“Stilly Valley Center” is the new name for the Stillaguamish Senior Center. The Center has been serving seniors and the Stillaguamish valley community for over 50 years!

The Center’s Board of Directors has been working on a new vision for the Center as it starts its second half century. When the Center first incorporated, the Stillaguamish Tribe did not have its own lands and was not active separate from the Tulalips. With the tribe acquiring lands and building its casino resort, there has been some confusion, many thinking the Center is a tribal senior center. It was also perceived that calling it a senior center created some barriers and confusion.

Over the years the main hall, with its commercial kitchen, has been in high demand for community events. It has recently been redecorated and rentals will continue when people can again gather.

As with many celebrations during the pandemic, the Center postponed its 50th anniversary celebration. The main hall, normally bustling with activity, has largely sat empty for the last 10 months. With vaccines coming available, it is the hope that activities can be resumed in late summer or early fall.

In 1969 the commissioners of Cascade Valley Hospital saw a need to create a place where senior citizens in North Snohomish County could stay active and healthy with less need for the services of the hospital. It put out the idea which was met with enthusiasm by some of the active retirees in the community. An organizational meeting was held, and seniors began meeting in a hall in downtown Arlington in January 1970. The group incorporated in June of 1970 as the Stillaguamish Center. In the fall of 1970, the downtown hall became too small and activities were moved to the Pioneer Hall. With continued growth the Center’s board looked for a place it could build a larger hall.

In August of 1972, with a $55,000 loan from three Arlington banks, secured in...
part with personal guarantees from hospital commissioners and the hospital administrator, the Center purchased the Fir Crest Motel on 3.5 acres north of Smokey Point. With many fundraisers, donated material, and volunteer labor (many of them retired), what is how the main hall was built. The motel units were remodeled for senior housing. The seniors moved into their new home in November of 1973.

In 1974 an additional 2.5 acres were purchased north of the main hall. Additional buildings, funded with Community Development Block Grants, were added to house classrooms, library, board room, and an area to do health screening for seniors. With a perceived need for additional low-income housing for seniors, the first of four apartment’s buildings was constructed on the site in 1978 with funding from HUD. Since then, additional adjacent property was acquired and three more subsidized low-income senior apartment buildings were built in 1989, 1992 and 2006, for a total of 154 apartments.

Funding for the Center over its first decades came from United Way, user fees, bingo, and hall rentals. With the rise of tribal bingo and gambling, and a change in direction by United Way, other sources of revenue had to be examined. When a secondhand store on 3.5 acres just south of the Center came on the market in 1997, it was acquired by the Center. The secondhand store became the Stilly Thrift Store, and it is now an important income source for the Center.

About 50% of the Stilly Valley Center’s revenue comes from grants, individual donations and business sponsorships. Without the generous support of our community, the Center would not be able to provide critical services that our seniors and other community members need.

The Center provides services to help with food insecurity, social activities to limit isolation, programs to help with health and wellness such as the family Caregiver Program, foot care and providing masks and other hygiene supplies to help reduce COVID-19 risk.

Even during the pandemic, the Center has continued to support its residents and members with lunches “to go” Mondays, Tuesday, Thursdays and Fridays from the back of our kitchen for seniors. Its Family Caregiver Program and case management staff are fully operational assisting a caseload of 261 families dealing with the care of a loved one with dementia or other chronic long-term illnesses. The Center is providing a weekly food bank for the residents of its low-income housing and it is operating a medical loan equipment for the community.

The Stilly Thrift Store is open, using Covid-19 protocol Monday through Friday and accepts donations of good used clothing and household items (no furniture) on Monday and Wednesday from 10 AM to 1 PM.

The AARP Tax Assistance Program will soon begin its annual tax service for individuals within our community through its volunteer program. Last year the tax assistance program helped prepare 400 returns, saving seniors in the community almost $700,000 in tax preparation fees.

It is the hope of the Center to have a celebration of 50 years and its new name next fall.
Sometimes we can be so focused on our everyday routine that we forget how important we are in the lives of those in our community. It’s not only our seniors that are impacted by the programs and services we provide, it’s also the children, grandchildren, extended family members, and so many more. Our organization impacts the lives of approximately 4,000 and over 200 volunteers annually.

This time of isolation during our closure has been extremely difficult for those who participate in our programs and services. Our participants have expressed how much our organization means to their lives and they are anxiously awaiting to see their friends and re-engage in our programs and activities.

Research shows that older adults who participate in senior center programs can learn to manage and delay the onset of chronic disease and experience measurable improvements in their physical, social, spiritual, emotional, mental, and economic well-being. Data also shows that compared with their peers, senior center participants have higher levels of health, social interaction, and life satisfaction. Senior centers connect older adults, their families and other individuals to vital community services that can help them stay healthy and independent.

Whenever I have the chance to share with someone about our organization, they are amazed at the multitude of programs and services we provide in addition to our 154 low income Housing apartments, our Thrift Store, Family Caregiver program involving case management, support groups, and more, our Wellness programs, medical loan equipment program, congregate meals, day trips, arts and crafts classes, our Food Room, Food Bank and so much more…..

Please remember to share our story with others, you never know whose life you may impact to make a difference!
Danette Klemens, Executive Director
(360) 653-4551 ext. 230
The history of the Senior Center is one of community and volunteers committed to keeping seniors active by providing health maintenance education and offering occupational and recreational therapeutics. There has been an over 50-year history of meeting, planning, fundraising and expansions to the whole facility.

The first planning meeting was held in December 1969, in the social room of the former Bank of Arlington, now Coastal Community Bank. Approximately 50 seniors were in attendance with Dave Gibson as the organizer.

The Commissioners of Arlington Public Hospital District undertook sponsorship. The commissioners then were Al Remington, Administrator of Cascade Valley Hospital, Bob Williams, Esther Wright, Bill Roal, Scott Claghorn from the Arlington Times, and a Cascade Management Corporation public relations person. The Cascade Management Corporation works with nursing homes and was instrumental in the organization of the Center. These early board members actually gave their personal guarantees for repayment of the loans from three area banks. The area to be served went from Ebey Slough, Marysville to the Skagit County line, including Granite Falls, Darrington and Stanwood. A meeting was held on January 28, 1970 at the old VFW Hall on Olympic Avenue with 33 members present.

Incorporation for the Stillaguamish Senior Center was on June 11, 1970. Dave Gibson and Scott Claghorn secured the Pioneer Hall to house the beginning group, and by fall of 1970, there was a sign on the building.

The first Board of Directors were B.W. Claghorn, Rev. Clyde Bachman, Dave Gibson, Roy Robb and Myrtle Ruckert. Margaret Gibson was the director of the facility, an unpaid position at the time. At the Pioneer Hall, the Center was open three days a week with many classes offered, such as: flower making and arranging, broom handle crochet and hairpin lace, tole painting, Indian bead weaving, square dancing, Bible classes, painting on rocks and driftwood, decoupage, Great Books, practical law, and positive living to name a few.

With the leadership and enthusiasm of Margaret Gibson, the attendance increased. It was soon apparent a larger accommodation was needed, so the search began. The 11-unit Fir Crest Motel was for sale at the current location. A drive for funds was started on Friday, May 26, 1972, with about 150 seniors present, making donations and pledges. Building materials were donated; rummage sales, bake sales, dances, craft sales, auctions and Christmas tree sales were

Our Senior Center History
Committed Community & Volunteers
held. Floats were decorated to collect donations during parades, Kiwanis sponsored a crab feed, and North County Rotary sponsored Deutsch Oktoberfest.

In 1973, with the money raised and a ten-year loan secured to purchase, $15,000 went to remodel the motel units into Evergreen, permanent rentals for seniors.

The construction of the main building began in March 1973. Carpenters were contracted to build the foundation, shell and roof, with the aid of volunteers. The building was about 9,000 square feet, and in two weeks, the concrete slab was finished, and the frame raised.

The first dance and potluck were held in the building on June 3, 1973, before the roof was even finished. An Advisory Council was developed with 21 members to give time, finance advice and suggest projects.

In 1974 more land was purchased and three more buildings were constructed for arts and crafts, health clinic, library, social room and photography rooms. Bingo became a major fund raiser with games on Tuesday afternoons and Friday nights. Roy Kinney managed the bingo operation for several years.

In 1975, the Housing and Urban Development Department approved a loan to build a federally subsidized complex to house low-income seniors and disabled persons. The 41-unit complex was started in July 1979 and completed and occupied by July 1980.

In 1989, another building with 42 units was started and completed, then in 1992 financing for another 40 apartment units was obtained. The low-cost housing is very much needed, as there is always a waiting list.

The next and final building was opened in 2006, named The Gardens. At this time, the Center has 153 apartments available for seniors and disabled with limited incomes. The Evergreen units were demolished and sold to a private company to build units next to the Center. This sale provided funding to the Center, and payments are continuing to be received. The Stilly Thrift Store property was purchased in 1997 and provides a significant source of income for the Center.

The Family Caregiver Program was started in 2008 to provide support to those in our community caring for others; at first 20 clients, then increasing to 100 clients. This program is funded by Snohomish County and Medicaid, and more staff has been hired for case management. The Center rents the space to this program.

While the past 50 years has been fruitful in meeting the needs of the seniors in our community, the next 50 years will bring more programs and changes. The name change to the Stilly Valley Center opens the way to reach more people and provide a greater variety of resources.

The Center has been a hub of activity with events, services and volunteers to serve our community for another 50 years.
Happy New Year!

Boy how I wish we could have had the Center’s 50th Anniversary celebration this past summer. Like the postponed 2020 summer Olympics, we will have a celebration in 2021! It will probably be in the fall after most of us have been vaccinated.

Although the main hall has sat empty since last March, our staff has done a great job at adapting and continuing to provide services, particularly to the 161 seniors that live in our apartments. Our Board of Directors has continued to function with work on a strategic plan for the start of next half century.

In October, the Board submitted a change in our name to the members for a vote. It was approved overwhelmingly, and we are now the Stilly Valley Center! Although our name was changed to end confusion with the Stillaguamish Tribe, our mission remains the same! Like the previous 50 years, we will continue to serve seniors and the community. It is a place for you to stay active and stay healthy!

Our Executive Director, Danette, other staff members, and Board members are always looking for new programs. Tell us what you would like to see in the way of activities and programs. We are here for you!

Our contact information can be found elsewhere in this newsletter.

I look forward to welcoming you all back to the main hall in a few months which, by the way, has been redecorated. It looks great!

Stay healthy!

Dave Duskin, President
dave.duskin@comcast.net
Annexation Update

By Fire Chief Dave Kraski

The City of Arlington is asking voters to annex its fire department to North County Regional Fire Authority (NCRFA) on the February 9, 2021 Special Election ballot. The purpose of annexing is to protect the quality and level of emergency services that our community requires.

Annexation also would result in the City lowering its general property tax levy, repealing the EMS Levy and eliminating the Ambulance Utility Fee. Instead, property owners would pay a dedicated fire and EMS Levy directly to NCRFA. The City would retain some property tax revenue for services the community wants such as police, parks/trails, roads and community facilities.

Annexation would take effect in August 2021 with property owners seeing the change to their tax statements in 2022. Based on the most current data for home values, 54% of City homeowners would save money or pay the same for emergency services; 28% would see an increase up to $5 per month/$60 per year; and, 18% would see an increase greater than $5 per month.

If annexation is unsuccessful, the City would have to double the Ambulance Utility Fee paid by all utility customers from $15 to $30 a month and increase the EMS levy. This would be necessary to prevent emergency service level cuts in the future.

Arlington would still have fire stations in the City,

STILLY VALLEY CENTER
Serving seniors for over 50

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