horizons* means to most of its members. We have an obligation to grow and to sustain ourselves.

Recently, one of our members asked me why we should ask people to donate to us since we are not the deserving poor. I said, "We **are deserving...**of community, of warmth, of caring, of love." We can strengthen and demonstrate a model that has potential to help many others whom I see around me suffering.

This week we have sent fundraising letters to more than 200 people, including to all of you, to our volunteers, to our families and friends. The purpose of this fundraising is to achieve **stability** for our small organization. Without a decent reserve fund, we cannot survive long-term.

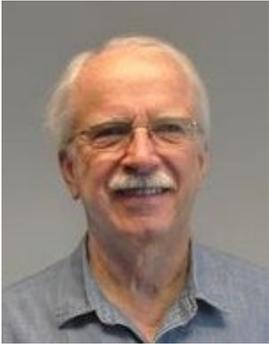
Right now, our dues and donations (from members and non-members) cover our expenses and give us enough cash flow to move into the next year without asking people to pay dues early or increase dues. While that feels like success, it is not enough to ensure the survival of *Wider Horizons*.

If you are able to donate, think what the meaning of that gift would be to all of us. And I still have a few letters left, so if you have the name and address of someone to whom I should send one, let me know!

Thanks to these members who helped get our letters out: **Jane Cotler, Patti Gorman, Michael and Beret Kischner, Ann Lawrence, Carol Mirman, Marianne Scruggs, and Debbie Ward.** Thanks, too, to our excellent Fundraising Group chaired by **Bob Anderson** and including **Susan Adler, Charles Heaney, and Gigi Meinig** as well as non-member expert Tom Mesaros.

Never Bored on the Board

by Charles Heaney



When Denise approached me about the possibility of joining this yet-to-be-launched project that would eventually emerge as Wider Horizons, I was on the verge of retiring and, of course, thinking about what lay ahead. Apart from the overall mission of promoting the ability of seniors to remain

independent for as long as possible, something I clearly had a vested interest in, the other thing that intrigued me was the opportunity to help create a brand new organization, a startup in modern parlance. Moreover, this startup was built around a new concept—the virtual village. It worked for me.

Earlier in my life, both as an employee and as a volunteer, I found myself being a part of several new and innovative organizations: a midwifery school separate from nursing; a physician-owned health plan; a pioneering cancer practice, and a unique health policy partnership between a state legislature and a university. The one thing they all had in common was they were magnets for energetic, committed, innovative people who embraced the challenges of creating their own approaches in pursuit of a greater good. Which I guess is a somewhat long-winded way of saying why I really enjoy being a member of our Board.

I'm sure a number of you have served on boards or committees where at times it was an effort to stay awake. This isn't one of them. In the several years in which I have been a participant, there is a continuous sense of forward movement. Ideas come up, goals are set, projects are initiated, follow-through, monitored. It all seems to fall in place with collegiality and friendships intact no less.

What really demonstrated to me how well our group worked together was the incredible effort that went into converting Wider Horizons from a traditional top-down operating mode to a truly member-driven organization. The meetings were numerous, long, and sometimes arduous, but it worked, and I think we are all enjoying the rewards of this effort.

For me, it has meant working alongside and getting to know some wonderful and talented people. Most recently, I was asked to succeed Michael Kischner as

the editor of this newsletter, no easy shoes to fill. But our editorial team, including Michael, has made it easy and fulfilling. Developing ideas, assigning responsibilities, soliciting contributions from members, writing occasional pieces like this one, and nagging folks to make sure the work gets done are what make it a wonderful job. I hope you enjoy what you see in the pages that follow, and in the issues yet to come.

Farming in the City

by Ann Lawrence



Eleanor Dills and I (above) were lucky to arrive just in time for the volunteer orientation at **Yes Farm** on July 25th. The farm is in its second year. Created as a partnership between Seattle Housing Authority and the Black Farmers Collective, this cooperative's goal is to provide food, improved health, education in farming, and community building in the Yesler neighborhood.

With the help and oversight of EarthCorps, the farm has developed a projected plan for its 2½ acres that includes small individual gardening plots, a seed nursery, and an area where they expect to plant fruit trees and several varieties of berries.

Under the guidance of project managers Hannah and Fernando of EarthCorps, Eleanor and I began the energetic task of removing tough dry hillside grass with rakes. The younger volunteers were also put to work with their Pulaskis (axe and adze combination tools), breaking up the soil and amending it with nutrients and more porous dirt.



From left, Eleanor Dills, Marianne Scuggs, Lette, Ann Lawrence, and Nora Gibson

More small garden plots will be added to the half-acre already under cultivation. All plots are organized using the Kwanzaa principle of cooperative economics to eliminate food scarcity and undo the commodification of the food industry for area families.

Eleanor and I worked from 10 am to 2:30 pm, taking time for lunch, water, and talking with the diverse volunteers. It was interesting to find out Fernando was from Sao Paulo, Brazil, and had been here in Seattle for over a year, learning about urban farming—something he hopes to introduce when he returns to Brazil next year.

We returned to the farm a second time on August 22nd, accompanied by **Nora Langan** and **Marianne Scuggs**. While eradicating blackberry bushes, we met Lette, one of the locals with her own garden plot. Lette shared how much she has benefited from all the fresh kale she’s grown and promised to share some of her recipes with us in the future.

There are regular opportunities to volunteer at **Yes Farm** and Hannah is usually there on Tuesdays and Saturdays from 9:30 am to 3:00 pm. You just have to show up and bring your own gloves; they provide the equipment. **Yes Farm** is always appreciative of donations:

www.blackfarmerscollective.com/donate



Deirdre Cochran: Music, Music, Music by Charles Heaney

I’m guessing that a number of you grew up with music. Maybe you took lessons as a child, played in a school band, jammed with friends, entertained others, or knew musicians who did. I’ve done all of those things, but never in my life did I have the opportunity to know someone who had music in their DNA; that is, not until I met with **Deirdre Cochran** a few weeks ago.

Some children take to music lessons easily while others do not. Deirdre was definitely in the latter group and her parents had to resort to some heavy persuasion in order to get her to sit at the piano. She hung in there for three years, but at age 11, she’d had enough and ended it all—or so she thought.

Then, twenty years later, some deep longing bubbled to the surface and at age 30, she started accumulating instruments to play. First, it was the recorder. Then came the hammered dulcimer, the concertina, mandolin, and penny whistle. The beat went on and at 70, why not have a go at the cello? OMG—now she’s toying with the kantele, the Finnish national folk instrument and plays with some others at the Finnish Lutheran Church.



I think you get the idea. Music drives this woman’s every waking moment. She practices or performs every day—mostly Scandinavian music for dancers—and has no vision of letting up any time soon...lucky us, lucky everybody.

Deirdre plays wherever there is a good opportunity and especially when baroque music, her favorite, is

called for. Several times, she has performed for Wider Horizons, the most recent being at the memorial gathering to celebrate the life of **Denise Klein's** husband David Soper at the Central Area Senior Center. She has also performed at the Foss Home in north Seattle, the Leif Erickson Lodge in Ballard, the Cedar Valley Grange in Lynnwood, and the Normanna Hall in Tacoma. Her favorite venue, however, is the monthly pancake breakfast at the Swedish Club in Seattle where adults and children dance with great fervor to the music.

Deirdre's passion for music is skipping a generation. None of her children are musically inclined, though all of her grandchildren are active players, giving her no end of pleasure. She would like to get a folk jam group going for Wider Horizons. Would any of you out there like to join it?

I can't tell you what a thrill it was to talk to someone who is so consumed with a level of passion, excitement, and commitment to an avocation in a way that few of us can imagine. I most certainly don't have it but am so happy to know someone who does.

Democracy Calls for Participation

by Kathi Woods

...and Wider Horizons' members answer. More than 17 members spent the better part of September and October helping volunteers across the country GET OUT THE VOTE. The majority of these worked for *Vote Forward* and *Reclaim Our Vote*. The mission of these two national organizations is to encourage voter registration and voting by people whose voting rights have been suppressed in one way or another. States were targeted where voting lists had been compromised or deleted altogether: Texas, Arizona, North Carolina, and Georgia, to name a few.

Carol Mirman, who volunteered for *Vote Forward*, ended up writing and mailing close to a thousand cards and letters to several targeted states. Across the country, 15 million mailings were elicited by *Vote Forward*. **Ellen Berg, Pat Siggs, Patti Gorman**, and **Dick Knutson** also wrote cards and letters for *Vote Forward*.

In addition to postcard writing, **Maggie Pheasant** is planning on phone banking in the state of Iowa during these last days before November 3rd. **Denise Lishner** helped register voters in Eastern Washington before working on letters and postcards the past few months. **Alline Thurlow** remarked, "It

felt good to be contributing in some way," after finishing her 300 postcards.

Together **Janet Tufts** and **Dave Darragh** finished off 95 letters and 55 cards. Janet said, "mMy arthritic hands are pretty tired but I am very pleased with the effort and so is Dave." **Wendy Carlton** wrote cards for *Momsrising* and **Nora Langan** was involved in getting out the vote with a couple of organizations by sending cards and making calls.

Reclaim Our Vote recruited about seven volunteers to get the word out to voters in targeted states. One of the postcard scripts was in Spanish! **Joan Bergman** did her 200 and then recruited her 14-year-old granddaughter to get into the civic spirit. She finished 30. **Beret** and **Michael Kischner** completed 200 cards; **Nancy Hooyman**, 400, **Sandra Wheeler**, **Chris Morris**, and **Kathi Woods**, 100 each.

Democracy is on the ballot next month and thanks to your friends and neighbors who've stepped up, there may be more voters raising their voices. "Your vote is your voice and your power" (excerpted from thousands of postcards). From the early voter turnout, it appears some of these postcards hit their mark!

Valerie Yockey

by Michael Kischner



Full disclosure: Valerie Yockey has been a close personal friend for 54 years. Our children grew up together from infancy. My wife and I watched Valerie grow into a vocal artist with an admirable career. We remember her excitement at becoming a graduate student in the UW studio of the notable **Leon Lishner**, father of WH Board member **Denise Lishner**. We remember wonderful performances at Bellevue's East Shore Unitarian Church, where she was a soprano soloist under the direction of the nationally recognized composer **Gerard Kechley**.

There were concerts with the Northwest Chamber Orchestra and then with the Kronos Quartet that emerged from that orchestra to national fame. With them Valerie performed many modern works, such as Schoenberg's challenging String Quartet No. 2.

Having perfect pitch helped her master the complexities in contemporary compositions. She gave world premiere performances of several Kechley compositions.

Then Valerie's career took a turn to early music. Her two sons now grown, she moved to Boston to study at the New England Conservatory for three years. She studied historical performance with the renowned John Gibbons and Daniel Pinkham. It also began a period when she appeared with major names in the world of early music—Gibbons, Pinkham, and the Bach Aria Festival of New York.

Back in Seattle, she produced and performed in the Baroque Christmas by Candlelight concerts with Byron Shenkman, Ingrid Matthews, and Margaret Tindemans. She is now on the Board of the outstanding baroque series, Byron Shenkman and Friends.

Valerie is by no means stuck in the Baroque period; there is nothing stuck, or stuck up, about her. When asked about her favorite composers, she names Bach and Schubert. Wider Horizons members have heard her beautiful rendering of the Gershwin's "Summertime." At a private party, I've heard her swing Antonio Carlos Jobim.

For several years, Valerie hosted a classical music program on KUOW and served on the voice faculties at the University of Washington and the Cornish College of the Arts. At least one of the students she taught in her private studio had starring roles at the Metropolitan Opera and the San Francisco Opera.

To speak to Valerie, you would not guess at her breadth of professional achievement. It lies quietly under her modest demeanor and human warmth. That's how it is with many people of high accomplishment.

All the Screen's a Stage for Somesuch

by Michael Kischner

In a May 4 memo to WH members, **Victoria Bestock** wrote, "A great idea has been floated as we face one more month of quarantine. Let's read a play together!" Ten days later, with seven people signed up, Victoria had found a suitable reading script of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, assigned roles, and set a date and time. Victoria, **Allan Blackman, Deirdre Cochran, Michael Kischner, Denise Klein, Liz Ohlson, and Debbie Ward** had a ball trading Wilde's witticisms over Zoom.

The next month, **Denise Lishner** and **Sue Lerner** joined the group to go down the Rabbit Hole in *Alice in Wonderland*. Next, everybody suffered the course of true love in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The players welcomed new member **Peter James**, who Zoomed to stardom as Bottom. In their most recent production, the players (now dubbing themselves Somesuch), joined by **Marianne Scruggs** and **Barbara Wechsler**, wrestled with themselves and each other over whether to send a young man to the electric chair in *Twelve Angry Jurors*.



Denise Lishner as Puck

At press time, they were choosing a play for their fifth production. For this they will be joined by **Misha Berson** (yes, the longtime theater and arts critic of The Seattle Times!). Although there is talk of public performances, so far their readings have been for each other only. This has not pre-vented some cast members from appearing in their onscreen cells in costume.

Many participants in that production would echo what Liz Ohlson said about the whole Somesuch experience so far: "I found myself transported out of

Homeless Haiku - Kathleen O'Connor

Small campfire smoking
Scant branches fewer matches
No home for retreat



my daily life as I've studied and read the plays. Play reading is a great way for me to become immersed in another world."



Peter James as Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Denise Lishner has written of Victoria Bestock's "masterful job of coordinating this delightful group." Victoria proved herself a master of both detail and diplomacy. When there were more roles than actors, double-casting and role-sharing were necessary. Luckily for all of us, Victoria has been able to consult with her daughter, Shana Bestock, who spent six years as the Artistic and Education Director of the Seattle Public Theater.

One thing Victoria has not had to deal with is prima donnas. The typical request is "Give me any role you want." Debbie Ward, who had never been in a play, expressed the spirit of the whole troupe: "I signed up for this as a lark, thinking I would do it only once. It was so much fun that I've now been part of 3 plays. Everyone is very accepting of everyone else. We each have occasional stumbles and our laughter just adds to the spirit of connecting over something entertaining."

There are lots more plays out there and lots more larks to be had. Somesuch may have room for more seekers of their inner Meryl Streep. Contact Victoria Bestock or Denise Klein.



A Mission Moment

Susan Adler opened the October Board meeting with the launch of our Board's first mission moment. In preparing for her remarks, she turned to the organization's core values (recently affirmed at our recent Board retreat. The words, "open hearted giving and receiving" constituted the core value that resonated most directly for Susan as a member of our Wider Horizons community.



As a new widow whose husband died of COVID-10 in mid-July, Susan held up for all to see a sampling of the thoughtful cards she received from more than 25 Wider Horizons members. Given our membership of 90, this outpouring of "open hearted giving" represents a substantial percentage of our membership. She then read selected excerpts— each in their own voice, offering words of comfort and wisdom. Susan received well over 200 cards and notes from across the country but pointed out that the ones from Wider Horizons stood apart because they were based on the memories of members who drew on their own life experience.

Still Laughing

by Dorothy Van Soest

You cried when you told me. We were sitting in the cozily sophisticated home you'd created with cast-off furniture and artwork from your many friends.

"Promise you won't tell," you said through tears. "No one will see me anymore. Just what I forget."

I promised. But we already knew that summer when the four of us, friends as close as sisters, were at the lake cabin. We knew when you couldn't follow the instructions to Bananagram. When you laughed and made up your own rules. We knew when you couldn't figure out which door was the bathroom. We knew when you threw up in the car on the way home.

In the midst of the magic of small things, the potency of everyday life—giggling like schoolgirls, painting each other's toenails, and the smells of tuna fish, lasagna, and pecan pie—your unholy diagnosis hung in the air as loud as a slammed door. Our shared intimacies were filled as always with contradictions like dueling dog barks—insightful, ridiculous, bizarre, irreverent, and hilarious. But that summer,

all the sentimentality of our shared history was shattered by the loss of your last five minutes.

According to the Alzheimer's Association, there are 10 early signs and symptoms. Forgetting recently learned information is one of the most common. Others include having trouble following a conversation, losing things, and being unable to retrace one's steps to find them again, getting easily upset when out of one's comfort zone, and problems with decision-making.

But it was always hard for you to make decisions. Whenever we made plans to go out to eat, you'd call to change the time, or the place, or both. You chose several items on the menu before placing your order, then you'd call the waitress back to change it, and when your food came, you'd point at mine and say, "I should have ordered that." You always forgot things. Lose things, once even a plane ticket. Did you know then and joke to cover it up? All those times I got frustrated or irritated. Did you have early-onset Alzheimer's then and I just didn't understand?

Oh, but you were such fun, the life of the party, witty and clever. I can still see you dancing on the table at one of our university parties. I can still see the twinkle in your eyes when you got us laughing so hard we begged for mercy.

Five years ago your wonderful adult children, who I've known for 44 years, moved you to memory care. You didn't want to go. Didn't understand. I was living in Seattle so was only able to visit you once or twice a year. Each time, even as your disease progressed, you were as funny and alive and sexy as ever. One time, when us four "sisters" were at your favorite church, you whispered in my ear.

"I have a new boyfriend."

"Yeah? What's his name?"

"Tim." You smiled. "And he likes *me* just as much as I like *him*."

After lunch, we brought you back to the memory care unit and you knocked on his door. You called out "are you decent" and then opened the door without waiting for his response. I heard that you slept with him and each morning the aid took you to your own room so Tim's disapproving family wouldn't know. I heard he was a priest. I hope that was true.

During another visit, you pointed to a painting of an elephant on the wall. "The elephants are coming back. The social workers are going to make sure they're freed. It was in the paper." I knew you were

confabulating the recent news about the Ringling Brothers elephants but each time you repeated the story I listened as if it were the first. You thought you were living in the university building where we'd taught together. You talked about students you were concerned about. Whenever there was a problem in the memory care unit, you said you'd get the social workers to fix it.

During my last visit, I noticed that all your dresser drawers were labeled (panties, bras, pajamas) except for the bottom one.

"What's in there," I asked.

The twinkle sparkled your eyes. "Dirty socks."

"Dirty socks? What do you do with them?"

"I take them out."

"And then?"

"I put them on the floor."

"Then what do you do with them?"

Your face lit up. "I. Lick. Them."

Oh my God, you had me rolling on the floor. And you loved it. I treasure that moment—you, outrageously funny as ever, and me, your willing collaborator.

When you died, I felt sad and relieved. I don't know what comes after we die but maybe, in death, we no longer forget things. Maybe, in death, we remember everything. Maybe, in death, it doesn't matter whether we remember or forget.

A few weeks later, I saw you early one morning when I was still in bed, half-awake. You were suspended in space, doing cartwheels and flips and being your outrageous self. And now I know, wherever you and your energy are, that you are still laughing.



Dorothy Van Soest is a Seattle novelist and professor emerita and former dean of the UW School of Social Work. This article was published in the Fall 2020 issue of 3rd Act Magazine, an excellent, wellness-focused publication for those of us trying to age with grace.

<https://www.3rdactmagazine.com/>
www.dorothyvansoest.com

Summer Memories by Members



Gay Hoerler and Charles Heaney's *Barndominium*
Framed in Spring



More Moclips by Nora



and Now (nearly finished)!

Donna Sunkel at the Helm, Then and Now



Donna Sunkel at the Helm in her 20s



Nora Langan Photo from an Escape to Moclips with friend
Ruby (above)



and at her 80th birthday party

**Friends and family celebrating
Donna's 80th birthday this summer
on Sunday, August 9***



Son-in-law Andrew Mambo holding granddaughter Adia while her big sister Adara looks on



Friends and neighbors Phyllis and Dennie Counts



Donna with Adara



**Donna's daughter Tesmer, right
and Blaine Daniels, Donna's niece, left**

Donna and her children daughter Tesmer and son Sennai (not pictured because he was going back and forth from kitchen to guests) carefully planned an outdoor distanced and masked event. Guests were asked to pick a time slot (no more than 4 people at a time). Ah, the joys of summer! We, the guests, stayed on one side of Donna's garden gate, standing or at one of two small tables that were well-separated. But oh, how we missed giving Donna a hug!

**one day before her actual 80th birthday*