



2022 Community Impact Report

opportunity
council



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A Place to Call Home

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Agency Directors

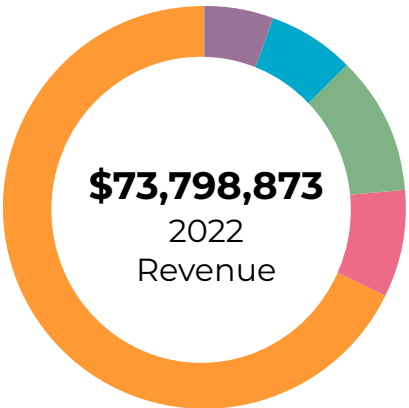
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Teri Bryant <i>Whatcom Homeless Service Center</i>	Melissa Frasch-Brown <i>Island County</i>

BY THE NUMBERS

2022 Financial Report

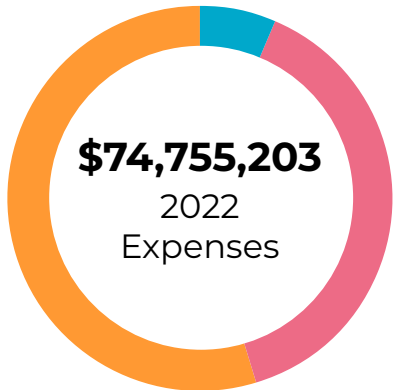
As a community-centered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, we are pleased to offer a full accounting of our funding and contributions for 2022. Over the last calendar year, our operational expenses totaled just over \$73.7M, including \$40.8M in direct financial assistance for individuals and families.

In total, 93% of our funding directly changes lives by supporting our more than 50 programs, Administrative and fundraising costs are less than 7% of agency expenses.



Agency Revenue

Federal Government	\$49,924,909	67.7%
State Government	\$6,311,433	8.6%
Local Government	\$8,302,645	11.3%
Individuals & Foundations	\$5,117,832	6.9%
Fee for Service	\$4,135,929	5.6%
Investment Income	\$6,125	.01%



Agency Expenses

Direct Financial Assistance	\$40,843,974	54.6%
Services & Programs	\$28,972,073	38.8%
Administrative & Fundraising Expenses	\$4,939,156	6.6%

Expenses by Department

Housing Services	\$42,925,389	Other Supporting Services	\$1,421,614
Early Learning & Family Services	\$11,268,301	Community Services	\$1,124,277
Energy Assistance	\$6,475,203	Energy Policy	\$647,998
Weatherization & Home Repair	\$3,472,860	Administrative	\$4,877,263
Housing Enterprise	\$2,480,405	Fundraising	\$61,893



Our Mission

The mission of Opportunity Council is to help people improve their lives through education, support, and direct assistance while advocating for just and equitable communities.

Our Promise

We are one agency in a nationwide network of Community Action Agencies, created in 1965 to combat poverty in partnership with others.

We believe Community Action changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community and are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.

What We Do

HELP WHEN IT'S NEEDED

With our many community safety net programs, we offer practical assistance when people need it—helping keep a roof over their heads and food on the family table while they get back on their feet.

INVEST IN THE FUTURE

We help build the foundations on which strong communities are built by investing in early childhood development & education, a stable workforce & economy, housing infrastructure, and the reduction of our carbon footprint.

PARTNER WITH OTHERS

Through coalitions, shared research, and unique initiatives, we harness the power and expertise of clients, volunteers, donors, and others to identify and meet community needs.

By the numbers



our FOCUS 2022

1

Housing & Homelessness

By matching available homes with the people who need them; managing supportive housing; and repairing and building housing, we work to make sure our community has enough available housing so that every person can live in the home that's right for them.

Read more about Housing & Homelessness on pages 8-9, 14-15, 16-17.

2

Children & Families

Our quality early childhood programs support children and families starting from pregnancy. Through our commitments to quality education, supporting and investing in child care providers, and supporting families, we help make sure children get the start in life they deserve.

Read more about Children & Families on pages 7, 9, 10-11, 12, 15.

3

Basic Needs

Regardless of their life situation, everybody needs a little help now and then. When times are tough, we can help qualifying individuals and families in need make ends meet by helping with utility bills, rent, food, childcare, school supplies and more.

Read more about Basic Needs on pages 6-7, 8-9, 12-13

4

Jobs & Financial Skills

A healthy, productive life depends on skill, grit, and the opportunity to succeed. Through employment support, financial literacy classes, and more, people gain the tools they need to build the lives they dream of.

Read more about Jobs & Financial Skills on pages 14-15

5

Community Health

People and communities prosper when health is a priority. Reducing the impacts of climate change and making sure everyone has access to healthcare, nutritious food, and a safe and healthy home are all key to a vibrant, thriving community.

Read more about Community Health on pages 12-13, 16-17.

EMPOWERING PEOPLE

community members connect with experts and resources

Resource Connection

Connecting people with the help and information they need is key to changing lives. We see that every day in all our services but especially at our Community Resource Centers that serve as beacons of hope for people in need.

At Opportunity Council resource centers experts help people in need connect with the more than 50 Opportunity Council services and programs as well as providing referrals for other partner agencies.

Our centers are located in Bellingham, Oak Harbor, and Kendall; we also partner with resource centers on Orcas, San Juan, and Lopez Islands to help meet their communities' unique needs.

Mr. C's Story

Mr. C had always counted on his trusty bicycle to run errands, including picking up groceries. He came to the Island County Community Resource Center one snowy and icy day, realizing that balancing loads was getting tougher.

The team came up with a solution: a 3-wheeled bike was a cost-effective solution that could provide Mr. C with the stability he needed to maintain his independence. When his new bike arrived, Mr. C's reaction was "on par with a 5-year-old's on Christmas morning," Community staff said. Before hitting the road and cruising the streets, Mr. C decided to pay it forward. He passed on his old bike to someone who would love it just like he did.

Pictured right: Mr. C. wheels his new bicycle out of the Island County Resource Center



Financial Wellness

In 2022 people continued to benefit from experts who teach skills everyone needs to thrive through our financial wellness programs.

From lessons on creating budgets, conserving energy, and even achieving home ownership, clients partner with staff and volunteer mentors to address challenges, set goals, and build on existing skills.

Programs like \$wellness are important for renters in particular—offering important tools for people moving into affordable housing. Meanwhile, programs like Economic Security for All (EcSA) work with whole families to reach financial stability and their career goals.



Energy Experts Help Others Save

Demand for Home Energy Audits continued to increase in 2022, with the Community Energy Challenge team completing 115 audits to help renters and homeowners cut down on gas and electricity use and costs.

This year, we also began offering financial incentives to Community Energy Challenge clients making the switch from gas-burning space or water heating to high-efficiency heat pumps. Anticipating an increase in demand for energy efficiency and electrification services thanks to the Inflation Reduction Act, an additional Home Energy Advisor also joined the team.

Pictured at left: Energy Advisors measure heat leakage

Every little bit helps

Helping people connect with resources like Basic Food and tax help, and financial incentives from programs like EcSA help people stretch their dollars, and resources.

Meanwhile, programs like the Community Energy Challenge provide energy audits and

financial incentives to anyone looking to improve energy efficiency.

Each of these programs helps people keep their heads above water, while also supporting local businesses and the future of Northwest Washington.

Pictured at right: a graduating EcSA family celebrates with their incentive check.



188

People accessed food for their families by enrolling in Basic Food programs

20

Calls fielded by the tax helpline

46

People and families gained skills, confidence, and financial incentives through the Economic Security for All program.

7071

Connections and referrals made by the Whatcom Community Resource Center

2400

Connections and referrals made by the Island County Community Resource Center

3373

Connections and referrals made by the Whatcom Community Resource Center

2309

Calls and visits made to the East Whatcom Regional Resource Center

OFFERING A HELPING HAND

a safety net to keep the lights on and a roof overhead

Direct Assistance

Job loss. Unexpected medical bills. Soaring energy costs. Fleeing domestic violence or even war zones. These are just a few of the reasons we hear when clients come to Opportunity Council for direct assistance.

Direct aid programs like rental assistance, utility grants, emergency child care vouchers and hot meals from Maple Alley Inn knit together to create a vital community safety net. By providing temporary financial aid and meeting basic needs, we help people make ends meet while they're down on their luck, protecting them from falling deep into poverty or homelessness.



Sarah's Story

Sarah and her family were living in a small room in a barn with no when they first came to Opportunity Council looking for help. The family was staying at one of our hotel partners—a warm safe place they got back on their feet.

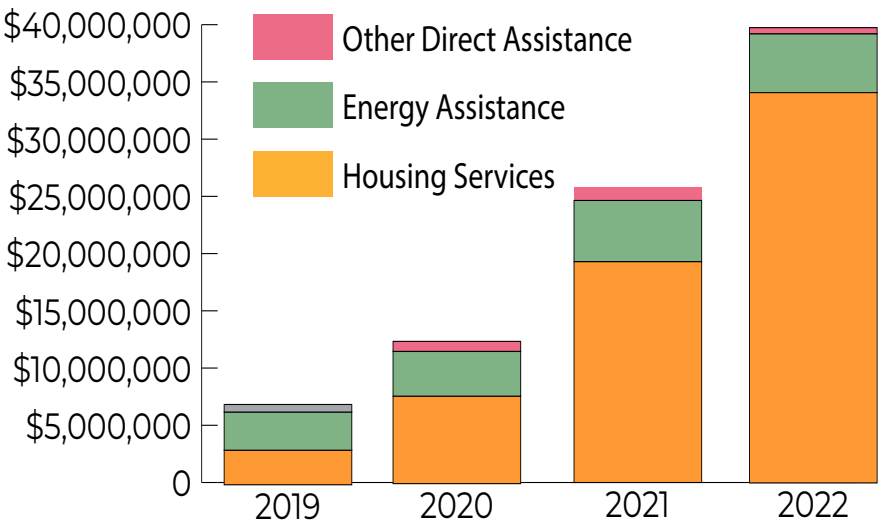
With weekly check-ins from their case manager, Taylor, and help with applications and securing work permits, the family found a home to start over.

"When you learned about [our situation], you took us into your care", said Sarah. "Your support and help did not stop there. We are very grateful to you for helping us."

Rental Assistance

For the second year in a row, help paying rent was the most pressing need for local individuals and families, and the most frequent form of direct assistance provided by Opportunity Council.

In 2022, Opportunity Council distributed \$34,100,629 in rental assistance and other forms of housing aid that ensures people don't lose the roof over their heads. In addition to keeping individuals and families in their homes, these dollars also support middle class landlords depending on rental income for their own financial stability.



A critical lifeline to families, individuals, and landlords, the program is funded by federal COVID-19 emergency dollars through June of 2023.

The federally funded program differs from previous rental assistance programs not just in scale, but in program requirements as it was open to both tenants and landlords seeking help on their tenants behalf.

All that a family meal provides

Needs don't get more basic than food. Throughout 2022, the Maple Alley Inn team worked hard to meet that need in every way they could.

We continued to provide packaged meals to families temporarily living in hotels as well as individuals and families those living in Dorothy Place and other supportive housing programs. Hot to-go meal service began in May.

Finally in November, we returned to in person dining, providing a hot fresh lunchtime meal once a week, in addition to our packaged meals.

Pictured right: Anne Poulson, long time Maple Alley Inn manager stands ready with her team of volunteers to welcome people to the first hot meal of 2022.



3791

Households in Whatcom, Island and San Juan Counties received Rental Assistance

8811

Grants to help keep the lights and heat on through our Energy Assistance Program

8062

Hot, nutritious meals served to families, seniors, veterans and anyone who was hungry.

59

Emergency child care vouchers to keep children in a safe and familiar childcare setting

GROWING TOGETHER

helping children and families grow learn and thrive

Investing in the future

Supporting families and young children isn't just the right thing to do, it's also a smart investment for the future of our communities.

The enriched nurturing environments of Head Start and preschool classrooms set the stage for later school success by promoting healthy brain development for young children, while programs like Early Head Start and SEAS (Single Entry Access to Services) support whole families by building parent skills and connecting caregivers with family resources.

By supporting children and families wherever they're at, we are giving children the start they deserve and building the future for us all.



"It's been a lifesaver"

When Katie and her family first came to Opportunity Council, they were in search of preschool for her three year old.

After meeting with the staff at their local Head Start location, Katie's three year old daughter was soon enrolled in the program. "It's made a big impact...being able to get back into the work force and be in such a supportive environment—watching my child grow going from 3-5 in the program and watching her flourish.

"It's not just a child in a classroom, but there are lots of extras that come with Head Start. Lots of support that we've had as a family and it's been a lifesaver. Truly a life saver."

Pictured above right: Katie and her family, celebrating together

FARM TO EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION IN NORTHWEST WASHINGTON

From 2020 - 2022, Child Care Aware of Northwest Washington and Opportunity Council worked together to bring an amazing learning experience to local children and families in the Skagit Valley Area through the Farm to Early Care and Education program.

In the program, Viva Farms provided fresh local produce for taste tests and classroom activities as well as seeds and technical assistance to sites with gardens. The program began in Head Start, expanded to the Mount Vernon School District (serving primarily children with English as



their second language), and grew to reach Latina-led private child care facilities as well. They have been able to partner with over 30 sites in the area.

An important part of this project is bringing cultural learning to the table. Many of the children participating in the program are the children of farmers. Said one teacher "I want them to be proud of what their parents do, that food is an essential part of community and society, and farmers and farmworkers should be respected and uplifted and represented in a positive light."



441

children ready to start school eager to learn after Early Learning programs

1230

SEAS referrals connected children with a medical provider and resources for housing, food, insurance and other needs

79

Infants & Families off to a great start thanks to the wraparound services of Early Head Start

557

children were served healthy meals and snacks at their child care each month.

For Families, By Families

Policy Council is the parent/ family-led governing body that works in conjunction with staff, community members, and the Opportunity Council Board of Directors to oversee our Early Learning Programs

In 2022, the council continued to meet virtually, allowing more

families to participate.

In Spring 2022, Policy Council hosted a "Teddy Bear Circus Picnic" for families at Bellingham's Squalicum Creek Park, with games and activities, prizes, face painting, food, and even a juggler!



BETTER TOGETHER

Expanding impact through partnerships & collaborations

Community Helping Community

Opportunity Council offers a diverse range of services, but we can't do it alone. We build partnerships with other organizations, educators, employers, volunteers, community foundations, faith communities, businesses and more.

Some of our most important partnerships of 2022 were our 9 hotel partners. These for-profit businesses partner with us to house families with no other place to call home—offering safe, stable, private shelter for parents to keep their children safe while they work with staff to find a permanent home.

Other examples of our partnerships and collaborations include the Whatcom Asset Building Coalition, Whatcom Volunteer Center, and the Way Station Partnership with Unity Care, set to break ground in 2023.

Heather's Story

Heather D. knows firsthand the stress, anxiety, and uncertainty that come with not having a place to call home. A single mom of two, she worked hard to get back on her feet and is now proud to staff the front desk at the Baymont Inn & Suites.

From behind the desk, Heather works directly with the children and families staying in her hotel while they work with Opportunity Council staff to find a new home to move into. It's a critical step in moving from homelessness to a place to call home. From late-night pickups for a mom who needs a ride, to helping make sure children catch the school bus, Heather freely offers up the kindness she once needed herself.

"I'm just here to do the right thing," she says. "I help because I can."

Pictured right: Heather and Kristina from Opportunity Council discuss ways to help



First Annual Health Fair

In 2022 Opportunity Council and the Whatcom County Health Department held the first annual Catherine Mahaffey East Whatcom Wellness Fair.

Named after an East Whatcom resident deeply passionate about healthcare, the fair gave East Whatcom County residents the chance to access vaccines, a bike safety course, eye exams, dental visits and check-ups for free.

Presented in partnership with the Whatcom County Health Department this first annual event featured services and exhibits from:

- Sea Mar Community Health Centers
- PeaceHealth
- Smart Trips
- Medical Teams International
- VSP Vision Care
- SmartTrips

Thanks to our partners and community members we were able to help an under-served population access traditional health care services that are normally more than an hour away. The event was completely free to attend as well, with no insurance required to receive services.



Pairs of glasses distributed



Eye Exams completed



Households sheltered safely by hotel partners while they searched for new homes



Households served by the Whidbey Essential Needs Program



Adults and children accessed free health care at the Catherine Mahaffey Health Fair



Households served by the Whidbey Essential Needs Program



Meeting people wherever they're at

For the second year in a row, we were able help Whidbey Island residents with ranging from refrigerators to cremation fees.

The Whidbey Island Essential Needs fund provided by the Whidbey Community Foundation and Goosefoot

Foundation continued to help meet needs not usually covered by our other grant and contract-funded programs. The flexible fund allows us to meet the unique needs of the families and individuals we serve. From stoves to child care to funeral costs, we can help people get back on their feet.

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

investing in people, homes, and a strong workforce

Resource Connection

Through employment support services, job training, support for small businesses, and continuing training for both childcare providers and weatherization professionals, we not only meet critical community needs; we also invest in our workforce and local economy.

In 2022, we helped business owners recover from the year-end floods of 2021, supported the continuing education of childcare providers, and continued to share our expertise in weatherization across the state and beyond.



Closing the Child Care Gap

Recognized by business leaders, government officials, and families as a critical need facing our communities, we continue to work to both create new childcare businesses and support existing businesses through the Center for Retention & Expansion of Child Care (a partnership with the Bellingham Regional Chamber of Commerce).

We also work to retain this critical workforce by supporting childcare professionals with ongoing education opportunities and other supports.



Rebuilding after catastrophe

Not long ago, catastrophic floods rocked Whatcom County, leaving businesses hard. The impact was particularly devastating for providers located in rural Whatcom County.

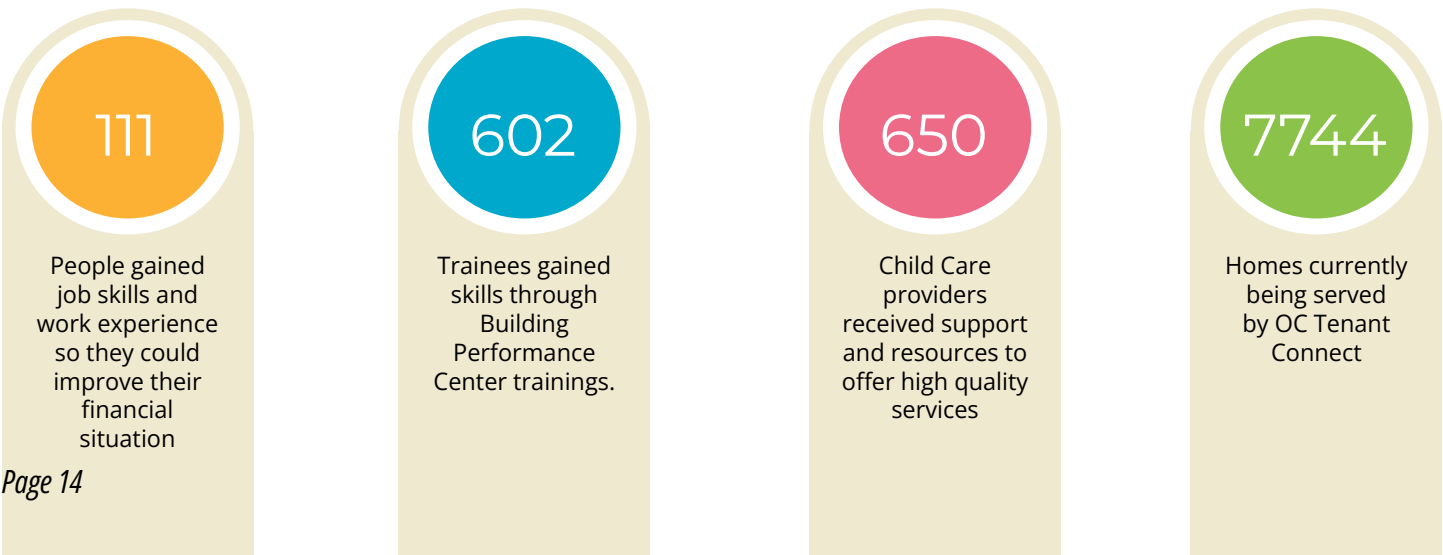
Thanks to community support, we were able to help these providers get back on their feet just weeks later. With funding from the Whatcom Community Foundation, our Center for Retention & Expansion of Child Care worked with the providers to secure a temporary home, obtain grants, and keep these two small family businesses afloat.

“[You] provided peace of mind...I did not have to worry about how to pay for the rent of facilities while I was working to rebuild my house. It allowed myself and another childcare provider to continue to provide quality childcare and nutrition to children in care. Thank you for your generosity in a time of great need!!!” ~Stephanie Anderson, Little Sprouts Preschool and Daycare



Leading the way across the state

We continue to Weatherization professionals across the state and country through Home Improvement Department and Building Performance Center training programs. Using a curriculum that combines healthy homes building science with national standards and state specific program guidelines, staff from the Building Performance Center continue to provide education and job skills training for the weatherization workforce.



OC Housing Partners

A unique partnership between Opportunity Council and housing developers, OC Housing Partners helps connect renters with local services, fund critical services and support the building of new homes in communities hit hard by the housing crisis.

In 2022, we worked to support tenants across our communities through Tenant Connect and moved forward on our upcoming Laurel Forest project, which will provide both homes for seniors and much needed childcare in downtown Bellingham.



Safety & Stability

The importance of a place to call home

The Foundation of Everything

We all need a decent, affordable place to call home. Our homes provide us with a sense of safety and security—they are the foundation for a healthy life.

Our approach to making sure everyone has a place to call home is multi-faceted: we work to keep existing homes safe and habitable through our Home Improvement Department; create more homes through OC Housing Partners; keep people in their homes through rental assistance and case management; and help people move from homelessness into homes through homeless outreach, supportive housing, and coordinated entry programs.



Repairing a home to stay above water

The home repair loan program keeps families and the community above water. With so many communities finding themselves short of housing, it's vital that we preserve and maintain as many homes as possible. Our home repair loan program is a lifeline to many--allowing for affordable repairs that keep a home habitable. In the words of one client:

"This situation with my roof and structure was very traumatic. I am still reeling from the kindness and generosity I have been shown throughout what was, for me, a nightmare. I don't know what I would have done without Opportunity Council. I can't express my appreciation—there aren't words to do it justice. Thank you, thank you, thank you."

135

Home Repair Projects ensured home safety and durability

84

Homes weatherized to improve comfort, safety, and affordability

849

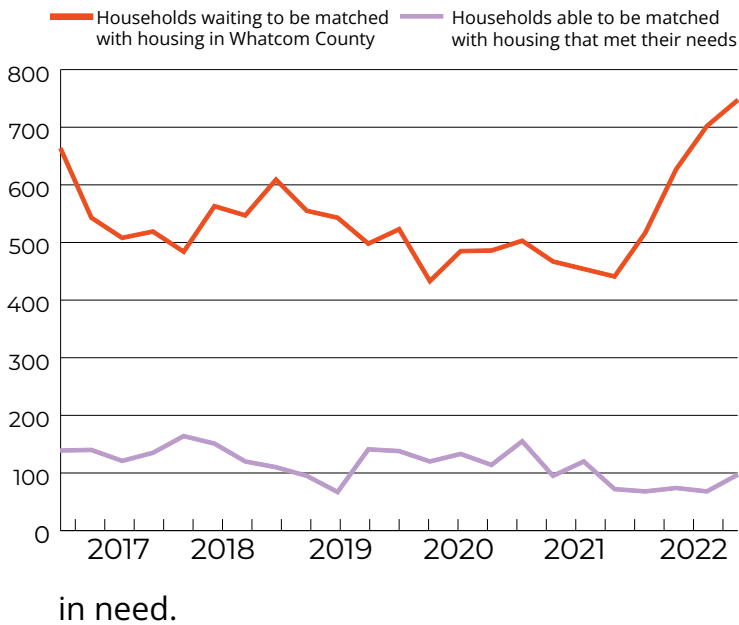
Households able to get or maintain housing through Opportunity Council Services

479

people experiencing homelessness who are contacted regularly by the Homeless Outreach Team

A frustrating trend

Even though Opportunity Council was able to help hundreds of families and other households out of homelessness in 2022, the gap between people in need and available housing continues to grow. While Coordinated Entry programs like that operated by Whatcom Homeless Service Center work to match people and families experiencing homelessness with available



county-wide program openings, the number of people in need continued to increase dramatically in 2022, while the resources to help them stayed stagnant.

Across the state, there are too few homes to serve the population (citation), making it vital that we continue investing in the development of new housing as well as important services like the Whatcom Homeless Service Center that track available housing and match it with people



Baree's Story: From Getting Support to Giving It



As is the case for so many, a safe, supportive and permanent place to call home was exactly what Baree needed in her life when she came to 22 North after years of experiencing homelessness.

Away from the danger and stress of her past life, Baree was able to focus on her health—joining a peer support group, and working hard with 22 North staff to meet her sobriety goals. Settled in

at 22 North, she adopted a cat named Randall, a furry companion who helps Baree feel at home and less alone.

Now on stable footing, Baree is giving back. She's part of the "Scrub Club" (22 North's neighborhood clean-up crew), was recently promoted to manager at her restaurant job, and has her sights set on getting into social work and becoming a peer counselor.

