

## “Everything’s Closed”

### ***Hello from your Editor-in-Hibernation.***

Ever since I got a link to a little Youtube ditty about self-isolation during the COVID-19 crisis, I have been humming along to it’s cheery tune, which is actually the tune of “Anything Goes.” Here’s the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tS--rtzIXDM>

I don’t need to tell anyone what a world-altering event the pandemic is: I am sure everyone is taking in as much of the news as they can handle. Right now, let’s focus on some of the bright spots:

- **Look for the article on page 3 about our AAUW connection to the new drive-through testing available, and be thankful for that test capability.**
- Be thankful that we cancelled all our Bellingham Branch events in early March, heeding the warnings from the Washington State and Whatcom County health authorities.
- Be thankful we can still enjoy a (solitary) walk outside in our beautiful part of the country.
- Be thankful for email, Skype, Facebook, texting, and all the other ways we can still connect - including the old-fashioned telephone!
- Be thankful for the ways in which we can help beat back the virus, whether it is through donations, a special skill, or like me, just staying home and trying to stay healthy, thereby reducing the load on our heroic health-care workers. That last part, the experts tell us, is highly valuable.
- Be thankful for all the Washington State entrepreneurs who are turning their companies to making medical supplies. I read in the *Times* this morning that WWU grad Louis Gong, an artist, was able to source a large supply of masks, etc., from his business contacts in China.



- Be thankful for the medical professionals and scientists who are working so hard to control this outbreak.
- Be thankful for friends.

And, wear a mask!

*Gwen Parker*  
*Newsletter editor*



**AAUW Scholarship winners: Bellingham Branch members Rebecca Bunn (AAUW/WWU liaison) and India Nishi (AAUW-Bellingham Co-President) represented AAUW at the WWU Scholarship awards dinner on February 10th. From left: Courtney “Hoku”lana Rivera, Rebecca, India, Sylvia Jane Gray, Brielle Lamphere and Kaitlyn Freitas.**

## 2019/2020 AAUW Bellingham Scholarships Awarded

AAUW Bellingham, with the prime mission of supporting education for girls and women, provides scholarship donations to Bellingham Technical College, Northwest Indian College, Western Washington University and Whatcom Community College. The amounts may vary from year to year, but recently we have been able to provide \$1000 each to BTC, NWIC and WCC. The WWU amount varies according to proceeds from the AAUW Bellingham Endowment established at WWU in the 1990s. This year, each WWU student received \$500 per quarter for three quarters of the school year, or \$1500 each from the endowment - a good year!

The following students have been awarded their scholarships for 2019/2020. NWIC has not yet made its selection.

### **Bellingham Technical College**

*Jessica Crook* - Business Management major and Bellingham resident  
Jessica's goal is to expand her dance studio to more locations in the county.

### **Western Washington University** (four scholarships given this year!)

*Brielle Lamphere* - Human Services major and Lynden resident  
Brielle's goal is to ultimately enter law school to become a child advocacy attorney.

*Courtney “Hoku”lana Rivera* - Creative Writing and Cultural Anthropology majors, from Honolulu, HI  
Courtney's goals are to write poetry and to continue her education in anthropology research.

*Kaitlyn Freitas* - Sociology and Psychology majors, from Buckley, WA  
Kaitlyn's goal is to earn a Master's degree in school counseling.

*Sylvia Jane Gray* - Kinesiology/Pre-Healthcare major and Orcas Island resident  
Sylvia's goal is to earn a Master's level Physician's Assistant degree with a focus on emergency medicine.

### **Whatcom Community College**

*Kimberly Johnson* - AAS-T cybersecurity major, from Bellingham  
Kimberly's goal is to earn a university degree in computer science or data analytics.

*Submitted by Carol Simmer, Scholarship/College Relations Chair*

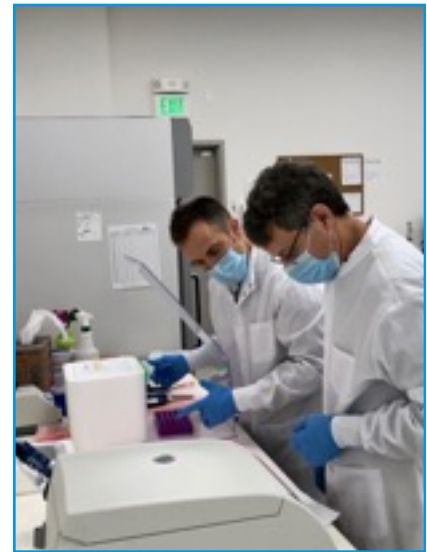
## Bellingham Branch member's son-in-law brings rapid testing for COVID-19 to Whatcom County

*Editor's note: I was so excited about this medical breakthrough in our community that I asked Susan Moen if she would "brag on" her son-in-law Greg Wolgamot for this newsletter. This was written by Susan's daughter Sara Mostad, MD, PhD, who is an infectious disease doctor at St. Joseph Hospital.*

Greg Wolgamot, MD, PhD and Ryan Fortna, MD, PhD are pathologists here in Bellingham, who have applied every fiber of their ingenuity and experience to bring testing for COVID-19 to Whatcom County. They both work at NW Pathology and NW Laboratory. They decided about two weeks ago that they could likely help with the problem of severely limited COVID-19 testing in Washington. Washington was the first state in the US to have a COVID outbreak. Our state is considered a 'hot spot' because of the early outbreak. The testing capacity of both the University of Washington and the Department of Health were rapidly overwhelmed early on. Northwest Lab (NWL) received a supporting letter from Washington State Department of Health to be designated high priority for initial distribution of COVID testing machines (PCR instruments), due to proximity to the rapidly expanding epidemic in Seattle.

Meanwhile here in Bellingham, 80 miles north of Seattle, the epidemic was growing and the hospital was filling with a large number of patients with respiratory symptoms. St. Joseph's Hospital was sending COVID tests to an out-of-state lab contracted by the hospital which was taking 8-10 days to provide results. There was a growing sense of urgency for testing, as all efforts to triage and care for patients, health care workers and the community were severely shackled by lack of ability to test. At one point last week, there were 64 people in the hospital with "pending" tests for COVID. To quote The WHO, "it's like trying to fight a fire blind-folded."

Greg and Ryan have both done PhD's in molecular bench science and have knowledge of and experience with the complex RT-PCR tests. NW Lab also has the input of other pathology colleagues and a highly capable operations crew. They believed they could manage to do the testing in Bellingham, but were not sure how they would get a large enough pool of skilled people run the test. Then one evening when he was out for a run, Greg ran into one of the biology professors from Western Washington University and realized that there were a lot of biology graduate students and lab assistants that were currently out of work while the campus is shuttered. He sent a letter to the WWU Biology Department, and within eight hours had ~20 grad students and lab assistants reply that they were eager to help with the COVID testing. Within 24 hours, they had 31 people from the Biology Department. Over the course of a weekend, they brought them in for orientation, credentialing and HIPAA-training.



**Dr. Ryan Fortna, left, and Dr. Greg Wolgamot**

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## Bellingham testing

*(Continued from Page 3)*

Last week the instruments arrived and over the weekend the lab was able to validate perfect tests against a large number of positive samples sent from the Department of Health. On March 30, they begin large scale testing of patient samples from the hospital, ER, long-term care facilities and local clinics. They did 265 tests the first day and will rapidly ramp up 24/7 testing, ultimately with capacity for 2000 samples per day. They are only the 3rd lab doing testing in Washington State (joining UW and Washington State Department of Health).

During the first 5 days of testing, 1344 patients were screened for COVID-19, 106 were positive. The availability of rapid testing has changed everything for being able to care for patients, health care workers and to help with timely outbreak investigation in the long-term care facilities and other clusters.

Last week, at the peak of testing delays, there were 64 patients in the hospital awaiting COVID results, including some patients on ventilators. Since we have starting testing locally at NWL, that number is now actually down to “zero” patients in the hospital waiting for COVID results. Hospital samples are processed immediately, with results ready in a few hours.



## Masks, anyone?

The CDC is now requesting everyone to wear masks in public, but many of us may not have the capability to sew one. If anyone who has been busy making them has some to spare, please email me, and I will send out an email to all our members, to see if anyone would like one or two.

From that point, members could arrange between themselves how to get them delivered. Maybe other members could serve as couriers - doorstep to doorstep. (I would volunteer for that.)

My email is [parker.gwen@comcast.net](mailto:parker.gwen@comcast.net)

## *Membership matters*

Even though our ordinary lives have become somewhat surreal, there are still things that move along and remind us that we'll eventually get back to something similar to our old reality. One of those is **AAUW membership**, and branch members should be receiving an email from the national AAUW office explaining how to submit annual dues. It will be titled *member info@aauw.org*.

***Please remain with our chapter. The things we do to support women and girls in our community will be more important than ever as our country recovers from the COVID pandemic. Thank you***

## Bellingham Branch has earned its fifth and final star

*Bellingham Branch co-presidents just received the following email:*

Dear AAUW Bellingham Branch,

Congratulations on receiving a star for Programs and Governance & Sustainability in the Five Star. Your letters of recognition and Five Star badge for your website is attached.

The Bellingham branch is officially a Five Star superstar! Your work to achieve Five Star success is a testament to your commitment to advance gender equity for women and girls. We deeply appreciate your support of AAUW's mission and your advocacy in your local community.

Your achievement will be recognized in our next issue of *Membership Matters*. Please stay tuned for more information on how we will be highlighting your branch success story and your online briefing from senior leadership.

Bravo Bellingham Branch!

**Nichia P. McFarlane**

**Engagement Associate, Advancement & Partnerships**



### The current AAUW closure list

Events cancelled include the

- April general meeting/elections
- The Stanwood-Camano April Day Tripper to the Seattle Art Museum
- April Adelante book club meeting.
- The WA/OR joint state meeting
- All 2020 Tech Trek camps nationwide, including those in Washington.
- College food pantry donations, until we start our AAUW meetings again.
- High School Scholars Event

### 2020 Tech Trek camps cancelled

In consultation with AAUW national, it is with a heavy heart that we announce the cancellation of all the 2020 Tech Trek camps nationwide, including those in Washington.

The safety of the girls and our volunteers is the most important consideration right now and always. This COVID-19 situation is ever evolving, but even when stay at home orders are lifted, the risk of contracting coronavirus still will be with us for the foreseeable future. We should expect continued social distancing measures even as shelter-in-place may be lifted.

With the close proximity of campers to each other and volunteers, including the overnight stay required for camps, social distancing will be impossible to effectively implement at camp.

While we are cancelling the 2020 camp, we would like to extend the invitation to all the campers you have already selected to attend one of our camps in 2021.

*Karen Manelis, Program Director, AAUW-WA Tech Trek*

**HAPPY**  
**Birthday**  
**TO YOU**

Cindy Paffumi	April 2
Kathy Jenkis	April 5
Rosemary Hostetler	April 6
Judy Fruhbauer	April 19
Suzanne Thorp	April 21
Sue McDonald	April 24
Liz Wright	April 27
Robin Kagan	April 30

### *Welcome*

Bellingham AAUW offers scholarships and supports numerous programs which help women and girls gain equity in all areas of life.

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