

THE FRIENDSHIP TIMES

Living in Community:

The positive breakdown between socio-economic groups



By Brenda Perkins,
Women's House
Manager

At Friendship House, everyone is welcome to share their insights, resources, and gifts. We provide shelter, meals, clothing, showers, and other essential needs to people. Equally important are the intangible things we offer: respect, love, acceptance, and warmth. Dorothy Day wrote: "We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community."

Each individual and family is part of the Skagit County community—even if they are homeless. We accept people from their desperate times to their flourishing times. As the Women's House Manager, I see both sadness and joy every day. I have seen that every person who walks in our doors has something of importance to give to our homes, and to our community as a whole.

The residents come to us in times of need for different reasons. Some struggle with mental or physical ailments, some are recovering from addiction, and others are looking for employment. Many are fleeing unhealthy situations. Whatever the reason, everyone deserves a hand in recreating themselves and striving for a better life. One thing that has inspired me is how the people of Skagit County take good care of one

another. I was very blessed with the opportunity to have spent my first Christmas with the residents of the shelter. I am astonished by the abundance of donations that flood our homes: everything from food and household goods, to toys and entertainment to be enjoyed by the residents, many of whom have not gone to the movies, skating rink, or bowling alley in years.

"I have admired the residents' love, laughter, leadership abilities, and compassion for others."

We all know there is a stigma associated with being homeless. Many people are frightened by or uneasy with the population. Working at Friendship House reminds me that any one of us could be in the same situation if our hand in life suddenly changed due to personal illness, death of a family member, or loss of a job. This population consists of someone's mother, father, brother, child, cousin, and friend. Let's work to break the stereotypes that build up barriers.

I invite you to come down to Friendship House for a meal. Sit next to your neighbors and have a conversation. Our tasty meals, served three times daily, are a true community manifestation! Most dinners are generously prepared and served by churches and service groups. All other meals are done by residents of Friendship House under

the guidance of our new kitchen manager Chef Tom Hoffman.

You, the community, donate so much to Friendship House. You keep us alive! By sharing a meal with us, you will give our residents the wholesome, healing opportunity to serve you. The gift of your presence will have the effect of flooding the separation gaps that exist between the groups society has formed.

Every resident I come into contact with leaves a little piece of their heart with us here at Friendship House. I have admired their love, laughter, leadership abilities, and compassion for others. I learn from them. I propose to everyone, from all walks of life, to reach inside and ask: "What can I give to my community?" See what you can offer to someone, and I guarantee you will get something in return.

You are welcome to join the Friendship House community. Our love and hospitality are not reserved just for homeless people, but for our volunteers, donors, and everyone who wants to reach out across society's boundaries. ♥



Photo: Ruth Lohmann

Thanks to Our Community

The Friendship House community is amazing!
Thank you to everyone who helps us out in a myriad of ways!



Western Washington University students volunteer their time at En Vogue each year and help us make the fashion show a success! We are especially grateful for our hardworking interns this past year. Pictured at top center is Blake Westhoff, our fall and winter quarter intern. Seated at far right is spring intern Sonia Sleiman. Thank you for all you accomplished for Friendship House! ♥



One of our recent residents, Cale (pictured bottom left), leads a poetry workshop for staff, residents, and community members at the Men's House. What a wonderful time to reflect on the beauty of the written word and the power it has to heal and rejuvenate. Thank you to Cale for sharing this with us! ♥



Recently, over a dozen teenage skateboarders showed up from Skaters for Change to see how they could help out the homeless community. MLK said "Everybody can be great because anybody can serve. You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love—and you can be that servant." Thank you to Skaters for Change for giving back! ♥

Want to help us save paper and postage?

Email lindsey@skagitfriendshiphouse.org to sign-up for e-receipts.



Taking Down to Build Up

Thank you to Pastor Kip McCormick of Cornwall Church in Skagit County for organizing an interfaith day of transformation for our Women's House yard, fence, playground, and serenity garden! People from the Navy took down the rickety playground in no time! Notice here not only the playground equipment, but the new fence!! ♥



Thanks to the Skagit Community Foundation for inviting Friendship House to participate in the first annual Skagit Day of Giving. We were able to secure \$35,000 in the months preceding the event, and had \$15,000 of that matched by the Foundation. In addition, we raised almost \$20,000 on the night of the event!

Keep On Truckin'

Father and son found more than shelter at Friendship House

By Kristie Kaaland, Men's House Manager

At Friendship House, Mike learned that he could ask for help, something he had never been good at doing. His goals while here were to obtain housing for himself and his son, as well as to get his veterans benefits. He also sought employment, but the jobs were pretty scarce. That struggle often made him feel helpless and stressed. It wasn't for lack of trying, however, and he didn't give up! He went to training with Biddix Trucking and now has his CDL, which required 160 hours of classroom and driving time. He has applications out with some local companies. His long term goal is to get a job closer to his daughter who lives in Utah. "I told her I would live closer to her during her last two years of high school."

While living here, Mike served as a resident House Assistant (HA). This is a leadership position, but definitely *not* an easy job. He summed up being an HA as "playing peace-keeper." While it is incredibly admirable how the residents of the shelter maintain positive and gracious attitudes during their most difficult times, you can imagine that communal living has its challenges. Mike helped make sure that residents were doing their chores, and he often assisted me between 1:00-4:00pm by accepting clothing and food donations generously dropped off by the public.

Mike continues to come in every Sunday and help prepare our lunch.

He also offered hospitality and orientation to people new to the shelter. Mike was an excellent HA and always had our best interest at heart.

FH referred him to more options that he had not known about. He contacted the Supportive Services for Veterans Families case manager at Skagit Community Action. FH staff helped him to get into his own studio apartment in Clear Lake. "FH continues to help me with the occasional food box when I am running low at the end of the month.



"I continue to attend weekly support groups for veterans in Burlington. I often pick up a former resident who is 83 and take him with me."

Mike says that the most important thing you can do at FH is apply yourself and not get *too* comfortable.

It has been six months since he and his son moved out, but he volunteers every Sunday to prepare our lunch. I enjoy Sundays because three of my past residents come in and volunteer. It is a worry-free day for me!

I asked 20-year-old Mikey what circumstances brought him and his father to FH. He said that they were evicted from their home after the

owner passed away and the family wanted to sell it. His dad lost his job and they moved to Anacortes for a month and then into a trailer park before landing at Friendship House.

Mikey's goals while at FH were to get his GED, a job, and housing. I am happy to report that he has achieved those goals. He is working in Burlington and got connected to Northwest Youth Services. He is living in an apartment with a roommate.

I so enjoyed having Mikey here! He was ALWAYS so polite and genuinely thankful for everything. He was always jumping in whenever I asked him to without hesitation. I am so happy and proud of the things that he has accomplished.

His duties while at FH included cooking and serving meals, getting up early and going to bed on time (difficult for a young man!), being productive all the time, and keeping in weekly contact with NWYS for four months while waiting for his name to come up on the housing list. On top of this, he had weekly chores and "donation hours." Way to go, MIKEY!

When I asked him how FH supported him, he did not hesitate: "In lots of ways." FH gave him shelter from the cold, three meals a day, clothing, support, and guidance. He said that sometimes when he was in a bad mood, or just feeling down, staff members always reminded him of the good things. He said we could always make him laugh.

Mike and Mikey are so truly appreciated by me, and I enjoy seeing them and catching up on their new lives. ♥

Groundbreaking Ceremony!

Tuesday, July 23 at 12:30

Join us for this exciting community celebration of our building project. We will gather on the SE corner of the property at 108 Snoqualmie Street (on the corner of 4th Street) just a few yards from both our shelters.

We hope you can join us!



Friendship House Welcomes Tom Hoffman as the New Kitchen Manager!



Tom is from Mount Vernon and has worked at a number of restaurants including Pacioni's Italian Restaurant, The Old Edison Inn, and the Train Wreck Bar & Grill. Tom owned his own restaurant for seven years where he was also the head chef. Tom's current specialty item to cook is soup. He is very excited to have the opportunity to work here at Friendship House. He will be an integral part of the new building and the Hunger to Hope training program, teaching residents basic cooking skills and connecting them to other local chefs and employment opportunities.

"I am very excited about working alongside the people!" Tom said. "I think it is every chef's dream to cook for people in need. This is a service industry and somewhere along the way that gets forgotten. I'm glad to be a part of Hunger to Hope to teach people the joy of cooking and help them get back to work."

Our Mission

Friendship House reflects the heart of God by feeding, sheltering, clothing, and healing...to empower those in need.

www.SkagitFriendshipHouse.org • 360.336.6138 (Office) • 360.336.2418 (Women) • 360.336.2135 (Men)
PO Box 517 • Mount Vernon, WA 98273