



## Circle of Life — Keeping Seniors Safe and Happy at Home

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## Circle of Life Celebrates Third Anniversary! *Winter 2011-2012*

On January 29, 2009, Circle of Life Caregiver Cooperative was licensed by Washington State Department of Health to begin providing in-home care services in Whatcom County. We held our breath for those first few months, while we got the word out. Then, in April, we got our first four clients. Since then, COL has served 65 clients and provided part-time employment to 33 workers. We hosted two community events under the name *Generation Celebration*, and look forward to hosting another *Generation Celebration* event in 2012.

Circle of Life is proud to have served our friend and client, Alma White, from the beginning. Alma has recently moved to an assisted living facility in Seattle to live closer to her daughters and her son. Our helpful services made it possible for Alma to remain safely in her home. We miss her.

Over the past three years, we have had the inevitable loss of clients that is part of this work. We miss all who have passed away this past year, including Carlene, Harriet, Lester, Lois, Millie, Eleanor, and Florence ("Aunt Kitty"). We are grateful for the opportunity to have been part of their lives.

COL's Annual Meeting will be held Thursday, Feb. 23, 4 to 6 pm, at Cordata Community Food Co-op.

### Annual Meeting Agenda:

- Celebrating three years of success!
- Great food.
- Wonderful people.
- Membership recognition.
- Election of members to 2012 Board of Directors.
- Dividend shares. This is the first year that COL has made enough of a profit to be able to distribute dividends, so that's something to celebrate.
- Celebrating some more, looking forward!



**Circle of Life Board of Directors 2011- 2012**  
Alice Robb (Chair) Kathie English (Secretary/  
Treasurer) Charlene Law (Vice Chair)

### Welcome, New Caregivers

We are happy to welcome three new caregivers to Circle of Life.

Mike Berry comes to us from many years of driving for WTA Specialized Transportation. We appreciate his long-standing concern for seniors. Pamela Holmberg commutes from Skagit County to work for COL. We value her commitment!

Nikki Kilpatrick has been volunteering with COL, helping with our marketing efforts, and we are glad to have her aboard as a caregiver.

### **Circle of Life Mission Statement:**

To provide quality in-home care services, with compassion and respect for our clients, by empowering our caregivers through teamwork and ownership of the business.

## Caregivers and Cooperatives on the National Agenda

### Proposed Rule Extends Minimum Wage and Overtime Protections to Home Care Workers

(WASHINGTON, Dec. 15, 2011 PR Newswire)

The fight to win basic labor protections for home care workers may soon be won, thanks to a proposed rule announced today by President Obama and U.S. Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis. The rule would extend minimum wage and overtime protections to these workers under the federal Fair Labor Standards Act.

Home care workers are currently excluded from minimum wage and overtime protections because they are considered mere "companions," an outdated ruling that fails to account for the health and personal care services they provide to elders and people with disabilities. "Extending minimum wage and overtime protections to home care workers has been the Direct Care Alliance's flagship issue since the Supreme Court ruled against Evelyn Coke," says Leonila Vega, executive director of the Direct Care Alliance (DCA). "We are delighted that the end of this injustice is in sight."

Evelyn Coke was a home care worker who challenged the companionship exemption in court. Her case went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled in 2007 that DOL was acting within its authority in upholding the exemption. "The nearly 2 million in-home care workers across the country should not have to wait a moment longer for a fair wage. They work hard and play by the rules and they should see that work and responsibility rewarded," said President Obama.

#### **Websites for Change**

[www.campaign.coop](http://www.campaign.coop) Download and read about the Cooperative Development Act.  
[www.directcarealliance.org](http://www.directcarealliance.org) The Direct Care Alliance is the national advocacy voice of direct care workers in long-term care.

### Opportunity to Promote Cooperatives Across the Nation

(Deborah Craig, for Community Food Co-op newsletter)

In the face of widespread unemployment and a growing lack of faith in traditional economic systems, many Americans agree that new, innovative, creative solutions are needed to grow a sustainable economy.

One American, Congressman Chaka Fattah (D) of Pennsylvania, sees promoting cooperative business as an answer to the question, "How can we turn this economy around?" In December Representative Fattah will introduce the National Cooperative Development Act of 2011, a bill designed to promote cooperative business development in the United States. Focusing on under-served communities, both urban and rural, the bill would allocate federal funding to promote job creation and economic development of all types and sectors of cooperatives.

In a recent interview in the Cooperative Business Journal, Fattah described the role cooperatives can play in economic development:

*"I think it's an exciting time for co-ops. And as we think about the economic challenges that the country faces, obviously, co-ops provide an opportunity for us to employ more people, to provide better services, whether its food, housing, healthcare, recreation materials and equipment, insurance products, electricity, you name it, co-ops are providing it today and doing it at affordable rates with quality goods and services. So we want to expand that and make sure that the federal government is a friend of the co-op movement and has a welcome sign on the door."*

If passed, the legislation specifically will:

- Provide loans and seed capital to groups who are attempting to form cooperatives;
- Award grants to nonprofit organizations, colleges, and universities so that they can provide technical assistance to operating cooperatives or groups that are attempting to form cooperatives;
- Provide guidance, information on best practices, and technical assistance to communities seeking to establish cooperatives;
- Provide funding for training of providers of technical assistance and supporting existing professional development training for organizations engaged in cooperative development; and
- Establish cooperative development centers in areas that currently do not have them.

## Circle of Life and Whatcom County Senior Centers, a Good Fit

Visit any of Whatcom County's eight Senior Centers and you will find seniors and caregivers.

Senior Centers are not care centers, and do not provide caregiving services, but the meals, classes, and activities offered at the centers make them an excellent resource for our clients and caregivers.

Large senior centers, open weekdays and some weekend hours, are located in Bellingham, Ferndale, Lynden and Blaine. Smaller centers are usually only open one or two days a week and can be found in Everson, Sumas, Welcome and Pt. Roberts.



Flea Market at the Blaine Community Senior Center. Alice Robb and her mom Dolly are at the center of the photo

**Senior Center Phone Numbers:**  
 Bellingham: 360-733-4030  
 Blaine: 360-332-8040  
 Ferndale: 360-384-5113  
 Lynden: 360-354-4501  
 For the other Senior Centers, call  
 Whatcom County Parks: 733-2900



### More News — COL and WA State

Along with national news on co-ops and caregiving, we have plenty going on here at home. Our most exciting news is that in 2011, COL made enough of a profit that the caregivers are going to be receiving modest patronage dividends at our Annual Meeting in February. This is a big step for our co-op.

In the Nov. 2011 election, Washington State passed a referendum requiring increased caregiver training and background checks, so COL will be updating all of our record-keeping and training criteria to meet those requirements. Perhaps we can secure some cooperative development funding assistance for that project.

National Public Radio recently ran a Facebook page asking for comments on the national caregiver issue. There was dismay among those posting. *"How can caregivers make under minimum wage? Isn't minimum wage the law?"* Even in Washington, which has laws favorable to caregivers, there are loopholes for paying caregivers. Caregivers who sleep during overnight shifts are exempt from overtime pay for that week. Also, caregivers can be paid a flat rate for 24 hours shifts, (about \$140 for 24 hours) as they are exempt from being paid *at all* for the eight hours of "sleep time." COL pays workers \$11 or more for all hours serving in clients' homes. We rarely schedule workers over forty hours a week.

## COL Dinners Continue to Build Our Community

On Friday, Oct. 21, Circle of Life Caregivers gathered at Jo Ann's McNerthney's home for dinner and friendly visiting.

The tradition of having seasonal dinner gatherings in the homes of our members continues to be a way that we can get to know one another and build better teams to serve our clients and grow our business.

Alice will be hosting the spring gathering at her home in the county.

### Missing the Boat

Who hasn't had that horrible experience of realizing that you somehow missed an important meeting or appointment? This cartoon helps put those moments into perspective!



This cartoon can be found online. It's from Dan Regan, a cartoonist for Hallmark Cards in Kansas City. Check out more of his cartoons at <http://www.shooboxblog.com/> under Dan R.



## Learning Curve — Help for Hearing Loss

We recently had a training by the **Hearing , Speech and Deafness Center**, a non-profit group that advocates for people with hearing disorders, does trainings for organizations and helps people get assistance for hearing aids and other hearing technology. Here are some of the things we learned at this excellent training:

- One in eight individuals is hard of hearing. Many people try to hide their hearing loss or think they can get by with lip reading. Actually, accurate lip reading takes years of practice and has limitations.
- To better communicate with someone with hearing loss, use hand gestures when speaking. Speak clearly, rather than shouting. Look directly at the person. Emphasize consonants rather than vowels.
- There are many new tools available, such as amplified phones, captioned phones, amplifiers, FM systems, and videophones. Counseling and financial assistance may be of help in getting and using these items.
- People with hearing loss sometimes lose confidence in their ability to communicate and sometimes have a hard time seeking treatment. Hearing loss can be a frustrating condition for elders and their families.
- Many factors, including aging, can contribute to hearing loss – some medications actually damage the cochlea, high fevers can also damage the cochlea. Some environmental factors cause hearing loss.

Contact the Hearing, Speech and Deafness Center for more information and assistance with hearing concerns.  
 Phone: 360.647.0910 Address: 114 West Magnolia St, Suite 106 Website: <http://www.hsdc.org/bellingham>

### Gift Certificate \$200 Caregiving Services

Date: Mom's birthday, Father's Day, Veteran's Day, Aunt Ruth's birthday??

This certificate entitles: MOM, DAD, or AUNT RUTH??

to up to 10 hours of services, tailored to your exact needs and desires, and according to your schedule. Orientation / assessment visit at no charge.

Authorized by Circle of Life Caregiver Co-op Expires 2012

\$200 deposit/retainer fee applied to services used within the designated time. Remainder



*Call our office (360) 647-1537 to get your gift certificate written up today!*



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