Your Community Action Agency Serving Island, San Juan & Whatcom Counties.
The Opportunity Council is your local Community Action Agency serving homeless and low-income families and individuals.

For over 50 years we have offered services that range from addressing immediate and crisis needs such as food and shelter to programs that promote long-term growth and stability through job skills training, financial literacy, early childhood education, and home weatherization.

Working together with our supporters and partner organizations, we are willing to take the lead in organizing whatever is needed to address local emerging needs and meet our mission to build stronger communities. We serve people in Island, San Juan and Whatcom counties, and have expanded some services into Skagit and Snohomish counties.

For more information about this work, please visit our website to view a new 2016 video featuring OC staff interviews about why they work here. You can also view a 2015 video featuring comments from our community partners at: http://www.oppco.org/about
We’re committed to helping people improve their lives and appreciate knowing we can count on you to be there with us.

As I write this message to you, our supporters, I recall the changes we saw locally and nationally in 2016.

We are now realizing the impact of those changes, including new proposals at the federal and state levels that threaten the fabric of our communities’ long-standing safety net programs. This is particularly troubling at a time when so many families and individuals are inadequately housed, fed, and employed.

Based on the services to households in need in 2016, we believe these ill-considered proposals to eliminate programs like low-income energy assistance, Community Services Block Grant, Community Development Block Grant, and Weatherization Assistance, will result in more than 10,000 households in Island, San Juan and Whatcom counties being denied access to crucial services.

Your loyal support, however, continues to help people attain their goals to achieve stable housing, school and work readiness, financial stability, and whole person health.

Here are a few highlights from last year:

- **Street Outreach** – Your support ensured the Homeless Outreach Team could engage with over 1,200 individuals who were unsheltered so that they could build trusting relationships that lead to recovery support and housing.

- **Project X-It begins!** - A new dual-generation financial stability and literacy program matches volunteer community mentors with early learners and parents so they are better equipped to become financially independent.

- **Volunteer Center integration** – You can now explore volunteer needs or interests through the Opportunity Council which is host to the Whatcom Volunteer Center.

- **Community donations increased** – You saw the challenges ahead and stepped up to provide a record number of donations that are filling funding gaps for vital programs and services that help people in need.

These are just a few examples of 2016 highlights and many others are listed in this report. This work is possible because of you and other generous donors, funders and partner organizations.

Despite the great uncertainties that lie ahead, we are committed to being there to help people improve their lives. We appreciate knowing we can count on you to be there with us, to help us stay strong and to fight for a stronger safety net that helps and empowers neighbors who need our assistance.

Your support will keep us strong!
How Your Gifts Help

15% Healthy Food
30% Information & Referral
11% Budgeting & Job Skills
33% Warm, Safe Homes
11% Early Learning

Healthy Food Resources - 4,653 services – 15%
Basic Food Assistance, Maple Alley Inn, Child Nutrition program, Fresh Bucks

Information & Referral – 9,678 Services – 30%
Community Resource Centers in Bellingham, Oak Harbor, Kendall, Lopez Island, Orcas Island and San Juan Island, Health Care navigator support in Island County and East Whatcom

Increased Budgeting & Job Skills - 3,552 Services – 11%

Quality Early Learning – 3,494 Services – 11%
Head Start, Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program, Early Head Start, Child Care referrals and resources, Single Entry Access to Services (SEAS)

Warm, Safe Homes – 10,706 – 33%
Homeless housing, energy assistance grants, Weatherization, home improvement, Conservation Education, Healthy Homes, Community Energy Challenge, Chore program, House 2 Home furniture donations
Helping Kids Thrive

Expanding office sites in 2016 for child care resources

Child Care Aware of NW opened an office in Mount Vernon in the fall of 2016.

This program provides families in Island, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, and Whatcom Counties with information and referrals to licensed child care facilities and also supports child care providers by offering education, resources and onsite consultation.

Early learning back in Blaine

When the fall school year started in 2016, our early learning program was pleased to welcome families to our new Head Start classroom in Blaine. Head Start had not had a home in the Blaine community since 2011, when the church space that hosted the program suffered water damage.

The Blaine classroom joins other OC Head Start programs in Bellingham, Everson, Ferndale, Lynden, Mt. Baker, Nooksack and Sumas serving income-eligible families with children ages 3-5 throughout Whatcom County.

Preparing children to reach their full potential.

- **446** Children prepared to enter kindergarten ready to learn by participating in Head Start and Early Childhood Education and Assistance programs.
- **74** Children ages 0-3 and their families participated in Early Head Start to support development during the child’s first few years of life.
- **52** Children who were homeless or in crisis were able to stay and play in a safe, appropriate setting thanks to emergency child care vouchers.
- **1985** Families found information for suitable child care options through Child Care Aware.
- **927** Children with special needs connected with a medical provider through SEAS (Single Entry Access to Services) and also accessed family resources for housing, food, insurance and other needs.
More fresh produce options available in 2016.

The “Fresh Bucks” program in Whatcom County expanded to four new sites in 2016, increasing healthy food access in Bellingham, East Whatcom County, and Ferndale.

The goals of this program are to provide access to healthy food for low-income families and opportunities for local farmers.

Volunteer gardeners provide produce

From February through fall our Maple Alley Inn hot meals program enjoys fresh produce thanks to a garden at Faith Lutheran Church garden.

The 2016 season started with crops in the hoop house installed by Ed Wood, our garden manager. Anne Poulson, Maple Alley Inn program coordinator, was excited to get 62 pounds of bok choy for a meal one week.

What some new users of Fresh Bucks are saying:

“Fresh Bucks has gotten me excited about having consistent fresh produce all through the month. It has dramatically improved the way we eat. The best nutrition program yet!”
- single mom in Bellingham

“I've been able to include fresh fruit in my diet for the first time in years due to the Fresh Bucks program.”
- 68-year-old Ferndale resident
Increased Budget & Job Skills

“Project X-it” began in 2016 to connect and engage community mentors with helping families reach their full potential. The program provides mentoring, financial education, and monetary incentives for 20 families who are very low-income and enrolled in early learning programs in Whatcom, Island and Skagit counties. Both parents and children actively participate to increase financial skills.

Pilot program kicks off in 2016

Community partners help provide opportunities to achieve long-term financial stability.

330 People gained job skills and work experience to improve their financial situation.
32 Individuals graduated from financial classes with improved budgeting skills.
2104 People received tax assistance so they could complete their tax returns.
576 Trainees improved their tech and energy job skills through the Building Performance Center.
92 Parents could apply for jobs and kids could do homework thanks to refurbished computers from Computers 4 Kids.
418 Child care providers received training, support and resources to offer high-quality services.

“Like for many of us, it comes down to having skills, guidance and increased fiscal resources to make our way. This pilot provides all three.”

David Webster, director of Early Learning and Family Services at the Opportunity Council

Housing plus employment results in increased independence

When “Scott” came to the Opportunity Council for assistance, he hadn’t worked for about 3 years. Scott had been volunteering at a local company to gain skills and when a delivery position opened up there, he was asked if he would be interested. He was, but did not have a driver’s license.

Through his work with Opportunity Council’s Basic Food and Employment Training program (BFET), Scott obtained his driver’s license and completed a CDL class. He also found housing; a studio apartment in Blaine that he could afford thanks to OC housing support.

Soon after starting his new job, Scott’s income increased to a level where he could afford his rent on his own. He exited out of the support program and is currently still working as a delivery driver.
Celebrating people moving out of homelessness

After being homeless for months - or even years - it is a struggle for people to find their way back into society.

“Jeff”, a local Veteran, had been living in the woods for nearly a decade when our Homeless Outreach Team began talking with him early last year.

After that much time in the woods, Jeff faced overwhelming challenges and roadblocks to moving into housing and reconnecting with society.

In 2016, after a lot of work and community support, we had cause for celebration: Jeff was approved for an apartment. Shortly after moving in, he began attending a local church where he connected with people who gave him a part-time janitorial job.

Jeff’s story is not only a success for him – it is turning into a success for others: Jeff has set a new personal goal and is now focused on helping other homeless Veterans re-connect with society.
Improving health with an improved home environment

The Weatherization Plus Health (Wx+Health) program helps clients improve their home’s indoor air quality and reduce asthma triggers, while also improving home comfort, durability, and energy efficiency. This program helps clients of any age (not only children) with diagnosed respiratory illnesses such as asthma and COPD.

“Accessible affordable housing is essential for the health of our community. The next step is to implement the actions as identified in the plan,”

Mark Tompkins
San Juan Co Health Dept director and OC board member.

Addressing community housing needs

With housing affordability issues escalating in all our communities, both Island and San Juan counties organized community groups in 2016 to address this issue.

The Island County Housing Affordability Task Force began in the fall with a focus on affordable workforce housing. The task force included representatives from the construction industry, zoning and land use, financing and investment, policy development and community advocacy.

In San Juan County, Mark Tompkins, director of San Juan Health and Community Services and Opportunity Council board member, spearheaded the Affordable Housing Workgroup that looked at addressing housing needs in the community.

The workgroup held their last meeting in November with a final Strategic Action Plan expected in 2017. The group’s list of strategies include updating the Housing Needs Assessment and working to develop public and private partnerships to build affordable housing.

A range of OC housing programs helps families with transitional shelter, rental assistance, as well as home improvements.

Photos L-R

Your support makes housing and support programs possible, including Dorothy Place in Bellingham and Marjie’s House in Oak Harbor.

Supporters and volunteers make it possible to provide a one-day Project Homeless Connect in Bellingham.

Congresswoman Suzan DelBene visited staff at the Building Performance Center in Bellingham in 2016 where staff demonstrated Weatherization techniques.
Information and Referral

A community resource hub

Our community resource and referral services provide a safe, respectful place where anyone can go to get help solving a problem or challenge in their life.

This is a highly utilized resource and the first point of entry to many services in Island and Whatcom county sites. We also support family resource centers in San Juan County.

Much of the time is spent helping complete client assessment or intake. During our busiest times, such as energy assistance scheduling, there are often long wait times to be seen. We strive to make the process as comfortable and encouraging as possible while providing meaningful referrals to other community resources.

CRN Whatcom recognizes 12 years of connecting providers

The Opportunity Council has been hosting monthly Community Resource Network meetings in Whatcom County for 12 years.

These meetings bring people together from a variety of organizations who can share information about their programs serving low-income and other needs.

In addition to hosting a monthly meeting, we manage a list serve and send frequent emails and updates and news throughout the month.

With your help, we are committed to providing I&R with compassion, dignity and respect.

4395 People accessed services and information through our Bellingham office

3186 People accessed services and information through our Oak Harbor office

829 People accessed services and information through our resource center at the East Whatcom Regional Resource Center (EWRRC) in Kendall

757 People accessed information through resource centers on Lopez, Orcas and San Juan islands

511 Individuals enrolled in health care programs through navigators in Island Co. and EWRRC.

Resource fairs at the East Whatcom Regional Resource Center in Kendall connects people to services.

Working in partnership with local agencies, Project Homeless Connect is a one day event providing access to homeless support services.
Volunteer Center of Whatcom moves to Opportunity Council in 2016

At the beginning of 2016, the Volunteer Center of Whatcom County transitioned to become part of the Opportunity Council. Volunteer Center’s organizational goals aligned with the goals of the Opportunity Council and are a good fit with the OC’s long-term strategic plans. Both organizations aim to provide resources that benefit our community, including both our nonprofit partner agencies and the people we serve.

Volunteers donated nearly 10,000 hours to support Opportunity Council programs in 2016. Programs such as Maple Alley Inn’s hot meals and Chore services to help aging and disabled residents stay in their home, would not be possible without community volunteers.

The transition process was successfully completed in 2016. Volunteer Center continues to recruit volunteers and match them with opportunities in the community. They also provide supportive programs such as CHORE and House2Home.

“The we are glad for the relationship we have with Opportunity Council’s work through our Alms Ministry and our participation in the Maple Alley Cafe program … we look forward to more cooperation in the future as we serve folks in need in our community. Thanks to you and your entire organization for the work you do.”

St. Paul’s Episcopal Church

“Participating artists donated 5% of all bowl sales this month and the store contributed an equal amount. Many customers were happy to participate and to learn of the work that Maple Alley Inn provides. Thank you for feeding our community!”

Good Earth Pottery

Pairing housing and education programs for student success

In September 2016, an Opportunity Council case manager was placed at a Bellingham elementary school to be on site to help students and families access stable housing.

This move was part of a new partnership between Bellingham Schools and Opportunity Council to help all students have access to safe, decent and affordable housing so that they can fully participate in academics and achieve their highest potential. It is part of the Homeless Student Stability Program (HSSP) that was created through the Department of Commerce to improve housing stability for homeless students.
Financials

2016 Revenue

- Federal: $12,762,075
- State: $3,133,126
- Local Government: $4,368,961
- Fee for Service: $2,601,462
- Donations & Foundation Grants: $4,672,830
- Interest & Other Income: $39,623

Total Revenues: $27,578,077

2016 Expenditures

- Early Learning & Family Services: $7,899,415
- Weatherization and Home Repair: $2,435,749
- Energy Policy: $340,663
- Housing Services: $5,089,535
- Housing Enterprise: $1,558,263
- Community Services: $1,185,566
- Energy Assistance: $4,413,949
- Other Supporting Services: $1,668,454
- Administrative: $2,343,482

Total Expenditures: $26,935,076

Revenue in Excess of Expenditures: $643,001*

Total: $27,578,077

*Includes board designated reserves, net revenue from fee-for-service and social enterprise activities, grants designated for capital projects, and unrestricted donations carried forward to support programs in 2017.
2016-17 Board of Directors

Citizen participation is essential. The Opportunity Council, like all Community Action Agencies, is locally managed by a volunteer board of directors which includes equal representation of public officials, the private sector and people who represent low-income communities.

Executive committee:

President: Mamie Lackie
Vice President: Rick Hughes
Secretary: Ramona Menish
Treasurer: Steve Jones
Past President: Stan Snapp
At Large: Sandy John

April Barker
Rebecca Boonstra
Christianna Clinton
Heather Flaherty
Frank Parker
Katrice Romero

Paul Stermer
Mark Tompkins
Carl Weimer
Faith Whaley – ELAJS Policy Council Chair

Approximately 225 employees work at the Opportunity Council to bring services to people in Whatcom, Island and San Juan counties. Some programs have expanded to include Skagit and Snohomish counties.

Executive Director: Greg Winter
Associate Director: Sheri Burgler Emerson
Community Services and Energy Services: Debbie Paton, Director
Early Learning and Family Services: David Webster, Director
Island County Opportunity Council: Lisa Clark, Director
Home Improvement: John Davies, Director
Whatcom Homeless Service Center: Mike Parker, Director
The Energy Project: Shawn Collins, Director
Fiscal: David Foreman, Chief Financial Officer
Human Resources: Kathy Washatka, Organizational Development Director
Your Support Makes A Difference

Your support is promoting the well-being of children, families and individuals in our community. Thank you. Our community is stronger and we all benefit when everyone reaches their potential.

$500+
Steve & Deborah Adelstein
Jo Ann Albers
Philip and Judith Andreass Jr.
Peter Arneil
Kirsten Barron and Steve Brinn
Robin and Yuki Caldwell
Karen Christensen
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Judy and Dale Cosgrove
David and Jayme Curley
Juliette Daniels
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John Davis and Janice Jung
Gary Dolin and Martha Vernier-Dolin
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Shen and Jim Emerson
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Kim and Steve Smith
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Kay Thulin
Mark Tompkins
Hank and Kristin VanSichelt
Ann Vater
Andrea and John Warner
Kathy Wasatka
Ken and Phyllis Weber
David Webster
Henry and Teresa Weg
Carie and Carol Weinerman
Windermere staff donate holiday meals at Dorothy Place.

Your support helps kids reach their full potential.

Samuels Furniture and Wilson Furniture provide mattresses for House2Home families.

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Bellingham Covenant Women
Catholic Archbishop of Seattle
Catholic Housing Services
Christ the Servant Lutheran Church
Christian Reformed Church
Congregation Beth Israel
Evangelical Lutheran Church In America
First Congregational Church
Garden Street United Methodist Church
Northside Community Church
Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church
St. James Presbyterian
St. Paul’s Episcopal Church
St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church
Whidbey Presbyterian Church

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Leaf & Ladle
Liberty Mutual Group Inc
Makham
Make It Rain
Mambo Italiano Cafe
Mills Electric
Mojio Music Discount
Mykonos Greek Restaurant
Nancy-Berg, Attorney at Law
Nancy-Leavitt Agency
North Coast Credit Union
North Puget Sound Brothers In Arms
North Whitby Lions Club
Oak Harbor Emblem Club 4540
Old Town Cafe
Old World Deli
On Rice Thai Cuisine & Spirits
Overhead Door Co of Bellingham Inc
Pacific Continental Realty
Pacific Northwest Roofing
Paula Brown Licensed Acupuncturist PS

Peace Health
Peoples Bank
Peoples Bank
Pepperidge Farm Restaurant
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Pizzazza
Pure Bliss Desserts
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Protea Cafe
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Robinson Hardwood & Homes LLC
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Rocket Donuts
Rofman, Inc.
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Silicon Valley Community Foundation
Sirena Gelfato
Sol Taining Sehome Village, Inc
SPIE
Sterling Life Insurance Co.
Sunnyland Properties
Superfect Worldwide
Surety Pest Control
Taco Lobo Inc.
The Temple Bar
Thai House Restaurant
The Benevolence Community Impact Fund
The Jewelry Gallery
Toakom Asian Bistro
Trapp Coffee & Deli
Trust
U.S. Bank
Unqua Bank
United Way of Island County
United Way of King County
United Way Of Skagit County
United Way Of The National Capital Area
United Way of Whatcom County
United Way Thurston County
Veterans of Foreign Wars
Wickiup Coffee
Wallace Rice Benefits
Wander Brewing LLC
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Whatcom Educational Credit Union
Windermere Management
Windermere Oak Harbor
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All efforts are made to accurately compile our list of supporters who made a financial contribution of more than $50 in 2016. If you feel an error has been made, please contact our office.
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