

# 2023-2024 IMPACT REPORT



## Year at A Glance

Welcome home Skagit is pleased to announce that through financial contributions and support from Skagit County Public Health, The City of Mount Vernon, Northsound ACH, Skagit Community Foundation, and various community members in Skagit and Whatcom counties our programs have received the support they need to operate this 2024 through 2025 year. This year we are expanding services to include vocational housing program to support participants of our revised vocational program and operations, expanding staff roles and support. Increased demand for additional day center hours and services offered.

## Current Projects

### Drop-In Center

This program operated out of the Salem Lutheran Church during the 2023-2024 year. We are excited to share that this amazing church has agreed to allow WHS to operate this program at their location for an additional year while we continue to explore options for a permanent location.

- Basic needs and connections are found at the Day Center. Our unsheltered friends have a safe place to fill their basic needs such as community, fellowship, food, showers, clothing.
- Safe refuge site for day time warming and cooling during extreme weather.
- In-house care coordination by our Washington State Certified Peer Counselors and Recovery support by our Life Recovery Coach(s) is available daily.
- Medical and mental health services are offered.
- Community and individual purpose are found in the Day Center.

From July 2023-May 2024 the DC was utilized 6258 times by 472 unduplicated individuals and 5,603 meals/snacks were served. We continue to expand the services being offered to our peers by building and strengthening relationships and building trust with our peers and community partners.



### Overnight Safe Parking

This program was created to support unsheltered individuals who reside in their vehicles and provides a safe place for them to park overnight and have access to basic necessities such as restrooms, food and showers. This program is long term and can be utilized by clients as long as it is needed while we work with them at our associated program to assist them in accessing and applying for other long term housing solutions. The program rotates between 5 church properties biweekly and is only possible because of their support. The program is limited to 7 vehicles per night. And has been at full capacity since March 2023. We are working closely with our host church properties and the City of Mount Vernon to explore options of expanding this program to accommodate 10 vehicles per night as we now currently have a waiting list... The OSP program has served 146 unduplicated individuals since it began in the summer of 2021 and was utilized by 97 unduplicated Individuals this reporting period so far.

## Severe Weather Shelter

We operated an emergency weather shelter this year in partnership with the Faith Community Fellowship Church and funded by Skagit County Public Health. The Shelter was open a total of 21 nights and utilized 319 by 107 Unduplicated individuals. Thank you to all the volunteers who helped with shift monitoring, delivering supplies, preparing meals, and volunteering at the shelter.

Because of the success and the increasing need, WHS will be open for 4 full months of shelter beds this winter. This adds more than 20 shelter beds to Skagit County for the entire season!

If you are interested in getting involved this next 2024-2025 winter season please visit our website at [www.welcomehomeskagit.com](http://www.welcomehomeskagit.com)



## Vocational Program

We remodeled this program in the Winter of 2023 from Janitorial Services in partnership with local church organizations to in-house employment opportunities.

Peers who wish to pursue this opportunity at their own pace start out as volunteers for an average of 1-2 months during this time we observe sobriety, harm reduction, behavior, ability, and interactions with others. They are next matched with a job, commit and move into the next phase. Through practicing sobriety, one on one work with care coordinator and life recovery coach on a regular basis they can become a paid peer contractor. This phase can take 3-6 months. Upon completion of this phase they have completed training to become wa state certified peer counselors and now have the option of becoming an employee of Welcome Home Skagit.

## Vocational Space

To further support our peer workers/employees we have partnered with the First United Methodist Church, the City of Mount Vernon and Skagit County Public Health to place 5 pallet units at First United Methodist Church for our peer contractor/employees to live in while we continue to work with them in their efforts to find permanent housing solutions. This has been made possible through financial contributions by the Skagit Community Foundation. This project is estimated to begin October 2024.

## Seasonal Overnight Winter Shelter

Over the course of the 2023-2024 peers of the DC were denied overnight shelter services from the only overnight shelter in Skagit county over 650 times. Leaving Welcome Home Skagit staff the unfortunate task of telling peers that they would have to sleep outside in unsafe, unhealthy and at times life threatening conditions, forcing staff to retraumatize our peers on a nightly basis reverting their progress and breaking the trust we worked so hard to earn.

As a direct result of the mental & physical impact this had on our unsheltered friends and staff, Welcome Home Skagit applied for a grant requesting to operate an additional overnight shelter this upcoming winter. This would mean two shelters would be available in Skagit county for our homeless friends. We are pleased to announce that we have been awarded funding for the operations of this program. We want to extend our gratitude to the Faith Community Fellowship Church for opening their hearts and doors for this project.

# THE IMPACT



Steve Larsen; participant of Welcome Home Skagit recourses and programs

"I am a 68 year old army and Marine Corps Vietnam veteran. I first came to Welcome Home Skagit seeking shelter services in the winter of 2023. I lost my housing when my mother who I lived and cared for since 2016 passed away in January 2024. Welcome home Skagit and the vocational program gave me a sense of purpose and allowed me the opportunity to help others and keep myself focused on positive things while dealing with the loss of my mother. I am currently enrolled in grief share classes working towards becoming a peer counselor and participate in other recovery supports I am thankful for the opportunity to be here and to help others"

-Steve Larsen

Jay first came to Welcome Home Skagit in the winter of 2022, when we operated a seasonal day shelter at First United Methodist Church. When asked what he thinks about the day shelter Jay said "The day shelter is a great program, a blessing, and I hope it keeps going". While participating in the program, the staff connected him with Community Action, who frequently dropped in to offer services and connect with existing clients. After the shelter closed in the spring of 2023, Jay continued to stay in close contact with Community Action, hoping to gain a housing opportunity. When we reopened the day shelter in August 2023, Jay returned and stayed with us over the course of the winter until he was able to receive sober housing at a local Oxford House. In the spring of 2024, Jay received a housing opportunity through Community Action with great excitement, but shortly after moving into his new home he found himself falling into depression. "I was getting lonely," said Jay. A couple of months later, out of the blue, Jay came to the day shelter. We were so happy to see him. Jay has a smile that can light up the whole place; he is so kind and generous, always quick to lend a helping hand to anyone in need. He told us about how he had been feeling, and we suggested he stop in and see us regularly. He agreed and has been coming in regularly, connecting with friends. The day shelter is more than just a place for people to spend their day; it's a place where connections are made and community is found. We are so grateful that Skagit County and the City of Mount Vernon have made the day shelter a possibility for people like Jay as they transition into their new way of living.

Jay; participant of Welcome Home Skagit resources and programs



WE ASKED OUR PEERS;  
“WHAT DOES THE DAY  
SHELTER MEAN TO YOU?”

“Community, being  
around people, grab a bite  
to eat and friends.”  
-Sunny

“Good program, good  
food, good staff. I'm  
Thankful!”  
-David

“New Beginnings”  
-Charlie

“It's a great  
resource for those  
who *want* help”  
-Rick

“It's a good way to  
socialize for those who are  
isolated and antisocial. A  
place to think and grow”.  
-Chris