



Heart to Heart



Mended Hearts Bellingham WA Chapter 382 January – February, 2026
2022 Western Region Newsletter of the Year



*From Our Chapter President,
Dianna Konrad*

2025 Was a Good Year for Our Chapter.

As a new year begins, we tend to look back at the previous year to remind ourselves of what we have accomplished and then decide what we want to achieve in the next year. For our Mended Hearts chapter, 2025 was an outstanding year of accomplishments and I would like to share some of our successes with you.

Our organization's primary goal is to support heart patients and their families in our community by giving hope and encouragement. We do this through a wide variety of visits and through educational speakers at our monthly meetings. Last year we had more than 2,600 visits with patients and their families, up from 1,700 in 2024.

More than 530 people attended our monthly meetings. In our efforts to educate our membership and guests, we covered topics that taught us how to ask the right questions before a medical procedure. We learned what it's like to be a nurse who works on a medical helicopter, we learned how to age better, and what we can do to help prevent dementia. We learned about men's heart health and how a perfusionist, operating a heart bypass machine, keeps our heart safe during open heart surgery. We also enjoyed a picnic and a holiday potluck together.

We collaborated with St. Joseph's to reach out to heart patients who could become new hospital visitors. Through this campaign we added ten newly certified hospital volunteers. This allowed us to increase the number of visits in the Fireside Room and the hospital by 185% over the second half of the year.

We added a new chapter officer and new board members. We welcomed Deenie Berry as our new secretary. Deenie also conducted the Mended Hearts Inc., training course for our new volunteers. Gene and Jan Knutson joined as our Membership Co-Chairs. All three are a tremendous addition to our chapter's management team.

We also enjoyed seeing two national awards presented in our chapter. Tammy Longstaff was named The Mended Hearts Inc. Volunteer of the Year and PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center was named Hospital of the Year for the second time since 2018.

I think we can agree we had a great 2025. Thank you for being part of it. We are on to 2026 where we will count on you to continue to be an active part of our chapter. Give us your opinions and suggestions. Consider volunteering somewhere in our chapter. Help us make 2026 an even better, more successful year.

We Exceeded our Goal for Toys for Tots



There were more happy children in our county this holiday because of your generosity. Our goal was \$500, but we collected \$650. Colonel Wes Weston, USMC Ret., who manages the program in Bellingham said more than 5,000 local children received a gift this holiday. Thank you on behalf of all the children.



Dianna Konrad presented our donation to Colonel Weston. The shelves on the right were filled three times with gifts that were distributed to children by various authorized groups in our county.

Upcoming Mended Hearts Chapter Meetings

All future meetings will be held on the second Saturday of the month.

Saturday, January 10, 2026, 10:00 AM, PT



St. Joseph Medical Center Foundation
Community Donations at Work For You

Amber Asbjornsen

Chief Philanthropy Officer Northwest Network
St. Joseph Medical Center Foundation

The next time you have cardiovascular imaging, visit the ER, or watch our new hospital wing being built, you can thank the Foundation for their role. The foundation team works with grateful patients and family members and granting organizations to ensure the best possible care is here in Whatcom County. Come to our meeting and you will be amazed to learn all the ways the foundation helps support you and our community every day.

Saturday, February 14, 2026, 10:00 AM, PT

The Institute for Nursing Excellence
Nurses are the Heart of Exceptional Care

Carrie Kronberg

Professional Practice Leader, MN, RN CCRN, NPD-BC
St. Joseph Medical Center Institute for Nursing Excellence



The Institute for Nursing Excellence (INE) is dedicated to empowering nurses with the resources they need to thrive, deliver exceptional care, and shape nursing practice locally and nationally. We will highlight the simulation center at INE, where nurses gain hands-on simulation training designed to strengthen a wide range of skills- ultimately improving patient outcomes. Join us to see how INE makes this possible! Experience life-like, anatomically accurate models and learn how interprofessional collaboration elevates care. Don't miss this opportunity to see innovation in action!

The meetings will be held at the Health Education Center (HEC)
3333 Squalicum Parkway, Bellingham, WA

You can join us on Zoom at: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84468535997>
or to live stream on YouTube, tap on "Live", then search *MH Chapter 382 Bham*

Our Own Educational Show and Tell in November



Caitlin Bassett, chief of perfusion at St. Josephs, showed us parts of the heart-lung machine she operates that protects your vital organs during open heart surgery. We had an added bonus of being able to see some of the equipment firsthand and she was kind enough to stay late to let us ask lots of questions. One of our guests was scheduled for open heart surgery the next week and was especially grateful and more relieved by all the information. You can see Caitlin's presentation by clicking here.

https://youtu.be/_cQx4PMwqQ

Caitlin Bessett (L) receiving our speakers thank you gift from Dianna Konrad, chapter president

Our Young Mended Hearts (YMH) group offers an opportunity for young heart patients (young adult to 55) and their families to meet. It is an informal environment where we focus on what it's like to be young and living with heart disease. Our next meetings are:

Wednesday, January 28, 2026 at 6:00 P.M. PT

Wednesday, February 25, 2026 at 6:00 P.M. PT

We meet at St. Joseph Medical Center, 2901 Squalicum Parkway, Bellingham, in the Physicians Dining Room. Be sure to use the new entrance at the East Tower during the hospital expansion.

Interested in joining our group? Contact Dianna at dmk9@sbcglobal.net. Meeting reminders and Zoom links are sent the weekend before each meeting. Follow us on Facebook at **Young Mended Hearts of Northwest Washington**.

News From Around the Chapter

In October, Accredited Visitor Certificates of Completion were presented to our new hospital volunteers. (L) to (R) Nanci Zander, Gene Knutson, Jan Knutson, Erin Kingery and Bel Stratton. Other new volunteers from this class not in attendance were Dan and Sue Steelquist, Deenie Berry, and Mark McBride. Our volunteers are already becoming well known around the Fireside Room and hospital for the good work they do for our heart patients and their families. Our sincere thanks and congratulations to each of you.

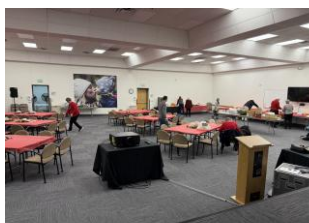


Spotlight on a Member



For Linda Butler, Mended Hearts and its monthly educational meetings are serious business. The reason she always comes is because she wants more information about heart health especially after having a heart attack two years ago.

Linda was born in Puyallup, WA. She worked at a variety of things during her life, ultimately earning her nursing degree. Determination is what is so special about Linda. Since she doesn't drive, she uses WTA to get to and from our meetings, so she has to make a special effort to join us. Still, she rarely misses a meeting. Linda is a very special example of the kind of people who become part of our Mended Hearts chapter, and we are so glad she is one of us.



Fifty people joined us for our holiday potluck. It was a record number! How did we prepare for it? You can see it in our pictures above. Board members, some family members, and many of our volunteers arrived early to set the tables in place and set up the holiday pictures to accompany the music. All the tables were beautifully decorated and the food people brought was carefully arranged on long tables. Special thanks to everyone who volunteered and brought food. We hope everyone who attended had as much fun as we did preparing for it.

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*Young Mended Hearts

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Young Mended Hearts

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Follow Young Mended Hearts on Facebook at:
Young Mended Hearts of Northwest Washington

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