

BLUEBILLS TWENTY YEAR ANNIVERSARY 1994 – 2014

By Bob Lambert and Richard and Norma Vaughn

In September 1994 a Boeing retiree team, about 27 retirees and one Boeing manager, met to design, build, and fly what became known as the Boeing Retiree Volunteers. The idea, the need for such an initiative, had been stirring for months but twenty years ago it was put to the test. Was it a doable task? Was it a sound idea? The time proved to be right. There was a pressing need. Remember in 1995 there was the “Golden Handshake” and many Boeing employees were soon to be retirees. There was a vast pool of proven and motivated talent coming available to improve their community and, as one of the founders of the new organization succinctly stated: “Retirees need to remain relevant in their new lives”. Retirees, once the travel bug had been satisfied, had to have reasons to get out of bed and turn off the TV. Most still had a fire in their stomachs and the need to remain productive.

The Boeing retiree organization, named Bluebills after the name of the first Boeing airplane, provided a vehicle for Boeing retirees and spouses to meet old friends, make new ones, and pursue projects enhancing personal relevance and resulting in community improvement, and to have fun. The Bluebill airplane was the first in a long line of military and commercial aircraft that changed the world and the retiree organization would change their community, both for the better. The Bluebills started with a bang and have never slowed down.

At the beginning of 1995 the Bluebills helped Tacoma renovate Jason Lee Middle School in the Hilltop area to become a focal point for community improvement. Keeping with the character of Boeing retirees, they knew how to organize, how to plan and how to accomplish. From that first project until now Bluebills were, justifiably so, known as force multipliers. So, by August 2009 the Bluebills’ Heritage Chapter in King/Pierce Counties, Sno-King Chapter in Snohomish County, and the Olympic Peninsula Chapter were doing over 100,000 recorded volunteer hours a year. There are currently over twelve hundred Bluebills members. Each chapter is making unique contributions to their communities. The scope of projects is vast, ranging from building wheelchair ramps for the disabled to facilitating free educational supplies to thousands of teachers and over a hundred fifty schools; supporting our military through the USO and sending cards to our military overseas; helping the Red Cross during emergencies; providing one-on-one mock interviews for dozens of community college students to prepare them for job interviews; providing assistance to our fellow retirees and spouses, and countless individual efforts to improve our communities. Bluebills work effectively as teams or as single volunteers.

The goals discussed in 1994 are still a work in progress. Bluebills can be proud of 20 years of accomplishments bringing priceless improvements to our communities and equally important, self-satisfaction. Bluebills have countless new friends and as a result social enrichment. The goal of personal relevance is an endless pursuit, hope-fully facilitated by the Bluebills organization. In 2014 the Bluebill organization must not rest on its oars or reflect on past accomplishments. Yes, we can be proud. The tasks ahead during this difficult time will demand more skilled and motivated volunteers to help solve our community problems. The Bluebills’ role is to help bring talented Boeing retirees and spouses, as teams and individuals focused on pressing needs, together to work to accomplish the goals of the Bluebills.

There are many retirees out there who have retired in the last 20 years and many do not know about Bluebills. Let’s find them and get them on our team to help those in need and build a better community.

We would like to thank The Boeing Company and all of the Bluebills for their support for the last 20 years.