# EMPOWER

The Arc's mission is to improve the quality of life, increase the independence and assure the full inclusion in the community of all persons with developmental disabilities

February 2025





6 - 8pm Tuesday, February 18

All About Housing Virtual Workshop



Families are welcome and encouraged to join us virtually to learn about housing options for their Loved One. Learn about Partners4Housing and how to access your free Benefits and Housing Review. Partners4Housings goal is to help you answer three critical questions:

- What does my Loved One need to live outside our family home?
- Who will they live with?
- How do we afford it?

Bring your questions and connect with other local families and professionals.

Registration Required: *https://tinyurl.com/4manp8v5* 

Learn more: arcwhatcom.org/partners4housing/

Questions? Email parentcoalition@ arcwhatcom.org or call 360-715-0170

The Arc of Whatcom County supports ALL families, regardless of their situation. We promise to never ask or assume age, ancestry, color, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity or expression, genetic information, HIV/AIDS status, military status, national origin, pregnancy, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status

We are committed to providing a warm and welcoming space for our staff and the families we support, a place where everyone belongs. We have always been and always will be a safe place for those raising or caring for someone with a disability.

We do not collect information for immigration purposes, nor will we do that. Your information is not for sale and is safe with us.

Your civil rights and liberties matter to us. Our goal is simple: we want to provide all families and individuals with connections to resources and services they need to feel empowered, encouraged, and supported.

Our Washington State Constitution ensures access to a basic education for every child residing within our state's borders. Our Constitution does not identify citizenship as a qualification to receive an education.

- https://waisn.org/deportation-defense-hotline-flyer/
- https://lcycwa.org/resources/immigration
- https://www.ilrc.org/

A newsletter by The Arc's Parent Coalition & Parent to Parent of Whatcom County

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# **Parent Coalition**

SAVETHE         DATE			
	FEBRUARY 5TH 10:00-11:30 AM VIRTUAL   <u>REGISTER HERE</u> LIVE CRSA (COMMUNITY RESIDENTIAL SERVICES ASSOCIATION) @ 12:00 PM	ACV Supported Living	OCACY DAYS 2025 How can I have a safe, affordable, inclusive place to live?
Prest Citis	FEBRUARY 12TH 10:00-11:30 AM   VIRTUAL   <u>REGISTER HERE</u>	Crisis	Why are so many people in crisis?
Terring a Job & a Life	FEBRUARY 19TH 10:00-11:30 AM   VIRTUAL   <u>REGISTER HERE</u> LIVE CEA (COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT ALLIANCE) @ 1:00 PM	Employment & Community Inclusion	How do we ensure that individuals have the adequate supports and individualized services needed to work and build relationships in the community?
Participation of the second se	FEBRUARY 26TH 10:00-11:30 AM <b> </b> VIRTUAL <b>  <u>REGISTER HERE</u></b>	Education	What is needed to ensure every student has an inclusive education?
	MARCH 5TH 10:00-11:30 AM   VIRTUAL   <u>REGISTER HERE</u> SAIL (SELF- ADVOCATES IN LEADERSHIP) RALLY @ 1:00	Community Living	What are the community and housing supports and services I need in order to live successfully in the community?
<b>TEAT</b>	MARCH 12TH 10:00-11:30 AM   VIRTUAL   <u>REGISTER HERE</u>	Social Engagement	How do we create welcoming communities and prevent social isolation?
Working the lines for the	MARCH 19TH 10:00-11:30 AM   VIRTUAL   <u>REGISTER HERE</u>	Workforce	How do we ensure there is a quality workforce available to care for our loved ones?
Budgett	MARCH 26TH 10:00-11:30 AM   VIRTUAL   <u>REGISTER HERE</u>	Budget	What can you do now?
		For more informe	ntion on Advondov Dave visit:

# MORE INFORMATION

For more information on Advocacy Days visit: <a href="mailto:arcwa.org/advocacy/advocacy-days/">arcwa.org/advocacy/advocacy-days/</a>

SPONSORED BY THE ADVOCACY PARTNERSHIP PROJECT

Need Paperwork & Application Support from Arc Staff Members? 11am - 1pm, 2nd Wednesday of every month, February 12, March 12 The Arc of Whatcom County, 2602 McLeod Rd., Bellingham

We will be supporting families with filling out Partners4Housing Residential Assessment, Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) Eligibility, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Guardianship Packet. We may not have time to complete all your paperwork, but this is a great opportunity to have support looking over where to start. No RSVP necessary.

# **Parent to Parent**

# **Monthly Parent Connect**

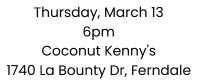
#### 7 - 8pm, Monday, February 10 Virtual Meeting via Zoom

This is a meeting for parents and caregivers of children with developmental delays, disabilities, and ongoing health care needs. Register: p2p@ arcwhatcom.org After registering you will receive an email containing the Zoom link.



PARENT TO PARENT

Parent to Parent of Whatcom County
DADS SOCIAL





**Helping Parent Training** 

Are you the parent/caregiver of a child with developmental disabilities or complex healthcare needs? Are you ready to help others COPE and GROW?

Helping Parent Training Wednesday, February 19 12 noon to 2 pm The Arc of Whatcom County, 2602 McLeod Road, Bellingham

As parents of children with disabilities we have access to so many professionals and resources. However, sometimes the best support and information comes not from the professionals but from other parents who have walked a similar path. The Helping Parent training is for parents and caregivers of children with developmental disabilities. This training explores your personal experiences of raising your child and teaches strategies for how to support other families who on a similar journey.

Our training will include:

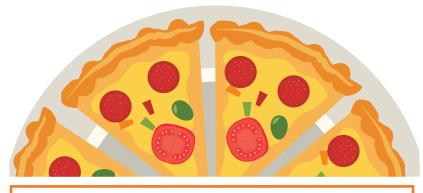
- P2P Services & Helping Parent Role
  - Grief Process
  - Communication
  - How to Support Another Parent

Please RSVP by Friday, February 14. For questions or to RSVP please contact the P2P office at (360) 715-0170 ext 302 or p2p@arcwhatcom.org

#### Coffee & Conversation February 3, March 3 10am - 11am The Arc of Whatcom County 2602 McLeod Rd., Bellingham

Parents and Caregivers of loved ones with developmental delays, disabilities, and ongoing healthcare needs are welcome to join us for coffee (or tea) and a relaxed and friendly chat. Meet other caregivers in our community, find out new resources, and share your thoughts, insights, triumphs and experience. Adults only please! Light refreshments provided. Join Parent to Parent's Dads Social. For fathers raising loved ones with developmental disabilities and chronic healthcare needs. A chance to be able to meet and talk with other dads that are dealing with similar issues and enjoy free wonderful pizza.

Please RSVP so we can get a heads up on how many people will be there. For questions or to register contact P2P at (360) 715-0170 ext 302 or p2p@arcwhatcom.org





Travelers with non-visible disabilities such as autism, PTSD, or hearing loss can pick up Invisible Disabilities Sunflower lanyards at SEA. The Sunflower lanyard communicates that passengers wearing it may need extra help while traveling. Request a free lanyard at the info desks pre-security between Checkpoint 3 and Checkpoint 4 and post security on Concourse A.

https://www.portseattle.org/blog/sunflower-lanyardprogram-grows-disability-awareness

#### Our Journey with Anna



La familia Zarza: Héctor, Brandon, Bryan, Anna y Eunice

Dear Friends, we are the Zarza family and want to tell you about our journey with our daughter Anna. She is eight years old and has autism. It's important to share that when she was diagnosed nearly four years ago, our lives changed a full 360 degrees. We experienced the grief cycle as a family. We are five in total; Anna has two older brothers who are 16 and 14 years, although they were little and didn't understand entirely what we were going through. It was difficult for them because often we were so stressed by the situation, seeking out therapies and dealing with waiting lists to receive support for Anna that we were quite worn out.

The impact of this situation resulted in us feeling alone and that no one understood what we were experiencing. We imagined that people would see our daughter differently and that she would feel other people's indifference. One big change was that we stopped doing activities where there were a lot of people present, or activities that were very loud.

We lived through different stages; the acceptance stage was vital to help our daughter. Each family is different. We took action and became advocates for Anna, fighting for her rights at school, searching for important supports for her. At that moment, our life was like a teeter totter. It's important that as caregivers or caregiving families we have a space where we can express our feelings or let go of our stress, and something that helped the rest of our family was to start seeing things like Anna sees them. She is a girl who does not converse, but she managed to infect us with calmness through the appreciation that she feels for nature in general. She simply told us with her smile that everything would be fine, and we just focused on what kept her occupied. So we decided to enjoy my daughter when it was possible. We discovered that going camping and being in touch with nature helped us clear everything and seeing our three children playing the same, in that case swimming, walking, and eating sweets was the connection our hearts needed. We gained results from these activities because then we decided that Anna would learn how to swim. Also, for her to have enjoyment in the places that the boys like to visit, we tried to go during the week and therefore avoid the weekend crowds of people, and up until now, this has worked well. Since Anna enjoys camping, the trips we set out on become enjoyable. Her favorite places are Winthrop and Wenatchee.

Anna needs caregiving, since for example she runs off if no one holds her hand when we go walking. She doesn't recognize the danger in front of her. At school she needs a paraeducator by her side the entire time, and she still uses diapers. All of us in our family are trained to tend to her needs. Her brothers love her with all their heart, protect her, and teach her things as well. There are also some people who have been crucial for Anna's ongoing progress; our friends from church and her teachers are part of her journey as well. It's important to communicate with them so that Anna's progress is reflected. Each school year we develop a letter for Anna's new teacher so that she gets to know her strengths and also her needs which will need support. We call the letter "A little about myself." It helps a lot because the teacher can get a better idea of how to support my daughter with this process.

Friends, I know that we all have endless experiences to share, and it would be wonderful if we could all listen and realize we're not alone on this journey. What we have gleaned from this stage of life is that bringing up our daughter with autism means enjoying every moment. She progresses very slowly, but every step forward by her is like scaling a mountain and, simply put, extraordinary. Anna enjoys dancing, singing, painting, the solar system, and truly her memory is outstanding. This takes us to a loving and honest place, because Anna follows our steps, and we want those to be steps that take her far in life according to her abilities.

I say farewell to you by sharing that being Anna's parents is the best thing that has happened to us. She's teaching us to appreciate life and to respect her. Having a disability doesn't limit you. We fight so that our children live in a healthy environment, and we teach others that being different is okay. Build your Self-Advocacy & Leadership Skills. These meetings empower individuals to develop advocacy and leadership skills and set lifetime goals for employment, independence and community involvement.

# **Self-Advocacy Group Meetings**

## Thursday, February 6, 4:30-6:30pm

### What is Self-Advocacy?

Develop and build your self-advocacy, self-confidence, and self-awareness skills. Join us virtually for this meeting on zoom.





## Thursday, March 6, 4:30-6:30pm

## **Believing in Yourself**

Build your self-confidence, self-love, and self-esteem. We'll look at what self-esteem is, why it's important for a selfadvocate, and how to build yours up.

# Thursday, April 3, 4:30-6:30pm

## **Social Connections**

Social engagement boosts well-being, happiness, and support. Please join us for a fun and friendly discussion on zoom.



The virtual meetings are on zoom. After registering you will receive an e-mail containing the link for you to join the Self-Advocacy Meeting. For more questions or information call (360) 715-0170. Pre-registration is REQUIRED to get the link. Must be able to connect through a cell phone, tablet or computer. Register at: SelfAdvocacy@arcwhatcom.org







Sponsored by The Arc of Whatcom County with funding from the Whatcom County Developmental Disabilities Program





IRS Ruling on Difficulty of Care Tax Exemptions

https://informingfamilies.org/irs-personal-care/?fbclid=IwY2xjawIEs7FleHRuA2FlbQIxMAABHSuMSRDEKHz Xk2pwllKTTw3xZWo1eEF\_IzSmuj8T5E9Ax6rnF4GN2Ml0mg\_aem\_V8RGRzGLwXhWQe7k95PA4w

8 Tax Tips for People With Disabilities (and Their Caregivers)

https://money.usnews.com/money/personal-finance/articles/2017-02-15/8-tax-tips-for-people-with-disabilitiesand-their-caregivers?src=usn\_fb

National Disability Institute has numerous resources about free tax preparation services for people with disabilities, low-income individuals and families and the elderly, including the IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program:

https://www.nationaldisabilityinstitute.org/financial-wellness/taxes/free-tax-prep-for-people-with-disabilities/

Disability and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/individuals/earned-income-tax-credit/disability-and-the-earned-income-tax-credit-eitc

Northwest Access Fund offers financial products and services designed to meet the unique needs of people with disabilities and seniors in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho.

https://www.nwaccessfund.org/

BenefitU.org is your go-to website to navigate your benefits with confidence. Our mission is to give you the tools to make informed decisions so you can take control of your benefits and your future.

https://benefitu.org/

Down syndrome Outreach

#### **Global Down Syndrome Foundation**

Start the year off right with the medical care resources you need for better health and wellbeing. Whether you prefer a print or digital version, we've got you covered. The new GLOBAL Medical Care Guidelines for Adults with Down Syndrome (GLOBAL Adult Guideline) provide first in-kind, evidence-based medical recommendations to support clinicians in their care of adults with Down syndrome and was supported by generous donations from the Down syndrome community

EXCITING NEWS: GLOBAL ADULT GUIDELINE NOW AVAILABLE IN SPANISH, ITALIAN, ALBANIAN, SWAHILI & JAPANESE!

https://www.globaldownsyndrome.org/



#### Down syndrome Outreach's Mom's Night Out

#### 6:30 - 9pm, Friday, February 21st Beehive Studio 1207 Ellsworth Street

Come have fun with fellow DsO mom's (adult sisters also welcome)! Relax, connect and make some art!

Everyone will have the option to make clay aromatherapy diffusers, aromatherapy misters (bottles), and explore the studio. We'll have a mixed-media art bar open for people to make cards to go with the aromatherapy gifts.

The Beehive is upstairs at the BUF, Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship. (Not affiliated)

RSVP is needed so we have supplies for everyone. dso@arcwhatcom.org



**Recreational Opportunities** 

# Learning Coach Occupational Therapy Presents **Fitness & Recreation for Self-Mastery**

Therapeutic coaching for youth and young adults

#### Did you know...?

- Resistance training increases bodily awareness and self-confidence,
- Cardiovascular exercise can increase alertness and coordination,
- Sports activities increase balance, concentration, and working memory!





Learning Coach Occupational Therapy offers individualized coaching for youth and young adults with disabilities to discover and practice their favorite fitness and recreation activities.

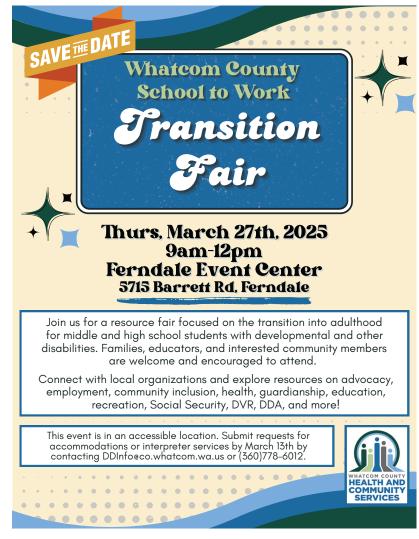


Learning Coach LLC LearningCoachWA.com Bellingham, WA 360-207-4560

Learning Coach is an in-network provider for Molina, United, Community Health Plan of Washington, Regence, Premera, Cigna, Coordinated Care, and First Choice. Clients with other coverage can request an Insurance Verification Form to check for coverage.









#### We're Listening: Share Your Vision for a Better Future

The Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council wants to hear from you! Share your thoughts, concerns, and ideas about the challenges and barriers faced by people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families in Washington State.

Your feedback will help shape the Council's priorities for the next five years. Let's work together to build a more inclusive and supportive community!

Complete the survey today:



# **Transition Resources**



**Choose Your Path:** Get help at home and in your community. Scroll through page by page or click an icon to take you where you want to go. *https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/documents/22-2023.pdf* 



students (18-22) newly available in Whatcom County.

DPCOMING DATES: FEBRUARY 25-27, 2025 TIME SLOTS AVAILABLE: BETWEEN 12-6:30PM



Meetings will take place at the student's school and will be guided by a trained Person-Centered Planning Facilitator. This process helps an individual and their network of support examine their strengths, talents, and goals. We'll work together on next steps, focusing on work opportunities, community inclusion, and anything else that supports a happy, meaningful life.

Contact DDInfo@co.whatcom.wa.us.gov or 360-778-6012 today with any questions or to get on the schedule.



Person-Centered Planning brings together people in your life to create a vision for your future, with action steps to reach your goals. It's a positive, community-building experience that creates space to dream and think of ways to turn possibilities into reality.



When does high school transition begin? What do goals look like and what do parents need to think about? When it comes to planning for life after high school, there's a lot to think about.

- A Star Form to help identify supports to reach a student's transition goals.
- Tips for transition planning and goal setting.
- Transition timeline of things to do from age 14-21.
- Transition checklist of skills, activities, and services when creating your child's high school transition plan for his/her IEP.
- Ways to gain job skills during high school.
- Resources for post-secondary education.

https://informingfamilies.org/topic/ high-school-transition/ **Informing Families** 



# Ready, Set, KNOW...

# Your Child's IEP and You

## An Individualized Education

**Program (IEP)** drives your child's educational instruction and ensures that they have equal access to the same educational opportunities as every other student.

As a member of the IEP team, you are your child's best advocate, making sure that the proper supports are in place to work toward learning goals that are meaningful and educationally appropriate.

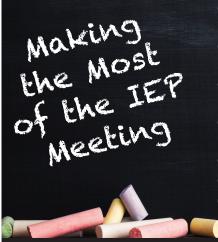
It's not always easy, but there are steps you can take to ensure that your child's educational needs are being met in a way that reflects their individual strengths, needs and priorities for learning.

#### **Get Organized**

Documents, doctors reports, IEPs, and other papers will grow over the years, so be sure to keep them filed and organized so that you know right where to look for what you need, when you need it.

#### **Document Changes**

Keep a written record of the specific things you notice with your child that cause you concern—such as new



behaviors—and any solutions you might have that relate to your child's IEP.

### **Communicate in Writing**

Poor communication and unclear expectations can create big issues down the road. Sending a letter of understanding after a meeting is one way to avoid these misunderstandings.

For day-to-day information sharing, some parents send a notebook to school, with notes and information that's helpful to school staff, such as something new that's happened at home. School staff can then send notes back as needed.

#### **Get Help**

If you've agreed to a program that's not having the results you'd hoped for, and the school district doesn't want to change its approach, it's a good idea to ask for outside help.

**Parent-to-Parent and PAVE** can connect you with parents and advocates in your area who can help:

Parent to Parent: 800-821-5927; arcwa.org/getsupport.

PAVE: 800-5-PARENT; wapave.org.

The Office of Education Ombuds provides conflict resolution: <u>oeo.wa.gov</u>.



"Think about your hopes and dreams for your child... Instead of maybe going in with 10 or 15 goals, really focus on two to three things that are really important to you. And remember, it's a relationship you're developing with the staff." Betsy M.

"What kids do at home is not always happening at school. Get the school to see what your child can do at home, things they can do and are interested in."

Liz M.



- Send your ideas to the IEP team ahead of the meeting to help shape the discussion and draft the plan.
- Use positive language. Focus on on what will help your child work toward their goals.
- Include the student as a meaningful participant in their IEP, life goal setting, career planning and decision-making.
- Be sure to include work-related goals in your child's IEP. If it's not in writing, it won't happen.
- ⊙ Bring another family member, friend, or advocate to the IEP meeting.
- Work at building a good relationship with all members of the IEP team.
- Remember that this is a marathon, not a sprint. Keep your eyes on your and your child's long-term vision for the future.

A Service of the Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council. For more information, visit: www.informingfamilies.org

# Staff & Board of Directors

The Arc of Whatcom County provides leadership support for individuals with developmental disabilities and their parents/guardians. The goal of the Parent Coalition is to enable persons with developmental disabilities and their parents/ guardians to become effective and involved in accessing services.

#### Arc of Whatcom County Staff:

Executive Director: Beverly Porter Assistant Director: Rhonda Rische GIDES Family Advocate: Barbara Roxas Asst Inclusion Advocate: Terri Hansen Family Advocate: Laura Kaptinski Parent to Parent & Self Advocate Coordinator: Karlene Umbaugh P2P Parent Assistant & Parent Coalition Co-Coordinator: Melissa Abraham Padres a Padres: Marta Mejia, Alina Zollfrank Office Manager: Hilary Scheibner

## **Board of Directors:**

Missy Bartell – President Ken Larson -Vice President Susan Jewell – Treasurer Sam Hogan – Secretary Dale Whipple – Director Ellie Posel – Director Margaret Jahn – Director Melanie Hartley – Director Frances Chalmers – Director

The Parent Coalition is funded by grants from the Developmental Disabilities Program of Whatcom County, the United Way and your generous donations.





Our office is open to the public Monday through Thursday, 10am - 1pm if you would like to browse our Lending Library or are in need of resources. Staff are also available by appointment outside of those times. Please call 360-715-0170 if you are needing any assistance and would like to connect with a staff member.

Staff are available every Thursday from 11am - 12pm via Zoom for Open Office Hours. No RSVP needed.

#### https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86909304702 Meeting ID: 869 0930 4702

Staff will be available to help with resources, support, information, and connection We will not have a password to join, but participants will be in a waiting room, until we admit you.

> The Arc of Whatcom County Dan Godwin Community Center 2602 McLeod Rd Bellingham, WA 98225-1368

Phone: (360) 715-0170 Fax: (360) 715-8522

Email: admin@arcwhatcom.orgTo see a list of staff positions and extensions, visit: *http://arcwhatcom.org/about-the-arc/staff/* 

# FEBRUARY

3 Monday 10 - 11am Coffee and Conversation

5 Wednesday, 10 -11:30am Virtual Adovcacy Day: Supported Living

6 Thursday, 11am -12pm Open Office Hours

6 Thursdsay, 4:30 - 6:30pm Self - Advocacy Meeting

10 Monday, 7 - 8pm Virtual Parent Connect

12 Wednesday, 10 -11:30am Virtual Adovcacy Day: Families in Crisis

12 Wednesday, 11am - 1pm Paperwork Application Support

13 Thursday, 11am - 12pm Open Office Hours

18 Tuesday, 6 - 8pm All About Housing Workshop more info on page 1

19 Wednesday, 10 -11:30am Virtual Adovcacy Day: Employment & Community Inclusion

19 Helping Parent Training 12 - 2pm

20 Thursday, 11am - 12pm Open Office Hours

26 Wednesday, 6 - 7:30pm Board of Directors Meeting arcwhatcom.org/aboutthearc/board-of-directors/ 27 Thursday, 11am - 12pm Open Office Hours

# MARCH

3 Monday 10 - 11am Coffee and Conversation

6 Thursday, 11am -12pm Open Office Hours

6 Thursdsay, 4:30 - 6:30pm Self - Advocacy Meeting

10 Monday, 7 - 8pm Virtual Parent Connect

12 Wednesday, 11am - 1pm Paperwork Application Support

13 Thursday, 11am - 12pm Open Office Hours

13 Thursday, 6pm Dads Social

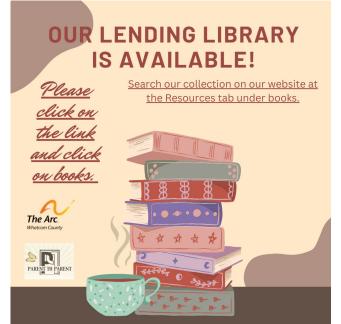
20 Thursday, 11am - 12pm Open Office Hours

26 Wednesday, 6 - 7:30pm Board of Directors Meeting more info at: arcwhatcom.org/aboutthearc/board-of-directors/

27 Thursday, 9am - 12pm Transition Fair Ferndale Event Center 5715 Barrett Road, Ferndale

27 Thursday, 11am - 12pm Open Office Hours





# STAY CONNECTED





www.facebook.com/ArcWhatcom

www.facebook.com/ ParenttoParentWhatcom

www.facebook.com/ WhatcomCountySelfAdvocacy

www.facebook.com/ DownsyndromeOutreach

Follow our Instagram @arc\_whatcom

Find resources, information and more at: *www.arcwhatcom.org*