

# Experience *in Action!*

King County RSVP's news for people 55 & older

Volume 38 | Issue 2 | Summer 2023



## Cooking Matters: Stretching food budgets while celebrating food traditions

by Gwen Campbell

Solid Ground's Cooking Matters program has supported families experiencing food insecurity for almost 30 years, leading classes on how to shop for and cook healthy food on a budget in partnership with national anti-hunger organization Share Our Strength.

The foundation of Cooking Matters is a six-week series of two-hour-long cooking classes led by staff, community volunteers with a passion for cooking, and professional chefs and nutritionists. The program partners with community organizations – like

housing sites, health clinics, and community centers – to recruit class participants who use Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.

Each class is led by a team of three trained volunteers who work alongside a staff coordinator to facilitate fun, lively, interactive, and informative classes. Participants engage in educational activities and help prepare a shared meal.

At the start of the pandemic, Solid Ground staff pivoted to provide virtual classes, reimagining cooking together



Gina Lee, former Cooking Matters Partnerships Coordinator, demonstrates how to cut dumplings (photo by Shana McCann).

to create community during a time of profound social isolation. Currently, they offer both in-person and virtual classes.

Leaning into Solid Ground's anti-racism commitment and food justice efforts fueled discussions about what health looks like across different cultures, barriers to improving health, and the resources needed to do so. Weaving anti-racism and anti-oppression values into Cooking Matters has expanded its scope and its related Community Food Education (CFE) resources.

Creating healthier communities begins with the realization that marginalized groups have fewer options and resources to access healthy, high-quality foods. "Conversations exploring the systems that create these barriers are critical," says Michael Friedman, CFE Program Manager.

Participants share recipes for culturally important foods and try recipes from other cultures. They learn how advertising targets consumers, how to read food labels, and how to cut through the food-marketing fog. Detailed information about SNAP eligibility, food banks, and meal programs is posted on the [Get Help | Food & Nutrition](#) section of Solid Ground's website.

Cooking Matters recipes aim to yield six servings for \$15, which has been especially challenging as food prices rise

rapidly. Focusing on hearty recipes such as stews – and using staples and pantry items from food banks – helps stretch food budgets. With the ethos that people are the experts in their own lives, program staff and volunteers work to create a space where people can share what they've learned from their own experiences with food insecurity.

Participants leave class with a grocery bag of ingredients for the day's recipe, and online learners receive a grocery gift card. They share recipe revisions catering to food preferences, taste, or budgets, which deepens the sense of community and adds value to the class. Cooking Matters staff work with interpreters to facilitate classes for participants with limited English proficiency.

Feedback from participants is enthusiastic: "When can we do this again?!" Participants report that they love trying new foods and want more recipes for soul food and nutritious desserts. For example, a recent class was excited about making dumplings, not part of the class curriculum, so CFE created a dumpling workshop event. One-time events such as workshops, cookouts, and demonstrations are planned to "pass the torch" to community partners to lead these events in their own communities. ●

*See how to get involved, p. 3*

**Solid Ground's King County RSVP  
(Retired and Senior Volunteer Program)**  
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## *EiA* Inside This Issue...

### Nonprofits build healthy communities

- ▶ Support your local nonprofits.....p. 3
- ▶ Tips to beat inflation.....p. 4
- ▶ The livable wage challenges nonprofits face.....p. 6
- ▶ Three stars of the Cooking Matters show.....p. 7



## Speaking Directly

by Jen Gahagan, RSVP Director

# Nonprofits & volunteers bring value & values

RSVP volunteers and the nonprofits where you serve bring incredible value to our community. Over the last 12 months, **320 RSVP volunteers** supported **19 King County nonprofits**, served **thousands of people**, and provided **33,434 service hours** valued at **\$1.25 million**.

Solid Ground is grateful to RSVP volunteers and our 40 RSVP site partners for their many contributions, so we're dedicating this issue of *Experience in Action* to nonprofits and how they improve our communities. Our writers explore many topics, including guiding principles for volunteer engagement, challenges faced by nonprofits, and the purpose of nonprofits.

As mentioned in some of the articles, nonprofits exist to make our communities stronger, safer, and more equitable. RSVP volunteers serve nonprofits that meet critical community needs, including promoting independence for older adults, supporting K-12 success, increasing food security, improving health access, and building nonprofit capacity.

At Solid Ground, we believe poverty is solvable, but we can't do it alone. We're proud to work alongside our community partners and volunteers to meet basic needs, nurture success, and spread change.

*Solid Ground staff and volunteers live by the following values every day to fulfill our mission and meet our neighbors' needs:*

- ▶ **Social Justice:** We fight racism and other oppressions by building equitable access to opportunities.
- ▶ **Compassion:** We listen to people and validate their stories, acknowledging the authentic struggles that people experience. We deliver services with sensitivity and humanity.
- ▶ **Collaboration:** We work alongside residents, program participants, staff, and community partners. We build relationships with others to connect and organize our efforts to achieve common goals.
- ▶ **Accountability:** We actively listen and respond to concerns raised by residents, program participants, staff, and community partners. We align with community and regional objectives. We do what we say we will do.
- ▶ **Respect:** We honor leadership from the communities we serve and support them to meaningfully participate in developing opportunities for their lives. We treat people as we'd want them to treat us and strive to understand and reconcile our differences. We practice professionalism and kindness with each other.
- ▶ **Integrity:** We strive to make honest, responsible decisions and act in alignment with our mission, vision, and values.

Thank you, RSVP volunteers, for exemplifying the values of the organizations you support and being a vital part of Solid Ground's efforts to build healthy and equitable communities. We appreciate your collaboration and investment of your time, talents, and passion for our work to end poverty. ●

## Learn more about Solid Ground!

Thursday, September 14, 2023 | 5-7pm

RSVP volunteers are invited to join us for an upcoming Virtual Volunteer Orientation that covers Solid Ground's mission, current volunteer opportunities, and how staff and volunteers work together to solve poverty. The two-hour orientation includes a one-hour introduction to anti-racism principles.



Sign up: [solid-ground.org/volunteer/#orientations](https://solid-ground.org/volunteer/#orientations)

## RSVP Volunteer Informational Event

Weds., Oct. 11, 2023 | 11am-12:15pm

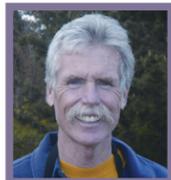
Passionate about making a difference? We need **YOU** to share your experience and skills to help meet critical community needs! Join us to learn how.

*All are welcome! We'll discuss...*

- ▶ Critical needs of families, youth, and seniors in your community.
- ▶ What's being done to assist them.
- ▶ The impacts volunteers are making.
- ▶ How you can provide support, services, and encouragement.
- ▶ All RSVP opportunities (virtual, socially distant, in-person).

Questions? [meganw@solid-ground.org](mailto:meganw@solid-ground.org) | 206.694.6786





## It Seems to Me...

by Peter Langmaid

# Support your local nonprofits

When I learned that the theme for this EIA newsletter was how nonprofits make our communities better, I was somewhat surprised because it seems like a rhetorical question. Doesn't everyone know nonprofits enhance communities? It's like asking if you prefer warm sunny days or cold, overcast, rainy weather.

Sure, over the past decade or so, I've volunteered at a number of nonprofits from food banks to senior centers, but I never gave a thought to how nonprofits fit into the community at large. They just do. Then I did some research.

By definition, nonprofit organizations operate to provide services to the community, not build profits for owners or shareholders. And according to the [Cause IQ website](#), there are over 21,000 nonprofits in the Seattle metropolitan area that employ a total of over 300,000 workers and utilize countless volunteers.

The range and focus of nonprofits are also mind-bending. They provide health services, food, housing, recreation, human services, veterans support, and countless other resources. To me, these are staggering statistics that give us insight into the size and scope of the nonprofit world.

In short, nonprofits do the work that governments either can't do or can't do well.

Take, for example, the shocking humanitarian crisis at the U.S.-Mexico border. While the government is paralyzed by partisanship, religious nonprofits have joined with local border communities to help support stranded migrants with food, water, and shelter.

Governmental organizations, however, do play an important role in the success or failure of nonprofits, and that role is to provide funding through vehicles like grants.

The government creates guidelines and reporting requirements, supplies the funding, and then gets out of the way to let the people closer to the communities take the wheel where the rubber meets the road. The government's role is active in the funding, yet passive in the execution. It's like hiring someone to paint your house, then letting them do the work.

There's a unique, mutually supportive relationship between nonprofits and the communities they serve: Communities support nonprofits with donations. Staff and nonprofits support the community with services and resources – and committed volunteers from the community help do the work.

My work at the food bank, though tiring, makes me feel good about myself even



as it helps my community. Additionally, volunteering for a nonprofit gives me positive status among my circle of friends as doing good for one's community is an admirable practice.

Nonprofits are also closer to the communities they serve than any government agency can be. In my work for this newsletter, I've visited many senior centers in the area to interview both patrons and staff. While each one bustles with activity, each one also has their own menu of activities and services that are customized, over time, to meet the needs of their particular communities. No cookie-cutter approach to service there!

In a sense, nonprofits define community and are a measure of how well a community is functioning.

In the contentious world we live in today, nonprofits bring out the best in us and should be a source of pride for everyone in the community. The root of the word "community" is "commune," meaning we're all in it together.

I know I'm proud of the work I do at nonprofits! ●

*Peter Langmaid is a semi-retired businessman, RSVP Ambassador, and longtime EIA contributor.*

# RSVP



## AmeriCorps Seniors

**The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)** is a nonprofit AmeriCorps Seniors 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. The **EIA** is dedicated to providing news, information and opportunities about senior volunteerism. Articles express writers' opinions, which aren't necessarily the views of RSVP, Solid Ground, 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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## Get Involved with Cooking Matters!

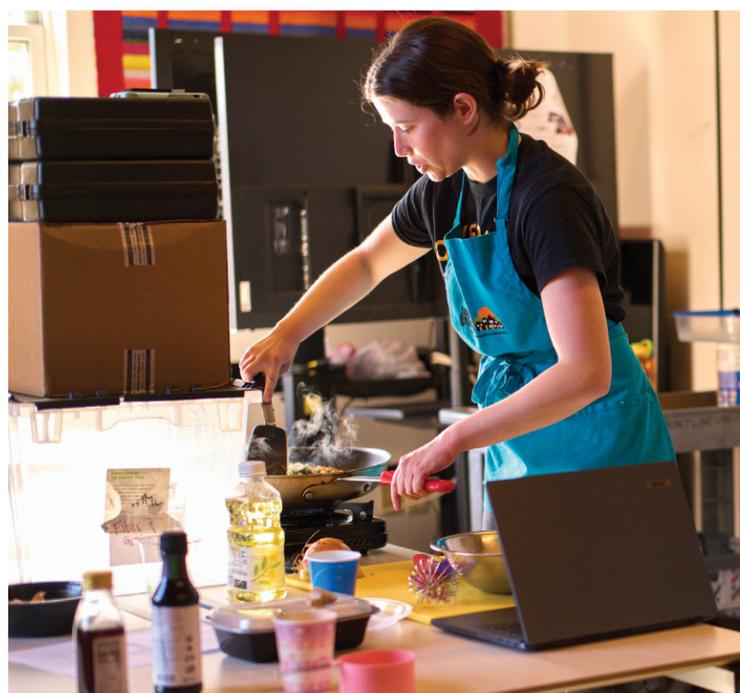
► See all current Solid Ground volunteer needs: [solid-ground.org/volunteer](http://solid-ground.org/volunteer)

► Next quarterly Cooking Matters Volunteer Training, Thursday, June 22 from 5-7pm: [solid-ground.org/cooking-matters-training-6-22-23](http://solid-ground.org/cooking-matters-training-6-22-23)

► Solid Ground Volunteer Orientations: [solid-ground.org/volunteer/#orientations](http://solid-ground.org/volunteer/#orientations)

Note that all potential Cooking Matters volunteers must first attend (or be signed up for) a Solid Ground Volunteer Orientation OR be a Cooking Matters Satellite Partner Volunteer.

► Want to host Cooking Matters at your site? Contact [cooking@solid-ground.org](mailto:cooking@solid-ground.org). ●



A cooking demo by Laura Emmerson (photo by Michael B. Maine)



## Financial Planning

by Bill Pharr

### Tips to beat inflation

In response to a recent student debt forgiveness article in *The Seattle Times*, I sent in a letter to the editor. I made the point that, in 1970, a college student could work summers and pay the entire cost of college doing manual labor. I was one of those students, along with many others, 53 years ago.

Now, a student must earn in the same summer vacation time allocation anywhere from \$15,000 to \$80,000. Clearly, this is not possible. This is an example of the battle we're all fighting these days – the rapidly increasing cost of living.

It would require a full book to deal with this topic, otherwise known as inflation. This long analysis would take into consideration history, a discussion of capitalism and its shortcomings, and a discussion of many poorly chosen and/or executed decisions made by America's leaders.

A more practical approach for the space we have here is to focus on steps the average person can take to combat inflation. The challenge is that this advice should be more customized for different age groups, so I encourage you to fill in the inevitable blanks in the following suggestions with your own specific situation.

**Track income and spending:** In my opinion, it's critical to know what you're spending your money on. What projects can you do yourself instead of hiring out? What can you eliminate or cut down on? Where can you scale back your lifestyle (reasonably, of course!)? Typically, larger items are the phone bill and the cable bill. It does require time and work, but it's worth shopping around for other options.

Don't be afraid to call and ask for a better deal – you might be surprised how often they'll offer

you a lower rate. Are you paying for anything you don't use, like magazine subscriptions, extras like Disney Plus, etc.? Finally, is the money you have in savings getting the highest interest rate now available?

**Grocery shopping:** Create a meal plan each week. Don't buy beyond what you need now. Check and compare price per ounce and not unit price. Shop the discounts hard, especially in store. Buy in bulk when possible. Eat out less. Take your lunch to work. Skip expensive coffees and treats. Use credit cards that reward spending on food.

**Work:** Is it time to start applying to other places, while you're still an employee? Is it appropriate to ask for a raise? Could you make more money if you had more education? If so, there are quite a few scholarship opportunities available if you have time to go to school. Do you have a skill that could make you some money on the side? Can you commute by public transit instead of driving?

**Health care:** This is an expensive aspect of most people's lives. If you're covered at work with a decent health insurance plan at a reasonable



monthly rate, consider this a blessing. Are there opportunities to get better coverage if you moved jobs? Could you go to an HR representative at work to see if you're on the best plan offered by the employer?

This discussion must also include the decisions *not* to make in these stressful times. Do *not* borrow from your 401k. Do *not* live off your credit cards. Only put on a credit card what you can pay off every month.

In summary, analyze every aspect of your financial life regularly. If possible, include all family members in these ongoing discussions. It can be a real learning opportunity for young kids and teenagers to begin healthy financial habits early, which will pay dividends (or even more) into the future. ●

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

## The Secret Life of Groceries

A Book Review by Bill Pharr

If I had been asked before reading this book what I thought the most important inventions of all time are, I would have said the wheel and the printing press. Benjamin Lorr, the author of *The Secret Life of Groceries: The Dark Miracle of the American Supermarket*, would add the corrugated box.

Before the creation of paperboard in 1817, people didn't have containers light or strong enough to ship large quantities of items, the most important of which is food. In 1812, nearly 90% of the population worked to produce the nation's food. Now, it's less than 3% of the population.

In 2018, Americans spent \$701 billion on food, and there were some 38,000 supermarket grocery stores across the country. An average American adult will spend about 2% of their life inside grocery stores, which each contain an average of 32,000 items!

As fascinating as those facts are, Lorr goes far deeper into the world of food, food production, and why we spend so much time shopping for food. Lorr spent five years debriefing grocery personnel, eating and researching his way through specialty food expos, riding shotgun with a long-haul trucker, attending a USDA class on avian influenza, working in the seafood department at a large grocery store, and interviewing Tun-Lin, a shrimp boat worker from Myanmar, whose labor was exploited for 15 years. He expertly weaves his own experiences into the book, often by using real people to make his points.

Lorr opens the book describing his work behind the fish counter in a New York City grocery store. He describes the stench from the display case when it would be cleaned once every two months.

He ranks the smell as the worst in his research, even out-reeking the times he waded through the waste lagoons of industrial swine farms and stood ankle deep in rotting fish in Thailand.

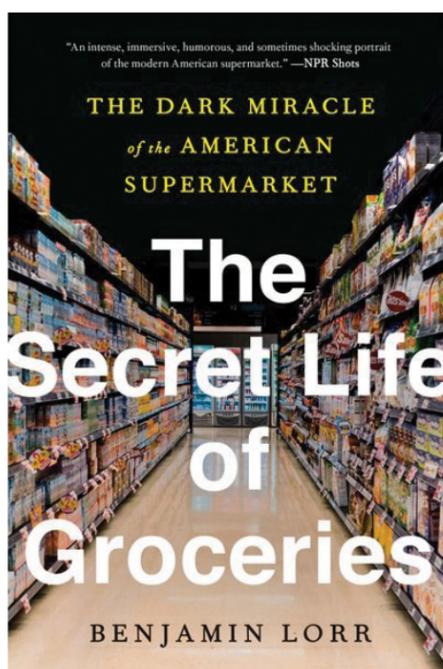
He then introduces us to Joe Coulombe, the founder of Trader Joe's. In the course of educating us on Joe's genius and his path to creating and then selling Trader Joe's, Lorr discusses the original general store where the clerks picked out all the items for the customers.

This leads into a discussion about ice, refrigeration, the beginnings of Southland Corporation, and eventually, the beginnings of large grocery stores. Lorr describes Joe as a visionary who is an "active retailer" uninterested in selling products available in infinite supply or competing on price (like Walmart and Amazon).

Lorr next describes riding shotgun with Lynne Ryles, a long-haul trucker. Lynne shares that in the last year, she grossed \$200,000 driving and took home \$17,000 net. Ouch! Truckers did better financially before President Carter deregulated the trucking industry.

Lorr attends a specialty food show to interview Kevin Kelly, an architect who designs stores. On the way to the food show, Lorr runs into Julie, who has a food product she wants to sell called Slawsa – coleslaw plus salsa in a bottle. This segment details the difficult process of getting a product to a grocery shelf. Julie is successful in the end, but not without a high level of determination and a supportive husband.

One little tidbit you learn about is that the system of paying stores for shelf space adds a big sum to the grocery store's bottom line annually and takes a chunk out of the profits of the product's owner. Eighty-five percent of new products that attain shelf space fail within two years!



*Continued on next page*



## Aging with Wisdom

by Carol Scott-Kassner

# Viewing our service through a spiritual lens

*“Service is reaching in toward our own wholeness, reaching out toward the world’s needs, and trying to live our lives at the intersection.” ~Parker Palmer*

I recently enjoyed a brief encounter with a woman sitting next to me on an airplane. She told me she was about to retire from many years in management at Boeing. I asked her what her vision for herself was after she retired. She immediately said, “More exercise and some volunteering.”

I told her I was excited to hear that she was committed to self-care and also to reaching out to the community in service. Then I added that it’s important to find meaning in the second half of our lives. She said, “Yes, I’ve heard about that meaning thing.”

Soon after that discussion, I read an article in *Spirituality & Health Magazine* about what it means to age consciously. The author, Marilyn Schlitz, made nine points about the qualities of that journey. One of the most important is that we need to “move from ‘I’ to ‘We,’” she writes. “While aging is a personal process, conscious aging is more than a personal quest. It can infuse your life as you promote the transformation of your community. Altruism and compassion, born of shared destiny rather than duty or obligation, can emerge and add joy and purpose to your actions.”

In other words, the attitudes we take into our volunteering can not only help our communities, but also help transform us.

Sage-ing International is part of the conscious-aging movement. It’s the organization through which I received my training in the spirituality of aging. Even now at the age of 81, I remain involved in this organization as the wisdom that permeates it fills my life with meaning, and the members are amazing, loving people committed to aging with wisdom. I continue to take online courses through their wonderful offerings and help train new people to be leaders.

A number of years ago, a group of Sage-ing leaders reflected on the question, “What does it mean to serve the community with the insights of a Sage – a wise older person who has done their inner work and is sharing their wisdom with the broader community?”

They developed the following qualities of a Sage in Service. I encourage you to reflect on each of these qualities and think about how they permeate your work as a volunteer. Also, reflect on how you’ve changed spiritually as a result of your volunteer experiences using these ideas as a guide.

**Groceries Book Review:** *Continued from previous page*  
**The book covers other aspects of the grocery business, including:**

- ▶ What does it take for a product to earn certification labels like “organic” and “fair trade”?
- ▶ Who suffers the consequences of increased convenience and efficiency?
- ▶ What changed in the industry after the Odwalla, Schwan’s Ice Cream, and Taco Bell health scares in the late 1990s?

Throughout the book, Lorr discusses why people shop, what goes through their minds when grocery shopping, and how grocery store owners design their stores to meet demand. This book is an investigation into the human lives at the heart of the American grocery store, but it hits close to home. ●



**1) Deep listening:** This is our ability to be present to another’s story without fixing the problem or judging. Deep listening is at the core of our service, building relationships, and forming community.

**2) Compassion:** With a deep awareness of the suffering of another coupled with the gift to relieve it, we serve from a deep passion that includes caring, understanding, reciprocity, and forgiveness.

**3) Joyfulness:** Through deep acceptance of our lives, we remember to laugh, play, and see humor in life. Our feelings are regularly filled with joy as we celebrate how extraordinary it is to be alive.

**4) Peacefulness:** Practicing inner calm that can come from a sense of gratitude, we speak and act in nonviolent ways. Pursuing peaceful solutions to conflict, we respect and promote justice in relationships.

**5) Open Communication:** We practice open communication by honoring mutuality in speech with language that reflects accurate, clear information and nurtures trust in relationships.

**6) Lifelong learning:** With enduring curiosity and innovative creativity, we have a personal mission to continue to grow cognitively, spiritually, and emotionally.

**7) Inclusiveness:** By welcoming and celebrating the rich diversity of ethnicities, lifestyles, backgrounds, ages, and spiritual/wisdom traditions in every community, we cooperate in helping others and making a difference for good in the world.

**8) Integrity:** We practice integrity by being genuine and true to ourselves, being honest and trustworthy in relation with others, and being truthful in words and actions in all circumstances.

**9) Reverence for Life:** We bring an attitude of respect and care for all living things and become stewards of our precious planet earth. We engage in programs and partnerships to nurture and sustain the wellbeing of the human family and planet earth.

**10) Respect:** Affirming the worth of ourselves and others, we strive to treat others as they want to be treated. Respect is a nonjudgmental attitude and feeling of value for people, places, and things. This attitude is linked to behavior in how we treat ourselves and others, in how we speak, and in what we do.

May you be inspired to deepen into the spiritual possibilities of your generosity as a volunteer. May you notice and name the changes that are occurring deep within your soul as you age. May you find great joy in life. ●

*Sage-ing International is dedicated to helping all who are interested in tapping into wisdom gained from living a long life and learning from that process. It offers training to become a Sage-ing leader, the opportunity to join a Wisdom Circle with others, and superb virtual classes on aging. Carol Scott-Kassner is a Certified Spiritual Director and member of Sage-ing International.*



# The livable wage challenges nonprofits face by Becky Rosenberg

Pay at nonprofits currently isn't adequate enough to enable many nonprofit workers, whether in direct service or administrative positions, to live in the cities where they provide essential services. At a time when more jobs are available and salaries are increasing in many economic sectors, nonprofits are having a particularly difficult time recruiting and retaining employees.

This issue hasn't gone unnoticed – by nonprofits themselves and by the communities that depend on their services. King County, for example, commissioned 501 Commons to conduct two major studies of salaries, benefits, and job satisfaction among nonprofit employees: the **Nonprofit Wage & Benefits Survey** and the **Employee Engagement Survey**.

As the 501 Commons report states, "The self-sacrifice model that has powered the nonprofit sector for decades has provided philanthropy and government with economic value, but the cost of that model has been absorbed by the people who work and volunteer in the sector."

In its job satisfaction survey, including more than 230 county agencies and 20,000 employees, the report found there's relatively high satisfaction with the flexibility and belief in the value of the work, but the lowest satisfaction with compensation and benefits. The report concludes by offering steps organizations can take to "be more intentional, transparent, and equitable in their relationships with employees."

Donors and funders, private and public, love to see their contributions providing programs with high visibility and low administrative costs, paying for direct services but not all overhead expenses (including administrative costs, supplies, etc.) required to operate. The consequence is that agencies have a great deal of difficulty establishing livable wages. But they're trying!

One example is Literacy Source, a community-based organization that "partners with adults working to gain skills and education to create new opportunities for themselves, their families, and the community." I spoke with Co-executive Director Shira Rosen,

who described their efforts. As part of their attention to diversity, equity, and inclusion, they identified pay equity as a focus.

Using available data on salaries at comparable organizations, Literacy Source seeks to provide salaries that meet at least the mid-level of those organizations. In consultation with their staff, the first concrete step toward equity was to take a pot of available funds equal to 8% of total staff salaries and distribute it equally among employees, so that those making the least received the largest percentage increase, and those with the highest salaries received the smallest percentage increase.

Literacy Source hasn't yet met its goal of providing a livable wage to all – and this measure depended on one-time funds – but it's part of an ongoing commitment. So are funders increasing their financial commitments to help address pay inequity? Shira says that so far, they haven't received any increases, but educating donors about this need will be a large part of their funding campaigns going forward.

The Seattle Human Services Coalition provided agencies with talking points to raise awareness about the essential nature, expertise, and effectiveness of human services providers in their many areas of operation, requiring "experts, resources, maintenance, and repairs."

The City of Seattle, with other local governments, contracts with nonprofits to deliver many frontline human services. The City funded a **Wage Equity Study** led by a team of University of Washington School of Social Work researchers. A steering committee of Seattle Human Services Coalition leaders, local nonprofit directors, and policy experts helped guide it.

The findings confirm that wages for nonprofit human services workers are significantly lower than for-profit wages – as much as 37% lower than wages in noncare industries – and even 30% lower than workers in education and health care. In addition, based on their job evaluation analysis, this difference is not based on "skill, responsibility, and difficulty of human services jobs."

Recommendations include



raising wages to reflect inflation in addition to a minimum 7% increase "in the near term." The report also emphasizes the need for ongoing attention to pay equity, identifying gender and race inequalities, and the need for public contracts to address pay inequities in their funding.

Marilyn Watkins, a committee member and retired Economic Opportunity Institute (EOI) Policy Director, notes that EOI is focused on continually adjusting wage scales to address high turnover and provide livable wages.

She reports that the UW Wage Equity Study's work builds on the 501 Commons report and provides much more data and analysis that may help convince policymakers and philanthropists

that human services pay must be addressed to hire and retain workers.

Volunteers continue to be critical contributors to the work of our nonprofits. The 501 Commons report found that 85% of all nonprofits are entirely operated by volunteers. But those employed in these organizations who depend upon them for their livelihood have to be fairly compensated for their work, their expertise, and their commitment.

It may take some innovation, and it will certainly take commitment to the well-being of those often on the frontlines of some of our community's most pressing needs, but it's well worth the effort. ●

## Medicaid Extension Period Ended

The COVID Public Health Emergency is over, and Apple Health (Medicaid) continuous enrollment ended on 3/31/23. Requests for eligibility renewal are currently being sent out.

### Here's what you need to know:

Individuals who are Medicare eligible or 65 years and older need to transition their coverage to Medicare. Apple Health will send a letter of your Medicaid coverage termination date. There will be a Medicare Special Enrollment Period (SEP). People who don't qualify for full Medicaid may be eligible for a Medicare Savings Program (MSP).

### Questions?

Call or email to connect with a SHIBA Medicare volunteer at **206.753.4806** or [shiba@solid-ground.org](mailto:shiba@solid-ground.org) to discuss!

## The Medicare Savings Programs (MSP)

### NEW in 2023: There are no resource limits for MSPs!

Sign up for an MSP for help with Medicare Parts A & B costs. Applying is easy. You can have either standard Medicare or a Medicare Advantage plan. If you qualify, Medicare Savings Programs may cover:

- ▶ Part A premiums
- ▶ Part B premiums
- ▶ Medicare copayments
- ▶ Medicare deductibles

### Income Guidelines as of 4/2023

	INCOME LESS THAN
Single Person	\$1,660 per month
	\$19,920 per year
Couple	\$2,239 per month
	\$26,868 per year



## Volunteer Spotlights

by Megan Wildhood

# Three stars of the Cooking Matters show

During the last few years of pandemic time, Solid Ground's Community Food Education (CFE) had to greatly reduce the number of classes in its very popular Cooking Matters program, which teaches people living on low incomes how to cook healthy food on a budget. It's been a hit among RSVP and Solid Ground volunteers alike for many years, and we're excited to announce its return to in-person classes this year.

We'd especially like to thank and highlight three RSVP volunteers who've dedicated their time, talents, and experience to Cooking Matters: Arlene Hing-Loh, Peggy Keene, and Beverly Pressey. Combined, they've served 54 hours total since Cooking Matters reopened its in-person offerings a few months ago.



Arlene Hing-loh

Arlene Hing-Loh, who has a Master's in microbiology and experience as a medical lab tech, came to Cooking Matters in 2019 as a Class Assistant. She enjoys setting up for class, helping participants with questions during class, teaching chopping techniques, and cleaning up the space after class ends. Inspired by a strong sense of community involvement, Arlene loves

teaching, tutoring and interacting with kids, including her own, as well as cooking – especially curry dishes.

As CFE Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator Shana McCann says, "Arlene has been a wonderful volunteer in both our in-person and virtual classes. She's been incredibly engaging, especially so in a class

with teens, sharing cooking information in an accessible way!"

Peggy Keene also started volunteering in 2019 as a Cooking Matters Class Assistant at the Pike Place Commons. She quickly took on the Cooking Facilitator role, frequently testing recipes used in class in her own kitchen before helping to teach them in class. She also has her own garden where she grows herbs, adding a personal spice to the healthy recipes in the Cooking Matters curriculum.



Peggy Keene

Shana says, "Peggy always goes above and beyond in classes, teaching participants how to make pesto, guacamole, and homemade popcorn! Her passion for cooking is contagious, and she's even brought in herbs from her own garden! We're so thankful to have her as a volunteer."



Beverly Pressey

Beverly Pressey, a registered dietician, originally came to Cooking Matters hoping to fill the volunteer role of Nutrition Facilitator in 2021. The program was on hold due to public health concerns, so she started volunteering at Marra Farm as a Giving Gardener instead.

In October of 2022, she became a Cooking Matters Cooking Facilitator, teaching both virtual and in-person classes. Shana says, "We're thankful to have Beverly volunteering with us. She's incredibly dedicated, coming to Marra Farm every Friday for the past two years, and we appreciate her expertise as a registered dietician in our Cooking Matters classes! She's skilled at bringing an approachable lens to nutrition education, and we're so happy to have her."

We really appreciate the passion and dedication of these three Cooking Matters volunteers, and we're excited about the reopening of in-person classes! Read the cover story of this newsletter to learn more about Cooking Matters, and visit Solid Ground's [Volunteer webpage](#) to view all CFE volunteer position descriptions. ●

## WHAT ARE RSVP AMBASSADORS?

They're RSVP Volunteers willing to help us spread the word about the benefits of volunteering!

Because of our small staff, we have a wonderful group of volunteers who help us share RSVP's mission with other seniors. If you're willing to represent RSVP at events around King County, we'd like to talk to you. You'll share your experiences and enthusiasm for volunteering, and encourage others to join RSVP. We provide a fun, interactive training!

## SEND US YOUR HOURS!

Your RSVP volunteer hours are important!

Hours are tied to federal funding with benefits provided to you, and they help our volunteer sites and RSVP reach volunteer hour goals. And importantly, they help us recognize you for your service and the contributions you make to meet community needs when you volunteer.



To sign up, send hours, or ask more questions, contact Megan Wildhood at 206.694.6786 or [meganw@solid-ground.org](mailto:meganw@solid-ground.org).

# 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 volunteer roles that are just right for you, call Megan Wildhood at 206.694.6786 – or visit our website at [solid-ground.org/RSVP](http://solid-ground.org/RSVP) for volunteer opportunity listings organized by region.

**American Red Cross:** Volunteers respond to disasters, speak to community groups and schools, develop youth leadership skills, support local blood drives, provide care to service members, and much more. The training and support volunteers receive on a regular basis allows them to be successful in every Red Cross program. Volunteer opportunities are available 365 days a year to provide frontline services in your community. ~Countywide

**Catholic Community Services (CCS) – Volunteer Services** 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 each time or be listed for on-call opportunities depending on schedules and interests. Volunteers receive training, mileage reimbursement and insurance. Requests include rides to medical appointments, yardwork, phone buddies, and grocery, medication, and meal delivery. ~Countywide & online

**CIRC** is developing a team of Digital Navigators to assist older adult residents in exploring the ever-changing world of technology. Navigators provide individualized or small-group assistance to older adults living in affordable housing. Help people find affordable internet-capable devices and/or coach them in introductory digital skills so they can become effective home internet users. ~Countywide

**Community Food Education (CFE):** Solid Ground's CFE is designed to teach people living on low incomes how to prepare healthy and delicious meals on a limited budget. CFE seeks volunteers who are passionate about food and nutrition to help with 6-week class series. Work alongside a staff coordinator to facilitate fun, lively, and informative classes. Volunteers work with participants on educational activities and help them prepare a shared meal. In-person and virtual classes are available, and training is provided. ~Countywide & online

**Full Life Care** is dedicated to enhancing quality of life for low-income elders and adults with disabilities. Volunteers support elders through the ElderFriends Program, which custom matches volunteers with lonely and isolated older adults in King County for 1:1 companionship via in-home or remote friendly visits in Seattle and King County. ~Countywide

**Habitat for Humanity** seeks regular volunteers to help build and repair homes for hardworking families in King County. Volunteers also coach families in Habitat's Family Support program, helping them find homes. Remote and in-person options are available. Join them for a volunteer orientation session to learn more. ~Countywide

**Hopelink** is opening back up to the public, and we need your help to ensure all members of our community have access to food! Volunteer in Bellevue, Carnation, Kirkland, Redmond, or Shoreline. Opportunities occur Monday through Friday during regular business hours and include check-in (computer skills required), customer service (must be able to lift up to 15 pounds), and restocking (must be able to lift 35+ pounds). ~North & East King County

**Lifelong:** Lifelong's volunteers – the heart and soul of the organization – have played a vital role helping provide quality care and services to clients for more than 30 years. Lifelong's food program, Chicken Soup Brigade, eases the lives of people living with or at risk of serious illnesses. Volunteer opportunities include: repacking food donations, prepping food, packaging meals, delivering nutritious food, and assembling health care kits. ~South Seattle

**North Helpline Emergency Services & Food Bank** believes all people deserve adequate food, housing, and respect. We're actively looking for volunteers to join our onsite programs, particularly for the following activities: food bank distribution (W. & Sat. mornings, Th. afternoons), home delivery box packing (T. & Th. mornings), and food donation sorting (T.–Sat. mornings). ~North Seattle

**Port of Seattle:** The SEA Airport (Seattle-Tacoma International Airport) volunteer program seeks new volunteers to join our dedicated team. Volunteers elevate the customer experience by addressing their needs. Whether providing directions, distributing special lanyards for passengers with hidden disabilities, or providing PacNW tourist recommendations, our volunteers are invaluable members of the airport team. As SEA traffic continues to pick up, the need for additional volunteers also increases. ~South King County

**Reading Partners:** Are you ready to help a student become a lifelong learner? Reading Partners seeks 400 volunteer tutors to work one-on-one with students during the school year. Give a little over one hour per week. We offer flexible Monday to Thursday volunteer times between 8am – 4pm. No experience required; we provide volunteers with a structured curriculum, training, and ongoing support to help you and your student succeed. ~South Seattle

**Sound Generations** is a nonprofit organization serving aging adults and their loved ones in King County since 1967. Our staff and over 2,100 volunteers are dedicated to ensuring older adults can live ample and fulfilled lives in a community that respects and affirms the aging journey. Requests include assisting with events, social media ambassadors, phone-a-friend connectors, and digital card making. ~Countywide

**Youth Tutoring Program (YTP)** provides free one-to-one, virtual tutoring for children living in five different housing communities for those living on low incomes around Seattle. YTP student scholars represent many nationalities, cultures, languages, and religions. Volunteers meet with the same student scholar every week to mentor and tutor them in academic and life skills. Afternoon and evening hours are available. Sign up for one hour a week or more and help a child succeed. ~North Seattle, South Seattle, & online

**Washington DECA** serves 13,000 high school students to prepare them to become innovative leaders and entrepreneurs who make a positive social and global impact. We're currently looking for volunteer judges to evaluate both written and oral business competitions. Students value your feedback as they prepare for the International DECA competition. ~Eastside & online

## OPEN FOR THE SEASON: Solid Ground's Giving Garden at Marra Farm!

We need volunteers to build soil, prepare vegetable beds, plant vegetable starts and seeds, weed by hand, compost, water, harvest, wash produce, and distribute produce to the community food bank and other locations. Many of our volunteers start with limited or no gardening knowledge and learn as they go, so we welcome you with whatever experience you bring.

To get involved, please contact Megan Wildhood: 206.694.6786 or [meganw@solid-ground.org](mailto:meganw@solid-ground.org).