

Experience *in Action!*

King County RSVP's news for people 55 & older

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Helping out around the house

Volunteer Home Helpers Sue & Jim Laurenti

by Megan Wildhood & Jennifer Gahagan

"It's not just that you're providing value to a client," Jim Laurenti says. "They provide value to you, too. You can make a huge impact with such a small thing, and people who haven't seen that are missing out."

Jim volunteers with Catholic Community Services' Volunteer Services program, which matches participants over 65 (or over 18 and living with a disability) with volunteers who are able to provide a small chore service such as yardwork, housework, laundry, and other similar need-based requests.

In the course of providing the service he signed up for (yardwork and help with

decluttering), Jim has opened several jars for an elderly person with a hand injury, repaired a vacuum that had broken into pieces, encouraged a participant to pare down the amount of boxes in storage and – just by offering his presence in another person's life – helped motivate someone to begin taking on tasks that were previously a struggle.

"I even had to start discouraging [her] from doing things that were too dangerous for her to be doing – but it's so good to see that motivation come back." (He realized she was potentially biting off more than she could chew when she asked him to repair a very wobbly



Jim & Sue Laurenti, RSVP Home Helper volunteers (photo by Megan Wildhood)

stepstool she had started using.)

Because of their volunteer work, Jim and Sue Laurenti find it impossible to get bored after retiring. In fact, they excitedly affirm that volunteering makes you a more interesting person, because you're always learning. For instance, one of Jim's participants has been tracking things like her electric bill since 1957 – "she has all the paperwork!" he says.

"You really do learn a lot about a person's life just by signing up to do one thing for them," Sue says. "You begin to see other ways you could use your skills to help someone." Sue has begun helping people make better use of their smartphones, for example, teaching them how to text and find useful apps.

Not only do Sue and Jim learn about other ways beyond what they signed up for to support people they are paired with, they also learn about people's lives. "It's amazing the history people come through," Sue says, "and how much of that history is repeated. I help a couple where the woman is in her 70s and the man is in his 90s. Who was president 90 years ago? What was happening in the world then? Things like this are fascinating to learn about."

It also gives her a chance to reflect. "Remembering that they're just like us – I mean, we'll be there in 20 or 30 years.

Volunteering in this way gives me perspective on what I still want to do in my life."

Transportation is the most common request Volunteer Services receives. Sue drives people to and from medical appointments. When she was working, she "commuted from Mukilteo to Renton – so a 20-minute drive to an appointment is not a problem. Bring a book while you wait. The best part is that you've got this person in your car, so you have a chance to get to know them and combat some of the loneliness so many people are experiencing."

Recent studies indicate that loneliness is worse for your health than smoking, and that more and more people are experiencing it. Helping members of the community with what feels like small things not only gives Sue and Jim a sense of blessing for their health and abilities, but invites them into people's lives, which decreases their sense of isolation.

Giving their time to those who need some extra support to remain independent in their homes is personal for Sue and Jim. "My mom lives alone and needs this kind of help," Jim says. "I've got five siblings that provide the help I can't. The client I help doesn't have family around. Her husband has passed, and her kids live far from her." Sue feels

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Speaking Directly

by Megan Wildhood, RSVP Coordinator

Bringing the housing crisis home

The housing crisis in this region has come up many times in conversations I've had in several different contexts. This is a complicated issue, and many people have questions. In this *EIA* issue on "Home," I wanted to offer some thoughts and information – based on my research – about its origins and possible ways to respond.

The Seattle Times ran an article in December of 2017 reporting that the population of people living without permanent shelter in King County was the third highest in the nation, both in terms of absolute numbers and percent of total population that is living unsheltered; only New York City and Los Angeles had higher numbers. KUOW 94.9 and NPR reported the same thing in December of 2018.

The January 2019 One Night Count of people experiencing homelessness in our community reports that 11,199 people, including 1,550 people under the age of 18, were living outside. The good news is that these numbers dropped for the first time since 2012; in particular, fewer children and people with substance-use disorders experienced homelessness.

Still, about a quarter of the chronically homeless population in King County, according to the most recent All Home report

(2017), are over the age of 60. You can see these and other real-time statistics on All Home King County's Data Overview webpage (allhomekc.org/data-overview).

It must be acknowledged that these numbers, and any that the media publish, are estimates – ones we can assume are lower than the actual numbers. It is very difficult to get a precise count, in large part because there is no way to guarantee a) accurate self-reporting on a census or b) that the organizations gathering the numbers can find every person living outside.

The important thing is that, in these and nearly every other major city in the United States, the problem always comes back to affordable housing. In other words, rents and property taxes go up, while paychecks and fixed incomes do not. In fact, Social Security payments are currently not even keeping up with inflation: The annual inflation rate in the US for 2019 was 1.7%; Social Security payments for 2020 will be increasing by 1.6%. This problem is much more difficult to solve than to explain, of course; there are many factors that go into potential solutions.

In terms of solutions, Seattle is in a difficult place. According to *The Seattle Times*, the Seattle area spends over \$100 million a year addressing



and responding to homelessness. The main sources of that revenue are property and sales taxes. Washington does not have a state income tax; instating one was voted down the most recent year it appeared on the ballot in 2016. Land for residential development is at a premium in a city with bodies of water and bridges everywhere. This is one reason property taxes are so high, which is itself one major contributor to the sky-high housing prices in this area.

Since 2017, nonprofits have had to prove to funders that they are responding to the housing crisis, whether it's connecting folks with supportive services or helping program participants gain permanent housing. Agencies have to meet performance standards set by the City of Seattle in order to receive government resources. For those who are concerned about the housing crisis in King County, volunteering can be a way to support efforts to respond to the crisis. While volunteers will not make up for budget shortfalls or loss of funding nonprofits

experience, volunteering with organizations engaged in aiding those affected by our county's housing crisis increases the capacity of those organizations. Volunteering is also a chance to learn a lot about this major and persistent issue in our region; plus, the health and wellness benefits of volunteering are backed by increasing amounts of research!

As the RSVP Coordinator of King County, I work to connect volunteers like you to one of our several partner sites responding to the housing crisis, such as Catholic Community Services' Volunteer Services Program, Habitat for Humanity, Multi-Service Center, Jewish Family Services, our many food bank partners, and others. These site partners – as well as our sponsor agency Solid Ground, which works to solve poverty by meeting basic needs, nurturing success and spreading change – are grateful for your support as we strive to carry out our mission. ●



Financial Planning

by Bill Pharr

Saving for retirement:

The sooner you start, the less the stress

If you want to see the eyes of a person under 30 glaze over, ask them, "Where will you get the income to live on when you're 70?" Too many young people dig themselves into a financial hole early in life because they do not understand saving, the compounding effect of time, or the downside of debt. They often fail to track and invest their money.

I have worked with many young people over the last 17 years, and only a couple of them have set up a Roth IRA (an individual retirement account that offers tax-free growth and tax-free withdrawals in

retirement) as soon as they started earning money. Investing \$100 one time at age 18 grows to \$2,194 by age 70 at 6% compounded growth. Investing \$100 at the beginning of year one – and \$100 each subsequent year on day one of the new year at that same constant rate of 6% – grows to \$36,992 by age 70. Wow! This Roth money can be withdrawn after age 59½ absolutely tax free, because it was funded with after-tax dollars.

Additionally, too few young people take advantage of the free match in their company's 401(k) plan. If your company matches employee contributions, they are actually giving you free money. I helped one young lady happily sign up within a week of speaking with her, and – because of her income level – we figured out how she could also invest in a Roth IRA. She can now answer the question I started with above with a positive answer.

I met with a young man recently who wanted to apply for a car loan. He had the car picked out already, but two issues quickly arose. First, I asked him about his credit history. His look was all I needed to know that we needed to back up. Banks do not loan money to (young) people at reasonable interest rates when they have no credit

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Home Helpers continued from page 1

similarly. "My dad lives in South Dakota. I can't be there to drive him where he needs to go, but I can help someone else in a similar situation."

Sue and Jim have a son in the area, but most of their family live in other states; many older people in this area are in the same situation. "Seeing what little you can do to help someone out," Sue says, "really makes you realize how important health is – and how you really don't have to do that much to make a big impact in someone's life."

Volunteering in some capacity has been a part of the Laurentis' lives since before they retired. Both originally from South Dakota – both the fourth of nine siblings (four brothers and four sisters each), they met at the South Dakota School of Mines & Technology through a friend. Jim got a job as an engineer at Boeing after graduating. After getting married in September of 1985, they moved out to Seattle where they both worked at Boeing and raised their family.

Having an open and inviting home is very important to Sue. "The first thing we do when people walk in is show them where the food, drinks, and plates are. Make yourself at home! We just open the door – don't mind the mess, you know. Coming from a big family, you just don't worry about that sort of thing, and most people don't notice it anyway. Just come on in. We've always been that way."

The Laurentis participated in Boeing's Day of Caring events and

other service days throughout their time there. Sue was a United Way Campaign Executive in 1999 as part of Boeing's initiative that "donates" an employee to a service organization for three months at a time. She has tutored algebra and been involved in volunteer work that supports girls entering the STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) fields. She also helped an immigrant get citizenship and recommends that every citizen help someone to become one.

When Sue was a tutor at Literacy Source, she found out about RSVP. She took Jim to the information session on becoming a Home Helpers volunteer, and they've been volunteering there for nearly a year.

Jim retired from Boeing in 2016 after 31 years, Sue in 2017 after nearly 32 years. "People who have worked their whole lives don't feel comfortable making yet another commitment," Sue says. "That might be a barrier to volunteering. You finally have the freedom to do what you want and you don't want to lock yourself into a schedule again. But volunteer organizations don't ask for a 20- or 30-year commitment."

Volunteer Services is particularly amenable to retirees looking for schedule flexibility. "You can sign up for a time that you want and a chore you want to do. It's all online and up to your discretion."

And, because it's about the relationship volunteers build with participants, volunteers are not locked into rigid expectations

that would impede their ability to also enjoy retirement.

Sue addresses another reason people might possibly be reluctant to get involved: energy. "Almost every time I go, I feel like I might be too tired, but then, after I get home, I feel so good that I went. I never regret it. You never feel bad about volunteering."

Sue's passion for volunteering extends beyond being able to give and receive value and benefit with those in her community who need a bit of extra support; she says you also learn a lot about what's going on in your community. "You learn about resources that you can offer the next time you hear about someone having an issue. You become more aware of what's actually happening and why." She encourages everyone to get involved, especially since there are so many ways to do so.

"Start volunteering, if you can, before you retire," she says. "Start building a social network before you lose the one your work provides you. Volunteering exposes you to people outside of your own age bracket, which is helpful as you age and start losing people. There is always somewhere to plug in. There are so many people close to the bottom. There is always a way to help." ●

More volunteers are needed for this priority area! For more information on becoming a Home Helper, please contact Megan Wildhood at **206.694.6786** or meganw@solid-ground.org.

Saving for retirement continued from page 2

history. I advised him to get a credit card with a small credit limit.

He needed to pay the balance off every month without fail to develop a credit history. This would also help him when he applied for his first apartment. Second, I asked him how much interest he would be paying on his new car if he did get an auto loan. His facial expression told the same story.

The used car he wanted to buy cost \$6,700. I discussed with him that companies that issue loans make their money by charging interest. We computed that a five-year loan for this car would cost him around \$886 in interest over the life of the loan. At 7% interest, his total interest payments would come to \$1,260. Proudly, I can tell you he applied for his ORCA card to ride the Metro buses the same day, and part of the savings has gone into a Roth IRA.

Debit cards are not generally good for young

people. I run into very few young people who know how much they spend, what they are spending money on, and how to figure out what their net worth is. And debit cards are too easy to use. With every client, young and old, I discuss the importance of tracking expenses and income on a monthly basis.



I would love to say that every young person I have met with has started tracking expenses and opened a Roth IRA with the money left over. Sadly, this is not the case – but I do have quite a few success stories of young people who are taking charge of their financial lives by investing in Roth IRAs, understanding how loans work before signing the paperwork, and tracking spending so they can maximize their fun while still saving for age 70 and beyond. ●

Bill Pharr is a retired business owner and financial advisor, RSVP member, and regular EIA contributor.

RSVP



The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) is a nonprofit National Senior Corps program sponsored locally by Solid Ground. RSVP meets critical community needs by encouraging and supporting volunteerism in King County for people 55 and older.



At Solid Ground, we believe poverty is solvable. Our approach combines direct services with community-based advocacy. We support individuals while working to undo racism and other oppressions that create barriers – so everyone can achieve their full potential.

EIA

Experience in Action! (EIA) is published by King County RSVP and distributed to 3,500 RSVP members, senior volunteers and friends. **EIA** is dedicated to providing news, information and opportunities about senior volunteerism. Articles express writers' opinions, which are not necessarily the views of RSVP or **EIA**. We reserve the right to refuse any material deemed unsuitable. Articles may be edited to meet technical and editorial policy guidelines.

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Aging with Wisdom

by Carol Scott-Kassner

Going home

The theme of home evokes many images in me. The most powerful are of being with my mother during her decline with Dementia/Alzheimer's. Virtually every afternoon around 5pm, she would state she wanted to go home.

This pattern, called "sundowner's syndrome," is so strong that it drew her to walk out of her assisted living facility and head in a direction she thought would take her to her home. Twice she ended up in the ER with bruises and scrapes; luckily, she did not break any bones.

When I would ask her which home she wanted to go to, she couldn't tell me. It was only later that I learned that I should have asked her to tell me about her home. Eventually, we moved her to an adult family home that felt much more like a real home to her. She no longer tried to wander.

If you've had this experience with loved ones, you know how powerful the urge for home is. We often feel this at holiday times, especially Thanksgiving and Christmas. Witness the thousands of miles – often arduous – that people will travel to be home and gathered with family and friends in familiar places.

The grief people often feel when they are away from such settings is reflected in the song, *I'll Be Home for Christmas*. It was written in 1943 and recorded by Bing Crosby. It names the feelings of soldiers whose longings could be satisfied "only in [their] dreams."

I find the idea of going home to be a powerful metaphor for the end of our lives. This urge to return to a feeling of home and connection with loved ones is very deep in our psyches. Sometimes at funerals or memorial services, people will state that their loved one has "gone home." In this setting, it often means that a person has gone home to God – to the origin of their being. For some it means that the person who has died is now reunited with loved ones who have gone before them.

Many of you may know the beautiful and haunting melody of Largo, the 2nd movement of Czech composer Antonín Dvořák's 9th symphony, *From the New World*. He wrote this work while he was Director of the National Conservatory of Music of America in the late 1800s. He wanted to compose a symphony that reflected the music that he was discovering in America.

His assistant was an African-American student named Harley Burleigh, a baritone, who sang many spirituals for him. Dvořák put the essence of longing to be home with God that is in spirituals into the beautiful melody of the Largo – and his 9th symphony became one of the most renowned in the entire world. Neil Armstrong took a recording on his flight to the moon in 1969. You can listen to it here: tinyurl.com/dvorak-newworld.



Later, another composer took the melody Dvořák had composed and turned it into a hymn called *Goin' Home*. The lyrics of the first verse beautifully represent our longing for a final home.

*Going home, going home,
I'm a going home.
Quiet light, sun filled day
I'm just goin' home.
Each not far, just close by
Through an open door.
Work all done, care behind,
Goin' to fear no more.*

*Mother's there, expecting me
Father's waiting, too
Lots of folks gathered there
All the friends I knew.
All the friends I knew.*

May you find a sense of home wherever you live. If you find yourself feeling lonely, may you reach out to others to form community. At the end of your life, may you find peace and a sense of readiness to return to a place of your longing. ●

Carol Scott-Kassner is a retired professor of music, a spiritual director, and an expert in the spirituality of aging.

SEND US YOUR HOURS!

Yes, your hours as an RSVP volunteer are important and need to be reported to us.

Your hours are not only tied to federal funding with benefits then provided to you, like the excess accident medical and liability insurance, but they also help the volunteer sites and RSVP reach volunteer hour goals.

And just as importantly, it helps us recognize you for your service and highlights the contributions you make to meet community needs when you volunteer.

If you have questions, please contact:
Megan Wildhood, 206.694.6785 | meganw@solid-ground.org



Habitat for Humanity's 10-home development in Sammamish (photo courtesy of Habitat for Humanity; see story p. 5)

Habitat for Humanity:

Building a better future

by David Thornbrugh

Has there ever been a better-named nonprofit organization than Habitat for Humanity? Founded in 1976, this Christian organization identifies the whole world as the target of its efforts. As their website proudly proclaims, "Habitat's vision is of a world where everyone has a decent place to live." In all 50 states and more than 70 countries, with roughly 1,000 employees and a boggling 2 million+ volunteers, Habitat does an impressive job of putting people beneath the roofs of homes they not only buy but have helped build.

Throughout its existence, Habitat for Humanity has helped construct, rehabilitate, or preserve more than 800,000 houses. More precisely, they have made it possible for that many families to take ownership of a home – many times one that the family has built. Once a family is chosen to participate in Habitat's homeownership program, they begin taking classes in finances, homemaking, budgeting, and other practical skills.

Once construction begins on a Habitat home, the participating families become part of the construction crew. As Alex Kaul, Corporate Relations Manager for Habitat Seattle, explains, "Participating families are able to work on 90% of the construction stages: putting rebar in the foundation, framing, putting on the roof." Over the course of the home-building project, a family is expected to put 250 hours into the construction of their house.

In King County, Habitat currently has three construction sites. In October 2019, they broke ground for 16 townhomes in Lake City – four blocks of four units each – that will house 16 families, a total of 66 residents. As Alex points out, "Projects

look different, because each is built to match the neighborhood." Therefore, in the small town of Pacific, "It made sense to build single-family homes – cottages." In a town that now has only five three-bedroom homes for sale under \$350,000, the Habitat project will add three homes affordable for low-income families. A third project is in Loyal Heights, where Habitat is adding 12 new homes at the end of a private road where Habitat has already built 16 homes.

Such homes are not given away, as Habitat volunteer Maryann Savina points out: Participants buy the homes on a sliding scale with money and the "sweat equity" they earn working on the construction site of their houses. As a Family Support Partner, Maryann helps families prepare for homeownership through tasks such as helping them decide how much to save each month. The family she supports is on the list for one of the Lake City homes, where Maryann was on hand "for the Golden Shovel and all that," as she puts it. Though the construction site was not yet ready for volunteers at the time of her interview, Maryann says her family is "excited about working on the site." (See p. 7 for a Volunteer Spotlight on Maryann.)

Maryann came to Habitat as a volunteer through RSVP after a career as an occupational therapist. "Being a Family Support Partner is a great job," she says, one that has very clear parameters. She was especially excited to learn about the Habitat project in Lake City: "Most projects are found in outlying areas, because building in Seattle is so expensive."

Volunteers have the option of earning sweat equity that they can contribute to the purchase of the home for the family they are partnered with, both by doing construction work onsite or in another of the agency's several programs. Maryann says, "I do my sweat equity at the ReStore," a Habitat for Humanity thrift store dependent on donated goods, "and donate it to my Habitat family."

Alex adds, "People don't know a lot about these stores. They think they're like Goodwill, but they only have the model of accepting



Volunteers at Habitat's three-home development in the town of Pacific (photos on this page courtesy of Habitat for Humanity)

donations." In a Habitat ReStore, the focus is on home furnishings and construction supplies, both new and used, but often new and marked down 50%. The stores – in Auburn, Bellevue, and Tukwila – are open to the public, not just Habitat participants. The stores can always use volunteers, whereas the construction sites fill up two-to-three months in advance.

"Habitat homes are not all new builds," Alex explains. Another Habitat program is for the repair and recycling of existing houses, most of which take place south of Seattle, where prices are lower than in the city. "Repairs" are houses purchased by Habitat and refurbished and renovated by Habitat volunteers. As Alex and fellow coworker, Employee Coordinator Nicole Errotabere, points out, this project is very volunteer friendly and needs volunteers.

A "recycled" home is one that has been built by a Habitat family who, when they decide to move, sells the property back to Habitat,

which then cleans it up and sells it at a subsidized cost to another family in need – "another way to maintain an affordable home," Alex explains. For example, in Sammamish, where Habitat has built 10 houses, housing prices are high, and getting permits can take years. The organization recycled one house from a family and sold it to another for \$250K. Without the subsidies made possible by Habitat's volunteers and sweat equity, the cost would have been more like \$880K.

Overall, as Alex points out, "The future of affordable housing in Seattle has to be with single home ownership." High-density urban areas throughout the country need affordable housing. "Habitat needs to be adaptable, get better at fitting into all the construction projects out there. We are pushing the limits of what we can do."

One such limit may be met adjacent to Seattle's Discovery Park, where old military barracks and parking lots will eventually be turned over to the municipality. Federal law allows the military to donate former base land so long as it is used for facilities such as schools, public housing, and parks. A proposed project is for 260 affordable homes, with 52 to be built by Habitat. The timeline for the project, which would be Habitat Seattle's single largest project, is three-to-five years.

Habitat is always looking for new ways to innovate and expand their development projects. Future projects could include building more vertically and densely, co-op ownership, and other ways to provide affordable housing. Of the 800,000 homes that Habitat has built worldwide, Alex and Nicole are proud to claim 390 homes and 190 repaired/recycled homes for the Seattle branch.

However, as Nicole points out, this balance between new and refurbished homes may be changing: In 2019, 19 homes were new, and 40 were repaired/recycled. Regardless of whether your skills are strongest in bookkeeping or pounding nails, Habitat can always find a place for more hands. As Solid Ground neighbor and Habitat volunteer Maryann Savina puts it, "Habitat is a wonderful partner." ●



Home is not a place ... it's a feeling *by Moreah Vestan*

What does it take to be “at home” wherever you are? Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines home a few ways, one of which is: relaxed and comfortable, at ease; in harmony with surroundings; on familiar ground. Hopefully, all of us have had moments or months or years of feeling at home – growing up, as an adult, and in our present lives.

We've heard “home is where the heart is.” Where is your heart? I not only have a contented heart about my childhood home on an Iowa farm with eight siblings, but also in a dorm at college. Then in an apartment where I taught junior high, my Minnesota home with my husband and two children, a large home I shared with six tenants for 30 years, and the current retirement home I moved into three months ago.

What made me feel at home in each of them was more than feeling relaxed and comfortable. The idea that “home is not a place ... it's a feeling” really resonates with me. Being “at home” goes way beyond where I live. It includes sharing time, openness, and fun with friends. I notice that feeling when I meditate, when I see a good movie or program, when I'm at a favorite grocery store enjoying their specials. I indulge that feeling with my grandchildren, with fellow diners I hang out with, and at the library checking out appealing books and DVDs.

We have probably all had at least a few moments or days of feeling discouraged, frustrated, sad, angry, or hopeless. The best thing to know on those days is that we can gain control over our thoughts, and the “bad” is temporary, if we choose. But, if “home” is a feeling, can you think of any reason not to enjoy that sunny walk, the fall leaves you collect just because they are beautiful, seeing your progress playing ping pong, and even deleting 10 emails from your overfull inbox? How about feeling at home wherever you enjoy coffee or tea, and whenever you see beautiful bouquets, whether you buy one or not? Does that amazing sunset, that beautiful lake, the Arboretum (or your favorite park) offer harmony?

If you are not currently relaxed about some of the happenings in

your life, what are you willing to do about them? Would you be more comfortable if you only chose to spend time with people who like or love you as you are? Why act as if you are feeling fine if you can be honest and say something like, “I notice I sometimes feel hurt by things you say to me. Would you be willing to be gentler with your words and your tone of voice?” If you have made a similar request without noticing any changes, won't you feel more “at home” by suggesting you see each other less often, only go when others are also going, or saying “I want to be alone today.” And instead of feeling frustrated, how about writing every day all the things you DO feel grateful for?

Home is more than a place, but where you reside greatly impacts how your heart is doing. Are you doing whatever it takes to make where you reside a haven of peace? Is it as neat and comfortable as you like? Have you placed photos, art, plants or whatever pleases you on walls and tables? Do you rest when you are tired, move around to music when you feel like it, and have a viable system for working with the people, pets, papers, plans, and concerns that come up for you?

Taking deep breaths, listening to relaxing music, connecting one-to-two times a week with an accountability partner, soaking in a warm bath, and going for a walk are a few things you can do to restore calm when you are slipping away from it.

These are just some suggestions to get you started. Find what brings you home, both in your home and in your heart; practicing the things you find will help bring peace, resiliency, and strength wherever you happen to be. What is your commitment to yourself to feel at home wherever you are? ●

Moreah Vestan, M.A., is a Life Coach, a Nonviolent Communication trainer, and an author who chooses to be at Home with Life. She is available for a complimentary coaching session and/or a no-cost PDF of her books. Read more at her website: <https://moreahvestan.com>.



Moreah Vestan “quite” at home (photo courtesy of Moreah)

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Volunteer Spotlight

by David Thornbrugh

Maryann Savina

For a woman who claims to have “5,000 hobbies,” it seems to have been easy for Maryann Savina to find the time to volunteer as a Family Support Partner for Habitat for Humanity. It may be in part because her first try at volunteering didn’t make good use of her skills as an occupational therapist. When I suggested it might have been because she was overqualified, she corrected me: “I think everybody is qualified to scrub toilets.”

Through RSVP, she discovered Habitat, and it met her criteria: “I know it when I see it.” She also likes that she can contribute as much volunteer time as she likes, so long as she meets the monthly minimum. She meets that and more at one of Habitat’s three ReStores, which she calls “... a treasure house, a fabulous thrift store.”

Raised in Wenatchee, Maryann moved to Seattle in 1970; in the years between, she spent time in Friday Harbor running a bicycle

shop with her husband, perhaps a natural progression from the bicycle trip they took across Europe in 1979. She remembers the hard pedal uphill to cross the Italian Dolomites but treasures the memory of a two-day downhill glide into Austria.

When the couple tired of repairing bikes, they moved to Seattle where her husband worked for Boeing for 32 years. She has one child with her husband and another she refers to by the Swedish phrase, “a bonus child,” rather than a stepchild.

Among her thousands of hobbies are compiling and distributing “quilt kits” for a quilting group on Whidbey Island and swimming three times a week at LA Fitness. She is also practicing a piano duet with a neighbor in hopes of overcoming a mutual shyness; both admit to being “petrified” of performing in public. ●



Maryann Savina (photo by Megan Wildhood)



Habitat for Humanity volunteers outside of the ReStore in Bellevue (photo courtesy of Habitat for Humanity)

WHAT IS AN RSVP AMBASSADOR?

An RSVP Ambassador is an RSVP Volunteer who is willing to help us spread the word about the benefits of volunteering.

Because of our small staff, we have assembled a wonderful group of volunteers who help us share RSVP’s mission with other seniors. If you would be willing to represent RSVP at events around King County, we would like to talk to you.

We do not ask for a specific time commitment, only that you occasionally share your enthusiasm for volunteering and relate your own experiences with RSVP to encourage others to join. We provide a fun, interactive training and give you the chance to meet another group of active, enthusiastic people.

To sign up or ask more questions, please contact:
Megan Wildhood, 206.694.6785 | meganw@solid-ground.org

Join us for Solid Ground’s 20th Annual
BUILDING COMMUNITY LUNCHEON

Featuring keynote speaker
Chef Edouardo Jordan

Tues
March 24

11:30am-1:30pm

Sheraton Grand Seattle
1400 6th Ave, Seattle, WA 98101

Presented by Whole Foods Market



Photo by Shannon Renfroe



VOLUNTEER & COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH RSVP

The following are just a few of the opportunities RSVP has to offer. To talk to a real person about opportunities that are just right for you, call Megan Wildhood at 206.694.6786 – or visit our website at www.solid-ground.org/RSVP for volunteer opportunity listings organized by region.

VOLUNTEERING

AARP Fraud Fighter Watch Helpline: The AARP Fraud Watch Helpline is recruiting volunteers to provide guidance and information to seniors who have been victimized or are at risk of fraud. Required skills include computer/internet research, and the ability to listen carefully and effectively communicate information over the phone. The call center is located near Sea-Tac airport with easy access to public transportation and free parking.
South Seattle

Bloodworks Northwest: Become part of the lifesaving link that delivers blood to patients in need in your community. Many opportunities are available depending on whether you prefer to be a donor monitor (helping certain donors feel well after donating) or work at the front desk (greeting and registering donors in the computer system). Volunteers are especially needed M-F during the day to go into the community to help at blood drives.
Countywide

Catholic Community Services: The Volunteer Services program welcomes volunteers to enable elders living on low incomes and adults with disabilities to remain independent in their own homes. Volunteers may help the same person or be listed for on-call opportunities depending on their schedule and interests. Volunteers receive training, mileage reimbursement and insurance. Their greatest need continues to be transportation; other requests include chores, laundry, cooking, yardwork, and office work.
Countywide

Community Food Education (CFE): This Solid Ground program is designed to teach community members living on low incomes how to prepare healthy and appetizing meals on a limited budget. Volunteers are trained to assist in providing hands-on cooking, nutrition education, menu planning, kitchen safety, and set up. Commitment is to participate in a series of six-week classes.
Various Locations Greater Seattle Area

Habitat for Humanity: We seek Family Support Partners, volunteer mentors for Habitat families approved into its homeownership program for low- to moderate-income families. Volunteers partner with families to create budgets and savings plans, and to complete 250 hours of sweat equity. If you are or have been a homeowner and would like to work with a family in the process of becoming homeowners for a period of six months to two years (approximately 4-12 hours per month), please consider this opportunity. *Countywide*

Jewish Family Services: Family mentor volunteers are needed in Kent! Help newly arrived refugees become acquainted with their surrounding communities and face the challenges of resettling in a new country. Volunteers will meet with an individual or family for an average of 2-3 hours per week for three months to help them navigate the crucial facets of American life, including transportation, banking, ESL skills, job search process, and health and child care information.
South King County

Multi-Service Center: Volunteers help adults complete their GED, help students learn English as a Second Language, help students improve basic reading, writing, and math skills, or help sort food and clothes in the food and clothing bank. We ask for a 3-hour/week commitment (two shifts of 1.5 hours) for a minimum of six months. No teaching experience required.
South King County

Magnuson Food Pantry: We welcome volunteers to support this new food pantry serving Solid Ground's Sand Point Housing campus in Magnuson Park. The food pantry is open every Wednesday; volunteers are needed for 1.5-hour shifts from 9:30am until 2:30pm to help set up, assist shoppers, and pack up.
Central Seattle

North Helpline: Volunteer to help keep your North Seattle neighbors housed and fed! Opportunities include food bank sorting and distribution, emergency services work, grocery rescue, and home delivery driving. Let us know if you'd like to join their team! Open Tuesday through Saturday. *North Seattle*

Northwest Parkinson's Foundation: Office volunteer needed to update key contacts and community events. Must have detail orientation; basic Microsoft office, spreadsheet, computer, phone, and people skills; and be an independent worker. We welcome commitments of at least 4 hours/week; the days are flexible.
Mercer Island

United Way Free Tax Prep: Join the Free Tax Campaign, a program that helps struggling families and individuals prepare their taxes, gives access to savings and opportunities, and connects people to public benefits. No tax experience necessary – we will train you. Join a talented team and help reach the people who need it most.
Countywide

Washington DECA: WA DECA's vision is to prepare innovative leaders and entrepreneurs who make a positive social and global impact by providing business and leadership opportunities to help high school students succeed in school, careers, and life. DECA seeks volunteer judges for online and in-person events occurring in Bellevue in November, January, and March. These involve role playing with students, evaluating written events online according to a provided rubric, and/or scoring live presentations. Areas to be judged include operations research, entrepreneurship business plans, and project management events.
South Seattle & online

Youth Tutoring Program (YTP): Volunteers tutor students in low-income housing across Seattle. YTP serves diverse students, many from immigrant and refugee families. Tutors and students are matched one-to-one to foster the best mentoring and tutoring relationships. Volunteers are trained to be effective tutors and provided with the tools they need to make a difference.
Throughout Seattle

- Please call to help me find a volunteer opportunity suited just for me.
- Please send information about RSVP.
- Please note my new address.

Name: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____

Please mail this form to: RSVP, 1501 N 45th Street, Seattle, WA 98103