

# COMMUNITY PARTNER CONNECTION

Transforming Lives

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2021

## Affordable Housing for Veterans

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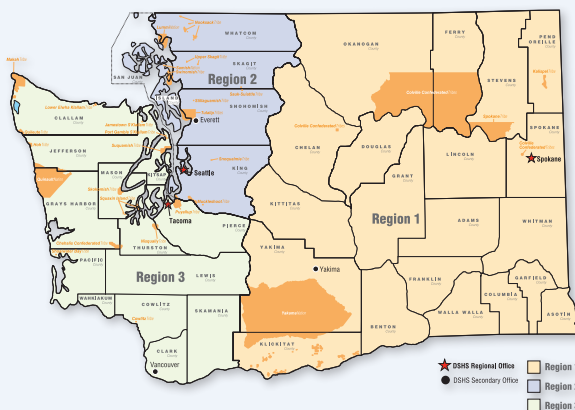
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## Yakima Housing Authority Affordable Housing for Veterans

Article submitted by Sally Shelton

Lowell Krueger, Executive Director at Yakima Housing Authority, has dreamed of providing affordable housing to veterans since 2016.

The project site, a former U.S. Marine Armory donated by the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services in 2017, came with specific instructions that it be used as affordable housing for veterans. It was later named Chuck Austin Place, after a local veteran who served in World War II and both the Korean and Vietnam wars. The gymnasium, completed in 2019, was dedicated to the Bravo Company of the 4th tank battalion, which had been based out of the old armory.

When completed, Chuck Austin Place will have 41 units (14 studios, 17 one-bedroom units and 10 two-bedroom units). Amenities will include raised

garden beds, an enclosed dog park and a walking path around the campus. In partnership with the U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs, all units will have assistance through either project-based or Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing, or VASH vouchers. Rent and utilities will not exceed more than 30% of the resident's income.

The new complex will include a health and dental clinic in partnership with Yakima Neighborhood Health Services. Other available on-site supportive services are VASH case management, a housing manager, a Supportive Services for Veteran Families case manager and a hygiene center.

Separate fundraising efforts have been launched to add a veterans memorial, upgrades to the gymnasium and outdoor benches. A "Call to Artists"

project is also in progress, with artists submitting designs for murals and other artwork for the site. Learn more on the [Yakima Housing Authority website](#).



## Aging and Long-Term Care of Eastern Washington Hard at Work

Article submitted by Savannah Reams-Taylor, Community Outreach Specialist

Aging and Long Term-Care is the Area Agency on Aging for Ferry, Stevens, Pend Oreille, Spokane and Whitman counties. We help older adults and adults living with disabilities discover the resources they need to plan, prepare for, and support living independently for as long as possible.

Following the launch of several programs during the pandemic, Aging and Long Term-Care has been hard at work helping our community manage their needs during our constantly changing world.

### Some highlights from 2021:

- **Check and Connect:** Our volunteer-based program now calls more than 80 isolated clients weekly to assist with emergent needs, offer resources and provide socialization. Many clients have expressed appreciation for the calls, stating that sometimes that is the only person they have spoken with in several days.
- **COVID-19 Response:** Community Living Connections staff are assisting clients with information about the vaccination and transportation to appointments. Our information line is fielding many calls daily to ensure people have equitable access!
- **Falls Prevention:** Falls Prevention staff completed the agency's first A Matter of Balance virtual class in May, with nine people in attendance. A technical support person was available to assist participants in navigating the Zoom platform. Planning is underway to resume A Matter of Balance in-person classes in the future.
- **Spokane Area Dementia Friendly Community:** This group conducted a survey and community forum to analyze Spokane County's needs when it comes to improving the lives of people living with dementia and their care partners. They are currently working to create a community action plan.

If the pandemic has shown us anything this past year, it is that as a community, we can get through anything. Check on your senior neighbors and friends! Refer them if you have concerns and then watch the community work to ensure those needs are met. Thanks for being a part of the solution!

If anyone would like additional information or assistance, or wants to schedule a presentation to learn more about our programs, please contact our helpline at 509-960-7281 or [visit our site](#).

## Comprehensive Healthcare and Yakima Valley Memorial Partner to Expand Care for Substance Abuse

Submitted by Tori Tarter

Recognizing that 2020 was a record year for opioid-related deaths in Washington and across the U.S., with 2021 set to continue the trend, Comprehensive Healthcare and Yakima Valley Memorial collaborated to bring cohesive prevention, intervention and treatment efforts to patients.

"For us at the emergency department at YVM, we are seeing many overdoses where it's not the client's first visit, and I realized there is a lot more we can do in terms of prevention," said Dr. Brian Padilla, Emergency Medicine Specialist at YVM.

Comprehensive Healthcare recently expanded its provision of medications to treat opioid use disorders to include Suboxone. Around that time, Padilla and his team at YVM connected with Comprehensive Healthcare's Hospital Liaison and Chief Medical Officer, building on an existing professional partnership.

Suboxone, a medication used to help individuals with an opioid use disorder, blocks the addictive effects of opioid medications and specifically for individuals in withdrawal. Individuals often experience pain through the withdrawal process, and intervention

with Suboxone helps interrupt that discomfort, on top of providing a more affordable and safer course of action than street drugs.

"It's our hope to help as many people as possible with this partnership. If we can help even just one person by providing Suboxone, we're saving someone's life," said Padilla.

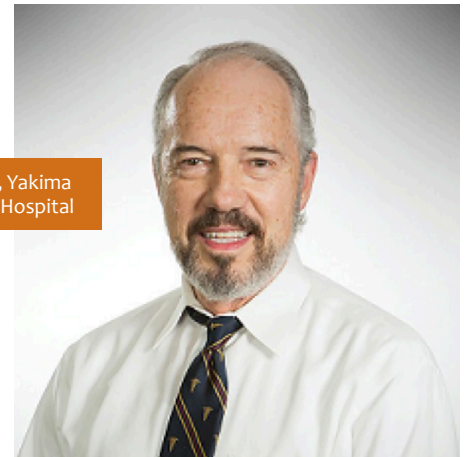
Clients who enter the program through YVM can be prescribed and given an initial dose of Suboxone at the time of their emergency room visit. An ED provider then refers that patient to Comprehensive Healthcare for continued, follow-up care.

"We're the behavioral health complement to the emergency care team at YVM," said Dr. Frank Garner at YVM. "Normally, anyone can get some level of treatment for withdrawals from emergency departments, but if they're not followed up with right away there's higher risk the individual turns to street drugs and fentanyl."

Each client receiving medications for opioid use disorders have a counselor and medical provider to assist with managing medications, alongside outpatient therapy options.

"Creating effective community partnerships builds communities of health that allow clients to be successful when on a journey of recovery," said Jodi Daly, President and CEO, Comprehensive Healthcare. "We are grateful that YVM is willing to partner with our Medication Assisted Treatment program in a way that benefits our community and the clients we serve."

Individuals experiencing an overdose or dangerous withdrawal symptoms are encouraged to seek emergency medical care. Otherwise, walk-in appointments for Suboxone are available at Comprehensive Healthcare.



Dr. Frank Garner, Yakima Valley Memorial Hospital

### REGION 2 update

## LWTech Hosts 2021 Virtual Spring Job and Internship Fair

Submitted by Amber Hisatake

[Lake Washington Institute of Technology](#) had its first virtual Spring Job and Internship Fair on Tuesday, May 18 — and it was a huge success! It featured 29 employers from a variety of different industries with a wide array of job openings and internships. More than 380 people attended, 120 of them were LWTech students and graduates, and more than 500 chat sessions took place between employers and attendees. It

was a truly amazing turnout! We appreciate the event planning and support that was provided by our WorkSource Seattle-King County partners, who also provided us with complimentary access to the Brazen platform for the event. Our WorkSource partners said this was the largest-attended virtual job fair they have participated in this year, and we received very positive feedback from attendees and employers.





## Allen Family Center Hosts Pfizer Vaccine Event

Submitted by Claire Kenneally



We had a very successful two-part Pfizer vaccine event at the Allen Family Center. It was truly a heartfelt experience to see the community joined together at the AFC to fight the spread of COVID-19. We are happy to report the turnout from the second-dose event on June 15 brought many new sign-ups and a few new Allen Family Center guests. Cancer Care Alliance, Fred Hutch and King County Public Health returned to the AFC in July to offer a third clinic event. Our engagement specialist, Savannah, greeted guests with snacks, and we provided to-go lunches put together by our resident service coordinator, Jada. It was a glimpse into the buzzing activity we hope to see as COVID-19 restrictions come to an end.

## Alcoholics and Addicts Helping Alcoholics and Addicts

Submitted by Jennifer Hopgood

We are a private supportive housing program serving individuals struggling with homelessness, as well as addiction and/or mental illness. Our residential facilities are located in south King County and offer more than simple affordable housing. They come fully furnished and include a laundry facility, stocked kitchens, telephones, computers and Wi-Fi.

We also provide our clients with onsite case management, education and occupational assistance, weekly NA/AA meetings and group wellness classes. We maintain strong partnerships with health facilities, non-profits and justice-involved organizations to serve our

clients throughout their recovery and/or mental health challenges. We accept housing vouchers and payments from HEN, HARPs, SOUND Health, Department of Corrections, REACH, Arms Around You, IF Project, St. Vincent de Paul, Share and Care, private pay and more! We work as a team to reduce our homeless population experiencing addiction and/or mental illness.

Meet one of our clients and case managers: Zach. Zach was released from SCORE jail in 2018 and came to AAHAA for transitional sober living. He has over three years of sobriety, and since first coming to AAHAA has graduated to



house manager and is now working as one of our case managers. We are so proud of Zach and all of our clients' hard work and commitment to improving their lives! You can learn more [here](#).

## Allen Family Center Works to Build a Thriving, Inclusive Community

Submitted by Claire Kenneally

In partnership with Paul G. Allen Family Foundation and the City of Seattle, Mercy Housing Northwest, Mary's Place, Child Care Resources and Refugee Women's Alliance have combined their resources and expertise at Allen Family Center. We are located on the ground floor of Gardner House, across from Mount Baker Link Light Rail Station in Seattle.

Allen Family Center honors all families, responds to crises when they arise and creates long-term stability by building a thriving, inclusive community. A collaborative approach simplifies the intake process and services are individualized based on each family's needs and goals.

We co-designed Allen Family Center's programming with families who experienced homelessness and listened as they passionately advocated for how to make Allen Family Center an inviting community resource. The Center's partners will seek continual guidance from an advisory board, which includes members with lived experiences to refine our programming.

At Allen Family Center, families will find a welcoming, one-stop hub of services in an environment designed for children:

- Diversion, housing placement and homelessness prevention.
- Help in securing affordable and culturally appropriate child care.
- Afterschool programs, health education and financial stability.
- Immigrant/refugee family-centered services, such as job navigation, housing and mental health services.
- Community events and social gatherings.
- A safe space to build healthy, positive relationships in the community.

Families are welcome to walk into the center, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. On site, we also offer resources like diapers, wipes, hygiene items and dry goods.

You are also welcome to call our front desk at (206) 584-2832. We are located at 3190 S. Hanford Street, Seattle, WA 98144.



## WithinReach – Help Me Grow

### 2021 Legislative Wins to Support Washington Children and Families

Submitted by Angelica Rivera

During this year's legislative session, WithinReach advocated for many important priorities related to equity, food access, physical and behavioral health and early learning. We are excited to share about three key successes for children and families that tie into our chief legislative priority of building a statewide Help Me Grow WA system.

[Help Me Grow WA](#) offers families seamless access to community services and supports so they can easily connect to the resources they need, when they need them.

#### Expanding Our Resource Navigator Workforce

Leading efforts alongside advocacy champion Sen. Claire Wilson, WithinReach secured \$530,000 to hire and train more resource navigators to connect Washington families with essential nutrition, health and child development resources.

**The impact:** *We know that finding help is hard. With this funding, more families in our state will have access to the services and resources they need to be healthy and safe. This achievement is the first time Washington has funded the statewide Help Me Grow WA system.*

#### Building Washington's Early Learning System

We worked closely with early learning advocates and legislative champions to pass the Fair Start for Kids Act, a significant investment in equitable, affordable, high-quality child care and early learning. Help Me Grow WA will be a crucial part of this comprehensive work to support families.

**The impact:** *The need for quality, culturally and linguistically relevant early learning is essential to protect communities and dismantle barriers to opportunity. This bill will provide the largest investment in early learning and child care in state history to help achieve this.*

#### Paving the Way for Optimal Health and Development

The third legislative success relates to building a strong connection between Help Me Grow WA and Paid Family Leave. The budget includes a directive for the Employment Security Department to connect Paid Family Leave beneficiaries with Help Me Grow WA so that families can easily access important health and development resources.

**The impact:** *This partnership will ensure that more families with young children, prenatal through age 5, seamlessly connected to the services and community resources they need to thrive. Linking these two statewide systems is a significant step forward in building a Help Me Grow WA system statewide.*



## Orion: Gathering and Using Feedback

Submitted by Kathy Powers

Recognizing that individuals we support need more input into designing services that meet their needs, Orion has embarked on a project to listen closely to those least heard and respond to the feedback from those we serve. We began this journey to improve experiences for participants and staff and to assure we listened to those most impacted by racial and economic inequities.

In October 2020, Orion launched a project in partnership with [Listen4Good](#). We were fortunate to engage REDF as a funding partner on this project.

Listen4Good is a Fund for Shared Insight initiative that delivers tailored solutions for direct-service nonprofits and government agencies committed to using feedback to bring about positive changes in the ways they make decisions, deliver services and partner with clients.

Listen4Good's programs offer simple, but systematic, ways to build high-quality survey-based feedback loops with clients. Each Listen4Good program is specially designed to help nonprofits listen and respond to the people most impacted by their work and is grounded in the principles and practices of equity and inclusion.

A feedback loop includes these key aspects: Design, Collect, Interpret, Respond and Close Loop.

Between January 2021 and April 2021, we conducted surveys with 43 Auburn manufacturing training program participants. The following results and action items were developed based on analysis of the survey feedback and these results will be shared with participants.

- You said: Orion is good at teaching and training effective case management and have supportive, positive staff.
- You said: You would like us to use a variety of teaching techniques. In response, we will increase mentor support to improve teaching efficacy.
- You said: You want increased connection, support and understanding. In response, we will provide ongoing coaching to mentors and staff that will help build stronger connections.
- You said: You are fearful about finding a job and navigating employer questions after Orion. In response, we will develop What's Next workshops to assist participants with the transition to employment.
- We noted that our survey results revealed a lack of diverse demographic representation. In response, we will actively engage strategies to recruit participants from underserved populations. We will increase representation of our community in our training programs and throughout our organization.

## St. Vincent de Paul - North Sound Council

Submitted by Amy Chestine

"COVID clean outs" have helped our stores serve people with low incomes throughout north Puget Sound. With many people cleaning out their houses and donating to our stores, we have many items to support individuals. While there are many urgent needs that St. Vincent de Paul - North Sound Council has been assisting with, an area we would like to share is our thrift stores and our **Beds for Children** program.

Our stores are non-profit with the proceeds supporting the Friends of the Poor, who provide aid to low-income people and our programs throughout north Puget Sound. Through our thrift stores, we provide low-cost clothes, furniture and household items to the community. Annually, we distribute cold-weather clothing, blankets and sleeping bags for our neighbors who are homeless and low-income. In 2020, we served 295 homeless people who came into our stores seeking warm clothing. Through SVdP conference vouchers, over 900 neighbors in need received free clothing and household items.

We have Beds for Children program, where parents may request a free new bed for their children. St. Vincent's assists with many basic needs and this program is an extension of that assistance. The need for children's beds continues. Our help line has been open throughout this crisis. Following safety protocols, volunteers have coordinated with the Council office to arrange for parents to pick up new beds. The program provided 207 children with new beds during the pandemic. Grants allow the Council office to coordinate with local conferences, who have their own funding, to stretch our assistance.

- One heartwarming story of assistance was a mother who secured an assisted housing apartment with her mother and two children, but they had no furniture or household items. The Council with Beds for Children funds provided two free children's beds, and a futon, dining table and kitchen items were provided by local SVdP conference funds.
- One mom who called our helpline was in need of a mattress, box spring and frame for three children who were sleeping on pallets on the floor. Beds for Children swept into action and provided her with three new beds. We were able to relieve this mother's worry.
- Another mother who had previously been couch surfing with her three children recently received a subsidized apartment. Her three children were sleeping on the floor when she called for assistance. With our grant funding, we provided beds and the local St. Vincent de Paul conference provided sheets and comforters. The kids were excited to receive their beds, so much so that the oldest child wanted to stay home from school that day.

Our Beds for Children program offers a simple, direct, and immediate long-term solution. Many times a new bed is too much for the parents' budget. We are helping parents create a home for their children. The joy and relief we witness with each new bed is proof of how a minimal improvement to a household has an impact.

Children under 18 years of age are the recipients of the Beds for Children program. For every child who receives a new bed, their parent also receives the fulfillment of knowing that their child is comfortable. You can learn more about St. Vincent de Paul - North Sound Council [here](#).

## Manufacturing Student Finds the Sky is the Limit at Shoreline Community College

Submitted by Inez Olive

Aaron Goodwin had only completed one year of manufacturing classes at Shoreline Community College when he was offered a job working as a machinist for a local company. He was pleased to be hired in the industry so quickly and stopped taking classes to focus on working full-time. Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit and he was unexpectedly laid off. Instead of feeling defeated about losing his job, Goodwin remained optimistic and quickly knew what he wanted to do next — return to Shoreline.

"I had already finished my first year at Shoreline, so I decided to finish my second year of classes," Goodwin said. "Shoreline is currently the only school offering the second year of the AA degree in Machinist Technology."

He re-enrolled at Shoreline and qualified for special worker retraining funding due to his unemployment status. Goodwin is now on track to graduate this summer with an Associate of Applied Arts and Sciences in Manufacturing/Machinist Technology.

"Everyone in the program at Shoreline — from the instructor, to the director, the shop manager, and the teaching assistant — is awesome at what they do!" Goodwin said. "Also, I couldn't have done it without my guidance counselor, Wanda Waldrop. Because of her motivation and knowledge of this program, I will be graduating with an AA."

Goodwin's enthusiasm is fueled by his belief that he is learning skills that will continue to be in demand.

"Mechatronics is the future of manufacturing and learning about it puts you and your understanding of robotics in high demand," he said.

What is next for Goodwin after graduation? He is looking forward to finding another job in the industry.

"The sky is the limit!" he said.

As the post-COVID economy begins to pick up, many small and large manufacturing firms in the Puget Sound — including plastics, molding, general manufacturing, and aerospace — have started to rehire machining technicians and operators.

*Shoreline Community College offers evening and weekend training in as little as 10 weeks in basic manufacturing, precision machining, computer-aided manufacturing, machine maintenance, quality assurance, electronics, and robotics. Summer classes began June 28 in South Seattle and Shoreline. Learn more about the [manufacturing program](#) at Shoreline.*





## Refugee Women's Alliance – Coming out of COVID

Submitted by Joanne Walby

In the past year, Refugee Women's Alliance (ReWA) has helped over 200 immigrants and refugees in the Puget Sound access mental health counseling. Most suffer from depression, PTSD, or just have trouble adjusting to a new country. All of these were exacerbated by the pandemic.

Dr. Azmi Jafaar is the clinical supervisor of ReWA's Behavioral Health program. He trained in Iraq as a medical doctor, and psychiatrist before coming to the United States in 2016 where he became a licensed mental health professional.

"I became interested in mental health when I was in high school. I read [Sigmund] Freud's theories and learned how he treated his clients through 'talk therapy'— which was revolutionary at the time," he said.

Azmi said he was fascinated to learn how Freud classified the human mind, between the conscious and unconscious.

"About 90% of our mental processes are unconscious. Most trauma can be traced back to childhood trauma that are often buried deep in the unconscious," he said. "Through talk therapy, we can bring it to the surface and we can understand ourselves better. This is the first step to heal from trauma."

Over the past year, Azmi said the number of calls coming into ReWA has doubled. He said phone or video counseling sessions are less effective than in-person services, but maintaining contact with clients through the pandemic was essential.

"In a crisis, it is normal for paranoia or superstition to increase, so keeping social connections, even by phone is crucial," he explained.

Azmi knows about working during a crisis. He spent 15 years of his residency in general practice and surgery in Iraq and Libya, both sites of war and its aftermath. He decided to specialize in psychiatry and returned to Iraq where he studied for four more years.

For the past year, the main mental health complaints among ReWA clients were anxiety over the pandemic or losing their job, and dealing with illness of a family member. On top of this, Azmi said, the spread of misinformation, coupled with social isolation, led more people to believe in conspiracy theories.

"When the vaccine was announced earlier this year, widespread conspiracy theories, shared over social media, led many clients to become hesitant about receiving the vaccine," he said. "My response was to be vaccinated and to make sure my clients knew I was vaccinated. Over the past few months, this has encouraged most of them to also get vaccinated."

ReWA's counselors have also used this year to increase training in topics like abnormal psychology, developmental psychology, trauma-informed care and how to help clients deal with grief. At the same time, Azmi was training staff in a new model of service delivery required by King County. Instead of a monthly cap for services, clients can receive what is determined medically necessary.

"This means the greater the stress and functional impairment they experience," he said. "The higher level of care is needed."

ReWA is one of a handful of mental health providers in the Puget Sound region that counsels immigrants and refugees in their native languages. ReWA counselors speak Arabic, Somali, Pashto, Turkish, Kurdish, Farsi and Dari and often share cultural background with their clients.

"This can help establish trust in communities where many hesitate to talk about mental health issues," Azmi said. "But when they get help, it can change their life."





# Family Works: Providing Services in Innovative Ways

Submitted by Edsel Blanche

At FamilyWorks (like so many other organizations), 2020 was a time of challenges and adaptations. For years, our Family Resource Center had been a community hub for services and social connection in Wallingford. Families and neighbors could participate in family playgroups, browse our selection of children's clothes, toys and work with our Family Advocates to connect to other resources, or simply stop by to chat. When the coronavirus pandemic arrived, it meant the closure of drop-in services and a complete reimagining of our programming to be **open differently** for our participants.

Despite having to close our doors to the public, our Family Programs team still found innovative ways to provide services to our participants. We quickly transitioned our empowerment programs and family playgroups to virtual settings and as the stay-at-home order was extended (and extended again), we surveyed our families to find out what, exactly, folks needed during the difficult time. One thing we learned was that with thrift stores closed and so many people working limited shifts or out of work completely, caregivers were having difficulty finding clothes for their growing children.

In August 2020, we held a free, pop-up outdoor clothing market in our parking lot, where participants could drop-off clothes that no longer fit their kids and browse our donated inventory for other options. In response to the success of the pop-up clothing market, we launched the Community Closet, our own free clothing store for participants. Folks can schedule a 30-minute appointment to safely shop from our selection of donated clothes, books, toys, home goods and hygiene supplies. These are costly items that, at times, many people had to refrain from purchasing during the pandemic. So far, over 216 households have shopped at our Community Closet.

As the pandemic wore on and the strain on people's finances increased, we heard growing requests for financial sup-

port from our participants. We added a Community Connector in 2020, a new position funded by Seattle Human Services and in partnership with North Helpline, designed to connect folks already using our food banks to other vital resources throughout the city like unemployment benefits, a utility discount program and more. By the fall of 2020, we were approved to assist participants in applying for King County's Eviction Prevention and Rental Assistance programs.

To increase our outreach in the community, we worked with Principal William Jackson, Family Support Engagement Specialist Tina Tudor and Seattle Public Schools to open a Satellite Resource Center at Nathan Hale High School. Throughout the school year, Nathan Hale served not only as a daily meal pick-up site, but also as the technology resource center for the Northeast Seattle region, meaning families from other schools also traveled to the site regularly. That made it a perfect place to connect in person with people from different communities.

Since we began outreach at Nathan Hale High School, we assisted over 50 families, connecting them to various resources, including our free diaper program, rental assistance, discounted bus passes and more!

Looking ahead to the rest of 2021, we are excited for a time we can safely welcome families back into our playroom and hear the joyous sounds of kids laughing and participants singing in our halls. However, until that moment comes, we know that through open communication with our participants and a willingness to learn from and adapt to challenges, we'll be there to meet our community's ever-changing needs.





## Community Action Takes Street Outreach to Rural and Isolated Skagit County

"When you don't have basic necessities, your whole survival is on the line," says Candace Weingart, Resource Center Manager with Community Action of Skagit County.

Candace describes the tough challenges faced by clients served through the Street Outreach Program.

"Many people feel lost and unseen, especially in places like East County where there are no bus lines beyond Concrete and people are further from services," she said. "This puts our neighbors living in rural areas at greater risk for food insecurity."

The Street Outreach Program at Community Action addresses this challenge by first seeking out and building trust with clients. Outreach staff recognize where individuals and families are in their journey to stability and rely on these relationships to meet immediate basic needs. The team literally meets clients where they are — outside, at campgrounds, in the woods, or in vehicles and sheds — as well as allowing each person full control to proceed in any interaction at their own pace.

Monthly pop-up events around the community help staff connect with new and existing clients. The May 20-21 event reached 31 individuals in Marblemount, to provide assistance with Basic Food, Disaster Cash Assistance and more. The next Street Outreach pop-up takes place Aug. 26-27 and Sept. 23-24 at the Inspire Church, 59850 state route 20, Marblemount. Other events are being scheduled in Hamilton, the first week of every month.

You can learn more on the Community Action of Skagit County Facebook page or by contacting Val McCormack at [valeriem@communityactionskagit.org](mailto:valeriem@communityactionskagit.org) or (360) 708-9408. In 2020, Community Action initially established an Opioid Outreach staff position in partnership with Skagit County Public Health with the goal of helping people get into recovery. The target population is community members experiencing homelessness who have a substance use disorder to opioids, or a polysubstance disorder with opioid involvement. Staff, volunteers and interns from Skagit Valley College and Western Washington University build relationships with people living under bridges, gathering behind businesses and living in tents next to city buildings. Services are provided to stabilize the current needs and include Basic Food applications, clothes, hygiene items and support for treatment.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, it became immediately clear that additional capacity was needed. Community Action allocated funding for an additional Street Outreach staff member plus an Outreach Navigator. They will help anyone experiencing homelessness and will provide assistance navigating services in the community. They trouble-shoot client barriers offering vouchers, shelter options, agency services and assist with paperwork smoothing the process and providing hope.

One interaction can mean a world of difference for an individual or family. Staff recently helped a man call DSHS through the window of their office because he missed the deadline to renew his Basic Food application.

"Not only was he able to get his Basic Food reinstated in one phone call," Weingart shares, "but he also found out he was eligible for DCAP and could use the money for a motel while he looked for work. In many cases, one pivotal interaction builds trust and that relationship allows us to serve people far beyond the reason they initially connected with us."

Community Action is currently looking to expand its Street Outreach network to other areas of Skagit County. If agencies are interested in establishing their own outreach staff, trainings will be available Fall 2021. Please contact Candace Weingart at [candacew@communityactionskagit.org](mailto:candacew@communityactionskagit.org) or (360) 416-7585, ext. 1255.



# Montesano United Methodist Church Forms Partnership to Provide Help During the Pandemic

Submitted by Carol A Boyer

A community partnership was born as a result of a small church's outreach to an often invisible and underserved community in the small town of Montesano. As the pandemic hit in March 2020, my part-time work with the Montesano School District as a Spanish language interpreter changed from school-driven conferences and IEPs to the basics of home-school communications, food, clothing, diapers, rent, electricity, the mysteries of Wi-Fi and technology and home repair.

Within two weeks of the quarantine, the local Kelsey Foundation of Montesano asked the Montesano United Methodist Church to be the administrators of a grant that would benefit families in need from our local school district by purchasing and delivering gift cards and certificates from local businesses. The Montesano Education Association became our partner in identifying families in need as well as collecting and distributing needed items. At this early point in the pandemic, nearly all of the identified 20 families had no source of income. Many of the men were formerly employed as salal cutters and the women as domestics and agricultural workers.

By the end of May 2020, we realized the generous funding from the Kelsey Foundation was not going to be able to sustain these families much longer. A call went out to church members, teachers, family, friends and neighbors telling of the great need. Many people donated their stimulus checks; others began giving regularly to the "Mission Now" fund. As much as the church's entire yearly budget was raised and distributed to support over 100 people for more than a year.

The Lord's Pantry at Foursquare Church in Central Park allowed us to shop for our families and we began twice-a-month deliveries of food, fresh fruit and vegetables. We also provided gift certificates for other necessities, like soap and diapers. In addition, we purchased culturally appropriate foods not available at the food bank. Every family received Thanksgiving and Christmas meals and gift cards for the parents to buy gifts for their children.

The men of the church have fixed dishwashers and refrigerators, replaced windows, repaired roofs, and dealt with clogged toilets and black mold. They have found donations of used appliances, beds and furniture, and helped sell cars.

Some of our church families have become adopted abuelitos (grandparents) to large families with young children. Teachers have donated clothing, blankets and diapers and the Elma Timberland Library provided monthly hands-on science kits for each family.

Other volunteers helped more than 50 people apply for Washington COVID-19 Immigrant Relief

Fund grants and 30 families apply for PUD grants. In addition, the Grays Harbor County Public Health Department agreed to hold two vaccination clinics in the church's sport court. Fifteen more people are now fully vaccinated.

How did a small rural church with an average Sunday attendance of 30 people manage to do all this?

It all goes back to the example of John Wesley, Methodism's founder, and his teachings about the poor, specifically in the parable of the Sheep and the Goats in the Gospel of Mathew.



*"Truly I tell you, whatever you have done (or not) unto the least of these you have done (or not) unto me" (v. 40, 45).*

*This was the main reason that Wesley continually encouraged the Methodists to give sacrificially to the poor and to seek out solidarity with the poor by spending time with them, eating with them, and fasting and begging on their behalf."*

— Viewpoint Magazine June 1, 2011

Here was the difference: A small church and their friends spent time with a group of people they likely would have never met in normal circumstances. Friendships and trust were formed. They visited (safely outside their homes), met the children, listened, learned, laughed and occasionally cried with them. In other words, they were truly community partners.





# Sea Mar Managed Care is Committed to Making a Difference as we Come Out of COVID

Submitted by Melissa Bless

The global pandemic disproportionately continues to affect minorities. It has been more than a year since COVID was declared a global pandemic and the Managed Care Department went virtual. Now, a year later, we are re-entering the community. Sea Mar understands that the community still needs our services and programs as there are individuals who are not vaccinated and suffering from food insecurities.

Although the state is re-opening, Sea Mar's Outreach team will continue to offer virtual service in collaboration with the Patient Contact Center who service clients through our toll-free number. We will continue using social media campaigns to promote events and actively assist with other resources such as Disaster Cash Assistance, shelters, food banks, Immigration Relief Fund, utility bill assistance and more.

On the COVID education front, we have used text campaigns, reaching over 100,000 people, to ensure that everyone eligible for a vaccine is vaccinated. Sea Mar has participated at COVID vaccination events, farmers markets and in collaboration with Friends of the Waterfront Seattle and We



Move to Give, also at Pier 62 every Sunday.

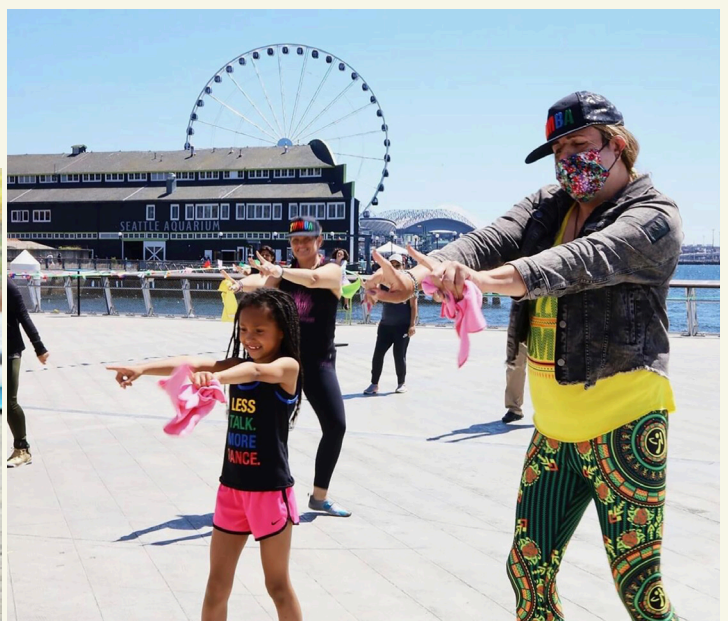
Our Basic Food education continues to be a central focus of Sea Mar's outreach. We joined forces with the Food Insecurity Network in King county to build a tool that screens for

food insecurities by asking the Hunger Vital Sign questions. Those identified as lacking food security will be referred to our customer service representative for basic food education, eligibility screening and assistance submitting a Basic Food application. Anyone in need of Basic Food assistance can get help from a Sea Mar customer service representative.

Although vaccines are readably available, there are still challenges to address. This pandemic has affected all of us in some way, directly or indirectly. The majority of the population who are non-vaccinated do not trust the process and need more education before deciding the vaccination is right for them. The distrust is not surprising and we anticipate seeing the effects for a long time. As we ramp up our community outreach, we plan to focus on building trust in the underserved communities so that the people most vulnerable get vaccinated.

The We Move to Give team has come together to provide support and expanded vision. We are connecting with instructors from all over the world to provide virtual Zumba classes in the Philippines. In addition to continuing to promote mental health-focused classes with the support of mental health professionals, we have begun offering Zumba Master Classes and Zumba Gold in collaboration with Friends of the Waterfront Seattle. The live events, which follow COVID guidelines, have exceeded all of our expectations. Our live events at Pier 62 include a Sea Mar Managed Care Department resource table with information on Basic Food. We Move to Give is committed to providing free fitness for all and educating the community about proper nutrition and access to food resources. Both are essential to being fit.

As you can see, Sea Mar's outreach in the community is ramping up. We will keep maintaining the level of virtual support that we provided during the pandemic and we will safely resume our in-person outreach as we help the most vulnerable populations navigate during these difficult times. Now, more than ever, we are committed to making a difference. For more information on our programs and services, please contact us at 855-289-4503.





## Rachel Romano Speaking at Rebuilding Hope's Fall Reception

Submitted by Carlyn Sampson

Rachel is an adult survivor of child and teen sexual abuse and assault who has effectively channeled her lived experiences into opportunities to advocate for social and system changes across the country. Rachel is a bestselling author, social justice advocate, public speaker and multidisciplinary trainer with over a decade of dedicated experience to better educating the public on the impacts of sexual assault and abuse as well as how communities can better respond to and, ultimately, end sexual violence. Rachel currently works as the Director of Strategy and Communications at Microsoft and is a new member of the Rebuilding Hope Board of Directors. We are excited to feature Rachel as the keynote speaker for this event and we encourage you to mark your calendars to join us for a powerful discussion that Rachel will help us launch this October. Come hear from the agency's leaders about how we, together, can end sexual violence in Pierce County. Virtual/live streaming attendance will be available!

Tickets are \$35 per person and registration will open in September. Appetizers and refreshments will be served and gifts will be mailed to those who join us virtually!

For sponsorship information, please contact [sarahrumbaugh@hopesacpc.org](mailto:sarahrumbaugh@hopesacpc.org) or call (253) 886-6668.



### Rebuilding Hope's 2nd Annual Fall Reception

Thursday,  
October 28, 2021

**5-7 p.m. PST**

Historic 1625 Tacoma Place

Featuring Keynote Speaker

*Rachel Romano*

SAVE  
THE DATE!

## Tacoma Public Utilities Customer Solutions Team: The Team With Heart!

Over the last two years, the entire Customer Solutions Team at Tacoma Public Utilities has been able to attend the annual National Energy and Utility Affordability Coalition conference because it has been held virtually.

Registrants had the option to make nominations in advance of this nationwide conference. Kristi Williams, who had just joined the team only a few months before being deployed to work from home because of COVID, decided to secretly submit a nomination for the Customer Solutions team because she had witnessed the hard work and dedication the CSO Team displayed in getting assistance from both TPU and community partners. Her nomination states, "At the beginning of the pandemic and as we were being deployed to work from home, TPU launched an emergency assistance program for customers that were affected by COVID-19. It befell upon the Customer Solutions team to organize, create processes and administer this unprecedented program. Amid all the chaos of technology challenges, learning to work virtually through Zoom and still providing excellent customer service to our most vulnerable population, the team brought their knowledge and their hearts to the table and successfully provided aid to those customers who needed it most. Additionally, the team made outreach calls to customers who have no technology access to ensure

assistance was more equitable! Since then, they have used the knowledge they have gained to distribute COVID assistance for both small businesses in Tacoma and federal funding for rent and utility assistance.

Around the utility department, they are affectionately known as the 'Team with a Heart.' I would like to nominate the entire Customer Solutions team, rather than just one person, as I feel everyone gave their best during these historical times."

Customer Solutions was one of three finalists selected for the Corporate Excellence Award, which was announced at the conference and was truly a surprise to the team. The winner was determined by having conference participants vote during the event. Imagine the team's excitement when they found out that Customer Solutions had actually won the award, which they were able to accept at the NEUAC Annual Membership Meeting in June. They have done so much and have helped so many customers who, if not for their outreach, may have never known that the COVID assistance and community partner programs were available. Moreover, because of their knowledge, we have established a successful process to rely on, if more emergency funding is received in the future. The Customer Solutions team is truly "The Team with a Heart," even BEFORE we were in a pandemic and our community is so much better for it.



## Partner Spotlight: Wraparound Service Leads to Positive Outcomes at Agapé Unlimited

Submitted by Ondrea McCourry

Agapé Unlimited knows that the road to recovery can be tough. With state-certified counselors and top-quality treatments and programs, we are here to help. We are a non-profit outpatient substance use disorder treatment program that offers a wide range of services to give participants the foundation and tools to aid in recovery. Our services include adult and youth substance use disorder treatment programs, mental health treatment, housing, case management, peer services and child care programs. We believe that true healing takes place when the body, mind and spirit are treated.

Agapé Unlimited owns and operates two housing programs that provide clean and sober living environments while residents participate in substance use disorder treatment.

The Koinonia Inn Women and Children's Transitional Housing is a facility for pregnant and parenting women with their children. The facility is staffed on a limited basis, seven days a week to provide structured housing, on-site licensed child care, case management and everyday living skills. This facility houses up to eight women and eight of their children.

The Sisyphus II Housing Project provides a more independent, permanent living environment. This program is for homeless individuals and families in recovery.

### Agapé is Getting a Face-Lift

Agapé was a recipient of a Kitsap County grant, funded from the one-tenth of 1% sales tax program that funds mental health, substance use and therapeutic court programs and services.

The grant will be used to update our main offices in Bremerton. Currently, new floors are being installed and a fresh coat of paint is being applied. Soon, we will install new windows and a new kitchen, and expand our front lobby to enhance services for our clients. We are happy to offer full services during the renovation and look forward to serving our community. We have been fortunate to be a Washington Connection Partner and are thankful for the opportunity to help our community.



### Other Programs

## Apple Health Helps Clients During the Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought increased unemployment, emotional stress and challenges for families and support systems to stay connected. Our Voices of Apple Health project highlights stories from real Washington Apple Health (Medicaid) clients during the pandemic.

### Voices of Apple Health Client Stories

Apple Health helped Penny connect with her son, Garrett, during the pandemic. With Apple Health coverage, Garrett receives inpatient treatment at the Child Study Treatment Center in Lakewood. Before the pandemic, Penny made an eight-hour round trip every week to visit her son. Due to the COVID-19 risk, she was no longer able to visit her son in person.

The Washington State Health Care Authority donated laptops to CSTC giving parents the ability to connect with their kids during the pandemic.

"I get to physically see my child and that means a lot," Penny said. "To just see him and physically see that he's okay, that's huge."





## Voices of Apple Health Client Stories

Expecting their second child, Angela and her family were living in an area with limited access to medical care. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, they had been planning a move to Washington state, which got fast-tracked when the pandemic hit.

Angela called Apple Health and learned her entire family met the eligibility and income requirements to qualify. Angela selected a plan that met her family's needs. Her daughter was able to catch up on immunizations at her well-child checkup and Angela went to the midwife and birthing center of her choice.



Frank lost his job at the start of the pandemic. Since he had medical coverage remaining for the month of February, he made an appointment to visit his doctor to get a physical and to renew his prescriptions. A representative at his doctor's office told him about Apple Health.

A Washington Healthplanfinder customer support representative helped Frank apply for coverage over the phone. He was relieved to qualify for Apple Health coverage.

"Apple Health filled a huge void over my concern to medically cover my family during this very tough time," Frank said.



### Share your story

Do you know a client with an Apple Health success story? With their permission, email success stories to [ahcommunications@hca.wa.gov](mailto:ahcommunications@hca.wa.gov) to inspire others to apply for free or low-cost coverage. Include in your email a summary of the story, the client's full name, and contact information. If we use the story, the client may be eligible to receive a \$50 gift card.

You can learn more about the Voices of Apple Health project [here](#).

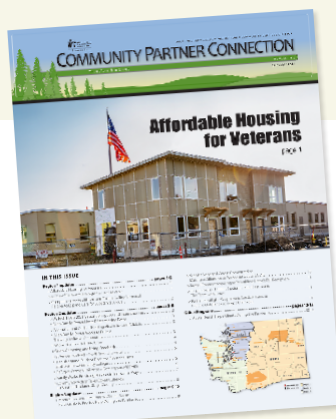
### About Washington Apple Health (Medicaid)

In Washington state, Medicaid is called Apple Health. Apple Health provides preventative care, like cancer screenings, treatment for diabetes and high blood pressure, and many other health care services to about 2 million residents. You can apply for free or low-cost Apple Health coverage year-round. For most people, Washington Apple Health is free, but some families may have to pay a monthly premium. View eligibility requirements and how to apply online at [hca.wa.gov/apple-health](https://hca.wa.gov/apple-health).



## Partnership in focus

*Articles are written and submitted by our community partners with permission for the Department of Social and Health Services to publish.*



Are you a Washington Connection Community Partner? Does your organization have an inspiring community story or an upcoming event to share? Would you like to share your short story in this newsletter? Please contact Stephanie Hart at [Stephanie.Hart@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:Stephanie.Hart@dshs.wa.gov) for more information.