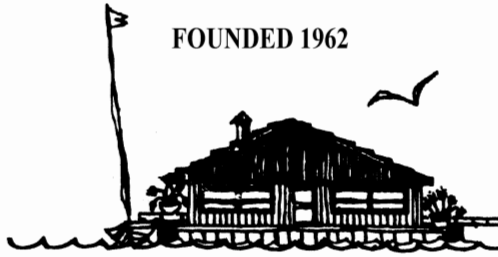


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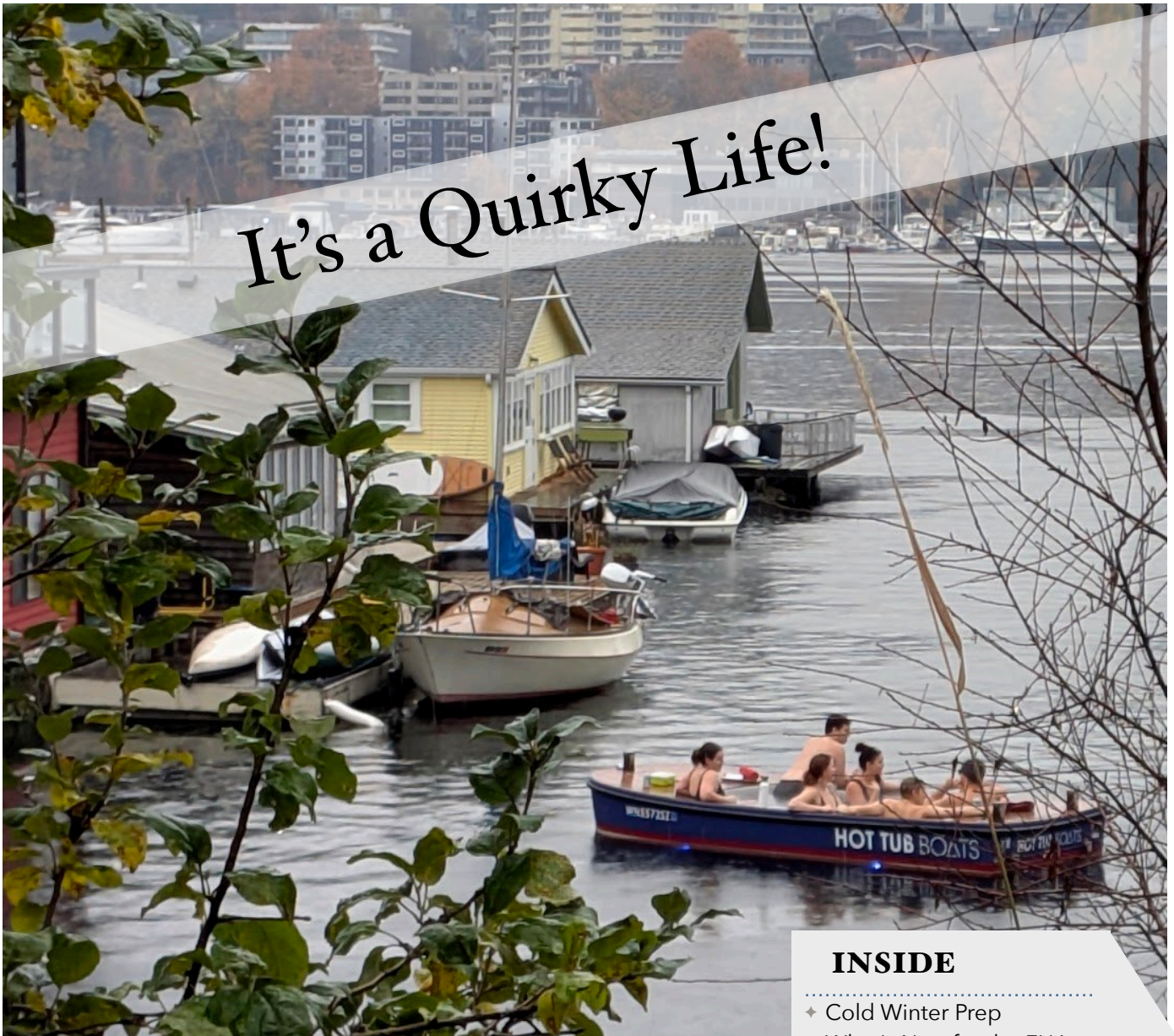
FLOATING HOMES  
ASSOCIATION

Winter 2024

NUMBER 164

News for Seattle's Floating Home Residents plus our friends, neighbors and the floating curious.

# It's a Quirky Life!



*Only in Seattle do swimsuit-clad twenty-somethings steer motorized, steamy tubs that glide past your windows sneaking a peek at what you're watching on TV. Meanwhile, fish swim under your house and a beaver steals a holiday wreath. This is a quirky, warm and colorful life - even in the winter.*

## INSIDE

- ♦ Cold Winter Prep
- ♦ What's Next for the FHA
- ♦ Stressed? We have advice
- ♦ News from the West
- ♦ Thanking Peter & Sarah

# Cold Winter Preparation - by Jason Rungsigul

With the end of the rainy fall season, our community needs to be prepared for the cold winter months. 2024/2025 is a La Niña year with cooler than normal conditions.

Let's stay warm while being safe! Here are some tips and reminders when you're warming up for the holidays:

- ✦ Always keep flames away from structures, have extinguishers ready, and make sure you have working smoke detectors in each bedroom and every home level.
- ✦ Keep electric heaters away from flammable items, use tip-over prevention space heaters, and use GFCI outlets outside.
- ✦ If you do have gas or propane, inspect your equipment and have carbon monoxide detectors near sleeping areas and on every level.
- ✦ Annually have professionals inspect your fireplace, chimney, and flue. Fire safety experts strongly discourage outdoor wood fires and activities with flying embers.
- ✦ Monitor weather, insulate pipes/bibs, and trickle water during freezing periods.
- ✦ If heavy winds or lake level changes are expected - secure outdoor furniture, flower pots, inspect sewer flex hose, and check home balance (did you lose a barrel?).

## **\*\*Emergency 911\*\***

Police Non-Emergency (24/7)  
(206) 625-5011 or FindIt,FixIt app

Fire Non-Emergency  
(206) 386-1400

Seattle Public Utilities (24/7)  
(206) 386-1800

Seattle City Light (24/7)  
(206) 706-0051

Behavioral Health Crisis (24/7)  
(206) 461-3222

Harbor Patrol (24/7)  
(206) 684-4071 or VHF 16

Large Spills (24/7)  
(800) OILS-911

Algae Report  
(206) 477-4800

Animal Control  
(206) 386-7387

Seattle Street Repair (24/7)  
(206) 386-1218



Photo from FHA Archives. Source listed as "Hopkins"

- ✦ Rehearse fire escape plans, use air horns to alert neighbors, locate nearest water hose on dock, know where shutoffs are located, and know landmarks so fire and harbor patrol can easily locate you.

Lastly, be safe when adding/removing holiday decorations! Use this time to inspect and discard any damaged light strands. Remember that real trees can easily catch fire so keep them watered and 3' away from heat sources. Compost your wreaths and trees when you're ready to get rid of them (4' lengths, 4" diameter, no wires).

Hopefully, keeping these tips in mind we can stay safe and prepared.

Jason is head of the FHA  
Office of Safety and Security



As your new Floating Home Association (FHA) President, I'm excited to share the priorities and plans we've been developing for our community over the past few months. Guided by your survey responses, dockside conversations and collaboration with the board, we've identified key initiatives—along with their leads—that align with our mission: celebrating and protecting Seattle's unique floating home community.

# A Stronger Floating Home Community: Our 2025 Preview

by Stafford Green

**Better Environment and Safety:** John Giaever (Office of Environment) is focused the next few months on lake water quality, a priority identified by many of you. John's deep commitment to environmental stewardship over the years is a huge asset to the FHA. Jason Rungsigal (Office of Safety and Security) is reviving this office to enhance safety for all floating home residents. Check out his article on Page 2.

**Fresh, Renewed Advocacy:** Sheri Greaves (Office of Neighborhood and Legislative Relations) brings fresh no-nonsense energy to tackle long-standing challenges by proactively building relationships to address these issues effectively. She and I look forward to the Heads of Dock Leadership Meeting January 15th to discuss dock needs and share ideas in detail.

**A Huge Seattle-wide Community Event:** Melissa Ahlers (Office of Culture) is leading the charge for the 2025 Floating Home Tour, scheduled for Sunday, September 7. This event is a crucial opportunity to showcase our community's history, lifestyle, and contributions to Seattle. Melissa's extensive network and her passion for our community ensure this event will be a highlight for the city and our members. Consider volunteering for this.

**Modernized Communications:** David Boschwitz (Office of Communications and Technology) is leading this new committee's much-needed website and technology refresh. His focus is on creating a platform that fosters connection, provides valuable resources, and adds a touch of creativity and fun. Improvements start next year.

**More Shared Knowledge:** Heidi Eagleton (Office of Legal and Compliance) is developing a comprehensive resource hub to help members navigate floating home building codes and regulations. This will be part of the website refresh. She is a talented former lawyer, architect and contractor, and is perfect for this task.

**Improved Member Service:** Sarah Morlidge is streamlining membership management, ensuring your requests go to the right person promptly. (Read more about Sarah in this newsletter). Megan Sutherland oversees FHA finances, which admittedly is stretched due to recent repairs to Keasler Cottage and the lack of tour income in recent years. However, with the upcoming tour and Megan's financial expertise, we'll soon be in better shape.

**Honored Legacy:** Restoring Keasler Cottage has been a personal, rewarding journey for me. By mid-2025, its foundation, deck, and archives will be fully restored in time for the Tour. Volunteers like Brian Demkowicz, Catherine Major, and FHA Librarian Megan Hall have been digitizing fifty years of photos and documents, which will be accessible to members mid next year, preserving our story for future generations. Without them, these artifacts would have been lost.

**And More Joy please:** Based on your feedback, we're reestablishing the Social Committee to bring back fun, engaging activities. These events will strengthen our community bonds and create more opportunities for connection. Stay tuned for details.



**Your turn - get involved:** We need volunteers. Whether it's writing a newsletter article, taking photos, helping with the Tour, or joining the Social Committee, there's a place for everyone. Email me at [president@seattlefloatinghomes.org](mailto:president@seattlefloatinghomes.org). Volunteers and FHA members don't always need to be floating home residents or owners—just enthusiasts who want to support our vibrant Seattle treasure and enjoy being part of the fun.

# Dedicated Service to our Community by John Giaever

## *Thanking Peter Erickson for his four years of dedicated leadership as FHA President*

At the end of August, Peter Erickson, FHA's president of the last four years retired. Peter and his wife Brigitte Bertschi have been living on a floating home for 50 years and raised two children on the docks. Since the time they first moved to the docks in Eastlake, they have been deeply involved in the floating home community as well as the greater community in Eastlake and Seattle. Brigitte is the founder of the acclaimed Bertschi School on Capitol Hill and Peter, a trained architect and developer, has a long history of developing projects in and around Seattle. They are intimately involved and active supporters of the arts and education in Washington, as well as dedicated swimmers, surfers, and hikers.

Peter joined the FHA board in 2016 when a neighbor asked him to use his experience as a developer to assist the FHA executive committee with issues of governmental agency outreach. Four years later when previous president, John Leness stepped down in 2020, Peter was voted in as president just, as luck would have it, as the COVID epidemic swept the world. Peter found himself having to pivot from in person meetings to now hosting tiny heads on a strange Zoom Application.

Over his tenure, government outreach became more and more significant to FHA. Given the multiple constituencies affecting the floating home community, the FHA had to work within an increasingly sophisticated and complex jurisdictions of the city (SDCI), state (DNR), Shoreline Management Act (SMA), commercial entities, and local neighborhood coalitions surrounding the lake. Not an easy task.

One of his most memorable successes was organizing an initiative to prevent Lake Union from having a dedicated, buoyed, off-limits runway down the center of Lake Union that could have seriously impacted the many recreational users and business operators on the lake. It's the people's lake was the refrain

([www.savelakeunion.com](http://www.savelakeunion.com)). Also, Peter has worked over seven years to curb an effort to prevent City Light of Seattle from imposing an extremely costly proposal to move all electrical meters to the shore. Discussions continue on this complicated topic.



Overriding this important work was the joy spent leading an engaged and dedicated FHA board for many years. Peter will always cherish the personal gratification of being able to give back to a community he loved and one that had nurtured him and his family for over five decades.

Peter hopes no one will ever take for granted our incredible unique lifestyle surrounded by nature in the heart of a cosmopolitan city. The FHA mission advocates for this community and all the wonder that it brings to Seattle's urban waters. Thank you, Peter, for your eight years of dedicated leadership supporting this incredible community!



# The Force Behind the Scenes by Stafford Green

## ***Thanking Sarah Morlidge for Her Lasting Impact on FHA***

Some of the most impactful leaders are those who work quietly, their crucial contributions hidden but deeply felt. Sarah Morlidge is such a leader, whose commitment to the Floating Home Association (FHA) over the years has been simply outstanding.

Growing up in a coastal town near Brighton, UK, Sarah began her career as a systems engineer at IBM in England. She's led a life filled with adventures around the world.

Her eyes sparkle when describing her time in a small fishing village in Quantab, Oman. There she felt a strong sense of community - families living closely together along a sandy beach, fishing together out at sea. With just one hundred homes in the town, everyone knew each other well - many related. Seattle floating homes give Sarah that same eye sparkle. Her first Floating Home Association meeting was by boat to a group of friends working together for a better community. She thought to herself, "This was the place for me."

Melissa Ahlers, VP of the FHA and friend, says she is driven, kind and very qualified. Even "very qualified" is an understatement: she spent a decade teaching technology to students at Chestnut Hill Academy and earned a master's degree in Educational Technology. Her time at IBM built her problem-solving and people skills - all have proven invaluable to our community. During COVID, she stepped up - as she always does - and built the on-line system so the kids could see each other again during the crisis.

Sarah has contributed significantly to fundraising efforts, particularly by cultivating memberships. She spearheaded outreach for events and communication, and is always ready to help an FHA member. With characteristic efficiency, Sarah has recently deep dived into reorganizing the databases, bringing her technical skills to simplify processes, including setting a common membership renewal date for smoother administration. "Technology makes it very easy," she says confidently.

She is a huge fan of the Dock Leadership Meetings, where dock officers share insights and tackle maintenance challenges together, providing invaluable support to members. "Everyone has a nugget of information," she says, emphasizing that pooling resources strengthens the entire community. "It's important to stay connected," Sarah says, "so if an issue arises, we know each other and can mobilize." To anyone considering joining an FHA committee, Sarah's advice is simple: "Do it – don't procrastinate!"

We are deeply grateful for her dedication, expertise, and heart. Sarah embodies values that make her truly exceptional. As her husband Andrew says, "she believes deeply in our unique community, in honesty and the understanding of one another, and giving selflessly without expecting thanks or recognition." Thanks to Sarah's work, the FHA is more organized, more connected, and more prepared to support our unique floating home life.



## Ask Deirdre by Deirdre Cochran

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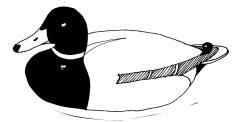
*"I am stressed about the TV news. What can I do to relax?"*

I used to conduct "Critical Incident Stress Debriefings" to help police, fire, and other emergency workers after a particularly difficult experience, to help them find ways to nurture themselves and lower their stress levels. We too need to nurture ourselves first so we have the strength to support whatever actions we want to take. These include—as I'm sure you know but can forget when stressed—eating healthy foods, and watching out for sugar, alcohol, internet, TV, and other mindless time sinks. Sleep enough, read books, write in a journal, be active, stay in touch with loved ones, friends, and community, connecting with those who uplift rather than drain you. Give yourself enough social time and enough alone time doing things that bring you joy. Appreciate the good that is still around us.

*Deirdre Cochran has been a clinical social worker and therapist for 35 years before moving to a houseboat on Lake Union. She welcomes your issues and recently received this question from a resident.*

A treasure we are fortunate to have here in Seattle is natural beauty. Nature is healing; use it. Gardening, hiking, picnicking, water activities, watching animals, walking, just sitting under a tree, photographing sunsets, appreciating the beauty and continuity of nature all help us find balance and peace. Just getting outside helps.

Focus on what you can control: get involved with groups that share your values. It feels good to be part of a movement and to support an organization whose mission you believe in. It can also be helpful to slow down, breathe, and recognize that most people are good and doing their best regardless of the choices they make.



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## News from The West Precinct

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The Floating Home Community can gain valuable insights from Detra Segar, a resident of Eastlake and a member of the West Precinct Advisory Council. The Council consists of representatives from neighborhoods within the West Precinct, which includes Eastlake, Queen Anne, Uptown, Belltown, South Lake Union, the International District, and downtown Seattle. The group meets monthly with Captain Rob Brown, the head of the West Precinct, along with his team and other service providers who support the precinct.

The goal of the group is to provide communication about what is happening in the neighborhoods that may not be in police reports or on Find It Fix It. In Eastlake, it could be updates on the RV issue along Fairview, graffiti, broken store windows, cars damaged, encampments, or an increase in some other activity that is negatively impacting the neighborhood. The precinct provides organizational updates that can help us understand what is impacting them beyond what we read in the Seattle Times and how we can support them.

*Have something you would like to discuss with the West Precinct Advisory Council? Send your note to [contact@seattlefloatinghomes.org](mailto:contact@seattlefloatinghomes.org) and we will connect you to Detra.*

In November Capt Brown reported that staffing has improved and the bicycle patrol has increased in size, improving response capabilities. The Downtown Activation Team (DAT), a citywide initiative, only in the downtown core and CID for now, has been bolstered by Mayor Bruce Harrell to enhance public safety and cleanliness. This program has integrated new lighting and public art to increase foot traffic and safety in the winter months. Additionally, the City Attorney's Office now processes misdemeanors more efficiently, including

*Continues on page 7*

# Ducklings, Daydreams and Childhood

by Jen Schill

In November of 1976, my family picked up and moved from a cute little brick Tudor in Montlake to a newly-remodeled 'houseboat' on Lake Union. I was a shy five year old daydreamer, nervous about a new home, new school, and completely new way of life! I could swim, and did love the water, but the new reality of having to wear a bulky lifejacket whilst playing outside on our deck or the dock was a little unnerving.

Our dock, 2025 Fairview, was not unusual in having a lot of free-spirited types living alternative lifestyles, but I do think it was unusual in having a particularly communal energy ... dock parties, rummage sales, and the capstone annual event, the pig roast and luau, lent a sense of fun to our day to day experience. It was a vibe! As a young child, I had free rein to wander in and out of neighbors' houses to say hi, play with one of the many dock kitties, and perhaps beg a glass of juice. Catching minnows in Dixie cups from the mossy logs protruding from the homes, chasing dragonflies as they would flit about the dock,



crowdadding with my friend using our homemade 'scooper-upper', a colander lashed to a long stick ... these were all favorite pastimes for a kiddo with a deep internal world.

Probably the thing I remember that was "The Most Houseboat" happened when I was in the third grade. We had a mother duck nesting in a flower planter on an upstairs deck. One morning, we were in our kitchen and all of a sudden we saw a flurry of feathers drift down from above ... racing upstairs, we found that a raccoon had gotten the mother duck, leaving her orphaned eggs in the nest. We jerry-rigged an indoor nest in a washtub with a clip

on utility

light under a large box. Each day, I would read to the eggs (Winnie the Pooh, of course!) after gently rotating them. We successfully hatched the babies, who took a swim in our bathtub before being whisked off to show and tell at Seward School, then off to the Wild Bird Sanctuary.

Almost 50 years have passed since we started our Lake Union adventure and, while so many things have changed, life on the lake continues to be an oasis for our family.

*Jen Schill was born and raised on a houseboat in Seattle, sailing, swimming and catching minnows in true free-range childhood style. Today, she is also a certified Positive Discipline educator and enjoys helping parents and caregivers find confidence in guiding and teaching their children.*

## West Precinct Continued...

those for retail theft, a critical step in ensuring accountability. This means booking people into the King County jail is now possible once more which should reduce the problem.

Several new residential groups have been established in the downtown core, including a block watch and a community council. This has led to a larger network of citizens actively monitoring and reporting on problem areas. Engaged and proactive neighborhoods are more successful at deterring crime. .

The increased collaboration between city departments and communities is fostering a safer and more vibrant environment for Seattle's unique floating neighborhoods. While we still have issues of illegal RVs, car break ins and minor theft, our community is moving in a positive direction.





Do you have a cherished photo from the past or a sweet recent picture? We'd love to include it in our FHA Archives, and it could even be spotlighted in our website and paper! Please send your photos to [comms@seattlefloatinghomes.org](mailto:comms@seattlefloatinghomes.org)



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**We believe in the Floating Home Association and our community's unique, colorful contribution to Seattle. We would be honored to help you with your home sale or purchase.**

Courtney Cooper Neese: call/text 206-850-8841

**Wondering what your floating home is worth?**

I live on a floating home at Mallard Cove and know the lake market well! So if you're curious about your floating home's value, or you're thinking of selling, I'd be happy to chat.



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