



Welcome Home Skagit Newsletter

Creating Pathways to Community

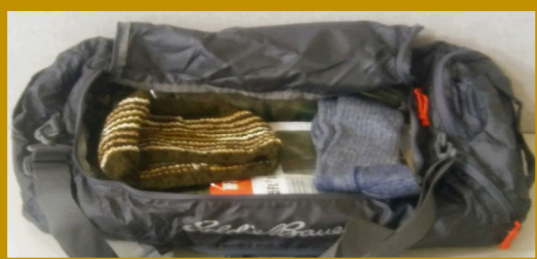
Assembling Survival Kits

Welcome Home Skagit is currently raising funds for additional cold-weather survival kits. These kits target those who are living in unsheltered outdoor spaces and are at-risk as the cold weather has arrived. We have already distributed over 50 of these kits and expect to need 100 more this winter. Each kit contains a large, heavy blanket, a tarp, wool socks, and a knit hat contained in a large duffel bag. Each kit costs about \$40 to build and distribute.

While the winter shelter at the Mount Vernon SDA Church will reopen this week, it will not be able to accommodate all those who will need accommodation. These survival kits are desperately needed. Your donation will help us continue our work and be ready to help others as the needs arise.

You may now make tax-deductible donations directly via our website at www.welcomehomeskagit.com/donate-now. PayPal and all major credit cards are gratefully accepted. You may also elect to become a regular monthly donor.

If you wish to donate by check, you can make a tax-deductible check payable to Angels for Angels and indicate "Welcome Home Skagit" in the memo line. Mail your check to Welcome Home Skagit, PO Box 1527, Mt Vernon, WA 98273. If you want your donation to go for a specific purpose, drop us a note at treasurer@welcomehomeskagit.com. Thank you in advance!



Larry Paise
President:
Welcome
Home Skagit
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3778

Hidden Depth



When I look at you,
I see a deep well,
a bubbling spring
hidden

by a thin shell of silence

Waiting to be tapped!

Longing to share life
and wisdom!

I want to tap your hidden well
and learn from you!

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Sarah Vogt & Nancy Brown



Nancy Brown



Larry Paise

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All in the family relaxing on the couch!

A Home at Last!



Curtis and Cora Steinhauer have always served their country and community in some capacity. We owe a debt of gratitude to Curtis for his service in the Air Force and his eighteen year commitment to saving lives as a volunteer fire fighter and ambulance driver. This became his passion, but unfortunately came to an abrupt halt when he sustained a major head injury in 1994. In spite of the devastating effects of that accident, including the eventual loss of a place to call home, Curtis and Cora have continued to live lives of service.

To this day, this amazing couple remain actively involved in their community in a variety of ways. Curtis is a valued member of the Welcome Home Skagit Board of Directors, where he chairs several sub-committees. Cora serves on Community Action Agency's Board of Directors. Curtis and Cora are the Skagit County leaders in the Resident Action Project (RAP), a statewide network in Washington led by people who have experienced housing injustice. They, along with other statewide RAP participants, are focused on building power to change state policy through storytelling, organizing, and civic action. Curtis recently participated in the RAP 2019 Summit for Homes, held in Vancouver, WA in mid-October. To see him pictured with other participants and learn more about RAP, go to <https://residentactionproject.org/>

Through his involvement with RAP, Curtis has not only learned to tell his own story effectively, he recently taught a class encouraging other people to tell their stories in an impactful and meaningful way. He utilized these skills at the Skagit County Housing Summit on October 15, where he introduced a video that includes snapshots of him and his wife along with other people who have lived on the streets of Skagit County. You can watch that video at <https://vimeo.com/366762105>

Though they have consistently lived lives of service, Curtis and Cora are no strangers to the challenges of living without a house. They and their beloved pets have spent twelve long years surviving on the streets, couch surfing, living in their van or camping in small camp trailers. They were told repeatedly that they did not qualify for any of the housing programs available in Skagit County. Finally some generous friends gave them a spacious motor home as a gift of love, but they struggled to find a place to park it. After an accident that severely damaged their motor home, Curtis and Cora were finally eligible for a housing voucher. Even then, they were unable to secure a home for several months due to the housing shortage in Western Washington.

After weeks of uncertainty, Curtis and Cora were finally handed the keys to their own apartment. Not long afterward, they gave the title and the keys of their motor home to another person in need; an amazing story just waiting to be told in a future newsletter. With years of lived experience to draw on, Curtis and Cora are daily living their core values of serving and strengthening their community. The great wisdom and experience they bring to Welcome Home Skagit and other service organizations is highly valued and deeply appreciated. Their legacy will endure for years to come as they work to create an environment where everyone can thrive.



Skagit County
Housing Summit



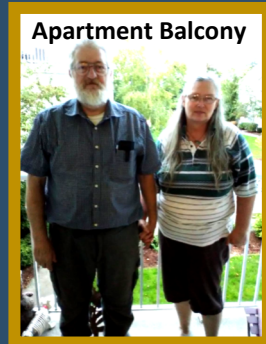
Primary Residence
off & on



Camp Trailer Living



A Gift of love



Apartment Balcony



Skagit County Housing Hero Award

On October 15th, during the Skagit County Housing Summit, the first ever Skagit County Housing Hero Award was presented to the Mount Vernon Seventh-day Adventist Church in front of an audience of approximately 250 elected officials, non-profit workers, housing developers and other community members. The Housing Hero award recognizes Pastor John McGhee and the MVSDA Church for outstanding service to people experiencing homelessness, and extraordinary contributions to our community. The award reads:

Skagit County

Housing Hero Award

This award is presented to the
Mount Vernon Seventh-Day Adventist Church
*In grateful appreciation of extraordinary service
and dedication to our friends and neighbors
experiencing homelessness*

When the Skagit County Housing Summit planning committee first convened in the spring, County Commissioner Lisa Janicki stated that one of the agenda items must be some kind of special recognition for the MVSDA Church honoring their work with the Winter Shelter over the past 2 years. Commissioner Janicki and the committee wanted to both show appreciation for the MVSDA Church, and hopefully also inspire others to action. That is how the first ever Skagit County Housing Hero award came to be. We hope that it is the first of many, and that others will follow in the footsteps of the MVSDA church by taking brave and bold action to care for our friends and neighbors in need.

Skagit County sincerely thanks Pastor McGhee and the MVSDA Church for providing safety, comfort and encouragement to so many during the cold winter months. We thank you for responding to neighborhood concerns with grace and patience. We thank you for dealing with the bureaucratic process of government, and working with us through all the necessary but sometimes frustrating requirements. We thank you for setting an example for the entire community of how we should all treat each other. We thank you for facilitating so many new partnerships. The Skagit County Housing Hero Award could not be more well deserved.

By Sarah Hinman, Housing Program Coordinator, Skagit County Health Department





For information about the Mentorship program
contact Sarah Vogt: sarah@welcomehomeskagit.com
Phone: 360-840-8136

Upcoming Events:

Friday Morning Conversations:

Please join us for a community conversation where solutions are discussed and plans developed to truly create pathways to community for people experiencing housing insecurity. We meet every Friday morning from 8:30-9:30 at the Mount Vernon SDA Church, 4520 East College Way, Mt Vernon, WA

There's No Place Like Home:

Theatre Artists for Social Action (TASA) presents "There's No Place Like Home (Myths, Truths and Solutions about the Homeless Crisis in our Community)" at the Lincoln Theatre on February 15, 2020. Save the date.

Project Dignity Banquet

The Second Annual Project Dignity Banquet will be held in April, 2020.

Gratitude Corner

Erin VonFempe

MVPD Outreach Coordinator

The Outreach Coordination program was only in its infancy, when I was called to the front lobby of the Police Department to meet members of the Mount Vernon Seventh-day Adventist Church. Pastor John McGhee, Jennifer Walton, and Ann Struthers were very concerned about those living without homes in their community. They were wondering what actions the church could take to alleviate the suffering. They had purchased coat/sleeping bags that were created specifically for people without homes. They offered some of these expensive, precious jackets for me to give out as I saw fit. Equally important was the immediate, deep, authentic support they offered me from the first time we met, welcoming me into their care, concern and activism without knowing if I would be effective in this new position or not.

This church family continued living their beliefs by looking for other ways to affect positive changes for the Skagit Valley citizens without homes. After exploring several options, they decided to offer their church gym as a temporary shelter. For a time, this decision lived in an environment of uncertainty and hope because it had never been attempted before. However, many community members with whom I spoke were very relieved that during the coldest months of the year, there would be a place for some people to let down their guard and rest. Within the shelter, there were volunteers who chatted or played games with the shelter residents, listening to them describe their heartbreaks and accomplishments.

The members of the Mt. Vernon SDA Church have continued to increase their focus toward finding even more ways to assist in changing the course of homelessness in Skagit County. I have a plaque on my desk that displays the words "Imago Dei." This phrase, as explained to me when I received the plaque, means "We are all equal in the eyes of God." I believe that the members of the Mount Vernon Seventh-day Adventist Church live this motto daily as they work toward encouraging everyone to embrace it as well.