

THE FRIENDSHIP TIMES

Skagit First Step Center, located in Burlington, opened June of 2021 and meets the community's great need for low-barrier shelter access.



Since this article was published, donors have been reaching out about directly supporting this program. The answer is YES! **Yes, we are always accepting financial contributions to our specific programs and even if you give online, you can select the First Step Center** as the assigned gift designation. If you wish to do something bigger than yourself, we have an incredible Peer to Peer platform that allows individuals and groups to help us fundraise for causes like the First step Center. We do this through an app called GiveButter, which allows communities to find ways for giving better! It's easy to give online from any page footer or through the donate tab. Visit us anytime at skagitfriendshiphouse.org or send a check with First Step Center on the memo line to our Mount Vernon Administrative office.



SKAGIT FIRST STEP CENTER IN THE NEWS

It's a place where people can get three meals a day, do laundry, take a shower, get sober, establish routines and work on finding permanent housing. "There are people who abuse drugs and take advantage of the system, here", said Bruce, when interviewed by King 5 in March. **"but there's a lot of people like us who just have misfortune and really have nowhere else to go."**

It costs about \$90,000 to operate the facility every month. Executive Director Jonathan Kline said First Step needs approximately \$270,000 to stay open until a new round of funding comes through in July. **"I think it will come together. I don't know how, but we provide a key service and people realize that,"** said Kline.

"This is our first time being homeless and we're not very good at it," says Bruce, "this place is a godsend."

First Step is Skagit County's only low-barrier shelter. It's comprised of 45 tiny homes and 25 additional beds as part of the cold weather shelter program.

All of them were full at the time of interview. **Funding through June this year has been secured,** thanks to the North Star Project leaders, WA Commerce, and the efforts of our Executive Director. We will continue to fundraise for FSC.

Any readers wishing to get more involved with peer to peer fundraising, reach Jen to get started in just minutes at 360-961-8434, or start a page at givebutter.com/skagitfriendshiphouse by clicking "Fundraise" or "Join a Team" today.



WELCOME ANNETTE HANSEN TO THE TEAM

Born and raised in Washington, our new Finance and HR Manager, Annette married her soulmate, and for 30 years the Navy took them and their four children all over the world! Recently back home in Skagit County they can spend time with family & friends, especially their kids, grandkids, and great grandbabies! In 2013 Annette earned her bachelor's degree in Finance Forensics. "In Virginia, I applied my accounting background and found a passion in working for two Feeding America Foodbanks; The

Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia and then as Director of Finance and Administration at the Virginia Peninsula Foodbank". Annette shared, **"I am thrilled to be working to support a mission and organization I care about here in Skagit County** and look forward to helping this organization continue to support those in need at the Skagit Friendship House." We are thrilled to have her, with her knowledge and passion as part of our staff. Welcome!



SUMMER IS ON ITS WAY!



Join us August 20th for our 2nd annual benefit concert! We were elated by the response last year and plan to double the

impact in 2023 with your help. Start telling your friends to save the date as we are preparing for the best show of the summer at Christianson's Nursery field on Best Road, Mount Vernon.

With your help last year, we raised over \$20,000 to provide for our programs. **If you have an interest in getting involved as a volunteer for this special event, let us know!**

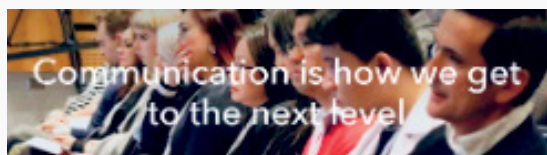
We've started seeing community sponsorships come in for this year's big event already. Benefit concerts really put the "fun" into fundraising. We are lining up the performers and food and will keep you posted on the Events page of our website. This year's musical theme is "bluesy rock". **Tickets will go on sale through our website** once our performers are booked. Stay tuned for more!



Smiles were on every face, as we celebrated together and raised funds and awareness for Friendship House programs.

SPRING SYMPOSIUM

With special thanks to Christianson's and Puget Sound Energy, Thursday May 18th, we are hosting a panel discussion, 10am-12pm to help discover housing options for some of our fixed, low-income neighbors struggling with rental rates.



In 2022, Friendship House saw 40% of our guests aged 55 years and older. Right now, three individuals in our core shelters are over 70.

These folks have been Skagit residents their entire lives, raised families here and helped build this community to what we enjoy it as, today.

They are our neighbors and should not be facing homelessness without the support of our community.

With recent rising rental rates we see the pains and struggle for food security as people figure out ways to keep afloat from month to month, on the edge of being without housing, personal transportation, or utilities. This symposium is intended to target our community change makers, to be in attendance as **we aim to partner across organizations on a local, county and statewide level. Our goal is to better support the low cost housing demands which will prevent further rough sleeping for individuals and families in Skagit County.** We look forward to seeing all of our political friends, organizational leaders and developers alike, to discuss how we can work together to move forward in supportive means to provide housing needs across all income levels, here in Skagit County.

Thank you to our sponsors, Christianson's Nursery and Puget Sound Energy.



2022 DONOR SPOTLIGHT

LEADING PARTNERS \$10,000 or more

Skagit County Public Health
City of Mount Vernon
City of Burlington
Puget Sound Energy Foundation
Skagit Community Foundation
Upper Skagit Indian Tribe
Vicki Soderberg Parry
Marathon Community Investment
Martin Family Foundation
Peace Health

SUSTAINING PARTNERS

\$5,000-\$10,000

Hazel Wheeler
Ruth Heft
Haggen
Jerry H. Walton Foundation
North Puget Sound Assoc. of Realtors
Carol Johnson
Martin Family Living Trust
William & Jerri Crawford
Sam Largent
Claudette Gubrud
Banner Bank
Draper Valley Farms
Dwayne Lanes Subaru
Friends of Trevor Smith
Harold and Sue Brown
Julia Phillip Real Estate & Design
Skagit Farmer Supply
Swinomish Tribal Community
Walnut Tree Thrift Shop

CONNECTING PARTNERS

\$2,500-\$5,000

Steven Uppendahl
Carol Fiske
Washington Dept. Labor and Industries
IBEW Local #191
Jon & Linda Peterson
SICBA
Susan Youngsman
Quil Ceda Village, Tulalip Tribe

COMMUNITY PARTNERS \$500- \$1,000

A combined total of over \$9,000 has been raised at this level.

CONNECTING PARTNERS

\$2,500-\$5,000 cnt'd.

The Knoke Fund of Thrivent Charitable
Anacortes Lutheran Church
First United Methodist Church Mt. Vernon
Edison Lutheran Church
Anne Wells
Stanley & Marie Bryant
Bethany Covenant Church
Valley Cabinets & More
William Youngsman
First Christian Reformed Church
Daniel & Eva Greenwald
Soroptimist Intl of Anacortes
Larry and Pat Edwards

SUPPORTING PARTNERS

\$1,000-\$2,500

Evan Ackermann
Juanita Sroka
Harold and Hella Lee
Paul Jurenka
Michael and Melissa Belisle
North Cascade Seventh Day Adventist
SWAN Foundation
Mark Kolner
Charles and Charlotte Ambrose
Craig & Lyne Olson
Dennis and Linda Jones
Elaine & John Wright
Jerry Sells & Linda Larson
Jonathan & Erin Yousling
Betty J Collings
Roger & Mary Ann Mercer
William and Cheryl Dennis
Hub City Church
Boeing Employees Community Fund
Mike and Lisa Janicki
Patricia Seaman
Barbara Carson
David Adams & Greta Movassaghi
Kathryn Smith
Kenneth & Suzanne Christianson
Kurtis Ackermann
Sierra Pacific Foundation
Tim and Jane Nelson

FRIENDS OF FH under \$500

Nearly \$63,500 combined was donated at this level!

SUPPORTING PARTNERS

\$1,000-\$2,500 cnt'd.

Westminster Presbyterian Church
Tommy A & Jacquelynn Karsh
Barbara J Cheyney
Carolyn Whalen & Staci Stratton
Cynthia Hosick
Lucas Winters
Charles Roberts
His Place Community Church
Greg & Katie Pulley
Jack & Anne Middleton
Jeff & Ann May
Keith & Catherine Wyman
Kevin & Mary McGoffin
Vickie Mackenzie
Martha & John Peterson
Susan and Richard Vignos
Washington Federal Foundation
Coastal Farm & Home Supply
Fredric Bergstrom
Katherine Olson
Pam and Lorrie Clifford
Scott and Martha Rhodes
Alaska USA Federal Credit Union
Baker Community Church
Brian & Rose Sweeney
Burlington-Edison Kiwanis
John and Marie Erbstoeszner
Hexcel Employees
Janna Longlet
Joan and Keith Magee
Kyle Ozechowski
Lisser & Associates
Michael & Samantha Cabaluna
Daren Joseph Carstens
Joshua Richard Smith
Jerilyn Hander
Peter Verge
Richard and Britt-Mari Wisniewski
Sandy Curtis
Simone Spiess
Susan Uker
Tim and Beth Wallace
Vicki Wesen
Kenneth and Anne Winkes

ANONYMOUS CONTRIBUTORS

Another \$23,000 was donated by our anonymous supporters.

IT WOULDN'T HAPPEN WITHOUT YOU!

To all of our donors, at every level, we are so appreciative of your support. **These programs would not be sustainable without you.**

Thank you for being here with us in our work.

In addition to the generous financial contributions last year, the budget saved over \$70,000 from our in-kind donors. This made a huge impact in our ability to deliver the necessary services to our community. This figure includes our faithful **Monthly Meal Club** support from the area's Congregations and Clubs.



We have 12 spots available for any group, business, or association who may wish to get involved. The monthly meal club serves dinner at our Café, the same rotating evening on a monthly basis.

Not only are our guests served by your group, but the meal is purchased and prepared by these groups each month, which adds a touch of variety to the normal meal service menu from our pantry items at the Café.

Plus, it saves us money! This Club allows our regular volunteers to have a shift off as the food preparation and service is hosted by the Monthly Meal Club volunteers.

We are so pleased for the impact of this Meal Club Program. How it touches our residents and regular volunteers and staff, but also how **it brings those groups into contact with the individuals we serve**, in a different way. This really connects our community to the need and impact of our work.

"My interest in friendship House happened the first time I served food there and I actually saw the human need in front of me. I witnessed appreciation and devastation at once, and realized the importance of outreach". ~ Mike Norris

MEET RYAN

Ryan is our Transitional House Liaison. He came into this position by graduating from our Men's House, spending a successful year at the Transitional House, and showing an interest and commitment in helping others succeed through the same program.

Our Transitional House, often referred to as Oak House aka: Magnolia House, is a 5 bedroom shared home in Burlington. Residents have an opportunity to stay here for up to 12 months after graduating one of our programs. While here they are able to save money, build rental history, and look for permanent housing. Having Ryan there will help create successful transitions from our program, back into self-sufficiency and stability. His story is similar to that of many other individuals that find themselves at our door.

"I had a drinking and drug problem which led to me being homeless. After a year of being homeless I hit rock bottom and had to change", states Ryan. "I heard about Friendship House so I went there after 100 days in treatment. It was the best decision I could have made."

Regarding his experience at our Men's House Ryan said, "You lose a lot of confidence being on the street but the kitchen helps so much. Tom the cook makes things so easy and **helps so much with confidence, structure, and a sense of pride that was lost** for so many years. Kristie, the men's house manager, has always been so helpful in making sure I stayed on track and made sure the house stays a safe environment."

"I just want to thank the whole staff, countless volunteers, and community for everything everyone has done not only to help me but the countless others I've seen come through this program."



In addition to his service in our Transitional housing program, Ryan continues to work as a highly talented painter in our community.

Because of our donors, stories like Ryan's will continue to be told.

Our staff works hard to create a healing and enriching environment and it is touching to hear that this has been his experience. We are continuing to cheer Ryan as he continues on his own path of success.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Andrew Vander Stoep, a candidate for Mount Vernon City Council, has become a dear friend to Friendship House. His volunteerism and energy around community connectedness has truly allowed us to grow.



Andrew takes time to listen and find solutions to community needs and was supportive in our efforts to complete some major renovations for the Women and Children's facility to remedy ongoing sewer troubles last year. Andrew helped us make new connections in the community, from Local Union associations to the compassionate contractors that he selflessly solicited on our behalf. With Andrews support we completed the project well under budget and with many new partners that we will continue working with in the future. Because of his dedication to serving Skagit he found us. We awarded Andrew with our 2022 Volunteer of the Year trophy to recognize his service.

Good luck in your campaigning Andrew!

NOT 1 BUT 2 VOLUNTEERS!

Instrumental in the sewer repair work for the Women's shelter, Steve and Neil put in steady hours for this project to be completed under budget. When it came down to the finish line and our goal to reopen the lower level for occupancy, they tirelessly returned for four day weeks to make it happen!

If you hadn't heard, we basically had to move the full bathroom from one end of the building to the other. This was no small feat. We had contractors in for the major plumbing work and then our volunteer construction experts who prefer to be mentioned as our over-the-hill construction crew (OTHCC), took the lead. They made steady progress with every element from replacing a window, framing in walls, correcting the handrail returns, hanging doors, mirrors and all the finish trim work. These two helped us do it all. They saved us a lot of money and while they were at it they came to love our mission at Friendship House in serving our unhoused neighbors.

Thank you Steve and Neil, or should I write Neil and Steve? Just one more thing for you to contemplate in a deep theoretical discussion...

This dynamic duo has continued to serve us on a regular weekly cycle and the jobs they tackle for us are rewarding for them to finish, so they can move onto the next challenge.

Our residents enjoy having them onsite, they love to hear the two of them teasing each other as they bicker through each task. I have heard them referred to as comedians and mentioned as needing their own TV show! Lots of entertainment as they make our facilities better for our residents.

You two are making impacts that will be utilized and enjoyed by folks coming into our programs for years to come. We are grateful for and encouraged by your spirit of service.

Like our financial supporters, our volunteers are essential to our programs success.



Volunteers are essential to the completion of many projects here at Friendship House. **We have entire programs run by volunteers and there is always a need for more**, as our programs are expanding to touch more lives. You can learn more about volunteering on our website: skagitfriendshiphouse.org/volunteer or you can email Mollie to find out more, mollie@skagitfriendshiphouse.org.

BASEMENT PROJECT COMPLETED

The end of a very big project was celebrated on Valentine's Day as we walked through the Women and Children's shelter once more during the open house event. We noted the many donors, grantors and vendors who provided the services needed to reopen the basement living level for use, as residents took up six beds in the space again, mid January. As mentioned in our Volunteer spotlight section, we were experiencing ongoing sewer issues at this location which were finally addressed and corrected. The Fall edition of our Friendship Times included photos of the upheaval and demolition work while it was underway.



Today we share with you the finished photos and one more word of praise to Full Speed Plumbing, who was essential in this projects completion. Full Speed brought the expertise and tools to get the job done. It required several phases to complete and they were easy to schedule and coordinate with as time was of the essence in regaining the needed bed space for our shelter. Thank you, Full Speed for getting us across the finish line on this complex project. Your attention to detail was admirable and we are glad to know we can rely on your skilled services. With appreciation for all who helped.



WE ARE GOING GREEN

Like many of our friends in the community we are paying more attention to the ways we can conserve.

Not just pennies but valuable resources we may take for granted from one day to the next.

In an effort to help reduce our own carbon footprint, this year we will be reducing our waste and costs by utilizing email receipting. Not only can we email you your donation



receipt, we can also email news and success stories, like you find here in this edition of the Friendship Times. Our email news, actually offers an Insider's edition, e-news only content, that you will not find printed and sent to your mailbox.

We have seen a great response to our e-news Insider's updates from our readers and we will continue to gather more email addresses to help reduce the amount of snail mail we are putting out. A goal for 2023 is to attain email addresses from all of our favorite constituents, that means YOU, to significantly reduce the printed and mailed receipts.

The cost is more than just a piece of paper: it includes the envelope, the stamp, the toner for the print, and the time required to produce, stuff, seal and send out each individual mailer.

To become an "Insider" subscribe to our e-news today on our website skagitfriendshiphouse.org/newsletters or give us a call with the best address to email you at.

If you are already receiving email notifications from us, then you won't have to do a thing. Just be sure to let us know if you would like to be added to the year-end print receipts. **This year end letter includes every gift you contributed to our organization in the year prior and is a perfect summary to use during tax time.**

We care deeply to stay in touch with our supportive followers, donors and volunteers. It is important that we are able to continue providing you relevant information in the most timely manner so we hope these new procedures are effortlessly put into action. Be sure to notify us directly if you encounter any issue with receiving letters through email from our software products and be sure to add us as trusted senders, if you find a note from us in your spam folder.

Thank you in advance, for appreciating the need for these communication upgrades as we continue to grow as an organization.

HAVING A BIRTHDAY?

If you are thinking of a new way to support us, look no further. Just plan a birthday wish that contributes to your favorite charity, using our Peer to Peer platform, GiveButter.



We love birthdays because people are always happy, plus there's cake!

But the best part of your birthday can be that there will be no mess to clean up from gifts you would be likely to return to the store the day after, if you choose to have your presents be ours! You can start a birthday fundraiser that will make you feel so good about the fact that you are getting older.

Last year we raised over \$2,000- from a birthday request of one donor, alone!

Imagine the giving we would see if more of our friends wished for support to Friendship House on their birthdays.

Friendship House can walk you through the easy to use GiveButter site online, and **you can share your very own fundraising page with your friends** and show them what you are really into, so they know what to get you for your next year of wisdom. Once your friends and family see that the biggest thing you wish for is more safe nights of rest

for people who are currently unhoused, they will want to support our mission and work too.

Getting a page started takes just a few minutes, once you set up a password using our partner platform, GiveButter. The coolest thing is that, anytime you want to fundraise for us... your page can be accessed and you can start a new campaign on our behalf. All you do once the page is created, is share it with your friends! It's so easy to do, using Facebook or twitter, you will wonder why this is the first time you have gotten involved in this way.

You can access the webpage to get started here:

givebutter.com/skagitfriendshiphouse today.

FIRST STEP CENTER CELEBRATES

Saint Patrick's Day was a fun staff celebration as tensions relaxed around the program funding concern. This June will be revered as First Step Centers two-year anniversary in providing low- barrier access to shelter in Skagit County.



We are very lucky to have such a tremendous team staffing the First Step Center in Burlington. They support our residents with fun activities and help keep a positive energy every day, and that can make all the difference for someone who has been facing tough challenges. Thank you for your dedication and enthusiasm! Your commitment to the needs of citizens in Skagit is recognized.





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MEET RYAN: SUCCESS STORY INSIDE

EXTRA EXTRA!
FIRST STEP CENTER RECEIVES FUNDING GAP PROMISE THROUGH JUNE.
READ THE STORY INSIDE.



READ ABOUT THIS SUMMER'S OUTDOOR BENEFIT CONCERT
INSIDE THIS EDITION OF THE FRIENDSHIP TIMES