

# Experience *in Action!*

King County RSVP's news for people 55 & older

Volume 37 | Issue 2 | Summer 2022



AmeriCorps  
Seniors



## American Red Cross: RSVP's newest site partner!

by David Thornbrugh

Although the International Red Cross was founded by a Swiss businessman, the American branch of the famous relief organization was founded by a woman, Clara Barton. Barton's experience as a volunteer aiding soldiers on both sides of the American Civil War gave her the skills she needed to establish the American Red Cross as an independent, civilian agency offering aid wherever it's needed.

As Sidney Helsten, senior volunteer recruitment specialist for the American Red Cross NW Region puts it, the agency continues to see "that basic

needs are met, whether that is medical care, food, care, [or] comfort," during a natural or human-caused disaster.

Today, Sidney recruits volunteer help for Washington state and the Panhandle of Idaho, which totals about 1,950 volunteers, with about 650 within King County. Perhaps the most impressive aspect of these numbers is that they make up 90% of the Red Cross's workforce. "Our volunteers are really how we deliver our services. As staff members, we're really here to support and empower our volunteers, to make sure that



they can do the work that they are doing for the community. I'm very proud of that."

She's been in her position now for just under three years and finds it very satisfying to work with active community members. "Our volunteers are the kind of people who are stepping up when bad things are happening in the world: natural disasters, house fires. It's really empowering just to be around [them], and I'm thankful to be in my role."

As Sidney explains, "[The Red Cross NW Region is] always looking for volunteers who have a passion for giving back, who want to volunteer in this capacity, who are team players and really want to help others ... a lot of times on their worst day. Many times, unfortunately."

Among the relief agency's needs right now is volunteers for the Disaster Action Team, which responds to local home fires and, Sidney explains, "provides immediate services to families and individuals impacted by home fires or floods to meet their basic needs. If they need food, they need clothing, or if they need a place to stay, we can provide them financial services for that."

At present, the Disaster Action Team is looking for a person to be a hotline dispatcher. "When there is a home fire that occurs in King County, they are the ones that are called, either by the fire department or another organization, and they are the ones who dispatch our volunteers to go out to the site." An on-call

position, a volunteer dispatcher commits to be reachable by phone for a set 12-hour period, say on a Monday. "If there is a disaster that occurs, they need to always have that phone on them, and if it rings, they can drop what they're doing, pick up the phone, and dispatch our volunteers to it. ... Hopefully nothing happens, but if it does, you're ready to help. There could be many shifts that the phone doesn't ring. That's what we hope for, but you have to be ready."

Another need exists for retired health professionals looking to use the skills they have from careers as medical professionals. In the area of disaster health services, qualified volunteers help meet basic health needs that arise during disasters. "Whether that's home fires or wildfires," Sidney says, "Red Cross volunteers help meet anything health related: being able to administer basic care, basic first aid, and if they need any kind of referral to further care."

Another pressing need is for people with leadership or managerial experience to coordinate volunteers on the Disaster Action Team and help schedule Red Cross volunteers. "There is always a need for someone to meet one-on-one to answer volunteers' questions [who] is a little more schedule based," Sidney explains.

Another steady volunteer opening is for members of the Armed Forces. As Sidney says, "We work closely with the

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## Speaking Directly

by Megan Wildhood, RSVP Coordinator

# Carol-Ann & Simone: Volunteer Services welcomes new team members

**We're pleased to introduce our two newest team members!**

**Carol-Ann Smith, Volunteer Services Program Assistant,**

joined us in February. She moved from the Philippines to the south Puget Sound area when she was three and has learned to appreciate all facets of Washington weather. She appreciated it even more during her AmeriCorps year, when she visited local gardens, sometimes multiple times a month, as part of an art program she supported. The gardens were beautiful, rain or shine. She loves that she can see and admire the Sound and mountains at the same time!

She says she had the most fun in her AmeriCorps position, where she supported dementia-friendly and LGBTQ programming for older adults through Seattle Parks and Recreation. After all, she received a stipend to do watercolors and yoga (among other things). But she also learned a lot from her previous role in healthcare as a CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant), and she worked closely with volunteers as a Community Engagement Specialist at Kin On.

Carol-Ann finds herself cycling through many hobbies because she wants to try everything but also gets burned out easily on a single activity. In the past year, she's crafted amigurumis (crocheted animals), macrame wall hangings and chandeliers, watercolor postcards, fridge magnets and resin coasters.



Carol-Ann Smith, Program Assistant

When she isn't crafting, she walks around her neighborhood, takes film photos, upcycles furniture, thrift shops, plays Genshin Impact (mobile), and does bullet journaling, just to name a few!

She's also been into web novels lately, but a recent print novel she read and enjoyed was Madeline Miller's *Circe*, a modern retelling of a Greek myth. The writing was smooth and, despite how the story took place over the course of centuries, it was a fresh and well-paced take on a classic tale of "gods and men" from a woman's perspective.

Carol-Ann first heard about Solid Ground during her time as an AmeriCorps member with Full Life Care, one of RSVP's site partners! She was drawn to the scope of Solid Ground's involvement in the community – from housing and food access to education and volunteer matching – as well as their commitment to undoing racism and systemic oppressions as the key to addressing poverty.

Two years later, she was still involved in Seattle nonprofits and saw her chance to join an amazing organization. There's always work to do and improvements to make, but she loves being a part of an organization that encourages us to learn and grow together.

She enjoys the feeling of being integrated into a community whenever she volunteers. She's not a social butterfly, but she likes meeting new people

occasionally and listening to their reasons for doing the work they do. The program leads at Solid Ground are also deeply knowledgeable about their work, and she's excited to learn from them as she settles into her role. She's volunteered at Solid Ground's Giving Garden at Marra Farm in South Park, which grows food for local food banks – and she can't wait to go back!

**Simone Marrion, Volunteer Coordinator,** joined us in April. While new to Volunteer Services, she's not new to Solid Ground. She joined the agency when it was the Fremont Public Association (FPA) after moving back to Washington state from Portland, where she served as an AmeriCorps/ VISTA member in an early childhood literacy campaign.

After her service year ended, she stayed in Portland and took a job as an Elementary School Librarian for Portland Public Schools. VISTA service taught her how important it is for students to read at grade level by 3rd grade – both for students and for our community.

Her first position at FPA was part-time Washington Reading Corps (WRC) Coordinator, hired out of a pool of 400 applicants. A year later, she became the WRC Program Manager and served at FPA/Solid Ground for 12 years.

Shortly after leaving Solid Ground, Simone joined the Board of Directors for Children Parents and Public Schools Seattle, an organization that aids immigrant parents in becoming more involved in their children's schools by helping them understand the American school system – as well as build confidence and community in order to advocate for their children.

She also worked with the AARP Foundation as a project director for a senior employment grant, building relationships with nonprofits in 23 counties in Washington, supporting mature job seekers to re-train and build more current resumes.

Simone believes that building relationships with organizations is simply building relationships with people working within those organizations. This involves finding out what people need rather than what you think they might need – articulating where your interests meet all with respect, communication, and reciprocity – and then relationship maintenance, which involves check ins, ongoing communication, and appreciation.

After a decade away, Simone is happy to return to Solid Ground as Volunteer Coordinator! Of all the places she's worked in her career, Solid Ground comes closest to matching her values. Twenty years ago, "antiracism" was a controversial term to use.

Under the leadership of former



Simone Marrion, Volunteer Coordinator

Executive Director Cheryl Cobbs Murphy, Solid Ground was one of only a handful of organizations openly committed to work toward becoming an anti-racist organization.

Simone was part of the original group of employees that launched Solid Ground's Anti-Racism Initiative (ARI). She says while this process was both difficult and rewarding, it ultimately changed how Solid Ground approaches our work, both with participants and internally.

In her off time, Simone describes herself as "a bit of a house frau. I love to cook and do home décor projects. I also do car repair: I recently rebuilt and replaced the clutch cylinder on my car!

"I love to read and usually have four to six books on my shelf (both fiction and nonfiction) and read three or four chapters in one book, then switch to another book. I just finished reading Isabelle Allende's *Violeta* and just started *Homo Deus* by Yuval Noah Harari. I'm really enjoying an anthology of Margaret Atwood's essays, *Burning Questions*. I love the book of poetry on my bookshelf right now, *Time is a Mother*, by Ocean Vuong."

Her husband is an urban fantasy fiction writer – and a geek. Thus, "He has a lot of action figures, and we have dollhouses for those action figures." They buy dollhouses used and then repair, paint, and wallpaper them, and build miniature furniture for them. "I try to not have fussy dollhouses; I want them to be places I would want to live."

The people, the approach to working with program participants, and the deep and long commitment to anti-racism are all reasons Simone is excited to be back with Solid Ground! ●



## It Seems to Me...

by Peter Langmaid

### When I was new: The road to RSVP

Like many of you, I suspect, I retired without a clear plan for what I would do with myself. I had hobbies, such as playing clarinet in a local community band, reading, and exercising daily. These activities were self-centered, and I felt a need – an obligation, really – to do something for someone else. After all, I reasoned, life had been exceptionally good to me by all measures, and I wanted to find a way to express my gratitude.

For my first adventure, I responded to an ad on a bulletin board for a caregiver for a man with ALS. He was about my age, wheelchair bound, and his speech was difficult to understand. He had other caregivers, and I took care of him one day a week while his wife went to work. He was a wonderful man with an incredible attitude, and we spent our time together reminiscing about “the good old days.”

After a year or so, his disabilities became more than I could manage physically. The day I left him for the last time, I wished him good luck and told him how much I enjoyed and appreciated our time together. He died a couple of years later, and at his memorial service, I discovered how deeply many other people also loved him.

My next dive into volunteering was with 826 Seattle, a free, after-school tutoring program for students from elementary school through high school. Many students didn't speak English at

home and struggled in school. We were advised to be gentle, encouraging, and supportive, not demanding. Students were free to pick their tutor each day, and a number of students gravitated to me. I suspect my popularity was attributable to my willingness to give answers to the math problems too easily! During my tenure, our family moved farther from the site and the commute lasted longer than my time with the students, so reluctantly, I moved on.

Searching for another volunteer opportunity, a friend suggested I contact Fremont Public Association (FPA) as it was known then, Solid Ground as it's known today. Through FPA, I discovered RSVP and its diversity of opportunities. Because I like to write, I began site-partner visits so I could write spotlights on the partners as well as volunteer spotlight interviews. I have been to many senior centers all around King County and met dozens of friendly and dedicated volunteers and staff. Each senior center is different in the way they serve their community, and all volunteers modestly claim they get more satisfaction from their efforts than they give.

Two site-partner visits, among many others, exemplify how wonderfully rewarding these visits were. The first was a visit to a retirement community near Northgate to observe a Knit-It-Alls (KIA) gathering. KIA is a county-wide program that collects and distributes knitted and crocheted

hats, mittens, gloves, and scarves to agencies serving people living unsheltered and on low incomes. What I observed was a group of women with an astounding ability to do two things at once: knit or crochet while visiting with each other (talk about multi-tasking!). While the knitting needles clicked away at effortless speed, these women were also engaged in multidirectional chatting. The no-look proficiency level was remarkable, and the participants fully enjoyed each other's company.

My second memory was a visit to a senior center in the south end to sit in with a group of men who had a fly-tying hobby in common. A number of things impressed me about this group. One: their eyesight. Tying flies, even with the aid of magnifying glasses, requires exceptionally detailed vision, uncommon among most seniors. Two: how much these guys enjoyed each other's company as well. And three, the way they ridiculed fly fishermen who spend hundreds for flies at specialty fishing stores. These guys get their supplies by scavenging thrift shops.

I have many other examples of my site visits, but the constant theme that runs through them all is the importance of community and connection. We really do need each other. ●

*Peter Langmaid is a semi-retired businessman, RSVP Ambassador, and longtime EIA contributor.*



# RSVP



## AmeriCorps Seniors

**The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)** is a nonprofit AmeriCorps Seniors program sponsored locally by Solid Ground. RSVP meets critical community needs by encouraging and supporting volunteerism in King County for people 55 and older.



**At Solid Ground, we believe poverty is solvable.** Our approach combines direct services with community-based advocacy. We support individuals while working to undo racism and other oppressions that create barriers – so everyone can achieve their full potential.

# EIA

**Experience in Action! (EIA)** is published by King County RSVP and distributed to 3,500 RSVP members, senior volunteers, and friends. The **EIA** is dedicated to providing news, information and opportunities about senior volunteerism. Articles express writers' opinions, which aren't necessarily the views of RSVP or **EIA**. We reserve the right to refuse any material deemed unsuitable. Articles may be edited to meet technical and editorial policy guidelines.

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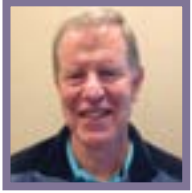
### Red Cross continued from page 1

military community to provide services with what we call the ‘military plus community,’ including active military members, veterans, spouses, dependents.” Volunteers can provide event support at local yellow ribbon and stand down events – as well as “Hero's Cafes” – which bring together veterans and communities.

Winding up our list of Red Cross-related volunteer opportunities is joining the team at a temporary disaster shelter. “That is when we open a shelter in response to a large-scale disaster,” Sidney says, “whether that is a large apartment fire, where many people have had to evacuate, or in response to the wildfires that happen in Eastern Oregon or Washington.”

As the energetic and well-spoken Sidney tells us, taking part with volunteers responding to such emergencies: “It's really empowering to be around all of that, and I'm thankful to be in my role.” ●

For more information, please contact Megan Wildhood at [meganw@solid-ground.org](mailto:meganw@solid-ground.org) or 206.694.6786.



## Financial Planning

by Bill Pharr

# Preparing for retirement: How you can start now

Though there are many steps to be taken and many that need to already be in existence, it's easy to list most of the items that need to be addressed when planning for retirement. One thing is certain: the earlier one starts planning for retirement, the more successful your retirement is likely to be. Everyone's situation is different, so this general overview does not cover everything that might need to be taken care of. See a financial planner or CPA for your unique situation and circumstances.

**The ideal time to start preparing for retirement is when you receive your first paycheck**, likely in your teenage years, because time is your very best friend. Either way, start the habit of saving as early as possible in your life, and make it a plan to never stop. A particular savings vehicle to take advantage of is the Roth IRA, a savings account you fund with money you've already paid taxes on, so you don't have to pay taxes on the withdrawals when you start taking them.

**Spend less than you make.** Manage debt intelligently by paying off high-interest debt as fast as possible. Continually educate yourself in financial matters, investing topics, and related topics. If you have children or grandkids, please read this to them. They will thank you in 60 years! Dealing with the topics and the questions below when you turn 60, 65, or 70 can be too late to create the desired situation in retirement. The challenge is to actually have the discipline to deal with one's specific financial reality earlier in life rather than later, but it is worth it.

**The most important item to take care of while still working is to know in great detail exactly how much you currently spend, and what you spend it on.** Simultaneously, you need to try to figure out how much you want to have available to spend in retirement and what the new expense categories will be (i.e., typically travel spending, out-of-pocket healthcare cost increases, and commuting expense decreases). This is an ongoing process, so have check-ins with yourself and any others in your life such as partners or children who are relevant to financial planning decisions. In retirement, always be prepared for the unexpected. Constantly review your

situation. Incoming cash flows, depending on their source, can be devastated in a financial crisis like 2008. How much cash do you intend to have on hand, and how does that match up with your reality?

If you're close to retirement, it would be assumed you have some sort of savings in the form of stocks, bonds, real estate, home, IRAs, 401ks, etc. **No matter how you've saved and invested in the past, retirement can't occur without cash regularly coming into your checking account.** After you have evaluated your current savings, compare your projected income with the projected expenses as discussed above and see where you stand. If your actual income comes up short, then you might have to postpone retirement and consider working a few more years or even take a part-time job in retirement. Other things like downsizing your home or paying off your existing mortgage if you can are examples of financial moves that can make retirement happen more smoothly. If you haven't already, you should sign up for an account on the social security website. This contains all of the information on your projected monthly payouts. It should be checked at least once a quarter.



Getting control of financial matters is only part of the retirement planning process. **It's just as important to develop a game plan for how you're going to spend your time in retirement.** It might be difficult to believe, but not everyone finds waking up in retirement with the entire day free a fun thing. Do you currently have hobbies? Do you have hobbies and skills you want to learn? Do you like to volunteer? How about travel plans? Lifelong learning is popular and good for your brain. Participating in activities you might think you would never do (ballroom dancing, for example!) can be fun for some in retirement. Pursuing healthy activities and keeping the brain

active are important. These areas and related topics are critical to talk about in advance of retirement – and even start before retiring.

Finally, as mentioned above, this article doesn't cover all retirement topics or every specific circumstance. **One thing that's important for everyone to do is sign up for Medicare at age 65, even if you're still working.** There are Medicare specialists available at no charge to you to assist in the process as needed, including the SHIBA (Statewide Health Insurance Benefits Advisors) program, which you can find out more about in this newsletter. Don't hesitate to reach out for help. Research and ask around to find qualified professionals who can guide you to this new phase of life as smoothly as possible. And good luck! ●

*Bill Pharr is a retired business owner and financial advisor, RSVP member, and regular contributor to the EIA.*

## RSVP Volunteer Informational Event

Passionate about making a difference? We need **YOU** to share your experience and skills to help meet critical community needs! Join Solid Ground and RSVP to learn how.

**WHEN:** Tuesday, October 4, 2022 | 11am-12:15pm

**ZOOM:** [tinyurl.com/RSVP-Vols-10-4-22](https://tinyurl.com/RSVP-Vols-10-4-22)

**All are welcome! We'll discuss...**

- ▶ Critical needs of families, youth, and seniors in your community.
- ▶ What's being done to assist them.
- ▶ The impacts volunteers are making.
- ▶ How you can provide support, services, and encouragement.
- ▶ All RSVP opportunities (virtual, socially distant, and in person).

**Questions/Technical Support? Contact:**

Megan Wildhood at [meganw@solid-ground.org](mailto:meganw@solid-ground.org) or 206.694.6786.





## Aging with Wisdom

by Carol Scott-Kassner

# Embracing the qualities of the sage archetype

In his seminal work on the unconscious, Swiss psychologist Carl Jung identified a number of archetypes that he suggests we have inherited from our ancestors across time. These remain unconscious until we hold them up to the light and actively choose to embody them for others to see. A few familiar archetypes include the hero, the lover, the jester, the rebel, the creator, the explorer, and the caregiver. It's enlightening to reflect on your own life and name the times you've played those roles, if any at all.

Perhaps the most important archetype for us to access as we age is the sage: a profoundly wise person. Regretfully, this deep aspect of our human potential is rarely celebrated in Western cultures that emphasize youth, image, money, and possessions over wisdom.

Happily, wisdom is still recognized in indigenous cultures – from whom we have much to learn – where the sage is called upon to guide in decision making and help members see generations into the future. Such visionary thinking names what must be done now so that descendants will have a healthy world in which to live.

As we look – often with horror – at the daily news, we recognize that thinking and acting as sages is a calling we must answer at this stage of our lives. Luckily, this is not one more thing to do in our often-busy schedules as volunteers. Instead, it's a way of being in the world that inspires others to find the qualities of a sage in themselves and to join others in shifting the paradigm from age-ing to sage-ing. (See the book *From Age-ing to Sage-ing* by Rabbi Zalman Schachter Shalomi.)

**Here are some core strengths we need to uncover in order to model sage qualities to others: \***

- ▶ Proficiency to stay open and curious in pursuit of knowledge
- ▶ Genius to live your purpose with meaning
- ▶ Propensity to choose how to respond to others positively
- ▶ Capability to speak your truth with grace and clarity
- ▶ Ability to trust your intuition (deep knowing) to be your guide
- ▶ Skill to actively attend to what matters in each moment
- ▶ Competency to integrate power of intention into your actions
- ▶ Capacity to witness others without judging or advising
- ▶ Adeptness in assimilating the authority of your life story

May you spend time with these ideas and reflect on your capacity to model the qualities of a sage to others. Trust that everyone has the capacity to do so – and you may even see young people acting as sages during this time of chaos and change. Trust that you can help to heal the world. ●



Carol Scott-Kassner is a Certified Spiritual Director and member of Sage-ing International, an organization dedicated to awakening spiritually as we get older. You can find it at [sage-ing.org](http://sage-ing.org).

\* Ideas shared by Katia Peterson in a class on the Sage Archetype sponsored by Sage-ing International.

## Medicare Part B: Preventive Benefits

If you have Medicare Part B, take advantage of some of Medicare's preventive benefits with no out-of-pocket costs to you.

**Here are some preventive services Medicare offers:**

- ▶ Annual Wellness visit
- ▶ Bone mass measurements
- ▶ Breast cancer screening
- ▶ Cardiovascular screening
- ▶ Colorectal cancer screening
- ▶ Diabetes screening
- ▶ Flu and pneumonia shots
- ▶ Obesity screening
- ▶ Tobacco-use prevention cessation counseling

See [Medicare.gov](http://Medicare.gov) or the *Medicare & You 2022* handbook for a full list of preventive benefits.

**Note:** Additional provider tests or services could add costs. You must meet coverage criteria, so be sure to check with your medical provider for more information before you run these or other tests and services.

## Medicare Savings Programs

**Applying is easy. You can have either standard Medicare or a Medicare Advantage plan. If you qualify, Medicare Savings Programs may cover:**

- ▶ Part A premiums
- ▶ Part B premiums
- ▶ Medicare copayments
- ▶ Medicare deductibles

**Help with Medicare Parts A & B costs (effective April 2021)**

	<b>INCOME less than:</b>	<b>RESOURCES less than: *</b>
<b>SINGLE PERSON</b>	\$1,549 per month	\$8,400
	\$18,588 per year	
<b>COUPLE</b>	\$2,080 per month	\$12,600
	\$24,960 per year	

\* The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) does not count \$1,500 above resource limits per person if it's set aside in a specific account for burial costs.

**Part D Prescription Drug Extra Help covers:**

- ▶ Premiums
- ▶ Some co-pay costs
- ▶ Deductibles
- ▶ Donut hole/coverage gap

**Extra Help for Part D (effective February 2021)**

	<b>INCOME less than:</b>	<b>RESOURCES less than: *</b>
<b>SINGLE PERSON</b>	\$1,719 per month	\$15,510
	\$20,625 per year	
<b>COUPLE</b>	\$2,309 per month	\$30,950
	\$27,705 per year	

\* People who work may have even higher income than what these charts show. For both programs, resources do not include the home you live in and one car.



## Life is Interesting

by Gwen Campbell

### Trying new things

I recently retired and relocated back to the Pacific NW after 16 years in Minneapolis. Having endured too many Minneapolis winters – May snowfall, -20°F days – I never wanted to see snow again. Rainy, cloudy winters are an upgrade.

But my best friend persuaded me to try snowshoeing in the Mount Baker area. I'm hooked. Both retirement and relocation are propelling me to try new things.

#### 1) Growing plants indoors:

Attempts at plant cultivation in my youth convinced me I had a brown thumb. When my children arrived, I had no time to attend to non-human living things. Now, living in the spectacular natural beauty of Camano Island, I want to bring some of it inside. I'm

thrilled to report that all 17 of my indoor plants are thriving! (My husband is the family gardener, and I enjoy the visual and edible fruits of his labor.)

**2) Kayaking:** My number one requirement when house hunting was a water view – a saltwater view. The smell of saltwater and the sight, sound, and rhythm of the waves delight my senses.

I love going knee-deep to cool off on a hot summer day. But I'm afraid to swim in an open body of water, and I get seasick boating. My best friend convinced me to try recreational kayaking in the nearby bay. Now, on warm, sunny days, we kayak and float along together.

**3) Walking:** A new way to engage in a form of exercise I love, which is walking, both by

myself and with others. It's my main form of exercise. I joined a Volkssport Association walking club to meet new people and explore my new environment.

#### 4) Learning to cook (which I never had):

When I began preparing my own meals as a young adult, I improvised; I ate a lot of oatmeal, sandwiches, mac and cheese, and steamed vegetables. As a parent, I tried to cook nutritious meals for my family, but I didn't enjoy doing it. Now, retired, with time and only two palates to please, I've become interested in cooking. Not gourmet cooking by any means, but actually learning how to cook – experimenting with different ways to prepare vegetables, discovering herbs and spices, and more.

**5) Volunteering:** I like volunteer activities that take advantage of my professional expertise, teach a valuable skill, or have a social element. With those goals in mind, I'm now writing blog posts for a housing nonprofit, writing articles for



the *EIA (Experience in Action)*, serving families at our local food bank, and tutoring with Reading Partners (featured in the Winter/Spring 2022 issue of the *EIA*).

I'm so happy to be home! ●

*Gwen is a retired writer and storyteller volunteering her skills to support nonprofit organizations. See the next page for more info on Gwen!*

### Book review: 'Through the Banks of the Red Cedar' a review by Bill Pharr

Maya Washington, a documentary filmmaker by trade, has written a book about her father, the famous football player Gene Washington, called *Through the Banks of the Red Cedar*. The book begins with the death in 2011 of Bubba Smith, a great football player from high school all the way to the NFL Football Hall of Fame. When Maya attended Bubba's funeral, she became aware that her father and Bubba lived during an amazing time in America for Black athletes.

Gene Washington grew up in La Porte, Texas, but was bused to attend high school in Baytown, because there were no schools for Black people in La Porte. Gene played football, basketball, baseball, and track in high school. Gene and Bubba competed against each other.

At this same time, Duffy Daugherty, the head football coach at Michigan State University (MSU), started doing something that very few other coaches were at that time of the 1960s, especially in the South: recruiting Black players. When Daugherty recruited Bubba, Bubba's father recommended he take a look at Gene Washington.

At the time, Black schools in Texas only competed against other Black schools. Gene Washington had never been out of his immediate community and had had virtually no contact with white people. Then, out of nowhere in 1963, he was headed to Lansing, Michigan, never having been on a plane before, never having lived where the bathrooms and water fountains were not marked "Whites Only." I, for one, can only imagine how frightening this was for Gene.

When he arrived at MSU, his football scholarship was eliminated, and he ended up with a track scholarship at the last minute. Gene ran track during his time at MSU, as well as played football, and he was NCAA champion in the 110-meter hurdles. During Gene's time at MSU, the football team was a national powerhouse and won the national

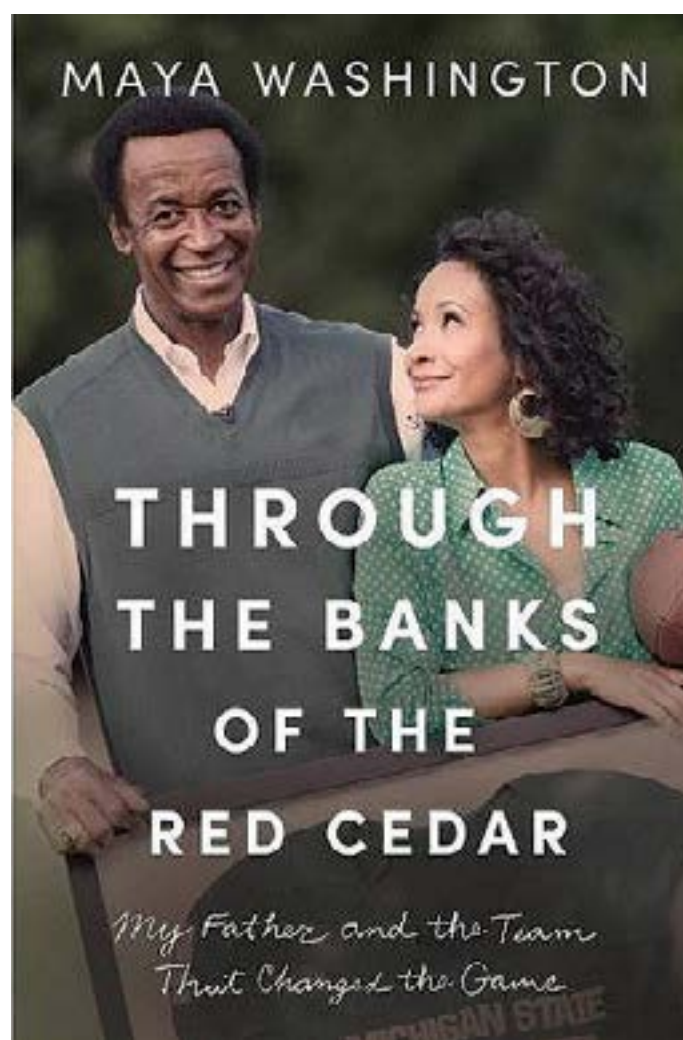
championship one year. Maya details many stories about what life was like for a Black student athlete at MSU in the mid-1960s. Just attending classes with white students was a new experience. There were even schools on the schedule who refused to play MSU because they had Black players.

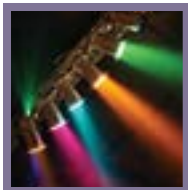
It is my belief that even non-football fans can read this book and appreciate the historical context under which Gene Washington played football and lived his life. The book also outlines his accomplishments in life: While neither of his parents had even graduated high school, Gene graduated with a degree from MSU.

While playing professional football, he worked part time (remember NFL salaries were small back then) for MMM Corporation. He had a distinguished business and speaking career. Gene has been very involved with civil rights issues for many years.

The author also discusses civil rights, details about the lives of other players as well as her family life growing up, including being unaware of her father's accomplishments. Gene won many medals

and honors as an athlete in college and as a pro for the Minnesota Vikings. For those who aren't football fans, the context of Gene's football career is as interesting as his actual career. ●





## Volunteer Spotlight

by Megan Wildhood

### New EIA contributor, Gwen Campbell

In keeping with our “Welcome to RSVP” theme of this edition, I’d like to introduce you to our newest writer: Gwen Campbell! Readers will recognize her from her book review in our last edition. She’ll provide reflections, columns, and book reviews in these pages going forward, so here’s a bit more about the woman behind the words!

Gwen has lived in a variety of places around the U.S. and in a foreign country, which she says has shaped her worldview more than travel, religion, or education. As a child, she lived in the Midwest, both the East and West coasts, and the South.

As an adult, she has lived in California, a suburb of Minneapolis, the Republic of Ireland, and Seattle, settling on Camano Island last year. She lived in Seattle’s Ravenna neighborhood for 18 years, enjoying its proximity to the library, shops, restaurants, and urban walking routes.

These days, she enjoys the library, a slower pace of life, and beach walks in her Camano Island neighborhood. She is grateful for having experienced so many flavors of American culture as well as a taste of European culture as a resident.

She earned a Bachelor’s degree from the Monterey Institute of International Studies in California and a Master’s from the University of Washington. Her career path wasn’t a straight line: She began in banking, worked in a variety of public sector roles, and spent the last part of her career working at a nonprofit providing emergency shelter and related social services to families experiencing homelessness. Her two wonderful daughters are in their twenties.

Gwen’s enjoyed writing since she first began learning to read and write. Writing to inform – reports, policies, analyses – has been part of all her career positions. When she entered the nonprofit sector, she added storytelling to her writing repertoire.

Two things draw her to writing, she says. “I find magic and delight in a well-written sentence, and a poorly written sentence strikes me like fingernails on a chalkboard.” Now that she’s retired, she volunteers for several nonprofits writing newsletters, blog posts, client success stories, and more.

I asked her about a positive memory she has about volunteering. She said, “I am still laughing about a recent interaction I had with a second-grade student whom I tutor. She was observing me on Zoom and asked why my hair is gray. I explained how hair often becomes gray as one ages; then she asked what color my hair used to be. After I responded, she thought for a moment, and then inquired, “Why don’t you dye it?” So curious and so few filters at that age.”

Since we may be seeing more book reviews from her in the future, I asked her for any book (or podcast) recommendations.

For nonfiction, she recommends *The Hare With Amber Eyes* by Edmund de Waal, *The Last Kings of Shanghai* by Jonathan Kaufman, and *The Warmth of Other Suns* by Isabel Wilkerson.

For fiction, she said *Heir to the Glimmering World* by Cynthia Ozick, *The Hunters* by Claire Messud, and *Deacon King Kong* by James McBride.

And for podcasts, she suggests *Unorthodox*, a smart, fun weekly take on Jewish notes and culture.

Thank you, Gwen, for your contributions to RSVP and the community! ●

For more information about writing for the EIA, please contact Megan Wildhood at [meganw@solid-ground.org](mailto:meganw@solid-ground.org) or 206.694.6786.



Gwen Campbell

### Need help with Medicare?



**SHIBA (Statewide Health Insurance Benefits Advisors) offers free, unbiased Medicare education and assistance through the Washington State Office of the Insurance Commissioner. Solid Ground SHIBA volunteers can help you:**

- ▶ Find Medicare options that meet your personal needs.
- ▶ Learn about your Medicare rights and options.
- ▶ Compare Medicare plans and prices.
- ▶ Report health care fraud and abuse.

Visit [www.insurance.wa.gov/shiba](http://www.insurance.wa.gov/shiba) or contact us at [shiba@solid-ground.org](mailto:shiba@solid-ground.org) or 206.753.4806 to get connected with a SHIBA volunteer!

### WHAT’S AN RSVP AMBASSADOR?

RSVP Volunteers willing to help us spread the word about the benefits of volunteering are RSVP Ambassadors!

Because of our small staff, we’ve assembled this wonderful group of volunteers who help us share RSVP’s mission with other seniors. If you’re willing to represent RSVP at events around King County, we’d like to talk to you.

We don’t ask for a specific time commitment, only that you occasionally share your enthusiasm for volunteering and relate your own experiences with RSVP to encourage others to join. We provide a fun, interactive training and give you the chance to meet other active, enthusiastic people.

### SEND US YOUR HOURS!

Yes, your RSVP volunteer hours are important and need to be reported to us.

Your hours are not only tied to federal funding with benefits then provided to you – like the excess accident medical and liability insurance – but they also help our volunteer sites and RSVP reach volunteer hour goals.

And just as importantly, it helps us recognize you for your service and highlights the contributions you make to meet community needs when you volunteer.



To sign up, send hours, or ask more questions, please contact: Megan Wildhood, 206.694.6785 | [meganw@solid-ground.org](mailto:meganw@solid-ground.org).

# Volunteer Opportunities with RSVP Site Partners

The following are just a few ways you can share your skills and experience with RSVP. To talk to a real person to find placements just right for you, call Megan Wildhood at 206.694.6786, or visit our website at [solid-ground.org/RSVP](http://solid-ground.org/RSVP) for volunteer opportunity listings organized by region.

**American Red Cross:** Volunteers respond to disasters, speak to community groups and schools, develop youth leadership skills, support local blood drives, provide care to service members, and much more. The training and support volunteers receive on a regular basis allows them to be successful in every Red Cross program. Volunteer opportunities to provide frontline services in your community are available 365 days a year. ~Countywide

**Catholic Community Services (CCS)** welcomes volunteers to enable elders living on low incomes and adults with disabilities to remain independent in their own homes. Volunteers may help one person regularly or be on-call depending on schedules and interests. Volunteers receive training, mileage reimbursement and insurance. Requests include: grocery, medication, and/or meal delivery; rides to medical appointments; yardwork; and phone buddies. ~Countywide

**Franciscan Hospice & Palliative Care (FHPC):** Affirming every life, FHPC invites you to be part of a team of professionals and volunteers who meet the unique needs of hospice patients and their families. Volunteers provide both practical companionship and emotional support by making friendly phone calls to patients, enhancing FHPC's compassionate care. ~South King County

**Full Life Care** is dedicated to enhancing quality of life for low-income elders and adults with disabilities. Volunteers are invited to support elders through the ElderFriends Program, which custom-matches volunteers with lonely and isolated older adults in King County for 1:1 companionship via in-home or remote friendly visits in Seattle and King County. ~Countywide

**Habitat for Humanity** seeks regular volunteers to help build and repair homes for hardworking families in King County. Volunteers also coach families in Habitat's Family Support program, helping them find a home. Remote and in-person options are available. Join them for a volunteer orientation session to learn more. ~Countywide

**Hopelink** is opening back up to the public. We need your help to ensure all of our community members have access to food! Volunteer in Bellevue, Carnation, Kirkland, Redmond, or Shoreline. Opportunities occur Monday-Friday during regular business hours and include helping with check-in (computer skills required), customer service (must be able to lift up to 15 pounds), and restocking (must be able to lift 35+ pounds). ~North & East King Co.

**Lifelong:** For more than 30 years, Lifelong's volunteers – the heart and soul of the organization – have played a vital role helping provide quality care and services. The food program Chicken Soup Brigade lies at the heart of their commitment to ease the lives of people living with or at risk of serious illnesses. We'd love to have you join us in this effort! Volunteer opportunities include: repacking food donations, prepping food, packaging meals, delivering nutritious food, and assembling health care kits. ~South Seattle

**Mount Si Senior Center** enhances the quality of life for older adults in the Snoqualmie Valley via a comprehensive network of services including social programs, housing, and transportation. Volunteer opportunities include front desk, admin support, data entry, kitchen prep and servers, yardwork and maintenance, and medical appointment drivers. Training provided. ~North Seattle

**North Helpline Emergency Services & Food Bank** believes all deserve adequate food, housing, and respect. We are actively looking for volunteers to join our various onsite programs, particularly for the following activities: food bank distribution (Wednesday and Saturday mornings, Thursday afternoons), home delivery box packing (Tuesday and Thursday mornings), and food donation sorting (Tuesday to Saturday mornings). ~North Seattle

**Port of Seattle:** Do you love to travel and enjoy being in airports? Join a dynamic group of volunteers to assist travelers at Sea-Tac Airport. Help travelers find their way around the airport, give out information about the Seattle-Tacoma-Everett area, or provide service to those in distress or needing assistance in changing planes. ~South King County

**Reading Partners**, a literacy nonprofit that mobilizes community volunteers to provide 1:1 tutoring to struggling elementary school readers, seeks volunteers to tutor one hour a week during the school year. No experience required as you'll be provided with an easy-to-follow curriculum that includes all the books, worksheets, and step-by-step lesson plans needed to teach an effective lesson. In-person and virtual tutoring positions available! ~South Seattle

**Solid Ground:** Sponsor of RSVP in King County, Solid Ground works to end poverty and undo racism and other oppressions that are root causes of poverty by meeting basic needs and nurturing success. We're currently seeking experienced photographers. Other volunteer opportunities include supporting youth activities, farming, and more! ~Countywide

**Tukwila Food Pantry** is a nonprofit food bank that serves around 500 families three times a week. We're in need of volunteers to come in and help out on days we distribute food: Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. Tasks generally include bagging produce, loading cars with food, and preparing food to go out. Volunteers usually work from either 9am-12pm or 12-3pm on those days, but we are happy with whatever time you can put in. ~South King County

**Youth Tutoring Program (YTP)** provides free 1:1 tutoring for children living in six different housing communities for families living on low incomes around Seattle. YTP students represent many nationalities, cultures, languages, and religions. Summer Session runs July 5 – August 12. If you're vaccinated, join us in person for as little as 1.5 or as much as 12 hours a week, Monday through Thursday, to tutor elementary and middle school students. ~South Seattle

- Please call to help me find a volunteer opportunity suited just for me.
- Please send information about RSVP.
- Please note my new address.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Please mail this form to:** RSVP, 1501 North 45th Street, Seattle, WA 98103