

Free County Publications Proliferate

by Jim Kjeldsen and Bill McCallum

In 2004 and 2006, *Whatcom Watch* published articles by news junkie Alan Rhodes about free publications available to readers in Whatcom County. Listed on the Currently Available Periodicals sidebar are 42 publications, one more than counted by Alan Rhodes in 2004.

The difference between 2004 and the present is the almost total disappearance of publications from outside the area (see the Publications No Longer Available sidebar on page 11). There are even more free editions available if you count lightly distributed publications from Vancouver, British Columbia (*The New Agora*); Corvallis, Oregon (*In Good Tilt*); Berkeley, California (*Slingshot*); Lake Stevens, Washington (*The Reel News*); Kennewick, Washington (*You Decides*) and Taiwan (*Macroview Weekly*).

For one thing, all the talk of a paperless society has gone by the wayside. There's more paper around than ever before, and the tablet computer boom has begun to wane, indicating that people don't want to spend their lives tethered to an electronic instrument. Books are suddenly cool again, and paper is good.

That's the good news. The bad news is that some of the publications available back then have bit the dust. In 2004, Alan Rhodes listed 10 of his favorite publications. By 2006, six of them had died. Since then, however, only one on his list has come to an end. Most of the rest continue to be mainstays of local news and entertainment. One of the biggies 10 years ago, *The Bellingham Herald*, has continued to wither on the vine thanks to the natural ossification of omnibus publications, which include newspapers. *The Herald's* stepchild, its Take 5 entertainment tabloid, continues

Jim Kjeldsen recently moved to Minnesota. Bill McCallum is responsible for the Whatcom Watch layout.

Currently Available Periodicals

Weekly

Cascadia Weekly
The Northern Light
Take 5
The Western Front
Western Weekend

Twice per month

Tidbits of Whatcom County

Monthly

The Bellingham Business Journal
The Betty Pages
El Periódico
Grow Northwest
Entertainment News NW
The Northwest Horse Source
Squol Quol
What's Up

Six times per year

Northwest Retirement Magazine
Pickford Film Center
Prime Time

Quarterly

Adventures NW
Bellingham Families
The Chuckanut Reader
Emergence
Fish Tales
In Season
Inside
Inside Schools
Klipsun
Leisure Guide
Mount Baker Experience
Port News
3rd Act Magazine
Whatcom Conservation News
Whatcom Magazine

Annual

Natural Choice Network
Waterside
Whatcom Health
Whatcom Weddings

Irregular

Co-op News.....eight times per year
Conservation Northwestthree times per year
The Horizontwelve times per school year
The Planetthree times per year
Vibrant Senior Options.....two times per year
Whatcom Watcheleven times per year

to hold its own, however.

Following the rules that Rhodes set up in 2006, *Whatcom Watch* has produced a new list of free publications. His rules include:

- The newspaper or magazine must be free to all. (This means that *The Bellingham Herald* can't be counted, but its free publications can.)
- To be in the Top 14 the publication must be available at a wide assortment of venues: grocery stores, cafes, espresso bars, etc.
- It must be a publication that has editorial content, not just advertising. (The one exception is the *Leisure Guide*. The *Echo* has been removed because it no longer has editorial articles just comments by the editor.)
- The publisher must be located in the Whatcom County.

We fudged a bit on the last one, instead counting publications that are targeted to Whatcom County or centered around its cultural life. A great many of the publications are printed outside the area.

Bellingham and Whatcom County remain a great place to be a reader, because the new list of 42 publications is an increase of 13 local ones over 2004. Meanwhile, it isn't just free publications that have proliferated. Free book libraries have popped up in front yards all over the county offering books to anyone who stops by, and the Bellingham Public Library's free-books section in the basement has become the equivalent of a town library all by itself.

There are a lot more free reads around today than there were 10 years ago, likely due in part to a backlash over electronic gear. Instead of paper disappearing, just the opposite has occurred. There's more to read now than ever before.

Rating the quality of local publications is necessarily subjective. The following, listed in alphabetical order, is an attempt to be comprehensive. Note that we found no conservative print publications in Whatcom County; they have all migrated to the Internet.

Top 14

Adventures NW

Quarterly. A slick magazine published in Bellingham with lots of advertisements. The Autumn 2016 edition is all about grizzly bears, especially the ones at Bella Coola, B.C. An Internet search reveals that one or two of those grizzlies might have slipped below the border into Whatcom County at some point, but don't expect to see one on the Yellow Aster Butte Trail. This magazine is oriented toward young people as well as those who get a vicarious thrill from reading about Cascadia gear.

The Bellingham Business Journal

Monthly. The Internet address BBJToday.com is at the top of the paper above the name. Rather

than railing against hippie constituencies, it embraces them with stories on such things as a new Bellingham pet company that focuses on "pure products" like 100-percent-beef dog food. It has a section on building permits and bankruptcies so you can see what your neighbors are up to. It used to cost money, but now it's free.

The Betty Pages

Monthly. Motto: Cascadia's most inclusive lifestyle entertainment tabloid. Betty Desire is the proprietor. The focus is lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender life — pride breakfasts, rainbow picnics, a page devoted to astrology and one on GLBT organizations. Does India's queer cinema have a big following in Whatcom County? The publication makes you feel good whether you're gay or not.

Cascadia Weekly

Weekly. Motto: reporting from the heart of Cascadia, Whatcom, Skagit and Island counties. This is the third local publication produced by Tim Johnson. He started *The Every Other Weekly* in 1997; the final issue was dated Nov. 27, 2002. He went into partnership with Doug Tolchin, and the first issue of *The Bellingham Weekly* was dated April 24, 2003. When the partnership dissolved, Tim Johnson started the *Cascadia Weekly* in March 2006, and was forced to change the name of his weekly column from The Skinny to The Gristle. The Gristle is a must read for liberals. The cartoons alone are worth picking it up. The Fuzz Buzz column rips off *The Northern Light* for a warmly humorous look at domestic violence and petty thievery, but that's incidental. "A

couple came in to report to the Blaine police that their cat was attacked by a coyote early that morning." The cops called Fish and Wildlife.

Entertainment News NW

Monthly. Motto: What, When & Where in the Pacific Northwest. This slick and professional glossy monthly explores entertainment, music and benefits around the region. It's kid-friendly and has excellent listings of events around the county that runs nine or 10 pages without ads. It does it without a terrific amount of advertising. This one alone can keep you hooked up to happenings for weeks on end.

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Grow Northwest

Monthly. Motto: Serving our northwest corner. Owned by the publishers of *What's Up*. Contains articles on local food, farms, gardening, crafts, events and resources plus a color photo centerfold of local life.

Klipsun

Quarterly. An independent student publication of Western Washington University. Has been published in different forms since 1920, became a magazine in 1967. In recent years, it has decreased the number of issues from six per year to five and currently is four in order to increase quality. Each issue has a theme; the Winter 2017 issue is Forward. The editor-in-chief defines forward as "... what it means to look toward the future." There are emotionally involving first person accounts by students on deciding to have an abortion, another on surgery for skin cancer, a student with an intellectual disability, a female student missing most of one arm and one on an adopted Chinese-American. It also has more traditional articles about the Lightcatcher building, the waterfront redevelopment project and cameras on drones.

The Northern Light

Weekly. This community news-

paper for Blaine and Birch Bay comes full circle with the same name as Whatcom County's original publication, *The Northern Light* from the Gold Rush days. The letters and Police Reports column are perhaps the most entertaining things in the entire newspaper.

The Planet

Three times per year. A student publication of Huxley College of the Environment. It started in 1979 as a publication of the Associated Students Environmental Center and became a Huxley publication in 1993. Each issue of the award-winning publication has a theme; the latest one is politics. There are articles on climate change warning labels on gas pumps in British Columbia, using moss to pinpoint sources of heavy metal air pollution, the Pacific Northwest Trail from Montana to the Washington coast, an attempt to ban the shipping of horses out of the country for slaughter, Initiative 732 on a carbon tax, and the city of Seattle suing Monsanto over PCB contamination in the Duwamish River.

Take 5

Weekly. A *Bellingham Herald* publication. Motto: A guide to good times in Whatcom County, Skagit County, Seattle and British Columbia. Whatever *The Bellingham Herald* does wrong,

this publication makes up for it. It's an interesting compendium of movie reviews, DVD's, music, food and dance. Sometimes the writers even say what they really feel, which is an anomaly for a daily newspaper. It comes inside the paper, which costs, but is also given away free.

The Western Front

Weekly. A publication of Western Washington University. For many decades it was published on Tuesday and Friday, now just Tuesday. While the primary focus is the campus it does cover other items. It covered the County Council recommendation to the state legislature that the legal age for tobacco and vapor products be raise from 18 to 21 and extensive coverage of the city rental registration program and ensuing rental safety inspections.

Whatcom Magazine

Quarterly. A glossy, uplifting *Bellingham Herald* publication. A recent cover article was about where to watch sunsets. There were other articles on Whatcom gardens, the county as a mountain biking mecca, a Lynden bistro, a Fairhaven cocktail lounge and a Ferndale rope manufacturer with 200 employees.

Whatcom Watch

Eleven times per year. Motto: a community forum on government, environment and media. The writ-

ers of this article have a conflict of interest; so Alan Rhodes wrote the following. "If you're looking for easy reading, *Whatcom Watch* is not for you. But if you want penetrating, in-depth discussion and analysis of important, often crucial, environmental and public policy issues, this is the place to go. Among its many valuable features, *Whatcom Watch* does something that you will find in no other local publication: every month it prints the voting record of members of the Bellingham City Council, Whatcom County Council and the Port Commission. You see every item that was voted on and how each person voted. *Whatcom Watch* is also impressive in its willingness to give almost unlimited space to subjects that warrant it. The paper will run an article in serial form for as many issues as it takes to fully inform you."

What's Up!

Monthly. Owned by the publishers of *Grow Northwest*. Thirty-plus pages on the local music scene. It is difficult for a codger to comment on a publication aimed at the under 30 crowd. It contains live show and album reviews, articles on local groups, a monthly pinup with accompanying risqué photo and a multi page calendar shoe-horned around ads. I second what Alan Rhodes said back in 2006 about *What's Up*, "Requirements for readership include at least two tattoos and one body piercing."

All Others

The following were only found at a few locations or are publications by local organizations, public entities or businesses that are made available to the general public. If this article missed your free county publication please send an email to editor@whatcomwatch.org.

Bellingham Families

Quarterly. Motto: A parent's guide to fun with kids in Whatcom County. A *Bellingham Herald* publication. The Winter 2016 issue featured 22 articles. There were articles on options for rainy-day fun with the kids, layer up and head outside, three options for family hiking and where to go for sledding fun.

The Chuckanut Reader

Quarterly. Village Books puts out this 78-page publication. It's chocked full of book reviews that can keep you knowledgeable for an unlimited number of cocktail parties to come. Instead of reading *The New Yorker* for sophisticated banter, you can tuck a *Reader* into your pocket. It's hard to tell if stories like the one on Bellingham Seafest are news or ads, but it probably doesn't make any difference.

Conservation Northwest Quarterly

Three times per year. Published

by Conservation Northwest. A full-color publication printed on 100 percent post-consumer recycled paper. In 1989, Mitch Friedman started the Greater Ecosystem Alliance in Bellingham to protect biological diversity in the north and central Cascades; in 1995 the mission was broadened to include British Columbia and the name changed to the Northwest Ecosystem Alliance; in 2005 the name was changed to Conservation Northwest. No. 100 (Summer 2016) focused on the North Cascades grizzly bears. This is a hard-core environment publication; it doesn't contain anything frivolous.

Co-op News

Eight times per year. A publication of the Community Food Co-op. *In Season* is produced the other four months. A tabloid format

that contains the latest news about the downtown and Cordata stores plus upcoming classes and season-originated recipes.

El Periódico

Monthly. Motto: Whatcom County's first bilingual newspaper. A supplement of the Ferndale Record. Six pages in Spanish and the same six pages in English. Contains many reprints from the Lynden Tribune and the Ferndale Record.

Emergence

Quarterly. First published in May 2014, then sporadically but now claims to be quarterly. For sheer creativity, you'd have to go to Madison, Wis., or Austin, Texas, to find anything that matches *Emergence*. It's a kaleidoscopic mix of whatever interests the editor. The tabloid contains art, cartoons,

commentary and poetry.

Fish Tales

Quarterly. A publication of the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association. A community-based organization celebrating its 25th anniversary that is dedicated to restoring sustainable wild salmon runs in Whatcom County. The publication is primarily about the associations projects and volunteers.

The Horizon

Four issues per quarter/12 issues per school year. The student newspaper of Whatcom Community College. We perused three fall 2016 issues. One was 12 pages and other two were eight pages. There were articles about teaching English to children in China by a woman that doesn't particularly like children or plan to have any of her own, freedom of speech, the Salish Sea and studying abroad. Distribution of the paper is very limited, the latest issue is available in the Bellingham library newspaper rack.

In Season

Quarterly. A Community Food Co-op publication. The *Co-op News* is produced the other eight months. A magazine format with a glossy cover. Content is similar to the *Co-op News*. The Autumn 2016 issue has articles on a local meat cooperative, local sheep shearers



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Continued from previous page and slave-free chocolate bars.

Inside

Quarterly. Whatcom Museum publication. A 16-20 page tabloid about exhibitions and programs at the Lightcatcher building and the Old City Hall.

Inside Schools

Quarterly. Bellingham Public School District publication. Mailed to homes and also available with free publications. Eight pages on what is happening in the school district.

Leisure Guide

Quarterly. A publication of Bellingham Parks and Recreation Department. While this periodical doesn't include editorial material it contains over 40 pages of advertising for educational and recreational activities. Recently added color, upgraded from newsprint to a higher grade paper and from tabloid to magazine format.

Mount Baker Experience

Quarterly. Motto: "Adventures in the Pacific Northwest." Produced by the Point Roberts Press, publisher of *The Northern Night*. A tabloid-sized glossy. The ads alone are worth the wade, featuring the latest in gear, food and cars. However, the stories are serious, written by people who really have climbed mountains and gone on endurance bicycle rides.

Natural Choice Network

Annual. Motto: online, on print and on air. Formerly known as the *Natural Choice Directory*. Publisher is located in Bellevue but Whatcom County businesses are listed in the publication. The 120 pages are divided into four sections: Green Living-eco-friendly socially responsible products and services; Natural Health-natural healthcare, fitness and bodywork; Food and Supplements-restaurants, co-ops and markets, herbs and supplements; Mind and Spirit-schools, bookstores, counselors, spiritual resources, yoga and meditation. Initially impressive until I noticed that like *Vibrant Senior Options* a significant portion of the listing are businesses that advertise.

The Northwest Horse Source

Monthly. Motto: Your all breed, all discipline educational resource. Publisher located in Blaine, distributed in six western states. Generic articles about horses; the only local attention is advertising and upcoming events.

Northwest Retirement Magazine

Six times per year. Motto: Redefining Retirement in the 21st Century. Previous called *Pacific Northwest Retirement*. Has local articles and ads but the mailing address is Henserson, Nevada. This publication may be in violation of our rule that publishers must be located in Whatcom County.

Publications No Longer Available

The following publications were listed by Alan Rhodes in his two 2004 articles, to our knowledge the local ones are no longer published. If we're wrong about any of these, please let us know at editor@whatcomwatch.org. Publications listed outside the area may still be published just not distributed in Whatcom County. The Come and Gone listings are publications that started and ended distribution since 2006, an incomplete list.

Local Publications

Birthing Bellingham
Destination Northwest..... Lynden
Fairhaven Free Press Bellingham
Foothills Gazette Lynden
Fourth Corner View Bellingham
Grass Roots Bellingham
Idiom Quarterly Bellingham
Northwest Events Lynden
Northwest Sun Bellingham
Organic Press Bow
The Town Crier Bellingham
Whatcom Independent Bellingham

Outside the Area

Computer User Oregon
Computer Source Seattle
The Discorder British Columbia
Diversity News Bellevue
European Weekly Seattle
Evergreen Monthly Seattle
Northwest AMP La Conner
Northwest City Sports Oregon
Northwest Family News Seattle
Northwest Garden News Seattle
Seattle Weekly Seattle
Skratch California
The Stranger Seattle
Talk of the Town Ohio
Voice of Choice Marysville

Come and Gone

Bellingham on Tap Bellingham
Bellingham Muse Bellingham
Health Today Bellingham
New Spirit Journal Monroe
360 Mount Vernon

Most of the articles read like a press release; human interest is not one of the hallmarks.

Pickford Film Center

Six times per year. This tabloid deals mostly with film reviews, but if you're a movie junkie you've got to get your fix somewhere, so this is a great place. The layout is good and the copy is interesting, plus you can go see the movies if you want.

Port News

Quarterly. Port of Bellingham publication. Recently, the port has collaborated with the city of Bellingham and state Department of Ecology and issued a joint publication. The *Port News* has not been discontinued.

Prime Time

Six times per year. Motto: A guide to making the most of your and your loved one's golden years. A

Bellingham Herald publication. The featured article is about retirees Jane and Terry Brooks doing fine without a car; the rest are brief one-page articles.

Squol Quol

Monthly. Official publication of the Lummi Nation. While the Lummi Nation is the primary focus it also covers national issues. Two of the four articles on the front page of a recent issue are about Standing Rock. Limited distribution in Bellingham but the downtown library has current and back issues.

3rd Act Magazine

Quarterly. Motto: Aging with Confidence. One of the very few publications from outside the area. The publisher is located in Brinnon, near Bremerton. There is a coupon for four free issues mailed to your home with no obligation. Winter 2017 is the fourth issue. It has 24

articles and columns on 64 pages. There are articles on the lost art of letter writing, decluttering your life, retirement investments, writing your own obituary, going on a cruise by yourself and one on a robotic seal to stimulate interaction by people with dementia. They are all well-written articles with a positive message.

Tidbits of Whatcom County

Twice per month. Motto: The Neatest Little Paper Ever Read. A franchise publication. National text with local advertising. Most of the advertising is for Lynden businesses. Lots of generic columns with titles like senior news, trivia newsfront, celebrity extra, sports quiz, Bible trivia, healthbits, petbits and birdbits.

Vibrant Senior Options

Twice a year. Motto: Resource magazine — Health, Housing, and Happenings. Publisher located in Burlington; distributed in Whatcom, Skagit, Island and San Juan counties. Lots of tables that point you to ads on home support, fitness, memory care, affordable housing (none in Whatcom County) health and wellness plus pet care.

Waterside

Annual. Motto: Discover the best of costal Washington and British Columbia. One hundred pages of entertaining things to do and places to go produced by the Point Roberts Press, publisher of *The Northern Night*. This slick, glossy magazine is full of whale-watching tours, great hikes and a description of Fairhaven as "technically part of Bellingham." It does have its own allure.

Western Weekend

Weekly. A *Western Front* publication. Each issue has a theme. Growing in size since it started in the spring of 2016, the alumni issue was 16 pages. The thrifty issue has a two-page spread on second hand savings, an article on the Wise Buys store and another on The Friends of the Library used book sale. Includes a calendar of weekend events. Non-students may find some of the articles interesting.

Whatcom Conservation News

Quarterly. A Whatcom Conservation District publication. Registered voters in Whatcom County elect a board member yearly. Lots of soil-amendment news, farming for clean water and alpacas can be PC.

Whatcom Health

Annual. A *Bellingham Herald* publication. Has been published for 11 years. The latest issue has articles on teeth cleaning, care for sore feet, sleep disorders, the challenges of diagnosing a rare disease, an eight-page medical directory, plus lots and lots of local medical ads.

Whatcom Weddings

Annual. A *Bellingham Herald* publication. A recent issue has profiles of 10 local weddings, plus articles on wedding photography, flowers, music, planning and catering. **W**

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