



A Conversation with Shiraz Alikhan, Board President, and Linda Ricklef, Steering Committee Chairperson

By Donna DiBiaso

Donna: By all indications, it looks like 2021 was a busy year for the Collaborative. What is on the horizon for 2022?

Shiraz: The Board is currently in transition with the departure of two Board members whose terms expired. Our appreciation and thanks go to Christine Flaherty and Bill Hoffman for their contributions over the past three years. Among his contributions, Bill coordinated our annual goals planning. As the chair of the Healthy Living Committee, Christine and her team coordinated health-related educational presentations and promoted healthful eating and exercise through tastings, weekly walks and the fitness stations that were recently installed near the intersection of the red and blue trails near the Wildcat dog parks.

With Christine's departure, the Board decided to move the educational piece of what the Healthy Living Committee had been doing over to the Steering Committee, which Linda will discuss. We think this change will align that function with the rest of our operations under the Steering Committee umbrella.

I'm very pleased to announce that Allan DeNiro and Mark de la Vina will be filling the open positions on the Board.

Allan has very impressive experience in executive roles across multiple industries, including Turner Broadcasting and Havertys Furniture here in Atlanta, and a management consulting firm which he founded. He has also been a Board member or volunteer at a number of non-profit organizations. Most recently, Allan is the founding member of the non-profit Big Canoe Community Garden. (More on the Community Garden can be found elsewhere in this newsletter.)

Mark is the Director of Communications and Marketing for the Big Canoe POA where he has utilized his decades of experience as a journalist and as a partner at a Silicon Valley public relations firm to make needed improvements to our POA communications capabilities. Mark has also been dedicated to volunteer work and has co-authored a writing guide for elementary school students.

Donna: Linda, the Steering Committee has added several new programs over the past year. What are your priorities for this year?

Linda: Initially, we are managing the transition of several year-end staffing changes. We're bidding a

fond farewell to BC Visits Coordinator David Patton and BC Rides Coordinator Robyn Bish. David had the difficult task of maintaining the readiness of the BC Visits team during a pandemic period where residents were reluctant to engage us for visits. BC Rides has been our most-used service and Robyn has shepherded the BC Rides team through significant growth in requests, even during the past couple of years. Her “can do” attitude provided a wonderful example to the team. We thank them both and wish them well as they end their terms with us.

Chris McGuire is moving from upcoming Meals Coordinator to the BC Visits role, which will be helpful as she is a retired RN. Because our Rides program is so busy, it will be led this year by Co-Coordiators, Bill Merrick and Wade Starling, who have been existing Rides volunteers.

Fran Holman McKenzie will be taking over the BC Meals Coordinator position. Fran has been a long-time BC Meals volunteer and is passionate about providing meals as a way to help our neighbors. Many will remember that Fran started “Thankful Thursdays” – a meal train for our Big Canoe Fire Department.

Another exciting change this year is that Diane LaCharite will be transitioning into the Steering Committee Co-Chair, working with me to lead our operational efforts. Diane has been a key member of the Steering Committee for several years as Meals Coordinator and is ready now to take on broader responsibilities.

Lastly, Lori Levey will be joining the BC Support Group team as the coordinator of a new program providing support sessions for those caring for loved ones with any form of memory loss. Lori is a licensed psychotherapist with years of experience in facilitating these types of sessions with Emory Healthcare. We are excited for her first sessions to begin in January.

We’re fortunate that such well-qualified volunteers have stepped into these important roles.

Shiraz: As you can see, even during the pandemic era over the past two years, the Collaborative continued to find ways to serve our community and recruit talented individuals to help us grow the organization. Our volunteers have stepped up when asked to assist with new services, such as the vaccine clinics and Blood Drive, and have done so in a caring, professional manner.

Linda: Our volunteers have also established our reputation in the Big Canoe community as an organization of “Neighbors Helping Neighbors” by providing necessary services when needed. We are incredibly grateful that our volunteer base has continued strong during some difficult Covid times and because of that we feel we are well positioned to handle client needs going forward.

Donna: Thank you both! I join you in thanking those volunteers whose terms are ending or moving to new roles, and warmly welcome the new members of your team. We all congratulate the Collaborative on its success over the past year and look forward to our 2022 programs!

*Linda Ricklef
Steering Committee Chair
and Board Member*



*Shiraz Alikhan
Wellness Collaborative
Board President*





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COMMUNICATIONS

Donna DiBiaso

Meet the Wellness Collaborative's New Rides Coordinators – Bill Merrick and Wade Starling

By Donna DiBiaso

This New Year brought a change to the role of BC Rides Coordinator. Bill Merrick and Wade Starling will be taking over this position from Robyn Bish who has decided to step down after several successful years of leading the program. This article gives us the opportunity to get to know Bill and Wade a little more as they transition into this important role for the Wellness Collaborative.

Bill Merrick and his wife Sue moved to Big Canoe in July of 2018 after Bill retired as an engineer for Shell Oil. Before coming to Big Canoe the Merrick's were lucky enough to spend three and a half years in the Netherlands, where Bill was on assignment for Shell. Bill remarked, "The Netherlands had a nice climate. Living on the coast, winters were mild, and summers didn't really get that hot. We also enjoyed traveling through the rest of Europe while we were there."

The Merrick's have two adult children - a son who was recently married and lives in Houston, and a daughter living in the suburbs of Chicago, who is expecting their first child this summer, and of course Bill and Sue are excited to welcome their first grandchild. They are also quite active in the community - Bill volunteers on the trails committee, is active in the photography club and is on the Chapel's Benevolence Committee. They also enjoy hiking the trails in Big Canoe and surrounding areas.

Both Bill and Sue have been volunteers in the Wellness Collaborative, Bill with the Rides Program and Sue with Meals and info line. Bill commented about the Rides Program, "It's a great program that the community needs and appreciates. I feel it is important and it was time for me to become involved in a more significant role."

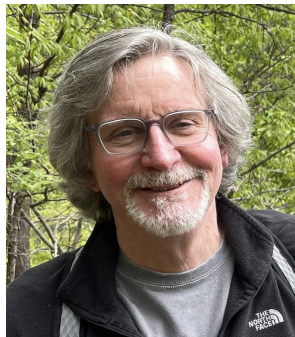
Wade Starling and his wife Susan have lived in Big Canoe since 2018, moving here from Roswell. Wade retired from Frito Lay in 2016 after 30 years working in sales. Susan is a retired educator, concluding her career as a PreK teacher at Kings Ridge Christian School in Alpharetta. After retiring from Frito Lay Wade worked part-time in Finance for his church for several years. It was after he stepped down from that position that he began looking for volunteer opportunities within Big Canoe. The Starlings have two grown children - a son who lives in Nashville and a daughter who takes after her mother and works as a teacher in Roswell.

Wade enjoys playing golf and is a member of the Men's Golf Association here in Big Canoe. He and Susan both volunteer at the Chapel, and Wade is a member of the POA's Audit Committee . They both enjoy hiking all the trails in and around Big Canoe. They also enjoy traveling and spending time with the many friends they've made here.

Wade started volunteering with the Wellness Collaborative in the summer of 2021. Wade explains how and why he got involved. "Susan was already volunteering with the Collaborative, and Shiraz Alikhan presented an overview of the program and all the great things they were doing." This convinced Wade that the Wellness Collaborative was a good organization to join as a volunteer.

Both Bill and Wade have commented on the great job Robyn has done leading the Rides program. "We have some big shoes to fill," remarked Wade. "We just hope to keep it running as smoothly as Robyn did." Also, this duo wants Wellness Collaborative volunteers to know how special they are and how much their efforts are appreciated. "Our volunteers have been really terrific," said Wade, "especially in this COVID environment." Added Bill, "Our drivers' efforts are important to the success of the program. We are very appreciative that people are willing to step up and volunteer to give a ride."

*Bill Merrick
New BC Rides
Co-Coordinator*



*Wade Starling
New BC Rides
Co-Coordinator*



The Big Canoe Community Garden

...a place of Good Health, Wellness and Friendships...

By Allan DeNiro

After more than 2+ years in the making, it appears that 2022 will indeed be “The Year Of The Garden” for the Big Canoe Community and for almost 100 inaugural Gardeners and their families.

The ‘impact’ of the planned 12,000 square foot Garden will be far and wide as all of those planted and harvested fruits, vegetables and herbs multiply outward to the many families, friends and even local community food banks who will participate in the efforts and the labor of the Garden Members.

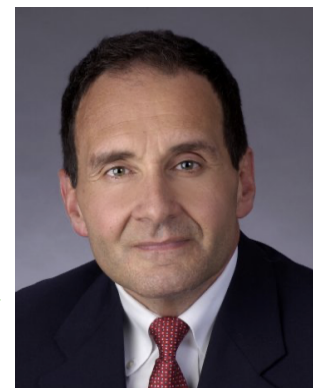
And just as importantly, one of the goals of the Community Garden is to be good neighbors and friends to other Big Canoe Clubs and Organizations where opportunities for education, collaboration and communication exist. One of those targets is The Big Canoe Wellness Collaborative.

“We know that fresh fruit and vegetables are good for our physical health, and of those working in the Garden we also believe that becoming involved in the Community and making new friends has mental health benefits as well,” said Allan DeNiro.

A Garden organizing and development Committee made up of Members Allan DeNiro, Gayle Falinski, Maria Leon, Laura McDonald, Nicky Sensale and Joe Tipton continue their hard work and journey towards a Spring opening and 1st ever large-scale planting. They are joined by over 90 Big Canoe Homeowners and Volunteers who have already committed to their own Garden plot and to helping in the massive efforts needed to realize the dreams of making our Community even more ‘green’.

“On behalf of the Big Canoe Wellness Collaborative, we’re excited about the potential for what happens next with this new ‘Community within a Community’ and we look forward to finding ways to partner with them in promoting health and wellness here in Big Canoe,” said Board president Shiraz Alikhan.

*Allan DeNiro
WC Board member and
founding member of the Big Canoe Community Garden*



Upcoming Events

January - Caregivers Support Group for those caring for Dementia Patients

February 24th - Blood Drive at the Chapel

March - Grief Support Group

June - Blood Drive at the Chapel

Fall - Vaccine Clinics and October Blood Drive

CPR training (TBD)

Big Canoe Wellness Collaborative Services Through December 31, 2021

Program Activity	2021 YTD	2020 YE	Since Inception
Client Service Calls (initiated through BC Info; some requested multiple services)	228	160	1059
Services Completed:			
BC Info	107	56	284
BC Meals	92	54	584
BC Rides	146	100	759
BC Visits	8	31	233
Total	354	241	1,860