

THE YORKER

SEPTEMBER 2025



FROM THE YORK NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION—BRINGING THE YORK COMMUNITY TOGETHER

The York & Sehome Neighborhoods' **ANNUAL PICNIC** **SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 6!** **4 TO 7PM**

York and Sehome neighbors!
Come meet, eat, and play!

at Harriet Spanel Park (corner of Whatcom and Grant streets)



★ featuring ★
Live Music: Wild Geese of the West!
Games for Kids
Piñata Smash
Kids' Talent Show—come play your
instrument, sing a song,
do gymnastics, or show your art.



Hempler's hot dogs and beverages will be provided, donated by Nelson's Market.

If you wish, please bring a potluck dish to share: salad, side dish, or dessert.

And bring a chair so you are comfortable!

Local organizations and election candidates are welcome to have a presence at the picnic, whether in the form of a table or booth or just socializing.

jointly hosted by the York Neighborhood Association and the Sehome Neighborhood Association



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Also, the York Neighborhood Association will have snazzy "York"-embroidered bill caps available for sale at the event, for \$25 apiece!



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yorkneighborhood.org/nev



YORK NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

PO Box 2662, Bellingham WA 98227-2662

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President's Corner

By Colin Beazley, YNA President

Living in the York neighborhood offers a unique opportunity to be at the heart of Bellingham's vibrant academic scene—welcome back, students!

As home to many students from **Western Washington University, Bellingham Technical College, or Whatcom Community College**, our community thrives on youthful energy (and sometimes revelry!). Our neighborhood has a shared responsibility to support these students, who are not just temporary residents but **integral members of our community**.

For example, Western pumps over \$500 million into the local economy each year, but they also rely on our community to help shape tomorrow's workforce and leaders. This support means recognizing their diverse needs, from finding affordable and stable housing to ensuring they have access to a quality education that helps them navigate the future.

The York Neighborhood Association recently met with **Chris Roselli**, Director of Community Relations of Western Washington University. Chris discussed significant budget gaps impacting students and staff. Despite the tough decisions, Chris said that Western programming is vibrant and invites neighbors to engage with WWU through the impact students are having—by attending a WWU info session or sporting match or just asking local students what they are up to and fielding career and networking questions. York has open communication with our universities, if there is ever anything positive or constructive a neighbor wants to pass along to me.

But it does not stop with secondary education, as our **primary education system** is core to any thriving community.



The dedication of educators at every level—from preschool to higher education—is what makes this possible. As we plan for our next newsletter in the fall, **we want to shine a light on these amazing individuals**. We

will be featuring educators of all types, sharing their stories and celebrating their commitment. If you are an educator, we would love to hear from you! Please reach out to president@yorkneighborhood.org so we can highlight your invaluable work.

Finally, don't forget to mark your calendars! The annual **York Summer Picnic** is just around the corner, happening on Saturday, September 6 from 4–7pm; **Wild Geese of the West** will join us once again, and **all are welcome, whether you live in York or not!** We can't wait to see you there!



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York's yards came alive for the Yard Crawl

At the end of July, York neighbors crisscrossed the 'hood in numbers to check out the happenings at nearly 50 **York Yard Crawl** sites, from Meador to Edwards and from Franklin to James streets. The variety was great—music, arts and crafts, food and drink, kids' activities, and just good-ol' parties, along with eleven yard sales.

June Hathaway, who started the Yard Crawl in 2018, says "As a York resident since 2012, I love this neighborhood! It's packed full of classic turn-of-the-century homes, tree-lined streets, friendly kitties, and creative, involved people. Some folks live here for decades, and some just for a semester, but we can all take part in the York Yard Crawl, whether by showing art, selling stuff, making music, or just moseying through and taking in all the cool stuff our neighborhood has to offer."



*It was all caftans, frizzy red wigs, and smiles galore as the **Roper Romp** spilled out from its Iron Street base and flooded York with Helen Ropers!*



Another successful Dumpster Day!

June 28th saw the 47th Annual **Dumpster Day**, in which York neighbors volunteered in collaboration to clean up our streets of abandoned junk as well as to get rid of no-longer-needed items of their own. Longtime "Dumpster Queen" **Carolyn Mulder** and YNA Board member **Erin Vonnahme** spearheaded the effort, overseeing a fleet of trucks combing the neighborhood to retrieve items and keeping order at the dumpster itself... which, this year, was filled up by **9:30 am**—a new record!

Erin reports: "We had the help of far more volunteers than made it into the

picture. Together, we combed the nooks and crannies of the neighborhood to gather a ton of large trash for responsible disposal. Neighbors also donated hygiene items for our friends affected by the fire that scorched apartments on James Street earlier in the month. The trashiest day in the York is always one of the best!"

As always, thank you to **Sanitary Services Company (SSC)**, **Republic Services**, and **Nelson's Market** for their enduring support of Dumpster Day. We'll see you in June 2026!

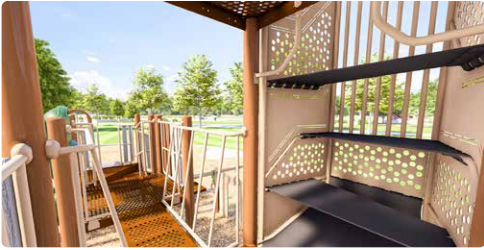


Rock Hill Park Refresh design nears the finish line

By YNA Board member Kevin Cussen

The long-planned playground refresh at **Rock Hill Park** is entering its final design stretch, with design finalization slated for August 2025. Since last year, neighbors have been lending their voices through York Neighborhood Association-hosted meetings and surveys, helping shape everything from play features to accessibility. That community input has been central to ensuring the redesign feels like it truly belongs to York—balancing safety, inclusivity, and plenty of room for fun.

So what's actually coming? The new play area will sit just south of the Iron Street entrance on the upper portion of the park, apart from the existing lower-section playground, and will be significantly larger. Highlights include a two-story spiral tube slide, climbing structures, swings, stepping stones, and smaller play structures designed with both older and younger kids in mind. The play zone will be partially enclosed by a new retaining wall and ADA-compliant limestone walkway, with a safety surface of engineered wood fiber (a.k.a. playground-grade wood chips). New amenities will also make the space more welcoming for everyone: a drinking fountain with taps for both people and pets, a bike rack, and seating. Importantly, the refresh protects longtime park favorites like the sledding hill, rock outcrop, and open space for pets.



Here's what the final stretch looks like for the refresh. The design phase wraps up in August, followed by permitting from August through February. Bidding and contracting will run January through March 2026, with construction breaking ground in March and carrying through

the summer. That puts the playground on track to reopen by late summer 2026—just in time for families to break it in before school starts. The YNA is already thinking about ways to christen the playground opening with a celebration, so stay tuned for more information there!

Ideas, questions, or comments? Send them to rockhillrefresh@gmail.com.



If these walls could talk...

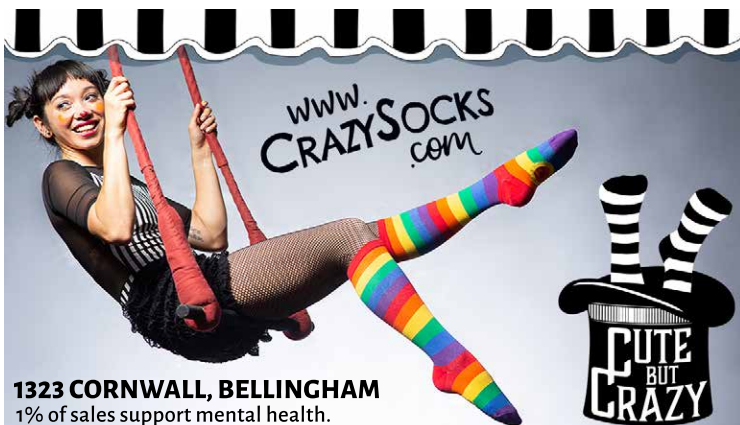
You'll probably have noticed some large-scale painting going on at the I-5/Lakeway underpass recently, near the southeast corner of Rock Hill Park. The organization responsible for the mural is **Paper Whale**, a Bellingham-based placemaking agency.

A 22-year York Neighborhood resident, **Nick Hartrich**, runs the organization, and he and his team have been busy curating and creating public art, sensory experiences, and marquee events across the community for the last three years.



This mural is intended to be a key cultural invitation for visitors entering downtown; one side of the mural will highlight the beautiful mountain landscape in Bellingham/Whatcom County, and the other will highlight the connection to our waterscape. The hope is that this visual representation of the community and its close relationship to the natural world can further connect people.

<https://www.paper-whale.com>



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Todd Kleinbrook • Tom Scott

★ College students: please consider joining us as a student rep! ★

Newsletter Production: Mark Ellis Walker

Find and color all ten!

Hey, kids! Here's a coloring-book page for you to find 10 very Pacific Northwest things in. If you want more copies to color, have your parents download and print this file, or color it digitally: yorkneighborhood.org/augustfinder.png

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| Orca | Leaping Salmon |
| Bicycle | Soaring Seagull |
| Tall Evergreen Tree | Rain Boot |
| Fishing Boat | Mushroom |
| Eagle | Coffee Mug |



Mission Statement of the York Neighborhood Association:

*To reduce isolation among residents;
to enhance the quality of life in a low- and
moderate-income urban neighborhood;
to create a sense of community; to reduce or
prevent crime; and to preserve the historic
character of the neighborhood.*



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Ragfinery moves on

We checked in with beloved York neighborhood nonprofit **Ragfinery** as they are hard at work rebuilding from the December 2024 fire that closed operations at their Forest Street home and destroyed much of their stock. They have now just announced that they will be reopening this year but at a new location: **115 Unity Street Suite 101**, in the same block as the Mount Baker Theatre.

New bridges now open

The James Street and Meador Avenue bridges over Whatcom Creek, at York's north boundary, reopened at the end of June after nearly 14



months of construction. Originally built in 1936 and rebuilt in 1962, both bridges have now been fully replaced (if not quite finished). A pedestrian bridge was added to Meador Avenue in 2011 and will be repurposed for a future Parks and Recreation Department trail project near Squalicum Parkway.

Torhil Ramsay, Communications and Outreach Coordinator for the City's **Public Works Department**, provided these interesting details: "The project involved relocating water and sewer lines to allow for drilling support shafts for the new structures. Stormwater systems were also upgraded for water quality treatment. The completed bridges now feature new bike lanes and sidewalks. The \$8.5 million project was funded by the Federal Local Bridge Program and local Street Funds.

"We appreciate the community's patience during the detours and construction."

And the York community sure appreciates our new bridges! Thank you, Public Works!

Welcoming YWCA families to York

This spring, York neighbors **Judy Hopkinson** and **Kirsti Charlton** got straight to work interacting with YWCA Housing Program Director **Kristy Backer** about how neighbors could help welcome the 19 new families who moved into the newly established **YWCA shelter** at 315 Lakeway Drive. To spread a little joy as a starting project, they organized a group to make Easter baskets for the children; this group of eleven "Easter bunnies," which included five students from **Western Washington University**, topped each basket with a coupon for each child and mom for a free ice cream cone from generous sponsor **Nelson's Market**.



There's currently an email group you can be a part of if you'd like to join in on the effort. Email kirsticharlton@gmail.com for more information.

Kristy reports: "Things are going well here, and we're excited for the summer. Our case managers are scheduling some fun family activities to help with all the free time some kiddos are going to have in the summer and if anyone in the neighborhood knows of something fun going on that is free or has an activity idea they'd like to share, they can email me and I'd love to hear from them. kristy@ywcabellingham.org

"We will be collecting school supplies throughout the summer, so if anyone has things to donate they can drop them off at the shelter. We have had such a generous outpouring of support that a lot of our needs have been filled!"

HOW YOU CAN HELP: Here are a few things on their wish list as of now:

- Chalk • Window paint • Diapers of all sizes • Baby wipes
- New or gently used shoes for kids aged 0–10 years old
(most of our kiddos are 6 or younger)
- New underwear for moms and kids • Fans

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What the Way Station's doing to be a good neighbor

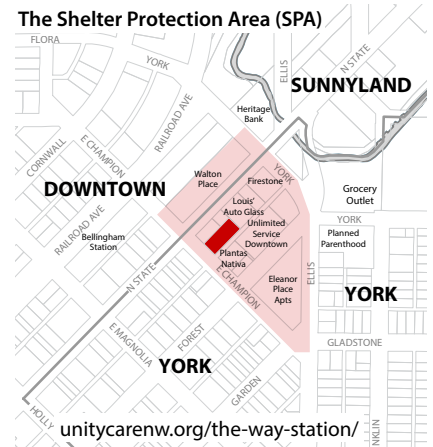
In June, the Way Station's Medical Respite Center began accepting clients at their new facility at 1500 North State Street. This program provides short-term, recovery-focused care for individuals experiencing homelessness who are being discharged from the hospital. Referrals to the Respite Center must come through PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center.

Since opening in November 2024, the Way Station's Health & Hygiene Center has served over 1,000 individuals—surpassing their original first-year goal of 750 in just eight months. This milestone speaks to both the immense community need and the importance of sustained collaboration, resources, and care for our unhoused neighbors.

Clear rules are posted on-site to reinforce appropriate use of the space and ensure the safety and respect of everyone. Staff are also verbally reinforcing these expectations with individuals in and around the area.

Please note that the Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) will engage, triage needs, and attempt to bring people to services but cannot enforce the Shelter Protection Area (SPA) or move people along. That is still a matter for staff at The Way Station and/or the police. HOT also has access to the encampment reports on SeeClickFix and references them regularly to plan their outreach.

To help streamline communication and improve coordination, they now have direct contacts for issues related to the Way Station or the surrounding SPA: **Marisa Schoeppach** (marisa_schoeppach@oppco.org, Medical Respite Center) and **Don Cook** (Don.Cook@ucnw.org, Health & Hygiene Center). Both Marisa and Don are actively engaged in providing services on-site and may not be able to respond to emails immediately; however, contacting them directly will help ensure your concern reaches the appropriate team member more efficiently.



WWU students dealing with inadequate resources should be aware that the university has a **Basic Needs Hub** specifically to help out. They strive to offer a centralized source of assistance, connecting students with the necessary support when they need it most. Whether it's food insecurity, housing concerns, or financial instability, all students are worthy of having their basic needs met.

<https://basicneeds.wwu.edu>

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