

Community In Action

A newsletter for friends of the Opportunity Council



22 North - Affordable Housing in Bellingham

Opportunity Council, in partnership with Northwest Youth Services, broke ground on a 40-unit affordable housing project in Bellingham this fall.

The facility - called "22 North" - is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2018 and will provide supportive housing for youth, veterans and others who have experienced homelessness. Half of the apartments will be reserved for young adults, five will be dedicated to military veterans and the remaining 15 units will be for people referred through the Whatcom Homeless Service Center, specifically the most vulnerable adults seeking housing services.

This project is one way the OC is committed to working with partner agencies and supporters to address the housing needs for people in our communities.

"We know people in Island, San Juan, and Whatcom counties are finding it very challenging

to find housing that is healthy, safe and affordable," said OC Executive Director Greg Winter. "In response to this vital community need, we are increasing our capacity to develop, preserve, and manage affordable housing." Winter said 22 North is the first of what will become a "pipeline" of innovative, new, affordable housing developments in San Juan, Island, and Whatcom counties. The OC has created a new Housing Development Department, which includes hiring a director of housing development (see Staff Updates on page 5).

"With increased capacity and community support," says Winter, "I'm confident Opportunity Council will have a meaningful impact in our region as we take steps to preserve and develop new service-enriched housing opportunities." said Winter.

"...22 North is the first of what will become a 'pipeline' of innovative, affordable housing developments in San Juan, Island and Whatcom counties."



Community donors and supporters celebrated the ground breaking ceremony for "22 North" Sept 15. This housing project in Bellingham is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2018. RMC Architects led the design team and primary construction funding and financing comes from Washington State Housing Finance Commission, Enterprise Community Development, Washington State Department of Commerce, City of Bellingham, and an extensive list of community supporters who donated generously to the project's capital campaign.

Affirming Our Commitment to Core Values

Greg Winter, Executive Director & Steve Jones, Board President

On September 28 the Opportunity Council Board of Directors unanimously approved an important resolution affirming a commitment to being a safe and inclusive organization. The proclamation affirms a set of core values related to equity, diversity, collaboration, respect, integrity, passion, and learning. As the Board members discussed this action, it was very clear how much they value the staff who advance our mission.

The Board was motivated to take this action for interrelated reasons, including the national political climate and the newly emboldened voices of hate and division that were tragically displayed during the Charlottesville incidents and its aftermath last August, and the associated high levels of fear, anxiety and trauma evident among our staff and clients.

The Board's statement "recognizes that our history teaches us that our citizenry can overcome fear that begets hate, can uphold the rights and dignity of all members of our communities, and that we must never enable those who would act otherwise."

Through the resolution, the Board also recognizes that Opportunity Council has strived to embody and practice these values during its 53-year history and acknowledges it is important to affirmatively declare

them and to "continuously improve our approach and outcomes related to diversity, equity and inclusion."

The Board intends to actively use this proclamation as a guiding document as it partners with staff to set the strategic direction of the organization.

The core values that are affirmed in this resolution are the very heart of what the Opportunity Council has been all about for over 50 years. Current events call on us to look internally and determine if we are meeting these responsibilities in our journey with clients, staff and community. This resolution restates our commitment to honor these principles which are inherent for all people.

"... we are a stronger, more humane and successful organization because of this commitment, and we are steadfast and clear in our purpose and determination to defend our values and thus our staff's and clients' safe access to our services and facilities free of prejudice, hate, or violence."

-Board Resolution excerpt, 9/27/17



Greg Winter,
Executive Director, Opportunity Council



OC board president Steve Jones and board secretary Sandy John discuss agency priorities during a board meeting in October.

Partnering With Schools to Provide Resources for Families



students and their families,” says Lisa Clark, Island County Opportunity Council director.

The additional Whatcom County schools served this year include Mt. Baker, Lynden, Meridian, Nooksack Valley, Blaine, and Ferndale.

Housing case managers located in these schools will be available to work with families referred by school staff. Once they receive referrals, case managers can help families connect to vital services offered by Opportunity Council and other community providers.

According to Debbie Paton, OC Community Services Director, the goals of this program are to provide educational stability and link families to stable housing in the student’s school district.

“We know that when children experience housing instability they lose approximately 3-6 months of academic progress each time they change schools,” said Paton. “Through this program we have been able to increase access points to housing services, strengthen our collaboration with the schools and community, and reach vulnerable families who might not have been connected to services before.”

Last school year, in partnership with the Bellingham school district, the Opportunity Council piloted a Homeless Student Stability Program (HSSP) that provides services for families at risk of or currently experiencing homelessness. This program is funded with a grant from the Department of Commerce.

This 2017-2018 school year, the program has expanded not only to other Whatcom County schools, but also to the South Whidbey School district.

“We have had a great start in receiving referrals and are connecting families to resources as well as developing the program to meet the needs of

2017 Peace Builder Awards

Once a year, the Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center recognizes peace builders in our community—those whose work reflects the Center's mission of "providing and promoting constructive and collaborative approaches to conflict." This year, the Opportunity Council's Homeless Outreach Team is among the recipients.

As a point of contact for our homeless community members, the HOT team walks with people through their journey toward housing. From greeting people in the mornings with hot coffee, to taking people to appointments, to advocating for them for housing and health care, the HOT team's work is client-centered and dynamic. Every day they apply a collaborative approach to their work with each other, as well as with clients and community partners.

“We are so pleased to be able to recognize the important work of the Homeless Outreach Team,” said Moonwater, Executive Director at the Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center. “We received an extraordinary number of nominations this year and are glad to bring attention to their compassionate efforts to create connections, foster understanding, and meet the needs of one of our county's most vulnerable populations.”

The Homeless Outreach Team will be honored, along with the seven other Peace Builder Award recipients at Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center's gala on November 17 at 5:30 p.m.



Monthly Kinship Clinic Available

The OC is now hosting a Kinship Custody Clinic one evening each month.

Attorneys from LAW Advocates work one-on-one with people who are raising children of relatives and are seeking an uncontested Non-Parental Custody Order through the court system. This service gives the caregiver permanent custody where they otherwise have no legal standing.

Family Law attorneys provide self-help assistance with court papers and how to represent themselves in court to obtain the custody order. OC staff are happy to host this clinic that was formerly housed at Northwest Regional Council and is the only such clinic in Washington State. Call (360) 734-5121 ext. 217 for more information.

Volunteer Working to Increase Child Care Options

Affordable child care can be a challenge for families to find. For families who rely on a state subsidy to pay for child care, that challenge increases even more.

This fall the Opportunity Council will host a Volunteer in Service to America (VISTA) who will act as a child care small business development specialist. The goal is to develop a model for individuals to gain employment by opening a childcare center in their homes. The additional benefit of this program is developing more child care options for families.

Over the next year, the VISTA will work with staff on developing a Whatcom County program that can be used as a model to benefit families throughout Opportunity Council's five-county service area.



Mobile Pantry Doubles Deliveries

Fresh food will now be distributed twice a month at the East Whatcom Regional Resource Center. The Mobile Food Pantry distribution will now be every 4th Thursday morning of the month in addition to the second Saturday at 11:30 a.m.

Mobile Food Pantry distribution is available thanks to the Foothills Foodbank and Food Lifeline.

Eat for Opportunity - a "first Thursday" fundraiser at Bayou on Bay

Since July, downtown Bellingham restaurant Bayou on Bay has donated ten percent of sales on the first Thursday of each month to help furnish apartments for people exiting homelessness.

These funds benefit clients of the Opportunity Council's Whatcom Homeless Service Center who are entering permanent housing programs. Items purchased for each housing unit depend on the needs of the client and can be tailored to each person's preferences. These funds allow the WHSC to make a client's apartment feel more like home.

In just the first three months of this partnership, Bayou on Bay has already made a significant impact. With their generous donations, the WHSC has been able to furnish 13 apartments.



OC Staff Recognized, Appreciated

Five staff members were recognized this fall for 20, 25, and 30 years of employment with the Opportunity Council. Lisa Clark, Director of the Island County OC, Debbie Paton, Director of Community Services Department, and Kathy Klemmer, Human Resource assistant manager were all honored by their co-workers for 20 years of employment.

Kim Walbeck, Pre-School Services Manager, and Jeannie Lamphiear, Child Nutrition Program Supervisor, were recognized for 25 years of service and Pam Head, a Site Coordinator for the OC Early Learning Department, was recognized for a stellar 30 years of service. Pam joins Wilanne Ollila-Perry, Quality Child Care and Support Services Manager, on an elite two-person list of people who have worked at the OC 30 years or longer. In addition, OC employee, Pam Follis, was also recognized for working over 20 years at the OC.

“Having an employee devote 20 plus years of their lives in pursuit of our mission is truly noteworthy and worthy of recognition,” said OC executive director Greg Winter. *“These staff members are to be congratulated – and thanked – for their service to our mission.”*

New Directors Announced

New housing development dept. at OC

Opportunity Council’s new Director of Housing Development is Jenny Weinstein. Jenny, who joined the agency this October, will lead agency efforts to increase and preserve affordable housing opportunities throughout Island, San Juan and Whatcom counties.

Jenny was previously Senior Housing Developer at Catholic Housing Services and most recently at Downtown Emergency Service Center in Seattle. Locally, she led the development efforts that produced Francis Place supportive housing in downtown Bellingham, and Villa Santa Fe, housing for agricultural workers on Bakerview Road in Bellingham.



OC program manager moves into director role

Ross Quigley has been promoted to Director of Opportunity Council’s Home Improvement Department. Ross replaces John Davies who retired this year after nearly 20 years at the agency.

Ross has been with OC for eight years. During that time he worked on the low-income weatherization crew and performed energy audits and project coordination for the Community Energy Challenge program. Most recently, he was the Manager of the Community Energy Challenge.

Thank you for your support - We salute all donors, volunteers, corporations, small businesses, foundations and others who value and support our work in our community all year long. When you give to our housing programs, early learning opportunities, food resources, or volunteer in any way, you are helping us build stronger communities where everyone can reach their full potential. Watch for a complete list of donors in our 2018 annual report next February.

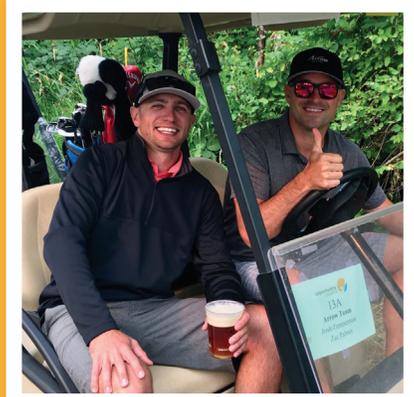


Kaitlyn Miller and Summer Starr enjoy the sights and sounds of bratwurst, beer steins, dirndl's and lederhosen at the Opportunity Council's Oktoberfest Saturday, October 7. The event featured 17 beers from 9 breweries and raised \$5,000 for the Volunteer Center of Whatcom County.



OC staff enjoyed getting new agency logo shirts at the annual staff meeting in September. If you see an OC staff member sporting a new OC shirt, feel free to thank them for the work they do at your local community action agency.

Over 100 golfers competed in the Opportunity Council's "Golf FORE Good" Tournament Friday, Aug. 5, at Shuksan Golf Course. The golfers, sponsors, donors and volunteers raised nearly \$20,000 (net) to help children in OC's early learning programs. Major sponsors included Peoples Bank, Philadelphia Insurance Company, HUB NW/The Unity Group, Phillips 66 Ferndale Refinery, Boundary Bay Brewery, Kelly's O'Deli, Overhead Door Company, Robinson Hardwood & Homes, Piper and Piper, Superfeet, IMCO General Construction, Lithtex, Aetna, Liberty Mutual Group Inc. and North Coast Credit Union.



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HOLIDAY GIVING

How can a gift at the holidays make a difference.

Your gift helps provide housing, heat, food and other basic resources for people in need.

Send your gift today to:
Opportunity Council
P.O. Box 2134
Bellingham, Washington 98227

Or give online:
www.opcco.org/donation-information

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Why not use a Realtor who will give 20% of their commission to the Opportunity Council at no additional cost to you?

Simple ways you can strengthen our community - at no cost to you.



Do you shop Amazon?

Amazon will donate to Opportunity Council programs every time you make Amazon purchases through smile.amazon.com. It will take less than a minute to sign up. On your first visit to AmazonSmile (smile.amazon.com), you just select Opportunity Council to receive donations whenever you make an eligible purchase.



Is your Fred Meyer card updated?

Last quarter we received over \$200 from Fred Meyer shoppers who simply "linked" their Rewards Card to the Opportunity Council. These links are renewed annually. To make sure your Fred Meyer Rewards Card is linked to the Opportunity Council, go to fredmeyer.com and click on Community Rewards and re-link your card. It costs you nothing and is a simple way to make a donation. And you keep all your rewards points!

Since 1965, Community Action has been a vital part of life in the Pacific Northwest,

providing local solutions to local needs. For over 50 years, your Community Action Agency, the Opportunity Council, has been "helping people, changing lives." Your contributions help us provide shelter, heat and care for people in our community today.

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Check: Enclosed is my tax-deductible gift for \$50 \$100 \$200 \$500 \$1,000 Other _____

Please make checks payable to "The Opportunity Council"

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Friends of the Opportunity Council are appreciated and may be publicly recognized.

Please check here if you prefer to remain anonymous.

Your contribution can be mailed to the Opportunity Council administrative offices at
P.O. Box 2134
Bellingham, Washington 98227

Opportunity Council programs include: Community Resource Center • Homeless Housing • Dorothy Place • Marjie's House • Homeless Prevention • Rental Assistance • Child Care Aware • Nutrition • Basic Food Education & Outreach • Maple Alley Inn • Energy Assistance • Weatherization Home Repair Loan Program • Early Support for Infants and Toddlers • Emergency Child Care • Early Achievers • School Backpack Drives • Head Start • Early Head Start • Early Childhood Education Assistance Program • Building Performance Center • The Energy Project • Conservation Education • Community Energy Challenge



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For mailing address changes, newsletter submissions and comments, please contact us at (360) 734- 5121, ext. 333.

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What a Season for Produce!

The Faith Community garden provided over 3,000 pounds of fresh, beautiful produce this year for the Maple Alley Inn meal program.

Produce Breakdown:

127 lbs Napa Cabbage	297 lbs Chard
277 lbs Bok Choi	326 lbs Green Beans
69 lbs Lettuce	426 lbs Cucumbers
85 lbs Spinach	402 lbs Summer Squash
399 lbs Cabbage	480 lbs Tomatoes
161 lbs Beets	5 lbs Basil
78 lbs Beet Greens	



Many of the beans, chard, and some beets were frozen to use during the winter and for holiday meals. A new composter, drainage system, and watering system were also installed. A new raised bed is in progress, and with fundraising, we are going to be able to install a greenhouse soon! Thank you to our garden volunteers, led by Ed and Beth Wood.

Event Calendar

November 18

VFW Chili Cook-off, 4-6 pm, VFW Post 7392, Oak Harbor. Tickets at door \$10

November 22

Whatcom Alliance for Health Advancement assists with health care enrollment, 9 a.m. - 12, East Whacom Regional Resource Center. For more EWRRRC event & info: www.oppco.org/ewrrc

November 23-24

OC offices closed for Thanksgiving holiday

December 7

OC board of directors meeting, 4pm Bellingham. For more info: 360-734-5121, ext. 333

December 25

OC offices closed for Christmas holiday

January 1

OC offices closed for New Year holiday

January 25

OC board of directors meeting, 4 p.m. Bellingham. For more info: 360-734-5121, ext. 333

Visit us online for more event information and updates.

