

# Experience *in Action!*

King County RSVP's news for people 55 & older

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## Day of Service celebrates Solid Ground's 50 years of building community to end poverty *by Mike Buchman*

Over 150 volunteers at five sites came together on Friday, August 23, 2024, to do community cleanup, garden, and put some sweat equity into the proposition that by working together we can solve poverty!

“Solid Ground and [our forebear] Fremont Public Association have always taken an action-oriented approach to community needs – so we’re delighted to have so many volunteers join us to exemplify that spirit of service,” says Solid Ground CEO Shalimar Gonzales. “From the very beginning, we’ve

put into practice the notion that volunteers are a force for good in our community and beyond.”

“I love working with Solid Ground,” says Peter Hanning, Executive Director of the Fremont Chamber of Commerce. “They know how to bring community together. And communities that work together are always stronger.”

In honor of Solid Ground’s 50th Anniversary, the project sites included some of our service locations as well as places that are historically important to us.

**Solid Ground’s King County RSVP (Retired and Senior Volunteer Program)**  
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Longtime RSVP volunteers Joe Villegas and Beverly Pressey receive appreciation for reaching a combined 850 hours of volunteer service (photo by Clarissa Magdich).

► **Magnuson Park**, where our Sand Point Housing provides permanent housing for more than 400 people who’ve lived through the experience of homelessness.

► **Marra Farm Giving Garden**, where we grow organic produce for the surrounding South Park neighborhood.

► **Solid Ground’s Transportation Hub**, also in South Park, where our ACCESS fleet provides compassionate transportation options for people to get to medical appointments, community services, and more.

► **Wallingford Playfield Park**, just a few blocks away from our administrative offices in Wallingford.

► **Fremont Canal Park**, in the neighborhood where we got our start as the Fremont Public Association in 1974.

The Marra Farm Giving Garden Day of Service project created the opportunity to celebrate two of our very dedicated RSVP volunteers, Beverly Pressey and Joe Villegas. They’re both farm regulars, and each has volunteered for four seasons.

Joe started by volunteering at the farm, then moved on to join Solid Ground’s Board of Directors! Beverly has also spent time volunteering as a Facilitator with our Community Food Education’s Adult & Family Education program.

On Friday, Beverly passed 500 hours of volunteering, and Joe is close to 350 hours! To celebrate their dedication, we presented both with a personalized hori hori knife (a type of farming tool) and a certificate of Volunteer Appreciation.

Here are some comments from Day of Service participants:

“I came out for Day of Service because it’s important to give back,” says Nam Le of HomeStreet Bank, who’s also a member of Solid Ground’s Board Finance Committee. “There’s a unique emotional connection that comes from engaging as a volunteer. It keeps me grounded knowing that every task, no matter how small, contributes to the wellbeing of others.”

Longtime supporter, US Bank, brought a crew of volunteers as well. Esther Richmond says that joining Day of Service “was about engaging our team to come out and be a part of this work. Solid Ground is an organization that we fund through the foundation. It comes down to being here – being present – and so the only way for any organization’s mission to really drive change is through our people. So that’s really what I believe in, and what our team believes in.”

“I’m struck by all the joy here this morning,” says longtime

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## Speaking Directly

by Megan Wildhood, RSVP Coordinator

# AmeriCorps Seniors convene to reflect, empower, transform & celebrate

As we continue to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the founding of Solid Ground, RSVP of King County's sponsor, we chose the theme "legacy" for this issue of the *Experience in Action! (EIA)* newsletter. Coincidentally, at the AmeriCorps Seniors 2024 Conference I had the privilege of attending in Baltimore this summer, there was significant discussion about succession planning – in other words, legacy planning.

At the final plenary session, there was a panel discussion about what to take into consideration when succession planning, when to start thinking and talking about succession, and what's next not only for those to whom batons are being handed, but also for those handing off their batons. Because each panelist had different responses, this was a rich discussion that spoke so clearly of legacy that it fit right in with our theme.

The takeaway that stuck with me most was that the time to start succession planning is now and continually. The message is that we're always building our legacy, so we might as well be intentional about it!

One panelist raised the point that in all the years he'd been in leadership positions, people encouraged him to start thinking of his successor and *what* – but most importantly *how* – he wanted to leave when that time came. But the topic of self-care for the person transitioning out was almost never discussed.

Good leaders, of course, aren't selfish, but they don't neglect themselves, either. One thing that makes a good leader is how they model setting boundaries, self-care, and advocating for one's needs, even as they put others and their organization's shared mission first.

This brings me to another discussion takeaway: When we hear "succession planning," and even when we hear "legacy," it might be more automatic to think of a CEO leaving an

organization, or a business owner passing down her life's work to her children. But the panelists, who all came from very different backgrounds – including the first-generation American experience, incarceration, and growing up in poverty – encouraged me to think outside of that box.

In addition to passing down a business or making a leadership transition as smooth as possible, leaving a legacy can also involve cultivating and passing on values in a family, or among volunteers.

Whether through training programs or creating a strong culture among volunteers, succession planning can happen at any level of any group of people whose goal is to pass down their values to those coming after them.

Current RSVP volunteers model the commitment to service and passion for using their skills to better their communities, which new and prospective members see and seek to match. RSVP Ambassadors – who are featured in Jen Gahagan's article on p. 4 – represent the program in the community. At events and fairs, Ambassadors share RSVP's mission and values with the public, inviting them into the legacy of volunteering built over more than half a century.

RSVP has quite the legacy already. According to our **Mission & History** document posted on our website, RSVP began when a group of government agencies and private organizations came together to create opportunities for community engagement among seniors after the Community Service Society of New York on Staten Island launched in 1965.

The society's successful work eventually led to Congress amending the Older Americans Act of 1965 to make legal provision for RSVP to become a national program in 1969. This was the first initiative at the federal level created to provide comprehensive services to older adults.

RSVP officially launched in



Plenary session engages a packed room (photo by Megan Wildhood).

1971 with half a million dollars from the Administration of Aging. Between 1972-1974, RSVP grew rapidly, and by the end of June 1974, there were almost 670 RSVP projects across the country. In 1993, the age of participation for RSVP members was lowered to 55 from 60.

### RSVP's purposes remain the same today:

- 1) Meet human, educational, environmental, and public safety needs of the United States without displacing existing vendors.
- 2) Renew the ethic of civic responsibility and spirit of community throughout the United States.
- 3) Expand and strengthen existing service programs with demonstrated experience providing structured service opportunities as well as visible benefits to participants and the community.
- 4) Provide tangible benefits to the communities where national service is performed.

RSVP volunteers are part of a long, nationwide legacy of service and dedication to strengthening their communities.

As the Senior Advisor at the Office of the U.S. Surgeon General shared during the Convention luncheon, not only do volunteers reap physical and mental/emotional health benefits themselves, but they pass down the strong commitment to lifetime service through volunteerism that's been handed forward for over 50 years.

In King County, Solid Ground has been RSVP's sponsor for 30 years, offering members multiple opportunities to volunteer with the agency, including tutoring, gardening, and teaching or assisting with cooking classes.

We're proud of and grateful for your passion to use your time, talents, and skills toward our shared legacy.

For more information on RSVP's mission, history, and our shared legacy, visit our website at [solid-ground.org/rsvp](https://solid-ground.org/rsvp). ●

**Upcoming RSVP Info Session**

For volunteers 55 & older. Join a virtual session via Zoom to learn about critical needs in King County!

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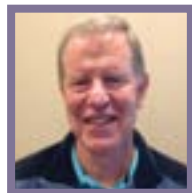
**Tuesday, October 15, 2024, 1:15 - 2:30pm**

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**To view all events & register, visit:**

[solid-ground.org/rsvp/#events](https://solid-ground.org/rsvp/#events)





## Financial Planning

by Bill Pharr

# Creating & protecting your financial legacy

Estate planning is essential for everyone, at all levels of “net worth.” At the bare minimum, every adult over 18 years of age should have a will, a named and well-informed executor of the will, a power of attorney (POA), and a healthcare directive.

All of these documents should be in place and current for everyone. They should be reviewed and updated as necessary at least every five years. All can be done online for free, for a relatively small fee, or by a lawyer if your estate is more complicated.

The original documents should be stored safely, and the executor and any other important people should know where they are and have access to them (e.g., bank lockbox, quality home safe, lawyer’s office, etc.). And make sure these same trusted people know your passwords!

### **Mistakes you can avoid to protect your legacy:**

**1) You don’t plan for possible tragic life events.** If you don’t mind everything in your life – from children to property and assets – being decided on by a probate judge, then by all means, don’t have any of the above items in place and current.

For one real-life example, a recently married couple, a mom and dad around 30 years old, both died in a car crash. Their child was not in the car with them. They didn’t have a will or POA in place, and most

importantly, hadn’t planned for what would happen to their minor child in this situation.

**2) You don’t talk to all possible heirs about your property and assets while you’re still alive.** To illustrate with an extreme example, let’s say you have two adult children, and you’re not going to give them equal shares of your estate. It is less painful to meet with the two children and explain why the estate will be divided unevenly than it is for the possibility of the two surviving children to get into a legal argument about uneven division of the estate’s assets after you have passed.

**3) You pass away and leave your spouse (and children) clueless about financial matters,** and with no skills to deal with resulting post-death events that become of paramount importance.

A person I know owned a small software company. He recently passed away suddenly. He was the main asset for the company (i.e., without him, there’s no value to the software). He did all the sales, marketing, and service calls. His wife was never part of the business beyond answering the phone and taking messages. She also doesn’t know a thing about their personal finances.

She’s left with the aftermath of the company, dealing with vendors who are owed money, and trying to see if there’s any value to the company left. In

addition to the grief of losing her spouse, she suddenly has added financial stress to deal with.

**4) You don’t update beneficiaries in your financial accounts that aren’t covered by your will.** IRAs, 401ks, etc. are covered by designated beneficiaries, not wills.

An example is when people who get divorced forget to update their beneficiaries, die 20 years later, and their IRA passes legally to someone they don’t want to receive it. This is a very common and very avoidable mistake!

Everything discussed above is straightforward to get done and easy to maintain. The goal for all of us is to not leave issues and burdens behind after we pass away. Hopefully my examples illustrate this point clearly. Also, please remember that when you do pass, everyone leaves behind the same things: stories, pictures, memories, and a pile of papers (bank statements, brokerage statements, title paperwork, etc.).

So concentrate on making memories, enjoying friends and family, having some fun, working hard, and making sure you leave your financial life in order so the people who inherit your financial legacy are educated and prepared to deal with it. ●

*Bill Pharr is a retired business owner and financial advisor, RSVP Ambassador, and regular 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, Solid Ground, 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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Solid Ground CEO Shalimar Gonzales (center with aqua cap) poses with US Bank volunteers (photo by Clarissa Magdich).

### **Day of Service** *continued from page 1*

donor and volunteer Flo Minehan. “Seeing people from all over Seattle coming together like this – yes, it’s hard work – but it’s so fun to do it all together.”

“It’s incredibly heartwarming to see everyone here giving back and beautifying our community,” says Andrew Miller, who is the longest-tenured member of Solid Ground’s Board of Directors.

“Community is important,” says Claire Swinbank, Regional Manager with JLL, who brought a crew to our Sand Point Housing campus. “We want to be a part of building community, and this seemed like a good fit for us.”

Visit Solid Ground’s **50 Years of Changing Lives** webpage for more information on our 50th Anniversary celebrations and stories from the last half century. ●



# How RSVP Ambassadors create a community-building legacy

by Jen Gahagan

When I first joined the RSVP staff at Solid Ground over 18 years ago, we saw a pattern of recently retired and passionate volunteers come to us who wanted to use their skills while engaging more deeply with the program. At the same time, we needed to recruit more volunteers to meet community needs. Out of a series of conversations with staff, advisory council members, and volunteers, the concept of the RSVP Ambassador was born to help the small staff team increase our ability to promote RSVP throughout King County.

The idea was to recruit people who are passionate about volunteering and like talking with others and building relationships in the community. In turn, we would provide them with training about RSVP's goals and opportunities so they could help us represent the RSVP program at tabling events, community resource fairs, partner site recognition events, speaking engagements, and more.

The idea was popular! RSVP volunteers stepped up to be a part of the movement. I would often hear from them that they got more out of volunteering than they gave, and they were excited to share the joy with others. By 2007, the group of Ambassadors had grown to a cohesive, knowledgeable, engaged, and dynamic community of volunteers.

At that time, staff and advisory council members evaluated the strength of our traditional advisory council and determined that we needed to make some changes. While a small and dedicated group met every month, both staff and council members found that there was a lot more excitement, learning, and engagement happening in the RSVP Ambassador group.

So in 2008, we transitioned to having the Ambassadors serve as our official community participation group in addition to filling the advisory council role. Several of our former council members were already part of our Ambassador group. Key members had become an integral part of expanding our internal capacity by working on the *EIA* newsletter, RSVP volunteer recognition efforts, and evaluation of potential site partners. They also participated in group service projects to benefit the community.

## RSVP Ambassadors now serve three important purposes:

- 1) Recruit volunteers through outreach activities in the community.
- 2) Provide program input and staff feedback.
- 3) Increase program capacity by supporting special projects.

Furthermore, RSVP ambassadors lead by example, sharing their joy and passion for volunteering.

RSVP Coordinator Megan Wildhood says, "What I love about working with the RSVP Ambassadors is the longstanding passion I see in each of them for serving their communities in the diverse ways they do. Each of the ambassadors I've had the privilege to know over the last five+ years I've been in my role as Coordinator is committed to the places they volunteer and represent RSVP in the community, and I am inspired by the heart and spirit they bring to our Ambassador meetings and their volunteering."



A blast from RSVP Ambassadors & staff past. See if you can find some familiar faces!



2024 RSVP Ambassadors & Volunteer Services staff (l to r): Jen Gahagan, Joe Hesketh, Gwen Campbell, Helen Hesketh, Julie Wagoner, Carol-Ann Smith, Edie Hilliard, Megan Wildhood, Bill Pharr, Paul Jeganathan, Marty Thompson (photo by Clarissa Magdich)

Over the years, they have touched the lives of countless community members and built a legacy of empowering our community to end poverty.

## Several of our current ambassadors recently shared happy memories about their RSVP/volunteer experiences:

*"A family of five came in when I was doing taxes. I was able to get them a \$14,000 refund. I got to know the family. They were immigrants and they needed the money. It was great to have the opportunity to get that for them. I've had a lot of years of experience working with United Way, an RSVP partner, and every time we can help someone like that, it feels really good."* -MARTY THOMPSON

*"We have been in RSVP for 25 or more years, and one of the greatest activities that we did was work with the nursing students from the University. They would come out to our homes about four times, and we would discuss what it's like to be a healthy senior."*

*"They would ask if they could hug us and ask about our medicines. The students developed a video, which is out on YouTube now, about how they learned about seniors through us."* -HELEN & JOE HESKETH

*"I've been an RSVP volunteer for about 10 years. It's been an extremely rewarding experience. At the tabling events, I really enjoy meeting people and telling them about RSVP. And in another program, you write letters to an elementary school kid, and they write back. I also worked for Cancer Lifeline. I learned a lot. The training was intense, but it's worth it. When you start hearing other people's stories, you compare notes, you listen to them, and you realize that there are things you can learn about that you would have never known if you had not volunteered."* -PAUL JEGANATHAN

*"I volunteer with RSVP, and I have so many favorite memories from volunteering. They almost always have to do with kids or people I have helped in some way. There was one operation when I was able to put together a bunch of playground equipment for kids. They were so happy; it was nice to see them laughing. I also volunteer to give financial advice. I just like helping people. RSVP gives so many opportunities to feel good about volunteering."* -BILL PHARR

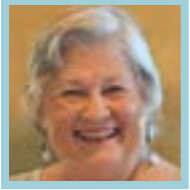
It's been a highlight and true joy to work with the RSVP Ambassadors for all of these years. Since 2006, 81 RSVP volunteers have contributed over 4,684 hours of service to the Ambassador community. This is a huge contribution with an enormous impact. I'm so grateful for their support, community development work, and contribution to my personal development as a leader.

We're currently seeking RSVP Ambassadors to join our learning community and share their love of volunteering with others. Ambassadors meet three times a year to get program updates, learn about volunteer opportunities, provide input into the program, and sign up to support outreach events and service projects.

**Find out how you can be a part of RSVP's ongoing legacy! We're holding an in-person Ambassador Interest Meeting on Tuesday, January 14, 2025. If you'd like to attend, please reach out to Megan Wildhood at [meganw@solid-ground.org](mailto:meganw@solid-ground.org) or 206.694.6786. ●**

*Jen Gahagan joined Solid Ground (then the Fremont Public Association) in 2005 and now serves as our Volunteer Services Manager.*





## Aging with Wisdom

by Carol Scott-Kassner

### Leaving a legacy

Congratulations to Solid Ground on 50 years of service to King County! What a tremendous legacy of 28,045 hours of service by 6,425 RSVP volunteers to 150 partner organizations ranging from blood banks to schools to food banks to SeaTac Airport, to name just a few of the volunteer opportunities RSVP offers.

Volunteers' services have been worth millions of dollars to the broader community, dollars saved by your willingness to donate your time and skills. This is truly inspiring and well worth celebrating.

Each of you who has volunteered through those programs has another kind of legacy to leave your loved ones. The invitation to consider such legacies is something we usually take up in our later lives. Some forms of legacies can seem a bit daunting to tackle, but others are less challenging. Rachel Freed, who has written a great deal about legacies said, "Some legacies we've received feel like gifts, others like karmic burdens." The following ideas may provide a structure for you to use in leaving the richness of your legacy.

**STORIES:** Our stories help encapsulate for our children, grandchildren, and community special moments in our lives: our accomplishments, what challenges we've overcome, who we've loved and who has loved us, where we've traveled to, what we've valued, and more. It's good to write out stories from our childhoods, teen years, and various stages of adulthood, so they can see the scope of our lives and gain a sense of what experiences contributed to shaping the person we've become.

These stories don't have to be long. They could be written over time and put into a collection to share with other generations. They can also be recorded in audio or video form.

**SKILLS:** Many of you may already do this, but teaching your grandchildren and others how to perform skills you've enjoyed – such as building things, creating art, cooking with favorite recipes, knitting, sewing, crocheting, making music as a family – is a powerful gift. Passing down treasured recipes from previous generations is a wonderful legacy to leave. I'm thrilled to have recipes written in my mother's hand.

**ETHICAL WILL:** The idea of leaving a spiritual legacy of one's stories that focuses on values has been a part of the Jewish tradition for centuries. Rabbi Steve Leder says, "We cannot learn from a story no one has ever told us." In his book *For You When I'm Gone: Twelve Essential Questions About Love and Life*, Rabbi Leder guides readers



through a series of questions that help the reader consider key events in their lives that reveal their basic values in the way or ways they've responded to life's challenges and invitations.

These questions can be answered through writing stories or letters to loved ones. He believes that "people die, but love and legacy do not." You can find many resources for writing ethical wills.

**BLESSINGS:** Some of you may want to leave specific blessings for those you love based on their interests and strengths. These can be enclosed in a card to be given to individuals at the end of your life. You may also want to leave general blessings applicable to anyone such as:

- ▶ May you be blessed with joy and peace throughout your life.
- ▶ May you be blessed with the strength of spirit to survive any challenges you meet.
- ▶ May your love of travel lead to discoveries of the vastness and diversity in this world.
- ▶ May your ability to care for others lead to even deeper compassion for all, including yourself.

**EMBODIMENT:** Perhaps our richest legacies are of who we are and what we represent to the world. As we age, are we still growing or have we remained stuck in old patterns of behavior? Are we bitter or joyful? Are we expressing the best of who we are in our daily lives and actions?

Sage-ing International has identified 10 qualities of a Sage in Service. They are: compassion, deep listening, joyfulness, inclusiveness, respect, lifelong learning, open communication, peacefulness, integrity, and reverence for life.

Imagine what our world would be like if we all embodied these qualities. We would transform this world. ●

*Carol Scott-Kassner is a Certified Spiritual Director and a Certified Sage-ing Leader. She is having a wonderful journey as she ages and wishes the same for you. For more information, visit [sage-ing.org](http://sage-ing.org).*

### Ambassador Interest Meeting

Save the date to learn more about becoming an RSVP Ambassador to represent King County RSVP and senior volunteering in the community.

Tuesday, January 14, 2025 (time TBD)

As an Ambassador, you'll share your enthusiasm for volunteering and relate your own experiences with RSVP to encourage others to join. You'll also have opportunities to provide input and feedback into RSVP programming. We provide a fun, interactive training and give you the chance to meet other active, enthusiastic people.

**To sign up or ask questions:**  
Megan Wildhood, RSVP Coordinator  
206.694.6786 | [meganw@solid-ground.org](mailto:meganw@solid-ground.org)

### Attention Current RSVP Volunteers!

If you haven't received your AmeriCorps Seniors long-sleeved T-shirt, please contact Megan at [meganw@solid-ground.org](mailto:meganw@solid-ground.org) or 206.694.6786 with your requested shirt size and the address where we should send it.

Not yet an RSVP volunteer? Sign up today! [solid-ground.org/rsvp-registration-form](http://solid-ground.org/rsvp-registration-form)





# RSVP volunteers 'knit it all' to keep people warm during the chilly months

by Gwen Campbell

I recently spent a delightful morning with RSVP Knit-It-Alls program volunteers, including the **Northaven Handcrafters**. The group has been knitting, crocheting, sewing, and quilting for the past 50 years, and they donate their creations to local charitable organizations such as Solid Ground.

Some members of the group gather weekly for conversation and craft at Northaven, an affordable housing community for seniors in Seattle, while others prefer to craft on their own.

Northaven Chairperson Nada Jacobsen has nurtured many handcrafters while knitting items and tracking and organizing their donations. "I sat at Nada's knee and learned [the craft of knitting]," was a common refrain from group members. "I can teach. That is part of giving and generosity," says Nada.

For these women, handcrafting skills were typically handed down from mothers and grandmothers or taught in home economics classes at school.

"My mother gave me my first ball of yarn at seven years old," Nada says. "My mother-in-law had one of the last Singer treadle machine models, and my mother bought one of the first electric Singer models. She had a sewing store on Vashon Island."

Nancy recalls her mother trying to teach her to sew: "I ran the needle through my finger during the first lesson. (That was the last lesson!) I learned sewing in home economics. Then I learned to knit and crochet. The draw for me was the lush yarn and fabric, not the craft."

Linda's first craft was knitting: "I took a class and zoomed on from there. In the 1990s and 2000s, I learned about other countries' different knitting styles, like Fair Isle sweaters."

Northaven Handcrafters use donated yarn to fashion hats, regular and tube cowl scarves, and booties with double-knit soles. Linda particularly enjoys crocheting cowl scarves, because they are quick and simple to make, don't require fasteners, and are useful to everyone to keep necks warm.

Susan enjoys knitting animals such as small cats using scrap material left over from a toy business she had with her mother. The animals are sold at the Handcrafters' annual charitable bazaar at Northaven, the proceeds of which are donated to local nonprofits. Many Northaven residents are also proud owners of these cats!

The Northaven Handcrafters donated 158 pieces to RSVP Knit-It-Alls in April, and they have 14 bags of completed items ready for donation. All are made of synthetic yarn, which is durable, hypoallergenic, and easy to care for and keep clean.

I also had a lovely conversation with **Lynette Mattarocci**, an independent King County knitter and RSVP Knit-It-Alls volunteer. She always knits with her brindle dachshund by her side, and sometimes with her friend Phyllis. She buys some of her yarn and receives donated yarn from her children and church friends.

Lynette has crocheted hats for over 20 years, taking about five hours to make each hat. A few years ago, her 10-year-old granddaughter got a Knifty Knitter loom. When she saw how it could be used, Lynette taught herself to use it. Now it only takes her two hours to create a hat on the Knifty Knitter. She never tires of knitting hats and created 521



Some of the Northaven Handcrafters pose with their gifts (photo by Gwen Campbell).

of them in 2020 alone. Her hats are one-size-fits-all: The yarn and loom she uses make her hats stretchy to fit the heads of children and adults.

Growing up, she also learned to do embroidery, crocheting, and sewing. She sewed clothing for her children and made rugs and quilts for them.

Lynette has a long history of volunteerism. She enjoyed volunteering at both the Kent Senior Activity Center and the local food bank for over 15 years until the pandemic ended that activity. Today she volunteers in person at her church. She sets up the church sanctuary for services, waters the plants, and provides hospitality. "If you have nothing to do for yourself, do something for someone else," she says.

Prior to the pandemic, RSVP received approximately 2,200-3,300 knitted/crocheted donations annually, and since 2020, it's been closer to 1,200. About 50 volunteers support RSVP Knit-It-Alls by knitting/crocheting items or tagging and organizing them for distribution.

**Recipients welcome the handcrafted hats, gloves, and scarves. Here are a few notes of appreciation:**

*"Dear incredible team of knitters, thank you so much for taking the time to create so many wonderful hats, gloves, and scarves for our families!"*

*"The moms and kids all commented on how warm, cute, and soft each item was. They were so excited to wear them! We really appreciate everything you all do."*

*"We wish you could see the joy on everyone's faces as we hand them out. You are all truly talented! 😊"*

~SOLID GROUND'S BROADVIEW SHELTER & TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

*"Including these lovely handmade hats and scarves in our clients' gift bags brings an extra bit of warmth to their winter season, and we're so grateful to all of you for making this possible!"*

~JEWISH FAMILY SERVICE



Some wee, sweet, knitted items are ready to keep small humans warm (photo by Gwen Campbell).

Do you enjoy knitting or crocheting? RSVP Knit-It-Alls volunteers knit and crochet throughout the year, creating warm winter clothing for families with low incomes and/or people experiencing homelessness in Seattle/King County. Solid Ground distributes the items to people we serve and to other nonprofits for their participants.

**Individual volunteers and groups are welcome! Contact Carol-Ann Smith, Solid Ground Volunteer Coordinator, at [volunteers@solid-ground.org](mailto:volunteers@solid-ground.org) if you're interested! ●**



## 'Bowed As If Laden With Snow' by Megan Wildhood

a book review by Liz Reed Hawk

You may know her as an energetic person who loves connecting 55+ people with volunteer opportunities that match their skills and passions.

But did you know that RSVP Coordinator Megan Wildhood is also an accomplished author?

Poetry is Megan's preferred mode of wordsmithing, and her first full-length, published book of poetry, *Bowed As If Laden With Snow*, was released in May 2023 by Cornerstone Press. It's a slim volume bursting with 81 power-packed poems ranging from one paragraph to several pages long. Each is a gem of carefully woven words that tell stories, daylight harsh realities and childhood memories, paint vivid pictures, and process loss.

Megan's powerful themes include the climate crisis and how it impacts us all, childhood experiences and how they inform who we become, and adult personal losses. Her words combine acute observations, scientific truths, and theology with human experiences like passion, pain, joy, hope.

"The way I write poetry – the whole point of the way I write – is to make it more accessible," she says. "What I really want to do is change people's minds about

poetry. It can be inaccessible, but it doesn't have to be. I try not to lock people out, and one way to do that is to provide strong imagery."

Personal experiences and family legacy also show up frequently in her poetry. While her work isn't "confessional," Megan says, "There's an autobiographical element in each of the poems. How I decide how much autobiography to include depends on what experience I want to invite the reader into."

Sometimes her poems narrate exact experiences. Other times, she says, "I take a kernel of something that happened and turn it into a story." For example, the seed for *Lessons from Mom for the Beach* is based on Megan's grandmother's advice to her daughters (later passed on to Megan) about what to do if you get stung by a jellyfish. On the other hand, *Hiking Kendall Katwalk* tells the true story of a challenging hike Megan took with her now ex-husband, and the metaphors it reflected for struggles in her marriage.

She says writing poetry is a tool for processing. Sometimes she infuses her words with humor to address serious topics like the climate crisis, as she does in

*Honey Bees Dance Their Science*, written from the perspective of a female bee warning her sister bees to avoid human "giants" and their destructive bee killer: "They don't know, yet, dearests, that, if we go, they go."

Other poems hit hard topics head on and help her process personal trauma. Megan grew up in Littleton, Colorado, and was in middle school seven minutes away from the devastating Columbine school shooting of April 1999. She says her school was locked down, but no one explained what was going on. Since her parents came of age during the Cold War, she says, "I thought the Russians were coming and we were at war."

For years afterward, the town didn't know how to address the tragedy. "I was 21 when I first talked about it." Writing a poem about it helped her "process the lack of processing" offered to the middle schoolers in the immediate aftermath of the shooting in real time.

As far as authorial intent goes, Megan emphasizes that "Meaning is cocreated between the writer and the reader. The goal in all of these is to connect and invite the reader in."

If you'd like to accept her invitation 'in,' visit her website at [www.meganwildhood.com](http://www.meganwildhood.com) for more information about all of her writing. ●



### How to Talk About the Weather

child::adult as work::mature  
ongoing::creation as loved::literature  
fear::love as hate::hope  
doubt::faith as rescue::rope  
soul::body as body::water  
shadow::light as planet::fodder  
love::fear as money::worth  
Earth::multitude as living::birth  
planet::fodder as other::rival  
crisis::climate as \_\_\_\_::Survival



## Medicare Open Enrollment 2024: Tuesday, 10/15 – Saturday, 12/7



Join us for a free, unbiased presentation on Medicare Open Enrollment and learn about...

- ▶ What you can do during Medicare Open Enrollment.
- ▶ Choosing and changing plans.
- ▶ What Medigap plans are available.
- ▶ How to get help paying for Medicare.

**VIEW OUR CALENDAR OF PRESENTATIONS!**

To see all upcoming events, check out our website at [solid-ground.org/workshops/#medicare](http://solid-ground.org/workshops/#medicare).

**QUESTIONS?** Email [shiba@solid-ground.org](mailto:shiba@solid-ground.org).

**Medicare Open Enrollment is just around the corner!**

**This is the one timeframe of the year when those already enrolled in Medicare can make changes to their health and drug plans for the next year. Changes made during this period are effective January 1, 2025.**

**4 ways to prepare for Medicare Open Enrollment:**

- 1) Review your Annual Notice of Change letter.** By September 30, you should receive a notice in the mail from your current plan with any changes for 2025, including formulary and/or premium changes. Review it carefully to see if the plan will continue to meet your needs.
- 2) Compare plans.** Even if you're happy with your current coverage, it's important to check for any changes next year and compare it with other available options. You may save money, find better coverage, or both!
- 3) Review your 'Medicare & You 2025' handbook.** In late September, all Medicare households should receive the updated handbook in the mail. Look it over to see new listings of plans in your area and answers to frequently asked questions about Medicare. You can also download a copy online at [medicare.gov](http://medicare.gov).
- 4) Get trusted advice from a SHIBA volunteer.** Starting October 15, SHIBA volunteers can help you compare plans for Open Enrollment. We offer free, unbiased education on your Medicare options.

Contact us at [shiba@solid-ground.org](mailto:shiba@solid-ground.org) or 206.753.4806 to get free, personalized health insurance counseling. ●



## VOLUNTEER & COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH RSVP

The following are just a few of the opportunities RSVP has to offer. To talk to a real person about volunteer roles that are 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, help youth develop leadership skills, support local blood drives, provide care to service members, and much more. Volunteer opportunities are available 365 days a year to provide frontline services in your community. The training and support volunteers receive on a regular basis allows them to be successful in every Red Cross program. ~Countywide

**Catholic Community Services (CCS):** Volunteer Services at CCS welcomes volunteers to enable elders living on low incomes and adults with disabilities to remain independent in their own homes. You may help the same person each time or be listed as “on call” depending on your schedule and interests. You’ll receive training, mileage reimbursement, and insurance. Volunteer opportunities include giving rides to medical appointments, doing yardwork, and being a phone buddy, as well as delivering groceries, medications, and/or meals. ~Countywide & online

**Communities in Schools of Greater King County** believes in surrounding students with a community of support, as well as tools for success, including basic needs such as food access and stability. We’re currently seeking volunteers to pick up weekend food bags each week in Newcastle, WA and deliver them to schools in both Renton and Tukwila to be distributed to students. ~South King County

**Community Food Education’s** Adult & Family Education program at Solid Ground teaches people how to prepare healthy and delicious meals on a limited budget. We need Class Assistants for 3- to 6-week series and one-time classes at rotating locations. Volunteer alongside staff to support fun, lively, and informative classes. Work with participants on educational activities and help them prepare a shared meal. Training is provided. ~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. ~Seattle & online

**Full Life Care:** Our Care Teams Program matches volunteer teams with an unpaid family caregiver in need of respite. Caregivers of seniors 55+ and veterans of any age qualify for Care Teams support. Volunteers help with light yardwork and household tasks, provide companionship for care recipients, run errands, or simply lend social or emotional support. ~South Seattle

**Greenwood Senior Center** is an inclusive community that provides social, physical, and educational activities focused on the needs of older adults. We work to fight isolation, build camaraderie, and enrich each other’s lives. Available volunteer opportunities include serving hot meals and assisting with special events and classes. We welcome all abilities and interests! ~North Seattle

**Hopelink** needs your help to ensure all members of our community have access to food! Volunteer in Bellevue, Carnation, Kirkland, Redmond, or Shoreline. Opportunities take place Mondays through Fridays during regular business hours and include 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 County

**Lifelong:** Our volunteers – the heart and soul of the organization – have played a vital role helping provide quality care and services to people for more than 30 years. Lifelong’s food program, Chicken Soup Brigade, eases the lives of people living with or at risk of serious illnesses. Volunteer opportunities include repacking food donations, prepping food, packaging meals, delivering nutritious food, and assembling health care kits. ~Central & South Seattle

**Mount Si Senior Center:** Over 1,200 seniors a year rely on Mt. Si Senior Center for fitness classes, social programs, arts and educational workshops, recreational activities, and lunches. Volunteers help ensure seniors can safely age in place. We seek lunch program help, afternoon front desk support, and workshop leaders. ~East King County

**North Helpline Emergency Services & Food Bank** keeps food on the table and a roof overhead for our neighbors, helping meet basic needs to affirm human dignity. We’re seeking fitness class instructors as well as nutrition volunteers for our Community Dining program and Health and Wellness Center. Training and certification provided. ~North Seattle

**Port of Seattle SEA Volunteers:** If you love being a part of the airport environment, join our volunteer team to help make every passenger’s journey a pleasant one. SEA Volunteers provide vital support at the airport, assisting passengers with navigation and ensuring a seamless travel experience. By guiding them through the terminals and offering knowledgeable assistance, you’ll enhance the efficiency and friendliness of the airport environment. ~South King County

**Reading Partners** program and volunteers are proven to help students improve their reading skills. We offer a unique opportunity for volunteers to support and encourage students on their literacy learning journeys. We provide training, onsite support, and an easy-to-use curriculum to set volunteers up for success. ~Central & South Seattle, South King County

**Sound Generations** is a nonprofit serving aging adults and their loved ones in King County since 1967. Our staff and over 2,100 volunteers are dedicated to ensuring older adults can live ample and fulfilled lives in a community that respects and affirms the aging journey. Requests include assisting with events, social media ambassadors, phone-a-friend connectors, and digital card making. ~Countywide

**United Way of King County’s Tax Prep:** Tax season can be stressful, especially for folks who are new to the U.S. tax code or just entering the workforce, and those with financial or technological barriers to filing. UWKC seeks volunteers to prepare taxes (we train you!) for the next January through April tax season, or to welcome people to our tax sites. Volunteer training starts in October. ~Countywide & online

**Washington DECA** serves 13,000 high school students to prepare them to become innovative leaders and entrepreneurs who make a positive social and global impact. We’re currently looking for volunteer judges to evaluate both written and oral business competitions. Students value your feedback as they prepare for the International DECA competition. ~Eastside & online

**Youth Tutoring Program** volunteer tutors guide and inspire 6- to 18-year-old youth scholars who live in low-income and public housing. We seek after-school tutors interested in helping guide youth on their educational journeys. We ask a minimum of one hour/week of in-person tutoring at one of our five centers. ~North & 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