

Community Connections



Pictured above: The Resource Center Team

ORCAS COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTER NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2026

Opioid Addiction Recovery Support (OARS)

Practical Help for the Recovery Journey

Recovery looks different for everyone, and asking for help is a sign of strength. If everyday stress is making recovery harder, the Resource Center may be able to help.

As part of San Juan County's comprehensive Opioid Remediation Plan, the OARS program offers short-term, practical assistance — including help with rent, utilities, transportation, and childcare — to reduce barriers while focusing on treatment and healing.

OARS is also available to parents, caregivers, and families of someone actively involved in treatment.

Our Community Health Workers will stand alongside you with respect, dignity, and confidentiality. Services are voluntary and available in English or Spanish.

Scan the QR code to apply, or stop by the Resource Center to fill out an intake form and explore your options.



Erin O'Dell + Skagit Legal Aid Team Members

Expanding Access to Justice on Orcas Island

Free Civil Legal Services Now Available

The Resource Center is proud to partner with Skagit Legal Aid to bring free civil legal services to Orcas every other month — removing barriers like transportation costs and private legal representation fees that make off-island help nearly impossible for many residents.

Services cover housing and eviction prevention, family law, medical debt, wills, and immigration support.

At their most recent clinic, Skagit Legal Aid provided free legal services to 5 island residents in a single day — support easily representing thousands of dollars that many families could not otherwise afford.

We are grateful to Skagit Legal Aid for ensuring our neighbors don't have to navigate complex legal systems alone. Learn more at skagitlegalaid.org

Leadership Changes

A Farewell and a Fresh Chapter



Kyra Dyer, Holly Southern, & Alison O'Toole

After more than six years with the Orcas Community Resource Center and over a decade on Orcas Island, our Programs Director, Holly Southern, headed to Atlanta to begin a new chapter.

For many islanders, Holly was a steady presence during some of life's hardest moments — joining the organization just before the COVID pandemic and helping shape much of the Resource Center's growth through one of the most demanding periods in its history.

"Some of the systems, programs, and relationships our community relies on today were built quietly behind the scenes through Holly's care, consistency, and determination. She has given so much of herself to this work and to Orcas Island. We are incredibly grateful." said Executive Director, Erin O'Dell.

The Resource Center has moved into this next season with confidence, transitioning to a shared leadership model with two familiar faces stepping into expanded roles. Kyra Dyer will focus on operations, staff support, and client coordination, while Alison O'Toole will oversee program management, compliance, and grant administration — both continuing their work as Community Health Workers.

"Our strength has always come from relationships and people stepping up for one another," O'Dell said. *"Kyra and Alison already carry deep knowledge of our programs and community, and we're excited to support them in these new roles."*

As we thank Holly for the ways she has strengthened our community, we look ahead with gratitude and confidence in the team continuing this work.

Virtual Courtroom

Expanding Justice on Orcas Island

The Orcas Community Resource Center is proud to partner with San Juan County to improve access to the court system by offering a private, secure space for virtual court appearances right here on Orcas Island.

For many island residents, attending court in Friday Harbor can mean ferry costs, lost wages, childcare challenges, and time away from work or family. By providing a local option for virtual participation, we can help reduce these barriers and make the justice system more accessible.

Recently, Judge Carolyn Jewett-Platts, along with county legal and justice partners, visited the Resource Center as part of planning for San Juan County's new Community Court program. This program uses a collaborative, problem-solving approach that connects participants with local resources and support services while promoting accountability and addressing the underlying challenges that can contribute to legal involvement.

The Community Court program focuses on helping individuals access services, treatment, education, employment support, and other resources with the goals of reducing repeat offenses, strengthening neighborhoods, and improving trust in the justice system.

We are honored to support this work by providing a welcoming space where Orcas Island residents can participate in court proceedings.

More information will be available as the program continues to develop.



ORCAS COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTER



Finding Solid Ground

Your Generosity Helps Islanders Land on Their Feet



A veteran arrived at the Resource Center one morning, overwhelmed and carrying a crisis that had compounded faster than anyone could manage alone. Facing eviction after losing seasonal employment, with a broken-down vehicle they couldn't afford to repair, the financial and housing pressures had converged into something deeper — and our team recognized it immediately.

Within that first conversation, we made a warm referral to the Mobile Crisis Outreach Team (MCOT) while working to connect them with housing options and additional community resources — though limited rental inventory and long waitlists made the road ahead a difficult one.

This is the reality for many island residents: financial instability, housing insecurity, and geographic isolation don't just create practical problems — they can escalate quickly into a mental health crisis. When multiple systems fail at once, the impact is devastating.

Today, things look different. This veteran has stabilized, and we're still walking alongside them — continuing to connect them with mental health resources and untapped veterans benefits as they rebuild a solid foundation. Their footing is steadier now, and this time they have support.

Experiences like this are why coordinated whole-person support is the backbone of everything we do.

Board Spotlight — Greg Guzauskas

Greg and his family started life on Orcas Island as Seattle-based weekends many years ago before becoming full time residents in 2020.

Greg holds a MSPH in health policy and a PhD in public health genetics. He is a health economist with the Comparative Health Outcomes, Policy, and Economics (CHOICE) Institute at UW. His research interests span population-level genetic testing, gene therapies, and healthcare interventions in areas that include cancers, HIV/AIDS, cardiovascular disease, liver disease, opioid addiction, and rare genetic diseases.



"Our community can only be as strong as its most disadvantaged members. I'm committed to the incredible work of the Resource Center that helps ensure everyone has the support needed to thrive."

*—Greg Guzauskas,
Resource Center Board Secretary*

Watch our video



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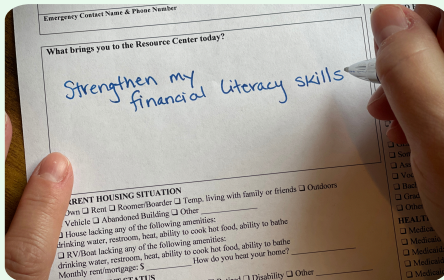


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Making Cents of it All

Free Financial Tools Now at Your Fingertips!



"Financial well-being is at the heart of a thriving community. This website means that no matter where you are on the island—or where you are in life—help is now just a click away."

-Elisabeth Britt, Financial Literacy Specialist

The Resource Center has launched orcascrcfinance.org, a free website offering a wealth of information, tools, and support for Orcas residents. Find resources on budgeting, savings, credit, and debt; sign up for **Orcas Talks Money** workshops, **Orcas Money Smart**, or **one-on-one financial counseling**; and learn how to volunteer as a financial literacy instructor or mentor. Services are free for residents of all ages and income levels.

Become a Resource Center Volunteer

Something For Everyone

Behind every program we offer is a community that shows up. From the Coates Cabinet hygiene bank to financial literacy classes and community lunch — our programs are powered by people who care. Volunteer, donate, or simply help spread the word — there's always a place for you on our team! Visit orcascrc.org to learn more or apply.

Hands-On: Stock or distribute hygiene essentials, welcome neighbors at the front desk, help with community lunch, or keep our grounds beautiful.

Skill-Based: Mentor participants in financial literacy programs or provide tech support to staff and community members.

Behind the Scenes & Flexible: Help with mailings on your own schedule or join a committee focused on events, programs, fundraising, or governance.

Pop-Up & One-Time: Show up when you can! We'd love your help at events, resource fairs, and hygiene drives.

**HELP FOSTER
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