

Fall 2016

Community In Action

A newsletter for friends of the Opportunity Council



Head Start back in Blaine

As the fall school year starts, we are pleased to welcome families to our new Head Start classroom in Blaine.

This 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. Head Start hasn't had a home in the Blaine community since 2011, when the church space that hosted the program suffered water damage.

"We are so excited to have the Head Start program back in our community," said Randy Elsbree, Special Programs Director at Blaine School District. "Especially within our own primary school walls."

Previously, families in Blaine had to travel to another Head Start site in the Ferndale School District or other county locations to participate in this program. The new preschool will be in the Blaine Primary School which recently completed a 10,000-square-foot addition that added eight new rooms. OC Preschool Services Manager Kim Walbeck said they have been looking forward to the chance to move the program back to the Blaine community.



"Having preschool services closer to where families live and in the school where children will attend kindergarten will support school readiness," Walbeck said. "These 18 children and their families will benefit from consistent learning and a smooth transition that support school achievement and family engagement."

- Article by Isaac Shoenfeld

"Having preschool services closer to where families live and in the school where children will attend kindergarten will support school readiness"

- Kim Walbeck

Volunteer Center

It's been nearly a year since the Opportunity Council and Volunteer Center of Whatcom County announced volunteer programs and services were transferring to the Opportunity Council.

In our first year, it's become increasingly clear how well the goals of our two organizations align. We've also realized community benefits of these services.

One recent example is the success in recruiting community mentors for a new OC program.

"We weren't getting many volunteers for our Project X-it program and were nervous we'd have to delay the start until the Volunteer Center got involved," said Javier Flores, executive coordinator who is working on a new mentoring program for families with young children.

Continued on page 3

Message from the Director

Greg Winter, Executive Director

One of the most enjoyable parts of my job is finding a few minutes to call donors and thank them for their recent investments in our work. It's a great way to end the week.

Last Friday's round of calls was especially gratifying because so many of the calls were answered live. It's awkward leaving messages. And it's just not as fun as connecting with people, most of whom I've never met. Hearing what they have to say is much more rewarding.

"It's very important what you're doing," said a retired school principal who had donated to our school supply drive. During our brief phone call, she told me just how critical it is to student success that we help families support their children's school readiness.

Another school supply donor said he appreciated that he could give cash instead of supplies as he used to do. It's easier for him, and he figured we could get better deals buying supplies in bulk (and we can target the supplies most needed by our families' children).

One donor who received a voice message from me called me back to acknowledge the call and to say, "You have a great organization!"

I had a nice long talk with a donor who used to give to one specific program, but in recent years has chosen not to designate her gift anymore. She did this after learning about the many other vital services we provide to individuals and families.



Greg Winter

I concluded this round of calls by leaving a voice message for a donor who had recently been a client of ours. His gift to us included an expression of gratitude for the help he had received. To me, that speaks volumes about him as well as our talented and caring staff who supported him when he needed a little help from his community.

These gifts are just a few examples of the many ways people support our work. This newsletter highlights others.

- Our annual Golf FORE! Good fundraiser depends on many volunteers and donors who help us put on a fun event with a serious cause: making a difference in the lives of children who are disadvantaged.
- Brothers in Arms raised nearly \$6,000 for Veteran services in Island county during their Poker Run Aug. 19.



Monica Lopez, center, receives check from Brothers-in-Arms fundraiser.

- Donors help kids get ready – and excited – for school by giving to our School Backpack Drives in Island and Whatcom counties.
- We'll soon be preparing more hot, nutritious meals in a safer and more efficient space thanks to support for our Maple Alley Inn kitchen campaign, which is over 80% to goal!
- The hundreds (yes, hundreds) of volunteers who are partnering with us to put on an "Oktoberfest" event next month and leverage volunteer programs that strengthen other nonprofit services as well as schools, libraries, and parks.

These supporters — together with many, many others, — help provide vital services that make a difference for families every day. You can read about some of our programs and supporters in this newsletter.

I know I can't call everyone individually, but if your phone rings on a Friday afternoon, I hope you'll pick it up. Talking with you would be much more fun than me leaving an awkward message.

Staff Quotes

What's your favorite part of your job?



"I love being a part of the Homeless Outreach Team because of the relationships I'm able to build. Every day is different and I get to witness how resilient and valuable people are."

Andrea Northey
- Street Outreach Specialist



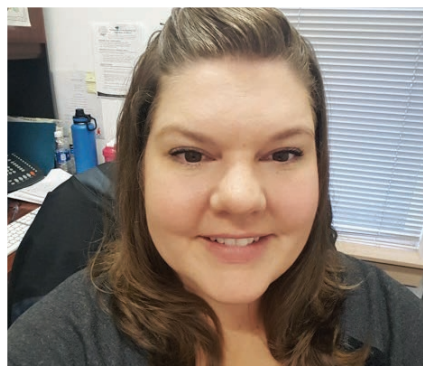
"For me, fall means seeing some of my clients again, especially during our Early Intake for seniors. Most of them live alone and I know it's nice for them to have someone to talk to. I like to hear how their year has been and they know that I'm here to serve them with the much needed energy assistance to get them ready for the winter months."

Aileen Camacho
- Energy Services Specialist



"Watching my students who came to me two years ago from Early Head Start begin their third year now as the oldest and most experienced children of their class to watch them continue to blossom and shine as they go through their final year before kindergarten. They have worked hard and have made so much progress!"

Erin Flannigan
- Teacher, West County



"I love working long term with women at Marjie's House and the partnerships we create are awesome. The journey I take with a woman who has experienced severe domestic violence - going from unstable and homeless to a thriving, housed dynamo can't be described. It makes all the trips and falls along the way totally worth it."

Melissa Brown
- Homeless Housing Case Manager

Volunteer Center

Continued from page 3

"They knew how to focus in on the volunteers we were looking for and target their marketing."

Recruiting for Project X-it is just one example of how the Volunteer Center supports volunteerism in the community. We continue to work with staff to evaluate these volunteer program systems and find ways to maximize this community resource.

For help recruiting volunteers for your project, or for more information about current volunteer opportunities, visit <http://www.whatcomvolunteer.org>

Project X-it

Our new community mentor program currently has 11 mentors trained in Whatcom County. We have openings for a few more mentors and are especially recruiting community members in Island and Skagit counties.

"Project X-it" will provide mentoring, financial education, and monetary incentives for families who are very low- income and enrolled in early learning programs. Both parents and children will actively participate.

If you are interested in knowing more about this mentor training, contact us at info@oppco.org.

More Child Care Providers Enroll in 'Early Achievers' System

Choosing child care is an important decision and families now have more information to help make that decision. As of Aug. 1, over 3,072 child care providers are enrolled in Washington State's Early Achievers system. Early Achievers is the state's quality rating and improvement system for early childhood education that began several years ago and was amplified in importance by the 2015 Early Start Act.

The Opportunity Council worked to promote enrollment and ongoing training for child care providers throughout five northwest counties. The quality rating of licensed providers is now public information.

The quality rating of licensed providers is now public information.

"As our Child Care Aware/Early Achievers team works along side those licensed small businesses, we are assuring equity of opportunity and a brighter future for our state," said David Webster, director of Early Learning and Family Services at the Opportunity Council. "And when our state's public pre-school program and licensed child care/early learning providers share the same goals and performance expectations, all children win."



Are you or someone you know looking for childcare?

Our OC staff can point you in the right direction.

The Child Care Aware Family Call center can help. Call 1-800-446-1114 and our trained staff will create a free, customized list of quality, licensed child care programs that meet your childcare needs. Or visit DEL's licensed child care information system online for a customized search: <https://apps.del.wa.gov/check/CheckSearch.aspx>

Community Energy Challenge Celebrates 6th Birthday

All around the country communities are working hard to reduce their energy usage—saving money, creating jobs, preventing pollution, and stimulating the economy.

One local program has been working on all these goals throughout the Pacific Northwest for six years: the Community Energy Challenge (CEC). This program makes home and commercial energy efficiency improvements easy and affordable and has been making steady progress toward its goals of reducing energy use and carbon pollution and making Northwest Washington a leader in energy efficiency.

In total, the Community Energy Challenge is saving 6,726 metric tons of CO₂ annually, which is equal to removing 1,421 cars from the road each year.

The CEC is a program of the Opportunity Council and Sustainable Connections. To schedule an audit or learn more about saving energy at your home or business, visit our website at www.communityenergychallenge.org.

Golfing For Fun, For Kids

Over 100 golfers competed in the Opportunity Council's "Golf FORE Good" Tournament Friday, Aug. 5, at Shuksan Golf Course. These teams, together with business sponsors and donors, raised close to \$20,000 (net) to help local children.

This event supports our programs for children who have disabilities or who are disadvantaged, homeless or in very low income families.



Golf teams and volunteers enjoyed a sunny day on the course Aug. 5 for a good cause, raising support to help kids.

"This is my favorite golf tournament every year," said Sheldon Satterthwaite, HUB NW. "As both a golfer and as an event sponsor, I look forward to this fun, well-run event and I know it raises vital support to help kids in our community."

Tournament presenting sponsors included Peoples Bank, Philadelphia Insurance Company, HUB NW/The Unity Group. Major sponsors include 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.

Thanks For Helping Kids Prepare For School

Thank you for supporting our School Backpack Drives this summer with donations to help children start school prepared and excited to learn.

The North Whidbey Lions Club collected backpack and school supply donations in front of WalMart Saturday, July 30. On Wednesday, Aug. 10, we collected donations at Carl Cozier elementary school on Lakeway Drive in Bellingham.

Businesses, organizations and individuals who contributed backpacks and financial donations made a difference for children who are homeless or very low income.

"Our School Backpack Drives help all students in our schools be prepared to do their best, regardless of income level," said Lisa Sohni, outreach and development coordinator at the Opportunity Council.

Your support helps make a difference

- We salute our community's amazing donors, volunteers, corporations, small businesses, foundations and others who value and support our work in our community all year long.

Thank you to these major donors who have* recently supported this work:

Aetna, Inc.	Gary Dolin and Martha Vernier-Dolin	Elaine Maki and Richard Schillinger	Jane and Jon Shaughnessy
Edoh Amiran and Veronica Wisniewski	Glenn Eckard	Mambo Italiano Cafe	Janet Simpson
Anchor Qea	Electric Beet Juice Co	Teizeen Mohamedali	Carol and David Smith
Anderson Paper & Packaging	Sheri and Jim Emerson	Mojo Music Discount	Stan and Marian Snapp
Arrow Insulation	Energy Savers, Inc.	Jan Mustain	John Sparing
Aslan Brewing Company LLC	Pam Englett	Mykonos Greek Restaurant	SPIE
Avenue Bread	Fat Pie Pizza	Nancy Leavitt Agency	St. James Presbyterian
Karen Barlean	Fiamma Burger	Michael New	John and Sandie Starr
Barlean's Organic Oils, LLC	Fidelity Charitable	Christopher and Astrid Newell	Paul and Becky Stermer
Kirsten Barron and Steve Brinn	First Congregational Church	North Coast Credit Union	Superfeet Worldwide
Bartholomew Family Foundation	Five Columns Restaurant	North Puget Sound Brothers In Arms	Surety Pest Control
Bayou On Bay	Fleet Reserve Assn	Northside Community Church	Steve Swank
Bellingham Bar & Grill	Fred Meyer Foundation	Northwest Energy Systems Of Washington, Inc.	Taco Lobo Inc.
Bellingham Cold Storage	Margaret Gardner	Old Town Cafe	The Temple Bar
Bellingham Covenant Women	Deborra Garrett	Old World Deli	Thai House Restaurant
Binyon Vision Center	David and Carol Gavareski	Maureen Osen	The Benevity Community Impact Fund
Black Drop Coffeeshouse	Dale and Robin Geleyne	Overhead Door Co of Bellingham Inc	The Jewelry Gallery
Brandon Bork	Carolyn Gibbons	Pacific Continental Realty	Kathy Thulin
Boundary Bay Brewery	Hardware Sales	Pacific Northwest Roofing	Mark Tompkins
Brandywine Kitchen	Elsie Heinrick	Susan and Jeff Palmer	Truist
Susan Browne	Hilltop Restaurant	Ingeborg Paulus	U.S. Bank
Buri Funston Mumford	Darryl Hirschhorn	Peace Health	Umpqua Bank
Busara Siamese Cuisine Corp.	Margaret and Jeff	Peoples Bank	United Way of Whatcom County
Cafe Akroteri	Horseshoe Cafe	Peoples Bank	United Way Thurston Co
Robin and Yuki Caldwell	HUB NW/The Unity Group	Pepper Sisters Restaurant	Vanguard Charitable
Casa Que Pasa	Nancy Hughes	Philadelphia Insurance Companies	VikingFood
Catholic Archbishop of Seattle	IMCO General Construction Inc.	Phillips 66 Ferndale Refinery	Kathy Washatka
Caz Energy Audits	Karen and Terry Inkster	Ron and Jan Pierce	David Webster
Christensen Net Works	Island Thrift Inc.	Michael Pietro and Christine Kubota	Whatcom Community Foundation
Christian Reformed Church	Damani and Rebecca Johnson	Piper Pediatric & Family Dentistry	Whatcom Educational Credit Union
Chrysalis Inn & Spa	Marguerite Johnson	Pizza'zza	Whidbey Presbyterian Church
Ciao Thyme Catering	Michael Karp & Anne Whirlledge-Karp	Sara Price	Amanda White and Greg Winter
Cigna Health Care	Alan Kemble and Sally Albers	Pure Bliss Desserts	Christina White
Joann Collinge	William Kern	Eugene and Amy Quinn	John and Kathryn Whitmer
Carol and Dennis Comeau	John and Hilde Korsmo	Sallye Quinn	Windermere Foundation Trust
Ross and Barbara Craigie	Kulshan Brewing Co	Renaissance Charitable Foundation	Kevin and Rochelle Wolber
Tony Dabbs	La Fiamma Wood Fire Pizza	RHD Enterprises, Inc.	Women Sharing Hope
The Daisy Cafe	Richard and Kerri Larrabee	Rhodes Cafe	Woods Coffee
Juliette Daniels	Larson Gross PLLC	RiverStyx Foundation	Stephen and Diane Woods
D'Anna's Cafe Italiano	Karen and Charles Lauckhardt	Robert Weston	Bill Wright and Patrice Clark
John Davies and Carol Kumekawa	Leaf & Ladle	Rock and Rye Oyster House	Romayne Zanchi
Dawson Construction Inc	Liberty Mutual Group Inc	Rocket Donuts	
Gail and Kent de Hoog	Kelli Linville and Will Roehl	Schwab Charitable	
Diamond Jim's Grill	Melinda Lunsford	Gil Seely	
Katherine Dickinson-Poteet	Maikham		

* Through Aug. 31, 2016

OC Board of Directors

President
Mamie Lackie

Vice President
Rick Hughes

Secretary
Ramona Menish

Treasurer
Steve Jones

Past President
Stan Snapp

At Large
Sandy John

ELAFS Policy Council Chair
Faith Whaley

April Barker

Rebecca Boonstra

Lisa McShane

Katrice Romero

Frank Parker

Paul Stermer

Mark Tompkins

Carl Weimer

Agency Directors

Executive Director
Greg Winter

Associate Director
Sheri Emerson

Island County Director
Lisa Clark

Chief Financial Officer
David Foreman

Community Services Director
Debbie Paton

**Early Learning and Family
Services Director**
David Webster

**Whatcom Homeless Service
Center Director**
Mike Parker

Home Improvement Director
John Davies

**Organizational Development
Director**
Kathy Washatka

Energy Project Director
Shawn Collins

Expanding food access through Maple Alley Inn

Dine Out success

Opportunity Council's 16th annual "Dine Out for Maple Alley Inn" last spring raised over \$30,000 to help provide hot, nutritious meals for people in need. It is the most this event has ever raised and is essential to the program's ability to provide meals to people in need. This year's event was held in partnership with nearly 60 local restaurants that donated a percent of sales May 3 to Maple Alley Inn. Business and media sponsors included Whatcom Educational Credit Union, Bellingham Cold Storage, The Bellingham Herald and Cascade Radio Group. This year's event included expanded coverage through Cascade Radio Group and support from Community Food Coop and Viking Food. All proceeds from Dine Out support the Maple Alley Inn program.

Volunteer gardeners provide produce

From February through fall our Maple Alley Inn program enjoys fresh produce thanks to a garden at Faith Lutheran Church Inn garden. The season starts with crops in the hoop house installed by Ed Wood, our garden manager. "(We get) LOTS of gorgeous, nutrient-rich vegetables," said Anne Poulson, Maple Alley Inn program coordinator, who was excited to get 62 pounds of bok choy for a meal one week and making plans for beets and tomatoes.

MAI kitchen expanding

Plans are underway for kitchen improvements for the Maple Alley Inn program. A new commercial refrigerator was installed this summer and we are raising funds to pay for the rest of the kitchen upgrades this fall.

We're 80% to goal! Your donation today will help us meet our goal this month. To learn more, visit the kitchen improvement fundraising site: <http://maikitchen.causevox.com/>



"Dine Out" enjoyed its most successful year ever this year. Fresh produce from the Maple Alley garden is supporting the nutritious meals we provide.

More fresh produce options now available.

The "Fresh Bucks" program expanded to four new sites this summer, increasing healthy local food access in Bellingham, East Whatcom County, and Ferndale.

In addition to the downtown Bellingham Farmers market and Community Food Co-op locations, SNAP (formerly known as food stamps) incentives are now available at the Wednesday Bellingham Farmers Market (Fairhaven), Twin Sisters Market (Deming & Kendall), and Ferndale Farmers Market. Fresh Bucks is funded by USDA with the goals to increase access to healthy food and to bolster opportunities for local farmers.

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

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



1111 Cornwall Avenue
Bellingham, WA 98225

return service requested

Non-Profit Org
U.S. Postage Paid
Bellingham WA
Permit No. 79

Contributors to this issue include
Greg Winter, Lorena Shah, Isaac
Schoenfeld, Monica Lopez, David
Webster, Jackie Lafata-Rinker,
Kaitlyn Miller, Debbie Paton, John Davis.

Editing by Sheri Emerson, and
Kathy Washatka.

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

Printed by Lithtex Northwest.
Layout by Ketchup+Mustard.



You're invited!

Experience the sights, sounds, and aromas of lederhosen, beer steins, and bratwurst! German traditions abound at Bellingham Oktoberfest, an event that raises funds for Opportunity Council's Volunteer Center programs and services. (See more about the Volunteer Center in this newsletter.) Featuring craft brews and food from local vendors, music, games, live-printed merchandise, and a photo booth, it's sure to be a good time! **Prost!**

October 15, 6:00-10:00 pm

Depot Market Square
1100 Railroad Ave. Bellingham, WA

\$25 pre-sale • \$30 at the door

Tickets include: general admission, a tasting glass, and tasting tickets

Event Calendar

September 22

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

October 15

Oktoberfest, Bellingham. See more information in this newsletter or visit www.oppco.org

October 27

OC board - staff annual retreat.
For more info: **360-734-5121, ext. 333**

November 24-25

Offices closed for Thanksgiving holiday.

December 8

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

Watch our website for details about other
upcoming events

You Can Help Through Amazon Smile

Did you know?

The Opportunity Council can receive donations when you shop online through Amazon! It doesn't cost anything to participate, and the donation is automatic. Sign up today and invite friends and family to sign up, too.

1. Go to <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/91-0787820>
2. Select Opportunity Council as the agency you'd like to support
3. Bookmark www.smile.amazon.com on your internet browser and shop for your favorite items!

