The Opportunity Council is your local Community Action Agency.

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

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.

For more information about this work, please visit our website www.oppco.org
The following quotes from our Spring 2018 Customer Satisfaction Survey highlight the impact of housing support services, early learning programs, nutritious meals, case management, and more.

- The Opportunity Council has been real good to me. It’s helping me to become productive, stable and safe. My case manager is always helping me along the way.
- You have done an amazing job with helping me and my daughter get the tools we need to help my daughter with her speech and learning.
- Because of the Opportunity Council I have kept my Autistic son and I in our home, and kept our power on. Without the O.C. my son and I would not have a home or electricity.
- We really appreciate all the hard work the teachers and volunteers put in. Day in and day out.
- There is literally nothing more that anyone here could have done for me. [My case manager] basically rebuilt my life with the patience of a saint. Got me back on my feet and helped me develop a plan.
- Thank you for being there to help my son and I get to the right program to get us out of my vehicle and into a home.
- Our occupational therapist is AMAZING! She is professional, friendly and amazing with our kids!
- Being homeless is so hard and tiring at times. One day a girl came up to us as we were laying at our “spot.” She said ‘hi how are you,’ and introduced herself from Opportunity Council Outreach. Wow! Checking on us - someone drives around in car and stops to see if there’s anything that we needed. I was really impressed and feel much better!
- I am happy that you come to the South End now as that makes it so much easier to get help.
- I am eternally grateful for the help I received from [my case manager]. She helped me believe in myself again, as well as offering practical help.
- Thank you from the bottom of my heart. These meal programs are lifesavers. The Quiche is delish.
- This experience was life changing help. My case manager is excellent as a resource for getting my life in a productive successful direction.
- This has been a wonderful experience. I have learned very much regarding resources, feelings (how to accept them), what is wrong or right in relationships and how to stand up for myself. I would like to thank the Opportunity Council for all of the help I have been given.
- The staff have always been uplifting, non judgmental, informed and Amazing.

We can’t help but be inspired by this kind of response to the services provided by our very talented and dedicated staff and volunteers. We hope this inspires you to continue or increase your support of our work.

With gratitude, Greg Winter & Steve Jones
Making an Impact

Thanks to you and many generous donors, funders and partner organizations, these services were available for people to meet their basic needs and equip them to exit poverty.

Eliminating the stress of being hungry or homeless is an essential first step in addressing the effects of poverty. When families can meet their minimum basic needs, they are able to focus on the next steps to exit poverty, such as increasing job skills, completing training programs, or enrolling their child in an early learning programs.

Helping kids thrive
Programs include Head Start/ECEAP, Early Head Start, SEAS, Emergency Child Care vouchers.

Access to healthy food
Programs include Basic Food Assistance, Maple Alley Inn, Child nutrition program, Fresh Bucks.

Building financial & job skills
Programs include Tax preparation, Basic Food Employment & Training, Financial Education, Weatherization and tech training, Early Achievers program.

Providing a warm, safe home
Programs include Homeless housing, Energy Assistance grants, Weatherization and Home Improvement, Conservation Education, Chore, Community Energy Challenge.

Offering information and referrals
Programs include Community Resource Centers in Bellingham, Oak Harbor, Kendall, Lopez island, Orcas island and San Juan Island and Child Care Resource and Information.
Helping Kids Thrive
All parents want the best for their child.

In 2017 families helped prepare their children to reach their full potential through our early learning preschool, quality child care and access to professional services.

When parents engage in our early learning programs they help their children progress toward educational and literacy goals. We also work with child care providers, educators, parents, and families to promote high quality early child care and education programs and access to professional services to support child development.

According to our 2017 community needs assessment, Whatcom County families with young children in the Head Start program reported more frequently (82%) that their children are doing well in school compared to non-Head Start families (58%). This program provides both children and families with benefits that include health assessments, nutrition education, mental health support and more. This is a learning environment for growth that builds relationships and support systems with families.
Access to Healthy Food

Healthy food is a necessity for all of us.

When volunteers, donors and funders make healthy food options available, they are promoting the well-being of families and individuals, including children and aging neighbors.

In 2017, dozens of volunteers served hot meals at Maple Alley Inn in Bellingham and distributed food at the rural East Whatcom Regional Resource Center. We also offered families food assistance programs and supported children with a child care nutrition program.

- Households could meet their basic food needs because they enrolled in the Basic Food Assistance program.
- People who were hungry enjoyed a hot, nutritious meal at Maple Alley Inn (19,622 total meals served).
- Children had healthy meals and snacks at child care each month (20,313 total).
- People enrolled in “Fresh Bucks” so they could improve their nutritional intake with fresh fruit and vegetables.

2017 HIGHLIGHTS

New kitchen equipment - Thanks to generous supporters and Faith Lutheran Church, Maple Alley Inn installed commercial cooking appliances in 2017. For Anne Poulson, Program Coordinator, and 45 weekly kitchen volunteers, the upgrades ensure the program increases health and safety standards and meets its goals: volume, safety, and ability to process, prepare, and store food.

Fresh food distributions doubled from once a month to twice a month at the East Whatcom Regional Resource Center. Mobile Food Pantry distribution is available through the Foothills Foodbank and Food Lifeline.

The Faith Community garden provided over 3,000 pounds of fresh, beautiful produce this year for the Maple Alley Inn meal program. Some of the produce was used for meals and we were also able to freeze some for use during the winter and for holiday meals.

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

Skills boost individual potential.

When people increase their job and financial skills, they increase their ability to fully realize their potential and contribute to their community.

OC programs support families and individuals who are working closer to financial stability through supportive-employment programs, financial classes, coaching on budgeting, renter education and savings.

2017 HIGHLIGHTS

Supportive-employment programs in Island and Whatcom county guide clients through the job-seeking process, including resumes, interview skills and coaching on the skills needed to get and keep a job. After getting a job, the program provides post-employment support to help ensure success for both the client and the employer. In 2017 the Bellingham vocational lab moved to an expanded training space at 625 Cornwall Avenue to increase services and trainings.

“Financial Literacy for Kids” is a new program that began in 2017. The Opportunity Council staff in Island County teamed up with the Boys and Girls Club of Oak Harbor to pilot a program designed to teach kids about a range of financial topics, including long-term savings and budgeting.
Providing a Warm, Safe Home

We all need a home.  

*A safe, healthy and affordable home is essential to a family’s well-being and the cornerstone of stability.*

As housing costs continue to increase, Opportunity Council is addressing the need for safe and affordable housing through short and longer-term housing options, eviction prevention and help with energy costs. We also help families improve their current home through Weatherization techniques, home improvements and an education program to conserve energy use.

Giving people the tools and support they need to stay their home contributes to a healthy, vibrant community and neighborhoods. Our Chore volunteers visit people who are aging or have disabilities to help them live independently. Our energy assistance program keeps our aging neighbors warm and safe in their home.

Aging clients were able to continue living independently in their own home with support from Chore volunteers.

Families were able to get or maintain housing in Whatcom (604), San Juan (24), and Island Counties (301).

Families improved their health and in-door air quality through the Healthy Homes program, including reducing asthma triggers.

Home improvement projects ensured home safety and efficiencies for individuals and families.

Energy assistance grants helped people keep the heat and lights on.

Households chose to complete energy upgrades through the Community Energy Challenge.

Households learned how to conserve energy so they could cut costs and stay warm.

Homes were weatherized to improve comfort and affordability.
2017 HIGHLIGHTS

**Twenty apartments in Friday Harbor** will remain affordable thanks to a 2017 sales agreement between the Opportunity Council and the building’s private owners. Harbor View apartments, built in 1984 through financing from USDA’s Rural Development program, was at high risk of transforming into market-rate housing. The sale of the property to Opportunity Council means it will remain affordable to low-income households for years to come.

“22 North” construction began with a ground breaking ceremony in September 2017. Community donors and supporters gathered to celebrate this housing project in Bellingham that is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2018. It will provide 40 units of supportive housing for youth, veterans and others who have experienced homelessness.

**Whatcom Housing Week** was held Nov. 6-9 in Bellingham. The Opportunity council teamed with others to present a week of events aimed at building awareness and support for innovative housing solutions that create diverse, vibrant and healthy homes for all. Event organizing partners included Sustainable Connections, Kulshan Community Land Trust and Unite Care NW.

**More than half of the 21 Dorothy Place units** in Bellingham converted from transitional housing to HUD Permanent Supportive Housing in 2017, which allowed residents to stay in their apartment more than the previous two-year limit. This increased housing stability gives some residents, like “Nancy,” the ability to continue counseling and other services for herself and her two sons. Nancy said she feels a strong sense of community at Dorothy Place and the longer stay gives her time to increase her savings and the ability to focus on her children’s future.
Information & Referrals

Information is key to meeting our needs, or knowing where to start.

A strong network of services connected people of all ages and circumstances to resources, opportunities and support so everyone can all reach their highest potential.

Our community resource and referral centers 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 of our services in Island and Whatcom county sites. We also support families resource center in San Juan County.

2017 HIGHLIGHTS

In addition to Opportunity Council’s staffed resource centers, we also partner with other organizations to provide information. The East Whatcom Regional Resource Center hosts a Community Connections Fair that includes over 30 groups and organizations. Drawings for prizes, opportunities for kids to draw what they like about their community, plus seasonal crafts, gardening information and games all contribute to building community.

The Homeless Student Stability Program provides information and services for families who are at risk of -- or currently experiencing -- homelessness. In 2017 this program expanded. In addition to our partnership with Bellingham schools, the program expanded to other Whatcom County schools and South Whidbey School district in Island County. This program is funded with a grant from the WA State Dept. of Commerce.
Working in Partnership

You play a key role.

Since 1965, our partners, volunteers and advocates have helped create a safe and healthy community for all of us through direct services and advocacy.

Our valued community partners contribute to helping all of us reach our potential, so we can all contribute fully to our communities.

2017 HIGHLIGHTS

Volunteers partner with us to improve the quality of life for local residents and create vibrant communities. In 2017, nearly 1,000 volunteers signed up through our Whatcom Volunteer Center to support 110 community service organizations. Volunteer drivers helped Veterans to their doctor’s appointment, cooks prepare hot meals that help families stretch their food budget, and parents spent time in their child’s preschool to build strong minds.

Partners in Education is a community outreach initiative with local schools to enhance the educational experience for students and give back to the community. OC partners with Oak Harbor Elementary school ambassadors. These youth ambassadors are committed to community service and working with community partners to make a difference.

“I gain a sense of hopefulness when I see so many other wonderful people in my community giving so freely, being active, connected and making other peoples’ lives so much better. I’ve lived here all my life and am so proud to be a part of this amazing community… (As a volunteer) I have also gained so many new skills that I feel like I am a much more qualified worker. I’ve seen volunteers be the top choice in hiring at several non-profits.”

Leslie Grace, volunteer

“For me, Advocacy Day was an opportunity to lend a louder voice for our clients. It was just amazing to be surrounded by so many other passionate people fighting for the same things we are”

Kate Stragis
Housing Assistance Specialist,
Opportunity Council
Our team is committed to our mission.

The experience, knowledge and commitment of OC staff and board members contribute to solutions that address issues our communities care about.

Board of Directors

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Staff and board commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

In September 2017 the Opportunity Council Board of Directors unanimously approved a 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.

“... 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

Thanks to:

282  960  15  803
OC Staff  Volunteers  Board Members  Donors

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2017 STAFF HIGHLIGHTS

The Opportunity Council’s Homeless Outreach team was honored in November with the Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center’s “peace builder” award. “We are so pleased to be able to recognize the important work of the Homeless Outreach Team,” said Moonwater, Executive Director at Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center. “We are glad to bring attention to their compassionate efforts to create connections, foster understanding, and meet the need of one of our county’s most vulnerable populations.”

The “Excellence in Weatherization” award from the Washington State weatherization network of 27 agencies was presented to OC employee Robyn Kaupplia in April 2017, by Mike Selig of Clark County Weatherization and Building Safety (Vancouver, WA). “In my five years of running the Clark County Weatherization program I have heard variations of this phrase, ‘I don’t know, let’s ask Robyn,’ or ‘I goofed up my registration, I need to talk with Robyn fast!’ I know I speak for everyone in the network when I say that Robyn is most deserving of being recognized for her contributions to the State Weatherization network,” Selig said.

Five staff members were recognized in 2017 for their long tenure with the Opportunity Council. Recognition was given for 20, 25 and 30 years of employment with the Opportunity Council. “Having an employee devote 20 plus years of their lives in pursuit of our mission is truly noteworthy and worthy of recognition,” said Executive director Greg Winter. “These staff members are to be congratulated and thanked for their service to our mission.”

Executive Staff

OC’s 282 employees work 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: Ross Quigley, Director
Whatcom Homeless Service Center: Mike Parker, Director
The Energy Project: Shawn Collins, Director
Fiscal: David Foreman, Chief Financial Officer
Human Resources: Lavonne Olsen, Director
Housing Development: Jenny Weinstein, Director
Financials

*A well-planned budget meets our needs today and plans for the future.*

To do this work effectively requires careful planning and adequate financial resource for the civic, social and economic well-being of our communities.

### 2017 Revenue

- Federal: $13,827,250
- State: $2,665,286
- Local Government: $3,819,009
- Fee for Service: $3,412,157
- Donations & Foundation Grants: $4,947,023
- Interest & Other Income: $10,112

**Total Revenues**: $28,680,837

### 2017 Expenditures

- Early Learning & Family Services: $8,582,065
- Weatherization and Home Repair: $2,656,851
- Energy Policy: $429,968
- Housing Services: $5,192,878
- Housing Enterprise: $1,466,424
- Community Services: $1,453,743
- Energy Assistance: $4,779,145
- Other Supporting Services: $1,203,086
- Administrative: $2,819,230

**Total Expenditures**: $28,583,390

**Revenue in Excess of Expenditures**: $97,447*

**Total**: $28,680,837

*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 2018.
Your Support Makes A Difference

Donors, funders, volunteers and supporters equip us to help realize our vision of a safe, just and thriving community.

For the second year in a row, 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.

$500+
Jo Ann Albers
Dr. Philip and Judith Andress Jr
Peter Arneil
Kelly Bachman
Jill Bauer
Ron and Cynthia Bauleke
Teresa Bodensteiner
Leslie Boswell and PJ McGuire
Lisa Clark
Janice Claussen
Joann Collinge
Carol and Dennis Comeau
Judy and Dale Cosgrove
David and Jayme Curley
Gary Dolin and Martha Vernier-Dolin
Glenn Eckard
Sheri and Jim Emerson
Pam Englett
Tim and Leslie Farris
David Finet and Vicki Lippiatt
David and Tanis Foreman
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Stephen Gockley and Ellen Posel
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David Johnson and Shelly Justis-Johnson
Marguerite Johnson
Jack Jovanovich
Michael Karp & Anne Whirledge-Karp
Karen Kaufmann
Beth Kelley
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Jeanette Beck
Albert and Jane Bender
Helene Berg-Kolin
Paul Berube
John and Nancy Blume
Rebecca Boonstra
Brandon Diana Bork
“I would like to begin this letter by extending my sincerest gratitude... Here I have found safety and stability. I’ve begun to lay the path to self-sufficiency. That has been possible because here I am safe. For someone like me it is the difference between surviving and thriving.”

Dorothy Place resident
Whatcom County
1111 Cornwall Ave., Bellingham, WA 98225
360-734-5121 | 800-649-5121

Island County
1791 NE 1st Ave., Oak Harbor, WA 98277
360-679-6577 | 800-317-5427

Building Performance Center
3406 Redwood Ave. Bellingham, WA 98225
360-734-5121

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